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

Love, Power, Dust Royall, Gavelkinde: Donne's Politics

Gale H. Carrithers, Jr. and James D. Hardy, Jr.

Beloved . . .

(Donne's favorite term of address to his congregations)

No man is a good Counsellor, for all his wisdome, and for all his liberty of speech, except he love the person whom he counsels . . .
(*Sermons* 4:317, 2 February 1622/23, on Romans 13.7)

As preacher to part of the legal establishment at Lincoln's Inn, subsequently to the *polis* as Dean of St. Paul's, preacher to King James and King Charles and to lesser nobility at Whitehall and elsewhere, John Donne was *ipso facto* a political figure in his preaching, no matter what he said. But his politics may best be construed largely, in terms of his theology and the Prayer Book liturgy, the tropes of religious life, and the fact of dialogue. This essay introduces several elements of such a reconstrual.

In a society of active surveillance and censorship, particularly in the capital, Donne rendered unto Caesar the small change we should expect of anyone who wanted to continue his ministry in the Church of England just then, and indeed avoid arrest with ears unclipped. He more than once praised King James as lawful and a peace-maker, praised him for wisdom and zeal in connection with foiling the Powder Plot, urged civil and ceremonial debts to him, and proposed regard for him as father to ecclesiastical appointments—measured praise, usually qualified in context.[1] In 1627 (probably), Donne preached to King Charles the conventional formula that "Kings are blessings, because they are Images of God," yet even then and there, at Whitehall, he hedged the formula with radical conditions and contingencies

(7: 357). Again, at Whitehall, he disclaimed it as "somewhat an Eccentrique motion . . . to speake of the Duties of subjects before the King"(7:403), but he did so, with obvious application to Charles' royal father, in a context noting that "Honour is . . . the noblest reward of the greatest Princes, yet the more have it, the lesse every one hath of it"(7:403). And, a moment later, he followed with Biblically ballasted advice not to curse the King, though the Biblical precedent from 2 Samuel ironically involved Shimei, whose curse King David deemed inspired by God, and forgave. Donne further advised not defaming unnamed wives of "Very religious Kings," even if they did have "some tincture . . . of errour . . . sucked in their infancy, from another Church" (7:409). Not, on inspection, sycophancy, though one must grant that by the end of the 1630's, even such discounted small change rendered unto Caesar would look and sound to many like unforgivably heavy money.

The point for present purposes is that the received view, as articulated by ecclesiastical historians such as Horton Davies, and the editors of the standard edition, Evelyn Simpson and George Potter, has too often taken the small change to be the entire transaction. Recently scholars, notably David Norbrook, Paul Sellin, and Jeanne Shami, more ambiguously Debora Shuger, have convincingly modified the old view by their nuanced and discerning redefinitions of Donnean options and Donnean choices in particular preaching situations. From (mostly) court sermons, Shami has argued that Donne made deflating comparisons of the King to God or Christ; made *law* dependent on God (not King), and law the foundation of the state; and made the minister a figure of *honest discretion* called to interpret God to the state. We agree, and would amplify her second and third points by noting that Donne meant natural or normative law, rather than positive (common, statutory, or jurisprudential) law as the foundation. And for him part of the King's duty was to reconcile positive to normative law, insofar as the fallen world would permit. In making her argument, Shami generously acknowledged and subsumed the earlier point by Jonathan Goldberg that patriarchy subjects the King to God, reconstrued Annabel Patterson's assessment of Donne's dependency, and (of course) dismissed John Carey's cartoon of a "thwarted, grasping, parasitic" apostate.[2]

1

Granted, explicit references to secular events, such as the Spanish Match and the war in Europe, and even references to Kingship, are brief, compared to the extent, emphasis, and explicitness of his treatment of differences with Roman Catholicism and Separatist Protestant-

ism. All this has sometimes been taken, perhaps abetted by Donne's own disclaimers, to indicate a political posture of acquiescent quietude. But Donne's pastoral theology tended to look beyond vicissitude, especially beyond the transient manifestations of political power, toward natural, graced anticipations of Divine eternity, and ultimate loving fulfillment in the *civitas dei*.

On Ascension Day, 1622, Donne preached a notable sermon at Lincoln's Inn on Deuteronomy 12:30: "Take heed to thy self, that thou be not snared by following them after they be destroyed from before thee." The sermon was preached in and to the intimacy of the Society of Lincoln's Inn personally friendly to Donne, and preached in what were even more intimate surroundings than the present chapel.[3] He dwells on the private individual's—or the household head's—relation to Roman Catholicism. But he observes parenthetically that the text's words "*Come not after them* . . . (if we were to reflect at all, which we always avoid, upon publick things) would afford a good note for the publick, for the Magistrate"(4: 139). Just a few sentences later, he adds, "But that is not our sphear, the Publick, the State; but yet States consist of Families, and Families of private persons, and they are in our sphear, in our charge" (4: 140). He concluded that line of argument, his explication of his chosen Biblical text, and the entire sermon, with a complex exhortation: "To end all, embrace Fundamental, Dogmatical, evident Divinity" (4: 144). *Embrace*: an act more of love than of power. He reminded his lawyer-auditors that they had just jointly and severally done that, in reciting beliefs together in the Prayer Book Creed, and reciting needs and subordination together in the Lord's Prayer. He directed their attention to the two tables of the Decalogue, conventionally placed on the walls of contemporary churches and chapels, as the familiar list of "things which we are to do:"[4]

> . . .the first Table begins with that, *Thou shalt have no other gods but me*. God is a Monarch alone, not a Consul with a Colleague. And the second Table begins with Honor to Parents, that is, to Magistrates, to lawful Authority. . . .*If it be possible*, saith the Apostle, *as much as in you lies, have peace with all men* [Romans 12.18], with all kind of men. Obedience is the first Commandment of the second Table, *and* [our emphasis] that never destroys the first Table, of which the first Commandment is, Keep thy self, that is, those that belong to thee and thy house, intire and upright in the worship of the true God, not only not to admit Idols for gods, but not to admit Idolatry in the worship of the true God. (4: 144)

So alert and anti-idolatrous a conscience as there recommended would reject idolatries of King, or Kingship, or Ecclesia, or Royal Exchange, or Technology. Though difficult to demonstrate in brief, Donne would and did just this.

