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Donne's Art of Preaching and the Reconstruction of Tertullian

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In the composition of his sermons, John Donne seldom confers with his patristic sources directly, and then often quotes inaccurately and out of context; for his aim is principally to recreate these sources in accord with his immediate rhetorical purpose. Citing a number of examples from Augustine, I have elsewhere argued that the sermons do not necessarily reveal significant patristic influence, and that we must look with care at many more quotations to see if Donne is not in fact wresting the Fathers out of their own texts.[1] But rather than to continue the analysis of instances from the vast work of Augustine, which must number about 700 allusions or quotations in the sermons, I have narrowed my survey to Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225), the early Christian lay apologist and controversialist, whose writing is more limited in its extent, but who is nevertheless very frequently cited throughout the whole range of sermons. Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian, to give his full name, may well provide the measure for Donne's use of patristic authority while one also recognizes that the affinity between Donne and Tertullian is different from that which Donne shared with Augustine or with any of the other Fathers. My present aim is to identify some leading features of Donne's homiletic composition through his use of Tertullian, who will provide the specific case for revealing how Donne characteristically fashions the Fathers, and additionally how, in particular ways, he is drawn to and delights in Tertullian's unique expression.

Donne frequently speaks approvingly of Tertullian's style, in terms more generous than he applies to any other author, ancient or contemporary. "*Tertullian* sayes well" (3.138), "sayes elegantly" (7.110), and

"sayes excellently" (9.125).[2] For Donne, Tertullian is above all "that great Minter of Latine words" (1.130), who is "every where a Patheticall expresser of himselfe" and sometimes "above himselfe" (10.151). W. Fraser Mitchell believes that "of all the patristic writers the one who seems most to have influenced Donne's style was Tertullian," and his impression may be correct, if by influence we may understand rhetorical and stylistic imitation.[3] Although Augustine is by far the most cited of the Fathers in Donne's sermons, Tertullian (and Jerome) are next in frequency; but Tertullian evidently provides Donne with abundant stylistic examples. Of the approximately 135 references or quotations to Tertullian in the 160 sermons, most function in some way to underline Donne's rhetorical or homiletic method, as he himself understood it. Mitchell notes that Donne's "vigour and colour . . . which he imparted to his brief sentences (or sentence-clauses, as they may more properly be called in his longer sentences), point back directly to Tertullian, who was able . . . to express himself always with liveliness, and often with considerable force in remarkably brief sentences."[4] Mitchell offers little or no argument for his attractive generalization.

We may still wonder why Donne should have been so interested in the late second century Tertullian—perhaps the earliest of the Latin (and African) Fathers, who was not a preacher and probably not a priest, many of whose theological views, including the heretical Montanism, must surely have been inimical to him. While Donne's regard for Tertullian is certainly stylistic (or "elocutionary"), and our attention will focus especially on the later writer's adaptation of the earlier one's language, Donne must have been attracted also by other rhetorical features of his learned predecessor's treatises. Here it is important to recall the indebtedness of Tertullian himself to the Second Sophistic writers of the second century, amongst whom Apuleius is one of the chief of the Latin names. Tertullian combined his learning and rhetorical education with philosophical and theological speculation, being "familiar," as Timothy Barnes observes, "with the stylized encomium or vituperation of a set theme, knowing both when it should be employed and when avoided."[5] Tertullian is a highly creative and

imaginative writer, whose ability to use *exempla* and sustain a metaphor, as in *Scorpiace* or *De Pallio,* reveals remarkable eloquence and rhetorical power.[6] The *Scorpiace,* or "scorpion," maintains the image of this poisonous little creature whose danger is greatest in the summer, which means persecution for Christians, but whose sting may in fact treat the bite of the Gnostics, while the *De Pallio* exhorts Christians to adopt the philosopher's mantle, or pallium, as their dress. Tertullian's style evidently touched Donne whose highly wrought and conceited prose has much in common with the rhetorical artifice of this African Father and his contemporaries. The point is that all of these early writers cultivated meretricious or decorative rhetorical effects that were to be popularly imitated in the seventeenth century—but none amongst them proved more attractive than Tertullian to the kind of bold and skillful adaptation that Donne especially practices.

