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By John Fox

"A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, The University of Auckland, 2015."

Dedication:

Pro dei amore; ipsi gloria in ecclesia –

et ad perpetuam memoriam

John Patrick Fox (1924-2008)
who never got to publish his.

And for the Teachers:

JB, FAO, MT, GRJ, EM, SG, PEH, RJ+, BB+, CM and TB.
Abstract

My thesis attempts to trace the theological language of building (“edification”) from its use by Thomas Cranmer and other English reformers through the maelstrom of the English reformation from 1530-1630. I argue that the language of edification, with its emphasis on communitarian re-formation and the transformative effects of an encounter with truth, offers a new way of seeing the vocation of the Protestant poet within the imaginative and spiritual conflicts that shaped the English reformation. I trace the language from its origins in Pauline thought to the English reformers, and from them to the poets and writers who internalised their vision of Pauline Commonwealth: Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, George Herbert and John Donne. Arguing that edification enables both deconstructive and reconstitutive kinds of reform, I examine the imagined role of poetry in that process of “rebuilding” the person, and the differing responses to, and re-imaginations of the notion of rebuilding.
“The sheening of that strange bright city on a hill, barred by its high gates...”

“Barred from all, Phrastes?”

“From all, Eroton, who do not desire to enter it more strongly than they desire all other cities.”

“Then it is barred indeed, and most men must let it go.”

“Those who have once desired it cannot let it go, for its light flickers always on the roads they tread, to plague them like marsh fires. Even though they flee from it, it may drag them towards it, as a magnet drags steel, and though they may never enter its gates, its light will burn them as with fire, for that is its nature.”

“Who then were the builders of this dangerous city?”

“Gods and men, Eroton, men seeking after gods, and gods who seek after men. Does it not appear to you that such a fabric, part artifact and part deifact, reared out of divine intimations and demands, and out of the mortal longings and imaginings that climb to meet these, must perpetually haunt the minds of men, wielding over them a strange wild power, intermittent indeed, but without end? So, anyhow, it has always proved....”

“Dialogues of Mortality”, in

Towers of Trebizond, by Rose Macaulay.

Within a single thing, a single shawl
Wrapped tightly round us, since we are poor, a warmth,
A light, a power, the miraculous influence.

Here, now, we forget each other and ourselves.
We feel the obscurity of an order, a whole,
A knowledge, that which arranged the rendezvous.

Within its vital boundary, in the mind.
We say God and the imagination are one...
How high that highest candle lights the dark.

Out of this same light, out of the central mind,
We make a dwelling in the evening air,
In which being there together is enough.

Wallace Stevens, Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour.
Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to the many people and institutions who put their hands to the work of building, or at least gave needed refreshment and encouragement to the builder.

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**On the subject of pestering, I thank, with affection:**

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I thank my grandmother, Frances Fox, of St Stephen’s Lincoln, for her permission to dedicate this thesis to the perpetual memory of her husband, and my grandfather. His example of Christian neighbourliness continues to be treasured, by the many it touched, and by his grandson.

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At the Auckland Regional Pain Service, my care team, without whom I would not have remained clear headed for a minute. No, really.


“To you I owe a debt of love/ which I will pay with love.”

A special thanks to my flatmates, who will no longer have to put up with Latin chanting, Luther coined swear words, or endless books lying about. Come to think of it, neither will I.

The influence of my Dad, can be seen and felt in every line. He read me the Book of Martyrs for bed time stories, taught me faith and got me lost in the seedy bits of Cambridge – still want to be like you when I grow up.

I officially acknowledge my wonderful beta readers, Andrew Shamy, Jeremy Vargo, Dr Roshan Allpress and the Rev’d Fr Dr Bryden Black, for much helpful advice. All responsibility is, of course, mine. I also thank Tom Bishop for Latin help, and Nick Thompson for rescuing my Greek.

Finally, then, Nisi dominus frustra. As Elizabeth I is supposed to have said, and would have said, if it weren’t for the pesky cavilling of revisionist historians:

"A Dominum factum est illud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris"

What she said.

JPF

Feast of St John the Baptist 2015.
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Chapter 1: Edification and its discontents.

“If men do not build, how shall they live?” \textit{T. S. Eliot, Choruses from the Rock}

“Words sent out to battle against other words” \textit{C. S. Lewis, Studies in Words}

The history of the Reformation is stained with ink, and blood, and marked by fire. In a conflagration of violence and passion, Europe tore itself apart over two mutually intelligible, but divergent notions of Salvation. The Reformation is a vital struggle about the ordinary means of grace and how they are accessed, a Biblical conflict, a national conflict, a class conflict, and, to a point, an intellectual battle. It is for historians to exegete causes and impacts, subsequent events and their connections. It is for theologians to search for coherence and subsequent development, to tie together Protestant and national narratives, and to search for the doctrine of the Primitive Church, or the differing uses of the Fathers, or the liturgical impact of Protestant barbarism/renewal/polemic. These debates are undeniably important: the rending of Christ’s seamless garment, the explosive growth of Protestantism in all its life and chaos, the formation of Protestant and nascently imperial England, and then Britain as the Protestant nation defined against France and Spain; all of these debates and fields of study are legitimate, important and valuable.

But it is open to literary scholars to explore these debates not in themselves, but as they touch upon, and dialogue with, the harder-to-quantify but deeply important realm of imagination. For the appeal of Protestantism is not simply a matter of abstract doctrine, as important as that is. The Reformers were not in themselves philosophers (excepting perhaps Erasmus) but pastors and theologians, engaging with practical problems, congregations of people, and national and provincial churches with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and
reforming opinion. Crucially, too, they were dreamers, inspired and motivated by a genuine vision of the Church as she could be, caught in the eschatological tension between the Church perfected and triumphant, a temple rightly ordered, a polity in godly order and obedient harmony, and the frustrating, sometimes ugly reality of the Church as she is in practice.

Thus, even the best and freest of the Reformers trip over patronage and politics, committees, tacking and trimming, the King’s will and the Pope’s, warring factions and confused moderates, devastated traditionalists like Roger Martyn – lovingly conserving the Catholic church furnishings and appointments against a Catholic restoration that would flower only to die – and savage hot-gospellers like John Hooper and John Field, wielding the hammer against the graven images of the Babylonish whore. This thesis attempts to map some part of this tension, examining the imaginative and literary elements of one vision of a future perfected Church, and the ways in which a reformed theology begins to take imaginative root, translating a vision of the Church of England and the English nation from pure theology, first into abstract imaginative theory, and then into imaginative flower in the poetry and prose of Early Modern England, especially in the work of Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, John Donne and George Herbert.

Classically, the Reformation has been analysed as either a debate about the meanings of words – important words like sin, grace, obedience, saving faith, election, order – or as a political debate, an exercise in nation building: Henry VIII and his children putting out religion as the guiding manifesto of a State department, like foreign affairs or tax. Both of

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1 See William Parker, *The History of Long Melford* (London, 1873) 70-3. Cited in David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell, *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005). As Reformers attempted to popularise the narrative of upbuilding to account for their reforms, writers such as Martyn and Robert Parkyn view the attack upon the Church’s physical buildings as not simply a species of sacrilege, but a temple-inflected exile. Refer to discussion in Cressy and Ferrell (29–33) in which the dissolution of the religious houses is viewed in the same light as “the Holy temple of Jerusalem…when the Chaldees had dominion thereof” (30). Parkyn’s sense of stark devastation when, for instance, the Pyx is taken down in York Minster (32) is given eloquent expression in Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 1992).
these ways of looking at the Reformation are legitimate at some level – the flood of duelling Confessional documents between 1530 and 1662 testifies to the reality of the first, and of course no one in the reforming movements, even the most radical, viewed salvation as simply a private or an individual matter – it is in this sense political and communal. Equally obviously, the language and ideology of the Royal Supremacy make the monarch a vital, vocal part of Anglicanism. For Elizabeth, for instance, chivvying the bishops really does fit between receiving the French ambassador, sending soldiers to Scotland, and, say, slapping the Earl of Essex. I have no wish to deny either analysis, but there is more to say.

These two alternative arguments also, naturally, have their methodologies. The first or theological-linguistic school tends to look for doctrine, system and definition: Jewel or Hooker or Calvin fit well with their exacting definitions and polemical systematics. The vast majority of confessional historians, including Diarmaid MacCulloch, Alister McGrath and Aidan Nichols fit into this category. The second, “political” school examines the impact of revolutionary change upon communities, the political undercurrent of Henry’s court or Edward’s, plots and counter-plots, move and counter-move, so that the Pilgrimage of Grace or the fall of Thomas Cromwell jump out in all their colour and Machiavellian manipulation. Traditional political history fits here: Scarsbrick or Starkey. In the second school, too, is the revisionism of Eamon Duffy and Christopher Haigh, who see the Reformation in vital and local terms, and as more or less popular in different districts, like Morebath. It is true, too, that since the explicit secularisation thesis of Jacob Burkhardt, the Whiggish notion that the Renaissance began the questioning of religion which ended in the blessed Enlightenment is stronger than it ought to be. As Debora Shuger has argued:

Books on the English Reformation do not usually engage questions of gender, sexuality, class, power, and selfhood; conversely, studies of Tudor and Stuart culture rarely consider sermons, sacraments, bishops, or prayer books.

This peculiar division of mental labor derives, at least in part, from Burkhardt's monumental study of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy, which conceptualized the Renaissance as an episode within secular culture – as the secularization of Western culture. Correspondingly, scholarship on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious history developed along confessional lines – Lutherans studying Luther, Catholics researching the Counter-Reformation, and so forth – and hence tended to focus on theological controversy rather than the sociocultural imbrications of religion.

(Shuger, Renaissance Bible 2)

These “sociocultural imbrications” too often play the poor relation, for a number of reasons, most obviously, the secularising narrative they are too often ignored or canalised by. As Shuger goes on to observe:

Renaissance scholarship, speaking very generally now, operates in terms of three basic categories: Classical antiquity, the secular culture of the Renaissance, and Christianity. Traditional scholarship focused on the unidirectional influence of the first category on the second; in Foucault, Greenblatt, and other contemporary thinkers, one notes a growing interest in the passage of sacred forms and practices – monastic discipline, confession, exorcism, the cult of the Virgin Queen, Wolsey's hat – into the social and literary structures of secular culture. If the first model tends to marginalize religion, the second conceptualizes the sacred as that which is drained, is emptied out, in order to provide modern culture with sufficient intellectual and symbolic capital to start up its own economy. (3)
In this thesis, I am interested in that “symbolic capital”, but more than that, in the vital interplay between theology, imagination, and literature, the swapping of symbols, and the training of what Shuger calls “habits of thought”. I have attempted to be conscious of the fact that there is a third way to view what the Reformers thought they were doing – one conceived primarily in imaginative terms. When we come to the English context, when we try to get inside the head of, say, Cranmer, the first reformed Archbishop, there is a puzzling vagueness. The trouble about Cranmer’s doctrine is that it appears both to trim (to the glee of Catholic polemicists) and develop (to the mingled joy and frustration of Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals alike). He (himself) insists upon his consistency in both, but the vocabulary he uses is slippery, and his position on matters of grave religious import is often designedly double-talked, on the one hand nodding to Henry’s Catholic traditionalism, and on the other flirting with the recovered/new ideas of reform, when Henry would let him. But apart from the formal theological vocabulary the Reformers are attempting to popularise (although connected to it), and even separable from a reforming political agenda, is imaginative vision and impact, words as tropes and as energies, as impetus for feeling, vision, and action. A Reformed vision of the Church of England is thus, in a way, simply that: not the reality of legal plunder and force, but a compelling vision of a future enscriptured and Reformed England, a vision the Reformers never forgot, and a vision which gives striking consistency and texture to the patchy history of doctrinal to-and-fro, and political trimming. This theologically inflected, but essentially imaginative vision, has contradictions, cruelties, fantastical leaps, even. But it remains, even if unattainable, nonetheless powerful.

This thesis therefore focuses not solely on theology – indeed, many deeply important theological debates are barely touched – language or imaginative artefact, but on the intersection of them all together, examining the translation of edifying language from a theological category into poetics and historiography. Borrowing Debora Shuger’s words
again, although not her focus, (she speaks of the Bible, rather than one subset of language inside it):

Renaissance biblical scholarship, however, is less a specialized discipline with its own internally generated topoi and methods than a disciplinary matrix where philological, historical, legal, antiquarian, and rhetorical procedures combine and recombine in response to fluctuations within the larger intellectual culture. It does not so much resemble a midwestern highway – a ribbon stretched across quiet fields connecting no place in particular to somewhere or other – as it does the four-level interchange in Los Angeles, where all roads meet, intersect, and divide; where lanes converge and split down unforeseen left- and right-hand exits; an arcing structural marvel littered with accidents and overloaded with interminable traffic. (4)

We enter our “interchange” with Anglican doctrine, in the mouth of Cranmer, Jewel, Hooker and others, but narrow our focus to the notion of “edification”, which becomes a key point in the legitimation of Anglicanism: doctrinally, linguistically, and, for our purposes, imaginatively. I argue that the best way to see the Church of England is as an institution with two contrasting valencies – a deconstructive and iconoclastic impulse, working in tandem with a narrative of recovery, restoration and spiritualisation. Its contradictions and discontents spring from the dialogue, and occasionally the opposition, between those two impulses: the movement to tear down false images and the engines of Antichrist, and a contrasting impulse to build, renew and plant. Insofar as Cranmer is committed to reform, it is not just doctrine, discipline or ecclesiastical property he is focused upon reforming (important as all those things are), but imagination, historiography, story, and nation. In fact, when read as an exercise in edification, that is, the rebuilding of the self through the gradual destruction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the false imagination and its linguistic and solid artifacts, the emphasis of the Reformers, especially Cranmer, begins to make more
sense. Caught in a concrete pastoral situation of assumed and important continuity, Archbishop Cranmer attempts to move the artifacts, services, and language of the English Church away from a Catholic solidity and corporeality, and towards a spiritualised and Reformed transparency. The notion of edification allows him to marry diverse but compelling strands: nation-building, obedience to the king, maintenance of the traditional social order, neighbourliness, communal reformation, and reformed godliness. These, he seems to have believed, would lead to a reform of imagination, and to the conversion of heart which is assumed to follow it.

Whether this is actually true or not is beside the point – whether the Church of England is the Church of Henry’s hormones, or an odd amalgam of impulses, or founded by Christ Himself on a Cornish tin ship, the point of this thesis is the same: the Reformed vision of enscriptured community, contingent ceremonies, neighbourly growth in charity and rebuilding and reforming of the self, is the thing that drives Cranmer, as an imaginative goal, and a laboured and painstaking reality, in flashes and parts. This imaginative goal and this rebuilding impulse is a vital current in seventeenth-century poetics, sparking both dialogue and difficulty. This thesis traces the emergence, dissemination, propagation and effect of the language of edification, an idea which becomes central to the practice, praxis and imaginative identity of English Protestantism.

Thus, my thesis is not simply a traditional historical exercise. Nor is it simply a theology thesis, tracing “the thought of the reformers”. Such theses tend to become overly schematic, and/or to treat imaginative artifacts as a messy embarrassment to be disposed of as soon as possible, or even passed over in silence.³ It is also more than a literature thesis, in the

³ Thus, for instance, Alister McGrath’s astounding assertion that "The most significant catalyst(to Protestant poetics) was the rise of hymnody... intended to edify and inform congregations. Suddenly, poetry was seen to have a thoroughly acceptable Protestant function... Protestantism may not itself have yielded a vast poetic
sense that obviously non-poetic and even non-literary texts are examined in it. I examine some elements of all three disciplines: imagination, the social world which produced it, and one strand of the theological language which gives the Reformation its zap, its passion and its energy. In this sense, like a good Anglican, I am constructing a three-legged stool.

J G A Pocock gets at what I mean here when he argues that:

> Men think by communicating language systems; these systems help constitute both their conceptual worlds and the authority-structures, or social worlds related to these; the conceptual and social worlds may each be seen as a context to the other, so that the picture gains in concreteness. The individual’s thinking may now be viewed as a social event, an act of communication and of response within a paradigm system, and, as a historical event, a moment in a process of transformation of that system, and of the interacting worlds which both system and act help to constitute and are constituted by. (Pocock 15)

Cranmer’s appropriation of the language of edification is of course an act drawn from Continental Reform (no one, not even Tridentine Catholics, in theory opposes edification) but it becomes in his hands, and in the English context, a set of tropes and images appealed to and used to legitimate certain types of reforming work, casting not only his theology, but his social vision, in Pauline and edificatory terms. What we speak of when we begin to examine Cranmer’s language is the “conceptual worlds” it opens, the “authority structures” it enables, the social vision it constructs, and the “social worlds” it is at play in. Pocock continues:

> Only after we have understood what means [the author] had of saying anything can we understand what he meant to say, or what he succeeded in saying, what he was
taken to have said, or what effects his utterance had in modifying or transforming the existing paradigm structures. As [paradigms of political speech] function, they prescribe the levels on which the author’s communications may be transmitted and (by no means the same thing) received….The historian’s first problem, then, is to identify the “language” or “vocabulary” with and within which the author operated, and to show how it functioned paradigmatically to prescribe what he might say, and how he might say it. (25)

With the greatest of respect to Pocock, I do not propose in the space of this thesis to chart paradigm shifts, as he attempts to do. To identify shifts in habits of thought with exactitude is a perilous undertaking, if only because paradigms are far from being simply chartable. Still less are they containable in a comfortably Whiggish railway timetable, in which sections of the populace progress tidily down the branch line to peace, progress, indoor plumbing or democracy, rather as they might change Underground Lines. I shall, however, attempt to examine the frustrations and contradictions in one paradigm – the Anglican notion of edification – and the social worlds, languages and particularly imaginative artifacts of early Anglicanism between 1530 and 1630 that draw on it. I argue that the notion of edification gives to the enterprise of Anglicanism an imaginative coherence. This is not a fictional chimera, but an imperfectly realised vision, conditioned by a theology of contingency which keeps running into, and adapting to facts on the ground. It thus gives rise to a historiographical push which is both iconoclastic and reconstructive, and a language which has both deconstructive and constitutive valencies. I argue that the world picture of concordant godliness, neighbourly participation and conformist obedience envisioned on, say, the frontispiece of the Great Bible, or in the injunctions of Henry VIII, provides an imaginative key for Protestant poetics, and that the notion of edification, portmanteau-like, manages to unite a number of tense, but complementary strands in one lexical field. It opens
for early modern Anglicans a new way of envisioning their Church and their place in salvation history, making imperative a new thrust for re-translation, iconoclasm and renewal. Sidney, Spenser, Donne and Herbert, present in their poetic and prose works not only an avowedly Protestant and thus polemical agenda, but a vision of civic evangelicalism⁴ which envisions the renewal of individual, parish, neighbourhood and society in a common enterprise of edification, reform and renewal according to Protestant lights. This notion of civic evangelicalism thus combines theology, with imagination, and social vision.

This reforming enterprise is deeply contested first by Roman Catholics loyal to the Pope, and then by the various Protestant voices later to constitute the Puritans – the Presbyterians and the Independent factions of the Interregnum --but the notion of edification is vital to understanding the energy and the discontents of Protestant poetics. We now may sketch some reasons why this should have been so. We begin by showing the basic structure and argument of the thesis showing the reasons the notion of edification is important, and the different levels of work it attempts to do.

The Church of England is in a strange position by comparison with the other reforming jurisdictions in Europe. First, its break with the Church of Rome is conditioned initially by one real issue, that is, the denial of Papal authority. It also clearly has a de facto existing continuity, something appealed to as early as Cranmer’s Collecteana, which aims among other things to prove the continuity and ancient independence of the English Church. This is an essential element in weaning Henry VIII from his defence of the Papacy, allied with

⁴ In this thesis, I shall use “Evangelical” to refer to the Church party which is Protestant, insists on Church services and Bible reading in English, and prioritises “inward faith” and “godly conversation”, (that is, interiority of religious practice,) and the reformed religion expressed by the 42 and 39 Articles of Religion. I also use evangelical as a shorthand (as here) for the Pauline theology of calling, justification and sanctification outlined in the following chapters. This is functionally what Bale means by “the gospel according to St Paul’s doctrine”. (John Bale, The vocacyon of Ioha[n] Bate to the bishiprick of Ossorie in Irela[n]de his persecucio[n]s in ye same, & final delyueraunce ... Publisher Uncertain 1553 [EEBO] Ci-ii)
Tyndale’s defence of the Supremacy in *Obedience of the Christian Man*. But Anglicanism follows Henry in sculpting a theology of godly obedience and continuity after the fact. Allowing space for Henry to assume (or usurp) the Imperial prerogative of Supreme Head makes urgent the need for a reconciliation between the Catholic impulse of the Church of England which asserts continuity and the contrasting iconoclastic impulse. It is the tying together of these two opposed valencies that is the task of reformed Anglicanism: how to legitimise the suppression of some impulses, such as the decline in Eucharistic devotion, or the abolition of monasteries and chantries, and at the same time promote the growth, of other impulses, such as private Bible reading, preaching, or Protestant poor relief. Further still, to examine edification or building language is also to look backwards to its Biblical bona fides, to examine what the English reformers saw themselves as doing, or recovering, the kind of man, the kind of parish, the kind of national community they thought they were building.

In this thesis, we shall look at the notion of edification from more than one angle, and attempt to identify similar Pauline and reformed languages of rebuilding and renewal in more than one context. First, we look at edification in the Pauline epistles, in terms of two of St

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5 Tyndale flirts with Supremacism, but also (and for good reason) sees evangelical truth in tension with royal authority, even when his work is rehabilitated and republished under the Protestant Tudors. For more, see “Fearing God and Honouring the King” in Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: evangelicals in the early English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 58. The rehabilitation of proto-Protestants is also seen in the English Church’s appropriation of Wyclif into an edificatory narrative conditioned by contemporary concerns: see, for example, *Apologie for John Wickliffe, Showing his conformitie with the now Church of England, with an answere to such slanderous objections as have been lately urged against him by Father Parsons, his apologists, and Others* (1608), published by Joseph Barnes. Thomas James, the Keeper of the Bodleian, argues that, God has “preserved his painful and learned works, to stop the mouths of lying pamphleters which write that our Religion is nothing else but a newe and upstart doctrine, scarcely ever heard of before Luther’s time...[and that they demonstrate] the fondness and vanitie of Father Parsons, both against the parson of Wickliffe, and the doctrine of our Catholike Protestant Religion: accusing the one of foul heresies and monstrous absurdities, and appealing the other of manifest newnes and new fagleness” (3).

6 It is as well to say at once that the vocabulary I trace here has a gendered element. Male devotional writing is at points assimilable to the stoic and masculine categories of so much importance in the Interregnum (see my MA work, “The Dischained Being”). Female Protestant devotion, while vitally important to the shape of the Reformation, and aiming at the same goals, observes a different decorum, important, but complex and different: domestic (though sometimes political), pious (but at points also polemical) and genuflecting in the direction of *gender roles (except when subverting them)*. For some treatment of this tension, see Megan Hickerson, “Gospelling Sisters “Goinge up and Downe””: John Foxe and Disorderly Women” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35.4 (2004): 1035-1051, and Collinson, *Elizabethans*, (London: MacMillan, 2003) 109ff.
Paul’s favourite metaphors: the body, and the temple. We look too at *Paraphrases* and translations of the Bible, and the words and concepts translators and reformers use, coupled with, or summing up edification. The English word “edify” takes on an important, unique resonance, amplified by the lexical field in the Bible itself, as Paul, and his translators set forth his vision of an enscriptured and united Church. Beginning the argument, we examine the notion of edification in the source texts, beginning with the early modern translations of St Paul, and the *Paraphrases* of Erasmus, and continuing through the Henrician *Preface* to Canon Law, the translations of Nicholas Udall, and the ideology of the Supremacy. We then continue to examine the Pauline frame, first in Erasmus, then in Cranmer. Analysing first the edificatory context of Cranmer’s martyrdom, we sketch Cranmer’s use of edificatory language in his Great Bible *Preface*, in the Homily Book, and in the Books of Common Prayer of 1549 and 1552. Connecting edification with its civic and communal frame, and with the notion of commonwealth, we begin to draw together the theological and civic elements into an imaginative paradigm which aims at reform on three major levels.

The first level is the religious reform of England, a national effort legitimising civic evangelicalism. We can see this impulse not only in the formal liturgies and episcopal injunctions already referred to, but also in polemic apologia, and in the search for a new historiography of the past, positioning England as the Protestant Nation. On the second level, the local one, the Reformers aim at the Protestant reconstruction of the local community, or the parish. This “parish impulse” is also seen in the mission of Protestant preaching (in Hugh Latimer, and in John Donne), in Protestant Psalm culture, and in the edificatory narratives of Protestant poetics. The third level, which of course overlaps in practice with the second, as the individual members of a parish overlap with one another, is the individual. Tying all of these three levels together is the continuing, and avowedly Protestant, vocation of the poet, as a maker of images, a container of energy, a painter of ideals. Having, as Sidney says, great
power both for the making of good things, and the moving towards virtue, and the corruptible
power of mutation and idolatry, the Protestant poet is in the driver’s seat, like Reason in the
Phaedrus. Pulled the one way by a profound distrust of images and the pious fakery they
promote, and the other by an equally profound desire to demonstrate that English
Protestantism is the growth of a godly continuity, the Protestant poet reels first one way, then
the other, tripping into absurdities, contradictions and tensions, but remains erect, valiantly
asserting in a world of trembling ruins the promise of a better Church tomorrow. Even if this
is an imaginative chimera it contrasts impulses deeply significant to human life, in a field not
governed by history, event and hard fact, but by that puzzling animating spirit inside them:
imagination. In this sense, the linguistic analysis of the literary critic is not interested in
paradigms, or habits of thought, politics and images, but in the imaginary city they construct.
Before us is the image of civic evangelicalism which, until the death blow at Naesby, united
King, Bible, Church and Realm in a Protestant and tethered whole, albeit one with recusants,
Covenants, and slackers, It is this image, and this structure of salvation, which Cranmer and
the reformers aim at, and this image which, even when shop-worn, exerts a compelling pull in
Protestant poetics. There, upon its native heath, shorn of, but at the same time reacting to,
messey reality, English nation building, English speaking Christianity, and English poetics
become the proper study not of the historian, but of the literary scholar, and the alert reader.
In this sense, what happens to the notion of England rebuilt in poetry becomes our concern in
this thesis too.

Hence, we begin in Chapter 2 and 3 with a theological outline: the notion of edification
in St Paul and in the work of the English Reformers, especially Erasmus and Cranmer. The
chapters argue that an Erasmian and Pauline notion of commonwealth is picked up by the
English Reformers with particular energy, suiting the unique context and existing continuity
of the English Church. Edification here implies both continuity (since there is no de novo
building) and repair, in a stepwise and provisional way – in this sense, Protestantism makes history provisional, and attempts to contextualise the struggles of English reformers into a narrative of civic apocalypticism and edificatory salvation history. In this sense, edification and its historiography go hand in hand.

In Chapter 4, we trace the Reformed priority of the word, and the danger and possibility of representation into poetic theory and poetic practice, examining Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* and *Astrophil and Stella*. I argue that Sidney picks up both a humanist sense of the possibility of language, and its creative and transformative power, and, in *Astrophil and Stella*, a profound sense of the gap between that possibility and the actual practice of real poetry. Cranmer’s theology of enscripturation, that we are “turned into” the book, becomes a double edged sword, full of both creativity and danger. In Chapter 5, edification reaches its widest compass, away from the theory of the commonwealth and the practice of the individual, and touches nation building. Into this level too comes Edmund Spenser, with his emphasis in *The Faerie Queene* on the razing of disordered building, and the raising of the true, a vision of England built properly as a nation, securely and concordantly (if also provisionally) under the rule of the Protestant hope, Elizabeth I. In this chapter, edification is seen not simply as a civic and historical duty, but as a present, contended-for reality, involving the reader in what one critic has called “a common hermeneutic quest” (Wood 29ff).

In Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, we examine the notion of edification as picked up by two parish priests – John Donne and George Herbert, tracing the Cranmerian vision of the Christian Commonwealth into individual spiritual practice, in *The Temple* and the *Holy Sonnets*, but also into corporate parish practice, in *The Country Parson* and *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. By the time 1530 has become 1630, the Church has been purged, spiritualised, separated, and has, by the time of Herbert’s “Church Militant” not a tethered
and real existence as Henry envisions, but a virtual, spiritalised and increasingly imperilled one, stuck together with hope, imagination and electrical tape.

Before we move on to the next chapter, some final points. I do not propose (and I am not able in this space) to sketch a history of Christian building, or to examine every source text which treats edification, even very extensively. For instance, the reader will find only cursory mention of Hooker, or my namesake John Foxe. I have chosen this list of poetic and imaginative figures for two basic reasons. One, these are figures which seem to me to be most directly in conversation with each other, and playing out the same theological questions, albeit with sometimes differing answers. These questions have a variety of imaginative responses in different contexts, from the national story of Spenser to the individual spiritual journeys of Sidney and Donne, from preaching and priestly manuals to epic verse. I have matched and chosen them in order to examine one narrative thread: what edification looks like in terms of its component and imaginative parts, and how these play out in differing contexts. I could of course have treated, say, Hooker, Foxe, or Andrewes as imaginative figures, examined Spenser’s *Ruins* or Du Bellay, Ben Jonson’s *Bartholemew Fair* or even Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* to make the same points, but I didn’t. I cheerfully admit to some extent the arbitrariness of this choice. I defend it on the grounds that the authors I have chosen play into, and converse with one another most directly, but also, very simply: these are the authors who interest me the most.7

It is also important to note that the conversation-in-poetry I trace has a gendered element. Although the reformed theology traced at the beginning presents itself as universal,

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7 Original spelling was retained in the earlier drafts of this thesis, but I have decided, in the interest of readability, to abandon it where it might tax the reader beyond patience. Thus, except when relatively clear as it is, most spelling is silently modernised except in two more circumstances: where the spelling and orthography seemed important, and when modernising spelling would upset poetic form. This last is especially the case in the poetry chapters, in which original spelling has been largely retained. Where page numbers exist, I have used them. Where they did not in manuscript sources, I have followed the convention of numbering them myself.
and indeed gives considerable, if not uncomplicated, space to women, (see footnote 6), when the theology begins to come out in poetic theory and practice, the construction of a man begins to take on gendered resonance, not because men are more important to the literary history of the Reformation, (Elizabeth, Catherine Parr, Anne Askew and others are vital, and still commonly underrated) but because of the male, paternal and aristocratic decorum governing the texts. Sidney’s Apology and Astrophil are both written from a male, humanist and aristocratic viewpoint, Herbert’s instructions in The Church Porch partake of the same fatherly, and hence masculine tone, not because women did not read them, but because of Herbert’s conception of the priesthood. Even Donne’s Holy Sonnets might have had a different, more domestic and pious posture, (at least on the surface) if, say, Amelia Lanyer, Lucy Hutchison or Anne Bradstreet had written them. This point is nuanced in Spenser by his celebration of the nation-building necessity of female authority – especially Elizabeth’s – but in general terms, tracing the differing notions of decorum, what is expected, and what is actually delivered, would have been a thesis in itself. Hence, despite noting at several points important and interesting gendered criticism (especially of Sidney), I have chosen in large part to focus only on one strand, and one language. I would rather leave such interesting complexities for another day, rather than offer terse, and inevitably inadequate treatment in the space I have.

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Chapter 2: “Every Joint of Subministration”: Edification, Erasmus and the Royal Supremacy.

Alas! how can the poor souls live in concord, when you, preachers, sow amongst them, in your sermons, debate and discord? Of you they look for light, and you bring them to darkness. Amend these crimes, I exhort you, and set forth God's word, both by true preaching, and good example-giving, or else I, whom God hath appointed his vicar, and high minister here, will see these divisions extinct, and these enormities corrected, according to my very duty, or else I am an unprofitable servant, and an untrue officer. Henry VIII, 1545

This chapter begins with a concrete controversy negotiated by Matthew Parker, and argues that edifying language, is key to legitimating the reforming project – at first politically, and then, in later chapters, imaginatively. Exegeting Parker’s appeal to it here is the first step in examining the uses, abuses and associations of edification. We begin by looking at the context of a small local controversy, and then move on to zero in on how Parker uses the term, and the work it allows him to do.

In 1538, certain traditionalist burghers of Clare, in Suffolk, complained to Lord Chancellor Audley against the preaching of Dr. Matthew Parker, parachuted into the nearby Collegiate Church of Saint John the Baptist in Stoke by Anne Boleyn (Parker, 4). Parker, soon to be King’s Chaplain, and already occupying the official pulpit at Paul’s Cross, was already associated with nascent evangelicalism, and, like all evangelicals at Henry’s Court, he had to step carefully through the minefield of Henry’s religious opinions. Too far, too fast,

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11 Or not, depending on the date.
or too much reform, and the aspiring preacher could lose his cloth, his place or his life – and the progress he had made would be undone.

The Protestant historian Strype records (much later, but with useful concision) that:

our Dean happened to preach on Easter Holy-day at Clare, near Stoke…Mr George Colt and some other inhabitants of the town of Clare picked out what invidious matter they could from this and other innocent Sermons preached by Parker, and drew all up into articles against him… (Strype, 11)

First, they allege that he had attacked their Easter procession, saying: “The manner as they used the resurrection, with the ceremonies appertaining to the same, was but a pageant, or an interlude.” Parker and his flock hit first on the well-travelled debate about ceremonies. whether, or how far, the theatrics of devotion express the inward reality of faith. Parker cannot deny the legality, or utility of ceremonies – especially those not only legal but still used in the Chapel Royal (Kisby 45ff) – but neither does he deny the accusation, simply supplying more context, and the beginnings of an argument:

I moved them to consider spiritually what was meant by their procession on Easter morning when they followed the quire about the church with Christus resurgens. I said it was an open protestation of their faith to believe that Christ died for their sins, and rose again for their justification, and that the ceremony of such following in procession was to declare, and testify openly before the world, that they would henceforth follow Christ in their conversation….without this meditation and purpose, their procession, with the solemnities thereof, was to them but a vain pageant, whereof they had no profit. (Parker,7)
Parker does not deny the utility or legality of the procession, he simply treats the procession as “vain” and of “no profit” unless it produces spiritual consequences. A movement “to consider” the spiritual truths upon which the procession is contingent: justification, death, and resurrection, and then a corresponding action, namely, the “following of Christ in conversation.” This enables him to say that it is not the ceremony per se he is attacking, but the bad use of the ceremony – ceremonies without faith. Parker prioritises the reception of the ceremonial. For Parker, the theatrical procession itself must be transparent and contingent enough to push the godly observer through it towards an engagement with the theological truth to be internalised. The imaginative encounter is finally fulfilled and theologically realised only in inner conviction, and following action – in this case, as in a procession, literally.

The second charge the burghers of Clare bring against Parker is that he said: “The cross that Christ died on was no holier than the crosses which thieves did die on.” Parker dodges the charge of sacrilege by again announcing that he was attempting to communicate a spiritual truth:

Upon Relic-Sunday, I declared to them what were the true relics which we should worship, and moved them not to put their trust and affiance in the holiness and virtue of men’s bones and coats, whereof we have no certainty whether they were the relics of saints or no…to forget the mystery of Christ’s cross, and fall to the worshipping of the tree of his cross, was superstitious worship, and reproved of Saint Ambrose de obitu Theodosii, which saith thus: Invenit Helena titulum, regem adoravit, non lignum utique, nam hic Gentilis est error et vanitas impiorum… (Parker, 8)

Note Parker’s rhetorical moves here. Parker pushes past the dispute about the physical object – the “tree of his cross”, the “bones and coats” and prioritises the spiritual truth to
which the cross bears witness. As his licence for doing so, he brings forth Ambrose. An avowed attack on the cult of relics, on Relic Sunday, the day on which relics were traditionally venerated, is excused by an appeal to patristic sources, and a little artful dodging.

The third and last accusation from Clare levels an expressly political charge at Parker, that he said: “The King, with the money that he gathered of his commons, bought peace with other realms.” Parker insists that, “in the insurrection time” he thought it expedient to, courage [the] hearts” of the soldiers with “God’s word to serve their prince in withstanding such traitors as were then risen….I inveighed against sedition, and declared the authority of a prince, and what commodities every realm enjoyed by such authority instituted of God…I thereby willed them, with good and ready wills, to pay their taxes…. (Parker, 8)

Lord Chancellor Audley, having read Parker’s reply, “blamed the promoters, and sent word that I should go on and fear not such enemies”. (Parker, 9)

So much to establish the context of Henrician Suffolk: a cadre of traditionalist laity, buttressed by sympathetic clergy,\(^{13}\) a system of guilds, and a monastic house of Austin Friars, attempting to defend their devotional life, and Parker attempting to reform it – undermining their dependence on the outward act, while stopping just short of condemning it. That is, he argues it is profitless, not evil. The aggressive implication, though, is that the pious customs of Clare are more customs than pious – an implication they both understand and resent. Both parties are appealing to the two halves of what Diarmaid McCulloch has called “Henry VIII’s

janus-like conscience” (12), in an attempt to win official backing, without looking disloyal or out-of-step with the King’s policy.

In the context of this dispute,14 Parker moves to deal with at least one of his opponents, writing to “Dr Stokes, Friar Austin” who has come to Clare from the Priory at Norwich. In his letter, Parker sets out both an Evangelical conception of ministry, and a Henrician model of the Church and its Commonwealth. Again, the biased but ubiquitous Strype gives us the context:

Upon this countenance [Audley’s approval] the Dean went on in his Doctrine, exciting the people everywhere to obedience to the King, and informing them out of the Word of God about many Abuses of Religion. So that the Knowledge of God was happily sown in these Quarters by Mr Parker’s means. But this so nettled Nix, the Bishop of Norwich, and the Popish Party thereof, that to unravel and disappoint these good beginnings, Dr Stokes Prior of the Augustins in Norwich…is sent now to Clare, pretending to settle there, and to preach out of Good will, or so he told Parker: But indeed….it was to supplant his Doctrine, and to reduce the people to their Old superstitions, and to keep them in their blindness and Popery. (Strype, 12)

We have seen Parker, as it were, on defence – using language of spiritual profit and Evangelical lively faith, as well as a dose of patristics, to insist that what he preached on Easter Day is legitimate. This next letter allows us to see him on attack, bullying, coaxing, and cajoling Stokes. The terms of this debate begin our engagement with “edifying” as a concept, and its associated political and imaginative connotations. Parker begins by assuming a collegial tone:

I shall do my best to set [Stoke’s intention of preaching] forward at all times and occasions, knowing that there can be no better service to God than sincerely to declare his will and pleasure, no sacrifice more acceptable than to convert the hearts of his reasonable creatures in true faith and knowledge unto him, and no ways better can we deserve of the commonwealth, than by our diligence to continue the commons in a quiet subjection and obedience toward their governors, and to further love and peace among themselves; which duty belonging to a Minister of God’s word I have done my best to perform… (Parker, 10)

Notice here the paired up conceptions here: preaching, knowledge, and conversion leading to the Supremacy’s gold standard: “quiet subjection and obedience” and the concord of the commonwealth in “love and peace among themselves”. Note also Parker’s insistence that the people of Stoke clearly are in need of both “true” faith and conversion. The duty of a minister of God’s word is defined here in Supremacist and conformist terms, but also Evangelical ones, the one reinforcing the other. As in Parker’s first letter, encounter with preaching (or with religious performance) should lead to knowledge, to conversion, and to amendment – in this case, quiet obedience. At one level, this is straightforward Supremacist stuff, with which Stokes (and, say, Edmund Bonner) would be ill advised to disagree. But at the same time, the “Popish Party” of Clare rightly view Parker’s attempt at relativising their religious practice in the light of an allegedly greater evangelical truth to be an attack on the necessity for it at all – Parker’s explicit pairing of the Supremacy with Evangelical conversion aggressively ties together the agenda of Reform with one of the principal instruments of it. In a similar way, Parker’s defence of his sermonising uses a patristic source, an Evangelical argument about the purpose of ceremonies, and a Supremacist affirmation of

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15 This is true, even if we take the notion of “converting” as a Latinate echo of “convertere”, which means “turn”, and is used more gently than the modern sense.
the King’s authority. Gospel-shaped preaching is thus tied both to the witness of the Primitive Church, and to the allegedly ancient custom of Christian emperors in charge of it.

Parker continues:

If ye should go about to sugill [bruise, defame, slander] and to decay the truth which I have (I trust and am assured) spoken, and I again should labour to use invidions against you, we should learn our audiences but envy, discord and dissension; we should offend God to abuse our office of peace to the slander of the other, and consume our time in matters of controversy of our own, when otherwise it should be spent in the edification of those whom we speak; we should by our disagreement cause a roar and a schism in the people, and cause a murmur, and a parts-taking among themself…for many times of such small sparks rise great commotions in the people, which once risen is not so easily ceased and stayed again… (11)

In this paragraph, one of a number which continue in tones of rising threat, Parker sets next to the picture of godly concord delineated previously a picture of discord: Suffolk decayed, privately envious and publically burning with sedition – a word picture not lost in a world still smarting from the Pilgrimage of Grace. The opposite of “edification of the King’s subjects” is discord, controversy, division, decay, roar, and schism, and Parker does not hesitate to refer to assurances given him he has spoken godly truth – presumably a reference to Audley’s approval. The reference to friends in high places gets more explicit in the next lines:

Ye know what diligence our sovereign Lord the king’s grace bestoweth daily to reduce his people committed to his charge from their manifold blindness and
superstitions they were in to the truth and right worship of God; it were meet for us
that be speakers to the people to further his most godly purpose, not with covert
intentions to labefact [weaken] the credence of the people, and so to hatch privy
rebellion and ill-will to his proceedings, not with ambiguous sophistication to fortify
their misframed judgements… (11)

The pitch perfect echoing of Henry’s own ideology of the Supremacy gives way after
line two to a fervently Evangelical demolition of blindness and superstition. Henry’s “godly
purpose” and Parker’s Evangelical one chime in an explicit echo of building language. Not
only is the faith of the people weakened by dissent, false doctrine almost “fortifies” a
disordered, “misframed” spiritual building. While Parker is busy edifying the true church, he
represents Dr Stokes as in danger of “fortifying” a false one – trapping his people in a
misframed and divided schism. As he writes, “I think it were meet, seeing we see the people
so much bent to their customed inventions, to give them no maintenance to continue them
still therein”. (12) Stokes is in danger not only of misframing, but of abetting “customed
invention” and using dispute to “allure the people’s minds and fancies”. (13) Edificatory
language allows Parker to move in one moment from affirmation of Henrician pains and legal
authority to a Protestant attack on superstition, from an affirmation of the concord and
godliness in the true church to an attack on a false fortress of error, from customed and
alluring error to sober, (new?) truth. This linguistic flexibility is partly politics, but partly also
exactly what he says it is – basic to the Protestant conception of a minister of God’s word.
Parker continues this theme:

It is for the more quietness of both our parties that we should, without let or
interruption of bye matters, effectuously go forward with the principle purpose of the
office and vocation taken upon us, in converting and reversing the hearts of the
fathers unto their children, and the unbelievers to the wisdom of the just, to make a
people ready for the Lord, to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to preach deliverance to the captive, and recovery of sight to the blind, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord… (13)

Parker fulminates against those who privily slander him, and urges Dr Stokes to refrain from plotting sedition or schism, “it is the causes’s sake, God’s sake, and the people’s true and peaceable instruction that I regard” (13), and he sums up this way:

But thus shortly to conclude. If ye should go about, Master Doctor, to get you a name, to hurt the truth of scripture, to deprave or hinder that reformation which the king’s Highness purposeth in matters of our religion, or to raise any schisure or murmur in the people of this country, now metely in good stay and toward in the acceptation of the truth, under any open or colourable insinuation, verily ye cannot so secretly do it but that it will burst out….and I will, according to my duty, present it immediately. [But] If ye…intend truly and rightly to declare the verity to the edification of the king’s subjects, I will then promise to join hands with you the best I can…and thus the Holy Ghost be with you… (14)

Parker’s borrowing of Christ’s own quotation of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth is at one level conventional – no one, Catholic or Reformed, in principle opposes the gospel, or conversion of unbelievers. But Parker’s assertion of this passage as the principal vocation of a priest leaves little doubt as to the role played by the people of Clare in the drama: they are the unbelievers who must be converted. While Clare’s reaction, presenting Parker to the Lord Chancellor, lacks the Nazarene directness of “attempting to throw [Jesus] down the cliff”, the reaction of the Catholic party to Parker’s implication is thus excusably irate.
Moving away from the details of the Stokes controversy\textsuperscript{16} let us examine Parker’s summary trump card, the notion of edification. His instruction to Stokes, that is, to “join hands…to declare the verity, to the edification of the King’s subjects”, and to spend his time “in edification of those to whom we speak” rather than the converse (“schisure” “roar” and “fortifying misframed judgements”) seems, portmanteau-like, to express several things. It is basic to Parker’s conception of the ministry – he and Stokes both have the shared calling to edify. Second, it is basic to the identity of “the King’s subjects”, that is, it is associated with godly quiet, concord and commonwealth, and with proper submission to the King. It is in this sense civic, or political. Third, it is also Evangelical, associated with “verity” and with the mission of Christ, which Parker borrows. And fourth, it is anti-Roman, in the sense that to edify something (or convert it, or liberate it, or recover it, all categories Parker uses) one must concede that something existent is decayed, unbelieving, bound or lost. In this Evangelical connection, two further points. First, while I have chosen to focus upon what might be called “conformist” Protestant figures such as Cranmer, Parker, Grindal and Donne, it is possible to run a much less comfortable, and much more politically radical reading of the Evangelical impulse, especially of course in its Presbyterian and dissenting manifestations.\textsuperscript{17} I have deliberately chosen not to do this. With Debora Shuger, whose approach to Andrewes and Richard Hooker deeply informs my own work, I have chosen instead to focus on the valencies and flexibilities in a more established and dominant paradigm, seeking to examine the dynamism, and imaginative interplay within it.\textsuperscript{18}

We shall begin with edification as a language in the Pauline epistles, and in their translations. We then move on to consider its attractions in the English context, and from

\textsuperscript{16}The destiny of Dr Stokes is recorded by Strype (A1.7). He sunk to history Cromwell’s prisoner.
\textsuperscript{17}For an example of the kind of radical reading I mean, see Alex Ryrie, The Gospel and Henry VIII: evangelicals in the early English Reformation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) especially 58ff.
there to the relationship between Pauline and evangelical vision, Erasmian adaptation of it, and the ideology of the Royal Supremacy. This done, we focus particularly on Cranmer’s theology of word and sacrament in the next chapter.

Parker’s summary language, which he obviously expects to be both politically acceptable and religiously effective in shutting up Stokes, and leaving Parker to get on with his mission, recurs again and again in various Reformers, in Pauline Biblical sources, and in official documents, becoming a sort of accepted official shorthand for certain kinds of reforming work. Further still, edifying, or the call to repair a man, a world, and a Church which has fallen from its primitive purity to something in need of rebuilding, becomes a call with literary, imaginative and poetic, implication. Taken up by Protestant poetics, the call to edify becomes an imaginative space as well, a call to repair, re-sanctify and renew the sacred, and civic, imagination.

1.1: Edification and Scripture

The most straightforward meaning of the Vulgate *aedificatio* is “the act of building or constructing” a dwelling.¹⁹ Thus, of course, it had in Elizabethan English the straightforward meaning of the building trade, the construction of literal “edifices.” This usage is reflected in the Vulgate, as in Genesis 4, where Cain is expelled from Eden, and “builds” the city of Enoch in the land of Nod, east of the garden: “et aedificavit civitatem vocavitque nomen eius ex nomine filii sui Enoch” (Gen 4:17). It also has a specialised religious meaning in the Old Testament, as meaning something like “erect”, mostly in the context of Old Testament altars of sacrifice, the temple, or the tabernacle.²⁰ Examples include Abraham in Genesis 12:7, (“apparuitque Dominus Abram et dixit ei semini tuo dabo terram hanc qui aedificavit ibi

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¹⁹ In Greek, the straightforward *oikodomeō* likewise has almost unanimous usage, in the same places.
²⁰ The original noun, *aedes*, is both a domestic house, and the shrine of a single god, as opposed to *templum*, a complex site for multiple gods.
altar ("itaque aedificavit ibi altare et invocato nomine Domini extendit tabernaculum praecepi
te servis suis ut foderent puteum…”), and other Old Testament figures who, like Solomon, ‘aedificavitque viginti cubitorum ad posteriorem partem templi”, (1 Ki 6:16) or “perfacisset … aedificium domus Domini”. (1 Ki 9:1) Alongside these, all through Ezra and Nehemiah, we find busy edifiers, who build everything from walls to altars and ordinary houses. This usage holds on into our period too.

But by the time the Bible is Englished, in the Wyclif, (1380), Tyndale (1534), Great (1539–40), Geneva, (1557) Bishops Bible, (1568) Douai (1582) and Authorised Versions (1611), the language of edification for simple physical structures has disappeared from the Old Testament, replaced by the straightforward “built”. “Edification” is now confined to certain specialised parts of the Pauline epistles, where St Paul is addressing upbuilding, spiritual maturity, growing up, and godly concord, in the church and the individual, not things, but people. It is in this corporate, communal and figurative context that the English Bible translators retain the term. It is also worth noting here something that will recur later in the context of the Biblical Paraphrases of Erasmus, that is, the notion of edification introduces into England, and the English Church, a linguistic distinction between ordinary building and the spiritual building of the Church which is absent in the originals. Further,

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21 Sometimes both a straightforward Vulgate use and a more complicated one exist in the same text, such as Volume III of Holinshed, for instance, in which college “edifications” (buildings) appear next to “edification” (that is, the spiritual progress and upbuilding that allegedly go on inside them).

22 It is notable of course that both Wyclif and Tyndale use “edify” and “edification”, variously spelt. This brings it through to the beginning of our period, already with a clear reforming ring to it.

23 John Bullokar, a doctor and aspiring Samuel Johnson, published in 1616 an Expositor of “the hardest words used in our language”. His entry on edification combines actual building with spiritual building, and both with instruction, as below:

“Edifie. To build, to frame, sometime to instruct.
Edifice. A building, a frame.
Edification. A building: but most commonlie it is taken for an instruction, so plainely deliuered that the hearer profiteth by it.” (43)

Thomas Wilson defined edification this way in his 1612 A Christian Dictionary:
despite the notion of “what is edifying” being a popular one among Continental Reformers such as Calvin and Luther, even when they match the cast of edification in the English Bible, once the idea is refracted into the English context, its cast seems somewhat different.24 This English inflection upon building language gives Church reform a particularly English expression, and reformers a language it seems of particular imaginative and legitimating power.25

We begin by examining the New Testament uses of the word, in an attempt to build a definition. We then examine the English context, and the English use of the term, hoping by comparison to sketch a lexical field – that is, the ideas which are coterminous, or associated, with the English notion of edification, especially in the context of Ephesians 4, and the Epistles to the Corinthians, but also Timothy and Titus. We then hope to examine the extra-biblical usage of the word in the English reformers, principally Thomas Cranmer, Matthew Parker and Bishop Coverdale, who adapt the notion of edification into a specialised political, and then a literary use.

“Edifie. sig: pro
1 To build, or to make an house.
2 To do all manner of duties, either to bring our Neighbour vnto Christ, or if he bee won, that he may grow from faith to faith: for the faithfull they are Gods house and building, his temple and stones of the new Ierusalem; and the furthering of these in Christianity, is edifying and building of them vp.

24 Luther uses “bessarung” or “betterment” and aufbauen, or building. Calvin uses the concept of edification most commonly in connection with ceremonies as opposed to the arguably broader English use. H. Holland’s paraphrased version of Calvin’s Institutes, for example, the Aphorisms of Christian Religion (1596) uses edification exclusively in the context of adiaphoral liberty about ceremonies, as in Aphorism X: “The end and use therefore of this doctrine is, that we may use the blessings of God, without any scruple of conscience, for that end, for the which they are ordained and given of God for vs, but euer moderating our selues in the use of these things, for the edification of our brethren.” Featherstone’s abridgement of Calvin, the Abridgement (1585) mentions edification more often, but again in the same context, as in the defence of Common Prayer in English: “But as touching the outward rite of the action, all things shall be well done, if they be done with love and edification”. The full translation of the Institutes in English, by Thomas Norton (1561) uses “edification” five times, in the context of Bible reading, and the Erasmian cognate, “profit” much more often, including in the epigraph. The Latin Institutes mention “aedificatione” about the same number of times as the English versions, that is, four. It is notable that edification continues to be mentioned in the context of debate about ceremonies in English too—for example, Richard Cox uses it in a 1552 letter asking for counsel on what reformed communion of the sick ought to look like. See Original Letters 124.

25 This is the case even if, as is likely, the theology of edification was formed in dialogue with the Reformed party in France and Switzerland, especially Zurich and Basle.
First, to the specialised use of edification in St Paul. The Greek word οἰκοδομή, oikodome, is usually translated “upbuilding” or “building up”, in the same way as the Latin. It comes in two related and specialised contexts, one in Ephesians 4, and the other in both epistles to the Corinthians. I shall quote the relevant sections here in the Authorised Version as an administrative convenience, noting translation differences where they appear in footnotes, going on to examine definitional similarities.26

St Paul begins Ephesians with the notion of a corporate election, asking the Ephesians to abandon their unhappy divisions and pursue concord and peace. He ends this exhortion with a vision of the Ephesians no longer divided, but joined up and joined together. The “exceeding greatnesse of his power to us-ward who believe” (1:19), is a maturing and binding power, one which is able to effect reconciliation between God and man, and between members of Christ’s body, which are exhorted to stop fighting, and co-operate together in concord and harmony. These ideas construct the governing metaphors of Ephesians: the reconciled family, the Church as Christ’s body, and the believers (plural) as God’s “habitation” or temple. These three governing metaphors chime together at the conclusion of Chapter 2:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (2:14ff AV)27

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26 Where the text matches in all the versions, or when the variation is not material to the argument, I have been silent.
27 Geneva Bible: “In whom all the building coupled together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord.”
The working of Christ here is individual, in that abolishes enmity, strangeness and foreignness in individuals to “make of twain one new man, so making peace,” and the “aliens to the commonwealth of Israel” (2:12) now have a share in it. But it is also corporate. In a succession of Old Testament metaphors, St Paul calls the Ephesians no longer tolerated (gentile), strangers but family. This claim to corporate, communitarian, “fit… frame” and organic growth through the effectual work of grace, is key to the setting up of the edificatory passages which follow in Chapter 4. The Ephesians are seen as grafted into a sanctificatory process, one which begins with “calling”, continues with “raising” and “quickening,” and ends with the building of God’s temple, a temple explicitly assimilated to, co-operating with, and represented as, the image of Christ’s body.

It is partly this narrative of spiritual progress, I argue, that the English Reformers meant when they used the shorthand “edify” or “edification”: the concurrent notions of call, individual strengthening, corporate establishment and growth in charity, and then final, corporate comprehension, shaping into a dwelling place for God. For this reason, the whole of Chapter 4 bears closer study. 

…[walk with] all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all…. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the

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28 It is difficult here to show properly variant readings. For reasons of clarity, they have been moved to footnotes. As an administrative convenience, I have retained the Authorised Version in the main body of the text.
work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.29 Till we all come in the
unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto
the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more
children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine… but
speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even
Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which
every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,
maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.30 ….. Let no corrupt
communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of
edifying,31 that it may minister grace unto the hearers…. And be ye kind one to
another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath
forgiven you. (Eph 4:1-32, AV)

29 Coverdale: “wherby the sayntes mighte be coupled together thorow comen seruyce to the edifienge of ye
body of Christ.”
Bishops’ Bible: “To the gatherying together of the saintes, into the worke of ministration, into the edifiying of
the body of Christ.”
Geneva Bible: “For the repairing of the saints, for the work of the ministerie, and for the edification of the bodie
of Christ.”
Tyndale: “that the sainctes might hve all thinges necessarie to worke and minister with all, to the edifyinge of
the body of Christ.”
Cranmer: “To the edifyeing of the saynetes, to the worke and minystracion, even to the edifying of the body of
Christ.”
Douai: “to the consummation of the sainctes, unto the worke of the ministrie, unto the edifying of the body of
Christ.”
30 Tyndale: “in whom all the body ys coupled and knet togedder in every joint wherwith one ministreth to
another (according to the operacion as every part hath his measure) and increaseth the body unto the edifying of
it silfe in love.”
Coverdale: “In whom all the body is coupled together, and one membre hangeth by another thorwh out all ye
joyntes. Wherby one mynstreth unto another (acordinge to the operacion as every membre hath his measure)
and maketh, that ye body growth to the edifieng of itself in love.”
Bishops’ Bible: “In whom all the body being coupled and knit together by every joint of subministration;
acording to the effectual power in ye measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of
itself in love.”
Geneva Bible: “By whome al the body being coupled and knit together by every joint for ye furniture thereof,
(accordingy to the effectual power which is the measure of every part) receiveth increase of the body, unto the
edifying of itself in love.”
Cranmer: “in whom yf all the body be coupled and knet together thorow our every joint wherwith one
mynstreth to another (accordynge to the operacyon as euyer parte hath hys measure, he increaseth the body vnto
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31 Coverdale: “edifye withal”.
Geneva Bible: “to the use of edifying”.

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31 Coverdale: “edifye withal”.
Geneva Bible: “to the use of edifying”.
The notion of edification is tied, in a typically Pauline fashion, to concurrent notions of membership, harmony, order and growth. Christ’s gifts of grace are given to each member separately, but for and in trust for the whole, “for the edifying of the body of Christ,” what the Geneva Bible calls the “repairing [of] the saints.”, and for “the work of the ministry.” Calling, quickening, joining, connecting, strengthening, establishing, all these things are (a) works of grace, (b) governed by authority which itself comes from God, and (c) the duty of every soul in the commonwealth of Ephesus, Israel, or England. The Bishops’ Bible, characteristically, emphasises this notion of due authority by translating “every joint supplying” as “by every joint of subministration.” For it, ministry should most emphatically be subministrated, or guided by due authority, itself a function and gift of Grace: for “He gave some [authority to be] apostles.”

The notion of edification, then, is a simple shorthand for a complicated set of images and interlocking concerns. We have the notion of calling, the “effectual work” of grace that call produces, the idea of membership in a community which itself is in the process of maturing, the idea of eschatological perfection in Christ, which perfection must be striven for even if it cannot be described, comprehended or attained in human terms – “the fullness of Christ, which fills all in all...”, children maturing into adults, and practical abandonment of sins in order to lead a life more receptive to the work of grace, and more up-building to one’s neighbours, “for we are members of one another”. In this corporate context, the call to edify is an invitation to personal and individual maturity, an invitation to contribute those individual gifts to the service of a wider commonwealth, and an interpolation into a particular eschatological vision which will see the tangible, but incomplete, breaking in of that final perfection. It is in just these Pauline terms that the early modern Reformers apply Ephesian metaphors to England too: the Protestant call to godliness and inward faith (how to measure either?), increase in neighbourliness and charity appealed for, with tears, by the aging lion
Henry VIII in 1545, and the eschatological vim of a scrap between the English David, and the Romish Goliath, as a stage in the great fight between Good and Evil. Of course, there are many differences between classical Ephesus and, say, Tudor Ely. But at the basis of the Evangelical vision of the English Reformers are the same Pauline categories: edification, progression, concord, unity and call, and pulling the Reforming party along is that same Pauline imperative of unity and constitutive order.

The second use of “edification” is as the summary criterion for Church order in the Corinthian epistles: “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:26). In first Corinthians, Paul writes to regulate the use of prophesying and speaking in tongues and to prescribe what public and holy worship ought to look like. In the second Corinthian epistle, he defends the legitimacy of his authority against his detractors because it has been “given for edification” that is, for good order, repair and maturing, “not destruction”.

The epistle takes up the theme of what it means to be “perfectly joined together” and the practical steps necessary for the restoration of order and the reconciliation of faction. Paul repeats the Ephesian metaphors of the Church as Christ’s maturing body, and the Church as God’s living temple, offering from verse 9 the following vision of maturity, conceived in building terms:

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.32 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. […] Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall

32 *Geneva*: “thereon”. In large part the Geneva Bible text of these verses matches the AV.
God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Cor. 3:9-11, 16-17 AV).