One may suppose mild collegial irony, edged by the known petulance of James I over criticism of the Spanish Match, when Donne said "we always avoid . . . publick things." In any case, the privation was undone explicitly here and implicitly throughout the one hundred sixty surviving sermons by the theologically and psychologically interactive analogies of "States . . . Families . . . private persons." It is the familiar tropism of inner for outer, as well as small for large: "Cities are built of families, and so are Churches too" (4: 263); "Every Christian is a state, a common-wealth to *himselfe*, and in him, the *Scripture* is his *law*, and the *conscience* is his *Iudge*" (4:216).[5] But that conventional structural inter-relationship, like that of microcosm to macrocosm, does not answer the question of what Donne as preacher said immediately or through analogy about political order and the State.

By analogy, then, and by "such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other" (as in the "game of puzzles" adverted to by Poe's Dupin), Donne constructed a politics far more for the *civitas dei* of love than merely for ephemeral power contests in the *civitas terrena*. And he did so largely with an Augustinian vocabulary current then and familiar today. But their extended significances, as so powerfully developed by Donne, can be overlooked. As Rebecca West remarked: men resist learning truths which are complex, and tend to forget truths which are simple.[6]

In briefest brief: Donne's politics were God-oriented, heaven-oriented, eternity-oriented, and dialogic. They were centered on his God and his God's loving call, and his own and his auditors' charitable response to it, as against the rising current of civil, ecclesiastical, or technological shows and idolatries. Donne's politics were centered on Heaven-oriented journey, in rejection of world as narcissistic end (i.e. excessive love of self, sensation, power and praxis here). His orientation toward Heavenly eternity was implicit in the innumerable metaphors and metonymies of Christian journey, and was synecdochically suggested by the *moment* of loving revelation or graced *retorqueo*, as opposed to the moment of apocalyptic loss or the endlessly disjunctive moments of tychastic time.[7] His politics were dialogic, as opposed to those of royal show and decree. Finally, Donne, "our Augustine," as Izaak Walton called him, was no Manichaean; the City of God, present here and even now, very now, in the mysterious workings of grace, was the true end of humankind, and it was understood to surpass incalculably, and to outrank

ontologically, the *civitas terrena*. Even the *Jerusalem* of this world as a literal place or as a figure for London was seen as "a tumultuary place, a place of distraction" (4: 228).

Partial illustration of these elements of Donne's general politics emerges from a splendid sermon "Preached at St. Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621." It was the first of three sermons he preached in that liturgical year on John 1.8: "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witnesse of that light." Donne had argued that the reason of man "must first be satisfied"—satisfied by the design of the world which should be understood to argue not only a Designer, but a Designer who "would still retain the Administration thereof in his owne hands" implicitly, Divine love in action to "*sustaine* it still by his watchfull Providence" (3: 358). The administrative and sustaining will implied for Donne a written and thereby permanent legal record. For him the Bible was obviously such a record, was so not by "*Demonstration*" but by such rhetorical, "Historicall. . .Grammaticall. . .Logicall" evidence as properly to entail belief (3: 359). It did not, must not, *compel* belief;but rather operate by dialogic—indeed hermeneutic—approximations and accumulations. This long quotation, rather like an overture to an opera, sounds all the important motifs:

> *Knowledge* cannot save us, but we cannot be saved without Knowledge; Faith is not on this side Knowledge, but beyond it; we must necessarily come to *Knowledge* first, though we must not stay at it, when we are come thither. For, a regenerate Christian, being now a *new Creature*, hath also *a new facultie of Reason*: and so believeth the Mysteries of Religion, out of another Reason, then as a meere naturall Man, he believed naturall and morall things. He believeth them for their own sake, by *Faith*, though he take *Knowledge* of them before, by that common Reason, and by those humane Arguments, which worke upon other men, in naturall or morall things. Divers men may walke by the Sea side, and the same beames of the Sunne giving light to them all, one gathereth by the benefit of that light pebles, or speckled shells, for curious vanitie, and another gathers precious Pearle, or medicinall Ambar, by the same light. So the common light of reason illumins us all; but one imployes this light upon the searching of impertinent vanities, another by a better use of the same light, finds out the Mysteries of Religion; and when he hath found them, loves them, not for the lights sake, but for the naturall

