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Donne and the Real Presence of the Absent Lover

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In the early seventeenth century, the Real Presence was a topic of earnest controversy, for it was a central point around which religious disputes, wars and persecutions in Western Europe had revolved for the past three generations. One of the issues debated about the Real Presence was this one: How could the body of Jesus Christ be Present at the Lord's Supper when he had ascended bodily to the right hand of the Father? Or, how could the lover still abide intimately, as he had pledged to do, with his beloved spouse the Church when he had departed to an inconceivable distance till his Second Coming? In that era, the body of Christ was thought to be literally millions of miles away after the Ascension to the Father related in the Acts of the Apostles, 1:9-11. This question had exercised Christians from the time Berengarius raised it in this form in the eleventh century. And this question had given birth to the term *Transubstantiation* in the course of five councils convened to respond to this challenge. John Donne also raises this momentous question when he has the lover pledge, in "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," that he will remain—all the while he is on a journey—Really Present with his beloved.

The lover in Donne's poem parallels Christ in uttering a valediction that is no valediction, in pledging at once to go and to abide. Indeed, the lover promises not merely to continue to be present as before after he leaves—he pledges to be more closely united than ever. His departure brings about a new, fuller, more dynamic intimacy. Moreover, the permanence of the love is guaranteed by the lovers' experience of Presence in Absence.

At the start of the Reformation, Zwingli alienated Luther by declaring, as Berengarius had done, that there was a flat contradiction between the Ascension and the Real Presence. During the Marburg Colloquy with Luther in 1529, Zwingli argued: "it would be a great incongruity if, when Christ says he is in heaven, we should seek him in the Supper. For one and the same body can in no way be in several places at the same time." Luther dismissed this argument and declared, in his treatise *That these Words of Christ "This is My Body," Still Stand Firm against the Fanatics* (1527), that Zwingli measured truth by what was easy to grasp, and attacked the Real Presence merely because "it is difficult to believe that a body is

at the same time in heaven and in the Supper." Luther took his "stand" on the plain words of Christ, "This is My Body," and denied that the Ascension "prevented" anyone from believing in the Real Presence.[1] Zwingli's view initially gained ground in England and prompted the rubric against the Real Presence in the communion service of Edward VI's second *Book of Common Prayer*. Elizabeth I, however, removed this rubric, and it was reinserted only in 1662. Later called the *Black Rubric*, it asserted that there was a contradiction between the Ascension and a Real Presence because a body could be in only one place at a time: "And the Natural Body and Bloud of our Saviour Christ are in heaven and not here; it being against the truth of Christs Natural Body, to be at one time in more places then one."[2]

Richard Hooker observed in the 1590s that Zwingli had caused some in England to fear lest the sacrament should come to be accounted "only as of a shadow, destitute, empty and void of Christ." He regarded Zwingli's metaphorical reading of "This is My Body" as leaving only a shadowy image in place of the body of Christ at communion. Hooker observed that belief in the Real Presence at length prevailed under Elizabeth I, so that the "manifold contentions" of his age were no longer about "what we have by the sacrament" but about "the manner how."[3] Indeed, in the age of Donne the Church of England acknowledged the Real Presence of Christ's body within the worthy receiver at the moment of communion, and therefore conceded Christ's natural body could be present in two places at once—at the right hand of the Father and within the communicant. The "manner how" Christ could be bodily present with the beloved at communion and still remain millions of miles away was concluded to be ineffable.

"A Valediction" is not alone among Donne's poems in having as groundwork the debate over the Lord's Supper. As M. Thomas Hester notes, many of Donne's lyrics have "embedded allusions to the Eucharist" and are "about the real presence of the body in human love."[4] Perhaps, though, "A Valediction" is unique in the way it delves into the mystery of the Real Presence to reveal the potentially infinite depths of human love. Of course, the Real Presence Donne and his contemporaries argued about was that of Christ's glorified body. A. B. Chambers, in his fine essay "Glorified Bodies and the 'Valediction: forbidding Mourning,'" focuses on glorified bodies "resurrected on Judgment Day." He finds it odd that such a theology even exists, since "there is and necessarily can be no experiential basis for it."[5] On the contrary, I think Donne, like other Christians of his era, would have thought that knowledge about a glorified body could be gathered from Scripture, since there was an account there of Christ's appearing in his glorified body to his disciples during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. Moreover, Donne would have regarded that same glorified body as the food received in the Lord's Supper from the time of the Apostles. The many useful points Chambers makes about glorified bodies in that essay, I should add, can also be applied to the Real Presence of the Absent Lover.

