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JOHN DONNE AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN THE REFORMED ENGLISH CHURCH

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English at the University of Dublin, Trinity College, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2008

DECLARATION

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SUMMARY

This thesis examines the place of religious authority in the thought of John Donne. The methodology employed is a historically-contextualised close reading of Donne's works, with particular focus on the sermons. This reading is informed by a multi-disciplinary approach: historical and theological insights are of particular importance to this study, and allow us to understand Donne in the context of the Reformation. We focus on three principal loci of authority – Scripture, the Church, and the preacher. These areas were chosen, following a reading of Donne's works, because of their evident interest to Donne.

The first chapter examines the importance of Scriptural authority to Donne's thought. It begins by surveying the Reformation background of those issues that most interest Donne – the status of natural revelation, the complexities of *sola scriptura*, the questions of canonicity, and the best method – ecclesiastical or individual – of Scriptural interpretation. Having established this context, we investigate, in detail, how Donne addressed each of these concerns. The findings that emerge confirm the orthodoxy of Donne's view of Scripture, his indebtedness to the advances of Renaissance philological methods, and his preference for a reformed literal understanding of Scripture. This preference finds its root in Donne's understanding of the importance of the individual's engagement with Scripture.

The second chapter of this thesis discusses the role of ecclesiastical authority in Donne's thought. We begin with a survey of the recent historiography of the Jacobean and Caroline Church, and argue that the complexities and idiosyncrasies of Donne's position require us to be very cautious about too hastily attempting to label his views. We investigate the key ecclesiological concepts that emerged during the Reformation, in order to trace the genealogy of Donne's own approach. We also discuss the nature of Richard Hooker's contribution to the ecclesiology of the Church of England. Our focus on Hooker is justified by our study of Donne's Satyre III, which, we suggest, is indicative of the primary importance of a Hookerian methodology to Donne's ecclesiology. It is important not to overstate this importance, and the chapter goes on to examine the place of more traditional conformity and especially the role of *adiaphora* to Donne's understanding of ecclesiastical authority. Finally, we discuss Donne's efforts to define a tightly limited body of essential Christian truth. Steadfast adherence to this doctrine, and a refusal to be too precise about anything else is crucial to what we term Donne's 'essentialist ecumenism', and basic to his understanding of the Church as an instrument of unification, rather than division.

The final chapter examines the role of the preacher as a conduit of Scriptural and ecclesiastical authority. It begins by examining the status of the preacher in the historical and theological context of Donne's ministry. This involves consideration both of the Reformation understanding of the preacher, and the new understanding that was emerging as part of a program of what has been called *avant-garde* conformity. We consider Donne's negotiation of the

respective values of preaching, sacrament, and liturgy, and uncover evidence of his consistently high view of preaching, and of his opposition to the *avant-garde* programme. We focus, in some detail, on Donne's approach to issues of authority in his 1622 sermon on James' *Directions*. We also look at Donne's conception of the office of preacher, his repudiation of both the apostolic and prophetic offices as proper prototypes. In keeping with all this evidence, we also consider Donne's reluctance to describe himself as a priest, and his foregrounding of homiletic rather than sacerdotal responsibility. Finally, we examine Donne's account of the true source of power in preaching. This allows to counter an emphasis on Donne as a 'metaphysical' or even 'anglo-catholic' preacher, and to locate him, rather, as a practitioner of Morrissey's 'English reformed style.'

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been a long time in the making. It had its inception when, as a 17 year old I bought a copy of Logan Pearsall Smith's selection from Donne's sermons. I knew little enough about Donne and, apart from Pearsall Smith's introduction, nothing about the sermons. A more mature perspective may lead me to question the basis of his selection, but the effect of the purple passages that he gathered together was undeniable: entranced by their strange music I determined that some time, somewhere, and somehow I was going to spend time studying Donne and his sermons more completely.

This thesis, then, is a dream accomplished. And it could not have been accomplished without the help of a great many people, whose assistance I am glad to acknowledge. First of all, I wish to thank the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, for granting me a Postgraduate Scholarship. Without this generous financial support, I would not have been in a position to complete my Ph.D., and I venture to hope that this thesis will seem a fitting result of their investment in me.

I have been fortunate, at every stage of my educational career to have had inspiring teachers who encouraged me in many different ways. I would especially like to thank the staff of the English Department at Trinity College Dublin: as an undergraduate and a postgraduate it has been a pleasure to learn from, and to work with, them. I wish particularly to thank Professor John Scattergood for his inspiring teaching, and for his encouragement to do postgraduate work, and to concentrate on Donne. I wish also to acknowledge the great debt that I owe to Crawford Gribben. As a teacher, a colleague, and especially as a friend, he has been an invaluable source of encouragement, good council, and ideas. Among all my teachers, though, special thanks are due to Eiléan Ni Chuilleanáin, who supervised this thesis. Eiléan's erudition is matched only by her kindness, and I could not have wished for a better, more diligent or more humane supervisor. Working with her has been an enormous privilege, and I have profited enormously from her generous counsel and encouragement.

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The debts I owe to my teachers and friends are great, but they are insignificant compared to those that I owe to my family. I wish especially to thank my parents for their love,

encouragement, and confidence in me, and also for tangible expressions of this support. I would also like to thank Ernest and Ruth for all their support and help.

To Sara I want to express my love and my gratitude. During the course of this Ph.D. she has been consecutively my girlfriend, fiancée, and wife, and at all times she has been my closest confidante, best friend, and the fixed point whose firmness makes my circle just.

But above all this, I wish to acknowledge all that I owe to God my Father, who spared not his only Son, and who, with Him, has freely given all things. By His grace I am what I am, and it is to His glory that this thesis is dedicated.

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NOTE

In the interests of the reader's convenience, references to Donne's works throughout this thesis are given parenthetically in the text. The following abbreviations are used:

B – *Biathanatos*, Ed. Ernest W. Sullivan, (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1984)

D – *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, Ed. John Hanbury, Angus Sparrow, and Geoffrey Keynes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923)

ED – *Essayes in Divinity: being several disquisitions interwoven with meditations and prayers*, Ed. Anthony Raspa, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001)

I – *Ignatius his conclave*, Ed. Timothy S. Healy, S.J., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)

PM – *Pseudo-martyr: wherein out of certaine propositions and gradations, this conclusion is evicted, that those who are of the Romane religion in this Kingdome, may and ought to take the Oath of Allegience*, Ed. Anthony Raspa, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993)

SP – *Selected Prose*, Ed. Neil Rhodes, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987)

Quotations from Donne's sermons are taken from *The Sermons of John Donne*, Ed. G.R. Potter and Evelyn Mary Simpson, (Berkley: California University Press, 1953-1962), are referenced by (VOLUME, page). Quotations from Donne's poetic works are taken from *The complete English poems of John Donne*, Ed. C.A. Patrides, (London, Dent, 1985).

Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Scripture are taken from the Authorised (King James) Version.

INTRODUCTION

> Dr. Donne sent for a carver to make for him in wood the figure of an urn, giving him directions for the compass and height of it; and to bring with it a board of the just height of his body. These being got; then, without delay, a choice painter was got to be in readiness to draw his picture, which was taken as followeth. – Several charcoal-fires being first made in his large study, he brought with him into that place his winding-sheet in his hand; and having put off all his clothes, had this sheet put on him, and so tied with knots at his head and feet, and his hands so placed as dead bodies are usually fitted to be shrowded and put into their coffin or grave. Upon this urn he thus stood, with his eyes shut, and with so much of the sheet turned aside, as might show his lean, pale, and death-like face, which was purposely turned toward the east, from whence he expected the second coming of his and our Saviour Jesus. In this posture he was drawn at his just height; and when the picture was fully finished, he caused it to be set by his bed-side, here it continued, and became his hourly object till his death.[1]

So Donne's first biographer described one of the most remarkable preparations for death recorded in early-modern biography. The dying poet and preacher was setting the scene with the theatrical instinct that had informed and illuminated his preaching. Donne was erecting bulwarks against posterity – controlling both the adjunct circumstances of his death-bed, and the means by which he was to be remembered. It was a determined effort, but we can

[1] Izaak Walton, *The lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and Robert Sanderson* (London: Falcon Educational Books, 1951), 58-9

scarcely doubt that Donne had his reservations about its success. Any reservations that he did have were amply justified, for both his death and his posterity soon slipped out of his control. Death was slow to come: Donne was obliged to wait for fifteen days until the scene that he had set was fully played out. Later, the interment that Donne had, in his will, desired to be 'as private as may be'[2] became a public ceremony attended by 'an unnumbered number' of 'persons of Nobility, and of eminency for Learning.'[3] And yet, Donne was not entirely without success, for the monument that he so carefully bespoke survived the fire that demolished the other monuments that graced St Paul's Cathedral, and years sequestered in the cobwebs of the crypt, once more to take its place on the walls of the cathedral and visitors to St Paul's still see Donne as he desired to be seen, arrested in mid-resurrection, partially re-animated by the call of his Saviour. The context is dramatically changed, the presuppositions of those viewing are likely to be radically different; yet the hard residuum of Donne's autobiographical intent endures.

The symbolism is obvious, perhaps excessively so.[4] Nonetheless it has value, functioning to remind us of the complex interplay of intention and agenda that has surrounded the legacy of John Donne. Donne's biographers and the critics of his poetry and prose have provided us with Donne after Donne. Each of these depictions has relied on the same core of documentary evidence, but the material available has been reworked into multifarious readings, reshaped to the taste of different audiences, the exigencies of miscellaneous programmes.

Biography

Thus, biographers have described a variety of Donnes, figures that frequently reveal more about the biographer than their subject. The same could be said of any number of early-modern figures, any number, perhaps, of modern figures too. The situation, however, is especially notable in Donne's case. To a considerable degree, this is a concomitant of the volume and nature of material available to the biographer. R.C. Bald locates Donneian biography at a unique crux in English literary history:

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[2] R. C. Bald, *John Donne : a life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 563.
[3] Walton, *Lives*, 62.
[4] This essay in reading the symbolism of Donne's monument pales by comparison to the delightfully recherché speculations of Nigel Foxell, *A sermon in stone : John Donne and his monument in St Paul's Cathedral* (London: Menard Press, 1978).

> Donne must be the earliest major poet in English of whom an adequate biography is possible. The life of Chaucer can only be pieced together from fragmentary records. Records likewise are the basis for any account of Shakespeare's life; one letter addressed to him has survived, but none of those he wrote himself. A life of Shakespeare is usually filled out with copious descriptions of the age in which he lived and with an autobiographical reading of the works, especially of the *Sonnets*. Somewhat more is known of the lives of Spenser and Dryden, yet there are serious gaps in our knowledge of both.[5]

For Donne, then, we have an adequate profusion of biographical material. Adequate, but only just. And it is this state of affairs that makes Donneian biography so fraught an undertaking – the spare biographical data that has been preserved and unearthed by successive generations of scholars provides us with an outline, sufficiently clear, and tantalisingly suggestive: the trajectory is clear, the force of propulsion along that trajectory maddeningly elusive. This lacuna of motivation, the desire for psychological insight, has thrown generations of biographers upon Donne's canon, and on biographical interpretations of the works, a strategy that has resulted, not in a coherent Donne, but in a fractured and fragmented figure whose interiority seems to lie ever just beyond our reach.[6] This lack of synthesis is due, in no small part, to the variegated nature of the Donneian canon. His works includes poetry, both secular and sacred; letters, both prose and verse; the probable juvenilia *Paradoxes and Problems; The Courtier's Library,* the satirical catalogue of invented books; the casuistical treatise *Biathanatos*; the controversial work *Pseudo-martyr*, with its spin-off *Ignatius, his Conclave*; the *Essayes in Divinity*, a work of uncertain date and purpose; and the sermons filling, in the University of California Press edition, ten substantial volumes. The works are varied in genre, in style, in audience, and intent, and, while they can be grouped by common themes, present no obvious unifying theme spanning the whole canon. Biographical data are found in the letters, in *Biathanatos*, in the preface to *Pseudo-martyr*, scattered through the sermons,

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[5] Bald, *John Donne : a life*, 3.

[6] Dayton Haskin, 'Donne's afterlife', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) provides a helpful overview of Donne's biographers. Dayton Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) documents a comprehensive and fascinating exploration of 'the process by which "Doctor Donne" was transformed from a subject of hagiography: for some readers, into the irreverent and rebellious figure ...; for others, into an exalted love poet who became the object of a cult in the century that followed; for many more readers than there had been for many years, into a fascinating writer, who seemed a perpetual puzzle.' (xxi) An interesting example of divergent interpretations of even the more concrete biographical facts is provided in Deborah Aldrich Larson, 'John Donne and Biographical Criticism', *South Central Review* 4 no. 2 (1987):93-102,.

in the letters, and in the poetry. None of these sources is unproblematic: biographical allusions in the sermons and in the controversial works are made in service of a wider agenda, and the biographical status of the poetry is a complex and intractable interpretative problem.[7] The letters, while apparently more biographically fruitful, raise issues of their own, not least because they are often highly performative.[8] It is also not helpful that we still want a critical edition of the letters – a significant lacuna that is only now being addressed.[9] It is hardly surprising, then, that critics and biographers alike have struggled to integrate Donne's remarkably heteroglossic utterances into one consistent narrative.

The complexities of writing Donne's life do not, however, spring solely from the dictates of available biographical material. The available material has been shaped (in some cases) by writers with one eye firmly fixed on a purpose other than accurate and disinterested reporting. Of no one is this more true than Donne's first biographer, Izaak Walton. Walton's *Lives* conceal beneath a most appealing façade of simplicity an involved programme of Anglican hagiography.[10] Donne's past and poetry were gently elided, and he was depicted as the angelic preacher, marked by prodigious piety, with a predilection for Laudian churchmanship. If Walton instantiated the ideologically informed biography of Donne, his uncertainty as to what to do with the sensual and irreverent poetry, and the chequered reputation of the young Donne, were also to become staples of the genre: Walton's separation of the secular and the sacred into two watertight compartments of Donne's life was to cast a long shadow, as did his use of material from the sermons to gesture

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[7] Additionally, see Dayton Haskin, 'John Donne and the Cultural Contradicitons of Christmas', *John Donne Journal* 11 (1992):133-157, esp. 133-4 and P.G. Stanwood, 'John Donne's Sermon Notes', *Review of English Studies* 29 (1978):313-20, for discussions of the besetting uncertainty as to the correspondence between Donne's sermons as preached, and the sermons as later prepared for publication.

[8] Annabel Patterson, 'Misinterpretable Donne: The Testimony of the Letters', *John Donne Journal* 1 no. 1 (1982):39-54, provides an outstanding discussion of the biographical significance of the letters, and the issues of censorship and free speech that they raise. See also I.A. Shapiro, 'The Text of Donne's *Letters to Severall Persons*', *Review of English Studies* 29 (1931):291-301, R.E. Bennett, 'Donne's Letters from the Continent in 1611-12', *Philological Quarterly* 19 (1940):66-78, R.E. Bennett, 'Donne's *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*', *PMLA* 56 (1941):120-40, and John Carey, 'John Donne's Newsless Letters', *Essays and Studies* 34 (1981):45-65,.

[9] I.A. Shapiro began work on his edition of Donne's Letters for Oxford University Press in the mid 1930s. At the time of his death, in 1994, this project was still not completed. M. Thomas Hester, Dennis Flynn, and Ernest W. Sullivan II had been working on their own edition of the letters have taken over Shapiro's project at O.U.P., and have been granted permission, by Shapiro's estate, to make use of his work in progress. This invaluable project, whose gestation has been remarkably protracted, is nearing completion. See Carrie Richardson, *Bentley College Professor and Colleagues To Publish Prose Letters of John Donne with Support from National Endowment for the Humanities Grant* (Bentley College, 2006 [accessed 7 June 2007]; available from http://www.bentley.edu/news-events/pr_view.cfm?id=500874) and M. Thomas Hester, 'John Donne Editions', *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 October 2006 To date, the best resource for readers of the sermons has been John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour (1651)*, ed. M. Thomas Hester (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977).

[10] Walton's programme, and the way in which it shaped his *Lives* are discussed, with special reference to Donne by David Novarr, *The making of Walton's "Lives"*, *Cornell studies in English ; Vol.41* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958).

towards the conversion narrative in his description of Donne as a 'second Austine.'[11] Walton undoubtedly deserves our gratitude for the way in which his *Life of Donne* drove the first major revival of interest in Donne and his works that began towards the end of the eighteenth century, and peaked towards the middle of the nineteenth.[12] It would be futile, however, to deny that his biography ultimately complicated and muddied our understanding of Donne's character and life.

The revival of interest in Donne to which Walton's *Life* contributed was important, for it resulted in new editions of Donne's works. Henry Alford's *Works* (1839) claimed too large a scope for itself: in fact it only included the printed sermons, less than half of the poems, the *Devotions*, and the prose letters. While Alford's was not a scholarly edition, it represented a valuable contribution.[13] He was followed by Augustus Jessopp who, in 1855, published an edition of the *Essayes in Divinity*. In his sixty-page biographical prolusion, his later article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and his 1897 biography, Jessopp not only added facts to Walton's account, but moved Donne's biography away from the sort of hagiography in which Walton had engaged. At about the same time (1872-3), a new edition of the poems had appeared, edited by the 'indefatigable antiquarian' A.B. Grosart.[14] Grosart's lengthy introduction is eloquent of Victorian mores struggling to integrate Donne's varied material into one morally consistent narrative. In this endeavour Grosart lent further impetus to speculation about Donne's conversion. In doing so, he foregrounded Donne's Catholicism to a degree hitherto unseen, and introduced too the recurring trope of the redemptive power of Donne's love of a good woman, a trope based on the foregrounding of hints found in poems like Holy Sonnet 17 and the 'Nocturne upon St. Lucy's Day.' In the United States, a similar revival of interest in Donne was underway. Donne's poetry was edited by James Russell Lowell, whose project was seen through to its completion by Charles Eliot Norton, who brought a new level of scholarly attention to the instabilities of Donne's texts. Norton's contribution was summed up in his essay 'The Text of Donne's Poems', which, in

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[11] Walton, *Lives*, 30.

[12] See Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century* and, more comprehensively, Haskin, 'Donne's afterlife', 236-7.

[13] Alford's contribution is sympathetically accessed in Haskin, 'John Donne and the Cultural Contradicitons of Christmas', 143-48, and in Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century*, passim.

[14] Haskin, 'Donne's afterlife', 238 See also Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century*, 103-48 and passim, Dayton Haskin, 'New Historical Contexts for Appraising the Donne Revival from A.B. Grosart to Charles Eliot Norton', *ELH* 56 no. 4 (1989):869-95, Raoul Granqvist, *The Reputation of John Donne 1779-1873* (Uppsala: Studia Anglistica Upsalensia 24, 1975), and Roland Botting, 'The Reputation of John Donne during the Nineteenth Century', *Research Studies of the State College of Washington* 9 no. 3 (1941):139-88,.

addition to adumbrating his own principles of editing, excoriated Grosart and his edition with a vigour that is still remarkable.[15] Norton's principles, especially the importance that he attached to the careful collation of manuscripts of the poems, influenced the work of Sir Herbert Grierson, and in thus shaping the most important edition of the poems, have had an abiding impact on our understanding of Donne's works.

By the start of the twentieth century, then, the documentary basis for the study of Donne's work had been reasonably well laid. And, with the straw so thoughtfully provided, biographers began to make bricks with renewed zeal. Most notable was Edmund Gosse's two volume *Life and Letters* (1899). Gosse's work was based, in part, on the research of Augustus Jessop, and, as the title suggests, centred on the letters. The poems were also important for Gosse's view of Donne, who treated them 'as transparent windows onto the poet's own experience and used them to weave together a titillating plot about a young man's sexual awakening and long-delayed religious conversion.'[16] The volume's documentary material was valuable, the biography almost pure speculation. Gosse's work drew a response from Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf's father. Stephen praised Donne for casting off the shackles of religion, but found it difficult to account for his subsequent career. With little regard for the value of religious motivation, Stephen depicted Donne as an opportunist, whose motives were venal and self-serving, and this theme has endured in Donneian biography.

The same cycle of editorial and biographical work emerged in the twentieth century. The University of California Press ten-volume edition of the sermons, published from 1953 to 1962, and edited by G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson, was the most significant contribution to Donne studies of the century. The volumes were edited to a high scholarly standard: they remain one of the best editions of early-modern sermons available. The currency of this edition in a new century has been insured by the searchable on-line version made available by the Harold B. Lee Library at the Brigham Young University. Evelyn Simpson drew on her experience as editor of the

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[15] C.E. Norton, 'The Text of Donne's Poems', in *Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, v: Child Memorial Volume* (Boston: Ginn, 1869)

[16] Haskin, 'Donne's afterlife', 240, and Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century*, 164-73. On Gosse's role in the 'Donne revival' see Clement H. Wyke, 'Edmund Gosse as Biographer and Critic of Donne: His Fallible Role in the Poet's Rediscovery', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 17 (1975-6):805-19, Raoul Granqvist, 'Edmund Gosse: The Reluctant Critic of John Donne', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 87 (1986):262-71, and Raoul Granqvist, 'The Reception of Edmund Gosse's *Life of John Donne*', *English Studies* 67 (1986):525-38,.

sermons in her selection *Sermons on the Psalms and Gospels* (1963), republished as *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and Gospels: with a selection of prayers and meditations* in 2003. Selected extracts from the California edition were published, with extensive annotation by Janel L. Mueller, as *Donne's Prebend Sermons* (1971). The commentary is far more extensive than was practicable in the larger edition, and the treatment of the Prebend sermons as a subset with a recognisable unity was a suggestive and productive way of looking at the sermons. In 1978, Clarendon Press published Helen Gardner's new edition of the Divine Poems., revising her own seminal 1952 edition. In 1970, Oxford University Press published R.C. Bald's *John Donne: A Life.* Bald's biography was meticulously researched, and it remains required reading for any serious study of Donne. It is notable, however, that, in the midst of the fine archival and historical research embodied in the work, Donne as poet and preacher is somewhat lost, and Donne the bureaucrat, administrator, and ambitious *apparatchik* is given considerable prominence. The detailed research embodied in Bald's volume has been helpfully and suggestively supplemented by Dennis Flynn's *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (1995),[17] and Paul R. Sellin's *So Doth, so is Religion: John Donne and Diplomatic Contexts in the Reformed Netherlands, 1619-1620* (1998) is enlightening in its very specific context. Bald's earlier work, *Donne and the Drurys* (1959), though superseded in large measure by *A Life*, remains valuable for its focussed examination of Donne's relationship with an important family.

Far less painstaking in its research and more popular in its appeal was John Carey's *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (1981, expanded ed. 1990). The picture of Donne that emerges from Carey's work of psychological eisegesis has unmistakable resemblances with that sketched by Stephen, but he is altogether bolder in his criticism of the work. For Carey, Donne's 'apostasy' from Catholicism, with its concomitant burden of guilt, is his basic psychological determinant, played out in a career marked with the consuming ambition of a jumped-up social climber and in his eventual mix of cringing fear and gloating power-play in the service of a dark and vengeful God. Carey's work is not of a character to withstand scholarly scrutiny; but he is so often and so

[17] Flynn argues for a Donne still largely Catholic in belief, a position first adumbrated in Dennis Flynn, 'Donne's Catholicism I', *Recusant History* 13 (1975):1-17, and Dennis Flynn, 'Donne's Catholicism II', *Recusant History* 13 (1976):178-95,.

egregiously mistaken in his interpretation of the evidence that any very detailed rebuttal would be tedious reading indeed. It may be for this reason that there have been few sustained responses to Carey's work.[18] Only one biography, certainly, has pitched itself as a corrective to *Life, Mind and Art*. David L. Edwards' *John Donne: A Man of Flesh and Spirit* (2002) explicitly located itself as the opposition to Carey. Unfortunately, his defence is ham-stringed by his embarrassment with Donne's religious belief, a stance that comes as something of a surprise in light of Edwards' own position as a minister of the Church of England, and his office, within that church as Canon of Westminster Abbey and as Speaker's Chaplain in the House of Commons. This, Edwards maintains, is a positive advantage to his understanding of Donne, for 'this is the first book about Donne ever to have been written by a man who has preached often in London, as he did.'[19] This may be so, but Edwards seems ill at ease with Donne's doctrine, and thus, feels obliged to invite his readers to excuse Donne for not looking beyond the religious options of his day, for believing in the literal truth of the Genesis account of creation, and for his remarks upon the irrationality of atheism.

Both Carey and Edwards have, according to their lights, attempted to find principles that can act as an integrating force for our understanding of the life of Donne, and a similar effort was made by John Stubbs in *Donne: the Reformed Soul* (2006), a popular-level reworking of the dominant themes of Donne biography, with an obvious debt to Gosse and Grosart, described by one reviewer as 'microwave biography at its worst.'[20] Other writers have tended to deny the possibility of any such synthesis, and have followed Walton's lead in insisting on a clear

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[18] However, see for a telling methodological critique Jeanne M. Shami, 'Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation', in *John Donne's Religious Imagination: Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross*, ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances M. Malpezzi (Conway, AR: UCA Press, 1995), for intelligent biographical responses, Dennis Flynn, 'Donne's politics, "desperate ambition," and meeting Paolo Sarpi in Venice', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99 no. 3 (2000):334-355, Jeanne M. Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 10-11 and passim, Patterson, 'Misinterpretable Donne: The Testimony of the Letters', Annabel Patterson, 'Afterword', *John Donne Journal* 14 (1995):219-30, and, for a more pithy rebuttal, William Kerrigan, 'What Was Donne Doing?' *South Central Review* 4 no. 2 (1987):2-15, esp 2-3. Kerrigan summarises Carey's approach as 'C.S. Lewis warmed over for an age of feminism.' Such a comment might well be considered a compliment – it is clear that Kerrigan does not so intend it. P. M. Oliver, *Donne's religious writing: a discourse of feigned devotion* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), on the other hand, enthusiastically endorses Carey's reading, and reflects on an entire canon of hypocritical performative works with considerable distaste. Debora Kuller Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) follows Carey's interpretation. Richard Strier, 'Donne and the Politics of Devotion', in *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688*, ed. Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) attempts a more nuanced accommodation of the basic Bald-Carey paradigm.

[19] David L. Edwards, *John Donne: Man of Flesh and Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002), viii.

[20] Mark Ford, 'John Donne, overdone,' *Financial Times*, August 18 2006.

demarcation between the secular and the sacred. Examples of this tendency include Hugh Fausset's dated *John Donne: A Study in Discord* (1924, reprint 1967), Edward Le Comte's *Grace to a Witty Sinner: A Life of Donne* (1965),[21] and Mary Clive's rather curious fictionalised account *Jack and the Doctor* (1966). In more recent work, Donne has seemed to fracture further, and some of the most valuable recent studies have been essay-length contributions that have focused on specific areas of Donne's life, without making very much attempt at a totalising biography. Pre-eminently useful are such collections as *John Donne's Professional Lives* (2003), edited by David Colcough, *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation* (2003), edited by Mary Papazian, and the earlier *festschrift* for John Shawcross, *John Donne's Religious Imagination* (1995) edited by Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances Malpezzi. These collections have espoused careful and contextualised readings of Donne texts, and have focused, to their advantage on the historical, and the historicist, rather than on the psychological. To them must be added the enormous plethora of valuable insights and discoveries documented in hundreds of journal articles and book chapters.

Critical Literature

A strikingly similar turn from grand narrative to detailed study can be seen in the critical history of Donne's sermons. While Donne's contemporaries had known him, and celebrated him primarily as a preacher, interest in the sermons only revived in the twentieth century. Logan Pearsall Smith published an anthology of purple passages in 1919. Smith acknowledged the unrepresentative nature of these extracts, but nonetheless presented them as the chief motivation for reading the sermons: 'lost in the crabbed, unread, unreadable folios of his sermons, these "volumes of religion and mountains of piety", there are pages and passages of surprising beauty, which are nevertheless entirely unknown to English readers.'[22] A paradigm of reading Donne was being established here – a trawling through the sermons to unearth the sort of vivid image that had been posited as the most important feature of Donne's poetry. W. Fraser Mitchell's *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson* (1932) perpetuated this approach to the study of Donne's sermons, but complicated it by embedding them in the master narrative of the

[21] See also Edward Le Comte, 'Jack Donne: From Rake to Husband', in *Just So Much Honor*, ed. Peter Amadeus Fiore (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972).
[22] Logan Pearsall Smith, ed., *Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919), xxi.

emergence of a 'metaphysical' style of preaching associated with anachronistically labelled 'Anglo-Catholic' preachers. In support of this, Donne and Andrewes were yoked together as the progenitors of a new 'metaphysical' preaching reacting against the barren sterility of Reformed homiletics. The unhappy effect of this was the lumping together of two preachers who differed widely both in terms of their style and churchmanship. And Donne is not, for the most part, an especially 'metaphysical' preacher. Mitchell's mistaken identification of Donne's ecclesiastical allegiance was perpetuated in the first book-length study of his theology. Itrat Husain's *The dogmatic and mystical theology of John Donne* (1938, reprinted 1970) was an effort to remake Donne in Andrewe's assumed 'Anglo-Catholic' image. The reprint of Husain's work reflects a continued interest in Mitchell's grand narrative, which persisted, albeit in a slightly more nuanced form, at the heart of Horton Davies' *Like Angels from a Cloud: the English Metaphysical Preachers, 1588-1645* (1986). The titular allusion to Walton's description of Donne is not misleading – Donne is, once more, dragooned as the prime representative of the style.

In general, though, the publication of the Potter and Simpson edition has marked something of a turn in the study of Donne's sermons. With the full canon of sermons readily available for the first time, some attempt could be made to form a more complete picture of his interests and occupations. Even before the California edition had been published in its entirety, J.B. Haviland had completed doctoral research on 'The Use of the Bible in the Sermons of John Donne' (1960), and while the sort of cataloguing exercise that he engaged in may not have allowed for a great deal of very deep insight, it neatly illustrated some new possibilities offered by the publication of the complete sermons. In 1962, co-incident with the publication of the final volume of the California edition, William R. Mueller's *John Donne: Preacher* provided a broad sketch of Donne as homiletic practitioner. Gale H. Carrithers examined a selection of sermons in his study *Donne at Sermons: A Christian Existential World* (1972). In 1977, Elizabeth Tebeux completed her doctoral dissertation 'John Donne and Anglicanism: The Relationship of his Theology to Richard Hooker's' at Texas A&M University, and, while the developments in Jacobean church history have dated her work, it provided refreshing evidence of a new engagement with the detail and context of Donne's theology.

More recently, these discussions of Donne's theology, as expressed in the sermons, have been joined by others of greater theological sophistication. Paul R. Sellin grasped a perennially problematic critical nettle in his *John Donne and "Calvinist" Views of Grace* (1983). With his characteristic alertness to historical context, and close attention to the text of Donne's sermons, Sellin offered a provocative, if ultimately less than convincing, interrogation of the popular image of a Donne more Arminian than Calvinist. The quotation marks in the title look typographically odd, but they are indicative of Sellin's grasp of the complexity of identifying a stable Calvinism, and this realisation brings to his work a very welcome level of nuance. Randolph Daniel's article 'Reconciliation, Covenant and Election: A Study in the Theology of John Donne' (1966) though necessarily less exhaustive, is similarly noteworthy.[23] Of still greater importance in this context is Jeffrey Johnson's *The Theology of John Donne* (1999). Johnson has appropriated the most pithy title for a work of this kind, and it may be an unbecoming symptom of chagrin to point out that his work does not quite live up to the sort of inclusive scale promised by the title. That said, his work is a very valuable investigation; commencing with a discussion of the Trinity as Donne's theological first premise, and moving on to discuss Donne's views on common prayer, the use of images, and his doctrine of repentance. The discussion provides a convincing integration of subjects that are, on the face of it, rather disparate. Johnson also deserves considerable credit for his view, stated in his introduction that Donne deserves to be treated 'as a theologian in his own right who is worthy of study in the development of seventeenth-century theology and in the history of the Church of England.'[24]

A range of scholarly contributions have focused on the specifics of Donne's method and message. So, for example, Terry Sherwood, in his article 'Reason in Donne's Sermons' (1972), and his *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of Donne's Thought* (1984) has called into serious question the conception of Donne as a sceptic and fideist, an enterprise in which Irving Lowe's 'John Donne: The Middle Way' (1961) shared.[25] Dennis Quinn, in 'Donne's Christian Eloquence' (1960) and 'John Donne's Principles of Biblical Exegesis' (1962), examined the sermons to elucidate Donne's

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[23] E. Randolph Daniel, 'Reconciliation, Covenant and Election: A Study in the Theology of John Donne', *Anglican Theological Review* 48 (1966):14-30,.
[24] Jeffrey Johnson, *The theology of John Donne, Studies in Renaissance literature, vol.1* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), ix.
[25] Terry G. Sherwood, 'Reason in Donne's Sermons', *ELH* 39 no. 3 (1972):353-74, and Irving Lowe, 'John Donne: The Middle Way', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 no. 3 (1961):389-97,.

homiletic method.[26] Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin's chapter-length study of 'Time, Place and Congregation in Donne's Sermons' (1984) was also occupied with homiletic nicety, stressing Donne's sense of his sermons as events whose meaning is intensified by their spatial, temporal and social location.[27] Paul Harland's articles on 'Dramatic Technique and Personae in Donne's Sermons' (1986) and 'Imagination and Affections in John Donne's Preaching' (1987) are further contributions to the study of Donneian homiletics, concentrating on the performative element of Donne's presentation.[28]

The emergence, during the 1980s, of the New Historicism left a clear mark on the field of Donne studies. One of the most valuable contributions to the subject of Donne's writing was Arthur F. Marotti's *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (1986), a study that was noticeably New Historicist in its guiding principles. This volume is, indeed, a powerful vindication of the illuminating potential of the New Historicist interest in cultural context and societal interrelationship. Marrotti painstakingly reconstructs the *milieu* in which Donne moved, and the audience for whom much of his poetry was written. The insights which result from his researches have relevance for much of this project, and especially for our treatment of the poetry. In particular, Marrotti's work is a preventative against our succumbing too readily to the idea that the poems offer us any sort of direct access to the inner recesses of Donne's mind. Much that has puzzled critics about the poems is suggestively addressed by this volume.

The rise of the New Historicism can also be traced in the critical literature that concentrates more directly on the sermons. At first this is manifest in the appearance of studies that, while not especially New Historicist in method, share that critical method's preoccupation with power relationships. Elizabeth Tebeaux developed some themes of her doctoral work in 'Donne and Hooker on the Nature of Man. The Diverging "Middle Way"' (1981), and in 'John Donne and the Problem of Religious Authority: "Wranglings that tend not to edification"' (1982),

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[26] Dennis B. Quinn, 'Donne's Christian Eloquence', *ELH* 27 no. 4 (1960):276-297, Dennis B. Quinn, 'John Donne's Principles of Biblical Exegesis', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* LXI (1962):313-29,.

[27] Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, 'Time, Place and Congregation in Donne's Sermons', in *Literature and Learning in Medieval and Renaissance England*, ed. V. J. Scattergood (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1984).

[28] Paul W. Harland, 'Dramatic Technique and Personae in Donne's Sermons', *ELH* 53 no. 4 (1986):709-726, Paul W. Harland, 'Imagination and Affections in John Donne's Preaching', *John Donne Journal* 6 no. 1 (1987):33-50,.

an article that primarily discussed the role of reason in Donne's thought.[29] Her work confirmed the picture that had been delineated with great accuracy by Roy Battenhouse in his article 'The grounds of religious toleration in the thought of John Donne' (1942).[30] These articles directly concern Donne's churchmanship, a theme that has been taken up by Daniel Doerksen. Doerksen, in 'Preaching pastor versus custodian of order: Donne, Andrewes, and the Jacobean church' (1994) in his book-length study *Conforming to the Word: Herbert, Donne, and the English Church before Laud* (1997), and in 'Polemist or Pastor? Donne and Moderate Calvinist Conformity' (2003) has set about pigeon-holing Donne's ecclesiastical allegiance.[31] In terms of political authority, David Nicholls contributed a neatly symmetrical set of articles on 'The theological politics of John Donne' (1984), and 'The political theology of John Donne' (1988).[32] More recently, work more clearly identifiable as New Historicist in both method and concern has concentrated on the problematic issue of Donne's absolutism. Carrithers and Hardy's essay on 'Donne's Politics' (1992) uses evidence from the sermons to undermine the picture of Donne as absolutist that had emerged from the work of Bald and Carey, amongst others.[33] David Norbrook's 'The Monarchy of Wit and the Republic of Letters' (1990) and Annabel Patterson's 'John Donne, kingsman?' (1991) had already engaged in a similar exercise, drawing on a range of sources beyond the sermons to present Donne's view of royal authority.[34] Debora Shuger contributed a very influential discussion of the same issue in her *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (1990). The view of Donne's commitment to absolutism adumbrated by

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[29] Elizabeth de Volin Tebeaux, 'Donne and Hooker on the Nature of Man. The Diverging "Middle Way"', *Restoration Quarterly* 24 no. 1 (1981):29-44, Elizabeth de Volin Tebeaux, 'John Donne and the Problem of Religious Authority: "Wranglings that tend not to edification"', *South Central Bulletin* 42 no. 4 (1982):137-43,.

[30] Roy W. Battenhouse, 'The Grounds of Religious Toleration in the Thought of John Donne', *Church History* 11 no. 3 (1942):217-28,.

[31] Daniel W. Doerksen, 'Preaching pastor versus custodian of order: Donne, Andrewes, and the Jacobean church', *Philological Quarterly* 73 no. 4 (1994):417-30, Daniel W. Doerksen, *Conforming to the word : Herbert, Donne, and the English church before Laud* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), and Daniel W. Doerksen, 'Polemist or Pastor? Donne and Moderate Calvinist Conformity', in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003). *Conforming to the Word* provides a helpful consideration of the detail of Herbert's ministry. In spite of the title, Donne is covered far less thoroughly. Frustratingly, Doerksen tends to develop his argument in relation to Herbert, and simply to add that similar proof can be adduced in Donne's case, without ever providing evidence that this is so.

[32] David Nicholls, 'Divine Analogy: The Theological Politics of John Donne', *Political Studies* 32 (1984):570-80, David Nicholls, 'The Political theology of John Donne', *Theological Studies* 49 (1988):45-66,.

[33] Gale H. Carrithers Jr. and James D. Handy Jr, 'Love, Power, DustRoyall, Gavelkinde: Donne's Politics', *John Donne Journal* 11 (1992):39-58,.

[34] David Norbrook, 'The Monarchy of Wit and the Republic of Letters: Donne's Politics', in *Soliciting interpretation : literary theory and seventeenth-century English poetry*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990)Annabel Patterson, 'John Donne, kingsman?' in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Shuger has been fiercely, and persuasively, criticised by Jeanne Shami, in her essay 'Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation' (1995). This essay also contains a very valuable methodological discussion, whose importance we will discuss further.[35] This methodology was applied, to great effect, by Shami in *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (2003). This very important study built, in its turn, on her earlier work. Some congruent themes have also been treated by Marla Lunderberg in her study of 'John Donne's Strategies for Discreet Preaching' (2004).[36] These studies have displayed an increasing consciousness of Donne's historical context, and the occasional nature of the sermon.

Shami's contribution to the debate about Donne's political views is not an isolated or occasional piece of writing. Rather, the methodological considerations she outlined in response to Shuger are part of a wider scholarly project. The roots of this project can, in large degree, be traced to a crucially important collection of essays on early-modern sermons, edited by Lori Anne Ferrall and Peter McCullough, and building upon their influential studies: Ferrell's *Government by Polemic* (1998) and McCullough's *Sermons at Court: Politics and religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean preaching* (1998).[37] *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History 1600-1750* (2000) embodied the emerging scholarship on the subject, work which, as indicated by the sub-title, fostered an awareness of the importance of multi- and interdisciplinary approaches. The sort of history in which the contributors engaged was heavily indebted to work done on ecclesiastical history by revisionist historians. Ferrell and McCullough contributed a seminal introduction, which stresses the cultural impact of the sermon and the consequent importance of its study. They also outlined the weaknesses of earlier studies of the sermon, and indicated a path forward. The contributors to this volume have continued prolific in their scholarship of the early-modern sermon, and have continued to stress the value of a contextually located, historically aware and

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[35] Shami, 'Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation' See the bibliography for a comprehensive listing of Shami's contributions to the study of Donne's sermons. The material produced before the publication of *Conformity in Crisis* has, in Shami's own analysis been subsumed into that volume. Jeanne Shami, '"Trying to Walk on Logs in Water": John Donne, Religion, and the Critical Tradition', *Renaissance and Reformation* 25 no. 4 (2001):81-99, was written after the larger work was completed, and provides a valuable complement to the material covered there.

[36] Marla Hoffman Lunderberg, 'John Donne's Strategies for Discreet Preaching', *Studies in English Literature, 1500 - 1900* 44 no. 1 (2004):97-119,.

[37] Peter E. McCullough, 'Making Dead Men Speak: Laudianism, Print, and the Works of Lancelot Andrewes, 1626-1642', *The Historical Journal* 41 no. 2 (1998):401-24, provided a further, very valuable, contribution.

textually based study of the sermons.[38] They have displayed a consistent interest in methodological development, a theme to which Mary Morrissey, in particular, had previously contributed.[39] Of late, there has been a sense of disciplinary consolidation – in 2006, a conference, 'Preaching and Politics in Early-Modern Preaching', co-organised by Morrissey and Hugh Adlington, included plenary papers delivered by McCullough, Morrissey, Shami, and Ferrell, surveying the state of sermon studies. Arising out of this conference, work has begun on the *Oxford Handbook to Early Modern Preaching*, to be edited by Adlington, McCullough, and Emma Rhatigan.[40] This volume, which is to include chapters on Scottish and Welsh sermons, is notable for its extension of the sermon canon beyond the court and London bias of contemporary work. In the context, specifically of Donne studies, a new and fully annotated sixteen volume edition of the sermons is being prepared by Oxford University Press, under the general editorship of Peter McCullough.

Donne's sermons are, of course, just one part of his *oeuvre*. The Donne canon includes the poetry, and other prose works. The critical bibliography of the poems is extensive, and to treat it with any claim to exhaustiveness would be impracticable and undesirable.[41] There are, however, a number of critical studies of the religious and theological significance of the poems that merit brief mention. It is also important to mention Helen Gardner's influential edition of the *Divine*

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[38] See, for example, Peter E. McCullough, 'Donne as Preacher at Court: Precarious 'Inthronization'', in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), Peter E. McCullough, ed., *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Mary Morrissey, 'John Donne as a Conventional Paul's Cross Preacher', in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003)Mary Morrissey, 'Scripture, style and Persuasion in Seventeenth-Century English Theories of Preaching', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53 no. 4 (2002):686-706, Bryan Crockett, 'From Pulpit to Stage: Thomas Playfere's Influence on Shakespeare', *Notes and Queries* 49 no. 2 (2002):243-5, Alison Shell and Arnold Hunt, 'Donne's religious world', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* Jeanne M. Shami, 'Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion in Donne's Sermons', in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), and Jeanne M. Shami, '"Speaking Openly and Speaking First": John Donne, the Synod of Dort and the Early Stuart Church', in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003)

[39] Mary Morrissey, 'Interdisciplinarity and the Study of Early Modern Sermons', *The Historical Journal* 42 no. 4 (1999):1111-23,.

[40] Although Adlington was not involved in *The English Sermon Revised*, his article on the influence of Donne's legal training on his preaching clearly displays a very similar approach to the sermons – see Hugh Adlington, 'The Preacher's Plea: Juridical Influence in John Donne's Sermons, 1618-1623', *Prose Studies* 26 no. 3 (2003):344-56,. Rhatigan is currently working on a monograph discussing Donne's Lincoln's Inn sermons based on her PhD research. The finished work promises to be a very fine contribution to our understanding of this important context of Donne's earlier sermons. See, for a kind of first fruits, Emma Rhatigan, 'Knees and Elephants: Donne Preaches on Ceremonial Conformity', *John Donne Journal* 23 (2004):185-213,.

[41] See, for more comprehensive cataloguing, Geoffrey Keynes, *A bibliography of Dr John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's* 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973)John R. Roberts, *John Donne : an annotated bibliography of modern criticism, 1912-1967* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1973)John R. Roberts, *John Donne : an annotated bibliography of modern criticism, 1979-1995* (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2004).

Poems (1952). Dame Helen's discussion of the problem of the correct sequence in which the 'Holy Sonnets' should be arranged was especially influential, even if it was frequently invoked by later critics only to be dismissed. This problematic sonnet sequence is central to a number of studies of the meditative poetry of the Reformation. The seminal work in this regard was Louis L. Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation : a study in English religious literature of the seventeenth century* (1954), which developed a thesis that the cultural dearth of Reformed England had sent poets to the Catholic forms of Ignatian meditation as a method of expressing their interiority.[42] This thesis was countered in Barbara Lewalski's *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (1979). Lewalski's work argues for the Protestantism of meditative sonnet sequence, and while unsatisfactory in detail, it is suggestive in its sketching of development of an English Protestant poetic, with Donne playing a leading role.[43] More recently, Ramie Targoff, in *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (2001), has followed Lewalski in stressing the essential Protestantism of the meditative tradition exemplified in these poems, but has interrogated the assumption made by both Martz and Lewalski, that these sequences should be understood as purely private and individual acts of meditation. John Stachniewski's 'John Donne: The Despair of the "Holy Sonnets"' (1981) engages with similar themes, stressing a Calvinist version of meditation. More recently, Paul Cefalu has revisited these themes with a greater degree of theological sophistication in 'Godly Fear, Sanctification, and Calvinist Theology in the Sermons and "Holy Sonnets" of John Donne' (2003).[44] Richard Strier has looked at some of the same issues in his 1989 article 'John Donne Awry and Squint: The "Holy Sonnets," 1608-1610'.[45] After the 'Holy Sonnets', Donne's Satyre III has the greatest potential to be read as theological autobiography, and it is hardly surprising that a number of studies have been published. Camille Slights studied the poem as an exemplar of 'Anglican casuistry' in her important article

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[42] Louis L. Martz, ed., *The meditative poem : an anthology of seventeenth-century verse* (New York: New York University Press, 1963) gave further expression to this thesis. See also the essays in John R. Roberts, ed., *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1994).

[43] See Louis L. Martz, 'Meditation as Poetic Strategy', *Modern Philology* 80 no. 2 (1982):168-74, for a review of Lewalski's volume, and a riposte to the central elements of her argument.

[44] Paul Cefalu, 'Godly fear, sanctification, and Calvinist theology in the sermons and "Holy Sonnets" of John Donne', *Studies in Philology* 100 no. 1 (2003):71-86,.

[45] Richard Strier, 'John Donne Awry and Squint: The "Holy Sonnets," 1608-1610', *Modern Philology* 86 no. 4 (1989):357-84,

'"To Stand Inquiring Right": The Casuistry of Donne's "Satyre III"' (1972).[46] Strier has discussed the poem in his 'Radical Donne: "Satire III"' (1993), and it is also central to Joshua Scodel's 'John Donne and the Religious Politics of the Mean' (1995).[47] Paul Sellin has provided a discussion of the problems of dating the "Satyre", and an argument that the issue must be revisited in his article 'The Proper Dating of John Donne's Satyre III' (1980).[48] The Satyres as a whole have been discussed at greater length by M. Thomas Hester in *Kind Pitty and Brave Scorn: John Donne's Satyres* (1982).[49] The poetry that Donne wrote after his ordination also deals with a number of theological issues, and these poems are discussed productively by David Novarr in *The Disinterred Muse: Donne's Texts and Contexts* (1980). A number of studies have concentrated on the importance of sacrament, and especially of the Eucharist in Donne's wider poetic canon, most notably Theresa DiPasquale's *Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and Secular in John Donne* (2001), Robert Whalen's *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert* (2002), Robert V. Young's *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (2000) and Felecia Wright McDuffie's *To Our Bodies Turn We Then: Body as Word and Sacrament in the Works of John Donne* (2005).[50] Joan Webber's earlier work, *Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne* (1963) had also highlighted the importance of the sacramental in Donne, with greater relevance to the study of the prose works.

Writing on Donne's prose works, other than the sermons, is sparse, and the more recondite recesses of his canon have yet to receive the critical attention that they deserve. The *Devotions* have been studied, in the light of Louis Martz's ideas, as exercises in meditation, perhaps most influentially by Andreasen in 'Donne's *Devotions* and the Psychology of Assent' (1965), a reading that has been helpfully extended by Robert M. Cooper in his 'The Political

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[46] Camille Slights, '"To Stand Inquiring Right": The Casuistry of Donne's "Satyre III"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 12 no. 1 (1972):85-101, see also Camille Wells Slights, *The Casuistical Tradition in Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, and Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[47] Richard Strier, 'Radical Donne: "Satire III"', *ELH* 60 no. 2 (1993):283-322, and Joshua Scodel, 'John Donne and the Religious Politics of the Mean', in *John Donne's Religious Imagination - Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross*, ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances M. Malpezzi (Conway, AR: UCA Press, 1995).

[48] Paul R. Sellin, 'The Proper Dating of John Donne's "Satyre III"', *The Huntington Library Quarterly* XLIII no. 4 (1980):275-312,.

[49] See also John T. Shawcross, 'All attest his writs canonical: the texts, meaning and evaluation of Donne's Satires', in *Just so much honor*, ed. Peter Amadeus Fiore (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972) and Thomas V. Moore, 'Donne's Use of Uncertainty as a Vital Force in "Satyre III"', *Modern Philology* 67 no. 1 (1969):41-9,.

[50] An important chapter of Whalen's work reappears as Robert Whalen, 'Sacramentalizing the Word: Donne's 1626 Christmas Sermon', in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor-Stuart Middle Way*, ed. Daniel W. Doerksen and Cristopher Hodgkins (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004). See also Lori Anne Ferrell, 'Donne and His Master's Voice, 1615-1625', *John Donne Journal* 11 (1992):59-72,.

Implications of Donne's *Devotions*' (1977).[51] Kate Narveson has engaged with some of the same issues to address questions of genre in her article 'Piety and the Genre of Donne's Devotions' (1998).[52] Kate Frost has written the most extensive discussion of the *Devotions* yet attempted in her *Holy delight: typology, numerology, and autobiography in Donne's Devotions upon emergent occasions* (1990). Elena Levy-Navarro's 'Breaking Down the Walls that Divide: Anti-Polemicism in the Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions' (2003) is manifestly more specific, but equally valuable. [53] David Gray and Jeanne Shami have found in their reading of the work a notable political independence; Richard Strier has responded to this with an interpretation that stresses rather Donne's principled loyalty to the *status quo*.[54] Doerksen has opposed Strier's reading with a study of 'Scripturalist Moderation in Donne's Devotions' (2004), much in the mould of his previous efforts to define Donne as 'a conformist member of the Jacobean Calvinist consensus.'[55] More recently, Kathleen Lynch has examined the Devotions as part of her forthcoming study *Truth and Circumstances: Religious Experience in the Seventeenth-Century Anglo Atlantic World*.[56] *Biathanatos*, the rather odd casuistical discussion of the permissibility of suicide is central to Meg Lota Brown's *Donne and the Politics of Conscience in Early Modern England* (1995). Add Brown's earlier discussion of 'Interpretative authority in Donne's *Biathanatos*' (1991), R. Siemens '"I haue often such a sickly inclination": Biography and the Critical Interpretation of Donne's Suicide Tract, *Biathanatos*' (2001), William Speed Hill's 'John Donne's Biathanatos: Authenticity, Authority, and Context in Three Editions' (1987) and two short notes by Malloch and Allen, and a survey of the recent

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[51] N.J.C. Andreasen, 'Donne's "Devotions" and the Psychology of Assent', *Modern Philology* 62 no. 3 (1965):207-16, Robert M. Cooper, 'The Political Implications of Donne's *Devotions*', in *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Gary A. Stringer, *Salzburg Studies in English Literature - Elizabethean and Renasiiance Studies* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1977). See also Gerard H. Cox III, 'Donne's Devotions: A Meditative Sequence on Repentance', *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973):331-51,.

[52] Kate Narveson, 'Piety and the genre of Donne's *Devotions*', *John Donne Journal* 17 (1998):107-36, see also Kate Narveson, 'Publishing the Sole-talk of the Soule: Genre in Early Stuart Piety', in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor-Stuart Middle Way*, ed. Daniel W. Doerksen and Cristopher Hodgkins (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004).

[53] Elena Levy-Navarro, 'Breaking Down the Walls that Divide: Anti-Polemicism in the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*', in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003).

[54] Dave Gray and Jeanne Shami, 'Political Advice in Donne's *Devotions*: "No Man is an Island"', *Modern Language Quarterly* 50 no. 4 (1989):337-56, Strier, 'Donne and the Politics of Devotion'. Shami responds to Strier's reading in some detail in Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit*, passim.

[55] Daniel W. Doerksen, 'Discerning God's Voice, God's Hand: Scripturalist Moderation in Donne's *Devotions*', in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor-Stuart Middle Way*, ed. Daniel W. Doerksen and Cristopher Hodgkins (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004).

[56] I am grateful to Dr Lynch for allowing me to read this work in manuscript, and for stimulating discussions on Donne's conversion.

critical history of this work is complete.[57] Donne's related controversial works *Pseudo-martyr*, *Ignatius his Conclave*, and his less readily categorised *Essayes in Divinity* and *Problems and Paradoxes* have largely been ignored by critics, although we are fortunate to have excellent scholarly editions of each of these texts. Anthony Raspa's introductions to his recent editions to both the *Essayes* and *Pseudo-martyr* are amongst the best discussions that we have of either text, and his article 'Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Essayes in Divinity* as Companion Pieces' (1999) draws further on his detailed knowledge of both texts.[58] In relation to *Pseudo-martyr*, mention should also be made of Victor Houliston's 'Apology for Donne's *Pseudo-martyr*' (2006) which provides an admirably clear discussion of Donne's argumentation and use of genre in the book, and is notable for its recognition of a 'convincing pattern of animated indignation against what Donne sees as Rome's betrayal of true religion.'[59] The *Courtier's Library* and the *Paradoxes and Problems* have yet to attract even this modest amount of critical attention.

Methodology

The field of Donne studies, then, does encompass some considerable lacunae. It is manifest that it is not, at the same time, sparsely populated, especially if one concentrates upon the poems and the sermons. What then is the necessity for another study that focuses on the sermons, and is there still a meaningful contribution to be made to our understanding of Donne's work? The present study is predicated upon the assumption that there is more to be said, but is this more than wishful thinking? It is the contention of this work that there is a good deal more ground to be covered in our understanding of Donne, and while it makes no claim fully to traverse this *terra incognita*, it does go some way towards addressing a very real shortfall in existing studies of Donne's religious understanding.

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[57] Meg Lota Brown, 'Interpretative Authority in Donne's *Biathanatos*', in *Praise Disjoined: Changing Patterns of Salvation in 17th-Century English Literature*, ed. William P. Shaw (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), William Speed Hill, 'John Donne's Biathanatos: Authenticity, Authority, and Context in Three Editions', *John Donne Journal* 6 no. 1 (1987):109-134, A.E. Malloch, 'The Definition of Sin in Donne's *Biathanatos*', *Modern Language Notes* 72 no. 5 (1957):332-5, and Don Cameron Allen, 'Donne's Suicides', *Modern Language Notes* 56 no. 2 (1941):129-33,.

[58] Anthony Raspa, 'Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Essayes in Divinity* as Companion Pieces', *John Donne Journal* 18 (1999):1-12, . We should also mention Anthony Raspa, 'Theology and Poetry in Donne's *Conclave*', *ELH* 32 no. 4 (1965):478-89, Jeffrey Johnson, '"One, four, and infinite": John Donne, Thomas Harriot, and Essayes in Divinity', *John Donne Journal* 22 (2003):109-143, R. Chris Hassel Jr, 'Donne's "Ignatius His Conclave" and the New Astronomy', *Modern Philology* 68 no. 4 (1971):329-37, Dennis Flynn, 'Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave* and Other Libels on Robert Cecil', *John Donne Journal* 6 no. 2 (1987):163-184, and Victor Houliston, 'An Apology for Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr*', *Review of English Studies* 57 no. 231 (2006):474-86,. It is to be hoped that Houliston's work is the first fruits of renewed study of this neglected work.

[59] Houliston, 'An Apology for Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr*', 484.

Firstly, this is a study that concentrates on key cruces in Donne's theology. The sustained study of Donne's theology has been a neglected element of the sermons, even in the work of McCullough, Ferrell, Shami *et al.* Their engagements with the sermons have delineated the detail of Donne's political views, his negotiation of contemporary power structures, and his spoiling of the Eygptians in his utilisation of the learning and experience of his secular life. They have approached these issues with an unprecedented amount of sensitivity to the importance of theological concerns, and a good deal of light is shed, by their researches, on a number of these concerns but, on the whole, they have been preoccupied with Donne's societal contexts and the theological has been displaced from their study of the sermons. While Jeffrey Johnson's contribution to this topic has somewhat redressed the balance, and has been of immense importance in its highlighting of Donne's status as a theologian in his own right, it can scarcely claim to be exhaustive. Equally problematic is the nature of this inexhaustiveness – Johnson's concentration on issues like images and common prayer assumes the centrality of these issues in Donne's theology. They were both hot issues,[60] although of very different significance in contemporary context and Donne's own thought, and Donne did engage with them, but to allow their currency to shape our critical agenda is to impose a reactive aspect upon Donne's theology, and to throw into sharp relief views that had an important but relatively minor place in his wider theology.

It has been an aim of this study to allow Donne to set the agenda. Therefore, we look at issues of theological authority not because they were the most fundamental issues of the Reformation – though it would be difficult to deny their basic importance – nor because we are engaged in a Marxist attempt to read religion as an elaborately encoded discourse of power. Rather, the choice of the issues around which this study clusters has been dictated by their enduring interest to Donne, and by his consistent and considered engagement with them. They have also the advantage of being crucial issues right from the beginning of the European Reformation, and, thus, our study of their treatment by Donne allows us to locate his work in the

[60] For discussions of these issues see, respectively, Keith Thomas, 'Art and Iconoclasm in Early Modern England', in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke*, ed. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), Ernest B. Gilman, '"To adore, or scorne an image": Donne and the Iconoclast Controversy', *John Donne Journal* 5 (1986):63-100, and Judith D. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

longer context of the Reformation, and to place his views in relation to those espoused by the Reformers whose impact on English society and religion was profound. And this is no minor contribution. It has been common to view Donne's theology in terms of the reactive paradigm outlined above. Biographical theories of Donne as establishment lackey and opportunist have increased this tendency, even when scholars are reacting against these ideas. On the other hand, the same biographical speculations have lent currency to the idea that Donne's religion was a Catholicism that conformed as much as necessary, but reformed as little as possible. Both of these views are called into serious question by the material discussed in this study. Our investigation of the importance of Scripture, the Church, and the preacher as sources of theological authority uncovers a Donne far more Protestant than has usually been recognised, an eclectic theologian who values highly the fruits of the humanist return *ad fontes*, and who insists on the individual's responsibility to choose wisely the religion worthy of his allegiance. Equally noteworthy is the sort of Protestant Donne that emerges. In an English Church that encompassed a vast range of ecclesiological possibility, Donne's allegiance did not lie, as has often been suggested, with Andrewes, Buckeridge, Laud, and the other *avant-garde* conformists.[61] Rather, Donne's intellectual descent is from the line of Reformed conformists, from Jewel, Whitgift, and Bridges, and ultimately, from the magisterial reformers themselves.

This study breaks some new ground in establishing this position. Scholars of Donne are constantly faced with basic questions about their choice of sources from Donne's extensive and varied *oeuvre*. These questions are not easily answered: a smooth integration of the available sources is not easy to achieve. This study concentrates principally on the sermons. However, it also draws, when appropriate, on Donne's other works of prose, and, less frequently, on the poetry. What emerges from this use of the wider canon is a most encouraging confirmation of the appropriateness of the parameters of this study – these issues of authority interested Donne throughout his career and their importance can be traced, oftentimes with remarkable consistency, right through the canon. This study is not the only work to range the canon, but it is unprecedented in the comprehensive and integrated picture that it presents. The approach

[61] See, for a discussion of *avant-garde* conformity, pp. 35-7, below.

adopted does raise some crucial questions of methodology, but these questions, or very similar questions, would need to be addressed in any case, and the benefits accrued in terms of our increased understanding of this outstandingly heterogeneous career amply justify any increased complexity.

The nature of the Donneian canon, defines the scope of this enquiry. The choice of the most appropriate methodology is a little less clear cut. A New Historicist approach has come to be something of a default position for engagements with early-modern texts, and it would be futile to deny that it has proved its value in providing fresh insights on the cultural imbrication of a wide variety of texts. However, as a number of scholars have pointed out, New Historicism is more adept at dealing with religious elements in secular texts, or, indeed, with secular elements in religious texts, than it is with religious elements of religious texts.[62] New Historicism's preoccupation with power and cultural authority tends to result in religion being read as an ornately coded system of authority. Furthermore, its interest in the way in which authority is exercised results in a disproportionate concern with the performative elements of religion.

This general unsuitability of New Historicism to the analysis of religious texts is exacerbated by its systematic lack of sympathy towards the sort of religion that we find embodied in the works of Donne. Religion, in New Historicist work, is almost always a marginal ideology – the traces of a suppressed Catholicism have a fascination that the established mainstream of religion quite lacks. New Historicism's interest in cultural power plays has, as its concomitant, a preoccupation with alterity, with the marginal and displaced. This taste is satiated – often very productively – by the glamour of recusancy and a vestigial 'traditional religion', but is less sure what to make of the commonplace religion of the Protestant conformist majority.[63] Ironically, as Debora Shuger suggests, this tendency results in a weakness of engagement with precisely those power structures that New Historicism is most interested in:

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[62] See Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, 'The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies', *Criticism* 46 (2004):167-90, Daniel Gates, 'The Presence of Religion in Early Modern Cultural Studies', *Literature Compass* 1 no. 1 (2004), Richard Strier, *Resistant Structures: Particularity, Radicalism, and Renaissance Texts* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 67-79. A compelling claim for the importance of religion to the study of Early Modern texts is made in Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation - Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3-14, and vindicated by the remainder of this magisterial work.

[63] See, for exemplars of this trend Stephen Greenblatt and Christine Gallagher, *Practising New Historicism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in purgatory* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University

> Conversely, the modern obsession with subversive and revolutionary change has discouraged inquiry into popular beliefs, unless, like witchcraft or presbyterianism, they seem to threaten the established order. But this tendency to resolve Tudor/Stuart religion into the dialectic of popular resistance and government repression renders invisible what it purports to illuminate: the role played by religion in early modern state formation.[64]

More fundamentally, in terms of the present study, this 'obsession' inhibits us from engaging in depth with religion *qua* religion. Therefore, while grateful to New Historicism for its promptings to read texts in context, it would be unhelpful to hitch this study too firmly to its star.

Rather than confining this study to the straitjacket of a particular theoretical approach, this study retains and makes use of a flexibility of approach that allows the exigencies and antinomies of the texts to set the parameters of our engagement. It is reassuring to note that the methodology that emerges from this approach bears a marked resemblance to that adopted in some of the most fruitful of the recent engagements with early modern sermons. Briefly, it is marked first by awareness of historical context, an awareness nuanced and directed by multidisciplinary insights. Secondly, it insists upon the necessity of basing our account of Donne's thought on the evidence of the whole canon, and not upon a series of isolated quotations. Finally, it fosters an awareness of the sermon as event, and of a particular sermon as an occasion rooted both in time and in place. These three elements, operating together, provide us with a formidable and flexible means of understanding and interpreting the Donneian canon.

The value of an inter- and multi-disciplinary approach to the study of the sermon has been evident in a number of the most successful recent studies of early modern religious literature. This has been true of the work of historians who have drawn on the insights of English studies – Peter Lake is exemplary in this context. It has also been true of the work of scholars of English literature who have drawn on the insights and models provided by historians. Much of the work carried out on the early modern sermon by McCullough, Shami, and Morrissey is eloquent of the benefits of this sort of engagement. Indeed, Mary Morrissey has

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Press, 2001), and Mark S. Sweetnam, '*Hamlet* and the Reformation of the Eucharist', *Literature and Theology* 21 no. 1 (2007):11-28,.

[64] Debora Kuller Shuger, '"Societie Supernaturall": The Imagined Community of Hooker's *Lawes*', in *Richard Hooker and the construction of Christian community*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), 325.

issued an explicit call for the cross-fertilisation of Literary Studies and History in the study of the sermon.[65] This study attempts to follow this example of historical awareness. Of course, it is not sufficient to claim historical awareness: we must specify what sort of history it is that we mean. Studies carried out by an earlier generation drew on the classical works of Whig historiography, and found their background in the stable distinctions and divisions embodied in this history of the grand narrative. More recent work on early modern religion has drawn on revisionist history, and has found an engagement with the fractured and shifting picture delineated by contemporary ecclesiastical historians to be a very fruitful encounter. A glance at the bibliography of the present project is indicative of a dependence on this sort of history: Tyacke, Lake, Milton and Fincham loom large as historians whose interpretation of the data, and the models constructed from them have been essential for our understanding of Donne. But this study also grasps beyond the historical. Our investigation of elements of Donne's theology requires a greater focus upon theological issues than has been required by the more politically focused interests of other recent studies. This endeavour has not involved us in systematic theology – Donne, after all, is neither a theological innovator nor the blind follower of someone else's system – but a consciousness of the theological questions and debates that drove the project of Reformation has been of considerable importance to our consideration of Donne.

Secondly, it is basic to this study that our understanding of Donne's theology must be based upon a study of the entire Donneian canon. This is especially important in the light of a tendency in Donne studies identified by Jeanne Shami in the important methodological discussion that emerged from her response to Debora Shuger,[66] but that went beyond that immediate discussion to embrace a far wider range of scholarship:

> [R]arely are the sermons seen as issuing from any specific context – generic, historical, theological, political, or cultural. Too often they become a Scripture which any poor devil looking for a publication can quote to her own purposes – usually by lifting passages, at will, from anywhere, with the aid of the *Index* – and

[65] See Morrissey, 'Interdisciplinarity and the Study of Early Modern Sermons', 1111-23.
[66] Shami, 'Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation' is not an isolated exercise in constructing a methodology for studying Donne's sermons. Further examples are to be found in Jeanne Shami, 'Reading Donne's Sermons', *John Donne Journal* 11 (1992):1-20, Shami, '"Trying to Walk on Logs in Water"', and Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit*, 2-12.

> using them to create a collage of comments that supposedly represents Donne's 'mature' views.[67]

The risks arising from the misuse of Troy Reeves' *Index* – invaluable though it may be when properly used – pales by comparison with the potential for the disjointed study of the sermons provided by the electronic, phrase-searchable archive of the Potter and Simpson sermons now available.[68] It is in the interests of avoiding this sort of distortion that this study has been based on a careful reading, not only of the sermons, but of all Donne's prose and poetry, and has avoided, with all possible care, the temptation first to shape a theory, and then select quotations to support it. As noted at the outset, we have allowed Donne to set the terms of this study, and theory has followed after text. And the textual context has been, as already stated, wider than the sermons: it has included Donne's canon in its entirety, with special emphasis on the prose writings. What will become very apparent in the detail of this study, however, is that the prose works do not have an equal relevance at all times. So, *Pseudo-martyr* and the *Essayes* are very relevant to both Donne's view of Scripture and his ecclesiology but they have little to say about his understanding of ministerial authority, a subject that is dealt with almost exclusively in the sermons.

Lastly, this study is underpinned by an awareness of the sermon as entity and event, rooted in time and place. We cannot treat the sermons as a homogeneous body of text: our understanding of their importance is determined as much by political context, audience, and, just as importantly, by liturgical setting as by their bare textual content. There is, however, need for a nuanced flexibility in applying this principle. In an ideal world, no doubt, the discussion of each sermon would be prefaced by a careful excursus on the details of time, place, and audience incidental to its preaching. This is not practical for two reasons. Firstly, it is an unfortunate but unavoidable reality that we possess these hard facts for only some of Donne's sermons: for others we lack details of date, location, and audience. We could simply exclude these problematic sermons from our consideration, but to do so would be to narrow the available evidence and

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[67] Shami, 'Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation', 383-4. This point, and a number of valuable related observations are helpfully discussed in Peter E. McCullough, 'Donne as preacher', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[68] However, the fact that these electronic sermons are also browseable by location, date and occasion should also facilitate the sort of contextually informed discussion more amenable to the methodology outlined here.

compromise our commitment to basing our conclusions on as broad a study of the canon as possible. We must use undated sermons with a consciousness of the limitations they impose upon us: this seems a lesser evil than not using them at all. The second consideration is the perennial problem of space. To locate each sermon fully would either mean a study of terrifying length, or a more moderately sized volume that covered far fewer sermons. We are, in fact, forced to play synopsis against scrutiny, synthesis against specifics. The result, inevitably, is a compromise: attention is drawn to particularly important or suggestive contexts, and some sermons are discussed in considerable detail. We do not scruple, however, to quote more briefly from uncontextualised sermons when necessary. To a large extent, this compromise is rendered more palatable by the interests of our study. If the sermons are to be mined for political information, then context is, or ought to be, all. The shifts in the prevailing political winds, the rise and fall of prominent political personnel – whether ecclesiastical or secular – demand that political commentary be carefully located in historical context. It is not the case that the issues that we discuss in this study exist apart from this political flux. It is, however, true that we examine theological assumptions that permeated all of Donne's career, and that were less directly linked to politics. Again, this is not uniformly true – the political impinges upon our examination of Donne's views on preaching and the preacher, for example, far more than it does upon our opening consideration of Donne's views on Scripture. Therefore, it is not accidental that one section manifests a closer engagement with the context of preaching than the other: these principles are a roadmap to guide our enquiry, not tracks irresistibly to control it.

These, then, are the considerations that guide our investigation of the texts that constitute Donne's *oeuvre*. It will be helpful briefly and explicitly to outline our understanding of these works. For the purposes of our study, they divide themselves into three main groupings: the sermons, the prose works (*Pseudo-martyr*, *Ignatius*, *Biathanatos* and the *Essayes in Divinity*), and the poetry. Donne's letters are excluded from this summary: they inform our study at a number of points, but are not among its main objects. [69] This is due, to some extent, to the way in which they raise questions of genre: Donne seems conscious that the familiar letter is not an

[69] Donne's *The Courtier's Library*, while deserving of greater critical attention than it has yet garnered does not feature in the present study.

appropriate forum for detailed theological debate; such theological detail as does emerge tends to be incidental and at times oblique. The nature of all these texts, and the weight that we attach to their contents in coming to an understanding of Donne's thought have been the subject of a good deal of debate. This might seem surprising in the context of the sermons: they apparently present an unproblematic and authentic version of Donne's voice. This view has proved too näive for a number of critics, including, most prominently, John Carey. For Carey, the sermons echo with the power-seeking and self-serving hypocritical cant of a man who has sought preferment in a Church to which he owes no meaningful allegiance. We do not need to subscribe to the excesses of these critics to recognise the truth of their contention that the sermon is a performative genre, and that the preacher Donne may only be providing us with the illusion of authentic access. Nonetheless, we ought not to let these considerations too deeply to taint our view of Donne, or too radically to undermine the evidentiary usefulness of the sermons. Certainly, the sort of consistency of approach and viewpoint delineated in this study, the nuanced defence of royal policy, and the emphasis given, at times, to politically or ecclesiastically unpopular positions give a very different impression. Donne is aware of the power of the pulpit, and he is also very conscious of the burden of authority that rests upon a man who is God's ambassador. The very evident sense of the responsibility to God and the congregation as a concomitant of this authority is no less clear.

Claims of self-advertisement have considerably more force in relation to *Pseudo-martyr*, Donne's contribution to the oath of allegiance controversy.[70] There can be little doubt that, in this rather impenetrable volume, Donne is demonstrating his abilities, his loyalty to his king, and his general suitability for advancement in service to the crown. That notwithstanding, the contours of thought that emerge in the volume are borne out by the tenor of Donne's broader thought. Furthermore, the fact that considerations of expediency required Donne to curtail the original plan of the work indicates that its initial conception was something rather more than a doffing of his cap to prevailing opinion. *Ignatius, his Conclave,* the delightfully scurrilous piece of fantasy writing that addressed anti-Papal polemic from the same viewpoint as *Pseudo-matryr,* is

[70] In keeping with the general tenor of his defence of Donne, Edwards, *Flesh and Spirit* finds both *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Ignatius* so embarrassing that he is driven to conjecture that Donne wrote both while experiencing a nervous breakdown. Edwards, *Flesh and Spirit*, 77-8.

still more resistant to being read purely as advertising – there is a strength in the anti-Jesuitical rhetoric that suggests considerable sincerity.

Biathanatos, that decidedly odd product of the hand of 'Jack Donne', whose ordained *alter ego* later forbade it the fire and the press, is clearly very different to the *Pseudo-martyr* and *Ignatius*. Meg Lota Brown has compellingly identified it as an accomplished piece of Protestant casuistry, and the work is, perhaps, best understood as an exercise in mental dexterity, a private entertainment, shared with a few chosen friends. In its choice of subject, then, its seriousness of engagement, and the place that it gives to the informed individual conscience, it is eloquent of some of the most interesting elements of Donne's personality. It is saying too much, however, to identify *Biathanatos* as representative of Donne's supposed lifelong preoccupation with death. The preoccupation is there – though often overstated – but Donne's choice of subject in this treatise has more to do with his desire to raise the odds of the discussion, than it does with a psychological need to justify suicide, just in case he should ever need it.

The *Essayes in Divinity* come with complexities all of their own. They existed only in manuscript until prepared for publication by John Donne the younger in 1651, and there is room for doubt as to their title, to say nothing of their purpose.[71] It is common for the *Essayes* to be read as just another performance on Donne's part, as an exercise in displaying his suitability for ecclesiastical office. There are elements of the work that seem to support this thesis but on the whole it reads less as a sample work designed to impress, more as a personal experiment in theology. Donne is pushing the limits of Scriptural interpretation, and ecclesiological option and if the work does bear a connection to Donne's impending ordination, it seems rather a last experiment in the farther reaches of theology before Donne confined himself to the interpretative and theological norms of the Church established.

Finally, it remains to remark on the evidentiary status of the poetry. This has been a hotly contested issue: the considerations of authenticity and performance that dog all of our engagements with the prose texts occur *a fortiori* when the poetry is in question. This study does its best to circumvent the most pressing issues. We consider those poems that deal explicitly

[71] See, for a discussion of these issues see John Donne, *Essayes in divinity : being several disquisitions interwoven with meditations and prayers*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), xxxv-li.

with issues raised in other parts of the canon, and we allow those other texts to set the terms of our understanding. This can be justified because Donne's poetry is not the main focus of this study: it adds texture and strength to our consideration of Donne's thought but is not central to it. The same is true of the *Problems and Paradoxes*

These, then, are the terms of our engagement. In the first section we discuss the importance of Scripture. Initially, we examine the central canonical and philological preoccupations of the Reformation. Against this background, we examine Donne's views on the status of natural and scriptural revelation: the privileged and essentially Protestant place that he gives to Scripture. We close this section by looking in detail at the principles that underlie Donne's exegesis, and his insistence on the importance of the individual's engagement with Scripture. In the second section we deal with Donne's understanding of the authority of the Church. Initially, we review recent ecclesiastical historiography, and discuss the issues that arise when we attempt to locate Donne against the complex background outlined in recent historiography. We go on to examine Donne's Satyre III in some detail, contending that it provides us with compelling evidence of the importance of Richard Hooker, and the *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* to the formulation of Donne's ecclesiology. We then examine that ecclesiology in some detail, noting its affiliation to the historical stream of conformist ecclesiology, and its links to the genesis of the Reformation in England. The final section deals with Donne's understanding of preacherly authority. Once again we begin by delineating the primary importance of the Word preached in the Reformation, and in the Reformed Church of England. We discuss the key challenges to this understanding that began to emerge in the work of Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes, and that were coalescing into an ideology under Laud. We then evaluate the importance of preaching for Donne, and investigate his implicit but considerable challenge to this *avant-garde* programme, concentrating in particular on his sermons preached on sacramentally and liturgically significant occasions, and on his notorious defence of James' *Directions for Preachers.* We then examine Donne's conception of the preacher's office, its status and dignity, and note once more his endorsement of the norms of the earlier Reformation, especially in his reluctance to claim any special sacerdotal status. Finally, we look at the

questions of style and the Spirit, in an effort more fully to understand Donne's comprehension of the authority that he brought to the pulpit.

