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Imagination and Affections in John Donne's Preaching

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John Donne's technique of homiletic persuasion necessarily depends upon his view of the workings of the human soul. Only when the preacher properly engages his listeners' faculties can he promote a spiritual regeneration. Consequently, considerable critical attention has been devoted to the comments Donne makes about the faculties. Most of these studies examine the memory, understanding, and will, which comprise the rational trinity according to Augustine and Bernard. However, the precise roles of two other faculties, the imagination and the affections, still need to be articulated.[1] Donne believes that the knowledge needed for salvation is not a cerebral accomplishment alone; it is a reordering of all the faculties and members of the human being. He asserts that "as every man was in *Adam*, so every *faculty* of every man . . . concurred to that sin. . . ."[2] Since all faculties participated in the Fall, the process of regeneration requires that all must participate in their restoration. Unless our critical appraisals of Donne's persuasive method take account of the functioning of the whole soul, including the imagination and the affections, such appraisals must remain partial.[3]

In many seventeenth-century accounts of human psychology, the close relationships among the senses, imagination, and affections cast a shadow of suspicion over these three faculties. Since the imagination receives and frequently transforms impressions gathered by its neighbor, the senses, it often shared in the Platonic distrust of the body. Itself a receptor of the negative effects of the volatile affections, the imagination was also seen to possess a dangerous potential to stimulate these affections, thus inducing perverse deeds.[4] In contrast, Donne, fully conscious of the distortions latent in the imagination and affections, tends to encourage these faculties to participate actively and rationally in cooperation with all other faculties. He understands that neither faculty is intrinsically evil and need not submit to coercive repression. Donne's

affirmation of these aspects of the soul counters a trend to dismiss their value in promoting spiritual rectitude; he thereby provides a theoretical basis for his preaching method, a method at once rational, sensuous, and passionate.

Donne's understanding of human psychology and, consequently, his manner of constructing sermons to fit the working of the mind follow from his conception of the relation between soul and body. For Donne, true human nature, by definition, comprises an integrity of body and soul; the nature of a regenerate Christian is a further refinement of this integrity:

> In the constitution and making of a natural man, the body is not the man, nor the soule is not the man, but the *union* of these two makes up the man . . . as there are spirits in us, which unite body and soul, so there must be subsequent acts, and works of the blessed spirit, that must unite and confirm all, and make up this spiritual man in the wayes of sanctification. . . . (II, 12, 261-62)

The unity of body and soul is given a greater fullness in the Christian because the body is reanimated to accomplish works of charity when the Spirit of God joins it to the regenerate soul. Divine intention gathers together body and soul for the enhanced service of God and other human beings. It is only the promptings of sin which attempt to tear asunder what God has joined together.[5] Donne thus warns, following Tertullian, "Never go about to separate the thoughts of the heart, from the colledge, from the fellowship of the body . . . All that the soule does, it does in, and with, and by the body" (IV, 14, 358). Each individual's destiny may be found in the incarnate Christ, since he perfectly exemplifies the proper integration of body and soul. When the Son took on human flesh, "The greater kingdom did not swallow the lesse, but the lesse had that great addition, which it had not before, and retained the dignities and priviledges which it had before too" (III, 14, 299).

Donne's attitude towards the integrity of body and soul clarifies the manner in which preaching may be used to reorient an auditory. Preaching is an illumination of the edifying process of life, but it is no more than that. As a result, Donne's sermons vindicate the "ordinary way" of achieving knowledge unto salvation—through the impression of the senses, by means of the imagination, and then by the action of all the faculties together.[6] Donne therefore attacks the false purity among some

Roman Catholics because they have forsaken their natural faculties in order to attain direct communication with God:

> There is a Pureness, a cleanness imagin'd (rather dream't of) in the *Romane Church*, by which (as their words are) the soul is abstracted, not onely *â Passionibus*, but *â Phantasmatibus*, not onely from passions, and perturbations, but from the ordinary way of coming to know any thing; The soul (say they) of men so purified, understands no longer, *per phantasmata rerum corporalium*; not by having any thing presented by the fantasie to the senses, and so to the understanding, but altogether by a familiar conversation with God, and an immediate revelation from God; whereas Christ himself contented himself with the ordinary way; He was hungry, and a fig-tree presented it self to him upon the way, and he went to it to eat. (I, 3, 186)

