

Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem  
Bölcsészettudományi Kar

## DOKTORI DISSZERTÁCIÓ

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“THE ART OF *SALVATION*, IS BUT THE ART OF *MEMORY*”:  
MEMORY AS ART AND DEVOTION IN THE SERMONS OF  
JOHN DONNE

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BUDAPEST, 2010

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am both humbled and heartened as I recognize those who contributed to the success of this dissertation. I am grateful to my colleagues at the Institute of English Studies, University of Pécs for welcoming me among their ranks in a spirit of trust and for setting high standards of scholarship and pedagogy. I thank especially Mária Kurdi for her professional guidance and goodwill in these first years of my teaching career, Gabriella Hartvig for her expert help with the bibliography and MLA formatting, and Csaba Németh of the Department of Aesthetics for sharing valuable sources. I honor my students of almost six years for their hard work, respect and love.



I owe a debt of gratitude to my learned professors in the English Literature of the Renaissance and Baroque Doctoral Program at the University of Budapest, especially to Péter Dávidházi, warm-hearted mentor and friend.



I acknowledge my unshaken circle of friends, especially Ágnes Streitmann and Noémi Tóth, faithful fellows-in-arms; Kinga Schmidt Kollerné for her continued professional interest and good cheer; Éva Dömötör, τὴν καλλίστην διδασκάλισσαν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς; Tamás Kiss for help with the Hungarian summary; Professor Arno Anzenbacher, Aquinas scholar extraordinaire; Suzana and Cornelia Zorca for their immense generosity enabling me to perform research in the USA in 2008; Márta and Gabriella Jassó for patient care of my Grandmother and timely help in our household; and Angéla Krieser, my guardian angel, for easing the writing process with her gracious companionship.



I gratefully acknowledge my intrepid advisor, Tibor Fabiny, for his professional and personal care. His ongoing quest to unite the noble fields of literature and theology continues to inspire and edify me and all those fortunate to come under his tutelage. I am thankful to the erudite Miklós Vassányi whose meticulous and good-natured comments on my theological chapter helped clarify a number of difficult concepts, elevated the quality of my writing and put my mind at rest. I owe a debt of gratitude to Gábor Ittzés for embodying and exacting a standard of philological excellence to which I can only aspire.



I honor my parents, Zsuzsanna and József, for giving me life and instilling in me a love of learning. Mom, thank you for your warm, motherly care and for selflessly providing for all of my needs during this challenging time. Dad, thank you for believing (and investing!) in me. I could never have written this dissertation without the treasury of books and articles you so generously obtained. Lóránt and Eszter, I am blessed to have you for my brother and sister. I love you all very much.



My highest thanks go to my Lord Jesus Christ, *lux mundi*, and to His Blessed Mother, *sedes sapientiae*, for giving me so much to be thankful for.

For my mother and my father

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## Foreword

Three years ago, I set out to read the entirety of Donne's 160 sermons. What began as a laborious task became, as I developed familiarity with his idiom, a source of insight and delight. Upon reading the first twenty, I consulted my advisor who asked what it was that had struck me most during my first encounter with these challenging texts. I believe I spoke of the Good Thief hanging at the right hand of Christ pictured by Donne as a preacher in a congregation of two, and about a trumpet, calling in different modes—alarm, battle, parley, retreat—while the preacher served as both trumpet and trumpeter. I may have mentioned groaning doves, self-shot arrows, garments flowing with sweet oil, sins in swaddling clothes, and other curiosities. I was excited and inarticulate, yet out of our dialogue arose the understanding that it was Donne's imagery that had captivated me. Unwittingly, like the first twentieth-century critics of Donne's sermons, I had set out to meet Donne the preacher only to come face to face with Donne the poet. I first resolved to write about the rich imagery of Donne's sermonic oeuvre.

As my gallery of memorable images grew, I stumbled across the following odd conceit from a 1618 sermon on Psalm 38:3 preached at Lincoln's Inn: "The art of *salvation*, is but the art of *memory*." The metaphor might be dismissed as more witty than just. The interjection 'but' even adds a quality of flippancy, yet salvation is the last concept a committed preacher would be flippant about. Intrigued, I read on to discover that the art of memory was in fact a memory training technique invented by the Ancient Greeks, systematized by Roman orators, Christianized by the Scholastic philosophers and revived in the Renaissance only to be subsumed by the New Science. In the age of Donne, the art of memory was firmly ensconced in all courses of rhetoric. And it was based on a system of mental spaces storing carefully constructed *images*! Delighted with my discovery of a classification scheme and possible explanation for Donne's sprawling body of imagery, I returned to the conceit for another round of reflection. Surely, Donne did not consider salvation contingent on the successful mastery of a rhetorical skill. Yet he was systematically filling the memories of his audience with vivid, earthy imagery to teach them heavenly truths and thereby lead them to salvation. Perhaps his concept of memory was something deeper and more elemental to the human soul. Donne's first

biographer described him as the English St. Augustine. St. Augustine had given memory great dignity by designating it the ‘place’ where man encounters God.<sup>1</sup> Maybe the parallel between Donne and Augustine was not purely biographical, and Donne’s appeal to memory not merely rhetorical. I was conscious of something subtly insistent and overarching taking shape before my eyes.

To elucidate its significance, I will provide a brief account of John Donne’s place in the sermon culture of Jacobean and Caroline England and a survey of the twentieth-century critical response to his sermons. Most importantly, I wish to present my idea of memory as a fundamental principle of the sermons and explore how it fits into the major trends of the twentieth-century critical response to Donne’s sermonic oeuvre.

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<sup>1</sup>In my dissertation, I have made the stylistic decision to use the masculine pronoun and expressions such as ‘man’ and ‘mankind’ when speaking about human beings in general. The recognition that men and women are ontologically equal but meaningfully different, a truth to which I naturally subscribe, both predates and transcends politically correct but often stylistically cumbersome use of gender-neutral language. I wish also in my own prose to cleave close to that of Donne. I hope my decision is thus justified.

## **I. Introduction**

### **I.1. The Seventeenth-Century Sermon**

According to an estimate by Godfrey Davies, approximately “360,000 sermons were delivered [in England] in the first forty years of the seventeenth century” (Shami, “Introduction” 1). This staggering number stands in sharp contrast with the relative paucity of scholarship on early modern sermons, which in turn is remarkable when compared to the wealth of criticism discussing plays, poems, and other forms of literature. Yet the understanding of early modern sermons remains vital to any exploration of seventeenth-century English culture.

The nineteenth-century parallel between the seventeenth-century pulpit and modern media still rings true. The preacher’s pulpit, primarily a locus for the formation of religious opinion, also provided “editorial commentary on current events, both domestic and foreign, to a broad social cross-section which included women, the poor, and the illiterate, as well as the Court, nobility, and gentry” (Shami, “Introduction” 2). Of the first three groups of auditors, little has been written. Peter E. McCullough’s monograph on Jacobean court preaching argues that James I was a great patron of the sermon whose love for this devotional form shaped public attitudes.<sup>2</sup> Under the scepter of James I (1603-1625) flowered a sermon-centered Protestantism which differed markedly from religious culture under Elizabeth I, who had inclined towards the ceremonial aspects of congregational prayer, and from the increasingly sacramental churchmanship championed by William Laud during the reign of Charles I (McCullough, “Sermons at Court” 6).

Early modern sermons were not only heard and discussed, but often copied by hand or printed so that they could be consulted for private devotion in solitude or within the family circle. In fact, contemporaries came to regard the deluge of published sermons as somewhat overwhelming. “Joseph Hall observed in 1608 that ‘there is store

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. “James’s passion for sermon-hearing—which surpassed his oft-noted pastimes of hunting and play-going—and the routines for attendance at service and sermon that he brought with him from Scotland radically altered the practice of religion at the English court. The accession of the new king not only saw at least a doubling of the number of sermons preached weekly at court, but also reoriented public worship in the chapels royal from prayerbook service to attendance at sermons” (McCullough, “Sermons at Court” 6).



of sermons extant. The pulpit scarce affordeth more than the press.’ And, in 1618, Joseph Barlow complained that ‘the abundance of sermons preached and printed hath brought the word of God and his ordinances to be contemned’” (Shami, “Introduction” 2). John Donne was one of a number of excellent preachers living and working under a sermon-loving king. The work of the majority of his contemporaries—John Prideaux, Thomas Gataker, Samuel Ward, James Ussher, Barten Holyday, and Robert Sanderson whose titles fill the STC<sup>3</sup>—still awaits discovery. John Donne’s prominence as a poet and, in a roundabout way, T. S. Eliot’s predilection for Lancelot Andrewes have secured Donne’s position in sermon scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Donne’s ecclesiastical career spanned the last ten years of the reign of James I and the first six of Charles I’s. He matured to prominence as a preacher under the watchful gaze of the king who had shepherded him towards Holy Orders by closing off all other lines of preferment.

## I.2. Donne’s Path to His Adopted Church

The first biography of Donne to come down to us was composed by Sir Izaak Walton, a pious linen draper a generation younger than Donne and a parishioner at St. Dunstan’s West, one of the sainted dean’s preaching venues (Post 16). Walton based the Donne chapter of his *The Lives of Doctor John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Mr. Richard Hooker, Mr. George Herbert, and Doctor Robert Sanderson*—usually cited under the mercifully abbreviated title *Lives*—on notes assembled by Henry Wotton, a close friend of Donne’s.<sup>5</sup> Walton has been much criticized for his inclination towards pious fiction, but it is largely thanks to his devotion to Donne’s “sufficiently extraordinary and usefully emblematic” life, complemented by the meticulous scholarship of twentieth-century

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<sup>3</sup> The initials stand for *A short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of English books printed abroad 1475-1640*.

<sup>4</sup> “T. S. Eliot’s selection of the sermons of Donne and [Lancelot] Andrewes for comparison further enhanced their reputation and determined, to some extent, their importance in twentieth century literary discussions of the pulpit” (Shami, “Introduction” 2-3).

<sup>5</sup> Walton’s initial biography of Donne was printed in the 1640 edition of *LXXX Sermons*. In the following thirty-five years, Walton separated his Donne biography from the sermons and reworked it as one chapter in a series of five biographies under the title *The Lives of Doctor John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Mr. Richard Hooker, Mr. George Herbert, and Doctor Robert Sanderson*. It is this later, augmented edition that I quote.

biographers<sup>6</sup> that Donne's life is "more vividly imaginable than that of almost any other writer in early modern England" (Post 1). Jonathan F.S. Post divides Donne's life into four phases: 1572-1591, 1591-1602, 1602-1615, 1615-1631 instead of the traditional two, Jack Donne and Doctor Donne, defined by Donne himself. Donne's life is too well known to require retelling in its entirety, but a brief look at Post's fourfold division helps to contextualize his preaching career.

John Donne was born in 1572 into a family of martyr-minded Catholics. On his mother's side, he was descended from Saint Thomas More. After leaving Oxford without a degree he either traveled to the Continent with Catholic aristocrats<sup>7</sup> or continued his studies at Cambridge.<sup>8</sup> His 1591 move to Lincoln's Inn was the beginning of his secular career. In this period, he was charmingly described by an Oxford friend as "not dissolute, but very neat; a great visiter of Ladies, a great frequenter of Playes, a great writer of conceited Verses" (qtd. in Bald 72). Donne's promising secular career was cut short in 1602 upon his clandestine marriage with Anne More, the niece of his employer, Sir Egerton. By this time, Donne had conformed, at least outwardly, to the Anglican Church. The marriage cost him a promising career and plunged him into material and spiritual difficulties.

Donne's third phase can be seen as logically leading up to his ordination in 1615. The complex combination of religious and worldly motivations for his decision to embrace the Anglican Church and to take up Holy Orders remains to be teased apart.<sup>9</sup> The period bracketed by Donne's marriage and his ordination is a time of continued religious preoccupations and a prolonged, exasperating quest for employment. From his youth, Donne had wrestled with his faith. Walton portrays Donne at a tender age, engaged in an avid quest for the true church:

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Edmund Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne, Dean of St Paul's*, 1899; R.C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life*, 1970; John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, 1981; A. J. Smith, "John Donne" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 1992; and, most recently, John Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul* 2006.

<sup>7</sup> According to Walton and Bald.

<sup>8</sup> Argued by Dennis Flynn.

<sup>9</sup> Donne's conversion from a misspent youth to saintly maturity and from the faith of his fathers to the faith of his king, as well as his late acceptance of the calling for which so many found him so deeply suited, have elicited much scholarly debate and psychological probing. Interpreters of Donne's motivations range from absolute believers in his spiritual sincerity (e.g., Izaak Walton) to mildly skeptical (e.g., Helen Gardner) and occasionally cynical (e.g., T. S. Eliot, R. C. Bald) readers.

About the nineteenth year of his age, he, being then unresolved what religion to adhere to, and considering how much it concerned his soul to choose the most orthodox . . . presently lay aside all study of the law . . . and began seriously to survey and consider the body of divinity, as it was then controverted betwixt the reformed and the Roman Church . . . in that disquisition and search he proceeded with humility . . . frequent prayers, and an indifferent affection to both parties; and indeed, truth had too much light about her to be hid from so sharp an inquirer; and he had too much ingenuity not to acknowledge he had found her. (4-5)

Walton compresses Donne's spiritual struggles into a year or two. In fact, they continued and intensified prior to his ordination and, as critics like R.C. Bald and Helen Gardner have argued, even beyond—perhaps to his death.

From his youth, Donne had also entertained court ambitions and with the financial and social needs of his family pressing on him, he worked tirelessly, as Post succinctly puts it, “to climb the slippery slope of preferment” (10). Donne enjoyed the friendship and occasional patronage of such important persons as Sir Henry Goodyer, Magdalen Herbert, and Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford, but his hopes were fixed on a courtly career. The letters written in this period, collected for publication in the 1651 volume *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* by his son, John Donne Jr., reveal an effort persistent and at times awkward to the point of sycophancy to attract the attention of the movers and shakers at court, most notably the king. He sought to do the same through publication. His 1610 *Pseudo-Martyr* was written to persuade English Catholics that they could take the Oath of Allegiance, instituted by King James in the wake of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, without compromising their beliefs. *Pseudo-Martyr*—composed in part to convince the king of Donne's suitability for court service and dedicated to his majesty—ironically served to strengthen James I's convictions that Donne's true calling lay in the church:

When the king had read and considered that book, he persuaded Mr. Donne to enter into the ministry; to which, at that time, he was, and appeared, very unwillingly, apprehending it—such was his mistaken modesty—to be too

weighty for his abilities . . . [To the Earl of Sommerset who approached James to petition a court position for Donne, the king replied], ‘I know Mr. Donne is a learned man, has the abilities of a learned divine, and will prove a powerful preacher; and my desire is to prefer him that way, and in that way I will deny you nothing for him (Walton 20-21).

### **I.3. Donne the Preacher**

In January of 1615, Donne was ordained to the Anglican priesthood, thereby embarking on a brilliant ecclesiastical career. He preached his first sermon in relative obscurity, as Evelyn Hardy recounts:

The village of Paddington lay, in the early seventeenth century, at a distance of four or five miles from the westernmost boundaries of London proper and was noted for its watercourse, which ran ‘to James-head on the hill’. Here, in a small church falling into ruin, Donne preached his first sermon and his choice of an audience indicates his hesitancy and humility. There is no record of the text he chose, or of what he said, of his manner of speech, or of how his congregation responded to him. (168)

A decade and a half later, in February of 1631, King Charles and hundreds of anxious listeners gathered in Whitehall to hear the much-beloved Dean of St. Paul’s give his last sermon, with the posthumously assigned title *Deaths Duell*. In a letter written during his illness, Donne had previously expressed a fervent wish to die in the pulpit and, indeed, many who attended felt it might be granted (Targoff 224).

[M]any of them thought he presented himself not to preach mortification by a living voice, but mortality by a decayed body, and a dying face. And doubtless many did secretly ask that question in Ezekiel, —‘Do these bones live?’ . . . Many that then saw his tears, and heard his faint and hollow voice, professing they thought the Text prophetically chosen, and that Dr. Donne had preached his own funeral sermon. (Walton 45)

The Dean died of a fever a little more than a month after his memorable final performance.

In the intervening sixteen years, Donne ran a brilliant career in his adopted church. A few months after his ordination, he became royal chaplain to the king. October of 1616 brought additional recognition when Donne was appointed Reader in Divinity at the Inns of Court. The summer of 1619 took him to Europe on what was to be his last journey abroad, as the chaplain on the futile mission headed by the Viscount Doncaster seeking to restore peace between the Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II and the Protestants of Bohemia. In November 1621, Donne received his highest honor yet when awarded the position of Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. After James' death, Donne continued in the service of his son, Charles, deftly navigating the rapidly shifting political and religious ground.<sup>10</sup>

Over the course of his career, Donne preached hundreds of sermons (only a portion of which survive) in a vast array of spaces, from court settings like “Whitehall and Denmark House, Queen Anne’s residence, to Paul’s Cross, with its mixed, open-air audience and opportunities to preach on controversial topics . . . at both St. Paul’s . . . and nearby St. Dunstan’s West, a living held by the Earl of Dorset” (Post 16). In addition to appearing at these regular venues, Donne was often invited to preach at private ceremonies of baptism, marriage and burial. Men and women from all walks of life—from the king and queen, and dignitaries civil and ecclesiastic, to their household servants, from the intellectuals of Lincoln’s Inn and the wealthy entrepreneurs of the Virginia company, to apprentices in every trade known to man—heard his preaching. As a fisher of men, Donne cast his net wide.

Donne composed and performed his sermons, massive texts numbering fifteen to forty modern pages each, within the epideictic branch of rhetoric. Epideictic rhetoric is impassioned didacticism, “the art of persuasively praising virtue or blaming vice, with an emphasis on inspiring voluntary actions by appeal to the auditory’s emotions” (McCullough, “Donne as Preacher” 168). The production of sermons for the pulpit—

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<sup>10</sup> In fact “the only sermon of Donne’s which we know to have given offence was delivered before Charles on 1 April 1627 . . . he was suspected of aligning himself with anti-royalist sentiments expressed in a recent sermon by George Abbot, the Calvinist Archbishop of Canterbury, whose views were distasteful both to Charles and to Laud. Donne seems to have been particularly hurt by the fact that he was in trouble over a sermon which he thought would earn him the king’s thanks” (Oliver 48).

their composition and subsequent performance—was divided into five phases inherited from ancient oratorical practice.

*Inventio* meant the selection of a biblical text as well as the identification of illustrations to be used in its discussion. Although Donne extracted evidence for his arguments primarily from Scripture, which he considered the ultimate moral and aesthetic authority, he also made extensive and creative use of non-Scriptural sources such as the Church Fathers, Scholastic, Reformation and Counter-Reformation theologians, and the great classical authors. Donne’s syncretic approach to wisdom sets him apart from most contemporaries, most notably Lancelot Andrewes, who was strictly scriptural and consulted the Church Fathers solely for their exegeses of biblical passages. During the *dispositio* phase, Donne arranged his illustrations and examples in a strategic order to achieve optimal emotive effects. The actual composition of the sermon took place during the *elocutio* stage when the preacher drew on the fullness of rhetorical devices—figures of speech and of thought—to give the work what may be termed its ‘style.’ Here readers will find the same ingenious and striking conceits that color his poetry, only on far vaster scales, fleshed out not in a line or two but in entire paragraphs of sprawling and elaborate prose. *Memoria* and *pronuntiatio/actio*, the fourth and fifth stages of the oratorical process, belong directly to the performance of oratory and are therefore impossible to reconstruct almost four hundred years after the dying strains of *Deaths Duell* subsided. *Memoria* implies the memorization process on the part of the preacher. Contemporary audiences looked with disfavor on those who preached from notes and with contempt on those who read out their sermons. Preachers resorted to the art of memory to enable them to commit their sermons to memory and thereby shift emphasis to effective delivery. The actual performance of the sermon, the *pronuntiatio* and *actio*, depended on four elements: *quantitas* and *qualitas* of the voice, the *spatium* (timing or rhythm) of delivery and the emphatic use of facial expressions and hand gestures (McCullough, “Donne as Preacher” 169-73).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For further discussion of the three types of speeches and the five tasks of the orator, as well as the place of memory within rhetorical art, please see section II.3.1 below.

Donne's preaching prowess was the subject of admiration on the part of lay listeners and colleagues alike. The most lively description of his preaching style derives from Walton's account of

a Preacher in earnest; weeping sometimes for his Auditory; sometimes with them: always preaching to himself, like an Angel from a cloud,<sup>12</sup> but in none; carrying some, as *St. Paul* was, to Heaven in holy raptures, and inticing others by a sacred Art and Courtship to amend their lives; here picturing vice so as to make it ugly to those that practised it; and a vertue so, as to make it be beloved even by those that lov'd it not; and all this with a most particular grace and an unexpressible addition of comeliness. (24)

Here it is important to note that Walton describes Donne's preaching efforts as *picturing* vices as repulsive and virtues as attractive. In other words, he makes a strong visual appeal in the form of images to hidden spiritual realities!

The verses written in memory of Donne to accompany the 1633 edition of his *Poems* and other contemporary references to his preaching are equally exuberant with praise. Shami quotes a number of instances of which I reproduce a handful of examples. Henry Valentine appealed to the language of cards to underscore Donne's importance, writing that "*Divinity, / Lost such a Trump as even to Extasie / Could charme the Soule.*" Thomas Carew attested that Donne's powerful preaching "Committed holy Rapes upon our Will" while one elegist regarded Donne as a reincarnation of "Golden Chrysostome." Donne's influence was profound not only on fellow Englishmen, but also on visiting dignitaries who heard him preach at court. The Dutch diplomat Constantijn Huygens composed a Latin poem praising Donne, which may be translated "From your golden mouth, whether in the chamber of a friend or in the pulpit, fell the speech of Gods, whose nectar I drank again and again with heartfelt joy." And perhaps most significantly, a certain Richard Gibson, in a letter to Samuel Pepys dated 15 August 1671, recalls a comment Donne had made in a sermon over forty years earlier! (qtd. in Shami, "Introduction" 3-4).

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<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, Donne uses this very image to describe preachers in his "To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders": "Mary's prerogative was to bear Christ, so / 'Tis preachers' to convey him, for they do / *As angels out of clouds, from pulpits speak...*" (ll. 41-43; emphasis added).

#### I.4. The Fate of Donne's Sermons

Donne preached from memory based on meticulous notes prepared at home; careful references to his sources filled the margins. Later—days, sometimes months or years later—the Dean sat in the privacy of his own home to ‘exscribe’ or write out the complete sermon, thereby preparing it for future publication (LeComte 174). With the exception of six published sermons, two at the request of the king, Donne’s sermons were heard, not read, in his lifetime. The remaining 156 were published in three folio volumes over a space of more than twenty years. Donne’s eldest son, John, “followed haltingly in his father’s clerical and literary footsteps” (Post 17) and discovered rather quickly that his best chances for some measure of fame and wealth lay in the collation and publication of his sainted father’s sermonic oeuvre. The sermons appeared in three installments: the 1640 *LXXX Sermons*, the 1649 *Fifty Sermons*, and the 1661 volume *XXVI Sermons*, conveniently alluded to as F80, F50, and F26 respectively (Krueger 151). The publication of the sermons was less than transparent.<sup>13</sup> According to Krueger’s reconstruction, John Donne junior was in the process of transcribing fifty of his father’s sermons (F50) for printing in 1638 when he discovered that his father’s executor, Henry King, had possession of eighty sermons (F80) already painstakingly prepared for the press, most likely by the elder Donne. These he took from King despite the executor’s great displeasure and commissioned Walton to write a biography of his father to complement the eighty sermons to be published. He then published the remaining fifty plus twenty-six sermons much later (Krueger 160).

Donne’s lyric and sermonic works were out of print throughout most of the eighteenth century. Catalogues of personal library holdings at the time record few copies of the *Sermons*. The nineteenth century brought heightened appreciation of Donne the writer as Walton’s *Lives* grew in popularity. Walton had reworked his commissioned biography of Donne over thirty-five years and attached it to a series of his biographies of other notable English divines. Interest centered around Donne’s

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Krueger argues that John Donne, Jr. was “notoriously untrustworthy”. For example, in a 1637 letter, he denied that his father had written *Conclave Ignatii* and certain poems that had already been published. Then, a decade and a half later, in 1653, he attempted to publish *Conclave Ignatii*, claiming that it was a translation he had found not long before among his father’s effects (Krueger 156).



marrying for love, his life pattern as a great convert comparable to St. Augustine and his role in solidifying Protestantism in England (Haskin 234-36). Samuel Taylor Coleridge, attracted to Donne by Walton's lively account, annotated Wordsworth's copy of *LXXX Sermons* in his youth and another copy in his mature years. Coleridge and Wordsworth were two Romantic readers deeply impressed by the "intellectual and imaginative qualities" of the sermons (Shami, "Introduction" 4). As the Oxford Movement developed, Coleridge is noted to have asked why Oxford University did not publish the sermons of Donne (Haskin 237-38). Coleridge and other prospective readers had to wait until 1839 when the young Cambridge clergyman Henry Alford (1810-1871) edited and published Donne's six-volume *Works* under the auspices of the Oxford Movement. Alford meticulously modernized the spelling and punctuation of the sermons. In the second half of the nineteenth century and especially the first half of the twentieth, focus shifted to Donne's lyric output.

The rapidly accumulating scholarship on Donne prompted the expansive, ten volume critical edition of the entire sermonic oeuvre. The massive project of editing and commentary was undertaken by George Potter and Evelyn Simpson and published by the University of California Press between 1953 and 1962. Each volume features a lengthy introduction, with some biographical background and literary analysis, to the sermons included therein, the texts of the sermons themselves, and a chapter of notes on sermon text *variora* at the end. Volume I offers a helpful General Introduction and Volume X provides an overview of Donne's major intellectual and spiritual influences in the General Index. The Potter-Simpson edition, although admittedly a monumental and valuable achievement, provides very little help in identifying Donne's precise non-biblical sources. Explicit and implicit biblical quotations are cited in the margins by chapter and verse, but there are no critical notes in any comparable detail concerning Donne's treasury of non-biblical sources. The works of St. Augustine excepted, Potter and Simpson rarely provide even so much as the titles of non-biblical citations, much less precise philological data concerning their provenance. Neither do they visibly differentiate between their own marginal notes and those appearing in the seventeenth-century editions of the sermons.

Recent readers are well served by the digitalized version of the 1962 edition available over the Internet through the Harold B. Lee Library of Brigham Young University, with Kimberly Johnson serving as project editor. The project allows free and easy access to the entire body of Donne's sermons, albeit without the Potter-Simpson critical apparatus, and enables scholars to search them for key words and by date, occasion, location, audience, Old or New Testament source text and position in the standard ten-volume edition. This valuable digitalized archive is an important first gesture towards popularizing Donne's sermonic oeuvre whose availability to individual scholars has, due to the difficulties and great expense involved in purchasing the entire ten-volume series, been severely limited.

A widely accessible critical edition that meets modern philological standards remains to be created.<sup>14</sup> At present, a scholar's best choice is to combine the facility of searching the entire sermonic oeuvre provided by the Brigham Young University digitalized archive with reference to the critical apparatus, such as it is, of the classic Potter-Simpson edition.<sup>15</sup>

### **1.5. Twentieth-Century Response**

To establish how the concept of memory fits into scholarship on Donne's sermons, it is important to begin with an overview of twentieth-century critical approaches to the sermons of John Donne. Such an overview results in three fundamental observations. First, most serious work on the sermons postdates the 1962 Potter-Simpson critical edition. Second, critical work on the sermons can be categorized as literary, theological, and historical—or formal, content- and context-based respectively—with few overlaps.

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<sup>14</sup> Oxford University has recently undertaken this project under the general editorship of Professor Peter E. McCullough. Starting in 2015, the sermons will be published in sixteen volumes by Oxford University Press and also made available in digital format. Further information concerning this exciting project may be found on the Oxford University homepage.

<sup>15</sup> A note on citing the sermons: There are currently two conventions in use. The first is to provide the volume- and page number (e.g., X, 73). The second calls for the volume-, sermon-, and line numbers (e.g., X, No. 2, ll. 172-75) in the Potter-Simpson critical edition. I follow the former convention throughout. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to situate every quoted sermon in its historical context, I wish to make a contextual gesture by providing, in the footnotes, the full title (normally including occasion, venue, date, biblical text, and page number within the sermon) of every sermon I quote. Please note: All parenthetical citations consisting only of a Roman numeral followed by a comma and Arabic numerals refer to passages in the 10-volume critical edition of the sermons.

Third, there was an explosion of historical sermon scholarship following the 1992 issue of the *John Donne Journal*.

Two aspects of nineteenth-century approaches to Donne serve as a bridge to critical scholarship on his sermons in the twentieth century. First, as I have mentioned, nineteenth-century readers in England were primarily interested in Donne's life story, especially his imprudent marriage and conversion experience. Second, Donne's poetry was gradually rediscovered by American readers and writers as notable as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and James Russel Lowell (Haskin 239). Sir Herbert Grierson and T. S. Eliot who are generally credited with shining the spotlight of academic interest on Metaphysical poetry in the interwar years<sup>16</sup> were in fact putting into words what many of their prominent countrymen had sensed in the previous decades. Twentieth-century critics inherited an interest in Donne's life story and an appreciation of Donne as poet.<sup>17</sup>

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Louis I. Bredvold<sup>18</sup> and Michael Francis Moloney<sup>19</sup> sought to liberate Donne from accusations of Medievalism and portray him instead as skeptic turned mystic and a proponent of the New Science respectively. The prominent Christian critic Roy Battenhouse<sup>20</sup> highlighted Donne's quality of religious tolerance while Evelyne Hardy<sup>21</sup> wrote a beautiful if somewhat sentimental account of Donne's conflicted spiritual journey in which quotations from the sermons serve as illustrations of biographical events. What is common to all four accounts is the excitement of novelty, the effort to portray Donne as an independent and—according to the authors, therefore modern—thinker, and cursory knowledge of the sermons.

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<sup>16</sup> In their respective essays entitled "Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century" (1921) and "The Metaphysical Poets" (1932).

<sup>17</sup>Please note: for easier reference and to better map out the scope of Donne scholarship, I provide the titles of individual essays and books and their publications dates in the footnotes throughout my Introduction.

<sup>18</sup> See his 1925 study entitled "The Religious Thought of Donne in Relation to Medieval and Later Traditions."

<sup>19</sup> See *John Donne: His Flight from Medievalism*, 1944.

<sup>20</sup> See his 1942 article entitled "The Grounds of Religious Toleration in the Thought of John Donne."

<sup>21</sup> See the chapter "Fulfillment and Fruition" in her biography entitled *Donne: A Spirit in Conflict*, 1942.

The publication of the Potter-Simpson critical edition was the watershed event that enabled scholars to seriously engage with the sermons. Evelyn Simpson's seminal 1962 article entitled "The Literary Value of Donne's Sermons" is emblematic of a tendency to look for Donne the poet in Donne the preacher. Simpson explores her thesis that "John Donne was essentially a poet" (137) in a meticulous yet pleasant manner. She speaks of Donne's poetic impulse as a kind of creative volcano seething under the grave veneer of the Dean of St. Paul's, erupting occasionally into hymns and holy sonnets. Simpson draws up a charming inventory of images, grouping them as: homely, grotesque/macabre, ingenious/far-fetched and incongruous (mixing sacred and secular) and suggests that Donne's prolific imagery comes from all areas of life. Donne "was writing . . . with no watertight compartments in his mind. Life is one, in all its manifestations, ugly or beautiful; the reality behind it is one, and is manifested in the secular as well as the sacred . . . Thus Donne obtains for himself a range of imagery incomparably wider than that of other preachers" (146-47). K. W. Gransden's chapter on the causes of Donne's powerful preaching in "A Preacher in Earnest,"<sup>22</sup> Winfried Schleiner's expansive 1970 survey of the fields of imagery found in the sermons,<sup>23</sup> Toshihiko Kawasaki's brilliant reflections on the idea of micro- and macrocosms in Donne's imagery,<sup>24</sup> Gale Carrithers' masterful exploration of Donne's use of metaphor, especially that of life as a journey,<sup>25</sup> Bettie Anne Doebbler's study of Donne's representations of death<sup>26</sup> are some of the fine contributions to our understanding of Donne's mastery and use of powerful imagery. Other critics, most notably Dennis Quinn,<sup>27</sup> William Gifford,<sup>28</sup> Michael L. Hall,<sup>29</sup> William R. Mueller,<sup>30</sup> Walter R. Davis,<sup>31</sup> P.G. Stanwood,<sup>32</sup> Maria Salenius,<sup>33</sup> Brent Nelson<sup>34</sup> and Robert A. Guffey<sup>35</sup> may also be

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<sup>22</sup> In his 1969 monograph entitled *John Donne*.

<sup>23</sup> In his book entitled *The Imagery of John Donne's Sermons*.

<sup>24</sup> See his 1971 essay "Donne's Microcosm."

<sup>25</sup> See *Donne at Sermons: A Christian Existential World*, 1972.

<sup>26</sup> See *The Quickening Seed: Death in the Sermons of John Donne*, 1974.

<sup>27</sup> See his 1960 article "Donne's Christian Eloquence."

<sup>28</sup> See "Time and Place in Donne's Sermons," 1967.

<sup>29</sup> See "Searching the Scriptures: Meditation and Discovery in Donne's Sermons" from 1977.

<sup>30</sup> See *John Donne: Preacher*, 1977.

<sup>31</sup> See "Meditation, Typology, and the Structure of Donne's Sermons" from 1986.

<sup>32</sup> See "Donne's Art of Preaching and the Reconstruction of Tertullian" from 1996.

<sup>33</sup> See "True Purification: Donne's Art of Rhetoric in Two Candlemas Sermons from 2003.

classified under the literary approach for addressing structural and broader rhetorical concerns in the sermons at large.

Theologically/philosophically oriented readers of the sermons have worked valiantly to reconstruct Donne's views on questions such as reason and faith, sin and grace, sacramental and Word-centered worship, and to position him on the theological map of the times somewhere on the spectrum from Roman Catholic to Calvinist. Although most serious reflection on Donne's theological stance began in the 1970s, Louis I. Bredvold and Roy Battenhouse, mentioned above, may be cited as early examples of critics working in this approach. Notable contributors to our understanding of Donne's theological position in a difficult era where doctrinal and ecclesiastical boundaries were in constant flux include Patrick Grant,<sup>36</sup> Barbara K. Lewalski,<sup>37</sup> Paul R. Sellin,<sup>38</sup> Teresa M. DiPasquale,<sup>39</sup> Jeanne Shami,<sup>40</sup> Robert Whalen,<sup>41</sup> Chanita Goldblatt,<sup>42</sup> and Alison Shell and Arnold Hunt.<sup>43</sup> Others working in this tradition have singled out individual thinkers from St. Augustine<sup>44</sup> to Donne's contemporary St. Robert Bellarmine<sup>45</sup> and examined their influence on the theology of John Donne. Jeffrey Johnson, in his 1999 volume *The Theology of John Donne*, is to my knowledge the only critic to treat Donne as a serious and original theologian in his own right. Over the course of five chapters, Johnson offers a survey of the key tenets of Donne's theology. In Chapter One, entitled "So Steepy a Place," he addresses the doctrine of the Trinity, which Donne identifies as the firm basis of all Christian faith and practice. "To Batter Heaven" discusses Donne's views on communal and private prayer, while "Through His Own Red Glasse" explores Donne's insistence on the preeminence of the sense of sight and his defense of the use of images to convey religious truth. "Voice of

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<sup>34</sup> See "Holy Ambition: Rhetoric, Courtship, and Devotion in the Sermons of John Donne" from 2005.

<sup>35</sup> See "Parabolic Logic in John Donne's Sermons" from 2007.

<sup>36</sup> See *The Transformation of Sin: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne*, 1974.

<sup>37</sup> See *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, 1979.

<sup>38</sup> See *John Donne and Calvinist Views of Grace*, 1983.

<sup>39</sup> See *Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne*, 1999.

<sup>40</sup> See "Anti-Catholicism in the Sermons of John Donne" from 2000.

<sup>41</sup> See *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert*, 2002.

<sup>42</sup> See "From 'Tav' to the Cross: John Donne's Protestant Exegesis and Polemics" from 2003.

<sup>43</sup> See "Donne's Religious World" 2006.

<sup>44</sup> See Gilian R. Evans in her "John Donne and the Augustinian Paradox of Sin," in from 1982 and Mary Arshagouni Papazian's "The Augustinian Donne: How a 'Second S. Augustine'?" from 2003.

<sup>45</sup> See R.V. Young's "Donne and Bellarmine" from 2000.

the Turtle” centers on Donne’s teachings concerning the importance of repentance, and “O Taste and See” analyzes Donne’s *via media* approach to the doctrine of grace, the question of faith and works and the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Throughout his slim and erudite volume, Johnson is careful to situate his quotations in the context of the whole sermon and the wider context of the time, place and audience before whom it was delivered.

This heightened sensitivity to the historical and political context of the sermons may be traced back to the 1992 issue of the *John Donne Journal* in which the editor, Jeanne Shami, opined:

As it is, there is little overlap in Donne studies between literary, historical, and theological approaches of the sermons: literary assessments of his rhetorical and homiletic devices, of style, are carefully insulated from historical assessments of Donne’s place among contemporary preachers; theological labels are applied to the entire body of his work; political assessments are achieved by quoting fragments of sermons out of context without due consideration of the time, place, and cultural circumstances informing the sermons; and it is unclear whether historians and literary critics are engaging in a productive dialogue about Donne as well as some of the other important preachers of the period. (“Introduction” 12)

Shami goes on to highlight the importance of the essays in the 1992 issue of the *John Donne Journal* as products of a conscious effort “to historicize Donne’s sermons, to place them within discursive and cultural contexts” (Ibid.).

Beside an earlier intriguing project to harmonize Donne’s thought with Mannerism,<sup>46</sup> most scholarship that reads individual sermons or clusters of sermons in their political/cultural/historical context begins in the 1990s.<sup>47</sup> Just as theological

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<sup>46</sup> See Robert S. Jackson’s *John Donne’s Christian Vocation* and Murray Roston’s *The Soul of Wit: A Study of John Donne* from 1970.

<sup>47</sup> Here we must differentiate between biographies of Donne, of which there is a long twentieth century tradition, and historical approaches to his sermons. Historical scholarship and biographies differ in their tools and aims. In biographies of Donne, sermons serve as a means to the end of producing a coherent, full and historically accurate reading of Donne’s life. Historical readings of Donne’s sermonic oeuvre, however, use knowledge of relevant historical, political and cultural background as means to the end of attaining a fuller understanding of the sermons themselves.

readings of Donne's sermons sought to place Donne on the religious map of the times, the primary concern of historical readings has been to place Donne on the political spectrum ranging from unabashed support of absolutist power<sup>48</sup> to "render[ing] to Caesar the small change of political obedience, [while] reserving the heavy money for God" (Shami, "Introduction" 13).<sup>49</sup> Within the range of historical readings, we may further differentiate between attempts to reread individual sermons or small clusters of sermons in relation to a specific event and larger-scale projects aiming to contextualize the entire body of sermons. Notable contributions to the former include Peter McCullough's discussion of Donne's 1617 sermon preached to Queen Anne. Only in light of the information that Anne harbored hidden Catholic sympathies does the reading of the sermon as a gentle but firm admonition to finally take a stand in matters of faith make sense.<sup>50</sup> Dayton Haskin,<sup>51</sup> Mary Arshagouni Papazian,<sup>52</sup> Katrin Ettenhuber,<sup>53</sup> and John N. Wall<sup>54</sup> provide similarly novel insights through a rigorous exploration of the specific contexts and audiences receiving individual sermons. Dennis Flynn,<sup>55</sup> Peter McCullough,<sup>56</sup> Paul Stevens<sup>57</sup> and Tom Cain<sup>58</sup> have worked towards defining the cultural and political contexts that promise to shed light on the entire body of sermons.

Scholarship on Donne's sermons, though still overshadowed by the disproportionately vast amount of criticism pertaining to his lyric oeuvre, has come into its own. The fifty years since the appearance of the ten-volume critical edition of the sermonic canon have produced an admirably wide range of literary, theological and historical approaches to these admittedly challenging texts. Furthermore, scholars in the past two decades have worked toward an increasingly holistic approach in which the literary form, theological content and historical context of the sermons are considered in

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<sup>48</sup> See John Carey's *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, 1981.

<sup>49</sup> See Gale Carrithers and James Hardy's article "'Not Upon a Lecture, but Upon a Sermon': Devotional Dynamics of the Donnean Fisher of Men." from 1992.

<sup>50</sup> See Peter McCullough's "Preaching to a Court Papist? Donne's Sermon Before Queen Anne, December 1617" from 1995.

<sup>51</sup> See "John Donne and Cultural Contradictions of Christmas" from 1992.

<sup>52</sup> See her article "John Donne and the Thirty Years' War" from 2000.

<sup>53</sup> See "'Take heed what you heare': Re-reading Donne's Lincoln's Inn Sermons" from 2007.

<sup>54</sup> See "Situating Donne's Dedication Sermon at Lincoln's Inn, 22 May 1623" from 2007.

<sup>55</sup> See *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility*, 1995.

<sup>56</sup> See *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching*, 1998.

<sup>57</sup> See "Donne's Catholicism and the Innovation of the Modern Nation State," 2001.

<sup>58</sup> See "Donne Political World" from 2006.

tandem to produce more accurate readings and a deeper understanding of the works whose composition occupied the whole length of Donne's mature years.

Here I wish to reflect briefly on the Hungarian response to Donne's sermonic oeuvre. While Donne's love lyrics have featured in Hungarian translation in a number of general anthologies<sup>59</sup> and a few specific collections,<sup>60</sup> as have his divine poems,<sup>61</sup> his sermons are largely unknown to scholars and to general readers alike. A selection of five sermons was printed in 1998 by Harmat Press under the title *Délben alkonyul, délben virrad*. This was the first and, to my knowledge, only time Donne's prose was published in Hungarian. The sermons were selected, translated and annotated by Péter Pásztor with a brief introduction by Győző Ferencz. In Donne the devotional poet, Ferencz recognizes modern man's gnawing doubts, spiritual crises and despair of sure fundamentals, as well as his unquenchable yearning for purity of spirit. In Donne the preacher, Ferencz sees a great performer of one-man morality and mystery plays (Ferencz 5-11).

There have been valuable contributions to our understanding of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hungarian sermon culture by scholars as notable as István Bartók, István Bitskey, Emil Hargittay and Gábor Kecskeméti, to name just a few. Although I have encountered and profited from their scholarship while conducting research for a comparative study of Donne's and Péter Pázmány's ideas of religious tolerance, I am not aware of these or other Hungarian scholars working on the sermons of John Donne. I write under the simultaneously humbling and challenging impression that my dissertation is the first attempt by a Hungarian scholar to approach and to state something about the entire sermonic oeuvre.

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<sup>59</sup> E.g., *Válogatott versek és versfordítások*, 1985; *Erotikus versek: A világlíra 50 gyöngyszeme*, 1990; *Gyönyörök könyve: a világirodalom legszebb erotikus versei*, 2004.

<sup>60</sup> E.g., *Negatív szerelem*, 1987; *Angol költők antológiája*, 2000; *A szerelem istensége*, 2007.

<sup>61</sup> E.g., *Templomablak: Istenes versek és műfordítások*, 1980 and *Donne, Milton és az angol barokk költői*, 1989. Please note: in conformance with MLA conventions, the above anthologies appear in the Works Cited section either under their title, or under the name of the editor and/or translator, or under Donne's name where appropriate.



## I.6. Memory in the Sermons

Lodged mostly within the philosophical/theological approach to the sermons is an ongoing debate about the fundamentals of Donne's theory of mind. This debate has been dominated by a discussion of roles of the Augustinian triad of memory, understanding and will in the sermons. Among those who have argued for the primacy of memory over understanding and the will are Robert L. Hickey,<sup>62</sup> Dennis Quinn,<sup>63</sup> Joan Webber,<sup>64</sup> Janel M. Mueller,<sup>65</sup> John S. Chamberlin,<sup>66</sup> and Achsah Guibbory.<sup>67</sup> Terry G. Sherwood<sup>68</sup> has made a strong counter-argument for reason, which was picked up by Noralyn Masselink<sup>69</sup> who convincingly suggested a Thomistic rather than Augustinian basis for Donne's epistemology. Masselink is also, to my knowledge, the only scholar to have treated Donne's *ars memoriae* in an independent article.<sup>70</sup> In what follows, I provide a brief summary of their contributions in order to better position my own work in the scholarly discussion of Donne's theory and practice of memory.

Robert Hickey's thesis is "that the tremendous range and quality of Donne's imagery may best be explained by his belief that the ends of persuasive discourse . . . are achieved by evoking the faculty of memory instead of, or in addition to, appealing to the understanding or attempting to influence the will" (29). He recognizes that such a statement has "psychological and theological as well as rhetorical implications" (Ibid.) but while his exclusively Augustinian presentation of the psychological and theological aspects is strong, his treatment of Donne's imagery remains general and fails even to mention the technique of *ars memoriae* so fundamental to the "rhetorical implications" he appropriately identifies.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See his 1958 study "Donne's Art of Memory."

<sup>63</sup> See his 1960 study "Donne's Christian Eloquence."

<sup>64</sup> See relevant parts of her 1963 monograph *Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne*.

<sup>65</sup> See the "Introduction" to her 1971 anthology of *Donne's Prebend Sermons*.

<sup>66</sup> See relevant parts of his 1976 monograph *Increase and Multiply*.

<sup>67</sup> See her 1980 study "John Donne and Memory as 'the Art of Salvation.'"

<sup>68</sup> See his 1972 study "Reason in Donne's Sermons" and his 1984 monograph *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought*.

<sup>69</sup> See her 1989 study "Donne's Epistemology and the Appeal to Memory."

<sup>70</sup> See her 1998 study "Memory in John Donne's Sermons: 'Readie'? Or Not?"

<sup>71</sup> Hickey's argument may be summed up in the following way: According to Donne's understanding of Augustine, the soul has three faculties (i.e. memory, understanding, and will) upon which the preacher and God can work. Sin stems from the perverseness of the will which in turn is a result of erroneous understanding. Man may be convinced by appeals to the intellect, but this is an arduous task,

Dennis Quinn treats of Donne's appeal to memory within the wider framework of the latter's concept of the Christian orator, arguing that "Donne's sermons embody the traditional Augustinian conception of eloquence and its connection to the Bible" (276). Quinn contrasts Augustine's theory of eloquence and conception of the Bible with the fruits of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation: "a new approach to the Bible, a new conception of rhetoric, and a new idea of the function of sermons" (278). Donne cleaved close to Augustine's views in his belief, as Quinn puts it, that "[j]ust as the Son was made flesh in Christ, and just as He was incorporated in the Bible, so He is once more incarnated in preaching the words of the Bible" (282). As a result of his strong Augustinian commitment, "Donne's sermons are not addressed primarily to the reason [i.e., they are not lectures] . . . It is the memory which Donne most often addresses in his sermons" (282-83). Like Augustine, Donne seeks to imitate Scripture, which appeals—through its various figures and metaphors—directly to the soul and only indirectly to reason. The remainder of the study analyzes Donne's imagery as an appeal, informed by Augustine's attitudes towards biblical imagery, to the closely linked faculties of memory and imagination.

In her monograph on the prose style of John Donne, Joan Webber discusses Donne's conceptions of memory at various appropriate points throughout her text. Early on, she determines that Donne's "purpose is to get at the memory, not at the intellect, to remind rather than to teach" and that

He shapes his prose in such a way as to appeal directly to the memory, by use of the long loose "Senecan" sentence that Morris Croll calls meditative, and that seems to advance with the progress of thought and emotion, a sentence shaped for exploration and recollection of known truths, rather than for exposition and persuasion. (22)

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and intellectual conviction does not necessarily move the will (29-32). It is memory's task to present such images that the understanding and the will may be rectified. Donne's effort then, as preacher, is to create a store of images in an effort to evoke the human memory (32-33). A varied audience calls for images drawn from all fields of human life, which practice in turn is based on biblical precedent (33-34).

Webber, however, goes on to contradict herself when explicitly identifying vivid imagery as the hallmark of Donne's Augustinian appeal to the memory for she contrasts Donne's reliance on the concrete and the visible with Augustine's ability to vigorously discuss the abstract and the invisible without a need for images.<sup>72</sup>

Within the "Introduction" to her critical anthology of Donne's Prebend sermons, Janel M. Mueller dedicates a brief section, entitled "The Appeal to the Soul," to a discussion of Donne's Augustinian-derived Trinitarian psychology. While identifying Augustine's *De Trinitate* as the ultimate source of Donne's Trinitarian psychology, Webber mistakenly attributes the alignment of the understanding with the father, the will with the Son and the memory with the Holy Spirit to St. Augustine (31). Donne himself explicitly attributes the alignment to St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Her identification of St. Bernard's *Tractatus de gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* and the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* attributed to St. Bonaventure (1217/18-1274) as possible media for Augustine's Trinitarian psychology is helpful, however. Interestingly, Mueller also lights upon Donne's appeal, in some sermons, to "the more objective Thomistic account of human psychology given in questions 75 to 83 of the first part of the *Summa Theologica*" (32). After this brief recognition of Donne's indebtedness to St. Thomas' essential anthropological optimism, Mueller argues that Augustine's pessimism was most decisive in Donne's understanding of human nature. Rejecting appeals to reason, "Donne . . . followed the Platonizing lead of St. Augustine in investing the memory with the additional power of reflecting upon the acquired and innate knowledge of the mind" (34). Following a brief case study of two sermons treating memory by Lancelot Andrewes, Mueller asserts Donne's uniqueness in attributing such importance and broad powers to the faculty of memory (33-34).

John S. Chamberlin's monograph, like the work of Webber before him, features a number of scattered references to Donne's Augustinian appeal to memory. In his discussion, Chamberlin establishes and repeatedly reinforces the potent link between memory and language, pointing out that "Language cannot teach without involving

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. "Augustine's mind is much more freely intellectual, abstract, and mystical; he did not need, as Donne did, to cling to the concrete, and he uses relatively little imagery in his writing" (Webber 135).

recollection of past experience; [for] how would it be possible to know what is meant by the word *tree* if we had never come upon one before?” (17) and later that the memory, for Augustine, has a special role in teaching, “since it is only because of this faculty that anything can be discovered by discoursing. Words can either recall in us our experience of past encounters with things corporeal and incorporeal or urge us to listen to the Inward Teacher” (18). Words of Scripture will recall, in the auditory, memories of past personal experience. Chamberlin conceives of Donne’s sermons primarily as meditative exercises, in which the preacher leads the congregation in meditation until enough personal meaning and memories have been attached to every word of the verse. Chamberlin recognizes that Donne “endeavors to teach the understanding, [and] to move the will” but argues that his aim is, “above all, to plant the words of the text in the memory where their meaning can be present, branch out, and remain alive” (121), in other words, where they can transcend time.

Achsah Guibbory, editor of the recent *Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, offers a sensitive, exclusively Augustinian reading of Donne’s appeal to memory. Guibbory begins by noting that within the triune structure of the soul, which by Donne’s time was well known through the work of Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure, Donne “gives and unusual weight to memory, for rather than seeing the three faculties of the soul as equal, he finds memory most reliable for leading man to God” (261). Guibbory, too, locates the ultimate source of Donne’s triune vision of the human soul in *De Trinitate*, but is the first scholar to remark and briefly explore the possibility that Donne’s predilection for memory may actually be influenced by Book Ten of Augustine’s *Confessions* (263-64). She quotes a handful of Donne’s architectural metaphors for memory, but attributes them to St. Augustine (265-66) instead of identifying them with the rhetorical tradition to which they clearly belong. Guibbory’s central argument seems to be that, for Donne, “memory’s supreme value lies in its ability to reestablish the link between man and God” (269). Memory is right for this task both because it transcends time and because God has chosen the memory as his dwelling place (270). The study closes with a unique consideration of the role of memory in Donne’s meditative poems, in his *Holy Sonnets* and the two *Anniversaries* written to

commemorate the death of Elizabeth Drury (270-73), and with a provocative reflection on memory as “re-collection” or a “bringing together of things which were previously united but since have become separated” (273). This is the sense in which God will remember or re-collect man at the general resurrection.

It is at this stage that Terry Sherwood and Noralyn Masselink enter the discussion to challenge what they feel is a distorted view of Donne’s psychology. In a 1972 study, which forms the basis for the discussion of Donne’s epistemology in his 1984 monograph, Sherwood opines that because of “Bredvold’s still influential assertions that Donne’s Thomistic confidence in reason waned as his [skeptical and fideistic] Augustinianism grew” (353),<sup>73</sup> critics following Bredvold have failed to recognize Donne’s “rational impulse” which is “the essential sinew in a reasoned belief” (Ibid.). Citing amply from the sermons, Sherwood shows that while Donne did consider faith to be of a higher order than reason, he was also deeply convinced that “[r]ational knowledge of principles structuring the natural world is a necessary precursor to faith” (354-55) and that Donne’s desire to understand was fundamental to his religious experience (356). Multiple instances of Donne’s use of the language of formal logic throughout the sermons, even in those most meditative, strengthen Sherwood’s argument for the perpetual presence of reason and reasoning, and build up his central statement that “[s]ome Donne sermons may appeal primarily to the memory, just as others appeal primarily to the reason or will; but any approach to the sermons should alert us to the continuity of reasoning which constantly interacts with materials gathered from the memory, and which is basic to exhortation” (364). Sherwood’s aim, therefore, is both to encourage awareness of Donne’s reasoned faith and to lay the groundwork for a more balanced understanding of his appeal to the soul’s three faculties.

In her 1989 study, Noralyn Masselink contrasts her position with that of earlier critics and of the reasonable Sherwood by suggesting that “Donne appeals to memory neither *instead of* nor *in addition to* reason, but rather because memory is a *necessary condition* for the function of reason. . . . Donne’s purpose is . . . to remind *in order to*

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<sup>73</sup> For further discussion of Bredvold’s argument, see section II.2.1. below.

teach” (“Donne Epistemology” 57).<sup>74</sup> After providing a brief overview of Augustinian and Thomistic epistemologies (“Donne’s Epistemology” 58-61) Masselink lights upon the fundamental difference between the two systems: the reliance on imagery. Augustine believes that God can be known directly without the mediation of the senses, while Aquinas insists that “God who is *not* a particular sense object is known by his works which are” (“Donne’s Epistemology” 60). The remainder of the article is devoted to a careful reconstruction of Donne’s sense-based epistemology (“Donne’s Epistemology” 61-75) and to an exploration of Thomistic trends in his appeal to memory (“Donne’s Epistemology” 75-83). Masselink, in her 1998 article on Donne’s pious appropriation of the architectural mnemonic, is the only scholar to make the link between theory and practice, between Donne’s strong appeal to memory and his open use of *ars memoriae*. Interestingly, she argues that Donne makes use of the architectural mnemonic not because of his trust in human memory but rather to counteract its weakness. Neither does she go beyond a discussion of Donne’s *loci* to explore the imagery with which he populates the mental spaces he has created.

### **1.7. My Own Niche**

My own paper takes as its focus the faculty of memory as presented and awakened in the sermons of John Donne. At the heart of Donne’s theology is the Holy Trinity, pulsating with life and love. Man is created in the image of God, who is Three Persons in One. Man therefore bears upon himself the image of Trinity. His soul contains triads of faculties, the highest of which is memory, understanding and the will. Donne discusses this triad explicitly in a number of sermons including one on Psalm 38:3 simply labeled *Preached at Lincolns Inne* and dated 1618. After carefully weighing the three faculties, Donne concludes that memory is the least fallen and therefore the surest path to salvation. While Donne’s commitment to the faculty of memory is clear, I believe it would be incorrect to claim that Donne reminds instead of teaching or appealing to the will, as critics from Hickey to Guibbory would suggest. Instead, as

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<sup>74</sup> Masselink is in effect continuing a very early argument promulgated by Mary Payton Ramsay (cf. section II.2.1.) that Donne was a Thomist, especially in his epistemology.

Masselink has convincingly argued, memory enjoys logical rather than ontological priority in Donne's psychology. In other words, memory is the storehouse of sense-based images from which understanding can be crafted, and it is correct understanding that moves the will in the appropriate direction, namely, towards salvation.