Donne imagines forth two ways the lover is really Present while absent, two ways of conceiving the "manner how" the lover could be at once far away and here with the beloved. First, since the lovers' two "souls" are "one," they may experience a wondrous elongation of their substance. Donne makes the entire souls, not just the minds of the lovers, the vehicle for Real Presence. Although they are "Inter-assured of the mind," the lovers seem Present to each other by their souls. Donne inherits a view of the human soul as a something that has the body implied in it—the soul as the substantial form of the whole mind-body union (Aquinas, *Summa* 1a:Qq 76:8). The lover imagines the souls spanning the vast distance between them to create a diaphanous bridge of intimacy. Thus, as the lover goes, their souls expand to fill the space between them. Perhaps Donne glances at Ephesians 4:10-15, where Paul says that Christ "ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things." Secondly, if their souls are still "two" as the lover travels away, they are united at the top, in the immortal part of their souls, by faithfulness to the very end. Even in the temporal part the souls are separated, their union at the height of immortality ensures a final reunion of whole with whole in the Second Coming. By these two modes of the lovers' union in absence, as we shall see, Donne evokes the debate over the "manner how" of the Real Presence.

In "Valediction" the lover at first asks that their parting should be like the quiet and voluntary passing of virtuous men from this life:

> As virtuous men passe mildly away,
> And whisper to their soules, to goe,
> Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,
> The breath goes now, and some say, no:
>
> So let us melt, and make no noise,
> No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
> 'Twere prophanation of our joyes
> To tell the layetie our love.[6]

In Meditation XVII ("for whom the bell tolls"), Donne sees *translation* (a word usually applied only to the passing of Enoch and Elijah) as the prerogative of all those who belong to the body of Christ. He plays on the two meanings of the word *translated* and states that virtuous persons do not die but are instead "translated" into "scattered leaves" to be bound together in the communion of saints at the Resurrection, because, having died and been reborn in Christ at Baptism, then fed with the bread of eternal life in the Lord's Supper, they are not subject to death. When the virtuous men in "A Valediction" tell their souls "to goe" and the souls willingly obey, death has no victory: these men are "translated," for they set off on their own initiative.

The lover in Donne's "Valediction" hints the beloved should avoid the example of the "sad friends" who watch for the last gasps and ignore the

impalpable signs of glory at the deathbed. The mourners are like the men who observe only the ominous earthquakes in the next stanza but overlook the hopeful sky-signs. But the lover asks the beloved not to grieve outwardly at his departure for yet another reason. An emotional display in love's priest—which the beloved is—would invite "prophanation" in the onlookers who also watch for palpable signs of the end of things and ignore the signs of a new creation. And so, the lovers' leave-taking—which inaugurates the Real Presence like the Last Supper—should be accompanied by reverent, priestly gestures. It should half veil from the "layetie" and half convey to them that a holy action seals "our joyes" and "our love." Insofar as the lovers' parting creates new depths of intimacy, this is no mournful occasion but a sacrament of "joyes."

In his sermon on Romans 13:11, given "to the Prince and Princess Palatine, the Lady Elizabeth at Heydelberg," June 16, 1619, Donne explains the enormous gap between priesthood and "layetie" adumbrated in this stanza: "the Priest doth that, which none but he doth," for he offers a "real sacrifice" at the Lord's Supper.[7] The word *real* here relates to the Real Presence of Christ's body "presented to the Father" by the priest for "the sins of the people." Donne thinks the priest should enact this *mysterium tremendum* in a hieratic manner inviting reverence in the onlookers. Those who asserted a flat contradiction between the Ascension and the Real Presence were precisely those who denied that there was a big gap between priesthood and "layetie."

The lover in "A Valediction" likens his going-and-staying to a quaking of the outermost sphere of the universe, like the prime motion caused by God at the start of Creation:

> Moving of th'earth brings harmes and feares,
> Men reckon what it did and meant,
> But trepidation of the spheares,
> Though greater farre, is innocent.

This "innocent" trembling, a fresh divine élan, is overlooked by carnal men who focus on earthquakes as signs of divine wrath breaking down the world. But here is a quiet, sinless sign of divine love entering into the world, abiding in it, filling it, making all things new, but they do not heed such subtleties or take hope from them. The going-and-staying of the lover, his Real Presence in Absence, parallels that harmless heavenly "trepidation"—a harbinger of the new reign of love.

