Memento gloriae

a new reading of the sermons of John Donne

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Abstract

The sermons of John Donne are widely regarded as being fixated on human mortality, and making a major contribution to the Western tradition of *memento mori* as a consequence. This study argues that this is a distortion of his thought; that the preoccupation of his sermons was not with death *per se,* but with life (specifically, with the particulars of Christian doctrine within which death is subsumed by resurrection); and that, as a result, Donne's was a radically orthodox voice within seventeenth-century English Protestantism. This thesis is advanced in three chapters devoted to Donne's sermons on I Corinthians 15, then buttressed by chapters on Donne's deployment of 1 Corinthians 15 in other sermons, and on how his perspective on the resurrection compares and contrasts with that of near-contemporary representatives of Laudianism and Puritanism respectively.

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Preface

I first encountered John Donne, as a seventeen year-old English Literature student, within the pages of an anthology that took its title, *The World's Contracted Thus*, [1] from a line in his poem 'The Sunne Rising'. At the time, I did not know what to do with the poem's central conceit that the bedroom the poet shared with his lover was the full compass of the world, and that "nothing else is".[2] Nor did I know that in his maturity, Donne turned from penning poetry to crafting and delivering sermons. Donne's most recent biographer has called him "the greatest writer of desire in the English language", but also notes that "none of the love poems are sonnets: he kept that form for death, his other, permanent love". [3] Another critic, with the sermons particularly in mind, comments that "if Love were the boon companion-adversary of Donne's youth, then Death was no less the intimate of his old age".[4]

On the strength of a close examination of the way Donne deployed a key Scriptural text – chapter 15 of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians – the present study proposes a significant qualification to those assessments. It appears that, in his maturity, Donne did believe that there was a concept within Christian doctrine around which all the others could be said to revolve. But to regard death as that locus amounts to a distorting re-appropriation of his sermons. Donne scholars who believe that "death became the ultimate object of Donne's passionate attention"[5] (many do) may be forgiven for losing sympathy with their subject at that point (and many do). This characterization of Donne's mature outlook as gloomy to the point of mawkishness does not do it justice. I shall argue that Donne found resources within the body of Christian divinity to view the world through the prism of life, rather than death.

The access I have had to the resources of Lambeth Palace Library and the London Library has been critical to the success of this study, and I thank the staff of both institutions for the consideration they have shown me. I am grateful for the advice, support and encouragement of Professor Mark Elliott, my supervisor and conversation partner, in the preparation of this

[1] J.A. and J.K. McKenzie, *The World's Contracted Thus: Major Poetry from Chaucer to Plath* (Heinemann Educational Australia, 1976).
[2] cf. A. Hadfield, *John Donne: In the Shadow of Religion* (Reaktion Books, London 2021), pp. 126-127.
[3] K. Rundell, *Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne* (Faber and Faber, London 2022), pp. 15, 282.
[4] E. Docx, *John Donne: On Death* (Hesperus Press, London 2008), p. ix.
[5] B. Saunders, *Desiring Donne: Poetry, Sexuality, Interpretation* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 2006), p. 2.

dissertation. In different circumstances, it would have been a pleasure to have extended my research, and prolonged and deepened our conversation. However, it has been a privilege to undertake the work of which this study is the culmination, at a time of life which for me has been busy, challenging and in many ways inauspicious. During the early stages of my research, and within a few months of each other, my father-in-law and my own father died, both of them widowers and full of years, following periods of poor health and incapacity. It is difficult to express how much consolation I gained in the lead-up to, and aftermath of, these bereavements, from the text Donne chose for his sermon of 8 March 1621, *The last Enemie that shall be destroyed, is Death.* I take this opportunity to dedicate this little study to the memory of Robert Henry Etherton (1922-2021), and of Leonard Charles Gale (1928-2021). May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

I am grateful to have received financial support from the Adams-Myland Fund of the Central Readers' Council of the Church of England, and to have been the recipient of the Archibald Main Prize for studies in Ecclesiastical History, in the first academic year (2020-21) of the studies of which this thesis is the culmination. I have found the University of Glasgow to be a most rewarding and congenial place to progress the study of theology, and am full of admiration for the staff and fellow students I have encountered along the way. Last but not least, I am grateful to both the internal and external examiners appointed by the School of Critical Studies, who at a late stage rescued this thesis from numerous infelicities of argument and expression.

30 January 2023

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Chapter 1: A text of the Resurrection

Setting the context for Donne's contribution to the Christian tradition of *memento mori*, Alison Shell, Professor of English at University College London, writes that "the early modern era can be thought of as one of pervasive honesty about death, in contrast to our own times" and that "it was certainly one in which intensive preparation for death bulked largely [*sic*] in the life of anyone who took the Christian faith seriously, and where the ideal of the *bona mors*, or good death, directed moral discourse at every intellectual level".[6] That Donne's poetry and prose was clear-sighted about, even preoccupied by, the theme of death, and that such clear-sightedness or preoccupation was psychologically healthy and actually to be preferred to the taboos around death operative in contemporary Western culture, have become commonplaces in what Johnson has called the "Eng. Lit." dominated field of "Donne studies".[7]

Yet when close attention is paid to John Donne's sermons, specifically those in which death is a presenting theme, a more subtle picture emerges, the contours of which the skills of the historical theologian are perhaps more suited to delineate than those of the literary critic. Donne's true preoccupation here was not with the universal non-negotiability of death *per se*, but with the specifically Christian doctrine of resurrection. This was a preoccupation he sustained not for the purpose of psychological benefit, but in order to build and maintain a worldview of a particular kind, one that is out of step in important respects with contemporary Western culture. The past truly is a foreign country, and constructing a useable version of it is not always as straightforward a task as it may appear on first blush. Donne's talk of resurrection may strike the modern critic as "traditional" and "conventional" (so Doebler,[8] for instance), but treating that talk as lacking in conviction or acting as proxy for other, more deep-seated concerns, would be to betray a certain lack of sympathy for the mindset of the preacher and the age in which he lived.

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[6] A. Shell, 'The death of Donne', in P. McCullough, H. Adlington and E. Rhatigan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011),.p. 646.
[7] J. Johnson, *The Theology of John Donne* (D S Brewer, Woodbridge, 1999), p.ix..
[8] B. A. Doebler, *The Quickening Seed: Death in the Sermons of John Donne* (Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, Salzburg 1974), *passim.*

There have been several studies of Donne's writings on death, some of which direct attention to his poetry,[9] others to particular sermons and devotional writings.[10] Rather than cover territory that has been explored elsewhere, the present enquiry will focus, at least initially, on five sermons that Donne preached on verses from the fifteenth chapter of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, a foundational text for the Christian doctrine of resurrection. (In a study such as this, no apology need be made for focussing attention on his sermons, which until recently have suffered relative neglect in the shadow of his poetry.) The aim in doing so – a theological one, certainly – is to trace the impact made by this text on Donne's own thinking. Several scholars have considered how factors concerning Donne's biography and Donne's audience influenced his preaching. The chronological arrangement of his sermons by the twentieth-century editors of his sermons, Potter and Simpson, could be said to encourage the former, and their arrangement by twenty-first century Oxford University Press editors could be said to encourage the latter. It ought not be presumed, however, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament formed for Donne a proverbial 'nose of wax', to be bent into the service of any didactic purpose at all. Although Donne's sermons show him to be a highly competent handler of biblical texts, his skills did not principally lay in turning them to his own historical *Sitz im Leben*. Rather, he interpreted them in conformity to the Christian – Christological – rule of faith that he believed formed their unifying backbone. In other words, a reading of Donne's sermons reveals him feeling and responding to interpretative pressure emerging from the texts themselves as considered within their ecclesiastical, canonical context as Christian Scripture. The best way to see this process at work is by means of example.

Donne took I Corinthians 15, verse 26, as his text when preaching at the Jacobean Court on 8 March 1621, early in Lent that year: *The last Enemie that shall be destroyed, is Death.* An opening exordium indicates his direction of travel: though ostensibly about death, most profoundly, as far as he was concerned, "this is a Text of the Resurrection".[11] On the surface, the rest of the sermon's short introduction is devoted to an apology for preaching on an Easter

[9] e.g. A. Dickson, '"I am every dead thing": John Donne and death', 2017, available online at www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/i-am-every-dead-thing-john-donne-and-death.
[10] e.g. P. McCullough, 'Preaching and Context: John Donne's Sermon at the Funerals of Sir William Cokayne', in P. McCullough, H. Adlington and E. Rhatigan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011), pp.213-269; M. A. Lund, 'Donne's convalescence', *Renaissance Studies* (2016), available at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/rest.12246.
[11] G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IV (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1959), p. 45.

text so early in the liturgical season. "It is not Easter yet; but it is Easter Eve", he declared, five Sundays before Easter Day. "All Lent is but the Vigill, the Eve of Easter: to so long a Festivall as shall never end, the Resurrection, we may well begin the Eve betimes."[12] Berhind this apology lies Donne's preoccupation, not with a *memento mori* tradition that deals in generalities and might be said to be most congruent with contemporary sensibility (along lines such as 'Remember, Caesar, thou art mortal' or '*Carpe diem* – seize the day'), but with the specifics of Christian doctrine, in which death is swallowed up in victory.

> Make way to an everlasting Easter by a short Lent, to an indeterminable glory, by a temporary humiliation. You must weepe these teares, teares of contrition, teares of mortification, before God will wipe all teares from your eyes; You must dye this death, this death of the righteous, the death to sin, before this *last enemy, Death*, shalbe destroyed in you, and you made partakers of everlasting life in soule and body too.[13]

Donne then briefly advertised the sermon's structure for the benefit of his hearers. "Our division shall be but a short, and our whole exercise but a larger, paraphrase upon the words",[14] viz. the words of I Corinthians 15,verse 26. The "division" was to be a précis of the 'exercise' to follow; in other words, Donne would first lay out the whole argument of his sermon in concise form, then circle back to the beginning to develop each of his points in turn. The claim involved in calling his sermon a "paraphrase" was that it would contain nothing that could not reasonably be inferred from that verse to Scripture, as considered in the light of Scripture and tradition.

Donne's inferences from I Corinthians 15, verse 26, were seven in number:

1. The Kingdom of Heaven will be made complete ("accomplished"), but not until it holds within it human bodies as well as souls;
2. There will be a lack of perfect peace on earth, and even in a manner of speaking in heaven, for all the time that the reign of death over humanity persists
3. Human beings will continue to be subject to death for as long as they continue to be subject to sin;
4. Death is a future certainty;

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[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*

5. Death is unnatural, in that it was not part of God's original creation; rather, it works in diabolical partnership with sin and Satan;
6. Death is the last and most powerful enemy of humanity, and;
7. Death shall be defeated at last, by resurrection.

The first hearers (and later readers) of this sermon would have prepared themselves for a seven-pointed sermon to follow this summation, but in an elegant – and audacious – move halfway through the fourth of these points, at the structural mid-point of the sermon, Donne advised his intention of sub-dividing his last point into an as yet unspecified number of sub-sections concerning the resurrection. "We may respite divine proofes, for divine points anon, for our several Resurrections."[15] This is the kind of move that a preacher trusted by an audience might execute once, but not more than once, without losing that trust.

Donne tactically deployed a range of analogies, learned and mundane, to drive home each of his points, but his conviction of their truth and pertinence arose not from these analogies but from the context of the Scriptural witness. His first assertion is supported by a metaphor with political, even military, overtones.

> No State upon earth, can subsist without those bodies, Men of their owne. For men that are supplied from others, may either in necessity, or in indignation, be withdrawne, and so that State which stood upon forraine legs, sinks. … Forraine helps are rather crutches than legs. There must be bodies, Men, and able bodies, able men.[16]

No doubt this eye-catching analogy had a certain rhetorical force, not least in the royal court, but behind it lay an appreciation of the seriousness with which human corporeality is treated in I Corinthians chapter 15 in particular, and by the Christian faith in general. In the beginning, says Donne, the Holy Trinity "thought not their glory so perfect, but that it might receive an addition from creatures; and therefore they made a world, a corporeall world, they would have bodies"; and at the end, "at the Resurrection of this body", he averred, "I shall be able to say to the Angel of the Great Councell, the Son of God, Christ Jesus himselfe, I am of the same stuffe as you, Body and body, Flesh and flesh, and therefore let me sit downe with you, at the right hand of the Father".[17] What Ramie Targoff has argued with respect to the rest of Donne's *oeuvre* seems to hold good here: his attitude towards death was not controlled

[15] *Ibid.,* p. 52.
[16] *Ibid.,* p. 47.
[17] *Ibid.,* pp. 46-47.

by an attachment to mortal life, but by horror at the prospect of the separation of body and soul it effected, albeit temporarily.[18] This is consistent with the challenge consistently laid down in Donne's poetry to the "Neoplatonic body/soul dualism"[19] that was a prevailing feature of the Petrarchan tradition. For the Christian audiences Donne addressed in his maturity, just as much as for the lovers featured in his *Songs and Sonets*, the only beatific vision to which they could aspire was a resolutely corporeal one.

In support of his second point (or "step in the paraphrase"), Donne identifies peace within nature, Church, state, family and oneself as the natural aspiration of humanity, Jesus Christ as the author of peace, and the inauguration of God's new creation ("and not till then") as the time of its coming. He deploys three sources to illustrate the intervening horror of war: a well-known aphorism from the poetry of Ovid, the war oracles of First Isaiah, and a memorable episode in the kingship narratives of the Hebrew Bible. Donne handled these sources in confidence that they would be familiar to his hearers. His classical allusion consisted of just three words – *Iam seges est* ('Now there are fields' [where Troy once stood]) – used by Ovid to drive home the devastation and depopulation of conflict. He chose verses from Isaiah describing comparable consequences of war: the replacement of vineyards with briars and thorns (Isaiah 7:23), and the substitution of shepherds, merchants and husbandmen in the land for owls, ostriches, satyrs or "God knowes what" (Isaiah 13:21).[20] Lastly, he referenced the unenviable choice between war, famine and pestilence given King David by the prophet Gad as a divine chastisement in 2 Samuel 24 to highlight the implicit association among, and the common denominator shared by, these three. "War and misery is all one thing"[21], he said in summation of this point, and subsists in earth, alongside a certain imperfection in heaven, for as long as death remains in existence.

The third point Donne made to his audience was that, even in the absence of war, they face hostility both outwith and within themselves. The Roman pontiff is identified as an external enemy, in a passage designed to appeal to Protestant and patriotic sentiment:

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[18] R. Targoff, 'Facing death', in A. Guibbory, *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006), pp. 217-218.
[19] A. Guibbory, 'Erotic poetry', in A. Guibbory, *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006), p. 142.
[20] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IV, p. 50.
[21] *Ibid.*

> He that detaines the soules of men in Superstition, he that detaines the hearts and allegeance of Subjects in a hesitation, a vacillation, an irresolution, where they shall fix them, whether upon their Soveraign, or a forraigne power, he is in the notion, and acceptation of enemy in this Text.[22]

This identification is clearly one of its time, but Donne was too keen a student of human nature and experience to be content to reserve opprobrium for his political and religious rivals. The problem of sin and death was more radically insidious than that, he believed. "Antichrist alone is enemy enough; but never carry this consideration beyond thy self", he counselled. "As long as there remains in thee one sin, or the sinfull gain of that one sin, so long there is one enemy."[23] Nor was it possible for people to acquit themselves of all sin on account of the sins their respective stages of life do not predispose them to commit. If

> thy youth be spent in wantonnesse … thy middle-age in ambition, and the ways of preferment … and thy [old age] in indevotion and covetousnesse, though thou have no further taste of licentiousnesse, in thy middle-age … nor of ambition in thy last yeares … yet all the way thou hast had one enemy [viz., death].[24]

This could be alternately considered an expression of Protestant interiority, or acute psychological realism; in any event, it is something other than unthinking sectarianism.

