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Political Play and Theological Uncertainty in the *Anniversaries*

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In 1610, five years before his ordination, Donne published *Pseudo-Martyr*, arguing that, in spite of fierce recusant arguments to the contrary, Catholics should take the Oath of Allegiance to King James. Donne's struggle with and against the Roman Catholic Church had been spread over many years, and his renunciation of the faith into which he had been baptized was a gradual process, and cannot be represented by one particular event. It is difficult to trace the development of Donne's thinking through the first thirty or forty years of his life since the dates of most of his poems are so speculative. We do know, however, that by 1597 and his twenty-fifth birthday, Donne was employed by Queen Elizabeth's Lord Keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton, himself an apostate.

The burden of Donne's ancestry must have been considerable if faithfulness to family tradition meant anything at all to him. His grandmother was a niece of Sir Thomas More. His Jesuit uncle, Jasper Heywood, who may have served as tutor to Donne and his brother Henry, was convicted of treason and condemned to be hanged, drawn and quartered when Donne was twelve. Henry himself died in prison before he came to trial for harboring a priest.

The agony of Donne's choice to leave the Catholic church meant, in the eyes of the Church, certain damnation. Some modern readers have surmised that Donne "chose hell" in return for a chance at courtly preferment and many have questioned Donne's motives in writing and publishing works like *Pseudo-Martyr* and the two *Anniversaries*, which followed in 1611 and 1612, because they seem to reveal a politically ambitious individual who would renounce his own faith, his family, and even his most loyal patron in return for the attention of well-connected social superiors, including, of course, the King.[1] In *Pseudo-Martyr* Donne argues the divine right of kings, a theory dear to the heart of King James I. In the *Anniversaries* he seems to be courting the favor of Sir Robert Drury, the father of Elizabeth Drury, whose "vntimely death" at the age of fourteen Donne publicly mourned in the poems even though he had never met the girl.[2]

These circumstances and his extravagant descriptions of the girl—in fact, his apparent beatification of her—often create an uncomfortable experience for the reader. But because of the certainty of their dates of composition and the resulting revelations about his various allegiances at this time in his life, the poems deserve close attention. Even at this late date within three to four years of his ordination, he does not reveal clear, unencumbered allegiances to either Protestant or Catholic doctrine. He is plainly influenced by each, so the *Anniversaries* become something of a hodgepodge of elements, creating confusion and explaining the diverse critical responses to the poems. This problem of focus is echoed in the very theme of the poems—that the world has fallen into discord from a previous state of harmony, a harmony which now can be found only with God and only after death—which is Elizabeth Drury's state to be envied. This concept—that the whole creation groans in its postlapsarian state—is basic Christian teaching. But Donne attributes the decay of the world to Elizabeth Drury's death.

Critics have offered a plethora of theories to explain Donne's lapse of taste. They have claimed variously, for example, that Donne was really writing about motherhood, St. Lucy, Sapience, Astraea, Elizabeth I, the Logos, the Virgin Mary, the Shekinah, the Protestant soul, Donne himself, Grace, or "a girl-symbol." Or they have concluded that he was writing elaborate and "malign jokes."[3] Ben Jonson offered the earliest criticism, saying to William Drummond of Hawthornden that "Dones Anniversarie was profane and full of Blasphemies. . . if it had been written of ye Virgin Marie it had been something. . . ." As I shall attempt to prove later, Jonson, closer to the truth than most have realized, was also a master of similar forms of flattery when called upon to produce court masques.

Donne's reply to Jonson's criticism was to insist "that he described the Idea of Woman and not as she was." This explanation has challenged critics to define just what that idea might have been and to attempt to tie it to a coherent system of structural unity within the poems. For the past few decades Louis Martz and Barbara Lewalski have been the originating forces behind much of the literary conversation about these poems—Martz representing the classical and Catholic side of the controversy and Lewalski presenting a Protestant reading.[4] The readings of the poems have become increasingly sophisticated and abundant, the conflicting interpretations creating an extended literary conversation testifying only to the poems' difficulties, not necessarily to their excellence. In spite of Ted Tayler's claim that the *Anniversaries* are "the two greatest poems between *The Faerie*

Queene and *Paradise Lost*,"[5] and his credible arguments against Lewalski's reading, the *Anniversaries* are interesting primarily because they present problems and puzzles for the reader. Patrick Grant writes, "Jonson was right, after all, to detect blasphemy. . . and yet the hyperbole itself goes some distance towards neutralising its own protest because, simply, it so often strikes us as an extravagant game, a huge, witty display which can veer off, for instance, into odd moments of perplexing satire: 'One woman at one blow, then kill'd us all,/ And singly, one by one, they kill us now'. . . ."[6] Ira Clark tackles the problem of "self-consciously witty misogyny" which he finds in the poems, showing how Donne presents an interpretation of the Fall which is inherently sexual, undercutting any critic's attempt to speak of Donne's "idea" as "ideal": "The recurring 'he' insists on maleness throughout the poem, lunging the 'Idea of a Woman' as far beneath men as she soars above them. So much for the microcosm in which woman inextricably signifies whore as well as madonna."[7]

