John Donne Journal
Vol. 11, Nos. 1 & 2 (1992)

INTRODUCTION: Reading Donne's Sermons

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While this issue of the *John Donne Journal* is devoted specifically to Donne's sermons, the larger question which this introduction must address is the virtual neglect by early modern scholars of all sermons, not only those of John Donne. For a number of reasons, scholars have yet to make full use of the massive archive of Engish sermons published since the Reformation and the important documentary textual record of Renaissance religious, political, and literary culture they provide.

Relative to the number of plays, poems, translations and other literary texts published each year in the early part of the seventeenth century and listed in the *STC*, sermons, works of religious controversy, and theological tracts comprise by far the majority of works printed. Godfrey Davies has estimated that 360,000 sermons were delivered in the first forty years of the seventeenth century; and Edith Klotz has concluded from a sample of publications listed in the *STC* for these years that books of a religious or philosophical nature made up one-third to one-half the titles listed in the *STC* for the years she counted.[1]

Undoubtedly, from the pulpit and the press, sermons initiated a discourse which was both "popular" and "culturally significant." They were by far the most pervasive medium for influencing public opinion at this time. The comparison between seventeenth-century pulpits and the periodical press was standard in the nineteenth century, and remains suggestive today. Of course, it was precisely because of their popularity that sermons could be and were appropriated for purposes other than edification. Readers constantly called for reprints of old sermons as well as absorbing a steady stream of new ones (127 editions of Henry Smith's works between 1591 and 1637), and the diaries of godly citizens such as Simonds D'Ewes provide evidence of the common practice of shorthand notetaking of sermons.[2] Sermons were not only heard at church but were often copied and read again in homes, where

they became fitting subjects of reflection and meditation. To contemporaries, at least, the number of sermons issuing from the press seemed high indeed. Joseph Hall observed in 1608 that "there is store of sermons extant. The pulpit scarce affordeth more than the presse."[3] And in 1618, Joseph Barlow complained that "the abundance of sermons preached and printed hath brought both the word of God and his ordinances to be contemned."[4]

Apart from their function as guides for spiritual instruction, sermons, in fact, supplemented the meagre sources of printed news and often offered editorial commentary on current events, both domestic and foreign, to a broad social cross-section which included women, the poor, and the illiterate, as well as the Court, nobility, and gentry.[5] Davies terms it "the most influential of all the organs of public opinion" at this time.[6] Consequently, the pulpit in the age of Donne became an energetic locus for the dissemination of ideas, and the political power which it commanded became the prize in the religious and ideological conflicts of the age. This was particularly true of the Paul's Cross pulpit, which was located at the hub of the London newsgathering network. This pulpit clearly served a propaganda function for many conflicting points of view, drawing as it did from preachers, not all of whom could be relied on to preach official doctrine or to steer clear of matters of state, especially when these were matters of religion as well. Recognized as the nation's most influential pulpit, it was unpredictable and difficult to control.[7]

Historians and literary critics alike have long acknowledged the power and popularity of sermons as a medium of public instruction, propaganda, and polemic, and have mined the sermons for quotations and other "evidence" to prove certain political or historical theses. In a study of the use of propaganda by Charles I, Thomas Cogswell raises precisely this question of the historical use of sermons and suggests that readers "trawl" for references in these "darker, uncharted areas" rather than restricting themselves to State Papers and other official political documents of the period. He cautions that while the results will be sparse and impressionistic, they will provide practically the only clues we have to the complex dynamics of early Stuart political and religious life.[8]

To some extent, sermons with literary as well as historical merit have been examined by scholars, but on the whole sermons have tended to fall between the disciplines in the construction of our sense of seventeenth-century culture. Preachers whose pulpit style, dramatic imagery, and rhetorical sophistication are deemed "literary" have attracted some critical attention.[9] T. S. Eliot's selection of the sermons of Donne and Andrewes for

comparison further enhanced their reputation and determined, to some extent, their importance in twentieth-century literary discussions of the pulpit.[10] Surprisingly, however, the sermons of another seventeenth-century writer, satirist, and friend of Donne's (i.e., Joseph Hall) have been virtually ignored, as have the sermons of other preachers who were popular and well-respected in their day.[11] Exceptions include Henry Smith, the "silver-tongued" orator who flourished in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, and Thomas Adams, whom Southey dubbed the "prose Shakespeare" of his day. Even these two have garnered only one book and a couple of articles between them.[12] Virtually nothing has been written about the excellent sermons of John Prideaux, Thomas Gataker, Samuel Ward, James Ussher, Barten Holyday, Robert Sanderson and countless others whose works fill the columns of the *STC*.[13]

Among many fine preachers, Donne was popular in the city pulpits of Lincoln's Inn, St. Paul's, Whitehall, and St. Dunstan's in the West. The high esteem in which he was held at Lincoln's Inn is well-documented, and even after he had been promoted to the Deanery of St. Paul's in 1621 he was made an honorary bencher of the Inn and asked to preach the sermon at the official dedication of the new chapel. R. C. Bald speaks of Donne's later reputation as one of the great preachers of his age;[14] and reports of Donne's sermons preached at Paul's Cross appear in Chamberlain's contemporary letters, and in the letters of other newswriters and diarists of the period.[15] Modern readers, of course, are influenced by the account by Donne's parishioner and first biographer, Izaak Walton. Walton wrote that Donne's abilities and industry in his profession were so eminent that within the first year of his entering Orders, he had fourteen advowsons of several benefices presented to him. Of his impact from the pulpit, Walton writes that Donne was "A Preacher in earnest, weeping sometimes for his Auditory, sometimes with them: alwayes preaching to himself, like an Angel from a cloud, but in none."[16] The commemorative verses accompanying his 1633 *Poems* are equally laudatory. Henry Valentine lamented that "*Divinity*, / Lost such a *Trump* as even to *Extasie* / Could charm the Soule" (p.379, lines 16-17) and Thomas Carew extolled Donne's pulpit eloquence which "Committed holy Rapes upon our Will" (p.385, line 17). Jasper Mayne went even further, claiming that Donne's hearers could take notes from his look and hand, "And from thy speaking action beare away / More Sermon, then some teachers use to say. / Such was thy cariage, and thy gesture such, / As could divide the heart, and conscience touch" (p. 395, lines 59-62). In him, one elegist wrote, "Golden Chrysostome was alive againe" (p. 401, line 30).[17]

