Julia J. Smith D. Phil, ahstract Somerville College, Michaelmas Term Oxford. 1982 ('*- '

A Comparison of the Imaginative Response of Donne and Milton
to a Selection of Theological Doctrines

This comparative study of the response of Donne and Milton to a
selection of theological doctrines is made in an attempt to reach a deeper understanding of their imaginations. It is divided into three
main sections, dealing with the creation of the world; the soul; and the Incarnation of Christ. In order to establish first the position of their theology in relation to Christian tradition, I begin each section with
a discussion of the development of the beliefs with which it is concerned, dealing with classical, patristic, scholastic, and Reformation writers. The purpose of this is not so much to trace influences, as to show what beliefs were available to the poet, and thus what -personal choices he made.

But if a poet is to be understood as a poet, rather than as a
theologian, we must look not only at what he believes, but at how he believes it. The mere statement of belief, faithfully held, does not indicate in itself either its imaginative or emotional significance to the poet. Therefore, the comparison of one poet with another reveals more clearly the imaginative response of each to his beliefs; and both Donne and Milton have left ample evidence both of what they believed, and of its imaginative expression. Thus I make a careful, chronological study of what Donne and Milton state themselves to believe, based particularly on Donne's sermons, and Milton's De Doctrina Christiana, and then I exa-nine how consistently these beliefs are upheld both explicitly and

implicitly in their poetry and prose works. I discuss the aspects of doctrine which seem most attractive to them, and the ir.a^es in which they choose to express them. Thus their attitude towards quite minor points of dopma can be seen as part of a much wider imaginative emphasis, and certain preoccupations may be found afrain and afain in the context of

different doctrines.

A COMPARISON OF THE IMAGINATIVE RESPONSE OF DONNE AND MILTON
TO A SELECTION OF THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES

JULIA J. SMITH

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of philosophy
at the Uhiversity of Oxford

Somerville College
Oxford

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REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Quotations from Donne's works are taken from the following texts, and the following forms of reference are used:

Divine Poems

Elegies

Epithalamions

Satires

Devotions

Essays

Ignatius

paradoxes

Sermons

Letters

Pseud o-Martyr

The Divine poems, ed. Helen Gardner. 2nd. ed. Oxford, 1978.

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The Epithalamions, Anniversaries and Epi cedes, ed. W. Milgate. Oxford, 1978.

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Essays in Divinity, ed. E. M. Sirrpson. Oxford, 1952.

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Oxford, 1980.

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E. M. Simpson. 10 vols. diversity of California Press, 1953-62.
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. London, £164?].

___

Letters to Severall persons of Honour. Lond on ,

Pseudo-Martyr. London, 1610.

Tobie Mathew Collection A Collection of Letters, reade by S Tobie Mathews, Kt. London, 1660.

Quotations from Milton's poetry are taken from The Poems of John Milton, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London, 1968)."

Quotations from Milton's prose are taken from:
\

Columbia The Works of John yilton, ed. F. A. Patterson et al. 18 vols. New York, 1931-38.

Yale The Complete prose Works of John Milton, ed. D (M. Wolfe et al. New Haven, 1953--

The following abbreviations are used for Milton's works:

DDC

PL

PR

De Doctrina Christiana

paradise Lost

Paradise Regained

Standard abbreviations are used for literary periodicals.

The following abbreviations are also used:

Anatomy

ANCL

Annotations

Apologie

Bald

Certaine Notes

Certaine Sermons

The Combat

Common places

Confession

Decades

De Civ. Dei

Deuout Meditations

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St. Bernard. Most Deuout and Diuine Meditations. London, 1632.

vii

PC

Golden Chaine

Hexapla

Immortalytie

Keynes

Lampe

Looking-

LF

Marrow

Mirrour

NPNF

A Paraphras e

P.G., P.Lat.

Pope

Prerogative

Questions and Answers

The Fathers of the Church; A New Translation^ ed. L. Schopp et al. Washington and New York, 1947--

William perkins. A Golden Chaine, or The Description of Theologie, containing the order of the causes of Saluation and Damnation, according to Gods woord. Translated by an other. London, 1591.

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[ed. E. B. Pusey] . 48 vols. Oxford and London,
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and the Poem. Baltimore, 1947.

[Guy Hoiland7] The Prerogative of Man. N.p., 1645.

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Answers vpon Genesis.London,1620.

Questions and Disputations Nicholas Gibbens. Questions and Disputations Concerning the Holy Scripture. The first part
of the first Tome. London, 1602.

VI11

Sighes, Sobbes, and Teares

S.Th.

Summe

Treasure

St. Bernard. His Meditations: or Sifrhes, Sobbes, and Teares, vpon our Saulours Passion. London, 16}1.

St. ^Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theolo^iae, ed. Thomas Gilby et al. London and New York, 1963-76.

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Thomas Vicary. The English Mans Treasure; With ————————— the true Anatomic of Mans bodie. London,

PREFACE

This comparative study of the response of Donne and Milton 10 a. selection of major theological doctrines is made in an attempt to reach a deeper understanding of their imaginations. In order to establish first the position of their theology in relation to Christian tradition, I begin each section of my thesis with a fairly detailed discussion of the development of the beliefs with which it is concerned, dealing with classical, patristic, scholastic and Reformation writers. The purpose of this is not so much to trace influences, as to show what beliefs were available to the poet at the time of his writing, and thus to indicate what choices he made, and what were his personal emphases.
But if a poet is to be understood as a poet, rather than as a theologian, we must look not only at what he believes, but at how he believes it. The mere statement of belief, faithfully held, does not indicate in itself either its imaginative or emotional significance to the poet. For this reason, the comparison of one poet with another reveals more clearly the imaginative response of each to his beliefs. Donne and Milton seem particularly suitable for such a comparison, being at once two of the greatest poets of the seventeenth century, and also scholarly Christian thinkers, who took the form of their beliefs very seriously; they have left ample evidence, both of what they believed,
and of its imaginative expression. The obvious differences in their approach to doctrine, and in particular in their attitude toward authority, may itself further the comparison through what it reveals of their preoccupations.

Thus I make a careful chronological study of what Donne and Milton state themselves to believe, and how this changes, based particularly on Donne's sermons and on Milton'.s De Doctrina Christiana; and then I examine how consistently these beliefs are upheld both explicitly and implicitly in their poetry and prose works. I discuss the aspects of doctrine which seem most attractive to the popts, and the images in which they choose to express them. Thus their attitudes toward quite minor points of dogma can be seen as part of a much wider imaginative emphasis, and certain preoccupations may be found again and again in the

context of different doctrines.
The thesis is divided into three main sections, dealing with the
creation of the world; the origin, nature, and destiny of the human soul; and the Incarnation of Christ, approached through the events of his earthly life, such as the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection,

CHAPTER 1

THE CREATION

I. Introduction

Creation is the manifestation of the Creator, who revealed himself
to his world in the very act of making it. That which was created was traditionally defined as all that was not G-od; as Wolfgang Kusculus, a sixteenth-century Lutheran, expresses it: "al is created, excetiting only the creator & worker himself a lone, namely heave, earth, the sea, & all that is in it." God's revelation of himself is explained by the Lutheran theologian John G-erhard: "God who by Nature is invisible, that he might be made known by things Visible, wrought a work which by the visibilitie

2 thereof might manifest him whose work it is." It is clear, however,

that God could not be known in his works until he created a creature able to perceive him: "The world was made to be inhabited by beasts, but studied and contemplated by man ... without this the world is still as though it had not been, or as it was before the sixt day when as yet there was not a creature that could conceive, or say there was a world." Through creation, therefore, man might come to know God; and it was a common-place of writing on creation that the work of God's hand might be discerned
in every part of it. St. Augustine, for example, claims that the very

Wolfgang Musculus, Common places of Christian Religion, trans.
John Man (London, 1563), fol.lOa; cf. William Ames, The Marrow of Sacred Divinity (London, 1642), p.}6.

2

John Gerhard, The Summe of Christian Doctrine, trans. Ralph
Winterton (Cambridge, 1640), p.40.
Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford,
1964), i.13 (p-13).

fact that the heaven and the earth are there, declares that they created, and that the work itself would be a sufficient revelation of its Maker, without even the testimony of Scripture: "the universe cries aloud, as it were, without saying a word, declaring both that it was created by a God who is ineffably and invisibly great and ineffably and invisibly beautiful." It was traditionally agreed that the "book of Nature" could be understood by those who did not have access to any other form of revelation; Sir Thomas Browne maintains that "The finger of God hath left an inscription upon all his workes," from which we may read of his nature, and the Puritan leader Henry Ainsworth stated firmly that "the eternal power & godhead of the Creator, are seen by his works, to make all men without excuse."
Paradoxically, however, to believe that the world was created was
an act of faith, most easily arrived at with the aid of Scripture. St. Augustine explains that while the universe testifies to its own creation, the witness of God himself, speaking through Scripture, is the more trust-
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worthy; and this is also implied by St. Ambrose when he says that Moses wrote the first verse of Genesis in order to dispel the errors of the

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heathen philosophers. This line of thought was confirmed by St. Thomas Aquinas, who specifically refutes the attempt to prove the creation of the world by natural reason: "That the world has not always existed

St. Augustine, Confessions, trans. W. Watts (1^31), rev. W. H* D. Rouse, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library (London, 1912), XI. iv (vol.11,
p. 21 7); De Civitate Dei, trans. G. E. McCracken et al., Loeb Classical Library (London, 1957-72), XI. iv (vol. Ill, p.
^ Religio Medici, ii.2 (p. 57); cf. Walter Ralegh, The History of
the World, in The Works of Sir Walter Ralegh, 8 vols. (Oxford, 1829), vol. II, p. 3.
Henry Ainsworth, Annotations Upon the first book of Moses, called
Genesis (["Amsterdaml , 1616), sig. A2r-v.
7

St. Augustine, De Civ. Dei, XI. iv (vol. Ill, p.435)«
Q

St. Ambrose, Hexaemeron, trans. John J. Savage, FC vol.42 (New York, 1961), 1.2.5 (p. 5).

9
cannot be demonstratively proved but is held by faith alone."
regained an orthodox b»lipf; the Puritan theolorian William F^V.ins writes, i,
quoting Hebrews 11.3: "By r^ith ye understand, that the worlde was ordained by the word of God." of the two books of God, Nature and Scripture,
it is the latter which speaks to us mor^ clearly of our Creator and his providence; Sir Thomas Browne calls nature "the Scripture and Tneolopy

12 of the Heathens," but its key was Genesis: "Out of the first verse we

conclude that the world had a beginning, and that it was created by God." One of the most difficult questions associated with the creation of
the world was that of the origin of matter. It was traditionally accounted for in one of three ways: it had existed eternally; it had been created from nothing (ex nihilo); or it had emanated from God (ex Deo). Plato,
in the Timaeus , had made use of a creation-myth, which was to have great influence on subsequent accounts of creation, in which the D^.iurge
shaped a primary matter into the created ur.iverse. VThether Plato had postulated a prior creation of this formless matter was a disputed question, but the usual interpretation of his thought was that riven by St. Ambrose, that the Demiurge acted "not as a creator of matter but as a craftsman
who reproduced a model." Aristotle held simply that the world was eternal, ungenerated, and incorruptible. Certain of the early Church Fathers followed what they understood to be the teaching of Plato, that

Q
S.Th., 1a. 46. art.2 (vol. VIII, p.79).
William Perkins, A Golden Chaine, or The Description of Theolorie, Translated by an other (London, 1591)» sig. B4v; cf. Ainsworth, Annotations, A2r.

11 12 cf. Donne, Essays, p. 7. Religio Kedici, i.16 (p.1'5).

Andrew Willett, Hexapla in Genesin; that is, A Sixfold Co^.entarie
Vpon Genesis (Cambridge, 1605), p.20. " Timaeus, 30a. ^ Hexaemeron, 1.1.1 (FC 42, p.3).
1 pe Caelo, II.1 (283b).

God had formed the world out of pre-existing natter. Justin Kartyr,

17 believing that plato himself had derived his account from Koses, wrote

that "we have been taught that He in the beginning did of His goodness,

17 for man's sake, create all things out of unforced matter." Athena/roras,
18 and possibly Clement of Alexandria, held the same opinion. Scriptural

support for this view could be found in a text from the apocryphal book, the Wisdom of Solomon: "omnipotens manus tua, quae creavit orbem terrarum ex materia invisa "(11.17).
But it quickly came to be seen by the early Church that such a theory
of pre-existent matter was incompatible with a belief in God as the sole first principle. As Theophilus of Antioch explains, "as God, because He is uncreated, is also unalterable; so if matter, too, were uncreated, it would also be unalterable, and equal to God; out of things that are not

19 He makes whatever He pleases." Thus God's supreme power is manifested.

In one of the first statements of the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, Hennas gives as the first command, "believe that there is one God who

20 created and finished all things, and made all things out of nothing."
21 Origen, Tertullian and Irenaeus all argue for this doctrine, finding

Scriptural support for it in another apocryphal text, from the Second Book of Maccabees: "Peto, nate, ut aspicias ad coelum, et terrain, et ad

17 Justin Martyr, The First Apology, trans. M. Dods, in ANCL vol.11
(Edinburgh, 1867), ch. LIX (p.57); ibid., ch.X (p.14).

18 Athenagoras, A Plea for the Christians, trans. B. P. Pratten, in
ANCL vol. II, ch. XIX (p.396); Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, trans. W. Wilson, 2 vols., ANCL vols. 17 & XII (Edinburgh, 1867, 1869),
V. XIV (vol. II, p.274).

19 Theophilus of Antioch, To Autolycus, trans. M. Dods, in ANCL
vol. HI (Edinburgh, 1867), II.IV (p.68).

20 The pastor of Hernias, in The Apostolic Fathers, trans. A. Roberts and J. Donalds on, ANCL vol. I (Edinburgh, 1867), II.1 (p.349).