These curious shifts in tone, which are especially evident in *The First Anniversary*, attest to the presence of a narrator with many voices—perhaps even a dialogic imagination. For example, the lines quoted above by Grant appear after 100 lines of serious encomium, at which point the tone abruptly lightens and suddenly evident is the witty language of the courtier:

> There is no health; Physitians say that we
> At best, enioy, but a neutralitee.
> And can there be worst sicknesse, then to know
> That we are neuer well, nor can be so?
> We are borne ruinous: poore mothers crie,
> That children come not right, nor orderly,
> Except they headlong come, and fall vpon
> An ominous precipitation.
> How witty's ruine? how importunate
> Vpon mankinde? It labour'd to frustrate
> Euen Gods purpose; and made woman, sent
> For mans reliefe, cause of his languishment.
> They were to good ends, and they are so still,
> But accessory, and principall in ill.
> For that first mariage was our funerall:
> One woman at one blow, then kill'd vs all,
> And singly, one by one, they kill vs now.
> We doe delightfuly our selues allow
> To that consumption; and profusely blinde,
> We kill our selues, to propagate our kinde.[8]

Bakhtin describes the Latin "parodia sacra" as a "hybrid of different languages," in particular a dialogue between "a dismal sacred word and a cheerful folk word."[9] Here in the *Anniversaries* Donne seems to be toying with just such a hybrid, presenting serious ideas and then stepping back from them, not quite denying them but certainly providing a qualifying voice if not a contradictory one. He seems to be simultaneously presenting ideas and resisting them, idealizing woman and chastising her.

In the next few lines, where Donne elaborates on the full effects of the Fall, which stunted humanity's growth,[10] even the rhyme accentuates Donne's comic interpretation of a serious theological concept:

> Alas, we scarse liue long enough to trie
> Whether a new made clocke runne right, or lie.
> Old Grandsires talke of yesterday with sorrow,
> And for our children we reserue to morrow.
> So short is life, that euery peasant striues,
> In a torne house, or field, to haue three liues.
> And as in lasting, so in length is man
> Contracted to an inch, who was a span.
> For had a man at first, in Forrests stray'd,
> Or shipwrack'd in the Sea, one would haue laid
> A wager that an Elephant, or Whale
> That met him, would not hastily assaile
> A thing so equall to him: now alas,
> The Fayries, and the Pigmies well may passe
> As credible; mankind decayes so soone,
> We're scarse our Fathers shadowes cast at noone. (129-144)

The flip tone surfaces again in some of the most familiar lines in the poems:

> And now the Springs and Sommers which we see,
> Like sonnes of women after fifty bee.
> And new Philosophy cals all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out. . . . (203-206)[11]

These deviations in tone indicate that something more complex is occurring than that which ordinarily happens in an elegy. The various intonations may reveal something about Donne's mixed motives in writing the poems. They also suggest that he is in the process of discovering a direction,

that he is undecided about his goals and unclear about his intentions. They also may reflect an inherent theological uncertainty at the core of the poems. In a sense, the reader is watching the poem as it is being written and Donne as he is creating his own persona. He seems to play the roles of both courtier and prophet, even though they are incompatible.

What Donne hoped to gain with the publication of these poems is also "hybrid." He succeeded in attracting the attention and favors of the Drurys with whom he was travelling in Europe by the time of the composition of *The Second Anniversary*. He also received negative responses, such as Jonson's, which he evidently had not anticipated—which brings us back to Jonson's specific criticism, particularly that "if it had been of the Virgin Marie it had been something." It seems highly unlikely that Donne was unaware of the implications of his comparisons of Elizabeth Drury with the Virgin Mary. Besides calling her "blessed maid" (*First*, 443) and "Immortall Maid" (*Second*, 516), he echoes the *Ave Maria* in *The Second Anniversary*:

> Who being heare fild with grace, yet stroue to bee,
> Both where more grace, and more capacitee
> At once is giuen: shee to Heauen is gone. . . . (465-67)

At the same time, however, Donne calls French Catholicism "mis-devotion." Writing from France where he was travelling with the Drurys, Donne announces himself to be:

> Here in a place, where mis-deuotion frames
> A thousand praiers to saints, whose very names
> The ancient Church knew not, Heauen knowes not yet. . . . (511-513)

Yet still he invokes the name of the "Immortal Maid," Elizabeth, saying "Could any Saint prouoke that appetite,/ Thou here shouldst make mee a french conuertite"(517-18). Edward Lowinsky claims that in the early sixteenth century it was a common phenomenon in hymns and songs to substitute an earthly woman for the Virgin Mary. Actually, the one example Lowinsky gives is not that of just any woman, but of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's ill-fated wife and mother of Elizabeth I.[12] Another example of the substitution of an earthly woman for the Virgin occurred in 1514 at the entry of Henry VIII's sister, Mary Tudor, into Paris after her marriage to Louis XII. At various pageant sites on her journey she was met with monuments of

architectural, religious and civic significance along with various tableaux presenting religious and mythological scenes. When she arrived at the royal Palace, she was greeted by a tableau of the Annunciation. On top of a scaffold stood Gabriel greeting her with the ancient message: "Hail Mary, full of grace."[13]