We can see here again St Paul’s three Ephesian metaphors: Family, with division attached, bodily growth, and building. All three are presented as co-operative enterprises. God has founded and built and husbanded, God has given grace (1 Cor. 3:10), and now Paul himself, a wise builder, uses that grace, and his authority, for the remaking, the sanctification, and the upbuilding, of the Corinthians, away from the carnal, and toward the spiritual, away from infantile immaturity towards full Christian adulthood, away from disorder towards a properly built and laid temple. It is in this context that the whole Epistle treats the pastoral questions of Church order, and introduces the explicit notion of edifying.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. (1 Cor. 10:23)

The distinctive contribution of Corinth to edificatory language is connected to the previous Ephesian notions of concurrent godliness, mutual upbuilding and legitimate authority or “subministration”, but also takes them one step further: doubtful matters of church order (such as feast days, and dietary laws, but also the use of tongues and prophesyings), are to be referred to it as a summary criterion: The Pauline rubric of maturing, then, happens when each person seeks the good of his neighbour, and attempts to build them up. To the extent that each person withholds their gifts, the body is poorer, and if it is divided then the orderly working of all the member is compromised. From these neighbourly notions of mutual love,
joinedness and edification, St Paul moves to apply these to the practical pastoral problems before him, the first being the speaking with other tongues.

How is it the, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (1 Cor. 14:26)34

Paul here explicitly marries the ideas of diverse gifts, godly concord, language, understanding and upbuilding, linking which will recur again and again throughout the theological programmes of the Reformers. Humanist and reformed insistence on the reformation of language, then, moves away from enacted commonality (as in the Cycle Plays, or Corpus Christi processions) and towards emphasis on common language, and common prayer.35 The Reformers pick up concordant order, monarchise and hierarchise it, and produce a vision of England united, answering the directions of the King with an orderly Amen. This, of course, is the social vision glorified on the frontispiece of the Great Bible (see Fig. 1): England in orderly ranks saying only “God Save the King” with dissenters and Papists tidily locked in jail. The fact that this is only a pictorial ideal is in itself the point – the Pauline ideal of “every joint supplying” unto the growth of the body and the building of the temple is key to the reforming vision – and parish reformers like Parker never forgot it.

33 The famous hymn to love which occupies chapter 13 is likewise stuck to maturing and apprehensive knowledge of God, but since it is not directly relevant, I pass over it.
34 The Geneva text in these verses for the largest part matches the AV.
35 Ironically, of course, this attempt to unify the diverse uses of Common Prayer into one, English form ran into ethnic obstacles in the North, Cornwall, Ireland and Wales. Cornwall was the leading location of the Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549. The Pilgrimage of Grace likewise had regional elements to it, as the North objected not only to the dissolution of the abbeys, but to the new service books. An early act of rebellion in 1536 was the burning of the Prayer Book in Durham and York. Note though that the text of the Act of Uniformity gives a basically edificatory reason for unifying the “divers and sundry” English uses, for the avoiding of offence. Edward is also presented as bearing with the “frailty and weakness” of his subjects by giving them a year to change to the Prayer Book. Both of these enterprises lie next to the Pauline frame constructed here.
Figure 1: The Great Bible Frontispiece, 2nd ed. 1541.
1.2 Edification and the English Context.

English Protestantism in the age of the Tudors faced a perennial Protestant problem, which is still not extinct: how to appear both new and old. On the one hand, the reforming hierarchy of the Church of England, asserted that “the church of Rome hath erred,” (Article 19), that it had fallen into “blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits” (Article 31), “blinded the people and obscured the glory of God” (*Of Ceremonies*), that it was the Antichrist, the Whore of Babylon, and generally in need of a whole lot less Corpus, and a whole lot more Christi. But while asserting the need for new reforms, the same hierarchy were constrained to deny that the new reforms they advocated were in any way new. Being a National Church, an Established Church, and a self-confessed Catholic Church, the Church of England could not afford to give its multitude of enemies any further ground for claiming the Reformers were making it up as they went along.

Protestants in general, and, most importantly from the view of English poetics, Anglicans in particular, had thus to police two fronts, and speak to two abiding problems – on the one hand, traditional religion must be attacked, sometimes violently. The traditional imaginative landscape of the Cycle Plays and the Corpus Christi processions, the traditional devotional frame, must be stripped of power, but this stripping is doubled as an act of repair, and recovery. Whether this is actually so or not is outside the scope of this study--what it is necessary to establish before moving on to consider a Protestant poetic of repair is what the reformers themselves considered they were doing, both theologically and imaginatively. Whether the English people mourned the stripping of their altars, as Duffy would have us believe, or welcomed it, as A.G. Dickens claimed, is functionally irrelevant to the subsequent question: How is Reformation imaginatively sanctioned? For the stripping of the altars is only the most obvious, furnishing related act in the re-formation of English-speaking religious imagination, the de-construction of old narratives, and the legitimation of new ones.
This is done by a serious theological, political and imaginative language which legitimises Protestant theology, and later, Protestant poetics. It is that language and its uses, we attempt to sketch.

### 1.3 The Narrative of Recovery.

The first thing to establish at once is the reformed sensitivity to the notion that a Reformed Church was simply made up. Bishop Jewel put it this way, in his *Apology* for the English Church (1562):

They [his Roman Catholic opponents] cry out upon us at this present everywhere, that we are all heretics, and have forsaken the faith, and have with new persuasions and wicked learning utterly dissolved the concord of the Church; that we renew, and, as it were, fetch again from hell the old and many a day condemned heresies…also that we are already divided into contrary parts and opinions, and could yet by no means agree well among ourselves…. that we have by our own private head, without the authority of any sacred and general council, brought new traditions into the Church: and have done all these things not for religion’s sake, but only upon a desire of contention and strife. (15)

A stung Jewel is constrained to deny the newness of any theological and ceremonial change, at the same time as defending it. But a Protestant counter-narrative, (as Shuger has pointed out in the context of Andrewes and Bellarmine (Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 120ff) must do more than simply offer a better catholic” counter-narrative based in patristics, although for Jewel, Cranmer and others this is important. The Roman dependence on continuity, and the
conception of ecclesial continuity itself, must be undermined (Shuger, 17). Thus, Jewel demands to know if Christ and the Fathers can be charged with heresy:

   We, for our part, have learned these things [our doctrines] of Christ, of the Apostles, of the devout fathers: and do sincerely, with good faith, teach the people of God the same…. 

   O immortal God! hath Christ Himself, then, the Apostles, and so many fathers all at once gone astray?....was so notable a consent of so many ancient bishops and learned men nothing else but a conspiracy of heretics? (55-56)

He continues to charge the Papists with “ignorance, error, superstition, idolatry, men’s inventions” (93) and their Church with being “darkened and decayed” (96). This double act may seem simple, but it has a wider linguistic valency: the enterprise of the English Church can be defined as a positive recovery and re-form, or a negative and iconoclastic return to purity; as a search for new establishment, or an attack on abuses; a growth in goodness, or a pruning of enormities; a growing up into Christ, or a smashing of the idols; an establishment of inward faith, or a stripping and purifying of the altars: in fact, both.

Jewel’s defence against accusations of novelty is a general Protestant preoccupation – and the same responses come from a variety of sources in Protestant Europe throughout the hundred odd years between the Act of Supremacy and the Peace of Westphalia – but Anglican responses are noteworthy in their attempt not just to pull down, but to build up, in their search for a language of revised establishment. Bishop Miles Coverdale’s sensitivity to the charge of novelty was so acute, that he translated a catechetical tract of Bullinger’s titled

*The Old Faith: an evident probation that the Christian Faith hath endured since the*
beginning of Time (1547), and the general Protestant search for a narrative that would trace the survival of the True Church “since the beginning of time” was finally imaginatively satisfied, in England, at any rate, by Foxe’s Acts and Monuments of the Martyrs (1563), which aimed to showcase God’s continually reforming work throughout history, juxtaposed with scenes of Romish persecution. John Calvin also alludes to the Protestant sensitivity to novelty in his prefatory letter to Francis I at the beginning of the Institutes (1536), paraphrasing the charges the French clergy made against the Reformed party:

They call it new, and of recent birth; they carp at it as doubtful and uncertain; they bid us tell by what miracles it has been confirmed; they ask if it be fair to receive it against the consent of so many holy Fathers and the most ancient custom…Lastly, they say there is little need of argument, for its quality may be known by its fruits, namely, the large number of sects, the many seditious disturbances, and the great licentiousness which it has produced. (Calvin 8)

Calvin’s defence against the charge of novelty is the well-travelled, and sarcastic rejoinder we also see paraphrased in Jewel:

To them, indeed, I very little doubt it is new, as Christ is new, and the Gospel new; but those who are acquainted with the old saying of Paul, that Christ Jesus “died for our sins, and rose again for our justification”, will not detect any novelty in us. That it

36 There is an industry of Protestant pamphlets attempting to prove that the Protestant Churches are no new religion. Thus, simply on title, we have for example, Marly’s Of the Institution, Use and doctrine of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Old Church (1600), Nichol’s Abraham’s Faith: That is, the Old Religion (1602), Morton’s A Catholic Appeal for Protestants Out of the Confessions of the Roman Doctors (1609), A New Eight Fold Probation of the Church of England’s Divine Constitution (1617), A Friendly Answer to the Pretended Catholics of Ireland (1622), Loque’s An excellent and plaine discourse of the church, whereby the godlie may knowe and discernre the true Church, from the Romish Church, and all other false and counterfeit churches (1582), Valsergues A notable discourse, plainelye and truelye discussing, who are the right ministers of the Catholike Church (1575), Bell’s The Catholic Triumph (1610), and many others, disputing Papal catholicity. 37 For more on Foxe and historiography, see John Foxe's Henry VIII As Justitia, Elizabeth H. Hageman The Sixteenth Century Journal 10.1 (1979) 35-43.
long lay buried and unknown is the guilty consequence of man’s impiety; but now when, by the kindness of God, it is restored to us, it ought to resume its antiquity just as the returning citizen resumes his rights. (9)

Cranmer produces a variation on this argument by placing his Preface to the Great Bible of 1539 into the mouths of two Church Fathers, Gregory Nazianus and John Chrysostom, in essence declaring his patristic and traditional credentials against both those who refuse to read the Bible, and those who would read it badly (see Chapter 3), and Thomas Browne still felt the need to say with a thump on the first page of his Religio Medici (1643) that the Church of England was no new religion:

but of the same belief our Saviour taught, the apostles disseminated, the fathers authorized, and the martyrs confirmed; but, by the sinister ends of princes, the ambition and avarice of prelates, and the fatal corruption of times, so decayed, impaired, and fallen from its native beauty, that it required the careful and charitable hands of these times to restore it to its primitive integrity. (2)

In essence, the two halves of the Protestant argument are fairly self-explanatory and obvious: the Church is decayed and in need of repair, and that repair ought to be conducted according to the criteria laid down in God’s word. What those criteria ought to be, and what to do with purely human and extra-biblical traditions, is a source of obvious and continuing controversy, but the wider, and so far, reasonably basic point is that the English Reformers were careful to reject any accusation of novelty, while at the same time being constrained to admit that the Church was indeed in need of some kind of new (but not novel) repair. It is for this reason that the English Church is from its very inception concerned with the historical narrative: this reform is legitimised by showing it to have occurred before. At some level, Coverdale’s Old Faith, Foxe’s Acts and Monuments and other historiographical exercises in justification, such
as Cranmer’s *Collecteana* on the Royal Supremacy, or John Bale’s *Three Laws* make the Church of England more apostolically acceptable to various shades of reforming opinion as a historical continuity, rather than a new artefact. The English Church is thus tied much more closely to a hermeneutic and narrative of continuity, than, say, the Scots Church, which explicitly “begins again” in new buildings, and with a system legitimised by public consent, first by the Reformation Parliament of 1560, and ultimately the National Covenant of 1635. Such a sense of *de novo* binding is absent in England, where the churches and cathedrals survive, and continuity is both emphasised, and an actual accomplished fact, as reformed services are celebrated in the same literal space as the old. Thus while, as Ulrich Gabler has pointed out, Calvinist churches in France are best “read” in terms of a narrative of exile, English Protestants are caught in a much more ambiguous, and hence literarily interesting, position. They are just as invested as their Scots counterparts in the end of the old devotional framework, the weaning of the people away from their reliance on tactile aids such as relics and pilgrimages, and, as can be seen from the Dissolution of the Monasteries, or the Edwardine reforms in Eucharistic reception, they are clearly capable of considerable radicalism, when political conditions allow. But with this allowable radicalism comes also a search for a language of establishment, a positive agenda aimed at rebuilding the realm in godliness -- not simply destroying old error, but planting an explicitly recovered truth. The Scots signature of the Covenant recalls the history of Covenant Theology all the way from the Old Testament, and is given later imaginative force by the twin bogies of Popery and

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38 For more on the Elizabethan reform of the National past, see Benedict Robinson “‘Darke Speech’: Matthew Parker and the Reforming of History”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29.4 (1998) 1061-1083. See also John King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 56ff, for the placing of contemporary martyrs such as Anne Askew into this narrative; and 73ff.


40 In conversation with this author.
Prelacy, and by the theatrical enacted commitment of signature. Anglican historiography recalls the cyclical narratives of Kings, Chronicles and Judges – the people fall into idolatry, forsaking the Lord, a righteous leader is raised up, restoring true worship and government, and the people who harken to the Lord return to the true faith, whereas those who cleave to idol worship are judged and destroyed. Again and again throughout history, Foxe presents a true remnant as persecuted and voyaging in exile. But whereas continental Calvinism looks toward some sort of fulfilment of the Covenant, Anglican theology follows its narrative of restoration towards a renewed and continuous community, one reflecting the vision of an inspired monarch. The language of edification, and its parallel narrative of restoration, is key to this imaginative recovery. Whereas Calvin’s conception of religious truth, as it were, drops from heaven as a unified system to “resume its ancient rights”, English Reformers see Reformation as less a blueprint than a process, and it is in service to this process that the language of edification comes into its own.

The central line of my argument is thus that, in order to negotiate this difficult balance between reform and continuity, the Protestant party, led in its early period by its Archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, borrows the language of “edification,” or “building up” as a rubric for the reform of the English Church, and that this language became installed as a central part of the imaginative “architecture” of the Anglican Church. Unimpeachably Biblical, the language of edification provided a governing principle for church order and a justification for church and for Royal authority. It had the Protestant idea of instruction in godliness at its core, while preserving the idea of the renovation of an existing structure, not the construction of a new one. If the church, and the people in it, could be “edified”, instructed so as to grow into holiness, the church and the realm would be placed in right and godly order, and right authority maintained.
Figure 2: Another picture of the Godly Commonwealth, this time under Edward VI, “our Josiah”, as Udall calls him. Note the “purging” in the top half of the image, and the rebuilding and reforming images at the bottom.
The idea of re-form, or re-edifying has obvious attractiveness in this light, since it appeals to the purity and godliness of the “ancient undivided church” as recounted in the Epistles, but also makes room for a process of reform conceived in avowedly Pauline terms. Bishop Jewel offers a discreet example of this, insisting that the Church of Rome is corrupt, that the Church of England is no new religion to replace it, but the old one repaired: “For neither is the Church of God such as it may not be dusked with some spot, or asketh not sometime reparation” (94). Behind that sentence are myriad assumptions about ecclesiology, but also about the theology of community, and imaginative vision. The Church can be “the Church of God” while at the same time condoning abuses, or “dusked with some spot”, but at the same time, the true “Church of God” is that which “asketh” reparation. Jewel argues both for the continuity of the Church, and for the necessity of repair – and in doing so, uses an avowedly Pauline, and useful, reforming language.

This Pauline language seems especially well adapted for England, and to have a special resonance there. Other reformers of course use the concept of edification, especially Reformed theologians such as Calvin and Beza. The wider Ephesian concept of maturing and progressive and gradual reform is also precious to Magisterial Lutherans, such as Luther, Melanchthon, Oisander, and Bucer, gaining special importance against the background of the Peasant’s Revolt, and other varieties of Continental upheaval. “edification not error” is the battle cry of the first reforms, but as they take effect, and amid further debates about how far they go, “edification not contention” becomes a conformist and conservative device, attempting to put the genie back in the bottle. In this sense, the reformers begin in Ephesians, (grow up into all truth) and end in Timothy and Titus (abandon debates that do not edify). In the English context, as reforming ideas gain currency, edification thus becomes a linguistic system which parallels an agenda of European magisterial reform, translating and standing in
for a number of associated concepts: order, neighbourliness, hierarchy, evangelical truth, and godly conversation.

We can see this, and we can add another layer of lexical richness to the notion of edification, by examining the concepts which it is seen to summarise, and lie parallel to. The way I have chosen to do this is to examine English translations of one of the most important Reformers for the English context: Desiderius Erasmus. Henry VIII never really embraced Luther, even when sounding Lutheran himself, and as G. W. Barnard has argued, the Henrician agenda of reformed and monarchical Catholicism can properly be described as “Erasmian”. Erasmian policies followed in England include monastic reform, and Henry himself wrote to Erasmus using Erasmian language, speaking of his commitment to “propagating and illustrating the Christian faith” and “For we have felt for several years, and now feel, that very thing: our breast, incited without doubt by the Holy Spirit, is kindled and inflamed with passion, that we should restore the faith and religion of Christ to its pristine dignity” (237). Henry also spoke well of De Libro Arbitrio (239), and echoes Erasmian language (“increase of virtue in Christ’s religion”) in the text of the Act of Supremacy (1534), and in the Preface to the Ten Articles (1536): “that unity and concord in opinion….may increase and go forthward” (277). Not only was Erasmus invited to England, and famously associated with the Humanist circle around Thomas More, Colet and Fisher, but his Paraphrases were placed in every parish Church in 1547. His agenda of Catholic reformism seems to influence, (at least the Catholic half) of Henry VIII, but for Protestants,

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41 Henry never forgave Luther his insults in Martinus Luther Contra Henricius Regem Angliae. Even at his most anti-Papal, Peter Marshall has described Henry as “Lutheran without justification by faith”. That is, in important respects, not Lutheran at all. Compare Alex Ryrie, “The Strange Death of Lutheran England” Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 53 (2002), 64-92. Henry’s conception of the Sacrament also remained thoroughly traditional – see Barnard 238ff. The exact points of disagreement with the Augsburg Confession were enumerated in 1535 (Barnard 239ff), essentially justification and the Mass. See MacCulloch’s account of the Ten Articles. (Cranmer, 161ff) Note also that Luther disliked the Paraphrases (Dodds 11): the English Church’s use of them is hence, as he says, “all the more interesting”.

Erasmus becomes, when translated into the English context, co-optable. The English translations of the Paraphrases (of course using the Great Bible) tend to use edifying and building language to translate a number of parallel and interlocking concepts in the original Latin of Erasmus, even when he seems to stay away from building language, or to use other words.

We compare the English text of the Great Bible, with its “edification” with Nicholas Udall’s English paraphrase from Erasmus. We also compare the English with Erasmus’s Latin, comparing the original Latin Paraphrase with the English version of it. We begin with the Bible text, and Erasmus’s paraphrase of the edifying part of Ephesians 4, in Latin. Next comes Udall et al’s translation of it. In what follows the first cited passage is the Great Bible translation of Paul in ordinary type, the second in bold is Erasmus’s Latin paraphrase of Paul. In italics, lastly, we compare Udall’s English translation and amplification.

And the very same made some apostles, some prophetes, some Evangelists, some shepherds and teachers: to the edifying of the saintes to the work and ministration, even to the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unitie of faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the full perfect age of Christ.

…Atque, item caeteros, alios aliis dotibus instruxit, ut ex his omnibus in unum collatis, consummaretur sanctorum coetus, sic instructus ad omnem officii functionem, & perfectum Christi corpus omnibus sui membris coagmentatum sic interim mutuis

42 For more on this, see Gregory Dodds, Exploiting Erasmus: The Erasmian Legacy and Religious Change in Early Modern England (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).
43 Englished by a team of translators, with Volume 1 appearing in 1548, and the Pauline Epistles appearing in 1549, the Paraphrases are the work of a team of translators. Volume 1 was edited by Nicolas Udall, and Volume 2 by Bishop Coverdale. We are moving from Erasmus’s words, to Erasmus as co-opted and received in England – an important distinction.
praesidiis foveatur, atque interim membrum validius imbecilliori morigeretur &
imbecillius ad robustiorum exemplum eniatatur.

Donec tandem omnes perveniamus ad par fidei robur, similique perfectione
cognoscamus Filium Dei, cujus auxilio sic grandescamus secretis animorum auctibus,
ut tandem evadamus in virum perfectum ac juxta modum nostrum perfectissimo capiti
respondeamus, in quo nihil fuit nec imbecillitatis nec erroris nec vitii. (Erasmus,
Paraphrasis in Epistolis Pauli ad Ephesios, 987) 44

And the rest he instructed, some with one gift and some with another, to the intent that,
of all these conferred together, the company of saints should so be cherished one with
the succour of another, and that the stronger member should bear for the time with the
weaker, and the weaker mark and follow the example of the stronger, until we may all
at length come to equal strength of faith, and with like perfection know the Son of God,
through whose help we maye wax big and lusty in the secret increase of mind, after
such sort that at length we may growe unto a perfect man, and according to our
measure, frame ourselves answerably to our most perfect head: In whom was neither
imbecility or error, neither any default.

Erasmus stays away from the explicit language of edifying which characterises the English
text of the instead producing a number of alternatives, and amplifying on a number of Pauline
offices. First, Erasmian conception of the Apostolic is inseparable from the centrality of
preaching, and evangelical life. But Erasmus then dilates upon the words the English Bible
translates as “to the edifying of the saints and the work of ministration.” The metaphor
Erasmus borrows at the first use of edifying, consummaretur sanctorum coetus (“the holy

44 The text here comes from the original Cambridge Latin Paraphrases on the New Testament, with clarification
and modernised spelling from the Latin facsimile edition: Desiderii Erasmii, Operum Omnim Tomus Septimus,
(London: Gregg Press, 1964). In the interest of readability and clarity, abbreviations have been silently expanded.
union is consummated”), Udall translates as “conferred together”, but Erasmus also uses a number of other cognates “perfectum Christi corpus” (which Udall makes contingent on the next clauses and translates “with like perfection”), and “suis membris coagmentatum” – a sort of coagulant cognate. But Udall also picks up the constructive vagueness of “bear[ing] for the tyme with the weaker” and “marking” the example of the stronger, so that we might look like Christ with “neither imbecillitie or errooure, neyther any defaule” in time. The process of growth and coagmenting, as it were, is a gradual one, and strikingly, also a possibly invisible one – we “waxe bigge and lustye in the secret increase of mynde”, or “sic grandescamus secretis animorum.” The notion of edification via Erasmus and Udall, then, provides a Pauline framework not only for “conferring together” and a progressive process of growth, but also an evangelically-inflected theology of waiting and encouraging, in the name of “bearing with” the weak, even hints of hiding: the work of edification can be “secret”. One does not need to look far to see that, for instance, Matthew Parker’s concern for the “edification of the King’s subjects” is not only an Evangelical desire to see growth, but a pragmatic acceptance of his duty to “reduce” the people from their error towards the truth. The duty of edifying thus has attached to it a certain pastoral ambiguity particularly suited to political hopscotch. Note also in this translation by Udall the use of building language – Erasmus seems to use a somatic metaphor, “perfectissimo capiti respondeam” – the head turns and we respond, or “answer” so to speak, in the manner of a horse, or a rudder. Udall translates this using the building term “frame” (familiar to us from Parker’s “misframed judgements”) – to “frame ourselves aunswerablye” is more like building from a plan (to which one answers) than Erasmian “respond[eamus]. Erasmus is clearly thinking of St Paul’s metaphor of the body, for Udall in an English context, the body clearly also connotes a built temple.45

45 These sets of images are of course both drawn from Paul. The main point is, however, in the English context,
Erasmus and Udall continue:

That we henceforth should be no more children, wavering and carried about with every winde of doctrine, but the wileyness of men through craftiness, whereby they laye away for us, to deceive us. But let us folowe the truth in love, and in all things grow in him, which is every joint, wherewith one ministreth to another (according to the operation as every part hath his measure) he increaseth the body unto the edifiying of itself thorough loue…

…Sed potius semel amplexi veritatem Evangelicae, huic jungamus sinceram erga mortales omnes caritatem, hoc idealigabili studio contendes, ur pariter & in cognitione veri & in caritatis officiius assidue proficientes, efficiamus, ut omnia membra suo capiti respondeant. Caput autem nostrum est Christus, qui & ipsa veritas, & sic dilixit nos, ut semetipsum nobis servandis impenderit. Huic membra congruant oportet. Ab hoc enim vitalis ille spiritus defluit in totum corpus, et diversis membris ordine sibi cohaerentibus compactum & coagmentatum per omnes artuum commissuras penetrans, quod non fieret nisi mutua concordia partis corporis sibi Jungerentur, ut eis spiritus a membro in membrum possit dimanare. Neque enim manus aut pes amputans particeps esse possit virtutis a summo capite proficiscendentis: verum, dum omne corpus sibi conglutinatum est, fit ut in singulis membris pro suo cujusque; captum atque ordine, Christi Spiritus vim suam exerat: dumque membra omnia mutua caritate sibi vicissim student esse usui, totum corpus augescit validiumque ac vegetum redditur haudquaquam cessurum ventis opinionum falsarum, hue atque illuc sollicitantibus, ut a vero deflectat…

…But no, we having once embraced the verity of the Gospel, let us rather join unto it sincere charitable love towards all men, enforcing our continual study to this end, that building clearly has a deeper resonance which means that Udall uses it even when Erasmus points a different way.
we may profit not only in the knowledge of the truth, but also in the continual diligent workes of charity, so as all we being members may be answerably like unto our head. And truly Christ is our head, who also is the truth self, and hathe so loved us, that he has given us himself, to make us safe. To this head, it is requisite that all members be agreeable: Inasmuch as from him, the spirit of life floweth into all the whole body, being compact and set together of sundry members, joined orderly one to another, and piercing through every joint of the limbs, which could not be, except the parts of the body were joined agreeably one to another, that life may have passage into the from one member to another. For the hand or the foot being cut off, cannot possibly have any part of the virtue that cometh from the top of the head. But forasmuch as the whole body is perfectly conglutinate in itself, it cometh to pass that the spirit of Christ practiseth his efficacy in every member according to their several capacity and order, and forasmuch as all the members study through mutual love to profit everyone another, the whole body waxeth bigger and bigger, and is made lusty and strong, so as it will not give place in any condition to the winds of false opinions; alluring this way and that way to bring it out of the truth. (Ephesians 4; Paraphrases 982–3)

To translate the second part of Ephesians 4 and paraphrase it, Erasmus again has to go into Explainer Mode. Udall translates “profectus in progressum pietatis” as “there is a procedying in godliness”, and again mixes a fervent evangelical conception of truth with a constructive ambiguity about the “several capacity and order” of the body, and how long the proceedings might take. Edifying, or making the body “conglutinate” (“omne corpus sibi conglutinatum est”) is paired with a theology of the Holy Spirit: edifying makes ready the body to receive virtue from the head. “[F]orasmuch as all the members study through mutual love to profit every one another, the whole body waxeth bigger and bigger, and is made lusty and strong…”, so that it may resist the temptations of error. Note also that the English notion of
edifying has the Erasmian cognate “to profit one another” but also that one must (and can) “study through mutual love to profit one another”.

Thus, the duty of edifying in Erasmus encompasses several things. One, it is evangelical, tied to the incremental growth of truth, and the resisting of error. Two, it is reforming, although Erasmus and his English readers clearly had different (although at points allying) notions of what ought to be reformed. Three, it is political, or civic, concerned with holy union, conjunction, conferring, and conglutinating. Four, it is pneumatic, or spirit driven. And five, it is progressive: there is room for constructive ambiguity about who is edified, how far, how much, and the “capacity and order” thereunto.

Having looked, then, at the language of building, and its positive, and constructive impulse, the next point is that edification requires not only this positive valency, but a negative, and destructive impulse as well. The edification of the faithful might require destruction of the false, as well as the building of the true. This second strand of edifying language comes in Corinthians, to which we now turn:

For we are God’s labourers, ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God given unto me, as a wise builder have I laid the foundation. And another built theron. But let every man take heed, how he buildeth upon. For another foundation can no man lay, then it that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3; 225)

Ego (ut exempli gratia sic loquar) ut doctus architectus jeci fundamentum aedificio, non meus viribus sed ejus ope qui delegerat hoc officii. Alius atque alius fundamentis per me jactis superstruit. Sed etiam atque etiam videat quisque quid superstruat. Nam fundamentum, quod a nobis positum est, mutari non potest. Succedant nobis quocunque nomine praedicatorum, nisi Christum Iesum praedicant, & eum crucifixum, audiendi non sunt. Quod si fundamentum probant, superest ut structuram inducant tali fundamento
dignam. Coeleste ac spirituale fundamentum est, non convenit huic structura carnalis ac terrenae doctrinae. Ut hominum judicium fallat inanis ac fuacta structura, Dei iudicium non effugiet. (867)

For example, according to the grace, that God hath given me, like a wise builder have laid a foundation for building, not by mine own power, but by his help, that appointed me to this office. Upon the foundation that I have laid, divers men diversely build, but let every man mark well what he buildeth thereupon. As for the foundation that we have laid, cannot be changed. What preachers soever come after us, of what authority soever they be, unless they preach that Jesus Christ was fastened to the cross, give them no ear. If these allow our foundation, then remaineth it, that they thereupon build such a piece of work, as is for that foundation meet. The foundation is heavenly and spiritual, and such as werewith the building of earthly and carnal learning agreeth not. A vain counterfeit building may haply deceive the judgement of men, but it cannot deceive God’s judgement.

We have here a different type of edification, the good building work, which is “diverse” but united by the firmness of its foundations and its Christocentricity, and the bad building work, a “structura carnalis ac terrenae doctrinae” which is also called “fuacta structura”, a “vayne counterfaite buylding”. In this moment, we are close, when received in England to the pruning and dissolving work Henry and Cromwell view as so essential – the trimming and destruction of error.46

The building part of Corinthians continues:

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46 The emphasis here is thus less on Erasmus and his agenda of Catholic reformism, and more on the reformers receiving and interpolating his work into a process of English and Protestant reform – less what he said, and more what they were able to take him to mean.
Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and how that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any manne defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

An non meministis vos esse templum Deo consecratum, quod divinis ille Spiritus inhabitator sanctificat? Quod si afficitur supplicio qui Templum ab homine dictatum prophanat, an non hunc perditurus est Deus, qui suum templum conspurcarit? Cum deus spiritu suo templum hoc semel purum sanctumque reddiderit, adnintendum ut a nobis purum sanctumque servetur. Innocentia ac moribus Christo dignis servetur: ambitione, libidine, dissidio, & his similibus affectibus, ac morbis prophanatur conspurcaturque. Vos igitur cum sitis templum Dei e vivis saxis constructum in Deum impius est, qui mores aut affectus aut doctrinam Christo indignam in coetum vestrum invehit. (228)

Know ye not, that ye are as a temple consecrated unto God, which the heavenly spirit of God possesseth and sanctifieth. If such a one be punished, as doth defile a temple, that is hallowed by man, will not God destroy him, that defileth his temple? Endeavour must we diligently that this temple be kept pure and holy, since God hath once by his Holy Spirit cleansed and hallowed it. Keep it clean may ye by unhurtful life, with Christian conversation and manners. But if ye be too much desirous of honour, or if ye be lecherous, or given to strife and debate, and to such other wilfulness, then suspend ye, and defile it. Sith then ye are the Temple of God, builded with lively stones, very wicked certainly and ungodly is he, that provoketh any of your company to such manners, condictions and learnings, as are not with Christ agreeable.

St Paul’s emphasis on the metaphor of the temple, and his following emphasis on the moral consequences of maturing combine here in a list of practical things which define what it
means to be properly built. To add to the previous signs of decay and immaturity (things like discord, susceptibility to error, propensity to be deceived by clever talking, over-philosophising leading to doubt, or wavering about between doctrinal opinions), Erasmus helpfully fills in the blanks, “ambitione, libidine, dissidio, & his similibus affectibus…”, and Udal adds to the languages of concord and “answering” the third notion of being “agreeable” to Christ in “maners, condicions, and learnynges”. We complete our lexical field with two more verses from Corinthians:

I may doe all thinges, but all thinges are not expedient. I may do all thinges but all things edify not. (1 Cor. 10:23)

Nihil mihi non licet, at non quidius expedit proximo cujus gratia nonnunquam & a lictis temperandum est. Nihil mihi non licet, at non quidvis conducit aliis ad pietatem. (228ff)

*I may do all things, but all things are not for my neighbour expedient, for whose sake I must sometime abstain even from lawful things. I may do all things, but all things edify not godly life.*

In the last sections of edifying Corinthians, Udall translates as “edifie godlye life” another Erasmian cognate, “conducit aliis ad pietatem”, and in the sections on speaking in tongues, where Udall has “edifying” in the text and “edifyeth” in the translated paraphrase, Erasmus speaks of utility “adferens utilitatem”, and profit, benefit and use, that is “prodest”.

He that prophesyeth, speaketh unto men, for their edifiying, for their exhortation, and for their comfort. He that speaketh with the tongue profiteth himself: he that prophesyeth edifieth the congregation. (1 Cor. 14)
Contra, qui prophetae fungitur munere, non Deo loquitur solum, verum etiam hominibus loquitur, non simplicem illis adferens utilitatem, quippe qui simul & malos invitat ad vitam meliorem & segnes extimulat ad vigilantiam & pusillanimes erigit ac solatur. Videte quantam inter donum & donum interest. Qui loquitur lingua, sibi private uni prodest: at qui per prophetiae donum enarrat scripturae mysteria, toti prodest congregationi.

*He that doth the office of a prophet speaketh not only to God, but also to men by diverse and sundry ways profiting them, whiles he both provoketh evil livers to amendment, and such as are slothful to diligence, and stirreth them up and comforteth them, that are faint hearted. Mark, how great difference there is betwixt one gift and another. He that speaketh but with tongues profiteth only himself. But he, that by the gifte of prophecy expoundeth ministeries of scripture edifyeth the whole congregation.*

Adding Erasmian cognates into the edifying mixture, then, expands the lexical field quite considerably. “Edification” and “Edify” in English are a sort of shorthand containing various kinds of reforming agenda. First, “Edification” can be appealed to as a process language, a language of incremental and evangelical change. Second, Edification is capable of being press-ganged very easily as a hierarchical language of magisterial reform, and ultimately the Royal Supremacy. Being agreeable and answerable to Christ as our head means it is but a step before we are also answerable and agreeable to Henry. But as well as being what Rowan Williams has called “straight-forwardly hierarchical”, he also points out the notion of commonwealth is “participatory” (*Royal Devotion 1*) the “conglutinate” unity of the Realm also means the evangelical participation of diverse kinds of people “according to their capacitie and ordre”, it is our duty to edify *one another*, not only in Christian conversation,
manners and life, but by study, reading, marking, and bearing with one another in “mutuall loue”. Third, the language of edification does not explicitly forbid or allow what is to be done in worship, but Pauline-ly, and re-formationally as well, it sets out the criteria by which doubtful matters are to be judged. “What is to be done, brethren? Let all things be done unto edifying” (1Cor. 14:26). This means that what is edifying is already contested, and by definition not only civic, but political – how are we to judge the nature and utility of the building, especially as there is such a thing as “bad” building, as “fortifying misframed judgements”? And lastly, the process of maturing, growth and sanctification is a spirit-driven, and a spiritual one – and one conceived in suprisingly general, although certainly not democratic, terms. The Spirit’s virtue is available to all who fulfil the entry criteria. It will be barely a generation until the vexed question of what these criteria are becomes acute, as former allies diverge into Anglicans and Dissenters and within an hundred years, England will fight a civil war to decide them.

1.4 Henry VIII and Edification: The Henrician Canons

Although Erasmus himself stays away from the notion of edification directly, Erasmian vocabulary attached to the notion of edification remains alive. Having, then, examined the ideas which readers of Erasmus had coterminous with edifying language, it is instructive to examine the Erasmian language borrowed, in the service of the Royal Supremacy. We shall examine Cranmer’s theology of the word in this connection in Chapter 3, but let us look first Henry VIII’s Preface to the Henrician Canons (1535), which links explicitly the Royal

47 This notion of “Christian conversation” is expanded by Calvin in his Conversation of a Christian Man, 6-17. See Calvin, Of the life or conuersation of a Christen man, a right godly treatise, wyrtten [sic] in the latin tonge, by maister John Caluyne, a man of ryghte excellente learnynge and of no lesse godly conuersation. Translated into English by Thomas Broke, (John Day: Cheapside 1549).
Supremacy with the Erasmian incremental “increase” of evangelical truth, and “Christian learning” and its assumed collorary, social concord (Bray 5). The theory of edification, as seen in Paul, is deeply conservative, and easily maps onto a hierarchical conception of social and church order. This said, however, the evangelical impulse released by the Royal determination to remove error is not easily containable: the genie is out of the bottle. We can see in the Henrician Canons, and in Henry’s bipolar Bible Decrees, both the flexibility of edification, and the contradictions in it, which begin to work themselves out almost immediately. Henry is forced again and again to insist that he is the directing mind and judge of what is erroneous, addressing Parliament in tears in 1545 at the advanced divisions which the reign of his son would only harden.48 We begin, however, with the comparative optimism of the 1535 Preface to Canon Law.

Henry…to our subjects and liegemen…greeting, and increase of Gospel truth (evangelicae veritatis incrementum).

[Kings] must take care not only of those things which pertain to human society, but also of those things which are most agreeable to the divine Christian religion. It is the duty of Christian Princes so to order the present happiness of this world that they may use this power of theirs to further the worship of God (ad Dei cultum dilatandum utantur), and to continue in this, so that true doctrine might be spread (recta doctrina propagatur) and God’s glory advanced (orneturque Dei Gloria). (6)

You are not unaware how much care I have devoted to promoting and preserving those things which seem to be helpful and most conducive49 to this matter, nor with what dedication I have tried and will continue to try to remove and destroy those

48 See epigraph.
49 “conducive” is another Erasmian notion, see the previous section on the Paraphrases.
things which seem to go against this aim, and hinder it… [I have reformed statutes]

In place [of Papal Canon Law] that the glory of the most high God may in future be more happily magnified, (ut felicis in posterum Dei maximi Gloria illustretur) that the kingdom of Christ might flourish by true Christian learning, (et vera philosophia Christiana, regnumque Christi vigere possit) and that everything in Christ’s church might be done decently, and in order, (et quo Omnia decenter et ordine in Christi hac ecclesia gerantur) behold – we are giving you laws published by our authority, which we desire to be received, studied, and obeyed by you all. (7)

Putting aside Henry’s conception of his direct access to God, and his subjects’ equally direct obedience to himself, note the number of progressive, re-forming processes in the proclamation. Gospel truth goes forward “incrementum”-wise. The worship of God is “furthered”, true doctrine “spread”, God’s glory “advanced”, the Christian religion “assisted” and “advanced”, right religion “promoted and preserved”, Papistical over-reach “removed and destroyed”, God’s glory “happily magnified” and Erasmus’s philosophia Christi flourishes in decency, order, concord and obedience.50 Note too the verbs here: God’s truth “dilates” (cultum dilatandum), evangelical truth is advanced in “incrementum”, right doctrine grows (propagatur), God’s glory orneturque (this is translated “advanced” or “furthered” but the root also has the sense of ornament, furnishing and equipping)51 – these are all progressive, incremental words. Henry himself even has to go through a process of search, realisation and discovery, a re-formation of right order and doctrine contingent on his own desire to do his God given, “divine sanctioned” duty. The language of Henrician reform can be seen as a stripping, a removal, an abrogation or a smashing – as Henry himself threatens

50 For some account of the Philosophia Christi, see Erica Kroeker, Erasmus in the Footsteps of Paul (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 6ff.
51 A formulation marrying the two, “of use and ornament to the Church of Christ” turns up in a letter from Cranmer to his Lutheran relation-by-marriage Andreas Oisander, urging Oisander to finish his Harmonia Evangelica, cited in MacCulloch, Cranmer 71.
bodily harm not only to the Papal party, but to all those who forget obedience – but it is also doubled as an act of recovery, re-establishment, re-form, and re-building.

Although Henry does not use the direct cognates of “edify”, the maturing, incremental process he describes, and pairs with the notions of unanimity (“with one voice”), social concord and submission is a Pauline and Ephesian one, with explicit Corinthian echoes as well, as everything is done “in decency and order” (1 Cor 14:40) – and Henry prescribes the Supremacist terms in which both are to be measured, by every joynt of subministration” indeed. We can see the same categories in the Bible Decree of 1541, which pairs conformist concern for obedience and quietness, an irate evangelical prod at those dilatory parishes who have yet to purchase a Bible, and an equally irate swipe at those who are too evangelical for the King’s taste:

The which Godly commaudment and injunction [for Bible provision] was to the only intent that every of the King’s Majesty’s loving subjects, minding to read therein, might… learn thereby to observe God’s commandments, and to obey their Sovereign Lord and high powers, and to exercise Godly charity, and to use themselves, according to their vocations: in a pure and sincere Christian life without murmur[ing] or grudging…[and] not that any of them should read the said Bibles, with loud and high voices, in time of the celebracion of the Holy Mass and other Divine Services used in the church, nor that any his late subjects reading the same, should presume to take upon them, any common disputation, argument or exposition of the mysteries therein contained, but that every such layman should humbly, meekly and reverently read the same, for his own instruction, edification, and amendement of his life, according to God’s Holy worde therein mentioned. (Tudor Royal Proclamations 296)
Henry’s notion of edification, then, is “sit down and read quietly, or else”, but more than that, a conception of a divinely ordained commonwealth, stuck together in diverse vocations, but with one heart and one obedience – an enscriptured and obedient community, the one depending on the other. The 1541 Bible decree is interesting to compare both with the expansive Cranmerian vision of Chapter 3, but also with a third Bible decree, one also using edifying language, but in a different connection. As we have seen, “edification” in Corinthian and Ephesian contexts can be used against error, as it was in Parker’s letter to Stokes – that is “edification, not destruction” or “evangelical truth, not Popish error”. But Henry gradually begins to use another sense of it, the one reflected in the admonitions of Timothy and Titus to: “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith (1 Tim 1:4), and Titus 3:9ff: “But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain”. Henry increasingly begins to borrow edification in this latter sense, that is, “edification not contention”. This conformist notion of pacifying unprofitable disputes is of course also basic to Parker’s appeal to Stokes, and it will increasingly become a conformist language borrowed to pacify dissent, as it is here, in Henry’s Decree of Necessary Doctrine (1543):

Like as in the time of darkness and ignorance, finding our people seduced and drawn from the truth by hypocrisy and superstition, we by the help of God & his word have travailed to purge and cleanse our realm from the apparant enormities of the same, wherein by opening of God’s truth, with setting fourth and publishing of the Scriptures, our labours (thanks be to God) haue not been void and frustrate....[but] we

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52 Geneva: “Neither that they give heed to fables and genealogies which are endless, which breed questions rather than godly edifying which is by faith.”
53 Both quotations from the Authorised Version. The Geneva version raises the entertaining notion of brawling in church: “But stay foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and brawlings about the Law: for they are unprofitable and vain.”
find entered into some of our people’s hearts, an inclination to sinister understanding of Scripture, presumption, arrogance, carnal liberty, and contention: we be therefore constrained for the reformation of them in time, and for avoiding of such diversity in opinions, as by the said evil spirits might be engendered, to set fourth with the advice of our clergy such a doctrine and declaration of the true knowledge of God and his word, with the principal articles of our religion, as whereby all men may uniformly be led & taught the true understanding of that which is necessary for every Christian man to know, for the ordering of himself in this life, agreeably to the will and pleasure of Almighty God. (Aii)

Henry begins in a well travelled evangelical vein, criticising Roman error and lauding the process of purgation, but soon takes up the irate theme of diversity in opinion which had been a feature of the second Bible decree of 1541. If Papists are identifiable with “hypocrisy and superstition” the further-light Evangelicals are contentious and disputatious – and Henry moves on to make clear that “edification not contention” means they should be quiet pronto:

considering that God (who as Saint Paul sayeth, distributeth [and] divideth to his Church His graces distinctly) hath ordered some sort of men to teach other, and some to be taught, that all things should be done seemly and in order, and hath beautified and set forth by distinction of ministers and offices, the same Church…. conveniently to dispence and distribute to their audience the truth of God, according to their conning for the edification of others, and by true exposition of the Scriptures according to the Apostolical doctrine received and maintained from the beginning…

It must be agreed than that for the instruction of this part of the Church, whose office is to teach others, the having, reading, and studying of Holy Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, is not only convenient but also necessary: But for the other part
of the Church ordained to be taught, it ought to be denied certainly that the reading of
the Old and New Testament, is not so necessary for all those folks, that of duty they
ought and be bound to read it, but as the Prince and the policy of the Realm shall
think convenient, so to be tolerated or taken from it. Consonant whereunto the politic
law of our Realm hath now restrained it from a great many, esteeming it sufficient for
those so restrained, to hear and truly bear away the doctrine of Scripture taught by the
preachers, and so imprint the lessons of the same, that they may observe and keep
them inwardly in their heart, and as occasion serveth, express them in their deeds
outwardly…..” (Aiii)

Not only is this attitude to the Bible flatly at variance with Cranmer’s Preface (see Chapter
3), it implies, somewhat against the spirit of both the Paraphrases and Henry’s own previous
decrees, that edification is basically a passive, clergy-directed process, one which is subject to
higher authority, and one which does not actually have to rely at all upon direct contact with
the scriptures. In this sense, carrying away the “imprinted” word by hearing from the pulpit
or the Homilies is enough for those tempted to contention or unable to handle the Scripture
properly – and the threat at the end is clear: access to the Bible is not necessarily edificatory,
but is a revocable privilege, and one contingent on social class, godly quietness, and
Henrician whim. While “edification not error” advances the claim of evangelical liberty
against the Antichrist of Rome, “edification not contention” suggests that those claims of
evangelical liberty must also take account of social concord, and political conditions. It is this
difficult balance Henry (and Cranmer) aim to tread.
Chapter 3: The Commonwealth of Christendom: Cranmer and Edification.

O that the King, O that God’s glory’s gust
from heaven would drive the dust of the land, smite
his people with might of doctrine, embodied raise
their subservient matter, set with his fire ablaze
their heavy somnolence of heavenly desire, his word
bid what God said be heard, whit God bade be done!
that the King’s law might run savingly through the land:
so might I, if God please, outcast from my brethren stand.


Excita, quaesumus, Domine, tuorum fidelium voluntates: ut divini operis fructum propensius exsequientes,
pietatis tuae remedia maiora percipiant: Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Collect for Stir Up Sunday (the first Sunday before Advent) 1549.

Cranmer’s martyrdom at the stake in 1556 is a deservedly famous, and iconic moment. Part high tragedy, part comic opera, the degraded Archbishop moves from browbeaten penitent to triumphant martyr, as “with an expression of great gravity” he puts the ultimate seal upon the sincerity of Anglicanism, silencing in death the accusations of reluctance and undue flexibility he was so often taxed with in life. The scene clearly made a great impact, then and since, upon the Protestant mind, and is represented in iconic form by the famous woodcut in Foxe of the bearded and grave Cranmer, consigning his hand to the flame, burning into the English story both Protestant sincerity, and Catholic iniquity.

This moment of high drama has to some extent obscured the recantation Cranmer read before it, in the pulpit of St Mary’s Oxford. And Cranmer’s sudden retraction of his
recantation at the end of the document, substituting for the expected denial of his previous work a re-affirmation of it, a denial of the Pope, and a last barb at Stephen Gardiner, has, understandably, eclipsed the dutiful sentiments expressed in the remainder of the document, and in Cranmer’s prayer, delivered immediately afterwards, before the stake in Broad Street.

If I begin here, with the most famous Anglican moment of the Reformation, it is to argue that this moment ought to be seen in the context Cranmer himself gave it – and that Cranmer’s life and work should be seen in this context too. The notion of edification recurs again and again, in various guises and in different words – including here, at almost the last moment of his life. While it is true that the sentiments, in the printed text of the Recantation passed muster with Cranmer’s Catholic censors, reading Cranmer’s last sentiments through the lens of edification reveals them to have a clear, Protestant ring – and a ring clearly audible to the spectators, who (Foxe naturally recalls) were greatly impressed by them.

Recall to mind the argument of the preceding chapters: that edification (and its corrolaries, godly obedience and reformation of manners and conversation) is assimilable in the English context to the Royal Supremacy, containing both a stepwise notion of progressive repair, a civic element of conjoint co-operation, and an Evangelical agenda prioritising the transformation of self and community in a Word-centred, Protestant direction. This Supremacist and Evangelical vision, the one re-inforcing the other, seems genuinely to have been Cranmer’s position, with “edification not error” being an Evangelical impulse, and “edification not contention” a conservative and hierarchical one. Such a reliance on “godly obedience” puts Cranmer in a much more difficult position at the accession of Mary I. Identified in Catholic eyes not only as the architect of Protestant reforms (including the Prayer Book which sparked traditionalist rebellions), but also a lead actor in the King’s divorce, Cranmer’s recantation and reconciliation had obvious public currency attached to it,
in the period when Marian priests and the Parliament were likewise being absolved of the sin of schism.54

Read as an exercise in progressive repair, or re-edification, I argue, Cranmer’s notorious, although perhaps overstated, trimming, and his emphases, begin to make sense – he must be seen, I think, in terms both theological and imaginative.

Edification conditions Cranmer’s liturgical reform, frames the Preface to the Great Bible of 1539-40, and he returns to it moments before his death, hoping that by his words, “God would be glorified, and the people edified.” If we engage in Cranmerian theology, then, it is to analyse a rhetorical world and an imaginative vision – the same vision, I argue, Cranmer maintains up to, in, and retracting, his recantations. This argument does not rescue Cranmer from the charge of inconsistency, nor does it try to. But it attempts to sketch in outline the Cranmerian vision of evangelical and concordant community, the vision of which has a literary application in the work of poets and literary figures to be examined later.

3.1 The Edificatory Context of Cranmer’s martyrdom.

The first point to note is the subtle but distinct overtone of building language in Foxe’s account, beginning with the sermon of Dr Henry Cole, Archdeacon of Ely. Dr Cole accuses Cranmer of having:

been a heretic, from whom, as from an author and only fountain, all heretical doctrine and schismatical opinions that so many years have prevailed in England, did first rise and spring…[Cranmer] sowing them abroad by writings and arguments, privately and openly, not without great ruin and decay of the catholic Church”. (Cranmer 331)

54 Indeed, the Marian regime seems to have attempted to salvage their propaganda victory, printing at Paris an edition of Cranmer’s Recantation which contains the statement he read without its defiant closing paragraphs.
This commonplace at first does not strike one as particularly significant, but it is another skirmish in the ongoing imaginative battle we see fought and re-fought in Parker’s letter to Stoke, in the historiography of Foxe and Bale, and in Spenser – someone is building the Church (in union with Christ), and someone else is ruining and decaying it by error. One side represents the pure and primitive Church, the other is liable to the charge of novelty. Cole’s rejoinder in his burning sermon, delivered in “the style of the schoolmen”, Foxe tells us, is a response to Cranmer’s appeal at his degradation, in which he said that the only reason he was accused of heresy was because:

I allow not the doctrine lately brought in of the sacrament, and because I consent not to words not accustomed in Scripture and unknown to the ancient Fathers, but newly invented and brought in by men, and belonging to the destruction of souls and the overthrowing of the pure and old religion. (327)

Dr Cole’s response takes up the cudgels on this ground, emphasising both Cranmer’s schism and the Queen’s authority, naming him fount of heresy and traitor, and finishes by inviting him “to show himself a catholic indeed”. (388) J. I. Packer is correct to spotlight this “happy irony”, (xi) since Cranmer’s attempts at reform were for him and the other reformers “a quest for catholicity”:

To the Reformers, as to the Fathers, catholicity was a theological and historical concept before it was a geographical or statistical one….where Apostolic teaching had been corrupted, there catholicity was wanting. (xii)

To ask Cranmer to prove himself a catholic gave the abjuring Archbishop a tailor-made chance to demonstrate that being truly catholic was to be reformed, especially on the subject
of the eucharist, and a chance to demonstrate which was the truly catholic, and which the novel and deformed doctrine – a chance he took.\textsuperscript{55}

But in locating Cranmer’s allegiance primarily to “doctrine” (xiii), Dr Packer skates over, as it were, the pastoral and national ambiguity of Cranmer. For whatever else the English Reformation is, it is a national phenomenon, adapted to English conditions, formed to English palettes, and stuck, as Dr Packer is forced to admit on the next page, to the Royal Supremacy (xiv-xv). Cranmer’s doctrinal allegiances should be read not simply in the light of, say, pan-European debates about justification or the sacrament, but as part of an avowedly evangelical, but also profoundly civic version of England. It is an exercise in the restoration of catholicity, as Packer argues, but also an exercise in the restoration of godly and hence neighbourly England on the model of the Great Bible, a debate engaged in Protestant distinctives, and sharing much with the exercises in restitutio of Lutherans and Reformed voices on the continent, but also devoted to the rebuilding of an English Church and the conditioning of an English context, a context conditioned by rhetorics of edification.\textsuperscript{56} For this reason, then, it is not suprising to see Cranmer returning to edification, in the pulpit of St Mary’s Oxford, where the challenge of Dr Cole to “show himself catholic indeed” has just died away. Cranmer’s response begins:

\begin{quote}
So I beseech God grant me grace, that I may speak something at this my departing, whereby God may be glorified and you edified. This shall be my first exhortation:
That you set not overmuch by this false glosing world, but upon God and the world to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} One might also bring to mind the Dedication of Cranmer’s work on the Sacrament to Edward VI, in which Cranmer announces that the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper has been “renovated” and “restored” after “superstitions” and “violations”. (52)

\textsuperscript{56} This argument of course does not exclude at the same time pan-European exercises in reformed unity. Cranmer’s great project (in the end, stillborn), to reconstitute “harmony of doctrine” (24) by summoning a great reformed Council to counter Trent can be seen (arguably) as a pan-Protestant version of the same kind of building effort Cranmer sponsors in England. See Cranmer’s letters to Calvin, Melanchthon, Bullinger, Bucer and others, in \textit{Original Letters}, 18ff.
come. And learn to know what this lesson meaneth, which St John teacheth, that the love of this world is hatred against God. (334).

Note here the characteristic of “the false world”, that is, that it does not interpret, or “glose” properly, that “so many folk so much doat on the love of this false world, and be so careful for it, that of the love of God, and the world to come, they think little or nothing”. This exhortation is both Johannine and Pauline – one might compare his distinction drawn in the Annotations to the King’s Book (1538) between those who have “general” Christian faith shared by the wicked and the devil, which simply admits the truth of theological propositions, and those who have saving and efficacious faith, “pure faith” or “love in the heart”. Those who have simply general faith are “members” together with wicked Christians and the devil, those who have pure faith “bridle their appetites”, face up to their sinfulness and, moved by the “spirit and motion of God”, they “crucify their flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof”. (Annotations of the King’s Book on Justification 6-12) Cranmer draws a similar distinction in his Preface to the Great Bible of 1539-40, between him who reads the Scripture “with firm purpose to reform himself according thereunto; and so to continue, proceed and prosper, shewing himself to be a sober and fruitful learner and hearer, and thereafter teacher, “not with his mouth, but with his living and good example”, (48) and those who “hate[...] to be reformed”, who are ceremoniously text-anathematised, both by the 50th Psalm called to witness against them, and by the reminder of the Royal Supremacy stapled to the end in the concluding epigram to the Preface, “God Save the King”. The repeated division between the froward unreformed and those of pure faith echoes Parker’s distinction drawn at Clare, between those who are wedded to ceremonies but unedified by them, the deaf, the sinful who refuse to face their true condition, the froward who love this world, and those of the true godly who have inward faith, “ordering their conversation aright”, (43) and coming to the Bible to be transformed and re-formed by it. Whether this distinction is actually accurate is
beside the point – the burghers of Clare take pardonable umbrage at being lumped in with the sinful and the blind. But I do wish to highlight the already changed tone here. Cranmer (and Parker), at least assured of the King’s support, adopt an earnestly admonitory civic tone basically that all shall be well, even if incrementally. But here, though Cranmer at the stake does not abandon his faith that England shall be reformed (indeed, in the end he rediscovers it), his slightly wearied reminders to the “false glosing world” reflect the awareness that the Edwardine reforms are temporary, the flock of the elect is much smaller than previously thought, and all the work will have to be done again.57

But this evangelical moment is crucially balanced by Cranmer’s now rather shop-worn and difficult touchstone – Princely obedience:

The second exhortation is, that next unto God, you obey your king and queen, willingly and gladly, without murmur and grudging. Knowing, that they be God's ministers, appointed by God to rule and govern you; and that therefore whosoever resisteth them resisteth the ordinance of God. (335)

Cranmer is caught in a difficult cleft stick. If, as Henrician theory in the last chapter had it, Princely obedience, evangelical zeal, and godly concord were an indivisible trio,58 then Cranmer and his brethren are both left nodding first at an empty, then an actively hostile, chair, upholding an evangelical and edificatory role for the monarch which Mary clearly

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57 This weariness can be seen, for instance, in the remnant theology articulated by Cranmer in, for instance, his letter of counsel to Mrs Wilkinson, could have been articulated by Bunyan, or any other Protestant dissenter— (Cranmer 281), and lent itself easily to marry Bale’s civic apocalypticism, and cyclical narratives of persecution. It is interesting to note here that Cranmer’s counsel to the godly to flee (while of course followed by leading Protestants such as Foxe and Coverdale) was not unanimous. Original Letters contains a letter from Hooper to Heinrich Bullinger arguing that it might be possible for reformed Protestants to conform and attend Mass. For the theological arguments he makes, see Original Letters 38.

58 See for further examples Cranmer’s letters to Edward VI (Cranmer 267-270 and 277), the first with the Jonas Catechism, the second attached to the 42 Articles.
declines to fill. Before converting himself into his own edificatory object lesson, Cranmer spells out the neighbourly implications of his evangelical vision.

The fourth exhortation shall be to them that have great substance and riches of this world, that they will well consider and weigh those sayings of the Scripture. One is of our Saviour Christ himself, who saith, It is hard for a rich man to enter into heaven; a sore saying, and yet spoke by him, that knew the truth. The second is of St John, whose saying is this, He that hath the substance of this world, and seeth his brother in necessity, and shutteth up his mercy from him, how can he say, he loveth God? Much more might I speak of every part; but time sufficeth not. I do but put you in remembrance of things. Let all them that be rich, ponder well those sentences; for if ever they had any occasion to shew their charity, they have now at this present, the poor people being so many, and victuals so dear. For though I have been long in prison, yet I have heard of the great penury of the poor. Consider, that that which is given to the poor is given to God; whom we have not otherwise present corporally with us, but in the poor.

Cranmer gives us a handy definition of what he considers edifying: evangelical, Bible-centred truth, obedience to the King – yes, even at the stake he is holding fast the Royal Supremacy, and evangelical social vision. These two last points, the increase of charity, and generosity to the poor, are the touchstones of reform as much as they are common to the Catholic party. This is the concrete reform of life and conversation which Cranmer considers the Scripture to spur. As with the Sentences and Comfortable Words in the Prayer Book,

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59 For Cranmer’s best attempt at squaring this circle, see his letter to Mary of September 1555. (Cranmer 286-299) Note the resurgence of Erasmian profit language in the edificatory passages from 291ff.
60 See Booty 261 for discussion of civic evangelicalism in the Edwardine period, and the continuing concern of the evangelical party for those in poverty, and the language attached to the discussion of evangelical poor.
Cranmer’s citations from Scripture are attempts to stir and move the watching audience to godly charity, and perhaps also to show Cranmer’s own godliness of life and conversation at the time when they are both most expected and most questioned – and he ends with an affirmation of Christ’s corporeal presence in the poor (and not in the Sacrament). Cranmer speaks to the edification of the crowd, in Foxe to the edification of the godly, and becomes his own best example of repentance, evangelical zeal, obedience to the Monarch, and neighbourly care, showing us in death, what edification means in life. These are of course commonly accepted and well-travelled subjects in Cranmer’s time, but if he thinks them important enough to spell out at his last earthly breath, under the heading of a word to edify, I suggest it is “meet, right and our bounden duty” to take seriously the context he himself spells out. It is to that context that we now come.

