The pairing of Jonson and Donne reveals differences both in temperament and in seclusion topoi as well as styles. It is not altogether convenience that has divided their successors roughly into cavaliers and metaphysicals, and my next pairing, of Herbert and Herrick, will take advantage of the logic of that division. But succession is complicated by a significant mixing, Herbert, for instance, being as Jonsonian in plain style as he is metaphysical in fermenting wit. The traditional classification breaks down almost totally with Vaughan, Marvell, and Milton. And so again we do a little better. I think, both with them and with Herbert, if we keep to topical charts. These give us not only stylistic but formal, metaphoric, and thematic ways to read the dynamics of literary response.

On those charts Herbert veers sharply from his three most important predecessors, Sidney, Jonson, and Donne. He does not presuppose a courtly circle as Sidney does, nor even the necessity to constitute his own substitute for it. But he does have to guide readers toward altered expectations, assuming that they come from Jonson’s classicism or the love tradition with its elaborate rhetoric, its habitual periphrasis, and its procedures for approaching (yet never possessing) the beloved. Negotiations with God are a quite different matter, not necessarily more direct but more dangerous to play with, and the church of course provides a unique setting. It virtually awards its own readership. But if Herbert were not broader than that readership suggests, it would be difficult to distinguish his lyrics from the anonymous medievalism Rosemond Tuve dis-
covers in back of them. The secular literary tradition has intervened, Donne's part of it especially, and Herbert's difference to a large extent is the product of an unusual combining, as again and again he crosses the secular and the sacred. Whereas he addresses his readers in general terms in "The Church-Porch" as primarily a collection of sinners needing to be sprinkled and taught with precepts, the lyric poet who presides over The Temple lets them in mainly as implicit witnesses of the speaker's approach to the divine presence, in so many ways like courtship of an Eliza or a mistress. Jonson's careful cultivation of a social context and Donne's secular lover's seclusion are obviously of little use to that new courtship and the high stakes it causes the reader to wager over the outcome. For these Herbert substitutes a paradigmatic spiritual drama in which God not only becomes the beloved but is a quite special case in his anticipation of anything the poet might say.

This special critic, the reader who counts most, raises foremost the question of authority. The poems go back and forth from the poet's desire to author that presence to an acknowledgment of his helpless passivity. This too is an important substitution for the kinds of forlorn address the secular lyric makes, and Herbert clearly feels the added difficulties it poses, the chief one being simply the strain of locating God in words and places. The poet craves enclosure, for instance, but having to place God within an object or poem breaks open the container. Receiving him requires the reform of the sinner beginning with the "Church-Porch's" moral handbook, since only prepared receptacles can hope for occupancy. But knowing what to do is easier than doing it. Humanly built memories are "quarries of pil'd vanities," and hearts are stockpiles of sin that leave their owners pleading, "Oh fill the place, / And keep possession with thy grace" ("Good Friday"). Preachers themselves are not much better as God's conduits, being as "Church Windows" says but "brittle crazie glasse" that require virtually a miracle for the divine story to be annealed in them. "I am both foul and brittle," the speaker of "The Priesthood" confesses, "much unfit / To deal in holy Writ."

God is thus stationed at two removes unless the poet can induce a change, which amounts to a kind of double sacred periphrasis, the first, the incarnation's reduction; the second, flawed verbal, artistic, and church-sponsored relivings of the son's episodic progress, the source of all rites and rituals. Actual biblical places and the topoi made of them so interfere with God's true, inexpressible nature that the extra barrier of the sinner's obstinancy and resisting heart
can altogether block off its presence. Hence much of *The Temple* is devoted to examining—and denying—paraphrase equivalencies, not only for God but for the soul, for certain doctrines, and even for the simplest of truths. In “The Quidditie” Herbert lists a number of erring paraphrases for verse itself, which is *not* a crown, hawk, lute, sword, or most of the things the secular traditions assume. As the Jordan poems add, neither is it quaint words, trim inventions, or winding stairs. These aspects of the inheritance have to be discarded at the outset. In “Deniall” similar errors of paraphrase apply to the soul and heart, which, being poured into broken vessels and disorderly verse, find no sense of accord between what the rhyming tongue says and the self feels:

Therefore my soul lay out of sight,
Untun’d, unstrung:
My feeble spirit, unable to look right
Like a nipt blossome, hung
Discontented.

If one’s own heart and soul cannot find proper form, how much more is God put out by the crazed glass and limp words of human devising.