Despite Bald's suggestion that contemporary references to Donne's sermons are surprisingly infrequent, then, there is considerable evidence that his contemporaries esteemed his skills as a preacher. Thomas Gataker, a popular preacher of the day and one of Donne's predecessors as Reader at Lincoln's Inn, reports favourably of a sermon he heard Donne give at the Inns of Court.[18] A comment recorded by a Mr. Hinton on 1 June 1630 attests to Donne's "powerfull kinde of preaching by his gestur & Rhetoriquall expression." And Richard Gibson in a letter to Pepys, 15 August 1671, recalls a comment made in a sermon by Donne some forty or more years earlier.[19] Even among the continental intelligentsia, Donne enjoyed a reputation as a superb preacher. Bald reports the opinion of Constantijn Huygens, Dutch statesman and secretary to Frederick of Bohemia, who met Donne at the home of Sir Robert Killigrew and who wrote an enthusiastic Latin poem praising him. The poem is translated: "From your golden mouth, whether in the chamber of a friend, or in the pulpit, fell the speech of Gods, whose nectar I drank again and again with heartfelt joy."[20]

Donne's reputation as a preacher can also be measured by the fact that he was asked to preach on important occasions, as in his defence of James's *Directions* in 1622. Several preachers dedicated sermons of their own to Donne and acknowledged his reputation and influence.[21] At least one preacher, Samuel Purchas, noted in 1622 Donne's efforts to improve the condition of St. Paul's since his rise to the deanship.[22] During Donne's lifetime several separate sermons were published and reissued, and after Donne's death, three folio editions of his sermons were published (1640, 1649, 1660). William Milbourne admired one of his sermons enough to print it in a pirated edition in 1638.[23]

But it was not until Alford's 1839 Oxford edition of Donne's *Works*, precipitated, in part, by the Oxford reform movement in the Church of England, that Donne's sermons became readily available to nineteenth-century readers, few of them as appreciative as Coleridge and Wordsworth of the intellectual and imaginative qualities of these works.[24] The historian Henry Hallam, for one, declared that "In their general character, they [the sermons] will not appear, I think, much worthy of being rescued from oblivion." His reason was that they illustrated the "subtlety" and "inconclusive reasoning" which he found also in the poetry.[25]

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, and certainly in the twentieth century, Donne's poems enjoyed a startling revival, but while these were appearing in a number of important editions, the sermons had to wait until

1962 for a full scholarly edition. Much, though not all, of the critical work on the sermons postdates that important edition. In addition, we now have the added information of three new manuscript sources for Donne's sermons discovered in the British Library, bringing from seven to ten the number of manuscripts available for textual study of the sermons, and indicating (by the way) an increased respect and interest in Donne's sermons than has hitherto been acknowledged.[26]

Even within Donne studies today, sermon scholarship constitutes only a fraction of the total output, and is inversely proportional to the total amount of Donne material being discussed.[27] The sermons have always been studied for their style, imagery, and poetic sensiblity, the primary interest in them being that they are the sermons of a poet.[28] Some important textual, critical, and contextual studies have been produced, of course, and in this regard the groundbreaking work of George Potter and Evelyn Simpson, John Sparrow, D.C. Allen, and R. C. Bald cannot be overlooked.[29] Nor can some of the important work which deals primarily with homiletic, rhetorical, and thematic concerns.[30] Increasingly, Donne's sermons have also been cited as evidence of his philosophic, religious, and epistemological habits of thought.[31] However, very little work has been done on historical contexts and influence for the sermons.[32] This is not to say that the sermons have not been cited. In many recent studies, they form the texture and weave of the critical fabric, but remain stubbornly invisible, imperceptible, inaccessible except as cryptic sermons references in footnotes. Rarely are the sermons cited in indices, despite pervasive quotation; however, even the most passing reference to a poem by Donne finds its way into a book's index.[33]

Clearly, so much of what readers take for granted in the study of literary documents needs to be reexamined. So, too, does the question of how to use the evidence provided by the sermons. In particular we need to reconsider how we generalize from the sermons, how we gain access to those texts, how we can quote effectively from the sermons, how we can understand them as historical as well as literary documents, and, finally, how we can promote a less fragmented approach to their use.

The difficulty of using sermons as evidence for generalizations of any sort is clearly exemplified in the scholarship which treats the sermons of Donne. T. S. Eliot was certainly prophetic in his prediction that "Donne will always have more readers than Andrewes, for the reason that his sermons can be read in detached passages and for the reason that they can be read by those who have no interest in the subject."[34] However, as criticism of the sermons bears out, such a popularity, on such terms, has exacted its toll.