Terminology

It will be helpful before concluding this introduction to comment briefly on some terminology that will be important throughout this work. Terminological considerations are notoriously problematic in the context of Jacobean and Caroline ecclesiastical history. Terms like 'Puritan', 'Godly', 'Arminian', and even 'Protestant' have long proved slippery and difficult to pin down, a situation that has not been helped by their rather indiscriminate contemporary application. This study follows the shift in recent historiography away from the depiction of the early Stuart Church as a body best understood in terms of a binary opposition between radical puritans and High Church ceremonialists or, in a slightly different formulation, between Calvinists and Arminians. It also adopts the spectrum model that these historians have suggested best represents the makeup of the English Church. We identify four categories within that Church, not as watertight divisions, but as representing definite contemporary ideological options. By the terms 'Puritan' or 'proto-presbyterian' we mean those members of the Church characterised by 'demands for ecclesiastical reform and a commitment to an intense word-centred piety.'[72] Because of the extremity of their views, these individuals are relatively easy to spot. Closer to the centre, and thus less distinctive than these radicals were the group that Kenneth Fincham describes as moderate puritans, a term that we use occasionally, while preferring Patrick Collinson's distinctive term 'Godly.' This group encompassed those who were

> partial conformists. ... Clergy among them offered a token subscription in return for the opportunity to preach the gospel and supplement parish services with the round of fasts, household prayers, psalm-singing and sermon repetition, all extra legal rather than illegal manifestations of that "voluntary religion" which Collinson has sensitively evoked.[73]

Adjoining this group, and frequently shading into it are those who are often termed moderate conformists. These individuals subscribed to most of the official beliefs of the English Church,

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[72] Kenneth Fincham, 'Introduction', in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 6. Fincham uses the term 'radical puritans' to describe this group.
[73] Fincham, 'Introduction', 7.

most of the time. They represent the broad mainstream of that Church, and, while less colourful than their compatriots at either end of the ecclesiastical spectrum were both more numerous and more important than their relative polemical inactivity might lead us, at this remove, to assume. The final group occupies a position on the right wing of the Church. Peter Lake, concentrating on a Jacobean context, has designated these as *avant-garde* conformists.[74] This label focuses attention on what Lake considers the essential novelty of this strand within the English Church, and his identification of this novelty is worth quoting at some length:

> The conventional defence of the Elizabethan church ... was formulated within certain conceptual limits, ... set by what might best be termed the English reformed tradition. ... [T]he central features of that tradition were a doctrine of double predestination, a vision of the Church and its evangelical mission centred on preaching and a view of the world stretched tight between the true church of Christ and the false church of Antichrist. ... On the basis of this common reformed heritage Elizabethan conformists erected a defence of the status quo founded on the idea of things indifferent and on the need, in such matters, to obey the commands of the Christian prince. They defined puritans almost exclusively in terms of their attitude to the power of the prince and to the government and ceremonies of the church, and not in terms of their doctrinal beliefs or style of piety. ... However, while this remained the dominant mode of conformist argument, thanks to Richard Hooker, there was another more emotionally compelling and comprehensively religious style of conformity available, in the public domain, by the middle of the 1590s. Whatever Hooker's own position on the issue of predestination (and this clearly shifted over time and arguably never achieved stable coherence) he can be seen almost to have invented the style of piety associated with the rise of English Arminianism and the ecclesiastical policies pursued by Charles I, Laud and their supporters during the personal rule. A broadly based vision of the Christian community, ... a view of the visible church centred far more on the sacrament and on public worship than on preaching; a justification of the ceremonial arrangements of the English church that transcended the realm of *adiaphora* and instead attributed a positively religious

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[74] *Cf.* Anthony Milton's comments on the term: 'There is no entirely satisfactory term to describe the new patterns of ceremonialist and sacerdotal conformist thought which began to find expression later in the Elizabethan period... The term "avant-garde conformity" has been employed by Professor Lake to describe this trend, a term which serves a useful purpose in distinguishing their style of piety from that of other conformists who had not granted the same edifying value to these ceremonies, while avoiding the anachronistic label of "Anglican." ... [The term] helps to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of this style of piety in the early Stuart period, and does not simply collapse it into the ideas and policies of Archbishop Laud.' Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed : the Roman and Protestant churches in English Protestant thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8-9.

> role and significance to the rituals and observances of the church – all these can be found fully developed in Hooker's thought.[75]

It is only later, after Laud rose to prominence, and prosecuted with considerable zeal the sort of programme of ceremonial reform envisaged by these conformists, that we are justified in using the term Laudian. For the greater part of Donne's career, the term is anachronistic. Furthermore, it tends to detatch Laud's programme from its earlier roots, obscuring the continuity that existed between Laud and the *avant-garde* conformists who preceeded him.

It should be noted too that we have not made use of the terms Calvinist and Arminian. This is expressive of caution of making assumptions about the packaging of doctrine and discipline. Nicholas Tyacke's *Anti-Calvinists* identifies the theology of grace as a crucial element of the Laudian programme, and, *pace* the contentions of Peter White, the importance of the Calvinist/Arminian debate is clear. Nonetheless it is unhelpful, if seductive, to extend Tyacke's argument so as to use a particular doctrine of election as a synechdoche for a wider view of ecclesiastical polity and praxis. This is certainly true of Calvinism, which has emerged from the researches of Patrick Collinson and Tyacke as the 'theological cement' of the English Church, 'a common and ameliorating bond uniting conformists and moderate puritans.'[76] As such, a Calvinist view of grace could be found in association with the most *outré* fringes of presbyterianism, as well as with the episcopalian conformity of the main-stream of the English Church. Similarly, on the anti-Calvinist side, Peter Lake suggests that 'whether they were Arminians of not, it is difficult to argue that any scholastic development of the doctrine of predestination lay at the center of the Laudian's concerns.'[77] And if this is true of the Laudian shoots, *a fortiori* does it hold for the *avant-garde* conformist roots. It is an index of the complexity of the relationship between doctrine and discipline that Hooker's own predestinarian position

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[75] Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity at the Court of James I', in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 113-4. See also Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), ch.4. There can be little doubt as to Hooker's influence upon Andrewes. We should, however, note Peter McCullough's observation that notes of Andrewes' Cambridge lectures provide us with 'categorical proof that Andrewes was venturing criticisms of mainstream moderate puritansim at least a decade before Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.' McCullough, ed., *Andrewes Sermons*, xvi.

[76] Patrick Collinson, *The religion of Protestants : the Church in English society 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 81.

[77] Peter Lake, 'The Laudians and the Argument from Authority', in *Court, country and culture : essays on early modern British history in honor of Perez Zagorin*, ed. Bonnelyn Young Kunze and Dwight D. Brautigam (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1992), 149-50.

remains a subject of some perplexity and no little debate.[78] The use of a Calvinist or Arminian theology of grace is particularly unhelpful when dealing with Donne, for it is the ceremonial renegotiation of the English Church that is at the forefront of his thought, and not the predestinarian debate.

Conclusion

Our study of Donne, then, builds on the insights of the revisionist historiography of the early Stuart Church. It also draws upon a wide range of previous engagements with Donne, and especially upon the solid body of very useful scholarship that has emerged from the study of the early modern sermon and of Donne's sermons particularly. It shares the principles of this scholarship in its historical contextualised reading of the sermons and its emphasis on the particularity of the sermon. Thus provided with a basis for our investigations we move beyond existing scholarship to examine the broad range of Donne's *oeuvre*. We take seriously the religious and theological concerns that informed Donne's *milieu* and that, on the evidence we have, interested, concerned, and motivated him throughout his adult life. If in doing so we collude in the failure of Donne's efforts to control his posthumous reputation, if we discount his testimony from the walls of St Paul's, we can, at least, allow his own words to set the agenda for this study.

[78] The essays by W. David Neelands, Daniel Eppley, and Egil Grislis, collected in W.J. Torrance Kirby, ed., *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003) provide very useful discussions of this issue.

CHAPTER 1

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

In an undated sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, John Donne addressed one of the chief preoccupations of his preaching career:

> This is one of those places of Scripture, which afford an argument for *that*, which I finde often occasion to say, That there are not so *eloquent* books in the world, as the *Scriptures*. For there is not onely that *non refugit*, which *Calvin* speaketh of in this *place*, ... The *Holy Ghost* in his instruments (in those whose tongues or pens he makes use of) doth not forbid, nor decline elegant and cheerfull, and delightful expression; but as God gave his Children a bread of *Manna*, that tasted to every man like that that he liked best, so hath God given us *Scriptures*, in which the plain and simple man may heare God speaking to him in his own plain and familiar language, and men of larger capacity and more curiosity, may heare God in that Musique that they love best, in a curious, in an harmonious style, unparalleled by any (X,103) [*Cf.* (VIII, 270) (VIII, 273) (IX, 226)].

This quotation illustrates some of the key features of Donne's understanding of Scripture. Scripture is literature of surpassing beauty; the canonical works are 'the eloquentest books in the world' (IX, 226). However, it is more than beautiful literature: its separation from all other literary production is one of kind, as well as of degree. Scripture, for Donne, is the word of God, mediated by human tongues or pens, but ultimately having its origins with the Holy Ghost. This

truth gives Scripture a vital importance; 'next to Christ' Christianity is most immediately concerned with 'Scripture and the canon thereof' (V, 216). Inevitably, though, the question of the role of Scripture in relation to the Church was far more complicated than that, a fact underscored for us by the fact that this discussion takes place in the context of a sermon, where Donne, as the preacher, is 'digesting' the Scripture for the benefit of his congregation (X, 104). The dilemma is classical to the Reformation. Scripture must be understood. Therefore, it must be interpreted. Donne's task, like that of any preacher in the Reformation, was to identify, propagate, and police the boundaries of acceptable interpretation.

I-Reformation and Revelation

In this section we will examine the most important features of Donne's understanding of Scriptural authority. To identify these it will be necessary to first consider the key contemporary issues of Scriptural interpretation – the debate over the special status of natural revelation, the authority of Scripture in the Church, and the efflorescence of philological scholarship that focussed attention as never before on the text of Scripture.[1] This Reformation context is important to our understanding of Donne's engagement with Scripture, for we can best understand the contours of that engagement by reference to the issues and concerns of both the magisterial Reformers and those associated more particularly with the Reformation in England. Donne's use of Scripture responded, at times explicitly and at others implicitly, to the questions of the identification, interpretation, and application classical to this period. Thus, having established the key features of Donne's historical context we will consider his approach to determining the extent of Scripture, both in his treatment of natural revelation and his delineation of the canon. We will then consider how Donne interpreted this body of Scripture. In doing so we will consider the relevance of philological and historical scholarship to his treatment of Scripture, his allegiance to a literal understanding of the Word, and the complex interplay between the roles of the Church and the individual as authoritative interpreters of Scripture.

[1] We will be obliged to trace these developments in some detail and at some length, because there exists no recent scholarly synopsis of the topic. For this reason, it will be necessary to draw together a good deal of relevant material from more microscopic studies. The resultant expenditure of time and space is valid, however, because a failure to accurately delineate Donne's theological background will inevitably distort our understanding of him, causing us to view the conventional as extraordinary, or to elide the individualities of Donne's approach.

From this there emerges a clear understanding of Donne's allegiance to an orthodox Protestantism, his awareness and ultimate rejection of the esoteric possibilities of Kabbalistic interpretation, his endorsement of a new literalism of interpretation, without jettisoning the pastoral value of appropriate allegorization, and the central place that he gave to the Church's guidance in the interpretation of Scripture, while guarding against privileging ecclesiastical tradition above the individual engagement with Scripture. It reveals also the independence of Donne's thought. We contend that he can best be understood as an heir of the wider Reformation. However, his inheritance was not an unproblematic one. Donne has wrestled in detail with these issues: the position at which he finally arrives is not simply an unnuanced acceptance of the norms of Protestantism, but a position satisfactory to his own conscience, intellect, and pastoral intent. Therefore, the Reformation context is crucial to our understanding of Donne's thought, but it must not be allowed to limit or to flatten out the complexities and contours of his position.

There can be very little doubt as to the importance of Scripture in the period before and during Donne's ministry.[2] The effect of the Reformation, in all its ramifications, was to place a greater burden of significance upon the text of the Bible than was ever the case before or since. In addition, the Reformation had a permanent impact upon the way in which Scripture was understood. Jaroslav Pelikan has summed up this interplay of Scripture and Reformation:

> The Bible of the Reformation and the Reformation of the Bible became two sides to one coin, for the Reformation of the sixteenth-century – whether Protestant,

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[2] An outstanding introduction to some of the crucial issues of reading and writing, which go beyond but include the strictly Biblical can be found in Cummings, *Grammar and Grace*, 15-53. More specifically concerned with Scripture are Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1-25, Debora Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible : scholarship, sacrifice, and subjectivity*, *The new historicism* ; 29 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994)Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Reformation of the Bible: The Bible of the Reformation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), Werner Schwarz, *Principles and problems of Biblical translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), G. R. Evans, *The language and logic of the Bible : the road to reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ : New Testament scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), Roland H. Bainton, 'The Bible in the Reformation', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. S. L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), Basil Hall, 'Biblical Scholarship: Editions and Commentaries', in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. Stephen Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 'Bibles of the Protestant Reformation', ch.9 in Christopher De Hamel, *The Book. A History of the Bible* (London: Phaidon Press, 2001), 216-45, Paul Saenger and Kimberly Van Kampen, eds., *The Bible as Book: the first printed editions* (London: British Library in association with The Scriptorium, 1999), and Orlaith O'Sullivan, ed., *The Bible as Book: the Reformation* (London: British Library in association with The Scriptorium, 2000) A terse introduction is provided by Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 145-68. Popular-level discussions of the translation of the King James Version are provided in Alister E. McGrath, *In the beginning : the story of the King James Bible and how it changed a nation, a language and a culture* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002) and Adam Nicholson, *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the making of the King James Bible* (London: Harper Collins, 2003).

> Roman Catholic or Radical – is unthinkable apart from the Bible; and the Bible – at any rate as we know it in the realms of western culture, literature and faith – is almost equally unthinkable apart from the Reformation.[3]

Jonathan Sheehan, who very capably surveys the inter-relationship of reformation and textual scholarship as a preliminary to his discussion of the emergence of Enlightenment criticism, has captured the unique importance of Scripture in this context:

> The Reformation made the Protestant Bible the engine of political, religious, and imaginative life... Even more than *gratia* and *fides*, the Bible powered the very project of Reformation. Whatever the theological controversies that arose ... beneath all these, the Bible lurked. ... To say 'scripture alone' was to deny the efficacy and relevance of the Roman Church to divine matters. To say 'scripture alone' was to invest reform and reformers with the very authority of God, before which no human institution—church or state—might stand. To say 'scripture alone' was, in short, to set up a tribunal before which unbelievers would be judged. In the new religious order emerging in sixteenth-century Europe, only scripture would, in the words of St. Paul, be needed for teaching, reproof, correction, and training.[4]

There can be little doubt that the demolition of the authority of the Church by the Reformers was the chief engine of this emphasis on the supreme authority of the written word of God. However, also implicit in projects like the *Novum Instrumentum* of Erasmus, was the belief that Scriptures purged of the accreted imperfections of the centuries could be the driving force for a similar cleansing of the Church. The interplay of forces causing and arising from this new insistence on Scriptural authority is extremely complicated, and awaits a definitive historical treatment. We shall consider only those features of the Reformation engagement with Scripture that have a particular resonance in Donne's treatment of the inspired text.

Amongst the first and most fundamental changes in the interpretation of Scripture to emerge in the Reformation was a modification of the relationship between the allegorical and literal interpretations of Scripture. This topic is a complex one, and it has been surveyed in a

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[3] Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 1.

[4] Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 1. See for a further important statement of the importance of Scripture to the Reformation, Alister E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), esp. 152-74.

depth that makes only a brief summary necessary here.[5] In general, the allegorization of Scripture had, as its starting point, the division of Scripture into letter and spirit. This view echoed, quite consciously, the incarnation; for the Patristic writers, the word of God was embodied in the letter of sacred text, and in the literal meaning of the passage. The stresses of Neo-Platonism and asceticism, combined with Paul's statement that 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'[6] led, at times, to this spiritual meaning being prized above the literal meaning of a text. Examples of the allegorization of Old Testament passages by New Testament writers further validated this approach to reading Scripture.[7] The medieval love of this allegorical mode can be traced back to Philo Judaeus, 'the "Cicero" of allegory' who 'did not invent [allegory] but popularised it.'[8] Philo was a Hellenized Jew, and his teachings were assimilated to Christianity in the works of Origen.[9] Origen's influence on the interpretation of Scripture was to be enormous: Smalley is scarcely exaggerating when she states that 'to write a history of Origenist influence on the west would be

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[5] Beryl Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), Richard Patrick Crosland Hanson, *Allegory and event : a study of the sources and significance of Origen's interpretation of Scripture* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis Vol. 1 : The Four Senses of Scripture* trans. Mark Sebanc (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1998), Evans, *Language and Logic* , Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 28-35, Philip Rollinson, *Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), and Mark Hazard, *The Literal Sense and the Gospel of John in Late-Medieval Commentary and Literature* (London: Routledge 2002). The unfolding history of Biblical allegory is set in the wider context of classical allegory in Lester K. Born, 'Ovid and Allegory', *Speculum* 9 no. 4 (1934):362-79, Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970) and the shift from allegorical to literal interpretation is examined in the context of hermeneutical development in '*Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*: Luther, Modernity, and the Foundations of Philosophical Hermeneutics' in Gerald L. Bruns, *Hermeneutics, ancient and modern* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 139-158, Jean Grondin, *Introduction to philosophical hermeneutics* trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994)and Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ*, 20-31. Also valuable, in their treatment of these and other issues, are the essays collected in David C. Steinmetz, ed., *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson, eds., *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of his Sixtieth Birthday* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), and Richard Griffiths, ed., *The Bible in the Renaissance. Essays on Biblical Commentary and Translation in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

[6] II Cor. 3:6.

[7] The outstanding example of this is Paul's explicit allegorization of the Old Testament narrative of Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4:21-31. 'Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.' Another important example can be found in the words of Christ in Matthew 12:38-40 'Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'

[8] Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3, 'Philo' in E. A. Livingstone and F. L. Cross, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed / ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), sv.

[9] 'Origen', in Livingstone and Cross, *ODCC*, sv.., Hanson, *Allegory and Event*

tantamount to writing a history of western exegesis."[10] Thus the subject is far beyond any very deep treatment here. It is helpful, however, to remark Origen's refinement of Philo's never fully reconciled systems of allegory. This refinement would, more accurately, be described as typology. This system had its basis in 'the Christian teaching that the Old Testament prefigures or foreshadows the New."[11] In this conception of allegory, 'both the sign and the thing signified are conceived as historical and would have no significance if they were not."[12] Typology, as we shall see, was to play an important role in Donne's use of the Scriptures. Origen's ideas were further developed, resulting in the four senses which were to dominate medieval exposition, the literal, allegorical, tropological, and analogical. This is, broadly speaking, what we mean by allegorical interpretation.

A fear that allegorical interpretation could be used to subvert the literal meaning of Scripture and to confine authoritative interpretation to a clerical elite led the reformers to oppose the over-use and mis-use of allegory. So, for example, Tyndale identified the machinations of Rome in the devaluation of the literal sense:

> They divide the scripture into four senses, the literal, tropological, allegorical and anagogical. The literal sense is becoming nothing at all. For the Pope hath taken it clean away and hath made it his possession. He hath partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies and feigned lies. And partly driveth men from it with violence of sword. For no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, but under a protestation, if it shall please the Pope. The tropological sense pertaineth to good manners (say they) and teacheth what we ought to do. The allegory is appropriate to faith, and the anagogical to hope and things above. Tropological and anagogical are terms of their own feigning and altogether unnecessary. For they are but allegories both two of them and this word allegory comprehendeth them both and is enough. For chopological is but an allegory of manners and anagogical an allegory of hope. And allegory is as much to say as strange speaking or borrowed speech.[13]

Similarly, Calvin dismissed efforts to prove doctrine by allegory, stipulating that 'Allegories ought to be carried no further than Scripture expressly sanctions: so far are they from forming a

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[10] Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 14.
[11] Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 6.
[12] Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 7.
[13] William Tyndale, *The Obedience of the Christian Man*, ed. David Daniell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), 156.

sufficient basis to found doctrines upon."[14] It would be unfair to say that allegory's main utility was the 'getting around' of knotty interpretative problems. However, its versatility in this purpose was seductive.

The era in which Donne ministered inherited the flowering of philological endeavour.[15] This, too, had its roots in the new place given to Scripture, for the more importance that was ascribed to the written word, the more vital it became to accurately determine the content of that word. Surveying the broader context, Basil Hall identifies in the Reformation a

> confident enthusiasm for the potent renewal, spiritual and intellectual, to be found in a clearer understanding of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. This is something new and fundamental to the cultural world of the early sixteenth century: it cannot be set down as merely a further stage in the development of humanist studies which had begun in the fourteenth century or earlier. There was a *preparatio evangelica* in the first quarter of the sixteenth, for it was then, and not before, that there appeared in combination the achievements of the humanist scholar-printers; [and] the fruits of intensive study in the grammar and syntax.[16]

This confidence can be clearly seen in the work of Lorenzo Valla[17], Desiderus Erasmus[18], and Cardinal Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros[19] who were willing to subject the sacred words of the

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[14] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Chicago, IL: Enclyclopaedia Britannia, 1990), 19.

[15] See, for an overview Ch. 1 – 'Sacred Philology' in Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 3-21. For the background of Biblical scholarship in the Middle Ages see Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* , and Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ*, 20-31.

[16] Hall, 'Biblical Scholarship', 38. For an influential account of the key features of Renaissance humanism see Paul O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), Charles G. Nauert, 'The Clash of Humanists and Scholastics: An Approach to Pre-Reformation Controversies', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 4 (1973):1-18, and George M. Logan, 'Substance and Form in Renaissance Humanism', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7 (1977):1-34,.

[17] Amongst the first of the Renaissance humanists to apply the new techniques of the Renaissance to the text of Scripture was Lorenzo Valla (1406-1457). His *De Elegantiis Latinae Linguae* was a comprehensive commentary on correct Latin style, a treatise calling for the reformation of Latin prose in a classical and Ciceronian direction. Later, Valla was involved in the investigation and revelation of a number of spurious documents, among them the *Donation of Constantine* and the supposed letter of Christ to Abgarus. Valla's greatest contribution to Biblical philology was his *Collatio Novi Testamenti*, written in the 1440s, but only published, at the behest of Erasmus, in 1505. (Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 16) This document was a verse-by-verse comparison of the Vulgate with a variety of Greek manuscripts. While the variants he found 'were not great (perhaps even disappointingly slight)', the *Collatio* had a deep significance for 'in the privacy of a scholar's study, he was willing to test the sacred words of the Latin Bible against the Greek from which Saint Jerome had originally made his translation a thousand years earlier.' (De Hamel, *The Book*, 219).

[18] The contribution of Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) to Reformation humanism was enormous, and his philological contribution was wide-ranging and significant. His most important contribution was probably the *Novum Instrumentum* (1516). Erasmus was influenced by Valla, and it was the *Collatio Novi Testamenti* that gave the first impetus to his work on Scripture. 'The text of Scripture should be as free from error as possible. Erasmus was convinced of that. His labour would not only correct the mistakes in extant copies, but prevent future misreadings.' (Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Erasmus on language and method in theology, Erasmus studies: a series of studies concerned with Erasmus and related subjects ;2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 4) This work eventually issued in his new edition of the New Testament, an edition that improved upon Jerome's *Vulgate* in thousands of instances. Erasmus'

Vulgate, hallowed both by time and ecclesiastical sanction, to scholarly scrutiny. In doing so they produced monumental works of humanist scholarship that enabled the work of later scholars and translators.

The early modern period was also marked by an increase of interest in Hebraic philology.[20] Jewish philology had begun to emerge towards the end of the first Christian millennium.[21] Whilst some of the Church Fathers, particularly Origen and Jerome, had appreciated the importance of Hebrew, and while the learning of Hebrew had been an important part of missionary preparation in the earlier Middle Ages, it was not until Roger Bacon (*c.*1210-1290) and Nicholas of Lyra (*c.*1270-1340) that Christian researches on Hebrew began to take off.[22]

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own account of his work was revealing: 'We do not tear up the *Vulgate* ... but we point out where it is depraved, giving warning in any case of flagrant error on the part of the translator, and explaining it where the version is involved or obscure.' (quoted Boyle, *Erasmus on language and method in theology*, 5) It was this willingness to alter the rendering of Jerome that precipitated his translation into controversy. Most notoriously, this controversy centred on Erasmus' translation of *logos*, in John 1:1, as *sermo* rather than, as in the *Vulgate*, *verbo*. This controversy forced Erasmus to defend his position, and his *Apologia refellens quorundam seditosos clamores apud populum qui velut impium insectabantur quod verterit, In principio erat sermo* (1520) clearly identified the priorities of his programme. The main planks of his defence were an appeal to philology, and to Christian tradition. He underlined the fact that John was written in Greek, and that the duty of a translation was to capture his intent and meaning as fully as possible through the application of philology. He is also at pains to establish that his rendering cannot be smeared as heretical, conforming, as it does to a very wide range of patristic usage. Erasmus also appealed to the closely allied concepts of copiousness and suitability. A translation had not only to be accurate; it also had to be pleasing. Thus, Erasmus adds to his grammatical and theological defence of *sermo* the contention that it has a softer, and a more pleasing sound. This conjunction of textual accuracy with rhetorical beauty is typical of the humanist project, and is an emphasis whose importance we will remark in Donne's engagement with Scripture. See also Albert Rabil, *Erasmus and the New Testament : the mind of a Christian humanist* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1972), Boyle, *Erasmus on language and method in theology* , Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ*, 112-93, Schwarz, *Principles and problems of Biblical translation*, 92-166 and David Daniell, *The Bible in English : its history and influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 113-119. On the comparisons and contrasts of the approach of Erasmus and Valla see Jerry H. Bentley, 'Biblical Philology and Christian Humanism: Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus as Scholars of the Gospel', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 8 no. 2 (1977):9-28, 9-28. For a discussion of the incorporation of Erasmus into English Protestant humanism see John K. Yost, 'Taverner's Use of Erasmus and the Protestantization of English Humanism', *Renaissance Quarterly* 23 no. 3 (1970):266-76, .

[19] Ximénes' chief contribution to philological study was printed before the publication of the *Novum Instrumentum* but not bound and released until 1520. This was the *Complutensian Polyglot* produced under his guidance. (Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ*, 70-111, De Hamel, *The Book*, 220-3, and 'Ximénez de Cisneros, Francisco', in Livingstone and Cross, *ODCC*, sv.) Ximénes had founded and endowed a university dedicated to the study of the three sacred languages, and, probably in 1502, he devised the project of a parallel translation of Scripture inspired by the legendary *Hexapla* of Origen. Ximénes borrowed and purchased a range of manuscripts, basing his translation on as wide a base as possible. The finished work featured parallel columns of the Greek, Latin Vulgate, and Hebrew text of Scripture, along with, in the Pentateuch, the *Targum of Onkelos*, the Aramaic version of the Hebrew Pentateuch. This work was of immense importance in the history of Biblical translation, and provided a vital tool to the chief vernacular translators of the Reformation. Donne was familiar with the *Complutensian*, and with the terminology used in the volume.

[20] See, for an important study of this context Robert J. Wilkinson, 'The origins of Syriac studies in the sixteenth century' (University of the West of England, 2003) and Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson, eds., *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Philidelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[21] It is an instructive point of comparison that the debate over the relative importance of scripture and tradition, within Judaism, provided the chief initial impetus for this specifically Jewish and Hebrew philological project. See G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: a third language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 1-6.

[22] Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 12-4, S. A. Hirsch, 'Early English hebraists: Roger Bacon and his predecessors', *Jewish Quarterly Review* O.S. 12 (1900):34-88, S. A. Hirsch, 'Roger Bacon and philology', in *Roger Bacon : essays contributed by*

Lyra's *Postillae* was enormously influential, and Donne was still referring to it over three centuries later.[23] Lyra's work was based extensively upon the rabbinical commentaries of Rashi (1040-1105), and gave the Jewish work currency throughout the later Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. Indeed, G. Lloyd Jones has suggested that the lack of interest in Hebrew studies in the century following Nicholas can be partially accounted for by the completeness and popularity of his work.[24] Equally significant, however, was a marked suspicion and distrust of Jews, and of their language, which was seen as a tool of Jewish proselytism. Allied to this, the expulsion of Jews from many European countries cut off the supply of qualified teachers, and those that remained were understandably reluctant to engage in such tuition. By 1492, Italy was the only country in Christian Europe open to Jews, and had a sizable and educated Jewish community. It is, therefore, scarcely surprising that it was in Italy that the next significant development in the study of Hebrew took place.[25] While the chief source of interest for Nicholas of Lyra had been the exegetical resource found in rabbinical commentary, the interests of the next wave of Christian students of Hebrew were much more esoteric. The most important Christian Hebraists were interested in the Kabbalah, 'the secret meaning of the Written Law revealed by God to the elect in the distant past and preserved by a privileged minority.'[26] Pico della Mirandola[27] and Johann Reuchlin[28] were both driven by this interest to produce important and

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various writers on the occasion of the commemoration of the seventh centenary of his birth, ed. A.G. Little (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), H. Hailperin, 'Jewish influence on Christian Biblical Scholars in the Middle Ages', *Historia Judaica* 4 (1942):163-74, and H. Hailperin, 'The Hebrew Heritage of Medieval Biblical Scholarship', *Historia Judaica* 5 (1943):133-54,.

[23] It is an indication of Donne's esteem for Lyra's work that he presented a six-volume edition of the Vulgate with Lyra's *Glossia Ordinaria* and *Postils* to the benchers of Lincoln's Inn to mark the occasion of his retirement from his duties there. (Bald, *John Donne : a life*, 382 For a valuable discussion of Lyra's importance to Luther, by an eminent editor see {Pelikan, 1996 #94} – 'It was necessary to keep Lyra continually at hand, in order to identify not only the many explicit references to Lyra but the unacknowledged borrowings by Luther.' See also Hazard, *Literal Sense and the Gospel of John* .

[24] Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England* , 18. For a more detailed account of the obstacles to Christian interest in the study of Hebrew see Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony - Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1983), 12-20.

[25] On the relative toleration of Jews in Italy see Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 18-20 and Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 20-22.

[26] Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England* , 21. Donne's interest in the Kabbalah lies outside the scope of the present discussion. For a succient treatment see Beth S. Newman, 'John Donne and the Cabala', *Jewish Quarterly* 23 no. 3 (1975):31-36, 31-6, also Baird W. Whitlock, '"Cabal" in Donne's Sermons', *Notes and Queries* 198 (1953):153,.

[27] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) was anxious to be able to read Jewish literature, and studied Hebrew and Aramaic under the tutelage of Jewish converts to Christianity. (Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England* , 21) These tutors introduced him to the Kabbalah, Pico enthusiastically embraced the concept, and discovered that kabbalistic methods allowed him to deduce the truths of the Christian religion, and controvert the verities of Judaism. He propagated his views in nine hundred theses, seventy-two of which deal specifically with the Kabbalah. The influence of Pico's work was widespread, and Donne's work exhibits his familiarity with his writings.

influential works of Hebraic scholarship. Of equal importance was Reuchlin's intervention in the 'battle of the books', which helped to ensure the survival of a corpus of Hebrew material, and was a decisive victory for the wider humanist project.[29] Reuchlin's work and the interest generated by the censorship of the Hebrew books laid the foundations for new translations of the Old Testament into Latin.[30] Sanctes Paginus[31], Sebastian Münster[32], Leo Jud[33], and Immanuel

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[28] Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522) had a frankly magical interest in the potential of the Kabbalah, and it was this esoteric interest, rather than a desire for accurate Scripture, *per se* that drove his philology: 'the need for accurate texts was fundamental to Reuchlin's purpose since only an exact rendering of the names would impart their magic and because numerological equations might be effective only if predicated upon knowledge of the exact number-letters.' (Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 74) Amongst his works were the mystical *De verbo mirifico* (1494) and *De arte cabalistica* (1517). He also wrote on rhetoric in his *Liber congestorum de arte praedicandi* (1504). More relevant to the future development of Hebrew philology was his *De rudimentis hebraicis* (1506), a Hebrew grammar and dictionary, which was to prove an important tool for future students of Hebrew. See also Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 23-36Schwarz, *Principles and problems of Biblical translation*, 61-91Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 24-28, 71-98 and 'Reuchlin, Johann' in Livingstone and Cross, *ODCC*, sv.

[29] Early in 1510 Reuchlin was approached to comment on a project proposed the Emperor Maximillian by Johann Pfefferkorn, a converted Jew. Pfefferkorn was seeking an order that Hebrew books belonging to the Jews of Cologne and Frankfurt be burnt as inimical to the Christian faith. Reuchlin was quick to defend the Jews and their books, arguing that manuscripts of the Old Testament, copies of the Talmud, the Kabbalah, rabbinical commentaries and liturgical works ought all to be preserved. Only those works that explicitly insulted Christ should be destroyed. This advice, perhaps unsurprisingly, failed to satisfy Pfefferkorn and the Dominicans who had initiated the project, and the particular argument escalated into a much more fundamental debate, which raged for a decade, and which, in very general terms, pitted the scholastics of the universities against the humanists who aligned themselves with Reuchlin. Indeed, it has been contended that 'the question was not simply as to the retention of the Jewish books, but as to something much more fundamental. Should the humanists have a voice in the affairs of faith and the Church?' (H. Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten and the German Reformation*, trans. Roland H. Bainton (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937), 54. This view has been contested, most notably in J.H. Overfield, 'A new look at the Reuchlin Affair', *Studies in Mediaeval and Renaissance History* 8 (1971):165-207, and in J.H. Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). For a survey of the modern historiography of the debate see Erika Rummel, *The case against Johann Reuchlin : religious and social controversy in sixteenth-century Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 36-40.) Reuchlin was defended by leading humanists including Erasmus. While he was eventually censured and fined by Pope Leo X, his stance, and the debate that it engendered stimulated a great deal of German scholarly interest in the study of Hebrew texts. Ultimately, the humanist project was strengthened by this debate. See Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 26-36, S. A. Hirsch, 'Johann Pfefferkorn and the battle of the books', in *A Book of Essays* (London: 1905), L. W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), W. Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969), Overfield, 'A new look at the Reuchlin Affair', Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany* , Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 26-8 and Rummel, *The case against Reuchlin* . On the relation of these events to the Reformation see Nauert, 'The Clash of Humanists and Scholastics', and Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ*, 12-3.

[30] Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 39-53.

[31] Sanctes Paginus (1470-1536) was an Italian whose *Veteris et Novi Testamenti nova translatio,* published in 1528 had been financed by Pope Leo X. Equally significant was the publication of a grammar and a dictionary, designed to assist students to read the Old Testament in Hebrew. Paginus also helped to perpetuate the works of Jewish rabbinical commentators, in his six-volume anthology of the works of Jewish and Christian commentators on the Pentateuch, published in the year of his death. See Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 40-44.

[32] Sebastian Münster (1489-1552) a German Franciscian, converted to Protestantism around 1526, and from that point until his death he published seventy-five works, over half of which were concerned with the study of the Semitic languages. These works were widely disseminated and influential: 'by the end of the sixteenth century over 100,000 volumes of his works were in circulation.' (Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 44) Münster's Latin translation of the Old Testament appeared in 1535, dedicated to England's Henry VIII. This translation was to have an enormous effect on the vernacular translations of the Reformation, not least in its appeal to rabbinical authorities in addition to, and even, at times, in preference to the Septuagint and the Vulgate. See Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 44-48, Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 44-49.

[33] Leo Jud (1482-1542) was the son of a Catholic priest, but believed to be of Jewish lineage. Jud was a close associate of Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, and, as his advisor, made an important contribution to the Zurich Bible of 1529. However, his real importance as a translator results from his own Latin translation of the Old Testament published a year after his death. See Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 48-50, and, for Zwingli's interest in gathering a corps of gifted Hebrew scholars Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 31-33.

Tremellius[34] produced translations that were of great use to succeeding generations of vernacular translators, but also produced a large amount of important scholarly works and provided Latin speaking students with access to the riches of Jewish Biblical commentary.

The works of this quartet of translators were of fundamental importance, for they provided a valuable resource for the translators of Scripture into the vernacular languages of Europe. They also opened a window on Jewish interpretation and tradition, and laid the basis for a form of Biblical exegesis that was much more culturally aware than had previously been possible. The streams of Latin, Greek and Hebrew philology met in the vernacular translations of the Reformers. Each of the Reformed translations was very clearly informed by the discoveries of the previous centuries, as much by the fresh insights on Jewish society and ritual as philological niceties.[35] Further, each of the Protestant vernacular translations built upon those that had gone before. This heritage of humanist scholarship was, therefore, available to Donne and, as we shall see, his work indicates his awareness both of its products and of the issues that had informed them.

II-Constructing the Canon

Philological investigations were fundamental to the Renaissance Bible. Less far reaching, but equally important were the questions of the identification of Scripture. In part, these questions had to do with the theological definition of the canon of Scripture. This issue had been

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[34] Immanuel Tremellius (1510-1580) was born of Jewish parents, but converted first to Catholicism, and subsequently to Protestantism. Tremellius exemplifies the mobility of the European scholarly elite. In 1547, he was invited to England by Thomas Cranmer, and taught Hebrew at Cambridge. Mary's accession forced him to return to the continent, where he came to hold the chair of Old Testament Studies at Heidelberg. His time at Heidelberg was notably prolific. His output included translations of rabbinical commentaries on the Minor Prophets, an Aramiac and Syriac grammar, and an edition of the Syriac New Testament with a Latin translation. Most significant, however, was a Latin translation of the Old Testament in which an introduction was provided for each book, and marginal annotations for almost every verse. Tremellius' translation marked the highpoint of Latin translations of the Old Testament, and moved farther from the text of the Vulgate than any previous effort. See Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 50-53, Friedman, *Most Ancient Testimony*, 250-1, Wilkinson, 'The origins of Syriac studies in the sixteenth century', Kenneth Austin, 'Immanuel Tremellius (1510-1580), the Jews and Christian Hebraica', in *Bundeseinheit und Gottesvolk: Reformierter Protestantismus und Judentum im Europa des 16 und 17 Jahrhunderts*, ed. Achim Detmers and Lange van Ravenswaay (Wuppertal: Foedus, 2005), Kenneth Austin, 'Immanuel Tremellius and the Avoidance of Controversy', in *Moderate Voices and the European Reformation*, ed. Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) and Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism: the life and writings of Immanuel Tremellius (c.1510-1580)*, *St Andrews Studies in Reformation History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). See also Robert J. Wilkinson, 'Immanuel Tremellius' 1569 Edition of the Syriac New Testament', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58 no. 1 (2007):9-25,.

[35] See Jones, *Hebrew in Tudor England*, 115-144, 'The Inspirational View: Luther' in Schwarz, *Principles and problems of Biblical translation*, 167-212, Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 41-62, David Daniell, *William Tyndale : a biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001) and Dahlia M. Karpman, 'William Tyndale's Response to the Hebraic Tradition', *Studies in the Renaissance* 14 (1967):110-130,.

pronounced on by the Church, and the invocation of it by the Reformers was indicative of their reluctance to rely only on the Church's declaration. Bainton succinctly states the question:

> But if the Scripture were the authority, what then was the Scripture? That question might seem long ago to have been settled because the canon, both of the Old Testament, and the New, had been fixed since the days of the early Church. But if, as the Reformers said, the Gospel was prior to the canon and only those books should be received which proclaimed the Gospel, might not the canon be re-examined?[36]

In the absence of ecclesiastical decree, it became necessary to develop other criteria by which the canon could be determined. This very considerable problem exercised the Reformers a good deal: Luther's qualms about the status of Revelation and James are simply the best known of the canonical dilemmas that had to be addressed.[37] The denial of the Church's authority made discussions about the canon feasible; it was another doctrine that gave them polemical and controversial edge. Purgatory was 'the one of the most contested doctrines of the Reformation,' and a factor in the controversy over the canon was the lack of support for the teaching in those books that the Reformers were prepared to accept as canonical.[38] Attempts to lend the doctrine credibility by appeal to the writings of the Biblical Apocrypha inevitably focussed attention on the status and utility of these books. This Biblical Apocrypha comprised books included in the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament carried out in Alexandria between in the third century before Christ, and widely used by Hellenistic Jews, and later by Greek-speaking Christians – and in the Vulgate, but not found in the Hebrew Old Testament. By the time of Donne's ministry, the identity and utility of the Apocrypha had been codified in the Thirty-Nine Articles:

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[36] Bainton, 'The Bible in the Reformation', 6. See also Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 20-21.

[37] On Luther's views on the canonicity of Revelation see Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6-11

[38] Greenblatt, *Hamlet in purgatory*, 13. On the wider canon debate see Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*, trans. John Austin Baker (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972), and the very comprehensive collection of essays in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002) especially Eugene Ulrich, 'The Notion and Definition of Canon', 21-35, Albert C. Sundberg Jr., 'The Septuagint: The bible of Hellenistic Judaism', 68-90, and Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., 'The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Early Church and Today', 196-210. For an interesting perspective on the interaction between Reformation and canon from a Roman Catholic theologian see Oswald Loretz, *The Truth of the Bible*, trans. David J. Bourke (London: Burns & Oates Ltd., 1968), 96-113. Lee Martin McDonald, 'Canon', in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J.W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) provides a convenient and illuminating overview of the subject.

> Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture, we do understand those Canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. ... And the other Books (as *Hierome* saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine; such are these following: The Third Book of Esdras, The Fourth Book of Esdras, The Book of Tobias, The Book of Judith, The rest of the Book of Esther, The Book of Wisdom, Jesus the Son of Sirach, Baruch the Prophet, The Song of the Three Children, The Story of Susanna, Of Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasses, The First Book of Maccabees, The Second Book of Maccabees.
>
> All the Books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them Canonical.[39]

This understanding of the Apocrypha was given a physical expression by their retention in the King James translation of 1611, as a separate section between the Old and New Testaments, useful to read but marked off from Scripture proper. Because Donne never proffers any other definition of Apocryphal writings, this orthodox and official definition is of considerable importance to our understanding of the term.

Thus it is that a key debate of the Reformation concerned the best means by which the canon should be determined. Archbishop Laud, in his *Conference with Fisher the Jesuit* (1639), a discussion that is both chronologically and, to some extent at least, confessionally pertinent to Donne, outlined the range of available sources of canonical certainty.[40] Laud identified four such sources. The first was the testimony of the Church, unpalatable to the Reformers, and dismissed by Laud; secondly, Laud instanced the internal testimony of Scripture, its witness to itself. Again, this is less than satisfactory, for 'this inbred light of Scripture is a thing coincident with Scripture itself: and so the principles and the conclusion in this kind of proof should be entirely

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[39] Thirty-Nine Articles, VI.

[40] The 'Fisher' conferences have received regrettably little attention. Thomas H. Wadkins, 'The Percy-"Fisher" Controversies and the Ecclesiastical Politics of Jacobean Anti-Catholicism, 1622-1625', *Church History* 57 no. 2 (1988):153-69, is an honourable exception, and is especially enlightening in his discussion of the Laudian role in the conferences, and his insight must qualify our understanding of the pertinence of the conference to Donne.

the same, which cannot be.'[41] Thirdly, 'some think that there is no sufficient warrant for this, unless they fetch it from the testimony of the Holy Ghost, and so look in vain after special revelations, and make themselves, by this very conceit, obnoxious, and easy to be led by all the whisperings of a "seducing private spirit".' Finally, Laud outlines the function of reason in identifying Scripture. None of these sources of authority entirely satisfies Laud, and he eventually argues that only a combination of all these voices is sufficient to prove the status of Scripture. Looking back over the Reformation, we can see those testimonies mentioned by Laud being variously invoked and depended upon.

For Luther, it was the preaching of Christ that gave the imprimatur of Divine inspiration:

> That which does not preach Christ is not apostolic, though it be the work of Peter or Paul and conversely that which does teach Christ is apostolic even though it be written by Judas, Annas, Pilate, Herod.[42]

Internal witness, therefore, was of the first importance. Similarly, Calvin had outlined the role of the internal witness of Scripture:

> For it is wonderful how much we are confirmed in our belief, when we more attentively consider how admirably the system of divine wisdom contained in it is arranged—how perfectly free the doctrine is from every thing that savours of earth—how beautifully it harmonises in all its parts—and how rich it is in all the other qualities which give an air of majesty to composition. Our hearts are still more firmly assured when we reflect that our admiration is elicited more by the dignity of the matter than by the graces of style. For it was not without an admirable arrangement of Providence, that the sublime mysteries of the kingdom of heaven have for the greater part been delivered with a contemptible meanness of words. Had they been adorned with a more splendid eloquence, the wicked might have cavilled, and alleged that this constituted all their force. But now, when an unpolished simplicity, almost bordering on rudeness, makes a deeper impression than the loftiest flights of oratory, what does it indicate if not that the Holy Scriptures are too mighty in the power of truth to need the rhetorician's art?[43]

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[41] William Laud, *A Relation of the Conference between William Lawd, then Lord Bishop of St. Davids; now, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury: and Mr. Fisher the Jesuit*, 4th ed., STC (2nd ed.)/15299 ed. (London: Printed by Richard Badger, Printer to the Prince, his Highnesse, 1639), 70.

[42] Luther, quoted Bainton, 'The Bible in the Reformation', 7.

[43] Calvin, *Institutes*, 22.

Thus, Scripture bears internal testimony to its own authenticity and usefulness. Notwithstanding this, although the relevant chapter of the *Institutes* is titled 'The Credibility of Scripture Sufficiently Proved, in so far as Natural Reason Admits', in practice, for Calvin natural reason does not go all that far:

> In vain were the authority of Scripture fortified by argument, or supported by the consent of the Church, or confirmed by any other helps, if unaccompanied by an assurance higher and stronger than human Judgment can give. Till this better foundation has been laid, the authority of Scripture remains in suspense. On the other hand, when recognising its exemption from the common rule, we receive it reverently, and according to its dignity, those proofs which were not so strong as to produce and rivet a full conviction in our minds, become most appropriate helps.[44]

For Calvin, then, the certainty of the canon depends on divine certification; reason is not sufficient.

A similar dynamic is observable in *A most godly and learned discourse* (trans. 1579), which comes to us with the enthusiastic endorsement of Heinrich Bullinger, and which deals with the canon in great detail. The author outlines reasonable arguments for the content of the New Testament canon. Thus, discussing the gospels, he adduces historical evidence that the gospels were held in esteem by 'Apostolik men.'[45] Moving to the epistles, he stressed the importance of Paul's practice, deduced from 2 Thessalonians 3:17[46], of affirming the authenticity of his epistles by signing them. He also outlines the testimony of the New Testament authors one to another. Only then was the testimony of the Primitive Church introduced:

> Therefore that is the Gospel of the Catholike Church, whiche being put in writing, God hath sealed for his worde. And this is the cause, that the Churches of all ages haue taken the bookes of the Newe Testament for authentike, which in these pages we do with reverence acknowledge for authentike, and which we doe most constantly affirme, ought to be beleeved.[47]

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[44] Calvin, *Institutes*, 22.

[45] *A most godly and learned discourse of the woorthynesse, authoritie, and sufficiencie of the holy scripture also of the cleerenesse, and plainnesse of the same, and of the true vse thereof. Wherin is discussed this famous question: whether the canonical scriptures haue authoritie from the church, or rather the church receiue authoritie from the Scriptures. By occasion wherof are touched the dignities and duties of the church, touching traditions, with aunswere to all obiections.*, trans. John Tomkys (London: 1579), 11.

[46] 'The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.'

[47] *most godly and learned discourse*, 12.

Ultimately, however, even these assurances were secondary to the role of the Holy Ghost, whose position on the hierarchy of testimony was vital:

> [T]he Canonicall Scripture hath her authoritie chiefly from the holy Ghost, by whose motion and inspiration it was set forth ... And after that, from the writers, unto whome God gave certaine and peculiar testimonies of the truth. Whereunto is added the witnesse of the primitive Church in whose time those bokes wer published & receiued.[48]

The identification of the word of God involved more than debates about the canon. The reformers' insistence on *sola scriptura* demanded the rejection of a whole swathe of other putative revelations. Partly this definition opposed the Roman Church. Donne's *bête noir* Cardinal Robert Bellarmine had made the issue clear in his *De verbo Dei non scripto*, and, indeed, the title alone serves to highlight the key issue. For Catholics, Scripture was not a complete revelation. Tradition and the authority of the Church were given a place alongside the revelation of God in Scripture; and to this many of the Reformers could not assent. On the other hand, some Protestants, and certainly we must include Donne in this group, also felt the need to stand against the contemporary drive to subsume all of nature and of human culture into one unfolding revelation of God – not precisely to give nature and culture the status of Scripture, perhaps, but to ascribe real revelationary significance to them, nonetheless.

III-Natural Revelation – Reasonable Religion

God's revelation in nature was equally a source of some contention, and it is important that we briefly sketch it, for Donne, with other Protestants of his circle, was keenly interested in the way in which ideas about natural revelation intersected with wider theological debate. The status of natural revelation was an issue that had a long history. In the first instance, it was deduced from Scripture, especially from Psalm 19 ('the heavens declare the glory of God...'), and Paul's teaching of the responsibility to respond to the Creatorial revelation of God as seen in the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, in particular 1:19-25:

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that

[48] *most godly and learned discourse*, 55-6.

> which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
>
> Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.[49]

The utility of natural revelation was fundamental to the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1265) of Thomas Aquinas. This methodology was the result of the fact that Aquinas' work was aimed at non-Christian readers:

> because some of them, like the Mohammedans and pagans, do not agree with us as to the authority of any Scripture whereby they may be convinced, in the same way as we are able to dispute with the Jews by means of the Old Testament, and with heretics by means of the New: whereas the former accept neither. Wherefore it is necessary to have recourse to natural reason, to which all are compelled to assent.[50]

Aquinas' *magnum opus*, the *Summa Theologiae*, was written for those who assented to the authority of Scripture, and this has obvious implications for his method. However, 'he remains careful to distinguish between truths discoverable by reason and truths available only through revelation.'[51] Thomistic philosophy continued influential throughout the medieval period, and its importance was in no way lessened by the Reformation or the Renaissance. Indeed, a number of the important concerns of the early modern period had given a new currency to Aquinas' ideas. This currency is visible in two strands that are important to our understanding of Donne – a continental strand preoccupied with speculative theology, and a more pragmatic English expression.

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[49] Rom. 1:19-25 (K.J.V.) See Michel de Montaigne, *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, ed. M. A. Screech (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), vvii-xx.
[50] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Contra Gentiles* trans. The English Dominican Fathers, vol. I (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd, 1924), 4
[51] Anthony Kenny, *Medieval Philosophy, A New History of Western Philosophy Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 70.

The continental strand is perhaps best represented by Raymond of Sebond (d. 1432). Sebond's *Theologia Naturalis* (written 1434-1436) argued, as Anthony Raspa summarises it in his introduction to Donne's *Essayes in Divinity*, 'that God had created the universe to give man knowledge of his divine being and that, in the divine mind, this book of the created universe pre-existed the Bible as a source of revelation for humanity, and so in that sense was a surer volume of information than the Scriptures' (*ED*, 112).[52] This was a considerable extension of Aquinas' ideas, and proved a step too far for the Catholic Church, who condemned Raymond as a heretic. Sebond's ideas had a particular currency at the end of the sixteenth century, because of their influence on Michel de Montaigne.[53] Montaigne published a translation of Sebond's *Theologia* in 1569 and his *Apology for Raymond Sebond* in 1576. This was published as the twelfth chapter of the second part of Montaigne's *Essays* in 1580. Montaigne's translation of Sebond recovered the orthodoxy of his teaching, and his defence of Sebond is an important and influential exercise in the Christian scepticism that touched Donne. Sebond's ideas, and Montaigne's use of them, had an obvious relevance in the context of Renaissance interest in the possibilities of the new world, and to the state of the 'savage' who did not have access to written revelation.

Ideas of natural theology were extended by Philippe de Mornay (1549-1623), a French Huguenot and member of the Monarchomachs. In his volume *De la verité de la religion chrétienne contre les athées, épicuriens, payens, juifs, mahométans et autres infidèles* (1581), translated as *A Work concerning the trunesse of Christian Religion Against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Jewes, Mahumetists, and other infidels*, De Mornay set about the correction of an impressive range of opponents. He attempted this by constructing a spectrum of revelation that began at Nature, and progressed, by way of heathen philosophers, to Scripture. Or, as phrased by the translator of the 1587 edition:

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[52] Screech, in Montaigne, *Apology*, xiii-xiv points out that it was only Sebond's prologue that was placed on the Tridentine Index of Forbidden Books (1564), and that the orthodoxy of Montaigne's translation, published with a revised prologue, was never called into question. Sebond's version described the doctrine he propounded as 'necessary', while Montaigne merely states that it is useful. Likewise, Sebond claimed, without qualification, that his understanding of nature was capable of teaching truth. Montaine argued that it taught the truth 'insofar as it is possible for human reason.' Sebond's heresy was, therefore, more the result of a demarcation dispute than a radical challenge to orthodox Christianity or Catholicism.

[53] The issue of Montaigne's influence on Donne is a difficult one, because we have no direct proof that Donne had read, or was influenced by Montaigne. Louis I. Bredvold, 'The Naturalism of Donne in relation to some Renaissance traditions', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 22 (1923):471-502, supports his argument that Montaigne was Donne's 'master' on the basis the similarity of ideas in their works, concentrating, in Donne's case upon the earlier, 'libertine' poetry. Richard Ornstein, 'Donne, Montaigne, and Natural Law', in *Essential Articles for the Study of John Donne's Poetry*, ed. John R. Roberts (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1975), 130, contends, against Brevold that 'Donne and Montaigne criticized natural law independently from the Libertine tradition and from each other.'

> The Author ... hath conveyed into this work what soever he found eyther in the common reason of all nations, or in the peculiar principles of the chiefe philosophers, or in the misticall doctrine of the Jewish Rabbines, or in the writings of historiographers and poets; that might conveniently make to the manifestation of that trueth, which he taketh in hand to prove.[54]

De Mornay's approach might best be described as omnivorous – a vast range of testimony is conscripted on behalf of the Christian religion: the range is extended well beyond the merely natural.

De Mornay's work is interesting because of his impeccably Protestant credentials: his work is, at least partially, an attempt to delineate the Protestant form of the religion revealed in nature. The Protestant agenda of the work is confirmed by its translation into English by Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding.[55] Both were notably Protestant, and Golding, who was from a well-known Puritan family, had previously translated works by Calvin, Beza, Bullinger, and Marolat. Interestingly, he had also translated Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Given de Mornay's attempt to subsume the work of pagan 'historiographers and poets' into a Christian super-narrative, this interest in mythology may have induced Golding to accede to Sidney's request and to complete the translation of the work. In any event, the collaboration of Sidney and Golding places Philippe de Mornay's apparently rather marginal work close to the heart of the English Protestant establishment.

From the heart of that establishment and from Donne's *milieu* there originated ideas that made the question of the value of natural revelation central. These were the ideas of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (d.1648), as exemplified in his influential philosophical work, *De Veritate* (Paris, 1624; London 1633)[56]. This treatise was to be of considerable importance for

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[54] Lord of Plessie Marlie Mornay, Philip, *A Woorke Concerning the Trewnesse of Christian Religion, written in French, against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Jewes, Mahumetists, and other Infidels*, trans. Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding (London: Thomas Cadman, 1587), sig. *3. See, for Mornay's biography, Charlotte Mornay, *A Huguenot Family in the XVI Century: The Memoirs of Philippe de Mornay, Sieur du Plessis Marly*, trans. Lucy Cramp (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., n.d.).

[55] See John Considine,'Golding, Arthur (1535/6-1606)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10908, 24 May 2007 and H.R. Woudhuysen,'Sidney, Sir Philip (1554-1586)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25522, 24 May 2007.

[56] David A. Pallin,'Herbert, Edward, first Baron Herbert of Cherbury and first Baron Herbert of Castle Island (1582?–1648)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13020, 24 May 2007

English Deism.[57] Herbert is an interesting comparison with Donne, particularly in light of the close friendship that Donne enjoyed with the Herbert family and with Edward personally. In reality, however, Herbert's views present more points of contrast than of comparison. In particular, the 'common notions of Religion' that Herbert identifies have less to do with the individual's response to God as revealed in Creation, than with the internal psychological realities of the individual. This distinction is very clear in Herbert's definition of Common Notions:

> Just as according to the usual view the faculties ... with which we were born, remain latent within us so long as their corresponding objects are not present, and even disappear completely and give no sign of their existence; so in the same way the Common Notions must be understood to be, not the products of experience, but principles without which we should have no experience at all.[58]

This sort of concern takes us well beyond the sort of natural encoding of Christianity envisaged by Montaigne and de Mornay. In spite of Edward Herbert's irreproachably Protestant roots, and the decidedly ambivalent contemporary reception of his work, Herbert's ideas came, eventually, to be associated with the Deist challenge to Christian orthodoxy, and thus, to be regarded as dangerous and heretical.[59]

More enduringly influential was the English natural theology expressed in the work of Richard Hooker.[60] Hooker's work shared the Thomist roots of the continental tradition, but was otherwise distinct from it.[61] The precise extent of Hooker's dependence on natural reason has

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[57] A number of scholars have discussed the nature of Herbert's influence upon Deism, suggesting in general that his ideas were rather later appropriations than fundamental in their importance. See R.W. Serjeantson, 'Herbert of Cherbury before Deism: The Early Reception of the De Veritate', *The Seventeenth Century* 16 no. 2 (2001):217-38, and David A. Pailin, 'Should Herbert of Cherbury be regarded as a 'Deist'?' *Journal of Theological Studies* NS, 51 no. 1 (2000):113-49,.

[58] Edward Herbert, *De Veritate*, trans. Meyrick H. Carré (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1992), 132

[59] See, on the reception of *De Veritate* Serjeantson, 'Herbert of Cherbury before Deism: The Early Reception of the De Veritate',.

[60] For a broader discussion of Hooker's importance to the development of 'anglicanism', to Donne's own ecclesiology, and of the novelty of his approach see Chapter Two, below.

[61] Even Hooker's indebtedness to Aquinas has been debated by scholars. W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, 'The Philosopher of the "Politic Society"', in *Studies in Richard Hooker: essays preliminary to an edition of his works*, ed. William Speed Hill (Cleveland, OH: Press of Case Western University, 1972), Robert K. Faulkner, 'Reason and Revelation in Hooker's Ethics', *The American Political Science Review* 59 no. 3 (1965):680-90, and Robert K. Faulkner, *Richard Hooker and the Politics of a Christian England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981) contend for an Aristotelian Hooker. Hooker's debt to Aristotle cannot be denied: it was, indeed, a chief objection of the authors of *A Christian Letter* that Hooker was happy to depend on a pagan philosopher [See 'A Christian Letter' in Richard Hooker, *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker Vol. 4 - Lawes: Attack and Response*, ed. John E. Booty (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1982), 65-7. This does not, however, eliminate the importance of Thomism in Hooker's epistemology, a dependence tellingly discussed by A.P. d'Entrèves, *The medieval contribution to political thought : Thomas Aquinas, Marsilius of Padua, Richard Hooker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939)A.P. d'Entrèves, *Natural Law: an introduction to legal philosophy*,

been hotly debated in recent scholarship.[62] Most critics agree, however, that Hooker's valorisation of the possibilities of natural reason was a direct response to the extreme Scripturalism of his Puritan opponents, who contended that Scripture alone was the guide for all actions. Hooker responded by adumbrating a hierarchy of laws – natural law, the celestial law (binding for angels), and the law of reason, obeyed by men as reasonable creatures, and tending to direct them in the imitation of God. This law, Hooker contends, can be seen at work shaping the actions of pious pagans like Plato (inevitably), and Mercurius Trismegistus, who proceeded in the 'knowledge of truth' and grew in 'the exercise of virtue.'[63] In further proof of this, Hooker appeals to the force of custom, and to the *locus classicus* of Romans 2:

> The generall and perpetuall voice of men is as the sentence of God him selfe. For that which all men have at all times learned, nature her selfe must needes have taught; and God being the author of nature, her voice is but his instrument. By her from him we receive whatsoever in such sort we learn. Infinite duties there are, the goodness wherof is by this rule sufficiently manifested, although we had no other warrant besides to approve them. Thapostle S. Paul having speech concerning the Heathen saith of them, *They are a law unto themselves.* His meaning is, that by force of the light of reason, wherewith God illuminated every one which commeth into the world, men being inabled to know truth from falsehood, and good from evill, do thereby learne in many things what the will of God is; which will himselfe not revealing by any extraordinary meanes unto them, but they by naturall discourse attaining the knowledge therof, seeme the makers of those lawes which are indeed his, and they but only the finders of them out.[64]

Hooker is very clearly envisaging a process of revelation: nature is God's instrument, and what she reveals we receive by her from Him.

Hooker's claims for the utility of reason are considerable, if contested. It is clear that he did not simply replace the Puritan emphasis on the omnicompetence of Scripture with a

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2nd (revised) ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1970), Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), John Sedberry Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican tradition : an historical and theological study of Hooker's Ecclesastical polity* (London: Black, 1964), Damien Grace, 'Natural Law in Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*', *The Journal of Religious History* 21 no. 1 (1997):10-22, and John K. Stafford, 'Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit' (University of Manitoba, 2005).

[62] See Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997) and Stafford, 'Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit' for the primacy of Scripture in Hooker's theology, and Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) for an opposing view.

[63] Richard Hooker, *The Folger Library edition of the works of Richard Hooker Vol.1 - Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity*, ed. Georges Edelen (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1977), 74.

[64] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 83-4.

similarly far-reaching view of reason. So, for example, he was careful to stress that it was important not 'so far to extend the law of reason, so as to conteine in it all maner lawes whereunto reasonable creatures are bound, but ... we restraine it to those only duties, which all men by force of naturall wit either do or might understand to be such duties as concerne all men.[65] Hooker goes on to argue for the necessity of Scripture. He does so by appeal to human potential. Man's sensual and intellectual desires are natural, and therefore able to be satiated by natural means. Humanity's spiritual desires are supernatural, and thus, by definition, require something beyond the natural to satisfy them. Scripture provides this supernatural resource, and is therefore, a far greater revelation than the natural:

> The light of nature is never able to finde out any way of obtaining the reward of blisse, but by performing exactly the duties and workes of righteousness. For salvation therefore and life all flesh being excluded this way, behold how the wisdom of God hath revealed a way mysticall and supernaturall, a way directing unto the same ende of life by a course which groundeth it selfe upon the guiltiness of sinne, and through sinne desert of condemnation and death. For in this waye the first thing is the tender compassion of God respecting us drowned and swallowed up in myserie; the next is redemption out of the same by the pretious death and merit of a mightie Saviour, which hath witnessed of himself saying *I am the way*, the way that leadeth us from miserie into blisse.[66]

Hooker's understanding of natural revelation maintained a vital place for God's revelation in Scripture. As will emerge below, it is this tradition, rather than the continental approach that we have traced, that has the most relevance for our understanding of Donne's negotiation of the issue.

IV-*SOLA SCRIPTURA?*

Complex questions about the identification and necessity of Scripture were only the prelude to equally problematic questions of interpretation. Again, Donne, and the Church of England generally, implemented a moderate understanding of *sola scriptura*. In 1538 Thomas

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[65] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 91.
[66] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 118.

Cranmer, as Archbishop of Canterbury, prepared the following declaration to be read aloud to congregations by the clergy of the Church of England:

> If at any time by reading, any doubt shall come upon any of you, touching the sense and meaning of any part thereof; that then, not giving too much to your own minds, fantasies and opinions, nor having thereof any opening in your open taverns or alehouses, ye shall have recourse to such learned men as be or shall be authorised to preach and declare the same. So that avoiding all contentions and disputations in such alehouses, and other places unmet for such conferences, and submitting your opinions to the judgements of such learned men as shall be appointed ... you use this benefit quietly and charitably every one of you, to the edifying of himself, his wife and family.[67]

The occasion of this declaration was a momentous event in the English Reformation – the first officially sanctioned publication of the Bible in English. Cranmer had been an enthusiastic supporter of vernacular Scriptures, and their publication was a victory for the reformed cause.[68] In this declaration, Cranmer's enthusiasm is balanced by a realisation of the complexities and the potential difficulties arising from the free availability of the Scripture.

This sort of balancing act was implicit in the Reformation cry of *sola scriptura*. It has been traditional to represent this slogan as a call for the radical abandonment of exegetical tradition.[69] Such an understanding is excessively simplistic, and it is helpful to note Pelikan's nuancing of this historiographical truism:

> It is a commonplace of theological and historical literature going back to the Protestant Reformers themselves that the sole authority of Scriptura, *Sola Scriptura*, was one of the fundamental principles of Reformation theology to which the authority of tradition had to yield, and that therefore, the Reformers no longer regarded Scripture and Tradition as two sources of divine revelation, nor even as a single source in two modalities. The confusions at work in this conventional

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[67] Thomas Cranmer, *Remains*, ed. H. Jenkins (Oxford: 1833), IV:272.

[68] On Cranmer's support for English Bible see Diarmuid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer, A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 147, 196-7, 199, also Alfred W. Pollard, ed., *Records of the English Bible: The Documents relating to the Translation and Publication of the Bible in English, 1525-1611* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 214-17. Especially of note is Cranmer's letter to Cromwell expressing his gratitude for the latter's successful efforts to secure the King's approval for the Matthew Bible: 'My Lorde for this your payne, taken in this behalf, I give unto you my moost hearty thanks, assuring your Lordeship for the contentacion of my mynde, you have showed me more pleasure herin then yf you had given me a thousande pounde.' (p.216)

[69] See, for an example of this tendency, Bainton, 'The Bible in the Reformation'.

> wisdom have received helpful clarification through Heiko Oberman's 'two concepts of Tradition.'[70]

Rather than viewing a distinction between *sola scriptura* and tradition, Oberman posits two types of tradition:

> We call the single-source or exegetical tradition of Scripture held together with its interpretation 'Tradition I' and the two-sources theory which allows for an extra-biblical oral tradition 'Tradition II.'[71]

His remark, made in the specific context of his own work that 'the representatives of the first concept of Tradition by no means isolate Holy Scripture by divorcing it from Tradition understood as the history of the interpretation of Scripture,' is equally valid in the context of the Reformation.[72] This restatement of this key difference between the Roman and Reformed churches in terms of two different types of tradition, rather than between tradition and Scripture alone, is very illuminating, and models effectively the packaging of Scripture and exegesis presented by key figures in the European and English Reformations.[73]

This packaging of Scripture and exegesis was necessary because the Protestant rejection of the traditions and teachings of the Roman Church as the definitive guide to the teachings of Scripture created an interpretative vacuum which needed to be filled. This new emphasis on vernacular Scripture, in potential at least, opened up the boundaries of interpretation in a radical and threatening way. Extreme readings of Scripture could be used to form or to feed extreme political positions, which threatened the established order of Early-Modern society. The often-instanced hermeneutical and revolutionary excesses of the Münster Anabaptists underscored and exemplified the dangers of unrestrained engagement with the text of Scripture.[74] This issue

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[70] Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 27.

[71] Heiko A. Oberman, *The harvest of medieval theology : Gabriel Biel and late medieval nominalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 371. This recognition that *sola scriptura* practically requires an exegetical tradition is at the heart of Richard Hooker's observation of Calvin: 'Of what accompt the Maister of sentences was in the Church of Rome, the same and more amongst the preachers of the reformed Churches Calvin had purchased ... His bookes almost the the very canon to judge both doctrine and discipline by.' Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 11

[72] Oberman, *The harvest of medieval theology : Gabriel Biel and late medieval nominalism*, 391.

[73] The complexities of *sola Scriptura* are surveyed from an Evangelical perspective in Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001), which makes use of and extends Oberman's taxonomy.

[74] See Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The origins of sectarian Protestantism : a study of the Anabaptist view of the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 27-32. On earlier radical sects see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, revised and expanded ed. (London: Temple Smith, 1970) especially, on the Münster movement, pp. 252-78. In this connection, the burning of books by these Anabaptists is eloquent of their rejection and silencing of traditional exegesis and teaching, and was so depicted by Richard Hooker – 'The booke of God they... so admired, that other disputation against their opinions then only by allegation of the Scripture they would not heare; besides it, they thought no other writings ...

exercised the key figures in Reformation theology. Cranmer, whose caution we have already noted, was committed to an existing ecclesiastical structure, and to a particular form of Reformation, which explicitly favoured an interpretive role for the clergy. The same stresses are visible, however, across the whole spectrum of Protestant thought. William Tyndale, whose commitment to the free availability of vernacular Scripture is patent, and who had little enough reason to lend his support to the existing structure of the Church, outlined his understanding of the weaknesses of Rome's position on Scripture with characteristic pith:

> Nay say they, the scripture is so hard that thou couldest never understand it but by the doctors. That is I must measure the meteyard by the cloth. Here be twenty cloths of diverse lengths and diverse breadths. How shall I be sure of the length of the meteyard by them? I suppose rather I must be first sure of the length of the meteyard, and thereby measure and judge the cloths. If I must first believe the doctor, then is the doctor first true and the truth of scripture dependeth of his truth and so the truth of God springeth from the truth of man.[75]

The difficulty was not that Scripture was expounded, rather that the relative priorities of Scripture and its exposition were being reversed; authority was being located in the teaching of the Church, rather than in the word of God. But, even for Tyndale, the solution was the reform of teaching, rather than its abandonment:

> Howbeit my meaning is that as a master teacheth his prentice to know all the points of the meteyard ... and then teacheth him to mete other things thereby: even so will I that ye teach the people God's law... So would it come to pass, that as we know by natural wit what followeth of a true principle of natural reason: even so by the principles of the faith and by the plain scriptures and by the circumstances of the text should we judge all men's exposition and all men's doctrine, and should receive the best and refuse the worst. I would have you teach them also the properties and manner of speakings of the scripture, and how to expound proverbs and similitudes. And then if they go abroad and walk by the fields and meadows of all manner doctors and philosophers they could catch no

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should be studied, in so much ... that as many as had any books save the Bible in their custodie, they brought and set them publiquely on fire. When they and their Bibles were alone together, what strange phantasticall opinion whatsoever at any time entred into their heads, their use was to thinke the Spirit taught it them.' Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 44.

[75] Tyndale, *Obedience*, 20.

> harm. They should discern the poison from the honey and bring home nothing but that which is wholesome.[76]

Rather than evacuating the usefulness of Church teaching, the availability of vernacular Scripture underlined just how essential instruction in the correct understanding of Scripture was.

Luther, whose conscience, famously, was captive to the word of God, and who translated Scripture so that his fellow Germans might 'seize and taste the pure Word of God itself' was also seized of the importance of teaching, and his large and short catechisms are indicative of his commitment to a form of teaching that had been much in vogue in the medieval church.[77] In the preface to his *Large Catechism*, Luther outlined his concern that pastors and preachers of the Reformation were failing to shoulder their burden of responsibility to teach the truth.

> We have no slight reasons for treating the Catechism so constantly in sermons and for both desiring and beseeching others to teach it, since we see to our sorrow that many pastors and preachers are very negligent in this, and slight both their office and this teaching; some from great and high art giving their mind, as they imagine, to much higher matters, but others from sheer laziness and care for their paunches, assuming no other relation to this business than if they were pastors and preachers for their bellies' sake, and had nothing to do but to consume their emoluments as long as they live, as they have been accustomed to do under the Papacy.[78]

Luther's mention of the helpful books available to assist the preacher reminds us that the Reformers saw no contradiction between their stress on *sola scriptura* and their prolific commentaries on Scripture.

Calvin, in his turn, articulated a very similar understanding of the importance of teaching, when properly subservient to the text of Scripture:

> God demands nothing except that men obey his laws, and yet he wishes his servants, the prophets, to be heard: *That you may hear the words of my prophets whom I send to you* (he uses the second person, you). Here there seems to be a kind of inconsistency. For if the law of God is sufficient, why is hearing the prophets

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[76] Tyndale, *Obedience*, 22.
[77] Luther, quoted Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 7.
[78] Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, trans. F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau (St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 565-773.

> added to it? But the two commands are really in perfect agreement. The law alone must be heard, and with it the prophets who continually interpret it. For God did not send his prophets to correct the law, to change something in it, to add to it or subtract from it. There was an inviolable decree *neither to add nor take away* (Deut. 12:32). What then was the purpose of prophecy? Truly, it was to explain the law more and more fully, and also to fit it to the immediate need of the people. Since, then, the prophets do not invent any new teaching, but are faithful interpreters of the law, God is not combining here two separate commands. He wishes his law and his prophets to be heard simultaneously. The majesty of the law does not lessen the authority of the prophets. For the prophets uphold the law; they in no way subtract anything from it.[79]

Similarly, the translators of the Geneva Bible felt it essential to supply, in the margins of their translation, an exegetical apparatus that guided, or controlled, the individual's understanding of Scripture.[80] Heinrich Bullinger, whose influence on Cranmer and consequently upon the Church of England, was considerable, endorsed the view that the Church 'hath excellent gifts, understanding, & the interpretation of doctrine given by divine inspiration.'[81] Problems arose, not because the Church had a unique role as teacher, but because

> manie eloquent learned men, doe ... extol, amplifie, & exaggerate the majestie, preheminence, authoritie & dignitie thereof, so that they do affirme, that she hath force and power above the written word of God, & thinke that Christians ought to give place to her in all things.[82]

It is simplistic, then, to expect that Protestant belief necessarily implies a wholesale abandonment of exegetical tradition. Protestant thought assigned a primary place to the text of Scripture, but it did not, in general, utterly despise the results of human engagement with that text.

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[79] Calvin, *Commentaries*, 81-2.

[80] Surprisingly little scholarship exists on the role of the Geneva marginalia. Lewis Lupton, *A History of the Geneva Bible, Vol. 7* (London: The Olive Tree, 1975), 150-181 provides a limited discussion of the interpretative apparatus provided for Revelation. More useful are Crawford Gribben, 'Deconstructing the Geneva Bible: The Search for a Puritan Poetic', *Literature and Theology* 14 no. 1 (2000):1-16, and David Daniell's discussion of the Geneva New Testaments and Bible, Daniell, *The Bible in English : its history and influence* , and especially on the marginalia, 304-10.

[81] *most godly and learned discourse*, 2. For a discussion of Bullinger's influence on Cranmer, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and on the Church of England see Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'The Latitude of the Church of England', in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke*, ed. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006)Paul Christianson, 'Reformers and the Church of England under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980):463-482, 470and William Cunningham, *The reformers and the theology of the Reformation, The students' reformed theology library* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 190.

[82] *most godly and learned discourse*, 2.

V - Donne and the Uniqueness of Scripture

Donne, then, ministered in a context in which Scripture was both vitally important, and hotly contested. The authority of Scripture was, in many ways, the central issue for Reformation Divines. Certainly, it was a central issue for Donne. The scale of his dependence on and saturation in Scripture, obvious even to the casual reader of the sermons, is quantified and emphasised by the statistical surveys provided by Potter and Simpson. They extrapolated from a survey of one representative volume, and suggested that the sermons, in their entirety, contain over 7,000 references to, or citations of, Biblical passages. Based on these rather crude metrics, then, Scripture has a place right at the centre of Donne's theology, and of his pastoral mission.

And its importance goes beyond the quantitative, for textual authority is a preoccupation of Donne's thought. In view of his constant immersion in texts, as law student, as poet, and as controversialist, such a concentration on the importance of the text is hardly inexplicable. At times Donne seems to exult in the polyvalence of the texts in which he deals. On other occasions it is the perversion of the text that concerns him, the possibility that texts may be transformed and deformed to the damnation of their readers. Whilst such a perversion is reprehensible in relation to any text, when Scripture is the text, the stakes become far higher. Charles Coffin has captured this aspect of Donne's scholarship, contending that his engagement with texts was characterised by

> ...first, insistence on the accuracy of any text used and the obligation of the scholar to make accurate use of this text as well as his obligation to consider the meaning of any part in its relations to the larger context and not to be contented with the meaning of isolated passages; second, the necessity of subordinating authors cited to the purpose of the writer; third, the importance of comparison, contrast, and correlation of opinions, in order to make a just evaluation of their worth; and fourth, recognition of the relativity of all human knowledge and its dependence upon its historical environment.[83]

Coffin somewhat underplays the scale of Donne's polemical intention, but his overall account of Donne's scholarship is accurate.

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[83]Charles Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1937), 232-3.

In this context, the often-quoted description of Donne's own conversion serves as an exemplar of textual engagement, and it is somewhat ironic, in view of Donne's later insistence on the importance of the word preached (I, 291), that this was driven by private textual engagement:

> I used no inordinate hast, nor precipitation in binding my conscience to any local religion. I had a longer worke to doe then many other men; for I was first to blot out, certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and to wrestle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken; and some anticipations early layde upon my conscience... [I] surveyed and digested the whole body of Divinity controverted betweene ours and the Romane Church (*PM*, 13).

In the context of Donne's project in *Pseudo-Martyr*, he presents himself here as an example to his Catholic readers because of his care in the interpretation of this controverted doctrine. He is not, of course, speaking about Scripture here – rather he engages his Catholic readership on the grounds of dogma. He lays great stress on his refusal to adopt the reading impressed upon him by 'Persons who by nature had a power and superiority over [his] will, and others who by their learning and good life, seem'd to me justly to claime an interest for the guiding, and rectifying of [his] understanding in these matters.' The contrast with the blind obedience required by Franciscans and Jesuits and excoriated by Donne in *Pseudo-Martyr* could scarcely be greater (*PM*, 115). Donne insists on the importance of his intellectual independence, and the freedom to arrive at his own reading of Church tradition and doctrine.[84] To a considerable degree, these principles transfer to his treatment of Scripture. Nonetheless, Donne's later work does qualify this fine independence. As a preacher and a pastor, it is his duty to guide his own flock to a proper understanding of the Scriptures that must provide a basis for their life and religion. Furthermore, that understanding must fall within the range of interpretation endorsed by the Church that enfolds both Donne and his flock. In light of his early own rejection of the teaching of those learned and good individuals, Donne's subsequent position as a religious teacher borders on the paradoxical. This notwithstanding, Donne's statement of his own interpretative independence should alert us to the importance that he attached to intelligent engagement with

[84] Donne's paradigmatic engagement with the issue of the correct choice of religion is found in Satire III. For valuable discussions of this issue see Strier, 'Radical Donne: "Satire III"', Strier, *Resistant Structures*, 118-164 Scodel, 'Religious Politics of the Mean'. See especially Scodel's discussions of the sermons, pp. 60-70. Satyre III is central to our study of the Church's authority in Donne's thought. See below, Chapter 2.

Scriptures, an importance that we will come to recognise as a recurring motif fundamental to his pastoral approach.

Donne summarised the crucial points of the debate about the status of Scripture in a way that highlights the three issues that we shall discuss in this section. He contended :

> ...first that there are *certaine Scriptures*, that are the revealed will of God. Secondly, that these books which we call *Canonicall*, are those Scriptures. And lastly, that this and this is the true sense and meaning of such and such a place of Scripture (IV, 216).

Thus it is that a key issue for Donne is the accurate identification of the canon; he must ensure that the status and authority deserved only by Scripture be ascribed only to true Scriptures. He must save his auditors from the fate of Gratian, who '*never stood upon Authoritie of Bookes, but tooke all, as if they had beene written with the finger of God, as certainly as Moses Table.*' (*PM*, 192). In this respect, the *Essayes in Divinity* provide a key manifesto. Although this work is more complicated in its genre, content, and audience than much of Donne's *oeuvre*, and although it sees Donne exercise a greater degree of hermeneutical freedom than he ever subsequently allowed himself; his meditations on the uniqueness of Scripture make explicit those assumptions that underlie his later engagement with Scripture. His definition is, broadly, a negative one – he emphasises what the Scriptures are not.

