Introduction

DONNE's sermons are admittedly unique. Charles Eliot Norton wrote of them, "They are as unlike any other sermons as his poems are unlike any other poetry." Coleridge was deeply interested in them and wrote profuse annotations in the margin of a copy of the 1640 Folio of Donne's *LXXX Sermons*. T. S. Eliot has told us that he prefers the sermons of Bishop Andrewes, Donne's greatest contemporary rival as a preacher, which are indeed full of intellectual power, but they have not the wide appeal which Donne's personality made on his hearers. F. P. Wilson has lately written, "For every reader of Andrewes there are, I suppose, a hundred of Donne.... One reason why the one is so much more read than the other may be that John Donne was once Jack Donne, whereas Andrewes was always Lancelot."[1]

For modern readers Donne has the advantage over Andrewes in that he was a poet who did not lose his poetical imagination when he entered the pulpit. Whenever he was deeply moved, his style caught fire, and he employed the images, the repetitions, and even sometimes the rhythms of poetry.[2] Moreover, during the forty-two years of his life before he entered the ministry, he had a wide and varied experience of life as a law student at Lincoln's Inn, a traveler in France and Italy, a gentleman adventurer in two naval expeditions led by the Earl of Essex against Spain, a secretary in the London house of Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper, and finally, after his romantic marriage and subsequent disgrace, as an impoverished husband trying to maintain his growing family by hackwork for various patrons. While his more academic contemporaries, who subsequently became bishops, were presumably studying Aristotle and Plato, Donne was reading Dante, Rabelais, Pico della Mirandola, and Reuchlin.

There were long years of hesitation before Donne finally decided to enter the ministry after his hopes of a diplomatic or political career

[1] *Seventeenth Century Prose* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1960), p. 97.

[2] See pp. 12, 20, 25–26 of the present volume.

had been blighted. After his marriage his life had become regular, he was devoted to his wife and family, and he read voraciously books on the canon law, on casuistry, and commentaries on the Scriptures and the Fathers. He was also passionately excited by the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo, which established the truth of the Copernican theory that the earth and the other planets revolved around the sun. Donne was neither a scientist nor a philosopher, but unlike most of his contemporaries he appreciated the significance of these scientific discoveries which revealed that the earth was not the center of the universe, and he voiced his bewilderment and concern in his two fine poems, the *Anniversaries.*

These middle years were also years of religious emotion, of penitence for the sins of his youth and of anguish for his present unworthiness. Helen Gardner has demonstrated that sixteen out of the nineteen *Holy Sonnets* must have been written about 1609, before Donne started the writing of his prose treatise *Pseudo-Martyr.*[3] Most readers are startled by the intensity of religious feeling in such sonnets as "Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned," "What if this present were the worlds last night?," "Batter my heart, three person'd God"; or "Thou hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?" The man who wrote these poems was clearly one who might some day become a great preacher.

Yet there was a delay of almost six years before Donne relinquished all hopes of a career in diplomacy or politics, and took Holy Orders in the Church of England. When he had taken the final step he devoted himself to his new calling with intense earnestness. As the years went by he realized that he had found his true vocation in the ministry.

Few preachers have impressed their personality on their sermons so vividly as Donne. He was no recluse, unable to feel for human weakness, and no hypocrite, claiming a saintliness which he did not possess; but a man of like passions with his hearers, a man whose history they all knew, whose penitence was as real as his sins had been, whose experience had taught him humility, compassion, and trust in the mercy of God.

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[3] *John Donne, Divine Poems* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. xxxvii–lv. *La Corona* and *A Litanie* are probably a little earlier, but they belong to the same period in Donne's life.

It is this note of intense personal religious experience which gives to the sermons their unique power. Behind their eloquence and elaborate rhetoric we hear the voice of a human soul, tortured at times by remorse for past sins, agonizing with his hearers to rescue them from temptations of which he knows the awful power, but inspired also by a great hope and a great devotion. The sermons of Andrewes or Tillotson or South seem cold beside this ardor of penitence, this glowing love to the person of Christ, this yearning desire for the souls of men. Donne never glosses over the sinfulness of his past life, but in the fact that God has had mercy on his own soul, he sees encouragement and hope for the most despairing of his hearers.

Thus speaking in joyful expectation of the resurrection of the dead, he rests all his confidence on Christ's merits.

> Christ shall bear witnesse for me, in ascribing his righteousnesse unto me, and in delivering me into his Fathers hands, with the same tendernesse, as he delivered up his owne soule, and in making me, who am a greater sinner, then they who crucified him on earth for me, as innocent, and as righteous as his glorious selfe, in the Kingdome of heaven.[4]

His sense of the mercy of God shown in the person of Christ leads to some of the most passionate outbursts in the *Sermons:*

> Earth cannot receive, Heaven cannot give such another universall soul to all: all persons, all actions, as Mercy. And were I *the childe of this Text,*[5] that were to live *a hundred yeares,* I would ask no other marrow to my bones, no other wine to my heart, no other light to mine eyes, no other art to my understanding, no other eloquence to my tongue, then the power of apprehending for my self, and the power of deriving and conveying upon others by my Ministery, the Mercy, the early Mercy, the everlasting Mercy of yours, and my God.[6]

More colloquial, but perhaps even more moving, is a short passage in a late Easter Day sermon:

> I doubt not of mine own salvation; and in whom can I have so much occasion of doubt, as in my self? When I come to heaven, shall I be able to say to any there, Lord! how got you hither? Was any man lesse likely to come thither then I?[7]

[4] *Sermons,* IV, 162.
[5] *Isaiah* 65.20: "The child shall die a hundred years old."
[6] *Sermons,* VII, 357.
[7] *Sermons,* VIII, 371.

This volume contains ten of Donne's most representative sermons on texts taken from two important sections of the Bible, the *Psalms* and the *Gospels*. The range of his sermons is very wide. He preached on texts from *Genesis* and *Exodus*, from *Job* and *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*, from *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, and several of the minor prophets, from *Acts*, from the *Epistles* of St. *Paul*, from St. *James*, and from *Revelation*. He knew the Scriptures from end to end, as the references, approximately eight thousand in number, in the complete edition of the *Sermons* can testify.[8] Yet he preached most eloquently on those books which were nearest to his own heart. He loved the *Psalms* more than any other book of the Old Testament, and we learn from his own testimony that he thought that the best sermons were those which were preached on Christ's own words.[9] It would be possible to quote a single fine passage from every one of Donne's 160 sermons which have been preserved, but too often such a passage is embedded in pages of tedious arguments or embittered controversy. Donne rises to his greatest heights when he has a great theme, and he found two such themes in the thought of death and the thought of love, the love shown by Christ on the Cross.[10]

Donne's intense affection for the *Psalms* is shown by the fact that of his extant 160 sermons thirty-four were preached on this book. He tells us himself that it was his favorite book of the Old Testament, and that one reason for this preference was that the Psalms are poetry, and that the metrical form appealed to him as a poet.[11]

[8] See University of California Press edition, *Sermons*, X, 295–296, for a rough analysis of the figures.