Donne insists that the senses have a prominent role in knowing God. This genuine method he relates specifically to preaching: "The ordinary way, even of the *holy Ghost*, for the conveying of *faith*, and supernaturall graces, is (as the way of worldly knowledge is) by the *senses*: where his way is by the *eare*, by hearing his word *preached*..." (IV, 8, 225). This is why God calls common men to be ministers and summons humanity with his word in their mouths. Such ministers are, Donne explains to his auditory, "taken from amongst your selves, and that therefore you are not to looke for Revelations, nor Extasies, nor Visions, nor Transportations, but to rest in Gods ordinary meanes . . ." (VIII, 1, 46). Donne emphasizes the fact that God seeks to use human senses ultimately in his service; what God desires is the senses' transformation, not their obliteration:

> It is not an utter *destroying* of thy senses, and of thy affections, that is enjoyned thee; but, as when a Man had taken a beautifull Woman capitive in the warres, he was not bound to kill her, but he must *shave her head, and pare her nailes, and change her garments*, before he might marry her; so captivate, subdue, change thy affections. . . . (VI, 9, 203)

The senses and affections, so transformed, become instruments by which we may know and praise God. Donne recalls Augustine's perception that "In all our senses, in our faculties, we may see God if we will . . ." (VI, 11, 236). With such an intense awareness of the indispensability of the senses, Donne preached his sermons conscious that he must engage the senses in order to restore them.

A healthy soul, in Donne's view, requires the good uses of the imagination. His sermons' purpose is "*Exhortation* principally and *Edification*, and a holy stirring of religious affections" (VIII, 3, 95), and the fantasy's creation of desirable and fearful images serves as a fit instrument for that goal. But, while Donne does not distrust the imagination in and of itself, he understands the varieties of abuse to which humans subject it. Such abuse occurs when the imagination feigns without regard to the broad consensus gained by Scripture, tradition, and historical experience, and without the further concurrence of the rational faculties. Consequently, when Donne speaks of the improper use of the imagination, he often directs his accusations against heretics, papists, and separatists—those who have not allowed the imagination to be governed by anything more worthy than narrow beliefs or personal feelings. Donne's greatest fear is that one element of life or one aspect of God may be mis-imagined as the whole of providence or of the divine nature. Thus, Donne speaks disparagingly of the separatists: "So those imaginary *Churches*, that will receive no light from Antiquitie, nor Primitive formes, God leaves to themselves and they crumble into *Conventicles*" (VII, 2, 83). He warns that meditation and contemplation of God "may determine in extasies, and in stupidities, and in uselesse and frivolous imaginations" (VIII, 4, 119) if they do not lead to virtuous action. Of the despairing misinterpreter of predestination, Donne asks rhetorically if he will "teare open the jawes of Earth, and Hell, and cast thy self actually and really into it, out of a mis-imagination, that God hath cast thee into it before?" (X, 4, 117). These false imaginations, symptoms of a diseased soul, often develop as a result of sloth:

> this easinesse of admitting imaginary apparitions of spirits in the Papist, and this easinesse of submitting to the private spirit, in the Schismatike, hath produced effects equally mischievous: Melancholy being made the seat of Religion on the one side, by the Papist, and Phrenzy on the other side, by the Schismatick. (VIII, 5, 135)

Sometimes slothfulness allows one to let the imagination govern itself instead of adhering to the counsel of the understanding, memory, and

will. Such an usurpation can only assist one to live in a world of false appearances:

> 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, 10, 263)

The imagination's power to conceive becomes a danger when its false impressions are taken as true. The most terrible instance of illusory conceit is when one perceives God as other than he is. When this happens, one no longer remains in relationship with the living God, but creates an idol out of machinations of one's limited perspective.[7] If the imagination can break apart impressions from sense experience, then it can dissect the Godhead and make the divine to appear as less than itself. It is a problem for Donne's contemporaries as much as it was for the Gentiles:

> For, this was the wretched and penurious narrownesse to which the Gentiles were reduced, that being unable to consider God intirely, they broke God in pieces, and crumbled, and scattered God into as many severall gods, as there are Powers in God, nay almost into as many severall gods, as there are Creatures from God; and more then that, as many gods as they could fancie or imagine in making Chimera's of their owne, for not onely that which was not God, but that which was not at all, was made a God. (III, 12, 262)

The question of idolatry is, of course, a question of what is the appropriate image by which man may respond to God. Donne recognizes that the original words for image "have sometimes a good, sometimes a bad sense in the Scriptures" (VII, 17, 431). When the imagination works to conceive of God, it bears this ambiguity and can create a shape which the living God may inhabit or a form which he may abominate. The horrifying thing about idolatry is its air of complete unreality. Donne states simply that "No Image, but the Image of God can fit our soule" (IX, 2, 80). The attempt to use another image to fit the mold causes frustration, anxiety, and a sense of purposelessness. Yet it is the perverse predilection of humans to traffic with this sacred treasure: "The

Image of God is more worth then all substances; and we give it, for colours, for dreames, for shadowes" (IX, 2, 81).