The first broad category of books which are not Scripture are the 'two other books, (within our knowledge) by which great Nations or Troops are govern'd in matter of Religion; The *Alcoran*, and *Talmud*' (*ED*, 10). The Alcoran, the Qur'an, is esteemed only where the Scriptures are not read. It provides the basis for just another 'weak, and suspicious, and crasie religion,' and is 'so obnoxious, and self-accusing, that, to confute it, all Christian Churches have ever thought it the readiest and presentest way to divulge it'(*ED*, 11). In contrast to the Scriptures, which not only withstand, but demand, searching (III, 367), the Qur'an is egregiously inadequate. The Talmud is equally defective. Galatinus' efforts to deduce all Christianity from this undermine, rather than support, the case for the Talmud's credibility – 'this flexibility and appliablenesse to a contrary religion, shews perfectly, how leaden a rule these lawes are' (*ED*, 11). Once again, close and careful engagement with this text is sufficient to dismiss this volume as alternative

Scriptures, to rob it of any glamour. Publication is damnation: 'without doubt, their books would have been received with much more hunger then they are, if the Emperour *Maximilian*, by *Reuchlyns* counsel, had not allowed them free and open passage.' Donne's dismissal of these counterfeit Scriptures combines with his concern for the seriousness of the issues of faith involved: 'If there were not some compassion belong'd to them who are seduced by them; I should professe, that I never read merrier books than these two.' For Donne, then, both of these putative Scriptures can be dismissed, almost out of hand, and the conclusion is obvious: 'Ours therefore, begun, not only in the first stone, but in the intire foundation, by Gods own finger, and pursued by his Spirit, is the only legible book of life; and is without doubt devolv'd from those to our times' (*ED*, 11-2).

Donne then addresses a second category of texts, 'the books of Philosophers' (*ED*, 10). These books 'only instruct this life.' Donne, at this stage, does not deny them some use, but he does limit their scope and power. 'As then this life compared to blessed eternity, is but a death, so the books of philosophers ... have but such a proportion to this book.' In the sermons, Donne dilutes this toleration, and becomes increasingly dismissive of secular writers, and increasingly impatient with the efforts of the Roman Church to 'bring other Authors into the ranke, and nature, and dignity of being Scripture' (VII, 120). So, preaching in 1622, he emphasised the dichotomy between the profane and the divine in terms of ability, as much as of spiritual value:

> *Saint Paul* is a more powerful orator, then *Cicero*, ... *Moses* is an ancienter *Philosopher*, then *Trismegistus;* and his picture of God, is the Creation of the world. *David* is a better *Poet* then *Virgil;* ... The power of *oratory*, in the force of perswasion, the strength of conclusions, in the pressing of *Philosophy*, the harmony of *Poetry*, in the sweetnesse of composition, never met in any man, as fully as in the Prophet *Esay* (IV, 167).

Within the broad category of 'prophane' literature, Donne especially reacts against the use of Classical writings.[85] Donne does cite Tertullian to acknowledge the possibility of edifying moral use to be made of classical writings, but emphatically endorses Tertullian's impatience with

[85] Donne's dislike of classical literature echoes the views of Augustine. Often, Christian use of Classical material tradition drew upon a tradition, extending back to the writings of the Greek Fathers, of retaining a place for Classical literature by reading it as Christian allegory. See, on the allegorization of classical sources E.K Rand, *Ovid and his Influence* (New York: Copper Square Publishers, 1963), esp. pp. 131-41, Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), Rudoph Schevill, *Ovid and the Renascence in Spain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1913) esp. 13-4 and, for an excellent overview of the topic, Born, 'Ovid and Allegory',.

those who, in his view, pass over useful moral lessons and fasten on imagined impeachments of Christian doctrine:

> If, sayes [Tertullian], we for our Religion produce your own Authors against you, (he speaks to naturall men, secular Philosophers) and shew you out of them, what Passions, what Vices even they impute to those whom you have made your Gods, then you say, ... Those Authors were but vaine, and frivolous Poets: but when those Authors speake any thing which sound against our Religion, then they are Philosophers, and reverend and classique Authors (V, 68).

Therefore, the utility of these writers is circumscribed for 'they have this perverse, this left-handed happinesse, to be believed when they lye, better then when they say true' (VI, 42). In this regard, Donne is clearly at odds with the intention and scope of projects like de Mornay's *Work concerning the trunesse of Christian Religion*.

Donne is equally forceful in his dismissal of efforts to prove Purgatory from the works of the pagan authors, opining that, in this matter, 'Virgil is a perfect, a downright Catholic', for, he pithily notes 'an upright Catholic in point of Purgatory were hard to find' (VII, 176-7). Donne's impatience with the mis-applied veneration of classical writers extends beyond the machinations of Rome. He also condemns those who identifying divine judgement in mythology give it more importance than the Scriptural record. He despairs that they

> beleeve it in their fables, and would not beleeve it in the Scriptures, They would beleeve it in the Nine Muses and would not believe it in the twelve Apostles; they would believe it by Apollo, and they would not believe it by the Holy Ghost; They would be saved Poetically, and fantastically, and would not reasonably and spiritually; By copies, and not by Originals; by counterfeit things at first deduced by their Authors, out of our Scriptures, and yet not by the word of God himself (VII, 234).

Likewise, Donne was gravely concerned by the possibility that divines would go beyond Scriptures, using Classical authorities in their effort to 'compass unrevealed mysteries.' It is, therefore, 'an offence' in Church-men to 'be over-vehemently transported with Poetry, or other secular Learning' (IV, 143). Ultimately, the over-valuing of Classical authors and the concomitant under-valuation of Scripture is indicative of a truly diabolical hubris:

> ... to think we can believe out of *Plato*, where we may find a God, but without a Christ, or come to be good men out of *Plutarch* or *Seneca*, without a Church and Sacraments, to pursue the truth it selfe by any other way then he hath laid open to us, this is pride, and the pride of the Angels (IX, 379).

To a large degree, it is a simple matter for Donne to dismiss these other texts. They are the productions of human endeavour. For Donne, as for Hooker, however, God is 'the author of nature, her voice is but his instrument.'[86] Scripture, begun by the finger of God, and pursued by the operation of his Spirit, occupies, by virtue of the radical ontological otherness of its Author, a hermeneutical space all of its own. Its superiority over secular texts is one of kind, as well as of degree.

There remains, however, a more complex source of revelation, the 'book of creatures.' The book of creatures has the same author as Scripture and its relationship to Scripture was central to the debate about natural theology that we have already surveyed. Raymond of Sebond had expressed this close fraternity between the Book of Nature and Scripture:

> [B]oth Books derive from the same Author: God created his creatures just as he established his Scriptures. That is why they accord so well together, with no tendency to contradict each other, despite the first one's symbolizing most closely with our nature and the second one's being so far above it.[87]

Donne likewise parallels very closely the process of Divine creation and Divine revelation:

> The Holy Ghost hovered on the waters, and so God wrought. The Holy Ghost hovered upon Moses and so he wrought (IX, 48).

In an undated sermon Donne appeared to toy with a very broad definition of the word of God, along the lines followed by de Mornay. Ultimately, however, he identifies a dichotomy between all human production andthat which originates with God:

> The word of God is either the co-eternall and co-essentiall Sonne, our Saviour, which tooke flesh ... or it is the spirit of his mouth, by which we live, and *not bread onely*. And so, in a large acceptation, every truth is the word of God; for truth is uniforme, and irrepugnant, and indivisible, as God. ... More strictly the word of God, is that which God hath uttered, either in writing, as twice in the Tables to *Moses*; or by the ministry of Angels, or Prophets, in words; or by the unborne, in

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[86] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, I, 84.
[87] de Montaigne, *Apology*, xliii.

> action, as in *John Baptists* exultation within his mother; or by the new-borne, from the mouths of babes and sucklings; or by things unreasonable, as in *Balaams* Asse; or insensible, as in the whole booke of such creatures, *The heavens declare the glory of God, &c.* But nothing is more properly the word of God to us, then that which God himself speakes in those Organs and Instruments, which himself hath assumed for his chiefest worke, our redemption (V, 231).

Donne's use of the Book of Creatures never strays beyond the mainstream of Christian orthodoxy. Indeed, his reluctance to ascribe too much to natural revelation was stated clearly very early on in his career, in Paradox IV, 'That Nature is our worst guide.' In approaching Donne's *Problems and Paradoxes*, we are faced by the difficulties of dating, and by the questions of intent implicit in the nature of these exercises in witty casuistry. However, the tone of this Paradox is less flippant than is elsewhere the case, and there is a clear continuity between the views expressed by the young Donne and his later circumspection when dealing with Nature as revelation:

> Shall she be *guide* to all *Creatures*, which is her selfe one? ...The affections of *lust* and *anger*, yea euen to *erre* is *Naturall*; shall we follow these? Can she be a good *guide* to us, which hath corrupted not us but only herselfe? Was not the *first man* by the desire of *knowledge* corrupted even in the *whitest integrity* of *Nature*? And did not *Nature* (if *Nature* did any thing) infuse into him this desire of *knowledge*, & so this *Corruption* in him, into us? If by *Nature* we shall understand our *essence*, our *definition*, or *reason*, *noblenesse*, then this being alike common to all (the *Idiot* and the *wizard* being equally *reasonable*) why should not all men having equally all one *nature*, follow one course? Or if wee shall understand our *inclinations*; alas! how unable a guide is that which followes the *temperature* of our slimie *bodies*? (*SP*, 40)

Later, in *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne stated more clearly his belief that natural revelation was an insufficient basis for true religion, as he theorised about a race of savages coming to faith. He claimed that any such group of people would first establish a hierarchical order: 'for Magistracie and Superioritie is so naturall and so immediate from God, that *Adam* was created a magistrate' (*PM*, 79). Having thus arranged themselves into a 'Commonwealth', the company moves towards enlightenment 'through understanding the Law written in all hearts, and in the booke of creatures.' Even the careful reading of these sources is insufficient, however; 'further light' and

'the relation of some instructors' is required before the company can 'arrive at a saving knowledge, and Faith in our blessed Saviours Passion.'[88]

In the *Essayes*, Donne seems to go beyond this understanding of the book of creatures, quoting, with approval, the ideas of Raymond of Sebond:

> But of the third book, the book of *Creatures* we will say the 18th. verse [of Is. 29], *The deaf shall heare the word of this book, and the eyes of the blinde shall see out of obscurity.* And so much is this book available to the other, that *Sebund*, when he had digested this book into a written book, durst pronounce, that it was an Art, which teaches al things, presupposes no other, is soon learned, cannot be forgotten, requires no books, needs no witnesses, and in this, is safer then the Bible itself, that it cannot be falsified by Hereticks. And ventures further after, to say, That because his book is made according to the Order of Creatures, which expresses fully the will of God, whosoever doth according to his book, fulfils the will of God (*ED*, 9-10).

These claims are considerable, and Donne is slow to dismiss them, remarking only that Sebond 'may be too abundant in affirming, that *in libro creaturarum* there is enough to teach us all particularities of Christian Religion.' Ultimately, Donne finds his solution in Scripture itself, noting that 'St *Paul* clears it thus far, that there is enough to make us inexcusable, if we search not further.'[89] Natural revelation is not, then, an end in itself, but a prompt for further investigation; it points back to God, but onwards to the revelation of Scripture. The fact of the Fall is vital to our comprehension of the necessity of Scripture's revelation. Relenting somewhat on his criticisms of pre-lapsarian Nature in Paradox VIII, Donne argues that if man had kept 'the first light of Nature', 'he had needed no outward law; for then he was to himself a law, having all the law in his heart; as God promiseth for one of the greatest blessings under the Gospel, when the Law of Nature is more cleerly restored: *I will make a new Covenent, and put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*' (*ED*, 100). In this, Donne accords with Calvin's views on the knowledge of God imparted from nature:

> For, properly speaking, we cannot say that God is known where there is no religion or piety. I am not now referring to that species of knowledge by which men, in

[88] *Cf.* Bacon's *New Atlantis*, in which the inhabitants of the utopian island respond not to natural revelation, but to the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, miraculously revealed to them. Francis Bacon, *The advancement of learning; and, New Atlantis*, ed. Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 222-4.

[89] Notably, Donne is, himself, making use of Romans 1:20 in this instance. It is significant that Donne stresses the closing clause of the verse, a clause omitted, as Screech points out, by Montaigne. de Montaigne, *Apology*, vvii-xix, 10.

> themselves lost and under curse, apprehend God as a Redeemer in Christ the Mediator. I speak only of that simple and primitive knowledge, to which the mere course of nature would have conducted us, had Adam stood upright. For although no man will now, in the present ruin of the human race, perceive God to be either a father, or the author of salvation, or propitious in any respect, until Christ interpose to make our peace; still it is one thing to perceive that God our Maker supports us by his power, rules us by his providence, fosters us by his goodness, and visits us with all kinds of blessings, and another thing to embrace the grace of reconciliation offered to us in Christ.[90]

Donne continues to endorse this view of nature. Whilst his statement, made in an Trinity Sunday Sermon (tentatively dated to 1621) on II Corinthians 1:3, that 'there is an elder booke in the World then the Scripture; ... it is the World it selfe, the whole booke of Creatures; And indeed the Scriptures are but a paraphrase, but a comment, but an illustration of that booke of Creatures' (III, 264) appears to undermine the primacy of Scripture, it is made in a context of the acknowledgement that 'there is nothing in Nature that can fully represent and bring home the notion of the Trinity to us' (III, 263-4). Subsequently, Donne articulates the same relationship that he outlined in the *Essayes*: 'Though God meant to give us degrees in the University, that is, increase of knowledge in his Scriptures after, yet he sent us to Schoole in Nature before; ... That coming out of that Schoole, thou mightest profit the better in that University, having well considered Nature, thou mightest be established in the Scriptures' (III, 264).

This understanding underlies all of Donne's subsequent engagements with the book of Creatures. It is eloquent of Donne's theological pragmatism; it is an answer that works for his hearers, who are able to follow the promptings of nature to search further in revealed Scripture. It does not solve the hard case of the 'savage' without written revelation, but Donne has little enough interest in pursuing philosophical speculation on their fate, and urges his congregation to leave them to God's 'unsearchable waies ... without farther inquisition' (IV, 78). God's unsearchable ways, however, can admit of human involvement in the amelioration of the plight of Scripture-less 'savages'. Donne's sermon 'Preached to the Honourable Company of the

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[90] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2-3.

Virginian Plantation 1622' has been called 'the first English missionary sermon.'[91] Donne had a previous interest in the Virginian company, in his job search, before entering the ministry, and his sermon expresses a consciousness of the possibilities of the Virginian plantation. It also adumbrates a missionary motive for the Virginian endeavour.[92] A similar understanding of national responsibility to spread the gospel, in tandem with commercial endeavour had, however, been outlined in one of Donne's earliest sermons. This is, arguably, the first articulation of the concept of 'commerce and Christianity', later to become so important:

> The Lord reigneth let the Islands rejoice the Islands who by reason of their situation, provision and trading, have most means of conveying Christ Jesus over the world. He hath carried us up to heaven, & set us at the right hand of God, & shal not we endevour to carry him to those nations, who have not yet heard of his name? Shall we still brag that we have brought our clothes, and our hatchets, and our knives, and bread to this and this value amongst those poor ignorant Souls, and shall we never glory that we have brought the name and Religion of Christ Jesus in estimation amongst them? (I, 307-8)

No doubt Donne's audience was quite happy to be given this evangelical justification for the risky business of plantation. None the less, it seems somewhat unfair to dismiss Donne's appeal for missionary activity, in light of the later use made of that justification. His sincerity and his understanding of the importance of this mission are underlined by an appreciation of the need of the heathen:

> O, if you could once bring a cathechisme to bee as good ware amongst them as a Bugle, as a knife, as a hatchet: O, if you would be as ready to hearken at the returne of a Ship, how many Indians were converted to Christ Jesus, as what Trees, or drugges, or Dyes that Ship had brought, then ye were in your right way, and not till then (IV, 269).

For the favoured members of English congregations, the hierarchy of nature, reason and revelation is important.[93] Nature reveals God, Reason acts on this natural revelation, but, ultimately, Scripture surpasses both nature and reason; 'Gods Word is much better assurance,

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[91] Smith, ed., *Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages*, 249.
[92] See Stanley Johnson, 'John Donne and the Virginia Company', *ELH* 14 no. 2 (1947):127-38, and Paul W. Harland, 'Donne and Virginia: The Ideology of Conquest', *John Donne Journal* 18 (1999):127-52,.
[93] Notably, Donne uses this hierarchy to structure *Biathanatos* (written before 1619, published 1647), his 'mis-interpretable', paradoxical defence of suicide.

then the grounds of Nature, for God can and does shake the grounds of Nature by Miracles, but no Jod of his Word shall ever perish' (V, 292). We have, Donne suggests, 'light enough to see God by that light in the theatre of nature and in the glass of creatures' (VII, 225). Indeed, this light is so clear that 'the Atheist must pull out his eyes and see no creature before he says he sees no God' (VIII, 225). To see God, however, is just a beginning, and while 'man can teach us how to find God,' a further hierarchy of revelation is needed, and 'The natural man in the book of creatures', comes behind the usefulness of 'the moral man in an exemplar life, the Jews in the Law, the Christian, in general in the Gospel.' Ultimately, 'only the Holy Ghost enables us to find God so as to make Him ours and enjoy Him' (VI, 128). Donne applies a pair of telling images to the same hierarchy in his fourth Prebend Sermon: 'though there bee not a full meale, there is something to stay the stomach, in the light of nature' (VII, 301). Nature, therefore, is a breakfast; the Law, dinner; and in the Church, the sufficiency of supper is found. Similarly, in the kind of imagery that is the stuff of Donne's poetry,

> In the state of nature, we consider this light, as the Sunne, to be risen ... in the farthest East; In the state of the law, we consider it as the Sunne come to ... the first Quadrant; But in the Gospel, to be come to the Canaries, to the fortunate Ilands, the first Meridian (VII, 310).

Donne pragmatically acknowledges that 'there may be some few examples given of men, enlightened by God, and yet not within that covenant which constitutes the Church' (VIII, 226). Nonetheless, whilst allowing for the sovereignty of God, we must remember that 'the ordinary place for degrees is the University', and 'the Church is our academy and university' (VIII, 226). Perhaps the best account of Donne's views of the possibilities and the limitations of this book of creatures is found in one of his later sermons:

> There is not so poor a creature but may be thy glasse to see God in. The greatest flat glasse that can be made, cannot represent any thing greater then it is: If every gnat that flies were an Arch-angell, all that could but tell me, that there is a God: and the poorest worme that creeps, tells me that. If I should aske the Basilisk, how camest thou by those killing eyes, he would tell me, Thy God made me so; And if I should aske the Slow-worme, how camest thou to be without eyes, he would tell me, Thy God made me so. The Cedar is no better a glasse to see God in, then the Hyssope upon the wall; all things that are, are equally removed from being nothing; and

> whatsoever hath any being, is by that very being, a glasse in which we see God, who is the roote, and the fountaine of all being (VIII, 224).

Nature, all of Nature, is sufficient to prove the being of God. 'But then, for the other degree, the other notification of God ... the means is of a higher nature' (VII, 225). And that means is Scripture.

Indeed, it is a part of the function of Nature to indicate to human reason the necessity of a more substantial, a more explicit revelation. One of Donne's recurring conceits is the heathen encountering the Gospel for the first time. The inept evangelist of Donne's imagination presents him with the facts of the Christian message, and concludes with the uncompromising warning 'believe all, or you burne in Hell.' Such a heathen, Donne states more than once, 'would finde an easie, an obvious way to escape all; that is, first not to believe in *Hell* it selfe, and then nothing could binde him to believe the rest' (III, 358). The heathen has been let off the hook because the evangelist neglected to take advantage of the illustrative matter that God had provided in Nature. Using this resource, Donne unfolds the inexorable aetiology of conviction and conversion:

> The *reason* therefore of man must first be satisfied; but the way of such satisfaction must be *this*, to make him see, That this World, a frame of so much harmony, so much concinnitie and conveniencie, and such a correspondence, and subordination in the parts thereof, must necessarily have had a workeman, for nothing can make it selfe: That no such workeman would deliver over a frame, and worke, of so much Majestie, to be governed by *Fortune*, casually, but would still retain the Administration thereof in his owne hands: That if he doe so, if he made the World, and *sustaine* it still by his watchfull Providence, there belongeth a worship and service to him, for doing so: That therefore he hath certainly revealed to man, what kinde of worship, and service, shall be acceptable to him: That this manifestation of his Will, must be permanent, it must be *written*, there must be a *Scripture*, which is his *Word* and his *Will*: And that therefore, from that Scripture, from that word of God, all Articles of our Beliefe are to bee drawne (III, 358).

The final result, presumably, one convinced heathen. Again, Nature has a dual role, pointing backwards to the necessity of God, and forward to the necessity of Scripture. Once more, the contrast with Edward Herbert is clear. Revelation, for Herbert, was to be clearly distinguished from the truth presented by the Common Notions:

> Revealed truth exists; and it would be unjust to ignore it. But its nature is quite distinct from the truth discussed above [the Common Notions of Religion], in that the truth as I have defined it is based upon our faculties, while the truth of revelation depends upon the authority of him who reveals it. ... [R]evelation must be given directly to some person; for what is received from others as revelation must be accounted not revelation but tradition or history.[94]

For Donne, the revelation of Nature is only of use insofar as it refers us to the more complete revelation of Scripture. Scripture is the word of God, and the garments in which God has 'apparelled, and exhibited his will' (V, 248). Additionally, it reveals the character of God: 'God is *Love*, and the *Holy Ghost* is amorous in his *Metaphors*; everie where his *Scriptures* abound with the notions of *Love*, of *Spouse*, and *Husband*...' (VII, 87). Since God 'hath declared himselfe in his Scriptures,' it is of the first importance that this revelation be 'by Translations and Illustrations, made applicable to every understanding; all the promises of his Scriptures belong to all' (VIII, 122). This was one of the key battlegrounds of the Reformation and Donne explicitly re-visits this issue:

> Whether they or we, do best apply our practice to this rule, Preach all the Truth, preach nothing but the Truth, be this *lis contestata*, the issue joined between us, and it will require no long pleading for matter of evidence ... And here is the Latitude, the Totality, the Integrality of the meanes of salvation; you shall have Scripture delivered to you, by them the Holy Ghost shall teach you all things; and then you shall be remembred of all, by the explication and application of those Scriptures ... Now, is this done in the Roman Church? Are the Scriptures delivered, and explicated to them? so much of the Scriptures as is read to them their Lessons and Epistles, and Gospels, is not understood when it is read, for it is in an unknown language; so that, that way, the Holy Ghost teaches them nothing (VII, 401).[95]

The ideal, for Donne – and one which he feels that the English Church has, in good measure, attained – is for Scripture to be freely accessible, 'explicated in Sermons' and available for private consideration:

> But when men have a Christian liberty afforded to them to read the Scriptures at home, and then are remembred of those things at Church, and there taught to use that liberty modestly, to establish their faith upon places of Scripture that are

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[94] Herbert, *De Veritate*, 308.

[95] Donne is, perhaps, being less than completely fair to his opponents. A more scrupulous honesty might have prompted him to make mention of the Douay Bible. Donne never refers to this translation.

> plain, and to suspend their judgement upon obscurer places, till they may ... receive farther satisfaction therein, from them, who are thereunto authorized by God in his Church, there certainly is this Rule of our saviours, *Take heed what you hear*, preach *all* that you have received from me, likelier to be observed then there, where the body of the conveyance, the Scripture itself is locked up from us (VII, 401).

Donne lays considerable stress on the policing role of ecclesiastical authority (something we will have cause to investigate more closely). At the same time, however, the availability of Scripture to the individual has a significant role to play in underwriting the explication of Scripture by preaching.

This quotation also emphasises the centrality of the Holy Ghost in the application of the text of Scripture to the individual hearer. For Donne, the Spirit is intimately involved in the work of Scripture. Revelation has been accomplished by the agency of the Holy Spirit, with a view to being understood by men. 'God speaks mens language, that is, the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures descends to the capacity and understanding of man, and so presents God in the faculties of the minde of man and in the lineaments of the body of man' (IX, 135, see also IX, 142). Thus, the writers of Scripture are the 'secretaries of the Holy Ghost' (*PM*, 14), writing 'by instinct of the Holy Ghost' (II, 269). A supernatural power, then, pervades all of Scripture. So, Donne, displaying his characteristic predilection for the Psalter, remarks that 'Any Psalme is Exorcisme enough to expell any Devill, Charme enough to remedy any tentation, Enchantment enough to ease, nay to sweeten any tribulation' (VI, 292). Donne allows for the role of the natural gifts of the authors, and traces the sweetness of Scripture to this, accepting without endeavouring to reconcile the perennial paradox between revelation and personality. He sees no contradiction that he needs to address in speaking of the 'characteristic phrases' of authors who write by the dictation of the Holy Spirit (VIII, 293). Similarly, whilst he acknowledges that the gospel of John 'seems rather fallen from Heaven than written by a man' (V, 241), Donne allows for a limited role for natural ability and experience in the writing of Scripture. In one of the sermons from his later series on the penitential Psalms, Donne uses David and the Psalms to exemplify this relationship:

> So in *Davids* Psalmes we finde abundant impressions, and testimonies of his knowledge in all arts, and all kinds of learning, but that is not it which he proposes to us. *Davids* last words are, and in that *Davids* holy glory was placed, That he was not onely *the sweet Psalmist*, That he had an harmonious, a melodious, a charming, a powerfull way of entring into the soule, and working upon the affections of men, but he was *the sweet Psalmist of Israel*, He employed his faculties for the conveying of the God of Israel, into the Israel of God; *The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue;* Not the spirit of Rethorique, nor the Spirit of Poetry, nor the spirit of Mathematiques, and Demonstration, But, *The spirit of the Lord, the Rock of Israel spake by me*, sayes he (IX, 252).

In the context, Donne is deliberately using David is a paragon of preachers. Nonetheless, it is clear that for Donne, the aesthetic value of Scripture, although always enjoyed and appreciated, remained secondary to their revelatory function. So, although 'of all Rhetoricall and Poeticall figures, that fall into any Art, we are able to produce higher straines, and livelier examples out of the Scriptures, then out of all the Orators and Poets in the world, yet we reade not, we preach not the Scriptures for that use, to magnifie their Eloquence' (IX, 252).

VI-Clarifying the Canon

We have been speaking of Scripture in aggregate. However, the acknowledgement that a written divine revelation exists inevitably raises the question of the canon of sacred writings. Both as a controversialist and as a pastor, Donne engages with the question of 'Gods canon' (VI, 253). Donne appreciates that such questions are inevitable. Indeed, one of his most detailed engagements with the topic comes at the end of the section, already quoted, where Donne undertakes to prove to the un-evangelised heathen the necessity of written revelation. Such an individual will very likely 'aske further proofe, how he shall know that *these Scriptures* accepted by the Christian Church are the true Scriptures' (III, 358). Donne addresses this issue in a very individual way:

> Let him bring any other Booke which pretendeth to be the Word of God, into comparison with these; It is true, we have not a Demonstration; not such an Evidence as that one and two, are three, to prove these to be Scriptures of God; God hath not proceeded in that manner, to drive our Reason into a pound, and to force it by a peremptory necessitie to accept these for Scriptures, for then, here had been

> no exercise of our Will, and our assent, if we could not have resisted. But yet these Scriptures have so orderly, so sweet, and so powerful a working upon the reason, and the understanding, as if any third man, who were utterly discharged of all preconceptions and anticipations in matter of Religion, one who were altogether neutrall, disinterested, ... should heare a Christian pleade for his Bible; the Majesty of the Style, the punctuall accomplishment of the Prophecies, the harmony and concurrence of the foure Evangelists, the consent and unanimity of the Christian Church ever since, and many other such reasons, he would be drawn to such an Historicall, such a Grammaticall, such a Logicall beliefe of our Bible, as to preferred it before any other, that could be pretended to be the word of God (III, 358).

Very noticeably, Donne bases his defence of Scripture, and its canon on an appeal to reason.[96] Moreover, this reason is assisted by the humanist return *ad fontes*; the eventual assurance of the heathen is based on a critical approach to Scripture.[97] In a later sermon, Donne again stresses the importance of such human argument in the identification of Scripture, dealing specifically with the issue of the canon:

> As for the whole body intirely together, so for the particular limbs and members of this body, the *severall books* of the Bible, we must accept *testimonium ab homine*, humane Arguments, and the testimony of men. At first, the Jewes were the depositaries of Gods Oracles; and therefore the first Christians were to ask the Jewes, *which* books were those Scriptures. Since the Church of God is the *Master* of those *Rolls*, no doubt but the Church hath *Testimonium à Deo*, The Spirit of God to direct her, in declaring *what Books* make up the Scripture; but even the *Church*, which is to deal upon men, proceedeth also *per testimonium ab homine*, by humane Arguments, such as may work upon the *reason* of man, in declaring the Scriptures of God (IV, 217).

'The rational acceptance of Scripture is crucial in Donne's epistemology,' as Terry Sherwood has noted.[98] This insistence on the importance of reason, and Donne's confidence in the assistance

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[96] As he does, with equal clarity, at I, 298.

[97] This faith in historical research is echoed J.B. Leishman's interpretation of Donne's instruction, in 'Satire III' to 'ask thy father and let him ask his' to identify true religion: 'This saving truth is, in a sense, factual rather than doctrinal, and to be attained not in some beatific vision, but as a result of a long and laborious process of historical, or semi-historical, research.' J. B. Leishman, *The Monarch of Wit: An Analytical and Comparative Study of the Poetry of John Donne*, 5 ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1962), 116. *Cf.* Irving Lowe's contention, in a discussion of the place of reason in Donne's thought, that 'the sermons merely make more explicit the grounds upon which Donne wrought from the beginning to the end of his career.' Lowe, 'John Donne: The Middle Way', 396.

[98] Sherwood, 'Reason in Donne's Sermons', 355. For an earlier but equally valuable discussion of Donne's views of reason, which makes similar reference to this passage see Lowe, 'John Donne: The Middle Way',.

provided to reason by the humanist project is a distinctive feature of his thought. Also notable in this connection is his endorsement of the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the canon of Scripture in an ecclesiastical, rather than an individual context. Further, his 'insistence upon this rational justification of belief, as a means of suggesting reason's importance, shows that he found it an important paradigm for the way in which the mind first refers experience to rational scrutiny.'[99] And, Sherwood suggests, the importance of reason in this fundamental issue is indicative of a Thomist stress in Donne's thought. Given the Aristotelian stress on reason in Catholic theology, it is possible that Donne is demonstrating the influence of his upbringing, although this stress is an equally telling indication of the philosophical ground shared by Donne and Hooker. Certainly, the basic importance of reason in the delineation of Scripture presents a significant challenge to Bredvold's marginalisation of reason in Donne's thought in favour of a scepticism built upon the mystical and fideistic elements of Augustinian thought.[100]

Even amongst the broad ecclesiastical *milieu* in which Donne moved, his claims for reason are considerable. This can be seen by considering the treatment of the same subject in Laud's *Conference with Fisher the Jesuit*. We have already considered the context of this; it is worthwhile to examine his treatment of reason specifically:

> [A]ll that have not imbrutished themselves, and sunke below their *Species*, and order of *Nature*, give even *Natural Reason* leave to come in, and make some proofe, and give some approbation upon the weighing, and the consideration of other Arguments. And this must be admitted, if it be but for *Pagans* and *Infidels*, who either consider not, or value not any *one* of the other *three*: yet must some way or other bee converted, or *left without excuse, Rom.* 1. and that is done by this very evidence.[101]

Laud's suggestion that natural reason is 'for pagans and infidels' is, perhaps, especially illuminating of the passage where Donne visualises himself in conversation with such an interlocutor.[102] We have already noted, however, that Donne also offers reason and 'humane

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[99] Sherwood, 'Reason in Donne's Sermons', 356.
[100] Louis I. Bredvold, 'The Religious Thought of Donne in Relation to Medieval and Later Traditions', in *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).
[101] Laud, *Conference with Fisher*, 59-60.
[102] A point Laud develops (p.76): 'The *Ancient Fathers* relied upon the Scriptures, no Christians more; and having to do with *Philosophers* (Men very well seen in all the Subtilties, which Natural Reason could teach, or learn) they were often put to it, and did as often make it good, That they had sufficient Warrant to rely, so much as They did, upon

Arguments' as the ground upon which even the spirit-taught Church must proceed. Laud stops short of endorsing the role of reason as widely as Donne does:

> In this Particular, the *Books* called the *Scripture*, are commonly and constantly reputed to be the *Word of God*, and so, infallible Verity, to the least Point of them. Doth any man doubt this? The World cannot keep him from going to weigh it at the *Ballance of Reason*, whether it be the Word of God, or not. To the same *Weights* he brings the *Tradition* of the Church, the *inward Motives* in Scripture it self, all *Testimonies* within, which seem to bear witness to it; and in all this, there is no harm: the danger is when a Man will use *no other Scale* but *Reason*, or *prefer Reason before any other scale*. For the *Word of God*, and *the Book containing it*, refuse not to be weighed by *Reason*. But the *Scale* is not large enough to containe, nor the *Weights* to measure out the true virtue, and full force of either. *Reason*, then, can give no *Supernaturall* Ground into which a man may resolve his Faith, *That Scripture is the word of God infallibly*; yet *Reason* can go so high, as it can prove that *Christian Religion*, which rests upon the *Authority* of this *Booke*, stands upon surer Grounds of *Nature*, *Reason*, common *Equity*, and *Justice*, than any thing in the world which any *Infidel* or mere *Naturalist* hath done, doth or can adhere unto, against it, in that which he *makes*, *accounts*, or *assumes* as *Religion* to himself.[103]

Donne and Laud do come close to each other in their conclusions. Donne, we have seen, acknowledged that, 'It is true, we have not a Demonstration; not such an Evidence as that one and two, are three, to prove these to be Scriptures of God; God hath not proceeded in that manner, to drive our Reason into a pound, and to force it by a peremptory necessitie to accept these for Scriptures.' Laud concluded that 'though this Truth, *That Scripture is the Word of God*, is not so demonstratively evident, *a priori*, as to enforce Assent: yet it is strengthen'd so abundantly with probable Arguments, both from the Light of *Nature* it self and *Humane Testimony*, that he must be very wilfull and selfe-conceited that shall dare to suspect it."[104]

Examining Donne's *oeuvre* in its entirety, it is noticeable that Donne's insistence that the canon can be reasonably derived by learning and reason alone is never quite backed up by concrete example or explication of how precisely reason may work. This quotation is typical:

Scripture. In all which Disputes, because they were to deal with *Infidels*, they did labour to make good the Authority of the Book of God, by such Arguments, as Unbelievers themselves could not but think *reasonable*, if they weighed them with indifferency.'

[103] Laud, *Conference with Fisher*, 75-6.

[104] Laud, *Conference with Fisher*, 77.

> All those blessings by the Sacrament of Baptism, and all Gods other promises to his children, and all the mysteries of Christian Religion, are therefore believed by us, because they are grounded in the Scriptures of God; we believe them for that reason; and then it is not a worke of my faith primarily, but it is a worke of my reason, that assures me, that these are the Scriptures, that these Scriptures are the word of God. I can answer other Mens reasons, that argue against it, I can convince other men by reason, that my reasons are true: and therefore it is a worke of reason, that I believe these to be Scriptures (V, 102).

Donne's protestations that his understanding of the canon is grounded in reason have a tinge of stridency, and it is notable that he provides no evidence in support of his asserted ability to 'convince other men by reason.' In this, he is reminiscent of Richard Hooker who, having conceded that the canon cannot be deduced from Scripture itself, argues from the premise that we are 'perswaded by other meanes that these scriptures are the oracles of God' without outlining just what those other means might be.[105] Understandably enough, Donne seems to wish that the issue of canonicity was more clear-cut.

In an earlier sermon, Donne had engaged with the same issues, and while still maintaining that reason was the truest way to defining the canon, ultimately solved the whole vexed issue by handing it over to the authority of the Church:

> Not that the Church is a Judge above the Scriptures, (for the power and the commission which the Church hath, it hath from the Scriptures) but the Church is above thee, which are the Scriptures, and what is the sense of the Holy Ghost in them (VIII, 228).

On the whole Donne remains convinced that the canon can best be deduced and defended by purely reasonable arguments. Ultimately, though, the question can be solved by invoking the authority of the Church. In this, he differs from many of the reformers. Calvin, for example, insisted that the Church had no role in determining or authorizing the canon:

> With great insult to the Holy Spirit, it is asked, who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God; who guarantee that they have come down safe and unimpaired to our times; who persuade us that *this* book is to be received with reverence, and *that one* expunged from the list, did not the Church regulate all these things with certainty? On the determination of the Church, therefore, it is said,

[105] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 126

> depend both the reverence which is due to Scripture, and the books which are to be admitted into the canon. Thus profane men, seeking, under the pretext of the Church, to introduce unbridled tyranny, care not in what absurdities they entangle themselves and others, provided they extort from the simple this one acknowledgement—*viz.* that there is nothing which the Church cannot do.[106]

> In vain were the authority of Scripture fortified by argument, or supported by the consent of the Church, or confirmed by any other helps, if unaccompanied by an assurance higher and stronger than human judgment can give.[107]

These views were echoed in *A most godly and learned Discourse of the woorthynesse, authoritie, and sufficiency* of the holy Scripture. The author outlined the position which the volume opposed:

> For the Church hath approved the chiefest scriptures, to be Canonical, whiche approbation they neither had of themselves, nor of their authors. ... Truelie they have their authoritie, not from the authours, from whome they come, but from the church. No holy Scripture doth shew out the rest of the Scriptures, which we saye, are canonical, and worthie credite: the consent of the Church hath made them authenticall.[108]

By contrast, the author repeatedly affirms his belief that

> the authorite of the Scripture doth depend not of the judgement of the Churche ... that the Scripture hath not her authoritie chiefly from the Church. For the firmness & strength thereof dependeth of God, & not of man.[109]

Donne, therefore, in his insistence on the importance of reason, and in his location of the testimony of the Holy Spirit's testimony to the canon of Scripture within the ambit of the Church, is at odds with the main current of Reformed thought.

This awareness of the complexity of defining the canon does not prevent Donne from invoking the topic controversially. Notably, when he does so, he approaches the question on the basis of a largely stable and clearly defined body of canonical Scripture. Quite explicitly, he regards the canon as the product of antiquity, once problematic, but now determined. So, he remarks, somewhat caustically, that he

> should hope better of their salvation, who in the first darker times, doubted of the Revelations of St. *Iohn*, then of theirs, who in these cleare and evident times, accept,

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[106] Calvin, *Institutes*, 18-9.
[107] Calvin, *Institutes*, 22.
[108] *most godly and learned discourse*, 3.
[109] *most godly and learned discourse*, 45, 54.

> and enjoyne, and magnifie, so much as they doe in the Romane Church, the Revelation of St. *Brigid* (VIII, 137).

Donne's intentions in this quotation are intriguing; not only is it the case that, whilst a degree of supernatural authority was ascribed to mystical books like the revelations of Brigid, nobody seems seriously to have suggested that they take their place alongside the canonical Scriptures. Moreover, the fact that the canonicity of the Apocalypse was questioned, most notably, by Martin Luther, seems to call into question when in history Donne locates 'the first darker times'.[110]

For the most part, as in this quotation, Donne is more exercised by the dangers of addition to the canon, than by subtraction. Whilst he touches briefly on the canonicity of Job, for example (III, 100), his chief concern, from a controversial point of view was the 'fathering' of 'Apocryphall and bastardly Canons' upon the Apostles (VII, 107). So, in one of his most substantial discussions of the canon, he adumbrates a view of a canon that progressed to sufficiency, but that has now been closed. The implication is that any such addition is not only wrong, but also unnecessary:

> [T]o adde to the Gospel, to adde to the Scriptures ... is a Diminution, a Dissolution, an annihilation of those Scriptures, that Gospel, that faith, and the Author, and finisher thereof. ... [T]he *Scriptures* grew ... the number of books grew; But they grew not to the worlds end, we know to how many bookes they grew. The body of man and the vessels thereof, have a certain, and a limited capacity, what nourishment they can receive and digest ... The soul, and soul of the soul, *Faith*, and her faculties, hath a certain capacity too, and certain proportions of spirituall nourishments exhibited to it, in certaine vessels, certain measures, so many, these Bookes of Scripture (VII, 399).

In this context, addition is worse than subtraction:

> Which of you can adde another booke to the Scriptures, *A Codicill* to either of [the] Testaments? The *curse* in the Revelation fals as heavy upon them that *adde* to the booke of God, as upon them that take from it: Nay, it is easie to observe, that in all those places of Scripture which forbid the taking away, or the adding to the Book of God, still the commandment that they shall not, and still the malediction if they do, is *first* placed upon the adding, and after upon the taking away (VII, 399).

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[110] For a discussion of the Reformation debate on the canonicity of Revelation see Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg*, 3-36

It is, Donne concludes, 'a more pernicious danger to the Church, to admit a book for *Canonicall*, which is *not* so, then to reject one that is so' (IV, 218). And, furthermore, this danger is a present one: on this issue that the battle remains to be won, for

> though heretofore some Heretiques have offered at that way, to clip Gods coin in taking away some book of Scripture, yet for many blessed Ages, the Church hath enjoyed her peace in that point: None of the Books are denied by any Church, there is no subtraction offered; But for addition of Apocryphal Books to Canonicall, the Church of God is still in her Militant state, and cannot triumph: and though she have victory, in all the Reasons, she cannot have peace (VII, 399-400).

We should remark that Donne's difficulty was not with the apocryphal books *per se*. Indeed, he develops an ingenious strategy to accommodate the homiletic benefits of the Biblical Apocrypha, arguing that 'because God foresaw that mens curiosities would carry them upon Apocryphal books' (V, 280) he ensured their usefulness. They are useful 'for applying our manners, and conversation to the Articles of Faith; ... Canonicall for edification, but not for foundation' (VII, 385). As such, there is 'no occasion [for] an elimination, ... an extermination of these Books' (VII, 386). But this usefulness does not give them the status of Scripture, a fact that Donne underscores when commenting on a conjectured allusion to 2 Maccabees 7:7 in Hebrews 11. He again invokes Divine sovereignty in maintaining a clear differentiation between apocryphal and canonical Scripture:

> So then, there may be good use made of an Apocryphall Booke. It always was, and always will be impossible, for our adversaries of the Romane Church, to establish that, which they have so long endeavoured, that is to make the Apocryphall Bookes equall to the Canonicall. It is true ... the blessed Fathers in the Primitive Church, afforded honourable names, and made faire and noble mention of those Books. So they have called them Sacred; and more then that, Divine; and more then that too, Canonicall Books; and more then all that, by the generall name of Scripture, and Holy Writ. But the Holy Ghost, who fore-saw the danger, though those blessed Fathers themselves did not, shed, and dropt, even in their writings, many evidences, to prove, in what sense they called those Books by those names, and in what distance they alwayes held them, from those Bookes, which are purely, and positively, and to all purposes, and in all senses, Sacred, and Divine, and Canonicall, and simply Scripture, and simply, Holy Writ (VII, 385).

The moral pointed is clear, and resonates with what we have already seen of Donne's efforts to foreground reason in the definition of a canon. There is no reason to be confused about the identification of Scripture.

Given that the question, as Donne chooses to see it, is as simple as this, why does a debate on the canon even exist? For Donne, it exists because the Church of Rome perpetuates it. They do, in spite of its simplicity, not because they are stupid, but because of a devious and malign project to undermine true Scripture:

> It is not, principally, that they would have these Books as good as Scriptures; but, because they would have Scriptures no better then these Books: That so, when it should appeare, that these Bookes were weake books, and the Scriptures no better then they, their owne Traditions might be as good as either. (VII, 387)
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> Their intention and purpose, their aime, and their end is, to undervalue the Scriptures, that thereby they may over-value their owne Traditions, their way to that end may bee to put the name of Scripture upon books of a lower value, that so the unworthinesse of those additionall books, may cast a diminution upon the Canonicall books themselves, when they are made all one (VII, 120).

Thus, disagreements about the identification of Scripture serve to mask a more radical question about the nature and the value of Divine revelation.

VII-Interpretation of Revelation

We have considered Donne's identification of Scripture. Such identification was simply a preliminary to engagement with, and interpretation of the canon thus defined. We have remarked that Donne preached in an atmosphere of heightened textual awareness. It would be incorrect, however, to suggest that he was part of the relatively confined group of scholars – Shuger's 'republic of sacred letters' – at the centre of Renaissance philology. His personal links to some of its members were close enough; but Donne is separated from this group by his lack of any deep linguistic scholarship. The precise extent of Donne's proficiency in the original languages of Scripture has been the focus of some debate. The foundations had been laid for much of this work by Don Cameron Allen as long ago as 1943. Allen's analysis of the sermons led him to the conclusion that:

> There is no doubt that Donne knew enough Hebrew to find the place in the text of the Bible and to make reasonable translations. The fact that he seldom ventured beyond this and that he does not compare his text regularly indicates that his scholarship was extremely limited. He was undoubtedly better than the average preacher in his knowledge of Semitics, but he fell far below the standard set by Andrews and even by Hall.[111]

Allen does suggest that Donne makes the best possible capital of his limited grasp of Hebrew: 'At no time does Donne seem to know as much Hebrew as Andrews or even Hall although he is more ostentatious in his use of it than either of them.'[112]

This broad picture has been challenged somewhat, and Raspa and Herz have differed on the precise extent of Donne's facility in Hebrew.[113] Chanita Goodblatt has nuanced the picture, and offered a reconciliation. Goodblatt uses Matt Goldish's 'important conception of Christian Hebraism.' Within this taxonomy, Donne fits best into the rank of

> third-order Hebraists ... who could read *some* Hebrew, but who knew and used significant amounts of Jewish literature in Latin and vernacular translations. ... Such a conception realigns the terms of the debate to allow for both Raspa and Herz to be correct in their assertions; there is nothing contradictory, after all, about Donne's possessing a basic, lexical grasp of the Hebrew language while acquiring the more sophisticated semantic nuances from commentators such as Nicholas of Lyra ... as well as Johannes Reuchlin and Pietro Galatinus.[114]

The circumscribed nature of Donne's knowledge no doubt explains why 'Donne sometimes plunges into philological difficulties that are probably beyond his depth.'[115]

As far as Greek is concerned, Allen contends that the extent of Donne's ability and scholarship 'is far below that of the average preacher of his age.'[116] It was, however, typical of that age that Hebrew attracted more scholarly attention than Greek. During the period when Donne was at Oxford, 'Hebrew had more students than Greek, and there was great enthusiasm for the Hebrew among theologians' (X, 307). So, whilst Donne does make use of the variant readings provided by the King James Version and the earlier Geneva translations, his engagement with the

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[111] Don Cameron Allen, 'Dean Donne sets his text', *ELH* 10 no. 3 (1943):208-29, 219.
[112] Allen, 'Dean Donne', 213.
[113] Anthony Raspa and Judith Scherer Herz, 'Response', *Renaissance and Reformation* 20 (1996):97-98,.
[114] Chanita Goodblatt, 'From "Tav" to the Cross: John Donne's Protestant Exegesis and Polemics', in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 224-5.
[115] Allen, 'Dean Donne', 217.
[116] Allen, 'Dean Donne', 222. Allen fails to provide much evidence for this rather sweeping statement.

Greek text of Scripture does not go any deeper. Allen summarises his view of Donne's textual scholarship in a way that is eloquent of the nature of Donne's relationship with innovations in early-modern Biblical scholarship:

> From these analyses we should gain some notion of Donne's scholarship as it applies to the setting of a text and to the care and accuracy with which he quotes the Scriptures to his parishioners. The result, it seems to me, is hardly a credit to Donne's scholarship. He knew some Hebrew and apparently some Greek, but he consults the original texts only when the mood is on him. ... He certainly lacked the scholarly approach of the great divines to the Holy Word, but he undoubtedly was more careful in his inspection of texts than the average preacher. ... [I]f this study suggests anything, it is that we should be more cautious in applying the words *scholarly* or *learned* to Donne the divine.[117]

Donne had some aspirations to adopt the emerging trends in Biblical scholarship. Insofar as his learning permitted, he emulated the modes of this new school, and his approach to the issue is that of the highly-educated man whose professional learning is primarily legal and theological.[118] Once again, however, we must recognise that Donne is a pastor, not a philologist, and remains only peripherally connected to the republic of letters.

The second distinctive innovation in the study of Scripture, in the Renaissance, can be seen, according to Shuger, as part of 'the Renaissance's scholarly fascination with the material culture of antiquity.' This historicist strain in Biblical scholarship differed from the inflexion of the same ideas in classical history, which was largely 'political and biographical, dealing with generals, emperors, demagogues, and statesmen."[119] Biblical scholarship, by contrast,

> focuses on culture rather than on politics. Since the events of the New Testament are only marginally related to the vicissitudes of imperial power, exegesis turned instead to the exploration of social praxis and the fabric of ordinary existence, studying clothing, table manners, dishware, marital and burial customs, penal codes, kinship structures, and ritual practice. ... Exegesis becomes less an explication of things (*res*) mentioned in the text than an inquiry into the codes and

[117] Allen, 'Dean Donne', 227, 229.
[118] The effects of Donne's legal education have been discussed in detail in Adlington, 'Preacher's Plea',.
[119] Shuger, *Renaissance Bible*, 32.

> customary practices (*mos*) implicit in both the composition and content of scriptural narrative.[120]

Donne was very aware of these developments; *Essayes in Divinity* makes clear his familiarity with some of the leading exponents of this scholarship, among them Reuchlin, Pietro Galatinus, and Sebastian Münster. Donne was not a practitioner, and was, once again, removed by an appreciable distance from the cutting edge of this new investigation into Scripture. This tendency does, however, leave its impress upon his preaching, less perhaps to aid exegesis than to further the hortatory purpose of his exposition.

One of the most typical examples of this novel historicism occurs in the sermon on Revelation 20:6, which we will consider as an important battleground between Donne's literalist leanings, and the allegorical impulse provided by his doctrinal commitments. This sermon might justly be seen as a prime demonstration of the medieval and modern stresses in Donne's exegesis. It is noteworthy, therefore, that Donne engages in the sort of historicism remarked by Shuger:

> We wonder, and justly, at the effusion, at the pouring out of blood, in the sacrifices of the old Law; that that little country scarce bigger then some three of our Shires, should spend more cattle in some few dayes sacrifice at some solemnities, and every yeare in the sacrifices of the whole yeare, then perchance this kingdome could give to any use (VI, 66).

This extract is eloquent of an interest in historical fact. It is also eloquent of the sort of texture that such historicism could impart to Scriptural exposition. And it is for just such texture that Donne uses textual scholarship and the fruits of historicist interpretation – they are important for his interpretation of Scripture, but not integral to it.

Donne, then, was rather a pastor than a philologist, and this fundamental fact determines his priorities in engaging with Scripture.[121] J. B. Haviland captured something of this:

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[120] Shuger, *Renaissance Bible*, 32.

[121] Jeanne Shami, 'Squint-eyed, Left-handed, Half-deaf: *Imperfect Senses* and John Donne's Interpretative Middle Way', in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor-Stuart Middle Way*, ed. Daniel W. Doerksen and Cristopher Hodgkins (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004) identifies a similar priority in Donne's preaching, concentrating more particularly upon his treatment of controversey.

> Before everything else he wants to understand and express ... the experimental side of the Christian life and the role the Church plays in that experience. He is determined not to become entangled with mere words; ... He is neither an etymologist nor a translator; he is a voyager into religious immensities which he believes beyond any doubt or question.[122]

It is this priority that explains why Donne values edification above exegesis, why, at times, he can disregard or dismiss questions of interpretation in order to allow him to make hortative use of a passage. Dennis Quinn is quite correct in stating that 'It is most historical and most accurate to think of Donne's sermons as spiritual or, specifically, tropological exegesis. Their central concern is the Christian soul."[123] Indeed, Donne is disarmingly open about this practice. For example, in an Easter sermon, preached in 1624, on Revelation 20:6[124], Donne, having listed a number of exegeses of the verse, concludes it by stating:

> And then the occasion of the day, which we celebrate now, being the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, invites me to propose a fourth sense, or rather use of the words; not indeed as an exposition of the words, but as a convenient exaltation of our devotion' (VI, 64).

The exaltation of his listeners' devotion reappears as the motive of overriding importance in a Christmas Day sermon preached in 1626. Here, its importance is sufficient to overcome the questionable nature of the sources upon which Donne relies:

> This assistance we have to the exaltation of our devotion, from that circumstance, that *Simeon* was an old man; we have another from another, that he was a priest, and in that notion and capacity, the better fitted for this epiphany, this Christmas, this Manifestation of Christ. We have not this neither in the letter of the story; no, nor so constantly in Tradition, that he was a Priest, as that he was an old man: But it is rooted in Antiquity too (VII, 285).

Likewise, preaching before King Charles, in 1626, on Isaiah 50:1[125], Donne declined to rule definitively on the true meaning of his text, and rather makes the greatest possible homiletical

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[122] J. B. Haviland, 'The Use of the Bible in the sermons of John Donne' (Unpublished PhD. thesis, Trinity College, University of Dublin, 1960) 14.
[123] Quinn, 'John Donne's Principles of Biblical Exegesis', 326.
[124] Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
[125] 'Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.'

capital out of the Scripture: 'And therefore, as *God* hath opened himselfe to us, both wayes, let us open both eares to him, and from one Text receive both Doctrines' (VII, 74). Indeed, this imperative towards edification causes Donne to go beyond the use of readings lacking in textual support, to the use of readings that are, beyond doubt, erroneous. So, for example, in a discussion of I Corinthians 12:3 ('Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost') Donne makes mention of

> those hereticall words of *Faustus* the *Manichean*, That in the Trinity, the Father dwelt ... In that light which none can attaine to, and the Son of God dwelt in this created light, whose fountaine and roote is the Planet of the Sun, And the Holy Ghost dwelt in the Aire, and other parts illumined by the Sun and, while rejecting their truth explains that 'we may make ... good use' of them (VI, 126).

Similarly, even while disagreeing with the rendering of Psalm 77:11 in the Vulgate,[126] Donne wishes 'wee could but take aright a mis-taken translation, and make that use that is offered us in others error' (VIII, 304).

Clearly, the passages that Donne treats with such a cavalier disregard for the niceties of exact exegesis do not treat any fundamental doctrine, and thus are available for the sort of pragmatic use to which Donne puts them. Donne is not alone in this; indeed, he justifies this use of Scripture by approving reference to Augustine's observations on the difficulty of correctly understanding the Biblical account of creation:

> If *Moses* were here, I would hold him here, and begge of him, for thy sake to tell me thy meaning in his words, of this Creation. But sayes he, since I cannot speake with *Moses* ... I begge of thee who art Truth it selfe, as thou enablest him to utter it, enable me to understand what he hath said. So difficult a thing seemed it to that intelligent Father, to understand this history, this mystery of the Creation. But yet though he found, that divers senses offered themselves, he did not doubt of finding the Truth: ... What hurt followes, though I follow another sense, then some other man takes to be *Moses* sense? for his may be true sense, and so may mine, and neither be *Moses* his (IX, 94).

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[126] 'And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High.' Ps. 77:10, AV, note that Donne follows the Vulgate's verse numbering, but not its Psalm numbering. The Vulgate renders the equivalent verse (Ps. 76:11) as 'et dixi nunc coepi haec mutatio dexterae Excelsi.' ('And I said, Now have I begun: this is the change of the right hand of the most High.')

Donne goes on to echo Augustine's dictum on the interpretation of contested passages of Scripture:

> Where divers senses arise, and all true, (that is, that none of them oppose the truth) let truth agree them. But what is Truth? God; and what is God? Charity; Therefore let Charity reconcile such differences. ... Let us use our liberty of reading Scriptures according to the Law of liberty; that is, charitably to leave others to their liberty, if they but differ from us, and not differ from Fundementall truths (IX, 94-5).[127]

Donne's attitude, then, to the interpretation of Scripture is irenic, where fundamental truths are not concerned. In an earlier sermon, Donne cast a jaded eye back over the history of Reformation and Counter-reformation, and alerted his congregation to the appalling consequences that an excessive insistence on doctrinal unanimity had had for earlier generations of English men and women:

> From making infirmities excusable necessary (which is the bondage the Council of *Trent* hath laid upon the world) to make Problematicall things, Dogmatical; and matter of Disputation, matter of faith; to bring the University into *Smithfield*, and heaps of Arguments into Piles of Faggots (IV, 144).

Donne never makes this error. He is conscious, throughout his writings, that no one man can claim to be an authoritative interpreter of Scripture: he was conscious that 'the best of men are but Problematicall, Onely the Holy Ghost is Dogmaticall; Onely he ... seales with Infallibility' (VI, 301). Accordingly, his own interpretation of Scripture was free from excessive dogmatism, and from the taint of arrogance.

This notwithstanding, Donne took the interpretation of Scripture very seriously, and he was always at pains to stress the pastoral and practical implications of exegesis. Indeed, his excoriating attacks on the mis-reading of Scriptures, which have troubled some modern critics, can be better understood when we remember just how serious, for Donne, were the stakes in play. So it is that, in *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne dealing with the deliberate distortion of Scripture remarks that, if such readings 'carried them no further, than to simple and childish actions', or to 'to stupid actions', 'sillinesse or some such disease might lessen the fault' (*PM*, 81-2). The reality,

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[127] On the role of this view in the rhetoric of Augustine and Donne see Quinn, 'Donne's Christian Eloquence', 277.

however, is infinitely more sinister than this: 'But then is there extreame horrour and abominations therein, when God and his Lieuetenants are at once injur'd, which is, when places of Scripture are malitiously or ridiculously detorted to the aviling of princes' (*PM*, 82). Donne greatly fears that his readers, and later his listeners, are being abused to their damnation. Later, in the sermons, Donne outlines a further consequence of incautious exegesis:

> It is a frequent infirmity amongst Expositors of scriptures, by writing, or preaching, either when men will raise doubts in places of scripture, which are plaine enough in themselves, (for this creates a jealousie, that if the Scriptures be every where so difficult, they cannot be our evidences, and guides to salvation) Or when men will insist too vehemently, and curiously, and tediously in proving of such things as no man denies; for this induces a suspition, that that is not so absolutely, so undeniably true, that needs so much art, and curiosity, and vehemence to prove it (V, 270).

Exegesis, for Donne, does not take place in a vacuum, and he cannot be an island insofar as Biblical interpretation is concerned. His exposition has consequences, and Donne never loses sight of this verity.

This attitude underpins Donne's interpretation of Scripture. His exegesis is also dependent upon his belief that Scripture was the result of Divine inspiration, a work of revelation as remarkable, in its way, as was the work of Creation. There followed from this belief, a view of Scripture that stresses a basic unity of purpose, a homogeneity of intention that overrides the differences in the historical context and other circumstances attendant upon the writing of Scripture. Donne states this very explicitly, even while acknowledging the assorted sources which make up canonical Scripture:

> ...in the true Scriptures, we have a glorious sight of this *Mosaick*, this various, this mingled work; where the words of the Serpant in seducing our first parents, the words of *Balaams* Ass in instructing the rider himself, the words of prophane Poets, in the writings and use of the Apostle, the words of *Caiaphas* prophesying that it was expedient that one should dye for all, The words of the Divel himself (*Jesus I know, and Pauls I know*) And here in this text, the words of a Thief executed for the breach of the Law; do all concur to the making up of the Scriptures, of the word of God (I, 253).

This belief has clear implications for interpretation: 'It must bee GODS *whole Booke*, and not a fewe mis-understood *Sentences* out of that *Booke*, that must try thee. ... That which must try thee is the whole *Booke*, the *tenor* and *purpose*, the *Scope* and *intention* of GOD in his *Scriptures*' (VII, 87). It leads Donne to ask 'but since our merciful God hath afforded us the whole and intire book, why should wee tear it into rags, or rent the seamless garment?' (*ED*, 16) In the immediate context, Donne is referring to the tendencies of Pico della Mirandella's cabbalism. Nonetheless, the query is indicative of Donne's understanding of Scripture, and could apply with equal force to the proof-texting of the scholastics, and to the excesses of medieval exegesis. Donne repudiates this behaviour in very clear terms later in the *Essayes*:

> The Souldiers would not divide our Saviours garment, though past his use and his propriety. No garment is so neer God as his word: which is so much his, as it is *he*. ... And in the Incarnation, the Act was onely of one Person, but the whole Trinity speaks in every word. The therefore which stub up these severall roots, and mangle them into chips, in making the word of God not such, ... they, I say, do what they can this way, whose word it is pretended to be, no God. They which build, must take the solid stone, not the rubbish (*ED*, 46).

This assumption of a pan-Scriptural unity of intent also allowed Donne to stipulate certain universal principles of interpretation. Thus, there is no difficulty, for Donne, in stating that 'the first thing I look for in the Exposition of any Scripture, and the nearest way to the literall sense thereof, is, what may most deject and vilifie man, what may most exalt and glorifie God' (IX, 361). In the same manner, Donne identified Christ as 'the subject of the Word of God, of all the Scriptures' (I, 287).

Donne's interpretation of Scripture was underwritten by a pastoral imperative. This motivation for exegesis was a more important factor for Donne than the scholarly dictates of the humanist project. His lack of deep expertise in the Biblical languages was one factor limiting Donne's complete engagement in detailed *ad fontes* exegesis, and his assumption of the universal suitability of a Christological approach to the interpretation of Scripture modified his commitment to a historicised reading of the Bible. But these interpretative possibilities, while of manifest relevance to our understanding of the detail of Donne's exegesis, were never the source

of his most abiding interest in Scripture. The exaltation of God and the instruction of man above all other considerations directed Donne's reading and exposition of the Biblical text.

VIII-The Literal Emphasis of Donne's Exegesis

The question of how exactly it was that Donne interpreted Scripture has been the subject of some debate. Much of this discussion has identified Donne's exegetical options as mediaeval allegory, on the one hand, and modern literalism, on the other. Scholars have then attempted to situate Donne against this artificially polarised background. Anthony Raspa, dealing only with Donne's early (pre-ordination) prose works identifies Donne's chief method of interpretation as typological, a method that he, like Barbara Lewalski, extends back into the poetry.[128] William R. Mueller acknowledges the place of allegorical interpretation in determining the structure of Donne's sermons, but ultimately contends that 'Donne seldom paid strict adherence to it in organizing his sermons.'[129] Dennis Quinn, presenting a rather more full-orbed picture, stresses Donne's literal hermeneutic, and comes very close to denying that allegorical readings had any place in Donne's understanding of Scripture. J.B. Haviland, in his earlier study of Donne's use of the Bible, seems unsure where precisely to position Donne, but on the whole attempts to understand his interpretation of Scripture in relation to medieval and allegorical modes, concluding that 'his method was derived from the Church Fathers by way of medieval tradition.'[130] These debates tend, in practice, to boil down to discussions of just how modern, or how medieval, Donne was.

There can be little doubt that there is legitimate importance in considering the question whether Donne's understanding of Scripture was allegorical or literal. Indeed, Donne, himself, treats of this question extensively, as he speaks reflexively of his preferred manner of interpretation. To concentrate on this issue alone, however, is to miss the relevance of a good deal of more recent scholarship on Reformation and Renaissance hermeneutics, and thus to miss the opportunity to view Donne in relation to the developments which were taking place in this

[128] Barbara K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, especially Ch. 4 'The Biblical Symbolic Mode: Typology and the Religious Lyric' and Ch. 8 'John Donne: Writing after the Copy of a Metaphorical God'.
[129] William R. Mueller, *John Donne: Preacher*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P, 1962), 90.
[130] Haviland, 'The Bible in the sermons of John Donne' 14.

field. We shall, therefore, consider the importance of allegory, and of literalism in Donne's exposition of Scripture.

Insofar, then, as the place of allegory in Donne's thought is concerned, we do well to remember that we have a range of works spanning twenty years. Moreover, these works were the product of a man noted for the investigative temper of his mind, and for his wide engagement with new learning. It should scarcely surprise us, then, that Donne's views on Scripture did develop. It is gratifyingly neat that the movement that Donne's hermeneutics display – away from the allegorical, and towards the literal – mirror broader developments, over a much wider time span, in Biblical interpretation. This is not to suggest that we have, on the one hand, earlier readings that are wholly allegorical, and later engagements that are entirely literal – the simplistic nature of such a dichotomy is patent. Donne always laid considerable stress on the importance of the literal meaning; he never disdained the opportunity to make a point based on allegory. We are, rather, speaking of emphases, and of the dominant tenor of Donne's work.

Donne's use of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture is inspired by a conviction that Scripture is a text spiritually discerned, and therefore must contain more than a surface literal significance. To this conviction he gave clear expression; speaking of David's lament about the vexation of his bones in Psalm 6:2-3[131] he asked: 'Shall we, who have our conversation is in heaven, finde no more in *Bones*, then an earthly, a worldly, a naturall man would doe?' (V, 353)[132] This use of spiritual meaning is most marked in the *Essayes in Divinity*. Donne insists on the typical value of the record of Genesis, but stresses that there is also literal truth in the account. Further, the truth, while it is not on the surface and not available equally to all, is still easy to understand. 'There is then in *Moses*, both History and Precept, but evidently distinguishable without violence' (*ED*, 21-2). The application of this dictum is most clearly seen when Donne deals with the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt:

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[131] 'Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?'

[132] This view may help to explain Donne's statement, generally ignored by critics, that Philip and Mary Sidney had, in their translation of the Psalms 'both taught us what, and taught how to doe. /... /They tell us *why*, and teach us *how* to sing.'(ll.20-2). Teaching how to sing is accounted for by Donne's clearly expressed views of the technical superiority of their translation. The teaching why to sing, qualified by the statement that the Sidneys had 'both translated, and apply'd' Psalm 97(l.19) appears to involve the unveiling of a contemporary significance in the Psalms. We should note that we have already seen Donne apply this same Psalm, in his sermon to the honourable company of the Virginia Plantation (1622), to give it a contemporary relevance.

> Only to paraphrase the History of this Delivery, without amplifying, were furniture and food enough for a meditation of the best perseverance, and appetite, and digestion; yea, the least word in the History will serve a long rumination. If this be in the bark, what is in the tree? If in the superficiall grass, the letter; what treasure is there in the hearty and inward Mine, the Mistick and retired sense? Dig a little deeper, O my poor lazy soul, and thou shalt see that thou, and all mankind are delivered from an Egypt; and more miraculously than these (*ED*, 82).

This is a statement of the higher value of the spiritual, the allegorical, sense that accords very closely with medieval exegesis. It is very unusual, in Donne's interpretation, that he is so dismissive of the literal sense of the text – 'the superficiall grass' – and even this unflattering description is balanced by his insistence that the literal sense of the passage alone provides 'furniture and food' for a 'meditation of the best perseverance.'

Subsequently, Donne makes use of a more peculiarly typological mode of interpretation:

> Almost all the ruptures in the Christian Church have been occasioned by such bold disputations *De Modo*. ... But to decline this sad contemplation, and to further our selves in the Meditation of Gods justice declared in this History, let me observe to you, that God in his Scriptures hath Registred especially three symbols or Sacraments, of use in this matter. One in *Genesis*, of pure and meer *Justice*, vindicative, and permanent; which is, The *Cherubim and fiery sword* placed in Paradise, to *keep out*, not only *Adam*, but his *Posterity*. The second in *Exodus*, of *pure* and *only Mercy*, which is the model and fabrick of the *Mercy seate*, under the shadow of the two Cherubims wings. The third, partaking of both *Mercy* and *Justice*, and a Memoriall and seal of both, is the *Rainebow* after the Deluge (*ED*, 95-6).

These Old Testament types can, therefore, provide a trans-historical declaration of the character of God, and by providing exemplars of the principles by which God operates, short-circuit the bitter, and for Donne, ultimately purposeless debates about the minutiae of God's operations, the questions *De modo* that he consistently denounced. A similar dynamic is evident in Donne's identification of Christ as the subject

> of all the Scriptures, of all that was shadowed in the Types, and figured in the ceremonies, and prepared in the preventions of the Law, of all that was foretold by the Prophets, of all that the Soule of man rejoiced in, and congratulated with the Spirit of God, in the *Psalms*, and in the *Canticles*, and the cheerefull parts of spirituall joy and exaltation, which we have in the Scriptures; Christ is the

> foundation of all these Scriptures, Christ is the burden of all those songs; Christ was in *sermone* then, then he was in the Word (I, 287-8).

The centrality of Christ gives a unity to Scripture that extends over all variations of genre, and this unity both makes possible, and is itself made possible by the power of typology.

The passage, quoted above, in which Donne speaks of the allegorical potential of the Exodus, is the high-point of the allegorical mode of interpretation in his *oeuvre*. Certainly, with the exception of the comment on the spiritual sense of Scripture quoted from the sermons, and of his acknowledgement, in the *Essayes*, that Scripture 'hath this common with all other books, that *words* signifie *things*; but hath this particular, that all *things* signifie *other things*' (*ED*, 10). Donne does not explicitly endorse allegorical interpretation of Scripture. We can, however, see him use this mode in his earlier sermons, and especially in those sermons preached on the Psalms. Thus, in a sermon delivered at Lincoln's Inn, on Psalm 38:2, Donne laid out his sermon based on a typological engagement with the passage:

> Which words we shall first consider, as they are our present object, as they are historically, and literally to be understood of *David*; And secondly, in their *retrospect*, as they look back upon the first *Adam*, and so concern *Mankind collectively*, and so *you*, and *I*, and all have our portion in these calamities; And thirdly, we shall consider them in their *prospect*, in their future relation to the *second Adam*, in *Christ Jesus*, in whom also all mankinde was collected ... for this Psalm, determin'd in *David*; some, a *Catholique*, and a *universall* Psalm, extended to the whole condition of *man*; and some a *Propheticall*, and *Evangelicall* Psalm, directed upon *Christ*. None of them inconveniently; for we receive help and health, from every one of these acceptations (II, 75).

Donne uses this method throughout his earlier sermons on the Psalms, and this early use of allegorical interpretation is a little formulaic and even somewhat restrictive – the contrast with Donne's later sermons on the Psalms is marked.[133] Thus, it is clear that the effort to understand Donne's exegesis as an inflection of medieval hermeneutics is doomed to failure. The use that he makes of allegory is limited in its scope, and is influenced more by the developments in rhetorical awareness than by medieval exegesis. Certainly, it cannot be said to be a dominant feature of his interpretation of the Bible.

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[133] See I, 291; II, 97-8; and II, 139.

And this is true, even in the *Essayes*, where Donne's use of allegorical interpretation is most marked. Even in this relatively early work, Donne privileges a literal understanding of Scripture above any allegorical or typological methods. So, Donne alerts his readers to the danger that Lyra is 'perchance too Allegorical and Typick' (*ED*, 10) and contends that Moses' purpose in writing Genesis was to provide 'such examples as might mollifie the Jews in their wandering', and therefore 'to put him in a wine-presse, and squeeze out Philosophy and particular Christianity, is a degree of injustice, which all laws forbid, to torture a man, *sine iudiciis aut sine probationibus*' (*ED*, 17). More explicitly, Donne states that:

> The word of God is not the word of God in any other sense then the literall, and that also is not the literall, which the letter seems to present, for so to diverse understandings there might be diverse literall senses; but it is called literall, to distinguish it from the Morall, Allegoricall, and the other senses; and is that which the Holy Ghost doth in that place principally intend (*ED*, 46).

Donne is clearly stating his preference for the literal sense of Scripture, but is careful to refine his definition of literal interpretation. He is, as Quinn states, rejecting 'both the literalistic and the fanciful without rejecting the services of either scholarship or spiritual insight.'[134] This account of the value of the literal sense echoes Tyndale's account of the subject:

> Thou shalt understand therefore that the scripture hath but one sense which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense thou canst not but go out of the way. Neverthelater the scripture useth proverbs, similitudes, riddles or allegories as all other speeches do, but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle or allegory signifieth is ever the literal sense which thou must seek out diligently.[135]

A decade later than the *Essayes*, Donne returned to similar language in discussing the correct interpretation of the Revelation. Donne began his sermon by arguing for the importance of hermeneutical sensitivity in pursuing a literal interpretation:

> In the first book of the Scriptures, that of Genesis, there is danger in departing from the letter; In this last book, this of Revelation, there is as much danger in adhering too close to the letter (VI, 62).

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[134] Quinn, 'John Donne's Principles of Biblical Exegesis', 316.
[135] Tyndale, *Obedience*, 136.

Donne develops this argument by instancing occasions when a sensitivity to metaphor is essential for the correct understanding of the literal signification of a passage:

> The literall sense is always to be preserved; but the literall sense is not always to be discerned: for the literall sense is not always that, which the very Letter and Grammar of the place presents, as where it is literally said, *That Christ is a Vine*, and literally, *That his flesh is bread*, and literally, *That the new Ierusalem is thus situated, thus built, thus furnished:* But the literall sense of every place, is the principall intention of the Holy Ghost, in that place: And his principall intention in many places, is to expresse things by allegories, by figures; so that in many places of Scripture, a figurative sense is the literall sense, and more in this book [Revelation] then in any other (VI, 62).

Donne, then, is calling for an awareness of the importance of metaphor in Scripture, and is defining a literal exegesis that can accommodate figurative language. Further, his pastoral priorities re-emerge, for he is concerned that 'to binde our selves to such a literall sense in this book, will take from us the consolation of many spiritual happinesses, and bury us in the carnall things of this world' (VI, 62). Once again, Tyndale's views on the language of Scripture are apposite:

> So in like manner the scripture borroweth words and sentences of all manner things and maketh proverbs and similitudes or allegories. As Christ saith (Luke 4), Physician heal thyself. Whose interpretation is do that at home which thou dost in strange places, and that is the literal sense. So when I say Christ is a lamb, I mean not a lamb that beareth wool, but a meek and patient lamb which is beaten for other men's faults. Christ is a vine, not that beareth grapes: but out of whose root the branches that believe suck the spirit of life and mercy and grace and power to be the sons of God and to do his will. The similitudes of the gospel are allegories borrowed of worldly matter to express spiritual things. The Apocalypse or Revelations of John are allegories whose literal sense is hard to find in many places.[136]

Tyndale is, perhaps, being more rigidly literalist in his language – he locates literal meaning behind the figures of Scripture. Donne sees no need for this distinction – figurative language, understood as such, provides, in itself the literal sense. Donne expands upon this, later in the sermon:

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[136] Tyndale, *Obedience*, 157.

> In the figurative exposition of those places of Scripture, which require that way oft to be figuratively expounded, that Expositor is not to be blamed, who not destroying the literall sense, proposes such a figurative sense, as may exalt our devotion and advance our edification; And as no one of those Expositors did ill, in proposing one such sense, so neither do those Expositors ill, who with those limitations, that it destroy not the literall sense, that it violate not the analogy of faith, that it advance devotion, do propose another and another such sense (VI, 63).

It is worth noting, however, that Donne is denying that the resurrection in his text – 'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection' (Revelation 20:6) – has any literal significance. It is, he claims a 'figurative, allegorical, mysticall, that is a spirituall Resurrection, that is intended.' To an extent, the foregoing discussion has been designed to provide interpretative space to move away from the literal import of the passage, and thus allowing Donne to deny a literal millennium. This is the significance of the 'analogy of faith': an isolated passage cannot be allowed to contradict the wider teaching of Scripture, as understood by the Church. Once again, this emphasises for us the nuance implicit in Donne's commitment to the literal interpretation of Scripture. Donne values the literal sense of the text, but this literal sense must be pursued with sensitivity to generic differences within Scripture, and with a consciousness of a broader doctrinal framework.

It is instructive, then, to see Donne engage Cardinal Bellarmine's inappropriate allegorization of I Corinthians 15:29 – 'Else, what shall they doe which are baptized for the dead? If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for the dead?' – to support the doctrine of Purgatory. In this instance, Donne has no difficulty in defending the literal reading that he views as appropriate:

> So *Bellarmine* does upon this place, and upon this place principally he relies, in this he triumphs, when he says ... Here needs no wresting, no disguising, here Purgatory is clearly and manifestly discovered. Now certainly, if we take the words as they are, and as the Holy Ghost hath left them to us, we finde no such manifestation of this Doctrine, no such cleare light, no such bonfire, no such beacon, no beame at all, no spark of any such fire of Purgatory: That because S. *Paul* sayes, That no man would be baptized *Pro mortuis, for Dead*, or, *for the Dead*, except he did assure himselfe of a Resurrection, that this should be *Aperta convictio*, an

> evident Conviction of Purgatory, is, if it be not a new Divinity, certainly a new Logique (VII, 191).

Bellarmine, at least in Donne's polemic, claims to have the clear meaning of the passage with him. However, Donne suggests that he is not taking the words as they are, and 'as the Holy Ghost hath left them.' His statement that Bellarmine denies any wresting or disguising, suggests, by implication, that this is precisely what his figurative reading of the text does. Donne makes clear his belief that this cannot provide a satisfactory basis for such important doctrine:

> But it is not the word, but the sense that they ground their assurance upon. Now, the sense which should ground an assurance in Doctrinall things, should be the literall sense: And yet here, in so important a matter of faith as Purgatory, it must not be a literal, a proper, a naturall and genuine sense, but figurative, and metaphoricall; for, in this place, *Baptisme* must not signifie literally the Sacrament of Baptisme, but it must signifie, in a figurative sense, a Baptisme of teares (VII, 192).

