

JOHN DONNE'S DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

by

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Protestant Churches were born during the period of Reformation they have been forced to do a considerable amount of soul-searching as to what constitutes their identity. Questions about the nature of the Church, visible and invisible, have been asked throughout the centuries among the Reformed, Lutheran and Anglican heirs of the Reformation, without ever reaching a conclusive answer. Interpretations of the true Church, its characteristics and its faith and order are many and varied, even within one denomination and they have engendered bitter strife and schisms.

This was also the case with the English Reformation and the Church that was established in its consequence. As Professor Owen Chadwick points out, the English Reformation was unique in being emphatically a political revolution, and its author, King Henry VIII resisted, for a time ferociously, many of the religious consequences which accompanied the legal changes everywhere in Europe.¹ Consequently, the nature of the emerging Church was even more open for debate than elsewhere in Protestant countries. The historical developments during the reigns of Edward VI and Mary made the situation even more confused. Thus, when Elizabeth succeeded her sister to the throne and the moderate Matthew Parker was installed as the Archbishop of Canterbury, nobody really knew how the Church of England was to develop. There were many conflicting opinions. Catholicism still had many staunch supporters, whereas the returning protestant exiles of Mary's reign wanted to press the Reformation further, according to the example of Geneva. It is significant

1. Chadwick, The Reformation. The Pelican History of the Church. Aylesbury 1968, p.97.

that Elizabeth, at the beginning of her reign, did not concentrate on doctrine, but on worship and discipline. Her aim was to consolidate a unified national Church, and to secure this aim she recovered from Parliament the Royal Supremacy and enforced the new Prayer-book. Only later, in 1563, was the work resumed on revising the 42 Articles of 1553, and the 39 Articles, as they now stand, saw daylight in 1571. Here, in Article XIX the Church was defined as "a congregation of Faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." Article XXXIV stated that "It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like" thus expressing a tolerant attitude, but taking a stand against those who were unwilling to submit to the ceremonies of the Church. Finally, Article XXXVII expressed the idea of the Church being subject to the Monarch's authority in certain matters. The general tone of the 39 Articles was conservative and conciliatory, and it did not satisfy the more radical wing of Protestants. Hence a Puritan front was soon forming, led by several noted theologians, especially by Thomas Cartwright, Professor of Divinity at Lady Margaret's College at Cambridge. The Episcopal wing of the Church also rallied to support their position, and as their most notable leader emerged Richard Hooker, author of the book Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. In the ecclesiastical battle that followed it became painfully obvious that Elizabeth had not succeeded in creating a unified national Church.

It is against this background that we see John Donne emerging from history. In his own person he depicted his age in many ways. He was the child of ardent Catholic parents, and in his earliest years he received a thorough indoctrination in his ancestors' faith. During his twenties he was converted to Anglicanism. As was the case with the English Reformation his conversion, too, can be called "a political revolution of expediency"

which was later to have genuine religious consequences.

Yet in the midst of his political conversion he was forced to give much thought to the differences between Rome and Canterbury and we know that he battled with the question of the true Church already from an early age. When later force of circumstances had confined him to seclusion and poverty, he used his time to study theology and canon law, thus paving the road that was to lead him into the orders. Although it can be argued that when Donne finally accepted orders, at a fairly advanced age, this was another political conversion, his career as a preacher became no less notable than that as a poet. His sermons were appreciated as much by the King as by the common citizens of London. There could be no doubt that the eventual fruits of his possibly political conversion were genuine. As the King's Chaplain in Ordinancy and Dean of St. Paul's he commanded a very influential position in his Church, and from what may be judged, his message was given due consideration. Only his ill health prevented his promotion to a bishopric shortly before his death.

From this background arises naturally the question: What was Donne's doctrine of the Church? How did this man, who had once in his life changed his allegiances from one Church to another and was later serving a Church deeply divided think about the Church in its essence and actions, in its faith and order? Often he is counted among the ranks of the Laudian party, but this assumption seems to be made on insufficient grounds, without the understanding of the totality of Donne's thinking. It is the purpose of this thesis to give as thorough account as possible of Donne's ecclesiology, and in doing so, to sketch the main outlines of his theological thinking and to show the place which the Church held therein. In so doing it will also be necessary to dwell at some length with Donne's personal development and the formation of his way of thinking, in order to arrive at an understanding of

him on his own terms.

In this task finding a suitable method has posed a problem. Donne was never an academic theologian, but a preacher and a poet. He did not present his message in academic treatises, but in dynamic preaching situation, creating a field of force, where the poles were the preacher, the congregation and the Holy Spirit. Donne himself was aware of this difference, and refers to it in one of his sermons in the following manner:

That's a difference between Sermons and Lectures, that a Sermon intends Exhortation principally and Edification, and a holy stirring of religious affections, and then matters of Doctrine and points of Divinity, occasionally, secondarily, as the words of the text may invite them; but Lectures intend principally Doctrinal points, and matter of Divinity, and matter of Exhortation but occasionally and as in a second place.²

This passage alone should make us to proceed with caution in applying the traditional methods of systematic theology to Donne's sermons. It is evident that the points of doctrine were always in a subordinate position in Donne's preaching and that the true gist of his message must be sought elsewhere. Another closely related danger here is that of approaching with a ready rigid frame of reference and applying excerpts of Donne's sermons to it and seeing how they correspond. As examples of this the two only treatises on Donne's theological thinking written before the 1960's, those of Mary Paton Ramsay and Itrat-Husain, may be cited.³ In her book, Miss Ramsay starts looking for similarities between Donne's sermons and the Neoplatonic elements of medieval Scholasticism. Obviously she finds plenty of these, as can be found with every theologian who makes frequent use of the Fathers, especially St. Augustine, as Donne does. From these admittedly undeniable and frequent similarities she derives the conclusion that Donne was essentially a medieval spirit and that most of his theology carries a Neoplatonic stamp. Thus she

2. The Sermons of John Donne, I-X, edited, with Introductions and Critical Apparatus, by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, Berkeley, Calif. 1953-62. Vol. VIII, p.95.

3. M. P. Ramsay, Les Doctrines médiévales chez Donne, London, 1917.
Itrat-Husain, The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne, London, 1938.

denies Donne of all originality as a theological thinker:

Donne s'est révélé ainsi comme un penseur élevé, qui prétend pourtant moins à l'originalité philosophique qu'à la vision du poète. Comme métaphysicien il a, en réalité, répété presque sans commentaires les théories de ses prédécesseurs depuis St. Augustin.⁴

Although her conclusion is correct in the sense that Donne did not develop any new points of doctrine as such, she has failed to see that the usage that Donne made of his predecessors' heritage formed a total picture that was quite unlike medieval Scholasticism.

The same faults of indiscriminate reading of Donne's sermons and coming with a pre-fabricated doctrinal frame of reference plague also Itrat-Husain's work. In his introduction he claims to "cover the whole field of (Donne's) theology in a systematic way, a method which is usually employed by theologians in the division and treatment of their subjects". He does not, however, stop to ask whether this admittedly common method is appropriate when dealing with Donne. Instead, he gleans Donne's sermons to see how Donne stands on a certain set of doctrinal points which he has derived from Anglican theology. Not surprisingly, he comes up with a Donne who is in perfect accord with Hooker and Andrewes, and a staunch supporter of high-church Anglicanism. He too has failed to ask whether similarity in certain doctrinal shibboleths does necessarily mean that the total picture of Donne's theological thinking corresponds precisely to that of the Anglican Church in the 17th century.

The great work of publishing a new edition of Donne's sermons in the 1950's and 60's, by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, brought a new impetus on the study of Donne's theology, especially in America. In these later studies of the 1960's we can see that a new appreciation of the special characteristics of Donne's thinking is forming. As an indication of this we may quote Thomas F. Merrill, in his article John Donne and the Word of God:

4. Ramsay, p.258.

As a rule, we approach the seventeenth-century sermon as we would a document. We examine its rhetorical form and flourish, we investigate its doctrinal orthodoxy, and we look for its insights into the social and intellectual milieu. The sermon, for all intents and purposes, is treated no differently than a theological treatise or a devotional handbook; we attend the composition and snub charisma. While this procedure perhaps suffices for the preaching of some Anglican divines, it certainly falls short of what is required for a comprehensive appreciation of the sermons of John Donne.⁵

Merrill goes on to show that any systematic analysis of Donne's theology must necessarily give due allowance to the fact that it is dealing with preached theology. This special character of Donne's sermons has been grasped also by Toni McNaron in her typewritten doctoral thesis John Donne's Sermons Approached as Dramatic "Dialogues of One".⁶ McNaron proceeds from the basic assumption that for Donne a sermon is always a dialogue situation. In her analysis she concentrates on the dramatic elements in Donne's sermons, such as questions, striking openings, elaborate conclusions and Donne's strong emphasis on time and place. She further emphasises that Donne attached much importance to audience participation, and rather than delivering a harangue, tried to engage his congregation in a dialogue, demanding immediate response from his hearers.

Thus, when doing the ground research for this thesis I battled with the problem of finding a suitable method for my research, I came to the following basic points: 1. I have denied myself all pre-established doctrinal frames of reference listening only to what Donne has to say. I have not tried to compare him with medieval Scholasticism, like Ramsay, or with the generally accepted body of Anglican divinity like Husain. References to common prevalent dogmatic structures have been made only when Donne's own material has so directly warranted, and I have tried consciously to avoid labeling him

5. Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 4 LXIX 1968. Helsinki 1968, p.597. This article deals with Donne's concept of the preached Word, and will be referred to in the respective chapter of this thesis. Merrill has also done research into the anthropology of Donne, the results of which can be found in his doctoral thesis The Christian Anthropology of John Donne, University of Wisconsin, 1964.

6. University of Wisconsin, 1964.

with tags derived from the history of dogma. 2. In approaching him in this manner I have observed the following guiding principles which can be derived both by Donne's own texts and by previously done research: a. Donne does not develop any new points of doctrine in his sermons. He is contented with the heritage of the Fathers and the Scholastics as seen through the eyes of Reformation, in this respect. b. He has no need of developing a novel dogmatic theology because his theology is essentially preached theology where points of doctrine come in a subordinate position. c. To Donne preaching is a dynamic event, as Merrill puts it, "an apocalyptic event that sets the doors of heaven and hell in motion".⁷ This event must be grasped as a dialogue, both between the preacher and the congregation and the Holy Spirit and the individual sinner. d. Consequently, when Donne is preaching, his main emphasis is on the immediate experience, he employs a theology of here and now. In the development of this theology lies Donne's great originality which separates him from other contemporary Anglican preachers.

To illustrate more closely what I mean, a passage of a sermon preached at St. Paul's on Christmas Day 1628.

So that here is the case, if the naturall man say, alas they are but dark notions of God which I have in the nature; if the Jew say, alas they are but remote and ambiguous things which I have of Christ in the Prophets; If the slack and historicall Christian say, alas they are but generall things, done for the whole world indifferently, and not applyed to me, which I reade in the Gospell, to this naturall man, to this Jew, to this slack Christian, we present an established Church, a Church endowed with a power, to open the wounds of Christ Jesus to every wounded soule, to spread the balme of his blood upon every bleeding heart; A Church that makes this generall Christ particular to every Christian, that makes the Saviour of the world, thy Saviour and my Saviour; that offers the originall sinner Baptisme for that; and the actuall sinner the body and blood of Christ Jesus for that; A Church that mollifies, and entenders, and shivers the presumptuous sinner with denouncing the judgements of God, and then, consolidates and establishes the diffident soule with the promises of his Gospell.⁸

7. Merrill, op. cit., p.603.

8. Donne, op. cit., vol. VIII, p.308.

On the surface, looking at the dogmatic content, this chapter would be hard to place in a definite era. It could well be taken from the writings of some early Father, or even from the Tones of Homilies, for that matter. Here Donne merely states that the Church pronounces the judgements and mercies of God in the sermon, and applies the merits of Christ to wash away the original sin and actual sins in the Sacraments. Perhaps the only sign that would give a casual reader a hint that these words were uttered by an Anglican divine, is the occurrence of the phrase "established Church", and the implied idea that an established Church is also a Church endowed with divine power. Yet an analysis of this chapter following the guiding principles given earlier will reveal much more:

In the above quoted passage Donne creates a dramatic situation. Although the Church is at the centre of the drama, it is not there as a static entity, but rather on one hand giving the framework of the events and also again emerging from the interwoven events. He introduces the active elements, the natural man, the Jew, and the slack Christian. These come forth with their objections and reservations which are met in the Church. The judgements of God are presented to each of them, to wipe away the objections and reservations, and this being accomplished, the promises of Gospel are applied to consolidate the diffident soul. Here Christ himself is at work; when we look at the way Donne alliterates with the words wounds wounded, blood .. bleeding, it is not simply for the sake of elocution, but to imply that in this event the wounded soul participates in the wounds of Christ, the bleeding heart partakes of his blood. The dramatic element, however, does not stop here on a descriptive level. We are also dealing with a dialogue, where Donne constantly involves his audience. The hypothetic natural man, Jew and slack Christian, are in fact challenges to the congregation: Do you recognize yourself in one of these? Donne sees the chain of events that

he is describing as not merely concerning but actually taking place here and now. The shattering of the presumptuous soul and establishing of a diffident soul are not meant to be things that happen to hypothetical entities in hypothetical time and space, but something that is to be applied by the individual parishioner to himself while he is hearing the words of Donne. Hence there is a constant interaction between the preacher, the congregation, and the Holy Spirit, who is the primus motor behind both of these. Hence we can also say that when Donne uttered his words, he had in his mind a Church that was not so much an established institution, but an event, where all the happenings he described took place in immediately relevant time and space.

Thus my basically systematic-analytical method in this thesis has been subjected to the essential modification that the preaching event is always taken into account as the fundamental point of view, necessary for understanding what Donne is saying. At times I have found it more fruitful to respond to Donne rather than to analyze him, to enter into a dialogue with him, in order to meet him on his own terms. Thus, in giving myself the liberty of hermeneutically interpreting his message I have tried to account for the fact that for Donne the effective communication of Christian doctrine is not a statement about the action of God, in creating, sustaining and saving the world. For him the proclamation of the Word of God, where it is efficacious, is identical to the action of God. By this I do not mean something over and above. The speaking of the preacher and the hearing of the hearer is simply participation in God's action.⁹

This should not, however, be taken as an indication that Donne was merely following the doctrine of the efficacious word as developed by Calvin.

9. Cf. Merrill saying: The traditional approach fails because it obliges us to regard the sermon as a static literary entity rather than, as Donne understood it, a dynamic, corporate event involving preacher, congregation and the Holy Spirit. For Donne, the sermon was not mere discourse, not even a sacred preparation for some ensuing sacramental encounter with the holy Presence. It was a decisive confrontation of congregation and Holy Ghost taking place in time. The sermon was a sacred instance of God's reaching out for man in this world; it was nothing less than an apocalyptic event. Merrill, op. cit.,

Although Donne's concept of preaching and the Word of God does superficially remind us of the Calvinistic doctrine of the instrumental use of the Word of God, its roots are elsewhere, and must be sought in Donne's ontology. In reading Donne's sermons one soon notices traces and hints of an ontology that is neither Scholastic-Aristotelian, nor Neoplatonic-Augustinian, but something very definitely Donne's own. Reading Donne's sermons one begins to discern that for Donne, to be is always being in relation and interaction to somebody or something. It is only a context of a pattern of interactive relationships that we can understand the meaning of Donne's message. That this sort of ontology of being in relationships is Donne's own concept and not a loan from Calvin or any other theological source, becomes evident when we notice that it does not come forth only in his theology, but also in his early love-poetry. One can trace a line of development in young Donne's amatory experience, where he changes from being an isolated, autonomous entity into being something only in relationship to the one he loves. A similar development can be later found in his searching for God, when he gradually abandons his autonomous isolation in favor of a harmonious interactive relationship. These trends will, however, be dealt with in greater detail in the first main chapter of this thesis. At this point let it suffice to say that when dealing with Donne we are dealing with a person, who had two totally different identities during his life: that of a man about town, a ladies' man, and that of a saintly divine and Dean of St. Paul's. Yet both his identities demonstrate a similar quality of experience that craves for communion and communication. This is the final viewpoint we need to convince us that, when dealing with Donne we will have to take him as an individual phenomenon and not rely too much on other earlier and contemporary theological solutions. It also convinces us that action and interaction are the two factors which furnish us the key of understanding his way of thinking and feeling, theological and otherwise. Thus,

forewarned and forearmed by the above-stated considerations I have finally been able to go ahead and try to present a picture of his thinking in general and his ecclesiology in particular.

I have begun my thesis with a chapter dealing with Donne's life and development, his works and the general character of his theology. In the first sub-chapter, Life and Development, I have tried to give the outlines of his life, giving special consideration of the development of his amorous life and his religious life. I have tried to make this as concise as possible but when we are dealing with a character as complex as Donne, a certain amount of biographical background data is necessary for proper understanding. In dealing with his amorous life and religious life, I have tried to trace their development as closely as can be done with existing material, knowing all the time that these are areas where research is always bordering dangerously close to speculation. In the second sub-chapter The Secular Works of Jack Donne I have concentrated on the trend of development in his amorous experience, as shown in the light of his love poetry. Here I try to show his pre-occupation with communication and communion, and his search for them in its different stages and its fulfillment. The third sub-chapter, The Works and Thinking of Dr. Donne, demonstrates a similar pattern of experience in his religious development, its correspondence to the pattern shown in the previous sub-chapter and also tries to give the outlines of his theology.

I have divided the actual discussion of Donne's ecclesiology in two main chapters: The Church in the World and The Church in her Actions. In the former I try to define the place that the Church held in Donne's ontological structure, its raison d'être in the creation, its position in a world where the Church of Christ had recently suffered a serious split and the rise of the national state required a re-evaluation of the old ideal of the universal Church, and its relationships with the society, and, finally,

I have outlined the function of the Church, given the above stated conditions and circumstances. The corresponding sub-chapters are: A. The Church in the Creation, B. The Church Divided, C. The Church and Social Order, and D. The Church as the Ark of Salvation.

In the latter main chapter on Donne's ecclesiology I have concentrated on describing how the Church fulfills its functions in practice. Here I have started from the basic problem facing man, to learn to see God and to know God, and the innate capacity in him for this task. From this I have proceeded to show how God has reached out for man, by speaking to him, first in the early revelation recorded in the Bible, and, later, in the preaching of the Church. Thereafter I have shown, how the relationship thus established is carefully cared for and nurtured through the Sacraments of the Church. The respective sub-chapters are: A. Man's Quest to See and Know God, B. The Written Word, C. The Spoken Word and D. The Sacraments. In the course of these considerations Donne's pre-occupation with communication and communion has provided the Leitmotiv, which serves us to demonstrate how Donne's ecclesiology forms a unified structure where the different elements join each other to form a clear and logical entity.

In this study Donne's sermons have provided me with my main source material. The edition I have used is The Sermons of John Donne I - X, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, Berkeley 1953-62. (Abbreviation S). As regards other source material, the following editions have been used: Essays in Divinity by John Donne, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson. Oxford 1952. (Abbreviation E). John Donne, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan, 1965. (Abbreviation D). The Poems of John Donne, ed. Sir Herbert Grierson. Oxford 1951. (Abbreviation Poems). Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne I-II. London 1899. (Abbreviation Letters). Biathanatos. Reproduced from the First Edition.

With a bibliographical Note by J. William Hebel. New York 1930.

(Abbreviation B). Psevdo-martyr. Wherein ovt of certaine propositions and gradations, this conclusion is euicted. That those which are of the Romane religion in this kingdome, may and ought to take the oath of allegiance. London 1610. (Abbreviation P-M).

When quoting directly from Donne's works, the source is indicated by the appropriate abbreviation together with the page number. In case other editions have been used, there is a separate mention of this in the footnote. As regards literature and criticism on Donne, I have relied mostly on Sir Geoffrey Keynes's excellent bibliography.¹⁰ Here, however, an unexpected problem has emerged. Although thousands of pages have been written on Donne and his production, most of these deal with his poetry, and even the treatises on his sermons are written mostly from a literary point of view. Hence it has been difficult to find suitable criticism for comparison with the ideas presented in this thesis. This problem has been made even more difficult by the fact that even the few works that deal with Donne's theological thought concentrate mostly on topics that are of little relevance from the viewpoint of this thesis. Thus, the reader will find that the research presented here stands to a large degree on its own, with references to previous research being scant and scattered. However, it is to be hoped, that in this manner the author has been able to open some new vistas to hitherto unexamined aspects of Donne's thinking.

10. Keynes, A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne, Dean of Saint Paul's. Fourth edition. Oxford 1973.

1. THE LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN DONNE

A. LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT

Ever since Izaak Walton first wrote his famous account on the life of John Donne,¹ numerous attempts have been made to describe his colourful drama and its main actor, Donne himself. Years of diligent scholarship in piecing together biographical data provided to us by his own writings and contemporary documents have produced a rich yield and we are to-day presented with a fairly accurate picture of the outward events of his life. ^{As} R.C. Bald points out, Donne must be the earliest major poet in English of whom an adequate biography is possible.² However, although Bald's excellent biography leaves few gaps concerning the events of Donne's life, the development and structure of his character and thinking is still shrouded in mystery to quite a large extent. When we look at Donne we are presented with pictures of a lecher and a saint, a cynic and a man overflowing with genuine tenderness; we see ecstatic visions, produced by ardent love to a mortal woman or immortal God, we see a desperate man brooding over suicide. Small wonder if we are to sigh together with Donne: "Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one."³

In this chapter it has been my main intent to concentrate not so much on the external events of Donne's life, but to try to draw a picture of his inner development. As has been already stated in the introductory chapter

1. The edition in my use has been: Izaak Walton, The Lives of Dr. John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Mr. Richard Hooker, Mr. George Herbert. 1670. (A Scholar Press Facsimile) Menston, 1969.

2. See Bald, John Donne, a Life. Oxford 1970, p.1.

3. Holy Sonnet XIX. Poems 302.

my main emphasis in this thesis is the dynamics of Donne's theology. The same principle applies also to this chapter. In following the inner dynamics of the developments of Donne's life I have been able to produce a fairly conclusive picture that helps us to understand the seeming contradictions in Donne's character and the great outward changes he went through during his life. I have relied mainly on three biographical works to supply the necessary data, those of Walton and Bald, and Edward Le Comte.⁴ Those wishing for a more detailed account of the external events of Donne's life are advised to refer to Mr. Bald's excellent work, which is generally considered to be the most authoritative treatise in its field to-day.

My basic assumption has been that although there are great changes in Donne's moods and emotions, his passions and loves, there is a clearly recognizable emotional charge of energy, an inner potential that is seeking constantly its outlet and driving him on, no matter what the course or direction. This emotional charge should not be confused with his actual emotions; it is merely a basic potential, whereas his actual emotions can be recognized as its outlets. In his earlier poetry or early sermons the emotional content may even strike us as rather shallow, but nonetheless we are able to recognize the hidden charge that has not yet had the time or opportunity to grow into an actual emotion. Whether Donne is urging his mistress to undress and come to bed, or his congregation to repent for their sins, he is following the one and the same calling of his vehement inner voice. As the events unfold in front of our eyes, we can see, that given the external circumstances he received from life, it was fairly logical that he should arrive where he did, following more or less unconsciously the calling voice of his primary charge.

4. Le Comte, Grace to a Witty Sinner: A Life of John Donne. London 1965.

1. Early years 1572-1601

John Donne was born in London, in Bread Street, some time during the early half of 1572. His father, a prosperous iron-monger, claimed gentle birth and traced his family to the Dwns of Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire. This was an old family whose roots disappeared in the mythical past; its early representative Meirick, King of Dyvet, was said to have been one of the four that carried golden swords before King Arthur at his coronation.⁵ In early history the Dwns of Kidwelly were often found participating in the making of the emergent nation. We cannot tell for sure whether this genealogical connection between the ancient family and the poet is accurate. We only know that he firmly adopted it himself, and the coat of arms of Dwns of Kidwelly appears in Donne's earliest portrait made in 1581 and was also used on one of his seals. In short, it is evident that together with his family Donne considered himself to be no commoner, and aimed from early manhood to the court and the service of the state.

Donne's maternal ancestry was by no means less notable than that on his father's side. His mother, Elizabeth, was daughter of John Heywood, epigrammatist and writer of interludes. The most noted member of the family was Donne's great-granduncle Sir Thomas More, martyr and saint. On both sides Donne's ancestors were ardent Catholics; Donne refers to himself as "being deriued from such a stocke and race, as, I beleeeue, no family, (which is not of farre larger extent, and greater branches), hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, than it hath done."⁶ Historical documents bear witness

5. See Bald, p.20. Bald quotes here the Golden Grove Book.

6. P-M "Advertisement to the Reader".

that this was indeed the case. We can only imagine the atmosphere of suspense in Donne's home during his childhood, the whole family living in constant fear of legal severities that might fall on Catholics suspected of recusancy or downright treason.

Young Donne received his early instruction from catholic tutors at home. In October 1584 he matriculated with his brother Henry from Hart Hall, Oxford. At matriculation they both gave their age as being one year younger than they actually were, to avoid the Oath of Supremacy which was required from all students of sixteen years or more of age. According to Walton, Donne studied for Oxford some three years, without taking a degree. From Oxford he moved to Cambridge, where he stayed about two years, again without taking a degree. Thus he again avoided the Oath of Supremacy. For the ensuing years 1589-91 nothing is known about Donne's life. It is suggested that during these years he travelled abroad to France, Italy and possibly to Spain. The next thing we know about Donne is that in 1591 he began preliminary studies of law in Thavies Inn, and moved from there to Lincoln's Inn the following year. There his law-studies, however, seem to have held a relatively unimportant place in his life. He lived extravagantly, spent a large portion of his patrimony, mixed with his fellow-students, and devoted his time to making valuable contacts and lasting friendships. It is also assumed that he wrote the bulk of his poetry at Lincoln's Inn. In 1596 he volunteered his services to the Earl of Essex, and followed him on his expedition to Cadiz, and a year later, to the Azores.

In 1598 Donne's star took a sudden rise. He was employed as the secretary of Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper. The new employment was ideal for him in many aspects. Egerton was one of the most influential men in the country, and his protégés had a reputation of getting good preferment. It is likely that nothing would have stopped Donne from

making a spectacular career as a statesman, had it not been for the disastrous effects of his marriage. In Egerton's house lived Lady Egerton's niece, Anne More. Donne and the sixteen-year-old Anne soon fell in love with each other, and were secretly married in December 1601. When Anne's father, Sir George More, was informed about the marriage in February 1602, he was furious. Sir George had Donne imprisoned briefly in the Fleet and tried to have the marriage annulled. He also persuaded Egerton to dismiss Donne from his service. Although Donne was soon released, and the Court of Audience upheld the validity of his marriage, he was in an awkward situation. Egerton would not give him his employment back, nor was there any other way of making a living in sight. Sir George More had refused to give any more substantial a dowry to his daughter than his grudging blessing. Eventually, a relief of sorts came when Anne's cousin, Sir Francis Wolley, invited the young couple to stay in his house at Pyrford.

Thus, Donne's hopes of a career as a courtier and statesman were crushed because he had allowed his love life to get the better of his political prudence. Therefore it is appropriate that we try to trace the chief outlines of his amorous liaisons, as far as possible, considering the scant data available. A friend had described the young Donne at Lincoln's Inn as being "not dissolute, but very neat; a great visiter of Ladies, a great frequenter of Playes, a great writer of conceited Verses".⁷ Unfortunately we have no data as to when, where and how he conducted his visits to Ladies. The autobiographical value of his poems is small, at least as actual events are concerned.⁸ But even so we can discern a fair amount of his emotional

7. See Bald, p.72.

8. Gosse has displayed vivid imagination by reconstructing "a deplorable but eventful liaison" that began in 1596. See Letters, p.66. Of modern opinion as to the autobiographical value of Donne's poems, see Bald, pp. 5-10.

attitudes during this period. It seems that the "great visiter of Ladies" at Lincoln's Inn was a great hunter as well:

I spring a mistresse, sweare, write, sigh and weepe:
And the game kill'd, or lost, goe, talke, and sleepe.⁹

This hunt of female game was indeed ars gratia artis:

And though I faile of my required ends,
The attempt is glorious and it self commends.¹⁰

There is no doubt of the bull's eye he is aiming at:

Perfection is in unitie: preferr
One woman first, and then one thing in her.¹¹

The important thing is the precious "Centrique part"; hence the indifferent Jack Donne can love

both fair and browne,
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betraies,
Her who loves lonenesse best, and her who maskes and plaies,
Her whom the country form'd, and whom the town¹²

If his mistress is married, her husband exists only to be cuckolded, although a certain amount of caution may be recommended. His passion has the quality of a devouring fire that, like a cask of powder, burns but a short time, yet devours everything in its way.

In the language of modern popular psychology it might be said that in his early poems Donne displays a well-developed Don Juan syndrome. His cynicism is striking and some of his poems even display some amount of sexual hatred.¹³ However, a word of caution is again needed. It must be taken

9. Loves diet. Poems 49.

10. Elegie XVII. Poems 101.

11. Elegie XVIII. Poems 103.

12. The Indifferent. Poems 13.

13. See e.g. The Apparition. Poems 43.

into account that Donne's early poetry also follows the conventions of his time. Many of his elegies make use of the themes of Ovid's Amores, and often his conceits are there merely for their own sake. Also Donne's early poetry was primarily written to amuse his closest circle of friends, a group of young Elizabethan coxcombs who always appreciated a good story, regardless of a doubtful veracity. Still it would be a grave mistake to assume that Donne had little or no amatory experience during his early years.¹⁴ He certainly had enough to recognize love's many moods and to play each string in Cupid's bow. His strong cynicism reveals his deep sense of insecurity; he is too wary to allow himself to grow too attached to any woman. Although the need of a deeper attachment is evident in his poetry, his lack of courage prevents him from forming one. To compensate for this, he concentrates in several less serious attachments and, like the proverbial fox with sour grapes, speaks of the "queasie paine of being belov'd and loving".¹⁵

We may well ask what caused Donne's metamorphosis from this youthful but wary cynic to the man who wrote The Good-morrow, The Sunne Rising and the Song Sweetest Love, I do not Go? Or, as the question may be paraphrased, what happened to him when he met Anne More? Here, I believe, The Extasie gives us the key. This poem will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapter, but already here a few remarks are required. In general, it is depressing to see how noted scholars like Helen Gardner and A.J. Smith treat this poem as an intellectual exercise that aims to treat the subject of lovers' ecstasy in Petrarchan style, or to define the metaphysical essence

14. Le Comte expresses with reason his astonishment at the prim attitude of certain Victorian minded scholars, and refutes their claims of Donne's sexual innocence. See Le Comte 53-57.

15. The Calme. Poems 157.

of love (possibly in accordance with the Platonic school).¹⁶ It should be fairly evident that, although The Extasie does contain numerous metaphysical allusions and figures, it also displays an emotional background where something essentially new has been experienced. Again, we cannot speculate about the external framework of this experience, but it should be clear that the experience has been none the less real. It is well known to those who have loved, that lovers sometimes do experience similar ecstasies, where the limitations of space and time lose their significance. Usually these experiences are totally unexpected and mark a turning point in an already existing relationship. Here, losing momentarily their separate identities, the lovers meet each other on what Donne calls the level of souls. This, in turn creates a basic sense of security, which works to allay possible fears and anxieties disturbing the dynamics of the relationship. We can fairly safely conjecture that in The Extasie Donne is describing a similar experience. For the first time in his life he has experienced a basic security with his woman and this experience is strong enough to transform their relationship and consequently, releases new potentials of loving and tenderness in Donne's person. Now he is capable of saying:

And now good morrow to our waking soules,
Which watch not each other out of feare.¹⁷

Having thus traced some main features of Donne's amorous life, it still remains for us to give some thought to his religious development during his early years. We have already noted that he had inherited from his parents a strong Catholicism. Yet he was constantly forced to see in his closest family circle how adherence to the ancestral faith could lead to imprisonment,

16. See Gardner, The Argument about The Ecstasy. Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies Presented to Frank Percy Wilson. Oxford 1959. Smith, The Metaphysics of Love. Review of English Studies 9/1958. Even more bizarre criticism can be found.

17. The Good-morrow. Poems 7.

exile or loss of life.¹⁸ Thus he soon had to face the question, whether this faith was worth the sacrifice of a promising career. Looking back at his conversion Donne writes:

I had a longer work to doe then many other men; for I was first to blot out, certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and to wrastle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken; and some anticipations early layde vpon my conscience, both by Persons who by nature had a power and superiority ouer my will, and others who by their learning and good life, seem'd to me justly to claime the interest for the guiding, and rectifying of mine vnderstanding in these matters.¹⁹

These influences were no doubt strong, but we know that Donne had already during his years of study become alienated from his Catholic heritage.

Walton tells us that Donne, in his eighteenth year "had bethrothed himself to no Religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian."²⁰ A little later,

... yet being unresolved in his Religion, he thought it necessary to rectifie all scruples that concerned that ... he begun to survey the Body of Divinity, as it then was controverted betwixt the Reformed and the Roman Church. ... Being to undertake this search, he believed the Cardinal Bellarmine to be the best defender of the Roman cause, and therefore betook himself to the examination of his Reasons.²¹

Although here Walton is probably speeding Donne's conversion, it is likely that during his years at Lincoln's Inn Donne did devote much time to the study of theology. He may well have studied Bellarmine's Disputationes de controversiis Christianae Fidei, although Bald remarks that this was more likely of his Catholic spiritual advisers' initiative.²² Perhaps the most authentic documents of Donne's religious search during these years is his III Satire. Here he makes fun of those who seek true religion in Rome, because it was found there a thousand years ago, as well as of those who

18. Donne's brother Henry died in prison in 1593. Both his uncles were exiled.

19. P-M, A Preface to the Priestes and Jesuites.

20. Walton, p.14.

21. Op. cit., p.15.

22. Bald, p.69.

seek in Geneva a religion "plain, simple, sullen, young". He refutes the claims of those who embrace all religions as willingly, and those who accept none. Finally he comes to his conclusion:

though truth and falsehood bee
Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is;
Be busie to seeke her, beleeeve mee this,
Hee's not of none, nor worst, that seekes the best.²³

We do not know for certain, when Donne finally abandoned catholicism and embraced Anglicanism. It must have happened some time before 1598, because otherwise Egerton would probably not have taken him into his employment. But even though the date of his formal conversion must remain a mystery, we may reasonably suggest that it was not a very deep one. We have no documents of that period where Donne would have displayed a deeper religious feeling one way or the other. It is probable that he was very much the man who wanted to "doubt wisely" and had acted mostly out of convenience. The sanctions that followed adhering to Catholicism and the rewards that accompanied Anglicanism must have been eloquent arguments indeed to a man of Donne's ambitions. Besides, he could explain to himself that the differences were not so essential anyway. As in his relations with women, he was wary, unwilling to commit himself emotionally.

23. Satyre III, Poems 136.

2. Years of painful growth 1601-1615

Donne and his rapidly growing family stayed at Pyrford until 1605. Little is known of how he occupied himself during those years. It seems that his seclusion may have been partly voluntary; Bald quotes a letter to Donne, presumably by Toby Mathew: "Your friends are sorry, that you make yourself so great a stranger; but, you know best your own occasions. Howbeit, if you have any designe towards the Court, it were good if you did prevent the losse of any more time."²⁴ In 1606 Sir George more finally consented to pay his daughter's dowry, and Donne moved with his family to Mitcham, apparently to be closer to the court, should a sudden chance for preferment occur.

The picture that Donne presents of his years in Mitcham is very sombre indeed. In his letters he complains constantly of illness that plagued not only himself but his whole family. He frequently refers to his home as his "hospital", and sometimes as his "prison" or "dungeon". Although he does not seem to have been in actual poverty, the idea of his "ruin'd fortune" must have been a bitter one. He sought preferment at the Court several times through his friends, but with little success. Yet his mental powers were undaunted, and he produced a considerable amount of writing during those years. The principal products were his three prose works, Biathanatos, Pseudo-martyr and Ignatius his Conclave. A number of his Divine Poems also belong to this period.

Donne also participated in the religious polemic that had gained new impetus after the discovery of the gun-powder plot. It is generally assumed that Donne was employed by a noted clergyman Thomas Morton, as his research

24. See Bald, p.144.

assistant over a period of years. Bald has shown, however, that this assumption must not be accepted uncritically.²⁵ At any rate, we know that some kind of connection existed between Donne and Morton, and the latter probably did urge Donne to take orders, as Walton tells us.²⁶ Although Donne politely declined the offer, he continued to participate in the controversy over the Oath of Allegiance, and finally, in 1610, published his own contribution to it in the form of Pseudo-martyr. As the sub-title tells us, he argues in his book that "those who are of the Romane religion in this kingdome, may and ought to take the oath of allegiance". Walton tells us that this book was commissioned by the King, but this assumption is probably inaccurate.²⁷ However, the book was dedicated to the King, and it is likely that Donne had taken care to enquire beforehand, whether this dedication would be acceptable to James. It is also probable that Donne's intention in writing his book had been to please the King, so as to persuade him to give Donne some lucrative post in his service. In this sense his plan backfired. Pseudo-martyr did indeed please James, but it also convinced him that Donne's place was in the service of the church. This again, was an idea that Donne himself was not yet willing to accept.

In 1611 Donne found himself a wealthy patron, Sir Robert Drury of Hawstead in Suffolk. Sir Robert had recently lost his daughter, Elizabeth, and Donne's poem in her commemoration pleased the grieving father so that he invited Donne to accompany him on his journey to central Europe. After their return from the continent Donne moved with his family to a house owned by Drury near his residence in Drury lane, where he stayed until moving to the deanery of St. Paul's. Again Donne made attempts to obtain secular

25. Op. cit., pp.210-212.

26. See Walton, pp.24-25.

27. Ibid., p.33.

employment, this time by appealing to the Viscount of Rochester (later Earl of Somerset). Meanwhile, he devoted himself to the study of classical languages, Hebrew and Greek. It is also probable that Essays in Divinity were written some time in 1613-14. We find Donne now in the curious situation, that although he was still expecting some secular employment he was devoting himself to theological studies, as if he already knew the outcome of his efforts. Finally, after Somerset had fallen in 1614, there was nothing that Donne could do any longer, but to accept the course of events. He was ordained on 23rd January 1615.

At this point it is appropriate to ask what kind of process led this some time Elizabethan man about town to accept orders. In other words, what is the inside story of the drama that was played in Pyrford, Mitcham and Drury Lane? We shall do best to start unraveling this question with Donne's marriage, which, in spite of poverty and illness seems to have been a happy one. The bed of John and Anne Donne was to him a small self-contained world, from which he could tell "busie old foole, unruly sunne" to mind its own business and leave the lovers in their own bliss.²⁸ In The Canonization he repeats the same advice to all those who (presumably) made reference to his forfeiting his career by this unpolitical marriage to leave them alone.²⁹ Yet he could not recover from the idea of his "ruin'd fortune", and a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer gives an illuminating glimpse of his feelings in Mitcham:

I write from the fire side in my Parler, and in the noise of three gamesome children; and by the side of her, whom because I have transplanted into such a wretched fortune, I must labour to disguise that from her by all such honest devices, as giving her my company, and discourse,³⁰ therefore I steal from her, all the time which I give this Letter

28. The Sunne Rising. Poems 10.

29. The Canonization. Poems 14.

30. Quoted by Bald, p.156.

Even after ten years of marriage, when Donne was leaving for abroad with Sir Robert Drury we can admire the genuine tenderness of his tone in the Song:

Sweetest love, I do not goe,
For wearinesse of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
A fitter love for mee;³¹

Yet in spite of this marital harmony, Donne's life was far from happy. His ambitions had been crushed and raising a family in relative poverty simply did not give a satisfactory outlet to his charge of primary potential. Thus he was soon suffering from a severe frustration. In another letter to Goodyer Donne writes

I would fain do something; but that I cannot tell what, is not wonder. For to chuse, is to do: but to be no part of any body, is to be nothing. At most, the greatest persons are but great wens, and excrescences; men of wit and delightfull conversation, but as moales for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world, that they contribute to the sustentation of the whole.³²

And again:

... such as I am, rather a sicknesse and disease of the world then any part of it ...³³

Here we can see that Donne is not only suffering from a frustration, but also from a severe crisis of identity. It is generally assumed that this helpless state caused him to contemplate suicide and that Biathanatos was written largely to purge these broodings from his mind. In the preface to Bianthanatos Donne writes:

I have often such a sickely inclination. And, whether it be, because I haue my first breeding and conversation with men of a suppressed and afflicted Religion, accustomed to the despite of death, and hungry of imagin'd Martyrdome; Or that the Common Enemie find that doore worst locked against him in mee; Or that there bee a perplexitie and

31. Song. Poems 17.

32. Quoted by Bald, p.230.

33. Ibid.

flexibility in the doctrine it selfe; Or because my Conscience ever assures me, that no rebellious grudgings at Gods gifts, nor other sinfull concurrence accompanies these thoughts in me, or that a brave scorn, or that a faint cowardlinesse beget it, whensoever any affliction assailes me, mee thinks I have the keyes of my prison in mine own hand, and no remedy presents it selfe so soone to my heart, as mine own sword.³⁴

From these melancholy broodings there was only a short step to religious meditations. Although Donne had probably not had any deeper religious conviction earlier, man in early seventeenth century lived in a far more religious atmosphere than in our secular age. Thus, feelings of despair and frustration were easily transformed into feelings of sinfulness and guilt and being forsaken by God. In Divine Poems we have a clear demonstration, how Donne in his existential anxiety turns to God and tries to bend his will to accept God's ways. Thus his despair in an existential crisis is converted into despair at the prospect of eternal damnation. Using a method that bears close resemblance to Ignatius Loyola's Spiritual Exercises he begs the three-personed God to make him free by enthralling him, to make him chaste by ravishing him.³⁵ Yet a cursory reading is enough to show us that at this stage Donne is doomed to remain in his despair. He has not yet learned the meaning of God's grace nor how to apply it to himself.

