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A "true Transubstantiation": Dr. Donne, Holy Violence, and the Preaching Crisis During the Year of Monarchical Transition

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Dr. Donne is invested in both the hurly-burly power of the pulpit to disrupt the self and its subsequent capacity to reorder its affections and priorities. As he vividly describes the work of the preacher in a 1627 sermon,

> The Preacher stirres and moves, and agitates the holy affections of the Congregation, that they slumber not in a senselesnesse . . . ; The Preacher makes a holy noise in the conscience of the Congregation, and when hee hath awakened them, by stirring the nest, hee casts some claps of thunder, some intimidations, in denouncing the judgements of God, and he flings open the gates of Heaven, that they may heare, and look up, and see a man sent by God, with power to infuse his feare upon them. . . . (*SJD* 8:43–45)[1]

A version of this essay was originally presented at the 2014 Conference on John Donne, organized by the John Donne Society in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I extend my gratitude to the interlocutors, equally as much for their trenchant points of critique as for their hospitality in welcoming a Miltonist interloper.

[1]John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953–62). Throughout, quotations from Donne's sermons are from this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as *SJD*, followed by volume and page number. Scholarship on the texts of Donne's sermons is in transition; elsewhere, with particular regard to the two April sermons delivered at

Donne's conception of the preacher here summons to mind the apocalyptic vision of the Second Coming in Revelation 19:11–16, wherein Christ brings the final judgment against and transformation of the earth and its inhabitants. Out of his mouth comes not a word of peace, but a sword. Consequently, proclamation awakens the congregation from their spiritual slumber as though they were Lazarus stirring from the tomb, calling hearers to a radical departure from themselves and the world in which they dwell.

Accordingly, the duty of preaching is thus not to "knocke at the doore" or to "delight the eare," but to "ransacke the conscience" as he describes elsewhere (*SJD* 4:276). In this mode, the preacher is the prophet, the "Trumpet" used by God "to awaken with terror." But after the trumpet's blare, the preacher becomes the "*Carmen musicum*, a musical and harmonious charmer" that settles the soul in "holy delight" (*SJD* 2:166, 168). This double movement, tearing the self to pieces for the sake of putting the self in order, is an act of creative obliteration—what Donne figures as spiritual ravishment leading to chastity in *HSBatter*, or excoriation and renewal in *Goodf*. Ideally for the preacher, hearers of the Word are thus habitually stripped of their illusions and rendered "naked" before God, and then clothed in Christ's righteousness, in order to participate in the embodied relations of the Church.[2] We might say that the preacher's call jars the

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Whitehall, I have quoted from volume three of *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne: Sermons Preached at the Court of Charles I*, ed. David Colclough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Quotations from this edition are cited parenthetically in the text as *OES*, followed by the volume number and page number.

[2]For more on the less than ideal circumstances of early modern auditories, see Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 15–25. More recently, Arnold Hunt has focused on both the transmission of the early modern sermon and the effects of its reception in the auditories of the sermon in *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); see especially ch. 2. That "art of hearing" is made virtual for us through the award-winning Virtual Paul's Cross Project (https://vpcp.chass.ncsu.edu/), lead principally by the research efforts of John N. Wall. For more on the transmission of the sermon from preacher's notes to speech performance to hearers' notes to print, see Mary Morrissey, *Politics and*

cogito into wakefulness with the eruption of the Wholly Other and momentarily renders it speechless in its internal conversation by the sacramental Presence of God.[3]

It is this jarring and disruptive capacity of preaching in particular that necessitates Donne's admonition in his sermon before the Household at Whitehall on 30 April 1626: "If there be discontinuing, or slackning of preaching, there is a danger of loosing Christ" (*OES* 3:69). Given the regularity of preaching in all its forms in the day-to-day business of the Church, however, it is unlikely that preaching would ever have been "discontinued" as Donne seems to anticipate.[4] Daniel W. Doerksen points out that church leadership across the theological spectrum "saw preaching of the Word as a vital way of attaining the kind of conformity that mattered most to them."[5] Perhaps Donne is merely engaging in hyperbole here. But what should we make of his concern for its "slackning"? The most relevant *OED* definitions regard "slackening" as a lessening of vigor or eagerness in a task, or a gradual decline (2a.b.), both definitions citing Donne's use of the word in two other sermons where he warns against one's lack of ardor in "making sure our salvation" (see *SJD* 7:424; 8:369). It may be that Donne is primarily implicating his fellow preachers here who, in his estimation, have retreated from their sense of urgency or have been lulled into sluggishness in both preparation and proclamation. Like most early modern preachers, Donne competed for his audience's attention, and he recognized the value of Aristotle's rhetorical principle of *energia*, the animating force behind effective composition

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the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558–1642 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 35–67.

[3]See Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).

[4]Thanks to an anonymous reader for this point. Ian Green usefully addresses the different kinds of sermons and the frequency of preaching in his "Preaching in the Parishes," in *The Oxford Handbook to the Early Modern Sermon*, eds. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 137–54.

[5]Daniel W. Doerksen, *Conforming to the Word: Herbert, Donne, and the Church Before Laud* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1997), p. 27.

and delivery.[6] But he may have sensed that the hazards were more serious than a professional lack of zeal.

The withering last phases of the Anglo-Spanish match, the eruption of the Bohemian crisis, James' suspension of the penal laws against recusants—all these spurred preachers towards anti-Catholic invective, political criticism, and doctrinal dissent. In response, James issued the controversial *Directions Concerning Preaching* (1622), which sought to more strictly define what could be said and by whom in the pulpit. By royal order, the Dean of St. Paul's publicly defended the restrictive tone of the *Directions* in a sermon on 15 September 1622, but many English preachers felt that James' proclamation "struck at the taproot of the evangelical faith," as Thomas Cogswell characterizes it.[7] Despite the late Jacobean attempt to control the pulpits through

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[6]On the competition between the pulpit and the theater for the same audiences, see Bryan Crockett, *The Play of Paradox: Stage and Sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 38. For the common performance strategies shared by the theater and the pulpit to spur audiences to transformative reflection, see Mary Blackstone and Jeanne Shami, "Donne, Shakespeare, and the Interrogative Conscience," *Shakespeare and Donne: Generic Hybrids and the Cultural Imaginary*, ed. Judith H. Anderson and Jennifer C. Vaught (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 85–110. On issues of gesture, voice, and delivery in the pulpit, see Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 61–67, and Kate Armstrong, "Sermons in Performance," *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, pp. 120–36. The use of rhetoric or extra-biblical material in the sermon was a source of contention among early modern divines. See Bryan Adams Hampton, *Fleshly Tabernacles: Milton and the Incarnational Poetics of Revolutionary England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), pp. 64–80. Along these lines, see also Noam Reisner, "The Preacher and Profane Learning," *The Oxford Handbook to the Early Modern Sermon*, pp. 72–86.

[7]Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621–1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1989), p. 32. Historians are divided about the practical impact of the *Directions* on the pulpit. On Donne's response in the pulpit on 15 September 1622, those of his contemporaries, and how historians have variously interpreted the *Directions* and whom they restrained and benefited, see Jeanne Shami's discussion in *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 102–38. See also Shami, "'The Stars in

the *Directions*, Peter E. McCullough describes that even at the close of Elizabeth's reign there were concerns about the gradual shift in emphasis from a preaching-centered church to a ceremony-centered church. Moreover, while the nation-wide suppression of preaching did not occur under Charles until 1629, McCullough continues, Bishop Laud had already begun working towards that end at court in 1626.[8] David Colclough notes that one of Bishop Laud's earliest interventions in the service at the Chapel Royal was to persuade the new king to attend fully *both* the liturgy and the sermon—a request with which Charles readily complied and one that directly chided James's past habit of interrupting the liturgy at his arrival in order to hear only the sermon.[9]

Jeanne Shami points out that Donne typically avoided controversial subjects in his preaching "not because he lacks principles or skill in disputation, but because his professional aims differ fundamentally from those of controversialists." At stake for the latter were competing visions of the Church of England and its doctrines, but of more importance for Donne the pastor "is the application of doctrines necessary for the salvation of his hearers within the existing institution."[10] In other words, Donne was concerned with exhorting

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Their Order Faught Against Sisera': John Donne and the Pulpit Crisis of 1622," *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 14 (1995): 1–58. For more on how Donne's sermon on the *Directions* defends the king's position on preaching by appealing to the priority of Scripture's principle of good order rather than the king's command, see Mary Morissey, "John Donne as a Conventional Paul's Cross Preacher," *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 159–78; especially pp. 167–72. John Cary understands Donne's sermon as evidence of his absolutist politics in *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), p. 102.

