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How and Why to Love the Ordinary[1]

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In his 1622 Easter sermon, Donne declared:

> Though thou thinke thou heare sometimes Gods sibilations . . . Gods soft and whispering voyce, (inward remorses of thine owne; and motions of the spirit of God to thy spirit), yet thinke not thy spirituall resurrection accomplished, till, in this place, thou heare his loud voyce; . . . that is, working in his church. . . . [H]is loudest instrument is his publique Ordinance in the Church [and] except the voyce come in the Trumpet of God, (that is, in the publique Ordinance of his Church) thou canst not know it to be the voyce of the Archangell.[2]

Donne repeatedly declares that attendance at public worship, the public ordinance of the church, is essential. Such declarations can make him seem a company man, with a paternalistic edge to his preaching, as when, in the same sermon, he admonishes his congregation that "much respect, and reverence, much faith, and credit behoves it thee to give to thine Angell, to the Pastour of that Church, in which God hath give thee thy station" (4:71). Arguments

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[1]This talk is dedicated to one of the Donne Society's greatest treasures, Raymond Frontain. With unmatched generosity, Raymond has over the years presented me with scholarly opportunities that I would at first think were beyond me but that always ended up bringing intellectual stimulation, bolstered confidence, and great pleasure. Many thanks, Raymond.

[2]*The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1953–62), 4:70–71. Future references will be by volume and page number in the text.

for listening to authority and going along with the institutional status quo can smack of the parent who responds to "why" with "because I said so." How do we take Donne's subordination of the private to the public? Does it reflect a deeply conservative and authoritarian bent, or an antipathy to puritan voluntarism? I will argue that neither is exactly the case. Rather, Donne presents us with a firm commitment to what he often calls the "ordinary means," based on a particular understanding of the ordinary, one by which Donne weds the discipline of the church as established with the very stress on private devotion that he might seem here to be rejecting.[3]

I realize that putting "John Donne" and "ordinary" in the same title might sound odd. Donne's wit, his learning, his churchmanship, his sexiness—what could be less appropriate than linking Donne with the ordinary? To say "embrace the ordinary" can sound like one of those self-esteem slogans: "ordinary is beautiful!" Or like a self-help program: "embrace your shortcomings—it's okay to be ordinary." On a spectrum between excellence and mediocrity, we might think of the ordinary as falling closer to the mediocre. "Don't be ordinary," urges a poster with a fish jumping from the water, free of a school of identical fish. But how long will that nonconformist fish live, out of his natural element? The frequency with which Donne warns against the extraordinary, against singularity in religion, is well-known, and yet his use of "ordinary" often has a force that we are likely to miss today.[4] I hope to bring out new ways to see the ordinary, specifically the "ordinary means of grace," for Donne's commitment to it helps us understand his conception of the essential role the institutional

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[3]For overviews of the debates over Donne's churchmanship and discussion of the challenges involved in adequately defining Donne's positions on matters of doctrine and ecclesiology, see David Colclough, "Upstairs, Downstairs: Doctrine and Decorum in Two Sermons by John Donne" *HLQ*, 73 (2010), p. 170; Jeanne Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2003), pp. 8–12.

[4]For Donne on singularity, see Jeffrey Johnson, *The Theology of John Donne* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1999), pp. 32–35; Hugh Adlington, "Preaching the Holy Ghost: John Donne's Whitsunday Sermons," *John Donne Journal* 22 (2003): p. 208; Shami, *Conformity in Crisis*, pp. 81–82 and pp. 142–43, and "Donne's Protestant Casuistry: Cases of Conscience in the Sermons," *Studies in Philology* 80 (1983), pp. 56–62.

church played in individual spiritual transformation, a role that needed new emphasis in the 1620s as pastors confronted not only on-going debate over the right ordering of church worship but also an increasingly independent laity.[5]

I: Donne's London Laity and Voluntary Devotion

Donne's stress on participation in the "ordinary means" reflects what he believed the ordinary lay person in his non-aristocratic London congregations needed to hear.[6] What, then, are his assumptions about his audience when he wasn't preaching at court or to persons of honor but to Londoners, a more or less promiscuous mix of city elites, merchants, lawyers, tradesmen, servants, wives and daughters?[7] In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck, sharing the

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[5]My argument here has in some respects been anticipated by Bruce Henrigtsen, in his "Donne's Orthodoxy," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 14 (Spring 1972), pp. 5–16. Henrigsten, though, operated with a conception of "Anglicanism" that has since been set aside for a more complex understanding of the early Stuart English church. I also am deeply indebted to Shami's careful discussion of Donne's sense of his pastoral office; this address develops her recognition that Donne stresses that Christ is found in his ordinances (*Conformity in Crisis*, pp. 76, 92–93, 265–67).

[6]The debate over Donne's politics has led to careful attention to his sense of audience when preaching at court; little has been said about his sense of ordinary lay audience. For a summary of the debate and excellent account of his careful thinking about the challenges of preaching to those in power, see Marla Lunderberg, "John Donne's Strategies for Discreet Preaching," *SEL* 44 (2004), pp. 106–15.

[7]I should note that I am very conscious of the fact that sermons were "radically occasional pieces of performed writing, contingent upon the context in and for which they were delivered;" see Peter McCullough, "Preaching and Context: John Donne's Sermon at the Funerals of Sir William Cokayne," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 213; and Jeanne 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), pp. 380–412. However, I will not delve into the occasions of sermons except in the most basic way, because

condescension of the Athenian aristocrats, mocks the hempen homespun artisans as "Hard-handed men that work in Athens here, / Which never labour'd in their minds till now" (5.1.72–73). If we ever give much thought to the London citizens who didn't get to sit on the benches erected around Paul's Cross, we might picture some of them as such unsophisticated folk, lettered, perhaps, but not particularly literate. The wood-turner Nehemiah Wallington, with his simple printing and erratic spelling, could well be Bottom's puritanical cousin. On the other hand, we might think of the Lord Mayor and aldermen, the eminent benchers, the prosperous guild members. How does Donne think of his lay auditors?