These examples from royalty lead logically to the consideration of another Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth Drury's namesake. Frances A. Yates and Roy Strong have pointed out the many correspondences between the symbols for the Virgin Mary and the symbols for Elizabeth I. Once again the substitution is evident, especially dramatic in a song in John Dowland's *Second Book of Airs:*

> When others sing *Venite exultemus!*
> Stand by and turn to *Noli emulari!*
> For *Quare fremuerant* use *Oremus!*
> *Vivat Eliza!* for an *Ave Mari!*[14]

By the early seventeenth century it seems that the practice of referring to female royalty as the second Virgin Mary was almost commonplace. There are further echoes of this iconographic mythology in public poetry mourning the Queen's death:

from "Epitaph on the Queen's Death"
by J. Jones

> . . .Whilst here shee liu'd well liu'd, shee spent her virgin yeares
> In Royall pompe amongst her wiser Peeres:
> Nor mought shee daygne with earthly Prince to ioyne,
> to bring forth issue from her virgin loyne:
> She had espoused her self to th'Lord of Life,
> So still shee liues, a maiden, and a wife.
> He bought her deare; and it was reason good
> He should her wedd, who bought her with his blood.
> So now shee's crown'd with blisse amongst those spirits,
> Which ransomed are, by Christ's all-saving merits.
> Little shee recks this world: ne had shee losse,
> Who got a crowne of blisse for one of drosse.
> England, thou maist ewaile her beeing dead,
> But more reioyce that her thou fostered.

Britain's Lachrimae
Weepe, little Isle, and for thy Mistris death
Swim in a double sea of brackish waters:
Weepe little world, weepe for great ELIZABETH;
Daughter of warre, for Mars himself begate her,
Mother of peace, for she bore the latter.
She was and is, what can there more be said,
In earth the first, in heaven the second Maid.
(Donation MSS. in the British Museum, 4712)[15]

The difference between the association of Elizabeth I with the Virgin Mary and earlier links between royalty and royal women was that for Elizabeth the connections were markedly political. The English nation needed images to replace those removed by Reformation zeal provoking the obliteration of statues of the Virgin and the saints. The Virgin Queen became the new Virgin Mary, and Elizabeth's Accession Day became a greater festival than any church holiday.[16] Shortly after her death an engraving was published reading: "The Maiden-Queen Elizabeth came into this world, the Eve of Nativity of the blessed virgin Mary; and died on the Eve of the Annunciation of the virgin Mary, 160[3].[17]

Such Elizabeth-Mary references seem to be intended echoes throughout the *Anniversaries;* for example, the context of two previously quoted lines in which "she" is described as one

Who by a faithfull confidence, was here
Betrothed to God, and now is married there,
Whose twilights were more cleare, then our mid day,
Who dreamt deuoutlier, then most vse to pray;
Who being heare fild with grace, yet stroue to bee,
Both where more grace, and more capacitee
At once is giuen: shee to Heauen is gone,
Who made this world in some proportion
A heauen, and here, become vnto vs all,
Ioye, (as our ioyes admit) essentiall. (*Second*, 461-470)

Marjorie Hope Nicolson has already suggested that Donne seemed to have had Elizabeth I in mind as he wrote the poems. Probably because she did not fully develop this idea, and probably also because the credibility of some of her ideas was undermined by her eccentric "double shee" theory, the connection of Elizabeth I and Elizabeth Drury has been largely ignored. Even

though Nicolson's assertion that Donne in the *Anniversaries* was writing "the greatest poetic tribute to Elizabeth after *The Faerie Queene*"goes too far by making what is secondary in the poem primary, yet Donne was echoing references to the Queen in his obvious comparisons of Elizabeth Drury to Astraea and the Virgin Mary.[18] When the child died, the Queen had been dead only seven years, so the images and the mythology she had so carefully constructed were still vivid in the memory of the English nation.

The early reference to the death of the Queen in *The First Anniversary* would have evoked some of these memories. Here the connections Donne is forcing between the two Elizabeths is unmistakable:

> When that Queene ended here her progresse time,
> And, as t'her standing house, to heauen did clymbe,
> Where, loth to make the Saints attend her long,
> Shee's now a part both of the Quire, and Song,
> This world, in that great earth-quake languished;
> For in a common Bath of teares it bled,
> Which drew the strongest vitall spirits out:
> But succour'd then with a perplexed doubt,
> Whether the world did loose or gaine in this. . . . (7-15)

The Queen (either Elizabeth Drury or Elizabeth I) ends her final Progress through the world and climbs to"her Heauen" (1), her permanent palace, while the world languishes in tears and doubt, a motif picked up in the later reference to "states doubtfull of future heyres" (43). The doubts before Elizabeth I's death were exactly these; the succession had been a serious political concern for some time, since she had persistently, until the very end, refused to name an heir, even though it was generally understood that the throne would go to James VI of Scotland.