21 Origen, De Principiis, trans. F. Crombie, ANCL vol. X (Edinburgh,
1869), II.I.5 (p.77);Tertullian, Against Hermogenes, trans. P. Holmes,in ANCL XV (Edinburgh, 1870), ch.XXI (pp.85-86); Irenaeus, Against Heresies, trans. J. Keble, LF 42 (Oxford, 1872), II.X.4 (p.116).

omnia quae in eis sunt; et intelliras, quia ex nihilo fecit ilia Dens, et hominum genus "(7»28). From the end of the second century, creation ex nihilo was almost universally* accepted by the Christian Church, and it was formulated as dogma by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215- Aquinas explains it as the origin of all being in God: "Were God to work only on something pre-supposed, the implication would be that it was not caused by him. We have already shown that there is naught in being that is not from God, who is the all-embracing cause of existence entire. That is why we are bound to infer that God brings things into existence from

22 nothing." Creation from nothing is a much greater achievement than
25 the alteration of an existing substance. The belief was a common-place
in the Renaissance, and is found stated, without discussion, by alnost every writer on creation: "Allmighty God created all things of nothing

Q A

by the power of his word." Closely associated with a belief in creatio ex nihilo is an emphasis on the utter dependence of all being on God: "all things other than God are not their own existence but share in

25 existence." Consequently the world continues to exist only as long as
2f> God wills that it should. Or, as Hakewill expresses it, if God should

"withdrawe himself e but for a moment, the whole frame would instantly

27 returne into that nothing, which before the Creation it was."
The ultimate origin of all creation was agreed to be in nothing,

22 S.Th., 1a.45.art. 2 (vol. VIII, p.3l)«
S.Th., 1a.45. art.1 (vol. VIII, p. 27); cf. Donne, pP. 50-31 below.
Q A

George Hakewill, An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God
(Oxford, 1627), p. 16 (wrongly numbered p. 12); cf. Guillaume de Saluste, Sieur du Bartas, The Divine Weeks and Works, trans. Josuah Sylvester, ed. Susan Snyder, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1979), I. i. 217-8 (vol.1, p. 11 7); Gerhard, Sumr,e, p. 42, S.Th. , 1a.44. art.1 (vol. VIII, p. 7); cf. Sir Thomas Browne,
Religio Medici, i.35 (p. 34).

26 S.Th.., 1a. 46. art.1 (vol. VIII, pp. 69-71).
27 Apologie, p. 38; cf. Donne, pp. 43~44 below.

8

but Plato's ima^e of the Demiurge shaping his naterial was a powerful one, and for many writers, it provided a solution to the interprptation of
the first verse of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Did these words merely summarize the subsequent account of creation, or did they describe a different act? Chrysostom apparently

28 regarded them as a sumnary; as Aquinas explained, "This would be like

saying, 'this builder made that house', and later to add, 'he first made the foundation, and afterward put up the walls, and thirdly placed the

29 roof on top.'" But it was more widely thought that a different stage

of creation was described. Philo Judaeus had suggested that on the first day, God had created an incorporeal pattern, according to which he would proceed to create the corporeal world; but most writers, using the imagery of Plato, thought that the words referred to the creation of
a primary matter or chaos, from which God proceeded to shape the universe. The words "without form and void" were interpreted by most Fathers, as Aquinas explained, "not in such a way as to exclude all form, but only the finished beauty and orderliness that now appear in material creation." Ambrose explained that the world was called unformed because it was devoid

32 of ornament, and Aquinas himself appears to favour this interpretation,

from which is derived the three-fold division of creation into creation, differentiation and adornment* St. Augustine, on the other hand, had

28 Chrysostom, Homiliae in Genesim, II.3 (P.G- 53-30).
29 7 S.Th., 1a.68. art.1 (vol. X, p.75).

Philo Judaeus, pi the Account of the World's Creation Given by
Moses, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1929), sect.29 (p.23).
S.Th., 1a.66. art.1 (vol. X, p.29).

32 Ambrose, Hsxaemeron, 1.8.28 (pp.30-31)5 cf. St. Basil, Hexae^eron,
trans. Blomfield Jackson, NPNF vol. VIII (Oxford, 1895), II.1 (p.59). S.Th., 1a. Introduction to Questions 65-74 (vol. X, p.3).

believed that the primary matter was entirely without form of any kind, "of which unshapeliness, of which almost nothing" the world was made.
i;

He speaks of the failure of his attempts to imagine it: ."true reason
did persuade me, that I must utterly uncase it of all remnants of forms whatsoever if so be I meant to conceive a matter absolute without form: and I could not." But as Aquinas points out, Augustine did not believe that the formless matter preceded the formed in time, but only conceptually in origin. Therefore this utterly formless chaos never had a real existence. Unlike St. Basil and St. Ambrose, who thought that the primary matter of heaven and earth was created on the first day of creation,
St. Augustine spoke of "the unshapen matter which thou didst make before

57 all days," but again he is speaking only of conceptual order, and not
•ZQ

of temporal events.
Renaissance writers continued to sppak of the three-fold division of
of the work of creation. Ralegh writes that "First, he created the matter of all things: and in the first three days he distinguished, and gave to every nature his proper form ... In the last three days, God adorned,

59 beautified, and replenished the world." Gervase Babington, Bishop of

Llandaff, explained that "God made first of nothing a matter, a first matter whereof he made all other things." It was generally supposed that this first matter was not entirely without form: "It is said to be

54 Confessions, Xll.viii (vol. II, p.501); XII.vi (vol. II, p.295)«

55 S.Th., 1a.66. art.1 (vol. X, p.27)» cf. Confessions, Xll.xxix
(vol. II, p.363).
Basil, Hexaemeron, 1.6 (NPNF vol. VIII, p.55); Ambrose, Hexaemeron,
II.1.1 (FC 42, p.45).
2 7 <^Q

Confessions, Xll.viii (vol.11, p.301). See p. 20 below.

59 The History of the World, vol. II, pp.23-24.

Gervase Babington, Certaine plaine, briefe, and comfortable Notes vpon euerie Chapter of Genesis (London,1592), fol.5r.

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without forme; not because it had no forme, but because it neither had beauty, and ornament, ncr a compleate act of those forces which were

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afterwards to proceed out of it. 1,! The heaven and earth first created were, insisted Andrew Y/illett, "the same heauen and earth, which are nowe," only "in a confused substance". The idea of this "impolitum chaos",
this "vnfashioned masse or lumpe," was one which exercised a rreat

45 fascination. Though "rude and without form" itself, it is full of potential, containing within itself "The rude and incorpleat existence
of things." Sir Thomas Browne attempts to describe it: "To speake yet more narrowly, there was never anything ugly, or mis-sha.pen, but the Chaos; wherein notwithstanding to speake strictly, there was no deformity,
A 7

because no forme, nor was it yet impregnate by the voyce of God." It could be represented only by negatives:

All, All was void of beauty, rule, and li^ht;
All without fashion, soule, and motion, Quite.
Fire was no fire, the water was no water,
Aire was no aire, the Earth no earthly matter.

Gerhard 49 states that this primary matter was created on the first day; Alexander Ross, one of Charles I's chaplains, followed Augustine in

41 Ames, Marrow, pp.40-41; cf. Ainsworth, Annotations, A2v.
42 Willett, Hexapla, p.2.
Biblia Latina (Testament! veteris Biblia Sacra ... quibus etiam adiunximus novi Testamenti libros ex sermone Graeco a Theodoro 3eza in Latinam converses}"^ trans. Pranciscus Junius and Im^anuel Tremellius (London, 1581)» annotation to Genesis 1.1 (p.2).

44 Nicholas Gibbens, Questions and Disputations Concprning the Holy
Scripture, the first part of the first Tome (London, 1602), p. $.

45 Gerhard, Summe, p.42,
46 Ames, Marrow, p.40; cf. Willett, Hexapla, p.2.

47 Religio Kedici, i.16 (p.16).
A A

Sylvester's Du Bartas, I.i.269-72 (vol.1, pp.118-19).

49 Gerhard, Summe, p.42.

11

claiming that the heaven and earth were created "Before the first day,
in respect of their substance and matter," although he held to a literal interpretation of the six days.
The third possibility for the origin of matter is that it was derived
ex Deo, from God's own substance, a theory which seems to have been first propounded in the West by the neo-platonist plotinus. In spite of Adamson's claim that the belief stands in a reputable tradition, it has always been firmly rejected by orthodox Christianity. The only Church Father who seems to have given it serious consideration is Gregory of Nyssa, who concludes that it is the better part of faith to set the question aside: "Did it [the world] come actually out of the Supreme Being? But the fact that this world presents a difference in kind to that Being militates against such a supposition. Did it then come from some other quarter? Yet Faith can contemplate nothing as quite outside the Divine Nature ... an inconceivability of equal magnitude arises in both our

52 suppositions." The lack of a qualitative distinction between God and

his creation, to which St. Gregory refers, was one of the strongest orthodox objections to the doctrine of creation ex Deo; the other is demonstrated by St. Augustine, who sees in the doctrine an implicit denial of the Trinity: "For thou madest heaven and earth; not of thee, for so should they have been equal to thine only Begotten Son, and thereby unto thine own self too: whereas in no way just it had been, that anything

55 should be equal unto thee, which was not of thee." That is, the belief

Alexander Ross, The First Booke of Questions and Answers vpon
Genesis (London, 1620), p.4? p.28.
^ 1 See J. H. Adamson, "Milton and the Creation," JEGP, LXI (1962),
758 ff.; -756 ff.

52 Gregory of Nyssa, On the Soul and the Resurrection, trans. W.
Moore and H. A. '.Vilson, in NPNF vol. V (Oxford, 1893), Dp.457-58.

55 St. Au^istine, Confessions, XII.vii (vol. II, p.299).

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makes a distinction in kind between the Son and the created world impossible. Therefore, taken to its logical conclusions, the belief could only be held by anti-Trinitarians, like Milton. The doctrine was occasionally
espoused by neo-platonists like Erigena; or mystics like Eckhart, who saw in it an affirmation of the goodness of matter, but it found no support from orthodoxy. Christopher Hill indicates a certain interest among seventeenth-century radicals in creation ex Deo, a tendency which often degenerated into pantheism. Thomas Edwards records the belief that "Every creature in the first estate of creation was God, and every creature is God." A version of creation ex Deo was propounded by the Rosicrucian Robert pludd, who claimed that the origin of creation could not be in nihil negativum (absolute non-entity), since "it appeareth as well by the infallible sense of holy Scriptures, as the sacred Light in nature: that the first essence and matter of all things was from all eternity in God,

57 and with God, one and the same thing." Creation from nothing was rather to be interpreted as creation ex nihilo privativo, a first matter lacking form, and therefore actuality, but having potentiality, "onely something

57 in puissance, and nothing in act."
In the beginning, God had created the world; had he created our
world only, or were there, perhaps, others? plato had held that there could be only one world, for otherwise it would not reproduce the perfect unity
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of the pattern according to which it was created; and this emphasis on

See Adams on, "Milton and the Creation," p. 759? ppj^1 ff-
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Christopher Hill, Milton and the English Revolution (London, 1977)»
pp. 324 ff.
Thomas Edwards , Gangraena; Or A Catalogue and Discovery of many
of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time ... 2nd, ed. (London, T646), Part I , p. 21.
Robert pludd, Mosaicall Philosophy (London, 1^59)» p. 4/1; p. 45. See
A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Not-^s on Milton's Views on the Creation: The Initial Phases," P£, XXVIII (1949), p. 218 (note) for comment on Pludd.
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Timaeus, 3la-b.

13

the perfection of unity was to become characteristic of orthodox Christian thinking on the subject. Aquinas expresses this when he explains that because God has one plan for his creation, "ranked together in one order

59 and trained to one end," there can be only one universe. Sir Thomas

Browne comments, "That there is but one world, is a conclusion of faith," and Alexander Ross asserts that God could have made more than one world, but chose not to, since "hee being one, delights in vnity."
We shall consider next the operation of the Trinity in the work of creation. The pre-Nicene Fathers had difficulty in distinguishing between

6? the part taken by the Word and Spirit in this work, but later Trinitarian

allusions were eagerly sought. The action of the Word in creation was interpreted by an association of the opening verse of Genesis with the first verses of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word ...
All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." St. Augustine writes, "In this Beginning, 0 God, hast thou made heaven and earth, namely in thy Word, in thy Son, in thy Power, in thy Wisdom, in thy Truth." The phrase "in the beginning" could it-self be understood in a mystical sense of the Word, or Wisdom. That God is said to speak is also taken as a reference to the presence of the Word; God does not speak as we speak, but his will is presented in the likeness of our speech in order to direct our attention to the Word, to whom this speech is addressed. St. Ambrose suggests that "God spoke"

59 S.Th. , 1a. 47. art. 3 (vol. VIII, p. 103).
Religio Medici, i.35 (p. 34). Questions and Answers, p.1.

62 Maurice Wiles, Working papers in Doctrine (London, 1976), pp.7~9-

Augustine, Confessions, XI. ix (vol. II, pp. 227-29).
/ 64 ,
Amorose, Hexaemeron, 1.4.15 (FC 42, pp.14-15)? cf. Augustine, De
Civ. Dei, Xl.xxxii (vol. Ill, pp. 55 7- 59).
Basil, Hexaemeron, III. 2 (?TP?fP vol. "/Ill, pp. 65-66).

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refers to the Father, and "God made" to the Son; Augustine adds that "God saw that it was good" could refer to the Holy Spirit: "And if we
are right in recognizing that this goodness is the Holy Spirit, then

67 the whole Trinity is inwardly presented to us in its works of creation."

Aquinas too finds the Trinitarian characteristics of Power, Wisdom and Goodness particularly fitting to the work of Creation. These ideas are repeated by Renaissance writers: the world was created, writes Gerhard,

70 "by God through the Sonne in the Holy Ghost." Babington notes that God

expressed his will by his Son, and that the Holy Spirit was employed in

71 "cherishing and nourishing what was created." Sylvester suggests

something of the mystery when he declares, "I wote not what great Word

72 he uttered", and Ainsworth records the belief that "in the beginning"
73 is applied mystically to Christ.

It was generally agreed that Genesis 1.26, "And God said, Let us
make man in our image, after our likeness," also signified the Trinity. Jewish commentators like philo, suggested that God was here speaking to

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the angels or to other powers; but amongst orthodox Christians the

75 suggestion, first made by Theophilus of Antioch, that the Father was
76 speaking to the Son and the Spirit was universally accepted. Many

Ambrose, Hexaemeron, II.5.18 (p.63); cf. St. Augustine, De Civ. De£,XI.xxiv (vol. Ill, pp.523-25).
De Civ. Dei, Xl.xxiv (vol.Ill, p.525). cf. Bonne, p.174 below.
9 S.Th., 1a.45- art.6 (vol.VIII, pp.53-55).
Summe, p.40; cf. Perkins, Golden Chaine, sig. B4r.