A contrast with Donne's use of "laity" in his secular lyrics is helpful. When Donne divides up the world in his love poetry, there is a distinction between the privileged initiates into love's mysteries and the clueless multitude. The speaker of the poems professes that "twere profanation of our joys / to tell the laity our love" ("A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," 7–8). The masses superstitiously invoke the lovers and approve them "canonize'd for Love" ("The Canonization," 35). The layman's eyes are snared by "books gay coverings" ("To his Mistress Going to Bed," 39), and he responds with ignorant awe or idolatrous credulity, venerating bones as relics and mythologizing lovers as saints. The speaker might with hyperbolic piety call his mistress a miracle, but more often, he adopts a slightly mocking attitude toward his claims that he and his mistress will be revered, that he is "love's martyr" and his relics might "breed idolatrie" ("The Funeral, 19"), that "all women shall adore us, and some men" ("The Relique," 19).[8] Meanwhile, the lovers have access

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I am looking for more general ideas about audience that recur throughout the London sermons, whatever the occasion.

[8]In presenting the use of the language of religion in the love lyrics as ironic, I join with Thomas Roche, "On Donne's 'The Canonization,'" *John Donne Journal* 29 (2010): pp. 115–32; James Baumlin, *Theologies of Language in English Renaissance Literature* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), pp. 80–81; and Teresa DiPasquale, *Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999), pp. 153–72. See also Grace Tiffany, *Love's Pilgrimage* (University of Delaware, 2006), pp. 110–22, who argues for the availability of specifically Catholic religious tropes for profane purposes.

to mysteries far above the comprehension of the common person. In a way, the speaker of a poem like "The Relique" shares the easy sense of superiority that Duke Theseus, Demetrius, and Lysander exhibit. But where the dialectic of the stage invites us into the mental and emotional world of Bottom as well as Theseus, Donne's love poetry seems simply dismissive of the credulous laity. Indeed, insofar as the lyrics invoke a religion divided between the initiate and the credulous, they draw on the stereotypes of anti-popish propaganda, imagining "a time, or land / where mis-devotion doth command" ("The Relique," 12–13). In the religion of love, the laity are benighted papists.

This figuring of the laity is necessary for Donne's love-as-religion trope to work. It functions to show how remarkable his love is: so remarkable that common people will see it as miraculous, in just the way simple folk venerate saints. But to put it that way raises a problem: if the speaker is dismissive of the credulity of the laity and their veneration of love saints, does that mean that the laity's awed response to his love is foolish? Even as Donne uses the trope to elevate his love, the fact that he is evoking an idolatrous religion ironizes his claims. Or perhaps his love is worthy of veneration, but only love's priests rightly understand it. The divide between the common person's apprehension and the lovers' special knowledge allows Donne to assert the rarity of his love in two registers—as it strikes awe in the laity and as it achieves a transcendence appreciated only by the cognoscenti. Yet in this case too, there is irony in Donne's fantasy of access to love's mysteries. He figures the cognoscenti as those with access to privileged knowledge, contained in books only they have read, but as Tiffany points out, this idea of "mystery" links them both with Roman Catholicism and with alchemy and hermetic philosophy.[9] When Donne became a minister, he had to let go of his attraction to privileged knowledge and esoteric mysteries, and conceive of the laity differently.

The Reformers had condemned the idea that the clergy were *ipso facto* more holy than the laity. Donne accepted the position, so vigorously argued by Luther, that (in Donne's words) "by the Layetie we intend the people glorifying God in their secular callings, and by the Clergie, persons seposed by his ordinance, for spiritual functions,

[9]Tiffany, p. 117.

The Layetie no farther remoov'd then the Clergie, The Clergie no farther entitled then the Layetie, in the blood of Christ Jesus," both having "an equall interest in the joyes and glory of heaven" (4:371). Besides the respect that was called for theologically, there was the nature of the London laity Donne addressed, an auditory far different from the credulous folk of his lyrics. By the time Donne was ordained, extensive individual and household devotion had become standard, practiced not simply by puritans but by any household concerned to be respectably religious. These exercises included individual bible reading, meditation, and prayer, as well as daily household devotions. Heads of households catechized children and servants, and "rehearsed" the sermon with them on Sundays after services. Numerous prayer manuals provided instruction on how to pray and supplied prayers for morning, evening, meals, travel, childbirth, and other standard occasions.[10] On Sundays, the literate in the congregation who were able to secure a seat often had a bible open on their lap, or they had stylus and writing table for taking notes on the sermon, notes that they would flesh out later, perhaps in a paper book such as those used by Robert Saxby and Anne Venn.[11] Manuscript devotions are fairly common in the papers of men of affairs, not only the puritan MP Sir Richard Paulet but the busy Lord Treasurer Lionel Cranfield and Lord Chief Justice Robert Heath.[12] Women also gathered Scripture verses under headings and wrote meditations and

[10]For an overview of lay religious practices, see Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012); and my own *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

[11]Arnold Hunt discusses ways in which lay people listened to sermons in *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, chapter 2. The Sutton monument in the Charterhouse chapel in London includes an image of pensioners with Bibles on their laps; see Emma Rhatigan, "Preaching Venues," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, p. 10.

[12]For Paulet, see, for instance, Hampshire Record Office MS 44M69/L66/5–7, for Cranfield, Kent History and Library Centre MS U269/F35, and for Heath, British Library MS Egerton 2982.

prayers, including women with whom Donne associated, such as Lady Elizabeth Stanley Hastings, whose devotions are now at the Huntingdon Library.[13]

Donne, then, would have been able to assume that a good number of his congregants, especially the heads of households whom he chiefly addresses, would have a high degree of religious competence: they were able to catechize, write prayers, read Scripture in light of doctrinal commonplaces, offer theological consolation to correspondents, and interpret their own lives in terms of conceptions of the workings of sin and grace. Given this audience, Donne's task was not to expound basic doctrine. In a Whitsunday sermon, probably preached at Lincoln's Inn, he notes that while Peter and the apostles seem to have preached extemporaneously, it was because the "people were capable of but little" in those early days (5:42). But, Donne continues,

> in these our times, when the curiosity, (allow it a better name, for truly, God be blessed for it, it deserves a better name) when the capacity of the people requires matter of more labour, as there is not the same necessity, so there is not the same possibility of that assiduous, and that sudden preaching. No man will think that we have abler Preachers then the Primitive Church had; no man will doubt, but that we have learneder, and more capable auditories. (5:42–43)

Donne also assumes that this "more capable auditory" was familiar with Scripture. In the same sermon, he assures his congregation that he will not summarize Peter's whole sermon to the household of Cornelius, but will "refresh to your memories, that which I presume you have often read in this story" (5:44). It is true that in this case he was probably addressing the well-educated congregation at Lincoln's

[13]For more on Donne's relationship with Elizabeth (Stanley) Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, see Dennis Flynn's essay on pp. 27–61 of this volume. For women's manuscripts, see Narveson, chapter 5. Lady Anne Twysden's meditations and prayers were valuable enough to her nephew Roger that he copied them in a neat little manuscript book titled "Certayn comfortable places of Scripture And three prayers collected and made by Lady Anne Twysden," Kent History and Library Centre MS U1655/F.8.