3.2 Edification in Cranmer’s Letter to Mary I.

In September 1555, Cranmer sent a long letter to Queen Mary, attempting to defend himself against charges of treason and heresy. Since he had exculpated himself on the charge of abetting Northumberland earlier, the letter is mostly concerned with religious matters, especially Papal authority, in the context of the Bishop of Gloucester’s tribunal of that year. As might be expected, Cranmer is as conciliatory as possible, but he spells out in that letter the remaining points of disagreement. First, as might be expected, he refuses the Pope’s authority as contrary to English law, and “the imperial crown and jurisdiction temporal of this realm, [which] is taken immediately from God, to be used under Him only, and is subject unto none, but to God alone”. (287) He argues that Papal authority is against God’s law, because it restricts the Bible, and shuts the service into Latin, so that the people do not profit by it:
By God’s law all Christian people be bounden diligently to learn his word, that they may know how to believe, and live accordingly….God’s will and commandment is that when the people be gathered together, ministers should use such language as the people may understand and have profit thereby, or else hold their peace. For as a harp or lute, if it give no certain sound, that men may know what is stricken, who can dance after it, for all the sound is vain. (291)

Cranmer locates edification, or to give it its Erasmian cognate here, “profit” in three communal places: in the Common Prayer and preaching which ought to be in the common tongue, in the Bible, which is indispensible both for private and civic duties, and in the eucharist: the three places in which God’s preventing and drawing grace meets a suffering, sinful, and blind humanity. Debates over church services, then, are not simply debates over church furnishing or royal authority, but debates over the common means of salvation – something both traditionalists and reformers never forgot. Underneath the rhetoric of edification is a reformed conception of a process of repair, which begins (as in the letter above) with gathering, hearing and knowing, and ends with believing and living. The exact mechanics of the middle bit, that is, how God’s grace once manifest is received, Cranmer leaves evangelically vague, and metaphorically lyrical. For the answer to this question, we must turn to his theological and liturgical works. The major point to grasp here, however, is that edification recurrently presents itself in tandem with its communal means: preaching, common prayer, royal authority, civic duty, godly conversation, and social responsibility.

By these parish means of grace, ordinary people could be moved to love, to conversion, to evangelical zeal and increased civic virtue. In these, Cranmer envisions, we are nearest the motions of the Holy Ghost, tenderest of heart, and closest to renewal, rebirth and redemption. It may be as well here to note the sites of conflict between traditionalists and reformers, in the parallel and contradictory Episcopal injunctions from 1549-1560, which treat of the parish as
a conflicted space. The injunctions inquire into, among other things, the presence or absence of English Bibles, Books of Homilies and Erasmian Paraphrases. Encouraged in fits and starts by Henry VIII, and with fervour by Edward and Elizabeth, service books in the common tongue were viewed with suspicion by Bishop Gardiner, and recalled by Mary, and in despite of her own sort-of involvement in the second volume of the Paraphrases, Gardiner viewed even Erasmus with suspicion, especially singling out not Erasmus, but Udall’s translation of him (Dodds, 11) It is enough to note here that a volume which had been considered orthodox by Henry VIII by Mary’s time was stigmatised and re-callable, as battle lines hardened. The debate over church furnishings (eucharistic vessels, altar lights, rood screens, communion tables and poor boxes, for instance) is an attempt by both sides to sketch in concrete things two mutually intelligible but diverging visions of salvation – (the other abiding and contrasting matter of the injunctions is the appropriate vessels and vestments for Catholic or reformed eucharist).  

In simple caricature (which I hope to fill in in the succeeding sections) note that all three of Cranmer’s means of grace are written and audible, and spiritualised. Cranmer’s emphasis is on the reception of the sign, as well as the sign itself. Note also that the ensigns of Catholicism are primarily visual: lights, statues, vestments, processions. In this light, the procession controversy at Clare, the vestiarian controversy and the continuing controversies about Church furnishing are debates not about the nature of the Church, but about the nature of man, and the process of salvation. For the surplice to be labelled a popish rag is an anti-

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61 The Visitation Articles of 1559 record, down to the parish, that English Bibles and service books were in fact removed, at least, in the North. See, for example, Kitching 62ff.

62 Note also the description of the Traditionalist rearguard action by Hooper to Bullinger in Original Letters 72. Traditionalist tricks to avoid Protestantising Bishops include chanting in English, retaining traditional Saints Masses (as indeed Bale finds out in Ireland) adapted to comply with the law, retaining vestments, candles and so on. Elizabethan Bishops, and occasionally even the Privy Council, regularly had to order the confiscation and defacing of traditional instruments of devotion such as service books, vestments or chalices. The most famous example of this is Bishop Ridley’s continuing struggle against the Catholics of London, culminating in his building a wall in St Paul’s to cut off sight of the altar and the Consecration of the Host.
Catholic and polemical statement, but in this context it is also readable as an evangelical impulse which rejects visual “gazing, becking, nodding” in favour of an inwardly received audible grace, a genuinely reformed anthropology. J. I. Packer puts it this way:

> [From the doctrine of justification by faith alone] follows that, instead of the gospel being really about the sacraments, as means for conveying specific spiritual blessings given no other way (the Medieval thesis), the sacraments are really about the gospel, in the sense that they hold forth visibly the same promises, and the same Christ, that gospel preaching holds forth audibly, and they call for the same level of response, appropriating faith….the use of faith as a key-concept in sacramental theology thus led Cranmer, in company with Reformation theologians generally, to assimilate the two sacraments to each other, and both to the gospel word. (Packer xi)

It is to these written and ordinary means of grace we now turn, beginning with the Bible.

3.3 Edification in the Great Bible Preface of 1539-40.

The “freeing” of the English Bible to be licensed (1539) and published and read in the vernacular (1540) was the primary goal of the Evangelical party under Henry VIII, and it has obvious and real symbolic significance. The publication of a licenced Bible in English is the official indication that, to paraphrase Tyndale, the King of England’s eyes have been evangelically opened. Carrying with it as it does an Erasmian reforming agenda allied with a practical application of the Royal Supremacy, legitimising vernacular Bible reading is an iconic moment, recalled by the coronation pageants in *The Queen’s Majesty’s Passage*, in

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63 For the various political machinations related to the Bible decrees, see MacCulloch, *Cranmer* 283ff and 291ff.
which Elizabeth receives a copy of the Great Bible, from Sir John Parratt, with his alleged likeness to Henry VIII.64

Cranmer’s Preface to the Great Bible is generally divided into two parts: the first part a defence of reading the Scriptures, aimed at, those who “cannot bear” the English Bible, and the second part an admonition to disputing reformers to cease their disputatious meddling, those who “abuse the same” (80). Cranmer defends English as a proper vehicle for divine truth, and the importance of logocentric encounter for the health of the individual, and the community. Cranmer at times speaks on his own authority as Primate of England, other times borrowing the King’s in a characteristic-defence of the Royal Supremacy, but most of his Preface he puts into the mouth of two Fathers of the Church, Gregory Nazianz[us] and John Chrysostom, presenting his work as a mere paraphrase of their own. “The ritual insistence on unoriginality”, to adapt Greene, positions Cranmer as a link in a chain of imitation, one which is historical, but also timeless. The transformative effect of the Word is, as Greene puts it, “infinitely repeatable” and thus, crucially, both relational and general, as well as historically and theologically creditable – Cranmer is positioning himself as a Biblicist reformer, but also as a good (indeed, better) Catholic.

Cranmer exhorts his readers to read the Bible, laying out for them a notion of progressive reform upon the heels of encounter with the Word, acting upon a humble and open heart. The desire to read the Bible is positioned as a desire for virtue and godliness is translated into “a firm and stable purpose,” or to put it another way, a firm and stable process, which “begins” and goes on “continue, proceed and prosper.” The word is general in the sense that it is everyone’s duty to read it, and relational in the sense that it begins to spread godliness and produce “sober fruitfull[ness]”, and then that fruit itself is “lively”, that is, it

64 See Germaine Warkentin, The Queen’s Majesty’s Passage & related documents (Toronto: Centre for Reformation Studies, 2004) 75ff.
begins to teach others, not through books, but through better example. In essence, Cranmer situates the Scripture as able to speak to a fallen humanity, to produce, step-wise, a process of fruit, and, in time, to enliven the recipient in order that his example will be contagious. In a sense, the recipient becomes his own best book, able to pass a desire for good things to his neighbours – the Reformation going viral. This conception of evangelical growth is related to the Erasmian verbs of Henry VIII in the previous chapter, and to the work of Parker at Clare too – the gradual expansion of the gospel, its converting power, and its helping agents: in this case, the Bible and the Royal Supremacy, the one to spread, the other to enable.

Cranmer paints a picture of, on the one hand, a broken, stubborn and divided common life which has failed to internalise the Word properly, on the other a re-formed, edified and cured community which has properly interpreted and used it. In the middle, we have the “sacred ministry” of the word, preaching and common prayer, and Cranmer’s conception of the role of the words of divine Scripture itself:

> For the Holy Ghost hath so ordered and tempered the scriptures, that in them as well publicans, fishers, and shepherds may find their edification, as great doctors their erudition….for the books were not made to vain glory, like as were the writings of the Gentile philosophers…but the apostles and the prophets wrote their books so that their special intent and purpose might be understand and perceived of every reader; which was nothing but the edification or amendment of the life of them that heareth or readeth it. (85)

Reading the Bible is not simply an intellectual exercise, or the pastime of an elite. For Cranmer word-centred encounter leads to the process of softening, sharpening, truth-telling and reforming, all of which he puts under the ultimate category of edification. He finishes with a similar flourish:
If thou can neither so come by it [understanding of the Book], counsel with some other that is better learned. Go to thy curate and preacher; show thyself to be desirous to know and learn, and I doubt not but God - seeing thy diligence and readiness (if no man else teach thee) - will himself vouchsafe with his holy spirit to illuminate thee, and to open unto thee that which was locked from thee. Remember the Eunuch of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, which albeit he was a man of a wild and barbarous country, and one occupied with worldly cares and business, yet riding in his chariot, he was reading the scripture. (86)

The implication here is something like “if barbarians manage to value the Word, and its truth, what is wrong with England that it doesn’t?” Barbarous Ethiopians, clearly inferior to Christian and Protestant England, who yet show themselves willing to heed, convict the English (or at least Cranmer’s opponents) of hard-heartedness, wildness, frowardness and barrenness. If even “wild and barbaric” savages can find something to soften them, Cranmer implies, the English are twice-damned for hard-hearted vipers, denied the virtues of harmony, concord and fruitfulness, and condemned to the decay and division incumbent on those who do not value the Word: “I can well think them worthy pardon, which at the coming abroad of scripture doubted and drew back. But such as will persist still in their wilfulness, I must needs judge not only foolish, froward and obstinate, but also peevish, perverse, and indurate”. (81)

Two more points before we leave Cranmer’s Preface. First, the role of the Scripture in cleansing, or enlightening, a fallen and decayed world. Cranmer (through his mouthpiece, “Gregory Nazianzene”), returns to the notion of a step-wise process beginning with the fear of God:

Therefore saith [Gregory Nazianz[us]], the fear of God must be the first beginning, and as it were an A.B.C. or an introduction to all them that shall enter into the very
true and most fruitful knowledge of holy scriptures. Where as is the fear of God, there
is (saith he) the keeping of the commandments; and where as is the keeping of the
commandments, there is the cleansing of the flesh, which flesh is a cloud before the
soul's eye, and suffereth it not purely to see the beam of the heavenly light. Where as
is the cleansing of the flesh, there is the illumination of the holy ghost, the end of all
our desires, and the very light whereby the verity of scriptures is seen and perceived.
(42)

The spelling “A.B.C.” of the fear of the Lord leads into, as Vaughan will put it, an “ethics” --
“the keeping of the Commandments” -- leading to cleansing, heavenly light, and the
fulfilment and end of desire in truth, a re-formed mind.65 This cleansing and reforming
“enscripturation” is integrally linked with the healing power of the Scripture, which has the
power of the Holy Ghost to “move” and “stir” the reader, as with Philip (86). And the
purpose of the Scripture, Cranmer argues, is the step-wise process of edification, or building,
a notion he takes up in the metaphor of his next paragraph:

All these things been written unto us, for our edification and amendment which be
born towards the latter end of the world. The reading of the scriptures is a great and
strong bulwark or fortress against sin;66 the ignorance of the same is the greater ruin
and destruction of them that will not know it. That is the thing that bringeth in heresy;
that it is that causeth all corrupt and perverse living; it is that that bringeth all things
out of good order. (86)

Notice here both the note of apocalypse (“the latter end of the world”) and the drawing
together of the Bible-readers from individuals “therefore let no man….” into an “us”, those

65 Tyndale makes a similar argument about ceremonies.
66 Psalm 46, with its notion of God as Fortress, fits well here.
who have heard, been gathered, and finally been stuck together into a building, into a Christian commonwealth, one in good order. Cranmer continues to make even more explicit this civic and evangelical vision, expanding the peroration of his Preface with a picture of a commonwealth restored by, and according to, the Word:

Herein may princes learn how to govern their subjects; Subjects obedience, love, and dread to their princes; Husbands how they should behave them unto their wives, how to educate their children and servants; and contrary, the wives, children, and servants may know their duty to their husbands, parents, and masters. Here may all manner of persons, men, women, young, old, learned, unlearned, rich, poor, priests, laymen, lords, ladies, officers, tenants, and mean men, virgins, wives, widows, lawyers, merchants, artificers, husbandmen, and all manner of persons of what estate or condition soever they be, may in this book learn all things what they ought to believe, what they ought to do, and what they should not do, as well concerning almighty God, as also concerning themselves and all other. (87)

Cranmer conceives of the Scripture as a written grace to the whole community, where “all manner of persons of what estate or condition soever” may learn both what to “believe” (or “ethiques”) but also what “they ought to do, and what they should not do...as also concerning themselves and all other” that is, it is also political. The power of the Scripture is able to move the mind to the contemplation of heavenly and godly things, by removing the blinders from the eyes of the humble. The Scripture is able to teach and instruct, but also to move – logocentric encounter is a “salve” and a “healthful medicine” because it is able to transform both individual and the individual’s community, as, rightly re-edified, he takes his place in

teaching others by example and “conversation”. It is this process that Cranmer sums up by “and these things were written unto our edification”, that, in Ephesian terms, we should be joined together to become a part of the advance of God’s Kingdom. The edifying practice of reading in the ancient authors is, of course, a feature of Humanism, with its cry of ad fontes. But the special kind of reading required when encountering the Holy Scripture is at the same time both deeper and more elevated. The traditional practice of lectio is transformative, and the reception of the Scriptures seen to be a stronger and more real transformation than the simple reading of any other text. This qualitative difference in kind makes edification also qualitatively different to a simple learning or instruction. It is, rather, a grace given to both the (elect) individual and the community, and for, and useful, in both.

3.4 Edification in the Book of Homilies 1547.

Edification appears both in the Preface and on the cover of the Book of Homilies 1547, signalling to us Cranmer’s view of the importance of the preaching ministry in the reconstruction of a godly England. By printer’s accident or deliberate design, the title page of the Book of Homilies is surrounded by classical pillars to form a building, (Fig. 2) both decorated and clearly ancient – perhaps a visual representation of the goal the Preface makes clear, namely the removal of “the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome and the ungodly doctrine of his adherents, not only unto the great decay of Christian religion…but the utter destruction of inumerable souls…” (I.ii), in order that the people “might be faithfully instructed in the very word of God, whereby they may learn unfeignedly and according to the mind of the Holy Ghost expressed in the scriptures, to honor God and serve their king with all humility and subjection, and Godly and honestly to behave themselves toward all men”. (A2)

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68 Even if, in Latin, instuere means to build.
The best way this reform might be effected, the Introduction argues, is “the true setting forth of God’s word, which is the principal guide and leader unto all Godliness and virtue”, and to assist in this,

“that all Curates of what learning soever they be may have some Godly and fruitful lessons in readiness to read and declare unto their parishioners, for their edifying, instruction and comfort”, the King has commanded the Homily book to be printed, “wherein is contained certain wholesome and godly exhortations to move the people to honor and worship Almighty God, and diligently to serve him, every one according to their degree, state, and vocation.” (A3)

We may see here, repeated portmanteau-like, the definition of edification favoured by Cranmer at the height of his political and Primatial power, under his protégé, Edward VI. It agrees strikingly with the concerns rehearsed in his speech at the stake in 1556: the moving of people to worship Almighty God, and to show more diligence in their religious duty, and the allying of this evangelical reform of conversation and promotion of “honest” behaviour to all with the social and neighbourly duties symbolised by obedience and humility toward the King, and the service of God refracted through civic and social order, which responds as a tethered whole. To adapt the Bishop’s Bible translation of Ephesians, “every joint of subministration” contributes to the body politic, which then, guided and led by the Word, by the preaching ministry, and the monarch, is edified rightly in love. The “movement” of the people towards virtue and godliness is the task of the Homily Book. The preacher, even if he is recycling Cranmer’s words from the Book as opposed to his own, is mover and builder in chief – or perhaps, given the pneumatic priority given to the Word, foreman of works to the Holy Ghost. This puts in a deeper light Parker’s admonition to Stokes to cease “fortifying misframed judgements” and join hands to declare “verity” “for the edification of the King’s subjects” that they may grow in godliness and obedience – anti-Roman polemic (like Foxe’s
Bale’s and Cranmer’s) ought to be seen (imaginatively, at least, and in the service of a Protestant narrative) as a stage on the road to rebuilding, replanting, and reconstructing.

Getting a purified Church with an open Bible is thus not simply a matter of getting the doctrinal recipe right. It is the gradual growth in neighbourly concord, monarchical loyalty, evangelical purity and reformed godliness which Cranmer prioritises – pushing through the doctrine to maintain, even at the stake, his imaginative vision of England renewed and rebuilt. Regardless of the critiques that can be levelled at Cranmer, or at his Church, (and there are powerful critiques to offer) we find animating Cranmer not simply history (although, history is a necessary part), and not simply doctrine (although of course, doctrinal specifics are important, and necessary also) but imagination. The notion of edification is ubiquitous, and hard to pin down, precisely because it contains inside it a whole imaginative vision centred upon its touchstones: the Bible, the Supremacy, and a profoundly relational notion of evangelical neighbourliness. It is to this embodied vision that Cranmer appeals, in a sense above doctrine, or rather, to doctrine left to germinate, grow and incarnate.

Professor MacCulloch is entirely right to position Cranmer as a serious and consistent evangelical (MacCulloch 365), but, like Luther and Calvin, he is also a pastor, attempting to promote the growth of his people – and unlike Calvin and Luther, he is (in a sense, and under Henry) responsible for the whole Nation, and for an avowedly National Church in different states of godliness and varying states of hostility.69 The Church of England is a fact before it is Reformed, Protestantised and Calvinised, and its defining Confessions (such as the King’s Book, or even the 39 Articles) are negotiations between political reality, doctrinal pull and Royal Authority, playing catch-up to an evolving pastoral and political situation. Cranmer of

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69 Luther is dragged reluctantly into politics, although of course his reputation and weight meant that he was consulted on State matters, most famously of course the Peasant’s Revolt. Calvin held no formal civic office at all, except as pastor of his Church, although that also had civic implications.
course (as MacCulloch again points out) was not doing anything new – from the moment the younger Cranmer arrives in Nuremburg, he is in dialogue with the reformers on the Continent – but he is in a unique situation, coaching along a nation, and an unsure King, away from Popery and step-wise towards his vision of Evangelical truth. The compromises Cranmer makes, the careful and vague double valency of his language, and the balance of his Prayer Book join the DNA of Anglicanism, and are married to his insistence on a sweeping reforming mission and a civic vision later to collapse under the weight of its own contradictions.

3.5 English Speaking God: The 1549 Preface.

The double valency of edificatory language can be seen, as it were, in miniature, in the 1549 Preface to the Book of Common Prayer, which sets out a justification for the Order of Mass in English, but also, and crucially for our purposes, frames it in terms of edification.

There was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, so surely established, which, in continuance of time, hath been corrupted as (among other things) it may plainly appear by the Common Prayers in the Church, commonly called divine service: the first and original ground whereof, if a manne woulde searche out by the ancient Fathers he shall finde that the same was not ordeyned but of a good purpose, and for the great advancement of godliness. (4)

This first paragraph gives us an example of the delicate balancing act that is Cranmerian continuity. First, he makes the polemical claim that all things are subject to corruption, including divine service, and the traditional religion. But auxillary to the claim that common prayer needs reforming is the principle by which the reform is to be carried out – a claim to return and restore “the first and original ground”, that is, that the Church is decayed, not destroyed, and diseased, not dead. To put it in Cranmer’s words, “this godly, and decent order
of the Ancient Fathers hath been so altered, broken, and neglected” that it must be restored, on the same ground, and in the same place, but for the original purpose, the “advancement of godliness”, an Henrician phrase straight from Erasmus. Again, Cranmer is attempting to deflect criticism by claiming the Fathers as the *fons et origio* of his reform. In doing so, he makes clear what it is he expects ministers to do, but also the purpose of the Common Prayer they read:

[to] be stirred up to godliness themselves, and be more able to exhort other by wholesome doctrine, and to confute them that were adversaries of the Truth. And further that the people (by daily hearing of holy scripture read in the Church) should continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be more inflamed with the love of his true religion. (4)

Note first, the patristic frame, in which it is not newly reformed doctrine, but ancient truth restored, but also the chain of imitation which Cranmer expects Common Prayer to engender: the clergy “stirred up to godliness” by the Bible, able to exhort others to the same godliness (as Parker does to Stokes) to rebut those who are “adversaries of the truth” and “fortifying misframed judgements.” This daily profiting allows, then, both “true religion” and the moving away from false. Cranmer appears to believe at this point that simple hearing is enough, since Scripture by its nature has power to inflame and renew. The scripture “moves”, “stirs” and “inflames,” then, even if Cranmer isn’t exactly clear on *how*. But while he has not spelt out (at least here) how the Word does its work, we know several things about how Cranmer thinks the Holy Ghost works with the match-box.

1. It is *in Common*.

Cranmer’s notion of Bible reading is not individual, but individual-for-corporate, in the same way as Ephesians asks individual members of the Church to give the gifts they have back to
Likewise, as both Ramie Targoff and Matthew Milner have pointed out, Cranmer’s conception of Liturgy attempts to reform the parishioner not simply through polemical argument (although this is permitted for clergy), or through force of law (although this is always present in the appeals to Royal Supremacy), but through force of habit, active repetition and rehearsing of a reformed theology profoundly neighbourly. Protestantism has been seen (mostly by Enlightenment historians reading backwards) as individual, and during the Interregnum this becomes a viable option (although still a commonly overstated one).

But for all the reformers, and especially for Cranmer, worship was common, liturgy was common, Bible reading was common, and the point of common prayer was an improvement both in “true religion” and in neighbourliness, godliness, and “godly conversation.” It is a whole society Cranmer is aiming at, and the teaching function of the Prayer Book Cranmer’s major way of incarnating the civic communion he imagines. For him to depart from doctrine in his Stake sermon to urge attention to the high price of bread for the poor is thus entirely in keeping.

2. It is Hierarchical and Orderly.

This point is hammered to the point of mania by bishops from Cranmer to Grindal: the reforming of the self should be conducted by the imitative chain stretching from the people to the clergy, the clergy stirring up each other and internalising by Bible reading and Common Prayer the habits of re-formed ministers, and the King at the top, benevolently hovering in the manner of a Goodyear blimp, or the frontispiece of the Great Bible.

3. It doesn’t always work, and it’s your fault.

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70 This conception is of course upheld by Tyndale and other reformers too.
71 See my MA work, The Dischained Being: Community, Regicide and the Loyalist Imagination in Eclipse, 1649-1657.
It is possible, even when sound doctrine is preached, and the Bible open, for froward and stubborn people to “hear with their ears only”, or actively refuse to hear. Cranmer postulates a difference between those who will hear and those who won’t or can’t, in his Preface to the Great Bible, but the attitude of heart of the person receiving the audible graces of preaching and prayer, and the spiritual graces of the Sacraments, thus becomes immediately relevant in a new way. To put it another way, if the match doesn’t catch, you must blame the kindling – and soon, reformed theology begins to speak of the elect, and those who aren’t.

Basic to reformed theology, and the basic posture of the Prayer Book, is the tension between the consciousness of sin, corruption and fallenness, and the appreciation of God’s grace. This tension is of course not original -- it is in Augustine, and prior, and is the position of almost every reformer from Luther to Calvin and Melanchthon. But, as Barbara Lewalski has argued, the appreciation of man’s corruptibility and the damage done to him is a particular task taken up by English Protestant poetics, which aims to provoke the worship and wonder due to God from his marred creatures, a wondering awe at such strange and great love. (Lewalski, Protestant Poetics, passim, especially 3-31). Augustinian poetics first acknowledge the utter independence and transcendence of God from human categories, continues to confess the utter contingency of human beings upon divine gift, and the hopelessness of life without it, and then provokes awe, worship and repentance which leads to inflaming appreciation of the love of God, and reform of manners and conversation – in essence, to edification, although Lewalski doesn’t use this term. To put it another way, the Book of Common Prayer, and Protestant poetics, attempt to show the contingency of man upon God, but also to produce the soil which makes the reception of grace and the concurrent edification of heart more likely.

Unsuprisingly, the Book of Common Prayer is a key site for Augustianian poetics and theology too. The consciousness of the gap between God and man is acknowledged at the
General Confession, but it is summed up by the choice of the two introits of Matins and Eucharist, the first the Hundredth Psalm:

O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our maker.

For He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if we will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (8)

And the famous Collect for Purity:

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, and all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of thy holy spirit: that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name. (20)

And the most downright of all, the 1549 introit to the Order for Baptism:

Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men be conceived and born in sin, and that no man born in sin can enter the Kingdom of God (except he be regenerate and borne anew of water and the Holy Ghost) I beseech you to call upon God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy, he will grant to these children that thing, which by nature they cannot have, that is to say, they may be baptised with the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ’s holy Church, and be made lively members of the same. (47)

The purpose of Cranmer’s liturgy, but also the purpose of Cranmer’s entire theological outlook, is described by Ashley Null in the title of his book, “renewing the power to love”, but also changing the objects of love, making them transparent, in order to show to the

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72 To be a member of the Church is, of course also a somatic term as in the member of the body. OED records that member can be seen as an architectural term too, as in “any of the parts of a building; spec. any of the mouldings in a collection of mouldings, as in a cornice, capital, base, etc.” The first recorded usage of this type is 1679.
penitent his true condition, provoking him to re-form his life, with soft heart to respond to God’s effectual call, as a “lively” member of the Church, and not a dead one. This more classically Reformed way of sketching the relationship between God and man is another way of viewing edification: as restoration, purifying, or rescuing. It also offers a way to examine Cranmer’s emphasis on “diligence”, that is, the work necessary on the part of the receptee. Cranmer is in fact so wedded to this notion that the reader ought to be doing work, and showing goodwill, that he instructs ordinary people to read the Bible again and again, even without understanding all or any of it, in quest of that understanding. In this sense, diligence is less about doing work than proving the possession of goodwill, and, in its secondary meaning, preserved in the Diligam, te, Domine of Psalm 18: proving love, and the proper objects of love.73 Even if the reader cannot understand the Scripture, reading it proves the kind of heart which would understand if it could: the kind of heart ready to be edified.

3.6 Edification in the Homily on Holy Scripture and the Homily on Contention.

It is in this corporate context of being a lively member of the Church that we can approach Cranmer’s sermons in the Book of Homilies., it is unsurprising to find him sticking together the edifying of the audience and the advancement of God’s glory, and it is likewise unsurprising to find the first homily in the Book, “On Holy Scripture”, beginning thus:

TO a Christian man there can bee nothing either more necessarie or profitable, then the knowledge of holy Scripture, forasmuch as in it is conteyned GODS true word, setting foorth his glory, and also mans duety. (Aiv)

Edification, or its Erasmian cognate, “profit” is stuck to the knowledge of Scripture, the setting forth of God’s glory, and man’s growth in civic and individual duty. Yet again,

73 OED observes in the entry on diligent that diligent in origin is the “present participle of diligere to value or esteem highly”, from which comes “careful or assiduous in service”.
gathering, and enlightening end in growth and godliness – but the *Book of Homilies* goes on, crucially, to give more detail as to the mechanism of growth in holiness – how the logocentric encounter which produces holiness actually works. First, like Sacraments, received rightly disposed, the words of Holy Scripture have a power in themselves:

> The wordes of holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life (John 6.68): for they bee GODS instrument, ordayned for the same purpose. They haue power to turne through GODS promise, and they be effectuall through GODS assistance, and (being receiued in a faithfull heart) they haue euer an heauenly spirituall working in them: they are liuely, quicke, and mighty in operation, and sharper then any two edged sword, and entreth thorow, euen vnto the diuiding asunder of the soule and the spirit, of the ioynts and the marrow. (Hebrews 4.12; Bi)

These are commonplaces, of course, but we can see here the same divided valency we’ve already discussed in Cranmer’s other work. The words of Scripture have a “heavenly spiritual working” in themselves, they are “lively, quick and mighty in operation.” But they must be received in “a faithful heart”, one itself prepared by divine action. Conversion leads to building, to settling, and to dwelling, just as in Ephesians:

> Christ calleth him a wise builder, that buildeth vpon his word, vpon his sure and substantiall foundation (Matthew 7.24). By this word of GOD, wee shall bee iudged: for the word that I speake (sayth Christ) is it, that shall iudge in the last day (John 12.48). Hee that keepeth the word of Christ, is promised the loue and fauour of GOD, and that hee shall bee the mansion place or temple of the blessed Trinity. (John 14.23; Bi)

> And, just as in Cranmer’s *Preface*, consistent dwelling, reading, and building (as Cranmer puts it, “diligence”), leads to permanent transformation of heart, and, in a sense, to
the subject becoming not only a living example of “outward Godly life”, but in a sense, a text-in-himself:

  For that thing, which (by continuall use of reading of holy Scripture, and diligent searching of the same) is deeply printed and grauen in the heart, at length turneth almost into nature. And moreouer, the effect and vertue of GODS word is, to illuminate the ignorant, and to giue more light vnto them, that faithfully and diligently read it, to comfort their hearts, and to encourage them to performe that, which of GOD is commanded. (Bi-ii)

In this, the longest attempt Cranmer makes to say how edification works, we still remain lyrically vague. *If* John Plowman is “diligent to read, and in his heart to print that he readeth” *then* the sanctifying work of God begun in election will continue in him in the same kind of stepwise advance it has in the body politic: the great desire of heavenly things and a corresponding contempt of worldly and transitory things begins the work of Grace, and it is that change of affection which Cranmer prays for England to have at the stake. Faith and trust in God is the effect of desiring heavenly things, and this transforms first inner life (“innocency and pureness of heart”) and then outward life (“outward godly life and conversation….”), and finally godly habits (“the same is printed and graven in the heart and turneth almost to a nature”) and civic reformation, in which neighbours and the body politic share.

Cranmer’s chain of imitation (Bible to clergy, clergy to people, people to each other) is explicitly set out in the next part of the Homily on Bible reading:

> **Who profit most in reading GODS word.** And in reading of GODS word, hee most profiteth not alwayes, that is most ready in turning of the booke, or in saying of it without the booke, but hee that is most turned into it, that is most inspired with the
holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and changed into that thing which hee
readeth. (Homilies, 3-4).

The purpose of the Book is “that we may be turned into it”. Bible reading in the elect heart is
seen to have a virtue of its own, that it replicates itself. In a sense, by grafting oneself in the
right way to the Scripture, one is able to become it. This gives extraordinary power to the act
of reading, the power of transformation. Reading can, in this sense, replicate itself, increasing
(incrementum-wise) virtue in the reader, but also social cohesion, concord and civic unity.

The reader then, by the power of word and example, is able to replicate himself over and over
again, fostering in those he contacts a desire for truth and evangelical fervour. It is this claim
that is at the back of the evangelical push to get the Bible into every parish Church, confident
that when the Scripture is read, enormities and abuses can be corrected. Evangelical vision
then, enthrones the word at the centre not only of the Church, but the social order,
envisioning it as a curative. This said, however, on behalf of Cranmer’s argument here, we
must note two or three things which will become acute later in this thesis. First, the
Cranmerian idea that the directing minds of interpretation ought to be the clergy, depends on
exactly the same kind of local loyalties and traditional practices Cranmer attacks in many of
his reforms. So, for example, abolishing the necessity of auricular confession strikes at the
root of the kind of relationship Cranmer envisions. Further, demoting the priest from the
recipient of real ordaining grace into a minister who interprets Scripture sets up in embryo the
two flash points of Elizabethan Church reform which we canvass briefly later. It allows (or
implies) consultations among ministers as to Biblical interpretation, which sets up the

74 This confidence in the power of Scripture also characterises Philippist Lutherans who follow Melanchthon,
and lies at the back of their adiaphoral position on most ceremonies. Melanchthon (always in many ways the
most ecumenical of the Lutheran theologians) seems to have believed that once the Bible was free and in the
vernacular, the rest (including ceremonies) would be reformed in time. For the connection between Sidney and
this Philippist line of thought, see the Sidney chapter, deeply marked by Stillaman’s Philip Sidney and
Renaissance Cosmopolitanism.
“prophesying” controversy.75 From the perspective of the monarch, however, this transforming power wielded by the Scripture is not simply potentially useful (in the well-travelled sense of Cranmer and Parker, that the Bible will teach people their duty and hold the Nation in concord), but potentially dangerous.76 As Diarmaid MacCulloch argues, Cranmer is not only conscious of this danger, but he relies upon the Royal Supremacy to guard against it. “The world needed discipline to use the Gospel’s message, and once the Pope had gone, who could give discipline but the King?” (260). Removing the authority of the Church infallibly to interpret Scripture (as the Articles functionally do)77 and subordinating the Church to the plain sense of the divine word, inevitably foregrounds debates about what that Word means.78

We may see this both by Henry’s attempts to channel and shut down discussions about Biblical interpretation, and still more clearly in the decrees of Elizabeth, in which reading and discussing Scripture is envisioned not, as here, as a curative in the service of the body of the Church and the good order of the realm, but as an actual dividing and sickening force.79 This danger explains why, soon after embracing “edification, not error,” both Henry and Elizabeth reach for “edification, not contention”, and attempt to enforce some limits to the same kind of

75 Connecting Archbishop Grindal to this idea that the reading and discussion of Scripture is not simply a good idea, but a primary, transforming and socially edifying grace, goes some way to explain why he was prepared to be sacked to preserve them.

76 This sense of edification and advancement needing consistent control and surveillance appears in the concluding paragraphs of the 39 Articles: “And if there happen any contempt or irreverence to be used in the ceremonies or rites of the Church by the misusing of the orders appointed in this book, the Queen’s Majesty may, by the like advice of the said Commissioners or Metropolitan, ordain and publish such further ceremonies or rites as may be most for the advancement of God’s glory, the edifying of His Church, and the due reverence of Christ’s mysteries and Sacraments…” (Cressy &Ferrell, 69).

77 Elizabeth I is said to have inserted the section about the Church having power to determine controversies of Faith: this is an attempt to square the circle which, although convincing enough to maintain a National Church with energy exerted by custom and by the monarch, will ultimately prove unpersuasive to the Parliamentary faction in the Civil War. This insertion into the Articles attempting to place some traditional boundaries around interpretation harks back, for example, to the 10 Articles of 1536, which refer interpretation to “the selfsame Creeds…..and holy approved doctors of the Church” (Cressy &Ferrell, 3).

78 We can see this debate between Archbishop Grindal and his interlocutors, in Section 3.7. Although the Archbishop and his Presbyterian and Independent dissenters agree on a lot, we can see the Presbyterian party using Anglican arguments against the conformists, urging the priority of pneumatic revelation and Biblical truth against the very social order Cranmer envisions them maintaining.

79 See the section on Elizabethan context.
debate Cranmer’s vision views as essential, though easily corruptible without care.\(^80\) If this kind of transformation-into-the-book is reserved for the act of reading the Bible, and the social and individual work of edification which the reader then undertakes, what is to hinder the same virtue, under the stewardship of another type of interpretive “ministry of the word”, being applied to different kinds of writing, such as poetry? Sidney takes up this idea in his Defence, and there, we may see Cranmer’s idea purged of its pious clothing and conformist conservatism, jumping off the page with all the jolt of radicalism. Via King David, the “right poet”, Sidney claims for poetry the job of assistant to the Holy Ghost, the same radical and transformative power to legislate, lead, guide, move, multiply and provoke.\(^81\) The double take we do at the idea that poetry, that reading, can have that kind of power, “living and active”,\(^82\) shows how radical, and how dangerous, this idea of neighbourly transformation is, and how much power it gives to those who compose, and interpret, the books one is transformed into.

In the Homily on Contention, for instance, Cranmer puts in a few shots at hot-gospel evangelicals, but also froward Catholics, in a Pauline riff derived directly from the edification parts of Ephesians and Titus. He is very clear that edification is civic and corporate, but also that it may be forwarded by not doing something, in this case disputing and rebelling.

O how the Church is diuided? Oh how the cities be cut and mangled? O how the coat of Christ, that was without seame, is all to rent and torne? O body mysticall of Christ, where is that holy and happy vnitie, out of the which whosoeuer is, he is not in Christ? If one member be pulled from another, where is the body? If the bodie be drawnen from the head, where is the life of the bodie? Wee cannot be ioyned to Christ

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\(^80\) For the political context of the Henrician crack-down, see MacCulloch, Cranmer 311ff.

\(^81\) For a situation of King David in the context of Protestant Psalm culture and theology, see Anne Prescott, “King David as a “Right Poet”: Sidney and the Psalmist”, English Literary Renaissance, 19.2 (1989) 131-151.

\(^82\) Hebrews 4:12. I mutter a Gloria to myself again for fear of blasphemy.
our head, except we be glued with concord and charitie one to another. (Homilies 125)

In the collection of images here, concord and charity are of course the main events, but we can see here also the balance between the two kinds of edification: unity-and-concord-onto-edification on the one hand, and edification-not-contention on the other. “Contention causeth diuision, wherefore it ought not to be among Christians, whom one Faith and Baptisme ioyneth in an vnitie.” (126). To “conjure” or command to unity is at the same time an act of Christian goodwill on the part of the well-disposed, and the separation apart of the forward who will not heed it, who are actively “read out” of the commonwealth: “And they bee vnworthy to liue in a common wealth, the which doe as much as lieth in them, with brawling and scoulding to disturbe the quietnesse and peace of the same.” (136).

The transforming of the Holy Ghost towards “comfort and peace” is seen in individual transformation, from “railing” to “sober counsel”, from “slander” to “comfort”, from cursing to blessing, from peace breaking to peace making. The cynical reading of the Homily as a “sit down and shut up” has an obvious attraction, but to my mind it underrates Cranmer and (as Collinson and Targoff point out) the transformative effect he obviously expects from both the Bible and the official liturgy. Church attendance isn’t required in Henrician and Elizabethan England simply as an abstract exercise in royal power and reformed brain-washing, or a Foucauldian encounter with repeated rituals of kingly power, but in service to a vision of an England re-edified, stuck together and “glued” not only to the King, but to the Bible and each other. It appears now, knowing the ending, so to speak, the chaos of the Interregnum, that the Church of England sustained for too long a tension between its National catholicity, and its Reformed iconoclasm, two wild horses with the Church of England not the chariot driver mentioned earlier, but the prima ballerina jumping nimbly between the two, faster and faster, stretching herself more and more. This dance between evangelical faith and civic catholicity
is not yet ended. But in the seventeenth century, it had barely begun. It still looked possible, in imaginative terms, to maintain a tethered and coherent whole, even and especially in ideal, in vision, and in representation. To those representations, and away from their theological roots, we now turn.

3.7 Enter Gloriana: Grindal Gets Fired.

The accession of Elizabeth in 1559, and the settlement of the Protestant religion in England, leads to a renaissance of edifying language. This is so both in the debates about what the Church ought to look like, and the official injunctions which mark what it does look like. First, we find the new Archbishop Parker, with others of the bishops, writing to petition Elizabeth against images in 1559, principally of course the cross in her private chapel. They write a long argument in several languages, canvassing Biblical and patristic sources, and they refer to edification as a summary criterion. The removal of images, Parker and his colleagues argue, will conduce to the “advancement of His glory, to the overthrow of superstition, and the comfort of all Your Highness’s loving subjects” (95), whereas, by the retention of them “no profit, nor commodity did ever grow to the Church of God” (93). The Henrician and reformed inflections of this language have been examined already, but Elizabeth herself picks up this last idea in her letter prohibiting the “residence of women in Colleges”, of 1561, declaring, a tradition of, and her determination to maintain, “to sustain and keep societies of learned men professing study and prayer, for the edification of the Church of God, and so constantly to serve the Commonweal” (Parker 146). Elizabeth seems determined to build, to restore, and, above all, to settle, the Protestant service, and the space it occupies.
The key connections between physical building, spiritual rebuilding, Evangelical truth contained in the liturgy to be read, and the monarch superintending it all, are reinforced by the instructions of the Queen to all the Bishops, dated 1560. Elizabeth commands not only that the lessons from the Book of Common Prayer be adapted “more to [the people’s] edification”, (132) but that the disorders in “comely keeping and order of the said churches, and especially of the upper part, the chancel” should be reformed. Echoing Haggai 1:4, the Queen commands that the “negligent order or spare-keeping of the house of prayer” be repaired, especially singling out “open decays and ruins of coverings, walls and windows, and by appointing unmeet and unseemly tables, with foul cloths for the communion, and generally leaving the place of prayers desolate of all cleanness and of meet ornaments for such a place” (133). This repairing impulse extends not only to the fabric of the Church and the shape of the liturgy, but also that “the tables of the Commandments may be comely set or hung up in the east end of the chancel, to be not only read for edification, but also to give some comely ornament and demonstration that the same is a place of religion and prayer.” (133)

Thus, Elizabeth’s edifying impulse extends not only to, say the “re-edifying” of the burnt St Paul’s (Parker 152) but the repair of all the actual church buildings, the settlement of Common Prayer, and even the re-erection (in the east end of the chancel, traditional location of both altar and tabernacle) of a Protestant replacement: the tables of the Commandments. The resettling of the Church, for Elizabeth, is a clearly vital part of rebuilding the English Nation itself. Likewise, for Parker, the Queen’s superintending care is a vital part of the Church’s hierarchical order, the wobbling of which gives him anxiety induced hives. In a panicked letter to Sir William Cecil after the Queen’s decree against Cathedral Close wives,
Archbishop Parker speaks of the Queen’s being “incenced” by her reformed clergy, and her attitude being a direct attack on “the ecclesiastical state” (157).

The details of this dispute matter less, however, than the three line description of Parker’s ideal Christian State, in which he demonstrates that he has changed little since chastising Stokes in 1536: “[The ecclesiastical state are] conservators of religion, by which the people be most strongly knit together in amity, their hearts stayed and won to God, [and] their obedience holden under their governors” (157). This conception of religion as a binding force (from ligare, as Augustine argues) explains why the Queen’s ‘attack’ on her clergy makes Parker panic. He threatens disobedience, even returning the spectre of martyrdom: “there be enough of this contemned flock which will not shrink to offer their blood in the defence of Christ’s verity, if it be either openly impugned, or secretly sugilled.” (157)

In this added sentence, we see the acknowledgement which will, in the end, unravel the Church of England, and leave her during the Civil War as hunted as the recusant Catholics she persecuted. Parker is prepared to entertain the possibility that Evangelical truth and obedience to the monarch can be at odds, not in the hurrying and trimming necessary in Henry’s reign, but in the flat opposition necessary during the Marian persecutions, and threatened even here, in the reign of a Protestant Queen. The reigns of Edward VI and Mary had hardened Catholic resolve, so that at the accession of Elizabeth only one bishop renounced his loyalty to the Pope. So also, the Marian persecutions can be seen as having given stubbornness, spine and coherence to the Protestant divines – the same stubbornness which was later to break Charles I, and which we see here, potentially (although not actually, in the end), useable against even Elizabeth.

Thus, although, Parker fully enters in to Elizabeth’s repair project, announcing when he asks for a warrant to get back Cranmer’s Library that “I would as much rejoice, while I am in
the country, to win them, as I would to restore an old chancel to reparation” (186),

Elizabethan decrees increasingly begin to use the language of building up, and tearing down, not against Catholics, but against hot-gospelling Evangelicals, especially, for example, those who would not use the surplice. Those who promote diversity of opinion “in the external, decent and lawful rites and ceremonies to be used in churches”, unless checked,

the infection were like to grow from place to place, as it were by an infection, to great annoyance, trouble, and deformity to the rest of the whole body of the Realm, and thereby impair, deface and disturb Christian charity, unity and concord, being the very bands of our religion; which we so much desire to increase and continue amongst out people, and by, and with which our Lord God, being the God of peace and not of dissention, will continue his blessings and graces over us, and his people….so as uniformity of order may be kept in every church, without variety or contention. (225–6)

At this point, then, “edification not error”, with its emphasis on the increase and continuance of true religion, is increasingly eclipsed by “edification, not contention” – although the word itself is not here, the categories are Pauline. The defacing and deformity here applied not to

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83 For a more detailed overview of Parker’s repair projects in Church fabric, see his the Visitation Articles of 1572-3. The dates of the Articles vary, since Parker visited several dioceses at different times, while inquiring using much the same Articles. See Reginald Wolfe, Articles to be enquired of within the dioceses of Canterbury, in the metropolitall and ordinary visitation of the moste Reuerend father in God, Matthew, by the prouidence of God, Archebyshop of Canterbury Primate of all Englande, and Metropolitane, in the yeare of our Lorde God, M. D. LXXIII. ( London, 1573).


85 Elizabeth takes up the same points in an Ephesian frame when prescribing clergy vestments. Thus, her “Injunctions on Doctrine, Order and Apparel” appeals to “the advancement of God’s glory, and to the establishment of Christ’s pure religion, for all her loving subjects, especially the state Ecclesiastical, to be knit together in one perfect unitye of doctrine…. but contention, offence and breach of common charity, and againste the laws, good usage and ordinances of the Realme) might be reformed and repressed…and that preachers might consider “…the gravity of their office, and to forsee with diligence the matters which they will speake, to utter them to the edification of the Audience.” These injunctions are bound in with the British Library copy of the Visitation Articles.
Catholics, but to evangelicals, and the nation-building and increase of “the body of the realm” is the preserve of the kind of religion which will accept hierarchical order, and “subministration”. This new tension between the conformist and the further-reforming clergy becomes acute by stages: first in the running battle the Bishops of London have against unlicenced preaching, and for the regulation of the reformed “Stranger Churches,” for Dutch and French, (Grindal 297) and, on the other side, the numbers of people attracted to hear Mass at the chapels of Catholic foreign ambassadors.

Bishop Grindal examined several Presbyterians in London in 1567, the proceedings of which were published at Edinburgh, and in Grindal’s Remains (199ff). In this examination, it is abundantly clear that for the seperatists, Evangelical truth and godly obedience to the monarch were uneasy bedfellows, and for some, the two were separated entirely. The seperatists were accused of setting up a conventicle in a Plumbers Meeting Hall, and objected to the usual laundry list of Puritan bugbears: the surplice, godparents, rings in weddings, wafers at Communion, and traditional holidays. But what is striking is exactly how much the two sides agree on. There is little debate about doctrine, but long and wrangling debate about ceremonies and the Church’s authority to regulate them, and explosive debate about whether the Queen is godly or not – clearly diverging, the seperatists urge Grindal to “go onward to perfection”, evince great suspicion of the Queen (although half of them do refuse to call her evil) and view appeals to public order, “comeliness” and even the practice of other Reformed Churches as so much Popery. For them, the appeal to the Church’s continuity is an active disadvantage. Their only reply to “but the Papists used the Churches, and now we use them properly” is “Churches be necessary to keep our bodies from the rain, but surplices and copes to be superstitious and idolatrous”. It has become not only imaginatively plausible to separate Queen and Church, but for some, even otherwise reformed Protestants, it is now
viewed as necessary. The *View of Popish Abuses* (1572), simply and baldly asserts “In all their order of service there is no edification, according to the rule of the Apostle, but confusion”. (Cressy and Ferrell 101)

The key moment for Grindal in which “edification not error” and “edification not contention” come apart is the controversy about prophesying and the numbers of preachers, in 1576, after which he is sequestered, and left under house arrest. For Grindal, preaching and prophesying are vital parts of his office, which he considers in terms straightforwardly edificatory:

> There was appointed to the building of Solomon’s material Temple an hundred and fifty thousand artificers, and labourers, besides three hundred thousand overseers, and shall we think a few hundred preachers may suffice to build and edify the spiritual temple of Christ, which is the Church? (378)

Not only is “Public and continual preaching of God’s word” “the ordinary mean and instrument of the Salvation of mankind” (379), but Grindal claims prophetic power unto “doctrinam ad aedificationem, exhortionem et consolationem” (385), and further, a powerlessness to tear down, quoting Paul: “I have no power to destroy, only to edify” (387)

The Queen, unconvinced by the traditional Cranmerian arguments about the Bible fostering Godly obedience and concord, and infuriated by Grindal’s gloriously tactless comparisons, lashed back at him. The Privy Council (471) makes a straightforward argument back: edification, not contention. Prophesying lead to “milliform”, not uniform rites and ceremonies, abet “inconveniences and disorders,… and divisions” which were “like to increase, greatly to the trouble of Her Majesty, and to the peril of the common quiet of the Realm,” the suppression of which is part of the Queen’s duty, “princely charge and dignity”.

Cranmer’s alliance of word and monarch in the name of social order, obedience and
evangelical faith is looking a little shaky, as the Nursing Mother of the Church reaches for the ruler, making it crystal clear to Grindal which half of edification will henceforth govern Anglicanism. Into this new context, we introduce the two Elizabethan figures to follow: Sidney’s portrait of imagination as both medicinal and edifying, and potentially dangerous. And Edmund Spenser’s portrait of the Church, wandering in the wilderness, the quest of the English nation, being led into a perilously unstable truth.
Chapter 4: “The Inward Touch”: Edification and Architectonics in *Astrophil and Stella* and *The Defence of Poesy*.

Great are the logical schools,
But greater are the myths and songs:
Solomon’s lions and bulls,
Jael and Israel’s wrongs;
The books are filled with shapes and sounds,
And heaven opening thunderous bounds
Where feet-and-face-hidden-seraphs burn
And eyed wheels turn.

**Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury, Charles Williams.**

Don’t build your house on the sandy bank
Don’t build it too near the shore
Oh it might be kinda nice, but you’ll have to build it twice
Yes, you’ll have to build that house once more....

**Build Your House on the Rock, Songs for Sunday School, c 1983.**

4.1 The Defence of Poesy.

Philip Sidney’s *Apology for Poetry* (1595),86 is an extraordinary tour de force, by turns a theory of poetry, a political text, a philosophical treatise, and a pageant of humanist and classical learning. It is in essence an argument for the moral and political uses of poetry, and a consideration of the poet’s duty in the body politic. The classical antecedents of Sidney have been well travelled. So, also, endless ink has been spilt on Sidney’s political context, Sidney’s epistemology, the courtly and humanist agendas of his writing, and so forth. But in general, critics have tended to take Sidney’s wry description of his “toyful book” (Wallace

at face value. Martin Garrett is representative when he characterises Sidney’s poetry as “simply one aspect of the larger construct ‘Sidney,’ potential Protestant leader, source of patronage, soldier or military expert” (1). Theodore Spencer argues that “most discussions [of Sidney’s contribution to English poetry] are concerned with its historical or autobiographical significance, rather than its actual poetic value” (31). Catherine Bates speaks of the voice of the argument in *Apology* as one that “beguiles” (155), and Catherine Barnes notes its rich, paradoxical and ironic voice (422). Michael Mack identifies frustrating “eclectism” (5).

Whatever the agenda of the critic, it appears that Sidney’s poetic enterprise (whatever it is) is hard to separate from “the larger construct” that is Sidney and his later legend – the man himself will keep intruding.

In this chapter, I wish to suggest that there is a sound reason for this inability to separate poetry from the man who wrote it. In fact, I argue that Sidney’s theory in *The Defence of Poesy*, and his practice in *Astrophil and Stella* partake of a genuinely theological and Protestant purpose, one deeply informed by the notions and language of reformed edification. In this sense, producing “the man himself” is not part of the point, but the whole of it. When partaking in Humanist conventions in the *Defence*, or when showcasing human weakness and the infirmity of the will in *Astrophil*, Sidney continues to foster, and sometimes to play with, the dual reformed notions of human fallenness and divine grace. In the *Apology*, he positions poetry as a response to the former, and an agent of the latter. But in *Astrophil*, he meditates on the infirmity of representation, on the contingency and easy corruptibility of images in a fallen world, upholding a much more limited, and a much more doubled, notion of Protestant poetics.

In the *Defence*, Sidney envisions the poet as a prophet, responsible for the moral training of the imagination, and the formation of a taste for virtue in the reader. He recycles the Horatian bromide of poetry’s purpose to “teach and delight”, but his notion of both adds
to Horace, and to humanism, light, but genuinely theological notions of enscriptured community, reformed conceptions of fallen human nature and the infirmity of the will, and the idea of the virtuous man, who is immersed in a poetic (imaginary, idealised) commonwealth of the poet’s making. For Sidney poetry is a way of moving to virtue, maintaining harmony. He even flirts with poetry as a human co-operation in the same kind of creation which belongs to God, turning out both idealised human beings, and idealised communities, in a (theoretical) reversal of the fall. Poetry is special because it leads to a man sharing in the attributes of God: the poet as prophet, the poet as creator of exemplars, and the poet as edifier, all in service to the same Divine Truth. Michael Mack sums it up this way:

Justifying the poet not by what he receives, but by what he delivers, Sidney puts forth one of his most striking and most explicit assertions of poetic creativity, the claim that the poet “bringeth things forth” “with the force of divine breath” Arguing by allusion, Sidney claims for the poet the power of God, who created by sending… His “divine breath” out over the waters, and bring[ing] things forth by the power of His word. (Mack 111)

Sidney sees poetry as having a special divine vocation to assist in the purification of the commonwealth – albeit as ‘only’ the first and most accessible grace in the progress of the soul. Sidney envisions poetry as an exercise in cleansing one’s desires, elevating one’s heart towards the apprehension of God’s truth, set out for all to read, and heed. Mack argues that, in grabbing this recreative vocation for poets, Sidney is “exploiting…the traditional typological understanding of creation as a foreshadowing of the recreation in grace” (113). This claim, extraordinary in its depth and scope, and breathtaking in its potential radicalism, takes Cranmer’s theology of Bible reading as a medicine to the Fall, and (potentially) applies it to reading (and writing) in general, at least, that done by “right” poets, and read by good readers. Claiming the Scriptures as poetry is one thing. Extending that divinity to ordinary
poets is such an explosive idea that Sidney is forced to back away from it, conceding that, for
the most part, poetry is in a bad state, that there are many different types of poets, that Plato
didn’t like poets, but only meant to abolish abuses, and that poetry is not a purely divine
power above human wit (Raiger 23), but even so, Mack is right that in poetry, Sidney sees “a
fictional remedy for the fall, and to the extent that fiction is not purely imaginary, it does a
work analogous to that of grace: it regenerates fallen nature” (126). He continues:

Participating in God’s work of regeneration, the poet, by means of his golden world,
moves the reader’s will to embrace the good. This gives the poet a God-like power, or,
better, it allows him to share in God’s actual power. (128)

The end of poetry is not simply to entertain, but to “move” to “virtuous action,” (94–5) the
framing of a good man. This notion of “making”, enchanting, and building maps, albeit
imperfectly, and in a different tone, onto the notion of edification, Even though the word
itself goes unused, the concept of poetics as having a moral mission of renewal remains, and
underlies Sidney’s vision of the poet. Fashioning a “gentle-man in virtuous and gentle
discipline”, is the same agenda set out by Spenser in The Letter of the Authors (see next
chapter), but it is vital to Sidney’s conception of poetry as well: it is the job of the poet to
speak truth, picture truth, image truth, and “show” forth truth. In a Cranmerian sense, reading
“right poetry” allows the transformation of an individual, we are “turned into” the book, to be
read and copied by our neighbours. Poetry is an elevating force to fallen world, corrupt man,
and decayed commonwealth:

lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, [the poet] doth grow in effect into
another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or quite anew,
forms such as never were in nature….so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not
enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the 
zodiac of his own wit…. [Nature’s world] is brazen, poets only deliver a golden. (85)

Poetry is also key in teaching a man to know, (his flawed self, and the world he is in), and to 
desire (the good). In this sense, it is a conduit between the ideal and the actual. A. E. Malloch 
puts it well when picks up Sidney’s use of “architectonic” knowledge, that is, knowledge 
which “consists in the knowledge of a man’s own self…this self knowledge, however, is far 
from being a private and individual affair; Sidney insists that its bearings are primarily ethical 
and political” (181). Malloch argues that Sidney’s poetic works to sharpen and purify 
perception, in Donne’s words, ethical poetry provides “both light and force of seeing.” It is 
this insight Daniel Jacobs hints at when he speaks of “the ethical function of narrative art” 
(334). Edificatory poetry is not simply a momentary encounter with a moral truth, or a 
recycled virtuous bromide, but the capture and attraction of lyric, story and narrative, and the 
use of these attractions to assist in self-knowledge, and exemplary self re-formation. As 
Sidney puts it:

Which delivering forth [from the Ideal] is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to 
say by them who build castles in the air; but so far substantially it worketh, not only to 
make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency as Nature might have done, 
but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright 
why and how that maker made him. (85)

By exposure to what Sidney calls the “golden world” of poetry, the spiritual or virtual world 
constructed by the poet, we emerge from it with a vision of what our own life might be. By 
the knowledge of our true condition and the nature of ourselves which we achieve from 
contact with poetry we are inspired to desire reform – the task of poetry is the picturing of 
(the striving for) the ideal, but also sharpening our desire for it:
Nature never set forth the earth in so rich Tapistry as diverse Poets have done, neither with so pleasaunt rivers, fruitfull trees, sweete smelling flowers, nor whatsoever els may make the too much loved earth more lovely: her world is brasen, the Poets only deliver a golden. (85)

The poet has a god-like (although not ultimate) power of creativity, but more than this, a power of airbrushing as well, a capacity for inspiration mediated by the Spirit and His instrument, the poet. Man knows himself best not in vacuo, but when he emerges into a relationship with the Ideal, mediated through the words on the page, even if he cannot by that encounter attain it, he is taught to desire it. In the words of Roland Levao, it becomes “a conduit, leading the ideal to flow into the actual” (223). Heninger gets at a version of this point when he argues that “the right painter, like the right poet, does not slavishly reproduce his object of imitation, but employs his wit to idealise it” (38). I would argue, with Bergvall, that the Ideal in Sidney cannot become achievable without a change of heart, without regeneration, calling, and enlightening. It is not simply a matter of correct cultivation, but of the movement of the Holy Spirit, whispering and appealing in poetry and beauty. To put it another way, we cannot attain the Ideal, we must be grabbed by It: or rather, Him. It is for this reason that Sidney leaves alone fruits and trees, and zeros in on his real target: Man, and his own heart.

But let those things alone and goe to man, for whom as the other things are, so it seemeth in him her uttermost cunning is emploied: & know whether she [Nature] have brought foorth so true a lover as Theagenes, so constant a friend as Pylades, so valiant a man as Orlando, so right a Prince as Xenophons Cyrus, so excellent a man every way as Virgils Aeneas. (85)
Jousting against Nature, Sidney defends poetry by suggesting that it is a much purer exercise in the ideal, a much more sacred form of creation. By the excellency of fictitious example, and by contact with it, the reader is able to access a much more concentrated form of divine truth than is available simply reading the book of Nature – poetry is the book of Nature purified, cleaned up, idealised – and so long as one realises both that poetry itself is in need of reform, that poetry is not in itself the point, then reformed theology fits very nicely in here. Of course a corrupted Nature cannot produce an Aeneas, but poetry, by supplying fallen “stepdame Nature’s” lack, can teach us to desire to be Aeneas, painting virtue in all its right colours, and sharpening our hunger for it.

Poetry is thus able not simply to create a man, but an ideal man. It does not simply create a world, but a golden world. It makes lovely nature yet more lovely, and it works “substantially” not simply to create one virtuous man, but it offers the opportunity for a whole multitude to “learne aright” and to graduate from poetry to the higher muses, notably of course, divinity. If the poet is conscious of his prophetic function, the sacred product of his “zodiacial wit” itself is sacred, and generative. It may “move” and transform, speak and teach in a genuine encounter with grace, since God’s Spirit “fills, moves, and vivifies” all in this world below. It is this kind of purified, idealised soul-experience which, Sidney argues, poetry provides a mediated and partial access to.

Sidney’s conception of poetry, likewise, narrativises growth in virtue, its “alternative” “golden world” demanding submission to the poet as legislator, creator and vatic guide. It is this encounter with the Ideal and its rules which refreshes our selves, and pushes us, by contact with the world of the literary work, towards ourselves, envisioned purified and whole. If we can only see a small flash of ourselves as we ought to be, and remain frustrated by the space, and the means of getting over it, that would, in the end, be part of the point. The same inspiration which breathed into the Psalter is, Sidney argues, breathing through all “right
poetry”, which is why Sidney holds up both the Psalter and the parables of Christ as examples.

