

John Donne, Governor of Charterhouse

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John Donne's service as a Governor of Charterhouse, a charitable "hospital" founded by Thomas Sutton to provide education and lodging for needy men and boys, has long been known. The standard biography of the poet, begun by R. C. Bald and finished by Wesley Milgate, notes that Donne attended each Assembly of the Governors during his term of service, from 1626 until 1631.¹ In fact, Donne's participation in the meeting of 26 February 1630/31, a month before his death, "was probably the last engagement away from home that he was able to keep" (Bald, p. 528). However, Milgate notes that "Professor Bald was unable to consult the muniments of the Charterhouse, which were in store in the country during the Second World War and the subsequent restoration of the buildings" (Bald, p. 424n). For his "information about the contents of the Assembly Books," Milgate had to rely on a report prepared by "the Master and the Registrar," who very kindly supplied the facts recorded" in the finished biography (Bald, p. 424n). The recent transfer of the Charterhouse papers to the Greater London Record Office has now made it possible to investigate more fully Donne's involvement with "Sutton's Hospital." We can now go beyond the biography's bare list of meetings attended and gain a fuller sense of what Donne's role as Governor involved, how he discharged his duties, and with whom he served. Examining the relevant Assembly Book reveals that Donne was one of the most active and conscientious of all the Governors and that he was intimately involved with the routine management and supervision of the institution.² The Assembly Book also shows the kinds of issues—including socially controversial ones—that he and the other Governors confronted, and how they dealt with them. The Charterhouse records give us a fuller sense of how Donne spent a good deal of his time, energy, and attention in the last five years of his life.

Donne's service at Charterhouse was important for a number of reasons. Although most of the business the Governors transacted was routine and mundane, some of the problems they faced were politically and socially significant, such as complaints by the poor against enclosures. Moreover, Donne's position as Governor gave him regular access to and involvement with some of the most powerful figures in Church and state, men who were in a

position to advance or retard his career, depending in part on their assessment of how he performed his Charterhouse duties. Donne, in turn, could benefit Charterhouse through his courtly and ecclesiastical connections, and through his links to London's legal establishment. His service at Charterhouse allowed him to draw on and to hone the administrative and management skills that were so necessary to his chief role during this period, as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. In addition, Charterhouse could serve as a laboratory for experiments in practical Christian charity and as a rebuke to those Catholics who claimed that Protestants neglected good works. Almost from the start, Sutton's Hospital had been seen as a symbol of the philanthropy of the reformed religion; and Donne, that vigorous controversialist, must surely have concurred. Service at Charterhouse gave him the chance to practice the kind of benevolence he called for in his sermons, and, in fact, two of the sermons delivered during this period gain added interest when seen from the perspective of his role as a Governor. Finally, Donne's responsibilities for administering a charitable institution help cast an interesting light on the evidence of his private charity that has come down to us from his letters and other sources. For all these reasons and others, Donne's involvement with "Sutton's Hospital" seems worth exploring in some detail.

Thomas Sutton, reputedly the richest commoner of his day, had built a large fortune from coal leases and then had multiplied it even more by prudent money-lending. In the decade leading up to his death in 1611, Sutton had made it known that he intended to endow a charitable institution, and in his final years that plan began to take definite shape. From Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, he purchased a former Carthusian monastery known as the Charterhouse, which he intended as the site of his hospital. Parliamentary legislation cleared the way for the institution's establishment, and by the time Sutton died in December 1611, he had signed a deed conveying the hospital to the care of its first board of Governors.³

The composition of this board was heavily weighted toward prominent courtiers and church officials, and it is chiefly this fact that explains Donne's appointment. In 1626 he replaced Valentyne Cary, the recently deceased Bishop of Exeter, who had preceded Donne as Dean of St. Paul's before both men were promoted in 1621. Cary's death now opened his seat on the board of Governors, and Donne succeeded him there as he had succeeded him earlier at St. Paul's, just as Donne himself would someday be succeeded as both Dean and Governor by Thomas Winniff. The Assembly Book records Donne's election as the first item of business for the meeting of 6 July 1626:

Dr Donne chosen
a Gouvernor

Wee doe nomynate elect Choose and
appointe the right wo[rshipfull]
John Dvnne Doctor of Divinitye and Deane of

Powles to be a Governor of the said Hospitall in the Rometh and place of the Right Reu[er]end ffather in God Valentyne Cary Lord Bishopp of Exeter lately deceased being a Governor of the same.⁴

The board Donne joined was composed of some of the kingdom's most powerful men, and Donne's regular meetings with them at Charterhouse seem to have been among his key points of contact with influential people in the last five years of his life. The status that Donne the courtier had long sought finally came to Donne the churchman, and his appointment as a Governor of Charterhouse was both a sign of his new prominence and an opportunity to enhance it. The Governors who met to elect Donne in July 1626 included some men with whom he had long been familiar, as well as some others with whom he would now have a chance to establish closer connections. Although Donne was one of the least senior members of the board (a fact that helps explain the intensity of his activities), his service at Charterhouse offered him a chance to display his talents and good judgment before a discerning and powerful audience.