71 Babington, Certaine Notes, fol.2r.
72 Sylvester's Du Bartas, 1.1.240 (vol.1, p.118).

75 Annotations, sig.A2r. 74 Qi the Creation, 72-74 (pp.57-59).
75 Theophilus of Antioch, To Autolycus, II.XVIII (ANCL vol.Ill, p.84).
76
e.g. Basil, Hexaemeron, IX.6 (p.106); Aquinas, 3.Th., 1a.9l.
art.4 (vol. XIII, p.33).

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seventeenth-century writers agree that "in this forme of speech is set forth the consultation of the blessed Trinitie, the father, sonne, and

77 holy Ghost." A later idea not found in the Church Fathers and, according
78 to Donne, first promulgated by Peter Lombard, is that the use of a

plural word for "God" and a singular form for "created" in the Hebrew
of Genesis 1.1 also signified the action of the Trinity. This too became
a popular belief. Gervase Babington explains: "the Hebrue word for God
is of the plural! number, to note (as some thinke) the pluralitie of persons, & the verbe created, of the singular number, to note the unity

79 of deitie in them all." But although references to the different
persons might be discerned in the account of Creation, William Ames reminds 80
us that according to orthodox doctrine, no distinction between them could be perceived in their relation to the world: "By the Creation God
is known, but not God the Father, Sonne and Holy Spirit, because that effecting power whereby the world was created, pertaines to the essence
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of God, and not to his personall subsistence."
A more explicit reference to a Person of the Trinity was found in Genesis 1.2: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters". The Hebrew "ruach" could mean, as Ainsworth explained, "any Spirit,

82 Ghost, breath, or winde." Jewish commentators had generally interpreted

it as a wind, or as the power of God, and some early Christians followed these interpretations. Tertullian seems to have understood spirit as

77 Willett, Hexapla, p.20; cf. Gibbens, Questions and Disputations,
p»30; Ross, Questions and Answers, p.21; Ainsworth, Annotations, 31v.

78
Essays, p.26.

79 Certaine Xotes, fol.1v; cf. Gerhard, Sunrre, p.41; Ainsworth,
Annotations, sig. A2r.

80 See below, pp. 163-64.
81 Ames, Marrow, p.40> cf. Perkins, Golden Chaine, sig.B2r.
82 Annotations, sig. A2v-A3v.

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"wind". But St. Augustine sums up the general attitude when he says, "and thus believing-, as I did, my God as the Trinity, I searched in his

84 holy words, and lo, thy Spirit Moved over the face of the waters." The
identification of this spirit with the Holy Spirit is confirmed by Thomas

8S Aquinas, and approved by Renaissance writers: "Wherefore you may in

no case vnderstand (by spirit) either breath, or winde, or spirit, other
of-

then the holy Ghost the third person in the Trinitie." Alexander Ross is exceptional in being prepared to admit more than one interpretation: "A wind, ... or the holy Ghost, or the power and mighty operation of God."87

For those who believed that the verse did refer to the Holy Spirit,
there was the further question of what act of the Spirit was described. The Hebrew "racaph" was first translated as "ferebatur", "was borne upon", or "moved"; but an explanation taken by St. Basil from an unnamed Syrian was to have much influence. The Syrians,he says, understand the word to mean "it cherished the nature of the waters as one sees a bird cover the

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eggs with her body and impart to them vital force from her own warmth." Following this, St. Jerome rendered the word "incubabat", a translation also adopted in the sixteenth-century by the Junius-Tremellius Protestant Latin Bible, where it was glossed thus: "verbum ab avibus pullitiei suae

89 incubantibus mutuatum". In fact, most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century

Tertullian, Against Hermogenes, XXXI (ANGL vol.XV, p.99).
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Confessions, XIII.v (vol. II, p.385); cf. Ambrose, Hexae-neron,!
8.29

* S.Th., 1a.66. art.1 (vol. X, p.33).

86 Gibhens, Questions and Disputations, p.5» c^« Ainsworth, Annotations,
sig. A2vf Gerhard, Summe, p.41.

87 Questions and Answers, p.3«
88 Basil, Hexaerr.eron, II.6 (p.63); cf. Ambrose, Hexaernpron,I.8.29(p.?3) 89 Biblia Latina (junius and Tremellius), note on Gen.1.2 (p.2).

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writers agree with Ralegh that "the English word moved is most proper

90 and significant," though they were much influenced "by the bird-imagery
in their interpretation of it. For Ralegh, the most important meaning was that of movement, "for of motion proceedeth all production, and all

90 whatsoever is effected," while Gibbens emphasizes the resting of the
Spirit on the waters: "who as it were inclosing it, and sustaining it (as if a man should hold a lumpe of sand in his hand, or a Crane in the aire a stone in her foote) by resting vpon it, did giue power vnto it

91 to be sustained." Sir Thomas Browne speaks of "that gentle heate that
92 brooded on the waters, and in six dayes hatched the world," while
Sylvester makes explicit reference to a hen on her eggs:

Or, as a Henne that faine would hatch a brood,
(Some of her owne some of adoptive blood)
Sits close thereon, and with her lively heat,
Of yellow-white balls, doth lyve birds beget.

In considering how God made the world, there was a general insist-
ence that it did not involve him in labour. St. Augustine says of God's rest on the seventh day, "this statement must not be childishly taken
to mean that God toiled as he worked," and Aquinas agrees. In the sixteenth century, Babington writes that God created "Onely with his beck without any change or wearines in himselfe."
The next question to be asked is, when did God create the world?

90 Ralegh, The History of the World, vol. II, p. 12; cf. the
Authorized Version, which translates "moved".

91 Questions and Disputations, p. 5.
92 Religio Medici, i.32 (p. 3

Sylvester's Du Bartas, I\ 1.323-26 (vol. I, p. 120).

94 I ™ De Civ.-' Dei, Xl.viii (vol. Ill, p. 453).
95 J S.Th., 1a. 73. art. 2 (vol. X, p. 145).

Certaine Notes, fol.4v; cf. Musculus, Common places, fol.10a.

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It was generally thought that the phrase "in the beginning" referred to the beginning of time, a belief ultimately derived from Plato, who
thought that "Time, then, and the heaven came into being at the same

97 instant." As St. Ambrose says, "Time proceeds from this world, not before
98 the world," the reason for this being that the measure of time is
dependent upon motion: "who could not see that time would not have existed

99 unless something had been created to cause change by some movement?"
Aquinas agrees that "the heavens and earth were created together with time," or, as Sir Thomas Browne vividly expresses it, "Time we may comprehend, 'tis but five dayes elder then our selves, and hath the same Horoscope with the world." "Which Time," Nicholas Gibbens explains,

102 "is the space or measure of the mouing of the heauens."

The exact significance of the beginning of time is, however, a matter
of dispute. Augustine is insistent that if the creation of the world took place "in the beginning", then nothing could have been created before it, "because if he had created anything before all the other things that he created, he would rather be said to have created this in the beginning*" This removes the much ridiculed question as to what God was doing before
he created the heaven and the earth: firstly, we cannot speak of a "before"in eternity, and secondly, Augustine was prepared to state categorically that "before God made heaven and earth, he did not make

97 Timaeus, 38b.
98 Ambrose, Hexaemeron, 1.6.20 (p.19); cf. Basil, Hexaemeron, 1.5 (p.54) 99 Augustine, De Civ. Dei, XI.vi (vol.Ill, p.447).

10 S.Th., 1a.46. art.3 (vol. VIII, p.89).
Heligio Medici, i.11 (p%11); cf. Ames, Marrow, D.38; Babington,
Certaine !fotes, fol.2v; Musculus, Common places, fol.10a.

102 Gibbens, Questions and Disputations, p.2.

De Civ. Dei, XI.vi (vol. Ill, pp.447-49).

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,,104 anything." Incidentally, Augustine is rejecting the answer, "God was

a preparing a hell, saith he, for those that should pry into such profound

105 mysteries," which was later sometimes attributed to him. Not all writers

agreed, however. St. Basil held that a spiritual creation had existed outside time, before the material world: "if he makes the world appear
in the beginning, it is not a proof that its birth has preceded that of all other things that were made. He only wishes to tell us that, after
the invisible and intellectual world, the visible world, the world of the senses, began to exist." This included the angels: "The Angels, Dominations, and Powers, although they began to exist at some time, were already in existence when the world was created." Many of the Fathers

107 followed this belief, although it aroused opposition in others.

Augustine thought that they were designated by the"light" of the first

108 day, while Aquinas thought that they were created together with the
109 heaven and the earth, and with time. Most Renaissance writers agreed
that before the world was created, there was no being but that of God: "there was neither primary matter to be informed, nor form to inform, nor any being, but the eternal." Protestant writers generally discourage
111 speculation either as to what God did before Creation, or as to when

Augustine, Confessions, Xl.xii (vol. II, p.235)*
Augustine, Confessions, Xl.xii (vol. II, p.233)» cf. Babington,
Gertaine Motes, fol.3v. Donne quotes this story (Essays, pp.19-20), and other references are given in patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966), p.28.
Hexaemeron, 1.5 (p«55)» cf. Ambrose, Hexaemeron, I.5«19 (p-18);
Ambrose, ibid*

107 See F. Egleston Robbins, The Hexae^eral Literature: A Study of
the Greek and Latin Commentaries on Genesis (Chicago,1912), p.62.
108 De Civ. Dei, XI.ix (vol. HI, p.46l).

109 S.Th., 1a.46. art.3 (vol. VIII, p.89).

Ralegh, The History of the World, vol. II, p.6.
Gibbens, Questions and Disputations, p.3» Babinrton, Certalne Notes

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112 the angels were created. Those who express an opinion about the creation of angels, favour a creation in time. Ames believes that "they were created the first day with the highest Heaven," and Willett that they were not created until the fourth day. Sylvester says of the possible activity of God before Creation:

He did admire his Glories Misteries: ...
It may be also, that he meditated . ~
The Worlds Idea yer it was Created.

Another question connected with the time of Creation was whether God literally took six days to perform the work, or whether, in fact, creation was instantaneous. Philo was of the opinion that the six days were meta-phorical, merely "an adumbration of the principle of order;" it was "not that its Maker required a length of time for His work, for we must think of God as doing all things simultaneously." Augustine too believed that the work of the six days was performed all at once, and that the six days of Scripture represented the process by which the creation was
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revealed to the angelic intelligence. This esoteric explanation was

118 not popular, and most commentators interpreted the days literally.

Protestant writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries felt them-selves bound by the letter of Scripture; Gerhard remarks, perhaps a little wistfully, "That all things were created in a moment it seems agreeable

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unto reason: but it is against the Mosaicall Scripture." Gibbens explains

Gerhard, Summe, p.46. Marrow, p.39. Hexapla, p.17»
' Sylvester's Du Bartas, 1.1.81; 86-87 (vol. I, p.113).
Philo, Qi the Creation, 67 (p.53); 13 (p.13).
De Civ. Dei, Xl.vii (vo*l. Ill, pp.451-53).

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e.g. Basil, Hexap-^ron, II.8 (p.64); Aquinas, S.?h., 1a.74. art.2
(vol. X, pp.157-61).

119 Sum-.e, p.42; cf. Ames, Marrow, pp.38-39; Babinp-ton, Gertaine
Notes, fol.6r. ~"

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that God was not constrained to work in time, but "for our instruction
he diuided the creation of the world into sixe daye-workes, that hee might
120 temper his working with our vnderstanding." Ross saw the alternative
interpretation as a threat to the historicity of Moses1 account: "if wee vnderstand Moses in this place allegorically, then wee must make this
121 whole historic an allegorie." Sir Thomas Browne is one of the few
authors who speculates about instantaneous creation without condemning-
122 the belief.
We shall consider next why God was thought to have created the world.
It was emphasized that he did not do it of necessity, and was not in any sense compelled to create. St. Augustine says that God made the creatures
123 "not out of any want, but out of the fulness of thy goodness," and
Aquinas that God does not act in order to achieve some purpose,but purely
1 O/f to communicate that goodness which is the cause of his action. Ames
argues that God shows his self-sufficiency by the way in which he created; for if it had been from need, "he had created the world as soone as he could"; and he also shows his freedom, "for if he created necessarily ,
125 he had done it from eternity." Christian thought on the purpose of
creation was much influenced by a passage in the Timaeus which describes how the Demiurge wished to communicate his goodness to the Creation:
"he was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like

126 himself as they could be." Tertullian speaks of Creation as a

120 Gibbens, Questions and Disputations, p.45*
121 122 Questions and Answers, p.28. Religio Medici, i.45 (p.^3). 125J Confessions, XIII.iv (vol. II, pp.381-83).

124 S.Th., 1a. 44. art.4 (vol. VIII, p.21).

125 Ames, Marrow, p.37; cf. Gibbens, Questions and Disputations,
Ross, questions and Answers, p.29.
Timaeus, 29d-e.

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manifestation 1 27 of God's goodness, and Augustine condemns those who look for any other reason for it: "some have still refused to accept in good and simple faith so good and simple a purpose for the making of

1 ?8 the world as this, that a good God might create good things." If God
was to communicate his goodness to the creation, then it was the part of the creature to recognize that goodness, and return glory to the Creator for it; this theme is emphasized by Reformation writers. Musculus explains, "The chief ende is, y ther should be some which knowing in deede the

129 goodnes of God, should use it, & glorifie the maiestie of God for euer,"

and Gerhard asserts that "the glory of God is the Ultimate and chief end of Creation." ^ A text frequently applied to the purpose of Creation is Romans 11.36: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:
to whom be glory for ever." Various secondary purposes were also acknowledged, such as the contemplation and study of divine goodness and

132 wisdom in Creation, and the good of man.

An acceptance of these purposes for creation leads to the conclusion that the material world is good. St. Augustine condemns Origen for thinking that the world was created "not to provide a place for good things to be conserved, but for evil things to be confined," and St. Thomas agrees with this. Much emphasis is therefore placed on the

1 27' Tertullian, Against Marcion, trans. peter Holmes, ANCLvol.VII,
(Edinburgh, 1868), II. Ill (pp.64-65).