[8]Peter E. McCullough "Donne as Preacher at Court: Precarious 'Inthronization,'" *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p. 198.

[9]David Colclough, "Introduction," in *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*, pp. 3.xv–lv; see p. xxi. For more on the partnership between Charles I and Laud, see Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I," in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 23–49.

[10]Shami, *Conformity in Crisis*, p. 20.

those in his various auditories to live a life of realized eschatology, or living in relation to a God who consistently unveils and refigures the self in order to prepare it for communal participation. But on occasion Donne found it necessary to be both controversial and pastoral, as his concern about the "slackning" of preaching demonstrates. Donne customarily did not take sides in the debate between the efficacy of preaching and that of the ceremonies and other sacraments, repeatedly emphasizing that both were complements rather than rivals in conveying grace, and habitually addressed preaching itself as like a sacrament in its effects.[11] The two were joined by God and ought not to be separated, for as Donne memorably puts it, preaching "is the thunder, that clears the air, disperses all clouds of ignorance" and the sacrament "is the lightning, the glorious light, and presence of Christ Jesus himself" (*SJD* 4:105). Achsah Guibbory has written persuasively that the ceremonialism in "Laudian worship integrated the individual worshiper into the larger Christian community" where "the personal was part of the communal."[12] Laud's renewed emphasis on church ceremonies was thus intended to mend the fabric of a communal Christianity that had been torn by the Reformation. Moreover, she clarifies that for Donne, "[i]nward spirituality depends on the material worship just as the soul depends on the body in this life."[13] As body and soul are naturally united for the health and life of the individual, so the sacraments and the ordinance of preaching are supernaturally united for the spiritual health and the life of the church. As Jeffrey Johnson puts it, "It is for him [Donne] neither the one over the other, nor the one more than the other, but both together through which the visible Church receives the invisible grace of God." Johnson reminds us that Donne sometimes addresses the Preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments at different times within the

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[11]Jeanne Shami, "The Sermon," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 318–47, esp. 324–25. See also Robert Whalen, *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 101.

[12]Achsah Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 21.

[13]Ibid., p. 20.

sermons, but in his doing so critics ought not to overemphasize one over the other; even the sermons that explicitly address preaching, Johnson keenly asserts, must be understood within the calculus of the liturgy accompanying the sermon he preaches.[14]

All points well taken. But what happens when Dr. Donne does *appear* to take sides in this controversy? As Arnold Hunt makes clear, the gradual rise of Laudianism forced the contest and ultimately brought with it "a radical downgrading of the role of preaching which went far beyond anything previously seen in the Elizabethan or Jacobean Church."[15] How did Donne respond? What are his methods and reasons for taking sides in the debate, and what effect does such a bifurcation between preaching and sacrament—real or imagined—have on the embodied relations in the church? That is, if, as Johnson warns, some critics are tempted to overemphasize the provenance of the sermons at the expense of Donne's other liturgical convictions, then perhaps the opposite temptation is to bind the sermons and the other sacraments so closely as to neglect their different purposes.

Evidence for the competing labels surrounding the politics of Donne's theological and ecclesial positions—Reformed Calvinist, moderate Calvinist conformist, principled conformist, absolutist and practical careerist, anti-Calvinist and Laudian—certainly can be found in the sermons of the 1620s.[16] Achsah Guibbory usefully steers us

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[14]Jeffrey Johnson, *The Theology of John Donne* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 131–32, 138.

[15]Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 43. Hunt situates part of the preaching versus sacraments controversy on Laudians, following Richard Hooker, who advocated that reading scripture or prayers during the liturgy was more powerful and less fraught with human ambition or error than was the delivery of the sermon—a tension that also reflected larger cultural transitions from orality to literacy. For a caution against an easy view of the controversy that automatically assumes that the rising of one means the decline of the other, see Arnold Hunt, "The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England," *Past & Present* 161 (1998): 39–83.

[16]See Lori Anne Ferrell, "Donne and His Master's Voice, 1615–1625," *John Donne Journal* 11.1–2 (1992): 59–70, and Richard Strier, "Donne and the Politics of Devotion," *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540–1688*, ed. Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 93–114. For more on the Laudian "avant-garde," see Peter Lake, "Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and

towards the sermons at mid-decade, around the year of monarchical transition, to demonstrate Donne's growing dissatisfaction, in his later career, with the Calvinist consensus of the Canons of Dort (1618–1619). Moreover, in Guibbory's view these sermons demonstrate his sharp commitment to Arminianism after 1624, which was largely shaped by the controversial writings of Richard Montagu and the subsequent debates he inspired at the York House conference in February 1626 and during Convocation, to which Donne was elected as Prolocutor, which met until 16 June.[17] I agree with the general tenor of Guibbory's argument, but I want to put pressure on three sermons that Donne preached during that crucial year of monarchical

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Avant-Garde Conformity at the Court of James I," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 113–33. For a view of Donne as a consistent Calvinist, see Paul Sellin, *John Donne and Calvinist Views of Grace* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel, 1983). On Donne as moderate conformist in the English Church, see Joshua Scodel, "John Donne and the Religious Politics of the Mean," *Donne's Religious Imagination: Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross*, ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances M. Malpezzi (Conway, AK: University of Central Arkansas Press, 1995), pp. 45–80, and Daniel W. Doerksen, "Polemicist or Pastor? Donne and Moderate Calvinist Conformity," *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), pp. 12–34. On the importance of Donne's consistent shift to an Arminian position after Charles' accession, see Achsah Guibbory, "Donne's Religion: Montagu, Arminianism, and Donne's Sermons, 1624–1630," *English Literary Renaissance* 31.3 (2008): 412–39.

[17]Achsah Guibbory, "Donne's Religion," p. 414. On the duties of the office of Prolocutor during Convocation, see Jeanne Shami, "'Speaking Openly and Speaking First': John Donne, the Synod of Dort, and the Early Stuart Church," in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), pp. 35–65. On Donne's selection as Prolocutor because of his reputation for being inclusive and non-factional in his preaching and interpretation, see Jeanne Shami, "Squint-eyed, Left-handed, Half-deaf: *Imperfect Senses* and John Donne's Interpretive Middle Way," in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor Middle Way*, eds. Daniel W. Doerksen and Christopher Hodgkins (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 173–92. Shami addresses Donne's sermon from February 1626 within the context of the York House Conference in "Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion," in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, pp. 135–57; see especially pp. 153–56.

transition, which may help us clarify how Donne understood the stakes involved in the preaching-sacrament controversy just as the faultlines were being newly exposed.[18]

In part 1, we engage his January 1625 sermon at St. Paul's, which meditates on the conversion of Saul in Acts 9—an event that Donne holds to be simultaneously unique in the history of the church and one that is also paradigmatic for all who believe. The sermon thus provides one kind of template for us to consider the role that preaching plays for Donne in the process of conversion with its dual hermeneutical movements of the alienation ("stripping") and retrieval ("clothing") of the self as it undergoes a "true Transubstantiation" (*SJD* 6:209). As we will see, Donne maintains a general conviction that preaching disrupts the self and unveils its idols and illusions, while also reconstituting it by casting it into the horizons of a new narrative whose communal contours are subsequently shaped by participation in the other ceremonies and sacraments. It is by the preacher's voice, the *Vox* of the *Verbum*, that Christ is made present in the world; by the voice comes the unveiling and revelation of the self. In part 2 we examine the adroit exegetical and rhetorical strategies Donne employs to communicate this abiding commitment to the priority of preaching in the two April 1626 sermons, preached at Whitehall before the king (18 April) and before the Household (30 April), during his regular month of waiting. Both were delivered on occasions that Donne perhaps did not feel as pressed in the crucible and exigencies of the moment to address other issues before his auditories; this is not to suggest, however, that they are unmoored from a context, as I will make clear. But they do provide a small window into how Donne attempted to set an early tone of discretion on the preaching-ceremony debate to members of the Household, as well as sound out and negotiate the boundaries of the new king's own positions, if not challenge or cross them.[19] Kevin Killeen has recently argued that "the

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[18]On Donne's first sermon to Charles I, see McCullough, "Donne as Preacher," in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, pp. 179–206.