The members who elected Donne in July 1626 included George Abbot, one of the original Governors and still the Archbishop of Canterbury; Thomas Coventry, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal; Henry Montagu, Earl of Manchester and Lord President of the Privy Council; William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain and subsequently Lord Steward; George Mountain, an original Governor who was now Bishop of London (and was thus Donne's immediate ecclesiastical superior); Lancelot Andrewes, an original Governor now serving as Bishop of Winchester; Sir Robert Heath, the Attorney General; Sir Henry Martin, Dean of Arches; Sir Robert Dallington, Master of the Hospital, who owed his appointment to the patronage of Prince Charles; and Sir Richard Sutton, the founder's cousin (fol. 188). Other members who would join the board during Donne's term of service included John Buckeridge, Bishop of Rochester and then of Ely (who became a Governor on 27 October 1626); Philip Herbert (brother of William), Earl of Montgomery, successor to his brother first as Lord Chamberlain and then as Lord Steward (who joined the board on 19 March 1627); William Laud, Mountain's successor as Bishop of London, who became a Governor on 31 October 1628; Sir Randall (or Randolph) Crewe, elected on the same day as Laud; and Sir Richard Weston, Lord Treasurer (who replaced the deceased Earl of Pembroke as a member of the board on 12 May 1630). John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, seems to have been a member before Donne became one, but he attended only two meetings during Donne's period of service. Williams's case, in fact, illustrates that not all Governors regularly attended the Assemblies; whether because of ill health, physical distance, or more pressing responsibilities, some members missed

some or all of the meetings during the period in question—a fact that makes Donne's perfect record seem even more impressive.

Donne's connections with the men who did attend seem worth remarking. Service on the board gave him an opportunity to strengthen ties with Governors he already knew and to build relations with less familiar figures. He already had much in common with many of his fellow Governors, but mutual service to the hospital also gave him the chance to work closely with those (like Laud) with whom his connections were occasionally strained. Moreover, in some cases, Donne served with a number of the Governors in other capacities, so that the connections developed at Charterhouse carried over into other spheres. For instance, he served along with Coventry, Manchester, Pembroke, Montgomery, Mountain, Buckeridge, and Martin in November 1627 as a judge in the case of the adulterous Lady Purbeck (Bald, pp. 420-21), and it seems safe to assume that the judges' work was facilitated by their experience of having already worked closely together at Charterhouse. The complicated web of relations between the men on this board exemplifies the kinds of ties that bound together members of the early Stuart ruling class, linking them in relations of mutual interest and individual familiarity, providing occasions for self-display and personal politicking, fostering closer ties or fomenting private conflicts or tensions. Unfortunately, the decisions of the Governors are routinely presented in the Assembly Book as unanimous pronouncements; the records provide little evidence of any debates and disagreements that may have occurred between various members of the board, especially the most prominent. It would be fascinating to know how less powerful figures such as Donne negotiated among the different interests, personalities, and perhaps even factions that may have affected the course of the Governors' meetings. We know from other sources that he felt a certain anxiety about displaying himself before his superiors, and it would be interesting to know whether and how such feelings may have affected his performances before the small but exceptionally powerful audience the board comprised.⁵

What emerges from a consideration of Donne's links with the other Governors is a picture of a relatively small and self-enclosed world, a world in which the most important players were all known to one another and in which relations within small groups were crucial to social status and a sense of self-definition. In spite of his varying activities and responsibilities as Dean of St. Paul's, in spite of the opportunities that position provided to address large groups of his fellow citizens, and in spite of the fact that he was an important man in one of the most populous cities of Europe, the crucial circles in which Donne moved were at once select and selective, and the crucial audience for whom he performed was composed of figures such as (and including) his colleagues at Charterhouse.⁶ This fact could not help but make his relations

with such men all the more important to him. His appointment as a Governor was due first and foremost to his office, to his status as Dean, but he surely realized that his performance at Charterhouse would reflect upon him personally, that he would be judged less as the Dean of St. Paul's than as John Donne. His commitment to serving the hospital seems to have been strong and unwavering, and it was a commitment undoubtedly inspired by his faith in God and his love of his fellow men. Yet it was also a commitment probably influenced, in part, by his felt need not to disappoint himself by disappointing his colleagues and superiors.

What, exactly, did Donne and the other Governors do at their Assemblies? Some sense of the kinds of business they normally transacted may be given by reporting the other items on the agenda of the meeting at which Donne was elected to the board. One of these items affected him personally and significantly. Whether Donne himself was present at this meeting, or whether he was present only for the part that followed his election, or whether he was only informed afterwards of his appointment—all of this is unclear. We do know, however, that no sooner had he been elected a Governor than he was already being named to serve on the standing committee that dealt with the day-to-day issues involved in managing the hospital in the intervals between the periodic Assemblies of the board. It was his regular appointment and reappointment to this committee that gave Donne the opportunity—as well as the obligation—to become as heavily involved in the affairs of Charterhouse as he apparently became. At the meeting of 6 July 1626, Donne was one of several Governors appointed to this committee; the others were Mountain, Heath, Martin, Sutton, Dallington, and Sir John Dodovich (a justice of the King's Bench who figures in no other list of committee members during Donne's tenure at Charterhouse [fol. 190]).

