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## Indexing Herbert's *Temple*

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### *Abstract*

*The Temple* (1633), a book of devotional lyrics by the English poet George Herbert, was a site of innovation in the seventeenth-century book trade. Scholars of book history have attended to its numerous editions, but one important paratext has been largely ignored: the expansive subject index that was appended to the collection in the printshop of Philemon Stephens in the 1640s. This subject index instrumentalized the collection. By using Stephen Orgel's methodology of 'the archaeology of texts', this essay demonstrates how this index activated homiletical readings of Herbert's poems. The essay uses the index first to reconstruct some of its readings. It explores the assumptions about the uses of lyric poetry that made such readings possible, and considers why twentieth-century critics have rejected them. While the essay connects the index to *The Temple* with earlier biblical and homiletical finding aids and an early modern cultural disposition to reading for action, it also marks, in the demise of this disposition, an origin for the modern practice of indexing lyric collections by first line. In closing, the essay compares the affordances of these two kinds of book index with the collation and search functions prepared for a recent digital edition.

**Keywords:** Book History, George Herbert, Homiletics, Index, Paratext

### 1. *Introduction*

There is no surviving holograph of *The Temple* (1633), a book of devotional lyrics by the English poet George Herbert.<sup>1</sup> According to his biographer Izaak Walton, Herbert left a manuscript copy with his friend Nicholas Ferrar before he died, charging

<sup>1</sup> Bradin Cormack offered the seminar, and encouraged the thinking, from which this essay began. Dennis Duncan organized a conference on book indexes and showed me and many others how they could become interesting. Years later, I had the benefit of conversations with Alison Shell and Paul Davis at the British Library. Margaret Maurer read the complete draft, and her advice made this a better piece in the end. Thanks to all of them, and to Zachary Lesser and Georgina Wilson for their help in bringing this work into print.

him to decide whether to burn or publish it (Walton 1670, 74).<sup>2</sup> In a prefatory letter to the first printed edition of 1633 – the year of the poet’s death – Ferrar declared his intention to publish it ‘in that naked simplicitie, with which he left it’ (\*2r).<sup>3</sup> The remark suggests not only the tribute of careful stewardship, but also a publisher’s desire, at the juncture of manuscript and print, for the printed book to complete the trajectory of the manuscript – or, as it were, manuscripts. For a long time, it worked. It was not until the nineteenth-century discovery of two manuscripts – one containing drafts of many of the poems included in the first printed edition, the second a presentation copy that closely resembles the printed copy – that modern editors began to assess the historical contexture of the books in which the poems had circulated and been passed down, in the sequence inaugurated by Ferrar in 1633.

Herbert’s vast and enthusiastic early modern audience typically encountered the poems in printed editions of *The Temple*. And in those books, despite Ferrar’s declaration, the poems were not left in their naked simplicity. Over the course of the seventeenth century, paratexts accumulated. The first six editions were relatively spare and elegant duodecimos published in the 1630s and 40s at Cambridge by the University printers Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel. These editions opened with Ferrar’s prefatory note and included a table of ‘the titles of the severall poems contained’. At midcentury, in what Kathleen Lynch describes as ‘murky circumstances’ (2002, 190), London stationer Philemon Stephens attained the copy of *The Temple*, and in his new editions the apparatus expanded. By the end of the century the retail edition included several commendatory verses, Walton’s *Life*, a series of engraved images, a supplementary collection of poems by Christopher Harvey (‘written in imitation of’ Herbert, and called *The Synagogue*), the original list of titles (relocated to the beginning of the collection, where it functioned as a table of contents), and an ‘Alphabeticall Table for ready finding out chief places’.

<sup>2</sup> The anonymous author of “The Printer to the Reader” – who, according to Walton was Ferrar – alludes to this exchange. For the identification of Ferrar’s authorship of the preface, see Walton 1670, 76. Herbert left the manuscript with mutual friend Edmund Duncon, who is thought to have conveyed it to Ferrar at Little Gidding. The scribes working there likely produced what is known as the Bodleian MS (Bodl. Oxf. MS Tanner 307 [B]) as a presentation copy for stationers. See Doerksen 1979-1980.

<sup>3</sup> All quotations from *The Temple* are from the seventh edition (1656).

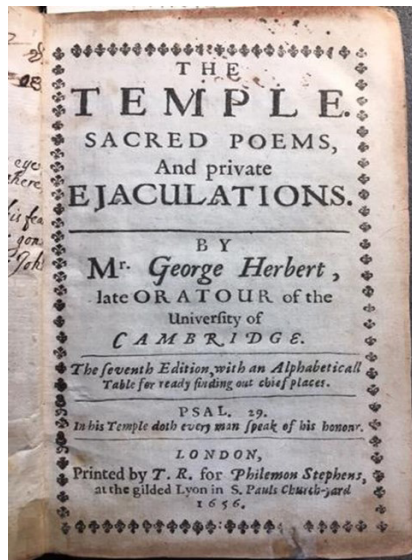


Figure 1 – The title page of the first of Philemon Stephens' editions of *The Temple. Sacred Poems, and private Ejaculations*, Printed by T.R. for Philemon Stephens at the gilded Lyon in S. Pauls Church-yard 1656 (Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Ex 3780.5.388.16 Wing H1518).  
Courtesy of Princeton University Library

Among the paratexts, the last one stands out as unusual. This 'Alphabetical Table' was a comprehensive subject index that was included in all the midcentury and Restoration editions of *The Temple*. Tables of this kind were common enough in books from the period. But no other single-authored lyric collection printed in the period includes a similar finding aid.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century, publishers and printers regularly appended finding aids to texts. The practice of indexing had begun to spread from learned works (especially works of theology and law) to books not previously thought to require them.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the title pages of seventeenth-century printed volumes frequently advertised the inclusion of tables 'never before printed' but 'now added', especially to new editions of previously printed works (Hall 1634, e.g.).<sup>6</sup> But in this context, 'table' might refer to a range of different indexical finding aids. Modern bibliographical parlance distinguishes between the table of contents, the alphabetical list of titles, the glossary, the concordance, the index of names or references, the subject index, and so on, but early modern stationers did not, and referred to all of these as 'tables'. The 'table' included in poetry collections was nearly always a list of titles which, like the one included in the first run of Cambridge-based editions of *The Temple*, functioned as a table of contents.<sup>7</sup> But beginning

<sup>4</sup> This claim is based on a survey of ESTC data, EEBO, and other digital records, and, in noteworthy cases (and where possible), consultation of physical copies of print editions of lyric poems by Cowley, Crashaw, Daniel, Denham, Donne, Drayton, Drummond, Dryden, Greville, Herbert, Herrick, Jonson, Marvell, Milton, Phillips, Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, Rochester, Raleigh, Traherne, and Vaughan.