[9] See *Sermons*, V, 263: "... the best texts we can take, to make Sermons upon, are as this text is, some of the words of Christs owne Sermons."

[10] He joined these themes in his last great sermon, *Deaths Duell*, on *Psalms* 68.20 (*Sermons*, X, No. 11).

[11] *Sermons*, II, 49–50: "Almost every man hath his *Appetite*, and his *tast* disposed to some kind of meates rather then others; He knows what dish he would choose, for his first, and for his second course. We have often the same disposition in our *spirituall Diet;* a man may have a particular love towards such or such a book of Scripture, and in such an affection, I acknowledge, that my spirituall appetite carries me still, upon the *Psalms of David*, for a first course, for the Scriptures of the Old Testament... God gives us, not onely that which is meerly necessary, but that

Another reason which Donne gives for his preference for the *Psalms* is that St. Augustine, his favorite among the Fathers, also professed a passionate love for the book. Donne has many references to Augustine's sermons and homilies on the *Psalms,*[12] and indeed he studied Augustine's works with a remarkable intensity. He calls the saint "that blessed and sober Father," "that tender blessed Father," and he found in Augustine's *Confessions* a striking parallel with his own stormy and licentious youth. He looked on the *Psalms* as being a treasury of devotion for the penitent, and he devoted twenty-four sermons to three series of expositions on three of the Penitential Psalms—the Sixth, Thirty-second, and Thirty-eighth in the Authorized Version, as well as a single sermon on the Fifty-first Psalm.

Donne delighted in the *Psalms.* He read them in the original Hebrew, in the Latin of the Vulgate, and in the English of Coverdale (Prayer Book version), the Geneva Bible, and the King James Bible.[13] In his third Prebend Sermon he brings together the various English translations and compares them (*Sermons,* VII, 248, 253). He even goes back to Wycliffe's translation, and approves that. As for the Vulgate, it had been the Bible of his childhood, and he must have known many of the Psalms in Latin by heart, for he constantly quotes the words of the Vulgate when the English alone would have been quite sufficient.

Like so many other famous Christians Donne found in the *Psalms* an unequaled treasury of devotion. In penitence there were no words so fitting as those of the Fifty-first Psalm, and in joy he exclaimed with the psalmist "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." He made the comment "How plentifully, how abundantly is the word *Beatus, Blessed,* multiplied in the Booke of Psalmes?

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which is convenient too . . . he gives us our instruction in cheerfull forms, not in a sowre, and sullen, and angry, and unacceptable way, but cheerfully, in *Psalms* . . .

[12] See *Sermons,* X, 346–358, and 376–386.

[13] Donne's knowledge of Hebrew is best shown in the twenty-two sermons which he preached on the Sixth, the Thirty-second, and the Thirty-eighth Psalms. He was not a great Hebrew scholar like Bishop Andrewes, but he seems to have had a fairly competent knowledge of Hebrew, considering that his early training had been legal, not theological. On the other hand his knowledge of New Testament Greek was very scanty.

Blessed, and Blessed in every Psalme, in every Verse; The Booke seems to be made out of that word, *Blessed,* And the foundation raysed upon that word, *Blessed,* for it is the first word of the Booke."[14] At other times when melancholy oppressed him he could use the *De Profundis,* "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice... I look for the Lord, my soul doth wait for him; and in his word is my trust... O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy: and with him is plenteous redemption" (Prayer Book version). The last two words are quoted again and again by Donne, *"copiosa redemptio,* plenteous redemption," as though they were a charm against all melancholic fears.[15]

Since Donne is not always an easy writer,[16] a few suggestions about his method of composition of his sermons may perhaps be helpful. Sermons at St. Paul's were generally expected to be at least an hour long, and at St. Paul's Cross they might be prolonged to two or even three hours. The preacher began by dividing his discourse into two or three parts, and by enumerating the several branches into which each part was to be enlarged. Donne accepted this rigid framework, which was a great aid to the memory of both preacher and congregation. He never read his sermons, but neither did he preach extempore.

[14] *Sermons,* VII, 243.

[15] He quoted them in *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany* (Vol. II, 379) when he was feeling qualms of anxiety about what might have proved a dangerous journey, and ten years later, in his Easter sermon of 1629, he reiterates them: "And, since with the Lord there is *Copiosa Redemptio, Plenteous Redemption,* that overflowing mercy of our God... that plenteous Redemption, may hold even in this particular blessednesse... there is plenteous redemption... this plenteous Redemption" (Vol. VIII, 370).

[16] Misinterpretations of his meaning may be found in the work of some professed Donne scholars. Thus when Donne, preaching by the King's order at St. Paul's Cross, took as his text, "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," Gosse surprisingly identifies Sisera with King James. "The text seems unluckily chosen to illustrate the supposed defiance of the King by the Puritans—'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera'—but Sisera was highly pleased with his Dean's defence." (Gosse, *Life and Letters of John Donne* (1899), II, 161). In the sermon Donne tells us that the stars represent the ministers of the Gospel, and that *"Sisera* is *Error."*

He prepared his sermons very carefully, made voluminous notes, and then committed the whole discourse to memory.

When he preached on the *Psalms* or on any other book of the Old Testament, Donne generally used the threefold method—literal, moral, and "spiritual" or anagogical—which had been used by preachers and commentators from the time of Origen and Clement of Alexandria to the Renaissance. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this method was beginning to look a little old-fashioned, and many of Donne's contemporaries were abandoning it in favor of a more historical approach. However, Donne himself announced in two sermons preached at Lincoln's Inn on the Thirty-eighth Psalm that this method was to be the basis of his series of six sermons. Having announced his text [*Psa.* 38.3] he says:

> Which words we shall first consider, as they are our present object, as they are historically, and literally to be understood of *David;* And secondly, in their *retrospect,* as they look back upon the first *Adam,* and so concern *Mankind collectively,* and so *you,* and *I,* and all have our portion in these calamities; And thirdly, we shall consider them in their *prospect,* in their future relation to the *second Adam,* in *Christ Jesus* . . ."[17]

And in the next sermon he puts it more briefly:

> First then, all these things are *literally* spoken of *David:* By *application,* of us; and by *figure,* of Christ. *Historically, David; morally,* we; *Typically,* Christ is the subject of this text.[18]

Though Donne frequently makes use of the moral and anagogical senses of Scripture, he is quite definite in asserting the supremacy of the literal sense, and thus he avoided the absurdities into which some of the earlier commentators fell. In his Christmas sermon of 1621 at St. Paul's he says:

> Therefore though it be ever lawfull, and often times very usefull, for the raising and exaltation of our devotion . . . to induce the *diverse senses* that the Scriptures doe admit, yet this may not be admitted, if there may be danger thereby, to neglect or weaken the *literall sense* it selfe. For there is no necessity of that *spirituall wantonnesse* of finding more then necessary senses; for, the more *lights* there are, the more *shadows* are also cast by those many lights. And, as it is true in religious duties, so is it in interpre-

[17] *Sermons,* II, 75.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 97.

tation of matters of Religion, *Necessarium & Satis convertuntur;* when you have done that you ought to doe in your calling, you have done enough ... so when you have the *necessary sense,* that is the meaning of the holy Ghost in that place, you have senses enow, and not till then, though you have never so many, and never so delightfull.[19]

In the nineteenth century this method was denounced as absurd by Biblical critics of various schools of thought, such as Matthew Arnold, Jowett, Dean Farrar, and Bishop Charles Gore. Farrar summed up the work of the Alexandrian Fathers by saying: "They do but systematize the art of misinterpretation. They have furnished volumes of baseless application without shedding upon the significance of Scripture one ray of genuine light."[20] The twentieth century has seen a revulsion from this wholesale condemnation. While some commentators may still desire "a single plain sense of Scripture" there has been a widespread return to the symbolical interpretation of Old Testament literature. A modern lay writer, Professor C. S. Lewis, in his *Reflections on the Psalms* (London, 1958, pp. 99–138), devotes three chapters to an eloquent re-statement of the position that Christians may rightly interpret the Old Testament, and especially the *Psalms,* as symbolizing and anticipating the life and death of Christ.

In handling texts from the Gospels Donne used a variety of methods. Occasionally he preached two or three sermons on a single text, as he did on *John* 1.8, while at other times (as in Sermon 7 of this volume) he based a single sermon on three texts, though only one (*John* 11.35) is placed at the head of the sermon, and the other texts (*Luke* 19.41 and *Heb.* 5.7) are enumerated in his third paragraph, and form the subject of the second and third parts of his sermon. Two sermons in the present volume show an interesting variation from Donne's usual direct approach to his text. Seventeenth-century sermons were almost invariably divided into two, three, or more parts, and each part might have several branches. This division

[19] See Sermon 6, p. 134 of this book.

[20] Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism* (Oxford, 1959), p. 89. The two chapters on "The Drunkenness of Noah," pp. 79–100, and "The Historical Sense," pp. 127–157, are valuable for those readers who would like to pursue this subject further, and pp. 136–142 deal specifically with Donne.

was clearly summarized early in the sermon, and Donne had no wish to upset his hearers by disregarding the usual practice. However, there are many texts in the Gospels for which this detailed dissection is inadvisable. Many sermon hearers have been distressed by the way in which a magnificent verse from the Gospels has been cheapened and its power lessened for them by unwise elaboration and repetition on the part of the preacher. In Sermons 6 and 10 Donne avoided this difficulty by studying carefully the whole passage in which his chosen theme is stated and then selecting as his actual text a verse which would lead up to and suggest the verse which he actually wished to impress on the minds of his hearers. Thus in Sermon 6 his theme is Christ the Light, and this is most fully expressed in *John* 1.9, "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," but he must have surprised the congregation by announcing the preceding verse, which refers to John the Baptist, "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light." We must remember that both verses formed part of the Gospel appointed for Christmas Day,[21] and since Holy Communion was always celebrated at St. Paul's on the morning of that day, Donne's audience had already heard this Gospel read aloud a few minutes earlier, so that when he repeated his text, its final words, "... witness of that light," their minds would inevitably move on to the succeeding verse, "That was the true light..." Thus they would grasp that Donne's real theme was the whole passage describing Christ as the Light.

If the Psalms were Donne's treasury of song, the Gospels represented the sheet-anchor of his faith. He was a great evangelical preacher. When he spoke of the love of Christ, his words became full of a fire and a passion which were lacking in his treatment of some parts of the Christian faith. The Cross of Christ was at the heart of his religion. Coleridge noted this in his judgment on Jeremy Taylor: "The Cross of Christ is dimly seen in Taylor's work. Compare him in this respect with Donne and you will feel the difference

[21] *John* 1.1–14. This is the great prologue to the Fourth Gospel. The Roman Church reads it in the Latin of the Vulgate, the English Church in the English of the Authorized Version. Donne throughout the sermon quotes both the Latin and the English words of his text.

in a moment."[22] This is evident in Donne's *Divine Poems* as well as in the *Sermons*. See in particular such poems as *"Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward," "La Corona,* 5. Crucifying," *"Holy Sonnets,* 9."

Donne's love of the Gospels seems to have developed steadily during the sixteen years of his ministry.[23] His gospel teaching is based equally on *Matthew,* representing the first three Gospels, and *John.* He preached sixteen sermons on *Matthew,* only two on *Mark,* three on *Luke,* and sixteen on *John.* He liked the majesty of *Matthew* with its picture of Christ as the new Lawgiver delivering the Sermon on the Mount to his disciples as Moses had given the Law from Sinai. He liked also the compact discourses into which *Matthew* has packed so many parables and maxims which are scattered in the other two Synoptists. When Donne quoted a text which occurs in two or three of the Gospels he generally gave the reference to *Matthew* alone. He preached three good sermons on texts taken from the Sermon on the Mount.[24]

John was perhaps the Gospel on which Donne meditated most fruitfully. He loved the great prologue, in which Christ is set forth as the Word (the Logos) and the Light. He was profoundly affected by the symbolism of this Gospel, in which we find the seven great affirmations, "I am the bread of life," "I am the light of the world," "I am the resurrection and the life," and so on. Seven, as Donne often tells us, is the number of infinity, and so these affirmations suggest the infinite riches of Christ. The first words of *John,* "In the beginning"

[22] *Table Talk* (1835), 1. 168.

[23] This fact was not evident till the sermons were arranged chronologically in the University of California Press edition. Thus in the nine sermons of Volume I, preached from 1615 to 1618, there is only one sermon preached on a text from the Gospels. In Volume II, from 1618 to March, 1620, there are five sermons out of eighteen; in Volume IV there are four out of fifteen; in Volume VII there are eight out of eighteen. Volumes IX and X cannot be reckoned, since they consist largely of undated sermons.

[24] These are on *Mat.* 5.8: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (*Sermons,* VII, No. 13); *Mat.* 6.21: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (IX, No. 7); and *Mat.* 5.16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (X, No. 3).

are set beside the same first words of *Genesis* again and again in Donne's sermons.[25]

There is symbolism in all four Gospels, but *John* has certain symbols peculiar to itself, such as Christ the True Light (1.9), the Ladder set up from earth to heaven (1.51), the Crucified Serpent (3.14),[26] the True Vine (15.1), and others. The symbolism of numbers meant much to Donne, as he explained in his *Essays in Divinity* (ed. Simpson, pp. 52–61).