Thus the Donne who accepted orders in 1615 was a man who had probably reached an intellectual consensus with the Anglican doctrine and was desperately trying to accept it on the emotional level. His mind was still troubled to some extent, although it is worth noting that Essays in Divinity, as Mrs. Simpson points out, is essentially a kind and happy book.³⁶ It seems that Donne had by that time temporarily at least rid himself of the thoughts of death and decay, that so often plagued him. He was sufficiently at peace with himself, to accept the orders with a good conscience, although

34. Biathanatos, pp.17-18.

35. Holy Sonnet XIV: Poems 299.

36. Simpson, A study of the Prose Works of John Donne. Oxford 1924, p.206.

we still may surmise that even then he would have preferred a secular appointment. Most important of all, he could reconcile in his mind the pressures of outer circumstances as being tangible signs of a calling, God acting through human and circumstantial intermediaries. The inscription on his grave at St. Paul's: Instinctu et impulsu Sp. Sancti, monitu et hortatu Regis Jacobi best summarizes us the mood in which Donne entered his new calling.

3. Years in priesthood 1615-1631

About Donne's ordination Walton exclaims:

Now the English Church had gain'd a second St. Augustine, 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.

And now all his studies which had been occasionally diffused, were all concentrated in Divinity. Now he had a new calling, new thoughts, and a new employment for his wit and eloquence. Now all his earthly affections were changed into divine love; and all the faculties of his own soul were engaged in the Conversion of others: In preaching the glad tidings of remission to repenting Sinners; and peace to each troubled soul.³⁷

In 1615 this was still to a large extent exaggeration and anticipation.

As we have pointed out Donne was still very much the man who had written the early Divine Poems and Pseudo-martyr and whose saintliness was still far from the degree that Walton describes. None the less, Walton's words must be credited in the sense that Donne's ordination did indeed mark the beginning of one of the most distinguished clerical careers in England. Shortly after his ordination, Donne was appointed Chaplain in Ordinancy to the King, and James persuaded the University of Cambridge to grant him an honorary Doctor's degree in Divinity. Donne spent the earliest period of his career preaching in country parishes, and in 1616 he was chosen Divinity Reader at Lincoln's Inn. Here he was to face an audience that knew him from of old and was aware of the irregularities of his youth. However, he soon won his audience to his side with his sincerity, wit and eloquence.

In August 1617 a severe blow fell on Donne. His wife Anne gave birth to a still-born child and died herself five days later. Anne Donne was only thirty-three years old when she died, a victim of too many child-births;

37. Walton, p.37.

she had been brought to bed twelve times. Two of her children were still-born, of the other ten, seven survived her. At her death, Donne was absolutely grief-stricken. He erected for her two monuments, one in stone in the church where she lies buried with her child, the other in the form of the Sonnet, "Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt."³⁸

In 1619 Donne travelled to the continent as chaplain of Lord Doncaster's embassy that was sent to try for a settlement at the beginning thirty-years'-war. After his return, he continued to keep an eye on possibilities of advancement, in his former courtierly fashion. Finally, in 1621, the King appointed him Dean of St. Paul's in London. This is where he was to stay for the rest of his life.

The appointment as a Dean brought Donne a number of administrative duties, in addition to his pastoral ones. He also continued to preach at the Court on his appointed Sundays, and visited his country parishes in summer-time. Preaching seems to have been the most pleasant of his duties; Walton tells us how he used to prepare his sermons:

The latter part of his life may be said to be a continued study; for as he usually preached once a week, if not oftner, so after his Sermon he never gave his eyes rest, till he had chosen out a new Text, and that night cast his Sermon into a form, and his Text into divisions; and the next day betook himself to consult the Fathers, and so commit his meditations to his memory, which was excellent. But upon Saturday he usually gave himself and his mind a rest from the weary burthen of his weeks meditations, and usually spent that day in visitation of friends, or some other diversions of his thoughts.³⁹

His sermons changed considerably from those which he had preached at Lincoln's Inn. He now preached with more authority, but also in simple language, for his audience did not consist any more of learned men, but was a thorough cross-section of the population of London. Walton tells us that he was

38. Holy Sonnet XVII. Poems 301.

39. Walton, p.61.

... A Preacher in earnest, weeping sometimes for his auditory, sometimes with them: alwayes preaching to himself, like an Angel from a cloud, 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 practiced it; and a vertue so, as to make it beloved even by those that lov'd it not; and, all this with a most particular grace and unexpressible addition of comeliness.⁴⁰

In November 1623 Donne suddenly fell ill with a fever. Although both he and his doctors feared the worst, the anticipated relapse did not come, and he eventually recovered. During his illness he wrote his Devotions upon Emergent Occasions and two poems, Hymne to God my God in my Sicknesse and A Hymne to God the Father. These works are important because, as will soon be shown, they demonstrate how finally, when confronted with imminent death he was able to bring to a conclusion his long process of conversion, and find peace and trust in God.

After his recovery Donne resumed his duties as Dean. To these were added in 1624 the duties of the Vicar of St. Dunstan's. Of these last years of Donne's life there is really little to say. He led a full and busy life, but in a way it can be said that he was already practicing Ars Moriendi, the art of dying. He had found peace with God, his development had been brought to an end, and now he was preparing to leave his body to see God without mediators. Although the idea of death had been familiar to him all his life, it now occupied him even more. But now it was not a cause for anxiety, but something he prepared for calmly and trustingly.

In 1630, when Charles I was making arrangements to promote Donne to a bishopric, his health finally broke down. As earlier, during the plague of 1625, rumours circulated claiming that he was already dead. Other rumours accused him of malingering. Partly to put an end to these rumours, partly because he wished to die in the pulpit, Donne arrived at the Court on the

40. Walton, p.38.

first Friday in Lent, 25 February 1631, and preached his last sermon. This sermon, known as Death's Duel was to become his most famous. Walton tells us how "many that then saw his tears, and heard his faint and hollow voice, professing they thought that the Text was prophetically chosen, and that Dr. Donne had preached his own funeral sermon."⁴¹ After that he lay in his bed until he died on 31 March 1631.

Looking now at Donne's personal development during the last years of his life, we can distinguish two important turning points: the death of his wife in 1617 and his serious illness in 1623. At his wife's death he was struck not only by the personal loss of a beloved person, but the whole balance of his dynamics was seriously impeded. After the adventures of his youth, he had finally found the basic sense of security with Anne More, thus giving release to his emotional capacity of loving and tenderness. Now he was suddenly deprived of this outlet. Once again his primary charge was seeking for an outlet, and the solution it was finally to find can be already seen in the Sonnet that Donne composed at his wife's death:

Here the admyring her my mind did whett
To seeke thee God; so streames do shew their head;
But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett.⁴²

The love that he had given to his wife was now seeking God. However, he had still a long way to go. In A Hymne to Christ that Donne composed on leaving for Germany in 1619 we can see that this new love affair is still plagued by uncertainty and doubt:

Nor thou nor thy religion dost controule,
The amorousnesse of an harmonious soule,
But thou would'st have that love thy selfe: As thou
Art jealous, Lord, so I am jealous now,

41. Op. cit., p.71.

42. Holy Sonnet XVII. Poems 301.

Thou lov'st not, till loving more, thou free

My soule: Who ever gives, takes libertie:

O, if thou car'st not whom I love

Alas, thou lov'st not mee.⁴³

Only in the two poems that Donne composed on his sick-bed in 1623 can we see that uncertainty has given way to certainty, and hear the voice of trusting:

I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne

My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;

But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne

Shall shine was he does now, and heretofore;

And, having done that, Thou hast done,

I feare no more.⁴⁴

The words "I feare no more" are indeed indicative of this new relationship. Donne had again found the sense of basic security he had been lacking. Even the idea of death is no longer terrible. In Hymne to God my God in my Sicknesse he writes:

I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;

For, though these currants yeeld returne to none,

What shall my West hurt me? As West and East

In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,

So death doth touch the Resurrection.⁴⁵

In short, we may state that in his new relationship with God, Donne can now say: "And now good morrow to our waking soules, "Which watch not one another out of feare". The wheel has come full circle.

43. Poems 321.

44. A Hymne to God the Father. Poems 337.

45. Poems 336.

B. THE SECULAR WORKS OF JACK DONNE

In a theological thesis which deals mainly with the ecclesiology of John Donne, little space and effort could ordinarily be dedicated to his secular poetry. Normally, this would be quite superfluous, because there is ample literature available for anyone who wishes more detailed information on this field, and a theologian who is an amateur in literary criticism can scarcely claim to surpass the efforts of literary scholars who have made Donne their lifetime speciality.

However, there is one important field, which requires a closer scrutiny of his secular works, and where a new aspect to the knowledge already acquired is possible. It has been already stated in the introductory chapter that in Donne's experience, to be, was always being in a context of interactive relations. Therefore, we must ask, how he experienced these interactive relationships in his early life, especially how he experienced the relationship between man and woman. To ask these questions in the context of this thesis is necessary, because they will help to clarify the relationship between the two facets of Donne's person, Jack Donne and Dr. Donne, and to demonstrate the essential unity in his life and thought. By analyzing at some length Donne's secular poetry and, in a later chapter, his religious poetry and prose, we will come to see that there exists a strong connection between Donne's journey to emotional maturity in his relationships with women and his development towards spiritual maturity in his search for God. In this analysis we will give special emphasis to the development of his already mentioned ontological conception, and how he came to see existence meaningful only in an interactive relationship with other entities. In

other words, we will follow his development from a tiny, isolated, self-contained and self-sufficient islet in a sea of reality into a part of a great continent, where all parts are connected to each other. Only thus can we hope to arrive at a complete understanding of his theological thinking, by first examining the experience of reality that lies behind the man.

In general modern criticism has not paid very much attention to the background of experience which might lie behind Donne's poems. This seems to be due to the very strong reaction to Gosse's imaginative but ill-fated attempt to read biographical significance into Donne's poems. The dominating trend of criticism to-day seems to deal exclusively with the formal characteristics of his poems, and concentrates on tracing previous literary examples which might have influenced his style. The results acquired in this way, in spite of their unquestionable merits, seem inadequate in some aspects. They may lead us to consider Donne's poetry as the result of a craftsman's skilful piecing together of building elements without any more significance than the joy of performance. Although this certainly applies to some of his poems, we should not forget that they also tell us a considerable amount about how this man experienced the reality that surrounded him and the people with whom he was in contact.

Thus, looking at Donne's early poetry we first meet a fairly uniform group known as the Elegies.¹ These are usually dated within the years 1592-96, a period, which for the most part coincides with the years Donne spent at Lincoln's Inn. These poems, which were apparently written mostly to amuse Donne's closest circle of friends, strongly portray the influence of Ovid's Amores, and show us Donne's flair and talent for dramatic

1. To-day an argument exists about the canon of Donne's Elegies. In his classical edition Grierson gives 20 elegies, whereas Gardner's edition (Oxford 1965) gives only 13, classifying five as dubia, and printing the remaining two in other context.

situations. Helen Gardner remarks rightly: "One can see clearly reflected in them that the young Donne was 'a great frequenter of Plaies'."² The dramatic situations of the Elegies show us Donne conducting a clandestine affair with a married woman in her husband's own house;³ he is courting a young girl and trying to avoid all the elaborate traps her parents have set to discover him;⁴ he is scolding bitterly a woman whom he had initiated in the mysteries of Ars Amandi and who now is turning a cold shoulder to him;⁵ he is lying in bed urging his mistress to undress and join him.⁶

To read any kind of biographical significance to those poems, as Gosse attempted, would be a grave mistake indeed. But omitting the field of bare biographical facts, one aspect is equally evident: the mistress of Donne's Elegies is conspicuous by her absence. We may discern in some cases that she is supposed to be married or to be a very young girl, but no light is thrown on her personality. The consistent male dominant trend of the Elegies leads us to ask whether during those years Donne had encountered woman on a personal plane at all. This is not to put an argument for his sexual innocence, as used to be fashionable in certain circles. For all that we know Donne may well have had a number of more or less clandestine love-affairs in those days, as any normal, enterprising young man of that era would. The important thing is that these encounters probably contained a minimum amount of personal involvement from Donne's side. When he writes:

Who ever loves, if he do not propose
The right true end of love, he's one that goes
To sea for nothing but to make him sick.⁷

the purpose of these words was certainly to amuse Donne's friends and they

2. Introduction to Gardner's edition of the Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets. p.xxiii.

3. Elegie I, Jealousie. Poems 71.

4. Elegie IV, The Perfume. Poems 75.

5. Elegie VII. Poems 80.

6. Elegie XIX, Going to Bed. Poems 106.

7. Elegie XVIII, Loves Progress. Poems 103.

may have held some shock value, but nonetheless they portray an attitude that is consistent throughout the Elegies. The essence of love is coitus and the subtleties that are requisite to reach this goal, the object of this noble pursuit is of a negligible concern.

Because this trend is so consistent, we are probably on safe ground, if we conclude that during this period Donne's experience of the relationship between man and woman was severely limited and that the interaction occurred on a purely physical plane. He considered woman as something that carried "the centrique part", capable of giving him his enjoyment, but less so as a person. Thus, the relationship can scarcely have been on an I-thou basis, but rather on an I-it basis.

In Donne's later poetry, the Songs and Sonnets, it is possible to see an already more varied image of love. Helen Gardner classifies these poems into three categories, according to the kind of relationship they portray: 1. The group similar to the Elegies, poems which treat love dispassionately and unphilosophically. 2. Poems of unrequited love, where the mistress refuses him, and having the upper hand, leaves him to sigh and burn. 3. Poems on mutual love, in which there is no longer a question of falseness or frustration, but which treat love as a union or a miracle, something that is outside the natural order of things.⁸ She also divides the Songs and Sonnets chronologically to those written before 1600 and those written after 1602. As a dividing line she uses the appearance of Neoplatonic themes and motifs in Donne's poems.⁹ This division by Gardner is probably the most authoritative to-day and its merits cannot be denied. Yet she leaves some questions open, especially that concerning the quality

8. Gardner, op. cit., p.1xi.

9. Op. cit., p.XXV.

of Donne's experience in his amorous liaisons. In the manner of the mainstream of criticism she concentrates on Donne writing on love, leaving open the question, whether he is writing in love. The dividing line of Gardner's chronology coincides conspicuously with Donne's marriage with Anne More. On this aspect Gardner writes:

I do not doubt that there is a connexion between Donne's love for Anne More and the appearance of this theme (mutual love) in his poetry, and that we can see reflected in these poems Donne's situation in the years that followed his marriage. But the poems themselves, even the most idealistic, are too far from the reality we know of for us to speak of them as written to Anne More, or even about her.¹⁰

We might be able to unravel this problem a little more by concentrating on the quality of experience that the Songs and Sonnets portray. Poems such as the Song, Goe Catch a Falling Starre, Womans Constancy, The Indifferent, and Communitie, among many others, are indeed written in the same flippant tone as the Elegies, but there is a new subtlety to be discerned. They portray a situation where love is no longer a straightforward hunt but implies some problems. Love can also be a devastating force, and the bold hunter may well get his own fingers scorched. Donne finds it now necessary to bargain with the God of Love in Loves Vsury, to plead with him for mercy in Loves exchange, to devise means to keep his heart free so that his body may reign in Loves diet. Again Gardner remarks rightly that Donne "rebels against the tyranny of the God of Love and blames and despises himself for his folly in accepting such a bondage."¹¹

The question must be posed whether this new trend is merely employing a newly found literary conceit, or whether it has its equivalent in Donne's personal experience. We are probably on safe ground if we interpret the "rebellious against the tyranny of the God of Love" which Gardner refers to,

10. Op. cit., p.xxviii.

11. Op. cit., xxvii.

as the anxiety that Donne felt when faced with the prospect of personal involvement in his amorous liaisons. In his younger days he had bluntly rejected emotional attachment and spoken contemptuously of "the queasie paine of being-belov'd and loving".¹² Now this rejection seemed to grow increasingly difficult, although he was still reluctant to give up the fight.

This now leads us to the dividing line in the Songs and Sonnets, which Gardner rightly places around 1600 and Donne's marriage. However, she may be overcautious in referring to the appearance of Neoplatonic themes as her primary criterion and leaving Donne's falling in love with Anne More discreetly to the background. To demonstrate this idea, let us look closer at The Extasie, which Gardner admits to be probably one of the earliest poems in this latter group.¹³

As has already been intimated, this poem has suffered much at the hands of literary criticism. As Helen Gardner tells in her article The Argument about 'The Ecstasy',¹⁴ Grierson took it to be a presentation of the Platonic ideal of love, whereas Pierre Legouis interpreted it as a witty piece of seduction. Gardner herself gives a long argument about The Extasie being modelled according to Italian Renaissance literature, particularly Leone Ebreo's Dialoghi d'Amore. Another noted critic, A.J. Smith, in his article The Metaphysics of Love, treats the poem as a witty "little play" on Petrarchan motives that also attempts to justify the idea of corporal love in an otherwise idealistic atmosphere.¹⁵ Still another critic David Novarr, in his article The Extasie: Donne's Address on the States of Union concentrates on the concept of the "abler soule" (line 43) and finds in the

12. The Calme. Poems 157.

13. Gardner, op. cit., p. Ivii.

14. Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies presented to Frank Percy Wilson. Oxford 1959, pp.279-306.

15. Review of English Studies, 9/1958.

poem apart from Donne's customary wit, a strong didactic trend.¹⁶

The blatant weakness of this sort of criticism is that it takes the poem merely as an intellectual and literary exercise. It also proceeds from the basic premise that lovers' ecstasy, such as Donne describes, is an unheard of impossibility, a premise that has been contested already in the previous chapter. But even if we leave open the point of actual ecstatic experiences and their possible occurrence, it should be obvious that something of a very concrete nature has happened to Donne (apart from possibly reading Ebreo's Dialoghi d'Amore) before he is able to display such a remarkable change in his feeling, as he does in The Extasie. When contrasted with Donne's earlier poems and the sort of experience they portray, The Extasie shows the following marked differences: 1. The development of a we-relationship. Unlike in Donne's earlier poetry, there is no longer a distinction between the subject and object, the hunter and the game. It makes no difference, which soul speaks, "because both meant, both spake the same". Love has merged the souls of the two lovers, making "both one, each this and that". 2. This experience is something larger than both its participants, transcending them both. Hence "the abler soule", which is the product of this experience, can be said to resist change, and Donne feels justified in making the reference to the immortality of their love. 3. This new experience creates a new sense of basic security. A profound emotional attachment on all planes is now possible. The primary sexual urge has lost its dominance, to give room to a wider scope of feeling. And yet it has by no means disappeared, the bodies will surely continue the union on a physical plane. 4. The idea of procreation makes a unique appearance here, first on line 13 and later on

16. Just So Much Honor. Essays Commemorating the Four-hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of John Donne. Ed. Peter Amadeus Fiore. Pennsylvania 1972.

lines 61-64. Although this appearance is fleeting, and the idea of procreation is otherwise conspicuous by its absence in Donne's poetry, it is reasonable to suggest that its appearance here signifies the opening of a totally new aspect in Donne's amorous experience.

Thus, contrasted with Donne's earlier poetry, The Extasie shows a remarkable change in amorous experience. It would probably be an oversimplification to say that it merely gives an account of an actual experience (although it is very likely that something of the kind also actually did happen). More likely it is a summary of the change that Donne underwent when he fell in love with Anne More. Certainly it would be a mistake to explain this change merely by referring to literary examples that Donne might have become acquainted with during that period. The Italian Renaissance influence and the Neoplatonic ideas are admittedly there as illustrative material, but the nucleus of the poem is in Donne's own love.

Against this background it is also easier for us to look at poems like The Good-morrow, and The Sunne Rising. After the great break-through of The Extasie, these poems are much simpler in form and content, The Good-morrow simply celebrating lovers' union where fears and ambiguity are a conquered phase, where the lovers' could "watch not one another out of feare". The rising sun discovers the lovers in bed and is told in a mock-stern manner to mind its own business, but finally is pardoned and offered a relief of its duties by shining on them and thus on the whole world. It seems that Helen Gardner again unnecessarily overemphasizes the Neoplatonic influences in these poems and belittles the actual situation. Her argument:

The superb égoïsme à deux of these poems, their scorn for the world of everyday and the duties of daily life, their stress on secrecy and insistence on the esoteric nature of love ... make these poems a quintessence of the romantic conception of the passionate love as the summum bonum. It is a lover and his mistress, not a husband and wife, who prefer to be blest 'here upon earth' rather than share with others the full bliss of heaven.¹⁷

17. Gardner, op. cit., p.xxix.

does not sound very convincing, when confronted with known biographical facts and simple reasoning. The great re-assessment of values in Donne's emotional life was followed rapidly by the shattering of his ambitions, thus creating a situation, where all that John and Anne Donne had was literally each other. Hence, it is not surprising that the now married lovers so strongly reject the world that has first rejected them, and create their own world in their love. This reaction is directly spelled out in The Canonization: The world may go on and observe its ways, as long as it leaves the loving couple in peace. Their love has hurt nobody, and although the world may call them names, they are transmuted by love and could not care less. Although the Neoplatonic patterns do emerge at the end of the poem, it is still a most plausible and natural reaction to a situation of which the outlines are well known to us.

Thus, we have been able to trace a consistent line of development in Donne's relationship with women, as portrayed by his poetry. We can see how he developed from a youthful hunter of the "centrique part" with an inability to form a deeper personal contact, into a man loving deeply and tenderly. Where his earlier relationships had been on an I-it basis, he later experienced himself and his beloved as a homogenous unit: We. Mutual love had transformed John and Anne Donne; made them "one anothers hermitage";¹⁸ and the situation where "both meant, both spake the same"¹⁹ can certainly be discerned in its Neoplatonic frame of reference as a real experience.

Following this line of analysis, we have seen that Donne's experience of relationships with women was drastically changed by his falling in love with Anne More. With her, he could experience acceptance and security

18. The Canonization. Poems 14.

19. The Extasie. Poems 46.

that enabled him to step outside the confinements of his own self and to enter into a mutually satisfying relationship of giving and receiving. In such a relationship he could now, presumably for the first time in his life, feel himself as a part of a unit larger than himself, a participant in a shared experience of reality. This change, in turn, marked the beginning of his new ontological conception, based on a network of interactive relationships, and on being in relation to others. It would be an overstatement to claim that this change in his ontological conception took place overnight, or that its results could be seen even in a year or two. The basis was now, however, laid for this development and we will see how the results started growing and bearing fruit when we turn to study the development of his religious experience and theological thinking.

C. THE WORKS AND THINKING OF DR DONNE

1. Donne's religious development as seen in his literary works

when looking at the process that transformed the man about town Jack Donne into the serious Dr Donne, the best place to begin is probably the years in Mitcham. As has been mentioned earlier, the years in Mitcham were for Donne a period of sickness, poverty and depression. In these years he wrote Biathanatos, which seems to have served the function of purging suicidal broodings from his mind.¹ At the same time when Biathanatos was written, Donne also began turning to religious meditation in his poetry. The first example of this is a chain of seven sonnets, written in 1607, which he titled La Corona and dedicated to Lady Magdalen Herbert. The opening lines of La Corona are indicative of the mood in which they are written:

Deigne at my hands this crown of prayer and praise,
Weav'd in my low devout melancholie.²

The sonnets of La Corona follow the medieval tradition, and concentrate on the beginning and the end of the life of Christ, totally omitting his ministry. Here Donne gives special emphasis to the paradox in Christian faith; when he addresses the holy Virgin in the sonnet titled Annunciation he exclaims in astonishment:

Ere by the spheares time was created, thou
Wast in his minde, who is thy Sonne, and Brother;

1. For more details, see Bald, pp.230-2. Note that Bald quotes Donne saying that Biathanatos was written by Jack Donne and not by Dr. Donne.

2. Poems 289.

Whom thou conceiv'st, conceiv'd; yea thou art now
Thy Makers maker, and thy Fathers mother;³

As regards his attitude in La Corona, J.B. Leishman writes:

His attitude, whatever it may have actually been, appears in these poems strangely external and detached. He seems, as it were, to be trying to stimulate his faith by means of his intellect, trying to make himself feel the reality of these mysteries and paradoxes by displaying them to himself under as many aspects as he can. He has not felt them, one is tempted to say, judging from the evidence of these poems alone, he has not experienced them, anything like so intensely as he has felt and experienced the much more general, and, in a sense more fundamental, antithesis between world and the spirit.⁴

In general Leishman's analysis is correct. Donne's style in the sonnets of La Corona is strictly formalized, liturgical; even when he employs a direct form of addressing the personages of the sacred history it is a ritual gesture, coming nowhere near a direct dialogue. In the midst of his "low devout melancholie" he is reaching his hand out, not knowing who or what will meet it. It can be said that in portraying the personages and events of the sacred history he is painting himself an image of those whom he is trying to contact, but not yet really contacting them. In this sense La Corona can be compared with Donne's earliest secular poetry, where a totally fictitious mistress could be depicted in a wildly dramatic and witty situation, which was more a product of Donne's expectations and fantasies than a reflection of a real contact. In this sense Leishman's words about Donne stimulating his faith by the means of his intellect may still at the stage of La Corona be considered as yet an overstatement, anticipation of a pattern that is to come more evident in Donne's later religious poetry. On the other hand, it seems that Leishman understates the case when he attributes Donne's turning to religious poetry mainly to his experiencing a contrast and conflict between the world and the spirit, or as Leishman puts it in another context, to his

3. Poems 290.

4. Leishman, The Monarch of Wit. London 1951, p.252.

detachment of life, a sense of other-worldliness.⁵ We do not have sufficient biographical data to give an exact picture of Donne's situation during this period, but from the little that we know, we can be reasonably certain that he was in a serious crisis and not merely suffering from his customary melancholy. His letters from this period give, as has been indicated before, a convincing picture of severe frustration and crisis of identity; in Biathanatos there is convincing circumstantial evidence that he was indeed contemplating suicide. Perhaps the most alarming sign would be that his love lyrics of this period suddenly display unexpectedly dark moods and sombre colours. A good example of this is Twicknam garden:

Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with teares,
Hither I come to seeke the spring,⁶

The fact that Twicknam garden, together with certain other Poems of this period, displaying an equally sombre mood, were dedicated to other muses than Anne Donne, may easily lead us to consider whether something was wrong with Donne's marriage. Although too bold speculations must be avoided, it may be reasonably assumed that the serious overall crisis that Donne was going through either affected his married life, or that the situation of his marriage aggravated the general crisis. It is a reasonable probability that Donne, who had already weathered many serious crises, might not have felt compelled to turn to religious meditations, had he been able to find his satisfaction and sense of security and of being accepted with his wife. The thing that is certain is that only a crisis of the gravest order could have prompted the launching of Donne to seek new religious dimensions, as he is already tentatively doing in La Corona.

This search for new dimensions can be seen to have gained more impetus

5. Op. cit., p.255.

6. Poems 26.

in Donne's next major religious poem, The Litanie, written probably in 1609-10. Here Donne is no longer content to gaze in wonder at the stained-glass mosaic of the sacred history, but he brings his own self more in the picture. Already the first stanza of The Litanie contains a passionate petition:

Father of Heaven, and him, by whom
 It, and us for it, and all else for us
 Thou madest, and govern'st ever, come
 And re-create mee, now growne ruinous:
 My heart is by dejection, clay,
 And by selfe-murder, red.
 From this red earth, O Father, purge away
 All vicious tinctures, that new fashioned
 I may rise up from death, before I'am dead.⁷

Throughout the stanzas there is a noticeable shift of emphasis, as compared with La Corona, from the objective mysteries and paradoxes of Christian faith to Donne's own feeling of shortcoming. He ransacks his soul and lists conscientiously possible sins, failures and doubts that he might have and prays the Lord to deliver him from them. However, in reading The Litanie, one should not get carried away, and give Donne credit for more depth of religious feeling than is his due. It was pointed out earlier that in La Corona Donne was largely painting an image of the Divinity he was trying to contact without the contact yet being established. In The Litanie he is largely engaged in a similar process, now creating an image of a repenting soul, in the hope that his soul might possibly develop along these lines. His prayer:

When wee are mov'd to seeme religious
 Only to vent wit, Lord deliver us.⁸

contains an important key to the emotional background of The Litanie. Donne

7. Poems 308.

8. Poems 315.

is perfectly aware that much of his religiousness is only venting his wit, and yet would will it to be otherwise. His prayer carries the thought: Through the venting of my wit, Lord help me to become religious. As Donne, in some of his earlier love poems, depicted an amorous soul and the mechanisms and stratagems of love, without actually being in love, he now depicts a religious soul, using more wit than feeling, relying more on accounts of others and previous literary examples than his own experience. He is preparing ground for personal involvement, which is yet to come.

The personal involvement in Donne's religious poetry makes its entry in the Holy Sonnets. The dating of these 19 poems is uncertain; Leishman attributes them to the period after his wife's death, whereas Gardner is of the opinion that they belong mostly to the era before his ordination, dating some as early as Mitcham and only three of them, XVII, XVIII and XIX to the period after his ordination.⁹ It seems, however, that, looking at the kind of experience they portray, the decade 1610-20 is as close as we can possibly date them, with the obvious exceptions of numbers XVII and XVIII. In the Holy Sonnets we can detect that the note of anxiety is becoming urgent indeed. Donne is no longer painting a portrait of a religious soul, as in The Litanie, but his personal anguish is real. A good example is Holy Sonnet I:

Thou hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?
 Repaire me now, for mine end doth haste,
 I runne to death, and death meetes me as fast,
 And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
 I dare not move my dimme eyes any way,
 Despaire behind, and death before doth cast
 Such terrour, and my feeble flesh doth waste

9. See Leishman, p.258-9. Gardner, Introduction to the Divine Poems.

By sinne in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh;
 Onely thou art above, and when towards thee
 By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;
 But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
 That not one houre my selfe I can sustaine;
 Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,
 And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.¹⁰

Here, as in most of the Holy Sonnets we can see that Donne is plagued by a heavy existential anguish. The theme of death, decay and destruction is prominent, and obviously the real cause of his anguish. It is important to note that there is only a very slight veneer of religious frame of reference, when Donne is describing his state; he is no longer trying to depict the religious soul to such an extent as in The Litanie. He openly admits that his greatest fear is in the face of annihilation. He is no longer young by the standards of his time, probably in his early forties. His health is ailing and constantly reminding him of the inevitable decay. Feeling the emptiness around him, he is still reaching out his hand, hoping that God will grasp it. However, it is obvious that he has not yet experienced an answer to his anguished cry. One can see clearly in the Holy Sonnets that when Donne is addressing God, his words do not carry the same conviction as when he is describing his own state. One suspects that he is still quoting what others have said and written of God, rather than relying on his own experience of being answered. He is craving for a message, for communication and communion that would form a bridge across the emptiness that is about to engulf him, but has found none.

It has been already pointed out, how Anne Donne's death in 1617 was the event that precipitated the process that led to Donne's final conversion. With his wife Donne had been able to overcome the fears and anxieties that had

10. Poems 193.

prevented him from harmonious interpersonal communication with his earlier mistresses. With her he had come to know a wholly new dimension of communion between two souls; now that he had lost her, recourse to God was the only way open to him to find a passage from the loneliness of his existence in a body that was rapidly growing older. It has also been shown that the process where the love of God came to replace the love of his wife was by no means instantaneous. We can see that in 1619, when he wrote A Hymne to Christ, on his going to Germany, he was already prepared to disclaim the ties that had held him to his previous mode of existence, yet not quite sure what kind of reception God would even then grant him. Perhaps resignation would be the best word to describe his attitude in the last stanza of this hymn:

Seale then this bill of my Divorce to All,
 On whom those fainter beames of love did fall;
 Marry those loves, which in youth scattered bee
 On Fame, Wit, Hopes (false mistresses) to thee.
 Churches are best for Prayer, that have least light:
 To see God only, I goe out of sight:
 And to scape stormy dayes, I chuse
 An Everlasting night.¹¹

It has already been pointed out that the serious illness that Donne went through in 1623 marks the final conclusion of his conversion. We are fortunate to possess ample literary evidence from these crucial weeks; during his illness (or more likely, his convalescence), Donne wrote his little book Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions and the two poems, Hymne to God my God in my Sicknesse and A Hymne to God the Father. If we look first at Devotions, we can see how Donne in the midst of meticulously describing his illness, its outbreak and different phases up to convalescence, concentrates on two main themes: The decay of the body and the imminent death facing him and

11. Poems 322.

and secondly, the problems of loneliness and communication. The opening lines of the first meditation establish well the tone that is pervasive of the whole work:

Variable, and therefore miserable condition of man! this minute I was well, and am ill, this minute. I am surprised with a sudden change, and alteration to worse, and can impute it to no cause, nor call it by any name. (D7)

From the general consideration of human frailty Donne soon proceeds to the consideration of the sinful condition of man, and especially his own sins and shortcomings. The sense of his own worthlessness in the face of God that was already so dramatically exploited in the Holy Sonnets, now reaches its culmination, when death is no longer a hypothetical possibility in distant future, but something that may seize him any minute:

I have sinned behind thy back (if that can be done), by wilful abstaining from thy congregations and omitting thy service, and I have sinned before thy face, in my hypocrisies in prayer, in my ostentation, and the mingling a respect of myself in preaching thy word; I have sinned in my fasting, by repining when a penurious fortune hath kept me low; and I have sinned even in fulness, when I have been at thy table, by a negligent examination by a wilful prevarication, in receiving that heavenly food and physic. (D101)

This sense of utter dejection and desolation also carries with itself the urgent need of company, fellowship and communion:

As sickness is the greatest misery, so the greatest misery of sickness is solitude; when the infectiousness of the disease deters them who should assist from coming; even the physician dares scarce come. Solitude is a torment which is not threatened in hell itself. (D30)

This need for fellowship and communion stems partly from the natural fear of a sick man of being left alone and from his need of comfort, but, as is the case with the whole of the Devotions, the feeling receives its full significance from the utter loneliness in death. Here Donne exclaims:

O my God, it is the leper that thou has condemned to live alone; have I such a leprosy in my soul that I must die alone; alone without thee? Shall this come to such a leprosy in my body that I must die alone; alone without them that should assist, that should comfort me? (D33).

In this passage one can already see that the note of dejection and desolation is already giving way to positive acceptance. Although Donne is still terrified of loneliness in the face of death, he does concede that God and God's people and his own friends are there. He is not forsaken, but part of a great structure of interactive relations, that supports him. Thus, when asking what Donne has accomplished during his illness that is portrayed in his Devotions this is the first main point. However, he would not have been able to accept himself in communion with his God and neighbours, had he not been able to overcome his sense of unworthiness. It is important to pay attention to the words of D.W. Harding, in his analysis The Devotions

Now:

We have to see that what his faith does for Donne in his sickness, for Donne in this world, is to convince him that his self-condemnation need not and must not be total and final. And non-Christians too, suffering from a deep sense of worthlessness, do in favourable circumstances, or with the right kind of help, come to terms with it, not by condoning what they have cause to deplore but by coming to believe that in spite of everything they can accept themselves, that there remains some worth in being the person they now are. Reconciliation to himself, though not to his past failures, is what in terms of human experience Donne achieves through his faith.¹²

Harding is perfectly right in stating that reconciliation to himself, though not to his past failures, is what Donne achieved during his illness. He is, however, putting the cart before the horse in supposing that it was Donne's Christian faith that helped him to do this. On the contrary, although the apparatus of Christian doctrine gave Donne suitable tools to work with, it was his reconciliation to himself that finally enabled him to accept the Christian faith wholeheartedly. Although Donne had earlier accepted the Christian doctrine as an intellectual truth, he had not been able to apply its positive sides to himself. Now, after the struggle against the sense of his own worthlessness in face of imminent death, he could accept the idea

12. Harding, The Devotions Now. Published in John Donne, Essays in Celebration. London 1972, p.401.

that God was willing to abide by him, and that he had his place in the company of God's faithful. It is his own acceptance of himself that finally enables him to write:

But as I know, O my gracious God, that for all those sins committed since, yet thou wilt consider me, as I was in thy purpose when thou wrotest my name in the book of life in mine election; so into what deviations soever I stray and wander by occasion of this sicknesse, O God, return thou to that minute wherein thou wast pleased with me and consider me in that condition. (D101-2)

Thus, the new note of confidence and security also appears in his two hymns, written during the same period of convalescence. Here he gives the positive answers that he has found in his struggle, distilled in verse form. In Hymne to God my God in my Sicknesse the thought of resurrection overrides the fears and anxieties caused by the decay of body and imminent death. The tone of this hymn is one of joy and trusting anticipation. The concluding stanza of the poem tells us that the crisis of fear has been overcome:

So, in his purple wrapp'd receive mee Lord,
By these his thornes give me his other crowne;
And as to others soules I preach'd thy word,
Be this my Text, my Sermon to mine owne,
Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down.¹³

Correspondingly, A Hymne to God the Father treats the theme of his self-accusations and sense of sinfulness and worthlessness. Once again he puts forth his faults and shortcomings, but this time the promises of God in his Son are weighty enough to dispel to scatter his fears. When he says:

And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I feare no more¹⁴

this means that Donne is indeed willing to leave himself to God and no longer fears the depths of his own soul.

Thus, looking in retrospect at Donne's religious development, we can see

13. Poems 337.

14. Poems 338.

that there is a marked similarity to the development of his amorous life. He starts from a point where the world of faith is more or less a fiction to him, and tries to imagine it with his fantasy and wit, relying heavily on the tradition of previous thinkers and writers. This can be directly equated with the period of his earliest love-poetry, the Elegies, when the world of love (even possibly amorous experience) was still something which had more reality in his fantasy than his experience. As in his amorous development, so also in his religious development, the question of personal involvement becomes acute, and the period of Holy Sonnets with its vacillation between urge and insecurity can be seen as a parallel to the period of the earlier Songs and Sonnets. The personal battle that he underwent during his illness in 1623 marks a similar turning point in his religious life as his falling in love with Anne More and the background experience of 'The Extasie did 23 years earlier in his amorous life. In both cases we see a dispelling of fears; he receives a certainty of being accepted, together with a sense of basic security. The similarities are so marked that they should be evident to us, even if Donne had not himself spelled out the parallelities of his emotional development in Holy Sonnet XVII Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt. The question that needs to be asked is where does this lead us in starting to consider the general character of his theology? The answer is, that when studying his theological thinking, we must pay special attention to how his existential experiences are translated into the language of theology. We have seen how his decisive discovery of a shared experience of reality with a woman was now broadened into sharing a reality with God and all his creatures. Again, this experience enabled him to accept Christian faith whole-heartedly on all levels of his personality, and not merely as an intellectual truth. Thus, he had now developed a coherent view of reality which was ready to be expressed in an ontological system, in the language of

theology, and which also was to serve as the basis on which he founded his religious views. Therefore, when studying Donne's theology we are to look for how he expresses his views of a shared experience of a reality based on communication and interaction, in the conceptual frame of Christian doctrine. we are not to be blinded by formal similarities that may offer themselves, into thinking that Donne would, together with the form, necessarily subscribe to the content. . Instead, we are to keep in mind that, for Donne, his proclamation of Christian faith was ultimately interpretation of his own decisive experiences, and to approach it as such.

2. General character of Donne's theology

When tracing Donne's religious development in the previous chapter we have noticed that Donne's conversion was achieved on two levels; first he came to accept the Christian (and Anglican) doctrine as an intellectual truth, and later, he struggled to find the meaning and personal application of this truth to himself. We have seen that it was not until 1623, that by coming to terms with his own self and his deepest problems, Donne was able to accept the Christian faith wholeheartedly after a long Jacob's struggle that had lasted for several years. Thus it is evident that the general structure of his theology is strongly influenced by his own personal outlook and the problems that he had conquered. However, this is only one side of the coin. As any theologian in any age, Donne did not operate in a doctrinal vacuum. He was strongly influenced both by the theological heritage of past generations, and by the generally accepted theology of his own Church and age. Thus, before trying to sketch the general outlines of his theological thinking, we must first take a look at his relationships to both past and contemporary theology.