Donne's intermediate step (the fourth of seven) in his "paraphrase" of I Corinthians 15:26 was to highlight the universality of death. He cited three authorities in making this simple case:

- St Augustine, who in a passage on the Sermon on the Mount observed that although a great many things in human experience are contingent and variable – they may or may not happen – when it comes to "*Morientur* … the *Fortasse* vanishes … infallibly, inevitably, irrecoverably they must die",[25]
- St Jerome, who in his Letter 60 wrote that "we die every day, and we die all the day long … and we call that an eternity",[26] and
- Seneca, who spoke of death as if it were a kind of law, tax or orderly bureaucratic process.

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[22] *Ibid.,* p. 51.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 52.
[26] *Ibid.*

To add to these memorable quotations, Donne minted at least two of his own, both of which are developed more fully elsewhere in his devotional writings:

- "Doth not man die even in his birth? The breaking of prison is death, and what is our birth, but a breaking of prison?" (compare the extended analogy between birth and death offered by Donne in his *Death's Duel* sermon of 1631) [27], and
- "The Bell tolls for to day, and will ring out anon; and for as much of every one of us, as appertaines to this day" (compare the famous lines in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* that culminate in "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee"). [28]

The rhetorical force of asseverations such as these may have been a factor in leading scholars to propose the truism of the universality of death, rather than the specificity of resurrection, as Donne's *idée fixe*. The fact that Donne enlisted Seneca's support in his argument about death, just as he had called in Ovid's support for a point made about war, shows that this argument could be advanced perfectly well within a secular frame of reference. Yet the fourth step in the paraphrase was only an intermediate inference from I Corinthians 15:26. It established that death was the common fate of humanity, but it did not speak to the claim that it was humanity's nemesis. That was the burden of Donne's fifth step, and to make it the preacher needed a specifically Christian, or at any rate Judaeo-Christian, set of sources at his disposal.

The first of these was the deuterocanonical Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, from which Donne retrieved the maxims "God did not make death" and "through envy of the devill, came death into the world".[29] The second was the letter of St Paul to the Romans, from which he excerpted the line "by sin came death into the world" (chapter 5, verse 12). Donne regarded death as unnatural, and sin and the devil (which he dubbed the mother and father of death respectively) as indubitable enemies of humanity working hand in hand with death. "He is an enemy, for they that adhere to the enemy are enemies … And so death adheres; when sin and

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[27] *Ibid.;* cf. D. Colclough, (ed.), *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 3: Sermons Preached at the Court of Charles I* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013), pp. 232-235.
[28] *Ibid.;* cf. J. Sparrow, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions by John Donne* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1923), p. 98.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 54., cf. Wisdom of Solomon 1:13. Donne cited Wisdom in full knowledge of its deuterocanonical status, but without any diffidence. No doubt he accepted the distinction articulated in the Church of England's Articles of Religion, between 'Holy Scripture' which contained 'all things necessary for salvation'and 'the other Books' which are read 'for example of life and instruction of manners' but not to establish any doctrine.

Satan have weakened body and minde, death enters upon both."[30] In making his case, Donne also called upon the authority of his favourite Church Father, St Augustine, who prayed "Suffer not, O Lord, death, whom thou didst not make, to have dominion over me who thou didst".[31] And he advanced an interesting, *Christus Victor*–style argument in support of death being an enemy to humanity: although according to the Pauline dictum "the reward of sin is death", death had a commission over humanity, it over-reached that commission "in invading Christ" over whom it had no jurisdiction "because he had no sin".[32]

In contrast with his manner of proceeding with his fifth point, Donne supported his sixth point by appeal not to authority (the Scriptural quotations in this section being incidental to the case he wished to make) but to experience. The lesson he sought to draw from experience was that it was easier for someone with access to the resources of reason, grace and the good and bad examples of others to resist the temptations of youth than it was for someone suffering one or more of the various infirmities attendant upon old age to resist the encroachment of death. The former contest had "some of that, which we call Honour"[33] which was lacking in the later, more one-sided affair. Death was to Donne "the powerfullest, the fearfulest enemy"[34] precisely because it was the last. Pending the final consummation, he knew that he would come off the worst in his own encounter with that enemy: death would "throw me from … bed, into the grave", he said, "and there triumph over me, God knowes, how many generations, till the Redeemer, my Redeemer, the Redeemer of all me, body, as well as soule, come again".[35]

Yet death, according to I Corinthians 15:26, would be destroyed at the last, and this destruction, said Donne in introducing the last step in his 'paraphrase', "is by the Resurrection; for the Text is part of an argument for the Resurrection".[36] It was not the preacher of this sermon's intention to expound the meaning of I Corinthians chapter 15 in its entirety, but here he noted its general drift, which provides an overall context to all that has been said up to now, and circled back (with a touch of the orator's artistry) to the way the sermon opens: "this is a text of the Resurrection". Donne then proceeded to do what he

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[30] *Ibid.,* p. 55.
[31] *Ibid,* p. 54.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.,* p. 55.
[34] *Ibid.,* p. 56.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*

earlier intimated he would: distinguish and describe in turn "severall Resurrections", spending at least one-third of the total length of the sermon on this concluding point.

His resurrections were three in number: "a Resurrection from dejections and calamities in this world, a Temporary Resurrection; Secondly, a Resurrection from sin, a Spiritual Resurrection; and then a Resurrection from the grave, a finall Resurrection".[37] In expounding each of these, Donne demonstrated considerable exegetical sophistication, referring the resurrections foreshadowed in the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Job ("though my body be destroyed, yet in my flesh will I see God") and in the thirty-seventh chapter of the Book of Ezekiel (the vision of the valley of dry bones) principally to the "propheticall Resurrection for the future, but a future in this world":[38] a restitution of Job's health and fortunes, and the return of Ezekiel's exiles to Jerusalem. "This first Resurrection", said Donne, "which is but from temporall calamities, doth … little concerne a true and established Christian, whether it come or no".[39] The second resurrection, superior to the first but still intermediate, was "a spiritual resurrection to a new life … by the voyce of the word of life, the Gospell of repentance", and grants a person "peace in his conscience" as distinct from "peace in his fortune".[40] The final, post-mortem resurrection of the body at the end of the age, of which the Apostles' Creed speaks, was for Donne "the ground of all" the others. "Fixe thy selfe firmly upon that beliefe of the general resurrection", he said, "and thou wilt never doubt of either of the particular resurrections, either from sin, by Gods grace, or from worldly calamities, by Gods power".[41]

The sophistication of Donne's exegesis here consisted partly in the respect accorded to the assumed historical contexts of texts such as Job and Ezekiel. In doing so, Donne owed, and acknowledged a debt to the humanist biblical criticism of John Calvin.[42] Yet it also partly lay in his perception of a family, ultimately Christocentric, relationship among the various "resurrections" delineated in Scripture, and a consequent appreciation for the Scripture

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[37] *Ibid.,* pp. 56-57.
[38] *Ibid.,* p. 58.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ibid.,* pp. 59-60.
[41] *Ibid.,* p. 61.
[42] *Ibid.,* p. 57: "Calvin [did not] carry those emphaticall words [of Job 19:25] to any higher sense than … he assures himself of a Resurrection, a reparation, a restitution to his former bodily health, and worldly fortune which he had before".

reading practices of Early Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine and Lactantius. Donne explains his method thus:

> Upon that pious ground that all Scriptures were written for us, as we are Christians, that all Scriptures conduce to the proofe of Christ … it is the ordinary manner of the Fathers to make all that [e.g.] David speaks historically of himselfe, and all that the Prophet speaks futurely of the Jews, if those places may be referred to Christ, to referre them to Christ primarily, and but by reflection, and in a second consideration upon David, or upon the Jews.[43]

In Donne's treatment, this was not an argument for flattening out the contours of Scripture, as if it spoke univocally, or for what Ephraim Radner has termed a "reversion to another era's [interpretative] practices".[44] Rather, it was a recognition of the rich literary and historical diversity, the deep theological interconnectedness *and* the raw power of the various Scriptural witnesses.

Sophisticated Donne's exegesis may have been, but it was also, it must be admitted, conventional. Donne was a conformist, and an apologist for English conformity. His anti-Roman sentiments must be understood in this light; he harboured anti-dissenting sentiments to match. But this does not mean that the contours of his religion were politically or socially determined, or formed "a coded discourse referring to something quite different from its ostensible preoccupation", in the words of Mark Sweetnam.[45] Resurrection was part and parcel of his belief system, as well as of the "commonplace religion of the Protestant conformist majority", but it is not on that account entirely devoid of interest or importance.[46] In his sermon on I Corinthians 15:26 and elsewhere, it is the doctrine that supplies the necessary corrective to the view that death was Donne's favoured theme.

No doubt it is true, as Bettie Anne Doebler writes, that "learning to despise the world and to think on the last things are basic themes in Donne's preparation of his congregations" for death, and that "in the advice he gives … concerning their private preparation he nearly

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[43] *Ibid.,* p. 60.
[44] E. Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 2016), p. 237. As appreciative as he was of the Fathers, Donne gladly embraced (early) modern biblical scholarship.
[45] M. Sweetnam, *John Donne and Religious Authority in the Reformed English Church* (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2014), p. 10.
[46] *Ibid.,* p. 11.

always urges them to meditate upon the life and passion of Christ".[47] Yet in this sermon (and, as we shall see, in others) on I Corinthians chapter 15, Donne supremely urged meditation, not on the life or death but the *resurrection* of Christ as the basis for Christian hope, not in a disembodied hereafter, but in a 'perfect consummation, both of body and soule'. For, said Donne, God "hath sealed the bodies of all mankind to his glory, by pre-assuming the body of Christ to that glory".[48] His exhortation is more a *memento gloriae*[49] than it is a *memento mori.*

[47] Doebler, *The Quickening Seed*, p. 205.
[48] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IV, p. 62.
[49] This is my own phrase, but I think it well encapsulates the trajectory of Donne's thought, towards a glorious future state for human life that reflected Christ's own glory and far excelled the glory of the humanity's original created state.

Chapter 2: "Prepossessed and preoccupated" with the Resurrection

Donne returned to I Corinthians chapter 15 in a series of three Eastertide sermons preached at St Paul's Cathedral in 1626. These sermons took one highly contested Scriptural verse as a point of departure for a thoroughgoing survey of the Christian doctrine of resurrection. The verse in question was the ostensibly unpromising "Else what shall they do that are baptized for dead? If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:29). In the second sermon he preached on this text, Donne critically engaged with Roman Catholic claims that it supported the doctrine of purgatory, and in the third, he reviewed a range of interpretative proposals before advancing his own, which he considered to be "the directest sense … the plainest … [and] fittest to establish all that the Apostle proposed", [50] as well as being "grounded upon a Custome, which came very early into the Church of God".[51]

In the first sermon, however, preached on Easter Day itself, Donne briefly touched on the points he meant to come to later in the series, before eschewing polemics in the first instance:

> howsoever these words have received divers good expositions from divers good Expositors, and received one perverse exposition from our adversaries in the Romane Church, who have detorted and deflected them, to the maintenance of their Purgatory, yet all agree, that these words are an argument of the Resurrection, and therefore proper to this day.[52]

Later he warms to his ecumenical theme with this rhetorical flourish:

> though … we may hereafter take just occasion of entring into a war, in vindicating and redeeming these words, seased and seduced by our adversaries, to testifie for their Purgatory, yet this day being a day of peace and reconciliation with God and man, we begin with peace, with that wherein all agree, that these words … must necessarily receive such an Exposition, as must be an argument for the Resurrection.[53]

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[50] M.A. Lund (ed.), *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12: Sermons Preached at St Paul's Cathedral* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017), p. 138.
[51] *Ibid,* p. 136.
[52] *Ibid.,* p. 67.
[53] *Ibid.,* p. 68.

This is a characteristically eirenic move on Donne's part. He moves on to delineate the scope for diversity of opinion regarding the doctrine of resurrection itself as follows:

> Where two contrary opinions are both probable, they may be embraced, and believed by two men, and those two be both learned, and discreet, and pious, and zealous men. And this consideration should keep men from that precipitation of imprinting the odious and scandalous names of Sects or Sectaries upon other men who may differ from them, and from others with them, in some opinions. Probability leads me in my assent, and I think thus; Let me allow another man his probability too, and let him think his way in things that are not fundamentall. They that do not believe alike, in all circumstances of the manner of the Resurrection, may all, by Gods goodnesse, meet there, and have their parts in the glory thereof, if their own uncharitablenesse do not hinder them: And he that may have been in the right opinion, may sooner misse heaven, then he that was in the wrong, if he come uncharitably to condemne or contemne the other: for, in such cases, humility, and love of peace, may, in the sight of God, excuse and recompense many errours and mistakings.[54]

This was not an argument in favour of indifference to doctrinal matters, it should be noted, but for charity in the face of diversity of opinion, in particular relation to "all circumstances of the manner of the Resurrection", and more generally "in things that are not fundamentall".[55] Here and elsewhere, Donne constructed his case to maximise the breadth of its appeal. He appears to have particularly disliked labels that tended the making of uncharitable assumptions by Christians about one another. He regarded as "hastie" the conclusions "that man is affected when he hears a blasphemous oath, and when he looks upon the general liberty of sinning; therefore he is a Puritan", and "that man loves the ancient formes, and Doctrines, and Disciplines of the Church, and retaines, and delights in the reverend names of Priest and Altar, and Sacrifice, therefore he is a Papist".[56] Moreover, he once declared of himself, "I am a Puritan, that is I wil endeavour to be pure, as my Father in heaven is pure, as far as any Puritan", and also, "I am a Papist, that is, I will fast and pray as

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[54] *Ibid.,* p. 69.

[55] Donne's eirenicism was carefully limited, and did not extend to embracing diversity of opinion over the Resurrection *ipso facto.* Cf. the simultaneously ecumenical and anti-Catholic project of the Scottish churchman John Dury, 1596-1680 (J. Fradkin, 'Protestant Unity and Anti-Catholicism: The Irenicism and Phlio-Semitism of John Dury in Context', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 56, 2017, pp. 273-294). Whereas Dury sought reconciliation between Lutheran and Reformed Churches, Donne was effectively consolidating support for the Established Church of England.

[56] G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IX (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1962), p. 216.

much as any Papist, and enable my selfe for the service of my God, as seriously, as sedulously, as laboriously as any Papist", all the while maintaining that "no man is the lesse a Protestant, nor the worse a Protestant", for doing so.[57]

It might be considered audacious of any preacher to recommend (or in Donne's words "propose") the twenty-four words of I Corinthians 15:29 in English translation for the meditation of a congregation, then immediately admit that they would not be examined in any detail ("determined") in the sermon to follow. "We shall not so much inquire, wherein, and in what sense the words are an argument for the Resurrection, as enjoy the assurance that they are so", said Donne on Easter Day.[58] This move might even be considered to indicate a lack of skill or sincerity, were it not for the polemical and exegetical 'heavy lifting' performed in the second and third sermons. In fact, the first substantive critical engagement Donne makes with Scripture in this opening sermon consisted in taking a step back from the granular detail of the particular verse chosen, in order to survey I Corinthians chapter 15 as a whole. This Donne characterised as "a continuall argument for the Resurrection", with three distinct steps:

1. establishing the fact of Christ's resurrection (from the beginning of the chapter to verse 35),
2. discussing the manner of the resurrection for those who have died, or will die (from verses 36 to 50),
3. considering the special case of those who are alive at the time of Christ's second coming (from verse 51 to the end of the chapter).