In Sermon 1 of this volume, which was preached on Easter Day, 1619, Donne's favorite themes of love and death are both exemplified, but there is here no mention of the worms or skeletons which are currently associated with Donne's idea of death. Instead we have a wonderfully beautiful passage on the mystical death of rapture:

> ... The contemplation of God, and heaven, is a kinde of buriall, and Sepulchre, and rest of the soule; and in this death of rapture, and extasie, in this death of the Contemplation of my interest in my Saviour, I shall finde my self, and all my sins enterred, and entombed in his wounds, and like a Lily in Paradise, out of red earth, I shall see my soule rise out of his blade, in a candor, and in an innocence, contracted there, acceptable in the sight of his Father.[27]

Sermon 2 in this volume is undated, but since it is described in the Folio as "Preached at S. Pauls," it is almost certainly later than Donne's election as Dean in November, 1621, while there are several passages in it which seem to refer to the Elector's series of defeats in the years 1620–1621. The most probable year for it is 1622.

Throughout the sermon Donne dwells on the virtue of praise. Of the Book of *Psalms* he says, "The Book is Praise, the parts are Prayer. The name changes not the nature; Prayer and Praise is the same

[25] See p. 129 of this volume and compare it with *Sermons,* II, 246: "*Moses* his *in principio,* that beginning, the creation we can remember; but St. *Johns in principio,* that beginning, eternity, we cannot..."

[26] Donne devotes a whole sermon to Jacob's vision of the Ladder, and its application to Christ (*Sermons,* II, No. 10), and he also has a very beautiful meditation on that vision (quoted on p. 242 of this present volume). He gives another sermon, and also a set of verses, to the contrast between Satan, the Serpent of Guile, and the Crucified Serpent, Christ (*Sermons,* X, No. 8 and *Poems,* ed. Grierson, I, 398–400).

[27] Sermon I, pp. 42–43.

thing." Prayer and praise "accompany one another . . . they meet like two waters, and make the streame of devotion the fuller." Prayer consists as much of praise for the past as of supplication for the future.

> It is the counsell of the Wise man, *Prevent the Sunne to give thanks to God, and at the day-spring pray unto him.* You see still, how these two duties are marshalled, and disposed; First Praise, and then Prayer, but both early: . . . Rise as early as you can, you cannot be up before God; no, nor before God raise you: Howsoever you prevent this Sunne, the Sunne of the Firmament, yet the Sonne of Heaven hath prevented you, for without his preventing Grace you could not stirre.[28]

> This joy we shall see, when we see him, who is so in it, as that he is this joy it selfe. But here in this world, so far as I can enter into my Masters sight, I can enter into my Masters joy. I can see God in his Creatures, in his Church, in his Word and Sacraments, and Ordinances; Since I am not without this sight, I am not without this joy.[29]

Here Donne's imagination is fired, and he mounts on wings. He had chosen a happy text, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." This combined two of the thoughts that were dearest to him—the everlasting loving kindness of God and the beauty of the dawning of the day. He himself was an early riser,[30] and he loved to remember that God's mercies were new every morning, fresh and sparkling as the dewdrops in the sunlight. In the passages quoted above, the texture of the writing is as rich and laden with meaning as the lines of his poems. There is his favorite word-play on "the Sunne of the Firmament" and "the Sonne of Heaven," which runs through half a page, and lightens with humor his rebuke to those sluggards who have come to church without having said their morning prayers in private at home. There is his well-chosen quotation from the Book of *Wisdom,* and his glancing allusion to Christ's parable of the talents in the antithesis—"so far as I can enter into my Masters sight, I can enter into my Masters joy."

[28] Sermon 2, p. 58 of the present volume. *Prevent* is here used in the archaic sense "go before, anticipate."

[29] Sermon 2, p. 64.

[30] "Nor was his age onely so industrious, but in the most unsetled dayes of his youth, his bed was not able to detain him beyond the hour of four in the morning." Walton, *Lives* (1670), Life of Donne, pp. 61–62.

Prayer and praise make an alliterative chime throughout the sentences, and this world and the next keep each other in view. "Gods house in this world is called the house of Prayer; but in heaven it is the house of Praise: No surprisall with any new necessities there, but one even, incessant, and everlasting tenor of thanksgiving."[31]

Sermon 3 was the first sermon which Donne preached before Charles the First. Donne was given very short notice by the Lord Chamberlain, and he wrote to his friend Sir Robert Ker asking him to be allowed to spend a little time in Ker's rooms at court before the service, so that he might prepare himself for the ordeal. Ker answered kindly and invited Donne to dine with him first, for the sermon was to be preached in the afternoon, but Donne refused, writing "But, in good faith, I do not eat before, nor can after ... so much hath my this years debility disabled me, even for receiving favours. After the Sermon, I will steal into my Coach home, and pray that my good purpose may be well accepted, and my defects graciously pardoned."[32]

The young King, who was very pale and grave, listened attentively and devoutly to the sermon, so the courtiers observed. He showed his approval by quickly ordering that it should be published. This was done speedily, and it appeared in a beautifully printed little quarto volume. Like the other sermons which were published in Donne's lifetime, it was excluded from the Folios, probably for reasons of copyright, and it was omitted by Alford. Consequently the anthologists have left it alone, and I have included it here partly because of its intrinsic merit, but also because it is so little known.[33]

[31] Pp. 48–59. These are only a few passages taken from a number of pages in which we find the following images: the Morning Star, the dawn, sunrise, the sun in its strength, showers of rain on the thirsty earth, associated with the thought of God's mercy and man's response in songs of praise. Compare also the great passage on God's mercy, pp. 182–184.

[32] *Letters* (1651), pp. 311, 313–314; Gosse, *Life and Letters of John Donne,* II, 219–220.

[33] Readers may be surprised that I have not included in this section on the *Psalms* the famous *Deaths Duell* on *Psalms* 68.20, but it has been reprinted so often that I have deliberately omitted it. Some critics who have apparently read no other complete sermon of Donne's, write of it as if its references to worms and skeletons were characteristic of all the other 159 sermons.

No. 4, the Second Prebend Sermon, is one of Donne's finest discourses, and it has furnished the anthologists with many extracts. Gosse admired it immensely. He described it as "a long poem of victory over death," and as "one of the most magnificent pieces of religious writing in English literature." Of its peroration he wrote that "it closes with a majestic sentence of incomparable pomp and melody, which might be selected as typical of Jacobean, or rather early Stuart, prose in its most gorgeous and imperial order."[34]

During the second half of 1625 London had suffered from a terrible epidemic of plague. The King and Queen with the Court had moved to Hampton Court, which became infected, to Windsor, and finally to Woodstock where they remained while Parliament sat at the neighboring city of Oxford during August. Rich and poor fled from stricken London, so that at last almost all the shops were shut and the streets were as deserted at midday as they were ordinarily at three in the morning. Meanwhile the scum of the great city set about looting the empty city, and Donne has left a vivid picture of the misery and desolation in the first sermon which he preached at St. Dunstan's "after our Dispersion, by the Sickness" on January 15, 1625/6.[35]

The Second Prebend Sermon was preached a fortnight later, and in it and the sermons which succeeded it Donne set to work to cheer and uplift his depressed and dispirited congregations. Other preachers had insisted that the plague was God's judgment on sin, and had chosen such texts as "There is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun" to emphasize their strictures on the iniquities of London. Donne did not dispute this general belief, but he thought it more important to insist that London, in spite of its sins, might still be called, like Jerusalem of old, "the holy City," and that God's mercy was available for its afflicted people. There is a pleasant passage in a sermon preached a few weeks after the Prebend Sermon in which he says, "Who but my selfe can conceive the sweetnesse of that salutation, when the Spirit of God sayes to me in a morning, Go forth to day and preach, and preach consolation, preach peace, preach mercy,

[34] Gosse, *Life and Letters of John Donne,* II, 239.