[19]An important study on Donne's "discretion" is Jeanne Shami, "Donne on Discretion," *English Literary History* 47 (1980): 48–66. On Donne's balance between zeal and discretion, see Shami, "Donne's Protestant Casuistry: Cases of Conscience in the Sermons," *Studies in Philology* 80.1 (Winter, 1983): 53–66. On the tension between praise and confrontation in Donne's sermons

early modern sermon yields its full political dividend only by attention to the intricacies of the biblical texts that are its subject."[20] Donne's intricate exposition of his biblical texts in these two sermons displays a spirited championing of the priority of preaching, but with a rhetorical rapier that grazes his exalted auditory through cautious circumlocution. During that year of monarchical transition, Donne calculated that this measured strategy—which confidently asserted the confrontational power of the Word and humbly declared his loyalty as a subject before God's newly appointed sovereign—would yield fuller "political dividends" in time to come.

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Donne preached four sermons on the Feast of St. Paul (1625, 1628, 1629, 1630), a feast day whose significance had largely been neglected by the English Church but one which Donne deliberately revived.[21] Gregory Kneidel argues that together these four sermons represent "Donne's most coherent account of the subject of conversion."[22] By the time he preached the first of these in January 1625, the king's health had rapidly deteriorated. While some of the practical duties of the sovereign had already been transferred to Charles and Buckingham, most did not expect the imminent death of the king the

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see Marla Hoffman Lunderberg, "John Donne's Strategies for Discreet Preaching," *SEL* 44.1 (Winter, 2004): 97–119.

[20]Kevin Killeen, "Veiled Speech: Preaching, Politics, and Scriptural Typology," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, p. 400.

[21]Clayton D. Lein, "The Final Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 600–15; see p. 604. Shami briefly discusses this particular sermon in *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis*, pp. 260–61. See also her, "'Speaking Openly and Speaking First.'" Shami demonstrates how Donne, elected as prolocutor to the 1626 Convocation of Clergy at Westminster, negotiates in this sermon between Calvinist and anti-Calvinist positions on election, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints; further, she asserts that in many of Donne's sermons he adopts a position that avoids dogmatism and emphasizes continued parlance on doctrinal issues.

[22]Gregory Kneidel, "John Donne's *Via Pauli*," *Journal of English and German Philology* 100 (2001): 224–46; quote from p. 225.

following March, though few were taken by surprise.[23] In this first intentional sermon reviving the holiday on the first Sunday in January after the Feast of St. Paul, there is nothing to suggest that he had any anxieties about the king's health in particular. But he is everywhere concerned with the death of the old self, the urgency of conversion, and the translation of the new self: "*Hodie mecum eris, This day thou shalt be with me in paradise*; . . . . Therefore presume not of that voice, *Hodie*, . . . if thou make thy last minute that day" (*SJD* 6:208–09).

Appropriately, Donne's text is the moment of Paul's conversion described in Acts 9:4 ("And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"). Donne explains that Paul's falling was a "medicinall falling, a falling under Gods hand," as God "throwes him down therefore that he may raise him." Saul is struck blind because he cannot behold the brightness of the *visio Dei*; his blindness "is not a darknesse, a dimnesse, a stupidity in the understanding, . . . [it is] not darknesse, but a greater light" (*SJD* 6:212, 215). In order to behold its glory, Saul must be alienated from himself. Echoing John Chrysostom, Donne explains that "He that will fill a vessell with wine, must take out the water; He that will fill a covetous mans hand with gold, must take out the silver that was there before. . . ." (*SJD* 6:214). These are images of *kenosis*, an emptying of the self, that is followed by a new kind of *pleroma*, or fullness of self that is redefined. Christ "withdrawes that light" that was in Saul, the former light of his understanding of the Law by which this Pharisee of Pharisees thought he recognized God, in order to "infuse new light" into him. This alienation is figured in terms of holy violence, and as Donne meditates on Saul's conversion he reflects on how God brings about the conversion of nations. God's "way is to bruise and beat them"; he "wound[s] us into love," for "The Lord knowes how to strike us so, as that we shall lay hold upon that hand that strikes us, and kisse that hand that wounds us." No matter how low God casts a person down, however, Donne consoles his auditory that this holy violence, initiated by the voice and the call, is always intended to recuperate, positively redefine the self, and "bring you home" (*SJD* 6:212–13).

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[23]James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 158–60.

The most significant aspect about Saul's conversion is the power of the Lord's voice, which Donne understands as the urgent necessity of preaching. Donne declares that Saul's conversion was accomplished not through the "naturall way" in seeing the invisible God manifested in the visible world, but through the "super-induced . . . supernaturall way" by hearing the voice. "Our Regeneration," Donne comments, "is by his Word; that is, by faith, which comes by hearing . . ." (*SJD* 6:216–17). Echoing Romans 10:13–14, Donne declares elsewhere that "[t]here is no salvation but by faith, nor faith but by hearing, nor hearing but by preaching"; it is by preaching that the promises of the Gospel are "binding and loosing on earth, which bindes and looses in heaven" (*SJD* 8:320). We might say that, for Donne, the emblem of Saul's conversion upon hearing the Lord's voice carries all the compressed power of an epigram. M. Thomas Hester notes that epigrams historically "transmit[ted] the grammar of death," since they were originally inscribed on gravestones or buildings; moreover, it was a poetic form whose "character . . . is mixed into all Donne's genres," including his sermons, "often comprising the pointed jests and final turns in his poems which (in a phrase from one of his Paradoxes) 'cozen your Expectatyonn.'"[24] Donne observes that Saul's transformation to Paul marks a death and a new life, for his "death to the Law was his birth to the Gospel."[25] The transition certainly "cozened" Paul's own expectations, as well as those of the disciples and members of the early church whom he formerly persecuted (Acts 9:1–2), but to whom he was called to preach and to serve.

This epigrammatic turn in conversion is highlighted by Donne's emphasis on the sacramental quality of preaching, as he borrows the theological vocabulary of the Roman Mass. Donne states that Christ's words to Saul ("why persecutest thou me?") are "words of Consecration"—Saul is set aside, made holy, for another narrative. These words effect a "true Transubstantiation" of "another manner," for after uttering these words, "*Saul* was no longer *Saul*, but he was Christ . . . for here a Wolfe is made a Lambe," "A bramble is made a vine," and "He that was the mouth of blasphemy, is become the

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[24]M. Thomas Hester, "The Epigram," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, pp. 105–21; quote from p. 105.