Inn.[14] Elsewhere, though, as in a 1622 sermon at St. Paul's, he is clear that he expects "the whole Congregation, consisting of all sorts and sexes" to "accustome your selves to a daily reading of the Scriptures" (4:219).

Besides witnessing his awareness of a doctrinally and Scripturally literate auditory, Donne's sermons to his London hearers indicate that he assumed regular participation in the forms of household devotion that I have enumerated. In his fourth prebend sermon, for instance, even while he declares that "the greatest power of all, is in the publique prayer of the Congregation," he also notes that "A man may pray in the street, in the fields, in a fayre." He then goes on to endorse more regular hours: "it is more acceptable and more effectuall prayer, when we shut our doores, and observe our stationary houres for private prayer in our Chamber; and in our Chamber when we praye upon our knees, then in our beds" (7:311). To his congregation at St. Dunstan's he made a similar observation: "Christ can come, and does often, into

[14]In another sermon to that audience, he notes a detail of translation that they will see "when you cast your eye upon this part of this Text," as though he assumes that some will have Bibles open, or will review the passage following the sermon (4:119). At times he can sound patronizing in his admonitions to "content thy selfe with reading those parts of Scriptures, which are cleare, and edifie, and perplex not thy selfe with Prophesies not yet performed" (5:40). Yet he also warns against pastors who "pretend to know those things, which God hath not revealed," and he prefaces these warnings by explaining their grounds: a person should beware of reading "superficially, perfunctorily" and thereby seeing in the Bible "every thing that he had pre-conceived, and fore-imagined in himself," with "a corrupt confidence in thine own strength" (5:39), but equally a person should not read according to a "vicious dejection of spirit, and a hellish melancholy," able only to see passages of condemnation. Both are ways of reading that reflect the self, rather than subjecting the mind to God. As Katrin Ettenhuber and Shami have demonstrated so beautifully, countering these self-centered extremes of reading is an essential component of Donne's hermeneutic (Ettenhuber, *Donne's Augustine: Renaissance Cultures of Interpretation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], pp. 109–25; Shami, *Conformity in Crisis*, pp. 79–89). But even in warning of these twin dangers, Donne assumes active Bible readers. For Donne's expectation of lay Scripture reading, see Mark Sweetnam, *John Donne and Religious Authority in the Reformed English Church* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), pp. 39–41.

thy bed-chamber, in the visitation of his private Spirit" (6:6/23). In his 1622 Spittle sermon, Donne notes that God "hath admitted you to him in your private prayers, and comes to you in your private readings of his Word" (4:107). In the same sermon, he listed a range of devotional practices that his hearers should engage in: "hear, and read, and meditate, and confer, and use all means whereby thou mayest increase in knowledge" (4:121).[15] In a witty comment on catechizing, he expects parents to nurture their children's piety: "every Father a Copy to his Son, every Mother a Samplar to her Daughter." Indeed, he comes close to the notion of the household as a little church, so that, having heard a sermon, the father is "a Doctor to all his Family, in his repetition, when he comes home" (4:118).[16] All these examples indicate that Donne saw the range of voluntary household practices, which we might once have been inclined to see as signs of puritanism, as normal and good.

Indeed, Donne went further in urging that devotion should inform all one's actions. Christians are called on to "look upon God in every object, to represent to thy self the beauty of his holinesse, and the honour of his service in every action" (4:76). To the congregants at St. Dunstan's, Donne warned that "God will have no half-affections, God will have no partners" (6:17/23). Donne assumes that a true faith will govern the person's whole life. At Lincoln's Inn he describes as

[15]It is important to note, of course, that the members of the congregation that he seems to have most had in mind were the male heads of households, whether preaching at Lincoln's Inn, St. Dunstan's, or St. Paul's. Beyond the assumption of ability and leisure to study Scripture and pray in private in their chambers, Donne more than once exhorts his audience on their duty to protect their household from Jesuit influence, or to ensure the servants can attend church. In one Lincoln's Inn sermon in 1622, for instance, he notes that no man will be saved as a good man "if he be not saved as a good Father, and as a good Master too, if god have given him a family" (4:209). In addition, he assumes that the secular preoccupations of those he addresses are trade, war, law, and politics (e.g. 5:51). The gendering of his implied audience in Donne's preaching merits more attention.

[16]Similarly, he suggests that a child or servant can look to the head of household, and "do but as thou seest thy Father do, do as thou seest thy Master do." It is characteristic that Donne links household and public devotion by adding that parishioners should "do as thou seest thy Pastor do" (4:100).

exemplary all of Cornelius's habits of devotion, concluding that he was thus "humbled and macerated by fasting, thus soupled and entendered with the feare of God, thus burnt up and calcined with zeal and devotion, thus united to God by continuall prayer, thus tributary to God by giving almes, thus exemplar in himself at home, to lead all his house, and thus diffusive of himselfe to others abroad" (5:45–46). Puritanism has nothing on the thorough-going godliness Donne calls for.[17]

Clearly, then, Donne's call to subordinate private devotions to public does not reflect a rejection of voluntary lay piety—indeed, he expects it. What, then, about the warning with which I opened, to beware of the private voice of one's spirit and to turn for salvation to the public ordinances of the Church? It is a refrain throughout the sermons to London audiences that Donne's hearers must look for God in the Church's public ordinances. Donne insists, "Thus, and no other way, by the pure word of God, delivered and applied by his publique Ordinance . . . is your first resurrection from sin, by grace, accomplished" (4:72). How does this stress on public worship mesh with the call for zealous individual piety? How can Donne both