One must begin by noting that many readers of Donne's sermons, trained as literary critics, approach the sermons with the aid of the *Index*, to argue from the sermons to the poems, to Donne's life, to Donne's politics. In fact, critics who profoundly mistrust the literal in poetry and appreciate the witty complexity of Donne's poetic strategies, find nothing anomalous in reading the sermons literally, believing that Donne's views are here straightforwardly expressed. At the same time, readers seldom try to make sense out of Donne's apparently contradictory statements, too often preferring to quote selectively to support their general sense of Donne's religious position and political alignment. In fact, it is only by doing so that Horton Davies can group Donne exclusively among the metaphysical Arminians, or that Lewalski and Sellin can find in Donne a consistently Calvinist theology.[35]

My point is that to make sense of any of these statements, context is all. But rarely are the sermons seen as issuing from any specific context—generic, historical, theological, political, or cultural. Too often they become a body of illustrative material which is approached through the *Index* to create a collage of comments that supposedly represents Donne's "mature" views. At its best, such a practice allows critics to develop a thesis which brings many diverse and seemingly contradictory comments into some sensible relation. At its worst, this means that for the sake of an argument, readers pillage the sermons for a quotation that will confirm their view. As A.B. Chambers noted wryly in a review essay on recent Donne scholarship ". . . merely to quote is to establish a point".[36]

If arguing from within the sermons is treacherous, arguing from the sermons to Donne's poems, his life, or his political beliefs is even more difficult. Historians, for example, have commented only sporadically, and tentatively, on Donne. The sheer volume of his work available to scholars might explain a certain reluctance on their part to treat Donne in detail. So, too, might the fact that historians are more aware than literary scholars of Donne's place among contemporary preachers, and do not privilege "the sermons of a Dean" over those of other figures who were more active politically. Generally, literary critics read the sermons as authoritative reference texts, a body of material which can be appropriated literally by readers to provide glosses on Donne's poetry and earlier writings, to confirm a biographical profile, or to support generalizations about Donne's beliefs. Inherent in such appropriations are at least three faulty assumptions:

One is that the sermons are straightforward, unequivocal, and easily understood. This is never stated explicitly, but in fact, readers do not

"interpret" the language of the sermons as they do the poetry. A second assumption is that the sermons can be taken as a whole. For the purposes of quotation, chronology and occasion are irrelevant. It is not unusual for critics to quote freely across the full range of sermons to support a thesis about what Donne supposedly "believes". A third assumption is that fragments of sermon text, taken out of context, are sufficient to prove a point.

A consequence of these first three assumptions is the powerful though unarticulated view that the sermons are less significant than the poems or ideas they are selected to illustrate. That is, they are less valuable as cultural performances, connected inevitably to audiences, occasions, an author, but ironically more valuable in their utilitarian function as "authorities" or glosses. The weakest argument acquires credibility when supported by quotations from the sermons. In other words, the sermons are often seen as means to other ends, rather than as the end of legitimate scholarly inquiry. This is a view enhanced when most readers of the sermons come to them via anthologies, or more perniciously, through the *Index*, a blunt instrument that dulls responses, determines topics of worthwhile inquiry, and threatens to become a substitute for reading the sermons themselves.[37]

The interpretive problems raised by these assumptions fall into at least three categories. The first is the question of how to interpret the biographical data of the sermons. Many critics use the sermons, like the verse letters, as sources of direct biographical information. But the practice raises as many questions as it answers. To what extent, for example, can one assume that the "I" of Donne's sermons is literally Donne? Marotti, for example, following Carey's lead, assumes that Donne is reflecting upon his own flattery in a sermon in which he says "when men of high degree doe not performe the duties of their places, then they are a lie of their owne making; And when I over-magnifie them in their place, flatter them, humor them, ascribe more to them, expect more from them, rely more upon them, then I should, then they are a lie of my making" (6: 306-7).[38] Tempting as such an identification might be to someone who comes to the sermons with a particular view of Donne's character or his politics, it does not hold as a methodology of criticism. How would such a practice help to elucidate the following passage where the "I" is cast in the role of the hearer, as he often is in the sermons? "Discredit a mans life, and you disgrace his Preaching: . . .for. . .if I believe the Preacher to be an ill man, I shall not be much the better for his good Sermons" (7: 151). Or shall we take Donne literally when he says: "I have nothing to plead with *God*, but onely his owne promises. . . .I cannot plead descent; *My mother was an Hittite*" (8: 72)?

A second class of misinterpretations results from difficulties of access to the complex body of material which constitutes Donne's sermons. The usual approach to the sermons is synechdochal, the use of fragments to represent the whole, whether these fragments are selected by reference to the *Index* to Donne's sermons, or whether they depend on the pre-selection of "significant" texts by earlier critics.

The evolution of a tradition of scholarship which finds Donne's politics to be "absolutist" relies on just such a synechdochal approach. Consequently its claims are largely unsubstantiated, but have been immensely popular for all that. One of the founding claims of Carey's *John Donne* is that Donne was most fascinated by God's attribute of power as something that somehow compensated for his own political powerlessness: "when Donne entered the Church he found in God, and in his own position as God's spokesman, a final and fully adequate expression of his power lust. If we ask what positive quality Donne most consistently reverences in the sermons, the answer is neither beauty, nor life, nor love, but power. His God is a heavenly powerhouse, with all circuits ablaze. . . .Further. . .it is God's destructive power that Donne particularly relishes dwelling on. . . .It is God as killer and pulverizer that Donne celebrates."[39] The proof for such provocative claims, however, hides in terse, enigmatic footnotes, the sheer number of which is persuasive enough that his assertions go unchallenged. Few object that the quotations are taken from across the entire range of the sermons and that the words of the sermons themselves are seldom quoted.