[25]Kneidel, p. 227.

mouth of Christ" (*SJD* 6:209–10). Gregory Kneidel usefully suggests that the Roman Catholic language and imagery are used by Donne for the purposes of doctrinal parody.[26] Donne certainly makes his own anti-Roman views explicit in the 1625 sermon, but he does embrace the theological transformation and "poetic" truth of the new creature in Christ.[27]

How the sacraments work to bring believers to this new view of the self crucially hinges on the participant's internal preparation and reception. Theresa M. DiPasquale convincingly argues that Donne largely shared Richard Hooker's understanding that the power of the sacraments lay equally in the work of the priest as in the receiver's active participation and reception through the Spirit.[28] That idea is undergirded by Jeffrey Johnson's observation that Donne's view of grace relies equally on God's "prevenient grace operating in concert with subsequent grace": respectively, the initial grace supplied *only* by God as he calls a person to salvation (Donne agreeing with Calvin's assessment of human depravity without endorsing supralapsarianism), and the ongoing and continual grace that encourages and sustains the holy life, but only as the believer cooperates with it (Donne modestly disagreeing with Calvin's assessment of human effort without endorsing Pelagianism); in both cases, the person in question can resist.[29] And Robert Whalen draws connections between Donne's participatory theology of grace and Calvin's desire to retain "an efficacious role for the sacramental species in the communion of grace," by emphasizing "the spiritual effects of the sacrament as they unfold within the soul of the individual believer." Moreover, as Whalen points out, Calvin was following Augustine's insistence that the sacraments are "poison" to the one who eats them in an unworthy

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[26]Ibid., p. 228.

[27]For an assessment of Donne's anti-Catholicism, see Jeanne Shami, "Anti-Catholicism in the Sermons of John Donne," in *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History 1600–1750*, eds. Anne Ferrell and Peter E. McCullough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 136–66.

[28]Theresa DiPasquale, *Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999), pp. 6–9.

[29]Jeffrey Johnson, *The Theology of John Donne*, pp. 123–27; quote from p. 123.

manner.[30] We see Donne's characterization of the interaction between priest-sacrament-congregant, for instance, when he briefly addresses the Roman view of the Eucharist and redefines the means of its ends. Donne states that the "words of consecration alter the bread, not to another thing, but to another use" and he clarifies that speaking the words "doth not infuse nor imprint this grace . . . yet whosoever receives this sacrament worthily sees evidently an entrance, and a growth of grace in himself" (*SJD* 2:258). Hugh Adlington puts pressure on this participative dynamic in his examination of Donne's Whitsunday sermons, which ritually commemorated Pentecost. In these sermons, Adlington notes, Donne habitually understood the preacher as performing an analogous role to the Holy Spirit. Just as the Holy Spirit manifested as tongues of fire at Pentecost to the Apostles for the purpose of giving them the ability to speak salvation to the Gentiles, so preachers infuse grace and convey scriptural knowledge of Christ upon diverse receivers, largely through reproof, exhortation, and the consolation of their own salvation.[31] But the Holy Spirit also works on the faculties of the congregation—in the Understanding, the Will, and the Memory—to infuse grace upon "all, which come well disposed to the receiving of him" (*SJD* 6:131).[32] Congregants are thus balanced in what Adlington calls "active-passivity": they are both actively preparing themselves *for* the reception of grace through the sacraments, through the increase of scriptural knowledge and through the devotional life of submission and obedience, but also passively receiving the Spirit's shaping them through the preacher's words of exhortation, reproof, and comfort.[33] Donne's participatory dynamic contrasts Calvin's notion of irresistible grace that "deludes many a man," as Donne explains in the 1626 sermon to the Household, to

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[30]Whalen, p. 62.

[31]Hugh Adlington, "Preaching the Holy Ghost: John Donne's Whitsunday Sermons," *John Donne Journal* 22 (2003): 203–28; see pp. 209–10, 212.

[32]See Ibid., pp. 205–07. Like Augustine (*De Trinitate*), Donne regularly engaged in finding "earthly analogues of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" and that "whereas Augustine's formulation associates Memory with the Father, Understanding with the Son, and Will (or Love) with the Holy Ghost, Donne holds that Understanding, Will, and Memory are linked respectively to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

[33]Ibid., p. 219.

which we will turn in a moment. For Christ "beats his Drum, but he does not Press men" (*OES* 3:68). Donne is concerned with the inward spiritual effects of Saul's receiving the sacrament of the preached Word, and Saul's "transubstantiation" occurs in his soul by the power of the voice and by his own cooperation. Jeanne Shami addresses Donne's use of the trope of transubstantiation, which he "deployed rhetorically to animate faith but bespeak vivid, sensually imagined spiritualized 'moments' of continued 'conversion' and commitment to that faith."[34] So, the term is used rhetorically by Donne on occasion to sew up doctrinal division. But Shami's attention to "transubstantiation as conversion" in this sense means that conversion is not just a single occurrence in the life of the believer—Saul becomes Paul—but a repeated offering of the self to God, a repeated disruption of the self that is alienated from and retrieved within the body of Christ.[35] And that reaffirmation of one's "commitment to that faith" also involves the expression of loyalty to the doctrines and ordinances that were officially defined by the Church of England, as well as conversion to the wide spectrum of the politics of identity involved in experiencing, polemicizing, and defending those positions, as Michael Questier has so aptly shown. "While an individual's 'conversion' can mean anything from an explosive evangelical sensation to a quiet, cold intellectual modification of ideas" it also "refers first to the efficacious moment in the process generally described as justification" when "man enters into a new relationship with Christ through the action of the Holy

[34]Jeanne Shami, "Troping Religious Identity: Circumcision and Transubstantiation in Donne's Sermons," in *Renaissance Tropologies: The Cultural Imagination of Early Modern England*, ed. Jeanne Shami (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2008), pp. 89–117; quote from pp. 112–13.

[35]Donne's deployment of the word is incredibly flexible. See Shami, "Troping," pp. 115–16. Shami elaborates that while Donne clearly thought that the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation was heretical and unscriptural, Donne periodically used the trope of transubstantiation for the purposes of inclusion, "to redeem the terms for Protestant believers within the Church of England, which has both Catholic and Jewish roots that Donne embraces, even as he absorbs them into his vision of the unique confessional and historical identity of that church." For more on Donne's rhetoric of inclusion, see Jeanne Shami, "Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion in Donne's Sermons," pp. 135–57.

Spirit (mediated through the Church), and then subsequently embarks on a pilgrimage of grace."[36] As we will see more clearly in a moment, one's "transubstantiation" is thus three-fold: the initiation into grace through the ordinance of baptism, the individual call to repentance, and a subsequent (and repeated) time of reckoning and response in the active life of repentance and renewal by grace.[37]

Kneidel accurately points out Donne's caution that Saul's conversion is a unique event in Christendom and that his "conversion is the wrong way to expect to be saved"; rather than seeing his conversion as a model for the psychomachia of conversion, Kneidel argues that Donne is interested in Saul's conversion as a cause for communal and sacramental celebration in the "enduring, visible, and public effects of Paul's inner conversion."[38] That is true: Dr. Donne is, after all, reviving a liturgical holiday that had been abandoned by the English Church. But that does not mean that Donne completely side-steps the "psycho-spiritual niceties" implicit in Saul's conversion, and which were explicit in how the hotter sorts of puritans approached and encountered spiritual life.[39] Given his anxiety over the "slackning" of preaching, the important point Donne makes here is that preaching in particular—the very call that Saul receives within the auditory of Christ's voice—fosters the event for this descent into the self to take place, and which demands a response: either to ignore and continue persecuting Christ and his church, or to listen and join in the apostolic work of building and participating in the church.

A bit later in the sermon, Donne tells his congregation to "Postdate the whole Bible, and whatsoever thou hearest spoken of such . . . beleeve all that to be spoken but now, and spoken to thee" (*SJD* 6:220). In his reckoning, believers are Simon Magus, believers are Cain or Dinah or Potiphar's wife if they sin in particular ways that resonate with these figures. So also with Saul. The question that he hears from the Lord ("*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou mee?*") is the question put to all sinners who actively resist in their souls and delay

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[36]Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 58.

[37]On Donne's sustained attention to the doctrine of repentance, see Johnson, pp. 89–118.

[38]Kneidel, p. 227.