Preaching for Donne, as we all know, was indebted to rhetorical art turned to ecclesiastical use, in which he, and every educated clergyman of his generation, was thoroughly grounded. From his study of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, Donne obviously knew the rhetorical theory of argument which traditionally possessed at least six different aspects: (1) different kinds of speeches are appropriate to different occasions: forensic (cases in court), deliberative (public persuasion), epideictic (luxuriant oratory of praise or blame); (2) a speech consists of various parts, usually *exordium, narratio or partitio, confirmatio, reprehensio, conclusio;* (3) three kinds of proof, or persuasion, were to appeal to the character of the speaker *(ethos),* to the emotions of the auditor *(pathos),* to rational argument *(logos);* (4) the quality of argument must be recognized through the study of *invention,* and (5) the means of developing an argument through *topics* (or tópoi); finally (6), the selection of modes of argument should reflect appropriately each kind of defence. Such rhetorical art was well understood by the learned preachers at James's court, who especially delighted in *amplificatio,* the amplification which conventionally combined *confirmatio* and *reprehensio* and provided the principal body of the sermon (or speech). Within this rhetorical mode and its urge for amplification, there arose an ecclesiastical fashion for empty-

ing one's common-place book in a dazzling display of references, frequently culled from ancient writers, notably Seneca, and the Latin and Greek Fathers. Thus the "witty preachers," in general, proceeded. The best of them—Lancelot Andrewes, William Laud, Henry King, and of course John Donne—composed and preached exceptional and memorable sermons, and they were followed by other preachers of considerable achievement: John Cosin, Ralph Brownrigg, Henry Hammond, Jeremy Taylor, and Mark Frank.[7]

Donne, along with this host of preachers, knew well the art of rhetorical theory. To the great classical rhetoricians mentioned already must be added the name of Tertullian, for he excellently dresses their formulations in his distinctive style. He is notable in at least four directions: his legal training and its effect on his treatises; his philosophical background; his difficult and theologically expressive Latin; and his rhetorical knowledge. Donne, of his contemporaries, best understood Tertullian's fascinating complexity. Even the learned Andrewes is more sparing in his use of Tertullian; for his densely exegetical mode prefers copious scriptural citation with helpful (and highly relevant) support from such Eastern Fathers as St. John Chrysostom, whom he almost always quotes in Greek—Donne is seldom so intensely concemed with the details of linguistic analysis and he rarely cites Greek texts in the original. Donne's admiration for Tertullian is especially remarkable, yet it is also judicious. Of Tertullian's thirty-one extant treatises, most possess highly formal rhetorical structures, and these typically feature extended sections of *amplificatio* thus providing "a sort of superstructure for the argument, examining its implications, and reaffirming and extending it, often with a rhetorical flourish."[8] This description applies equally well to Donne's usual sermon, where the introduction of the text leads promptly to its division, and then to the prolonged discourse of amplificatio, or proof, with many embellishments that are not always essential to the argument. It must be said that Donne found in Tertullian a master of the art of rhetoric whose influence may be implicitly assumed. To the explicit use of Tertullian, however, my wish is to turn; for we should be able to

observe how one stylist made effective use of another, and from whom he may well have learned much of his own art.

Donne evidently read widely in Tertullian, for he refers to most—but by no means all—of his treatises. The *Apologeticum* receives particular attention. An allusion in the poetry leads to one lively example: Mitchell recalls Grierson's commentary on "The Calme," one of the verse letters:

> How little more alas
> Is man now, then before he was? he was
> Nothing; for us, wee are for nothing fit;
> Chance, or our selves still disproportion it.[9] (ll. 51–54)

The lines are similar to a passage in Donne's sermon on Job 19:26, "And though, after my skin, wormes destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," preached at Lincoln's Inn:

> Canst thou chuse but thinke God as perfect now, at least as he was at first, and can hee not as easily make thee up againe of nothing, as he made thee of nothing at first? *Recogita quid fueris, antequam esses;* Thinke over thy selfe; what wast thou before thou wast any thing? *Meminisses utique, si fuisses;* If thou hadst been any thing then, surely thou wouldst remember it now. *Qui non eras, factus es; Cum iterum non eris, fies;* Thou that wast once nothing, wast made this that thou art now; and when thou shalt be nothing againe, thou shalt be made better then thou art yet. And, *Redde rationem qua factus es, & ego reddam rationem quâ fies;* Doe thou tell me, how thou wast made then, and I will tell thee how thou shalt be made hereafter. (3.97)

The allusion is to *Apologeticum,* 48.5–6, which Donne typically adapts to his own use:

> Recogita, quid fueris antequam esses. Utique nihil: meminisses enim, si quid fuisses. Qui ergo nihil fueras priusquam esses, idem nihil factus cum esse desieris, cur non possis rursus esse de nihilo eiusdem ipsius auctoris uoluntate, qui te uoluit esse de nihilo? Quid noui tibi

> eueniet? Qui non eras, factus es; et iterum, cum non eris, fies. Redde, si potes, rationem, qua factus es, et tunc require, qua fies. Et tamen facilius utique fies quod fuisti aliquando, quia aeque non difficile factus es, quod numquam fuisti aliquando.
> (Reflect on what you were before you came into existence. Nothing. For if you had been anything, you would have remembered it. You, then, who were nothing before you existed, reduced to nothing also when you cease to be, why may you not come into being again out of nothing, at the will of the same Creator whose will created you out of nothing at the first? Will it be anything new in your case? You who were not, *were* made; when you cease to be again, you *shall* be made. Explain, if you can, your original creation, and then demand to know how you shall be re-created. Indeed, it will be still easier surely to make you what you were once, when the very same creative power made you without difficulty what you never were before.)[10]

This translation rather feebly reflects the carefully structured parallelisms and repetitions of the original, and the train of little clauses that Tertullian urges and that Donne affects and disperses. In Donne's redaction, there is especially his striking change of *require* to a repetition of *redde* as *reddam ego,* "I will tell," an alteration that turns the speech into Donne's voice. We shall often see this kind of change.[11]

In his undated sermon on 1 Cor. 16:22, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maranatha," Donne refers several times to Tertullian, and especially to *Apologeticum,* 1.13. Donne is in this place writing of persecution, of the martyrs of the early church, in his second partition of the text—on the name and worship of Jesus. Donne says:

> That in the midst of persecutions, God will give us temporall blessings, but that in the midst of temporall blessings, God will give us persecutions; that it shall be a part of his mercy, to be delivered from the danger of being puffed up by those temporall abundances, by having a mixture of adversity and persecutions; and then, what ill, what losse, is there in laying downe this life for him? *Quod hoc mali est, quod martyrialis mali, non habet timorem, pudorem, tergiversationem, pœnitentiam, deplorationem?* What kinde of evill

> is this, which when it came to the highest, *Ad malum martyriale,* to martyrdome, to death, did neither imprint in our holy predecessors in the Primitive Church, *Timorem,* any feare that it would come; nor *Tergiversationem,* any recanting lest it should come; nor *Pudorem,* any shame when it was come; nor *Pœnitentiam,* any repentance that they would suffer it to come; nor *Deplorationem,* any lamentation by their heires, and Executors, because they lost all, when it was come? *Quid mali?* What kinde of evill can I call this, in laying down my life, for this Lord of life, *Cujus reus gaudet,* when those Martyrs called that guiltinesse a joy, *Cujus accusatio votum,* and the accusation a satisfaction, *Cujus pœna fœlicitas,* and the suffering perfect happinesse? Love thy neighbour as thy selfe, is the farthest of that Commandement; but love God above thy selfe; for, indeed, in doing so thou dost but love thy selfe still: Remember that thy soule is thy selfe; and as if that be lost, nothing is gained, so if that be gained, nothing is lost, whatsoever become of this life. (3.306)