Most scholars have been thoroughly impressed by the considerable reverence that Donne pays to medieval authorities. His sermons and other writings abound with references to the early Fathers of the Church, as well as to the Scholastics. This, in itself, is hardly surprising. Donne had received his earliest education from Catholic tutors, and was well versed in the system of St. Thomas Aquinas and his disciples. Also, the Fathers and Schoolmen were well-respected in the whole Anglican Church at that time, being often cited as authorities by Hooker, Laud, Andrewes and Taylor and other apologists of the English Church. Nor is it surprising to find that

among all ancient and medieval authorities St. Augustine is Donne's unquestionable favourite. One can well expect Donne to feel a special kinship of spirit with this saint, who, like Donne himself, had an irregular and erratic youth and was not converted until a more mature age. Also, Donne must have been enchanted by the acute tone of personal immediacy and involvement in St. Augustine's writings - a trait that was so close to his own style of preaching. As has been pointed out by Thomas F. Merrill, Donne shared with St. Augustine the understanding of the importance of the individual self in a theistic universe.¹⁵

But although Donne frequently quotes medieval authorities and is indebted to both the Fathers and Schoolmen in many respects, it would be totally erroneous to call him an essentially medieval spirit, a conclusion to which Mary Paton Ramsay comes in her doctoral thesis Les Doctrines Médiévales chez Donne:

Or, nous avons constaté chez notre auteur deux choses: 1. Sa pensée conserve essentiellement un caractère médiéval; 2. elle est fortement imprégnée de plotinisme.¹⁶

The same idea of Donne being a medieval thinker whose ideas were thoroughly impregnated by Neoplatonism is shared by Mrs. Simpson:

His thought is medieval in character, and most of his ideas can be traced back through Aquinas to St. Augustine, the pseudo-Dionysius, and other early Christian writers who brought into the Catholic Church much of the philosophy of Neoplatonism.¹⁷

What Ramsay and Simpson fail to see is that although Donne admittedly uses medieval elements with a strong influence of Neoplatonism in building his theological structure, the result is something very much different from the origins. To demonstrate this point, let us take a look at Donne's ideas of creation and the universe. Ramsay summarizes Donne's thoughts on this

15. Merrill, The Christian Anthropology of John Donne. University of Wisconsin, 1964, p.14.

16. Ramsay, p.258.

17. A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne. Oxford 1924, p.88.

subject in the following manner:

1. Dieu a tiré l'univers du néant; 2. Le monde intelligible et le monde sensible ont été créés en un seul moment, et c'est le moment où le temps lui-même commença; 3. En ce qui concerne le monde sensible Dieu a créé d'abord une matière première capable seulement de recevoir, des formes. Sur ce dernier point l'opinion du moyen âge est divisée et Donne sans s'exprimer d'une façon nette, semble pourtant adopter cette opinion. Quant aux âmes humaines, il croit à la "création continue"; 4. Tout a été créé d'après des images ou formes exemplaires, qui existent éternellement au sein de Dieu.¹⁸

Admittedly this summary indeed bears strong similarity to Neoplatonic thinking. But the similarity ends when Donne starts adding his personal contribution to this structure, pouring new wine into old skins. The first thing to be noted is that Donne is not interested in ontological structures, but immediately goes on to personalize them, and pays most attention to interactive relationships. Thus when he speaks of the creation of man, he does not speak of man in general, but of an individual self:

For though God did elect mee, before he did actually create mee, yet God did not mean to elect mee, before hee meant to create mee; when his purpose was upon me, to elect me, surely his purpose had passed upon me, to create mee; for when he elected me, I was I. (S VIII 282)

The insistence on "I was I" is already a new element which, when introduced in an otherwise Neoplatonic context leads us to expect that Donne does not merely repeat what earlier generations have thought, but brings his own original contribution. The insistence of an individual self also leads us to expect that Donne's God is not a general creator, but an intensely personal God, whose importance lies not so much in having created man, but in his constant interaction with his creation. This is confirmed by numerous passages in Donne's sermons. He frequently remarks that "we are to consider God, not as he is in himselfe, but as he works upon us." (S VI 216). As William Mueller points out:

18. Ramsay, p.304.

Time and again Donne emphasized that man in this world needs to dwell on God's existence, his relationship to man, more than on God's essence, his attributes; there is an emphasis more on God's immanence than on his transcendence.¹⁹

Here Mueller hits the mark on pointing out the overwhelming importance of immanence, as compared with transcendence, in Donne's thinking. Donne had come to accept Christian faith in a very immanent situation, being seriously ill and confronted with imminent death. Thus, it is logical that in his theological thinking transcendental structures, such as Neoplatonism, are only of value if they can be used to illustrate immanently valid facts and situations. Thus it is obvious that Donne is far from being a medieval soul. His thinking might be more correctly characterized as akin to existentialist. This is a fact that has already been discovered by some scholars especially within the 1960's. In his thesis Thomas Merrill quotes Theodore Gill saying:

"Donne possessed an anachronistic turn of mind which repeatedly interpreted experience and belief in a manner we now call existentialist." 20

Merrill himself is more wary of calling Donne's thinking anachronistic, and gives the following explanation:

Yet to brand evidences of existential thought in Donne's work as "anachronistic" is to presume that the twentieth century holds exclusive franchise on existentialism. Such a claim no informed existentialist would care to make. To the contrary, it is commonly and vociferously insisted that existentialism is as old as philosophy itself Few philosophers, in fact, have escaped having their names linked with existentialism, and this is not because of any uncontrolled zeal on the part of existentialist enthusiasts to find inchoate anticipations of their "discovery" everywhere and in everything. It is rather because existentialism by its very nature is not a philosophical system but merely a way of looking at things which has potential application to virtually all fields of inquiry.²¹

In other words, we should be careful not to get carried away by the temptation of simplistic tags and labels, but approach Donne as a unique individual, a mixture of old and new with his own personal matrix

19. Mueller, John Donne Preacher. Princeton 1962, p.241.

20. The Sermons of John Donne, selected and introduced by Theodore A. Gill. New York, 1958, p.7.

21. Merrill, The Christian Anthropology of John Donne, pp.193-4.

characterizing and dominating all the different components.

From this point of view it is easy to look at Donne's theology and ascribe to the medieval and Neoplatonic elements their relative importance. It is also easier to solve some dilemmas that baffled Ramsay and Simpson. As an example we can take the problem of sin and evil. Both Ramsay and Simpson agree that Donne followed here the medieval doctrine peccatum nihil. Because everything originates from God, who by his essence is goodness itself, everything created must be essentially good. Donne agreeingly quotes Augustine: Inquantum sumus, boni sumus. Consequently sin and evil must be mere deprivations of goodness, incomplete being by their nature. However, both Simpson and Ramsay cannot explain why Donne nonetheless gives such a strong emphasis to Christian life and often preaches convincingly and at length on sin and its power. Here the solution is obvious. Donne is not interested in essences. Sin and evil may be nothing in their essence, but their effect on human existence and the interaction between God and man or man and his neighbour is devastating. Hence it is a real power that must be fought against at all costs.

If the question of Donne's relationship to the medieval heritage is relatively easy to solve, the question of how he fits in the contemporary theological field is a more complex one. This question has been approached most thoroughly in two studies, Itrat-Husain's book The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne and George H. Bruce's typewritten doctoral thesis John Donne and the Anglican Faith.²² In their respective studies both men arrive at fairly similar conclusions, describing Donne as a faithful and sincere son of the Anglican Church, being well in accord with Hooker, Andrewes and Laud. As Bruce states in the introduction of his thesis:

22. University of Rochester 1962.

This thesis shows that Donne was an orthodox and sincere member of the Anglican Church. Though Donne has often been accused of being only half-hearted in his acceptance of Anglicanism, he was, as this study shows, neither lukewarm in his acceptance of the Church of England, nor Roman Catholic in his sympathies, but earnestly in support of his faith, as it was codified by Richard Hooker.²³

However, it is perhaps wise to approach the unconditional acceptance of Donne's Anglican orthodoxy by Husain and Bruce a little warily. What makes the issue complicated is that Anglicanism in the early 17th century was far from being a clearly codified doctrinal structure. As P.E. More writes in his foreword to the anthology Anglicanism:

Within this period of nearly a hundred years a considerable diversity of opinion may be discovered among admittedly Anglican writers on points of doctrine and discipline England, it is important to remember, did not produce at that time, and indeed has never produced, a single theologian to whom appeal can be made for a final sentence in disputed questions, as the Germans could appeal to Luther and the Presbyterians to Calvin, nor had she any such ultimate court of authority as the Counter-Reformation possessed in the Council of Trent. Possibly Hooker, had he written at the conclusion of our century, might have summed up the scattered thoughts of his predecessors in quasi-definitive form; but that is a conjecture, and as a matter of fact no such legislator did appear.²⁴

During Donne's era the doctrine of Anglicanism was loosely defined. The only proof of orthodoxy required of the Anglican ministers was the signing of the Thirty-nine Articles, which by their very nature were broad and conciliatory, leaving a wide margin to different interpretations. Instead of doctrinal matters, the emerging Church of England was more concerned with political and social issues. Matters of theological controversy did not enter the picture until the existing social order and the established political and ecclesiastical regime were brought into jeopardy. It is significant that the struggle with puritanism started after the Hampton Court conference in 1604, when James I felt that his reign was threatened by the Puritans' demands, and coined his famous expression: "No Bishop, no

23. Bruce, p.iii.

24. Anglicanism, ed. P.E. More and F.L. Cross. London 1957, p.xx.

King". In a similar manner the controversy with Rome was largely re-kindled by the Gunpowder Plot, and the real issue at stake was whether the King or the Pope had the ultimate authority in the realm of England, this being put in test through the Oath of Allegiance. The chief endeavour of the ruling regime was to create a united national Church, this undertaking providing the norm that was to be used in judging doctrinal issues. The two chief issues of Protestantism, justification by faith and the supremacy of the scripture were accepted and affirmed, but otherwise the emphasis in the Church of England was on the via media, avoiding the extremes of Rome and Geneva, and thus providing a wide basis for unity and accord. Hooker's attempt at writing an Anglican Summa was an isolated venture, and his work never reached the position of a normative theology. Laud, in his turn, seems to have striven for his ideal of Anglicanism largely through a process of elimination, being on the look-out for tendencies that seemed Puritanical or Papist and at times using thoroughly unpleasant methods to suppress them.

Thus it is against this background that we must approach the question of Donne's relationship with contemporary Anglican theology from two angles:

1. How much was he in accord with the decisive Anglican issues of the time;
2. How does he compare with other Anglican thinkers of the period, notably with Hooker and Andrewes.

On the decisive Anglican issues of the existing political and ecclesiastical order and the King's supremacy, there can be no doubt on Donne's standing. He was a King's man through and through. He owed his whole career to the initiative and favour of James I. One of his early works, Pseudo-Martyr, was entirely devoted to proving that the Catholics ought to take the Oath of Allegiance, and he did not hesitate to defend the existing order in his sermons. Also, in accordance with the prevailing Anglican spirit, Donne polemicizes against Catholics and Puritans mostly on points

where their doctrines would imply changes in the existing order. We may go further and ask the question, whether Donne's straightforward standing here was something dictated by his debt of gratitude to the King and by his former courtier's attitudes, or whether it was something that stemmed from an inner conviction. Here the answer can be found in Donne's conception of the Church. As in his ontology he was not concerned with essences, but laid stress on relationship and interaction, his ecclesiology was chiefly concerned about the practical possibilities of the Church to fulfill its functions. This will be dealt with in greater detail in following chapters; let it suffice to say now that Donne saw the Anglican system of close relationship between the state and the Church as something that best guaranteed the Church favourable working conditions in a way that was "more convenient and advantageous than in any other Kingdom". Thus, we can say that his acceptance of the Anglican way was in accord with Donne's way of thinking and his general theological structure.

The next question to be asked is whether Donne clashed in any way with the Thirty-nine Articles to which he had subscribed. Again, the answer is no. We cannot find in his sermons any major line of thought that could be classified as being in direct conflict with the defined formulation of these Articles. However, although Donne did not openly contradict them, it is important to bear in mind Mrs. Simpson's observation that Donne did not lay equal stress on all parts of the Creed.²⁵ Although he was not outrightly heterodox, he had his own preferred viewpoints for looking at the Christian doctrine, which in turn were determined by the process of religious development that we have already charted in previous chapters.

25. Simpson, op. cit., p.68.

In other words, although Donne accepted the Anglican doctrine, this was not the theological edifice that he was expounding, but rather the framework that allowed him to preach Christianity as he had experienced it and had come to accept it. That Donne can be called an orthodox Anglican is attributable more to Anglican doctrinal flexibility than to Donne's personal obedience to the Creed of his Church.

But although it is easy to see that Donne could be called an orthodox Anglican in the sense that he did not kick over the traces and that he upheld the Anglican position in central social and political issues, it is also evident that Donne fits ill in the company of other contemporary divines. There is a quality in his thinking and preaching, that is characteristically his own, as has been pointed out already by Logan Pearsall Smith in his introduction to an anthology of Donne's sermons:

And yet in these, as in his poems, there still remains something baffling and enigmatic which still eludes our last analysis. Reading these old hortatory and dogmatic pages, the thought suggests itself that Donne is often saying something else, something poignant and personal, and yet, in the end, incommunicable to us.²⁶

These lines have been also quoted by T.S. Eliot in his essay Lancelot Andrewes, where Eliot makes some comparisons with Donne and Andrewes, and develops Smith's idea further. Setting aside Eliot's value judgements, one must state that he is very much on the right track in tracing the essential difference between Donne and Andrewes, when he writes:

Andrewes's emotion is purely contemplative; it is not personal, it is wholly evoked by the object of contemplation, to which it is adequate; his emotion is wholly contained and explained by its object. But with Donne there is always something else, the "baffling" of which Mr. Pearsall Smith speaks in his introduction. Donne is a "personality" in a sense in which Andrewes is not: his sermons, one feels, are a "means of self-expression". He is constantly finding an object which shall be adequate to his feelings; Andrewes is wholly absorbed in the object and therefore responds with adequate emotion.²⁷

26. Smith, Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages with an Essay. Oxford 1919.

27. Eliot, For Lancelot Andrewes. London 1928, pp.29-30.

What Eliot is obviously striving to express here, is that for Donne human experience (especially his own) always comes before a doctrinal structure. This is also the great dividing line between Donne and other contemporary theologians. Where other Anglican divines saw themselves as exponents of a divine structure that had been revealed to men in the Bible and/or the tradition of the Church, Donne was first and foremost an interpreter of existence and life, applying the Christian doctrine to human experience. The difference becomes obvious if we compare Donne with Hooker. Although there is much that is similar in the purely dogmatic standpoints of these two men, the differences are also pronounced. As has been shown by John S. Marshall in his work Hooker and the Anglican Tradition (London 1963), Hooker was basically an Aristotelian and a Thomist. He derived strong influences from Cajetan, and approved of the method of a Summa for writing a philosophy and theology united into one whole. His main concern was on essences as sources for human thought and epistemology.²⁸ In brief, although Hooker worked in a concrete situation of ecclesio-political controversy with Puritans, he was first and foremost a synthetizer, accepting the Revelation of the Bible and the tradition of the Church as the given viewpoints from which he was to distil a homogenous entity. Contrary to Donne, the complexities of human existence did not enter as a determining factor in his work and thinking.

Thus we have seen that against the backgrounds of medieval tradition and contemporary theological thinking, Donne stands out alone because of his "existentialist trait". We now have to ask, what central points did this trait raise in his teaching and preaching. We have already stated that unlike Hooker and most other contemporary Anglican divines Donne did not

28. See chapter on Hooker and the Thomists, Marshall, pp.56-65.

accept the Bible and the tradition of the Church as automatically given sources of a structure he was to expound, but rather concentrated on human experience. From this follows that in his theology the sermon held a central position. "Nothing is Gospell, not Evangelium, good message, if it be not put into a messengers mouth and delivered by him." (S VII 396) The Word of God in the Bible, as well as the tradition, were to him latent entities until they were brought into dynamic interaction. This could happen only when they were presented to a congregation in a concrete preaching situation:

Still we must hear Evangelium in sermone, the Gospel in the Word, in the Word so as we may hear it, that is the word preached; for howsoever it be Gospel in it self, it is not Gospel to us, if it be not preached in the Congregation. (S I 291)

This passage demonstrates neatly the distinction that Donne makes between essence and existence. A thing may be Gospel in itself, yet it is perfectly useless, until it becomes Gospel to somebody, in a concrete situation. It was the duty of the preacher to create this situation where the Word of God could become a living reality to an individual parishioner, to touch his life and remould it. Hence all theology was subordinated to the living proclamation, and its main duty was to assist the creating of this confrontation situation.

From the exalted position that the sermon held in Donne's theology, follows that the necessary framework of preaching, the Church, was also in a central position:

Therefore we have a clearer, that is, a nearer light then the written Gospell, that is, the Church. For, the principall intention in Christs Miracles, even in the purpose of God, was but thereby to create, and constitute, and establish an assurance, that he that did those Miracles, was the right man, the true Messias, that Son of God, who was made man for the redemption and ransome of the whole world. But then, that which was to give them their best assistance, that that was to supply all, by that way, to apply this general redemption to every particular soule, that was the establishing of the Church, of a visible and constant, and permanent meanes of salvation, by his Ordinances there, usque ad consummationem, till the end of the world. (S VIII 307)

From this we can see that although the Church, too, held an exalted position in Donne's theology, it was not by virtue of her essence but by her function. The task of the Church was to "apply this general redemption to every particular soule" and she had value only as long as she performed her duty as means of salvation.

One more concept that requires more detailed consideration here to produce a complete picture of the overall features of Donne's theology is that of salvation. In the above quoted paragraph we can see that Donne calls the Church a permanent and visible means of salvation. This leads us to think that to Donne salvation is something that principally takes place here and now, in definite time and space. This idea is further supported by the fact that Donne makes a distinction between general salvation, for all mankind, and particular salvation, the application of the general salvation to a particular soul, which is the work of the Church. The particular salvation takes place where Christ is preached and where an individual receives this preaching. This, again, once more demonstrates to us the priority that existence held over essences in Donne's thinking. He is not interested in justification in foro coeli, God imputing grace on an undeserving sinner as a forensic act of pardon, but rather concentrates on the sinner in his actual state in a given concrete situation. If salvation brought about by the preaching of the Word of God is to have any relevance, it must touch the individual in his actual existential situation and be a meaningful reality in his everyday life. Thus, when Donne preaches on heaven and hell, his concepts are overtly in the indefinite dimension of eternity, but it is easy to see through the superficial superstructure and discern that he is really speaking of the heaven and hell that are already here in our everyday existence. Two examples of this may be quoted here:

The pure in heart are blessed already, not only comparatively, that they are in a better way of Blessednesse, then others are, but actually in a present position of it: for this world and the next world, are not, for the pure in heart, two houses, but two roomes, a Gallery to passe through

and a Lodging to rest in, in the same House, which are under one rooffe, Christ Jesus; The Militant and the Triumphant, are not two Churches, but this the Porch, and that the Chancell of the same Church, which are under one head, Christ Jesus; so the Joy, and the sense of Salvation, which the pure in heart have here, is not a joy severed from the Joy of Heaven, but a Joy that begins in us here, and continues, and accompanies us thither, and there flowers on, and dilates it selfe to an infinite expansion. (S VII 340)

Here one can see that although Donne, in an orthodox manner, preaches of the joys of heaven to come, salvation and the joys of heaven are nonetheless to him something that take place already here and now. On the other hand, when preaching of hell, he exclaims:

What Tophet is no Paradise? What brimstone is not amber? What gnashing is not confort? What gnawing of the worm is not a tickling? What torment is not a marriage bed, to this damnation to be secluded eternally, eternally from the sight of God? (S V 267)

Here Donne's greatest source of fear, when speaking of hell, is to be secluded from the sight of God. This, obviously, is something that reflects his own experience, the days of his melancholy and depression, when he was only seeking God and felt himself to be secluded from him. Thus, even Donne's hell is something of a very concrete nature that he had already experienced in his life, what was needed to make it orthodox preaching of hell was merely to add the dimensional attribute: eternally.

Thus we can summarize the conclusions to be drawn from this chapter in the following manner:

1. Donne constantly placed existence before essences. All aspects of the Christian faith were for him something to be experienced in concrete situations, here and now. Reality to him was a constantly fluctuating event, where different entities had significance in so far as they affected the general happening. He was both listener of human experience and partaker in it. His theology is essentially preached theology, where emphasis is on the actual preaching event, and where dogmatic-doctrinal matter serves to

further or explain experience, but does not take priority over it.

2. Although Donne was in many respects indebted to the theological heritage of the Middle Ages, especially to St. Augustine and the Neoplatonic school of early Fathers it would be wrong to call him an essentially medieval soul. His emphasis on existence and experience, as well as his appreciation of the importance of individual self, help him to overcome the limitations of the heritage of the past. In this way a modern scholar will often find Donne a surprisingly contemporary thinker.

3. Although Donne never came in open conflict with Anglicanism, and adhered to its doctrine, as well as to its social and political views, he was not a typical Anglican divine to be counted in the same school as Hooker, Laud and Andrewes. Here again the same factors that enabled him to surpass the limitations of medieval thinking, also made him a thinker far ahead of contemporary Anglican divines.

4. In Donne's thinking the Church and especially the preaching of the word of God in the Church were central. Everything else in his theology was subordinate to preaching. But preaching itself had to touch directly man's existence in order to be meaningful. Salvation itself took place in the preaching event, and both salvation and damnation were things to be experienced within the immediate scope of human existence, they were concepts carrying their full significance in the here and now.

II. THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

It has been already stated in the previous chapter that Donne experienced reality as a constantly fluctuating and changing event. To him the world was an intricate pattern of interactive relationships, where man was both observing the happening around him and, by participating in it, simultaneously shaping it. Therefore, when starting the actual discussion on Donne's ecclesiology, it is obvious that we must pay our greatest attention to these patterns of relationships and to the role of the Church in the interaction. I have divided this discussion into two main chapters, The Church in the World and The Church in her Actions. In this main chapter, The Church in the World, I have tried to trace the role of the Church on three levels, in Donne's cosmological structure, starting from creation, sub-chapter The Church in Creation, in the historical situation during Donne's own era, sub-chapters The Church Divided and The Church and Social Order and, finally, the role of the Church in the existence of the individual, sub-chapter The Church as the Ark of Salvation. In the latter main chapter I will try to trace the details of the actions of the Church in its different functions.

A. THE CHURCH IN CREATION

When dealing with the ecclesiology of some other theologian, the first question to be asked might be: What is the ontological essence of the Church? With Donne, however, this question would be rather

inappropriate. Because his view of reality was based on an ontology of relationships and interaction rather than that of essences, the start must lie elsewhere. Thus, we are best advised to start our ecclesiological enquiry by asking: What is the essential role played by the Church in the cosmic interaction? To answer this question we must go to the very beginning, and start with the creation. However, when we use the word beginning, in speaking of the creation, it should be noted that this word does not occur in the temporal sense. When dealing with the creation, the Christian tradition shows a marked tendency to use concepts of the past not as an account of historical occurrences, but as something that explains the present. The story of creation is not intended to give an actual account of how the world came into being, but to explain the present situation. With Donne this tendency is especially strong. We have already noted that in Donne's thinking and preaching immanence always takes precedence over transcendence. When he is preaching on creation, his material stretches to the very beginning of time itself, but his emphasis is on the here and now. In other words, the history of creation is to Donne, interpretation and illustration of the present situation. Thus, when we answer the question about the role of the Church in the present time, in the very situation when Donne uttered his words from the pulpit.

In dealing with this question, the common method of collecting excerpts from Donne's sermons where he is speaking on our topic is inapplicable. This is because, as we have intimated earlier, Donne's message is not contained merely in doctrinal statements, but also in the dramatic dynamics of the sermon itself, in the "dialogue of one". Therefore it is more advisable to follow the course of one relevant sermon at greater length, in this case the one preached to the Earl of Exeter and his company, in his chapel at St.

John's, 13.6.1624 (S VI, no. 7). The text of this sermon is taken from the book of Revelation, chapter 7, verse 9: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." In the course of this analysis we hope to see how Donne conceived the interaction between the Creator and his creation, both in the beginning and the present, as well as the role that the Church played in it.

In the opening words of this sermon Donne warns his audience of the dangers of curiosity, which are present when dealing with a text from the Revelation. He presents his division, consisting of two main parts, first, the number of those that shall be saved, and second, the qualities which shall be imprinted on those saved. Then he proceeds to elaborate on his division:

In the first of these, we shall passe by these steps; first, we shall consider the sociableness, the communicableness of God himself, who gives us the earth, and offers us heaven, and desires to have his kingdome well peopled; he would have many, he would have all, he would have everyone of them have all. And then, the first word of the text, (After this) will carry us to the consideration of that which was done before; which was, first, that they which were of this number, were sealed, and then they which were so sealed before, were a great number, one hundred forty four thousand; but they who were made partakers of all this after, were innumerable, After this I beheld a great multitude, which no man could number; And therefore we shall shut up that first part with this consideration, what sense, what interpretation, may belong unto those places, where Christ says, that the way to heaven is narrow, and the gate straight: of these peeces we shall make up our first part; And for the particulars belonging to the second, we shall fitliest open them, then, when we come to the handling of them.
(S VI 151-2)

we can see that in these lines Donne starts building up the dramatic tension of his sermon. He is about to present a "dialogue of one", and to succeed, a dialogue needs dynamic action. Thus, he starts listing the dramatis personae of his sermon, starting with God. Yet it is important to

note that Donne does not start with God in general, but with the two important attributes of God, his sociableness and communicableness. In giving the first member of his cast, he also gives his intentions and the Leitmotiv of the action that is to follow. He is not going to consider God, such as he is in himself, but God in his works and his relationships with his creation. Thus, the audience knows to expect not a discourse on essences and qualities, but a drama full of action and events. Also, when Donne is referring to the rest of his cast, those saved, his emphasis is on what had been done to them; they were sealed. "The great multitude which no man could number" is, in turn, pointing to a climactic finale, whereas the last reference to Christ's word about the narrow way and straight gate is more or less an afterthought or an epilogue, but nonetheless serves to bring out the tension in this drama, being placed more or less in a paradoxical position, coming after the idea of innumerable multitudes. Donne then proceeds to start his sermon proper by analyzing the sociableness and communicableness of God:

Our first step then in this part, is, the sociablenesse and communicablenesse of God; He loves holy meetings, he loves the communion of Saints, the houshold of the faithfull: Deliciae ejus, says Solomon, his delight is to be with the Sons of men, and the Sons of men should be with him: Religion is not a melancholy; the spirit of God is not a dampe; the Church is not a grave: it is a fold, it is an Arke, it is a net, it is a city, it is a kingdome, not onely a house, but a house with many mansions in it: still it is a plurall thing, consisting of many: and very good grammarians amongst the Hebrews, have thought, and said, that that name, by which God notifies himself to the world, in the very beginning of Genesis, which is Elohim, as it is a plurall word there, so it hath no singular: they say we cannot name God but plurally: so communicable, so extensive, so derivative of himself, is God, and so manifold are the beames, and the emanations that flow out from him. (S VI 152)

The central idea here is that of communication and communion. God himself is a sociable God who abhors being alone and loves the company of men. Here Donne adheres to the generally accepted Christian doctrine of the love of God being the activating force in the creation and universe.

However, the love of God in his conception is not a distant thing, as in the Neoplatonic structure, but it manifests itself in the concrete company of men: the Church, the household of the faithful. Religion and the Church are emphatically joyous things one might almost say a cheerful party, where God himself is the host. Here lies also the immediacy that connects what might otherwise be an abstract and obscure discussion to the immediate situation where these words were uttered. The congregation to which Donne was preaching formed one mansion in the household of God. The people who heard these words should be cheerful, enjoy the company and communion of each other and remember that this communion was created because God in his sociableness desired company and delighted in such meetings, being himself present in them.

Apart from noting the strong emphasis that Donne puts on the cheerfulness of religious communion, it is also worth noting the importance he lays on religion being a collective thing. One can clearly detect the implicit idea, that because the Church is a fold, an ark, net, a city and a kingdom, no man can enter the kingdom of God but in the company of other men. Otherwise God's loving, sociable activity would remain unfulfilled. We can see that communion with God implies directly communion with one's fellow-men, indeed, with all creatures. In the "holy meeting" of religion, man is invited not only to meet his Creator and discourse with him, but he is also invited to meet all his fellow creatures in a shared experience of Christian reality.

Thus, Donne has now established the relevance of his message to his congregation in the immediate situation. He has drawn a connecting line between God in all eternity and a group of people here and now. It is hardly surprising to see that this tie-up consists of communication and

interaction, according to the nature of God. He then proceeds on a discourse on God's unity, expounding traditional dogmas, which need not be reproduced here. He refers to the pagan concept, which deriving from the plural attributes of God, comes to the conclusion that there must be several gods, each corresponding to an attribute. He refutes this idea, and then comes to the Christian concept of Trinity:

There is but one God; but yet was that one God ever alone? There were more generations (infinitely infinite) before the world was made, then there have been minutes, since it was made: all that while there were no creatures; but yet was God alone, any one minute of al this? Was there not alwais a Father and a Son, and a holy Ghost? And had not they, always an acquiescence in one another, an exercise of Affection, (as we may so say) a love, a delight, and a complacency towards one another? So, as that the Father could not be without the Son and the holy Ghost, so as neither Sonne, nor holy Ghost could be without the Father, nor without one another; God was from all eternity collected into one God, yet from all eternity he derived himselfe into three persons: God could not be so alone, but that there have been three persons, as long as there hath been one God. (S VI 153)

Here we can see that in his dramatic "dialogue of one" Donne is now taking a closer look at the leading role in his dramatis personae, and subsequently laying basis on the action which is to come. The concept of Trinity that he puts forth is by no means new; the idea of mutual loving interaction between the persons of the Trinity occurs already in the writings of early Fathers. However, in this context the emphasis does not lie in the trinitarian dogma; it serves merely as a foundation, as a starting point in the drama for the action that leads through the creation to immediate present. Instead of concentrating on the essence and ousias of the Trinity, Donne prefers to spell out "Divine existence" as a suitable introduction to the action of creation:

Had God company enough of himselfe; was he satisfied in three persons? We see he proceeded further; he came to Creation; And as soon as he had made light, (which was his first Creature) he took pleasure in it; he said it was good; he was glad of it; glad of the Sea, glad of the Earth, glad of the Sunne, and Moone, and Starres, and he said of every one, It is good: But when he had made All, peopled the whole world, brought

all creatures together, then he was very glad, and then he said not onely, that it was good, but that it was very good: God was so far from being alone, as that he found not the fullnesse of being well, till all was made, till Creatures met together, in an Host, as Moses calls it; then the good was extended into very good. (S VI 153-4)

The love that the three persons of the Trinity held and exercised towards each other, was clearly not a static thing, but constantly growing and seeking new outlets. Thus the expansive tendency of Divine love leads to the creation. We can see that here Donne further develops his dramatic "dialogue of one" by introducing the rest of his cast in a general sweeping gesture. We also see that the emphasis is not on their essence, but on the relation that they held towards their Creator. This relationship, in turn, is strongly marked by joy and gladness. God is glad of the sun, moon and stars, and when the fullness of creation is reached, the joy increases; God is no longer glad, but very glad. The expansiveness of Divine love is underlined by the strong emphasis on the concept of fullness, which Donne continues to elaborate:

Did God satisfie himselfe with this visible and discernible world; with all on earth, and all between that, and him? were those foure Monarchies, the foure Elements, and all the subjects of those foure Monarchies, (if all the foure Elements have Creatures) company enough for God? was that Heptarchie, the seven kingdomes of the seven planets, conversation enough for him? Let every Starre in the firmament, be (so some take them to be) a severall world, was all this enough? we see, God drew persons nearer to him, then Sunne, Moon, or Starres, or any thing, which is visible, and discernible to us, he created Angels; How many, how great? Arithmetique lacks numbers to expresse the, proportion lacks Dimensions to figure them; so far was God from being alone. (S VI 154)

Thus, apart from elaborating on the concept of fullness, Donne has started listing God's communication partners. The partners of the visible world, infinite as they were in their numbers, were not close enough to God, and thus he proceeded to create angels, in equally infinite numbers, for more intimate communication. But even with such a company the fullness of the expansion of Divine love is not yet achieved; and so we come to

the creation of man:

And yet God had not shed himselfe far enough; he had the Leviathan, the Whale in the Sea, and Behemoth and the Elephant upon the land; and all these great heavenly bodies in the way, and Angels in their infinite numbers and manifold offices, in heaven; But, because Angels could not propagate, nor make more Angels, he enlarged his love, in making man, that so he might enjoy all natures at once, and have the nature of Angels, and the nature of earthly Creatures, in one Person. God would not be without man, nor he would not come single, not alone to the making of man; but it is Faciamus hominem, Let us, us, make man; God, in his whole counsail, in his whole Colledge, in his whole society, in the whole Trinity, makes man, in whom the whole nature of all the world should meet. (S VI 154)

Thus, God's chief communication partner makes his entry in Donne's cosmic drama. We can see that in all creation, man holds a special position by virtue of two factors: 1. He combines in himself the natures of both visible and invisible worlds, he is "a little world made cunningly of Elements and an Angelike spright".¹ Thus, meeting man, God meets his whole creation in one person. Hence, we can say that in Donne's concept man is the "liaison officer" of all creatures. 2. Because man can propagate and is given the task of multiplying and filling the earth, the love of God towards his creation, and the joy that he feels in the communion with men is going to expand ad infinitum. Here man is able to surpass even the angels, and guarantee by each subsequent generation that Divine love will not grow static or stagnant. Donne emphasizes the importance of these two factors by pointing out that in all creation man alone was created in the whole college and counsel of the Holy Trinity. Although Donne does not expressly say so, it is evident that he is applying here the typological way of thinking: The way in which man was created in consultation and communication between the three persons of the Trinity serves as a type to that which is to follow, similar interaction and communication between the creator and the created.

1. Holy Sonnet V. Poems 295.

However, even the unique man is surpassed by one important exception in God's plans:

And still our large, and our Communicable God, affected this association so, as that having three Persons in himselfe, and having Creatures of divers natures, and having collected all natures in man, who consisted of a spiritual nature, as well as a bodily, he would have one liker himselfe, then man was; And therefore he made Christ, God and man, in one person, Creature and Creator together; One greater then the Seraphim, and yet lesse then a worme; Sovereigne to all nature, and yet subject to naturall infirmities; Lord of life, life it selfe, and yet prisoner to Death; Before, and beyond all measures of Time, and yet Born at so many moneths, Circumcised at so many days, Crucified at so many years, Rose againe at so many Houres; How sure did God make himselfe of a companion in Christ, who united himselfe, in his godhead, so inseparably to him, as that godhead left not that body, then when it lay dead in the grave, but staid with it then, so closely, as when he wrought his greatest miracles. (S VI 15 1-5)

Here, Donne's exposition of the creation develops an interesting turn, as he arrives at Christ as the greatest culmination of God's communicative work. One thing that is striking here, is that now Donne abandons completely temporal congruency. The Christ he is talking about is not primarily the pre-existent second person of the Trinity, but Christ incarnate, thus making a temporal leap of 4000 years (in Donne's reckoning). In itself this is hardly surprising, because, as we have earlier pointed out, the story of creation served Donne largely to explain the present. Both the events he had talked of earlier as well as the culmination in the creation of Christ, were seen strictly from the viewpoint of 1624. Thus, he was able to make a smooth transition. However, there is another, more important transition than the temporal one. Although Donne here describes Christ as the most perfect and closest companion to God, his emphasis is changed. There is a switch from the idea of communication between the creator and created, to the union of divinity and humanity, finite and infinite, eternal and temporal. Yet it would be wrong to say that Donne swifts, from the doctrine of creation to christological doctrine. Rather, he is preparing ground for the next development that is to come in his

drama, the mode of communication. Here Donne puts Christ, God and man as an example of the closest possible companion to God. But the christological dogma functions first and foremost as an illustration that the divine and human are not totally separated - Christ serves as a model and proof of the possibility of interaction. How this happens, Donne proceeds to illustrate:

Beyond all this, God having thus married the soule and body in one man, and man and God, in one Christ, he marries this Christ to his Church. Now, consider this Church in the Type and figure of the Church, the Arke; in the Arke there were more of every sort of cleane Creatures reserved, then of the uncleane seven of those, for two of these; why should we feare, but that in the Church, there are more reserved for salvation then for destruction? And into that room (which was not the Type of the Church, but the very Church it selfe) in which they all met upon whitsunday, the holy Ghost came so as that they were enabled, by the gift of tongues, to convey, and propagate, and derive God, (as they did) to every nation under heaven: so much does God delight in man, so much does God desire to unite and associate man unto him; and then, what shall disappoint, or frustrate Gods desires and intention so farre, as that they should come to him, but singly, one by one, whom he calls, and wooes, and drawes by thousands, and by whole Congregations? (S VI 155)

Here Donne develops argument further by employing the figure of marriage, which signifies to him the closest possible hypostatical union. Or, rather than a hypostatical union, the abandoning the isolation and autonomy of one's limited self, for the benefit of a larger unit of a shared reality that is greater than its participants, transcending both to a new, higher level.² As divine and human natures are united in Christ, so Christ and his Church are united into one entity, through which communication and communion, mutual affection and joy flow between the Creator and his creation. Thus, we can see that Donne's drama of creation is not dealing with separate entities, which are trying to bridge the gaps that separate them from one another. Instead, God's whole plan of creation is geared to ensure that all participants, from highest to lowest, are interwoven in a large homogenous network of interaction that constantly expands. We should, however,

2. This idea should be seen in the light of what has been earlier said about Donne's experience of the relationship between man and woman.

be careful not to simplify the role of the Church here only to constitute the connecting link between God and man, through Christ. It should be noted, that, for Donne, the Church is not the only possible frame of interactive relationships. Even before the establishing of the Church, the whole creation was geared to work in the interaction between God and man and man and his fellow-men. In this network the place and function of the Church is perhaps more exactly defined by saying that it constituted the establishing force of these links. Moreover, the Church was primarily an idea, the concept of interaction that actualized itself in time and space, in the "holy meetings". Although the Church is certainly a tangible entity (Donne points out that a certain room was not the type of the Church, but Church itself) it is also an universal concept, a mode of interaction. Rather than being an institution, the Church is an event, which takes place in several places and occasions. This thought becomes particularly clear, when Donne proceeds to deal with the establishing of the Church:

Be pleased to carry your considerations, upon another testimony of Gods love to the society of man, which is, his dispatch in making this match, his speed in gathering and establishing this Church; for, forwardnesse is the best argument of love, and dilatory interruptions by the way, argue no great desire to the end; disguises before, are shrewd prophecies of jealousies after: But God made hast to the consummation of this Marriage, between Christ and the Church. Such words as those to the Colossians, (and such words, that is, words to such purposes, there are divers) The Gospell is come unto you, as it is into all the world; And againe; It bringeth forth fruit, as it doth in you also; And so likewise, The Gospell which is preached to every creature which is under heaven; such words, I say, a very great part of the Antients have taken so literally, as thereupon to conclude, That in the life of the Apostles themselves, the Gospell was preached, and the Church established over all the world. (S VI 155-6)

The thought that the Church is established through the preaching of the Gospel, which for the most part already took place during the Apostolic era, if taken out of context, is hardly anything new or surprising. Yet we must see that this thought was expressed in a "dramatic dialogue of one", where the main emphasis is on the present. When Donne made his reference:

"The Gospell is come unto you, "and again:" ... as it doth in you also", he is employing a direct form of address, rather than a quotation, and the word you means the Earl of Exeter and his company, who formed his audience. In effect, what he is saying is that God establishes his Church here and now, at St. John's, through this preaching of his Gospel. It does not matter that the Church has already been established by the apostles, or that the Church of England is already about a hundred years old. The Church is an event, a universal concept that actualizes itself again and again in given time and space, where the communication and communion between God and man are established, where the union of marriage takes place between Christ and his faithful.

From here Donne's sermon goes on at considerable length, but what follows is irrelevant of the point of view of this sub-chapter. Already from the above quoted passages we can return to our original question of the basic function of the Church in the order of creation and give a summarized answer:

1. In Donne's concept the origin of creation is to be traced to the sociableness and communicableness of God. God desired company, and because the interaction between the three persons of the Trinity was not enough for him, he proceeded to undertake the work of creation.

2. In the order of creation man holds a special place, because he combines in himself the natures of angels and earthly creatures. Also, because man multiplies in infinite generations, this guarantees that Divine love has enough scope for its exercise in infinite expansion.

3. To provide a suitable means of communication and interaction God created the Church. In the Church God calls people to himself, as well as enjoying their company in the holy meeting.

4. The Church however, should not be seen as an institution, but

rather as an universal concept or event, which actualizes itself in given time and space, when the communion and communication between God and man is established and maintained. This actualization, in turn, takes place, when the Word of God is preached.

5. Thus, we can conclude by saying that in the order of creation the Church is the concept and event that materializes and preserves the activating idea of creation itself; interaction and communion between God and his creatures. Thus the Church is the practical manifestation of Divine love.

B. THE CHURCH DIVIDED

In the previous chapter we said that in order of creation the Church was God's instrument to bring his creatures in communication and communion with himself. In Donne's own time, however, the functioning of this instrument seemed to be seriously impeded by the great split of Churches as the consequence of the Reformation. This process of schism and disintegration which started only a few decades before Donne's birth, had divided Europe into Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and Anglicans. Even within the realm of England, the dominant faith, Anglicanism, was forced to defend itself continuously against the attacks of the old faith, Catholicism, as well as those of the radical Puritan front. Small independent Churches, such as the Congregationalists and Baptists were separating themselves from the communion of the Church of England. Thus, it is hardly surprising that people in these days felt considerable confusion as to which was the true Church that possessed the true faith. Donne himself was by no means a stranger to this dilemma. In his own youth he had battled with the question, and finally switched his allegiances from one Church to another. The question of the true Church did not cease to trouble his mind even in his later years, after he had taken his orders. Probably some time in 1618-20 he wrote the following poem, in which he voiced his question:

Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear.
 What! is it She, which on the other shore
 Goes richly painted? or which rob'd and tore
 Laments and mournes in Germany and here?

Sleepes she a thousand, then peepes up one yeare?
 Is she selfe truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
 Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
 On one, on seaven, or on no hill appeare?
 Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
 First travaile we to seeke and then make Love?
 Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
 And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
 Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
 When she's embrac'd and open to most men.¹

It is this poem that offers us our best starting point in unravelling Donne's views on the problem of the division of Churches. The first important thing to note is that the question for Donne is not academic but intensely personal. He does not approach it as a systematic theologian, but as a soul in uncertainty, yearning to embrace the bride of Christ, but not knowing who, where and in what appearance she is. He sees the richly painted Church of Rome on seven hills, and ragged and torn Protestant Churches of Central Europe and England, all making claims of being the rightful spouse of Christ. But when he approaches them and tries to discern between their claims, this is not for the mere intellectual purpose of identifying, classifying and labelling the Churches, according to the justification of their claims. Instead, he wants to recognize the true spouse of Christ in order that by embracing her he might find union with her husband and personal peace and fulfillment. He is not ultimately looking for the Church, but for the Lord of the Church. The problems presented by the division of the Churches are not a theological question to him, but a personal hindrance in this quest.

These then, are the considerations that we must keep in mind when considering Donne's answers to the problem presented by the division of the

1. Holy Sonnet XVIII. Poems 301.

Churches. We will see that he is not interested in solving them in a manner that would make up a logical speculative theological structure, but in a manner that would help him, as well as other men to find their way more easily through the maze of ecclesiastical barriers and disputes to rest in the arms of the spouse of Christ. This being the case, he omits some questions that a theologian would consider as essential, while sometimes concentrating on points which from the theological point of view seem trite or trivial. To obtain a comprehensive picture of his thinking on this topic we will again, as in the previous chapter, follow at length a passage of his writings, this time taken from Essays in Divinity. Here on pages 47-52 Donne is dealing with the problem presented by the diversity of names in the Old Testament. First he quotes several examples, where one person seems to appear under several different names. He then refers to the attempts of Cabbalists and Renaissance commentators to deal with this problem, and suddenly transfers it into an ecclesiological context:

Since therefore this variety of Names falls out in no place, where the certainty of the person or History is thereby offuscate, I encline to think, that another usefull document arises from this admitting of variety; which seems to me to be this, that God in his eternall and everpresent omniscience, foreseeing that his universal, Christian, Catholick Church: imaged, conceived, and begotten by him in his eternall decree, born and brought to light when he travail'd and labored in those bitter agonies and throes of his passion ... should in her latter Age suffer many convulsions, rents, schisms, and wounds, by the severe and unrectified Zeal of many, who should impose necessity upon indifferent things, and oblige all the World to one precise forme of exterior worship, and Ecclesiastic policie; averring that every degree, and minute, and scruple of all circumstances which may be admitted in either belief or practice is certainly, constantly, expressly, and obligatorily exhibited in the Scriptures; and that Grace, and Salvation is in this unity and no where else; his Wisdome was mercifully pleas'd, that those particular Churches, devout parts of the Universall, which, in our Age, keeping still the foundation and corner stone Christ Jesus, should piously abandon the spacious and specious super-edifications which the Church of Rome had built thereupon, should from this variety of Names in the Bible it selfe, be provided of an argument That an unity and consonance in things not essentiall, is not so necessarily requisite as is imagined. (E 48-9)

We can detect in this passage, as in the sonnet earlier a note of anxiety because of the disputes and complications both leading to the division of the Churches, and coming after it. In its essence, Donne determines, the Church is one, universal and Catholic. The idea of the Church existed eternally in God's thoughts, and was brought from there into our world through Christ's passion. Here we can see how Donne does not pay attention to the anticipation that preceeded the birth of the Church, nor to the manner of its establishing. His main concern lies in the unity of the Church that stems from an eternal divine idea. This concept of a divine idea again leads us to see how Donne conceived the Church on two levels: On one hand it is an institution, consisting of human beings, established by Christ and consolidated by the apostles, originally one, but divided in her latter age. On the other hand, the Church is basically a divine idea that actualizes itself in given conditions, in human time and space. The first great and basic actualization took place as the result of Christ's work, when the institution was born, but the continuous existence of the institution is to be explained as the constant actualization of the one and same "Church idea", an idea of communication and communion between God and his creatures. For lack of better expression we may call this actualization of the divine idea in human conditions the Church event. Thus, in Donne's conception, the Church held the dual ontological nature of an institution and an event. It is fairly obvious that although for practical reasons Donne speaks mostly in terms that fit an institution, his main emphasis is on the event character of the Church, on the fulfillment of God's will and plans in human world. The concept of the Church as an event, an actualization of a divine idea, also gave Donne the necessary basis, from which he could effectively argue the unity of the Church. It

did not matter, if the outer framework of the Church event varied, as long as the event remained the same.