[35] *Sermons,* VI, No. 18. See especially pp. 359–360.

And spare my people, spare that people whom I have redeemed with my precious Blood, and be not angry with them for ever..."[36]

In this Prebend Sermon Donne notes "an extraordinary sadnesse, a predominant melancholy, a faintnesse of heart, a chearlesnesse, a joylesnesse of spirit" as one of the characteristics of the time, and therefore he says, "I would always raise your hearts, and dilate your hearts, to a holy Joy, to a joy in the Holy Ghost."

"Joy" is the keyword of this sermon. With its derivatives "joyful," "rejoice," and the like, it recurs thirty-nine times. And it is closely associated with "glory," as in the following passage, where Donne uses his favorite metaphor of the map:

> If you looke upon this world in a Map, you find two Hemisphears, two half worlds. If you crush heaven into a Map, you may find two Hemisphears too, two half heavens; Halfe will be Joy, and halfe will be Glory; for in these two, the joy of heaven, and the glory of heaven, is all heaven often represented unto us. And as of those two Hemisphears of the world, the first hath been knowne long before, but the other, (that of America, which is the richer in treasure) God reserved for later Discoveries; So though he reserve that Hemisphear of heaven, which is the Glory thereof, to the Resurrection, yet the other Hemisphear, the Joy of heaven, God opens to our Discovery, and delivers for our habitation even whilst we dwell in this world.[37]

This joy takes full account of the manifold afflictions of the world. It does not depend on circumstances, but is derived from the unchanging nature of God himself. "Fixe upon God any where, and you shall finde him a Circle; He is with you now, when you fix upon him; He was with you before, for he brought you to this fixation; and he will be with you hereafter, for *He is yesterday, and to day, and the same for ever.*"[38] We hear Donne's characteristic note in the words: "All our life is a continuall burden, yet we must not groane; A continuall squeasing, yet we must not pant; And as in the tendernesse of our childhood, we suffer, and yet are whipt if we cry, so we are complained of, if we complaine, and made delinquents if we call the times ill."[39] For Donne there is no safe abiding place for the soul anywhere but in God.

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[36] *Sermons,* VII, 133.
[37] Sermon 4, p. 112.
[38] Sermon 4, p. 95.
[39] Sermon 4, p. 97.

Under the shadow of his wings, you may, you should, rejoyce... And then thinke also, that if God afford thee the shadow of his wings, that is, Consolation, respiration, refreshing, though not a present, and plenary deliverance, in thy afflictions, not to thanke God, is a murmuring, and not to rejoyce in Gods wayes, is an unthankfulnesse. Howling is the noyse of hell, singing the voyce of heaven; Sadnesse the damp of Hell, Rejoycing the serenity of Heaven. And he that hath not this joy here, lacks one of the best pieces of his evidence for the joyes of heaven...[40]

From this point Donne enters upon his peroration, which recalls a passage in *The Second Anniversary,* where he had written of the soul set free by death, and ascending to heaven:

> Thinke thy shell broke, thinke thy Soule hatch'd but now.
> And think this slow-pac'd soule, which late did cleave
> To a body, and went but by the bodies leave,
> Twenty, perchance, or thirty mile a day,
> Dispatches in a minute all the way
> Twixt heaven, and earth; she stayes not in the ayre...
> For th'Element of fire, she doth not know,
> Whether she past by such a place or no;
> She baits not at the Moone, nor cares to trie
> Whether in that new world, men live, and die...
> Who, if she meet the body of the Sunne,
> Goes through, not staying till his course be runne...
> But ere she can consider how she went,
> At once is at, and through the Firmament....
> So by the Soule doth death string Heaven and Earth.[41]

So here Donne continues to speak of the faithful soul:

This joy shall not be put out in death, and a new joy kindled in me in Heaven; But as my soule, as soone as it is out of my body, is in Heaven, and does not stay for the possession of Heaven, nor for the fruition of the sight of God, till it be ascended through ayre, and fire, and Moone, and Sun, and Planets, and Firmament, to that place which we conceive to be Heaven, but without the thousandth part of a minutes stop, as soone as it issues, is in a glorious light, which is Heaven... As my soule shall not goe towards Heaven, but goe by Heaven to Heaven, to the Heaven of Heavens, So the true joy of a good soule in this world is the very joy of Heaven; and we goe thither, not that being without joy, we might have joy infused into us, but that as Christ sayes, *Our joy might be full,*

[40] Sermon 4, pp. 112–113.

[41] *Poems,* ed. Grierson, I, 256–257.

perfected, sealed with an everlastingnesse; for, as he promises, *That no man shall take our joy from us,* so neither shall Death it selfe take it away, nor so much as interrupt it, or discontinue it, But as in the face of Death, when he layes hold upon me, and in the face of the Devill, when he attempts me, I shall see the face of God, (for, every thing shall be a glasse, to reflect God upon me) so in the agonies of Death, in the anguish of that dissolution, in the sorrowes of that valediction, in the irreversiblenesse of that transmigration, I shall have a joy, which shall no more evaporate, then my soule shall evaporate, A joy, that shall passe up, and put on a more glorious garment above, and be joy super-invested in glory.[42]

Sermon 5, which is placed at the beginning of the Gospel section, is undated, but there are several reasons for placing it comparatively early among Donne's sermons.[43] It has certain peculiarities of style and arrangement which set it apart from most of the sermons, and which have suggested to me that it may have been intended for one of Donne's country parishes, such as Sevenoaks in Kent or Blunham in Bedfordshire. The sentences are shorter and simpler than usual, and all the marginal headings are in English instead of Latin. Most of the sermon is free from the usual quotations from the Fathers. It is only in the last few pages that St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and the rest make their appearance. The sermon is shorter than average, as would befit a country church. Yet Donne certainly took pains over the sermon. In the paragraph quoted below, each short sentence has a wealth of thought and experience behind it, and the whole paragraph is lighted up by the final simile in which Donne, the affectionate father of many "gamesome children," as he called them in one of his letters, compares God's reception of prayer to a father's play with his children.