[39]Ibid.

conversion. Donne states that the voice Saul hears is "a distinct, and intelligible voyce; and *saying unto him*, that is, appliable to himselfe." Moreover, Donne makes the point that Saul is called "by his name, that hee should not be able to transfer the summons upon any other" (*SJD* 6:220). Similarly, Donne advises his auditory "to consider God, not as he is in himselfe, but as he works upon us" through his Word, again emphasizing the "medicinall" aspects of the call (*SJD* 6:216). He argues that what distinguishes Saul from those with whom he is traveling, who according to Acts 9:7 also heard the sound but saw and did nothing, is that Saul *as an individual* hears the voice, internalizes it, understands the voice to be coming from the Lord, and "discerned Gods purpose in it" (*SJD* 6:218). Saul's alienation is complete, but his subsequent retrieval requires his cooperation: his recognition that the voice belongs to the Lord, that the Lord calls his own name, and that he willingly follows the summons. So, Kneidel is partially right. For Donne, Saul's conversion is not paradigmatic for all believers because of the method or historical circumstances of his conversion. But, it is paradigmatic for all believers because of the manner of his conversion: the Word is preached; it confronts a hardened heart; the self wrestles with the message; the self turns, is transubstantiated, and is incorporated into the *ecclesia*. The *tuba Dei* calls a person out of his or her own illusions, for the voice is the means by which Saul the individual is awakened "out of this dreame" (*SJD* 6:220) to encounter the presence of Christ, and thereby made ready for the new community of the church.

Converts by the preached Word are like Saul who becomes Paul, one who undergoes a "true Transubstantiation" (*SJD* 6:209). Hermeneutically, proclamation projects a new "horizon" of seeing and a novel way of being situated in the world as a result of the encounter with the Holy. To borrow Paul Ricoeur's language, we might say that proclamation "unfold[s] the possibility of being indicated by the [T]ext."[40] For Ricoeur, "what must be interpreted in a text is a *proposed world* which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities. That is what I call the world of the text, the

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[40]Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 56.

world proper to *this* unique text."[41] In Ricoeurrian terms, we might posit that this "true Transubstantiation" of the self occurs along a hermeneutical arc: from "prefiguration" (the conditioned assumptions about one's world and one's identity), to "alienation" (the exploding or critical unmasking of assumptions and identity), to "retrieval" or "appropriation" (the shaping of one's new horizons of understanding the self, the world, and the divine).[42] The appropriation of the text, its ontological or "incarnate" possibilities in the narrative of one's life, is the hermeneutical moment of understanding for Ricoeur. For Donne, the Holy Spirit is essential in driving this hermeneutic moment of illumination. In fact, Adlington notes that Donne's Whitsunday sermons offer a range of names for the Holy Spirit, including the Voice, the Comforter, the Tongue, and the Witness among others, but how Donne thinks about the office of the Holy Spirit "remains consistent throughout; namely, that the third person of the Trinity is

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[41]Ibid., p. 143.

[42]For more on how Ricoeur formulates the hermeneutical arc of "emplotment," see *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 52–87. For Ricoeur, readers experience the letter of the text in our initial encounter, what he alternately labels "pre-understanding," "prefiguration," or $mimesis_1$. Here, a reader brings to the text her own conditioned assumptions about her world and her identity that shape the questions she asks of the text. Next, the reader engages the text through critical methods of explanation, wherein she begins to interpret the text, lay bare its genre, analyze its structures and assumptions, and test her guesses about its meanings in a moment of "configuration" or $mimesis_2$. Readers must travel through the hermeneutical arc from prefiguration and pre-understanding, through configuration, to "refiguration" or $mimesis_3$. Although he does not explicitly invoke the Incarnation, we see the theological analogue of this pattern of alienation and retrieval: the Son is alienated as he departs the Father's side (*exitus*), he descends into flesh and appropriates the human "text," and then he reascends (*reditus*) to the Father singly and with his Church. Implicitly, Ricoeur's hermeneutics reflects the theology of the Incarnation. See also Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1997), pp. 235–74. Gadamer's terms for one's assumptions is "prejudice": the historical and cultural "situatedness" of the reader, or "tradition," that influence the kinds of questions a reader will even ask of the text.

the author and communicator of Scriptural knowledge."[43] The illumination of the scriptures by the Holy Spirit makes the contours of that new narrative known to believers. But how does one move from alienation and illumination, to appropriation or the "incarnation" of the narrative contours?

For Ricoeur, it requires a moment of textual "faith" that the new possibilities of the horizons of the self are disclosed by the narrative itself; readers must, as Anselm put it, "believe in order to understand." The internalization results in a kind of "narrative performance": the embodying of a text in the narrative of one's life through appropriation, giving rise, as Ricoeur describes, to a hermeneutics of "witness" or "testimony." The witness tells the story of the events as he or she has perceived them. This narrator, however,

> is not limited to testimony *that* . . . but he testifies *for* . . . , he renders testimony *to* . . . . By these expressions our language means that the witness seals his bond to the cause that he defends by a public profession of his conviction, by the zeal of a propagator, by a personal devotion which can extend even to the sacrifice of his life.[44]

In bearing witness, there is a radical turn from the mere oral relation of events to the performance of actions in the world. As Ricoeur observes, testimony "is the action itself as it attests outside of himself, to the interior man, to his conviction, to his faith."[45]

Analogously, Brent Nelson addresses the early modern preacher's task of bringing congregants from divine alienation to properly ordered desire and divine retrieval through the rhetoric of courtship, "a process which begins with weak inclinations to virtue which need to be goaded and extended toward fulfilment in God."[46] That divine

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[43]Adlington, p. 207.

[44]Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 129; emphasis added for clarification, and ellipses are Ricoeur's and do not indicate the elision of text.

[45]Ibid., p. 130.

[46]Brent Nelson, *Holy Ambition: Rhetoric, Courtship, and Devotion in the Sermons of John Donne*. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, vol. 284 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003), p. 69.

courtship and "fulfilment in God" is often accomplished in Donne's sermons by his rhetorical skill in prodding his audience to realize the frustration of worldly courtships for earthly power or patronage or community, a "never-ending cycle where appetite begets satiety, and satiety begets a new appetite," and by Donne's *inventio* which conjures the fullness of heaven's promise of love and kinship under a King whose willing goodness to bestow them is never exhausted.[47] Thus, Donne habitually moves through the disappointed desires of his congregants, who then become alienated from the world in which they traffic; are temporarily suspended between earth and heaven as their affections are judged, weighed, and found wanting; and, subsequently reincorporated into the body of Christ. A bit later, we will see this strategy of alienation and retrieval playing out in his April 1626 sermon to the king, as he reminds all in that exalted auditory that the benefits and consolations derived from their earthly positions are ultimately illusory and misplaced, for in heaven all souls—king or beggar—are in equal proximity to Christ's glory, and even now partake equally of the comforts of salvation.

Preaching for Donne enables "an Affirmative, a blessed seal in his [Christ's] mouth" to be efficacious in bringing about our "Inclusi[on], a blessed naturalization in his Kingdom" (*OES* 3:59). But how is that sense of "inclusion," manifested through sacramental preaching, different from that which is anticipated through the sacrament of baptism? The 1604 *Book of Common Prayer* hopefully declares to the congregation that through the sacrament of baptism the infant is "received into Christes holy Church, and be made lively members of the same" and that they "may receive remission of their sinnes by spirituall regeneration."[48] Baptism is the first catalyst of their heavenly citizenship, but Donne often (but not exclusively) describes the process of redemption as contingent in part on the person's right reception of the sacrament in faith.[49] In the case of infant baptism the anticipated redemptive work of Christ is performed through the "surety" of the godparents: "Wherefore after this promise made by Christ, these infants must also faithfully for their parte by you that be

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[47]Ibid., p. 90.

[48]Thanks to an anonymous reader who took me to task on this.