He then reviewed the reasons advanced by St Paul in favour of Christ's resurrection, of which the last was "Else what shall they do that are baptized for dead?", all the while admitting that, in and of themselves, these reasons would not "convince a man, who were not at all prepossessed, and preoccupated with a beliefe of the resurrection".[59] The "knowledge of the resurrection in it selfe", he thought, was "a mystery"; yet not such a mystery as demanded a *sacrificium intellectus* (otherwise there would have been no call for his sermon to be continued).

[57] *Ibid.,* p. 166.
[58] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 67.
[59] *Ibid.,* p. 68.

By this survey of I Corinthians chapter 15, Donne demonstrated his command of the context of his chosen verse, and by his commitment to a three-sermon series with this verse as a point of departure, he showed himself to be "prepossessed, and preoccupated", not with death, as many commentators on his works have assumed, but with the Christian doctrine of resurrection. The overview completed, the 'division' he offers in his first sermon in the series is simple and elegant: first, "the Glory of our bodies in the last Resurrection", and second, "the Grace upon our souls, in their present Resurrection now" – in short "Glory in the end, And Grace in the way".[60] This is reminiscent of the threefold division made between temporal, spiritual and final resurrections in his sermon to the Jacobean Court on 8 March 1621, and only differs in the absence of "temporal resurrection" from the discussion, which (it may be remembered) Donne opined "doth little concerne a true and established Christian, whether it come or no". It is also indicative of the balance sought (or 'plague on both their houses' called down!) by Donne between the social and cultural withdrawal and heavenly-mindedness associated with 'Puritanism', and the attachment to ecclesiastical form and discipline, as this-worldly instantiations of grace, associated with Laudianism, if not 'Papistry'.

Donne then outlined three aspects of human mortality, which he believed were consequential upon the fall into sin, that would be remedied by the final resurrection. In his view, death effected (but resurrection would repair):

1. "a divorce of body and soul (and the resurrection from this fall is by Re-union, the soul and body are re-united at the last day)",
2. "a dissolution [by putrifaction], into atoms and graines of dust (and the resurrection from this fall, is by Re-efformation: God shall re-compact and re-compile those atoms and graines of dust, into that Body, which was before)", and
3. "a dispersion, [this dust being] scattered unsensibly, undiscernibly upon the face of the earth (and the resurrection from this death, is by way of Re-collection; God shall recall and re-collect all these Atoms, and grains of dust, and re-compact that body, and re-unite that soule)".[61]

[60] *Ibid.,* p. 67.
[61] *Ibid.,* p. 73 (parentheses mine).

This exposition of the ravages and remedies of death renders simplistic judgements such as that of Donne's modern biographer John Stubbs that "during his early years as a preacher, Donne was still plagued by thoughts of damnation, by the knowledge of his own sin and that which he, and all humankind, had inherited".[62] In the previous chapter's discussion of his sermon on I Corinthians 15:20, Donne's horror, not of the prospect of damnation upon death, but of separation between body and soul, was noted. In this sermon on 15:29, Donne returned to that theme: "A man is not saved, a sinner is not redeemed, I am not received into heaven, if my body be left out".[63] In the face of mortality, Donne likewise derived comfort, according to Ramie Targoff, not from "the thought of the immortal soul travelling to heaven", but from "the recollection that the body – now consisting of only sand, dust, rubbish, bone – will also ultimately ascend".[64] Targoff's more sophisticated analysis is only attenuated by her poorly founded contention that "Donne's preoccupation with the material continuity of the self" was discontinuous with what she regards as "the general discomfort that [early modern] Protestants evince[d] around the subject of the resurrected body".[65] A charge like this might be plausibly maintained against nineteenth and twentieth century Protestantism, both conforming and dissenting – that would be another story – but hardly against the seventeenth century Anglican orthodoxy of which Donne was broadly representative, and for which his sermons are themselves evidence.

Donne devoted the remainder of his sermon to juxtaposing the three above-mentioned consequences, and glorious end-time reversals, of mortality – divorce, dissolution and dispersion – with three analogous temporal vicissitudes – and grace-enabled correctives – associated with the "spirituall death of the soule by sinne".[66] The analogies he proposed may appear rather distant, and any force they had is likely to have been more rhetorical than logical. But this is not to accuse Donne of insincerity. For him, analogies between this world and the next ran deep, and were not accidental.

Donne first describes the this-worldly phenomenon of "spiritual death" under the rubric of divorce: "Man sometimes withdraws the soule from the body, by neglecting the duties of this life", he said, "and oftener withdraws the body from the soule, which should be subject to the

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[62] J. Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul* (Penguin Books, London 2007), p. 341.
[63] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 73.
[64] R. Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL 2008), p. 150.
[65] *Ibid.,* p. 169.
[66] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 74.

soule, but does maintain a war".[67] This gives him occasion to launch an extended, and carefully-constructed, polemic against monastic asceticism on the one hand, and libertarian excess on the other. Of the body and soul, he said: "God having joyned them, man may not separate them … [and] as God shall re-unite them at the last Resurrection, so must we, in our Resurrections in this life".[68] To further unpack the idea of spiritual death, Donne deployed the analogy of dissolution to describe the "daily customes … continuall habits … and uninterrupted course of sin"[69] in a person's life. These he regarded as resulting from the losses suffered by humanity, one on top of another: that of their original innocence, their baptismal cleansing, and their will to repent. There were, however, a trio of remedies for this trio of falls:

> As from the loss of … our natural faculties in original sin, we have a resurrection in baptisme, And from … the falling into some actuall sins … we have a resurrection in the other Sacrament; so … when we are fallen from all present sense of the means of a resurrection, yet there may be a resurrection wrapped up in the good purposes of God … which, unlesse he wille himselfe, shall not be frustrated, not evacuated, not disappointed.[70]

Lastly, Donne viewed spiritual death through the prism of the concept of dispersion, which in this context he took to mean the total loss of conscience consequent upon a misspent life. "Where will this man finde his soule, thus scattered upon every woman corruptly won, upon every office corruptly usurped, upon every fee corruptly taken?",[71] he asked. The answer he proposed was for the sinner to "recollect himselfe, and his own history, his own annals, his own journals, and call to minde where he lost his way, and with what tendernesse of conscience … he entred into some sins at first, in which he is seared up now".[72] "Grace accepted", Donne concluded, "is the infallible earnest of Glory". "Gather yourselves into the Congregation", he exhorted his hearers. "Gather your sins into your memory, and poure them out in humble confessions … Gather the crummes under his Table, lay hold upon [his] gracious promises".[73]

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[67] *Ibid.*
[68] *Ibid.,* pp. 76-77.
[69] *Ibid.,* p. 77.
[70] *Ibid.,* p. 80.
[71] *Ibid.,* p. 81.
[72] *Ibid.,* p. 82.
[73] *Ibid.,* p. 83.

So much of this sermon is devoted to tracing the this-worldly contours of grace, that it is worth asking whether, and if so how, Donne has avoided the kind of sermon criticism advanced by a modern critic, writing with deliberate provocation: "Then comes the boring part … usually at the end, when we're supposed to 'apply it to our lives'. That's when the preacher turns our attention away from Christ and gets us asking what we're supposed to *do* about the things we've just heard."[74] It is true that Donne exhorted his hearers to moral effort in the metaphorical re-unification of body and soul, in refraining from frustrating the good purposes of God, and in the acceptance of grace. For all that, his sermon is not driven by practical Pelagianism of the 'God helps those who help themselves' variety. Rather, it is an example of preaching that shifts "the focus from what people should do to what Christ has done for [them], so they may know that what they cannot do in their own power, God can do by the grace of Christ working in them".[75] Evidence of this may be found throughout the sermon, but chiefly in the exposition of the argument of I Corinthians 15 that lay at its heart. "Howsoever [Christ's resurrection] be our proofe, and our patterne for our resurrection, yet it is above our imitation", Donne ventured. "All we shall be raised from the dead, onely Christ arose from the dead. We shall be raised by a power working upon us, he rose by a power inherent, and resident in himselfe."[76] Moral exhortation within the context of God's enabling grace, thought Donne, was by no means inconsistent with that grace.

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Having dedicated the first sermon in a series of three on I Corinthians 15:29 to a ground-clearing exercise demonstrating that, whatever the particular meaning of verse 29, it must positively function as an argument for the Christian doctrine of resurrection, Donne now devotes the second sermon in his series to another such exercise – this one intended to demonstrate that, whatever the meaning of the verse, it cannot fairly be considered a buttress for the Roman doctrine of purgatory, because the Roman doctrine of purgatory is not true to the *regula fidei*. This kind of polemical purpose does not sit comfortably with many modern commentators. Potter and Simpson believe that the sermon makes for "tedious reading"; Mary Ann Lund calls it "forcefully confrontational … slyly indirect, [and] anything but the

[74] P. Cary, *Good News for Anxious Christians: 10 Practical Things You Don't Have to Do* (Brazos Press, Grand Rapids MI 2010), p. 157.
[75] *Ibid.,* p. 159.
[76] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 71.

bland 'middle voice' of moderation".[77] (Radner levels a similar charge – "extreme anti-Romanism"[78] – at a different sermon of Donne's.) However, the historicism of some scholars has affected their judgement about Donne's sincerity when engaging polemically. Lund acutely identifies the "unhappy memory of the negotiations surrounding the Spanish Match" between Charles I and Infanta Maria Anna, daughter of Phillip III of Spain[79] as this sermon's principal political backdrop. Yet in characterising Donne's oration as "preaching to the choir", not primarily to "persuade those drawn towards Catholicism, but deliberately to harden opinion against it",[80] she appears to have introduced a distinction without a difference that tends to impute insincere motives to Donne. On the other hand, the ahistoricism of other scholars leads them to expect Donne to observe the conventions of twenty-first century ecumenical dialogue. Radner's charge of "extreme anti-Romanism" only has anachronistic plausibility as applied to Donne. It is simpler, albeit less glamorous, to argue that for its time, Donne's voice really was one of moderation, and that he was genuinely unpersuaded by the doctrine of purgatory.

No doubt there is a challenge here for scholars to render this conclusion appealing, especially to a postmodern readership attuned to the hermeneutic of suspicion. "Religion, in New Historicist work, is almost always a marginal ideology – the traces of a suppressed Catholicism, for instance, have a fascination that the established mainstream of religion quite lacks", according to Mark Sweetnam. Yet in order to illuminate "the role played by religion in early modern state formation", it is incumbent upon historians – some of them, at any rate – to develop an account of "the commonplace religion of the Protestant conformist majority" of seventeenth century England, rather than content themselves with playing about its edges.[81]

Donne's questioning of the Roman doctrine of purgatory went hand in hand with his questioning of the efficaciousness of prayer for the dead (which he regarded as "the Grandmother Error" that sired purgatory[82]) and indulgences ("which are the children" of purgatory, he said, that "support and maintaine their parent" and grandparent doctrines[83]).

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[77] *Ibid.,* pp. xliv-xlv.
[78] Radner, *Time and the Word*, p. 294.
[79] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. xlv.
[80] *Ibid.,* p. xlvii.
[81] Sweetnam, *John Donne and Religious Authority*, p. 11.
[82] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 87.
[83] *Ibid.,* p. 88.

His sermon consisted of a forensic investigation of the patristic tradition to which Roman Catholic authors had appealed in support of each of these teachings. Its theological method was borrowed from the Doctor of the Church he most admired: "we must apply S. Augustines words … Read us any thing out of the Law, or Prophets, or Psalmes, or Gospel, or Epistles, and we will beleeve it".[84] As Protestant-sounding as this maxim may sound, it did not prevent Donne from devoting his sermon to patristics rather than Scripture. At the time of its delivery, the challenge Bishop Jewel issued in 1560 was still reverberating through English theology:

> If any learned man of all our aduersaries, or if all the learned men that be alive be able to bring, any one sufficient sentence, out of any olde catholike doctor, or father: Or out of any olde generall counsell: Or out of the holye scriptures of God: Or any one example of the primitiue Church, wherby [any one of 27 distinctively Roman Catholic tenets listed by Jewel] may be clearly & plainly proued … I would geue over and subscribe unto hym.[85]

The Continental Reformers' maxim of *sola scriptura* had itself never functioned to exclude a role for tradition in interpretation, something which in any case would be impossible. And there is "no indication that Jewel considered the position of the Church of England to be different from that of continental Reformed Churches", according to Jean-Louis Quantin. "He always maintained that the prime authority belonged to Scripture alone. The Fathers were only an aid towards an understanding of it."[86] In constructing his virtuoso survey of the tradition's handling of prayers for the dead, purgatory and indulgences, Donne was simply following in Jewel's footsteps. Those at some distance from Donne's interests and sympathies may well consider the discussion tedious, but there is every reason to think that the immediate audience of this sermon were electrified to hear the momentous issues of their day handled with such assurance. Mary Ann Lund, the modern editor of this sermon, lists 22 ancient and modern authors cited by Donne, but cautions that two key passages borrow heavily from "the Lutheran Martin Chemnitz's *Examen Concilii Tridenti* for quotations and arguments, and even for the structuring of … material".[87] Chemnitz may certainly be credited with a fair share of the erudition on show here; yet undoubtedly there was skill involved in

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[84] *Ibid.,* p. 91. Donne added that "we must have leave to return S. Augustines words upon S. Augustine himselfe, who hath much assisted [the] custome of praying for the dead".
[85] T. Kirby (ed.), *Sermons at St Paul's Cross 1521-1642* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017), pp. 252-253.
[86] J.-L. Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009), pp. 31-32.
[87] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* pp. 257-258.

the preacher condensing, presenting and actually performing this sermon of 11,000 words in such a way as to engage a congregation.

