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Consulting the Fathers: Invention and Meditation in Donne's Sermon on Psalm 51:7 ("Purge me with hyssope")

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In the Records of the growth, and propagation of the Christian Church, The Ecclesiasticall Story, we have a relation of one *Pambo,* an unlearned, but devout, and humble Ermit, who being informed of another man, more learned then himselfe, that professed the understanding, and teaching of the Book of Psalmes, sought him out, and applied himselfe to him, to be his Disciple. And taking his first lesson casually, at the first verse of the thirty ninth Psalme, *I will take heed to my wayes, that I sin not with my tongue,* He went away with that lesson, with a promise to returne againe when he was perfect in that. And when he discontinued so long, that his Master, sometimes occasionally lighting upon him, accused him of this slacknesse, for almost twenty yeares together he made severall excuses, but at last professed, that at the end of those twenty yeares, he was not yet perfect in his first lesson, in that one verse, *I will take heed to my wayes, that I sinne not with my tongue.*

Donne uses this anecdote to introduce a sermon on the seventh verse of the Fourth Penitential Psalm: "Purge me with hyssope, and I shall be cleane; wash me, and I shall be whiter then snow."[1] Typical of a large class of stories in the literature of ancient Christian monasticism, this one appears in the fifth-century Church history of Socrates where it exemplifies the strict discipline of the first generation of Egyptian monks.[2] Pambo died around the year 370. By Socrates' time he was revered as a master of monastic spirituality, one of those whose words and deeds were even then being sorted into the various collections that later went by the name of *apophthegmata* or "Sayings of the Fathers." Hence the appeal, for late antique readers, of this story of his own hard discipleship.[3] Socrates need offer no judgment on Pambo's behaviour. Implicitly he applauds it. The illiterate monk was right to consult a man (in Donne's words) "more learned then himselfe," even if he did not stay to hear the whole of his lesson. But that is not the preacher's point. As far as Donne

is concerned, Pambo made a mistake. The verse he took to meditate upon was ill chosen because it "employed all his diligence, and his watchfulnesse upon future things" (296). Better for him to have taken the text that Donne now has in hand, "which is but a calling to our memory that which is past" (296) Better, in other words, to have repented his past actions . . . And so the sermon begins.

Apparently simple in its application, the story of Pambo may nonetheless have a deeper resonance in Donne's preaching on the Psalms. It was no accident that the hermit went to meditate on a verse from this part of the Bible. The Psalter was the book par excellence of the early Christian monks, the single most important literary source of their spirituality, prayer, and liturgy. Pioneered by Origen in the third century, developed by Greek writers like Evagrius Ponticus and the author of the pseudo-Athanasian *Letter to Marcellinus* in the fourth, "translated" into Latin by John Cassian in the fifth, the ancient monastic reading of the Psalms formed one of the bases of the Christian contemplative tradition. As Catholic Christianity from the time of Augustine and John Chrysostom drew heavily on its monastic inheritance, the "desert" spirituality of the Psalms gradually infused the Church as a whole. Indeed, since the medieval theory and vocabulary of confession and repentance derive directly from monastic spirituality, the Book of Psalms was in a sense the universal primer of Christian penitence. Donne was not blind to this aspect of the "Ecclesiastical Story". As an Anglican preacher he could afford to make the antics of a "humble Ermit" appear slightly ridiculous. But he would also be conscious of his own place in the literary and devotional tradition of Psalter-exegesis, aware that the "understanding, and teaching of the Book of Psalmes" that he himself now "professed" was open to comparison with that of earlier masters.

I would suggest, in fact, that Donne's dismissal of Pambo's discipleship is meant to serve as an advertisement of his own, that the folly of the monk's meditation on the Psalms inversely figures the wisdom of the preacher's. Interpreted in this light, Donne's story of Pambo is not merely an exordium to a single sermon but an index to one of the most distinctive features of his whole homiletic oeuvre, namely his presumptuous deference—or deferential presumption—with respect to the Church Fathers.