To be sure, in certain seasons—particularly Easter and Christmas, seasons of hope—metaphors come streaming to both priests and poets: the word is a pasture, the soul a shepherd; the flock it feeds are thoughts, words, deeds; and we all “sing one common Lord” (“Christmas”). Doctrines, too, collect a quantity of truth, as the trinity and incarnation are stately cabinets full of the Lord, whose sweets “are packt up” in them (“Ungratefulnesse”). But this only leads to vacillation between emptying out and filling up vessels. That vacillation is by now a familiar story to Herbert’s critics, as are his expectations for simple style. If the poet could not promise some usable metaphors—if scripture, for instance, did not give him the apostle’s “grain” to convert into “bread”—there would be no gathering of a reader-flock for the mystical repast, no conveyance of true substance, no recounting of Christ’s life story as the basis of all images, doctrines, and sacraments. At the same time, there seems to be little the poet himself can do to initiate a divine indwelling to which he can summon the flock. “The Holdfast” concludes that no one can claim authority in such matters; one can merely observe that, paradoxically, all things human that have served the divine nature are “more ours by being his,” not by having been his, but by being currently and always his if he chooses.
The difficulty for lyric address in that otherwise consoling thought is similar to the drawback of a plain style that produces only "My God, my king": the outgoing impulses are stopped up except as correctable leaps into authorship, and except for pleas and complaints. The divine substance flows only one way. Thus the poet’s contribution in “A True Hymne” is a longing “O, could I love!” and God’s conclusion a simple, abrupt (if total) “Loved.” Similar endings come up fast and close down with preemptive mystery in “Prayer I,” “Redemption,” and even “Love III” as the final writing of “loved.” They do without the indirections of trope and traditions of periphrastic location. God’s residences are unpredictable and indifferent, finally, because they are obliterated by his descent into them, all sacred paraphrases being much more radically unlike the truth than, say, the moon is unlike Diana or the sun unlike Phoebus.

One of Herbert’s legacies to Vaughan and the several others who followed his lead is nonetheless a practiced attempt to balance self-abasement and high ambition. As we have seen in “Lycidas,” Milton seeks his own version of that balance, and Marvell experiments with it momentarily in “The Coronet,” “On a Drop of Dew,” and “A Dialogue, between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure.” But Milton goes much further than Herbert would dream of going in claiming the gifts of the seer, and Marvell is too skeptical to believe that he or anyone can actually set forth the divine nature. The Neoplatonist alternative to its embodiment that Marvell proposes in the latter two poems undermines not only nature’s forms but the poet’s own artfulness. Unwilling to go that far on other occasions, he pulls back to a different kind of self-reduction in “The Garden” and “Upon Appleton House,” where a wise passiveness keeps him at arm’s length from both Miltonic genius of place and Herbert’s struggle to negotiate further for a place. (He is somewhat overwhelmed by the vast design of Paradise Lost, though he acknowledges its success.) Both Milton and Marvell, then, inherit the risky venture of founding the poet’s authority without courtly functions, but neither suggests quite the readership or the seesaw drama so pervasive in Herbert’s best lyrics.

As a poet for all realms, Herrick takes an easier way, and I glance at him here primarily as a contrast to the those who pursue transcendental placings of lyric address. It is revealing that when he finds himself detained in a place without attraction, he does not analyze a subtle dissociation of mind from what it surveys or initiate proceedings to escape to another plane; he merely crosses it off his
list with a reverse charm or curse, which implicitly sets up reception of a well-mannered nature:

Dean-Bourn, farewell: I never look to see
Deane, or thy warty incivility,
Thy roackie bottome, that doth tear thy streams,
And makes them frantick, ev'n to all extremes;
To my content, I never shou'd behold,
Were thy streames silver, or thy rocks all gold.
Rockie thou art; and roackie we discover
Thy men; and roackie are thy wayes all over.
O men, O manners; Now, and ever knowne
To be A Rockie Generation!
A people currish; churlish as the seas;
And rude (almost) as rudest Salvages
With whom I did, and may re-sojourne when
Rockes turn to Rivers, Rivers to Men.¹

This dislike of the rude countryside may seem to argue for courtly preferences, but Herrick has actually little explicit interest in establishing a consistent decorum by which to judge an outlying province. He only knows what he does and does not like and sets aside “The Country Life” and “The Hock-cart, or Harvest home” to distinguish further. The point here, however, is simply that Herrick is open to the varied charms of country harvests, petticoats, veiled beauties, fairyland, bed chambers, and countless other places available for pictorial vignettes. Milton and the metaphysicals are less catholic and more driven to locate central and ultimate places.

Herbert of course makes the one realm, the temple, subsume all others. Few poets have studied a single locality as closely for intimations of end things. At the same time and in the same place he gauges the powers of word and image to express the divine presence—often in images as emblems and in words as abstractions beyond icons or tortured and broken into elements, as in the word-game poems “Jesu,” “Anagram,” “Love-Joy,” “Paradise,” and “Heaven.” Neither abstraction nor emblematic concretion can offer more than an approximation of what the poet seeks—which is to be as close to God as he dare try to move. Terms such as “bliss,” “peace,” “love,” and “trust” provide some preliminary access to that position, especially when they are coupled with God’s presence everywhere, locally and universally, temporally and eternally. Unlike a normal human addressee, such a party can be evoked only by some use of theological terms, but he makes himself sufficiently available to allow overlapping between divine petition and the more ordinary situations of address. He dwells in the heart, in
frames, in arks, cabinets and cupboards, houses, and windows, for instance, as well as in scripture and sacrament. To situate him there, Herbert comes recurrently to the lowly preposition “in” among other words that signify an in-dwelling presence as opposed to a transcendent law giver. He thinks in terms of interpenetration, filled places, and mutual habitations of body and spirit. The temple is the chief place of presence, but it opens onto external realms and transplants the plenary world into its own enclosed space, where the poet can establish relations between man and creator. Rites, charms, rituals, word games, and festivities assist its sacramental manipulation of presence.