We should note that Donne is stating an important ground-rule here – like Calvin, he believes that doctrine must be grounded in the literal sense. Further, allegorization is the more unsuitable because the doctrine being dealt with is of considerable soteriological importance. Nonetheless, his criticism of the way in which Bellarmine selectively re-defines the literal sense seems a little disingenuous, especially when juxtaposed with the extract quoted above:

> Yet he pursues his triumph ... As though he might waive the benefit, of making it a figurative sense, and have his ends, by maintaining it to be the literall sense; This is, sayes he, the true and naturall sense of the place. But it will be hard for him, to perswade us, either that this is the literall sense of the place, or that this place needs any other, then a literall sense (VII, 192).

Notwithstanding Donne's pleasure in the appropriate and telling metaphor, he seems happier when defending a literal reading, than when issuing apologia for allegorical interpretation. Indeed, he seizes very enthusiastically on the contradictions and absurdities that would result from taking this method of interpretation to its logical conclusion. So, in responding to Bellarmine, he does not scruple to expose his opponent to mockery. He does, however, do so, to make a serious point about the interpretation of Scripture:

> Not to founder by standing long in this puddle, he makes no other argument, that Baptisme must here be understood of afflictions voluntarily sustained, but that that word *Baptisme* is twice used, and accepted so in the Scriptures by Christ himselfe; It is taken so there, therefore it must be taken so here. But not to speake at all, of the weaknesse of that Consequence, (the word hath been taken figuratively, therefore it must never returne to a literall sense) which will hold as well, that because Christ is called *Porta, A Gate*, therefore when *Samson* is said to have carried a Gate, *Samson* must be a *Christopher*, and carry Christ; And because Christ is a *vine*, and a *way*, and *water*, and *bread*, wheresoever any of these words are, they must be intended of Christ (VII, 193).

One of the most fundamental debates of the Reformation centred on the issue of how precisely Christ's words 'this is my body' were to be interpreted and understood. Donne identified this issue as belonging properly to the debate on the figurative use of Scripture. In the same sermon, he explicitly describes allegorical interpretations as a perfunctory and superficial reading of Scripture, and demonstrated his awareness of the sort of biased interpretation that we have already seen:

> If a man read the scriptures a little, superficially, perfunctorily, his eyes seem straightwaies enlightened, and he thinks he sees everything he had pre-conceived, and fore-imagined in himselfe, as cleare as the Sun in the Scriptures. He can finde flesh in the Sacrament, without bread, because he findes *Hoc est Corpus meum, This is my body*, and he will take no more of that hony, no more of those places of Scripture, where Christ saies, *Ego vitis*, and *Ego Porta*, that is he is *a Vine*, and he is *a Gate*, as literally as he seems to say, *that that is his Body* (V, 39).

Donne's non-controversial discussions of the correct method of understanding Scripture all confirm his own personal predilection for a literal hermeneutic as the normative mode of engagement with Scripture. In a later sermon, he again depicted allegorical interpretation as something which had been outgrown. Here he aligns it not with the Fathers, but with the Jewish interpreters of Scripture:

> The Jews were as School-boys, always spelling, and putting together Types and Figures; which things typified and figured, how this Lamb should signifie *Christ*, how this fire should signifie a *holy Ghost*. The Christian is come from school to University, from Grammar to Logick, to him that is *Logos* it self, the Word; to apprehend and apply Christ himself; and so is at more liberty then when he had

> onely a dark law without any comment, with the natural man; or onely a dark comment, that is the Law, with a dimme light, and ill eys, as the Jews had: for though the Jew had the liberty of a Law, yet they had not the law of Liberty (VIII, 351).

This comment is notable for its seemingly self-conscious use of the terms of contemporary philology. God's revelation has developed, and the changing nature of that revelation demands a like evolution of exegesis. The movement in both is from picture to word, from type to antitype, from allegory to text. The New Testament Christians, then, had progressed to that point where they were properly occupied with 'the right use of the true, and naturall, the native and genuine, the direct, and literall, and uncontrovertible sense of the words' (VII, 120).

The tensions informing Donne's preference for a literal understanding of Scripture can also be seen in a sermon preached in St Dunstan's on the text Lamentations 3:1:'I am the man, that hath seen affliction, by the rod of his wrath'. Donne spends some time at the beginning of the sermon attempting to define who the man primarily referred to in text is. He points out the affinity between this phrase and the words used in Pilate's presentation of the scourged Christ to the Jewish multitude, '*Ecce homo.*' This similarity has led 'many of the ancient Expositors [to] take these words *prophetically* of *Christ* himselfe; and that Christ himselfe who says, *Behold and see if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow,* says here also, *I am the man, that hath seen affliction...*' (X, 193). In this instance, Donne uses one typical reading to buttress another, and his objection is less that such a reading evacuates the literal meaning of the text, than that 'there are some other passages in this Chapter, that are not so conveniently appliable to Christ.' Donne rejects the suggestion that the text speaks of Jerusalem by a reference to the words used in the inspired text: 'but then it would not be expressed in that *Sex*, it would not be said of *Jerusalem, I am the man.*' He also rejects a reading that suggests the passage deals with 'any *particular*, that had his part in that calamity, in that captivity; that the affliction was so universall upon all of that nation of what condition soever, that *every man* might justly say, *Ego vir, I am the man*' (X, 193-4). Donne objects to this reading because it eliminates the possibility of understanding the text, and its wider context, literally:

> But then all this chapter must be *figurative*, and still, where we can, it becomes, it behoves us, to maintain a *literall sense* and interpretation of all Scriptures. And *that* we shall best do in this place, if we understand these words literally.

It is notable here that Donne appears to differentiate between a figurative reading, and a typical reading. The typical reading appears to have greater validity for Donne, because of his belief, already seen, that all Scripture speaks of Christ. We should also note, however, that Donne insists on the importance of context in validating the reading – he is following his own rules about maintaining the integrity of Scripture.

Donne's interpretation of Scripture, then, is not one that can be summarised in terms of simple polarities. The situation is more complicated than that. In the *Devotions*, Donne gives us an insight to the importance that a tension between the literal and the allegorical had for his theology, in its strictest sense:

> My *God*, my *God*, Thou art a *direct God*, may I not say, a *literall God*, a *God* that wouldest bee understood *literally*, and according to the *plaine sense* of all that thou saiest? But thou art also ... a *figurative*, a *metaphoricall God* too: A *God* in whose words there is such a height of *figures*, such *voyages*, such *peregrinations* to fetch remote and precious *metaphors*, such *extentions*, such *spreadings*, such *Curtaines* of *Allegories*, such *third Heavens* of *Hyperboles*, so *harmonious eloquutions*, so *retired*and so *reserved expressions*, so *commanding perswasions*, such *sinews* even in thy *milke*, and such *things* in thy *words*, as all *prophane Authors*, seeme of the seed of the *Serpant*, that *creepes*; thou art the dove, that flies. O, what words but thine, can expresse the inexpressible *texture*, and *composition* of thy *word* (*D*, 99).

Away from the hortatory context of the sermons, Donne's balancing of the literal and the allegorical is revealed as essential to his understanding of his God. It is this God that breathed out Scripture, Scripture takes its character from him, and a God who eschews the resources of figurative language is a God too prosaic for Donne. The poet who expected and awaited eternal conformity to God, a conformity that seemed imminent as he penned his *Devotions*, anticipated unity with a greater, and not a lesser, poet. In general, then, Donne's preference is clearly for a sensitive use of the literal sense that acknowledges, allows for, and exults in the use of figurative language. Clearly, Donne is removed, by some considerable distance, from the frigidity of much

medieval exegesis, especially of scholasticism, and the overall trend of his engagement with Scripture endorses the primacy of literal interpretation.

IX-Locating Interpretative Authority

Thus, Donne's treatment of Scripture owed a good deal to the developments of the Reformation. The most characteristically Reformed element of that treatment was the place that he gave to the individual engagement with Scripture. Donne trusted his lay readers, and never simply wanted them to rely on what they had been taught, without the use of their own intellect and understanding. We can see Donne's dynamic interplay of ecclesiastical and lay interpretation at work right from his earliest prose works. In *Pseudo-Martyr* and the *Essayes in Divinity*, Donne, then himself a layman, creates a freedom for his own engagement with Scripture. Once ordained, he allowed much of that same freedom to his congregations. The fact that Donne writes in these volumes as a layman appears to trouble him, and he opens the *Essayes* with an apologia for this fact:

> ... the holy Scriptures ... have these properties of a well provided Castle, that they are easily defensible, and safely defend others. So they have also this, that to strangers they open but a little wicket, and he that will enter, must stoop and humble himselfe. To reverend Divines, who by an ordinary calling are Officers and Commissioners from God, the great Doors are open. Let me with *Lazarus* lie at the threshold, and beg their crums (*ED*, 7).

He restates this conviction that the Scriptures are the business of the qualified and called divine, whilst preserving a space for individual interpretation in a way that we will have more to say about:

> ... as all mankind is naturally one flock feeding upon one Common, and yet for society and peace, Propriety, Magistracy, and distinct Functions are reasonably induc'd; so, though all our soules have interest in this their common pasture, the book of life, (for even the ignorant are bid to read;) yet the Church hath wisely hedged us in so farr, that all men may know, and cultivate, and manure their own part, and not adventure upon great reserv'd mysteries, nor trespass upon this book, without inward humility, and outward interpretations. For it is not enough to have *objects*, and *eyes* to see, but you must have *light* too.'

In coming to Scripture the private individual must be guided by 'outward interpretations', by expositions of the passages that fit within the general understanding of the Church. It is worthy of note that Donne, in the passage quoted, links this preparation for exegesis with societal, as much as with ecclesiastical, authority.

This imbrication becomes more explicit in *Biathanatos*. In dealing with this work, we must bear in mind its complexity in terms of its genre, its readership, and, more fundamentally, of its intent. Remembering, then, that it is an odd book, we may still observe some characteristic features of Donne's engagement with Scripture at work. Commenting, in the third division to this volume, on the authority of Scripture, Donne accords with the Roman Church's traditional reading of 2 Peter 1:20: 'That no prophesy in the Scripture is of private interpretation.' This means that 'the whole Church may not be bound and concluded by the fancy of one, or of a few, who being content to enslumber themselues in an opinion and a lazy preiudice, dreame arguments to establish and to authorise that' (*B*, 110). This reading contrasts instructively with the more Protestant understanding exemplified by Tyndale, who uses the passage to stress the internal coherence and sufficiency of Scripture:

> No place of the scripture may have a private exposition, that is may not be expounded after the will of man or after the will of the flesh or drawn unto a worldly purpose contrary unto the open texts and the general articles of the faith and the whole course of the scripture, and contrary to the living and practising of Christ and the Apostles and holy prophets.[137]

Similarly, Calvin, whilst moving the interpretation of the text away from this concept of intra-scriptural validation, was anxious to interpret this verse in a way that did not infringe upon the freedom for the individual reader, or privilege the interpretation of the Church:

> But the papists are foolish when they conclude that no private interpretation by an individual is valid. They abuse Peter's testimony, in order to give their councils alone the right to interpret Scripture. But this is childish. When Peter speaks of private interpretation, he does not refer to individuals; neither does he forbid them to interpret Scripture. He means that it is not godly for them to come out with something out of their own heads. Even if all men in the world were to agree and be of one mind, the outcome would still be private, of their own. The word private is

[137] Tyndale, *Obedience*, 169.

> here set against divine revelation; for the believers, illumined inwardly by the Holy Spirit, know as truth only what God says by his Word.[138]

Donne's appeal, by contrast, is to ecclesiastical authority. A little later, however, he broadens the scope of 'outward interpretations' in a notable manner. Firstly, Donne instances Deuteronomy 32:39, 'I kill and I give Life.' From this, it 'is concluded, that all authority of Life and death is from God, and none in our selves.' Donne rebuts this assumption by reference to societial convention:

> But shall we therefore dare to condemne vtterly, all those States, and Gouernments, where Fathers, Husbands, and Masters had Iurisdiction ouer Children, Wifes and seruant's Lifes? If we dare, yet how shall we defend any Magistracy, if this be so strictly accepted? (*B*, 115)

He resorts to a very similar argument when dealing with the seventh commandment:

> For though the Words be generall *Thou shalt not Kill*, we may kill beastes, Magistrates may kill Men; and a priuate Man in a Iuste warre may not onely kill, contrary to the sound of this Commandement, but he may kill his Father Contrary to another (*B*, 116).

It is worthy of note that, rather than referring his readers to those parts of Scripture which institute capital punishment, Donne directs us to the prevailing practice of the society in which he lives. This strategy is scarcely very risky, as Donne could rely on his readers' ability to trace that allusion for themselves. Nonetheless, the appeal to cultural practice gives Donne's contention force and emphasis, whilst stressing for us the importance that he attaches to an interpretative community by which Scripture is mediated to the private individual.

In *Pseudo-Martyr*, *Biatanathos*, and, to a lesser extent, the *Essayes in Divinity*, the interpretative community includes the ecclesiastical, the political and the legal authorities invoked and addressed in these works. In the sermons, Donne speaks as a man committed to the Church in which he ministers, and as a preacher conscious of his responsibility to address the varied religious needs of his congregation. Thus it is that his focus remains more firmly on the interpretative tradition provided by the Church. There is need for nuance in understanding his use of this tradition: Donne, himself, was at pains to explicitly privilege Scripture above any other source of religious authority. For Donne, as for other Reformation divines, the church that

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[138] Calvin, *Commentaries*, 88.

interprets Scripture remains subordinate to that Scripture that validates her existence. This conviction he makes very clear, stating, for example, that 'the *foundations* of the *Church* are the *Scriptures*' (VIII, 73). Likewise, while he advises his congregation in his Easter sermon for 1628 that 'to know what the holy Ghost saies in the Scriptures, apply thy selfe to the Church,' (VIII, 228) he stresses, as we have seen in the extract quoted in our discussion of ecclesiastical authority and the canon, that the superiority of the Church is relative to the individual, and not to Scripture.

Donne also relies on the authority of the Church in the matter of translation. So it is that, preaching in 1625 on Psalm 11:3 – 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' – in his first sermon to King Charles, Donne resolves the textual ambiguity of the original, and the consequent variety of translations and diversity of expositions, by reference to the authority of the Church:

> ...wee rest in this Translation, which our Church hath accepted and authorized, and which agrees with the first Translation knowen to us, by way of Exposition, that is the *Chaldee Paraphrase* (VI, 241).

Notably, Donne endorses this translation because it is convenient for him to do so, and lack of overt authorization never prevents him from referring to a variety of translations, including the Vulgate and the Geneva translation.[139] Furthermore, he does not simply accept this translation because the Church does – its agreement with the Chaldee paraphrase (Donne follows the designation used by Jerome and the Complutensian Polyglot for the Aramaic translation of the Jewish scriptures) lends it the sort of accuracy that Donne prizes very highly. Nonetheless, his invocation of the authority of the Church is deliberate, and indicates the status, fundamental but carefully delineated, that he gives to ecclesiastical authority. Donne makes a very similar use of ecclesiastical teaching when preaching to the King in 1626. Outlining the variety of available expositions of his text – John 14:2: 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you', in this instance – he concludes 'we find no reason to depart from that Distinction and Interpunction of these words, which our own Church exhibits to us, and therefore we shall pursue them so' (VII, 119). Once again, his acceptance of the

[139] See Haviland, 'The Bible in the sermons of John Donne' 138-54 for a catalogue of the translations used by Donne.

teaching of the Church is neither absolute, nor unthinking. Rather, he endorses it because it serves his purpose, not because he can conceive of no true interpretation in conflict with that offered by the Church.

It would be wrong to portray Donne's understanding of the Church's authority as simply a resource of homiletic convenience. He attached a great deal of importance to the precedent and order provided in ecclesiastical tradition. Always inclined to conservatism, Donne firmly believed that 'God loves not innovation,' but 'old doctrines, old disciplines, old words and formes of speech in his service, God loves best' (II, 305). In Donne's understanding, Reformation was renovation rather than innovation, and his reliance on the Fathers is but the most significant sign of his predilection for antiquity. Thus, in his sermon of valediction, preached before his departure for Germany in 1619, he drew a parallel between the actions of God in Creation, and in the Church:

> ...here God raises up men to convey to us the dew of his grace, by waters under the firmament; by visible sacraments, and by the word so preach'd, and so interpreted, as it hath been constantly, and unanimously from the beginning of the Church ... God hath gathered all the waters of life in one place; that is all the doctrine necessary for the life to come, into his Church. ... And in this third daies work God repeats here that testimony ... he saw that it was good; good, that there should be a gathering of waters in one place, that is, no doctrine reciev'd that hath not been taught in the Church (II, 242).

The Church, therefore is the exemplar of doctrine, a body that determines the truth, and hence the necessity, of doctrine. Antiquity is the yard-stick. The insistence upon the beginning of the Church is vital, for it excludes, for Donne, the accretion of tradition, and those 'interlineary doctrines, and marginal glosses' which 'were but to vent the passion of vehement men, or to serve the turns of great men for a time,' and 'which were no part of the first text.'

It is crucial in our understanding of Donne's views of the status of Scripture, to note that the authority of the Church is never obtruded without the place of Scripture being stressed. Thus, in a defence of the practice of fasting, which forms the opening to a sermon preached during Lent of 1624/5, Donne stresses that the Church cannot exist without the authority of Scriptures:

> The Scriptures are Gods Voyce; The Church is his Eccho; a redoubling, a repeating of some particular syllables, and accents of the same voice. And as we harken with some earnestnesse, and some admiration at an Eccho; so doe the obedient children of God apply themselves to the Eccho of his Church, when perchance otherwise, they would lesse understand the voice of God, in his Scriptures, if that voice were not so redoubled unto them (VI, 223).

The figure of an echo is a telling one. Authoritative teaching originates with Scripture, and the Church has no existence without it. This ordering resonates with that endorsed by the author of the *most godly and learned discourse*, and thus by Heinrich Bullinger:

> For what authoritie in estimation soever the Church hath, it commeth wholly from the worde of God, whereof also the Church hath the beginning. ... Therefore as is the daughter to the mother, so is the Church to the Scripture. And since we do all confesse, that the Church is susteined by the foundation of the Prophets & Apostles ... it must necessarily follow, that the authoritie of the doctrine doth excel the authoritie of the Church.[140]

The Church, then, is a mediator, and an interpreter of truth, and not its source. This mediatorial function is something that Donne regularly stresses. Thus, in a later sermon, he presents the Church as the final link in the chain of divine manifestation: 'God hath manifested himselfe to man in Christ; and manifested Christ in the Scriptures; and manifested the Scriptures in the Church' (VIII, 145). One year later, Donne developed this point: 'we have a clearer, that is, a nearer light then the written Gospell, that is, the Church' (VIII, 307). It is not that the Church is superior to Scripture in its authority; it is clearer because nearer; it is the mediator that makes the Word of God present and relevant. A similar imbrication of Scripture and Church is outlined by Donne in 1625:

> That which the *Scripture* says, *God* sayes, (says St. *Augustine*) for the Scripture is his word; and that which the *Church* says, the *Scriptures* say, for she is their word, they speak *in her*; they authorize her, and she explicates them; The *Spirit* of God *inanimates* the Scriptures, and makes them *his* Scriptures, the *Church actuates* the Scriptures, and makes them *our Scriptures* (VI, 282).

Having thus safeguarded the extent of the Church's authority, and having stressed again the primacy of Scripture, Donne extols the benefits of submission to the Church's teaching:

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[140] *most godly and learned discourse*, 8.

'There is not so wholsome a thing, no soul can live in so good an aire, and in so good a diet, ... Then still to submit a mans owne particular reason, to the authority of the Church expressed in the Scriptures.' The Church, then, is 'the *Trumpet* in which God sounds his *Judgements*, and the *Organ*, in which he delivers his *mercy*' (VI, 283). Thus, if men 'will pretend to *heare Christ*, they must heare him there, where he hath promised to speake, they must *heare him in the Church*.'

Scripture and the Church, then, have a mutual interdependence. Donne stresses this point in an early sermon, preached in 1618. He is dealing with the Ephod – one of the parts of the Jewish High Priest's garments used to divine the will of God.[141] He emphasises the need for knowledge of the Divine will, in a way that, at this early stage of his preaching career, has some distinct biographical resonances:

> Think no step to be made directly towards preferment, if thou have not heard Gods voice directing the way. *Stare in usque*; stand upon the ways, and inquire not of thy fathers, but of the God of thy fathers, which way thou shalt go (I, 282).

How then, is the Christian to inquire of the God of his fathers? Once again, the answer is both Scripture and the Church:

> The word of God is an infallible guide to thee, But God hath provided thee also visible and manifest assistants, the Pillar his Church, and the Angels his Ministers in the Church. The Scripture is thine onely *Ephod*, but *Applica Ephod*, apply it to thee by his Church, and by his visible angels, and not thine own private interpretation (I, 283).

For Donne, the mediation of Scripture by the Church is a safeguard against the danger of singularity and schism. It guarantees the integrity of the interpretative community; it underwrites the public and shared nature of Scripture. So, he urges his hearers to

> Beleeve those things which the Saints of God have constantly and unanimely believed to be necessary to salvation: The Word is the Law, and the Rule, The Church is the Practice, and the Precedent that regulates thy faith; And if thou make imaginary revelations and inspirations thy Law, or the practise of Sectaries thy Precedent, thou doest but call Fancie and Imagination, by the name of Reason and Understanding, and Opinion by the name of Faith, and Singularity, and Schisme, by the name of Communion of Saints. The Law of thy faith is, That that that thou beleevest, be Universall, Catholique, believed by all (VII, 263).

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[141] See Exodus 28

The polar opposite of this true Catholic is the 'Pharisee, that by following private expositions, separates himselfe from our Church' (IX, 169), seduced, by an excess of exegetical hubris, into severing the association that gives religious life its structure and meaning.[142] Donne plays on the possible meanings of Pharisee – separation, and exposition – and identifies in a love of 'private interpretations' the separation from the teaching of the Church, and 'a contempt of all antiquity; and not only an undervaluation, but a detestation of all opinions but his owne, and his, whom he hath set up for his idol' (IX, 168).[143] A propensity to doctrinal innovation and to schism corresponds for Donne with an organic unsuitability for communal religious life.

The ideal, for the conscientious Christian, was a humility that combined an awareness of personal limitations with a willingness to seek for help, and the wisdom to look for such help in the right place:

> And therefore, forebearing to make any interpretation at all, upon dark places of Scripture, (especially those, whose understanding depends upon the future fulfilling of prophecies) in places that are clear, and evident thou maist be thine own interpreter; in places that are more obscure, goe to those men, whom God hath set over thee, and either they shall give thee that sense of that place, which shall satisfie thee, by having the sense thereof, or that must satisfie you, that there is enough for your salvation, though that remaine uninterpreted (IV, 221).

Donne echoes Cranmer's concern that the true interpretation of difficult Scripture must be sought in the Church, not in taverns; that those consulted must have carry the weight of ecclesiastical authority. It is typical that, in this sermon, Donne insists on the importance of an ecclesiastical calling to validate exegesis, even while stressing the need for each individual to possess and read Scripture, and indeed, juxtaposes these two truths in as many sentences:

> It is not a bare *reading*, but a diligent *searching*, that is enjoyned us. Now they that search, must have a warrant to search: they upon whom thou must rely for the sense of Scriptures, must be sent of God by his Church (IV, 219).

Appeal to the teachings of the church, then, helps to prevent singularity. However, Donne allows for new teaching that is not schismatic. He acknowledges that it may be necessary to accept

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[142] See Littell, *The origins of sectarian Protestantism : a study of the Anabaptist view of the Church* .
[143] *Cf.* Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 15-9, 44.

doctrine that has not been taught before. Even when this does happen, Donne continues to insist on the importance of the Church in the management and validation of new teaching:

> The doctrine truly is good; neither should I sodainly condemne his singularity, if it were well grounded. For, though in the exposition of Scriptures, singularity always carry a suspition with it, singularity is *Indicium*, (as we say in the Law) some kind of evidence, It is *Semi-probatio*, a kind of halfe-proofe against that man, that holds an opinion, or induces an interpretation different from all other men; yet as these which we call *Indicia*, in the Law, worke but so, as that they may bring a man to his oath, or, in some cases, to the rack, and to torture, but are not alone sufficient to condemne him; So if we finde this singularity in any man, we take from thence just occasion to question and sift him, and his Doctrine, the more narrowly, but not only upon that, presently to condemne him. For this was S. *Augustines* case; S. *Augustine* induced new Doctrines, in divers very important points, different from all that had written before him; but upon due examination, for all his singularity, the Church hath found reason to adhere to him, in those points, ever since his reasons prevailed (VIII, 357).

The interpretative role of the Church is, therefore, a flexible nexus, which has considerable power as an expository device, and as a pastoral aid. This understanding allows Donne to negotiate significantly with the Catholic end of the interpretative spectrum. It is, as such, a Protestant negotiation, which allows Scripture to speak, but which maintains a role for the Church. His position is both balanced and nuanced, a mean between two extremes. It is this moderation that he wants to inculcate in his congregation. In this respect, as in many others, Donne uses his commemorative sermon on Lady Danvers to describe the ideal parishioner, and, by extension, the paragon Christian:

> [S]hee govern'd her selfe, *according to his promises;* his promises, laid downe in his *Scriptures.* For, as the *rule* of all her *civill Actions*, was *Religion*, so, the *rule* of her *Religion*, was the *Scripture;* And, her *rule*, for her Particular understanding of the *Scripture*, was the *Church.* Shee never diverted towards the *Papist*, in undervaluing the *Scripture;* nor towards the *Separatist*, in undervaluing the *Church* (VII, 90).

We have seen the role that the Church plays in Donne's understanding of Scripture. Although that role is important, it is secondary. For Donne, there is a fundamental importance to the interaction of the individual Christian with the words of Holy Scripture. Such an engagement was controlled, but crucial; it brought the risk of error, but remained indispensable.

Donne wants his hearers to be readers and understanders of Scripture. We have seen that it is the Divine inspiration of Scripture makes vernacular translations essential, a point that Donne emphasised as he preached the first sermon to the new King Charles in 1625. This sermon is of considerable importance: in it we have Donne's survey of the English Church at this significant point in her history. We have already seen Donne deal with the importance of ecclesiastical sanction in this sermon: it is notable then that this extract explicitly stresses the right of the lay man to try controversies by Scripture:

> [T]he *foundation* it selfe is Christ himselfe in his *Worde*; his *Scriptures*. And then, certainly they love the *House* best, that love the *foundation* best: not they, that impute to the *Scriptures* such an *Obscuritie*, as should make them *in-intelligible* to us, or such a defect as should make them *insufficient* in themselves. To denie us the use of *Scriptures* in our vulgar Translations, and yet to denie us the use of them, in the *Originall* Tongues too, to tell us we must not trie *Controversies* by our *English*, or our *Latine Bibles*, nor by the *Hebrew Bibles* neither, To put such a Majestie upon the *Scriptures*, as that a Lay man may not touch them, and yet to put such a diminution upon them, as that the writings of men shall bee equall to them; this is a wrinching, a shrinking, a sinking, an undermining, a destroying of *Foundations*, of the *foundation* of this first *House*, which is the *Church*, the *Scriptures* (VI, 253).

Likewise, in an earlier sermon, Donne had extolled the importance of a detailed private engagement with Scripture:

> Thou art robbed of all, devested of all, if the Scriptures be taken from thee; Thou hast no where to search; blesse God therefore, that hath kept thee in possession of that sacred Treasure, the *Scriptures*; and then, if any part of that treasure ly out of thy reach, or ly in the dark, so as thou understandest not the place, *search*, that is, apply thy self to them that have warrant to *search*, and thou shalt lack no light necessary for thee (IV, 219).

And this engagement was vital for all of God's people, regardless of age or sex:

> It is but a woman that Saint *Hierome* saith ... Love the Scriptures, and wisdom will love thee: The weaknesse of her *Sex* must not avert her from *reading* the Scriptures. It is instruction for a *Childe*, and for a *Girle*, that the same Father giveth, ... As soone as she is *seaven years old*, let her learn all the *Psalmes* without book; the tendernesse of her age, must not avert her from Scriptures. It is to the whole Congregation, consisting of all sorts and sexes, that Saint *Chrysostome* saith, ... I always doe, and

> always will exhort you, ... that at home, in your owne houses, you accustome your selves to a dayly reading of the Scriptures (IV, 219).

It is important to recall that Donne did begin this section by cautioning his congregation that 'they that will search, must have a warrant to search; they upon whom thou must rely for the sense of the Scriptures, must be sent of God by his Church.' Thus, this engagement with Scripture is set in a context controlled by the Church. Nevertheless, his injunction that 'it is not a bare *reading*, but a diligent *searching* that is enjoyned us' (IV, 219) makes it clear that that this individual encounter with Scripture is not merely to be a cosmetic exercise.

The passages quoted above delineate the key tenets of this individual searching of the Scriptures. Chiefly, it is to be considered – the understanding must be involved in this reading, and enlightened as a result of it. Equally explicit is Donne's belief that some of Scripture does 'ly in the dark', that not all of God's word is amenable to every understanding, and some is not available to any. Further, and as a corollary of this, it is clear that Donne conceives of a core of fundamental truth that is accessible to the ordinary lay reader, to 'all sorts and sexes.' In this, Donne echoes Tyndale's differentiation between 'open and manifest scriptures' and 'darker sentences."[144] These principles, as we shall see, underpin Donne's understanding of the authority and interpretation of Scripture. Moreover, they form key continuities throughout Donne's *oeuvre*. Indeed, Donne had outlined these concerns in the *Essayes in Divinity*, before he had taken orders. As such, they form part of the document that, as we have already seen, constitutes Donne's exegetical manifesto.

We have noted that Donne opens the *Essayes* with an expression of diffidence because he was not a divine, because he had not a calling as an officer and commissioner of God. His standing as a lay man made him conscious of the need, in approaching Scripture, to 'stoop and humble himselfe' (*E*, 7). Donne is careful to define this humility in a way that opens up hermeneutical room for manoeuvre, delineating a sphere appropriate for the lay reader of Scripture:

> [Chirst's] humility, to be like us, was a Dejection; but ours, to be like him, is our chiefest exaltation; and yet none other is required at our hands. Where this

[144] Tyndale, *Obedience*, 106.

> Humility is, *ibi Sapientia.* Therfore it is not such a grovelling, frozen, and stupid Humility, as should quench the activity of our understanding, or make us neglect the Search of the Secrets of God, which are accessible. For, Humility, and Studiousnesse, (as it is opposed to curiosity, and transgresses not her bounds) are so near of kin, that they are both agreed to be limbes and members of one virtue, *Temperance* (*ED*, 7-8).

Donne is opening up a space for himself to engage with Scripture. He does so in precisely the same way as he subsequently does for his own lay congregation. The teaching of the Church, corporately, or of any preacher, individually is not a substitute for the understanding of the individual. Indeed, we may, with all due caution, observe a similar stress extending back beyond the *Essayes*, and into Donne's juvenilia. With the qualifications engendered by the question of the intent of these problematic works carefully in mind, it is worthwhile to note the sentiments expressed in Paradox IX, 'That by discord things increase':

> And who can deny but *Controuersies* in *Religion* are growne greater by discord, and not the *Controuersie*, but *Religion* it selfe: For in a *troubled misery* Men are alwaies more *Religious* than in a *secure peace*. The number of *good* men, the onely charitable nourishers of *Concord*, wee see is thinne, and daily melts and waines; but of *bad discording* it is infinite, & growes hourely. Wee are ascertained of all *Disputable* doubts onely by arguing and differing in *Opinion*, and if formall *disputation* (which is but a painted, counterfeit, and dissembled *discord*) can worke us this benefit, what shall not a full and maine *discord* accomplish? (*SP*, 46-7)

Given the context of the *Paradoxes*, it seems likely that Donne is less than completely serious here. Nonetheless, the preference expressed for an intelligent discussion of the chief points of religion above the mere complacent acceptance of doctrinal concord is a Donneian hallmark.[145]

This theme resonates throughout Donne's career – he insisted, early in his career, that 'to beleeve implicitly as the Church believes, and know nothing, is not enough; know thy foundations, and who laid them' (III, 239). Later he stressed the same point: 'Blinde and implicite faith shall not serve us in matter of Doctrine, nor blinde and implicite obedience, in matter of practice' (VIII, 137). Even those who, like the un-ordained Donne, stand at the threshold 'see enough to instruct and secure [them]' (*ED*, 8). So, whilst it was given only to

[145] See also Satire III, and the discussion in Scodel, 'Religious Politics of the Mean' and Strier, 'Radical Donne: "Satire III"',.

God's priests – fitted, by their ordination, to pass beyond the threshold – to see the 'treasure of saving mysteries', it was open to all, and incumbent upon all to 'study God.' Such is the freedom and responsibility that Donne allows to the common reader of Scripture. We may also observe his very characteristic endeavour to control that individual exegetical freedom – care is required that efforts to understand Scripture do not transgress the bounds of curiosity, or that the individual does not aspire to a knowledge that is inappropriate to their position.

And these themes run right through Donne's sermons, revealing his willingness to allow his congregations the same freedom that he has appropriated to himself. This willingness is based firmly upon his conviction that there is a core of fundamental saving knowledge available to all – visible from the threshold. In this view, Donne was inflecting a long tradition in the understanding of Scripture, a tradition that Hooker traced to Augustine himself:

> Some things are so familier and plaine, that truth from falsehood, and good from evill is most easily discerned in them, even by men of no deepe capacitie. And of that nature, for the most part are things absolutely unto all mens salvation necessarie, eyther to be held or denied, eyther to be done or avoided. For which cause Saint Augustine acknowledgeth that they are not only set downe, but also plainlely set down in Scripture: so that he which heareth or readeth may, without any great difficultie, understand.[146]

Donne stressed this point, in a Lent sermon, preached before the king, taking I Timothy 3:16 for his text. The two parts of the sermon highlighted manifestation and mystery, and in balancing these two, Donne stresses that the Apostle 'recommends to us such Doctrine as is without controversie: and truly there is enough of that to save any soule, that hath not a minde to wrangle it selfe into Hell' (III, 207). It was necessary for the Christian to know this doctrine: 'not to labour to understand the Scriptures, is to slight God' (III, 208). In an image that called into question the exegetical purpose and helpfulness of the Calvinist annotations and of the Geneva translation of Scripture, he remarked that 'it is the Text that saves us; the interlineary glosses, and the marginal notes, and the *varie lectiones*, controversies and perplexities, undo us: the will, the Testament of

[146] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 13.

God, enriches us; the Schedules, the Codicils of men, begger us' (III, 208).[147] Ironically, the matrix of hermeneutical control provided by the radical Protestants behind the Geneva version was impinging upon the status of Scripture in a way potentially as harmful as Roman tradition, or the marginal glosses of the Douay Bible. The ideal for his auditors was 'in ... all Mysteries of your Religion, to rest upon the onley word of God' (III, 212). Scripture alone provided the basis for the Christian life: 'upon the foundations laid by God in the Scriptures, and not upon the super-edifications of men, in traditionall additions must wee build' (X, 109). Towards the end of his life, Donne was still encouraging his parishioners to engage with Scripture, and was steadfast in his belief that 'the Scriptures were not written for a few, nor are to be reserved for a few' (IX, 123-4). This echoed his earlier expression that 'the hand of God hath written so, as a man may runne and read; walk in the duties of his calling here, and attend the salvation of his soul too' (III, 208). Similarly, in his Easter sermon for 1630, Donne, speaking on the visit of the faithful women to the tomb of Christ, stated that 'though all Scriptures be proposed to all, and Gods secret purposes proposed to none, yet the fundementall doctrines of the Christian faith are proposed to all, the weakest of all, These women had heard Christ' (IX, 212). Later, Donne exulted that saints of all abilities were able to benefit from reading Scripture:

> Begin a *Lambe*, and thou will become a *Lion*; Reade the Scriptures modestly, humbly, and thou shalt understand them strongly, powerfully; for hence is it that Saint *Chrysostome*, more than once, and Saint *Gregory* after him, meet in that expression, That the Scriptures are a Sea, in which a *Lambe* may wade, and an *Elephant* may swimme (IX, 124).

This quotation clearly illustrates Donne's belief that the Scriptures are able to accommodate all abilities and capacities. But it also makes another point. Men and women of all abilities ought to be immersing themselves in Scripture : there is no excuse for simply standing on the shore.

It is noteworthy that, in this extract, as in the *Essayes*, Donne emphasises the need for a correct attitude in the reader of Scripture. Modesty and humility remain the *sine qua non* of reliable interpretation. This renunciation of an inappropriate curiosity is a theme that runs throughout Donne's work. So it is that 'high flying men' who are 'not content with the revealed

[147] Donne was echoing royal policy, for the instructions to the translators of the 1611 King James Version, as reported to the Synod of Dort, clearly stated that 'no notes were to be placed in the margin, but only parallel passages to be noted.' Pollard, ed., *Records of the English Bible*, 339.

word of God, but want to pry into that which is not revealed' (III, 330) earn a rebuke. Their motive is wrong: like those that Donne criticises in a later sermon, they desire knowledge 'only that [they] may know, or be known by others to know; he who makes not the end of his knowledge the glory of God' (IV, 142). And the source of this curiosity is an intellectual conceit that Donne finds most distasteful:

> To stay within the limits of a profession, within the limits of precedents, within the limits of time, is to over-active men contemptible; nothing is wisdome, till it be exalted to a Craft, and got above other men. And so it is, with some, with many, in Doctrinall things too. To rest in Positive Divinity, and Articles confessed by all Churches, To be content with Salvation at last, and raise no estimation, no emulation, no opinion of singularity by the way, only to edifie an Auditory, and not to amaze them, onely to bring them to an assent, and to a practice, and not to an admiration, This is but home-spun Divinity, but Country-learning, but Catechisticall doctrine. Let me know (say these high-flying men) what God meant to doe with man, before ever God meant to make man: I care not for that Law that *Moses* hath written; That every man can read; That he might have received from God, in one day; Let me know the Cabal, that which passed betweene God and Him, in all the rest of forty dayes (III, 330).

Donne's pastoral priorities emerge very clearly in this extract – the knowledge sought by these men has no value for edification. Pride, and not piety, is served by this approach. Nor is this the worst motive that Donne can imagine. He also expresses his concern that these overly curious engagements with Scripture may be used as a device to excuse the ignoring of the plain truth of God's word:

> If thou give thy curiosity the liberty to ask How the holy Ghost proceeded, ... The end of thy enquiring will not be, that thou mightest finde any thing to establish thy beliefe, but to finde something that might excuse thine unbeliefe; All thy curious questions are not in hope that the weaknesse of the answer may justifie thy infidelity (VI, 128).

Very clearly, such a reading is a gross misuse of the individual's freedom to engage with the text of Holy Writ. Even more seriously, such readings threaten the communal character of the Church that Donne prizes so highly. So it is that he enjoins his congregation 'in such things as are

problematicall, if thou lovest the peace of Sion, be not too inquisitive to know, nor to vehement, when thou thinkest thou doest know it' (II, 207).

In opposition to this inappropriate engagement with Scripture, Donne outlines the ideal approach to Scripture, an approach in which humility and sincerity of purpose predominate:

> For we are all admitted and welcomed into the acquaintance of the Scriptures, upon such conditions as travellers are into other Countries: if we come as praisers and admirers of their Commodities and Government, not as spies into the mysteries of their State, nor searchers nor calumniators of their weakness (V, 239).

Moreover, in the Christmas Day sermon conjecturally assigned to 1629, Donne links humility with holiness, and stresses the necessity of both if the reading of Scripture is to accomplish anything:

> Humiliation is the beginning of sanctification; and as without this, without holinesse, no man shall see God, though he pore whole nights upon the Bible; so without that, without humility, no man shall hear God speake to his soule, though hee heare three two-hour sermons every day (IX, 153).

It is, for Donne, a part of the character of the Scriptures that they are responsive to the motive of those who search them, and particularly, that they will always afford enlightenment to the earnest searcher after truth. This duality in the nature of Scripture – at once transparent and opaque, difficult and easy – is at the heart of his meditation upon them in an early sermon on Matthew 4:18-20, where the preacher-poet, expounding Christ's promise to make Simon Peter and Andrew 'fishers of men', makes a telling use of the image of the net:

> A net is *Res nodosa*, a knotty thing; and so is the Scripture, full of knots, of scruple, and perplexity, and anxiety, and vexation, if thou wilt goe about to entangle thy selfe in those things, which appertaine not to thy salvation; but knots of a fast union, and inseparable alliance of thy soul to God, and to the fellowship of his Saints, if thou take the Scriptures as they were intended for thee, that is if thou beest content to rest in those places, which are cleare, and evident in things necessary. A net is a large thing, past thy fadoming, if thou cast it from thee, but if thou draw it to thee, it will lie upon thine arme. The Scriptures will be out of thy reach, and out of thy use, if thou cast and scatter them upon Reason, upon Philosophy, upon Morality, to try how the Scriptures will fit all them, and believe them but so far as they agree with thy reason; But draw the Scripture to thine own heart, and to thine own actions, and thou shalt finde it made for that; all the

> promises of the old Testament made, and all accomplished in the new Testament, for the salvation of thy soul hereafter, and for thy consolation in the present application of them (II, 308).

Scriptures, then, abound in the sort of truth that it is necessary to know, and supply every need for that measure of truth.

In addition to this central importance of appropriate motive, Donne also emphasises the method best suited to the individual engagement with Scripture, a method that stresses the search for practical and applicable truth, rather than a seeking to know facts. This priority, once again, confirms Donne's status as a pastor, rather than a philologist, and queries the value of knowledge gleaned for knowledge's sake:

> I am commanded *scrutari Scripturas, to search the scriptures;* now, that is not to be able to *repeat* any history of the Bible without booke, it is not to *ruffle* a Bible, and upon any word to turne to the Chapter, and to the verse; but this is *exquisite scrudatio,* the true searching of the Scriptures, to finde all the *histories* to be *examples* to me, all the *prophecies* to induce a Saviour for *me*, all the *Gospell* to apply Christ Jesus to *me*. ... This is *Scrutari Scripturas, to search the Scriptures*, not as though thou wouldest make a *concordance*, but an *application;* as thou wouldest search a *wardrobe*, not to make an *Inventory* of it, but to finde in it something fit for thy wearing (III, 367).

In spite of Donne's insistence on the simplicity of the Scriptures when approached and used correctly, he still acknowledges – indeed, he could scarcely deny – that not all Scripture is easy to understand. He admits this, in a Trinity Sunday sermon preached in St. Dunstan's in 1627. He carefully couched this admission to maintain the revelatory function of Scripture, and, by virtue of a rather ingenious piece of exposition, gave it a characteristically pastoral twist:

> [T]he Apostle sayes, *Whatsoever things are written afore time, are written for our learning;* But yet, not so for our learning, as that we should think always to learne, or always to have a cleare understanding of all that is written; for it is added there, *That we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope;* Which may well admit this Exposition, that those things which we understand not yet, we may hope that we shall, and we must have patience till we doe. For there may be many places in Scripture, (especially in Propheticall Scripture) which, perchance, the Church of God her selfe, shall not understand, till those Prophecies be fulfilled, and accomplished (VIII, 39).

He adopted a rather similar strategy in a sermon preached in 1622, remarking that 'It is true, in some places [the Scriptures] are dark; purposely left so by the Holy Ghost ... lest we should think we had done when we had read them once' (IV, 220). This explanation for the obscurity of Scripture is, as Dennis Quinn has pointed out 'a venerable commonplace, traceable to Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and repeated by Christians down to and beyond Donne's time.'[148] A similar dynamic is at work, as Quinn also suggests, in Expostulation XIX of Donne's *Devotions*, where Donne places God's 'reserved' expressions alongside his plain and direct speech, and insists that there is a place for both (*D*, 99-103).

Prophetic scriptures clearly top Donne's list of the difficult passages of God's word. In his Christmas Day sermon for 1628, he unpacked the chief difficulties in contemporary prophetic understanding in a daunting list of 'clouds in the eyes, and riddles in the understanding of men' (VIII, 302). The ordinary Christian should not, however, be concerned about this range of imponderables, for in

> such questions as these, Christ enwraps not onely his Apostles, but himselfe in a cloud; for that cloud which he casts upon them ... It belongs not to you, to know times and seasons, he spreads upon himselfe also ... It belongs not to me, not to me, as the Son of man, to know when the day of Judgment shall be (VIII, 302).

Clearly, if neither Christ nor his apostles needs to know this information, it can scarcely be regarded as essential for the generality of Christians. In any case, as Donne pointed out in the fifth of his Prebend sermons a year earlier,

> In a holy, and devout, and modest ignorance of those things which God hath not revealed to us, we are better settled, and supported by a better Pillar, then in an over-curious, and impertinent inquisition of things reserved to God himselfe (VIII, 121).

As we have seen, then, Donne's views on the interpretation of Scripture are highly nuanced, and elude any attempt at polarised definition. The interplay of individual and church is lively, and pastorally essential. Throughout we have seen that pastoral priorities drove Donne's view of Scripture, and determining the importance of the individual understanding of the way of salvation. Before leaving this subject, it will be helpful to look at those passages where Donne

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[148] Dennis B. Quinn, 'Donne and the Wane of Wonder', *ELH* 36 no. 4 (1969):626-47, 630.

speaks explicitly of reading Scripture at home, for here those factors that we have already observed at work come into play in a very explicit way. It is interesting to note that these passages are clustered towards the end of Donne's preaching career. This is highly significant in light of the *avant-garde* conformist trend, remarked by Peter McCullough, towards 'increasing attempts to restrict the rights of Scriptural interpretation to the clerisy.'[149] It is true that the earlier discussions considered below occur before this tendency had fully developed. Nonetheless, Donne's persistence in it indicates his continuing commitment to facilitating the individual's engagement with Scripture.

Possibly the earliest of these references to the private reading of Scripture is found in a sermon conjecturally assigned, by Potter and Simpson, to 1623. In this extract, Donne stresses the importance of the Church as the means of the application of Scripture to the individual life in terms very consonant with those that we have already seen:

> You believe, because the great Angel Christ Jesus, hath left his history, his action, and passion written for you; and that is historical faith. But yet salvation is nearer to you, in having all this applied to you, by them, who are like you, men, and there, where you know how to fetch it, the Church; That as you believe by reading the Gospels at home, that Christ died for the world, So you may believe, by hearing here, that he dyed for you (X, 50).[150]

Curiously enough, it is in the communal context of the Church that the individual is reached by this awareness of the personal relevance of Christ's saving work. Whilst this may seem to border on the paradoxical, it is, in fact, all of a piece with Donne's views on the importance of the word preached.

The second reference, in point of time, was made in a sermon preached in St Paul's in 1624/5. In this brief, almost glancing, reference, Donne does seem to be attempting the control of individual exposition. Speaking of the conversion of Saul, Donne stated:

> First then, what he was at that time, the Holy Ghost gives evidence enough against him, and he gives enough against himselfe. Of that which the Holy Ghost gives,

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[149] McCullough, 'Donne as Preacher at Court: Precarious 'Inthronization'', 201.

[150] It is interesting that Donne uses Tyndale's concept of a historical faith – belief in the facts of the life of Christ – that must be distinguished from the feeling faith that resulted from the individual appropriation of the salvation that resulted from these facts. See William Tyndale, *The Work of William Tyndale*, ed. G.E. Duffield (Appleford: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1964), 368-80.

> you may see a great many heavy pieces, a great many applicable circumstances, if any time, at home, you do but paraphrase, and spread to yourselves the former part of this Chapter, to this text. Take a little preparation from me (VI, 206).

Donne here is encouraging the private reading of the verses, encouraging his congregation to unpack the truth of the passage in a way that the exigencies of the sermon will not permit. However, rather than simply sending them off with Bible in hand, Donne is interested in giving them some preparation. He is adumbrating his guidelines for the most pastorally profitable understanding of the passage. It is telling that, even when dealing with a very straightforward piece of Biblical narrative, Donne desires to 'prepare' his congregation.

In later sermons, Donne uses another strategy to safeguard the importance of the Church's role. In these extracts, teaching is seen as originating in the Church, and then, being remembered by the individual at home, as he re-reads the Scriptures that have previously been brought to his notice. So, in 1627, he told his congregation:

> The Holy Ghost shall teach you *all things*, and bring *all things* to your remembrance: And here is the Latitude, the Totality, the Integrality of the meanes of salvation; you shall have Scriptures delivered to you, by them the Holy Ghost shall teach you all things; and then you shall be remembered of all, by the explication and application of those Scriptures, at Church, where lies the principall operation of the Holy Ghost. ... But when men have a Christian liberty afforded to them to read the Scriptures at home, and then are remembred of those things at Church, and there taught to use that liberty modestly, to establish their faith upon places of Scripture that are plain, and to suspend their judgement upon obscurer places, till they may, by due meanes, preaching or conference, receive farther satisfaction therein, from them, who are therteunto authorized by God in his Church (VII, 401).

Quite evidently, this extract serves as a neat summary of those facets of Donne's views on interpretative authority that have already occupied us. In addition it is valuable to note the wider context of this extract – this sermon constitutes an attack on the Roman Church for denying the Scriptures to the lay-man, and for failing to expound them by means of preaching. Thus, the context of these remarks does depict the dialogue between church exposition and private exegesis as a vital 'Christian liberty.' Joshua Scodel, in his discussion of Donne's depiction of a truly desirable mean, expresses the bivalency of this sermon, arguing, on the one

hand that, in the sermon as a whole, Donne 'applies the language of Pyrrhonist scepticism, in which he had articulated the individual's religious enquiry in 'Satire III,' to urge the individual's deference to authority,' and on the other that it is notable in a sermon, addressed to Charles I, that Donne emphasises 'both the layman's reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word.'[151] The fact that Donne was reprimanded for the sermon by Charles and Laud, while doubtless partially connected with Donne's apparent criticism of the Catholicism of Charles' wife Henrietta Maria, indicates the delicate context in which Donne choose to deal with these issues.[152]

Similarly, in 1628, Donne is balancing the roles of public and private reading, although here, the private setting is rather the family-circle than a truly individual engagement with Scripture. Again, the order is explicit: learn at Church, meditate at home.

> The most powerful meanes is the Scripture; But the Scripture in the Church. Not that we are discouraged from reading the Scripture at home: God forbid we should think any Christian family to be out of the Church. At home, the holy Ghost is with thee in the reading of the Scriptures; But there he is with thee as a Remembrancer, (*The Holy Ghost shall bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you*, saies our Saviour) Here in the church, he is with thee, as a Doctor to teach thee; First learne at Church and then meditate at home, Receive the seed by hearing the Scriptures interpreted here, and water it by returning to those places at home (VIII, 227).

Only once does Donne appear to invert this order of public and private reading, and the reference then is so slight as to inculcate less certainty regarding his intentions:

> *God hath spoken once*, in his Scriptures, *and wee have heard him twice*, at *home*, in our owne readings, and againe and againe *here*, in his *Ordinances* (X, 109).

Certainly, Donne does seem, in this quotation, to suggest that the first engagement with Scripture takes place at home, and that the encounter in Church is secondary. However, it would be difficult to build too much on this with any degree of confidence. Furthermore, the fact that the sermon is undated hampers us in making very much of it.

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[151] Scodel, 'Religious Politics of the Mean', 63.

[152] For a discussion of this censorship of Donne see Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early-Modern England* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 110-1 and, on Donne's wider treatment of sensitive issues see Lunderberg, 'John Donne's Strategies for Discreet Preaching',.

These, then, were Donne's views on the interpretation of Scripture by the private individual. These views implicitly privileged engagement with the Bible by ordained ministers, by those with a warrant from the Church to search. Donne saw no difficulty with this; there were factors unique to the position of the minister that demanded a more sophisticated understanding of Scripture. These factors were both pastoral and controversial, and Donne outlined them very clearly:

> In the Wildernesse, every man had one and the same measure of Manna; The same Gomer went through all; for Manna was a Meat, that would melt in their mouths, and of easie digestion. But then for their Quailes, birds of a higher flight, meat of a stronger digestion, it is not said, that every man had an equall number: some might have more, some lesse, and yet all their fulnesse. Catechisticall divinity, and instructions in fundamentall things, is our Manna; Every man is bound to take in his Gomer, his explicite knowledge of Articles absolutely necessary to salvation; ... But then for our Quails, birds of higher pitch, meat of a stronger digestion, which is the knowledge how to rectifie every straying conscience, how to extricate every entangled, and scrupulous, and perplexed soule, in all emergant doubts, how to defend our Church, and our Religion, from all the mines, and all the batteries of our Adversaries, and to deliver her from all imputations of Heresie, and schisme, which they impute to us, this knowledge is not necessary in all; In many cases a Master of servants, and a Father of children is bound to know more, than those children and servants, and the Pastor of the parish more than parishioners: They may have their fulnesse, though he have more, but he hath not his, except he be able to give them satisfaction (V, 226-7).

The conscientious minister has to shoulder, *ex officio*, a heavier burden of interpretative responsibility, both to meet the challenge of religious controversy, and to minister to the spiritual needs of his flock. And these are precisely those features that predominate in Donne's sermons. His account of the particular responsibility of the minister of the Church echoes that expressed by Hooker. Having stated, as we have already noted, that he viewed doctrine essential for salvation as easily apprehended, Hooker goes on to delimit the special role of the minister:

> Other things also there are belonging ... unto the offices of the Christian men: which, because they are more obscure, more intricate and hard to be judged of, therefore God hath appointed some to spende their whole time principally in the

> studie of things divine, to the end that in these more doubtfull cases their understanding might be a light to direct others.[153]

The trope of Scripture as food, and the requirement that Donne feed his flock with appropriate food also appears in an early sermon, preached to Donne's first congregation, at Lincoln's Inn:

> I acknowledge that my spirituall appetite carries me still, upon the Psalmes of David, for a first course, for the Scriptures of the old Testament, and upon the Epistles of Saint Paul for the New: and my meditations even for these publike exercises to Gods Church, returne oftenest to these two. For, as a hearty entertainer offers to others, the meat which he loves best himself, so doe I oftenest present to Gods people, in these Congregations, the meditations which I feed upon, in those two Scriptures (II, 49).

In this extract, Donne stresses the pastoral motive that causes him to read and to study his Bible, and his own sense of his responsibility to provide food for his flock. It is important that we pay sufficient attention to this pastoral priority in Donne's engagement with Scripture.

X-Conclusion

At this point, then, we are in a position to summarise these most important features of John Donne's understanding of the authority of Scripture in a reformed church. Of primary importance is the position given to Scripture in Donne's epistemological consciousness. The written word of God has an otherness peculiar to itself – human cultural production, ecclesiastical tradition, or even the creatorial revelation of God partake of none of the authority uniquely ascribed to Scripture. This basic assumption gave a new currency to questions of canon for Donne, as for other Reformation theologians. This issue consistently elided any straightforward resolution, and focuses some of the chief anxieties of the Reformation. Donne's own resolution of the issue was, as we have seen, idiosyncratic, centralising the importance of reason, as enlightened by the humanist project, and by the return *ad fontes*. This approach, on the part of Donne, is a noticeably modern one, and yet may well be one of the more significant traces of the Roman Catholicism in which he was raised. In any event, Donne's emphasis on the role of reason in the resolution of this most fundamental of dilemmas is a serious challenge to accounts

[153] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 13.

of his thought that give too generous an account of the scepticism that undoubtedly does feature in his work.

Equally pertinent to the wider debates of the Reformation were the tensions informing the implementation of *sola scriptura*. We have noted the importance attached to the continuing role of the church in interpreting and applying Scripture, and in policing those interpretations that were considered schismatic in tendency. Donne's preaching provides us with a dramatic out-playing of these factors. From the consideration of Donne's balancing of the individual and corporate understanding of Scripture arises the inescapable realisation of the innate independence and the basic Protestantism of Donne's thought. This is, in many ways, the most attractive element in Donne's epistemology – his insistence that the mind must be engaged, the intellect enlightened. This is basic to his insistence that the authority of Scripture is related both to its exposition in Church and the private consideration of it at home. Interpretation of Scripture by the Church is not, for Donne, a totalising narrative that translates Scripture away from the common man. Balancing this is the lively pastoral imperative displayed in the sermons. Donne values the function of the Church as the validating authority of teaching, as that which underwrites the communal nature of the doctrine of the Reformed Church of England. Similarly, he is anxious that every engagement with Scripture, private or public, be the product of right motives: not, in particular, actuated by an inappropriate curiosity or by exegetical hubris.

And, this pastoral priority can, as we have seen, frequently overwhelm Donne's concern for an accurate understanding of the text – effective exhortation has, at times, a higher priority than accurate exegesis. Against this, however, should be placed the evidence that Donne sought, as far as in him lay, to apply the developments in philology, and in cultural understanding to underpin the accuracy of his interpretation. The unique authority given to Scripture does demand that every effort be made to ensure that its injunctions be properly understood. The literal content of the text has a new importance, as Donne, to a considerable degree, frees himself from the hegemony of the allegorical mode of Scriptural interpretation and participates in the re-valuation of the literal sense of Scripture that had permeated the Reformation.

Donne's engagement with these issues is fascinating generally as well as personally, because so many of the issues that occupy him are the issues of the Reformation. Donne preaches at the cusp new developments in the understanding of the authority of Scripture. We can be sure that had his career ended just a few decades later than it did, Donne's sermons would respond to a range of issues that were, in some key aspects, radically divorced from those that do feature. It is surely fortunate, then, that historical serendipity has permitted us to consider the implications that the Reformation had for the understanding of the authority of Scripture as mediated by a man who thought deeply and carefully about these issues, and who expressed his understanding of them in his own uniquely memorable and enduringly powerful prose.

CHAPTER 2

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

Preaching, as was his custom, on the feast of the conversion of St. Paul, in 1629, Donne took occasion from Paul's statement of his credentials as a Pharisee to make a statement that must have succeeded in arresting the attention of his auditors:

> Beloved, there are some things in which all Religions agree; The worship of God, The holinesse of life; And therefore, if when I study this holinesse of life, and fast, and pray, and submit my selfe to discreet, and medicinall mortifications, for the subduing of my body, any man will say, this is Papisticall, Papists doe this, it is a blessed Protestation, and no man is the lesse a Protestant, nor the worse a Protestant for making it, Men and brethren, I am a Papist, that is, I will fast and pray as much as any Papist, and enable my selfe for the service of my God, as seriously, as sedulously, as laboriously as any Papist. So, if when I startle and am affected at a blasphemous oath, as at a wound upon my Saviour, if when I avoid the conversation of those men, that prophane the Lords day, any other will say to me, This is puritanicall, puritans do this, It is a blessed Protestation, and no man is the lesse a Protestant, nor the worse a Protestant for making it, Men and Brethren, I am

> a Puritan, that is I wil endeavour to be pure, as my Father in heaven is pure, as far as any Puritan (IX, 166).

This extract is striking, not only for its rhetorical effectiveness, but for Donne's rejection of any simplistic and essentialist accounts of religious affiliation.[1] And Donne's suspicion of labels is not isolated to this extract. Earlier in his life, according to Walton, Donne had been reluctant to betroth himself to any 'religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian.'[2] This statement comes to us with the uncertainty that we must ascribe to all of Walton's assertions, but it certainly accords closely with Donne's subsequent expression, in January of 1627, of the conviction that

> If we will goe farther then to be Christians, and those doctrines, which the whole Christian Church hath ever believed, if we will be of *Cephas*, and of *Apollos*, if we will call ourselves, or endanger, and give occasion to others, to call us from the Names of men, Papists, or Lutherans, or Calvinists, we depart from the true glory and serenity, from the lustre and splendour of this Sunne (VII, 310).

Donne's objection to any sort of sectarian and essentialist labelling of other Christians continued unabated to the end of his career – in one of the sermons from his undated sequence of the Penitential Psalms, Donne criticised hasty conclusions about ecclesiastical affiliation based on behaviour or significantly on the use of Laudian terminology:

> That man is affected when he hears a blasphemous oath, and when he lookes upon the generall liberty of sinning; therefore he is a Puritan; That man loves the ancient formes, and Doctrines, and Disciplines of the Church, and retaines, and delights in the reverend names of Priest and Altar, and Sacrifice, therefore he is a Papist, are hastie conclusions in Church affaires (IX, 216).

It is important that we observe the consistency of the views expressed above, spanning Donne's career. Stuart ecclesiology was a hotly contested nexus of politics and religion, and Donne frequently preached in a very loaded political context. As such, it is only to be expected that there will be variations of emphasis in Donne's treatment of the authority of the Church. What is remarkable, however, is the extent to which the core principles of his ecclesiology remained constant throughout his career. This ecclesiology was shaped by a consistent irenicism, by a

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[1] See, for a valuable discussion of the use of these labels in Stuart religious writing Thomas H. Clancy, 'Papist - Protestant - Puritan: English Religious Taxonomy 1565-1665', *Recusant History* 13 no. 4 (1976):227-253,.
[2] Walton, *Lives*, 32.

refusal on Donne's part to see the church as an instrument of division, by his insistence that it was possible, rather, to define a limited and essential ecclesiology that would unite, and not further divide, Christendom. Thus, these extracts are paradigmatic of Donne's understanding of ecclesiastical authority, emphasising not only his enduring lack of ease with the use of labels other than Christian, but his continuing insistence on the surpassing importance of the common and irreducible core of Christian religion. If nothing else, it should make us very wary of attempts to pin Donne to any one ecclesiastical position.

This is underscored for us when we contrast Donne's words with another contemporary text. This document, from the hand of William Laud, in 1625 is a list cataloguing the bishops of the English church, neatly labelled with 'P', for Puritan, and 'O', for orthodox.[3] Laud felt able, for his own political purposes, neatly to catalogue his colleagues, without ambiguity or ambivalence. Such certainty has been denied to historians of the period, and the primary historiographical debate has centred on the sort of division that Laud made. In this context, Donne's remarks serve not only as a warning against doing violence to his own conception of his position on the spectrum of Jacobean and Caroline Christendom, but also as a salutary reminder of the limited utility of labelling individuals, and the danger of over-simplification attendant upon such labelling. Thus, while it is important that we consider the heated historiographical debates about religious belief and practice in the period of Donne's ministry, we will refrain from doing so simply in order to determine the best pigeonhole to accommodate his views of ecclesiastical authority, or to allocate them a conveniently totalising label. Rather, we will endeavour to examine the key features of Donne's own ecclesiology, in its idiosyncrasies and its conformities, and will consequently attempt to relate his views to contemporary developments and viewpoints of particular relevance. In doing so, we will discover that this ecclesiology was consistent, but not static, and that it is, in its individuality, expressive of the key stresses of Donne's thought.

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[3] W. Scott and J. Bliss, eds., *The Works of the most Reverend Father in God, William Laud, D.D.*, 7 vols. (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1847-60), III, 159. It is only since writing this section that I discovered the very similar use to which Jeanne Shami puts this document in Shami, 'Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion in Donne's Sermons'. Shami's essay provides a very valuable exposition of some of the points briefly mentioned here, and her conclusions concord with my own in a most gratifying manner. See also Shami, 'Squint-eyed, Left-handed, Half-deaf: *Imperfect Senses* and John Donne's Interpretative Middle Way'.

While stressing this individuality, we will also examine the roots of Donne's ecclesiology in some of the most important conceptualisations of the Church to have developed during the Reformation, and in the new emphasis on some of these ideas in the work of Richard Hooker. We have already noted the relevance of Hooker to Donne's understanding of natural religion; this chapter will discuss the very considerable influence of Hooker on Donne's ecclesiology. Hooker's influence permeates Donne's work and, as we shall see, is very clearly expressed in the early poem Satyre III. We consider this important poem as evidence of the fundamental influence of Hooker on Donne around the time of his conversion. In particular, our reading of the poem indicates the importance of Hooker's methodology to Donne's understanding of the nature of the Church and of his place within it. We will then go on to examine Donne's defence of the English Church, as a body both Catholic and Reformed. We will consider the latitude of Donne's definition of acceptable ecclesiology, his willingness to accommodate a great deal of variety in the manifestation of the visible Church, and the basis on which he exhorts his congregations to function faithfully within the communion of the Church of England. Finally, we will examine Donne's 'essentialist ecumenism' – his stripped down definition of orthodox Christianity designed peacefully to unite European Christians in the inclusive confines of Christ's true Church, to reach, particularly, out to the wide range of Christians across the spectrum of English Protestantism.

I-Theorising the Reformed Church

This English ecclesiological spectrum was broad and colourful. The central achievement of the revisionist history of recent decades has been the problematisation of simplistic binaries as the picture of English early modern religious history has become vastly more complicated.[4]

[4] For helpful surveys of developments in the historiography of the Reformation see Christopher Haigh, 'The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation', in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Fincham, 'Introduction' Nicholas Tyacke, 'Anglican Attitudes: Some Recent Writings on English Religious History, from the Reformation to the Civil War', *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996):139-67, and Ethan H. Shagan, 'English Catholic History in Context', in *Catholics and the 'protestant nation' : religious politics and identity in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). Peter Lake's summary of the effects of recent historiography is worthy of quotation: 'Now ... we had a situation that called the whole notion of mainstream and periphery into question; to appropriate and adapt Kevin Sharpe's phrase, not so much a common wealth as a polyphony, indeed at times of crisis, a veritable cacophony, of meanings, as a number of different groups and factions (puritans both radical and particularly moderate, evangelical Calvinist conformists, Whitgiftian conformists, avant-garde conformists, Laudians and proto-Laudians, various sorts of church papist and Catholic loyalist to name a few) manoeuvred within and in terms of the basic legal and institutional, the political, textual and

This addition of nuance and the concomitant increase of complexity is especially relevant to Donne, whose ministry occurs at the nexus between the debates about the nature of the wider Reformation project and the dynamics of the emergence of Laudian churchmanship. Both of these fundamental changes in the nature of the English Church did involve opposing extremes, yet we must be careful of the impulse to see them simply in binary terms. There is, perhaps, an especial danger of this in light of the deliberately polarised account of events given by controversialists involved in contemporary debates, whose purpose was rather effective polemic than accurate history. Peter Lake, discussing the Admonition Controversy, and arguing that Cartwright and Whitgift shared more ground than has been usually recognised, gave an apposite and typically acute account of the tendency

> of nearly all sixteenth-century religious polemicists to argue in terms of inversion and binary oppositions. Such exchanges employed a relatively limited number of ideal types or models of heterodoxy and unsoundness, among which, for respectable Protestants, both popery and Anabaptism held pride of place.[5]

The difficulty is, of course, that, while extremes did exist, and were often vigorously defended, most people were situated somewhere in the middle, deviating perhaps towards one end of the spectrum or the other, but still possessing a complicated and even contradictory range of views. It is vital, therefore, that we view the history of the Reformation, and of the Stuart Church, as continua.[6] This is especially important when we come to look at characters like Donne who

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ideological structures provided by the national Church, structures that, of course, they all hoped (to different extents) to change and even, in some cases and at some times, to transform in order to gloss and claim that Church as their own. In so doing the various parties very often tried to achieve their ends by establishing some notion of the mainstream.' There is an entirely appropriate breathlessness to this extract that does as much as anything to establish the rich complexity of this issue. While we are about it, we would also do well to note Lake's warning that 'all this makes it doubly critical that historians trying to understand these interactions should adopt an attitude of critical distance, a more or less permanently suspended judgement about the "veracity" of the various renditions of the core and the periphery deployed by contemporaries.' Peter Lake, 'Introduction: Puritanism, Arminianism and Nicholas Tyacke', in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke*, ed. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 12

[5] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* , 24. Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit*, 15-17 makes a similar point. For exceptionally helpful discussions of the dangers of simplistic binaries, and of other perils to which Reformation historiography is heir see Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, 'Introduction', in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000)and Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 1-16. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* is of particular interest, because of its avoidance of binary oppositions. Peter Lake, 'Anti-popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', in *Conflict in early Stuart England : studies in religion and politics 1603-1642*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London: Longman, 1989) and Peter Lake, 'Anti-Puritanism: The Structure of a Prejudice', in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke*, ed. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006) provide valuable insights on the process by which these two opposing poles were constructed.

[6] Kenneth Fincham, *The Early Stuart church, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993) provides some very helpful overviews of the range of positions available to Stuart ecclesiastics. See, in particular, Fincham's 'Introduction' (1-22)

consciously sought the middle ground on an array of issues, and who, very often, held this middle ground less by eschewing elements from the extremes of the range of available belief than by accommodating elements from both ends of the continuum.[7] It is entirely possible for us to engage, as does Daniel Doerksen, in an attempt to pin Donne to one particular strand of the English Church.[8] While there is little doubt that Doerksen is correct in his ultimate conclusion that Donne was a conformist, rather than a Laudian, this insight scarcely provides us with a light on his views in all their complexity – when the study concludes, we do not feel we know Donne much better, or understand him much more fully. Simply put, Doerkesen's treatment locates him in the context of a debate in which Donne was not terribly interested.

Debora Shuger, in her consideration of Richard Hooker and his construction of the Christian community in the *Lawes*, outlines an alternative way of understanding Reformation history. She focuses less on the attempt to find a totalising meta-narrative, and concentrates instead on the individual case, allowing for the fact that these people did not conceptualise themselves in the catagories of modern historiography, and certainly were at no pains to correspond directly with them. Shuger's point is made in the context of political history, but it applies with equal force to other historical paradigms:

> [The] tendency to resolve Tudor/Stuart religion into the dialectic of popular resistance and government repression renders invisible what it purports to illuminate: the role played by religion in early modern state formation. That the Crown attempted to reinforce political unification by imposing religious uniformity is evident. It is equally evident that this project met with opposition. The hagiographies, autobiographies, parish records, devotional manuals, theological polemics, and pastoral handbooks written between the Middle Ages and the restoration document the ensuing conflicts. But they primarily document something else: the proliferation of local experiments in sacred community, experiments sometimes at odds with the laws of ecclesiastical polity, sometimes

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for a very useful taxonomy of positions within the English Church, and for the definition of conformity used in this chapter. However, Fincham's consideration of the complexities of defining conformity in the period in Kenneth Fincham, 'Clerical Conformity from Whitgift to Laud', in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), ought also to be kept in mind.

[7] Scodel, 'Religious Politics of the Mean' provides an outstanding and very valuable discussion of Donne's conception of the mean, and its importance to his thought.

[8] Doerksen, *Conforming to the word : Herbert, Donne, and the English church before Laud* . The usefulness of Doerksen's work for students of Donne is also limited by his concentration on Herbert – his treatment of Donne appears almost an afterthought.

> not. Book V of Hooker's *Lawes* is itself one such experiment, as is the imagined community of his Presbyterian antagonists.[9]

Clearly there is a role for historical meta-narrative, and efforts to identify and understand the grand plan of Reformation history. For the purposes of this study, however, we stand with Shuger on the importance of the individual improvisation, and the imperative need to understand the views of Donne in all of their complexity. We must enjoy, as well as seek to understand, the antinomianism of the individual.[10]

None of this emphasis on the importance of the individual is by the way of suggesting that Donne was some sort of ecclesiological maverick. Indeed, it is notable that Donne is greatly influenced by tradition. Equally notable is the nature of this tradition, for, in spite of his often-discussed Catholicism, his late and slow conversion to the English Church, his pride in the illustrious recusant history of his family, and the impressions made upon him by persons of holy life in his youth, Donne has little time for Roman ecclesiology.[11] Nor is this distaste difficult to account for. One of the most enduring epistemological monoliths of Donne's thought was his commitment to the rights of the monarch.[12] Repeatedly, his complaint against Rome is that it compromises regal authority, and his most bitter invective, directed against the Jesuits is inspired as much by political as religious ideology and especially by the Jesuitical privileging of papal above regal authority. Additionally, Rome's detailed ecclesiology, and its increased precisianism as a result of the Counter-Reformation generally and the Council of Trent more particularly, were anathema to Donne. We shall see that an insistence on doctrinal and ceremonial accommodation was a central *leitmotiv* in Donne's thought, and Rome's response to the Reformation ran counter to this impulse.

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[9] Shuger, 'The Imagined Community of Hooker's *Lawes*', 325-7

[10] Powerful vindications of the illuminative value of a careful study of idiosyncratic individuals are furnished, *inter alia* by Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583: The Struggle for a Reformed Church* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), Peter G. Lake, 'Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson', *The Journal of British Studies* 27 no. 2 (1988):81-116, Susan Holland, 'Archbishop Abbot and the Problem of "Puritanism"', *The Historical Journal* 37 no. 1 (1994):23-43, Gary Jenkins, *John Jewel and the English National Church: the dilemmas of an Erastian reformer* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), Peter Lake, 'Matthew Hutton - A Puritan Bishop?' *History* 44 (1979):182-204, and MacCulloch, *Cranmer*

[11] See Jeanne Shami, 'Anti-Catholicism in the Sermons of John Donne', in *The English Sermon Revised - Religion, Literature and History 1600-1750*, ed. Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter E. McCullough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) for a survey of Donne's polemical treatment of this topic.

[12] The precise contours of this commitment have been the subject of some debate. See, for differing views of Donne's absolutism, Norbrook, 'Donne's Politics', Nicholls, 'Divine Analogy: The Theological Politics of John Donne', Nicholls, 'The Political theology of John Donne', Patterson, 'John Donne, kingsman?', Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 159-217and Shami, 'Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation'.

Such a career-spanning consistency as we shall uncover in this study is remarkable. In light of Donne's conversion form Catholicism, it might well be unexpected; in view of his supposed guilt about that 'apostasy' it seems impossible. Nevertheless, the texts that provide us with the only reliable access to Donne's thought support it, and their endorsement must surely outweigh any expectations aroused by psychological extrapolation from Donne's biographical details. And this underlines for us the difficulties and the dangers of approaches which rely on the critic's psychological insights to decode the 'hidden meaning' of texts whose patent implications point in another direction. Psychological criticism is always a risky endeavour, and our inability to account for the motives and actions of our own contemporaries ought to make us very wary of dogmatic statements about the experience of those who occupied a *milieu* so vastly different from our own. This is, perhaps, especially true of conversion. Andrew Petegree opens his very perceptive treatment of the culture of the Reformation by a consideration of the process of conversion that raises pertinent and suggestive questions but provides no certain answers. Their import is rather to remind us how little we know about the dynamics of this process:

> [The] recognition that the process of conversion was an extended and evolving process, brings us up against the first, and very substantial question. Are we right to assume that adherence to the Reformation was a conscious choice for more than a very small number of articulate, educated individuals? Are we guilty of using a single word – conversion – to mask a complex process of psychological adjustment that requires far more careful analysis?[13]

Pettegree goes on to distinguish carefully between the experience of the first generation of the Reformation, for whom 'the religious alteration was one pregnant with consequences', a lonely choice to 'court calamity' and those who subsequently converted:

> Later, as the churches of the Reformation became institutionalized, it became possible to adhere to Protestantism with little real choice, and without any real

[13] Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2. For a wide-ranging study of conversion in this period see Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Questier's reference to Donne (p. 56) is disappointingly slight, but the applicability of much of his material to Donne's experience is patent. Kathleen Lynch's forthcoming work *Truth and Circumstances: Religious Experience in the Seventeenth-Century Anglo Atlantic World* provides a very helpful discussion of Donne's representation of the conversion process.

> mental engagement. Even here, however, there is reason to doubt whether such utter passivity would have been the normative experience.[14]

For Donne, these two situations are imbricated, and the complexities are correspondingly greater, for, if he lived in a society where Protestantism was the normative religious option, he also possessed a family noted for its Catholicism, a brother who was a *de facto* martyr to the cause of Counter-Reformation, Jesuit uncles, and all the while, his mother, staunchly Catholic to her death, telling her beads in the background. Insofar as it is impossible that such complex circumstances could be replicated in our own experience, even the most hubristic of biographical critics would surely benefit from Donne's own insight on his experience.[15]

The difficulty is that Donne speaks very little about his conversion. We have, in fact, little beyond that strangely ham-fisted letter of explanation to his new and unwilling father-in-law, in which Donne goes out of his way to emphasise the slowness of his conversion, and the preface of *Pseudo-martyr*, where Donne presents his careful mental engagement with the teachings of the Roman and Reformed churches as a paragon to his Catholic readers. Conversion, then, was an important experience in Donne's life, but it scarcely seems to have assumed the central and nagging importance that some critics have envisaged – the process, on Donne's own evidence, was painstaking and protracted, but it was also complete and completed. We ought to notice, at this point, that Donne's conversion concerned the choice of a 'local religion', and his conversion did not miraculously expunge every trace of his Catholic upbringing. Certainly, Donne never pretends that this is the case, and in his sermons, he takes spoil of the Egyptians at every opportunity, even as he plays with Roman doctrine and liturgy in his poetry. Conversion involved a change of allegiance, not of being.[16]

The chronology of this change has proved a perpetual problem to Donne's critics. His marriage provides a *terminus ante quem*; there is no obvious *terminus post quem*. Typically, Satyre III, Donne's definitive documentation of the search for true religion, has been seen as representative of his frame of mind towards the beginning of the process of conversion. That would be rather

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[14] Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 3.

[15] Cummings, *Grammar and Grace*, 365-417 provides an outstandingly nuanced and convincing account of Donne's conversion.

[16] For a treatment of the literary dynamics of conversion in an even more complex set of circumstances Mark S. Sweetnam, 'Calvinism, Counter-Reformation and Conversion: Alexander Montgomerie's Religious Poetry', in *Literature and the Scottish Reformations*, ed. Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan (forthcoming).

more helpful, if we were able to date the Satyre with any certainty – dating has tended to rely on assumed biographical parallels, throwing us into an uncomfortable circularity of argument. A key element of the argument of this chapter will be that we can date the Satyre with some certainty to the closing months of the 1590s, and that it embodies not the early stages of Donne's conversion, but rather his appreciation of Hookerian ecclesiology, and thus reveals a conversion that has reached a crucial point of acceptance, even if it is not yet entirely complete. And the issues that Donne raises in the poem were to set the agenda for his ecclesiology were consistently to provide the backbone of Donne's explication of the status and worth of the Reformed Church of England.

We find the roots of Donne's understanding of the authority of the Church in the longer tradition of English conformist thought, most especially its articulation, in the aftermath of the Admonition Controversy, by Whitgift, and later by Hooker. We will be arguing that Hooker's work was especially influential on Donne's thought, but some of the key elements of his ecclesiology can be traced back to some of the central thinkers of the Elizabethan Reformation, and beyond this to the roots of Protestantism. In the writings of these men we find some key concepts of the Church that are essential to our comprehension of Donne's own ecclesiology. In order to understand Donne's view of the authority of the Church, and the detail of his ecclesiology, we must investigate a number of key models of the Church that were central to reformed ecclesiology.