With the exception of Mountain (who never again served on the committee during Donne's tenure), those selected for committee service usually seem to have been the least senior members of the board, usually those whose names were listed near the bottom of the roster of Governors with which each report of the Assembly meetings begins. Donne's selection, then, seems to have been less a tribute to his lofty status than an indication of his somewhat lower rank, but his efficient and effective service on the committee was one means by which he could enhance his standing in the eyes of its other members and of his colleagues in general. The committee members ("or any fower") were instructed to serve "vntill the next generall assembly" and "to order any thinge of ordinary Consequence touching the affaires of the said Hospitall" (fol. 190). Thus Donne was probably a more frequent visitor to Charterhouse—or at least was more regularly in touch with its immediate supervisors—than Bald's list of his attendance at Assembly meetings indicates, and in fact the Assembly Book contains several previously unreported references to Donne's participation in

committee meetings. Donne soon became one of the more active and well-regarded of the committee members, as subsequent data from the Assembly Book clearly suggest.

Before focusing on Donne, however, it seems useful to give a fuller sense of the kinds of business with which the Governors usually dealt. In addition to Donne's election to the board and appointment to the standing committee, for example, the other items on their agenda for 6 July 1626 were numerous and varied. The Governors filled 49 present or anticipated vacancies, and they also selected four scholars to be sent to university at the hospital's expense (fols. 189-90). Curiously, they entreated Bishop Mountain (who was present) to "take vnto him such Learned men as he thinck[s] fitt" and to visit the hospital at his convenience (fol. 190). They ordered that all the hospital's court rolls be fairly "ingrossed in p[ar]chment," and they also ordered a survey of all manors belonging to the institution (fol. 190). They called for the keeping of a new ledger book; ordered a new lease for one of the hospital's manors; directed that the crops and profits of another property be turned over for their use; ordered that patents be granted to the hospital bailiffs; ordered that a legal suit be started for payment of a debt; directed that Abell Allen, the hospital's Steward, pay John Clark 10 pounds while Clark executed Allen's office, and also directed that the payment of 10 pounds currently being given to Clark by the hospital cease; ordered payment of 50 pounds to the hospital physician; accepted the resignation of the institution's schoolmaster; ordered that John Woodhall continue as hospital surgeon; ordered that Thomas Heyward, the hospital Register, pay security for a debt owed the institution; and appointed Donne's committee—or any three of them—to deal with Heyward about this matter (fols. 191-92). None of this is of much interest today, and was probably of only slightly greater interest even then, but it gives a fair sense of the kinds of matters to which Donne the successful officeholder would now be devoting a fair amount of his time.

One other matter dealt with at this meeting is slightly more intriguing, especially given Donne's involvement in it. At one point the Assembly Book records this instruction by the Governors:

We doe desire the said Committees or any ffower of them to take into their consideration what the Chardge will be of havinge an Organ within the Chappell of the said Hospitall, and to set downe what stipend shall be allowed yerely to mainteyne an Organist that shall play vppon the said Organs; and teach the Schollars of the said house to singe prick songe and to play vppon any Instrument / ffor we doe well allowe to haue an Organ and an Organist within the hospitall soe that the Chardge thereof be not excessiue. (fol. 190)

It is pleasant to think that one of Donne's first duties at Charterhouse was to find and employ a man to teach its students to sing, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Dean—with his connections at court and among London churches—may have taken a leading role in discharging this assignment. Whatever the case, the committee was able to report before the end of the year that an organist had been found.

The Assembly's next meeting, on 27 October 1626, was attended by Abbot, Coventry, Manchester, Heath, Donne, Martin, Richard Sutton, and Dallington. It was at this meeting, among other business, that Buckeridge, the Bishop of Rochester, was elected a Governor, and that a new schoolmaster and usher were selected (fol. 194). Also at this meeting, Donne's committee reported on their dealings with Heyward, the Register, about the payment of the security on his outstanding debt. The report was signed by Donne, Martin, Sutton, and Dallington, and Donne's signature—perhaps significantly—is the first one listed (fol. 193). He seems from the start to have become involved in the minute details of administering the Hospital.

A little over a month later, the Governors assembled again, this time on 7 December 1626. Those present included Coventry, Manchester, Pembroke, Buckeridge, Heath, Martin, Donne, Richard Sutton, and Dallington. One of the first items of business was the reconstitution of the standing committee, which this time included only Heath, Martin, Donne, Sutton, and Dallington. Bishop Mountain was no longer included, and he seems, in any case, not to have played much part in the committee's operations since his appointment in July (fol. 195). Donne was now the senior churchman on the committee and in general was one of its higher-ranking members, a fact that would have given him even more influence over its operation.