Even so, all means of bringing God into localities are imperfect, and for the poet no placement less than paradise can be fully satisfactory. As “The Flower” indicates, any request for permanent union with God is prideful. It cannot be granted and should not even be made—although that does not prevent the poet from lamenting, “O that I once past changing were / Fast in thy Paradise.” Even the soul, God’s “subtile room,” like all things connected with the transient state, is subject to corruption and displacement. Sin can occupy it, and other competitive lodgers wish to dwell there and in the heart. Hence the poet must practice certain tactics of expulsion to make room, alternating appeals for divine presence with complaints and confessional purgations.

Herbert’s quest for a fixed accord and a defined career is inseparable from such matters of placement. In “The Temper II,” he calls for what he terms a fixed chair of grace to discipline his own unruly powers and to extract from himself songs of praise and reverence. Among his various offices, the poet prefers to render true hymns in an elevated style, but it is usually in ordinary things made special by grace that the divine presence registers. Under the right circumstances, virtually all images and their topics are expandable into vehicles of revelation, but they are also expendable and no sooner offer a glimpse of the divine presence than they betray their shortcomings. Their unreliability precipitates several crises in Herbert’s affliction and unemployment poems, in which God seems to be no place, certainly not in a fixed chair of grace. The poet may make some progress limping along in his vocation, as “Affliction I” indicates, but his better moments tend to be strung out and anecdotal and his gains reversible.

In “Affliction I” he has been mistaken to think in the early days of his service that God’s blessings were being openly and generously extended. Up to the reflective present of the poem, each new
turn of service reveals new errors of perception and ever-perplexing entanglements that leave him without a sense of mission or place to serve:

Yet lest perchance I should too happie be
   In my unhapinesse,
Turning my purge to food, thou throwest me
   Into more sicknesses.
Thus doth thy power cross-bias me, not making
Thine own gift good, yet me from my wayes taking.  

In the first of the alternating long and short line units here, Herbert turns the paradox of the feast on nothing into a searing irony saved from irreverence only by its humor. The same thought spills over into the second unit and prevents any comfortable adjustment of event to narration. The stanza works toward a typical closure beginning with a “thus” and an encompassing counter movement that leaves him momentarily stalled, but even as the unit closes formally, it keeps open and even raw the relationship itself.

When neither service nor the study of service succeeds, the poet turns about in a series of reversals and comes to a riddling conclusion, which breaks free of place, service, and all forms of rootedness:

Now I am here, what thou wilt do with me
   None of my books will show:
I rede, and sigh, and wish I were a tree;
   For sure then I should grow
To fruit or shade: at least some bird would trust
Her houshold to me, and I should be just.

Yet, though thou troublest me, I must be meek;
   In weaknesse must be stout.
Well, I will change the service, and go seek
   Some other master out.
Ah my dear God! though I am clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

Perhaps no ending in Herbert is more up in the air about the poet’s possibilities for a household or a church to serve in. Yet it is also definitive in dramatizing an in-between state and in capitulating at the last moment. Coming at the end of an extremely busy movement of changing tonalities, it tightens up certain realizations of status and the rewards of service. In contest with himself, the poet alternates between weakness and assertion, which is roughly equivalent to alternating between a human logic that tries to define the servant’s place and a passive faith in inscrutable divine purposes. The attractions of treeness are several. Trees are dumb and feel no pain, which would be an improvement over human tribulations.
Primarily, they simply grow and are useful, especially to birds. But Herbert gives the trope an added turn in "I should be just"; God, who should be his tree, has not been. Certainly at a minimum, masters should be to servants as trees to birds: not that trees do anything explicitly for birds, but they are there to be nested and sung in. However, as the subjunctive mood indicates, the speaker's desire for either vegetable painlessness or safe perch is desperate; no permanent comforts are to be expected.

A more satisfying way to handle affliction would be to resign oneself to it. But that idea, too, Herbert abandons in coming to a conclusion that reveals the dialectical skill of the rubrician, who shuffles three implicit matters, service, love, and reward, in such a way as to reveal their close relationship. The services of poets to masters and to Petrarchan ladies in predecessor complaint lyrics are reducible to a single formula in this revised master-servant relationship. As the "Ah" suggests, Herbert comes to that realization with conviction. The outbreak signals a new self-awareness as the argument struggles to higher ground. Service is to be rendered simply by love, which is its own reward. Although they abandon most of the aggression of the complaint, the final lines do not come to an unconditional surrender, as "clean forgot" indicates. What is new about the concluding formula is an emphasis equally on love and on "thee," which reminds us that love is theological or Pauline as well as personal: "If I love thee not" (as opposed to thy rewards), "let me not love thee." Such a balancing of love's proper object and the willed action of the servant would take away the reward where the service is not appropriate. By reversing the emphases—"If I love thee not, let me not love thee," or perhaps "not love thee"—the speaker could also suggest a paradoxical removal of the service whenever the attitude goes awry. Either way, whatever previous relationships may have clouded the poet's sense of place, God has not contracted his service in any way that obligates him to pay for them in comforts nor of course in any way recognizable to those who seek careers through patronage or acknowledgments from mistresses. Both the complaint lyric and the love lyric shift their ground as the speaker cancels the secular analogies that have fed his own grievances. The good servant may not deviate into other courses that translate God into a providential well-wisher or compress him into the doings of prosperity. All expendables have been discarded, all analogies questioned.