<sup>5</sup> The seminal study of information-management practices in early modern printed books is Blair 2010. For a brief essay on the indexing practices under discussion here, see Corns 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Enlargement-by-paratext was a common technique for boosting sales downstream from the first edition, then as now; see Targoff 2001, 149-5 n. 24; Ferry 2008, 77 and Knight 2013, 6.

<sup>7</sup> ESTC data identifies many poetry collections from the period as 'with index', though none has a subject index except these editions of *The Temple*, so far as I have been able to determine.

in 1656, Herbert's collection had two different tables: a table of contents and a subject index. The mid-century and Restoration sequence of editions of *The Temple* was therefore notable for its inclusion of both kinds of index at a point in the history of the paratext when the two were rarely distinguished, and the subject index was just beginning, according to Dennis Duncan, its 'slow migration to the position it occupies today at the back of the book' (2021, 127).

This index is not just a bibliographical anomaly. It makes a fascinating point of entry into *The Temple* at a crucial moment in its reception, set against the backdrop of the political and religious turmoil of mid-seventeenth-century England. One aim of this article will be to place this subject index within the history of *The Temple's* reception, and moreover to consider it as evidence of the book's reception as 'something other than a strictly literary work', in Ramie Targoff's terms (2001, 144).<sup>8</sup> Unlike the 1633 table of titles, the subject index has not attracted much attention from critics. The standard description of this subject index as an aid to prayer or a 'devotional commonplace book' (Targoff 2001, 149) does not account for the different interpretive capacities of a subject index in general and the contents of this one in particular. In fact, the evidence suggests that this index was not intended as an aid for private prayer or devotional use, as critics have suggested, but rather as an aid to homiletical reading and writing. Much like Herbert's popular handbook for parish clergy *A Priest to the Temple*, also known as *The Country Parson* (1652), this index participated in a vocational culture. As such, it specifies the kind of devotional work *The Temple* was sometimes taken to be.

The index, along with the other paratexts of the seventeenth-century editions, also historicizes a curious fact concerning the reception of Herbert's poetry in the years immediately following its publication: in the words of an early reader, 'it hath y<sup>e</sup> most generall approbation y<sup>e</sup> I haue knowne' (quoted in Charles 1977, 125). Even more surprising than its initial popularity was its widespread approbation during a period of Civil War and religious fragmentation.<sup>9</sup> *The Temple* was celebrated, quoted, and imitated by readers representing a wide spectrum of Christian dispositions at a time when intra-Protestant and confessional differences were politicized and fiercely contested. As Sharon Achinstein puts it, 'the centrality of Herbert was the one thing upon which all sides could agree' (2006, 432). *The Temple* served as a devotional touchstone through the English Civil Wars and into the Restoration and came to be regarded, as Nigel Smith has claimed, 'as a kind of manual or handbook on the godly parish' (1994, 266) all throughout a protracted crisis that often centered on the very subjects of his poems. By the end of the century, writes Helen Wilcox, '*The Temple* ... had the status of common property' (1984, 290).

The material form of the book influenced this reception and contributed to its prolonged influence. But its material form was not stable throughout this period. The layered accumulation of paratextual apparatuses offers to modern readers an opportunity to undertake what Stephen Orgel calls an 'archaeology' of the text. Orgel says of the first editions of *The Temple* that 'the original book's portability, modesty and discreetness were elements of its meaning and a factor in its reception' (2022a, 6). In the twenty years after the first edition, new paratextual structures altered the form of the book, and its meanings and reception changed, too. Readers wanted something different, publishers provided something new, and approaches to reading and using these devotional lyrics evolved. These changes left their traces in and around the text itself, embodied most conspicuously in its paratexts.

<sup>8</sup> T.A. Birrell likewise reads the subject index as evidence that Herbert 'survived through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, not as a metaphysical poet, but as a prayerbook' (1985, 164).

<sup>9</sup> The most detailed study of the reception of Herbert's poetry in the seventeenth century remains Wilcox 1984.

The concept of the paratext refers to the parts of the historical book that served as a hinge between the book's production and its reception. According to Gérard Genette, a paratext is a frame around an authorial text, the purpose of which is to make the work legible to a contemporary audience. Paratexts 'present' the work in the double sense of sponsoring its appearance and updating or contemporizing the work, 'making present' the author's text for a new generation of readers (Genette 1991). In Genette's double sense, the paratexts of the Stephens edition 'present' Herbert's collection, framing it while also updating it for a new, critical moment of publication in the mid-seventeenth century. To read the collection through this index is to retrace the routes of access into the poems that its publishers thought to provide and that its readers at this time may have solicited and followed. The subject index therefore offers a particularly useful (and comparatively rare) access into the historicity of *The Temple* because it functions, as Duncan writes of such indexes in general, by 'balancing its allegiances between the work and the community of readers who will come to it' (2021, 11). As an artifact of book use, its allegiances remain poised between Herbert's poems and the wider field of its reception among contemporary readers to whom the index's compilers were also responsive.<sup>10</sup>

The index also attests to ideas about the utility of lyric poems produced for and within a clerical readership in the mid-seventeenth century. As Thomas Fulton has recently shown, early modern religious paratexts enable us 'to reconstruct methods of interpretation' (2021, 12) that informed the period's cultures of reading and writing. In the stalls of Stephens' shop, and under the interpretive auspices of the index, Herbert's poems respond to a host of untimely inflections and interpretations. This index represents a systematization of the interpretive methods that made the text available for a particular kind of use. An archaeological approach therefore reconstructs a contemporary sense of the utility of lyric poems, the practices of interpretation designed to activate their uses, and the bookmaking and publishing practices that distributed them. In this sense, the significance of these paratexts is not only antiquarian: disparities between the untimely readings encoded in the index and recent historicist readings of Herbert illuminate some rather different assumptions about the uses to which Herbert's poetry might be put. The comparison becomes even more interesting where the index produces readings that modern critics like C.A. Patrides feel are 'not evenly remotely sanctioned by Herbert' (1983, 12). In fact, it is not the subjects or topics it identifies, or even the readings implied by its identifications, that has alienated this finding aid from the sensibility of modern critics; it is the basic indexical practice of collating subjects with passages or lines of poetry.