Appreciating the words on the page is thus but the first (and most childish) step, the end is a virtuous man, even a redeemed world, beginning with peace and cleansing among the muses. Indeed, poetry is but one small part of ‘Sidney the construct’, but it is the first and foundational intimation of God’s call, the first stone in a construct which will end in heaven. Poetry but sharpens our hunger to follow the pattern the exemplar represents. In a corrupted cosmos in which we are all too prone to ignore God’s “law written on the heart” (Romans 2:15), Sidney envisions poetry as a sort of medicine slathered with jam – R. W. Maslen is exactly right when he argues that “for Sidney, poetry is the art of the fallen world,” (37) a medicinal purgative.87 It aims at the gentling of savagery, and encouragement to virtue by a real encounter with truth, and by the internalising of its “force”, a force which is then multiplied, and multipliable. This theological ideal of poetry and the poet’s job explains why Sidney is so distrustful of the dramatic mixture of “kings and clowns” (112). If poetry and drama show forth the ideal, then there is no room for characters like Falstaff.

It is true that Sidney is a humanist, and, as David Norbrook has perceptively pointed out, a representative of the sort of “civic humanism” concerned with the health of the body politic. But if he is calling for the reformation of poetry in accordance with its moral purpose, and for a new moral seriousness in the inculcation of virtue at the same time, we ought to consider the Apology as a work with theological bones informed by the contemporary doctrinal debates outlined in preceeding chapters, as well as by philosophy, classical progenitors, and contemporary Elizabethan politics.

87 Cummings argues that, in fact, poetry for Sidney is not subject to the Fall – something Astrophil and Stella disputes (264ff).
From this point, we examine the situation of *Apology*, move on to trace the theological vocabulary of renovation and reform inside it, and then consider practical applications of Sidney’s poetic in *Astrophil and Stella*, considering the notion of edification as an interpretive frame for both Sidney’s theory and his poetic practice.

The lively beginning of the *Apology* is notable for many things, especially the entertaining portrait of Jon Pietro Pugliano, the Italian horse-master, and his rhetorical colour and verve:

> [Pulgiano] according to the fertilnes of the Italian wit, did not onely affoord us the demonstration of his practise, but sought to enrich our mindes with the contemplations therein, which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine eares were at any time more loaden, then when (either angred with slow paiment, or mooved with our learnerlike admiration) hee exercised his speech in the praise of his facultie...if I had not beene a peece of a Logician before I came to him, I thinke he would have perswaded me to have wished myselfe a horse. (81)

By the end of this paragraph, Sidney has effortlessly positioned himself as a paid-up member of the humanist and aristocratic elite. But if, in one sense, Sidney speaks from the heart of European humanism, in a conventional nod to the boys in the Club,88 he also distances himself from it. The very Italian sophistication, or “fertilnes” (81) which gives Sidney his licence to speak is subjected to a lightly ironic tone – the “great commendation” and rhetorical overblow, the studied “exercise” in speech and the ears “loaden” with the golden syllables and exaggerations that follow are all held up for the amusement of the watching audience.

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88 For the context of gender in the Sidney circle, especially its influence on women writers, see Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).
We have here a small narrative of learning and enriching, contemplating and demonstrating, but we are also introduced to a scepticism about it. Pugliano’s rhetoric is convincing, he has the power to persuade, or to move, but how far is the rhetorical power to move trustworthy? Sidney positions himself as at the same time attracted by the power of rhetoric, and lightheartedly acknowledging its ability to carry away and ensnare. He admits the ability of language to prove false, and spikes that argument by suggesting that the trouble is not the power of poetry, but Pugliano and his “self love”. It is not linguistic power to excite love and devotion which is at issue, but the object of the devotion the rhetoric points to. Hence, the real value and generativity of “Italian fertility” is brought into question.

In the following paragraph, after some conventional modest disclaimers, Sidney transfers the serious version of this corrupt impulse from Europe to England, where poetry is “falne to be the laughing stock of children” and there is “great daunger of civill warre among the Muses,” where poetry is “defaced”. To the rescue comes Sidney, armed with two things: his “unelected vocation,” and his claim to have the proper credentials, “since the scholler is to be pardoned that followeth in the steps of his maister” (81). It is natural to view Sidney’s claim of a vocation in the same sort of ironic light as Pugliano’s horse – and, of course, Sidney is being both light-hearted and serious. We have repeated in the next paragraph a similar sort of situation to the previous, but one presented in much more serious terms – as a civil war and conflict between the Muses, a disordered body politic in which venerable poetry (presented as “first light giver to ignorance, and first nurse” (82)) is mocked by children, and plagued by “Vipers, that with their birth kill their parents”. The English commonwealth, like Italy where falsity is “gilded”, is in fairly desperate need of re-formation, a clear steer on

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89 This particular image of Vipers eating their parents recurs, for example in Henry Vaughan’s *Silex Scintellans* (1650) 217-18.
the right path to avert this muse-ical conflict – and Sidney is called, though unworthy, to provide it.

It is in this context of “unelected vocation” that we approach Sidney’s remarks about the moral purpose of poetry. He has already assumed the authority identified by Cranmer, that of a man “consecrated according to the Scripture” (117), and crucially, the man responsible for harmony among the Muses and in the commonwealth. And like the Archbishop, whose concern for edification rules his Preface and arguably his whole theological outlook, Sidney conceives of his vocation in terms – recognisably Cranmerian – of the lightening of ignorance, the taming of barbarity, the administration of medicine, and the preservation of concord.90 Bible reading for Cranmer is “salve for your sores”, the chief joy of even the Ethiopian eunuch and the plowman, be he “ever so barbarous or unlettered”, and by it, we are taught, commonwealth-wise, our duty to each other, to the King, and to God. In the same way for Sidney, poetry is a sort of primal grace, which later allows the education of the person to deeper levels, and to deeper things:

And first, truly, to all them that, professing learning, inveigh against poetry, may justly be objected that they go very near to ungratefulness, to seek to deface that which, in the noblest nations and languages that are known, hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges. (82)

Poetry is seen as a pagan and general grace, connected perhaps to the image of God in Creation (as Calvin has it), and thus, like that image, it should not be “defaced” by ingratitude. Such an ingratitude goes near to irreverence, given Who it is that brings first light

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90 See Cranmer’s Preface to the Great Bible outlined already.
to ignorance, and even pagan people, Sidney argues, can be taught to love and admire what is good:

For not only in time they had this priority – although in itself antiquity be venerable – but went before them as causes, to draw with their charming sweetness the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge. So as Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts, – indeed stony and beastly people. (82)

In a world fallen into sin and prey to corruption, the decayed and broken state of the Muses mirrors the Reformed conception of the broken world. The duty of the poet, like that of the priest, is to “move stones” and “stonie people” to the “admiration of knowledge”. Note here that the beasts, and the “stonie and beastly” people, aren’t transformed by contact with the music into human beings, or anything so miraculous – but they are charmed by “sweetness”, they are “moved” and enlivened, from stony and beastly into something else, and brought to “the admiration of knowledge,” to glimpse, pause and admire. Although this movement to admiration and charming is not an end in itself, and obviously becomes corrupt when narcissitic or misdirected, it is a beginning, one among several necessary checks to human depravity, “wild” and “untamed” as it is. In this sense, Sidney’s conception of poetry maps onto Spenser’s Una in Book I of the Faerie Queene, instructing and charming the fauns and satyrs, partly by truth, but partly by the medicinal strength of her beauteous self. Further, the stones moved by Amphion, and their association with “stony and beastly people” places poetry in the same Biblical frame as the lively stones builded into a living temple (1 Peter 2:5), and the same Pauline moment as 1 Corinthians: for “you are God’s building”. Taking away hearts of stone and giving hearts of flesh, the civilising of beastly people, the growing up process symbolised by the organisation of stones into a city, all of these are edificatory moves. The catching power of poetry, signified here by “admiration” is the same catching
power later taken up by Donne, the transfixing and attracting power of creativity. In the story of Amphion, the attractive power is signified as music, but note also that Amphion’s gliding stones are images also of the two things I argue are intimately connected in Sidney (as they are in the rest of Protestant poetics): transcendence, and divine grace. By music (in this case, by poetry) we are able to access a power which lifts and moves, which makes easy and light the burden Zethus could not carry by himself. The image of Amphion building the walls of Thebes is thus not simply an image of creativity, but one of re-formation, and reformation allied to its first prerequisite: the inability of human beings to do the things they want. It is for this reason that we need civilising. It is also for this reason, Cranmer and Sidney both argue, that we should “read, mark, and inwardly digest” the written grace – in the one case Scripture, in the other, poetry.

In this sense, Sidney argues for the capacity of “right” poetry to purify and correct nature. It is not simply that the reader reads the words on the page, but the representation of virtue there reads and corrects him, it is able to civilise. It is not the Scripture, but it is able to sharpen desire for goodness which Scripture then fulfils. The first stage of “stony and beastly people” opening themselves to grace is the admiration of goodness, the desire for it. The act of reading, then, is tied to the effect of the reading -- the re-forming of a man -- but the pattern of that man and his progress is in itself generative – by reading, it is possible to “make many Cyruses”, to form the enscriptured and purified community which the visible signs enable, testify to, and yet do not contain. In this sense, Sidney’s conception of poetry maps onto Cranmer’s conception of Bible reading. Cranmer argues that one reads the Bible in order to be “turned into it”, and then, “by the power of word and example, [the reader] is able to replicate himself over and over again, fostering in those he contacts a desire for truth”. These words come from the Cranmer chapter, but they could very well be written about Sidney and poetry. Poets may create a Cyrus, but then he is replicable, “to make many Cyruses”.
The right use of poetry, and reception of its truths can both “sharpen” and “soften” – soften hard hearts and bring home to them a true sense of their own unregenerate condition, and “sharpen” the perceptions of a remedy for it. Poetry is able to give light, but also force, to soften, but also to cut, to move, but also to pierce, and in the end to promote good fruit. In this sense, the “maker” (Greek: poietes from poiein) treads after God in the creation, and the reformation, of his own world, and the people in it. Further, if poetry really is “an unelect vocation”, which Sidney has “stumbled into”, it tracks the Biblical language of calling as well, and the reformed notion of effectual call – a grace to which no resistance is possible, or efficacious. In claiming to speak as and for a vocation, then, Sidney himself dons the prophetic mantle. We have here several repeated tropes – the “softening” of “hard” wits, the sharpening of “dull wittes”, the idea of persuasion to virtue and “exercise,” and the final “frutes” of knowledge which are the consequence of a planting in good soil. If this is the prophetic or vatic ministry of the poet, then, what of the man who will exercise it?

In theological terms, the priority of God’s perfecting grace runs up against the practical difficulty that it must be transported in, in ministers, in sacraments, and in human enclosures, which are at the same time authoritative (indeed, vital), and contingent. They must not become ends in themselves and block the access of the worshipper from the signification to the broader reality behind and above it. It is for this reason that Cranmer, in his prefatory “Of Ceremonies: Why Some Be Abolished And Some Retained” (1549) announces that the Church of England is to be content only with those ceremonies which are “apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification, whereby he might be edified”. In similar terms, and as a result of the same bracing doctrine of the Fall borrowed from reformed theology, Sidney evinces both an appreciation of the vital and creative power of golden rhetoric (as in Pugliano, for example) and a suspicion of it, a recognition of its contingency and corruptibility. If there is “right”
poetry that can be privileged as part of natural grace, and a genuine stirring of the Spirit, then there is actively wrong poetry too, poetry with bad intent, or poetry looked at as an end in itself, as a corrupting fancy, as he says, phantastike, not eistastike:91

Poesy…should be eikastike, which some learned have defined “figuring forth good things”, [but man’s wit may make it] to be phantastike, which doth contrariwise infect the fancy with unworthy objects, as the painter that should give to the eye either some excellent perspective, or some fine picture fit for building or fortification, or containing in it some notable example, as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, Judith killing Holofernes, David fighting with Goliath, may leave those, and please an ill pleased eye with wanton shows of better-hidden matters. But what! shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious? Nay, truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming force, it can do more hurt than any other army of words. (104)

Like the force attributed to the sacraments, or the authority of the Church, its very sweetness, charm and force potentially assimilates both to the Holy Spirit, or to devilish mummary, right edification from exemplars and images, or the bad kind, infectious phantastike from edifying eitastike true Church with its right use and force, and the world, with its false glozing and Babylonish pride.92

The correct posture for a poet or minister, then, is a modest consciousness of his own unworthiness, a sense of his own responsibility for the gift given, and the ability to separate the ordinary man from the prophet. To be a prophet is in some sense to be called to a divided

91 It is perhaps for this reason that in his argument about the status of poetry as a general grace, all the examples are barbarous, savage, and uncivilised locales: Turkey, Ireland, Wales, the New World, and the function of poetry said to be to prepare the way for tougher learning: “if ever learning come among them, it must be by having their hard dull wits softened and sharpened with the sweet delights of poetry” (83).
92 See the Chapter on Cranmer for his speech on the “false glozing” of the world in 1554.
life: a life that is both human and channel for the divine, capable of corruptibility *in persona humana*, but speaking *in persona dei*, the vehicle for truth. It is for this reason, I argue, that Sidney is so aware of the treacherous power of rhetoric unblessed by the grace of the spirit, unshackled from virtue, in the hands of the deceitful and unedified. This is both a reason for his ostentatious modesty, and one for him to abandon it, as it were, when the Spirit strikes, in defence of vocation and inspiration, in light hearted but pointed raillery against those who would scourge poetry from the Church of God. The transformative effect of truth is, as Greene puts it, “infinitely repeatable” and thus, crucially, both *relational* and *general*, yoking us in to the sine curves of salvation history, perfect divine call, and flawed human response, prophetic truth-telling, human imperfection, God’s mercy, and man’s depravity. It is for this reason that the *Defence* can be said to be edificatory, even if it is also many other things. it envisions a movement towards fallenness, but also God’s creative power and calling grace transforming man and his desires, man’s corruptibility, but God’s capacity to overrule and use him, the imperfection of human representation, but the perfect whole shining behind it, man’s necessity to build small things, but God’s will to perfect them and make them float, like Amphion’s music. In all this, Sidney’s conception of poetry matches Cranmer’s of the preacher and the lector. The Great Bible *Preface* too, positions Cranmer, and his reader, in a chain of repeatable imitation, stretching back through Gregory Naziensisus and Chrysostom, through the Apostolic writers to Christ Himself. Likewise, the preacher is seen as both flawed, and a divine instrument⁹³ “declaring the verity”, relaying the call of God floating above a “stony and beastly people”.

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⁹³ In fact, Elizabeth I’s conception of preaching is so ritually unoriginal that she seems to envision preachers as in large part simply readers, reading the *Book of Homilies* to the people. Strype records her: “she particularly declared herself offended at the numbers of preachers, as well as the exercises [prophesyings]….urging that it was good for the church to have few preachers, and that three or four might suffice for a county: and that the reading of the *Homilies* to the people was enough” (Grindal 375).
The analogy between the word of the poet, the divine truth reflected in poetry, and the Word of God, which all of the reformers represent as the ultimate harmonising and salvific force, is developed to quite some extent by Sidney, who begins by claiming that poetry is civilising, but advances to declaring it sacred, albeit mediated, truth:

Among the Romanes a Poet was called Vates, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or Prophet, as by his conjoined words Vaticinium, and Vaticinari is manifest, so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestowe uppon this hart- ravishing knowledge. (83ff)

The poet to Sidney is a prophet, or a “vates”, and hence we should, with Sidney and Cranmer, respect the “temper[ing] and order[ing] of the Holy Ghost” (Cranmer 85) and accord to the Psalter its proper place as the crown of Sidney’s poetic theory. If the excellence of truth is to be seen by the cleansed eye, and cleansing towards virtuous action the task of poetry, then poetry, and encounter with truth in general become a genuine “heart ravishing” grace, and the poet a real, although perhaps minor, minister in the reform of manners. ⁹⁴ If the “eyes of the mind” are to be cleared”, if the everlasting is to be made palpable but not containable, if the unspeakable is to speak, then poetry, and its task of edification, are essential elements which “deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God”. (Sidney 84)

This cleansing and reforming “enscripturation” is integrally linked with Sidney’s theory in The Defence of Poesy. It is no accident that reading, ethical concern, cleansing, illumination and reform recur in the same breath, and the same paragraph. Sidney describes the ends of all learning thus:

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⁹⁴ Although Sidney leaves open the idea that perhaps it might be the easiest and pleasantest ministration.
this purifying of wit, this enriching of memorie, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name so ever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the finall end is, to lead and draw us to as high a perfection, as our degenerate soules made worse by their clay-lodgings, can be capable of. (88)

Poetry is important for Sidney because it leads to an *inner* transformation, or, as he carefully puts it, in Calvinist terms, as high as our “degenerate soules” ever get. Sidney appears to make room for the *vates* in drying out the kindling, in teaching man to know his fallen self, and, in some contexts, such as David’s, uniting human creative power and the Spirit’s own:

> But when by the ballance of experience it was found that the Astronomer looking to the stars might fall in a ditch, that the inquiring Philosopher might be blind in him self, & the Mathematician, might draw forth a straight line with a crooked hart. Then lo did prove, the overruler of opinions make manifest, that all these are but serving sciences; which as they have [each] a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistresse knowledge by the Greeks [called] architectonike which stands as I thinke, in the knowledge of a mans selfe, in the Ethike and Politique consideration, with the end of well doing, and not of well knowing onely….the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action, those skills that most serve to bring forth that, have a most just title to be princes over all the rest. (88)

Sidney goes on to consider the various claims of the arts and sciences to pre-eminence, and comes down in favour of poetry, but notice two things in this passage. First, these are earthly forms of knowledge, as Bergvall points out, and thus subject to human corruption, and human fallibility. Second, that poetry, like the other forms of knowledge, is measured against criteria
that begin with the “knowledge of a mans selfe” but notice in the “Ethike and Politique”
consideration, with the end of well doing, and not well knowing onely.” It is by definition
communal, not a private, but a public end, that called “architectonike”.

The word is from Aristotle, it comes from “the Greeks”, and thus tracks with the
Politics and the Ethics in associating poetry not with speculation, or even just with prophetic
and Platonic perfection, but with civic and ethical life, and with getting things done. In
Sidney’s words, this kind of knowledge is concerned with “the knowledge of a man’s
self…so that, the ending of all earthly learning being virtuous action, those skills, that most
serve to bring forth that, have a most just title to be princes over all the rest” (88). Heninger
associates architectonike with Plato, and thus both with the ideal State, and the realm of the
forms. Pointing out the Platonic and Boethian bona fides of harmony as the governing
principle of the Republic: “This planet-like music of the mortal poet can be used to induce the
musica humana, the proper ordering of the human soul. And for that reason the planet-like
music of poetry is therapeutic. It tunes the psyche” (40). For Heninger then, “poetry enduces
that guided introspection which eventuates in self-knowledge, the recognition that, in the
Providential scheme, our psyche is ordered by divine intention” (41). This said, however,
Heninger then connects poetry not to Plato or Boethius, but, like Sidney, to King David,
playing the harp for the troubled Saul. This kind of re-ordering, calming effect is taken up as
a vocation by more poets than Sidney,95 and the idea that contact with virtuous example and
sacred text ought to inspire following action is one Sidney has in common with Cranmer and
other reformers: “following Christ in manners and conversation” transformation followed by
action, is exactly the calming and settling order Cranmer envisions for the Bible, as the

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95 Henry Vaughan, refers to his poetry in The Mount of Olives as “an ethiques.” George Herbert, Walton
records, assisted a carter with an overburdened horse. When reproached for his dirty appearance, Herbert
announces that he “would not let a day go by without comforting a sad soul, or showing mercy…” (Herbert,
303ff), finishing “and now, let us tune our instruments….”, a pun evoked by his musical company, but also in
touch with the Sidneyan lyricism here.
product of instruction and example. It is the edifying or teaching nature of poetry that makes it valuable, the inspiring and moving picture of virtuous action. “For as the Image of each Action stirreth and instructeth the minde, so the loftie Image of such woorthies, moste enflameth the minde with desire to bee woorthie: and enforms with counsaile how to bee woorthie.” Poetry is valuable because it inspires the reader to look behind and above it, from picture to reality, in Cranmerian terms from signification to reality and devotion. For this reason, poetry is enthroned as “Prince over al the rest” as the civil war between the Muses pictured in the introductory passage is finally resolved with the restoration of right order. As Beach puts it, the poet “shows men what perfection is, and therefore goes further than the philosopher or the historian to “disinfect the will”” (368). This conception of moral reform is what causes Hunter to add Augustine and Aristotle to Heninger’s Plato (4) “…the ultimate purpose of human knowledge [in Sidney] ….is to “lift up the mind” from earthly concerns, and set it moving towards its native country, by properly enjoying its own heavenly nature” (5), but also to find its ethical and political moorings in this world too (7), to learn to rule himself. Thus (although Hunt does not mention this) the Aristotlean metaphor of the saddle and the horse, with the telos of virtue directing the virtuous man.96 To this, Stillaman adds a definition of architectonike which is Humanist and Phillippist, not Calvinist, arguing that Sidney, instead of being reformed, or Protestant, or popularising a Protestant poetics, instead partakes of a humanist, Platonic and ecumenical enterprise shaped by Melanchthon’s eirenicon purpose of Church reunion, and mediated through Languet and de Mornay (Stillaman 140-180, passim). He writes, arguing against Bergvall:

Nowhere in the Institutes can such an optimism about the natural powers of human beings be paralleled…. as an anvil for his hammer, Calvin strikes heavily and liberally

96 This idea recurs of course in Proverbs, and Hebrew Wisdom literature generally.
upon depravity….the utter corruption of the will, its insatiable appetite for sin….Calvin’s emphasis sounds inconsistent with a critical argument like Sidney’s that relies so heavily on the poet’s power to move the will. (144)

Instead, Stillaman argues, Sidney partakes of Melanchton’s conception “locating inside the human organism itself a natural foundation for the fulfilment of God’s promise to restore his image (149). “In a reading like Melancthon’s, heroism is no longer the tired business of dead Greeks or Romans….instead, [it] is reawakened as the ordinary and extraordinary vocation of all people, called to rebuild the ruins of Troy, of the Church, of their own fallen worlds and selves…. (150). Architectonike, then, descends from Melancthon’s conception of God as a Mens Architectrix, and human reason as well as human wit, is dignified by real, if imperfect, participation in God’s plan. He argues:

Human and sacred letters are so closely associated in art [for Sidney], because the human and the divine are so closely bound together in Sidney’s thinking about nature. An absolute division between the secular and the sacred, the gulf that yawns in Calvin’s theology between helpless man and an omnipotent God – is irreconcilable with a conception of “human conceit” presented in terms of a still-erect Adamic wit, ranging in a zodiac of ideas.” (160)

It is true that, as a thinker and theologian, Melancthon’s contribution to the English Reformation has been long undervalued. Also, Stillaman performs a valuable service in reminding us that Reformed theology does not always have to genuflect to Calvin, and reminding us too of the historical and real diversity inside it. That said, there are a few moments at which his argument is overstated. First, utter depravity and total depravity are not the same thing. All the reformers agree that human beings are capable of recognising goodness, and being transformed to desire it by the work of grace. This is essentially
Bergvall’s argument, which is unaffected by the fact that, as Stillaman argues, Sidney does not actually mention “general grace” *qua* label. Secondly, Stillaman’s argument does not account for (indeed barely mentions) *Astrophil and Stella*, in which there is just such a yawning gulf between the ideal and the actual, and just such moments of human powerlessness as he calls absent. If Stillaman’s argument that the sacred and the secular are close together in Sidney is to be taken seriously, then we ought to consider (as I do in Part II of this chapter) that *Astrophil* also contains a genuine anthropology. In fact, I argue that it is an object lesson in precisely the general impotence of “still erect Adamic wit”, and the deconstruction of the possibilities envisioned by a conduit to the ideal. Thirdly, in Sidney, it is emphatically *not* simply a human conceit that poets wield. It is not simply a divine one either, but a mutation in the middle, in the same way that the prophetic and preaching ministry is. In this sense, the Adamic wit does not have to be erect, but only *erectible*, not perfect in doing right, but only receptive to the *desire* to do it, and not perfectly true, but only telling and pointing at the truth. Lastly, even if the gulf between human and divine is yawning, Calvinism’s main point is that the gap is and can be bridged, even if only by divine initiative. If poetry is an “unelect vocation” then it works by the same rules as those other elections: prophecy and preaching. None of these require perfect instruments, and it remains open to argue that, at least for “right poetry,” poets express through their wits a power they add to, point to, and do not contain. In this sense, poetry as an ordinary grace sits close to the reformed Sacrament of the Altar: It of course contains human artifacts, (bread, for example) and points upwards in a spirtualised chain of memorial and re-presentation, but it is not artefact, but part art, part deifact, emphasising the gulf only to bridge it. In this sense, *architectonike* begins in Heaven with the master builder, and ends on earth with the tuning of instruments to virtuous action, or, in parallel, the *reception* of grace by the communicant, if well disposed, and if all goes as it ought.
In this sense, Sidney’s theology of poetry maps onto Cranmer’s theology of Bible reading – via of course, the Psalter, the supreme example for Sidney of “right poetry”. For Sidney, the transformative power of encounter with this kind of poetry, the kind that “moves” to virtue, lands the poet next to the minister as an agent of divine truth, and both next the Holy Ghost. The poet works upon “infected wil” by “enticing” to virtue, and elevating from *is* to *ought*, or “the divine consideration of what may be and should be.” In this sense, he creates a whole virtual world with his “Zodiacical wit”: not just one Cyrus, but “a thousand Cyruses”, nature and virtue in all her best colours. The poet is a moral arbiter, creator and legislator: “Whatsoever […] the Historian is bound to recite, that may the Poet if hee list with his imitation make his owne; bewtifying it both for further teaching, and more delighting as it please him: having all from Dante his heven to his hell, under the authority of his pen” (93). “Poetrie ever sets vertue so out in her best cullours, making fortune her well-wayting handmayd, that one must needs be enamoured of her.” (94).

The poet (or, as Sidney continually points out, the good poet) is responsible for the showing forth of Truth “in her best cullours”, the declaring of Divine Truth to an infected world. Poetry, the ancients said, was “a divine gift & no humane skill”, and Sidney represents himself as being “overmastered by some thoughts [and] yeeld[ing] an inckie tribute unto them.” The good poet speaks not on his own merit or authority (being but a poor man), but borrows the authority of the Word, the power of divine truth. It is for this reason that poetry is a “sacred mystery”, drawing, as Greene points out earlier, the reader into narratival ethics.

So much for the language of reformation and community in the *Apology*. But Sidney’s engagement with it moves past the merely theoretical. In *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney again positions himself in service to the same reformed narrative. In the first, he presents the knowledge of God as a general grace open that all may read, and as such makes an auxillary
argument to the one in the *Defence*. In the second, Sidney again takes up the idea of the infected will, and the powerlessness of man without grace to rule himself, even when he wants to.

Sidney’s poetic theory envisions the poet as prophet and priest, responsible for the moral health of the whole community. The *Apology* defends poetry as morally upright and spiritually edifying, English as fit, proper and decent (these notions will recur again in a Laudian context), and the poet as fit to show, make, create a virtual virtuous world opposed to Romish errors and forward and stubborn ignorances, a place for the truly enscriptured to dwell. Cranmer imagines a community of Bible readers learning the right duty to God and each other (see Chapter 1), and Sidney himself enacts in building language the same journey through general revelation to God’s law, from call to response and reform.

5.3 The Inward Touch: *Astrophil and Stella*.

Other than the collaborative Sidney *Psalter*, which is in itself less an edificatory example of a text than an edificatory exercise in itself, Philip Sidney’s most obviously poetic production by himself is the sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, which, at first glance presents us with a number of problems in attempting to read it inside an edificatory frame.

First, setting it next to *The Defence of Poesy*, *Astrophil and Stella* does not seem hugely concerned with moving to virtue. Indeed, as will be seen, a number of the sonnets explicitly deny virtue’s power in the face of Stella’s charms. Religion, important to the Sidney of the *Defence*, is swapped (explicitly, as in Sonnets 4 and 5) for devotion to Stella. Rather than a straightforwardly edificatory purpose, the sonnets flirt with embracing the opposite, a portrait of a man ruined, seduced, enslaved, and, what’s more, at least sometimes happy about it. But, I argue, examining the notion of edification as an ideology with double
valency, we can see, written from an explicit pole of negation, a meditation on the same human frailty that Sidney offers poetry as a potential and partial medicine for in the *Apology*. Once a leading young light of the humanist *jeunesse doree*, Sidney shows in *Astrophil* a scepticism of humanism, and its (by now rather shop-worn) frames of meaning. He seeks to explore what a Protestant Petrarchanism might look like, and questions in the sequence the true nature of poetic devotion, and the emotional responses it evokes.

Sidney’s speciality in his early verse, as in parts of *Astrophil*, is light and ironic Petrarchanism, conscious of its own artificiality, but still attempting to dramatise an idealised narrative of courtly love, in which the beloved is itemised, her attractions praised, and, most importantly, her effect on the lover celebrated. Alongside these poems, we have others which appear (at least possibly) to be written to a real person, as in the poems punning on the last name of Penelope Rich. And, thirdly, we have those poems about poetry as an enterprise, how to begin ‘painting’ true devotion, and the effect of the image of the beloved on the poet. In these, Penelope Rich fades in favour of the literal meaning of ‘Stella’, (“star”) and the image of the beloved becomes an excuse for Sidney to meditate on transcendence and human fallenness, in much the same way as “Stella” in the Petrarchan kind of poems becomes an excuse to dramatise the situation and emotions of the lover.97 If *Astrophil and Stella* is about “a lover of stars” and the unreachable star he loves, this third category is about the nature of the *phil*, what it means to love: true love, false love, faithful love, fake love, and how you tell the difference.

Before setting out into deep water, let me say first that I do not necessarily expect that hobgoblin “consistency” from Sidney, in the sense that I read *Astrophil and Stella* as simply the application of the *Defence*, or as a primarily theological work. It isn’t, at least not directly. Further, both figures in the sequence partake of what Montgomery calls shifting “indeterminacy” allowing the movement between the fleshly and the transcendent, the gendered and the bodyless (44). Rather, I argue that, while Sidney is interested in a pretty compliment to Penelope Rich, in a teasing narrative of ironic Petrarchan agony, perhaps even in genuine feeling, a deeper question also emerges. It is the one which Sidney begins the sonnet sequence asking: what *is* the proper mode for genuine devotional feeling? Put this way, one can see the familiar and recurring Anglican question: Devotion must be shown, or signified in concrete things. How then can we ensure that such constructions are genuine; that they enable the expression of genuine attitudes of *heart* rather than deceitful “faining”? This is a different way of asking Cranmer’s edificatory question in “Of Ceremonies”, that is, does the ceremony under dispute provide a “notable and special signification” by which the soul might be “edified,” or is it simply a show getting in the way, a potentially misleading and false construction? Is it transparent and referring upwards, stella-wise, or perverting devotion by absorbing its energy into complicated artifice, or even false idolatry? Seen this way, *Astrophil and Stella* occupies a place adjacent to the more explicitly devotional poetry of Herbert and Donne, since it is asking analogous questions. Astrophil feels so passionately, devotedly, and hopelessly in love with Stella that his feelings are uncontainable, inexpressible, totally transcendent, in the same way as, Auden like, the spellbound lover looks at the cold stars. In the same way, God is utterly transcendent and often inscrutable. But, yet, the devotee *must* write of his pain and love in the same breath, exposing uncontainable love to the “scandal of particularity”,98 and opening it to questions of

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98 This phrase has probably passed sufficiently into general parlance, but it originates from the German Ärgernis.
genuineness, corruption, and human inconsistency, the balance between “truth and
prevarication” (Montgomery 47).

T S Eliot and Dr. Johnson have both levelled a version of this critique at devotional
poetry in the context of Donne, that is, that true devotion cannot be quite so complicated and
showy as Donne seems to make it (43). In saying this, they follow Herbert’s predilection for
“plainly saying” (see Herbert chapter), but also Sidney’s recurring theme, the importance of
“loving in truth,” not by rule. Sidney positions himself as a spokesman for an Englished
Petrarchanism shorn of over-reach and artifice (one thinks of his artful spiking of Pugliano
here). Sidney’s agenda, which he shares with Cranmer, Spenser and Herbert, is to
demonstrate the contingency of outward show upon inward grace, what he calls “inward
touch” (15). His poetry, in itself is not the point: it provides glimpse of Stella, who recurs as a
lodestar and touchstone at the end of each sonnet, either by explicit mention, or by her effect.

In a different context, Sidney engages with two of the great controversies of English
reformed theology: How is it possible to know God (or in this case, what is required to show
the genuineness of devotion to Stella?) and what the end of knowing God is, what He
requires. We can recast this question as “What effect does genuine devotion to Stella
produce?” or “what proofs does she require of her lover?” To put this into Cranmerian
language, what does a “notable and special signification” to put in “rememberance” look like,
and how can we distinguish true devotion from false? And, how to recognise the effect of the

99 For a more complicated reading of the relation between Protestantism and Petrarch, see Gary Waller, “The
showing (or the signification, or the ceremony, or the furnishing, or the building) in terms of spiritual effect? What does it look like, and how do we know that it works?\textsuperscript{100}

To be clear, I am not blind to the significant genre and tonal differences here. Further, I accept the fact that the tension involved in “devotional” poetry is often imperfectly resolved, if at all – Herbert is often at his most complicated while claiming to be plain, and Sidney lambasts Petrarch’s aristocratic and borrowed artificiality only to borrow him in service to an agenda equally artificial and aristocratic. But I am attempting to trace some strands of a cultural conversation about markers of devotion, and how genuine they are, even if I am deliberately, in doing this, eliding the fleshly and gendered in favour of the abstract.\textsuperscript{101}

The Protestant/Catholic divide can be quantified by so many differences: individual vs. communal faith, sola fide vs. works salvation in some form, predestination vs free will, English vs. Italian, and so on – and all the stereotypes fail to do justice to the nuanced complexity inherent in any religious movement, whether conservative or reforming. But one of the most noticeable changes from 1534 is the undermining of communal faith in the sacramental system. To a medieval focus on a right disposition is added a reformed preoccupation with the effectiveness and edificatory reception of the object. It is not enough to go to confession, one must promote heart repentance. It is not enough to eat literally the Body of the Lord, one must worry about the state of one’s spiritual communion. In every case, the visible sacramental system is undermined. Anglicans and Lutherans instead privilege the inward grace over the outward form, that is, the sacrament enables access to the thing that is really important, the spiritual reality to which it signifies.

\textsuperscript{100} For a treatment of this in linguistic terms, see J. Miller, “What Words May Say: The Limits of Language in \textit{Astrophil and Stella}, in Waller and Moore (eds.) 95ff.
\textsuperscript{101} For more on this balance, see Montgomery 48ff.
Some similar shift can also be seen in Sidney, from the ostentatious, Italian and Catholic performances of devotion made popular by courtly love and Petrarch, towards (allegedly) a plainer and more genuine affection, to which the sonnets give testament. They are presented as the offerings of a devoted heart – albeit an ironic and playful one.102

The spiritualised devotion here outlined itself must be performed and shown, and this gives rise not only to critical complaint about Sidney’s artificiality, but to Puritan complaints about praying and devotion by rule, but the distinctive task of Anglican poetry, which we can see recur again in Herbert and in Spenser, is to demonstrate how contingent the performance is on the reality, and not the other way about. It is “inward touch” that leads to real devotion, not necessarily taking up the right posture and mouthing the right words. Thus, the internal landscape of the lover becomes important in a new way. The difference between a real devotion and a fake one is the reality and reception, of “Stella’s image”, and the poet’s interpretation of, and dialogue with, the beloved. Arising from this, his own analysis of his own inward state becomes immediately and vitally relevant, and the reader is brought into a hermeneutic quest, focused in a sense less on the object, and more on the object’s work in the one receiving it. In the same way as Cranmer’s preservation of “notable and special significations” as being edificationally useful, when received correctly or with correct disposition, but as neutral in themselves,103 or Parker at Clare attacking the ceremonies of Relic Sunday not because of their intrinsic qualities but because they leave open the possibility of being received badly or to bad effect, Protestant poetics rips open a new (or recovered) introspection upon the quality and nature of devotion. In a partial and limited way, the poetic conversation not simply about love but about the proper modes of showing that

102 For a much more ironic reading of Sidney’s ethics, see Charles Levy, “Sidneian Indirection: The Ethical Irony in Astrophil and Stella”, in Waller and Moore (eds.) 56.
103 Or, as Tyndale would say, harmful when multiplied.
love, and the genuineness of devotion (and how you tell) maps onto this newly sceptical Protestantised poetics.

What then, sets this Protestant introspective process apart from traditional Catholic devotional language, and indeed, Catholic devotional poetry, which of course exists? Simply, two things. First, the object of devotion (whether Stella, God, or Sacrament)\textsuperscript{104} is removed from the complete access of the worshipper by an emphasis on the totality of Fallenness and human incapacity, and distrust of the images and representations of human beings, since they could be fake or disordered. Of course, this is a feature of Catholic piety as well, but it is adopted by all the Reformers with Augustinian firmness, in the face of Italianate anthropolatry. Secondly, the reforming impulse to curtail with severity an overweening humanism puts a corresponding expanded emphasis upon divine action. Limiting the capacity of an infected human will leads logically to an expanded role for God’s gift, whether sovereign grace, as later Calvinists would call it, or grace of the prevenient variety appealed to by Laudians and later Wesleyans. In this sense, Protestant poetics puts emphasis on God’s interaction with a reduced humanity, showing the imperfect attempts of human beings to reach God. This impulse to see the poverty of human artifacts, accept the human necessity for them, and square the circle by divine initiative allows Protestant poets on the one hand to show the insufficiency of human beings attempting to build any artifacts to contain God, and on the other to see those artifacts as a necessary stage in the overmastering plan revealed in the final analysis to be God’s plan to catch and contain us, not the other way around.

This kind of “Augustinian poetics” (Lewalski) leads both to a Protestant introspection on the workings of grace, as outlined, but also an inquisition into the kind of heart liable to attract divine action, and the raw materials upon which grace acts. It is this type of heart-

\textsuperscript{104} These may seem widely different objects of devotion, (although in the star-y sense of Stella not so far away), but they partake of the same problem: Loving in truth, and the proper and genuine showing of that love.
preparation work that Cranmer argues, knowledge of scripture helps, on the plough-into-fallow-earth principle (Hosea 10:12). Sidney skates very close in the Apology to claiming a similar kind of role for the right kind of poetry (albeit the wrong kind is an ever present and double-edged danger, in the same way Scripture being potentially harmful if received badly is in Cranmer’s Preface), but in Astrophil he focuses on the first half of the task of a Protestant poet. Instead of examining the role of poetry in moving toward virtue, he is examining human incapacity to attain it. In the ultimate analysis, what William Craft labels (rightly) an anti-Platonic impulse celebrating earthly artifacts over heavenly illusions, and culture over nature can also be labelled more straightforwardly as a meditation on the things that get in the way: fallible devotion, fallible perception, and the fallible products of a human mind turned in on itself, with no divine circuit breaker. As Strycharski puts it, “inscribed language is susceptible to misinterpretation, and its frustrating inability to communicate intentions reveals that its absences may overpower the presence ascribed to it (45). Waller speaks of the “Petrarchan lyric [as] always underm[ing] itself”, struggling to “fix or create the self by means of language” (74), a more secular way of making the same point. In exchange for what devotional poetry usually offers, what Debora Shuger calls (in another context) “a passionate intuition of divine presence”, (130) the poor and ruined Astrophil is given precisely the reverse – a crippling and ultimately ruining sense of Stella’s absence, a sense of his own ruin, a sky with no stars.

In this sense, Astrophil and Stella is a sequence about human poverty and contingency, but also a poem about the human propensity to invent. It paints desire as a double edged sword: capable of elevating and driving towards transcendence, but ultimately hollow when set upon the wrong object, in the same way that poetry itself is a gift, and a

\[105\] He makes it in relation to Protestantism in the same essay, 77ff.
danger. Sidney criticism tends either to moralise (as Sinfield and Scanlon do), allegoricalise, and make Stella the fictive embodiment of an idea (as, say, Weiner does), or a political figure (Minogue) or, in reaction against the other two, insist, as Hull does, that the poem is simply about desire, nay, clangingly and crassly about “fucking” (177). In this chapter, I argue that Sidney has a moral purpose, but also that his language has a double valency that by turns endorses and questions desire, in the same way that Sidney both endorses and questions the function of representation in general, and poetry in particular. The repair and renewal of the self is a moral imperative, but in *Astrophil* not achieved, as the idealised figure of Stella is both an image of transcendence, and a disordered image of idolatry

This doubled language begins at the beginning, in Sonnet 1. We do not here get a description, or a Petrarchan dismemberment, of Stella, but a meditation on the nature of art, and the possibility and dangers of poetry in particular:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show
That she (dear She) might take some pleasure of my pain:
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,

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106 For an engagement on Plato and poetic danger, as well as a conception of poetic energy which takes into account the *reception* of the poet’s work in a very Cranmerian way, see Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 147ff.

107 In the treatment of *Astrophil* that follows, I focus avowedly on only one strand of debate – the one about the vocation of poetry, and the infected nature of man. I resolutely ignore the usual Petrarchan sequences, except when they are directly relevant. This means that I spend disproportionate time on the first section of the sequence, before the first song, and leave off well before the end, with Sonnet 69.
We begin not with an image of Stella herself but with a paradox. Loving in truth, he would “show” his love, but “feigning show” is the immediate risk and danger of his will to paint, and hers to read. Not only is the poet here presented as a practitioner of paint, but we are already in the first quatrains, in a world of texts. “She” is convinced and pleased by the portrait of pain, this pleasure causes her to read, and having read the text (the poem, but also Astrophil’s “blackest face”) she then has knowledge, which leads to the effect: pity, and grace. Even this ideal chain of love through representation to pleasure, pity and grace is complicated, both by the double meaning of “faining” with its connotations of faking it, and by the notion that the effect of the text(s) will not quite be that simple as pity and grace. By the end of the first quatrains, we are already in a hermeneutic quest, attempting as the audience to read the text before us, and the genuineness of Astrophil’s devotion, at the same time as Stella is attempting to read it, and Astrophil attempting to show it.

Sidney insists on two things that might be considered as contradictory, the truthfulness and genuine nature of his love, and the feigning nature of it: It is “paint”, as well as “truth”. In the same way as the ceremonies and sacraments of the Church, it is part human “invention”, part deifact, with Stella receiving devotion, and for it, returning grace. The truest kind of devotion in the second half of Sonnet 1 is presented part as human labour, part as a Muse-ical grace, as heart devotion staggers to a plain end, wrapping up all the beating and mid-wife like labour in a simple moment of transcendence.

Thus great with child to speake, and helplesse in my throwes

Biting my trewand pen, beating myselfe for spite

Foole, said my Muse, look in thy Heart and write...”
The true way to “grace obtain” is not to borrow devotion from somewhere else by rule, not to “study” for it, or to do a sort of lover’s penance by beating and biting, but instead to “look in thy heart” where the image of the beloved is, and from which a genuine showing will then come. To attempt by study, by “other’s feet”, by simple human work unalloyed with any “inward touch” is to end “sunburnt”, to receive inspiration and quickening, but to end only in human labour, and human pain. Without the figure of the Muse, without, in some sense the divine gift conferred by heart, Sidney’s trewand (truant, idle, worthless) pen stays unmoved.

Similar notions recur in Sonnets 2 and 3, as Sidney again discounts a borrowed or studied devotion, poking at outlandish or over-elaborate display – in a sonnet which relies for its effect on the very contrast created between that over-elaborate display and the concluding sestet. The first quatrain selects as its target over-sophisticated “dainty wits” who cry on the muses in a sort of acting posture, “bravely masked” “ Flaunt they in phrases fine,” which are fake, because posturing and borrowed. Real poetry, for Sidney, is a product not of “phrases and problems” or of “strange things,” but an encounter with Stella, an encounter presented as a form of reading:

How then? Even thus: in Stella's face I read
What love and beauty be, then all my deed
But copying is, what in her Nature writes. (166)

This is, at one level, nothing to do with a theological proof. But it says a great deal about Sidney’s conception of poetry: real poetry comes from an encounter with the really real image of Stella in the heart, and then a showing forth of that in “copying”, a signification which reflects the importance and effect of that encounter. Leaving intact the fairly obvious fact that the real Stella is not her image, and that she is seen primarily in terms of her effect on him, what we have here is a Stella-centric encounter which produces an effect, the effect
thus producing the writing. Yet again, this reading however is too simple. Sonnet 2 celebrates the conquest of love over Astrophil in stereotypical Petrarchan terms of Love, wounds, passion and repining. Yet, at the same time, the sonnet has uncomfortable edge, as Astrophil is first wounded and bleeding, “forced”, “lost” and finally enslaved. “Like a slave-born Muscovite, I call it praise to suffer tyranny” (15). This form of semi-bestial slavery is associated too with the corruption of his imagination, and his faculty of invention. First, love has taken most of it away, he has only “a remnant of my wit”, and further, he uses it to “make myself believe that all is well/ while with a feeling skill, I paint my hell” (15). Again, the paint, and the deceptive qualities of his wit, are contrasted with a “feeling skill” which appears (and perhaps even is) genuine. We have doubled language in which Sidney is both a languishing Petrarchan poet conscious of his own state, and a hapless prisoner decorating a cell. Scanlon puts it well, in terms borrowed from the Apology, “Astrophil’s “erected wit” allows him to know what perfection is, but his “infected will” prevents him from “reaching unto it”” (68). The end in which Petrarch and Protestantism agree, is a self thus “insecure, anxious, discontinuous” (Waller 77).

In Sonnet 4 and 5, Sidney continues this, notion that Virtue and Love are at war, exiling representatives of Virtue their “seat”, and declaring his determination not only to worship Stella, but the seductive power of Stella is opposed to all the ammunition Virtue can muster:

My mouth too tender is for thy hard bit.

But if that needs thou wilt usurping be,

The little reason that is left in me,

And still th’effect of thy persuasions prove:
I swear, my heart such one shall show to thee
That shrines in flesh so true a deity,
That Virtue, thou thyself shalt be in love.

This sonnet is notable for its starkness. Rather than attempting to argue either that love of Stella is virtuous, or that it is in conformity either with reason or moderation, Sidney announces that even should Virtue tangle with desire here, she would be converted by “so true a deity” as the image of Stella in Astrophil’s heart. The bare declaration to Virtue not to bother, for it will lose, contains an ounce of rebellion, a pinch of lust, and a curious doubled conclusion. The simple knowledge that “the heavenly part ought to be King”, will do very little against the rush of desire, the “Gimme!” in the couplet, in which the infected will triumphs over the elevated wit. Sidney here grabs onto, and even celebrates the disordered nature of Stella-centric idolatry, part lust, as here, and perhaps also (in a typical paradox), part transcendent love, as in the following lines from Sonnet 5:

    True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
    And should in soul up to our country move:
    True, and yet true that I must Stella love.

On the one hand, what we have here is another simple statement that Desire will steam-roll over the poor saps who attempt to get in the way with their abstractions and their Books. On

108 This clash is described by Lanham as between “desire and convention” (105)—he traces the unstable dialectic between the two in terms of purity and impurity. See R. Lanham, “Astrophil and Stella: Pure and Impure Persuasion”, English Literary Renaissance, 2.1 (1972) 100–115.
the other hand, “true, and yet true” leaves open the aching and longing nature of eros, in
which the search for the true, the good and the beautiful, the country of the soul, is fulfilled in
his love of Stella, which is elevating and the only thing which is really real. Typically, “the
inward light” is both denied (in the sense that Stella is better than it) and affirmed, in the
sense that the image of Stella in the heart is both idolatry and some sort of truer reality. Of
course, this in itself is a fiction, not least because we are reading it – it’s aggressively implied
that Astrophil is deceiving himself – but at the same time, a genuine reality behind all the
loaded language and eloquent scholarisms is always affirmed – and back we go, in Sonnet 6,
to another meditation on how you get there. Sidney is not like all those Italian poets with their
golden syllables and classical myths, neither is he studying for pastoral simplicity (as in the
Arcadia). He is, rather, plain, trembling, and little.

What makes the difference between Sidney and Petrarch and Pindar et al? Simply the
quality of his muse, the quality of his faith, the encounter with Stella signified by “behold”
and then the effect “endite”. Rather than factual posture, Sidney locates the genius of poetry
in the realm of Stella, and speaks of the effect of such a glimpse in his poetry – it is for this
reason that Nature and Sidney both copy Stella, and not the other way about. On the other
hand, though, Sidney charts the gradual disintegration of himself, in a sense as an exemplary
text, as he shows forth the reformed emphasis on both the uselessness of human effort in
saving the self, and the absolute necessity of encounter with Something able to do it – and
Stella can’t, marking her withdrawal with instructions to hit the road. After all his efforts, he
ends up not only absolutely negative, but abnegated. It is for this reason that Sidney’s
contemporary Thomas Nashe described Astrophil and Stella as “a tragicomedy of love, the
prologue hope, the epilogue despair” (58).
In Sonnet 9, the dialectic between outward show and inward reality is even more stark. The aggressively tactile, and ornamental nature of the Stellan “temple” is both attractive, in an Italianate and questionable, as the outward show loads not only language, but the questions asked of it. Is the obvious pull of the dismembered and re-constructed Stella an idolatrous impulse (as in pagan temples), a worshipful elevation (as it is in say, the Song of Songs, or the Old Testament tabernacle), or does the sonnet, like its language, have the potential to be both? Is the temple and the wreck of, say, Sonnet 40: a disordered kind of pagan wreck, a simple recognition of human contingency, or both? This question recurs again and again as we attempt to “read” the quality of Astrophil’s devotion, see-sawing back and forth between idolatry and true devotion, true writing and fake feigning, virtue and its opposite. This doubled dialectic is seen most obviously and acutely in the remainder of Sonnet 9:

Queen Virtue’s court, which some call Stella’s face,
Prepar’d by Nature’s choicest furniture,
Hath his front built of alabaster pure;
Gold in the covering of that stately place.

To begin with, in conformity with Sonnet 5, Queen Virtue has arrived at Stella, and clearly taken up residence in her face. Further, copying has given way to Nature, solidified as “furniture”. The Old Testament temple’s colours (alabaster, gold, red, although not purple) are copied here, as each of Stella’s attractions are itemised as solidified furniture, as a “stately place”, part palace, part temple.

The door by which sometimes comes forth her Grace
Red porphyr is, which lock of pearl makes sure,
Whose porches rich (which name of cheeks endure)
Marble mix’d red and white do interlace.
The windows now through which this heav’ny guest
Looks o’er the world, and can find nothing such,
Which dare claim from those lights the name of best.

At the same time, the windows (or Stella’s eyes) contain “this heavenly guest”, as her lips contain “grace”. This solidification has long religious and Petrarchan pedigree but the effect, or “touch” on Astrophil isn’t elevation, but destruction. One touch of Stella in the night (as it were) is enough to turn all the solid to straw, and bring abruptly down to earth all the furniture, as the entire sonnet goes up in figurative smoke.

Of touch they are that without touch doth touch,
Which Cupid’s self from Beauty’s mine did draw:
Of touch they are, and poor I am their straw.

The Reformed emphasis on the faulty and corruptible nature of reason, and the human propensity to deceive ourselves is the subject of the next sonnet, in which Astrophil tells Reason to go and take a running jump:

Reason, in faith thou art well serv’d, that still
Wouldst brabbling be with sense and love in me:
I rather wish’d thee climb the Muses’ hill,
Or reach the fruit of Nature’s choicest tree,
Or seek heav’n’s course, or heav’n’s inside to see:
Why shouldst thou toil our thorny soil to till?

Reason is strong enough to put up a fight, But, even while fighting, Astrophil is clear that the rules which pertain to the realm of the forms need not apply in this fallen world, with its cursed “thorny soil” in which the combat is much more extensive, and its outcome certain only in the sense that the human capacity for self-justification will reliably triumph over abstract philosophical instructions to do the right thing. In the end, the “cunning fence” of reason is broken easily:

For soon as they strake thee with Stella’s rays,
Reason thou kneel’dst, and offeredst straight to prove
By reason good, good reason her to love.

A similar combat recurs in Sonnet 14, in which Astrophil’s unnamed friend stages an intervention, in which he makes the argument that untrammelled desire will end in Astrophil’s submerging in “sinful thoughts, which do in ruin end?” To this, Astrophil makes the major argument that this kind of love, which improves the self into a better man, it elevates and frames “manners” “truth”, “faith”, “wit” and “fixed hearts”. That said, of course, the medicinal purgative fails, as Astrophil gives the shrug in the couplet: if this is sin, “let me sinful be”. The redefinition of devotion as a virtuous enterprise softens the rebellious “so what?” of the couplet to something less than rebellion, but virtuous advice to avoid “ruin” goes the way of “parsons and school masters”, and Sidney rushes to ruin by the simple expidient of denying that ruin is anything of the kind. Yet again, the language here is doubled: Stella is both elevated and virtuous, and ruinous, and reason extant, but increasingly useful only as a propagandist.
In the same way, plain language is claimed, but increasingly both stuttering and elaborate. In Sonnet 15 the motive for speaking is both plain love, a love contrasted with Petrarch and Pindar as that which truly has “inward touch”, but at the same time (conveniently) it will make one nurse not at the literal breasts of Stella, nay yet Penelope Rich, but “the fullest breasts of fame”, the complete opposite of plain, reputationless love.

But if (both for your love and skill) your name
You seek to nurse at fullest breasts of Fame,
Stella behold, and then begin to endite.

Sidney examines with clear, even burning eyes, the mixed motives, swift justifications, and ruinous nature of the Fall, both in personal terms (as Astrophil begins to disintegrate), in community and relational terms (as he begins to rip apart both the institutions of virtue and the counsel of friends), but also, the effect of the fall upon language. Astrophil is graced enough to see virtue, to behold a pure image of Stella which calls, no, commands him to write in Sonnet 1. Yet and still, his writings and representations are undermined, both by his own mixed motives, and the questionability and corruption inherent in making the inward solid. Strykarchski sums it up, by saying “Writing is self-loss, rather than self knowledge” (57).

In this sense, Sidney undermines the same power of representation which he celebrates so eloquently in the Defence – the poet’s power to make a golden world is limited, severely, by the basic quandary of being human. We cannot do without representation, but, yet, that representation is always inadequate, and often a temptation to idolatry. In this sense, Astrophil is the reverse of an edificatory text, showcasing only the feebleness of man’s effort to build himself, and the ruinous nature of desire unalloyed by the medicinal pain of grace. A
C Hamilton puts it well, and simply: “By the end of this sequence, his fall seems complete” (73).

Sidney portrays Astrophil by the end of the sequence as almost entirely deconstructed, and happy about it. Prendergast puts it this way: “As Astrophil drifts into a solipsistic space that is isolated from any authoritative meaning, he ironically finds himself losing any coherent, unified sense of self” (20). The man who was in “hell” at the beginning of the sequence seems to make a point of pride of how abject he is, and how little remains to and of him, in a language remnant of generosity, but also an almost total celebration of abnegation, as in 18:

My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys,

My wit doth strive those passions to defend,

Which for reward spoil it with vain annoys.

I see my course to lose myself doth bend:

I see and yet no greater sorrow take,

Than that I lose no more for Stella’s sake.

To the pile to be torched by Stella’s face/image/eyes/love, Astrophil adds his public reputation, and the humanist expectation so celebrated by the young Sidney in the Defence, and banged on about by Languet and others in his correspondence, telling the unnamed friend that he has better things to do, and more lasting gold to mine:
For since mad March great promise made of me,

If now the May of my years much decline,

What can be hoped my harvest time will be?

Sure you say well, “Your wisdom’s golden mine,

Dig deep with learning’s spade.” Now tell me this,

Hath this world aught so fair as Stella is.

In the same way, Astrophil (potentially) unsays the Defence’s preference for moral maxims, morally weighted philosophy and allegory (as, for example in Senecan tragedy), by announcing in Sonnet 28 that such enterprises are suspect and unnecessary. Instead of allegory’s frame, or philosophical loadedness, we ought to:

Look at my hands for no such quintessence;

But know that I in pure simplicity

Breathe out the flames which burn within my heart

Love only reading unto me this art.

The allegedly plain nature of true love, and the allegedly transparent kind of reading which love enables, is complicated by paradoxes. If love is allegedly only “pure simplicity”, why is its reading “art?” If love is virtuous, not ruinous, why is Astrophil’s heart presented as being on fire? (Yes, a stock image, but also a negating one). And if language needs no allegory, and has the perfection bestowed on it by love, why can Astrophil “breathe out” the flames, and make not only Virtue but Reason, and the audience, burn and suffer too by the art of
representation, in a sequence which flirts with allegory in its very title, and is figurative and elaborate in almost every sonnet?

Placing the *Defence* next to *Astrophil*, we can see an argument with two poles. First, the possibilities envisioned in the *Defence*, in which poetry is the purgative of the fallen world, the poet assistant builder to the Holy Ghost, parading the forces of virtue in their best looks, and in their most powerful form – powerful because pleasurable. In the *Defence*, representation becomes a holy task, even if it carries with it the risk of lying, or the risk of reading badly (as Cranmer’s Bible Preface also does), then the remedy for it is the moral education of the poet, the moral edification of the reader, with the moral and imaginative architecture of the poet and poesy itself, its architectonics, grafted in to service in the moral renewal and refreshment of individual, and the collective audience. Yet, in *Astrophil*, a work presenting itself as the fruit of a sunburned maturity, this humanist optimism about the purpose and use of poetry is qualified by a much more sceptical and negative impulse. Instead of simply celebrating the power of poetry to create (although this never goes away), *Astrophil* is a meditation on those things which can corrupt that power into a disordered imagination, the littleness, creatureliness and contingency of human beings. This, a well travelled reformed doctrine, creates a hermeneutic quest for genuineness in representation, a distrust of outward show, and a privileging of inward reality, and a corresponding dialogue with the self on the genuineness and working of markers of devotion. In *Astrophil*, language can flip either way, from genuine love to false feigning, from transcendent desire into frank lust, from true faith to false fame. This corruptibility and plain giddiness works against readings which privilege one side or another: there is too much philosophy for plain desire, there is too much desire for pure theology – but isn’t that the mixture, admixture and constitution of fallen beings, especially ones who must be reduced to recognise their need of grace? It is open to us to read Sidney as a serious Protestant, engaged in the portrait of human
pride and inconsistency, and the necessity of encountering one’s own poverty. Sidney recognises poetry as a risky business, prey to all the interpretive difficulty of a fallen world, but it is through Sidney’s erected wit that we may realise our true condition, our own need of grace. The heart’s movement and stirring then become the prelude to renewal, a renewal mediated through words, the right reception of which can touch the core of being with inward touch – sometimes, imperfectly, and contingently, but also really. The ethical concern which marks the Defence then, also marks Astrophil, and he becomes an object lesson in human corruption, negation and necessity.
Chapter 5: “Framed in righteousness”: Red Crosse, the narrative of the English Church and tropes of edification in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*.

“Christ’s gospel is a religion to serve God, not in bondage of the figure or shadow, but in the freedom of the Spirit, being content only with those ceremonies which do serve to a decent order and godly discipline, and such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification, whereby he might be edified.”

*Of Ceremonies, a Preface to the Book of Common Prayer, 1549.*

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**Come, bride of Christ, receive the crown**  
*which the Lord has prepared for you for all eternity;*  
*for whose love you have shed your blood.*  
*And you will enter into the Paradise among the angels.*  
*Come, O you my chosen one, and I will set my throne within you:*  
*so shall the King have pleasure in your beauty.*  
**Veni Sponsa Christi**

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5.1: Introduction.

Edmund Spenser’s poem *The Faerie Queene* is many things. It is part epic of nation building, part court present to the Queen, part traditional Italian allegory, and, I argue, part Protestant edificatory narrative. By this, I do not mean a Calvinising narrative of univocal tone and simple structure: Spenser is not Bunyan. Neither do I mean in this chapter either to examine all the Books of *The Faerie Queene*, treat of every building image, or offer a defence of Spenser as attached to this or that religious school, as if people (even devout and committed ones who take their theology seriously) can be reduced to a theological proof. Instead, I begin with the text of Book I, the Knight of Holiness, and trace in it one aspect of Spenser’s thought: the relationship between building language, allegory and the reform of the English Church. In Book I we have explicit figures representing the True Church (Una), and a figure of England (Red Crosse) who becomes St George. What we see in the story of Red Crosse is a narrative of edification: the Christian knight learning to tell the true from the false, to discern right order, the right way and the right cause, learning to be holy. He
becomes attached to, and governed by, right and mature authority. In fact, he is “built up”
towards maturity, learns wisdom, and is strengthened by instruction. These are all Protestant
motifs inflected through building language and the tropes of edification.