[49]DiPasquale, p. 9.

their sureties, that they will forsake the devil and all his workes, and constantly beleeve Gods holy word, and obediently keepe his commandements." Because the infant's participatory will in the sacrament is null, the minister turns directly to the godparents and demands that *they* pledge to turn away from the world, the flesh, and the devil in order that they as "surety" may be both a safeguard for the child against the enemy and the security of contract until the infant matures into fuller possession of its benefits (*OED*, 1a, 1b). The godparents' faith in baptism's efficacious power to convey grace and communicate Christ's mercy thus holds the sacramental "contract" together until a later time of reckoning. In an undated sermon on Galatians 3:27 ("For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ") that was delivered at a Christening, Donne makes a distinction between a redemption that makes believers into servants, and the application of that redemption which makes believers into sons or daughters:

> There is then a double *Induere*, a twofold clothing; we may *Induere*, 1. *Vestem*, put on a garment; 2. *Personam*, put on a person. We may put on Christ so, as we shall be *his*, and we may put him on so, as we shall be *He*. . . . That is, we shall so appeare before the Father, as that he shall take us for his owne Christ. . . . He shall find in our bodies his *woundes*, in all our mindes, his *Agonies*; in all our hearts, and actions his *obedience*. (*SJD* 5:158)

Donne continues by saying that Christ accomplishes this latter kind of redemption by "imputation"; as he states earlier in the sermon, Christ gives believers his own righteousness because "we cannot make ourselves ready" since fallen humanity "are poore and beggarly creatures." But he also clarifies that while Christ provides the garment, "but yet he doth not thrust it on: He makes us *able* to put it on: but if we be not *willing*, then he puts *no necessity upon our will*: but we remaine naked still" (*SJD* 5:155). Baptism thus begins the transformation of identity by initiating the child into the contours of a new narrative of Christ's righteousness, but the Word preached brings that promised reckoning that requires and engages one's volition. The promises of that initial baptism are confirmed for Donne in the "*Baptismate lachrymarum*" (*SJD* 7:213), the baptism of tears; as Jeffrey

Johnson contends, the habitual tears of contrition shed during repentance are "a theological complement to, and even a type for, the waters of baptism," closely emphasizing Donne's conviction of the near-sacramental status of "turning" during repentance, "which restores the commerce within the Church, between Church and State, and between God and these human communities."[50] In the alienation and reconstitution of the self a person's old ways of seeing and being are judged, weighed, and found wanting, and hearers are alienated from their previous dispositions ("the devil and all his workes"); and, the process involves a subsequent, intimate vesting of adoption and application that retrieves them into union with Christ and incorporates them more fully into his body the Church ("constantly beleeve Gods holy word, and obediently keepe his commandements"). Presumably, the godparents, too, have had such a reckoning if they are to be the surety of the infant's future redemption from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Preaching thus provides the "means to rectifie thee, in all dejection of spirit, light to cleare thee in all perplexities of conscience, in the ways of thy pilgrimage . . . at the houre of thy transmigration into his joy, and thine eternall rest" (*SJD* 6:222). Without preaching, Donne insists, there is no inner "transubstantiation" and thus no *ecclesia*, or body of "called out ones."

2.

Anthony Milton contends that this kind of sacramental theology of preaching, that emphasizes these inner workings in the psyche or soul, tends to diminish the role for outward ceremony and ecclesiastical authority.[51] If we visit Donne's sermons preached to the king and to the Household at Whitehall in 1626, wherein he derides the "slackning of preaching" that he may sense within the first year of Charles' accession, we see Milton's point coming to the fore.

Donne begins the work of advocating for the necessity, if not priority, of preaching on 18 April in the king's presence. We find his strategy of holy discretion at work in communicating his conviction

[50]Johnson, p. 105.

[51]Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 196–205.

about the importance of preaching, this time through a circumlocution on consolation. This was only his third sermon delivered in the new king's presence, and considering the pressing circumstances behind the first two sermons before Charles, he perhaps felt a bit more leeway in shaping the content of his address. His first sermon occurred just a week after the death of James, and it anticipates a time of transition even as Donne reassures his auditory that the righteous remain even if the foundations are destroyed (Psalm 11:3).[52] Donne's second sermon before the king (24 February 1625/6) came on the heels of the York House conference, convened by Buckingham to deliberate on the Montagu affair, and he must have felt compelled to comment on the ensuing debate on predestination and the perseverance of the saints.[53] Then, Donne's sermon had engaged Isaiah 50:1, a text on divorce, and while he asserts that it is God's prerogative to put away his "bride" for unfaithfulness in the characteristic move of alienating the self, he also argues that God "reserved to himselfe a *power of revocation* . . . in all cases" (*OES* 3:31), retrieving them at his good pleasure. Consequently, these two sermons before the king show Donne to be appropriately engaging contemporary contexts; his pastoral inclination, however, towards instilling comfort in his hearers overshadows—but does not eliminate—doctrinal assertions.

With the Montagu affair still in the background, Donne's first words in the third sermon to the king address controversy: not about predestination or perseverance, but about disputing interpretations of

[52]See John Stubbs, *John Donne: The Reformed Soul* (New York: Norton, 2006), p. 419. Stubbs comments that Donne was intentionally chosen by Charles to preach the first sermon in his royal presence (3 April 1625) in order to send a "tacit signal" that he "was favouring a more or less 'high' churchman, a defender of ceremonies that some regarded as 'Popish', as opposed to a member of the Puritan faction that had earlier dominated his entourage at St. James's Palace." See also, David Colclough, "Commentary to Sermon 1" *Oxford Edition*, p. 258. He notes that Charles' choosing Donne supplanted Bishop of Durham Richard Neile, who would normally preach the Lent Sunday sermon; in doing so, Charles "signalled [*sic*] both continuity and change" in this "liminal moment."

[53]James' response to the Synod of Dort and ensuing debates on Montagu's writings is discussed in W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

John 14:2 ("In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you."). His sermon represents Donne's boldest foray into the preaching-ceremony debate to date, but also one that he takes through the backdoor of consolation as he exposits the verse "back to front." The second part of the verse forms the core of the first part of the sermon, where Donne contends for the sufficiency of scripture alone to relate what is necessary for salvation, against Roman Catholic traditions and doctrines that, through accretion, are like "enormous super-edifications" and "incommodious upper-buildings" which become top heavy and "shake and endanger things neere foundations" (*OES* 3:47). These additions may have been sincere and pious at the moment of their institution, but they have since become "impious, and destroy Devotion so farre, as to divert it upon a wrong object" (*OES* 3:47). Doctrine and devotion, he insists, must be built on the parts of scripture where there is no controversy, for controversy works against the soul's consolation. But, as we will see in a moment, he enters the fray nonetheless as the *tuba Dei* announcing the limits of worldly power—confronting the prejudices of their social station (alienation) in order to bring them back (retrieval) into their eternal source of comfort.

Donne insists that preaching is the primary instrument of bringing the comfort of salvation to the consciences of believers. Conveying this comfort is a constant task, and Jeanne Shami observes that the "greatest difficulty" that his sermons try to overcome is the "problem of despair": how to communicate the seriousness of God's Judgment to the sinner without leaving them hopelessly adrift and alienated in the sea of worldly sorrow, and to spur them towards repentance and the "godly sorrow" that Paul characterizes in 2 Corinthians 7:10 which leads the individual to be incorporated into the larger body of Christ.[54] The first part of John 14:2 forms the center of the second part of the sermon where Donne moves from doctrine to consolation, one of the predominant sermon "types" that instills the theological virtue of hope, as derived from Romans 15:4.[55] William Perkins has this popular

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[54]Shami, "Donne on Discretion," p. 50.

[55]For more on the sermon types (doctrinal, redargutive, correction, consolation, and instruction) as adapted from Andreas Gerardus Hyperius' *De Formandis Concionibus Sacris* (1553; English translation 1577), see Jameela

genre of sermon in mind when he writes that "Our dutie is, to labour to bee setled and assured in our conscience that God is our God: for first in this assurance is the foundation of all true comfort."[56] Here, before an exalted auditory accustomed to deriving their comfort from the power and privilege granted by their possessions and the degrees of their social class, Donne reflects on the consoling power of the "many mansions" that Christ promises to his disciples.