There are many facets to Donne's patristic learning and display, all of which could bear fuller exposure to the light of modern historical criticism.[4] In this paper I want to begin an inquiry into Donne's relations with the Fathers, by considering the manner of his recourse to patristic texts in the composition of his sermons.

According to Izaak Walton, in the latter part of his life Donne would not rest after delivering a sermon "till he had chosen out a new text, and that night cast his sermon into a form, and his text into divisions." On the next day, we are told, he would betake himself "to consult the Fathers, and so commit his meditations to his memory, which was excellent."[5] We know that Donne generally improvised his sermons, assisted by a set of notes that he had prepared beforehand.[6] If Walton's testimony is reliable, he first devised an outline of the sermon, without looking at any book besides the Bible. Only after that would he consult patristic commentaries, and perhaps other books as well. We might guess that some of the fruits of this second stage of preparation would also be committed to paper. And yet, if we take Walton at his word, we must allow that whatever Donne's "consultation" of the Fathers might yield, it would not normally alter either the "form" of the sermon or the "division" of the scriptural text previously arrived at.

How exactly did Donne "consult the Fathers"? Reading Walton literally and recalling an elegist's tribute to the Dean's possession of "Divinity, great store, above the rest, / Not of the last Edition, but the best,"[7] we might picture him turning to the great folio volumes of the *Bibliotheca Patrum*. Occasionally, no doubt, he did resort to the original texts. But as a busy preacher he would rely heavily on stores more readily accessible: his "excellent" memory and his notebooks. At his death, Walton records, Donne "left the resultance of 1400 authors, most of them abridged and analysed with his own hand."[8] Like all learned readers of his time he kept a commonplace book. The importance of such collections for the history of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sermonizing has long been recognized. In the words of W. Fraser Mitchell, "when we remember the astonishing application to study of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean divines, the habit of keeping commonplace books, the fondness for excerpting and quoting, it is not to be wondered at that the English sermon, as it fell from the lips of the Anglo-Catholic preachers, or was carefully set out by them for the Press, was of a curiously composite and often surprising character."[9] No wonder indeed, but an incitement to consider more closely the processes by which the sacred studies of these Anglo-Catholic preachers were transmuted into sacred eloquence. Although Donne's commonplace books are lost, it ought to be possible to make some progress towards discovering how they were arranged, and how he used them. Other, more or less contemporary commonplace collections have survived, and the ecclesiastical rhetorics of the period are full of advice on the use of such material. To cite but one pertinent example: in his Latin treatise *On the*

Right Method of Theological Study, published in 1602, Matthew Sutcliffe, later Dean of Exeter, expounds the virtues of a good commonplace collection.[10] The theologian who is thus equipped will no longer have to "to go back to the Fathers or the writings of more recent authors, every time he has to make a speech or give a sermon, as though compelled to fetch new materials for a new building." Instead, says Sutcliffe, he will be able to draw from his own stock of commonplaces, "as from a privy chest," whatever he needs for the purposes of preaching, debating, or controversial writing, thereby sparing himself the embarrassment of referring to the repertories compiled by monks, schoolmen and papists.[11]

The task of determining Donne's habits of excerption and compilation, and of identifying the other compendia on which he may have drawn for his patristic materials, is not one that I can pursue here. A brief analysis of one of his sermons may, however, confirm the potential interest of such a programme of research.

Let us return to the sermon on Psalm 51.