But it is a procedure and a focus that even someone armed only with the *Index* might challenge. Even a cursory glance at the *Index* under "*GOD: Attributes of* " would have sent him to 204 places that mention God's Mercy as compared to 41 that mention Power. One of these quotations actually celebrates the power of God *to comfort*, "a power to erect and settle a tottering, a dejected soule, an overthrowne, a bruised, a broken, a troden, a ground, a battered, an evaporated, an annihilated spirit" (3: 270). A glance at all of Donne's sermons would have sent Carey to sermons that consider the Son's attribute of Wisdom, and the Spirit's attribute of Goodness to balance the focus on Power attributed to the Father. In fact, a glance at sermons by other preachers of the period would have shown him that the power of the Lord of Hosts was a common homiletic refrain of the early Stuart period, particularly among Puritan preachers, who had little hope for present political and theological victory, but who were confident in the final victory of Christ over Antichrist.[40] Such a consideration might even have led him to the conclusion that Donne is "oppositional" rather than "absolutist."

A third interpretive difficulty is generated by readers of the sermons when fragments from the sermons are taken out of their historical, occasional, and rhetorical contexts. Carey, for example, cites disparagingly a passage in which Donne defines his calling as a preacher by distinguishing between the extraordinary commission of the Prophets and the present day ordinary function of the minister.[41] Carey concludes that the distinction between Prophet and Minister is another example of Donne's cowardly rationalizations. He does this without any reference to Donne's other comments on the Law and its processes as the foundation of the state in his sermons, or to the specific occasion of this sermon and its peculiar textual transmission. In fact, the sermon from which this quotation is taken was preached on December 19, 1619, at The Hague, while Donne was on the continent as chaplain to Doncaster's embassy. Donne rewrote the sermon eleven years later while visiting his daughter at Aubrey Hatch in Essex, at which time he revised his short notes and, as he describes it, "digested them into two." It is hard to imagine the complexities of interpretation that Carey has consigned to a footnote. How, for example, do we construe a statement made to a foreign congregation in 1619, recorded in note form, and expanded for publication eleven years later, although never delivered as a sermon to an English congregation? Even Carey would have to admit that 1630 was not 1619, either politically or theologically, although the liberties claimed by Charles I in the name of martial law would have made Donne's distinction between lawful due process and illegal claims for privilege more pertinent in 1630. What drew Donne to return to this sermon in 1630, and what does he mean when he says that he "digested" his notes into two sermons? These questions obviously interfere with Carey's main point about Donne's relations to power.[42]

When a sermon fragment is used to illuminate a poem, the conclusion can be even more tenuous. On the basis of a quotation from the sermons taken completely out of context, Marotti suggests that Donne's verse letters to women record the tension between his "natural urges" and the proper social decorum of the situation, which demanded a "desexing of the man/woman relationship". Marotti argues that since Donne believed physicality to be essential to human love, he could not be comfortable with a more sublimated form of the affection. This statement may be partially true, but the quotation Marotti uses to support his claim is taken from a sermon in which Donne is discussing not the instability of one's moral integrity when confronted with women, but the fragility of one's reputation. The sermon uses the example

of the Platonic but scandalous devotion of Paula for Jerome to make Donne's point that "a familiar and assiduous conversation with women will hardly be without tentation and scandal" (1: 201). But to whom? The sermon makes it quite clear that their spiritually intimate relationship was not a scandal to Jerome or Paula, but to those who observed it, not only their enemies, but their friends and supporters who "loved Religion well." Donne is dealing with the problem of reputation rather than conscience, with the giving of scandal rather than with the immorality of illicit love. Upon examination, the quotation about Jerome and Paula has no bearing at all on the poem in question and is hardly axiomatic, as Marotti asserts, of the tension between Donne's appetites and the decorum of the complimentary love lyrics.[43]

It is impossible to ignore the effects of the fragmentary and uncontextualized approach which has become the practice among critics. I have already mentioned the problems of access to the sermons; but one aspect of the problem which needs more attention is the political effect of this method of quotation. It is not difficult to discern, for example, that nearly all modern critical references to the "I" of the sermons have as their project the confirmation of Donne's grasping, egotistical nature. Similarly, many of the fragments which supposedly represent the "whole" Donne seem to be selected deliberately to prove a thesis which a fuller quotation could not support. As with so many other areas of scholarly endeavour, the forces of political correctness in literary studies feel justified in aggressively labelling Donne as "absolutist" and by definition, therefore, unacceptable. And if his own words, fully cited will not support such a label, then it seems acceptable to "quote" them until they do.

The trend in quotation that I am describing can best be illustrated from Debora Shuger's recently published chapter on Donne's sermons. Shuger takes as her epigraph to the section of her essay analyzing how Donne uses the analogy between God and King "Measure God by earthly Princes." No specific reference is provided for the quotation, merely "Donne, *Sermons*." In fact, the reference in the sermon from which it is taken qualifies, if it does not negate, the absolutist meaning Shuger intends and epitomizes the misinterpretability of isolated quotations from the sermons. Donne continues the analogy in parentheses: "(for we may measure the world by a Barly corne)" (5: 371), nullifying Shuger's claim that Donne differs from his contemporaries in the degree to which he stresses the analogy between God and Kings. Clearly, the parenthetical material undercuts the epigraph's imperative, revealing a complex irony that Shuger's quotation masks.