But Donne is concerned with the metaphor as it touches the debate on the difference of the degrees of glory between the saints in heaven. And, as we will see towards the close of the sermon, the stakes of that debate directly confront the prevailing social assumptions of the exalted auditory. As he begins his exposition, Donne argues that the Roman Catholics have misinterpreted the significance of the "crowns of gold" mentioned in two places: the construction of the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25:25 (the Hebrew mistakenly rendered in the Vulgate, Donne points out, as *facies coronam aureolam*, "you shall make little crowns"), and the crowns worn by the twenty-four elders in Revelation 14:14. Catholic exegetes have placed both passages in the service of justifying the Roman Catholic doctrine of the merits of the saints, and in the latter case Donne insists that whatever degree of glory the elders enjoy is derivative of Christ's and not built of their own merit. Moreover, they have misunderstood the meaning of the "fruit" brought forth by the faithful sower in multiples of thirty-, sixty-, and a hundred-fold as described in Matthew 13:8; in this case, they mistakenly attempt to justify the heavenly rewards accounted to the married (thirty), the widows (sixty), and the virgins (one hundred). Donne demonstrates that he is not against the doctrine of differing rewards in heaven, but he positions himself against any interpretation of those rewards as indicating "certain *Dotes*, as they call them, certaine dispositions in this life, by which some have made themselves fitter to be united to God, in a nearer distance then an

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Lares, *Milton and the Preaching Arts* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001). On consolatory sermons in particular, see the discussion pp. 80–88. See also Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons*, pp. 55–61.

[56]William Perkins, "A Godly and Learned Exposition Upon the Whole Epistle of Jude." *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1608–13), 3:520.

ordinary Saint" (*OES* 3:48). For Donne, such an interpretation erroneously creates "*Sancti Majores*," those saints of special favor in the eyes of God, and "*Sancti Mediocres*," those inferior saints that belong in the "middle forme" (*OES* 3:48). While the doctrine of degrees itself may have merit, Donne agrees, the Roman Church goes too far in its insistence on the importance of those degrees, thus primarily upholding its own *magisterium* instead of emphasizing the true consolation of the soul's eternal nearness to Christ. "Trouble not thy selfe with dignity, and priority, and precedency in Heaven, for Consolation and Devotion consist not in that"; then, "thou wilt be the lesse troubled with dignity, and priority, and precedency in this world, for Rest and Quietnesse consist not in that" (*OES* 3:55). The bold implication behind Donne's exposition to this highest of auditories is that while the social stratifications on earth may have merit, according as God has measured them out, those titles and degrees do not privilege their holders in a location nearer to Christ in heaven than that of any other saint.

Donne confronts his exalted audience and places them in a rhetorical position that forces the issue: To assert that these social degrees do entitle one to be placed closer to the bosom of Christ insures that they are analogously acting like the Romanists. In heaven, "all soules shall be so intirely knit together, as if all were but one soule, and God so intirely knit to every soule, as if there were as many Gods as soules" (*OES* 3:54). In heaven, Donne intimates, God will be united as fully to the soul of a king as he is to the soul of a beggar. God thus violates the very social hierarchy that many imagined he set in place, an action most obviously bringing comfort to the beggar first. But, again with caution, Donne has issued an implicit warning: if the king or a member of his Chamber balks at such an idea, they are deriving their devotion and their comfort from the dust—and ultimately the kingdom of death—and not from the eternal presence of Christ. Here we see that dual hermeneutical movement of preaching: Donne alienates them from the assumptions and idols of earthly power and comfort in order to retrieve them into the comfort of salvation in Christ and his abundant mercies. Donne's sermon calls into question their desire for the tenuous comforts to be gained through social climbing. While they may be ascending the political spectrum through patronage and power, permitted in part through the

metaphor of the Great Chain of Being, their misplaced consolation and earthly ambitions actually create the conditions for their spiritually descending the scale of being—turning away from the realization of God as their highest point of strident identification, and towards the lower orders of the beasts.[57]

Dr. Donne's subtle knot of boldness and discretion demonstrates a shrewd awareness of his audience and confirms Marla Hoffman Lunderberg's characterization of Donne's discretion as "principled loyalty": his negotiation "between dutiful service and freely chosen methods of serving."[58] The full reality of Christ's presence is for all—*that* is the consolation. Significantly, in this sermon before the king Donne neither affirms nor negates the ceremonies of the church as accomplishing this aim. But he acknowledges that "wrangling and disputing" about the "Reall presence" of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper offers no comfort whatsoever; such doctrinal bickering threatens to induce "unnecessary doubts of his presence" and "fearfull assurances of his absence" (*OES* 3:55).[59] Instead, a believer's comfort derives from the realization that

> Christ is nearer us, when we behold him with the eyes of faith in Heaven, then when we seeke him in a piece of bread, or in a sacramental box here. . . . The best determination of the Reall presence is to be sure, that thou be really present with him, by an ascending faith.
> (*OES* 3:55)

That "ascending faith," towards which Donne inspires his congregation, is initiated and amplified by preaching, as Paul affirms in Romans 10:17. With considerable risk, Donne engages the controversy of Christ's presence in the sacraments, which may have caused the hairs on Charles' neck to bristle. As David Colclough notes, the Bishop of Gloucester, Godfrey Goodman, made the mistake of

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[57]For more on this common strategy of Donne's, see Nelson, *Holy Ambition*, pp. 75–80.

[58]Lunderberg, p. 98.

[59]For more on Donne's views regarding the debate of Christ's presence in the wine and bread, and his commonalities with Calvin and Hooker on this point, see Johnson, p. 139–45.

preaching on the doctrine in the presence of the king just three weeks earlier, and many found his formulation of Christ's presence to be too friendly with Roman Catholicism.[60] Donne's message is that "in the conversion of oneself to God . . . the 'Real Presence' exists in the believer instead of in the bread," as Jeanne Shami comments.[61] Donne's sermon thus placed real distance between Bishop Goodman's agenda and his own, and cleverly managed to avoid clarifying his own doctrinal stance through the rhetorical circumlocution of consolation. When Donne's "eyes looke up to Heaven, the eyes of all should looke up upon me, and God should open my mouth, to give them meat in due season" (*OES* 3:51). Congregants see Dr. Donne looking with rapture to heaven, share his blessed sight of assurance, devour the Word with their ears, and thus ascend to the comforting presence of Christ.

The result is the same epigrammatic transformation of Saul to Paul that Donne described in the 1625 sermon. Although "a licentious Goat, a supplanting Fox, an usurious Wolfe, [or] an ambitious Lion" may enter the auditory, the "Gospel of peace and consolation" effects a "Metamorphosis, a transformation, a new Creation in Jesus Christ" when they leave, whereby

> my Goat, and my Fox, and my Wolfe, and my Lion . . . become *Semen Dei*, the seed of God, and *Filium Dei*, the child of God, and *Participem Divinae Naturae*, Partaker of the Divine Nature itself; This is that which Christ is essentially in himselfe, This is that which ministerially and instrumentally he hath committed to me, to shed his consolation upon you, upon you all. . . . (*OES* 3:51)

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[60]Colclough, "Commentaries," *OES*, p. 291.

[61]Shami, "Troping," p. 114. Jeanne Shami briefly discusses this sermon in "Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion," arguing that the sermon is Donne's attempt to move away from the Montagu affair by "renovating" some of the terms of the debate. In the process, Donne "chastises controversialists of all descriptions, including Catholics who wrangle about the exact manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist . . . and rigid Calvinists who interpret the phrase in its narrowest sense to focus on God's power rather than on human efforts of faith" (p. 148).

The members of his auditory, including the king, are infinitely more than their possessions or social degrees. They, and the people over whom they have authority, are more than their bodies. And that should be a comfort. Donne's preacher is "a *Barnabas*, a son of Consolation," a figure who "unveils" and alienates the self from present circumstances or illusions and subsequently retrieves them to their proper condition before God: at the sick bed, he establishes health by instilling hope to the soul; when a fortune is lost, he is the friend whose words bring reparation; in the pulpit, he is the one that "restores and rectifies my conscience, and scatters, and dispels all those clouds that invested it, and infested it before" (*OES* 3:52). Preaching "transubstantiates" the self in multiple spiritual dimensions. Deborah Shugar has shed light on Donne's "absolutist theology," the tension throughout Donne's sermons at court between the idea that the preacher who submits to royal authority is also the one who exercises divine authority to preach to the king, and Peter McCullough has commented on Donne's odd blend of humility and self-elevation in this sermon along those absolutist lines.[62] Here, Donne's task has been principally to strip away the body's ornament, *including his own*—worldly acclaim, title, degree—to reveal the diseased and greedy soul in serious need of true comfort, and the soul of the self that is made naked before God and ready to be re-clothed to participate properly in the sacraments, ceremonies, and embodied relations of the church.