The currency of these concepts of the Church can be traced to the start of the European Reformation. In an English context, however, their key synthesis and popularisation was provided by the seminal writings of the martyrologist John Foxe. Foxe was a figure of considerable importance for the Reformation, and his *Acts and Monuments* was not only a very influential work of Reformation apologetic, but provided, in its methodology, a key paradigm for understanding the Reformation.[17] Foxe's project was centred on addressing the uncomfortable novelty of the Reformation, and he accomplished this by tracing the true Church back to

[17] See Jane Facey, 'John Foxe and the Defence of the English Church', in *Protestantism and the national church in sixteenth century England*, ed. Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (London: Croom Helm, 1987), and, for the nature and extent of Foxe's influence, David Loades, ed., *John Foxe at Home and Abroad* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) and Christopher Highley and John N. King, eds., *John Foxe and his World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), especially Patrick Collinson, 'John Foxe and National Consciousness', 10-34.

apostolic times. This he did, dissenting from the Roman insistence on Apostolic Succession through ordination, by arguing that the true Christian religion was maintained and upheld by a number of heretical, and often underground groups. Far from being the true Church, the Church of Rome had been the oppressor and the persecutor of genuine Christianity. Particularly influential, in terms of Reformation polemic, was Foxe's version of the idea, first expressed by Luther and Bale, and perpetuated by the marginalia of the Geneva Bible, that the Church of Rome was, in fact, nothing less than the apocalyptic Babylon, the engine of the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, and the inveterate enemy of the followers of Christ.[18] In order to support this understanding, Foxe was obliged to introduce an essentially novel conceptualisation of the visible Church.[19]

This concept was fundamental to Foxe's work, and he began his discussion of the teleology of the Church by distinguishing not only between the world and the Church, but also between the visible and invisible Churches:

> The world I call all such as be without or agaynst Christ.... On the other side, the kyngdome of Christ in this world I take to be all them which belong to the fayth of Christ.... The number of whom although it be much smaller then the other, and alwayes lightly is hated & molested of the world, yet it is the number, which the Lord peculiarly doth blesse and prosper, and euer will. And thys number of Christes subiectes is it, whiche we call the visible Church here in earth. Whiche visible Church hauyng in it selfe a difference of. ij. sortes of people, so is it to be deuided in. ij. parts, of whiche the one standeth of such as be of outward

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[18] See Martin Luther, 'The Babylonian Captivity of the Church', in *Luther's Works. Vol. 36, Word and Sacrament II*, ed. Abel Ross Wentz (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 11-126, especially Luther's declaration (p.12) 'I now know for certain that the papacy is the kingdom of Babylon and the power of Nimrod, the mighty hunter.' Peter Lake, 'The Significance of the Elizabethan Identification of the Pope as AntiChrist', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 no. 2 (1980):161-178, provides an illuminating account of the development of this trope, with considerable relevance to this chapter. See, on Foxe's own interpretation of prophecy, and his enduring influence on English and, especially, Puritan eschatology Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 59-66, Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth century apocalypticism, millenarianism and the English Reformation: From John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay, 1978), and Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1978). Also helpful, if of less immediate relevance is Walter Klaassen, *Living at the End of the Ages: Apocalyptic Expectation in the Radical Reformation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992)

[19] For an invaluable treatment of Foxe's ecclesiology see Viggo Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan church* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), and on the importance of the distinction between the visible and invisible Churches, especially 101-23. The tensions at the heart of Foxe's ecclesiology, and of the self-image of the Reformed English Church are examined in Catherine Davies, '"Poor Persecuted Little Flock" or "Commonwealth of Christians": Edwardian Protestant Concepts of the Church', in *Protestantism and the national church in sixteenth century England*, ed. Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (London: Croom Helm, 1987). The relevance of the concept of the invisible Church to the Laudian project is discussed in Anthony Milton, 'The Church of England, Rome and the True Church: The Demise of a Jacobean Consensus', in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993).

> profession onely, the other which by election inwardly are ioyned to Christ: the first in word and lyppes seemeth to honour Christ and are in the visible Church onely, but not in the Church inuisible, and partaketh the outward Sacramentes of Christ, but not the inward blessing of Christ: The other are both in the visible and also in the inuisible Church of Christ, which not in wordes onely and outward profession, but also in hart do truely serue & honour Christ, partakyng not onely the Sacraments, but also the heauenly blessinges and grace of Christ.[20]

Foxe's concept of the visible Church, therefore, was a valuable tool against the monolithic Roman view of the Church, and particularly against the identification of membership of the Church with the godly.[21]

Ironically, by the time of the Admonition Controversy, the bijective identification of the godly and the Church had become a central tenet of Puritan thought, and became a key issue between Whitgift and Cartwright. It was one of Whitgift's reiterated complaints that his Puritan opponent

> continually confused the church defined as a visible this-worldly institution with the invisible church of God's elect. According to Whitgift, Cartwright habitually used an exalted language of spiritual perfectionism, appropriate only to the invisible church, when he was in fact talking about the visible church. The visible church, trapped within the structures of the history of a fallen humanity, must necessarily always remain sadly imperfect and subject to change and decay.[22]

The concept of the visible Church, developed by Foxe, had, by now, become a central plank of the conformist case. So, Whitgift contended that there were

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[20] John Foxe, *The First volume of the Ecclesiastical History Contayning the Actes and Monumentes of things passed in every kinges time, in this Realme, especially in the Churche of England...* (London: Printed by Iohn Daye, dwelling over Aldergate, 1576), 30. As with the identification of Rome with the apocalyptic Babylon, the concept of the visible Church was not new to Foxe. Luther and Tyndale, in his *Answer to Sir Thomas More* (1531), had both outlined similar ideas, but Foxe's development of the concept was both more detailed and more influential in the context of the English Reformation. For an example of the visible and invisible aspects of Luther's ecclesiology see his 'Sermon on the Ban' in Martin Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 39, Church and Ministry I*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch, vol. 39 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), 7-26, esp. 7 and 8. Tyndale states that the term church 'is sometimes taken generally for all that embrace the name of Christ though their faythes be nought or though they have no faith at all. And some times it is taken specially for the electe only in whose hertes God hath written his lawe with his holy spirit and geven them a felingefaith of the mercy that is in Christ Jesus oure lorde.' William Tyndale, *An answere unto Sir Thomas Mores dialogue made by William Tindale* (1531), unpaginated.

[21] See, for the wider implications of this view, in the Reformation, Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 128-34, 157-72, 270-321, S Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Seperatist Ecclesiology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 115-6, J.F.H. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of their opposition 1558-1640* (Stanford: Black, 1964), 33, J.T. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism: The Ecumenical Spirit and its Persistant Expression* (Richmond: John Knox, 1964), 44, 68-9, H.F. Woodhouse, *The Doctrine of the Church in Anglican Theology, 1547-1603* (London: 1954) and G. Windsor, "The controversy between Roman Catholics and Anglicans from Elizabeth to the Revolution" (Unpublished PhD. thesis, Cambridge University, 1967) 145-7.

[22] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* , 28.

> two kinds of government in the church, the one invisible, the other visible; the one spiritual, the other external. The invisible and spiritual government of the church is when God by his spiritual gifts and the ministry of his word doth govern it by ruling in the hearts of men and directing them in all things necessary to salvation and it is in the church of the elect only. The visible and external government is that which is executed by man and consisteth of external discipline and visible ceremonies practised in that church and over that church that containeth in it both good and evil, which is called the visible church of Christ and compared by Christ to a field wherein both 'good seeds' and 'tares were sown' and to a 'net that gathered of all kinds of fishes'.[23]

This division between the visible and invisible Churches, in Whitgift's hands, allowed for any amount of variation in regiment and ritual. Cartwright's identification of the invisible and visible Churches allowed for no variation in either. If Scripture spoke of the visible, as well as the invisible Church, then Scripture alone was the arbiter of correct practice. By contrast, if Scripture spoke to an invisible Church, composed exclusively of true believers, contained and concealed in a visible Church, which comprised both godly and ungodly, it had no exclusively prescriptive role in the definition of correct practice.

This understanding of the visible Church was also important in Hooker's ecclesiology. Indeed, Peter Lake has argued that Hooker took this distinction to new lengths:

> All conformist apologists were committed to a more or less generous definition of the membership of the visible church by the logic of their polemical position. Hooker, however, took to such a view with an almost indecent enthusiasm. For Hooker all that was necessary for inclusion within the visible church was baptism and a profession of Christian belief so minimal as to exclude virtually no one in a formally Christian country.[24]

This 'indecent enthusiasm' emerges very clearly in Hooker's definition of 'what the Church is', in the opening chapter of the third book of the *Lawes*. Here he very explicitly locates the issue of ecclesiastical polity in the visible Church, rather in the essence of the Church's being. The intrinsic intangibility of the invisible Church made it impossible that it be the object of external polity:

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[23] John Whitgift, *The Works of John Whitgift*, ed. J. Ayre, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1851-3), I, 183-4.
[24] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 160.

> That Church of Christ which we properly terme his body mysticall, can be but one, neither can that one bee sensiblie discerned by any man, in as much as the partes thereof are some in heaven already with Christ, and the rest that are on earth (albeit their naturall persons bee visible) we doe not discerne under this propertie, whereby they are truly and infallibly of that body. ... Whatsoever we reade in scripture concerning the endlesse love and the saving mercy, which God sheweth towards his Church: the onely proper subject thereof is this Church. ... Those who are of this societie have such markes and notes of distinction from all others, as are not object unto our sense; onely unto God, who seeth their heartes and understandeth all their secret cogitations, unto him they are cleere and manyfest.[25]

By contrast, Hooker outlines his understanding of the visible Church. This Church also had its continuity, and consistency of existence, but not of manifestation:

> And as those everlasting promises of love, mercy, and blessednes belong to the mysticall Church, even so on the other side when we read of any dutie which the Church of God is bound unto, the Church whome it doth concerne is a sensible knowne company. And this visible Church is in like sorte but one, continued from the first beginning of the world to the last ende.[26]

And Hooker goes on to outline just that stripped down and minimalist version of 'the Christian Religion' remarked by Lake, based on the definition provided in Ephesians 4:5:

> The unitie of which visible body and Church of Christ consisteth in that uniformitie, which all severall persons thereunto belonging have, by reason of that *one Lorde* whose servants they all professe them selves, that *one faith* which they al acknowledge, that *one baptism* wherewith they are all initiated. The visible Church of Jesus Christ is therefore one, in outward profession of those thinges, which supernaturally appertaine to the very essence of Christianity, and are necessarily required in every particular Christian man.[27]

This understanding of the nature of the visible Church provided Hooker with an answer to the taunting question that was a mainstay of Catholic polemicists:

> [T]hey aske us where our Church did lurke, in what cave of the earth it slept for so many hundreds of yeeres together before the birth of Martin Luther? As if we were of the opinion that Luther did erect a new church of Christ. ... We hope therefore that to reforme our selves, if at anie time we have done amisse, is not to sever our

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[25] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 194-5.
[26] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 195-6.
[27] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 196.

> selves from the Church we were of before. In the Church we were and we are so still.[28]

Further, such an understanding of the Church allowed for the sort of variety in ceremony and ritual that was central to Hooker's case against the puritans, and was vital to his defence of the English Church:

> *Where but three are, and of the laitie also,* said Tertullian, yet there is a Church, that is to say a Christian assemblie. But a Church, as now we are to understand it, is a societie, that is, a number of men belonging unto some Christian fellowship, the place and limites whereof are certaine. ... As therefore they that are of the misticall body of Christ have those inward graces and vertues, whereby they differ from all others, which are not of the same body; againe whosoever appertaine to the visible body of the Church, they have also the notes of externall profession, whereby the world knoweth what they are: after the same manner even the severall societies of Christian men, unto everie of which of which the name of a Church is given with addition betokening severalitie, as the Church of Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, England, and so the rest, must be indued with correspondent generall properties belonging unto them, as they are publique Christian societies. And of such properties common unto all societies Christian it may not be denied, that one of the verie chiefest is Ecclesiaticall Politie.[29]

It ought to be stressed that, while Hooker did, undoubtedly, take the concept of the visible Church to a greater length than had previously been attempted, he was far from being the first to appreciate the room for the accommodation of ceremonial diversity allowed by this understanding of the Church. Indeed, such a realisation was part of the impeccable orthodoxy of the English Church, and, as such, was embodied in the Thirty-Nine Articles, which, after 1571, provided her with her most basic expression of belief. Article XIX defined the Church, but tellingly limited its definition to the visible Church:

> The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Still more significant, for our present discussion, was the language of Article XXXIV, 'Of the traditions of the Church':

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[28] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 201-2.
[29] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 205-6.

> It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the Traditions and Ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like,) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren.
>
> Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, Ceremonies or Rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.[30]

This important, and orthodox, concept of the visible Church is vital to our understanding of Donneian ecclesiology. While he makes a glancing reference to what we might term the Foxeian understanding of the concept (*vid.* VIII, 264), its development by Whitgift and Hooker is basic to his understanding of the Church. It is true he does not often refer specifically to the visible Church: Donne is far more inclined to talk about the division of the Church in to its Militant and Triumphant branches.[31] However, as we consider Donne's understanding of the Church in this chapter, it will become clear that he speaks, almost exclusively to a visible Church, denominated by baptism, and commitment to a basic form of Christian dogma.

From the conceptual division of the Church into visible and invisible sections, arose the equally important Protestant notion of the Catholic Church. Anthony Milton describes the idea and its importance:

> From the Reformation onwards, Protestant ecclesiology in England, as elsewhere, was preoccupied with the need to combat the claims of the visible Church of Rome to be the universal Catholic Church.... Against these claims, it was argued that the Holy Catholic Church of the Creed was fundamentally distinct from the national, institutional churches on earth. It was comprised solely of the predestinate, of God's elect. Only the elect were truly members of the body of Christ and it was to the elect alone that the scriptural promises on infallibility and

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[30] This article, of 1570, was based upon the Edwardian formulation of 1553. The Elizabethan revision had added 'times' to 'countries' and 'men's manners' as a possible source of variation. The paragraph insisting on the authority of 'every particular and national church' was added at the same time.

[31] See, however, V, 151-167, for a christening Sermon that provides perhaps our most systematic development of the role of the visible church in Donne's ecclesiology.

> indefectibility truly applied, rather than to the visible Church of Rome. This Catholic Church was 'invisible' in a number of respects. Its head, Christ, was now invisible, while some of its members were already in heaven, and others were still unborn. ... This argument was not the preserve of dangerous Puritan radicals, but was a commonplace of Protestant ecclesiology, argued with similar force and conviction by moderate puritans such as William Perkins, Andrew Willet and William Whitaker, and by the future Calvinist bishops Robert Abbot and John Davenant.[32]

This account of the Catholic Church is, perhaps, more precise than was always the case when it was used by Protestant writers. Nonetheless, it helpfully highlights the polemical issue at stake. The respective terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' were semantically weighted, and inevitably gave the advantage to the Roman Church. The Protestant re-definition of the Catholic Church was, in part, designed to re-take the rhetorical high ground, to eliminate the overtones of dissenting novelty implicit in the term Protestant. It also meant, as Milton suggests, that the Nicene and the Apostles' Creed could still be used, and that their references to the Holy Catholic Church could be defined away from Roman control, and read as referring to a mystical international body of which the Reformed Churches were part. This was especially important in the light of the endorsement of the creeds in Article VIII of the Thirty-Nine Articles, entitled 'Of the three creeds':

> The Three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.

The Creeds were at the heart of the project pursued by Thomas Jackson (d.1640), an *avant-garde* conformist priest who, between 1613 and the year of his death published a series of commentaries on these confessions.[33] Most relevant to our present discussion is his *Treatise of the*

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[32] Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 128-9.

[33] Jackson had begun his career with Puritan inclinations, but rejected Calvinism, became an associate of Richard Neile and a member of the Durham House circle. In 1631, he was elected president of Corpus Christi, Oxford, on the recommendation of Charles I, and in 1639 he was appointed dean of Peterborough, through the patronage of Archbishop Laud. Nine volumes on the Creeds were published during Jackson's life, a further three appeared posthumously. See A. J. Hegarty,'Jackson, Thomas (bap. 1578, d. 1640)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14551, 31 Aug 2007, Sarah Hutton, 'Thomas Jackson, Oxford Platonist, and William Twisse, Aristotelian', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 no. 4 (1978):635-52, Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists : the rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 7, 64–7, 77–8, 83–4, 121, 143–4, 159–60, Julian Davies, *The Caroline captivity of the church : Charles I and the remoulding of Anglicanism, 1625-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 58, 113, 123 , and Thomas Jackson, *The Works of Thomas Jackson, D.D.: Sometime President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and Dean of Peterborough*, 12 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1844).

Holy Catholike Faith and Church (1627), which clearly outlined the sort of understanding of the Catholic Church described by Anthony Milton:

> The speciall points which wee are in this article to beleeue, are these. First, that as Christ, whilst he liued on earth was a King, albeit his Kingdom was not earthly, nor of this world: so he hath still a Kingdome, or at least a great part of his Kingdome here on earth; the members or Citizens of which Kingdome, whilest liuing in this world are not of this world ... the Societie or Corporation, whereof they are actuall and liue-members, is translated from earth to heauen, and their demeanour or conuersation here on earth must be celestiall, and such as becomes the sonnes of God. The second, that God or Christ in the choice or admission of Citizens into this celestiall Corporation, doth not tye himselfe to any one Kingdome, Nation, or Prouince, to any visible Societie or Corporation here on earth. But as heauen it selfe is alike from euery part of the earth; so euery Nation or Kingdome of the earth are alike free to *stand* for, or solicite their election or admission into this heauenly societie, which wee tearme the holy Catholique Church.[34]

Jackson had rejected the doctrines of absolute election and reprobation by 1605, and was preaching against them, albeit to a restricted collegiate audience, by 1612. It is interesting, therefore, to note that the Church that he describes as Catholic is an invisible society: we might speculate that this is a recrudescence of his earlier puritanism. It is no surprise, however, that the wider redefinition of 'Catholic' was a part of conformist orthodoxy: it had been since the Henrician Reformation, and outlined in both the King's and the Bishop's Books, and by conformist apologists like Jewel, Whitgift and Bridges.[35] Likewise, with a typical focus upon the visible aspect of sacred community, Hooker outlined his view of a global Catholic Church in which all the national churches participated:

> [A]s the maine body of the sea being one, yet within divers precincts hath divers names; so the Catholike Church is in like sort devided into a number of distinct societies, every one of which is termed a Church within it selfe. In this sense the Church is always a visible society of men, not an assembly, but a societie.[36]

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[34] Thomas Jackson, *A Treatise of the Holy Catholike Faith and Church. Divided into three Books. The first book.* (London: Printed by M.F. for *Iohn Clarke*, 1627), 35-6.

[35] For an account of this understanding of the Catholic Church throughout Protestant conformist thought see Franklin Le Van Baumer, 'The Church of England and the Common Corps of Christendom', *The Journal of Modern History* 16 no. 1 (1944):1-21,.

[36] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 1, 205-6.

Thus, this understanding of the catholicity of the global true Church was a staple of the conformist case. It also featured, however, in Puritan ecclesiology. For example, Foxe had prefaced his *Acts and Monuments* with a epistle addressed 'to the true and faithful congregation of Christs vniversall Chvrch, with all and singular the members thereof, wheresoever congregated or dispersed *thorow the realme of England.*'[37] Similarly, William Perkins had contributed to the debate in his *A Reformed Catholike.* Sub-titled 'A declaration shewing how neere we may come to the present Church of Rome in sundrie points of Religion: and wherein we must for ever depart from them: with an Advertisment to all favourers of the Roman religion, shewing that the said religion is against the Catholike principles and grounds of the Catechisme,' the work was scarcely remarkable for its ecumenism. Nonetheless, it is indicative of a desire, right across the English ecclesiastical spectrum to reclaim the term Catholic, and to formulate that concept less in terms of dominion than in terms of doctrinal commonality.

A most interesting articulation of this understanding of the term Catholic occurs in James I's *Premonition to the kings of Europe.*[38] James is explicitly concerned to address the accusations of those who, like Cardinal Bellarmine, attempted to paint him as an heretic and schismatic. James asserted his identity as a Catholic, and went on to adumbrate his position on a range of the most crucial issues, including the place of Scripture, the role of Mary,[39] and the questionable propriety of praying to the saints:

> I am such a CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN, as beleeueth the three *Creeds*; That of the Apostles, that of the Councell of *Nice*, and that of *Athansius*; the two latter being Paraphrases

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[37] John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of the Matters most Special and memorable, happening in the Church, with an universall historie of the same* (London: Printed for the Company of Stationers, 1610), sig. ¶ 3.

[38] See, on James' biography, King of Scotland and England James VI and I, *King James V I and I Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994),D. Harris Willson, *King James V I and I* (New York: Henry Holt, 1956),Maurice Lee Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James V I and I in his Three Kingdoms* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), and Lee Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James V I and I in his Three Kingdoms* . For of James' ecclesiastical programme see W.B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, 'The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I', *Journal of British Studies* 24 no. 2 (1985):169-207, Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, 'The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I', in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (London: Macmillan, 1993), Mark H. Curtis, 'Hampton Court Conference and its aftermath', *History* 46 (1961):1-16, Jenny Wormald, 'James V I and I: Two Kings or One?' *History* 68 (1983):187-209, W.B. Patterson, 'King James I's Call for an Ecumenical Council', in *Councils and Assemblies*, ed. G. J. Cuming, *Studies in Church History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) and Curtis, 'Hampton Court Conference and its aftermath',.

[39] Donne's position on this contested issue has a good claim to be treated in this chapter. We do not consider it, partly because of the exigencies of space, but more especially because George Klawitter, 'John Donne's Attitude toward the Virgin Mary: The Public versus the Private Voice', in *John Donne's Religious Imagination - Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross*, ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances M. Malpezzi (Conway, AR: UCA Press, 1995) has provided an excellent survey of the subject.

> to the former: And I beleeue them in that sense, as the ancient Fathers and Councels that made them did understand them: To which three *Creeds* all the Ministers of England doe subscribe at their ordination. And I also acknowledge for Orthodoxe all those other formes of *Creedes*, that either were deuised by Councels or particular Fathers, against such particular Heresies as most reigned in their times. I reverence and admit the foure first generall Councels as Catholique and Orthodoxe: And the said foure generall Councels are acknowledged by our Acts of Parliament, and receiued for Orthodoxe by our Church.[40]

This understanding of Reformed Christianity resonates very definitely with Donne's appreciation of his status as a Reformed Catholic.

We have already touched upon some of the continuities between the thought of Hooker and earlier English conformists. In light, however, of what we will shortly have to say about the importance of Hooker to Donne's understanding of the authority of the Church, it is important that we look in a little more detail at the nature of Hooker's enterprise in the *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*. This is by no means a simple issue: Hooker's purpose, and the background to the writing of the *Lawes* have been the subject of some debate. This is so in spite of the copious bibliographical information that we have about the writing of the *Lawes*. [41] The volume of this data, indeed, contrasts with the paucity of biographical information that we have on Hooker. Moreover, in light of the fact that Hooker, like Donne, was a recipient of the 'Walton treatment', such data as we have are remarkable for their uncertainty.[42] The immediate object of the *Lawes* continues to be the subject of some debate, and an older consensus that stressed the philosophical judiciousness of the *Lawes* has given way to a reading that, while acknowledging the philosophical element of the work also stresses its roots in Reformation controversy and

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[40] King of Scotland and England James VI and I, *The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, Iames By the Grace of God, King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith &c.*, ed. James Montague (London: Printed by Robert Barker and Iohn Bill, Printers to the Kings most Excellent Maistie, 1616), 302-3.

[41] C. J. Sisson, *The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker and the Birth of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940). See, for an alternative reading of some of the evidence Hardin Craig, 'Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity - First Form', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5 no. 1 (1944):91-104,

[42] Walton, *Lives*, 123-196. For a discussion of some of Walton's inaccuracies, see Novarr, *The making of Walton's "Lives"*, 197-298. Also useful, as a discussion of the difficulties of constructing a biography of Hooker is Philip B. Secor, "In search of Richard Hooker: Constructing a New Biography", in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997). Patrick Collinson, 'Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment', in *Richard Hooker and the construction of Christian community*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997) is a characteristically insightful and readable account of Hooker's relationship to the Elizabethan establishment.

polemic. The recent problematisation of the concept of Anglicanism has also complicated the picture of Hooker's role in relation to the development of an Anglican Church.

Typical of the earlier and more idealistic readings of Hooker is that of Alfred Pollard, who sees in Hooker the prophet of Anglicanism whose work 'goes beyond the bickering world of wrangling about ecclesiastical power and scriptural interpretation into the majestic realm of eternal verity.'[43] On the other extreme, however, it has been suggested that the *Lawes* fails to function on any plane other than the polemical, that it is a collection of anti-Puritan arguments, without a clear organising principle. On this reading, the work is marked by a tragic incoherence, and vitiated in so far as any enduring usefulness is concerned.[44] The most helpful accounts of the nature of the *Lawes* allow for both positions; and while appreciating the philosophic content and legacy of Hooker's work, see it as firmly rooted in the very specific context that gave birth to it. There has been increasingly a realisation that Hooker deserves, in Patrick Collinson's words 'to be rescued from the noble vacuity of all time and restored to the materiality of his own age, where he belongs.'[45] As Rudolph Almasy argues:

> In closely examining the arguments that Hooker expounds and the materials of the Elizabethan controversy he includes, we discover that Hooker's treatise, rather than rising majestically above ecclesiastical bickering, is thoroughly grounded in polemical and controversial advocacy. ... Of course, Hooker is a far better stylist and polemicist than his contemporaries; his vision is far more significant than his predecessors'.[46]

Hooker, Almasy concludes, 'tried to be both irenic and polemical.'[47] William Speed Hill explains the dual nature of Hooker's work by reference to an alteration in Hooker's intent even as the *Lawes* were being written:

> The Laws, then, had begun as a vindication of Hooker and Hooker's church against the Attacks by Travers at the Temple upon his integrity as a scholar and teacher; it

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[43] Alfred Pollard, *Richard Hooker* (London: 1966), 15.
[44] See *inter alia*, H.F. Kearney, "Richard Hooker: A Reconstruction", *Cambridge Journal* 5 no. 5 (1952):300-11, and Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Church*, trans. Olive Witon, vol. 2 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), 367. For a robust defence of the coherence of Hooker's work see A. S. McGrade, 'The Coherence of Hooker's *Polity*: The Books on Power', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 no. 2 (1963):163-82, and William O. Gregg, 'Sacramental Theology in Hooker's *Laws*: A Structural Perspective', *Anglican Theological Review* 73 no. 2 (1991),.
[45] Collinson, 'Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment', 149.
[46] Rudolph Almasy, 'The Purpose of Richard Hooker's Polemic', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 no. 2 (1978):251-270, 251.
[47] Almasy, 'The Purpose of Richard Hooker's Polemic', 252. see also Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism or English Magisterial Reformer', *Anglican Theological Review* 84 no. 4 (2002):943-60, 954-6.

> took the form of a systematic treatise on the polity and practices of the church as a whole; but it ultimately became subordinate to the demands of an essentially political controversy.[48]

Perhaps the most satisfactory account of Hooker's purpose is expressed by Peter Lake, in what is certainly one of the most valuable studies of English conformist thought in general, and Hooker in particular. Lake contends that:

> [T]he polemical engagement with Presbyterianism must provide the ideological context for any discussion of Hooker's *Laws of ecclesiastical polity*. ... The *Polity* was certainly not a measured defense of an 'anglicanism' that did not yet exist. ... [I]t emerges as not only (perhaps not even primarily) an attack on Presbyterianism, rather it appears as an attempt to sort out a conformist case much afflicted by its own internal contradictions. This was a task which hardly made for the easy serenity which is usually attributed to Hooker. If he contrived to appear serene, it was largely because he was able to address and to resolve those contradictions in what were essentially novel ways.[49]

Lake's statement of Hooker's purpose raises another, and, for our purposes, more pressing question. What precisely was Hooker's function in relation to the Established Church? Is it true that he simply 'takes his place alongside Whitgift, Bridges, Cooper, and Sutcliffe as yet another dutiful defender of the settlement, putting on record the truth as it was discerned in 1590 and giving a more satisfactory response than before to the Presbyterians'?[50] Or, is it possible that Hooker was defining as well as defending an essentially novel understanding of the nature of the English Church. For Lake, and for Patrick Collinson, this was broadly the case. We have already noted Lake's contention that Hooker's methods were novel; we should also consider his conclusion that:

> [I]t was Hooker, with a unique combination of theoretical ambition and polemical acuity, who broke with the mainstream of English Calvinism. ... If Hooker's *Polity* represented some sort of natural culmination or conclusion to the debate with Presbyterianism it did so not because it summed up existing conformist

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[48] William Speed Hill, "The Evolution of Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*", in *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an edition of his works*, ed. William Speed Hill (Cleveland: Press of Case Western University, 1972), 146. Hill's assertion that Travers was Hooker's main target is, in itself, the subject of debate. Craig, 'Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity - First Form', likewise understands Travers to have been central to the writing of the *Lawes*. Almasy, 'The Purpose of Richard Hooker's Polemic', however, argues persuasively for the more compelling view that Thomas Cartwright was Hooker's antagonist, Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* takes this position for granted.

[49] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* , 145.

[50] Almasy, 'The Purpose of Richard Hooker's Polemic', 251.

> arguments (although in part it did that), but because it resolved or tried to resolve the central cruxes and contradictions within the conformist case as it had developed since 1570. ... Hooker undoubtedly deserves his place in 'anglican' hagiography – not because he personified or expressed existing 'anglican' attitudes and values but because he, more than any one, invented them.[51]

This re-reading of Hooker's significance seems rather audacious, but Lake's closely-reasoned defence of his position makes it, equally, most compelling.[52] Furthermore, this hypothesis has been endorsed by no less a scholar of Hooker than Arthur McGrade, and no less a historian than Patrick Collinson.[53] Collinson's essay, indeed, provides a very valuable contextualisation of Lake's Hooker in the religious and political establishment of his day. He concludes that 'no other apologist for the Elizabethan *status quo* chose to be as critical as Hooker of the institution he was supposed to be defending.'[54] Further, he condenses what he understands as the crucial implications of Lake's argument, and contends that:

> [attacking P]resbyterianism was never Hooker's real or ultimate objective. While appearing to fight old battles all over again, Whitgift versus Cartwright, he was in fact using that as a smoke-screen under which to construct an original synthesis of old arguments, amounting to a novel vision not so much of what the English version of the Protestant religion was as of what it ought to be; of its foundations in reason as well as in Scripture; the reason of the church being actually anterior to Scripture; and so perhaps prior; of the location of the English church, vertically in

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[51] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* , 228, 230. See also Peter Lake, 'Business as usual? The immediate reception of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 no. 3 (2001):456-86,.

[52] The nature of Hooker's relationship to the magisterial reformers and to the Reformed traditions of the English Church has been keenly debated. W.J. Torrance Kirby, *Hooker's Doctrine of Royal Supremacy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990)W.J. Torrance Kirby, 'Richard Hooker as an Apologist of the Magisterial Reformation in England', in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), and Atkinson, *Hooker - Scripture, Tradition and Reason* argue that interpretations of Hooker's thought as discontinuous with the tradition of the English Reformation are incorrect. In Atkinson's case, he is eager to co-opt Hooker in support of his evangelical agenda. Almasy, 'The Purpose of Richard Hooker's Polemic', Cargill Thompson, 'The Philosopher of the "Politic Society"' , Margaret Sommerville, 'Richard Hooker and his contemporaries on episcopacy: an Elizabethan consensus', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1948):177-87, and Stafford, 'Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit' have also argued for the continuity of Hooker's approach on a number of crucial issues. See, in addition to Lake and Collinson, for arguments for the essential novelty of Hooker's approach, Philip B. Secor, *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism* (London: Burns and Oates, 1999), Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification', *Harvard Theological Review* 74 no. 2 (1981):211-20, Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Repentance', *Harvard Theological Review* 84 no. 1 (1991):59-74, Lee W. Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of scripture and Tradition', *Harvard Theological Review* 95 no. 2 (2002):227-35, Gibbs, 'Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism or English Magisterial Reformer', and Voak, *Hooker and Reformed Theology* . M.E.C. Perrott, 'Richard Hooker and the Problem of Authority in the Elizabethan Church', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 49 no. 1 (1998):29-60, is a convincing attempt to achieve a synthesis of Hooker's novelty and his 'engagement with contemporary concerns in the late Elizabethan Church.'

[53] See A. S. McGrade, 'Introduction', in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Preface, Book I, Book VIII*, ed. Richard Hooker, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xix and Collinson, 'Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment' .

[54] Collinson, 'Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment', 171.

> time and horizontally in its contemporary relations within the universal and catholic church of which it was part, but of which the Roman church was also a part, if defective.[55]

All of this constituted no very minor change in the perception of the English church, and Donne's commitment to the broad details of the Hookerian vision was a commitment to a novel force in English ecclesiology. We will shortly consider that commitment. For the present, it is important to highlight the novelty of Hooker's paradigm of ecclesiastical authority.

It is also important to indicate how Hooker reshaped the role of *adiaphora* in the English Church. Traditionally, conformist defenders of the English had been content to relegate a good many ceremonial details to the realm of things indifferent:

> Traditional conformist arguments on the rites and ceremonies of the English Church were centered on the notion of things indifferent and on the assertion and defense of the power of the Church and Christian magistrate to order these things guided only by general Scriptural rules and prescriptions concerning order, decency, uniformity and obedience. Once these general rules had been observed, the Christian governors were free to act as they saw fit for the common good. The role of the ordinary church member was simply to do as his or her superiors ordered, safe in the knowledge that if the rites and ceremonies in question were literally matters of indifference, their duty to obey the magistrate was not. The resulting ceremonies and forms were not then enforced as parts of God's worship or as having any intrinsic religious value in themselves but only for the state of order, decency, unity and obedience. It was only the strict observance of this limitation that protected the conformists from Puritan allegations of will worship and Popish superstition and that allowed even moderate puritans, in extremity, to produce elaborate justifications for conformity. [56]

Lake is correct in pointing out the protection, and potential for accommodation that this view afforded to conformists. However, as M.E.C. Perrott has pointed out, it was an expedient unlikely to commend itself to those puritans who argued for the omnicompetence of Scripture in ceremonial as much as in moral and doctrinal matters.[57] Hooker responded to this by altering the focus of the debate over *adiaphora*:

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[55] Collinson, 'Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment', 174.
[56] Lake, 'The Laudians and the Argument from Authority', 150.
[57] Perrott, 'Hooker and the Problem of Authority', esp. 39-45.

> The textual evidence of the *Laws* suggests that Hooker did not seek obedience to church law simply by emphasising the necessity of blind obedience to magisterial authority but rather by seeking the subject's apprehension that laws grounded on the authority of reason were sound. The explicit nature of Hooker's argument in this respect represents a significant development in conformist thought.[58]

This development set the tone for the *avant-garde* conformists who followed, and who allowed increasing less scope for the adiaphoric in the order of the English Church.

II-Satyre III and Donne's Hookerian Ecclesiology

We have already remarked that Donne's ecclesiology, while evolving throughout his career, remained largely consistent. An index of this consistency is the fact that the key elements of that ecclesiology all find their expression in some of Donne's earliest works, and re-echo throughout his career. Indeed, one of the most important of these seminal discussions of the authority of the Church was written before Donne's career as a divine commenced, before even his participation in the oath of allegiance debate. In Satyre III the young Donne deals with preoccupations that telescope out of the poem, and occur time and again throughout the prose works. For this reason, our engagement with the Satyre, and our consideration of the treatment, throughout the Sermons, of the issues that spring from it will be crucial to our understanding of the Donneian ecclesiology.

Fundamental to the purpose of the poem is the expression of moderation found in its first section. Here, Donne lists examples of excessive and intemperate zeal:

> Dar'st thou ayd mutinous Dutch, and dar'st thou lay
> Thee in ships woodden Sepulchers, a prey
> To leaders rage, to stormes, to shot, to dearth?
> Dar'st thou dive seas, and dungeons of the earth?
> Hast thou couragious fire to thaw the ice
> Of frozen North discoveries? and thrise
> Colder then Salamanders, like divine
> Children in th'oven, fires of Spaine, and the line,
> Whose countries limbecks to our bodies bee,
> Canst thou for gaine beare? and must every hee,

[58] Perrott, 'Hooker and the Problem of Authority', 37.

> Which cryes not, 'Goddesse,' to thy Mistresse, draw,
> Or eate thy poysonous words? (ll.17-28)

He goes on, as Richard Strier and Joshua Scodel have both helpfully argued,[59] to identify such intemperate zeal as disguised, and indeed as suicidal, cowardice:

> courage of straw!
> O desperate coward, wilt thou seeme bold, and
> To thy foes and his (who made thee to stand
> Sentinell in his worlds garrison) thus yeeld,
> And for forbidden warres, leave th'appointed field? (ll. 28-32)

These lines are, as Strier has pointed out, preliminary to the injunction, in line 43, to 'seeke true religion.' Before giving the instruction that would equip the reader to find a middle way between Rome and Geneva, then, Donne wishes to inculcate a suitable frame of mind; a medium between intemperate zeal, and excessive, even suicidal, cowardice. This seeming allusion to suicide in the poem has particular interest in terms of the wider Donneian canon – not only his extensive treatment of the subject in *Biathanatos*, but also, and with greater relevance, his treatment of martyrdom as a means of suicide in *Pseudo-martyr*.[60] The precise nature of this excessive fear is outlined by Donne in his Trinity Sunday sermon for 1621:

> There is also a feare of God too large, too farre extended, when for a false feare of offending God, I dare not offend those men, who pretend to come in his name, and so captivate my conscience to the traditions and inventions of men, as to the word, and law of God. (III, 279)

This definition resonates very clearly with opposition between Divine power and its claims for obedience, and the unjust imposition of merely human tyranny.

Fully to understand the significance of this poem in determining Donne's ecclesiology, we must consider this twin repudiation of courage and cowardice. In Donne's expression of this, and in the wider context of the Satyre, we see slight but exceedingly significant resemblances to one of the most influential works of English ecclesiological theory, Book V of Richard Hooker's *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*. These resemblances strongly argue for the centrality of Hooker's

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[59] Strier, 'Radical Donne: "Satire III"', Scodel, 'Religious Politics of the Mean'.

[60] The conjunction of the search for true religion, despair, and suicide in this poem have obvious literary analogues in Spenser's Despair (*Faerie Queen* I.ix). Spenser's bogeyman, however, seems to have a distinct predestinarian, and specifically Calvinist hue: the cowardice that Donne evokes does not appear to be connected with God's eternal decrees.

method and understanding of the nature of the English Church to Donne's own epistemology.[61] Before considering this claim in greater detail, it is necessary to look briefly at the dating of the Satyre. The general editorial consensus has dated the Satyre in the early to mid 1590s, a date that looks, at best, uncomfortably tight if we are to sustain the argument that Book V of the *Lawes*, first published in 1597, was a meaningful influence on the poem. However, as Paul Sellin points out

> The date of 'Satyre III' has depended almost exclusively on speculative argument regarding Donne's spiritual biography rather than on historical or bibliographical facts. Unlike several of the other satires, the third has up to now yielded no easy historical allusions or similar clues by which scholars could establish even an indubitable terminus a quo, and it has never been possible to date the poem with precision.[62]

Having established the lack of any incontrovertible basis for dating, Sellin goes on to argue for a later date, based on events referred to in the poem. The first half of his argument relies on the imagery of polar exploration used earlier in poem, and he convincingly contends that this imagery used by Donne echoes reports of the third of the Dutch Barents expeditions which returned from its polar hardships in November, 1597. Sellin thus concludes that

> 'Satyre III' clearly appears to be no earlier than November 1, 1597... To assign the poem to so early a time, however, would assume that the news found its way to Donne directly from Amsterdam and that he reacted immediately. It therefore seems more likely that Donne's allusion stems from printed sources, in which case the earliest possible date is at least 1598. ... Because the story reached the height of its popularity between 1599 and ... 1600-1601 ... it is reasonable to conclude that the likeliest terminus a quo for 'Satyre III' ranges from middle or late 1598 to 1602, with mid-1598 as the earliest moment feasible.[63]

Such a dating would, clearly, allow us to visualise Donne writing the poem with Book V of the *Lawes* fresh in his mind. To be sure, Sellin does go on to argue, on the basis of resemblances between the image of Truth on a hill, later in the poem, and the medal struck to commemorate

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[61] The theological relationship between Donne and Hooker has already been investigated by Elizabeth de Volin Tebeaux, 'John Donne and Anglicanism: The Relationship of his Theology to Richard Hooker's' (Texas A&M University, 1977). This study is suggestive, but lacking in historical and theological nuance. Tebeaux assumes a very unproblematic 'Anglicanism', and sees Hooker and Donne as contributors to this ideal *via media*. She also fails to address Hooker's reinterpretation of *adiaphora*.

[62] Sellin, 'Dating of "Satyre III"', 275.

[63] Sellin, 'Dating of "Satyre III"', 281.

the Synod of Dort, that the correct dating of the Satyre may be as late as 1620, but this later argument lacks the conviction of the earlier, and makes some questionable assumptions.[64] Dating, then, we can conclude does not eliminate the possibility that the Satyre was influenced by Hooker's work, and the propinquity of dates makes it very likely that Hooker's work was fresh in Donne's mind as he wrote the poem.

It would, of course, be very helpful if we could point to incontrovertible evidence that Donne had, in fact read Book V of the *Lawes*. Such evidence, however, is sadly to seek – Donne's works, indeed, contain no direct reference to Hooker. However this is also true of other contemporary English works of religious controversy of such relevance and importance that it is unthinkable that Donne, with his theological and controversial proclivities, had not read them.[65] Thus, this lack of direct allusion ought not, perhaps, discourage us too much. We could argue on the grounds of probability that Donne was familiar with Hooker. Such grounds are rather more flimsy than is altogether comfortable. Happily, a marginal note in a tract entitled *A Iust and Temperate Defence of the Five Books of Ecclesiastical Policie: written by M. Richard Hooker*, by William Covell, presently held in the Harvard College Library, provides us with clearer evidence. The tract was published in 1603, while Donne was employed by Bishop Morton.[66] The page opposite the title contains the following Latin epigram, in Donne's handwriting, and bearing Donne's signature:

> Ad Autorem
> Non eget Hookerus tanto tutamine; Tanto
> Tutus qui impugnat sed foret Auxilio
> [Hooker does not need such great protection; but he who attacks such great help would be safe]

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[64] Especially troubling is Sellin's attempt (p.297) to detach Satyre III from Donne's other satires by questioning its identity as a Satire. The fact, remarked by a number of critics, that Satyre III is clearly based closely upon Juvenal's Satires, especially Satire 2, makes any other claims as to genre questionable, at best.

[65] This is especially so in light of Walton's account of Donne's attention to contemporary occurances – '[A]ll businesses that passed of any public consequence, either in this or any of our neighbour-nations, he abbreviated either in Latin, or in the language of that nation, and kept them by him for useful memorials.' (p.87) *Ignatius, his conclave* also furnishes us with ample evidence of Donne's familiarity with current affairs and discoveries.

[66] The tract, and the collection in which it is found are described by R.E. Bennett, 'Tracts from John Donne's Library', *Review of English Studies* 13 (1937):333-5, 333-5. The content of Covell's *defence* is summarised in some detail in Lake, 'Business as usual?' 462-81. Given the overtly cermonial and sacramental direction in which Covell pushed Hooker's argument, Doone's distaste for it is a telling confirmation of his views as discussed in this chapter, and in chapter 3.

Clearly, then, Donne was not only familiar with Hooker's work, but appreciated its worth. George Field summarises the weight of this evidence succinctly:

> Such a judgment would hardly seem possible were Donne not familiar with Hooker's *Laws*, as well as being in such substantial agreement as to be provoked into writing this epigrammatic comment – a unique action by Donne unparalleled in any of the other books known to be from his library.[67]

In the light of this regard for Hooker it is not, surely, excessive to argue that resemblances between the very influential Book V and Donne's radical discussion of the search for true religion are more than a matter of coincidence, or of shared sources.

What, then, are these resemblances, and what is their significance in Donne's thought? The poem opens with Donne weighing the respective value, in eschatological terms, of 'fair Religion' and of the 'vertue' of the first blinded age. This seems a commencement that corresponds oddly with the denominational specifics that follow. It is instructive, however, to note that Hooker begins Book V in precisely the same way, for his argument that 'true religion is the roote of all true virtues and the stay of all well ordered common-wealthes' leads him inevitably to the question of the virtuous pagan, the 'blind philosophers.' Hooker's reference to 'pure and unstained religion' resonates with the opening section of Donne's poem, as well as with later allusions to images of sexual purity. Also noticeable is the motive to which both writers ascribe the virtue of those for whom 'heavens joyes' are not a goal. Hooker instances those who commend the

> felicitie of that innocent world, wherein it is said, that men of theire own accorde did imbrace fidelitie and honestie, not for feare of the magistrate, or because revenge was before theire eyes, if at any tyme they should doe otherwise, but that which helde the people in awe was the shame of ill doinge, the love of equitie and right it selfe a barre against all oppressions which greatnes of power causeth (19).

This motivation for virtue could be summarised in Donne's words on the subject: 'earth's honour.'

Following this, we have already noted the repudiation of excessive zeal, and immoderate fear that opens the Satyre, and have noticed Donne's belief that both must be cast off before the

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[67] George C. Field, 'Donne and Hooker', *Anglican Theological Review* 48 (1966):307-9,.

search for true religion can begin. When we turn, then, to Hooker, we find an answer to Donne's preparatory laying aside of zeal and fear in the third chapter, entitled 'Of superstition and the root thereof, either misguided zeal, or ignorant fear of divine glorie':

> [T]wo affections there are, the forces whereof, as they beare the greater or lesser sway in mans harte, frame accordinglie the stampe and character of his religion; the one zeale, the other feare. Zeale, unless it be rightlie guided, when it endeavoureth most busily to please God, forceth upon him those unseasonable officies which please him not. ... Zeal, except it be ordered aright, when it bendeth it selfe unto conflict with things either in deed, or but imagined to be opposite unto religion, useth the razor many times with such eagerness, that the verie life of religion it selfe is thereby hazarded, through hatred of tares the corne in the field of God is pluckt up (27).

Hooker then turns to the complementary vice of fear, and argues that, whilst a reverential fear of God is a necessary and a healthy thing, an excessive and a cringing fear is inimical to the sort of reasonable consideration of religion that Hooker is conducting, and is, in fact, the first step towards superstition:

> Feare is a good solicitor to devotion. Howbeit sith feare in this kinde doth growe from an apprehension of deitie indued with irresistible power to hurte, and is of all affections (anger excepted) the unaptest to admit any conference with reason, for which cause the wise man doth saie of feare that it is the betrayer of the forces of reasonable understandinge, therefore except men knowe before hand what manner of service pleaseth God, while they are fearful they try all thinges which phancie offereth (28).

Hooker's explanation of the way in which these dispositions impede the search for true religion amply accounts for and unpacks Donne's preliminary determination to eschew them both.

At this point, the sceptic would be justified in protesting that neither discussion of the virtue of the Golden Age nor the identification of wisdom in the Aristotelian medium between zeal and fear are particularly recherché, and certainly they are not unique to Donne and Hooker.[68] So much is true. Nonetheless, there is a congruence of arrangement and of the intent underlying that arrangement that seems to call for an explanation more convincing than happenstance. This conviction can only be strengthened when we come to the address to the reader towards the close

[68] The classic statement, and the source for Hooker, was, of course, Aristotle's *Ethics*.

of the poem. In doing so, we pass over Mirreus, Crants, Graius and Phrygius, four examples of how a true religion ought not to be sought, and come to Donne's instructions as to how it should be pursued. Donne follows the last counter-example – Graccus who believes that

> As women do in divers countries goe
> In divers habits, yet are still one kinde,
> So doth, so is Religion (ll.66-8)

– with instruction to his reader about the correct search:

> but unmoved thou
> Of force must one, and forc'd but one allow;
> And the right; aske thy father which is shee,
> Let him aske his; though truth and falshood bee
> Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is. (ll.69-73)

Donne's use of 'force' and 'forc'd' is striking in this context, and has caused some uncertainty among editors of the work, who have seen in this phrase the spectre of coercion. As Paul Sellin has, however, plausibly glossed the lines as follows:

> unmoved thou
> Of force must one [religion], and forc'd but one allow;
> And the right [one].[69]

Read in this way, the lines lose any apparently sinister overtones, and simply state the truth (*contra* Graccus) that the individual must choose one religion, and cannot simply float catholically amongst the available options. The closing lines of the poem appear, at first glance, to be more troubling in this regard:

> As streams are, Power is; those blest flowers that dwell
> At the rough streames calme head, thrive and do well,
> But having left their roots, and themselves given
> To the streames tyrannous rage, alas are driven
> Through mills, and rockes, and woods, and at last, almost
> Consum'd in going, in the sea are lost:
> So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust
> Power from God claym'd, than God himselfe to trust. (ll.103-10)

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[69] Paul R. Sellin, *So Doth, So Is Religion: John Donne and Diplomatic Contexts in the Reformed Netherlands, 1619-1620* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1988), 4.

The image is forceful, and Donne's reference to the 'streames tyrannous rage' and 'mens unjust power from God claym'd' set off any number of alarm bells. On closer examination, however, it is less than patent that these lines substantially alter the meaning of the Satyre as a whole. Their import, rather, seems to correspond very closely with Donne's rejection of the dictates of 'a Philip, or a Gregory, a Harry, or a Martin' as a reliable basis for identifying 'true religion.' Power originates with God: to dwell at the stream's 'calme head' then is similarly to disregard human encouragements towards the choice of one religion or another. To abandon this position of dependence on God alone is dangerous: so doing, the hapless soul will be swept to its destruction.

Thus, it is far from clear, in spite of the readings of some critics, that these references to force allude to the established status of the English Church.[70] Nonetheless it is important to remark the hegemony of the State Church. This is, to a large extent, an absent presence in the work of both Hooker and Donne. As we have already noted, Hooker's reasoned approach to the choice of religion disregards, for the most part, the fact that the ceremonies, ritual, and the polity of the English Church had a unique position in law. Donne, similarly, is slow to foreground this position. However, it is clear that the establishment of the Church is crucial to Donne's understanding of the Church's authority. In this, his method had, perhaps, a greater affinity with those used by earlier conformists. This method was to establish that matters of ceremony and ritual are morally neutral: the case for and against is, in a sense, evenly balanced. The key element tipping the balance, after this equipoise has been achieved, is the Christian's duty to obey civil law:

> Call not *Ceremoniall*, and *Rituall* things, *Essentiall* parts of Religion, and of the worship of *God*, otherwise then as they imply *Disobedience;* for *Obedience* to lawfull Authoritie is always an *Essentiall* part of religion (VI, 258).

For Donne, then, the playing-field is never quite level, and civil responsibility may overrule the wise doubt endorsed in Satyre III, and temper, if not override, the position of fine independence embodied in the closing lines.

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[70] See especially Oliver, *Donne's religious writing : a discourse of feigned devotion*, 51-66.

It also seems at least possible that Donne, with his own traumatic conversion not so very far behind him, is regretting the necessity to choose a particular religion. In light of that conversion, the advice to 'ask thy father' and to 'let him ask his' seems a little odd – this is precisely what Donne, for all his pride in his illustrious and thoroughly Catholic lineage, did not do.[71] It is, however, precisely the course that Hooker, quoting Deuteronomy 32:7, urged upon his readers:

> Neither may we in this case lightlie esteeme what hath bene allowed as fitt in the judgment of antiquitie and by the longe continewed practise of the whole Church, from which unnecessarelie to swarve experience hath never as yet found it safe. ... [L]ett no man ... neglect the instructions, or dispise the ordinances of his elders, sith he whose guift wisdome is hath said, *Aske thy father and he will show thee, thine Ancients and they shall tell thee.*[72]

There are, then, some striking and suggestive congruencies between Donne's record of the search for true religion, and Richard Hooker's defence of the English settlement as just such a true and fair religion. These suggest an endorsement by Donne of the elements of Hooker's approach to the subject of ecclesiastical polity. Clearly, the possibility of Hooker's influence on Donne does not entirely depend on the respective dates of Book V, and Satyre III – Hooker had dealt with general issues of the relationship between Scripture and ecclesiology in Books III and IV, and the resemblances between Hooker's and Donne's stances on a range of issues are indicative of a very considerable commonality of viewpoint. However, the correspondences between Book V and the Satyre indicate a basic consonance of approach, and suggest that Donne found in Hooker's method insights crucial to the formation of his ecclesiology. We will consider the shared elements of this ecclesiology shortly, but Satyre III is concerned less with details than with fundamental questions of approach. Arguably, Hooker's most enduring contribution to the emerging Anglicanism was his emphasis on the role of reason as a balancing influence on both Roman tradition, and, more especially, Puritan Biblicism. *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* was,

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[71] Donne's reference, in Satyre III, was echoed in Holy Sonnet VIII – 'If faithfull soules be alike glorifi'd.' See also Sweetnam, '*Hamlet* and the Reformation of the Eucharist', 14-5.

[72] Richard Hooker, *The Folger Library edition of the works of Richard Hooker Vol.2 - Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity*, ed. William Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1977), 34-5.

prima facie, a reasoned and reasonable defence of the Elizabethan and Jacobean settlements. The primacy of reason in Hooker's approach was enormously attractive to Donne.[73]

Donne's wish to proceed by reason is established by his instruction to the reader to 'doubt wisely', and to 'stand enquiring right'; but also by 'the long and laborious process of historical, or semi-historical, research' implied in Donne's instruction to 'ask thy father' and 'let him ask his.'[74] Similarly, the painstaking ascent towards Truth, is gradual, not the product of a swift or sudden revelation, but the winning of 'hard knowledge', by means of the 'mindes indeavours.' Satyre III, then, is expressive of Donne's desire to follow Hooker's method, to be convinced by his reason of the identity of true religion. However, the Satyre may also dramatise the failure, for Donne, of this reasoned approach. We have already noted, in our consideration of Donne's understanding of the authority of Scripture, that he foregrounds the role of reason in the identification of Scripture, but remains deeply uncertain about the way in which reason might best be used. Here too, his commitment to reason leaves him less than fully satisfied. The whole point of Hooker's work was that reason could give the assurance of the possession of true religion, and Hooker is apparently serene in his confidence in the possibilities of reason.[75] Donne, in spite of his reliance on the 'mindes indevour' to win 'hard knowledge' seems unable, at this point, wholly to share Hooker's serenity. Reason fails to identify true religion beyond debate, and so he 'stand[s] inquiring right' and feels unable to 'run', in the pursuit of religion, to pursue a *via media*, a way and not a place.

Donne ultimately found a religion in which he could run, and his sermons outline his subsequent understanding of the role of religion in the authority of the Church. Indeed, it is noticeable that Donne's record of his own conversion in *Pseudo-martyr* stresses the role of careful research and the reasoned weighing of the opposing claims of the Roman and English Churches.

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[73] On the role of reason in Hooker's epistemology, and the tensions implicit in his dependence upon reason see 'Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, and the Boundaries of Reason' in Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 17-68. For reason in Donne's epistemology see Lowe, 'John Donne: The Middle Way', Sherwood, 'Reason in Donne's Sermons', Terry G. Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984) and Tebeaux, 'Donne and Religious Authority',.

[74] Leishman, *Monarch of Wit*, 116.

[75] Hooker largely maintains this serenity in the *Lawes*. As Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 17-68points out, consideration of the Hooker *oeuvre* in its entirety reveals some telling tensions.

Similarly, the second of Donne's sermons in the Potter and Simpson edition opens with an adumbration of the role of reason in relation to Scripture and the Church:

> [W]e forbid no man the use of Reason in matters of Religion. As S. *Augustine* says, *Contra Scripturam, nemo Christianus,* No man can pretend to be a Christian, if he refuse to be tried by the Scriptures: And, as he adds, *Contra Ecclesiam nemo pacificus,* No man can pretend to love order and Peace, if he refuse to be tried by the Church: so he adds also, *Contra Rationem nemo sobrius,* No man can pretend to be in his wits, if he refuse to be tried by Reason. He that believes any thing because the Church presents it, he hath Reason to assure him, that this Authority of the Church is founded in the Scriptures: He that believeth the Scriptures, hath Reasons that govern and assure him that those Scriptures are the Word of God. Mysteries of Religion are not the less believ'd and embrac'd by Faith, because they are presented, and induc'd, and apprehended by Reason (I, 169).

In the sermons, then, Donne is able to go beyond 'doubting wisely', and to run in the English Church, balanced by what was to become the classical 'Anglican' triad of Reason, Faith, and Tradition.

Donne's desire to stand enquiring, rather than to run, can also be interpreted in light of his difference with Hooker on the issue of rites and ceremonies. As we have seen, Donne did not, in general, follow Hooker in defending these observances on the ground of their necessity. Rather, he preferred to echo earlier generations of conformist apologists. This reluctance to over-determine the adiaphoric is of a piece with the picture of Donne's ecclesiology that will emerge in our study.

III-Catholic yet Reformed: Donne and Allegiance to the English Church

A crucial element in Donne's understanding of the Church appears in *Pseudo-martyr*, his earliest controversial work. It emerges in the context of Donne's discussion of the relative origins of magistracy and of ecclesiastical authority. As such, it forms a vital element in Donne's defence of the King's right to impose the oath of allegiance. Additionally, however, it is very revealing of Donne's conception of the nature of ecclesiastical authority. We have already alluded to this passage in relation to Donne's appreciation of the necessity of Divine revelation, but it bears quotation here at greater length:

> Certainely all power is from God; And as if a companie of *Savages*, should consent and concurre to a civill maner of living, Magistracie, & Superioritie, would necessarily, and naturally, and Divinely grow out of this consent. ... And into what maner and forme soever they had digested and concocted this Magistracie, yet the power it-selfe was *Immediately* from God: So also, if this Companie, thus growen to a *Commonwealth*, should receive further light, and passe, through understanding the Law written in all hearts, and in the Book of creatures, and by relation of some instructers, arrive to a saving knowledge, and Faith in our blessed Saviours Passion, they should also bee a *Church*, and amongst themselves would arise up, lawfull Ministers for Ecclesiastical function, though not derived from any other mother Church, & though different from all the divers hierarchies established in other Churches: and in this State, both Authorities might bee truly said to bee from God (*PM*, 79).

There are a number of elements to note in this extract. First of all, it provides us with a crucial insight into Donne's views of ecclesiastical polity. In this connection, we should notice that, the establishment of civil rule, as part of created order, is anterior to the emergence of ecclesiastical hierarchy, and validates the members of that hierarchy – they are 'lawfull Ministers.' Ecclesiastical rule, as much as the civil, originates with God as a principle. Divine ordinance does not, however, extend so far as to cover the precise manifestation of that hierarchy. This statement of Donne's understanding of hierarchy is important, not least because of the scarcity of reference to the subject in the sermons. Rather than just compensating for this paucity, however, the statement accounts for it: for Donne, Church polity is Divinely established, mediated through existing civil power structures, and not, therefore, up for debate. As a member of the Established hierarchy, preaching to members of the Church by law established, Donne has little reason to debate something that ought, in his view, to be taken entirely for granted.

The sermons are not entirely devoid of such discussions, and one of the most important occurs in Donne's Trinity Sunday sermon for 1621. There is much in the contemporary context to explain why Donne choose to address this issue: the period leading up to the publication of James I's *Directions* was marked by considerable ferment – negotiations over the Spanish match,

and concern about the fate of the Palatinate conspired to create an atmosphere of heightened tension.[76]

> Donne's sermons of this period contrast the excessive zeal of those who would reform abuses outside the law with the normal processes available for such improvement. Many of the analogies he uses reinforce his sense that the legally-constituted institutions of England, in both church and state, are the only legitimate means through which to effect further reform. ... Virtually all of Donne's sermons in these controversial times articulate a doctrine of callings focusing primarily on their spiritual as well as social necessity.[77]

This analysis is borne out by Donne's sermon on I Peter 1:17: 'And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' The closing section of the sermon commences with a warning not to

> thinke that power, by which the world is governed, is but the resultance of the consent, and the tacite voice of the people, who are content, for their ease to bee so governed, and no particular ordinance of God: It is an undervaluing, a false conception, a misapprehension of those beames of power, which God from himself sheds upon those, whom himselfe cals Gods in this World (III, 289).

In this context, with its obvious similarity to that outlined in *Pseudo-martyr*, Donne discusses the office and duties of priest and king:

> We sin then against the Father, when we undervalue God in his Priest. God hath made no step in that perverse way of the Roman Church, to prefer, as they doe, the Priest before the King; yet, speaking in two severall places, of the dignity of his people, first, as Jews, then as Christians, he sayes in one place, That they shall be *a Kingdome*, and *a Kingdome of Priests;* and he sayes in the other, They shall be *Sacerdotium*, and *Regale Sacerdotium, Priests*, and *royall Priests:* In one place, *the King*, in the other, *the Priest* mentioned first, and in both places, both involved in one another: The blessings from both so great, as that the Holy Ghost expresses them by one another mutually (III, 289).

There is, then, an imbrication of authority and of office, and both are to be given their allotted due: if the Christian is to 'abstaine from violating the power of god the Father, in dis-esteeming his power thus planted in the Priest' (III, 289), he must also avoid sinning 'against the Father, the

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[76] Donne sermons for this period are discussed in Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit*, 75-101. For a helpful discussion of the rather intractable complexities of the Spanish Match see Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).
[77] Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit*, 90-1.

roote of power, in conceiving amisse the power of the Civill Magistrate' (III, 290). Donne still sits very lightly on the precise detail of the hierarchy in which the priest functions; crucially, however, he is a 'lawfull minister.'

For Donne, then, civil and Church authority are closely related. But though closely related they are distinct, and in a sermon preached to the Royal household in 1626, Donne cautions any attempt to use civil means to religious ends:

> Christ beats his Drum, but he does not Press men; Christ is serv'd with Voluntaries. There is a *Compelle intrare*, A forcing of men to come in, and fill the house, and furnish the supper: but that was an extraordinary commission, and in a case of Necessity: Our ordinary commission is *Ite, prædicate; Go, and preach the Gospel,* and bring men in so: it is not, *Compelle intrare*, Force men to come in: it is not, Draw the Sword, kindle the Fire, winde up the Rack: for, when it was come to that, that men were forc'd to come in, (as that Parabolical story is reported in this Evangelist) *the house was fill'd,* and the supper was furnisht, (the Church was fill'd and the Communion table frequented) but it was *with good and bad too:* for men that are forc'd to come hither, they are not much the better in themselves, nor we much the better assur'd of their Religion, for that: Force and violence, pecuniary and bloudy Laws, are not the right way to bring men to Religion, in cases where there is nothing in consideration, but Religion meerly (VII, 156-7).

As the last clause quoted suggests, it is not always the case that 'Religion meerly' is in question, and Donne goes on to argue a role for the State when men's 'allegience is complicated with their Religion' (VII, 157). Thus, the imbrication of Civil and ecclesiastical authority has a negative, as well as a positive aspect.

Returning to the quotation from *Pseudo-martyr*, there are further details of significance to remark. We have already noted at some length the evidence, in this extract, of the radical importance of Scripture to Donne's ecclesiology. What is equally significant, however, is Donne's belief that adherence to Scripture as the source of the Church's authority still allows considerable freedom and flexibility in the details and minutiae of ecclesiastical practice. Donne therefore stands in contrast to Biblicist puritans, like Cartwright, who contended that adherence to Scripture should be absolute and excluded any room for variation in ecclesiastical practice. This accommodation of variety in practice was, and remained, fundamental to Donne's

understanding of ecclesiastical authority. It is also entirely consonant with Donne's interest in contemporary developments in the state of Venice, which seemed, for a time, to have the potential to result in further secession from the sovereignty, if not from the doctrine, of the Roman Church. *Pseudo-martyr* resounds with Donne's fascination with these events, and it seems most probable that the chapters originally planned by Donne to close the book would have further developed these ideas, had he remained constant in his purpose.

A similar conception of the possibility of differing manifestations of ecclesiastical polity appears in the *Essayes in Divinity*. In the *Essayes*, this account emerges in the context of Donne's discussion of the significance of the diversity in names found in Scripture. The reasons for this lack of uniformity had exercised the ingenuity of cabbalists, and Donne is dismissive of their tendency to 'observe in every variety some great mystick signification' (*ED*, 54-5). He offers '*It is so, because God would have it so*' as an accurate, if a 'lazy', explanation. However, Donne makes characteristic use of this debate to emphasis the irenicism of his own ecclesiology:

> I encline to think, that another usefull document arises from this admitting of variety; which seems to me to be this, that God ... fore-seeing, I say, that this his dearly-beloved Spouse, and Sister, and Daughter, the Church, should in her latter Age suffer many convulsions, distractions, rents, schisms, and wounds, by the severe and unrectified Zeal of many, who should impose necessity upon indifferent things, and oblige all the World to one precise forme of exterior worship and Ecclesiastick policie; averring that every degree, and minute and scruple of all circumstances which may be admitted in either belief or practice is certainly, constantly, expressly, and obligatorily exhibited in the Scriptures; and that Grace, and Salvation is in this unity and no where else; his Wisdome was mercifully pleas'd, that those particular Churches, devout parts of the Universall ... should from this variety of Names in the Bible it selfe, be provided of an argument, *That a unity and consonance in things not essentiall, is not so necessarily requisite as is imagined* (*ED*, 55-6).

While this argument is essentially the same as that outlined in *Pseudo-martyr*, we should observe one important development. In the earlier work, Donne spoke in terms of different churches developing in isolation, amongst unconnected savages. In this quotation the concept of a Catholic church emerges. As we have seen, this is to some degree a consequence of the belief that Scripture allows room for diversity in the practice of true Churches. Each individual Church –

and in Donne's thought this amounts to every national church – is validated as a church, not by external matters of polity, but because of its membership in this universal Catholic Church, a membership that, itself, springs from adherence to the core doctrines of Christianity. Donne expanded upon this understanding of catholicity in a sermon preached in 1619. The origin of this sermon is noteworthy – it is one of the two into which Donne 'digested' a single sermon preached at The Hague.[78] It is somewhat frustrating that we do not, therefore, know of a certainty that this section was preached on that occasion, but its appeal to the Reformed church in the Netherlands is patent:

> The Church loves the name of Catholique; and it is a glorious, and an harmonious name; Love thou those things wherein she is Catholique, and wherein she is harmonious, that is, ... Those universall, and fundementall doctrines, which in all Christian ages, and in all Christian Churches, have beene agreed by all to be necessary to salvation; and then thou art a true Catholique. Otherwise, that is, without relation to this Catholique and universall doctrine, to call a particular Church Catholique, (that she should be Catholique, that is, universall in dominion, but not in doctrine) is such a solecism, as to speak of a white blacknesse, or a great littlenesse; A particular Church to be universall, implies such a contradiction (II, 280).

As we have already seen, the respective etymologies of 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' gave the Roman Church an unfair semantic advantage. Donne here participates in the effort to regain the broader sense of the term, a sense that accommodated the reformed communions. In the following year, he engaged in further careful redefinition of terms that the Roman Church sought to monopolise. 'Every Church is a Supreme Church, and every Church is an Apostolicall Church ... as long as they agree in the unity of that doctrine which the Apostles taught, and adhere to the supreme head of the whole Church, Christ Jesus' (III, 138). And, in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross in 1627, Donne expressed his wish that all of Christendom might be united in the sort of Catholic Church that he longed to see:

> Blessed be that God, who, as he is without change or colour of change, hath kept us without change, or colour of change, in all our foundations; And he in his time bring our Adversaries to such a moderation as becomes them, who doe truly desire,

[78] For a detailed discussion of this sermon and the circumstances surrounding its delivery see Sellin, *Donne and Diplomatic Contexts*, esp. 109-34.

> that the Church may bee truly *Catholique, one flock, in one fold, under one Shepherd,* though *not all of one colour,* of one practise in all outward and disciplinarian points (VII, 433).

Donne is careful not to deny the possibility of a participation in this re-defined Catholicism by the Roman Church.[79] In the *Essayes*, as later in his career, Donne, while insisting on the necessity for Reformation, is unwilling to deny that the Roman church is, essentially, still a church. In this, Donne's echoes Hooker's statement that the Church of Rome ought 'to be held and reputed a part of the howse of God, a lime of the visible Church of Christ.'[80] Likewise, with a somewhat odd derangement of mammalian imagery, Donne allows for the validity of both Eastern and Western, Roman and separatist churches, a gesture that echoed one of James' preoccupations:

> Therefore that Church from which we are by Gods Mercy escaped, because upon the foundation, which we yet embrace together, Redemption in Christ, they had built so many stories high, as the foundation was, though not destroyed, yet hid and obscured; And their Additions were of so dangerous a construction, and appearance, and misapplyableness, that to tender consciences they seem'd Idolatrous, and are certainly scandalous and very slippery, and declinable into Idolatry.... And though these points be not immediately fundementall points of faith, yet radically they are, and as neer the root as most of those things wherein we and they differ ... yet though we branch out *East & West*, that Church concurs with us in the root, and sucks her vegetation from one and the same ground, *Christ Jesus*; who, as it is in the *Canticle*, lies between the brests of his Church, and gives suck on both sides. And of that Church which is departed from us, disunited by an opinion of a necessity that all should be united in one form, and that theirs is it, since they keep their right foot fast upon the Rock Christ, I dare not pronounce that she is not our Sister (*ED*, 56-7).

In this quotation we have progressed beyond matters merely of external procedure, which, in Donne's view are the result of 'the ground and state wherein God hath planted' a particular church, to those of doctrine (*ED*, 57). We will have more to say on this distinction later, but for the present, we ought to note that Donne regards both polity and non-fundamental doctrine as areas in which difference can be tolerated. And Donne, with his enduring ability to find the

[79] The status of the Roman Church had been the subject of broad agreement in the earlier Reformation. See Milton, 'The Church of England, Rome and the True Church: The Demise of a Jacobean Consensus'.
[80] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol. 2*, 355.

telling image, goes on to give memorable expression to this dichotomy between the external and the essential:

> As naturall, so politick bodies have *Cutem, & Cuticulam*. The little thin skin which covers al our body may be broken without pain or danger, and may re-unite it selfe, because it consists not of the chief and participant parts. But if in the skin it self, there be any solution or division, which is seldome without drawing of blood, no art nor good disposition of Nature, can ever bring the parts together again and restore the same substance, though it seem to the ey to have sodder'd it self. It will ever seem so much as a deforming Scar, but is in truth a breach. Outward Worship is this *Cuticula*: and integrity of faith the skin it self (*ED*, 57).

It is as well, perhaps, that the image is a memorable one, for the concept that it represents is crucial to our understanding of the Donneian ecclesiology. If it appears, at times, inadequate, it is because Donne seems to locate so many issues on the thin outer skin, and relatively few on the inner. This problem diminishes, however, when we recollect that while the articles of non-negotiable faith may be few in number, they are vast in significance – for Donne, they compose essential Christianity.

This contrast between the internal and essential, and the external and optional endured throughout Donne's career, and, indeed, its clearest articulation in the sermons is found in the series on the Penitential Psalms.[81] Donne adopts the Pauline image of treasure in earthen vessels, from II Corinthians 4:7:

> Consider the Church of God collectively, and the Saints of God distributively, in which Babylon you will, in the Chaldean Babylon, or in the Italian Babylon, and these waters doe come nigh us, touch, and touch to the quick, to the heart. But yet, ..., they touch not us, they come not nigh us; for *wee have treasures in earthen vessels;* They may touch the vessel, but not the Treasure. And this literally expressed in the Text it selfe, ... not that they shall not come neare his house, or his lands, or his children, or his friends, or his body, but *non eum*, they shall not come nigh him. For, for the Church, the peace of the Church, the plenty of the Church, the ceremonies of the Church, they are *sua*, but not *illa*, they are hers, but they are not she. And these things, riches and ceremonies, they may be washed off with one

[81] The dating of these sermons on the penetintial Psalms has proved problematic. Potter and Simpson have generally adopted a later date. P.G. Stanwood, 'Donne's Earliest Sermons and the Penitential Tradition', in *John Donne'sReligious Imagination*, ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances M. Malpezzi (Conway, AR: UCA Press, 1995) argues for an earlier date, although, tellingly, he does suggest that Donne may have revised and re-used some of these sermons – a telling indicator of the consistency of some of Donne's views.

> tide, and cast on with another, discontinued in one Age, and re-assumed in another, devested in one Church, and invested in another, and yet the Church is, she in her fundamentall Doctrines, never touched (IX, 332).

Quite evidently, to take these views on the nature of the Church to their logical, if extreme, conclusion would be to suggest that differences in polity or liturgy could simply be disregarded; that the issue of ecclesiastical affiliation was a matter of indifferency. Donne is conscious that his views could be caricatured in this way, and is ever careful to guard against this interpretation. In this, the jaded eye might see simply the expediency of a minister of the Established Church of England. However, while Donne was surely conscious of the responsibility he had assumed with his ordination, we must also recollect his own earlier remarks, in his letter to his new father-in-law, and more publicly in *Pseudo-martyr* of his own painstaking investigations of the competing claims of the Roman Church and the Reformed Church of England. Thus, while Donne emphasises common ground and shared belief, he is also adamant in his conviction that one ought not and cannot 'shuffle religions together, and make it all one which you chuse' (IV, 196). And this conviction is re-stated throughout the sermons. Like other of the key elements of Donne's ecclesiology, however, its most memorable expression occurs in Satyre III.

The over-riding preoccupation of the Satyre might be summarised as the choice of religion. The opening lines site this consideration in an eschatological context – the issues of Heaven and Hell are introduced early, and the Satyre, even in its more ironic moments, never quite allows us to forget this. Thus, it is scarcely surprising that Donne emphasises his firm belief, already noted, that the choice of Church is not a matter of indifferency. Donne expresses his repudiation of those who view the Church of England as the only valid church:

> Graius stayes still at home here, and because
> Some Preachers, vile ambitious bauds, and lawes
> Still new like fashions, bid him thinke that shee
> Which dwels with us, is onely perfect, hee
> Imbraceth her (ll. 55-59)

But the poem, in its pursuit of the mean, is equally critical of those who regard all religions as equally valid. So, he also criticises those like Graccus, one of the other counter-examples in the poem, who

> ... loves all as one, and thinkes that so
> As women do in divers countries goe
> In divers habits, yet are still one kinde,
> So doth, so is Religion; and this blind-
> nesse too much light breeds; (ll.65-68)

An indifference that regards all variation in religious practice simply as a matter of externals, is to be avoided. And Donne restates this conviction throughout the sermons, pronouncing, for example, in an undated Lincoln's Inn Sermon:

> [W]o unto him that is so free from all offences, as to take offence at nothing; to be indifferent to any thing, to any Religion, to any Discipline, to any form of Gods service; That from a glorious Masse to a sordid *Conventicle*, all's one to him (III, 166).

It is of particular interest to observe Donne take up this subject in his sermon preached in defence of James' *Directions for Preachers*.[82] This was an intensely political sermon, perhaps the most political that Donne ever preached, and, in light of the proposed Spanish marriage, James' diplomatic negotiations, and the Direction's instruction that 'no preacher of what title or denomination soever, shall consciously and without invitation from the text, fall into bitter invectives, and indecent railing speeches against the person of either papists or puritans,' it is not, perhaps, surprising that Donne does stress the possibility of compromise with those who differ in some points.[83] Nonetheless, we should note that Donne took occasion to stress the impossibility of compromising on fundamental principles:

> First then we are in Contemplation of *a Spirituall warre:* now, though there be a *Beati Pacifici*, a blessing reserved to *Peace-makers*..., yet there is a *Spirituall Warre*, in which, *Maledicti Pacifici;* Cursed bee they that goe about to make Peace, and to make all one, The warres betweene *Christ* and *Belial. Let no man sever those whom God hath joined,* but let no Man joyne those whom *God* hath severed neyther. ... God hath put *Truth* and *Falshood, Idolatrie* and *Sinceritie* so farre asunder, and infused such an incompatibilitie, and imprinted such an implacability betweene them, as they

[82] This important sermon, and the considerable body of related scholarship is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, below.
[83] Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 59.

> cannot flow into one another: And therefore, there, *Maledicti Pacifici*, It is an opposition against God, by any colourable Modifications, to reconcile opinions diametrically contrary to one another, in fundamentall things. .... There are points, which passions of men, and vehemence of disputation, have carried farther a sunder than needed: and these indeed have made the greatest noyse ... But then there are matters so different, as that a Man may sit at home, and weepe, and wish, prayse God that hee is in the right, and pray to God for them that are in the wrong, but to thinke that they are indifferent, and *all one*, *Maledicti Pacifici*, hee that hath brought such a Peace, hath brought a curse upon his owne Conscience, and layd, not a *Satisfaction*, but a *Stupefaction* upon it (IV, 192-3).

In a later sermon, preached in 1622, that dealt with the similarly divisive issues of images and iconoclasm, Donne stressed that, while compromise for the sake of friendship was by no means unthinkable, it could never be on fundamental beliefs:

> Problematicall things are our *silver*, but fundementall, our *gold*; problematicall our *sweat*, but fundementall our *blood*. If our Adversaries would be bought in, with our silver, with our sweat, we should not be difficult in meeting them halfe way, in things, in their nature *indifferent*. But if we must pay our Gold, our Blood, our *fundamentall* points of Religion, for their friendship, A Fortune, a Liberty, a Wife, a Childe, a Father, a Friend, a Master, a Neighbour, a Benefactor, a Kingdome, a Church, a World, is not worth a dramme of this Gold, a drop of this Blood (VII, 433).