Donne's consecutive discussion of prayer for the dead, purgatory and indulgences comprises a beguilingly simple structure for his sermon (Jeffrey Johnson calls it "uncharacteristically abbreviated"[88]), but the approach he took to each subject was typically nuanced. He clearly thought prayers for the dead inexpedient, but objected not to them *per se* but to claims of their efficacy for the benefit of the dead. He noted that mention of the custom was absent from the Old and New Testaments, but was brought into Christian practice by Gentile converts, and not strongly opposed by the Fathers of the Early Church , partly "because the thing it selfe argued and testified a good, and tender, and pious affection"; "partly also, because this practise, being but a practise onely, and no Dogmaticall constitution, might [continue] without shaking any foundation, or wounding any Article of the Christian Religion"; and lastly "because it was a long time before the Fathers came to a cleere understanding of the state of the soule, departed out of this life".[89] A "good, and tender, and pious affection" he attributes to Ambrose and Augustine in a highly affecting section in which he imagines overhearing them praying for the dead, and cites their own words to explain their purpose in so doing, concluding that "they prayed for the Dead, and they meant no ill, in doing so; but what particular good they meant, they could hardly give any farther account, but that it was, if not an inordinate, yet an inconsiderate piety".[90] The Fathers "prayed for that which they assured themselves was done before", he thought; "though it had the forme of a prayer, it might be a commemoration of Gods former benefits".[91] Moreover, Donne understood "the general disposition in the nature of every man, to wish well to the dead" which motivated these prayers, and knew that the Augsburg Confession of 1530, one of the founding documents of the German Reformation, permitted the practice. It "all ends in this", he said, "that neither those prayers of those Fathers, nor these of these Lutherans (though neither be in themselves to be justified) did necessarily imply, or presuppose any such Purgatory, as the Romane Church hath gone about to evict or conclude out of them".[92]

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[88] J. Johnson, 'John Donne and Paolo Sarpi: Rendering the Council of Trent', in M.A. Papazian (ed.), *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit MI 2003), p. 102.
[89] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 89.
[90] *Ibid.,* pp. 95-96.
[91] *Ibid.,* p. 97.
[92] *Ibid.*

His final rhetorical flourish was to advance "a justifiable prayer for the Dead, that is, for our soules, dead in their sins … *O Lord, create a new heart in me*".[93]

There is similar nuance in Donne's treatment of purgatory. To be sure, he noted its absence from the Old Testament, and gives dubious credit to Plato (via Eusebius) and Virgil (via Lactantius) for its entrance into Christian theology.[94] But he maintained that Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hilary and Ambrose spoke of purgatory in *obiter dicta* only: they "said it not Dogmatically, but by way of discourse, or opinion".[95] Further, by it they usually meant either "the general fire of conflagration at the last day" or "that severe judgement, and examination which every soule is to passe under, from the hand of God at that time".[96] Rarely, if ever, did they mean "a place of torment, where … [the] soules [of the dead] need helpe, and from whence … [the] prayers [of the living] might help them".[97] Finally, Donne makes positive rhetorical use of the concept by arguing that

> we have in this life … a purging, and a Purgatory; a purging in this, That Christ Jesus … *by himselfe hath purged our sinnes*: There is our purging; But then, because after this generall purging … our own evill habits, our owne flesh pollutes us, therefore God sends us a Purgatory too in this life, Crosses, Afflictions, and Tribulations, and to burn out these infectious staines and impressions in our flesh … to wash us, and to burn us cleane with afflictions from his own hand.[98]

Similarly, Donne was not content simply to reject the practice of indulgences; his ambition was to completely recast it. In its "enormous excesse of Indulgences, the Romane Church tooke her deaths wound", he said; "from this extreme abuse of Indulgences, arose the occasion of the Reformation".[99] To modern scholars, the unwillingness to let the practice pass may be evidence of Donne's "extreme anti-Romanism"; but to Donne himself, the extremity lay in the practice, not in his objection to it. "Our danger is greater from these Indulgences, then either from prayer for the Dead, or from Purgatory … because that opinion of an immediate passing to Heaven thereupon, animates men to any undertakings".[100] So

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[93] *Ibid.,* p. 102, citing Psalm 51:10.
[94] *Ibid.,* pp. 93-94.
[95] *Ibid.,* pp. 94-95.
[96] *Ibid.,* p. 97.
[97] *Ibid.,* p. 95.
[98] *Ibid.,* p. 98, citing Hebrews 1:3.
[99] *Ibid.,* p. 100.
[100] *Ibid.*

much for Donne's rejection of the Roman practice of indulgences: "how they rose, how they grew, how they fell, is a historical knowledge, and not much necessary to be insisted upon", he thought.[101] He then moved to reconstruct and reapply the concept: the only true and acceptable indulgences were the "testimonies of the remission of sinnes, which God hath enabled his Church to imprint and conferre upon us, in the absolution thereof",[102] or, in other words, "the constant promises of our faithfull God, that he will give us the issue with the tentation, and that as the Apostle says, *No tentation shall befall us … but that which appertains to man*".[103]

If Donne were simply preaching this sermon "to the choir", a denunciation of Roman prayers for the dead, purgatory and indulgences would have sufficed. That he proposed versions of these concepts, transformed so as to render them acceptable within Reformed theology, suggests that he had more than sectarian point-scoring in mind (though he was not above this kind of point-scoring). It is noticeable that the transformations he effected were Scriptural and Christological in nature. This is the significance of the fact, noted by Lund without further remark, that "Bible quotations are comparatively sparse until the last 200 lines" of the sermon.[104] These are versions of prayers for the dead, purgatory and indulgences that observe St. Augustine's maxim ("Read us any thing out of the Law, etc. and we will believe it") and are unmistakeably gospel-oriented (the soul dead in sin, the purging of sin wrought by Christ, the correction and mercy of God). As well as Scriptural and Christological, Donne's rhetorical recovery of these concepts may well have been ecumenical in motivation. It brought to light what he considered to be the kernels of evangelical truth embedded within them, and recommended his message to all his hearers in a way that outright and unattenuated rejection might not have done.

From one point of view, the fact that Donne delayed any detailed explication of I Corinthians 15:29 until the last of his three sermons on it may seem remarkable. This was, however, a consequence of his use of the text as a prism through which to view the wide spectrum of Christian doctrine that revolved around the resurrection. Donne himself says as much in introducing his second sermon. In the very words of I Corinthians 15:29 ("Else what shall

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[101] *Ibid.*
[102] *Ibid.,* p. 99.
[103] *Ibid.,* p. 101, citing I Corinthians 10:13.
[104] *Ibid.,* p. 258.

they do that are baptized for dead? If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for dead?"), he declared, "the whole Circle of a Christian is designed and accomplished".[105]. The reference is to that fact that baptism (the first point in Donne's 'circle'), death (the second point, 180˚ around from the first so as to be diametrically opposed to it), and resurrection (the last point, 180˚ around from the second point so as to be overlaid onto the first, as is appropriate for "another Birth"[106]) are all contained within the one verse. This is Donne's highly mannered way of advertising the import of his text. It can easily support three sermons because, in a manner of speaking, all humanity *and* divinity is contained within it.

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In the third sermon in his series on I Corinthians 15:29, preached in June 1626 (there is some uncertainty about the precise date[107]), Donne at last turned to an examination of the meaning of his chosen text. He is likely to have done so with the proclamation issued by Charles I on 14 June of that year ringing in his ears, which prohibited the raising of "any doubts" and maintenance of "any new inuentions, or opinions concerning Religion" other than "such as are clearly grounded, and warranted by the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England, heretofore published".[108] Yet Donne was used to navigating royal circumscription, having four years previously preached a sermon in praise of James I's *Directions for Preachers*, which banned *inter alia* "bitter invectives, and undecent rayling speeches, against the persons of either Papist or Puritan", and directed clergy to "free both the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England, from the aspersion of either Adversarie", but to do so "modestly, and gravely", and only "when they are invited or occasioned thereunto by their text of Scripture".[109] The *Directions for Preachers* didn't stop Donne preaching in 1622 – far from it! – and the 1626 proclamation didn't do so either. In the third sermon of this series, Donne professed to be in search of nothing other than the "obvious, and ordinary, and literall"[110] sense of I Corinthians 15:29. His *modus operandi* – a review of the reception history of this verse – weighted the sermon more towards exposition than exhortation, though the latter was by no means absent. His preaching instincts, however, did not desert him. Conscious, no

[105] *Ibid.,* p. 86.
[106] *Ibid.*
[107] *Ibid.,* p. 295.
[108] *Ibid.,* p. 155.
[109] McCullough, Adlington and Rhatigan (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, p. 559.
[110] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 126.

doubt, of the demands his review of exegetical options would place upon his hearers' concentration, Donne dispensed with his usual *exordium* ("introduc[ing] the occasion" and "engaging [the auditory's] sympathy"[111]) and announced a simple (Johnson describes it as "especially truncated",[112]) tripartite structure for his sermon at its very beginning. According to this *divisio*, he would first critique post-Reformation Catholic interpretations, most of which sought to make I Corinthians 15:29 function in support of the Roman doctrine of purgatory, then survey patristic discussions of the verse, before turning his attention to those readings, both ancient and modern, which permitted the verse to function (as he thought proper, in the overall context of I Corinthians chapter 15) as an argument for the resurrection.

Treating I Corinthians 15:29 as if it were supportive of the Roman doctrine of purgatory was, according to Donne, "neither the common[ly agreed] sense [of the verse], but [only] of a few; nor the ancient sense, but [only] of a few later men; nor a sense obvious, and ordinary, and literall, but figurative".[113] In pursuit of this point, he examined interpretations of the verse offered by Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), Benedetto Guistiniani (1554- 1621) and Thomas Cajetan (1469-1534). In Donne's account, Bellarmine and Guistiniani take the baptism mentioned in the verse to be a figurative "baptism of tears", which Bellarmine understood to mean intercessions offered by the living for the delivery of the souls of the dead from purgatory, and Guistiniani understood as afflictions voluntarily undergone by the living as penances on behalf of the dead in purgatory. Donne objected to this figurative understanding of baptism, on the ground that in the Scriptures the "baptism of tears" was a figure used twice only in the Gospels, and then "onely applied to Christ, and appropriated to his Passion",[114] thus not transferable in the way Bellarmine and Guistiniani suggest. Donne further observed that if the interpretations offered by Bellarmine and Guistiniani were correct, St. Paul's argument could not "conduce to the proofe of the Resurrection of the body",[115] whereas the resurrection of the body clearly was the Apostle's preoccupation in I Corinthians chapter 15. Tellingly, he enlisted Roman Catholic expositors (albeit not ones in complete favour with Rome) in the effort to discredit Bellarmine and Guistiniani: Willem Van Est, who treated the "baptism of tears" exposition as "wholly relying upon a figure … a figure very rarely

[111] P. McCullough, 'Donne as preacher', in Guibbory, *Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, p. 177.
[112] Johnson, 'John Donne and Paolo Sarpi', p. 104.
[113] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 126.
[114] *Ibid.*
[115] *Ibid.,* p. 127.

used",[116] and then only of Christ; and Thomas Cajetan, who proposed a completely different figurative understanding of this verse's mention of baptism for the dead (he thought it meant baptism by full immersion to signify death, burial and resurrection) which provided no support for the doctrine of purgatory.[117]

Donne took particular exception to the strident tone of what he considered to be Bellarmine's unsupportable claims in relation to this verse. He cited him as saying, "Here needs no wresting, no disguising, here Purgatory is clearly and manifestly discovered"; "This is … the true and natural sense of the place"; and "We desire no more than this place, for the evident proofe of Purgatory".[118] Likewise, Donne cited the opinion of the French Franciscan François Feruardent (1539-1610), whose understanding of I Corinthians 15:29 mirrored Bellarmine's, that "he that interprets these words thus, is a Catholique, and he is an Heretike that interprets them otherwise". This claim Donne found not only intemperate, but risible, since "thus, he leaves out the Fathers themselves out of the Arke, and makes them Heretiques".[119]

As for the interpretations of this verse advanced by the Fathers, Donne found that none of them functioned in support of the doctrine of purgatory. True enough, he did not assent to Tertullian's view that Paul was constructing an *ad hominem* argument, based on the existence of an unorthodox practice of being baptised as a proxy on behalf of the dead, about which he refrained from pronouncing judgment. He thought it improbable "that S. Paul would take an Hereticall action, and practise, for the ground of his argument"; further he doubted whether baptism for the dead was practised in St. Paul's time; and finally he maintained that such an argument did not answer St. Paul's purpose in I Corinthians chapter 15, which was to argue for the resurrection of the body.[120] Nor did he accept Theodoret's suggestion that being baptised for the dead was St. Paul's shorthand phrase for representing the death, burial and resurrection of Christ in baptism: he thought that the phrase was "somewhat more hard and unusual, then may be easily admitted, in such a matter of faith as this".[121] The notion shared by Chrysostom and Theophylact that being baptised for the dead was St. Paul's way of referring to the hope of resurrection as expressed in the Apostles' Creed, which was

[116] *Ibid.,* p. 126.
[117] *Ibid.,* pp. 127-128.
[118] *Ibid.,* pp. 124-125, 128.
[119] *Ibid.,* p. 128.
[120] *Ibid.,* p. 129.
[121] *Ibid.,* p. 130.

rehearsed at the time of baptism, received equally short shrift. The hope of resurrection was only one of the articles of the Creed, Donne pointed out, and if a reference to the Creed was intended, "it might as properly [or as obscurely] be said, that they were baptized for Christ, baptized for the holy Ghost, baptized for the descent into hell, as for the dead".[122] Lastly, Donne dissented from Thomas Aquinas' view that the verse could be paraphrased "what shall they do who are baptised for the cleansing of dead works, i.e. sins?", on the basis that it was a figurative interpretation which (however "usefull" and "devout") could not serve as "the principall and literall sense of this place", not least because it "seems to conclude nothing necessarily for the resurrection of the body, that we are washed from our sins".[123] Notwithstanding that Donne found fault with each of these interpretations, very often for the same exegetical cause (that they paid no heed to how baptism for the dead operated as an example in St. Paul's argument in favour of the resurrection of the body), he found it notable that the doctrine of purgatory was not hardwired into any of them.

Donne then moved to a consideration of what "later men" had to say on the subject of I Corinthians 15:29, commencing with Juan de Maldonado (1533-1583), a Jesuit scholar with an independent-minded streak, for whom being "baptized for the dead" had nothing to do with purgatory, but was synonymous with undergoing a baptism of blood, i.e. being martyred, for the sake of faith in the resurrection.[124] He regarded this as another figurative interpretation which would have to give way to any coherent literal sense that could be found, and he believed that such a sense *could* be found. The first of two literal-sense interpretative options he reviewed was one that concerned not being baptised "for the Dead, but upon the Dead, upon the graves of the Dead",[125] or in the presence of the bones of the dead, this being posited as an ancient Christian practice that dramatically spoke of faith in a future bodily resurrection.[126] Donne attributes this approach to I Corinthians 15:29 to the Reformers Martin Luther, Philipp Melancthon, Johannes Piscator and Theodore Beza. The only hesitation he had in accepting it was his inability to find any evidence of such a custom in the ancient Corinthian Church. He did not credit Lutheran claims that I Corinthians 15:29 itself furnished such evidence, and believed that for this reading to be established, it would have been

[122] *Ibid.*
[123] *Ibid.,* pp. 130-131.
[124] *Ibid.,* p. 134.
[125] *Ibid.,* p. 135.
[126] *Ibid.,* pp. 134-136.

necessary "to have proved the text from the story, [rather than] the story from the text". [127] In contrast, Donne regarded the second literal-sense interpretative option he reviewed as "fittest to be embraced", being "grounded upon a Custome, which came very early into the Church … which … for the matter of fact, wee are sure it was in practise".[128] He thought that the custom adopted by many early Christian catechumens, of postponing baptism until they were close to death, made it possible to paraphrase I Corinthians 15:29 as follows: "what shall they do who have delayed their baptism until they are preparing for their imminent death?"[129] He openly credited three authorities for this approach: Epiphanius, the fourth-century Bishop of Salamis, the Dutch Catholic exegete Willem Van Est, and the French Reformer John Calvin.[130]

These acknowledgements are highly significant. Lund believes that "to enlist [Calvin] as [an] authority figure in a polemical context [would have been] to make a declaration of religious identity that D[onne] was unwilling to make" and that "while D[onne]'s interpretation … is, in the final assessment, Calvinist, he [was] either not at pains to show it, or at pains not to show it".[131] This assessment notwithstanding, Donne *did* explicitly enlist Calvin as an authority figure for his favoured interpretation of his text; yet he placed him alongside a patristic source in Epiphanius and a modern, Roman Catholic, one in Van Est. In so doing, he made a clear declaration of his ecumenical religious instincts. To the attentive listener of this sermon, this would have come as no surprise, given that Donne had already made positive use of the exegetical writings of Van Est and Cajetan, and had (early on in the sermon) acknowledged that those Roman Catholic authors who

> write by way of Exposition, and Commentaries upon the Scriptures, and are not engaged in the professed handling of Controversies, doe very often content themselves with the true sense of those places which they handle, and hunt after no curious, nor forced, nor forraine, nor unnaturall senses.[132]

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[127] *Ibid.,* p. 136.
[128] *Ibid.*
[129] This understanding of I Corinthians 15:29 is assumed or briefly promoted in four of Donne's other sermons: one on Isaiah 53:1 (G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume VIII (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1956), p. 300), one on Acts 20:25 (*Ibid.,* p. 170), one on Revelation 4:8 (*Ibid.,* p. 44) and one on Galatians 3:27 (G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume V (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1959, p. 161).
[130] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* pp. 137-138.
[131] *Ibid.,* p. 297.
[132] *Ibid.,* p. 123.