Similarly, in a paragraph discussing Donne's habit of depicting divine/human interaction as analogous to seventeenth-century absolute monarchy, Shuger focuses on the highly politicized language in which Donne speaks of God's unrevealed decrees. Donne associates these, she notes, with royal prerogative and absolute power, implying that there exists a reserve of power behind the ordinary lawful operations of the monarch (or divinity) that can neither be questioned nor limited. To prove this point, Shuger cites many passages from the sermons. "It is not merely unnecessary," she concludes "to probe God's secrets, but 'Libell' to publish them, 'an injury to God, and against his Crowne'" [4: 305].[44] Donne's own words, however, are much more ambivalent, and reveal a concern for decorum and audience, for the "fit" place in which to discuss controversial matters, specifically the doctrine of Election, which Donne saw as a doctrine which perplexed the consciences of weak men or offered contentious men the delights of disputation. Donne says:

> Those men who will needs be of Gods Cabinet Counsell, and pronounce what God did first, what was his first Decree, and the first clause in that Decree, those men who will needs know, and then publish Gods secrets, (And, by the way, that, which sometimes it may concerne us to know, yet it may be a Libell to publish it) Those mysteries, which, for the opposing and countermining stubborne, and perverse Heresies, it may concerne us, in Councels and Synods, and other fit places, to argue, and to cleare, it may be an injury to God, and against his Crowne, and Dignity, in breaking the peace of the Church, to publish and divulge to every popular auditory, and every itching eare, and thereby perplexe the consciences of weak men, or offer contentious men, that which is their food, and delight, disputation".

Donne's wording is far more tentative than Shuger's (it "may" be a libel, it "may" be an injury to God), suggesting in fact that the error is not in questioning and knowing, but in publishing what we know, particularly in public sermons where the abilities of the congregation to discern the subtle points of controversy might not be sufficient to render that place fit to argue and clear points of mysterious doctrine.

Donne's sermons, then, need to be reassessed from the full range of critical positions available to modern scholars. As it is, there is little overlap in Donne studies between literary, historical, and theological approaches of the sermons: literary assessments of his rhetorical and homiletic devices, of style, are carefully insulated from historical assessments of Donne's place

among contemporary preachers; theological labels are applied to the entire body of his work; political assessments are achieved by quoting fragments of sermons out of context without due consideration of the time, place, and cultural circumstances informing the sermons; and it is unclear whether historians and literary critics are engaging in a productive dialogue about Donne as well as some of the other important preachers of the period.

Scholarship on Donne's sermons is developing in a number of productive directions, as the contents of this volume indicate. Clearly one of the dominant concerns articulated in these articles involves an effort to historicize Donne's sermons, to place them within discursive and cultural contexts which will illuminate what are admittedly a difficult body of material. Consequently, several of the essays in this volume are concerned with Donne's politics. To accept the fact that there is a political Donne, while it seems self-evident, is to open up a whole new area of inquiry into the sermons, and to radically reassess scholarship which has concentrated on Donne's rhetoric, exegetical strategies, epistemology, and biography. As many of these essays demonstrate, however, politics is a broad term, and one which goes far beyond factional allegiances, or styles of churchmanship. In the broadest sense, Donne's politics ask the question of how Donne could be a royalist supporter without, by definition, supporting the absolutist politics of that monarchy. The dominant view, espoused by Carey and Shuger, but assumed by so many of Donne's readers, is that he was unable to separate the two, and that he sacrificed conscience and integrity for advancement at Court. This caricature of Donne, based as it is on Bald's version of Donne's career as a preacher, and the suggestion that Donne's absolutist politics "came from his soul," has held remarkable sway, given the lack of evidence for such a conclusion.[45] Critics such as Dennis Flynn, Annabel Patterson, Thomas Hester, Achsah Guibbory, Ted-Larry Pebworth, and David Norbrook have qualified and complicated this view, thus enriching our knowledge of Donne's political allegiances and activity;[46] however, none of these critics has ventured far into the sermons to examine the ways in which Donne participates, if at all, in the religious and political life of England from 1615 to 1631.[47] Much of this work remains to be done, and informs each essay in this special issue.

Paul Harland's essay, for example, conceives of Donne's politics in terms of his "intervention" in the 1629 Parliament, drawing upon Donne's own political and parliamentary experience, as well as the discursive milieu in which Donne's sermon was preached. Harland's essay shows how Donne's own discussions of liberty and law in one sermon join the controversy between

Crown and Parliament in terms "remarkably similar" to terms used by angry members of Parliament in Commons debates, and not-so-gingerly touching on abuse of the royal prerogative. Harland's conclusion is that Donne was modeling for the Court the very course he recommended as the way to avert a political disintegration practically guaranteed by the absolutist policies of the crown.[48]

Harland is not the only author in this issue to see Donne not as an anti-royalist, but as an anti-absolutist capable of both obedience and truthful counsel. Gale Carrithers and James Hardy, for example, describe in detail how Donne rendered to Caesar the small change of political obedience, reserving the heavy money for God. Carrithers and Hardy focus on the ways in which Donne's use of tropology consistently qualifies the absolutist love of power with his Augustinian insistence on the power of love.

Several of the essays in this volume find the question of Donne's politics not in any coherent ideology, but informed by the independence of his mind and his rewriting of party politics in the pulpit. In her essay on Donne's Jacobean sermons, for example, Lori Anne Ferrell places Donne within the group of avant-garde conformists described by Peter Lake in order to discuss Donne's style of churchmanship and his political allegiances. Ferrell argues that despite Donne's essential conformity, his quasi-sacramental theory of the reciprocal operations of preaching gave a unique quality to his conformist polemic. She argues that in contrast to the predominant ecclesiastical style of the reign of Charles I, Donne's divinity is oriented towards the power of the minister's voice, and of the word preached. Accordingly, she finds his sermons almost perfectly suited to deliver the frustratingly mixed messages of the 1620s—a decade poised between Calvinist consensus and Laudian provocation.