Almost every meanes between God and man, suffers some adulteratings and disguises: But prayer least: And it hath most wayes and addresses. It

[42] Sermon 4, pp. 113–114.

[43] These are set forth in detail in *Sermons,* V, 18–20. Of these reasons the most important is that it is found in the two MSS *E* and *M* in company with a number of dated sermons, all of which belong to the earlier part of Donne's career as a preacher, ranging from December, 1617 to April, 1622. Another reason is that the style of the sermon has some affinity with that of *Essays in Divinity,* a work written before Donne's ordination.

may be mentall, for we may thinke prayers. It may be vocall, for we may speake prayers. It may be actuall, for we do prayers. For deeds have voyce; the vices of *Sodome* did cry, and the Almes of *Toby*. And if it were proper for St. *John*, in the first of the *Revelations* to turne back to see a voyce, it is more likely God will looke down, to heare a worke. So then to do the office of your vocation sincerely, is to pray.... Since then every rectified man, is the temple of the Holy Ghost, when he prays; it is the Holy Ghost it selfe that prays; and what can be denyed, where the Asker gives? He plays with us, as children, shewes us pleasing things, that we may cry for them, and have them. Before we call, he answers, and when we speak, he heares..."

Sermon 6 was preached on Christmas Day, 1621, at St. Paul's, and it was the first of Donne's sermons as Dean. It was a splendid sermon, which Donne intended to be a manifesto that during his tenure of office his essential theme would be Christ as Light of the World, the Divine Word from all eternity who became incarnate at Bethlehem. It is longer than the majority of Donne's sermons, and it has a few weak passages which could well have been pruned away, but the Londoners who heard it must have been moved by his passionate eloquence and his evident sincerity.

On Christmas Day and certain other festivals the service at St. Paul's was attended by the Lord Mayor of London, the aldermen and sheriffs, and the chosen representatives of the twelve great livery companies, who rode together in procession to their cathedral. It was to them in particular that he addressed his peroration:

But to you the *Day starre*, the *Sunne of Righteousnesse*, the Sonne of God is risen this day. The day is but a little longer now, then at *shortest;* but a *little* it is. Be a little better now, then when you came, and mend a little at every coming, and in lesse then seaven *yeares apprentissage*, which your occupations cost you, you shall learn, not the Mysteries of your *twelve Companies*, but the Mysteries of the *twelve Tribes*, of the *twelve Apostles*, of their *twelve Articles*, whatsoever belongeth to the *promise*, to the performance, to the *Imitation* of Christ Jesus. He, who is *Lux una*, light and *light alone*, and *Lux tota*, light and *all light*, shall also, by that light, which he sheddeth from himselfe upon all his, the light *of Grace*, give you all these Attestations, all these witnesses of that his light; he shall give you *Lucem essentiæ*, (really, and essentially to be incorporated into him, to be made partakers of the Divine Nature, and the same Spirit with the Lord, by a Conversation in Heaven, here) ... *Lighten our darknesse*,

" Sermon 5, pp. 116–117.

we beseech thee, O Lord, with all these lights; that in thy light we may see light; that in this Essential *light, which is Christ, and in this* Supernaturall *light, which is* grace, *we may see all these, and all other beames of light, which may bring us to* thee, *and* him, *and that blessed Spirit which proceeds from both. Amen.*[45]

The symbolism of light which Donne used here was particularly suitable for a Christmas sermon. Soon after the winter solstice, when the sun seems to have sunk to its lowest point, the Church keeps the feast of the birth of the Sun of Righteousness, who rises with healing in his wings. At Christmas the London of Donne's day was plunged for nearly sixteen hours out of the twenty-four into a darkness which cannot be realized by modern city dwellers for whom night is turned into day by the brilliance of electric standards and flashing neon lights. Oil lamps, candles, and torches were the sole means of lighting the houses and streets. In the narrow lanes the height of the overhanging houses almost blocked out the sky, so that even the light of moon or stars on a clear night could hardly penetrate the murky darkness. Londoners hailed with joy the first faint indications that the sun was beginning to regain its strength. Donne saw in the coming of Christ into the world the dawn of hope, the promise that what he calls in this sermon "the long and frozen winter nights of sinne, and of the works of darkness" would be dispersed by the eternal Light. His message from the pulpit of St. Paul's was to be that Christ is the source and fountain of life and light. From him proceed the light of nature and the light of reason, the light of grace and the light of glory.[46]

Sermon 7 is a quiet and beautiful discourse on the humanity and the compassion of Jesus. Coleridge, who was a lover but also an outspoken critic of Donne's sermons,[47] singled out a sentence to be found on p. 174 of the present volume as "Worthy almost of Shakespeare!" The sentence is "...that world which findes it selfe truly in an Autumne, in it selfe, findes it selfe in a spring, in our imaginations."

[45] Sermon 6, pp. 155–156.

[46] It should be remembered that London is in the latitude of Labrador, and that the sun rises at 8.08 A.M. and sets at 3.45 P.M. on the shortest day.

[47] See a summary of Coleridge's notes on the Sermons in E. M. Simpson's *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* (2d ed.; Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1948), pp. 287–290.

The text of the sermon is the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept," and some time later Donne preached a companion sermon on another text almost as short, "Rejoyce evermore."[48]

No. 8 is the Christmas Day sermon for 1624. It contains one of his most exquisite passages, in which he dilates on his favorite theme, the boundless and ever-present mercy of God:

> God made Sun and Moon to distinguish seasons, and day, and night, and we cannot have the fruits of the earth but in their seasons: But God hath made no decree to distinguish the seasons of his mercies; In paradise, the fruits were ripe, the first minute, and in heaven it is alwaies Autumne, his mercies are ever in their maturity.... He brought light out of darknesse, not out of a lesser light; he can bring thy Summer out of Winter, though thou have no Spring; though in the wayes of fortune, or understanding, or conscience, thou have been benighted till now, wintred and frozen, clouded and eclypsed, damped and benummed, smothered and stupified till now, now God comes to thee, not as in the dawning of the day, not as in the bud of the spring, but as the Sun at noon to illustrate all shadowes, as the sheaves in harvest, to fill all penuries, all occasions invite his mercies, and all times are his seasons.[49]

This is only a fragment of a long passage which should be read slowly and carefully to relish its full flavor. George Saintsbury singled it out as "a passage than which I hardly know anything more exquisitely rhythmed in the whole range of English from Ælfric to Pater."[50]

Donne achieves some of his effects here by the use of alliteration. In the first sentence quoted we have three alliterative sounds: *s* in "*S*un ... *s*easons ... *s*easons ... *s*easons"; *m* in "*M*oon ... *m*ercies ... *m*inute ... *m*ercies ... *m*aturity"; and *d* in "*d*istinguish ... *d*ay ... *d*ecree ... *d*istinguish." More subtle is the effect produced by the use of heavy consonantal groups and thick vowel sounds in "clouded

[48] This sermon is printed in *Sermons,* X, as No. 10. Donne preached a number of sermons on texts which may be said to illustrate the paradoxes of the Christian religion. Thus in *Sermons,* Vol. II, we have one pair of sermons (Nos. 15 and 16) and in Vol. III, another pair (Nos. 3 and 4) which are complementary to one another. Donne was always interested in seeing how he could use one passage of Scripture to illustrate or to supplement another.