1 ?fl De Civ. Dei, Xl.xxiii (vol. Ill, p. 515); cf. Aquinas, S.Th., 1a.
44. art. 4 (vol. VIII, p. 23).
1 29 Common places, fol.10b.

Summe, p. 50? c? • Religio Medici, i.35 (p-34).
.perkins, Golden Chaine K sig.B2r; cf. 3abin~ton, C OT-talne Notes, foL5r.

1 Gerhard, Supine, p. 50; 3abir.,c;ton, C^rtaine Notes, fol.5r.
De Civ. Dei, Xl.xxiii (vol. Ill, p. 515); for Origin's opinion
see De principiis, II. 1.1 (ANCL vol. X, pp. 72- 73).
1 '^ 4 S.Th., 1a.65. art. 2 (vol. X, p. 11).

words repeated throughout the Genesis account, "and God saw that it was good." Pererius enumerates seven ways in which the creation can be called "good", and care is taken to explain that although many creatures appear to be "hurtful! and pernitious to men," and superfluous to the good of creation, this is because we do not understand their use. Ross asserts, however, that although the world is good, God could have made it better: "for his power is not limited: therefore hee might haue made

157 it sooner then hee did, and larger, and fuller of Creatures."
Finally, we have to consider the theory of Ideas, that God made the material universe according to a pattern, or model. Again, the belief is derived from the Timaeus , where Plato speaks of the eternal and independ-ently-existing forms, to which the Demiurge looked as a pattern for his

1 creation. An early modification made to this theory by religious
thinkers, who could not accept that anything other than God was eternal
139 and self-existent, was that Ideas were the thoughts of God. Philo
explains that, "God, being God, assumed that a beautiful copy would never be produced apart from a beautiful pattern," and that God therefore first formed an intelligible world as a pattern for the material, as an architect might plan a city in his mind. This could be thought of simply as God r s thoughts, for "the universe that consisted of ideas would have no other location than the Divine Reason." ^ Augustine emphasizes that God knew exactly what the world would be like, before he created it, 1

Pererius, In Qenesim, vol.1, pp. 70-71 (sects. 160-61).
TTillett, Hexapla, p.16; cf. Basil, Hexameron, Y.4 (p. 77).
Questions and Answers, p. 20. Timaeus, 30c.

139 See The Encyclopedia of philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards (New York,
1967), unrier "Ideas".
140 Qi the Creation, 16 (p. 15); 20 (p. 17).
141 De Civ. Dei, Xl.xxi (vol. Ill, p. 503).

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and St. Basil says that God "imagined the world such as it ought to be,

142 and created matter in harmony with the form which He wished to give it."

Ambrose denies the Platonic Idea, existing independently of God. Aquinas too maintains that "there are Ideas in the divine mind." An idea means
the form of a thing; it exists independently of the thing itself, but
not independently of God: "God does not know things through an idea exist-ing outside himself." Many Renaissance writers on Creation do not mention Ideas at all; sometimes a much-diluted form of the theory is represented as God knowing Creation from eternity: "Therefore before the Creation, the Creatures had no reall being either of existence, or Essence,

145 although they had a known being from eternity in the knowledge of God." Sir Thomas Browne comments that the six days of Creation "seem to manifest the method and Idea of that great worke in the intellect of God." Sylvester also refers to Ideas; thus, he suggests as a possible activity of God before Creation.*

It may be also, that he meditated
The Worlds Idea, yer it was was created. creat<

But a little later, he states that God needed no pattern in order to create:

Th f admired Authors Fancie, fixed not
On some fantastike fore-conceipted plot.

The discrepancy is perhaps accounted for by the distinction between Plato's theory and its later modification, which Sylvester does not make explicit.

Hexaemeron, II.2 (p.60). Hexaemeron, 1.1.1 (p.3).
144 S.Th., 1a.15« art.1 (vol.IV, pp.63-65); cf. S.Th., 1a.44. art.3 (vol.X, p.17).
Ames, Harrow, p.36. Religio Medici, i.45 (p.43).
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' Sylvester's Du Bartas, 1.1.85-86 (vol. I, p.113).

1 /1ft ibid., I.i.201-02 (vol. I, p.117).

II. Donne and Milton

Donne states clearly that the Creation is God's first revelation
of himself: it is the "first handle that God puts out to man, to lay hold upon him by, as hee is The Creator." It is the first article of our faith, since we could not know God unless he had first created us:
2
"There begins the Bible, and there begins the Creed," and, furthermore, we are not to seek to know anything of God prior to this, his first revelation of himself. We are not, for example, to suppose that God
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decreed our election or reprobation before he decreed our creation,
2

but are to accept Moses 1 "in principio" as the limit of our knowledge. Yet Donne accepts that the relationship of the two revelations of
Nature and Scripture is an ambivalent one. According to emphasis, either "book" may be described as the easier to read, the book of Nature because it is accessible to all men, and Scripture because it makes plain truths which cannot be deduced from Nature. In his earliest discussion of the question, in Essays in Divinity, while recognizing that the book of Nature is much inferior to the Book of Life, and to the Bible, and
that we cannot deduce "all particularities of Christian Religion" from it, Donne praises it in the words of Isaiah 29.18: "The deaf shall heare the word of this book, and the eyes of the blinde shall see out of obscurity," and su^rp-ests that it is easily read even by those without other revelation. Indeed, he states that "S Paul clears it

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Sermons, VIII. 12.282. SfJH^i» !! 11-246; cf. 7111.12.282, 3ssays, p.7; D.8; u.7.

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thus far, that there is enough to make us inexcusable, if we search not further." In his first reference to this idea in a sermon, however, while he admits that "The correspondence and relation of all parts of Nature to one Author, the concinnity and dependance of every piece and joynt of this frame of the world, the admirable order," leads us to the knowledge of God, he warns us that in comparison with Scripture, "it is but a faint twilight, it is but an uncertain glimmering which we have of God in the Creature." And in a later sermon, he seems to reverse the opinion which he held in Essays, when he claims that the book of Nature is the hardest to read: "There are some difficulties (if curious men take the matter in hand, and be too inquisitive) even in the Gospel; more in the Law; most of all in Nature." But still "there is light in Nature too." As we shall consider later, Donne in fact shows little inclination to perceive the glory of God in the visible beauty and harmony of the universe; the individual characteristics of the creatures had less hold on his imagination than the mere fact that God had created, or even just the idea of God creating.
Milton, in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, describes the

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Creation as "the first and last of all his visible works", but his

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later views on the inferiority of the Son to the Father* force him rather to describe the generation of the Son as God's first revelation
of himself. God's external efficiency is defined by Milton as that by which "he effects outside himself something he has decreed within himself;" generation must be an example of this, "since the Son is a different

Essays, p.8. Sermons, 1.8.289-90.
Sermons, VII. 12.303-4; 30-3.
The Doctrine and Discioline of Divorce (2nd. ed., 1644), ch.X '
(Yale II, p.273).
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See pp. "82 ff. r^I

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person from the Father." And it is the Son who makes God known: "as
he is the image, as it were, by which God becomes visible, so he is
the word by which God is audible." Therefore, Creation is only
"The second kind of external efficiency." Milton holds, however, an orthodox view of the quality of the revelation which Creation suDplies: God has left "so many traces of his presence through the whole of nature, that no sane person can fail to realise that he exists," and the world's "perfection of beauty and order" point unerringly to "a supreme creative being." But while it is obvious, this revelation is not complete:
"No one, however, can form correct ideas about God guided by nature or reason alone, without the word or message of God." Again, we shall see later Milton's exeat sensitivity to, and delight in, the manifold works of nature, as they reveal their Creator and Master.
Both poets are in agreement that we know only by faith that the
world was created, and therefore that it had a beginning. Donne acknowledges the authority of Thomas Aquinas-in stating, "That it is

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an Article of our Belief that the world beg-an," and with a typical emphasis on the limitations of reason, speaks of "his great work of Creation, which admits no arrest for our Reason, nor gradations for our discourse, but must be at once swallowed and devour'd by faith, without mastication, or digestion." Donne does not stress this point, however, except in the Essays. Milton merely states: "That the world was created, must be considered an article of faith: Heb. xi.3s through faith we understand that the world was made by God's word."

DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, D.205).
, I.VI (Yale 71, p.29*7); 1.711 (p.299).
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, I.II (Yale VI, p.130; p.132). 3sr,ays, p.16; cf. p.19.
See pp. 29; 89; 172 below. 4 5ssays, D.54-

10 DDC

11 DDC

DDC, I.VII (Yale /I, p.300).

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A question of much greater importance to both poets is that concerning the origin of matter; and the difference of their answers has far-reaching implications. Donne seems never to have doubted the orthodox doctrine of creation from nothing, although there are some hints that at an early period he thought of "nothing" not as complete non-entity (nihil negativum), as he was later to define it, but merely as lack of form, or as the Chaos (nihil privativum). This is suggested by some lines in "The Storrne" (1597)» in which the tempest is compared to the state before the first creation:

All things are one, and that one none can be, Since all formes, uniforme deformity
Doth cover, so that wee, except God say , Another Fiat, shall have no more day,

and even more strongly by the verse letter "To the Countesse of Huntingdon," where the word "nothing" is actually used of the unseparated elements of Chaos:

As all things were one nothing, dull and weake,
tfritill this raw disorder'd heape did breake,
And severall desires led parts away.

But in a letter of March 1607, Donne's use of the idea of creation from nothing, associated with the idea of annihilation, seems to suggest

1fl non-entity, rather than mere formlessness. Likewise, "A Nocturnall upon 19 S. Lucies Day," seems to make a distinction between the nothingness

of "dull privations" (1.16), and the "first nothing" (1.29), which the

"The Storme," 11.69-72 (Satires, p. 57).

1 7 ' "To the Countesse of Huntingdon," 11.37-39 (Satires, D.82);
for the date of the poem, see Sa-tires, pp. 242-43.
ers, P. 65.
1 9
This poem was probably written after 1607; see ^IQ^JPS, up. 249-51

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lover becomes by his loved one's death. And in Essays in Divinity, Donne expressly repudiates the interpretation of "nothing" as r>rimary matter: "Nothing was not a pre-existent matter, nor mother of this All,

20 but onely a limitation when any thing began to be.'r

Like the fact of creation itself, creation from nothing can be
known only by faith: "Truly, it is not the power and victory of reason, that evicts the world to be made of Nothing ... nor is it expressly

21 said so in any Scripture." The supporting text of 2 Maccabees 7.28

is "of no straight obliaration". Moreover, like Milton, Donne denies that the word translated "creare" at the opening of Genesis must necessarily mean "a Making of Nothing", and quotes a selection of Scriptural texts

21 to refute this idea. But at the same time, Donne feels that there
is no other explanation so consonant with reason. The world could not have been made of "something", for "If it be of it self, it is God:

21 and it is God, if it be of God." So Donne is divided between the

claims of faith and reason: in a sermon of 1622, he feels that nothing will "so much strain a mans Reason, as the Creation, a Creation of all

22 out of nothing," while in a sermon conjecturally dated 1630, he

claims that "to know a creation of the world of nothing, reason serves

25 us too," using the same argument which he had used in Essays. Neither

could the world have been eternal, for then it would also be equal to God; Donne refutes the opinion of Boethius, supuorted by Aquinas, that this would not have been the case since "Gods eternity is all at once, and the worlds successive," by saying, "yet, some part of the world must be as old as God, and infinite things are equal1, and equalls to God
24 are God."

Essays, p.31. Essays, p.28; pp.2?-28; p.29.

22 25 Sermons, IV.3.100. Seirons, IX.10.245-
?/i

Sssays, p.29; cf. Sermons, 1.8.290. and Aquinas, S.Th., 3a.46
art.2 (vol. Till, p.83).

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This "nothing" was fascinating to Donne, because it defied the
attempts of the human intellect to understand it: "this Nothing being

2S no creature, is more incomprehensible then all the rest." It can
necessarily supply no imagery, and can be described only in negatives. Donne exclaims, "how invisible, how inintelligible a thing then, is this

26 Nothing!" It is "infinitely lesse then a Mathematicall Doint, then
27 an imaginary Atome." We are forced to consider it in terms of contrast
to existence, and thence to realize that the particular differences between created beings are not so great as the difference between any kind of existence, and nothing: "It is not so high a step, to raise the poore out of the dust, and to lift the needy from the dung-hill, and
set him with Princes, To make a King of a Beggar is not so much, as to

28 make a Worm of nothing." The fascination and awe which kings held for
29 Donne, make this a particularly emotive image. So to contemplate the

creatures, directs Donne's attention to the simple act of creation: elephants, cedars, kings, and beggars, are remarked not for their individual characteristics, but for the principle of their creation. Donne is forced to admit that "all my Elephants, and Cedars, and the Heavens that I consider, were made of nothing; that a Cloud is as nobly born, as the Sun in the Heavens; and a begger, as nobly, as the King upon Earth." So we are directed from the particular to the general, and especially to the point of origin of all things in nothing. All creatures, whatever their apparent variety, have been made by God from this same privation. Though Donne may despise some creatures, and

p.113.
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Essays, p.32. Sermons, 17.3.100.

97 ?fl Sermons, x.5-134- Sermons, 17.2.85; cf. III.3.96; IV.3.101. 29 See John Carey, John Donne; Life, Mind ani Art (London, 1981),

Senr.ons, 17.3.90.

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admire others: "when I do not know, and care not whether I know or no, what so contemptible a Creature as an Ant is made of, but yet would fain know what so vast, and so considerable a thing as an Elephant is made of ... I shall have but one answer from Moses for all, that all ray Elephants, and Cedars, and the Heavens that I consider, were made

^1 of nothing."' So when these things reveal God's glory to us, they

reveal not their origin, which is in nothing, but God's pure creative

act.

This act of creation was the most inconceivable, and also the most difficult of all God's works, for which he is to receive the greatest glory; believing that he performed that, we should not doubt that he can do all else: "The Creation, which was the first, and was a meer

32 production out of nothing, was the hardest of all."