We no longer use this kind of book this way. The 1709 edition was the last to include this, or any, subject index, and the effect of this kind of indexing practice on Herbert's poetry shows why. As I argue later in the essay, by way of a reading of the index's reading of Herbert's poem 'Aaron', this index's basic hermeneutical orientation toward the subjects of the poems circumvents Herbert's *treatment* of the subjects, the sophistication of which has been considered a hallmark of Herbert's religious and literary sensibility in recent scholarship. As a result, the index produces some awkward readings. Its capacity to produce these readings has much to teach us about the reception of *The Temple* in its first century of circulation in print. It also illuminates the interpretive framework of modern critics who reject it.

<sup>10</sup> Recent book historical scholarship distinguishes between book use and the history of reading. See Cormack and Mazzio 2005; Sherman 2008; Lynch and Ender 2018.

## 2. *The Origins of the Subject Index*

To find the origins of the index to *The Temple*, we must look back to the ‘murky circumstances’ surrounding the transfer of the copy from the Cambridge press to the Gilded Lion, Philemon Stephens’ London shop, sometime in the 1640s. The Gilded Lion was a hub of nonconformist printing. Works by godly authors such as John Owen, Cornelius Burges, Thomas Hooker, and other, lesser-known ministers were printed for sale by Stephens. The shop was also an established ‘meeting place for Puritans visiting the capital’ (Gilbert 2016, 23) such as the young Richard Baxter who, in his memoirs, recalled meeting his friend ‘sober, godly’ Humphrey Blunden (who would later become a significant publisher of news pamphlets during the Civil Wars) in Stephens’ shop where Blunden was then apprenticing (Baxter 2020, 230). The Gilded Lion’s godly bona fides notwithstanding, it was not a publisher of sectarian propaganda, and the paratexts produced there were even less likely to be instrumentalized for causes associated with the figure named in the imprint. The indexes affixed to books sold in Stephens’ shop were probably compiled by younger scholars and apprentices who were either affiliated with the shop or working for hire. It was not the kind of work a busy stationer would undertake. The agencies encompassed by this shop therefore include the work of apprentices such as Blunden, whose later career was not marked by any sectarian emphasis, as well as collaborators such as Christopher Harvey, the fervent conformist with whom Stephens worked on an edition of a text by Harvey’s stepfather Thomas Pierson. The diversity of devotional attitudes expressed by his few known collaborators cautions against ascribing Stephens’ own nonconformist church attitudes to all the paratexts printed and sold in his shop.

A visitor to the Gilded Lion would have encountered an array of indexes at the back and front of the books sold there, and many of these indexes seem designed to serve the demands of a clerical readership. This homiletical inflection, more than the ideological affiliations discernible through Stephens’ list and reputation, helps classify the index to *The Temple*. Many other editions bearing Stephens’ imprint, such as Nicholas Byfield’s *Rule of faith* (1626, with a separate imprint for the index); Gryffith Williams’ *The best religion* (1636, ‘with a large alphabeticall table’); and Pierson’s *Excellent encouragements against affliction* (1647) had impressive indexes that identify key topics and passages in these lengthy works of theological prose, enabling pinpoint access to the books for ministers at work on the preparation of sermons. The shop also sold several standalone indexes, including Thomas Farnaby’s *Index rhetoricus ... et index poeticus* (1640), a guide to figures and topics of classical literature, as well as Thomas James’ *Index generalis sanctorum patrum* (1624), an index to the Church Fathers. Such works belong to the world of information management and homiletics without betraying any discernible sectarian inflection.

Since its first edition, Herbert’s poetry had always been read as a devotional resource as much as, if not more than, a collection of poems. By the time Stephens printed the first of his sequence of editions in 1656, the collection had achieved an unusually ecumenical readership, especially among a growing cohort of clergymen-poets. The language Stephens used to advertise the edition’s new ‘Alphabeticall Tables for the readie finding out chief places’ was common in this subculture, although, as far as I have been able to tell, not previously in books of poetry. John Bellamy’s fourth edition of John Weemes’ *The Christian Synagogue* (1633), for example, advertised ‘an alphabeticall table of the cheefe things contained in the booke’, while Stephens’ edition of John Trapp’s *A commentary or exposition upon the XII minor prophets* (1654) similarly advertised ‘An Alphabeticall Table of all the Principall things contained in this whole Work’.

Both echoed a common, familiar, source: the Geneva Bible.<sup>11</sup> By far the most popular household English bible in the period, copies of these books typically advertised, “for the readie finding out of any thing in the same contained” (1611), the inclusion of Robert Herrey’s *Two Right Profitable and Fruitfull Concordances, or, Large and Ample Tables Alphabetically* (1578).<sup>12</sup>

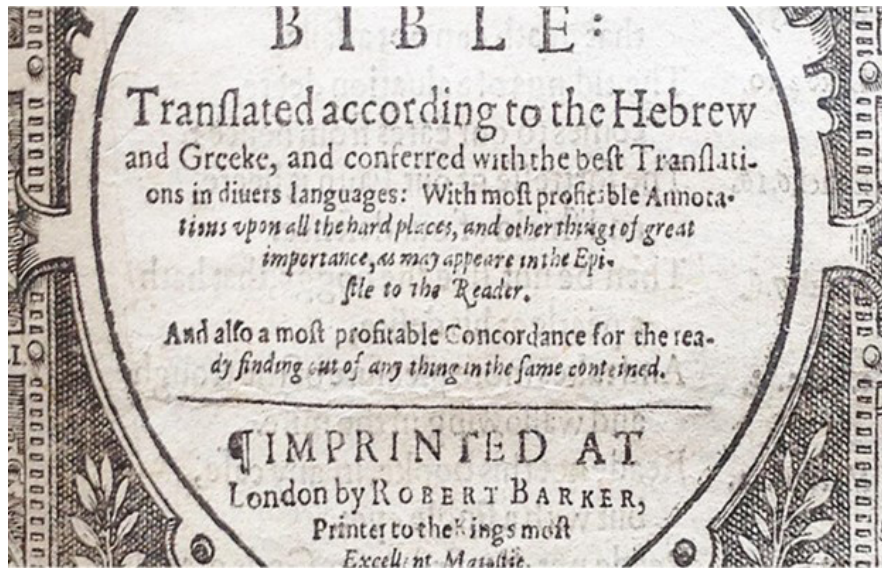


Figure 2 – The title page of a Geneva Bible, advertising Robert Herrey’s concordance (Special Collections, Princeton University Library, 5173.1605). Courtesy of Princeton University Library