and true worth of the thing it self. Some men by the benefit of this light of Reason, have found out things profitable and usefull to the whole world; As in particular, *Printing*, by which the learning of the whole world is communicable to one another, and our minds and our inventions, our wits and compositions may trade and have commerce together, and we may participate of one anothers understandings, as well as of our Clothes, and Wines, and Oyles, and other Merchandize: So by the benefit of this light of reason, they have found out *Artillery*, by which warres come to quicker ends then heretofore, and the great expence of bloud is avoyded: for the numbers of men slain now, since the invention of Artillery, are much lesse then before, when the sword was the executioner. Others, by the benefit of this light have searched and found the secret corners of gaine, and profit, wheresoever they lie. They have found wherein the weakenesse of another man consisteth, and made their profit of that, by circumventing him in a bargain: They have found his riotous, and wastefull inclination, and they have fed and fomented that disorder, and kept open that leake, to their advantage, and the others ruine. They have found where was the easiest, and most accessible way, to sollicite the Chastitie of a woman, whether *Discourse*, *Musicke*, or *Presents*, and according to that discovery, they have pursued *hers*, and *their* own eternall destruction. By the benefit of this light, men see through the darkest, and most impervious places, that are, that is, *Courts of Princes*, and the greatest *Officers* in Courts; and can submit themselves to second, and to advance the humours of men in great place, and so make their profit of the weaknesses which they have discovered in these great men. All the wayes, both of *Wisdome*, and of *Craft* lie open to this light, this light of naturall reason: But when they have gone all these wayes by the benefit of this light, they have got no further, then to have walked by a tempestuous Sea, and to have gathered pebles, and speckled cockle shells. Their light seems to be great out of the same reason, that a Torch in a misty night, seemeth greater then in a clear, because it hath kindled and inflamed much thicke and grosse Ayre round about it. So the light and wisedome of worldly men, seemeth great, because he hath kindled an admiration, or an applause in Aiery flatterers, not because it is so in deed. (3: 359-60)

This side, beyond, come thither, come to, stay at, wayes: it is the Biblical, Augustinian, Prayer Book trope of life as journey, a trope which

pervades Donne's sermons. That point has long been available for critical discourse, and Norbrook has recently enlarged upon it, with reference to a later sermon, preached on the Biblical text "Take heed what you hear." Norbrook wrote that as "soon as Donne has set up the figure of the *via media* he starts to deconstruct it: precisely because it is a way, a process, the middle is constantly changing its position."[8] What did not change for Donne is that wisdom associates most properly with the path of love, craft all-too-readily with aggressive unlove or the merely narcissistic love of power.

As Donne moved, in the passage above, from the concept and category of knowledge to the human faculty which conceives and articulates it—the reason, especially the natural or "common Reason"—the underlying metaphor and metonymy of journey expands momentarily into resonant allegories of "Sea side," and natural illumination as punning "beames of the Sunne," and "medicinall Ambar," that last resonant with the convention of spiritual sickness and *Christus medicus*.[9] The "*new facultie of Reason*" should be loving reason, directed toward the gifts of Divine love allegorized as natural pearl and amber, and love in good neighborly, good Samaritan fashion toward "things profitable and usefulle to the whole world." Donne here pioneered the argument (did we think it was Marshall McLuhan's discovery?) that printing was the most important example of such good works. The intensity of iteration, and the associations of the word *communicable* in a context of Prayer Book worship, probably in a service featuring Holy Communion, all suggest appreciation as profound as Milton's, for printing, as medium of sociable citizenship.[10] And printing threatened not only the *mores* and stability of oral culture, it threatened absolutism. It threatened absolutism by disseminating investigative refinements of previously accepted quasi-facts (mapped boundaries, Biblical texts), by endless rejoinders and responses and counter-blasts, by its stability and volubility, such that a fugitive press could put out too many copies of a subversive pamphlet ever to be quite forestalled or even suppressed, all of which Elizabeth Eisenstein has so magnificently explicated.[11] The congregation were of course using the printed Prayer Book as liturgical context of Donne's very sermon.

In this excerpt, artillery epitomizes power as gadgetry. Presumably there were those who took *it* to be the pre-eminent practical invention of the age, and by 1621 there could be no doubt of its power. But any reader, like an initial hearer of this sermon, is in the presence of an Augustinian scale of love: pearl and amber of heavenly orientation; intellectual community as people's work here below; "Clothes . . . Wines . . . Oyles, and other Merchandize" yet lower, not indecent, however often abused, but more akin to "light pebles,"

which are not the bread of life. The word *merchandize* seems to be the launching point into irony, in the example of artillery. No expense of blood was being spared, whatever the talking points by militarists for the expensive burgeoning technology may have been. Presumably neither Donne nor anyone else in December, 1621 could foresee the full horror of the Thirty Years War, but the Battle of White Mountain and other recent history gave signs for those who would see. Artillery was metaphor and metonymy of technology as dark power.

Trade, and its negotiable instruments, Donne seemed to imply, comprised the equivalent power *abstraction*. Suddenly reader-hearers were moved toward the world of Jonsonian or Middletonian comedy: buyers aggressively diminished by corner or staple or monopoly pricing, unguarded heirs blown up by usury or commodity swindles, chaste women beseiged by lovelessly delusive sallies and sorties. But Donne extended the scene whither Jonson and Middleton had scarcely dared: to court. In this sermon on Christ as *light essential*, and on the God-given light of natural understanding, he called "*Courts of Princes*" and their "greate *Officers*" the "darkest and most impervious places." In an immediate context of chastity beguiled to "eternall destruction," he posited men who "submit themselves" to "advance the humours" of "great men," by—the implication seems unavoidable—the prostitute mechanics of strength plying weakness. If any had lost track of the parallel alternatives, he reminded them of ways of *Wisdome*, which evidently associated with loving reason or a transcendent orientation, and ways of *Craft*, mere leverage in the *civitas terrena*. As the remarkably weighty paragraph concluded, the whole court and its deceptions all became a court-masque of blackness, antimasque to the *civitas Dei*.[12]