Donne states, in accordance with the views of many commentators,
that the world was created in two stages. In Essays in Divinity, he discusses various interpretations of Genesis 1.1, without committing himself to any of them, but in a sermon of 1618, he explains the verse thus: "so that that which was made sine sermone, without speaking, was only matter without form, heaven without light, and earth without any productive virtue or disposition, to bring forth,and to nourish creatures." In another passage, he refers to the three-fold pattern of creation: God "first made all, and then digested, and then perfected them." But it is clear that this process of creation is not one which fired Donne's imagination. He has a few references to the Chaos, or first stap-e of creation. In "The Comparison", he facetiously likens

Sermons, IV.3.89-90.
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, III. 3. 96; cf. 17,3.100; Letters, p. 291.
33 34
ys, DID. 32-33. Sermons, 1.8.299; cf. III. 3.
^ Semens, 7-10.206.

his mistress' rough-hewn face to "the first Chaos" (1.21); and in

36 Essays, he notes that Chaos "preceded forms and distinctions." In

the sermons, there are a few brief references to "that pre-existent

37 matter, which God had made before." But clearly, Donne did not find
it as exciting a concept as nothing. His references to the Hexaemeron
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are likewise few, and although he understands the work of the days

39 literally, his only use of it in the sermons is to illustrate the
working of God in the human soul, as we are exhorted to remember our Creator "at least in one of these dales of the week of thy regeneration," whether it be that of the waters gathered together in the Church, or that of the creeping things of the earth, which represent humility.
He speaks of "That earth and that heaven, which spent God himselfe, Almighty God, six days in furnishing," but in his imagination cancels the gap between order and confusion, between cedars and elephants, and nothing. The two stages detract from the absoluteness of God's act, the simple fact of bringing something out of nothing. Donne makes an imaginative leap from nothing to a creation of form without considering the primary matter. For Milton, as we shall see later, the process works in exactly the opposite wayj while maintaining that creation was instantaneous, and that the Genesis account is figurative, he describes in fascinating detail the work of the days. Donne does not picture the world coming into being, nor describe the intermediate stages. His excitement at creation from nothing implies instantaneousness: "what

gssays, p.19; see p. 28 above.

57J{ Sermons, IX.2.82; cf. IX.1.49.
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e.g. "To the Countesse of Salisbury," 11.39-46 (Satires, p.108);
The .^irst Anniversarie, 11.347-50.

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See p. 55 below. Sermons, II.11.243.

41 Semons, IX. 1.47.

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then is there that can bring this Nothing to our understanding? what hath that done? A Leviathan, a whale, from a grain of Spawn; an Gee from a buried Akehorn, is a great; but a great world from nothing, is
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a strange improvement." Unlike Milton, he has no interest in the idea of Chaos; his conceptual imagination makes its own order from confusion. Evelyn Simpson writes that "It was ideas, not forms or colours or sounds, that excited Donne's imagination and fired his fancy. He was the most intellectual of poets, and the least dependent on his sense-impressions," and this is well exemplified by his attitude toward creation. It is hardly ever to the glory of God perceived in trees, mountains, the variety of animal and plant life, or to the sounds of wind, water, or birdsong, that Donne draws our attention. The essential point is simply God's creative act. In speaking of the common division of the six days into the three parts of creation, distinction, and ornamentation, Donne stresses the inferiority of the second two parts: "the making of that which was made something of nothing before, a particular thing, a beast, a fowle, a fish, a plant, a man r a Sun or

44 Moon, was not so hard, as the first production out of nothing." 45 Although Donne is not oblivious of the intricacies of creatures, he does not normally use them to direct our attention to the erlory of the Creator.

Milton's early writings have few references to creation, and none from which his opinions on the origin of matter might be deduced; he speaks twice in the divorce tracts of the primaeval chaos from which

4 Sermons, IV.3-100-01.
2. M. Simpson, A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne, 2nd
ed. (Oxford, 1948), p.8.

44 / ^ Semens, III.?.96.

See John Carey, John Donne, op.146 ff.

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the world was formed, but says nothing of its source. It is only in the De Doctrina that we find Milton's explanation of the Droduction of matter. His definition of creation significantly omits the words ex
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nihilo, and he goes on to explain why he cannot accept the orthodox doctrine. Like Donne, he denies that the Hebrew bara of Genesis 1.1 means

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"to make out of nothing," and he finds that while the evidence of the Scriptures is not wholly clear, it tends not to suggest creation from
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nothing. He then turns to reason for guidance; and his rejection of
the traditional position rests on logical grounds. The relationship between the Artis Logicae and the De Doctrina on this point has been

A f% discussed by Gordon Campbell, who shows that Milton applies his statement in the Artis Logicae that there can be neither more nor fewer than four modes of causation - efficient, material, formal and final - to the doctrine of Creation. He is in agreement with orthodoxy when he states that nothing cannot be the material cause of creation, since

49 "nothing is no cause at all;" but his "heterodoxy lay in his assertion that all things have a material cause." Having decided, therefore, that nothing cannot be a material cause, he is compelled to look for one elsewhere. He rejects the idea that matter had always existed independently of God, since this would deprive God of sover-eignty, and is therefore left with the conclusion that the material cause is God himself, for which he adduces Scriptural suDtiort, claiming that "with the guidance of scripture, I have proved that God

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (2nd. ed,), ch. X (Yale
II, p.273); Tetrachordon, Yale II, p.633.
47 DDC, I.VII (Yale 71, p.300; p.305; p.306).
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A ft Gordon Campbell, "?,fj.lton's Theological and Literary Treatments
of the Creation," JTS, n.s. XXX (1979), 128-37; ibid., Dp.130-33. DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, p.308). 5 Campbell, p.130.
51 DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, p.308; p.307).

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52 produced all things not out of nothing but out of himself." What was

produced from God was an "original matter", which was subsequently
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shaped by God in the work of Creation. Because of his anti-Trinitarian beliefs, Milton was not troubled with the difficulty of making an essential distinction between Christ and the Creation; and the theory also had the advantage of affirming triumphantly the goodness of matter. Almost nothing of this is to be found in Paradise Lost. Milton
speaks at length of "how the heavens and earth / Rose out of chaos" (l-10) t but on how the chaos came there in the first place, he is silent. Gordon Campbell states that in Paradise Lost, Milton "deliberately dismisses the question of the material cause," and points to the
fact that Raphael never answers Adam's question "whereof created." Abdiel tells Satan that God

out of smallest things could without end Have raised incessant armies, (VT.137-38)

perhaps implying creation from something, rather than nothing, but not too much can be made of this,.
Milton saw the creation of the world as a much less decisive event than Donne did; as we shall see later, he believed that God had created other things before the world, and also that various events had taken place, including the fall of the angels. So the creation of the world did not represent that most miraculous of all steps, from nothing to something, but was rather part of a long creative process. Since there were other creations, it is not the mere fact of the world's creation which interests Milton, but rather, how it was done. He was therefore

52 DDG, I.VII (Yale VI, p.310; p.308). 55 See pp. 185-56 below . Campbell, "Milton's Theological and Literary Treatments of the Creation," p.128; p.135? PL, VII.54.

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fascinated by the attempt to describe the primaeval Chaos, by the way in which God imposed form on it, and by the manifold variety of the
work of the days.
His first description of the Chaos is found in the divorce tracts,
where he sees it as an antagonism of opposites. He stresses that God's creative command was divorcing, and that the world was born from a

55 separation of unlike elements. The warring of elements in the primaeval

chaos suggested itself to him as the type of an unhappy marriage: "But to binde and raixe together holy with Atheist, hevnly with hellish,
fitnes with unfitnes, light with darknes, antipathy with antipathy, the injur'd with the injurer ... this doubtles is the most horrid, the most unnatural mixture, the greatest confusion that can be confus'di "
It has frequently been noted that the descriptions of primary matter which Milton gives in the De Doctrina and in paradise Lost are seemingly

57 incompatible. In the De Doctrina, Milton states quite clearly the
goodness, and indeed, the perfection of primary matter: "For this original matter was not an evil thing, nor to be thought of as worthless: it was good,and it contained the seeds of all subsequent grood." It was indeed "in a confused and disordered state at first 1,1 but it was not imperfect: "The addition of forms ... did not make it more perfect but only more

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beautiful." In paradise Lost, Milton returns to the warring of opposites described in the divorce tracts, and it is clear that this Chaos in which the elements fight for mastery, accompanied by the din of the battle-

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (2nd. ed.), ch. X (Yale II, p.2737:—————————— ———

Tetrachordon, Yale II, p.635«
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e.g. Arthur Sewe11, A Study in Milton's Christian Doctrine
(London, 1939), pp.127-29; A. B. Chambers, "Chaos in Paradise LosT," JHI, 24 (1963), p.55-
58 DDC, I.VII (Yale VT, p.308).

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ground, a Chaos inhabited by the monsters Tumult, Discord, and Confusion (II* 898 ff.), seems closer to hell than to the goodness of God's own substance. And indeed, Milton elsewhere describes it as:

The black tartareous cold infernal dregs
Adverse to life, (VTI.238-39)

using explicitly hellish language. I do not think that there is any way of reconciling these obviously opoosed accounts; it simply seems that in paradise Lost, Milton was not thinking of the Chaos as being closely associated with God's substance.
In fact, Milton is fascinated by the disorder of Chaos which he portrays in paradise Lost, and gives two full descriptions of it, one

59 of Satan's journey through it, and one of the Son's. It is a tantaliz-ing state between nothing and formed creation; Milton is much attracted by the idea that, though formless itself, the Chaos contains the seed of every conceivable kind of being, and even some kinds not yet dreamt of. The causes of all things war for ever,

Unless the almighty maker them ordain
His dark materials to create more worlds. (II.915-16)

Chaos can be described only in that it has existence; but it has none of the properties which we associate with formed matter:

a dark
Illimitable ocean without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and highth,
And time and place are lost. (II.891-94)

It is a primaeval battle-ground, where the components of elements strive against one another in everlasting deadlock; it is best described

59 Chambers, "Chaos in paradise Lost," pp.55-84, contains a full
discussion of Milton's treatment of Chaos, including: its moral implications.

as a warring of opposites:

For Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry, four champions fierce Strive here for mastery. (II.898-99)

It is a "void and formless infinite (ill.12), a "wild uproar" (ill.710), frightening in its uncontrolled power:

Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
And surging waves, (VTI.212-14)

until brought to harmonious order by the speaking of the Word.
Oi this primary matter, God imposed form. The descrit>tion of this
process in the De Doctrina is very simple: "It was in a confused and disordered state at first, but afterwards God made it ordered and beautiful." In Paradise Lost, however, the account of the limitation
and regulation of Chaos is given in much greater detail, and is complicated by the obscure, and much-discussed lines spoken by God the Father, after he has instructed the Son to create heaven and earth "Within appointed bounds":

Though I uncircumscribed my self retire,
And put not forth my goodness, which is free
To act or not, necessity and chance
Approach not me, and what I will is fate. (VII.170-73)

The meaning of these lines is not clear, and critics have been divided between those who think that God created by withdrawing his will, or his goodness, from the deep; and those who argue that God created by

60 DDC, I.711 (Yale VI, p.308).
Denis Saurat, Milton, Man and Thinker, rev. ed. (London, 1944), pp.102-03; pp.236-38.

6? H. F. Robins, If This Be Heresy: A Study of Milton and Origen,
Illinois Studies in Lanp-ua^e and Literature, 51 (Urbana, 1963), p.47.

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putting forth his goodness and his creative power. From the action described in Milton's account of creation, it seems that the second interpretation is much more likely; as we have seen, the uncontrolled Chaos of paradise Lost is clearly opposed to a God of order, harmony and creativity; it can hardly be that the journey of the Son and Spirit into Chaos, who bring the beauty of Creation to the warring deep, can represent a withdrawal of God's goodness:

Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,
Said then the oranific Word, your discord end* (VT1.216-17)

Thus by his command, the Word brings order to that part of Chaos
which he circumscribes with his golden compasses; this is the action which Milton equates with the first verse of Genesis:

Thus God the heaven created, thus the earth,
Matter unformed and void. (VII.232-33)

So we have, as it were, a second sta^e of primary matter, now subject to God, and waiting to bring forth life. Much of Milton's interest in the unformed heaven and earth is expressed in images of procreation and pregnancy. The abyss is envisaged as a womb, in which the forms of nature grow as an embryo; the life-giving and begetting power is the divine force of the Father, emanating in the form of the Spirit: the
Holy Spirit "Dove-like sat'st broodiner on the vast abyss / And madest
it pregnant." By this means, the womb of the formless matter is made fertile; as in Genesis, this fertility is particularly connected with

See A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Views on the Creation,"
p.226; Chambers, "Chaos in Paradise Lost," p. 70.
/• j •
The womb was a more ambivalent image for Donne, e.g. Sermons,
X.11.233: "Wee have a winding sheete in our '[others wombe."
PL, 1.21-22; cf. 711.234-37.

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the idea of the waters, in which the world waits unborn:

The earth was formed, but in the womb as yet /-/-
Of waters, embryon immature involved.

In the place of nothingness and not-being, we have an immense mass, powerful with the life-principle; the possibility of life abounds, imparted to the earth by the waters:

over all the face of earth
Main ocean flowed, not idle,but with warm Prolific humour softening all her p-lobe, Fermented the great mother to conceive, Satiate with genial moisture, (VII.278-82)

and later we see the earth opening her teeming womb to release the creatures (VII.453-55) Much more than Donne, Milton is interested in the generative, self-perpetuating power of creation which God has begun. The impulse of his universe is towards continuation, and not, like
f>7
Donne's, towards decay. God is not the creator out of nothing, but the begetter; as God is the principle of being, he imparts this quality to that which is made out of himself.

This sense of the richness of Chaos, which contains the possibility
of more worlds than have been created, is reflected in Milton's description in paradise Lost of the Hexaemeron. The mere fact of being interests him less than it does Donne, but at the same time he seems to have a feeling for the actual life created which Donne lacks. Donne, even as he saw the image of the winding sheet in the womb, generally seems to be unable to think of life without also remembering death. Nature may be a revelation of the glory of God; it is also a reminder of man's mortality: "Looke upon the water, and we are as that, and as
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that spilt upon the ground: Looke to the earth, and we are not like

66 67 PL, 711.276-77; cf. VII.220. ' See below, pp. 45-44.

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68 that, but we are the earth it self." Milton, not being- pre-occupied 69 with the unstable fact of being-, delighted in its manifestations.