The Assembly did not meet again until 21 June 1627, but it seems probable that Donne, as a member of the committee, would have had some dealings with hospital business during the interim. Those present at the June meeting included Abbot, Coventry, Manchester, Buckeridge, Heath, Martin, Donne, Richard Sutton, and Dallington (fol. 201). Among other business transacted, the Governors found themselves having to deal once more with Thomas Heyward, who had recently resigned as Register, and who was directed to pay Richard Sutton the 300 pounds he had borrowed out of the personal estate of the Hospital, and who was also ordered to "trouble the board noe more w[i]th any further demaunds, for that the Governours holde it vnfitt to giue him any further relief out of the stocke of the poore" (fol. 203). This seems to have worked: nothing more is heard about Heyward in the Assembly Book during Donne's term of office.

At the same meeting the Governors also dealt with another item of business from the preceding summer, the matter of Abell Allen, the Steward

who seems to have neglected his office while expecting the hospital to pay another man for discharging Allen's duties. The Governors decided that Allen could retain his patent and salary if he executed his office himself; if it could be proved to the committee that his neglect continued, the Governors would deal with him as they saw fit (fol. 203). Donne's committee, then, was given not only supervisory but judicial authority, and subsequent evidence suggests that the committee members exercised both functions.

At this June meeting the foundation was also laid for one of the most interesting items of business the Governors faced during Donne's term on the board, and his membership in the committee ensured that Donne would have some close involvement with the issue. The Governors ordered that "the Complaynts of the Parson and Tenaunts of Dunsbye" (a manor owned by the Hospital) "against S^r Richard Moore Knight, as allsoe the said S^r Richard Moores Petition against them shall be referred to the last Com[m]ittee, and they to heare and examyne the Complaynts and answeres of bothe sides, and to certefye the Gouernours at the next Assembly what they finde therein" (fol. 205). Similarly, the Governors also ordered that "M^r Hudsons Petition exhibited at this Assembly, be likewise referred to the considerac[i]on of the said Committee, To certefye as aforesaid" (fol. 205). Donne's committee would thus again deal with detailed matters for which the more senior members had less time to spare.

When the Governors assembled again half a year later, on 25 February 1627/28, several of the matters that had been turned over to the committee at that time now came to a head. Present at this meeting were Coventry, Manchester, Pembroke, Mountain, Buckeridge, Heath, Martin, Donne, Richard Sutton, and Dallington. One of the first items dealt with was the fate of Abell Allen, the negligent Steward. Apparently the committee members had decided in the interim that Allen was indeed in "default," for at the February meeting it was announced that Allen was "found not fit to execute his office and (was) willing to resign." The Governors accepted his resignation and, "On his humble suit," gave him 200 pounds in severance pay (fol. 207).

More interesting was their resolution of the dispute between Sir Richard Moore and his tenants. Apparently this had been the subject of a committee meeting on 2 November 1627 in which Donne presumably participated, and apparently the committee had been unimpressed with Moore's side of the argument. The full judgment against him, which runs for several closely written pages, provided a striking victory for the tenants, and provides as well an intriguing example of powerful men acting on behalf of the relatively powerless. What makes the judgment even more interesting is the fact that the chief matter of contention—the enclosure of common lands—was a source of such persistent social conflict during the early modern period.⁷ It seems

reasonable to suppose that Donne, as a senior member of the committee, had an active role in judging the dispute and determining the details of the decision against Moore. The Governors ordered

That S^r Richard Moore Knight shall truly obserue and p[er]forme those severall thinges and proffers w[hi]ch he voluntarily made and consented vnto before the Committee the second day of November last, As by the Report of the said Committee appeareth vnto vs. (That is to say) That the said S^r Richard Moore shall forthw[i]th lay open so much of the Little Meadowes in Dunsbye, in the County of Lincolne, w[hi]ch was not before the said second day of November last by him letten and leased out for yeres: And that the Tenants of Dunsbye shall or may from tyme to tyme hereafter rent and haue the same amongst them at the rate of nine shillings an acre yerely . . . [and] That the said S^r Richard Moore his executors and assignes nor any of them shall at any tyme or tymes hereafter make or cause to be made any more new enclosure of any the land[s] within the Mannor of Dunsby aforesaid w[hi]ch aunciently haue not ben enclosed, w[i]thout the consent and license of the Gou[er]no[r]s of the said Hospitall for the tyme being or the most parte of them at an Assembly first had and obtayned in writing for the doinge thereof." (fols. 209-10)

This was not the last time that the board—or Donne's committee—would have to deal with Sir Richard Moore, but the judgment against him must have seemed devastating in its thoroughness, and it is extremely interesting in view of what it suggests about the social and economic attitudes of Donne and his fellow Governors.