Meg Lota Brown, on the other hand, finds Donne's politics more ambivalent. Specifically, Brown finds the key to Donne's equivocal politics in his casuistical approach to the circumstances of specific occasions. Brown argues that casuistry, itself potentially conservative as well as oppositional, was "particularly well-suited to Donne's interpretive practices." Her essay analyzes Donne's use of casuistry in his sermon on Esther, and concludes that case divinity, which enabled Donne both to integrate within the community while preserving integrity of conscience, appealed to his divided culture as well as to his ambivalent politics.

Noralyn Masselink's essay, with its focus on Donne's use of examples in relation to rules of moral conduct, also glances at the question of Donne's

politics, specifically in terms of his attitudes in both sermons and poetry to singularity and innovation. Her essay demonstrates Donne's independence in his works in appropriating to himself the role of interpreter of examples. Masselink shows that by assuming this role, Donne shows himself clearly unwilling to identify the Church in specifically historical terms, and thus maintains the independence which readers of the poetry find so attractive.

Other cultural contexts, of course, inform Donne's sermons and must shape the way in which we view the discourses they generated. Mark Vessey's essay, for example, opens up the broad topic of Donne's use of Patristic sources in one sermon as a way of approaching the whole issue of Donne's rewriting of the Fathers. Vessey's detailed analysis of one sermon, and the agenda for further research with which he concludes his essay, mark out the path of future critical inquiry in this field.

Lindsay Mann's essay also amplifies the context within which we read Donne's sermons. Mann extends his important studies of the marriage analogue in Donne's poetry, and places the sermons within the context of a consistent and principled dialogue with contemporary ideas about marriage, the status of women, and the extremes of libertinism and aceticism which shaped part of the discursive context of the period.

Finally, Dayton Haskin's essay on Donne and Christmas invites readers to make use of the "interdisciplinary and comparatist frameworks" available to them at this moment in history to develop a "new theological approach to Donne Studies." Haskin's own richly historicized reading of Donne's Christmas sermons sets a standard for continued scholarship on the sermons. His incorporation of historical, literary, and biographical material from Donne's time to our own, and his challenge to readers to focus their attention on Donne's religious imagination, initiate a new direction for future discussion of the sermons.

Much more, however, remains to be done.

a) The discovery of new manuscript sources for Donne's sermons means that the textual status of the edition now used has to be assessed. In addition, it is conceivable that new manuscripts will continue to be uncovered as scholars explore the rich resources of sermons collections in major libraries.

b) The historical context of particular sermons, and groups of sermons, needs to be enriched.

c) Donne's religious and political positioning requires reevaluation in the context of his career as a minister under both James I and Charles I.

d) Donne's sermons need to be related in more detail to those published and preached contemporaneously with his own.

e) The significance of Donne's sermons for understanding his biography needs to be reassessed in light of recent studies.

f) Donne's sermons need to be considered in terms of their female as well as their male auditors, and in fact, the whole question of who heard and read Donne's sermons in the the first half of the seventeenth century needs to be more fully examined.

g) More work needs to be done on the complex exegetical strategies used in the sermons.

h) The proposals for a thorough evaluation of Donne's rewriting of the Fathers need to be put into practice.

All of this is to say that Donne's contribution to the writing of the culture of his day needs to be more thoroughly assessed. The publication of a separate issue of the *John Donne Journal* devoted exclusively to the sermons signals an important refocusing in Donne studies, and one that invites the participation of scholars from a variety of disciplines. The intertextual and interdisciplinary rereadings of Donne's sermons represented in this volume promise to illuminate not only Donne's particular works, but the entire cultural context which his sermons helped to define.

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Notes

[1] Godfrey Davies, "English Political Sermons, 1603-1640," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 1 (1939): 1-22; Edith Klotz, "A Subject Analysis of English Imprints for Every Tenth Year From 1480 to 1640," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 1 (1939): 417-419. Judith Simmons' analysis of publications for the year 1623 concludes that books of a religious nature comprise 120 of her total of 327 books. Of this total only 11 books of poetry and 11 of plays and masques were published. See "Publications of 1623," *The Library*, 5th series, 221.3 (1966): 207-27.

[2] H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1603-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 117, refers his readers to the widespread practice of notetaking at sermons, citing in particular the sermons recorded in the diary of John Manningham. In his diary, Simonds D'Ewes records his practice of taking notes at sermons; he came early to hear John Donne preach at Paul's Cross on Sept. 15, 1622, in defence of James's *Directions to Preachers*, "and by great good fortune and little cost, stood close by him within the Crosse, and ther wrote as much as I desired; . . . The most part of the afternoone and a prettye [while] after supper I spent in noting it out, soe that I did not partake of our whole Temple sermon, heere at night." *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1622-1624)*, ed. Elizabeth Bourcier (Paris: Didier, 1977), p. 97.

[3] Joseph Hall, *Pharisaisme and Christianity* (London, 1608), sig. A2.

[4] John Barlow, *Hieron's last fare-well* (London, 1618), sig. A4.

[5] See Richard Cust, "News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 111 (1986): 60-90; F. J. Levy, "How Information Spread Among the Gentry, 1550-1640," *Journal of British Studies* 21 (1982): 1-24.

[6] Davies, p. 7.