Having established this basic viewpoint Donne finds it easier to approach the actual question of the separation of Churches. In his opinion this was due to the rents, schisms and wounds that the one catholic Church was to suffer in her later age. It is interesting to see that Donne lays the chief blame for them on Protestant elements. He especially attacks the narrow biblicism of the Calvinists and Puritans, who required that every minute detail of Christian faith and practice should be mentioned in the Bible in expressis verbis. These quarrels, in turn, would tend to hinder the actualization of the Church event, by distracting attention from central to the peripheral. However, in his omniscience God had foreseen the effects of the "severe and unrectified zeal" of the Protestant dissidents. Thus, he had seen fit that the dissidents go their own way and form their own Churches. In this manner the necessary working peace might be better preserved among all parties. Although the split of the Churches that followed the Reformation was essentially an undesirable thing, it was nonetheless a necessary action to preserve the working conditions of the Church.

The rents and schisms that had split the Church were, however, based on non-essential things. Here Donne follows the characteristically Anglican division between essentials and adiaphora. Both the "spacious and specious" super-edification of Rome and the Protestants' abhorrence of them were, by their very nature, secondary matters, because they were merely human interpretations of a divine theme. As long as the integrity of the central idea was preserved, these variations did not matter, and unity and consonance in them was not requisite. The question however remains, where the dividing line between essentials and adiaphora lay. In other

words, to what extent was the content of the Church event, i.e. the establishing of communication and communion between God and man, inseparable from its surroundings, and to what extent could these surroundings be varied, without changing the content of the event. As yet, we have seen Donne mention only the maintenance of the corner stone Christ Jesus as being the essential criterion. He elaborates, however, in the continuation:

Certainly, when the Gentiles were assum'd into the Church, they entred into the same fundamentall faith and religion with the Jews, as Musculus truly notes; and this conjunction in the roote and foundation fulfill'd that which was said, Fiet unum Ovile, et unus Pastor, One fold, and one Shepherd. For, by that before, you may see that all Christs sheep are not alwayes in one fold, Other sheep have I also, which are not of this fold. So all his sheep are of one fold, that is, under one Shepherd, Christ; yet not of one fold, that is, not in one place, or form. For, that which was strayed and alone, was still his sheep; much more any flock which hearken together to his voice, his Word, and feed together on his Sacraments. (E 49)

According the generally accepted Protestant formula, Donne introduced the Word of God and the Sacraments as constituting the Church. Thus, the concept of the Church event implies active obedience to the will of God through hearing and receiving his Word preached, as well as deriving sustenance from the Sacraments. We see that the Word and Sacraments are emphatically active elements here, the Word implies preaching, hearing, receiving and obeying, the Sacraments administering, receiving, and taking the sustenance offered. The action side of their nature is strongly underlined, in accordance with the general idea of an event. Donne presents the static essence of a flock divided into separate folds and the dynamic existence contained in the Church event as opposites. On the other hand, it is interesting to note Donne's gallant nonchalance about the finer details of what constituted the true preaching of the Word of God and rightful administration of his Sacraments. Although disputes about these questions had been a major factor in creating the split of Churches, Donne staunchly

leads us to understand that they are irrelevant. According to him, the Word and Sacraments are efficacious in all folds into which the flock of Christ is divided. Although in his sermon he often defends the stand of the Anglican Church on points of doctrine and practice, he never admits that they would be necessary to the esse of the Church. Donne conceived the word and Sacraments to be essentials of the Church because of the communication and communion with the Lord of the Church that they conveyed, but was willing to admit considerable latitude in details. Thus, overriding these details, he could proclaim the basic unity of the Roman Church and the Anglican Church:

Therefore that Church from which we are by Gods mercy escaped, because upon the foundation, which we yet embrace together, Redemption in Christ, they had built so many stories high, as the foundation was, though not destroyed, yet hid and obscured; And their additions were of so dangerous a construction, and appearance, and misapplyableness, that to tender consciences they seem'd Idolatrous, and are certainly scandalous, and very slippery, and declinable into Idolatry, though that Church be not in circumstantiall and deduced points at unity with us yet though we branch out East and West, that Church concurs with us in the root, and sucks her vegetation from one and the same ground, Christ Jesus, who, as it is in the Canticle, lies between the breasts of his Church, and gives suck on both sides. (E 49-50)

In this passage Donne presents the division caused by disagreement in "circumstantial and deduced points", and the unity that derives from sharing the common ground and drawing nourishment from the same source as opposites. Without even stopping to elaborate, he overrides the differences on points of doctrine and practice, and concentrates on the idea of communion with Christ both constituting a Church, and creating unity between different branches of the Church. Once again, he emphasizes the active element in this process, now using the metaphor of giving suck and being nourished. The unity that is created between both Catholic and Anglican Churches by being participants in this same process, i.e. by actualizing the Church event, justifies his calling them the two breasts of the one Mother

Church.² Thus he is able to see the bride of Christ in both forms, "richly painted" as well as "rob'd and tore". Both offer their arms and can lead him to the husband of the Church. Thus Donne's great dilemma is considerably reduced, and what remains is merely questions of practical expediency.

From what has been said above can also be seen that Donne shared the common Anglican attitude of regarding the Catholic and Anglican Churches as the two "legitimate" ones, other denominations being less favoured. However, Donne did not wish to deny that even smaller Protestant Churches might have the right foundation:

And of that Church which is departed from us, disunited by an opinion of a necessity that all should be united in one form, and that theirs is it, since they keep their right foot fast on the Rock Christ, I dare not pronounce that she is not our Sister; but rather as in the same Song of Solomon's, We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: if she be a wall, we will build upon her a silver palace. If therefore she be a wall, That is, because she is a wall; for so Lyra expounds those words, as on her part, she shall be safer from ruine, if she apply her selfe to receive a silver palace of Order, and that Hierarchy which is most convenient and proportionall to that ground and state, wherein God hath planted her; and she may not transplant her self: So shall we best conserve the integrity of our own body, of which she is a member, if we laboriously build upon her, and not tempestuously and ruinously demolish and annul her; but rather cherish and foment her vitall and wholesome parts, then either cut, or suffer them to rot or moulder off.

When Donne wrote this passage, he was apparently thinking of small independent Protestant Churches, such as Congregationalists and Baptists that had separated themselves from the communion of the Church of England. The reason for them having no breasts was that in their Biblical zeal they had abolished ecclesiastical ceremonies, which Donne held important, if not for the esse, certainly for the bene esse or plene esse of the Church. But because they too, had preserved the right basis "keeping their right foot

2. If communion with Christ creates unity between different Churches, question might be asked does it create unity between individual members of the Church. This question shall be dealt with in the chapter The Church as the Ark of Salvation.

fast on the Rock Christ, i.e. being still in communion with the Lord of the Church, Donne was willing to admit them as little sisters of the Church of England. We can see his disregard of external forms and unessential details, when he wishes that the "silver place" of order and hierarchy that he wishes to build on these sister - Churches should correspond with local circumstances. Once again, he is not willing to state that a particular manner of ecclesiastical practice should be definitely superior to others, or necessary for maintaining the essence of a true Church. The function of the "silver palace" would be to prevent the little sister-Church from sliding from schism into heresy. But even now Donne does not give a doctrinal stand as a classification of heresy, but defines it as "deflection from obedience". Thus, schism is to Donne a disobedience of established ecclesiastical authority, heresy is disobedience to the Lord of the Church, i.e. disruption of the communion. Here is where the essence of a Church lies. In no case should the little sister-Church be left alone to her own means, much less be persecuted. Donne is quick to point out that a Church which despises another has reduced herself to Ecclesia Malignantium. Because all Churches are members of one another, a more developed and better established Church is obliged to give active support and assistance to a younger and less developed one. Thus, Donne is ready to collect the threads of his argument together and make his final conclusion:

Thus much was to my understanding naturally occasioned and presented by this variety of Names in the Scriptures: For, if Esau, Edom and Seir were but one man; Jethro and Revel, etc. but one man, which have no consonance with one another and might thereby discredit and enervate any History but this, which is the fountain of truth; so Synagogue and the Church is the same thing, and of the Church, Roman and Reformed, and all other distinction of place, Discipline, or Person, but one Church, journeying to one Hierusalem, and directed by one guide, Christ Jesus. (E 51)

At the end of his conclusion that all different branches of the Church are in fact but one Church, Donne presents a finalistic point of view to

stress further the functional dynamism of his conception. Not only do the Churches concur in the root and continuous sustaining communication, but their destination, the New Jerusalem is one and the same. The verbs that Donne employs here, journing and guided serve to stress the active elements of striving, movement and development. The Churches are united in their common constant process, where the starting point, in the idea of God is one, the goal in the New Jerusalem is one; and although splits have occurred on the road, the guide is one, thus ensuring continuous unity. The finalistic point of view, however, still has a deeper significance than merely serving as an additional argument. It also gives us the key to why Donne's reasoning went along these lines, and why he reached the conclusion which he did. In invoking the finalistic goal of the pursuit of individual Churches, Donne also takes the issue to where it started, his own pursuit. Already in the sonnet quoted at the beginning of this chapter we could see that the dominant issue in Donne's mind was: How can I find the true Church that will lead me to Christ? Finding rest in God, experiencing existential fulfillment is the ultimate criterion that Donne uses in judging the claims of rival Churches, not points of doctrine and practice. From his own personal experience and observations he cannot deny the possibility of this in all Churches, hence he concludes that all Churches have preserved the right foundation and are in communion with their Lord, in spite of many varied differences. When he states that their goal is one, he also implicitly states that they all have the possibility of reaching this goal; this is the practical, one is tempted to say empirical, argument for the unity of Churches. Donne is interested in reaching the New Jerusalem, if only the end can be reached, the details of the route taken are matters of expediency.

At this point the question may be asked, whether all this means that

Donne was a theological relativist who refused to take stand on these points of doctrine and practice because he saw all different opinions to be more or less accurate approximations of the truth. The answer to this is no. Reading Donne's sermons we can see him voicing definite opinions on different questions; the reason for his silence in this context of the ecclesiological problem is a matter of priorities. Instead of matters of doctrine and practice, he perceived communion with God to be the sine qua non of the Church. This, in turn, was accomplished through Christ's action which could, and frequently did override human error. Because of his background, Donne had perceived the inner nature of Catholic piety, as manifested in his mother and many of her friends. Here he saw spiritual communion with Christ that could be recognized in its own light, in spite of what he considered to be manifest errors in Catholic doctrine and practice. Therefore, his intellectual integrity did not allow him to maintain that the road to salvation should go only through the acceptance of Anglicanism. It should also be noted here that, as we have already seen in the chapter dealing with the general character of Donne's theological thinking, he did not personally adhere to Anglicanism because he believed it to be the only right solution. Instead, he was an Anglican, because he found in the Anglican Church sufficient latitude to profess and expound the Christian faith, such as he had come to assimilate and accept it. This will help us to understand, why such Anglican shibboleths as e.g. apostolic succession are conspicuous by their scarcity in Donne's writings.

From these viewpoints, it should be easy for us to understand the practical implications which Donne is now ready to draw from his ponderings:

... though this unity in things not fundamentall, be not absolutely necessary, yet it were so comely and proportional with the foundation it self, if it were at Unity in these things also, that though in my poor opinion, the form of Gods worship, established in the Church of England, be more convenient, and advantageous then in any other Kingdome, both to provoke and kindle devotion, and also to fix it, that it stray not into infinite expansions and Subdivisions. ... And though to all my thanksgivings to God, I ever humbly acknowledge, as one of his greatest Mercies to me, that he gave me my Pasture in this Park, and my milk from the breasts of this Church, yet out of a fervent, and (I hope) not inordinate affection, even to such Unity, I do zealously wish, that the whole Catholick Church, were reduced to such Unity and agreement, in the form

and profession Established, in any one of these Churches (though ours were principally to be wished) which have not by any additions destroyed the foundation and possibility of salvation in Christ Jesus; That then the Church, discharged of disputations, and misapprehensions, and this defensive warr, might contemplate Christ clearly and uniformly. (E 51-2)

Because achieving the end goal is the main thing, Donne wishes that all Churches might unite under the confession and ecclesiastical order of any Christian Church, so that they might better strive together to reach their common goal. If this were to be achieved, people would no longer be in doubt and confusion, as to which is the true Church that will lead them to Christ, the Churches would not have to waste their energies in non-essential quarrels and Christ would be manifested more clearly. These advantages would be so considerable, that although Donne is of the opinion that the ways of the Church of England are best geared to kindle and maintain faith and devotion in people, he would be willing to sacrifice them for this goal. The fact that he would have been willing to abandon the values which the Church of England represented to him, shows that the problem of the division of Churches was indeed a sore personal dilemma to him, and that the personal aspect of the problem dictated his approach to it. Donne himself was going a long and devious way to find existential fulfillment and rest in God. (As a matter of fact, the Essays were written when he still had a long way go to). No doubt he saw the split of Churches as a factor making the road even more winding and difficult. By wishing that the Churches might reach a visible unity, he hoped that this road would be made straighter and easier for himself, as well as for others.

Thus we can summarize our findings in this chapter in the following manner:

1. The problem of the division of Churches was a personal problem for Donne. In his search to find rest in God, the division of Churches caused confusion in him as to which Church was the true bride of Christ that could lead him to her husband. This was the starting point that dictated his whole approach to the question.

2. In spite of confusion and division, Donne concluded that the Church is

basically one. This was because the Church had its origins in an eternal idea in God's thoughts. Rather than being an institution, the Church is in Donne's opinion, the constant actualization of this divine idea of communication and communion in human conditions. Because this idea was one and indivisible, the external circumstances of its actualization could not destroy the underlying unity.

3. Even in practical terms, the Church as an institution was originally one. The splits that it had suffered later were caused by human quarrels in non-essential adiaphora. Because of these quarrels it had pleased God that the dissidents go their own way, thus preserving the peace that was necessary for the actualization of the Church event. As regards the individual Churches, Donne acknowledged them all to be parts of the universal, because through the preaching of the Word of God and through the administering of Sacraments, they brought people in communion with the Lord of the Church, and the Church event thus took place. Donne was not willing to elaborate what the preaching of the Word should entail, or how the administering of Sacraments should happen. His own experience and observation told him that Christ could be found and the New Jerusalem could be reached in all these Churches, from this he was compelled to arrive at the conclusion that finer details of doctrine and practice were non-essential. Thus, the true bride of Christ could be found in Rome as well as in Geneva, Canterbury or Wittenberg. In all different shapes and appearances she was one.

4. Even though Donne saw the Church to be one in its origin and action, he wished that the Church might also reach visible unity in non-essential adiaphora. Thus, the hindrances that lay in the path of people searching their way to rest in God would have been removed and the Church itself could be free to use all her energies to the positive fulfilling of its task. To attain this visible unity Donne would have been willing to accept the faith and order of any Christian Church. He believed the advantages then gained would have outweighed the loss that might have resulted from abandoning the practices of the Church of England, which Donne held to be the optimum approximation of the ideal.

C. THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL ORDER

In the previous chapter we have seen Donne's answer to the problem of the division of Churches. Another closely linked problem, was that of the relationships between the Church and social order. Following the split of the Church in the Reformation, the medieval idea of a universal Church that towered above the rule of kings and princes was given a final coup de grâce. In the emerging national states rulers quickly made use of the given opportunity and declared themselves arbiters of ecclesiastic policies, which office they were readily offered in some protestant Churches, especially on the Lutheran side. Even in Catholic states, the relationships between the rulers and the Pope were becoming strained, and a deep revaluation was taking place. At the beginning of the English reformation, King Henry VIII had declared himself the "Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy", thus claiming absolute authority in the Church he had created. Although this title was changed by Elizabeth into "Supreme Governor", this hardly meant the diminishing of the Monarch's power in ecclesiastic matters. During the reign of the early Stuarts ecclesiastical policy was an integral part of the overall policies of the Kings. Especially James I prided himself with his theological learning and ability to steer the Church as well as the state. The official stand on the closely knit marriage between the Church and the state did not escape severe criticism. This came both from the Catholics and the Puritans. This was clearly seen in the controversies over the Oath of Allegiance, where the Catholics challenged the supreme spiritual authority of the ruler,

and in the Puritans' attacks on Episcopacy, which they conceived to be the chief supporting pillar of the ruling establishment.

Thus, before developing this thesis any further we will have to ask what was Donne's view on the relationships of the Church and the social order. What were his views on the structure of the society, and on the powers and functions of both civil and ecclesiastic authorities? In approaching this question we find that the material on these topics is relatively scant. This is partly due to Donne's own precarious position. He owed his career and preferment to the King, in fact the very reason why James insisted on Donne's taking orders was that he saw in Donne a powerful exponent of theological views favourable to the Throne. Thus we cannot expect Donne to be outspoken on controversial matters, where his ideas might have been contrary to those of the King. However, looking more closely at the emerging picture, we can see that in most instances Donne was quite sincerely a King's man. A more likely reason for his usually being silent on social matters or staunchly supporting the ruling establishment, stems from his basic way of thinking. His conversion had been a comprehensive affair, after which the newly found sense of acceptance and security permeated his whole scope of thinking, abolishing the dichotomy between sacred and secular. The new discovery gave a spiritual dimension to all mundane details of daily social life, which was of an overwhelming importance. Thus it is understandable that he came more or less to accept the existing framework of social and ecclesiastical order without conceiving any basic need of reform in them, or a need of an autonomous system of social order.

In order to render a thorough account of Donne's views of the relationship between the Church and social order, it is necessary first to dwell at

some length on his views of the secular society. We will therefore first inspect how Donne drew his theory of interaction between men in an organized society from the act of creation. After this, we will proceed to Donne's views on the particular form of society he was born in, i.e. monarchy. This consideration will, in turn, lead us to the question of the relationship between Church and society, starting from the monarch's authority in ecclesiastical matters. Having rendered account of the influences that social order exerted on the Church, we will go on to consider, whether this influencing was a two-way process, and to what extent the Church could affect the society.

In the chapter dealing with Donne's concept of the creation, we have already seen that Donne's ontology was based on relationships and interaction rather than on essences. The central idea of the creation was that of harmonious communication, first between the persons of the Trinity, later expanding in the work of creation to that between the Creator and his creatures. From this idea of relationships and communication Donne also derived the basic structure that was to rule between the creatures and in their society:

As then God seemes to have been eternally delighted, with this eternall generation, (with persons that had ever a relation to one another, Father and Sonne) so when he came to the Creation of this lower world, he came presently to those three relations, of which the whole frame of this world consists; of which, (because the principall foundation, and preservation of all States that are to continue, is power) the first relation was between Prince and Subject, when God said to Man, Subjicite & dominamini, subdue and govern all Creatures; The second relation was between husband and wife, when Adam said, This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; And the third relation was between parents and children, when Eve said, that she had obtained a Man by the Lord, that by the plentifull favour of God, she had conceived and borne a sonne: from that time, to the dissolution of that frame, from that beginning to the end of the world, these three relations, of Master and Servant, Man and Wife, Father and Children, have been, and ever shall be the materials; and the elements of all society, of families, and of Cities, and of Kingdomes. (S V 113-4)

Here we can see that Donne conceived all social life to be based on certain interactive relationships, which were of divine origin, being determined by God himself according to the model of the Holy Trinity. We can see that man does not stand alone in the world, as an individual, nor alone with his maker only. Instead, he must find his place in a network of interactive relationships; he is man only in the context of his fellow-men. The purpose of the creation was to bring man in communication and communion with his creator, from this it follows that similar communion was also established between men in the realm of creatures. Thus, the relationships between men that Donne lists are not by their essence dialectical I-thou relationships. To Donne, fellow-man is a fellow participant in the shared experience of reality. Hence, it is more correct to call these relationships we-relationships, where all concerned parties, by their shared experience constitute the world. This, consequently, forms an effective safeguard against possible abuses:

The generall duty, that goes through all these relations, is expressed, Subditi estote invicem, Submit yourselves to one another, in the feare of God; for God hath given no Master such imperiousnesse, no husband such a superiority, no father such a soverainty, but that there lies a burden upon them too, to consider with a compassionate sensiblenesse, the grievances that oppresse the other part, which is coupled to them. For if the servant, the wife, the sonne, be oppressed, worne out, annihilated, there is no such thing left, as a Master, or a husband, or a father; They depend upon one another, and therefore he that hath no care of his fellow, destroys himselfe. (S V 114)

In this passage, we can again see Donne reject the dualistic dichotomy in human relationships that would stem from uncontrolled individualism. Because men in the world are placed in interactive relationships, it follows that they are members of one another. The oppression or destruction of one's fellow-men would mean the annihilation of the oppressor himself. In order that the complicated machine of human society might function smoothly it is necessary that all members acknowledge their interdependence on one another

and act accordingly.

The general idea that the human society is based on interactive relationships implies also that each member in the society has his own particular task to fulfill in it, i.e. a calling. Like most his contemporaries, Donne adhered firmly to this view;

Our body must also testifie and expresse our love, not onely in reverentiall humiliation thereof, in the dispositions, and postures, and motions, and actions of the body, when we present ourselves at Gods Service, in his house, but in the discharge of our bodily duties, and the sociable offices of our callings, toward one another: Not to run away from that Service of God, by hiding ourselves in a superstitious Monastery, or a secular Monastery in our owne house, by an unprofitable retirednesse, and absenting our selves from the necessary businesses of this world: Not to avoid a Calling, by taking none: Not to make a void Calling, by neglecting the due offices thereof. (S VII 104)

According to the generally accepted tradition of the Reformation, Donne presents here the dutiful fulfilling of a secular calling as serving God. However, the main emphasis does not lie in this direction, but clearly the fulfilling of a calling is mainly directed to the benefit of one's fellow-men. The concept of a calling is in Donne's thinking an integral part of his whole conception of the social order as mutual interdependence. The network of interactive relationships that constitutes human society can function only when all its members perform the tasks and duties allotted to them. The idea of fulfilling a calling does not really need the specific concept of worshipping God as its justification, because the form of society that imposes these callings is also of a divine decree. Both interaction between man and God and man and his neighbours are equally sacred, thus worshipping God and performing one's social duties are merely parts of the same network of communication and communion.

Having seen how Donne conceived the structures of social order in general, it is appropriate to examine his views on the particular form of society that he lived in, i.e. monarchy. We already know that Donne was

in many respects a faithful King's man, and thus it will come as no great surprise to see that he favoured monarchy over other forms of society. In a sermon preached in 1622, on the anniversary of the discovery of the gunpowder plot, he makes the following case for the superiority of monarchy:

Of all things that are, there was an Idea in God; there was a modell, a platform, an exemplar of every thing, which God produced and created in Time, in the mind and purpose of God before; Of all things God had an Idea, a preconception; but of Monarchy, of Kingdome, God, who is but one, is the Idea; God himselfe, in his Unity, is the Modell, He is the type of Monarchy. (S IV 240)

The distinction that Donne makes is interesting: of all things created God had an eternally existing idea, but God himself is the idea of monarchy. This relates directly to the previously quoted passage of the three relationships on which all human social order was based. We may ask whether it would be more accurate to say that in Donne's conception God was more the prototype of a monarch than monarchy; the idea of monarchy coming from the ruling relationship that exists between God and all his creatures. The apparent confusion between the two concepts, monarchy and monarch is, however, explained when we keep in mind that every being was in Donne's ontology something only in relationship to others. Thus, there could not be a monarch without the actual ruling relationships of monarchy. Monarchy is the superior form of government, because it bears closest correspondence to the divine ideas of power and ruling. Even more, in Donne's mind it is an earthly beacon showing us the image of Heaven:

There is One God, One Faith, One Baptisme, and these lead us to the love of one Sovereign, of Monarchy, of Kingdome ... All forms of Government have one and the same Soul, that is Soveraignty; That resides somewhere in every form; and this Soveraignty is in them all, from one and the same Root, from the Lord of Lords, from God himself, for all Power is of God ... All governments may justly represent God to mee, who is the God of Order, and fountaine of all government, but yet I am more eased, and more accustomed to the contemplation of Heaven, in that notion, as Heaven is a Kingdome, by having been borne, and bred in a Monarchy; God is the Type of that, and that is a Type of Heaven. (S IV 240-1)

Thus, the earthly and heavenly monarchies are closely related; "This is

the Gallery, and that the Bed-chamber of one, and the same Palace, which shall feel no ruine". From this it follows that the ruling monarch is a direct participant in divine power, a type, if not a representative, of God on earth. He is the husband, soul and head of the kingdom, and can require unconditional submission from his subjects. There is no excuse to resist him, much less to overthrow him. Donne unconditionally rejects the idea that to overthrow a monarch might be sometimes justified for the good of the kingdom: "Salus Regni, Asylum Proditorum". To pretend to uphold the Kingdome and overthrow the King, hath ever been the tentation before, and excuse after, in the greatest Treasons." (S IV 245) This categorical stand, of course, implies that Donne takes a defensive attitude to the question of the abuse of power. Because the position of a ruler is, after all, based on a relationship of not only power but also of mutual interdependence, the abuse of power would lead to the destruction of the monarch himself. Thus the question for Donne is rather remote and hypothetical. Instead, he counsels the King's subjects to be content with the dealings of their ruler, because they do not know the exact circumstances that influence decisions of policy:

That man must have a large comprehension, that shall adventure to say of any King, He is an ill King; he must know his office well, and his actions well, and the actions of other Princes too, who have correspondence with him, before he can say so ... Impium est dicere Regi, Inique agis; It is an impious thing ... to say to the King, or of the King, He governs not as a King is bound to do; we remit judgement of those their actions which are secret to God; and when they are evident, and bad, yet we must endeavour to preserve their persons; for there is danger in the losse, and lamentation due to the losse, even of Zedekiah, for even such are uncti Domini, The anoynted of the Lord, and the breath of our nostrils. (S IV 249-50)

Thus, if the King should prove to be evidently corrupt or evil, without the mitigating circumstances of political necessities, he should still be respected and supported. He is still the anointed of the Lord and the breath of our nostrils. With this Donne means that even if the King is evil, the office and person of a King is necessary for the functioning of

the relationship network that constitutes human society. Without a King, the network would be torn asunder, and even an attempt to replace an evil King with a better one would be so badly against the functions of these relationships that the texture would necessarily be damaged.

The question that may be asked at this point is: Was Donne really sincere in his unconditional defense of monarchy and of the monarch's person, regardless of his particular characteristics, or was he only paying a debt of gratitude to the King who had given him his present position. Although we know that Donne had started his career as a courtier, and retained the habits of one to the end of his life, I do not think that we need suspect him for selling his principles for pottage. Admittedly his ideas pleased the King, and Donne was loath to incur royal displeasure, as is known from an incident involving Charles I and William Laud.¹ However, it must be pointed out that nowhere can we find any evidence, direct or indirect that Donne might have held any opinions contrary to those quoted in the passages above. More significant still, we can see how his views of monarchy and the position of the monarch form an integral part of those he held generally of creation and social order. If, when we read these passages we could find elements that were recognizably of a foreign, or borrowed, origin, or if they seemed to clash with Donne's general way of thinking, we might suspect him of insincerity and paying lip-service to the ruling establishment. As this, however, is not the case, but we can on the contrary see that all his expressed opinions fit neatly the general pattern of his theological thinking, it is my conclusion that Donne was indeed sincere, and that his eulogizing the monarchy stemmed from inner conviction.

1. Donne was deeply disturbed, when, in April 1627, he received a letter from William Laud commanding him to present a written version of a sermon preached to Charles I and his court shortly before. The sermon had seemed to Donne harmless enough, but apparently the King and Laud suspected him of harbouring low-Church ideas. Donne wrote two letters to Sir Robert Ker, asking him to speak on his behalf, and eventually the cloud of royal displeasure passed away.

Donne defended the monarch's absolute powers, at least in civil matters, because the monarch portrayed in his realm the rule of God over his creation. The next question to be asked, then, is: how did Donne conceive the ruler's authority in ecclesiastic matters. This can best be seen in Donne's reaction to an incident which took place in 1622. James I had published a decree called "Directions for Preacher's", forbidding the preaching on certain topics, in order to reduce the heat of religious controversy.² On 15.9.1622 Donne preached a sermon at St. Paul's Cross defending the royal decree.

In this sermon on the text: "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges 5.20) Donne first delivers a general exposition of his text, and, arriving at the second part, starts to deal with the current situation. He first declares the existence of a continuous spiritual war against the forces of evil. In this struggle between truth and falsehood, "the Munition, the provision for this warre, is not as before, the temporall assistance of Princes, Officers, Judges, Merchants, all sorts of People, but it is the Gospell of Christ Jesus, and the preaching thereof." (S IV 192) God fights from heaven against his enemies, through his ordinance of preaching, making his ministers stars. Preaching is a holy necessity imposed on ministers; Vae mihi si non. But had not James exceeded his authority and impeded this war by seeking to limit preaching by forbidding it altogether on certain topics? "To take away preaching, were to disarm God, and to quench the spirit; for by that Ordinance, he fights from heaven." (S IV 195)

2. According to this proclamation, no preacher below the rank of Bishop or Dean was to "presume to preach in any popular auditory the deep points of Predestination, Election, Reprobation, or of the universality, efficacy, or irresistibility of God's grace, but leave these themes rather to be handled by the learned men, and that moderately and modestly, by way of use and application, rather than by way of positive doctrines, being fitter for the Schools than for simple auditories. "No preacher of any rank whatsoever was to limit the "Power, Prerogative, and Jurisdiction, Authority, or Duty of Sovereign Princes, and the People, than as they are instructed and preceded in the Homilies of Obedience, and the rest of the Homilies, and Articles of Religion ... set forth by public Authority." S IV, Introduction, p. 28

Donne makes his way out of this apparent dilemma by invoking the concept of order. If the spiritual war against the forces of evil were to be fought at random, many of the ministers would be silenced, either through external persecutions or through their own weaknesses. Hence,

God hath plac'd us in a Church, and under a Head of the Church, where none are silenc'd, nor discountenanc'd, if being starrs, called to the Ministry of the Gospell, and appointed to fight, to preach there, they fight within the limits and discipline of this Text, Manentes in Ordine, containing themselves in Order. (S IV 196)

If the ministers of Gospel preserve order in a manner of a well-disciplined army in their spiritual war, then they shall not be silenced, but God's cause will prevail. However, the concept of order still needs more clarifying, and Donne proceeds to elaborate. He first shows that by order he means orderliness, that everything in the Church should be done in a disciplined manner, avoiding disorder and unruly conduct. Secondly, to Donne order means obedience to ecclesiastical authority, to the constitutions and canons of the Church. The third and most important meaning, however, that Donne ascribes to the concept of order is the congruency of ecclesiastic and civil order. In other words, he stresses that these two realms are not incompatible, but Donne, as well as his other colleagues have their place not only in the hierarchy, but also in the secular society. The Church does not stand outside the society, or above it; she has to follow its laws and rules, and pay obeisance to the secular majesty. In a similar manner the ministers of the Church have to observe the obligations imposed on them by the secular establishment, as well as those of the Church:

Wee enjoy gratefully, and we use modestly the Priviledges which godly Princes, out of their pietie have affoorded us, and which their godly Successors have given us againe by their gracious continuing of them to us; but our Profession of it selfe, naturally (though the very nature of it dispose Princes to a gracious disposition to us) exempts us not from the tye of their Laws. All men are in deed, we are in Deed and name too Men of Orders; and therefore ought to be most ready of all others to obey. (S IV 198)

This concept of the Church and ecclesiastics being subordinate also to the civil order derives directly from Donne's concept of the creation. We have already stated, that Donne conceived society (and especially Monarchy) to be of a divine origin because it was based on eternal relationships that were derived from God. Thus the Church could well be submitted to the monarch's authority, because this was a reflection of God's authority in his creation. This was not for Donne a case of submitting something sacred to the secular, but rather a case of unity of order in the creation, stemming from the unity of the Creator. Thus, he is quite happy to acknowledge the head of the State as the head of the Church also. Now he is also ready to put forth the authority of the King in matters concerning the preaching of the Church:

Now, beloved, Ordo semper dicitur ratione principii: Order alwayes presumes a head, it alwayes implyes some whom wee are to be ordered, an it implyes our conformity to him. Who is that? God certainly, without all question, God. But between God, and Man, we consider a two-fold Order. One, as all creatures depend upon God, as upon their beginning, for their very Being; and so every creature is wrought upon immediately by God, and whether hee discerne it or no, does obey Gods order, that is, that which God hath ordained, his purpose, his providence is executed upon him, and accomplished in him. But then the other Order is, not as man depends upon God, as upon his beginning, but as he is to be reduced and brought back to God, as to his end: and that is done by meanes in this world. What is that meanes? for those things which wee have now in consideration, the Church. But the body speaks not, the head does, It is the Head of the Church that declares to us those things wherby we are to be ordered. (S IV 198-9)

From the order necessary in the spiritual war, Donne makes his transition to the order of creation, man's originating from God and returning to God. This, and this alone, is the order that transcends the order of civil and ecclesiastic authority he needs the help of earthly institutions to find his way back to his origins. This is where the Church and its ordinances of preaching enter the picture. The Church has the duty to bring man back to

God by her exhortation. But this, in turn, is something that integrally involves the head of the Church, the ruling monarch. The King's duty is not only to look after the temporal welfare of his subjects, but as the head of the Church, the burden of their spiritual welfare rests on his shoulders, too. Again, this emphasizes the undivided character of authority vested on the ruler through the creation. It is the King's authority that defines the rules and limits of the ordinance of preaching, thus James was perfectly within his rights in publishing his "Directions for Preachers".

But although Donne staunchly upholds James's right to limit preaching on controversial topics, he is also careful to point out that James had not in fact done anything that might be termed controversial. According to Donne, James had merely asserted what was already accepted by the common consensus of the Church. He had not introduced any new additions to faith, nor excluded anything essential to salvation. Donne refers to the examples of the Kings of Judah and early Christian Emperors: "But that Emperour (Charlemagne) did but declare things constituted by other Counsellis before: but yet the giving the life of execution to those Constitutions in his Dominions, was introductory, and many of the things themselves were also." (S IV 199)

In the similar manner, James, through his "Directions" had merely asserted the authority of the Catechisms, the Thirty-nine Articles and the Tomes of Homilies. In exercising his rights as the head of the Church the monarch is nonetheless bound by the faith of the Church, which he may not transgress or violate, but which it is his duty to affirm and promote.

Thus, the central theme that arises from Donne's thoughts is that of an undivided order of creation, starting from God and ending in God. Everything is created according to a divine idea, and equally sacred. There is no need for a dichotomy between civil and spiritual authority, and power remains as

undivided as the creator who gave it. The Church may be best termed as the specialized branch of the society that is charged with leading people back to God, from whom they originated. But as the society, by virtue of the relationships of power on which it is based, remains undivided, we may now ask, whether the "secular" branches of the society further in any other way this divine purpose. This question is especially relevant because the society that Donne lived in, Jacobean England, was intensely expanding, both in internal consolidation and external acquiring of territory. We see Donne preaching on the subject of expanding society in a sermon preached to the Virginian Plantation Company on 13.11.1622. (Sermons IV no.10) Here his text is taken from Acts 1.8: "But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Here Donne's exposition turns around the key concept of power. We have earlier quoted him saying "the principall foundation, and preservation of all States that are to continue, is power". (p.99) In this sermon he develops this idea further and demonstrates, how power forms the connecting link between the heavenly and earthly kingdoms. The passage with which we are most concerned in this exposition begins with Donne taking up the concept of power and international law:

There is a Power rooted in Nature, and a Power rooted in Grace; a power yssuing from the Law of Nations, and a power growing out of the Gospell. In the Law of Nature and Nations, A Land never inhabited, by any, or utterly derelicted and immermorially abandoned by the former Inhabitants, becomes theirs that wil possesse it, So also is it, if the inhabitants doe not in some measure fill the Land, so as the Land may bring foorth her increase for the use of men That rule which passes through all Municipal Lawes in particular States, Interest reipublicae ut quis re sua bene utatur, The State must take order, that every man improove that which he hath, for the best advantage of that State, passes also through the Law of Nations, which is to all the World, as the Municipall Law is to a particular State, Interest mundo, The whole world, all Mankinde must take care, that all places be emprov'd, as farre as may be, to the best advantage of Mankinde in generall. (S IV 274)

The first thing to note here is that the two kinds of power to which Donne refers, power in nature and power issuing from the Gospel, are by no means opposites. In Donne's united order of creation, there is only power coming from God, and the two kinds mentioned here should be seen as two facets of the one and same divine power. As all social order is based on power that manifests itself in interactive relationships, here the same power, embodied in international law, forms the basis of the expansion of society. The expansive tendency that causes the society to acquire new territory can be directly traced to the divine command subjicite et dominamini. Thus secular power is in a sense autonomous in its uses, with the important reservation that it shall be used in the best interest of those affected, in this case mankind in general. But although it is autonomous it cannot be separated, either, from power spiritual, its counterpart and partner:

But then, Accipietis potestatem, You shall receive power, sayes the text; you shall, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; that is, when the instinct, the influence, the motions of the Holy Ghost enables your Conscience to say that your principall ende is not gaine, nor glory, but to gaine soules to the glory of GOD, this seales the great Seale, this justifies Justice it selfe, this authorises Authoritie, and gives power to strength it selfe. (S IV 274-5)

Here Donne presents the spiritual power, given through the Holy Ghost, as the necessary component of temporal power. Only when the testimony of the Holy Ghost assures that the power is not used for selfish aims, is the expansion of the society, or any other functioning, for that matter, as it should be. Justice needs the justification, authority needs the authorization of the seal of the Holy Ghost. Once again, we meet the concept of a unified order of creation, where components cannot work separated from the totality. Although all power is from God, secular power cannot function properly, if it is isolated from spiritual power. However, once this has been achieved, we can see that the scope of operations of the society is

correspondingly widened. After the powers work in harmony, the colonization of America is no longer a secular venture, but an apostolic function. Although it may still be directed to making money, its equal aim should be the spreading and extending of Christian society. The work of winning souls to God was to be started by bringing these souls under same laws that governed the interaction in a shared experience of Christian reality, which, to Donne, effectively constituted the society. It is important to note that Donne does not assign this part in the field of operations to any specialized missionary branch, but to the entire company itself. Although he makes occasional reference to missionaries that are to accompany the settlers, he is not willing to make a distinction between sacred and profane activity.

Thus, mutatis mutandis, we can apply the principles derived from Donne's sermon to the Virginian Plantation Company to his whole conception of society. All society is derived from God and based on power that manifests itself in interactive relationships of mutual interdependence. Thus secular power is autonomous in its own right, but it needs spiritual power as its necessary component. When secular and spiritual power work harmoniously hand in hand, then the entire society fulfills its functions in the best possible manner, on one hand ensuring the happiness and prosperity of its members, on the other, striving to bring men back to their origins and creator. Thus the whole society fulfills the grand scheme of creation, not only its specialized ecclesiastic branch.

We can now summarize the considerations of this chapter around the central concept of unity. This unity, which Donne derives from the unity of God, through the creation, first ensured the unity of society. Here all members of society were also members of one another, by virtue of the basic interactive relationships in which they were placed, and by the common experience that they shared in this communication and communion. Indeed, as

has been said earlier, this shared experience of Christian reality constituted the society. The communion between members of society was the best guarantee against abuses, and thus served to ensure the successful working of absolute monarchy, which Donne advocated, again because of his concept of creation. Similarly, because of the basic unity of human society, the dichotomy between sacred and secular was abolished. The Church was a specialized branch of the society, but none the less an integral part of it, and under the jurisdiction of the head of the society. However, not only the Church, but the entire society was responsible for the grand scheme of bringing everything that originated from God back to him. We can best conclude by saying that although we can find in Donne's sermons reasonable answers to our original questions of the relationships between the Church and the social order, the question would have not probably occurred to him, apart from practical consideration. Himself, Donne saw only the entire multitude of God's creatures, sharing the common striving to find their way back to God. In this striving both the Church and the social order were merely two aspects of the same process.

D. THE CHURCH AS THE ARK OF SALVATION

In the previous chapters we have analysed Donne's ideas of the Church's position in the world, keeping his concept of creation as our starting point. We have seen that in the order of creation Donne conceived the Church to be the specialized branch that had as its duty to ensure that the process of communication between God and his creatures took place and that the process of drawing men back to their origins, God, would proceed. In this chapter our main consideration is: how was this all to take place? What were the mechanisms in the functioning of the Church? How does the Church go about fulfilling its task and how does the membership of the Church effect people? We will, however, limit ourselves in this chapter to the general principles and main lines, without going yet into practical details, such as preaching of the Word of God and administering the Sacraments. These will be dealt with at length and in detail in the last part of this thesis. Instead, the questions to be asked in this chapter, are the following: 1. If as we have repeatedly stated earlier, the Church is primarily to be seen as an event, what is the content of this event and what takes place? 2. If, again, the Church is primarily a collective entity (a fold, a net, a city, a kingdom) catholic and universal, what is the relationship between the individual and collective? and 3. If the Church is God's instrument to bring his creatures to himself and to their salvation, is it the only way? Did Donne subscribe to the old maxim extra ecclesiam nulla salus est? By answering these questions we can hope to complete our picture of the Church in the world, and thus we

will be ready to proceed into a detailed study of the Church's actions in the third part of this thesis.