Apparently the Governors were satisfied with the committee's performance, because they immediately reconstituted it. Once again, Heath, Martin, Donne, Richard Sutton, and Dallington were selected as its members (fol. 210). No sooner had the committee been reappointed than its members were given a new authority to deal with the hospital's day-to-day business. The Governors instructed that "ffor the better enablinge of the Committee from henceforth to punnish and reforme the vice of druckenness, disobedience, or any other notorious crime, misdemeanor, or disorderly course of lyving in any poore Brother or inferiour officer of this hospitall," if anyone committed these offenses

. . . that then the said Committee or any three of them (whereof the Master to be one) shall haue full Power imediatly to sequester & exclude such partye or partyes offending from the House and Hospitall and from his and their lodging dyett and all other benefitt[s] of in or

by the said Hospitall, vntill the then next Assembly of the Governours or the maior part of them. And then the said Governours vpon the Committees Report in every such case to take such further order therein as to their wisdomes shall seem fitting. (fols. 210-11)

As we shall see, the committee soon found itself acting on its new authority, but what is generally more interesting about this and similar enactments is the evidence it provides that the power of the Committee—and thus Donne's power—continued to grow during his tenure as a Governor, a fact that makes his service at Charterhouse all the more significant. The other Governors seem to have been confident of the judgment and good sense exercised by Donne and the other Committee members.

Before finishing this report of the February meeting, it seems worth recording perhaps the oddest of all the orders issued by the Governors during Donne's term of office. It would be interesting to know what role, if any, Donne may have had in formulating this pronouncement, or his attitude toward it. Early in the meeting the Governors declared that from now on no corpse would be buried in the hospital chapel or on its grounds unless said corpse had once had some affiliation with the institution. This seems sensible enough, but then the order continues: "And that hereafter no woman or woman kynde deceased shall be by any meanes buried in the said Chappell or burying place" (fol. 211). What provoked this curious stipulation (not to mention its strangely precise and emphatic language) is unfortunately unclear.

The next two assemblies of the Governors, on 19 March 1627/28 and then again on 31 October 1628, involved little business of direct relevance to our concern with Donne. Coventry, Manchester, Pembroke, Buckeridge, Heath, Martin, Donne, Richard Sutton, and Dallington attended the former meeting, during which the Earl of Montgomery (Pembroke's brother) was appointed a Governor to replace Edward, Earl of Worcester, Lord Privy Seal, who had not attended any meetings during the nearly two years that Donne had served on the board (fol. 218). The same Governors, now joined by Montgomery, also were present in October, when Sir Randall Crewe was selected to replace Sir John Dodderidge, who had recently died (fol. 219). More significantly, at this meeting William Laud, now Bishop of London, was chosen a Governor, replacing the recently deceased Bishop Mountain (fols. 219-20). Laud would be present at all but one of the remaining assemblies during Donne's life. Their mutual service at Charterhouse would have given Donne a chance to become closer to a figure whose influence with the King and importance in church affairs was growing day by day.

The Assembly of 8 December 1628 is of more obvious significance to our focus on Donne. Attendance was particularly good; those present included

Abbot, Coventry, Manchester, Pembroke, Laud, Buckeridge, Bishop Williams, Crewe, Martin, Donne, Richard Sutton, and Dallington (fol. 222). A fairly ticklish matter arose, one in which Donne's involvement is of special interest, and one in which his fairness and good judgment were especially required. Sir Richard Sutton—the Founder's cousin, the only surviving executor of the Founder's will, one of the original Governors, and the man who seems to have had most to do with the day-to-day operation of the hospital—requested an investigation of his involvement with the institution's financial affairs.

The causes and motives behind this investigation are uncertain. Sutton seems to have felt that the institution owed him money, although later events suggested that there were obligations on both sides. It must have been a somewhat prickly matter to scrutinize the records of a man so closely identified with the hospital, but Donne was one of the Governors (along with Buckeridge, Crewe, Martin, and Dallington) selected for the assignment (fols. 222-23). Whatever the circumstances surrounding this audit, Sutton himself was nonetheless reappointed to membership on the reconstituted standing committee, which also included Heath and the other Governors just mentioned (fol. 223).

When the Assembly reconvened on 2 July 1629, a complicated decision concerning the financial affairs of Sir Richard Sutton was reached. Those present included Abbot, Coventry, Manchester, Laud, Buckeridge, Williams, Crewe, Heath, Martin, Donne, Sutton, and Dallington. The committee reported that they had examined Sutton's accounts on 15 January 1628/29, a month after the last general Assembly. Sutton had petitioned the Governors for a payment of 927 pounds, 8^s-3^d, and in view of the Committee's report the Governors approved, although stipulating an audit (fol. 230). To perform this task, they chose the same Committee—including Donne. However, what Sutton gained on one hand he lost on the other, for the Assembly also ordered that he "giue security to the Governours or some of them for the payment of the arere and residue" of a sum of 3089 pounds, 7^s-7^d that (it had apparently been concluded) Sutton owed to the hospital. He was directed to pay 300 pounds per year until his debt was fully discharged, and the same committee was appointed to deal with him (fol. 230). It seems that Donne the churchman and Governor was obliged to spend an increasing amount of his time and energy as an accountant. Donne had worked closely with Sutton over the last few years, but he was now gaining an even more detailed insight into Sutton's dealings and the hospital's circumstances than he already possessed.