It is true that Donne went on, in the passage just cited, to describe the distortions he saw emerging from the pens of apologists for Roman Catholicism over against Protestantism, but this may have been as much about understanding how they arose as it was about critique. After all, later in the sermon he described how engagement in polemic, at one time against the Pelagians, at another against the Manicheans, seems to have swayed the judgement of his most highly esteemed authority, St. Augustine, to the extent that it was sometimes possible to doubt whether he was "constant in his own opinion, and not transported sometimes with vehemency against his present adversary".[133]

Donne's determined advocacy for the Anglican establishment is often remarked upon, but the impression left by this sermon is of a fair-minded person interested in seeking common ground with fellow and rival religionists alike; albeit not any common ground whatsoever, but rather the common ground of Scripture, interpreted without fear or favour. He reserved criticism for those he thought had over-claimed on the basis of flimsy interpretative assumptions, and tried to keep his own mind open to a range of possible alternatives, even as he rejected others. He was prepared to acknowledge the plausibility of the reading of I Corinthians 15:29 which originated with Luther, for instance, and even its likelihood in the event that evidence could be found for the custom of performing baptisms upon the graves of deceased Christians. He was even willing to admit that "the fact may be proved by some, whom those reverend persons [Luther, Melancthon, Piscator and Beza] have read, and I have not".[134] Donne's approval of Luther and critique of Bellarmine in this sermon is not likely to have arisen from pure Protestant chauvinism, given the approving references he includes to Aquinas, Cajetan and Van Est. Perhaps he really did believe his own position to represent the 'middle voice of moderation' after all.

Johnson, noticing the eirenic spirit pervading this sermon and the others in the series of three, albeit in the context of Donne's polemical tussle with Roman Catholicism, proposes a link between that series and Donne's first sermon before Charles I, preached on 3 April 1625 on the text 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous doe?' (Psalm 11:3). "It seems prudent to read these three [sermons] as extensions of and complements to his 'foundations' sermon of the previous year", he writes, and as embodiments of the "discourse

[133] *Ibid.,* p. 133.
[134] *Ibid.,* p. 136.

of conciliarism he wishes to promote between Protestants and Catholics". Donne is here concerned, according to Johnson, "with the collapse of distinction between things fundamental and things indifferent that makes impossible the discourse over these issues that [he] believes is essential for reconciliation in the Church".[135] While Johnson's general point is well made, the particular link he tries to establish between one sermon on the Psalms in the Eastertide of 1625 and three on I Corinthians 15:29 in the Eastertide of the following year is less plausible. All that can, and need, be said is that these four sermons are among many that inhabit the same intellectual space, and give expression to the same overall project: promotion of agreement on essentials and charity over non-essentials.

For Donne, the resurrection of the body was the essential matter at hand. This doctrine invigorated him, and he expected it to invigorate his audience. He did not intend his sermons to be purely cerebral affairs. Closing this last sermon on I Corinthians 15:29, he cited Chrysostom's maxim that "all S. Pauls words work as lightning … It affects, and it leaves some marke upon everything that it touches", to which Donne added, with a certain revivalist *elan*, "if hee have touched thee now, his effect is not onely to make thee beleeve a future resurrection of the body, but to feele a present resurrection in thy soule, and to make mee beleeve that thou feelest it, by expressing it in thy life and conversation".[136] To those that had ears to hear, these must have been electrifying words to hear at the end of what might otherwise have been mistaken as a learned disquisition. "Hee must mend his life, that will be believed to have comprehended S. Paul; For if he be onely the wiser, and the learneder, and not the better, and the honester, he hath but halfe understood S. Paul."[137] The certainty of the future resurrection of the body was for Donne the guarantor of the possibility of a present resurrection from sin. In this way, life was transfigured, and death was subsumed, by resurrection.

[135] Johnson, 'John Donne and Paolo Sarpi', p. 103.
[136] Lund (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 12,* p. 138.
[137] *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: Charting a middle way

The English metaphysical poets of the early seventeenth century were fond of a good paradox, and none were fonder of one than John Donne. His devotional sonnets addressed God the Father as the "all changing unchang'd" and God the Son as he who "cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die".[138] His *Paradoxes and Problems* comprised a series of playful rhetorical exercises raising specious problems ("Why is there more Variety of Greene, than of any other Colour?"[139]) and inviting outrageous speculations ("Why hath the common Opinion afforded Women Soules?"[140]). In his preaching, however, Donne preferred to advance his case by "paragraph-long elaborations of … single idea[s] in expansive, complex sentences" than by witty aphorisms , so "readers of the sermons looking for the flash of… sharp, quick paradoxes and conceits … will be disappointed". [141] The "centrality of paradoxes in Donne's religious language and thought", and principally the crucifixion, "when the Son of God was raised up on the cross to die, thereby destroying the power of death",[142] was carried in his sermons not by one-liners but by carefully-developed argument.

Donne tackled paradoxes arising from a reading of the Christian Scriptures in a particularly striking way in two pairs of sermons preached in 1620. The first pair were on texts from the Gospel of John, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement to the Sonne" (John 5:22), and "I judge no man" (John 8:15). Donne thought it "a usefull and acceptable labour … to reconcile some such places of Scripture, as may at first sight seem to differ from one another".[143] The second pair of texts he juxtaposed were Job 19:26 ("And though, after my skin, wormes destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"), and I Corinthians 15:50 ("Now this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdome of God"). It is probably no accident that he preached these sermons to the Benchers, Fellows, clerks and students of Lincoln's Inn, rather than to (say) royal audiences at Whitehall or the general populace at Paul's Cross, neither of whom could be counted upon to have had sufficient

[138] H. Wilcox, 'Devotional writing', in Guibbory, *Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, p. 151.
[139] K. Ettenhuber, 'Reading and Interpretation', in M. Schoenfeldt, *John Donne in Context* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2019), p. 124.
[140] Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul*, p. 191. Katherine Rundell had these speculations in mind in writing "the more you read Donne's verse, the more you love him, and the more you read Donne's prose, the less you can bear him" (Rundell, *Super-Infinite,* p. 133).
[141] McCullough, 'Donne as preacher', p. 171.
[142] Wilcox, 'Devotional writing', p. 151.
[143] Radner, *Time and the Word,* p. 295.

patience with these casuistical exercises. The first pair of sermons utilises the Johannine texts to traverse "the full pattern of God's purpose and providence in Christ", according to Ephraim Radner, "using the Son as the great figure of all human life".[144] With the second pair of sermons, we are in the territory of Donne's great preoccupation, the resurrection of the body. Donne leaves it until the close of the second sermon in the pairing to effect a reconciliation between his chosen texts. "There is one flesh of Job, another of Saint Paul", he said. "And Jobs flesh can see God, and Pauls cannot; because the flesh that Job speaks of hath overcome the destruction of skin and body by wormes in the grave … and Pauls flesh is overcome by the world".[145] To Donne, the texts were not in opposition, but simply spoke of two distinct realities: the first of the glorified body of the last resurrection, and the second of the corruptible body known to present human experience.

The distinction Donne advanced here was not a particularly innovative or surprising one. Donne was a communicator, not an innovator, and in any event innovation was not considered a virtue in the Christian divinity of his time. His sermon on I Corinthians 15:50 opens by treating the use made of this verse in the sixth-century controversy between Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Gregory the Great of Rome. Eutychius, in the conventional account relayed by Donne to his hearers, believed the resurrection body not to have "any of the qualities of a natural body", but to be "so rarifyed, so refined, so attenuated … that they were aery bodies, and not bodies of flesh and blood".[146] I Corinthians 15:50 was his proof text; yet in answer to it, Gregory responded that "sinfull flesh shall not [inherit the kingdom of God], but natural flesh; that is, flesh indued with … all such qualities as imply no defect, no corruption (for there was flesh before there was sin) such flesh, and such blood shall inherit the Kingdome of God".[147] Donne also relates a popular anecdote suggesting that Eutychius' underwent something of a death-bed conversion to Gregory's point of view: "in this flesh", he said, raising and showing his hand to those who by his side, "I acknowledge that I, and all men shall arise at the day of Judgement".[148]

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[144] *Ibid.* Radner's sentiment that the Son is "the great figure of all human life" mirrors Donne's privileging of the resurrection within the system of Christian doctrine.
[145] G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume III (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1957), p. 132.
[146] *Ibid.,* p. 114.
[147] *Ibid.,* pp. 114-115.
[148] *Ibid.,* p. 114.

Donne continued his sermon's exordium by conducting a historical sweep of heterodox opinions concerning the resurrection, starting with the view posterity attributed to Simon Magus that there would be no such thing, and then proceeding to list:

- The Gnostics, who believed the resurrection to be "of the soul onely, and not of the body, for they thought that the soul lay dead … till the Resurrection";
- The "Arabians", who affirmed "a temporary death of the soul, as well as of the body, but then … allowed a Resurrection to both soul and body, after that death";
- Hymeneus and Philetus, characters mentioned in 2 Timothy chapter 2, to whom was attributed the view that resurrection was of the soul only, and had already taken place in the lives of baptized Christians;
- Eutychius, who (as Donne had already mentioned) confessed the resurrection of the body, but stretched "the qualities of the body so far, as that it was scarce a body";
- The Armenians, who believed that at the last resurrection, all people would rise as men, "the perfecter sex", and none as women; and
- Origen, according to whom it appeared to Donne that the resurrection of the body would be for the duration of a millennium, after which time human individuation would be swept up into "the essence of God himselfe".[149]

The purpose of this review was not simply to demonstrate Donne's grasp of Christian tradition, but to explain why his chosen text had been treated by the tradition in different ways: "those Fathers who opposed these heresies, so diverse from one another, … interpret[ed] these words [i.e. those of I Corinthians 15:50] diversly, according to the heresie they opposed".[150] This is a theme to which he returned in 1626, saying of the Fathers,

> in heat of disputation, and argument, and to make things straight, they bent them too much on the other hand, and to oppose one Heresie, they endangered the inducing of another, as in S. Augustines disputations against the Pelagians … and the Manicheans … we shall sometimes find occasions to doubt whether S. Augustine were constant in his owne opinion, and not transported sometimes with vehemency against his present adversary, whether Pelagian, or Manichean.[151]

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[149] *Ibid.,* p. 115.
[150] *Ibid.,* p. 116.
[151] .G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume VIII (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1954), p. 203.

Thus Donne showed himself to be an expert handler and sophisticated inheritor of the patristic tradition. In his sermon on I Corinthians 15:50, however (in contrast to his series of sermons, especially the second in the series, on I Corinthians 15:29, preached at St Paul's Cathedral), he spared his audience a survey of the diverse interpretations of I Corinthians 15:50 he considered to be orthodox, and said simply that "all agree, that [the words of the verse] are an argument for the resurrection, though they seem at first, to oppose it".[152] His refusal to go into specifics at this point was a deft homiletical move, on three counts: it freed him from the necessity of explaining how his own treatment of the verse interacted with the granular detail of patristic interpretation; it avoided the possibility that some listeners might prefer one or other of these interpretations over his; and it simultaneously promised and delayed, and consequently increased audience anticipation of, his own exposition of the verse.

Donne's next move was to situate I Corinthians 15:50 within the flow of the argument of the chapter as a whole, noting the same three steps as would later be highlighted in the first of his three sermons on I Corinthians 15:29:

4. the fact of Christ's resurrection (from the beginning of chapter 15 to verse 35),
5. the manner of the resurrection for those who have died, or will die (from verses 36 to 50),
6. the special case of those who are alive at the time of Christ's second coming (from verse 51 to the end of the chapter).

Donne called verse 50, his chosen sermon text, "the knot, and corollary of all the second part, concerning the qualities of the bodies in the resurrection", as if the apostle Paul were saying "now [in verse 50] I show you as much in the Negative as I have done [in the preceding verses] in the Affirmative … that flesh and bloud cannot inherit the kingdome of God".[153] He then lit upon a saying of Tertullian from which he developed the structure of his sermon. The saying was as follows: "God hath given us his earnest, and a pawn from him upon earth, in giving us the holy Ghost, and he hath received our earnest, and a pawn from us into heaven, by receiving our nature, in the body of Christ Jesus there."[154] From this, Donne teased out two points, to be treated in succession in the sermon, which effectively functioned as caveats to the assertion of verse 50. He granted that *sinful* flesh and blood may not inherit the

[152] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume III, p. 116.
[153] *Ibid.*
[154] *Ibid.*

kingdom of God, but first, "flesh and blood, *when it is conformed to the flesh and blood of Christ now glorified, and made like his, by our resurrection*, may inherite the kingdome of God, in heaven", and, second, "flesh and blood *being conformed to Christ by the sanctification of the holy Ghost, here, in this world,* may inherite the kingdome of God, here upon earth".[155]

With his first caveat, Donne looked to the future, glorified state of redeemed humanity, and explored how much could be said with certainty concerning it. He took the Gospel accounts of the transfiguration as providing the best guide or glimpse of the resurrection body, and in doing so he consciously followed St Jerome, who argued that the transfigured "Christ had still the same true, and reall body, and he had the same forme, and proportion, and lineaments, and dimensions of his body" as before. "Transfiguration did not so change him" as to render him unidentifiable to Peter, James and John, "nor shall glorification so change us, as that we shall not be known" by those by whom we are known in this life.[156] Beyond this, Donne observed a certain reticence in delineating the precise contours of the resurrection body, taking the admonition of Christ to his disciples not to speak of the transfiguration until his resurrection as a point of departure to say that "till our Resurrection, we cannot know clearly, we should not speak boldly, of the glory of the Saints of God, nor of our blessed endowments in that state".[157]

At this point in the sermon, according to his twentieth-century editor Evelyn Simpson, Donne included "some controversial matter against the Church of Rome", before going on to "interpret his text in [the] secondary sense … of the kingdom of God in this world".[158] This dismissive comment invites the contemporary reader to regard Donne's polemic as devoid of intrinsic interest or merit, and unworthy of sustained attention. In full anti-Roman swing, Donne's prose is certainly jarring to modern ecumenical sensibilities, as well as to the High Church sentiment of editors such as Potter and Simpson. However, it is not to be overlooked on that account. In the present case, the motivating heart of Donne's sermon on I Corinthians 15:50 is embedded within the "controversial matter" which is the subject of only passing notice by his editor.

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[155] *Ibid.,* italics mine.
[156] *Ibid.,* p. 118
[157] *Ibid.,* p. 122.
[158] *Ibid.,* p. 9. Simpson's fellow editor George Potter died before the writing of the introduction in which this line was included.