However, although the imagination may spawn idolatry, Donne also realizes that the Devil's indwelling is a parody of God's residence in the temple of the soul. God maintains a holy purpose for the imagination, despite evil's attempt to thwart that design. Donne counsels those who stand in fear of God's judgment and despair of any reconciliation with him to consider that these feelings may be a mis-imagination, a distortion of their sense of responsibility: "for, as God hath given the Soule an Imagination, and a Fancy, as well as an Understanding, So the Devill imprints in the conscience, a false Imagination, as well as a fearefull sense of true sin" (IX, 13, 306). In this way, Donne explains that, while the imagination is especially susceptible to the Devil's influence, it need not be so influenced, and still remains God's creature.

While Donne recognizes that the false representations of the diseased imagination may instigate rebellion against God, he nonetheless seems to tolerate the imagination's explorations. Certainly one does not have to fulfill in action what one conceives in one's imagination in order to stand accused of sin; one may sin "but *imaginarily*, (and yet *Damnably*)" (VI, 9, 199). Still, it is Donne's inclination to avoid an overscrupulosity of conscience in the matter of the soul's reveries. To pay too much attention to light fancies over-dignifies their worth:

> there may arise some Paradoxicall imaginations in my selfe, and yet these never attaine to the setlednesse of an opinion, but they float in the fancy, and are but waking dreames; and such imaginations, and fancies, and dreames, receive too much honour in the things, and too much favour in the persons, if they be reproved, or questioned, or condemned, or disputed against.
>
> (VI, 16, 317-18)

Even when sin is deliberately committed in the imagination or by means of the other faculties, Donne does not despair of amendment. For he trusts that experience in time will eventually shed light on false paths, providing that one still seeks to follow God. Damnable sinfulness, as Donne understands it, does not arise from images of evil penetrating through the imagination, thus converting the soul to evil's disorder. Rather, such sinfulness occurs when sin springs spontaneously from the self once the heart is hardened by habit against any promptings of remorse:

> When a man receives figures and images of sin, into his Fancie and Imagination, and leads them on to his Understanding and Discourse, to his Will, to his Consent, to his Heart, by a delightful dwelling upon the meditation of that sin; yet this is not *a setting of the heart upon doing evil*. . . . It is not, when the devil is put to his Circuit, to *seek whom he may devour*, and how he may corrupt the King by his Council, that is, The Soul by the Senses: But it is, when by a habitual custom in sin, the sin arises meerly and immediately from my self: It is, when the heart hath usurp'd upon the devil, and upon the world too, and is able and apt to sin of it self, if there were no devil, and if there were no outward objects of tentation. . . . (I, 2, 178-79)

Damnation does not follow ineluctably from false conceptions engendered in the imagination and received in the other faculties. Only when the soul so isolates itself as to become comfortably evil without exterior prompting does it finally reject God's offer of salvation.

It is the preacher's responsibility to stimulate the imagination to conceive of God in such a way that the conception is adequate to "fit" the human soul. The preacher challenges his auditory to enter into a vital relationship with God and thereby to correct their psychological processes:

> Never propose to thy self such a God, as thou wert not bound to imitate: Thou mistakest God, if thou make him to be any such thing, or make him to do any such thing, as thou in thy proportion shouldst not be, or shouldst not do. . . . Imagine God, as the Poet saith, *Ludere in humanis*, to play but a game at *Chesse* with this world; to sport himself with making little things great, and great things nothing: Imagine God to be but at play with us, but a gamester; yet will a gamester *curse*, before he be in danger of losing any thing? Will God curse man, before man have sinned? (VII, 14, 360-61)

By twice inviting his auditory to imagine God, even in such a provisional way, Donne proves to them the beneficial powers of imagination. The imagination properly "proposes" models of God that bear repeating on a human scale, and thereby performs a vital function in inducing charitable acts.[8]

In Donne's conception, those things in which the imagination and senses delight find their fulfillment in God's manifestations of himself. These faculties also yearn for perfection, and are restless until they find their peace in him. They are put to good use when they dwell upon the arts employed by virtuous authors; they are put to their best use in considering and applying the writings of the Bible:

> Thou that lovest the Rhetorique, the Musique, the wit, the sharpnesse, the eloquence, the elegancy, of *other authors*, love even those things in the *Scriptures*, in the word of God, where they abound more, then in other authors. Put but thy affections out of their ordinary sinfull way, and then *Lavasti pedes*, thou hast washed thy feet; and God will take thy work in hand, and raise a building farre beyond the compasse, and comprehension of thy foundation; that which the soule began, but in *good nature*, shall be perfected in *grace*. (V, 8, 177)

Thus, while the imagination is ambiguous in its function and able to summon good or evil phantasms, when it is properly exercised and sanctified by the beauty of holiness, its representations become true because they draw humans into a loving convenant with God. The sanctified imagination reveals the loveliness of the real. Its inventiveness creates charitable relations and beneficial conditions among human beings in the militant Church and figures forth God's glory in his triumphant Church.