What Tertullian actually says is lost in Donne's colourful elaboration:

> Quid hoc mali est, quod naturalia mali non habet, timorem, pudorem, tergiuersationem, paenitentiam, deplorationem? Quid hoc mali est, cuius reus gaudet, cuius accusatio uotum est et poena uictoria? Non potes dementiam dicere, quod reuinceris ignorare.
> (What sort of evil thing is this, which wants all the ordinary peculiarities of evil—fear, shame, subterfuge, penitence, lamenting? What! is that a crime in which the criminal rejoices? to be accused of which is his ardent wish, to be punished for which is his felicity? You cannot call it madness, you who stand convicted of knowing nothing of the matter.)

Most notable in Donne's new verson is his substitution of *martyrialis* for *naturalia,* which appears in no edition of Tertullian; for Tertullian is not at this point—the conclusion of his first chapter of *Apologeticum*—discussing martyrdom but defending the character of Christians against pagan rulers (the variant *fœlicitas* for *uictoria* has the authority of the edition of 1580, which Donne may have used). Donne has taken a hint from the cleverly balanced phrases and the series of descriptive terms.

But he is concerned to make his own point, which is independent of his putative source. Tertullian's language is clever, yet it is primarily a means for helping Donne to sustain his own wit and learning.

We often find that Donne rewrites Tertullian, a practice he reveals, for example, in one of his sermons preached on the penitential Psalm 6:1, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." In the second part of the main body of the sermon, on God's displeasure, or deprecation, Donne remembers the opening of Tertullian's *Apologeticum,* 1.2:

> Nihil de causa sua deprecatur, quia nec de condicione miratur. Scit se peregrinam in terris agere, inter extraneos facile inimicos inuenire, ceterum genus, sedem, spem, gratiam, dignitatem in caelis habere. Vnum gestit interdum, ne ignorata damnetur.
> (She [that is, the Truth] has no appeals to make to you in regard of her condition, for that does not excite her wonder. She knows that she is but a sojourner on the earth, and that among strangers she naturally finds foes; and more than that, that her origin, her dwelling-place, her hope, her recompense, her honours, are above. One thing, meanwhile, she anxiously desires of earthly rulers—not to be condemned unknown.)

With these lines from the *exordium,* Tertullian is supposedly addressing the magistrates on the hill of Byrsa in Carthage, and he wishes to defend the Christians who had been recently harassed. One can almost imagine these circumstances in Donne's reconstruction of Tertullian; but Donne is excited by the prospects that Tertullian's words inspire, and he weaves them into a new and ambitiously conceived situation of his own that is important to the elaboration of his text from Psalm 6. The prayer in the text is deprecatory, Donne says. There is no contention here, but rather "the humility of a Petitioner, and Supplicant, to begge a forbearance." He continues:

> The Martyrs in the Primitive Church would not doe that. *Nihil de causa sua deprecatur, qui nihil de conditione sua miratur,* sayes *Tertullian;* . . . He meanes that the Christians in those times of

> Persecution, did never intreat the Judge for favour, because it was not strange to them, to see themselves, whose conversation was in heaven, despised, and contemned, and condemned upon earth: *Nihil mirantur de conditione,* They wondred not at their misery, they thought it a part of their Profession, a part of the Christian Religion, to suffer, and therefore, *Nihil deprecati de causa,* They never solicited the Judge for favour. (5.328)

Donne is playing on "deprecation," which he calls "*Tertullians* Method"; but Tertullian contributes very little to the substance of Donne's argument although he does help him with his style; and when Tertullian provides him with an insufficiency of balanced phrases, Donne improves on his source and thus we have the parallel series introduced by "Nihil."