The sermon to assist us best in analysing the content of the Church event is that preached at St. Paul's on Christmas Day, 1628. (S VIII no.13) Here Donne is expounding the text "Lord, who hath beleaved our report", and dealing chiefly with prophetic office. He deals first at length with the prophet's calling, having a direct message to deliver from God and the constant frustration caused by people's unwillingness to believe, repent and accept God's ways. But even then, the office of a prophet was always a singular phenomenon, isolated and scattered. The calling of God to his people needed something more constant to support itself, and thus we arrive at the Church. Donne presents the chain leading to the Church in the following manner:

Here then the Apostles expostulation with God, and increpation upon the people, may usefully be conceived to be thus carried; from the light and notification of God, which we have in nature, to a clearer light, which we have in the Law and the Prophets, and then a clearer then that in the Gospell, and a clearer, at least a nearer then that, in the Church.
(S VIII 306)

Here we can see that the background, against which the Church emerges, is that of a continuous revelation which is aimed at drawing men back to their Creator. The Church is not an isolated phenomenon, but integrally linked with God's communicative order of creation. God had begun drawing men to himself already when he created light as his first creature, in order that men might see his works and glorify him.¹ In a similar manner, God had written his law in men's hearts. Thus men could see God's works in nature and hear the testimony of their own consciences, and had no excuse for not seeing and knowing God, even by natural revelation alone.² But the contrast that emerges is that between God's works to reveal himself and draw his creatures back to

1. S VIII 298.

2. S VIII 306-7.

him, and men's unwillingness to see and believe:

But then, Quis credidit auditui suo? who hath beleevd his own report? who does reade the Law written in his own heart? who does come to Church to himselfe, or hearken the motions of his own spirit, what he should doe, or what will become of him, if he doe still as he hath done? or who reades the history of his own conscience, what he hath done, and the judgements that belong to thoseformer actions? (S VIII 307)

Here Donne's exposition moves on two levels. On the surface it is strongly moralistic, concentrating on man's sinfulness and his unwillingness to accept the verdict of his own conscience on his sins and repent from them. However, the basic issue here is man's insistence on going his own way. He is not willing to enter into harmonious communication with God, of whose calling both nature and his own heart bear witness, but rather remains separated from God, this separation being manifested in his sinful ways. Ultimately, Donne is not interested in individual actions and God's judgements on them, but in the deeper issue of man's alienation from his maker. This alienation was not cured, even though prophets appeared with a direct message from God, and thus God in his wish to draw all his creatures to him, was forced to speak "personally and aloud":

God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last dayes spoke to us by his Son, sayes the Apostle; He spake personally, and he spake aloud, in the declaration of Miracles; But, Quis credidit auditui filii? who beleevd even his report? did they not call his preaching sedition, and call his Miracles conjuring? (S VIII 307)

The important thing here is that Donne does not conceive the appearance of Christ as an isolated, unique phenomenon, but as a part in the chain of God's continuous revelation. Likewise, the redemptive aspect of Christ's work is overshadowed by the revelatory aspects. Although Donne frequently preaches in other sermons on Christ's dying to redeem mankind from his sins, it is clear that the judicial aspects of western "objective" doctrine of atonement were not dominant in his theological structure. As it was pointed out earlier that Donne's moralistic preaching of God's judgements on men's

sins merely portrays a concern about men's alienation from their maker and an urge to draw them back to God, similarly the chief purpose of Christ was to cure this alienation, and the atonement of sins that he achieved on the cross was a preparation for this. We might put Donne's way of thinking in an argument: What good is atonement of sins per se, if it does not lead people back to their Maker, which after all, is the chief wish of God and the red thread going through all the order of creation? Return to God and finding rest in him was Donne's greatest concern and the spectacles through which he looked at all the events in the history of salvation. From this point of view even the coming of Christ was an event in distant history and in a sense subordinate of the situation of here and now, where the Church played the main role:

Therefore we have a clearer, that is a nearer light then the written Gospell, that is the Church. For, the principall intention in Christs Miracles, even in the purpose of God, was but thereby to create, and constitute, and establish an assurance, that he that did those Miracles, was the right man, the true Messias, that Son of God, who was made man for the redemption and ransome of the whole world. But then, that which was to give them their best assistance that that was to supply all, by that way, to apply this generall redemption to every particular soule, that was the establishing of the Church, of a visible, and constant, and permanent meanes of salvation, by his Ordinances there, usque ad consummationem, till the end of the world. (S VIII 307)

Here we can see clearly that Donne conceived the Church as a soteriological event. He makes the distinction between general salvation that was achieved by Christ on the cross, and particular salvation, which takes place when the individual soul receives the general salvation in the Church. The Church is the "visible and permanent" means of salvation, being here and now in man's immediate reach. Although Christ's work was admittedly the basis of all salvation, it was a distant event in history, and thus meaningless, until it became reality in the life of an individual. Thus, although the Church does not add anything new to the salvation achieved by Christ, she

none the less applies it, and can be said to have precedence in Donne's thinking by virtue of her immediacy. Once again this is a question of setting existence before essence.³ We may now ask, how this salvation is applied, i.e. what takes place in the Church event:

So that here is the case, if the naturall man say, alas, they are but dark notions of God which I have in the nature; if the Jew say, alas they are but remote and ambiguous things which I have of Christ in the Prophets; If the slack and historicall Christian say, alas they are but generall things, done for the whole world indifferently, and not applyed to me, which I reade in the Gospell, to this naturall man, to this Jew to this slack Christian, we present an established Church, a Church endowed with a power, to open the wounds of Christ Jesus to receive every wounded soule, to spread the balme of his blood upon every bleeding heart; A Church that makes the Saviour of this world thy Saviour and my Saviour; that offers the originall sinner Baptisme for that; and the actuall sinner the body and blood of Christ Jesus for that; a Church that mollifies, and entenders, and shivers the presumptuous sinner with denouncing the judgements of God, and then consolidates and establishes the diffident soule with the promises of his Gospell; a Church in contemplation whereof, God may say, Quid potui Vineae, what could I doe more for my people then I have done? first to send mine only Son to die for the world, and then to spread a Church over the whole world, by which that death might be life to every soule. (S VIII 308)

In this passage of splendid rhetoric Donne is not merely describing what takes place in the Church event. By addressing his congregation with his customary immediacy he is creating a dialogue situation, where a challenge is tossed by him to the congregation, and where he expects an equally immediate answer. Instead of delivering a learned discourse or a

3. The use of the concepts essence and existence as contrasts to describe Donne's thinking may give the impression that the author is considering him from the viewpoint of mid-twentieth century existentialism and trying to present him as an early forerunner of this philosophical school. This, however, is not the case. These terms are being used to demonstrate the dominant quality of immediacy in Donne's thinking and the strong emphasis that he laid on immediate experience, especially his own. The doctrinal apparatus of Christian faith was to Donne first and foremost a tool to express his own experience and the solutions he had found for his isolation and anguish when confronted with death and annihilation. If it pleases somebody to call Donne an existentialist, this can, however, be done, bearing in mind Merrill's statement that existentialism is not so much a philosophical school than a way of looking at life. (Merrill, The Christian Anthropology of John Donne, p.193)

harangue, he is presenting the components of the Church event to his hearers in such a manner that they can be grasped as immediately efficacious elements in the dynamics he is letting loose. In this manner we can say that while describing in his sermon the Church event he is simultaneously creating it, through the dynamics of the dialogue situation. The three characters that he creates, the natural man, the Jew and the slack Christian stand for the objections that people might have for the wholehearted acceptance of the Gospel, but they are also challenges to the parishioners of St. Paul's: do you recognize yourself in one of these? Here Donne confronts man with his possible objections with the living, established Church and all that she can do. She proclaims the judgements of God to shatter the presumptuous sinner, and this being done, establishes the diffident soul with the promises of the Gospel. Thus we see that confrontation is the first essential of the Church event. This confrontation takes place between not a hypothetical man, but the actual parishioner, who is hearing Donne's words here and now, and with not a hypothetical judgement, but the real challenge that is issued in the words of the preacher, daring the sinful man to stand up and defend his life, if he can, or else succumb and repent. Unless and until this confrontation between living, actual man and living, actual judgement happens, the whole elaborate structure of salvation remains just so much hypothetical essences.

The second important ingredient in the Church event that Donne is both describing and creating, is sacramental participation. Looking at Donne's alliteration: wounds ... wounded, blood ... bleeding, we soon notice that Donne is not merely indulging in rhetorical gimmicks. Instead, he uses these to express that after the presumptuous soul has been shattered in the confrontation and is being re-established again, the wounded soul participates in the wounds of Christ and the bleeding heart partakes of his blood. In

conveying salvation in Christ the Church is primarily conveying communion with him. Although salvation involves the washing away of both original sin and actual sins in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, it is none the less first and foremost the re-establishing of the broken communication and communion between man and God. With his vivid images Donne emphasizes the most intimate nature of this communion that takes place in the Church event. The sinner is united with his redeemer, through the wounds and blood of Christ. We might carry Donne's images even further and say that in this union both bloods are mingled.⁴ Thus the Church provides the event, where the finite is capable of the infinite and man reaches union with his maker.

Thus, we can conclude that apart from being a soteriological event, the Church in Donne's conception was clearly the continuation of Christ's work. If Christ had died and risen in distant history, without there being a Church to apply these things in given time and space, it would have been in vain. But in the confrontation of the Church event and in the sacramental union that it conveys, the death and resurrection of Christ become a tangible reality in the life of men. This is the event, where the death of Christ becomes "life to every soule", and where the obstructions posed by sin on the road to union with God are wiped away. Thus in the Church God has fulfilled the work which he begun in the creation, to draw his creatures to himself. Now all that is needed is for this event to take place in the human world

4. This reference to the mingling of bloods, is derived of course, from Donne's poem The Flea. The author has chosen this reference to Donne's secular poetry because it goes well to demonstrate the similarity between Donne's amorous and religious experience. In both cases there is a surrendering of the autonomy of his self, followed by the joining into a larger unit that shares together the experience of reality. In the sacramental participation to the wounds and blood of Christ, the sinner is joined to the unity of the Church, experiencing with this fellowship the harmonious communion and communication with God. By its aetiology, this phenomenon is, however, clearly recognizably an expansion of the happy union that Donne earlier found with Anne More.

again and again, to serve its purpose in innumerable generations.

We have, however, repeatedly pointed out that the Church event is a collective thing. This is implied by the figures that Donne uses, a net, an ark, a city and a kingdom. Also we can see that the Church event presupposes by its very nature human interaction, between the preacher and the congregation. To look closer at this collective nature of the Church, we must once again, start with the creation. We have already quoted Donne saying that God would "have many, he would have all he would have every one of them have all".⁵ Also in the same sermon he assures that as in the ark the clean beasts outnumbered the unclean, so will people destined for salvation by far outnumber those that will be lost, and asserts that God calls his people himself by thousands and by whole congregations.⁶ Thus it is evidently God's own desire for communion that lies behind the collective character of the Church. The Church must be truly Catholic and universal to be a true Church, and encompass all nations and denominations:

Many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit downe with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; from the Eastern Church, and from the western Church too, from the Greek Church, and from the Latine too, and (by Gods grace) from them that pray not in Latine too, from every Church, (so it be truly and fundamentally a Church). (S VI 163)

The encompassing of all nations and denominations is, however, only one side of the catholicity and collective nature of the Church. The other, equally important, side is the communion that reigns between all its members. No man can enter the Kingdom of God but in the company of other men, and in his Devotions Donne develops the implications of this companionship:

The Church is Catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me. (D 107-8)

5. S VI 151-2.

6. S VI 155.

If, as we have earlier said, the communion which the Church conveyed between man and God was of the most intimate nature, so is the communion between the members of the Church as well. All the members of the Church form a collective, which, again, is not a static entity, but rather an ever fluctuating tableau, where each minute change affects not only the grand totality but each individual component as well. When a child is baptized and joined to the communion of the Church, not only the Church is the richer for that, but also Donne is increased, being a part of the Church. When a man dies and is buried, not only the whole of the Church loses something, but something in Donne is dead and buried, too. We must, of course, keep in mind, that in speaking of the unity between members of the Church, we are not dealing with a unity of essences, which would lead ad absurdum, but rather with Donne's consistent ontology of relationships. Man is man only in the context of other men; the very essence of his manhood is constituted by the interactive network of relationships, in which he was placed in the creation.⁷ Thus the communion between members of the Church can be seen in its proper and logical perspective, both in its intenseness and its active existential quality. In one of his sermons Donne gives a practical example of the way this communion works:

Joyne therefore ever with the Communion of Saints; Et cum memberum sis ejus corporis, quod loquitur omnibus linguis, crede te omnibus linguis loqui. Whilst thou art a member of that Congregation, that speaks to God with a thousand tongues, beleeve that thou speakest to God with all those tongues. And though thou know thine own prayers unworthy to come up to God, because thou liftest up to him an eye,

7. This should not, however, be taken to mean that Donne would have abandoned the importance he gave to the individual self. Rather, we face here a dialectical situation, where the self holds a tremendous importance, but its potential remains latent and captive, until it finds fulfillment in communion and fellowship with other selves. In other words, man's capacity of being an individual is actualized only in a relationship to his fellow-men.

which is but now withdrawne from a licentious glancing, and hands which are guilty yet of unrepented uncleannesses, a tongue that hath but lately blasphemed God, a heart which even now breaks the walls of this house of God, and steps home, or runs abroad upon the memory, or upon the new plotting of pleasurable or profitable purposes, though this make thee thinke thine own prayers uneffectuall, yet beleeeve that some honest man then thy selfe stands by thee, and that when he prayes with thee, he prayes for thee; and that, if there be one righteous man in the Congregation, thou art made the more acceptable to God by his prayers.
(S VII 233)

The Church, the Communion of Saints, is struggling to find its way back to God as a collective body. If in this communion one man manages to proceed a little way further, this will benefit his fellow-strugglers too. As the taking of a new member in the Church in Baptism increases each of its individual members, and the death and burial of another diminishes them, in the same manner the progresses and failures on the road to the Kingdom of God are shared by all. Again this thinking is based on the idea of a network of interactive relationships. Indeed, the whole idea of interaction presupposes this result. For a relationship to be interactive it is logical that a change in one pole affects other poles to which it is linked. Thus the prayers of an honest man in the congregation will carry his less faithful brothers close to God. Thus, it follows logically that Donne takes a highly reserved attitude to private devotions, if these are carried out without the benefit of the living congregation of the whole Church of God:

Hee that made the great Supper in the Gospel, called in new guests; but he sent out no meat to them, who had been invited, and might have come, and came not. Chamber-prayers, single, or with your family, Chamber-sermons, Sermons read over there; and Chamber-sacraments, administered in necessity there, are blessed assistants, and supplements; they are almes at the gate, but the feast is within; they are as a cock of water without, but the Cistern is within; habenti dabitur; he that hath a handful of devotion at home, shall have his devotion multiplied to a Gomer here; for when he is become a part of the Congregation, he is a joynt-tenant with them, and the devotion of all the Congregation, and the blessings upon all the Congregation, are his blessings, and his devotions. (S VII 292)

In short, private devotions can be useful and valuable only when they

are carried out to supplement and augment the devotions in congregation. However, if a man tries to isolate himself from the life of the congregation, thinking his private devotions enough to win his salvation, this attempt shall win him nothing. Donne is emphatic that salvation can be gained only in company with other men. A man who sets him outside the Church has isolated himself from the whole communicative order of creation, by severing the interactive links that should have tied him to his fellow-men, i.e. the congregation, he has also rendered the forming of a link with God impossible:

Let no soule say, she can have all this at Gods hands immediately, and never trouble the Church; That she can passe her pardon between God and her, without all these formalities, by a secret repentance. It is true, beloved, that a true repentance is never frustrate: 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 self yet if thou have no more corn, nor oyle, nor milk, then growes in thy self, thou wilt starve; Though thou be a Church in thy fancy, if thou have no more seales of grace, no more absolution of sin, then thou canst give thy self, thou wilt perish.
(S VII 232-3)

Thus we can also see that Donne's answer to the question, whether there existed a possibility of salvation outside the Church was basically in the negative. Only the Church could convey the event, where the atonement abolished the obstacles in the way to communion with God, and where this communion was established. If a man attempted to attain God by his own means alone, or by virtue of his own morality, this was in vain:

And, as out of the Arke, whosoever swam best, was not saved by his swimming, no more is any morall man, out of the Church, by his praying: He that swomme in the flood, swomme but in more and more water; he that prayes out of the Church, prayes but into more and more sin.
(S IX 319)

Not only is the man who stays outside the Church deprived of absolution of sins and the establishing of a relationship with God, he is also deprived of the constant support that the Church gives to her members. He falls in his sin, and there is nothing to check his fall, because all his faculties

are warped by original sin. Whereas a man who stays within the communion of the Church:

fals not so desperately, as that he feeles nothing between hell and him, nothing to stop at, nothing to check him by the way, Cadit super, he falls upon some thing; nor he falls upon flowers, to wallow and tumble in his sinne, nor upon feathers, to rest and sleep in his sinne, nor into a cooling river, to disport, and refresh, and strengthen himself in his sinne; but he falls upon a stone, where he may receive a bruise, a pain upon his fall, a remorse of that sinne that he is fallen into. (S II 190)

Thus, the Church is necessary for salvation by both creating the requisite conditions for establishing the communication and also for maintaining it.

As any relationship, the one established with God in the Church was a dynamic thing, subject to changes and fluctuations. The Church provided the necessary support that man's temporary lapses would not severe this relationship, but it would be continuously re-established and strengthened. We must, however, take into account that all previous excerpts, where Donne is expounding the necessity of the Church for salvation, presuppose a situation, where the Church already exists, and the man who stays outside of the Church is deliberately opting out. We will see, however, that Donne devoted some thought also to the possibility of salvation of those who had never even heard of the Church:

And as those blessed Fathers of tender bowels, enlarged themselves in this distribution, and apportioning the mercy of God, that it consisted best with the nature of his mercy, that as his Saints had suffered temporall calamities in this world, in this world they should be recompenced with temporall abundancies, so did they inlarge this mercy farther, and carry it even to the Gentiles, to the Pagans that had no knowledge of Christ in any established Church. You shall not finde a Trismegistus, a Numa Pompilius, a Plato, a Socrates, for whose salvation you shall not finde some Father, or some Ancient and Reverend Author, an Advocate. (S IV 78)

The issue in question is the obvious abundance of God's mercy, and its applications through Donne's pragmatic point of view. Would it be reasonable to suppose that good and virtuous men, who through no fault of their own had never heard of Christ in any established Church, would automatically be lost?

This is something that Donne with his common sense is not willing to accept, and therefore he gives the following cautious answer:

To me, to whom God hath revealed his Son, in a Gospel, by a Church, there can be no salvation, but by applying that Son of God, by that Gospel, in that Church. Nor is there any other foundation for any, nor other name by which any can be saved, but the name of Jesus. But how this foundation is presented, and how this name of Jesus is notified to them, amongst whom there is no Gospel preached, no Church established, I am not curious in inquiring. I know God can be as mercifull as those tender Fathers present him to be; and I would be as charitable as they are. And therefore humbly imbracing that manifestation of his Son, which he hath afforded me, I leave God, to his unsearchable waies of working upon others, without farther inquisition. (S IV 78-9)

Thus, affirming the absolute necessity of a Church for salvation, where one exists, Donne none the less leaves the door open for the possibility of salvation of the pagans, because God's ways are inscrutable. It would, however, be erroneous to account this reservation entirely to pragmatic consideration, and unwillingness to accept something that seems unjustified to common sense, although these factors admittedly play a large part. We must, as always, take in account that Donne's theological thought is ultimately based on his ideas of creation. This, in turn reminds us that Donne held the conviction that all men are created by God and that God calls all men to himself. Donne had a strong sense of the unity of all mankind; in Devotions he writes: "All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language." ⁸ Therefore the mere absence of an established Church is not strong enough a factor to shatter the unity of one volume and withdraw God's maintaining care and calling. Although Donne can by no means be described as an universalist who would have accepted Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis tōn pantōn, he none the less wanted to reserve the universal possibility of salvation, and not set artificial limits on God's grace. In this sense his affirmation of the necessity of a Church for salvation was

always qualified.

Thus the contents of this chapter can now be summarized in the following manner:

1. In Donne's thinking the history of salvation loses most of its judicial, forensic aspects, and becomes the history of God's drawing his people to himself. The appearance of Christ and the atonement achieved by him are links in a chain by which God has sought to notify himself to his people and establish communication and communion with them. The last and most important link in this chain is the Church. The soteriological Church event applies the general salvation, achieved by Christ in distant history, to every particular soul, thus making salvation real and meaningful. The contents of the Church event can be classified as follows: (a) confrontation between the individual soul and the Church. This includes the shattering of a presumptuous sinner with the judgements of God, and re-establishing the diffident soul with the promises of the Gospel. (b) re-establishing the communion with God. This communion is of a sacramental nature and of the most intimate kind. The sinner becomes participant of the blood and wounds of Christ, and a union with finite and infinite is achieved.

2. The Church is a collective entity, catholic and universal. This means not only that the Church must encompass all nations and denominations, but also that there exists an integral communion between all its members. There can exist no unidimensional communion with God, without the corresponding communion with one's fellow-men. The members of the Church are all parts of a vast fluctuating network of interaction, where each minute change

affects all parts. Thus when a child is taken into the Church in Baptism, all members are increased, when a man dies and is buried, all members lose something. Similarly, progresses and failures on the road to the kingdom of God are shared, one single pious member's devotion will benefit all other members in fellowship with him.

3. Basically no salvation can exist outside the Church. This can be attributed to two factors: (a) Only the Church can convey the event, where obstacles of sin are wiped away, and the communion with God is established. Similarly only in the Church can one's temporary lapses be checked, and the fellowship of the Church will prevent man from falling endlessly into sin. (b) If a man strives to find God, but sets himself outside the Church, he has set himself outside the communicative order of creation and salvation which God has decreed. In setting himself apart from his fellow-men he has also rendered the forming of a link with God impossible. The important qualification that Donne was willing to make, however, was in case of those who never had heard of Christ in an established Church. In their case there would be no question of opting out from a divinely decreed fellowship, thus Donne could believe that Christ might have been presented to them perhaps in some other manner, and that the Church event might have taken place in an unfamiliar framework, but none the less equally efficacious.

III. THE CHURCH IN HER ACTIONS

In the previous main chapter we have outlined how Donne saw the role of the Church in the world. Our main viewpoint has been that of the grand totality of Donne's unified order of creation, and by employing different approaches we have seen how the Church fits into the order of creation, her ontological functional essence, how she correlated with the secular order of society, and her instrumental uses to bring men to their salvation. Our aim has been to grasp an overall conception, and, like looking at a great painting that employs a considerable space we have continuously stepped backwards to get a better view of the totality, while mostly ignoring details. However, to make our exposition of Donne's ecclesiology as complete as possible, we will in this main chapter totally reverse our previous manner of inspection, take a step closer to the painting, and pay most of our attention to detail work. In other words, we will study the individual actions of the Church, from the viewpoint of an individual parishioner, and see how they worked to help him to his salvation. The reason for this is obvious. Should we contain ourselves to the level of grand generalities, we would eventually end up with a view of the Church that to Donne would have been totally false. We have repeatedly stated that in Donne's thinking existence always took precedence over essences. Thus we cannot speak of the Church without stating how the Church affected man's actual existential situation. To Donne the Church was primarily an event that took place in actual time and space with consequences that were meaningful to the individual. Thus, in order to give a thorough account on Donne's ecclesiology we must devote the other

half of our analysis to the individual actions of the Church, and the effects that they had on the existence of an individual parishioner. Thus, while describing the actions of the Church, we will consider them from the point of view of the individual, to whom these actions were directed, and his personal situation. Therefore, we will start the considerations of this main chapter with an analysis of man's quest to see and know God, and thus outline the situation to which the actions of the Church are directed. From there, we shall proceed to God's revelation in the Bible, giving the background of the actions of the Church. After that, we will in two respective sub-chapters first analyze Donne's conception of the spoken word and its effects, and the Sacraments. In so doing we cannot avoid a certain overlapping with material presented already in the previous main chapter. This is, however, necessary to preserve the continuity of thought in our exposition and to avoid sudden leaps of logic.

A. MAN'S QUEST TO SEE AND KNOW GOD

In the previous chapters we have already established that the structure of Donne's theology lies squarely founded on the ideas of communication, communion and interaction. He conceived the very starting point of the universe to lie in God's sociableness and communicableness. Thus, desiring partners for harmonious communication and interaction God was inspired to undertake his work of creation. The world that he created was equally based on interactive relationships, linked with a strong influence of Neoplatonic concept of procession and conversion.¹ All that was created was from God,

1. For a detailed account of this Neoplatonic concept in Donne's thinking, see Ramsay, pp.224-45. (De l'union avec Dieu ou de l'extase.) As usual, Ramsay's detailed findings are correct, but she fails to see the larger connections.

and strove to find its way back to God. Donne subscribed fully to St. Augustine's exclamation: Fecisti nos Domine ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec quiescat in te. Although man's faculties were warped in the fall, and now turned to evil, there still was in him an insatiable craving to rest in God. Yet, by his own faculties, man is unable to come to God. Therefore God comes to him, in the Church:

Beloved, though we cannot come to God here, here God comes to us: Here, in the prayers of the Congregation, God comes to us; Here, in his Ordinance of Preaching, God delivers himselfe to us; Here, in the administration of his Sacraments, he seals, ratifies, confirms all unto us. (S IX 126)

We would, however, make a grave mistake to consider the Church a phenomenon isolated from human striving, a kind of machina, from which God intervenes to save the day. In Donne's theological structure there was no room for isolated phenomena that did not connect integrally to the grand total. The Church was God's instrument through which he reached his creatures and drew them into communion with himself. But even as such, the Church did not stand alone in executing this task. It was connected to a unified order of creation, where ground had already been prepared for its work, and the necessary pre-requisites had been laid. Metaphorically speaking, one might say that the cables necessary for communication between man and God had already been built at the creation, and that they only waited to be connected and energized by the Church. Therefore, it is our undertaking in this chapter to establish the relationship between the groundwork already accomplished and the task that the Church was to fulfill. In other words, we will consider first man's innate capacity of seeking God, and the role of the Church in fulfilling this search. We will also consider the quality of the relationship thus established between man and God. In so doing we will have accomplished a picture of what Donne meant by the seeing

of God, forming a notion of him, and by knowing God, establishing an intimate relationship with him.

The sermon which assists us in answering this question, is the one preached at St. Paul's on Easter Day, 1628, on the text: "For now we see through a glasse darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am knowne." (I Cor. 13.12.) Starting to analyze his text in his Divisio, Donne first proceeds to make a distinction between seeing and knowing God, and between both actions happening darkly now, but perfectly in glory. For the purposes of our considerations, we will concentrate here on the concepts of seeing and knowing, and the use that Donne makes of them.

For our sight of God here, our Theatre, the place where we sit and see him, is the whole world, the whole house and frame of nature, and our medium, our glasse, is the Booke of Creatures, and our light, by which we see him, is the light of Naturall Reason. And then for our knowledge of God here, our Academy, our University is the Church, our medium is the Ordinance of God in his Church, Preaching, and Sacraments; and our light is the light of faith. (S VIII 220)

Here we can see that Donne links the difference between the concepts of seeing and knowing God with natural revelation and revelation in the Church. We see God in nature, in his creatures, assisted by our natural reason. Thus, seeing God is an innate capability in man, implanted by God in creation. Indeed, while proceeding with the work of creation, God created light as his first creature, in order that men might see him in his works and glorify him. (S IV 219) Thus when born in this world, man is already equipped with a capacity to obtain a notion of God, to know that he is the creator, and also to react to him. Although Donne clearly puts knowing God, in the Church, through the light of faith, on a higher level, it is none the less clear that already man's innate capabilities held the seed of communication and communion in a germinal stage. Thus, before going into the notion of knowing God, we will follow Donne's analysis of seeing God more closely:

The sight is so much the Noblest of all senses as that it is all the senses. As the reasonable soul of man, when it enters, becomes all the soul of man, and he hath no longer a vegetative and a sensitive soul, but all is that one reasonable soul: so, sayes S. Augustine ... Visus per omnes sensus recurrit, All the Senses are called Seeing, as there is videre & audire, S. John turned to see the sound; and there is Gustate, & videte, Taste, and see, how sweet the Lord is; And so of the rest of the senses, all is sight. Employ then this noblest sense upon the noblest object, see God; see God in every thing, and then thou needst not take off thine eye from Beauty, from Riches, from Honour, from any thing. S. Paul speaks here of a diverse seeing of God. Of seeing God in a glasse, and seeing God face to face; but of not seeing God at all, the Apostle speaks not at all. (S VIII 221)

This passage leads us briefly to Donne's epistemology and his thoughts on how man interpreted the reality in which he lived. We notice that he conceives man's interpretation of his reality to be primarily a result of sensory stimuli. Yet the important thing here is the strong emphasis that he, in an Augustinian manner, gives to the sense of vision. We can see that, according to Donne, vision is the sense that co-ordinates the stimuli received by all the five senses, thus arranging the sensory images in one coherent picture. Hearing, smelling, tasting and touching may all add their contribution of the shape of reality, but under vision, reality takes a distinctive form that is ready to be interpreted. In this manner, all the senses are connected in the unified action of forming a notion, which Donne, because of the preponderance of vision, calls seeing. This forming a notion, in turn, is both a descriptive and analytical act, in the sense that it both describes reality and also gives an analysis of it. This becomes evident, when we see what Donne has to say about seeing God. This, to him, is a total experience formed through all his senses and through all the objects on which his senses are directed. God can be seen in every thing, in all that he has created. Donne's senses, by conveying an image of the things that surround him, not only give the size, shape, smell, taste and touch of those things, but also their ontological position, all

that he sees and forms a notion of has been created by God, therefore his senses also give the notion of God's existence, he sees God. Seeing God, forming a notion of the creation and God who originated it, is also a total experience in the sense that all can be reduced to God. Not only is God seen in all and through all, but in God all things can be seen. When one sees God, he also sees in him all beauty, riches and honour of the world that surrounds him. As we have pointed out earlier that for Donne the whole order of creation was a unified entity, we can now equally say that the notion which man formed of the world with all his faculties was equally unified and total. All this could be done already with the capabilities endowed to man in creation, his five senses and the natural reason that interpreted sensory stimuli. From this unity and totality of perception follows that God can be seen in even most trivial and mundane observations:

There is not so poore a creature but may be thy glasse to see God in. The greatest flat glasse that can be made, cannot represent any thing greater then it is: If every gnat that flies were an Arch-angell, all that could but tell me, that there is a God; and the poorest worme that creeps, tells me that, If I should aske the Basilisk, how camest thou by those killing eyes, he would tell me, Thy God made me so; And if I should aske the Slow-worme, how camest thou to be without eyes, he would tell me, Thy God made me so. The Cedar is not better a glasse to see God in, then the Hyssope upon the wall; 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. (S VIII 224)

The reason why even the poorest creature could reveal the existence of God was in the vast ontological barrier that separated being from non-being. Every existing creature revealed by its very being that it had been called to existence from non-being by someone who was the source of all being, being itself. All life testified of God, without whom no life could be conceived. Again the unity of the order of creation guaranteed the totality of perception. The fact that man drew the correct interpretation from the perception of his senses was, in turn, guaranteed by natural reason, which was universally

bestowed on all men:

Of those words, John 1.9. That was the true light, that lighteth every man that commeth into the World, the slackest sense that they can admit, gives light to see God by. If we spare S. Chrysostomes sense, That that light, is the light of the Gospel, and of Grace, and that that light, considered in it self, and without opposition in us, does enlighten, that is, would enlighten, every man, if that man did not wink at that light; If we forbear S. Augustines sense, That lightens; every man, that is, every man that is enlightened, is enlightened by that light; If we take but S. Cyrils sense, that this light is the light of naturall Reason, which, without all question, enlightneth every man that comes into the world, yet we have light enough to see God by that light, in the Theatre of Nature, and in the glasse of Creatures. (S VIII 224-5)

As has already been seen, Donne unconditionally takes St. Cyril's side in this controversy between the three Fathers. The light of natural reason, universally possessed by all men, is enough to see God by, i.e. enough to draw the right conclusions, when looking at God's creation. Therefore, Donne maintains there could be justification for atheism:

God affords no man the comfort, the false comford of Atheism: He will not allow a pretending Atheist the power to flatter himself, so far, as seriously to thinke there is no God. He must pull out his own eyes, and see no creature, before he can say, he sees no God; He must be no man, and quench his reasonable soule, before he can say to himselfe, there is no God. The difference between the Reason of man, and the Instinct of the beast is this, That the beast does but know, but the man knows that he knows. The bestiall Atheist will pretend that he knows there is no God; but he cannot say, that hee knows, that he knows it; for, his knowledge will not stand the battery of an argument from another, nor of a ratiocination from himselfe. He dares not aske himselfe, who is it that I pray to, in a sudden danger, if there be no God? Nay he dares not aske, who is it that I sweare by, in a sudden passion, if there be no God? Whom do I tremble at, and sweat under at midnight, and whom do I curse by next morning, if there be no God? (S VIII 225)

For an atheist to try to escape from the evidence of his senses and the interpretation of his reason behind a willful denial, is a useless venture. Even if he bends his will to deny God's existence, the evidence of his perception has already established reactions in him which are clearly directed to the very God he tries to deny. He prays and swears in sudden danger or fit of passion, he shivers in his bed at night and curses God in the morning, and thus cannot escape the reactions to the evidence of nature and reason. Thus, we can see that in Donne's

thinking, seeing God meant the following things: (a) forming a notion of God's existence and of his position as the creator, the origin of all universe, and (b) this notion was followed by a reaction, which could be either a wilful denial or positive acceptance. However, in spite of that some sort of reaction to the notion of God was inevitable, the reaction did not yet mean forming a relationship with him. Man could see God and react to him, and none the less remain distant and separated from him. At most seeing God could serve as a preliminary stage, as the first step, to knowing God:

The first act of the will, is love, sayes the Schoole; for till the will love, till it would have something, it is not a will. But then, Amare nisi nota non possumus: It is impossible to love a thing, till we know it: First our understanding must present it as Verum, as a Knowne truth, and then our Will imbraces it as Bonum, as Good, and worthy to be loved. (S VIII 222)

Here, Donne changes his terminology slightly but the meaning is none the less evident. To learn to know God, to learn to love him, to form a personal relationship with him, first knowledge is required, and this knowledge is already present in seeing God. We can see that when we are to make a transition from seeing God to knowing God, the greatest change that happens is the entrance of a personal element, an involvement. As yet, the concept of seeing God has implied merely objective, detached forming of a notion, the intellectual acceptance of the existence of a God and creator. Although man already reacts to this knowledge, the reaction has remained on a purely individual level, without any element of communication, communion or interaction. Here, however, Donne employs the verb love, thus signifying the transition to an entirely different level. As a further sign of shifting to a level of a personal involvement, Donne invokes the person of Christ and the knowledge of God through him:

neither does any man know God, except he know him so, as God hath made himselfe known, that is, In Christ. Therefore, as S. Paul desires to know nothing else, so let no man pretend to know any thing, but Christ Crucified; that is, Crucified for him, made his. In the eighth verse of this Chapter he sayes, Prophesie shall faile, and Tongues shall faile, and Knowledge shall vanish; but this knowledge of God in Christ made mine, by being Crucified for me, shall dwell with me for ever. (S VIII 222)

Thus, we can see that by seeing God Donne meant first and foremost forming a personal relationship with him. The personal character of this relationship was further stressed by the fact that it must be formed through the person of Christ. Only then could man know God, as God wished to make himself known. In knowing God through Christ, there could be no question of objective, detached, observation. It was not enough to know Christ crucified; one must know Christ crucified for oneself. Only then could man's knowledge of God be of a lasting kind, and would lead him to his salvation. To illustrate the quality of this loving relationship, and the bond of union created by it, we can quote here at length another of Donne's sermons:

Love him then, as he is presented to thee here: Love the Lord, love Christ, love Jesus. If when thou lookest upon him as the Lord, thou findest frowns and wrinkles in his face, apprehension of him, as of a Judge, and occasions of feare, doe not run away from him, in that apprehension; look upon him in that angle, in that line awhile, and that feare shall bring thee to love; and as he is the Lord, thou shalt see him in the beauty and livelinesse of his creatures, in the order and succession of causes, and effects, and in that harmony and musique of the peace between him, and thy soule: As he is the Lord thou wilt feare him, but no man feares God Truly, but that feare ends in love.

Love him as he is the Lord, that would have nothing perish, that he hath made; And love him as he is the Christ, that hath made himselfe man too, that thou mightest not perish: Love him as the Lord that could shew mercy; and love him as Christ, who is that way of mercy, which the Lord hath chosen. Returne againe and againe to that mysterious person Christ...

I love my Saviour as he is The Lord, He that studies my salvation; And as Christ, made a personable to work my salvation; but when I see him in the third notion, Jesus accomplishing my salvation, by an actual death, I see those hands stretched out, that stretched out the heavens, and those feet racked, to which they that racked them are foot-stooles; I heare him, from whom his nearest friends fled, pray for his enemies, and him, whom his Father forsooke, not forsake his brethren; I see him that cloathes this body with his creatures, or else it would wither, and cloathes this soule with his Righteousnesse, or else it would perish, hang naked upon the Crosse; And him that hath, him that is, the Fountaine of the water

of life, cry out, He thirsts, when that voyce overtakes me in my crosse wayes in the world, Is it nothing to you, all you that passe by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger; When I conceit, when I contemplate my Saviour thus, I love the Lord, and there is a reverent adoration in that love, I love Christ; and there is a mysterious admiration in that love, but I love Jesus, and there is a tender compassion in that love, and I am content to suffer with him, and suffer for him, rather than see any diminution of his glory, by my prevarication. (S III 306-8)

After these words of Donne, we hardly need to elucidate further on what he means by knowing God through Christ. We can see that he describes an intensely personal relationship, where the main emphasis is not on the attribute Lord, the judge and scrutinizer of one's salvation, nor on the attribute Christ, the one who has accomplished the salvation, but on the person of Jesus, a man of flesh and blood. This corresponds with our earlier considerations that Donne was not so much interested on the judicial forensic aspects of atonement, as in forming a personal relationship of communication and communion with God. Therefore the person of Jesus of Nazareth forms the ideal human aspect of divinity which can serve as the necessary link in forming the communicative relationships.