Nearly two weeks later on 30 April, Donne preached to the Household at Whitehall, an auditory which included some nobles busy with the day-to-day administration of serving the members of the upper Chamber, but which could have also contained the court elite, such that "a preacher could never pitch a sermon for a household very low."[63] Thus, Dr. Donne repeats his strategy of discretion while simultaneously preaching about the utter necessity of preaching. The text for the sermon is Matthew 9:13, where Christ confronts the Pharisees and declares, "I am not come to call the righteous, but

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[62]Deborah Kuller Shugar, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 159–217; McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," pp. 185–87.

[63]McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," p. 185.

sinners to repentance." Donne's *exordium* appears disjointed, as he moves through the continuities and discontinuities between the gospels in recording certain events. The first of these is Joseph's humble refusal "to expose [Mary] to dishonour and infamy" by publicly broadcasting her perceived infidelity in Matthew 1:19. The second of these episodes is recorded only in Mark (7:32), and involves Jesus' healing a man who was deaf and unable to talk. While Christ could have healed him with a word, he instead "was pleas'd to enlarge himself in all those ceremonial circumstances" to bring healing: the ceremony of the "imposition of hands, of piercing his ears with his fingers, of wetting his tongue with spittle." Donne then shifts his focus to an episode recounted only in Luke (2:42), in which Joseph and Mary "lose" Christ after departing the holy city of Jerusalem, only to find the twelve-year-old boy preaching in the Temple. Donne then remarks that only John (2:11) records Christ's changing the water into wine at the marriage in Cana. Finally, he comments that all four gospels mention the humility of John the Baptist before Christ (*OES* 3:57–58). The juxtaposition of these five incidents seems stylistically disjointed but innocuous enough. But we ought to examine more closely the clever strategy behind this opening gambit, for the whole tenor of the sermon is built on Donne's strident insistence on the power and necessity of preaching to call sinners to repentance: the alienation from sinful illusions of the self, and the retrieval of sinners made new in the body of Christ.

Let us begin with the second and third episodes. After recounting the story of Christ's healing the man who neither hears nor speaks, Donne comments that the "ceremony" of healing was unnecessary. This leads Donne to conclude that although we should not "undervalue such ceremonies as have been instituted in the Church," these ceremonies (not specifically named here by Donne) are "primarily, naturally, originally, fundamentally, and merely in themselves . . . not absolutely and essentially necessary." The ceremonies of the Church are not necessary for healing, but preaching *is*. Here is how the Gospel of Mark renders the episode: "And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, *Ephphatha*, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain" (7:34–35). Christ's word "opens" the man, freeing him to hear and to speak, to listen to the divine speech and to bear witness.

This episode is thus linked with the young Christ's speaking in the Temple to those gathered to hear. Mary and Joseph "lose" their son, even "in *Jerusalem*, in the holy City," but only find him again while he is preaching (*OES* 3:57). By "slackning" in preaching, Donne warns that like Joseph and Mary in Jerusalem, the English Church is in danger of "loosing Christ," even in so great a city as London. Instead of placing themselves under the preaching of Christ in his Temple, Donne implies that congregants who are deprived of preaching are "departing" the Church deaf and "speechless" like the man before his miraculous healing. To deemphasize preaching is to leave the congregation unrepentant, unregenerate, and without hope of being "brought thither" to paradise (*OES* 3:69).

Now we are able to draw the connection between the second and third episodes to the rest. In Donne's inconspicuous manner, he implies that he, as the priest married to the Church, is like the husband Joseph who exercises holy discretion by not publicly denouncing his bride Mary, as in the first episode. That discretion is underscored when we consider that this sermon was preached to the Household at Whitehall—"below stairs," as it were, to those servants under the Lord Steward who served the king and the upper Chamber at Whitehall, and not to the king himself.[64] Donne reasons that a good priest is like a good husband: he is not "utterly without all jealousie," for he guards the Church's integrity, "but yet not . . . so indulgent to her faults, when they were true faults" as to "make her faults, his" (*OES* 3:57). It is only by preaching, Donne insists, that the marriage celebration between priest and Church can be properly honored, and that the water can be turned—or, "transubstantiated," as we saw with the conversion of Saul—into the "miraculous supply of wine," as recounted in the fourth episode (*OES* 3:58). Donne now sews together all these previous episodes to the last, which occupies the strongest and most central link in the chain: that of John the Baptist,

[64]On the distinction between sermons preached to the king and those preached to the Household, see Kenneth Fincham, "Donne and Court Chaplaincy," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, 554–65, and G. E. Aylmer, *The King's Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625–1641* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). Peter McCullough notes that this sermon appears to be the only instance that specifically identifies itself as "to the Household." See McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," pp. 185–86.

whose calling the people to repentance, and whose directing his followers to the one whom "*he was not worthy to carry his shoes*," is recounted in all four gospels. Like John, the preacher is a "fore-runner of Christ," and his voice is not "Any voyce, but The voice," as Donne declares elsewhere (*SJD* 2:172). Like John, the preacher "in respect of Christ" calls others to repentance, knowing that "the best endeavors of Gods best servants, are unprofitable, unavailable in themselves, otherwise then as Gods gracious acceptation inanimates them, and as he puts his hand to that plough which they drive or draw" (*OES* 3:58).

In this way, preaching creates the conditions for God to put his hand to the believer's plough. Preaching thus accounts for one crucial strand in what Charles Taylor calls "webs of interlocution": the notion that one's self can only be understood in relation to other selves who initiate us into a common "language."

> One cannot be a self on one's own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding. . . .[65]

Proclamation initiates the individual self into the continued conversation with God, which then instigates the fundamental turn towards others in redeemed relations within the church. The "*calling* implies a voice, as well as a Word; it is by the Word, but not by the Word read at home, though that be a pious exercise; nor by the word [*sic*] submitted to private interpretation; but *by the Word preached* . . ." (*OES* 3:69). The proclamation of the Word is, for Dr. Donne, the common language that demands to be lived—embodied not just in the narrative of one's life, but in the life of the commonwealth, and most crucially in the life of the Church.

As we saw in his sermon on the conversion of Saul, preaching effects a "true Transubstantiation" as sinners and enemies of God are now made into his sons and daughters. In Christ's pronouncing his purpose to call, "we have a Negative, a fearful thing in Christs lips; . . .

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[65]Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 36.

an Exclusive, a fearful banishment out of his Ark" (*OES* 3:59). Left in the "Raggs" of his sin, the human creature "had no pre-disposition in Nature, to invite God to come to him" (*OES* 3:68). The proclamation of the Word is thus God's pure gift. Donne's emphasis on the ordinance of preaching here is understandable, for through preaching Christ is "*venit actu* . . . actually come" (*OES* 3:67). This is precisely why Donne places the importance here on preaching over the effects of the other sacraments and ceremonies. Christ's declaration, and Dr. Donne's insistence, is that he came "*vocare . . . to call*" sinners to repentance and transformation, not "*Occurrere*," to meet them along their way (*OES* 3:59). While Donne judiciously does not debase the value or power of the other sacraments and ceremonies, he avers that in the other sacraments and ceremonies sinners "meet" God along the way. But in preaching, the Holy Other that is disclosed does not "meet" the individual consciousness; rather, God consumes and transforms the individual consciousness. Consequently, it is by preaching in particular—a calling, alienating, and retrieving by the voice of the Lord calling one's name—that the circumstances necessary for congregants to meet God properly in the other sacraments and ceremonies are fostered.

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