My focus being memory, I do not offer to trace the entire memory-understanding-will trajectory to its endpoint, which, as the title of my work suggests, is salvation. Instead, I propose a thorough treatment of the first step in the salvific process, which is the appeal to and the furnishing of a rich and retentive memory. In chapter II, I explore in depth the three traditions of memory to which Donne had access. Within the Augustinian branch, I will treat not only *De Trinitate*, which is the ultimate source of Donne's Trinitarian conception of the human soul, but also the *Confessions*, Donne's most quoted non-biblical source. Book Ten of the *Confessions* is virtually a hymn to memory, yet criticism of Donne's sermons, except for Guibbory's brief treatment, has remained innocent of this vital influence. Webber's self-contradiction in tracing Donne's vivid imagery to a purely Augustinian appeal to memory while noting that Augustine believed in direct divine illumination independent of images, and Masselink's strong argument for Donne's sense-based, Thomistic epistemology have inspired me to explore St. Thomas Aquinas' theology of memory as thematized in various portions of the *Summa Theologiae* and in his commentary on Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscetia*. This reconstruction of Thomistic memory is a much needed contribution to criticism of the sermons and, as far as I am able to tell, a unique, if modest, addition to the formidable tradition of Aquinas scholarship. Masselink's lone treatment of Donne's unique appropriation of *ars memoriae* has prompted me to approach three Antique sources, the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* in an effort to understand the tradition of architectural mnemonic, which is a strong structural undercurrent in the entire sermonic oeuvre. In chapter III, I reconstruct Donne's own theology of memory as a synthesis of Augustinian and Thomistic elements with the help of six entire sermons in which this faculty is treated at length, and a generous selection of other, shorter thematizations of memory scattered throughout the 160 sermons. I also reflect on the link between

memory and repentance, thereby identifying an entirely novel topic in discussions of Donne's theology of memory. In chapter IV, I describe Donne's appropriation of the *ars memoriae* technique by mapping out his *loci* (i.e., mental spaces) and *imagines agentes* (i.e., vivid imagery). In my exploration of Donne's mental spaces, I address not only architectural *loci*, but the full spectrum of spatial metaphors he uses to divide and structure his sermons. My survey of his *imagines*, arranged along the Great Chain of Being, showcases the variety of Donne's imagery and his predilection for metaphors drawn from the urban, intellectual subculture of which he formed part. The wealth of Donne's imagery underlines his commitment to memory and to a sense-based epistemology according to which invisible and intangible realities may be understood through the visible and tangible world we inhabit. Donne's variety of imagery ensured that after leaving behind the cool walls and hard pews of the church, members of his auditory would remember to seek God everywhere they turned. The chapter ends with a reflection on Donne's sermons as psychosomatic journeys towards God. Finally, in chapter V, I propose the art of memory as a unique way of reading Donne's meditative sonnet sequence, *La Corona*.

In sum, I am suggesting memory as a fundamental principle potent enough to bind together the theological and the literary branches of scholarship on Donne's sermons. Donne's Augustinian and Thomistic conception of memory, lodged within the philosophical/theological approach, relates to his mnemotechnical methodology, located in the literary approach, as theory does to practice. And it is here that this particular theory and related practice are treated side by side for the first time.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> As a student of literature, I am more qualified to evaluate Donne's imagery and creative use of *ars memoriae*, but I cannot ignore the theological and psychological commitments underlying his appropriation of this originally secular, rhetorical technique. In exploring the memorial aspect of Donne's imagery, I wish neither to diminish other dimensions of his imagery nor to exclude alternate and equally valid philosophical explanations for its exuberance. My aim is rather to survey Donne's imagery from a new standpoint and to map out certain theoretical underpinnings that have heretofore received sporadic and one-sided treatment. In the spirit of Donne, I choose a metaphor. When I see an iceberg in the water, I know there is more and purer ice below. Not contented to bump my small boat against the tips of icebergs, I wished to touch their immense, hidden foundations.



## II. Three Theories of Memory

### II.1. St. Augustine and Memory<sup>76</sup>

#### II.1.1. Parallel Lives

Aurelius Augustinus was born in AD 354 in a north African province called Numidia Proconsularis, and was raised by a fervent Christian mother and a mostly non-believing father. Young Augustine received an excellent education centering on rhetoric, and in his youth took a concubine who bore him his son, Adeodatus, a bright and beloved child who died in his teenage years. Some time after a conversion to a lifestyle of philosophy precipitated by Cicero's *Hortensius*, Augustine joined the Manichaeans, and in AD 383 traveled to Italy. After four years of intense intellectual and spiritual introspection deeply influenced by the eminent figure of St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, Augustine was baptized in AD 387.<sup>77</sup> In AD 391, Augustine was ordained a priest and just a few years later, he became the bishop of Hippo, an office he retained until his death in AD 430. Augustine's influence on Western theology and philosophy from the Patristic Age into the twenty-first century can hardly be overestimated. Eleanor Stump identifies St. Thomas Aquinas as his first serious 'competitor' in the thirteenth century (Stump 1-7).

Augustine's "surviving works include roughly two hundred letters, five hundred sermons, and a hundred philosophical and religious works" (Stump 2). For modern readers, the most popular titles have been the *Confessions*, *De Civitate Dei*, *De Trinitate*, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, and a cluster of early works following Augustine's conversion: *De Academicis*, *De ordine*, *De beata vita*, *Soliloquia*, and *De libero arbitrio voluntatis*. Augustine's difficult anti-Pelagian works are approached somewhat reluctantly and generally read as a source of his views on free will and predestination, while the large body of letters and sermons is visibly underrepresented in Augustine scholarship (O'Donnell 11).

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<sup>76</sup> Please note: Latin language quotations from the *Confessions* are from the edition available on the Documenta Catholica Omnia website.

<sup>77</sup> Augustine's conversion to Christianity was the third in his line of conversions. "Inasmuch as conversion describes a radical change in one's beliefs, then one would have to concede that this also applies, in some sense, to Augustine's earlier adoption of the religion of the Manichees [... and] the memorable Hortensius episode of the third book which resulted in Augustine's conversion to the pursuit of wisdom, or *philosophia*" (Ferrari x).

Saint Augustine and John Donne are profoundly connected in the realm of the intellect and the spirit. Sir Izaak Walton, John Donne's hagiographically inclined first biographer, writes the following in the Donne chapter of his *Lives*:

This is a relation that will beget some wonder; and it well may, for most of our world are at present possessed with an opinion that visions and miracles are ceased. And though it is most certain, that two lutes being both strung and tuned to an equal pitch, and then one played upon, the other, that which is not touched, being laid upon a table at a fit distance, will (like an echo to a trumpet) warble a faint audible harmony, in answer to the same tune, yet many will not believe there is any such thing as a sympathy of souls. (17)

Now the English Church had gained a *second St. Austin*, for I think none was so like him before his conversion; none so like St. Ambrose after it: And if his youth had the infirmities of the one, his age had the excellencies of the other; the learning and holiness of both. (23)

The first passage was written in conjunction with a vision Donne had one evening while on a diplomatic mission to the Continent, of his wife walking past his chamber, holding a dead child. Days later, the worried husband received the news that she had delivered a stillborn baby and was perilously close to death herself. Walton sees the souls of John and Ann Donne as two lutes, sharing secret resonances. In the second quotation, he notes that there is such a parallel between Augustine and Donne, the Augustine of the English church. I am indebted to Walton both for the parallel between the two great churchmen and for the beautiful metaphor of the lutes resounding at some distance from one another to qualify this parallel. Though Augustine and Donne were so alike in temperament both before and after their conversion, "Donne does not call on Augustine's Confessions as an example of the conversion pattern of his life" (Papazian, "The Augustinian Donne" 79). Rather, he is indelibly influenced by Augustine's predestination theology. During the Augustinian revival of the early seventeenth century, Donne and his fellow Protestant divines relied on Augustine's later works for their predestination theology and understanding of sin, grace and redemption, while their Roman Catholic counterparts turned to Augustine's early works for his concept of

the church. Donne, argues Papazian, is a second Saint Augustine because he “put into powerful poetry Augustine’s predestination theology” (Papazian, “The Augustinian Donne” 83-84).

Donne, whose life pattern was indeed hauntingly similar to that of Augustine<sup>78</sup> and who created a powerful poetic response to Augustine’s theology of predestination, also relied on the greatest of the Latin Fathers for his ontology: both of memory (in determining the structural levels of this spiritual faculty) and of the soul (out of whose three faculties—memory, will, and understanding—he highlighted memory as pre-eminent).

Beside the Scriptures, “the vast works of Augustine” are Donne’s primary source of inspiration, producing “about 700 allusions or quotations in the sermons” (Stanwood 153) and the *Confessions* is for Donne “the most frequently quoted work from his most frequently quoted [non-Biblical] source” (Papazian, “The Augustinian Donne” 76).<sup>79</sup> In the Index of Book X of the Simpson-Potter critical edition of the sermons, the editors recognize Donne’s deep indebtedness to St. Augustine. They remark that “Donne’s quotations cover almost the whole field of Augustine’s thought” and list the most often quoted works, which are “*Confessions*, *De Civitate Dei*, the *Sermons*, *Enarrationes* on the Psalms, *De Doctrina Christiana*, and the *Epistles*, with occasional references to *De Gen. con. Man.* [i.e., *De Genesis contra Manichaeos*], *De Moribus Ecclesiae*, *De Trinitate*, *De Vera Religione*, *Enchiridion*, *Quaest. in Heptateuchum* [i.e., *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*], *Retractationes*, etc” (X, 354).<sup>80</sup> It follows from the above discussions and Simpson and Potter’s weighted enumeration that Augustine’s *Confessions* served as Donne’s single most important non-Scriptural source.

As Augustine scholar John A. Mourant points out, the key to the unity of the *Confessions* is memory. While it is primarily Book X, and within it chapters 8-38, that treats memory explicitly, Mourant insists that the first eleven books are an act of

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<sup>78</sup> Donne’s conversion process, too, began in his youth and stretched over a number of years, but did not culminate in any scene as dramatic Augustine’s “‘tolle lege’ episode [which] is the grand climax of the entire autobiography” (Ferrari 56).

<sup>79</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Donne’s sources, please see section II.2.1. below.

<sup>80</sup> For a complete list of identified passages quoted from Augustine in the sermons of John Donne, please see Appendix A in X, 376-86. For a list of all references to the works of Augustine, please consult the General Index in X, 450-51.

Augustinian remembrance, and points to Augustine's ongoing fascination with the memory, notably in Books X-XV of *De Trinitate*, especially X.4., XI.3.4., XII.4., XIV.3-5., XV.1, 2,4-6, and in references scattered throughout *De Musica*, *Soliloquia*, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, *De Ordine*, *Epistola 7*, and *Retractationes* (66).

I will base my discussion of memory primarily on relevant passages from the two most important sources for Augustinian memory theory, the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*. As Augustine does not treat the processes of storage and recall separately, neither will I. Perhaps the word 'capacity,' in its wide range of meanings from 'ability' to 'space,' best reflects Augustine's understanding of memory. A brief juxtaposition of Augustinian memory with common conceptions, an exploration of the various levels of memory detailed in the *Confessions*, and an examination of the relationship among memory, understanding, and will in the human soul as presented in *De Trinitate* will provide part of the framework necessary for appreciating Donne's appeal to the memory throughout the sermons.

### II.1.2. Augustine's *Memoria* vs. Common Conceptions of Memory

Augustine's conception of *memoria* differs markedly from contemporary accounts of the nature and function of memory. For Augustine, *memoria* does not only involve a certain awareness of the past but also includes the present and the future. "[I]t is a recognition that something is present to the mind" and, therefore, the source of all knowledge, including the highest knowledge of God Himself (Yuen 10).<sup>81</sup> Secondly, memory for Augustine is not a part or faculty of the mind, but rather, the mind as it presents to itself its contents, itself, and God.<sup>82</sup> "We call memory itself the mind" (*Confessions* X.21.).<sup>83</sup> The word 'present', which has a temporal dimension when it

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<sup>81</sup> See also Bubacz 82.

<sup>82</sup> For this reason, at least in the *Confessions*, Augustine's philosophy of memory may be equated with his philosophy of mind.

<sup>83</sup> Ronald Teske arrives at the same conclusion concerning Augustine's counterintuitive notion of memory, and further positions the Augustinian concept of memory within the Church Father's philosophy of mind. "The topic of memory in Augustine's thought includes much of his philosophy of mind, for memory is not a distinct power or faculty of the soul, but the mind itself, from which memory, understanding, or will are distinguished only in terms of activities. Memory for Augustine has not merely the rather straightforward role of retaining recollections of past experiences, but also the

signifies a tense, and a spatial position when used as the opposite of distant or absent, is the link between semantic *momenta* of Augustine's conception of memory. Presence, then, lies at the heart of Augustine's theology of memory.

Augustine insists that memory is concerned not only with the past, but with the present and future as well: "Perhaps it would be exact to say: there are three times, a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come. In the soul there are these three aspects of time, and I do not see them anywhere else" (*Confessions* XI.26.). Through memory, all three planes of time cohere in a single, endless present: "I combine with past events images of various things, whether experienced directly or believed on the basis of what I have experienced; and on this basis I reason about future actions and events and hopes, and again think of all these things in the present" (*Confessions* X. 14.).<sup>84</sup> As the eminent Augustine critic Etienne Gilson writes, "Just as the eye brings together into one field of vision a whole host of objects and points scattered in space, so memory, that 'light of the intervals of time' makes a succession of instants, which would disintegrate without it, co-exist in the sight of consciousness" (Gilson 64). Memory, then, enables man to construct a present, which would otherwise be a fleeting moment forever falling into the past. To help his readers understand how memory joins together the three planes of time, Augustine brings a practical example from habit memory.<sup>85</sup> He points out that while reciting a psalm, we hold the entire psalm in our memory even as what we are about to recite becomes what we are reciting becomes what we have recited (*Confessions* XI.38.).<sup>86</sup>

Memory creates a continuity and measures time by the *attentio* of the soul. Our very sense of self and of its continuity in time resides in memory, for memory is "the focal point of any sense of continuity experienced," and memory's ability to create and sustain continuity unites man with God, the ultimate goal of man's epistemic yearnings

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much more problematic tasks of holding in mind present realities and even of anticipating the future" (Teske 148).

<sup>84</sup> According to Augustine, "we deal with the future by drawing inductions [in the present] from past experience" (Bubacz 81).

<sup>85</sup> The philosopher Mary Warnock juxtaposes habit memory, the ability to recall skills, or behavioral responses, with conscious memory, the capacity to recall past experiences (Warnock 9).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Cicero's insight that "only people with a powerful memory know what they are going to say and for how long they are going to speak and in what style, what points they have already answered and what still remains..." (*De oratore* III.lxxxvii.355.).

(Yuen 34-35). God lives in an eternal present; he always *is*. With the help of our memory, we cultivate an awareness of his eternal present and presence and through the agency of the will, seek him out.<sup>87</sup>

Just as the soul, for Augustine, is ontologically one, memory—equated by Augustine with the soul<sup>88</sup>—is also one, yet it can be understood as multilayered. Its layers draw us from the external world to the internal in the following steps: The soul as conscious of its contents has sensible and intellectual memory. The soul, as conscious of itself, has/is *memoria sui*, memory of the self. And the soul as conscious of God has/is *memoria Dei*.

### II.1.3. The Sensible Memory and Augustine’s Theory of Perception

First, let us treat sensible memory. This is the form of memory required for all sense perception, because sensory experiences are so ephemeral that only the memory helps stay them so that they may be known. Images of objects, not the objects themselves, enter the memory through the five senses. “Thus light and all colours and bodily shapes enter by the eyes; by the ears all kinds of sounds; all odours by the entrance of the nostrils; all tastes by the door of the mouth” (*Confessions* X.13.).

The outside world enters the memory through a continuous formation of images. Augustine differentiates among four forms of images, each deriving from the one before it and moving ever inward: “the form of the perceived object, the form induced in the sense, a third produced in the memory, and a fourth in the intellect” (Yuen 12).<sup>89</sup> In the memory, images are stored as in a *thesaurus*, or treasure house, from the Greek *θεσαυρίζω*, ‘to gather treasure.’ It is from this treasure house that memories can be summoned for contemplation in a process of recollection that mirrors the process of storage. For this reason, and because of his holistic vision of the memory, Augustine does not treat the two processes in a rigorously separate manner:

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<sup>87</sup> For a brief discussion on the relationship between memory and time, please see section II.1.6.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. “Great is the power of memory . . . And this is mind, this is myself” (*Confessions* X.26.).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *De Trinitate* XI.16.

Memory's huge cavern, with its mysterious, secret, and indescribable nooks and crannies, receives all these perceptions, to be recalled when needed and reconsidered . . . On demand, when I wish, they can be immediately present. With my tongue silent and my throat making no sound, I can sing what I wish. The images of colours, which are no less present, do not intrude themselves or interrupt, when I draw upon another treasury, containing sounds which flowed in through the ears . . . I distinguish the odour of lilies from violets without smelling anything at all. I prefer honey to a sweet wine, a smooth taste to a rough one, not actually tasting or touching at the moment, but by recollection. (*Confessions* X.13.)

There is a crystalline order in Augustine's memory, in which memories are kept in separate receptacles according to the sense-gate through which they entered. His later synesthetic appeal to God as "sweet light" will be an indication that God transcends the categories of the human memory. Augustine's delight in this treasure trove of the memory is palpable; he frolics among its many beauties, which are distinguished by the sense-door through which they entered.

Recall, recognition and imagination are all 'functions' of memory. The beautiful images in the memory feed the imagination, which Augustine relates to the sensible memory and defines as an ability of the mind to construct that which it has not yet sensed on the basis of that which it has.<sup>90</sup>

#### **II.1.4. Intellective Memory**

For Augustine, the dependence on images ceases beyond the level of sensible memory.<sup>91</sup> The deeper forms of memory operate without images.<sup>92</sup> Augustine attempts to define what is stored in the intellective memory as not images but the concepts themselves; thus he upholds the possibility of imageless thought (Mourant 17).

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<sup>90</sup> For this reason, the later, Romantic belief in the primacy of imagination as the wellspring of art could potentially be harmonized with Antique, Medieval and Renaissance man's fascination with the powers of memory.

<sup>91</sup> Aquinas, who makes an Aristotelian appeal to memory and insists on the 'embodiment' of all knowledge, will differ markedly in this respect! Cf. section II.2.3. below.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. "[There are] notions where we do not draw images through our senses, but discern them inwardly not through images but as they really are and through the concepts themselves" (*Confessions* X.18.).

At a level deeper than sensible memory, we find memory of entities which did not enter through the five senses but are, nevertheless, present to the memory. Intellective memory is concerned with the remembrance of the incorporeal and intangible: numbers and dimensions, skills, emotions, and abstract concepts including that of memory and forgetfulness itself:

None of them [i.e., numbers and dimensions] has been impressed upon memory through any bodily sense-perception. They are not coloured. They give out no sound or odour. They cannot be tasted or touched. . . I have seen the lines drawn by architects. They are extremely thin, like a spider's web. But in pure mathematics, lines are quite different. They are not images of the lines about which my bodily eye informs me. A person knows them without any thought of a physical line of some kind; he knows them within himself. (*Confessions* X. 19.)

Knowledge of "numbers and dimensions" would therefore seem innate. Early in his education, Augustine accepted the Platonic concept of *anamnesis*, or learning as equivalent to a recognition of truths already imprinted in the soul before birth.<sup>93</sup> He later rejected the concept of *anamnesis* in his mature work, the *Retractations*.<sup>94</sup> In the *Confessions*, Augustine arrives at a halfway solution by stating that abstract concepts like dimensions and numbers are acquired through recognition of knowledge innate to the soul but that these truths "[have] had no previous existence outside the mind" (Mourant 27).

The skills one gathers throughout one's life also reside within the memory. Surely we acquire skills by using our senses to engage with the world our skills will shape, but these skills are stored in the intellective memory in such a way that "[we] carry not the images but the very skills themselves. For what literature is, what the art

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Roland Teske helpfully provides the following examples: *Soliloquia* 2.20.25., *De quantitate animae* 20.34., *De libero arbitrio* 1.12.24. (148-49).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. "For if even untrained persons give true replies concerning certain disciplines when they are properly questioned, it is more credible that there is present in them, to the extent that they can receive it, the light of eternal reason where they see immutable truths, and not that they know them once and have forgotten them, as Plato and people like him thought" (*Retractations* I.iv.4.).



of dialectical debate is, how many kinds of question there are—all that [we] know about these matters lies in [our] memory in this distinctive way” (*Confessions* X. 16.).

Emotions, too, are remembered without images. “[W]e do not receive [emotions] through any bodily entrance. The mind itself perceives them through the experience of its passions and entrusts them to the memory; or the memory itself retains them without any conscious act of commitment” (*Confessions* X. 22.). Emotions, then, are purely internal events, memories of which are stored entirely without images. Augustine further notes with fascination that when emotive memories are recollected, recollection does not necessarily conjure up the same emotions. “I can be far from glad in remembering myself to have been glad, and far from sad when I recall my past sadness. . . . Sometimes also, on the contrary, I remember with joy a sadness that has passed and with sadness a lost joy” (*Confessions* X. 21.). There is therefore a kind of distance between emotions and our memories of them. This is because a memory of an experience is not the equivalent of the experience. It is not surprising that this happens when we remember physical pain or pleasure formerly experienced at the level of the body. Concerning the memory of emotions that were already at the level of the mind, Augustine wonders: “what is going on when, in gladly remembering past sadness, my mind is glad and my memory is sad?” (*Ibid.*) In one of his most often quoted passages, Augustine concludes that emotions once experienced within the mind are somehow sealed off, so that remembering them does not necessarily cause us to relive the same emotions: “Memory is, as it were, the stomach of the mind, whereas gladness and sadness are like sweet and bitter food. When they are entrusted to the memory, they are as if transferred to the stomach and can there be stored; but they cannot be tasted” (*Confessions* X. 21.). This ability of memory enables man in turn to speak dispassionately, even rationally, of passion.

The concepts of memory and forgetfulness are also stored in intellectual memory, and Augustine is most intrigued by this self-reflexive act of the faculty of memory. “Surely memory is present to itself through itself, and not through its own image” (*Confessions* X.23.). When reflecting on forgetfulness, Augustine makes a distinction between total oblivion (when we forget even that we have forgotten) and a

more hopeful kind of forgetting, in which we still remember that we have forgotten and therefore have access, albeit limited, to that which we have forgotten. He marvels especially at the paradox of *memoria*'s ability to remember the concept of forgetfulness, because as soon as it conjures up forgetfulness and forgetfulness is present, all memory should disappear, yet it does not:

But when I remember forgetfulness, both memory and forgetfulness are present . . . What we remember, we retain by memory. But unless we could recall forgetfulness, we could never hear the word and recognize the thing which the word signifies. Therefore memory retains forgetfulness . . . Should the deduction from this be that, when we are remembering forgetfulness, it is not through its actual presence in the memory but through its image? If forgetfulness were present through itself, it would cause us not to remember but to forget. Who can find a solution to this problem? Who can grasp what is going on? (*Confessions* X. 24.)

Augustine is unable to solve this paradox, yet records it for posterity: "I am certain that I remember forgetfulness itself, and yet forgetfulness destroys what we remember" (*Confessions* X. 25). John Mourant suggests that the paradox stems from Augustine's inability "to distinguish between forgetfulness and the things that are forgotten" (19) and from his failure to differentiate between forgetting something but still being aware that we have forgotten, and the concept of total oblivion, a state in which the mind no longer retains awareness of having forgotten. The mind can remember the act of forgetting or even the particular piece of knowledge it has forgotten but it cannot call up the concept of oblivion.

Self-reflexive acts, like remembering that I remember, knowing that I know, willing that I will, connect memory as a consciousness of its contents to the idea of memory as a consciousness of the self, the third layer, namely *memoria sui*.

### II.1.5. *Memoria Sui* and the Mind as Memory

Augustine finds it marvelous to behold the contents of memory, for they are varied and potentially endless. “I run through all these things, I fly here and there, and penetrate their working as far as I can. But I never reach the end” (*Confessions* X. 26.).

Augustine defines learning in the following manner: “[B]y thinking we, as it were, gather together ideas which the memory contains in a dispersed and disordered way and by concentrating our attention we arrange them in order as if ready to hand, stored in the very memory where previously they lay hidden, scattered, and neglected” (*Confessions* X.18.). It is evident, therefore, that memory is fundamental to understanding. There can be no understanding, no construction of knowledge, without the prior presence of its raw materials in the memory (Pelikan 20).

The link between sensible and intellectual memory and *memoria sui*, or memory of the self, is in the act of thinking, cogitation, which is the supreme function of the mind that trumps imagination, recall and recognition. When I cogitate, I collect materials as *related to myself*. “In the vast hall of my memory . . . I meet myself and recall what I am, what I have done, and when and where and how I was affected when I did it.” During cogitation, personality is forged, for “Out of the same abundance in store, I combine with past events images of various things . . . and on this basis I reason about future actions and events and hopes, and again think of all these things in the present” (*Confessions* X. 14.). Augustine’s most eloquent and dignified assertion essentially equates the memory with the sense of self. “Great is the power of memory, and awe-inspiring mystery, my God . . . And this is mind, this is myself” (*Confessions* X. 26.).

Gilson sums up what we have discussed and links it to the final layer of memory when he remarks that “in St. Augustine, the word memory is applied to everything which is present to the soul including what we today would call the unconscious or the subconscious, and the metaphysical presence within the soul of a reality distinct from it and transcendent, as God” (Gilson 299).

### II.1.6. *Memoria Dei* and Divine Illumination

The final step in the development of the concept of memory is the discovery of God with the help of our memory. Memory is well suited to aid the search for God because it is the most godlike of our faculties.<sup>95</sup> God transcends time as the Creator transcends the created. He is beyond time, because “God created the world not *in* time but *with* time. Time is God’s creation” (Ittzés 15-16). Thus there was no time ‘before’ creation, in fact, there is no ‘before’ creation.<sup>96</sup>

Memory is like God because it transcends time. Memory “exists in an eternity of past, present, and future.” Augustine even defines time, albeit tentatively, as a *distensio animi*, a stretching out of the mind.<sup>97</sup> Memory, equated as we have seen with soul, is needed to measure time, for “[t]o measure time is to measure temporal extensions between impressions which passing events have made upon the soul and which abide when they have gone” (Knuutila 112).<sup>98</sup> Without human memory, then, time would still exist, but the concepts of past, present, and future would not.

Discovering God with the help of the memory proves to be a twofold process, as God is both immanent and transcendent in relation to memory.<sup>99</sup> God’s immanence to memory is a mystery, for He cannot be contained by either sensible or intellectual memory or even the mind as memory, yet somehow He makes Himself present to the memory. This mystery is presented in a passage of bitter regret and burning love,

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. our earlier discussion in section II.1.2. above.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Confessions* XI.15. In an ontological, but not in a temporal sense, eternity ‘precedes’ creation (Ittzés 16).

<sup>97</sup> Cf. “It may happen that a short line, if pronounced slowly, takes longer to read aloud than a longer line taken faster . . . That is why I have come to think that time is simply a distension. But of what is it a distension? I do not know, but it would be surprising if it is not that of the mind itself” (*Confessions* XI.33.).

<sup>98</sup> Although Augustine owes much of his discussion of time to Aristotle, who contemplates the question in the closing chapters of Book 4 of his *Physics*, his project to describe the sense of time through the concepts of memory and foresight (Cf. *Confessions* XI.26 and XI.33.) is novel. Augustine’s terminology anticipates the vocabulary of Husserl’s phenomenological time. Husserl uses concepts such as primal impression, retention, and protention to describe the temporal determination of the present, the past and the future (Knuutila 113).

<sup>99</sup> The question of ‘where’ God is in relation to the soul is exceedingly complex. It seems there was a time Augustine’s soul did not ‘contain’ God, i.e., “You were not already in my memory before I learnt of you,” (*Confessions* X.37.) yet Augustine contradicts himself in the very next paragraph, “And see, you were within, *ecce intus eras*, and I was in the external world and sought you there” (*Confessions* X.38.). Even after God is found within, in His immanence, He must still be sought without, in His transcendence: “Here I am climbing up through my mind towards you who are constant above me” (*Confessions* X.26.).

beginning “*Sero te amavi*, Late have I loved you.” Augustine discovers that his contemplation of the beauties of Creation without distracted him from seeking the Creator within. It is not the created entities or even their beauty that is at fault, but rather, Augustine’s misuse of Creation and his inability to conceive of the created world as a stepping stone to God instead of an end in itself. He sought joy in the knowledge of Creation when in reality, the fullness of joy resides in the knowledge and possession of God:

Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within, and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours. (*Confessions* X. 38.)

This is an echo to the earlier passage quoted in the footnotes below concerning the senses of the soul. It is only the senses of my *inner* man that can perceive God. Outer senses can never access him. In fact, the two passages, both about finding and loving God, frame the section on memory in Book X.<sup>100</sup> God’s immanence—his presence in the mind of man—is emphasized in both cases, with the second quotation further emphasizing his timelessness. God is now in Augustine and Augustine in God.

According to Augustine’s theory of divine illumination, first introduced in the early dialogue *De magistro* only to reappear a number of times in the Augustinian

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. “But when I love you, what do I love? It is not physical beauty, nor temporal glory, nor the brightness of light dear to earthly eyes, nor the sweet melodies of all kinds of songs, nor the gentle odour of flowers and ointments and perfumes, nor manna or honey, nor limbs welcoming the embraces of the flesh; it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace when I love my God—a light, voice, odour, food, embrace of my inner man, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is sound that time cannot seize, where there is a perfume which no breeze disperses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part. That is what I love when I love my God” (*Confessions*, X. 8.).

corpus, the mind is only able to discern intelligible things with the help of the light of Christ, the Inner Teacher.<sup>101</sup> This is Augustine's way of "account[ing] for our access to realities that can in no way be directly sensed" (Matthews 180-81). The intelligible light which illumines the soul is of a higher order than sensible light, the light that is seen by the bodily eye. Just as man requires sensible light to see the sensible world and acquire knowledge about it, so he needs created intelligible light (*lumen creatum intelligibile*) to recognize and know the intelligible truths innate to the mind and to know himself. To gain the highest form of knowledge, knowledge of God himself, man needs the highest form of illumination, uncreated intelligible light (*lumen increatum intelligibile*) (Yuen 28-31). God Himself is this light which dwells in memory and reminds man constantly to turn to God.<sup>102</sup> He is the light by which we see light, a light which "enables us to bring other things into focus, [but] cannot be brought into focus itself" (Matthews 183).

God is not only immanent but also transcendent. He is present to the mind of man, but the mind of man does not hold him exclusively, so to more fully possess God, man must transcend his own memory:

Behold in the plains, and caves and hollows of my memory are innumerable kinds of things . . . My mind can glide freely from one to the other. I can delve deeply into them and there is no limit to them . . . I will pass beyond this power of mind, which is called memory, so that I can attain you, sweet light . . . I shall pass beyond memory too so that I may attain the God who has set me apart from the beasts and made me wiser than the fowls of the air. I must pass beyond memory also to find you, who are truly good and sweet. But where shall I find you? If I find you beyond memory, it means

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<sup>101</sup> Some have suggested that only *a priori* truths require divine illumination to be 'seen' by the intellect, but quoting *De magistro* 11.28, Matthews argues that "according to Augustine, all human understanding arises from this source [i.e., divine illumination]. The passage from *De magistro* reads: "Concerning everything we understand we consult, not the speaker who makes noise outside us, but the Truth that presides over the mind within" (Matthews 180).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. "But the light makes its way with such power that, if suddenly it is withdrawn, it is sought for with longing. And if it is long absent, that has a depressing effect on the mind . . . Light which Tobit saw . . . Light which Isaac saw . . . Light which Jacob saw, though because of his great age he had lost his eyesight! . . . This light itself is one, and all those are one who see it and love it." (*Confessions* X.51-52.)

that I am without remembrance of you. How, then, may I find you, if I am without memory of you? (*Confessions* X.26.)

Augustine comes up against the paradox of transcending memory: if I transcend memory to find God, I will be outside the confines of my own memory, and therefore be *without* (both spatially and figuratively) memory of him. This sounds very much like lifting oneself by one's own bootstraps. Augustine has an answer to this paradox: to forget oneself is the transcendence of memory by one's own memory (Coleman 107). By forgetting himself, man is able to go beyond himself to meet, understand and love God.

We have seen memory in the *Confessions* “[take] on very broad powers and [come to be] identified with the mind (*memoria sui*) and with God (*memoria Dei*)” (Mourant 20). Since the mind is one in Augustinian psychology, it becomes difficult to talk about the memory (equated with the mind) in relation to any other ‘faculties.’ Yet in the latter chapters (X-XV) of Augustine’s treatise *De Trinitate* whose period of composition (AD 400-416) overlapped with that of the *Confessions* (AD 396-401) Augustine makes a concerted effort towards situating memory in a Trinitarian understanding of the human soul.

### **II.1.7. Memory and the Trinity in Man**

According to a much beloved anecdote, one day the saintly Augustine was walking on the beach, contemplating the mystery of the Holy Trinity, when he met a young boy with a bucket. After watching the boy, whom he did not recognize as the Christ child, fill the bucket with seawater, carry it to a place further off and pour the water into the sand only to return for another bucketful, Augustine spoke to him, inquiring what he was doing. The boy replied that he was emptying the sea of its water. Augustine, laughing at the boy’s innocence, explained to him that the sea is vaster than he could conceive and that his attempts were futile. The perspicacious boy turned to the learned doctor and said, “If it is impossible to empty the sea of its water with a bucket, how much more impossible it is to comprehend the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, as you are trying to do.” Then, he disappeared, leaving the saint breathless with awe.

In writing *De Trinitate* Augustine undertook the seemingly impossible task of fathoming the Holy Trinity. His objectives were threefold. He hoped to show to critics of the Nicene Creed the scriptural basis of the divinity and equality of the three persons of the Trinity. He wished to demonstrate to pagan thinkers the need for faith in a Divine Redeemer so that redemption may take place. Finally, he aimed to convince his public that salvation and spiritual growth stem from taking seriously the concept of man's creation in the image of a Triune God (Clark 91). Edmund Hill, in the introduction to his English translation, provides an even more succinct summary. He sees *De Trinitate* as presenting "the quest for, or the exploration of, the mystery of the Trinity as a complete program for the Christian spiritual life, a program of conversion and renewal and discovery of self in God and God in self" (19).

The work, consisting of fifteen books, can be seen as a diptych hinging on Book VIII. Books I-VII explore the mystery of the Trinity<sup>103</sup> while Book VIII makes the ontological descent to man by proposing that if man is truly created in the image of God, who is Three in One, then the soul displays a Trinitarian structure and must in its functioning reflect the relations among the three persons of the Holy Trinity. What is more, by studying the triune structure of the mind, man embarks upon the unending spiritual exercise of comprehending the mystery of the Trinity. Books IX-XIV investigate the image of the Triune God in man, first by finding suitable language to talk about it,<sup>104</sup> then by exploring triune structures in man's faculties while moving inward and upward through the human psyche.<sup>105</sup> Book XV is an expression of wonder and doubt that even the highest trinity in man is fit to reflect the ineffable inner workings of the Holy Trinity (Hill 23-27).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Books I-IV trace the drama of its revelation in Scripture and Books V-VII argue from reason for this tenet of faith.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Books IX-XI.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Book XIV.

<sup>106</sup> Keeping in mind the aim of this dissertation, which is to describe and evaluate Donne's appeal to human memory in the sermons, we will lay aside most theoretical speculations concerning the triune nature of God, and of God's memory, understanding and will, and provide a primarily anthropological reading of Books IX-XV of *De Trinitate*. Our focus is on the three faculties contributing to the triune structure of the human soul and the relative position and role of memory within a triad that reflects but dimly the inner life of the Holy Trinity.



Let us take a closer look at some Trinitarian structures in man. In Book XI, Chapter 1, Augustine proposes a simple trinity of the outer man based on sight, “the most excellent of the body’s senses” (XI. Prologue). The look of the object observed, the form impressed by the sense of sight and the act of will that fixes sight upon the object form a trinity whose interactions in the human psyche mirror the life of the Trinity. In XI.2. we move inwards as the next triad proposed is the intention of the will, the attention of the mind and the image stored in memory. In this configuration, the attention of the mind is the equivalent of the sense of sight while the image stored in the memory corresponds to the sense object itself. In Book XIV Augustine finally identifies the highest trinity in man as *memoria*, *intelgentia* and *voluntas*: memory, understanding and will.<sup>107</sup> Soon *voluntas* and *amor* begin to be used interchangeably; the will is equated with love—after all, love is a will to possess—so the mind can be described as always “remembering itself, understanding itself, loving itself. If we see this we see a trinity, not yet God of course, but already the image of God” (*De Trinitate* XIV.3.11.). This trinity is nearer to God than the previous trinities because it is coeternal with the mind and did not come from the outside but always existed within.

The trinity of the human mind, to truly become Godlike, must reach beyond itself. It cannot be contented with remembering, knowing and loving itself but must redirect itself from itself to God. After all, the Holy Trinity remembers, understands and loves *God* and so must man:

This trinity of the mind, is not really the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made. And when it does this it becomes wise. If it does not do it, then even though it remembers and understands and loves itself, it becomes foolish. Let it then remember its God to whose image it was made, and understand and love

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<sup>107</sup> Augustine explicitly mentions what may be the rudiments of this triad in the *Confessions*: “Who can understand the omnipotent Trinity? . . . I wish that human disputants would reflect upon the triad within their own selves. These three aspects of the self are very different from the Trinity, but I make the observation that on this triad they could well exercise their minds . . . The three aspects I mean are being, knowing, willing. For I am and I know and I will. Knowing and willing I am. I know that I am and I will. I will to be and to know” (*Confessions* XIII.12.).

him. To put it in a word, let it worship the uncreated God. (*De Trinitate* XIV.4.15.)

As a result of the Fall, human memory, understanding and will are distorted and deficient. Augustine takes the words of the Apostle Paul, “We see now through a mirror in an enigma” to refer to man: “as far as I can see then, by the word ‘mirror’ he wanted us to understand an image, and by the word ‘enigma’ he was indicating that although it is a likeness, it is an obscure one and difficult to penetrate” (*De Trinitate* XV.3.15.). Restoring God’s tarnished triune image in man is a lifelong effort that extends beyond the grave to the Beatific Vision when man will see God face to face. Through the Trinitarian workings of the human soul, man receives a foretaste of the inner life of God. By studying the Holy Trinity, man learns about his triune self; while uncovering the trinities within, he grows in understanding and love of God. Until God’s image in man is perfected, man must constantly be reminded to turn from creation to the Creator so that all three faculties of the mind may be employed in approaching him:

The mind does however remember its God. He always is; it is not the case that he was and is not, or is and was not, but just as he never will not be, so he never was not. And he is all of him everywhere, and therefore the mind lives and moves and is in him, and for this reason is able to remember him. [Man no longer remembers God as he was in Paradise, for these things the soul has forgotten.] Yet it is reminded to turn to the Lord, as though to a light by which it went on being touched in some fashion even when it turned away from him. (*De Trinitate* XIV.4.21.)

Though memory, understanding and will are coeternal and therefore no one faculty has ontological priority over the others, it still would seem in passages like the one above that memory enjoys some kind of—at least logical—priority. For example, while memory, understanding and will seem to correspond neatly to the past, present and future, in XIV.3.14. Augustine explains that the domain of memory is not only the

past but the present as well and that memory is the ground for understanding and love.<sup>108</sup> In a later passage memory subsumes even the future.<sup>109</sup>

When speaking about remembering, knowing and loving those things that are not readily available to the mind's attention, Augustine points out that

in the recesses of the mind [in the *Confessions*, here he would have used the word 'memory'] are various awarenesses of various things, and that they come out somehow into the open and are set as it were more clearly in the mind's view when they are thought about . . . But if it is something that we have not thought about for a long time and are unable to think about unless we are reminded of it, then in heaven knows what curious way it is something, if you can say this, that we do not know we know.

(*De Trinitate* XIV.2.9.)

The entire contents of the mind together and every element in itself is simultaneously remembered, understood and loved by the mind, yet when things disappear out of the "mind's view" it is through an act of reminding that man becomes aware that he knows what he knows and loves what he loves.

It is not just in man's relation to himself but also in his approach to God that *memoria* takes logical priority, for man cannot understand or love God without first discovering the presence of God within himself. "In a word, God must first present Himself to us and He does this through His existence in our memory" (Mourant 50). Augustine designates the initial impetus to turn towards God as a 'reminder': "Those who do, on being reminded, turn to the Lord from the deformity which had conformed them by worldly lusts to this world are reformed by him . . . And thus the image begins to be reformed by him who formed it in the first place" (*De Trinitate* XIV.5.22.).

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<sup>108</sup> Cf. "As regards things past one means by memory that which makes it possible for [things] to be recalled and thought over again; so as regards something present, which is what the mind is to itself, one may talk without absurdity of memory as that by which the mind is available to itself, ready to be understood by its thought about itself, and for both to be conjoined by its love of itself" (*De Trinitate* XIV.3.11.).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. "There are some thoughts of ours which we can see as about to happen in the immediate future with considerable clarity and certainty; but we do this with the aid of memory when we are able to do it and as far as we are able . . . You can experience what I mean in speeches or songs which we render word for word by memory; clearly, unless we foresaw in thought what was to follow, we would not say it. And yet it is not foresight that instructs us how to foresee, but memory" (*De Trinitate* XV.2.13.).

Finally, memory, understanding and love, always rendered in this order, would seem to correspond neatly to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet all three persons of the Trinity have or are their own memory, understanding and love:

So here we are then with these three, that is memory, understanding, love or will in that supreme and unchangeable being which God is, and they are not the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit but the Father alone. And because the Son too is wisdom, begotten of wisdom, it means the father does not do his remembering for him or the Holy Spirit his loving any more than the Father or the Holy Spirit do his understanding, but he does it all for himself; he is his own memory, his own understanding, his own love, but his being all this comes to him from the Father of whom he is born. (*De Trinitate* XV.2.12.)

The passage goes on to extend this truth to the Holy Spirit. In the end, the simultaneous three-ness and oneness of memory, understanding and love transcend human understanding, which swings as would a pendulum between the concepts of three and one, unable to rest in both at the same time. An early passage in Book X is perhaps the closest Augustine comes to penetrating this conundrum:

These three then, memory, understanding, and will, are not three lives but one life, not three substances but one substance. When memory is called life, and mind, and substance, it is called so with reference to itself; but when it is called memory it is called so with reference to another. I can say the same about understanding and will; both understanding and will are so called with reference to another. But each of them is life and mind and being with reference to itself. (*De Trinitate* X.4.18.)

The last challenge that remains is bringing Augustine's all-consuming appeal to memory in Book X of the *Confessions* into some kind of dialogue with his carefully egalitarian treatment of the soul's three 'faculties' in *De Trinitate*, for the concept of memory in the *Confessions* is not interchangeable with the concept of memory in *De Trinitate*.

In the *Confessions*, memory is ‘capacity’ in the sense of ‘space’ rather than ‘ability.’ Memory is the soul as treasure house, holding all that ever was available to the soul at the levels of sensible and intellective memory, holding the soul itself (*memoria sui*) and, in an incomplete way, God (*memoria Dei*), who is both immanent and transcendent with regard to memory. Dependence on images ceases at the level of sensible memory. Not only does intellective memory operate without images, but Augustine suggests that it stores concepts themselves, not images of them, furthermore, that these concepts did not enter the memory through the gateways of the five senses but reside there from the beginning. Man seeks God with the help of his memory, but ultimately, he must go beyond memory of creatures to remember the Creator, and the memory itself to reach a transcendent God.

In *De Trinitate*, memory becomes ‘capacity’ in the sense of ‘ability’ or ‘faculty’ and is placed in a Trinitarian structure whose workings mirror, albeit dimly, the inner life of the Triune God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Augustine glosses over sensible memory,<sup>110</sup> and intellective memory,<sup>111</sup> to focus on *memoria sui* and *memoria Dei* as they relate to *intelligentia* and *voluntas* and *intelligentia* and *amor* respectively. Although the two sets of three faculties are coeternal with the mind,<sup>112</sup> and are one essence, yet memory seems to enjoy a kind of logical, if not ontological, priority. Memory is always enumerated first, as is the Father in any enumeration of the Divine Persons.<sup>113</sup> Memory subsumes past, present and future, even though they would correspond neatly to memory understanding and will. Furthermore, things held in the mind’s view are remembered, understood and willed simultaneously, but things which disappear are retrieved with the help of the memory. Finally, man must discover God in his memory before he can begin to understand or love him.

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<sup>110</sup> The products of sense perceptions are most definitely *not* coeternal with the mind.

<sup>111</sup> He treats memory of *sensibilia* and *intelligibilia* in the two lower trinities (look of the object observed, the form impressed by the sense of sight and the act of will that fixes sight upon the object; the intention of the will, the attention of the mind and the image stored in memory) discussed above.

<sup>112</sup> The term ‘coeval’ may be a more appropriate expression when describing something that had a beginning in time.

<sup>113</sup> Just as the Son is begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son, we may argue that memory ‘begets’ understanding and the will ‘proceeds’ from both memory and understanding.

In the end, the memory of the *Confessions* seems a broader category than the memory of *De Trinitate*. Memory as the soul in the *Confessions* stores all manifestations of all three faculties in *De Trinitate*, because in this life as man hurtles forward in time, present and future are swiftly becoming past and present, and all impulses of memory, understanding and love become memory.

## II.2. St. Thomas Aquinas and Memory<sup>114</sup>

### II.2.1. A Straight Path but Not Narrow

To understand Donne's epistemology in relation to memory—i.e., how memory contributes to gaining *episteme* 'knowledge'—we must appeal to St. Thomas Aquinas. It can be stated that Donne—unlike his great contemporary Lancelot Andrewes who was strictly Scriptural—openly drew exempla for teaching from a vast array of non-Scriptural sources including the Father of the Church, Medieval theologians Scholastic and otherwise, prominent Reformation and Counter-Reformation thinkers, Greek and Roman philosophers and King James I, to name just the most important sources. Within this syncretic body of wisdom, Simpson and Potter also note that “Donne's indebtedness to medieval writers and especially to Aquinas, Scotus, and other Schoolmen, is very considerable. To examine it fully would require a whole volume” (X, 364). This volume remains to be written, yet two early but important gestures set the scene. They are Mary Paton Ramsay's 1917 monograph *Les Doctrines Médiévales chez Donne, le Poète Métaphysicien de l'Angleterre*, and Louis I. Bredvold's 1925 study “The Religious Thought of Donne in Relation to Medieval and Later Traditions.”<sup>115</sup> While Ramsay is convinced that Donne was “un penseur profondément religieux en meme temps que fermement convaincu de la valeur de la raison humaine [...parce que] Dans les hautes régions de la spéculation métaphysique dont les docteurs du moyen âge lui montraient le chemin, il n'y avait pas de place pour les doutes”<sup>116</sup> (qtd. in Bredvold 196), Bredvold

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<sup>114</sup> Please note: Latin language quotations from the *Summa Theologiae* are from the edition available on the Documenta Catholica Omnia website.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. the Introduction above.

<sup>116</sup> Donne was a “deeply religious thinker at the same time firmly convinced of the value of human reason [because] doubts did not belong in the lofty regions of metaphysical speculation in whose ways the medieval masters instructed him” (Translation mine).

argues that Donne was “peculiarly the disciple of Augustine” and shared his favorite Church Father’s distrust of reason and mystical bent (Bredvold 219). Bredvold polemicalizes with Ramsay à propos Donne’s epistemology, which, as will be shown later, is indeed Thomistic.<sup>117</sup>

The Appendix and General Index attribute approximately 50 references to Aquinas alone (X, 387-88, 449) and circa 110 to the undifferentiated group labeled ‘Schoolmen’ or ‘the School,’ i.e., the Scholastic philosophers (X, 475). Taken alone, Aquinas stands alongside John Calvin, Origen and Martin Luther in approximately tenth place as Donne’s most often quoted non-Biblical source. If references to Schoolmen are considered alongside individual references to Aquinas,<sup>118</sup> he rises to fourth place after Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom.<sup>119</sup> This alternative order makes Aquinas the most prominent medieval theologian to be quoted by Donne, even as Augustine is by far the most prominent among cited Church Fathers.<sup>120</sup>

If Augustine and Donne were spiritual meanderers, St. Thomas Aquinas was like a golden arrow aimed straight at the sun. He was born in late 1224 or early 1225 at Roccasecca and died in 1274 at forty-nine, an age at which most philosophers and theologians are just beginning to create their important works. In 1244, Aquinas joined the newly-formed mendicant order of Dominicans, the first Catholic order devoted primarily to study. After being forcibly detained for a year by his family who opposed his decision, Thomas was finally allowed step irrevocably onto the path of academic and spiritual success. The remaining thirty years of his life were dedicated to learning and

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. chapter III below.

<sup>118</sup> Possible overlaps between the two categories are justified by the fact that besides Duns Scotus (7 references), Anselm of Canterbury (3) and Bonaventure (4) Donne does not, to my knowledge, quote any other Scholastic philosopher by name.

<sup>119</sup> The order from most to less quoted, including approximations of the number of references, is as follows: Bible 7,000, Augustine 700, Jerome 263, Chrysostom 194, Ambrose 138, Bernard of Clairvaux 132, Tertullian 130, Pope Gregory the Great 114, Basil 100, Calvin 75, Origen 71, Luther 55, **Aquinas 50**, Cyprian 46, Cyril of Alexandria 46, etc. If references to the Schoolmen are combined with references to Aquinas, the list reads: Bible, Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, **Aquinas and Schoolmen 160**, Ambrose, etc. The undifferentiated group ‘Fathers of the Church’ weighs in at circa 142 references.

<sup>120</sup> As I have notes in my Introduction, the Simpson-Potter critical edition, the only complete critical collection of Donne’s entire sermon corpus to date, fails in most cases to provide exact bibliographical information concerning references beyond simply naming the author. It is outside the scope of the present study to trace the entire body of Thomistic and Scholastic citations to their origins. Aquinas’ robust presence is, however, evident.

teaching, writing and preaching in the great European centers of theology, most notably Cologne, Paris, Rome and Naples.

Over the course of his life, St. Thomas composed more than sixty works, among them a set of disputations<sup>121</sup> inspired by the Scholastic university method of the *disputatio*, the *Summa contra gentiles*<sup>122</sup> and the *Summa Theologiae*,<sup>123</sup> a number of commentaries on Aristotle (384-322 BC),<sup>124</sup> whose increasingly robust presence at Faculties of the Arts throughout Europe was proving a challenge to Christian theology, commentaries on works by other philosophers,<sup>125</sup> and original philosophical treatises.<sup>126</sup>

In his article entitled “Aquinas’s Philosophy in Its Historical Setting,” Jan A. Aertsen emphatically rejects the monolithic concept of an Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy and points to important Neoplatonic elements in Aquinas’ thought such as the *exitus* and *reditus* of all things from and back to God, the concept of *participatio* to qualify the relationship between God and created beings, and the notion that all of reality is in circular motion (*circulatio*). When discussing the Philosopher’s undeniably profound effect on Aquinas, of all the fields of Aquinas’ thought, the author identifies his epistemology as most heavily influenced by Aristotle.<sup>127</sup> St. Thomas “rejects the view that a human being has innate ideas. The basis of human knowledge is sense

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<sup>121</sup> *De veritate* (On Truth), *De potentia* (On the Power of God in the Creation and Conservation of Things), *De malo* (On Evil), *De spiritualibus creaturis* (On Spiritual Creatures) and *De anima* (On the Soul), among others.

<sup>122</sup> The *Summa contra gentiles* was written as a handbook for Dominican missionaries to Muslim countries. The first three books argue entirely from reason and present necessary and probable arguments for statements concerning God, while the fourth book uses reason to clarify truths which take their origin in Divine Revelation (Aertsen 18).

<sup>123</sup> The *Summa Theologiae*, written over the course of ten years in Aquinas’ Italian period (1259-1269), is considered by many to be his “main achievement” (Aertsen 18) others highlight the *Summa contra gentiles* as more purely reason-based, therefore more philosophical. Irrespective of its ‘rank’ in the scheme of Aquinas’ vast oeuvre, however, the fundamental importance of the *Summa Theologiae* is incontestable.

<sup>124</sup> Aquinas commented on Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*, the *Posterior Analytics*, the *Physics*, *De Caelo*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *Meteora*, *De anima*, *De sensu et sensato*, *De memoria et reminiscencia*, the *Metaphysics*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Politics*.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Aquinas’ commentaries on *Liber de causis*, on Boethius’ *De trinitate* and *De hebdomadibus*, and on the *De divinis nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius.

<sup>126</sup> See for example *De ente et essentia* and *De unitate intellectus*.

<sup>127</sup> The concept of an “Aristotelico-Thomistic” philosophy can be traced back to Pope Leo XIII’s 1879 encyclical entitled *Aeterni Patris*. While there are significant similarities between Aristotle and Aquinas, it is important to note that there were important Scholastic thinkers (e.g. Duns Scotus, Francisco Suarez) who were Aristotelian but decidedly un-Thomistic. The most significant difference between Aquinas and Aristotle is that Aquinas separated ‘being’ and ‘essence,’ which separation proved crucial to his distinction between God and creatures, and to his proof of the indestructibility of the human soul (Owens 38-39).



experience . . . Aquinas also rejects Augustine’s idea that we need divine illumination to attain certain knowledge . . . The way to intellective cognition passes from sensory cognition through abstraction: the intellect abstracts the intelligible content from sensible images” (Aertsen 16, 21-22). The memory—the storehouse of all sensory-derived images from which intelligible content may potentially be derived—thus plays a fundamental role in Thomistic epistemology.

Aquinas, who himself was known for his prodigious memory,<sup>128</sup> thematizes memory in two important works, in his commentary on Aristotle’s *De memoria et reminiscencia* and in select portions of the *Summa Theologiae*: in the Treatise on Man (most specifically in ST Ia.79.6-7) and in the Treatise on Prudence and Justice (most specifically in ST IIaIIae.49.1).

The first, or Aristotelian, approach within the Treatise on Man is to ensconce memory in epistemology and show its role in the acquisition and retention of knowledge. The second, or Ciceronian, approach within the Treatise on Prudence and Justice discusses memory essentially as a virtue, a good habit, under the cardinal virtue of Prudence. In the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas thus reflects on memory as a part of his theory of mind, of his epistemology, and of his ethics. St. Thomas’ commentary on Aristotle’s *De memoria et reminiscencia* serves as a bridge connecting the two seemingly disparate discussions, linking the anthropological, epistemological, ethical (and to some extent rhetorical) aspects of memory through the subtle concept of ‘habit.’

### **II.2.2. The Soul According to Aquinas and the Habitation of Memory**

Aquinas’ appeal to memory is a vital part of his theory of mind and his sense-based epistemology. Aquinas sees cognition as “the soul’s assimilation to the objects cognized” (MacDonald 160). To understand cognition, Aquinas’ “fundamental

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<sup>128</sup> There are numerous anecdotes from Thomas’ life of his incredible abilities in the realm of memory. Bernardo Gui, Aquinas’ first biographer and Thomas of Celano, St. Thomas’ contemporary, both testified to his incredible memory feats. “His memory was extremely rich and retentive: whatever he had once read and grasped, he never forgot; it was as if knowledge were ever increasing in his soul as page is added to page in the writing of a book” (qtd. in Carruthers 3). The testimony goes on to describe how St. Thomas assembled the *Catena aurea*, an anthology of Patristic commentaries on the four Gospels, in a fluid manner and entirely from memory. Even more amazingly, he was reputedly able to dictate to three sometimes four secretaries in his cell, in Latin, on entirely diverse topics without losing sight of the logical sequence of the given topics (Ibid.).

epistemic category,” (Ibid.) we must understand both the human soul and the objects of its cognition. Memory, as a power of the soul, will prove indispensable to cognition.

For Saint Thomas, the fundamental distinction among created things is between the corporeal (for example stars, trees, and cats) and the incorporeal, or spiritual (such as angels). Man occupies a unique place among creatures because he is both corporeal and spiritual (Kretzmann 128). In the *Summa Theologiae*, the human soul is discussed in the Treatise on Man, constituting Questions 75-102 in the First Part.<sup>129</sup> First, it is very important to establish that Aquinas defined man as an embodied soul or ensouled body.<sup>130</sup> The soul enlivens the body; “[it] is defined as the first principle of life in those things which in our judgment live; for we call living things ‘animate’ and those things which have no life, ‘inanimate’” (ST Ia.75.1). Elsewhere Aquinas writes, “The soul is immediately united to the body as the form to matter” (ST Ia.76.7).

Every body is joined to a single soul with multiple functions. In Medieval psychology, one prevalent view concerning the soul was that it had a tripartite structure. It was argued (based on the second part of Aristotle’s *De anima*) that every man had three ‘levels’ of soul: the vegetative soul (‘located in’ the genitalia and responsible for the base instincts, common with plants), the sensitive soul (‘located in’ the heart, responsible for emotions and shared with animals), and the intellectual soul (‘located in the head’ and man’s common heritage with angels) (Rivers 71). But while “Plato held that there were several souls in one body, distinct even as to organs . . . saying that ‘the nutritive power is in the liver, the concupiscible in the heart, and the power of knowledge in the brain,’” Aquinas sided with Aristotle, who insisted that “in man the sensitive soul, the intellectual soul, and the nutritive [i.e., vegetative] soul are numerically one soul” (ST Ia.76.3). When he speaks of the vegetative, sensitive or intellectual soul, Aquinas refers simply to various levels of the same soul.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>See Ia.75-102.

<sup>130</sup>As Carruthers lucidly states: “For St. Thomas, the soul is neither a ‘ghost in the machine’ nor the machine itself. It is ‘embodied,’ as the form which ‘causes matter to be’” (57).

<sup>131</sup>Norman Kretzmann provides an excellent summary: “Aquinas thinks of the human soul not as three nested, cooperating substantial forms . . . but as the single form that gives a human being its specifically human mode of existence, including potentialities and functions, from its genetic makeup on up to its most creative talents. And so he will often simply identify the human soul as the rational

The vegetative soul, according to Aquinas, has nutritive, augmentative and generative powers (ST Ia.78.2), while the sensitive soul claims four powers of its own: *sensus communis*, *phantasia*, *vis aestimativa* in animals or *vis cogitativa* in human beings, and *memoria* (ST Ia.78.4). Of these, Aquinas highlights the cogitative and memorative powers, stating that they “owe their excellence not to that which is proper to the sensitive part, but to a certain affinity and proximity to the universal reason, which, so to speak, overflows into them. Therefore they are not distinct powers, but the same, yet more perfect than in other animals” (ST Ia.78.4). The memory, then, is one of the powers of the sensitive level of the soul that we share with animals, who possess it to a lesser degree.