For all Donne's emphasis on the importance of essential Christianity, and his willingness to stress the role of ecumenism and the possibility of more cordial inter-church relationships, he consistently argued the insufficiency of personal religious practice based upon a sparing or grudging commitment to the tenets of Protestant Christianity in general, and the Church of England in particular:

> Doe not say, I will hold as much of Jesus, as shall be necessary, so much as shall distinguish me from a *Turk*, or a *Iew*, but if I may be the better, for parting with some of the rest, why should I not? Doe not say, I will hold All, my self, but let my wife, or my son, or one of my sons, goe the other way, as though *Protestant*, and Papist were two severall callings; and as you would make one son a Lawyer, another a Merchant, you will make one son a Papist, another a Protestant (IV, 263).

The fact that Donne spoke these words in the 1622 sermon commemorating the discovery of the Powder Treason plot, intended for the very public arena of Paul's Cross, is, once more, an

important reminder of the vital political dimension to this debate. Thus, it is valuable to note the similarity of Donne's thought in an undated christening sermon. In this context, less public and political, more intimate and pastoral, Donne closed his remarks with an account of the nature of the Church into which the infant had been baptised. In this domestic context, he stressed not so much the choice between different churches, but rather the danger of attempting to overlook or to minimise the differences between conformity to the Church of England, and those who diverged to either side:

> To come as neere Christ as we can conveniently, to trie how neare we can bring *two Religions* together, this is not to preserve *Integritatem Jesu:* In a word, Intirenesse excludes deficiency, and redundancy, and discontinuance; we preserve not intirenesse, if we preserve not the dignity of Christ, in his Church, and in his *discipline*, and that excludes the defective *Separatist;* we doe not preserve that entirenesse if we admit *traditions*, and additions of Men, in an equality to the word of God, and that excludes the redundant *Papist;* neither doe we preserve the entirenesse, if we admit a discontinuence, a slumbering of our Religion for a time, and that excludes the *temporisers*, the *Statist*, the *Politician* (V, 150).

So, while Donne's comprehension of the Church as a core of essential beliefs overlaid by non-essential ceremonies that vary with time and place is fundamental to his ecclesiology, and remained so throughout his career; he balanced this by insisting that all Churches were not equally valid, and, specifically, that the Church of England which he had chosen after careful deliberation was the correct place for English Christians to be.

Donne spends less time explaining why this should be so then we might expect. There are, essentially, three reasons that Donne offers to explain his conviction that the Church of England is not be abandoned by members of his congregations. The first of these is, simply, its antiquity. For Donne, the ability of the English Church to trace its heritage back beyond the Reformers, and ultimately to the Primitive Church, was vital to its claim for allegiance. He was firm in his belief that 'God loves not innovation' but 'old doctrines, old disciplines, old words and formes of speech in his service, God loves best' (II, 305). This appeal to antiquity validated both doctrine and liturgical practice. So, in an undated sermon on Christ's instruction to Simon

Peter and Andrew to 'Follow me', Donne emphasised the value of the true Church as a doctrinal template, and hence as a necessary means to follow Christ:

> [I]n Doctrinall things, There must have gone some body before, else it is no following; Take heed therefore of going on with thine owne inventions, thine owne imaginations, for this is no following; Take heed of accompanying the beginners of Heresies and Schismes; for these are no followings where none have gone before: Nay, there have not gone enow before, to make it a path to follow in, except it have long continuance, and beene much trodden in. And therefore to follow Christ doctrinally, is to embrace those Doctrines, in which his Church hath walked from the beginning, and not to vexe thy selfe with new points, not necessary to salvation. That is the right way, and then thou art well entred; but that is not all; thou must walke in the right way to the end, that is to the end of thy life (II, 298-9).

This appeal to antiquity was also Donne's recourse when addressing the Puritan enemies of the Established Church, in an undated Trinity Sunday sermon. He took occasion to defend the fact of that antiquity, as well as its virtues:

> [I]n his Religion, and outward worship, we have enemies that deny God his House, that deny us any Church, any Sacrament, any Priesthood, any Salvation, as Papists; And enemies that deny Gods house any furniture, any stuffe, any beauty, any ornament, any order, as non-Conformitans; ... For our refactary, and schismaticall enemies, I call not upon them to answer me... Let them answer the Church of God, in what nation, in what age was there ever seen a Church, of that form, that they have dremt, and believe their own dream? (III, 257)

Secondly, and as we have already seen, Donne contends that the Established Church deserves the allegiance of his auditors precisely because it is Established, because of its relationship with civil government. This point he develops in an undated sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn:

> When our whole Land is in possession of peace and plenty, and the whole Church in possession of the Word and Sacraments, when the Land rejoices because the Lord reigns; ... every man that is encompassed within a Sea of calamities in his estate, with a Sea of diseases in his body ... may yet open his eyes above water, and find a place in the Arke above all these, a recourse to God, and a joy in him, in the Ordinances of a well established, and well governed Church, this is truly Regnum Dei, the Kingdome of God here ... This then is the blessed state that wee pretend

> to, in the Kingdome of God in this life; Peace in the State, peace in the Church, peace in our Conscience (III, 127).

Civil and religious peace, then, are inter-related, and their correspondence is guaranteed by the special status of the national Church.

Thirdly, Donne reminds his listeners that they had been born into the English Church, and argues, consequently, that they owe her their continued love and allegiance. Donne makes only sparing use of the Biblically validated imagery of the Church as a woman, and when he does use it, uses it most often to depict the English church as a mother deserving of her children's love and obedience.[84] Preaching in 1625 in the presence of the body of the king who was so largely responsible for his position in that Church, he applied the words of Canticles 3:11: 'Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.' It is highly significant that, in praising the dead King, Donne chooses to eulogise the English Church:

> And therefore you daughters of Sion ... quarrel not your mothers honor, nor her discretion: Despise not her person nor her apparel: Doe not say, *she is not the same woman, she was heretofore, nor that she is not so well dressed, as she was then;* Dispute not her *Doctrine*, Despise not her *Discipline;* that as you *sucked her breasts* in your *Baptism*, and in the *other Sacrament*, when you entred, and whilst you stayd in this life, so you may *lie in her bosome*, when you goe out of it (VI, 284).

In light of the love due to this mother, in light, too, of the gratitude due to her for her ministry of nourishment, it is a serious betrayal to look elsewhere:

> [W]hen we are bid to *Go forth*, it is not to go so far, as *out* of that Church, in which God hath given us our station; for, as *Moses* says, That *the word of God is not beyond the Sea*; so the Church of God, is not so *beyond Sea*, as that we must needs seek it *there*, either in a *painted Church*, on one side, or in *a naked Church*, on another; a Church in a *Dropsie*, overflown with *Ceremonies*, or a Church in a *Consumption*, for want of such Ceremonies, as the primitive Church found usefull, and beneficiall for the advancing of the glory of God, and the devotion of the congregation. (VI, 284).

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[84] This is an interesting contrast with the sleazily sexual imagery that permeates Satyre III. Even in that poem, however, the language of debased sexuality is reserved to the misguided efforts of those who fail in the search for true religion. 'True religion' in the poem is not a bawd or a strumpet, but a mistress. That term is intriguingly polyvalent, but she is, at any rate, a woman commanding the 'soul's devotion', rather than sordid misapprehension.

The possibility that English Christians might look elsewhere for the pattern of the ideal Church was troubling to Donne. His belief that the English Church was a complete and adequate Church made such an investigation both superfluous and a betrayal, and, in a sermon preached to the Earl of Carlisle and his company, he was clear in his instruction that his auditors ought not to trouble themselves

> to know the formes and fashions of forraine particular Churches; neither of a Church in the lake, nor a Church upon seven hils; but since God hath planted thee in a Church, where all things necessary for salvation are administred to thee, and where no erroneous doctrine (even in the confession of our Adversaries) is affirmed and held (V, 251).

This was also a useful rhetorical device, identifying religious with national loyalty, and suggesting that both puritans and papists were less than loyal in their commitment to the English state, a charge with considerable bite in the prevailing political and diplomatic environment.

These arguments for continued loyalty to the English Church are noticeably based more upon political, and, it might be said, sentimental reasons. Donne is strikingly slow to make any sweeping doctrinal claims for his Church. One of the most outstanding occasions when Donne did engage in this sort of defence comes relatively late in his career, in a sermon preached before Charles in 1627, a sermon that got Donne in trouble with the King and Archbishop Laud. Maura Lunderberg argues cogently that it was Donne's remarks about the possibility that the wives of religious kings might 'have retained some tincture, some impressions of errour, which they may have sucked in their infancy, from another Church' that offended his regal auditor (VII, 409).[85] Certainly, it seems unlikely that either Charles or Laud would have been offended by Donne's defence of the *via media* of the Reformed Church:

> From extream to extream, from east to west, the *Angels* themselves cannot come, but by passing the middle way between; from that extream impurity, in which the Antichrist had damped the Church of God, to that intemerate purity, in which Christ had constituted his Church, the most Angelicall Reformers cannot come, but by touching, yea, and stepping upon some things, in the way. ... It is the posture reserved for heaven, to sit down, at the right hand of God; Here our

[85] Lunderberg, 'John Donne's Strategies for Discreet Preaching',.

> consolation is, that God reaches out his hand to the receiving of those who come towards him; And nearer to him, and to the institutions of his Christ, can no Church, no not of the *Reformation*, be said to have come, then ours does. It is an ill nature in any man, to be rather apt to conceive jealousies, and to suspect his Mothers honour, or his sisters chastity, then a strange womans. It is an irreverent thankfulnesse, to think worse of that Church, which hath bred us, and fed us, and led us thus far towards God, then of a foreign Church, though *Reformed* too, and in good degree (VII, 409).

Donne's conception of a continuum of reform, along which the English Church has found just the right place to stop, is an interesting one, and it emphasises for us the importance of the *via media* in Donne's thought. This, too, is an element that finds its first expression in Satyre III. The poem, indeed, sets up two middle ways – firstly between intemperate zeal and cowardice, and secondly between Rome and Geneva. We have already considered the importance of the first of these, but the significance of the second should be noted, especially in light of Peter Lake's contention that

> Hooker was the first conformist to locate the English church between Rome on the one hand and an image of Presbyterian and Genevan extremism on the other. ... In constructing that image Hooker was trying to sever the close links of belief and identity which, as men like Bridges and Whitgift had acknowledged, had always bound the church of England to the foreign reformed churches. If a crucial element in the ideology of 'anglicanism' was the claim to have maintained a middle path between Rome and Geneva then Hooker deserves considerable credit for having been the first divine to formulate that proposition in as many words.[86]

Donne, then, is following Hooker when he personifies the two extremes that demarcate the middle way in the figures of Mirreus who thinks religion

> ...unhous'd here, and fled from us,
> Seekes her at Rome: there, because hee doth know
> That shee was there a thousand yeares agoe,
> He loves her ragges so, as wee here obey
> The statecloth where the Prince sate yesterday.

The other extreme is represented by Crants who

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[86] Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 159-60.

> ...to such brave Loves will not be inthrall'd
> But loves her onely, who'at Geneva's call'd
> Religion, plaine, simple, sullen, yong,
> Contemptuous, yet unhandsome.

Donne, then, is determined to navigate his way between a religion that can point only to past glories, on the one hand, and one having no past on the other. The balance that he seeks is less in terms of doctrine than in order and beauty – his objection to Geneva concentrates on its lack of beautifying order. Once again, we appreciate the force of his search for a church that combines antiquity of practice, with the re-invigoration of Reform. This characterisation of the *via media* continues throughout the sermons, as when, for example, Donne exhorted his readers to thankfulness that their Church suffered neither 'a dropsy nor a consumption, neither overflowing with unnecessary, nor lacking beneficial ceremonies' (VI, 284). Donne's desire for his congregations was that they, with him, might be 'content to consist in moderate, and middle wayes in the Reformed Church' (VIII, 135).

IV-Defining Christianity: Donne's Essentialist Ecumenism

What then, we may ask, does Donne understand as the key elements of the Christian faith, what ought to mark the middle way, and what constitutes the underlying integrity of Christian doctrine that can be neither broken or compromised? Like James I, Donne adopted an essentialist definition of Christianity that looked back beyond both the turmoil of the Reformation and the corruption of the Roman Church to Apostolic teaching, the early councils, and the belief of the primitive Church. These elements, agreed upon by Roman and Reformed Churches, form the core of Donne's ecclesiology. Roy Battenhouse, in one of the best available treatments of Donne's understanding of Christianity, identified this trend in Donne's thought, arguing that 'he seeks Christian unity by reducing dogma to a common minimum' and that 'his whole faith moves within the bounds of the creed of Nicea.'[87] Battenhouse uses the term 'fundamentalism' to label this tendency in Donne's ecclesiology. His choice of terminology is curious. The term 'Fundamentalism' emerged in the United States in the 1920s, with the

[87] Battenhouse, 'Religious Toleration', 229, 231.

publication of a number of Biblicist and intensely anti-modernist tracts defending core Christian values.[88] These tracts were collectively entitled *The Fundamentals*, and from this the movement whose ideas they represented became known as fundamentalism. Since than, the use of the term has evolved, and it has come to have definite overtones of intransigence and even of extremism. These associations render it inappropriate to describe Donne's essentialist rendering of Christian dogma. This purpose would more accurately, if less elegantly, be described as a essentialist ecumenism, stressing the unifying intent of Donne's identification of the essential core of Christian doctrine. While we wish to consider the expression of this view in the sermons, it is worthwhile to remark its practical expression in Donne's friendship with individuals from all parts of the ecclesiastical spectrum in England, as well as his interest in and links to Gallicans, Paolo Sarpi, and other Venetian reformers, and the proceedings of the Synod of Dort.[89]

This view of the Christian religion and of the Christian Church finds expression throughout the sermons, as Donne attempts capsule definitions of the truth of Christianity. He attempts in a number of ways. In his Whitsunday sermon for 1628, he does so by appeal to primitive creeds, endorsing a version of Christianity stripped down even further than the Church of England's creed:

> Truly I had rather put my salvation upon some of those ancient Creeds, which want some of the Articles of our Creed, (as the *Nicene* Creed doth, and so doth *Athanasius*) than upon the *Trent* Creed, that hath as many more articles as ours hath (VIII, 263).[90]

At other times he provides his own confession, stating, for example, that:

> The simplest man, as well as the greatest doctor, is bound to know that there is one God in three persons, that the second of those, the Sonne of God, tooke our nature, and dyed for mankinde; and that there is a Holy Ghost, which in the Communion of Saints, the Church established by Christ, applies to every particular soule the benefit of Christs universall redemption (V, 276).

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[88] See Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[89] See also Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit*, 10, 20, 23.

[90] Note that the continued use of this Creed was objected to by Cartwright, on the basis that the demise of the Arian heresy made it both superfluous and irrelevant. Hooker, in Chapter 42 of Book V, gave an account of its origin, and argued in favour of its retention as part of the liturgy of the Reformed Church.

In the sermon preached to the Earl of Carlisle, he turned the attention of his congregation to the three cornerstones of this essential Christianity:

> the Ten Commandments, which is the sum of all that we are to doe; The Lords Prayer, which is the summe of all that we are to ask; and the Apostles Creed, which is the summe of all that we are to believe (V, 247-8).

Donne also adopted the minimalist definition of the Church outlined in the Thirty-Nine Articles, itself echoing the Augsburg Confession, and according closely with Calvin's own definition: 'the true Church is that, where the word is truly preached, and the Sacraments duly administred' (VIII, 309).[91] He did, indeed, go on to qualify this definition by stressing that the word so preached must be 'the word inspired by the holy Ghost; not Apocryphall, not Decretall, not Traditionall, not Additionall supplements', and that the Sacraments administered must be those 'instituted by Christ himself, and not those super-numerary sacraments, those posthume, *post-nati* sacraments, that have been multiplied after.'

The ecumenical value of this view of Christianity emerges clearly in Donne's treatment, in a sermon preached in Lincoln's Inn, of Matthew 18:7: 'Wo unto the world because of offences.' Donne used this text to issue a very typical call for consideration for those who differ in non-essentials, stressing that 'wee are forbidden to scandalize any person' (III, 174). But Donne qualifies this call, and limits the range of possible offence proscribed by Scripture, to allow for the defence and statement of the verities of this essential Christianity:

> [Paul] was as carefull not to scandalize, not to give just occasion to Jew, nor Gentile, as not to the Church of God; so must we be towards them of a superstitious religion amongst us, as carefull as towards one another, not to give any scandal, and just cause of offence. But what is to be called a just cause of offence *towards* those men? Good ends, and good ways, plain and direct, and manifest proceedings, these can be called no scandal, no just cause of offence, to Jew, nor Gentile, to Turk, nor Papist; nor does Saint *Paul* intend that we should forbear essentiall and necessary things, for fear of displeasing perverse and peevish men. To maintain the *doctrinall truths* of our religion, by conferences, by disputations, by writing, by preaching to avow, and to prove our religion to be the same, that Christ Jesus and his Apostles proposed at the beginning, the same that

[91] Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.9. See Hirofumi Horie, 'The Lutheran Influence on the Elizabethan Settlement, 1558-1563', *The Historical Journal*, 34:3 (1990), 519-37.

> the generall Councels established after, the same that the blessed Fathers of those times, unanimely, and dogmatically delivered, the same that those glorious Martyrs quickned by their death, and carryed over all the world in the rivers, in the seas of their blood, to avow our religion by writing, and preaching, to be the same religion, and then to preserve and protect that religion which God hath put into our hearts, by all such meanes as hee hath put into our hands, in the due execution of *just Laws;* this is no scandal, no just cause of offence to Jew nor Gentile, Turke nor Papists (III, 175).

This identification of Protestant doctrine with Apostolic and Patristic teaching addressed the Catholic depiction of Reformed doctrine as innovation. Indeed, Donne's appeal to primitive and patristic Christianity reaped rhetorical dividends, for it allowed him to characterise the Roman Church in general, and the council of Trent, more particularly, as forces of innovation, and to upbraid them for their failure to perceive or to respect the sufficiency of this fundamental doctrine. Donne stated this position forcibly in his 1621 Christmas sermon, dealing with John 1:8: 'He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.'

> As in the heavens the stars were created at once, with one *Fiat*, and then being so made, stars doe not beget new stars, so the *Christian doctrine necessary* to salvation, was delivered at once, that is, intirely, in one spheare, in the body of the Scriptures. And then, as stars doe not beget stars, Articles of faith doe not beget Articles of faith; so, as that the *Councell of Trent* should be brought to bed of *a new Creed*, not conceived before by the *holy Ghost* in the Scriptures, and, (which is a monstrous birth) the child greater then the Father, as soon as it is borne, the new Creed of the *Councell of Trent* to containe more Articles, then the old Creed of the Apostles did. Saint *Jude* writing of the *common salvation* ... exhorts them to *contend earnestly for that faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints. Semel, once;* that is, *at once, semel, simul, once altogether* (III, 369-70).

The polemical thrust of this extract is patent, and Donne goes on to underscore the culpability of the Roman Church in adding to this once-delivered faith. Inevitably, transubstantiation and '*quotidian miracles*' come in for a mention, but Donne has spleen to spare for Rome's political innovations, as he summarises and re-states his position:

> To contract this, their *occasionall Divinity*, doctrines to serve present occasions, that in *eighty-eight*, an Hereticall Prince must necessarily be excommunicated, and an Heriticall Prince excommunicated must necessarily be deposed, but at another

> time it may be otherwise, and *conveniencies*, and *dispensations* may be admitted, these, and such as these, *traditionall, occaisionall, Almanack Divinity*, they may bee *Comets*, they may be *Meteors* ... but they are not *lux æternorum corporum*, the light of the stars and other heavenly bodies, for, they were made *at once*, and diminish not, encrease not. *Fundamentall articles* of faith, are always the same. And that's our application of this *lux æternorum corporum*, the light of those heavenly bodies, to the Light of our Text, Christ working in the Church (III, 370-1).

Donne was revisiting a theme that he had already examined in an undated sermon, preached on Job 19:26, at Lincoln's Inn, and dealing with the theme of resurrection. Here Donne pauses in his discussion of the Church's unique role in propagating the doctrine of bodily resurrection to distinguish carefully between the creation and the declaration of articles of faith. Notably, he also takes the opportunity to stress that doctrine must be in accordance with reason: to the extent that it must not contradict what reason grasps of the character of God:

> For, though articles of faith be not *facta Ecclesiæ*, they are *dicta Ecclesiæ*, though the Church doe not *make* articles, yet she *declares* them. In the Creation, the way was, *Dixit & facta sunt*, God spake, and so things were made; In the Gospell, the way is, *Fecit, & dicta sunt*, God makes articles of faith, and the Church utters them, presents them. That's *manifestè verum*, evidently, undeniably true, that Nature, and Philosophy say nothing of articles of faith. But, even in Nature, and in Philosophy, there is some preparation *A priore*, and much illustration *A posteriore*, of the Resurrection. For, first, we know by naturall reason, that it is no such thing, as God cannot doe; It implies no contradiction in it selfe, as that new article of *Transubstantiation* does; It implies no defectiveness in God, as that new article, *The necessity of a perpetuall Vicar upon earth*, does (III, 94-5).

In addition, then, to its very considerable possibilities as a means of promoting Christian unity, Donne's essentialist ecumenism allowed him room for some very effective polemical manoeuvre against the Roman Church and her adherents. In a funeral sermon for William Cokayne, preached in December of 1626, Donne made it an equally effective weapon against those at the other extreme of the religious spectrum. Interestingly, as in the Christmas day sermon, Donne is dealing explicitly with the theme of the faith. As befits the more lugubrious occasion Donne calls for introspection and self-examination: there is a far stronger sense in this sermon of

obedience to the faith embodied in the teaching of the Church as an individual exercise and responsibility.

> There is a Law of faith; a rule that ordinates, and regulates our faith; by which law and rule, the Apostle cals upon us, To examine our selves whether we be in the faith, or no; not onely by the internall motions, and private inspirations of his blessed Spirit, but by the Law and the Rule, which he hath delivered to us in the Gospell. The Kings pardon flowes from his mere grace, and from his brest; but we must have the writing and the Seale, that we may plead it: so does faith from God; But we must see it our selves, and shew it to others, or else we do not observe the Law of faith. ... So that it is not enough to say, I feele the inspiration of the Spirit of God, He infuses faith, and faith infused cannot be withdrawne; but, as there is a Law of faith, and a practice of faith, a Rule of faith, and an example of faith, apply thy selfe to both; Regulate thy faith by the Rule, that is the Word, and by Example, that is, Beleeve those things which the Saints of God have constantly and unanimely believed to be necessary to salvation: The Word is the Law, and the Rule, The Church is the Practise, and the Precedent that regulates thy faith; And if thou make imaginary revelations, and inspirations thy Law, or the practise of Sectaries thy Precedent, thou doest but call Fancie and Imagination, by the name of Reason and Understanding, and Opinion by the name of Faith, and Singularity, and Schisme, by the name of Communion of Saints (VII, 262-3).

Donne is in pastoral, as well as polemical, mode here, and he can be found in a similar vein as he discusses the same issue towards the end of his career, in the Christmas day sermon for 1629. In this sermon, he not only stressed the simplicity of the essence of Christianity – now reduced to the two commandments given by Christ – but also his reprehension of those who, by their 'wrangling' complicate Christianity:

> Whereas the Christian Religion, is ... a plaine, an easie, a perspicuous truth, but that the perverse and uncharitable wranglings of passionate and froward men, have made Religion a hard, an intricate, and a perplexed art; so that now, that Religion, which carnall and worldly men, have, by an ill life, discredited, and made hard to be believed, the passion, and perversness of Schoole-men, by Controversies, hath made hard to bee understood. Whereas the Christian Religion, is of it selfe *Iugum suave*, a sweet, and an easie yoak, and *verbum abbreviatum*, an abridgement and a contracted doctrine; for, where the Jews had all abridged in *decum verba* (as *Moses* calls the ten Commandements, *ten words*) the Christian hath all abridged in *duo verba*, into two words, *love God, love thy neighbour* (IX, 150).

Donne's distaste for the heated debate of doctrinal minutiae echoes throughout the sermons, often in just such a pastoral context. At times, too, Donne's repudiation, or even disgust, is motivated by the purposelessness of 'all such controversies which are all but forced diseases of hot brains and not sound minds' (V, 123). But beyond the pointless nature of such debate, Donne alerted his congregations to the tragic potential that such discussions had to weaken the defence of orthodox Christianity by dividing its forces. So, in a court sermon preached to King Charles in 1629, Donne warned of the possibility that internecine Christian controversy distracted attention from the true enemies of the gospel:

> Truly it is a sad Contemplation, to see Christians scratch and wound and teare one another, with the ignominious invectives, and uncharitable names of Heretique, and Schismatique, about Ceremoniall, and Problematicall, and indeed but Criticall, verball controversies: and in the meane time, the foundation of all, the Trinity, undermined by those numerous, those multitudinous Anthills of *Socinians*, that overflow and multiply every where (IX, 52-3).

This concern about misplaced use of 'heretic' as a convenient and emotive pejorative label is typical to Donne. It was an important, and deliberate, implication of his ecumenical essentialism that it made heresy much more difficult to achieve, and far more serious when it did occur. Donne spelled this out quite explicitly, in another sermon before Charles:

> I shall better answer God for my mildenesse, then for my severity. And though anger towards a brother, or a *Raca*, or a foole, will beare an action: yet he shall recover lesse against me at that bar, whom I have called weake, or mislead, (as I must necessarily call many in the *Roman Church*) then he whom I have passionately and peremptorily called *heretick*: for that consists much in the manner. It must be matter of faith, before the matter be heresie (IX, 77).

In this extract, Donne adopts a relatively accommodating attitude to Roman Christians, something that, undoubtedly, has a good deal to do with its audience and its context in court. Earlier in his career, the threat against which Donne called for English Christians to unite was this same Roman Church. As he outlined this in a Lincoln's Inn sermon, he articulated a principle fundamental to his vision of an accommodating and tolerant Church:

> He is a good Christian that can ride out ... a storme, that by industry, as long as he can, and by patience, when he can do no more, over-lives a storm and does not

> forsake his ship for it, that is not scandalized with that State, nor that Church, of which he is a member, for those abuses that are in it. The Arke is peace, peace is good dispositions to one another, good interpretations of one another; for, if our impatience put us from our peace, and so out of the Arke, all without the Arke is sea; The bottomlesse and boundlesse Sea of Rome, will hope to swallow us, if we dis-unite our selves, in uncharitable mis-interpretations of one another; The peace of God is the *peace that passeth all understanding;* That men should subdue and captivate even their understanding to the love of this peace, that when in their understanding they see no reason why this or this thing should be thus or thus done, or so and so suffered, the peace of God, that is, charity, *may passe their understanding,* and goe above it; for, howsoever the affections of men, or the vicissitudes and changes of affairs may vary ... howsoever I say, various occasions may vary their Laws, adhere we to that Rule of the Law, which the Apostle prescribes, that we always make ... *The end of the Commandment charity* (III, 185).

Christian peace, then, is a peace that passes understanding: a peace built upon an understanding of the limitations of reason. At times, then, it may be necessary to 'doubt wisely.' Again, this is a facet of Donne's thought identified by Roy Battenhouse, who summarises Donne's views on the value of human reason in this context by suggesting that, for Donne 'the mind's effort in pursuit of definitions produces results that are suggestive but not substantial, pertinent but not essential.'[92] Battenhouse identifies this strain in Donne's thought with the doctrine of 'learned ignorance' as taught by Erasmus and other Renaissance humanists, but taking its inspiration from Nicholas of Cusa. Ultimately, however, he identifies Donne's limitation of the utility of reason as a species of pietism, and briefly contends that this 'anti-intellectual' impetus can be traced 'back through St. Bernard to Gregory the Great, Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom and the Greek Fathers generally.'[93] Battenhouse is, perhaps, going to the very outer limits of the evidence by describing Donne's methods as anti-intellectual. In addition, he seems to underestimate the importance of another, more immediate source of this appreciation of a peace passing understanding. It should not, perhaps, greatly surprise us that this source is Richard Hooker, and *The Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Polity.*

[92] Battenhouse, 'Religious Toleration', 224.
[93] Battenhouse, 'Religious Toleration', 225.

Sacramental theology had a vital importance in Hooker's view of the Church. The Eucharist was of special importance in the cultivation of Church community. The precise mode of operation of the sacrament had been a subject of much discussion; central to the debate between the Roman and the Reformed Churches, but of similar import in inter-reformed debate. The battle between Roman transubstantiation, Lutheran consubstantiation, and Zwinglian memorialism was always intractable, and frequently divisive. In spite of the importance that Hooker ascribes to the Eucharist, he views this battle as vastly unproductive and, ultimately, unnecessary. He argues that the correct response to this central sacrament of the Church was rather a personal appropriation of spiritual benefit, and not a desire to investigate the nuts and bolts of sacramental operation. Hooker is not entirely accommodating of every perspective – like Donne, he resists Zwingli's idea, later adopted in the Westminster Confession, that the species of the Eucharist were simply signs, and not channels of grace. Beyond this qualification, however, Hooker is not prepared to pronounce on the mode of sacramental operation:

> This was it that some did exceedinglie feare, least *Zwinglius* and *Oecolampadius* would bringe to passe, that men should accompt of this sacrament but only as of a shadowe, destitute emptie and void of Christe. But seeinge that by opening the severall opinions which have bene held, they are growen (for ought I can see) on all sides at the lengthe to a generall agreement, concerninge that which alone is materiall, Namelye the *reall participation* of Christe and of life in his bodie and bloode *by means of this sacrament*, wherefore should the world continewe still distracted and rent with so manifold contentions, when there remainethe now no controversie savinge onlie about the subjecte *where* Christ is? Yea even in this point noe side denieth but that the *soule of man* is the receptacle of Christes presence. Whereby the question is yeat driven to a narrower isshue, nor dothe anie thing rest doubtfull but this, whether when the sacrament is administred, Christ be whole *within man onlye*, or els his bodie and bloode be also externallye seated in the verie consecrated elementes them selves, which opinion, they that defende, are driven either to *consubstaniate* and incorporate Christe, with elementes sacramental or to *transubstantiate* and change substance into his. ... All thinges considered and compared with that successe, which truth hathe hitherto had, by so bitter conflictes with errours in this point, shall I wishe that men would more give

> themselves to meditate with silence what wee have by the sacrament, and lesse to dispute of the manner how.[94]

Similarly, for Donne, the issue of importance is 'what wee have by the sacrament,' and not the insoluble and divisive question of 'the manner how.' He expressed this belief very clearly in his Christmas Day sermon for 1626, which 'contains ... his most explicit treatment of sacramental doctrine'[95]:

> When thou commest to this seale of thy peace, the Sacrament, pray that God will give thee that light, that may direct and establish thee, in necessary and fundamentall things; that is, the light of faith to see, that the Body and Bloud of Christ, it is applied to thee, in that action; But for the manner, how the Body of Bloud of Christ is there, wait his leisure, if he have not yet manifested that to thee: Grieve not at that, wonder not at that, presse not for that; for hee hath not manifested that, not the way, not the manner of his presence in the Sacrament, to the Church. A peremptory prejudice upon other mens opinions, that no opinion but thine can be true, in the doctrine of the Sacrament, and an uncharitable condemning of other men, or other Churches that may be of another perswasion then thou art, in the matter of the Sacrament, may frustrate and disappoint thee of all that benefit, which thou mightst have, by an humble receiving thereof, if thou wouldest exercise thy faith onely, here, and leave thy passion at home, and referre thy reason, and disputation to the Schoole (VII, 290-1).

In this extract, as is typical of Donne's Christmas sermons, it is the pastoral imperative that is stressed, and Donne alerts his congregation to the danger that an attitude of sacramental curiosity may nullify the personal and spiritual benefit of the sacrament. Curiosity, for Donne, often leads to a lack of charity, and true Christian charity should be able to accommodate differences of opinion in matters of 'probability.' Donne stresses the function of charity in his discussion, in his Easter sermon for the same year, of the importance of 'allowing another man his probability' on issues where Scripture is silent:

> Where two contrary opinions are both probable, they may be embraced, and believed by two men, and those two be both learned, and discreet, and pious, and zealous men. And this consideration should keep men from that precipitation of

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[94] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol. 2*, 331-2.

[95] Whalen, 'Sacramentalizing the Word: Donne's 1626 Christmas Sermon', 192. This sermon is also discussed in some detail in Robert Whalen, *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) and Eleanor McNees, 'John Donne and the Anglican Doctrine of the Eucharist', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 29 no. 1 (1987):94-114,.

> imprinting the odious and scandalous names of Sects or Sectaries upon other men who may differ from them, and from others with them, in some opinions. Probability leads me in my assent, and I think thus; Let me allow another man his probability too, and let him think his way in things that are not fundamentall. They that do not believe alike, in all circumstances of the manner of the Resurrection, may all, by Gods goodnesse, meet there, and have their parts in the glory thereof, if their own uncharitablenesse do not hinder them: And he that may have been in the right opinion, may sooner misse heaven, then he that was in the wrong, if he comes uncharitably to condemne or contemne the other: for, in such cases, humility, and love of peace, may, in the sight of God, excuse and recompense many errours and mistakings (VII, 97).

As we have already noted, sacramental debate was not just a matter of pastoral importance: it was an issue of central polemical interest. Later in the Christmas sermon quoted above, Donne acknowledged this aspect of the question. The imagery he uses expresses very acutely Donne's impatience with the taking up of positions simply to take a position:

> And so, diving in a bottomlesse sea, they poppe sometimes above water to take breath, to appeare to say something and then snatch at a loose proposition, that swims upon the face of the water; and so the Roman Church hath catched a *Trans*, and others a *Con* and a *Sub*, and an *In*, and varied their poetry into a Transubstantiation, and a Consubstantiation, and the rest, and rymed themselves beyond reason, into absurdities, and heresies, and by a young figure of *similiter cadens*, they are fallen alike into error, though the errors that they are fallen into, be not of a like nature, nor danger. We offer to goe no farther, then according to his Word; In the Sacrament our eyes see his salvation, according to that, so far, as that hath manifested unto us, and in that light wee depart in peace, without scruple in our owne, without offence to other mens consciences (VII, 296).

This extract is dismissive of theological debate – the endorsement of different positions on the Eucharist is seen less as a matter of careful thought than a desperate grasping at seemingly random ideas. It is this extract, perhaps, that comes closest to justifying Battenhouse's use of the term pietism to describe Donne's theology.

This treatment of the operation of the sacrament is paradigmatic of Donne's approach to a wider range of doctrinal debates. He outlined this approach, and some of the issues to which it was pertinent in one of the undated sermons from his series on the penitential Psalms:

> But still we continue in that humble boldnesse, to say, God is best found, when we seeke him, and observe him in his operation upon us. God gives audiences, and admits accesses in his solemne and publike and out-roomes, in his Ordinances: In his Cabinet, in his Bed-chamber, in his unrevealed purposes, wee must not presse upon him. ... We must abstaine from enquiring *De modo*, how such or such things are done in many points, in which it is necessary to us to know that such things are done: As the maner of Christs presence in the Sacrament, and the maner of Christs descent into Hell, for these are *arcana Imperii*, secrets of State, for the maner is secret, though the thing bee evident in the Scriptures. But the entring into Gods unrevealed, and bosome-purposes, are *Arcana domus*, a man is as farre from a possibility of attaining the knowledge, as from an excuse for offering it (V, 298-9).

In another undated sermon, preached at a christening, he added to the list of *Arcana domus* another insoluble mystery:

> Now since the Holy Ghost, that is the God of unity and peace, hath told us at once, that the satisfaction for our sins is Christ himselfe, and hath told us no more, Christ entirely, Christ altogether, let us not divide and mangle Christ, or tear his Church in pieces by forward and frivolous disputations, whether Christ gave his divinity for us, or his *humanity;* whether the divine Nature, or the humane Nature redeemed us; for neither his divinity nor his humanity, is *Ipse*, He himselfe, and *Dedit seipsum*, He gave himselfe: Let us not *subdivide* him into lesse pieces, then those, *God*, and *Man;* and enquire contentiously, whether he suffered in *soul*, as well as in *body* ... He gave himselfe; let us least of all shred Christ Jesus into lesse scruples and atoms then these, Soul, and body; and dispute whether consisting of both, it was his *active*, or his *passive* obedience that redeemed us ... Let us abstain from all such curiosities, which are all but forc'd dishes of hot brains, and not sound meat, that is, from all perverse wranglings, whether *God*, or *Man* redeemed us (V, 123-4).

Amongst these unplumbable mysteries, Donne also reckoned the controverted points of predestinarian theology, urging his listeners:

> let no Man be too curiously busie, to search what God does in his bedchamber; we have all enough to answer, for that, which we have done in our bedchamber (V, 160).

We may, then, observe Donne summarising this approach to these issues of theology in another of his sermons on the Penitential Psalms, even as he introduces a related but distinct issue in the life of the English Church:

> When the Lord is working in his Temple, in his Ordinances, and Institutions, let not the wisdome of all the world dispute why God instituted those Ordinances, the foolishnesse of preaching, or the simplicity of Sacraments in his Church. Let not the wisdome of private men dispute, why those whom God hath accepted as the representation of the Church, those of whom Christ sayes, *Dic Ecclesiæ, Tell the Church*, have ordained these, or these Ceremonies for Decency, and Uniformity, and advancing of Gods glory, and mens Devotion in the Church; Let all the earth be silent, *In Sacramentis*, The whole Church may change no Sacraments, nor Articles of faith, and let particular men be silent *In Sacramentalibus*, in those things which the Church hath ordained, for the better conveying, and imprinting, and advancing of those fundamentall mysteries; for this silence of reverence which is an acquiescence in those things which God hath ordained, immediately, as Sacraments, or Ministerially, as other Rituall things in the Church (IX, 281-2).

The doctrinal issues that we have already mentioned were enormous in their intrinsic import. Less inherently important in doctrinal terms, but of equal, if not greater impact to the experience of Church life, and the practical implementation of ecclesiastical authority, were the 'Ceremonies for Decency, and Uniformity' mentioned in this extract – matters of ritual and liturgy indifferent in themselves, but endorsed by the Church. These matters were hotly contested between those who conformed – with whatever degree of enthusiasm – to the form of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the Puritan and proto-Presbyterian elements of English Protestantism. A long history of debate between conformists and separatists had focused on these issues: the fashion of churches, the form of public prayer and the use of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the use of the cross in baptism, and the observance of holy days.[96] Not all of these issues are of equal importance for Donne, but many do occur in the sermons. Donne is concerned not to prove that the acceptance of these adiaphora was essential, but that it was possible without violence to the conscience to follow the direction and ordinance of the Church in matters not essential. Donne justifies the retention of contested ceremonies, on which Scripture is silent, by appeal to 'Decency, and Uniformity' in the praxis of the English Church.

The objection raised to these matters of ritual, and thus requiring to be addressed by their apologists, was that they came to close to the observance of the Roman Church, and hence

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[96] For a helpful discussion of the accommodation of common prayer and images in Donne's theology see Johnson, *The theology of John Donne*, 37-88.

had no place in Reformed polity. Hooker had summarised the complaints of the Puritan party, stating that the ritual of the English Church 'hath in their eye too great affinitie with the forme of the Church of Rome; it differeth too much from that which Churches elsewhere reformed allowe and observe.'[97] It fell to the lot of Hooker, Donne, and other apologists of conformity to argue that similarity to Rome was not, in and of itself, a *prima facie* basis to reject matters of observance otherwise indifferent. Donne expressed this conviction clearly in the sermon that he preached in 1628, marking the conversion of St Paul:

> I doe not intend, that we should decline all such things, as had been superstitiously abused, in a superstitious Church; But, in all such things, as being in their own nature indifferent, are, by just commandment of lawfull authority, become more then indifferent (necessary) to us ... (for, though salvation consist not in Ceremonies, Obedience doth, and Salvation consists much in Obedience) That in all such things, we always informe our selves, of the right use of those things in their first institution, of their abuse with which they have been depraved in the Roman Church, and of the good use which is made of them in ours. That because pictures have been adored, we do not abhor a picture; Nor sit at the Sacrament, because Idolatry hath been committed in kneeling. ... For this is a true way of shutting out superstition, Not always to abolish the thing it selfe, because in the right use thereof, the spirituall profit and edification may exceed the danger, but by preaching, and all convenient wayes of instruction, to deliver people out of that ignorance, which possesses people in the Roman captivity (VIII, 331).

Similarly, in his Trinity Sunday sermon for 1624, Donne explicitly addressed those who questioned the value of any extra-Biblical ritual. In the context, his immediate concern is the justification of the liturgical use of Scripture, the application of certain passages to particular days. His defence of this practice, however, goes beyond this particular adiaphoron, to embrace the whole range of external practices in the life of the Church:

> It hath been the custome of the Christian Church to appropriate certaine Scriptures to certaine Dayes, for the celebrating of certaine Mysteries of God, or the commemorating of certaine benefits from God: They who consider the age of the Christian Church, too high or too low, too soone or too late, either in the cradle, as it is exhibited in the Acts of the Apostles, or bed-rid in the corruptions of Rome, either before it was come to any growth, when Persecutions nipped it, or when it

[97] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol. 2*, 119.

> was so over-growne, as that prosperity and outward splendour swelled it, They that consider the Church so, will never finde a good measure to direct our religious worship of God by, for the outward Liturgies, and Ceremonies of the Church. But as soon as the Christian Church had a constant establishment under Christian Emperours, and before the Church had her tympany of worldly prosperity under usurping Bishops, in this outward service of God, there were particular Scriptures appropriated to particular days. Particular men have not liked this that it should be so: And yet that Church which they take use to take for their patterne, (I meane Geneva) as soone as it came to have any convenient establishment by the labours of that Reverend man, who did so much in the rectifying thereof, admitted this custome of celebrating certaine times, by the reading of certaine Scriptures (VI, 132-3).

Donne's appeal to the practice of the primitive Church is very typical, but we should also notice his citation of the practice of Geneva in support of the practice of the English Church – a move calculated to impress upon his congregation the validity of this practice. This is a device that Donne used whenever possible: Calvin is routinely empanelled to speak for the continued use of images, and the considered preservation of ceremonies in the life of the Church. So, for example, in a sermon preached on Candlemas day, close to the end of his life, Donne concludes his very frank acknowledgment that the celebration of Candlemas is a Protestant perpetuation of a Roman ceremony that originated in pagan practice by appealing to Calvin's three dicta on appropriate ceremonies, approving his requirement that ceremonies used in the reformed Church should be 'few in number; ... easie for observation; [and] ... clearely understood in their signification' (X, 90).

Donne's essentialist ecumenism, then, and his approach to both doctrine and ceremony emphasised a form of Christianity, a view of Church authority calculated to appear to as wide a range of opinion as possible. In no matter is this intent more clear than Donne's treatment of the Council of Trent.[98] Anti-Tridentine polemic was something of a Protestant staple. With Donne's interest in controversy, he was likely to be familiar with many of these writings against Trent. At the very least it is virtually certain that he would have known the work of Paolo Sarpi, the most

[98] For a wider discussion of Donne's views on Trent see Jeffrey Johnson, 'John Donne and Paolo Sarpi: Rendering the Council of Trent', in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003).

prominent and prolific exponent of the genre, in whom Donne had a clear interest.[99] These works of polemic drew the reader's attention to a large array of shortcomings in the instantiation, deliberations and decrees of Trent. With such a wide range of weapons at his disposal, it is very noticeable that Donne repeatedly returns to one central complaint: the Council of Trent had over-determined Christian doctrine, and had made 'Problematical things, Dogmatical; and matter of Disputation, matter of Faith' (IV, 144). Donne's disagreement was not simply with the outcomes of Trent, but its very premise:

> We charge them with *Heresie* in the whole *new Creed* of the *Councell of Trent*, (for, if all the particular doctrines be not *Hereticall*, yet, the doctrine of inducing new Articles of faith is *Hereticall*, and that doctrine runs through all the Articles, for else they could not be Articles) (III, 132).

And, while Donne adverts from time to time to specific determinations of Trent (such as the status it gave to the Vulgate, and its use of the 'unanime consent' of the Fathers as the gold standard for the interpretation of Scripture)[100] it is a repudiation of its unnecessary codification of Christian belief that most consistently occupies him.

So it is, that, in his first sermon before Charles, preached in April 1625, Donne includes, as a part of his discussion of the state of the English Church, a very typical criticism of the Tridentine additions to the fundamentals of Christian religion:

> [T]hey have made *Salvation* deare; Threescore yeares agoe, a man might have beene sav'd at halfe the price hee can now: Threescore yeares agoe, he might have beene saved for believing the *Apostles Creed;* now it will cost him the *Trent Creed* too. Evermore they will presse for all, and yield nothing; and there is indeed their *Specification*, there's their *Character*, that's their *Catholique*, their *Vniversall;* To *have all;* ... It would not be granted at *Rome*, if we should aske a *Church* for a *Church*. In a word, wee charge them with *uncharitablenesse*, (and *Charitie* is without all Controversie, a *Foundation* of *Religion*) that they will so peremptorily exclude us from Heaven, for matters that doe not appertaine to *Foundations*. For, if they will call all *Foundations*, that that *Church hath*, or *doth*, or *shall* decree, wee must learne our *Catechisme* upon our *Death-bedd*, and inquire for the Articles of our Faith, when

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[99] Sarpi's *History of the Council of Trent* was published in England in 1619. See Frances A. Yates, 'Paolo Sarpi's "History of the Council of Trent"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 7 (1944):123-43,. Johnson, 'Donne and Paolo Sarpi' provides a valuable discussion of the correspondences, and more importantly, discontinuities between the thought of Sarpi and Donne.

[100] See, for example, III, 176; III, 316; IV, 61; VIII, 205; and VIII, 358.

> wee are going out of the world, for they may have decreed something that morning (VI, 249).

Later, in another sermon preached before the King, Donne deals tellingly with Trent's unnecessary additions. In proof that these additions are undesirable, as well as the unnecessary, Donne goes on to instance the realisation of the 'sad and sober' men within the Roman Church who have come, ruefully, to recognise that they have committed themselves to an over-defined and inflexibile Christianity:

> [W]hen we have *Primogenitum Ecclesiæ*, The eldest son by the Primitive Church, The Creed of the Apostles, they will super-induce another son, by another *venter*, by a step-mother, by their sick and crazy Church, and ... will then make the portion of the later, larger than the elders, make their Trent-Creed larger then the Apostles. ... But the mystery of their Iniquity is easily revealed. ... All this is not because they absolutely oppose the Scriptures, or stiffly deny them to be the most certaine and constant rule that can be presented. ... But because the Scriptures are constant, and limited, and determined, there can be no more Scriptures, And they should be shrewdly prejudiced, and shrewdly disadvantaged, if all emergent cases arising in the Christian world must be judged by a Law, which others know beforehand, as well as they; Therefore being wise in their own generation, they choose rather to lay up their Rule in a cupboard, then upon a Shelfe, rather *in Scrinio pectoris*, in the breast and bosome of one man, then upon every deske in a study, where every man may lay, or whence every man may take a Bible. Therefore have so many sad and sober men amongst them, repented, that in the Councell of Trent, they came to a finall resolution in so many particulars; because how incommodious soever some of those particulars may prove to them, yet they are bound to some necessity of a defence, or to some aspersion if they forsake such things as have been solemnly resolved in that matter (VII, 124-5, *Cf.* VI, 300-1).

By way of a contrast that clearly points up Donne's objection to Trent, and that articulates an alternative conciliar model that appealed to his essentialism, we must give consideration to his views of the Synod of Dort, expressed in the same sermon.[101] We are less

[101] A very suggestive discussion of Donne's wider views of Dort is provided in Shami, 'Donne, the Synod of Dort, and the Early Stuart Church'. See also Shami, 'Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion in Donne's Sermons', 154-7.

interested in Donne's view of the theology of Dort than in his endorsement of the method of Dort:[102]

> In the last forraine Synod, which our Divines assisted, with what a blessed sobriety, they delivered their sentence. ... That we must receive Gods promise so, as they are generally set forth to us in the Scriptures; and that for our actions and manners, for our life and conversation, we follow that will of God, which is expressly declared to us in his Word (VII, 127).

What is noticeable is Donne's endorsement of a synod that refrained from emulating Trent's rigid codification of Christian doctrine. The determinations of Dort, in Donne's view, at any rate, allowed individual adherence to Scripture to take precedence over a commitment to the determinations of any human council.

It is helpful, by way of re-capitulation, to close this chapter by looking briefly at Donne's sonnet 'Show me deare Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and clear.' One of the relatively few poems written by Donne after he had entered orders, this sonnet, in its treatment of the Church, answers, across the years of Donne's career, the ideas of Satyre III.[103] It shares a number of the Satyre's key elements: the identification of the Church as a woman, the explicit figuring of this female figure as the object of a quest, the identification of painted Rome and the despoiled Churches of Reformed Europe as opposing ecclesiological positions, and a refusal to be complacent about the status of the English Church. Key to understanding the unique contribution of this sonnet is the fact that Donne, by imploring that he be granted a view of Christ's spouse, is looking for an eschatological revelation – Biblically it is only at the end of time that the Church is unveiled as Christ's spouse, that he presents her to himself 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish'

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[102] It is also significant that a commitment to councils of the Church, as a means of resolving doctrinal differences had a long history in English Protestantism and was, furthermore, of considerable importance in Hookerian ecclesiology. See, on the role of councils in general the overview of scholarship provided by Francis Oakley, 'Natural Law, the *Corpus Mysticum* and Consent in Conciliar Thought from John of Paris to Matthew Ugonis', *Speculum* 56 no. 4 (1981):786-810, and, on the pre-Reformation background, Bruce Gordon, 'Conciliarism in Late Mediæval Europe', in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000). Specifically on Hooker's consiliarism, W.B. Patterson, 'Hooker on Ecumenical Relations: Conciliarism in the English Refomation', in *Richard Hooker and the construction of Christian community*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1989), 23-4, 32-3, 42-4, Egil Grislis, 'The Role of Consensus in Richard Hooker's Method of Theological Inquiry', in *The Heritage of Christian Thought: Essays in honour of Robert Lowry Calhoun*, ed. Robert E. Cushman and Egil Grislis (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), Gunnar Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation in Richard Hooker* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1962), 53-5 and Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought*, 95-9.

[103] See, on Donne's post-ordination poetry, David Novarr, *The disinterred muse : Donne's texts and contexts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

(Ephesians 5:27). In this context, his examination of earthly, visible Churches, whether in Rome, Germany, or in England, seems calculated to reveal how little any national and temporal Church corresponds to the international and eternal Catholic body of believers. But there is also a polemical edge to this sonnet: Donne invokes and entirely subverts a crucial image of Presbyterian ecclesiology. 'For inscribed at the heart of the Presbyterian project lay a moment of transcendence when the division between the internal and the external government of the church was dissolved and Christ's spiritual body became visible, embodied in the community of the godly which had been called together and sustained by the purely scriptural ordinances and offices of the discipline.'[104] Donne is seeking a moment of transcendence that sounds similar, but is, in fact, fundamentally opposed to such expectations. His closing appeal to Christ to

> Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
> And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
> Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
> When she is embrac'd and open to most men. (ll. 11-14)

is deliberately shocking in its overt sexual implications, and forcefully expresses Donne's belief that a true church is an inclusive church. The articulation of the belief is, perhaps, unwontedly stark, but it remains an expression of the same basic ecclesiology that we have traced throughout Donne's career. For Donne, the Church did not function as a select society of the godly, whose membership requirements were designed to exclude all but the very elect. Nor could he accept the Roman model, where inclusion was obtained only at the price of a confining and crippling over-definition of acceptable belief. Rather, Donne, with Hooker, saw the Church as a supernatural society, the locus of orderly religious life, an expression of a national and international unity in the essentials of the Christian faith.

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[104] Peter Lake, 'Presbyterianism, The Idea of a National Church and the Argument from Divine Right', in *Protestantism and the national church in sixteenth century England*, ed. Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 200.

CHAPTER 3

THE AUTHORITY OF THE PREACHER

One of the most memorable scenes recorded in Izaak Walton's *Life of Donne* comes close to the end of his account, as Donne, the paragon of preachers, delivers his final sermon:

> Before that month ended, he was appointed to preach upon his old constant day, the first *Friday* in *Lent;* he had notice of it, and had in his sickness so prepared for that imployment, that as he had long thirsted for it: so he resolved his weakness should not hinder his journey; he came therefore to *London*, some few days before his appointed day of preaching. At his coming thither, many of his friends ... doubted his strength to perform that task; and did therefore disswade him from undertaking it, assuring him however, it was like to shorten his life; but he passionately denied their requests; saying, *he would not doubt that God who in so many weaknesses had assisted him with an unexpected strength, would now withdraw it in his last employment; professing an holy ambition to perform that sacred work.* And, when to the amazement of some beholders he appeared in the Pulpit, many of them thought he presented himself not to preach mortification by a living voice: but mortality by a decaying body and a dying face. ... Many that saw his tears, and heard his faint

> and hollow voice professing they thought the Text prophetically chosen, and that Dr. Donne *had preach't his own Funeral Sermon*.[1]

The sermon, at least in Walton's account was both the conclusion and the climax of Donne's preaching. His text, his exposition, and his appearance join together – 'his form and cause conjoined' – to make his final sermon uniquely effective, uniquely memorable.

For Walton, the preaching of the sermon later published as *Death's Duel* was a unique occasion, but it was also the culmination of a remarkable preaching career: the power of Donne's final act of preaching had been foreshadowed throughout Donne's ecclesiastical career. Donne had consistently:

> preach[ed] the Word so, as shewed his own heart was possest with those very thoughts and joys that he laboured to distill into others: A Preacher in earnest; weeping sometimes for his Auditory, sometimes with them: always preaching to himself, like an Angel from a cloud, but in none: carrying some, as St. Paul was, to Heaven in holy raptures, and inticing others by a sacred Art and Courtship to amend their lives; here picturing a vice so as to make it ugly to those that practised it; and a virtue so, as to make it beloved even by those that lov'd it not; and all this with a most particular grace and an inexpressible addition of comeliness.[2]

For Donne's first biographer, then, and for many of his contemporaries, it was as a preacher that Donne was to be remembered and celebrated. This is fitting: Donne himself found in preaching a work that gave shape and meaning to his life; a task that demanded the highest pitch of the oddly assorted talents with which his earlier life had furnished him. To understand Donne's view of the preacher's office is essential to our understanding of Donne's own self-image.

This understanding is of particular moment for our present study. For, if the authority of Scripture and the Church delineated truth for Donne, it was the office of the preacher to impart that truth to his congregation. The pulpit, then, became more than a stage for performance, or a shop counter for the peddling of crowd-pleasing sermons. Rather, it was a point of contact between God and his people, and the preacher, in his preaching of the Word of God became a conduit of Divine grace. And, while there was, clearly, a dignity about this function, it was a dignity that came with an alarming burden of responsibility – to God, to the

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[1] Walton, *Lives*, 55-6.
[2] Walton, *Lives*, 31.

Church, and to the congregation. It is this sense of obligation that that Donne repeatedly expresses by his appropriation of the Pauline *væ si non*... – 'Woe be unto me if I preach not the gospel...'.

Donne's understanding of the preacher's role illuminates more than the details of his biography. That insight is, unquestionably, both useful and necessary. Of equal importance, in our present study, is the pertinence of this understanding to our effort to locate Donne in relation to the intellectual and theological currents of the Reformed Church in which he ministered. Our endeavour to do so is a particularly notable instance of the advantages of reading Donne in the context of his time. As we shall see, the place of preaching in the economy of the English Church was being renegotiated throughout Donne's career. When this is borne in mind two remarkable facts emerge – firstly that Donne interacts vigorously and with some clarity with the changes proposed by the *avant-garde* conformists; secondly this interaction never explicitly invokes contemporary controversy. Donne is engaged less in a defence of orthodoxy than a defensive orthodoxy, and he responds to the challenge of the *avant-garde* by consistently restating the established doctrine of the English Church.[3]

While the role of preaching became an increasingly contested issue during Donne's career, the role of the preacher had been a complex one right through the Reformation.[4] The broad parameters of the debate over the role of the minister were laid out by William Crashawe in his Epistle Dedicatory to William Perkins' two treastises *On the Calling of the Ministrie ... Describing the Duties and Dignities of that calling*:

> The Church of *Rome* ... have taken other and strange courses to magnifie the Cleargie. ... They teach, that the Cleargie is a state so distinct, and yet so absolute of it selfe, as it hath not to doe with the ciuile state, yea they exempt their clergie, from being in any way subject to the temporall Magistrate. ... They extol their Clergie aboue the temporalitie, allowing the Priests both bread and wine in the Sacrament, but leaving the *Laitie* bread alone. They make them in their masse,

[3] A point that is much emphasised, in the service of a clear evangelical adgenda, by Peter Adam, *'To bring men to heaven by preaching' : John Donne's evangelistic sermons* (London: Latimer Trust, 2006).

[4] Preaching had, of course, been a mainstay of the continental Reformation. See, for a discussion oif its importance Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* . We should also note that preaching was not by any means exclusive to the Reformed Church. Indeed, Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) traces developments in late-medieval preaching that, in her compelling thesis, laid the homiletic basis for the diffusion of Reformed teaching.

> mediators betwixt Christ and God the father, and the Creators of their Creator and Redeemer, when and as often as themselves list. And finally, they send for the most part, all their Clergie immediately to heauen without let, whereas all the temporalitie (except Martyrs) nust passe by purgatory... Contrariwise, our church, or rather the corruption of our church, ... by auoiding one extremitie, have falne into the other, by taking too much *dignitie* & authoritie from our Ministerie, and by laying too much pouertie, contempt, and basenesse vpon it. It were a worke worth the labour of the wisest heads, to put downe the true meane betwixt both extreames, and worth the labour of our Noble King, to take order that that meane be kept, without rising to the right hand, or falling to the left.[5]

A central preoccupation of Crashawe's brief account, and of Perkins' longer treatment, is to demarcate the difference between Catholic and reformed understandings of the clergy. The account is classic in its statement of the key concerns of the Reformers – the exemption of the clergy from the rigours of criminal law, the sacramental privileging of priests above the laity, both in the celebration and reception of the Eucharist, and the extension of clerical privilege into eternity. The denial of such distinctions was a vital element in defining the distinctiveness of the reformed ministry. Equally significant, however, is Crashawe's acknowledgment that the reformed view of the minister was far from monolithic, and, indeed, required the wisest definition, and most careful preaching if the correct, but very delicate, balance were to be maintained. To a degree, no doubt, Crashawe is concerned with practical issues of considerable contemporary import. The funding and maintenance of the ministry, in particular, had occupied polemicists, politicians, and divines since the beginning of the Henrican Reformation, with its associated appropriation of Church property.[6] Crashawe and Perkins are, however, equally concerned with less tangible issues – the precise nature of the 'duties and dignities' of ministerial office.

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[5] William Perkins, *Of the Calling of the Ministrie, Two Treatises Describing the Duties and Dignities of that calling, Delivered Publikely in the Unviersity of Cambridge* (London: Printed by Thomas Creede, for William Welby, 1606), Sig. A 3.

[6] On this issue see Patrick Carter, 'Clerical Polemic in Defence of Minister's Maintenance During the English Reformation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 49 no. 2 (1998):236-56, Christopher Hill, *Economic problems of the church, from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), ch. ii and iii , F Heal, 'Economic problems of the clergy', in *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I*, ed. F Heal and R O'Day (London: Macmillan, 1977), 91-118, F Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes: a study of the economic and social position of the Tudor episcopate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: the emergence and consolidation of a profession, 1558-1642* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), and M. Zell, 'Economic Problems of the Parochial Clergy in the Sixteenth Century', in *Princes and Paupers in the English Church, 1500-1800*, ed. F Heal and R O'Day (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981), 19-43.

That this should be so was inevitable, given that the priesthood of all believers was a central teaching of both Luther and Calvin. As was the case with any number of key doctrines, however, the precise practical implications of the teaching were worked out differently by different Reformers. In the context of the English Church, the views of Calvin and Luther were especially influential, and the praxis of that Church drew upon these traditions with a fluidity of emphasis that varied over time. The influence of those traditions was complicated, during the period that most concerns us in this study, by the Laudian revision of Church practice, which added a further dimension to the interpretation of the role of the preacher, and of the priest.

To understand, therefore, the wider understanding of the role of the minister in the context in which Donne worked; it will be helpful to consider the doctrine of ministerial calling in the theology of both Luther and Calvin. For Luther, these doctrines were fundamentally based upon the priesthood of all believers. Thus, it is helpful to look first at the way in which this teaching was inflected in his writings. This will require us to qualify näive understandings of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. A simplistic reading of the doctrine, especially when taken in conjunction with the concept of *sola scriptura*, appears to eliminate the necessity of any ministerial or priestly office, insisting, in Lindsay's definition, on 'the right of every man and woman, whether lay or cleric, to go to God directly with confession seeking pardon, with ignorance seeking enlightenment, with solitary loneliness seeking fellowship, with frailty and weakness seeking strength for daily holy living.'[7] Such a statement clearly queries the value of communal Christian life, and the importance of the Church. The doctrine could be used in this way, and stated in the sort of terms that Lindsey used, was a reaction to the sort of privileging of the priesthood that motivated Crashawe's complaint. This element is clear in discussions of the priesthood of believers by the Reformers, but it gained nuance and complexity as they articulated a theology of priesthood, that accommodated the primacy of the individual relationship with God, but insisted also on the importance of communal Christianity, and of ministerial structure.[8]

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[7] T.M Lindsay, *The Reformation* (Edinburgh: 1883), 185-6.

[8] The following discussions of this subject provide helpful overviews of the relevant evidence: John T. McNeill, 'The Doctrine of the Ministry in Reformed Theology', *Church History* 12 no. 2 (1943):77-97, B. A. Gerrish, 'Priesthood and

This interplay of the communal and the individual is particularly noticeable in Luther's treatments of the issue. Luther denounced dependence upon 'the tin gods and buffoons of this world, the pope with his priests',[9] and affirmed the priesthood of all believers based upon his understanding of I Peter 2:9: 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' Thus, his treatise *On Private Masses and the Consecration of Priests* (1533) asserted that the priesthood of Christians depends only upon their baptism. For Hegel, and, in a more specifically theological context, for Schleiermacher, this doctrine made Luther the champion of a sturdy individualism, the epitome of the theological 'turn to the subject.'[10] In reality, however, while Luther had a manifest ability to stand alone against the massed ranks of his opponents, to understand his theology of believer's priesthood as a paean to the individual is to misinterpret it. In Luther's thought, from the fact that every believer was a priest did not flow the fact that every believer could be a priest for himself:

> [T]he individualistic interpretation of the common priesthood, according to which each man is his own, self-sufficient priest, misses the entire direction of Luther's thinking. The priest faces toward his neighbour, and serves him in the things of God. To be sure, it is the privilege that he has free access to God. Luther can therefore state categorically that we need no other priest or mediator than Christ. Such a statement, viewed in isolation, might well seem to support the individualistic interpretation of the common priesthood. But it must, of course, be interpreted by Luther's repeated insistence that to be a priest is to be a priest *for others*.[11]

Ministry in the Theology of Luther', *Church History* 34 no. 4 (1965):404-22, Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology:Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1999), 286-97.

[9] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 36, Word and Sacrament II*, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz (Philidelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 140.

[10] On Luther's influence on Hegel, and Hegel's complex use of Luther, see Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1994), Andrew Shanks, *Hegel's Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Ulrich Asendorf, *Luther und Hegel: Untersuchung zur Grundlegung einer neuen systematischen Theologie* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982) and Gary D. Badcock,'Hegel, Lutheranism and Contemporary Theology', *Animus*, http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/2000vol5/badcock5.pdf, 14 March 2007. On Luther's relevance to Schleiermacher see Richard Crouter, 'Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many-Sided Debate', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 no. 1 (1980):19-43, Kenneth Hamilton, 'Schleiermacher and Relational Theology', *The Journal of Religion* 44 no. 1 (1964):29-39, and B. A. Gerrish, 'Schleiermacher and the Reformation: A Question of Doctrinal Development', *Church History* 49 no. 2 (1980):147-59,.

[11] Gerrish, 'Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther', 410-1.

For Luther, then, it was the responsibility of every Christian to function as a priest for his fellow believers. Indeed, as Althaus points out, this duty spread beyond the Church to embrace a whole world:

> Luther never understands the priesthood of all believers merely in the sense of the Christian's freedom to stand in a direct relationship to God without a human mediator. Rather he constantly emphasizes the Christian's evangelical authority to come before God on behalf of the brethren and also of the world. The universal priesthood expresses not religious individualism but its exact opposite, the reality of the congregation as a community.[12]

The office of the minister, then, had little to do with a privileged access to God, or with special sacerdotal status. The minister stood in distinction to his flock not as a result of greater dignity, but as a result of his office in the Church: 'it is true that all Christians are priests, but not all are pastors. For besides being a Christian and a priest, one must also have an office and a parish committed to him."[13] The minister was also set apart from his congregation by his greater duty. This duty was pastoral, and, above all, doctrinally based, involving the instruction, as well as the defence of the flock. The minister, then, was an overseer for:

> This is exactly what one calls someone who lives in a tower to watch and to look out over the town so that fire or foe do not harm it. Therefore, every minister . . . should be . . . an overseer or watchman, so that in his town and among his people the gospel and faith in Christ are built up and win out over foe, devil, and heresy.[14]

The defence of the flock involved the preaching of the word of God. For Luther, however, this was just one aspect of a ministerial calling that was saturated in the Word, that had the proclamation of God's Word for its *raison d'être*. This logocentric conception of ministry emerges, perhaps most clearly, in Luther's *Concerning the Ministry* (1523). In this treatise, Luther lists seven functions of the minister, functions that bear a clear resemblance to the duties of the pre-Reformation priest: preaching, baptism, the administration of the Lord's Supper, binding and loosing sins, intercession, sacrifice, and the judging of doctrines. The place of preaching in this taxonomy is

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[12] Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 314.
[13] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 13, Selected Psalms*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 65.
[14] Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 39, Church and Ministry I*, 154-55.

noticeable – is basic to ministerial function, and basic, too, to the Christian experience that the minister must assist. Luther, indeed, made this explicit:

> The public ministry of the Word, I hold, by which the mysteries of God are made known, ought to be established by holy ordination as the highest and greatest of the functions of the church, on which the whole power of the church depends, since the church is nothing without the Word and everything in it exists by virtue of the Word alone.[15]

Further to this, however, is Luther's insistence that all these functions are understood as forms of the Word of God:

> The first and foremost of all, on which everything else depends, is the teaching of the Word of God. For we teach with the Word, we consecrate with the Word, we bind and loose with the Word, we baptize with the Word, we sacrifice with the Word, we judge all things by the Word.[16]

The Word, then, is of fundamental importance to the Church, and her need for it demanded 'the setting aside of men specially fitted for the work of proclamation.'[17] In Luther's theology, therefore, the preaching of the Word was the basic function of those called to be ministers, and set apart by the recognition of the Church.[18]

While Calvin's views on the nature of the ministry differed in detail from Luther's, the amount of ground common to both of the reformers is considerable, and the overlap is unmistakable. For Calvin, as for Luther, the priesthood of all believers was a vital doctrine. For Calvin, however, this priesthood was based upon Christ's priestly ministry:

> There being a change of the priesthood, there must of necessity be a change of the law. All the sacerdotal functions were transferred to Christ, and in him fulfilled and ended (Heb. 7:12). To him alone, therefore, all the rights and honors of the priesthood have been transferred.[19]

The priesthood of all believers, therefore, conferred upon Christians not the sacerdotal functions of priesthood, but rather the opportunity to minister as priests in fellowship with Christ:

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[15] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 40, Church and ministry II*, ed. Bergendoff (Philidelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 11.
[16] Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 40, Church and ministry II*, 21.
[17] Gerrish, 'Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther', 413.
[18] Like Calvin, Luther sat rather lightly on the precise mechanics of this calling, and of its external recognition in ordination. The complexities of this lie beyond the scope of the present discussion, and, thus, it is sufficient to note B. A. Gerrish's view that Luther's understanding was never fully delineated, and that the tension between the 'institution' and 'delegation' views of the ministry was never fully resolved. Gerrish, 'Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther', see especially 414-416.
[19] Calvin, *Institutes*, 297.

> But since God under the Law ordered sacrifices of beasts to be offered to him, there was a different and new arrangement in regard to Christ—*viz.* that he should be at once victim and priest, because no other fit satisfaction for sin could be found, nor was any one worthy of the honour of offering an only begotten son to God. Christ now bears the office of priest, not only that by the eternal law of reconciliation he may render the Father favourable and propitious to us, but also admit us into this most honourable alliance. For we though in ourselves polluted, in him being priests (Revelation 1:6), offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary, so that the sacrifices of prayer and praise which we present are grateful and of sweet odour before him.[20]

This priesthood was shared by all believers, and it was this universality of access that marked true Christianity off from the rituals of the law:

> Peter elegantly transposes the words of Moses, teaching that the fulness of grace, of which the Jews had a foretaste under the Law, is exhibited in Christ, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,' (1 Peter 2:9). The transposition of the words intimates that those to whom Christ has appeared in the Gospel, have obtained more than their fathers, inasmuch as they are all endued with priestly and royal honour, and can, therefore, trusting to their Mediator, appear with boldness in the presence of God.[21]

This doctrine of priesthood had for Calvin, as for Luther, a clear implication for the Roman view of priesthood.

A Reformed ministry, then, was something fundamentally different from the Roman priesthood, in purpose and in execution. The radical extent of this difference implied the need to define this ministry from the ground up – the mere redecorating of the Roman priesthood would not be adequate. Calvin is anxious not only to distinguish between the Reformed ministry and the priesthood, but also between the ordinary Scriptural offices of pastor and teacher, and the extraordinary offices of Apostles, prophets and evangelists. These three, 'the Lord raised ... at the beginning of his kingdom, and still occasionally raises them up when the necessity of the times requires.' Apostolic function centred in Christ's command to 'preach the gospel to every creature,' and their function was to spread the Gospel as widely as possible. Prophets, and evangelists, likewise

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[20] Calvin, *Institutes*, 234.
[21] Calvin, *Institutes*, 155.

> were not instituted in the Church to be perpetual, but only to endure so long as churches were to be formed where none previously existed ... although I deny not, that afterward God occasionally raised up Apostles, or at least Evangelists, in their stead, as has been done in our time. For such were needed to bring back the Church from the revolt of Antichrist. The office I nevertheless call extraordinary, because it has no place in churches duly constituted. [22]

In contrast to these extraordinary functions, Calvin recognised 'Pastors and Teachers, with whom the Church never can dispense.' The teacher's office was limited to 'interpretation of Scripture only', the pastor's encompassed 'discipline, or the administration of the sacraments, or admonitions, or exhortations' and was, in brief, essential to the functioning of a 'church duly constituted.' The Word of God, then, is crucial to the essence of the Reformed ministry – the minister is, above all else, a preacher:

> Paul speaks not of himself only but of all pastors, when he says, 'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God' (I Corinthians 4:1). Again, in another passage, he describes a bishop as one 'holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers' (Titus 1:9). From these and similar passages which everywhere occur, we may infer that the two principal parts of the office of pastors are to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. ... What Paul says of himself is applicable to all pastors: 'For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel' (1 Corinthians 4:16). In short, what the apostles did to the whole world, every pastor should do to the flock over which he is appointed.[23]

Of note here is the conception of the ministry as a weighty responsibility towards the flock of God, a duty to which preaching is integral.

This delineation of the responsibility of the minister naturally raises the question of how such ministers are to be appointed. Thus, Calvin also devoted considerable space to the discussion of ministerial calling:

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[22] Calvin, *Institutes*, 349. These five offices were not the only ones recognised by Calvin – he also had a place for elders and deacons. (*Institutes*, IV, iv, i) These, manifestly, were more concerned with ecclesiastical discipline, and were given little place in the Episcopalian mainstream of the Reformed English Church.
[23] Calvin, *Institutes*, 350.

> I am speaking of the external and formal call which relates to the public order of the Church, while I say nothing of that secret call of which every minister is conscious before God, but has not the Church as a witness of it; I mean, the good testimony of our heart, that we undertake the offered office neither from ambition nor avarice, nor any other selfish feeling, but a sincere fear of God and desire to edify the Church. This, as I have said, is indeed necessary for every one of us, if we would approve our ministry to God. Still, however, a man may have been duly called by the Church, though he may have accepted with a bad conscience, provided his wickedness is not manifest.[24]

Calvin goes on to examine in detail the four questions that he sees as vital to the role of the minister: '*who* are to be appointed ministers, *in what way, by whom*, and with *what rite or initiatory ceremony*?' Crucial to his concept of ordination was the necessity for the Church to give an external visible warrant of calling. So, as he argues for the ceremony of the laying on of hands as the most scriptural form of ordination, he draws attention to the message conveyed by such an act to the ordinand and to the congregation:

> And it is certainly useful, that by such a symbol the dignity of the ministry should be commended to the people, and he who is ordained, reminded that he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and the Church. Besides, it will not prove an empty sign, if it be restored to its genuine origin. For if the Spirit of God has not instituted anything in the Church in vain, this ceremony of his appointment we shall feel not to be useless, provided it be not superstitiously abused.[25]

The continental reformers, then, were united in their insistence upon the necessity for a ministry, and on the fundamental importance of preaching to that ministry. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe the importance attached to preaching in the Reformed Church of England, from the earliest days of the Reformation.[26] This is clear, for example, in the work of William Tyndale. In his 1528 *Obedience of a Christian Man*, Tyndale presented Christ's instruction to his apostles to preach the gospel as the essential content of their commission.[27] In his *Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, published in the same year, Tyndale, concluding his treatment of serving God

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[24] Calvin, *Institutes*, 352.
[25] Calvin, *Institutes*, 354.
[26] A suggestive overview of the importance of preaching in the Edwardian Church is provided by Catherine Davies, *A religion of the Word - The defence of the reformation in the reign of Edward VI* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 87-128.
[27] Tyndale, *Obedience*, 72.

within the confines appropriate to the calling of the individual by referring his readers to the example of the John the Baptist. His treatment of the relationship between the external features of the Baptist's life, and the importance of preaching to his ministry is of interest to us, because it anticipates Donne's very similar treatment of the same subject:

> Take this for an ensample. John baptyst, which had testymonye of Chryst and of the gospel, that there neuer rose a greater amonge womens children, with his fastynge, watchynge, prayeng, raiment, & strayte lyvynge, disceyued the jewes, and brought them in doubte, whether John were very Chryst or not, and yet no scripture or miracle testefyenge it, so greatly the blynde nature of man, loketh on the outwarde shynynge of workes, and regardeth not the inwarde worde whiche speaketh to the herte. Whan they sent to John, axynge him whether he were Chryst, he denied it. Whan they axed him what he was and what he sayd of him selfe/ he answered not, I am he that watcheth, prayeth, drynketh no wyne nor stronge drynke, eateth nother fysshe nor flesshe, but lyve with wyld honye & grasshoppers, & wear a cote of camels heare, & a grydell of a skyn: but sayd, I am the voice of a cryer. My voice onely pertayneth to you ... To you am I a voyce onely, and that whiche I preache. My preaching (yf it be receyued in to a penitent or repentynge herte) shall teache you howe to lyve & please god, according as god shall shede out his grace on euery man.[28]

To the English Reformation, then, the importance of preaching was deep rooted and organic: it was a foundational part of the Church, and not a later bolt-on accessory. This is clear at the most basic level of definition – Article XIX of the Thirty Nine Articles stated that 'the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.' Preaching, then, was a part of the *esse* of the Church: essential and fundamental to her being – more fundamental, almost, given the order, than the Sacraments. Article XXIII, Of Ministering in the Congregation, outlined precisely the same order, stating that 'it is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and

[28] William Tyndale, *The parable of the wicked mammo[n] take[n] out of the. xvi. ca. of Luke with an exposicyon tervpon latley corrected [and] printed* (Malborowe, in the lande of Hesse [London]: Hans Luft, 1528), fo.xxxvii (verso)-fo.xxxviii.

sent to execute the same.'[29] The point was underscored in *The Bishops' Book* (1537) and in *The King's Book* (1543). The former detailed the necessity that ministers with 'speciall power, auctoritie, and commission under Christe to preache and teache the word of god unto his people', before going on to deal with sacramental responsibilities, an ordering the more noticeable for the only partially reformed approach to the sacraments embodied in the *Bishops' Book*.[30] This fact gives emphasis, too, to the causes, set forth in the book, for the preservation of the office of ministry:

> Item that this power, office, and administration is necessarie to be preserved here in erthe for thse speciall and principall causes. Fyrste for that is the commaundemente of god it shulde so be, as it appereth in sondrye places of scripture. Seconde, for that God hath instituted and ordeyned none other ordinarie meane or instrument, wherby he woll make us partakers of the reconciliation, whiche is by Christ, and conferre and gyve the graces of his holy spirit unto us, and make us the right enheritours of everlastynge lyfe, there to reigne with hym for euer in glorye: but onely his worde and sacraments. And therefore thoffyce, and power to minister the sayde worde and sacraments, maye in no wyse be suffered to perysh, or to be abolysshed, according to the sayenge of saincte Paule, how can men invocate and call upon the name of hym, in whom they beleue not? And how can men beleue in hym, of whom they never herde tell? ... And therefore it is sayde by the prophete Esai, Blessyd be the feete of those preachers, whiche beings auctorysed and sent by god, do preche and shewe unto us the peace and benefytes, whiche we receyue by Christe.[31]

This priority remained unchanged in rather more conservative *The Kings Book* (1543). Similar language was used, too, in the office for the ordering of priests, as set out in 1559:

> And now we exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to have in remembrance, into how high a dignity, and to how chargable an office ye be called, that is to say, to be the messengers, the watchmen, the Pastors, and the stewards of the Lord: to teach, to premonish, to feed, and to provide for the Lord's family: to seek for Christ's sheep that be dispersed abroad, and for his children which be in the midst of this naughty world, to be saved through Christ for ever. ... And seeing that you cannot by any other means compass the doing of so weighty a work pertaining to the salvation of man, but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of holy Scripture, and with a life agreeable to the same; ye perceive how studious ye

[29] The same order also appears in Article XXVI – Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacraments.
[30] *The Institution of a Christen Man* (London: 1537), 39.
[31] *The Institution of a Christen Man*, 40-1.