While *deprecation* is the key term of this passage, another, more unusual expression, also evidently inspired by Tertullian and wrenched from him, occurs in a Lincoln's Inn sermon on Trinity Sunday, 1620, on Genesis 18:25, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" God is judge of the whole church, committed to Abraham and his descendents; but the church may be known by different offspring as long as they enjoy unity of doctrine and community of spirit:

> *Tertullian* sayes well, That the whole Church of God is one houshold: He sayes every particular Church is *Ecclesia Apostolica, quia soboles Apostolicarum,* An Apostolicall Church, if it be an off-spring of the Apostolicall Churches: He does not say, *quia soboles Apostolicæ,* because that Church is the off-spring of the Apostolicall Church, as though there were but one such, which must be the mother of all: for, sayes he, *Omnes primæ, & omnes Apostolicæ,* Every Church is a supreme Church, and every Church is an Apostolicall Church, *dum omnes unam probant unitatem,* as long as they agree in the unity of that doctrine which the Apostles taught. . . . The Church then was, and should be, as one houshold; And in this houshold, sayes *Tertullian* there, there was first *Communicatio pacis,* a peaceable disposition. . . . And then there was *appellatio fraternitatis,* sayes he; . . . And lastly, sayes he, There was *Contesseratio Hospitalitatis,* A

> warrant for their reception and entertainment in one anothers houses, wheresoever they travailed. (3.138-39)

Contesseration now becomes the term most central to Donne's expository proof, and it appears five times within the next twenty-four lines, describing, for example, baptism in the name of the Trinity, the principal unifying sign of the Christian "household." The word is unusual in English, the OED giving Donne's usage of it in this sermon of 1620 as the first instance, deriving from *tessera hospitalis,* "a square tablet which was divided as a tally or token between two friends in order that they or their descendents might thereby ever afterwards recognize each other." Tertullian is referring in *De praescriptione haereticorum* to the *tessera* in the passage that Donne has adapted and made his own:

> Ac per hoc et ipsae apostolicae deputabuntur ut suboles apostolicarum ecclesiarum. Omne genus ad originem suam censeatur necesse est. Itaque tot ac tantae ecclesiae una est illa ab apostolis prima ex qua omnes. Sic omnes primae et omnes apostolicae, dum una omnes. Probant unitatem communicatio pacis et appellatio fraternitatis et contesseratio hospitalitatis. (20.6-8)
> (Therefore the churches, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive church, [founded] by the apostles, from which they all [spring]. In this way all are primitive, and all are apostolic, whilst they are all proved to be one, in [unbroken] unity, by their peaceful communion, and title of brotherhood, and bond of hospitality.)

We may continue to see Donne's fascination with Tertullian's cogent style in further instances of shrewd invention.

In a sermon on Whitsunday, Donne is expatiating on the nature of the church and how it must be filled with sacramental grace. A long passage begins with a brief but appealingly clever quotation from Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem,* 4.5.3: "Now, *Faciunt favos & vespæ, faciunt Ecclesias & Marcionitæ,* As Waspes make combs, but empty ones, so do Heretiques Churches, but frivolous ones, ineffectuall ones"

(7.232). The conceit evidently attracted Donne, and without quite taking it out of context, he fits it into his own doctrine of the church and into an elaboration of his sermon text on John 16:8–11, on "judgement." A little later in the same sermon, Donne returns to Tertullian, this time selecting phrases from *Apologeticum,* 47.9–14, and reconstructing them to suit his purpose. On the contrast between poets and philosophers, on the one hand, and the followers of Christ, on the other, Christians now are scorned if they proclaim divine judgment, even though those poets and philosophers themselves have set up a judgment seat of their own in the realms below. Tertullian writes:

> Expedite . . . praescribimus adulteris nostris, illam esse regulam ueritatis, quae ueniat a Christo transmissa per comites ipsius, quibus aliquanto posteriores diversi isti commentatores deprehenduntur.
> (We at once put in a plea in bar against these tainters of our purity, asserting that that is the rule of truth which comes down from Christ by transmission through His companions, to whom we shall prove that those devisers of different doctrines are all [later or] posterior).