The highest level within the soul is the intellectual soul, which is the only incorruptible part of man. “There is no other substantial form in man besides the intellectual soul” (ST Ia.76.4) yet even this incorruptible, substantial form in man is just the lowest in the hierarchy of substantiality, “for it is not naturally gifted with the knowledge of truth, as the angels are, but has to gather knowledge from individual things by way of the senses.” Yet “the intellectual [i.e., intellectual] soul, because it can comprehend universals, has a power extending to the infinite” (ST Ia.76.5). The intellectual soul has reason and memory as its powers, intelligence and conscience as its acts and *synderesis*<sup>132</sup> as a habit. But this statement seems to contradict what came before, namely that memory is a power of the sensitive soul! The seeming paradox is resolved in a passage in ST Ia.79.6.<sup>133</sup> The *power* of retention is located in the intellectual soul, but, as we will see in the following passage, the *place* of storage and thus the possibility of recall depends on the sensitive soul, “But if in the notion of memory we include its object as something past, then the memory is not in the

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[i.e., intellectual] soul, an identification made entirely appropriate by the fact that *rational* is the differentia of the human species in the genus *animal* (Kretzmann 131).

<sup>132</sup> The Latinized form of the Greek noun ἡ συντήρησις, meaning ‘keeping together.’

<sup>133</sup> Cf. “What is received into something is received according to the mode of the recipient. But the intellect is of a more subtle nature, and is more immovable than corporeal matter. If, therefore, corporeal matter holds the forms which it receives, not only while it actually does something through them, but also after ceasing to act through them, much more does the intellect receive the species unchangeably and lastingly, whether it receive them from things sensible or derive them from some superior intellect. [Note: In Thomistic philosophy, the latter is possible only after death.] Thus, therefore, if we take memory only for the power of retaining species, we must say that it is in the intellectual part” (ST Ia.79.6).

intellectual but only in the sensitive part, which apprehends individual things. For past, as past, since it signifies being under a condition of fixed time, is something individual [not universal as would belong to the intellective soul]" (ST Ia.79.6). Otherwise put, individual memories of particular sense objects are located in the sensitive soul. The intellective soul holds only the universals abstracted from them and is the ultimate source of the power of memory (ST Ia.86.1).<sup>134</sup>

### II.2.3. The Perception-Storage-Knowledge-Recollection Trajectory

The key to Aquinas' sense-based memory theory and epistemology can be found in his understanding of the process of sensory perception and the mechanisms of storage and retrieval. St. Thomas' axiom concerning sensation is that it is insolubly tied to the physical, to the body. "It is [Aquinas'] considered opinion that sensation is not a power of the soul, but of the body-soul composite . . . The act and power of sensation inhere in the ensouled animal, not in the soul of the ensouled animal" (Cohen 195-96). Perception is a physical event that causes change, both physical and spiritual, in the perceiver. The perceived object always brings about change in the perceiving sense organ comparable to the image a seal imprints into wax.<sup>135</sup> When the wax receives the impression of the seal, it does not acquire the material cause of the seal (e.g., gold or some other metal), but rather the formal cause.<sup>136</sup> In a similar manner, the eye, perceiving sense objects, does not come in material contact with them, yet undergoes change when taking up their formal cause. Such an imprint is called by Aristotle and Aquinas a *phantasma*,<sup>137</sup> the plural of which is *phantasmata*, and is stored in the memory, which, during the process

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<sup>134</sup> The substantiality of the intellective soul sets it apart from the vegetative and sensitive soul and from the body. This seems to threaten the unity of the human being, yet Kretzmann that the human soul can be defined as the substantial form or the full *intellective animality* of the human body (Kretzmann 134-35).

<sup>135</sup> Cf. "For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people do who seal things with signet rings" (*De memoria et reminiscencia* I. (450b)).

<sup>136</sup> For Aristotle's discussion of the four causes of things (i.e., material, formal, efficient, and final), please see *Metaphysics* 1013a.

<sup>137</sup> *Phantasma* is a transliteration of the Greek τό φάντασμα, pl. τά φάντασματα, meaning 'vision,' 'phenomenon,' 'dream' and 'appearance.' I have chosen to use the word in its transliterated form despite the decision of translators of Aquinas to anglicize it as 'phantasm.' In a *phantasma*, the material forms of external objects are realized in different matter, namely that of the human sensory apparatus (Kretzmann 139).

of recollection, re-presents the *phantasma* to the soul.<sup>138</sup> Conceptual knowledge, stored in the intellectual memory, is constructed by abstracting<sup>139</sup> from these *phantasmata*, which abstraction, in turn, results in further *phantasmata*.

Aquinas consciously distances himself from the Platonic idea earlier adopted by Augustine that universals are imprinted on the mind before we are born and that the learning process is simply one of recognition.<sup>140</sup> Even the most abstract or subtle concepts enter the memory via the senses and are stored as ‘visible’ *phantasmata*. No intellection is possible without *phantasmata*. The intellective soul, when thinking of universals, abstracts that which is intelligible from *phantasmata* and has knowledge of universals in the *phantasmata* (Kretzmann 141).<sup>141</sup> Only the disembodied soul, namely, the intellective soul after death, will think without *phantasmata*. As it will no longer be connected to the body, sensation, and the formation, storage and recollection of *phantasmata* will be impossible. As Aquinas asserts in *De Veritate*, the *phantasmata* “will not remain in any way after death” (qtd. in Cohen 202).

Critics have grappled with the paradox that though “St. Thomas lists sensation as a power of the soul . . . it is his considered opinion that sensation is not a power of the soul, but of the body-soul composite” (Cohen 195). Cohen goes on to reason: “The thing that sees is the thing that has the ability to see, and the thing that sees, sees with its eyes, so it is the thing that has eyes that has the ability to see. The act and power of sensation inhere in the ensouled animal, not in the soul of the ensouled animal. The soul no more sees than eats, though Aquinas lists nourishment, too, as a power of the soul” (Cohen 196). In other words, man is an embodied soul or ensouled body, and is thus capable of

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<sup>138</sup> The question of how these *phantasmata* are recollected and known can be addressed by considering the topic of memory error, so humbling and so fundamental to the human psyche. While modern man tends to think of memory error as a problem of inaccurate reproduction, the Ancients and Mediaevals considered it a heuristic problem, from the Greek verb εὐρίσκω, to find. In other words, as long as we remember to look for a piece of knowledge, it is there, intact in our minds. We have only to locate it (Carruthers 61).

<sup>139</sup> We abstract universal concepts like height, width, length, curvature, by considering some aspects of sense objects separately, without thinking these aspects exist separately (Carruthers 56).

<sup>140</sup> Cf. a brief discussion in section II.1.4. on Augustine’s views on anamnesis.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. “In the present state of life in which the soul is united to a passible body, it is impossible for our intellect to understand anything except by turning to the phantasms [ . . . even] incorporeal things of which there are no phantasms, are known to us by comparison with sensible bodies of which there are phantasms . . . Other incorporeal things we know in the present state of life only by way of remotion or by some comparison to corporeal things” (ST Ia.84.7).

sensation, and, consequently, of producing *phantasmata* and holding them in the memory only as long as body and soul are in union. So sensation is a power of the soul only inasmuch as its source is in the soul. It is a mystery whether the *phantasmata* will be restored after the resurrection of the body.<sup>142</sup>

What then of the knowledge of God? If we define knowing as ‘seeing with the intellect’ (Cf. ST Ia.85.4), we can rephrase the question as: what then of the vision of God? Is man able to see God? Within the Treatise on God, found in the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas addresses the question “Whether any created intellect can see the essence of God?” (Question 12) He very emphatically states that “It is impossible for God to be seen by the sense of sight, or by any other sense, or power of the sensitive part” (ST Ia.12.3). There is no possibility in this earthly life of seeing God as He is, for not even the created intellect can perceive God’s essence by its own natural power. “God cannot be seen in his essence by a mere mortal being unless he be separated from this mortal life” (ST Ia.12.11). It is only after death that the incorruptible part of the soul, the intellect, will see God, but even then, this will not happen of the soul’s own power but through God’s graciousness, because “the created intellect cannot see the essence of God unless God by His grace unites himself to the created intellect, as an object made intelligible to it” (ST Ia.12.4). During sight, a union occurs between perceiver and perceived and this union can only occur if there is some likeness between them. “To see the essence of God then requires some likeness in the seeing power, namely, the light of divine glory strengthening the intellect to see God” (ST Ia.12.2).

To sum up, in this life, the soul is embodied, has its being in matter and therefore knows only those things that have a form in matter. “It is not possible, therefore, that the soul in this mortal life should be raised up to the uttermost of intelligible things, that is, to the divine essence” (ST Ia.12.11).<sup>143</sup> All we know of God, we know through his

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<sup>142</sup> Perhaps this is the cause of Donne’s desperate insistence on the perfect reintegration of every particle and atom of the body at the resurrection (Cf. his last sermon, dramatically entitled *Deaths Duell*)! He knows and deeply feels that his personhood, and that of his loved ones and of every man, resides in the body-soul composite, the ensouled body or the embodied soul.

<sup>143</sup> Exceptions to this rule occur in the case of dreams or other “withdrawals from the bodily senses” during which “revelations and foresight of future events are perceived” more clearly (ST Ia.12.11).

effects, “because they are his effects and depend upon their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God whether he exists, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him” (ST Ia.12.12). The rest is the subject of faith based on divine revelation.

The recollection of *phantasmata*, produced either during perception or as a result of cognition, is a natural process that can, through certain methods, be enhanced. Memories can surface spontaneously,<sup>144</sup> but man is better able to recollect in a systematized manner shaped by “habit, de consuetudine, rather than by logic, de necessitate . . . [T]he ability to recollect is natural to everyone, but the procedure itself is formed by habitus, training, and practice” (Carruthers 64). Habit shapes the order in which memories are linked to one another and, as a consequence, habit will play a pivotal role in recollection. Memory, as a process of recollection, is a habit of the soul. “All virtues and vices are habits, good or bad (ST IaIIae.1.55).” This explains why Aquinas’ most extensive treatment of the subject of memory besides his commentary on Aristotle’s *De memoria et reminiscentia* can be found in the *Summa Theologiae*, in the discussion of the virtues, especially cardinal virtue of Prudence (ST IaIIae. 47-51) of which memory forms a part.

In his commentary on Aristotle’s *De memoria*, Aquinas recognized that Aristotle made reference to the very art of memory that will be taught in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a work by an anonymous Latin author which was, in the Middle Ages, mistakenly attributed to Cicero and simply called his Second Rhetoric.<sup>145</sup> Aquinas’ commentary on *De memoria* therefore serves as an excellent bridge between the psychological and epistemological aspects of memory described above and the technical aspects addressed below.<sup>146</sup>

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Aquinas also discusses in detail the unique vision of St. Paul who, in his rapture, was able to see the essence of God in this life (Cf. ST IaIIae.175.3).

<sup>144</sup> Cf. also Augustine’s passage on chasing away wrong memories with the ‘hand’ of his heart in *Confessions* X.12.

<sup>145</sup> Thus, Aquinas came to regard Aristotle’s book as a treatise on mnemotechnic, “to be conflated with the rules of Tullius [i.e., Cicero] and which provided philosophical and psychological justification for those rules” (Yates 32).

<sup>146</sup> Cf. sections II.2.5. and II.3.1-4.

## II.2.4. Aquinas on Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia*

Between 1248 and 1252, Thomas Aquinas studied with his master, Albertus Magnus, an erudite Aristotelian who explicated for his students the entire Aristotelian corpus available in Latin at the time. It may be due to Albertus' influence that Aquinas came to view philosophy as the foundation for theology and Aristotle as 'the Philosopher'. As a part of a larger project of commenting on Aristotle,<sup>147</sup> Aquinas, like his teacher before him, undertook a commentary on *De memoria et reminiscencia*. The commentary, begun in Italy sometime in or after 1268, was completed during his last Parisian stay. Its composition thus overlapped with that of the *Summa Theologiae*, a fact that is underscored by references to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* in both works (Ziolkowski 153-54).

Aquinas' commentary on the Philosopher's treatise is typical in that it follows the treatise in linear order, interpreting one passage after the other (Ziolkowski 155). The commentary begins with a reference to the Chain of Being and man's place in it above the animals. Aquinas states that man shares Prudence with certain animals. The parts of Prudence, and here he quotes Cicero, are "foresight, by which the future is planned . . . understanding, by which the present is considered, and memory, by which the past is apprehended" (Commentary on *De memoria*, Article 298).<sup>148</sup> Men and animals, therefore, share the capacity for memory, but while animals have only memory, man also has recollection. The structure of the commentary may be summarized as follows:

### I. Memory and remembering, which is its act.

1. What is memory? And what is remembering?
2. What is its cause?

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<sup>147</sup> Aristotle's treatise *De memoria et reminiscencia* constitutes one of nine pieces in a series of nine works known as the *Parva naturalia*. The writings contained in *Parva naturalia* may be read as complementing Aristotle's *De anima*. *De memoria et reminiscencia* is still considered a major philosophical achievement addressing memory and recollection, because it successfully "distinguishes memory from other types of cognition . . . establishes that the object of memory is that which is past . . . explores the reliance of memory on mental images and the need of the human intellect for such images . . . provides an exposition of mnemonic techniques [especially the place system and] differentiates not only between recollection and remembrance but also between memory and imagination (*fantasia*)" (Ziolkowski 153).

<sup>148</sup> In what follows, I provide only the number of the article.



### 3. To what part of the soul does it pertain?

#### II. Recollection.

1. What it is not and what it is.
2. The mode of recollecting.<sup>149</sup>

Aquinas proceeds in an order different from what he originally proposed: I.1. is followed by I.3. and then by I.2. In his discussion of what memory is (I.1. above) and where in the soul it resides (I.3. above), Aquinas emphasizes countless times that man is unable to think without *phantasmata*. This is nothing new, but his link to Cicero is important when he states that “we cannot remember well those things which have a subtle and spiritual consideration; those objects that are gross and sensible are better objects of memory. It is necessary, if we wish to facilitate the remembering of intelligible reasons to bind them to certain phantasms, *as Cicero teaches in his Rhetoric*” (326; emphasis added).

In part I.2., Aquinas addresses the causes of memory, and concludes “that the movement made on the senses by the sensible thing impresses something like a sensible figure on the imagination, which remains even in the absence of the sensible thing, in the same way as those who seal with rings impress a certain figure in wax, which remains even when the seal or ring has been removed” (328). The seal in wax is one of the most ancient images for memory as storage. Because memory works through *phantasmata*, or physical ‘impressions,’ the durability of the impressions will change with the condition of the body.<sup>150</sup> Each *phantasma* in our intellect “can be taken as it is something in itself, or as it is a phantasm of another thing.” In itself, it can be considered an object for intellectual speculation, but as a *phantasma* of another thing, “it

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<sup>149</sup> Aquinas’ work in the commentary lays the groundwork for his reflections on memory in the *Summa Theologiae*, therefore it would be redundant to review in detail the contents of the commentary. Instead, it will prove more useful to highlight the concepts and distinctions that, to my knowledge, are not present in the *Summa Theologiae*.

<sup>150</sup> Aquinas emphasizes this notion twice. When the soul or body is in flux, for example, in a state of inebriation, anger or lust, *phantasmata* will not be as deep and firmly fixed. This is also true of times in life (youth and old age) when the body is in rapid growth or decline. At the same time, “It happens that things which one receives in boyhood are firmly held in the memory because of the *vehemence of the movement*, just as it happens that *things about which we wonder* are imprinted more in the memory. We wonder especially . . . at the *new and unusual*” (332; emphasis added).

is considered as an image leading to another and the principle of remembering” (340).<sup>151</sup> In the end, Aristotle recommends that man strengthen his memory by “frequent meditations on those things which we sensed or understood” for “by the frequent act of remembering the habit of memorable objects is strengthened, as also any habit (is strengthened) through similar acts” (348).

In the second part which treats recollection, Aristotle begins by defining what recollection is not: namely, it is not the gaining of knowledge nor is it simply a recurrence of memory. Rather, “recollection is a kind of movement towards remembering” (356). Recollection occurs because one movement follows another. One may recollect by necessity, naturally,<sup>152</sup> or by custom.<sup>153</sup> Frequent review helps memory, which is also strengthened when we “vigorously apply the mind [...while] those things which we see or consider superficially and lightly skip quickly from the memory” (361).

Then, Aquinas elucidates Aristotle’s insights on how exactly recollection happens. Recollection is an active search for something that is not currently present to the memory. It must always have a starting point. During recollection we can, as it were, move backwards and forwards along a virtual timeline.<sup>154</sup> In sum, Aquinas draws four important lessons concerning the skill of recollection: “First one must be careful to reduce to some order what one wishes to retain; then one must apply the mind profoundly and intently to those things; next one must frequently meditate (on them) in order; finally one must begin to recollect from the starting point” (371).

Next, Aquinas explains the difference between recollection and relearning and further emphasizes and explains why a person wishing to recollect must begin at a

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<sup>151</sup>Our attitudes towards the *phantasmata* and the act of memory vary: sometimes, we speculate on a *phantasma* and do not know whether it recently entered our intellect or we are remembering it. In this first case, we doubt that we are remembering. It is also possible to be aware of the act of remembering when we know that the phantasm we are considering is “the image of another [thing] which [we] previously sensed or understood” (346). This is when we know that we are remembering. Finally, it is possible to be mistaken about phantasmata in such a way as to think that new phantasms entering the mind are really phantasms “of some previous events” (347).

<sup>152</sup> Just as “the apprehension of animal follows from the apprehension of man” (361).

<sup>153</sup> But this “custom . . . is not established equally in all men” (361). Some have a more retentive nature and are able, after a thinking of the *phantasma* a single time, fix it, while others must repeat this action numerously.

<sup>154</sup> We may also proceed from *phantasma* to *phantasma* by three different principles: likeness, contrast or closeness (a close relationship) “of society, or place, or time” (364).

starting point. Recollection happens when man “retains interiorly a certain aptitude or capability of leading himself to the movements of the thing which he seeks” (375) while relearning calls for a teacher, an outside source, who must provide the impetus.

Finally, in reference to the all-important starting point, Aquinas notes that “men sometimes seem to recollect from places in which things have been said, or done, or thought” (377) and deftly connects this natural inclination to the concept of *loci et imagines* (to be discussed later) in artificial memory by quoting Cicero who “teaches in his *Rhetoric*, that, to remember easily, it is necessary to imagine certain ordered places in which the phantasms of those things which we wish to remember are arranged in a certain order” (Ibid.). Habit, or custom, will prove just as important as the firm starting point, for sometimes we fail to recollect even when beginning at the same point because we move in a different direction. “We easily recollect things which we considered many times by the inclination of custom” (382).

The underlying concepts in St. Thomas’ commentary on Aristotle’s *De memoria et reminiscencia* are memory as part of the sensitive soul, the vital importance of *phantasmata*, the storage and retrieval process and, concerning the latter, the emphasis on recollection through custom or habit. Aquinas quotes Cicero’s *Rhetoric* in a way that connects the concept of memory as part of the cardinal virtue of Prudence and memory as a habit or custom the training of which sharpens the mind and builds a richer system of knowledge. The link between the two is the definition of virtue as a good habit or inclination, and the Scholastic tenet that the highest form of knowledge to which man can aspire is knowledge of God.

### **II.2.5. Memory Training as Exercise in Virtue**

In IaIIae of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas treats the Habits, Law, and Grace in three separate treatises. The Habits are further subdivided into good habits (i.e., virtues) and evil habits (i.e., vices) of the appetitive soul. In Question 61, Aquinas treats the Cardinal virtues, of which there are four. Their relation to one another is detailed in ST

IaIIae.61.2., where Saint Thomas concludes that “Prudence is the principle of all virtues absolutely.”<sup>155</sup>

In ST IIaIIae, Aquinas begins with the Treatise on Faith, Hope, and Charity (questions 1-46) and continues with the Treatise on Prudence and Justice (questions 47-122). Memory is discussed within the questions related to Prudence (questions 47-56), specifically in IIaIIae.49.1. While Cicero listed memory, understanding and foresight, pertaining to past, present, and future respectively, as the three parts of Prudence, Aquinas lists eight integral parts, of which the three originally found in Cicero are italicized: *Memory, Understanding or Intelligence*, Docility, Shrewdness, Reason, *Foresight*, Circumspection, and Caution. As usual in the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas begins by stating the opposite of what he wishes to prove: “It would seem that memory is not a part of prudence” and then convincingly argues the opposite. Responding to three objections raised,<sup>156</sup> Aquinas shows that memory is indeed a part of prudence.<sup>157</sup>

It is within the reply to the second objection that Aquinas shares his insights, based on *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a work mistakenly attributed to Tullius (i.e., Cicero) and on Aristotle’s *De memoria* concerning methods to improve the faculty of memory:

There are four things whereby a man perfects his memory. First, when a man wishes to remember a thing, he should take some suitable yet somewhat unwonted illustration of it, since the unwonted strikes us more, and so makes a greater and stronger impression on the mind; and this explains why we remember better what we saw when we were children. Now the reason for the necessity of finding these illustrations or images, is that simple and spiritual impressions easily slip from the mind, unless they be tied as it were to some corporeal image, because human knowledge has a

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<sup>155</sup> “First, as consisting in the consideration itself of reason; . . . we have one principal virtue called Prudence.” To put reason into our operations we need Justice. When we put reason into our passions, our passions either revolt against reason, in which case Temperance is needed to curb them, or passions may withdraw from us, “for instance, through fear of danger and toil, and then man needs to be strengthened” with Fortitude. “Prudence is the principal of all virtues absolutely” (ST IaIIae.61.2.).

<sup>156</sup> They are: 1) memory is in the sensitive part of the soul, prudence in the rational; 2) prudence comes from experience, memory is in us from nature; 3) memory regards the past and prudence the future.

<sup>157</sup> He does so by arguing that 1) prudence applies universal knowledge to the particulars stored in the sensitive soul, 2) memory is in us from nature but, according to Tullius it is “also aided by art and diligence.” 3) we argue about the future from the past.

greater hold on sensible objects. For this reason memory is assigned to the sensitive part of the soul. Secondly, whatever a man wishes to retain in his memory he must carefully consider and set in order, so that he may pass easily from one memory to another. Hence the Philosopher says (De Memor. et Remin. ii): “Sometimes a place brings memories back to us: the reason being that we pass quickly from the one to the other.” Thirdly, we must be anxious and earnest about the things we wish to remember, because the more a thing is impressed on the mind, the less it is liable to slip out of it. Wherefore Tully says in his Rhetoric [\*Ad Herenn. de Arte Rhet. iii.] that “anxiety preserves the figures of images entire.” Fourthly, we should often reflect on the things we wish to remember. Hence the Philosopher says (De Memoria i) that “reflection preserves memories,” because as he remarks (De Memoria ii) “custom is a second nature”: wherefore when we reflect on a thing frequently, we quickly call it to mind, through passing from one thing to another by a kind of natural order.

The first bit of advice is to find *similitudines convenientes, nec tamen omnino consuetas*, convenient similitudes, not at all usual ones, because we wonder more at that which is unusual and the soul is held more vehemently by such things. It is necessary to invent such images, because *intentiones simplices et spirituales*, simple and spiritual intentions slip easily from the soul, *quia humana cognitio potentior est circa sensibilia*, because human cognition is stronger concerning sensible things. Secondly, referring to Aristotle’s *De memoria*, Aquinas highlights the necessity of arranging that which one wishes to remember in an orderly fashion *ut ex uno memorato facile ad aliud procedatur*, that one may move easily from one remembered thing to another. Thirdly, *oportet ut homo sollicitudinem apponat et affectum adhibeat ad ea quae vult memorari*, man should apply solicitude, a misquotation of ‘solitude’ from *Rhetorica ad Herennium*,<sup>158</sup> to that which he wishes to remember. Finally, frequent meditation is vital

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<sup>158</sup> The original passage from *Ad Herennium* reads: “the crowding and passing to and fro of people confuse and weaken the impress of the images while solitude keeps their outlines sharp, *frequentia et obambulatio hominum conturbat et infirmat imaginum notas, solitudo conservat integras simulacrorum*”

to firmly fixing memories, for, and here Aquinas thinks he is citing Cicero, *meditationes memoriam salvant*, meditations keep memory.

In sum, it is a moral duty to train the memory, and this training is best done in a sense-based, orderly, and repeated manner. All efforts at achieving a disciplined memory best reach their aim when performed out of solicitude and affection.<sup>159</sup> The art of memory, the third of the memory traditions appropriated by Donne, is an artificial memory system built around such natural insights concerning the ideal functioning of memory.

### II.3. Mnemotechnic Through the Ages<sup>160</sup>

#### II.3.1. Sources

The two seminal authors on the art of memory are Frances Yates and Mary Carruthers. Their works, entitled *The Art of Memory* (1966) and *The Book of Memory* (1990) respectively, are masterful syntheses of most of what can be known about this ancient art. While Yates proposes a discussion of the art of memory from its inception in sixth century BC Greece to its merging with the scientific method in the seventeenth century, she more or less leaves a gap between the fifth and the twelfth centuries which Carruthers, in her own book, fills with exacting detail. No survey of the art of memory is complete, or even possible, without reference to the scholarship of Yates and Carruthers.

The art of memory, variously known as *ars memorativa*, *ars memoriae*, or by its Greek name as *mnemotechnic*, is an ancient art, one might even say, based on the Greek

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*figuras*" (III.xix.). The change from solitude to solicitude adds a "devotional atmosphere which is entirely absent from the classical memory rule" (Yates 75).

<sup>159</sup> Carruthers offers a succinct reflection on the importance of memory to medieval man. Memory, she writes, is "co-extensive with wisdom and knowledge, [...] and] more—as a condition of prudence, possessing a well-trained memory was morally virtuous in itself. The medieval [and I would add, Renaissance] regard for memory always has this moral force to it, analogous to the high moral power which the Romantics were later to accord to the imagination, genetrix of what is best in human nature. [...] the memory feats of saints are frequently stressed in hagiography, even of saints who were not scholars (like Francis of Assisi). This was done not to show off their intellectual prowess, but to stress their moral perfection" (71). In other words, memory was regarded as a virtue important enough to be celebrated in the lives of saints.

<sup>160</sup> Please note: Latin language quotations from *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De oratore* are from the bilingual editions listed in the works cited section. The bilingual edition of the former is cited under Cornificius.

etymology,<sup>161</sup> a ‘craft,’ ‘art’ or ‘method’ of memory that flourished in the West from Antiquity until the seventeenth century.<sup>162</sup> When Cicero, in *De oratore*, identified memory as the noblest of the five parts of rhetoric—the widely known *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, *pronuntiatio et actio*—he irrevocably connected it with oratorical art, and its fate in our culture with that of rhetoric. Cicero, however, is also responsible for ensconcing memory among the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. In his *De inventione*, he writes, “Prudence is the knowledge of what is good, what is bad, and what is neither good nor bad. Its parts are memory, intelligence, foresight” (qtd. in Yates 20). The tension between seeing a trained memory as mere skill or bravura and considering it the basis of “character, judgment, citizenship, and piety” (Carruthers 9) will define Western memory theory for centuries to come. In our discussions of Augustinian and Thomistic memory, we have seen memory from the point of view of anthropology/theory of mind, epistemology and ethics. What follows is a discussion of memory as a part of the venerable craft of rhetoric.

Classical to postclassical writers have defined rhetoric in a variety of illuminating ways. Erik Gunderson, in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, provides a survey spanning almost a millennium and a half. Juxtaposing Aristotle’s definition in his *Rhetoric* as “the capacity to discover the possible means of persuasion concerning any subject” (qtd. in Gunderson 1) with Quintilian’s simpler “knowing how to speak well” from his *Institutes* (qtd. in Gunderson 1), Gunderson highlights important early variations in the understanding of the art. Two more contemporary thinkers, Kant and Nietzsche, offer novel insights into the nature of rhetoric. Kant “yokes rhetoric and poetry when describing the arts of speech: ‘The rhetorical arts are oratory and poetry.’ He goes on to define rhetoric as the art of carrying on a serious business of the understanding as if it were a free play of the

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<sup>161</sup> The English word mnemotechnic stems from two Greek root words, ἡ μνήμη, meaning ‘memory,’ ‘remembering,’ ‘the power to remember,’ and ἡ τέχνη, translating to ‘dexterity,’ ‘skill,’ ‘method,’ ‘art,’ and ‘craft.’

<sup>162</sup> Mnemotechnic is a form of individual, habit memory that is no longer taught in schools, indeed, our documentary culture generally dismisses memory training, but this is not a result of printing technology but of the waning of rhetoric. “The valuing of memory training depends more . . . on the role which rhetoric plays in a culture than on whether its texts are presented in oral or written forms” (Carruthers 11).

imagination’ [contrasting it with poetry, which he describes as] ‘the art of conducting a free play of the imagination as if it were a serious business of the understanding’” (qtd. in Gunderson 1-2). Nietzsche’s elegant definition is joined seamlessly to that of Kant when he declares that rhetoric is simply “a further development, guided by the clear light of understanding, of the artistic means which are already found in language” (qtd. in Gunderson 2). It is possible to assemble these disparate definitions into a meta-definition that reads something like this: Rhetoric is the art of persuasive eloquence rooted in the very heart of human language. Such a definition dissolves the tension between nature and artifice and admirably complements our interdisciplinary discussion of memory.<sup>163</sup>

By the age of Cicero and of Quintilian, rhetoric had been codified to the extent that the “three kinds of speech and the five parts of rhetoric [...] were] well-established fundamental doctrines” (Heath 65). The three kinds of speech, deliberative,<sup>164</sup> judicial<sup>165</sup> and demonstrative/epideictic,<sup>166</sup> were attributed to Aristotle by Cicero and Quintilian.<sup>167</sup> Deliberative speeches took as their *telos* “the expedient or the harmful,” judicial speeches “justice or injustice” and epideictic oratory “the noble [...] or] the shameful” (Hesk 146). The rudiments of the five parts of rhetoric, or five tasks of the orator, also stemmed from Aristotle, who discussed invention, arrangement and expression and touched on delivery in his *Rhetoric*. “We do not know when memory was added to complete the quintet” (Heath 64). To Cicero and Quintilian, they were known as *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *pronuntiatio/ actio*.<sup>168</sup> The order of the five tasks was not carved in stone. *Memoria* and *elocutio* were especially mobile; theorists

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<sup>163</sup> It is also important to note that “unlike most other *tekhnai* or *artes* such as medicine, architecture or even cooking, rhetoric did not have a distinct field of knowledge of its own” (Steel 78). Instead, its techniques could enhance a variety of fields of study including, prominently, theology.

<sup>164</sup> I.e., “The oratory of public persuasion and speeches that argue before a duly assembled and authorized body either in favor of or against some course of action to be taken in the future” (Gunderson, “Appendix I” 291).

<sup>165</sup> I.e., “The oratory of prosecution and defense in a court convened to make a ruling on a matter of law relative to some past event” (Ibid.).

<sup>166</sup> I.e., “The oratory of display. A gathering hears the praise or blame of a person, place, or even thing” (Ibid.).

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.7., *De oratore* 2.43., Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 3.1.15. (Heath 64).

<sup>168</sup> For a brief discussion of the five tasks of the orator, please refer to the Introduction above, where they were defined in relation to Donne.



alternately placed the former either after *inventio* or after *dispositio*, and the latter fit nicely after *inventio* or as the fifth in the sequence (Steel 79).

Three Latin rhetorical handbooks serve as the basis for all subsequent discussions and adaptations of *ars memoriae*: the anonymous<sup>169</sup> *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* (III. xvi-xxiv.), Cicero's *De oratore* (II.lxxxvi-lxxxvii.), and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (XI. 2.).<sup>170</sup>

The memory section in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is the only Latin memory treatise preserved in its entirety. Cicero's and Quintilian's remarks on memory, though informative, are not complete treatises and presuppose the readership's familiarity with mnemotechnic and its terminology. Thus, the fullest account of the *loci et imagines* method ironically comes from the author whose name has been lost to memory and who wrote sometime between 86 and 82 BC.<sup>171</sup> All *ars memoriae* treatises up to the sixteenth century and beyond rely heavily on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Yates 5). It is possible and enlightening to reconstruct the art with the help of the three works introduced above.

### II.3.2. The Birth of *Ars Memoriae*

In *De oratore*, Cicero recounts the tragic story behind the invention of mnemotechnic. Simonides of Ceos (556-468 BC), the honey-tongued poet was employed by the nobleman Scopas of Thessaly to chant a poem in his honor at a banquet. At the end of the recitation, Scopas offered Simonides only half the sum they had agreed upon claiming that Simonides had made a digression in the poem in praise of the gods Castor and Pollux. At that moment, the disappointed poet was summoned by two mysterious

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<sup>169</sup> Although sources as recent as the Whitehead-Rossington anthology, *Memory: A Reader* (2007), and *The Cambridge Companion to Rhetoric* (2009) cite the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* as anonymous, an alternative line of scholarship attributes it to the Roman orator Cornificius, who was in his late twenties in the 80s BC and therefore old enough to have composed this key text of classical rhetoric. For further reflections on Cornificius as the author of the work, please consult Tamás Adamik's excellent "Introduction" to his 1987 translation of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, especially pp. 34-48.

<sup>170</sup> The three treatises are the major Latin contributions in a line of rhetorical manuals with Hellenic roots beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC *Rhetoric to Alexander* mistakenly attributed to Aristotle and Aristotle's own *Rhetoric*, in which he differentiates between thought, diction and action, thereby prefiguring the later fivefold division (Heath 61-69).

<sup>171</sup> Scholars have traditionally proposed four sets of dates: 86-82 BC, 75-70 BC, AD 50 and 60 (Adamik 20). *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric* accepts the first of the four possibilities.

young men to the entrance of the hall, and as he left the building, the roof caved in, burying Scopas and his guests and leaving Simonides the sole survivor. What is more, the bodies were so badly mangled in the accident that the mourning relatives were unable to identify their loved ones. Simonides then stood in the middle of the rubble and, with his mind's eye, reconstructed the entire hall including the exact location in which each of the guests had been reclining. Thus, based on his memory of *loci* (places) and *imagines* (images; in this case the faces of the victims), he was able to identify the mangled bodies for proper burial (*De oratore* II.lxxxvi.352-53.).<sup>172</sup>

Cicero provides the intellectual link between the particular case of the disastrous banquet and the universal usefulness of mnemotechnic:

[T]his circumstance suggested to him the discovery of the truth that the best aid to clearness of memory consists in orderly arrangement. He inferred that persons desiring to train this faculty must select localities and form mental images of the facts they wish to remember and store those images in the localities. (*De oratore* II.lxxxvi.353-54.)

After its inception following a ruined banquet, mnemotechnic came to involve the building up of rooms, hallways, entire palaces in the mind, and the peopling of these palaces with stirring images. It is fitting that the art of memory was born in response to death. Memory is, after all, the sole human antidote to mortality.

### II.3.3. *Loci*

The fourth step of the rhetorical process, *memoria*, was rooted in the extensive previous preparation of suitable *loci*.<sup>173</sup> According to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the first responsibility of any aspiring rhetor was to construct, in his mind, a set of *loci* capable of housing images. These *loci* are generally architectural in nature, entire buildings and

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<sup>172</sup> The story is retold, with slight variations and commentary, in the *Institutio oratoria* (XI.2.11-16).

<sup>173</sup> In a sense, the memory itself is such a locus. The Ad Herennian author introduces his discussion of memory with the following injunction: "Now let me turn to the treasure-house of ideas supplied by Invention, to the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric, the Memory" (*Ad Herennium* III.xvi.).

their elements, such as spaces between columns, archways, corners.<sup>174</sup> “We should therefore, if we desire to memorize a large number of items, equip ourselves with a large number of backgrounds, so that in these we may set a large number of images” (*Ad Herennium* III.xvii). The *loci* must form some sort of sequence with a fixed order essential for successful recollection, during which process we can start from any point in the sequence and move backwards or forwards with ease.<sup>175</sup> In order to remember the order of the places, one should mark every fifth place with a golden hand and every tenth place with the portrait of a friend called Decimus. It is best to form *loci* in a deserted and solitary place, away from crowds of people, whose presence tends to “confuse and weaken the impress of the images, while solitude keeps their outlines sharp” (*Ad Herennium* III.xix.). *Loci* should be of moderate size, not too brightly lit to keep the images from dazzling the beholder, and not too dark so that the images are still clearly visible. Furthermore, they should not be more than thirty feet apart, for distance, like elapsed time, enfeebles the memory.<sup>176</sup> Those sufficiently practiced in the art of memory are admonished to create their own fictitious *loci*. “[T]he imagination can embrace any region whatsoever and in it at will fashion and construct the setting of some background . . . we may in our imagination create a region for ourselves and obtain a most serviceable distribution of appropriate backgrounds” (*Ad Herennium* III.xix).

Cicero wrote his *De oratore* in 55 BC, approximately three decades after the completion of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. He refers to the “science of mnemonics” as “well-known and familiar” and notes that the images storing the information to be remembered “require an abode, inasmuch as a material object without a locality is inconceivable.” He then proceeds to very briefly discuss the need for *loci*, stating that

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<sup>174</sup> “By backgrounds I mean such scenes as are naturally or artificially set off on a small scale, complete and conspicuous, so that we can grasp and embrace them easily by the natural memory—for example, a house, an intercolumnar space, a recess, an arch, or the like” (*Ad Herennium* III.xviii.).

<sup>175</sup> “If these [i.e., the backgrounds] have been arranged in order, the result will be that . . . we can repeat orally what we committed to the backgrounds, proceeding in either direction from any background we please” (*Ad Herennium* III.xviii.).

<sup>176</sup> “And these backgrounds ought to be of moderate size and medium extent, for when excessively large they render the images vague, and when too small often seem incapable of receiving an arrangement of images . . . I believe that the intervals between backgrounds should be of moderate extent, approximately thirty feet; for, like the external eye, so the inner eye of thought is less powerful when you have moved the object of sight too near or too far away” (*Ad Herennium* III.xix.).

the orator is in need of “a large number of localities which must be clear and defined at moderate intervals apart.” He rejects *memoria verborum* (i.e., verbatim memorization of a speech) for *memoria rerum* (i.e., memory of ‘things’ or concepts) and concludes that “we may grasp ideas by means of images and their order by means of localities” (*De oratore* II.lxxxvii).

Quintilian, active a century after Cicero, also defines memory as “the treasure-house of eloquence” (*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.1.) and provides a lucid description of *loci* along with additional insight concerning their use. He advises that one chose a large, spacious building with as many rooms as possible. In memorizing the rooms, one should take care to memorize permanent decorations such as statues, whose positions within the rooms will yield further, more subtle *loci*.<sup>177</sup> Quintilian then describes the orator ‘walking’ through his memory edifice and scrutinizing the images he has placed there.<sup>178</sup> He, too, encourages the orator to broaden his horizons by adding *loci* differing from his own home, and even to invent imaginary places of his own.<sup>179</sup>

### II.3.4. *Imagines*

The Ad Herennian discussion of images is evocative and reveals a keen understanding of human psychology:

Now nature herself teaches us what we should do. When we see in everyday life things that are petty, ordinary, and banal, we generally fail to remember them, because the mind is not being stirred by anything novel or marvellous. But if we see or hear something exceptionally base, dishonourable, unusual, great, unbelievable, or ridiculous, that we are likely to remember for a long time . . . ordinary things easily slip from the

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<sup>177</sup> “The first thought is placed, as it were, in the forecourt; the second, let us say, in the living-room; the remainder are placed in due order all round the impluvium and entrusted not merely to bedrooms and parlours, but even to the care of statues and the like” (*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.20.).

<sup>178</sup> “This done, as soon as the memory of the facts requires to be revived, all these places are visited in turn and the various deposits are demanded from their custodians, as the sight of each recalls the respective details” (*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.20.).

<sup>179</sup> “What I have spoken of as being done in a house, can equally well be done in connexion with public buildings, a long journey, the ramparts of a city, or even pictures. Or we may even imagine such places to ourselves” (*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.21.).

memory while the striking and the novel stay longer in the mind. A sunrise, the sun's course, a sunset are marvelous to no one because they occur daily. But solar eclipses are a source of wonder because they occur seldom . . . Thus nature shows that she is not aroused by the common, ordinary event, but is moved by a new or striking occurrence. Let art then imitate nature, find what she desires, and follow as she directs. . . . We ought, then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longest in memory . . . [I]f we set up images that are not many or vague, but doing something; if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we dress some of them with crowns or purple cloaks, for example, so that the likeness may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, [these techniques] will ensure our remembering them more readily (*Ad Herennium* III.xxii.).

Notable here is the author's strong appeal to nature and the natural, even as he presents an artificial technique for enhancing the memory. It is natural for human beings to remember that which is "new or striking" and to forget anything "common [or] ordinary." The sunset and the solar eclipse are an apt symbol of how natural and artificial memory are related. Sunsets and eclipses of the sun are both natural events in that they occur in the world of nature. They differ not in essence but in frequency, and therefore, originality. Images must be clear and, interestingly, in motion. The author proposes people, singularly beautiful or ugly, adorned with purple cloaks or disfigured with mud or blood, as the most memorable choices. Effective images are not static, "but doing something." They are most like four-dimensional scenes being played out in the niches of the mind.

Cicero describes optimal images as "effective and sharply outlined and distinctive, with the capacity of encountering and speedily penetrating the mind, *imaginibus autem agentibus, acribus, insignitis, quae occurrere celeriterque percutere animum possint*" (*De oratore* II.lxxxvii.358.). Quintilian's discussion of images is brief. He proposes a few iconic examples, which he terms "symbols [that] may have reference to the subject

as a whole.” The examples, “an anchor” or “some weapon,” drawn from the world of navigation and warfare respectively, presumably represent parts of a speech connected to naval or military matters. Quintilian does not, however, elaborate on them.

It may be said of all three rhetorical treatises that they leave readers to their own devices where striking images are concerned, providing almost no concrete examples. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* gives us only one for *memoria rerum*. It involves a legal case in which the prosecutor claims the defendant poisoned a man to obtain his inheritance and that several others were witnesses to the act. To best remember the details of this case, the author proposes that we picture

the man in question as lying ill in bed, if we know this person. If we do not know him, we shall yet take some one to be our invalid, but not a man of the lowest class, so that he may come to mind at once. And we shall place the defendant at the bedside, holding in his right hand a cup, and in his left, tablets, and on the fourth finger, a ram’s testicles. In this way we can have in memory the man who was poisoned, the witnesses, and the inheritance. (*Ad Herennium* III.xx.).

The cup should remind the speaker of the poison, the tablets of the motivation for the crime (i.e., the inheritance), and the testicles on the fourth finger, of the four witnesses (i.e., *testes*).

It is difficult for modern man living in a documentary rather than memorial culture to appreciate the intensity of outward and inward vision required for full mastery of the art of memory. Cicero recognized that Simonides’ invention of the *loci* and *imagines* method rested not just on the importance of order but also on man’s intense dependence on his sense of sight. In *De oratore*, he writes:

It has been sagaciously discerned by Simonides or else discovered by some other person, that the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things that have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and that consequently perceptions received by the ears or by

reflexion can be most easily retained in the mind if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes. (*De oratore* III.lxxxvii.357.)<sup>180</sup>

Ancient mnemotechnic, or the art of memory, required inner vision of painstaking detail and an almost searing clarity. Cicero defends image-based mnemonic from “unscientific” detractors who declared “that memory is crushed beneath a weight of images and even what might have been retained by nature unassisted is obscured” by citing “eminent people with almost superhuman powers of memory” who thrived using traditional art of memory techniques (*De oratore* III.lxxxvii.360.).

Quintilian, however, had his doubts about a purely image-based memory technique, and recommended simpler methods, like learning speeches “piecemeal, since there is nothing so bad for the memory as being overburdened [ . . . studying] a passage by heart from the same tablets on which [we] had committed it to writing [ . . . , keeping the mind alert] by the sound of the voice, so that the memory may derive assistance from the double effort of speaking and listening [ . . . , testing] ourselves from time to time . . . good health, sound digestion, and freedom from other preoccupations of mind” and dividing information into manageable and logical parts. In the end, “[t]he most important thing is to learn much by heart and to think much, and, if possible, to do this daily, since there is nothing that is more increased by practice or impaired by neglect than memory” (*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.27-40.). Quintilian clearly recognizes the psychosomatic effort needed for memory to function properly and therefore recommends that the orator strive after health of the body as well as of the mind. Intentional study of the same writing tablets appeals to both the eyes and the ears at once and thereby reinforces learned material, which is most liable to be memorized when duly organized and partitioned. Daily, rigorous practice is also helpful. And finally, fear of forgetting proves to be an important source of motivation. “For this reason,” Quintilian declares, “I regard it as a mistake to permit the student to be prompted or to consult his manuscript, since such practices merely encourage carelessness, and no one will ever realize that he has not got his theme by heart, if he has no fear of forgetting it”

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<sup>180</sup> Cicero’s insight qualifies the ear-based Protestant sermon culture of which Donne formed a part. While Donne’s preaching was primarily an aural experience, it became visual through intense internal image-formation.

(*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.45.). This was an injunction that seventeenth-century preachers took very much to heart.

### II.3.5. *Ars Memoriae* Enters the Renaissance<sup>181</sup>

The Renaissance witnessed the rebirth of numerous Antique genres, including the *ars memoriae* treatise. Such treatises gained intense popularity with the advent of printing, which could be viewed as a type of rival technology negating the need for virtuosic feats of memory. The first printed *ars memoriae* treatise, in the form of an appendix to the *Oratoriae artis epitome* of Jacobus Publicius, appeared in 1482. The genre remained highly popular throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Yates 106). During this time coinciding with the zenith of the Northern Renaissance, the art of memory branched out in five directions: post-Scholastic, secularized, iconoclastic, occultist and memory theater, the latter two overlapping significantly.

Scholastic theologians passed on the rules which had, during the Middle Ages, entered the service of faith. The Order of Preachers, or Dominican Order, of which Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas were members, became the standard-bearer for the Christianized mnemotechnic. Theoreticians like Johannes Romberch (1480-1532) and Cosmas Rosselius (d. 1578), with their classic treatises entitled *Congestorium artificiosae memoriae* (1520) and the *Thesaurus artificiosae memoriae* (1579), were at the forefront of this tradition.<sup>182</sup>

With the flowering of the Renaissance, there arose a need for a mnemotechnic to satisfy secular ambitions. Humanist schools trained their students for brilliant careers in

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<sup>181</sup> In what follows, I provide a brief overview of the fate of the art of memory in the Renaissance. Sources as recent as the 2007 Rossington-Whitehead memory studies anthology implicitly acknowledge that there have been, since Yates' 1966 monograph, no comprehensive contributions to scholarship on Renaissance *ars memoriae*. Wishing to place Donne's own reception of the art of memory into its proper context, I have no choice but to rely on the volume *The Art of Memory*.

<sup>182</sup> Romberch expanded the loci repertoire by suggesting the use of the cosmos, (with the spheres of the elements surrounding the earth, then the spheres of the planets and stars, and the Empyrean heavens), the signs of the zodiac and the various buildings of a contemporary abbey as memory places. His contribution to the realm of images consists in the discussion of a visual alphabet in which various images stood for letters of the alphabet, and words could be 'spelled out' using sequences of images. Yates cites a humorous example of Romberch's suggestion for memorizing the word *aer*, air: we have only to picture an Ass, and Elephant, and a Rhinocerus standing side by side to 'write' the concept onto the chosen memory place! (Yates 115-19). Rossellius follows his fellow Dominican closely. He provides an elaborately detailed, Dantesque description of the places and sub-places of Heaven and Hell, which he warmly recommends as loci for the artificial memory (Yates 122).



public life as advisers to rulers, lawyers, diplomats (Rivers 128). The enterprising jurist Peter of Ravenna (1448-1508) created an immensely successful book of secularized mnemotechnic entitled *Phoenix seu artificiosa memoria* (1491). Peter of Ravenna managed both to secularize and to commercialize mnemotechnic in his self-promoting handbook, which was translated into various languages and published throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in cities as diverse as Bologna, Venice, Vicenza, Cologne, and Vienna.<sup>183</sup>

At the height of Humanism in the sixteenth century, there was much reflection concerning rhetoric and its parts, which formed an integral part of Humanist curricula. Cicero's venerable fivefold division was challenged, abridged, or rearranged.<sup>184</sup> Sixteenth-century thinkers like Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) and Peter Ramus (1515-1572) subscribed to Quintilian's doubts and were skeptical of *ars memoriae*, which they dismissed as 'medieval.' Ramus, a French Huguenot who lost his life in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, moved memory from rhetoric to dialectic and removed *imagines agentes* from memory. In his *Scholae in liberales artes*, Ramus contends that memory, now an element of dialectic rather than rhetoric, is best aided by recognizing the logical relations between bits of information we wish to remember rather than by associating these bits of information with striking images.<sup>185</sup> In his structuring of information, Ramus could not separate himself entirely from the visual, but by eliminating the need for striking images, he performed a kind of interior iconoclasm, which, alongside his martyr's death, popularized his work in predominantly Protestant countries, including England (Yates 234-35).

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<sup>183</sup> Peter recommends unfrequented churches as the best loci for memory training but encourages his readers to travel widely and visit the greatest number of buildings possible with the express intention of acquiring memory places. His discussion both of *loci* and of *imagines* is purely pragmatic and devoid of all theological content, though the author does boast that he could repeat from memory all of cannon law using the methods described in his handbook (Yates 112-13).

<sup>184</sup> This may well have been a result of Quintilian's skepticism. The author of *Institutio oratoria*, after describing the places and images method, did not hesitate to voice his doubts, suggesting both that *memoria*, and *pronuntiatio/actio* should not be regarded as parts of the rhetorical process because they belong to nature not to art and that the best method for improving memory was good old-fashioned hard work and repetition.

<sup>185</sup> His method was to organize information into subjects, which were then further divided into "a series of dichotomized classifications" through which one descended to the "specials" or "individual aspects" (Yates 232).

The beginnings of Renaissance occult memory can be traced to a mystical Majorcan named Ramon Lull (1235-1316). Lull, a contemporary of St. Thomas Aquinas, conceived of memory as the point of entry into the world of occult knowledge. He developed his art, known thereafter as the Art of Ramon Lull, after a spiritual experience on Mount Randa in Majorca during which “he saw the attributes of God . . . infusing the whole creation.” Lull discussed the art in a vast number of works, most notably his *Ars Magna* (1305-1308). The art of Ramon Lull was combinatory and meditative.<sup>186</sup> The Art of Ramon Lull was based on first causes and philosophic ‘reals,’ not empirical knowledge and was therefore Platonic rather than Aristotelian. It influenced other thinkers in the Renaissance occult tradition, notably Giulio Camillo (1480-1544), Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) and Robert Fludd (1574-1637).

Camillo and Fludd created so-called memory theaters—actual buildings—constructed in a neo-Platonic spirit to mirror the ultimate realities of the cosmos and dedicated to the storage of scrolls and codices holding all the knowledge available to Renaissance man. These documents were kept in drawers and the ardent seeker of knowledge had only to withdraw the drawers, one by one, to read and learn their contents. After much dedicated study, he would be able to simply enter the theater and ‘behold’ the cosmos of human knowledge. The very word theater comes from the Greek θέατρον, which in turn is related to the verb θεάομαι, meaning ‘to observe,’ as well

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<sup>186</sup> Lull based his art on the Names or attributes of God—Bonitas, Magnitudo, Eternitas, Potestas, Sapientia, Voluntas, Virtus, Veritas and Gloria—which he abbreviated as B C D E F G H I K. These attributes of God were present, to varying degrees, at all nine levels of Creation: Deus, Angelus, Coelum, Homo, Imaginativa (man’s imagination), Sensitiva (animal creation), Vegetativa (plant creation), Elementativa (the four elements), Instrumentativa (the arts and sciences). The circle (for eternity), the square (for the four elements) and the triangle (for Holy Trinity and the Augustinian memory/intellect/will triad) served as the geometric basis of the art. The mechanism of the art consisted in creating sets of concentric *rotae* or wheels with the divine attributes and/or levels of creation written on the rim. On some figures, the various attributes formed the corners of all the possible triangles and squares that could be drawn between them. As the wheels spun around, various combinations of attributes and levels of creation came up, and the task of the practitioner was to meditate on these combinations. Behind Lull’s art burned the fire of missionary zeal. The tradition of the Names or attributes of God was strong in both the Jewish and the Islamic mystical tradition, the Cabala and Sufism. The cosmological elements of the art were also widely accepted in the three great monotheistic faith traditions. Because it was based on truths accepted by all, he was sure that if Jews and Muslims were to practice the Art with him, they would come to accept the ultimate truth of Christianity. Lull’s Art is related to memory in that it was meant to be used by all three powers of the soul: memory, will, and intellect. In the *Arbor scientiae*, Lull suggested that practitioners memorize his wheels and figures and their contents. He called this process *ars memorativa* and most likely conceived of the circles, triangles and squares as places and the attributes as images (Yates 173-98).

as the Greek word for God, Θεός, the ultimate Beholder. The constructors of memory theaters were audacious men who yearned to see creation with the breadth and depth unique to our omniscient God.

Giordano Bruno, a Dominican friar recognized by his order for his mastery of the *ars memoriae* technique, was the author of three treatises on the art of memory, *Shadows* (1582), *Circe* (1582), and *Seals* (1583) (Yates 202). Bruno had intense admiration for St. Thomas Aquinas and for Ramon Lull and sought, in his works, to combine the Dominican memory tradition with the Art of Ramon Lull. *Seals*, published during Bruno's visit to England, combines memory and astrology. Bruno attempts to create an *ars memoriae* more powerful than those that have gone before. Its power is to come from magical images and astronomical places. Bruno believed that if his *loci* corresponded to astrological realities, he would be using the power of nature herself to organize the human psyche (Yates 251).

Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, occultism and the natural sciences parted ways. Even so, certain occultist memory practices were incorporated into the scientific method. Lull's insistence that man could manipulate the contents of his memory to gain knowledge about reality made him a forerunner of the New Science. The memory theaters of Camillo and Fludd and Bruno's magic memory held up the possibility that if man painstakingly assembled every bit of information under the sun and arranged it in a system that reflected the structure of the universe (of reality) he could behold connections and relationships only available to the Eye of God.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), René Descartes (1586-1650) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), pioneers of the scientific method, considered memory an important aid to the inductive method.<sup>187</sup> During the birth throes of the New Science, the art of memory went from "a method of memorising the encyclopaedia of knowledge, of

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<sup>187</sup> Bacon, in his *Novum Organon*, explained that memory facilitates scientific discovery by allowing us to hold information in our minds long enough to see the interconnections. In *Cogitationes privatae*, Descartes pointed out that all things could be reduced to their common causes if connections were traced back far enough with the help of memory. Leibniz picked up a more occultist thread when proposing in his *Dissertatio de arte combinatoria* that man assign mathematical values to every notion under the heavens. Then, instead of arguing or physically fighting in the name of truth, those on two sides of an issue would simply sit down and 'calculate' who was correct. This method, as idealistic as it is beautiful, was called the universal calculus.

reflecting the world in memory, to an aid for investigating the encyclopaedia and the world with the object of discovering new knowledge” (Yates 368-69).

One of Frances Yates’ most promising insights is presented in a provocative chapter entitled “Medieval Memory and the Formation of Imagery.” The author proposes that although the art of memory is an invisible art, it may have become externalized when the idea of harmoniously sized, well lit *loci* became a primary contributor to the development of perspective in early Renaissance (she mentions Giotto as a case in point) (Yates 93) and the need for striking and complex images, grotesque and beautiful, may well have brought about a proliferation of images in Western visual art (Yates 91). It is very probable that the conceit, or *conchetto*, developed in Italy out of the rhetorician’s quest for ever more striking images. There has been much scholarly debate on how exactly the *conchetto*, a witty Italian device, traveled hundreds of kilometers to become the English Metaphysical conceit. Though the answer to this question presently lies beyond our scope, it would be fruitful to look to handbooks of secular rhetoric that traveled Europe at the time. They may well have been the vehicles by which the hunger for *imagines agentes* arrived in Donne’s homeland.<sup>188</sup>

### **II.3.6. John Donne Meets *Ars Memoriae***

John Donne, as will be shown in a later chapter,<sup>189</sup> was intimately familiar with the architectural mnemonic, which he most likely mastered as part of his rhetorical training at Oxford University. In England, the “sons of prosperous husbandmen and yeomen, burgesses from the towns, country gentry, professional men and the lower ranks of the titled” attended the universities of Oxford and Cambridge for a period four or more years to become “priests, country gentlemen, school teachers, academics, royal servants, doctors, lawyers and tradesmen” (Mack 48). In any given year, the entering class at the two universities (about 700 students per year) corresponded to a little more than one percent of all males born in their year. University study was a great privilege. Students

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<sup>188</sup> William E. Engel points out that “Memory, who is after all the mother of the muses [i.e., the goddess Mnemosyne bore Zeus nine daughters], brings into being all manner of intellectual creativity” (Engel 26).

<sup>189</sup> Cf. section IV.1. below.

entered at the age of fifteen or sixteen and received their Bachelor's Degree four years after matriculation. Some attended the university for just two or three years as "gentlemen commoners" and left without taking a degree. Approximately twelve percent of Bachelors went on to attain higher degrees; the overwhelming majority of graduate students studied theology (Mack 50). The *Septem Artes Liberales*, consisting of the well known divisions into the *Trivium*, or 'three ways,' of grammar, logic/dialectic, rhetoric and *Quadrivium*, or 'four ways,' of geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy, continued throughout the Renaissance to form the basis of higher education. In specially established Humanist schools and later and gradually, at the universities, emphasis shifted towards a more practical knowledge that young graduates could put to use in the service of society. The secularization of learning had begun (Rivers 128).