The imagination is most genuinely in touch with the real when its image of God is continuous with the depictions of God recorded in Scripture and preserved in fundamental doctrines. These are the tests which one must apply to one's own imagination. Donne is wary of private inspiration because the imagination may not perceive with due regard to history. Thus he warns, "No word is certain, not in the mouth of an Angel, but as it is referred to the former word of God" (IX, 8, 212). This perspective accounts for his disparagement of the Roman Church's use of legends and its elevation of tradition to equal stature with Scripture. Both practices spring from a false imagination not firmly grounded in experience and history. The legends, he charges, "did not onely *faine actions*, which those persons never did, but they *fained persons* which never were"; further, "they did not onely *mis-canonize* men, made Devills Saints, but they *mis-christened* men, put names to persons, and persons to names that never were." The evil consequences of such legends manifest themselves by perverting human knowledge of God's

purpose: "And these *legends* being transferred into the Church, the sheep lacke their grasse upon the ground, that is, the knowledge of Gods will, in his house, at Church" (X, 6, 145). Because God is so intimately connected with his revealing actions in history, to misrepresent history is equivalent to distorting the Godhead itself. Thus, preaching in the reformed Church can have no such basis in false imagination. Rather, the imagination must be tested by historical experience. Donne perceives that God's artistry in the Gospel is a "*Res integra*, a whole piece" (V, 13, 259) and thus resists any individualistic fury of imagination which might deface the divine work. False speculation is checked and true imagining is fostered by Donne's restatement of the principle that one's thoughts and imagination must agree with "that which all Churches alwayes have thought and taught to be necessary to salvation" (III, 9, 209).

Implicit in Donne's sermons is his belief that the imagination must be shaped and informed by the memory. The memory enables the imagination to cast accurate images concerning God and his providence and thus assists humans in working out their salvation. Donne asserts that the preacher's task is not to provide proof, but to stimulate the memory: "So that our labour never lies in this, to prove to any man, that he *may* see God, but onely to remember him that he *hath* seen God: not to make him beleeve that there is a God, but to make him see, that he does beleeve it" (IV, 6, 169). Donne's close association of imagination and memory is perhaps best seen in one of the imagination's legitimate functions. Since the imagination speculates and creates possibilities, its field of action is often the future. For Donne, healthy conjuring often best takes place when it recalls the events related in Scripture, or when it recollects the scriptural application of personal experience. Thus Donne declares, "whatsoever we reade that God had formerly done, in the reliefe of his oppressed servants, wee are thereby assured that he can, that he will doe them againe; and so Histories are made Prophecies . . ." (VIII, 4, 112). Donne's auditor may choose a course of action more confidently because memory helps him to imagine the future. Such an attitude explains Donne's care in presenting historical figures so that they are both imaginatively believable to the auditor and scripturally accurate.[9]

Just as the activity of the imagination is closely allied to the senses and the memory, so there exists considerable interaction among all the faculties. The workings of the memory, understanding, and will have already received critical attention, but one should stress Donne's tendency to see the cooperation and concurrence in the divine Trinity and its counterpart in the human soul, that "*trinity from the Trinity*" (II, 2,

72). Donne affirms that the "Attributes of God, Power, and Wisedome, and Goodnesse, be all three in all the three Persons of the Trinity," and consequently they possess "a joynt-Almightinesse, a joynt-Wisdome, and a joynt-Goodnesse" (III, 15, 327). The attribute accorded each person of he Trinity is not exclusive, but flows among the other persons. He thus suggests that both Son and Holy Ghost are Fathers: the Son is the Father of mercies, and the Holy Ghost the Father in that adoption by which Christ is applied to us (III, 12, 265-69). Elsewhere, Donne suggests there is "a Holy Ghost in all the holy offices of Christ" (VI, 16, 314). Further, Donne sees a concurrence of all the divine persons in the creation of man and in the work of salvation.[10] In an analogous fashion, the functions of the human soul are not neatly compartmentalized among the memory, understanding, and will. For this reason, ideally, the Christian's "understanding and his will is all one faculty" (VIII, 7, 190); the human memory is superior to that of beasts since it has recourse to "a ruminated, a reflected knowledge" (IV, 12, 306), the work of the understanding; and God can "make" man understand only with the "voluntary concurrence" of the will (IX, 16, 352).