The structure of the last two stanzas is more intricate, however, than any such summary can indicate. Herbert has by this point
played with a great many variations of the basic narrative stanza in a seemingly over-extended numbering of grief’s phases. Here he progressively shortens the emotional lines and winds into a counter movement that challenges the leisure of the stanza, turning one section against another. The psychological tension is all inside the speaker, the charges being entirely one-sided and without reply; but that makes all the more devastating the rejoinder he applies in the final couplet and the check he gives in advance to any future impulse to get up bills of grievance. The first long-short unit, “Now I am here, what thou wilt do with me / None of my books will show,” opens the hands in a gesture that says in effect, “here I effectively and entirely am: honesty and recollection can bring forth nothing further to bear on the case.” The speaker does not pout over the futility of books, which we can assume to include all divine ones and perhaps all he himself has written as a clue to what he might still do, certainly all that a student with painstaking research might discover in the libraries that record the tasks and contracts by which God rules ecclesiae, poets, and ordinary men.

The ground has been surveyed, then, and no act of intelligence remains to be exercised. no human help brought up; and so the case being indeed quite helpless, he can only move from narrative to current trials and put that helplessness on display: “I read, and sigh, and wish I were a tree.” Herbert exploits the stanza’s second unit not to open a new topic or to augment by illustration and example but to pry the lid off that great reservoir of futility. After a stop and a regrouping of thought, the follow-up can then be released: “For sure then I should grow / To fruit or shade.” That afterthought comes from a harbored imaginative world of quite another kind, and we begin to see that a stanzaic turn in Herbert’s close unfolding is a self turning, a ransacking of every corner of consciousness and pious feeling and its harbored rebellion for enticements to change the terms of service. That so much stanza remains with which he can elaborate this hypothetical unthinking state of bliss remembers in smaller form the many elaborations of grievances and narrative ins and outs of this very flexible and surprisingly ample verse unit throughout. In its capaciousness here, the stanza is allowed to spread until God might have room to enter should he see fit, as on other occasions the poet hopes he will through cracks in the poem’s surface. But it is also rigorously disciplined in conducting the drama, which for the moment holds the public outside until the doors can be flung open and the drama published.
It is not entirely clear at this point how much that publication may be anticipated by the act of speaking, which after all sets a pattern from which others may profit; but if any closure proves to be possible, it will have to proceed not from instructions offered in some definitive way to readers but from the tentative approach of poet to God, just as the mystical repast that outsiders are expressly invited to share is first of all the product of a similar speaker's reluctant progress toward love. The stanza here allows only a brief turnout in place to let us think of its larger context. Actually, *The Temple* permits similar well-managed but often longer glances in its excursions into the outer or historical world, from which it looks back at the temple-sanctuary and its special discipline. The manipulation of overall and limited points of view is part of that placement of units within a whole and is a suspension as well as a pacing, as points of view we have already recognized are held in abeyance while others are inserted. I note in passing that this art of insinuation is akin to the technique of third-person narrative in which point of view is sufficiently inside a character to render his perceptions, but also sufficiently flexible to allow concurrent or intermittent authorial judgment. The control of small inner spaces and reflections of larger ones—like the leverage of subordinate thoughts uttered in asides that lift edifices into view—no one has ever managed as Herbert does. (Getting so much into the short compass both of stanzas and colloquial lines is one of his singular triumphs; another is constant circulation through events and types from the greater story, as "Easter-wings," for instance, identifies the present request for inspiration with the sinking and soaring of all mankind from Adam.)

It is only in retrospect from "Love III" that we are allowed to see how much a given turnout depends upon the security of the whole and the sense of place at table the servant anticipates as the enactment of a final, ceremonial contract. In "Affliction I" the stanza allows just such small satisfactions as will mislead the speaker and us awhile into thinking that self-assertion offers something independently, as again in "I should be just," or even more loudly and incriminatingly "I should be just." But even in that false pride (as though a mere human could solve the world's injustice), the speaker does not yet allow a hint of petulance. It is simply that one must be permitted a satisfying self-estimate now and then if other rewards are scarce. The rhyming of "tree" with "me" suggests one sort of answer to the opening question of what to do with me, and the rhyming of "grow" with "show" virtually finishes that answer.
"I would make me a tree to thrive and show; I would let me at least produce, as poet or simply as man.” The rhyming of “trust” and “just” escalates a notch toward grand yet tight abstractions for the contractual bonds and of master-servant relations. All such bonds, of course, would depend upon trust and justice—would if men controlled their destinies, were just, or could be trees.