The lover then reproves "sublunary lovers" who have no faith in Real Presence; indeed, they cannot "admit" Absence because their love would die:

> Dull sublunary lovers love
> (Whose soule is sense) cannot admit

> Absence, because it doth remove
> Those things which elemented it.

These "sublunary lovers" find only a Real Absence when "eyes, lips, and hands" are gone, for their very souls are flesh, refusing those infinite depths of love for which humans were made.

This attack on "sublunary lovers" and their Real Absence evokes the attacks on Zwingli and his followers, the "Fanatics," who were charged with denying the Real Presence in the sacrament because they said they did not perceive it with their senses. Luther argues that the Zwinglians are the "real Capernaites" who fasten only "on the physical eating of flesh" (*Works* 37:93). The name *Capernaites* was given to the disciples who abandoned Christ in John 6:53-63 because they interpreted in a gross, carnal way his saying he would give them his body to eat. With them it had to be altogether flesh or altogether spirit. Luther concluded that the Zwinglians—who use rhetorical analysis to turn the Christ's words into a metaphor—are "fleshly spirits who scarcely know how to crawl on the earth, inexperienced in spiritual matters," yet they presume to "measure and judge these profound, mysterious, incomprehensible matters not according to God's words but according to their crawling and walking on the earth" (*Works* 37:220). He felt they were using natural, uninspired, hence fleshly reason to debunk the Scriptural mystery of the Real Presence.

It is evident in his Fourth Prebend Sermon that Donne sympathizes with Luther in his quarrel with Zwingli and with the Church of England in its quarrel with the Dissenters. The English Church required the Dissenters to kneel at communion, but they balked or scrupled on the ground of idolatry. Donne thought that in effect they denied the Real Presence. Like Hooker, Donne in his sermons defends kneeling at the rail to receive communion—a kneeling required by law—because he affirms a Real Presence of Christ's Body at the moment of reception. He states that the "Body and Blood of Christ is received by us, at that Supper, and in that Sacrament," even though "it is very hard to tell," "hard to be expressed, hard to be conceived," how that Real Presence might come about, not the reality of it, but "the way and manner thereof."[8] Here Donne is at a loss for words, struck dumb trying to convey how that sacred Presence might occur. Hooker observes likewise that the mystery of the Real Presence ought not to be a subject of "disputing," for the mode of it is "either for height and sublimity of matter, or else for secresy of performance" a mystery beyond our reach (2:330). In the same way, the lover in "A Valediction" is struck dumb, too, when he contemplates the love that can endure absence. He admits he knows not "what it is":

> But we by'a love, so much refin'd,
> That our selves know not what it is,

> Inter-assured of the mind,
> Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse.

The word "Inter-assured" here evokes such phrases for the Lord's Supper as seal of assurance, sure pledge of eternal life.

Jan Mueller underscores Donne's "unequivocal endorsement of adoration" of the sacrament in the Fourth Prebend Sermon (pp. 744-45). It should be added, however, that Donne defends adoration of the Real Presence only at the moment of communion and that he does so mainly to justify kneeling at reception, in opposition to the Dissenters' charge of idolatry. Donne concedes what few Anglican writers do—that kneeling is indeed a sign of worship. He contends, however, that kneeling is lawful here because Christ is worshipped as present within the receiver, not as present under the sacramental bread and wine. More warily, Hooker speaks of kneeling as only a gesture of piety "which custom and long usage had made fit" (2:335). Donne seems more candid—or perhaps just closer to the Catholic Church, in which he was raised—than Hooker in admitting that kneeling is no "indifferent" ceremony.

Paradoxically, Donne underlines his Protestantism when he uses the phrase "true Transubstantiation" in the Fourth Prebend Sermon: he takes the very term Catholics use for the "mode" of the Real Presence and applies it, not to the sacrament of the altar but to the sacrament just as it is received by a worthy communicant: "There is the true Transubstantiation, that when I have received it worthily, it becomes my very soule; that is, My soule growes up into a better state, ... the more deified soule by that Sacrament" (Mueller, p. 155). By using the term *Transubstantiation* at all, Donne distinguishes his view sharply from that of the Dissenters, whom he sees as Zwinglians, and insists that Christ's ascended body is substantially Present at the Lord's Supper, as a divine food to the worthy receiver. Kneeling is warranted because it is not a figurative feeding for him: it is a real joining to the receiver of the substance of divinity, the beginning of eternal life.