[49] Sermon 8, p. 182.

[50] *History of English Prose Rhythm* (London, 1912), pp. 162–163.

and eclypsed, damped and benummed, smothered and stupified." Here the slow heavy syllables suggest the bewilderment of the frozen soul, contrasted with the sense of life and movement conferred by the bestowal of God's mercy, suggested by the light anapæstic rhythm of "not as in the dawning of the day, not as in the bud of the spring," a clause which leads up in turn to the full splendor of the climax, "as the Sun at noon to illustrate [the second syllable is stressed] all shadows, as the sheaves in harvest, to fill all penuries."

We are not to think of Donne as elaborately working out a series of rhetorical effects. He was a poet, and whenever he was deeply moved, as here by his contemplation of God's mercies, he chose with a poet's instinct the right sounds and rhythms to express the emotions which he wished to convey.

This magnificence of diction is not sustained throughout the whole sermon. There are some dull and tedious pages in which Donne paraphrased and condensed the information which he got from the massive Latin commentary of Cornelius à Lapide (van den Steen) on the major prophets. This was published at Antwerp in 1622, and it followed the same writer's commentaries on the Pentateuch (published in 1616) and on St. Paul's Epistles (published in 1614), of which Donne also made use.[51]

Sermon 9 is a companion piece to Sermon 7 in its emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. Here Donne stresses Christ's friendliness with publicans and sinners, and his readiness to join in the feast which Matthew made for him. The text enabled Donne to set forth his intense belief that Christ's religion is meant for bad men and women who would like to be good.

Shall we wonder that Christ would live with sinners, who was content to die for sinners? Wonder that he would eat the bread and Wine of

[51] Cornelius, a Flemish Jesuit, wrote voluminous commentaries on almost the whole Bible, but several of these appeared too late for Donne to have made use of them. I have accumulated proof, however, that Donne used his works on the Pentateuch and on St. Paul's Epistles. See *Sermons,* VIII, 393–396, and X, 369–374. Donne mentions him by name in the margin of the Christmas sermon on Exodus 4.13 (*Sermons,* VIII, 151). His work was extremely careful and thorough, and it was valued throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries by Catholics and Anglicans alike.

sinners, that gave sinners his own flesh to eat, and his own blood to drink? Or if we do wonder at this, (as, indeed, nothing is more wonderful) yet let us not calumniate, let us not mis-interpret any way, that he shall be pleased to take, to derive his mercy to any man: but, (to use *Clement* of *Alexandria*'s comparison) as we tread upon many herbs negligently in the field, but when we see them in an Apothecaries shop, we begin to think that there is some vertue in them; so howsoever we have a perfect hatred, and a religious despite against a sinner, as a sinner; yet if Christ Jesus shall have been pleased to come to his door, and to have stood, and knock'd, and enter'd, and sup'd, and brought his dish, and made himself that dish, and seal'd a reconciliation to that sinner, in admitting him to that Table, to that Communion, let us forget the Name of Publican, the Vices of any particular profession; and forget the name of sinner, the history of any man's former life; and be glad to meet that man now in the arms, and to grow up with that man now in the bowels of Christ Jesus; since Christ doth not now begin to make that man his, but now declares to us, that he hath been his, from all eternity: For in the Book of Life, the name of *Mary Magdalen* was as soon recorded, for all her incontinency, as the name of the blessed Virgin, for all her integrity; and the name of St. *Paul,* who drew his sword against Christ, as soon as St. *Peter,* who drew his in defence of him: for the Book of life was not written successively, word after word, line after line, but delivered as a Print, all together. There the greatest sinners were as soon recorded, as the most righteous; and here Christ comes *to call, not the righteous* at all, *but* onely *sinners to repentance.*[52]

[52] Sermon 9, pp. 207–208. This passage finds a close parallel to the poem *An hymne to the Saints, and to Marquesse Hamylton,* which Donne had written a year earlier, especially in the following lines (*Poems,* ed. Grierson, I, 289–290):

> And if, faire soule, not with first *Innocents*
> Thy station be, but with the *Pœnitents,*
> (And, who shall dare to aske then when I am
> Dy'd scarlet in the blood of that pure Lambe,
> Whether that colour, which is scarlet then,
> Were black or white before in eyes of men?)
> When thou rememb'rest what sins thou didst finde
> Amongst those many friends now left behinde,
> And seest such sinners as they are, with thee
> Got thither by repentance, Let it bee
> Thy wish to wish all there, to wish them cleane;
> With *him* a *David, her* a *Magdalen.*

Donne devotes some part of this sermon to a defence of cheerful society and hospitality. This he derived from the circumstances in which Christ spoke the words of the text:

> And in the first of these, the Historical and Occasional part, we shall see, first, That Christ by his personal presence justified Feasting, somewhat more then was meerly necessary, for society, and chearful conversation: He justified feasting, and feasting in an Apostles house: though a Churchman, and an Exemplar-man, he was not depriv'd of a plentiful use of Gods creatures, nor of the chearfulness of conversation.[53]

This is in harmony with what we know of Donne's own behavior. Though in his later years he was extremely temperate, he was not austere, and he loved good company and the society of friends, except in such a period of retirement as that after the death of his wife. Walton's testimony of him, given from personal knowledge, was that his company was one of the delights of mankind, and that "his aspect was chearful, and such as gave silent testimony of a clear knowing soul, and of a Conscience at peace with it self." This is confirmed by the funeral elegy which Sidney Godolphin, a minor poet, contributed to the *Poems* of 1635:

> Nor didst thou onely consecrate our teares,
> Give a religious tincture to our feares;
> But even our joyes had learn'd an innocence,
> Thou didst from gladnesse separate offence.[54]

Sermon 10 was preached at the funeral of Sir William Cockayne, an alderman of the City of London. Donne's eulogy of his character and career gave Clement Barksdale one of his *Memorials of Worthy Persons,* published in 1661, and this was reprinted in 1741 in John Wilford's *Memorials and Characters.*[55] But the chief interest of the sermon lies not in this brief eulogy but in Donne's handling of the theme which always moved him profoundly, the certainty of death and the hope of resurrection. The sermon gives us in its text another example of Donne's use of the method of oblique approach which

[53] Sermon 9, p. 198.

[54] *Poems,* ed. Grierson, I, 393.