By advancing the idea that the legend of Holiness is a narrative of discernment and
spiritualised edification, and thus is in service to a broadly Protestant cause and conception of
Church, government and order, I am not saying this is all it is. There are a number of more
Catholic and classical elements: the canonisation of Saint George, the use of penance and
good works, echoes of the Georgics and Ovid, the setting of “Faerie land” itself, which would
not perhaps have been the first choice of Bunyan. As Harold Weatherby points out, to turn
from the “ambiguous formularies” of the Church of England to Spenser is “to find a literary
portrait of the same ambiguities” (cxvi). Like the Church of England, Spenser’s poetry
contains sacraments, traditional figures, traditional spiritual practice, and festive culture.109

The Faerie Queene also contains tensions between concretising, building impulses, and
iconoclastic ones,110 paralleled with doubled images of true and false, in the manner of a
traditional morality play. To announce that Spenser is advancing a Protestant poetics is a
contradiction to these things only if one considers Protestantism to be the exclusive preserve
of adherents like the polemical John Bale or John Field. To announce that, like Sidney,
Spenser is a Puritan because he shows sympathy with international Protestantism in the
Netherlands or Ireland, or that in The Shepherd’s Calendar he defends Grindal as a good
pastor means only that he shared the sympathies of the vast majority of Elizabeth’s bishops111

109 For a fascinating treatment of Baptism and Chrismation in Book I, argued as Spenser attempting to engage
with the Church Fathers (something not surprising in view of Una’s representation as the Ancient Primitive
Church) see Harold L. Weatherby, “What Spenser Meant by Holiness: Baptism in Book One of “The Faerie
110 For more on iconoclasm see Walsham, 80-152, and K. Gross, Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm, and
111 Grindal claims in the Prophesying letter (cited above) to have the support of the majority of the bench of
Bishops for the prophesyings, and names them in the margin.
and a considerable number of her closest advisors – that he is probably accurately located on the fringes of the Leicester-Sidney-Walsingham circle.\footnote{Sidney is, of course, the dedicatee of The Shepherd’s Calendar.}

I admit C. S. Lewis’s insistence on the importance for Spenser of lavishly Catholic and Italian epics like Gerusalemme Liberata and Orlando Furioso (Lewis 297), and I concede the difficulty of representing an iconoclastic and edificatory narrative in the same frame. Protestantism attempts to spiritualise, allegory by its nature is concretising. However, Spenser’s dilemma and tension between concrete and spiritual, sign and inward reality, building up and tearing down, is not accidental, for it is the dilemma of the English Church itself. For this reason, I consider edification to be a helpful trope through which to view Spenser, and so I will argue, agreeing with M. Pauline Parker that: "Book One is a general picture of the Christian combat; and… Spenser therein portrays the perfecting of the Christian soul" (73). Caroline McManus puts it another way when she calls Book I “an extensive process of sanctification… overseen by nurturing maternal figures” (McManus 382). “Making holy”, what the Geneva Bible calls “the repairing of the saintes” is a straightforwardly Ephesian concept, borrowed as a rubric for the entire Church, and a summary criterion for its order, as we have already seen. The purpose of edification is, in the Geneva version:\footnote{I use the Geneva here because at several points in Book I Spenser echoes its glosses.}

The repairing of the Saintes, for the worke of the ministerie, and for the edification of the bodie of Christ, Till we all meete together (in the vnitie of faith and that acknowledging of the Sonne of God) vnto a perfite man, and vnto the measure of the age of the fulnesse of Christ, That we henceforth be no more children, wauering and caried about with evry winde of doctrine, by the deceit of men, and wt craftines,
whereby they lay in wait to deceiue. But let vs folowe the truth in loue, and in all things, grow vp into him, which is the head, that is, Christ. (Eph 4:15, GB).

We can see here not only the emphasis on instruction “grow up into him” but also church order, conceived as a body: “coupled and knit together by every joint…for the edifying of itself in love,” and the use of instruction as an aid to building up: “That we henceforth no longer be children.” Lastly, edification was the particular job of church authorities, authority was given to church leadership in order that the congregation might be edified: “Wee doe all thinges, dearely beloued, for your edifying” (2 Cor. 12:19 GB). The language of building and edification was applied to individuals and their good works too: “Euen so, forasmuch as ye couet spirituall giftes, seeke that ye may excell vnto the edifying of the Church” (1 Tim. 1:4 GB). The church was seen as a “habitation” of the Holy Spirit, built of people, mature and tempered Christian souls. In the words of Ephesians 2: “In [Christ] all the building [is] coupled together, [and] groweth vnto an holy Temple in the Lord. In [Jesus Christ the foundation] ye also are built together to be the habitation of God by the Spirit.” St Peter speaks of a “spirituall house” made of “lively stones” (2 Peter 2: 3ff GB).

For reforming Protestants using St Paul’s concept of the edification of the body, the Body of Christ was aggressively *spiritual*, the national Church a spiritual body in need of a spiritual building up. Protestant tropes of edification served the theological shift in emphasis from a primarily visible church to an invisible and spiritual one. Sacraments, preaching, private prayer and the other machinery of Salvation still had public uses, but they became increasingly inflected through a language which stressed personal and private spiritual benefits, spiritual requirements, and the spiritual building-up of an equally spiritual community. I argue that Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, and to some extent the whole work,

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114 The obvious example of this is Archbishop Cranmer’s view of the Eucharist.
is a narrative of edification, the building and maturing of a man, even though the word “edification” seldom appears. Spenser engages with the contemporary and Pauline tropes of edification, and works them through in the narrative, with the purpose that the body, and the man, might be built up, be made wise to deceptions, and enabled to “folowe the truth in loue.”

5.2: The Letter of the Authors.

The first thing to consider in this context is Edmund Spenser’s description of his purpose, in his preface, the *Letter of the Authors*. He writes:

The generall end…of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline, which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historical fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter, then [sic] for profit of the ensample”.

(715)\textsuperscript{115}

There are several things to notice here. First, the whole point of the book lies in “profite of the ensample”, that is, the frame of the work is edificatory, attempting, Sidney-wise, to slather virtue with “a medicine of cherries”, or as Spenser puts it, to “delight” those who read, and thus to teach and “profit” them. This comes of course from Horace, but it recalls Sidney’s argument in *The Defence*, and partakes in the same project of the reform of English verse and manners characteristic of the poets of the Sidney circle: the Areopagus.\textsuperscript{116} In this sense, the allegorical fiction is the hook, but the purpose is to instruct, to draw, and to teach, in an

\textsuperscript{115} All quotations from FQ, the *Letter* and the Prefatory Poems come from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed, A.C. Hamilton et al. (eds.) (Harlow: Longman Pearson, 2007). The poem is cited by Canto number, the *Prefatory* and the *Letter* by page.

\textsuperscript{116} For more on the Areopagus group of poets, and the Pleadies, the French group it imitated, see Howard Maynadier, “The Areopagus of Sidney and Spenser”, *Modern Language Review*, 4.3 (1909) 289-30. Note also the Commendatory Verse by “WL” (Spenser 724), in which Sidney is explicitly credited with having discovered Spenser, and inspired his art.
explicitly Pauline frame. Hence, for example, Spenser’s description of Red Crosse as “a tall clownishe younge man” who lies on the floor before the “Faery Queene” because he is “unfitte through his rusticity for a better place” (812). This position recalls St Paul’s admonition to “grow up,” especially since the Faerie Queene and Una are both opposed to Red Crosse’s going on the quest until he puts on the armour, which is “the armour of a Christian man specified by St Paul v Ephes”, the chapter immediately following the instructions to the Ephesians on edification. The armour, or rather Red Crosse’s adventures wearing it, will bring him to full maturity, train him so as to put him in readiness to fight the dragon. This puts the whole enterprise of Book 1 in the same narrative of maturing that we have outlined from Ephesians in other contexts. Thus, I confine my observations to Book 1 partly because it is the story of holiness, partly because it is the story of the True Church and England, and mostly because St Paul is the frame Spenser puts around this book explicitly in a way he does not in the others.

Note also two more things about the Letter. First, it foregrounds the hermeneutic question, in that its explicit purpose is to put limits around the interpretation of the allegory. Spenser envinces the same doubled appreciation for representation as Sidney: allegory, or “dark conceit” is powerful to “delight”, but it also must guard against the dangers of concretisation, what Cranmer calls the dangers of this “false glozing world”. To avoid “by-accident[al]” bad interpretation, Spenser provides the Letter, and the true glozing of the Arguments. Attempting thus to fix language at the same time as reform manners, Spenser engages in a project familiar to us from both the Bible reading theology of Cranmer and the poetic theory of Sidney: he releases the dangerous power of reading, interpretation and representation, but attempts to put it on some sort of communitarian leash. Further, and again like Sidney, the Faerie Queene partakes of Aristotle’s schema, concerned, in Sidney’s words, with “well doing, and not well knowing only”, with man in his “ethique and politique”
consideration. This agenda is specifically adopted by Spenser in the *Letter*, with “ethics”, “the virtues of a private man” (715), applied to Arthur, promising the political virtues in a hypothetical sequel. In this sense, what we have in *The Faerie Queene* is half of the Sidney project, the showing forth of personal and relational virtue.117 Spenser even compares the poet favourably with the historiographer, in the same way Sidney does in the *Apology*.

But this is not all. Spenser attaches his Arthur to Plato and Xenophon, praising one who formed “a Commune wealth such as it should be”, and the other who “in the person of Cyrus….fashioned a government such as might best be” finishing with the edificatory summary sentence “…so much more profitable and gratious is doctrine by ensample, than by rule….” (716). Note here Spenser’s allegiance to the Sidneyesque idea of example-giving, and the explicit evocation of Cyrus, Sidney’s exemplar and rebuilder, or, as Spenser has it, the “fashioner”. This explicit parallelism between individual “fashioning” and the project of common building puts the dangerous notion of, as Sidney would have it, “making” [Gk *poietes* from *poiein*] at the centre of the *Faerie Queene*. Fashioning as a word reflects this doubled dangerousness. In the Geneva Bible, for example, it is applied to bad idolatry, it is said of the golden calf in Exodus 32 that Aaron “facioned it with the grauing toole”, to the creativity of God, as in Job 10:8, “Thine handes haue made me, and fashioned mee”, to good human building, as in Acts 7: “Our fathers had the tabernacle of witnes, in the wildernes, as hee had appointed, speaking vnto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seene”, to the maturing of the Church, as in Romans 12:2, “And fashion not your selues like vnto this worlde, but bee yee changed by the renewing of your minde” and in 1 Corinthians, “And they that vse this worlde, as though they vsed it not: for the fashion of this worlde goeth away.” 1 Peter picks up this usage too, instructing the Church to act “as

117 Although for a complicating reading of eros and Arthur, see Wall 95.
obedient children, not fashioning your selues vnto the former lustes of your ignorance:” In this sense, Spenser is using a word which is parallel to, and part of the vision of edification. Not co-incidentally, I submit, “fashioning” occupies much of the same Pauline lexical field, and is capable of the same lexical flexibility, being applied to idolatry, but also to human and divine artifacts in the same way as edification. Note also that the virtuous example is attached to two more things, it is a “doctrine”, and, it is “gratious”. OED reminds us that, happily in this period, “gratious” has a double meaning: partly “full of divine grace” in the sense of divinely touched, and partly, simply, “attractive”.

5.3: Enter St George: Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.

We are in the Cranmerian territory here of reading the book “to be turned into it”, as the Homily has it, showing forth fruit, but also able to transform and replicate that divine and “inward touch” among our neighbours. Hence, Spenser picks up the “admiration” and attraction of the Sidney project, and applies it in Book 1 not only to growth in holiness (which is Paul’s end goal: believing and calling must end with dwelling and living), but to Nation building as well. To the text of Book 1, we now turn.

That Red Crosse needs edification is obvious from the very first stanza, because “armes till that time did he never wield” and like his steed, he is rash and in need of curbing: “His angry steede did chide his foming bitt./As much disdayning to the curbe to yield” (6).

The narrative of *The Faerie Queene* is not just a story of chivalric maturity, in the sense that

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118 Note that in the Commendatory Verses to FQ, the poem itself is envisioned as a building, a Petrarchan temple by Walter Raleigh (721), and Spenser as a workman building a house in the poem by “Ignotus” (725). It is hard to know what Spenser is envisioned as devising in the poems, but the fact that it is a building is suggested by the garland hung upon the door in the last stanza. Spenser himself hints at common building in the political Roman Pillars constructed in his dedicatory sonnet to Sir Christopher Hatton (727), but returns to moral fashioning by the time he is writing to the Earl of Cumberland (729), and builds a muse-ical mansion for the Earl of Ormond (730), and a bower for Walter Raleigh (733). He marries up Roman pillars and virtue in the sonnet to Lord Grey of Wilton (731). He also writes to Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, which shows him as aspiring to be noticed by the same social and family circle as both Sidney (Pembroke) and Herbert (Wilton).
Red Crosse simply needs a little practice at fighting.\textsuperscript{119} Instead, Red Crosse must learn several more things. First, he must learn to interpret the concretised signs around him. Since he is wandering in the world with Una, the Church is envisioned as attempting to find not only the right way, but a settling and dwelling place. In this sense, Una represents the Church Militant, with her dark cloak hiding her glory, subjected to persecution, assault and deceit, in the same way that She is in both Protestant Salvation history and in Donne. The concretising nature of allegory, and the narrative of wandering-until-the-lesson-is-learnt marries up both the individual work inside Red Crosse, and his outward actions in the moral landscape, and their effects on Una. Thus, Book 1, unlike in many ways the other books, applies the individual work inside Red Crosse to the narrative of English nation-building. When he is perfected, at least enough, he becomes St George, and stands thus for the entire nation, he is “St George for England”, in the same way that Una stands for the entire Church.

The concretising nature of allegory also means that, when the monsters and deceitful figures like Archimago and Error are defeated, they either have to be destroyed (as Error is), or [temporarily] frustrated and exiled (as Archimago is). This makes the moral combat not only explicit and vivid, but concrete. In this way, allegory itself is a building impulse. Not only does Red Crosse have to become attached to the right cause, and the right guide, to “folowe the truth [and that means Una] in love”, he must also learn to read the signs, to discern the concretely good from the idolatrously bad, and put his hand to both the work of building, and the work of destruction.

This necessity of discernment between the true and the false is hinted at very early in Canto I,\textsuperscript{120} when Red Crosse, the dwarf and Una are “enforced to seeke some couvert nigh at hand…[which] promist ayde the tempest to withstand” (7). Even though the trees “seeme”

\textsuperscript{119} Although as Psalm 144 reminds us, maturing can be seen as a training in combat.
\textsuperscript{120} The references here are to the stanza numbers in A.C. Hamilton et al.
like a “fair harbour”, for the church and her champion to rest, they are really part of the “wandring wood”: “They cannot finde that path, which first was showne, but wander to and fro…so many turnings seened/that which of them to take, in diverse doubt they been” (8).

This stanza summarises the Reformation dilemma: the ancient purity and Una-ty of the catholic faith “that path which first was showne” is obscured, and the Church is “in diverse doubt”. The picture of the Church as wandering in the world is a fairly well-travelled Protestant trope, the reverse of the (bad) fixity and solidity of Roman sacramentality. Spenser attempts, like several other of the literary figures in this thesis, not to abolish solidity, or sacramentality, but to reconcile it, spiritualise it, and make it transparent. Thus, allegorically, Red Crosse and Una must learn to look through and past appearances and “seemings” into the attitudes of the heart, the same attitudes in Red Crosse to which the moral landscape around him gives access. In this episode, for example, the trio are “beguiled” by being “led with delight” (10), an early example of the trouble “delight” can get you into, and a quick counterweight to the Sidneyan “delight” which is supposed to make the virtuous medicine go down.

The first episode of Book I, the fight with Error, in her “den” gives us an example of Red Crosse’s biggest problem: his callow rashness. Rather than proceeding cautiously, and with proper respect for the authority of the truth and the Church, the knight disregards the direct warnings of both the dwarf and Una, and charges straight into battle with Error because he trusts to the light of (his own) “virtue” (12). He is finally yanked out of the combat with error by Una’s reminder to “add faith unto your force, and be not faint” (19), but this sets up a pattern which will recur several times over the course of Book I – apostasy and renewal.

The point of Red Crosse’s mistake is as, in the words of progressive teachers, “a learning

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121 So, for example, Thomas Lever prays in 1556 for the “gathering together, consolation and edifying” of Marian exiles. *Original Letters* 168.
122 For the erotic connotations of this, see Wall, J. 93ff.
experience”, but his temptation and fall sets up the repeated trope of deceit, deliverance, and damage, the same cycle which is key to Protestant historiography. The knight himself, and the character he is opposing, must show their true nature, and, as so often in Spenser, a violent iconoclastic and razing impulse is necessary to extricate Red Crosse from the muddle he has got himself into. Error is first identified properly by Una (13), opposed and exposed by light (16), wounded (19), and finally defeated by the strength of faith (25).

The literal dismemberment of Error is life-giving for her impish children, but they glut themselves on blood, and burst, “drink her life, the which them nurst…” (26), and in a sense, destroy themselves. Thus, the right discernment, the grace of light and faith which opposes vain and cunning knowledge (Hamilton 36) is partly a rescuing and maturing force for Red Crosse, “knitting all his force….”, as it were, and partly a vicious dismemberment, which affects both Error itself, and the place it “defiles”. The frustration and dismemberment of characters like Error is a consequence of concretised allegory, in which the defeat of obstacles is visualised as a military victory, and the obstacle giving way as a consequence of a destructive and Providential force, allied to, and victorious for, faith. “Add faith unto your force, and be not faint…” (19). Red Crosse, and through him, the reader, is consistently forced to ask what the right way is. He is constantly being led away (by “the deceit of men….whereby they lay in wait to deceiue”) and abandons the truth, he realises his error, and then has to be rescued, by Una, or Arthur, figures more mature in the life of faith, who finally put him on the right path, which ends with the House of Holiness, and the vision of Contemplation. It is only there, in right order and governed by right authority, that he finds the answers to the constant hermeneutic questions we are faced with: Where is Truth, and which her dwelling place? In this sense, building language hovers over the The Faerie Queene, popping up here and there, as England-in-Red Crosse engages in an extended game of “Are you my Mother” with Duessa and Una, the doubled images of true and false worship.
If Duessa’s kind of building is solid, aggressively tactile, and life-destroying, Una’s, in the vision of Contemplation from the House of Holiness, is transparent, spiritualised, and not-of-earth.

It is this kind of spiritualised allegory that Spenser attempts, trying to push the reader to the limits of earthly vision and beyond, through the figure to the inexpressible reality, to which the envisioned building only points. Hence, when tracing building language in Spenser, we have a doubled set of images: The bad kind of building can be likened to a light swallowing wall, solid, blunt and impressive, in the same way that Duessa riding in her chariot is an impressive and prideful horror, or Orgoglio a big windbag. The good kind of building is a transparent window, identifiable with the humility and grave beauty of Una, the contemplation of which “does not puff up, but build up” (1 Cor. 8:1).

The only explicit use of the word “edified” in Book I echoes the confusion and need for discernment which was a constant problem for the Elizabethans in matters of religion, and is a constant problem for Red Crosse. The landscape in *The Faerie Queene* constantly shifts. Seeming fair havens become dens of error, reverend hermits stop tolling their beads to conjure up the devil, virginal Una appears wanton, wanton Duessa appears pure, and all appears confusion. In a sense, too, confusion appears not only inevitable (for the way is lost), but so does wandering, in the same way as the Church is consistently challenged to find a way through her difficulties, voyaging in a world exposed to fallenness. In many ways, too, the constant movement of landscape, and the warping of perspective, serves a Protestant agenda, undermining and displacing the concretising which is such an essential element of allegory. If what appears solid is not so, if what appears bright (Fidessa, Lucifera) is wicked, and the good can appear (under the influence of Hell) to be wanton, then the emphasis is drawn away from what we see, which we are taught to distrust, and thrown back on Red
Crosse, and the poem becomes primarily about his capacity to sift and interpret what he can see, and the development of the maturity and spiritual tools necessary for this to happen.

As Rufus Wood points out, the shifting of the landscape involves both Red crosse and the reader in a “"[a] common hermeneutic quest" – "How do we know if we are reading correctly?" (29-30). This is extended further by Christy Mujahid, who points out that this quest is true at the level of the Community of the Realm too: "what becomes increasingly ambiguous... is the ability of the English people (personified by Red Crosse) to stand firm and faithful in the face of evil and temptation” (165). As the story continues to shift, our reaction to it becomes less concrete, more distrustful of the events and things we can see. Instead, we shift towards a spiritual narrative of tempering and testing, in which concrete elements bring forth spiritual fruit, and a spiritual reactivity, in much the same way that the Cramnerian sacrament does. Duessa never gets tired of attempting to deceive Red Crosse and everyone else, sending a letter to slander him even at the very moment of Red Crosse’s betrothal to Una. He simply gets better at recognising, rejecting and resisting her.

This discernment training is partly a matter of learning how to read and follow outward signs, but also the ability to detect fraud. We can see this in a series of doubles – instructive flash cards meant to teach Red Crosse what to look for. We must learn to recognise when dismemberment is bad (Red Crosse leaving Una) and when good (the lion’s savaging of Kirkrapine), when female authority is right (Caelia, Charrisa, Esperanza, Gloriana) and when to be resisted (Duessa, Lucifera), when the wisdom of elderly fathers is to be respected (Contemplation) and when avoided like the plague (Archimago), which Houses are to be builded (Una seeks a dwelling) and which thrown down (Orgolio’s castle). The fact that Red Crosse “with God to frend” (28) gets through all of these adventures is a demonstration of the fact that he has enough wisdom, buttressed both faith and reason, to frustrate the purpose of
the Devil, but also enough sense to “read” well, and to take advice, as he does not do in the Den of Error.

An example of the shifting landscape to which I refer comes paired with the explicit reference to edification, in Canto 1, stanza 34, which describes the hermitage of the sorcerer, Archimago:

A little lowly Hermitage it was,

Downe in a dale, hard by the forest’s side,

Far from the resort of people, that did pas

In traverse to and froe: a little wyd

There was a holy Chappell edifyde,

Wherein the Hermite dewly wont to say

His holy things each morn and eventide

Thereby a cristall stream did gently play,

Which from a sacred fountaine welled forth alway

It looks, at first glance, holy, humble and safe. The salient warnings here are the isolation of the place, and the downness of the dale – compare it for example with Contemplation’s mountain, which is “steepe and hy” (46). Furthermore, instead of “holy things”, we are directed to “HIS holy things”, and, most significant of all, the explicit notion of “edified”, a building whose ostensible job is edification, which Hamilton defines via OED as “growth in holiness” (Hamilton 133). In actuality, the den of Archi-Mago is the abode of the “building Sorcerer”. This building is not only a place which contains evil, then, but a place in dedicated
to the reverse of edification. To borrow Sidnean categories, it is a place of phantastike, not
eikastike.\textsuperscript{123} It is, I argue, no accident that once night falls, the true nature of the building
becomes evident in Red Crosse’s fevered fantasies, and Archimago reveals what his “holy
things” really are. Note that in the argument to the first canto, Archimago is called
“hypocrisie” (6), that is, the representative of outward show, instead of inward belief (King
51). This outward show, as Red Crosse finds out the hard way, is fantastical and deceptive,
and tends to divorce the soul from truth. In a sense, hypocrisy is thus identifiable with
diseased imagination, what Romans calls “vain imaginations” (AV). Too much emphasis on
outward form, and not enough on inward substance, leads to the “guileful enchanter part[ing]
Red Crosse from Truth,” which is then replaced by “true seeming lies” (38) and “faire
falsehoods’(argument) forged by art. Archimago’s architecture of evil is emphasised by his
“pleasing words”, “smooth” tongue, and “artes of several kinds” (36), which signal
Archimago’s true nature as a blasphemous “bold, bad man” (37). The parting between Red
Crosse and Una is a due to his lack of discernment as he is taken in by “feigned hew” (46),\textsuperscript{124}
and by the feigned “blandishment” of the false “Una”, “but also to his trade-mark rashness
and immaturity. Una cannot catch up with him and explain all because “the eye of reason was
with rage yblent” and he is “pricked with wrath and firey fierce disdaine” (8).

As a result, Una is set to “wandring in woods and forests.” The angry and disdainful
reaction of Red Crosse to the voice of truth shows his immaturity, but it also figures forth an
infected will, one which, in Protestant terms, at this point cannot hear the truth. This
destructive impulse ends both in the undermining of the self, as Red Crosse is isolate and
easy prey for Duessa, but it also sends the Church Militant on a wandering and exilic journey
seeking her husband, the same journey which reforming Protestantism positions as more or

\textsuperscript{123} Sidney glosses this Greek term as simply “figuring forth good things”. 
less inevitable. We see variations on this theme in the repeated cyclical narratives of Protestant history, in which human fallenness again and again corrupts the attempts of God to bring human beings and institutions to repentance. We see it again in Jewel’s assertion that the best Church will need rebuilding and repairing work. It recurs in Donne, where the true Church is “bruised and torn”, as well as veiled, broken by her voyage in the world. We even see it in Sidney’s acknowledgement in *Astrophil* of the power of *phantastike* to leave human beings stripped and slavish, and in Herbert’s Church Militant, packing the camp bed for America.

In the sundering of Red Crosse and Una, Spenser reveals his allegiance, not to a narrow Protestant party or a theological proof, but to a Protestant vision of a perilously provisional and always-reformable Church. Una herself is (exactly as her name implies), One, Holy, Pure and Gravely Plain, but the blindness of the human heart, easily led away to falsity, means that her allegedly faithful husband will always be potentially seducible, especially when he has yet to grow into his surcoat, and sense of purpose. The parting is described as the division of Archimago’s guests “into double parts” which is Paulinely suggestive (9). The true church is divided from her champion, the intimate union between England and the truth is broken, and this inflicts a wounds, or “smarts” (9), which is reinforced by the images of sundered bodies, “double parts” and Archimago’s assumption of the identity of Saint George. By his divorce from the truth, Red Crosse has become a false shadow of himself. Archimago and Duessa attempt to, as Nadya Q. Chishty Mujahid has it, "weaken the religious and patriotic spirit of men such as Red Crosse," to seduce them from their duty (144).

All of this narrative partakes of Elizabethan tropes of the Church, constructing and dramatising the need to edify, restore and rebuild both church and its members. Una represents a Church which is not new, but is hidden, divided from her true eminence and destiny, and prey to ignorant assault, the “false glozing” of her knight, and the devilish
machinations of Archimago’s magic architecture. In ironic echoes of Bishop Jewel, if anyone is summoning heresies from Hell, or sundering bodies, it is Roman deception, not Anglican reform.\textsuperscript{125} In the same way that the “ancient undivided Church” had been divided and set to wander, we see a lost and abandoned Una wandering about in the wilderness. Indeed, wandering is a badge of catholicity and authenticity, for, as Bishop Jewel puts it:

It hath been an old complaint, even from the first time of the patriarchs and Prophets, and confirmed by the writings and testimonies of every age, that the truth wandereth here and there as a stranger in the world, and doth readily find enemies and slanderers amongst those that know her not (Jewel 1).

To add to a wandering church, we have a deceived Saint George captive to hypocrisy and exterior shows. By contrast with Una, Duessa not only has a doubled name, but her apparel is aggressively showy, impressive, and exotic:

A goodly Lady clad in scarlet red

Purfled with gold and pearle of rich assay,

And like a Persian mitre on her head

She wore, with crowns and owches garnished

The which her lavish lovers to her gave,

\textsuperscript{125} To remind the reader Jewel paraphrases the Catholic complaints against the reformers thus, as cited already in Chapter 1: “[they say we have] with new persuasions and wicked learning utterly dissolved the concord of the Church; that we renew, and, as it were, fetch again from hell the old and many a day condemned heresies; that we sow abroad new sects, and such broils as never yeast were heard of: also that we are already divided into contrary parts and opinions, and could yet by no means agree well among ourselves…..” In this Canto, it is Archimago who has ariful learning, Archimago who attacks the relationship between Una and her England, by fetching agents from an explicit Hell, and Archimago who “divides the body”, allegorically RC, Una and the Dwarf, from each other.
Her wanton palfrey all was overspread

With tinsel trappings, woven like a wave.

Whose bridle rung with all the golden bells and bosses brave. (13)

This is of course standard Protestant Whore-of-Babylon iconography, picked up by Herbert, for example, in “The British Church”. In this stanza, we can see both Duessa’s excess, and her attractiveness. She is “overspred” with ornament, what Spenser later calls, with loaded, plastic-surgery precision, “forged beauty” (25). The contrast between over-ornamented Rome, and the severe simplicity of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* is marked, it is a kind of “spiritual seduction” (Waters 279). In this contrast, too, we have two different types of attractiveness.¹²⁶ In Una’s case, we have the true, tender and grave, Quakerish authenticity, which, owing to its lack of show, is often both veiled and “ungently” requited. Duessa, by contrast, sluttishly “play[s]” with and “intertain[s]” Sansfoy, but is able to spur him on to prideful display, which by stanza 15 leads to the orgiastic festival of rage between Sansfoy and Red Crosse: “as when two rams stird with ambitious pride/ Fight for the rule of the riche fleeced flocke”. This moment, which begins with “broken relics of their former cruelty” (lances), and ends with cleaved heads and “streams of purple blood”, with “iron”, and “cruelty” and dismemberment. Red Crosse is saved from complete moral collapse by his spark of native virtue, which revives, but this moment is one of several in Spenser fraught with savage violence. Not only has Error been defeated and devoured by the force of Faith, his “blest” fight with Faithlessness is rescued by the same virtue, by the shield of Faith from Ephesians.

¹²⁶ For a connection between this seduction and its verbal context, see J. Wall 90.
This is ironic, in that it is Sansfoy who is presented as being properly faithful to his Lady, whereas Red Crosse has faithlessly abandoned his, but the point here is that the destruction of Sansfoy is presented as an attack upon an ancient and ruined tower, his strength and (according to his own lights) fidelity only making his “woe” worse. Sansfoy “falls like the old ruines of a broken towre” (21), one of several images in Spenser where architectural and bodily destruction is presented not only as necessary, but blessed. Duessa, whose “seeming glorious shows” are attractive enough not only to deceive Red Crosse, but to cause him actively to chase her, is associated not only with show, but with dead bodies (the cult of the Mass in particular), and with aimless wandering, in the sense that she is doubled as a fraudulent copy of Una, complete with (fake) marks of catholicity.

In this sense, she is the cuckoo in the Ecclesial nest, complete with false name, and figmented history. Further, she continues to be associated with images of bodily violence, as at stanza 30, when the garland made to crown her begins to bleed, and during Fradubio’s story, when the representative of Doubt names, and recalls the true nature, and “proper hew” of Duessa (40), associating her not only with the shape-shifters of Ariosto, but with his own self-blindness and “misforme” (42; Gough 50). The contrast between spiritual reality and outward signification is rendered acute not only by Duessa’s “proper hew” as a “filthy foul old woman”, but by Red Crosse’s encounter with Fradubio, a spiritual reality “enclosed” in what he calls “wooden wals” (42), and Red-crosse a “misformed house” (43), an explicit nod to the architectural power of a false religion. Just as Una has the ability by her nature and firm reminder to kindle Faith in Red Crosse, so the black and wicked sorceress is able to malform, sunder, mutate, and destroy. The violent, and good, iconoclasm of Red Crosse is paralleled by a more frightening negation, the ability of evil to steal and to deface, humanity, an evil capacity to overlay, ornament, and trap.
If Duessa has the artifice of the courtesan, and the accursed sorcery of secret art, Una’s power is shown in Canto III, where Spenser represents the Church “divorced in despair”, “in wildernesse and wastful deserts strayed” (3). Stopping to rest, and removing her stole, Una’s glory is revealed, much to the amazement of the local carnivore:

It fortuned out of the thickest wood

A ramping Lyon rushed suddenly

Hunting full greedy after salvage blood

Soon as the royall virgin he did spy,

With gaping mouth at her ran greedily

To have attonce devoured her tender corse

But to the pray when as he drew more ny,

His bloody rage aswaged with remorse

And with the sight amazed, forgat his furious forse. (5)

Truth, although in “wildernesse and wastful deserts strayed,” has the power and beauty of holiness, able to subdue pride. The lion’s “yielded pride” and “proud submission” show the power of truth to abate “hungry rage” and [the] “mighty proud,” in a beautiful echo of the Magnificat. This is particularly pointed because the abating of rage and pride is exactly what Red Crosse has failed to do. His failure to listen to the truth is the thing which propels him into Duessa’s clutches. What happens to the lion, that is, his submission to godly, edifying and female authority, is the thing which must and will happen to Red Crosse.
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Further, while both the combat, and the encounter with Fradubio show Duessa’s power
as deceiving, savage, and inciting, Una’s power does the exact opposite: it catches, but does
not trap, settles, but does not freeze, gentles, and does not incite. Not only does the savage
visceral desire for flesh leave the lion, he does what Red Crosse ought to do, pities Una’s
sadness, recognises the stabilising and glorious splendour of truth, and protects, guards and
cherishes it. (9)
This Cranmerian moment, in which the barbarous (in this case the animal, which is a
level or two below the Ethopian eunuch) values truth while representative England scorns it,
is encapsulated in Una’s lament: “Why has he me abhorred?” (7). It might be expedient to
observe here that this example of what Sidney calls “the admiration of knowledge”, that is,
the catching force which gives power to truth, is even more explicitly treated of in the second
civilising narrative of Canto VI, in which the satyrs begin by awe and admiration of Una as a
goddess, and end being taught by her, very gently, “the discipline of faith and verity” (31). It
is this Sidneyan process of progress in virtue that is pictured here, and it is, meta-theatrically,
the purpose of The Faerie Queene’s “doctrine” as well.
Una’s encounter with Abessa and Kirkrapine, which immediately follows the episode
of the lion, is the fruit of the lion’s submission. Having taken service with the right mistress,
the lion now does God’s work. Notice the terms in which Una’s arrival at the convent is
couched. She cannot at first even get into the convent (13). She seeks a “dwelling place” (11),
and in asking for it, she “framed words and countenance fit.” The search of the Church for a
secure dwelling place, or even a moment of rest (14) and the “framing” of it, track the
language of edification. So also does the death of Kirkrapine. Once he is “quite
dismembered…the thirsty land drunke up his life.” The lion in the service of the truth has
(paradoxically) revived the landscape by tearing the abusive Kirkrapine asunder, a Kirkrapine
described in very physical terms in stanzas 17–18, as a collection of objects: “heavy load”,


“stout and sturdy thief”, “ornaments”, “poor boxes”, “rich vestiments”, “habiliments”, “gold” and “rings” (30).

The destruction, (one is almost tempted to say the Dissolution), of Kirkrapine, Abessa and Corcera is a form of edification because it feeds the spiritual landscape at the expense of the concrete, corrupt and decayed, it deprives “blind devotion” of its fatness and oppression only to build up the life of the spirit.127 While the dismemberment of the True Church is a wound and a wickedness, the dismemberment of the false church is a duty, and a life-giving one at that. Again, we have a positive image of visceral savagery, as the Lion does his duty by Holy Church. Kirkrapine is presented as busting in the door (in tribute to his name), but the destroyer is destroyed himself:

His bleeding hart is in the vengers hand

Who streight him rent in thousand pieces small;

And quite dismembred hath: the thirsty land

Dronke up his life: his corse left on the strand. (20)128

As Una is manhandled by Spenser’s resident Dick Dastardly, Sansloy, Our Hero, in thrall to the ghastly Duessa, is brought into Canto IV. He arrives at the House of Pride, the Court of Lucifera, which is a visual representation of the Church of Rome. It is described in opulent,

127 Mahoney sees in Kirkrapine’s stealing of the cloths of saints a complaint about Protestant iconoclasm. In response, I simply observe that the basic problem with Kirkrapine is not his stripping of the altars (assuming Kirkrapine’s Church ornaments are Catholic ones, which I don’t, necessarily) but the illicit nature of the stripping, and the ungodly uses to which the monies are then put—Anne Boleyn, for instance, believed both in the Dissolution of the Abbeys and that Cromwell’s commissioners were on the make and not using the proceeds for the poor relief and educational purposes promised.

128 The reaction of the hags Abessa and Corcera, is likewise bodily, as they tear at their hair, beat their breasts, and tear their naked flesh (22), mad with rage, in a feminine equivalent of Red Crosse’s rage.
aggressively tactile language: “A goodly building, bravely garnished…the House of a mighty Prince” (2):

A stately Pallace built of squared bricke

Which cunningly was without morter laid

Whose walls were high, but nothing strong or thick

And golden foile all over them displaid

That purest skye with brightnesse they dismaid:

High lifted up were many loftie towres,

Goodly galleries far over laid,

Full of faire windows and delightful bowres;

And on the top, a Diall told the timely howres. (4)

It was a goodly heape for to behould,

And spake the praises of the workmans witt

But full great pitie, that so faire a moulde

Did on so weak a foundation ever sitt:

For on a sandie hill, that still did fit

And fall away, it mounted was full hie,

And every breath of heaven shaked itt:
And all the hinder partes, that few could spie,

Were ruinous and old, but painted cunningly. (5)

The impression here is paradoxically strong and weak, opulent and odd. The brickes are “squared” and “high” but they have no “morter” and they are not “strong.” Since the House of Pride relies on outward show, rather than inward, spiritual reality, it can put on an impressive front, but there is no ‘morter’, no faith or right belief, a fact which is emphasised by the “golde foil” of “display” which shuts out, or “dismais” the natural purity of the sky. The excessive ornament of the House of Pride is made explicit in the next lines.

This language admits the power of the deceptive image, but condemns it as “lofty” and ultimately something that obscures, or “farre overlays” spiritual truth. In the next line, the palace is suggestively called “a goodly heape”, that is, a decayed pile of stones in desperate need of edifying, being built up into a real and spiritual solidity. The ostensible strength of the House of Pride is only illusory, because of its attention to exterior show, and its neglect of foundation work. Thus, the impressive “cunning”, the “workman’s witt”, piles up stones, in lofty and impressive “towres”, but there is no “there” there, no real solidity. This is true at the foundation level. The clear allusion to Christ’s parable in Matthew 7, of the “foolish man which hath builded his house on the sand” reinforces this passage’s engagement with Protestant rhetoric and the concerns of edification. Christ begins the parable by uttering the awful warning: “Not euery one that sayeth vnto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdome of heauen, but he that doeth my Fathers will which is in heauen,” emphasising that the foolish (one might add, the hypocritical) man is “he who hears My words and doeth them not” (Matthew 7:21 ff GB). Emphasising exterior show and concrete fabric, the House of Pride has neglected its proper task, the edification of spiritual foundations.
To adopt a Sidneyan frame for a moment, the House of Pride is concerned with well knowing (in the sense that Duessa can talk the talk, and pretend to be *Fidessa*) and well showing, but not well doing – it is the sort of construction which is the reverse of *architectonike*. It has Archimago’s kind of cunning, and ornamental wit, but no real permanence. This lack of strength is also true at the level of the conjunction *between* the stones, where there is “no mortar.” The House of Pride is a sort of anti-Ephesus, where the stones are *not* conjunct, where the building is *not* “conferred together”, where capitalled Pride, and not reciprocal charity, is the architectonic end.\(^{129}\)

In this connection, the language is designedly doubled, attractive adjectives (“faire, sumptuous, beautified, glorious, witt”) vie with the narratival second look, which reveals, on closer inspection, the building to be “ruinous”, “fraile”, pompous” and “cunning”. This staggered sense of impressiveness, and then discernment, gives a real sense of entering a Tudor Court, complete with petitioners, courtiers and hangers on, competing to access The Presence (7). It is notable that Lucifera, the Anti-Una, has the Palace Una’s station entitles her to, while Una wanders taking refuge in cottages and under trees. It is also notable at Lucifera’s introduction that, like Duessa, she is immediately attractive and her throne is “glorious”. It takes a second look to realise that behind the “glistering gold”, and the “bright blazing beautie”, the “brave emblesh[ment of] royall robes and gorgeous array”, there is “disdayne”, and, under her “scornefull feete was layne/ a dreadfull Dragon with hideous trayne” (10). It is notable that, in her episode with the Lion, Una works precisely the opposite way. She at first shows a front that is sad, grave and black, like her stole – it is only when it is removed that her humility and deliberate plainness begin to “shine” with dazzling glory. Lucifera’s glory is impressive, but shallow, emphasising both her competitive pride and her

evil – as Hamilton reminds us, Una can shine, but Lucifera’s brightness burns. (64). All Lucifera’s dazzling array, like her architecture, is in the end destructive, or to use Spenser’s word, “ruinous”, just as all Una’s plainness and lack of artifice will end in both glory, and in a dwelling place of peace.

At this point (especially in stanza 15), Red Crosse is finally growing up – he is pointedly described as “the stout Faerie” and he thinks “all their glory vaine in knightly vew”, but to give him a further hint, Lucifera heads in her chariot a Pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins. The iconography in this passage, as A. C. Hamilton notes, is fairly traditional, and from a standpoint of building language, there is only one point I wish to make. First, Pride, as the governing end and Queen of all the other sins, is able to have a sort of multiplying effect, as Lucifera brings in her train all the other sins. In this sense, they make together a sort of disordered commonwealth, all of them making up not the Body of Christ, or, say, the Aristotelian body of the virtuous man, as in the Castle of Alma episode in Book II, but the seven-headed Beast of Revelation 17:3 (Hamilton notes this last, 65). Duessa is assigned a role at this diabolical Court, “next the chair…as one of the traine” (37), and the rejoicings of the diabolic are described as a kind of “fellowship”, in what Spenser calls in Canto V a “commune hall”, a destructive *koinonia* from which Red Crosse is pointedly “estranged”.

Again, the motif is Pauline – the fellowship of the Church breaks down estrangement and division and sets together all the members of the Church in fellowship.\(^{130}\) In this scene, the motif is *anti*-Pauline, as the “fellowship” actually *causes* the estrangement. Thus, as the

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\(^{130}\) “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners: but citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone In whom all the building coupled together, growtheth unto an holy Temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are built together to be the habitation of God by the Spirit.” (Eph 2:19ff GB)
Church is edifying, without a palace, or even a building, so the House of Pride is separating, however impressive its ornamental columns.

Turning now to Canto V, a few words about Duessa’s outing to Hell to bring back the devilish cure for her paynim lover. The thing to notice here is the curious solidity of Hell. This is not just the stock Dantean underworld with a pageant of tormented historical figures, or a Tasso-like Hellish interlude where the devil intervenes with magic to succour his chosen, although it has elements of both. It is described as “Pluto’s House” (32), and troubled by the screams of the damned, “the house of endless pain is built thereby” (33). It has a solidity, a “threshold,” parts of it are “wrought.” These solid, building moments are reinforced again once Duessa returns to the House of Pride. The dwarf tells us that the things we have just seen in Hell are repeated in the very dungeon of the castle itself, and Spenser leaves us with one last impression of solidity: “Forth riding underneath the castell wall,/ a dunghill of dead carkases he spied/ the dreadful spectacle of that sad house of Pryde” (53). The House of Pride is a solid house of deception built of torment and sin and enthroned upon corpses, a last echo of the essential deadness already associated with Duessa.

It is one of the frustrating bêtes noirs of Protestant allegory that even while undermining Catholic solidity and advocating a more spiritualized, transparent view of the Christian life, as Spenser does, Protestant authors have to concretise the spiritual in order to show it, and spiritualise the concrete, in order that the moral might be drawn. Using allegory as a critique of reliance on outward show is thus fraught with difficulty, since to show internal reform of life, it must be shown outwardly, and to allegorise concrete forms of evil, they must have spiritual, and hence non concrete dynamics to them. Cantos 4 and 5 represent an example of this tension, and although Spenser’s elegance of structure and ability to turn on

131 Note especially in this episode the comradely communality between Duessa and the witch representing Night.
a semi-colon mitigates its damage to the narrative, the tension is real. It is elided here by the poet showing both the spiritual (Duessa’s trip to Hell) and the concrete representation thereof (the House of Pride) side by side, and by his echoing the language and imagery of one in the other. But this problem gets very real in the next part of Book I, in the House of Holiness.

The solidity, and loving detail of the House of Pride is, no, must be absent here, as Protestant inward and true godliness is pictured not by outward signs, but by edificatory effect, in the same way that the importance of the Cranmerian Sacrament is not the Body of the Lord itself, but the process, and enabling access the elements allow when received in the communicant. Thus, Spenser has the difficult job here of dramatising an essentially internal psychological state in an allegorical frame, while attempting to argue that the allegorical frame itself is not the point. Before he gets there, however, Arthur must tackle the Giant, in Canto VIII.

Orgoglio is Italian for “Pride”, but his mythology, as Hamilton reminds us in his gloss, also associates him with idleness, with lust, and, along with Duessa, false religion, through his association with “the old man” or the earth. He is also associated, through the utter despair Red Crosse experiences in his dungeon, with the battle Red Crosse fights with Despair in the next Canto. The alliance of truth and Faith which, Spenser argues in Stanza 1, upholds the righteous man, also, as Hamilton argues, “answers the power [and, I would add, the ubiquity] of deceit as seeming truth” (103). Spenser speaks of truth as the only remedy for the frailty of man:

Her love is firm, her care continuall,

So oft as he thorough his own foolish pride,

Or weakness is to sinful bands made thrall.
In this sense, Una and Arthur together represent divine action, Arthur as *Deus ex Machina* in charge of “deliverance”, Una representing, and not for the last time, the preventing, enlightening and enlivening work of truth. They work together to deliver Red Crosse from “thrall”, snapping “sinful bands.” This iconoclastic impulse is shown in bodily terms, as Orgoglio is dismembered by the shining might of Arthur:

He smott off his left arme, which like a block

Did fall to ground, depriv’d of native might

Large streames of blood out of the trunked stock

Forth gushed, like fresh water stream from riven rock. (10)

Yet again, this sundering is life-giving. Duessa’s beast is likewise wounded, the ravening monster of Antichrist and his False Prophet, given the death blow. Noot argues, persuasively, that the wound to the Beast is “the places where God’s word is preached” presumably picking up “the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 5):

His monstrous scalpe down to his teeth it tore,

And that misformed shape misshaped more

A sea of blood gusht from the gaping wond,

That her gay garments stayned with filthy gore. (16)

The combat is repeated in parallel, building like terms. Arthur’s horn, identifiable via Romans 10 with the word of God “which soundeth throughout the earth” (Hamilton 105), makes the castle of Pride “quak[e] from the ground” (5). Arthur’s felling of the giant is compared to “a castle, reared high and round, by subtile engins and malitious slight…undermined from the lowest ground, and her foundation forced and feeble quight,
[which] at last down falls” (23). The radically iconoclastic force of Arthur’s shield when unveiled, which smites the giant, works by, in a sense, stepping outside the allegorical frame, into the world of the truly real. When Arthur is described, what you see is what you get. The shield’s power is that it is able to reflect the “blazing brightness” of Heaven directly, like a window, not a wall, or an image. Of course, the shield is identified variously as Faith (from Ephesians) or grace, but the point here is that Arthur is the kind of agent who seems to stand above the kind of hermeneutic questioning applied to the other characters. His effect is plain, his force irresistible.

Such is the force of his sight and strength that he is able to strip Duessa of her ornaments, and make it obvious who and what she is. The only other character who has this power is Una – and often she not until it is, in her words, “too late”. Note also that the solidity and complexity of the Castle does not defeat Arthur. Whereas, say, Red Crosse on a search mission would have been distracted six times and had to ask the dwarf for directions, Arthur barely stops to note the dismembered infants in Duessa’s private chapel (35), before he manages to find, encourage and “enlarge” his target. This is a fully mature man, no longer a child, not blown around by the wind, an Ephesian paragon obedient to reason, strong in Faith and constant in duty. This is, in fact, the man Red Crosse needs to look a good deal more like before he is fit to kill the dragon. This is partly a matter of straightforward “repaire” (50) in the sense of recuperation, but it is mostly a matter of spiritual progress – and to that progress, and Canto X, we now turn.

Red crosse’s “sinews [are] woxen weake and raw”, or as in the next line “decayed” (2). He is in urgent need of edification to remove that decay, and set him securely on the road to sanctification – in his case, literally. The House of Holiness, which is the Protestant alternative to the House of Pride is described as “an auntient house”, but in keeping with its mission to edify, it is in strict and cheerful order, and female order at that: “It governd was,
and guided evermore, through wisedome of a matron grave and hore” (3). This government results in the edification of all concerned by “goodly thewes (habits, but also, OED notes, applicable to bodily strength) and godly exercise”. Note that apart from a cursory mention of the gate, and a spacious court, the focus in the House of Holiness is on people, and more importantly their inner qualities, which are given allegorical form (King 58ff).

Unlike in the House of Pride, the whole pageant is spiritualised, and oddly floating. There are descriptions here of allegorical symbols, (Fidelia and her Book and cup, Speranza and her anchor, Charissa and her engorged mammary glands), but little description of the house, its appointments, architecture, windows, sundials, towers or other *House and Garden* features.

As one might expect in a House entered by Humility, the solid things aren’t the point. Rather, the descriptions are focused upon virtues, for instance “countenance demure, and modest grace”, or the Figures harmony and concord shown by their being “linked arme in arme” (12). They soon “goodly gan discourse” (15), teach “celestial discipline” and put Red crosse into the “schoolhouse” (18) to “teach” “preach” and “disclose” towards “perfection of heavenly grace” Their courtesy and charity show a properly Christian counterpoint to Lucifera’s competitive Hunger Games.¹³³

What the Figures “show” Red Crosse is strictly Biblical: Red Seas and stopped suns, buttressed with “goodly counsel and advisement.” Crucially too, Fidelia in stanza 19 has the “thrilling” power of words, the power of Sidney’s poet, “she was able with her words to kill, and rayse again to life the hart” (19), not the least in her parade of miracles. These holy Protestant women could come from the Interpreter’s House: however residually Catholic the whipping, scourging, fasting and good works Red Crosse performs may be. Bunyan would have been first in line to uphold “inward corruption and infected sin”, rotting and superfluous

¹³² For the Prayer Book resonances in this section, see Wall 112–113.
¹³³ Even though Fidelia has a book in which many “darke things were writ”, she has a face of “cristal”, she is clear, and transparent, if also sometimes properly mysterious (12–13).
flesh and “blots of sin” unpurged by human effort. The proper answer to this residual woundedness and weakness is the bitter remedy Spenser speaks of in stanza 29, “true repentance”. It would be easy here to wade into a critical debate about Spenser’s theology of Penance, and how this repentance is enabled. I might suggest, perhaps, that for Spenser the exercises gone through by Red Crosse are, while not wholly efficacious or salvific, the equivalent of Cranmer’s “diligence”, that is, useful because they signify to us a transformed and purified love. From thence, it is a short step to charting signs of regeneration and plotting them on a John Field flow-chart, and from there, we are, ironically enough, none so far from Bunyan, hermeneutically examining Bedford puddles for signs of election. Instead, I wish to say two things.

First, simply in story terms, Red Crosse cannot be off to fight the Dragon now, because the narrative arc of his growth into manhood and maturity is not finished. Having made catastrophic mistakes in his interpretive quest, he now has some repair work to do, but more than that, he cannot credibly be a proper guardian of Una, without a narrative means of purgation. In this sense, the Catholic penance and scourging are an allegorical way of showing the internal bend towards repentance which is necessary for truth and Faith to remain credible.

Thus, whether Spenser believed in outward signs of repentance like scourging or not, his story needs them, to make convincing the psychological ascent from suicide to the Mountain top. The solidity here is a victory for form over theology, even if the theology is maintained in the main. As with the tropes of building, scourging and purifying “restore health”, and the best way of edifying is a destruction. The work of grace thus “rend[s] flesh” and “sinews are eat[en]” (28), but unlike the dismemberings earlier, these ones advance spiritual progress, and are necessary to correct and “clear” Red Crosse. We see the Pageant of Holiness to pair with the Pageant of Sins: one mature, ordered, “charge[d] and govern[ed]”
(107), and at the end of this, we have the final statement of Red-crosse’s maturity: “His mortall life he learned had to frame in holy righteousness” (45, emphasis mine).

All of these tropes show us Red Crosse being edified: he submits to authority, (with its echoes of Elizabeth) to instruction, and to a process of tempering and maturity ending in a declaration that he is no longer “decayed” but “framed in holy righteousness”. Further, he is no longer “wandring” either (34), but guided to make the first, feeble steps towards the Holy Hospitall (36), and the Pageant of Virtues. These are clear antitheses of the Seven Deadly Sins, focusing on the Works of Mercy, and so disembodied and virtuous that they are supremely dull. But that disembodiment and spiritualisation is the point. These are Spiritual Virtues, not fleshly, and hence incarnatable sins. Spenser is forced to concretise them, as beadsmen, but he dramatises them as spiritual states, job descriptions of good works, or, occasionally, theological morals. Having Protestantised them, and opposed them to the aggressive detail and solidity of the House of Pride, Spenser now is forced to draw them in as little detail as possible.

Since even the house goes undescribed, the Beadsmen, unlike the Deadly Sins, swim out from a vague spiritual light, and then go back into it without having much emotional or vivid impact. Ironically, it is the very concreteness and disordered attractiveness of the Deadly Sins which Spenser attacks, and it is that catching power which the Virtues are unable to match. Spenser distrusts the artifice and solidity of allegory, since it so often leads, as in the House of Pride, either to disordered and inflated ego, or to equally disordered idolatry. But without it, he is unable to make virtue attractive – and, of course, the entire poem is an exercise in artifice. Even if it is open to Spenser to claim, as Sidney and Herbert do, that he has submitted this artifice to God, and that now, human cunning and wit rest, not on a foundation of sand, but founded on the rock, without showing us what virtue looks like lived out, and thus exposing himself to the risk inherent in representation and interpretation, we
never get past Square One to a virtue knowable and practicable. This is of course the danger Sidney negotiates in the *Apology*, and navigates by his notion of “right” poetry, which is *eikastike*, not *phantastike*. It is this same tension in Bible reading and interpretation that Cranmer attempts to palliate with the Church Fathers and the Royal Supremacy. Bale and Foxe attempt to address the question with a mixture of secular and sacred history, and a thorough didacticism. Herbert negotiates it through argument and devotion, and Donne by extreme abnegation. What Spenser does with it, we have seen in the *Letter of the Authors*, and we now see in the Mount of Contemplation.

First, in the figure of Contemplation, we find the Anti-Archimago. Not only is his hill high, where Archimago lived in a dell, but his chapel, and Hermitage echo Archimago’s. Like him, Contemplation is occupied day and night, and appears reverend and aged. But, although he is outwardly blind, inwardly, he can see, renouncing worldiness, and thinking only of “God and goodness” (46). While his body is feeble, his spiritual eye is “like the Eagles” he is physically wasted, but “waxeth lustie in the inward man”, in what Udall calls “secret increase of mind”.134 “For nought he car’d his carcas long unfed; his mind was full of spiritual repast….” (48). Contemplation, like Archimago, shows Red Crosse a vision. But while Archimago’s vision is lying, fleshly, and sundering, Contemplation’s is true, spiritual and edifying. And, as in the House of Holiness, the first thing to go is language, as Spenser steps in to announce that he cannot write, or represent, the things Red Crosse sees:

A path was steep and long

Which to a goodly city led his vew

Whose wals and towres were builded high and strong

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134 For some situation of this notion of *ecclesiola in ecclesia* in historical context, see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London and New York: Methuen, 1967) 28ff.
Of perle and precious stone, that earthly tong

Cannot describe, nor wit of man tell;

Too high a ditty for my simple song:

The City of the Great King, hight it well

Wherein eternal peace, and happiness doth dwell. (53)

This last polis is curiously disembodied. It has “walls and towers builded high and strong”, but Spenser declines to describe it, because it is “too high a ditty for my simple song” and he “cannot describe, nor wit of man tell” us about it. It is hedged about with Biblical tropes (stanza 54), and, in inhabitants, its angels, with their gladsome “companee”, form a kind of disembodied commonwealth, which towers into “the starry sphere” (56). This City is Deifact, as Contemplation tells us, it is “the new Hierusalem, that God has built/ for those to dwell in, that are chosen His” (57). Note here both the repeated emphasis on “dwelling” as opposed to “wandering”, and the sense of final completion, perfection, here. In this, echatalogical sense, the Church will not settle in her final home, and with her final husband, until the Church Militant becomes the Church Triumphant, no longer wandering, or provisionally camping, but dwelling. Red Crosse announces that he thought Cleopolis (London) the fairest City ever seen – “but this great City that does far surpass/ and this bright Angels towre quite dims that towre of glas” (58) – and Contemplation concedes that while this is true, it’s also true that Heaven looks a bit like London, “for earthly frame” (39). In prophetic flight, he goes on to congratulate Red Crosse on his new title: St George. We can see here Spenser’s genuflection at the fact that the Beatific Vision of Heaven vouchsafed Red Crosse is, at its basis, unrepresentable. At the same time, Scripture and poetic wit combine to give us some images to grab onto, ones clearly marked as spiritualised, and sufficient only to lift up our minds to
full consciousness of our own littleness. It is at this point Spenser is closest to Cranmer’s
notion that ceremonies and suchlike outward signs such ought to be “such as be apt to stir up
the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special
signification, whereby he might be edified” (Of Ceremonies 1549). Our minds, being dull,
need something to grab and lift and signify. But, our minds being dull, we grab on, not to
realities, but what Cranmer calls “shadows”. These shadows, if used in knowledge of their
insufficiency to contain and limit divine truth, can help and enable us to access it. What
“notable and special” means, is, of course, then and now, a source of controversy. But
Spenser, attempting to make his concretising allegory transparent, partakes and participates in
a Cranmerian poetics deeply engaged in spiritualising and edificatory reform, attempting to
“stir up” and build up.

Two more points. First, Spenser gives us here in the episode of Contemplation a series
of fairly orthodox correspondences. God is the Great King, on earth we have the Faerie
Queene, Elizabeth. New Jerusalem is the heavenly City, on earth we have Cleopolis, or
London. The Church Triumphant will be settled in that City ultimately, restored and spotless.
On earth, Una wanders veiled and torn. In Heaven, we have Christ, on earth the chain of
imitation and mutual edification goes through Arthur, and then to the knights, likewise
Champions of the Church. This correspondence is not, however, exact. Most obviously, Una
is frequently ignored, and literally sugilled by various seducers and villains. Further, the
fidelity of Red Crosse is not as constant as this schema would suggest – he is frequently to be
found riding off in a huff, and leaving the Church to find her own way home. This means, not
only that the hermeneutic quest is never over (or, at least, not until we see “face to face” and
thus need neither allegory nor glass), but also that the final destiny of the Church is never
certain. Even after the dragon is dispatched, and the betrothal made official, Red Crosse again
leaves Una to mourn, as he continues chivalric adventuring. Likewise, while architectonic
evil in the form of Archimago and Duessa can be scotched (as Archimago is forced to flee),
or exposed (as Duessa is stripped), but it is not really ever finally defeated. Archimago
returns at the beginning of Book II to make trouble for Guyon, and Duessa likewise makes
guest appearances as the analogue of Mary Stuart, both escaping several more times. In this
sense, the combat between true religion and false, between tearing down and building up, is
unending. Perhaps, for Spenser, it ever must be so.

Chapter 6: Not to Admiration, but to Edification – John Donne, Construction and
Abnegation in The Holy Sonnets and Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions.

“[I am to speak] not in the School, but in the Church, not in a Chair, but in the Pulpit, not to a
congregation that required proof in a thing doubted, but edification upon a foundation received…."

Donne, Sermon 38, Trinity Sunday135

“O to vex me contraries meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot
A constant habit….”