John Donne matriculated at Hart Hall in Oxford in 1584, thereby entering a rigorous four-year course on the Trivium. Though students read widely in the fields of history, mathematics, physics, ethics, theology, modern languages and Latin and Greek, "classical literature, rhetoric and dialectic remained at the centre of official college and university teaching" (Mack 50). Cambridge students devoted one year entirely to rhetoric, their Oxford counterparts two. A catalogue of books on rhetoric belonging to students who had died in residence includes Cicero's *Orations*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and, in slightly smaller numbers, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, Cicero's *De oratore* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Of Renaissance rhetorical manuals, Erasmus' *Ecclesiastes* and works by Melanchthon and Omer Talon prove most frequent (Mack 52).

In the field of logic or dialectic, to which Cambridge students devoted two years and Oxfordians two and a half, Aristotle's *Logic* was the core classical text. Of the Renaissance dialecticians, Rudolph Agricola (author of *De inventione dialectica*) and Melanchthon gradually ceded to Ramus in the 1570s (Mack 55-56). Texts in rhetoric and dialectic laid much-needed groundwork for the public disputations and declamations in which all students were required to participate. At Oxford in the time of John Donne, students in their second year and beyond were expected to engage in public

disputation at least once every term and were encouraged to attend as many such disputations and declamations as possible.

In the years spent at Oxford, John Donne had many chances to come in intimate contact with the great ancient masters of rhetoric and to absorb Peter Ramus' reformed, humanist dialectic. The most important English-language works on rhetoric in circulation during his youth include: Leonard Cox's *Arte or Crafte of Rhetoryke* (1532) (an amplified translation of Melanchthon's *Institutiones rhetoricae*), Thomas Wilson's *The Art of Rhetorique*, which draws on classical and Continental Renaissance sources, Dudley Fenner's *Arte of Rhetorique* (1584, 1588) and Abraham Fraunce's *Arcadian Rhetorike* (1584), the latter two being a translation and an adaptation of Ramus' rhetoric manual (Mack 78). Donne's knowledge of the above works is conjectural but possible.

Suggestively, Donne may have had some knowledge of the occult memory tradition. In 1584, the very year of his matriculation at Oxford, a memory controversy broke out between Alexander Dicson, an ardent follower of Bruno, and William Perkins, a Cambridge Ramist (Yates 266). The debate, played out over several years and a series of polemical writings, tapped into one of the central issues of the Reformation, the interpretation of God's commandment against graven images. Dicson advocated Bruno's wildly imaginative use of striking images while Perkins, a staunch Puritan, swore by Ramus' austere, iconoclastic memory technique. It is as fascinating to ponder a young Donne's possible reaction to the virulent memory debates as it is to consider the possibility that, later in life, he came in contact with the memory theater designed by his exact contemporary and countryman, Robert Fludd. These intellectual influences are gossamer threads awaiting the sunlight of historical truth.

#### **II.4. A Syncretic View**

In Western philosophy, serious theorizing about memory began in Antiquity, and is rooted both in Hellenic and in Latin culture. A fundamental distinction within the tradition, a distinction that exists to the present day, is between dialectical/philosophical

and rhetorical memory.<sup>190</sup> Theories of dialectical memory begin with Greek moral philosophy, notably Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus* and Aristotle's treatise *De memoria et reminscientia* (*On the Memory and Recollection*), an appendix to *De anima* (*On the Soul*). Both texts treat of recollection as the art of thinking, a mode of reasoning. They emphasize the insoluble tie between memory and understanding. Rhetorical memory is developed in the Roman treatises on oratory composed between 100 BC and AD 100. In the rhetorical framework, memory is an art or craft, a set of acquired techniques to complement natural ability (Richards 21). Strictly speaking, we might say that Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas wrote primarily about dialectical memory, while the Ad Herennian author, Cicero and Quintilian belong to the rhetorical tradition.

Within the philosophical approach, Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle created an important line of division that was to stretch across the centuries. In his *Phaedrus*, Plato developed the idea that knowledge of the truth consists in remembering Ideas once seen by all souls in their country of origin, in the World of Ideas. Remembering is nothing but a recognition of innate truths. Man can remember, and construct knowledge out of, that which he never 'sensed.' Aristotle, on the other hand, in his *De memoria et reminscientia* based his discussion of memory on how the mind recalls information. The main emphasis throughout his study is on the associative and visual nature of memory. Only sense impressions and their abstractions may be stored in the memory, and all contents of the memory have visual and affective qualities enabling recall (Richards 21).

The Platonic concept of anamnesis found its way into the early works of St. Augustine. Further Platonic elements in Augustine's thought are the belief, related to the concept of anamnesis, that certain truths (i.e., knowledge of God) are innate to the soul, and his theory of divine illumination whereby man comprehends *a priori* truths with the help of Christ, the Inner Teacher.<sup>191</sup> For Augustine, "*credo ut intelligam* [i.e., I believe

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<sup>190</sup> We may (cautiously) call these types of memory 'natural' and 'artificial' respectively.

<sup>191</sup> "The Augustinian tradition had come early to the insistence that the *a priori* proof, proceeding as it does from cause to effect, is the surest mode of demonstration; all other truths depend upon it and all sciences are trustworthy only as they are ordered to the knowledge of God; the nature of things in general must be determined before the nature of anything may be investigated. Aquinas agrees that the *a priori* proof is surer, but he insists that it is impossible to proceed from the nature of God to his effects because the nature of God is not known . . . we know him only through his effects" (McKeon 437-38).

that I may understand] always takes precedence over the *cogito ergo sum*” (Mourant 49). “The chief ancient rival of the doctrine of illumination is the Aristotelian idea of abstraction” (Matthews 181). In his *Commentary on De Memoria et reminiscencia*, Aquinas establishes the principle fundamental to his epistemology: “Man cannot understand without images [*phantasmata*]; the image is a similitude of a corporeal thing, but understanding is of universals which are to be abstracted from particulars” (Masselink, “Donne’s Epistemology” 58). Augustine “believes that men are capable of imageless thought [i.e., at the levels of intellectual memory, *memoria sui* and *memoria Dei*]” and “suggests that Christ, the inner teacher, provides the soul with those truths inaccessible via the senses. Thus, for example, the memories of all people contain visions of God” (Ibid.), which come to man by divine illumination. Aquinas, in contrast, holds that “men come to understand even non-corporeal truths only through a process of abstraction from corporeal images.” He “has a doctrine of abstraction . . . whereby God who is not a particular sense object is known by his works, which are” (Ibid.).<sup>192</sup>

Augustine and Aquinas differed both in where memory was located within their system of thought and what they had to say about memory. Augustine’s theory of memory is part of his theory of mind. Indeed, because he equates memory with the mind, we might even state that Augustine’s theory of memory *is* his theory of mind.<sup>193</sup> Through the theory of divine illumination, however, his theory of memory is also connected to his epistemology. It is nearly impossible to overemphasize the importance and vitality of Augustinian memory, best defined as an awareness of the presence of all that is accessible to the soul:

From sensible memory and intelligible memory, memory as the *thesaurus* of all knowledge, and memory as the bearer of divinity, to memory as a function of time and an intimation of eternity, its power is truly profound for

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<sup>192</sup> McKeon goes so far as to say that Aquinas succeeded in reforming the Platonic/ Augustinian doctrine of knowledge (i.e., epistemology), a development which can be “conceived as the beginning of purely philosophical tradition” in which “researches are concerned . . . with problem that were to become traditional in later philosophy” (McKeon 442).

<sup>193</sup> It is difficult to separate Augustine’s theory of mind from, for example, his epistemology or even his ethics. “Augustine made important contributions to every area of philosophy, and there are many appropriate ways of ordering the topics on which he wrote. Furthermore, in Augustine’s work—much more than in the work of a medieval philosopher such as Aquinas, for example—disparate topics are interwoven in such a way that trying to disentangle them would do violence to the thought” (Stump 2).



Saint Augustine. Finally, there is the role of memory in the *cogito sui* eventually leading by a kind of mystical ascent from the images of the Trinity in us to the Divine Trinity itself—the *Memoria Dei, Intelligentia* and *Amor*. (Mourant 52)

Augustine gave memory unprecedented dignity within the human soul. For him, memory leads man to discover inner infinity<sup>194</sup> and to turn inwards and upwards in his search for God. Furthermore, Augustine doesn't merely discuss memory, he hymns it.

Aquinas treated of memory within his theory of mind, as a part of his ethics, and as the starting point of his sense-based epistemology in the systematic, rigorous manner that is the hallmark of Scholasticism. As a place of storage, memory is located within the sensitive soul, second in dignity within the tripartite soul and shared with animals. Memory as the process of recollection, is a habit of the soul, and as good habits are virtues and bad habits vices, memory becomes a virtue to be cultivated within the cardinal virtue of Prudence, which Aquinas highlights as a kind of first among equals (the others being Temperance, Fortitude and Justice). Memory, both as the capacity for storage and the subsequent process of recollection, is a prerequisite for reasoning, which happens 'in' the intellective soul and is vital to the search for God. Memory is a cog in the intricate psychosomatic machinery of man which was made, body and tripartite soul, to seek God and find him.

In the Renaissance, *ars memoriae* blossomed into five flowers—post-Scholastic, secularized, iconoclastic, occultist and memory theater—which, to continue the metaphor, went on to cross-pollinate one another in fertile and creative ways. While all five approaches were primarily rhetorical, their dialectical underpinnings were vastly different. The post-Scholastic approach was decidedly Aristotelian, while the occultist and memory theater branches clearly hearkened back to Plato.<sup>195</sup>

Finally, it is counterproductive to set up a strict binary opposition between natural and artificial memory, which are in a clear dialectical relationship. Saint

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<sup>194</sup> For this insight, I am indebted to Miklós Vassányi.

<sup>195</sup> For example, memory theaters were actual physical structures in which man can view the entire body of knowledge arranged "in relation to the [cosmic] realities . . . Camillo's memory system is based (so he believes) on archetypes of reality on which depend secondary images covering the whole realm of nature and of man" (Yates 37).

Augustine, as both a recognized teacher and a brilliant practitioner of the art of rhetoric, was well-versed in Roman developments in artificial memory. His identification of the memory as a *thesaurus* or treasure-house,<sup>196</sup> clearly echoes the Ad Herennian author<sup>197</sup> and Quintilian.<sup>198</sup> His vision of the ‘halls’ and ‘caves’ of memory crowded with a myriad impressions of sense objects, whose images had entered through the five gateways of the senses, recalls a somewhat cluttered version of the ordered *loci et imagines* recommended rhetorical handbooks. Saint Thomas, too, in his discussion of memory within the Treatise on Prudence and Justice in the *Summa Theologiae*,<sup>199</sup> quotes *Rhetorica ad Herennium* as he shares advice on enhancing the natural memory through the artifice of mnemotechnic. His notable substitution of ‘solicitude’ for ‘solitude’ as the condition for forming lasting memory images adds a devotional dimension to a rhetorical skill.

In parallel, the classical authors of the Roman rhetorical handbooks clearly recognized that their ‘art’ or ‘craft’ did not contradict but rather—to use an agricultural metaphor—‘cultivated’ nature. The Ad Herennian author,<sup>200</sup> as well as Cicero<sup>201</sup> and Quintilian,<sup>202</sup> conceived of the architectural mnemonic as *built*, if you will, on the natural foundations of human psychology, primarily that human cognition is profoundly visual and man uses spatial metaphors to describe his interior workings.

John Donne was, as any serious reader of his work can attest, a syncretic and not a systematic thinker.<sup>203</sup> In his own appeal to memory, he drew on Augustine for his

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. section II.1.3. on the sensible memory and Augustine’s theory of perception.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. “Now let me turn to the treasure-house of the ideas supplied by Invention, to the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric, the Memory” (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* III.xvi.).

<sup>198</sup> Cf. “Memory has been called the treasure-house of eloquence” (*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.1.).

<sup>199</sup> Cf. section II.2.5. on memory training as exercise in virtue.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. “There are then two kinds of memory: one natural, and the other the product of art. The natural memory is that memory which is imbedded in our minds, born simultaneously with thought. The artificial memory is that memory which is strengthened by a kind of training and a system of discipline. But just as in everything else the merit of natural excellence often rivals acquired learning, and art, in its turn, reinforces and develops the natural advantages, so does it happen in this instance” (*Ad Herennium* III.16.).

<sup>201</sup> Cf. “[T]he chief source of this endowment [i.e., memory], as of all things I have spoken of before, is nature [... artificial memory practice] fosters and strengthens things that have already sprung to birth within us” (*De oratore* III.lxxxvii.356.).

<sup>202</sup> Cf. “Some regard memory as being no more than one of nature’s gifts; and this view is no doubt true to a great extent; but, like everything else, memory may be improved by cultivation” (*Institutio oratoria* XI.2.1.).

<sup>203</sup> The two terms are, of course, not mutually exclusive.

theory of mind, Aquinas for the sense-based link between memory and understanding (i.e., for the foundations of his epistemology), and on mnemotechnic for artful (and artificial) ways to cultivate man's God-given memory. In what follows, we will examine his Augustinian and Thomistic memory theory and mnemotechnical memory practice.

### III. Donne's Theology of Memory

#### III.1. The Six 'Memory-Sermons'

After enjoying a syncretic view of Augustinian and Thomistic memory and *ars memoriae*, we must separate the strands yet again to better reconstruct Donne's theory and practice of memory. The present chapter examines Donne's concept of memory from the dialectical/philosophical angle. This will be complemented, in the following chapter, by an exploration of his relation to memory from a rhetorical point of view.

The concept of memory is mentioned and/or thematized at some length in seventy one, that is nearly one half, of Donne's 160 sermons. Of this prodigious number, six sermons stand out as important sources of his unique theology of memory. They are entitled: 1) *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.3.*,<sup>204</sup> 2) *A Sermon of Vaediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1.*,<sup>205</sup> 3) *Preached at Lincolns Inne upon Trinity-Sunday. 1620. Gen. 18. 25.*,<sup>206</sup> 4) *Preached at S. Pauls upon Whitsunday. 1628. John 14.26.*,<sup>207</sup> 5) *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26.*,<sup>208</sup> and the undated 6) *Preached at a Christning. I John 5. 7,8.*<sup>209</sup> A brief survey of the dates reveals to us Donne's heightened concern with memory at the beginning of his preaching career and his return to the topic in the last years before his death. It is as if he had laid the topic aside for a while and remembered to address it again as the time of his ministry drew to a close. Furthermore, the occasions for which the six sermons were composed and the Bible verses on which they were based point very strongly to a Trinitarian and therefore Augustinian appeal to memory. Sermons 3-6 were all given at holidays or events connected to the Holy Trinity. Sermon 3 was preached on Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after Pentecost; Sermon 4 was given on Whitsunday, the Sunday of Pentecost which celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and is the

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<sup>204</sup> II, No.2.

<sup>205</sup> II, No.11.

<sup>206</sup> III, No.5.

<sup>207</sup> VIII, No.11.

<sup>208</sup> IX, No.2.

<sup>209</sup> V, No.6. Henceforth, I refer to these sermons by their number in the above sequence.

birthday of the church; Sermon 5 takes as its text the verse from Genesis 1.26<sup>210</sup> whose plural pronoun is read in the Christian tradition as the earliest indication of the existence of the Holy Trinity, and sermon 6 was preached at a christening, the act of Christian initiation which, according to biblical injunction,<sup>211</sup> also happens in the name of the Holy Trinity. In all six sermons, memory is clearly associated with the workings of the Holy Spirit. This association is biblical<sup>212</sup> and is not, to my knowledge, emphasized by St. Augustine. A closer study of the memory passages in the six sermons above as well as select passages scattered throughout the sermonic oeuvre reveals an approach to memory that amalgamates both Augustinian and Thomistic elements. In the past, critics have told their own story of Donne's memory and have been content to illustrate it with appropriate passages drawn at random from sermons. Here, for the space of six sermons, I allow Donne to present his own theology of memory within the context of each entire sermon, in the order and to the extent he himself chose.

### III.1.1. Sermon 1

This sermon, preached sometime in the spring or summer of 1618, is the first in Donne's oeuvre to deal explicitly and at length with the subject of memory. In 1618, Donne gave a series of five sermons on Psalm 38 covering verses 2, 3, 4 (twice) and 9. In the first sermon of the series, he expresses his deep love for the Psalms and for the Epistles of St. Paul, which he compares to the two dishes he most enjoys serving his congregation, for "as a hearty entertainer offers to others, the meat which he loves best himself, so doe I oftenest present to Gods people, in these Congregations, the meditations which I feed upon at home, in those two Scriptures" (II, 49).<sup>213</sup> He loves

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<sup>210</sup> Cf. "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" (*Authorized (King James) Version*, Gen. 1.26). All subsequent Bible quotations, unless quoted directly from a sermon, are from the *Authorized Version*. Donne himself had been brought up on the Vulgate, for which he evinced great fondness throughout his preaching career (X, 319). When quoting in English, Donne referred to the Coverdale Bible, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, and the Authorized Version or King James Bible (X, 324).

<sup>211</sup> Cf. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. 28.19).

<sup>212</sup> Cf. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14.26).

<sup>213</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.2., 1.*

them because Augustine and Chrysostom loved them and because he has always had a deep affinity for poems and letters.

The Psalms, according to Donne, are so precious that they must be kept under lock and key, corresponding respectively to the analogy of the Christian faith and the title of the psalm which opens to us its purpose. The key to Psalm 38, Donne notes, is repentance, a vital first step in coming closer to God. It is also an action inextricably bound up with the faculty of memory, “The faculty that is awakened here, is our *Memory*.” Donne is quick to position memory in a Trinitarian conception of the soul, which he derives from the well-known passage in Genesis 1:26 mentioned above:

As God, one *God* created us, so wee have a soul, *one soul*, that represents, and is some image of that one God; As the three Persons of the *Trinity* created us, so we have, in our one soul, a *threefold impression* of that image, and, as Saint *Bernard* calls it, *A trinity from the Trinity*, in those *three faculties* of the soul, the *Understanding*, the *Will*, and the *Memory*. (II, 72-73)<sup>214</sup>

Here, he attributes the Trinitarian concept of the soul to Saint Bernard, though its ultimate source is Book XIV of *De Trinitate*.<sup>215</sup>

Donne differs from Augustine who makes no explicit connections between the faculties of the triune soul and the persons of the Trinity, although he does consistently list the three faculties in the same order—memory, understanding, and will—leading one to associate them with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit respectively. Augustine’s highlighting of the faculty of memory, at least in *De Trinitate*, is subtle and implicit, while Donne, who admits all three are fallen, nevertheless explicitly identifies

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<sup>214</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.3., 1-2.*

<sup>212</sup> Jane Mueller cites three works that may have directly influenced Donne’s (ultimately Augustinian) Trinitarian conception of the soul. St. Bernard’s *Tractatus de gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* and St. Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* were two widely known tracts on spiritual development and regeneration through exercise of the soul’s three faculties. This Augustinian program for the Christian life was also adopted by St. Ignatius of Loyola in his *Exercitia spiritualis* (31). As Donne attributes the concept to St. Bernard, he most likely adopted it from either the *Tractatus de gradibus* or the immensely popular *Sermones super cantica canticorum*, Sermo 11, Cap. 5., which also features a short discussion of the three faculties of the soul. Considering the significant Bernardine presence in the sermons (cf. the footnotes of section II.2.1. above), a thorough study of St. Bernard’s influence on Donne, including of his role in mediating Augustine’s Trinitarian psychology, will be a fruitful contribution to Donne scholarship.

the memory as the least prone to sin.<sup>216</sup> In his rejection of the understanding as the primary road to salvation, Donne quotes biblical passages emphasizing the inscrutability of God's judgments, decrees and secrets, while in a lengthy passage denouncing the faculty of the will, he repeats the words *noluit* and *noluerunt*, 'he does not want to' and 'they do not want to' eight times to emphasize the rebelliousness of human will in the face of the commandments of God and the exhortations of the prophets.<sup>217</sup> Finally, it is the memory that is singled out as the surest way to God:

Of our perverseness in both faculties, *understanding*, and *will*, God may complain . . . for, for the rectifying of the *will*, the *understanding* must be rectified; and that implies great difficulty: But the *memory* is so familiar, and so present, and so ready a faculty, as will always answer, if we will but speak to it, and aske it, *what God hath done for us, or for others*. The art of *salvation*, is but the art of *memory*. (II, 73)<sup>218</sup>

The adjectives used to describe memory—familiar, present, ready—all convey a sense of immediacy, of easy access. 'Present' especially resonates with Augustine's view of the memory as the present of things past, the present of things present and the present of things to come.<sup>219</sup> Through biblical instances, from the giving of the Law to the establishment of the Eucharist, Donne cites God's appeals to man's memory; Old Testament man is expected to keep the Law in his memory and to perform it while New Testament man is entrusted with remembering Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>220</sup> God never forgets man, but when he is said to remember man, this is a scriptural metaphor for the bestowal of grace. Past, present and future are subsumed by memory as Donne exhorts his congregation to remember: "*Memorare novissima*, remember the *last* things, and

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<sup>216</sup> Cf. our discussion in section II.1.7. above, especially concerning the egalitarian treatment of the three faculties and the possibility of a tentative alignment between the Father and memory, the Son and understanding, and the Holy Spirit and will/love.

<sup>217</sup> Hickey points out that according to Donne, man may be convinced by appeals to his intellect, but such conviction is only reached with difficulty and conviction does not automatically mean persuasion. Quoting Donne, Hickey remarks that human beings often understand that what they are doing is wrong and proceed to do it despite their better understanding (30-31).

<sup>218</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.3., 2.*

<sup>219</sup> Cf. sections II.1.2. and II.1.6., especially the discussion of memory's relation to time, above.

<sup>220</sup> Hickey develops this idea further, arguing that it is precisely the office of the church to appeal to the memory through liturgy (33). Guibory, too, notes that Donne sees the superiority of Christian over Jewish ceremonies in that they place greater emphasis on the memory (262).

*fear* will keep thee from sinning; *Memorare praeterita*, remember the *first* things, what God hath done for thee, and *love*, (love, which, mis-placed, hath transported thee upon many sins) love will keep thee from sinning” (II, 74).<sup>221</sup> With the aid of memory, man is not only able to recall the good deeds of God and evoke love, but also to foresee, to imagine the Day of Judgment and harness the fear it evokes to live better a life.<sup>222</sup>

Donne continues, as the sermons progresses, to place ever greater emphasis on the faculty of memory. Flirting with the idea of anamnesis which Augustine had taken up in earlier works then rejected in *Retractationes*, he states that salvation is not so much contingent on increasing knowledge of God as on remembering what one already knows:

*Plato* plac'd all learning in the memory; wee may place all Religion in the memory too: All knowledge, that seems new to day, says *Plato*, is but a remembring of *that*, which your soul new before. All instruction, which we can give you today, is but the remembring you of the mercies of God, which have been *new every morning*. (II, 74)<sup>223</sup>

Metaphorically speaking, each man has a personal Bible in his memory for he can remember his own Genesis (birth), his own Exodus (delivery from calamity), his own Leviticus (laws he must keep), up to the Book of Revelation (a premonition of his fate in the afterlife).<sup>224</sup> “There may be enough,” Donne writes, “in *remembring our selves*;

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<sup>221</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.3., 3.*

<sup>222</sup> Guibbory links Donne’s conception of memory’s timelessness to *De Trinitate* XIV.9. and makes an interesting connection Cicero’s *De Inventione*, specifically to the passage concerning *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *providentia* as the parts of the virtue of Prudence. She argues that “just as memory assumes for Donne the most important position in the trinity of the rational soul, so . . . he has memory appropriate much of the province of *intelligentia* and *providentia*” (267). Her insight connecting the belief that memory, as a treasury of examples from the past, can inform the present and serve as a guide to the future, to secular Renaissance historiography is equally valid (266).

<sup>223</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.3., 3.*

<sup>224</sup> I disagree with Guibbory who sees this passage as affirming Donne’s (Platonic) Augustinianism that “the teacher simply reminds his pupils to search within for the knowledge they already contain” (269). Instead, I believe that here Donne is referring to a kind of typological relationship between individual lives and Biblical history. His point is that by reflecting on God’s presence in their own lives, human beings may learn as much as if they were to read Bible stories or hear a sermon. Chamberlin’s view is more helpful: “For Donne, the preacher reaches his congregation and stirs them to a lively sense of their faith by engaging in their memories the meanings of the words of the text with their own personal history, tumbling it together, and drawing out the implications and associations. The past events that the hearer himself or the nation has experienced become involved in the meditative remembering of the words of Scripture; so the awareness of God’s activity in the world and of His revelation in His Word touches the hearer’s experience and makes it all [his own story]” (117).



but sometimes, that's the hardest of all; many times we are farthest off from our selves; most forgetfull of ourselves" (II, 74).<sup>225</sup> This forgetting of oneself is not the selfless act of transcending an overly insistent ego but rather, a weak sense of *memoria sui*, a shaky self-knowledge and a refusal to admit that, most often, we ourselves are the cause of our own misery. "Remember thy self well, and thou wilt see, it is *because of thy sins* . . . that Gods anger fals . . . upon you" (II, 75).<sup>226</sup> With this statement, Donne returns to the necessity of repentance, which is the logical product of this "*Psalm for Remembrance*" (II, 75).<sup>227</sup>

### III.1.2. Sermon 2

In Sermon 2, Donne takes as his text the admonition of the anonymous author of Ecclesiastes to remember the Creator at all times, especially "now . . . in the dayes of thy youth." He develops the idea according to the 'string of pearls' structure,<sup>228</sup> discussing the line of biblical verse word by word and phrase by phrase. Once again, memory is connected to the "doctrine of repentance" and highlighted as the faculty of the soul most capable of bringing man to God:

Here then [i.e., in Ecclesiastes 12:1] the holy-Ghost takes the neerest way to bring a man to God, by awaking his memory; for, for the understanding, that requires long and cleer instruction; and the will requires an instructed understanding before, and is in it self the blindest and boldest faculty; but if the memory doe but fasten upon any of those things which God hath done for us, it is the neerest way to him. (II, 235)<sup>229</sup>

The Augustinian triune structure of the human soul is qualified to show a distinct order among the three faculties. The memory, already described as familiar, present and ready, is now presented as the nearest way to God.<sup>230</sup> Understanding, which requires

<sup>225</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.3., 3.*

<sup>226</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. [Spring or Summer 1618] Psal. 38.3., 4.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> Cf. section IV.1. below.

<sup>229</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 1.*

<sup>230</sup> Cf. "For Donne, indeed, memory's supreme value lies in its ability to reestablish the link between man and God" (Guibbory 269).

instruction and the will, which requires understanding, are two faculties that lag behind. But memory, too, must be stretched and exercised, for human beings have a propensity to remember the beauty and multiplicity of creation without reaching back far enough to the source of all being, the Creator.<sup>231</sup> Donne warns: “thy memory looks not far enough back, if it stick only upon the Creature, and reach not to the Creator, Remember the Creator, and remember thy Creator” (II, 236).<sup>232</sup> The directionality of the passage echoes Augustine’s teachings on the four levels of memory leading man ever inward and upward toward God.<sup>233</sup>

In the Scriptures, Donne explains, memory is not only the antithesis of forgetting, but also of neglect. Remembering is synonymous with ‘considering’ and ‘taking care of.’ This is what an omniscient God does when he ‘remembers’ man.<sup>234</sup> If remembering is not taken in such a general sense but is rather confined to the faculty of the memory, it can be considered “the stomach of the soul, [for] it receives and digests, and turns into good blood, all the benefits formerly exhibited to us in particular, and exhibited to the whole Church of God” (II, 237).<sup>235</sup> Donne, after attributing the Augustinian metaphor to Saint Bernard, praises the ecumenical and unitive nature of memory. Whereas understanding of various events in Scripture divides Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, as does their understanding of the workings of the will, “both Jew and Christian, Papist and Protestant, Puritan and Protestant, are affected with a thankfull acknowledgment of his former mercies and benefits, this issue of that faculty of their memory is alike in them all . . . This is the faculty that God desires to work upon” (II,

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<sup>231</sup> Aquinas, too, proposed memory training as an exercise in virtue. Cf. section II.2.5. above.

<sup>232</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 2.*

<sup>233</sup> Cf. section II.1.3.-II.1.6. above.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. For further possibilities concerning the meaning of God re-remembering or re-collecting man, cf. “Perhaps most importantly . . . the ‘recollection’ of memory is an image, an anticipation, of the resurrection man will have at the Apocalypse, when God will ‘re-collect’ all the ‘scattered’ grains of dust, ‘recompact’ the body, and finally ‘re-unite’ body and soul (VII, 103)” (Guibbory 274).

<sup>235</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 3.*

Guibbory, who sees memory as playing a key role in Donne’s meditative poems, reads the first two lines of *Holy Sonnet XI*, “Wilt thou love God, as he thee? Then digest, / My soul, this wholesome meditation,” as appealing to this same metaphor (ll. 271-72).

237).<sup>236</sup> In other words, there is something primal and basic about communal memory allowing it to unite people of varying and sometimes contradictory convictions by producing in them the deeply unifying feeling of gratitude. Here Donne speaks of memory's appeal to emotions, an appeal that is beyond words and, if not irrational, yet perhaps *arational*. He goes on to refine the image by describing man's individual memory as

The Gallery of the soul, hang'd with so many, and so lively pictures of the goodness and mercies of thy God to thee, as that every one of them shall be a catachism to thee, to instruct thee in all thy duties to him for those mercies: And as a well made, and well plac'd picture, looks alwayes upon him that looks upon it; so shall thy God look upon thee, whose memory is thus contemplating him, and shine upon thine understanding, and rectifie thy will too. (II, 237)<sup>237</sup>

In this profusely rich image, Donne reveals a number of important details about his conception of memory, which is based on the metaphor of the memory as a gallery. Galleries were, in seventeenth-century England, long, ornate corridors lined with paintings and connecting various parts of the house. Donne's gallery is reminiscent of Augustine's *thesaurus*, or treasure house, with added dynamism thanks to its long, narrow shape inviting viewers to proceed from one end to the other.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, the pictures in this gallery are 'lively,' 'well made' and 'well plac'd,' all attributes calling to mind the admonitions towards memorable images.<sup>239</sup> While the images in the gallery may be at the level of sensible and intellective memory, they also have the uncanny quality recalling the famous Mona Lisa, of looking "upon him that looks upon it."<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 3.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> For a discussion of Augustine's *thesaurus*, cf. section II.1.3. above.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. section II.3.4. above for parallels to the construction of *imagines agentes* as presented in the three Latin rhetorical manuals.

<sup>240</sup> In "Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward," the poet is shown progressing towards the west when in fact his vision should be directed towards the east, which is the source of the rising sun and Easter hope. Although his bodily sight is fixed on the west, scenes of Christ's sacrifice, Donne assures himself, "are present yet unto my memory / For that looks towards them; and thou look'st towards me, / O Saviour . . ." (ll. 34-35). Spiritually, he is visiting the gallery of his soul, where scenes of God's mercy present themselves to him, and God himself looks him in the face.

This personal connection and the application to the self of what one sees on the pictures provides the link to *memoria sui* and enables man to construct his identity based on the good things that God has given him personally in the past. Finally, God himself will look upon the careful observer of these living pictures, and as man contemplates him through his capacity of *memoria Dei*, God proceeds to enlighten man's understanding and give new direction to his will.<sup>241</sup> It is important to note the connection between memory and understanding. The pictures lining the gallery of the mind are not hanging there simply to entertain passersby, but rather to instruct, to serve as a 'cathachism.' The link between memory and understanding is thus established, as is the consequent link between the understanding and the will.<sup>242</sup>

Donne's metaphor of the memory as the gallery of the soul may derive from the rudiments of the architectural mnemonic directly, or indirectly via Augustine's *thesaurus*. All levels of Augustinian memory are present in this short passage with one difference: for Donne, images continue to play an important role even at the level of *memoria Dei*.

Donne recommends three vast tableaux of the general delivery of the English nation (from the Spanish Armada and the terror of the Gunpowder Plot) and of the Protestant Church (by allowing it to increase so rapidly that its members soon equaled those of the Catholic persuasion) as fitting paintings for the gallery of the soul. Yet, he notes:

[i]f these bee too large pictures for thy gallery, for thy memory, yet every man hath a pocket picture about him, a manuall, a bosome book, and if he will turn over but one leaf, and remember what God hath done for him even since yesterday, he shall find even by that little branch a navigable river, to sail into that great and endless Sea of Gods mercies towards him, from the beginning of his being. (II, 238)<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Guibbory eloquently calls the memory "that special intersection of God's vision and man's" (270).

<sup>242</sup> Cf. "Even though the understanding may be perplexed and the will perverted, the memory can present such images that the two other faculties may be rectified" (Hickey 32).

<sup>243</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 4.*

In this metaphor, the intensely personal side of memory is revealed. The bosom book is a tiny volume readily kept above the heart. It is an illustrated record of what God has done for the individual soul and therefore every picture within it links *memoria Dei* with *memoria sui*.<sup>244</sup> Although the book is tiny, each page, each ‘leaf’ leads man through a pun (leaf in a book and leaf on a tree) to a branch which in turn and once again through a pun (branch on a tree and branch of a river) allows him to navigate his way to the “endless Sea of Gods mercies.”

As Donne proceeds through the sermon, he emphasizes the necessity of remembering now and remembering during the day, for when the night of death comes, with its many shadows, our own life will be distorted and blurred in our memories, making it difficult for us to balance our accounts before God:

But all this is *Opus diei*, a work for the day; for in the night, in our last night, those thoughts that fall upon us, they are rather dreams, then true remembrings; we do rather dream that we repent, then repent indeed, upon our death-bed. To him that travails by night a bush seems a tree, and a tree seems a man, and a man a spirit; nothing hath the true shape to him; to him that repents by night, on his death-bed, neither his own sins, nor the mercies of God have their true proportion. (II, 240)<sup>245</sup>

This passage is important as a rare recognition of the fallible nature of memory, which according to Aquinas is part of the psychosomatic union of body of soul.<sup>246</sup> Although Donne has clearly highlighted the memory as the nearest way to God, he also recognizes its weakness. As the body fades on the deathbed, the memory, as part of the sensitive soul, is affected, causing it to distort images fixed in it earlier on. The motif of

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<sup>244</sup> Chamberlin’s reflections on Donne’s memory focus primarily on the necessity of memory for communication. If that which is signified is not kept in the memory, signifiers signify nothing. His reflection on the fate of words, especially words of Scripture, during a sermon may be brought into parallel with the bosom book, which serves as a record of God’s personal mercies. In his view, words are tumbled about the memory during a sermon until they accrue weighty meaning: “Words drawn from the memory are tumbled over in the mind; their various meanings, implications, and associations are chewed over; and thereby the reader experiences Scripture delightfully renewed for him” (116).

<sup>245</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 5.*

<sup>246</sup> Masselink is one of the few critics to note Donne’s recognition of the weakness and fallibility of memory. The above is one of the passages upon which her own argument hinges (“Memory in John Donne’s Sermons” 101).

repentance, eminently dependant on memory, resurfaces. Donne argues that repenting on our deathbeds is risky precisely because of the distortion of memories caused by the fading of the body and the inevitable disruption of the inextricably linked soul.

What follows is a contemplation of *memoria Dei* and its relation to sensible memory. *Memoria Dei*, Donne writes, is so powerful a faculty that it recreates man spiritually. “God afford us many dayes, many lights to see and remember him by. This remembrance of God is our regeneration, by which we are new creatures” (II, 240).<sup>247</sup> Memory of God leads to regeneration: a new and fuller life. Donne leads his auditory through the six days of creation. The days of creation and the day of rest serve as memory places even as Donne interprets those creatures that are created on each day as emblematic of God’s blessings for man. The six days serve as *loci* and all that is created upon them—the light, the firmament, the waters, the sun and the moon, etc.—become *imagines* whose meaning is expounded, to remind man of God. Indeed, as “the memory can go no farther then the creation; and therefore we have no means to conceive, or apprehend any thing of God before that” (II, 245-46)<sup>248</sup> memory of God presupposes sensible memory, memory of his creation. “Remember the Creator then,” Donne admonishes,

because thou canst remember nothing backward beyond him, and remember him so too, that thou maist stick upon nothing on this side of him, That so neither *height, nor depth, nor any other creature may separate thee from God*; not only not separate thee finally, but not separate so, as to stop upon the creature, but to make the best of them, thy way to the Creator . . . Remember the Creator, and get thither, because there is no safe footing upon the creature, til we come so far. (II, 246)<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 6.*

<sup>248</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 11-12.*

<sup>249</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 12.*

Donne's repeated insistence on directionality of memory, on the necessity of looking through creatures to the Creator echoes Augustine's beautiful meditation beginning "*Sero te amavi, Late have I loved you*" in *Confessions* X.38.

Throughout the sermon, the word 'remember' is repeated countless times, numerous in certain paragraphs, sometimes more than once in a single sentence. Donne's desire to awaken the faculty of memory in the audience stems not only from theological but also from circumstantial and very personal considerations. The year is 1619 and he is preparing to set out on a journey to the embattled Continent, one year into the devastating Thirty Years War. Donne's reluctance to leave England and misgivings about the journey are recorded not only in this sermon, but in the poem *A Hymn to Christ, at the Author's last going into Germany* and in personal letters composed at this time. He hopes to preach a memorable sermon so that the audience may preserve him in good memory and explicitly asks them to do so. "As we remember God, so for his sake, let us remember one another," he begs. "In my long absence, and far distance from hence, remember me, as I shall do you in the ears of that God, to whom the farthest East, and the farthest West are but as the right and left ear in one of us" (II, 248).<sup>250</sup> Here memory of God is subtly and appropriately interconnected with the memory of one's fellow.

### III.1.3. Sermon 3

Sermon 3, preached on Trinity Sunday, 1620 on Genesis 18.25<sup>251</sup> also makes a strong link between occasion (a holy day dedicated to worship of God as a Trinity) and topic (the mystery of the Trinity and its imprint in the human soul). The sermon has a dual structure; the first half centers around the three men or angels Abraham encountered, and the question whether their number alludes to the Trinity, while the second portion analyzes the haggling scene between Abraham and God for the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is in the second part among the reflections on the Trinity that the faculty of memory is mentioned and analyzed. Donne, quoting Augustine, admits that "*Figura*

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<sup>250</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 14.*

<sup>251</sup> Cf. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

*nihil probat*, A figure, an Allegory proves nothing; yet, sayes he, *addit lucem, & ornat*, It makes that which is true in it selfe, more evident and more acceptable” (III, 144).<sup>252</sup> It is therefore “a lovely and a religious thing, to finde out *Vestigia Trinitatis*, Impressions of the Trinity, in as many things as we can” (Ibid.).<sup>253</sup> First, he cites Philo, a Hellenized Jewish historian, as identifying a kind of proto-Trinity, not of persons but of actions, consisting of creation, providence and judgment. Then, he refers again to Saint Bernard who proposed three different manifestations of the Trinity in the human soul. “Reason, Memory, and Will” and the Trinity we human beings have “super-created . . . Suggestion, and Consent, and Delight in sin.” Man tarnished the image of God in himself through sin, God in his mercy “infuses the third Trinity, Faith, Hope, and Charity, by which we return to our first” (III, 145).<sup>254</sup> In this scheme, faith rectifies reason, hope rectifies the memory and charity or love rectifies the will.

At the end of the sermon, Donne urges his auditory “To collect all, and bind up all in one bundle, and bring it home to your own bosomes, [to] remember” the teachings he expounded throughout the sermon. There are many insights to store in the memory, but man is called especially to remember

[t]hat though Gods appearing thus in three persons, be no irrefragable argument to prove the Trinity against the Jews, yet it is a convenient illustration of the Trinity to thee that art a Christian: And therefore be not too curious in searching reasons, and demonstrations of the Trinity, but yet accustome thy selfe to meditations upon the Trinity, in all occasions, and finde impressions of the Trinity, in the three faculties of thine owne soule, Thy Reason, thy Will, and thy Memory; and seeke a reparation of that thy Trinity, by a new Trinity, by faith in Christ Jesus, by hope of him, and by a charitable delivering him to others, in a holy and exemplar life. (III, 154)<sup>255</sup>

Edmund Hill, a Catholic priest and translator of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, the ultimate source of the memory, understanding, will triad has noted that while Aquinas,

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<sup>252</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne upon Trinity-Sunday. 1620. Gen. 18. 25., 11.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne upon Trinity-Sunday. 1620. Gen. 18. 25., 12.*

<sup>255</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne upon Trinity-Sunday. 1620. Gen. 18. 25., 21.*



in *Summa Theologiae* Ia.93., dutifully reproduces Augustine's triads, he fails to identify and discuss why Augustine said what he did. By proposing the triad in man as a kind of humble reflection of the persons of the Trinity, Augustine was in effect offering a program for the Christian spiritual life. This program would consist in unearthing, purifying and strengthening God's triune image in man by appropriate exercise of the memory, the understanding and the will. With a measure of humor, Hill asserts that when Aquinas misses a point, so does "the whole subsequent tradition of Catholic theology" (20). Donne, however, exhibits deep knowledge of Augustine when he too proposes that man "seek reparation" of his tarnished memory-understanding-will trinity through the practice of faith, hope and love.<sup>256</sup> This reparation is a lifelong project.

#### III.1.4. Sermon 4

Sermon 4, preached upon Whitsunday 1628 on the verse John 14:26<sup>257</sup> celebrates, in two parts, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. The double division applies to two aspects of the workings of the third person of the Trinity, the action itself, which is teaching, and the manner of that action, which is reminding. Donne presents man's hunger for understanding in no uncertain terms. While those who are completely ignorant wallow in intellectual and moral sloth, anyone who has tasted knowledge hungers for it insatiably:

Ignorance may be said to worke, as an in-appetency in the stomach, and as an insipidnesse, a tastlesnesse in the palate; But the desire of knowledge, without meanes to attaine it, is as a hunger in a dearth, or in a wilderness. Ignorance is a kinde of slumbering, or stupidity, but this desire without meanes, is a continuall racking, a continuall pressing; a far greater vexation, and torment; ignorance may work as a Lethargy, but this desire as a phrensie. . . . To a barrennesse, that is, never to have conceived, there belonged, amongst that people [i.e., the ancient Israelites], a kind of shame

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<sup>256</sup> Cf. also the discussion of the regenerative effect of meditating on the Days of Creation, briefly addressed in connection with Sermon 2 above.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, hee shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

and contempt, (and that is our case in ignorance, which is the barrenness of the soule) But to come to the throwes of Childbirth, and then not to have the strength, or not to have helpe to be delivered, that is the dangerous, that is the deadly torment; and that represents our soule, in this desire of knowledge, without means to attain to it. (VIII, 257)<sup>258</sup>

The understanding, the second of man's triad of faculties, is empty and man hungers for knowledge (of the heavenly kind), yet he is unable to feed himself. Christ must send the Holy Spirit to teach man, and man's edification begins with the awakening of the faculty of memory. Once again, the link between memory and understanding is strengthened. The memory is not awakened for its own sake but in order to prepare the way for understanding. "Here we, we that are naturally ignorant, we, we that are naturally hungry of knowledge, are taught, a free Schoole is opened unto us, and taught by him, by the Holy Ghost speaking in his Delegates, in his Ministers . . . [T]he manner of the Holy Ghosts comming, and teaching his Ordinance . . . is, by remembring" (VIII, 261).<sup>259</sup> Though it might seem at first glance that Donne is flirting once again with the idea of anamnesis, in truth he defines this learning as relearning.<sup>260</sup> Through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit, man remembers that which he was taught (and made to understand) before.

The second half of the sermon explores the reasons and the manner in which the Holy Spirit appeals to man's memory:

And truly the Memory is oftner the Holy Ghosts pulpit that he preaches in, then the Understanding. How many here would not understand me, or not rest in that which they heard, if I should spend the rest of this houre in repeating, and reconciling that which divers authors have spoken diversly of the manner of Christs presence in the Sacrament, or the manner of Christs descent into Hell, or the manner of the concurrence, and joint-working of the grace of God, and the free-will of man, in mens actions? (VIII, 261)<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls upon Whitsunday. 1628. John 14.26., 5.*

<sup>259</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls upon Whitsunday. 1628. John 14.26., 9.*

<sup>260</sup> Cf. also the discussion of Donne's relationship to anamnesis in Sermon 1.

<sup>261</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls upon Whitsunday. 1628. John 14.26., 9.*

The Holy Spirit is presented in the figure of a preacher, standing and expounding from the pulpit of the memory. Picturing the faculty of memory as a pulpit, a locus of teaching, makes it prerequisite to the understanding. Donne chooses obscure (Christ's descent into hell) and controversial (the manner of his presence in the Eucharist) doctrines to illustrate the sluggishness of the understanding. Were he to discuss these topics—and he gives us to understand that he could do so at length and with facility—the majority of his congregants would find themselves bewildered. The above passage is lodged within a lengthier discussion of the ways in which memory contributes to salvific knowledge and to righteous action:

They had wont to call Pictures in the Church, the lay-mans book, because in them, he that could not reade at all, might reade much. The ignorantest man that is, even he that cannot reade a Picture, even a blinde man, hath a better book in himself; In his own memory he may reade many a history of Gods goodnesse to him. . . . But is there any man amongst us that is not capable of this Catechisme, Remember to morrow but those good thoughts which you have had within this houre, since you came hither now: Remember at your last houre, to be but as good as you are this minute; I would scarce ask more in any mans behalf, then that he would alwayes be as good, as at some times he is; If he would never sink below himself: If he would remember his own holy purposes at best, he would never forget God; If he would remember the comfort he had in having overcome such a tentation yesterday, he would not be overcome by that tentation today. (VIII, 261)<sup>262</sup>

There is a clear inward and upward progress in this description of the workings of memory. Pictures, the layman's book, convey a great deal of information to the simplest believers at the level of sensible memory. The layman who looks inside himself will find a personal catalogue, reminiscent of the bosom book, which records God's mercies to him personally. Once again, *memoria sui* is linked with *memoria Dei*. Donne exhorts his auditory to remember "those good thoughts" that filled their mind during the sermon, and the emotion of comfort (from the intellectual memory) they experienced

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<sup>262</sup> Preached at S. Pauls upon Whitsunday. 1628. John 14.26., 9.

upon overcoming a temptation. Finally, the memory reaches into the future because it keeps man's "own holy purposes at best" and thereby prevents him from forgetting God. To observe God's goodness, record it and recall it is the surest way to upright behavior. It is as secure as the laws of logic.

Sherwood has noted that in this passage, Donne describes a non-rational process using the terminology of reason. Donne's use of terms from logic and argument to describe the memory both reinforces the link between memory and reason and affirms his belief in the fundamental importance of reason, not just memory, to the life of the soul ("Reason in Donne's Sermons" 361):

The Memory is as the conclusion of a Syllogisme, which being inferred upon true propositions, cannot be denied: He that remembers Gods former blessings, concludes infallibly upon his future. Therefore Christ places the comfort of this Comforter, the Holy Ghost, in this, that he shall work upon that pregnant faculty, the Memory. (VIII, 261)<sup>263</sup>

Once again, the arc of past, present and future stretches through memory. A pious past guarantees a successful future. The memory is described as "pregnant" both because it is a vessel for that which lies inside and because it is the mother of the future, the bearer of salvation.

As the sermon draws to a close, Donne reinforces the connection between memory and a salvation that is not just personal but also communal:

And if the holy Ghost do bring these things, which we preach, to your remembrance, you are also made fishers of men, and Apostles, and (as the Prophet speaks) *Salvatores mundi*, men that assist the salvation of the world, by the best way of preaching, an exemplar life, and holy conversation. *Amen.* (VIII, 269)<sup>264</sup>

Just as the apostles were reminded of Christ's teachings by the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity continues to operate today when it recalls to congregants that which they heard from the mouth of the preacher. In this analogy, the preacher is linked

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<sup>263</sup> Preached at S. Pauls upon Whitsunday. 1628. *John 14.26.*, 9.

<sup>264</sup> Preached at S. Pauls upon Whitsunday. 1628. *John 14.26.*, 17.

to Christ and his auditory is given the very dispensation the apostles received, to become “fishers of men.”

### III.1.5. Sermon 5

Sermon 5 in our series was preached to the king in April 1629. It is the second of two sermons on Genesis 1.26, the first Old Testament verse read by Christians as evidence of the triune nature of God. The two sermons are really one long discourse proposing to elucidate all that Christian man needs to know in order to attain salvation. The salvific information is presented in a fourfold division corresponding to the points of the compass. In the first sermon, Donne discusses East (corresponding to the beginnings and fundamentals of the Christian faith as belief in the Holy Trinity) and West (the lowly state of man as mirrored by his four names in the Scriptures). Donne begins the second sermon with an overview of the main points of the first. Donne quips that whereas our Western considerations of the lowly state of man covered us in a dark cloud of despondency, the fresh North wind, the knowledge that we are made in the image of the Trinity, will blow these clouds away. Though stones, plants and animals, by virtue of their existence, life and sense, are vestiges of the Holy Trinity, no creature but man is created in the image of God. Good and exemplary men therefore are especially beneficial as living images or patterns of how to live a godly life, but the best assurance man has is to look inside himself to find the image of God. With the help of a meditation of the image of God in man, the auditory sails south, to comforting climes.

“But beyond this North,” Donne writes, “thou hast a South, a Meridionall heighth, by which thou seest thine Image, thy pattern, to be no copy; no other man, but the originall it selfe, God himselfe” (IX, 76).<sup>265</sup> Furthermore, Donne determines that it is the soul, not the body of man, that is created in the image of God. “The Sphear then of this intelligence, the Gallery for this Picture, the Arch for this Statue, the Table, and frame and shrine for this Image of God, is inwardly and immediately the soule of man” (IX, 79).<sup>266</sup> Donne appeals to the language of *ars memoriae*, naming places and the images

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<sup>265</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 9*

<sup>266</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 12*

they keep to convey a sense of the capaciousness and worthiness of the soul in housing the image of God. This relationship is not as immediate as the relationship between the Son and the Father, for at the level of essence, Christ alone is the image of God:

But this Image is in our soule, as our soule is the wax, and this Image the seale. The Comparison is Saint *Cyrills*, and he addes well, that no seale but that, which printed the wax at first, can fit that wax, and fill that impression after. No Image, but the Image of God can fit our soule. Every other seale is too narrow, too shallow for it. (IX, 80)<sup>267</sup>

Wax and seals are an ancient trope for the functioning of memory that can be attributed to Aristotle. Every man has the true image printed in his bosom, and no seal found in the world will fit the deep and exquisite groove left by God. Donne finds attempts to fill the void in the soul with anything but God as preposterous as if a mother, surrounded by her beautiful children, were to play with dolls instead, or a man in possession of valuable paintings, were to run to the village fair for cheap prints. “The Image of God is more worth then all substances; and we give it, for colours, for dreames, for shadowes” (IX, 81),<sup>268</sup> knowing all the while that nothing but the real will satisfy.

The next consideration applies to the manner of the presence of the Trinity within the human soul. Donne invites the congregation to

consider the having of this Image: in what respect, in what operation, this Image is in our soule. For, whether this image, bee in those faculties, which we have in Nature; or in those qualifications, which we may have in Grace; or in those super-illustrations, which the blessed shall have in Glory; hath exercised the contemplation of many. (IX, 81)<sup>269</sup>

Donne concludes that the image of God is present in natural man, but it is dimmed because of sin. For this reason, God grants man many graces to restore his image, which will shine forth in full splendor in the glory of Heaven. Donne describes a rather elaborate yet memorable scheme:

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<sup>267</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 13.*

<sup>268</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 14.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

For as there are three Persons in the Essence of God: so there are three faculties in the Soule of man. The Attributes, and some kind of specification of the Persons of the Trinity are, Power to the Father, Wisdome to the Sonne, and Goodnesse to the holy Ghost. And the three faculties of the Soule have the Images of these three. The Understanding is the Image of the Father, that is, Power . . . and in the second faculty which is the Will, is the Image, the Attribute of the second Person, the Sonne, which is Wisdome . . . And then, in the third faculty of the soule, the Memory, is the Image of the third person, the holy Ghost, that is, Goodnesse. (IX, 83-84)<sup>270</sup>

In the faculty of understanding, the image of the Father is power; the link becomes appropriate because just rule depends on deep understanding. The will, which is the image of the wisdom of the Son, is connected to wisdom because the latter is not so much about knowing facts as about knowing right and wrong and being able to choose between them. Finally, the memory as the image of the goodness of the Holy Spirit. Once again, though each of the faculties is analyzed at length, memory subsumes the other two in a very Augustinian fashion.

Continuing the thought above, Donne writes:

For to remember, to recollect our former understanding, and our former assenting, so far as to do them, to Crowne them with action, that's true goodness. The office, that Christ assigns to the holy Ghost, and the goodnesse, which he promises in his behalfe is this, that he shall bring former things to our remembrance. (IX, 84)<sup>271</sup>

Memory then of what we had formerly understood and resolved to do leads to righteous action. The Holy Spirit was sent by Christ to awaken man's memory of the good he understood and willed and thereby enable him to act.<sup>272</sup> Citing Augustine who wrote

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<sup>270</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 16-17.*

<sup>271</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 17.*

<sup>272</sup> Here memory is presented as following the actions of understanding and will. This does not, however, contradict our former assertions that understanding is constructed out of the contents of memory, and that a rectified understanding is in turn necessary for the movement of the will. Rather, the passage points out the interrelatedness of the three faculties. Even if the preacher appeals to the memory, rectifies the understanding and moves the will, his congregants may very well forget their former resolutions as soon as they leave the church. It is the office of the Holy Spirit, the master of

“*Visus per omnes sensus recurrit*,” that all sense are called sight in the Scriptures, Donne concludes that all goodness can be attributed to memory, to recalling that which we understood to be good and the movement of our will when we made up our minds to achieve it (IX, 85).<sup>273</sup>

Donne continues to praise and highlight the memory by quoting Ecclesiasticus 7.36. “The wiseman,” he writes, “places all goodnesse in this faculty, the memory: properly nothing can fall into the memory, but that which is past, and yet he says, *Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never doe amisse*” (IX, 84-85).<sup>274</sup> Although the end is not yet come, the “wiseman” bids us to “remember” it. Once again, memory’s jurisdiction stretches over the bournes of the past, shapes the present and decides the future.

Donne is overjoyed at the dignity conferred upon man as carrier of God’s image and surprised that his fellow men are ignorant of it:

There is a respect due to the Image of the King in all that have it. Now, in all these respects man, the meer naturall man, hath the Image of the King of Kings. And therefore respect that Image in thy selfe, and exalt thy naturall faculties. Aemulate those men, and be ashamed to be outgone by those men, who had no light but nature. Make thine understanding, and thy will, and thy memory (though but naturall faculties) serviceable to thy God; and auxiliary and subsidiary for thy salvation . . . And do not thinke that because a naturall man cannot doe all, therefore he hath nothing to doe for himselfe. (IX, 85)<sup>275</sup>

Donne’s understanding of the Augustinian project of strengthening and restoring God’s triune image in man shines through this passage as it did in numerous passages discussed above. Donne exhorts his auditory to “exalt [its] naturall faculties” and to “aemulate” those “naturall” men (i.e., those living before God’s self-revelation in the Old Testament and the New) who, although their knowledge of God was severely

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memory, to enliven the memories of the auditory so that they may perform the righteous actions they had previously determined to undertake.

<sup>273</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 18.*

<sup>274</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 17-18.*

<sup>275</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court. [April 1629] The second Sermon on Gen. 1.26., 18.*



limited, nonetheless used their three faculties of memory, understanding and will to improve themselves and to work goodness in the world.

### III.1.6. Sermon 6

Sermon 6 is an undated piece entitled *Preached at a Christning. I John 5. 7,8.*<sup>276</sup> It is masterfully constructed around a threefold division with threefold subdivisions. In his four page *dispositio*, Donne begins by reflecting on the miserable state of man. He chooses an ancient legal indictment, “*Igni & aqua interdicitur*; let him have no use of *fire*, and *water*, that is, no use of any thing, necessary for the sustentation of life” (V, 130).<sup>277</sup> Furthermore, grave offenders were often smitten with the malediction “*Intestabiles sunt*, let them be Intestable,” meaning that such criminals were divested of four rights having to do with testaments and witnesses: they could not testify on their own behalf, no testament made by another could profit them, they could not testify on behalf of another and no man could be allowed to speak on their behalf (V, 131).<sup>278</sup> Donne proceeds to show how this secular law applies spiritually to every man. Since every man is a sinner, he is fallen under the condemnation of being ‘intestable.’ God in his mercy grants man three witnesses in heaven—the Father, the Word (Son), and the Holy Spirit—and three witnesses on earth—spirit (preaching), water (baptism) and blood (Eucharist). Donne calls these a Trinity in Heaven and a Trinity on Earth, and in the end, urges man to find the third trinity in himself:

God created one *Trinity* in us; (the observation, and the enumeration is Saint *Bernards*) which are those *three faculties* of our soule, the *reason*, the *memory*, the *will*; That *Trinity* in us, by another *Trinity* too, (by *suggestion* towards sin, by *delight* in sinne, by *consent* to sinne) is fallen into a third *Trinity*; The *memory* into a weakness, that that comprehends not *God*, it glorifies him not for benefits received; The *reason* to a blindness, that that discerns not what is *true*; and the *will* to a perversnesse, that that wishes

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<sup>276</sup> Cf. “For there are three which beare record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one: and there are three which beare record in the earth; the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.”