The joint-working among the three superior faculties of the soul also extends to other capacities. Much of Donne's lament concerning human psychology is that human beings do not employ all their powers and faculties. They stop before the circuit of faculties is completed. Often this is because the understanding is slighted in the process. Donne asserts, "The Mind implies consideration, deliberation, conclusion upon premisses: and wee never come to that; wee never put the soule home; we never bend the soule up to her height . . ." (VIII, 14, 326). If humans were more willing to let the psychological process follow its full course, the soul would be more likely to detect error and redirect its impulses and actions to godly ends. This is why Donne insists that "The Imaginations . . . before it [sic] come to be a formall and debated thought" are only evil continually (II, 6, 153). It is not that the imagination is intrinsically evil, but that without the confirmation of the whole reasoning process, its images cannot be identified as good. Donne's persistence in encouraging his auditory to complete the psychological circuit, by including reason, is apparent when he speaks of God's manner of working:

> sometimes he workes upon the phantasie of Man; as in those often *Visions*, which he presented to his Prophets in *dreames*; sometimes he workes upon the *senses*, by preparing objects for them; So he filled the Mountaine

> round about with horses, and chariots, in defense of *Elisha*; but alwayes he workes upon our *reason*; he bids us feare no judgment, he bids us hope for no mercy, except it have a *Quia, a reason*, a foundation, in the Scriptures. (V, 4, 103)

The implication of this statement is that both the prophets' visions and the sensible phantasms used in Elisha's defense were *reasonable*. They stood up under the understanding's scrutiny: they did not conflict with reality, the genuine workings of providence.

When the three superior faculties give effect to their considerations, they require the involvement of the affections or passions. These emotions must be stimulated before the conscience can activate the muscles of the body. Thus, Donne makes use of St. Paul's method, which is "to proceed by the understanding, to the affections, and so to the conscience of those that hear him, by such means of perswasion, as are most appliable to them, to whom he then speaks" (VIII, 6, 160). Like the other faculties, the affections may be either good or evil. One must subdue "brutish affections" (II, 3, 100), but one can hope to enjoy "Religious affections" (VII, 12, 316). But individual affections are morally ambiguous too, since even hatred can be used to good ends: "He that hates nothing in an Heretique, or in a Schismatique, but the Schisme, or the Heresie . . . hath got far in the steps of Christian perfection" (VI, 16, 320).

Christians may legitimately attempt to purify the affections and nurture them to good ends. We must not try to divest our human nature by an "extinguishing of naturall affections," for Christ enjoined, "sleepe not lazily in an over-indulgency to these affections; but, *Ambula*, walke sincerely in thy Calling, and thou shalt heare thy Saviour say, *Non est infirmitas haec ad mortem*, These affections, nay, these concupiscencies shall not destroy thee" (V, 17, 351-52). In paradise, the affections held their proper station, and thus at that time, "all affections should have been subjects" (VII, 14, 358). In a fallen world, however, humans often err by allowing their affections free rein, and this false path is "a following of affections, and passions, which are the inferiour servants of the soule, and not of that, which we understand here by the Minde" (VIII, 14, 327). Nonetheless, Christ revealed the proper use of the passions, when, through his love and sorrow, he wept for humanity, though in him there was "no declination towards inordinatenesse" (IV, 13, 338; 329). But even strong and pressing emotions do not of themselves alienate one from God: "A storme of affections in nature, and yet a setled calme, and a fast anchorage in grace, a suspition, and a jealousie, and yet an

assurance, and a confidence in God, may well consist together . . ." (VII, 15, 383). So, while it is possible that the natural affections may make men bestial, to be without affections lowers one further down the chain of being: "indolencie, absence, emptinesse, privation of affections, makes any man at all times, like stones, like dirt" (IV, 13, 330). The affections are, therefore, a necessary and desirable aspect of a Christian's constitution. Religious zeal itself is "that one good affection" which excuses many who would otherwise stand condemned (VI, 11, 229). And in St. Paul's writing, Donne finds a method of drawing nearer to God in contrition:

> according to that chaine of Affections which the Apostle makes, That godly sorrow brings a sinner to a care; He is no longer carelesse, negligent of his wayes; and that care to a clearing of himselfe, not to cleare himselfe by way of excuse, or disguise, but to cleare himselfe by way of physick, by humble confession; and then that clearing brings him to an indignation, to a kind of holy scorne, and wonder, how that tentation could worke so. . . . (VIII, 8, 206)

The important place which Donne accords the affections manifests itself in his attempt to stir them up while preaching. He emphasizes the affections' considerable role, though he also balances their functioning with the other faculties. One of the true purposes of preaching, Donne tells his auditory, is to "usher the true word of life into your *understandings*, and *affections*" (X, 6, 147). By stimulating the passions, the preacher prevents his auditors from falling into the dullness and complacency which plagues the ungodly: "The Preacher stirres and moves, and agitates the holy affections of the Congregation, that they slumber not in a senselesnesse . . ." (VIII, 1, 43). If the preacher performs his task well, he should be able to touch the auditor using Scripture's power to integrate and restore the soul. When he emulates the poetry of the Bible, as in the Song of Deborah, he too may be able "to Tune us, to Compose and give us a Harmonie and Concord of affections, in all perturbations and passions, and discords in the passages of this life" (IV, 7, 180).