Taking off from that self-satisfying fantasy with its lingering indulgence of the complaint, the last stanza proceeds first to some timely bracing. Herbert expends just the first unit on that task, the time being short. The moment is obviously right for a gathering of some sort, but the problem still remains, what actually does one do? What substantial progress can one show from the complaint, upon which to base a change? That first unit substitutes a convenient axiom and an attitude for a real answer, and its show of strength proves to be hollow. The speaker knows that the thorn is still in his foot; he simply vows not to limp anymore. Herbert gives that forbearance a semblance of possibility by the interrupting acknowledgment “though thou troublest me” before settling into a deeply rooted Christian stoicism which, unsatisfying as it is here, has in fact ended many a similar debate over God’s unfathomable ways. But the first new searing pain usually drives out such resolve in the truly tender; and the second unit here, so well deployed now as an antithesis in this quickening pace, allows petulence to emerge from hiding at long last. It has issued enough disguises, rationalizations, and wayward plans to throw the unwary off the scent; but now that it has stood up in “Well, I will change the service,” it will be satisfied with nothing less than a complete apology, or a reversal of policy. The “some other” master betrays its lack of will, however, and makes it appear an idle threat, uttered to indicate simply that the last straw has fallen with all the back-breaking weight it is reputed to have.

It is just when one can’t go on that one discovers that one can go on, and why. In a final movement unpredicted by earlier stanza closures despite their variety, Herbert riddles to a high plane we had no right to expect from the speaker without divine intervention but know to be exactly right as soon as the view from there unfolds. Such formal skill, in which every syllable comes down with the right weight at the right moment, can come only out of psychological adeptness and great wisdom. None of those who learned from Herbert discovered quite how to do precisely that with a stanza, each of whose lines is right, each of whose repetitions builds a poetic whole that in turn finds a place in a singular volume—self-
contained, complete, yet locating its place in a greater universe outside.

What contract between master and servant does the final couplet propose? Actually none that is binding both ways, and so the closing even here remains open in important respects. By floating several possible readings of the lines in their hovering stresses, Herbert accepts unconditionally the cross-biasing he has complained about earlier. He stops all conceivable escapes from the one course that will work, which is to serve by love and forget the rest. The proper scene for that role is the temple, where rites and sacraments are seated in their doctrinal context. In effect the speaker proposes an agreement against his own temptations to profane the place where love for its own sake prevails. Whether or not God also loves does not really figure in his calculation, which is strictly preventative. However, even if such paraphrases (among others that are conceivable) managed to disentangle the main elements of the riddle, the final line would still not be definitive or sacramental in itself. No answer comes from God, who is not imagined to have descended either into symbols or into ritual acts. Nor does "Affliction I" suggest that he should. This is only one among a good many spiritual exercises and small dramas on the way to the definitive enactment of service and love in "Love III." What Herbert requests for the moment is a safeguard against the inclination to bargain too much. As rhythm and emphasis hesitate among possibilities, the ending is glimpsed and postponed; it tends to become pausal, as though in an alternation of earned repose and renewed struggle. The implicit household topic assures us that all quarrels are in the family. The placement that the poet requires, to return to it, is not a well-substantiated position or a permanent chair of grace but a spiritual condition that will survive cycles of hardship and prosperity and begin to rise toward the everywhereness of divine love and trust. The speaker thereby extricates the soul a little from its circumstances and its autobiography. Ultimately it will require no furniture or objects except those of communion and love's substance served therein.

"Affliction I" is not the only Herbert poem to cast a longing eye on the advantages of rootedness and the still more attractive prospect of rising into God's place directly. As two other employment poems, "Temper I" and "The Flower" indicate, Herbert had difficulty reconciling his ambitious desire to be a poet of transcendence with his awareness of the fixed state to which he is consigned along with all other mortals. In "Employment II" the speaker defines the soul as motion—certainly as stirred by emotion:
Man is no starre, but a quick coal
Of mortall fire:
Who blows it not, nor doth controll
A faint desire,
Lets his own ashes choke his soul.

Life is a businesse, not good cheer:
Ever in warres.
The sunne still shineth there or here,
Whereas the starres
Watch an advantage to appeare.

Oh that I were an Orenge-tree,
That busie plant!
Then should I ever laden be,
And never want
Some fruit for him that dressed me.

However, even busy trees sooner or later come to an end. As "Vertue" reminds the rose, "Thy root is ever in its grave, / And thou must die." In "Employment II" the speaker is even less hopeful:

But we are still too young or old;
The Man is gone,
Before we do our wares unfold:
So we freeze on,
Untill the grave increase our cold.

Thus manhood disappears before the poet gets his fortune made or his volume out, and the well-manured soil claims the plant it grew. The soul is more definitively smothered by the general conditions of bodies than it is by the ashes of its own past activity. In "The Flower" Herbert would break loose altogether from the botanical cycles of productivity and freezing and be transcendent, transplanted past changing. But to gain that ultimate garden requires a disciplined recognition of mortal rootedness and patience to endure it.

Herbert comes to a similar realization of the poet's wayward inclinations in "The Temper I," which at first laments the torments of spatial extension and the vast discrepancies between earth, heaven, and hell. Stretched to extremes and trying desperately to adjust to them, the speaker comes to prefer any secure place however small to the vast universe. But again a seasoned spirit accepts all places, even displacements, and the inclination to roost near God gives way to a willingness to run risks in order to encompass a greater arena:

Yet take thy way; for sure thy way is best:
Stretch or contract me, thy poore debter:
This is but tuning of my breast,
To make the musick better.
The service here is not merely love but music of a tempered kind and hence a form of employment. It finds its best balance in the final stanza, which I take to be one of Herbert’s crucial statements about placement. It is an answer of sorts to the discrepancy between mortal rootedness, or cohabitation with God in limited frames and cabinets, and transcendent soaring. Its style has some of each level:

Whether I flie with angels, fall with dust,
Thy hands made both, and I am there:
Thy power and love, my love and trust
Make one place ev’ry where.