Donne after him declares that "*Tertullian* apprehends and reprehends in his time, when he sayes, *Præscribimus adulteris nostris,* Wee prescribe above them, which counterfeit our doctrine, for we had it before them, and they have but rags, and those torn from us. *Fabulæ immissæ, quæ fidem infirmarent veritatis;* They have brought part of our Scriptures into their Fables, that all the rest might seem but Fables too." Donne's paraphrase is not far from Tertullian's intention, but he obviously allows himself considerable freedom. But Tertullian's statements about judgment are completely rewritten:

> Itaque ridemur praedicantes Deum iudicaturum. Sic enim et poetae et philosophi tribunal apud inferos ponunt. Et gehennam si comminemur, quae est ignis arcani subterraneus ad poenam thesaurus, proinde decachinnamur.
> (Accordingly, we get ourselves laughed at for proclaiming that God will one day judge the world. For, like us, the poets and philosophers

> set up a judgement-seat in the realms below. And if we threaten Gehenna, which is a reservoir of secret fire under the earth for purposes of punishment, we have in the same way derision heaped on us.)

Donne cleverly reorganizes Tertullian's statement to say, "*Gehennam prædicantes & iudicium, ridemur, decachinnamur,* They laugh at us when we preach of hell, and judgement" (7.234).

Donne not only remakes Tertullian's language, but he also may discover inspiration from certain of his ideas though often in elaborately misleading ways. Three sermons of 1626 are related by their common text, 1 Cor. 15:29, "Else what shall they doe which are baptized for the dead? If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for the dead?" (7.94–117; 164–89; 190–214) This Pauline text is famously obscure, and it cannot be said that Donne's illumination is particularly helpful. He comes to speak, as he evidently must, on the notion of "vicarious baptism," referring at length to Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* (alternatively, *De resurrectione carnis),* especially chapter 48, section 11, which is important to have before us:

> Si autem et baptizantur quidam pro mortuis, uidebimus an ratione. Certe illa praesumptione hoc eos instituisse portendit, qua alii etiam carni [ut] uicarium baptisma profuturum existimarent ad spem resurrectionis, quae nisi corporalis non [nisi alias] in baptismate corporali obligaretur. Qui <d> et ipsos baptizari ait, id est <lauari>, si non quae baptizantur corpora resurgent?
> (But inasmuch as "some are also baptized for the dead," we will see whether there be a good reason for this. Now it is certain that they adopted this [practice] with such a presumption as made them suppose that the vicarious baptism [in question] would be beneficial to the flesh of another in anticipation of the resurrection; for unless it were a bodily [resurrection], there would be no pledge secured by this process of a corporeal baptism. "Why were they then baptized for the dead," he asks, unless the bodies rise again which are thus baptized?")

Donne at first seems to suppose that Tertullian is reflecting vicarious baptism in his own time in his explication of Paul's statement, and that

there is, or was, "Baptisme by an Atturney, by a Proxy." Yet Tertullian may not have meant this sense after all, Donne rather confusingly concludes, and says that Tertullian was rejecting the old custom of placing a dead and unbaptized person under the bed of a living individual who was then baptized on behalf of the person under the bed. It is not clear that Tertullian knew of such a practice, nor that he understood in any specific way what Paul was writing; for he returns to the same verse in a later treatise, where he professes ignorance: "Viderit institutio ista . . . si forte . . . " (Now, never mind that practice [whatever it might have been] . . . perhaps . . .), he writes in *Adversus Marcionem,* 5.10.1. It is difficult to understand how these references to Tertullian help Donne's argument here; they provide only a strange shimmer of patristic authority, a superficial yet amplifying ornament in the sermon as a whole.