[17]Examples could be multiplied, though we should also note the extent to which Donne's call for lively piety stresses that faith must be active in works; see, for instance, a sermon at a christening, in which Donne appropriates the concept of perseverance, declaring "our sanctification must goe through our whole life in a constant, and an even perseverance" (5:156). To make this point is not to make a claim about Donne's religious affiliations; as Brian Cummings points out, "By the early seventeenth century, religious identities in England are not constructed around fixed points of doctrine"; see *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 369. It is not possible or useful to assign Donne to a particular camp. Further, a sermon is not a confession of personal belief; we need to attend to how he engages particular ideas in the public forum of the pulpit, conscious of his ministerial office; see Shami, "Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion in Donne's Sermons," in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2003), pp. 146–47. For the difficulty of framing public statements of belief in the climate of early Stuart England, see Brooke Conti, *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), pp. 4–8, and for Donne's technique of renovating controversial terms, see Shami, "Labels," pp. 147–53, and *Conformity in Crisis*, pp. 31–32, 151–52.

assume and endorse a lively self-directed devotion and think that his listeners will accept that they should subordinate their private devotion so decisively to public? Donne's second sermon at St. Dunstan's focuses the problem. On the one hand, he insists that his new parishioners must not be critical of the pastor but must respect him for his office, and further, that they must "come as children to hear the Word." On the other hand, he stresses that merely coming is not enough:

> When thou comest to meet him in the Congregation, come not occasionally, come not casually, not indifferently, not collaterally; come not as to an entertainment, a show, a spectacle, or company, come solemnly, with preparation, with meditation. He shall have the lesse profit, by the prayer of the Congregation, that hath not been at his private prayer before he came. (6:100)

Surely preparation, meditation, and private prayer are the acts of adults, not children? Does Donne want autonomy or dependence?

As is so notable in Donne's preaching, the tension between apparently opposing commitments makes possible an account adequate to Donne's complex thinking about religious matters, in this case, his sense of the ordinary experience of faith. In the Whitsunday sermon I noted above, for instance, Donne uses Peter's preaching to the household of Cornelius as a model for God's method with all Christians. Donne subordinates private devotion, declaring that the Holy Ghost "visits us, and disposes us, but yet the Holy Ghost sends us to the Ministery of man . . . Preaching is the ordinary meanes" (5:40). His subsequent admonition points us to two interconnected reasons that Donne insists on the primacy of public worship. He warns that "The Holy Ghost did not leave them [that congregation] to future meditations, to future conferences, he did not stay till they told one another after the Sermon, That it was a learned Sermon, a consciencious Sermon, a usefull Sermon, but whilst the Preacher yet spoke, the Holy Ghost spoke to their particular consciences" (5:40). There are two things that I will address here. First, Donne recognizes the danger of idolizing the self, the tendency for people to place too much stock in their own religious learning and devotional activities,

critiquing the sermon as if their seal of approval was what mattered.[18] His emphasis on ordinary worship, I will argue, reflects his sense of the ordinary, sin-prone nature of humankind, and the perhaps wishful belief that the Holy Ghost works in and through public worship to correct the fissile tendencies he observed among his London congregants. And second, consequent on that belief, Donne conceives of the ordinary means in a special and rich sense of "ordinary" as something that reflects a divine purpose and order, as suggested by his insistence on the workings of the Holy Ghost. I will consider Donne's assumptions about ordinary, flawed human nature first, and then his conception of the "ordinary means" as a solution to humankind's flawed state.

II: Donne's London Laity and Ordinary Human Nature

Donne might at first seem to distinguish between his London auditory of regenerate Christians on the one hand and benighted gentiles or papists on the other. He regularly participates in anti-Catholic polemic, offering the standard criticisms of the range of ways the Roman Church fostered inclinations to superstition and idolatry and blind worship—all those things, in fact, that Donne had attributed to the "laity" in his secular love lyrics, and that anti-Catholic polemics presented as "papist" and therefore "other." In his sermons, he recognizes that he is preaching not to that superstitious laity but to an audience brought up in a new dispensation under which they've had the benefit of sound catechizing, access to Scripture, and regular preaching. And yet, regularly he collapses the distance between his auditors and those who, in more benighted times and places, fall into false ideas of God.

For instance, drawing on common Renaissance ideas about the origins of pagan gods, Donne often employs the euhemerist account, that imagination unchecked by revelation led the gentiles to revere extraordinary people as divine, though "they were mortal before they

[18]In the same sermon, Donne's concern about the egocentric pleasure of being in the know also emerges in warnings against reading the Scripture for perplexing prophesies (40), and against responding to the sermon "I have heard all this before" (55).

were gods" (8:58).[19] He also sees it as human nature to imagine different gods for different powers, so that that Gentiles "crumbled, and scattered God into as many severall gods, as there are Powers in God" (3:262), for "that which one god could not, or would not do, another would" (8:57). Further, it is normal to imagine the gods as like us, so that the gentiles "knew the history, the generation the pedigree of all their gods," where they "went to schoole" and where they "were buried"; indeed "they knew their Parents, and their Uncles, their Wives and their Children, yea their Bastards , and their Concubines; so far were they from being eternall gods" (8:57).[20] But even as Donne mocks the unchecked fancies of the Gentiles, he also sees those same impulses in early Church history. The Arians, for instance, could not conceive the trinity to be one God, while the Manicheans and Marcionites imagined two divine forces, of good and evil (4:93). And he sees those impulses still active in his own age. Where the Syrians in I Kings imagined God to be powerful only in the mountains and not the valleys, similarly in the Roman Church's series of plots against England, "Our Age hath produced such Syrians, too; Men, who, after God hath declared himself against them many ways, have yet thought they might get an advantage upon him some other way" (4:95). Those brought up in Romish churches are to be pitied because their natural human inclination to swallow false conceptions of God and to multiply divine powers and imagine intermediaries has not been corrected.

But then, Donne brings that tendency home, as characterizing himself and his auditory too. In his Ascension Day sermon at Lincoln's Inn in 1622, a sermon whose engagement with the anti-Catholic anxieties of the Spanish Match Shami has demonstrated, Donne preaches on the dangers posed by idolaters.[21] He glances at the need

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[19]For euhemerist accounts of the origin of deification, see Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1953), chapter 1.