[7] The standard work on this pulpit is Millar Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534-1642* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958). See the discussion of the doctrinal tenor of Paul's Cross sermons from 1570 to 1638 in Appendix I of Nicholas Tyacke's, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). The unpredictability of the Paul's Cross Pulpit is noted by Paul Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent 1560-1642* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 56-60.

[8] Thomas Cogswell, "The Politics of Propaganda: Charles I and the People in the 1620s," *Journal of British Studies* 29 (1990): 215.

[9] See for example Maurice Reidy, *Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, Jacobean Court Preacher* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1955); Nicholas Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes the Preacher*, trans. A. Louth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Trevor Owen, *Lancelot Andrewes* (Boston: Twayne, 1981).

[10] T. S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," in *Essays Ancient and Modern* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1932), pp. 3-23.

[11] See Ronald J. Corthell, "Joseph Hall and Seventeenth-Century Literature," *John Donne Journal* 3.2 (1984): 249-268. Frank Huntley's *Bishop Joseph Hall, 1574-1656* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1979) contains no chapter on the sermons. There is some discussion of sermons in Leonard Tourney, *Joseph Hall* (Boston: Twayne, 1979) and in Richard McCabe, *Joseph Hall: a Study in Satire and Meditation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

[12] R. B. Jenkins, *Henry Smith: England's Silver-Tongued Preacher* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983); Walter Davis, "Henry Smith: The Preacher as Poet," *English Literary Renaissance* 12.1 (1982): 30-52; Moira Baker, "'The Dichotomiz'd Carriage of All Our Sermon': Satiric Structure in the Sermons of Thomas Adams," *English Renaissance Prose* 3.1 (1989): 1-17.

[13] Some excellent work on the sermons of some of these authors is being done by early modern historians. In particular, the work of Peter Lake deserves notice. See, for example, "Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson," *Journal of British Studies* 27 (1988): 81-116.

[14] See the account of Donne at Lincoln's Inn in R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p.315 and *passim*.

[15] John Chamblerlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2.vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), 2:74, 142, 296, 360, 382, 399, 407, 451, 464, 518, 531, 534, 613, 545. On March 29, 1617, Chamberlain writes to

Carleton that Donne made "a daintie sermon . . . and was exceedingly well liked generally, the rather for that he did Quene Elizabeth great right, and held himself close to the text without flattering the time too much" (2: 67). On July 1, 1622, Chamberlain writes that "our Deane made a very good sermon in the church as he hath done divers of late with great concourse" (2: 443). Again on May 30, 1623, Chamberlain writes that "The Deane of paules made an excellent sermon" (2: 500).

[16] Izaak Walton, *The Lives of Dr. John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Mr. Richard Hooker, Mr. George Herbert* (London, 1670), p. 38.

[17] John Donne, *The Poems of John Donne* (London, 1633).

[18] Thomas Gataker, *Discours Apologetical* (London, 1654), p. 52.

[19] The first is recorded in *The Diary of Thomas Crosfield,* ed. F. S. Boas (Oxford: Royal Society of Literature, 1935), p. 43; the second occurs in Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. A174, f. 372.

[20] Bald, p. 442.

[21] Daniel Donne, *A Sub-poena from the Star-Chamber of Heaven* [preached August 4, 1622], (London, 1623); Elias Petley, *The Royall Receipt: or, Hezekiahs Physicke* [preached Sept. 29, 1622], (London, 1623); Thomas Adams, *The Barren Tree. A sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse October 26, 1623.*, (London, 1623).

[22] Samuel Purchas, *The Kings Towre, and Triumphant Arch of London. A Sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse* [August 5, 1622], (London, 1623).

[23] William Milbourne, *Sapientia Clamitans, Wisdome crying out to sinners to returne from their evill wayes* (London, 1638).

[24] Donne's nineteenth-century reputation is considered in several sources. See especially Raoul Granqvist, *The Reputation of John Donne 1779-1873* (Uppsala: Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia 24, 1975); Roland Botting, "The Reputation of John Donne during the Nineteenth Century," *Research Studies of the State College of Washington,*" 9.3 (1941): 139-88; Dayton Haskin, "New Historical Contexts for Appraising the Donne Revival from A. B. Grosart to Charles Eliot Norton," *ELH* 56 (1989): 869-95.

[25] Henry Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* 4 vols. (London, 1837-9), 3: 124.

[26] See Jeanne Shami, "Donne's 1622 Sermon on the Gunpowder Plot: His Original Presentation Manuscript Discovered," *English Manuscript Studies* 5 (1994): forthcoming; in addition, two new manuscripts in the British Library, containing a total of seven Donne sermons, are presently under examination by Jeanne Shami.

[27] John R. Roberts made this point some time ago about Donne's poetry in "John Donne's Poetry: An Assessment of Modern Criticism," *John Donne Journal* 1 (1982): 55-67.

[28] See, for example, Robert Hickey, "Donne's Art of Preaching," *TSL* 1 (1956): 65-74; Dennis Quinn, "Donne's Christian Eloquence," *ELH* 27 (1960): 276-97; Winfried Schleiner, *The Imagery of Donne's Sermons* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1970).

[29] Potter and Simpson's edition of the *Sermons* is the standard edition. Bald's *Life of Donne* has been the standard biography since Walton. For the early part of Donne's life, readers are referred to an important new study by Dennis Flynn, *Swordsman: John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995). See also the following essays: John Sparrow, " John Donne and Contemporary Preachers: Their Preparation of Sermons for Delivery and Publication," *Essays and Studies* 16 (1930): 144-178; D. C. Allen, "Dean Donne Sets His Text," *ELH* 10 (1943): 208-29.