Two other items from the July meeting seem worth mentioning. First, the Governors referred to the committee's consideration a petition "exhibited at our last assembly by the inhabitants of our mannor of Southminster touching their pretended right, on behalf of the poor there, to the grounds called Longlands and Hollfeild's . . ." (fol. 232). The Assembly would thus again have

an opportunity to rule on another case involving the poor, but their decision in this instance would (as a subsequent report illustrates) be different in tone from their earlier ruling in the case involving Sir Richard Moore. In addition, the report on the July meeting provides evidence that the Governors—acting, presumably, on the committee's recommendation—were exercising their new powers to discipline wayward residents of the hospital. They ruled that John Richers should be expelled on grounds of drunkenness, uncivil behavior, and mispending his allowance (fol. 234). The same men who could judge a Lady Purbeck could also deal strictly with miscreants of less exalted rank.

When the Governors reassembled for a general meeting on 7 December 1629, several items of business from the July session were on the agenda again. Present in December were Abbot, Coventry, Manchester, Pembroke, Montgomery, Crewe, Heath, Martin, Donne, Richard Sutton, and Dallington (fol. 237). It was at this meeting that the protracted dealings with Sutton came to a head. The Governors ruled that in view of the Committee's investigation of Sutton's finances, and because Sutton had presented the Governors with a petition asking forgiveness of his debt and offering to surrender his annuity, the Assembly had decided that Sutton should either pay the hospital 2000 marks and sacrifice the annuity, or should pay 1000 marks and keep it. Sutton chose the latter option (fols. 237-38). The Governors further ordered that he should deliver all the bonds in his possession, and in addition they directed, "At the moc[i]on of the said S^r Richard Sutton, . . . That he shall nominate and appoynt M^r Doctor Donne Deane of the Cathedral Church of S^t Paule," as well as Sir Robert Dallington, the Hospital's Master, "to be the said S^r Richard Suttons Executors after his decease," but only in matters that concerned "the p[er]sonall Estate left by the ffounder and remayning to the vse of the Hospitall" (fol. 239).

The Governors' decision in this case, along with Donne's selection as one of Sutton's executors, are both interesting developments. In the first place, the fairly strict judgment concerning Sutton speaks well of the Governors generally and of the committee members specifically, especially since the Governors could act only on the information the Committee provided. Sutton himself had regularly been a member of the committee, but his colleagues seem to have approached this case with an objective determination to do right by the hospital rather than to shield one of their own from financial loss. The judgment seems prudently to have combined justice and flexibility. Moreover, Donne's appointment as an executor—at Sutton's instigation—suggests that he was trusted both by Sutton and by the other Governors to deal wisely and fairly with all parties and to keep the best interests of the institution in mind. As it happened, Donne died before Sutton, but this appointment suggests the esteem he enjoyed, the confidence he inspired, and the expertise he had developed as an active administrator of Charterhouse.

Another item of business carried over from the July meeting was now ready to be settled, and once again Donne's committee seems to have been involved. Regarding the petition from the poor of Southminster, the Governors announced that, having examined the committee's report in this matter, and "having taken tender consideration, and being favourably disposed in this case of the poore, and willing to express our charitable inclinac[i]on for a continuall reliefe to the poore people of that p[ar]ticuler parish," the Assembly had decided "*w<i>th one assent and consent freely and finally. . . . That there be from henceforth forever yerely and every yere allowed and given from this Hospitall to and for the vse of the poore people of the said parish of Southminster for the tyme being, the som[m]e of ffoure Poundes of lawfull money of England at two ffeastes or Termes in the yere . . .*" (fol. 238). After the long buildup of legalistic jargon, the actual award seems a bit anti-climactic, but the Governors additionally decreed that provisions should be made available to the poor, and that the common fine of 20 shillings per year customarily paid out of the manor to its proprietors would now be paid by the Hospital. However, the Governors added an interesting stipulation, suggesting some limit to their patience with petitions from the poor or perhaps some intention not to establish an obligatory precedent. They ruled that their earlier decisions should be enacted, "Provided alwayes, and it is our order and meaning, that this our free and charitable allowance of foure poundes yerely to the said poore, and of the said defalcac[i]on of the twenty shillings yerely for the Com[m]on fine, out of the rents and proffitts of the said Closes, is and shall be accompted in full recompence of all such benefitt title and interest" as the poor of Southminster could claim (fol. 240). The decision in favor of the poor in this case was less sweeping than it had been in the case of Sir Richard Moore, and the committee and other Governors seem to have been concerned to limit the claims that could be made on their indulgence.

The next Assembly of the Governors was relatively uneventful, at least insofar as our focus on Donne is concerned. At the meeting of 12 May 1630, Coventry, Manchester, Laud, Crewe, Heath, Donne, Sutton, and Dallington were present, as was Philip Herbert. William Herbert, the old Earl of Pembroke and one of Donne's closer contacts among the aristocracy, had recently passed away, and his place on the board was now filled by the election of Sir Richard Weston, Lord Treasurer and rising royal favorite (fol. 246). Donne's involvement with Weston at Charterhouse would have given him still another route of access to the court and King.