One of the most familiar—and embellishing—statements of the earlier seventeenth century is Tertullian's often repeated "credibile est, quia ineptum est" (that is, believable because it is absurd), which refers to the Crucifixion; and that Christ rose again is certain because impossible ("certum est, quia impossibile," from *De carne christi,* 5.4). Sir Thomas Browne, for example, deals with "those wingy mysteries in Divinity" and answers "all the objections of Satan, and my rebellious reason, with that odde resolution I learned of *Tertullian.*"[12] Donne, too, may be attracted by this paradox, or by an idea very much like it: *"Nihil impossibile nisi quod non uult,* He can do whatsoever he will do" (8.57), he says in his Trinity sermon of 1627, meditating also on other perplexities and mysteries of religion. Here Donne introduces a memorable statement, characteristic of Tertullian's carefully balanced phrasing. In a variety of places, Donne adapts a word or phrase from Tertullian: "unintelligibleness, (to use *Tertullian*'s word)" (1.181), from *Adversus Marcionem,* 5.14.9 (and cf. 4.25.3); *"In-intelligibilia, In-investigabilia,* (as *Tertullian* speakes) un-understandable things, unrevealed decrees of God" (9.51; and cf. *Adversus Praxean,* 7.6); "this *Blessednesse,* which as it is in Heaven, and reserved for our possession there, is in-intelligible, (as *Tertullian* speaks)" (9.251); "Gods Method, To make us understand, certainely

those things which belong to our Salvation, are not *In-intelligibilia,* not In-intelligible, un-understandable, un-conceivable things, but the Articles of faith... discernible by Reason" (9.355). This last reflection recalls us to the truth that for both Donne and Tertullian reason and revelation live in tension and possess common authority.

Tertullian affected Donne in many ways, and he is typical of the patristic and other commentators that Donne so frequently and often so casually cites. He was for Donne a rhetorical exemplar, a master of Latin style, and a valuable resource. Donne evidently read him, collected felicitous lines from him, perhaps gathering ones he liked into a common-place book with other commentators; and perhaps he referred to this book, or simply to his memory when he wished to fill out the main body of his sermons. Tertullian understood well the necessities of *amplificatio,* and so also did Donne.

Yet one further instance demonstrates Donne's stylistic indebtedness to Tertullian. The passage is near the conclusion of the sermon on Psalm 32: 1,2, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sinne is covered; blessed is the man, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquitie, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Donne is celebrating God's mercy, the full antidote to sin and the source of pardon for all iniquities. He is especially forceful in his acclamation by building a series of parallel clauses whose crescendoing power leads to an exaltation. The passage, from *De patientia,* 15.1-4, begins in Tertullian, but it ends in Donne: "*Si apud Deum deponas injuriam, ipse ultor erit,* Lay all the injuries that thou sufferest, at Gods feet, and hee will revenge them; *Si damnum, ipse restituet;* Lay all thy losses there, and he will repaire them; *Si dolorem, ipse medicus;* Lay downe all thy diseases there, and he shall heale thee; *Si mortem, ipse resuscitator,* Dye in his armes, and he shall breath a new life into thee; Add wee to *Tertullian: Si peccata, ipse sepeliet,* lay thy sins in his wounds, and he shall bury them so deepe, that onely they shall never have resurrection" (9.272-73). Donne is not unfaithful to Tertullian's general sense: "Si iniuriam deposueris penes eum, ultor est; si damnum, restitutor est; si dolorem, medicus est; si mortem, resuscitator est." But Donne has restructured Tertullian to gain greater vividness and dramatic intensity,

notably by introducing the intensive "ipse" in the series of clauses, and by replacing the present with the future tense; for it is toward "the laver of Regeneration" that Donne means to proceed and where he will leave his auditors at the end of his sermon. In taking up Tertullian's confident statement of God's mercy—and patience—Donne has also expanded it with his own language in an additional clause that is grammatically parallel with the previous ones, and also extends and complicates the imagery of "si mortem, resuscitator" (death–revival) with "si peccata, sepeliet" (sins–burying). We may well see in this instance Donne's reinvention—or, better to say, his *re-elocution*—of a much favored source.