So far we have dealt with the differences between the concepts of seeing God and knowing God. Having now established these, we can turn to the thought which Donne expressed earlier, that we can learn to know God only in the Church:

This place then where we take our degrees in this knowledge of God, our Academy our University for that, is the Church; for, though, as there may be some few examples given, of men that have grown learned, who never studied at University so there may be some examples of men enlightened by God, and yet not within that covenant which constitutes the Church; yet the ordinary place for Degrees is University, and the ordinary place for illumination in the knowledge of God, is the Church.
(S VIII 226)

This reference, no doubt, can be compared to the passage quoted in an earlier chapter, where Donne reserves the possibility of salvation to those

good pagans, who never have heard of Christ in a Church, through no fault of their own.² This course, however, is not open for those whom Donne is addressing. To grow from the notion of God's existence into knowing God intimately, through a personal relationship with Christ Jesus, the Church is necessary. Here Donne emphasizes especially the need of the total fellowship of the whole catholic Church, and the appliance of all its ordinances:

If a wall stand single, not joyned to any other wall, he that makes doore through the wall, and passes through that doore, Adhuc foris est, for all this is without still, Nam domus non est, One wall makes not a house; One opinion makes not Catholique Doctrine; one man makes not a Church; for this knowledge of God, the Church is our Academy, there we must be bred; and there we may be bred all our lives, and yet learne nothing. Therefore, as we must be there, so there we must use the meanes; And the meanes in the Church, are the Ordinances, and Institutions of the Church. (S VIII 227)

To learn to know God man must stay within the Church, and be part of the total edifice. But even this is not enough, he cannot merely be a passive member, content in just belonging to the Church. The Church in Donne's thinking is not a static institution, as we have repeatedly pointed out, but a dynamic event. Therefore, if one aspires to learn to know God, he must participate in the happening that goes on in the Church, be an active participant of the Church event. What this means in practice, Donne goes on to illustrate:

The most powerful meanes is the Scripture, but the Scripture in the Church. Not that we are discouraged from reading the Scripture at home: God forbid that we should think any Christian family to be out of the Church. At home, the Holy Ghost is with thee in the reading of the Scriptures; But he is with thee as a Remembrancer, (The Holy Ghost shall bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you, saies our Saviour). Here, in the Church, he is with thee, as a Doctor to teach thee; First learne at Church and then meditate at home, Receive the seed by hearing Scriptures interpreted here, and water it by returning to those places at home. (S VIII 227)

To form a relationship with God through Christ, the evidence and power of the Scripture are needed. Their proper application, however, must take

2. S IV 78-9, discussed in The Church as the Ark of Salvation.

place in the Church. Here the Holy Ghost is personally present to teach the meaning and content of the Scriptures, through ministers whom he has called. Studying the Scripture at home is a useful exercise, but only to remind one what he has been taught in the Church. One should not aspire to learn to know God by his own studies of the Scripture alone:

When Christ bids you to Search the Scriptures, he meanes you should go to them, who have a warrant to search; A warrant in their Calling. To know which are Scriptures, To know what the holy Ghost saies in the Scriptures, apply thy selfe to the Church. Not that the Church is a Judge above the Scriptures, (for the power, and the Commission which the Church hath, it hath from the Scriptures) but the Church is the Judge above thee, which are the Scriptures, and what is the sense of the Holy Ghost in them. (S VIII 227-8)

In other words, private interpretation must always be subordinate to the interpretation of the Church. Only then can one be sure of not erring and losing his way. But although the Scripture is a powerful means of learning to know God, it is none the less not enough. The Scripture contains the evidence, but this evidence must be applied and sealed:

So then thy meanes are the Scriptures; That is thy evidence: but then this evidence must be sealed to thee in the Sacraments, and delivered to thee in Preaching, and so sealed and delivered to thee in the presence of competent witnesses, the Congregation. When S. Paul was carried up In raptu, in an extasie, into Paradise, that which he gained by this powerfull way of teaching, is not expressed in a Vidit, but an Audivit, It is not said that he saw, but that he heard unspeakable things. The eye is the devils doore, before the eare: for, though he doe enter at the eare, by wanton discourse, yet he was at the eye before; we see, before we talke dangerously. But the eare is the Holy Ghosts first doore, He assists us with Rituell and Ceremoniall things, which we see in the Church; but Ceremonies have their right use, when their right use hath first beene taught by preaching. Therefore to hearing does the Apostle apply faith; And, as the Church is our Academy, and our Medium the Ordinances of the Church, so the light by which we see this, that is, know God so, as to make him our God, is faith. (S VIII 228)

Thus, Donne has led us back to the Church event, which we have already analyzed in the previous chapter. The promises and evidence of the salvation which God has prepared for mankind through Christ are in the Bible, but they need to become a living reality in the life of an individual, before they can be efficacious. The general salvation needs to be applied to every

particular soul, and for this, the only place is the Church. Here the totality of the ordinances of the Church enters the picture; first and foremost preaching, to establish the confrontation between the individual and the Word of God. As a result of this confrontation faith is begotten, and Donne is prompt to stress the role of the ear as the "Holy Ghosts first doore" and that faith comes through hearing. The seeds sown through preaching are sealed through the Sacraments, and the whole congregation bears witness that all this takes place properly, according to the institution of Christ. Thus, as the result of the work of all the ordinances of the Church, faith takes root in man, and he achieves the necessary light to learn to know God. At this point we may ask whether Donne is any more explicit in his definition of the word "faith". We can see that he uses the structure of the Scholastics to hammer home his meaning:

The Schoole does ordinarily designe four wayes of knowing God; and they make the first of these four wayes, to be by faith; but then, by faith they meane no more but an assent, that there is a God; which is but that, which in our former Considerations we called The seeing of God; and which indeed needs not faith; for the light of Nature will serve for that, to see God so. They make their second way Contemplation, that is, An union with God in this life; which is truly the same thing that we meane by Faith: for we do not call an assent to the gospell, faith, but faith is the application of the Gospell to our selves; not an assent that Christ dyed, but an assurance that Christ dyed for all. Their third way of knowing God is by Apparition; as when God appeared to the Patriarchs and others in fire, in Angels, or otherwise; And their fourth way is per apertam visionem, by his cleare manifestation of himself in heaven. (S VIII 228-9)

The significant words here are "union with God in this life". Faith is not an intellectual notion, but a living relationship, union and communion. Donne rejects bluntly the idea of intellectual assent to Gospel, and also, in later lines, the way of apparition. Only by living in communion with God on earth, and, after that, in seeing him in Beatific Vision, can we achieve true knowledge of God. This knowledge, again, must be termed as a continuous relationship that starts in time and ends in eternity. As long as we live on earth, even the knowledge of God achieved through faith is

partial, leaving gaps that will be filled only in the life to come:

But knowledge by faith in this world, is Gratiae communis, it is an effect and fruit of that Grace which God shed upon the whole communion of Saints, that is, upon all those who in this Academy, the Church, do embrace the Medium, that is the Ordinances of the Church; And this knowledge of God, by this faith, may be diminished, and increased; for it is but In ænigmate, sayes our Text, darkly, obscurely; Clearly in respect of the naturall man, but yet obscurely in respect of that knowledge of God, As long as we walk by faith, and not by sight, we are separated from the Lord. Faith is a blessed presence, but compared with heavenly vision it is but an absence; though it create and constitute in us a possibility, a probability, a kinde of certainty of salvation, yet that faith, which the best Christian hath, is not so far beyond that sight of God which the naturall man hath, as that sight of God which I shall have in heaven, is above that faith which we now have in the highest exaltation. (S VIII 229)

But unsatisfactory though the knowledge of God on earth may be, as compared with heavenly vision, it is none the less the beginning of total and perfect knowledge. The relationship that is established through faith is, one might say, a continuous process of becoming increasingly acquainted, in the assurance that this acquaintence will not be disrupted, but, on the contrary, is the basis of an everlasting communication. Even death is a passing experience:

If I can say, (and my conscience doe not tell me, that I belye mine owne state) if I can say, That the blood of my Saviour runs in my veines, That the breath of his Spirit quickens all my purposes, that all my deaths have their Resurrection, all my sins their remorse, all my rebellions their reconciliations, I will harken no more after this question, as it is intended de morte naturali, of a naturall death, I know I must die that death, what care I? nor de morte spirituali, the death of sin, I know I doe, and shall die so; why despaire I? but I will finde out another death, mortem raptus, a death of rapture and of extasie, that 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 extasie, in this death of the Contemplation of my interest in my Saviour, I shall finde my selfe, and all my sins enterred, and entombed in his wounds, and like a Lily in Paradise, out of red earth, I shall see my soule rise out of his blade, in a candor, and in an innocence, contracted there, acceptable in the sight of his Father. (S II 210-1)

Thus, we can conclude that the knowledge of God which is achieved in the Church forms a most intimate union between man and his Saviour. When Donne

says that the blood of his Saviour runs in his veins, he is not indulging in florid rhetoric, but conveying his experience that he has been ultimately transformed by the union with Christ. We can see that this transformation entails a loss of self (the death in rapture!) and the formation of a new unit that transcends the limitations of his old ego. The way of natural man consisted only of his created capabilities, and could lead only to forming a notion of God, but nothing essentially new was achieved. In union with Christ, however, the natural man is discarded, he dies a three-fold death, and the result is a new entity, which is acceptable to God the Father, and will eternally behold him.³

We can summarize the findings of this chapter in the following manner:

1. The purpose of God in creation had been to gain communication partners to himself. Therefore none of his creatures were totally cut away from him, but from the very beginning all had basic pre-requisites for communication. These were (a) an innate yearning to find God and rest in him. Thus, the ulterior motivation was provided. (b) the necessary equipment for forming a notion of God's existence. Looking at the creation and interpreting sensory stimuli with natural reason all men must come to the conclusion that there was a God who had created everything.

2. By his natural faculties man could proceed no further than to

3. It will help us to understand better Donne's train of thought here, if we compare the concept of union with Christ to Donne's experience of union between man and woman, as portrayed e.g. in its union with another soul, and the formation of a new, transcendent unit, we. The union with woman meant for Donne stepping outside the self-imposed confinement of his own ego, reaching towards not only another person, but to another mode of being, in communion with this person, as a we. The union with Christ meant to him the same things, but on a larger scale. The new mode of being achieved in this union could at best see God through his senses and thus obtain a notion of God's existence, into a veritable, integral part of God's creation, God's partner in communion and interaction, together with God executing the idea that originally had motivated the creation. Thus, we can say that Donne reached his fulfillment by abandoning his existence as a unit of reality for the benefit of becoming a part of the total action of reality.

form a notion of God. Some reaction to this notion was possible, but this would not lead to communication, outside his own self. He could see God, but he would not know him. For this, the Church was needed. In the confrontation of the Church event the evidence of the Scripture was presented to man by preaching in such a manner that he could adopt it, and a communicative link with God could be formed. This link was further sealed in the Sacraments, and supported and fostered by all the institutions of the Church. Thus, staying within the Church and applying himself to all its ordinances, man would learn to know God and achieve communication with him.

3. Man's learning to know God is essentially God's work, achieved through his Church. When Donne employs the term, to know God, he means first and foremost a close personal relationship. The partner of this relationship is the person of Christ, not Christ the Lord, or Christ the Saviour, but Christ the man, the human aspect of divinity, with whom a personal relationship was possible. This relationship is one of love, involving a most intimate union, where the old, natural man dies, and a new entity is formed. The new unit transcends the limitations of the old self, is acceptable to God the Father, and, reaching beyond natural death, will dwell with the Father for ever.

B. THE WRITTEN WORD

When dealing in the previous chapter with man's way to see and know God, we have stated that for knowing God, for forming a close personal relationship with him, the assistance of the Church was necessary. Only in the Church could man be confronted with the living word of God, and the bridgehead of a communicative relationship be established. The testimony of the Book of Creatures in itself was sufficient for forming a notion of the existence of God, but could not lead man to know God. As Donne himself puts it:

The voyce of the Creature alone, is but a faint voyce, a low voyce; nor any voyce, till the voyce of the Word inanimate it; for then when the Word of God hath taught us any mystery of our Religion, then the booke of Creatures illustrates, and establishes, and cherishes that which we have received by faith, in hearing the Word: As a stick bears up, and succours a vine, or any plant, more precious then itselfe, but yet gave it no life at first, nor gives any nourishment to the root now: so the assistance of reason, and the voyce of the Creature, in the preaching of Nature, works upon our faith, but the roote, and the life is in the faith it selfe; The light of nature gives a glimmering before, and it gives a reflexion after faith, but the meridianall noone is in faith. (S VI 143)

As always, Donne is prompt to stress that faith can be born only through hearing the word of God. However, the concept of the Word in this connection itself raises a few questions. What exactly does Donne mean by the Word of God? Does he follow the traditional formula and attribute this distinction to the Scripture only, or does he expand it to grasp the preached Word also.¹ We have quoted Donne saying: "So then thy meanes

1. C.F. Hooker saying: "We are when we name the word of God always to mean the Scripture only." Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, V, xxi, 2. (Everyman's ed., II, 77).

are the Scriptures: That is thy evidence: but then this evidence must be sealed to thee in the Sacraments, and delivered to thee in Preaching."²

Already this shows us, that the Word of God, such as it occurs in the Bible, cannot be separated from the ordinances of the Church, especially that of preaching. Therefore, when dealing with Donne's conception of the Church as a continuous event of communication and interaction between God and man, we must of necessity devote some consideration to the written Word, and the role it plays in this continuous event. Yet we are constantly to keep in mind, that, while dealing with the written Word, its formal characteristics, its contents and interpretation, we are dealing with one detailed aspect of the great process of communication that constitutes the Church. Should we fail to keep this basic premise in mind, we would arrive at conclusions that would do grave injustice to Donne's ideas both of the Church in general and the written Word in particular.

Proceeding from these premises we can now turn our attention to Donne's conception of the written Word of God, concentrating our study to the following points: (a) the concept of the Word of God, and how this is manifested in the writings of the Scriptures (b) the essential qualities of the Old and the New Testaments, and the relationship between the two (c) the interpretation of the Bible in the light of the usage that will be made of it. In this manner our study of the written Word will lead us directly to the consideration of the following chapter, the preached Word, and will help us to form a coherent picture of the Church in her actions.

Approaching the question of the character of the Word of God in the Scriptures, we must first take a look at the origins of the concept. In one sermon we read Donne saying:

2. S VIII 228.

Inter caeteras Dei appellationes, Sermonem veneramus, amongst Gods other Names, we honour that, that he is the Word; That implies a Communication, Gods goodnesse in speaking to us, and an obligation upon us to speake to him. (S VIII 119)

Already this implies, that for Donne the concept of the Word is a much wider entity than the Scripture alone. The Word of God is God's communication, his active speaking to men. The concept of the Word of God cannot be separated from the Godhead himself, it is an inseparable aspect of him, that which is turned towards us. In his Word God enters into a dialogue with men, he not only speaks to us, but also expects us to answer. In his Word God bridges the gap between the finite and the infinite, thus forming the basis of his covenant. An appropriate reminder here is a passage equating the concept of Word in general with the particular person of Christ Jesus:

First then, God speakes: For, beloved, we are to consider God, not as he is in himselfe, but as he works upon us: The first thing that we can consider in our way to God, is his Word. Our Regeneration is by his Word; that is by faith, which comes by hearing; The seed is the Word of God, sayes Christ himselfe; Even the seed of faith. Carry it higher, the Creation was by the Word of God; Dixit, & facta sunt, God spoke, and all things were made. Carry it to the highest of all, to Eternity, the eternall Generation, the eternall Production, the eternall Procession of the second Person in the Trinity, was so much by the word, as that he is the Word; Verbum caro, It was that Word, that was made Flesh. So that God, who cannot enter into bands to us, hath given us security enough; He hath given us his Word; His written word, the Scriptures; His Essentiall word, his Son. (S VI 216)

Thus, the Word of God is by no means a nebulous, general concept. It is an essential part of the Godhead from all eternity, the second person of the holy Trinity. However, asserts Donne, it is not for us to digress in idle speculations about the essence of God. Rather, we are to consider God as he works upon us, as he manifests himself upon us, as we can experience him through our faculties. And that element of God which reaches us is his Word. The Word through which the world was created, was made man in the historical person of Christ, and we can read the selfsame Word on the pages

of the Scriptures. Thus, although we can say that in Donne's thinking the Word of God comprises the whole process of communication and dialogue between man and God, it is none the less firmly anchored on the person of one man, and on certain written texts. Therefore, the communication is not left hanging in the air, but has a firm basis that is tangible and comprehensible to man. Yet we may ask the question, what does Donne mean by his distinction between the essential Word (Christ) and the written Word. The answer would seem to be that whereas Christ, being also the second person of the holy Trinity comprised in himself the whole entity and all aspects of the Word of God, and thus was the sum total of all the interaction that took place between God and men, the Scriptures, were only a part of this process, although they certainly belonged to it, being, one might say, of the same ontological essence. In other words, the Scriptures contained within themselves the Word of God, to such a degree as this could be accomplished within the limitations of this media, and also played their part in accomplishing the task that the Word of God was to fulfill on earth. From this it follows that when we start reviewing the Scriptures, we are to keep in mind that we are dealing, not with the whole process of communication between man and God, but with a part of it, and, furthermore, with a part that is a living, growing, developing entity. In the following lines we will see, how the idea of the revelation in the Scriptures being a developing process is integral for the understanding of Donne's view of the Bible.

Thus, when approaching the Old Testament, the chief feature we can find in Donne's ideas on the subject, is that the revelation of the Old Testament is by no means complete or final. The thought of gradual revelation should come as no surprise to us; already when discussing the creation, we noted that God began his process of revelation by creating light as his first

creature, in order that men might see his works and glorify him. From then on, God contacted his creatures in several manners, giving them more and more knowledge of himself. In this process one important step was the giving of the Mosaic Law. It was designed to help the Jews in their struggle to be able to follow God's ways:

It is so also in respect of the Law given by God to the Jewes. The Jewes had liberties, that is, refuge and help of sacrifices for sin; which the natural man had not: for, if the natural man were driven and followed from his own heart, that he saw no comfort of an innocency there, he had no other liberties to flie to, no comfort in any other thing; no law, no promise annexed to any other action; not to Sacrifice, as the Jewes; or to Sacrament, as the Christians, but must irremediably sink under the condemnation of his own heart. (S VIII 351)

Here we can see that the observance of the Law and the ritual sacrifices were primarily intended to help the Jews to stand the judgement of their own conscience. Both the Jews and natural men had already some notion of the will of God and of their own shortcomings, as contrasted to it. But in the Law the Jews were given a simple, tangible means of observing some commandments of God and attaining some elementary degree of justification. Moreover, in the prophecies and promises of the Law the Jews were given a hope of a better future, and of a closer relationship with God. In fact, even the Gospel was already within the Law, but the Jews lacked ability to see this. Only later, after the coming of Christ, would the Christians be able to interpret the Law to its fullest extent:

The Jew had this liberty, a Law, and a Law that involv'd the Gospel; but then the Gospel was to the Jew but as a letter seal'd; and the Jew was but as a servant, who was trusted to carry the letter, as it was, seal'd to another, to carry it to the Christian. Now the Christian hath received this letter at the Jewes hand, and he opens it; he sees the Jewes Prophecie made History to him; the Jewes hope and reversion, made possession and inheritance to him; he sees the Jewes faith made matter of fact; he sees all that was promised and represented in the Law, performed and recorded in the Gospel, and applied in the Church. (S VIII 351)

From this we can conclude the following: The word of God which was already recorded in the Law given to the Jews, was in itself already capable

of establishing a relationship between God and the followers of the Law. At first, however, this relationship was limited to alleviating the doom of one's guilt and to promising a better future. The latent Gospel within the Law remained hidden, until God had revealed more of himself, and established a stronger communication with men through his complete and essential Word, his Son. Thus, the degree to which the written word of God could be interpreted and its contents be perceived, was directly dependant on how well the communicative link was established. In other words, the written words of the Law could be perceived as a container carrying the full efficacy of the Word of God, which was to become operative only after the coming of Christ and the establishing of the Church.³ Once again this demonstrates how the Scriptures and the Church could not be separated from each other. The former constituted part of the basis on which the latter was built, yet it could be actualized to its fullest extent only within the Church and through the new relationship established between God and man in the Church. That the released efficacy of the Word within the Law was due to a new kind of relationship, Donne demonstrates in the following excerpt:

So that our happinesse is now at that height, and so much are we preferred before the Jews, that whereas the chiefest happinesse of the Jews was to have the law, (for without the law they could not have known sinne, and the law was their Schoolmaster to find out Christ) we are admitted to that degree of perfection, that we are got above the law; It was their happinesse to have had the law, but it is ours, not to need it: They had the benefit of a guide, to direct them, but we are at our journies end; They had a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ; but we have proceeded so farre, as that we are in possession of Christ. The law of Moses, therefore, binds us not at all, as it is his Law; Whatsoever binds a Christian, in that law, would have bound him, though there had been no law given to Moses. (S V 151-2)

The new relationship that was established through Christ in his Church was so effective, that apart of giving actuality to the full scope of the promises and Gospel within the law, it also released from the aegis of

3. This is an important point because in pages to come we are to see that the same kind of idea about the Word of God with a latent efficacy that is to be released by an outside element, applies also to the writings of the New Testament.

unnecessary and immaterial regulations. The Christian had already learned to know God, as he wished himself to be known, through Christ. He no longer needed to quiver at God's wrath and assuage him with sacrifices and ritual observances. Thus, it was this relationship of maturity and unhindered communication and communion that enabled the Christian to see the essential in the Law in its full significance, as well as to disregard the non-essential.

Thus, moving from the realm of Old Testament to that of the New, we can see that in Donne's conception the chief difference is that the new relationship through Christ has already been established. God has already spoken "personally and aloud" in his Son, and given thus people his complete and essential Word. Therefore, one might expect, the written Word in the writings of the New Testament should be seen essentially as commentaries to the Word that became flesh. Whether this indeed is the case we see when we review what Donne has to say of the four evangelists. Donne considers the four Gospels to be essentially works of history, intended to record the events of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Each writer, although inspired by the Holy Ghost was prompted to his work for a particular reason, and wrote to fulfill a certain need:

For Matthew, after he had preached to the Jewes, and was to be transplanted into another vineyard, the Gentiles, left them written in their own tongue, for permanency, which he had before preached unto them transitorily by word. Mark, when the Gospell fructified in the West, and the Church enlarged her self, and drew a great body, and therefore required more food, out of Peters Dictates, and by his approbation, published his Evangile. And as Matthewes reason was to supply a want in the Eastern Church, Markes in the Western; so on the other side Lukes was to cut off an excesse and superfluitie: for many had undertaken this Story, and dangerously inserted and mingled uncertainties and obnoxious improbabilities: and he was more curious and more particular then the rest, both because he was more learned, and because he was so individuall a companion of the most learned Saint Paul ... John the Minion of Christ upon earth, and survivor of the Apostles ... because of the heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus were rooted ... John I say, more diligently then the

rest handleth his Divinity, and his Sermons, things specially brought into question by them. (S V 240-1)

In spite of these obvious individual differences, Donne was cautious not to grant too much individuality to the evangelists, and to reduce themselves to mere chroniclers. Therefore he invokes the traditional doctrine of the inspiration by the Holy Ghost in writing the Scriptures. Thus, although he was aware of discrepancies and apparent contradictions in the Gospels, he could invoke the common inspiration which was to guarantee the unity and concordance of all four Gospels:

For as an honest man, ever of the same thoughts, differs not from himself, though he do not ever say the same things, if he say not contraries; so the foure Evangelists observe the uniformity and samenesse of their guide, though all did not say all the same things, since none contradicts any. And as, when my soule, which enables all my limbs to their functions, disposes my legs to go, my whole body is truly said to go, because none stayes behinde; so when the holy Spirit, which had made himself as a common soule to their foure soules directed one of them to say any thing, all are well understood to have said it. (S V 239-40)

The important phrase in this passage is: "had made himself as a common soule to their foure soules". The idea that the Holy Ghost was directing each evangelist in writing his account was important for Donne in that it not only guaranteed the unity and congruity of the New Testament, and indeed, the whole Bible, but also the universality of the Scriptures and their applications to future situations in the Christian Church. From Donne's point of view, we can follow his reasoning like this: although God had given his complete Word in his Son, this event now lies in distant history, and it is difficult to make it a living reality for the present-day parishioner. If the Gospels of the New Testament were mere chronicles and commentaries of this event and other Apostolic writings were contemporary exhortations, they could be hardly called on to kindle faith and to establish a communicative relationship between man and God. If,

however, the soul of the Holy Ghost has been standing behind the soul of the authors of the Scriptures, this would guarantee their universality and timelessness, thus providing them with a charge of immediate power that can be released by the preaching of the Church. That the idea of the Scripture as an infinite power-charge was familiar to Donne can be seen from the following excerpt:

As much as Paradise exceeded all the places of the earth, doe the Scriptures of God exceed Paradise. In the midst of Paradise grew the Tree of Knowledge, and the tree of life: In this Paradise, the Scriptures, every word is both those Trees; there is Life and Knowledge in every Word of God. That German Iehovae, as the Prophet Esay calls Christ, that Off-spring of Jehova, that Bud, that Blossome, that fruit of God himselfe, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, growes upon every tree in this Paradise, the Scripture: for Christ was the occasion before, and the consummation after, of all Scripture. This have I written (sayes S. John) and so say all the Pen-men of the holy Ghost, in all that they have written, This have we written, that ye may know that ye have eternall life: Knowledge and life growes upon every tree in this Paradise, upon every word in this Booke, because upon every Tree here, upon every word, grows Christ himselfe, in some relation. (S VIII 131-2)

Here we can see that the power with which the Holy Ghost has charged the Scriptures has one sharp focal point, the person of Christ. Every word has been so inspired that it points to him. Also, the Christ to whom the Scriptures point is not the figure of history who lived 1600 years before Donne's time, but the living Lord of the Church, through whom the relationship with God is to be made. In the same manner, this power-charge is meant to be released in a contemporary, current situation, where it can affect the individual souls who come into contact with it. The instrument of this discharge is the Church, mainly in its ordinance of preaching. But preaching on the Scriptures requires an interpretation, and, therefore, before proceeding to deal with the preached Word, we must make a survey on Donne's ideas on the interpretation of the Bible.

The first principle in Donne's interpretation of the Bible is the unity of the Scriptures. This also means that there is no fundamental

discrepancy between the Old Testament and the New. Where these seem to clash, the Old is subordinate to the New, according to the idea of a gradual revelation. Together they form a harmonious entity, where the New is anticipated by the Old and the Old is explained by the New:

Brevissima differentia Testamentorum, Timor & Amor; This distinguishes the two Testaments, The Old is a Testament of fear, the New of love; yet in this they grow all one, That we determine the Old Testament, in the New, and that we prove the New Testament by the Old, for, but by the Old, we should not know that there was to be a New, nor, but for the New, that there was an Old; so the two Testaments grow one Bible; so in these two Affections, if there were not a jealousie, a fear of losing God, we could not love him; nor can we fear to lose him, except we do love him. (S VI 112)

The important thing here is that Donne does not so much prove the essential unity of the two Testaments by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but by interlinking of complementary affections. This, in turn, almost certainly derives from the fact that, as has been stated earlier, Donne does not approach the Bible as a historical document, but as a power-pack that in a contemporary situation will give the necessary spark to establish an interactive, communicative relationship between God and man. This relationship, again, is based on living, real affections which can be incited by the respective contents of the Bible.⁴ This becomes even clearer, when Donne continues to end his sermon:

Place the affection, (by what name soever) upon the right object, God, and I have, in some measure, done that which this Text directed, (Taught you the fear of the Lord) if I send you away in either disposition, Timorous, or amorous; possessed with either, the fear, or the love of God; for this fear is inchoative in love, and this love is consummative fear; The love of God begins in fear, and the fear of God ends in love; and that love can never end, for God is love. (S VI 113)

Thus, both Testaments, being based on their contrasting but complementary affections, together point the way to the establishing of a communicative bond,

4. It would seem to fit nicely in our pattern to equating Donne's religious experience to his previous experience with women, that he conceives the relationship between man and God consisting of contrasting elements, bearing an innate ambiguity: love - fear; love - hate. To go deeper into this in this thesis would be, however, unnecessary psychologizing.

where both fear and love can be experienced, but where, ultimately, love will prevail. In this manner the inner tension within the Bible is reconciled to serve the function of the written Word of God.

Having established the case for the essential unity of the Bible, we will now move to the problems of detailed interpretation. Donne was firmly convinced that each word of the Scriptures was inspired by the Holy Ghost and needed to be taken with utmost seriousness. So strong was the imprint of divine inspiration that it extended not only to the contents, but even to the literary style:

... the Holy Ghost in penning the Scriptures delights himself, not only with a propriety, but with a delicacy, and harmony, and melody of language; with height of Metaphors, and other figures, which may work greater impressions upon the Readers, and not with barbarous, or triviall, or market, or homely language. (S VI 55)

When God speaks to mankind through the Holy Ghost in his written Word, each word is to carry the maximum weight, in order to have the desired effect. Therefore the aesthetic side of the message is not ignored either.⁵ In his word God was calling his people to himself; thus the invitation was to be presented in as attractive a package as possible. But what should happen, if the message were not always intelligible, or should leave the hearer in doubt as to the proper meaning. Donne openly acknowledged certain difficulties of interpretation:

In the first book of the Scriptures, that of Genesis, there is danger in departing from the letter; In this last book, this of the Revelation, there is as much danger in adhering too close to the letter. The literall sense is alwayes to be preserved; but the literall sense is not alwayes to be discerned: for the literall sense is not alwayes that, which the very Letter and Grammer of the place presents, as where it is literally said, That Christ is a Vine, and literally, That his flesh is bread, and literally That the new Jerusalem is thus situated, thus built, thus furnished: But the literall sense of every place, is the principall intention of the Holy Ghost, in that place: And his principall intention in many places, is to expresse things by allegories, by figures; so that in many places of the Scriptures, a figurative sense is the literall sense, and more in this book, then in any other. (S VI 62)

5. One may well presume that this was one reason why Donne also took great pains to preserve the high aesthetic quality of his own sermons. Of course, the great poet that he was, he would be naturally delighted in skilful use of language: both of the Holy Ghost and of his own.

We can see that as Donne conceived the Bible to be God's direct communication to mankind, he also expects that, according to the general rules of all communication, the most immediate meaning, "the literall sense" is that according to which it is to be interpreted. However, he acknowledges, following the "straight letter and grammar" might sometimes lead ad absurdum. Therefore, he raises the key concept of "the principall intention of the Holy Ghost". At this stage it is almost a truism to say that the intention in Donne's mind is undoubtedly that of establishing the communicative relationship. In all Scriptures, Donne maintains, the Holy Ghost is directly addressing people, trying to cause an effect on them. This is his "literall sense". Therefore, Donne severely attacks the allegorical method of Catholic commentators, especially Bellarmine, who hunt after "curious, forced, forraine and unnaturall senses".⁶ The great sin of these commentators and their allegorical method is not, however, the flight of fancy and imagination. It is the indulging in nebulous speculations to support a point of doctrine in a controversy (such as Purgatory), and thus robbing the Word of God of its character of immediate and direct address. Donne himself is by no means adverse to an occasional flight of imagination and this can be seen from his particular fondness for typological interpretation. Thus, for instance, he explains the sling of David to be the type of the cross, and the stone which slew Goliath, the type of Christ.⁷ Likewise, Jacob's blessing from Isaac prefigures the adoration of Christ by the Magi, and Jacob's banishment from his home Christ's flight to Egypt.⁸ The difference between the allegory and typology is, however, clear. In Donne's mind an allegory pointed to a nebulous, metaphysical through-structure that might have considerable interest to an academic theologian, but did not

6. S VIII 191.

7. S II 187.

8. S II 278-9.

bear direct relevance to the state of the individual hearer of the Word, and to his salvation. A type, in turn was an example of the potential power-charge that lay hidden in the Scriptures. If the stone with which David slew Goliath was the type of Christ, this was an example of how a powerful prophecy and promise was contained hidden in the Old Testament, only to come to light and reveal its power after the fulfillment of the New Testament. Even more, from the pages of the Bible the charge of an individual power-cell, the type, was waiting its release in the preaching situation. To indulge in metaphorical language, we can say that the stone in David's sling, Christ, was waiting to be slung over and over again towards the hearer of the Word, to hit him, to bring him into remorse of his sins, and to beget faith in him. Or, we might say that the power of the Holy Ghost, latent in the types of the Old Testament and revealed in the light of the New, was waiting to become active in the situation of the preaching of the Word in the Church. This, evidently, was the functional mechanism that Donne saw in the typological method in the interpretation of the Bible, and therefore he made frequent use of it.

This is how far we will be able to proceed in our attempt to create a picture of the Church in her actions through the study of the written Word. We have seen the Scriptures as an essential component of the Church, which, in turn, need the Church and her ordinances to release their full power. To proceed any further in our study of Donne's ecclesiology, we must now turn to the Word preached and the role it plays in actualizing the Church event. Before doing so, we will, however, summarize our findings in this chapter in the following manner:

1. When speaking of the Word of God Donne means essentially the whole communicative process that proceeds from God to man. The Word is one of God's attributes; more specifically the second person of the Trinity, the

Word through which the world was created, and which became flesh in Jesus Christ. The Word of God in the Bible is part of this whole process, and of the same ontological essence (or function). The written Word needs, however, the ordinance of preaching and the Church to complement it and to actualize its power.

2. The Word of God in the Bible follows a process of a gradual revelation. The Law of the Old Testament gave the Jews some kind of assurance and the ritual sacrifices furnished an elementary refuge from the judgement of their consciences. The Gospel was already contained in the Law, and became visible and discernible in the light of the New Testament, after the establishing of the Church. The books of the New Testament were written by individual authors to fulfil certain individual needs. They were, however, as indeed all the Books in the Bible, equally inspired by the Holy Ghost, who had made himself "as a common soule" to all the authors.

3. The inspiration of the Holy Ghost guaranteed that the books of the Bible were not mere contemporary reports or exhortations, but contained a power-charge that was timeless and universal, and could be released in the ordinance of preaching. Each word of the Bible was divinely inspired to point to Christ; who therefore could be found in all its passages. Thus Donne could say: "There is Life and Knowledge in every Word of God."

4. As regards the interpretation of the Bible, Donne had two main guidelines:

(a) The unity of the Scripture. The whole Scripture was aimed at establishing a communicative relationship between God and man. Therefore, the different aspects of the Bible were simply different approaches in this task. The Old Testament was based on fear, the New on love. These were however, merely different aspects of a living and loving relationship. Of

these two love would prevail, because God is love. Similarly in the interpretation of the Bible the Old Testament was in accordance with but subordinate to the New.

(b) Because the essence of the Bible is communication, its Words were to be taken at their most simple and obvious meaning, at their face, according to the rules of all communication. However, Donne admitted the existence and importance of various types and figures. These could be accepted because the type in itself depicted a power-cell, where the power was latent in the Old Testament, revealed in the New and waiting to be actualized from the pages of the Scripture in a preaching situation. Donne favoured the immediate relevance of a type, but rejected strongly allegory as idle speculation. In a type he could hear the voice of God speaking, in an allegory the voice of speculative man.

C. THE SPOKEN WORD

In the previous chapter we concluded that when Donne is speaking of the Word of God he essentially means the whole process of communication that proceeds from God towards mankind. In this process the written Word in the Scriptures is an essential part, but none the less only a part. To make it effective, the ordinance of preaching is necessary. In one sermon Donne illustrates the continuous chain of the Word of God in the following manner:

All the word of God then conduces to the Gospel; the Old Testament is a preparation and paedagogie to the New. All the word belongs to the Gospell, and all the Gospell is in the word; nothing is to be obtruded to our faith as necessary to salvation, except it be rooted in the Word. And as the locutus est, that is, the promises that God hath made to us in the Old Testament; and the sicut locutus est, that is, accomplishing of those promises to us in the New-Testament, are thus applyable to us; so is this especially, Quod adhuc loquitur, that God continues his speech, and speaks to us every day; still we must hear Evangelium in sermone, the Gospel in the Word, in the Word so as we may hear it, that is, the Word preached; for howsoever it be Gospel in it self, it is not Gospel to us if it be not preached in the Congregation. (S I 291)

In other words, God's Word speaking to man is to be heard in sermon. Only in sermon do the promises of Gospel become effective, only in sermon is the power-charge packed in the types and figures of the Bible released to change the lives of men. The sermon to Donne is the decisive event where the Word which proceeds from God's mouth reaches its proper recipient, man, thus establishing the first part of the communicative link. What has been spoken before is history, the important thing is that which is being spoken here and now, to continue Donne's chain, quod hic et nunc loquitur. In this manner, the study of the spoken Word, which we are about to undertake in this chapter, will enable us to further clarify our picture of how Donne conceived

the Church in her actions. We will see the Church as the final link in the great chain of God's speaking to his creatures, and the ordinance of preaching as the voice of God directly addressing man and reaching him in his actual existential situation. By studying Donne's conception of the spoken Word and its effects, we will come further to understand, that although the Church may, by her ontological essence, be conceived as an idea of communication and communion between God and man, and, in everyday life, be seen as an institution, consisting of men in a given social environment, she is none the less to be seen mainly as an event, taking place through certain of her actions most importantly through the action of preaching. Therefore, I propose to deal with Donne's concept of the spoken Word in the following manner: (a) analysing the essence and content of the preaching event, as far as this can be done, (b) proceeding to demonstrate the interaction between the preacher and the hearer in forging this link of communication, and (c) showing that the sermon is not an isolated event, but is integrally linked with individual human life, both of the preacher and of the hearer. In the considerations of this chapter, reference will be made to Thomas F. Merrill's article John Donne and the Word of God,¹ this being the most extensive treatise of Donne's thoughts on this subject at present.

In a previous chapter (The Church as the Ark of Salvation) we have already established that the chief content of the preaching event was to create a confrontation with the living Word of God and the individual parishioner, and to establish a communicative link.² At this point, it is time to look more closely how this happens. In one sermon we find Donne saying:

1. Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 4 LXIX 1968. Helsinki 1968. The reader may note that this is the first time in the course of this thesis that we are fortunate enough to have relevant theological material for comparison on the specific topic of our study.

2. See pp. 118-9 of this thesis.

There is no salvation but by faith, nor faith but by hearing, nor hearing but by preaching; and they that thinke the meanliest of the Keyes of the Church, and speake faintliest of the Absolution of the Church, will yet allow, That those Keyes lock, and unlock in Preaching; That Absolution is conferred, or withheld in Preaching, That the proposing of the promises of the Gospel in preaching, is that binding and loosing on earth, which bindes and looses in heaven. (S VII 320)

In short, preaching is the event where the efficacious power of the Church is concentrated and culminated. The Church has the power to bind or loose man of his sins, she can confer or withhold absolution. She carries out these powers in preaching. When the preacher, with the Scriptures as his basis, brings the Word of God to each person who hears him, he is creating a confrontation, where the hearer can allow the power of the Word of God touch him and bring him into a living communication with God. The power-charge of the Scripture is now released, it only remains for the hearer to tap the power thus brought within his reach and grasp the new life that is offered to him. Yet the hearer has the choice to remain passive and not accept that which is offered to him. In doing so, he will not, however, avoid the power of the preached Word, but this power will not benefit him, but turns into his ruin:

He (God) answers us by terrible things, in all those particulars, which we have presented unto you; By infusing faith; but with that terrible addition, Damnabitur, He that beleeveth not, shall be damned He answers us in Preaching but with that terrible commination, that even his word may be the savor of death unto death. (S VII 323-4)

This is the other and equally important side of the preaching event; the powers that are unleashed will either cure or damn. From this it follows that the sermon should not be approached as an academic exercise or a pious exhortation, but, as Merrill puts it, an "apocalyptic event" that "puts the doors of heaven and hell in motion".³ The Word of God offered in preaching would work on its hearer everlasting life or everlasting death, depending

3. Merrill, p.608.

on his own response. These are, of course, strong assertions, and therefore we must now examine how Donne warranted this exalted view of the sermon. An illuminating passage can be found where Donne is dealing with the concept of the Spirit:

We are made Ministers of the New Testament, of the spirit, that giveth life: And if the ministration of death were glorious, how shall not the ministration of the spirit, be more glorious? It is not therefore the Gospell meerly, but the preaching of the Gospell, that is this spirit. Spiritus sacerdotis vehiculum Spiritus Dei; The spirit of the Minister, is not so pure, as the spirit of God, but it is the chariot, the meanes, by which God will enter into you. The Gospell is the Gospell, at home, at your house; and there you doe well to read it, and reverence it, as the Gospell: but yet it is not Spiritus, it is not this Spirit, this first witnesse upon earth, but onely there, where God hath blessed it with his institution, and ordinance, that is, in the preaching thereof. (S V 145)

Here we can see now Donne links together the concepts of the Spirit and preaching. To him, the preaching of the Gospel is the Spirit of God that gives life and bears witness. Through the spirit of the preacher, through the words that issue from his mouth, the Holy Spirit descends to touch the individual hearer. Thus the warrant that Donne gives to the exalted position of preaching lies in immediate divine presence. The parishioner, hearing the sermon, is supposed to see through the person of the preacher and discern that it is not the minister but the Holy Spirit who is addressing him directly. As Donne puts it in another Sermon:

Christ is verbum, The word; not A word, but The word: The minister is Vox, voyce; not A voyce, but The voyce, The voyce of that word, and no other. (S II 172)

A tempting comparison offers itself here. One might easily say that the Holy Spirit is present in the sermon in a manner similar to that as Christ is present in the elements of Communion. This comparison is eagerly seized upon by Merrill in his article, and indeed forms the basis of much of his thinking. His starting point is the controversy between the high Church and Puritan wings of early Anglicanism, where the opponents wished to

exalt either the preaching of the Word or the Sacrament.⁴ Merrill's chief claim is that Donne sided wholeheartedly with the Puritan wing and exalted the sermon into a sacramental position by applying to it the ex opere operato - principle first published by Bullinger in his Confessio Helvetica Posterior.⁵ For this he finds support in such sayings of Donne as e.g. "It is impossible to receive the Sacrament of Baptisme, except the soule have received Sacramentum Fidei, the Sacrament of faith, that is, the Word preached."⁶

But while I agree with Merrill in quite a few points that he makes, I cannot accept his basic premise that the key to Donne's conception of the preached Word is to be found in the contemporary theological controversy and in an attempt to fill a vacuum of direct divine presence left by the abolition of Catholic mass. I have repeatedly stated that to understand Donne's thinking we must not try to fit him in frames of reference derived from the history of dogma or contemporary ecclesiastical situation. Instead, we must approach him from his own premises, taking into account his whole personality and mode of experiencing reality. The key concept which I have used consistently has been the idea of communication and the establishing of communion, and even here it offers us a simple and logical explanation of the exalted position that Donne gave to preached Word:

Nothing can speak, but man: No voice is understood by man, but the voice of man; It is not vox dicens, That voice sayes nothing to me, that speaks not; And therefore howsoever the voice in the Text were miraculously formed by God, to give this glory, and dignity to this first manifestation of the Trinity in the person of Christ, yet because he hath left it for a permanent Doctrine necessary to Salvation, he hath left ordinary means for the conveying of it; that is, The same voice from heaven, the same word of God, but speaking in the ministry of man.
(S VI 145)

As this passage clearly indicates, the exalted position of the sermon follows logically from Donne's basic concept of communication. In speaking

4. Merrill, pp. 598-601.

5. Merrill, pp. 602-5.

6. S V 261-2.

to man through his Word God wishes to convey a message; therefore his Word needs a voice, a medium that is easily applied and readily understood. Therefore God makes use of the voice of man, that of a minister preaching. In the preaching of the minister the message from God is delivered in a form that is immediately intelligible to anyone that hears it, because the network of verbal communication is part of man's natural make-up. Thus it can have the desired effect, provoke a real confrontation in the hearer's life and lead to a response on his part to God. Indeed, as we have intimated in an earlier chapter, the whole Church event culminated in the event of preaching, the direct speaking of God to man, through the voice of the minister.⁷ So if the preaching activity should slacken in a Church, this Church would then be in danger of losing Christ and her own identity:

Now, this calling, implies a voice, as well as a Word; it is by the Word, but not by the Word read at home, though that be a pious exercise; nor by the word submitted to private interpretation; but by the Word preached, according to his Ordinance, and under the Great Seal, of his blessing upon his Ordinance. So that preaching is this calling; and therefore, as if Christ do appear to any man, in the power of a miracle, or in a private inspiration, yet he appears but in weakness, as in an infancy, till he speak, till he bring a man to the hearing of his voice, in a settled Church, and in the Ordinance of preaching: so how long soever Christ have dwelt in any State, or any Church, if he grow speechless, he is departing; if there be a discontinuing, or slackning of preaching, there is a danger of loosing Christ. (S VII 157)

The fact that even the appearance of Christ in a miracle or in a private inspiration must bow before his direct speaking in the preached Word, goes well to demonstrate the central position that preaching held in the constitution of the Church. The Church was the event where confrontation between God and man could take place for the establishing of the communicative bond. This would happen when the judgements and mercies of God would be presented to a sinner in his natural state in the sermon. As for the rest of the institutions and ordinances of the Church, they were centered to

7. The Church as the Ark of Salvation, esp. pp.118-9.

prepare, support and consolidate this central culmination point. The Sacrament of Baptism would prepare the ground by washing away the original sin. The ceremonies and rituals of the Church would help to put the individual in a receptive frame of mind. Studying the Scripture at home would support the message he had received in preaching, his actual day-to-day sins would receive their absolution in the Sacrament of Eucharist, but the decisive confrontation, the hearing of the audible voice of God could take place only in sermon. Therefore it is easy to see that for Donne a Church without preaching simply could not exist. Without preaching, the voice of God could not be heard, the confrontation could not be established, nor communication between God and man. Therefore: no preaching, no Christ, no Church.