But by adding the word *true* to *Transubstantiation*, Donne also distinguishes his view from that of Catholics who believe the *Transubstantiation* also involves a change in the substances of the bread and wine, a change which happens before and continues after the moment of communion, making it possible to reserve the sacrament in a tabernacle on the altar and to worship it apart from the Lord's Supper. He also separates himself here from Luther who believed that the Real Presence was with the sacramental bread and wine at least during the space of the Lord's Supper. On the subject of "true Transubstantiation" Donne is very close to Hooker, who uses a similar phrase about Real Presence at communion: "there ensueth a kind of transubstantiation in us, a true change both of soul and body" (2:328). By using the word *transubstantiation* and referring to the sacrament's effect on the receiver's body, Hooker makes it plain that he believes in a substantial Real Presence at the moment of reception. The term *substance*, as used here by

Donne and Hooker, is from Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and means something like abiding identity of a thing as distinct from its changing and measurable appearance. For Donne and Hooker, "true Transubstantiation" means that the underlying identity or substance of Christ enters the worthy receiver and somehow changes that person into the body of Christ. Hence, Donne can speak of his "deified" soul. For Catholics, *Transubstantiation* is not only such a private event but also a public event, since the underlying identity of the bread and wine on the altar are converted into the "substance" or identity of the body of Christ not only for the duration of the Lord's Supper, as Luther believed, but for as long as the sacramental elements remain. This doctrine Donne refuses and brands with the mark of idolatry.

In the sermon given in Heidelberg, a Calvinist city, Donne refers twice to Calvin and echoes him in ridiculing both Catholic Transubstantiation and Lutheran Consubstantiation. Donne echoes Calvin when he speaks of "the sacrifices of Christians" as "all spiritual" because the words of institution "This is My Body" alter the bread "not to another thing, but to another use" (*Sermons* 2:257-58). "Not to another thing" implies that, for Donne, nothing happens under or with the elements at the alter. Therefore, Donne condemns as "idolatry" any kneeling to Christ in the sacrament apart from the moment of communion, stating: "there is a fair distance and a spacious latitude between those two, an adoring of God in a devout humiliation of the body in that holy action, and an adoring the bread, out of a false imagination that the bread is God." No one believed bread was God, but in the controversy of that time, this was charged on Lutherans and Catholics who both believed in an objective Presence under or with the symbols. Kneeling in "that holy action," by which Donne means at the reception of the sacrament, should not be condemned as idolatry by the Dissenters. The kneeling ordained by English law is not in the same league, he alleges, as that "Idolatry in the practice of the Roman Church" (*Sermons* 2:258). Donne here condemns Catholic kneeling to the sacrament when it is elevated at the altar or carried in processions.

In "A Valediction," the lover gives two parables about how his Presence with the beloved will be an inter-penetration of souls leaving them as one, and yet for a while also as two souls. By the image of gold he stresses their oneness in glory, but by the image of the compass he stresses their twoness necessary for their collaboration in shaping the course of history. A. B. Chambers notes that gold was often used for glorified bodies (pp. 9-12). The first parable of the lovers as gold leaf hints that the Real Presence of the Absent Lover is a realized eschatology, an experience of glorification before Judgment Day:

> Our two soules therefore, which are one,
> Though I must goe, endure not yet
> A breach, but an expansion,
> Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.

The oneness of the lovers in gold evokes the "deified soule" of Donne's Fourth Prebend Sermon, the result of "true Transubstantiation" occurring at communion, when the Real Presence brings the food of eternal life to the worthy receiver.

The "ayery thinnesse" of gold leaf makes it virtually impossible to touch with the hand, and yet this stuff is still a body, however difficult to grasp. When trying to explain the "manner how" the Real Presence of Christ might be bodily reality and yet not palpable flesh, both Luther and Calvin make an analogy to golden sunlight which can be seen and felt, but not seized. "See, the bright rays of the sun are so near you that they pierce into your eyes or your skin so that you feel it, yet you are unable to grasp them," Luther writes (*Works* 37: 68), and Calvin adds that the Holy Spirit conveys Christ's body in the Lord's Supper as the sun sheds its beams upon the earth and casts down something of its substance at the same time.[9] Like Luther and Calvin, Donne wants us to have a sense of Real Presence as something with substance but not like carnal flesh. In attacking Zwingli, who kept alleging against the Real Presence the scriptural passage that flesh is of no avail, Luther used to say that Christ's glorified body was not to be confused with Adam's flesh, which of course availed nothing.