[20]Donne's conception of the imagination lies behind these ideas; see Paul Harland, "Imagination and Affections in John Donne's Preaching," *John Donne Journal* 6 (1987), pp. 37–38. The euhemerist account occurs frequently; see, for instance, Donne's statement that "The gods of the Gentiles have dyed thrice, in body, in soul, and in fame . . . all those temporary, and transitory Gods, are worn out, and dead in all senses . . . those gods, who were but men" (3:103).

[21]Shami, *Conformity in Crisis*, pp. 151–52.

for governors to be vigilant but quickly turns to warn of snares at home: the snare that draws your son to study abroad, draws your servants to be recusants, draws your wife to convert; or the snares that play on your desire for profit with hope of "a Chain, a Jewel, a Pension," or on your desire for society with the expectation that at Mass you will meet "more good company than at thy Parish Church" (4:139). Papists lay all those snares . . . but then Donne shifts gear in the middle of a paragraph, in which the lack of transition is striking. He starts with warnings against lack of vigilance about associating with Catholics:

> Because thou thinkest thou hast a power in thy wife, in thy children, in thy servants, and canst do what thou wilt with them at any time, therefore thou needest not be so scrupulous at first, but mayst admit any supplanters, any underminers into thy house, because they are good company, or because they have relations to great persons. Come not to this, *Post eos*, play not that after-game, to put thy self to a necessity of taking sowre and unkinde courses with wife and children after; but be beforehand with such Idolaters, prevent their snares. We lay this Inhibition too upon every particular conscience. *Covetousness is Idolatry*, saith the Apostle, and *Quot vitia, tot Idola*, saith St. *Hierom*. As many habitual sins as we have, so many Idols have we set up." (4:140)

And all of a sudden, Donne is off on a discussion of the danger of making idols of our bosom sins. It is not that Catholics are alien, as Donne represents them, but rather that their religion plays on ordinary tendencies in human nature. And beyond that, the tendencies are there even without popish temptation; Donne's congregants, it turns out, also participate in these ordinary weaknesses of human nature. All are potentially idolators; even "hee that sayes there is no God, doth for all that, set up some God to himselfe" (6:325). Superior as they feel to the papist, Donne's congregants are not different from the credulous laity of "The Canonization" in kind, but only in culture. Donne sees the same features of human nature leading people away from right belief and action not just among the

Gentiles or in the popish church, but *mutatis mutandi*, even among a well-informed laity in a well-ordered church.[22]

If some people err by being too much like the credulous laity of the love lyrics, others err by being too much like the self-conceited speakers. I have noted Donne's warning about the ordinary tendency to singularity, the ever-present danger of over-affecting one's own opinions. One senses an impatient exasperation in Donne with a laity that is not just religiously literate, but opinionated, each his own pundit, quick to "thinke Preaching a thing under you" and to "take so much liberty in censuring and comparing Preacher and Preacher" (7:319). He rebukes those who scoff at staying "within the limits of a profession, within the limits of precedents, within the limits of time" and for whom "nothing is wisdome, till it be exalted to Craft, and got above other men" (330). Such people think that "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 . . . this is but homespun Divinity, but Country-learning" (3:330). This false estimation sounds akin to the dismissive attitude adopted by the speakers in his love lyrics, writing off "country pleasures" as these self-conceited religionists write off country learning.[23]

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[22]Besides idolatry, anti-popish prejudice also charged Rome with promoting ignorance in the laity. Donne regularly criticizes the Roman church for praising "holy simplicity" and its adherents for being "under an invincible ignorance" (4:142). At the same time, he also condemns all those "that swallow any particular religion, upon an implicite faith." Here, too, he brings it home as a general religious danger: "never to have asked question in matter of Religion, this is such an Implicitenesse, and indifferency, as transgresses against the Son of God" (3:329). In attacks on monastic life, too, Donne defines the sin in a way that makes clear that the potential for it is present in his own society: "any Artificer is a better part of a State, then any retired or contemplative man that embraces no Calling" making "a stupid and negligent passage through this world" (3:329).

[23]In a reversal of the stance of the speaker of the love lyrics, Donne's hermeneutic is to reject the "extraordinary" sense and endorse the "ordinary," as Shami has pointed out, and to hold that "The generall opinion, the generall voyce, is for the most part, good evidence, with, or against a man" (*Conformity in Crisis*, p. 81; also Ettenhuber, pp. 117–21). A similar false

III: The "Ordinary Means" as God's Remedy for Ordinary Sins

In bringing home to his listeners' own lives the impulses on the one hand to ignorance and idolatry, and on the other to self-conceit about one's knowledge and efforts—in showing their own susceptibility to these as ordinary human failings—Donne must offer an alternative conception of what it means to be truly religious. He does so by calling for full commitment to the ordinary in another sense: do not expect miracles, the extraordinary, whether you do so credulously, as the papist, or from illusions of private inspiration, as the schismatic. In fact, if you love God, you will desire to come to God in the congregation and participate in the ordinary means God has ordained. One may be exemplary in one's piety without being singular. When, repeatedly, Donne seeks to convince his auditors that they should embrace the ordinary means, it is because there is in that worship, in all its normality, the best means to true, exemplary faith, for there "Grace and Sacraments, visible and invisible means of salvation, have kissed each other" (3:320).

A number of factors lie behind Donne's emphasis. First, we might note particular concerns alive in the last years of James I. In stressing participation in formal worship, Donne to some degree expresses a common theme among ministers in the 1620s and 30s. As I have discussed elsewhere, the very success of the push for household and private devotion had by the 1620s demystified the exegetical work of the preacher, and clergy both conformist and puritan were concerned that some people had so active an extra-curricular devotional life that they were skipping public worship services.[24] The conformist puritan

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estimation and self-conceit lies in mistaking quantity for quality, sending people sermon gadding, or encouraging extraordinary feats, like that of a nine-year old girl who could repeat any Bible verse without book. See 4:203, and Joshua Scodel's discussion of Donne's critique in "Satire III" of "extremes that come from mistakenly focusing on the numerical" (Scodel "The Medium is the Message: Donne's 'Satire 3,' 'To Sir Henry Wotton' (Sir, more than kisses) and the Ideologies of the Mean," *Modern Philology* 90 [1993], pp. 494–95).