Having completed his exordium, Donne proceeds to a division of the text: "*Purge us with hyssope, that we may be cleane, and wash us, that wee may be whiter then snow*" (297). "[W]e shall," he says, "consider the Person, and the Action, who petitions, and what he asks." "Both," he continues, "are twofold; for, the persons are two, the Physitian and the Patient, God and *David,* Doe *thou* purge *me,* doe *thou* wash *me;* and the Action is twofold, *Purgabis,* doe thou *purge* me, and *Lavabis,* doe thou *wash* me." He further divides each of the actions into three branches: "purging" into the action itself, its means ("*with hyssope*"), and effect ("*I shall bee made cleane*"); "washing" into the action itself, its effect ("*I shall be white*"), and degree ("*whiter then snow*") (297). Thus he distributes the words of his text into eight sections, to which he will add a general conclusion (298). In the event, Donne also offers a separate conclusion to Part One ("Persons"), making nine sections plus exordium, division and conclusion, or twelve sections for the sermon as a whole. The scheme of the sermon may be tabulated as follows in the table on the following page (section numbers added in bold type).

Since this scheme appears to arise naturally from an analysis of the biblical verse, there is nothing to prevent our supposing that Donne produced something like it at the first stage of composition. The exordium would presumably have been left blank in his original plan, to be worked out later. The conclusion to Part One may also have been an afterthought. Otherwise these headings could well correspond to an initial "cast[ing] of [the] sermon

Table

Form and Divisions of Donne's Sermon on Psalm 51:7 ("Purge me with hyssope")

Section		Lines
1	Exordium	1-46
2	*"Divisio"*	47-79
	"1 Part" [Persons]	
3	*"Deus"*	80-114
4	*"David"*	115-322
5	Conclusion to Part One	323-409
	"2 Part" [Actions]	
	"Purgabis"	
6	Action	410-453
7	Means: *"Hyssopo"*	454-526
8	Effect: "Cleansing" [*Mundabor*]	527-600
	"Lava"	
9	Action	601-624
10	Effect: *"Dealbabor"*	625-658
11	Degree: *"Super nivem"*	659-698
12	*"Conclusio"*	699-776

Words and phrases in quotation marks appear in the margin of *LXXX Sermons* (1640)

into a form, and [of the] text into divisions." Assuming such a correspondence, what can we conjecture about Donne's recourse to the Fathers in the next stage of composition?

Five patristic writers are named in the text of the sermon as we have it. They are Basil, once; John Damescene, once; Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, together once; and Augustine alone, twice in the same connection. All these references occur in structurally prominent positions: each of the first three within a few lines of the beginning of a new section, the last immediately before the peroration. Taken together with the reference to "The Ecclesiastical Story" in the opening sentence, they provide an impressive armature of ancient Christian authority for Donne's sermon.

How much do they contribute to its argument?

In truth very little. Basil is smuggled in by analogy (4, 121): "So that as S. *Basil* said, hee needed no other Booke, for all spirituall uses, but the Psalmes, so wee need no other Example to discover to us the slippery wayes into sin, or the penitentiall wayes out of sin, then the Author of that Booke, *David*"(299).[12] John Damascene lends superfluous endorsement to an

interpretative strategy (5, 329): "*Damascen* hath a Sermon of the Assumption of the blessed Virgin, which whole Sermon is but a Dialogue . . . If I should insist upon this Dialogue, between God and *David, Tu me, Tu me,* Doe thou worke upon me, it would not be the lesse a profitable part of a Sermon for that"(305).[13] Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome stand witnesses to the patristic penchant for allegorizing natural history (7, 459): "The Fathers taking the words as they found them, and fastning with a spirituall delight, as their devout custome was, their Meditations upon the figurative and Metaphoricall phrase of purging by Hyssop, have found purgative vertues in that plant, and made usefull and spirituall applications thereof, for the purging of our soules from sin. In this doe S. *Ambrose,* and *Augustine,* and *Hierome* agree, that Hyssop hath vertue in it proper for the lungs, in which part, as it is the furnace of breath, they place the seat of pride . . . And by this interpretation, *Davids* disease that he must be purged of, should be pride"(308).[14] Donne disagrees. David's disease was concupiscence, not pride; if any part of his anatomy needed purging it was his liver, not his lungs; the Fathers, as usual, are too allegorical.