One metaphoric way in which Donne often describes the affections is to say that they are the animal side of man, and since man is a compendium of all creation, he is like a Noah's ark where all beasts are gathered together. In this conceit, Donne playfully combines the idea that "Man is called *Omnis Creatura*, Every creature" (V, 13, 253) with the original meaning of the Pauline "natural man" as "the animal man." Following

Origen, Donne suggests that "all creatures were as it were melted in one forge, and poured into one mold, when man was made" (V, 13, 253). Donne's view of these "beasts," these affections, is not pejorative, however, for all of God's creatures may perform a useful function. The affections are wounded by the Fall, but must be restored to health if humankind is to experience wholeness. In a letter Donne therefore writes: "And as the Indian priests expressed an excellent charity, by building Hospitalls and providing chirurgery for birds and beasts lamed by mischance, or age, or labour: so must we, not cut off, but cure these affections, which are the bestiall part."[11] Donne advances the principle that the affections ought not to be Stoically suppressed, but should be corrected and governed. Indeed, Donne's verse letter to Sir Edward Herbert makes clear that true Christian wisdom is attained only by bringing the affections into a cooperative relationship: "Man is a lumpe, where all beasts kneaded bee, / Wisdome makes him an Arke where all agree. . . ."[12] Such affections may best be used when an individual guides each affection and "directs it upon the right object" (VI, 15, 295). When the affections are focused upon God, their most worthy object, they undergo purification and receive divine validation:

> All affections which are common to all men, and those too, which in particular, particular men have been addicted unto, 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.
> (I, 5, 237)

The ultimate goal of all the natural faculties is not only to become an integrated and effective mechanism but to put themselves at the disposal of the divine purpose. Donne declares, concerning the faculties, "For, though they be not naturally instruments of grace; yet naturally they are susceptible of grace, and have so much in their nature, as that by grace they may be made instruments of grace . . ." (IX, 2, 85). When the faculties, whose own original purpose in bearing the image of God is a good one, are enhanced by the intervention of grace, they become a new creation. This new creation or capacity is what Donne means by the "superedification" upon the natural reason (IX, 17, 382), or else the "*new facultie of Reason*" (III, 17, 359), which leads to Christian wisdom.[13] For though Donne speaks of the rectified reason or understanding in a narrow sense, meaning the pure operation of the natural faculty, he also speaks of the rectified reason in a more comprehensive manner. For example, he distinguishes senses when he contradicts Justin Martyr,

who asserted that "rectified reason did the same office in the Gentiles, as faith did in the Christians" (VI, 5, 118). Donne insists that Christians have a greater inheritance than the enlightened thinking of the philosophers:

> The Atheist and all his Philosophy, Helper and hee that is Holpen, Horse and Man, Nature and Art, Reason mounted and advanced upon Learning, shall never be able to leap over, or breake thorough this wall, No man, no naturall man can doe any thing towards a supernaturall work. (VI, 5, 119)

Christians also have benefit of the manifestation and actual presence of Christ among them. So the rectified natural understanding is not what Donne means by a "*new facultie of Reason.*"

However, Donne uses the term "rectified reason" in a more inclusive sense as well. It may also refer to the whole human being who has been restored by grace. When a Christian uses all his faculties to embody the Gospel, this too may be "rectified reason." In this sense, "rectified Reason is Religion" (II, 14, 293), for religion demands that all the faculties perverted in Adam be renewed by God's redeeming power. Donne refines this notion of a comprehensive reason when he alludes to the model of the human soul as having three souls, the superior of which embraces the inferior within itself. When humans achieve their goal in heaven, there will be:

> Bodies, able bodies, and lastly, bodies inanimated with one soule: one vegetative soule, head and members must grow together, one sensitive soule, all must be sensible and compassionate of one anothers miserie; and especially one Immortall soule, one supreame soule, one Religion. (IV, 1, 47)

As all the natural souls—vegetable, sensitive, and rational—are included within the rational soul, so the supreme soul, religion, embraces all the regenerate faculties. This supreme soul is the Christian rectified reason. Donne explains this phenomenon in another way when he recites the deformities associated with the memory, understanding, and will. The three rational faculties are lost until the Holy Ghost favors them with the three virtues of Christian religion: "the goodnesse of God, by these three witnesses on earth [faculties] regenerates, and reestablishes a new Trinity in us, *faith*, and *hope*, and *charity*" (V, 6, 149).