> ought to be in reading and in learning the Scriptures, and in framing the manners, both of your selves, and of them that specially pertain unto you, according to the rule of the same Scriptures.[32]

The weight of responsibility conveyed by ordination, the importance of feeding the Church with Scripture, and the necessity of living a life that accorded with Scripture are key notes sounded repeatedly throughout this order. That this should be so, following the conservative alterations made to the liturgy of the Church in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, is indicative of the importance of the preaching of the Word in the Church of England.

We observe a very similar understanding of preaching in the sermons of Hugh Latimer. This is particularly noticeable in his sermon to Convocation on Luke 16. This sermon was something of an omnibus rebuttal of false Roman doctrine and practice, and few elements of controversy were excluded. In addressing Convocation he was, of course, speaking to fellow ministers, and he reminded them very clearly of the importance of their preaching:

> [Christ] is also the good man of the house, the church is his household, which ought with all diligence, to be fed with his Word and his Sacraments. These be his goods most precious, the dispensation and administration whereof, he would Bishops and Curates should have. Which thing S. Paule affirmeth, saying, Let men esteeme us, as the Ministers of Christ, and dispensores of Gods misteries. But I pray you what is to be looked for in a dispensour? This surely, that he is found faithfull, and that hee truly dispense, and lay out the goods of the Lord.[33]

Latimer's use of the title 'good man' establishes the context of household rule and the responsibility of the servant, especially in light of its resonance with passages like Matthew 20. The theme of faithfulness to Divine doctrine runs through the sermon – Latimer emphasises that the faithful steward cannot coin new money, but must spend 'the self same that he had of his Lord.'[34] Over against this ideal of faithfulness, the failure of the Roman clergy is to be seen as a failure in preaching:

> I command you to teach my commandements, and not your fansies, and that you should seek my glorie and my vantage: you teach your owne traditions, and seeke

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[32] William Keatinge Clay, ed., *Liturgical Services, Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer set forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1847), 288-9.
[33] Hugh Latimer, *Fruitfull sermons preached by the Reuerend Father, and constant Martyr of Iesus Christ, M. HUGH LATIMER, newly imprinted with others not heeretofore set forth in print, to the edefying of all which dispose themselues to the reading of the same.* (London: Printed for the Company of Stationers, 1607), facing 6.
[34] Latimer, *Fruitfull Sermons*, 6.

> your own glorie and profite. You preach very seldome, and when you do preach, ye do nothing but comber them that preach truelie, as much as it were much better, such not to preach at al, then so pernitioustie to preach.[35]

It is worthy of note that, as well as the *Fruitfull sermons*, which appeared in a number of editions, Latimer's sermons on preaching were anthologised in a compilation entitled *The Preaching BISHOP Reproving Unpreaching PRELATES*, printed in 1661: an illuminating attempt by a later polemicist to lay hold upon this exemplar of logocentric piety from the early days of the English reformation.

The place of preaching was not, indeed, uncontroversial throughout the Reformation: episodes like Elizabeth's clashes with Grindal, and his defence of both 'prophesyings' and of preaching more generally in his letter to her is proof enough of that.[36] For the most part, however, the primacy of the word preached was a hallmark of the English church. And this importance was constantly restated throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, inflected in sermons and apologetics, and endorsed by those from across the spectrum of the English Church.[37] It was only towards the close of James' reign that this consensus on the importance of preaching became an issue of contention. Though those who set about this demolition proclaimed their continuity with historical Christianity, they represented a new development in the English Church.

Commencing during the reign of James, the re-evaluation of the place of the sermon culminated, under Laud and Charles I, in a radical reorientation of the piety of the English church. As historians have sought to account for the emergence of the allied and overlapping forces of Laudianism and Arminianism, they have highlighted the origins of this new piety in the

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[35] Latimer, *Fruitfull Sermons*, 7.

[36] For an account of this episode see Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal*, 233-52. Prophesyings were rather different from the sort of sermons that we find Donne engaged in. Nonetheless, we should note that Grindal's fateful letter to Elizabeth I is as much a defence of preaching in general as it is of the specific form of 'prophesying.' See Edmund Grindal, *The Remains of Edmund Grindal, Successively Bishop of London and Archbishop of York and Canterbury*, ed. William Nicholson (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1843), 376-90. On the nature of prophesying see Peter Iver Kaufman, 'Prophesying Again', *Church History* 68 no. 2 (1999):337-58,. Collinson also draws our attention to the importance attached by preaching by Ridley, Grindal's mentor (p.57-65, *passim*), and to the centrality given to preaching in Grindal's approach to the ignorance prevailing in his new diocese of York, (pp. 205-10, 226).

[37] Eric Josef Carlson, 'Good Pastors or Careless Shepherds? Parish Ministers and the English Reformation', *History* no. 88 (2003):423-36, surveys the evidence for the centrality of preaching in a range of polemical, apologetic, and homiletic writing. Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor : the episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) esp. 9-34 suggests that the preaching of the gospel was one end of the Episcopal dipole, and marshals impressive evidence for the importance of preaching in the perception of the bishop's office.

works of Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes, and its popularisation by John Buckeridge and by Laud himself.[38] These men form the core of the *avant-garde* conformity of the Jacobean Church. The place of preaching was a central point of dissension between these *avant-garde* conformists, and the mainstream of the English Church.[39] Peter McCullough, in his study of sermons at the Elizabethan and Jacobean court, recognises the development of a very similar agenda of change, and, as befits the scope of his study, concentrates especially on its implications for preaching. He recounts James' demand that, on his arrival in his closet to hear the sermon, the liturgical portion of the service be cut short: the minister was obliged to segue, with what grace he could muster, into the sermon. In the light of this, he argues that it was 'James' brusque elevation of sermon over service [that] focused and fuelled a debate over the efficacy of preaching versus prayer that has simmered in England since the Reformation.'[40]

McCullough's characterisation of the debate should be noted with care: it was indeed concerned with the 'efficacy of preaching versus prayer.' None of the *avant-garde* argued that it was either possible or desirable to dispense with preaching. On the contrary, these divines had a very high estimation of the sermon. Hooker, indeed, made this explicit when he stated:

> So worthie a part of divine service we should greatlie wronge, if we did not esteeme preaching as the blessed ordinance of God, sermons as keyes to the kingdom of heaven, as winges to the soule, as spurres to the good affections of man, unto the sound and healthie as foode, as phisicke unto diseased mindes. Wherefore how highlie soever it may please them with wordes of truth to extol sermons, they shall not herein offend us.[41]

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[38] See, *inter alia*, Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* , Lake, 'Avant-Garde Conformity at The Court of James I' , Lake, 'The Laudians and the Argument from Authority' Fincham and Lake, 'The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I', Fincham and Lake, 'The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I' , Fincham, *The Early Stuart church, 1603-1642* , Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor*, esp. 231-47 and 277-88, Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists* , and Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* . Davies, *The Caroline captivity of the church : Charles I and the remoulding of Anglicanism, 1625-1641* , provides a useful marshalling of relevant evidence, but his interpretation of that evidence is open to challenge, especially in relation to the roots of the *avant-garde* movement in the Jacobean reign. Tyacke, 'Anglican Attitudes', provides an instructive survey of the 'Anglican' historiography embodied in a number of studies, and provides a helpful examination Davies' work (pp. 156-67).

[39] Helpful discussions of the debate over preaching are found in Lake, 'Avant-Garde Conformity at The Court of James I', esp. 123-6, Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor*, 233-47, Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion', McCullough, 'Laudianism, Print, and Andrews', Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court - Politics and religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121-2, 158-66. Lori Anne Ferrell, *Government by Polemic: James I, the King's Preachers, and the Rhetorics of Conformity, 1603-1625* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) covers many of these issues in her discussion of James' 'tuning of the pulpits.'

[40] McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, 156.

[41] Richard. Hooker, *The Folger Library edition of the works of Richard Hooker Vol.3 - Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity*, ed. Paul G. Stanwood (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1981), 87.

In spite of this view of preaching, Hooker's suggestion that the reading of the Scriptures might, at times, be both more beneficial, and (being unmediated) less susceptible to misinterpretation than preaching, was of crucial importance to the development of the *avant-garde* reappraisal of preaching. Also of vital importance was Hooker's understanding of the efficacy of Scripture, as the Word of God, and of preaching, as the medium to convey that word:

> He also seems to suggest that the salvific function of Scripture, read or preached, stems from the information that it imparts, rather than from the operation of grace on those present. Scripture 'serveth than onlie in the nature of a doctrinall instrument. It saveth because it maketh *wise unto salvation.*' ... [I]f sermons are 'doctrinall instruments' (in Hooker's phrase) then they are means of salvation only insofar as they teach the hearers what is required to be saved. The event of the sermon is not itself an opportunity for the receipt of grace.[42]

We find Hooker's ideas developed in the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes, 'the most famous preacher against preaching.'[43] Like Hooker, Andrewes insisted on the importance of preaching, in its place. This he expressed characteristically in a sermon preached before the King in 1607, on James 1:22: 'But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.'

> [I]n dealing with Scriptures that consist of *Negatives* by comparison (not *hearers*, but *doers*; and such like) we had need to walk warily: ... lest we cast out one Devil with another, as the manner of some is: the devil of *hearing* only, with the devil of *not hearing at all*: ... *We must take heed we preserve both, both* hearing and doing, each in their severall right: and so doe the former, that the latter *we leave not undone.* ... The reason of which our continuall being *hearers*, is the continuall necessitie of *hearing of the Word of* GOD.[44]

So while Andrewes insisted on the importance of the sermon he was concerned to identify it as but one of the means of grace, and to locate, or to re-locate, preaching in a hierarchy of those

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[42] Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion', 697.

[43] Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion', 697 On Andrewes see Peter E. McCullough,'Andrewes, Lancelot (1555–1626)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/520, 14 March 2007, McCullough, ed., *Andrewes Sermons* , and Nicholas Tyacke, 'Lancelot Andrewes and the myth of Anglicanism', in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church c.1560-1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, *Studies in modern British religious history, v.2* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000). For Andrew's influence on Laud see Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud, 1573-1645*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 113-4, Nicholas Tyacke, 'Archbishop Laud', in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-42*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), and Lake, 'Avant-Garde Conformity at The Court of James I', 114. Peter E. McCullough, 'Donne and Andrewes', *John Donne Journal* 22 (2003):165-201, provides an excellent study of the contrasts between two preachers who are sometimes simplistically compared. McCullough's article identifies as important a number of the central issues discussed in this chapter.

[44] Lancelot Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons by the Right Honorable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes, late Lord Bishop of Winchester*, ed. William Laud and John Buckeridge (London: Richard Badger, 1629), 132 (2nd pagination).

means, to reverse what he saw as the entirely reprehensible tendency in the Church of England to privilege preaching above prayer and sacraments. And he made this point, even as he insisted upon the place of preaching, in his Whitsun sermon for 1606:

> Howsoever it be, if these three [1] *Prayer*, [2] *The Word*, [3] *The Sacraments* be every one of them as an *arterie*, to conveigh the *Spirit* into us; well may we hope, if we use them all three, we shall be in a good way to speede of our desires. For, many time we misse, when we use this one, or that one alone; where it may well be, GOD hath appointed to give it us by neither, but by the third.[45]

For the Christian to restrict him or her self to any one artery, then, was dangerous: God's blessings might well rush past unseen in other, neglected, conduits. And, in Andrewes' view, it was in just such dangerous folly that his age was engaged:

> In, at our *eares*, there goes, I know not how many *Sermons*: and every day more and more, if we might have our wills. *Infers auribus*, into the *eares* they goe; the *eare* and all *filled*, and even *farced* with them: but there, the *eare* is all. It puts me in mind of the great absurdity, as *Saint Paul* reckons it. What, *is all hearing*? (saith he; *All hearing*? Yes: *all is hearing with us*. But, that all should be *hearing* is as much as if all one's *body* should be *noting but an eare*, and that were a strange body. But, that absurdity are we fallen into. The *corps*, the whole body of some mens profession; all *godlinesse* with some, what is it, but *hearing a sermon*? ... They were wont to talke much of *Auricular Confeßion*: I cannot tell, but now all is turned to an *auricular Profeßion*.[46]

And, we must qualify his treatment of the importance of preaching, in the sermon on James 1:22, quoted above, by noting his opening jeremiad:

> And this (to speake with *Salamon*) *is and evill disease under the Sunne*, which hath possessed the world; or (with S. *Iames*) *a strong illusion* of our ghostly enemy, Who when he cannot draw us *wholly* from the *Service* of GOD, maketh us single out some *one part* of it from the rest, and to be superstitiously conceited of that part; to make much of it, and to magnifie it *highly*, nay *onely*; with neglect, and (even as it were) with some disgrace to all besides it.[47]

Andrewes' most acute problems arose, then, when preaching was valued more highly than the sacraments and liturgy:

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[45] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, 607.
[46] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, 240.
[47] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, 130 (2nd pagination).

> Thus *serve* we *Him*, in His *holy worship:* how *serve* we *Him*, in his holy things? How *serve* we *Him*, in our *holineße* there? I will begin, and take up the same complaint that the Prophet *Malachi* doth. First, *Mensa Domini despecta est: The Table of the Lord is not regarded.* That Sacrament, that ever hath beene compted, of all Holies the most holy, the highest and most solemne *service* of God; (Where are delivered to us, the holy Symbols, the precious memorials of our greatest *Delivery* of all;) why, of all others they speed worst. How are they in many places, denied any reverence at all, even that which Prayer, which other parts have. ... Shall we now come to the service *indeed*? ... It is no new thing, for one *species* to carie away the name of the *genus* from the rest, as in this: For, though there be other parts of Gods *service*: yet Prayer hath borne away the name of *service*, from them all. ... As indeed, when all is done, devotion is the proper, and most kindly work of *Holineße;* and in that *serve* we God, if ever we *serve* Him.
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> *Thou hast magnified thy Name, and thy Word above all things*; saith the Psalme. After invocation then of His Name, let us see how we *serve* His Word; that part of his *service*, which in this Age (I might say, in the error of this Age) caries away all. For, what is it to *serve* God *in holineße?* Why, to go to a Sermon: All our holiday *holineße*, yea, and our working-day too, both are come to this, to heare (nay, I dare not say that, I cannot prove it) but, to be at a Sermon.[48]

In this extract, Andrewes' ire is directed in equal measure against those who too lightly esteem sacrament and liturgy. In his Whitsun sermon for 1618, however, his especial target was the suggestion that prayer was superfluous in the salvific economy:

> I dare not end with *Prophetabunt*, or with this; I dare not omit, but joyne *invocaverit* to them, For what? From *Prophetabunt*, come we to Salvabitur straight, without any *medium* betweene? No, we must take I*nvocaverit* in our way; no passing to *salvation*, but by and through it. For what? Is the *powring of the Spirit*, to end in *preaching*, and *preaching* to end in it self (as it doth with us; a *circle of preaching* & in effect nothing els) but *poure in prophesying enough*, and then all is safe? No: there is another yet, as needful, nay more needful to be called on (as the current of our Age runns) and that is *Calling on the name of the Lord.* This, it grieveth me to see, how *light* it is sett; nay, to see, how busy the devil hath beene, to *power contempt* on it, to bring it to disgrace with disgraceful termes: to make nothing of *Divine Service*, as if it might well be spared, and *invocaverit* (heer) be stricken out.[49]

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[48] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, 991-2.
[49] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, 719.

This sermon was preached before King James, and this fact adds emphasis to this section when we recall what we have already remarked in relation to James' tendency to dispense with the liturgy that the sermon might commence.

Andrewes was not the only *avant-garde* conformist to minister during the reign of James. Richard Meredeth, indeed, had begun the charge, and his two surviving sermons, both in their content and presentation, represent a clear elevation of prayer over preaching.[50] John Buckeridge who, as Lake and McCullough both point out, is a key figure in the development of the new conformity, endorsed a ceremonialism and a sacramentalism that went beyond what Andrewes had contemplated, also provides us with a clear link between Andrewes and Laud.[51] Few of these men, however, were as influential as Andrewes, and the publication, under the editorship of Buckeridge and Laud, of the *XCVI Sermons* in 1629 helped to perpetuate that influence after his death. It is, therefore, in his reappraisal of the place of preaching that we find the context of Donne's implicit defence of his role, his function, and his art.

In the context of this *avant-garde* reappraisal of the value of the word preached it is helpful to commence our consideration of Donne's views of the authority of the preacher by observing his insistence on the importance of the sermon. This insistence is marked by the moderation that, by now, we should recognise as a hallmark of Donne's approach to the contentious or the controversial. It gains weight, however, from the consistency with which Donne gave expression to it, and the significance of the homiletical contexts in which he chose to articulate it. The sermon, for Donne, took its place alongside the sacraments as a conduit of Divine grace.[52] Thus, while he distinguishes between sermon and sacrament, and between sermon and liturgy, he does so in order to argue for a relationship of equality and not of hierarchy. And, Donne contends for this equality not just during the reign and in the presence of

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[50] See McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, 156-9, and Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 112-3. McCullough draws our attention to the typographical eccentricity of Meredeth's printed sermons: The printed version of these sermons was set in the black-letter gothic that looked, by the date of their printing, in 1606, 'noticeably, even deliberately, antiquated.' He accounts for this eccentric typographical choice by pointing out the status of black-letter 'as the standard typeface for official government and church documents including *The Book of Common Prayer*.'[50] Thus, the typeface of *Two Sermons* visually linked Meredith's book with the printed liturgical texts of the English Church, a connection made explicit in the text of the second sermon, where the preacher made unprecedented use of passages from the prayer book as exempla and proof texts.

[51] Lake, 'Avant-Garde Conformity at The Court of James I' and McCullough, 'Laudianism, Print, and Andrews',.

[52] See McCullough, 'Donne and Andrewes', and Ferrell, 'Donne and His Master's Voice, 1615-1625',.

the remarkably homilophilic James, but also when preaching before the more liturgically preoccupied Charles.

I-Sermon and Sacrament

This relationship and the sort of balance with which it was expressed are both exemplified in Donne's Easter sermon for 1622. Taking his perennial Easter theme of resurrection, Donne spoke from I Thessalonians 4:16 and 17: 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' In this context Donne gave warning that the minister – the angel – must speak the word of God, or be accursed. And, for the individual Christian, the preaching and praxis of the Church provide the vital assurance of divinely originating authenticity:

> Yet thou must heare this voice of the Archangell in the Trumpet of God. The Trumpet of God is his loudest Instrument; and his loudest instrument is his publique Ordinance in the Church; Prayer, Preaching, and Sacraments; Heare him in these; In all these; come not to heare him in the Sermon alone, but come to him in Prayer, and in the Sacrament too (IV, 71).

This is a paradigmatic account of the place of the sermon in Donne's theology – not an option to be chosen *a la carte*, but a vital and integral part of Christian life. Or, as Donne expresses it a little later in the same sermon:

> [T]his we say to you, by the Word of the Lord, (by harmony of all the Scriptures) thus, and no other way, By the pure word of God, delivered and applied by his publique Ordinance, by Hearing, and believing, and Practising, under the Seales of the Church, the Sacraments, is your first resurrection from sin, by grace, accomplished (IV, 72).

The following day, Donne was preaching at the Spittle, with similar thoughts on his mind. His text on this occasion was II Corinthians 4:6: 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' The obvious connection with Pauline biography and the description of the gospel in the verse are more than sufficient stimuli for a further meditation on

the role of the preacher and of preaching. In this sermon, indeed, Donne engages in a more extensive discussion of the correlation between sermon and sacrament, drawing upon both Paul's experience on the Damascus road, and the 'infusion of the Holy Ghost into the Apostles at Pentecost.' In both of these instances, Donne points out, the work of God was expressed in

> an effectual, a powerful shining. And in both those cases, there were tongues too. The Apostles first, was fiery tongues, and *S. Pauls* light, was accompanied with a voice; for then does God truly shine to us, when he appears to our eyes and to our ears, when by visible and audible means, by Sacraments which we see, and by the Word which we heare, he conveys himself unto us. In *Pauls* case, there were some that saw the light, but heard not the voice: God hath joyn'd, separate them not: Upon him that will come to hear, and will not come to see; will come to the *Sermon*, but not to the *Sacrament;* or that will come to see, but will not come to hear; will keep his solemn, and festival, and Anniversary times of receiving the *Sacrament*, but never care for being instructed in the duties appertaining to that high Mystery, God hath not shin'd. They are a powerful thunder, and lightning, that go together: Preaching is the thunder that clears the air, disperses all clouds of ignorance; and then the *Sacrament* is the lightning, the glorious light, and presence of Christ Jesus himself. And in the having and loving of these, the *Word* and the *Sacraments*, the outward means of salvation, ordained by God in his Church, consists this Irradiation, this Coruscation, this shining (IV, 105).

Six years later, Donne expressed the same understanding of the role of the sermon, not, on this occasion, to a large Easter congregation, but to the elite of Whitehall as he preached before King Charles, then backing the early stages of the Laudian transformation of the English Church. In this more charged context, Donne's exposition was terse but no less unequivocal:

> God hath put nothing else into his Churches hands to save men by, but Christ delivered in his Scripture, applied in the preaching of the Gospel, and sealed in the Sacraments (VIII, 248).

Notably, the physical reality of the meteorological figure used in the 1622 sermon would reverse the order in which Donne glosses them, complicating any straightforward sense of hierarchical ordering. Before the King, however, the order seems clearly to privilege to place of the sermon above the sacrament and to place it in a more immediate relationship to Christ himself.

It is as much the liturgical as the historical context that lends force to Donne's treatment of the sermon. His allusion to the subject at Easter, for instance, gains force when we remember

that Easter Sunday was one of the three occasions during the Church's liturgical year when the taking of communion was mandatory for all. Indeed, notwithstanding the requirements of the 1559 *Book of Common* Prayer, and the canons of 1603, Easter was, according to Arnold Hunt, 'the one occasion during the year when all adults were expected to receive communion.'[53] Furthermore, the significance of Lent as a time of preparation for the climactic reception of communion added to the sacramental focus of the season. At Easter, then, the sacrament enjoyed a peculiar prominence, and Donne's efforts to balance that prominence are the more noticeable in this liturgical context. Nor was this limited to the sermons preached in 1622; in 1624 he returned to the same topic and the same arrangement:

> Christs first tongue was a tongue that might be heard, He spoke to the Shepherds by Angels; His second tongue was a Star, a tongue which might be seene; He spoke to the Wisemen of the East by that. Hearken after him these two waies; As he speakes to thine eare, (and to thy soul, by it) in the preaching of his Word, as he speaks to thine eye, (and so to thy soule by that) in the exhibiting of his Sacraments (VI, 79).

Once more, the topic was resurrection, and Donne was concerned to instruct his auditory how they might attain to the resurrection 'from the fearfull death of heinous sin' (78). To this end, the means provided in the sermon and sacrament were alone effectual. Donne contrasted these effective means with worldly delights, with good works, and with 'a relation to God himselfe, but not as God hath manifested himselfe to thee, not in Christ Jesus.' Above all these, the sermon stands as a central and vital element in God's salvific programme.

Equally noticeable in this context are sermons preached by Donne at christenings. Again, these occasions had a primary sacramental purpose and the treatment of the significance of the sacraments generally, and of baptism in particular, was only to be expected. Less expected, in the absence of what we have considered above, is Donne's consistent treatment of the relationship of preaching to the sacraments. The fact that few of the christening sermons are dated prevents us from attempting to integrate them into a particular historical context, and this, in turn, complicates an effort to map a development in Donne's understanding of the sermon. This notwithstanding, these sermons, taken along with the preoccupation of the Easter sermons are

[53] Arnold Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* no. 161 (1998):39-83, 41.

indicative of the importance that Donne attaches to preaching. This is exemplified in the christening sermon preached on I John 5:7 and 8: 'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.' Congruent with the occasion, Donne glosses the witness of the water as referring to baptismal water. He discusses alternative interpretations – the actual natural water employed in 'the *ablutions* of the old law' (V, 146), an alternative allegorical reading of the waters as '*affliction*, and tribulation' (147), or as 'waters of *Contrition*, and repentant *teares*' – and, while allowing them some usefulness for edification, ultimately dismisses them, because such non-sacramental waters are unworthy of equality with preaching:

> That water which is made equall with the *preaching* of the Word, so farre as to be a fellow-witnesse with the Spirit) that is onely the *Sacrament of baptisme*, without which (in the ordinary dispensation of God) no soule can be surer that Jesus is come to him, then if he had never heard the Word preached (V, 147).

Donne goes on to interpret the witness of the blood as a reference to the Eucharist, with the reluctance to be explicit about the operation of Divine presence that we have already noted in an earlier chapter:

> I am not ashamed to confesse, that I know not *how*, but the bloud of Christ is a *witnesse upon earth*, in the Sacrament, and therefore, upon the earth it is. Now this witnesse being made equall with the other two, with *preaching*, and with *baptisme*, it is as necessary, that he will have an assurance, that *Jesus* is come to him doe receive this *Sacrament*, as that he doe heare *Sermons*, and that he be *baptized* (V, 148).

In keeping with this imbricated importance of sermon and sacrament, Donne goes on to outline the appropriate trajectory of the Christian life, of which baptism is only the beginning. All three witnesses will be necessary at the other end, will be vital in an eschatological context:

> ... *woe unto you Hypocrites, that make cleane onely the outside of your Cuppes and Platters.* That baptize, and wash your owne, and your childrens bodies, but not their mindes with instructions. When we shall come to say ... *we have heard thee preach in our streets*, we have continued our hearing of thy Word, when we say ... we have eate in thy presence, at thy table, yea ... we have eaten thy selfe, yet for all this outward show of these three witnesses, of *Spirit*, and *Water*, and *bloud*, *Preaching*, and *Baptisme* and *Communion*, we shall heare that fearfull disclaiming from Christ Jesus,

> *Nescio vos*, I know not whence you are. But these witnesses, he will always heare, if they testifie for us, that Jesus is come unto us; for the *Gospell*, and the *preaching* thereof, is as the deed that conveys *Jesus* unto us; the *water*, the *baptisme*, is as the *Seale*, that assures it; and the *bloud*, the *Sacrament*, is the delivery of Christ into us; and this is *Integritas Jesu*, the entire, and full possession of him (V, 148-9).

In another undated christening sermon, this time on Ephesians 5:25-7, Donne developed these themes in greater detail, based on his treatment of the Divine intention to 'present ... himself a glorious Church', and the means by which this was to be accomplished: 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' The water and the word provide Donne with the opportunity to present the expected balance:

> He therefore stays not so long, for our *Santification*, but that we have meanes of being sanctified here; Christ stays not so long for his glory, but that he hath here a *glorious Gospell*, his *Word*, and *mysterious Sacraments* here. Here then is the *writing*, and the *Seale*, the *Word*, and the *Sacraments;* and he hath given power, and commandement to his Ministers to deliver both writing, and Seale, the *Word* and *Baptisme* to his children. This Sacrament of Baptisme is the first; It is the Sacrament of *inchoation*, of *Initiation;* The Sacrament of the *Supper*, is not given but to them, who are instructed and presum'd to understand all Christian duties; and therefore the *Word*, (if we understand the Word, for the *Preaching* of the Word) may seeme more necessary at the administration of this Sacrament, than at the other. Some such thing seems to be intimated in the institution of the Sacraments. In this institution of the Supper, it is onely said, *Take, and eate and drinke*, and doe that in *remembrance of me;* and it is onely said that they *sang a Psalme, and so departed*. In the institution of *Baptisme* there is more solemnity, more circumstance; for first, it was instituted after Christs *Resurrection*, and then Christ proceeds to it, with that majesticall preamble, *All power is given unto me in heaven, and in earth;* and therefore, upon that title he gives power to his Apostles, to joine heaven and earth by *preaching*, and by *baptisme:* but there is more then *singing of a Psalme;* for Christ commands them first to *teach*, and then to *baptize*, and then after the commandement of Baptisme, he refreashes that commandement againe of *teaching* them, whom they baptized, to observe all things, that he had commanded them (V, 127).

Donne, to an even greater extent than usual, is engaged in a balancing act in this sermon. For conformists, even for those who resisted the increasing sacramentalism of the Laudian programme, one of the most inexcusable Puritan excesses was the refusal of some parents to

allow their children to be baptised without an accompanying sermon. By the same token, however, Donne dismisses the contentions of those who evacuated the 'word' of its homiletic significance and who limited it to the formula of words spoken in the administration of the sacrament:

> I speake not this, as though *Baptisme* were uneffectuall without a *Sermon; S. Augustines* words, *Accedat verbum, & fiat Sacramentum*, when the Word is joined to the element, or to the action, then there is a true Sacrament, are ill understood by two sorts of Men; first by them, that say that it is not ... the word of *Prayer*, nor the word of *preaching*, but ... that very phrase, and forme of words, by which the water is sanctified, and enabled of it selfe to cleanse our Soules; and secondly, these words are ill understood by them, who had rather their children dyed unbaptized, then have them baptized without a *Sermon*. ... A *Sermon* is usefull for the congregation, not necessary for the *child*, and the accomplishment of the Sacrament.
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> From hence then arises a convenience, little lesse, then necessary, (in a kind) that this administration of the Sacrament be accompanied with *preaching*; but yet they that would evict out of it an *absolute necessity* of it, out of these words, force them too much (V, 128-9).

Donne is consciously and explicitly steering a balanced course between two extreme views, yet his belief in the necessity (though less than absolute) of the preaching of the word is clear and, as we have seen, gains impact in the sacramental context of the sermon. Its impact is further increased by Donne's location of this discussion at the end of his sermon, immediately before his peroration.

In these sermons, and on these sacramentally significant occasions, therefore, Donne consistently insisted on the necessity of preaching, along with prayer and sacrament, in the conveyance of salvation. In a number of other sermons, Donne goes beyond this, and argues that the sermon has, in itself, an incarnational and a sacramental function. So, in a sermon where he identifies preaching as an ordinary means of 'manifesting Christ', he goes on to say '*caro in verbo*, he that is made flesh comes in the word, that is, Christ comes in the preaching thereof' (II, 251). Similarly, in a sermon preached at Whitehall, during Lent of 1625, Donne's discussion of the ritual value of fasting leads him on to a discussion of preaching and sacrament in the sort of terms that

we have already remarked. He goes on from this to collapse any too-stable distinction between sermon and sacrament:

> This fasting then, enjoyned by God, for the generall, in his Word, and thus limited to this Time, for the particular, in his Church, is indeed but a continuation of a great Feast: Where, the first course (that which we begin to serve in now) is Manna, food of Angels, plentifull, frequent preaching; but the second course, is the very body and blood of Christ Jesus, shed for us, and given to us, in that blessed Sacrament, of which himselfe makes us worthy receivers at that time. Now, as the end of all bodily eating, is Assimilation, that after all other concoctions, that meat may be made *Idem corpus*, the same body that I am; so the end of all spirituall eating, is Assimilation too, That after all Hearing, and all Receiving, I may be made *Idem spiritus cum Domino*, the same spirit, that my God is: for, though it be good to Heare, good to Receive, good to Meditate, yet, (if we speake effectually, and consummatively) why call we these good? There is nothing good but One, that is, Assimilation to God (II, 223-4).

A similar dynamic is at work in an undated Whitsunday sermon, assigned by Potter and Simpson to 1618, 1620, or 1621. Donne took as his passage Acts 10:44: 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' He treats Peter's preaching as a paradigm of the preparation, delivery, and results of preaching. This meditation on the means and end of preaching includes one of Donne's most far-reaching declarations of the power of the word preached, a declaration rendered the more noticeable for the cautious qualification with which Donne voices it:

> *He hath commanded us to preach;* that is, he hath established a Church, and therein, visible means of salvation; And, then, this is our generall text, the subject of all our Sermons, *That through his name, whosoever beleeveth in him shall have remission of sins.* So that this is all that we dare avow concerning salvation, that howsoever God may afford salvation to some in all nations, yet he hath manifested to us no way of conveying salvation to them, but by the manifestation of Christ Jesus in his Ordinance of preaching.

Very much of a piece with these Easter and christening sermons are those sermons preached by Donne at churchings. The churching sermon itself is an interesting phenomenon, indicative of distinctive stresses in the Reformed church. The service of churching, adapted by the Roman Church from the Jewish ritual purification following childbirth, was far from having

the deep and hotly contested theological significance that was ascribed to the sacraments. Nonetheless, its retention in the English Church was controversial: it was felt by more rigidly Protestant reformers to be at best of questionable value, at worst thoroughly disreputable.[54] Thus, while Richard Hooker designated it an adiaphoron, he also felt the need to defend it, as a duty of thanksgiving.[55] In this context, the insertion of a sermon into the service of churching was of considerable symbolical importance in the 'protestantising' of the rite, adding to its ritual function an opportunity for some profitable preaching, and the possibility of using the sermon to define and contain the meaning of the rite enacted. Thus, it can persuasively be argued, the churching sermon had as much to do with the inoculation of a dubious ceremony against the threat of popery as it did with the instruction of the newly purified mother and her friends.

Donne's churching sermons clearly partake in this project. More notable than their existence, however, is their content, for Donne makes use of the opportunity provided to speak clearly about the responsibility of the preacher and the function of the sermon. Potter and Simpson's edition contains three churching sermons. The first of these was preached at Essex House on the occasion of the churching of Lady Doncaster. The remaining two printed sermons are an expansion of one sermon preached at the churching of the countess of Bridgewater. Donne's 'digesting' of the one preached sermon into two – fairly substantial – printed sermons is a salutary reminder of the gulf between the sermon as an oral and a printed artefact – a gulf certainly present, though of incognoscible width. For the purposes of the present argument, however, this gulf matters less than it might in other contexts. What is significant, from our point of view, is Donne's recognition that a churching sermon provided a *mise en scène* amenable to the discussion of the preacher and preaching. Whether he introduced it, or simply retained it, its presence in the printed version is testament to the fact that he thought the point worth the making.

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[54] The significance of churching in late medieval England has been most influentially surveyed in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, studies in the Popular Belief of Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971). An significant recent study that draws explicitly upon Thomas' account is provided in William Coster, 'Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: The Churching of Women, 1500-1700', in *Women in the Church*, ed. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for The Ecclesiastical History Society, 1990). For a more valuable account, privileging historical data above theory, see David Cressy, 'Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England', *Past and Present* no. 141 (1993):106-46,.

[55] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol.* 3, 406-9.

Donne's sermon at the churching of Lady Doncaster took as its text the second clause of Canticles 5:8: 'I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?' Donne draws on patristic interpretation and exegesis to apply the cleansing mentioned to the cleansing of the life from sin, specifically an initial washing in baptism, and the ongoing examination and purification of the life by the individual believer. The redefinition of the churching ceremony already remarked can be seen at work here, for Donne's references to the specifics of child-birth, and the sort of defilement that it entailed are slight:

> It is a degree of uncleannesse, to fixe our thoughts too earnestly upon the unncleannesse of our conception, and of our birth: when wee call that a testimony of a right coming, if we come into the world *with our head forward*, in a head-long precipitation; and when we take no other testimony of our being *alive*, but that we were heard to *cry*; and that for an earnest, and a Prophecy, that we shall be ... bloudy, and deceitfull Men, false and treacherous, to the murdering of our owne soules we come into this world, as the Egyptians went out of it, swallowed, and smothered in a red sea ... weake, and bloudy infants at our births (V, 171-2).

Not one to gloss over the earthier facts of life, Donne is, nonetheless, quick to carry his thoughts 'from *materiall* to *spirituall* uncleannesses', and the remainder of the sermon is occupied with spiritual exhortation. Donne, by drawing his audience's attention to the personal possessive pronoun in the text insists on the individual's responsibility for personal spiritual cleanliness, and to this precept he lends force by applying it to his own condition as a preacher:

> This washing of the feet, is the spirit of *discerning*, and censuring particular particular actions: but it is *pedes meos*, a discerning, and censuring of *my actions*, not onely, or not principally the actions of *other Men; ... how beautifull are the feet of them, that preach peace*, says Saint *Paul*, out of the mouth of two witnesses, two Prophets, that had said so before. If we will *preach peace*, that is, relieve the consciences of *others*, by presenting them their sinnes, we must have *speciosos pedes*, cleane ways, and a cleane life of our owne; so it is with us, and our profession; But *Gens sancta, regale Sacerdotium*, as the Apostle joines them, If ye be a *holy people*, you are also a *royall priesthood;* If you be all *Gods Saints*, you are all *Gods Priests;* and if you be his priests, it is your office to preach too; as we by our words, you by your holy works; as we by contemplation, you by conversation; as we by our doctrine, so you by your lives, are appointed by God to preach to one another: and therefore every particular Man, must wash his owne feet, look that he have *speciosos pedes*, that his example

> may preach to others, for this is truly *Regale Sacerdotium*, a regall priesthood, not to work upon others by words, but by actions. ... There is a priestly duty lies upon every Man, brotherly to reprehend a brother, whom he sees trampling in foule ways, wallowing in foule sinnes, but I may *preach to others and be my selfe a reprobate*, (as Saint *Paul* speakes with terror to Men of our coate) in his own person, I may bring others to heaven, and bee shut out my selfe (V, 180).

There is a great deal worthy of note in this extract: we should note, in passing, that Donne identifies preaching as a key responsibility of priesthood, that the imperative to preach is the result of a Divine appointment, and the concept that it is holiness of life, above all else, that gives the preacher his authority. These are significant markers, to which we will return. For the present, it is sufficient that we consider Donne's decision to include, at the climax of this section, and close to the end of the sermon, an exhortation that relies so heavily upon an appreciation, shared by preacher and congregation, of the role and responsibility of the preacher.

The sermons preached to the Countess of Bridgewater reveal a similar understanding of the authority of the preacher and his sermon. Both sermons deal with Micah 2:10: 'Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.' Of the two, it is the second that seems most closely connected with the occasion. The first, consisting of a detailed discussion of the relevance of the text to the history of Israel, and its application, by way of spiritualisation, to the Church, and the individual Christian, contains no direct reference to the churching, although there is, doubtless a significance in Donne's choice of the language of Ezekiel 16:4 ('And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all') to summarise the sinfulness of Israel. By contrast, the second sermon opens with a direct reference to the occasion of its preaching:

> [T]he words admit a just accommodation to this present occasion, God having rais'd his honourable servant, and hand-maid here present, to the sense of the *Curse*, that lyes upon *women*, for the transgression of the first woman, which is painfull, and dangerous *Child-birth;* and given her also, a sense of the last glorious resurrection, in having rais'd her, from that Bed of weaknesse, to the ability of coming into his presence, here in his house (V, 198).

Indeed, there is a far clearer sense of audience in this second sermon, and this, taken with the fact that it could easily stand on its own as a sermon, makes it likely that it is this sermon, rather than the preceding one, that most accurately reflects Donne's performance at the churching.

Be that as it may, this churching sermon provides us with one of Donne's most clearly self-reflexive commentaries on preaching, on the mechanics of effective rebuke of sin. He draws upon the very current discussions of freedom of speech, and in particular on debates about the most effective way of counseling the monarch.[56] In keeping with the substance of these debates, he outlines both classical precedent and the practice of the Jacobean age:

> There was such a tendernesse, amongst the orators, which were used to speake in the presence of the people, to the Roman Emperours, (which was a way of *Civill preaching*) that they durst not tell them then their duties, nor instruct them, what thet should doe, any other way then by saying, that they had done so before; They had no way to make the Prince wise, and just, and temperate, but by a false praising him, for his former acts of wisedom, and justice, and temperance, which he had never done; and that served to make the people believe, that the Princes were so; and it served to teach the Prince, that he ought to be so. And so, though this were an expresse, and a direct flattery, yet it was a collaterall increpation too; And on the other side, our later times have seen another art, another invention, another workmanship, that when a great person hath so abused the favour of his Prince, that he hath growne subject to great, and weighty increpations, his owne friends have made *Libells* against him, thereby to lay some light aspersions upon him, that the Prince might thinke, that this coming with the malice of a *Libell*, was the worst that could be said of him: and so, as the first way to the Emperours, though it were a direct flattery, yet it was a *collaterall Increpation* too, so this way, though it were a direct increpation, yet it was a *collaterall flattery* too (V, 200).

These two examples have their relevance for the preacher and for his preaching, and Donne outlines the two corresponding avenues open to him in his sphere, and on the homiletic dilemmas associated with each:

> If I should say of such a congregation as this, with acclamations and shows of much joy, Blessed company, holy congregation, in which there is no pride at all, no vanity at all, no prevarication at all, I could be thought in that, but to convey an increpation, and a rebuke mannerly, in a wish that it were so altogether. If I should

[56] For a very helpful discussion of these debates see David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

> say of such a congregation as this, with exclamations and show of much bitternesse, that they were sometimes somewhat too worldly in their owne businesse, sometimes somewhat too remise, in the businesse of the next world, and adde no more to it, this were but as a plot, and a *faint libelling*, a punishing of small sinnes to keep greater from being talk'd of: slight increpations are but as *whisperings*, and work no farther, but to bring men to say, Tush, no body hears it, no body heeds it, we are never the worse, nor never the worse thought of for all that he says. And loud and bitter increpations, are as a *trumpet*, and work no otherwise, but to bring them to say, Since he hath published all to the world already, since all the world knowes of it, the shame is past, and we may goe forward in our ways againe (V, 200-1).

Such a meditation upon the difficulties of faithful preaching, the machinations of the human heart, and the general slipperiness of language would attract our attention at any locus in Donne's canon. Its inclusion here, in the intimate pastoral context of a churching, adds to its intrinsic significance a great deal of importance. And this is equally true of Donne's succeeding remarks; his attempt to answer his own question, 'Is there then no way to convey an increpation profitably?':

> God hath provided a way here, to convey, to imprint this increpation, this rebuke, sweetly and successfully; that is, by way of counsaile: by bidding them *arise*, he chides them for falling, by presenting the exaltation and exultation of a peacefull conscience, he brings them to a foresight, to what miserable distractions, and distortions of the soule a habite of sinne will bring them to. If you will take knowledge of Gods fearfull judgements no other way, but by hearing his mercies preached, his *Mercie is new every morning*, and his dew falls every evening, and morning, and evening we will preach his mercies unto you. If you will believe a *hell* no other way, but by hearing the joyes of heaven presented to you, you shall heare enough of that; we will receive you in the morning, and dismisse you in the evening, in a religious assurance, in a present inchoation of the joyes of heaven. It is Gods way, and we are willing to pursue it; to shew you that are Enemies to Christ, *we pray you in Christs stead, that you would be reconciled to him;* to shew you, that you are faln, we pray you to *arise*, and *si audieritis*, if you hear us so, if any way, any means, convey this rebuke, this sense into you ... *If you hear, we have gain'd a brother;* and that's the richest gain, that we can get, if you may get salvation by us (V, 201).

Even shorn of its context, this analysis would demand our consideration. Its reflexivity provides us with one of our most intimate insights into Donne's understanding of the role of his own

preaching. Especially notable is Donne's disavowal of the rhetorical tropes of free speech, in favour of 'God's way', and to do so with the objective of his audience's salvation. This is not an eschewal of stylish preaching, rather a subordination of method to ends, and, as we shall have occasion to note, is typical of Donne's understanding of the authority of preacher and sermon. Once more, the context in which these words were preached multiplies their significance, and even as they explicitly shape our understanding of Donne's view of the intrinsic importance of the word preached, they implicitly reveal his grasp of its relative place in the life of the Christian and of the Church.

Donne's sermons on churching have been singled out for consideration by a number of critics. Jeffrey Johnson's consideration, while set in a different context to the present study, is worthy of note. Johnson argues that both sermons 'reveal Donne's desire to move his auditors beyond a strictly liturgical or a culturally delimiting understanding of the churching service.'[57] More specifically he argues that

> the churching sermons ... reveal Donne's theological and ministerial integrity in the midst of a cultural view of churching as merely ceremonial. The purification Donne prescribes in the sermons for these two aristocratic women, while associated with the bodily cleansing outlined in Leviticus, derives fundamentally from his own sense of calling to preach the gospel that is repentance. In these sermons, he enlarges the need for purification to include all of fallen humanity; the churching of Francis Egerton and of Lucy Percy were for him particular occasions that touched the more universal condition of human sinfulness. Because of original sin, as well as the inevitability of actual sins, birth brings forth death, and as Donne makes clear in these churching sermons, the only way to seal one's repentance, is through a communal participation in the Word and Sacraments.[58]

Johnson's account, which reads the sermons in the context of the importance that Donne attached to repentance, and to the communal expression of that repentance meshes with this reading when we appreciate that, for Donne, it was preaching that produced repentance. Thus, his realignment of a slightly dubious ceremonial occasion by stressing the primacy of preaching sanctifies and makes useful the ritual of churching.

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[57] Johnson, *The theology of John Donne*, xi.
[58] Johnson, *The theology of John Donne*, 104-5.

II-Preaching and Prayer

If the conflict between a word-based and a sacramental piety is of central consequence to our understanding of Donne's estimation of the importance of the sermon, and a key marker that qualifies and problematises any simple identification of Donne with the Hookerian *avant-garde*, we ought also to consider Donne's less extensive engagement with another aspect of the realignment of the English Church: the programme begun by Andrewes and Richard Meredith, and vigorously promoted by Laud, to privilege prayer – the liturgy – above the preaching of the word. We have already noted instances in which Donne triangulates the benefits of sacrament, sermon and prayer. For more explicit engagements with the value of public, liturgical prayer, we must turn to sermons that seek to address the primary function of the church or chapel. McCullough summarises this question in the words of Richard Meredith – were the nation's churches to be *oratoria* or *auditoria*?[59] That this question was of relevance to Donne is clear from his engagement with it in two sermons. One of these was preached at the dedication of the new chapel in Lincoln's Inn. Donne had been heavily involved in this project, and his sermon of dedication preached in 1623 saw him discuss the purpose of the new building. The second relevant sermon is an undated Candlemas day sermon, dated by Potter and Simpson to either 1617 or 1623, with 1623 as overwhelmingly the most likely. Such a dating is appealing, suggesting, as it does, that this matter was the subject of detailed consideration by Donne. In the state of the evidence, however, we can only raise this as an interesting possibility.

One way or another, the undated sermon is the earliest detailed discussion of the primary function of church buildings. The wider context in the sermon is a discussion of the Christian's debts to God – praise and prayer. In his discussion of praise, Donne had already touched upon the pulpit, to deplore its use as 'the shop, and the theatre of praise upon present men, and God left out', and sermons that speak 'more of Great men, then of our Great God' (IV, 307). As he turns to prayer, he invokes the classic proof-text of Isaiah 56:7 – 'mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people' – and bases his discussion upon the identification of the Judaic temple with the Christian church:

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[59] McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, 156-167. See Lake, 'The Laudians and the Argument from Authority' for an extensive discussion of the Laudian re-evaluation of the nature and use of consecrated space.

> [M]y house, saies God, is a house of prayer; for this use, and purpose, he built himselfe a house upon earth; He had praise and glory in heaven before, but for Prayer he erected a house here, his Church. All the world is his Exchequer, he gives in all; from every creature, from Heaven, and Sea, and Land, and all the inhabitants of them, we receive benefits; But the Church is his Court of Requests, there he receives our petitions, there we receive his answers. It is true that neither is that house onely for prayer, nor prayer onely for that house: Christ in his person, consecrated that place by Preaching too: And for prayer elsewhere, Christ did much accustome himselfe to private prayer ... But when we meet in Gods house, though, by occasion, there be no Sermon, yet if we meet to pray, we pay our debt, we doe our duty; so doe we not, if we meet at a Sermon without a prayer. The Church is the house of prayer, so, as that upon occasion, preaching may be left out, but never a house of preaching so, as that Prayer may be left out (IV, 309).

This extract is typical of Donne in its moderation. He instances the proof-text, but, picking up on its quotation by Christ in the cleansing of the temple, stresses the relevance of the passage to preaching as well as to prayer.[60] Further, his acknowledgement that preaching might be omitted 'upon occasion' clearly implies that, for Donne, at least, the sermon was to be a normal part of the service of God.

The sermon preached at the dedication of the Lincoln's Inn chapel deals with the subject in a similar fashion.[61] This similarity extends to Donne's choice of John 10:22-23 as his text: 'And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.' Donne, then, is extending his use of the Jewish temple as a paradigm for the Christian church. The sermon is an important one, and sees Donne interacting with a number of subjects that were emerging, or would emerge, as the shibboleths of the Laudian project. Chief amongst these is the place of preaching and prayer, and Donne's response to it would surely have found acceptance with his somewhat puritanically-inclined auditors, who were unlikely to have been so Puritan as to be offended by Donne's defence of the practice of consecrating church

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[60] Lake, 'The Laudians and the Argument from Authority', 151-2 outlines the use made by Laudians of those Scriptures that referred to the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple. By comparison, Donne's insistence on the place of preaching is the more noticeable.

[61] The attendant circumstances of this consecration, and the liturgical context in which Donne preached this sermon have been discussed by Jeffrey Johnson, 'Consecrating Lincoln's Inn Chapel', *John Donne Journal* 23 (2004):139-160,

buildings, which immediately precedes this section.[62] Donne's prose is not at its clearest in this extract, but we must follow its flow carefully if we are fully to understand the significance of this negotiation of the question:

> In *Nature*, in the *Law*, in the *Gospell*, in *Precept*, in Practise, these Consecrations are established. This they did. But to what use did they consecrate them? not to one use only; and therfore it is a frivolous contention, whether *Churches* be for *preaching*, or for *praying*. But if *Consecration* be a kind of *Christning* of the *Church*, and that at the *Christning* it have a name, wee know what name *God* hath appointed for his House, Domus mea, Domus orationis vocabitur. My House shall bee called the House of Prayer. And how impudent and inexcusable a falsehood is that in *Bellarmine*, That the *Lutherans* and *Calvinists* doe admit *Churches* for *Sermons* and *Sacraments*, *Sed reprehendunt quod fiant ad orandum*, They dislike that they should be for *Prayer*: when, as *Calvin* himselfe, (who may seeme to bee more subject to this reprehension then *Luther*) (for there is no such *Liturgie* in the *Calvinists Churches*, as in the *Lutherean*) yet in that very place which *Bellarmine* cites, sayes *Conceptæ preces in Ecclesia Deo gratæ* ... Still consider Consecration to be a *Christning* of the place; and though we find them often called *Templa propter Sacrificia*, for our sacrifices of praier, and of praise, and the merits of *Christ*, and often called *Ecclesia ad conciones*, Churches, in respect of congregations, for preaching, and often call'd *Martyria*, for preserving with respect, and honor the bodies of *Martyrs*... and often, by other names, *Dominica*, *Basilica*, and the like, yet the name that *God* gave to his house, is not *Concionatorium*, nor *Sacramentarium*, but *Oratorium*, the House of Prayer (IV, 373).

The dynamics of this quotation are most interesting. Donne's admission that the church is properly called oratorium is, as we have seen, fully consonant with *avant-garde* terminology, but the cautious, even grudging nature of the admission is anything but. Notable is Donne's appeal to tradition, which did not consecrate churches to one exclusive use. Further, his defence of the Reformed Churches of the continent against Bellarmine's unmerited slur pre-empts controversy,

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[62] The precise extent of the Puritan influence in the Inns of Court generally, and Lincoln's Inn, specifically, is somewhat problematic. Doerksen, *Conforming to the word : Herbert, Donne, and the English church before Laud*, passim buttresses his case for a conformist Donne by drawing attention to the Calvinist credentials of his predecessors in the ministry. Wilfred R. Prest, *The inns of court under Elizabeth I and the early Stuarts, 1590-1640* (Harlow: Longman, 1972), 187-219 presents a considerably more nuanced account, which still concludes that there existed a definite interest in Puritan ideals amongst the benchers of the Inn. See also Ian D. Aikenhead, 'Students of the Common Law 1590-1615: Lives and Ideas at the Inns of Court', *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 27 no. 3 (1977):243-56, esp 253, Alan Harding, *A Social History of English Law* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 175-90, R.M. Fisher, 'The Reformation of Clergy at the Inns of Court 1530-1580', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 12 no. 1 (1981):69-91, and Emma Rhatigan, 'John Donne's Lincoln's Inn Sermons' (Oxford University, 2006) 11-68.

by collapsing any 'us and them' binary, and thus preventing attempts too closely to identify a word-centred piety with an anti-liturgical bias.

And the priorities that underlie Donne's approach become clearer when we find him immediately following the extract quoted above with these words:

> And therefore without prejudice to the other functions too, (for as there is a *væ* upon me, *Si non Euangelizavero*, If I preach not my selfe, so may that *væ* be multiplied upon any, who would draw that holy ordinance of God into a dis-estimation, or into a slacknesse,) let us never intermit that dutie, to present ourselves to *God* in these places, though in these places there bee then, no other Service, but Common prayer. For then doth the House answere to that name, which *God* hath given it, if it be a house of prayer (IV, 374).

This is an unmistakably clear claim for the importance of preaching, and Donne refers, as he so often does, to the words of the Apostle Paul which, as we shall see, formed a vital element in Donne's understanding of the responsibility of his ministry. Because the imperative to preach is divinely ordained, nothing must allow preaching to be hindered, or even to be 'dis-estimated'. Thus, even while concurring with the concept of prayer as the *raison d'être* of the Christian church, Donne appeals to primitive precedent, Protestant practice, and personal pastoral responsibility to insist on the central importance of the sermon in the life of the Christian.

III-Defending the *Directions*

It is to precisely these elements of precedent, practice, and pastoral responsibility that Donne turns when he finds it necessary to define the worth of the sermon as against the act of catechising. The catechism was regarded as a crucial pastoral tool across a wide range of Protestant opinion, and its purpose as a handmaid to the sermon, and a preparatory course to preaching received broad agreement. There were, however, moments when official concern to limit and control the range of issues raised in the pulpit resulted in a drive to substitute pro-forma expressions of Christian doctrine, with all the weight of Protestant tradition, for the unpredictable sermon, the vehicle for the less-manageable personal programme of the individual. We have already noted the significance of James' *Directions for Preachers* in this context.[63] These

[63] The text of the *Directions* is printed in Kenneth Fincham, ed., *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church, Church of England Record Society, vol.* 1 (Woodbrideg: The Boydell Press, 1994), 211-14, Edmund Cardwell, ed.,

Directions are particularly pertinent to the discussion of Donne's understanding of the authority of the preacher and of the sermon, for it was he who was chosen to preach a defence of the *Directions* in the public arena of Paul's Cross, a defence which was subsequently printed at the King's command. This sermon has justly received a considerable share of critical attention, for it is, without doubt, one of the most interesting interactions of political, pastoral, and personal priorities in Donne's work.[64] In the light of this, our consideration of Donne's understanding of the worth of catechetics – and not only the Catechism itself, but also the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the two books of homilies – this sermon provides us with a relevant and important point of departure. Furthermore, while formularies are discussed more fully in this sermon than in any other, the views outlined here remain, as we shall see, consistent throughout Donne's preaching career.

Critics' views of the sermon, both contemporary, and modern have been greatly varied, and, as David Colcough points out, have displayed evidence of a reappraisal:

> Donne's sermon has often been considered an awkward performance, Chamberlain beginning a long tradition of criticism when he wrote that the Dean 'gave no great satisfaction, or as some say as yf himself were not so satisfied.' Readers' opinions of the sermon tend to be divided on the basis of their own image of Donne, as absolutist apologist for James or as conscience-stricken servant of a demanding king put in an impossible position; but recent work by scholars such as Jeanne Shami and Mary Morrissey has urged us to pay more careful attention to the ways in which Donne balances his conflicting obligations to maintain the dignity of the pulpit and the supremacy of the king.[65]

This reappraisal is to be welcomed, and we should note that those critics who have spearheaded the recent, more positive views of Donne's performance are those who have most insisted on the importance of understanding his sermons in historical context. Certainly, it is my view that Donne's performance of the task given to him is eloquent of his faithfulness to his conception of

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Documentary annals of the reformed Church of England : being a collection of injunctions, declarations, orders, articles of inquiry, &c. from the year 1546 to the year 1716 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1839), II, 146-51 and in Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain : from the birth of Jesus Christ until the year 1648* ed. James Nichols, 3 vols. (London: William Tegg, 1868), III, 356-8.

[64] See Mary Morrissey, 'Rhetoric, religion and politics in the St. Paul's Cross sermons, 1603-1625' (Cambridge University, 1998) 12-50 for an outstanding treatment. Also important are Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* , Jeanne Shami, '"The Stars in their Order Fought Against Sisera": John Donne and the Pulpit Crisis of 1622', *John Donne Journal* 14 (1995):1-58, Colclough, *Freedom of Speech* , Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*

[65] Colclough, *Freedom of Speech*, 94-5.

the responsibilities of his ministry, and indicates obedience, but not obeisance, to political and, specifically, regal authority. While it is not our purpose, in this work, to engage with those treatments of Donne that depict him as an ambitious and insincere *apparatchik*, we ought not to miss this opportunity to underline the extent to which this sermon calls that view – sufficiently dubious, at best – further into question. Donne writes as a man conscious of a hierarchy of commitment and responsibility: his ministerial responsibility to God, and his pastoral responsibility to his flock enjoy a higher priority than his commitment to royal policy. This is not an attempt to read Donne as a subversive, nor to suggest that he is covertly conveying disagreement with James' *Directions*. Clearly, his selection for this job demonstrates the confidence his superiors had in him, both as a man who would support the royal programme, and do it well. Indeed, the king's order that the sermon be printed demonstrates the extent to which Donne succeeded in effectively articulating royal policy. Nonetheless, it does become clear, in reading this sermon, that Donne's endorsement of the *Directions* was neither absolute nor uncritical.

In light of this importance, it is worth our while to discuss both the structure and the content of this sermon in some detail. And it is the structure, as much as anything else, that reveals the caution of Donne's endorsement. He took as his text Judges 5:20: 'They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.' In his division, Donne promises to 'consider the Text, as two *Hemispheres* of the world, laid open in a flat, in a plaine Map' (IV, 181). The first of these was occupied with 'the Literall, the Historicall sense of the words', their '*explication*.' To the second, then, was reserved the '*Application*', the 'emergent', 'collaterall', and 'occasional sense of them.' The exposition of the text, which occupies the first section of the sermon, provided Donne with the opportunity to stress God's use of humble means, his utilization of individuals drawn from all layers of society, as described by Deborah and Barak, in Judges 5, and the orderliness with which God's cause is to be upheld. With considerable skill, Donne uses these Biblical conditions to paint his audience a vivid picture of English society as a Christian coalition in which each plays his part, an ideal, if hierarchical, society, troubled by

external attack, and, although ultimately the object of Divine protection, yet requiring the best efforts of each member, in their appointed role, in its defense.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the very public arena in which the sermon is delivered, Donne was careful to guard against any appearance of rabble-rousing:

> And into [the sub-divisions of part 1] I passe with this protestation, That in all which I shall say this day, being to speake often of *God*, in that *Notion*, as he is *Lorde of Hostes*, and fights his owne battailes, I am farre from giving fire to them that desire warre. *Peace* in this world, is a pretious *Earnest*, and a faire and lovely *Type* of the everlasting peace of the world to come (IV, 182).

This caution notwithstanding, Donne is reluctant fully to abandon the context of attack and defence that had the potential to lend such emphasis to his call for a united and orderly Christianity. He resolves this dilemma by explicitly locating religious conflict, in the literal and martial sense, safely on the European continent:

> I speake of this subject, especially to establish and settle them, that suspect Gods power, or Gods purpose, to succour those, who in forraine parts, grone under heavie pressures in matter of *Religion*, or to restore those, who in forraine parts, are devested of their lawfull possessions, and inheritance; and because *God* hath not done these great workes yet, nor yet raised up meanes, in appearance, and in their apprehension, likely to effect it, That therefore *God* likes not the cause; and therefore they begin to bee shaked in their owne Religion at home, since they thinke that God neglects it abroad (IV, 183).

Donne goes on to outline Divine sovereignty in relation to timing and to means, stressing that, whilst God does not need human contribution to bring about His ends, he chooses to work with men:

> And therefore, though God give *his glorie* to none, *his glorie*, that is to doe all with *Nothing*, yet he gives them *their glorie*, that doe anything for him, or for themselves. And as hee hath laid up a record, for their glorie and Memoriall, who were remarkable for Faith (for the eleventh *Chapter* to the *Hebrewes*, is a *Catalogue* of them) So in this Song of *Deborah* and *Barake*, hee hath laide up a Record for their glorie, who expressed their faith in *Workes* (IV, 186).

Notably, as he reflects on the means available to God, Donne anticipates the treatment of the text in Part Two and expresses, once again, the equality of sermon and sacrament:

> How often hast thou suffered thy *Soule*, to grow cleane out of all reparations into ruine, by thine inconsiderate and habituall course of sinne, and never repaired it by any good use of hearing the word, or receiving the *Sacrament* in a long time (IV, 185).

So, emphasising the example of those eulogised in the song of Deborah and Barak, Donne calls upon his auditors to play their part in the orderly defence of their faith. Beginning at princes, and going on to the governors, officers, merchants, judges, and 'idle discoursing men' (IV, 190), Donne has words of exhortation for all strata of society. Recalling that this sermon was preached at Paul's Cross, where the layout of the outdoor pulpit and its environs gave a powerful visual expression to the hierarchy of Renaissance society, we can estimate something of the impact of sermon as delivered, with the preacher turning to address each grouping in its turn, occupying their appropriate location.[66] Donne closes this first half of his message by underlining the importance of each individual retaining their societal location for '*God will not fight, nor be fought for disorderly*' (IV, 192).

Donne's creation of this context is not merely intended to fill the time. Rather, this context is crucial to his unfolding, in part two, of the function of the preacher and of preaching. And, as Donne outlines the branches of the second division, he explicitly spiritualises his text, translating it away from his audience, and referring it to the responsibilities of the preacher:

> And thus wee shall proceede; first, the *Warre*, which wee are to speake of here, is not as before, a *Worldly warre*, it is a *Spirituall War*: And then the *Munition*, the provision for this warre, is not as before, temporall assistance of *Princes, Officers, Iudges, Merchants*, all sorts of *People*, but is the *Gospell of Christ Jesus, and the preaching thereof*. Preaching is *Gods* ordinance, with that *Ordinance* hee fights from heaven, and batters downe all errors. And thirdly, to maintain this War, he hath made *Preachers Stars;* and *væ si non, woe be unto them, if they doe not fight, if they doe not preach:* But yet in the last place, they must fight, as the Stars in heaven doe, *In their order*, in that Order, and according to those direction s which, they, to whom it appertaines, shall give them: for that is *to fight in Order* (IV, 192).

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[66] Wabuda, *Preaching*, 40-8 provides a helpful discussion of pulpit crosses, in general, and Paul's Cross in particular. She draws attention (p.45) to the hierarchal society depicted in the Gipkyn Diptych (reproduced p. 46). Detail from this painting is also reproduced in David J. Crankshaw, 'Community, City and Nation, 1540-1714', in *St Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London, 604 - 2004*, ed. Derek Keene, Arthur Burns, and Andrew Saint (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 49, Crankshaw also discusses the importance of Paul's Cross as a locus of preaching (pp.56-7). See also Morrissey, 'Rhetoric, religion and politics in the St. Paul's Cross sermons, 1603-1625' and H. Gareth Owen, 'Paul's Cross: The Broadcasting House of Elizabethan London', *History Today* 11 (1961):836-42,.

Having outlined the nature of the spiritual war, and insisted that spiritual conflict was both inevitable and unavoidable, Donne denounces any attempt to ignore such warfare, and to declare a false peace:

> Every man is bound to hearken to a peace, in such things as may admit peace, in differences, where men differ from men; but bound also to shut himselfe up against all overtures of peace, in such things, as are in their Nature irreconcilable, in differences where men differ from *God*. That warre *God* hath kindled, and that war must bee maintaind, and maintaind by his way; and his way, and his *Ordinance* in this warre, is Preaching (IV, 194).

This distinction between necessary and superfluous conflict is something that we have already noted to be a key element of Donne's ecclesiology, and is not by any means to be regarded as a rhetorical ploy adopted for the purposes of this, particularly loaded, sermon.

Donne then goes on to echo his earlier remarks about the sovereignty of God as to means by reflecting on the uniqueness and, indeed, the improbability of preaching as a method of establishing the kingdom of God:

> If *God* had not said to *Noah, Fac tibi Arcam;* and when he had said so, if he had not given him a *Designe*, a *Modell*, a *Platforme* of that *Arke*, we may doubt credibly, whether ever man would have thought of a *Ship*, or of any such way of trade and Commerce. ... So also, if *Christ* had not said to his *Apostles, Ite prædicate, Goe and preach:* And when hee had said so, said thus much more, *Qui non crediderit damnabitur, Hee that believes not your Preaching shall bee damned;* certainly man would never have thought of such a way of establishing a kingdome, as by Preaching. No other Nation had any such Institution, as Preaching. ... But a fixt and constant course of conteyning Subjects in their Religious and Civill duties, by preaching, onely God ordain'd, onely his Children enjoy'd (IV, 194).

And, for Donne, the authority of this unique institution is strengthened by Christ's own words:*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed mee to preach:* His unction was his function' (IV, 195). The Preacher's office, then, is unique in its dignity for the preacher has been anointed by Christ, 'with part of his own unction', and has been endued with 'part of [his] power.' And it is this double mandate that makes preaching not simply a desirable facet of Christian life, but an indispensable part of the Church's service of God.

The importance of the Divine Spirit's association with the preacher and preaching is stressed by Donne: the identification between the two allows him to apply the Apostle's injunction 'quench not the Spirit' (I Thessalonians 5:19) to the suppression of preaching:

> Quench it not in your selfe, by forbearing to hear the Word preached, quench it not in others, by discouraging them that doe preach. For so Saint *Chrysostome*, (and not he alone) understood that place, *That they quench the spirit, who discountenance preaching, and dishearten Preachers.* ... So a Man may quench the spirit in himselfe, if he smother it, suffocate it, with worldly pleasures, or profits, and he may quench it in others, if he withdraw that favour, or that helpe, which keepes that Man, who hath the spirit of Prophesie, the unction of Preaching, in a cheerfull discharge of his duty. Preaching then being *Gods Ordinance*, to beget Faith, to take away preaching, were to disarme *God*, and to quench the spirit; for by that *Ordinance, he fights from heaven* (IV, 195).

Donne's homiletic apologetic never becomes less apologetic than this – to suppress preaching is to disarm God. And he goes on to press home this point. Invoking the stars, held in the right hand of Christ in Revelation 1, and identifying them as the ministers of God, Donne re-interprets the stars of his text as those ministers, and thereby sets their ministry in a martial context:

> And to maintaine that fight, hee hath made his *Ministers Starrs* ... And they fight against *Sisera*, that is, they preach against *Error*. They preach out of Necessity; *Necessitie is laid upon me to preach*, saies the *Apostle*; and upon a heavy penalty, if they doe not; *Væ mihi si non, Woe be unto me if I doe not preach the Gospell* (IV, 195).

We have seen sufficient, at this point, to recognise the invocation of Paul's exclamation as typical of Donne's discussions of preaching. In this instance, he does more than simply stress the imperative to preach; by stressing the present tense of the verb, indeed, by quibbling with the 'Roman translation's' future tense, he stresses the need for continuous and consistent preaching. Citing patristic examples, he shows that this imperative to preach had been, at times sufficiently strong to justify inconvenience, and excessive demands upon the preacher – they must preach 'whensoever *Gods* good people may be edified' (IV, 196). Donne's audience is fortunate, for, while *Antichrist* by his Persecutions, and Excommunications silenced many', and while some have been silenced by 'Abundance', 'laziness and Ignorance, and some 'by their own indiscretion', God had seen to it that His 'good people' in the English Church had ample preaching:

> But God hath plac'd us in a *Church*, and under a *Head of the Church*, where none are Silenc'd, nor discountenanc'd, if being *starrs*, called to the *Ministery* of the *Gospell*, and appointed to *fight*, to preach there, they fight within the discipline and the limits of this Text, *Manentes in Ordine, conteining themselves in Order* (IV, 196).

We should remark that, by this time, we are over half of the way through Donne's sermon, and thus far, that sermon has been one of the most unequivocal defences of preaching amongst his work. It would be difficult to deny the central importance that Donne gives to preaching. Indeed, it is this importance that, in the final sections of his sermon lends force to his support of the *Directions*. Preaching, for Donne, is too important to be abused. Its formidable power as a weapon in the hands of an almighty God demands that it be used reverently, with care, and, above all, in an orderly way. Order, then, becomes the key motif of the closing half of Donne's sermon – an order that moderates the expression of Christian zeal, while never suppressing it. This is an order precisely consonant with that expressed in Donne's ecclesiology:

> It is true that wee must hate *Gods* enemies with *a perfect hatred*, and it is true that *Saint Chrysostome* sayes, ... that is not a perfect hatred, that leaves out any of their Errors unhated. But yet a perfect hatred is that too, which may consist with perfection, and Charitie is perfection: a perfect hatred is that which a perfect, that is, a charitable man may beare, which is still to hate *Errors*, not *Persons*. When their insolencies provoke us to speake of them, we shall doe no good therein, if therein we proceed not decently, and in order. *Christ* sayes of his *Church*: ... *It is Powerfull as an Armie;* but it is ... *as an armie disciplin'd, and in order:* for without order, an armie is but a great Ryot; and without this decencie, this peaceablenesse, this discretion, this order, zeale is but a fury, and such preaching is but to the obduration of ill, not to the edification of good Christians. ... For when there is not an uniforme, a comely, an orderly presenting of matters of faith, faith it selfe growes loose, and loses her estimation; and preaching in the *Church* comes to bee as pleading at the Barre, and not so well: there the Councell speakes not himselfe, but him that sent him, here wee shall preach not him who sent us, *Christ Iesus*, but ourselves (IV, 196-7).

This emphasis on order explains the long section that follows this point, in which Donne gives a protracted blow-by-blow account of the emergence of the *Directions*. *Qua* sermon, it is the least successful section that we have considered, yet it is crucial to Donne's defence. The point repeatedly underscored is that these *Directions* have been given as an expression of the orderly

discipline of the English Church. The instructions therein embodied are not something imposed on the Church by an external controller. Rather the *Directions* themselves and the way in which they have been promulgated are an expression of the orderly rule of the English Church:

> It is the *Head of the Church* that declares to us those things wherby we are to be ordered. This the *Royall* and *religious Head* of these *Churches* within his Dominions hath lately had occasion to do. And in doing this, doth he innovate any thing, offer to doe any new thing? Do we repent that *Canon*, and *Constitution*, in which at his *Majesties* first coming we declar'd with so much alacrity, as that it was the second canon we made, *That the King had the same authoritie in causes Ecclesiasticall, that the godly Kings of Judah, and the Christian Emperors in the primitive Church had?* Or are we ignorant of what those *Kings of Iuda*, and those *Emperors* did? We are not, wee know them well (IV, 199).

The head having spoken, Donne further emphasises the order with which his declarations were promulgated, mapping out their course through the hierarchy, until they finally have trickled down to Donne, who, as an ordered cog in an orderly machine, does not shirk his responsibility:

> I was not willing only, but glad to have my part therein, that as, in the feare of God, I have always preached to you the *Gospell of Christ Jesus*, who is the *God* of your Salvation; So in the testimony of a good conscience, I might now preach to you, *the Gospell of the Holy ghost*, who is the *God of peace*, of unitie, and concord (IV, 201-2).

It is at this point that Donne turns to the subject of formularies of doctrine, specifically the two Catechisms, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the two Books of Homilies. His defence of their use is carefully crafted to address the concerns of those Protestants who would have the greatest sympathy with the type of preaching that the *Directions* were intended to limit. Thus it is that Donne chooses to stress that 'all that Doctrine, which wrought this great cure upon us, in the Reformation' was contained in these formularies. These collections of doctrine had, in fact, been vital tools for Reformation: 'they were *our first way in receiving Christianitie*, and our *first* way in *receiving the Reformation*' (IV, 202-3). From the birth of English Protestantism, then, these embodiments of wholesome doctrine had been Divinely blessed. But their history does not merely date to the dawn of the English Reformation, for Donne appeals to Puritan desires after a purity of practice based upon the primitive Church, and stresses the role of catechetics in the early days of the Christian Church:

> Remember what *Catechising* is; it is *Institutio viva voce*. And in the *Primitive Church*, when those persons, who coming from the *Gentiles* to the *Christian* Religion, might have been scandalized with the outward Ceremoniall, and Rituall worship of god in the *Church* ... to avoid that daunger, though they were not admitted to see the *Sacraments* administred, nor other Service of God performed in the *Church*, yet in the *Church*, they received *Instruction*, by word of mouth, in the fundementall Articles of the *Christian Religion*, and that was *Catechising* (IV, 203).

And, in continuation of this somewhat *ad hominem* argumentation, Donne asks 'if wee should tell some men, That *Calvin's Institutions* were a *Catechisme*, would they not love Catechising the better for that name?' It is questionable that Donne is being entirely serious at this point, but there is no mistaking the seriousness of the point that he goes on immediately to make:

> And would they not love it the better, if they give mee leave to tell them that of which I had the experience. An Artificer of this Citie brought his Childe to mee, to admire (as truly there was much reason) the capacitie, the memory, especially of the child. It was but a Girle, and not above nine yeares of age, her parents said lesse, some yeares lesse; wee could scarce propose any Verse of any Booke, or Chapter of the *Bible*, but that that childe would goe forward without Booke. I began to *Catechise* this childe; and truly, shee understood nothing of the *Trinitie*, nothing of any of those fundementall points which must save us: and the wonder was doubled, how she knew so much, how so little (IV, 203-4).

The image of the grave Donne interacting with this remarkable prodigy is one of the most appealing found in the sermons, but what ought to concern us is less its sentimental appeal, than the evidence it presents us with of Donne's sense of pastoral responsibility. The force of this evidence is only strengthened by its juxtaposition with the quibbling of those who would abandon their objections to catechising if it could only be proved that Calvin did it. Donne sees the humour in this position, but he has little patience with those who allow party concerns to blind them to the need for repeated instruction in the basics of the Christian faith, and has a warning both for his audience and for ministerial colleagues:

> *Except yee become as little Children, yee shall not enter into the Kingdome of Heaven*, sayes *Christ*. Except yee, yee the people bee content at first to feed on the milke of the Gospell, and not presently to fall to gnawing of bones, of Controversies, and unrevealed Misteries, And except yee, the Ministers and Preachers of the Gospell, descend and apply yourselves to the Capacitie of little Children, and become as

> they, and build not your estimation onely upon the satisfaction of the expectation of great and curious Auditories, you stopp theirs, you loose your own way to the kingdome of Heaven (IV, 205).

The catechism, then, fulfils a vital role in preparing souls for Heaven. And yet, Donne, even as he brings this defence of *Directions* that have attempted to alter the balance between the sermon and the catechism to a close, stresses that the minister's duty includes catechesis, but does not stop at it:

> Not that wee are shut up, and determine our selves, in the knowledge of Catechisticall rudiments, but to bee sure to know them first. The *Apostle* puts us upon that progresse, *Let us leave the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, and goe on to perfection*. Not leave at them; but yet not leave them out: endeavour to encrease in knowledge, but first make sure of the foundation (IV, 205).

Donne finds room in the *Directions* to accommodate this sort of progression into truth. In James' recommendation of the Thirty-Nine Articles, Donne finds a depth and a height of truth sufficient that no preacher needs to feel cramped. Within the confines of the Articles, Donne states, the preacher can address such contested points of doctrine as Christ's descent into Hell, and of predestination. Controversy with Rome is no less possible, for the Articles 'imbrace *Controversies*... in points that are necessarie.' Donne's selection of the issues that can still be preached upon is rather remarkable, for he includes the most troublesome points of doctrinal debate and anti-Roman polemic. The point being made is classically Donneian. There is sufficient room in the orthodox to envelope debate and dissension, only the extreme need be excluded. The *Directions* can ultimately be defended because they should not prevent the conscientious preacher from doing what he must, under Divine obligation, do. Donne's understanding of the authority of the preacher and the sermon was not everyone's. It was his view, however, that allowed him to accept and endorse the King's *Directions*. To Donne, the *Directions* were in keeping with the order of the English Church, did not interfere with the duty of the Christian minister, and could thus, with nuance and moderation, be endorsed by the faithful preacher, even when that faithfulness was understood as first to God, then to the congregation, and only then to the King. And it is Donne, himself, who, by returning to the image that unifies the sermon, best summarises this view:

> And you, who are *Gods* holy people, and zealous of his glory, as you know from St. *Paul, that Stars differ from Stars in glory*, but all conduce to the benefit of man: So, when you see these *Stars*, Preachers to differ in gifts; yet, since all their ends are to advance your salvation, encourage the *Catechizer*, as well as the curious Preacher. Looke so farre towards your way to Heaven, as to the Firmament, and consider there, that that starre by which wee saile, and make great voyages, is none of the starres of the greatest magnitude; but yet it is none of the least neither; but a middle starre. Those Preachers which must save your soules are not ignorant, unlearned, extemporal men; but they are not over curious men neither ... That so, *Priest* and *people*, the whole Congregation, may by their religious obedience, and fighting in this spirituall warfare in their *Order*, minister occasion of joy to that heart, which hath beene grieved (IV, 209).

IV-Apostle or Prophet

At this stage, the primary importance attached to the sermon by Donne is clear. In the light of this status, an enormous stress falls upon the role of the preacher, and his authority, in the mediation of the truth of Scripture, and the traditions of the Church. Donne is very conscious of the authority of this role, and, in a number of sermons, explicitly adumbrates his understanding of the privileges and responsibilities of his office. It is worthy of note that these treatments arise in sermons with specific and immediate pastoral contexts – at moments that underline the relationship of the preacher to his congregation. Thus, a crucial discussion occurs in the second sermon preached by Donne after his arrival at St Dunstan's, and forms part of his discussion of the respective responsibilities of preacher and hearers.[67] Along with this sermon of introduction, we have one of valediction: preached by Donne as he departed for Germany, and resonant of his uncertainty about a safe return. Both these sermons emphasise the pastoral imperative that underlies all of Donne's preaching.