Donne, Holy Sonnet 19136

By the time of James I, and the time of John Donne, the National Church is beginning
to show distinct signs of metal fatigue. At first the great hope of the Puritans, James acts
against unlicensed preaching (although, unlike Elizabeth, forwarding an educated preaching
ministry), and conventicles, leaving George Abbot’s protest that, on second look these

135 Works of John Donne (London: John W Parker, 1836) 165.
136 The numbering and all citations from the Holy Sonnets come from The Poetry of John Donne, Donald
decrees would be found “of much edification” (4) (and not contention!) looking distinctly shopworn. The Hampton Court Conference makes clear to the Presbyterian party that the King will not budge, and although he scores a late goal in managing to substitute the Authorised for the Geneva Version’s “bitter notes”, the ascent of (the) Laud and resacramentalising leaves open space for the alliance of political anti-tyrannism with reforming religious zeal. Richard Hooker’s majestic flanking movement in the *Laws*, appealing to the same vanishing Protestant consensus occupied by Grindal and his Presbyterian interlocutors, fails to square the circle, as on the one side Marprelate Tracts attack prelacy whole-sale, and on the other the moderate sacramental piety of Herbert and Andrewes turns Caroline and Cavalier.

Inasmuch, therefore as John Donne is a Dean, an official spokesman for Anglicanism, for the regime which supported it, and for a kind of Protestant consensus which the Civil War would later undo, it is unsurprising that in his sermons he at many times borrows the frame, and the language, of edification. But it is how he does so, and the uses to which this language is then put, that offers, I argue, a way also to re-evaluate both the *Holy Sonnets* and the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*.  

In this section, we shall examine the uses of edification in Donne’s sermons, unsurprisingly the most obvious place to find theological scaffolding – and then go on in Part 2 to examine the Holy Sonnets, and Part 3 the Devotions.

6. 1 Sermons

First, and most obviously, Donne uses the word “edification” as the summary purpose of gospel preaching, often beginning the rehearsal of his sermon heads with a variation on edificatory

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language, as in [these points] “for your edification, and His glory” He announces that sermons are “not for admiration, but for edification” (Donne, *Sermons* IV.231), that he is glad to seize “occasions of advancing your devotion and edification” (Donne, *Sermons* V.162), and that St Paul is an example “in the character of his ministry, preaching to edification and advancing the kingdom of God” (Alford, *Donne Works* II.139).¹³⁸ Second, as well as being a duty of the minister, edification is a duty of the laity – the minister may preach, but the people must also learn to hear, as in the third Penitential Sermon: “for as you see the branches are many and full of fruit, and I can but shake them and leave every one to gather his own portion to apply those notes which may most advance his [own] edification” (Donne, *Sermons*, IX:296). Third, the good hearer becomes a kind of speaking text, which is able to teach others, moving them towards that Cranmerian constant, godly conversation:

A good hearer becomes a good preacher that is able to edifie others. It is true that these men were not to be literally preachers, as the apostles upon whom the Holy Ghost fell as upon them were, and therefore the gift of tongues may seeme not to have beene so necessary to them, but it is not onely the preacher that hath use of the tongue for the edification of God’s people, but in all our discourses and conferences with one another we should preach his glory, his goodnesse.

(Donne, *Sermons*, V:50)

In this sense, edification is not only an individual duty, but a corporate one. We are to edify *one another*, by stirring each other up to goodness, in the same way that a sermon does: “a sermon intends exhortation principally and edification, and a holy stirring of religious affections” (VIII:95). In this connection too, the minister himself can be a kind of text, in that Donne encourages ministers not to

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¹³⁸ This sermon, recorded by Alford as XLV, and preached on the Sunday after the Conversion of St Paul, 1627, also recurs in the BYU Database, but does not appear in the Simpson edition. Numbering is taken from the Norton Critical Edition of *John Donne’s Poetry* (Norton, New York: 2007). I have included the first line on first mention for convenience.
hesitate to preach from their own lives and histories to edify their congregations by speaking of examples:

…when the preacher preaches himselfe his owne sins, and his owne sense of God’s mercies or judgements. Judgements upon him, as that is intended most for the glory of God, so it should be applied most by the hearer for his own edification… [David] proposes himselfe for an exemplary sinner, for a sinfull example, and for a subject of God’s indignation whilst he remained so….And so we are come to our third part, he teaches by example. He proposes himselfe for the example and of himselfe he confesses those particulars which constitute our text. (Alford, *Works* II:533)

In this sense, of course, the Minister is exegeting a text, one of the penitential Psalms, but he has also in a sense become a text, an exemplar for the instruction and the profit of others. Donne’s own sinfulness, and his checkered past, become a sort of store of examples, from which the preacher (or the Spirit working in the preacher) may draw, to the upbuilding of the watching audience:

[we must] looke intirely upon the certainty of God’s judgement who hath the whole body of our sins written together before him, and picks out what sin it pleaseth him and punisheth now an old now a yesterday’s sin as he findeth it most to conduce to his glory and our amendment and the edification of others. (Alford *Works* V:319)

God has before him a “body” in the sense of a body of work, but also a body in the sense of a fleshly and corporeal thing, the sufferings and scourgings of which conduce at once to God’s glory (in that the image of the Suffering Christ is formed in the individual – “Thou hast Donne…”), and to “our amendment” by the knowledge of our own weakness and frailty and failure in the face of sin. And then that example, that paradox of the redeemed sinner who
shows God’s glory both by a deconstructive suffering and a reconstitutive grace, is offered to the watching audience “for the edification of others.”

Donne goes further: in his sermon on the persecutors, drawn mostly from Lactantius, he condemns those pagans “who will not suffer it [their suffering] to break out to the edification of others” (Alford, *Works* II:98). Edification in this sense is a duty, especially to be expected of the minister, and he is especially culpable if he in his suffering continues to “voyage alone” (Gardner clv) without regard for the wider whole.

The job of catechesis then, is partly one of “reducing”, in Herbert’s words, the unrepentant sinner, of moving his heart to the consciousness of his own weakness, so that he becomes humble and malleable. Donne makes this explicit in his instruction on the importance of catechism, enjoined on the Church by King James:

Christ enwraps, unwraps [sic] the greatest doctors in his person, and in his practise when he says: *sinite parvulos parvulos suffer little children to come unto me. And we do not suffer them to come unto us if when they come we doe not speak to their understanding, and to their edification, for that is but an absent presence when they heare and profit not— and christ enwraps unwraps the learnedest hearers in the persons of his owne disciples, when he sayes except yee become as these little children yee /cannot enter into the kingdome. (Alford *Works* II.506)

Connecting here catechism, edification and profit of clear and simple, childlike speech, and an attitude of the heart, Donne unwraps, as it were, a charter not only for his sermons, but for his poetry, and his devotions too, one deeply invested in the Cranmerian vision of godly neighbourliness, and subject obediently to the Royal Supremacy, and its stepwise Erasmian verbs:
wilt thou doe unto thy glorious church said the saints of God in those deprecations if thou take those men out of the world (the King and Parliament) whom thou hadst chosen, enabled, qualified for the edification, sustentation, propagation of that church. (Alford Works II.444)

Examining his poetry as an exercise in exemplary edification, with its concurrent sharp contrasts, theological sophistication, and staggering violence, offers a way to contextualise and re-view Donne’s famous melodrama, in the Holy Sonnets, aiming at shock, awe, ouch, throwing everything into a struggle which is at once reconstitutive and iconoclastic.

6.2 Fury in the Arena: The Holy Sonnets

It is a truism that Dr. Donne’s Holy Sonnets have a genius for melodrama, that they are, in a word, extreme. Patrick Grant identifies “an assertive and sinful self” and “an oppressive sense of individuality” which jars upon the reader and prevents the narrative “personal search for humility” presented in the Holy Sonnets from ringing entirely true (558ff; see also Gardner xxxi). Wilbur Sanders accuses Donne of unbecoming “frivolity” (128) and, “sanctimonious mummary” (112). John Stachniewski speaks of a theological “frame” to which Donne is bent by “spiritual contortions” (688ff).

I admit to some extent the force of this commonplace. It is true that a modern eye finds much overstatement, “forced sensationalism” (688) and erotic shock-mongering in the Holy Sonnets, and it is hard not to cringe before lines such as:

Except you’ enthrall mee, never shall be free,

Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee. (140)
Donne’s luxuriating in the imagery of force, rape, violence, suffering and scourging, which we find also in “Spit in my face you jews” and “O might those sighes returne againe” causes many critics to jibber about eroticism, masochism, personal voices and assertive autonomous selves rearing up in defiance of religious dogma. Robert Bozanich sums up when he pulls out Donne’s remark, repeated in Holy Sonnet 18, claiming an “amorous soule” (270; Martz 134). Donne’s is a passionate mind in search of rest and resolution, and to such minds anatomised in public spaces, extremes of language become a feature, not a bug.

Thus, the engagement of the “assertive and sinful self”, the enmeshing of the self in the drama, is exactly what the sonnets aim at. Although Stachniewski is right to speak of the “frame” and the struggle of the self and the intellect against it, it is important to consider John Donne not as some sort of proto-modern existential wit, but as a serious clergyman of the Church of England, enacting a theological drama in a public (or at least semi-public) space. Donne is in a paradoxical position of being private, in the sense of enclosed and privatised, but he offers that privacy to a reading public. The struggle of the self against the frame, the playing of the mind upon sacred themes, the unconvinced cry out to God, and the relentless buffeting, dwelling upon imagery of violence and force. All of these have impeccable Biblical pedigree as ways of “consider[ing] the wondrous works of God” (Job 37:14), “offering up” suffering and the self, and engaging intellect, will and memory in the process of meditation. Some meditations are unbearably bleak and/or tactile: for instance Ecclesiastes, the cursing Psalms, and Medieval lyrics such as the 14 O’s, which focus the vision on despair, blood, sweat, agony and flesh, with the aim of abrading the heart, bringing home to the penitent his true condition. This process is not only Ignatian, but it is repeated in a gentler manner by George Herbert contemporaneously with Donne. Its aim is the edification of the watching public, by observing what Donne calls in another context “the progres of the soule” (Martz 113) through struggle in hope of redemption. In fact, the conduct of what Louis Martz
calls “the spiritual combat” (*The Poetry of Meditation* 118) is the point of the sonnets. While Donne’s Holy Sonnets are complex, and notoriously slippery, the occasional strained conceit, the pushing of the reader’s vision to an uncomfortable point, allows us to see the drama of Salvation as something more than “a Christian commonplace,” as something of soul-tearing and unbearable import, calling on the whole person, even to the point of straining every sinew, and conceit. We may go further. The extremity in Donne’s poetry is a function of two poles. As Erica Longfellow puts it, “the self presented in the Holy Sonnets is one that both expresses its own will and seeks the annihilation of that will” (1).

Expression of the extreme abnegation and frailty of human effort is uncompromising and total on the one hand. But against this pulls a contrasting reconstructive impulse. Between them, these valencies produce a movement aiming an avowedly Protestant, and avowedly edificatory purpose – the reform of the self, the movement of the audience from a trust in the flawed self to a new appreciation for God’s grace and love – “O let me then his strange love still admire” or as the old hymn has it, paused in “wonder, love, and praise”. At the same time, too, examining the sonnets through the lens of edification enables us to do several things. First, it explains Donne’s consciousness of audience, his theatricality. Donne never forgets, whether he is in the pulpit of Paul’s Cross, wrapping in his winding sheet, or publishing his internal debates on sickness, the watching eyes. Secondly, it enables renewed praise of God, and a sort of charting in progress, which is then offered to the reading audience. But thirdly, and most crucially, it replaces the Ignatian form of meditation with a reformed equivalent, enabling Donne to luxuriate in tactile and vivid images, provided at the same time that he acknowledges his own contingency and littleness – something he likewise takes great delight in doing. Reading the Holy Sonnets through the lens of Protestant
edification allows the attempt at reconciliation (although it is not comfortable) between the tactile world of Catholic devotion, and Protestant theology.

But it is not this simple. It is Donne’s very extremity which prevents the sense of rest, establishment and building we find in Herbert. Donne confesses in the sermons the aspiration to a kind of edificatory narrative, but he is always, with a few rare exceptions, unable to sustain the images for very long. It is as if the two halves of Sidney were let loose upon each other, human possibility and talent smashing into human fallibility and abnegation, leaving a curiously empty space, in which the rest is not assurance, but exhaustion. In this way, the narrative of edification we have been building is unsustained, and ultimately disintegrates, even if, as Corinthians allows us to do, we swap Herbert’s building of the temple for Donne’s anatomisation of the body. It is Donne’s task to shake us out of complacency, by a meditative construction of place, flesh, image and narrative. Once we have realised our own helplessness, then we may appeal for aid, and have it come, in an edificatory movement which is at once deconstructive (away from reliance on the self and its false coin) and reconstructive (caught up in the life of God, a spiritualised reconstruction) which begins with the salutary shock of an “ouch!”, an iconoclastic blow which loosens our grip upon the fake, the corrupt, and the fleshly.

This said, it is this very violence that exhausts and disestablishes. Donne attempts to show us an edificatory narrative, in the same sense as the Stations of the Cross (indeed in the Devotions he constructs named “stations”), but at several moments, either the contrast becomes strained, as in “Batter my Heart”), the abnegation too much (as in “Poisonous Minerals”), or the aesthetic world of the poem takes over (as in “Death be Not Proud”). A sense of separation from Donne’s suffering, a sense that he is holding a pose and we are watching him under glass, is in itself part of the point. Having offered us a tableau, Donne then becomes liable to all the accusations of insincerity levelled at Sidney as a lover, or
Herbert as a poet\textsuperscript{139}: theatricality and self-absorption, craftedness. His poetic production, like Sidney’s, thus partakes of a certain degree of ambiguity.

Donne himself seems resigned to the corruptible fleshiness of representation. As Lewalski has argued, his growing sense of the danger of “over-poetiqueness” (257ff) finds expression in a double headed argument. Donne defends (like Cranmer, and Sidney) the vocation of the preacher-as-truth teller, and the use of right and godly eloquence to edify the congregation – these arguments apply to his poetry and the \textit{Devotions} too. But Donne also expresses a deep (and paradoxical) “distrust of inwardness” (Longfellow 2). The Holy Sonnets are of course inward looking, but they look with a sceptical eye, alert for falsity, and the sense of struggle and wrestling we get within them pitches the reader into a hermeneutic combat, the weapons of which are words and wit, and the outcome always uncertain.

Without divine intervention (which of course is called for in all of them, like the Psalter) Donne is left only with his own patchiness, a patchiness which continues to spotlight his sinfulness when graced, and his capacity for grace when sinful. This paradoxical straining forward to renewal, and being dragged back by one’s own heavy fault, is the defining mark of Augustinian poetics, and, as in the Book of Common Prayer, the penitent is continually reminded both of God’s mercy and Man’s iniquity, whenever he is tempted to presume upon either. In this sense, the fact that the poems are uncomfortable, that at some points we feel ourselves separate from the pose, asking whether we really buy the sincerity of this guy, is part of the poetic point, for it is the problem of images, the problem of representations, the necessary tension between edification and idolatry. It is perhaps for this reason that, as Huebert has pointed out in another context, “Donne equivocates between the concrete and the abstract” (15–16).

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Erica Longfellow touches on a version of this point, when she argues that, by comparison to Herbert, Donne does not develop sustained architectural metaphors, since he is in a state of much greater inward messiness: “Donne’s temple in the heart never develops into a sustained metaphor because he sees God’s indwelling as so precariously threatened by sin…” (14). Donne’s sense of inwardness is much more precarious and contingent:

He is much less convinced than most of his contemporaries of the firm division between the unknowable but redeemable inner self and the outward, material world that could be scrutinised and controlled, but remained fallen. Instead, Donne’s evolving metaphors repeatedly collapse or commingle the distinction between the inner world of the soul and the physical body. (14)

Both of these points are of course true, in that Donne’s sense of his own mess only deepens when interiorised. Donne’s engagement with building metaphors and edificatory theology is not as direct as tidiness might like – he does so only in flashes and starts, and by subscription to a severely majestic theological structure designed to showcase his own bodily ruin, and God’s great grace. Of course, this is true in Herbert too – and Dr Longfellow’s distinction is problematized, since in the Bible even erected temples come second to attitude of heart (John 4:24), and even when they are built, they have a bad habit of being thrown down again. The point of *The Temple* (to be examined in the next chapter) is not the Temple itself, for that, *L’Envoy* makes clear, is all-too-contingent. Instead, the interior journey into mess becomes a sort of hermeneutic dialogue, an exercise in reading the self, in the wrestle against which the poverty and powerlessness of human effort is shown. In this sense, it is possible to have an edificatory narrative which substitutes for overt building language the language of body, self and world, built around the same structure of decay and renewal. Donne, except in a few
conventional genuflections, does not build a temple, but he does anatomise a body, an entire “little world made cunningly”. He does not envision himself in the *Devotions* as a spiritual temple, but himself as a small part isolate from the Church. And, he traces the same tense and paradoxical sense of decay, renewal and conflict in the *Devotions* that characterise the Holy Sonnets.

Consider the famous Sonnet 10: “Batter my heart, three-person’d God”:

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me; and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,
Labour t'admit you, but O, to no end.
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain:
But am betroth'd unto your enemy:
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

The “battering” in the first three lines is conceived in terms familiar from the minor prophets (notably Hosea and Malachi (esp 3:2ff)) – the stripping away of pride, the burning and
refining of dross.\textsuperscript{140} “Knocke” is not just an image of violence, but the image of Christ knocking at the heart, and is quickly succeeded by further images of the Spirit’s (too gentle) action; “breathe” “shine” and “seek to mend” are all images of the work of grace – the gentle work which is not sufficient to move the dross; the refiner must turn up the heat; “bend/Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.” The parataxis and alliteration in these lines give a feel of simultaneous beating and blowing: this is not the mere melodrama of sensation, but the focused forging of a craftsman, applying pressure in just the right place, for the desired (Malachi-like) purification. As Louis Martz points out, the Triune God is instructed to intensify His work: “the Father knocks but should break the Holy Spirit breathes but should blow, and the Son (sun) shines but should burn” (\textit{The Meditative Poem} 90). A gentle work is not sufficient to “plowe up” what the Bishops’ Bible calls “freshe” and the Authorised Version “fallow” ground (Hosea 10:12).

We then begin in the next lines a complex interaction between images of usurpation, captivity, weakness, love, betrothal, divorce, enthrallment, harlotry and rape. In the context of the minor prophets, which has been hinted at already, the obvious parallel is Hosea, the image of whose love for his prostitute wife is the type of God’s faithful love for His people – or in this case, the Christian soule, which is “captiv’d” “weake” and “untrue.” Hosea begins with a marriage, to the promiscuous Gomer, and continues with a divorce. The Lord puts away his people, saying to them “ye are not my people” (Hosea 1:9, Bishops’ Bible) just as Gomer ends “captiv’d” in the slave market. But it ends with a renewed marriage, the Lord restoring the chastity of His people, renewing the betrothal, and citing the “bandes of loue:” which

\textsuperscript{140} Tom Bishop (in conversation) offers another parallel here. The medieval Harrowing of Hell episode “Tollite portas et levamini” etc, where Christ smashes open the doors of hell and leads “Captivity captive” has a parallel sense of enclosure, violence and deliverance. Here the heart is like a building being knocked on for entry (“tollite”)…and then prays for a real, iconoclastic and violent deliverance, in a similar way to the Harrowing of Hell. Although enactments and artifacts showcasing the harrowing are officially abolished, they remain alive in cultural memory, especially in Catholic families such as Donne’s.
hold Him, and His beloved in thrall (Hosea 11:4, Bishops’ Bible). Hosea redeems Gomer and, taking her home, forbids her to go out any more (3:3). The constant lamentations of the Lord about “fornications” (1:1), “whoredome” (4:18), “becoming harlots” and “[breaking their] wedlocke” (4:11ff), (“being untrue” if you like) makes Donne’s imagery if not less shocking, at least less one dimensionally violent. Like the crucifixion, for example, the violence done in Holy Sonnet 14 aims at redemption, betrothal, at “breaking” and bringing not just a body, but a hard heart to the full consciousness of the loyal love of God. The imagery of marriage, divorce and final consummation: “dearely I love you, and would be loved faine/but am betrothed unto your enemie:/ Divorce me, untie, or breake that knot againe,” echoes Hosea. Before the Lord can remarry faithless Israel, the “knot” contracted unto the “enemie” must be broken – in Israel’s case literally, as the Baals and Ashteroths are smashed – and the original betrothal renewed, and finally consummated. This context does not make the conclusion with its appeal for God to “ravish” any less shocking, but it does jolt the reader out of rote confessions of sin, in the same way as Isaiah and Hosea do: by re-emphasising how harlot and whore-like, how disgusting, the faithless sinner is, even if the betrothal to the enemy is unconsummated, in the same way as Red Crosse and Duessa. This may not be comfortable or exactly balanced, but the repeated focus of the reader’s vision on exactly what it will take to purify and redeem the self has a long Biblical pedigree, ending in final praise of God, and the appreciation of the cost of the plan of Salvation. As in Hosea, we are presented with a bridal narrative, reflecting (albeit oddly) on God’s love. Before it is possible for a new marriage to be contracted, the disordered betrothal must be (almost literally) broken. Before the new self can rise, chaste and free, the old self must be over-mastered. Before the soul can be delivered from prison, he must be imprisoned, to be reclaimed.\footnote{Lewalski puts it this way:}

\footnote{This violent interplay between slavery, freedom, and deliverance parallels Romans 6, but also the Collect for}
Sanctification…involves the renovation of the soul by degrees, so that, progressively, but never completely, the corruptions of sin are purged from it, and the image of God is restored in it….the imagery recalls several graphic descriptions and heart emblems representing the softening or mollifying the heart as the first stage of regeneration.

(271)

In this sense, then, divine initiative frees the self from its false nature, its disordered loves, and its petulant will, giving to the soul the strength it needs to convert “labour” into real change, a real volta, from “O to no end” towards the end of all things. It is for this reason that, as Papazian puts it, Donne “oscillate[s] between hope and near-despair” (Papazian, *Eagle and the Dove* 83), and, often, despair and hope cancel each other out in apophatic exhaustion, not, as Lewalski argues, little by little, but in a conflagration which destroys both sets of images, affirming and negating.

We can also note that the movement of the sonnet traces a duel between the self who prays, labours and loves, and the other self, the one who is captive, weak, untrue, usurped and married to the devil, one which the assertive and sinful part of Donne wins. Absent the requested help, the sonnet leaves the soul tied in literal knots. Without the assumption that God will in fact turn up the heat, the soul is left abandoned in a state of almost collapse, wanting good, unable to struggle any more for it, and never able to deliver the self. In this sense, Donne’s combat against himself requires both combatants to lose: the self who loves to recognise his own frailty and inability, and the captive self his lack of will. To get Donne out of this mess, the entire game, the entire self, must be cancelled, and the field left clear for the hoped-for *divine* action. There are two more problems with the enterprise here which remain.

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*Peace at Morning Prayer:* “in whose service is perfect freedom”.
First, Donne’s “batter my heart” is an instructive imperative. It can even be read as an imperative instruction to the Almighty to get on with it. For a poem about self-abnegation, the self certainly has no difficulty in being heard. And, related, the violence of the images, ravishment, battering, breaking, have a vividness, a violence, which, even given the previous theological context, have technicolour zap not easily moved past or through. This is not so much melodrama as the attractive pull of conceits for their own sake – an impulse next to that of idolatry., what Sidney might call “admiration”. To destroy one set of images only to become enthralled by another is a characteristically Donne-ian move, and his pyrotechnics to that extent do lose the simplicity and transparency of Herbert’s My God, my King. This said, however, that is the risk of all representation – and it is a risk Donne is prepared to acknowledge, in much the same way as Sidney does in Astrophil, and with much the same caveats, stucknesses and untidinesses.

Poetry in this vision has a divine vocation, but it, like the poet, is also subject to corruptibility – hence, of course, the combat, the struggle, and the thrill. Without this hermeneutic conflict, in which we, enmeshed in language, attempt to cut through it to genuine devotion (and what does that look like anyhow?), the puzzle is simplified, the caricature flat. Being pitched into the middle of this conflict is to straddle the divide between sinner and saved, between decay and repair, between redemption and damnation, and constantly moving between the two. Kermode puts it well when he speaks of “The general balm, the alchemical ruin, the violent paradoxes on All or Nothing, these belong to Donne’s mental habit” (Kermode 23), paradoxes violent, extreme, and vital. The drive to rest, then, is not a drive to rest as such, but the clarity of a violent clash.

So, for example, Sonnet 1, “As due by many titles I resign” pictures the soul in the octet enumerating all the reasons God has a de jure right to the soul, first “made by thee”,
then “bought”, “I am thy Son, made with thyself to shine…til I betrayed myself, temple of thy Spirit divine.” The volta then asks “why doth the devil then usurp in me? Why doth he steal, nay, ravish that’s thy right…?” The simple answer to the question (which Donne confines to a parenthesis) is that the son is also fallen, “decayed” and in need of repair, and keeps betraying his own birth-right to sky-lark with Beelzebub. Half of him realises his own dignity and title and attempts resignation into the hands of God, but in the way is the treacherous fifth column which co-operates with the other guy. In this sense, then, we have two kinds of destruction played with here: the bad destruction, in which Satan destroys him and makes him “despair” and the good kind of resignation, in which the poet resigns himself and all the fight into the hands of the God who initiates it in the first place, and finishes it with his own Son. As Sonnet 2 puts it “yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke/but who shall give me that grace to begin?” (137)

Characteristically, Donne flits around these two poles by envisioning them in terms of love: Satan is the illegitimate ravisher, God is envisioned as the inactive owner. Satan hates him but is “loath to lose me” God allegedly loves him, “yet will not choose me”, and seems puzzlingly asleep, having to be told to “rise and for thine own work fight”. God should grasp and doesn’t, Satan shouldn’t and does, Donne is conscious of the fact that his self is divided, and the slightly querulous tone of the sestet suggests that God should get on with it. More broadly, though, Donne is recounting this conflict, and commenting on it. We, with him, are observing the fight. The progress of the soul is a private edificatory narrative since Donne is using the sonnet form to examine his spiritual progress and enmesh the “I” into a broader, Christian and cosmic story. However, it is the shape of that private narrative, the notion of the world of the self fitting in to the levels above it, that makes it a publicly available too. Donne is at one level repeating his own personal story, but he is also engaging with salvation history,
with Protestant soteriology, with the story and the structure of the entire world, of which his “little world made cunningly” is only the lowest level.

To edify himself, and to offer that story to the community, as he does in the Devotions and the Sonnets, puts himself on the same level as, perhaps, an emblem book, a glassed over picture which portrays a theological moral – among them, the theological moral that no one is ever perfected, discrucified or entirely transparent in language and motive. Hence, even when Donne is at rest, it is the exhausted, cancelled out rest of a union of opposites. He never lose a constant, dynamic sense of struggle, and the bits of Donne sticking out of the frame, the parts where it doesn’t work, these are part of edificatory narrative too. The combat, or rather, the will to combat, is the point – much as it is for Cranmer’s doctrine of diligence examined already.

Thus, almost literal dismemberment is particularly a feature of the Last Judgement sonnets, especially 3, “This is my play’s last scene”, which runs through expiring time in the octet, with gluttonous death at hand to devour, from the running of “race” to the stasis of “minute’s last point”, followed by the gradual dissolution of body un-jointing, soul flying, and body, being earth-born, “dwelling” only in dirt, and in stasis. The only thing which belongs to the speaker is the thing he’s left with: his heavy sins, “that all may have their right”. The couplet, “Impute me righteous, thus purged of evil/ for thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devil” can be read as a straightforward statement of Lutheran vicarious substitution, but the larger point is that once the world, the flesh, and the devil have been disposed of, and the soul returned to her own place, we are left surveying a curiously flat and sterile landscape – what is left? Nothing. In this sonnet, the imputed grace intervenes to balance accounts, and restore what is, in imagistic terms, not a vision of glory, but a terra nullius, in which sin and grace have cancelled out each other. It is this aphophatic cancelling, I argue, which is the
consequence of Donne’s drive to imagistic extremes, and the source of the sequence’s pervasive insecurity.

Sonnet 9, too, begins with an evocation of the judgement, in the “world’s last night”, and the thing which Donne begins to compose in his heart is “the picture of Christ crucified”. Like the two sonnets mentioned already, Holy Sonnet 13 is beautifully balanced, between the Christ of judgement and the Christ of mercy, with the conceit of profane love brought not as a witty addendum, which it might at first seem, but a wry statement of faith, a final summation of exactly that consummation celebrated in “Batter my heart”, and without the same problems inherent in it.

The balance between the Christ of Judgement who is evoked in the first line and the mercy which spends the rest of the poem allaying fear and fright is tilted by a strange tenderness – the whole thing could serve as a meditation on the verse “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13). “Teares” and Blood” fall from Him to lighten the darkness and dispel the terror, and from the tongue forgiveness flows before the judgment. It is confidence in this “picture” which finally assures Donne’s salvation – he clutches at the image as a talisman in the same way he does relics of his “profane mistresses” and “idolatrie[s]” in secular poems such as The Canonisation. The image being formed, or “marked” (in the sense of “drawn” or “graven”) in his heart, this “beauteous forme”, “assures a pitious minde”, that is, constant return to, and “marking” (in the sense of paying attention to) of the image of Christ “pictured” “in my heart” keeps Donne’s heart soft, and ready to respond to the motions of divine grace. It is the picture which reinforces confidence in Christ’s “pitious mind”, that is, the pity that keeps Donne free of the pit. It is, also, of course, an evocation of the mark of
baptism, which is the sign of divine love, the “print’s first kiss”. In that Divine Love, Donne has found the ultimate talisman, the ultimate beloved (one thinks of the Song of Solomon here), of which all the rest were mere shadows, or “idolatries”. We are back at “Batter my heart” with the image of Christ “marked” (one might suggest “beaten”) into the heart, which is soft enough to bear the mark, (like softened wax before a flame). At the end, we have produced by tenderness the same softness induced by holy fear in Sonnet 19. Further, though, it is an image which, unlike the profane mistresses, is a permanency, it “dwells” in the heart, and the reader thus “performs an internal and awe-ful meditation….without becoming the graven image” (Martin, Unmeete Contraries 197).

This rare and explicit centre for a Donne poem, in which inheres the stability, kindness and solidity of a home, is enough to outlast all the imaginative thrashing about which usually accompanies Donne’s meditations on the judgement. In this sonnet, the negative impulse is flatly forbidden by the piteous image of Christ crucified – although Donne attempts to kick it into gear by meditation on “depart from Me” (Mt 7:23), the strange, horrible, transcendent spectacle of the crucifixion keeps drawing his attention, and his heart. In this sonnet, decay seems almost irrelevant – which, of course, highlights its presence in the other sonnets in a marked way. It isn’t that Donne can’t write poetry that is celebratory, it’s simply that his deep understanding of the tension inherent in reformed anthropology never lets him off the hook – except when the image of the suffering Jesus makes the hook irrelevant.

Donne conceives of this in different, and perhaps more terrible terms, in Holy Sonnet 1, “Thou hast made me, and shall thy worke decay”. Here, we are presented with a picture of the weighed down decayed and damned soul, rescued by the action of divine grace. There are

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142 I shamelessly steal this expression from the theologian J. Lloyd Staley, who uses it as the title for his book on the Gospel of John.
moments of genuine terror in it, but like the erotic conceits examined already, they threaten the frame without entirely rupturing it, and are serving a very definite theological purpose, one terrified by, and at the same time attracted to, the notion of decay and repair.

Like Sonnets 12 and 15, Sonnet 1 begins with a question, “Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?” (83). It appears at first glance the answer is “Yes”, for just as in “Batter my heart” in which the spirit’s “seeking to mend” is insufficient to budge the stubborn heart, so in Sonnet 1, we are treated to a view of all the decaying and corrupting influences which hedge the speaker about. He “runnes to death” without even the consolation of pleasure, which is fading “as yesterday” (if he means the erotic pleasures of his past life here, the phrase is well-chosen). He is caught between “despaire behind” and “death before” which strike “terrour” into his sinful and “feeble flesh”, which “t’wards hell doth weigh.” Even as he looks for Salvation, rising slightly by “thy leave”, the weakness of the flesh and the devil “tempteth” so that his resolution lasts “not one hour” (here we are in the territory of “Oh to vex me” in which inconstancy is a feverish and admitted impulse). By himself, the speaker is unable to rise, but with preventing grace which enables the heart to respond to God, “thy grace may wing me to prevent his art/And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.” Like a magnet, God’s “adamant” grace draws the “iron” [from the] heart, enabling softness and proper formation.

It is this Thomistic “drawing” “by the object of one’s desire” that we can see in both halves of the poem: the drawing to Hell, the looking up, the grace of God reaching down and converting the desires of the heart such that the speaker has hope of being drawn up, finally, toward God. The imagery of “feeble flesh” wasting\textsuperscript{143} is thus not a piece of pious quackery,

\textsuperscript{143} Refer also Sonnet 17’s “a holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet…”
but necessary to construct the image of the magnet with which the sonnet closes. We see here negative and positive valencies cancelling out, the decay calling forth the iron adamant, but also, grace “preventing” art in a wider sense too. It is this sense of decay and rebuilding, the wish to repair (“repair me, now, for now mine end doth haste…”), that is at the basis of Donne’s engagement with edification – a repair work which can only begin when human tools, tried and inadequate, have been abandoned. The meditative exercise, then, throws the reader into a struggle with sin only to have him lose it – and that would be the point.

This structure of decay and repair becomes even more obvious when we see it in its reverse, in Holy Sonnet 11, “Wilt thou love God as He thee?” Instead of a just presenting a meditation on the poverty of Man, and the decay caused by sin, it is, in parallel, also a meditation on kenosis, God’s self-emptying to rescue Man. In a chiasmic dramatization of what St Augustine called “the great exchange”, the sonnet begins with a basic Trinitarian structure, showcasing the con-descension of all three Persons. First, the Spirit descends, from the Heavenly temple to the earthly one, to tabernacle in the midst of mess:

    Wilt thou love God as he thee? then digest,
    My soul, this wholesome meditation:
    How God the Spirit, by angels waited on
    In heaven, doth make His temple in thy breast.

The Father, then, whose eternity and eternal-begetting Donne is sure to emphasis here, descends to adoption:

    The Father having begot a Son most blest,
    And still begetting – for he ne'er begun –
    Hath deign'd to choose thee by adoption,
Co-heir to His glory, and Sabbath' endless rest.

By the turn of the volta, we have got to a hint of the glorification of Man, and the rest both at the Creation and at the Apocalypse. The sonnet comes to a full stop for a moment to consider the (in a kenotic sense) decay of God,¹⁴⁴ His self-emptying into human beings, the “deigning” and the co-heiral “blessing” which is entirely undeserved. But, having got to the Fall, Donne pictures “robb’d man” as entirely earth bound, running about looking after and looking for his stuff, in self-bondage to fragments of things, to loss, debt, fret, and panic. At the same time, the Sun of glory rises by his shoulder, asking to reclaim His own, asking to cancel the great debt, and let the little go free:

And as a robb'd man, which by search doth find
His stolen stuff sold, must lose or buy it again,
The Sun of glory came down, and was slain,
Us whom He had made, and Satan stole, to unbind.

The sonnet ends with the couplet which reflects back upon the question asked in the first two lines. “Wilt thou love God as He thee?” (Spoiler: You can’t). Then digest, my soul, this wholesome meditation (in its whole, we can’t, since it is too big, too glorious to picture divine kenosis, great in itself, on behalf, for, and with of potsherds-human beings.) The poet can only marvel at the depth of divine stooping, in the couplet:

'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
But, that God should be made like man, much more.

¹⁴⁴ I cross myself here for fear of blasphemy. Only a metaphor, guv.
Most often, Donne wishes to build upwards, from a contingent and human image of human sin to a bigger and divine one about grace, picturing God rescuing a broken mankind. In this sonnet, he meditates the other way, from God’s perfection towards his interaction with human beings, arriving at the same place, admiration, love, and praise. God’s grace cannot be contained, but if it could be, it is contained in poetry which leaves us, in Herbert’s phrase: “a wonder tortured in the space/ between this world and that of grace”. At the end of Donne’s poetry, we are left in the blank space, chiasmic between this world and that of grace. At the cross point, where human inadequacy meets divine all-sufficiency, the imagination of the poet fails – and that would be the point. We are left with only silence – and only wonder, in the same way as the inward, and abstract, vision of Contemplation is, at least at points, above language.

Two more Holy Sonnets before we leave this point. The first, Sonnet 15, “I am a little world made cunningly” situates Donne in the salvation history of the world, paralleling the descent and renewal predicted from Genesis to Revelation. Webber is correct to identify here that, “The little world becomes a summary of all the evils of the universe, and the wasting action of the fever is compared to the earth’s progress to annhiliation” (186):

    I am a little world made cunningly
    Of elements, and an angelic sprite ;
    But black sin hath betray'd to endless night
    My world's both parts, and, O, both parts must die.

In a sense here, the speaker doesn’t even get off the drawing board, as the Creation imagery is immediately counterbalanced by the Fall. “I am a little world made cunningly” juxtaposes the world with the cunningness of the serpent, and Donne with both his capacity for wisdom
and reason, and his capacity for sin.\textsuperscript{145} “Elements and an angelic sprite” of course describes human beings, but also the creating Holy Spirit hovering over the base elements of mankind, and the black chaos to which the “endless night” of the next line refers. Webber again puts it well when he speaks of “both man and nature [being] bound towards annihilation, which is their centre and their end” (186). Having now fallen, Donne meditates upon the human inability to do so much, and yet not to do this:

\begin{quote}
You which beyond that heaven which was most high
Have found new spheres, and of new land can write,
Pour new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
Drown my world with my weeping earnestly,
Or wash it if it must be drown'd no more.
\end{quote}

This allusion to the Noahic flood, “drowned no more” and baptism, “wash it”, serve only to highlight the human fallenness to which both kinds of drowning were and are the response – and even here, Donne makes room for scepticism. If astronomers need to find some kind of special way of producing extra tears from him, he can’t do that by himself by contemplating his sins. Is this a genuine sort of cried-out contrition recognising that no sorrow will ever be enough, even if it were a flood, or Donne tipping the handkerchief to show the onion hidden inside it, producing fake tears when there are none? Regardless, this kind of decay isn’t radical enough, since there is still human work, “wood, hay and stubble” (1 Cor. 3:12) to be burned, echoing 2 Peter 3:6-7:\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{145} The Pauline resonances of this sonnet are ably described by Lewalski 266ff.

\textsuperscript{146} The passage I am thinking of ties together, as Donne does here, Creation, Noah, and Apocalypse, fire and water, as following: “…by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”
But O, it must be burnt; alas! the fire
Of lust and envy burnt it heretofore,
And made it fouler; let their flames retire,
And burn me, O Lord, with a fiery zeal
Of Thee and Thy house, which doth in eating heal.

We are in familiar territory here, that of “Batter my heart” in which the working of the Holy Spirit (even in baptism) is not enough, it is efficacious but not deep enough. It must be burnt, but even to get to the point at which abnegation is possible, we must get through the previous foulness of “lust and envy” who have caked over the soul with a sort of sludgy residue of impurity, which Donne borrows Malachi\textsuperscript{147} (again) to envision the “eating destruction” of. The refining fire is envisioned as a cleansing of the temple, borrowing the famous words from the Gospel of John,\textsuperscript{148} “zeal of thine house hath eaten me up”. In this context, the temple of the Holy Spirit which Donne envisions himself as must be cleansed of foulness, and it is only through being destroyed that healing may come. In that sense, the acidic “eating” and destruction of a disordered and bad building leads only to purification, healing, and “eating”, again, we are left with a landscape from which the literal temple envisioned in the first lines has been removed, but hangs there in purified, and spiritualised terms, as a clean heart, a converted mind, a healed soul. This kind of iconoclastic “throwing down” to build up is basic to the Protestant theology of the self, and the Protestant theology of the Church too. As Donne puts it in his Sickness hymn: “Therefore that He may raise, the Lord throws down”.

It is to this theology of Church that we turn in the last of the Holy Sonnets to be examined in this section, “Show me, dear Christ, thy spouse so bright and clear”. We finish

\textsuperscript{147} Malachi 3:3ff.
\textsuperscript{148} John 2:17, the cleansing of the Temple, which is of course a parallel to Psalm 69.
with it because it will hark back to Spenser, as the previous poems of abnegation have harked back to Sidney and his conversation about poetic devotion – and it will also lean forward towards George Herbert’s theology of Church to be expanded in the next chapter. Hence, although we shall move on immediately in this chapter to the Devotions, this rather puzzling sonnet on ecclesiology should detain us briefly.

The first thing to notice about Donne’s first line is the opening demand: “Show me, dear Christ, thy spouse so bright and clear.” This question is striking for a simple reason: it assumes that the answer is not obvious. The visible Church, as such, with her rich painting, is fairly clearly dismissed with a “what?”, but the revelation of the True Church takes what Julian of Norwich called “a showing”, a revelatory moment in which the Church Triumphant is identifiable with her contingent and burned-out husk down here in the Church Militant. Of course, the differing answers to the question of which Church is the true spouse will be canvassed in the octet, and place Donne square in the middle of the biggest question of the Reformation, but it is striking that the answer (despite the spouse being “bright and clear”) is certainly not bright and clear to the speaker. This sonnet broadcasts suspicion of painted falsity, dismissing the Church of Rome thus:

What, is it she which on the other shore
Goes richly painted?

But it is the figuring of the Protestant Church here which is particularly interesting:

or which, robbed and tore,
Laments and mourns in and here?

The probable reference to the Battle of the White Mountain (1620) situates the tension here. On the one hand, the Church Triumphant, married to Christ, and “brided in the Courts of the
Trinity” (Sayers 13). On the other, the Church as she appears now, the fighting Church Militant, either tempted to idolatry, as the Church of Rome is, or oppressed and lamenting, the way Una does in Book 1 of The Faerie Queene. In that canto, the Church, her shining glory hidden by a dark cloak, is pushed from pillar to post, captive, mourning, abandoned, but never losing the sternness or the tenderness of her vocation, or her titular claim to be Empress of the East and of the West, the True Church, even without the True Church’s proper recognition, dignity or reverence. The mourning bride here, “robbed and tore” constructs a tension between the glorious vision of the Church as she will be, and in some sense already is. Leishman is entirely correct when he writes that “it is upon the vast and painful difference between these Churches on earth, whether mourning or rejoicing, and the Spouse of Christ, the promised bride of the Apocalypse, that [Donne] is chiefly insisting” (Leishman 270).

In this sense, Donne is balanced between differing images of the Church and the imperfect attempts of human beings to find her and love her, see sawing between idolatry, seeming violation, and the Anabaptist temptation just to make stuff up:

Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year?

Donne finds himself at the end of this question playing here not only with the Church’s authority among fallen mankind, but the historiographical narrative beloved of Foxe and Bale, as he tries on for size the Protestant history which sees the Church as contingent and inevitably doomed to decay and renewal, albeit only in a typical four word paradox:

Is she self-truth, and errs? now new, now outwore?
This question as it is juxtaposes the Protestant and cyclical narrative of “now new, now outwore” with the Roman Church’s claim to “self truth” and the Anglican accusation of Article 19, “and errs”, but after treatment of all three, remains agnostic.

Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore

On one, on seven, or on no hill appear?

One hill is probably Mount Moriah and Jerusalem, seven hills are of course identifiable with Rome, but it is “no hill” that might be the most subversive of all. It might of course simply be identifiable with Anabaptist conventicles, which took pride in their separation from the confessional State, but given the explicit reference to “one hill” and its Jewish resonances of Sinai and Moriah, “no hill” also recalls John 4, in which Jesus and the Samaritan woman discuss the question of where right worship ought to be conducted. To the woman’s assertion that “our Fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship”, Jesus announces that the right place to worship God is none of the above, summarising in verse 24:149 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Opting for “no hill” then reveals the radical contingency of temples, and the importance of the concluding lines of John 4: Spirit and truth are wider, bigger, and more iconoclastic categories than which hill is the true one. Recognising this is both a deconstruction (in that temples are made functionally irrelevant, or at least contingent) and a reconstruction, in that worshipping the Father as He commands, in “spirit and in truth” is in

149 “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”
itself renewing and edifying – the kind of spiritual building which speaks from, but does not need a physical parallel. This kind of reading is strengthened, I argue, by the rest of the poem:

Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
First travel we to seek, and then make love?

To “dwell” with us in a sort of univocal, proprietorial way might be true of the visible Church of England in one way. But the fact that the poem begins with the slightly forlorn request to show the speaker where Mother has got to suggests that some sort of Spenserian hermeneutic search is necessary, something that the contrasting arguments advanced in the rest of the sonnet only confirm. To chase the Church as an adventuring knight in a chanson de geste is a typically Spenserian image, but equally typically for Donne, the speaker then makes “love”, which is territory Red Crosse and Una never get to. As her basically Platonic protector, guardian, auditor and interlocutor, Red Crosse’s chaste betrothal basically ends up with another separation, leaving the flirting, courting and consummating for the end of time, in which Una will be married not to Red Crosse, but to the Lamb, as Christ’s bride. The odd note of amorous discovery is only amplified, to the point of repulsion, in the next lines:

Betray, kind husband, thy spouse to our sights,
And let mine amorous soul court thy mild dove,
Who is most true and pleasing to thee then
When she is embraced and open to most men.

This visceral image of the Church as a prostitute, or a dove being thrust upon by an “amorous soul” is overdone to the point of mania, in which the Church welcomes “all sorts and conditions of men” in the most offensive and tactile sense of the word. Kermode claims that

150 Albeit in Spenser, the Church chases the knight, not the other way around.
our discomfort here is a result of the alleged fact that “the image of Church as bride is no longer commonplace”, and that while the image is “indelicate”, “the point is the glorious difference of this from a merely human marriage.” Lewalski, with her usual thoughtfulness, gets closer to the mark when she writes that Donne aims to “confuse the Bride with her antithesis in Revelation, the Great Whore…to point up the essential spiritual qualities God’s church must display…,” and that “the Spouse, rather than exhibiting the undefiled purity of the Bride of Canticles and Revelation, must in the necessary promiscuity of her love to many, turn harlot….” (274). This confuses, of course, the maternal care of the Church and the chaste love of Una for Red Crosse for its disordered equivalent – for Donne, as for his contemporaries, there is no union between Christ and, to quote St Paul, “the members of a harlot” (1 Cor. 6:15).

The imagery of harlotry here has a long Biblical pedigree, from 1st Kings (Chapter 14) and Genesis (38), Jeremiah (2), Ezekiel (16, 23), and of course Hosea and the minor prophets, the same context as “Batter my Heart”. The people of God “play the harlot” with other gods, take other lovers, and forsake the Almighty, their most faithful husband. In this last four lines, the chaste Spouse ends the poem unchaste, not a spouse, and the plaything of not-particularly reverent men, not to mention probably idolatrous, as the imagery of Israel “playing the harlot” with other gods hints. The basic moral of this sonnet might be something like “the True Church is perfect until you find her”, sitting in spirit next to the misogynist poems of Donne’s youth, in which “no where lives a woman true and fair”.

That said, it can be Protestantised as well, in that while the True Church (Triumphant) is indeed shining and beautiful, and pleasing to Christ, since he wishes her to voyage in the world, and become touchable, knowable, and loveable, the practical realities of the Church Militant thus involve fallenness, imperfection, lamenting, and idolatry. In the final image of this sonnet, Donne picks a narrative, and, oddly, but really, it is apocalyptic. The Church
takes search and discernment (as in *The Faerie Queene*), she is hidden, but real (again, Spenser), she is always exposed, when on earth, to inevitable and cyclical corruption, and when she does rebuild and renew, it’s to show the importance of worship in Spirit and truth.

This undercuts the emphasis on the visible Church in the first lines of the sonnet. Donne sets up an image of shining spouse only to undercut it, showing how unstable, how contingent, the Church Militant is. And since the corruption of the Church is basically an inevitable consequence of Christ’s exposure of His Spouse to the “betray[ing]” male gaze, in a sense she must inevitably be corrupted once she touches us, or rather, once we touch her.

Still further, this betrayal is both pleasing and true, the adjectives most commonly used of proper worship in the Old and New Testament – the spreading abroad of the Church among corrupt and corruptible men is in itself inevitable, willed by the bridegroom, and inevitably destructive. This sonnet shows how far Donne is willing to go in installing theological figures and tropes, and how far he goes in destroying them. The sonnet leaves the tragic image of the “torn” Church hanging in the air, to chime with the mourning Protestant Una, crying in agony after her dismemberment at the White Mountain, torn and lamenting. It’s a Protestant sonnet tracing the same double valency of creation and destruction we have seen in other images of edification. At the same time, it is violent, pyrotechnic, bipolar, entirely over the top – and, to rejoin Lewalski after having contested her reading, only Donne could have, would have, written it (274).

Helen Gardner observes of the Holy Sonnets that “The image which dominates his divine poetry is the image of Christ as Saviour, victor over sin and death” (Gardner 136). This commonplace sums up two of the most vital points of this section. First, the notion of

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151 “True” recalls ‘worship the Father in spirit and truth’ as well as fidelity, and ‘pleasing’ recalls the archetypal “aroma pleasing to the Lord” used of correct worship in Numbers, and recalled by St Paul in 2 Cor. 2:15, when he speaks of the Church.
Christ as Victor implies struggle, or combat. With, in, and through John Donne, a great struggle against guilt, sin, death and his own fallenness is being fought. The temporary sense of victory we obtain is generally fleeting, the “strife is fierce, the warfare long.” But in a sense, the struggle, and the giving up of it, is a necessary preliminary to the work of grace, the infusion of life, and saving health, into a decayed and infirm self. In this sense, Salvation, as Gardner points out, is a filling up, and supplying, of a deep sense of lack, absence, and sterility – the two component parts of edification. Before rebuilding can begin, we must clear the deck – and bow the will. Even in the moments this is impossible, Donne stretches to make it so – and ends at many points in the kind of stasis that happens when unstoppable force meets immovable object: the kind of collision ending in “ouch”.

6.3 “Nothing in Ourselves: Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions.

Donne’s sickness meditations (1623), even more than the Holy Sonnets, show a consciousness of audience. Of course, we always associate such a theatricality with Donne in all guises. But here, he is most conscious of the spiritual value of his Devotions, most concerned to show a narrative both of dissolution and reconstruction, for the profit of his reading congregation. In essence, the Devotions are an attempt to do what the sermons chastise the pagans in Lactantius for not doing: offering his suffering “for the edification of others”. In these Devotions, Donne deliberately constructs, I argue, a narrative of edification, and for edification. He views his sickness as the reverse of meaningless, or random. Instead, it is sent by God in a deliberate purgation and deconstruction effort, possibly to be followed by the ultimate dissolution in his own death, but actually followed by his own recovery and renewal. At the beginning of the Devotions Donne is prey to conflicting impulses, a desire to get better, a desire for abnegation, that his body should dissolve to the liberation of his soul,
and a conflicting and expostulating impulse which announces how unfair and arbitrary it all seems. As in the Psalter, these impulses are (usually) harmonised in the concluding prayers. Thus, Webber puts it this way:

> Each unit progresses from negation and despair in the meditations, through questioning rebellious love in the expostulations, to affirmation and calm submission in the prayers (J. Webber, *Contrary Music* 184).

This is of course true. But we may go further than this. By the end of the Devotions, Donne has been anatomised and deconstructed to the edge of death,152 and then he has come back. In this sense, the Devotions do not simply add up to a tidy exercise in spiritual narrative, but a deliberate and far-reaching exercise in charting a spiritual dis-ease, at the same time as a natural one. As Rollin puts it, correctly, “The poet is functioning much like the minister in diagnosing spiritual diseases and describing remedies” (Rollin, *The Eagle and the Dove* 131), and of course, (although Rollin doesn’t), one might add the doctor here.

The use of the Devotions is as a charting of a spiritual abnegation, its pause, and its reversal back to zero, as the soul draws back from death purged and clean. Thus, the last of the meditations is not simply a celebration of God’s mercy (*deo gratias*), or a celebration of assurance (*How firm a foundation*), but a prayer against relapse (*that was close, don’t let me go down there again*). In this sense, the focus is on the cost as well as the progress of redemption. The first two responses are evoked only in a celebration of the costliness of grace, and the constancy of the Lord’s mercy is evoked only in its continuing contrast with Donne’s own instability and variability. (If God can turn the heart, so inconstant, then mercy is inevitable, if of course elect). One might see the Devotions as a chart of election, on the flow-chart model of the prefatory material in the Geneva Bible (Papazian sees “the

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152 And has anatomised himself!
Augustinian Donne” in these terms as anatomising himself for signs of election, and thus “oscillat[ing] between hope and near-despair” (Papazian, The Augustinian Donne ED 83), or as an exercise in nihilistic wrestling buttressed by black wit. But reading the Devotions in terms of demolition and rebuilding allows us to make sense of several impulses inside them. Donne constructs a number of microcosmic images (“stations”, on the meditative model of the Stations of the Cross), which continue to have more macrocosmic resonances, moving between individual disease, ecclesial polity, and Christian commonwealth, using Donne as a microcosmic image of the work of the same grace which “renews the Power to love” in parish, Church and commonwealth as well.

In this sense, the scourging and renovation work which the Devotions do has resonances outside Donne’s sick room, for the Church, for his congregation of readers, and for the entire nation. In this sense, then, what goes on in Donne’s sickroom as he is ‘under renovation’ has resonance with the previous parts of this thesis: Donne is Astrophil, abnegated by sin, yet tied to a divine grace which forbids his nothingness. Donne confronts in the Devotions the same English narrative of evangelical faith, reformed emphasis on infirmity (pun intended), and even royal supervision, as he attempts to “bear in his body” the marks of a severe mercy (Galatians 6:17). Of course, it is not as simple as this, or as tidy, one suspects. But on a stage, there must be some hand-waving. Donne’s own sense of the theatricality is necessary to bring home to his congregation the true importance of the spiritual narrative he represents before them. The end of devotional narrative, medical diagnosis, and spiritual repair, is the upbuilding not only of himself, but of the Church, to make “admiration” serve “edification”. In Station 5, Donne prays that God would: “prosper thine ordinance, in their hands who shall assist in this sickness, in that manner, and in that measure, as may most glorify thee, and most edify those who observe the issues of thy servants, to their own spiritual benefit.” This requires in the Devotions a personal but more-broadly-applicable
narrative being offered to the public, but it also literally required his being painted in his winding-sheet, leaving even the vivid colours and dire poles of the Devotions almost literally for dead. Here, in this chapter, we can see a personally applied narrative of abnegation and reconstruction cast in a reformed mode, dancing images around the truly Calvinist constants: the infirmity and untrustworthiness of human beings, and the equally severe response, an insistence on the stern and glorious Sovereignty of God.

This note is struck beginning with the very first sentence of Station 1, “VARIABLE, and therfore miserable condition of Man;” which variability Donne stigmatises and anatomises as the result of the Fall. Human beings labour, exercise, and “polish every stone that goes into that building; and so our health is a long and regular work: but in a minute a cannon batters all, overthrows all, destroys all” (3). This notion of vulnerability to sickness is buttressed (pun intended) by building language, the body represented as under siege by illness, fever, fret and fallenness.¹⁵³

We beggared ourselves…infatuated ourselves….so that now, we do not only die, but die upon the rack, die by the torment of sickness, nor that only, but are pre-afflicted….we are not sure we are ill…presages prophesy these torments which induce [sickness and] death before either come; and our dissolution is conceived in these first changes, quickened in the sickness itself, and born in death, which bears date from these first changes. (3,4)

Of course, the most obvious and strongest reading of the paragraph above is a straightforward one, in terms of literal illness. But right from the beginning, the destroying impulse in human beings is associated not only with specific sickness, but more broadly with the destruction of

¹⁵³ Here, Donne constructs an image of wasting which is the reverse of Spenser’s in Book II of The Faerie Queene where the Castle of Alma is built of bodily bits.
the Fall (as of course sickness also is). We threw away our true riches “beggared ourselves” but also inherited greed, we were seduced by the devil, but now have disordered loves “infatuated”; we have not only sickness, but the torture of concupiscence working in our members, and, of course, the loss of true knowledge of the self. This is true not only in our sickness, but in the fact that we are no longer sure whether we are sick, we inherit death, but also “my own dissolution” (89). We inherit sickness, but also original sin, we are literally “born in death,” sick from the very moment of “quickening”. Thus, then, from the first paragraph of the first station, we fulfil several of the key elements of a narrative of edification: a hermeneutic quest from a position of fallible knowledge (as in Book I of Spenser), the terminal and ultimate decay of the self (seen personally in Sidney, and in Donne’s own Holy Sonnets, and corporately and ecclesially in Mulcaster and in Herbert), and further, the contingency of human solutions and human effort upon the divine initiative: to be rebuilt is humanly speaking, impossible by human effort, it must be vouchsafed by gift: an encorporate expression not only of evangelically centred truth, but sacramental stickability, human bondedness and “supernatural society”.

Such a radical contingency begins Donne’s Expostulation in Station 1, in which he compares his own littleness, deathliness and destroyedness with divine enormity, life and creativity:

IF I were but mere dust and ashes I might speak unto the Lord, for the Lord’s hand made me of this dust, and the Lord’s hand shall re-collect these ashes: the Lord’s hand was the wheel upon which this vessel of clay was framed, and the Lord’s hand is the urn in which these ashes shall be preserved. I am the dust and the ashes of the temple of the Holy Ghost, and what marble is so precious? But I am more than dust and ashes: I am my best part, I am my soul. (5)
This paragraph is notable for diverse reasons. Donne evokes his own solidity (albeit as a pot) only to turn it into an urn, creatable dust into dead ash. But in the explicit mention of building language, the temple, it is destroyed (“I am the dust and ashes of the temple of the Holy Ghost”) in order to be recollected, and spiritually reappropriated in a move connected to, sparked by, but at the same time hovering independent of, the metaphor. “I am the dust and ashes of the temple….and what marble is so precious?” The answer is, of course, none, which disposes of solid marble, but the metaphor itself, even in its remains, or “ashes” remains in ghostly being, hovering above an otherwise negated landscape, as the soul does, burning “coal” amid ash.

Donne’s portrait of fallenness in the Devotions is coincident to that in the Holy Sonnets, in that it is represented both as a destructive plague, the analogue of the “devout ague” of Sonnet 19, and as a destructive mania, (the drive at the back of “O it must burn”), with the “snake”, a doubled portrait of the devil and the corrupted wit, only assisting in the headlong rush to become Typhoid Mary.

I stand in the way of temptations, naturally, necessarily; all men do so; for there is a snake in every path, temptations in every vocation; but I go, I run, I fly into the ways of temptation which I might shun; nay, I break into houses where the plague is, I press into places of temptation, and tempt the devil himself, and solicit and importune them who had rather be left unsolicited by me. I fall sick of sin, and am bedded and bedrid, buried and putrified in the practice of sin, and all this while have no presage, no pulse, no sense of my sickness. O height, O depth of misery, where the first symptom of the sickness is hell, and where I never see the fever of lust, of envy, of ambition, by any other light than the darkness and horror of hell itself, and where the first messenger that speaks to me doth not say, “Thou mayest die,” no, nor “Thou must die,” but “Thou art dead”. (5)
Typically here, it is not enough for Donne to be humanly tempted, but he must hasten his destruction by rushing off to tempt the devil himself. But passing over the violence of this paragraph, which fits into the bipolar universe of the Holy Sonnets outlined already, the images of decay and descent here are notable, as Donne’s body traces the narrative of dissolution: “sick, bedded, bedrid, buried, putrified”, “no pulse, no presage”. We can see within the context of the first meditation Donne converting his body into a number of anatomised metaphors, from building to fever (both kinds), and whoredom, (“tempt, solicit”), but he is converting himself at the same time into what Sidney calls a “speaking picture,” a “station” to be contemplated, a text to be read, by doctors, by watchers, and by himself. As he puts it, “I have cut up mine own anatomy, dissected myself, and they are gone to read upon me” (52).