Once more Donne's starting point was a dictum of Tertullian: "My faith directs it self first upon that which Christ hath done, he is dead, he is risen; and my hope directs it selfe upon that which shall bee done, I shall rise again".[159] In other words, the resurrection sustains hope for the future. Donne then moved swiftly on to controversy. "All persecuted Churches are religious, all peaceable Churches are dissolute", he claimed, and at the time of the European Reformation (a century prior to his preaching), the Roman ecclesiastical authorities "wallowed in all abundances, and dissolutenesse". Donne faulted this on theological, rather than moral, grounds, since "when they bent their thoughts entirely, and prosperously upon possessing this world, they thought they might spare the Resurrection well enough".[160] That Donne's principal intent was not to score sectarian debating points is evidenced by his subsequent admissions, first that "God in our days, hath given us, and our Church, [in England] the fat of the glory of this world too, and we also neglect the other"; second that the Protestant Reformation had prompted a Counter-Reformation in which Roman Catholics "grew more carefull of their manners, and did reform themselves somewhat, though not thoroughly, and are the better for that reformation which was offered to them, and wrought more effectually upon others".[161]

At heart, Donne's vision was one that has animated Christian preachers (and quite possibly congregations) across the centuries: of the resurrection as the sole appropriate ground for the sustenance of future hope. "Imagine the eschaton were coming tomorrow", says a preacher of the early twenty-first century. "The rich are those who say, 'Couldn't we have just a bit more time? I'm only just getting used to e-mail, I haven't tried out my new car, and I'm so looking forward to my daughter's graduation'. The poor are those who say, 'Yes, please'."[162] Donne's seventeenth-century version of this was to say:

> In true faith to God, true Allegiance to our Prince, true obedience to the Church, true dealing with all men, [let us] make our selves sure of the Resurrection in the next life … nor [let us be] corrupted carnally by the pleasures or profits of this world, but … conforme our selves to the purity of Jesus Christ … [163]

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[159] *Ibid.,* p. 123.
[160] *Ibid.*
[161] *Ibid.*
[162] S. Wells,'No Abiding Inner City: A New Deal for the Church', in M.T. Nation and S. Wells, *Faithfulness and Fortitude: In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh 2000), p. 128.
[163] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume III, p. 124.

His vision was accompanied by all the trappings of social and religious conformity of the era, but it was nevertheless one that transcended and maintained a measure of critical distance from society, and found its anchor in resurrection hope.

Let us "conforme our selves to the purity of Jesus Christ", Donne urged, "in that measure, which we are able to attain to, which is our spirituall Resurrection, and constitutes [the sermon's] second part, That Kingdome of God, which flesh and blood may inherit in this life".[164] This was his segue into the second of the caveats he wished to register concerning his text: notwithstanding that sinful flesh and blood may not inherit the kingdom of God, flesh and blood being conformed to the likeness of Christ *may* do so, to the measure of their conformity, in the present. Once again, Donne took his departure from Tertullian, who in commenting on I Corinthians 15:49 ("As we have born the image of the earthly, so let us beare the Image of the heavenly"), wrote that "the apostle does not speak of our glorious resurrection at last, but of our religious resurrection now … [and] delivers it as a duty, that we must, not as a reward, that we shall bear that image".[165] In other words, when the Christian hope of future resurrection was correctly grasped, Donne believed, it would inspire the present conduct of Christians.

Donne devoted the remainder of his sermon (save the coda that distinguished between the usages of the word "flesh" in the book of Job and the first letter to the Corinthians respectively) to explicating three matters in turn: what form did the kingdom of God take in the present, how can it be inherited in the present life, and what form of flesh and blood was excluded from it?

Donne's short answer to the first of these questions is "peace in the State, peace in the Church, [and] peace in our conscience", maintained by the people of England "endevour[ing] a conformity to [Christ], in … life, and conversation".[166] This was a profoundly quietist and conformist political vision, but it was not so complacent as to be the product of an over-realized eschatology. In a particularly purple passage, Donne recognised human vulnerability (personified as Everyman) to "being encompassed within a Sea of calamities in his estate, with a Sea of diseases in his body, with a Sea of scruples in his understanding, with a Sea of

[164] *Ibid.*
[165] *Ibid.,* p. 125.
[166] *Ibid.,* p. 127.

transgressions in his conscience, with a Sea of sinking and swallowing in the sadnesse of spirit", alongside the possibility of "open[ing] his eyes above water, and find[ing] a place in the Arke above all these, a recourse to God, and joy in him, in the Ordinances of a well established and well governed Church".[167] Nor was this vision so anthropocentric as to imply unaided human perfectibility. "To call upon God for the Day of Judgment, upon confidence of our own righteousnesse", Donne regarded as "a shrewd distemper" and "a dangerous issue".[168] The this-world kingdom of God was for him a kingdom of grace, wherein God deigned "to be present with us … in the preservation of his Church", and wherein Christians were "sensible of his presence".[169]

With this point, Donne moved to the second of the questions that framed the conclusion to his sermon: how might the kingdom of God be inherited in this life? The particular Reformed, ecumenical hues of the colours he nailed to the mast become clear in his approach to this question. "I cannot have [the kingdom of God] by purchase,", he says, "by mine own merits and good works; It is neither my former good disposition, nor Gods fore-sight of my future cooperation with him, that is the cause of his giving mee his grace". Moreover, he added, "I cannot have this by Covenant, or by the gift, or bequeathing of another, by works of Supererogation".[170] On the face of it, these are the remarks of a genuinely convinced Protestant, not those of a pulpit time-server who was simply anxious to conform to the requirements of the times when "preaching against Catholics was conventional and even expected".[171] Donne's question and answer was thoroughly Reformed: "I have no title to this Kingdome of God, but Inheritance, whence grows mine Inheritance? … because I am propagated of the seed of God, I inherit this peace."[172] His outlook was nonetheless ecumenical (albeit one shaped by his seventeenth-century context). "Let none divorce himself from that religion, and that worship of God, which God put into his armes, and which he embraced in his Baptism", he said in discussing the earthly inheritance of the kingdom of God. "Woe be unto us, if we deliver not over our religion to our posterity, in the same sincerity, and the same totality in which our Fathers have delivered it us; for that, that

[167] *Ibid.*
[168] *Ibid.,* p. 126.
[169] *Ibid.,* p. 127.
[170] *Ibid.*
[171] J. Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (D.S. Brewer, Woodbridge 2003), p. 26.
[172] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume III, p. 128.

continuation, is that, that makes it an inheritance".[173] One might have expected some awkwardness from Donne in the making of this point, given that he himself was baptized a Roman Catholic, and embraced Reformed religion as an adult. He did indeed qualify these words by adding "except there be error in fundamentall points, such as make that Church no Church, let no man depart from that Church, and that religion, in which he delivered himself to the service of God at first".[174] And according to Jeanne Shami, throughout his sermons he distinguished "between the true religion into which he was born and contemporary Catholicism characterized officially by the Council of Trent, the Jesuitical campaign to re-establish Catholicism in England, and the political interventions of the pope".[175] Shami argues, that in referring (as he did elsewhere) to "the Religion I was born in", Donne meant "nothing more specific than 'Christianity'".[176] It is more likely that, by "the Religion I was born in", Donne meant, more particularly, small-c catholic, apostolic, orthodox Christianity, which he believed had been eroded by Rome, and required renewal such as had been effected in the sixteenth-century English Reformation. "Wee have an inheritance in this Kingdome", he summarised, "if we … possess [the Word of God] and persevere in the true profession of it, to our end".[177]

Lastly, Donne turned to the issue of "upon whom the exclusion [from the Kingdom of God in I Corinthians 15:50] fals". 'Flesh and blood' in this sense he identified as humanity "without the regeneration of the Spirit of God" and "all those works which proceed meerly out of the nature of man".[178] These he enumerated colourfully as "the adorning of my flesh in pride … the polluting of my flesh in wantonnes … a pampering of my flesh with voluptuous provocations … a withering … of my flesh in superstitious and meritorious fastings, or other macerations" and

> an admiring … of honourable blood, in a servile flattering of great persons … an insinuating of false and adulterous blood … by supposititious children … the inflaming [of] the blood … by lascivious discourse … shedding the blood of another

[173] *Ibid.,* p. 129.
[174] *Ibid.*
[175] Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis*, p. 27.
[176] *Ibid.,* p. 33. In arguing thus, Shami (I believe correctly) resists the notion, popularised by John Carey, that Donne embraced Protestantism with a bad conscience for the sake of career progression. "There can be no mistake about the agony of Donne's choice. And he chose hell." (J. Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (Faber and Faber, London 1990), p. 25).
[177] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume III, p. 130.
[178] *Ibid.,* p. 131.

> in a murderous quarrel … blaspheming the blood of my Saviour, in execrable oathes, or the prophaning of his blood in an unworthy receiving.[179]

In speaking in this vein, Donne attempted to avoid the extremes of both legalism (which to his mind held sway over Roman Catholicism) and antinomianism (which he believed characterised Puritanism to some degree), extremes to which he feared his audience was equally vulnerable. "Breaking down [by finding a way of navigating around] binary oppositions", was, in Shami's words, Donne's "constant rhetorical and intellectual strategy".[180] It was what motivated him to juxtapose the assertions of Job 19:26 and I Corinthians 15:50 in the first place. He did so not as a scholastic exercise – he was too practical a person for that – but as a means of getting to what he saw as the eternal truth, and the everyday consequences, of the Christian doctrine of resurrection.

[179] *Ibid.*
[180] Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis*, p. 30.

Chapter 4: The Resurrection to Glory

The preceding chapters have focused on five sermons preached by John Donne on verses from the fifteenth chapter of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, a key text for the Christian doctrine of resurrection, to support the thesis that resurrection, rather than death, was Donne's *idée fixe*. Until some way is found to establishing how representative of Donne's thought these five sermons are, however, an alternative account cannot be ruled out, that in these five sermons Donne merely followed where I Corinthians 15 led, and in his one hundred and fifty-five remaining extant sermons, he followed where other texts led, to many and various places in the universe of Christian thought.

In other words, some survey of Donne's sermonic output is required to substantiate the thesis being advanced in this dissertation. This chapter will address the full extent of the hold that I Corinthians 15 in particular, and the doctrine of resurrection in particular, exerted on Donne's imagination, according to the evidence of his extant sermons considered as a whole. The first volume of Troy Reeves' *Annotated Index to the Sermons of John Donne* will prove a useful tool in this endeavour. The limitations of Reeves' indices have been carefully logged by Jeanne Shami, but she begins her review by admitting that "any index to Donne's *Sermons* is better than no index".[181] For present purposes, it is sufficient to note that in his first volume (the one that tabulates Donne's Scriptural citations), Reeves "collected his references from the marginal references in the [mid twentieth century] Potter and Simpson edition"[182] of the sermons. These, while very extensive, are known to be incomplete. Conclusions based on data obtained from Reeves' Scriptural index must therefore be regarded as provisional, but may be treated as indicative.

Reeves lists many thousands of Scriptural citations – Potter and Simpson's estimate is that Donne's extant sermons contain over 7,000 such citations[183] - but, of course, the number of chapters in the constituent books of the Bible totals well over a thousand. In his choice of citations, however, Donne did not demonstrate the same level of interest in all Scripture.

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[181] J. Shami, 'Review of Troy D. Reeves' Index to the Sermons of John Donne', in *Renaissance and Reformation* 8.1, 1984, p. 59.
[182] *Ibid.*
[183] G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume X (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1962), p. 295.

Potter and Simpson note the general point that the Gospels provided texts for thirty-seven of his sermons, the Psalms for thirty-four, the Pauline epistles for twenty-six, the book of Genesis for nine, and so on.[184] Careful analysis of the citations listed by Reeves uncovers a point that is more specific and equally telling. Only three chapters of the Bible are cited more than sixty times throughout Donne's extant sermons, according to Potter and Simpson's marginal references (and Reeves' *Index*). These are: Genesis chapter 1 (78 times), Genesis chapter 3 (69 times), and I Corinthians 15 (67 times). Together these chapters cover the theological waterfront of creation, fall, death and resurrection. Further analysis of the I Corinthians citations reveals that they appear in thirty-three of his sermons, over and above the five analysed in previous chapters of this dissertation - or in thirty-eight in total.

These numbers create a *prima facie* impression that the doctrine of resurrection was never far from the forefront of Donne's mind. He preached on the subject on Easter Day, as might be expected, and throughout the rest of the year as well. Counting these citations is not enough to demonstrate this, however. Careful attention to them and their various contexts is required, the purpose of the enquiry being to determine to what extent these quotations are deployed by Donne to promote the doctrine of the resurrection. This may be conveniently done in three phases, corresponding to the three stages in the flow of the argument of I Corinthians chapter 15, as perceived by Donne: first, establishment of the fact of Christ's resurrection (from the beginning of the chapter to verse 35); second, discussion of the manner of the resurrection for those who have died, or will die (from verses 36 to 50); and third, consideration of the special case of those who are alive at the time of Christ's second coming (from verse 51 to the end of the chapter).

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In an undated sermon which took for its text a verse from another chapter of I Corinthians, Donne used the famous claim near the start of chapter 15 ("for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures") to make a point about the divinity of Christ.

> The Apostle thought it a hard, a heavy, an incredible thing to say that this person, this Christ, this Man and God, was dead. [So] to mollifie the hardnes of that saying, he

[184] *Ibid.*

> adds this, Christ is dead, according to the Scriptures: if the Scriptures had not told us that Christ should die, and told us againe, that Christ did die, it were hard to conceive, how this person, in whom the Godhead dwelt bodily, should be submitted to death.[185]

This verse, though ostensibly about Christ's death, became in Donne's treatment not only about his divinity, but also indirectly about his resurrection.

The majority of I Corinthians 15:1-35 is, of course, overtly concerned with the resurrection, not only of Christ, but also of Christian believers. Verses to which Donne had recourse more than once in his preaching included 17 ("if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins"), 19 ("if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"), 20 ("But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"), 22 ("As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"), and 24 ("Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"). In weaving verses such as these into his preaching, Donne spoke to what for him were four connected realities: the pre-resurrection healings and revivifications recorded in the Bible; the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead; the conversion and renewal of the Christian believer in the present (what he described as a "spiritual" resurrection in his sermon to the Jacobean Court on 8 March 1621); and the general resurrection of humanity in the future.

About the revivications, he said in an Easter Day sermon of 1624, "such Resurrections as are spoken of, That women received their dead raised to life again, and such as are recorded in the old and new Testament, they were all unperfect and temporary resurrections … They had a Resurrection to life, but yet a Resurrection to another death."[186]

"Our last resurrection from the grave, is rooted in the personal resurrection of Christ", he said in his Easter Day sermon of 1622. "To deliver us from sin, Christ was to destroy all our enemies; Now the last enemy is death; and last time that Death and Christ met, (upon the Crosse) Death overcame him, and therefore, except he be risen from the power of Death, we are yet in our sins."[187]

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[185] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume III, p. 300.
[186] G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume VI (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1953), p. 77.
[187] G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume II (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1956), pp. 71-72.

On the following Easter Day, 1623, Donne said this about the "spiritual" resurrection of Christian living: "Blesse Gods present goodnesse, for this [resurrection of Christian conversion] now", "and attend Gods pleasure, for the other Resurrection hereafter".[188] And in that Easter Day sermon of 1623, he used I Corinthians 15:19 to underscore the physical nature of the general resurrection.