In none of the three cases just cited does the patristic reference materially assist, let alone direct, Donne's exegesis. Finally, Augustine is used against himself (12, 746 & 750). In the purging of sinners, we are to understand, "God does all." "Yet," Donne insists, "thus argues S. *Augustin* upon *Davids* words, *Tuus sum Domine,* Lord I am thine," that David was especially God's because he sought His righteousness. So Augustine does argue in his *Enarratio* on Psalm 118.[15] But he would hardly have granted the preacher's further inference, that David sought righteousness, and found it, "in himselfe." The calculus of divine grace and human will in the act of salvation that Donne seeks to establish at the end of his sermon is not Augustinian, and only by sleight of hand can he associate Augustine with it.

With the exception of this last instance, in which patristic testimony is visibly manipulated for the sake of a theological argument, the citations that we have been considering can all be reckoned stylistic ornaments or elements of rhetorical *elocutio.* None of them was held to merit a marginal note of provenance. For the most part, we may assume, they were drawn from the preacher's memory or his notebooks. Neither the reference to Basil nor that to the Damascene suggests renewed recourse to their works, while the consensus of the three greatest Latin Fathers on the allegorical meaning of hyssop smacks of a secondary source. I can find no clear sign that Donne resorted directly to Ambrose's treatise on David's repentance or to any of the tractates on Psalm 51 [50] attributed to Jerome.[16] With Augustine the case

is different. Besides the incidental references to this Father that we have already noted, there is extended use of his exegesis of Psalm 51 [50] in the fourth and longest section of Donne's sermon, that concerning the "person" of David (299-300). There are several Latin quotations, marked "August.[inus]" in the margin, as well as direct translations of phrases, free variations of key ideas, and hints of a more general reworking of material. I shall not analyze these passages. It is clear that Donne had consulted a text of Augustine for the purpose of the sermon, presumably the *Enarrationes* itself. Although Augustine is not named in the text of this section as printed, we can assume that the preacher identified his source when speaking. (The reference to "That Father", i.e. Augustine, at line 311 confirms as much.) Donne takes over some of Augustine's formulas. He also allows his predecessor's exegesis to shape his own—but only in this section, and even here only intermittently. Contrary to what we might expect, there is nothing in the rest of Donne's sermon to betray recent study of Augustine's *Enarratio* on Psalm 51 [50]. Indeed there is nothing to suggest that Donne on this occasion continued reading beyond the interpretation of hyssop.[17] The reference at the end of the sermon to Augustine's exegesis of Psalm 118:94, if he owed it directly to the *Enarrationes,* could have been facilitated by his having that work close by. On the other hand, it is easier to understand (and excuse) the use he makes of it if we suppose that he relied on his earlier notes or some other secondary source.

In the course of a more exhaustive analysis of Donne's sermon on Psalm 32: 1-2 , John S. Chamberlin remarks of the preacher's citations: "Augustine is cited explicitly more often than any other non-scriptural author—some ten times in all. In *passages of topical development,* the allusions are to various works, insofar as remarks so Augustinian can be traced to particular sources; but *where the language of the text is itself multiplied,* the allusions are to that Father's *Enarratio* on this Psalm."[18] A similar pattern emerges for the patristic references in the sermon we have been studying. Thus we find: on the one hand, a medley of incidental citations implying no special recourse to the original works; on the other, evidence of close but not extensive reliance on a single work, consulted in the original. Chamberlin's distinction between "passages of topical development" and those "where the language of the text is itself multiplied" seems to me a useful and necessary one for the study of Donne's use of the Fathers. We might sharpen it by referring to the rhetorical categories of *elocutio* and *inventio,* and distinguish between patristic elements that serve mainly for ornament and those that contribute to the development of an exegetical argument. Broadly speaking, these two

categories would also correspond to two kinds of patristic recourse: that made by way of the commonplace book or other secondary instrument and that requiring direct access at the time of composition to an integral text of the patristic work in question. However, we should be wary of making too wide a separation between the two kinds. Our cursory analysis of his sermon on Psalm 51 suggests that even when Donne consulted a particular passage from the Fathers, the influence of that source would not necessarily breach the confines of the single section or "room" of his sermon which it was intended to help furnish.