[24]See my *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*, conclusion; Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 77; Peter Lake and David Como,

Richard Sibbes comments on men who "put off God's ordinance, thinking that they can get as much good in their warm chamber by reading of books, as in the congregation by hearing God's word taught." Donne sounds the same note of alarm when, in his dedication sermon for the new Lincoln's Inn chapel, he warns that "they who love a warme bed, let it bee a warme Studie, let it bee a warme profit, better then this place, they deny CHRIST in his institution" (4:377). But along with the similar concern, there is a slight but telling difference in emphasis: Sibbes stresses attendance as a means of instruction, while Donne stresses that public worship is Christ's institution.[25] For Donne, the most important wellspring of religion is found in participation in the means—Word and sacraments—that God has instituted.

The emphasis on the ordinary means of grace was also a feature of advice on how to examine one's standing with God. One way that pastors addressed anxiety about election was to direct believers not to try to pin down an elusive inward faith, but to observe its fruits. Both in general guides to godliness and in treatises on the marks of salvation, believers were advised that love of God's ordinances was one sign of grace, and that attendance at the ordinary means was a way to strengthen weak faith. Richard Bernard, in a 1609 treatise on assurance, taught that believers should examine themselves for "an internall sanctification" manifest in "knowing, feeling, and ever retaining such graces as are Gods good workes, wrought in a man effectually called." These graces include "perseverance following Christ, love to the godly, faith in Gods promises, love to Gods ordinances, his word and sacrament."[26] Nathanial Cole, a preacher in

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"Orthodoxy and its Discontents: Dispute Settlement and the Production of 'Consensus' in the London (Puritan) 'Underground'," *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000): pp. 34–70; and Derek Oldridge, *Religion and Society in Early Stuart England* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Press, 1998), p. 110.

[25]Daniel Featley, a Calvinist conformist, exhibits great ambivalence. At one point he notes that in private devotion men may feel "some soft and sweet blasts of the spirit" but in public worship, the Spirit comes "like a mighty rushing wind." However, at another point, he argues that "publike makes more noise, but private (for the most part) hath a deeper channel"; see *Bible Readers*, pp. 209–10.

[26]Richard Bernard, *The Sinners Safetie* (London, 1609), p. 46.

Essex, similarly linked self-examination and love for the ordinances. He warned in 1615 against curiosity, noting that some presume "by climing up into Heaven, there to whisper God, as it were, in the eare, and to aske his secret counsel, whether he shall be saved or no." Instead, Cole urges, the believer is to discern his estate "by descending downe into his owne hart, searching narrowly every corner of his owne conscience, trying and examining himselfe how he standeth in the grace and favour of God, and so to see into himselfe, *how hee hath used the meanes of salvation*, *which God hath appointed* to be used of all those that ever meane to attaine the end; namely, life eternall." But, Cole warns, many expect to be saved "yet never caring for living the life of the righteous; for they heare not the Word conscionably, they use not Prayer diligently, they receive not the Sacraments worthily; which are the principall means to attaine (together with Gods spirit) all the graces which are needfull to salvation."[27] Silently dropping the call for "searching narrowly every corner" of the conscience, Donne, characteristically, draws from this hotter sort of Calvinism the element he finds valuable, adapting the emphasis on participation in the means as the chief way the Spirit acts on believers and strengthens faith. He insists, for instance, that "if [people who neglect worship] would accustome themselves in a daily performing of Christian duties, to an ordinary presence of God, religion would not be such a stranger, nor devotion such an Ague to them" (5:46). In stressing the ordinary means of grace, then, he is striking a chord that will resonate with those steeped in the puritan discourse of assurance but at the same time he is decoupling it from the emphasis on intensive self-examination, so that the stress falls on worship as the place where God's grace dependably touches the believer.

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[27]Nathaniel Cole, *The godly mans assurance: or A Christians certaine resolution of his owne saluation* (London, 1615), A6v–A7r. This stress on the ordinary means is in fact standard in pastoral counsel about how to gain assurance of election. As Charles Cohen notes, "prayer, meditation, and regular religious observance figure much more prominently" in lists of means to gain assurance than do introspection or outward works. See also David Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 123–27.

A second reason for this stress was, of course, Donne's allegiance to the discipline of the church as established. Donne subscribed to the conformist belief that the ordinary means, while ordained by God, are given institutional form by the Church in which one is born. The tension in Donne's preaching between his call for lively personal faith and his insistence on participation in public worship is, as recent work highlights, the central tension in the moderate conformist position. Charles Prior, for instance, points out that the conformist view of ecclesiastical polity involved two propositions: England had a legally established church, "founded in law and within the jurisdiction of the English Crown," and therefore all subjects were required to conform; and at the same time, that church was "a restoration of the spiritual association that defined the church established by Christ and descended through the apostles."[28] As Prior points out, while presented as joint, these ends could be in tension. In the 39 Articles, Article 19 states that "This visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance." Yet Article 23 provides that preaching and ministering of the sacraments could be performed only by those who were "lawfully called" by "men who have public authority," and Article 34 introduced "custom": "It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly alike . . . 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."[29] Somehow, conformists had to argue that the church was both grounded in the unchanging Word and subject to local regulation.

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[28]Charles Prior, *Defining the Jacobean Church: The Politics of Religious Controversy, 1603–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 63. In his fine discussion of Donne's commitment to the institutions of the English Church, Mark Sweetnam points to three reasons: their antiquity, their establishment by rightful powers, and their claim as the native forms of an English person's mother church (pp. 112–18).

[29]Prior, p. 160. Donne made the conformist argument when, for instance, he states that the church's ordinances were modeled on the pattern that God had given, that, as he preached at the dedication of the new chapel at Lincoln's Inn, "God hath given the Church a paterne of Holy dayes . . . and according to the paterne, the Church hath instituted more" (4:367).

In advocating the ordinary, then, Donne is not only warning the laity not to value their own voluntary devotion over public worship, he is preaching in defense of a particular conception of public worship, the conformist conviction that the Church has the right to determine the particular forms of worship, and that his auditors are bound to submit to its authority. The ordinary means are the ordained means, expressive of good order. The early sermons at St. Dunstan's fight on this front, as Donne insists on the congregation's duty to accept and revere the minister that the institutional church provides. The sermon on the *Directions for Preachers* riffs on the concept of the *ordo* behind the church's ordinances, behind the clergy's holy orders (4:198–99). Throughout the London sermons, Donne is frequently prickly in his insistence on the deference due the preacher by virtue of his office. In his Spital sermon, what starts as a rare celebration of the priesthood of all believers, ministering to each other, quickly transforms into a warning about presumption in criticizing pastors. Donne first declares that "There is not so holy, so Priestly an Office, as . . . That man who from the Altar of a pure heart, offers sacrifices of prayer and praise to God, that man is a Priest." But Donne immediately follows by warning "Since then to this intendment you are Priests, as we are . . . do not you make us to be all of the inferiour Ministry, and all your selves to be Bishops over us, to visit us, judge us, syndicate us, and leave out your selves" (4:113).