[55] For a less favorable view of Cockayne's career, see Astrid Friis, *Alderman Cockayne's Protest and the Cloth Trade* (Copenhagen and London, 1927).

we have already noted in Sermon 6. Since it was preached at a funeral the audience had already heard the great words of Christ, "I am the resurrection and the life," repeated by the priest as the coffin was carried into the church.[56] According to *John* 11.21–25 they were first uttered as a reply to Martha's reproach, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The whole conversation between Jesus and Martha, leading up to this great affirmation, is the theme of Donne's sermon rather than the one verse which he chose as his text. A more ordinary preacher would have announced "I am the resurrection and the life" as his text, but Donne knew that these words had already made their solemn impact when the congregation rose to its feet as the coffin entered the church. He chose his text therefore from the beginning of Christ's conversation with Martha so that he could analyze and dissect Martha's reproach. Thus instead of asserting directly he could suggest by implication that his theme was Christ the Life, just as in his first Christmas sermon he had led his hearers indirectly to the consideration of Christ the True Light. As the symbolism of the Divine Light had dominated the preaching of Donne's first year as Dean of St. Paul's, so in the last two or three years of his ministry the Divine Life, infinite, immortal, is the theme of much of his preaching.[57] Light and life, those two great keywords of this Gospel, are inextricably joined in Donne's mind with the thought of Christ the Sun of Righteousness, who by his rising dispels the darkness of death and brings to men the light of life.[58]

This sermon is a fine one, full of memorable passages. One of these describes the difficulty of concentration in private prayer, and Donne gives us a remarkably vivid picture evidently drawn from his own experience.

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[56] The rubric at the head of the Office for the Burial of the Dead in the Book of Common Prayer states "The Priest and Clerks meeting the corpse at the entrance of the Church-yard, and going before it, either into the Church, or towards the grave shall say, or sing: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord . . ."

[57] His Christmas sermon on *John* 10.10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," almost certainly belongs to the end of 1629 (*Sermons,* IX, 12–13). See also VIII, 190–191; IX, 89–90, 127–129, 146–149, 153–154, 187–188, 203–204.

[58] A fuller treatment of this symbolism can be found in *Sermons,* X, 302–306.

I throw my selfe downe in my Chamber, and I call in, and invite God, and his Angels thither, and when they are there, I neglect God and his Angels, for the noise of a Flie, for the ratling of a Coach, for the whining of a doore; I talke on, in the same posture of praying; Eyes lifted up; knees bowed downe; as though I prayed to God; and, if God, or his Angels should aske me, when I thought last of God in that prayer, I cannot tell: Sometimes I finde that I had forgot what I was about, but when I began to forget it, I cannot tell. A memory of yesterdays pleasures, a feare of to morrows dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine eare, a light in mine eye, an any thing, a nothing, a fancy, a Chimera in my braine, troubles me in my prayer. So certainely is there nothing, nothing in spirituall things, perfect in this world.[59]

Much of the sermon deals with that favorite theme of seventeenth-century writers, the imperfection and mutability of earthly things. There is an interesting reference to the "new philosophy" of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, which had fascinated him so much in the earlier years when he was writing *Biathanatos, Ignatius his Conclave,* and the two poetical *Anniversaries:*

I need not call in new Philosophy, that denies a settlednesse, an acquiescence in the very body of the Earth, but makes the Earth to move in that place, where we thought the Sunne had moved; I need not that helpe, that the Earth it selfe is in Motion, to prove this, That nothing upon Earth is permanent; The Assertion will stand of it selfe, till some man assigne me some instance, something that a man may relie upon, and find permanent.[60]

When at last he turned to the consideration of death itself, his prose suddenly caught fire, and he uttered one of his short prose poems in which all the words are charged with poignant associations and a definite rhythm guides the whole movement. He thinks of Goliath as the type of manly strength, of Jezebel the haughty Oriental beauty, of Dives the representative of all rich men who are clothed in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day, and then reflects that strength, beauty, riches, all must come to dust:

When *Goliah* had armed and fortified this body, and *Iezabel* had painted and perfumed this body, And *Dives* had pampered and larded this body, As God said to *Ezekiel,* when he brought him to the *dry bones, Fili*

[59] Sermon 10, pp. 226–227.

[60] Sermon 10, p. 233.

hominis, Sonne of Man, doest thou thinke these bones can live? They said in their hearts to all the world, Can these bodies die? And they are dead. *Iezabels* dust is not Ambar, nor *Goliahs* dust *Terra sigillata,* Medicinall; nor does the Serpent, whose meat they are both, finde any better relish in *Dives* dust, then in *Lazarus.*[61]

Here the words are incomparably enriched by the associations which lie behind the proper names. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones, and his cry "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," Jezebel cruel and brave, who prepared for her horrible death with the courage of a great queen, painting her face and tiring her head, Lazarus the beggar who went from his rags and his filth to Abraham's bosom—all these immortal stories must have risen at once into the minds of Donne's hearers, as he uttered these few sentences. He whose prose is often so copious and redundant here employs a singular economy of words: "They said in their hearts to all the world, Can these bodies die? And they are dead." Is there any other passage in Donne's prose which is so exclusively made up of monosyllables of Anglo-Saxon origin, or any sentence so short and pregnant as "And they are dead"? Coming as the words do, after the first introduction of the foreign names *Goliath, Jezebel, Dives,* and *Ezekiel,* and before their repetition (in a different order, and with the substitution of *Lazarus* for *Ezekiel* in the concluding sentence), they have a peculiar vividness of dramatic effect. Here the poet and preacher are one. It was the poet who brought in amber and that magical and medicinal *Terra sigillata* to suggest something rich and strange about the dust of these who had to die.

After this, Donne relapses for a few sentences into the flattest of pulpit prose. Then in the next paragraph his style rises again at the thought of resurrection. He turns from the Old Testament to Catullus for his associative magic: "The Gentils, and their Poets, describe the sad state of Death so, *Nox una obeunda,* That it is one everlasting Night; To them, a Night; But to a Christian, it is *Dies Mortis,* and *Dies Resurrectionis,* The day of Death, and The day of Resurrection; We die in the light, in the sight of Gods presence, and we rise in the

[61] Sermon 10, p. 234.

light, in the sight of his very Essence." Here the line of Catullus with its sad and heavy vowels is contrasted with the deliberate repetition of the long *i* sound in "die," "light," "sight," "rise," "light," "sight." Donne makes his point by a device which he uses very seldom in prose, that of rhyme. Also he uses a very marked anapæstic rhythm to suggest that for the Christian the night of death ends in light, the Light Eternal of the Beatific Vision: "We die in the light, in the sight of Gods presence, and we rise in the light, in the sight of his very Essence." The passage is subtly differentiated from actual verse by the occasional use of nonmetrical weighty syllables, but the effect on the mind and the ear is that of poetry. These two contrasting fragments, the one on death, the other on resurrection, reveal to us how much of the poet still lived in the Dean of St. Paul's.

Note.—A few textual notes to the sermons included in this volume will be found on page 244.