Walton evidently knew of what he spoke. For Donne, it seems, the first two offices of the orator were "disposition" (*dispositio*) and "meditation" (Walton's term). Once he had divided his text and cast his sermon into a form, all the resources of his reading and note-taking, past and present, were summoned to fill the "places" thus created. In this broader sense Donne's reference to the Fathers is wholly "topical."

By way of conclusion, I offer a five-point agenda:

1. It would be instructive to extend this kind of analysis of Donne's patristic references to a larger sample of his sermons. It is sometimes suggested that Donne's command of the Fathers improved with time; indeed the relative lack or abundance of patristic citation in different sermons is used by Potter and Simpson as a criterion for dating them. As long as such judgments remain impressionistic they are worth little. Nor is there much to be gained by making them statistical. Citations and other secondary references need to be weighed, not counted. Only when the character, function and likely provenance of every reference in a given sermon have been taken into account can anything useful be said about the preacher's literary resources.

2. Donne's mode of recourse to the Fathers (and to other theological writings) should be studied in the context of Renaissance theories and practices of excerption, compilation and quotation. We need to know both how he went about acquiring his own stock of commonplace material and what other stores he raided.

3. Since Donne clearly did spend some time consulting the Fathers in the "best" current editions, it would be interesting to know more about the editions he used. Commentators on his prose have done valuable work in this line but have usually (and understandably) been content to locate the probable source of individual quotations. For a just appreciation of Donne's patristic learning we need to reconstruct the full apparatus of patristic scholarship within which he worked.

4. Donne's citations of the Fathers should be studied as an integral part of the verbal artistry of his sermons. If the examples here recovered from the

sermon on Psalm 51 seem of rather limited aesthetic interest, many instances could be given of a more powerful and poetic "patristic" *elocutio*.[19] Already in prose works such as *Biathanatos, Pseudo-Martyr* and the *Essayes in Divinity* Donne displays great verve and considerable ingenuity in the deployment of other men's texts. As a pulpit orator he perfects a method of mimetic citation which is substantially his own.

5. Finally, we might consider the manner in which Donne used patristic reference to establish a character for himself as a Christian interpreter. I began this paper, as Donne began his sermon on Psalm 51, with the example of Pambo, a man "who being informed of another . . . more learned then himselfe" in the understanding and teaching of Scripture, "sought him out, and applied himselfe to him, to be his disciple." Donne may not have been like Pambo in any other respect, but he does seem to have owed part of his reputation as a master to his comportment as a disciple. A Christian orator who routinely placed himself in the company of teachers like Augustine, Basil and John Damascene, and whose contemporaries were then willing to see him as a "second St. Austin" or "Chrysostom alive again" was clearly more than a match for the "self-crowned laureates" of his day.[20]

Modern readers of Donne's sermons are naturally impressed, as his seventeenth-century listeners must have been too, by the tokens of his patristic learning. A careful sifting of his citations of the Fathers would lead, I suspect, to the conclusion that much of what we have taken for erudition is more rightly considered a form of display.[21]

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Notes

[1] *The Sermons of John Donne,* ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-62) 5: 296-317. References to this sermon will be by page-number of the text printed by Potter and Simpson.