Donne implies this all-inclusive faculty of the regenerate soul when he speaks in such a way as to suggest the cooperative action of many faculties in carrying out the works of grace. When the soul is regenerate, when Christian rectified reason operates, there is a delightful, creative, and incisive procedure under way. Thus, even while Donne dismisses the possibility of God's serious operation in the light and vain musings of the imagination, he suggests that the inclusive reason is imaginative, creative, and susceptible to transformation:

> God does not seale in water, in the fluid and transitory imaginations, and opinions of men; we never set the seale of faith to them; But in Waxe, in the rectified reason of man, that reason that is ductile, and flexible, and pliant, to the impressions that are naturally proportioned unto it, God sets to his seale of faith. (IV, 14, 351)

The transformed reason is not only a faculty which deduces logically, but a faculty which is moved by the shapes and images of poetry. This is why Donne calls the Holy Ghost "a direct worker upon the soule and conscience of man, but a Metaphoricall, and Figurative expresser of himselfe, to the reason, and understanding of man" (IX, 14, 328). Certainly Donne gives the impression that he is striving to articulate a reasonable capacity in man, which, when influenced by grace, "understands" on many levels, and draws upon many faculties. We note, for example, that in the early stages of faith, the soul is filled with an awe at the works of God: "The first step to faith, is to wonder, to stand, and consider with a holy admiration, the waies and proceedings of God with man: for, Admiration, wonder, stands as in the midst, betweene knowledge and faith, and hath an eye towards both" (VI, 13, 265).[14] Thus, the soul of man, that supreme soul, when it becomes the Christian rectified reason, has multiple powers: it is ductile and flexible, it is susceptible to poetry, it is able to stand in wonder at the workings of providence.

The inclusive rectified reason is characterized by its search for Christian wisdom. This wisdom, however, is not the mere acquisition of the knowledge of earthly and spiritual things alone, but knowledge which is expended in the service of God and community. This wisdom is knowledge which is tested and proved through active choice, choice which has the benefit of God's acceptance or reproof:

> wisdome is not as much in knowing, in understanding, as in electing, in choosing, in assenting. No man needs

> goe out of himselfe, nor beyond his owne legend, and the history of his owne actions for examples of that, that many times we know better, and choose ill wayes. Wisdome is in choosing, in Assenting. (IX, 2, 84)

It is by acting out one's religion, and thus by making difficult and problematic decisions, that one knows the mettle of one's own heart. Even the combined working of faith and nature, which Donne describes as "the *exalting of my naturall faculties* towards *religious uses*" is incomplete until an individual's "*conscience* testifies to himself and . . . *actions* testifie to the world, that he *does* what he *can* . . ." (III, 17, 367-68). Only then does one exercise the grace which one has received; only then may one fully enjoy the benefits of "reason rectified, which is, conscience" (III, 16, 342). Unless all the faculties perform loving acts for the community in God's name, reason is not wholly rectified, since "all goodnesse . . . is in bringing our understanding and our assenting into action" (IX, 2, 85). Donne deeply values exposing the soul to experience, for even in error, the faithful soul will recognize its fault and seek God's correction.

While true wisdom surrenders itself to become "Crucified wisedome" (X, 8, 189), it also asserts itself as radical self-possession. One must use one's wits and one's members to incorporate the truth that is God's. The imagination and the affections, working cooperatively, provide a significant, though limited, function in educating and rectifying the soul. Without the active involvement of these faculties, acts of devotion might be reduced to prosaic and joyless ritual, and good works might become empty motions of institutional obedience. Since even the "Anger of God is . . . a Pedagogie" (V, 16, 333) for mankind's benefit, the imagination should receive and construct accurate representations of God's saving initiatives, thereby banishing idolatry. These representations may then stimulate worthy affections, which, in turn, may aid in godly choice and charitable actions. Donne's ability to diagnose the causes of imaginative and emotional distortions frees him from a habitual distrust, common among his contemporaries, of these two faculties, and allows him to find ways to put them to wise and proper uses. As vital parts in the operation of the superedified reason, they contribute to the "redintegration" (III, 3, 112) of body and soul, and thereby help to restore and improve the humanity that was lost in the Fall. When humankind achieves this goal, it will have accomplished its utmost in its earthly task of bringing God's heavenly kingdom: "then is flesh and spirit

reconciled in Christ, when in all the faculties of the soule, and all the organs of the body we glorifie him in this world . . ." (IV, 11, 301).