To be sure, Donne hedged enough to keep his post, his freedom, and his ears: *courts, princes, officers*—the terms he used were tactfully general. The next paragraph in this sermon was more about valid love than about power; it generalized about "worldly men," gatherers of "nothing but shels and pebles" (3: 361), whatever their *wit*, *learning*, *industry*, *fortune*, or *favour*. But no one likely to be in London, at St. Paul's, on Christmas Day in 1621 would have needed much prompting for particular application to the Court of James I, and James's scandalous sale of honors, disgraceful favoritism in connection with his series of infatuations, and the demoralization attending courtly whoring and pimping. Which is more subversive from the pulpit: eloquent argument calling in the secular arm to attack perceived heresy or other wrong-doing, or eloquent (and anti-Manichaean) argument

that idolatries and shows of power are darkly, ontologically insubstantial, are the ephemeral and trivial annoyance merely of "thicke . . . grosse Ayre"?[13]

2

A politic spy would have had difficulty seizing on any bit, in the examples above. After all, were we not assured, here in the *civitas terrena*, that here is no continuing city?[14] Were congregations not, whenever witnesses to baptism, enjoined by the Book of Common Prayer to side with the godparents to help the newly-baptized "forsake the devil and all his works, the vain pomp, and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same," and (last) "the carnal desires of the flesh"? Was King James ever specifically named or indicated, unless to praise him for being a peacemaker? Certainly not; and kings are conventionally acknowledged and *called* to be God's agents. But everyone knows what happens to agents.

It was not at all uncharacteristic for Donne to advert to such particular matters by more general reflections on the status of worldly pursuits. He preached at Lincoln's Inn, (probably in 1620) on Job 19.26: "And though, after my skin, wormes destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." A theologically orthodox occasion, certainly: after all, congregations vocally and regularly reaffirmed their belief in "the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come" as part of the Prayer Book credo. With more obvious political point, there is late in the sermon indulgence of royalty as spectacle, albeit ironically theatrical (3: 112); and the flesh to be resurrected and transfigured is acknowledged to have aspersed and slandered "persons in authority" (3: 112). Yet, there is no moment in the sermon more wittily pointed than one on the destruction of body and worldly things "as may justly remove us from any high valuation, or any great confidence" in them:

> The knife, the marble, the skinne, the body are ground away, trod away, they are destroy'd, who knows the revolutions of dust? Dust upon the Kings high-way, and dust upon the Kings grave, are both, or neither Dust Royall, and may change places; who knows the revolutions of dust? (3: 105-06)

The highway could be the King's and Donne would exhibit conventional alacrity in rendering or acknowledging it unto Caesar, but any road, the whole *way* of the world here below, was pervasively understood as a way of process (in our word) or flux or (in their word) vicissitude. On Candlemas Day

(perhaps in 1622/23), in a place not identified, Donne preached on Romans 13.7: "Render therefore to all men their dues". Our second epigraph occurs two-thirds of the way through that sermon, but appropriately frames the beginning of this essay because the sermon is itself doubly framed by affirmations of the primacy of love. Granted, he opened with the conventional and almost lecture-like outline of topic-headings (debts to God—praise, and prayer; to neighbors—superordinate and subordinate; to self—early and late). But he really began the engagement of the sermon with text and liturgy by negations: "Contentious men" discounted because "their food, and delight, [is] disputation" (4: 305); they represent, given the food image in its liturgical context, the mischoice of kacharist for eucharist. The pulpit itself could be degraded and diverted from its calling, which was to enable the people's work of the liturgy in that valid theater, and could instead be "made the shop, and the Theatre of praise upon present men, and God left out" (4: 307). Later, he spoke of ceremonial respect being due up the chain of order, but all proper respect ending properly in God (4: 316). This situated his climactic point about improper respect to superordinate neighbors: "to encourage him in his ill purposes . . . is too high a ceremony, and too transcendent a complement, to be damned for his sake, by concurring with my superiour in his sins" (4: 316-17). It is a point about conscience, as identified in Shami's analysis, and a point Donne confirmed with an even heavier term to end the whole sermon. He contrasted counselling from love with counsels of power: the satirist/calumniator seeks "to exercise his authority," (4: 317) and others are guilty of "trusting too much in learning, for worldly gain," what we would call idols of the library. Thereupon Donne echoed the caution of the Psalmist: "except the Lord keep the City," [Ps. 127.2] and many would have responded mentally from their awareness enhanced by the Prayer Book, "the watchman waketh but in vain" (4: 321). Thus he came to conclude for himself and the other individual "Romans" of his own day: "thou shalt have renderd to all their dues, when thou hast given the King, Honour; the poore, almes; thy selfe, peace; and God thy soule" (4: 323).

In a sermon on the call to love Christ, he speaks of Christ giving the individual soul "a capacity which it hath not, to comprehend the joyes and glory of Heaven." He continues:

> To save this body from the condemnation of everlasting corruption, where the wormes that we breed are our betters, because they have a life, where the dust of dead Kings is blowne into the street, and the

> dust of the street blowne into the River, and the muddy River tumbled into the Sea, and the Sea remaunded into all the veynes and channels of the earth; to save this body from everlasting dissolution, dispersion, dissipation, and to make it in a glorious Resurection, not onely a Temple of the holy Ghost, but a Companion of the holy Ghost in the kingdome of heaven, This *Christ* became this *Iesus*.(3: 302)

The indiscriminacy of dust and the invidious discriminacy of lords and tenants contrasts with the self as *Temple* and *Companion*. Or when the general way of the world is quite specifically the King's, the road must have two directions, and may have strange turnings: "Have we not seen often, that the bed-chambers of Kings have back-doores into prisons" (3: 261). Or again, when Christ's "pleasure is to execute a just judgement upon a Nation, upon a Church, upon a Man, in the infatuation of Princes, in the recidivation of the Clergy, in the consternation of particular consciences, *Quis stabit?*" (3: 325).[15] Whether auditors thought of Somerset in the Tower, or any other infatuator/infatuatee of King James, the point had general force. Elsewhere Donne would quote Romans 8:28: "*All things work together for good, to them that love God*" (3: 182).