Up to this point we have been mainly concerned about what happens in the preaching of the Word of God. Now it is convenient to shift our focus and ask how it happens. When Donne is preaching with the intent of creating a decisive confrontation with the Word of God and his parishioners, strong enough to change their entire lives, how does he go on about it? Here most earlier critics have already brought to our attention the intensively subjective personal element in Donne's preaching. In this context one may remember the well-known and often quoted remark by T.S. Eliot in his essay on Lancelot Andrewes:

About Donne there hangs the shadow of the impure motive; and impure motives lend their aid to a facile success. He is a little of the religious spellbinder the Reverend Billy Sunday of his time, the flesh-creeper, the sorcerer of emotional orgy. We emphasize this aspect to the point of the grotesque. Donne had a trained mind; but without, belittling the intensity or the profundity of his experience, we can suggest that this experience was not perfectly controlled and that he lacked spiritual discipline.⁸

An accusation like this seems to centre around two prominent features in

8. Eliot: For Lancelot Andrewes, London, 1928, p.20.

Donne's preaching: (a) he was not afraid of using first person singular pronoun, nor of referring to his own experiences and feelings (b) he did not hesitate to follow the cue of his own emotions when preaching, and sometimes he digressed seemingly far from the original topic of his text. It is now for us to see whether these traits are merely quirks (or weaknesses) of Donne's own personality, or whether they have their logical place in his total theological scheme.

We shall deal first with the question of Donne's seemingly unwarranted digressions in the course of his preaching. Here we must take into account that to Donne the preacher was the immediate mouth-piece of Christ, "the voice of that word, and no other". When the parishioner was hearing the sermon, he was supposed to perceive that he was not listening to the Dean of St. Paul's, although the voice and the words might be his, but he was hearing God himself speaking. Therefore, reasons Donne, it is appropriate to suppose that God, speaking through his human mouthpiece will also direct his tongue on the topics that are relevant:

God directs the tongue of his Ministers, as he doth his showres of rain: They fall upon the face of a large compasse of earth, when as all that earth did not need that rain. The whole Congregation is, oftentimes, in common entendment comfortable, and well settled in all matters of Doctrine, and all matters of discipline. And yet God directs us sometimes to extend our discourse (perchance with a zeale and a vehemence, which may seem unnecessary, and impertinent, because all in the Church are presumed to be of one minde) in the prooffe of our doctrine against Papists, or of our discipline against Non-conformitans. For, Gods eye sees, in what seat there sits, or in what corner there stands some one man that wavers in matters of Doctrine, and enclines to hearken after a Seducer, a Jesuit, or a Semi-Jesuit, a practising Papist, or a Sesqui-Jesuit, a Jesuited Lady; And Gods eye sees, in what seat there sits, or in what corner there stands some weak soul that is scandalized, with some Ceremony, or part of our Discipline, and in danger of falling, from the unity of the Church: And for the refreshing of that one span of ground, God lets fall a whole showre of rain; for the rectifying of that one soul, God poures out the Meditations of the Preacher, into such a subject, as perchance doth little concern the rest of the Congregation. (S VII 328)

The viewpoint that Donne expounds here, that God directs the thoughts and words of the preaching minister to suit the needs of a single individual parishioner even though this might mean neglecting the rest of the congregation for the time being, reveals an important aspect of Donne's concept of preaching. We have repeatedly stated that the purpose of preaching was to cause a confrontation between God and the individual man. Here we can see that this confrontation could not be caused by preaching in general, by proclaiming "general Gospel", a universally applicable doctrinal structure of God's judgements and mercies. To produce desired results, the proclaimed Word of God had to hit its hearer at the very point where his individual problem or sin lay. The hearer could not be expected to be moved by lofty generalities, he must hear God speak to him in his actual existential situation, before he could be expected to answer. For this reason the preacher must deal with concrete situations, preach explicitly against oppression, extortion and usury to wound the consciences of those guilty of these particular sins.⁹ The preacher was, however, merely human, and could not be expected to know the particular situation of each member of his parish, or their secret sins. But these would be open to God's sight, and the preacher could rely on God to direct his thoughts on the particular topic that a certain member of his congregation would profit by them. Admittedly this would mean sometimes preaching on topics that would not concern the majority of the congregation. This, however, was something that the members would just have to put up with, each waiting for his own turn to come. Thus, we can see that these seemingly unwarranted digressions were an integral part of Donne's total theological structure, without having to

9. S VII 327-8.

attribute them, like Eliot, to lack of spiritual discipline.¹⁰

A slightly more complex question is that of Donne's intense intrusion of the personal element in his sermons. He often "preaches himself", as he remarks in one sermon:

When the Preacher preaches himselfe, his owne sins, and his owne sense of Gods Mercies, or Judgements upon him, as that is intended most for the glory of God, so it should be applied most by the hearer, for his own edification. (S VII 280)

Thus it is not surprising that Donne not only frequently uses the first person singular pronoun, but that he also often makes reference to his personal experience, even to the vagaries of his youth. Here he follows the example of King David, who

... labors not to show his reading, but his feeling; not his learning, but his compunction; his Conscience is his Library, and his Example is himselfe, and he does not unclasp great Volumes, but unbutton his owne breast, and from thence he takes it. (S VII 278)

As another example of "preaching himselfe" Donne quotes King Solomon who, in the book of Ecclesiastes,

... hides none of his owne sins; none of those practices, which he had formerly used to hide his sins: He confesses things there, which none knew but himselfe ... letting them know, how long the Lord let him run on in vanities, and vexation of spirit, and how powerfully and effectually he reclaimed him at last. (S VII 279)

The question that now confronts us is: Was this "preaching himselfe" that Donne both applauded and practiced mere spiritual exhibitionism or did

10. Dealing on this question Merrill makes the following remark: "The danger inherent in such confidence in subjective feelings is, of course, that it incurs the problem of ascertaining which impulses are divine and which are human. Certainly a preacher could test his feelings against the written Scriptures and Church Dogma, but a total reliance on this recourse would represent a betrayal of the ex opere doctrine and the dynamic comprehension of the preached Word." (p.612) Merrill's mistake lies in introducing a foreign element borrowed from Bullinger to explain Donne's thought, without sufficiently digging into Donne's own way of thinking. Had Merrill done this, he would have seen that the principle of communication simply presupposes that the communicated message is relevant to the recipient, thus guaranteeing the authenticity of the subjective impulse.

it have a logical raison d'etre. In what way did it assist in conveying the message from God through the preacher to the individual soul? In approaching this question, we have to bear in mind that the reason for the exalted position of the sermon is the distinctive role which it plays in the communicative structure which is Donne's key ecclesiological concept. However, this communicative structure is essentially more than and other than the natural pattern of human intercourse and discourse. It is a work and an act of God himself. But yet this does not mean that the communication would take place and have its being apart from the normal structures of human intercourse and discourse. When speaking to his creatures God makes use of the already mentioned network of human communication and interaction. Therefore, man with his innate capacity of speaking and understanding speech is essential for God's reaching towards his creatures. But this does not mean that man, in conveying God's message works as an impersonal automatic mouth-piece. Instead, the communicative act of God takes place through the wholehearted and active participation of man, with all his personality. It is the whole of the preacher's self that participates in conveying the divine message. We can also assume that the sensitive man that Donne was, he did not conceive communication as mere verbal conveying of ideas. In one sermon he exclaims:

It is not the depth, nor the wit, nor the eloquence of the Preacher that pierces us, but his nearnesse; that hee speaks to my conscience, as though he had been behinde the hangings when I sinned, and as though he had read the book of the day of Judgement already. (S III 142)

Here the key word is "nearenesse". We see that the ideas conveyed verbally stand in a subordinate position to a total encounter between two persons, where the whole position, the whole person of the preacher, and not just his words produce the confrontation between God and man. In short,

divine confrontation is contained in the human interaction of two total personalities. This is also undoubtedly the key to Donne's "preaching himselfe". He wants to present himself not as a mere mouthpiece, or a conveyor of a message, but as another human being, a fellow-man, who is confronting the member of congregation in his pew. He brings out himself, his feelings, his own experiences and even shortcomings, in order that the hearer might see him as he is, and meet him on a relevant basis. The preacher does not merely proclaim abstract doom on abstract sins, but confronts the sinner as if he, personally, had been an eye-witness. Here his whole person as well as his words spell out the accusation. In a similar manner Donne, "preaching himselfe" makes his whole body and soul a living example of the merciful forgiveness that God has shown to him. The hearer is not confronted with mere ideas but with a living person that has experienced an existential reality and is conveying it by proclaiming this experience. In this manner God makes use of the total scope of human interaction when establishing the communicative confrontation in the sermon event.

Thus we can conclude that the encounter between the word of God and the individual man in the sermon is essentially contained in the total interaction of the two human personalities, the preacher who proclaims, not only the Word as such, but also its effects, as embodied in his own person, now confronting the hearer, and the hearer who receives not only the preacher's words, but the total impact of his personal approach and appeal to him in the sermon. As Donne conceived the divine encounter to take place within the framework of a human encounter, it is not surprising to see that he is unwilling to limit the possibility of this encounter strictly to the preaching event:

But it is not onely the Preacher, that hath the use of the tongue, for the edification of Gods people, but in all our discourses, and conferences with one another, we should preach his glory, his goodnesse, his

power, that every man might speake one anothers language, and preach to one anothers conscience; that when I accuse myselfe, and confesse mine infirmities to another man, that man may understand, that there is, in that confession of mine, a Sermon, and a rebuke, and a reprehension to him, if he be guilty of the same sin; Nay, if he be guilty of a sin contrary to mine. (S V 50-1)

Here we can see that basically the possibility of a divine encounter lay in all human interaction. The preacher was not the only person, whose words or personality could find their target in another man's conscience, this was a latent capability open to all believers. Donne's wide scope of interaction can be seen in that even if a man confesses a certain sin, of which the other is not guilty, the impact of this confession may move him enough to recognize a contrary or totally unrelated shortcoming in his own demeanour. This illustrates Donne's basic conviction that when two personalities encounter each other, the effects are felt in all areas. An encounter like this need not necessarily even be of a verbal nature:

Twenty of our Sermons edifie not so much, as if the Congregation might see one man converted by us. Any one of you might out-preach us. That one man that would leave his beloved sinne, that one man that would restore his ill-gotten goods, had made a better Sermon then ever I shall, and should gaine more soules, then all our words (as they are ours) can doe. (S II 275-6)

Thus the mere example of a man abandoning his sin and making good for his wrong-doings would be sufficient to produce an impact among those who came in contact with him, equivalent to several sermons. Again Donne bases his concept on the idea of mankind as an intricate network of interactive relationship. A noticeable change for the better at one point could not but produce similar effects in all related points. We may, however, ask whether such examples as are quoted here do not in fact constitute a degradation of the utterly exalted position of the preaching of the Word of God, as we have outlined it earlier in this chapter. To this the answer is definitely no. The sermon is always the prime focal point where the spirit of God descends

through the spirit of the preacher to address each individual member of the congregation personally. Even such "lay-preaching" to which Donne refers in the two passages we have quoted, is essentially a product of the preaching of a duly ordained minister. Instead, the significance of these passages lies in pointing out how Donne consistently avoids introducing the gap between sacred and profane, and bridges the gap between divine and human. God works within the framework that he has already established in creation. Men were created in relationship to each other; thus even the minister's proclamation of the Word is part of this network of interactive relationships. Donne does not introduce Dei ex machina, as Merrill implies with his heavy reliance on the sacramental ex opere operato principle. The minister's and, consequently, the Holy Ghost's, impact is not separated by any gulf from the day to day impacts of human life. Everything that man needs for his salvation was provided for by God in creation, starting from the earliest revelation, that of creating light, to the latest and greatest revelation, the Church and her proclamation of God's Word in sermon.

We can now conclude our considerations of this chapter with the following summary:

1. When speaking of the Word of God, essentially Donne means the whole process of communication that proceeds from God to man. The written Word in the Bible forms a part of this process, which, although it forms the basis of all preaching, is subordinate to the preached Word. The written Word is history and latent, whereas in the preached Word the power packed in the Scriptures is released and brought to benefit members of the congregation.

2. The preaching event contains in itself an immediate divine presence. Through the spirit of the minister and his words, the Spirit of God descends

to address each member of the congregation individually. This address cannot be escaped; one either receives it and responds to it, in which case the Word has established a life-giving, communicative bond, or one rejects it, in which case the Word becomes one's condemnation. Thus the sermon is an "apocalyptic event that sets the doors of heaven and hell in motion".

3. This immediate divine presence should not be taken as an indication of a sacramentalist principle, or be compared with the Sacrament of Eucharist. Its proper connexion lies in the communicative structure of Donne's thinking. To convey his message to mankind, God makes use of the ready-made communicative networks that have been in existence ever since creation. Since no one can speak but man, and no one's voice is understood but man's, God speaks through his voice.

4. This communication between God and man through the minister is not restricted to a strictly verbal level. It is not merely the words of the preacher that confront the hearer; God speaks to him through the minister's entire personality. Although the preaching event is essentially a corporate act concerning the entire congregation and taking place within the total communicative pattern of the Church, it is also an encounter between two individual personalities, making use of all levels of communication. In the great interactive network of the preaching event that comprises the whole congregation, we can isolate an individual "sub-event" between the preacher and the individual parishioner, whom the preacher's words hit strongly enough to cause an effect in him, perhaps even a decisive crisis in his life. From this it follows that the personal encounter in preaching does not have the sole monopoly for God's work, although it certainly is the undisputed basis and corner stone. Divine presence, the speaking of the Word of God can occur in all human interaction where a change towards the ways of God takes place. The Word of God is the whole of God's speaking, wherever and whenever this may take place.

D. SACRAMENTS

When dealing with the written and spoken Word of God in the two previous chapters, it is noticeable that our considerations tend to focus on one particular point, namely the actual establishing of a communicative relationship between God and man. This, as we have noted, has been the chief aim and purpose of the Word of God, and hence our vista has tended to be a narrow field, where tremendous powers are at work in a limited area. When shifting our glance from the Word to the Sacraments, the other component of the pair on which Protestant Churches base their existence, we can see that the field of our vision widens considerably and, on the other hand, the activity of powers at work assumes a less hectic character. The following remark by Donne is characteristic in its change of tone:

This guiding then with the eye, we consider to be his particular care, and his personall providence upon us, in his Church; For, a man may be in the Kings presence, and yet not in his eye; and so he may in Gods. Gods whole Ordinance in his Church, is Gods face; For, that is the face of God, by which God is manifested to us; But then, that eye in that face, by which he promises to guide us, in this Text, is that blessed Spirit of his, by whose operations he makes that grace, which does evermore accompany his Ordinances, effectually upon us; The whole Congregation sees God face to face, in the Service, in the Sermon, in the Sacrament; but there is an eye in that face, an eye in that Service, an eye in that Sermon, an eye in that Sacrament, a piercing and operating Spirit, that looks upon that soule, and foment's and cherishes that soule, who by a good use of Gods former grace, is become fitter for his present.
(S IX 367)

Here the change of emphasis is obvious. Gone now is the tumult of the "apocalyptic event that sets the doors of heaven and hell in motion".

Instead, Donne presents a picture, where all the Ordinances of the Church of God bring their contribution to the "cherishing and fomenting" of an individual

soul, like a gardener who alternatively sows, plants, weeds, waters and manures his plants. This is invariably the atmosphere in which Donne presents his ideas on the Sacraments. He always connects them to the total of God's face in his Church, presenting them as a part of a grand scheme for re-establishing the broken union between man and his maker. The establishing of the communicative bridgehead in preaching was an abrupt, almost violent affair, the Sacraments belong to a structure that requires time and careful nurture. Thus, these two facets of God's work on man, differing as they do in their character, none the less complement each other, and grow together in the total ordinance of the Church.

This is the basis from which we will proceed in this chapter to make our study of Donne's concept of the Sacraments. We will first take a look on the general character of Sacrament, such as Donne conceived it, paying special attention to the relationship between the Sacrament and the preached Word. Thereafter, we will proceed to examine in detail both individual Sacraments, Baptism, and the Eucharist. In this manner we will have concluded our study of Donne's doctrine of the actions of the Church, thus presenting the necessary component to the considerations of the earlier part of this thesis, and making our picture of his ecclesiology complete.

Looking first at the general character of the Sacrament, our best starting point is the already intimated idea that they are primarily concerned with the total restoration of the whole man. Here the relevant background is man's continuous falling away from God, which started already in the sin of Adam, and continues from day to day in each individual's life:

Cecidimus in lutum & super acervum lapidum, says Saint Bernard; we fell by Adams fall, into the dirt; but from that we are washed in baptisme; but we fell upon a heape of sharpe stones too; and we feel those wounds, and those bruises, all our lives after; Inpingimus meridie, we stumble at noone day; In the brightest light of the Gospell, in the brightest

light of grace in the best strength of Repentance, and our resolutions to the contrary, yet we stumble, and fall againe. (S V 173)

Therefore, God works continuously through the Sacraments to restore man from his continuous lapses. Through the fall of Adam the whole of mankind was defiled in original sin, and turned away from God. To wash this defilement the Sacrament of Baptism was instituted. In this Sacrament man is also incorporated to the body of the Church, and brought in to contact with the continuous nurture that God practises through all the ordinances of the Church. But even then man remains in a weakened state. He is not able to keep to God's ways, although his original sin has been washed away. Instead, he stumbles and falls again and again, and therefore needs a healing and restoring Sacrament that can be repeated over and over again, as need be:

Now, as God provided a liquor in his Church, for Originall sinne, the water of Baptisme, so hath he provided another for those actuell sinnes; that is, the bloud of his owne body, in the other Sacrament. In which Sacrament, besides the naturall union, (that Christ hath taken our Nature,) and the Mysticall union, (that Christ hath taken us into the body of his Church) by a spirituall union, when we apply faithfully his Merits to our soules, and by a Sacramentall union, when we receive the visible seales thereof, worthily, we are so washed in his bloud, as that we stand in the sight of his Father, as cleane, and innocent, as himselfe, both because he and we are thereby become one body, and because the garment of his righteousness covers us all. (S V 173)

This passage is important, because we notice that when Donne is speaking of the restoration of man from the falls and bruises of his actual sins, he is speaking primarily of a union. In a previous chapter (The Church as the Ark of Salvation) we have stated that for Donne salvation primarily meant a union with God, and atonement was to be seen as the abolishing of barriers on the way to this union.¹ Now we can see that in a similar manner the Sacrament of Eucharist, in restoring man from his actual sins, is also first and foremost a conveyor of this union with God. To emphasize this aspect, Donne lists no less than four kinds of union, or rather aspects of this

1. See pp. 115-6 of this thesis.

union, natural, mystical, spiritual and sacramental. Through the nurture of the Sacraments, the sinner is not only washed clean from his sins (both original and actual), but he is also united with his redeemer, having partaken of his body, having received an application of his merits to his own soul, and sharing his righteousness. Thus, the mutual sharing of both nature and merit that happens between man and Christ, enables Donne to say that they are of one body. Being such, man is now ready to enter into union with God the Father himself as readily, as the Father and Son, who are already one.

Thus, if the Sacraments are instruments instituted by God for the gradual establishing, nurturing and deepening of the union between man and himself in his Church, it is now time to ask, what was the relationship between these instruments of gradual assistance and the ordinance of preaching, which tended to an abrupt and decisive confrontation. The first answer that meets us is, that they go inseparably together:

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 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. (S IV 105)

From this we can gather that although the Word and the Sacraments belong together like thunder and lightning, both have their distinct and separate duties. Preaching, the thunder, clears the air, and prepares ground for the Sacramental encounter. We must, however, be careful to note that even so the main emphasis lies in preaching. We have already noted that the encounter of human and divine in the Sacrament is always part of a gradual nurturing scheme, to be repeated over and over again as need be. It does

not constitute a decisive, abrupt change in man towards God, but instead presupposes that this change has already been accomplished through the preaching of the Word. In clearing the air like thunder preaching establishes the bridgehead of a communicative relationship, from which the work towards accomplishing the union between man and God can proceed, by encountering the direct corporeal presence of Christ in the Sacrament. Metaphorically one might say that the confrontation established through preaching is the planting of a seed which only need happen once, whereas the encounter of Christ in his corporeal presence in the Sacrament is the watering of the plant, which needs to be repeated until the plant has attained its full growth. Yet this metaphor is only valid to an extent, because Donne held that although the communicative relationship might be already established the encounter in preaching must also be continuously repeated. Even then preaching held its place to prepare man with the direct address from the Holy Spirit to encounter his saviour in the Sacrament. In another sermon Donne illustrates the interdependence of the Word and Sacraments in the following manner:

But these witnesses he will always heare, if they testifie for us, that Jesus is come unto us; for the Gospell, and the preaching thereof, is as the deed that conveys Jesus unto us; the water, the baptisme, is as the Seale, that assures it; and the bloud, the Sacrament, is the delivery of Christ into us; and this is Integritas Jesu, the entire, and full possession of him. (S V 149)

Here again Donne points out how the preaching of the Gospel, and the two Sacraments are all equally necessary if one is to reach the full possession of Christ. Yet one can see that the first place is held by preaching, as "the deed that conveys Jesus unto us". Without this deed both the seal for its ratification and the subsequent delivery of Christ in the Eucharist would be useless. Thus, preaching is the prime requisite for possession of Christ, the Sacraments merely confirm and complete the work initially begun in preaching. The trend of subordinating the Sacraments to preaching of the Word is consistent throughout Donne's theology, and we may look for reasons for it

in the following excerpt:

... when Christ had undertaken that great work of the Conversion of the world, by the Word, and Sacraments, to shew that the word was at that time the more powerfull meanes of those two, (for Sacraments were instituted by Christ, as subsidiary things, in a great part, for our infirmity, who stand in need of such visible and sensible assistances) Christ preached the Christian Doctrine, long before he instituted the Sacraments; But yet, though these two permanent Sacraments, Baptisme, and the Supper were not so soon instituted, Christ alwayes descended so much to mans infirmity, as to accompany the preaching of the Word, with certain transitory, and occasionall Sacraments; for miracles are transitory and occasionall Sacraments, as they are visible meanes of invisible grace, though not seales thereof; Christs purpose in every miracle was, that by that work, they should see Grace to be offered unto them. (S X 69)

The first of the relevant points in this passage is that the Sacraments were instituted by Christ, because man was in need of visible and tangible assistance if he were to receive the grace offered by Christ (and later by the Church) in preaching. In other words, Donne conceived that mere verbal message might not be sufficient in communication, and therefore this must be strengthened by actions that speak for themselves and support the conveying of the message. At first Christ used miracles in order to give an irrefutable argument on the validity of his words and of the grace they contained. Later on, he instituted the Sacraments which not only confirmed the message of grace, but also infused it and sealed its possession. Thus, preaching of the Word can be regarded as a spearhead that pierces man's defences and brings him to conversion, whereas the Sacraments are auxiliaries that both support the message delivered in preaching and consolidate the effects achieved by preaching. There is, however, still another aspect to this discussion. In the chapter dealing on Preached Word, we have stated that it was not only the words of the preacher that were used to achieve the desired results, but his whole personality, the preaching event being the encounter of two human personalities, where God works through the person of the preacher.² From

2. See pp. 169-70 of this thesis.

this we drew the conclusion that Donne perceived communication to take place on all levels of human interaction, and not merely on the verbal level. To understand the relevant position of the Sacraments in Donne's theology we must recognise the total ordinance of the Church as a great process of communication and interaction, and see her in a similar role to that of a human communication partner. As in communication between two human beings the words may carry the quintessence of the message, and yet the interaction takes place on all levels between two total personalities, when Donne speaks of the interaction between the Church and the individual he is preaching a similar situation. The words delivered in preaching may be the chief means of carrying the message from God to man, but yet it is the whole Church with her Sacraments, ceremonies and all ordinances that confronts the individual. The non-verbal communication delivered in Sacraments is an equally essential part of the total message, and delivers the same words in non-verbal, corporeal form. Therefore when we speak of the relationship between the Word and Sacraments in Donne's theology, and assert the supremacy of the Word, this assertion must always be qualified by the inseparableness and necessity of the Sacraments. This is a qualification that Donne himself was always ready to assert, stressing the perils of neglecting Sacraments:

I should thinke I had no bowels, if they had not earn'd and melted, when I heard a Lady, whose child of five or six daies, being ready to die every minute, she being mov'd that the child be christened, answered, That, if it were Gods will, that the child should live to the Sabbath, that it might be baptized in the Congregation, she should be content, otherwise, Gods will be done upon it, for God needs no sacrament. With what sorrow, with what holy indignation did I heare the Sonne of my friend, who brought me to that place, to minister the Sacrament to him, then, upon his death-bed and almost at his last gaspe, when my services were offered him in that kinde, answer his father, Father, I thanke God, I have not lived so in the sight of my God, as that I need a Sacrament. (S X 161-2)

Having thus taken a look at Donne's conception of the general character of the Sacraments and their relationship to the Word preached, it is now convenient to look at some specific details of Donne's ideas on the

Sacrament of Baptism. The two prominent themes that emerge here are union with God and restoration from one's sins. Preaching on the text "For, all yee that are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ", Donne starts his sermon on the theme of union:

All proofes must either arrest, and determine in some things confessed, and agreed upon, or else they proceed in infinitum. That which the Apostle takes to be that which is granted on all sides, and which none can deny, is this, that to be baptized is to put on Christ: And this putting on of Christ, doth so far carry us to that Infinitissimum, to God himselve, that we are made thereby Semen Dei, the seed of God; The field is the world, and the good seed are the Children of the kingdome; And we are translated even into the nature of God, By his pretious promises we are made partakers of the Divine nature; yea, we are discharged of all bodily, and earthly incumbrances, and we are made all spirit, yea, the spirit of God himselve, He that is joyned to the Lord, is one spirit with him. All this we have, if we doe put on Christ: and we doe put on Christ, if we are baptized into him. (S V 153)

Here Donne takes the concept of being baptized in Christ and putting on Christ as a basic, generally accepted doctrinal consensus, from which to develop his train of thought. He sees the putting on of Christ as forming a deep union with him, that leads man to God. Man is then made partaker of divine nature, freed of all incumbrances. Thus he becomes one spirit with God. We may now ask, whether this strong assertion of the union with God starting already at the baptism does not in part contradict what we have earlier stated on Donne's view of the sermon as the initiator of the communicative relationship. In other words, how is this union to be seen? The answer to this lies basically in the character of Donne's ontology, which is consistently more interested in relationships than essences. Consequently, the union with God of which he speaks should not be seen as a union of essences, but as a union in interaction. The interaction between God and man starts at baptism. Here God reaches his hand to man (usually a child) and gives a visible sign and medium of his grace. This means that God and man have now started a process of common action and interaction, albeit in

an elementary and germinal stage. This is the common denominator they share, although their essential natures do not intermingle and God remains God and man remains man. This relationship is the union they form, in which, as God was its initiator, the spirit of God prevails, dominating their interaction and characterizing its development. Thus, we have a basis for the later reception of the preached Word, just as land is ploughed before the actual sowing of the seed.

In this union of shared interaction, Donne sees the washing away of the original sin as the most important part. He uses the metaphor of clothing man with Christ's righteousness:

When the prodigall child returned to his father, his father clothed him intirely, and all at once; he put a robe upon him, to cover all his defects: which Robe, when God puts upon us, in clothing us with Christ, that robe is not onely Dignitas quam perdidit Adam, as Augustine says, but it is Amictus sapientiae, as Ambrose enlarges it, It does not onely make us well, as we were in Adam, but it enables us better, to preserve that state; It does not onely cover us, that is, make us excusable, for our past, and present sinnes, but it indues us with grace, and wisdome, to keep that robe still, and never to returne to our former foulnesses, and deformities. (S V 154)

Thus baptism does not merely wash away the original sin, but it also enables man to remain in the state of grace which is given to him. Again this is not to be conceived as an infused mystical virtue, but as the result of the newly begun relationship with God. It is by virtue of God's action in this relationship that man does not lapse into his original fallen state. In this manner baptism preserves man for the further development of his relationship with God which is to come later. For this reason Donne stressed the absolute necessity of baptism. Unless man were restored from his original sin, and preserved in that state, no relationship could be conceived between him and God. Therefore:

Baptisme is so necessary, as that God hath placed no other ordinary seale, nor conveyance of his graces in his Church, to them that have

not received that, then baptisme. And they, who doe not provide duly, for the Baptisme of their children, if their children die, have a heavier accompt to make to God for that child, then if they had not provided a Nurse, and suffered the child to starve. God can preserve the child without Milke; and he can save the child without a sacrament; but as that mother that throwes out, and forsakes her child in the field, or wood, is guilty before God for the Temporall murder of that child, though the child die not, so are those parents of a spirituall murder, if their children, by their fault die unbaptized, though God preserve that child out of his abundant, and miraculous mercy, from spirituall destruction. (S V 162)

Thus baptism is the only door through which one can enter into a relationship with God. If this door remains closed, there is a grave danger of a spiritual death. Although Donne would not state categorically that children who die unbaptized, would be damned, he none the less stressed the guilt of those by whose omission such a thing can occur. He would not lay limits to God's mercy, and yet he would not alleviate the gravity of the situation. He could, however, be explicit in his message to those who already could have a say in the matter of their own baptism:

So what assurance soever, what privy marke soever, those men, which pretend to be so well acquainted, and so familiar with the decrees of God, to give thee to know, that thou are elect to eternall salvation, yea, if an Angel from heaven come down and tell thee, that he saw thy name in the booke of life, if thou beest' not baptized, never delude thy selfe with those imaginary assurances. (S V 161)

Having thus established the position that baptism held in Donne's theology, it is now time to turn to the Sacrament of Eucharist. This, we will see, is in Donne's conception largely a consolidating Sacrament that follows the act of preaching, delivering to the hearer who has received the Word, Christ himself in a corporeal form. We have already stated that the great significance of Eucharist is that it wipes away the actual sins that accumulate from day to day to burden the individual's life. How this happens, Donne explains in the following way:

... we have only the sacrifices of prayer, and of praise, and of Christ in the sacrament; for so it is the ordinary phrase and manner of speech in the Fathers to call that a sacrifice; not only as it is a commemorative

sacrifice, (for that is amongst our selves, and so every person in the congregation may sacrifice, that is, do that in remembrance of Christ), but as it is a real sacrifice, in which the Priest doth that, which none but he does; that is, really to offer up Christ Jesus crucified to Almighty God for the sins of the people, so, as that very body of Christ, which offered himself for a propitiatory sacrifice upon the cross, once for all, that body, and all that body suffered, is offered again, and presented to the Father, and the Father is intreated, that for the merits of that person, so presented and offered unto him, and in the contemplation thereof, he will be merciful to that congregation and applie those merits of his, to their particular souls. (S II 256)

At first sight this statement affirming so strongly the sacrificial character of Eucharist seems to bear vestiges of Donne's earlier attachment to Romanism. It would, however, be erroneous to look for an explanation to Donne's conception of Eucharist in that direction. Far more important is that Donne affirms the character of Eucharist as a dynamic event. In other words, he does not see the Sacrament as a "medicine of immortality", where the communicant is the passive recipient of the elements that in some manner contain a mysterious virtue and power. We get a much truer picture of Donne's view of the Eucharist, if we compare it with his view of sermon. We have stated in the previous chapter that for Donne the sermon was an "apocalyptic event that set the doors of heaven and hell in motion". This was because through the voice of the preacher, the voice of the Holy Ghost directly ascended to address the congregation and its individual members. Each word uttered in the sermon carried a power-charge that could give ever-lasting life or cause ever-lasting death on the hearer. This, then, is the background, against which we can understand better the sacrificial character of Eucharist which Donne expounds. We see that like the sermon, the Eucharist is an equally apocalyptic event. In the Eucharist the body of Christ which once hung on the cross is offered once again, being brought to God as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the congregation. The actual suffering of Christ on the Calvary might have been a matter of history, like the pages of the written Word in the Scriptures, but when

this body was sacrificed again, in a given congregation, it became a particular event that could apply the "general salvation" on each particular soul. Thus Donne's view of the Eucharist was dominated by his characteristic structure of the Church being the instrument for applying general salvation in particular cases. To him there could be no case of general structures, each soul was a separate individual, who needed God's saving grace for his own concrete existential situation. This could be provided if at each time of celebration the Communion was an equally real and efficacious renewal of the sacrifice of Christ. From this assertion follows naturally the tremendous gravity of each situation where Communion was celebrated. As in the sermon, potent powers were released, and these could either make or break the individual who came in contact with them:

This Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Saviour, Luther calls safely, Venerabile & adorabile; for certainly, whatsoever that is which we see, that which we receive, is to be adored; for, we receive Christ. He is Res Sacramenti, The forme, the Essence, the substance, the soule of the Sacrament; And Sacramentum sine re Sacramenti, mors est, To take the body, and not the soule, the bread, and not Christ, is death. (S VII 320)

Thus, the recipient of the Eucharist finds himself in the following situation: He is present at an event, where the priest offers the body of Christ to God for the sins of each partaker of the Communion. He participates in this event by witnessing it and receiving the elements of Communion, in which he receives Christ corporeally. If he receives communion worthily God will accept the offer of Christ to wash away his own individual sins, and his receiving the body and blood of Christ will strengthen the union between God and him. If, however, he receives the elements unworthily, not accepting Christ with the bread and wine, the powers at work will turn into his spiritual death.

Donne did not wish to be explicit on the manner in which the body and

blood of Christ were received in the elements. He did, however, strongly refute the doctrine of transsubstantiation, thus stressing the difference between his views and Romanism:

Beloved, in the blessed, and glorious, and mysterious Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ Jesus, thou seest Christum Domini, the Lords Salvation, and thy Salvation, and that, thus far with bodily eyes; That Bread which thou seest after the Consecration, is not the same bread, which was presented before not that it is Transsubstantiated to another substance, for it is bread still, (which is the hereticall Riddle of the Roman Church, and Satans sophistry, to dishonour miracles, by the assiduity and frequency, and multiplicity of them) but that it is severed, and appropriated by God, in that Ordinance to another use; It is other Bread, so, as the Judge is another man, upon the bench, then he is home, in his own house. (S VII 294)

The decisive difference lay in the use, and not the substance of the bread, as the whole Sacrament itself was primarily a dynamic, sacrificial event, and not a static consuming of a "medicine of immortality". Therefore, if a parishioner was perplexed at the manner in which he received Christ, Donne would only advise him not to worry, and not to enquire too closely into divine mysteries:

When thou comest to this seale of thy peace, the Sacrament, pray that God will give thee light, that may direct and establish thee, in necessary and fundamentall things; that is, the light of faith to see, that the Body and Bloud of Christ, is applied to thee, in that action, But for the manner, how the Body and Bloud of Christ is there, wait his leisure, if he have not yet manifested that to thee: Grieve not at that, wonder not at that, presse not for that; for hee hath not manifested that, not the way, not the manner of his presence in the Sacrament to the Church. (S VII 290)

In other words, Donne urged the communicant to perceive the content of the action that was to take place, not its outward form or mechanics. This is an attitude consistent to Donne. He did not wish to enter into sophisticated and abstract theological speculations when preaching to his congregation. His main concern was the saving action of God and the interaction between God and man that took place through the ordinances of the Church. Both the sermon and the Sacraments were to him a hand of God reached out

to man, waiting for man to grasp it. Therefore, if this account has failed to answer certain questions pertinent to the curiosity of a theologically trained mind, it cannot be helped. To Donne questions concerning theological detail were often irrelevant, and he refused to deal with them. His only concern was how to find rest in union with God, and how to assist his fellow-men on this trail. Therefore his way of thinking was moulded accordingly, and I have tried to present it as such in this thesis.

We will finally summarize the contents of this last chapter in the following manner:

1. For Donne the Sacraments were essentially a part of the continuous process of God's nurturing care in the Church. Where the sermon was an abrupt establishing of confrontation, the Sacraments belonged to a realm of gradual care. Both the sermon and the Sacraments belonged, however, inseparably together, "like thunder and lightning", complementing each other and both working together to bring man in union with his Maker.

2. The chief work of the Sacraments was to prepare ground for the establishing of this union by washing away the original sin in Baptism, and by consolidating the union by atoning for the day-to-day actual sins in Eucharist. It is to be noted, that Donne always considered sin as something that stood in the way of the process of conversion, hindering the interaction between God and man. Thus, while the Sacraments offered atonement and washing away of sins, they are to be seen essentially as instruments of union.

3. The Sacraments were to be seen also as the non-verbal part in the process of communication between God and man through the Church. As in communication between two persons, words may essentially carry the chief message, and yet the interaction happens on all levels of personality, likewise in the communication of the Church the sermon formed the verbal part,

which was supported and complemented by the non-verbal message of the Sacraments in affirming the message of grace, and giving visible and tangible seals of it.

4. The Sacrament of Baptism, apart from washing away the original sin, also restored man to a state, where he could continue his newly established relationship with God, without relapsing into his former, natural state. Thus it marked the beginning of a long and gradual process that was eventually to lead man into a harmonious union with God. Because this process of interaction was initiated at Baptism, it followed that Baptism was absolutely necessary to one's salvation. Although Donne was not willing to condemn children dying unbaptized, he was prompt to point out that no one could hope to travel the path to the Kingdom of God without having entered through the gate of Baptism.

5. The Sacrament of Eucharist was to Donne essentially a sacrificial event. Here the priest re-offered the crucified body of Christ to God as a propitiatory offering for the congregation's sins. To be fully understood, this event is to be compared to the sermon. In sermon the preacher brings forth the power of the Scriptures, to present-day reality. In a similar manner the historical event of Christ's death on the cross was brought into the present day, to the here and now in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Thus the general salvation achieved by Christ could become particular salvation to the individual parishioner in his very own existential situation.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In starting to summarize the different threads of this thesis and to draw conclusions from them, it is first necessary to go back to the very beginning and consider the method and approach, which we had set for ourselves in taking the task of rendering an account of Donne's ecclesiology. The first task I set myself was to meet Donne strictly on his own terms. Already at the earliest phase of this research it became evident that previous scholars studying Donne's theology had made the grave mistake of seeing him in the light of the theological heritage of previous ages, or within the strictly contemporary framework of his own era and its theological and ecclesiastical climate. In doing so these scholars had failed to detect Donne's great originality and to discern the paths along which his thoughts ran. They had discovered striking similarities between Donne and the Neoplatonic school of thought or between Donne and high-Church Anglicanism. Even though these discoveries were correct in themselves, the conclusion drawn by Ramsay and Husain, i.e., that Donne could be classified as a Neoplatonist or a high Church Anglican was totally erroneous. Therefore I set myself to attempt to listen only to what Donne himself has to say, to detect the twists and turns in his train of thought, and to render as faithful as possible an account of that which could be heard in this manner. It has to be admitted that this approach, in spite of its obvious justification, has caused a somewhat curious situation, not often

encountered in theological research. My actual topic, Donne's doctrine of the Church, deals with a question that was acute in Donne's own contemporary situation. In his own lifetime men had been jailed and suffered martyrdom for differences of opinion concerning the doctrine of the Church. The question of the nature of the Church had a long and tortuous history even in the centuries that preceded Donne, and to an extent an understanding of both previous and contemporary argument could thus be deemed necessary for the proper grasping of a certain man's thoughts on the Church in a given era and environment. Yet, in order to make only Donne's voice properly heard, I have endeavoured to keep these factors in the background, and consciously avoided references to past and contemporary thinkers. This has been because of my basic conviction that even in approaching a question that is of critical relevance to a given time and environment, a certain man's thoughts and doctrinal standpoints stem first and foremost from the man himself, and only in the second place from his past and present age and environment. As a justification of this conviction we may remark that, as the reader has already seen, following this path in research has produced results that do not follow the generally accepted pattern, but none the less form a coherent and logical picture. In other words, my chief argument for the validity of my approach and of the results I have produced rests on their credibility. Ultimately the reader must judge the validity of this claim.

Thus, in endeavouring to present a picture of Donne's doctrine of the Church, I have been compelled to devote considerable thought and space to the man Donne, his way of experiencing the reality that he lived in, and to the way this reality experience formed his way of thought. In other words, in order to present a small sector of Donne's thinking, I have

tried to understand him as a total personality, and see not only his thoughts on the Church, but also on the whole scope of life and existence. Following this path has necessitated trying to bridge a gulf of more than three centuries, as far as this can be done, and trying to form an intimate relationship with the man Donne. It has demanded a considerable effort of empathy, and has produced a situation, where the person making the study finds himself not only as a detached scrutinizer, but also himself personally responding to the long dead and yet living personality of Donne. Although an argument might be raised against the validity of such personal response on the researcher's part, I none the less consider it essential. Two examples may be cited here, as to where this responding has noticeably affected my work: (a) The reader may have been at times surprised at the astonishing "modernity" of some of Donne's ideas and of the way in which they have been expressed. Here my response to Donne has been that I have not always felt myself bound to the vocabulary and thought concepts that Donne used. I felt that I may present a more accurate picture of his experience and thoughts by using language and concepts which, although no doubt unfamiliar to him, still best express the message he wanted to convey. Had I confined myself in such instances to the exact words and concepts Donne himself used, his message might have remained obscure to the modern reader, and the originality of his thought totally unnoticed. (b) At times the reader may have been disappointed because certain questions which seem pertinent to a theologically trained mind have been left conspicuously unanswered. Here I have deemed it inappropriate to dwell on topics which held scant relevance to Donne, even though some other theologian might have had entirely different thoughts. Thus even though enough material may have existed to answer these questions, I have felt at liberty not to dwell on topics which Donne had accepted only because they were part and parcel of

the generally accepted body of Anglican dogma, but which did not hold any significance for his own thought. We may now go back to the definition of the task of this thesis, as it was formulated in the Introduction, i.e. to render as thorough an account as possible of Donne's ecclesiology. From the considerations that have emerged the reader may see that this task has been executed not by analysing a set of detached, abstract ideas, but primarily by making an analysis of Donne's experience of reality and of the role that the Church played in it. It is my contention that we are able to get a truer picture of what the Church meant to Donne, by linking it to his overall existence, than if we had approached Donne's ecclesiology as a set of abstractions holding mainly academic interest to him.