Indexes to devotional and theological works served an expanding, increasingly educated, and professionalizing class of clergymen in this period. As in other learned professions, commonplacing and indexing were regarded, and retailed, as clerical best practices. William Perkins’ manual *The Arte of Prophecyng* (1607) encouraged clergy to ‘Haue in readinesse common-place heads of euery point of diuinitie’ (29; see Werlin 2022, 349). Similarly, Herbert’s ideal parson was instructed to have ‘compiled a book and body of Divinity’ with passages abstracted from his reading in scripture and theology, to serve as ‘the storehouse of his sermons which he preacheth all his life’ (Herbert 2004, 206). The professionalization of the clergy in the mid-seventeenth century generated texts that had much in common with legal and medical literatures, down to the time-saving finding aids and note-taking practices often advertised in print as ‘Alphabetical tables’.<sup>13</sup>

But the literary culture of the clergy differed from that of other professional cultures in one key respect. As Julianne Werlin has recently shown, the composition and circulation of lyric

<sup>11</sup> Targoff’s suggestion that the index to Trapp’s *Commentary* is ‘nearly identical to Herbert’s’ is true only in the simplest sense, in that their title and function are similar (2001, 149 n. 24). The contents of the indexes differ substantially, mirroring the differences of the contents of the respective works.

<sup>12</sup> Stallybrass notes that editions of the Geneva Bible printed between 1580 and 1615 often include these concordances, and were still in wide use through the middle of the seventeenth century (2002, 51-63; 52).

<sup>13</sup> Legal compendia with ‘Alphabetical Tables’ include *The Compleat clerk* (London, 1664), *Reports and Cases, Collected by the Learned Sr. John Popham* (London, 1682) and *An abridgement of the statutes in force and use* (London, 1663). Other professional books like *The City and countrey chapmans almanack* (London, 1685), *The Mariners Jewel* (London, 1695) and *An epitomie ... appertaining to physick and chirurgery* (London, 1639) did as well.

poetry became a conspicuous feature in the lifeways of seventeenth-century English clergy. In fact, the clergy comprised the largest professional cohort among lyric poets from the period (Werlin 2022, 335). Herbert's works both testify to this conjunction of literary and pastoral arts and served as a model for the successive generation, not least for churchmen-poets of the 'school of Herbert' that included in its ranks the Roman Catholic convert Richard Crashaw, the Anglican conformist Harvey, and the *sui generis* Henry Vaughan, a self-styled convert to the religion of Herbert (Hutchinson 1941, xli). Still, critics have interpreted the subject index as further evidence of *The Temple's* appropriation into devotional reading practices, where it was read as a 'prayerbook'. Targoff was right to note that this text was regarded as 'something other than a strictly literary work' (2001, 144), but the alphabetical table of chief places in *The Temple* indicates that it was also, like other indexes produced within this context, something other than an aid private devotion. Rather, much like Herbert's *Priest to the Temple*, it was used as an aid to clerical employment and, specifically, as a source of preaching material.

The reception history of *The Temple* in the seventeenth century attests to many examples of the book's usage as a homiletical resource. But one well-known example also suggests the index's later re-circulation of this interpretive practice. It comes from a sermon by Samuel Ward of Ipswich. In 1635, Ward was censured for preaching a prophetic sermon against popery in which he asserted 'that Religion and the Gospel stood on tiptoes ready to be gone' (quoted by Ray 1986, 22). This last phrase, recorded by William Prynne in his account of the censure, is an allusion to a notorious couplet in Herbert's 'Church Militant': 'Religion stands on tip-toe in our land, / Ready to pass to the American strand' (ll. 235-236). As Walton noted in his *Life*, these 'two so much noted Verses' (1670, 110) nearly caused the licenser to censor the collection in 1633. Though these verses were dangerously heretical upon its original publication, and quoted to dangerous effect shortly thereafter by Ward, the 1656 subject index shone a spotlight on them. Readers could even find this once-heretical phrase by looking in the index directly under the catch-all heading 'Christian religion'. Or, they could access it through one of ten other headings: 'Religions rise and progress', 'prognosticks of Englands woe', 'of the gospels removal to America', 'of Christs second coming', 'The Church... her progress likes the Suns from the East Westwards', 'Americas conversion calculated', 'East, the Churches, as well as the Suns Rising-place', 'Sun, his course like the Churches', 'Time, how ordered by God... all nations have their set time for the gospel', and 'West, see Christian religion'. Two decades after Ward's censure, preachers who wished to invoke Herbert's famous verses on the westward course of conversion in their sermons would have no trouble finding it with the subject index in hand, and many in fact did so.<sup>14</sup> What was controversial for one generation was commonplace for the next.

### 3. Reading 'this book of starres'

The index advertised on the title page of Stephens' editions functioned just like the conventional subject index with which all modern readers are familiar: by sorting the volume for keywords, categories, and concepts of contemporary interest, and providing the reader with access to these topics through a system of internal references. Applied to *The Temple*, this index generated other innovations in the lay-out of the book. Not only did these books contain page numbers – a common but not standard feature, but one made necessary by the subject index – they also had

<sup>14</sup> For instance, Hall 1658, 135. See Ray 1986 for many subsequent allusions to these lines.

line numbers, a much rarer feature that enabled the location of references with greater specificity. The way in which they enabled reference demonstrates the effect of the subject index on the material form of the rest of the book. Unlike modern lyric collections, the lineation in these editions begins anew at the top of each page without regard to the disposition of the material across the pages of the book. The numbers do not count the lines of a given poem; they count, instead, the number of lines of verse on a single page. This numerical system is useful only as an extension of the book's index and demonstrates the index's organization of the book's material for a homiletical, rather than a lyric, mode of reading. Though the line numbers fell out in the tenth edition of 1674, the subject index remained in place for the run of editions printed in London by Stephens, then by his son, and then by his son's associate William Godbid, from 1656 until the thirteenth edition of 1709.

*The Temple's* subject index provides several substantial and interpretive collations under the heading of a category. In this regard, the index functions like a commonplace book, organizing material into usable fragments and sorting them by keyword. Certain entries provide extensive commentary on some of *The Temple's* grandest themes. The entry for 'Man', for instance, does more than simply locate the occurrences of the word or idea within the pages of the book. In fact, the entry identifies 'man' as the implicit subject of a great many of the collection's meditations on life and the concept of being. 'Man' leads to sub-headings that suggest mankind's attributes: 'short-lived, and full of sorrow', 'subject to changes', 'mortall', 'perverse', 'rebellious', 'foolish and strangely wicked and wilfull', 'vile and filthy', 'averse from goodnesse', 'impatient of reproof and correction', 'having his reason hoodwinked by Lusts', 'giddy and unconstant', 'grossely doting in what most concerneth him', 'ungratefull to God', 'an ill Steward of Gods goods', 'a busy searcher after every thing but God', 'a beast', 'a tree', and 'likened to a flower'. The entry for 'Man' is surpassed in scale only by the entry for 'God', the category which threatens to subsume the entire organizational remit of the index. Which of the lines of *The Temple* do not fall under the heading of 'God' or to, for example, 'His Pity', 'His Omniscience', 'His Corrections, tokens of his Love'? Inside the thematic world of *The Temple*, nearly any subject refers, at some level, to God or man.