In an important essay on Donne's sermon on Psalm 51, Mark Vessey has urged that Donne's citations of the Fathers need to be studied for their contribution to his verbal artistry.[13] He points in a preliminary way to what we may now surely begin to see: there is undoubtedly a powerful patristic *elocutio* at work in the sermons, a function that goes far beyond mere *invention,* or the gathering of materials, such as Vessey has described. Donne's method with Tertullian, which typifies his ingenuity, appears to be consistently that of separating and expanding parallel terms in series for maximum emotional effect. He delights in constructions that are a feature of Tertullian's frequently concise, mannered, elliptical, and balanced style and turns them into elements of a more inflated rhetoric. We must realize—probably for the first time—that Donne's management of patristic "influence," as well as his use of other sources, needs such careful defining as this essay has attempted to demonstrate; for Donne's copious invention, potent imagination, and rich elocution renew an older style. Out of the midst of earlier works, Donne finds and elaborates the terms of his influence, and when he has finished consulting the work of others, the resulting composition is essentially and decidedly Donne's own.

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Notes

[1] See "Donne's Reinvention of the Fathers: Sacred Truths Suitably Expressed," in *Sacred and Profane: Secular and Devotional Interplay in Early Modern British Literature,* ed. Helen Wilcox, Richard Todd, and Alasdair MacDonald (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995), 195-201. For a recent discussion of Donne's general response to Augustine, see Mark Vessey, "John Donne (1572–1631) in the Company of Augustine: Patristic Culture and Literary Profession in the English Renaissance," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 39 (1993), 173-201.

[2] Passages from Donne's sermons are quoted from the edition by George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953–62), cited by volume and page number within the text.

[3] W. Fraser Mitchell, *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson: A Study of Its Literary Aspects* (1932; rept. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 189.

[4] Ibid. 190.

[5] Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 214.

[6] In his well-known essay on "'Attic' Prose in the Seventeenth Century," Morris W. Croll confusingly adds Seneca, Tacitus, and Lucan to Tertullian, and together they influence the supposed "anti-Ciceronianism" of the seventeenth century. Croll looks back over the development of elocutionary fashion in the seventeenth century from the point of view of Malebranche who complained in 1694 that Tertullian, Seneca, and Montaigne are "'enemies of clear thinking and pure reason, because they have more fancy than judgment and dress the truth in colors of imagination.'" Originally published in 1921, the essay is reprinted in *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm: Essays by Morris W. Croll,* ed. J. Max Patrick et al. [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966], 100). The lumping of these figures must be very imprecise and chronologically crude; for Seneca, Tacitus, and Lucan—writers of the Silver Age of Latin literature—all flourished within the first century, more than a hundred years before Tertullian was born. Croll was following the scheme suggested earlier by E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1909).

[7] See my "Patristic and Contemporary Borrowing in the Caroline Divines," *Renaissance Quarterly* 23 (1970): 421–29, rept. in *The Sempiternal Season: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Devotional Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 65–73.

[8] See Robert Dick Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 22. I am generally indebted to Sider's analysis of Tertullian's rhetoric.

[9] Mitchell 190, and Herbert J. C. Grierson, ed., *The Poems of John Donne,* 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), 1:179–80; the commentary is in 2:139.

[10] Tertullian is quoted from the two volume edition in the Corpus Christianorum *Series Latina* (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954). Translations of Tertullian are from the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library,* 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868–70).

[11] Of incidental interest is the fact that Donne probably owes the theme and movement of his *Metempsychosis* to Tertullian's *De Anima.* See M. van Wyk Smith, "John Donne's *Metempsychosis,*" *Review of English Studies* n.s. 24 (1973): 17–25, 141–52; and cf. Janel M. Mueller, "Donne's Epic Venture in the *Metempsychosis,*" *Modern Philology* 70 (1972): 109–37. Don Cameron Allen suggests that Tertullian's *Adversus Praxean is* the original source of lines 72–73 of *Satyre III:* "though truth and falshood bee/ Neare twins, yet truth a little elder isn ("Two Annotations on Donne's Verse," *Modern Language Notes* 60 [1945]: 54–55).

[12] Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (I.9), ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 9.

[13] Mark Vessey, "Consulting the Fathers: Invention and Meditation in Donne's Sermon on Psalm 51:7 ("Purge me with hyssope")," *John Donne Journal* 11 (1992): 99–110.