That the heavens were hers had been acknowledged iconographically for some time and were dramatically realized in John Case's *Sphaera civitatis* (1588) (See illustration 1.) in which the Queen's name and title appear in the *primum mobile*, the ninth sphere, usually reserved for God. She herself stands beyond the ninth sphere, and holds the universe in her large embrace. This placement of Elizabeth in the position of the divine appeared as early as 1569 where she was enthroned as the creator on the title page of the *Bishop's Bible*.[19] (See Illustration 2.) The heavens most certainly belong to her. *The Second Anniversary* claims:

> As these prerogatiues being met in one,
> Made her a soueraigne state, religion
> Made her a Church. . . . (374-76)

The world's reaction to the death in *The First Anniversary* is to have "fits" and to "joy" and "mourn" simultaneously (20), similar to the joint mourning/celebration at the death of any monarch: "The Queen is dead! Long live the King!" The early lines of the poem contain a further embedded reference to another significant historical occurrence in Elizabeth's reign. James was eager to create precedent-setting connections between the Queen and his son Henry, heir to his own throne, so when she consented to be named godmother to the Prince, King James was willing to postpone the baptism several times when her representative's arrival was delayed.

> For as a child kept from the Font, vntill
> A Prince, expected long, come to fulfill
> The Ceremonies, thou vnnam'd hadst laid,
> Had not her comming, thee her Palace made:
> Her name defin'd thee, gaue thee forme and frame. . . . (33-36)

The poem also alludes several times to Astraea, a mythological figure long associated with the Queen: "in all, shee did,/ Some Figure of the Golden times, was hid" (*Second*, 69-70). In addition, Elizabeth's most outstanding military exploit was the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada which may be implied in

> Shee, who beeing to herselfe a state, enioyd
> All royalties which any state emploid,
> For shee made wars, and triumph'd . . . . (359-61)

It is quite possible that Donne meant to suggest another Triumph, well-known in his day. In 1601 Thomas Morley published *The Triumphes of Oriana*, a collection of twenty-five madrigals written in honor of Queen Elizabeth. These madrigals develop a pattern of imagery which is echoed in the two *Anniversaries*. All of the madrigals, with one exception, end with the refrain:

> Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana
> Long live fair Oriana.[20]

Only the last ends with "in heav'n lives Oriana," suggesting that Oriana's triumph, like Elizabeth Drury's is that she has become part of the eternal. The theme of harmony and the heavenly music of the spheres, a pattern which is central in the *Anniversaries* also finds expression in these madrigals.

> Sing shepherds all and in your roundelays
> Sing only of fair Oriana's praise.
> The Gods above will help to bear a part
> And men below, will try their greatest art
> Though neither gods nor men can well apply
> Fit song or tune to praise her worthily.
>
> Hark hear you not a heav'nly harmony
> Is't Jove think you that plays upon the spheres
> Heav'ns is not this heav'nly melody
> Where Jove himself a part in music bears
> Now comes in a quire of Nightengales
> Mark mark how the nymphs and shepherds of the dales
> How all do join together in the praise
> Of Oriana's life and happy days.

The point is that Donne seems to be continually reminding the reader of the previous monarch. Her presence lurks just under the surface of the poems. The question, of course, is why Donne, who had such an intense interest in a political appointment, would choose to publish poems filled with unmistakable references to Elizabeth I when it was not Elizabeth's attention he was courting but that of King James? The most likely explanation for this odd inclination has to do with Prince Henry, Elizabeth's godson, and heir to the throne of England, Scotland, and Wales.

The future Henry IX of England was sixteen in 1610, and in June of that year, six months before the death of Elizabeth Drury, England celebrated his investiture as the Prince of Wales. A possible marriage between these two young people was rumored, but never substantiated and was probably politically unlikely.[21] At any rate, the Prince's public image had been carefully crafted since his infancy. Raised apart from his parents, but under the strict orders of his father, he was groomed by male tutors to assume the role of "*Fidei Restituor*" which many Protestants hoped he would adopt from his namesake Henry VIII, who brought the Protestant Reformation to England. The image of the Prince as consummate soldier and expert warrior

was at odds with his father's image of peace-maker, and it was clear that at times the King had a difficult task trying to bridle his son's desire for battle and for a more public role. The Prince had great popular appeal, although as J. W. Williamson has described it: "He was a prince playing a prince, the symbolic role-player who moved simultaneously through three worlds—the actual, the poet's fiction, and the combined mythologized image in the eye of the beholders. At the opening of 1610 Prince Henry had indeed arrived at a kind of apotheosis in his personation." The problem in this personation was that the boy was given two incompatible roles to play simultaneously: that of the unassailable warrior and that of the self-sacrificing servant. As Williamson puts it, "Henry was ceremoniously dressed in the robes of the conqueror while he was being led to the slaughtering stone of martyrdom."[22] He was expected to be fluent in both languages.