At the intersection of these two concepts, an expansive entry harmonizes the disparate references to 'Christ' in Herbert's poetry. Collating 121 references from 50 different poems, this entry works as a homiletical aid in several different ways. It supplies commonplaces that illustrate or memorialize the themes of Christ's life. It also gathers episodes from the life of Christ that appear in Herbert's poetry, and by doing so, suggests the rudiments of a narrative: 'How he humbled himself to redeem us... He laid aside his Robes, to put on our Rags... He is lodged in an inn... cradled in a manger...' and so on (with each ellipsis standing in for at least one reference to a poem by Herbert). These homiletic excursions and pocket interpretations point toward the use function of such an index for the increasingly professional office of a priest. Of course, any clergyman would know the life of Christ without needing to consult a book; the point is that the index allows the preacher to find quotations from Herbert's work for use at an appropriate moment in a sermon on that life.

The index enabled a topical reading practice suited to sermonizing, but it also supported the literary work of the clergy by identifying the many figures of comparison in Herbert's poetry: 'Afflictions compared to moles'; 'Affliction to Christians, like the pruning knife, to trees'; 'Eager undertakers and slack prosecutors, likened to an exhalation'; 'Our life lik'ned to a posy of flowers'; 'restless thoughts, likened to Thorns'; 'Schism in the Church, like a worm in a rose'. Beyond its many specific identifications of Herbert's similes and metaphors, the index activates a comparative mode of attention, as exemplified by the places where it creates clever nodes of references that mimic Herbert's own conceits, where the reader might for 'Easy things, see Hard' or for 'Envy, a worm', for 'emulation, a spur' and for a 'Grave, see Bed'.

This comparative hermeneutics was central to a preaching ministry, and it is the method that Herbert recommends in Book IV of *A Priest to the Temple*, his handbook for parish clergymen. There, Herbert describes the ‘diligent collation of Scripture with Scripture’ and the ‘judicious comparing of place with place’ as the ‘singular help for the right understanding of the Scriptures’ (Herbert 2004, 205). In his poem ‘The H. Scriptures. II’, Herbert similarly describes the synthesis of new meanings from the collation of disparate passages of scripture. Just as a stargazer might discover, in the scattering of heavenly bodies, the image of a constellation, a reader finds that ‘This verse marks that, and both do make a motion / Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie’, as ‘this book of starres lights to eternall blisse’ (ll. 5-6 and 14). While the poem figures this method of comparative reading as akin to stargazing, Herbert’s eye was, at the same time, fixed on the pages of a text. There, in the popular household Geneva bibles of the period, the ‘starre’ had a mundane and specifically indexical meaning: it referred to the asterisk, or ‘Starre\*’ (as it was termed in Herrey’s concordance) that pointed readers to parallel passages listed in the margins. In the pages of these bibles, stars mingled with other alpha-numeric superscripts and marginal annotations, marking out complex patterns of cross-reference (Herrey 1578).<sup>15</sup> The asterisk indicated, in the *mise-en-page* of the bible itself, parallel references within the book that, when followed, illuminated the hermetic internal correlations of what Herbert calls ‘this book of starres’.

#### 4. *Reading The Temple through its Index, Then and Now*

In an early article on *The Temple*’s paratexts, Saad El-Gabalawy rdescribes the apparatus as neutral in its stance toward the sectarian conflicts of the day (1971). But as Bradin Cormack and Carla Mazzio have argued, ‘even when an index seems to be neutral, by its nature it is interpretive since it guides cognition by emphasizing certain categories and eliding others and indeed by implicitly defining what constitutes a category’ (2005, 14). A subject index is never neutral because it selects and organizes and, as Duncan writes, ‘distil[s] its source work into a collection of keywords: names, places, concepts’ (2021, 4). To make an index is to begin by ‘reducing the material, summarizing it’ and, by abstracting from the source material, ‘to create something new and separate’ (*ibid.*).

Though necessary practices for the compiler of a subject index, generalization and abstraction happen to be the interpretive habits that many modern readers of Herbert denounce. Scholars of Herbert have argued that generalization has the effect of flattening a crucial dynamic in Herbert’s poetry. As Joseph Summers puts it, ‘generalizations crumble before the practice of a particularist such as Herbert’ (1954, 149). The index tends to collapse the crucial difference between a subject and Herbert’s treatment of the subject. It produces a straightforward reference precisely where Herbert’s poems explore the contingencies of a chosen subject. This aspect of Herbert’s poetics has informed several influential readings of Herbert’s church politics, specifically when focused on the poems in *The Temple* that address the material aspects of religious culture. Critics like Daniel Doerksen, Christopher Hodgkins and Richard Strier read Herbert’s representations of devotional practices and ceremonial things such as the altar, the vestment, the windows, and the floor, as signs of his ‘church attitudes’ or theological inclinations – which is to say, as the measure of his conformity (Strier 1983; Doerksen 1987 and 1997; Hodgkins 1993). In doing so, they

<sup>15</sup> The asterisk also appeared, alongside a host of superscripts, in seventeenth-century *Authorized* (or *King James*) *Versions* of the bible as well as editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

emphasize the (for Herbert) relative *insignificance* of things in their material sense. Herbert's poetry has prompted these readers to consider the way in which English Protestantism reinterpreted the material aspects of religious culture in a figurative, or wholly verbal, sense. The governing metaphor of *The Temple* extends this interpretive activity across the whole collection, evoking both the bricks and mortar of its structure – the indifferent matter of its ceremonial practices – and the sighs and groans and inward sensibility of its worshippers that take its place, 'making words do the work of, and actually become, ceremonies and externals' (Smith 1994, 266).