Yet for much of the rest of 1630, Donne was absent from London and his health was poor. In late June he attended the marriage of his daughter Constance at Aldborough Hatch, where he developed an illness that bedevilled him for the rest of the year and prevented his return to the capital. Rumors began to circulate that he had died, and by December even he thought it prudent

to prepare his will (Bald, pp. 521, 523). When he finally did return to London in February 1630/31, he attempted to resume his normal activities. He preached a sermon on Friday, 25 February, after which (according to Bald) he returned home "and rested quietly for a day or so" (p. 526). Yet this claim contradicts information provided two pages later and confirmed by the Charterhouse Assembly Book, which makes clear that Donne attended the Assembly of Governors the day after his sermon, on 26 February 1630/31. Also present at this, Donne's last meeting of the board, were Coventry, Weston, Manchester, Montgomery, Laud, Crewe, Heath, Martin, Sutton, and Dallington. Appropriately enough for Donne's final meeting, his committee was given one new instruction—to deal with a request from the hospital Physician about repairs to his lodgings (fol. 252). Whether Donne was able to participate in their deliberations is unclear.

When the Governors reassembled on 18 May 1631, one of their first items of business was to select Thomas Winniff as a replacement for Donne, who had passed away on 31 March. Donne's death robbed Charterhouse of one of its more active and committed Governors. In nearly five years of devoted service, he had never missed a meeting and seems never to have shirked a responsibility. He had brought to the board various assets—including his early legal training, his connections at court and in the church, his administrative skills, a judicious temperament, and a humane disposition—and at one time or another, in one way or another, he seems to have drawn on all of them. He seems to have been trusted both by those above and below him in the hospital's hierarchy, and his commitment to the institution is suggested by his presence at the February meeting, when his health and energy were both at low ebb.

Donne's involvement with Charterhouse had given him opportunities to nurture a public philanthropy that matched his private generosity; evidence survives of his personal gifts to the poor and support for needy scholars (Bald, pp. 429-30). His attitude toward charity is suggested by two private letters written during his later years. In one, probably dating from 1629 (three years after his appointment as a Governor), he tries to comfort a friend over the recent loss of her child. "We do but borrow children of God," he tells her, "and lend them to the world." But this claim is preceded by a statement that reflects interestingly on his role during this period as an administrator of Thomas Sutton's legacy: "A man truly liberal, or truly charitable, will borrow money to lend; for, if I be bound to assist another with my meat, or with my money, I may be as much bound to assist him with my credit, and borrow to lend."⁸ This statement, like his energetic service at Charterhouse, suggests a more than routine commitment to helping the needy and less fortunate.

Donne seems to have regarded his duties at the hospital as comparable to one of his other chief preoccupations during his final years—his attention to composing, preaching, and transcribing his sermons. Writing to an unidentified

correspondent during the period either shortly before or shortly after his appointment as a Governor, he excuses himself for not having written sooner, and then alludes to his reputation for "scribbling." At least, he claims, his writing is now devoted to the more worthy and serious mode of sermons. Apparently alluding to his decreasing interest in composing verse, he continues, "I make account that to spend all my little stock of knowledge upon matter of delight were the same error as to spend a fortune upon masques and banqueting houses; I chose rather to build in this poor fashion some spittles and hospital, where the poor and impotent sinner may find some relief, or at least understanding of his infirmity."⁹ Service to his fellows—in the pulpit as well as at Charterhouse—provided a keynote of his final years. For Donne, both activities seem to have been intimately linked.

In fact, two sermons in particular from this final period may reflect Donne's involvement at Charterhouse. Although in them he nowhere alludes specifically to his service there, the sermons take on a more personal dimension when we read them in light of his involvement with Sutton's charity. The first, a sermon on the virtue of liberality preached before the King on 15 April 1628, contains numerous passages that suggest the kinds of attitudes that may have informed Donne's sense of his role at Charterhouse. His editors have already suggested how the sermon may allude to political events in 1628,¹⁰ yet seeing it in light of Donne's service as a Governor gives us a further sense of the range of implications it may have had for him and his contemporaries. Certainly most members of Donne's original audience would have known that the man preaching to them about the virtues of benevolence was in a position, at Charterhouse, to act on his own prescriptions.

Although the entire sermon suggests the principles that may have helped guide Donne in his service at the hospital, a few examples are worth citing. At one point, for instance, Donne calls liberality "a generative, a productive vertue, a vertue that begets another vertue, another vertue upon another man" (*Sermons* 8:240). The liberal person, he contends, seeks out the object of his charity "with as much earnestnesse, as another man seeks the money"; he comes "to make a man, to redeeme him out of necessity and contempt; (the upper and lower Milstone of Poverty)" (*Sermons* 8:241). And, in a passage particularly relevant to his role at Charterhouse, he compares the King to the sun and the King's officers to the stars:

The Sunne does not enlighten the Starres of the Firmament, meerly for an ornament to the Firmament, (though even the glory, which God receives from that Ornament, be one reason thereof) but that by the reflection of those Starres his beames might be cast into some places, to which, by a direct Emanation from himselfe, those beames would not have come. So doe Kings transmit some beames of power into their

Officers, not onely to dignifie and illustrate a Court (though that also be one just reason thereof, for outward dignity and splendor must be preserved) but that by those subordinate Instruments, the royal Liberality of the King, that is, protection, and Justice might be transferred on all. (*Sermons* 8: 243-44)

It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that Donne may have seen himself and the other Governors as just such "subordinate Instruments" who, by their conscientious service to the hospital, could bestow a measure of protection, justice, and liberality on some of the least powerful and most needy members of the commonwealth.