Perhaps this double nature appealed to Donne, the master of the double attitude, or perhaps he was simply even more calculating and ambitious about attracting the King's attention and that of his heir. At any rate, within seven months of Henry's investiture, and soon after the death of Elizabeth Drury, Donne was writing a poem in which he seemed very purposely to be invoking images and myths which had recently been re-introduced in the Prince's honor. Henry was imaged as the Faerie Prince, as the inheritor of Astraea's sword, as the true heir of chivalry and of the Elizabethan golden age. Inigo Jones designed the sets for the tilt which was held on June 5th, the day following the ceremonies. In it the Prince, the "Shepherd Knight," participated in activities which recalled Elizabeth's annual Accession Day tilts.[23] The court masque, which had become especially popular under James, provided the perfect opportunity to secure enduring symbols of royalty in the minds of court and subjects, and this festive occasion celebrating the future king was no exception. Ben Jonson composed two masques (Inigo Jones once again designed the sets) honoring the event: *Prince Henry's Barriers*, performed January 6, 1610, and *Oberon, The Fairy Prince* performed January 1, 1611 with the Prince himself in the title role. At one point in the masque Silenus points to Oberon-Prince Henry and says:

> He is the matter of virtue, and placed high.
> His meditations to his height are even,
> And all their issue is akin to heaven.
> He is a god o'er kings, yet stoops he then
> Nearest a man when he doth govern men,
> To teach them by the sweetness of his sway. . .

> . . .'Tis he that stays the time from turning old,
> And keeps the age up in a head of gold. . . . (258-63, 67-68)[24]

Jonson had the unenviable task of writing masques for the Prince which did not work against the King's mythology. James envisioned himself as Solomon and as peace-maker—roles at odds with the mythology Prince Henry encouraged for himself—the fairy knight, the warrior. In *Oberon*, the Prince played the part of the son of King Arthur. That forced the role of Arthur onto James, and the fit was definitely awkward.

Patricia Fumerton has found sound indications that in their design of the masques for Henry, Inigo Jones and Jonson had in mind several paintings of the Annunication She observes that "to see the connection requires only that we superimpose the Annunciations we have seen over Inigo Jones's stage designs while transposing 'divinity' into the haloed subjectivity of the royal 'self.'" She also points out that both James and Henry are put into the role of "promised son," of the Virgin Mary, and finally of God.[25] The only real difference between Jonson's form of flattery and Donne's was that Jonson was at court and Donne was not. How short-sighted of Jonson to interpret Donne's work as blasphemy when his own work used the same sacred connections to make its point. But then he was in the center of political power and that gave him prerogatives Donne could only dream of—which of course he did constantly.

The reign of Oberon, however, was tragically short-lived. In November of 1612 the Prince of Wales died of typhoid fever. The myths of Astraea, the Faery Prince, the Red Cross Knight, the heir of Gloriana, no longer had their object. After 1612 the references to Elizabeth's reign, to her as the second Virgin Mary, would no longer serve to ally Donne with court mythologies. Only for this short time, between June of 1610 and November of 1612 had they been appropriate.

Just as Jonson faced special difficulties writing masques to suit both Prince and King, so Donne encountered tricky theological choices as he wrote the *Anniversaries*. Louis Martz has described the influence of Ignatian meditation on the poems. Donne could not, of course, slough off his Catholic upbringing like a snakeskin. He would forever, even as an Anglican divine, reveal his Catholic rootedness. But now he was writing for a Protestant family, the Drurys, hoping for an appointment from a Protestant king, who, as the son of Mary Queen of Scots, had a certain Catholic heritage of his own, although he was raised completely separated from his mother by strict Calvinists. But in 1600 James' wife, Queen Anne of Denmark, converted to

Catholicism. It was probably for this reason that the King realized Henry must be raised apart from her influence unless he was willing to jeopardize his claim to the English crown. James tried to steer a middle course between the Catholics and the Puritans, but his son Henry's household possessed a definite Calvinist tone.

The First Anniversary is infused with much more of a Roman Catholic spirit than *The Second Anniversary*. One Catholic teaching which permeates the poem is that of the indwelling spirit or inhabitation—that is, the doctrine that God is specially present in baptized and justified believers, in this case, Elizabeth Drury. Augustine had explained: "Although God is everywhere wholly present, he does not dwell in everyone. . . .and he does not dwell equally in those in whom he does dwell. . . . We say, then that the Holy Spirit dwells in baptized children although they do not know it. They are unconscious of him although he is in them. He is said to dwell in such as these because he works in them secretly that they may be his temple, and he perfects his work in them as they advance in virtue and persevere in their progress."[26] Also, according to this doctrine, as it was explained by Aquinas, God is present intimately in the soul. He gives himself personally so that he is not only in the soul but belongs to the soul. The soul possesses God as its property, since "by the gift of sanctifying grace the rational creature is perfected so that it can finally use not only the created gift but enjoy also the divine person."[27] This seems similar to Donne's description of Elizabeth Drury—a soul possessing God as its property. It was a Catholic doctrine explicity rejected by the Lutherans in the 1580 Formula of Concord.[28]

Another indication that Donne is not speaking from a Protestant viewpoint occurs early in *The First Anniversary*:

> Because since now no other way there is
> But goodnes, to see her, whom all would see,
> All must endeauour to be good as shee. . . . (16-18)

In other words, the only way to be reunited with her is to strive for goodness so that one may end up in heaven with her. This, according to Luther, is an example of active righteousness, the direction reason always leads—a direction astray—to good works (instead of faith by grace) for justification.[29] This is certainly not sound Protestant doctrine. But it is practically the first theological concept presented in the poem.