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Notes

[1] Terry G. Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 63-101, restores the prominence which Donne accorded the bodily powers of the soul. Sherwood discusses the topic of faculty psychology in this book, pp. 21-62, and in his earlier article, "Reason in Donne's Sermons," *ELH* 39 (1972), 353-74. Other writers to discuss this subject include: Robert L. Hickey, "Donne's Art of Memory," *TSL* 3 (1958), 29-36; Dennis Quinn, "Donne's Christian Eloquence," *ELH* 27 (1960), 283, 289-90; Irving Lowe, "John Donne and the Middle Way: The Reason-Faith Equation in Donne's Sermons," *JHI* 22 (1961), 389-97; Margaret Anne Cummings Johnson, "Homiletic Theory and Practice in the Sermons of John Donne and Lancelot Andrewes," Diss. Univ. of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana 1970, pp. 192, 304-05; Janel M. Mueller, ed., *Donne's Prebend Sermons* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 31-35; Laurence Hull Stookey, "The Biblical Theology of Memory in the Sermons of John Donne," Diss. Princeton 1971; Bruce Henricksen, "Donne's Orthodoxy," *TSLL* 14 (1972), 11-12 and "The Unity of Reason and Faith in Donne's Sermons," *PLL* 11 (1975), 18-30; Achsah Guibbory, "John Donne and Memory as 'the Art of *Salvation*,'" *HLQ* 43 (1979-80), 260-74; Lynette McGrath, "John Donne's Apology for Poetry," *SEL* 20 (1980), 73-89.

[2] All references to the sermons are from John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1953-62). This particular citation is from vol. II, sermon 3, p. 106. Subsequent references are indicated parenthetically by volume, sermon, and page numbers.

[3] Arthur E. Barker's comments on Sidney lay the groundwork for this study: "An Apology for the Study of Renaissance Poetry," in *Literary Views: Critical and Historical Essays*, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 15-43. Note especially p. 40: "for him good poetry exercises the imagination, with the other faculties, illuminates the grounds of wisdom that, in philosophy and history, 'lie dark before the imaginative and judging power,' and so enables the whole mind to respond healthily to the stimuli of experience coming through the senses and to act well through them."

[4] William Rossky, "Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic," *SRen* 5 (1968), 53-54, 62-64.

[5] See Lindsay A. Mann, "The Marriage Analogue of Letter and Spirit in Donne's Devotional Prose," *JEGP* 70 (1971), 607-16.

[6] For the workings of faculty psychology, see Perry Miller's useful formulation, *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol. I of *The New England Mind* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), pp. 240-41.

[7] William Perkins warns that one "way whereby a man denyeth god in thought is by placing in the roome of the true God, an Idoll of his owne braine: This men doe by thinking some other thing beside the true God to be their chiefest good. . . ." See Wil[liam] M. Perkins, *A Treatise of Mans Imaginations Shewing His Naturall Euill Thoughts: His Want of Good Thoughts: The Way to Reforme Them* (Cambridge, 1607), pp. 38-39.

[8] One of the most perceptive and imaginative Puritan preachers of the time, Richard Sibbes, also describes the regenerate uses of imagination: "Whilst the soul is joined with the body, it hath not only a necessary but a holy use of imagination, and of sensible things whereupon our imagination worketh. What is the use of the sacraments but to help our souls by our senses, and our faith by imagination? As the soul receives much hurt from imagination, so it may have much good thereby." See *The Soul's Conflict with Itself, and Victory over Itself by Faith*, in *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, I (Edinburgh, 1862), 185.

[9] Donne rejects a tendency, illustrated by John Hoskins, to pit memory against imagination. For Hoskins, Roman Catholics compromise faith by catering to the imagination. Preaching, in his view, is "no late deuice starting vp vpon occasion in the phantasie, but an ancient record long since enrolled in the memorie." See *Sermons Preached at Pavls Crosse and Elsewhere* (London, 1615),

pp. 28-29. Donne practices no rigid exclusivity in making demands upon the memory, but encourages mutual association and instruction among all faculties.

[10] See, for example: I, 8, 289 and V, 18, 379.

[11] Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (London, 1651), p. 41.

[12] Donne, *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters of John Donne*, ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 80, ll. 1-2.

[13] These arguments on the varieties of reason and wisdom support a trend in criticism advanced by Terry G. Sherwood, though this paper stresses the dynamic workings of conscience within the rectified reason. See *Fulfilling the Circle*, pp. 35-44, 50-57. Also see Frank Manley, ed., *John Donne: the Anniversaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 45-46; Henricksen, "The Unity of Reason and Faith," p. 26; Eugene F. Rice, Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 16, 143-47.

[14] See Dennis Quinn, "Donne and the Wane of Wonder," *ELH* 36 (1969), 626-47.