The paradox here is more definitive than that of “Affliction I” but equally riddling. A satisfactory notion of placement both for the professional maker of praise songs and the typical sinner comes with the realization of God’s omnipresence and his agreement to be represented to men by love. If one place is everywhere, as the chastened would-be hymnist decides, then one time must be all times, and any moment God chooses to enter takes on the quality of eternity. It may also follow that activity is really disguised repose. One can be rooted in place as a mortal but busy and encompassing as a mind and spirit. The definitions are again theological, but the experience is no less personal for that.

Knowing this with some certainty, the poet reaches into a reserve of power by means of abstractions that are often his best “topics” or placements. They are terms of inaction inasmuch as they do not require a busy copiousness to encompass God’s blessings, as “Providence” does—except as “make” requires an exercise of love, trust, and power to bring one to rest. The solution is much more impressive than the bland coziness of “Even-song,” which concludes:

My God, thou art all love.
Not one poore minute scapes thy breast,
But brings a favour from above:
And in this love, more then in bed, I rest.

Granted that an evening song properly ends in bedtime prayer, the style is that of one who muses to himself and comes to a sense of blessedness without struggle or a sense of outside distances, with all their possibilities for alienation. “The Temper I” does not define any further uses of poetry to help one arrive at an awareness of God’s everywhereness, but it does suggest that the better music of the preceding stanza both moderates the extremes of complaint and high praise and paradoxically extends moderation toward wonder and mystery. When “everywhere” is thus filled with divine
presence, one can go nowhere in the cosmic vastness without encountering it. Godlessness has been expelled in the most inclusive of all Herbert's cleansing operations.

That momentary confidence does not prevent the poet's lapsing into a sense of uselessness in the sequence that follows, which includes "Employment I" and its realization once again of the perils of rootedness:

If as a flowre doth spread and die,
Thou wouldst extend me to some good,
Before I were by frosts extremitie
Nipt in the bud;
The sweetnesse and the praise were thine;
But the extension and the room,
which in thy garland I should fill, were mine
At thy great doom.

For as thou dost impart thy grace,
The greater shall our glorie be.
The measure or our joyes is in this place,
The stuffe with thee.

The poet would have God materialize a place in which to be served, not only now but after judgment. His use of "extension" and "room" is curious, however. Sweetness and praise fly up in words like spiritual essences and become God's "stuff" (the poet's substance and matter lodged in the perfect reader), while the tangible residue (that which has dimension and placement in metaphor?) remains with the poet. Presumably it is the shell of the poem or its mechanics of saying, the "measure," that belong to him and thus all the labor, while grace can be imparted with ease should God choose. Certainly being will dilate only when moment and place are filled with such a gift. But at the moment, though he has measures aplenty, he languishes uninspired, without produce or sweet smell, not as an orange tree but a tuneless reed:

I am no link of thy great chain,
But all my companie is a weed.
Lord place me in thy consort; give one strain
To my poore reed.

Even the parallels with natural processes, limiting enough in themselves in "The Flower," break down when the poet falls into such unproductive periods, and then no place will serve as meeting ground. The quandary of the unemployed is here compounded; where the sixteenth-century poet often felt injured by denials of the service he had been trained for, Herbert's poet is deprived of much more: his membership in the natural species; the great chain
joins low to high without him, giving placement to all degrees but nipping his potential poetic flowers in the bud.

Apart from the failings of language in such unsupported moments, Herbert does not usually celebrate nature for its own sake. Nature must either receive special visitations or shrivel and in neither case manages to stay healthy for long. Nor can the poet exploit its potential worth for elegiac feeling as the reverse of celebration. In “Vertue,” for instance, the daily cycles and the seasons serve primarily to set off the soul’s passage beyond them, as we have seen. Spring contains things that are sweet and perishable and therefore tempting, but the poet assesses them coolly and in the final stanza converts all intimations of elegiac feeling into a sense of the soul’s marvelous escape. He gains considerable leverage from the fact that the soul is superior to those sweet days, roses, and springs that we ordinarily prize. The final fire clears them away almost as rubbish.

The poet’s impulse to move within the precincts of God’s protection has the outstanding drawback that he cannot stay there and still live a temporal life. An incarnate word presents an alternative, however, and also a transferable word power that escapes the disadvantages of abstraction and the perils of rootedness in place and time. Herbert finds its descent into the frame of bodies and poems even as he discovers it in cabinets, the heart’s lodgings, and houses. Word-shapes such as “The Altar” and “Easter-wings” suggest a hieroglyphic capacity for the divine being to be inscribed in materials, just as “Sepulchre,” “Good-Friday,” and “Obedience” look for engravings on surfaces. The poet too would engrave rhymes in steel and locate immortal love, “author of this great frame,” within the compass of poetic forms. But it is the incarnation of deity that makes such things possible, or as “Anagram” remarks concerning the letters of Mary’s name:

How well her name an Army doth present,
In whom the Lord of Hosts did pitch his tent!