For a country parson, conformity was at stake in the choice to embrace the practices and things that were deemed insignificant in the spiritual sense but maintained as mandatory in the public interest of the values that Herbert and many of his contemporaries, following St. Paul, upheld in the name of decency, 'order' and 'edification' (Herbert 2004, 221-222). 'Things once indifferent' became 'by the precept of authority more than indifferent', as Herbert put it in the *A Priest to the Temple* (237). This obligation to simultaneously deny the significance of specific things while upholding their significance in the political register of conformity generated much debate and occasional confusion in the decades after Herbert's death in an increasingly polemical ecclesiological discourse. Readers might well have approached Herbert's *Temple*, much as they did Weemes' *Christian Synagogue* or any number of devotional works from the period, to determine whether they ought to embrace certain circumstantial practices or indifferent things or follow their conscience in eschewing them. Stephens' index anticipates such questions in entries that tell 'Priests how to be dressed', or maintain that the 'Churches Authority [is] to be obeyed... Innocent customs in the Church [are] to be observed'; and 'Lent-fast, to be observed'. But if, in general, the index attempts to answer the questions such readers might pose, most modern critics have found, with Richard Strier, that 'one cannot answer this question when it is put this way' (2007, 100).<sup>16</sup> Instead, Strier explains, echoing the claims of Hodgkins and Judith Kronenfeld, Herbert's poems often point toward or describe the material aspects of religious practice ('marke you the floore?', 98) but resolve by dismissing the material reality of the thing being described, revealing the material structures of the church to be nothing more, and nothing less, than the metaphorical scaffolding for an experience that was entirely inward. 'Even when externals are Herbert's apparent subject, as is frequently the case in *The Temple*', writes Doerksen, 'these poems are really about the spiritual matters for which the forms are symbols' (1997, 88). Much of Herbert's artistry is contained in the graceful and surprising effects he works upon those changes. For the index, such subtleties are irrelevant; the index informs readers looking to know, more pragmatically, whether they must follow a particular religious practice.

Generalizations, then, became especially fraught in cases where the index points toward matters of religious controversy. In a few places the index strikes a boldly polemical note. The first entry – 'Aarons garment should be still worn by ministers' – is an instructive case, because it points directly to a topic of enduring controversy in English church politics, a subject of intense debate since the Reformation. 'Aaron's garment' was the elaborate vestment at that time still mandatory for ministers in the English church despite the Calvinist orientation of its doctrine, but decried by some as an unconscionable sign of affiliation to the luxurious ceremonialism of Rome. The index implies that a clerical reader could simply turn to page 168, line 19, to find Herbert instructing him to conform to the official injunction to wear the surplice.

<sup>16</sup> The question Strier raises, only to dismiss, is whether Herbert thinks that 'actual church floors do not matter' (100).

A T A B L E.	
	A.
	Aaron's garments should be still worn by Ministers Page 168 Line 19
	Abraham brought Religion with him from the East 184.19
5	Abstinence, how profitable 79.7
10	Abuse of things taketh not away their use 79.16
	Abstinence, the scum of vice 8.29 9.1
	Account, see Rules
	Action. The glory of an action is, to do it for Gods glory 178.21
15	Active spirits onely live 12.19 71.3
	Adoration of Saints, why unlawfull 70.1
	Affliction succeedeth prosperity 38.25, &c. it is not to be grieved for 164.11 or rather, grief for affliction is to be turned into grief for sin 164.17
	how to carry our selves therein 40.7 it is advantage to a Christian 35.90.7 124.25 Afflictions caldron helpeth to supple the heart 122.17-19
	123.1 affliction to Christians, like the pruning-knife to Trees 126.2 afflictions compared to Moles 119.1 all our afflictions, nothing to Christ's sufferings 53.26 Christ hath his part in our afflictions 64.27 65.7 80.28
	Aims, the most thriving trade 89.3 motives thereunto 13.20 &c. see Rules
	to Gods

Figure 3 – The subject index compiled for the 1656 edition of *The Temple. Sacred Poems, and private Ejaculations*, Printed by T.R. for Philemon Stephens at the gilded Lyon in S. Pauls Church-yard 1656 (Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Ex 3780.5.388.16 Wing H1518).  
Courtesy of Princeton University Library

What this reader would find is the beginning of the poem 'Aaron':

Holinesse on the head,  
Light and perfections on the breast,  
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead.  
To lead them unto life and rest:  
Thus are true Aarons drest. (ll. 1-5)

This opening stanza of the poem follows the passages in Exodus 28:30 in which the garments of Aaron, high priest of the Levites, are described in close detail. Moreover, the stanza articulates the union of garment, office, and personal qualities toward which a priest in any age might aspire. Aaron's authority as high priest was represented precisely by the richness of his apparel, as displayed in illustrations in the Geneva Bible.



Figure 4 – The image of Aaron, high priest of the Levites, in the Geneva Bible (Special Collections, Princeton University Library, 5173.1605). Courtesy of Princeton University Library

But if the stanza described the priestly archetype – the ‘true Aarons’ – dressed in a certain way, a Protestant reader could well anticipate what comes next in Herbert’s poem. The poem’s speaker draws the reader through a typological comparison between Aaron, whose authority was expressed outwardly through the beauty of his robe, and his own inward preparations for occupying the office of the priest.

The second stanza furnishes the other half of a comparison. Aaron’s outward representation of authority is contrasted with a bereft inward state:

Profanenesse in my head,  
 Defects and darknesse in my breast,  
 A noise of passions ringing me for dead  
 Unto a place where is no rest:  
 Poore priest thus am I drest! (ll. 6-10)

While the poem draws this comparison of the external vestment and an internal condition, it invokes another, complexly temporal axis on which it might be drawn. What was appropriate dress for the ‘true’ Aaron as described in Exodus would not be likely to serve literally as the model for priestly dress at any point in the subsequent history of the poem’s reception. The index says it should be worn ‘still’, and its insistence reproduced this norm for another moment in 1656, and then again in successive editions through 1709. Perhaps in doing so it merely pointed to the process (which Herbert’s poem narrates) of inhabiting the externalized metaphor that Aaron’s garment instantiated, for contemporary priests. For many modern critics, it would seem closer to Herbert’s meaning to say that the specific kind of priestly garment is irrelevant to his authority, than it would be to say, as the index does, that they ‘should be still worn’. Modern critics have taken Herbert’s point to be that such matters were inessential, circumstantial, and immaterial to the real question of an authority underwritten by Christ. While the Old Testament type – the ‘true Aarons’ of the first stanza – displayed the law on the outer surface

of his garment, he merely prefigured the internalization of that law, and the act that defines the true Christian disposition. 'In him I am well dressed' (l. 15) the speaker realizes in the third stanza, and only in this inward sense has he dressed to do the work of preaching. The index's reference to the vestment as originally sanctioned in Exodus by Aaron and therefore 'still' legitimate is, theologically, the very thing that influential critics like Strier have argued the poem denies when it routes the question through the bible's typological system of references.