[30] See, for example, W. Fraser Mitchell, *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson* (London: Society for the Preservation of Christian Knowledge, 1932); Joan Webber, *Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Herbert Umbach, "The Rhetoric of Donne's Sermons," *PMLA* 52 (1938): 54-58; William Mueller, *John Donne: Preacher* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); John Chamberlain, *Increase and Multiply: Arts-of-Discourse Procedure in the Preaching of John Donne* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976); James Baumlin *John Donne and the Rhetorics of Renaissance Discourse* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991); Sister Geraldine Thompson, " 'Writs Canonicall': The High Word and the Humble in the Sermons of John Donne," in *Familiar Colloquy: Essays in Honour of Arthur Edward Barker*, ed. Patricia Bruckmann (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1978), pp. 55-67.

[31] See, for example, Robert Hickey, "Donne's Art of Memory," *TSL* 3 (1958): 29-36; Irving Lowe, "John Donne: The Middle Way. The Reason-Faith Equation in Donne's Sermons, *JHI* 22 (1961): 389-97; Gale Carrithers, *Donne at Sermons: A Christian Existential World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1972); Terry Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Thomas O. Sloane, *Donne, Milton and the end of Humanist Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[32] Exceptions include the work by Potter and Simpson, Mueller, and Bald cited above. In addition see William Gifford, "Time and Place in Donne's Sermons," *PMLA* 82 (1967): 388-98; Geoffrey Bullough, "Donne the Man of Law," in *Just So Much Honour*, Ed. Peter Amadeus Fiore (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1972), pp. 57-94; John B. Gleason, "Dr. Donne in the Courts of Kings: A Glimpse From Marginalia," *JEGP* 69 (1970): 599-612; Paul Sellin, *'So Doth, So Is Religion': John Donne and Diplomatic Contexts in the Reformed Netherlands, 1619-1620* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989); W. Moelwyn Merchant, "Donne's Sermon to the Virginia Company 13 November 1622," in *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 433-52; Jeanne Shami, "'Kings and Desperate Men': John Donne Preaches at Court," *John Donne Journal* 6.1 (1987): 9-23.

[33] See in particular John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981) and Debora K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English*

Renaissance: Religion Politics and the Dominant Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1990.

[34] Eliot, p. 23.

[35] Horton Davies, *Like Angels From A Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1986), pp. 195-203; Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 17; Paul Sellin, *passim*.

[36] A. B. Chambers, "Will the Real John Donne Please Rise?" *John Donne Journal* 4.1 (1985): 110.

[37] On the reliability of the *Index* to Donne's Sermons see Jeanne Shami, Review of Troy D. Reeves' *Index to the Sermons of John Donne*, 3 vols., *Renaissance and Reformation* 8.1 (1984): 59-62.

[38] Arthur Marotti, *John Donne: Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 204.

[39] Carey, pp. 122-3.

[40] See for example John Denison, *A checke to curiosity; and, I the safest service* (London, 1624); Thomas Barnes, *Cure for the Comfortles . . .* (London, 1624); Elias Petley, *The Royall Receipt* (London, 1623); James Ussher, *A Briefe Declaration of the Universalitie of the Church of Christ . . .* (London, 1624).

[41] Carey, p. 114.

[42] Carey, pp. 113-115. For a full discussion of this sermon in its historical context of the Doncaster Embassy (1619) see Sellin, pp. 109-134.

[43] Marotti, pp. 214 and 337n.65.

[44] Shuger, p. 167.

[45] Carey, p. 115.

[46] See, for example, Dennis Flynn, "Donne the Survivor," in *The Eagle and the Dove: Reassessing John Donne*, Ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), pp. 15-24; Annabel Patterson, "All Donne," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, Ed. Elizabeth Harvey and Katherine Maus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 37-67; Annabel Patterson, "John Donne, Kingsman?" in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, Ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 251-272; Annabel Patterson, "Misinterpretable Donne: The Testimony of the Letters," *John Donne Journal* 1 (1982): 39-53; M. Thomas Hester, *Kinde Pitty and Brave Scorn: Donne's Satyres* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982), "Donne's (Re)Annunciation of the Virgin(ia) Colony in *Elegy XIX*," *South Central Review* 4 (1987): 49-64, and " 'this cannot be said': A Preface to the Reader of Donne's Lyrics," *Christianity and Literature* 39 (1990): 365-85; Achsah Guibbory, " 'Oh, Let Mee Not Serve So'" The Politics of Love in Donne's Elegies," *ELH* 57.4 (1990): 811-833; David Norbrook, "The Monarchy of Wit and the Republic of Letters: Donne's Politics," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English*

Poetry, Ed. Elizbeth Harvey and Katherine Maus (Chicago: University of Chicagot Press, 1991), pp. 3-36; Ted-Larry Pebworth, "'Let Me Here Use That Freedome': Subversive Representation in John Donne's 'Obsequies to the Lord Harrington,'" *JEGP* 91.1 (1992): 17-42.

[47] A forthcoming essay by Jeanne Shami entitled "Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation" in *Donne's Religious Imagination: Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross*, ed. Francis Malpezzi and Raymond-Jean Frontain, (Conway, AK: University of Central Arkansas Press, 1994) handles some of these issues and develops the argument about the use of the sermons in recent criticism. The entire volume focuses on the issue of Donne's religious imagination and takes up the challenge to Donne studies issued by Dayton Haskin in the conclusion of his essay.

[48] These remarks are taken from Dennis Flynn's response to papers by Paul Harland, Gale Carrithers and Richard Strier at the General Session on Donne, Toronto 1993 MLA.