The first of these sermons was preached by Donne in April of 1624: his second preached at St Dunstans. Donne took for his text the words of Psalm 34:11: 'Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.' The two clauses of the verse provide Donne with the

[67] That Donne waits until his second sermon to discuss the matter in depth should not cause to question his understanding of the importance of preaching. The first sermon is a comprehensive overview of the reciprocal responsibilities of pastor and flock, an overview that includes a discussion of preaching. In light of its comprehensiveness, however, we will postpone consideration of this sermon until we come to discuss Donne's negotiation of his role between the polarities of preacher and priest.

framework to examine the reciprocal responsibilities that interest him most. The main substance of the discussion of preaching is contained at the heart of this, fairly lengthy, sermon, but it opens in a way that clearly sets Donne's remarks in a homiletic context:

> The Text does not call *children* simply, literally, but such men, and women, as are willing to come in the *simplicity* of children; such children, as *Christ* spoke of, *Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdome of heaven; Come ye children;* come *such* children. Nor does the Text call such as come, and would fain be gone again; it is *Come* and *Hearken;* not such as wish *themselves away*, nor such as wish *another man here;* but such as value Gods ordinance of *Preaching*, though it be, as the Apostle says, but the *foolishnesse of Preaching*, and such, as consider the *office*, and not the person, how meane soever; *Come ye children;* And, when ye are come, *Hearken*, And, though it be but *I, Hearken unto me; And, I will teach you the feare of the Lord;* the most noble, the most courageous, the most magnanimous, not *affection*, but *virtue*, in the world; *Come ye children, Hearken unto me, and I will teach you the feare of the Lord.* To every Minister and Dispenser of the word of God, and to every Congregation belong these words; And therefore we divide the Text between us; To you one, to us appertains the other part (VI, 95).

Notably, Donne conceptualises his relationship with his new congregation as primarily that of a preacher. he is, above all else, a 'dispenser of the word of God.' This dispensing is his chief responsibility, and must be carried out with an objective that is both clearly defined, and clearly pastoral:

> In our Part there is first a *Teaching;* for, else, why should you *come*, or *hearken unto me*, or *any*? It is a *Teaching*, it is not onely a *Praying;* And then, there is a *Catholique* doctrine, a *circular* doctrine, that walks the round, and goes the *compasse* of our whole lives, from our first, to our *last childhood*, when *age* hath made us children again, and it is the *Art of Arts*, the root, and fruit of all true wisdome, *The true feare of the Lord. Come ye children, hearken unto mee, and I will teach you the feare of the Lord* (VI, 96).

In light of what we have already seen, the significance of Donne's statement that his responsibility is teaching, and not only praying, is patent. Equally obvious is his conviction that, for all in his congregation, for all, indeed, in his new cure, his preaching is an essential resource for their development as Christians.

Donne is very clear in his belief that, if profitable preaching is his responsibility, diligent hearing is his congregation's:

> *Faith comes by hearing*, saith the Apostle; but it is by that hearing of the soul, *Hearkning, Considering*. And then, as the soul is infused by God, but diffused over the whole body, and so there is a *Man*, so *Faith* is infused from God, but diffused into our *works*, and so there is a *Saint*. Practise is the *Incarnation of Faith*, Faith is incorporated and manifested in a body, by works; and the way to both, is that *Hearing*, which amounts to this *Hearkning*, to a diligent, to a considerate, to a profitable *Hearing*. In which, one essentiall circumstance is, that we be not over affectionately transported with an opinion of any *one person*, but apply our selves to the *Ordinance*, *Come*, and *hearken* unto *me*, To *any* whom God sends with the Seale and *Character* of his Minister (VI, 102).

Donne, therefore, desires that his preaching issue in faith and accompanying probative works. He is also anxious to disavow any intention to portray himself as a superstar of the pulpit, or to claim any exclusive right of audience from his parishioners. His right to expect the diligent hearkening of his congregation has, rather to do with his position than with his person, and, as he turns from the responsibilities of the congregation to those of the minister, he outlines his understanding of the source and the nature of the authority that he assumes over the parishioners of St Dunstan's.

That authority is seated firmly in the call of the minister – a call affirmed, to be sure, by a suitability of life and the possession of ability, but ultimately transcending these considerations:

> *David* doth not determine this in his own person, that you should hearken to *him*, and *none but him*, but that you should hearken to him in that capacity and qualification, which is common to *him* with others, as we are sent by God upon that Ministery; that you say to all such, *Blessed art thou that comest in the Name of the Lord*. ... He is a perverse servant, that will receive no commandment, except he have it immediately from his Masters mouth; so *is he too*, that pretendeth to rest so wholly in the *Word of God*, the *Scriptures*, as that he seeks *no interpretation, no exposition, no preaching* ... He is also a perverse servant, that wil receive no commandment by any *Officier* of his Masters, except he like the *man*, or, if his Master might, in his opinion, have chosen a *fitter man*, to serve in that place. And such a perversnesse is in those hearers who more respect the *man*, then the

> *Ministery*, and his *manner* of delivering it, then the *message* that he delivers (VI, 102-3).

Such perversity in responding to a preacher is based, Donne contends, upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the preacher, and of the nature and source of the authority with which he speaks:

> *Let a man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God.* That is our *Classis*, our rank, our station, what names soever we brought into the world by our extraction from this or that family, what name soever we took in our *baptisme*, and contract between God and us, that name, in which we come to you, is *that, The Ministers of Christ, The stewards of the Mysteries of God, And so let men account of us*, says the Apostle. *Invention*, and *Disposition*, and *Art*, and *Eloquence*, and *Expression*, and *Elocution*, and *reading*, and *writing*, and *printing*, are secondary things, accessory things, auxiliary, subsidiary things; men may account us, and make account of us, as of *Orators* in the pulpit, and of *Authors*, in the shop; but if they account of us as *of Ministers and Stewards*, they give us our due; that's our name to you (VI, 103).

Donne, then, is defined by his position as a preacher, and, he goes on to explain, occupies that position primarily by virtue of his calling. And, in elucidation of that calling, Donne points his audience to Biblical prototype, echoing Tyndale's commentary on John the Baptist:

> All the Evangelists mention *John Baptist* and his *preaching;* but two of the foure say never a word of his *austerity of life*, his *Locusts*, nor his *Camels haire;* and those two that do, *Matthew* and *Marke*, they insist, *first*, upon his *calling*, and *then* upon his *actuall preaching*, how he pursued that Calling, And *then* upon the *Doctrine* that he preached, *Repentance*, and *Sanctification*, and *after that*, they come to these secondary and subsidiary things, which added to his estimation, and assisted the passage of his Doctrine, His good life. Learning, and other good parts, and an exemplar life fall into second places; They have a first place, in *their* consideration who are to call them, but in *you*, to whom they are sent, but a second; fixe you, in the first place, upon that *Calling*. This Calling circumcised *Moses* uncircumcised lips; This made *Jeremy* able to speak, though he called himself a childe; this is *Esays coale from the Altar, which takes away even his sinne, and his iniquity*. Be therefore content to passe over some infirmities, and rest yourselves upon the *Calling* (VI, 103).

By calling the preacher, then, the Church gives recognition to his suitability for the work of a preacher, and the primary responsibility of the congregation is to accept that endorsement. The calling does not place the preacher above all reproach, nor, as we shall see, does it allow for an

unbecoming life. The imprimatur of the calling does, however, give Donne, and his fellow ministers, the authority to command their audience's respect, and their audience's ear.

But, if the calling lays responsibility upon the congregation, it has its concomitant obligations for the preacher. Called to preach, he must preach, and the singular imperative of this duty must govern him in his life and in his performance in the pulpit:

> [W]e are bound to *teach*, and that this *teaching* is to *preach;* And *Væ si non, Wo be unto us*, if we do *not preach*. Wo to *them*, who out of *ease*, or *state*, *silence themselves;* And woe to *them* too, who by their *distemper*, and *Schismaticall* and seditious *manner* of preaching, occasion and force *others to silence them;* and think, (and think it out of a profitable, and manifold experience) That as forbidden books sell best, so silenced Ministers thrive best. It is a Duty, *Docendum*, we must teach, *Preach;* but a duty that excludes not *Catechizing;* for catechizing seems especially to be intended here, where he calls upon *them* who are to be taught, by that name, *Children*. It is a duty that excludes not *Praying;* but Praying excludes not *it* neither. Prayer and Preaching may consist, nay they must meet in the Church of God. Now, he that will teach, must have *learnt* before, many yeers before; And he that will preach, must have *thought* of it before. *Extemporall Ministers*, that resolve in a day what they will *be*, *Extemporall Preachers*, that resolve in a minute, what they will *say*, out-go Gods Spirit, and make too much hast. It was Christs way; He tooke first Disciples to learne, and then, out of them, the tooke *Apostles* to teach; and those Apostles made more Disciples. Though *your* first consideration be upon the *Calling*, yet *our* consideration must be for our *fitnesse* to that Calling (VI, 104).[68]

There is much in this extract that is familiar: Donne's balancing of preaching with catechising and prayer echoes precisely the approach that we have already noted as an enduring theme of Donne's belief, and his quotation of Paul's exclamation – 'woe be unto me if I preach not the gospel' – is likewise something that occurs on almost every occasion that Donne speaks about preaching. To what we have already seen, the extract adds Donne's focus on the importance of the preacher's fitness – to be evaluated personally, if not by his congregation. Donne's inveterate balance emerges once again: the preacher must guard against being indolent in the pursuit of his calling, on the one hand, and against excessive zeal, and deliberate provocation on the other. The preacher can allow neither to compromise his calling.

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[68] For an instructively similar criticism of ministers who preached or conducted themselves so as to cause their 'mouths to be stopped' see Holland, 'Archbishop Abbot and the Problem of "Puritanism"', 25.

Thus it was that Donne laid out the parameters of his approach to the souls in his cure at the commencement of his ministry in St Dunstan's. In Donne's sermon of valediction to his Lincoln's Inn congregation at his going into Germany, preached in 1619, we get a view of his more mature relationship with this congregation, one which had reason to occupy a special place in Donne's affections. This statement of his feeling for those who have sat regularly under his preaching has a heightened sense of poignancy in the light of Donne's grave misgivings about the prospect of his safe return. Thus, he uses his sermon of valediction to summarise his relationship with his first congregation, a group that occupies a warm place in his affection. Even as he does so, Donne emphasises the sort of reciprocity of affection and of duty that we have already observed:

> As we remember God, so for his sake, let us remember one another. In my long absence, and far distance from hence, remember me, as I shall do you in the ears of that God, to whom the farthest East, and the farthest West are but as the right and left ear in one of us; we hear with both at once, and he hears in both at once; remember me, not my abilities; for when I consider my Apostleship that I was sent to you, I am in St. *Pauls quorum, quorum ego sum minimus,* the least of them that have been sent; and when I consider my infirmities, I am in his *quorum*, in another commission, another man, *Quorum ego maximus;* the greatest of them; but remember my labours, and endeavors, at least my desire, to make sure your salvation. And I shall remember your religious cheerfulness in hearing the word, and your christianly respect towards all them that bring that word unto you, and towards myself in particular far [a]bove my merit. And so as your eyes that stay here, and mine that must be far of, for all that distance shall meet every morning, in looking upon that same Sun, and meet every night, in looking upon that same Moon; so our hearts may meet morning and evening in that God, which sees and answers every where; that you may come thither to him with your prayers, that I, (if I may be of use for his glory, and your edification in this place) may be restored to you again; and may come to him with my prayer that what *Paul* soever plant amongst you, or what *Apollos* soever water, God himself will give the increase: That if I never meet you again till we have all passed the gate of death, yet in the gates of heaven, I may meet you all, and there say to my Saviour, that which he said to his Father and our Father, *Of those whom thou hast given me, have I lost none* (II, 248).

Donne's affection for, and keen sense of duty towards, his congregation are patent. What is also clear is the extent to which the relationship with his congregation is contained in the act of

preaching. Donne presents preaching as his chief discharge of his overarching function – to 'make sure your salvation' – and the reverent response of his hearers as the chief expression of their Christianity. It is notable that attention to the word of God comes first – respect for the minister has also its place, but is secondary to attentive listening to the voice of God.

Donne's characterisation of his ministry to his Lincoln's Inn congregation in this sermon introduces us to another important theme in Donne's understanding of the preacher's office. His depiction of his ministry as an apostleship is significant, and alerts us to the importance of the contemporary debate over the nature of the minister's authority. The issue of apostolic succession was, increasingly a vexed one in the English Church. There is a tendency, in the wake of the Oxford Movement, to think of apostolic succession primarily in terms of the tracing back of episcopal ordination through the centuries, to Apostolic times. Such an interpretation of succession did exist amongst Donne's contemporaries, and can be seen especially in the work of Francis Godwin (1562-1633). Godwin's *Catalogue of the Bishops of England*, published in a two of editions in 1601 and 1615, attempted just this sort of tracing. A later edition of this book was published in 1625 as *The Succession of the Bishops of England*, a change of title which Anthony Milton suggests offers a telling index of the increased concern with apostolic succession.[69]

For others, however, apostolic succession was less a matter of tracing the orderly progression of bishops from the apostles to the present – schism had made it problematic for even the Roman church to make any very sweeping claims in that regard. Indeed, the doctrine of succession, as officially formulated for the first time by the Council of Trent, was concerned with the authority of the bishop rather than his historical pedigree:

> [I]f any one affirm, that all Christians indiscrimately are priests of the New Testament, or that they are all mutually endowed with an equal spiritual power, he clearly does nothing but confound the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is as an army set in array; as if, contrary to the doctrine of blessed Paul, all were apostles, all prophets, all evangelists, all pastors, all doctors. Wherefore, the holy Synod declares that, besides the other ecclesiastical degrees, bishops, who have succeeded to the place of the apostles, principally belong to this hierarchial order; that they are placed, as the same apostle says, by the Holy Ghost, to rule the Church of God; that

[69] Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 284.

> they are superior to priests; administer the sacrament of Confirmation; ordain the ministers of the Church; and that they can perform very many other things; over which functions others of an inferior order have no power.[70]

This understanding of apostolic succession only slowly penetrated the English Church. Bishop John Jewel 'refused to endorse apostolic succession, rejecting it in favour of doctrinal succession. He believed apostolic succession undemonstrable and rationally unsupportable. During his long controversy with the puritans, John Whitgift expressly denied the doctrine as an infringement of monarchical power.'[71] Richard Hooker appeared to approach this understanding more closely:

> The ruling superiority of one Bishop over many Presbyters in each Church, is an order descended from Christ to the Apostles, who were themselves Bishops at large, and from the Apostles to those whom they in their steads appointed Bishops over particular Countries and Cities; and even from those antient times, universally established, thus many years it hath continued throughout the World; for which cause Presbyters must not grudge to continue subject unto their Bishops, unless they will proudly oppose themselves against that which God himself ordained by his Apostles, and the whole Church of Christ approveth and judgeth most convenient.[72]

Yet, this notwithstanding, Hooker qualified this endorsement of apostolic succession:

> On the other side Bishops albeit they may avouch with conformity of truth, that their Authority hath thus descended even from the very Apostles themselves, yet the absolute and everlasting continuance of it, they cannot say that any commandment of the Lord doth injoyn.[73]

More complete, but still guarded, endorsements of this understanding of apostolic succession were to be found in a Paul's Cross sermon preached by Richard Bancroft, in which he excoriated Puritan and Presbyterian innovators, and defended the episcopacy on the basis that 'ever since Saint *Marks* time the care of church government hath been committed. They had authoritie over the rest of the ministry.'[74] For some *avant-garde* conformists, at least, the concept of apostolic succession was crucial to the authority and the authenticity of the ministry of the reformed

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[70] J. Waterworth, ed., *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent* (London: Dolman, 1848), 172-3
[71] Stanley Archer, 'Hooker on Apostolic Succession: The Two Voices', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 no. 1 (1993):67-74, 68
[72] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol. 3*, 167-8It should be noted that Book VII of the *Lawes* was not published during Hooker's lifetime, although it did circulate in MS. See Sisson, *The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker*
[73] Hooker, *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity, Vol. 3*, 168.
[74] Richard Bancroft, *A sermon Preached at Paules Crosse the 9. of Februarie, being the first Sunday in the Parleamеant, Anno* 1588 (London: I.I for Gregorie Seton, 1588), 14-5.

Church of England. Such a succession guaranteed that apostolic authority continued to be vested in the hierarchy of that Church. This model of ministerial authority stressed the importance of calling, and of ecclesiastical sanction. The message, in some senses, became subservient to the man.

For those on the more Puritan end of England's ecclesiastical continuum, this emphasis on the apostolic succession was objectionable, little more than popery dressed up, or, perhaps more accurately, dressed down. For these Protestants, the message was primary, and the authority of the preacher was rather vested in their proclamation of God's word than any ecclesiastical ceremony. Those who adopted this position found a congenial paradigm in the lives of the Old Testament prophets, and, thus, tended to theorise the authority of the preacher in prophetic, rather than apostolic terminology. Such terminology was common to a broad swath of the ecclesiastical spectrum. Conformists, like Edmund Grindal, who emphasised the role of preaching had no difficulty with describing gatherings for the preaching of the word as prophesyings; Donne's own 'godly' contemporary, William Perkins entitled his book of advice for preachers *The Arte of Prophesying*, and, in his two treatises on the duty and calling of the minister defined that duty in prophetic terms. More radical puritans, however, went beyond the mere use of terminology, and saw in the lives of Biblical prophets a pattern of God-granted authority that transcended political structures and authority. For those who opposed the religious policies of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs, such prototypes offered a pattern of an authority based in a God-given mandate and message – an authority that was not weakened, and indeed could be validated, by ecclesiastical or secular disapprobation. And such disapprobation was generally forthcoming; the prophetic paradigm was perceived as one more occasion for Puritan rebelliousness. Donne's sermons demonstrate his familiarity with both views of the minister's authority, and, in typical fashion, he generally maintains a position of equipoise less by rejecting both, than by adopting elements from both views, to serve his immediate rhetorical purpose. But, as in other matters, this equipoise should not be understood as indifference, and Donne has left us an explicit and very clear discussion of the claims of the opposing paradigms of preaching.

This discussion takes place in a very interesting context: it forms part of the second of the two sermons into which Donne digested the one preached at The Hague.[75] The peculiarly Reformed nature of Donne's audience may have provided him with an impetus for his discussion, and it is probably true that his remarks would have been palatable to those who listened. There seems, however, no need to dismiss Donne's remarks as the mere *ad hominem* posturing of a crowd-pleasing preacher. If nothing else, his own preparation of the sermon for publication suggests that he regarded it as an accurate statement of his views, and which had sufficient potential to be helpful in its articulation of them to justify its publication. And while Donne was sensitive to the rhetorical possibilities of presenting his ministry as apostolic, on the one hand, or prophetic on the other, the view of his ministerial authority embodied in this sermon is endorsed by his sermons as a whole.

Donne's choice of text for the sermon was an interesting one, and one that gave particular point to the discussion of calling. He spoke from Matthew 4:18-20: 'And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.' This is the primeval calling of the first apostles. Donne applies the calling practically and pastorally, and exhorts his audience to the following of Christ 'as well in doctrinall things as in practicall' (II, 302). Having dealt with the responsibilities that lay upon the two brothers as a result of their calling, he turns to consider 'what they shall get by this' – their gain because of Christ's calling. It is typical of Donne, and consonant with what we have already seen, that Donne sees the gain rather in terms of a particular duty than the dignity of a position:

> They shall be *fishers;* and what shall they catch? *men*. They shall be fishers of men. And then, for that world must be their Sea, and their net must be the Gospel. And here in so vast a sea, and with so small a net, there was no great appearance of much gaine. And in this function, whatsoever they should catch, they should catch little for themselves (II, 302).

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[75] On Donne's time in Europe with Doncaster see Sellin, *Donne and Diplomatic Contexts* and Bald, *John Donne : a life*, 338-65. Dudley Carleton recorded the event in his letters but, while he mentioned Donne's sermon, he was more occupied with practical details. See Jr. Lee, Maurice, ed., *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603-1624: Jacobean Letters* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 273-6.

Above all else, then, the apostles were preachers. Donne has little to say about any sacramental privilege, or ecclesiastical authority: the apostles, in his account, are primarily proclaimers of the gospel. As such, their calling is a burden, at least as much as it is a privilege and, Donne goes on to stress, it was an extraordinary calling that left no room for ideas of succession:

> The Apostleship, as it was the fruitfullest, so it was the barrennest vocation; They were to catch all the world; there is their fecundity; but the Apostles were to have no Successors, as Apostles; there is their barrennesse. The Apostleship was not intended for a function to raise houses and families; The function ended in their persons; after the first, there were no more Apostles (II, 302).

The statement is certainly unequivocal, as is Donne's reiteration that 'the Apostleship was an extraordinary office instituted by Christ, for a certaine time, and to certaine purposes, and not to continue in ordinary use.' (II, 303) Between these two statements, Donne had given a polemical edge to his argument, and had directed it against the apostolic pretensions of the Pope, against his claim to 'Apostolicall authority, ... Apostolicall dignity, and Apostolicall jurisdiction' (II, 302). This in no way evacuates his words of their relevance to the present discussion, for to deny the possibility of apostolic succession was to deny it to Canterbury as well as to Rome, to the pulpit of St Paul's as well as to the altar of St Peter's. Furthermore, Donne's immediate progression to a discussion of the extraordinary nature of the prophet's office, and his denial of the idea that its functions have transferred to the Christian minister clearly indicate his belief that apostolic barrenness has implications for the contemporary understanding of the authority of the preacher, and indicate too, his expectation, indeed his intention, that his words be understood to have just such an import.

Donne is, perhaps, more explicit in his statement that 'the office of the Prophet was in the Old Testament an extraordinary office, and was not transferred then, nor does not remaine now in the ordinary office of the Minister' (II, 303). The lack of justification for the treatment of the prophetic office in his text is indicative of the degree to which claims of apostolic and prophetic calling were, for Donne, the Scylla and Charybdis of the preacher's authority and role. And, it quickly emerges, it is the political import of claims to prophetic office that most disquiets Donne:

> [T]hey argue impertinently, and collect and infer sometimes seditiously that say, The prophet proceeded thus and thus, therefore the Minister may and must proceed so too; The Prophets would chide Kings openly, and threaten the Kings publiquely, and proclaime the fault of the Kings in the eares of the people confidently, authoritatively, therefore the Minister may and must do so. God sent that particular Prophet *Ieremy* with that extraordinary Commission, *Behold I have this day set thee over Nations, and over the Kingdomes, to roote out, and to pull down, to destroy and throw downe, and then to build, and to plant againe;* But God hath given none of us his Ministers, in our ordinary function, any such Commission over nations, and over Kingdomes. Even in *Ieremies* Commission there seemes to be a limitation of time; *Behold this day I have set thee over them*, where that addition (*this day*) is not onely the the date of the Commission ... but .. is the terme, the duration of the Commission, that it was to last but that day (II, 303).

Ultimately, for Donne, both the apostolic and the prophetic views of the office and authority of the Christian minister are anachronistic and equally to be reprehended. They both stem from a failure correctly to apprehend the nature of God's purposes in the past and at the present moment:

> And therefore, as they argue perversely, forwardly, dangerously that say, The Minister does not his duty that speakes not as boldly, and as publiquely too, and of Kings, and great persons, as the Prophets did, because theirs was an Extraordinary, ours an Ordinary office, (and no man will thinke that the Justices in their Sessions, or the Judges in their Circuits may proceed to executions, without due tryall by a course of Law, because Marshals, in time of rebellion and other necessities, may doe so, because one hath but an ordinary, the other an extraordinary Commission) So doe they deceive themselves and others, that pretend in the Bishop of Rome an Apostolicall jurisdiction over all the world, whereas howsoever he may be S. *Peters* successor, as Bishop of Rome, yet he is no Successor to S. *Peter* as an Apostle; upon which onely the universall power can be grounded, and without which that universall power fals to the ground: The Apostolicall faith remaines spread over all the world, but the Apostolicall jurisdiction is expired in their persons (II, 303-4).

Thus far, Donne's discussion of the ministry has been a negative one: he has denied the applicability of the two models most often used in describing ministerial function. Donne clearly appreciates this for, having eliminated these models, he sets about to provide a new model, in their place, one that acknowledges some common ground with prophetic and apostolic

prototypes, but that ultimately insists upon the radically different and essentially innovative nature of the preacher's authority.

In adumbrating this model, Donne insists that essence is of more importance than presentation, that an appreciation of the responsibilities of ministerial office is more appropriate than glorification in the status of such an office. Thus it is the humility of the calling to be fishers of men that, for Donne, defines the calling to preach the gospel:

> These twelve Christ cals *Fishers:* why fishers? Because it is a name of labour, of service, and of humiliation; and names that tast of humiliation, and labour, and service, are most properly ours; (fishers we may be) names of dignity, and authority, and command are not so properly ours, (Apostles wee are not in any such sense as they were) Nothing inflames, nor swells, nor puffes us up, more then that leaven of the soule, that empty, aery, frothy love of Names and Titles (II, 304).

Thus it is that, in defining the nature of the preacher's duty, Donne still appeals to the disciples as exemplars, but to their example as evangelists, not as apostles. His text, therefore, allows him to insist that the office of the preacher is linked to a calling; or, rather, is linked with two callings, an internal and an external validation of ministry:

> [God] does not call them from their calling, but he mends them in it. It is not an Innovation ... but it is a Renovation ... and Renovations are alwayes acceptable to God; that is, the renewing of a mans selfe, in a consideration of his first estate, what he was made for, and wherein he might be most serviceable to God. Such a renewing it is, as could not be done without God; no man can renewe himselfe, regenerate himselfe; no man can prepare that work, no man can begin it, no man can proceed in it of himselfe. The desire and the actuall beginning is from the preventing grace of God, and the constant proceeding is from the concomitant, and subsequent, and continuall succeeding grace of God; for there is no conclusive, no consummative grace in this life; no such measure of grace given to any man, as that a man needs no more, or can lose or frustrate none of that. The renewing of these men in our text, Christ takes to himself; *Faciam vos, I will make yee fishers of men;* no worldly respects must make us such fishers; it must be a calling from God; And yet, (as the other Euangelist in the same history expresses it) it is *Faciam fieri vos, I will cause yee to be made fishers of men,* that is I will provide an outward calling for you too. Our calling to this Man-fishing is not good, *Nisi Dominus faciat, & fieri faciat,* except God make us fishers by an internall, and make his Church to make us so too, by an external calling. Then we are fishers of men, and then we are successors

> to the Apostles, though not in their Apostleship, yet in this fishing. And then, for this fishing, the world is the Sea, and our net is the Gospel (II, 305-6).

Donne's use of the terminology of grace in this extract is striking. He is, in effect, taking the Calvinist aetiology of conversion, and applying it to a calling to the ministry. This identification of conversion with the call to the ministry is fascinating, especially given the context of Donne's life. The same biographical context may seem to render ironical the insistence on the importance of an internal calling. Yet, the insistence that the call to the ministry of the Church must come, in the first instance, from God is consistent throughout Donne's sermons, and there is at least a suggestion here that this passage provides us with fresh light on Donne's often-remarked reluctance to respond to James' urgings that he be ordained. Certainly, his insistence, in soteriological terminology, on the need for God's grace, lends support to Walton's contention that his delay was occasioned by a sense of unworthiness of the position to which he was called. Also notable is Donne's conceptualisation of the external calling by the Church. Such a calling was essential, given Donne's understanding of ecclesiastical authority, but, by linking it with an inward calling, he makes it something more than the mechanical recruitment of candidates for ecclesiastical positions.

As well as outlining the sort of callings associated with this distinctly new form of Divine service, Donne comments on the scope of his ministry, and the methods to be employed in its pursuit. The world, he remarks, is the sea, in which the Divinely-mandated fishing is to take place, and like the sea, 'is subject to stormes, and tempests, and presents a danger of drowning 'in a calme, as in a storme', as well in prosperity, as in adversity. This world offers immense and unrestricted possibilities for fishing, and the faithful preacher is not to limit this scope by any personal predilection or ambition:

> And in this Sea, are we made fishers of men; Of men in generall; not of rich men, to profit by them, nor of poore men, to pierce the more sharply, because affliction hath opened a way into them; Not of learned men, to affect them with an astonishment, or admiration of our gifts: But we are fishers of men, of all men, of that which makes them men, their soules. And for this fishing in this Sea, this Gospel is our net (II, 307).

Twice over, by this time, Donne has identified the Gospel as the net by which the Divinely-ordained fishing is to be carried out. He goes on to develop this point, defining the Gospel by opposition:

> Eloquence is not our net; Traditions of men are not our nets; onely the Gospel is. The Devill angles with hooks and bayts; he deceives and he wounds in the catching; for every sin hath his sting. The Gospel of Christ Jesus is a net; It hath leads and corks; It hath leads, that is, the denouncing of Gods judgements, and a power to sink down, and to lay flat any stibborne and rebellious heart, And it hath corks, that is, the power of absolution, and the application of the mercies of God, that swimme above all his works, means to erect an humble and contrite spirit, above all the waters of tribulation, and affliction (II, 307-8).

Significantly, Donne immediately follows this extract with a section which begins 'A net is ... a knotty thing, and so is the Scriptures' that we have considered in some detail in a previous chapter. Thus he collapses any distinction between the gospel that he is called to preach, and the Scriptures that proclaim it – the gospel prescribes both matter and method. That it is the word preached that Donne has in view at this point is evident in his closing, appealingly personal, expression of faith in God's ability and intention to bless the word preached:

> And that is truly the comfort that refreshes us in all our Lucubrations, and night-studies, through the course of our lives, that that God that sets us to Sea, will prosper our voyage, that whether he fix us upon our owne, or send us to other Congregations, he will open the hearts of those Congregations to us, and blesse our labours to them. For as S. *Pauls Væ si non*, lies upon us wheresoever we are, (Wo be unto us if wee doe not preach) so (as S. *Paul* sayes too) we were of all men most miserable, if wee preached without hope of doing good (II, 309).

Donne returned to the relevance of the prophetic ministry as a paradigm for the ministerial in his Christmas sermon for 1628.[76] He took as his text the question 'Lord, who hath believed our report?', and drew the attention of his congregation to the three Biblical occurrences of the words: Isaiah 53:1, John 12:38, and Romans 10:16. Donne made these three passages the three sections of his sermon, and discussed the question as raised by a prophet, an evangelist, and an Apostle, and pertaining to the 'prophetic Christ', as foretold by Isaiah, the 'historical

[76] Donne's Christmas Sermons have been examined in detail in Haskin, 'John Donne and the Cultural Contradicitons of Christmas',.

Christ', recorded by John, and Christ as applied 'to every soule, in the settling of a Church, in that concatenation of meanes for the infusion of faith expressed in that Chapter, *sending*, and *preaching*, and *hearing*' (VIII, 294). We have considered this very important discussion of the Church's role in a previous chapter, and the treatment, as part of that discussion, of the place of preaching in bringing salvation fits very closely with the recurrence of the theme in Easter sermons, given that communion was also, at least theoretically, obligatory at Christmas. For our present purposes, though, Donne's remarks on the office of the prophet are where our interest lies, and here, as in the sermon preached in The Hague, his chief interest was to distinguish between the prophet's office and Donne's own function:

> The office and function of a Prophet, in the time of the Law, was not so evident, nor so ordinary an office, as the office of the Priest and Minister in the Gospel now is; There was not a constant, an ordinary, a visible calling in the Church, to the office of a Prophet. Neither the high-priest, nor the Ecclesiastical Consistory, the *Synedrium*, did by any imposition of hands, or other Collation, or Declaration, give Orders to any man so, as that thereby that man was made a Prophet. I know some men, of much industry, and perspicacy too, in searching into those Scriptures, the sense whereof is not obvious to every man, have thought that the Prophets had an outward and a constant declaration of their Calling. And they think it proved, by that which is said to *Eliah*, when God commands him to anoint *Hazael* King of Syria, and to anoint *Iehu* King of Israel, and to anoint *Elisha* Prophet in his own room: Therefore, say they, the Prophet had as much evidence of his Calling, as the Minister hath, for that unction was as evident a thing, as our Imposition of hands is. And it is true, it was so, where it was actually, and really executed. ... But howsoever it may have been for their Kings, there seemes to be a plaine distinction betweene them and the Prophets in the Psalme, for this evidence of unction; *Touch not mine Anointed*, sayes God there: They, they that were Anointed, constitute one rank, one classis; and then followes, *And doe my Prophets no harme:* They, they who were not Anointed, the Prophets, constitute another classis, another rank. So that then an internall, a spirituall unction the Prophets had, that is an application, an appropriation to that office from God, but a constant, an evident calling to that function, by any externall act of the Church, they had not, but it was an extraordinary office, and imposed immediately by God (VII, 296-8).

In this fairly lengthy section, Donne is concerned less with the contrast between the duties of prophet and minister than he is with the difference in their calling. Once again, he is keen to

stress the extraordinary nature of the prophet's calling, and clearly distinguishes it from the ordinary and evident calling of the minister. Significantly, the role of the Church in this ministerial calling is repeatedly stressed. The precise importance of ecclesiastical recognition becomes clear when we consider the broader context of the sermon. The lack of any external ritual connected with the calling of the prophet, Donne argues, might excuse the Israelite polity 'if they did not believe a Prophet presently' (VII, 298). Thus, it was essential that their extraordinary Divine mandate be confirmed by extraordinary means:

> Therefore when God does any extraordinary worke, he accompanies that work with an extraordinary light, by which, he, for whose instruction God does that work, may know that work to be his (VII, 298).

The minister of the gospel required a similar validation: and, as an ordinary office, finds it in the recognition, the ordination of the Church, established, by God, as 'a visible and constant, and permanent meanes of salvation' (VII, 307). And, it is worth noting, that Donne insists not only on the importance of preaching to the mission of the Church – commanded to '*goe, and preach the Gospell to every creature*' – but also to its very existence, as he echoes the Thirty-Nine Articles in declaring that 'the true Church is that, where the word is truly preached, and the Sacraments duly administered.' Preaching, then, is at the very core of the nature and the mission of the Reformed Church, and thus central to the role of the 'Priest and Minister in the Gospel.'

In a rather frustratingly undated sermon, preached at St Paul's, on the key homiletic text in II Corinthians 5:20: 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God', Donne marked off the function of the priest from that of the prophet with even greater clarity:

> Though God sent Jeremy with that large Commission, Behold this day I have set thee over the Nations, and over the Kingdomes, to pluck up, and to rout out, to destroy and to throw down; and though many of the Prophets had their Commissions drawn by that precedent, we claime not that, we distinguish between the extraordinary Commission of the Prophet, and the ordinary Commission of the Priest, we admit a great difference between them, and are farre from taking upon us, all that the Prophet might have done; which is an errour, of which the Church of Rome, and some other over-zealous Congregations have been equally guility, and equally opposed Monarchy and Sovereignty, by assuming to

> themselves, in an ordinary power, whatsoever God, upon extraordinary occasions, was pleased to give for the present, to his extraordinary Instruments the Prophets (X, 121).

The preacher is not a prophet, and Donne marks off his position from that of Rome and of 'other over-zealous Congregations.' In doing so, he raises the odds of the discussion considerably, making a proper understanding of the prophet's role a vital marker of ecclesiological propriety.

V-Preacher or Priest

Both of these sermons refer to the ministers of the Church of England as priests, and thus call our attention to a term that has, thus far, been conspicuous by its absence from this chapter. We have delayed discussion of it to this point because the evidence available to us suggests that the concept of priesthood was of far less importance to Donne than those ideas that clustered around the office of the preacher. This relative lack of importance is evident on a crudely quantitative basis – examination of Troy Reeves' index to topics in the Sermons reveals approximately thirty references to priests, as against a combined total well in excess of two hundred and fifty for 'Preacher' and 'Preaching.'[77] The impression provided by this very broad and sketchy overview is confirmed by a more detailed examination of the sermons – many of the references to priesthood are very slight, and Donne provides us with no systematic treatment of the subject in the sermons to match his discussions, both extensive and intensive, of the preacher's role. Such discussions of priesthood as he does engage in are as likely to refer to the 'royal priesthood' of all believers, as to the special status of the minister in any Hookerian or Laudian sense.

The sermon on II Corinthians 5:20, quoted above, is the most detailed treatment that we have, in the sermons, of the topic of priesthood. Donne is very explicit about his interest in priesthood: in his division of the text he draws the attention of his hearers to the 'two kinds of *persons, we* and *you*' (X, 120). The first part of the sermon, then, addresses 'our office towards you, and our stipulation and contract with you, *We pray you;* we come not as Lords or Commanders over you, but in humble, in submissive manner, *We pray you.*' And, far from making any exalted

[77] Troy D. Reeves, *Index to the Sermons of John Donne Vol.2: Index to Proper Names*, ed. James Hogg, *Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), 153-6'Minister' and 'Ministry', admittedly more 'catch-all' terms net a combined total of some two hundred mentions.

claims about the office of the priest, Donne is anxious, as he develops his subject, to disavow any claim to any mastery over the heritage of God, and, as we have seen him do repeatedly, stresses rather his duty to his congregation:

> First, then, for *our office* towards you, because you may be apt to say, *You take too much upon you, you sonnes of Levi; We* the sonnes of *Levi*, open to you our Commission, and we pursue but that we professe, that we are sent but to pray, but to intreat you; and we accompany it with an outward declaration, we stand bare, and you sit covered. When greater power seems to be given us, of treading upon *Dragons* and *Scorpians*, of *binding* and *loosing*, of *casting out Devills*, and the like, we confesse these are powers over *sinnes*, over *Devills* that doe, or endeavour to posess you, *not over you*, for *to you* we are sent to pray and intreat you (X, 121).

This extract is remarkable for the way in which Donne mentions the more spectacular aspects of priesthood, only to dismiss them as of no real importance to the relationship between himself and his congregation. Indeed, even as he raises them, he acknowledges doubt as to their existence. Priesthood, for Donne, is not a thaumaturgic office. Rather, it is bound up in preaching, and preaching is a business best carried out in the absence of pride:

> [A]s Christ being the light of the world, called his Apostles the light of the world too; so, ... the Saviour of the world communicates to us the name of Saviours of the world too, yet howsoever instrumentally and ministerially that glorious name of *Saviour* may be afforded to *us*, though to a high hill, though that Mount Sion, we are lead by a low way, by the example of our blessed Saviour himself' (X, 122).

And the protestations of humility do not end there. Donne is not only happy to pray his audience, but to 'throw down', to 'deject' himself, to 'admit any undervalue, any exination, any evacuation of our selves, so we may advance this great work' (X, 123). Later, he recalls that the Holy Ghost 'suffered his Apostles to be thought drunk', and gives a contemporary application: 'a dramme of zeal more than ordinary, against a *Patron*, or against a great Parishioner, makes us presently scandalous Ministers.' Later, again, he calls to mind the occasions when both Christ and Paul were accused of madness, and of foolishness. While he stresses that he speaks 'of the ministration of our office, for, for the office itself, nothing can be more glorious, then the ministration of the Gospel' (X, 124), and, while he later does spend some time on the dignity of speaking for God, it is his conception of the lowliness of the priestly office, and its basis in

preaching that is the overwhelming impression of this sermon. Equally noteworthy is Donne's limitation of his priestly role to the proclamation rather than the enforcement of truth:

> [W]e present to you our tears, and our prayers, his tears, and his prayers that sent us, and if you will not be reduced with these, our Commission is at an end. I bring not a *Star-chamber* with me up into the Pulpit, to punish a *forgery*, if you counterfeit a zeale in coming hither now; nor an *Exchequer*, to punish usurious contracts, though made in the Church; nor a high *Commission*, to punish incontinencies, if they be promoted by wanton interchange of looks in this place. Onely by my prayers, which he hath promised to accompany and prosper in his service, I can diffuse his overshadowing Spirit over all the corners of this Congregation, and pray that *Publican*, that stands below afar off, and dares not lift up his eyes to heaven, to receive a chearfull confidence, that his sinnes are forgiven him; and pray that *Pharisee*, that stands above, and onely thanks God, that he is not like other men, to believe himself to be, if not a rebellious, yet an unprofitable servant. I can onely tell them, that neither of them is in the right way of reconciliation to God (X, 122).

This attitude to priesthood is echoed in Donne's poetry. The late poem 'To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders' is addressed to a newly ordained priest, and adumbrated the consequences of the step that he has taken. These consequences reiterate a good deal of what we have already seen. The link between calling and conversion that Donne describes in his own experience is repeated in this poem. Ordination should give rise, it is suggested, to 'new thoughts and stirrings', to 'new motions': it occasions a paradigm shift in existence. Yet, Donne is as clear, and more emphatic, in his disavowal of any mystical change of Mr Tilman's 'substance':

> Thou art the same materials, as before,
> Onely the stampe is changed; but no more.
> And as new crowned Kings alter the face,
> But not the monies substance; so hath grace
> Chang'd onely Gods old Image by creation,
> To Christs new stampe, at this thy Coronation. (ll. 13-18)

This 'coronation', like the impress on a coin, is something public and external, and Donne is insisting, once again, upon the necessity of external calling. Nor does this external calling stand

by itself – Tilman is responding to the promptings of his 'diviner soul' in taking orders, and the external calling is confirming and validating those initial and inward promptings.

It is this double calling, then, that makes Tilman a minister, and the rewards of that calling that outweigh the social disadvantages of assuming a profession that is scorned by 'the foolish world'. And, this calling does have a mediatorial, a priestly aspect:

> If then th' Astronomers, whereas they spie
> A new-found Starre, their Opticks magnifie,
> How brave are those, who with their Engine, can
> Bring man to heaven, and heaven againe to man?
> These are thy titles and preheminences,
> In whom must meet Gods graces, mens offences,
> And so the heavens which beget all things here,
> And the earth our mother, which these things doth beare,
> Both these in thee, are in thy Calling knit,
> And make thee now a blest Hermaphrodite. (ll. 45-54)

The poem, then, does describe a priesthood that represents God to man, and man to God. Donne, however, pays little attention to the sacerdotal elements of Mr Tilman's new status, according more space to a discussion of the problematic social standing of the ministry than he does to any mystical or hieratic elements. Further, Donne still strongly indicates on the importance of preaching, and, in the central section of the poem suggests that it is the preaching of the Gospel, above all else that brings 'man to heaven, and heaven again to man':

> What function is so noble, as to bee
> Embassadour to God, and destinie?
> To open life? to give kingdomes to more
> Than Kings give dignities; to keep heavens doore?
> *Maries* prerogative was to beare Christ, so
> 'Tis preachers to convey him, for they doe
> As Angels out of clouds, from Pulpits speake;
> And blesse the poore beneath, the lame, the weake. (ll. 37-44)

The most weighty claims of power and privilege, then, are made not for the minister *qua* priest, but *qua* preacher. The preaching of the word, as we have already seen, re-incarnates Christ, transforms lives, and takes souls to Heaven. This, for Donne, is the real dignity and authority of his calling.

Whether this account of Donne's understanding of ministerial office should surprise us depends greatly upon how we understand the nature of his theology. If we are to view him as a Laudian, proto-Anglican, or *avant-garde* conformist, these views will be at best surprising, at worst inexplicable, and will, require, at a minimum, a major qualification. If, however, we have become convinced of Donne's adherence to an essential Protestantism, that sits lightly on ritual, defending it when necessary in terms of order and decency, and that is based squarely upon the tenets of the Reformers, we will be satisfied, rather than surprised at such a close fit between Donne's views of the authority of the sermon and the preacher, and those Reformed understandings that played so crucial a role in determining the place of the minister in the reformed Church of England.

VI-Style or the Spirit – Locating the Power of Preaching

It remains for us, then, to look briefly at the relationship between rhetoric and authority in Donne's sermons. This might seem somewhat peripheral to the thrust of this study, but it is relevant, partly due to link between ecclesiastical affiliation and preaching style that has been posited by some students of the sermon, and derided by others, but, more importantly because Donne perceived a clear linkage of the authority of his office, of the sermon, and the tropes of rhetorical expression. In their engaging introductory chapter to the influential collection of essays, *The English Sermon Revised*, Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough trace the genealogy of literary criticism of the sermon, and identify the four classic studies by Mitchell, Herr, Maclure, and Blench as the most important standard general studies of the first generation of critical work on the sermons. These works 'were all seminal studies: they established the bibliography of printed sermons from 1450 to 1715, documented the sites and occasions for preaching in Early Modern England, and outlined both the formal characteristics of the genre and its cultural and

political currency during a period of tremendous social change.'[78] However, in calling for a revised approach to the criticism of the sermon, Ferrell and McCullough also call attention to the way in which Mitchell's work, in particular, ossified the study of the sermon by focussing scholarly attention on 'the history of English prose style, antiquarian literary history, and a preoccupation with "the Metaphysical".'[79] Each of these areas have scope to benefit from the sort of study that Ferrell and McCullough call for, and that is exemplified in the essays that they have collected. It is the last, however, that interests us here, not least because of the central place given to Donne's sermons as exemplars of the 'metaphysical style'. The account given of this importance is worth quoting at some length:

> Mitchell's avowed purpose in undertaking his work was nothing less than 'determining the place of Donne as a pulpit orator'. ... Convinced that Donne 'was a "metaphysical" preacher, just as he was a "metaphysical" poet', Mitchell thus encumbered criticism of Donne's sermons in particular with a term that has never proved as helpful or productive as it arguably has been to criticism of Donne's poetry. ... The label is itself, an anachronism largely foreign to the early seventeenth poetic vocabulary, much less to the homiletic one. Particularly awkward has been the fact that the quality most associated with metaphysical verse – the flash of paradoxical metaphor made all the brighter by an almost violent concision of thought and phrase – only very rarely displays itself in Donne's prose, or at least rarely with the economy that the poetry has taught us to expect. ... As so often is the case, to cope with this irksome refusal of subjects to fit neatly into catagories, new, usually larger, catagories have been to found accommodate them. Mitchell's answer was to propose an ecclesiological umbrella under which he could fit 'metaphysical' poets who should be 'metaphysical' preachers. In the wake of nearly twenty years of detailed reassessment of once confidently used ecclesiastical party labels like 'Puritan' and 'Calvinist' ... Mitchell's choice of the howlingly anachronistic phrase 'Anglo-Catholic Preachers' to describe preachers from the Calvinist Playfere to the anti-Calvinist Andrewes (with Donne somewhere between them) hardly needs refutation.[80]

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[78] Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter E. McCullough, 'Revising the study of the English Sermon', in *The English sermon revised*, ed. Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter E. McCullough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 3.
[79] Ferrell and McCullough, 'Revising the study of the English Sermon', 3.
[80] Ferrell and McCullough, 'Revising the study of the English Sermon', 5-6.

Mary Morrissey begins her study of 'Scripture, style and persuasion in Seventeenth-Century English Theories of Preaching' by making a similar point, which she then extends in a manner very illuminating of our present study:

> Critics of seventeenth-century sermons have commonly divided preaching styles along the lines of the political and doctrinal divisions in the Church, associating the plain style with puritans and what is now called the 'metaphysical' style with the Laudians (or 'avant-garde conformists'). This simplistic and flawed dichotomy can be shown to be based on the transferral of theories from classical rhetoric that were only partly relevant to discussions of preaching before the Restoration. Behind this transferral lies the assumption that preaching was always considered a branch of rhetoric, rather than a sacred office that makes use of the techniques of rhetoric: that it aims primarily to persuade the hearers through the argumentative and ornamentative resources of oratory.[81]

Morrissey takes issue with this assumption, arguing that it 'was alien to the terms in which Elizabethan and early Stuart English preachers spoke of their task.' Rather, 'the unique status of preaching in Reformed theology set it apart from other forms of oratory and shaped the theory of preaching accepted within the mainstream of the English Church before the Civil War.'[82] Morrissey goes on to identify what she terms the 'English reformed' style, and, drawing on the sort of Protestant theology of the Word that we have discussed at the start of this chapter, and in our earlier discussion of the authority of Scripture, she contends that the key elements of this style are firstly the view that the sermon makes a 'particular part of Scripture operative for the hearers', and secondly, 'if Christ was present in the Word and that presence [was] made operative in preaching, it was not just because of the preacher's oratorical skills: the operative force in this encounter was the Holy Spirit.'[83] In Morrissey's analysis, these elements, though with varying nuance, remained stable markers of the 'English Reformed' style of preaching across the ecclesiastical spectrum until after the Civil War.

The views of Ferrall, McCullough, and Morrissey are undoubtedly helpful in moving the critical study of the sermon on from the dead end that Mitchell's approach represents, and opening the way for the sermons to speak, once again, for themselves. Their usefulness is

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[81] Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion', 686.
[82] Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion', 687.
[83] Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion', 690.

particularly clear, when their ideas are applied to Donne, for they allow us to approach the sermons with ears no longer straining for what Logan Pearsall Smith described as 'the strange music which he blows through the sacred trumpets.'[84] Rather, we can consider Donne's style, and his own commentary upon his style, and, rather than dismissing his disavowals of primarily rhetorical intent purely as a homiletic humility topos, or a sort of inverted effort to blazon his verbal artistry, we can see them, at least to some extent, as the sincere reflections of a preacher whose chief desire was the edification of his congregation. It is well worth our while to note that the view of preaching that emerges from Donne's own commentary on his office bears a considerable resemblance to that outlined by William Perkins, who was certainly no 'Anglo-catholic':

> Hitherto hath bin spoken of the preparation or prousion of the sermon: the *Promulgation or uttring* of it followeth. In the *Promulgation* two things are required: the hiding of humane wisdome, and the demonstration (or shewing) of the Spirit. *Humane wisedome* must bee concealed, whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the words: because the preaching of the word is the *testiminie of God, and the profession of the knowledge of Christ*, and not of humane skill: and againe, because the hearers ought not to ascribe their faith to the gifts of men, but to the power of Gods word. ... If any man thinke by this meanes barbarisme should be brought into pulpits; hee must vnderstand that the Minister may, yea and must priuately vse at his libertie the artes, philosophie, and varietie of reading, whilest he is in framing his sermon: but he ought in publike to conceale all these from the people, and not to make the least ostentation. ... The *Demonstration* of the spirit is, when the Minister of the word doth in the time of preaching so behaue himselfe, that all, euen ignorant persons & vnbeleeuers may iudge, that it is not so much hee that speaketh, as the Spirit of God in him and by him.[85]

It would, clearly, be footling to deny that Donne made considerable use of rhetorical technique, and that he usually did so with some aplomb. We should note, therefore, Morrissey's insistence that 'although preaching was not considered a branch ... of rhetoric, this does not mean that preachers were thought to have no need for deliberate eloquence.'[86] Indeed, for Donne,

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[84] Smith, ed., *Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages*, xxxv.
[85] William Perkins, *The arte of prophecying, or, A treatise concerning the sacred and onely true manner and methode of preaching first written in Latine by Master William Perkins ; and now faithfully translated into English (for that it containeth many worthie things fit for the knowledge of men of all degrees) by Thomas Tuke.* (London: By Felix Kyngston for E.E., 1607), 132-3.
[86] Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion', 694.

as for Perkins, and other preachers, it was a part of the preacher's duty to couch his sermon in terms fitting to his audience, and palatable to them. This view he states most clearly and comprehensively in a Lent sermon preached at Whitehall in 1618, which takes as its text the words of Ezekiel 33:32: 'And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voyce, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they doe them not.' Right from the opening of the sermon, Donne is treating of the responsibilities of the minister, his duty to his congregation:

> As there lies always upon Gods Minister, a *væ si non*, Wo be unto me, if I preach not the Gospel, if I apply not the comfortable promises of the Gospel, to all that grone under the burden of their sins; so there is *Onus visionis*, (which we finde mentioned in the Prophets) it was a pain, a burden to them, to be put to the denunciation of Gods heavy judgements upon the people: but yet those judgements, they must denounce, as well as propose those mercies (II, 164).

Donne, then, is laying a primary emphasis on the preacher's obligation to meet his congregation at their point of need, and with a message appropriate to them. This obligation, moreover, is independent of personal preference – its execution may often be pleasant, but it will sometimes occasion deep personal pain. The preacher has, furthermore, a responsibility to God correctly to depict his character, balancing his mercy and his justice, reprehending the 'Expostulation, and a Disputing with God, and a censuring of his actions' (II, 166). The twofold duty of the preacher, then, is of considerable weight and force, and thus demands the highest efforts of the preacher:

> First then, God for his own glory promises here, that his Prophet, his Minister shall be *Tuba*, as is said in the beginning of this Chapter, a Trumpet, to awaken with terror. But then, he shall become *Carmen musicum*, a musical and harmonious charmer, to settle and compose the soul again in a reposed confidence, and in a delight in God: he shall be *musicum carmen*, musick and harmony in his manner; he shall not present the messages of God rudely, barbarously, extemporally; but with such meditation and preparation as appertains to so great an imployment, from such a King as God, to such a State as his Church: so shall he be *musicum Carmen*, musicke, harmony, *in re & modo*, in matter and manner (II, 167).

As ambassador for God, then, the preacher must take trouble with his expression, and must couch his communiqués in language appropriate to the august status of God, and of His Church, for 'unpremeditated, and drowsie, and cold manner of preaching, agrees not with the dignity of

Gods service' (II, 167-8). Donne uses this opportunity to sound, once more, his motif against extemporary preaching, precisely because it compromises the polished presentation essential to the preacher's mission:

> [H]e would put them in care of delivering God's messages, with consideration, with meditation, with preparation; and not barbarously, not suddenly, not occasionally, not extemporarily, which might derogate from the dignity of so great a service. That Ambassadour should open himself to a shrewd danger and surprisall, that should defer the thinking upon his Oration, till the Prince, to whom he was sent, were reading his letters of credit: And it is a late time of meditation for a Sermon, when the Psalm is singing (II, 171).

This view of the need for careful, painstaking preparation of the sermon reoccurs throughout the sermons, and should cause us to give credit to Walton's account of Donne's diligence in preparing his own messages:

> The latter part of his life may be said to be a continued study; for as he usually preached once a week, if not oftener, so after his Sermon he never gave his eyes rest, till he had chosen out a new Text, and that night cast his Sermon into a form, and his Text into divisions; and the next day betook himself to consult the Fathers, and so commit his meditations to his memory, which was excellent.[87]

Such a quality of presentation is, moreover, aimed at the critical interests of the congregation:

> And then *musicum* so much farther (as the text adds) as that he shall have a pleasant voice, that is, to preach first sincerely (for a preaching to serve turns and humours, cannot, at least should not please any) but then it is to preach acceptably, seasonably, with a spiritual delight, to a discreet and rectified congregation, that by way of such a holy delight, they may receive the more profit (II, 167).

The interests of the congregation, then, demand pleasant preaching – not crowd-pleasing flattery or mere ear tickling – but a presentation that does its best to avoid becoming an obstacle to the assimilation of the doctrine and edification intended in the sermon. And, rather than renouncing the importance of rhetoric in the service of this greater cause, Donne insists that the example of Scripture demands rhetorical polish:

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[87] Walton, *Lives*, 48.

> Religion is a serious thing, but not a sullen; Religious preaching is a grave exercise, but not a sordid, not a barbarous, not a negligent. There are not so eloquent books in the world, as the Scriptures: Accept those names of Tropes and Figures, which the Grammarians and Rhetoricians put upon us, and we may so bold to say, that in all their Authors, Greek and Latin, we cannot finde so high, and so lively examples, of those Tropes, and those Figures, as we may in the Scriptures: whatsoever hath justly delighted any man in any writings, is exceeded in the Scriptures. ... [T]hen are we *Musicum Carmen in modo*, musick to the soul, in the manner of our preaching, when in delivering points of Divinity, we content ourselves with that language, and that phrase of speech, which the Holy Ghost hath expressed himself in, in the Scriptures (II, 170-1).

Donne reiterates the impetus given to a polished presentation by the preacher's responsibility to his congregation, in a Christmas sermon for 1627, preached on Exodus 4:13: 'And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.' Thus detatched from its context, the utterance is somewhat gnomic, but it provided Donne with opportunity to mark yet another liturgically and sacramentally significant occasion with a discussion of the importance of preaching.[88] He draws upon the decidedly lukewarm reception given to Moses by his brethren, and remarks that 'this is the saddest discouragement that can fall upon the Minister and Messenger of God, *not to be believed*' (VIII, 148). Sad the discouragement may be but it is not uncommon, as Donne proves by reference to Biblical messengers who experienced the bitterness of incredulity. This leads Donne on to a consideration of Patristic ministry, and the complaints of the Fathers about the 'thinness, and scarcity' of their congregations, and their efforts to 'draw men thither', and 'to hold them in a disposition of hearkening unto them' (VIII, 148). Such measures had a success that could be problematic:

> Sometimes they did it so, by submitting themselves to the Congregation, in phrases of humiliation; and sometimes, by taking knowledge of the pious and devout behaviour of the congregation, even in their Sermons, and thanking them for it; As *Leo* does too, *Quod non tacito honorastis affectu*, That they did countenance that which was said, with a holy murmur, with a religious whispering, and with an ocular applause, with fixing their eyes upon the Preacher, and with turning

[88] Whalen, *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert* , reprinted as Whalen, 'Sacramentalizing the Word: Donne's 1626 Christmas Sermon' treats Donne's 1626 sermon extensively, and arrives at conclusions that fit well with our own. This sermon is also treated in McNees, 'John Donne and the Anglican Doctrine of the Eucharist', a treatment weakened by its lack of historiographical nuance

> their eyes upon one another; for those outward declarations were much, very much in use in those times. And though in excesse of such outward declarations, S. *Chrysostome* complain of them, *Non Theatrum Ecclesia*, My masters, what mean you, the Church is not a Theater ... what do I get by these plaudits, and acclamations? I had rather have one soul, then all these hands and eyes: yet it is easie to observe, in the generall proceeding of those blessed Fathers, that they had a holy delight to be heard, and to be heard with delight. ... No man profits by a Sermon, that heares with paine, or wearinesse. ... And to the same purpose, S. *Augustine* does not only professe of himselfe, ... that he studied at home, to make his language sweet and harmonious, and acceptable to God's people, but he believes also, that S. *Paul* himselfe, and all the Apostles, had a delight, and a complacency, and a holy melting of the bowels, when the congregation liked their preaching (VIII, 148-9).

We should note that Donne is not programmatically promoting rhetorical ornament in the construction and delivery of the sermon. Rather, it is suitability that is his watchword – the sermon must be palatable to the hearers, must meet them at their level of sophistication and education. This point emerges very clearly in the sermon preached, on the third of November 1622 to the governors of the Virginia company. As Donne contemplates the remoteness and savageness of the plantation, he envisages the need for a form of preaching very different to that which is appropriate in London, or when addressing the governors. But such simple, rustic preaching has its place, and may, at times, be preferable to the topical polish of the urban pulpit:

> Birds that are kept in cages may learne some Notes, which they should never have sung in the Woods or Fields; but yet they may forget their naturall Notes too. *Preachers* that binde themselves always to *Cities* and *Courts*, and *great Auditories*, may learn new Notes; they may become *occasionall* Preachers, and make the emergent affaires of the time their *Text*, and the humors of the hearers their *bible;* but they may lose their Naturall Notes, both the *simplicitie*, and the *boldnesse* that belongs to the preaching of the *Gospell:* both their power upon lowe understandings to raise them, and upon high affections to humble them (IV, 276).

Rhetoric, then, is not to be used for rhetoric's sake, nor to draw attention to the abilities of the preacher. But, the importance of the preacher's role, the authority with which he is vested makes it imperative that he frame his message with care, using all resources available to them.

These resources are important but human endeavour was only ever half of the story. Donne is always conscious that the Holy Spirit must animate him, and that it is this inspiration,

above any human factor that loads his words with eternal significance.[89] So, in a sermon preached to the King at Whitehall in April of 1626, Donne, using language noticeably similar to that addressed to Mr Tilman, emphasises the wonder of Divine enablement of the minister:

> What a Coronation is our taking of Orders, by which God makes us a Royall Priesthood? And what an inthronization is the coming up into a Pulpit, where God invests his servants with his Ordinance, as with a Cloud, and then presses that Cloud with a *Væ si non*, woe be unto thee, if thou doe not preach, and then enables him to preach peace, mercy, consolation, to the whole Congregation. That God should appear in a Cloud, upon the Mercy Seat, as he promises *Moses* he will doe, That from so poore a man as stands here, wrapped up in clouds of infirmity, and in clouds of iniquity, God should drop raine, poure down his dew, and sweeten that dew with his honey, and crust that honied dew into Manna, and multiply that Manna into gomers, and fill those Gomers everyday, and give every particular man his Gomer, give every soule in the Congregation, consolation by me; That when I call to God for grace here, God should give me grace for grace, Grace in a power to derive grace upon others, and that this Oyle, this Balsamum should flow to the hem of the garment upon them that stand under me; that when mine eyes look up to Heaven, the eyes of all should looke up upon me, and God should open my mouth, to give them meat in due season (VII, 134).

This is, perhaps, Donne's highest account of the position of the minister, and the emphasis on the charismatic – in the strictest sense – power of the Holy Spirit to surpass and to overcome natural and spirituality disability in striking. The comparison with the lines to Mr Tilman is significant, especially given Donne's evocation of the ointment that, according to Psalm 133:2, ran down to the skirts of Aaron's garments. The reference is clearly to the anointing of the priest, yet, clearly, for Donne, the anointing is, above all else, an anointing to preach, and, as in the poetic treatment, it is the preacher's office that is seen as truly priestly.

In his Candlemas sermon for 1626/7, Donne dealt again with the importance of the Holy Spirit to his ministry. On this occasion, he was interested less in the Spirit's power in relation to the preacher's office, than in His role in directing the sermon to the needs of the congregation:

> God directs the tongue of his Ministers, as he doth his showers of rain: They fall upon the face of a large compasse of earth, when as all the earth did not need that

[89] For a helpful treatment of the importance of the Holy Spirit to Donne's sense of vocation and to his preaching style see Hugh Adlington, 'Preaching the Holy Ghost: John Donne's Whitsunday Sermons', *John Donne Journal* 22 (2003):203-228,.

> rain. The whole Congregation is, oftentimes, in common entendment, conformable, and well settled in all matters of Doctrine, and all matters of Discipline. And yet God directs us sometimes to extend our discourse (perchance with a zeale and a vehemence, which may seem unnecessary, and impertinent, because all in the Church are presumed to be of one minde) in the proofe of our doctrine against Papists, or of our discipline against Non-conformitans. For, Gods eye sees, in what seat there sits, or in what corner there stands some one man that wavers in matters of Doctrine, and enclines to hearken after a Seducer, a Jesuit, or a Semi-Jesuit, a practising Papist, or a Sesqui-Jesuit, a Jesuited Lady; And Gods eye sees in what seat there sits, or in what corner there stands some weak soul that is scandalized, with some Ceremony, or part of our Discipline, and in danger of falling from the unity of the Church: And for the refreshing of that one span of ground, God lets fall a whole showre of rain; for the rectifying of that one soul, God poures out the Meditations of the Preacher, into such a subject, as perchance doth little concern the rest of the Congregation (VII, 328).

This argument certainly provides Donne with a neat apologia for controversial preaching, for the repeated coverage of ground held, in theory, by minister and congregation. More broadly, it expresses his belief in the power of the Spirit to take and apply the word spoken. And, Donne is confident that the Spirit will so work in the case of his hearers, because he has, himself, benefited in this way:

> It becometh me to make my selfe as acceptable a messenger as I can, and to infuse the Word of God into you, as powerfully as I can, but all that I can doe, is but a small matter, the greatnesse of the worke lieth in your Application, and that must proceed from the Word of God it selfe, quickned by his Spirit... Truly, when I reade a Sermon of *Chrysostome*, or of *Chrysologus*, or of *Ambrose* ... I finde my selfe oftentimes, more affected, with the very Citation, and Application of *some sentence of Scripture*, in the middest or end of one of their Sermons, then with any witty or forcible passage of their own (VIII, 272-3).

At this point the central importance of homiletic authority in Donne's thought is evident. This importance embraces both the sermon as a crucial part of the imparting and cultivation of the Christian's religious life, and the importance of the preacher's office in a reformed Church. Donne is immensely conscious of the dignity of the preacher's office. This consciousness is not the result of the indulgence of the solipsistic egotism of a power-hungry hypocrite. Rather it finds its roots deep in the teaching of the Reformation. And this root-bed is

made both more important and more relevant in the light of the *avant-garde* reappraisal of the role of preaching in the life of the Church. This debate informed the context of Donne's ministry and, while he seldom refers explicitly to it, the consistent emphasis that he places on preaching, especially on occasions when liturgical considerations threw the importance of the sacraments into especially sharp relief. Similarly, the consecration of Lincoln's Inn chapel provided an opportunity for Donne to stress the equality of preaching and prayer. Donne's understanding of the heavy burden of charisma which lay upon the preacher's shoulders also informed his relationship to political authority, and when he took the pulpit in defence of James' *Directions*, he engaged in a delicate balancing act that reminded all of his listeners of their responsibility orderly to contend for the faith, while carefully defending the preacher's own unique authority, and the importance of preaching. We have also noted Donne's construction of the precise nature of that authority: his stress on the pastoral relationship and responsibility that ought to exist between minister and congregation. We have noted also the careful negotiation between the offices of prophet and apostle that allowed Donne to define his own understanding of the position of the minister in the Reformed Church, while simultaneously avoiding the excesses of the puritans and the Papists. And, once more with relevance to the rejection of the programme of the *avant-garde* conformists, we have also noted Donne's understanding of priesthood: both his reluctance to use that title of himself in a way that separates him from the generality of English Christians and the absence of any sacerdotal stress in his view of priesthood when he does make use of the concept. Finally, Donne's treatment of homiletic technique confirms his pastoral priorities, and undermines efforts to assimilate his preaching to a supposed 'Anglo-Catholic' or metaphysical school. While our investigations of Donne's understanding of the authority of Scripture and the Church have revealed the importance of the Reformation in his thought, it is his view of preaching and the preacher that is, perhaps, the most telling index of the sincerity and consistency of Donne's Reformed Christianity.

Conclusion

The pulpit may her plain
And sober Christian precepts still retain ;
Doctrines it may, and wholesome uses, frame,
Grave homilies and lectures ; but the flame

Of thy brave soul, that shot such heat and light,
As burn'd our earth, and made our darkness bright,
Committed holy rapes upon the will,
Did through the eye the melting heart distil,
And the deep knowledge of dark truths so teach,
As sense might judge what fancy could not reach,
Must be desired for ever. ...
Here lies a king that ruled, as he thought fit,
The universal monarchy of wit;
Here lies two flamens, and both those the best :
Apollo's first, at last the true God's priest. (ll. 11-21, 95-98)[1]

Like all of the poets who contributed to the 'Elegies upon the Author' appended to the first edition of Donne's poems in 1633, Carew was conscious that he was commemorating two Donnes – the preacher and the poet. Carew's solution to the dilemma was elegant, and eminently suited to the requirements of elegy. Unfortunately, if inevitably, it was also a

[1] Thomas Carew's 'An Elegie upon the death of the Dean of Pauls, Dr. John Donne' is reproduced in John Donne, *The complete English poems of John Donne*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Dent, 1985), 496-8. Carew's elegy is discussed in John Lyon, 'Jonson and Carew on Donne: Censure into Praise', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 37 no. 1 (1997):97-118, and Scott Nixon, 'Carew's response to Jonson and Donne', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39 no. 1 (1999):89-109,.

misrepresentation of his subject. For, while his description of the soul-melting fervour of Donne's preaching is easy enough to credit, the corresponding disestimation of plain pastoral preaching writes off the greater part of Donne's ministry. Donne was not reluctant to display, from time to time, such pyrotechnics of learning and delivery as he had at his command, but, throughout his career, pastoral priorities, and a desire to impart simple and wholesome doctrines, exercised no inconsiderable control over his ministry. In a similar way, Carew's neat device of presenting Donne's life in two priesthoods suggests an understanding of Donne's preacherly vocation that he did not himself share: a sacramental and mystical understanding of a primarily homiletic office that Donne summed up in his reiterated echo of Paul's '*vae si non...*'.

These two forces – the desire to give unity to Donne's life, and a willingness to tamper with the facts of that life in order to create the illusion of such a unity – have dogged attempts to understand Donne: from Walton to Gosse to Carey and beyond we can trace a genealogy of misrepresentation. This study has also sought the key to a coherent picture of Donne, and has found it near to hand. And that key is a willingness to allow Donne's own work to dictate the terms of our enquiry. Having taken the hints that his writings plainly offer, we have been able to trace a consistency of thought that has always been striking, occasionally surprising, but always rather gratifying. Essential to the uncovering of these life-spanning consistencies has been our willingness to allocate to religious topics and concerns something like the intrinsic importance that they had for Donne. For too long, these issues have attracted scholarly attention only as the referents of Donne's political, poetic, philosophical, or even erotic ideology, but as early-modern studies more generally exhibit a most encouraging trend towards methodologies that are sensitive to religious concerns, this study is a demonstration of the value of such methodologies when applied to Donne.

One of the chief effects of the application of these methodologies in this study is a fundamental challenge to the idea of an apostate Donne who became as Protestant as necessary while remaining as Catholic as possible. Rather, our consideration of the importance of the authority of Scripture, the Church, and the preacher in Donne's thought reveals an estimation of the value of intellectual independence, and of orderly community that is eloquent of the

fundamental tendency of Donne's thought towards Protestantism. Donne found in the conformist mainstream of the Church of England a congenial ecclesiastical environment that enabled him to arrive at his own negotiation – often idiosyncratic, but always orthodox – of Christian life.

Scripture was essential to this negotiation, and we have noted the importance that Donne accords to the individual engagement with Scripture, and his faith in the power of a new philology to assist in that engagement. We have remarked upon the excoriation of blind and unquestioning obedience that so often marks Donne's pastoral concern for his flock. In line with this essentially Protestant emphasis, Donne rejects any programmatically allegorical interpretation of Scripture in favour of a literal approach with greater potential for unmediated engagement. And we have observed the way in which he balances the roles of the Church and the individual as interpretative authorities. Like almost all Protestants, Donne saw in the Church an interpretative aid, which could guide and test interpretation, but which ought never tyrannically to control it. This commitment to the individual engagement with Scripture is not negotiable with Donne: we have noted the increased place that he gave to the private reading of Scripture, even as avant-garde conformity increasingly marginalised the importance of private lay reading. That he should, in such a context, so insist upon this right is further confirmation that Donne's theology is best understood be reference to the long context of Reformation thought.

A similar picture emerges from our consideration of the role of ecclesiastical authority in Donne's thought. We have outlined some very suggestive evidence, from Satyre III, of the importance of Richard Hooker's *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* to Donne's methodology, and this insight has uncovered a wider ecclesiological debt to Hooker. This notwithstanding, we have also considered evidence that integrates Donne with the tradition of conformist apology that stretches back to Whitgift and Jewel. The importance of *adiaphora* in their work is echoed in Donne's search for a truly inclusive Church. We have seen how Donne's loyalty to the English Church was based, in part, upon his belief that she offered a model for this sort of inclusivity. She was not a perfect Church, and Donne would not have claimed that. Nor would he dream of claiming that she modelled the only form of Church government and ceremony acceptable to

God. But as a work in progress, as an approach to religious community, she had much to offer. Thus, Donne is unswerving in his loyalty to her, and unrelenting in his denouncement of those who would disturb the peace of this Catholic and Reformed Church. Donne's commitment to accommodation and irenicism within the Church of England is also exemplified in his pursuit of what we have termed his essentialist ecumenism: his delineation of a set of core beliefs that could not, at any price, be compromised, and his relegation of other matters – both doctrinal and ceremonial to the realm of things indifferent. There was, as we have been stressing, nothing essentially novel in this approach, but Donne makes a notably extensive use of it. And, while he follows Hooker in demanding accommodation on contested points of doctrine, he demurs from his increased emphasis on ceremonial precision, and follows, rather, the approach of earlier conformists. This approach gives a basic Protestantism the widest possible room for manoeuvre. Wherever a paralysing precisianism raises its head – be it in the deliberations of the Council of Trent, in the scripturalism of the puritans, or in the rigours of an emerging Laudian programme – Donne positions himself as its opponent.

Finally, we have considered Donne's understanding of what, as a preacher, his authority and duties were. Once again, it emerges clearly that the roots of his thought go deep into the soil of the Reformation. The Christian ministry is, for Donne, deeply logocentric: the preaching of the Word of God is both its heaviest duty and its greatest dignity. Because the traditional place of preaching was identified as such a site of contest by the emerging *avant-garde* tendency, and because this re-orientation of the English Church away from preaching, and around a dipole of sacrament and liturgy was so radical a reshaping of the *status quo*, Donne's orthodoxy is the more evident. This defensive orthodoxy seldom explicit: Donne is slow to give a direct public airing to the divisions within the English Church. Notwithstanding this, his opposition to the downgrading of the sermon's importance emerges clearly enough when his sermons are read in their religious and historical context. We have joined too with a number of other critics in noting the importance of Donne's sermon in defence of James' *Directions* as an expression of Donne's paradigm of preaching. Donne is attempting a delicate balancing act: he must be faithful to God, and loyal to the King. And, while it might be an overstatement to label his attempt an

unqualified success, we have noted the principled care with which he defends the unique place and unmatched importance of preaching. We have noted too Donne's theorisation of his office, and remarked his understanding of priesthood. In this, as in so much, Donne seeks the mean, and delineates the unique office of the minister of Christ, who is neither apostle nor prophet. Donne, moreover, is resistant to any definition of ministry that makes secondary the importance of preaching. The minister, in his understanding, is remarkable not for the sacerdotal importance of his role but because he speaks, as a preacher, for God. A crudely quantitative analysis of the sermons is enough to suggest what more detailed study confirms: Donne sees himself as preacher first, and as priest hardly at all. But this is no diminution of dignity. He is God's ambassador, and speaks with a consciousness of the burden of that great charisma. Thus, while the importance of the office demands that great care and skill be employed in finding out words to speak, the power of the preacher does not reside in his rhetorical accomplishment, but in the unction of the Spirit.

This, then, is the picture of Donne that emerges from our study of his understanding of these fundamental loci of religious authority. Donne has suffered more than most from labelling, and it has been an important aim of this study to avoid imposing any such totalising terms upon his beliefs. That notwithstanding, we can, by this time, readily identify the key priorities of his theology. It is Protestant, not in its rigid adherence to any one system of theology, but in its basic assumptions, in its vital stress upon the responsibility of the individual correctly to respond to Divine revelation, and in its continuity with the reformed tradition of the English Church. It is pastoral in its emphasis: whether Donne in interpreting Scripture, delineating the role of the Church, or speaking as a preacher to one of his congregations, his words are marked by a lively awareness of the needs and concerns of his listeners. Finally, it is principled. It is a pity to allow some of the less sympathetic readings of Donne too rigidly to set the terms of our inquiry. Nonetheless, it is difficult not to take some satisfaction in the way in which the contextualised study of Donne's entire *oeuvre* vindicates a man so abused by those who see in his life little that cannot be accounted for by the cocktail of apostasy and ambition that supposedly intoxicated the poet and the preacher. The consistency of Donne's views, his moderate but determined

defence of the Established Church, and his concern to protect his congregations from the pastorally disastrous effects of schism, and fractious doctrinal debate remind us that his commitment to a Church that was, increasingly, understanding itself as a compromise need not itself be a compromise.

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'When thou hast done' the 'Hymne to God the Father' reiterates 'thou hast not done, / For, I have more.' Donne's appropriation of the congregational hymn for such an individual and personal purpose is typical. It is also somehow typical that his words of confession addressed to God, acknowledging Donne's inadequacy, re-echo to Donne's critics as a reminder of their own inability fully to embrace or understand the variegated tapestry and changeful trajectory of Donne's life. That remains a challenge as daunting for us as for Carew and his fellow elegists, and we are always conscious that, while we may be finished, we have never Donne. This work is no exception, for, while it has accomplished what it set out to do, it is a beginning, and not an end. The careful and contextualised reading of the Donneian *oeuvre* that has been basic to our methodology has proved its value in this work as in others, and that approach to his works still has enormous potential to illuminate our understanding of the man and his context. Where this study has broken new ground is in its focus on the religious elements of Donne's thought, and its willingness to take those issues seriously in their own right, rather than as the referents of political or ideological positions. Studies predicated upon this assumption have a great deal of scope. The issue of authority alone is far from exhausted by this study, and there are a great many other theological issues that are of concern to Donne, and which ought to be important to Donne scholars. And, as early Stuart historiography moves away from its established focus on predestinarian theology, we are likely to realise the importance of a far wider range of religious and theological concerns.

But if this study suggests useful steps to be taken in increasing our understanding of Donne, it may also be of value in indicating an avenue to a greater understanding of the experience of the Jacobean and Caroline convert and Christian. Literary studies of the early modern period have suffered, to date, because the theorised general has been imposed upon the

particular. If this flow is reversed, if the detailed study of specific cases is allowed to illuminate the general context, if we permit the antinomy of the individual to problematise and nuance our conveniently simplistic views of this most religiously complex of periods, the gains we stand to make are considerable indeed. And, it may be that Donne is an outstanding example of the value of this process. Certainly, it is difficult not to concur with Jeanne Shami's contention that

> though no historians (in the purely disciplinary sense) have treated Donne seriously as an important figure in the construction of the English church, their insights about the tensions fracturing and shaping the English church are nowhere better examined than in this man – a compendium of conflicts, controversies, and harmonies, who epitomizes the efforts of the Church to remain whole, and whose daring experiments in interpretation and rhetoric predicted its highest achievements. His writings expose the fault lines and tensions in the early Stuart church, and his resistance to labelling makes all too clear the more extreme, less sophisticated, versions of the conflicts he embodied.[2]

That being the case, the study in which we have been engaged has the potential to benefit more than Donne scholars. But its chief contribution is the insight that it gives on the complex and compendious character of John Donne.

[2] Shami, '"Trying to Walk on Logs in Water"',.

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