Aaron's garment is therefore an example of what Hodgkins called the 'vanishing edifice': an external thing associated with conformity that Herbert invokes, only to redefine its value as entirely internal. *The Temple* itself might be read as such a structure (Hodgkins 1993). Kronenfeld therefore advises readers of Herbert against 'attaching significance to the apparent choice of subject at the expense of the treatment of that subject' (1983, 58). But that is precisely what a subject index is designed to do: to attach significance to the choice of subject at the expense of Herbert's treatment of it. As a consequence of its design, the index makes the vanishing edifice reappear. The relation between subject and treatment that the index supplies in its references is precisely the relation that Herbert's poems, according to his modern critics, treat with a signature subtlety, and ultimately undermine.

Accordingly, modern critics have disavowed the index and its identification of conformist slogans in Herbert's poetry, such as 'Aarons garment should be still worn by ministers'. Yet such claims were supported across the several different paratexts bound within the seventeenth-century editions of Herbert's book, dating back to the first edition, and well-attested by the reception of his poetry during this period. In his introductory note from 1633, Nicholas Ferrar declared that Herbert's 'obedience and conformity to the Church and the Discipline thereof, was singularly remarkable' (\*2v). In *A Priest to the Temple*, Herbert himself advised that the authority of the Church was to be obeyed in cases where ceremonies were deemed innocuous. His ideal priest maintains the material elements of his church, not 'out of necessity or as putting a holiness in the things, but as desiring to keep a middle way between superstition and slovenliness' (Herbert 2004, 222). These are good grounds for associating Herbert with conformity, and they are accurately paraphrased in the index's entry: 'Churches Authority to be obeyed ... Innocent customs in the Church to be observed'. But, set against the context of the English Civil Wars and the dismantling of episcopacy – a world Herbert never knew – the index's assertion of Herbert's conformity seems to link the poet to Royalist efforts toward restoring a 'British Church' that was, by the late 1650s, resurgent (see Achinstein 2006).

Why then did Stephens, a 'known Nonconformist' (Achinstein 2006, 431) in the London book trade who was not known for printing lyric poems, print Herbert with a conformist index? And why include the other major paratext in the edition, Christopher Harvey's 'tin-eared paeans to high church Anglicanism' (Lynch 2002, 191) which Stephens printed not just once, but in successive editions in conjunction with Herbert? Initially, this was the product of a genuine collaboration between Stephens and Harvey, as detailed by Judith Maltby (2000) and Kathleen Lynch (2002).<sup>17</sup> Familial relations linked Thomas Pierson and Harvey, while ideology and trade linked Pierson to Stephens. Their collaboration across sectarian lines may have led to the combinatorial editions of Herbert's *Temple* and Harvey's *Synagogue*, but it also suggests how personal affiliation and commercial interest guided the agencies of this print-shop toward the production of the midcentury Herbert editions that included the index.

<sup>17</sup> In 1647, Stephens published a work by Shropshire minister Thomas Pierson entitled *Excellent encouragements against afflictions*. It also included a prefatory letter by Stephens, as well as several dedicatory epistles by Harvey. See Maltby (2000, 88-120) and Lynch (2002, 189-193).

Sustained proximity to Herbert has not brought favorable notice to Harvey's poems. But what makes Harvey sound 'consistently vapid' (Patrides 1983, 4) to modern ears might tell us something about what clergymen-poets valued in Herbert in the 1650s and how, in rejecting this historical appropriation, critics since the 1950s have articulated their appreciation for Herbert's art in a different way. Just as the index periodically identifies (or misidentifies according to modern critics) ceremonial things as the subject of Herbert's poetry, so too Harvey's poetry, although modelled on Herbert, also makes things, not ideas about the things, his real subject. A striking difference in their respective approaches to conformity emerges. Where Herbert meditated on what it meant to inhabit church offices, or clerical vestments, when the offices and the vestments themselves were indifferent, Harvey wrote in defense of the institutions as they stood: 'The Bishop? Yes, why not? What doth that name import / That is unlawful, or unfit?' (1647, 32). This didacticism leaves his verse vulnerable to modern criticism, but it also makes legible one interpretative field into which Herbert's legacy was conscripted and in which the subject index participated.

Among his many defenses of tradition and ceremony, Harvey's poem 'Church-festival' is especially interesting because it is a poem about books, and it seems to comment, from within the binding it shares with Herbert's collection, on the value of paratexts. Moreover, it does so by imitating perhaps the most distinctive lyric poem in Herbert's collection, 'Prayer (I)'. In that celebrated poem, the virtue of prayer is suggested by a list of images, and its effect made intelligible not by the connections of grammar, but by the uncommon juxtaposition of the mundane with the otherworldly, as in the images of 'reversed thunder'; 'Church bells beyond the stars heard'; and 'the soul in paraphrase' (l. 6, 13 and 3). Herbert's poem describes the resonance of prayer in terms of the material substrate of religious practice, but the everyday ringing of bells indicates a trajectory that is ultimately 'beyond' the scope of human perception. The bells are, in Hodgkins' terms, a vanishing edifice. But Harvey has it the other way around. In his 'Church Festivals', he borrows Herbert's verse form for a poem that presents festivals as the 'compendiums' of religious experience. They condense it, just as time-saving paratexts condense books into usable matter:

Marrow of time, eternity in brief  
 Compendiums eptimoz'd, the chief  
 Contents, the indices, the Title-pages  
 Of all past, present, and succeeding ages... (ll. 1-4)

For Harvey, ceremony is to the liturgical year as the index, the 'chief / Contents', and the epitome are to the text in full: devices which, by distilling religious experience, become essential features of its praxis. Like Stephens' subject index to *The Temple*, Harvey's devotional poetics reverses Herbert's, and materializes the spiritual.

#### 4. *Toward the First-line Index*

After 1709, no new editions of *The Temple* appeared until a fledgling Bristol publisher printed a new one in 1799. Unsurprisingly, the seventeenth-century subject index was dropped. Though Herbert was 'held', according to the editor of this edition, 'in no small estimation by the devotional writers of the beginning of the present century', the situation – the book out of print for almost the whole of that century – meant that readers had 'never been able to meet a copy of the whole work' and instead encountered Herbert's poetry primarily in 'detached sentiments' and dispersed fragments (Herbert 1799, iii). This editor reproduced the whole of *The Temple* in

an edition that likely fell into the hands of the young Coleridge, who was working near Bristol at the time and whose reflections on *The Temple* in *The Friend* (1809) and *Biographia Literaria* (1817) inspired a generation of readers to re-evaluate Herbert. The re-discovery of Herbert in the nineteenth century also involved a succession of editors, and saw the production of the first complete works (William Pickering, 1835) and the first major annotated and 'definitive' edition (Alexander Ballach Grosart, 1874).<sup>18</sup> Each retained a version of the original alphabetical table of titles (the collection's most durable index) but left the subject index behind.