> Upon those words of the Apostle, If there were no Resurrection, we were the miserablest of all men, the Schoole reasons reasonably; Naturally the soule and body are united, when they are separated at Death, it is contrary to nature, which nature still affects this union; and consequently the soule is the lesse perfect, for this separation; and it is not likely, that the perfect natural state of the soule, which is, to be united to the body, should last but three or fourscore yeares, and, in most, much lesse, and the unperfect state, that in the separation, should last eternally, for ever: so that either the body must be believed to live againe, or the soul believed to die.[189]

On show here is the horror with which Donne regarded the prospect of the separation of body and soul (albeit temporary) upon death.[190]

Notwithstanding the intricate theological structure Donne perceived in the first half of I Corinthians 15, it remained for him a text that was generative of many personally meaningful associations. In the middle of a farewell sermon preached while gravely ill at Lincoln's Inn in 1619, just prior to joining a peace mission to Germany from which he believed he would not return alive,[191] he lit upon verse 9 ("For I am the least of the apostles") and juxtaposed it with I Timothy 1:15 ("Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief") in an affecting auto-elegy that turned out to be premature by eleven years. "Remember me, not my abilities", he urged his auditors,

> for when I consider my Apostleship that I was sent to you, I am in St Pauls *quorum, quorum ego sum minima*, the least of them that have been sent; and when I consider my infirmities, I am in his *quorum*, in another commission, another way, *Quorum ego*

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[188] G.R. Potter and E.M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IV (University of California Press, Los Angeles CA, 1959), p. 360.
[189] *Ibid.,* p. 358.
[190] Cf. chapter 1, pp. 9-10, and chapter 2, p. 21.
[191] Cf. Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul,* p. 341.

> *maximus*; the greatest of them; but remember my labors and endeavours, at least my desire, to make sure your salvation.[192]

At other times he spoke of the evangelical appropriation of the following verse ("by the grace of God I am what I am") "to make God mine owne, to finde that all that God says is spoken to me, and all that Christ suffered was suffered for me",[193] and promised the benefits of this identification to his fellow believers: "God will give us the comfort of this phrase in the next House [i.e., life]".[194] For Donne, the resurrection was not an abstraction that invited speculation, so much as it was a dynamo that drove Christian living.

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Donne gave sustained attention to the *manner* of the resurrection in his 1620 sermon which had I Corinthians 15:50 as its text, which (it will be remembered) was paired with a sermon on the same topic, but from the different perspective of Job 19:26. Apart from that, he made no substantive comment on the subject (which St Paul treats from verses 36 to 50), apart from one reference to I Corinthians 15:36 in his 1620 sermon on Job. The issue at stake was whether flesh and blood could see God (as Job believed it could), or inherit his kingdom (as St Paul believed it could *not*), and the resolution offered was that in these texts Job was speaking of renewed, resurrected flesh, but St Paul was not. Within this general context, Donne was inspired in his sermon on Job 19:26 by I Corinthians 15:36 ("That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die") to draw an analogy from nature to illuminate the relationship between death and resurrection. "If thou hadst seen the bodies of men rise out of the grave, at Christs Resurrection, could that be a stranger thing to thee, then (if thou hadst never seen, nor hard, nor imagined it before) to see an Oake that spreads so farre, rise out of an Akorne?", he asked. "So the holy Ghost himselfe sends us to Reason, and to the Creature, for the doctrine of the Resurrection."[195] Death was for Donne a necessary corollary to resurrection, but resurrection was the overarching reality.

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[192] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume II, p. 248.
[193] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume VI, p. 219.
[194] *Ibid.,* p. 360.
[195] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume III, p. 98.

It might be thought, at this point, that the particular case of those who are alive at the time of Christ's return (a case which St Paul considers from verse 51 of I Corinthians 15 to the end of the chapter) should have given Donne pause for thought. How could death be *for them* a necessary corollary to resurrection? Donne did indeed give consideration to this question, and set out his answer in sermons commenting on I Corinthians 15:51 ("Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"). The first step in his logical progression was to problematise the phrase "we shall not all sleep". "I scarce know a place of Scripture, more diversly read, and consequently more variously interpreted then this place", he said in a sermon on Easter Day 1622. "The Apostle professes there to deliver us a mystery … but Translators and Expositors have multiplied mysticall clouds upon the words".[196] In another, probably earlier, sermon he had ventured that "whether this sleeping be spoke of death it selfe, [meaning] we shall not die … or whether this sleep be spoke of a rest in the grave, [meaning] we shall not be buried, and remain in death, that may be a mystery still".[197] But by 1622 he had made up his own mind on the question:

> We who are then alive … shall have a present [i.e. instantaneous] dissolution of body and soul, and that is truly a death, and a present [instantaneous] redintegration of the same body and the same soul, and that is truly a Resurrection; we shall die, and be alive again, before another could consider that we were dead … it shall be done, sayes [St Paul] … in the twinkling of an eye.[198]

So closely were death and resurrection related in Donne's thinking that it was a point of principle for him that those alive at the time of Christ's return should not be exempt from the universal law of death. "We lost the earthly Paradise by death" in the Garden of Eden, he said in a 1627 sermon, "but wee get not Heaven, but by death, now".[199]

The last judgement was also part of Donne's system, and in this he was no innovator: "this all the Fathers, and all the Schoole, all the Cajetans, and all the Catharins, all the Luthers, and all the Calvins agree in, A judgment must be, and it must be … in the twinkling of an eye".[200]

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[196] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IV, p. 74.
[197] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume II, p. 204.
[198] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IV, p. 75. Donne repeated this view in his famous 'Death's Duel' sermon, preached a few weeks before his death: "… wee shall not all sleepe, (that is, not continue in the state of the dead in the grave,) but wee shall all be changed. In an instant we shall have a dissolution, and in the same instant a redintegration, a recompacting of body and soule, and that shall be truely a death and truely a resurrection …" (Colclough, (ed.), *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne. Volume 3*, pp. 237-238).
[199] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume VIII, p. 91.
[200] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume II, p. 206.

He did not believe that all would reach paradise. "Who can expresse, who can conceive that strange confusion, which shall overtake, and oppresse those … Soules, which shall be changed at the last day [only to] receive an irrevocable judgment of everlasting condemnation".[201] But he did expect all to die, and then to be raised.

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There is more that could be said in support of the thesis that resurrection, rather than death, was the key insight of Donne's mature thought. The focus of this study has been on the extensive use he made of I Corinthians 15, in sermons given on texts from that chapter as well as sermons on other texts. Yet Donne found the resurrection in many other parts of the Bible. On Easter Day 1629, he celebrated

> the Resurrection of all kinds, whether the Resurrection from calamities in this world, Ezechiels Resurrection, where God said to him … Son of man doest thou thinke, these scattered Bones can live againe? The Resurrection from sin, S. Johns Resurrection, Blessed is he that hath his part in the first Resurrection: or … the Resurrection to Glory, S. Pauls Resurrection, that is, more argued, and more particularly established, by that Apostle, then by the rest.[202]

A more ambitious treatment of Donne's doctrine of resurrection would trawl for and analyse every citation in every sermon on every text, starting, it may be, with the just-mentioned references to Ezekiel chapter 37, verse 3 (there are a total of five on that one verse throughout his sermons, according to Reeves) and Revelation 20:6 (there are a total of six). In a modest, indicative study such as this, it has been reasonable to focus attention on I Corinthians 15, the chapter that Donne privileges as containing the most closely argued case for the resurrection in the Christian Scriptures.

Interest in Donne's life and work continues unabated, the best part of four hundred years after his death. It is an interest shaped more by his poetry than by his prose, and more by "Eng. Lit." than by Divinity, notwithstanding the fact that at the time of his death, in the words of Peter McCullough, he "was popularly famous not as a poet, but as a preacher".[203] The efforts of McCullough and the other editors of the Oxford edition of Donne's sermons are beginning

[201] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume V, p. 106.
[202] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume VIII, p. 355.
[203] McCullough, 'Donne as preacher', p. 167.

to alter that picture. Andrew Hadfield's 2021 monograph *John Donne in the Shadow of Religion* and Katharine Rundell's 2022 *Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne* do cite his sermons alongside his poetry. Yet they do so with a certain lack of sympathy. Hadfield regards Donne's famous 'Death's Duel' sermon of 1630 as underpinned by the belief that "life is time to be endured rather than enjoyed and that the sooner we can cast off our mortal flesh the happier we will be".[204] Rundell dubs the sermon "resolutely sad" and "dark as pitch, until almost the very end".[205] She finds it difficult to take his perspective on death seriously, informed as it was by the Christian doctrine of resurrection. "If I had fixed a son in court, or married a daughter into a plentiful fortune, I were satisfied", Rundell quotes Donne as saying. "Shall I not be so, when the King of Heaven hath taken that son to himself, and married himself to that daughter, forever?" Not as far as Rundell is concerned. To her, this "reads like a man wringing consolation by force from beliefs that had been already agonisingly hard-won". "You can hear the fixed set of his jaw in his words", she says.[206]

There is an alternative to regarding Donne as insincere or engaged in special pleading in his sermons, which is to recognise that not all of the contours of the early modern mindset map comfortably onto contemporary sensibilities. For as long as death is considered in isolation, Donne's perspective may seem dismal, mawkish, misanthropic, otherworldly or perhaps not even credible. But Donne never considered death in isolation from resurrection. In commenting on the end of the 'Death's Duel' sermon, and to her credit, Rundell recognises this. "The end of the sermon is a litany of images of life …and the sermon's last words … were these: … lie down in peace in [Christ's] grave, till he vouchsafe you a resurrection".[207]

Why does it matter that – as has been argued – Donne's sermons constitute, at least in part, a *memento resurrectionis* rather than a *memento mori*? In the final analysis, what can be said to hang on this distinction? Close attention to Donne's use of I Corinthians 15 suggests the outline of an answer to questions such as these. In the interests of the construction of a useable past, many serious thinkers have proposed excavating and repurposing the *memento mori* tradition for a secular age. E.M. Forster wrote that "death destroys a man, but the idea of death saves him"; quoting this, Raymond Tallis glosses: "The sense of finitude animates a

[204] Hadfield, *John Donne: In the Shadow of Religion*, p. 36.
[205] Rundell, *Super-Infinite*, p. 288.
[206] *Ibid.,* p. 283.
[207] *Ibid.,* p. 288.

desperate desire to make a deeper, more coherent sense of things … The idea of death is a threat, a goad and an inspiration. And its power is available to all of us who aim to live abundantly."[208] In such treatments, the injunction to *memento mori* is shorn of all specifically Christian content and becomes effectively synonymous with the sentiment behind the phrase *carpe diem*.

Contemporary thinkers are of course free to engage with inherited traditions of thought in any way they wish. But what Tallis regards as a threat, goad and inspiration, Donne would have feared as either an invitation to a misguided project of Pelagian self-reliance, or else a slide into meaninglessness and hopeless despair. Had he been able to conceive of the possibility of death without the prospect of resurrection, he would have certainly clenched his teeth in horror at it. As matters actually stood, however, Donne was able to find hope and meaning, not in death *qua* death, and all the efforts and achievements inspired by a sense of finitude, but in death as a prelude to resurrection, which he believed to be a divine work from beginning to end. This constitutes an important corrective to the commonplace claim that "there can be no other front rank writer in the English language who has thought, written and talked about" death more than John Donne.[209] If death was his subject, it was not death as modernity knows it. The basis of the *carpe diem* philosophy is the one-dimensional thought that "we *are* now … that we are able to listen, to think, to move, to plan, to hope, to bring about"[210] *now,* and will not be able to do so later. By contrast, time and again in this study we have observed Donne carefully distinguishing between past, present and future resurrections, then insisting on their inter-relatedness. "Our last resurrection from the grave, is rooted in the personal resurrection of Christ",[211] Donne preached on Easter Day 1622; and on Easter Day 1629, he added that "this Resurrection to glory is the consummation of all the others".[212] He believed that it was God alone who could bring hope out of death, and God alone who had actually done so by means of resurrection.

[208] R. Tallis, *In Defence of Wonder and Other Philosophical Reflections* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2012), p. 211.
[209] Docx, *John Donne: On Death*, p. ix.
[210] Tallis, *In Defence of Wonder*, p. 210.
[211] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume IV, p. 71.
[212] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume VIII, p. 355.

Chapter 5: A portrait in a landscape

Any study as tightly focussed as the present dissertation on the sermons on John Donne is vulnerable to criticism for a lack of context by which their significance may be assessed. A glance outside the bubble of those who regard him the greatest English-language preacher or poet is enough to demonstrate that Donne's work, while not completely *sui generis,* had distinctive features of its own when compared and contrasted to that of others within his milieu. Our present interest is in juxtaposing what he had to say about the resurrection in general, and I Corinthians 15 in particular, with Laudian and Puritan perspectives that were in currency in his time. The results of this endeavour will be indicative rather than conclusive. Pertinent exemplars of these perspectives have been chosen for examination, but offering a definitive account of the outlines of these movements is beyond the scope of this study.

Among the most fruitful comparators are the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes, bishop of Winchester from 1619 to his death in 1626 (and as such strictly a proto-Laudian). In part, this is thanks to the invidious comparison drawn between the two by T.S. Eliot in the early twentieth century. "The sermons of Andrewes are not easy reading", wrote Eliot. "They are only for the reader who can elevate himself to the subject", and their qualities "are best elucidated by comparison with a prose that is much more widely known, but to which we believe that we must assign a lower place – that of Donne", whose sermons have received popular acclaim, he believed, "precisely for the reasons because of which they are inferior to those of Andrewes".[213]

The main charges Eliot levelled at Donne's sermons - from which he exculpates those of Andrewes – are that they are rabble-rousing, and lack sincerity. "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."[214] A well-known passage from one of Donne's sermons which imagines the effect the sermon is having on its hearers, and their various responses to it, is cited by Eliot as evidence of this insincerity. "These are thoughts which would never

[213] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (Faber and Faber, London 1932), p. 334.
[214] *Ibid.,* p. 335.

have come to Andrewes", he believed, who "is wholly in his subject, unaware of anything else" when he preaches.[215] It seems not to have occurred to Eliot to treat this as evidence, not of insincerity on Donne's part, but of greater pastoral awareness and interest in his audience than is demonstrated by Andrewes' sermons.

Donne's most recent biographer Katherine Rundell extends Eliot's scepticism about Donne's sincerity to his very belief in the resurrection. "The poems" [but she could have equally well written, the sermons] "that are saddest have a tooth-gritted hope in them: the effort involved in attempting to turn misery into possibility is so palpable and so unconvincing".[216] These are decidedly modern criticisms of Donne, which rely for their credibility on forgetting the Proustian dicta (cited by Rundell herself, without consciousness of contradiction) that "people of bygone ages seem infinitely remote from us" and "we do not feel justified in ascribing to them any underlying intentions beyond those they formally express".[217]

The most cursory acquaintance with Lancelot Andrewes' sermons on the resurrection – eighteen are extant – reveals that he believed in the resurrection of Christ no more and no less sincerely – if we follow Proust's rule – than did Donne. The Scriptural texts chosen for most of the eighteen came from the Gospels, but one, for a sermon preached on Easter Day 1607, was from I Corinthians 15:20, 'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and was made the first fruits of them that sleep'. Andrewes took the opportunity to draw the same distinction as Donne did repeatedly in his sermons between *our* first and final resurrections.

> The same Apostle that out of Christ's resurrection taught the Romans [a] matter of duty, the same here out of the same resurrection teacheth the Corinthians [a] matter of hope … that former is our first resurrection from sin, this latter our second resurrection from the grave.[218]

Commentators such as Nicholas Lossky have written of this distinction as if Lancelot Andrewes was alone among his contemporaries in making it.

> The resurrection is not understood by Andrewes simply as an event having taken place in the past for Christ and destined to take place in the future for humanity … the

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[215] *Ibid.,* pp. 340-341.
[216] Rundell, *Super-Infinite*, p. 176.
[217] *Ibid.*
[218] L. Andrewes, *Ninety-Six Sermons, vol. II: Lent, Good Friday and the Resurrection* (John Henry Parker, London 1841), p. 79.