Juggling the arrangement of letters renders different paraphrases of the same word, each version of which is an implicit comparison to the original word. Not only is Mary improbable as God’s housing, no ordinary tent will hold the entire celestial host. Yet this one does so in defiance of logic. The renaissance was accustomed to thinking of shifting places for God’s location—in residences such as the enclosed garden (a figure for Mary in Jesuit iconology), the book of creatures, and various hieroglyphic shapes. Herbert here
includes the womb as the smallest and most human of enclosures and therefore the most startling demonstration of God's compression of everywhere into one place. The fruitfulness of the well-laden tree, the prolific bearing of poems, and the tree-housing of singing birds are imperfect variants of both Mary's capacity to house the Lord and her name's capacity to encompass the celestial host. The key here is "presentation." No one doubts God's capacity to dwell everywhere at once in seventeenth-century theology, but by what runic magic is the poet's wordcraft to achieve the equivalent of a sacramental union? By petitions and prayers that seek presence as voice? Or simply by witty recognition that letters falling into the right order suddenly reveal and present?

Whatever we may think of the actual powers of presentation that the letters M—a—r—y have, the poet is not always fortunate enough to stumble upon language that will lift citational or descriptive loads out of their specific locations. "Church-monuments," for instance, reveals another side of signs, their tendency to crumble. The body of writing can as well be dust as incarnate presence. All bodily things, in fact, are restless. They constantly disintegrate and recombine without repose, and that problem with transience is only compounded by our erecting of monuments as supposedly permanent texts in which the body may read lessons:

I gladly trust
My bodie to this school, that it may learn
To spell his elements, and finde his birth
Written in dustie heraldrie and lines;
Which dissolution sure doth best discern,
Comparing dust with dust, and earth with earth.
These laugh at Jeat and Marble put for signes,
To sever the good fellowship of dust,
And spoil the meeting. What shall point out them,
When they shall bow, and kneel, and fall down flat
To kisse those heaps, which now they have in trust?

The answer to the last question is that nothing will point out monuments when they fall because they themselves are the best signs that men can build. Beyond significance or intelligence (once the soul has left it), dust offers no further location. For the time being, however, the spelling and decoding that these signs make possible are useful for moral purposes. Here and now the body's lecturer cannot transcend them, but it can point to them and interpret them. Also, physical monument and prayer are opposite and complementary placements in their respective corners of the church, as
nature and the abode of virtuous souls are in "Vertue." As one falls, the other learns to rise and chiefly live.

This opposition is too neat, however, to do justice to the ways the poet finds to assemble a visible world as his native setting and as one of God's places. Less mutually exclusive than dust-bound signs and spiritual "understanding," the goal of prayer, are two quite different kinds of expressive signs in "Peace." There the poet advances from certain ambiguous places to objects seated in biblical allegory, in much the same way the poet's ventures into hermeneutic demonstrations in "Heaven" and "H. Scriptures II" are corrected by sacred words from scripture and heaven itself. The cave, the rainbow, and the garden of the earlier stanzas of "Peace" are as unstable as "the trees and leaves" of "Heaven" and the "dispersed herbs" of "H. Scriptures II." The cave issues its admonition to the pilgrim in a voice like that of pagan oracles. The evidence against the rainbow is more damaging because a rainbow should suggest a covenant of peace but in this case breaks and scatters like other monuments and signs. Neither the reclusive life of the cave nor nature's beauty gives the pilgrim the right sort of peace, then, although they seem logical places to look. Also, where the right sort of garden (Marvell's, for instance), combines beauty and privacy, the garden to which Herbert's pilgrim turns has serious drawbacks. The best its "gallant flower" can do is lead toward the church as a different sort of garden wherein the grain of gospel grows. Not all these locations are totally without promise, but they are indefinable until they have been transposed into biblical typology. Dealing in more secure types and figures within the precincts of a church, the "rev'rend good old man" who narrates the last half of the poem places the pilgrim among a different order of symbols whose harvest is easily decoded:

Take of this grain, which in my garden grows,
And grows for you;
Make bread of it: and that repose
And peace, which ev'ry where
With so much earnestnesse you do pursue,
Is onely there.

The surface of the parable becomes distinctly unimportant once such translations are provided. As St. Augustine remarks about metaphors, they are sweet and enticing to the intelligence, but "Hardly anything may be found in these obscure places which is not found plainly said elsewhere." What counts is the temple's founding and the peace it provides in doctrine and sacrament. Although in one sense the seeker cannot really possess that peace
even in communion until end things arrive, the definition is complete enough for a foretaste. He at least knows that he cannot seek anywhere else for it: it is only here, where the reverend man indicates. As the search concludes, the substance of peace is the same as the substance of joy, love, redemption, life, bliss, gladness of the best, and other Herbert abstractions: all these meet at the end, and their realized definitions guarantee lyric celebration in the space that God fills. Herbert’s endings combine a finished definition of place with a rising movement toward that something still further off. Stopping short of Crashaw’s exclamatory outbreaks at that point, Herbert does not push poetry to the next phase, which in some ecstatic extremity would stretch language beyond its capacities.