In Raphael's account to Adam of the Creation, even those parts of the Creation which are not living - the light, the waters, the earth - are spoken of in images of life. They respond like living- creatures to God's word of command; they are given activity and vitality:

Let there be light, said God, and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure
Sprung from the deep. (VII.243-45)

The waters have a womb, and the earth an embryon form. Rivers and mountains rejoice in their own life; Milton's response is very much that of the Psalmist, for whom the oceans clap their hands, and hills rejoice on every side. The mountains stretch themselves - "their broad bare backs upheave" (VII.286), much as the animals are to do later, in emerging- from the earth, and the rivers rush gladly to fill the river-beds (VII. 290-91). Milton notices the particular details of Creation, gourds and reeds, "and the humble shrub, / And bush with frizzled hair implicit" (711-322-23)y seals and dolphins, storks and crocodiles; and these too are described in images of motion and excitement. The gourd is swelling- (711.321), the trees are dancing (VTI.324)» and the lion struggles for liberty:

now half appeared
The tawny lion, pawing to get free
His hinder parts, then springs as broke from bonds
And rampant shakes his brinded mane. (VII.463-66)

All of Creation, depicted in fascinating detail, seethes with activity,

Sermons, III.8.202.

69 See 3. M. W. Tillyard, The Miltonic Setting, past and Present
(London, 1938), pp.69-72, on the fertility of Milton's writing.

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There is a great sense of triumph in the angels' hymn to God when the six days' work is finished, that though he has created before, he has again amazed them with his power (VTI. 601 ff.). Adam and Eve, when
they offer praise to the Creator, define him by his works: they

adored
The God that made both sky, air, earth and heaven
Which they beheld. (IV. 721-23)

The views of Donne and Milton on the origin of matter clearly
have implications for its relation to God, the nature of its preservation, and its ultimate destiny. First of all, Donne's belief in creatio ex nihilo makes absolute the contrast between God and all his creatures

in this question of being; God, in the sense of Coleridge's definition, is the only primary Creator, who can call not-being into being, the
only true I am, "so distinctive a Character is it of the Godhead, to

70 produce any thing from nothing* " Donne places great importance on

I am as the name of God, stating that Jehovah "denotes his Essence, his

71 72 Seeing," and that "Being is the peculiar and proper name of God."

He emphasizes the interdependence of the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, and the name I am, explaining, "The name, by which God notified himself e, to all the world, at first, was, Qui sum, I am ... for there, God would have it made known, that all Essence, all Seeing, all things, that fall out, in any time, past, or present, or future, had their dependence

73 upon him, their derivation from him, their subsistence in him," or,
7/t

more concisely, "the name of the Creator is, I am . " Tfe are now like God in that we have being, although it is dependent on his; but while

71 Semons, IV.3.101. , Sermons, 17.2.85.

12 Semons, T/III.2.?6; cf. VIII.7.177-
^ Semons, III.3,187. Sermons, VIII.5.144.

43

Man hath

God is grounded in being, we are grounded in nothing: "If we bee compar'd with God, our Being with his Being, we have no Being at all,

75 wee are Nothing^" And this represents an absolute opposition to God:
76 "nothing is so contrary- to God as to be nothing." All creatures are

warned not to place too much confidence in their own being: "The name of the Creator is, I am, but of every creature rather, I am not, I am nothing ... Man hath more privatives, then positives in him;
but his own beeing; Man hath not the beeing of an Angel, nor the beeing-of a lyon; God hath all in a kind of eminence more excellently then

77 the kinds themselves, onely his name is I am," It is therefore clear
that the principle of continued being is not inherent in matter; being created from nothing, its natural course would surely be to return to nothing, unless it were sustained by God. This belief, held by Donne, increases emotional dependence on the Creator, since the preservation of nan and the world is dependent upon God's will and pleasure, rather

78 than simply on God's being: "our preservation is also from mercy."

In other words, God might continue to be himself, without wishing that anything else should continue to be; if God chooses not to preserve the

79 world, it will suffer dissolution.
Donne sees around him in all things, a perpetual tendency towards

80 decay and annihilation. The return to nothingness is a real threat,

and there is nothing in Creation free from it: only the very light of God "is not threatned with this annihilation. All other things are; even Angels, even our soules; they move upon the same poles, they bend to the same Center; and if they were not made immortall by preservation,

77
7Q

Sermons, VIII. 2. ?6.
Sermons , VIII. 5-144.
Sermons, VIII. 5-144.

7fl

Sermons, VIII. 7. 177.
gssays, p. 6}; cf .Sermons, IV. 2. 85. Sermons, X.11.233; 11*9.197; III. 3. 105,

44

their Nature could not keepe them from sinking to this center, Annihil-

81 ation." God alone can keep creation from nothingness; God now does

this, yet for the created being, the position is a precarious one: "As Man had an etemall not beeing before the Creation; so he would have another eternall not-being after his dissolution by death, in soule, as well as in body, if God did not preserve that beeing, which he hath
Q <p

imprinted in both, in both." So any creature is, as it were, continually at the feet of God, in recognition of "Misericordia Domini,
Q7

quia non sumus consumpti." Yet annihilation after creation is as inconceivable as nothingness before. Man cannot even wish to be annihil-ated: Donne is attracted by the Scholastic syllogism that we cannot desire anything which does not seem to us better than what we have; that "whatsoever is better, is not nothing," and that therefore we cannot

ftyf wish to be nothing. Donne believes, moreover, that God did not create
Q C

us "to return to nothing again," and that to become nothing "even at the last great fire, shall not befall the most wretched worme, nor the most abject grain of dust: for that fire shall be a purifier, not
Bf> consumer to nothing."
Milton, on the other hand, does not place special importance on
I am as a name of God. Although he gives as a meaning of Jehovah, he "who is, was, and shall be," he seems of the opinion that mere
existence is not a sufficient signification, and takes the name to refer
Q <J

also to God's promises. For Milton, the being of God was not completely

0 .4 flP

Devotions, p.51- Sermons, VIII.5«144-45*
5ssays, p.63. Sermons, IV.3.101; cf. 17.2.85; 5s3ays, p.31.
85 Serrnons, 11.11.24?; 23^.<
Qf>

assays, p.30; Serr.ons, 17.3-90, 11.34-35» sepr.s to i*mly, however, that so^e parts of crpation at least will return to nothing.
87 m)C, I.II (rale 71, pp.138-39).

45

contrary to the nature of created things. The world was not created from

nothing-, but from some pre-existent matter which had originated in God,

Therefore, all things share in some measure the divine being and nature.

To exist is not contrary to their nature; while they are essentially

dependent upon God for their being, they are not absolutely thrown on

the mercy of his will: "since all things come not only from God but out
QO

of God, no created thing can be utterly annihilated." Consequently,

there is no fear of nothingness, and little emphasis on being. Unlike

Donne, Milton makes little use of such words as "nothing", "being", and

89 "not-being". Almost the only occasions on which they are used in

Paradise Lost in this sense are in the speech of the fallen angels.

They alone can consider the possibility of not-being, and in view of

Milton's beliefs, they are clearly wrong to do so:

what doubt we to incense
His utmost Ire? which to the highth enraged,
7/ill either quite consume us, and reduce
To nothing this essential, happier far
Than miserable to have eternal being:
Or if our substance be indeed divine,
And cannot cease to be, we are at worst
this side nothing. (II.94-101)

The moral failure of this position is shown by the unnatural womb-

imagery, which follows in the speech of Belial, who fears that they will be

swallowed up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night, (II.149-50)

since it is the purpose of the wonb not to sv/allow up, but to bring

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D-DG, 1.711 (Yale 71, p.3*10).
Q H

See J. Sradshaw, A Concvordar.ee to the Poetical T,7orks of John
Milton (London, 1894)» and H. C. Combs and Z. R. Sull^ns, A Concordance to the Sn~lJ3h Poe.^s of John Donne (Chicago, 1940), under "nothing", ", etc.

46

forth. To destroy is the occupation not of God, but of the devil (IX.129). It also seems to Milton that the purpose behind Creation will preserve
it from destruction. God has a purpose for all things: "the end of all created things is some kind of good, whereas nothing is neither good
90
nor any kind of thing at all." This is reflected in the strong sense
of purpose in Milton's own life, and his faith in

that same lot, however mean or high, q
Toward which time leads me, and the will of heaven.

Thus the distance between creature and Creator is reduced; both share in being, and the continuance of the Creation must be the best fulfil-ment of God's purposes.
On the question of how many worlds God created, Donne has little
92
to say. In one place, he states simply, "He made but one W"orld;" in
a later sermon, he suggests that there may be other worlds as lar^e
as our own: "subtile men have, with some appearance of probability, imagined, that in that heaven, in those manifold Sphears of the planets, and the Starres, there are many earths, many worlds, as big as this,

93 which we inhabite," but he does not suggest that there are other

inhabited worlds. UTilton, although he does not refer to the idea in any other work, introduces the possibility of life on other planets a great

94 number of times in Paradise Lost. Sometimes he warns against specu-

lation; Raphael instructs Adam:

Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there
Live, in what state, condition or decree,

QO7 DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, p.310).
91 Sonnet VII, "How soon hath tine," 11.11-12.

92 S_er-_on3, 17.^.240. ^ Serins, IX.1.47.
See ?cwler's note to PL, 111.5^5-71, and J. H. Ada-son, "yilton and the Creation,'' pp. 774-75-

47

but while Milton does not conmit himself to this belief, his curiosity is certainly roused by the possibility; Raphael himself also suggests to Adam that there might be life on the moon (VIII .144-45) > ^d after the Creation the angels in their hymn of praise sing of "every star perhaps a world / Of destined habitation" ("VTI.621-22). J. H. Adamson sees a traditional connection between Milton's belief in creation ex

95 Deo, and his interest in a plurality of worlds.
We consider next the operation of the Trinity in the work of
creation. Donne's Trinitarian position is orthodox, and he accepts the traditional understanding- of the work of the Word and Spirit in creation. "A Litanie" refers to creation through the Word (11.1-3), and in Essays, he relates the in principio of Moses and John. He takes the in principio of John's Gospel to mean that "the Word was with God,

97 before God created Heaven and Earth," and indeed, from eternity, but
rejects the identification of "the beginning" of Genesis with the Son

98 himself, since it is better to interpret Moses literally. Donne is
much interested in the idea of God creating by speaking through his Word: it is by this s-oeakinp- that God first reveals himself, for the

99 Word is "the uttering of the wisdome of God." On several occasions
he applies the words of psalm 33»9» "Dixit, & facta sunt," to the work of Creation, and it seems to suggest its instantaneousness to him: "immediately upon Gods speaking, the work follow'd: Dixit & factum, he

Adamson, "Milton and the Creation," p.774«
96 See pp.172 ff. below.

97 98 Essays, p.16; cf. Sermons, IV.3.69. Essays, pp. 17-18.
99 7 Sermons, 11.10.228; cf. .1.8.290; VI.10.216.

100 SQrr.ons. VI. 10.216.

48

spake the word, and the world was created.'* Or, as he says of the

102 world elsewhere, "there went but a word to the raking^" The contrast

between God's eternal silence, and the speaking- of the Word is parallel with the contrast between nothingness, and the making of the world:
"But how many millions of generations was this Word in heaven, and never spoke? The Word, Christ himself, hath been as long as God hath been:
But the uttering of this Word, speaking hath been but since the Creation." The mystery of God's speech is intensified by a quotation from Augustine: "he spake Ineffabiliter, says St. Augustine, without uttering- any sound." Donne also follows Athanasius in saying that the word dixit also implies the presence of the Trinity, since God was addressing
"the second Person in the Trinity, his Sternal Word; and the third Person, the Holy Ghost." 1 4
Donne makes a distinction between God speaking- to create the lower creatures, and the consultation of the Trinity in the making of man, in Genesis 1.26, "a more expresse manifestation of divers persons speaking-together, of a concurrence of the Trinity." In Essays, he had agreed with the Nicene Fathers that this was the first Scriptural revelation of the Trinity, and in one of his later sermons, he insists on the

107 importance of recognizing the Trinity in this verse. Towards the

creavit Dii of Genesis 1.1, although he frequently refers to it, his attitude is ambivalent. In assays in Divinity, he attacked the use of this phrase as an argument for the Trinity, calling it "this extortion,

10fl and beggarly wresting of Scriptures," but later he places more

101 Sermons, 11.10.233; of. VI.10.216; 1.8.289.
102 Sermons, 17.3-101. . 1 °5 Sermons, VT.10.216.
104 Sermons, 17.3-102. 1 °^ Sermons, 1.8.289; cf. IX. 1.48-49-

106 ^3ays, p.26. Sermons, IX.1-51- 5ssays, p.26.

49

importance on this evidence of Trinity in unity, and while he still does not regard it as a proof, he is prepared to admit that with other texts, "it is a refreshing, it is a cherishing, it is an awakening of that

109 former knowledge which we had of the Trinity." Always making the

distinction between proof and "intimation", he writes that the doctrine of the Trinity "is insinuated and conveyed unto us, even in the first

110 verse of the Bible, in that extraordinary phrase, Greavit Dii."

Donne insists that the Spirit mentioned in Genesis 1.2 is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, co-eternal with the Father and the Son; he is not a creature, but a Creator: "where we heare of the making of every thing else, in the generall Creation, we heare

112 that the Spirit of God moved, but never that the Spirit was made."

In his sermon on this text, Donne considers some other interpretations, both the Jewish idea that the word means''wind", and the suggestion of sone Christian writers that it means operatio Dei, but he repudiates them, concluding with Jerome that "This Spirit of God gave life, there-fore this Spirit was a Creator." But this text too does not constitute a strong proof of the Holy Spirit's existence.
Donne also considers the discussion concerning the meaning1 of the
word translated "moved" by the Authorized Version. "Moved" is almost invariably his own preferred translation, and the rendering which
he chose when he preached on Genesis 1.2. Its Latin equivalent he gives as "ferebatur", although once he translates "incubat" as

10Q7 Serr.ons, III.5-143-

110 Sermons, 71.6.141; see also VI.5-129; VIII.1.55; IX.3-92.
111 seep. 172 below. 1 Sermons, 7.2.61; cf. 17.9.251.
11 ^ Sermons, IX.3.95-6; 97; 98.
114 Sermons, 1.8.290; 7.2.61; VI.5-129. Ser-nons, IX.3.92.