In the image of the lovers' souls being beaten as gold into near transparency Donne might also be hinting at the hand of a hidden Artist, since gold is beaten by a craftsman for a purpose, and a compass is turned about to make a design. In these images of the Real Presence, Donne hints that the body of the Absent Lover abides with his beloved so that Divine Providence might act in a secret way to form a new creation—in a way oblique to carnal eyes—even as the old world is passing.

It may be because Donne uses the theology of the Real Presence as poetic groundwork that A. B. Chambers feels "the conceits of Petrarch or even of Dante's *Vita nuova* seem pale" compared to the imagery of "Valediction," which confers "upon mere mortals the body of God, the most glorified Body of all." When Donne's lover "seriously claims to be God," Chambers wonders if this is wit or blasphemy (p. 17). Perhaps Donne takes the Real Presence as the paradigm of the most exalted human love because he follows literally Christ's explicit new commandment: "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

The lover in Donne's "A Valediction" explains his abiding Presence to the beloved in still another way. He uses the compass and its motion to show how they may be both eternally one and yet temporally apart until his return. Even if their souls are "two" for a while, it is only on the earthly plane, for on the topmost immortal plane, they are firmly united by his Real Presence. The topmost part of the compass is like the inter-penetration of the lovers: their hidden life in each other is made the pivot for the rest of their earthly actions. The temporal separation at the lower compass feet is even necessary to make the artistic or mathematical design:

> If they be two, they are two so
> As stiffe twin compasses are two,

Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the'other doe.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth rome,
It leanes, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect, as it comes home.

In this second mode of Presence there seem two spatial components, the vertical line and the horizontal. The vertical line suggests the beloved's soul is exalted with the lover above time and space, at the Father's right hand, while the horizontal, forward movement hints at parousial expectancy of the Second Coming. The lover in "A Valediction" hints to the beloved that they are to remain separated temporally only as long as needed to draw the full circle of their love's sacred history. The compass motion implies a divinely circular shape in events, and its closing means the culmination of a design like that which starts with the forward movement of Pentecost after the Ascension and ends with the Apocalypse.

In another way, the compass may glance at what Luther calls the heavenly or repletive mode of Real Presence. In this "exalted" mode, Christ cannot be measured or circumscribed by anyone, but all people "are present to him so that he measures and circumscribes them" (*Works* 37:223). The word *circumscribes* here seems to suggest the action of a compass.

The firmness and correctness of the circle drawn by the compass depends greatly on the union of the lovers at the top and the consequent fidelity of the beloved. The lover is seated firmly above but also wandering dynamically below, an image of the compatibility of the unmoved divine nature and the active role of the lord of history. The beloved is the faithful compass-foot that yearns and "hearkens after" the other, turning with and leaning toward that other foot which has always the greater scope of movement. This word *hearkens* may allude to Christ's command that his beloved followers should hearken after his voice and not heed strange guides. The final perseverance of the beloved is apparent when she "growes erect" at the lover's coming home. The phrase "growes erect" may allude to Christ's saying that his followers should lift their heads or "stand erect" (Luke 21:28) when the signs appear that his Second Coming is at hand. When the compass is closed, the forward movement ends, the horizontal is swallowed up into the vertical, and the two souls melt into an eternity of oneness. Until then, the wandering foot, one aspect of the lover who is also enthroned above, must run "obliquely" in the eyes of the beloved. His ways are hard to discern, but in the end a "just" circle or a design filled with justice is manifest at the Judgment. All the while her "firmness"—which involves her turning with the lover as the circle is formed—makes his circle "just." Her active participation and patient fidelity vindicates the ways of God to man, makes the circle of their story an artistic and perfect whole.