Moreover the general implications were by no means exclusively passive or quietist. In that same sermon about "Wo unto the world because of offences," he quoted from Matthew's next verses, and elaborated:

> *If thy foot, thy hand, thine eye, scandalize thee* . . .Though hee bee the foot upon which thou standest, thy Master, thy Patron, thy Benefactor; Though hee be thy hand by which thou gettest thy living, thy meanes, the instrument of thy maintenance, or preferment; Though hee bee thine eye, the man from whom thou receivest all thy Light, and upon whose learning thou engagest thy Religion . . . . *Cut off, pull out, and cast away* (3: 179-80, at Lincoln's Inn, probably 1620, but perhaps earlier).

No bishop, no king could be immune to so decisive an individual conscience.[16]

This may sound too radically Protestant, too little the Establishmentarian Anglo-Catholic Donne of some redactions. But Donne was an inclusivist of the middle way, and engaged—more in Lutheran senses than Calvinist—the Biblical trope of calling and ambassadorship.[17] The trope of calling may for purposes of analytic explication be taxonomically separated from the trope

of journey. But for Donne, in devout lived experience the two must coalesce. The Christian was understood to be called by the Triune God, from birth (into sin) through the fallen world, to redemption in eternal community; the call was a commission always ambassadorlike to represent the true God in the welter of would-be gods of place or power, and to return to the loving Creator, rather than stultifying in any besotted stasis. And *vae mihi si non*, says Donne repeatedly of his own calling to preach.[18]

To the Prince and Princess Palatine, at Heidelberg in June of 1619, he, a ranking member of Viscount Doncaster's embassy,[19] preached on salvation as a calling to action: "as the B. Virgin speaks, *Thy soul shall magnifie the Lord*; all thy natural faculties shall be employed upon an assent to the Gospel, thou shalt be able to prove it to thy self, and to prove it to others, to be the Gospel of Salvation" (2: 262). And he characteristically adds, a bit later: "to be a lively faith, expressed in charity" (2: 263). Every English communicant would recognize the "Magnificat," from uncounted services of Evening Prayer, and recall something of the Prayer Book context: "he hath scattered the proud . . . . He hath put down the mighty . . . and exalted the humble and meek."

Returning in December, 1619, the more literal and particular embassy having failed, Donne preached at the Hague, on the text "I will make you fishers of men." In 1630, he "digested" his "short notes" into two sermons, presumably for publication. He wrote in 1630, whether or not he had spoken in 1619, of the more general—the literal, political and more than political—calling. He averred that contemporary ministers had not the *special* callings of Apostles or Prophets, to "chide the Kings openly," but rather the *regular* callings, like "Justices in their Sessions, or the Judges in their Circuits [to be proceeded by] due tryall by a course of Law" (2: 303-4).[20] Here, as in the citation before it, he evinced a marked variation of Calvinist doctrine: there is a universal calling to the priesthood of all believers, which is to magnify the Lord; and (he elaborated here) each person must find a special calling from God, like a sailing ship *in* the waterway of the world, but *directed* by the *Hagia Pneuma*.

Given the combination of Christian orthodoxy and Donnean wit, the former including journey, calling, and estimation of this world's attractions as "but *nothing* multiplied"(4: 171) or "but an *Occasionall* world . . . but as it directs and conduces" to the joy of heaven (3: 188), we should not be surprised to find witty and subtle permutations into variations on the commonplace that "all the world's a stage." After all, what is an omniscient

God if not the arch-spectator, and what is His call if not to true and self-fulfilling action? "Hath God made this World his Theatre, . . . that man may represent God in his conversation; and wilt thou play no part?" (1: 207).[21] The Bible can accordingly become a kind of prompt-book in the hands of the preacher: "our Text is an Amphitheater . . . in which, all men, all may sit, and see themselves acted" (8: 337). Sooner or later all the experiential variations introduced by these formulations get developed, and so, too, do innumerable others, from like pronouncements. The imperfection of the player in his or her true part, imperfection by sloth or more explicit idolatry, may be anatomized; the self-divinizing tendency to script self or others into mere roles and scenarios is the trumpery and mummery of a fallen world.

Before King James, in Lent, 1621, Donne preached on I Timothy 3.16: "And without controversie, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, receiving up into glory." He divided his sermon into major parts on "the mystery," and "the manifestation," and offered on each of those elaborated exposition and reflection, for his auditor's immediate apprehension and later meditation. In a shrewdly developed subsection on "seen of angels," he extended angelic seeing from Christ to ourselves (by the authority St. Paul and St. Jerome): "*We are made a spectacle to men and angels.* The word is there *Theatrum*, and so S. *Hierom* reads it." The application included urging not to "sollicite a woman's chastity, . . . nor calumniate an absent person in the Kings ear," nor to offend "those Angels which see Christ Jesus now," by obliging them to "see the same Christ in thee, . . . crucified again in thy irreligious conversation" (3: 218).