[2] *Ecclesiastical History* IV.23. Greek text in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 67: 513. The story is retold in Latin in the *Historia tripartita* VIII.1 (*Patrologia Latina* 69: 1103), with the variant "forty-nine" years for the "nineteen" mentioned by Socrates and rounded to "twenty" by Donne. The latter could have consulted the Greek history in the Latin translation of Wolfgang Musculus (Basel, 1549) or of John Christopherson, Bishop of Chichester (Louvain, 1569; Cologne, 1570; further editions in 1587, 1611, 1612), where the relevant section of Book IV is

numbered 18, or in the English version by Meredith Hanmer, *The ecclesiastical histories. . . wrytten by Eusebius, Socrates, and Evagrius* (London, 1577; frequently reprinted: STC 10572f.) Hanmer's translation of the passage runs thus: "*Pambo* a simple and unlearned man, came unto his friend to learn a Psalme, and hearing the first verse of the thirtie and eight Psalme, which is thus read: *I said I will take heed unto my waies, that I offend not in my tongue,* would not heare the second, but went away saying: *This one verse is enough for me, if I learn it as I ought to do.* And when as his teacher blamed him for absenting himselfe whole sixe moneths, he answered for himselfe, that as yet he had not well learned the first verse. Many yeares after that, when as one of his acquaintances demanded of him whether he had learned the verse: he said again: that in nineteen years he had scarse learned in life to fulfill that one line" (1607 edn., 328). If Donne did not initially find the story in any of these translations he could have obtained it from a collection such as Antoine d'Averoult's *Flores exemplorum collecti ex Sacra Scriptura, sanctis patribus, aliisque ecclesiae doctoribus, ac historicis, sive catechismus historialis* (Cologne, 1614; and later editions), of which he is known to have had a copy: Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne, Dean of Saint Paul's,* 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 268. In the 1616 edition of the *Flores,* Cap. VII. Tit. LXXX: *De silentio monastico,* the first example is that of Pambo; however, the time of his study is there given as "forty-nine" years and the primary reference is to the *Historia tripartita.*

[3] For the original significance of Pambo's example, see Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 156.

[4] For a more extended treatment of the subject see my "John Donne in the Company of Augustine: Patristic Culture and Literary Profession in the English Renaissance," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 39 (1993) : 173-201.

[5] *Life of Donne,* p. 58. For want of a critical edition of Walton's *Lives* I refer to the text of the *Life of Donne* published in the Nelson Classics series (London, n.d. [1940?]), which derives from the author's third revision of 1675.

[6] John Sparrow, "John Donne and Contemporary Preachers: Their Preparation of Sermons for Delivery and Publication," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* 16 (1930): 144-78, is the fundamental study.

[7] *The Poems of John Donne,* ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 1: 374.

[8] *Life of Donne,* p. 58. For the subsequent history of these collections see David Novarr, *The Making of Walton's "Lives"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 26. They do not seem to have survived.

[9] *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson: A Study of Its Literary Aspects* (1932; repr. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 147.

[10] *De recta studii theologici ratione liber unus* (London, 1602). For an account of the work see J. W. Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1990), pp. 310-13.

[11] Sutcliffe, pp. 70-71: "[N]on erit opus posthac, quod multi nunc homines imperiti factitant, vel ad putidas papistarum postillas, vel ad verbosos & lutulentos monachorum tractatus, vel ad promptuaria Stapletoni & aliorum stercorea, vel ad thesauros & silvas exemplorum & similitudinum, vel ad scholasticarum sententiarum spinosas argutias, & ad flores doctorum iam deflorescentes, & huiusmodi scripta inepta & noxia recurrere. Habebunt enim theologiae studiosi, si nostrum in locorum communium descriptione consilium promptè & accuratè exequi voluerint, ex ipsis scripturae fontibus, & patrum, ecclesiaeque monumentis, tamquam ex penu instructissimo, quaecunque vel ad concionum materiam & ornatum, vel ad disputationes & congressiones cum papistis necessaria erunt... [N]on erit necesse ut hactenus, in singulis concionibus & disputationibus iterum atque iterum vel ad patrum, vel ad recentiorum scripta redire, novamque materiam, tanquam ad nova aedificia comportare. Hinc enim sumere possunt theologi, tanquam ex thesauro domi iam parato, quicquid vel ad conciones, vel ad disputationes, vel adversariorum scriptorum confutationes necessarium erit." Compare George Herbert's advice in *The Country Parson* (in *The Works of George Herbert,* ed. F. E. Hutchinson [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941], p. 229): "The country parson hath read the Fathers also, and the schoolmen, and the later writers, or a good proportion of all, out of all which he hath compiled a book and body of divinity, which is the storehouse of his sermons, and which he preacheth all his life; but diversely clothed, illustrated, and enlarged. For though the world is full of such composures, yet every man's own is fittest, readiest, and most savoury to him" (Ch. 5: "The Parson's Accessory Knowledges").