Similar implications can be seen in a sermon delivered half a year later at St. Paul's, on the evening of 23 November 1628. Donne takes his text from Proverbs 14:31: "He that oppreseth the poore, reprocheth his maker, but he that honoureth him, hath mercy on the poore." This sermon assumes added interest when we recall that in the year leading up to its delivery, Donne had been involved in the investigation and judgment of Sir Richard Moore, the man who had been petitioned against by his poor tenants. Like the judgment, the sermon takes a very strong stance against abuses by the rich. At one point Donne insists that "The poor are immediately in Gods protection. Rich and poore are in Gods administration, in his government, in his providence: But the poor are immediately in his protection, . . . They are *Orphans, Wards*, delivered over to his tuition, to his Protection" (*Sermons* 8: 285). Similarly, a little later he proclaims that "God hath made the charitable man Partaker with himself, in his own greatest attribute, his power of *showing mercy*" (*Sermons* 8: 287).

Surely Donne would have held this view even if he had never been affiliated with Charterhouse, but his service there gave his words a more personal application than they might otherwise have had. His role as Governor allowed him, literally, to practice what he preached. All the evidence suggests that he took the opportunity and acted on it.*

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Notes

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¹ *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 424. Although my article greatly supplements Bald's account of Donne's service at Charterhouse, I am much

indebted to his indispensable book for other facts concerning Donne's life. All subsequent references to Bald will be given parenthetically.

² Actually, the original Assembly Book remains on deposit at Charterhouse itself; a microfilm for public inspection is on file at the GLRO; see reel number X56/6. I am grateful to the Registrar of Charterhouse for permission to quote from the documents kept at the GLRO.

³ See Gerald S. Davies, *Charterhouse in London: Monastery, Mansion, Hospital, School* (London: John Murray, 1921), p. 192. Other discussions of Sutton and Charterhouse include William Haig Brown, *Charterhouse: Past and Present* (Godalming: H. Stedman, 1879); Dom Lawrence Hendriks, *The London Charterhouse: Its Monks and Martyrs* (London: Kegan Paul, 1889); E. P. Eardley Wilmot and E. C. Steatfeild, *Charterhouse: Old and New* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1895); and William F. Taylor, *The Charterhouse of London: Monastery, Palace, and Thomas Sutton's Foundation* (London: J. M. Dent, 1912). However, all earlier accounts should be supplemented by two important articles: Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Thomas Sutton," *Carthusiana* 20, no. 1 (October, 1948), 2-8; and Neal R. Shipley, "Thomas Sutton: Tudor-Stuart Moneylender," *Business History Review* 50 (1976), 456-76. For fuller discussion of various treatments of Sutton's life, see my article "Thomas Sutton: Ben Jonson's Volpone?" *Philological Quarterly* 68 (1989), 295-314.

⁴ Fol. 188. All subsequent references to the Assembly Book will be given parenthetically within the body of the paper, citing relevant folio numbers. Although the OED records no definition of "Rometh," it seems to have been used in the Assembly Book as a synonym for "rooms" and seems to have been part of the standard formula used when recording the election of a new Governor. In quotations from the Assembly Book, brackets will be used to indicate expanded contractions.

⁵ See, for example, Bald's account of Donne's nervousness about delivering sermons at court (pp. 467-68). Bald provides, in passing, many pertinent facts about Donne's specific connections with the other Governors. Although it might be useful to assemble in one place evidence of the particular links not only between Donne and his colleagues but also among the other Governors themselves, limits of space prevent me from bringing those data together here. Nonetheless, several points seem worth making. For instance, in discussing a legal deposition that lists both Donne and Randall Crewe, Bald remarks that the document is interesting in part "because it mentions men whose names never occur elsewhere in connection with Donne" (p. 377)—a statement no longer relevant to Crewe, thanks to the evidence provided by the Charterhouse Assembly Book. Similarly, the Charterhouse records provide evidence of a new link between Donne and Lancelot Andrewes, one of the other great preachers of the age. Finally, it seems worth mentioning that Donne's service with Bishop Laud at Charterhouse may have helped Laud develop a fuller trust in Donne and may thus have helped lead to Donne's being seriously considered for a bishopric in the year before his death (Bald, p. 515). Their service as Governors would have given Laud many opportunities to see Donne in action and to evaluate his doctrinal stance and administrative abilities.

⁶ On the importance of coterie audiences for Donne's literary works, see Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne: Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

⁷ For an overview of recent research on enclosures, see Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982), pp. 173-80.

⁸ See Edmund Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne*, 2 vols. (1899; repr. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959), 2, 261.

⁹ Gosse, 2, 255.

¹⁰ On the sermon's apparent endorsement of the King's request for supplies to carry on the war effort, see *The Sermons of John Donne*, eds. Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-1962), 8:21. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically as *Sermons* and will list volume and page numbers.