His long concluding section, on "received up into glory" looked both ways: toward the true and lively theater of the transcendent manifest here, toward selfhood as true calling engaged here, toward *civitas dei* reached and manifest here, and toward *civitas terrena* as meretricious mummery, essentially going nowhere.[22] Having argued in the longer second part of the sermon that manifestations had established "meanes for believing in" Christ, he reminded all at Whitehall who had ears to hear, of the ontological distance, which was likewise hermeneutic and political distance: "This which we are fain to call *glory*, is an inexpressible thing, and an incommunicable: *Surely I will not give my glory unto another*, says God, in *Esay*." (3: 222) This remark implicitly about the distance between Divine being and human apprehension and representation debouched into more about titles than any cautious preacher would have poured into the ears of a monarch so disesteemed

for giving and selling titles as James had done. The passage came to a summary view of the *fallen* terrene end of the axis and its shows: "Great Titles have been taken, Ambition goes far; and great given, Flattery goes as far." But not to 'your Glory' or 'our Glory;' "*Glory be to God*," i.e. to the Trinity, only. "As long as that scurff, that leprosie sticks to every thing in this world, *Vanitas Vanitatum, that all is vanity*; can any glory in any thing of this world, be other than vain-glory?" (3: 223). Coronets and titles of the two realms were contrasted. On one bearing were those which one *has* out of the "abundant Greatness and Goodness" of kings here, by which receivers "are *Consanguinei Regis*, the King's Cousins" (3: 223-24). In contrast to the passive receptivity of status, Donne posited the active doing in response to the other kingdom's calling:

> The glory of Gods Saints in Heaven, is not so much to have a Crown, as to lay down that Crown at the Feet of the Lamb. The glory of good men here upon earth, is not so much to have Honour, and Favour, and Fortune, as to employ those Beams of Glory, to his glory that gave them . . . . glorifie him in that wherein you may see him, in that wherein he hath manifested himself; glorifie him in his glorious Gospel: employ your Beams of Glory, Honour, Favour, Fortune, in transmitting his Gospel in the same glory to your Children, as you receiv'd it from your Fathers: for in this consists this Mystery of Godliness, which is, Faith with a pure Conscience: And in this lies your best Evidence, That you are already co-assumed with Christ Jesus into glory . . . that Kingdom . . . purchased for you, with the inestimable price of his incorruptible Blood. (3: 224)

Officially, James *was* transmitting the Gospel as he had received it, neither remitting it to Rome nor hailing it into Geneva. So he could have felt praised without flattery by a definition of the good which corresponded to his supposed policy but which was offered as advice to follow. But could he have received complacently the implicit message to all the other auditors: 'Glorify God for all good fortune, including favors from the King. If in good men's judgments you deserve them, then *that* is by the grace of God directly to you and through the royal giver; if you don't deserve them, you will come nearer so by glorifying God. If the King wishes to be glorified himself for the favors he gives, he is so much the less worthy of his own crown.'

Similarly, but more generally: on the first of July, 1627, Donne preached a commemorative sermon for his old friend Magdalen Herbert, recently

deceased as Lady Danvers. We infer that the church in suburban Chelsea would have been crowded with persons of political and economic importance; and the sermon, quite long, was published in duodecimo the same year. He took as text 2 Peter 3.13: "Nevertheless, we, according to his promises, looke for new heavens, and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousnesse." He divided less the text than the sermon into "two Workes . . . That wee may walke together two miles, in this Sabbath daies journey; First, *To instruct the Living*, and then *To commemorate the Dead*." (8: 63) The "mile" of instruction trebled in length and equaled in fervor the mile of commemoration.

Deep in that first mile, Donne ascribed to "*regenerate* man" a God-given, "endlesse, and Undeterminable desire of more, then this life can minister unto him . . . . *Man* is a *future Creature*" (8: 75). Implications obviously include that worldly honor can be *at best* only a gift and typological shadow of eternal heavenly honor, that inherited position *is* as inherited position *does* toward that validly fulfilling end, and that in the fallen world, less and worse are usual. And so it was, in the stunning climactic syntactic gallop through three paragraphs on Righteousness / Justice / Righteousness, to the end of the instruction. We give them in part, eliding mainly remarks on righteousness which took it as the more private and personal face of justice:

> here, the *holy Ghost* proceeds not that way; by *improvement* of things, which wee *have*, and *love* here; *riches*, or *beauty*, or *musicke*, or *honour*, or *feasts*; but by an everlasting possession of that, which wee hunger, and thirst, and pant after, here, and cannot compasse, that is *Iustice*, or *Righteousnesse* . . . . What would a worne and macerated *suter*, opprest by the bribery of the rich, or by the might of a potent Adversary, *give*, or *doe*, or *suffer*, that he might have *Iustice*? . . . Here there is none that doe's right, none that executes *Iustice*; or, not for *Iustice* sake. Hee that doe's *Iustice*, doe's it not at first; . . . *Iustice* is no *Iustice*, that is done for feare of an *Appeale*, or a *Commission*. There may bee found, that may doe *Iustice* at first; At their first entrance into a place, to make good impressions, to establish good opinions, they may doe some *Acts* of *Iustice*; But after, either an *Vxoriousnesse* towards the wife, or a *Solicitude* for children, or a *facility* towards servants, or a *vastnesse* of expence, quenches, and overcom's the love of *Iustice* in them; *Non habitat*, In most it is not; but it *dwels* not in any . . . And that's my comfort; that when I come thither, I shall have *Iustice* at *God's* hands. . . . *Iustice dwels* there, and there *dwels Righteousnesse*; Of

> which there is none in this world; None that growes in this world; none that is mine owne; . . . But in this new *state*, these *new Heavens*, and *new Earth, Iusticia habitat*, This *Righteousnesse* shall dwell; I shall have an *innocence*, and a *constant innocence*; a present *impeccancy*, and an *impeccability* for the future. But, in this especially, is *Righteousnes* said to *dwell* there, because this *Righteousnesse*, is the very *Son of God*, the *Sonne* of *Righteousnesse* himselfe. . . .these *new Heavens*, and *new Earth* shall bee his *standing house*, where hee shall *dwell*, and wee with him; as himselfe hath said . . .*God* shall impart to us all, a mysterious *Gavelkinde*, a mysterious *Equality* of *fulnesse* of *Glory*, to us *all*" (8: 83-84).