IV: Divine Accommodation: the Extraordinary Ordinary

Donne's quick qualification of the priesthood of all believers might seem to support the picture of Donne as authoritarian, gesturing to the equal value of the laity but insisting on their deference to the clergy.[30] But I would argue that the spur to this sort of comment is not

[30]It is important to place this moment in relation to another, in a sermon at St. Paul's, Christmas 1626. There, Donne is reflecting on Simeon, and raises the possibility that he was not a priest in the Temple but an ordinary man. The possibility leads Donne to insist that "to come to the Communion Table, is to take Orders; Every man should come to that Altar, as holy as the Priest, for there he is a Priest . . . No man comes to the Sacrament well, that is sorry hee is there; that is, whom the penalty of the law, or observation of neighbours, or any collaterall respect brings thither. There thou art a Priest,

a desire to insist on obedience to authority so much as a desire to correct the self-conceit that I have noted, and to call for recognition that behind the church's ordinances stands God's attempt to accommodate human nature. In other words, Donne's embrace of the ordinary is firmly rooted in his theological suspicion of the singular. Take, for instance, Donne's view of what the laity should look for in their minister. Arguing from analogy, Donne teaches that just as God chose in the incarnation to bridge the gap between human and divine by becoming man, so ministers are "taken from amongst your selves," are ordinary men, and "therefore you are not to looke for Revelations, nor Extasies, nor Visions, nor Transportations, but to rest in Gods ordinary meanes" (8:46). To be ordinary does not mean to be of lesser value. The ordinary is what is ordained because it is right and fit, and in that sense best. Indeed, in this sermon to his congregation at St. Dunstan's, Donne invites wonder at "how neere to your selves, God hath brought the meanes of your Salvation, in his visible, and sensible, in his appliable, and apprehensible Ordinances" (8:46). Do not look for miracles—rather, marvel at how wonderfully God has accommodated us in the ordinary means.[31] We should embrace that the author of Scripture was "the highest Author," the "assurance of the Scripture was the safest foundation" the "riches of the Scripture was the best treasure" and that "all true constancy" was built upon this rock. Donne insists, you might say, upon the superlative ordinary.

The superlative ordinary person lived a life committed to the voluntary practices I opened with but was also alert to ordinary human failings that might lead her aside to the singular, the eccentric, the misplaced priority. Katrin Ettenhuber has traced how this kind of humility shaped Donne's biblical hermeneutic.[32] I would argue that it also goes a long way toward explaining the central place he gives

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though thou beest but a lay-man at home . . . Live in remembrance, that thou wast a Priest to day; (for no man hath received Christ, that hath not sacrificed himself)" (7:287). This seems to me another moment in which Donne draws on the idea of the priesthood of all believers that grounds puritan voluntary practices, yet shifts the emphasis away from the laity's knowledge and authority in order to stress the need to strive for complete holiness of life.

[31]A similar idea lies behind Donne's meditations on the dove that is applied to his feet, in the twelfth of his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*.

[32]Ettenhuber, pp. 109–17.

ordained worship. Donne argues that believers should be glad to embrace the means of grace that God has established in the church, ordinary as they are, for those means are the dependable, everyday means God has designed to convey the Gospel. Prayer, as a friend of Donne's said, is "heaven in ordinary, man well-dressed."

The theme of embracing the ordinary means sounds throughout the sermons. In the ministry and dispensation of the Gospel, God established "ordinary meanes" for the conveyance of grace (4:211). Or again, God shines an "effectual light" into our hearts, and in preaching and the sacraments, "the outward means of salvation, ordained by God in his church, consists this Irradiation," and therefore, Donne urges, "let this light, the love of the ordinary means of your salvation, enter into your hearts and shine there" (4:105–08). And again, excommunication is to be feared because it will "shut up the ordinary and outward meanes of our salvation" (3:325).[33] In short, Donne located the center of religious experience in the ordinary means. Of preaching in particular Donne declares "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 manifestation of Christ Jesus in his Ordinance of preaching" (5:45), a sentiment he repeats in many sermons. He puns on the idea of preaching as God's ordinance: sermons are "God's ordinance, to beget Faith [and] to take away

[33]See also 5:46. While Donne does often embrace word and sacrament in this reference to "means," he very often develops the idea in reference to preaching alone. Thus "the ordinary way, even of the holy Ghost, for the conveying of faith . . . is by the eare, by hearing his word preached" (4:225). Hugh Adlington offers a valuable account of Donne's sense of the specific functioning of preaching as means. He argues that the sermon captures the mode of communication that Donne saw in the Trinity, and that: "this Augustinian 'union' characterizes Donne's *kerygma*, his incarnation of the Holy Ghost in the Whitsunday sermons. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are thus present 'in the preaching thereof,' the preaching that 'conveys, diffuses, and seals' in its effort to emulate the function of Scriptural eloquence, which is to 'actuate, fecundate, and generate' the congregation's disposition to receive the Holy Spirit" (228). I would question the idea that Donne would see this as an instance of *kerygma*; the metaphor he uses for the union subsequently is marriage. The point nonetheless is that the sermon may be an ordinary means, but it is also a profoundly efficacious one.

preaching were to disarme God . . . for by that Ordinance, he fights from Heaven" (7:320). But the serious claim behind the pun is that God set up preaching as the means to convert, edify, and move people to Christian service. The same holds for the rest of the prescribed service: it is set up as the fit and effective way, "usefull, and beneficiall for the advancing of the glory of God, and the devotion of the congregation" (6:284).