Thus, starting from these premises, I have decided to divide this chapter of conclusions in the following manner: A. Donne the man and his experience of reality. Here I will concentrate on drawing the lines which show how his experience of reality affected his theological thinking in general and his ecclesiology in particular. B. Donne's doctrine of the Church. This section will give a summary of the most important results of my research, paying most attention, as has been my consistent approach, to that which best displays Donne's originality.

A. DONNE THE MAN AND HIS EXPERIENCE OF REALITY

Starting to collect the different threads which we have already presented on Donne the man in the first main chapter of this thesis, the prominent theme that emerges on all planes of his personality is the conflict between an aspiring ego and the reality which surrounds it. In all fields of life the story of Donne is the story of this ego in conflict with its surroundings, and, later, adjusting to it, finding reconciliation in a

working synthesis of reality. We can see that the young Donne is a person who intensely stresses his own individuality, an ego separate and autonomous in the reality which surrounds it. To this emphasis is coupled the exaltation of the body and its corporeality, as well as that of sensual delights. This emphasis on personal separateness from his surroundings, however, soon leads him into a serious conflict. What I propose to do in this passage, is to follow the course of this conflict and its eventual solution on three distinct fields, his relationship with women, with his career and with religion. On the basis of our findings in the first main chapter I wish to summarize here the parallel course of this basic conflict and its solution as it emerged on these three fields, thus forming a picture of Donne's experience of the reality that surrounded him, and the ways in which this affected his theological thinking.

1. Donne and his women

Following the course of development of Donne's experience of his women, as we can see it portrayed in his poetry, we see what tremendous emphasis the young Donne laid on the separateness of his personal ego. As can be clearly seen from his earliest poetry, the Elegies, to him love was a strictly one way affair. It had its origins in his own burning desire, which could be kindled by almost any woman in sight. Indeed, it is obvious that to Donne love and the chase and capture that it involved was an end in itself. The object of this chase was clearly of a secondary importance, and it can be safely argued that young Donne rarely if ever encountered his women as equals. The self-sufficiency of his own ego as well as a fear of being hurt apparently forbade him a closer personal relationship. To this self-sufficiency must be added, both as its contrast and complement, a germinal feeling of the insufficiency of such total separateness of his person.

Donne staunchly denied this feeling as long as he could, but it could not be suppressed in the long term. In some of his Songs and Sonnets we can already see an impending crisis brewing. In such poems Donne bitterly expresses his own folly in falling a prey to love, and rebukes himself. He is clearly afraid to step outside the confines of his personal ego, and thus rendering himself vulnerable to the possibility of being hurt. Yet the demands of splitting his narrow confines are growing stronger all the time, waiting only the final burst of the dam. This burst came, when Donne met Anne More and fell in love with her. Of this process we can see traces recorded in The Extasie and some other Songs and Sonnets. Thus we can attempt to reconstruct a picture of what happened. It is apparent that Donne's sense of dissatisfaction with the total separateness of his self had finally grown strong enough to force him to risk venturing earnestly to reach out to another person. He was now willing to submit his total independence and to share his formerly self-contained world with somebody else. We know that when he finally risked this with Anne More, the attempt was successful, and produced some totally new results. The most important of these was, no doubt, an entirely new kind of experience, which he records in The Extasie. Here, it can be seen, both participants have temporarily abandoned themselves, sharing an experience that is greater than its two participants, transcending them both. One can reasonably surmise that now for the first time in his life Donne felt not being a strictly separate, individual personality, but shared his reality with someone else, and this experience of a shared reality brought with itself a concept of reality where the total is based on the interaction of its parts, the parts themselves being in a subordinate position. In other words, it is my contention, that in Donne's experience with Anne More lay the beginnings of his ontological conception, which was later to

become so decisive for his theology. He had successfully experienced the bursting of an ego from its limited confinements into a shared reality of interpersonal interaction. To Donne, this experience was so significant, that although it would be a gross overstatement to claim that it immediately changed his whole outlook of life and reality, it none the less marked the beginning of a process that was to lead to this total change of outlook. As Donne's marriage seems to have been essentially a happy one, we may claim that the pattern of a shared experience of reality was strengthened in the years of life that he had together with Anne, thus preparing him for a similar change in his ontological reality in other fields of life and finally in his total outlook. Therefore in the case history of Donne, his relationship with women was the first area where the impending conflict of his starting point was brought to a crisis and to a successful solution. At the same time his experience of reality was given the first decisive shaping.

2. Donne and his career

Looking at Donne's experience in his struggle to make a career, the first point that catches the eye is the strong element of aspiration in his starting point. We have already noted that he traced his family to the Dwns of Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire, an ancient and distinguished family that had often played a role in the making of the emerging nation. It is obvious that he considered himself to be no commoner, and aimed high at making his career. Already at an early age he set forth to make his way to the Court, by making useful contacts and friendships, and finally finding employment with Egerton. The picture that emerges of the young Donne aspiring to a career, is that of a strong and aspiring ego, that perceived the social machinery as a ladder to be climbed, a system to be utilised, where great opportunities were offered to an enterprising young man who was ready to seize them. This view was dealt a

shattering blow, when his hopes vanished as a consequence of his politically unwise marriage. Now the establishment which to him had seemed a useful ladder to climb turned against him, and seemed to grind him into poverty and oblivion. This total reversal which so thoroughly changed his earlier view explains to us Donne's severe depression and crisis of identity during his years at Mitcham. His failure to utilise the social establishment to fulfill the aspirations of his ego had left him a strong sense of being apart, of being cut out of the world. Hence he could write: "Such as I am, rather a sickness and disease of the world than any part of it." From this desolation and feeling of being cut off emerged, however, the seeds of a new solution. The key concept to this was being part of something. The blow that had been dealt to him in crushing his ambitions had demolished his view of the world as something to be utilised. Now he merely wanted to be part of the social system, to belong to it, and not to be cast away. He had already experienced with his wife reality as something that is based on the shared action and experience of its participants. The crisis with his career ambitions helped him gradually to expand this view to the total functionings of the social structure. Although he by no means abandoned his hopes of a career as a courtier, he was able to submit his ego to be part of the machinery of the world and society, not a detached observer and utiliser. More important still, he was now able to conceive the social structure as a unified system, where all parts were interlinked. Thus he was eventually able to accept his place in the Orders, albeit still much against his will. The inscription on his grave monument Instinctu et impulsu Sp. Sancti, monitu et hortatu Regis Jacobi is characteristic to his attitude at this time. Both the secular society and the Church belonged together in his conception, thus if King James seemed to force him to take Orders, he could consider this as an impulse by the Holy Spirit,

because his structure of reality in this respect was unified. In accepting the pressure of circumstances and the admonitions of the King he was again making himself a useful part in the unified order of creation. Yet it must be admitted that he never totally abandoned his court manners and attitudes. The question has been raised, whether he had paid Buckingham for his appointment to the Deanery of St. Paul's, and we know that the opinion of the high and the mighty was always a grave concern to him. However, especially after he had found wholehearted acceptance of the Christian doctrine, not only on an intellectual, but also on an existential level, we see Donne as a "preacher in earnest", expounding and extolling the message of his Church, and in the same time knowing that in so doing he was performing his part in God's scheme of creation. Thus, even concerning his career his ego had found reconciliation and a working synthesis with its environment to which it had earlier tried to adjust as an outsider with little success. This reconciliation between self and environment, we have already seen, came to play a decisive part in the formation on in Donne's theological thinking and his concepts of the Church.

3. Donne and religion

In considering the question of the relationship between Donne and religion, we soon find ourselves on the most delicate ground yet covered. We know that his family were ardent Catholics with a long tradition of persecution and martyrdom. Young Donne himself was soon facing the difficult dilemma of the choice of loyalties offered to him by his family tradition and his high career ambitions. It is not surprising to see that he soon decided in favour of the latter; indeed the sanctions that followed from adhering to Catholicism and the rewards that came with the acceptance of Anglicanism must have been very eloquent arguments to a man as ambitious as Donne. Yet we may safely assume that the question had even deeper dimensions still. Catholicism,

especially in Elizabethan England, demanded unconditional submission to the authority to the Church, both in intellectual matters of doctrine, and, to quite a large extent, in matters of political and social allegiance. It is most likely that it was this submission of his self, body and soul, to the authority of the Church that Donne found most difficult to accept, and therefore drifted from the Catholic Church into a "marriage of convenience" with the Anglican Church. The scant documents that have been preserved about young Donne's religious attitude, bear witness of the extremely detached and impersonal character of this new alliance. Donne may or may not have intellectually accepted the bulk of the Anglican doctrine, but he certainly was not going to submit his ego to the authority of the Anglican Church, nor to give one inch on his individual autonomy. His III Satire shows us, how Donne made a sharp distinction between "true religion" and the claims of the individual Churches. His answer was to "doubt wisely" but not to give up the search for the truth. We can see here a clear analogy between Donne's earlier relationship with women and his earlier relationship with religion. Both are marked by a detachment that stems from a desire to preserve the autonomy and self-sufficiency of his ego, as well as by a fear of being hurt, if he ventures into a closer relationship and lowers his barriers. Yet there is in both cases a clear indication of a wish for such a closer relationship, an indication that being totally self-contained is not quite as satisfactory as Donne would have it.

This attitude of detachment finally collapsed and developed into an open conflict during Donne's years at Mitcham, as the result of the severe frustration and crisis of identity that followed the crushing of his career ambitions. Now the sense of isolation and separation from the world prompted him into religious meditations, as a possible way of finding a solution. Yet his poems

like La Corona and The Litanie, together with some earlier Holy Sonnets, show clearly how abortive his attempts were. We can see in them his ego, full of Sturm und Drang as aspiring as ever, reaching towards God, voicing desperate cries, and yet not really knowing to who or what it is reaching. He is still a prisoner of himself, and although he borrows heavily from the influences of his early Catholic training and the language and imagery of contemporary religious writings, he is unable to break the self-imposed limits that isolate him and his crisis as a small islet in an archipelago of reality. However this religious crisis temporarily subsided when Donne found reconciliation with his social environment and was able to accept Orders. Although he may not have found the meaning of Christian doctrine on an existential level, he was none the less able to accept it as an intellectual truth and find his place in the social establishment by serving the Church. This relief was, however, only temporary, and the religious crisis in Donne's existence became more acute than ever, after his wife died, two years after his accepting the Orders. Previously, his wife had given him the sense of security and acceptance that had enabled him to venture outside the limits of his ego, and to share his experience of reality with another person. Now this support was denied to him, and hence he either had to seek some other partner, or revert to the self-contained state of his earlier age. From his sonnet Since she whom I lov'd hath paid her last debt it is clear that the course of seeking God to fill the place of his deceased wife, was Donne's choice very soon after the tragedy had struck him. Yet there were several obstacles on this course. To Donne God may have been an intellectually acceptable truth, but his earlier attempts to find contact with him by the aspirations of his ego and wit had remained fruitless. He had tried to use his wit as a battering-ram to conquer the gates of heaven, but the gates had held. Thus, the only thing that remained

to him was to be still and wait. Donne's A Hymne to Christ, composed on his going to Germany in 1619 gives us a picture of a soul that is prepared to disclaim the ties that had bound him to his past, including the Sturm und Drang of his aspiring ego, but is none the less uncertain as to whether God is going to receive him. Resigned expectation is perhaps the best expression to describe the state of Donne's soul during the years that passed between his wife's death and the decisive crisis.

The decisive crisis came in 1623, during Donne's serious illness. Now he was brought face to face with imminent death. In this situation he could find no escape from his sense of guilt and worthlessness, and fears of being abandoned into utter annihilation. Yet it was not until Donne was thus forced, on his sick-bed, to face his deepest fears without any remaining support that he was able to forge a lasting solution to the problem that had plagued him for years. What he found was a new sense of his belonging to God's people, a communion that was greater than himself, and from which he would not be eradicated by sickness and death. This discovery also brought with itself a sense of acceptance and reconciliation of his past shortcomings and failures. He found that despite his worthlessness, God was willing to accept him and support him, when all his own supports had failed. This experience, in turn, marked the beginning of a totally new relationship. He could now accept God as his partner without a fear of being suddenly abandoned or getting hurt in the process. He had now gained the same sense of basic security and acceptance, which he had first experienced with Anne More. Thus he could contemplate God without fear, jealousy or false pretences. He had no longer a need to make the distinction between subject and object, his own self aspiring and God as the target of his aspirations. In communion with God he now had the we-experience of a shared reality in a harmonious interaction with all of God's creation.

4. The significance of these developments to Donne's theology.

These then, were the developments that decisively shaped Donne's theological thinking. Although admittedly he did receive a number of influences from both mediæval Scholasticism and contemporary Anglican theology, these influences must be regarded as amorphous material to which he gave the form and shape of his own personal struggles, his own questions and solutions. Indeed, we may go one step further, and claim that Donne was not strictly speaking a theologian. By this I mean that he never really assimilated the doctrinal structure of Christian faith as something valuable or autonomous in itself. Rather, it always remained to him as something foreign to which he had any use only in so far as it could be used to demonstrate the contents of his own inner struggles, and their outcome. This will become evident, when we collect the following dominating trends which stem directly from Donne's own struggles and give his theology its characteristic shape:

Donne's personal development was strongly marked by the initial struggle of an aspiring ego to encounter its environment as a distinctly separate thing, an object, the tension and clash that followed from this manner of encounter and the eventual reconciliation in an experience of shared reality. From this follows that in his theology Donne always retained an emphasis on the importance of a personal self, and insisted that even before God created him, he elected him, therefore, says Donne, even then "I was I". This insistence lent Donne's theology the characteristic tension between individual and collective, a structure which perhaps can be best described in the dialectical structure of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. For instance, we can perceive Donne's starting point, the creation, which was a unified and harmonious order under God as the thesis, which received its antithesis in the fall of man and in man's individuation and differentiation from the rest of creation as well as from

his fellow-men. This development in turn reached the stage of synthesis when man turned back to his maker in a process of conversion, being restored in a state better than his original righteousness, and in his interaction with God sharing a common reality with him, thus becoming "of one Spirit".

This dialectical tension also found its outlet in Donne's ontology, which, as has already been pointed out, was formed at least partially as a result of his early experiences. Here the synthesis between the aspiring ego and its environment led Donne to an ontology that decisively placed the essences in a subordinate position to relationships and interaction. Donne's own life had been a struggle for communication and communion; the fulfillment which he eventually found was so overwhelmingly important that it surpassed in meaning its components. Thus to Donne experience of reality was a shared event, and invariably greater than the sum of its participants. The synthetic unit of we took precedence over the tentative stage of I - it and even the more personal I - thou. Donne perceived the whole creation as a vast network of shared interaction and common experience of communication and communion, where the individual components were reduced to poles between which the network of interaction could be weaved and a myriad of communicative connections could be linked. From this follows that to Donne all the universe was essentially an event, the sum total of the shared interaction between all its components.

From this view of reality Donne also shaped his view of the Church. Because the whole created universe was a unified network of interaction, Donne would not concede any dichotomy between sacred and secular. Therefore the Church was to him a specialized branch of the whole creation, with a task to concentrate on initiating and furthering the process of conversion of men to their maker and to the restored harmonious communication between man and God and man and man. In effect, according to Donne's view, the Church should not

be seen as an institution doing something, but as an event taking place. This view stressed further the unity of the Church with the rest of created universe. The Church was in itself an event, part of the great event of reality, that part which led to the synthesis of harmonious interaction, communion and communication. Here the institution merely provides the necessary outer framework to this event and the means by which it could take place.

B. DONNE'S DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Having thus summarized the main lines of Donne's development and his experience of reality, we have also given an answer to our question: Why and how did Donne's theology and ecclesiology develop the way it did? Thus it is now time to collect the main points of our findings of the actual structure of Donne's doctrine of the Church and present our final answer to this question.

We started our analysis with a view of the position and role of the Church in the created universe. Here our following of Donne's thought lead us first to the act of creation, which to Donne was the logical starting point, and where he followed the general tradition of Christian theology by interpreting the past from the situation of present-day reality and existence. Thus, according to Donne, the ultimate primus motor that prompted God to undertake the work of creation was his own "sociableness and communicableness." In accordance with his ontology that stressed relationships and interaction at the expense of essences, Donne perceived the pre-existent Holy Trinity not as a static entity, but a dynamic tripole, with a constant exercise of mutual affection and emotional interaction taking place between the three persons. God would not, however, be content merely with himself and the limited communication and communion within the Trinity. He desired more communication

partners to expand his affection, more company to communicate with. Therefore he created heaven and earth, populating all the created realms with diverse creatures, from the highest angels to the lowest worms. In this host of creatures man came to hold a special place, because he combined in himself the nature of angels as well as that of earthly creatures. Also, because man multiplies in infinite numbers, this guaranteed the scope for the expansion of the exercise of divine affection ad infinitum. Having thus the multitude of companions around him, it now remained for God to establish the mode and instrument of communication. This he did by creating the Church. The Church was placed in the world to be the "holy meeting" between God and his faithful; a joyous occasion and a cheerful event. At the same time the Church summoned more and more people to come and join this communion. Thus, although the Church has the characteristics of an established institution it should be seen primarily as an event, taking place in given time and space, where communication and communion between God and man is established and maintained. We can say that the Church event is the constant actualization in created world of the very idea that initiated the creation, the manifestation and exercise of divine, communicative love.

The question that immediately presented itself from Donne's own historical situation was, whether the working of this instrument of communication had not been seriously impeded by the great split of Churches that had happened shortly before, as a consequence of the Reformation. This question was especially acute to Donne, because he had been born and bred a Catholic, and had changed his allegiances to the Church of England only in later life. The question that he faced together with many of his contemporaries was: When all the Churches lay claims of being the rightful spouse of Christ, which is the right one that will surest lead man into union with his maker and to his salvation.

Here, again, Donne drew the solution from his ontological structure. The Church, as has been already stated should not be seen primarily as an institution, but as an event, the actualization of an idea. This idea was pre-existent with God from all eternity, and as such essentially indivisible. Although the different Churches offered different environments and frameworks to its actualization, this could not destroy the basic unity that was founded on the idea being one and the same. Indeed the outward split of the Churches, which in Donne's mind was caused by human disagreements on unessential adiaphora, served a positive purpose, because when disruptive and quarrelsome elements went their own way and formed their own Churches, this preserved the necessary peace at all quarters for the actualization and maintaining the communication and communion between God and man. In any case, Donne held, all Churches that he saw had maintained the rightful basis for their existence, which was redemption in Christ. In all of them the Word of God was being preached and the Sacraments administered, according to Christ's institution; thus they were all parts of the universal Church. Moreover, all of them were striving together to reach the New Jerusalem, and Donne's own acute observation told him that this goal might be reached in any one of them. Thus he coupled his personal experience with his ontological view in forming a solution to this question. However, although Donne maintained that the Churches of Rome, Canterbury and Geneva were essentially one in both their basis and their goal, he still expressed a wish that these Churches might also reach visible unity under the faith and order of any of these Churches. Yet he remarked that the Anglican version would be preferable, as he held it to be the closest approximation to the ideal. If this visible unity were to be reached, this would liberate the energies otherwise wasted in unnecessary bickering and "defensive warr" and the whole Church of Christ might contemplate

her Lord "clearly and uniformly".

Closely allied to the question of the division of the Churches in Donne's own time was the question of the relationship between the Church and society, especially the relationship to secular authority. But in contrast to the question of the division of Churches, the relationship between Church and society seems to have been one that scarcely troubled Donne. Here he based his views firmly on the concept of a unified order of creation. This unity was ensured, because God had created men in interactive relationships that were derived from God himself. Thus all members of the society were dependent on one another. Indeed, all members of the society were members of one another, by virtue of these relationships in which they had been placed, and by the common experience which they shared in their communion and communication. One might say that for Donne the shared experience of Christian reality was the society. Thus the society was safeguarded against possible abuses, a view which enabled Donne to advocate absolute monarchy, deriving this from the nature of God himself as King of the creation. Similarly, because of this united view of creation and the society, Donne would not acknowledge any dichotomy between its sacred and secular branches. The Church was a specialized branch of the society, but none the less an integral part of it, and under the jurisdiction of the head of the society. Conversely, Donne also held, from his unified point of view, that not only the Church, but all branches of the society and all its secular ventures held to a degree a share of the responsibility of the task of bringing God's creatures back into communion with him. In the great process of interaction that constituted the world, sacred and secular were merely different facets of the same unified concept.

Having thus defined Donne's concept of the position and of the Church in the created universe and secular society, we can now collect our findings on

the contents of its function. We have already stated that God created the Church to be his instrument in drawing his creatures in communion and communication with himself. In other words, the Church was primarily a specialized instrument of salvation. Following Donne's own definition we can say that the task of the Church was to apply and convey the general salvation, achieved by Christ on the cross, to every particular soul, to each individual member of the congregation, in his particular existential situation. It must be pointed out here that for Donne the concept of salvation was not primarily concentrated on the forensic, judicial, concepts of justification and righteousness. Admittedly Donne conceived salvation to contain a remission from one's sins, but this was not in the sense of a Judge proclaiming a verdict of not guilty, but in the sense of abolishing the obstacles that stood in the way of the communicative union. Thus the Church event that achieved all this and conveyed the general salvation to every particular soul can be analyzed as follows: (a) It established a confrontation between the individual man and God, in which man became aware of his own sinfulness and his shortcomings before God. However, it was against the background of this experience that man was also able to perceive the scope and meaning of the grace offered to him. It must be kept in mind that sin and grace were never impersonal abstractions in Donne's theology. They were always linked with a concrete experience that occurred in connection with certain actual circumstances, varying from each individual man to another. Unless a man could experience his sin as a tangible entity, and the wrath of God descending on him for a particular, clearly understood reason, grace would have been meaningless. For salvation to be effective, the individual man must be confronted in his actual situation with the judgements of God that hit him in the particular weaknesses of his own life. In this confrontation his defences would be broken, his self-assertions shattered, and he would be forced with his

back against the wall with nothing standing between himself and the judgements of God. (b) The road having thus been cleared of barriers and false pretences the sinner would, however, encounter not only the wrath of God, but also his mercy. From a situation of utter abandonment and loneliness would spring a new communicative relationship, and interaction in harmonious communication. Thus man would be led into his salvation, a new state of union that would carry him even across the straits of death.

This salvation was achieved by the Church through its two main instruments, the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments. The preaching was especially used for proclaiming the judgements of God, but it could also apply his mercies. The newly established relationship was nurtured by the application of the Sacrament of Eucharist. Yet it must be remarked, that as God acted in this process through the medium of the Church, forming a union with him meant also being integrally grafted to the fellowship of the Church and its faithful. The Church was to be seen as a collective, where all the people were members of one another, and where the successes and failures on the road to the Kingdom of God were equally shared, each affecting the total. When a child was baptized, each member of the Church was a little richer, when some one died and was buried, each member of the communicative fellowship had lost something. In the interactive network of the Church there was a union of divine and human, but also unity between all human elements. Thus we can conclude by saying that the salvation achieved by the Church and through the Church meant essentially the final and perfect actualization of the communicative interaction that had been the original reason of the work of creation.

This, then, was in Donne's thought the essential role and function of the Church. Yet to say this, and leave blank the actual mechanisms of how it worked, as seen from the viewpoint of the individual, would be to give but

half of Donne's doctrine of the Church, because, as has been repeatedly stated, Donne had no use for generalizations, but only for real actualizations of the idea in human existence. Directing our glance to this aspect in the third main chapter of this thesis, we found that the basic human starting point could be summarized as follows:

Because God had created man with the purpose of gaining partners for communication in his mind, man was already innately equipped with a yearning to find God, and to rest in the union with him. Thus there was in him from the very beginning a spark which could be kindled to respond to the call which was to come from God. Also man had as a part of his natural equipment a capacity of forming a notion of God's existence, through the observation of his own senses. This capacity was, however, limited only to the forming of an intellectual notion. By observing the creation around him, man could perceive that God existed, but he could not enter into communication with him. He was, in other words, doomed to remain strictly within the limits of his own self, and alone, before God took the decisive step to establish the communicative relationship. Only then could man graduate from seeing God to knowing God. The term that Donne consistently employs, to know God, gives an implication of an intimate relationship. This implication is further strengthened, when Donne stresses that God wishes to make himself known through Christ. The Christ-figure here that Donne speaks of is not primarily Christ the Judge or Christ the Redeemer, but Christ the man, the God incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus learning to know God through his human aspect, the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the gap between divine and human could be bridged, and the union is thus made possible. Yet no man could learn to know God through Christ, but through his Church, in which Christ could be met both by sharing his Word and meeting him corporeally in the

Sacraments.

Yet even before God proceeded to establish his Church where men could be led to their salvation, by learning to know him, this step was preceded by a long history of God's speaking to men in diverse situations. God's revelation of himself was a continuous and growing process, where the Church was the culmination. Thus he had given the people of Israel his law, and made his will known through the prophets. In this manner the Jews had a refuge from the condemnation of their consciences and could attain an elementary degree of justification. Yet the Scriptures of the Old Testament could be but imperfectly understood before the coming of Christ and the establishing of the Church. They contained all the power of the Holy Spirit, but this power remained latent, until it was released in the light of the Gospel. Even the Scriptures of New Testament, being directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, and giving an account of God's speaking "personally and aloud", through his Son, could yield only part of their power, before they were submitted to the catalyst of the preaching of the Church. In the ordinance of preaching the power of the Scriptures was brought forward in such a form that it could cause a confrontation and crisis in the life of men, together with a lasting change. Thus, when Donne mentions the concept of the Word of God he always means the whole process of communication that proceeds from God to man. The Word is one of God's attributes, that side of him which is turned towards men, calling them. Of this Word the written Word in the Scriptures forms a part, a recorded history of God's speaking, as well as a message that can be delivered in the preaching of the Church. The Church itself, with all her ordinances, is, however, the complete and ultimate revelation, and the final Word of God in the complete sense of the Word, encompassing within herself all God's speaking, past and present, and

continuing this activity until the end of the world.

This speaking of God in his Church is, as has been repeatedly stated, concentrated on the sermon. This, to Donne, was nothing less than an apocalyptic event. The preaching event contained an immediate divine presence, where the spirit of God descended through the minister and his words, to address each member of the congregation individually. In preaching tremendous powers were unleashed, and they could not be escaped. Either the hearer received the message that the Holy Spirit delivered to him through the preacher, or he rejected it. In the former case his false presumptions were shattered and a new relationship between God and him could be established, which would lead him to his salvation. But in the latter case, if he rejected the power which could have saved him, it turned against him, to bring about eternal damnation. Thus the ordinance of preaching formed a pivotal centre, around which God's saving action turned. Yet, in spite of the exalted position, to which Donne placed preaching, it should not be thought that it was a supernatural event, where God acted as a Deus ex machina. Rather, it should be seen as integrally linked with Donne's total view of creation. Here both divine and human were interlinked in a network of shared interaction. To convey his message to mankind God merely made use of the existing communicative structure, where the communication between God and man and man and man were all united in a grand total structure. This view is further emphasized by the fact that Donne did not conceive the interaction in preaching to take place on a merely verbal level. Instead, the whole person of the preacher was the vehicle, through which God addressed the congregation. The preacher made his impact with the force of his whole personality, as well as by his words.

The other central pole of God's saving action in his Church, the

Sacraments, differed sharply in their character from the sermon. Where the sermon was a powerful battering-ram, that shattered the presumptuous sinner, before a communicative relationship could be established between him and God, the Sacraments belonged to an order of gradual, careful, nurturing care, that prepared ground for the confrontation in sermon, and consolidated the newly begotten relationship. In this manner they were none the less inseparable, in spite of their differences in character. The Sacraments were in Donne's thought chiefly concerned with cleansing a man from his sins. The original sin was washed away in the Sacrament of Baptism, in which man was also restored into a state of grace, in which he could continue his striving towards God without relapsing into his former fallen state. The Sacrament of Eucharist, in turn, washed away man's actual sins that accumulated in his daily life to impede his process towards a union with God. It should be noted that sin in Donne's theology was always something that hindered man's conversion to God, and should be regarded as an obstacle, rather than forensic guilt. Thus, when the Sacraments conveyed absolution of these sins, they were essentially instruments for furthering union, rather than of forensic pardon. In conveying union with Christ in the corporeal elements of the water of Baptism or the bread and wine of Eucharist, they can be called the non-verbal side of God's communication, the silent sound of the Word of God. Thus the verbal and non-verbal parts, the loud and silent speaking of God, in the preaching of the Word, in the Sacraments and all ordinances of the Church together formed God's face that was turned to man, and man, approaching this face, staying before it and contemplating it could, as a result of a total ordinance on all levels, reach the union which was offered to him, peace with his maker in harmonious interaction and his salvation.

ENVOI

Or: some final considerations on the method used and results obtained in this thesis

Having thus completed our task of rendering an account of Donne's doctrine of the Church and, in so doing, having also sketched the outlines of his theological thinking and its correlation to his experience of reality, there still remains one question which may require a short explanatory note. The reader may have noticed that in the course of our scrutiny of Donne's ecclesiology an opportunity has seldom presented itself to draw parallels to research by earlier students of Donne and to find support in their findings. References to past research have been mainly critical in their nature, or stressing the irrelevance of earlier research to the approach adopted in this thesis. The reader may have thought to have detected a hint of arrogance on the author's part, and may have questioned what is my right to dismiss the results of scholars such as Ramsay, Husain or Merrill as fundamentally mistaken or irrelevant in their basic premises.

It is true that the picture of Donne and his theological thinking, as it is presented in this thesis, differs sharply from his earlier theological portraits. Furthermore it is true that a result like this was inevitable after adopting a strongly subjective, almost impressionistic method of research that did not shirk from attempting a direct dialogue with Donne and tried to put the scholar in rapport with him, responding personally to this enigmatic and fascinating figure. However, it is not true that arriving at

wildly divergent results from earlier research was something new and unique in the course of scholarship on Donne's theology. To demonstrate this point, let us take a cursory look at some opinions expressed in the course of the last decades.

The first major work on Donne's thinking, Miss Ramsay's Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne, found him essentially a medieval soul, deeply impregnated by Neoplatonism, faithfully repeating the views of early Christian Fathers, especially of St. Augustine. With a result like this, it can hardly be a coincidence that Ramsay had defined her task to study the medieval elements in Donne's thinking. In other words, it may be suspected with reason that the task and method she had adopted influenced the conclusions which she eventually reached. A similar phenomenon occurred in Itrat-Husain's work The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne. Here Husain had set himself the task of comparing Donne's theology with early 17th century Anglicanism, notably with Hooker and Laud. It is hardly surprising that starting from these premises, Husain arrives at a conclusion that Donne was a faithful son of his Church, with no major differences to the generally accepted body of Anglican theology. The two above mentioned works can be seen as fairly straightforward cases, where the pre-conceived frame of reference has contributed to the tag affixed to Donne by the scholar. However, it was discovered early in this century that Donne was by no means a straightforward case ready for classification. This discovery can be seen in T.S. Eliot's appraisal of Donne, in his essay on Lancelot Andrewes. The subjective elements in Donne which eluded definition apparently irritated Eliot, and hence he accused him for the lack of the "goût pour la vie spirituelle". Thus, the final evaluation was determined by the irritation caused by the lack of a suitable frame of reference! An attempt to solve the problem which so irritated Eliot was made

later by Theodore Gill, when he tentatively dubbed the same elements as "akin to existentialist". This path was later adopted by Merrill, who in his thesis The Christian Anthropology of John Donne draws parallels between Donne and Kierkegaard and between Donne and Buber. Thus, we can see that the development of new theological trends and the scholars' acquaintance with them have radically altered the appreciation of Donne and his theological thinking. In other words, whatever the approach of the scholar seems to be, Donne himself appears to fit neatly into it, producing new and unfathomable depths from the richness of his sermons. Consequently, when studying Donne there seems to be as many different conclusions as there are scholars.

We must now ask the question, what is the justification of the author's offering yet another, different view of Donne and his theological thinking. Is the picture presented in this thesis yet another subjective interpretation, based on the author's own bias and prejudice? To answer these questions, we may begin by pointing out that the thoughts and ideas presented in this thesis should be sufficiently documented by quotations from Donne's sermons, to convince the reader that they are indeed Donne's own. It has been pointed out already in the introductory chapter, that although every effort has been made to avoid placing Donne in any procrustean bed of pre-established doctrinal frameworks, the author has reserved the right of a personal and subjective response to Donne, thus forfeiting any claim to detached objectivity. Even omitting the fact that such claims are more often than not illusory, surely this approach requires more justification to merit itself. To give this justification we must see what we are left with, after executing a research project in such a manner.

Perhaps the chief merit that can be attributed to the approach adopted in this thesis, is that it does not deal with Donne's theological thinking as

a set of detached ideas, forcibly separated from their rightful context of life and experience. It has been the author's consistent aim to establish an encounter with the man Donne and his existential situation, thus giving his theological thought the necessary background for its proper understanding. The author has tried to listen to his voice, as a parishioner of St. Paul's, trying to adapt himself to the situation, where these words of exhortation and edification were first uttered. Thus, in trying to appreciate the man Donne, the Dean of St. Paul's, and listening to him from the viewpoint of not a scholar but of that of an involved listener, the author has gained the advantage of hearing in his words not a doctrinal structure but a communication of living faith.

The importance of this approach will become clearer, if we keep in mind that, for Donne, his faith was not so much based on the teachings he had received in his youth from his Catholic tutors, or in his later age, when preparing to accept Anglicanism, but a personal accomplishment that followed from his decades-long struggle and was finally completed in the context of his serious illness in 1623. His faith was based essentially on the experience of finding acceptance and security, communion and communication, in a situation where he was confronted with imminent death and annihilation, and all his carefully built defenses had crumbled. He had had a thorough knowledge of Christian doctrine before, and had accepted it as intellectual truth, but now his new experience of faith became the breath of life into dry dogmatic bones, the co-ordinating and guiding force in the maze of doctrinal intricacies. Thus, when he preached, it was not so much the Anglican or even Christian doctrine as such that he expounded, but his own personal experience, clad in the garment of Christian doctrinal tradition. Therefore, when we study his sermons, it should be evident that we only gain

half of his message, if we concentrate single-mindedly on the doctrinal statements without trying to perceive the underlying message of experience and faith.

What has been said above of his theological thinking in general, is also applicable, when we come to his ecclesiology in particular, the specific topic of this thesis. As far as is known to the author, no earlier scholar has attempted to render a specific account of Donne's thoughts on the Church. One might offer as an educated guess, that this is so because no scholar before has found this topic sufficiently interesting or important in the total field of Donne's thinking. Indeed, it is not until one sees Donne's thought against the background of his experience of faith and reality that we can see the tremendous importance of the Church in his theological thinking, and appreciate the novel aspects that he attributed to the Church. We have seen how his experience of faith was based on the concepts of communion and communication and how he perceived reality not as a collection of separate individual entities, but as a constantly changing and fluctuating network of interactive relationships. It is against this background that the Church assumes its importance. We see the Church emerge from Donne's thinking, not as a static institution offering salvation, but as the very idea of communication and communion between God and man and between all God's creatures; we see the Church as the all-important event where this idea of communication is constantly actualized again and again. In Donne's thinking the Church is not so much an article of the Creed, a concept to be believed, as the very basis of faith, the event that makes faith itself possible. In this manner the Church event transcends the temporal and spatial limitations, which, in a given time and environment give it the necessary external framework, but do not essentially affect its contents.

Thus, the Church in Donne's thinking grows truly Catholic and universal, transcending human bickering.

Yet, having said all this, it is perfectly possible for a critical reader to point out that, although the presented views may be sufficiently documented, it would also have been possible to present a picture of Donne's ecclesiology in a totally different manner, giving the reader a quite different impression. Is there anything else apart from the author's subjective preference to merit the presentation of Donne's thinking and ecclesiology in such a manner as has been done in this thesis? To answer this question, we must now introduce the concept of relevance. To present Donne's doctrine of the Church without the context of his experience of faith and reality would have been like an archeologist piecing together the excavated bones of a long-dead mammoth, tying them together with pieces of wire and setting them in a museum as a historical curiosity. In this thesis our attempt has been to present Donne, his theological thinking and his ecclesiology not as a collection of mammoth's bones, but as something living and relevant to contemporary theological discussion.

This goal has been achieved in this thesis by following Donne's own tendency of ignoring the externals and concentrating on the immediate experience. Donne himself was perfectly aware that ecclesio-political situations are strictly tied to temporal and spatial limitations, and subject to change. He also perceived the same to apply to current interpretations of Christian doctrine and its contents. Thus, although he always made allowances for the current situation and the conditions it imposed, he strove to reach the core of immediate human experience, the response echoing from the naked heart that had been struck by the Word of God. By following this approach it has been possible for us to present Donne as an exponent of the

unchanging core of human existence, interpreting the raw, basic feelings that remain the same amidst changing times and environments. As a Shakespearean drama can still be considered to-day a relevant treatise on love, hate, jealousy and lust for power, although Elizabethan England has long passed by, in a similar manner we can find in Donne's sermons a valid description of the human condition, instantly applicable in our own day and environment. What makes him relevant from not only a humanistic, but also from the theological point of view, is that his theological concepts are not based on dogmata, but on the human condition that he interprets so accurately.

This claim can be directly substantiated by the major study of our work Donne's doctrine of the Church. Although he makes good use of what the Fathers had thought on the Church before him, his basic viewpoint is still different. He bases the concept of the Church on the structure of existence and reality, as he perceived it. In a world that consisted of interactive relationships, the Church, in spite of its all institutional characteristics, was primarily the basic idea of communication and communion between the separate components, and the event where this interaction took place. In this manner its nature and existence was not based on an institution by Christ or a gathering of "faithful men", but on the roots of all life and existence. Seen in this manner Donne's doctrine of the Church becomes truly universal, to quote the words of Ben Johnson on Shakespeare, "not of an age, but for all time".

The applications of such a view of the Church in current theological discussion are not hard to come by. In an age when theology is seeking to liberate itself from normative doctrinal statements of times gone by, and seeking a more accurate interpretation of human existence and the effects of the Word of God upon it, we can see in Donne an accurate sounding-board

for the vibrations of human life and in his doctrine of the Church a possible instrument for the re-evaluation of the significance of an institution currently under the fire of criticism. In the Church's current struggle for the re-appraisal of its identity, in its search for a new and better self-understanding, the thoughts of Donne offer one possibility of bringing the life of the Church into a closer synchronisation with human existence and of re-interpreting its tasks, not from a starting-point of age-old ordinances, but from that of the basic communication and communion between each member in the family of man and the Father of this family. It is not, however, the task of this particular thesis to dwell on the possibilities that are opened in this manner, it may be claimed merely as a justification of the method and approach that have been used. The results obtained in this manner, raise a possibility that a line can be drawn from Donne's thinking that offers practical applications in current theological search for new solutions.

With these final and concluding considerations it is my humble pleasure to submit this interpretation of Donne's doctrine of the Church to the reader, in the modest hope that the reader might at least share a part of the enjoyment and excitement I have had during these years of my interaction with John Donne.

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In this bibliography only those works are mentioned which have been directly quoted in this thesis or which otherwise have materially assisted me in my work. Hence I have omitted from this list such works of Donne as e.g. Ignatius his Conclave, Iuvenilia, Problemes and Paradoxes and The Courtier's Library. Because they were in no way connected to the problems with which this thesis dealt, I did not see it relevant to list them as my sources. The same applies also to the vast majority of literature and criticism on Donne. Most of it has been written from the view-point of literary criticism alone, and bears scant relevance to the study of his theological thinking. Works published on Donne's theology are few, and none of them deals specifically with his doctrine of the Church. These facts, account for the perhaps surprising brevity of this bibliography. However, if the reader should wish a complete list of editions of all Donne's works, together with a complete list of everything written on Donne until the year 1972 he is advised to refer to Sir Geoffrey Keynes's excellent bibliography A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne, Dean of Saint Paul's, fourth edition, Oxford, 1973.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

When quoting directly from Donne's works, the following abbreviations have been used together with the page number:

B Biathanatos, Scolar Press facsimile edition

D Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, Ann Arbor Paperbacks edition

E Essays in Divinity, ed. Simpson

Letters The Life and Letters of John Donne by Gosse

P-M Pseudo-martyr, original 1610 edition

Poems The Poems of John Donne, ed. Grierson

S The Sermons of John Donne, ed. Potter & Simpson

SUMMARY

In this thesis my aim has been to present a complete picture of John Donne's doctrine of the Church. Preliminary studies soon showed that Donne based his theological thinking largely on his own personal experience, so the first part of this thesis is devoted to describing Donne's experience of the reality in which he lived. By following the line of his development in his amorous liaisons and in his search for God, as demonstrated in his literary production, it can be seen that Donne conceived reality as a fluctuating event of shared experience, as an interaction between persons, where participants were of less importance than the action itself.

From this basic ontological premise we continue to analyse the position of the Church in the world. Here we see that God was prompted to undertake the work of creation because of his desire for communication and communion. Thus the world and all its creatures should be seen essentially as communication partners for God. In the order of creation, the Church was God's instrument to actualize this communication. For Donne, the Church was not a static institution but an event taking place again and again in given time and space. This character as an event made the Church independent of local conditions and of the external forms and limitations imposed by man. For instance the split of the Churches that occurred after the Reformation could not destroy the underlying unity of the Church. Also, because of Donne's concept of a unified order of creation, the realms of sacred and secular did not collide in any manner; a shared experience of Christian reality was the society, with the Church event taking place wherever and whenever communication and communion between man and God was established and maintained.

Fulfilling its task in practice, Donne perceived the Church to be integrally linked to God's continuous chain of revelation. This had already begun in the creation, when God had given man an innate capacity of forming a notion of God's existence and a wish to find God and rest in him. It was the duty of the Church to exploit these capacities and transform man's notion of the existence of God into a relationship of knowing him through Christ. Here the Church was linked into a continuous chain of God's speaking. This had already begun in the giving of the Law and through the prophets. Eventually, God had spoken "personally and aloud" in his Son, but the nearest and clearest voice of God was to be heard in the Church, through her ordinances. The most important of these was the ordinance of preaching. Here an immediate confrontation was established between God and man through the words and the whole person of the preacher. In this confrontation a dialogue was established, and thus a communicative relationship could begin. However, this relationship needed, the Sacraments both to prepare the ground for it, by washing away the original sin, and to strengthen and nurture it, by the constant re-stitution of man from his actual sins, through the Sacrament of Eucharist. Together, the Word and Sacraments formed God's face in the Church, that side of God which was turned towards men, and through which men could find their way back to their maker in a harmonious communication.