Gavelkinde was the Kentish alternative to primogeniture: roughly, 'equal inheritance.' Of course Donne was no church-court-and-chancery burning leveller. But the implications of his liturgic and sermonic orientation toward gavelkinde reward reflection. Most of that in any secular perspective, which would magnify status, is nugatory. But love, and within its nature justice, is always to be construed in heavenly perspectives, where in valid manifestations it will always look majestically, in invalid or misoriented manifestations will evaporate as gross air.

Such samples, excerpted from the sermons, are representative. His preaching itself manifested a sort of parable or allegory of the Biblical, Augustinian, liturgical Christian journey of rightly ordered loves. He proceeded with zealous alertness which tried on the one hand to avoid the dejection of spirit or uncharitable disputatiousness he associated with Separatism, and to avoid the fast and loose, power-mongering tendentiousness he associated with spiritual complacency, Pelagianism, and Rome, on the other hand. He hunted and gathered or was liturgically confronted by Biblical texts which his meditations could develop, for his auditors' meditations subsequent to the liturgy, as "arguments" expansible into scenarios for mental or social action: action God- and heaven-oriented rather than idolatrous of inferior powers or shows, and eternity-minded and dialogic rather than entropically or disjunctively temporal, or supine, or monologic and narcissistic. Such a preacher of "True and lively word" may be thought of as Protestant in zeal[23] of conscience, as Catholic in his sense of alternatives as unlively, or existentially attenuated, but as tempered by his calling to speak from love. He would need to be a "*preacher*, crying according to Gods ordinance, shaking the soule, troubling the conscience, and pinching the bowels, by denouncing of Gods Judgements, [for] these beare witnesse of the

light when other wise men would sleep it out" (4: 211). The King's court adjacent to and the political world circumfusing the pulpit—those necessary but problematic expediencies of a fallen world—needed likewise, he believed, to take lights from light's source in the godly city, or sink to emitting light squibs,[24] mere shows in the somnolent dark.

Louisiana State University

Notes

[1] References are to *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1953-1962), by volume and page number. James was praised as a peace-maker at, for example, 1: 218 (but compared there with Queen Elizabeth); at 3: 26, repeatedly in 4: 178-209 (at royal command, but again with reference to Elizabeth); praised for foiling the Powder Plot at 4: 260; acknowledged to be focus for civil and ceremonial debts at 4: 313; and to be father to ecclesiastical appointments, 6: 90.

[2] Jeanne Shami, "Kings and Desperate Men: John Donne Preaches at Court," *John Donne Journal* 6 (1987): 9-23; Horton Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud. English Metaphysical Preachers, 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntington Library 1986); David Norbrook, "The Monarchy of Wit and the Republic of Letters: Donne's Politics," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 3-36; Paul R. Sellin, *'So Doth, So Is Religion': John Donne and Diplomatic Contexts in the Reformed Netherlands, 1619-1620* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988), and *John Donne and 'Calvinist' Views of Grace* (Amsterdam: V U Boekhandel, 1983); Debora Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1981); see also John B. Gleason, "Dr. Donne in the Courts of Kings: A Glimpse from Marginalia," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 599-612.

[3] For Donne's collegiality in the Society of Lincoln's Inn, see the Introductions by Simpson and Potter to Volumes 2 (especially, with frontispiece of 1623 pulpit), 3, and 4. The Society built a new and presumably finer chapel, in which Donne—by then Dean of St. Paul's—preached the dedicatory sermon (Ascension Day, 1623; (4: 362-79). With an eighteenth-century false ceiling removed, and despite some

late-Victorian embellishment and enlargement, that "new" chapel remains today a space of some intimacy, at least as compared to typical American city churches or university (as opposed to small college, or particularly denominational) chapels). He warned the Company of the Virginia Plantation to be preachers of the Gospel, rather than to have to make "emergent affaires . . . their *Text* . . . [or to make the] humors of the hearers their *Bible* . . . . to knocke at the doore, . . . to delight the eare, and not to search the House, to ransacke the conscience" (4: 227). See also John New, *Anglican and Puritan: the Basis of their Opposition, 1558-1640* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1964).

[4] See the essential book by J. Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England: Anglicans, Puritans, and the Two Tables, 1620-1670* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

[5] In that sermon, his third of three on John 1.8, Donne is strongly opposed to any idolatry of the state, a point affirmed to be characteristic by Gale Carrithers, *Donne at Sermons: A Christian Existential World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1972), p. 156.

[6] Rebecca West, "Epilogue" to *The New Meaning of Treason* (New York: Viking, 1964). Donne never forgot that his nation and church, albeit imperfect, were, as West so well understood, a hearth giving warmth.

[7] Tychastic time: the temporal disconnection of mere chance, *Tuchà*, isolated events. Mikhail Bakhtin described it in the genre of romance; see *The Dialogic Principle: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1981). Some sense of it was part of Donne's uneasiness with "the scurrilities of a Comedy, or the drums and ejulations of a Tragedy" (3: 271). For derivation of the term, and something of its use in twentieth-century cultural critiques, see Gale H. Carrithers, *Mumford, Tate, Eiseley: Watchers in the Night* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), index entries for *time*.