Donne is in part picking up on uses of the word "ordinary" in liturgy and ecclesiastical law that we might no longer be alert to. When Donne declares that "A Bishop as Christs vicar can claim no other power, then was ordinary in Christ" (2:16.328), he refers to the idea that an office had regular, established powers, as opposed to extraordinary powers.[34] Ordinary also referred to the prescribed normal order in worship; an "ordinary" could denote "a book that sets out rules and records practice" (*OED* II.9), and was the term for a book containing the order of divine service for regular, non-festival days. Such days were referred to as "ordinary time." Ordinary, in other words, bore strong associations with the rules instituted to direct regular church practice. Both ordinary and regular come from the idea of governance by rule. And, significantly for Donne's sense of the word, "ordinary" is cognate with "ordained" and with "order." Ordinary is not just mundane, it is that which is prescribed as what normal life rightly calls for. The ordinary means is the best way to do the everyday. Hence Donne's stress on worship in the English church as excellent because it is not "a church in a Dropsie, overflown with Ceremonies, or a Church in a Consumption, for want of such Ceremonies." The "ordinary means" reflect a mean that is the

[34]As a noun, an "ordinary" was the term for "A person who has, of his or her own right and not by the appointment of another, immediate jurisdiction in ecclesiastical cases, such as the archbishop in a province, or the bishop or bishop's deputy in a diocese" (*OED* I.1.a). This meaning is still in use: a diocesan bishop "has within his diocese jurisdiction as Ordinary" (https://www.churchofengland.org/media/38963/gsmisc910.pdf). The term came to be used for judges who have jurisdiction in themselves, and for "a staff of officers in regular attendance or service" (*OED* I.3), so that the king had chaplains in ordinary, men who had a regular or ordinary right to officiate—if another minister were invited, his appearance would be extraordinary. The term was also used for physicians and other office holders.

excellent course between two deficient courses—once again, the superlative ordinary. As Donne urges, "All affections which are common to all men . . . shall not only be justly employed upon God, but also securely employed, because we cannot exceed, nor go too far in employing them upon him" (1:237). And again, "God hath chosen ways of mediocrity; He Redeemed us not, by God alone, nor by man alone, but by him, who was both" (5:40). The mean, the mediocre, is superior to what lies on either side.[35]

The "ordinary" in this ecclesiastical sense captures both the church's role in establishing fit order and the more profound claim about the ordinary as a theological ideal, reflecting God's created order. This deeply theological claim addressed the kinds of dangers Donne saw among his ordinary lay audience. He was preaching in part to the relatively apathetic who attended church as a social event, for the company they might meet, and who made advancement, pleasure, or gain their idol. To them, he had to stress that God demands complete devotion, the whole heart, not simply in church but in one's calling. To these auditors, the ordinary means, and preaching above all, function to arouse and awaken; they are the necessary beginning point of the transformation that will then transform the whole life, motivating the voluntary private and household devotion Donne also cared about. At the same time, Donne was preaching to the active and opinionated London godly, prone to over-value their religious competence and self-directed devotion at the expense of public worship and to pick and choose among preachers who suited their views. Equally important, I think, is another theological idea close to Donne's heart, the reassuring idea that the believer does not have to take extraordinary measures to stand aright with God. Donne is emphasizing a particular value of ordinariness—it is well-known and easily accessible and well-established.

The intrinsic value of the ordinary, then, matters to Donne, and it matters in a complex and distinctive way. He advocates the conformist conception of the grounds and nature of the church's authority and he insists on the central necessity of attendance at public worship. Yet he never sacrifices an equal insistence on the necessity of the inward

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[35]This conception of the superior mean is similar to the move that Scodel describes, in which "between" is also "beyond" (p. 501).

spirit. He declares that God "instructs us not, by the Holy Ghost alone, without the Ministery of man, nor by the Minister alone, without the Holy Ghost" (5:41). In the Easter sermon with which I began, Donne acknowledges acts of private devotion: "I can," he muses, "build a Church in my bosome; I can serve God in my heart . . . I can build a Church at my beds side, when I prostrate my selfe in humble prayer." We expect him next to state that private, domestic exercise does not have the force of the public. However, that's not exactly where he goes. "I can praise God cheerefully in my Chappell," he continues, "cheerefully in my parish Church." Then, Donne groups both bedside and parish church together as less than when he worships in "the great Congregation": "I finde the highest exaltations, and the noblest elevations of my devotion, when I give thanks in the great Congregation, and praise him among much people, for so me thinks, I come nearer and nearer to the Communion of Saints in Heaven" (4:84).[36] Regularly, and notably in the *Devotions* and in the second Prebend sermon, Donne identifies with David in his distress at being kept from the house of God and his deep longing to join those assembled there.[37] In the 1626 Christmas sermon, Donne acknowledges the value of "Chamber-prayers, single, or with your family, Chamber-Sermons, Sermons read over there; and Chamber-Sacraments, administred in necessity there, are blessed assistants, and supplements." However, "they are as the almes at the gate, but the feast is within; they are as a cock of water without, but the Cistern is within; *habenti dabitur*; he that hath a handful of devotion at home, shall have his devotion multiplied to a Gomer here; for when he is become a part of the Congregation, he is joint-tenant with them, and the devotion of all the Congregation, and the blessings upon all the Congregation, are his blessings, and his devotions" (7:292). Here, the stress is not so much on the ordinary means as valuable in creating and nurturing faith or providing assurance, as elsewhere, but on the

[36]See Adlington, who similarly finds that for Donne, "it is in his Ordinance, in the reproof and consolation of the Holy Ghost, that the *religious* trinity of God, man, and Church is bound together" (p. 210). Adlington cites a late sermon in which Donne declares "The Holy Ghost was sent to Teach; he teaches by speaking; he speaks by his Ordinance, and Institution in his Church" (p. 222, quoting 8:261)

[37]See Devotions 30 and *Sermons* 7:57.

participation in the larger body. Just before this moment, Donne developed this idea in terms of the communication among all those in the church, the members "lively stones" where "every stone is supported by another, and supports another . . . so when thou commest to the porch of the Triumphant Church, the doore of heaven, the Communion table, desire that that joy, which thou feelest in thy soule then, may then be communicated to every communicant there" (7:291). The ordinary means, in other words, are not simply the way that God communicates with individuals, but the way that sharing the reception of that Spirit with others amplifies devotion. In both cases, Donne represents the communication in terms of the action of the Holy Ghost. Donne's advocacy of the ordinary is not authoritarian, and is not bloodless and bland, because by the ordinary means, the Spirit awakens faith and unites believers. Ordinary worship is, for Donne, amazing; it is the plain man's pathway to heaven.

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