116 Sermons, IX-3-98.

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117 "moved" too. But he also thinks that Jerome's rendering "incubabat"
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conveys something of the meaning, translating it as "hovered". And 119
once he refers to Pagnini's translation "sufflabat", "breathed".
The Latin translation of the text of this sermon he gives as "ferebatur 1 20
super faciem aquarum." He explains how the Hebrew word signifies
both movement and rest; "ferebatur" expresses the motion, and "incubabat" conveys the bird sitting still upon her eggs. This was a sign of the movement and rest in Creation: the creature was first brought into

121 being out of nothing, and afterwards continued in existence. The

bird imagery is of course suggested by the identification of the Spirit

122 with "The Holy Ghost, who is a Dove," so that it brooded upon the

waters: "He hovered over the waters, he sate upon the waters, and he

122 hatched all that was produced." The waters offer a womb to the
122 generative power of the Spirit, here spoken of as a Father: "The

waters enwrapped the whole substance, the whole matter, of which all things were to be created, all was surrounded with the waters, all was

123 embowelled, and enwombed in the waters." Donne makes it quite clear

that the Holy Spirit caused the production of the creatures by his own power, and not by infusing a power of production into the waters: "For no power infused into the ?/aters, or earth then, could have enabled that

11V 11 ft "' Sermons, IV.9.251. Sermons, VII.1.70; IX.3.98.
119 Sermons, 17.9.251; see 3. M. Simpson, in Sermons, vol.X, p.523. 120 Sermons, IX.3»93 I have been unable to find any Latin
version which uses the same combination of words as Donne here; he is not quoting the Vulgate, either before or after the Clementine recension of 1592; nor Junius-Tremellius; none of the Latin translations of any of the versions contained in the Antwerp Polyglot of 15^9; nor Sebastian Castellio; and clearly not Pagnini. It seems most likely that either his memory has confused two versions, or that he is making his own translation.

121 1 ?2' Serj-ons, IX.3. QS-?9. Serr.ons, VII.1.70.

123 Sermons, IX*3.99.

51

earth, then to produce Trees with ripe fruits, in an instant, nor the waters to have brought forth '.Vhales, in their growth, in an instant;"
the Spirit produced them, and only afterwards established "that seminal1
"1 O A

power which we call nature."
?!ilton Takes use of the orthodox formulation that Creation is by
the Father, and through the Son, but he makes these prepositions bear
an interpretation which is quite contrary to the spirit of the traditional understanding of them: "Creation ... is always qualified as being- through

125 Christ; not by him, but by the Father." Thus he uses the distinction

to argue the inferiority of the Son, and the subordinate part which he took in the creation of the world. This is based on ".lilton's insistence

125 that "the Father is the first or ^.ajor cause in everything-." Father

and Son cannot be joint causes because the two prepositions sisnify different kinds of efficient causes, and therefore the Father must be the principal cause of creation, and the Son "the less principal

1 ?£\ cause." Furthermore, Milton goes on to demonstrate, with Scriptural

quotations, that the Son was himself the first of all created things,

126 and could therefore not have been the primary cause of creation. In

contrast with Donne, Milton actually takes Christ's title of the Word as an indication that he is not of one essence with the Father: "The

127 V/ord must be audible, but God is inaudible just as he is invisible."

The De Doctrina gives no description of the means by which the Father created through his Word.
In paradise Lost, however, we are given a splendid picture of the
7/ord carrying into effect the Father's commands in Creation. This

124 Semons, IX.3.100. . BDC, I-V (Yale VI, p.26?; p.268).
126 DDC, 1.711 (Yale '/I, pp.301-02; p.303).

12? DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.239).

52

picture may be interpreted either according to Milton's exposition in the De Doctrina, when the Son acts because the Father, the principal cause, commands, or according- to the traditional understanding of the Word as the expression of God's will. First of all, God announces by what means he intends to create:

And thou my tVord* begotten Son, by thee
This I perform, speak thou, and be it done, (VII.163-64)

where we see that it is the Son, as the Word, who is to speak, as he does when he first surveys the abyss of Chaos:

Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,
Said then the omnific Word, your discord end. (VTI.216-17)

Uriel describes how Chaos is ruled by the Word of God:

I saw when at his word the formless mass,
This world's material mould, came to a heaps
Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
Stood ruled, . (ill.708-11)

when by his Word, God extends his creative goodness into that sea of warring elements. But when the Son actually gives the conrand for Creation, he is no longer referred to as "the Word", but as "God",
a title which persists throughout the work of the six days:

Let there be light, said God, and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure
Sprung from the deep. (VII.243-45)

This may remind us of the prinacy of the Father, whose will the Son expresses; or it may remind us of the traditional attribution of "God

128 made-" to the Son. And certainly in paradise Lost the work of Creation
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most fully reveals the divine splendour of the Son, as he is sent out

1 28 See abov--?, pp.

53

in the glory of the Father:

Girt with omnipotence, with radiance crowned
Of majesty divine, sapience and love
Immense, and all his Father in him shone. (VTI.194-96)

But when we come to the account of the creation of man, it is the Father himself who speaks, addressing the Son-

therefore the omnipotent
Sternal father (for where is not he
Present) thus to his Son audibly spake. (711.516-18)

'/Ve may notice, however, that the Spirit is not addressed.
When we turn to the part played by the Spirit in the work of
Creation, we find that "/Lilton regarded it as considerably less important than the work of the Son. J.lilton does not give a decisive interpretation of Genesis 1.2, but he is ^uite sure that the Spirit there referred to is not the Third Person of the Trinity. He sw^rests in his chapter on the Holy Spirit in the De Doctrina, that while it right nean "the power and virtue of the Father," it is more likely "that we should here interpret the word as a reference to the Son, through whom, as we are

129 constantly told, the Father created all things." In the chapter on Creation, he repeats that it is "not any particular person," here favouring the interpretation of it as "God's divine power." Perversely he takes the naming of the Spirit in Genesis 1.2 as an indication that it was not a person: "For if it was a person, why is the Spirit named and nothing said about the Son." And elsewhere, he even sup-p-ests
that the Spirit may not have been created before the foundations of the world were laid. In Paradise Lost too, the role of the Spirit is

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129 DDG » I.VI (Yale 71, t).282).
15°_DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, p.304). 151 DDC, I.'/I (Yale 71, p.298).

54

ambivalent. In the opening- lines of the poem, Milton actually invokes that Spirit who

from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread Dove-like sat'st brooding- on the vast abyss, (I.T9-21)

but in the account of the Creation in Book VII, God informs the Son;

My overshadowing- spirit and might with thee
I send along-, (VII. 165-66)

which certainly does not surest a Person; the Spirit himself is never addressed by the Father.

/

In the De Doctrina, Milton consistently prefers the verb "incubabat"

132 to describe the Spirit's action, although he does not discuss the

translation. This is reflected in Paradise Lost, where the Spirit is described as "brooding":

on the watery calm
His brooding wings the spirit of God outspread, (VII.234-35)

and as it broods over the waters, it imparts life to them:

And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth
Throughout the fluid mass. (VII.236-37)

Of the idea that God created without labour, Donne apparently has nothing- to say; Milton's only reference to it is to comment that the Creator ceased from creation, "though unwearied" (VII-552).
Oi the question of when the world was created, Donne accepts the traditional belief that time began with the creation of the universe,

DDC, I.VI (Columbia 14, p.358); DDC, I.VII (Columbia 15,
p.12; p.14); it is incorrectly translated in the Columbia edition as "moved."

55

stating that "this Beginning was the first point of time," and that the reason for this is that time is "but "the Measure of Motion."
Thus it is not possible to ask why God did not make the world sooner,

136 nor may we enquire what God did before Creation; since the answer

has not been revealed to us, Donne, with St. Augustine, "will sooner

137 say, I know not, when I know not," than fabricate a reply. All that
we can say is that before Creation, "whatsoever God did, he did it uncessantly and unintermittingly; which was but the generation of the

1 ^ft Son, and procession of the Spirit, and enjoying: one another." Some-

times, however, Donne also admits the possibility that the angels were created before the visible universe: either they were made at the

1 39 beginning of time, or "before all measure of time began." In any case,

they were the first of all created things.
As to the interpretation of the six days' work, Donne is insistent
that Genesis must be taken literally, "because we are utterly dis-provided of any history of the Worlds Creation, except we defend and maintain this Book of Moses to be Historical, and therefore literally to be interpreted." Therefore, Donne concludes that "God could have made all the world in one day, and so have come sooner to his Sabbath, his rest; but he wrought more, to give us an example of labour, and of patience." Elsewhere, he simply states that God "did bestow six daies labor upon the Creation."
Milton, of course, refers to the Creation as "The second kind of

Essays, p.l9» cf. Sermons, IX. 1.47. Devotions, p. 71.
Sermons, VI. 9. 188. Sermons, 11.11.245-46.
Essays, p. 20. ^ Essays, p. 19; cf. Sermons, VIII. 7. 176
1 * Se_rrons, 'fill. 3. 10-. 14° Sermons, III. 11. 254; III. 12. 2 Essays, p. 18; cf. Sermons, VI. 2. 62. Sermons, IV. 2. 76 Ser-cns, nil, 7. 176; cf. IX. 1.47.

56

external efficiency," since in his scheme of things, God has already generated the Son as an external revelation of himself. 3ut in any case, the creation of the world, for several reasons, did not seem to hira as decisive an event as it did to Donne. While in the De poctrina he accepts the definition of time as a measure of motion, he does not see why both time and motion could not "have existed before this world was made." Moreover, various other forms of creation had taken place before the world was made. Qie of these is the highest heaven, which is a dwelling-place for the glory of God; why, Milton asks, should God have waited through eternity until the first of the six days of creation to build such a heaven for himself. Angels too may well have existed long before this world - Milton cites the authority of patristic writers on this point - and also, "it seems likely that that apostasy, as a result of which so many myriads of them fled, beaten, to the lowest part of heaven, took place before even the first beginnings of this world." The Holy Spirit also may have been created before the
"1 A 7

world. Although Kilton says smartly that "Anyone who asks what God did before the creation of the world is a fool; and anyone who answers him is not much wiser, Ir he in fact provides a substantial account
of God's activities before the Creation. This is, of course, even more apparent in paradise Lost than it is in the De Doctrina, since not only
the creation of the angels, but a large proportion of the action of the poem takes place before the creation of the world. Time is referred
to in paradise Lost before the world is created; Raphael, in his account
to Adam of the exaltation of the Son, is able to speak of a "day" in

DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, p.299). 145 DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, pp.313-4). 144

146 DDC, I.711 (Yale VI, p.312; p.313). ' 4 ' DDC, I.VI (Yale VI, p.2^8)
143 DDC, I.VII (Yale '/I, p.299); cf. Tetrachordon, Yale II, p.663.

57

heaven, and explains that time may be a measure of motion even in eternity (V.580-82); similarly, it is possible to speak of man "about this time / To be created" (II.348-49). The devils expect that the passage of time in hell may soften the pain of their torment (II.209-11). It is clear that all the action of God in the poem takes place on a time-scale. On the other hand, however, Raphael tells Adam that his account of Creation as a work of six days will be a myth:

Immediate are the acts of God, more swift
Than time or motion, but to human ears
Cannot without process of speech be told,
So told as earthly notion can receive, (VII.176-79)

and also suggests that the world was made instantaneously when he reports God as saying that he "in a moment will create / Another world" (VII.154-5)' Donne saw the chief purpose of creation as being that God should
receive honour and glory from it. He writes in The Second Anniversarie;

Honour may have pretence unto our love,
Because that God did live so long above
Without this Honour, and then lov'd it so,
That he at last made Creatures to bestow 1.~
Honor on him,

quickly adding, "not that he needed it." He explains that although to receive honour is a peculiar property of God, "he could have none, til he had made Creatures to exhibit it." Not only is the honour of God the chief purpose of Creation, but also of all his decrees: "the last end to which all conduces, is, that God may have glory." God also

152 showed his mercy by creating the world; and made man "to take pleasure in." Elsewhere, however, Donne condemns it as arrogance

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^ 11.401-5; cf. "To the Countesse of Bedford, " 11.1-3 (Satires, p.100).
Essays, p.54. Sermons, X.3.100- Essays, p.63.
155 Sermons, IX.3-99.

to "looke for a reason, why God made a world.,,154

Milton emphasizes that God was not "impelled by any necessity" to create the world. He states in the De Doctrina that God created "IN ORDER TO SHOW THE GLORY OP HIS POWER AND GOODNESS," and quotes a few Scriptural texts in his support; but he does not discuss the Doint . One passage in Paradise Lost reflects this exactly, when Adam and Eve
say that God's works "declare / Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine" (V.158-59); elsewhere, the elements of power and goodness are separated. The Son speaks to the Father of man and the earth, which
"for thy glory thou hast made" (ill.164), and the angels sing, as Creation is completed, that God will "thence diffuse / His good to worlds and
ages infinite" (VII.190-91). However, in Paradise Regained, Milton has the Messiah explicitly deny that God's prime purpose in creation was
that he might receive glory. Satan implies criticism of the Father's desire for glory:

he seeks glory,
And for his glory all things made, all things Orders and governs, nor content in heaven
By all his angels glorified, requires
Glory from men, (ill.110-14)

though at the same time urging that the Messiah should not despise the pursuit of glory for himself. Christ does not counter this argument primarily by pointing out the difference between the glory of God and the glory of man, but by claiming that God's creation was first and foremost a sharing of his goodness:

his word all things produced,
Though chiefly not for srlory as prime end,
But to show forth his goodness, and impart
His good communicable -to every soul
Freely . (ill.122-26)

154 Sermons, VI.9.188. 155 DDC, I.Ill (Yale VI, p.154). DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, P.300; p.305).