<sup>277</sup> *Preached at a Christning. I John 5. 7,8., 1*

<sup>278</sup> *Preached at a Christning. I John 5. 7,8., 2.*

not what's *good*; But the goodnesse of God, by these three witnesses on earth regenerates, and reestablishes a new Trinity in us, *faith*, and *hope*, and *charity*; Thus farre that devout Man carries it . . . (V, 149)<sup>279</sup>

Once again, Donne connects the originally Augustinian trinity of memory, understanding and will to Saint Bernard. Repeating his observations in Sermon 3, he notes that all three faculties are fallen in their own particular way. The memory sees only as far as creation and the good things of life, but is unable to discover the Creator and the beneficent giver behind them. Without a recognition of God, there is no concept of absolute right and wrong, so man's moral compass oriented by his faculty of reason spins out of control. If reason is unable to identify goodness, the will cannot align itself with that which is right. While reason suffers from "blindnesse" and the will from "perversnesse," the memory is simply described as weak. Were it to be strengthened, through powerful images with a moral message for example, Donne implies that it would enable man to see God behind the scenes of his creation and all would be well. God, in his goodness, has provided the antidote in the form of a trinity of virtues—faith, hope, and love—fervent practice of which restores God's tarnished triune image in man.

Looking back at the six memory sermons, we find a rich and profound thematization of memory centered around Donne's adaptation, via Saint Bernard, of Saint Augustine's Trinitarian concept of the human soul and his program for Christian spiritual regeneration. All six sermons place memory within a triune scheme—aligning the understanding with the Father, the will with the Son and the memory with the Holy Spirit—while subtly highlighting very different aspects of this important faculty.

In sermon 1, Donne asserts that the memory is the least fallen of the three faculties and is in fact a familiar, present and ready capacity of the soul. He attributes to the memory amazing powers and somewhat playfully considers the possibility of anamnesis. The memory subsumes all three planes of time, yet it is especially vital to self-knowledge and thereby serves as the key to repentance. In sermon 2, Donne continues to praise the memory as the "nearest way to bring a man to God," but admits that it, too, must be stretched and exercised to lead man from remembrance of mere

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<sup>279</sup> *Preached at a Christning. I John 5. 7,8., 20.*

creatures (sensible, intellectual memory and *memoria sui*) to memory of the Creator (*memoria Dei*), “because there is not safe footing upon the creature” until we arrive in the arms of God. Three metaphors for the memory—the Augustinian stomach of the soul, and Donne’s own gallery of the soul and bosom book—illustrate respectively the memory’s ability to ‘digest’ experience and create understanding, its dependence on powerful imagery and its deeply personal nature. In sermon 3, Donne urges his auditory to seek out vestiges of the Holy Trinity in the created world, most notably in the human soul. He provides a detailed account of the three faculties of reason, memory and will and how they are fallen through suggestion, consent and delight in sin to depths from which only an infusion of faith, hope and charity can redeem them. It is in this sermon that Donne most visibly appropriates Augustine’s program for the Christian life, whose primary aim is to restore God’s tarnished image in man to its original splendor. Sermon 4 provides the strongest link between the faculties of memory and understanding. By proposing the memory as the “Holy Ghosts pulpit” and presenting the Third Person of the Trinity as a teacher in a spiritual school, Donne forges an indestructible link between the faculties of memory and understanding and shines light on the logical primacy of memory in further spiritual endeavor. Once again, memory spreads its jurisdiction over past present and future, for memory of past triumphs over temptation and of God’s goodness to man, when contemplated in the present, decides the future. Sermon 5 presents a series of parallel trinities: Father, Son and Holy Spirit and their respective qualities of power, wisdom and goodness, which are imaged forth in the soul as understanding, will and memory. Memory subsumes the other two faculties when Donne suggests that memory of what we formerly understood of God and assented to, when recalled and crowned with action, produces goodness.<sup>280</sup> Finally, sermon 6 repeats the fall and redemption of the memory, understanding and will. Donne leaves us on a

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<sup>280</sup> Chamberlin offers the following helpful reflection: “[Donne] endeavors to teach the understanding, to move the will, but above all, to plant the words of the text in the memory where their meaning can be present, branch out, and remain alive. “For to remember,” he says, “to recollect our former understanding, and our former assenting, so far as to *doe* them, to Crowne them with action, that’s true goodness” (9.2.606-8). By remembering the true doctrine we have been taught and the right course of action we have been shown and have resolved upon, we act. To experience the meaning of Scripture complicated with our lives is one with doing good” (121-22).

note of reassurance that through proper exercise of faith, hope and love, we may restore the ‘blind’ understanding, the ‘perverse’ will and the ‘weak’ memory.

### III.2. Augustinian Foundations and the Thomistic Divergence

Thus far, Donne’s thematization of memory is fundamentally Augustinian. In the six sermons discussed above, Donne places the memory in the Trinitarian scheme developed in *De Trinitate*. While Augustine is at pains to avoid exclusively identifying any of the three faculties with any person of the Holy Trinity<sup>281</sup> his insistence on the order—memory, understanding and will—leads both to an intuition about the primacy of the memory and to its association with the Father who is first in any enumeration of the divine Persons. Donne’s alternative association of the faculties with the Persons of the Trinity comes to him via Saint Bernard, while the link between memory and the Holy Spirit is, as we have seen, biblical. Donne proposes time and time again virtuous exercise of all three faculties to help restore God’s obscured image in man. In one sermon from 1627, he provides a description of a virtuous man, who has triumphed in this lifelong project, on his deathbed:

And when this Picture comes to the Presse, this Man to the streights and agonies of Death, thus he lies, thus he looks, this he is. His understanding and his will is all one faculty; He understands Gods purpose upon him, and he would not have God’s purpose turned any other way; hee sees God will dissolve him, and he would faine be dissolved, to be with Christ; His understanding and his will is all one faculty; His memory and his fore-sight are fixt, and concentred upon one object, upon goodnesse; Hee remembers that hee hath proceeded in the sincerities of a good Conscience in all the wayes of his calling, and he foresees that his good name shall have the Testimony, and his Posterity the support of the good men of this world . . . (VIII, 190)<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Cf. Section 1.7.

<sup>282</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall. February 29. 1627. [1627/8] Acts. 7.60., 17.*

Donne's highlighting of the faculty of memory, however, indicates the influence of Book X of the *Confessions*. Following Augustine's lead, Donne identifies memory as the "nearest" way to God and places not only the past, but the present and the future as well under its jurisdiction. The clearly identifiable layers of sensible and intellectual memory as well as *memoria sui* and *memoria Dei*, and the strong sense of directionality in memory—memory of creatures leading man to self-knowledge and ultimately to a memory of the Creator—are also reminiscent of Augustine's lyrical thematization of memory in the *Confessions*. Ultimately, the higher levels of memory—*memoria sui* and *memoria Dei*—make us human. They enable us to participate in the Trinitarian life of the soul. As we have seen in the work of Aquinas, memory resides in the sensitive soul and is therefore a faculty man has in common with animals, yet animals cannot progress beyond the level of sensible memory.<sup>283</sup> Only human beings, by ruminating and reflecting on the contents of their sensible memory, can build higher levels of memory and understanding. The idea of thinking as 'rumination' also fits well with the conception of memory as the stomach of the soul:

It is an evident knowledge, and acknowledgement of God, by which, others come to know him too; which acknowledgement is well called a recognition, for it is a second, a ruminated, a reflected knowledge: Beasts doe remember, but they doe not remember that they remember; they doe not reflect upon it, which is that that constitutes memory. (IV, 306)<sup>284</sup>

The link between memory and understanding has been made clear; it is easy to see that a richly furnished memory is not enough self-sufficient. Memory gains value in the service of understanding. One charming anecdote, resonant with anyone who has taught children, establishes this important truth beyond a shadow of doubt:

An Artificer of this Citie brought his Childe to mee, to admire (as truly there was much reason) the capacitie, the memory, especially of the child. It was but a Girle, and not above nine yeares of age, her parents said lesse, some

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<sup>283</sup> Cf. section II.2.2. above. Augustine, too, was aware that animals have memory. "Beasts and birds also have a memory. Otherwise they would not rediscover their dens and nests, and much else that they are habitually accustomed to" (*Confessions* X.26.). Yet theirs is sensible memory, the level that man must transcend to reach God.

<sup>284</sup> *Preached upon Candlemas day. [1623] Rom. 13.7., 4.*

yeares lesse; wee could scarce propose any Verse of any Booke, or Chapter of the *Bible*, but that that childe would goe forward without Booke. I began to *Catechise* this childe; and truly, shee understood nothing of the *Trinitie*, nothing of any of those fundamentall poynts which must save us: and the wonder was doubled, how she knew so much, how so little. (203-04)<sup>285</sup>

In this vivid personal story, Donne presents a young child with a prodigious capacity of memory who has still not taken the first step in knowledge. Although the treasure-house of her memory is full of Bible verses, she has not progressed beyond the memory human beings share with animals. She has not reflected on the contents of her memory in an effort to apply them to herself or to construct understanding.

Memory is a prerequisite for understanding, and correct understanding of God directs the will towards good actions. Furthermore, memory of what we have understood and resolved in church or during personal devotion leads to righteous action in the world. For these reasons and in these ways, a rich and retentive memory is vital to salvation.<sup>286</sup> Thus far, Donne is in harmony with Augustine, diverging only in his clear alignment of the Holy Spirit with the faculty of memory.

It is the concept of the *phantasma*, however, that drives a wedge between the two thinkers. While Aquinas would agree wholeheartedly that memory contains the raw material of knowledge, he differs significantly from Augustine in his conception of how that material is received into the memory and the form in which it is stored. As we have seen, Augustine believed in direct, divine illumination by Christ the Inner Teacher, and also upheld the possibility of imageless thought at the level of intelligibles.<sup>287</sup> Aquinas,

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<sup>285</sup> *A Sermon upon the XX. verse of the V. Chapter of the Booke of Judges. Preached at the Crosse the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. 1622. Judges 5.20., 26-27.*

<sup>286</sup> Sherwood offers a succinct summary of how the three faculties are related and interact. "Augustinian psychology," he writes, "appeals to the less stubborn memory in order to bend the Fall-weakened reason and will, to direct them to their proper ends in understanding and loving God" ("Reason in Donne's Sermons" 364). Yet there is no either-or choice among the faculties. Just as remembrance of man's fallenness and God's grace moves man's will towards fear and love of God, the will directs reason in search of divine knowledge (Ibid.).

<sup>287</sup> Cf. section II.1.6. above. See also Chamberlin's summary: "How are intelligibles present in our minds when we express or understand something about them in discourse? The answer lies in Augustine's concept of the memory that not only retains objects from without but also keeps ideas conveyed through man's inmost contact with the divine [here Chamberlin quotes a section from *De Magistro* explaining the presence of Christ as the Inward Teacher]" (17).

on the other hand, promulgated a doctrine of abstraction,<sup>288</sup> according to which even the highest forms of intelligible knowledge were gleaned from, and produced further, *phantasmata*, or psychosomatic impressions in the body-soul composite that is the human being. In other words, all knowledge, even of the highest things, even of God Himself, first enters the mind through the five senses. In this life, there is no possibility of direct contact with the Divine.<sup>289</sup> Donne states his commitment to a sense-based epistemology in a succinct passage that Sherwood claims “encapsulates his basic epistemological assumption” (“Reason in Donne’s Sermons” 354). “So, though our faith be of an infinite exaltation above understanding,” Donne writes, “yet, as though our understanding be above our senses, yet by our senses we come to understand, so by our understanding we come to believe” (IX, 357).<sup>290</sup> Donne rejects Augustine’s belief in the possibility of “immediate revelation from God” without the action of the senses, insisting instead on the sensual origins of all knowledge. Since understanding is constructed from the contents of memory, with this statement, Donne establishes the sense-based nature of all memory material.

Donne makes the soul’s dependence on *phantasmata* explicitly clear in a polemical passage weighing the possibility of what we may recognize as Augustinian divine illumination, although Donne does not attribute the notion to Augustine but to unnamed theologians of the “Romane Church”:

There is a Pureness, a cleanness imagin’d (rather dream’t of) in the *Romane Church*, by which (as their words are) the soul is abstracted, not only *a Passionibus*, but *a Phantasmaticibus*, not only from passions, and perturbations, but from the ordinary way of coming to know any thing; The soul (say they) of men so purified, understands no longer, *per phantasmata rerum corporialum*; not by having any thing presented by the fantasie to the senses, and so to the understanding, but altogether by a familiar conversation with God, and an immediate revelation from God; whereas

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<sup>288</sup> Cf. sections II.2.3. and II.4. above.

<sup>289</sup> For rare exceptions to this rule, please consult the footnote on dreams and the rapture of Saint Paul in section II.2.3. above.

<sup>290</sup> *Preached upon the Penitential Psalmes. Psalm. 32.8., 8.*

Christ himself contented himself with the ordinary way; He was hungry, and a fig-tree presented it self to him upon the way, and he went to it to eat. (I, 186)<sup>291</sup>

The “men so purified” mentioned in the passage are not blessed souls enjoying the Beatific Vision. If the passage were about the Beatific Vision of God in heaven, Donne would agree wholeheartedly that in the afterlife, we will no longer require the *phantasmata* of corporeal things to mediate between us and God, but will see Him face to face as He is. I believe that Donne is polemicizing against the idea that certain penitential and spiritual practices can purify men to such an extent that they enjoy unmediated communion with God in this life. He is advising caution in mystical matters, and opts to remain in the safety of the concrete and tangible. In this he purports to follow Christ who shared hearty meals not just of figs, but of bread and fish with his disciples. Indeed, the passage may be read as a statement of Donne’s commitment to incarnation theology. If Christ took upon himself the full human condition, thereby sanctifying the most mundane bodily needs, his disciples should neither disdain the bodily and the concrete nor attempt to exceed their master.

Donne therefore diverges from Augustine and sides with Aquinas in the crucial matter of how the contents of memory enter the soul and in what form in they reside there. Webber points to the consequences of this divergence as manifested in the respective writing styles of Augustine and Donne. “Augustine can make an idea exciting through sheer intellectual vigor, while Donne prefers to concentrate on its concrete, palpable application to his human situation” (16). Further on she notes that “Augustine’s mind is much more freely intellectual, abstract, and mystical; he did not need, as Donne did, to cling to the concrete, and he uses relatively little imagery in his writing” (135). Donne, however, did cleave to the tangible and was unable to distance himself from the vibrancy of the physical world. His dependence on vivid imagery to fill the memory, impart understanding and subsequently move the will stems from the theological

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<sup>291</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart.1616. Proverbs 22.11., 4.*



commitments discussed above. Before moving on to a discussion of Donne's pious appropriation of *loci* and *imagines*, let us briefly address a weakness of the memory that also turns out to be its strength. Let us examine the presence of past sins in the memory and the role of memory in repentance.

### III.3. Healing the Weak Memory

In a confessional passage which may well provide a glimpse into his personal prayer life, Donne reflects with one measure of humor and two measures of sadness on the imperfection of spirituality in this world.

But when we consider with a religious seriousness the manifold weaknesses of the strongest devotions in time of Prayer, it is a sad consideration. I throw my self downer 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 File, for the rattling of a Coach, for the whining of a door; I talked on, in the same posture of praying; Eyes lifted up; knees bowed downer; as though I prayed to God; and, if God, or his Angels should asked me, when I thought last of God in that prayer, I cannot tell: Sometimes I fined that I had forgot what I was about, but when I began to forget it, I cannot tell. A memory of yesterdays pleasures, a feared of to morrows dangers, a straw under my knee, a light in mine eye, an any thing, a nothing, a fancy, a Chimera in my braine, troubles me in my prayer. So certainly is there nothing, nothing in spiritual things, perfect in this world. (VII, 264-65)<sup>292</sup>

This passage shows how man's various spiritual faculties fail him when strong sense impressions distract his attention. One resolves to pray and directs his will towards God and his angels, but even slight, common noises are enough to redirect the will and draw the attention of the soul from within to that which lies without. Although the body persists in a posture of prayer, the soul is no longer engaged. There is a

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<sup>292</sup> *Preached at the funerals of Sir William Cokayne Knight, Alderman of London, December 12. 1626. Joh. 11.21., 8-9.*

moment of recognition, however, when the person in prayer is somehow reminded of God. Perhaps it is the body, faithfully persevering in its posture of prayer that recalls the soul. The faculty of memory is awakened, yet it is not strong enough to remember when it forgot God. The soul knows it has been contemplating worldly things, but cannot remember since when. Not only did it forget God, but it forgot when it forgot. Indeed, it may well have been the “memory of yesterday’s pleasures” that distracted the soul in the first place. Moments of spiritual elevation are sweet but fleeting, for “there is nothing, nothing in spiritual things, perfect in this world.” The memory, too, is implicated.

Memory is a faculty of fallen man therefore it, too, must be fallen. Donne uses the adjective ‘weak’ to convey this. Normally Masselink, in her article “Memory in John Donne’s Sermons: ‘Readie’? Or Not?” treats of the weakness of memory. She identifies two failings of memory: it is corrupted by sin because it stores images of our sins to which we return with delight (100) and it is “limited by the accuracy with which it recalls the images it holds” (101).<sup>293</sup> These two types of weakness listed by Masselink are actually at odds with one another, because memory of past sins is strong enough to make man sin again, whereas inaccuracy or distorted recall is truly a weakness. So it would seem the memory is too strong in some cases and too weak in others.<sup>294</sup> She continues to argue that Donne avails himself of the *loci* and *imagines* method to “counter the frailties of memory” (102) and concludes eloquently that “the *loci* become in Donne’s hands tools of sanctification for fallen humanity” (106).

To my knowledge, in all of Donne’s sermons, there is a single passage addressing the inaccuracy of recall. It begins “But all this is *Opus diei*, a work for the day; for in the night, in our last night, those thoughts that fall upon us, they are rather dreams, then true

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<sup>293</sup> Masselink continues to cite Augustine as recognizing the destructive power of forgetfulness. However, in the case of Augustine, the greatest danger is not so much inaccuracy as failure to recall something at all. Carruthers also notes that the ancients weren’t so much concerned about inaccuracy as oblivion.

<sup>294</sup> Those familiar with the plays of Shakespeare may be reminded of the efforts of the Good Mechanicals, the amateur theater troop in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, to represent ‘wall,’ ‘moonshine,’ and ‘lion.’ While in the case of the lion, they are worried that Bottom’s overly convincing rendition would frighten the ladies in the audience (Cf. I.2.60-78), in a later scene, the troop clearly mistrusts the public’s imaginative capacity as they feel obliged to assign the role of ‘moonshine’ and ‘wall’ to actual actors (Cf. III.1.45-67). In the end, is the audience’s imagination overwrought (i.e., lion) or inadequate (i.e., wall, moonshine)?

remembrings,” and was discussed above within the context of Sermon 2. Donne, like Augustine before him, was more concerned about forgetting and oblivion than he was about inaccurate recall. Indeed, as we have established in section II.2.3., Ancient and Medieval man, and here I would add those living in the age of Donne, saw memory error as a primarily heuristic problem, a difficulty of locating information, rather than a question of accuracy. It is therefore more helpful to turn our attention to the presence of sin in memory and the dialogical relationship between remembering and forgetting.

Masselink is correct in identifying passages that speak of the presence of sin in human memory as crucial for refining a reading of Donne’s theology of memory. What she fails to mention is that for the approximately twelve sermons bemoaning the taint of sin on the memory, there are as many that discuss the necessity of remembering sins for true repentance; forgetting may be just as dangerous as remembering. In other words, memories of sins stored in the soul are ambivalent in themselves; it is what one does with memories of sin that counts. Those who revisit them to extract further pleasure from the circumstances and details of their sin commit the sin all over again, while those who recall their transgressions in a sincere spirit of repentance win forgiveness.<sup>295</sup>

Masselink claims the memory is tainted by the sins it holds. Passages from numerous sermons discuss the peril of remembering past sins.<sup>296</sup> The spiritual danger lies in ruminating over the pleasurable details of the sin until the very act of remembering becomes a sin in thought or the will is roused by the promise of the same pleasure again and the sin is committed again in deed. And relapsing, Donne wryly asserts, comes more easily than lapsing for the first time:

Though the body of sin have so far received a heavy wound in thee, as that  
thou hast discontinued some habitual sin, some long time; yet if though  
touch upon the *memory* of that dead sin, with *delight*, though begetttest a

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<sup>295</sup> In “Holy Sonnet III” the poet bemoans that, unlike “[t]h’ hydroptic drunkard, and night-scouting thief, / The itchy lecher, and self tickling proud / [who] [h]ave the remembrance of past joys, for relief / Of coming ills” he suffered twice: once because of mistreatment by his mistresses and now for a second time in his repentance (ll. 8-12). Although at first glance, Donne seems to envy other sinners, the poem becomes one of sincere repentance when he discovers that his sins have brought him nothing but pain, for “long, yet vehement grief hath been / The effect and cause, the punishment and sin” (ll. 13-14).

<sup>296</sup> Examples may be found in IX, 82; V, 292; VIII, 251; that is *Preached to the King, at the Court in April, 1629. [Second Sermon on] Gen. 1.26., 15; Preached at S. Pauls. Psal. 90.14., 25; Preached to the King at White-hall, April 15. 1628., Esay. 32.8., 15* respectively.

new childe of sin. . . . Every man may observe, that a *sin of relapse* is sooner upon him, then the same sin was at the first attempting him; at first, he had more bashfulness, more tenderness, more collocation against the sin, then upon a relapse. And therefore in this survey of sin, thy first care must be, to take heed of returning too diligently to a remembrance of those delightful sins which are past, for that will endanger new. (I, 194)<sup>297</sup>

Instead, one should recall the sins just long enough and in just enough detail to repent of them. Once we have cast them off through sincere repentance, we should take care not to return to them again. If God has forgotten them, Donne suggests, so should we.<sup>298</sup>

Of course, an omniscient and omnipotent God cannot forget anything in the sense that he would be unable to recall it afterwards. Neither are men able to forget on command; exhortations to forget something will turn counterproductive and only serve to further ingrain it in our minds. In the following passage, Donne uses the verb forget in the alternative sense of ‘disregarding’ or ‘neglecting’ or in the Augustinian sense of not cultivating the feeling of presence. In these acceptations, even man can control his own forgetting:

And in many cases it is safer to do (as God himself is said to do) *to tie up our sins in a bundle, and cast them into the sea*; so for us to present our sins in general to God, and to cast them into the bottomless sea of the infinite mercies of God, in the infinite merits of Christ Jesus; then by an over-diligent enumeration of sins of some kinds, or by too busie a contemplation of those circumstances which encreased our sinful delight then when we committed those sins, to commit them over again, by a fresh delight in their memory. When thou hast truly repented them, and God hath forgotten them, do *thou forget* them too. (I, 194)<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons*, 24. Mart. 1616. [1616/17] *Proverbs* 22.11., 12.

<sup>298</sup> “Holy Sonnet IX” offers a related reflection on God’s memory and forgetting. In the sestet, the speaker begs for forgiveness by asking God to wipe out and forget his sins. “Oh! Of thine only worthy blood, / And my tears, make a heavenly lethean flood, / And drown in it my sin’s black memory . . .” the poet begs, reassuring God that “I think it mercy, if thou wilt forget” (ll. 10-14).

<sup>299</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons*, 24. Mart. 1616. [1616/17] *Proverbs* 22.11., 12.

It is only with prodigious help from God that man is able to separate himself from sinful memories. In one passage, Donne identifies this help as grace:

That we fall not from our faith, and that dead flies corrupt not our ointment,  
that worldly mixtures doe not vitiate our best works, and the memory of past  
sins, dead sins, doe not beget new sins in us, is the operation of Grace.

(IV, 287)<sup>300</sup>

In another reflection on the same spiritual affliction, he clearly identifies the source of that help as the Holy Spirit. We have seen the Holy Spirit associated with the memory, presented as Lord of the memory in the six sermons discussed above. It is therefore only appropriate that the Holy Spirit should rush to the aid of a man haunted by memories of sin and wishing to forget. The Holy Ghost exorcises unwanted ghosts:

And if the ghosts of those sinners, whom I made sinners, haunt me after  
their deaths, in returning to my memory, and reproaching to my conscience,  
the heavy judgments that I have brought upon them: If after the death of  
mine own sinne, when my appetite is dead to some particular sinne, the  
memory and sinfull delight of passed sinnes, the ghosts of those sinnes  
haunt me againe; yet there is a holy Ghost in heaven, that shall exorcise  
these, and shall overshadow me, the God of all Comfort and Consolation.

(IX, 61)<sup>301</sup>

Forgetting is a balm after the painful upheaval of repentance but puts the soul in grave spiritual danger before. In a passage comparing sin to rising waters, Donne writes:

But if it be above our head, then the brain is drown'd, that is, our reason,  
and *understanding*, which should dispute against it, and make us asham'd of  
it, or afraid of it; And our *memory* is drown'd, we have forgot that there  
belongs a repentance to our sins, perhaps forgot that there is such a sin in us;  
forgot that those actions are sins, forgot that we have done those actions;

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<sup>300</sup> *Preached at St Pauls, upon Christmas day. 1622.Coloss. 1.19, 20., 5.*

<sup>301</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court in April, 1629.[First Sermon on] Gen. 1.26., 15.*

and forgot that there is law, even in our own hearts, by which we might try,  
whether our actions were sins, or no. (II, 110)<sup>302</sup>

Sin can drown the memory. If memory is dead, forgetfulness reigns. Donne masterfully traces the levels of forgetfulness from forgetting to repent, to forgetting we have sinned, even to forgetting the law in our hearts that enables us to weigh actions and determine whether they were sins.<sup>303</sup>

Forgetfulness can also lead to spiritual laxity. Failure to remember the root of a sin that has since become habit prevents many from cutting themselves off from the root that feeds the particular sin:

In young Men, vanity begets excesse; excesse, licentiousnesse; licentiousnesse, envy, hatred, quarrels, murders; so that here is generation upon generation, here are risen *Grandfather* and *Great-grandfather-sinnes* quickly, a forward generation: And then they grow suddainly to be *habits*, and they come to prescribe in us: *Prescription* is, when there is no memory to the contrary; and we cannot remember when that sinfull custome begun in us: yea, our sinnes come to be revered in us, and by us; our sinnes contract a majestie, and a state, and they grow *sacred* to us; we dare not trouble a sinne, we dare not displace it, nor displease it . . . (VI, 196)<sup>304</sup>

Memory is necessary for repentance, for “my secret sins, sins that I am not able to returne and represent to mine owne memory, may [be imputed onto me]” (IX, 263).<sup>305</sup> We should not be upset when memories of past sins flood our memories. “Say not with *Ahab* to the Prophet, Hast thou found me out, O mine enemy? when an unrepented sinne comes to thy memory then, be not sorry that thou remembrest it then, nor doe not say, I would this sin had not troubled me now, I would I had not remembred it till tomorrow” (VIII, 290).<sup>306</sup> One should cultivate gratitude instead for the auspicious time for

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<sup>302</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. Psalme 38.4. Spring or Summer 1618.*, 16.

<sup>303</sup> An interesting parallel may be drawn to Augustine’s own reflections on the powers, albeit limited, of forgetfulness. Cf. our discussion in section II.1.4. above.

<sup>304</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Saint Dunstan’s upon New-Years-day, 1624. [1624/25] Gen. 17.24.*, 11

<sup>305</sup> *Preached upon the Penitentiall Psalmes. Psal. 32.1,2.*, 14.

<sup>306</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, upon Christmas day. 1626. Luke 2.29 and 30.*, 12.

repentance is come. The minister assists in the process of reconciliation with God, but the first step towards this squaring of accounts is to scour one's own memory for sin.

How shall we [i.e., preachers] finde your sinnes? In the old sacrifice of the law, the Priest did not fetch the sacrifice from the herd, but he received it from him that brought it, and so sacrificed it for him. Doe thou therefore prevent [i.e., work ahead of] the Preacher; Accuse thyselfe before he accuse thee; offer up thy sinne thy selfe; Bring it to the top of thy memory, and thy conscience, that he finding it there, may sacrifice it for thee; Tune the instrument, and it is the fitter for his hand. (III, 364)<sup>307</sup>

Memory of sins no longer seems a danger. Instead, the preacher himself urges the congregation to call sins to mind so that they may be forgiven. "Your way is Recollecting," Donne explains to his auditory in an Easter Day sermon, "[G]ather your sins into your memory, and poure them out in humble confession" (VII, 116).<sup>308</sup> After true repentance, we can proceed to forget the sins we have been forgiven, to neglect them, to cut them off utterly, to no longer regard them as present. The peace of a clean conscience is like nothing in this world, and Donne proposes the unbearable lightness of being forgiven as a more fitting subject for the memory:

Our best state in this life, is but a returning, to the purity, which we had in our baptism; whosoever surprises himself in the act or in the remorse of any sin that he is fallen into, would think himself in a blessed state, if he could bring his conscience to that peace again, which he remembers, he had the last time he made up his accounts to God, and had his discharge sealed in the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ Jesus. Cleanse thy self often therefore, and accustome thy soul to that peace, that thou mayest still, when thou fallest into sin, have such a state in thy memory, as thou mayest have a desire to return to. (I, 281)<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> *Preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmas day, 1621. John 1.8., 17.*

<sup>308</sup> *The first Sermon upon this Text, Preached at S. Pauls, in the Evening, upon Easter-day. 1626. 1 Cor. 15.29., 23.*

<sup>309</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, April 12. 1618. Gen. 32.10., 14.*

We have progressed from the danger of delighting in remembered sins to the gift of forgetting forgiven sins and from the danger of forgetting unforgiven sins to the gift of repenting of remembered sins. We have arrived at the peaceful memory of being forgiven.<sup>310</sup>

While the memory of the sweetness of being forgiven can keep man from sin, so can the memory of events from the life of Christ when he triumphed over temptation and sin:

[A]cknowledge . . . the presence of God, that at such a time (by reducing them to thy memory and contemplation his Agony) thou wast brought to a sense of thy miserable estate, and after (by considering the ministering of the angels to him there) thou tookest a confidence of receiving succour from him; That at such a particular time, the memory of his fastinge rescued thee from a voluptuous and riotous meetinge, and the memory of his proceedinge and behaviour in his tentations brought thee also to deliver thy selfe by applyinge his word and the promises of the Gospell from those dangerous attempts of the tempter. (II, 159)<sup>311</sup>

The memory is virtually boundless in its capacity, and therefore filling it with *phantasmata* of good things does not entirely exclude sin. Yet a memory filled with a rich store of *phantasmata* based on images taken from all areas of life is necessary to produce the knowledge needed to rectify the will and move man one step closer to salvation.

In the following chapter, we will examine Donne's salvific use of the *loci* and *imagines* method to create *phantasmata* from which the understanding can derive wholesome lessons. Donne's effort to illustrate the most abstract theological teachings with the most concrete examples speaks eloquently of his belief in sense-based

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<sup>310</sup> David J. Baker writes of the dynamic between memory and forgetting in the context of shifts in national religious allegiance in Reformation England. His reflections, however, prove relevant in our present context. Baker suggests, "[w]e will best be able to trace the interplay of memory/forgetting in early modern England . . . if we realize, not only that forgetting was productive, but that the relation between it and memory was, as it were, *fully* dialectical. . . . The forgetting/memory dialectic, then, is precisely not 'closed' (in the sense of 'static') but 'open,' in that both memory and forgetting are constantly sustained by one another and modified by one another in their joint inter-productivity" (Baker 110).

<sup>311</sup> Preached at *Lincolns Inne*. [Spring or Summer 1618] *Psal.38.9.*, 16.



epistemology and his engagement with the world to bring his congregation successfully out of it. Masselink writes:

Donne's transformation of a secular mnemonic device into a method of enhancing understanding and devotion in worship can be seen as rooted in his sense-oriented epistemology whereby we come to know God through images of his effects. As counterbalances to the tainted, weakened condition of memory, the *loci* become in Donne's hands tools of sanctification for fallen humanity. ("Memory in John Donne's Sermons" 106)

Let us then explore how Donne fitted out spaces of the mind and filled them with vivid imagery, thereby readying the soul for the acquisition of salvific knowledge.

#### IV. Donne ‘Baptizes’ *Ars Memoriae*

##### IV.1. *Loci*

Within the context of the five tasks of the orator—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *pronuntiatio/actio*—the structure of the sermon would be established during the *dispositio* stage, which is the time for arranging arguments in a logical manner. It is during this crucial phase that the orator decides on the divisions and subdivisions of his argument. If the *dispositio* process is successful, the speaker has a much easier task in committing the sermon to memory as part of the *memoria* phase. Confident and accurate recall of the parts of the sermon in turn allows the preacher to invest his mental energies into effective delivery during *pronuntiatio/actio*.

The audience has no insight into the composition process and is therefore made aware of the structure of the sermon during delivery. Anglican sermons in Donne’s day, in both their oral and written forms, followed the Ramistical structure consisting of a *proem*, division into a few parts, amplification of each of the parts, a summing up, and an application of the message or teaching to the audience (Davis 166).

The *proem* is also known as the *exordium*, where “the orator introduces the occasion, justifies his presence before the auditory, and begins the crucial work of engaging its sympathy” (McCullough, “Donne as Preacher” 177). Donne’s *exordia* are generally half a page to one and a half pages in length but may, in some instances, extend to four pages.<sup>312</sup> They are brilliant attention-catching devices. After hearing the biblical verse clearly read out, the auditory is kept in suspense for the space of a few minutes, wondering when Donne will return to the verse he selected and begin to ‘anatomize’ it. Over the course of these minutes, Donne approaches the verse obliquely. He may recount a related anecdote, reflect on the occasion for the sermon and its audience, quote a previous exegesis from a Church Father, Reformation or Counter-Reformation commentator, or situate the selected verse in the context of the entire chapter or book of the Bible to which it belongs. On rare occasions he dispenses with the *exordium* altogether, either because he is continuing a previous sermon or because the sermon is so long that he considers it more appropriate to jump straight to the

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<sup>312</sup> Cf. IV, No.4., that is, *A Sermon Preached at the Spittle, Upon Easter-Munday, 1622*.

*divisio*. As the *exordium* draws to its close, Donne expertly returns to the original verse by allowing his own reflections to flow seamlessly into the biblical text, so that the audience listening to Donne’s fluid prose suddenly realizes that it is hearing the verse for the second time. This pleasurable recognition is the first act of memory that Donne requires of his audience!

After the second reading of the verse, the preacher presents the *divisio* of the sermon. Peter McCullough warns that

thematic imagery, tropes and figures, and most wit evaporate while the preacher offers a detailed structural outline of the sermon . . . the sermon *divisio* is by design schematic—these must be skeletally clear outlines in order to aid both the preacher and the auditory. For the former, it is a crucial *aide memoir*; for the latter, it offers a road-map marked with milestones which an audience (who themselves often took notes) will want to watch and listen for. (McCullough, “Donne as Preacher” 178-79)

The *divisio* is followed by the *amplificatio*, or elaboration of the topics proposed for each of the subdivisions during which Donne refers back to the landmarks previously proposed, and a *conclusio*, which includes the “emotionally clenching [*peroratio*] designed to summarize the whole of the sermon exercise with the aim of inspiring action on the part of the hearers” (McCullough, “Donne as Preacher” 179-80). As Donne saves his most vivid imagery for the *amplificatio* and *conclusio*, we will treat of those sections during our subsequent discussion of the *imagines*.

In the *divisio* phase, Donne presents the sermon structure over the course of half a page to multiple pages. His divisions are most often threefold with further subdivisions, but twofold<sup>313</sup> and fourfold<sup>314</sup> structures also occur. Furthermore, Donne has an alternative way of structuring sermons based on the grammatical makeup of the

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<sup>313</sup> Cf. III, No.9; VIII, No.4; VIII, No.14; that is *A Lent-Sermon Preached before the King, at White-Hall, February 16, 1620 [1620/21]*. *1 Tim. 3.16., Preached to the King in my Ordinary wayting at White-hall, 18. Aprill 1626. Joh. 14.2., and Preached to the King, at White-Hall, the first Sunday in Lent. [Probably February 11, 1626/7] Esai. 65.20.* respectively.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. II, No.15; II, No.12; that is *Preached at Lincolns Inne [January 30, 1619/20] John 5.22. and Two Sermons, to the Prince and Princes Palatine, the Lady Elizabeth at Heydelberg, when I was commanded by the King to wait upon my L. of Doncaster in his Embassyge to Germany. First Sermon as we went out, June 16, 1619. Rom. 13.11.* respectively.

verse he is treating, which he divides into clauses, phrases and individual words to rigorously explore the full range of meanings. I would call this the ‘string of pearls’ approach, as the structure of the sermon proceeds from the word order of a sentence as one pearl follows the other on a string. The ‘string of pearls’ approach is compatible with a twofold, threefold or fourfold structure. In such cases, the individual words of the verse become the subdivisions within the two, three or four established parts.

Donne unveils the structure of the sermon, whether twofold, threefold, fourfold or ‘string of pearls’ in three basic ways. In some sermons, he lists the parts with no spatial metaphors involved.<sup>315</sup> In other instances, he makes use of a striking variety of spatial metaphors to hold the parts together. Finally, Donne’s most explicit use of *ars memoriae* occurs when he uses architectural metaphors to establish the structure in the memory of the congregation. We will consider the logic or reasons behind the structure (which of course contributes to making the sermon more memorable) in a later section; here I wish only to discuss, through representative examples, Donne’s explicit use of *loci*, architectural or other, to present the structure and make his *divisio* memorable.

An early sermon on Ecclesiastes 8:11 from the second year of his preaching career provides a simple instance of Donne merely naming the parts of his sermon:

In which words we shall consider, first, The general perversness of natural man, who by custom in sin, comes to assign a Reason why he may sin; intimated in the first word *Because*. And secondly, The particular perversness of the men in this Text, who assign the patience of God, to be the Reason of their continuance in sin, *Because sentence is not executed speedily*. And then lastly, The illusion upon this, what a fearful state thus shuts them up in, *That therefore their hearts are fully set in them, to do evil*. And these three, The perversness of colouring sins with Reasons, and the impotency of making Gods mercy the Reason, and the danger of obduration thereby, will be the three parts, in which we shall determine this Exercise. (I, 169)<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> This is especially true of sermons based on the ‘string of pearls’ approach described above.

<sup>316</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, April 21. 1616, Eccles.8.11., 2.*

It is not uncommon for Donne, when simply listing the parts of his sermon, to name them two or three times using different wording. This strategy turns the *divisio* into a miniature sermon and reinforces, through repetition, the mental map of the structure.

As the sermon progresses and Donne launches into each of the three proposed parts, he refers back to the original structure thus: “First then, in handling the perversness of assigning Reasons for sins . . . Now the particular reason, which the perversness of these men produced here, in this text, is . . . Now for the Incurableness of this heart . . .” (I, 170, 172, 180).<sup>317</sup>

When moving from one proposed part to the other, he often provides a brief summary of the part he has just treated. Furthermore, upon beginning the subsequent portion, he presents the subdivisions that he had not presented before to avoid burdening his auditory needlessly at the beginning. *A Sermon Preached at Greenwich, April 30. 1615.* showcases both memory-friendly strategies:

So then, Having thus represented unto you, a model, and designe, of the miserable condition of man, and the abundant mercy of our Redeemer . . . That we may look better upon some pieces of it, that we may take such a sight of this Redeemer here, as that we may know Him, when we meet Him at home, at our house in our private meditations, at His house, in the last judgment, I shall onely offer you two considerations; *Exprobationem*, and *Consolationem*: First, an exprobaton, or increpation from God to us, And then a consolation, or consolidation of the same God upon us. (I, 154)<sup>318</sup>

The above examples stemmed from sermons with the most common threefold division. In the case of a ‘string of pearls’ sermon, the many parts listed in the *divisio* are held together by association. The second sermon on Psalm 38:2 from 1618 simply entitled *Preached at Lincolns Inne* serves as an excellent case in point. The verse serving as the basis of the sermon reads “For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand

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<sup>317</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, April 21. 1616., Eccles.8.11., 2, 4, 12.*

<sup>318</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Greenwich, April 30. 1615. Esay 52.3., 4.*

presseth me sore” and Donne proposes to unravel the meaning of his chosen text in a careful, word-by-word manner:

[F]irst, we shall see in what respect, in what allusion, in what notification he calls them *arrows*: And therein first, that they are *alienae*, they are shot from *others*, they are not in his own power; a man shoots not an arrow at himselfe; And then, that they are *Veloces*, swift in coming, he cannot give them their time; And again, they are *Vix visibiles*, though they bee not altogether invisible in their coming, yet there is required a quick eye, and an expresse diligence, and watchfulnesse to discern and avoid them; so they are arrows in the hand of another; not his own; and swift as they come, and invisible before they come. And secondly, they are *many arrows*; The victory lies not in scaping one or two; And thirdly, they *stick in him*; they find not *David* so good proof, as to rebound back again, and imprint no sense; And *they stick fast*; Though the blow be felt, and the wound discerned, yet there is not a present cure, he cannot shake them off; *Infixae sunt*; And then, with all this, they stick fast in him; that is, in *all him*; in his body, and soul . . . And of so many pieces will this exercise consist, this exercise of your *Devotion*, and perchance *Patience*. (II, 51)<sup>319</sup>

Even instances like the above, when Donne mentions no specific spatial metaphors to create a mental map of his sermon, he still utilizes verbs of movement to convey a sense of locomotion from place to place, as in the following example.

For, I shall let him see first, The dangerous slipperiness, the concurrence, the co-incidence of sins . . . and then, in a second place, he shall see, what perverse and frivolous reasons they assign for their sins . . . And then, lastly, by this perverse mistaking, they come to that infatuation, that dementation, as that they loose the principles of all knowledge, and all wisdom . . . First then, We enter into our first Part, The slipperiness of habitual sin . . .  
(II, 223-24)<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> *Preached at Lincoln's Inne. Psal. 38.2., 3.*

<sup>320</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, Novemb. 2. 1617. Psal. 55.19., 1-2.*

Other examples such as “And therefore we will carry this question a little higher . . .”, “We passe then from the *Morte moriemini*, to the *forte moriemini* . . .” and “Come then to ask this question . . .” (II, 198, 203, 207)<sup>321</sup>—all taken from a single sermon—further suggest that Donne is imagining his sermon in spatial terms even when he fails to explicitly say so.

Yet other instances show him using both verbs of motion and spatial designations, such as ‘place’ or ‘part.’ “In our first part, *Holy Places*, wee looke first upon the times of our meeting there, *Holy Dayes*” (IV, 365),<sup>322</sup> “And then, in the second place, . . . In the first of these, we shall passe by these steps . . .” (VI, 151),<sup>323</sup> “In these three parts, we shall walk by these steps; Having made our entrance into the first . . . In the second, we shall also first make this generall entrance. . . . In the third we have more steps to make (VI, 168-69),”<sup>324</sup> “Where we must necessarily make thus many steps, though but short ones” (VI, 264),<sup>325</sup> and “in those two miles, wee shall also make up that Sabbath Dayes journey, when God shall be please to bring us to it . . .” (VIII, 165)<sup>326</sup> are just a handful of the subtlest indications that Donne is making pious use of architectural mnemotechnic.

The most common spatial metaphor Donne employs to convey the structure of his sermons is that of a tree, with its roots, branches and nourishing fruits. Sometimes he uses the metaphor simply to refer to the sermon as a whole as in “And by all these steps must we passe through this garden of flowers, this orchard of fruits, this abundant Text” (X, 44)<sup>327</sup> or “For the first, (for, of the other two wee shall reach you the boughs anon, when you come to gather the fruit, and lay open the particulars, then when we come to handle them” (VII, 216)<sup>328</sup> or in the following elaborate example:

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<sup>321</sup> *Preached to the Lords upon Easter-day, at the Communion, The King being then dangerously sick at New-Market. Psal. 89.48., 2, 7, 11.*

<sup>322</sup> *Encaenia. The Feast of Dedication. Celebrated at Lincolnes Inne, in a Sermon there upon Ascension day, 1623. John 10.22., 4.*

<sup>323</sup> *Preached to the Earl of Exeter, and his company, in his Chappell at Saint Johns; 13. Jun. 1624. Apoc. 7.9., 2.*

<sup>324</sup> *Preached at Pauls, upon Christmas Day, in the Evening. 1624. Esaiah 7.14., 1-2.*

<sup>325</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, in the Evening, upon Easter-day. 1625. John 5.28 and 29., 3.*

<sup>326</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, May 21.1626. I Cor. 15.29., 2.*

<sup>327</sup> *Preached upon All-Saints Day. [?1623] Apoc. 7.2,3., 4.*

<sup>328</sup> *Preached upon Whitsunday. John 16.8,9,10,11., 2.*

Be pleased to admit, and charge your memories with this distribution of the words; Let the parts be but two, so you will be pleased to stoop, and gather, or at least to open your hands to receive, some more (I must not say flowers, for things of sweetnesse, and of delight grow not in my ground) but *simples* rather, and *medicinnall herbs*; of which as there enter many into good *cordials*, so in this supreme cordiall, of bringing God into the eyes of man, that *every man may see it, men may behold it afar off*, there must necessarily arise many particulars to your consideration. I threaten you but with two parts; no farther tediousnesse; but I aske roome for divers branches; I can promise no more shortnesse. (IV, 164)<sup>329</sup>

In most cases, however, he conscientiously returns to the organic imagery throughout the text, as in “For the first branch of the first part . . . This was our first branch . . . This was our second Branch” (VI, 116, 118, 119).<sup>330</sup> Perhaps behind these tree-based images lives the conviction that the preacher, throughout the sermon, imparts correctly the knowledge of good and evil that Adam and Eve panted after as they gazed up at the fateful tree in Paradise. The harvest Donne proposes is divinely sanctioned.

But there are many other metaphors from the natural world that help the auditory visualize the sermon. These include the metaphor of light, “And then, for the second part, which is the manifestation of the Mystery, we shall look upon that by all those beams, which shine out in this Text” (III, 207)<sup>331</sup> and the sides of the body “And then there is a *dextra*, and *sinistra beatitudo*, a right handed, and a left handed blessednesse in the Text: so there is a *dextra* and *sinistra Interpretatio*, a right and a left Exposition of the Text” (III, 74).<sup>332</sup>

Donne’s excitement at the geographical discoveries of the times prompts him to use the language of maps and globes to convey mental space:

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<sup>329</sup> *Preached at Hanworth, to my Lord of Carlile, and his company, being the Earles of Northumberland, and Buckingham, &c., Aug. 25.1622. Job 36.25., 2.*

<sup>330</sup> *Preached upon Whitsunday [Conjecturally assigned to 1624] I Cor. 12.3., 3,5,6.*

<sup>331</sup> *A Lent-Sermon Preached before the King, at White-Hall, February 16, 1620 [1620/21]. I Tim. 3.16., 2.*

<sup>332</sup> *Preached at White-hall, the 30. Aprill 1620. Psal. 144.15., 2.*



You shal have but two parts out of these words; And to make these two parts, I consider the Text, as the two *Hemispheres* of the world laid open in a flat, in a plaine Map. All those parts of the world, which the Ancients have used to consider, are in one of those *Hemispheres*; All *Europe* is in that, and in that is all *Asia*, and *Afrike* too: So that when we have seene that *Hemisphere*, done with that, we might seeme to have seene all, done with all the world; but yet the other *Hemisphere*, that of *America* is as big as it; though, but by occasion of new, and late discoveries, we had had nothing to say of *America*. (IV, 181)<sup>333</sup>

Another geographical metaphor relies on the dynamism of sailing:

In this discovery from this Red Sea, to this dead Sea; from the mercy of God, in the blood of his Son, to the malediction of God, in the blood of the sinner, be pleased to make these the points of your Compasse, and your Land-marks by the way, in those, in the two parts of this exercise. (VIII, 351)<sup>334</sup>

Fountains of water, rivers that naturally lead into one another are also apt spatial metaphors for a sermon that flows:

The teares of the text are as a Spring, a Well, belonging to one household, the Sisters of *Lazarus*: The teares over Jerusalem, are as a River belonging to a whole Country: The teares upon the Crosse, as the Sea belonging to all the World [...at last] we shall looke upon those lovely, those heavenly eyes, through this glasse of his own teares . . . For so often Jesus wept. (IV, 326)<sup>335</sup>

The layers of time, even in the abstract, contribute to a structural metaphor that points beyond itself.

So that we have here the whole compasse of Time, Past, Present, and Future; and these three parts of Time, shall be at this time, the three parts of

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<sup>333</sup> Preached at the Crosse the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. 1622. Judges. 5.20., 4.

<sup>334</sup> Preached to the King, at White-Hall, the first Sunday in Lent. [Probably February 11, 1626/7] Esai. 65.20., 3.

<sup>335</sup> Preached at White-hall, the first Friday in Lent. [1622/23] John 11.35., 3.

this Exercise [...speaking of David's troubles and then redemption] First, His distresse in the Wildernesse, his present estate carried him upon the memory of that which God had done for him before, And the Remembrance of that carried him upon that, of which he assured himselfe after. 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.* (VII, 52)<sup>336</sup>

Beside natural phenomena, manmade objects also serve as indicators of sermons structure. The following *divisio* is based on the shape of the letter Y:

Our Text therefore stands as that Proverbial, that Hieroglyphical Letter, Pythagoras his Y; that hath first a stalk, a stem to fix it self, and then spreads into two Beams. The stem, the stalk of this Letter, this Y, in the first Word of the Text, that Particle of argumentation, For . . . And then opens this Symbolical, this Catechistical Letter, this Y, into two Horns, two Beams, two Branches: one broader, but on the left hand, denoting the Treasures of this World; the other narrower, but on the right hand, Treasure laid up for the World to come. (IX, 174)<sup>337</sup>

The clock comparison is both a subtle reference to the amount of time allotted to the delivery of this relatively short sermon and fosters an awareness of the spacing or timing of a sermon whose parts are proportionate and harmoniously arranged: "These foure steps, these foure passages, these foure transitions will be our quarter Clock, for this houres exercise" (VI, 64).<sup>338</sup> Donne's rather leisurely reference to units of 'quarter clocks' or intervals of fifteen minutes that would be signaled by bells in church towers is appropriate as minute hands on clocks did not appear until the end of the seventeenth century (Falk 65).

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<sup>336</sup> *The second of my Prebend Sermons upon my five Psalmes. Preached at S. Pauls, January 29. 1625. [1625/6] Psal. 63.7., 2.*

<sup>337</sup> *A Lent-Sermon Preached to the King, at White-Hall, February 12, 1629. Mat. 6.21., 2.*

<sup>338</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, upon Easter-day, in the Evening. 1624. Apoc. 20.6., 3.*

A special kind of double picture serves to accommodate a sermon divided into two parts: “But in this Text, as in one of those Tables, in which, by changing the station, and the line, you use to see two pictures, you have a good picture of a good King, and of a good subject” (I, 183).<sup>339</sup> In the same sermon, Donne continues: “Here in our Text, we finde the subjects picture first; And his Marks are two . . . In the Kings picture the principal marke is . . . In the first then, which is this Pureness of heart, we are to consider *Rem, sedem, & Modum*: what this Pureness is, Then *where* it is to be lodged and fixed, In the heart; and, after that, the way, and means by which this Pureness of heart is acquired and preserved” (I, 184).<sup>340</sup>

A very unique spatial metaphor merging *loci* and *imagines* occurs when the verse being discussed mentions houses<sup>341</sup> and Donne proceeds to use the image of four houses which will be visited as the sermon progresses: “That therefore we may take in light at all these windows that God opens for us, that we may lay hold upon God by all these handles which he puts out to us, we shall make a brief survey of these four Houses” (VI, 351).<sup>342</sup>

The above example leads us to a consideration of architectural mnemotechnic, which is most strictly in keeping with Antique rhetorical tradition. Architectural references range from instances where Donne simply uses the metaphor without further comment to elaborate cases when he consciously refers to the parts of the mental building as he ‘leaves’ and ‘enters’ them. Examples of the former include “So have you the designe, and frame of our building, and the severall partitions, the roomes; pass we now to a more particular survey, and furnishing of them” (IV, 146)<sup>343</sup> and “so you have the *Modell* of the whole frame, and of the partitions; we proceede now to the furnishing of the particular roomes” (IV, 267).<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons*, 24. *Mart. 1616. Proverbs 22.11.*, 1.

<sup>340</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons*, 24. *Mart. 1616. Proverbs 22.11.*, 2.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. “For there was not a house where there was not one dead” (Exod. 12.30).

<sup>342</sup> *A Sermon Preached at St. Dunstons January 15. 1625. [1625/6] Exod. 12.30.*, 3.

<sup>343</sup> *Preached at St. Pauls on Midsommer day. 1622. John 1.8.*, 2.

<sup>344</sup> *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable Company of the Virginia Plantation. 13. November 1622. Acts 1.8.*, 4.

Donne's most explicit use of the architectural mnemonic occurs in an undated sermon on Luke 23.24 simply entitled *Preached to the Nobility*. His choice of a palace to reflect the layout of the sermon shows a unique sensitivity to the needs of his audience. Not only does he share his *loci* with his auditory but he goes out of his way to accommodate his listeners by selecting a kind of place with which they would be intimately familiar:

These words shall be fittest considered, like a goodly palace, if we rest a little, as in an outward Court, upon consideration of prayer in generall; and then draw neare the view of the Palace, in a second Court, considering this speciall prayer in generall, as the face of the whole palace. Thirdly, we will passe thorow the chiefest rooms of the palace it self; and then insist upon four steps . . . And lastly, going into the backside of all, we will cast the objections. (V, 231-32)<sup>345</sup>

After unveiling the structure of the sermon, Donne returns to the *loci* at later points in the text, gallantly admitting that “It were unmannerlinesse to hold you longer in the Entry” and proposing “One turne in the inner Court, of this speciall prayer in generall, and so enter the Palace” (V, 233).<sup>346</sup>

In one special architectural mnemonic, the parts of the memory building themselves convey the relative importance of the parts of the sermon. As Masselink has pointed out, this is highly unusual, because mnemonic devices are usually value neutral; they contain information but do not qualify it<sup>347</sup> as Donne does when he says:

In the words, and by occasion of them, we consider the Text, the Context, and the Pretext: Not as three equall parts of the Building; but the Context, as the situation and Prospect of the house, The Pretext, as the Accesse and entrance to the house, And then the Text it selfe, as the House it selfe, as the body of the building. . . . We begin with the Context; the situation, the prospect; how it stands, how it is butted, how it is bounded . . . (VI, 224)<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> *Preached to the Nobility. Luke 23.24.*, 1-2.

<sup>346</sup> *Preached to the Nobility. Luke 23.24.*, 3.

<sup>347</sup> See Masselink, “Memory in John Donne’s Sermons” 103.

<sup>348</sup> *Preached at White-hall, March 4. 1624. [1624/5] Mat. 19.17.*, 2.

In a polemical sermon, Donne sets out to dismantle belief in Purgatory by presenting the concept as a teetering building built on the wrong foundations. The picture of the building also serves as the spatial metaphor governing the sermon, allowing the mnemonic device, once again, to serve as commentary on its contents:

It may then be of use to insist upon the survey of this building of theirs, in these three considerations. First, to looke upon the foundation, upon what they raise it, and that is Prayer for the Dead, and that is the Grand-mother Error; And then upon the Building it selfe, Purgatory it self, and that is the Mother; and lastly upon the outhouses, or the furniture of this Building, and that is Indulgences, which are the children, and issue of this mother, and not such children as draw their parents dry, but support and maintaine their parents; for, but for these Indulgences, their prayer for the Dead, and their Purgatory would starve; And starve they must all, if they can draw their maintenance from no other place but this, *Why are these men baptized for the dead?* (VII, 168).<sup>349</sup>

Donne's open and creative use of architectural mnemotechnic attests to his commitment to nurturing his auditory's faculty of memory. On occasion, he puts this commitment into words. For example, to aid his auditory, he proposes to postpone subdivisions of the second and third parts until those parts are reached in revelatory passages such as: "And these will be the branches, or circumstances of our first part: for the particulars of the second, we shall open them more commodiously for your memory and use, then, when we come to handle them, then now. Now we proceed to those of the first part" (IV, 182)<sup>350</sup> and "As for the particulars belonging to the second, we shall fitliest open them, then, when we come to the handling of them" (VI, 152)<sup>351</sup> and "Now, a re-distribution, a sub-division of these parts, into their branches, we shall present to

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<sup>349</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, May 21. 1626. I Cor. 15.29., 5.*

<sup>350</sup> *Preached at the Crosse the 1<sup>5</sup><sup>th</sup> of September. 1622. Judges. 5.20., 5.*

<sup>351</sup> *Preached to the Earl of Exeter, and his company, in his Chappell at Saint Johns; 13. Jun. 1624. Apoc. 7.9, 3.*

you anon, more opportunely, as we shall come in due order to the handling of the parts themselves” (VI, 206).<sup>352</sup>

Donne’s concern for the memorability of his oration shines out most clearly in passages where he reflects on the right logic behind his *divisio*: “So then, the sense of the words being thus fixed, we shall not distract your understandings, or load your memories, with more than two parts: Those, for your ease, and to make the better impression, we will call propositium, and praepositium” (III, 189)<sup>353</sup> and “These considerations will, I thinke, have the better impression in you, if we proceed in the handling of them thus . . .” (IV, 239)<sup>354</sup> and “You may apprehend the parts easily, and as easily comprehend them; They are few, and plaine, and of things agreed by all” (VIII, 74).<sup>355</sup> In one such reflection, Donne reassures a most likely overwhelmed audience: “And so have you the whole frame mark’d out, which we shall set up; and the whole compasse design’d, which we shall walk in: In which, though the pieces may seem many, yet they do so naturally flow out of one another, that they may easily enter into your understanding; and so naturally depend upon one another, that they may easily lay hold upon your memory” (VIII, 144).<sup>356</sup>

Referring back to our previous discussion of the history and variety of the art of memory and comparing it to the treasury of examples presented above, we arrive at the conclusion that Donne had a deep and thorough understanding of the theory of *ars memoriae* as laid down by the anonymous author of *Ad Herennium* and by Quintillian, but that in practice he was creative and fascinatingly unconventional, at least in comparison to the rules layed out in the Latin rhetorical handbooks.<sup>357</sup> Along the lines of the Antique admonitions, Donne pictures entire buildings and names their rooms in an order he then follows throughout the sermon. The anonymous author suggests that the mental architecture does not have to be taken from real life, but it is legitimate

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<sup>352</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, The Sunday after the Conversion of S. Paul. [1624/5] Acts 9.4., 2.*

<sup>353</sup> *Preached to the Countess of Bedford, then at Harrington house. January 7. 1620. Job 13.15.*

<sup>354</sup> *A Sermon upon the fift of November 1622. being the Anniversary celebration of our Deliverance from the Powder Treason. Lament. 4.20., 5.*

<sup>355</sup> *A Sermon, Preached to the Kings Majestie at Whitehall, 24. Febr. 1625 [1625/6] Esai. 50.1., 3.*

<sup>356</sup> *A Sermon Preached to the Houshold at White-hall, April 30. 1626. Matth. 9.13., 4.*

<sup>357</sup> For a discussion of Donne’s possible direct contact with Latin rhetoric, please refer to our discussion in section II.3.6. above.

practice to imagine suitable *loci*. None of Donne's mental buildings are described in enough detail to enable researchers to match them up with actual buildings from his time. Although he may very well have used the Chapel at Whitehall or St. Dunstan's Church or indeed any of his multiple preaching venues as private mental places on which to place his images, these buildings have been dramatically altered by fire, "by passing architectural fashions or the personal whims of those responsible for them in the intervening 400 years" (Wall 160-61). Donne's mention of the furnishings of the imaginary rooms and the many verbs he uses to convey a sense movement through the house hearken back to Quintilian. His use of unconventional *loci* such as trees, seas, the human body, clocks and pictures, to name a few, are in line with the Dominican tradition cherished by Johannes Romberch of using the spheres of the cosmos, the signs of the zodiac, and a variety of spatial configurations as memory structures. Interestingly, building- and other spatial metaphors appear and increase in frequency in the mid-1620s. The sheer variety of *loci* as well as using them to convey the relative importance of parts of the sermon are all Donne's own and show a deep commitment to the memorability of his sermons. We have explored the theological reasons for this commitment in the previous chapter, now let us turn to the panoply of images with which Donne fills his mental spaces made public.