We may (as the doctors do at various points) read the text of Donne’s body badly, or apply remedies which are inefficacious. But as the subject of a spiritual parable, and as a little commonwealth made of bodily elements the same way both the Church and England are, Donne is caught in a spiritual narrative of corruption and incorruption, decay and renewal, death and resurrection. In this sense, the Devotions work like alternating current, swapping with increasing energy and speed between decay and renewal, releasing instead of heat and light and an increasing sense of fever, balanced by still moments of isolation, contemplation, and renewed affirmation. Of course, the key moments for the first set of images are the expostulations, the second, the prayers. But in each, a desperate sense of man’s creatureliness and dependency is constructed, and made acute. Take for example the beginning of Station 2, as strength and senses “change and fail”:

Man, who is the noblest part of the earth, melts so away, as if he were a statue, not of earth, but of snow. We see his own envy melts him, he grows lean with that; he will say, another’s beauty melts him; but he feels that a fever doth not melt him like snow,
but pour him out like lead, like iron, like brass melted in a furnace; it doth not only
melt him, but calcine him, reduce him to atoms, and to ashes; not to water, but to
lime. (8)

Of course, these are not in the literal sense building images, except insofar as the body (a key
Pauline metaphor for the edification passages in Ephesians and Corinthians, as we’ve seen)
can be mapped onto the temple, as at the beginning of Station 1, or in Station 3, where the
body is described explicitly as of a form “naturally built for the contemplation of heaven”
(13). That said, however, God’s destruction of the body is doubled as being both a reduction,
a “melting,” a “pouring out”, or a reduction to ash, and destruction as the prelude to a
resurrecting act. For instance, “melting” recalls the liquefying furnaces of ‘Batter my heart’
and Malachi, “poured out” recalls both the drink offering being “poured out” not as a waste,
but as a propitiating sacrifice, and the crucifixion (“broken and poured out”), and the ash
becomes fodder for the resurrecting reconstruction of the body in the next lines:

I consider in my present state, not the haste and the despatch of the disease, in
dissolving this body, so much as the much more haste and despatch, which my God
shall use, in re-collecting and re-uniting this dust again at the resurrection. (10)

It is this combat between decay and renewal which drives the Devotions, as it does the
eschatological vision of the Holy Sonnets, and of much Anglican devotional poetry in
general. This double valency is explicitly endorsed in the Devotions, as Donne writes:

O Lord, in these corrections which are the elements of our regeneration, by which our
souls are made thine, imprint thy two qualities, those two operations, [consolation and
humiliation] that, as they scourge us, they may scourge us into the way to thee; that
when they have showed us that we are nothing in ourselves, they may also show us,
that thou art all things unto us. (45)
As here, a sense of inadequacy is an important part, but not the whole, of the journey. The sense of the necessity of destruction is taken to severe and extreme lengths, in much the same contrast as we see between the true, properly built commonwealths of Mulcaster, and the false, disordered building of Spenser and Bale. Except that, in Donne, there is almost literally, an alternative body of sin, an old man, to contrast with the purified and renewed body. He writes:

I open my infirmities, I anatomize my body to them. So I do my soul to thee, O my God, in an humble confession, that there is no vein in me that is not full of the blood of thy Son, whom I have crucified and crucified again, by multiplying many, and often repeating the same, sins; that there is no artery in me that hath not the spirit of error, the spirit of lust, the spirit of giddiness in it; no bone in me that is not hardened with the custom of sin and nourished and suppled with the marrow of sin; no sinews, no ligaments, that do not tie and chain sin and sin together. (55)

Here, the metaphors double transfusion (of Christ’s blood), medicine, (“I open my infirmities”), the good body (“of Christ”) identified with the blood in the veins, and the bad, disordered sort of body in another confederate commonwealth determined on sin, in a sort of demonic parody of Ephesians, with Donne determined as a body of rebellion, albeit not an ecclesial or civic body, but an individual one. In this sense, then, the utter destruction of this body is a necessary part of renewal. As he puts it, again at the last gasp: “I am ground even to an attenuation and must proceed to evacuation, all ways to exinanition and annihilation” (127). This sense of extinction and decay recurs at the last, in building language once again, in Station 14:

That body, which scarce three minutes since was such a house, as that that soul, which made but one step from thence to heaven, was scarce thoroughly content to leave that
for heaven; that body hath lost the name of a dwelling-house, because none dwells in it, and is making haste to lose the name of a body, and dissolve to putrefaction..... now the whole house is but a handful of sand, so much dust, and but a peck of rubbish, so much bone. (110)

This sense of infirmity plays into a sense of circularity and provisionality. This is, of course, the same sine curve of decay and renewal so key to the historiography of Bale, and it is individualised here, as, on Donne’s sick bed, ruin touches renewal, birth and spiritual new birth touch death, and “death doth touch the resurrection.” We may see it here in the following moment from Station 3:

When God came to breathe into man the breath of life, he found him flat upon the ground; when he comes to withdraw that breath from him again, he prepares him to it by laying him flat upon his bed. (13)

And again, at almost the last moment, working in the other direction against the reconstructive impulse of recovery: “O perverse way, irregular motion of man; even rising itself is the way to ruin!” (133). In this context, much as the Prayer Book does, Donne reminds himself, and us, of the provisionality of victory, and the probability of relapse.

So much then for Augustinian poetics. Two more points before we end this chapter, one about commonwealth, and one about space. First, as Erica Longfellow has (justly and thoughtfully) argued, Donne’s conception of faith and Christian journey is pervasively corporate, and communal. Indeed, pace the oft-insisted-on individuality of Protestantism, Donne seems to view his isolation not as a blessing, but as an amputation, and an excommunication:
I lie here and say, *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house*; but I cannot say, *I will come into thy house*; I may say, *In thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple*; but I cannot say in thy holy temple. And, *Lord, the zeal of thy house eats me up*, as fast as my fever; it is not a recusancy, for I would come, but it is an excommunication, I must not. (13)

Donne makes up for this sense of isolation in the stillness of “communing with himself” (17), but he also conceives of himself as connected to the wider commonwealth, to “the association and communion of thy Catholic church” (44), but also by making himself a microcosmic version of it. This interplay between micro and macrocosm is of course a feature of Donne’s love poetry (“The Good Morrow”, “The Sunne Rising”), but he repeats it here, making his body encompass all the world, in Station 4, by a sort of magic extension charm:

[It] is too little to call man a little world; except God, man is a diminutive to nothing. Man consists of more pieces, more parts, than the world; than the world doth, nay, than the world is. And if those pieces were extended, and stretched out in man as they are in the world, man would be the giant, and the world the dwarf; the world but the map, and the man the world. If all the veins in our bodies were extended to rivers, and all the sinews to veins of mines, and all the muscles that lie upon one another, to hills, and all the bones to quarries of stones, and all the other pieces to the proportion of those which correspond to them in the world, the air would be too little for this orb of man to move in, the firmament would be but enough for this star; for, as the whole world hath nothing, to which something in man doth not answer, so hath man many pieces of which the whole world hath no representation. (19)

In this paragraph, Donne sets out himself as a map (a conceit he borrows again in his sickness hymns), with topography to be discovered (as in “To His Mistress, Going to Bed”),
anatomised, and mapped. But he is not content to leave it there, beginning to people the map too, ending with typical paradox:

Enlarge this meditation upon this great world, man, so far as to consider the immensity of the creatures this world produces; our creatures are our thoughts, creatures that are born giants…. Inexplicable mystery; I their creator am in a close prison, in a sick bed…. And then, as the otherworld produces serpents and vipers, malignant and venomous creatures, and worms and caterpillars, that endeavour to devour that world which produces them, and monsters compiled and complicated of divers parents and kinds; so this world, ourselves, produces all these in us, in producing diseases, and sicknesses of all those sorts: venomous and infectious diseases, feeding and consuming diseases, and manifold and entangled diseases made up of many several ones?….. O miserable abundance, O beggarly riches! (19)

Let us for a little moment follow the conceit here. Donne expands from his sick bed by thoughts, pictures and metaphors, making of his little room a whole world. As he puts it in the Sermons, “a Christian is a commonwealth to himself” (Alford, Works V.106) This is precisely of course the sort of thing Sidney says poetry is so good at, making a golden world out of a base, filled with fantastical creatures. But at the same time, Donne’s world is peopled with disease, worms, corruption. Out of the compass of his sick bed, and liberated from the confines of space, he finds only “serpents and vipers, malignant and venomous creatures, worms, and caterpillars” and, still more, a twistedness of disease, consummation (in both senses) and misery. Man is rich only in sin, and “shapen in iniquity” (Ps 51). In perhaps a limited sense here, Donne is marrying together the capacious reach of the creative poet celebrated in the Apology, and the abnegation which is the lot of disordered love in Astrophil and Stella. Thus, of course, he makes misery both particular (in his own body) and universal
There are only two moments of relief in the *Devotions* from the tension of the paradox constructed here. First, the disordered world represented by his own body is opposed by an ordered and “supernatural society” (Shuger), that is, the communion of saints, to whom Donne remains attached. In Episode 5, he writes:

In heaven there are orders of angels, and armies of martyrs, and in that house many mansions; in earth, families, cities, churches, colleges, all plural things; and lest either of these should not be company enough alone, there is an association of both, a communion of saints which makes the militant and triumphant church one parish. (26)

Later, he takes up this idea of community, associating it with the community of physicians sent to his cure, and with the medicinal work of the Trinity celebrated and begged for in “Batter my heart”, and with the anatomisation of another text, the Cranmerian priority of Bible reading, open and intelligible:

Yet, O blessed and glorious Trinity, O holy and whole college, and yet but one physician, if you take this confession into a consultation, my case is not desperate, my destruction is not decreed. If your consultation determine in writing, if you refer me to that which is written, you intend my recovery: for all the way, O my God (ever constant to thine own ways), thou hast proceeded openly, intelligibly, manifestly by the book. (55)

Here, poking through in a slightly awkward way, we have conceits paying homage to the other parts of edificatory work that we have already seen so far in this thesis: the well-ordered and the badly ordered commonwealth, or world, and the priority of hermeneutic work, open,
intelligible, manifest, in “the book”, both the book of the sinful and redeemed self, and the book of the Scriptures. Donne however makes the parallels even more explicit by constructing the body as a commonwealth, and one overseen by the reason, as England is overseen by the King:

The heart in that body is the king, and the brain his council; and the whole magistracy, that ties all together, is the sinews which proceed from thence; and the life of all is honour, and just respect, and due reverence; and therefore, when these vapours, these venomous rumours, are directed against these noble parts, the whole body suffers. (73)\textsuperscript{154}

One last point about the language of space. Christ makes, as Donne points out earlier, the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant “one parish” by the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{155} At the same time, however, Donne sticks together himself (as the temple of the Holy Ghost, even if one, as the Biblical temple was, doomed), Christ, as the new temple, and England/the world, as the physical expression of that temple, in the following, which follows on the passage quoted earlier: “[so that] Christ was not out of his diocese when he was upon the earth, nor out of his temple when he was in our flesh” (26). He makes the parallels more explicit in Station 9, writing:

O eternal and most gracious God, who in thy upper house, the heavens, though there be many mansions, yet art alike and equally in every mansion; but here in thy lower house, though thou fillest all, yet art otherwise in some rooms thereof than in others;

\textsuperscript{154} I do not propose to analyse in detail the role of the King and his physician(s) in the Devotions, but it should be sufficient to note that His Majesty’s doctor plays a similar surveilling diaconal role over Donne’s body as the King does over the actual commonwealth, and its reformed Church—even here, the Royal Supremacy turns up, stuck coterminous with commonwealth, Bible reading, confederate somatic metaphors, and Ephesian progress.

\textsuperscript{155} This theology of incarnation (and its inevitable suffering, limiting and kenosis) has obvious relevance to “Show me thy Spouse so bright and clear…..” This looks like a leftover note from some earlier draft.
otherwise in thy church than in my chamber, and otherwise in thy sacraments than in my prayers; so though thou be always present and always working in every room of this thy house, my body, yet I humbly beseech thee to manifest always a more effectual presence in my heart than in the other offices. Into the house of thine anointed, disloyal persons, traitors, will come; into thy house, the church, hypocrites and idolators will come; into some rooms of this thy house, my body, temptations will come, infections will come; but be my heart thy bedchamber, O my God, and thither let them not enter. (69)

Donne here plays with the language of space. Again, he sticks the Church Triumphant “in the upper house”, dwelling in “many mansions”, with the Church Militant, “in thy lower house”, where presences are not equal and univocal, but divers and of multiplied kind. At the same time however, both are associated with his own body, “thy house”, which though while explicitly attacked by the same “temptations” and “infections” as the Church Militant (and, I suppose, St Paul’s, if “the house of thine anointed” is particular rather than general), but Donne appeals, in a moment of assurance, to the “private bedchamber” of his heart, the thing left in God’s hand as God’s habitation when all the rest have been destroyed. In the same sense as the ember of his soul lies amid the consumed ash of metaphor, the “habitation whose builder and maker is God” outlasts all the other metaphors, lying underneath and above them all, a sure fastness, and a secure household. In this sense, it fulfils, and makes irrelevant all the other temples, and all the other churches. Here, “at the still point of the turning world” lie the soul and its Master, and Una’s true dwelling place. It is a puzzling in-between place, both temple and not-temple, solid and yet transparent, destroyed and yet whole – a paradox, a desire, and a joy.
Chapter 7: “All the Constellations of the Story”: Edification and George Herbert

Nothing lasts but the Church.

*George Herbert, Outlandish Proverbs.*

**What** Church is this?

Christ’s Church.

Who builds it?

Mr. George Herbert.

Who assisted it?

Many assisted: who, I may not say,

So much contention might arise that way.

*Robert Harvey, The Synagogue (1640)*

To say that George Herbert’s poetry is deeply invested in notions of building is a truism. Like Hyacinth Bucket’s organised religion, (which requires by definition someone to organise it), the erection of any Temple requires building language. But the subject of this chapter is what Herbert’s book of poetry, *The Temple*, with its concomitant “pastoral” A Priest to the Temple or A Country Parson, does with and to that building language.156

I wish to argue that, while continuing to be deeply invested in the tethering language of godly order and Henrician progression, Herbert draws also on the evangelical civic vision of (Edward and) Elizabeth, small moments of apocalyptic history not so very far from Foxe or Bale, and, most importantly of all, a Reformed theology which accepts the inevitability both of human artifacts (Church furnishing, poetic language, sermon illustration, sacramental materials) and their essential corruptibility and contingency. In *The Temple* George Herbert constructs a “building” and upholds the human inventions, conventions and incarnations of

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156 That is, pastoral manual.

spiritual truths, while at the same time presenting them as marred by human Fallenness, human deafness, and human obstinacy. Building language in Herbert is always doubled – it constructs, repairs and renovates, establishes with a careful domestic eye, but at the same time, like Donne, it also has deconstructive valency – the starting point is the realisation of the contingency of artifacts, and the reliance on God to make them transparent. Sara William Hanley is entirely right when she points out that Herbert’s progression in *The Temple* involves the realisation that “man can proceed no further in his approach to God without help – and his realisation of this constitutes his essential purgation.” (Hanley 123). The assumed solidities, and the assumed obediences of the sublimely confident Henry, and even a more cautious Elizabeth, are here are undermined, as Herbert gives voice to a spiritualised vision of a Church floating, as it were, attached to human things, but also puzzlingly disembodied, dependent, and perfect only in heaven.

7.1 Of Templedness: the Title.

This doubled language is seen (to begin with) in both the title and the dedication of *The Temple*. The history of the Hebrew Temple is a cyclical one, marked by construction, destruction and reconstruction. The original tabernacle built by Moses disappears after the destruction of Shiloh, and the more permanent Temples of Solomon, Ezra and Herod are all built only to be followed by exile and destruction – the kind of apocalyptic circle in which renewal and reconstruction are followed by inevitable corruption, apostasy, exile and demolishing. John David Walker is of course correct when he calls the David/Solomonic temple “the dominant influence on the structure of *The Temple*” (Walker 289), in that it is the

158 For more on the typology of the Temple, see John David Walker, “The Architectonics of George Herbert's *The Temple*” *English Literary History*, 29.3 (1962) 289–305.
obvious Biblical analogue. That said, his reading of *The Temple* in typological terms, with, for example, the Church Porch standing in for the washing laver in the tabernacle, the Altar the Altar of Incense, and so on, ignores some facts. First, that kind of Hebrew Temple, as the Reformers re-emphasised, is fulfilled and abolished in Christ. That is, Herbert is not a Jewish poet. He picks up the traditional correspondences between the Temple and Christian architecture, such as the font for purification and so on, but the kind of worship that goes on in *The Temple* is much different than Levitical ritual – and this is a point the Reformers insisted upon, accusing their Roman enemies of, as John Bale has it, “being Moses’ priests, not Christ’s.” (Bale, cvi). Further, in the Bible, the idea of the Temple contains both provisionality (in that (1) the earthly Temple is only a copy or shadow of the Heavenly one, and that, (2) it is always subject to the possibility, indeed at some points almost the inevitability, of human corruption. In this sense, while of course the first impulse of *The Temple* is a constructive one, the title also carries inside it the seeds of a deconstructive impulse, in which true religion is always imperilled by corruption. It is no accident that *The Temple* ends with “The Church Militant” and “L’Envoy”, in which the peripatetic figure of the Church is (almost) hounded out of her home in Europe in an apocalyptic vision none so far from Bale, in which the Antichrist is enthroned at Rome:

Thus Sinne triumphs in Western *Babylon*;

Yet not as Sinne, but as Religion.

.................................................................................................................................

Old and new *Babylon* are to hell and night,

As is the sun and moon to heav’n and light

When th’ one did set, the other did take place,
Confronting equally the Law and Grace.

They are hells land-marks, Satans double crest;

They are Sinnes nipples, feeding th’ east and west.

The second Temple could not reach the first:

And the late reformation never durst

Compare with ancient times and purer yeares;

But in the Jews and us deserveth tears. (line 250ff)

Herbert here makes an explicit reference to the tears of the book of *Ezra*, in which the Jewish elders who had seen the first temple wept at the poorer and smaller replacement, but the main point here is that Herbert is very well aware of the insecurity of temples, as true religion abandons the one at Rome, perches precariously on the Thames, and prepares to pack the camp bed for New England. We will come to “The Church Militant” in its place in this chapter, but Herbert is well aware of the full richness of the title’s resonance, and implications. In Herbert’s temple, constant vigilance is necessary against sin and against the equally constant appeals of slackness, apathy, “the world, the flesh and the devil”, and even when this is complete, the inevitable nature of human beings means that the building work is not completely to be trusted. At some level it is always contingent, or under threat, in much the same way that the Biblical temple was, consistently being destroyed, renewed and rebuilt. Even when the building stays up, there is often conflict inside the image, more than one argument, more than one valency. It is this conflict which gives *The Temple* its interest. It is also this conflict which gives *The Temple* its sense of fragility, and provisionality. As in Donne, the images are under interpretive question, involving the reader in the debate, as spectator, and adjudicator.
This chapter is structured more or less in the chronology of *The Temple*, first an examination of “The Church Porch”, then a tracing of Herbert’s theology of contingency through the poems of *The Temple* to “The Church Militant”. But before we do that, we should examine its concomitant manual, *The Country Parson or A Priest to The Temple*, the Preface and Herbert himself, (at least through the hagiographic pen of Walton). I look at aspects of these together to find the context in which the poetry resonates. It is from these that we may find the Temple’s altar lights, sketching first the purpose, and the outline, of the building.

### 7.2 The Country Parson, and the Printer’s ‘Preface’ to The Temple.

*The Country Parson* begins in terms of imperfection. Not only does Herbert admit in the Preface that it is an ideal to aim at, an ideal which he is bound to fall short of, although “I will set [it] as high as I can”, but he includes the notion of others (Herbert’s successors in Bemerton or readers, presumably) adding to “those points which I have observed, until this book grow to be a complete pastoral.” The duty of a priest set out in Chapter 1 is to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh for his body’s sake, which is the Church” (202; Colossians 1:24). This notion of progressive growth, and filling up, is emphasised too by the rules of apparel in Chapter 3, in which “his apparel [is] plain, but reverend and clean, without spots, dust or smell, the purity of [the parson’s] mind breaking out and dilating itself even to his body, clothes and habitation” (204). This idea of the parson being “full of all knowledge” (Chapter 4), and set to increase the zeal and service of his people by a progressive, “dilating” encouragement towards godliness, is a gentle echo of the Henrician idea of “dilation” and progression, as the parson presses his people “with grave liveliness, between fear and zeal” to answer the responses “not in a huddling or slubbering fashion, gaping or scratching the head, or spitting even in the midst of their answer, but gently and peaceably, thinking what they say… not as parrots without reason” (208). To encourage this, preaching occurs, by which the people are “built”, using “all possible art”,
attempting to “move” (note the Sidneyism here) “thick and heavy” country people “who need
a mountain of fire to kindle them”, “by texts of devotion, not controversy, moving and
ravishing texts” (a nice moment of both Sidney’s “moving” and Donne’s “ravishing”) (209).
Sermons and preaching acts are avowedly “dangerous things”, so that “none goes out of the
Church as he came in, but either better, or worse” (209). At the same time, the country parson
is determined that “all may be done with reverence to His glory, and the edification of His
flock” (211)159, “humbly beseeching the Almighty to pardon and accept our poor services,
and to improve them, that we may grow therein, and that our feet may be like hinds’ feet,
ever climbing higher and higher unto Him” (212). It is this notion of improvement,
“dilation”, progression, “climbing higher and higher unto Him” that is our first point, a gentle
echo of Erasmus and the Henrician Canons, generations on. Herbert’s language is at one level
much more secure (in the sense that, presumably, there will be no Catholic incumbent to
undo all his work as there might have been a generation earlier), but a minister’s job is never
done – and there is still work to do. Herbert has here the Sidney-and-Cranmeresque job of
“moving” the people of Bemerton onward further. But he also must, in his conversation and
entertainment of his neighbours after Divine Service, take “occasion to discourse of such
things as are profitable and pleasant, and to raise up their minds to apprehend God’s good
blessing to our Church and State; that order is kept in the one, and peace in the other” (212).
Herbert summons at his (written) table here a miniature version of the commonwealth, in
which Church and State keep order and peace together, on the model sketched above.160

159 Which is of course “his” flock, Herbert’s, too.
160 Note also that similar language recurs with respect to the Parson’s family. His children are first made
Christians, and then “Commonwealth-men” (215). This parallels earlier language, where in the chaos of the
Marian persecutions, the reformed family becomes a domestic church, as it is for Thomas Lever, who speaks of
“the edification of me and mine” (Original Letters 163). As a sidenote lying across the notion of the father of a
family exercising the same duty as the King does in the commonwealth, Thomas Becon’s catechism of 1559
pursues a delicate balance on godly obedience which parallels the dilemma of Evangelicals under Elizabeth.
God’s will must come first, Brecon admits, but then layers down this admission with the same kind of
qualifying leash that Elizabeth and James attempt for preaching. See Cressy&Ferrell 86-7, and then 88-90, in the
Nowell Catechism of 1570.
Edificatory profit, a raising movement of the soul, social obligation and good-neighbourliness join together in a reciprocal tetheredness to the delight of the shade of Henry, his Archbishop, and two of his three children.\textsuperscript{161}

Let us pause here for a moment to draw some strands together. Herbert’s conception of his office can be explained imaginatively in several ways. First, the parson is the conduit for the dangerous, yet vital encounter with the divine Word, seen primarily in preaching, since “the pulpit is his joy and throne.” In a sense, the preaching parson is a creator of things, tropes, arts and truths, partly the catalyst for a dangerous metamorphosis for “none goes out as he comes in”. And the parson is concerned with kindling, moving, ravishing, explaining, dilating, instructing, growing and progressing – the same verbs Erasmus borrows for the divine word, the same ideas Sidney plays with in the \textit{Apology}, the idea of “lifting” the mind to the appreciation of holy things is a Cranmerian idea, but it is inflected too with the concordant Cranmerian idea of neighbourly godliness, order and peace. “Edification, not error” and “edification, not contention” lie down together in peace and order in the Bemerton bog.

But is it this simple? Herbert obediently repeats in his section on Church furnishing, the by-now commonplace that church furnishing and services ought to be summarised by the rubrics of Pauline edification:

\begin{quote}
And all this he doth, not as out of necessity, or as putting a holiness in the things, but as desiring to keep the middle way between superstition, and slovenliness, and as following the Apostles two great and admirable Rules in things of this nature: The first whereof is, \textit{Let all things be done decently, and in order}: [I Cor. 14:40]. The
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{161} Of course, it is true that, as the chapter on Bale and Respublica points out, Mary was tied by this language and this vision too, even when a more overtly Papal one might have been a more distinctive rhetorical move.
second, *Let all things be done to edification*, [I Cor. 14:26]. For these two rules comprize and include the double object of our duty, God, and our neighbour; the first being for the honour of God; the second for the benefit of our neighbour. So that they excellently score out the way, and fully, and exactly contain, even in externall and indifferent things, what course is to be taken; and put them to great shame, who deny the Scripture to be perfect. (222)

At the same time, he makes clear the best and biggest duty of the parson, that is, catechesis:

The Countrey Parson values Catechizing highly: for there being three points of his duty, the one, to infuse a competent knowledge of salvation in every one of his Flock; the other, to multiply, and build up this knowledge to a spirituall Temple; the third, to inflame this knowledge, to presse, and drive it to practice, turning it to reformation of life, by pithy and lively exhortations; [and he uses catechesis] by way of preaching to himself, for the advancing of his own mortification; for in preaching to others, he forgets not himself, but is first a sermon to himself, and then to others; growing with the growth of his Parish. (230)

We can see here that edification, catechesis, and growth, have more than one level. The parson has an individual duty to “advance his own mortification” and “preach…to himself”. Second, the parson has an ordinary duty to edify his neighbours, by “speaking of such things as be profitable”. Third, the parson has a special duty for the growth of his whole parish, both in the maintenance and repair of the physical building, and the “infusing of a competent knowledge of salvation in every one of his flock” such that it is “build[ed] up to a spiritual Temple”, inflaming, dilating, sharing, kindling “by all possible means”. On all of these levels, the key mission of the pastor is to build, to inflame, to model, and to move. This duty of catechesis, Herbert says, is connected properly to representation, and thus to the mission of
poetics. The best means of catechesis is twofold: Socratic method, and figurative language. Questions are good, but images are better.

This practice [Socratic questions] exceeds even Semons in teaching: but there being two things in Sermons, the one Informing, the other Inflaming; as Sermons come short of questions in the one, so they farre exceed them in the other. For questions cannot inflame or ravish, that must be done by a set, and laboured, and continued speech. (232)

Before we move on to the images in The Temple as an example of the kind of “set, laboured and continued” inflaming catechesis, two further points. First, this model of godly progression is contested by the fact that not everyone is willing to be edified. Like Cranmer, who in his Preface divides those who come to the Bible with a teachable and movable heart from those who (in the Psalter’s phrase) “hatest to be reformed”, Herbert leaves room in his schema for those who actually come away “worse” from the transmutation chamber that is the sermon. Herbert is also clear that there are two differing responses to The Temple also, the one that gains profit, and the one that is actively hurt by a bruising encounter between Truth’s unstoppable force, and the hard heart and stiff neck of the reprobate. In the words of the dedication:

Turn their eyes hither, who shall make a gain:

Theirs, who shall hurt themselves or me, refrain. (5)\textsuperscript{162}

We shall examine the nature of the hurt later in the context of The Church Porch, but the simple point is that Herbert “reads out” (as it were) a category of people who do not meet the

\textsuperscript{162} All Herbert poems in “The Temple” are taken from George Herbert, The Complete English Poems, ed. John Tobin, (Penguin: London, 1991). From now, only line numbers will be cited, and since the poems are treated in approximate reading order, even these are sometimes assumed to be unnecessary when the poem itself is quoted as a whole, or the context makes clear which poem is being examined.
conditions set out for edification, either because their kindling is wet (they are gaping, scratching and not attending at Divine Service, perhaps) or because they are actively hostile to the persuading work of edification, that is, they actively refuse it.

The second complicating factor Herbert admits in his schema of edification is the eschatological and theological one – that is, the parson’s work of edification is provisional, fragile, and in slightly desperate need of help. Let me pause to explain what I mean by this, since it is the root of the double valency of images in *The Temple*, the fount of half the conflict.

At first glance, Herbert’s conception of the role and vocation of a minister is a comprehensive and constructive one, encompassing everything from medical and legal advice to neighbourly chit chat. But it is also a high and expansive vocation, as below:

“The country parson is full of all knowledge” (204).

“The country parson preacheth constantly” (208).

“The country parson is the father of his flock” (225).

“The country parson wherever he is, keeps God’s watch” (227).

“The Countrey Parson is in Gods stead to his Parish, and dischargeth God what he can of his promises. Wherefore there is nothing done either wel or ill, whereof he is not the rewarder, or punisher” (229).

“The Countrey Parson at spare times from action, standing on a hill, and considering his Flock, discovers two sorts of vices, and two sorts of vicious persons” (238).
“…the obscurity in some points being the exercise of the Church, the light in the foundations being the guide; The Church needing both an evidence, and an exercise” (237).

The parson’s duty involves an awful lot of watching, observing, visiting, surveillance and profitable talk, and the end of all this edifying work, guided by an “irradiation” of original truth, the end of all the rushing hither and yon is that he:

knows well, that both for the generall ignominy which is cast upon the profession, and much more for those rules, which out of his choysest judgment hee hath resolved to observe, and which are described in this Book, he must be despised; because this hath been the portion of God his Master, and of Gods Saints his Brethren, and this is foretold, that it shall be so still, until things be no more. Neverthelesse, according to the Apostles rule, he endeavours that none shall despise him; especially in his own Parish he suffers it not to his utmost power; for that, where contempt is, there is no room for instruction. (242)

The slightly sad emphasis on the corruptibility of man here is tied to an eschatological vision straight out of Bale: the pastor must be despised, and in fact if he is not despised (as are the prophets and Protestant martyrs “until things be no more”) then he is not doing his job. His acts of building and renovation are provisional, subject to an eschatological vision which requires both an impulse to construction and an impulse for fallenness and deconstruction, so that the parson is enjoined to “advance his own mortification”. Building up is subject to inevitable corruption, but it also requires an impulse to confront the fallenness of the self, the temptations to sin, and the ruin mankind has made of himself. In this sense, abnegation is a key part of building. Indeed, not only is the end of all this constructive work unsure and provisional (nay, even despised), the Parson is envisioned at perpetual war with the bad kind
of building. Indeed, even at the very beginning of *The Country Parson*, he is made a sort of one-man siege train, as his vocation is described:

A pastor is the Deputy of Christ for the reducing of man to the obedience of God. (201)

The same word, “reduce”, is used of the struggle against false doctrine, a little later:

The Countrey Parson, if there be any of his parish that hold strange Doctrines, useth all possible diligence to reduce them to the common Faith. The first means he useth is Prayer, beseeching the Father of lights to open their eyes, and to give him power so to fit his discourse to them, that it may effectually pierce their hearts, and convert them. (237)

These deconstructive valencies lie under the surface of even the constructed buildings in the parish and virtual commonwealth of Bemerton, and strike a note of sadness and anxiety; baldly summarised at the beginning of Chapter 27:

The Countrey Parson is generally sad, because hee knows nothing but the Crosse of Christ, his minde being defixed on it with those nailes wherewith his Master was: or if he have any leisure to look off from thence, he meets continually with two most sad spectacles. Sin, and Misery; God dishonoured every day, and man afflicted. (241)

This underlying purpose of spiritual rebuilding offers a parallel way to consider Herbert’s actual rebuilding work. There are of course physical buildings and rebuildings in Herbert. Walton records that he rebuilt, repaired and paid for church repairs, at both

163 “Reduce” is a paradoxical word: at once a dilation and an enlargement, and, more shadowly, a curtailment or diminution.
Bemerton and Leigh Ecclesia near Lincoln, and indeed that he was so committed to the advancement of physical building that his response to his mother’s objection to it was positively rebellious. When she said to him “‘George, it is not for your weak body, and empty purse, to undertake to build Churches,’” he replied, according to Walton:

when he had first desired her blessing, and she given it him, his next request was,

“That she would at the age of thirty-three years, allow him to become an undutiful son; for he had made a vow to God, that, if he were able, he would rebuild that Church.” (283)

The Printer’s Preface to The Temple records a similar determination in Bemerton, calling Herbert “God’s instrument for the re-edifying of the Church belonging thereunto, that had lain ruinated almost 20 years” (4). At Bemerton, local tradition (recorded both in memory and in handy tourist handbills) associates Herbert with the new floor, the odd South Wall portal, the poor box, and possibly the church bell. At St Peter’s Fugglestone, he was likewise associated with the bells, and with a number of other Church improvements of a minor kind.¹⁶⁴ But more important than the physical repairs, and behind them, is an vision of enscriptured commonwealth and godly community, inflamed, kindled, dilated and instructed – instructed not simply by catechism, but by images in a sanctified (although still potentially dangerous) imagination. This community, led and enabled by its pastor, is imperfect, provisional, and contains the sinful, the deaf and the contemptuous. But it is none the less real, even if idealised. The Country Parson is not simply a portrait of the Bemerton community (except in real grace notes alleged by Walton), but George Herbert’s ideal community, camping on the edge between England and eternity. This community is the one

¹⁶⁴ According to local tradition, preserved in a handwritten tourist placard. What authority this has is difficult to say.
The Temple is built for. In this sense, the enterprise of sacred poetry becomes part of the parson’s duty too (or at least a duty of this one), marrying together public ethics and imaginary artifacts, architectonike wise. Poetry acts here to promote the same sort of transformation of heart envisioned by Cranmer with respect to Bible reading, and slots into the same kind of exemplary offered-for-edification space as the Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions. Although it is not offered with the same kind of consciousness of audience as Donne – Herbert simply saying to Nicholas Ferrar that the Temple might be printed “if it would turn to the advantage to any poor soul” (Barnes 90) – it partakes of the same edificatory purpose, and the same edificatory tensions.

Viewing The Temple this way also makes sense of the puzzling sense of transparency inside it. Hanley is right again when she notes that even in the five most embodied “furniture” poems considering church floor, door, lock, key, music, windows and monuments, only the last “functions in [a] literal way”, and even then it relies upon a complex interplay between metaphor and concrete reality. Brewster Ford is also precisely right when he points out that the main point of The Temple is not church furnishing, but liturgy, specifically a “pattern of worship” (19), or to use the metaphor original to Herbert himself in The Country Parson, an “order.. of life.” The images in The Temple are much more like sermon illustrations or parables than they are literally accurate. They are in fact images which are made transparent, contingent, or even consumed, by the theological truths to which they point. Robert Higbie nails the wider movement when he suggests that:

The imagery of The Temple then, seems to follow a progression from the earthly, man made enclosure, the house and the church, to the divine enclosure of the [Heavenly]

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165 Herbert announces in Chapter III that “the parson orders his life”, but the enterprise of the whole book can be seen as Herbert attempting to do that, reducing himself to obedience before attempting the same in his parish.
temple, the perfection that the Church tries to embody on earth. This is not however
an obvious, direct progression; on the contrary, it moves through conflict, as the
Christian himself must before he can reach God. Affirmation alternates with despair.
(627–8)

Herbert is clear in *The Country Parson* that:

> there is a double state of a Christian even in this Life, the one military, the other
peaceable. The military is, when we are assaulted with temptations either from within
or from without, the Peaceable is, when the Divell for a time leaves us, as he did our
Saviour, and the Angels minister to us their owne food, even joy, and peace; and
comfort in the holy Ghost. (253)

The poems in *The Temple* then, give voice to this “double state”. Partly this is “peaceable”
celebration of God’s grace, the kindness of the Lord and the good order of the Church in
neighbourly concord. On the other hand, *The Temple* is also partly “military”, and enclosed,
that is, besieged, imperfect, and corruptible. On the one hand, God cannot be contained in
buildings, and in fact He deliberately busts them, with a wide, spiritualising and iconoclastic
impulse. On the other, like Donne, Herbert borrows the military imagery of enclosure,
implying that the soul is consistently arraigned, attacked and besieged by sin. Robert Higbie
again:

> Nevertheless, the work does move to a final sense of God’s grace, and the progression
from earthly church to divine temple can be taken as a representation of the
movement from the old dispensation to the new, from punishment to redemption.
Herbert accomplishes this movement by making us feel the inadequacy of the merely
earthly…man’s state is described as an enclosed one because Herbert wants to make us aware of how limited it is. (628)

This is of course correct, but it doesn’t go far enough. The state of the earthly church, the “Church militant” is not simply one of limitation or conflict, it is also a state of contingency, “inadequacy” and potential and inevitable corruptibility. This is why the spatial and temporal metaphors of The Church Porch and The Church, which Rubey regards as an “architectural metaphor” being “apparently abandoned” in “The Church Militant” in favour of “images of historical development” (105), are in fact a key part of Herbert’s eschatological vision. The inevitable building and rebuilding of the Church Militant, which will be completed and perfected only in the New Jerusalem, unites the conflict-ridden architectural images of The Temple, with the personal images of individual rebuilding, and the images of historical and cyclical corruption and renewal. It is that avowedly Protestant eschatological narrative that lies behind The Temple, and that clarifies or dismisses vague descriptors like “symbolic imagination” (Carnes 507), “spatial progression” (Walker 289), “sacramental view of reality” (Lynch 41-60) and even Johnson’s idea that “The Church Militant” ought to be detached altogether.

To a further examination of this “double state” and its tensions, and to The Temple, we now go.

7.3 The Church Porch.

The first point to make about the largest portion of the Temple, “the Church Porch” is its comparative neglect. This neglect is summarised by the wonderful Anne Myers, whose
reading of the Church Porch I follow in this section. The poem is “resolutely ignored” (427), she argues, because of its very lack of difficulty, its “lack of tension and contradiction” (428) and its didacticism. In this, modern taste is very different from earlier, in that the Church Porch was “Herbert’s most-cited poem through the end of the seventeenth century” (429). Modern scholars who come to it expecting Donne-ian pyrotechnics are disappointed, but in my view (and Myers’s), they come to the porch expecting the wrong kind of poem. What we have here is an exercise in didacticism—conceived primarily in parish terms. The Church porch is a litoral space, the mixing place between church and the world, but it also fulfils a number of other social functions. As Myers argues, quoting Friar, the church porch has a role “at the centre of community life”:

> Historically, the church porch was not only an entryway. It was also a site for meetings and exchanges, the place where bonds and contracts were formed between individual and community, between parishioner and parishioner, and between the religious and secular worlds. (430)

Historically, as Myers argues in the remainder of her paper, the Church porch is associated with the legally binding bits of marriages, with burials, with baptism, since the baptismal font was by custom there (as it still is, in many places, although not little St Andrew’s¹⁶⁷), and that candidates for baptism were received there by the Prayer Book of Edward VI (432). It was also associated with the honouring and solemnising of contracts (434), charity and other community business (435), occasional extra space for the priest, and the catechesis and

¹⁶⁶ Anne Myers, “Restoring the Church Porch: Herbert’s Architectural Style” English Literary Renaissance, 40.3 (2010) 427–457. My reading of the Church porch in ethical and essentially social terms I arrived at while reading the poem sitting in the Church porch at Bemerton in 2012. It was both an annoyance and an increasing delight to see that Myers has taken a similar tack, and argued it with much more depth and elegance than I was going to, two years earlier.

¹⁶⁷ At both St Andrews Bemerton and St Peter’s Fugglestone, the Churches are small, so that the font is a couple of steps away from the church door at worst – but so is everything else in front of the altar rail. Hence, while the (Victorianised) font is not in the church porch, it, like everything else, is near the church door.
education of children (436). One might add a ritual Myers doesn’t explicitly mention, funerals as well as burials began by rubric either at lynch-gate or porch with reception of the remains, and recital of the Sentences. As Myers sums up:

The most direct connections between poem and porch are established by Herbert’s repeated references to events that would actually have taken place in the church porch. As a group, these events enfold moral and spiritual significance into the course of a parishioner’s life; they have to do with the affirmation of religious responsibility or the inculcation and surveillance of socially useful virtues such as charity, thrift, and truthfulness. (438)

It strikes me that many of the aphorisms in the Church porch are exactly that: small, homespun proverbs aimed at catechising, at an essentially social rather than transformative function, aimed at getting the community to rub along in approximate harmony, bondedness and peace.\(^\text{168}\) Hence, the essential homeliness of instructions such as:

“Drink not the third glass”. (l 25)

“If reason move not gallants, quit the room”. (l 45)

“Lie not”. (l 75)

“Flee idleness”. (l 80)

These add of course to the highlighted virtues associated with the social functions of the porch. Marriage is treated by the early “abstain wholly or wed” (line 12), lust is positioned as the polluter of baptism “[Lust] doth pollute and foul/ Whom God in baptism washed with His

own blood.” Indeed, it is envisioned as a sort of book, which is opposed to the image of the Scriptures:

It blots the lesson in thy soul

The holy lines cannot be understood.

How dare those eyes upon a Bible look

Much less toward God, whose lust is all their book? (10)

Treated also here are the social duties so dear to Cranmer that he recalled them even at his execution: almsgiving (380), public prayer (395), sermon-hearing, temperance in dress and speech (otherwise known as “godly conversation”), and the payment of tithes, as well as the proper attitude to great persons and hierarchical order, as in “Think the king sees thee still, for his King does” (121). To go with the sort of fridge-magnet maxim such as “who breaks his own bond forfeiteth himself/ what nature made a ship, he makes a shelf” (120), we have a couple of noteworthy image clusters here too. First, we have the somatic imagery not so far from Donne, in which the good body is built up, as in “Constancy knits the bones, and makes us stour,/ When wanton pleasures beckon us to thrall” (116), and a corresponding association of social evils with disease, as in “look to thy mouth: diseases enter there” (126). Secondly, we have the imagery of building here too, upholding both the individual and the corporate:

Slight those who say amid their sickly healths

Thou livest by rule. What doth not so but man?

Houses are built by rule, and commonwealths. (135)
To go with it, as in the somatic metaphor, sin (in this case gambling) is envisioned as
destructive “civil gunpowder, in peace/ blowing up houses, with their full increase” (200).

Both metaphors chime again in Stanza 70, at the time of divine service, as the worshipper is
pictured as a body again, but one with closeable bits, like the shutters on a house:

In time of service seal up both thine eyes

And send them to thine heart, that spying sin

They may weep out the stains by them did rise

Those doors being shut, all by the ear comes in.

Who marks in church time others’ symmetry

Makes all their beauty his deformity. (420)

The tone in the Church porch is the familiar, slightly weary one of a parent, or better still, an
older brother. It isn’t supposed to be pyrotechnic, but homespun, didactic, proverbial and
above all, clear. These practical kindliness maxims, as Myers points out, essentially face
outward, into the parish, concerned with the practical regulation of social order, social
bondedness, and social peace. Even if, as Amy Charles argues, Herbert had the specific case
of his brother Henry in mind (Charles 78), or if Strier is right, and Herbert attempts the
special case of “sanctifying the aristocracy” perhaps via Montaigne (Strier 44), something
hardly suprising under the walls of Wilton House, the Church Porch retains the didactic,
proverb-like tone of peasant medieval piety such as Piers the Plowman.¹⁶⁹ concerned with

¹⁶⁹ I am thinking here of the connection identified by Roger Scruton, following C. S. Lewis, between the
godliness and honest toil in Langland, and the “non-conformist conscience” (Scruton 19).
godliness, damage limitation, and social peace. It is this rule of life which the Church porch advances: for the good man, for the parish, and for the whole commonwealth. As Shuger observes, “The self that is to be “rhymed to good” is ineradicably politicised, a social performance” (96ff). The Church Porch thus ties together the building up and tearing down that takes place in the transformative space of the Church with the neighbourly context of that reform, which was so important to the reformers: in essence, the porch connects Christ and commonwealth in one rule, and in one parish. Here, in the parish figures of a real place like Bemerton, the rubber meets the road, and Herbert meets his people, as he announces in The Country Parson he intends to, and as he does in similar form in his little known collection of traditional bromides, Outlandish Proverbs (1640).

7.4 The Church

Let us now turn from the porch, having been sprinkled and catechised, to the Church itself. The first poem in itself, the Altar, is an instructive lesson in the parallels and perils of Herbert, and so we begin a complex interplay between literal church furnishing (the Church Militant), heavenly archetype (the Church Triumphant), and the essential contingency, destruction and uncontainability of “the real thing”, that is, that God. The latter, while representable, does not need representation at all, indeed at some level He must transcend it, be outside it, and escape it. These three levels construct between them a complicated mixture of construction and deconstruction, building up, and tearing down. The poem itself is below:

Another in a more reformed tradition is, of course, Gifford’s Country Divinity (1582), in which the traditional country fellowship of drinking, eating and carousing basically upheld (with reservations) by Herbert, is attacked by “Zelotes”, preaching a vision of the Christian commonwealth superintended by the minister. This vision is of course allied to Herbert’s at very crucial points (the minister as God’s deputy to reduce the populace, for example), but also in tension with it, in that traditional social obligations, such as those in the Church porch, are in large part discounted by Zelotes.
A broken A L T A R, Lord, thy servant rears,
Made of a heart and cemented with tears;
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workman's tool hath touch'd the same.

A HEART alone
Is such a stone,
As nothing but
Thy pow'r doth cut.
Wherefore each part
Of my hard heart
Meets in this frame
To praise thy name.

That if I chance to hold my peace,
These stones to praise thee may not cease.
Oh, let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine,
And sanctify this A L T A R to be thine.

To begin with the most obvious things first, in the Church we have a literal altar, or, in more Protestant terms, “a table, altar-wise”, to quote Elizabethan Bishops’ injunctions (Parker A6). This ambiguity about the placement and place of altars hints at Herbert’s wider tension here. Of course traditional features (indeed, the biggest feature) of medieval parish churches, stone altars had been ordered destroyed by the injunctions of Edward VI, on the grounds that the traditional sacrifice and oblation of the Mass was in error, and redemption guaranteed not by the sacrificing act of the priest, but by the one salvific act of Christ which the priestly act commemorates and memorialises. At the same time, Common Prayer Eucharist unites and spiritually makes that act present not the literal matter and product of sacrifice, but accessing the spiritual reality of it, in the bread and in the communicant. Hence, while Communion Tables generally stood in chancels “altar wise”, they occupy a typically Elizabethan position of recalling an altar (and perhaps, in some local areas and to some people, being used as an altar), without actually being one, in the same way that kneeling remained customary (although not required), and belief in the Real Presence was allowed (but not mandated,
depending on definition) by the simple expedient of removing the Black Rubric, and remaining silent on its replacement. ¹⁷¹ So, the literal altar in the parish church ¹⁷² is already in a contested, in-between space. The next line, with its “broken altar” can likewise be read two ways. First, the altar is the heart, and in the heart, and true worship of God requires no concretising, but simply the broken contrition of Psalm 51, “a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise”. At the same time, the broken altar is “reared” by the servant, recalling the broken altar of the Lord in 1 Kings 18:30 ¹⁷³ repaired by Elijah to restore true worship of the Lord, in the teeth of Baal and his 450 prophets.

We see here a doubled language which is at the same time constructed (the altar is “reared” here) and undercut (the altar is broken, but repaired; it’s repaired but unnecessary because true worship happens in the heart). Likewise, the second line’s “cemented with tears” is constructive (in that the image of literal cement is solid) but not, since if we follow the image of the heart, the parallel is the difference between stony hearts and fleshly ones (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26), and the boundary between them is marked by tears. In this sense, the tears actually dissolve the stony heart, not cement it. The next line, “no workman’s tool has touched the same” is a direct allusion to Exodus 20:25, in which the use of tools is forbidden to shape the altar, since human artifice is excluded (at least here) from true worship. This is true here, since only God has created the parts of the heart, but since clearly the poet’s hand has constructed this particular altar-shape, again, the image is doubled, especially if one throws in another altar-image, that of the Athenian altar to “an unknown god” who, being the

¹⁷¹ Until 1662, when it was restored to forbid a corporeal presence, assuming anyone was ever talking about any such thing.
¹⁷² Whichever one it is, St Andrews, St Peter’s, Leighton Ecclesia or somewhere else. I am agnostic on this point, simply because thanks to remodelling, the passage of time, and Herbert’s deliberate vagueness, it’s probably impossible to know if he had a literal model in mind, and if so, which.
¹⁷³ A parallel passage is of course 2 Chronicles 33:6, in which repentant Manasseh also repairs the “ruined” altar of the Lord to offer proper sacrifice after abolishing idolatry.
true God, “does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:22ff), and requires worship most importantly and truly in the heart, rather than representatively in temple or idol. Herbert’s enterprise is partly required (since he is giving God “his tenant’s rent” in the form of his art), partly questionable (in that that art mustn’t be allowed to become the equivalent of the workman’s tool on the altar’s uncut stone), and partly working the same way that the image is, pushing through the altar to the work of grace in the heart. As of course, the poem continues to do. “A heart alone/ is such a stone/ as nothing but/ Thy power can cut…” Herbert picks up the image of the undressed stone here, and turns it (via Ezekiel) into an image of the work of grace, in that God’s power cuts the sinful stoniness of the heart, pulling each stone into the proper order.

Of course, Herbert has already done this, pictorially, providing a textual replacement for the literal altar, making a sort of transformative space in which he hopes the heart of the reader will be at the same time built up (in the sense of directed to true worship) and torn down (in that false “rearing” will be undercut). In fact, by halfway through the poem, Herbert removes himself from the poem entirely, praying that, even if “by chance” he were silent, “these stones to praise thee may not cease”. Again, this is partly a recognition that, even after his death the literal lines will continue to speak of God’s praise (as indeed they have proven to), but it is also a recognition of the contingency of his own art, the fact that God might like to hear him, but doesn’t need to. Also, of course, it is an assertion of creatureliness and vulnerability to “chance” and inconstancy. The construction of this “pushing through” impulse lies across the enterprise of catechesis traced by Stanley Fish. The temple which is edified is built, in the end, “not on the page, or in space, but in the heart of the reader” (54), a process of transformation which the reader is invited into.
Insofar as it is possible in the poetic product of any mind, here, Herbert attempts to abdicate, to put God into the driver’s seat, as the possessor of power, potency, and agency. My favourite reading of the Altar, among the many that exist, is Paul Dyck’s, for the simple reason that he recognises this. As he puts it:

Herbert's choice of places for the beginning and end of "The Church," then, appears highly deliberate, and deliberately roomy, as it were. These are spaces not made but invoked and approached by Herbert, in which God acts, and more particularly, in which God hosts humanity, and more curiously, humanity God (in the Incarnate Son). Herbert did not separately choose a setting or structure in which some action would happen, but rather, the space, the action, and the divine Actor are all mutually implied. Herbert's great insight was not to attempt to bound this space but rather to identify its centrality as a locus of relationship and then to work out a poetics of invitation and approach. The resulting space is both homely (the space of the table) and at hand (the space of the book) while also churchly (the Lord's table) and apocalyptic (pointing toward full union with Christ). (46)

By the time we arrive at the final “sacrifice”, that too has three levels: the literal sacrifice (as in the Old Testament, or perhaps in the Mass), the sacrifice of Christ, which on divine initiative cleanses and rebuilds the broken heart, sanctifying it to be a proper altar, and the reality of that broken heart in the penitent asking the question, the “sacrifice of God” which is “a troubled spirit”. We may see here a constructive impulse (in the altar and the poem) a destructive one (in the breaking down of sinful idolatries, the cutting of the sinful heart, and Herbert relativizing himself) and the balance resolving at the end, in which we have very

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little to look at at all, since the literal altar is gone, we have moved through the words on the page to the spiritualised altar which is primarily internal, and in any case, only possible by a divine action which the poem mimics and invites us into.

In my analysis of the Altar here I have outlined the basics of my approach to the rest of the poems in The Church. I argue that in them, Herbert is deeply concerned with the kind of edification which requires both building up, and tearing down. In the examples outlined here, Herbert has a constructive valency, as the images themselves do, towards the building up of the Temple, a certain solidity. On the other hand, Herbert consistently undercut them, insisting that the images themselves are not the stopping point, indeed that they must not be. He attempts to enmesh the reader (and of course himself – Herbert, unlike Donne, entertained the possibility that *The Temple* might be burned unread) in a transformative space similar to his earlier conception of the preaching ministry. Like sermons in the literal church, we come to the poems of *The Temple* to be “inflamed”, pierced through with truth. Or, again like sermons, we might come to active harm, like sermons, poetry is a “dangerous” thing, leading to idolatry, disordered love, or to despair. This is why Herbert places on *The Temple* the dedication quoted earlier, which amounts to the same kind of health warning Cranmer puts on the Bible: Herbert asks the Lord to turn the eyes of the harm-able away from the Temple, and away from him. In this sense, he invites us into a same process of abnegation, stripping, and loss, the laying down of pride and sinfulness in order to be “in Him new drest”, built up, tethered, tied, and bridied.

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175 I will not analyse every poem in The Church—I have deliberately chosen those in which building language is present, or those which bear upon the idea of building up and tearing down which I am outlining. I have at the same time tried not to grab only the most conveniently tidy examples, deliberately choosing to include some in which Herbert’s approach to building language is oblique or not immediately obvious.

176 It is worthwhile noting here that Herbert doesn’t even assume that the Temple will in fact be edifying, or as he says, “turn to the advantage of any poor soul”; in fact, he abdicates this judgement to Deacon Nicholas Ferrar, who deserves the thanks of history for making the right call and publishing it.
The next two poems, “The Sacrifice” and “The Thanksgiving”, are tied together by the altar too, since of course Christ is the ultimate source of the Sacrifice offered upon it. Thanksgiving, as well as being the basic meaning of “eucharist”, is mentioned ten times in the Communion Rite of 1559, especially in the classically Anglican prayer after Communion, which survives in all Anglican jurisdictions: “we…desire [you] mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving: most humbly beseeching thee to grant, that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in His blood, we (and all Thy whole church) may obtain remission of our sins” (Cummings BCP 137-8). In these two poems, we may see Herbert’s immediate first impulse, to begin progress in The Church with an imaginative contemplation of the Crucifixion, and the cost of redemption. I do not propose to engage in analysis at any length here, but simply to spotlight one or two points to do with the transparency and inadequacy of constructed things in Herbert. The liturgical roots of “The Sacrifice” have been well established in the Good Friday reproaches (Tuve 91; cf. Mic. 3:1-3ff), and it is in many ways a strikingly traditional poem: its conventional iconography, its litany-like rhythm, its chiming antitheses – what Tuve calls “the unrelieved beating of phrase upon phrase” – in which the first three lines of the stanza rhyme exactly, broken by the refrain. Likewise, the other major feature of the poem, the antithesis, has been convincingly analysed in terms of ambiguity and irony by William Empson (228ff), who argues that the coupled lines either reveal more tension than at first glance, or that the antithesis often overbalances, as (inevitably) in Donne – in this, he picks up Tuve’s earlier description of the poem as one of “minute shocks and ironic contrasts” (Tuve 19). For the purposes of this argument, I shall simply note three further things. First, the shock created by Herbert rests for its effect on the contrast between God’s goodness and sacrifice, and human ugliness and blank incomprehension. In this sense, it straddles a tension which we’ve already identified, the tension between reality (in that the Son of God is dying with exquisite generosity) and
human blindness to it, as in, for instance, the need for fallen human beings to have reality explained, demonstrated, represented and decoded. As Christ says in the poem, from line 178, “I, whom am Truth, turn into truth their deeds”. It is this new appreciation of what is really going on that the shock attempts to provoke. Secondly, that the effect of this poetic encounter is to give us this shock. But Herbert does not stop there. The effect here is to push the reader through the traditional iconography by the repeated refrain. “Was ever grief like mine…” calls for the basic answer “No”, implicitly calling into question both human ability to repeat and appropriate “the sacrifice” by any other means than gift. Since the poem stands in the liturgical tradition of the Good Friday reproaches, spoken by Christ to the whole Church, and the poem continually reminds us of the cost of redemption for human beings including the reader, we are pushed through the implications of the Passion narrative into the appropriate liturgical response: “Almighty and Immortal One, have mercy on us!” In fact, the iconographic impulse of the poem, which constructs a traditional Passion narrative is undercut by the realisation and negation of the “Never….” – human response is inadequate, and we have reached the limits of language, and the limits of representation.

All we can offer is the Biblical “marvelling” so beloved of the Gospel of Luke, turning away saying “Never was any grief like this”. The Passion narrative of course constructs this response, but the effect upon the devout reader is mirrored by Herbert’s launching away from it, towards the Nothing beyond representation, the acknowledgement that even devout categories will not contain this, that this is too big.

A similar technique of construction and negation happens in “The Thanksgiving” in which Herbert tries out a number of responses to the Passion we have just seen. First, he tries out “grief”, which is already comprehended in Christ’s own grief. Then “shall I weep blood… shall I be scourged, flouted, boxed, sold?” This sort of encore performance of the
Passion recalls Donne ("Spit in my face, ye Jews…"), and it is likewise (although theatrical) ineffective, since it is but to repeat “the tale” that has already been told. Perhaps, then, ignoring it? Or trying a proper poetic response? Herbert wonders “shall I then sing, skipping thy doleful story…shall thy strokes be my stroking? Thorns my flower? Thy rod my posy? Thy cross, my bower?” (line 11). The question here is an acute one for Herbert: How is the devout poet to turn the suffering of Christ into a poem without aestheticising and devaluing it? How can we treat the crucifixion in the same way as we treat the idealised love poetry of posies, bowers and Venus fly traps?177 “How then shall I imitate thee, and/ Copy thy fair, though bloody, hand…” (line 15) sums up the problem: Herbert is committed to “copying” with pen strokes, but how is he to (a) summon up the proper spirit to do this, or (b) make sure that when it has been copied, the poem retains enough decorum not to be either another idolatry, or an exercise in bloated and disordered ego, like Marvell’s The Coronet? Herbert announces in fifty lines of paired couplet all his resolutions: devout service, care of the poor, true love, finishing “if thou shalt give me wit, it shall appear/ if thou hast giv’n it me, tis here.” (It appears in this poem, I am not hiding my light under a bushel), even that “thy art of love” once learned, will be turned back to God in poetry, the construction of which puts Herbert in shouting distance of “Victory!” in the representative contest. Confronted with the passion, however, Herbert is constrained to admit that representation here is inadequate, subsiding into silence: “…for thy Passion – I will do for that – alas, my God, I know not what….” (line 50).

The benefits and mysterious strangeness of the Passion are the subjects of the next poems, “The Agony” especially, in which sin and love are so infinite they can only be

177 For an attempt at squaring Herbert (and Sidney) as a Petrarchan, see Wall, Transformations of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, Vaughan (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 224ff.
quantified in terms of their sacramental effect upon the communicant – here, Herbert puts great weight upon the materiality of the Sacrament, while representing it primarily in terms of its receptory effect – Cranmer strikes again. But most interesting in terms of building language is “Good Friday”, in which the heart is “one box for ink and sin”. Again, the metaphor is for blood here, but Herbert also accepts by his choice of “ink” in which the poem is of course written, the contingency of his own wit, its fallibility, and appeals again to the benefits of the Passion. It is the suddenly solid “thy whips, thy nails, thy wounds, thy woes” which make the heart solid too, into a builded house, as the list of Passion objects “all come to lodge there, [and] sin may say “no room for me” and fly away…Sin being gone, O fill the place/ And keep possession by thy grace….” (line 25). It is grace which will prevent sin blotting and burning “the writings” (as Herbert swaps again with sin presented now as defacing), and keep and preserve the heart as a permanent Passion memorial “unto everlasting life” (as the Sacrament does).

Similar playing with the notion of the heart as resting place is seen in “Sepulchre”, in which the heart is at the same time the only fitting resting place for Christ’s body and simultaneously unfitting, since it is the spring of the sinful impulses which killed Christ in the first place. The Law of Moses is written on stone, yet the Law written on the heart (Romans 2:15) is only enough to tell us the heart is no fit sepulchre. But Herbert does not finish there. When it comes into contact with the Body of Christ, the heart is melted, tuned, tamed or smoothed, and hence IS fit as a dwelling place, on the model of “Nature” in which God is envisioned as a stonemason chiselling himself out a proper “hold” to dwell in, restoring “sap” to the now softened heart. We can see here Herbert swapping between deconstructive

178 Though stones are also prominent features in “The Sinner” and “Sepulchre”, which is also a “room” poem.
179 Note also of course the whole poem is a memorial for Good Friday.
180 Herbert may also mean the eucharist here, as in “feed on Him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving”, or a Pauline riff on “that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:17).
impulses and constructive ones, from stone to its melting, from a literal sepulchre to a
figurative heart-dwelling, and back again, from stone to flesh and back again, from law to
grace and back again. In this way, much like alternating current, the energies of the poem are
never stable, but always switching back and forth, swirling upward toward the permanent
reality behind them – sometimes attaining it, sometimes not. When one adds in the interplay
of voice between God and the Speakers of the argumentative poems, and the paradoxical
switching between depravity and grace, the poems become a transformative alchemical space
for breaking down and building up of representations, into which one goes with apprehensive
trust, and from which no one emerges unchanged.181

Take for example “Sin (I)”, in which Herbert piles image on image to convey God’s
generosity, in a slightly panicked parataxis:

Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulnesse,
the sound of glorie ringing in our eares:
withoute, our shame, within, our consciences;
Angels and grace, eternall hopes and fears. (10–12)

The rushed feel of these lines at once gives a sense of the abundance of grace and strikes an
urgent, even desperate note, as if the poet is trying to prevent what is coming next, to
preserve the “fine net” of grace, which, in the end, is “blown quite away” by man’s sin (14).
The contrast in these lines is enormous, between the bulk of the poem (and the abundance of
grace); and one little “bosome-sinne” of a couplet, which “blows away” the “whole array” of
the “fragile” “fence”, with the double edged sword of potentially corruptible “cunning” (14).