On the other hand, Donne also explores Christian doctrines that would have been shared by both Protestant and Catholic readers. The theme of the

Fall is pervasive in the poem, and Donne is very strong on original sin, although as we have seen, he has some quirky ideas about the responsibility of women for the loss of Eden. He of course was not alone in expressing these ideas. His expressed beliefs about the incarnation, heaven, and hell are orthodox. By the end of *The First Anniversary* Donne makes a further claim. He compares his role as poet to that of Moses, to whom God gave a song to teach his people and to help them remember the teachings. Donne seeks a middle way—that of poetry:

> Which when I saw that a strict graue could do,
> I saw not why verse might not doe so too.
> Verse hath a middle nature: heauen keepes soules,
> The graue keeps bodies, verse the fame enroules. (471-474)

Between heaven and the grave is this poem, Donne says, clearly presenting himself as a prophet, and a channel for God.

The Second Anniversary, on the other hand, anchors Donne more firmly within a Reformation context. Luther's argument about the necessity of offering the communion in both kinds to the laity, for example, is echoed in lines describing the sacrament of the Eucharist—in particular the blood of Christ, that element which had been denied the laity by the Catholic church[30]:

> Thirst for that time, O my insatiate soule,
> And serue thy thirst, with Gods safe-sealing Bowle.
> Bee thirsty still, and drinke still till thou go;
> 'Tis th'onely Health, to be Hydropique so. (45-48)

Another markedly Protestant text is found in Donne's reference to the Virgin Mary as the mother of God:

> Where thou shalt see the blessed Mother-maid
> Ioy in not being that, which men haue said.
> Where shee'is exalted more for being good,
> Then for her interest, of mother-hood. (341-344)

Here Donne offers criticism of any who would extol the Virgin Mary for her sinlessness rather than for her humble acceptance of her role as the mother of God. Donne is taking on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, which Reformation theologians considered heretical. In a 1538 sermon Luther said, "But though Mary had been conceived in sin, the Holy

Spirit takes her flesh and blood and purifies them; and thence He creates the body of the Son of God."[31]

And yet, in spite of these strongly Protestant references, and in spite of Donne's assertion that in France "mis-devotion" (that is, Catholicism) reigns, Donne ends *The Second Anniversary* with lines that flatter Elizabeth Drury by coming as close as he can to calling her saint. This is no Protestant saint as in the "priesthood-of-all-believers," but a Catholic saint, probably even another Virgin Mary.

> Here in a place, where mis-deuotion frames
> A thousand praiers to saints, whose very names
> The ancient Church knew not, Heauen knowes not yet,
> And where, what lawes of poetry admit,
> Lawes of religion, haue at least the same,
> Immortall Maid, I might inuoque thy name.
> Could any Saint prouoke that appetite,
> Thou here shouldst make mee a french conuertite. (511-518)

So where does Donne stand in these poems? Which voice is his? Catholic or Protestant? Poet or sycophant? Could he possibly be writing a poem in which he is all of these things at once? Does such a conclusion necessarily deconstruct both Donne and his work? Or does it, perhaps, describe cosmos in a characteristic state of chaos—on its way to order and clarity, but not there yet? Lindsay A. Mann makes a pertinent point in the observation that Donne completes nothing in these poems because he is still undergoing a process which has not finished, and which will not finish until after death.[32]

Donne's predicament seems similar to that of the English church at the time, which was its own creation—neither Catholic nor avowedly Lutheran nor completely Calvinist—but rather a combination of elements uniquely English. The King as head of the church was faced with a peculiar set of difficulties, and in attempting to resolve them, he could not be completely consistent. For example, his well-known statement, "No bishop, no King" did not sit well with the Puritans, but James knew that if one began to do away with all of the traditional hierarchies, his own self-proclaimed divine right to the throne would be challenged, too. And yet he simultaneously possessed certain strongly Calvinistic views . Another example is his *Basilikon Doron*, a Renaissance handbook for monarchs which he dedicated to his son Henry. In it he urged in Calvinist tones, a certain measure of discipline "to banish idleness" at court. The reality, however, was that he himself kept a stylish,

expensive, and sophisticated court. As Maurice Lee has pointed out, James was learned and theological, but he was not pious. His church was "Calvinist in doctrine and episcopal in polity." He was interested in including Catholics in high office, so long as they were quiescent. He promoted Arminians within the episcopacy. He wanted mainly to keep controversies and discussion private. He sanctioned no public altercations, no contentious public debates.[33] The hybrid languages of James and of Donne do not seem to be the result of conflict and compromise. Instead, they seem to be the expression of many voices engaged in a conversation which does not necessarily have a clear direction or a neat resolution. Donne, in attempting to prove himself ready once again for a public appointment, was actually proving to James that he was exactly the kind of Catholic the King wanted in his church.