[8] Norbrook, p. 23; his reference is to 7.11, preached at St. Paul's on Christmas, 1626, on Luke 2. 29-30 (*nunc dimittis*); but cf. Shami, 'Kings and Desperate Men,' p. 19, on the same sermon. For a preliminary sketch of the importance of journey, see Carrithers, *Donne at Sermons*, pp. 21-22, 90-98.

[9] For Christ as physician (with reference to Luke 4.23), or variations on medicine, illness, patient, and the like, see for example: 1: 178; 1: 205; 1: 303, 308, 312; 2: 256-7; 3: 149; 3: 179-80; 3: 191; 3: 359; *et passim*. These sermonic employments of the complex trope need to be inter-related with the *Devotions* (1623) and the two *Anniversaries* (1612). See Dave Gray and Jeanne Shami, "Political Advice in Donne's *Devotions*: 'No Man is an Island'," *MLQ* 50.4 (1989): 337-56. For the non-Pelagian Donne, persons partly *choose* sin (unlike sickness), but can get well only by grace.

[10] Norbrook, p. 7, speaks of Donnean allegiance to "an international republic of letters, an ideal community," but does not at all develop what seems to us the framing importance of love, nor acknowledge Donne's Augustinian sense of the

civitas dei as both immanent and transcendent.

[11] Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2 v.; or see her more lavishly illustrated, brief account: *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). And see, of course, the foundational work of Walter Ong, much of it conveniently summarized in *Orality and Literacy* (London: Methuen, 1982).

[12] Cf. Jonson's "Masque of Blacknesse" and "Masque of Beauty," which would altogether more likely have been received as the sort of too-welcome-to-the-Court compliment which we all call flattery. In fairness to Jonson, though, one might note that the Queen was more the object of compliment than James.

[13] This instance is not atypical. In a paragraph on the knowledge and the love of God, he observed: "To know how near nothing, how meer nothing, all the glory of the world is, is a good, a great degree of learning" (4: 122).

[14] Hebrews 13.14, cited at 2: 307, and of course read aloud in Morning Prayer approximately every six months. The insistence on airiness and ephemerality help to gloss such passages as that where he averred of "the state of Princes," "all that is but ceremony; and I would be loath to put a *Master of ceremonies* . . . to include so various a thing as ceremony, in so constant a thing, as a Definition" (3: 111); the passage adverted to below, in the text. When Fielding's Parson Adams cites Heb. 13.14, it is partly in favor of earthly countryside.

[15] Sermons 12, 14, and 15 in Vol. 3 were originally printed as 38, 40, and 41 in *LXXX Sermons* (1640), there ascribed by John Donne, Jr. (presumably) to "Trinity Sunday." Simpson and Potter seem right in ascribing them to a single Trinity *Term* at Lincoln's Inn, not implausible in supposing 1621. In 4: 53, Donne spoke again of dust of wretch, prince, patrician, or plebian as indistinguishable. We acknowledge that *dust*, like almost any tropic image, *can* work honorifically and not disparagingly. Ulysses S. Grant was praised as a dusty general, meaning one not afraid to get close to the action. But we can find little ambiguity in Donne's sermonic usage in his Biblical and liturgical contexts.

[16] For Shami, on conscience, see esp. pp. 15-17, and her earlier article "Donne's Protestant Casuistry: Cases of Conscience in the *Sermons*," *Studies in Philology* 80 (1983): 53-66.

[17] Briefly, Calvin conceived a dual calling: special, to the ministry; and general, to election. Luther espoused a *more* general calling, of each to find her or his way to embody in this world Divine will and thereby to enhance Divine glory; see *Luther's Works*, trans. and ed. Hans J. Hillebrand (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), L11, 123-24; trans. and ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia, 1966); XLIV, 130, 269, 294-95; trans. and ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1961), III:130.

[18] Donne condenses I Corinthians 9.16; the more private and internal aspect of this was addressed by Carrithers, *Donne at Sermons*, p. 117.

[19] Sellin argues persuasively that Donne was integral, not merely adjunctive, to the embassy, especially in *So Doth, So Is Religion*

[20] On law, see especially Shami, "Kings and Desperate Men," pp. 13-14; we infer that she would agree with our sense of Donne's usual (though not *always* clear in him) distinction between the greater normative or natural law and the lesser positive law.

[21] So Donne at 1: 207 translates "ut exhibeatur ludus deorum," substituting *God* for *gods*, and notes in the margin "Plato"—a not uncharacteristic instance of his almost Miltonic imperialism with sources.

[22] Cf. 4: 165 (1622, at Hanworth, to the Earls of Carlisle, Northumberland, and Buckingham, on Job 36.25): "every error begins in *blindnesse*, and ignorance, but proceeds, and ends, in *absurdity*, in *frivolousnesse*."

[23] Shami ("Donne on Discretion," *ELH* 47 (1980): 48-56) finds honest discretion in the sermons, and so do we. But she takes that as antipathetic to Puritan or suchlike *zeal*. There are certainly Donnean animadversions against stirrers-up of strife, but our *general* sense of his passionate distinction between the City of God here and hereafter as opposed to near or mere nothings, and the testimony on his elocutionary style (in the elegies to him by acquaintances) places us closer to Norbrook's position that Donne "preferred evangelical 'zeal' to the decency that was so much a feature of High Church rhetoric," p. 23 (think, for illustration, of the high, dry, wry rhetoric of Andrewes).

[24] We deliberately echo "light squibs, no constant rayes," from "St. Lucies Day," and "light squibs of mirth" from "A Litanie," to acknowledge the issue of continuity of Donne's thought from late poetry to later prose, an interesting issue marginal here.