[12] The idea that the Psalms are an epitome of all that is useful in the Bible is expressed several times in the preface to Basil's Homilies on the Psalms, attached to the homily on Psalm 1. Greek text in *PG* 29: 209-13, Latin translation by Rufinus in *PG* 31: 1723-26. This text had pride of place in Latin editions of Basil's "collected" works published in the Renaissance, beginning with that of Raffaele Maffei (1516). See Iréna Backus, *Lectures humanistes de Basile de Césarée: traductions latines (1439-1618)* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1990).

[13] The reference is apparently to the Damascene's *Homilia II in dormitionem B.V. Mariae* (*PG* 96: 721-54), although Donne exaggerates the extent of the dialogue in this sermon.

[14] As suggested below, this appeal to the consensus of the the three great Latin patristic commentators almost certainly reflects a secondary source, but I have not yet succeeded in identifying it.

[15] Maurist text of the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* in *PL* 36-37, reprinted in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina,* vols. 38-40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956). The reference is to *Enarr. in Ps. 118,* 6.

[16] Ambrose, *De apologia prophetae David* (*PL* 14: 891-960). For the ps.-Hieronymian commentaries see *Clavis Patrum Latinorum,* ed. E. Dekkers, 2nd edn. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), pp. 142-3, and Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (IIIe - Ve siècles),* 2 vols. (Rome: Pont.

Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1982-85) 1: 157.

[17] *Enarr. in Ps. 50,* 12-13.

[18] John S. Chamberlin, *Increase and Multiply: Arts-of-Discourse Procedure in the Preaching of Donne* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), p. 139. My italics.

[19] A particularly fine example occurs in the sermon on Psalm 32:1-2, where Donne quotes Tertullian in celebration of God's bounty to sinners. The passage in the original reads: *"Si iniuriam deposueris penes eum, ultor est; si damnum, restitutor est; si dolorem, medicus est; si mortem, resuscitator est" (De patientia,* 15). Donne adapts and expands it thus: "*Si apud Deum deponas injuriam, ipse ultor erit,* Lay all the injuries that thou sufferest, at Gods feet, and hee will revenge them; *Si damnum, ipse restituet;* Lay all thy losses there, and he will repaire them; *Si dolorem, ipse medicus est;* Lay downe all thy diseases there, and he shall heale thee; *Si mortem, ipse resuscitator,* Dye in his armes, and he shall breath a new life into thee; Add we to *Tertullian: si peccata, ipse sepeliet,* lay thy sins in his wounds, and he shall bury them so deepe, that onely they shall never have resurrection" (9: 272-73). While respecting the overall shape of Tertullian's carefully balanced period, Donne imparts a new intensity, vividness and affectivity to the ideas expressed. We may note too how his conversion of the African's present-tense verbs to a future tense helps compel his listeners towards "the laver of Regeneration" which is the sermon's goal. I owe this example and much besides to my colleague Paul Stanwood.

[20] Walton, *Life of Donne,* p. 40; *The Poems of John Donne,* ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912) 1: 386, from a tribute to the late Dean by "R. B." The phrase "self-crowned laureates" is borrowed, of course, from Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Johnson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). I have tried to supplement Helgerson's passing treatment of Donne in this book in "John Donne in the Company of Augustine" (see note 4 above).

[21] My thanks to Graham Parry for helpful criticism of a draft of this paper, and to members of the audience in Gulfport in February 1993 for their comments and suggestions.