> reality of the resurrection of Christ himself, and humanity recapitulated in him, has a present value in the life of the Christian.[219]

Yet, as our study has shown, Donne was at least as powerful an advocate for this view as was Andrewes.

Andrewes also, like Donne, remarked on the inseparable relationship between death and resurrection. "The Apostle never [considers Christ's dying and rising in isolation], but … suffers one to draw in the other continually", he said in his Easter Day sermon of 1606. "It is not here alone, but all over his Epistles; ever they run together, as if he were loath to mention one without the other".[220] Death as he conceived of it *was* death, but not as secular modernity knows it. Within the intellectual framework he shared with Donne, death was swallowed up in victory.

Again, like Donne, Andrewes made explicit the relationship between Christ's resurrection and the general resurrection of the dead, and I Corinthians 15 provided the inspiration for them both to do so.

> This text is a good text, but reacheth not to us, unless it be helped with the Apostle's exposition, and then it will", says Andrewes. "The exposition is it that giveth us our hope, and the ground of our hope. 'Christ is risen', saith the Angel. 'Christ the first fruits', saith the Apostle …if he be as the 'first fruits' in his rising, his rising must reach to all that are of the heap whereof he is the 'first fruits'. This is our hope.[221]

In an Easter Day sermon of 1622, Andrewes made a further point reminiscent of , but going well beyond, one made by Donne in remarking on the "strange confusion" of "Soules which shall be changed at the last day [only to] receive an irrevocable judgment of everlasting condemnation".[222] "The Resurrection itself is no Gospel, not of itself, unless *ascendo* follow it," according to Andrewes.

> Better lie still in our graves, better never rise, than rise and rising not ascend. Of them that shall rise, they that see they shall not ascend, shall wish themselves in their

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[219] N. Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes, the Preacher (1555-1626); The Origins of the Mystical Theology of the Church of England*, translated by A. Louth (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1991), p 164.
[220] Andrewes, *Ninety-Six Sermons, vol. II*, p. 195.
[221] *Ibid.,* p. 80.
[222] Potter and Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, volume V, p. 106.

> coffins again; nay, they shall pray 'the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them', and bury them quick.[223]

Here Andrewes turned the screws on "miscreants, Jews, Turks and all"[224] far more tightly than Donne ever did. A passage like this ought to have given T.S. Eliot pause before opining that Donne, by comparison with Andrewes, "is much less the mystic" and "is primarily interested in man".[225] What Eliot believes to be true of Donne is in fact true of both Donne and Andrewes: "he has many means of appeal, and appeals to many temperaments and minds [including] to those capable of a certain wantonness of the spirit".[226] Or, if this is not fair comment on the one, it is not fair comment on the other. Consideration of the effect one's words will have upon one's hearers is not *ipso facto* an illegitimate concern for a preacher; and if Donne was the more emotional and earthy, and Andrewes the more cerebral and ethereal, the former was no more dangerous as a result. Eliot pays a reluctant compliment to Donne in describing

> his cunning knowledge of the weakness of the human heart, his understanding of human sin, his skill in coaxing and persuading the attention of the variable human mind to Divine objects, and … a kind of smiling tolerance among his menaces of damnation.[227]

Andrewes and (supremely) Donne were both heralds of the resurrection as the proper ground of Christian hope, present and future. Lossky characterises Andrewes' Easter preaching as "resounding with the hope and joy that emanate from the Passion – Resurrection". While admitting that it

> is certainly not in that respect novel in the general history of preaching", "he claims that "it is necessary to go back to the great 'mystics' of the fourteenth century, such as Julian of Norwich, to retrieve the same link with the breadth of optimism of the great patristic period that Andrewes forged.[228]

Outside the circle of those who, like Lossky and Eliot, regard *Andrewes* as the greatest ever preacher in the English language, it may be said that the joy, hope and centrality to the

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[223] L. Andrewes, *Ninety-Six Sermons, vol. III: The Resurrection and the Sending of the Holy Ghost* (John Henry Parker, London 1841), pp. 46-47.
[224] *Ibid.*
[225] Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 342.
[226] *Ibid.,* p. 343.
[227] *Ibid.,* p. 342.
[228] Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes* p. 154.

Christian life of the resurrection was *at least* as ably communicated by Donne as by Andrewes.

Actually, more so. For, in the final analysis, the resurrection was not Andrewes' central theme, as it was for Donne. Andrewes, according to Eliot, "tried to confine himself in his sermons to the elucidation of what he considered essential in dogma", and "said himself that in sixteen years he never alluded to the question of predestination, to which the Puritans … attached so much importance".[229] The issues of predestination and justification by faith, treated so fully in the schools of Geneva and Wittenberg, "were not necessarily unimportant" to Andrewes, according to Donald Allchin, "but they were secondary and derived, and needed always to be seen in relation to the central mystery of Trinity, Incarnation and theosis".[230] Andrewes' emphasis on becoming "partakers of the divine nature" gives him an affinity with Eastern Orthodox doctrines of deification which is entirely lacking in Donne.[231] In this sense, it is true that Donne was "much less the mystic";[232] but this is also where he eclipses Andrewes in commitment to the resurrection as the ground of Christian hope. Donne's anguish at the prospect of the post-mortem separation of body and soul, and the burning concern he felt for their eschatological reunification, left no more room for any Neoplatonic concept of the absorption of the human individual into the divine, than the "corporeal turn" in Donne's poetry gave room for "Neoplatonism's traditionally chaste conception of love".[233] He was preoccupied instead with what he took to be the resurrection experience of "what it feels like to be perfectly ourselves … fully present in both parts of the self".[234]

If this is how the preaching of Donne stands *vis à vis* that of a proto-Laudian such as Lancelot Andrewes, how do his sermons on the resurrection compare with Puritan thinking of his day, concerning which charges of religious spellbinding and emotional sorcery are more readily plausible? Asking this question is a second step in comparing what Donne had to say on the resurrection with the perspectives of others. The first point to make in response to it is the

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[229] Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 337.
[230] A.M. Allchin, 'Lancelot Andrewes', in G. Rowell (ed.), *The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism* (Ikon Productions, Wantage 1992), p. 161.
[231] Cf. *ibid.,* pp. 155-156.
[232] Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 342.
[233] C. Tilmouth, 'Donne and the Passions', in M. Schoenfeldt (ed.), *John Donne in Context* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2019), p. 185.
[234] Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul*, p. 23.

general observation that Puritanism was no more a monolithic, unvariegated phenomenon, either intellectually or politically, than was Laudianism. This much has been established by scholars such as Peter Lake for the late sixteenth century, and by Nicholas Tyacke, Stephen Hampton and others for the early seventeenth. "Moderate puritans"[235], "Calvinist episcopalianism",[236] and "Reformed conformists"[237] were all features of Donne's era, as were traditions that were "neither Puritan nor Laudian, but explicitly and self-consciously distinct from both".[238]

Nothwithstanding this, to the extent that Puritanism as a system of thought may be considered to exhibit a degree coherence and continuity, the resurrection did of course feature within it – it would have been extraordinary were this otherwise – but it seems not to have been as central within that scheme as it was for Donne. A recent exhaustive review of Puritan literature found relatively little which treated the resurrection as a major theme: a few sermons of Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), a work of practical divinity recommending "conformity to Christ in his resurrection"[239] by Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664), and a work by John Bunyan (1628-1688) entitled *The Resurrection of the Dead*, in which the author "illustrate[s] the horrors that await the damned following the final judgment".[240]

These slim pickings seem to confirm the judgment of Allen Carden concerning the "relative scarcity in Puritan preaching of references to the resurrection of Christ".[241] A 1998 study by Rudi Heinze concedes that the theology of the cross and divine election more fully captured the Puritan imagination than the theology of resurrection, but argues that the latter was not entirely forgotten.[242] One of Heinze's footnotes draws attention to the fact that the Puritan systematician John Owen devoted an entire book to the death of Christ, but in it mentioned the resurrection "only when commenting on Romans 4:25 and I Corinthians 15:22", and then

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[235] P. Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan church* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 1982), p. 280.
[236] N. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-revolution', in C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (MacMillan: London, 1973), p.129.
[237] S. Hampton, *Grace and Conformity: The Reformed Calvinist Tradition and the Early Stuart Church of England* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2021), p. 13.
[238] *Ibid.* p. 8.
[239] J.R. Beeke and R.J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: with a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Reformation Heritage Books: Grand Rapids, MI 2007), Kindle loc. 991.
[240] *Ibid.,* Kindle loc 1864.
[241] A. Carden, *Puritan Christianity in America* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI 1990), p. 75.
[242] R. Heinze, 'The Resurrection of Jesus in English Puritan Thought', in P. Head (ed.), *Proclaiming the Resurrection* (Paternoster Press, Carlisle 1998), pp. 82-85.

only "in order to argue [the Calvinist case] that these passages do not teach universal atonement".[243] Heinze does succeed in bringing together a series of observations concerning the resurrection from the voluminous combined output of William Perkins, Thomas Goodwin, Stephen Charnock, Thomas Manton and Richard Baxter, but does not provide convincing evidence that the resurrection was the lynchpin of Christian doctrine for any of these writers. It seems rather to have provided a point of departure for moral exhortation. Perkins, for example, states that "since Christ rose by his own power, we must by his grace and in imitation of Christ rise up from our sins", and that "if we are raised with Christ, it is our duty to set our mind on the things that are above".[244] In words such as these, we see the practical bent that seems, without caricature, to have fired the Puritan imagination.

There are a couple more slim pickings worthy of review, if only to highlight the contrast between Donne and the Puritans (all the while remembering the degrees of overlap, acknowledged by Donne himself,[245] between the various parties in the English Church of the seventeenth century) . In the course of preaching through the book of Job (which took 24 years and 424 sermons), Joseph Caryl (1602-1673) came across chapter 19 verse 26, which according to Ramie Targoff "may have been the single verse of Scripture Donne embraced most passionately in his writings": "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God". Donne and Caryl both knew of John Calvin's view that "this verse signified only that Job [would] return to God's favour in his mortal life, and not that he [would] be reborn after death".[246] In the 1620 sermon on Job 19:26 that he paired with one on I Corinthians 15:50,[247] Donne ranged the authority of Osiander, Tremmelius and Piscator against that of Calvin. In contrast, the only authority appealed to in Caryl's sermon is that of the book of Job itself:

> He saith, that he should see God with the same eyes, that he should see him for himselfe and not another, which argueth that he intended not a resurrection of his outward estate: for what doubt could there be, that if he were raised from affliction, but that he should see God with the same eyes, and that he himselfe should see him,

[243] *Ibid.,* p. 82.
[244] *Ibid.,* pp. 91-92.
[245] See p. 18 above.
[246] Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul*, p. 19.
[247] Mentioned in chapter 3 above, pp.36-37.

> and not another … but to believe the restoring of the same body, or the Identity of the eyes of his body after all had mouldered into dust, this was a high act of believing.[248]

So Caryl and Donne were united in believing that Job's faith was "in a resurrection, not to a temporall good in this life, but to eternall life".[249] Yet this belief cannot be said to be axiomatic for Caryl (who was obliged to devote one sermon out of 424 to the subject, in service of his gargantuan expository project) as it was for Donne, who sought out this verse for reassurance of "absolute continuity between his earthly and his heavenly self".[250]

Then William Gurnall (1619-1679) devoted his sermon at the funeral of Mary Vere of Tilbury, Essex, to an exposition of the last verse (verse 58) of I Corinthians chapter 15, and later expanded it for publication as *The Christian's Labour and Reward*. This verse ("Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord") is one of relatively few in this chapter to which Donne never explicitly referred in his sermons. It commends redoubling one's efforts as a practical consequence of the doctrine of resurrection, as set forth in I Corinthians 15 as a whole. That Gurnall devoted a sermon to it is an indication of the experiential frame of mind, and the Protestant work ethic, that he shared with his fellow Puritans. (That Donne never referred to this verse suggests that for him, the significance of the resurrection could not be distilled into a single moral exhortation.) Gurnall gave formal assent to the doctrine of the resurrection at the beginning of his sermon, saying that "what Luther said of justification by faith, that we may [say] concerning the resurrection of the dead … it is an article with which the Church standeth or falleth".[251] Yet he is strangely incurious about the doctrine, judging by the remainder of the sermon. His imagination is captured not by it, but by the labour and reward of a Christian, which are expounded at considerable length without further reference to the resurrection. At the approach of death, according to Gurnall,

> the sincere Christian, who hath laboured faithfully in the Lords work … then hath a pleasant prospect to behold, when he looks back upon his conscionable walking, and

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[248] J. Caryl, *An Exposition with Practicall Observations continued upon the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-one* [sic] *Chapters of the Book of Job* (Matthew Simmons: London, 1653), p. 319.
[249] *Ibid.*
[250] Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul*, p. 22.
[251] W. Gurnall, *The Christian's Labor and Reward* (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, Grand Rapids MI 2005), p. 1.

> can thence make his humble appeal to God, and desire him to remember how he hath walked before him in truth, and with a perfect heart.[252]

Here, and elsewhere in his sermon, Gurnall veered close to a practical Pelagianism which Donne was always at pains to avoid.

Once Donne is situated within the landscape of the English church of the seventeenth century, his attempt to chart and promote a middle way between Laudianism on the one hand and Puritanism on the other becomes clear. Donne had time neither for mysticism or for relentless practical-mindedness, over and above the mystery *and* truth of the resurrection. Certainly death loomed large in his thinking, as a hostile interrogation of the meaning of human existence. Yet the locus of his thought was the Christian doctrine of resurrection, which offered an answer to the questions posed by death, and an affirmation that life was the more basic reality. His reflections on I Corinthians 15 display in microcosm the preoccupations of all his meditations on Old and New Testament texts. As much as he actively set out in his sermons to interpret the Scriptures, he was also conscious of their work in interpreting and making sense of his own experience. "Interpret thine owne worke",[253] he prayed within his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, at a time when God's "worke" upon him was sickness, and he regarded himself as close to death. In other words, he placed "his own body and soul under the lens of the Scriptures" and prayed, in effect, "Exegete me, God. Tell me what I mean. You first spoke me into being; now translate me".[254] Donne did not believe the resurrection to be *everything*, to a degree that meant 'nothing else is'. His sermons display a catholicity of interest in all Christian doctrine, and all human language and life.[255] But he regarded the resurrection as a prism, through which the rest of Christian doctrine was thus refracted. He was not mawkishly fixated on death, but undistractedly devoted to life.

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[252] *Ibid.,* p. 30.
[253] Sparrow, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions by John Donne*, p. 9.
[254] N. Wall, 'God's Way with Words: John Donne and Figural Reading', in E. Radner and D. Ney (eds.), *All Thy Lights Combine: Figural Reading in the Anglican Tradition* (Lexham Press, Bellingham WA, 2022), pp. 122, 129. Cf. the more prosaic transliteration, 'Interpret for me what is happening' (P. Yancey, *A Companion in Crisis: A Modern Paraphrase of John Donne's Devotions* (Illumify Media Global, Littleton CO, 2021), p. 27).
[255] Cf. J. Chamberlin, *Increase and Multiply: Arts-of-Discourse Procedure in the Preaching of Donne* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill NC, 1976), p. 108: "Donne … shared in the High Church reaction against the Puritan methods of … reductive topical logic and preferred to follow the patristic and medieval example of reading the text with attention to the rich and interrelated significations of the words".

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