## **IV.2. *Imagines***

### **IV.2.1. Mapping the Images**

If we return to the sermon-writing process, we will remember that following the *dispositio* phase, the preacher proceeds to consider *elocutio*. In possession of some sort of skeletal structure for the oration, he is now looking for the illustrations and examples that will flesh it out and bring it to life. During delivery of the sermon, the audience can expect to encounter most of the images at the *amplificatio* stage, following the *divisio* discussed above. Amplification turns out to be an apt term when describing what Donne does to enhance his arguments. Instead of brief, flashy conceits presented in a few lines, or a stanza or two at most, Donne presents vividly detailed images sprawling out into compound sentences and occasionally one or more paragraphs. By 'image' I mean

simply something visible that stands for or points to something that generally is not. Using the language of the literary arts, we may define imagery broadly as “all forms of figurative discourse, among them, metaphor, simile, and allegory” (Schleiner 5).

Here I return briefly to Robert Hickey’s thesis that “the tremendous range and quality of Donne’s imagery may best be explained by his belief that the ends of persuasive discourse . . . are achieved by evoking the faculty instead of, or in addition to, appealing to the understanding [or to the will]” (29). Later, Hickey also noted that “by far the greater proportion of [Donne’s] imagery is drawn from fields which would be familiar to followers of the different vocations represented in his congregation” (34). Although Hickey’s brief study of Donne’s art of memory could accommodate neither a survey of the “tremendous range and quality of Donne’s imagery” nor a convincing body of examples of imagery drawn from “the different vocations represented in [Donne’s] congregation,” we have ample space to achieve both ends. In what follows, we will consider ways of organizing Donne’s imagery and then survey this vast body of material using a method that excludes overlaps and allows for weighted treatment of imagery drawn from the world of man.

Winfried Schleiner’s 1970 volume entitled *The Imagery of John Donne’s Sermons* is by far the most systematic and detailed treatment of a topic that has inspired generations of scholars struck by the ‘poetic’ qualities of Donne’s prose. Schleiner, towards the beginning of his analysis, debates long and hard over the best method to organize and categorize Donne’s unruly body of imagery. “The task of mapping out Donne’s tropes raises the question of what map to use. On what co-ordinates should they be plotted?” (Schleiner 5).

Building on the recognition that tropes, particularly metaphors, have “at all times been considered as some kind of transgression of the rules of signification” (Schleiner 6), Schleiner first proposes to set up a scale of degrees of linguistic ‘transgression’ indicated by the ‘distance’ between tenor and vehicle. The distance in this case is ontological, referring to the space between vehicle and tenor in the hierarchy of being. He does not explain from whence he would derive this hierarchy nor does he develop



the idea further,<sup>358</sup> but enumerates three complementary methods instead, the second of which is to divide Donne's imagery into fields.<sup>359</sup>

Schleiner devotes most of his study to fields of imagery—"Sin as Sickness," "Life as Journey," "The Book of the World," "The Seal of the Sacrament," "Salvation as a Purchase," "The Eyes of the Soul"—which, while highly representative and masterfully discussed, are not mutually exclusive but rather overlapping categories. Man's journey through the world ("Life as Journey"), his setbacks ("Sin as Sickness") and healing ("Salvation as a Purchase" and "The Seal of the Sacrament") make sense only when seen through "The Eyes of the Soul" continually probing "The Book of the World" as man seeks the divine Author. In this scheme, "The Book of the World" representing the entirety of the known universe subsumes all categories as the document par excellence of God's prevenient love for man and man's tentative steps towards God.

We may recall also Evelyne Simpson's division of Donne's imagery into homely, grotesque/macabre, ingenious/far-fetched and incongruous (mixing sacred and secular) as discussed in section 1.5. above. Simpson, too, contended that Donne drew imagery from all areas of life, yet her classification scheme, which is based more on the quality of the imagery than on their provenance, provides little help in showcasing their variety. While Kawasaki, Carrithers and Doebbler, have treated aspects of Donne's

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<sup>358</sup> Schleiner rejects the method of measuring linguistic transgression through ontological difference based on a single expression. After all, he argues, a river and human speech certainly inhabit disparate ontological realms, yet an expression like "flowing speech" is hardly striking but is rather a commonplace that sophisticated writers and speakers strive to avoid (Schleiner 9). Commonplaces, however, are easy to sift out. By their very nature, they are simply mentioned and never developed. They are quite the opposite of Donne's elaborate conceits, unfurled over the course of elaborate sentences and entire paragraphs.

<sup>359</sup> Relying on Weinreich's definition of the metaphor as "a word in a context by which it is determined that it signifies something other than what it means," Schleiner proposes to measure words to their context according to the rhetorical ideal of decorum, or the fittingness of speech. To explore how the tropes are interrelated, he identifies fields of imagery "constituted by an analogical link between the two areas of meaning" (11). Finally, to address tropes that do not neatly fit into one of the proposed fields of meaning, Schleiner refers back to Medieval semantic theory and concepts of biblical exegesis in which individual words are seen to have a spectrum of meanings ranging from the historical to the allegorical and on to the moral and anagogical. "According to this conception a word has as many potential meanings as the *res* that lies behind its *vox* has properties" (12). The aim and result of Schleiner's study is a sensitive evaluation of the wealth of Donne's imagery in the sermons according to the double criterion of traditionalism and originality.

imagery,<sup>360</sup> nobody other than Schleiner has, to my knowledge, surveyed Donne's imagery in the entire body of his sermons in a systematic manner. I wish to set up my own survey along the Great Chain of Being, a Renaissance structural metaphor for the entire known cosmos. We may treat the links in the chain as *loci* and the metaphors contained within as *imagines agentes*. The visual metaphors are arranged according to the ontological position of their vehicle or, in the case of multiple vehicles, their lowest one. For each image, I provide a brief analysis in an attempt to abstract understanding, as Donne would have expected his auditors to do. Where appropriate, I note similarities and differences to imagery found in Donne's lyrical oeuvre. Finally, through an examination of select, emblematic images, I wish to point to the influence of Antique admonitions for *imagines agentes* in Donne's own carefully constructed metaphors.

#### IV.2.2. The Great Chain of Being

To appreciate the universal scope of Donne's imagery, we must first conjure up a vision of the world according to Renaissance man. Cosmos, the Greek word for universe, derives from the verb κοσμέω meaning both 'to organize, to place in order' and 'to beautify' and reveals a fundamental belief cherished by Renaissance man that the universe is a place of profound intelligibility and great beauty. The traditional Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology held its own for nearly two thousand years<sup>361</sup> until its truth was questioned and incompatibility with scientific findings exposed during the Copernican Revolution<sup>362</sup> spanning the hundred years between 1550 and 1650. Although Donne was aware of and often referred to the findings of the New Science,<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> These scholars have written on the relationship between the macro- and microcosm, the life as a journey motif and imagery of death respectively.

<sup>361</sup> The Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology was a (later Christianized) Antique scheme based on the works of Plato (*Timaeus*), Aristotle (*On the Heavens, Physics, Metaphysics, On Generation and Corruption, On the Soul*), Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Galen, Strabo and Pliny (Rivers 68).

<sup>362</sup> The Copernican Revolution 'began' in 1543 with the publication of Copernicus' *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* and was carried forward through the efforts of Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei (Rivers 72).

<sup>363</sup> See for example Michael Francis Moloney's "The Mind of Donne: The New Science" in *John Donne: His Flight from Medievalism* from 1944 or Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of "New Science" upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry* from 1960.

still his sermons reflect the aesthetically satisfying and morally reassuring older cosmology.

According to the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic world view embraced by Donne, the entire universe consists of a set of concentric, transparent spheres in unceasing motion. Centermost is the terrestrial sphere. The earth and all that inhabit it are composed of the four elements: earth, water, air and fire—cold and dry, cold and wet, hot and wet, and hot and dry respectively. Furthermore, within the terrestrial sphere, the elements are arranged in layers with the earth at the bottom, covered by water, which is topped with a layer of air followed by fire. The first sphere that transcends the earthly is the lunar sphere, or the sphere of the Moon, which is nested in the ever-widening spheres of Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. Beyond the sphere of Saturn revolves the realm of the fixed stars, the Crystalline sphere and finally, the primary mover, or *Primum Mobile*, whose cosmic revolutions keep the lower spheres in motion. Everything in the sphere of the Moon and beyond consists of a rarified fifth element, known as quintessence or ether, which knows neither change nor decay. God's abode beyond the *Primum Mobile* is the Empyrean Heaven "whose existence is of a different nature from that of the cosmos and incomprehensible to man" (Rivers 69).

Such a world view might lead both to pessimism and to optimism. If the ontological distance between the sublunary and the superlunary realms is stressed, man might feel entirely and irrevocably cut off from higher planes of existence. Yet if correspondences or relations between different levels of being were highlighted, man might be seen as the central rung in an existential ladder connecting the heavens and the earth. The *scala naturae* or Chain of Being—taking as its scriptural model Jacob's vision in Genesis 28.12 of angels descending and ascending a ladder reaching into the heavens—reserved for man a central position that was both a comfort and a challenge (Rivers 70).

E. M. W. Tillyard's brief summary presents in a clearcut manner the structure of the Chain:

First there is mere existence, the inanimate class: the elements, liquids, and metals. But in spite of this common lack of life there is vast difference of

virtue; water is nobler than earth, the ruby than the topaz, gold than brass: the links in the chain are there. Next there is existence and life, the vegetative class, where again the oak is nobler than the bramble. Next there is existence life and feeling, the sensitive class. In it there are three grades. First creatures having touch but not hearing memory or movement. Such are shellfish and parasites on the base of trees. Then there are animals having touch memory and movement but not hearing, for instance ants. And finally there are the higher animals, horses and dogs etc., that have all these faculties. The three classes lead up to man, who has not only existence life and feeling, but understanding: he sums up in himself the total faculties of earthly phenomena. (For this reason he was called the little world or microcosm.) But as there has been an inanimate class, so to balance it there must be a purely rational or spiritual. These are the angels, linked to man by community of the understanding, but freed from simultaneous attachment to the lower faculties. There are vast numbers of angels and they are as precisely ordered along the chain of being as the elements or the metals. (Tillyard 27-28)

Donne discusses the Chain of Being explicitly in a sermon on the verse exhorting Christians to preach the Gospel to all creatures. Donne argues that by all creatures, the verse simply means all men, for man sums up in himself the characteristics of all creatures even as all creatures are made for the sake of man:

Because all creatures were as it were melted in one forge, and poured into one mold, when man was made. For, these being all the distinctions which are in all creatures, first, a mere being which stones and other inanimate creatures have; and then life and growth, which trees and plants have; and after that, sense and feeling, which beasts have; and lastly, reason an understanding, which Angels have, Man hath them all, and so in that respect is every creature, sayes *Origen*. (V, 253-54)<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> *Preached to the Earle of Carlile, and his Company, at Sion. [?1622] Mark 16.16., 9-10.*

Every class in the Chain of Being possesses a single trait that causes it to excel the class directly above it. Stones are more durable than plants, plants better able to assimilate nourishment than animals, animals are physically stronger than men, men excel angels because of their faculty of learning. Angels cannot excel God, though they possess the unique gift of adoration. Furthermore, within each class along the chain is a primate that excels its peers. Among the elements, fire is primate, among stones the diamond, of metals gold and silver, of plants the rose and the oak, of animals the eagle, dolphin or whale, lion or elephant. In the human body, the head enjoys primacy, among men it is the king or emperor, among stars the sun, and among angels God Himself (Tillyard 29-31).

Although the Chain of Being is strictly vertical and therefore hierarchical, Renaissance cosmology also displays a kind of horizontal impulse when identifying correspondences or parallels between different planes of existence (Tillyard 83). The favorite Renaissance trope of man as a small world is based on the correspondence between the created world as macrocosm and man as microcosm. The four elements out of which all sublunary creatures are composed match the four humors—melancholy, phlegm, blood and choler—circulating in the body of man (Rivers 70). Furthermore man's head as the highest point of the body was his noblest part, and his heart corresponded to the sun which gives light and life to the planets. The tripartite soul—vegetative, sensitive and intellective—was a miniature Chain of Being inside man enabling him to act on desires that placed him in league with plants, animals and angels respectively. Other correspondences between macrocosm and body politic (universe and state) and body politic and microcosm (the state and the human body) were frequent in Renaissance political thought. Correspondences between celestial beings and earthly creatures, especially between the Creator and Creation, are extremely rare in Renaissance literature, most likely because of a reluctance or sheer inability to compare God to anything below him (Tillyard 87-100).

In my study of the imagery of Donne's sermons, I assembled a catalogue of over one hundred striking images spanning the entire sermon canon and arranged them along the Chain of Being according to the ontological position of the vehicle or, in the case of

multiple vehicles, the lowest among them. The three ancient sources on mnemotechnic, Cicero's *De oratore*, the anonymous *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* call for unusual pairings of tenor and vehicle and elaborate, meaningful detail, hallmarks, as we will see, of Donne's imagery. In what follows, I invite the reader on a climb up the Chain of Being for a dynamic survey of the most representative images.

#### **IV.2.3. *Elementa mineraliaque***

The trope of man as a microcosm, with his four humors corresponding to the four elements may be a Renaissance commonplace,<sup>365</sup> but Donne takes this idea further, into the spiritual realm. He differentiates between a natural man who is trapped at the level of physicality and the regenerate or Christian man whose building blocks are supernatural or metaphysical. His message—that Christian perseverance, one of the four elements of a true Christian, is hidden unless made manifest in good works and holy actions—is made memorable by the parallel with the element of fire, the most mysterious of the four elements:

You are naturally composed of four Elements, and three of those foure are evident, and unquestioned; The fourth Element, the element of Fire, is a more litigious element, more problematicall, more disputable. Every good man, every true Christian, in his Metaphysicks, (for, in a regenerate man, all is Metaphysicall, supernaturall) hath foure Elements also; and three of those foure are declared in this text. First, a good Name, the good opinion of good men, for honest dealing in the world, and religious discharge of duties towards God, That there be no injustices in our hands, Also that your prayer be pure. A second Element is a good conscience in my selfe, That either a holy wariness before, or a holy repentance after, setle me so in God, as that I care not though all the world knew all my faults. And a third element is, my Hope in God, that my witnesse which is in Heaven, will testifie for me, as a

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<sup>365</sup> See for example "I am a little world made cunningly / Of elements and an angelic sprite..." ("Holy Sonnet" V ll.1-2).

witnesse in my behalfe, here or acquit me, as a mercifull Judge, hereafter. Now, there may be a fourth Element, an infallibility of final perseverance, grounded upon the eternall knowledge of God; but this is, as the Element of fire, which may be, but is not, at least, is not so discernable, so demonstrable as the rest. And therefore, as men argue of the Element of fire, that whereas the other elements produce creatures in such abundance, The Earth such heards of Cattell, the Waters such shoales of Fish, the Aire such flocks of Birds, it is no unreasonable thing, to stop upon this consideration, whether there should be an element of fire, more spacious, and comprehensive then the rest, and yet produce no Creatures; so, if thy Element of Infallibility produce no creatures, no good works, no holy actions, thou maist justly doubt there is no such element in thee. (IX, 230-31)<sup>366</sup>

In an earlier sermon composed most likely in 1618, Donne uses the same metaphor in an ironic manner to emphasize the misery of man. Yes, man is made of four elements, but instead of the traditional fire, air, water and earth, his ingredients are darker and more sorrowful.<sup>367</sup> Just as the good things of the earth, emblematically represented by the light of the sun and the fragrance of the rose, exist for man and not for themselves, so does all ill, the bite of the viper, the poison of the toad, pour down upon him:

In this second part, first we contemplate *man*, as the Receptacle, the Ocean of all misery. Fire and Aire, Water and Earth, are not the Elements of man; Inward decay, and outward violence, bodily pain, and sorrow of heart may be rather stiled his Elements . . . As the good qualities of all creatures are not for their own use, (for the *Sun* sees not his own glory, nor the *Rose* smells not her own breath; but all their good is for *man*) so the ill conditions of the creature, are not directed upon themselves, (the Toad poisons not it

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<sup>366</sup> Preached in Lent, to the King. April 20. 1630. [?]Job. 16. 17,18,19., 18-19.

<sup>367</sup> In "The Dissolution," Donne shows how the difficulties of earthly love dissolve the lover into his own dark elements, into "My fire of passion, sighs of air, / Water of tears, and earthly sad despair, / Which my materials be..." (ll. 9-11). "Elegy 12 His Parting from Her" uses the same trope to convey the good qualities of the mistress, which are reflected by the four elements: "the air shall note her soft, the fire most pure; / Water suggests her clear, and the earth sure" (ll. 75-76).

selfe, nor does the Viper bite it self) but all their ill powrs down upon man.

As though man could be a *Microcosm*, a world in himself, no other way, except all the misery of the world fell upon him. (II, 78)<sup>368</sup>

The uniqueness of the element of fire forms the basis of a passage of biting satire directed at the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory and the practice of selling indulgences, whose purchase was originally meant to be a pious act to counteract the punishment meted out in Purgatory for sins already forgiven. Donne argues that while three of the four elements (earth, water and air) produce a panoply of living creatures, fire seems to be barren until we consider the fires of Purgatory, which have produced vast flocks of indulgences:

Against the popular opinion of the Spheare, or Element of Fire, some new Philosophers have made this an argument, that it is improbable, and impertinent, to admit an Element that produceth no Creatures; A matter more subtill than all the rest, and yet work upon nothing in it; A region more spacious then all the rest, and yet have nothing in it, to worke upon. All the other three Elements, Earth, and Water, and Ayre abound with inhabitants proper to each of them, onely the Fire produces nothing. Here is a fire that recompences that defect; The fire of the Roman Purgatory hath produced Indulgences, and Indulgences are multiplied to such a number, as that no heards of Cattell upon earth can equall them, when they meet by millions at a Jubile, no shoales, no spawnne of fish at Sea, can equall them, when they are transported in whole Tuns to the West Indies, where of late yeeres their best Market hath beene; No flocks, no flights of birds in the Ayre can equall them, when as they say of *S. Francis*, at every prayer that he made, a man might have seene the Ayre as full of soules flying out of Purgatory, as sparkles from a Smiths Anvill, beating a hot Iron. (VIII, 184-85)<sup>369</sup>

The elements, despite their specific properties, are forever in a process of transmutation. When the earth itself does not stand still it is not surprising that the very

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<sup>368</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. Psal. 38.3., 7.*

<sup>369</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, May 21. 1626. 1 Cor. 15:29., 21-22.*



elements, the building blocks of sublunary world, are themselves in constant flux. Donne returns on numerous occasions to the dynamism of the natural world where nothing is constant. Air rarified becomes fire and air condensed transmutes into water which, when further condensed, becomes solid earth.<sup>370</sup> This well-known ‘fact’ from natural philosophy becomes an illustration of the constant flux and slipperiness of a mobile and unpredictable human society and of the fragility of worldly ambition:

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 assign me some instance, something that a man may relie upon, and finde permanent. . . . In the Elements themselves, of which all sub-elementary things are composed, there is no acquiescence, but a vicissitudinary transmutation into one another; Ayre condensed becomes water, a more solid body, And Ayre rarified becomes fire, a body more disputable, and in-apparent. It is so in the Conditions of men too; A Merchant condensed, kneaded and packed up in a great estate becomes a Lord; And a Merchant rarified, blown up by a perfidious Factor, or by a riotous Sonne, evaporates into ayre, into nothing, and is not seen. (VII, 271)<sup>371</sup>

Beside the properties of the elements, the relative sizes and positions of their particles as they assemble themselves into solid physical objects also provide insight into spiritual realities like the reality of habitual sins which are difficult, though not impossible, to shake:

We know, that in Nature, and in Art, the strongest bodies are compact of the least particles, because they shut best, and lie closest together; so be the

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<sup>370</sup> In “The Triple Fool,” Donne uses an elemental image of geological processes to depict the power of poetry to tame the misery of love: “Then as th’earth’s inward narrow crooked lanes / Do purge sea water’s fretful salt away, / I thought, if I could draw my pains / Through rhyme’s vexation, I should them allay” (ll. 6-9).

<sup>371</sup> *Preached at the funerals of Sir William Cockayne Knight, Alderman of London, December 12. 1626. Joh. 11.21., 15.*

strongest habits of sin compact of sins which in themselves are least; because they are least perceived, they grow upon us insensibly, and they cleave unto us inseparably. (I, 196)<sup>372</sup>

The inextricable tie between thunder and lightning, both manifestations of the element of fire, illuminates the relationship between word- and sacrament-centered worship. Donne takes a characteristically *via media* approach to this question by insisting on the vitality of both avenues of grace:

God hath joy'n'd them, separate them not: Upon him that will come to hear, and will not come to see; will come to the *Sermon*, but not to the *Sacrament*; or that will come to see, but will not come to hear; will keep his solemn, and festival, and Anniversary times of receiving the *Sacrament*, but never care for being instructed in the duties appertaining to that high Mystery, God hath not shin'd. They are a powerful thunder, and lightning, that go together: Preaching is the thunder, that clears the air, disperses all clouds of ignorance; and then the *Sacrament* is the lightning, the glorious light and presence of Christ Jesus himself. And in the having and loving of these . . . consists this Irradiation, this Coruscation, this shining. (IV, 105)<sup>373</sup>

Up to this point, the four elements of which the macrocosm is correspond to the four 'ingredients' of the microcosm of man, yet in some instances, Donne makes an unusual ontological leap from creation to Creator. In an effort to probe the nature of Christ's coexistent divinity and humanity, he imagines them as the two 'elements' constituting the Son and subsequently points out that the metaphor is inadequate.<sup>374</sup>

The name of *Christ*, denotes one person but not one nature: neither is Christ so composed of those two natures, as a man is composed of Elements; for man is thereby made a third thing, and is not now any of those Elements;

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<sup>372</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons*, 24. *Mart. 1616. Proverbs 22. 11.*, 14.

<sup>373</sup> *A Sermon Preached at the Spittle, Upon Easter-Munday, 1622. II. Cor. 4. 6.*, 17.

<sup>374</sup> In "Resurrection, imperfect," Donne pictures Christ as a mineral that slept for some time in the bowels of the earth before emerging in full force. "For these three days [he had] become a mineral; / He was all gold when he lay down, but rose / All tincture [i.e., the essence of gold able to transform other metals into gold], and doth not alone dispose / Leaden and iron wills [i.e., stubborn and hardened sinners] to good, but is / Of power to make even sinful flesh like his" (ll. 12-16).

you cannot call mans body fire or ayre, or earth or water, though all foure be in his composition: But Christ is so made of God and Man, as that he is Man still, for all the glory of the Deity, and God still, for all the infirmity of the manhood . . . (III, 299)<sup>375</sup>

Across the ontological cleft between the four elements and the three persons of the Holy Trinity even Donne proceeds with caution:

The subjects of naturall philosophy, are the foure elements, which God made; the subject of supernaturall philosophy, Divinity, are the three elements, which God is; and (if we may so speake) which make God. (IX, 51)<sup>376</sup>

From the treasury of inanimate objects, Donne most often selects two precious materials, gold and pearls, to stand for entities valuable in the spiritual realm: God's grace and his justice, wisdom and Holy Scripture, man's good deeds and man himself who is of infinite worth in the sight of God. In every instance, Donne's intimate familiarity with the melting, beating, turning, twisting of gold and the formation and boring through of pearls add depth and credibility to his imagery.<sup>377</sup> Both the mercy and the justice of God, he says, are precious as gold to the human soul, yet if mercy is stored in clumsy wedges—contemplated in theory—it is of no use to man who should make coins of the gold, thereby applying the mercy to himself and releasing it into further circulation. To properly approach the mercy of God, Donne exhorts his listeners to “[t]ake not the grace of God, or the mercy of God as a medal, or a wedge of gold to be layd up, but change thy medal or thy wedge into currant money, find this grace and this mercy applied to this end this action” (II, 159).<sup>378</sup>

God's justice, too, is compared to gold but in a slightly different way. Here Donne contrasts gold languishing in the bowels of the earth<sup>379</sup> (acts of divine justice not yet

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<sup>375</sup> *Preached upon Trinity-Sunday. I Cor. 16.22.*, 8.

<sup>376</sup> *Preached to the King, at the Court in April, 1629. Gen. 1.26.*, 5.

<sup>377</sup> A famous example of this familiarity is Donne's comparison in “A Valediction: forbidding Mourning” of his soul and that of his wife to “gold to aery thinness beat” which, when stretched to a seemingly impossible degree, “endure[s] not yet / A breach, but an expansion” (ll. 24, 22-23).

<sup>378</sup> *Preached at Lincoln's Inne. Psalme 38.9.*, 16

<sup>379</sup> In his youth, Donne conceived of love as the earth hiding treasures to be discovered by the inquisitive love: “Some that have deeper digged love's mine than I, / Say, where his centric happiness

performed) and gold beaten to airy thinness and carried away by the slightest wind (acts of justice that affected guilty and innocent alike) with gold alloyed and minted into coins (God's justice striking the guilty while conspicuously sparing the innocent):

As gold whilst it is in the mine, in the bowles of the earth, is good for nothing, and when it is out, and beaten to the thinnesse of leaf-gold, it is wasted, and blown away, and quickly comes to nothing; But when it is tempered with such allay, as it may received a stamp and impression, then it is currant and usefull: So whilst Gods Justice lyes in the bowels of his own decree and purpose, and is not executed at all, we take no knowledge that there is any such thing; And when God's Justice is dilated to such an expansion, as it overflows all alike, whole Armies with the sword, whole Cities with the plague, whole Countryes with famine, oftentimes we lose the consideration of Gods Justice, and fall upon some naturall causes, because the calamity is faln so indifferently upon just and unjust, as that, we thinke, it could not be an act of God: but when Gods Justice is so allayd with his wisdome, as that we see he keeps a Goshen in Aegypt, and saves his servants in the destruction of his enemies, then we come to a rich and profitable use of his Justice. (III, 148-49)<sup>380</sup>

Gold in coin form—timely and measured justice—turns out to be most profitable to man.

Divine wisdom, especially in the form of Scripture, is often presented as a pearl available for the gathering.

Divers men may walke by the Sea side, and the same beames of the Sunne giving light to them all, one gathereth by the benefit of that light pebles, or speckled shells, for curious vanitie, and another gathers precious Pearle, or medicinall Ambar, by the same light. So the common light of reason illumins us all; but one employes this light upon the searching of impertinent vanities, another by a better use of the same light, finds out the Mysteries of

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doth lie . . . But should I love, get, tell, till I were old, / I should not find that hidden mystery; / Oh, 'tis imposture all . . ." ("Love's Alchemy," ll. 1-2, 4-6).

<sup>380</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne upon Trinity-Sunday. 1620. Gen. 18.25., 15-16.*

Religion; and when he hath found them, loves them, not for the lights sake,  
but for the naturall and true worth of the thing it self. (III, 359)<sup>381</sup>

In this image, life on earth is pictured as a walk on the seashore, a place of restless transience. The whole scene is illumined by the sun of natural reason, a most democratic light shining on the path of all men. Yet some use their gift of reason to seek our trifling, worldly knowledge when precious and healing heavenly wisdom is freely available for the taking.

The pearl reappears as a symbol of the Scriptures. In an ingenious image revealing much about the nature of God's Word, Donne writes:

The Scripture is a Pearl, and might be bored though every where. Not every where by *thy self*; there may be many places, which thou of thy self canst not understand; not every where by *any other man*; not by them, who have warrant to search, Commission from God, by their calling, to interpret the Scriptures, not every where by the *whole Church*, God hath reserved the *understanding of some places of Scripture, till the time for the fulfilling of those Prophecies* [... But if you understand the basic doctrine of the place] then thou maist *bore this pearl* thorough, and make it fit for thy use, and wearing, in knowing so much . . . as concerns thy edification. (IV, 220-21)<sup>382</sup>

Here the spherical shape of the pearl can allude to its perfection. In the first half of the image, the pearl seems to represent the entire Scriptures and the infinite ways of boring through it the multiplicity of interpretations, some of which will only be revealed at the end of time. As the metaphor is developed further, however, the pearl comes to symbolize a single verse which, when sufficiently understood, may be strung up and worn by the individual Christian.

In other contexts, the pearl and diamond, while preserving their value, are associated with the good works of man which are disproportionately precious in the eyes of God. In this image, Donne plays with mathematical values while giving

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<sup>381</sup> *Preached at Saint Pauls Upon Christmasse Day, 1621. John 1.8., 12.*

<sup>382</sup> *Preached at Saint Pauls 13. October, 1622..John 1.8., 11-12.*

evidence of multiple visits to the jeweler. A pearl of twice the size is worth ten times as much, yet the reward offered by God for a tiny increase in moral effort on our part is foolishly lavish. Donne explains:

That whereas a Pearle or Diamond of such bigness, of so many *Carats*, is so much worth, one that is twice as big, is ten times as much worth. So, though God vouchsafe to value every good work thou dost, yet as they grow greater he shall multiply his estimation of them infinitely; When he hath prized at a high rate, the *chastitie* and *continency* of thy *youth*, if thou adde to this, a *moderation* in thy *middle age*, from *Ambition*, and in thy latter age from *covetousnesse* and *indevotion*, there shall be no price in Gods treasure (not the last drop of the blood of his Sonne) too deare for thee, no roome, no state in his Kingdome (not a *Jointenancie* with his onely Sonne) too glorious for thee. (III, 373)<sup>383</sup>

In another passage from the same sermon, Donne is careful to point out that while man's good deeds can indeed be pleasing in the sight of God, their ultimate source is to be found in God himself. Donne's lyrical reflections on the formation of precious stones, though most definitely not compatible with the findings of modern geology, emphasizes the divine origin of man's good deeds and the arduous deliberative process that must take place before divine inspiration to do good can become reality. The ontological gap between heaven and earth is bridged through God's grace who lets fall his dew and his word. The biblical metaphor of God's word as dew from heaven lends the image further gravity:

Precious stones are first *drops of the dew* of heaven, and then refined by the sunne of heaven. When by long lying they have exhal'd, and evaporated, and breathed out all their grosse matter, and received another concoction from the sunne, then they become precious in the eye, and estimation of men: so those *actions* of ours, that shall be precious or acceptable in the eye of God, must at first have been conceived from *heaven*, from the *word* of God, and then receive *another concoction*, by a holy *deliberation*, before we

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<sup>383</sup> Preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621. *John 1.8.*, 26.

bring those actions to *execution*, lest we may have mistaken the roote thereof. (III, 372-73)<sup>384</sup>

It is not only man's righteous deeds but man himself who is precious as gold and pearl in the eyes of God. Man does not become fit for God's treasury overnight, however.

[God] betters us, he improves us, to a better condition, than we were in, at first. And this he does, first by purging and purifying us, and then by changing, and transmuting us. He purges us by his sunshine, by his temporal blessings; for, as the greatest globes of gold lye nearest the face and top of the earth, where they have received the best concoction from the heat of the sun; so certainly, in reason, they who have Gods continual sun-shine upon them, in a prosperous fortune, should have received the best concoction, the best digestion of the testimonies of his love, and consequently be the purer, and the more refined metall. If this purging prevail not, then he comes to purge those whom he means to lay up in his treasure, with tribulation . . .

(I, 163)<sup>385</sup>

The various positions of the clumps of gold in relation to one another conjure up the social hierarchy of Donne's time. Clumps lying closest to the surface represent those men who have risen highest in fortune. Their proximity to the sunshine of God's blessing should cause them to be the purest, most refined metal. Yet most men reject the pleasant way of purification by gratitude for God's blessings and are therefore subjected to harsher ways of purging.

When man is pictured as a pearl, the transformative process is one of construction rather than purgation, of building rather than paring away:

Thus Nature makes Pearls, Thus Grace makes Saints. A drop of dew hardens, and then another drop fals, and spreads it selfe, and cloathes that former drop, and then another, and another, and becomes so many shels and films that invest that first seminall drop and so (they say) there is a pearle in

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<sup>384</sup> *Preached at Saint Pauls Upon Christmasse Day, 1621. John 1.8., 25-26.*

<sup>385</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Greenwich, Aprill 30. 1615. Essay 52.3., 13.*

Nature. A good soule takes first Gods first drop into his consideration, what he hath shed upon him in Nature, and then his second coate, what in the Law, and successively his other manifold graces, as so many shells, and films, in the Christian Church, and so we are sure, there is a Saint. (VII, 306)<sup>386</sup>

Each layer of film on the pearl corresponds to a stage in the development of mankind. Man under nature is invested with knowledge of the law and further covered in the grace of God to become a saint. The layers of the pearl serve to remind one of the stages traditional to a typological reading of history, man *ante legem*, *sub lege* and *sub gratia*, before the law, under the law, and under grace.

#### **IV.2.4. *Plantae***

The rose and the violet are the most common flowers to appear in Donne's *florilegium*, the cedar and the oak the most common trees. Of produce, it is corn (various types of grain) and the apple that figure often. In his metaphors involving plants, Donne reflects on the mysterious relationship of seed to plant, the integrity of the entire plant, its faculties of growth and spreading, its death and hope-giving vitality in springing back into life.

The following brief passage shows Donne at his best, making a subtle religious point using a plant metaphor readily understandable by all. The metaphor, hinging on the relationship between a seed and the earth in which it grows, illuminates by analogy the link between nature and grace. Although the corn that sprouts is rooted in and nourished by the earth, it originates not from the earth but from the seed, which is sown from above:

Grace does not grow out of nature; for nature in the highest exaltation and rectifying thereof cannot produce grace. Corn does not grow out of the earth, it must be sowed; but corn grows only in the earth; nature and naturall

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<sup>386</sup> *The third of my Prebend Sermons upon my five Psalmes: Preached at S. Pauls, November 5. 1626. In Vesperis. Psal. 64.10., 7.*



reason do not produce grace, but yet grace can take root in no other thing  
but in the nature and reason of man . . . (II, 261)<sup>387</sup>

The most diminutive seed holds, in a mysterious way, the entire plant. Donne chooses the acorn which forms a striking contrast with the mighty oak, primate among trees, to illustrate the potency of original sin as a deadly seed sprouting death instead of life. The forest of oaks, a field of corn, and a barn of grain are stark representations of man's potential for corruption:

Scarce any man considers the weight, the oppression of Originall sinne. No man can say, that an Akorn weighs as much as an Oak; yet in truth, there is an Oak in that Akorn: no man considers that Originall sinne weighs as much as Actuell, or Habituell, yet in truth, all our Actuell and Habituell sins are in the Originall . . . Thus sin is heavy in the *seed*, in the *grain*, in the *akorn*, how much more when it is a *field* of Corn, a *barn* of grain, a *forest* of Oaks, in the multiplication, and complication of sin in sin? (II, 121)<sup>388</sup>

A plant that has sprung out of the earth and put forth roots and shoots remains a living entity of organic integrity. The rose and the violet are thoroughly rose and violet from the tips of their roots to the tender edges of their petals. Donne applies this same sense of unity to Christian holidays which, in his analogy, are blossoms of the first Sabbath instituted by God as the root of all rest:

In our first part, *Holy Places*, wee looke first upon the times of our meeting there, *Holy dayes*. The root of all those is the *Sabboth*, that God planted himselfe, even in himselfe, in his own rest, from the Creation. But the root, and those branches which grow from that root, are of the same nature, and the same name: And therefore as well of the flower, as of the root of a Rose, or of a Violet, we would say, This is a Violet, this is a Rose: so as well to other Feasts of *Gods* institution, as to the first *Sabboth*, God gives that name; hee calls those severall Feasts which he instituted, *Sabboths*; enjoynes

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<sup>387</sup> *Two Sermons, to the Prince ad Princess Palatine, the lady Elizabeth at Heydelberg, when I was commanded by the King to wait upon my L. of Doncaster on his embassy to Germany. First Sermon as we went out, June 16. 1619. Rom. 13.11., 12.*

<sup>388</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. Second Sermon on Psal. 38.4., 3.*

the same things to be done upon them, inflicts the same punishments upon them that breake them. (IV, 365-66)<sup>389</sup>

Despite the unity of roots, trunks, branches and fruits, roots cannot guarantee fruits in the same way that choice fruits serve as evidence of strong roots. This insight illuminates the relationship between faith and works, one of the central questions of the Reformation.<sup>390</sup> With uncharacteristic simplicity, Donne pictures good works as rooted in faith. Faith may produce a variety of fruits, many different good works, but only with fruit in hand can we be sure of the strength and qualities of the faith: “The evidence that Christ produces, and presses, is good works; for, if a man offer me the roote of a tree to taste, I cannot say this is such a Pear, Apple, or Plum; but if I see *the fruit*, I can” (IX, 121).<sup>391</sup>

Certain plants, though they grow in the wild, are carefully domesticated for their beauty or utility, and then spread quickly no longer from field to field but from private garden to private garden. The practice of praying for the dead grew up among Gentiles, but because of its morally healthful effects, was planted in the garden of Christendom. The biblical link between the People of God and a well-kept garden strengthens Donne’s reflections on the contentious question of praying for those who have passed away:

So then, at first it was a weed that grew wild in the open fields, amongst the Gentiles; Then because it bore a pretty flower, the testimony of a good nature, it was transplanted into some Gardens, and so became a private opinion, or at least a practice amongst some Christians; And then it spred it selfe so far, as that Tertullian [took note of it though he acknowledged the custom did not rest on scriptural grounds]. (VII, 170)<sup>392</sup>

Even the most robust and crescive of plants fades with time. In an especially lyrical passage, Donne muses on the power of death, the great leveler of trees and men.

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<sup>389</sup> *Encaenia. The Feast of Dedication. Ascension day, 1623. John 10.22., 4-5.*

<sup>390</sup> In “Love’s Growth,” Donne uses a similar, tender image to express the relationship between love for another human being and loving deeds directed at him or her: “Gentle love deeds, as blossoms on a bough, / From love’s awakened root do bud out now” (ll. 19-20).

<sup>391</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls Crosse, November 22. 1629. Mat. 11.16., 13.*

<sup>392</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, May 21. 1626. 1 Cor. 15.29., 7.*

The fall of the oak and traces of its ashes in the chimney is emblematic of the death of great men whose dust, like the oaken ash, is mute regarding past fame. The mingling of the dust of princes and commoners under the broom of the man sweeping the church is reminiscent of Hamlet's grim reflections in the company of the Gravedigger and the skull of poor Yorick:

It comes equally to us all, and makes us all equall when it comes. The ashes of an Oak in the Chimney, are no Epitaph of that Oak, to tell me how high or how large that was; It tels me not what flocks it sheltered while it stood, nor what men it hurt when it fell. The dust of great persons graves is speechlesse too, it sayes nothing, it distinguishes nothing: As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldest not, as of a Prince whom thou couldest not look upon, will trouble thine eyes, if the winde blow it thither; and when a whirle-winde hath blown the dust of the Church-yard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the Church into the Church-yard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, This is the Patrician, this is the noble flowre, and this the yeomanly, this the Plebeian bran?

(IV, 53)<sup>393</sup>

Plants with their faculty of speedy and cyclical regeneration aptly serve as symbols of hope and new life. In a passionate excerpt from a sermon given during the grave illness of King James, Donne envisions his soul spring forth from the wounds of Christ as a white lily from the red earth of Paradise:

The death which S. *Gregory* speaks of, *Divina contemplatio quoddam sepulchrum animae*, 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 exstasie, in the 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 soul rise out of

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<sup>393</sup> Preached at White-hall, March 8. 1621. [1621/2] *I Cor.* 15.26., 9.

his blade, in a candor, and in an innocence, contracted there, acceptable in the sight of his Father. (II, 210-11)<sup>394</sup>

The contrasting colors, the clear, cool outlines of lily and blade and the thought of life emerging from death serve to make this profoundly medieval image memorable.

#### **IV.2.5. *Animalia***

We may recall that the link of animals is home to three classes of creatures: those with touch memory but no hearing or movement such as sponges, those with touch and movement but no hearing such as ants, and the higher animals which possess all three faculties. In what follows, we will climb from the sponge to the falcon and enjoy exhilarating views along the way.

The decision to compare the rich man to a sponge is mischievous because while a rich man imagines himself at the top of the social hierarchy, here he is compared to the humblest of animals a single step above the vegetative class. Donne, like Archimedes according to legend, may very well have made his discovery in the bathtub! He refers to the image as an emblem and appeals from the start to the audience's faculty of memory where this telling emblem is to be housed. As a sponge sucks up water, a rich man hoards money. The success of the image depends on the utter helplessness of the incognizant sponge as it is prodded, lifted, pushed this way and that or simply left to its own devices. Whatever its state and position, it gushes water uncontrollably. The rich man's miserly hoarding is frustrated when he realizes he has been collecting not for himself but for other men:

You may have a good Embleme of such a rich man, whose riches perish in his travail, if you take into your memorie, and thoughts, a Spunge that is overfilled; If you presse it down with your little finger, the water comes out of it; Nay, if you lift it up, there comes water out of it; If you remove it out of his place, though to the right hand as well as to the left, it poures out water; Nay if it lye still quiet in his place, yet it wets the place, and drops out

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<sup>394</sup> *Preached to the Lords upon Easter-day, at the Communion, The King being then dangerously sick at New- Market. Psal. 89.48., 14-15.*

his moisture. Such is an overfull, and spongy covetous person: he must pour out, as well as he hath suck't in; if the least weight of disgrace, or danger lye upon him, he bleeds out his money; Nay, if he be raised up, if he be prefer'd, he hath no way to it, but by money, and he shall be rais'd, whether he will or no, for it. If he be stirr'd from one place to another, if he be suffered to settle where he is, and would be, still these two incommunities lye upon him; that he is loathest to part with his money, of anything, and yet he can do nothing without it. He labours for riches, and still he is but a bagg for other men . . . (III, 65)<sup>395</sup>

The spider, an ingenious creature that knows where to spin its web for best access to flies, is an emblem of the devil who sets his traps in human hearts filled with vain trifles instead of ponderous thoughts.<sup>396</sup> The Patristic association between the devil and Beelzebub, or Lord of the Flies, strengthens the brief image in which Donne asks “him that is subject to these smaller sins, [to] remember, that as a spider builds always where he know there is most access and haunt of flies, so the Devil that hath cast these light cobwebs into thy heart, knows that that heart is made of vanities and levities” (I, 195).<sup>397</sup> A later sermon presents the devil in constant metamorphosis. Men who grovel before evil will be scattered; victory is preserved for those who rise above it, for “[t]he Devill is a Lion to Ants, dasheth whole hills *of them* with his paw, that creep under him, but he is but an Ant to birds; they prey upon him, that flie above him” (VI, 110-11).<sup>398</sup>

Ants and bees have, from Antiquity, attracted the attention of philosophers because as insects living in organized societies, their lives and interactions had much to say about mankind. Donne’s evident delight over the emblematic qualities of anthills, beehives and their tiny hardworking denizens causes him to create one of the most

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<sup>395</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, April 2. 1620. Eccles. 5.[13 and 14].*, 19.

<sup>396</sup> In “Twickenam Garden,” Donne presents love as an insidious spider creeping into and ruining his life. In this topsy-turvy poem, only when the speaker brings his own serpent does he recognize what could have been paradise. “But O, self traitor, I do bring / The spider love, which transubstantiates all, / And can convert manna to gall, / And that this place may thoroughly be thought / True paradise, I have the serpent brought” (ll. 5-9).

<sup>397</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart. 1616. Proverbs 22.11.*, 13.

<sup>398</sup> *The second Sermon Preached by the Author after he came to St. Dunstanes, 25 Apr. 1624. Psal. 34.11.*, 16-17.

detailed images to be found anywhere in the sermons.<sup>399</sup> Drawing on the reflections of the Church Fathers Basil and Chrysostom, a quaint anecdote about naturalists experimenting with a beehive made of glass, Pliny's account of Aristomachum Solensem, a man who studied bees for sixty years, and some rather fanciful speculations concerning the source of honey, Donne produces a charming example of moralized natural history and a living emblem. The motto of the image might well be *Vade ad Apem*, Go to the Bee, and learn how to work hard for your fellow man and for the glory of God, follow this example of humility, sedulity, community, secrecy, and purity, and your reward shall be honey, temporal blessings which, however, turn bitter with time, and the honeycomb, a religious knowledge that transcends temporal blessings. Donne recounts:

Both *S. Basil*, and *S. Chrysostome* put this difference in that place, between the labour of the Ant, and the Bee, That the Ants worke but for themselves, the Bee for others: Though the Ants have a Commonwealth of their own, yet those Fathers call their labour, but private labour; because no other Common-wealths have benefit by that labour, but their own. Direct thy labours in thy calling to the good of the publique, and then thou art a civill, a morall Ant; but consider also, that all that are of the household of the faithfull, and professe the same truth of Religion, are part of this publique, and direct thy labours, for the glory of Christ Jesus, amongst them too, and then thou art a religious and a Christian Bee, and the fruit of thy labour shall be *Hony*. The labour of the Ant is *sub Dio*, open, evident, manifest; The labour of the Bee is *sub Tecto*, in a house, in a hive; They will doe good, and yet they will not be seene to doe it; they affect not glory, nay, they avoyd it. For in experience, when some men curious of naturall knowledge, have made their Hives of glasse, that by that transparency, they might see the Bees manner of working, the Bees have made it their first work to line that Glass-hive, with a crust of Wax, that they might work and not be discerned.

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<sup>399</sup> In "The Flea," Donne allots another tiny animal holy significance when he tells his lady, "This flea is you and I, and this / Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is . . ." (ll. 12-13).

It is a blessed sincerity, to work as the Ant, professedly, openly; but because there may be cases, when to doe so, would destroy the whole worke, though there be a cloude and a curtaine between thee, and the eyes of men, yet if thou doe them clearly in the sight of God, that he see his glory advanced by thee, the fruit of thy labor shall be Honey.

*Pliny* names one *Aristomachum Solensem*, that spent threescore yeares in the contemplation of Bees; our whole time for this exercise is but threescore minutes; and therefore wee say no more of this, but *Vade ad Apem*, practise the sedulity of the Bee, labour in thy calling, And the community of the Bee, believe that thou art called to assist others, And the secrecie of the Bee, that the greatest, and most authorized spie see it not, to supplant it, And the purity of the Bee, that never settles upon any foule thing, that thou never take a foule way to a faire end, and the fruit of thy labour shall be Hony; God shall give thee the sweetnesse of this world, honour, and ease, and plenty, and hee shall give thee thy honey-combe, with thy honey, that which preserves thy honey to thee, that is, a religious knowledge, that all this is but hony; And honey in the dew of the flowres, whence it is drawne, is but *Coeli sudor*, a sweaty excrement of the heavens, and *Siderum saliva*, the spettle, the fleame of the starres, and *Apum vomitus*, the casting, the vomit of the Bee. And though honey be the swetest thing that wee doe take into the body, yet there it degenerates into gall, and proves the bitterest; And all this honey is the Antitype, in that which it signifies, in the temporall things of this world; In the temporal things of this world there is a bitterness, in our use of them; But in his hand, and his purpose that gives them, they have impressions of sweetnesse; and so *Comede, Eat* thy honey, which is also a step farther. (III, 232-33)<sup>400</sup>

The snake is an animal redolent with meanings. It is associated with the devil in the form of the primeval Serpent who tempted Eve in Paradise, with man in his fallen,

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<sup>400</sup> *Preached at White-hall, April 8. 1621. Prov. 25.16., 8-9.*

miserable state, and with Christ who like the brazen serpent in the Sinai wasteland was lifted up on the cross for the healing of mankind. Donne conjures up all three faces of the serpent in a highly effective reflection on the difference between man's ways and God's ways in the form of a rhetorical question:

And, if a snake have stung me, must I take up that Snake, and put it into my  
bosome? If so poore a snake, so poore a worme as I, have stung my Maker,  
have crucified my Redeemer, shall he therefore, therefore take me into his  
bosome, into his *wounds*, and save me, and glorifie me? (III, 197)<sup>401</sup>

Noah's ark has in ecclesiology been read as an emblem of the Church, both as a spiritual refuge and a vehicle towards salvation. Donne imagines his congregation as the ark in which only eight human beings corresponding to Noah and his family, are disposed towards God in it. He further elaborates the image by 'peopling' the ark with emblematic animals representing different types of sins and sinners who can all potentially be transformed by the power of his preaching.<sup>402</sup> Donne's sense of mission compels him to reassure his congregation:

[t]hat if God lead me into a Congregation, as into his Arke, where there are  
but eight soules, but a few disposed to a sense of his mercies, and all the rest  
(as in the Arke) ignoble creatures, and of brutall natures and affections, That  
if I finde a licentious Goat, a supplanting Fox, an usurious Wolfe, an  
ambitious Lion, yet to that creature, to every creature I should preach the  
Gospel of peace and consolation, and offer these creatures a Metamorphosis,  
a transformation, a new Creation in Christ Jesus, and thereby make my  
Goat, and my Fox, and my Wolfe, and my Lion, to become *Semen Dei*, The  
seed of God, and *Filium Dei*, The child of God. (VIII, 135)<sup>403</sup>

In a brief flash of insight, Donne presents the good Christian as a patient cow, a cleanly creature engaged in constant digestion of divine teaching, for "The chewing of

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<sup>401</sup> *Preached to the Countesse of Bedford, then at Harrington house. January 7. 1620. Job 13.15., 11.*

<sup>402</sup> The emblematic quality of the animals recalls medieval bestiaries. These in turn call to mind Donne's comparison of love to a baby bear, which, according to popular belief, needed to be licked into shape by its mother after birth: "And love's a bear-whelp born, if we o'er-lick / Our love, and force it new strange shapes to take, / We err, and of a lump a monster make" ("Elegy 18 Love's Progress" ll. 4-7).

<sup>403</sup> *Preached to the King in my Ordinary wayting at White-hall, 18. April 1626. Joh. 14.2., 18.*



the Cudd was a distinctive mark of cleanness in the Creature; The holy rumination, the daily consideration of his Christianity, is a good character of a Christian” (IV, 136).<sup>404</sup>

In a lengthy disquisition on the four creatures—the lion, the ox, the man and the eagle—representing the Evangelists Mark, Luke, Matthew and John respectively, Donne translates the physical characteristics of these emblematic beings to spiritual meanings and applies these meanings to preachers who have inherited the lofty task of teaching their fellow man about God and must therefore cultivate “the courage of a *Lion* the laboriousness of an *Oxe*, the perspicuity and cleare sight of the *Eagle*, and the humanity, the discourse, the reason, the affability, the appliableness of a *Man*” (VIII, 41).<sup>405</sup> Donne dwells with especial keenness on the wings of all four emblematic creatures, wings, which they must use both to ascend to God by “keep[ing] themselves upon the wing, in a Heavenly conversation, ever remembering that they have another Element, then Sea or land, as men whom Christ Jesus hath set apart” and to “be alwaies ready to succour all, in all their spirituall necessities” (VIII, 42).<sup>406</sup> The wings stir up the holy affections of the Congregation, their fluttering infuses fear of God and God alone, they both shelter and elevate those who would be too weak to fly for themselves. Finally, the minister’s wings enable him to reach those in need quickly to administer “spirituall Physick” which is the name of Jesus (VIII, 42-44).<sup>407</sup>

We have seen human beings compared to various animals, from the lowly sponge to the biblical Four Creatures. Donne does not shy away from finding similarities between certain animals and God if these connections enable him to make a spiritual point. In Christian iconography rooted in the biblical account of Christ’s baptism, the Holy Spirit is often represented as a dove. By contrasting the ravenous vulture that feeds on destruction with the modest dove that nibbles gently upon corn which is easily replenished, Donne conveys an understanding of God’s invitation to constant renewal and a better life:

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<sup>404</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Lincolns-Inn, Ascension-day, 1622. Deut. 12.30., 5.*

<sup>405</sup> *Preached at S. Dunstanes upon Trinity-Sunday. 1627. Rev. 4.8., 5.*

<sup>406</sup> *Preached at S. Dunstanes upon Trinity-Sunday. 1627. Rev. 4.8., 6.*

<sup>407</sup> *Preached at S. Dunstanes upon Trinity-Sunday. 1627. Rev. 4.8., 6-8.*

[God is merciful and] the Holy Ghost is not a Vulture, that hovers over Armies, and infected Cities, and feeds upon carcasses, But the Holy Ghost is in a Dove, that would not make a Congregation a slaughter-house, but feeds upon corne, corne that hath in nature a disposition to a reviviscence, and a repullulation, and would imprint in you al, the consolation and sense of a possibility of returning to a new, and a better life. (VII, 135-36)<sup>408</sup>

Birds inhabit the most 'spiritual' element of air and rise to close proximity with God, so Donne's choice of the falcon in a discussion of God's perspicuity in overseeing Creation, though cautious, is apt.<sup>409</sup>

When there was no more to be seen, or considered upon the whole earth but the garden of Paradise, for from the beginning *Deliciae ejus esse cum filiis hominum*, Gods delight was to be with the sons of men, and man was only there, shal we not diminish God nor speak too vulgarly of him to say, that he hovered like a Falcon over paradise, and that from that height of heaven, the piercing eye of God, saw so little a thing, as the forbidden fruit, and what became of that, and the reaching eare of God heard the hissing of the Serpent, and the whispering of the woman, and what was concluded upon that? (II, 316)<sup>410</sup>

Surely, continues Donne, if God had the clear sight to see so tiny a thing as the fateful apple in the hands of Eve, his vision continues to penetrate the cosmos.

#### IV.2.6. *Homo*

"I am a little world made cunningly / of elements and an angelic sprite" Donne writes in "Holy Sonnet V." As a little world, a microcosm, man sums up in himself the totality of earthly phenomena and his angelic sprite grants him access to the divine. Occupying an

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<sup>408</sup> *Preached to the King in my Ordinary wayting at White-hall, 18. April 1626. Joh. 14.2., 18-19.*

<sup>409</sup> The same birds associated with John the Evangelist (eagle) and with the Holy Spirit (dove) also figure prominently in Donne's love poetry, e.g., in "The Canonization," where the poet describes the two lovers as both quenching and renewing one another's life: "Call us what you will, we are made such by love / Call her one, me another fly, / We are tapers too, and at our own cost die, / And we in us find the eagle and the dove, The phoenix riddle hath more wit / By us; we too being one, are it" (ll. 19-24).

<sup>410</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne [January 30, 1619/20] John 5.22., 6.*

intermediate position on the Chain of Being between animals and angels, he can slip downwards all too easily and move upwards through effort and grace. A preacher's focus is by necessity man and his salvation and his hope is to promote man's ascendance. For these reasons the overwhelming majority of Donne's most vivid imagery is derived from the world of man.