It must be noted that the perfect temporal circle, the design of history as governed by Divine Providence was yet unbroken for Donne and most of his contemporaries, even if the old circle of the spatial world had been shattered for many by the new cosmology. The cosmos might be seen for the first time as inconceivably vast and no longer geocentric, but most people, even the learned, believed for another century that the universe was less than six thousand years old. This foreshortening of time can be viewed in the universal histories of the later seventeenth century by Ussher, Heylin, and Bossuet, all of whom take the chronology of the Bible literally and are not contradicted by the scientists of their times. The vast space of the new cosmos unveiled by science seemed, then, like a wondrous stage to a brief temporal event, human history. Cosmos and humanity were thought to be agemates: humans and the world had been born together the same week. It was believed the cosmos had no story, no development of its own apart from and earlier than humankind. The cosmos was only the scene in which the human saga, all the more glorious for such a setting, took place. In the seventeenth century, European history was still conceived as a wedge in the circle of sacred history, which was a perfectly shaped divine drama from Genesis to Apocalypse, with the climax at the Resurrection of Christ and a catastrophe at the Last Judgment. This was still an age when very many thought the dramatic completion of the circle and the closing of the compass was at hand.

In the controversy over the Real Presence in the seventeenth century, it was pointed out that in his promise to abide during his absence, Christ had left the "mode" of this Presence uncertain. In a parallel way, Donne's lover simply hints at two modes of his abiding presence, explaining that their love is so ineffable that "our selves know not what it is"—that is to say, no amount of thinking on modes will comprehend this mystery. Donne implies that the "how" of the Presence is a matter of sublime contemplation.

Those trying to mediate between divergent Christian views of the Lord's Supper in the early seventeenth century pointed out that many of them shared a belief in the Real Presence, which Christ had affirmed, and were fighting over the "mode" of that Presence, which Christ had left obscure. Calvin himself taught, as the Church of England also did, that there is a Real Presence of Christ's body in the worthy receiver at communion. But Zwingli and his followers among the English Puritans disagreed—not merely about "mode" but also about the reality of the bodily Presence itself.

Although there have been books on iconoclasm published of late, this aspect of iconoclasm has been unfortunately overlooked. Yet here was perhaps the major driving force in iconoclasm—the repudiation of the Lord's Supper as an *embodiment* of divine presence. The iconoclasts wanted to knock down what they saw as a final idolatry: the Lord's Supper as the ongoing enfleshment of God in time and space. The breaking of crucifixes, statues, stained glass windows, and altars was only peripheral to this repudiation, symbolized in England by the objection to

kneeling at communion on grounds of idolatry. In his sermon on kneeling, Donne is keenly aware that the Real Presence as defined by the Church of England is the issue. The iconoclasts' sense that bodily phenomenon is contrary in all things to the spirit led them to want to confine Christ's body solely to the right hand of the Father till the Day of Judgment. For Zwingli and his followers, therefore, the Lord's Supper could be only an application of the benefits of the Passion to the receiver. The entire sacrament was a metaphor for what went on in the preaching. There was no power in it, no dynamic, personal inter-penetration of Christ's own body with the communicant.

Although Calvin himself did not regard kneeling at reception as idolatry, the English Puritans did. Thus, the long struggle with the Puritan Dissenters was in part over their Zwinglian view—expressed in the Black Rubric of Edward VI's second Prayer Book—that the substantial Real Presence within the receiver at communion—still Church of England teaching in the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline ages—was an idolatrous embodiment, a remnant of "popery," almost as much a mark of the Antichrist and the Whore of Babylon (to employ the bitter rhetoric of the age) as the Lutheran and Catholic views of Real Presence with or under the symbols.

In sum, Donne's "A Valediction" can be read as having for a groundwork, beneath the lyric song of farewell, a view of bodily Real Presence which most readers (except for the followers of Zwingli) in seventeenth-century Britain and Europe shared. The poet takes as a paradigm for the most exalted human love Christ's love for the Church, a love which will not allow him to be Absent. This permits Donne to give an almost infinite depth to the promise of the lover, who on the brink of a journey pledges not merely to return to the beloved but also, in an incomprehensible, numinous, but still substantial manner, to remain all the while Really Present.

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Notes

[1] *Works*, 55 vols. ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), 37:74, 144; 38:300.

[2] Dyson Hague, *The Story of the English Prayer Book*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans Green, 1930), pp. 161, 180, 233-35.

[3] Richard Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, 2 vols. (London: Dent and Dutton, 1922), 2:320.

[4] "'This cannot be said': A Preface to the Reader of Donne's Lyrics," *C&L* 39(1990), 369, 374.

[5] *John Donne Journal* 1 (1982), 1.

[6] All citations of Donne's poems are to *The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[7] *Sermons*, 10 vols., ed. Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-62), p. 256.

[8] *Donne's Prebend Sermons*, ed. Janel M. Mueller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 137.

[9] *Institutes*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).