Most critics consider *The Second Anniversary* the better of the two poems; perhaps its more consistently Protestant orientation contributes to a more unified tone. Could it be that travelling in France with the Drurys exposed Donne to more traditional Protestant reactions to Catholic doctrine? The following year Donne wrote his anti-Catholic polemic, *Ignatius His Conclave*. Bald has observed that while in France with the Drurys, Donne was interested enough in the religious controversies to attempt to contact Edmond Richer, a Sorbonne theologian in trouble with Rome because of his position on the authority of the Pope.[34] Donne also wrote to his friend Henry Goodyer about another conflict he observed:

> They of the religion held a Synod at this time in this Towne, in which the principall business is to rectifie, or at least to mature, against their Provincial Synod, which shall be held in May, certain opinions of Tilenus, a divine of Sedan, with which the Churches of France are scandalized. The chief point is, Whether our salvation be to be attributed to the passive merit of Christ, which is his death, or to his active also, which is his fulfilling of the Law. But I doubt not but that will be well composed, if Tilenus who is here in person with two other assistants, bring any disposition to submit himself to the Synod, and not onely to dispute. I doe (I thank God) naturally and heartily abhorre all schism in Religion so much, as I protest, I am sorry to find this appearance of schism amongst our adversaries the Sorbonists. . . .[35]

In France, Donne seems to have been actively engaged in thought on one of the basic issues of Reformation theology, the difference as Luther described it between active righteousness and passive righteousness. In the letter to Goodyer Donne describes a particular facet of the argument—that which questions whether Christ himself was actively or passively righteous or both. The Calvinist position would insist that Christ was both an instrument acted upon and used by God and an example of free will perfected and unbound, capable of choosing self-sacrifice for the benefit of humanity. Donne is sceptical about Tilenus's motives, suspecting that the Reformed minister was merely interested in the game of "dispute" for its own sake. Donne seems to support the orthodox Reformed position which espouses the active righteousness of Christ.[36]

In *The First Anniversary*, Elizabeth Drury was held up as an impossible ideal, more like the Law which could never be obeyed perfectly. In fact, her perfection and example were reasons enough for the world to despair because it must forever be convicted of its own deficiencies in comparison to her perfection. In *The Second Anniversary*, her perfection is merely accepted as an ideal to be reached for, but never perfectly imitated, giving her a peculiarly New Testament identification.[37] It is true that this Sapience-Christ figure provides an impossible pattern for human behavior, but according to Protestant doctrine, what is to be learned from it is the proper place for grief and repentance. As has been previously noted, Donne veers very close to invoking the girl's name as a Roman Catholic would the Virgin Mary's or a saint's, but he issues a disclaimer saying to the spirit of Elizabeth Drury, "But thou wouldst not" have me do that. Donne acknowledges that God should be the recognizable presence in the poem, overshadowing both Donne himself and Elizabeth Drury.

> Since his will is, that to posteritee,
> Thou shouldest for life, and death, a patterne bee,
> And that the world should notice haue of this,
> The purpose, and th'Autority is his;
> Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame
> The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came. (511-528)

The final emphasis, then, is on Drury's and Donne's acceptance of grace, and the admission that no good thing can be done without God's intervention,

sound Protestant doctrine, even though Donne seems also to acknowledge that he has painted the girl in saintly robes, as a pattern to be imitated. The conclusion is not without its ambiguities and ambivalences.

The Old Testament reading for the evening of December 17th, the day of Elizabeth Drury's funeral, was listed in *The Booke of Common Prayer* as Isaiah 48, a chapter which expresses God's judgment on Israel. In spite of the transgression, God defers his anger and says, "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob." The song is God's; the instrument is Donne, who realizes that alone he cannot create harmony. He can, however, at least be a channel through which it may be expressed.

It is clear that Donne does not see possibilites for heavenly harmony in any earthly church, Protestant or Catholic, which is of course orthodox Christian belief. He does say, however, that heaven throws a few glimmers—half-lights—to earth, suggestions of music, memories of it, even faint echoes of the harmony that exists in God but cannot exist in full measure under the sphere of the moon. Is Donne playing the role of James in these poems, attempting to reflect the King's ideas about the English church—convictions which were neither Catholic nor Lutheran nor Calvinist, but rather an Anglican combination of elements peculiarly English? The King was interested in establishing a middle ground in religion. Motivated by the desire for personal aggrandizement, Donne seemed after a similar middle ground in his political posturings, which very naturally included his religious position. Because there was no real separation between religion and politics, this middle ground was necessarily slippery, especially for a man with Donne's protean capabilities. In attempting to attract the attention of the Drurys through the publication of these poems, Donne also revealed his astute awareness of the acceptable political metaphors of the time, metaphors which would do two things at once: lavishly memorialize the dead child, and compliment the Prince of Wales. For this brief moment in history—1610-1612—these metaphors were viable.

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Notes

[1]John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981, 1990), p. 11. Carey's first chapter begins with these lines: "The first thing to remember about Donne is that he was a Catholic; the second, that he betrayed his Faith."

[2]Donne later regretted publishing the poems. He was severely criticized and risked losing the valuable patronage of Lucy, Countess of Bedford as a result of his extravagant praise of Elizabeth Drury.