181 Return for a moment to Herbert’s description of the sermon in this connection.
The whole poem is held together by a tight rhyme scheme, suggesting the tight “begirting” of all of God’s mercy, opposed by two alliterative ‘b’ sounds in the final couplet: “bosom-sinne blows”. These sounds give a windy feel to the couplet, and the sturdy “fence” is revealed indeed to be a “fragile net”. Just as the “whole array” of the poem is “blown” in a gale, so also God’s grace can be ‘blown’, quite literally, by a fallen man, in the space of one couplet. As with the previous poems, the reader comes away marvelling at God’s forbearance. In “Sinne”, we see Calvinist “passivity” at its most infuriating (Stachnieswski 668), Herbert’s best efforts at holding the net together, and God’s best efforts at constructing it are to no avail. But even taking into account the edge here, Herbert’s simplicity, and the luminous abundance heaped upon the reader in the first three stanzas, almost make sin an afterthought, albeit an infuriating one. The “begirting” here is unavailing, as the fence fails, but it ultimately is upheld, as the soul is, by the strange, pursuing love of God, which simply won’t give up, even when the poem is almost literally blown up. Simply, here, we’re left with a clear landscape – and a clear hope.

Similarly, in Prayer (I) for instance, the rich lavishness of the metaphors is not enough. “The soul in paraphrase, the heart in pilgrimage… church bells among the stars heard” – Herbert layers on the images connecting heaven and earth, “heaven in ordinary, man well dressed”, and even plays with a very Donne-ian violence with the military imagery of the “Engine against the Almighty, sinners’ tower/ reversed thunder, Christ side-piercing spear”, only to end with language faltering, from the solid to the transparent: “A land of spices/ something understood”. Again, we have reached the limits of language, using concrete imagery only to transcend it.
The obvious parallel here is the Sacrament, which, although solid, has edificatory and spiritual effect, as in “Holy Communion”, which begins with a “Not”:

NOT in rich furniture, or fine array,
Nor in a wedge of gold,
Thou, who for me wast sold,
To me dost now thy self convey;
For so thou should’st without me still have been,
Leaving within me sinne. (188).

Herbert negates here the “rich furniture” and “fine array” of the literal Jewish temple, mashing it together with Achan’s covetousness-causing “wedge of gold” (Joshua 7:21) on two grounds. First, these are external things, whereas the important thing here is the transformation of the inside, the tackling of internal sin, the sort of internal “moving” and strengthening we have already seen in previous images of edification, a different, internal kind of building:

But by the way of nourishment and strength
Thou creep’st into my breast;
Making thy way my rest,
And thy small quantities my length;
Which spread their forces into every part,
Meeting sinnes force and art.
This nourishment and strength is pictured in the next stanza as a different, spiritual kind of building, complete with rooms, walls, outworks, locks and keys. The poem plays here between the physical, solid kind of bodily nourishment which builds up the literal man, and the spiritual work of grace which allows the opening, cleansing, and renewal of the spiritual building, as below. The body and the soul in conflict, the two halves of Herbert are divided:

Yet can these not get over to my soul,
Leaping the wall that parts
Our souls and fleshy hearts;
But as th’ outworks, they may controll
My rebel-flesh, and carrying thy name,
Affright both sinne and shame.

Onley thy grace, which with these elements comes,
Knoweth the ready way,
And hath the privie key,
Op’ning the souls most subtile rooms;
While those to spirits refin’d, at doore attend
Dispatches from their friend.

So in this poem, the image of the literal Temple is negated, and the solidness of the Sacrament is stigmatised as not-really-the-point. Instead, an internal dwelling, with internal walls, locks and doors, is built, so as to hold a different sort of Communion, a koinoneia of the Spirit. The poem ends by envisioning a pre-lapsarian state in which physical and spiritual are one, such that Adam could “to heaven from paradise go/ as from one room t’another” (35), and celebrates the fact that, in the Sacrament, that unity is re-achieved, “thou hast
restored us to this ease”. The Biblical parallel here is less a temple than a domestic room, in which a spiritual communion occurs – “I will come in and eat with Him, and he with Me” (John 14:23) Again, the literal temple is deconstructed with “not/ nor”, a spiritual reality privileged, even though it has physical elements. By the end of the poem, physical, spiritual, heaven and earth are re-united, in a mess of building language owing something to all, and confined by none, celebrating the return of the state where “A fervent sigh might well have blown/ Our innocent earth to heaven.” The poem pushes through the physical image, to the spiritual dwelling, which is internal and spiritual but enabled by the physical Holy Communion. The key is contained in the elements, but not containable in them because the Spiritual effect of the Sacrament is the thing which builds up the Spiritual house. And by the time the spiritual house is built by the act of grace, (given in the Sacrament, accessed and through it), the physical wafer is celebrated as the kind of food which leaves all others in the dust – a turn back to materiality again. There is building language, but building language isn’t the point. There is earth, but only to leave it. And there is renewal, only to celebrate the contingency of all its frames of meaning, since they are parts of a greater reality which is essentially unspeakable. While Donne would have taken delight in smashing the toy cars together, Herbert lines them up in an orderly row, ending in a domestic image of divine union, with tension, but without stress.

Herbert keeps playing this way in The Temper (I), in which he flips the building metaphor. Cheerfully admitting his inconstancy and essential littleness, as well as his potential for Sidneyan adventuring in the realm of the forms, he writes:

Although there were some forty heavens or more,

Sometimes I peer above them all,
Sometimes I hardly reach a score

Sometimes to hell I fall. (line 3ff)

But despite recognising the vast disparity between God (“The world’s too little for thy tent”) and himself (“a grave too big for me”), and even celebrating his own nothingness “Wilt thou meet arms with man that thou dost stretch/ a crumb of dust from heav’n to hell?”), Herbert again has recourse to building language, speaking partly of himself as a lively temple, partly the Church, “thy house,” partly of the heavenly temple, and partly of Christ’s “tenting” with us, when he writes:

O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid
O let me roost and nestle there:
Then of a sinner thou art rid
And I of hope and fear.

In this stanza, Herbert stops, fetching up abruptly under a roof, in a resting place. It is the soujourn in this house that allows both his “tuning” (in life and in poetry) in the next stanza, and his abolition of the distinctions between heaven and earth, and his stretching into infinite space:

Whether I fly with angels, fall with dust
Thy hands made both, and I am there.
Thy power and love, my love and trust
Makes one place an ev’rywhere.

182 John 1:1ff, in which Christ is described as “tabernacling” among us—rendered in English usually as “dwell”—the allusion here is to the tabernacle of Moses, but also to the Incarnation, and to the wider truth that even the whole universe is not big enough to contain God.
This sense of space, but spacelessness, solidity but transparency, repair referring upward, is at the heart of the notion of edification. The notion of the invisible Church Triumphant, pulling the Church Militant through its work of repair and journey on earth, is a Protestantising of an old concept, but, as here, it allows the retention of solid buildings, artifacts and church furnishings, but also the abolition of their solidity, a pushing through them, towards the spiritual realities they recall, and represent. It is thus that Herbert in this poem can be both present and stretched so far he is almost absent, under a solid roof, yet in God’s hands where building is irrelevant, roosting, tabernacling, yet also flying, forgiven, yet still sinful, everything, and nothing.

In The Temper II, he is also fixed and unfixed, as his own powers are unruly, yet sit before a “chair of grace” in a “bower”, scattered, yet gathered together, and Herbert himself asks to be fixed by God’s constant act of recreation, wanting God to keep “a standing Majesty in me”. This constant dialectic of filling up and leaking out requires huge abundance from God, who is in the position of attempting to fill a sink with no plug, upholding and consistently refilling all the things. As Herbert says in Chapter 34 of The Country Parson, “Preservation is a Creation; and more, it is a continued Creation, and a creation every moment.” A similar cluster of images recur in “Whitsunday”, with the Holy Ghost envisioned at rest in His palace, both (at Pentecost) scattering truth throughout the world like a sunshine, and since (because corruption, and sinfulness have cut the “pipes of gold”) waiting behind a shut door, nesting, and brooding. Herbert prays that God would “restore this day [Pentecost], for thy great Name,/ Unto His ancient and miraculous right” (line 25), in some part to use the building, (or the person) as the Apostles are used in the first half of the poem, but also in large part to come out from hiding in the Temple, in order to make the whole world like it, in

183 It also works the other way in “Affliction II” where the soul is envisioned as being killed every day.
a sense, to make the temple irrelevant. As Herbert puts it in “Grace”, he wants to be in the place where he no longer has to say “drop from above” (line 20ff). In this sense, the heart at public Morning Prayer (envisioned in “Matins”) is a removal from “silver gold, and precious stone” to a mixture “or star, or rainbow, or a part.....”, and then a lighting up of both “work and workman” such that all of these become no longer necessary, as Herbert announces that having seen them properly, “then by a sunbeam I will climb to thee” (line 20). Having passed through the concreteness of the literal temple (which presumably, Herbert is attending at Matins, as Walton records was his practice) to the Thing the concreteness represents, Herbert may now discard it – although of course, he is showing us the discard in a poem, itself a concrete artefact. In this sense, it is Herbert’s job as a sacred poet to use himself to make himself irrelevant, to work himself out of a job. Thus, while the concrete thing is itself important, since without it we do not even begin, it is not, must not be, the main point. It is a means, not an end, a window, not a wall.

I have deliberately so far chosen to go through The Temple in more or less the order Herbert arranged it. But it is not accidental, I think, that Herbert (apart from porch and Altar, which have their own rules, as has been outlined already) begins the Church with the work that is supposed to be going on in it (praise and thanksgiving, Matins, the work and person of the Holy Spirit) before beginning to itemise Church furniture. I deliberately follow him in setting out the theological purpose of concrete artefacts (including poetry) before taking account of the other Church furnishings. The first quintet of them now appear: “Church Monuments”, “Church Music”, “Church-Lock and Key”, “Church Floor” and “Church Windows”.
A few general words should be said about this kind of poem first. These are the most solid poems in *The Temple*, in that they refer to actual places, and in terms so explicit that we might almost be able to identify them (unlike the Church Porch). For example, the floor in “The Church Floor” is clearly checkered, as is the floor in both parish churches in Fugglestone with Bemerton (See Fig. 3). “Church Monuments” might in the same way refer, for instance, to the effigy of a past Mistress of St Giles Lazar House, which is more or less immediately adjacent to the chancel of Fugglestone St Peter (see Fig. 4). Local tradition at St Andrew’s Bemerton claims that not only did George Herbert replace the lock and key there, but that it is the same one in use now, (see Fig. 5) and it is certain that he replaced the floor with rush, although it is not the present one. Further, the Church windows at both Bemerton and Fugglestone retain some elements Herbert would have known, either glass dating to the Medieval period, as in the South east Nave window of St Andrew’s, or the tracery window of Fugglestone St Peter, which is also original. Thus, it is at this point that the literal building intrudes the most appreciably. But even here, the importance of the physical objects is only as a catalyst. They begin a meditation which ends far away from Bemerton, a bridge to the Kingdom of God, from the practicalities of the Church Militant to her spiritual and triumphant analogue. Just as Herbert saw himself divided, half “deputy for the reducing man to the obedience of God”, half slightly resentful consumptive, and just as the Church is divided, between her ultimate bridal triumph and the practical realities of voyaging in the world, so also the practical furnishings, being the beginning of the process, cannot be dismissed or abolished. But neither are they anything other than a window, an image pointing upwards.

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184 I could go on to talk about the positioning of the pulpit and the reading desk in Leighton Ecclesia, and that’s not even touching Salisbury Cathedral, Lincoln, where Herbert was a prebendary, or the Churches in Cambridge we know Herbert knew. Even assuming that I were able to retrace Herbert’s steps in a much more detailed way, (and I did visit every Herbert site I could) it would be a reasonably fruitless enterprise, since the point isn’t the literal furniture, but what the furniture is pointing at.
Hence, Herbert begins “Church Monuments” with partly an anticipation of his own death (he puts down his body, even) and partly by using the Church monuments to “spell” his own frailty, littleness, and temporality. He entrusts his body:

to this school, that it may learn
to spell his elements, and find his birth,
written in dusty heraldry and lines”. (58).

Figure 3:s “Mark you the Floor?” in Fugglestone St Peter.
Figure 4: Church Monuments? The Abbess of St Giles Lazar House, in the chancel of Fugglestone St Peter.
Figure 5: Church Lock and Key, St Andrew’s Bemerton.
Figure 6: Church Windows, Fugglestone St Peter.
Figure 7: The Church Porch, St Andrew’s Bemerton.
In essence here Herbert asks his body, like Ebenezer Soge, to examine his own headstone, and consider of the frailty of life – even the frailty of church monuments and epitaphs, which “dissolution sure doth best discern,/ comparing dust with dust, and earth with earth” (10).\(^{185}\)

Having buried the status game along with his body, which he has temporarily “intombed” in order to learn this lesson, and moved on to a very Donneian epitaph contest between “jet and marble”, Herbert suddenly resurrects and engorges the flesh, moving from dust and “stem” back to growth, as in:

Dear flesh, while I do pray, learn here thy stem
And true descent; that when thou shalt grow fat
And wanton in thy cravings, thou mayest know
That flesh is but the glass, which holds the dust
That measures all our time; which also shall
Be crumbled into dust. Mark here below
How tame these ashes are, how free from lust,
That thou mayst fit thyself against thy fall.

While Herbert prays, the body is envisioned as going through a process of birth and growth, sin, and then the loss of time, followed by decay and final judgement, from “stem” to “growth” to hour glass and “dust”. Again, lust is presented as corrosive and corrupting, destroying the flesh, but the flesh itself is presented as engorged and “fat”, ripe for destruction, bound to it, even. That which looks solid (the Church monuments, as well as the

\(^{185}\) It is interesting to note that the effigy at Fugglestone is epitaphless, and that large parts of it are worn away. Also of course since the lady buried there helped run the lazaret house (which survives today as a Housing Trust in Bemerton and Quidhampton), the effigy works on more than one level: as a reminder of the frailty of human accomplishment, and as a reminder of the dissolubility of the body (in leprosy).
flesh) is worn down by time, time is worn out in the hour glass, and learning this lesson requires the body to be sent to school, for intombing practice, while Herbert’s soul says his prayers. This witty casting off of the body relies for its effect on the double valencies of tearing down, corroding, and building up, using the Church monuments (see footnote) in an educative move portraying the inevitability of fall (and The Fall), inevitable destruction. This lesson either leads to renewal and taking better care to “fit thyself against thy fall” or promises a renewal after it, on the model of the first half of the poem, in which the body is intombed only to rise again.

I pass over “Church-Music”, except to note that the edificatory effect of music on the heart is cast in building language: “you took me thence, and in your house of pleasure/ a dainty lodging me assigned”, and that the result of dwelling in the house of pleasure is a dissolution of the body, thus:

Now I in you without a body move
Rising and falling with your wings (line 5).

And of course the final effect of music is the opening of “heaven’s door” – again, we have a physical thing (music, which has physical frequencies) becoming spiritualised, and that spiritualised thing is envisioned as a house, supported by the kind of commonwealth-wise harmony Henry VIII’s social vision prioritised. Herbert and music “both together sweetly live and love”, “Yet say sometimes/ God help poor kings.”

186 I do not propose to wade into Herbert’s politics here, but even if one sees “Church Music” as a response to the ceremonial riots in Salisbury at about the same time as the writing of this poem, (which would explain why Herbert is worried about the church music going away) the otherwise slightly odd evocation of the King at the end of an image of harmony makes more sense when seen as part of an edificatory move—to put it another way, a house must have a Master, at least here in Herbert’s head.
The oddities of building language are brought to a pitch in the following poem, “Church-Lock and Key”. In this, Herbert envisions himself as locking up God with his sins, “binding thy hands”. Instead of the Church lock and key being a good thing, for the protection of God’s house, or the admittance of sinners (as the Edwardine Bishops’ Injunctions had envisioned both key and poor box), Herbert uses lock and key as an image of sin, and by calling his sins “stones” makes himself a kind of locked up building for the door, despite the speaker’s protestations, isn’t locked on God’s side. Instead, Herbert has himself to absorb the warmth, “as cold hands are angry with the fire”, and the stones make the work of God only louder and more wonderful. He is caught in a “sweet current”, and his lockedness then does have an end, whether he wants it or not, much like the cold hands opening to the fire. In this sense, the image is one of building (since the building materials are solid) but also tearing down, as blood is restored in circulation, and enclosure enlarged. Although Herbert doesn’t use the building images deftly here (the original title of “Prayer” seems to fit better) their very importance is testified by their introduction here to make a sequence.

The Church-Floor, on the other hand, is in large part a building metaphor, as the title implies. The parts of the choir and floor are anatomised with virtues, and “the sweet cement, which in one sure band/ Ties the whole frame is Love/ And Charity”, puts us straight back in the edificatory passages of Ephesians, with the body “building up itself in love”. Patience, confidence, humility and charity are not attributes of the building, but attributes of the people worshipping inside it, or rather, ideal attributes of the virtual commonwealth we can see here, present in the building without the people. In this sense, the physical building is only the beginning of a ladder of ascent which ends with a Church, not in England or in
Ephesus, but in Eternity. This poem is partly catechetical, hence its Socratic beginning, but it
is also next to Church Monuments in that, while sin “stains” the marble and needs cleansing,
and Death “blows all the dust about the floor”, the building itself is not knocked over, or
“spoil[t]”. It is intergenerational, eternal, and built not by the effort of men, but as a deifact,
by the power of God, as a monument and a testament to His Goodness. Thus, the poem’s
ending: “Blessed be the Architect, whose art/ could build so strong in a weak heart” (20).

Again, we discover here that we are not in St Andrew’s Bemerton, but enmeshed in God’s
work in the human heart, the repeated and harmonious work of grace on different levels and
in different ways, “but by the same Spirit”, in Herbert, in the reader, in Salisbury, in England,
in the world, in the Eternal Church in heaven. The Architect, then, has different scales, and
different levels, but the same plan, the same architectonic goal, and the same work to do. In
essence thus, the accomplishment of this work is not dependent here on Man, but on God.

This said, though, “The Windows”, the next poem, goes on to unsay about half of it.
Beginning “Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word? He is a brittle crazy glass”, the
poem concedes that in preaching, representation is not only unavoidable, but necessary for
the preaching of eternal truth. Here, Herbert comes close to Sidney in granting to the poet,
and to the preacher, the radical and dangerous power of representation. Like the prophet, and
the poet, the preacher is given the grace and the burden of a divided life: half ordinary person,
half divine instrument:

Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
The glorious and transcendent place
To be a window, through thy grace. (line 5)

The position of window is an interesting one – not in himself anything, it is the preacher’s job
to get out of the way, to enable his congregation to look through him, as one would through a
window. On the other hand, however, Herbert squarely faces the inevitability that the preacher’s own “life and conversation” (to grab a Cranmerism) will inevitably colour his message. Rather than worrying about this, Herbert claims it as a feature. If the preacher’s doctrine does not match his life, the edificatory effect of his discourse is diluted, and becomes “watrish, bleak and thin”, whereas if they chime together, as the colours in the stained glass, they have a catching, moving, and inflaming effect similar in tone and colour to the effect Sidney claims for poetry:

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
When they combine and mingle, bring
A strong regard and awe: but speech alone
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
And in the ear, not conscience ring. (61).

If the preacher does not marry his doctrine with godly life, the effect is as if a match were to flare and then refuse to catch; his words are dead, and inefficacious in the heart of the auditor – the preaching is a dead letter that has no upbuilding spiritual effect. If they chime, however, human artefacts are positively glorious, as they are given greater force to “ring” in the conscience, echoing a call to virtue, and moving the auditor at a much deeper level. It is this function of art which Sidney upholds in the *Defence*, its capacity to inflame, kindle, ravish, and move, instead of doctrine and virtue remaining simply a dead letter. Thus, of course, this particular poetic strand maps onto the Jordan poems, about the purpose of sacred poetry and inspired representation, to be examined presently. Before leaving this point, it is worth saying that the constructive and lifting impulse attributed to sacred representations like sermons and sacred poetry can actually work the other way, not only into idolatry, which we shall consider presently, but into a disordered kind of fantasy building, as in “Frailty”, in which the speaker cheerfully tramples “honour, riches, or fair eyes” into “dust”, calling them “gilded clay.” But
this reality is opposed by the dust, which “pricks” the speaker’s eyes, making it seem as if he has made the wrong choice: “That which was dust before doth quickly rise….”, and rise not only in a dust cloud, but in a building, a false building, like Babel. “It may a Babel prove/commodious to conquer heaven and Thee/ planted in me” (25).

Herbert joins here most other renaissance theorists (including even Sidney, who assumes it), in affirming the disordered potential of the imagination, the possibility of dodgy and disordered building. Since of course the 39 Articles make it fairly clear that preachers are not infallible, the claim of “The Windows” that the worst the preacher can be is a dirty window (rather than, say, Parker’s Dr Stokes, who is actively accused of building a bad building in his fortification of “misframed judgements”) is the voice of a second-generation Anglicanism no longer under immediate threat from the Papists, but it is also the tone of a man fundamentally optimistic about the preaching ministry, and about the intentions of the men performing it. Even though the claim of The Windows can be nuanced and limited, it is an extraordinary claim to divine eloquence, similar to the one Sidney makes for poets in the _Defence_, right down to the “light” and glory. Indeed, in “The Star”, Herbert plays with a strikingly Neo-Platonic image, in which the “bright spark, shot from a brighter place” lodges in the heart, and Herbert asks it to stay, “take a bad _lodging_ in my heart…” such that the spark will make him like the heavenly: “Touch it with thy celestial quickness… let’s take our flight unto the place where thou before didst bow” (20). This cluster of images, the speaker receiving the star, almost literally “trailing clouds of glory”, has a long afterlife in Romantic period poetry, as a favoured image of poetic inspiration. But in Herbert, it is stuck to

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187 As in fact it proved: there were no more serious attempts to recall England to Catholicism except James II, and even he never envisaged wholesale reconversions on the Marian model. The danger to the Church of England would henceforth come from Puritans and Dissenters.
building, to edification, to neighbourliness, to a lit room, to the kind of renewal and inspiration which is essentially domestic.

A more solid treatment of a similar idea turns up in “Sunday”, in which the Lord is pictured as almost literally enclosing His favourite day, planting gardens, “inclosing light”, and an “arched palace” with “pillars” (25). Time, like a garden, and like Elizabethan England in many ways, stands in “ranks and orders”, as the Lord renews, restores, and reorders, both the individual man, and the bride, the Church, who appears decorated with a bracelet of Sundays. This constructive impulse is opposed with a massive deconstruction, in the crucifixion, the earthquake which “at His passion did th’ earth and all things with it move”, but, sticking out in a slightly odd way is a sort of carpenter-y moment, as below:

As Samson bore the doors away

Christ’s hands, though nailed, wrought our salvation

And did unhinge that day. (68).

And this sort of solid unhinging leads to the spiritual euphoria of the last stanza, in which a giddy and gay Herbert is bounding up toward heaven, “being tossed from earth”, which by this point is an irrelevance anyway. The destroyed earth is renewed in disembodied terms, higher and higher, hovering above the ruins of Gaza gate, the destroyed garden of Eden, and the “hollow room” of vanity. Edification here looks like destruction – unhinging, uncoupling, separating and releasing.
This dialectic between building up and tearing down is emphasised further in the antitheses of “The World”, in which the soul is envisioned as a “stately house”. The house is built by Love, “cleft and torn” by Sin, rescued by Grace, who limits the damage Sin can do to the load bearing walls, and then “Sin combined with Death in a firm band/ to raze the building to the very floor”. The rebuilding trio of Love, Grace and Glory make “a braver palace than before,” but unlike the first one, which is described (albeit barely) down to the balcony and frippery, the second palace, is undescribed – and undescribed because undescribable. In this sense, the “razing” here is a felix culpa, a staging post on the way to the main point, which lies on the other side of the images, connected to them, but ultimately hanging above them.

We turn from this allegorical vision back to a more personal, a more expansive, and then later, a much more bleak, vision of tearing down, one which maps onto the apocalyptic vision of English Protestantism, and is, oddly, the reverse pole of this kind of sunny hope. By looking at these, I wish to show Herbert’s use of the same kind of dialectic at different levels: allegorical, as here, with actual figures named things like Love and Grace, personal, as in “Affliction” and “Decay”, and corporate and cosmic, as in “Man”.

Herbert narrows from “The World” back to the individual in “Affliction (IV)” and “Man”, which are complicated enough in their use of edificatory language to require longer treatment. Affliction (IV) begins with man in complete collapse, decayed and lost:

Broken in pieces all asunder,

    Lord hunt me not,

    A thing forgot,
Once a poor creature, now a wonder,
A wonder tortured in the space
Betwixt this world, and that of grace. (3)

We may see here how complicated the dialectic of edification is. At the beginning, the soul is broken, but rather than asking God to find and fix him (as might be expected), like Adam, the soul is hiding – but then again, also protesting about being forgotten. This sense of the self being divided is captured beautifully in the next stanza, in which the soul is confined between worlds, and between words, stretched, on the rack (as note, Donne’s body also is in the previous chapter) between heaven and earth, between possibility and fallenness, between forgetting and remembering. This sense of bodily strain is made visceral in the next stanza, in which the doubled images of decay and growth recur:

My thoughts are as a case of knives
Wounding my heart
With scattered smart,
As watering pots give flowers their lives,
Nothing their fury can control,
While they do wound and prick my soul.

This image is sublimely odd. While the image of the wounded heart is an emblem book common-place (Lewalski 109), the “scattering” of the smart is doubled as the life giving image of the watering can. The wounded heart could recall Christ, and his life-giving wounds for all the world, which would be another emblem book common-place, except that the wounds are destructive, furious, violent. In the next stanza, Herbert intensifies the image of
social dissolution and strife: “all my attendants are at strife/ quitting their place….the elements are let loose to fight,/ and while I live, try out their right” (line 15), presenting himself as a scrap fought over, loosening, and dissolving. In the next stanza after that, though, Herbert swaps the valency again, first picking up the idea of death and dissolution, envisioning it as an attendants’ gunpower-y plot, as in : “O help, my God! Let not their plot kill them and me/ and also Thee/ who art my life”, but then praying that God would “dissolve the knot/ as the sun scatters by his light/ all the rebellions of the night”. Herbert envisions himself as a sort of commonwealth (an image he picks up again in “Man”), or a betrayed king fighting rebels who need to be broken up”. In this sense, the transformation of the “scattered smart” into scattered darkness mirrors affliction, which is transformed from the breaking stabbity-stab of “knives” into a theological and moral necessity on the way from a disordered self-sufficiency to the renewal of heaven. This is, in fact, what happens in the concluding stanza:

Then shall those powers which work for grief
   Enter thy pay
   And day by day
   Labour thy praise, and my relief:
   With care and courage building me
   Till I reach heaven, and much more, thee.

The building, with “care and courage” is the result of facing up with courage to the dissolution which the previous four stanzas insist on. Affliction is then not simply negative: it has a constructive valency in itself, scattering life, truth, and reality, even if painful.188

188 A similar interplay of wounding and dissolving can be seen in “Home” at greater length, eg: “O lose this frame, this knot of man untie”, but since it is in the basic context of approaching Death, I pass over it with only a footnote. After Donne, we have had enough Death.
Occasionally, Herbert does echo Pico della Mirandola in praise of the dignity of Man, envisioned as a “stately habitation”, and the keystone and sum of all the things, from trees and beasts to stars and herbs – “he is in little all the sphere,” Yet more, Man is a symmetrical commonwealth in himself, kin to the wider order of the world:

Man is all symmetry,

Full of proportions one limb to another,

And all to the world besides.

Each part may call the farthest brother,

For head with foot hath private amity,

And both with moons and tides. (17)

This “wonder” (to quote Affliction) is ready for its divine inhabitant, a renovators dream. And this recall of our housely assets is supposed, according to the moral of the last stanza, to make us more willing to serve God, the way that the entire universe does us. In this sense, all the insistence on the dignity of man is undercut, since it is only to teach us how small we are, and how vulnerable to divine action – in the same way that man contains all the things, so God Himself does at a larger level. The thematic counterpart to “Man” is the poem “Mortification”, in which everything is melted, decayed, and condemned to ultimate dissolution, in much the same way that the last stanza makes contingent man’s power and possibility.

So much for the double valencies of building up and tearing down. But “Man” and “Mortification” as well as the poem to be examined next, “Decay”, represent Herbert playing with the levels of space, portraying the same dialectics on a large scale (as in the entire world,
and the stars), and on an exquisitely small scale, contracting to the human heart. In this sense, Herbert’s poetic is cousinly to Donne’s, and to Sidney’s. Zooming in, and panning out, now on personal dynamics, now on parish ones, still further out to the story of the world, and the Salvation history of mankind – Herbert shows the elasticity of the Christian account of being and becoming, attempting to show in his sacred poems, as he writes in Holy Scriptures II, “all the constellations of the story”, from least to greatest, from the exquisitely intimate and personal work and dialogue of repair, to the cosmic tearing and building which is God’s wider work. Hence, Herbert himself has poems in which he argues with God, poems in which he stands in for Mankind in a Habbakuk-like dialogue, moments when, like Abraham, he looks up at the stars and frankly admits it’s all too big for him, and moments at which his godlike creativity gives him a creative power which is the same kind celebrated by Sidney: limitless, and full of potentiality.

If “Man” represents Herbert at his most cosmic and expansive, “Decay” is exquisitely little, as God is chased from the Old Testament, in which he “lodged” with the Patriarchs and was badgered by Moses, away from the world, the worship of which is condemned as idolatry, away from sound, as Aaron’s bell is heard then silenced in the second stanza. By stanza three, God is almost a prisoner, as the speaker asks him “thy self immure and close/ in some one corner of a feeble heart” (line 11). Even this is not enough contraction, though, since Sin and Satan combine to attempt to push the Lord out of his perilous foothold, they “do pinch, and straighten Thee” (15). The weary sense of trappedness continues, as in:

I see the world grows old, when as the heat
Of thy great love once spread, as in an urn
Doth closet up itself, and still retreat,
Cold sin still forcing it, till it return,
And calling Justice, all things burn. (20)

The “lodging” of God in the heart here is almost bleakly provisional. Forced by cooling and
cold love\(^\text{189}\) into a “retreat”, the only salvation of the wider world is a break-out, the coal,
which has already burned once into ash in the funereal “urn”, breaking out again in
destroying justice, a vision of cleansing, burning and renewing apocalypse. This vision prays
for what is essentially an Australian bush fire, a burning kind of deconstructive renewal, in
which all the cold, broken, hard and bitter things will be caught.\(^\text{190}\) The cycle pictured here is
in spirit very close both to the prophetic isolation of the parson in \textit{A Priest to the Temple}, and
the apocalyptic vision of Bale and Donne, with its cyclical narrative of corruption, renewal,
and renewed corruption, ending only at the eschaton.

The most explicit deconstructive impulse in \textit{The Temple}, apart from “The Church
Militant”, is \textit{Sion}, which begins with a detailed evocation of the Old Testament Temple,
marrying prophet and builder into deifact:

\begin{quote}
Lord, with what glorie wast thou serv’d of old,
When Solomons temple stood and flourished!
Where most things were of purest gold;
The wood was all embellished
With flowers and carvings, mysticall and rare:
All show’d the builders, crav’d the seers care.
\end{quote}

\(^{189}\) Recall Herbert’s prayer against English Phlegm in “The Church Porch” here.
\(^{190}\) This is of course envisioned in 2 Peter 3:7.
This stanza is impressive, elaborate, and solid. But, like the impulse in “Decay,” “Sion” withdraws from the solid temple furnishings, and their outward power, arguing that the most effective form of temple is internal – although even here, Herbert leaves a kind of vagueness about why outward representation is a bad thing. There is no actual reason for the deconstruction, as there is in Scripture (idol worship). Herbert simply says:

Yet all this glorie, all this pomp and state
Did not affect thee much, was not thy aim;
Something there was, that sow’d debate:
Wherefore thou quitt’st thy ancient claim:
And now thy Architecture meets with sinne;
For all thy frame and fabrick is within.

Rather than saying, as, say, Bale does to the gob-smacked Irish explicitly, that the outward shows were ineffective, idolatrous and hence must be removed, Herbert actually opts for the other option: they did not affect “much”, that is, they are indifferent things, of little harm, and little good. The bad thing about “glory, pomp and state” (again, neutral or even slightly positive adjectives) is that they “sow debate”, that is, they divide the faithful, and they are debates which do not edify, as St Paul calls them. “Edification, not contention” means that the things should be withdrawn from, even though Herbert, very pointedly, does not say why the outward shows are bad, merely that “something” caused unhelpful debate. “And now thy Architecture meets with sin” is partly “and now solid things are potentially ensnaring”, and partly “and now You have chosen to tabernacle inside sinful flesh, thus making human beings your temple, and exposing the beauty of true worship to the possibility of sinful corruption”.

Now, then, “all” the important things go on “within”, in the heart of the worshipper receiving
divine presence, or divine truth. In this way, temples, outward things, are not dismissed, but they are clearly marked as *adiaphora*.\(^{191}\) Outward things like Church furnishing, then, are not profitless, but neither are they the main point. The main point is the combat, the struggle, between building up and tearing down, as in the next stanza:

There thou art struggling with a peevish heart,
Which sometimes crosseth thee, thou sometimes it:
The fight is hard on either part.
Great God doth fight, he doth submit.
All Solomons sea of brasse and world of stone
Is not so deare to thee as one good grone.

In this stanza, the speaker envisions a great struggle, in which God consents to be “crossed” and defeated (a rather subtle crucifixion reference), even to “submit” (as to death), but his main goal is to subdue and open the human heart, envisioned as, perhaps a harder “world of stone”, captive to a “peevish” ego. The destructive impulse is working when the soul groans because of combat, when the heart is cracked enough to feel its own need of grace. In this sense, the quicker the groaning, the compunction and the cutting, the quicker the remedy. In this way, physical temples are made irrelevant, as the groan opens both the gate of death (resurrection moment, possibly?), and the disem bodied world of the Spirit, in which the soul is enabled, rather than being tied to stone artifacts, to soar:

And truly brasse and stones are heavie things,
Tombes for the dead, not temples fit for thee:

\(^{191}\) In the same way, in “Lent”, Herbert relies not simply on Biblical precept, but on what he calls “public authority”, summing up: “Christ says fast, the Church says [fast] now.”
But grones are quick, and full of wings,
And all their motions upward be;
And ever as they mount, like larks they sing;
The note is sad, yet musick for a King.

In the last note, sadness and violence chimes with grace, in the reconstruction of a heavenly court – having taken up proper residence in the heart, the Lord has all the Temple he needs, and the solid artefact of Solomon’s temple may be safely abandoned. In this case, the right building actually doesn’t need a building at all – for it has been built inside, in the heart, the practical evidence of which (the groan) is the result of the abrading of the temple in the first place.

Herbert’s poems in “The Church” strike a balance which is perilous. On the one hand, they begin at least, as solid poems about Church furnishing, lovingly describing weeping marble and checkered floors, and even looking longingly toward Marian devotion. Herbert’s exactness, his Sacramental sense that the meaning of the Host is infinite, and his association with the monastic community of Little Gidding contribute to what one might call a High Church pole, attached to music and the traditional architecture of the parish Church. The landscape around the Church, too, is neighbourly and rural, containing stars, flowers, beasts and trees, the same sort of landscape which will be so precious to the Cavalier Poets during the Interregnum, in which they hold on to it as a sort of talisman that the order of the world continues. For this reason, Herbert is easily adoptable by what would become Laudian party, and beginning with the Little Gidding manuscript in the Bodleian library (Tanner 307),
High Church editions of *The Temple* become, as books, increasingly elaborate. But by the time the poems end, Herbert has pushed us *through* the image, in the same way that “Windows” suggests, away from the concrete building toward the spiritualised and edificatory internal reality. As Lynch argues, “in the tradition of Augustine, strengthened by Protestant dependence on the Scriptural word, Herbert finds verbal expression to be an indispensable yet inadequate guide to the ineffable. (139)

Using the concrete images to zero in upon the spiritual work inside the heart, Herbert then shifts them out of focus, having borrowed the template. This means that, unlike, say, Crashaw, who piles image upon image, losing control of them as he goes, Herbert participates in a seriously Protestant enterprise: careful, Biblicist, gently reformed, and firmly reminding us, that, as Sighs and Groanes has it, beautiful temples are not the main point. Herbert’s poetics thus hold together a Laudian solidness, and catholicity, and a respect for beauty and order, with a reformed and Puritan transparency, with both impulses in touch with each other, not yet divergent. One can observe with Patrides that “the eucharist is the marrow of Herbert’s sensibility” (17) and that Herbert advances, as Lake has it, “a predominately sacerdotal and ceremonial vision of the Church” (114ff), but at the same time, Doerkesen, for example, argues that “Herbert’s religion is primarily personal and Biblical, rather than institutional” (139), and Clarke hits the middle (closest to the argument I make here) arguing that “Herbert’s poems externalise the inward spiritual holiness which is the essence of Reformed piety” (Whalen, 1276). Herbert is one of the last poets to be able to do that,

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192 I owe this point to Diarmaid MacCulloch, who pointed it out to me in conversation. The printing history of the diverse *Temple* manuscripts is traced by Helen Wilcox in her note on the text in her edition of *The English Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

193 For a useful summary of this tension and its critical history, see R. Whalen, “George Herbert’s Sacramental Puritanism”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 54.4 (2001) 1273-1307.
holding the architecture of the building in productive tension with its spiritual effect, and serenely refusing to pick a side. Not only does he simply ignore (at least explicitly) most of the contentious Church order controversies of his time,\(^{194}\) which is striking for a sequence about Church furnishing at a time when the ornamentation of Churches is becoming increasingly controversial, but so does Gabriel Harvey in *The Synagogue*, flatly refusing to wade into “who built” the Temple, in the name of “edification not contention.” It is of course true that it is not as simple as this. Herbert’s eschatology and ecclesiology in *The Church* are complicated here by the ending poem of Herbert’s sequence, “The Church Militant,” and we end this chapter with some account of it.

### 7.5 The Church Militant.

The Church Militant at one level seems so different from the enterprise of *The Temple* that LeAnn Johnson suggests that it ought to be separated from the whole (Johnson 201). In response to Louis Martz, she rightly argues that:

> The poem depicts the Church dogged by “Sinne” struggling against *internal* corruption, as well as warring against heathenism. Nowhere within the poem does the

\(^{194}\) Unlike, say, Donne, who writes, for example, poems on the importance of the cross in Churches. Richey may be right that Herbert had a number of opinions on Church reform, (she argues for him being a Laudian in several vital ways, which he is in the *Musae*) and it may also be that writing about Church furnishings such as altars is in itself anti-Puritan (although I doubt it, since the altar is explicitly erected not especially in the Church, but in the heart), but the point is that Herbert chooses to write reasonably ereinic poetry popular with both parties, (think of Edward Taylor, for example), not either Laudian tracts or polemical poetry in which, say, altar rails are either erected or destroyed. He seems rarely *explicitly* interested in ceremonial controversy, at least when writing in English. For her paper, see Esther Gilman Richey, “The Political Design of Herbert’s Poetry”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37.1 (1997) 73–96.
Church reflect a confident spirit aiding others to attain perfection. Rather, the Church
Militant concludes with the fate of the Christian life in doubt. (202)

Stanley Fish has argued for the relationship of the three parts of *The Temple* in terms of the
catechumenate, Walker in terms of the Hebrew Temple, Lewalski in typology. Weinberger
examines it as an historical poem. Anselement gets close to the mark, as usual, in calling it a
“prophetic” poem, a foretelling, which positions it as an argument with historiographical
bones.\(^{195}\) It is also important to remember, as Rubey reminds us, that if “The Church
Militant” is an integral part of *The Temple*, that, Herbert’s history is “enclosed within the
historical community of the Church, and the history of the earth itself (Rubey 107).\(^ {196}\) In this
connection, then, Herbert offers not necessarily a Temple in “The Church Militant”, but an
exilic paegeant, like Daniel’s, one legitimised not both by the escatalogical narrative of
Protestant decay and repair, but also the apocalyptic and prophetic visions of St John,
Jeremiah, Isaiah and Daniel. In essence, in the Hebrew Bible, the rebuildings and destructions
of the Temple are always bracketed by exilic narratives, and reestablishments. This is even
the case in the New Testament, in which, for example, St James writes to “the Twelve Tribes
scattered abroad” (James 1:1) not as a Jewish diaspora, but its Christian replacement,\(^ {197}\) and
the visions of the heavenly temple and the New Jerusalem in *Revelation* are bracketed both
by the earthly destructions of the Church shown in the book, and the collapse of the Hebrew
temple in AD 70. Even the Heavenly Temple has its own groaning exiles, in the form of the
marytrts under the altar (Rev. 6:9). Herbert shows paired images of first the Church’s work,

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\(^ {195}\) It is in this frame of historiographical controversy between Church parties that Richey speaks of Herbert’s
*Temple* as a “political design”, aimed mostly at Puritans. *op. cit.*

\(^ {196}\) For Rubey’s application of this movement to his particular interest, the five “Affliction” poems, see Daniel
Rubey, “The Poet and the Christian Community: Herbert's Affliction Poems and the Structure of The Temple”,

\(^ {197}\) St Peter joins him in writing to “the exiles” but he geographically locates them in Pontus &c.
and then the work of sin. But both images of destroying and sundering, and images of conversion and cleansing, are in service to the rubric set up at the very beginning – in a sense, the whole world is God’s building, in which He is working out his purposes, He is the great architect and ruler, and the architectonic end (at the risk of metaphor overstrain!) is repeated in the refrain: *How deare to me, 0 God, thy counsels are/ Who may with thee compare?* God brings His purposes full circle, soaring above human understanding, but paradoxically, still close enough to be “deare”, if also “unsearchable and past finding out” (Romans 11:33).

Historiographical contemplation then, even in the Danielesque format of a prophetic apocalypse, is partly a religious duty, partly an enduring puzzle. Donne gets close here when he attempts to find the True Church in the torn Lady of Bohemia. Here, too, Herbert is close to Bale, attempting to see “God’s Promises” and purposes, as the little boat of the Church of England heads for some large rapids. Thus, Herbert does not locate his first move in “The Temple” at all, but in the mind of God, who is the Directing Mind, not only of the Church, but of the nation, and the diverse commonwealths of the whole world:

**Almightie Lord, who from thy glorious throne
Seest and rulest all things ev’n as one:
The smallest ant or atome knows thy power,
Known also to each minute of an houre
Much more do Common-weals acknowledge thee,
And wrap their policies in thy decree,
Complying with thy counsels, doing nought
Which doth not meet with an eternall thought.
But above all, thy Church and Spouse doth prove
Not the decrees of power, but bands of love.** (179)
We have in this first ten lines, a Gods-eye view of the world – we are suddenly able to see the entire sweep and scope of divine law (if not always to understand it), and the theoretical idealisation here of the proper commonwealth and the True Church makes sure we begin “The Church Militant” with a firm reminder of the way things ought to be, and are, in the heavenly commonwealth. The Spouse of Christ, presented as trim, sweet, perfect and fit, comes “to receive thy love.”, as she will at the eschaton. In these lines, then, we almost have a picture of the Church being united with God – and this picture has confused critics who identify “The Church Militant” with the Church Triumphant. But this is to misunderstand the cyclical nature of the poem. It is a cyclical combat between the Church and sin, literally all round the world, as at the very end (line 260ff):

Yet as the Church shall thither Westward fly

So Sin shall trace and dog her instantly

The Church shall come, and Sin the Church shall smother:

That when they have accomplished the round,

And meet in the East their first and ancient sound,

Judgement may meet them both, and search them round.

Thus do both lights, in Church as well as Sun,

Light one another, and together run.

Thus also Sin and Darkness follow still

The Church and Sun with all their power and skill. (271)
The cyclical game of tag between the Church, which, like the Lord in line 19, “plants”
goodness all through the world, and Sin, representing as “breaking her peace, and tainting her
good name.” Shuger is correct when she writes that in The Church Militant, “history is a
predetermined failure” (105). Herbert’s historiographical narrative retraces the same ground
as Bale, beginning with true worship, and with Abraham, establishing and “fixing” the old
religion:

Where th’ Ark did rest, there Abraham began
To bring the other Ark from Canaan.
Moses pursu’d this: but King Solomon
Finish’d and fixt the old religion.
When it grew loose, the Jews did hope in vain
By nailing Christ to fasten it again.
But to the Gentiles he bore crosse and all,
Rending with earthquakes the partition-wall:
Onely whereas the Ark in glorie shone,
Now with the crosse, as with a staffe, alone,
Religion, like a pilgrime, westward bent,
Knocking at all doores, ever as she went. (30)

Establishing and fixing the old religion (Judaism) is of course a positive thing, but the repair
work the Jews do on the fixed frame (or the Temple), which is ostensibly an act of rebuilding,
is the thing which actively liberates the Church from solid artifacts at all. The Jewish act of
repair is converted into a Christlike moment of liberating destruction, as “the walls that

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198 Christ is presented in Line 25 in breaking down the “partition wall” of the Temple, but this is also what the
Geneva Bible calls the walls that divide in Ephesians 2: “For He is our Peace, who has broken down the
partition wall”. In this way, sin is presented both as attempting to uproot the good news of the New Testament
and the reconciliation it offers with God, but also “breaking her peace” in the sense of destroying her edificatory
concord and charity.
divide” lets out the Glory of God to shine not only in the Ark, or in the Commandments, but in the whole world. This theological moment in which glory stops being “fixt” and becomes accessible even to Gentiles, means that the Church is uprooted, not in exile, exactly, but in a Providentially guided pilgrimage, of the same kind as the Exodus, or Abraham’s journey from Ur of the Chaldees. She passes “knocking at all doors”, in search of a dwelling place – here, the Church of Herbert joins Una in Spenser. Wherever the Church temporarily sets foot, edificatory things happen, not in the sense of concrete buildings, but the other kinds of edificatory effect: coversion of heart, transformation of evil, from “things misshapen” to “things of highest use” (45), the frustration of vain philosophy by true wisdom (50), and the spiking of sophists by truth (one recalls Duessa and Una here), until, at “prefixed time” (one thinks of Daniel’s “times, time, and half a time” (Daniel 7:25, Rev. 12:14)), and having (temporarily) transformed “Ergo” into “Amen”, she departs for Rome, advancing the scars of Christ against the battle wounds of the Children of Mars.

The Church’s tuning work is advanced in line 75, helping both prowess and art to build a commonwealth ruled over by shepherd’s crook, transformed to sceptre. (Note here that Herbert doesn’t seem to have a Constantine phobia, which is in tune with the generally positive view Elizabethans have of Constantine’s Imperial jurisdiction over the Church, which Jewel and others explicitly endorse. Religion continues to take root in Spain, Germany, and finally England, but Sin is chasing to catch up with her, planting idol worship in Egypt (line 110), “severing” God and man, erecting lavish “shrines” and “oracles” in Greece (125), which give bad poetry (130), “all glorious cheating, brave deceit” and false

199 How the Royal Supremacy fits in to this sense of dis-establishment is traced by Wall, 262ff.
200 See Patrick Collinson, “If Constantine, then also Theodosius: St Ambrose and the Integrity of the Elizabethan Ecclesia Anglicana” in The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Volume 30 / Issue 02 / April 1979, pp 205-229
prophecy. At Rome, Sin advances the catching temptations of “glory” and “pleasure”, “carnal joy”, and consigns Greece and Egypt to Islam (150). The Reformation and the Ezra-laments have been analysed at the beginning of this chapter, but Herbert sums up this way:

Nay, it (reformation) shall evry year decrease and fade;

Till such a darkness does the world invade,

At Christ’s last coming, as his first did find,

Yet must there such proportions be assigned

To these diminishings, as is between,

The spacious world and Jewry to be seen.

Religion stands on tip-toe in our land

Ready to pass to the American strand,

When height of malice, and prodigious lusts

Impudent sinning witchcrafts and distrusts

(the marks of future bane) shall fill our cup

Unto the brim, and fill our measure up. (240)

These lines, as Whalen recalls, nearly caused *The Temple* to be censored by the Vice-Chancellor, and that a minister who quoted them in a sermon (presumably without Herbert’s careful qualifiers) was presented before George Abbott (Anselment 43), and note also of course that Herbert backs away from identifying *present* England as this bad, reserving the judgement for “future bane.” This said, though, the whole of “The Church Militant” shifts about, provisionally, presenting the Church not as secure in England, but, in fact, on tip toe,
ready to move, packing the camp-bed. This does not necessarily mean that England is at this moment godless and corrupt, since the movement of the Church in the other places is presented as a matter of two feet – first she strikes out to a new place, then withdraws from an old one. It simply means that, like all the other places, England (and the Church Militant) in the fullness of time, will diminish, and depart, and go (as it were) into the West.

The poem is saved from a sense of shifting chaos by the parallelisms inside it between the Church and Sin, and the Church and the Sun, the geographic metaphor giving us a sense of cyclical progression, season, and *Kairos* time, in which all things are ordered, not by National Church or by political order, or even by fixity of human things, but by God, who sees every atom, and numbers it with the care and attentiveness of a good Father, and the panache of a good artist. Note, here, where we have ended. The Church has been set free from her *Temple*, and voyages in the world, not dwelling or lodging (Sin does that!), but edifying, carrying her nature and her tool kit with her. In this sense, Herbert, like Spenser, presents the Church as grave, not triumphant, as collapsible, not solid, as provisional, not permanent – but the work of the Church Triumphant, and its supervising builder, not Henry, or Elizabeth, but God, continues, pulling the seasons round, transforming the heart into the knowledge and love of God, building up a commonwealth that really is bound, not by power, but by love. Debora Shuger argues, rightly, that in the poem, “Presence retreats from history to inwardness” (106). Ultimately, *The Temple’s* ending Love (III), and *L’Envoy* in “The Church Militant”, strike the same note: the one embracing the invitation of “quick eyed love”, the other, in *L’Envoy*, praying that, even as a Pilgrim without a permanent dwelling place on earth, the Church, even without her buildings, will be strong enough (by divine aid) for one last act of force, and one last act of decomposition, leaving the dialectic between sin and the Church resolved, and the reader looking at less-than-dust:
Let not sin devour thy fold,
Bragging that thy blood is cold,
That thy death is also dead,
While his contrasts daily spread,
That thy flesh hath lost his food
And thy Cross is common wood.
Choke him, let him say no more,
But reserve his breath in store,
Till thy conquests and his fall,
Make his sighs to use it all,
And then bargain with the wind,
To discharge what is behind.

By the end of this poem, and “finis”, the conflict is indeed “finis”, the stage is clear, the enemy and the Church are silent, and Herbert gives only one more gloria. At the end, and in the end, we are left with a cancelled dialectic, a closed circle, but not really a resolution. Stanley Fish writes that the ending of the Church Militant is “pessimistic, inconclusive, and anticlimactic” (Fish 144). The dwelling place of the Church remains disembodied, impermanent, and imperilled. We have moved from a real Church, through the porch and architectural features, into an engagement not with concrete things, but with Salvation history, and the Church set out to voyage in the world: a little, patched up boat, upon a vast, and breaking ocean.
Chapter 8: Conclusion.

“As for the Church, it has scarce been out of danger since we remember it”

Thomas Carlyle, *Signs of the Times*.

“For here we have no continuing City, but we seek one to come” *Hebrews 13:14*.

When Henry VIII lets loose the Reformation in 1534, he envisions it giving a new strength to English social bonds: a re-formation not simply of English religion, but English obedience, English godliness, and English manners. Bible reading and preaching, as well as the administration of the Sacraments were supposed to confirm the social order, buttressing Henry’s conception of his own, divinely ordained office with the reciprocal neighbourliness and due obedience that “the edification of the King’s subjects” would strengthen. To this, both he and Cranmer, albeit to differing extents, expect the increase of evangelical truth, the purification of error, and the suppression of enormities. The notion of edification, then, is a politically and theologically useful one, having both deconstructive elements of pruning, abolishing, and taking away things, (especially errors), but at the same time retaining the ideal of the renovation of an ancient structure, and not the construction of a new one. Cranmer, like all the reformers, is deeply convinced that he is doing *nothing* new, and denies the charge of novelty with the stung indignation of sincerity. That said, as Shuger points out, the valencies of established language (in this case repairing language) can be construed either way: to enable either traditionalism or scepticism, in our frame, pulling down, or building up. Hence, the language of edification is used to support the building of some things (like a preaching ministry, or Bible reading, and evangelical theology, and the renovation of spaces, the provision of new service books, the English Prayer Books, the Homilies, poor boxes, or
tablets of the Commandments. It is also used to aid in the suppression of things stigmatised as unhelpful: Rood screens, monastic houses, chantry chapels, and traditional cults. This doubled talk smells to many like a propaganda move, and in many ways, it was. But above the (important) political, cultural, and historical questions to be controverted by various disciplines, is the realm of imagination, civic vision, what Shuger calls “symbolic capital”, and Pocock “paradigmatics”.

I argue that, picking up a theological language from St Paul, Cranmer and others adapt it into an English context, retaining and enriching the notion of edification, up from building towards process and progress, not buildings, but people. I trace in the Erasmus chapter the concepts which lie across, or underneath, the notion of edification, the political and theological ideas it is seen, portmanteau like, to sum up. By comparing the word “edification” with the Latin ideas it attempts to translate, we establish a Pauline lexical field, in which edification is seen to comprise civic reformation, godly conversation, what the Bishop’s Bible calls “subministration”, the setting forth of evangelical truth, and the conversion of heart and amendment of life this is assumed to enable.

We also examine Henry’s conception of edification drawn from Erasmus, and his cooption of the idea into the ideology of the Royal Supremacy, making the King and the Ephesian “commonwealth of the Realm” an integral part of Anglican social vision. We locate in St Paul the two main clusters of edifying language: “edification [to maturity] not error” in Ephesians, and “Edification not contention” in Timothy and Titus, giving in the English context, and to the English Church, a deconstructive language to use against the Catholics, but also a conformist language to be used against those whose ideas of repair were unacceptably radical, “Anabaptists and all such other”. Cranmer’s conception of Bible reading, in both his Preface and in the Homilies focuses on the renovation of the
commonwealth, the edification of the Church, and the renewal of the individual, so that, with loving diligence, we may read, hear, obey, and heed. The reformation makes urgent the need for a reform of English history, and national narrative, as well as a need for the Anglican Church to prove its historical bona fides. The poetic theory of Philip Sidney came next, as edificatory purpose, use and profit to the commonwealth becomes not only, for Sidney, a job of poetry, but the job of any “right” poetry: the teaching of virtue, the remedying of the infected will, a partial medicine for the fall, in that poetry’s “golden world” has an attracting and catching power which ought to be put at the service of virtue. Like Cranmer’s Bible reading, Sidney envisions virtuous poetry creating exemplars, “speaking pictures” which are able then to inspire and uplift not only their neighbours, but the whole commonwealth.

In this theology of poetry, Sidney makes extraordinary claims for the power of poetry, but also envisions its danger if badly used, to contribute to vice, hypocrisy, or deceit. He picks up this last idea of “feining”, the bad kind of “making”, in Astrophil and Stella, in which poetry is presented as the reverse of edifying, as destructive and abnegating. If in the Apology, Sidney endorses a qualified version of the humanism which sees poetry as in the service of divine truth, in Astrophil, it paints loss, stark destruction, and negation, Sidney recognises poetry as a risky business, prey to all the interpretive difficulty of a fallen world, but it is through a renewed wit that we may realise our true condition, our own need of grace, and begin to desire it.

The heart’s “moving” and desiring become the first signs of real renewal, a renewal mediated through logocentric encounter, the right reception of which can touch the core of being with “inward touch” – not perfectly, but authentically. This theology of poetry as architectonic, concerned with the figuring forth of good things, the moving of the heart, and the training of the imagination for neighbourliness and concord in the polis is profoundly
Greek, but also Ephesian, and it moors poetry to politics, to ethics, and to social order, in the same way the Ephesian edificatory passages envision. Spenser applies the notion of edification, or as he calls it, “fashioning” of man in his nation building epic, *The Faerie Queene*. In Book I, the Red Crossed knight moves from callow to hero, from clownish to St George, but more importantly still, his journeys with and on behalf of the English Church popularise a Protestantised allegory, in which nation building, imagination, epistemic transparency and hermeneutic struggle are allied.

In Book I, edification is sometimes destructive, sometimes reconstructive, and sometimes contains elements of both, as both England and Una attempt to find a dwelling place, see past exterior show, move through images without being trapped by them. In this sense, Spenser’s engagement with edification is a search for a Protestantised allegory which is specific, but not too concrete, spiritual, but still visible, edifying, but not idolatrous. That search is sometimes successful, and other times Spenser seems caught in a tension, unable to make the different valencies balance. By the late reign of Elizabeth, and the early reign of James, “edification not error” was the preserve of Presbyterians and Dissenters, with violent debates about ceremonies, vestments, and church order. This debate, in which “edification not contention” begins to become a dominant official language, further separates Supremacist and conformist impulses from Evangelical, and Evangelical-civic ones.

At about this time, Donne and Herbert write, picking up the notion of building in new ways. The struggle to make religious verse both vivid and transparent also bedevils Donne, who attempts to portray an edificatory narrative of vivid and violent contrasts, swapping between poles of deconstruction and reconstruction, rememebering and dismembering, isolation and socialisation, removing his edificatory narrative from the Church, and putting it
in technicolour theatre.\textsuperscript{201} Anatomising his own body in edificatory terms, Donne offering us in the Holy Sonnets a strange harmony of contrasts, a violent self-abnegation which, paradoxically, makes the constructive attempt only more difficult. His edificatory purpose, settled in the sermons, unsettles in the sonnets, and becomes acute in the \textit{Devotions}, as Donne begins to attack not simply artifacts, and artifice, but himself. We end our period with Herbert, although of course the second large tranche of edificatory language from 1630 (which will end in the Civil War) has barely begun. But by this point, in \textit{The Temple}, an avowedly physical thing, too, has been spiritualised, Protestantised, and made transparent.

Herbert goes to considerable length to insist that the point of Faith is not outward show or participation (except of course the showing of good works as in the Church Porch, and the social participation advised in \textit{the Country Parson} for a good neighbour), but the inward work of grace in the heart, the bigger reality to which the building points. Herbert is perilously balanced here, holding on with one hand to Laudian sacramentality and ceremony, with the other hand to reformed theology and Puritan Biblicism, and reaching for the duct tape. By the time “The Church Militant” comes along, Herbert envisions the collapse of all the solid things, religion “severed”, and the inevitable results of sin undermine still further the solidities in the Church. By the time Herbert dies, the Church is planning to leave the building, and can continue her edifying work without literal edifices. The way is open, not simply for the decay of catholic Nationalism attached to sacramental things, but increasing private judgement, the death of the National Church’s monopoly, and the ascent of the Dissenters, using in large part, Anglican tools, and Anglican arguments, as we can see in the Grindal paragraphs. But apart from all this shabby and political realism, the church bells still

\textsuperscript{201} Of course, I don’t mean this literally – simply that the sonnets are an available narrative of spiritual progress which does not depend on solid things, but on images, and the reader’s engagement with them.
ring. They ring for Cranmer, sketching out the first service book in English, lifting to his breast the first printing of the New Great Bible. Spenser heard them, passionately reconstructing a mythic English past, full of dragons, crowned whores, deceitful monks and godly Princes. Sidney thrilled to them as he dreamed of what English poetry could be, of English as a vehicle for that dangerous and essential thing: illumination. They hang from Arthur’s helmet, as the Una begs for the strong right arm unafraid to defend Truth, plain, grave and beautiful. They ring in London, over and over, as red headed Henry’s daughter in her golden chariot takes the Bible from a little girl in a white stole. They toll for Donne, anatomising his sins, patting the hand of his Catholic mother, and worrying about Convocation. They call a coughing but determined poet across the wild-flowered fields to Salisbury, dreaming of spires “whose builder and maker is God”.

Are all these images open to charges of romanticism, nostalgia, unreality, undue tidiness, Imperialism, and, as one German-Reformed critic has it, “that Anglican habit of doing theology to the sound of Church bells?” (Ramsay 9).

Yes, of course. But such is the power of representation. And that would be the point. Shuger argues that a community is united “by common agreement on the objects of their love” (132).

Yes. Yes it is. And that imaginative coherence, even if illusory, counts too, and counts profoundly. Even and especially when it fails.

FINIS.
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