Similar to “Peace” in its providing of sure signs in a middle state of biblical typology (between nature’s disintegrating placements and sacramental union) is “H. Scriptures II,” which emphasizes both the certainty of scriptural language and one’s need to interpret it skillfully:

This verse marks that, and both do make a motion  
Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie:  
Then as dispersed herbs do watch a potion,  
These three make up some Christians destinie.

As so often in Herbert, the purpose is to realize something about the final placement that constitutes bliss. Among biographical events, the interpreter finds his directions very scattered; but a totality of places and moments is fully transcribed in sacred writing. Despite their diverse authors and scattered locations, the scriptures are bound within a single cover where a knowledgeable interpreter can find all the matters that concern him. The secret lies in connection: as herbs from here and there are unrelated until the chemist provides the recipe that makes a potion, so statements and events in scriptural history lie sprawling, as poems do in The Temple, until an act of interpretation combines them. That same act dislocates each passage also, as herbs must be plucked from the field to serve in a healing formula and the reader must be drawn out of personal circumstances to find his destiny among scriptural types.

Herbert demonstrates a final type in the courtship of the sinner by Love in “Love III.” As his most noteworthy sacramental poem, “Love III” closes the volume disarmingly. It implicitly provides the chair of grace the poet has asked for earlier and resolves the discrepancy between the rootedness of the mortal poet and the desire for transcendence. It allows no riddles of the kind that forestall the
divine-human union in “Affliction I” or the theological formula of “The Temper I.” It brings negotiations between sinner and love quickly to a point on the model of a quiet drawing-room talk. The exclamations and apostrophes that might ordinarily signal the speaker’s identification with a transcendent other (or a Petrarchan enamorata) are entirely absent, even though it is nothing less than the union of God and man that the poem approaches. In contrast, the union of romantic poets with transcendent powers through objects comes with the fervor of spiritual effort, which is sometimes evident from the outset of the poem. For instance, in the first lines of Keats’s odes, the poet has already risen to the high pitch of “Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness” and “O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers.” Wordsworth begins with an address of some intensity in “Oh blithe New-comer” (“To the Cuckoo”) and “Stern Daughter of the voice of God!” (“Ode to Duty”). Shelley begins “Ode to the West Wind” with “O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being” and “To A Skylark” with “Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!” Given the nature of the romantic ode, such addresses are perhaps not very comparable to Herbert’s conversational mode, but they underscore the tranquillity with which Herbert’s divine being enters the poet’s presence and makes gaps crossable and dislocations curable. The poet’s own earlier extremities of fervor and agitation derive from motives that usually prove to be reproachable. The ambitious romantic in him must be disciplined. When a way out of the world’s labyrinth does appear, as in “The Pearl,” it turns out to be simple enough to preclude strain. In any case the poet’s other dramatized roles and petitions for place collapse into the one he stages in “Love III.” If Herbert does not look elsewhere in that final moment for landmarks in biography or social position, as he does in “Affliction I,” it is because a single gesture suffices to place him at table.

No other poet in the renaissance offers so condensed a placement for lyric as Herbert’s in The Temple in general and in “Love III” in particular, in a locality that transcends the court’s versions of love and courtship and even Donne’s private room while absorbing their intimate relations-of-two into dialogue form. The enactment of these relations quiets all previous yearnings, which derive from the sinner’s unworthiness and sense of lost paradise. But it also avoids the ecstasies of “a true hymn.” The key moment is not the ascension after crucifixion but the human supper before. It is still a historical moment that requires the acknowledgement of sin and betrayal and a sacramental miracle. The poet’s response is not
an "imping" of his wing on Christ's but the ritual enactment of breaking bread. The two parties stand simultaneously on earth and in paradise. Actually, we see no specific setting; the table could be set in the wilderness, as of old, in one's private chambers, or in the church. The poet blends into Everyman, whose voice is paradoxically both choral and personal; as though in answer to "Affliction I," service is love and love is service. Both seek ritual form and suggest the bending of the poetic office to a simple narrative allegory that recreates in one time and moment a relationship that has always been intended.

Since that relationship is paradigmatic and the personality of the poet is put in abeyance, Herbert in a sense finds a place for the divine presence in a common identity committed to ritual. The food of the repast may be an individual possession, since each of those at the doorway must decide to enter and accept it, but it is also a general gift, the taking of which abolishes all minor distinctions and cancels accidents of self. In this very unequal union of divine and human parties—but also very ordinary act of taking a place at table—Herbert has upped the admission requirements of Jonson's initiated circle and further mystified Donne's relations-of-two. His redefinition of love here and in other poems of *The Temple* and his rethinking of what makes a closed circle prove in subsequent sacred lyricists the less settling the greater the poet who heeds them. Nothing quite like his balance of self-concern and self-abasement, his enlivening of plain style with wit, or even his contained book of lyrics concluded by "Love III" is evident in Vaughan despite Vaughan's attraction to him. Milton of course never wished a priestly sacramental or ritual conveyance for the word so long as celestial light purges and disperses darkness inwardly. Herrick in *Noble Numbers* reverts to a simpler piety and in *Hesperides* forges his own selective receptions of Donne and Jonson (seldom of Donne, often of Jonson), prompters of a book as various as Herbert's is single-minded.
Ile shew thee that capacious roome
In which thy Father Johnson now is plac't,
As in a Globe of Radiant fire.