While in Donne's love poetry, Kawasaki argues, the exclusive microcosm of the lovers' room is a symbol of a deep-seated egotism and agoraphobia,<sup>411</sup> in his religious writing, especially in the sermons, Donne advocates a much greater openness to and dependence on the macrocosm.<sup>412</sup> In a well-wrought passage about the structure of the world of men, Donne shows how every individual as a micro-microcosm, fits into an ever widening scheme of small worlds: the microcosm of the family, the church, the state, and the macrocosm of the whole world:

Let the whole world be in thy consideration as one house; and then consider in that, in the peacefull harmony of creatures, in the peacefull succession, and connexion of causes, and effect, the peace of Nature. Let this Kingdome, where God hath blessed thee with a being, be the Gallery, the best roome of that house, and consider in the two walls of that Gallery, the Church and the State, the peace of a royall, and a religious Wisedome; let thine owne family be a Cabinet in this Gallery, and finde in all the boxes thereof, in the severall duties of Wife, Children, and servants, the peace of virtue, and of the father and mother of all vertues, active discretion, passive

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<sup>411</sup> Cf. "Only an extraordinary egotist can be so deeply and constantly engrossed in the reflection of his own figure in the pupil of his beloved's eye, or, as a matter of fact, in the process of his flesh being assimilated into the worm. One critic [i.e., J.E.V. Crofts] has cogently pointed out that throughout his life, Donne was 'unable to find any window that would not give him back the image of himself'"(Kawasaki 37).

<sup>412</sup> For contrast, see for example "The Good Morrow," a poem typifying Donne's earlier devotion to the exclusive microcosm of himself and his lover: "For love, all love of other sights controls, / And makes one little room, an every where. / Let sea-discoverers to new world have gone, / Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have shown, / Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one" (ll. 10-14). A gentler version of the same sentiment can be found in "Love's Growth," where Donne pictures the love for his lady as a pebble thrown into a stream, producing cosmic ripples that reverberate throughout the firmament: "If, as in water stirred more circles be / Produced by one, love such additions take, / Those like so many spheres, but one heaven make, / For, they are all concentric unto thee..." (ll. 21-24). "A Valediction: of Weeping" presents teardrops as miniature globes reflecting the entire world. "Elegy 18 Love's Progress" and "Elegy 19 To his Mistress Going to Bed" plays with the same trope of the human being as a world in the erotic parallel between geographical and sexual discovery.

obedience; and then lastly, let thine owne bosome be the secret box, and reserve in this Cabinet, and find there the peace of conscience, and truelie thou hast the best Jewell in the best Cabinet. (IV, 49)<sup>413</sup>

The passage continues in reverse order, and the peace that is the jewel of man's bosom finally becomes a vision of universal peace in the New Jerusalem.

In our discussion of images related to the world of man, we pause on one particular link of the Chain of Being and adopt an ever-widening scheme. Since the human person is an embodied soul or ensouled body,<sup>414</sup> the human body is physically and often visibly affected by the dynamics of the soul. In his household, surrounded by familiar objects and his family, he finds further models of spiritual reality. The third group of images relies on the language of various trades and occupations in which man engages to earn his bread. Finally, man's position as a member of the church and of the state ensures his participation in realities larger than himself.

### *Corpus*

Due to the psychosomatic unity of the human being, the soul and its processes physically affect the body, just as the actions of the body are made manifest on the soul. This interconnection fuels one of Donne's favorite tropes of sin as sickness and salvation as good health. Whether studying the indisposition of a single organ or the entire body or describing the effects of primitive treatments and medication, Donne does so in exacting detail that puts any seventeenth-century physician to shame.

The heart figures often as central to man's body and spirit. If sin infests the heart, strikes at the core of our being, it is very difficult to find healing.<sup>415</sup> This is due to the nature of the heart, which, unlike the other organs, is forever palpitating. The heart, according to ancient metonymic usage, stands for man. In the following passage, Donne reveals what it takes for the heart to be settled, then healed:

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<sup>413</sup> *Preached at White-hall, March 8. 1621. [1621/22] I Cor. 15.26., 5.*

<sup>414</sup> Cf. our earlier discussions of Aquinas on the soul in section II.2.2. above.

<sup>415</sup> In "The Damp," Donne insists that love is a disease that can be detected when the lovesick patient is 'anatomized' by his physicians: "When I am dead, and doctors know not why, / And my friends' curiosity / Will have me cut up to survey each part, / [Then] thy shall find your picture in my heart . . . ." (ll. 1-4). Being stretched out for dissection is a recurring vision with Donne.

If the heart lay still, as other parts do, so that medicinal helps might be applied to it, and admitted by it, there were more hope. Therefore when we lay such a weight upon the heart, as may settle it, fix it, give it a reposedness and acquiescence, though it do receive some wounds, thought it be touched with some tentations, it may be cured. But is there any such weight as should so settle the heart, the soul of Man? This love or Pureness is that weight. (I, 204)<sup>416</sup>

If the heart is infested, the disease of sin quickly spreads throughout the body to create a ‘body of death’ as expressed by Saint Paul.

Donne, to use a favorite expression of his, ‘anatomizes’ the process of falling deeper and deeper into sin. The sinews and ligaments of the body serve to link sin to sin, marrow, present in the Psalms as a symbol of the good things with which God feeds his people, gives it deliciousness, bones strengthen it, in fact, every one of the workings of the natural body is mapped onto the spirit, which is thoroughly overcome by sin:

And when sin hath got a heart in us, it will quickly come to be that whole *Body of Death*, which Saint Paul complains of, who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death? When it is a heart, it will get a *Braine*; a Brain that shall minister all *Sense*, and *Delight* in sin; That’s the office of the Brain; A Brain which shall send forth sinews and ligaments, to tye sins together; and pith and marrow to give a succulencie, and nourishment, even to the bones, to the strength and obduration of sin; and so it shall do al those services, and offices for sin, that the brain does to the natural body. So also if sin get to be a heart, it will get a liver to carry blood and life through all the body of our sinful actions; That’s the office of the liver; And whilst we dispute whether the throne and seat of the soul be in the Heart, or Brain, or Liver, this tyrant sin will praeoccupate all, and become all; so, as that we shall finde nothing in us without sin, nothing in us but sin, if our heart be possesst, inhabited by it. And if it be true in our natural bodies, that the heart is that part that loves

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<sup>416</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart.1616. Proverbs 22.11., 22.*

first and dyes last, it is much truer of this *Cor peccati*, this heart of sin. (I, 192)<sup>417</sup>

If the body and its functions mirror the processes of the soul, the physician who administers to the body aptly symbolizes the minister who is a mere apprentice to the true physician, Jesus Christ. The following passage owes its success to Donne's description of the painstaking process of diagnosis.<sup>418</sup> Just as the physician observes symptoms and then attempts to pinpoint the source of the trouble, the minister examines the soul of the sinner and, through his prodding and poking, hopes to identify sore spots.<sup>419</sup> If the disease can be localized, there is hope for healing, but if the sinful soul does not sense the prodding of the minister, he is either spiritually dead or very close to it:

As long as a man is alive, if there appeare any offence in his breath, the physician will assigne it to some *one* corrupt *place*, his *lungs*, or *teeth*, or *stomach*, and thereupon apply convenient remedy thereunto. But if he be dead, and putrefied, no man askes *from whence that ill aire and offence comes*, because it proceeds from thy whole carcasse. So, as long as there is in you a *sense* of your sinnes, as long as we can touch the offended and wounded part, and be felt by you, you are not desperate, though you be froward, and impatient of our increpations. But when you *feele nothing*, whatsoever wee say, your soule is in an *Hectique fever*, where the distemper is not in any one humor, but in the whole substance; nay, your soule it selfe is become a carcasse. (III, 364-65)<sup>420</sup>

Once the sinner has been correctly diagnosed, God's grace, which is the medication of the soul, can be applied to his ailments. Donne contrasts the complex system of ritual expiations detailed in the Old Testament with the simpler yet more

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<sup>417</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons*, 24. *Mart. 1616. Proverbs 22.11.*, 10.

<sup>418</sup> In "Love's Diet," Donne playfully sets up his own diagnosis and goes about healing himself. Since his love is grown "To . . . cumbersome unwieldiness / And burdenous corpulence" (ll. 1-2), he decided to put it on a diet and make it "feed upon / That which love worst endures, discretion" (ll. 5-6).

<sup>419</sup> In "Elegy 8 The Comparison," the gentleness of a priest "handling reverent sacrifice" or the surgeon "searching wounds" is compared to the tenderness with which the poet and his beloved "embrace, or touch, or kiss" (ll. 50-52).

<sup>420</sup> *Preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmas day, 1621. John 1.8.*, 17-18.

effective channels of grace given in the New. The passage details various types of common medication known at Donne's time and translates their effects from the physical to the spiritual realm. There are, he writes,

more means of restoring in one dram of treacle or mithridate, then in an ounce of any particular syrup, in which there may be 3 or 4, in other perchance so many hundred; so in that receipt of our Saviour Jesus Christ, *quidquid ligaveris*, in the absolution of the Minister, that whatsoever he shall bind or loose upon the earth, shall be bound or loose in heaven; there is more physick, then in all the expiations and sacrifices of the old law. [This is because Christian 'physick' serves multiple purposes.] Here, in the absolution of the Minister, there is a concurrence, a confluence of medicines of all qualities; purgative in confession, and restorative in absolution; corasive in the preaching of Judgments, and cordial in the balm of the sacrament . . . (II, 256-57)<sup>421</sup>

The first medicine to act on the diseased soul is the purgative of confession, which will be followed by various spiritual medicines to strengthen, rejuvenate and sooth the newly purified soul. In another passage, Donne details the use of purgative medicine and notes that spiritual purgation works with much the same method through the actions of grace:

Now for the first of these, the *purging*; the proper use and working of *purging Physick*, is, not that that Medicine pierces into those parts of the Body, where the peccant humour lies, and from which parts, Nature, of her selfe, is not able to expel it: the substance of the Medicine does not goe thither, but the Physick lies still, and draws those peccant humours together; and being then so come to an unsupportable Masse, and burden, Nature her selfe, and their owne waight expels them out. Now, that which *Nature* does

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<sup>421</sup> *Two Sermons, to the Prince and Princess Palatine, the Lady Elizabeth at Heydelberg, when I was commanded by the King to wait upon my L. of Doncaster in his Embassy to Germany. First Sermon as we went out, June 16. 1619. Rom. 13.11., 7-8.*

in a naturall body, *Grace* does in a regenerate soule, for *Grace* is the *nature* and the *life* of a regenerate man. (VI, 198)<sup>422</sup>

Being purified of sin is much like emerging from a long illness. Though the recovered patient is considered whole, yet he remains weak, walking with wobbly steps and sitting and lying down frequently. Donne makes masterful use of the familiar image of a convalescent to warn his congregation about the dangers of relapsing into sin. The warning can also serve as encouragement for the believer not to give up because, relapses aside, he is healed and, though shakily, walking in the path of righteousness:

He that hath had a *fever*, though he have cast it off, yet he walks weakly, and he hath an inclination to the beds side, or to a chaire, at every turn that he makes about his chamber. So hath he to *relapses*, that hath been under the *custome* of an habituall sin, though he have discontinued the practice of that sin. (II, 136)<sup>423</sup>

In her book *John Donne: Body and Soul*, Ramie Targoff argues that Donne was an uneasy dualist regarding his views on the relationship of body and soul. She meant perhaps that while he recognized a kind of antagonism between the two, his deep impulse was not to mortify the body in order to ‘liberate’ the soul but, recognizing that man is a psychosomatic unit, to involve both parts in salvation. This same uneasy dualism can be found in Donne’s musings on the relationship between and relative importance of fervent faith and righteous action. It is therefore proper that he should seek to unify body and soul, faith and works, in the following strong image of this mysterious unity:<sup>424</sup>

In the constitution and making of a natural man, the body is not the man, nor the soul is not the man, but the union of these two makes up the man; the spirits in a man which are the thin and active part of the blood, and so are of a kind of middle nature, between soul and body, those spirits are able to doe,

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<sup>422</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Saint Dunstan’s, upon New-Years-day, 1624. [1624/5] Gen. 17.24., 13.*

<sup>423</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. The Third Sermon on Psal. 38.4., 6.*

<sup>424</sup> In “The Ecstasy,” Donne uses a very similar image to underline the importance of bodily expression of love, which is related to true love as works are to faith. “As our blood labours to beget / Spirits, as like souls it can, / Because such fingers need to knit / That subtle knot [i.e., binding up body and soul], which makes us man . . .” (ll. 61-64). Although the souls love, they must “descend / T’affections, and to faculties, / Which sense may reach and apprehend . . .” (ll. 65-67).



and they doe the office, to unite and apply the faculties of the soul to the organs of the body, and so there is a man: so in a regenerate man, a Christian man, his being born of Christian Parents, that gives him a body, [his baptism gives him a soul ] but yet, as there are spirits in us, which unite body and soul, so there must be subsequent acts, and works of the blessed spirit, that must unite and confirm all . . . (III, 261-62)<sup>425</sup>

### ***Domus familiaque***

In his own home, man is surrounded by family and the familiar. His relation to his children and spouse, and to common objects like balls, pieces of paper and lamps, trumpets, ladders, makeup and perfume, mirrors how he stands with regard to higher spiritual realities.<sup>426</sup> Sins and good deeds might be termed man's spiritual children as they are conceived in his heart from whence they issue forth. In a passage filled with wry humor, Donne describes how sinful thoughts become sinful actions as they are babied, fondled and nourished in our hearts. The passage derives its power from recognizable feelings of tenderness and love for a helpless infant which turn into horror when the ugliness of this particular baby is revealed:

when a sinful thought or purpose is born in our hearts, first we rock it, by tossing, and tumbling it in our fancies, and imaginations, and by entertaining it with delight and consent, and with remembering, with how much pleasure we did the like sin before, and how much we should have, if we could bring this to pass; And as we rock it, so we swathe it, we cover it, with some pretences, some excuses, some hopes of coveraling it. (I, 224)<sup>427</sup>

Marriage as a symbol of the mutual love between God and his people is a trope of both the Old Testament and of the New. Straying from God is therefore pictured as

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<sup>425</sup> *Two Sermons, to the Prince and Princess Palatine, the Lady Elizabeth at Heydelberg, when I was commanded by the King to wait upon my L. of Doncaster in his Embassy to Germany. First Sermon as we went out, June 16. 1619. Rom. 13.11., 12-13.*

<sup>426</sup> In "The Cross," Donne defends the use of crosses as symbols and the practice of crossing oneself before prayer by playfully reminding his readers that human beings, as they go about their everyday activities, encounter the shape of the cross virtually everywhere that two objects cross each other. All of these smaller crosses found in the most unlikely places are to remind us of the cross of Christ.

<sup>427</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, Novemb. 2. 1617. Psal. 55.19. 2.*

adultery and, in extreme cases, prostitution. Donne makes creative use of this ancient metaphor by starting with an example of a failed earthly marriage and the husband's late response to his wife's straying.<sup>428</sup> While such a late response makes a laughingstock of an earthly husband, it becomes an apt symbol of God's patience and enduring love for sinful man:

But as in the fleshly fornications of an adulterous wife, the husband is, for the most part, the last that hears of them: so, for our spiritual fornications, such as the loathness, the patience, the longanimity of our good and gracious God, that though he do know our sins, as soon as they speak, as soon as they are acted . . . yea, before they speak, as soon as they are conceiv'd; yet he will not hear of our sins, he takes no knowledge of them, by punishing them, till our brethren have been scandaliz'd, and led into tentation by them.

(I, 171)<sup>429</sup>

Familiar objects lying about the house can, when properly viewed, become emblems of spiritual realities and reminders of God. The movements of a piece of paper, tossed to and fro on the waves, warn us against attaching ourselves to any earthly thing. Fixing our eyes on the paper and following it on its way shows us in turn the futility of fixing our heart upon desirable earthly attainments such as riches, beauty and honor, which will draw us, restless and unsatisfied, along a winding path to nothingness. Donne proposes "the Almighty and immoveable God" as the best anchor:

Cast but a paper into the river, and fix thine eye upon that paper, and binde thine eye to follow that paper whithersoever the river, or the winde shall carry it, and thou canst not imagine where thine eye will be tomorrow: For this paper is not addressed, as a ship, to a certain port, or upon any certain purpose, but expos'd to the disposition of the tyde, to the rage of the wind,

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<sup>428</sup> In "The Storm," Donne offers a charming parallel of passengers on a storm-tossed ship who "forth their cabins peep: / And tremblingly ask what news, and do hear so, / Like jealous husbands, what they would not know" (ll. 48-50). The sestet of "Holy Sonnet XIV" takes up the same metaphor, begging God to "enthral" and "ravish" his soul, so that he may be free and pure. The most daring appropriation of the metaphor of God as husband occurs in "Holy Sonnet XVIII" where the poet asks God to "[b]etray . . . [his] spouse to our sights, / . . . Who is most true, and pleasing to [God], then / When she is embraced and open to most men" (ll. 11, 13-14).

<sup>429</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, April 21. 1616. Eccles. 8.11., 4.*

to the wantonness of the Eddy, and to innumerable contingencies, till it wear out to nothing. So, if a man set his heart (we cannot call it a setting) if a man suffer his heart to issue upon any of these fluid and transitory things of the world . . . He shall not know where to finde his own heart. If *Riches* be this floating paper that his eye is fixed upon, he shall not know upon what course; If *Beauty* be his paper, he shall not know upon what face; If *Honor* and *preferment* be it, he shall not know upon what faction his heart will be transported a month hence. But, if the heart can fix it self upon that which is fixt, the Almighty and immoveable God, . . . it will find the way of cleansing. (I, 190-91)<sup>430</sup>

God's light enables man to discern and seek what is eternal. Correct interpretation and application of God's word is therefore vital to salvation. Donne draws a comparison between individual and collective reading of the Scriptures, suggesting that "[t]he *word* is the *light*, but the *Church* is the *Lanthorne*, it presents and preserves that light unto you" (I, 205).<sup>431</sup> This simply elegant image works so well because churches as buildings often contain and shine forth physical light, while the church as the body of the faithful and the proper community for interpreting and teaching God's word emits the light of truth in accord with Christ's admonition not to hide one's light under a bushel.

Preachers play a special part in the process of interpretation and edification. Throughout the sermon corpus, Donne offers a number of reflections on his vocation and evidence of his self-consciousness concerning his role as spiritual leader of his people. He wavers between an almost giddy wonder at the loftiness of his task and rankling doubts regarding his worthiness. In a sermon from the early years of his preaching career, the preacher is pictured as both trumpet and trumpeter. In this complex metaphor, the different calls of the trumpet on the battlefield correspond to the preacher's call to various courses of action in the fight against evil. Physically audible calls are invested with spiritual meanings:

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<sup>430</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart.1616. Proverbs 22.11., 9.*

<sup>431</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart.1616. Proverbs 22.11., 23.*

The same trumpet that sounds the alarm (that is, that awakens us from our security) and that sounds the Battail (that is, that puts us into a colluctation with our selves, with this world, with powers and principalities, yea into a wrestling with God himself and his Justice) the same trumpet sounds the Parle too, calls us to hearken to God in his world, and to speak to God in our prayers, and so to come to treaties and capitulations for peace; and the same trumpet sounds a retreat too, that is, a safe reposing of our souls in the merit, and in the wounds of our Saviour Christ Jesus. (II, 169-70)<sup>432</sup>

As mentioned before, the preacher's duty is to facilitate man's ascent to God through administrations of grace and encouragements of effort. Donne reflects on the danger of wanting to rise too high too fast through the image of a set of stairs or a ladder which, though they convey us to the heights, do so in a roundabout way. This limitation is part of the human condition and is better accepted than fought. Two more examples, one from blowing glass the other from cosmetics serve to underline the message of modesty and moderation:<sup>433</sup>

The danger is, that we cannot goe upward directly; If wee have a staire, to goe any height, it must be a winding staire; It is a compassing, a circumventing, to rise: A Ladder is a straight Engin of it selfe, yet if we will rise by that, it must be set a slope; Though our meanes be direct in their owne nature, yet wee put them upon crooked wayes; It is but a poore rising, that any man can make in a direct line, and yet it is, *Ad sufficientiam*, high enough, for it is to heaven. Have yee seene a glasse blowne to a handsome competency, and with one breath more, broke? I will not aske you, whether you have seen a competent beauty made worse, by an artificiall addition, because they have not thought it well enough before; you see it every day, and every where. If *Paul* himselfe were here, whom for his Eloquence the

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<sup>432</sup> *A Lent-Sermon Preached at White-hall, February 12. 1618. [1618/19] Ezek. 33.32., 6-7*

<sup>433</sup> In "The Broken Heart," Donne offers a poignant image of the broken heart as shattered glass. "... but Love, alas / At one first blow did shiver it as glass. / Yet nothing can to nothing fall, / Nor any place be empty quite, / Therefore I think my breast hath all / Those pieces still, though they be not unite; / And now as broken glasses show / A hundred lesser faces, so / My rags of heart can like, wish, and adore, / But after one such love, can love no more" (ll. 23-32).

Lystrians called *Mercury*, hee could not perswade them to leave their *Mercury*; It will not be easily left; for how many of them that take it outwardly at first, come at last to take it inwardly? Since the saying of *Solomon*, *Be not over righteous*, admits many good senses, even in Morall vertues, and in religious duties too, which are naturally good, it is much more applicable in temporall things, which are naturally indifferent; Bee not over faire, over witty, over sociable, over rich, over glorious; but let the measure be *Sufficiencia tua, So much as is sufficient for thee*. (III, 234-35)<sup>434</sup>

Sometimes ascent must begin with descent. Donne uses a simple image picturing man as a ball, a plaything in the hands of God, to explain this counterintuitive notion. Yes, God occasionally throws us to the ground and this causes both fear and pain, but his underlying intention is that we rise still higher through a certain spiritual elasticity and the momentum of suffering. “[A]s he that flings a ball to the ground, or to a wall, intends in that action, that that ball should returne back, so even now, when God does throw me down, it is the way that he hath chosen to returne me to himselfe” (III, 193).<sup>435</sup>

In a celebration of the essential goodness of social harmony brought about by adherence to social order, Donne pictures society as a house with many floors and our particular duties as containers of perfume:

For truly that’s one great benefit that arises out of our doing the duties of our own places, in our own time, that as a perfume intended only for that room, where the entertainment is to be made, breaths upward and downward, and round about it; so the doing of the duties of the place, by men that move in the middle Sphears, breath upwards and downwards, and about too, that is, cast a little shame upon inferiors if they doe not so, and a little remembrance upon Superiors, that they should do so, and a thanksgiving to Almighty God for them that doe so . . . (VIII, 178-79)<sup>436</sup>

Those who conscientiously perform their duty where God placed them achieve results at all levels of the social hierarchy. Their good example, though the work is done in secret,

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<sup>434</sup> *Preached at White-hall, April 8. 1621. Prov. 25.16., 10-11.*

<sup>435</sup> *Preached to the Countesse of Bedford, then at Harrington house. January 7. 1620. Job 13.15., 7.*

<sup>436</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Hite-hall. February 29. 1627. [1627/8] Acts. 7. 60., 4-5.*

spreads like the scent of perfume throughout the entire house. The beauty of the passage stems from the inevitable dissemination of fragrance despite the modesty of the hardworking individual.<sup>437</sup>

### *Occupationes*

Throughout the sermonic oeuvre, Donne exhibits a deep commitment to active engagement with the world within the framework of a legitimate trade or vocation.<sup>438</sup> It therefore does not come as a surprise that the vast majority of his striking imagery is drawn from a panoply of situations and occupations, from the world of bellmen and markets, fishing and warfare, schoolmasters and physicians, the printing press and the fine arts. Donne's intimate knowledge of everyday urban life in early seventeenth-century England allows him to construct familiar images to serve as vessels of spiritual meaning. His occasional daring comparisons of God to working men, from jewelers to carters of dung, show a mind in which sacred and secular are united in a holistic vision of reality.

Donne conveys the importance of arriving to church spiritually prepared in a charming musical image. It is not rare to compare the preacher and his words to an accomplished musician and a finely wrought song. In this image, the idiosyncrasies of reality, the custom of the poor bellman waking the sleeping population, point to the necessity of approaching a sermon already attuned to the word of God. The bellman may stand for sickness, failure, tragedy or any 'noise' that predisposes man to the divine:

[R]emember that as in that good Custome in these Cities, you hear cheerful street musick in the winter mornings, but yet there was a sad a doleful bellman, that wak'd you, and call'd upon you two or three hours before that musick came; so for all that blessed musick which the servants of God shall

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<sup>437</sup> For a secular precedent, see "Elegy 4 The Perfume" in which the lover is discovered by his lady's father because of his heavy perfume, the scent of which inevitably spread throughout the house: "But Oh, too common ill, I brought with me / That, which betrayed me to mine enemy: / A loud perfume, which at my entrance cried / Even at they father's nose, so we were spied" (ll. 39-42).

<sup>438</sup> In "Break of Day," Donne, taking upon himself a female persona, playfully implies that being occupied in the world and being in love are mutually exclusive: "He which hath business, and makes love, doth do / Such wrong, as when a married man doth woo" (ll. 17-18).

present to you in this place, it may be of use, that a poor bell-man wak'd you before, and thou but by his noyse, prepared you for their musick. (VIII, 174-75)<sup>439</sup>

Christ's redemptive act as a financial transaction is a biblical trope much used by Donne, but his choice of describing the church as a market of grace is an unusual image as it evokes Protestant distaste for what was perceived as the Catholic custom of 'selling' salvation in the form of indulgences. Donne selects three laws of the marketplace and applies them to the operations of the church:

The Market is open till the bell ring; till thy last bell ring, the Church is open, grace is to be had there; but trust not upon that rule, that men buy cheapest at the end of the market, that heaven may be had for a breath at last, when they that hear it cannot tel whether it be a sigh or a gasp, a religious breathing and anhelation after the next life, or natural breathing out, and exhalation of this; but find a spiritual good husbandry in that other rule, that the prime of the market is to be had at first . . . (II, 245)<sup>440</sup>

The notion of preachers and ministers as fishers of men is also deeply biblical, but Donne merely uses it as the framework of an ingenious tableau depicting a whaling scene. The various stages and gestures of this dangerous but exhilarating occupation are imbued with spiritual meaning. At first, the minister valiantly targets the whale but as the 'fish' struggles and excitement builds, God himself enters the fray by sending sickness or other forms of calamity to help wear out the sinner and ready him for the minister and his ministrations:

The rebuke of sin, is like the fishing of *Whales*; the marke is great enough; one can scarce misse hitting; but if there be not *sea room* and line enough, and a dexterity in letting out that line, he that hath fixed his harping Iron, in the Whale, endangers himselfe, and his boate; God hath made us *fishers of Men*; and when we have struck a *Whale*, touch'd the conscience of any person, which thought himselfe above rebuke, and increpation, it struggles,

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<sup>439</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Hite-hall. February 29. 1627. [1627/8] Acts. 7. 60., 1-2.*

<sup>440</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inne, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 11.*

and strives, and as much as it can, endeavours to draw fishers, and boate, the Man and his fortune into contempt, and danger. But if God tye a *sickness*, or any other calamity, to the end of the line, that will winde up this Whale againe, to the boate, bring back this rebellious sinner better advised, to the mouth of the Minister, for more counsaile, and a better souplennesse, and inclinableness to conforme himselfe, to that which he shall after receive from him; onely calamity makes way for a rebuke to enter. (V, 199-200)<sup>441</sup>

The image of fervent prayer as the storming of heaven may be a commonplace, but Donne resorts to it in order to craft an ingenious comparison between prayer and trench warfare.<sup>442</sup> In this struggle, the end of which is the siege of God himself, man moves forward from trench to trench, though the ‘canons’ of the Church be pointed at him.<sup>443</sup> In his direst need, he can always seek refuge in the first trench, which corresponds to basic tenets of Christian anthropology, that man has a soul endowed with the light of nature and open to grace:

In the Prayers of the Congregation wee besiege God, So this way wee entrench our selves before God, so, as that nothing can beat us out of our trenches; for, if all the Canons of the Church beat upon me, so that I be by Excommunication removed from the assistances of the Church . . . yet, before that be effected, I am still in my first trench, still I am a man, still I have a soule capable of Grace, still I have the light of Nature, and some presence of God in that; though I be attenuated, I am not annihilated . . . (VIII, 306)<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> *Preached at the Churching of the Countesse of Bridgewater. [?1621 or 1623] Micah 2.10. Second Sermon.*, 2-3.

<sup>442</sup> The trope of earthly love as war is a Renaissance commonplace. Donne’s unique use of the trope in “The Damp” has a decidedly Spenserian flavor. Instead of the wooer ‘waging war’ on his beloved, the poet suggests that the lady besiege herself: “. . . but if you dare be brave, And pleasure in your conquest have, / First kill th’ enormous giant, your Disdain, / And let th’ enchantress Honour, next be slain . . .” (ll. 10-12).

<sup>443</sup> While Donne’s pun on ‘canons’ as weapons and ecclesiastical ‘canons’ is humorous and worldly, his comparison of the soul of two lovers to bullets in “The Dissolution” is rather more somber: “And so my soul more earnestly released, / Will outstrip hers; as bullets flown before / A latter bullet may o’ertake, the powder being more” (ll. 22-24).

<sup>444</sup> *The fourth of my Prebend Sermons upon my five Psalmes: Preached at S. Pauls, 28. January, 1626. [1626/7] Psal. 65.5., 7.*



Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, the Book of Proverbs<sup>445</sup> asserts. It is more basic to wisdom than is the skill of reading, which surely is the beginning of advanced knowledge if not of wisdom. To emphasize the vital importance of the fear of God, Donne resorts to a nightmarish image of an educated man pleading his own case at the Bar and suddenly finding himself unable to read what he had prepared:

*They fear not God:* This is such a state, as if a man who had been a Schoolmaster all his life, and taught others to read, or had been a Critick all his life, and *ingeniosus in alienis*, over-witty in other mens Writings, had read an Author better, then that Author meant, and should come to have use of his Reading to save his life at the Bar, when he had his Book, for some petty Felony, and then should be stricken with the spirit of stupidity, and not be able to read then. Such is the state of the wisest, of the learnedest, of the mightiest in this world: If they fear not God, they have forgot their first letters. (I, 232)<sup>446</sup>

Fear of God leads man to live a good life and only a well-lived life can prepare him for a good death. While setting up the contrast between the death of a righteous and of a wicked man, Donne emphasizes that the calm, quiet and dignified exit out of this world is made possible by a lifetime of good deeds. Referring to the world of printing, he reminds his auditory that though a picture comes quickly off the press, yet engraving the picture into the copper sheet for printing takes much longer. The metaphor is appropriate on many levels and connects various related fields of imagery: man as a picture (created in the image of God), man as a page in the book of humanity,<sup>447</sup> the process of dying as being pressed and transformed:

Be pleased to remember that those Pictures which are deliver'd in a minute,  
from a print upon a paper, had many dayes, weeks, Moneths time for the  
graving [i.e., engraving] of those Pictures in the Copper; So this Picture of

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<sup>445</sup> Cf. verses 1:7 and 9:10.

<sup>446</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, Novemb. 2. 1617. Psal. 55.19.*, 10.

<sup>447</sup> For an interesting secular parallel, see "A Valediction: of the Book" where Donne compares the "myriads / Of letters" which have passed between himself and his love to a "book, as long lived as the elements . . . this all-graved tome" from which theologians, statesmen and lawyers can extract all the knowledge to be found in the world (ll. 10-11, 19-20).

that dying Man, that dies in Christ, that dies the death of the Righteous, that embraces Death as a Sleepe, was graving all his life; All his publique actions were the lights, and all his private the shadows of this Picture. And when this Picture comes to the Presse, this Man to the streights and agonies of Death, thus he lies, thus he looks, this he is. His understanding and his will is all one faculty . . . His memory and his fore-sight are fixt, and concentred upon one object, upon goodnesse . . . (VII, 190)<sup>448</sup>

Man, created in the image of the Creator, is himself a creator. Two types of artists, painters and sculptors, represent two modes of creating something new, either by addition or by subtraction. This creative activity in turn illustrates two approaches to describing God, either by stating what he is or defining what he is not. Donne's few simple details of the painting and sculpting process serve to create an especially fine, almost translucent image:

To make representations of men, or of other creatures, we finde two wayes; Statuaries [i.e., sculptors] have one way, and Painters have another: statuaries doe it by Substraction; They take away, they pare off some parts of that stone, or that timber, which they work upon, and then that which they leave, becomes like that man, whom they would represent: painters doe it by Addition; Whereas the cloth, or table presented nothing before, they adde colours, and lights, and shadowes, and so there arises a representation. Sometimes we represent God by Substraction, by Negation, by saying, God is that, which is not mortall, not passible, not moveable: sometimes we present him by Addition; by adding our bodily lineaments to him, and saying, that God hath hands, and feet, and eares, and eyes . . . Some such things may be done towards the representing of God, as God; But towards the expressing of the distinction of the Persons of the Trinity, nothing. (VII, 54)<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Hite-hall. February 29. 1627. [1627/8] Acts. 7. 60., 17.*

<sup>449</sup> *Preached at S. Dunstanes upon Trinity-Sunday. 1627. Rev. 4.8., 18.*

So far, we have sampled images in which Donne invested persons or procedures belonging to various trades and occupations with spiritual meaning in an effort to externalize and present in a simple, visible manner the internal, invisible workings of the human spirit on its journey to God. In some passages, however, God is depicted as working various trades in order to illuminate both his relation to man and his inner attributes.

In an early sermon, Donne writes at length about individuals identified as prodigals by the law and their subsequent loss of rights—they cannot dispose of their own estate, may not make a will, and are presumed disinherited by their father—comparing them to sinners, spiritual prodigals, who have lost parallel rights in the spiritual world. The Holy Spirit is then compared to a tutor or curator appointed to take charge of the affairs of a prodigal.<sup>450</sup> Once the Holy Spirit takes charge, the sinner's account is set straight and guidance given so that he will avoid poor bargains and spiraling debts in the future:

[A]s they [prodigals] had Tutors, and Curators appointed them, so he sends the Holy Ghost, to be our Guardian our Curator: and as the office of that person, in that law, was double, first to reverse all contracts and bargains, which that prodigal person, in that state, had made, and secondly to inhibit, and hinder him, from making new contracts, so this blessed Spirit of consolation, by his sanctification, seals to our consciences a *Quietus est*, a discharge of all former spiritual debts, he cancels all them, he nails them to the cross of Christ, and then he strengthens us against relapses into the same sins again. (I, 163)<sup>451</sup>

The third person of the Trinity is still active in the world shaping both individuals and communities. In a metaphor depicting the Holy Spirit as a jeweler, Donne conveys a sense of the foresight and delicacy with which God shapes man and the preciousness and uniqueness of the material:

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<sup>450</sup> “The Will” presents a man made prodigal by love disposing of his treasures in the most inappropriate and profligate ways. He gives away everything but always to those who either do not need (e.g., to Argus his eyes, to women his tears) or will not accept (e.g., Catholics his faith, the “schismatics / of Amsterdam” his works) the gift.

<sup>451</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Greenwich, Aprill 30. 1615. Essay 52.3.*, 13.

The moving of the Holy Ghost upon me is, as the moving of the minde of an Artificer, upon that piece of work that is then under his hand. A Jeweller, if he would make a jewell to answer the form of any flower, or any other figure, his minde goes along with his hand, nay prevents [i.e., is ahead of] his hand, and he thinks in himself, a Ruby will conduce best to the expressing of this, and an Emeraud of this. [So the Holy Ghost shapes us to the best service of God]. (IX, 101)<sup>452</sup>

In keeping with the metaphor of sin as sickness, Christ is often portrayed as a divine physician and the minister as his apprentice. Images drawn from this profoundly fertile metaphorical ground may focus on the illness, the medicaments, the ministrations of the physician or the response of the patient. Donne finds any reliance on the merits of others to raise one in the eyes of God as absurd as if a sick man expected to recover because his brother took a double dose of medicine. Instead, he contends, each man is individually responsible for his own righteous actions and his own salvation:

It were a strange pretence to health, that when thy Physitian had prescribed thee a bitter potion, and came for an account how it had wrought upon thee, thou shouldst say, My brother hath taken twice as much as you prescribed for me, but I tooke none, Or if he ordained sixe ounces of bloud to be taken from thee, to say, My Grandfather bled twelve. God shall judge according to *The worke*, that is, The nature of the worke, and according to *Thy worke*, The propriety of the worke. (III, 286-87)<sup>453</sup>

In order to make a strong point, Donne does not shy away from comparing God to men of very humble occupations. He muses on the Christian dynamic between God as almighty and transcendent and God as loving and immanent by contrasting God's behavior with that of a constable or a beadle. It is a mystery that while these men of lesser rank would be rankled were they to be addressed with the informal pronoun 'thou,' God desires to be addressed in such a direct way:

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<sup>452</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, upon Whitsunday. 1629.Gen. 1.2., 10.*

<sup>453</sup> *Preached upon Trinity-Sunday. I. Pet. 1.17., 14.*

First then, for that Compellation *Tu*, hast *thou* found it? It is a word first of familiarity, and then a word of particularity. It is a degree of familiarity, that God hath notified himselfe to us in severall Persons; that hee hath come so neere to our comprehension, as to be considered not onely as an universall, and infinite God, but as a Father, and as a Sonne, and opened himselfe unto us in these Notions . . . *Thou* O Father, and *Thou* O Sonne, have mercy upon us. A Constable, or Beadle will not bee spoke to so, to be *thou'd*, and any Person in the Trinity, the whole Trinity together is content with it. (III, 227)<sup>454</sup>

On another occasion God is brought into parallel with a carter of dung responsible for carting away, bit by bit, an entire dung heap. Since the dung heap stands for a wicked man and the carting away represents his gradual death, the passage has more to say about the miserable condition of the wicked, yet the audacity of the comparison is not lost on the listener:

[The hypocrite] does God service, and yet perishes, because he does it not from the heart. God shall take him away, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone. God does not say there, that he will take away the dunge, but the man; not that he will take away the Dissimulation of the Hypocrite, but he will take away the Hypocrite himself, as dunge is taken away, till it be all gone . . . If he have a complacency . . . his joy is but dunge, and in a moment comes a Cart, and fetches away that dunge, sweeps away even that false joy. . . . As soon as it is a Hope, it shall be as the giving up of the Ghost, and a Cart shall carry away that dunge, that Hope. . . . when the Cart comes for the last load of dunge, his corrupt, his putrified soul, what hope hath the Hypocrite for the next life? (I, 190)<sup>455</sup>

Sometimes brief and simple images are the most effective. In such cases, the listener is expected to fill in the details out of the wealth of his own associations. An especially moving image is Donne's insight that "As a *Soldier* would not part with his

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<sup>454</sup> *Preached at White-hall, April 8. 1621. Prov. 25. 16., 3.*

<sup>455</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart. 1616. Proverbs 22. 11., 8.*

scars, Christ would not" (II, 138).<sup>456</sup> Religious poetry composed in Old English in the Anglo-Saxon period often depicts Christ as a soldier, who virtually leapt onto the cross to achieve the heroic work of redemption. Another association might lead to the *miles gloriosus* of Roman comedy, an old veteran who revels in his scars while proudly recounting his military exploits. The power of this simple image relies on implications of heroism, a sense of nostalgia, and the beauty of Christ's wounds.

### ***Regnum ecclesiae***

The entities of church and state are two large bodies consisting of many smaller parts. As such, they are well represented by the human body and are themselves both representations of Creation and a foretaste of the Kingdom of God or the Heavenly Jerusalem. Donne makes use of these tropes often when addressing the importance of temporal and spiritual unity and recognizing the contribution of each member of the church or state.<sup>457</sup> In a complex passage, Donne describes a strong and able body animated by a tripartite soul as an image of a self-sufficient, functional state. He highlights the importance of strong feet, a stable and able working class, without which the entire body totters and falls and provides a unique interpretation of spiritual unity by addressing all three levels, vegetative, sensitive and intellective, of the tripartite soul:

No State upon earth, can subsist without those bodies, Men of their owne.  
For men that are supplied from other, may either in necessity, or in indignation, be withdrawne, and so that State which stood upon forraine legs, sinks. Let the head be gold, and the armes silver, and the belly brasse, if the feet be clay, Men that may slip, and molder away, all is but an Image, all is but a dreame of an Image: for forraine helps are rather crutches then legs. There must be bodies, Men, and able bodies, able men; Men that eat the good things of the land their owne figges and olives; Men not macerated with extortions: They are glorified bodies that make up the kingdome of

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<sup>456</sup> *Preached at Lincolns Inne. The Third Sermon on Psal. 38.4., 8.*

<sup>457</sup> In his love poetry, a single beloved woman becomes the whole world to Donne, or rather the soul of the world without whom the world is just a "carcase." In "A Fever," his love's illness takes on cosmic proportions: "These burning fires [i.e., her fever] but meteors be, / Whose matter in thee is soon spent. / Thy beauty, and all parts, which are thee, / Are unchangeable firmament" (II. 21-24).

Heaven; bodies that partake of the good of the State, that make up the State. Bodies, able bodies, and lastly, bodies inanimated with one soule: one vegetative soule, head and members must grow together, one sensitive soule, all must be sensible and compassionate of one anothers miserie; and especially one Immortall soule, one supream soule, one Religion. (IV, 47)<sup>458</sup>

In another body-based image, Donne subtly intertwines church and state in a single image of spiritual unity and hierarchy. The hierarchy is visible in the descending order from head to beard to vestments and the unity derives from the holy oil, or shared faith, that anoints the entire body. This is remarkable oil indeed! Although it has a common source, it signifies a different virtue at every level of the hierarchy:

The oyntment is *super caput, super barbam, super oram vestimenti*, as *David* speaks; It is fallen upon the *Head*, we have had, and have religious Princes; And upon the *Beard*, the Beard of *Aaron*, we have had, and have (no Time, no Church ever more ever so much) a religious Clergy, vigilancy in the Superiour, laboriousnesse in the Inferiour Clergy; And it is fallen upon the *Skirts of the garment*, the love, the desire, the hunger of hearing is fallen upon the lowest, and upon all our Congregations, *Oleum effusum nomen ejus*, his Name, and his Ordinance is poured out upon us all . . . (VII, 109)<sup>459</sup>

In Donne's eyes, respect and love for God are strongly bound up with respect and love for religious and secular leaders whose work and presence provides the leadership and security necessary to create a lasting society.<sup>460</sup> In the following passage Donne leaps from God to worldly magistrates and back to God in a complex metaphor that reveals connections between the two levels of leadership:

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<sup>458</sup> *Preached at White-hall, March 8. 1621. [1621/2] 1 Cor. 15.26., 3.*

<sup>459</sup> *The first Sermon upon this Text, Preached at S. Pauls, in the Evening, upon Easter-day. 1626. 1 Cor. 15.29., 16.*

<sup>460</sup> In "Holy Sonnet XIV" the poet pictures himself as "an usurped town, to another due" all the while laboring to admit God, the rightful king, "but oh, to no end." God, like a prudent earthly king, has entrusted his town to a viceroy, reason, but this viceroy "is captived, and proves weak or untrue" (ll. 5-8).

Now, as the fear of Gods punishments disposes us to love him, so that fear which the Magistrate imprints, by the execution of his Laws, establishes that love which preserves him, from all disestimation and irreverence: for, whom the Enemy does not fear, the Subject does not love. As no Peace is safe enough, where there is no thought of War; so the love of man towards God, and those who represent him, is not permanently settled, if there be not a reverential fear, a due consideration of greatness, a distance, a distinction, a respect of Rank, and Order, and Majestie. (I, 234)<sup>461</sup>

It often happens that God, because he is transcendent and his judgment delayed, receives less reverence than would a human king.<sup>462</sup> For instance, “[t]hat which is not allowable in Courts of Justice, in criminal Causes, To hear Evidence against the King, we will admit against God; we will hear Evidence against God” (I, 225).<sup>463</sup> Donne points out the danger and absurdity of such behavior in numerous passages which both depend on and reinforce a sturdy royalism on the part of the audience. Collective responsibility is personalized in a passage insisting on the inherent dignity of each person created in the image of God and his profound personal responsibility in preserving the beauty and wholeness of the image.<sup>464</sup> In this sense, every time one remembers oneself, he should also remember God, and when he considers his actions for the day, he must recall that he takes God with him wherever he goes:

Earthly Princes have been so jealous of their honours, as that they have made it Treason, to carry their pictures into any low Office, or into any irreverend place. Beloved, whensoever we commit any sin, upon discourse,

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<sup>461</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, Novemb. 2. 1617. Psal. 55.19., 12.*

<sup>462</sup> In “Farewell to Love,” sexual love is presented as a neglected king, first much sought after then quickly forgotten: “But, from late fair / His highness sitting in a golden chair, / Is not less cared for after three days / By children, than the thing which lovers so / Blindingly admire, and with such worship woo . . .” (ll. 11-15).

<sup>463</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, Novemb. 2. 1617. Psal. 55.19., 3.*

<sup>464</sup> In “Elegy 10 The Dream,” the lover is shown as bearing upon himself the image not of God or of the king but of his beloved. If the “[i]mage of her whom I love” is “in my faithful heart,” says Donne, this “[m]akes me her medal, and makes her love me, / As kings do coins, to which their stamps impart / The value . . .” (ll. 1-5). A sacred instance of the same metaphor occurs in “To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders” where the poet sees his friend as a new coin [i.e., ordained minister] and asks whether he is “the same materials, as before, / Only the stamp is changed . . .” Newly crowned kings alter the image on the coin, not its worth, after their coronation; thus, the grace of ordination has stamped Donne’s friend with “Christ’s new stamp” (ll. 13-14, 18).



upon consideration, upon purpose, and plot, the image of God which is engraved and imprinted in us, and lodged in our understanding, and in that reason which we employ in that sin, is mingled with that sin; we draw the image of God into all our incontinencies, into all our oppressions, into all our extortions, and all our supplantations: we carry his image, into all foul places, which we haunt upon earth; yea we carry his image down with us, to eternal damnation. (I, 160)<sup>465</sup>

The church, when not conceived of as the body of all faithful, can be considered a sacred edifice and the house of God. Donne universalizes the metaphor of churches as houses of God to include the whole world. Although there are different levels of proximity to God and hence happiness in his house which is the world, Donne generously conceives of the entirety of mankind, regardless of creed, as inhabitants of God's estate and potential shareholders in salvation:

In Gods house, which is All (all this world, and the next too, is Gods house) there are out-houses, rooms without the house; so considered in this world are the Gentiles, and the Heathen, which are without the Church, and yet amongst them God hath some Servants: so in his house there are women below stairs, that is, in his visible Church here upon Earth; and women above stairs, that is, degrees of Glory in the triumphant Church. To them that are lodged in these out-houses, out of the Covenant out of the Church, salvation comes sometimes, God doth save some of them: but yet is not near them . . . (II, 253)<sup>466</sup>

Death, then, is a simple move upstairs, into rooms closer to God. In the Gospels, Christ reveals that there are many mansions in his Father's house. This is a source of comfort, yet

the Consolation is not placed in this, That some of these Mansions are below, some above staires, some better seated, better lighted, better vaulted,

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<sup>465</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Greenwich, Aprill 30. 1615. Essay 52.3., 10.*

<sup>466</sup> *Two Sermons, to the Prince and Princess Palatine, the Lady Elizabeth at Heydelberg, when I was commanded by the King to wait upon my L. of Doncaster in his Embassy to Germany. First Sermon as we went out, June 16. 1619. Rom. 13.11., 4-5.*

better fretted, better furnished then others; but onely in this, That they are *Mansions*; which word, in the Originall, and Latin, and our Language, signifies a *Remaining*, and denotes the perpetuity, the everlastingnesse of that state. (VII, 138)<sup>467</sup>

The correct attitude, however, is not to discontentedly look for better rooms than those given our fellows, but to rejoice that we have any room at all.

#### IV.2.7. *Coelum*

The celestial bodies are both distant from man and have a profound effect on the innermost workings of his body. What is more, it was believed in Donne's day that the movement of the stars and their ever changing position in relation to one another mirrored the fate of man and mankind. For these reason, celestial bodies served as emblems of God.

As constellations are both permanent regarding their individual integrity and in constant, stately movement across the sky, Donne drew frequent comparisons between constellations and Christian doctrine or constellations and the entire church.<sup>468</sup> The number of stars in a constellation is given; one star more or one less would cause it to lose its coherence. Men who, with the help of rigorous inquiry (i.e., the telescope) or an overwrought imagination, claim to discover more stars (i.e., further doctrines) must realize that although these add to the beauty of the night sky, they are by no means part of the constellation:<sup>469</sup>

If an other man see, or think he sees more then I; if by the help of his Optick glasses, or perchance but by his imagination, he see a star or two more in any constellation then I do; yet that starre becomes none of the constellation;

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<sup>467</sup> *Preached to the King in my Ordinary wayting at White-hall, 18. April 1626. Joh. 14.2., 20-21.*

<sup>468</sup> In "Upon the Annunciation and Passion falling upon one day. 1608" Donne uses this trope to speak of the essential integrity of the church as it meanwhile makes its necessary progress through the centuries. The image is Donne's intricate justification of the changes brought about by the Reformation. "As by the self-fixed pole we never do / Direct our course, but the next star thereto, / Which shows where the'other is, and which we say / (Because it strays not far) doth never stray; / So God by his Church, nearest to him, we know, / And stand firm, if we by her motion go" (ll. 25-30).

<sup>469</sup> In "To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders," Donne compares his fellow preachers to astronomers who when "they spy / A new-found star, their optics magnify" (45-46). Preachers, however, turn out to be more powerful as they don't just observe the heavens, but "with their engines, can / Bring man to heaven, and heaven again to man" (ll. 47-48).

it adds no limb, no member to the constellation, that was perfect before: so, if other men see that some additional and traditional things may adde to the dignity of the Church, let them say it conduces to the well-being, not to the very being; to the existence, not to the essence of the Church; for that's onely things necessary to salvation. (III, 210)<sup>470</sup>

In the geocentric world view Donne mostly embraced in his art, the predominance of our sun among celestial bodies is uncontested. It is therefore an appropriate symbol of God and, because of a fortuitous pun on sun/Son endemic to seventeenth-century English religious poetry and prose, of Jesus Christ. In an allegorical reading of the days of creation, Donne ingeniously exploits the relation of sun and moon, true source of light and its lesser reflection, to indicate God's constant care for man, which becomes evident if we "let the making of the Sun to rule the day be the testimony of Gods love to [us], in the sunshine of temporal prosperity, and the making of the Moon to shine by night, be the refreshing of his comfortable promises in the darkness of adversity" (242).<sup>471</sup>

Just as the sun is constant in emitting light, God does not cease to love man. If we find ourselves hemmed in by shadows, this is not because the sun has ceased to shine but because something has gotten in the way of the light. The appeal to the archetypes of light and darkness and the biblical reference to the shadow of death<sup>472</sup> lend Donne's image gravity:

No man can assigne a reason in the Sun, why his body casts a shadow: why all the place round about him, is illumin'd by the Sun, the reason is in the Sun; but of his shadow, there is no other reason, but the grosness of his own body: why there is any beam of light, any spark of life, in my soul, he that is the Lord of light and life, and would not have me die in darkness, is the onely cause; but of the shadow of death, wherein I sit, there is no cause, but

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<sup>470</sup> *A Lent-Sermon Preached before the King, at White-Hall, February 16, 1620 [1620/21]. I Tim. 3.16., 5.*

<sup>471</sup> *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inne, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1.,8-9.*

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Isaiah 9.2, Luke 1.79.

mine own corruption. And this is the cause, why I do sin; but why I should sin, there is none at all. (I, 226-27)<sup>473</sup>

Here, too, Donne may well be playing with the pun on Son and sun, as evidenced by his reference to Jesus Christ as “the Lord of *light* and life” (emphasis added). On occasion, with just a few brushstrokes, Donne changes this seventeenth-century commonplace into an image of great beauty and a call to a more fervent spiritual life:

[The day of the birth of Christ] was a holy Equinoctial, and made the day of the Jews and the day of the Gentiles equal . . . Christ must come first in the flesh, and he must come again to Judgment. To us, and in our case one of these lives is spent; Christ is come in the flesh: and therefore as the earth is warmer an hour after the sun sets, then it was an hour before the sun rose, so let our faith and zeal be warmer now after Christs departing out of this world, then theirs was before his coming into it . . . (I, 306-07)<sup>474</sup>

Here the light of the sun is an image of human religious zeal. For Christians, Christ’s ascension was a sunset. Not only does this sunset portend a new sunrise but it is a symbol, too, of the completeness of revelation through Christ.<sup>475</sup>

#### **IV.2.8. *Angeli Deusque***

At the level of angels and beyond, Donne’s images disappear.<sup>476</sup> If we define an image as something visible pointing to something that is not, it is not hard to see why. Angels and God are pure spirit and therefore invisible to bodily sight, as we discovered through the reasoning of Aquinas. What is more, Donne explains that as

We say in the School, *Deus cognoscibilior Angelis*, We have better means to know the nature of God, then of Angels, because God hath appeared and manifested himself more in actions, then Angels have done: we know what

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<sup>473</sup> *A Sermon Preached at White-hall, Novemb. 2. 1617. Psal. 55.19, 4-5.*

<sup>474</sup> *A Second Sermon Preached at White-hall. April 19. 1618. 1 Tim. 1.15., 6-7.*

<sup>475</sup> In “A Lecture upon the Shadow,” Donne also uses the image of sunlight to poignantly qualify earthly love, which, unlike the love for God discussed above, which is a waiting love, plunges the soul into darkness once the love is past its prime: “Love is a growing, or full constant light; / And his first minute, after noon, is night” (ll. 25-26).

<sup>476</sup> For a unique instance of Donne’s use of angelic imagery, see his ethereal poem “Air and Angels,” specifically his wry observation that “Just such disparity / As is ‘twixt air and angels’ purity / ‘Twixt women’s love, and men’s will ever be” (ll. 26-28).

they are, by knowing what they have done; and it is very little that is related to us what Angles have done . . . (IV, 100)<sup>477</sup>

Paradoxically we as creatures know more about God than about our fellow creatures, the angels. In fact, it is only by comparing God with himself that we are able to grasp, albeit dimly, the mystery of the Holy Trinity. “The greatest Mystery in Earth, or Heaven, which is *the Trinity*, is conveyed to our understanding, no other way, then so, as they have reference to one another *by Relation*, as we say in the Schools; for, God could not be a father without a Son, nor the Holy Ghost *Spiratus sine spirante*.”<sup>478</sup>

#### IV.2.9. The Central Rung

Over the course of our climb up the Chain of Being, we have seen various levels of reality, from inanimate creatures to human beings, reflect spiritual truths or God himself. Standing on each rung, we have evaluated the structure and efficacy of images drawn from all planes of existence. Donne assures us that “[t]here is not so poore a creature but may be thy glasse to see God in . . . all things that are, are equally removed from being nothing; and whatsoever hath any beeing, is by that very beeing, a glasse in which we see God, who is the roote, and the fountaine of all beeing” (VIII, 224).<sup>479</sup> In other words, all things that are, just by being, reveal something about God, who is the Source of All Being. Yet a closer look at the distribution of images reveals a strong impression of Donne’s special circumstances.

John Donne was an urban intellectual in poor health, and these circumstances left an indelible mark on his imagery. As a lifelong city dweller, Donne had very little direct contact with or knowledge of the world of nature. The plants and animals he does reference are generally primates in their class and therefore commonly emblematic, and Donne’s descriptions of them do not reveal intimate knowledge of the habits and habitat of these creatures. Imagery drawn from agriculture, hunting, fishing, mining, and other

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<sup>477</sup> *A Sermon Preached at the Spittle, Upon Easter-Munday, 1622. II. Cor. 4.6., 12.*

<sup>478</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart.1616. Proverbs 22.11., 2.*

<sup>479</sup> *Preached at S. Pauls, for Easter-day. 1628. I Cor 13.12., 6.*

rural activities is almost entirely absent.<sup>480</sup> There is a strong focus on urban life instead, and urban occupations, especially in the fields of law and medicine. The prevalence of medical imagery in the forms of sickness as sin, medicine as grace, the physician as the minister or Christ himself may be attributed to Donne's recurring bouts of illness, especially a near fatal relapsing fever in 1623, and his morbid fascination with and understandable fear of the decay of the body due to illness and death. It must also be noted, however, that Donne was addressing a mostly urban audience. Though his auditory at some venues, most notably Paul's Cross and Saint Dunstan's parish, spanned the entire social scale, other venues such as court (Whitehall and Denmark house) and Lincoln's Inn, or occasions such as private christenings, weddings and funerals, were attended by the educated members of the middle and upper classes. Therefore, the prevalence of urban imagery drawing especially on the fields of law and medicine may very well be a sign not of Donne's limitations but of his awareness of the needs of his audience.<sup>481</sup>

In the end, it is man who lies at the heart of Donne's preaching efforts, both as a source and a target of powerful imagery. Yet the notion of man as a small world comes with a caveat: the metaphor of a human microcosm will not save man. Donne warns us:

But yet, if thou wilt think thy selfe a little Church, a Church to thy selfe,  
because thou hast heard it said, That thou art a little world, a world in thy  
selfe, that figurative, that metaphoricall representation shall not save thee.  
Though thou beest a world to thy selfe, yet if thou have no more corn, nor  
oyle, nor milk, then growes in thy self, or flowes from thy self, thou wilt  
starve; Though thou be a Church in thy fancy, if thou have no more seales of

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<sup>480</sup> In his poem "The Broken Heart," Donne presents love as a master hunter and a large fish seeking its prey: "By him, as by chain-shot, whole ranks do die, / He is the tyrant pike, our hearts the fry" (ll. 15-16).