[3]D.W. Harding, "Coherence of Theme in Donne's Poetry," *Kenyon Review* 13 (1951): 427-44; Richard E. Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1968); Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the New Science upon Seventeenth Century Poetry* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1950); Frank Manley, *John Donne: The Anniversaries* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963); P.G. Stanwood, "'Essential Joy' in Donne's *Anniversaries*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 13 (1971): 227-38; Barbara K. Lewalski, *Donne's 'Anniversaries' and the Poetry of Praise* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1973); Ruth Fox, "Donne's *Anniversaries* and the Art of Living," *English Literary History* 38 (1971): 528-41; Marius Bewley, "Religious Cynicism in Donne's Poetry," *Kenyon Review* 14 (1952): 619-46.

[4]Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979); Lewalski, *Donne's 'Anniversaries' and the Poetry of Praise*; Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

[5]Edward W. Tayler, *Donne's Idea of a Woman: Structure and Meaning in The Anniversaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. ix.

[6]Patrick Grant, *Literature and the Discovery of Method in the English Renaissance* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), p. 91.

[7]Ira Clark, "'How witty's ruine': the Difficulties of Donne's 'Idea of a Woman' in the First of his *Anniversaries*," *John Donne Journal* 53 (Jan. 1988): 24.

[8]Frank Manley, ed., *John Donne: The Anniversaries* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), lines 91-110. All further references will be to this edition.

[9]Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 76.

[10]"Is this Donne's way of telling us that the poem is not of course simply about a dead girl, but is really about the loss of the qualities that this young and innocent being may be taken to represent: youth, beauty, purity, virtue, religion? 'Who it is

that's gone' is something that has long been away, long, long, every since the fall of man, ever since the fall of the angels. . . . There can be no progress, no redemption, in such a dissected structure: the *Anatomy* suggests a mind caught in a deadly oscillation, caught in a narrowing gyre that ends in the grave." Louis L. Martz, "Donne's *Anniversaries* Revisited," *That Subtle Wreath*, ed. Margaret W. Pepperdene(Atlanta: Agnes Scott College, 1973), p. 40.

[11]Arthur F. Marotti agrees that the tone in these lines is much more comic than most critics have acknowledged. *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 240.

[12]Edward E. Lowinsky, *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance and Other Essays*, ed. Bonnie J. Blackburn (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 2: 500.

[13]Edward E. Lowinsky, ed., *The Medici Codex of 1518: A Choirbook of Motets Dedicated to Lorenzo De' Medici, Duke of Urbino* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 3: 221. See also Charles Read Baskervill, ed., *Pierre Gringore's Pageants for the Entry of Mary Tudor into Paris: An Unpublished Manuscript* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. xxvi.

[14]*An English Garner*, (1882) 4: 524-4. Quoted in Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 78. See also Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabeth and Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 16.

[15]John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* (London; New York: Burt Franklin, 1823), 3: 652.

[16]Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabeth and Portraiture and Pageantry*, pp. 16, 114.

[17]Christopher Haigh, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1987), p. 6.

[18]Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the New Science upon Seventeenth Century Poetry* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1950), p. 79.

[19]Andrew Belsey and Catherine Belsey, "Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I," in *Renaissance Bodies: the Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), p. 28. See also Yates, p. 64.

[20]Thomas Morley, *The Triumphes of Oriana* (1601; London: Hawes, undated), pp. 60-69.

[21]Manley, p. 1.

[22]J. W. Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror: Prince Henry Stuart: A Study of 17th Century Personation* (New York: AMS Press, 1978), pp. 65, 79.

[23]Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986), pp. 158-59.

[24]Ben Jonson, *The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

[25]Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 154-55. See also Williamson, p. 99; Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales*, p. 171; and Graham Parry, *The Seventeenth Century: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1603-1700* (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 16-17.

[26] Augustine, "Augustine, bishop, to his beloved brother, Dardanus," in *Saint Augustine: Letters,* ed. Hermigild Dressler O.F.M. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1955), pp. 232,233,241.

[27] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Question 43, 3rd Article, Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans. (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947-48), 221.

[28]*The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 475.

[29]"Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians," in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 103.

[30]See "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" printed as "The Pagan Servitude of the Church" in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger, (New York: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 249-359.

[31] *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, ed. Ewald M. Plass, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), I: 152.

[32] ". . . in assimilating Donne to the model of Protestant doctrine, readers such as Lewalski have blurred Donne's most characteristic emphases. Donne's primary concern is not the restored image of God in the regenerate but the process of restoration and therefore human pain and effort in striving to achieve it. Donne in particular stresses suffering as purgatorial and contritional, as preparation for a resurrection that is experienced fully only after death." Lindsay A. Mann, "The Typology of Woman in Donne's *Anniversaries*," *Renaissance and Reformation/ Renaissance et Reforme* 11 (Fall 1987): 340.

[33]Maurice Lee, *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 165-184.

[34]R. C. Bald, *Donne and the Drurys* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), p. 97.

[35]Donne to Goodyer, Paris, April 9, 1612 in *Letters to Several Persons of Honour by John Donne*, ed. Charles E. Merril (New York: 1910), pp. 113-14.

[36]Paul R. Sellin, *John Donne and 'Calvinist' Views of Grace* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1983), pp. 28-29.

[37]See Lewalski *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, p. 27 ff; Joseph A. Galdon, *Typology and Seventeenth Century Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 109.