It was not the lack of a subject index, or a lack of paratexts in general, that led G.H. Palmer at the turn of the twentieth century to lament the state of Herbert's editions. 'How loosely he is published', wrote Palmer, 'appears in the fact that his book is still without an index of first lines' (1905a, xiv). Distinguishing his new six-volume *English Works of George Herbert* from 'the many handy editions which are issued for devotional purposes', he set out to bring scholarly rigor to Herbert's corpus (xiv-xv). His main editorial intervention was to break apart the structure of *The Temple* and reorganize Herbert's lyric output chronologically. He created new groupings based on a speculative timeline of composition, and correlated poems with moments in Herbert's psychological and poetical development. This editorial intervention has largely been rejected, but the index of first lines, which was essential to the re-ordering project and implicitly part of the reaction against the devotional cast of Herbert's editors through the nineteenth century, has endured, becoming a standard feature in all of Herbert's major editions to the present day.

This indexing practice is not particular to Herbert's collection. Now, 'the norm of poetry books ... is to provide an index of first lines', as Duncan writes (2021, 267). The story of how and why this practice became standard has yet to be told, and is beyond the scope of this essay, but the emergence of the norm in editions of Herbert's poetry can be dated to Palmer's edition of 1905.<sup>19</sup> And there is one more historical coordinate that may be useful for understanding the widespread adoption of this indexing practice for lyric poetry around the turn of the twentieth century. That is, it emerged as an organizing principle for archival collections of lyric poetry in manuscript before it was normalized in print editions. In 1880 the staff of the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum began compiling the first-line index to poems in manuscript that still serves as a guide to the collections today. Other institutions followed suit and, over labor-intensive decades, compiled similar finding aids. In 1969, Margaret Crum published a *First-Line Index of English Poetry 1500-1800, in Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, a staggering achievement modelled on the British Library index, and in 2009 several major first line indexes (to the collections of the Huntington, Folger, Beinecke, Houghton, and other libraries, and also incorporating Steven May's first-line index to Elizabethan poetry) were synthesized as *The Union First Line Index*, a digital resource compiled and maintained by The Folger Shakespeare Library. Researchers in manuscript archives favor first-line indexes over indexes by author or title because, as James Woolley has written, 'a poem's first line usually remains stable from version to version' (2013, 1). These finding aids help scholars identify variant versions of a poem, including those attributed to different authors, printed under non-authorial titles, or circulated anonymously.

If the first-line index to lyric poems is primarily useful in manuscript miscellanies and in archives where authorship is unstable and titles are fluid and non-authorial, what use might it

<sup>18</sup> Grosart's edition is notable for its basis in a process of 'collation and re-collation' with 'original and early editions and manuscripts', including the (then) recently discovered Williams manuscript (quoted in Armbrust 1990, 145-146).

<sup>19</sup> There was one first line index in an earlier edition: the 'Table... to find any Poem by the First Line' in the Edward Suter edition of 1835. See Palmer 1911, 9.

serve for an author like Herbert, whose corpus has been relatively stable since the publication of the first print edition, for whom there are only two significant manuscript witnesses, and whose titles were authorial and consistent? It is suggestive that Palmer's initial call for the creation of a first-line index to Herbert accompanied his project of breaking up the collection. Only after Palmer's dismantling of the original structure of *The Temple* was a first-line index more useful than, say, the table of contents produced for the first print edition. Palmer's edition downplayed *The Temple's* large-scale architectonics and emphasized, instead, the formal diversity of Herbert's poetry. His Herbert was a poet who 'invents for each lyrical situation exactly the rhythmic setting which befits it' (Palmer 1905b, 136). A first-line index guides the reader toward this variety of forms more directly than the original table of titles, which corresponded to devotional topics, some of which recur several times. And unlike the subject index, the first-line index defers to the formal integrity of the individual poem. In this sense, it does not generalize. As Joseph Summers maintained, 'the only justifiable generalization [for Herbert] is that every poem required a new beginning, a new form, a new rhythm' (1954, 149), and first-line indexing identifies a poem, and enables access to it, by way of the beginning. Though originally an appendix to Palmer's re-ordered *English Works* of 1905, the first-line index has remained a standard feature of subsequent editions of *The Temple* that have restored the collection's original order, beginning with the landmark Hutchinson edition of 1941.

As Herbert's most recent print editor Helen Wilcox has written, in an article with Richard Todd, Palmer's experiment 'is unlikely ever to be repeated' because it 'disrupt[s] the conversations that take place among the lyrics in their 1633 sequence' (Todd and Wilcox 2012, 199). While Palmer's edition helped establish Herbert's reputation as a major English poet regardless of the religious sentiment of the reader, it also made it clear to readers such as T.S. Eliot, Louis Martz, and C.A. Patrides that to engage with Herbert 'we must study *The Temple* as a whole' (Eliot 1962, 17). Critics have identified the significance of sequential reading in *The Temple*, a mode of attention encouraged by the woodcut and engraved images of actual thresholds that encourage the reader to imagine entering the collection as though through a doorway (McLeod 1998). Both the reader entering through the front door via these paratextual thresholds and the reader entering through the backdoor via the subject index might experience the collection 'as a whole'.

These paratexts and their separate histories remind us that (as Peter Stallybrass has written) 'one paratext can be used to skip or evade another' (2011, 219) and neither should be granted a totalizing authority over the disposition of the volume. A corresponding emphasis in recent indexing practices has been to reintroduce the comparative resources of a subject index in different forms and so guide readers, readers to what Wilcox and Todd describe as the 'echoes internal to the volume' (2012, 200). In addition to a first line index, her edition includes an index of scriptural citations and allusions within the work. Likewise, the editors of *The Digital Temple*, a web-based edition published in 2012, seeking to amplify 'reverberating dialogue' among the poems, have built a parallel display feature which collates the two manuscript witnesses and the first print edition in a single field of view (Hodgkins and Whalen 2012). In place of an index, its strikingly user-oriented interface provides 'sophisticated search mechanisms' enabled by the granularity of its code through which the reader can index the work on the fly (Whalen 2011, 116). As early modern readers knew, sequential reading is not the only, or even the primary, means of sounding the totality of a work. And as Herbert knew, *The Temple's* resonances were internal not to the collection, but to the reader.

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