<sup>481</sup> Hickey, too, has argued that "[t]he remarkable range of Donne's imagery in his sermons, his references and allusions drawn from virtually all possible fields of knowledge, his examples, illustrations, and analogies, his piling of metaphor upon metaphor, even the redundancy and superfluity of his tropes and figures, are the results of his efforts to evoke the memory of each of his listeners" (33). I agree with his conclusion that because the vast majority of Donne's imagery is drawn from fields that would be known to congregants pursuing different occupations it was most likely chosen and crafted to appeal to the memory of his auditors (34).

grace, no more absolution of sin, then thou canst give thyself, thou wilt perish. (VII, 232)<sup>482</sup>

Man must keep in mind that images, both on the walls of churches and in the human mind, are merely reminders of deeper, currently invisible realities. Donne trusts his auditory will discern this, for

if the true use of Pictures bee preached unto them, there is *no danger* of an abuse; and so, *as Remembrancers* of that which hath been taught in the Pulpit, they may be retained; And that was one office of the Holy Ghost himselfe, *That he should bring to their remembrance* those things, which had been formerly taught them. (VII, 432)<sup>483</sup>

And of the connection between the Holy Spirit and the faculty of memory much has been said.

### IV.3. *Imagines Agentes* and the Emblem Tradition

Thus far, we have surveyed Donne's imagery to arrive at the conclusion that he derived his visual metaphors from all ontological levels of the known world, with a special emphasis on the slice of the world which his fellow seventeenth-century Londoners inhabited. Just as we evaluated his *loci* against the requirements laid out in the Latin textbooks on rhetoric, we will now attempt to assess the influence on Donne's imagery of ancient rhetorical admonitions for *imagines agentes*.

Here we must briefly return to our discussion of *imagines* in section II.3.4. above. We will recall that it is the Ad Herennian author who gives the most thorough advice on how to construct *imagines* and also provides the single detailed example that has survived within the Antique *ars memoriae* tradition. The author suggests images of exceptional beauty or singular ugliness, "images that are not many or vague, but doing something" (*Ad Herennium* III.xxii.). Cicero had called for imagery that is "effective and sharply outlined and distinctive, with the capacity of encountering and speedily penetrating the mind, *imaginibus autem agentibus, acribus, insignitis, quae occurrere*

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<sup>482</sup> *Preached upon Whitsunday. John 16. 8,9,10,11., 18-19.*

<sup>483</sup> *Preached at Saint Pauls Crosse. 6 May. 1627. Hosea 3.4., 19.*

*celeriterque percutere animum possint*” (*De oratore* II.lxxxvii.358.). Quintilian proposed symbols such as anchors or weapons, most likely meant to represent parts of an oration concerning naval or military matters.

The Ad Herennian author provides our single detailed example, quoted again for convenience. To remember the details of a murder case, he suggests we picture: the man in question as lying ill in bed, if we know this person. If we do not know him, we shall yet take some one to be our invalid, but not a man of the lowest class, so that he may come to mind at once. And we shall place the defendant at the bedside, holding in his right hand a cup, and in his left, tablets, and on the fourth finger, a ram’s testicles. In this way we can have in memory the man who was poisoned, the witnesses, and the inheritance. (*Ad Herennium* III.xx.).

The cup recalls that poison was used, the ram’s testicles on the fourth finger refer to the four witnesses, and the tablets remind us of the inheritance at stake.

This carefully constructed, artificial scene may remind students of Renaissance visual culture of a very important art form current in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the emblem. Yates points to this connection in passing when noting that “[a]mongst the most characteristic types of Renaissance cultivation of imagery are the emblem and the *impresa*. These phenomena have never been looked at from the point of view of memory to which they clearly belong” (124). Here we may also recall Yates’ suggestions that while the art of memory was an originally invisible art may have become externalized when the call for harmoniously sized, well-lit *loci* precipitated the development of perspective in the early Renaissance (93) and that the need for striking and complex images may have brought about a proliferation of images in the visual arts (91).<sup>484</sup> Lewalski, too, notes that emblems are partly rooted in the rhetorical tradition, but she cites their “close affinities to [the] epigram” (180).<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Cf. section II.3.5. above.

<sup>485</sup> In a sense, the emblem is the anti-epigram, because while “emblems are things (representations of objects) used to illustrate a conceit . . . epigrams are words (a conceit) used to illustrate objects (180). The two devices are therefore linked through their brevity and illustrative quality.



While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a history of the emblem genre or to offer an overview of the emblem books current before Donne and in his day, I wish to identify a few key aspects of the emblem that I believe may be brought into fruitful connection with the imagery of Donne's sermons as surveyed above.

Renaissance theorists differentiated between the emblem and the *impresa*. While an emblem may be defined as a symbolic picture supplied with a motto and a few lines of prose or verse text, the *impresa* consisted of two parts, a figure and a short motto. Lewalski notes further differences between the two visual genres, namely that while the emblem "had general moral application to all mankind and [was] more open in method and more didactic in intention," (181) the *impresa* was drawn up for a single individual and was "more rigidly controlled by strict rules governing its composition" (Ibid.).

Out of emblems and *impresa*, it is the former "curious amalgams of picture, motto, and poem" (Lewalski 179) that we can connect both with Donne's imagery and the *imagines agentes* of the *ars memoriae* tradition. In her own treatment of the imagery of the sermons, Joan Webber lights upon an exciting consideration. Drawing on Rosemary Freeman's influential discussion, Webber points out that emblems cannot be considered symbols "because there is no identification of emblem and thing" (130). The emblem, unlike the symbol, is chosen first, and "its points of resemblance to a moral idea [are] imposed upon it" (Ibid.). This may give the emblem a forced or stiff character that sets it apart from freer symbols. Although the initial link between the emblem and what it represents is arbitrary, the reader or listener comes to realize the aptitude of the parallels as the emblem mulled over (or described in words), causing "illustration and moral [to become] fused" (Ibid.).

Donne's most memorable images share certain qualities with emblems as described above. They, too, are "chosen first" and the initial parallel may seem arbitrary. Then, as they are described element by element, moral meanings accrue until the visible reality Donne has found in the world and described in his sermon merges with the moral message he meant it to convey. In what follows, we will take another look at a handful of the images surveyed above. Of the images treated under *Elementae*,

let us reconsider the metaphor of the pearl.<sup>486</sup> The very first line of the image, “Thus Nature makes Pearls, Thus Grace makes Saints” may be taken as the motto for this emblem, a motto which makes clear both the natural reality chosen and the meaning to be imposed upon it. Donne describes the mechanism by which pearls are made. They begin with a “seminall drop” of dew, which is then coated by another and yet another, until “many shells and films” have formed around the initial drop. This visible and natural process is then invested with invisible, supernatural meaning. In the moral realm, the first, “seminall drop” is knowledge that God exists. The second layer is the good qualities possessed by natural man *ante legem*, the third layer is the goodness of man *sub lege* and the final layer is the grace conferred upon those living *sub gratia* and enjoying membership in the Christian Church. There is, however, an element of stiffness, of imposition in that while the layers of the natural pearl are all of the same substance, the levels of grace by which the saint is built up differ in their very nature.

From among the *Plantae*, let us rediscover the emblem of the grain growing out of the earth:

Grace does not grow out of nature; for nature in the highest exaltation and rectifying thereof cannot produce grace. Corn does not grow out of the earth, it must be sowed; but corn grows only in the earth; nature and natural reason do not produce grace, but yet grace can take root in no other thing but in the nature and reason of man . . .

Here, too, Donne begins with a fundamental truth observed in nature concerning the relationship of earth to seed to crop. A field only of earth, however fertile, will not produce anything of itself. The corn that will grow out of it must first be planted into it. Donne takes this basic agricultural knowledge and imposes upon it the symbiotic relationship between nature and grace. Nature without grace lies fallow; grace without a strong sediment of nature is rootless.

From the world of *Animalia*, one of the most vivid emblems is that of the sponge. Donne himself explicitly calls it a “good Embleme of such a rich man, whose riches

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<sup>486</sup> For citation information, please refer to our previous discussion of these images in the appropriate sections above.

perish in his travail” and bids his auditory take this “Embleme . . . into your memorie, and thoughts.” Not only is the motto of the emblem succinctly stated (i.e., a rich man is a sponge), but the role of the memory in absorbing this emblem is also made clear. In what follows, Donne manipulates the sponge, first pressing down on it with a little finger, then lifting it, moving it to the left and to the right, and finally letting it sit still. After instilling the scene in the auditory’s memory, he repeats the scene line by line, attributing moral meaning to each action with the sponge. The pressing down of the little finger becomes a light calamity, the lifting up is social advancement, letting the sponge sit is the equivalent of leaving the rich man alone. Yet in all these situations, Donne asserts, the covetous person leaks money for others to enjoy.

From among the images detailed at the level of *Homo*, we will briefly review two. The first is the whaling scene in which the minister is depicted as a fisherman and the sinner as a wayward whale. Once again, the first line may be read as the motto of the emblem: “The rebuke of sin, is like the fishing of *Whales*.” Donne proceeds to detail a vivid maritime struggle. The whale, as a “marke is great enough” and easy enough to hit, yet much “*sea room* . . . line . . . and a dexterity in letting out that line” are needed to go after the whale. What is more, “he that hath fixed his harping Iron, in the Whale, endangers himselfe, and his boate.” These elements and these events are natural to a whaling scene, and once again, Donne proceeds to match them with moral meaning. The minister does, by touching upon the conscience of a sinner, place himself in some inconvenience, if not danger, and the sinner may struggle even harder until “God tye a *sickness*, or any other calamity, to the end of the line.” Such hardship will exhaust the sinner and bring him to “a better souplenesse, and inclinableness,” allowing the minister to minister to him.

As a final example, let us recall how a picture in the press represents a dying man. Donne begins by appealing once again to the memory of his auditory, “Be pleased to remember that those Pictures which are deliver’d in a minute, from a print upon a paper, had many dayes, weeks, Moneths time for the graving . . . So this Picture of that dying Man, that dies in Christ . . . was graving all his life.” In what follows, Donne presents the steps of the engraving and printing process and imposes moral meaning on them.

The lights of the picture and its shadows, and the weight of the press are to remind us respectively of the dying man's public and private actions, and his lying in the "streights . . . of Death." Once again, the normal steps in the printing process are described in a recognizable way and then invested with moral meaning.

The five emblems we have discussed above both match and differ from rhetorical admonitions for striking images. They may be characterized as "effective and sharply outlined and distinctive, with the capacity of encountering and speedily penetrating the mind, *imaginibus autem agentibus, acribus, insignitis, quae occurrere celeriterque percutere animum possint*" (*De oratore* II.lxxxvii.358.), but it is the Ad Herennian call for "images that are not many or vague, but doing something" (*Ad Herennium* III.xxii.) that seems most resonant, especially the later request that these images be "doing something." Although Donne's images bear resemblance to traditional emblems, they differ because they are four-dimensional. Indeed, most of them could not be properly drawn because they represent not a frozen moment of time but a process played out in time, and their very meaning depends upon the fourth dimension. They are living emblems with a temporal dimension, and are therefore aptly stored in the memory which, as we know from St. Augustine, is the human faculty that transcends time.

Returning to the Ad Herennian deathbed scene, we may note both similarities and differences to Donne's imagery. Donne's emblems resemble the Ad Herennian striking image in their complexity. Neither is a simple symbol, but consists instead of several elements, all of which have their own meaning and contribute also to the collective meaning. Beyond this point, the similarity ends. It is not difficult to see the stiffness and forced nature of the Ad Herennian deathbed image. It is certainly not a scene onto which one would expect to stumble under normal circumstances. Rather, it is a carefully contrived visual cluster. The high-bred man in bed, conspicuously gripping a tablet, takes upon himself the role of the victim, the defendant at the bedside is depicted in the awkward pose of holding a cup in one hand and sporting ram's testicles on the ring finger of the other, thereby embodying the circumstances of the alleged crime. The Ad Herennian author starts with that which he wishes to remember and assembles an artificial scene in which visual elements are brought in to represent abstract content.

Donne's emblems work the other way around. He begins with the concrete and the natural, with four-dimensional slices of the reality that surrounded him and seems simply to be abstracting a moral *from* it. Of course, we may argue that he had the original moral meaning in mind and merely reached out into the world to find a physical phenomenon to match it. Nonetheless, from the point of view of the auditory, Donne calls up *phantasmata* of physical reality in the memory of his listeners and abstracts understanding from these *phantasmata*, thereby turning his emblems into his primary teaching tools in true Thomistic fashion. In a sense, the entire world in all its concreteness and physical vibrancy is Donne's *thesaurus* and his meditative journey through it is mirrored in the psychosomatic exercise that is the sermon.

#### IV.4. The Sermon as Journey Through *Loci* and *Imagines*

Throughout the sermons, Donne refers to the sermons themselves as 'meditations' or as 'exercises.' It is easy to dismiss the latter metaphor in the world of scholarship where academics are used to exercising the brain alone, yet the word 'exercise' has a decidedly physical aspect. It has overtones of dynamism and movement. I believe it is best to look at the *loci* and *imagines* not only as static rooms filled with stationary pictures, colorful and striking though they may be, but as structures inviting the audience on a journey of discovery. Instead of waiting passively for disjointed images, even if they were living emblems, to flash upon the imagination, Donne's audience was expected to actively engage itself in a psychosomatic journey. Gale Carrithers, in his *Donne at Sermons: A Christian Existential World*, proposes life as journey as the central metaphor of the sermons:

The most pervasive metaphor of Donne's sermons is *living as travelling*.<sup>487</sup>

For him, Christians not sunk in apathy or "lethargy" are constantly on the move. [...] It is a metaphor biblical, Patristic, medieval, Anglican and familiar to his hearers in literally numberless devotional and secular ways, evidently ever capable of new turns. (21-22)

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<sup>487</sup> This metaphor is developed in *Holy Sonnet VI* when the poet feels he has reached "[his] play's last scene" and "[his] pilgrimage's last mile..." (ll. 1-2).

When viewed in the light of this central metaphor the many words of movement such as “advance, ascend, borderers, bring, carry, comes, contiguous, course, descend, farther, feet, find, go, got up, journey, let you in, meet, navigate, pace, path, perverted, proceed, progress, pursue, run, return, sail, step, strayed, towards, transgress, transported, tread, turn, voyage, walk, way” generously sprinkled throughout the sermons texts and strengthened by restatements of the *loci* as landmarks, turn sermons into journeys:

The journey proceeds through no desert place. Rather, the preacher’s versions of himself and his auditors are jostled by an existential city continually presenting alternative selves and choices of direction and corporate challengers (the Papist or ‘Jesuited lady’ or ‘tother Anabaptist’) and individual Fathers or controversialists (historical or hypothetical) enunciating perennial compass readings, along a trail demarcated by the chosen text . . . It connects inner self and intentionality and exterior occasions and persons, connects auditory and kinesthetic experience with visual experience, spatial relationship, and the kind of analytic exposition instanced by map-making. The Christian journey-metaphor, in short, is antischizoid and at ease with the Incarnation in that. (92-93)

In the end, Donne’s sermonic journeys anticipate another masterpiece of seventeenth-century English devotional literature published two generations after the death of John Donne, namely John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.<sup>488</sup> The entire allegorical journey of Christian and his wife Christiana, in all its richness and complexity, may serve as a parallel to experiencing a sermon by John Donne. Yet two episodes, one involving Christian and the other Christiana, stand out. Both man and wife, early in their respective journeys, arrive at the house of the mysterious Interpreter. This house consists of a number of ‘significant rooms’ filled with living emblems: a damsel sweeping, two children at play, a man casting oil into the fire, a host of cheerful folk dressed in gold while a distressed swordsman attempts to break in, a professor in a cage. The Interpreter leads pilgrims by the hand, from room to room. He allows them to

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<sup>488</sup> My sincere thanks go to my advisor Tibor Fabiny for drawing my attention to the parallel.

carefully observe the scenes then explains their meaning patiently, occasionally even leaving time for the pilgrim to interpret for him- or herself. It is illuminating to see Donne's sermons as strings of significant rooms filled with emblems and to interpret Donne as the Interpreter. The benevolent Interpreter dispatches his visitor with a fervent wish that can easily be placed along the memory-understanding-will trajectory: "Well, keep all things so in thy mind, that they may be as a goad in thy sides, to prick thee forward in the way thou must go," (81) he urges, and finally commends the pilgrim into the keeping of the Holy Spirit who is, as we have seen, the master of the memory.

## V. *La Corona*

### V.1. A Mnemotechnical Reading

“So, in his purple wrapped receive me Lord, / By these his thorns give me his other crown; / And as to others’ souls I preached thy word, / Be this my text, my sermon to mine own, / Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down,” (ll. 26-30) Donne wrote in the last stanza of his “Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness.” In these few lines, not only does he summarize the paradoxical message of the entire poem using the symbol that lies at the heart of the *La Corona* sequence, that of the crown, but he also preaches to himself. While the hundreds of sermons given at Whitehall, Lincoln’s Inn and Paul’s Cross were preached to “others’ souls” (emphasis added), Donne conceived of certain moments within his devotional lyric, the most personal of genres, as “[his] sermon[s] to [his] own.” Let us discover, then, how Donne made use of *ars memoriae* to shape ‘sermons’ to his own soul.

*La Corona*, Donne’s early venture<sup>489</sup> into the world of devotional poetry, has gone somewhat neglected if we compare the relatively little probing into this seven-part sonnet sequence with the almost unsurveyably large amount of material related to his nineteen *Holy Sonnets*, by far the most widely-read pieces of Donne’s religious lyric. Within the more modest amount of material concerning the *La Corona* sonnet cycle, scholarly concern has tended to gravitate around a clearly circumscribed set of issues either theological or literary.

The most important debate flows out of an ongoing effort to determine whether this elusive sonnet cycle is a product of Catholic, Anglican or Protestant sensibilities. Critics have staked their claims and argued their case for Donne’s position at various points on the seventeenth-century English religious spectrum. Although such arguments are provocative and relevant in the light of Donne’s complex spiritual journey, we must keep in mind that in penning *La Corona*, Donne was not creating a polemical tract but composing a devotional lyric. In other words, he was not so much a Roman Catholic polemicizing against Calvinists, or an Anglican provoking Puritans, but primarily a Christian confronting God. Related to this approach is the argument concerning the

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<sup>489</sup> The sonnet cycle was written sometime between 1607 and 1609.



liturgical and devotional background of the sermon cycle: is it closer to intimate, private devotion, like the *Holy Sonnets*, or to a public liturgical poem like the “Litanie”?

The literary issue par excellence has been the relation of shape to content, the fascinating detail Donne states in his first sonnet that he is setting out to create a “crown of prayer and praise” and how—by weaving his text carefully throughout making the last lines of each sonnet coincide with the first line of the next and the last line of the last sermon link to the first line of the first—he accomplishes just that. The two approaches are, of course, connected, because the wreath-like shape of the poem cycle and its very title, alluding both to a wreath and to a crown, reminds most readers of the Catholic rosary devotion, bringing us full circle to the denominational considerations discussed above.

In my own approach to *La Corona*, I would like to offer a new way of reading the sonnet cycle as an appeal to the memory. In this meditative reading, the seven sonnets become seven *loci*, seven memory places to be populated with *imagines agentes*, or active images. The *imagines* derive their life force from a set of paradoxes rooted in an essential paradox: the finite and human comprehending<sup>490</sup> the infinite and the divine. The paradox is physically or visually represented when the seven *loci* making up the cycle are linked together to form a crown, a circle whose end, paradoxically, is also its beginning.<sup>491</sup> The seven *loci* linked together in turn become a striking image of a crown with profound scriptural implications that have hitherto gone unnoticed because of the strong, and of course appropriate, emphasis on the cycle’s connection to the circlet of beads that is the physical rosary. In the end, Donne crafts a memorable meditative exercise.

Although Donne’s sermons have come under scrutiny from the point of view of mnemotechnic, no scholar has, to the best of my knowledge, addressed the art of memory in Donne’s lyrical works. Cleanth Brooks came close in his famous essay entitled “The Language of Paradox,” in which he recognizes that in “The Canonization” “the poet has actually before our eyes built within the song the ‘pretty room’ with which

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<sup>490</sup> Both in the sense of ‘containing’ and of ‘understanding.’

<sup>491</sup> Cf. also Christ’s words in Revelation 22.13, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

he says the lovers can be content. The poem itself is the well-wrought urn which can hold the lovers' ashes and which will not suffer in comparison with the prince's 'half-acre tomb'" (Brooks 200). In a 1622 sermon, Donne uses the words 'room' and 'straine,' the latter being another word for 'stanza,' interchangeably, thereby reinforcing the impression that he thinks of poems as mental spaces of the mind: "*For the Lord that sees them in secret, shall reward them openly, with peace in their owne States, and Honour in their owne Chronicles, as here, for assisting his cause, hee gave the Princes of Issachar a roome, a straine in Deborah and Barakes song*" (IV, 188).<sup>492</sup> *La Corona* is a series of seven rooms which open unto one another, with the seventh room opening back onto the first. Michael R. G. Spiller provides an almost mathematical description of these "pretty rooms":

The 'proportioned mental space' which the sonneteers so consistently chose to inhabit emerges, right at the start, as the familiar fourteen-line sonnet, with eleven syllables (or ten, depending on the vernacular) to a line, dividing into eight and six, and using in the octave two rhymes arranged either ABAB ABAB or ABBA ABBA; and two or three rhymes rhyming CDCDCD or CDECDE. (Spiller 2-3)

In a later passage, Spiller reflects on how the sonnet, a strictly prescribed form,<sup>493</sup> has enjoyed such longevity in European literature from its birth in Sicily around 1230 until our present day, and why, thanks to its unique extension and proportions, it can serve as an apt vessel to a poet's thoughts: "The sonnet extends to fourteen lines, providing 140-54 syllables in all. This seems to be rather more, in most modern European vernaculars, than one requires for the simple expression of a feeling or state of mind, but rather less than one would like for a full discussion of that state of mind" (4).<sup>494</sup> This observation fits hauntingly well with the Ad Herennian admonition to create

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<sup>492</sup> *A Sermon upon the XX. verse of the V. Chapter of the Booke of Judges. Preached at the Crosse the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, 1622. Judges 5.20., 11.*

<sup>493</sup> "A prescribed form, or *closed form* as it is sometimes called, is one whose duration and shape are determined before the poet begins to write . . . Identity is formal, not thematic, as it is in tragedy or ode" (Spiller 2).

<sup>494</sup> The reflections continue with a structural analysis of the Italian sonnet (consisting of an *octave* and a *sestet*), the form Donne opted for in his own appropriation of the genre. It would seem that the very structure of the sonnet forces the poet to move forward and make his point. Cf. "It is certainly too short

rooms of moderate size, not too dark nor too brightly lit and at no more than thirty feet from one another.<sup>495</sup> As Donne did not invent the sonnet form, naturally he cannot take credit for its unique dimensions. What is noteworthy is his conscious choice to conceive of his meditative sequence as an interconnected sonnet cycle.

Donne's sonnet cycle also follows further Ad Herennian advice to create *loci* in a fixed order and in a manner open both to backward and to forward movement.<sup>496</sup> The correspondence between the last line of each sonnet and the first line of the next affixes the order of the sequence, even as it facilitates meditation and the finding of connections in both directions. Donne's description of the sonnet cycle as "[w]eaved in my low devout melancholy" sets a brooding, lonely tone that echoes the Ad Herennian call for solitude during the acquisition of memory places<sup>497</sup> and the devotional (i.e., "*devout melancholy*") attitude of the entire cycle reinforces St. Thomas' idea of 'solicitude' as vital to memorability.<sup>498</sup> In his devotional soli(c)itude, Donne has created for himself and for his readership a set of seven moderately sized, evenly spaced mental rooms, each opening unto the next and the last leading back to the first. He has fitted out a "[g]allery of the soul hang'd with . . . lively pictures [i.e., *imagines agentes*] of the goodness and mercies of thy God,"<sup>499</sup> pictures meant to serve as an unending source of devotion.

Passing from one sonnet to the next, Donne explicitly draws the reader's attention to the "lively pictures" with expression such as "Lo, faithful Virgin, [Christ] yields himself to lie/ In prison, in thy womb" ("Annunciation" ll. 5-6), "See'st thou, my soul, with thy faith's eyes, how he . . ." ("Nativity" l. 9), "lo / It suddenly speaks wonders" ("Temple" ll. 5-6)" and "Lo, where condemned he / Bears his own cross, with

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for narration: a sonnet can present a narrated event, but it must be highly compressed if anything at all is to be said about it. The proportionality of the sonnet, eight parts to six, works against any kind of simple repetition of an initial point or emotion, since the second part is structurally different from the first, and almost compels some kind of development or analysis" (Spiller 4).

<sup>495</sup> Cf. section II.3.3. above and *Ad Herennium* III.xix.

<sup>496</sup> Cf. *Ad Herennium* III.xviii.

<sup>497</sup> Cf. *Ad Herennium* III.xix.

<sup>498</sup> Cf. Section II.2.5. above and ST IIaIIae.49.1.

<sup>499</sup> Cf. Section III.1. above and *A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany, at Lincolns-Inn, April 18. 1619. Ecclesiast. 12.1., 3.*

pain . . .” (“Crucifying” ll. 9-10). He describes each scene in the present tense, as if it were being played out in the now for the devoted onlooker.<sup>500</sup>

The scenes presented in the six latter sonnets fit the Ad Herennian advice for striking images to the letter. They are of “exceptional beauty,” “not many or vague” and, most importantly, “doing something.” The “crowns or purple cloaks” the pagan orator proposes cannot help but remind the Christian reader of the crown of thorns and robe ‘adorning’ Christ before the crucifixion,<sup>501</sup> just as the proposition to disfigure [figures in our minds...] by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint” (*Ad Herennium* III.xxii.) recalls Christ’s ‘disfigurement’ in the course of his sufferings.<sup>502</sup> Interestingly, two of the four alternative dates for the composition of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* are decades after the death of Christ, namely AD 50 and AD 60. I do not wish to belabor what is surely an imaginative coincidence, yet the Ad Herennian author’s selection of a crown, a purple cloak, blood and mud is achingly poignant to the Christian reader.<sup>503</sup>

The lively—or living—images with which Donne furnishes the seven mental spaces derive their life from the tension inherent in paradox. A paradox may be defined as “an anomalous juxtaposition of incongruous ideas for the sake of striking exposition or unexpected insight” (“Paradox”). In other words, a paradox produces a spark of understanding. Let us enter the seven “pretty rooms” to witness the living scenes played out in each.

## V.2. The Seven Rooms

### V.2.1. “Annunciation”

In “Annunciation,”<sup>504</sup> the central image is of an immense God lying in a tiny human womb. The poet greets the Virgin Mary with a series of elaborate paradox-praises. In a beautiful conflation of space and time, Christ is “all, which always is all everywhere.”

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<sup>500</sup> Cf. Section IV.3. above, especially the discussion of the four-dimensional emblematic scenes in the House of the Interpreter.

<sup>501</sup> Cf. *La Corona* “Sonnet I,” l. 7.

<sup>502</sup> Cf. “Crucifying,” especially ll. 9-11.

<sup>503</sup> Cf. “And they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand” (Matt. 27.28-29).

<sup>504</sup> Cf. Luke 1.26-38

‘Always’ and ‘everywhere’ are words indicating God’s total immanence, his permeating presence in our world of time and space. This “immensity,” however, chooses the “prison” of Mary’s womb, where he is “[shut] in little room.” The beauty of the paradox is heightened by the awareness that the word ‘stanza,’ in Italian, simply means ‘room.’ This sonnet, therefore, is no more than a small, sounding chamber containing, like Mary’s womb, the eternal Word. Christ “cannot sin, and yet all sins must bear, / . . . cannot die, yet cannot choose but die,” the poet quibbles. These are compound paradoxes. The very word ‘cannot,’ when spoken in relation to Christ, is a paradox in light of his omnipotence as God. Furthermore, ‘cannot’ and ‘must’ are at odds with one another. God must violate his own sinless, immortal nature to be able to save man, and the entire scheme depends on the “faithful Virgin” on whom the sonnet hinges, both poetically and theologically. “Salvation to all that *will* is nigh,” (italics mine) thus becomes an insistence on man’s free will in general and on the necessity of the Virgin Mary’s *fiat*, “let it be done,” specifically. The prison in which Christ has deigned to lie is etymologically a place of ‘seizing,’ or ‘taking.’<sup>505</sup> Recalling Sir Walter Raleigh’s words “Our mothers wombes the tyring houses be / Where we are drest for this short Comedy” (ll. 3-4)<sup>506</sup> we may conceive of Mary’s womb as a unique wardrobe where Christ’s divine nature is clad in human flesh.

The paradox of the sestet in turn hinges on two definitions of the word ‘conceive,’ which means both ‘to become pregnant’ or ‘to take into one’s body,’ and ‘to imagine or form a conception,’ ‘to take into one’s mind.’ Christ, therefore, conceived of the Virgin Mary before she conceived him, before she was even alive to conceive of conceiving him. As such, the Virgin is become “[her] maker’s maker, and [her] father’s mother.” Although lying in such a womb is “well-beloved imprisonment,” humanity is still more dearly beloved, and so the time is nigh for Christ “into our world to come.”

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<sup>505</sup> The Latin word *prehendere*, from which we have *prehensio*, prison, means ‘to seize,’ ‘to grab’ (“Prison”).

<sup>506</sup> Cf. his poem “What is our Life?”

### V.2.2. “Nativity”

The third sonnet, “Nativity,”<sup>507</sup> takes as its central image once again an infinite God being lodged in a finite space, his “well-beloved imprisonment.” The octave continues in the vein of praise still addressed to the Virgin Mary. It is God’s pleasure to leave his mother’s womb and come into the world, after making “himself to his intent / Weak enough,” human enough, frail enough for “death’s force [to] try.” An inn is usually conceived of as temporary quarters for one traveling through, yet its Old Norse predecessor, *inni* means a dwelling, a place of some permanence (“Inn”). Christ’s presence in the world is both temporary and permanent. In human shape, he is simply traveling through, while in his divine reality, he was, is and will be with us always. By the twelfth century, the word ‘stall’ meant not only a narrow place for keeping and feeding animals, but a “seat in the chancel of a church” as well (“Stall”). The divine child lies both in a humble stable among dumb animals and in the chancel of the church, among ecclesiastical dignitaries, both in the midst of sheep and among the shepherds of God’s flock. According to the Gospel of Matthew, “Stars, and wisemen” do indeed travel “from the orient,” yet their role is one of catalysis rather than prevention. It is only after the wise men visit Herod and inquire of him the whereabouts of the small king that Herod’s jealous rage is whipped into a frenzy.<sup>508</sup> Instead, it is the angel of the Lord appearing both to the wise men and to Joseph who maps out the routes of escape leading to lands outside the scope of Herod’s “general doom.”<sup>509</sup> Archaic meanings of the word ‘prevent,’ such as ‘to be in readiness for’ or simply, ‘to go or arrive before,’ better describe the role of stars and wisemen in the nativity.

The ensuing sestet is addressed to poet’s own soul, admonishing it to look upon the image just described with “faith’s eyes,” an internal vision capable of encompassing the paradox “how he / Which fills all place, yet none holds him / doth lie [in the manger].” “Kiss him,” Donne urges his soul, knowing full well that the only

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<sup>507</sup> Cf. Matthew 1.25-2.23, Luke 2.1-20.

<sup>508</sup> Cf. Matthew 2.3 “When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”

<sup>509</sup> Cf. Matthew 2.12-13

documented kiss Christ ever received was at the lips of Judas, his betrayer.<sup>510</sup> This is to be a kiss of faith, however, as the soul will then proceed to follow Christ into Egypt, the land *Mitzrayim* in Hebrew, related both to the word *tzar*, for narrow and *tzarot*, sorrows, straits, “with his kind mother, who partakes [of] woe.” The Holy Family’s flight into Egypt, the search for freedom and safety in a land associated with bondage and suffering, is a paradox only understood in the light of faith in God and his providence.

### V.2.3. “Temple”

Joseph, as the head of the Holy Family, is the addressee in the fourth sonnet, “Temple,”<sup>511</sup> the central image of which is a “shallow seeming child” arguing with the “Doctors.” The sonnet begins with a call to Joseph to turn back and see “[w]ith [Christ’s] kind mother who partakes [his] woe.” Joseph’s is the woe of immense responsibility and fear of what is to come. Lot’s wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt; Mary and Joseph turn back and are petrified to see “where [their] child doth sit,” discoursing with grave divines. In a small-scale anti-Pentecost, the child sits “Blowing, yea blowing out those sparks of wit, / Which himself on the Doctors did bestow.”<sup>512</sup> Jesus, the eternal Word of God “but lately could not speak,” as an infant, from the Latin *infans*, or ‘without a voice,’ he lay speechless upon his encounter with the world, but in the temple, he is found discoursing with the most learned men of his age. Christ’s shallowness is only skin-deep. The Old English word for shallow, *sceald*, stems from the Greek word *skeletos*, or ‘dried up,’ the source of our own Modern English skeleton (“Shallow”) but Christ is only shallow-seeming. He is the Father’s word made *flesh*, and as such, he “deeply know[s]” the human condition.

In the first two lines of the sestet, Donne insists on Christ’s dual nature, both human and divine. Christ wrought “miracles exceeding power of man” not because he was purely divine, nor because “time had mellowed him to this ripeness.” Donne’s somewhat homely explanation would simply imply that those who have “a long task” ahead of them had better “with the sun . . . begin [their] business,” i.e., start on their as

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<sup>510</sup> Cf. Matthew 26.49

<sup>511</sup> Cf. Luke 2.41-51.

<sup>512</sup> Luke 2.46-47

early as possible. Although Christ's first documented miracle was performed at the Wedding at Cana, and even then he felt his mother had imposed upon him, Donne insists on the miraculous nature of his encounter with the doctors in the temple, the only documented incident from Christ's childhood. The Son must begin "his [and his Father's] business, / . . . in his age's morning," "with the sun," just as Christians are admonished to go about their own tasks with the companionship of the Son.

#### V.2.4. "Crucifying"

"Crucifying"<sup>513</sup> takes as its central image Christ being nailed onto the cross. The sonnet identifies Christ's miracles as the cause of his death. "All that heard [Christ in the temple] were astonished at his understanding and answers,"<sup>514</sup> but his "miracles exceeding power of man / . . . faith in some, envy in some begat." It is no longer clear to whom Donne's lines are addressed, at least not until the twelfth line, where the cry to Christ begins "Now thou art lifted up . . ." "Weak spirits" ran to him in admiration, the "ambitious [in] hate," but the latter, "the worst are most, they will and can / . . . and do" crucify the Lord. These short monosyllabic words 'will,' 'can,' 'do,' onomatopoeically recall the sound of nails being driven into Christ's hands and feet, even as they highlight the role of man's free will and of his God-given power in the death of the Savior. The central paradox of the fifth sonnet is the scandal of the cross, the triumph of the finite and the imperfect over immaculate infinity. Although 'immaculate' is an epithet traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary, here Donne uses it to designate Christ, the perfect sacrifice. God created Fate, both the word and its signified, yet he is assigned the ignominious fate of death on a cross.

Man attempts to measure "self-life's infinity to a span, / Nay to an inch," without success. This line and a half is especially rich in meaning depending on which connotation of the word 'span' we alight upon. Man initially narrowed everlasting life down to a life-span, four score years or so, when he sinned and was exiled from Paradise. That narrower of life-spans was the first Adam, while the rest of mankind

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<sup>513</sup> Cf. Matthew 27.33-50, Mark 15.24-39, Luke 23.33-46, John 19.18-30.

<sup>514</sup> Cf. Luke 2.47



labored on to narrow the second Adam's, Christ's, infinite life down to a single life span, "[n]ay, to an inch," to thirty-three short years. A span, if taken to be a hand's breadth from outstretched thumb to little finger, is approximately nine inches long and once served as a unit of measurement ("Span"). The word here recalls Christ's own hand stretched out and readied for the nail. Any attempt to measure infinity in spans and inches is doomed to fail, for it threatens to impose human terms on a divine gift. Christ's body, laid out on the cross, seemed laid there to be precisely measured and studied,<sup>515</sup> as on a dissecting table of sorts. But the divine principle eluded the masses. Christ "[b]ears his own cross" up Golgotha, where the cross, in turn, will bear him. Borne by the cross, Christ will then bear all the crosses of mankind, which, heaped upon a single man, cannot but crush.

In the last three lines, Donne speaks to Christ with the faith of the Good Thief, trusting that Christ, "lifted up" onto the cross, will in turn, be lifted into heaven, where the poet, too, wishes to be pulled, pushed, drawn, whisked away on a chariot of fire.<sup>516</sup> Of the Christ who "such liberal dole" on the cross: 1) dole as a portion, a generous destiny, 2) dole as food and drink, the gift of his body and blood and 3) dolor, grief and sorrow to his mother, his faithful followers and the heart of every man of goodwill, the poet requires but "one drop of . . . blood" to "[m]oist . . . [his] dry soul." This act of moistening, recalling Christ's words on the cross<sup>517</sup> and the "strong sober thirst" of the first sonnet, is a condition for the next sonnet, in which 'moist' no longer figures as a verb, but an adjective.

### V.2.5. "Resurrection"

"Resurrection"<sup>518</sup> takes as its central image a soul both flinty and fleshly. "Moist with one drop of [Christ's] blood," the poet's soul will enjoy freedom "from being starved, hard, or foul." At the present, the poet's soul is paradoxically both flinty, stony,

<sup>515</sup> Cf. for example: "Whilst my physicians by their love are grown / Cosmographers, and I their map, who lie / Flat on this bed" (ll. 6-8) from "Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness."

<sup>516</sup> Cf. "Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art, / And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart" (ll. 13-14) from "Holy Sonnet I."

<sup>517</sup> Cf. "I thirst" (John 19.28).

<sup>518</sup> Interestingly, in the sonnet entitled "Resurrection," Donne does not describe the resurrection event but rather makes a profound personal plea to Christ for his own successful resurrection.

impenetrable to God's voice, and fleshly, disposed towards the things of this world. The poet's condition is one of confusion rather than perdition. He rejects what he should embrace and embraces what he should scorn. Hardness of heart, when directed towards those things keeping the Christian from faith, is a desirable quality, as is pliant, yielding acceptance of the words of God. With a single drop of Christ's blood, the poet's soul will be freed from its ambiguous, indisposed state, and "life, by this death abled, shall control / Death, whom [Christ's] death slew." "Death, thou shalt die," Donne writes some time later in his most famous Holy Sonnet.<sup>519</sup> Christ's death, the death of life, has paradoxically brought about the death of death and the possibility of unlimited life.

This single, potent drop of blood was Doctor Faustus' last despairing wish.<sup>520</sup> Empowered with Christ's drop of blood, his name registered in the "little book" of life, Donne no longer fears "first or last death," death of the body, or damnation, death of the soul. Death, no longer a permanent state, becomes a transformative process by which the body is made "of which" and "for which" it existed, converted to dust, and further fitted for immortality. In the words of Saint Paul, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."<sup>521</sup> The body can "by [no] other means be glorified." The sonnet ends on a note of prayer. In that curious state of sleeping even as he is aware that he is sleeping, the poet asks that he may be "waked from both . . . sin's sleep, and death's," that his eyes and ears may be open only to what is needful while yet in this life, and his body raised eternally in the next. He prays that he may pray more at an auspicious time, and "salute the last and everlasting day."

### V.2.6. "Ascension"

"Ascension" centers around the apocalyptic image of Christ as a ram rising above the dark clouds and battering heaven. The poet becomes a kind of trumpet to announce

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<sup>519</sup> Cf. "Holy Sonnet X," l. 14.

<sup>520</sup> Cf. "See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament! / One drop of blood will save me. O my Christ!" (*Doctor Faustus*, V.2.153-154).

<sup>521</sup> 1 Corinthians 15.50, 53

Christ's victory to the people.<sup>522</sup> "Salute the last and everlasting day," is the beginning of a communal call to praise, Donne's "Behold the bridegroom" cry. The octave is steeped in the language of the Book of Revelations, offering comfort to those "whose just tears, or tribulation / Have purely washed, or burnt [their] drossy clay," and presents a triumphal image of Christ, "sun, and son," who "lightens the dark clouds" of despair and of the Father's wrath as "first he, and he first enters the way." Elijah the prophet was assumed into heaven while yet alive, Lazarus died and was raised to continue his earthly life, but Christ is the first to have died and risen of his own power into eternal life in order to open the way for those who will follow.<sup>523</sup>

Donne's prayer to "the strong ram ...[and]...mild lamb" makes of the sonnet a theologically informed but passionate private prayer. The visions of Christ both as the primary male sheep in a flock and a battering ram making assault on the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem are deeply Biblical. What is more, those familiar with shepherding will know that sheep have an unmitigated instinct to follow the lead ram, whether he is meandering along green pastures and still waters or leaping headlong into a gorge. The "mild lamb" of the tenth line is a reference to Christ as a sacrificial victim, the Lamb of God, a poor, despised creature who bled to death and marked the narrow path out of the labyrinthine meshes of sin. Christ as a "bright torch" hearkens back to the familiar pun on "sun, and son" and, more anciently, to the Book of Revelations, in which the Lamb is the light of the city of God.<sup>524</sup>

The final paradox of the sonnet, the image of Christ "[quenching his] own just wrath" with his blood, is subtly woven into the paradox of the "knotty Trinity,"<sup>525</sup> the perfect union of three distinct persons. The entire Holy Trinity is present in the past three lines of the sonnet: the wrath is the Father's, the blood is the Son's, and poetic inspiration is of the Holy Spirit. And, if Donne's "Muse did" rise to the occasion, a *crow* will surely alight on a most deserving head.

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<sup>522</sup> Cf. the lovely couplet in Donne's poem "Of the Progress of the Soul": "Thou art the proclamation; and I am / The trumpet, at whose voice the people came" (ll. 527-28).

<sup>523</sup> "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept ...Christ the firstfruits; afterward, they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor.15.20, 23).

<sup>524</sup> Cf. Revelation 21.23

<sup>525</sup> Cf. "Holy Sonnet XVI," l. 3.

### V.3. *Loci as Imagines*

In the end, the seven rooms which open onto one another and house the *imagines agentes* discussed above, themselves form an image—seared into the memory—of a crown. The word ‘crown’ occurs a full seven times in the sonnet cycle, six times in the first sonnet, whose relationship to the entire cycle is like that of the head to the body. The connection to the rosary prayer has been briefly explored above, but Donne, a deeply Biblical thinker, may have had other crowns in mind, as the different crowns mentioned in the first sonnet attest.

A search of the Bible in the original languages yields a treasury of results, all of which are translated as ‘crown’ in the King James Bible. I have discovered four distinct and relevant Hebrew words all translated as crown: קֹדֶקֶד<sup>526</sup> וַיִּרְגַּל<sup>527</sup> זָרָהּ or זָרָהּ<sup>528</sup> and כֶּתֶר.<sup>529</sup> They mean ‘head,’ ‘wreath,’ ‘diadem,’ ‘(woven) wreath’ and ‘circlet’

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<sup>526</sup> *Kodkod* is used exclusively to denote the head, or the crown (top) of the head. It is related to words like *kodem*, meaning first of all, *kadima*, or ahead, and *lakod*, the verb for to bow. The earliest use is in Genesis 49:26, where a dying Jacob proclaims to Joseph that “the blessing of [his] father . . . shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.” There are six additional uses in the Old Testament, all of which denote quite simply the crown of someone’s head, from Absalom’s in 2 Samuel 14.25, where David’s rebellious son is described as without a blemish from the tip of his toes to the crown of his head, to Job 2.7, where the unfortunate victim of Satan’s bet with God is covered with sores from his lower extremities to his *kodkod*.

<sup>527</sup> *Zer*, meaning simply a wreath or bouquet, and its variant, *nezer*, signifying diadem, are translated as crown thirteen times in the King James Old Testament. In Exodus, a *zer zahav* or *nezer zahav* (crown of gold) is placed on the Ark of the Covenant, setting it apart as a container of holiness. In Leviticus, Aaron, the high priest wears both a *nezer hakodesh*, a mitre of sorts as a high priest, and the *nezer shemen mishchat Adonay*, a crown of anointing, a crown of holy oil worn by the anointed priest or *mashiach* (cf. our word Messiah) of God. A *nezer*, however, does not only signify holiness and spiritual power, but worldly might as well, when worn by various kings of the earth, including Saul in 2 Samuel 1.10, and other royal leaders in the Book of Kings, the Second Book of Chronicles and Nahum. In the Book of Psalms and Proverbs, *nezer* is a crown that can flourish, be cast off or wither, somewhat closer to the organic idea of a wreath, or Donne’s “vile crown of frail bays.”

<sup>528</sup> *Ateret* and *atarah*, both noun reflexes of the verb *’ater*, or ‘to weave,’ occur most often in two-word compounds such as *’ateret tif’eret* or *’ateret tzvi* (crown of glory), *’ateret ge’ut* (crown of pride), *’ateret paz* or *’ateret zahav* (crown of gold), and refer not to worldly power but carry symbolic meanings of honor, privilege, wisdom, blessing. When appearing in a compound with the word for kingship, *’ateret malchut* signifies a royal crown. The most fascinating, and entirely unique, use of the word occurs in the Book of Job, where Job insists on his innocence despite the doubts of his ‘comforters,’ and says, “Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me.” Job would wish to wear God’s indictments against him as an ornament, so sure is he of suffering wrongfully. This is the only mention in the Old Testament of a crown of sufferings and false accusations, typologically haunting when considered alongside Christ’s crown of thorns.

<sup>529</sup> Finally, the word *keter*, stemming from the verb *l’chater*, to encircle, occurs only four times in the Old Testament. As a compound, *keter malchut*, it is a royal crown presented first to Queen Vashti then to Queen Esther in the Book of Esther, while in the book of Proverbs, “the prudent are crowned with knowledge, *yachitiru da’at*.” The latter image is especially beautiful when interpreted in the light of the deserving receiving the fullness of wisdom, being *encircled* with knowledge.

respectively and appear in a rich number of literal and figurative contexts, most often, but not always, as something positive, as a reward. The Greek New Testament offers two words for crown, ὁ στέφανος, primarily meaning ‘wreath,’ and τὸ διάδημα, a ‘royal crown’ or ‘diadem.’ In most contexts, *stephanos*, or ‘wreath’ is used<sup>530</sup> while the Book of Revelation, in which the word ‘crown’ appears eleven times, features a single use of *diedema*, or ‘diadem.’<sup>531</sup> The crowns of the Bible are, for the most part, wreaths, woven by hand out of an assortment of materials from flowering branches to gold. These etymologies of biblical crowns fit well with the concept of the poet as a ‘maker’ or ‘craftsman,’ and we see him in our mind’s eye, slowly turning the crown round and round. This is what we, readers, are called to do as well.

In the end, this meditative sonnet cycle appeals to the memory. Since the memory transcends time, it is able to simultaneously behold these blessed events which once took place over a period of thirty-three years, and are celebrated cyclically in the repeating feasts of the church year. Memory is the place where we encounter God, beyond words, beyond understanding.<sup>532</sup> We cannot rightly say that the poet uses the images in his seven rooms as a basis for constructing understanding. By their very nature, paradoxes cannot be properly understood, much less the divine contradictions at the heart of the Christian faith. Perhaps, as the shape of the crown suggests, these

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<sup>530</sup> The only crown mentioned in the Gospels is Christ’s crown of thorns (Matt. 27.29, Mark 15.17, John 19.2, 5) woven by the soldiers of the governor. This crown was placed on Jesus’ head, a reed in his right hand, and the soldiers went down on their knees and mockingly exclaimed, “Hail, King of the Jews!” Paul, in his Letter to the Corinthians, juxtaposes the corruptible crown, one liable to fade, wither, be cast off, to the incorruptible crown, the eternal reward of the believers. Man is crowned by God, and receives crowns of rejoicing, crowns of righteousness, and the crown of (eternal) life. These compounds appear multiple times in the Pauline Epistles. “A man is not crowned, except he strive lawfully,” explains Paul in 2 Timothy 2:5, but if he strive lawfully and faithfully, “he shall receive the crown of life” (James 1.12), “the crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5.4). The word crown appears eleven times in the Book of Revelations, which is the book to crown the New Testament, and details the victory of the King of Kings. There are multiple crowns in this book, and they are pitted against one another signifying the apocalyptic battle for dominion over Heaven and Earth. The crowns are worn by elders and the righteous (these they cast before the throne of God in adoration in Revelation 4.10), by Jesus Christ (the white rider, the Son of Man in Revelation 6.2 and 14.14), by the woman clothed with the sun and wearing a crown of twelve stars (traditionally interpreted as the Virgin Mary, in Revelation 12.1), and by evil forces threatening Christ’s reign (locusts in 9.7, the dragon in 12.3, and the beast in 13.1).

<sup>531</sup> *Diadema* appears in Revelation 19.12, a passage describing the victorious Christ wearing multiple crowns, “His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, *diademata polla*; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but himself.”

<sup>532</sup> Cf. “The sonnet is still the place where Desire confronts its Other, and in a small room some fixity is given to the restlessness of being” (Spiller 197).

contradictions will be dissolved in eternity. For the moment, we are simply called to gaze upon the crown and meditate on all that is contained therein. The constant turning of the crown produces impulses of prayer and praise. And perhaps a peace that surpasses understanding. Or the will to begin all over again.

## VI. Conclusion

I have chosen for my topic the fundamental principle of memory, both as presented in theory and as put into practice throughout Donne's sermonic oeuvre. As we have seen, the potent concept of memory is capacious enough to unite two of the most robust areas of scholarship on Donne's sermons: his theory of mind, ensconced within philosophical/theological criticism of the sermons and his exuberant use of imagery, the key concern of the literary approach. As my dissertation draws to a close, I wish once again to lay out and bind together the most important strands of our discussion.

The Introduction began with broad considerations of the importance of the sermon to seventeenth-century English culture and continued with reflections on Donne's own exterior and interior career which brought him, by the year 1615, to the threshold of a brilliant ecclesiastical career eminently suited to his ambitious temperament and poetic sensibilities. Practical considerations of Donne's preaching venues and preparation style were followed by a short evaluation of his preaching prowess. In his description of Donne's profoundly moving preaching style, Izaak Walton highlighted his ability to "*pictur[e]* vice so as to make it ugly to those that practised it; and a virtue so, as to make it be beloved even by those that lov'd it not" (24; emphasis added), thereby setting the scene for later discussions of Donne's powerful imagery. Next, an overview of the publication history of the sermons established the groundwork necessary to discuss the twentieth-century critical response to this crucial and challenging oeuvre. This critical response was depicted in three bold brushstrokes corresponding to theological/philosophical, literary, and historical approaches, and further detailed as I discussed the critical evaluations of Donne's appeal to memory spanning approximately fifty years from Robert L. Hickey to Noralyn Masselink, and presented my own position. My argument has been that memory is central to Donne's preaching enterprise, both as the bedrock of his psychology and as a wellspring of his vivid imagery.

In chapter II, I gave patient consideration to the three memory traditions informing Donne's own appeal to memory. Within the Augustinian tradition, I began with salient biographical parallels between St. Augustine and Donne, Izaak Walton's

second St. Augustine, and continued with a brief juxtaposition of Augustine's concept of memory with common definitions of the same. In my reading of the *Confessions*, I presented the various layers of memory as envisioned by Augustine, ever moving inward and upward from the image-based sensible memory, imageless intellectual memory to the mind as memory, and (carefully) to the memory as the dwelling place of God. It was a challenge to bring his all-consuming vision of memory as presented in the *Confessions* into dialogue with the painstakingly egalitarian treatment of the three faculties of the soul—memory, understanding and the will—in *De Trinitate*. The key to the successful absolution of this seeming contradiction was the realization that memory in the *Confessions* stands in for the entire soul, while memory in *De Trinitate* refers only to the higher levels of *memoria sui* and *memoria Dei* and is truly presented as one of three coeval faculties. The Thomistic tradition, due to the rigorous, textbook-like organization of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* and commentary on Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia* proved easier to separate into its respective strands. In the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas reflects on memory as a part of his theory of mind and of his epistemology (within the Treatise on Man) and as a part of his ethics (within the Treatise on Prudence and Justice). In his commentary on Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia* the concept of 'habit' links the psychological, epistemological, ethical and even rhetorical aspects of memory. Habit, both as a natural and as a trainable pattern of behavior, also links the concepts of dialectical and rhetorical memory. After placing the *ars memoriae* tradition within the broader framework of Antique rhetoric, I examined the architectural mnemonic as taught in three classics of Latin oratory: the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, separating their admonitions into rules on places and rules on images, and presenting the three perspectives in chronological order. Tracing the fate of *ars memoriae* into the Renaissance and reflecting on the form in which it may have reached Donne, I closed my theoretical chapter with a syncretic view of the Augustinian, Thomistic and rhetorical memory traditions. Concluding that Augustine and Aquinas were clearly working in the dialectical memory tradition and the three Roman orators in the rhetorical, I discovered that



natural and artificial are not so much the opposite ends of a spectrum as root and flower, or reality and its image in the mirror of humanity. The assumptions underlying the art of memory—that human beings deeply depend on the visual and conceive of the memory as a ‘place’ inhabited by ‘images’ of all that is accessible to the mind—have their source in the natural workings of the human mind.

Chapter III offered an analysis of Donne’s own theology of memory as a crossroads of Augustinian and Thomistic assumptions. In the analysis of what I have dubbed his six ‘memory sermons,’ I found a markedly Augustinian influence. Donne’s Trinitarian presentation of the human soul, filtered for him through the work of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, was clearly derived from the latter books of *De Trinitate*, but I also traced the influence of the *Confessions*, whose eloquent Book X, devoted to memory, most likely inspired Donne’s special commitment to and praise of this faculty. An examination of another cluster of sermon passages thematizing memory brought insight into the Thomistic aspect of Donne’s theology of memory, primarily concerning his recognition that sense-derived *phantasmata* are central not only to a functional memory, but also to the construction of understanding, and that in lieu of direct divine illumination, the human memory keeps psychosomatic impressions of external reality and works with them, and only them, to construct understanding. This discussion, followed by a brief reflection on sin in the memory and the role of memory in repentance, set the stage for the chapter IV, an extended examination of Donne’s appropriation for pious purposes of the secular craft of *ars memoriae*.

Chapter IV, divided into three main sections, first treated of Donne’s *loci* or mental spaces. While the Antique rhetorical handbooks I examined spoke of *loci* exclusively as an interior, mental grid available only to the orator, Donne unabashedly and purposefully publicized his own spaces. With this step, he initiated his audience into a system of visualizing sermon content by taking recourse not only to *loci* derived from the world of architecture, but to spatial metaphors as varied as clocks and fruit-bearing trees, letters of the alphabet and archipelagos of islands, all drawn from the visible world. His fundamental commitment to the ‘edification’ of his auditory’s

memory, both in the architectural and in the educational sense, is evidenced by the care with which he announces his mental spaces made public in the *divisio* and the faithfulness with which he returns to them throughout the sermon. In my exploration of Donne's *imagines agentes*, I selected a novel classification scheme in which the links of the Great Chain of Being became, metaphorically speaking, my own memory places. This arrangement enabled me to both to present the full variety of Donne's sense-based imagery without ambiguity or overlap and to arrive at the conclusion that for his metaphors, Donne enlisted vehicles primarily from the microcosm of man: the human body, domestic life, vocations, and the two large bodies of church and state.<sup>533</sup> Through the universality of his imagery covering the entire visible cosmos, Donne made sure his auditory remembered and learned of God wherever they turned. A brief examination of a handful of images which may be interpreted as emblems connects Donne's imagery to the emblem tradition and the emblem to the art of memory to which, as Yates has suggested, it so clearly belongs. The chapter ends with a reflection on Donne's sermons as psychosomatic journeys involving both body and soul in a sensation of moving towards God.

In chapter V, I myself appropriated Donne's sacred *ars memoriae* as a way of reading his lesser-known sonnet cycle *La Corona*. Interpreting the sonnets themselves as proportioned mental spaces, I provided a meditative analysis of the imagery of each poem. The power of these images is rooted in paradoxes eminently memorable because they simultaneously compare holy persons and events both to what they are most like and to what they are not at all like. In the end, the *loci* of the sonnet cycle connect to form a crown, whose shape is both the embodiment of paradox, in that its end is its beginning, and the resolution of that paradox, as all paradoxes are dissolved in eternity.

"The art of *salvation*, is but the art of *memory*," Donne wrote in a 1618 sermon on Psalms 38:3 preached at Lincoln's Inn. The conceit, though challengingly simple, no longer sounds flippant. It is a powerful link between dialectical and

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<sup>533</sup> We may note that Donne's imagery, which has often been termed biblical, was biblical not only by virtue of actual metaphors derived from the Bible, but more deeply so because, like imagery in the Bible, it dealt in the everyday and the intimately familiar.

rhetorical memory, between theological and literary considerations of Donne's sermons, between theory and practice. Augustine provides the Trinitarian framework and celebrates the mysterious power of memory, Aquinas adds his insight that all contents of the memory are image-based, and in Donne's hands, a secular rhetorical technique for enhancing the orator's memory becomes a tool for the sanctification of the auditory.

God Himself, Donne would have us know, is an enthusiastic patron of the art of memory:

God is abundant in his mercies to man, as though he did but learn to give by his giving, as though he did but practise to make himself perfect in his own Art, which Art is bountiful Mercy; . . . he delights to give where he hath given, as though his former gifts were but his places of memory, and marks set upon certain men, to whom he was to give more. (VI, 350)<sup>534</sup>

Aware of God's own blessed approval of this mighty faculty of the human soul, Donne developed a syncretic appeal to memory that allowed him—a master of images—to begin to recover in his auditors the image of his Master.

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<sup>534</sup> *A Sermon Preached at St. Dunstons January 15. 1625. [1625/6] Exod. 12.30., 2.*

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