59

For this reason, he receives glory as his due, a natural response from the gratitude of man; but he did not create in order to receive it.
So we have no clear answer, as Adam too, when he asks Raphael "for
what cause" (V1I.64) the world was created, receives no reply at all. Raphael does not suggest any theory of the purpose of Creation, and although he reports the speech of the Father saving that the new creation will make good the loss of the fallen angels, repeats the emphasis that such a replacement was not necessary (VII. 145 ff«)» Although Milton
was much interested in the purpose of created things once they had come

157 into being, he seems content to have accepted the fact of their

existence as the starting-point for his thought.
We turn finally to the theory of Ideas, a belief in which Donne
was much interested, and Milton, even when influenced by Plato in his earlier writing, very little. Donne accepted the traditional reinteroret-ation of Plato: he defined the Ideas as "p re- conceptions, pre-

1 Rfl determinations in God," and makes it clear that they had no external

or independent existence: "for though there were no world, that was
elder brother to this world before, yet God in his owne minde and
purpose had produced, and lodged certaine Idea's, and formes, and patterns of every piece of this world, and made them according to those pre-

159 conceived formes, and Idea's." What attracted Donne about this belief

was the insight which it gave into God's ways of working: "God proceeds by example, by pattern;" thus it should be the course of every wise man, as it is of God, first to plan what he is going to do, and then
to execute his plan: "from the meanest artificer, through the wisest Philosopher, to God himselfe, all that is well done, or wisely

DDC, I. VII (Yale VI, p. 310). 1 ^ Sermons, VII. 1-

1 S9 ^ 7 Sermons, IX. 12. 276; cf. IV=3.98; IX. 2. 73-74.
160 3errons_, IV. 3- 98.

undertaken, is undertaken and done according to pre-concertions, fore-imaginations, designes, and patterns proposed to ourselves beforehand," Qi almost every occasion on which Donne refers to Ideas in the sermons, his immediate purpose is to exhort his congregation to foresight and wise planning in their actions, following the example of the saints and

16? the teaching of the Church: "when God himself proceeds upon pre-

conceptions, pre-meditations, shall we adventure to do, or to say any thing in his service unpremeditately, extemporally?" So much is it
a part of a divinely ordained order that every action should follow such a pattern, God pronounced Creation to be good, because it conformed to his eternal pre-conception of it: "And when he had made any thing, he saw it was good: s:ood because it answered the pattern, the Image; good, because it was like to that."
Yet although God acts according to a pattern, the pattern is en-
tirely original; it differs from the plans of men in that nothing has gone before which it may imitate: "God had no external pattern in the Creation, for there was nothing extant." Likewise Christ's life followed a pattern of startling originality; and to conform to this pattern "is onely to be a new Creature." On the other hand, God himself is the Idea of kingship; the necessary relation of God to creation is the type of monarchy: "Of all things God had an Idea, a preconception; but of Monarchy, of Kingdome, God, who is but one, is the Idea." In fact, there is a sense in which, as Donne says, all "these Idaeas and eternall impressions in God, may boldly be said to

167 be God." In Essays, Donne had also felt that the eternal presence

Sermons, VII. 1.60. . Sermons, IV.3.99; VII.1.61.
, 17-3.99. 4 Sermons, IX. 2. 74.
5 Sermons, IV. 3-98; 99. 1 Sermons, IV. 9. 240.

167 Essays, D.29.

61

of every detail of the world in the mind of God, before it was created, gave the world a special dignity: "The greatest Dignity which we can give this world, is, that the Idaea of it is eternall, and was ever in God." This exalts the world, but also deprives it further of the life-principle. Since the Idea of the world has an eternal quality which cannot be attributed to the actual world, it increases Donne's interest in the concept of creation, rather than in the actual creatures.
Milton, however, has only one explicit reference to the Idea, when
in paradise Lost, God finds goodness in the correspondence of the created world to its pattern,

how it showed
In prospect from his throne, how good, how fair, */•*
Answering his great idea.

Elsewhere, however, Milton seems to reject speculation about God's planning of creation; he says in the De Doctrina that "it would clearly be disproportionate for God to have been totally occupied from eternity

170 in decreeing things which it was to take him only six days to create."

Satan's remark that God had not only taken six days to create, but "who knows how long / Before had been contriving " (PL, IX.138-39)r also suggests that God would not have spent eternity planning Creation. But neither of these comments need refer to the traditional Idea.

168 Essays, p.29; of. Essays, p.63.

PL, 711.555-57; there is also an allusion to the Idea at V.574-7^
170 DDG > I-VII (Yale V"1 * P-299).

CHAPTER 2

THE SOUL

I. Introduction

Beliefs about the soul have always occupied a somewhat ambivalent position in the Christian tradition, influenced on the one hand by the Greek philosophers' who tended to make a clea\r distinction between spirit and matter, and on the other by the Hebrew understanding' of
the nature of man, embodied in the Old Testament, which emphasized that both body and soul had a single source in God. In fact, Scrip-ture makes few explicit statements on the nature of the soul; and as we shall see, none of the relevant texts had an obvious explanation. Neither is there any article explicitly concerning- the soul in the Apostles', the Nicene, or the Athanasian Greeds, although it is clearly closely connected with the Resurrection of the Body, to which refer-

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ence is made. The early Fathers, however, though they reached no firm doctrinal standpoint on questions like the soul's origin, immortality, and fate after death, exercised a great deal of thought on them; and their interest was continued by the mediaeval Schoolmen. St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae presents the teaching on the soul which has gained widest acceptance in the Christian Church, and which is still the received doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. But the subtlety

1 e.*. Gen.2.7; Matt. 10.28;* 3cclesia?t-s 9.5 etc.
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Donne claimed that the reason p or this omission wa.^ that the immortality of th^ soul was .^ elf-evident: Sermons, '/III .5 .97-8.

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and coherence of his system by no means ended the debate, which rather gained in strength. The nature of the soul was a question of deep fascination to the Renaissance, and philosophers and theologians alike took up the theme vigorously. Few Protestants were deterred-indeed, they were rather encouraged- by their insistence on the suf-ficiency of Scripture for salvation, and Scripture's seeming reticence on the subject. The Lutheran Musculus raises a protest: " It may seeme
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that y very order of our treatie should leade vs to talke also somwhat of the soule of man. But in my opinion it is better to absteine from medlyng therin, by cause the matter is so obscure and darke," and explains that his caution is approved by his belief in the sufficiency of Scripture: "But yet it is meete for vs to knowe no more herein than is set forth in the holy and canonical! scriptures." But few followed his example, assuming thar they could find in Scripture the answer to any question they cared to ask.
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The crucial text for discussions on the nature-of the soul was Genesis 2.7» which describes the creation of Adam: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This seemed to indicate clearly that man was composed of two elements, bod^f and soul, and that in the first man both had been created directly by God; it also raised many questions. What was the precise meaning of "breath of life" and "living soul", and had the body actually been created before the soul? That man's soul was directly inspired by God had

Wolf -angus Musculus, Common places of Christian Relip-ion, trans
John Man (London, 1563),' fol. I2b.
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A full and representative discussion o r suo'i questions ^ay be
found in 3enedictus Fereri^s, Go^'-ntariorum et Disr^tati -num in Genesim, TO mi '^uat'ior, in two vols. (Coloniae A.rHpoinae, 1-01) t vol. 1, pp.183 ff.» in. his commentary on G^n.2.7» a-n-i ''Di.^putatio de
Creatioie anim^.e rationalis 1 '.

64

suggested to some that the soul therefore shared in the divine substance, and was immortal of its own nature, a belief clearly influenced by Plato. But this did not accord with the traditional distinction made between God the Creator, and his created universe; thus St. Augustine explains to his opponents that even as man can expel a breath without taking from his own substance, so God cnuld produce a breath which
was not of his own substance, even out of nothing. Aquinas makes the same point; we are not to suppose t l -at nan received God's breath in any physical sense:" but for God to 'breathe into 1 means to 'make a spirit 1. Though even when a man breathes in the physical sense, he does not give out some of his own substance, but something of an

7 extraneous nature." At the same time it was recopnized that the soul

of Adam was directly created by God from nothing in a way which was
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quite different from the creation of the souls of animals, and had
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an individual, immaterial subsistence. This continued to be the orthodox position; the soul is typically described by Zanchius as "a spirituall and immortall substance, made of nothing." It was occa-sionally considered necessary to restate opposition to the belief that it was part of the divine substance: Pererius says of it " ridicula

Pererius says that the idea was derived from Cicero's inter-pretation of Plato: In Genesim, vol. 1, p.183 (section 104).
St. Augustine, De Givitate Dei, trans. G.3. McCracken et al.,
Loeb Classical Library (London, 1957-72), XIII.xxiv (vol.17, p.251). 7 S.Th., 1a. 90. art. 1 (vol. XIII, p.5).
8 De Civ, rei, XIII.xxiv (vol. IV, p.249).
9 S.Th., 1a.90. art.2 (vol. XIII, pp. 7-9).
Hi^ronymus Zanchius, His* Conf^ssi^n o f Christian Religion,
^np-lished in sens^e agreeable ... (Cambrid*?-0, 15q 9)» p. 24. All p'afre refer^nc^s to this work are to the text, not t" the Jpistle, which is also numbered in Arabic numerals.

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& absurda h^c opinio est."
However, amongst many of the radicals of the Reformation, an entirely opnosine^ belief e^ew up, ap:ain based on an interpretation of Genesis 2.7 and combined with a scorn for the worldly wisdom of philosophy, which completely denied the independent existence of the soul: it was not a spiritual substance, nut merely the life power of the body; to say that Adam became a "living soul" meant only that he was made to live, phis opinion was attacked by Calvin in the early part of the sixteenth century: " [they I say that it is onely a power
of lyfe, which is ledd by the mouin^r of the pulses, or of Lunges & lytes, and because it canot be without a body, therefore they faine that it dyeth and pearisheth together with the body," and the 1/ adduce Scriptural supnort for their belief: "they sett downe, that God hath placed none other soule in T.an, but such as is common to all ot^er
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beastes. For the scripture attributeth to al equaly , a liuing soule." Very similar points are made in the mid-seventeenth century by Richard Overton, General Baptist and champion of the mortality of the soul: man's sou' is the "property of life," and identical with the soul of
a beast. In fact, the whole idea of spiritual substance is a "ridiculous invention ... traducted frorr the Heathens ." This interpretation
does receive support from the close connection in Hebrew of the ideas

Pererius, In Genesim, vol. 1, p.183 (sect.104); see also
Zanchius, Confession, p.26.

12 John Calvin, An excellent treatise of the Immortalytie of the soule, trans. T. Stocker (London,1581)» fol. 2r; fol. 40r. All quota-tions from Calvin's Psychopann.ychia (first published in 1542) are taken from this, the first complete Dn^lish edition.
Rfichard] 0 I vert on] , yarrs Mortal 1 itie (Amsterdam, 1^43), p.1»
p. 39 (incorrectly numbered p. 38); p. 11,~ ?or the attribution of this par ph let, see P. Zacrnrin," rhe A'lthorshin of :,;ans "ortallitJQ," The Library, 5th. series, 7 (1950-1), 17^-^3. Although, the titl« pa*re states the Dlace of publication as A^s t^^iar,, it w".s in fact London.

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of Life, breath, and the soul; the word nephesh (the anima vivens of Gen. 2.7) is often translated "soul" in '^glish versions of the 3ible, when all that is really meant is "life". And George Conklin cites quotations from Hebrew lexicons of the seventeenth century which agree in defining the word as the whole, livinpr being.
Those who believed in the independent subsistence of body and
soul had also to solve the question of the order of their creation. The order most naturally suggested by Genesis is that the body was created first, and the-i the soul, a view advanced by Chrysostom who said that it was fitting for the soul, noblest of creatures, to be created last. Others took it to mean tha^ God brought to the body after its creation a soul whic^ he had previously made. This view again derived ultimately from plato, who had stated that all souls were

17 created together at the b^inn'.ng of the world, and it was given

a Christian interpretation by Driven, who tauerht that thev were later

18 confined to bodies as a punishment for sin. Augustine too, although
no Origenist, allows the possibility that Adam's soul may have been created before his body: "Either he had irplanted in him by breathing
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a soul that he had already made, or had rather created it by breathing." To Aquinas, however, this sup-p-ested a denigration of the body which
he could not permit. Influenced by Aristotle, for whom body and soul

3ee H.'iV. Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man, 3rd- ed.
(Edinburp-h, 192o), pp. 14-16.
G.N. Coiklin, jiblical Criticism an-! Heresy in Milton (New
York, 1949), pp. 77-79-
Jt. John Chr/sostom, Homiliae in Genes in, PG 53- 104.

17 Timaeus, 41d.
1 ft Oric-en, ue Prinolpiis, trans .I-VCro^.bie, ANCLvol. 10 (Sdinbur^h,
, in. 7.4 "
1 9
De Giv» Dei^ Xll.xxiv (vol.17, p. 11 5).

67

20 are a unity in "the most proper and fundamental sense," he taught
that body and soul were natural to one another, forming a perfect whole. If the soul had been created first it would have meant either that the soul did not need the body for its perfection, or that per-fection was at first lacking to the soul: "It is, however, contrary to the whole notion of the perfection of the original establishment of things that God should have made either the body without the soul or
the soul without the body, since each is a part of human nature." The explanation of the Genesis text, therefore, is that its second part is

21 an amplification of the phrase "formed man." This remained the stand-
22 ard position, as expounded by Pererius, although some still thought
that the body had been made first, like the Galvinist 'William Ames:

25 "For the body was first prepared, and afterward the soule was inspired'.'

How far, then, was the creation of Adam to be taken as a pattern
for the creation of subsequent men? Clearly Adam's body alone was
formed by God from the dust; all other men were his descendants by

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natural generation. But where did their souls come from? As we have

25
seen, Orisren taught the pre-existence of souls, but while he found a few followers, most of the Greek Fathers rejected the idea, and it was expressly condemned at the Synod of Constantinople in 5^3: "Let him be anathema who asserts the fabulous pre-existence of the soul."

2°je Anima.412b. 1 S.Th., 1a. 91. art.4 (vol. XIII, p.33).

22 In Genesim, vol. 1, pp.182-3 (sects.101-2); pp.184-5 (sects.
110-11).

25 William Ames, The Harrow of Sacred Divinity (London, 1642), p.43; cf. Sir Thomas jrowne, Relig-io Medici, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford Clarendon press, 19^4), 1.36 (p.35).

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See AUP-MS tine, ^e Civ. :^i, XIII.iii (vol. IV, pp.l/H-j).
ue Principiis, II.IX.1 (po.126-7).

26 Rooinson, Doctrine of ^'an, po.161-2.

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The second possibility was the theory of Traducianism, that the soul is transmitted from the'parents to the children in the act of genera-tion; its chief, though by no means its only exponent was Tertullian, who combined it with the belief, drawn from the Stoics, that the soul 27
was a material substance, though as light and tenuous as possible. The third and prevalent theory in both East and ,7est was Creationism: that God creates ex nihilo a new soul for every human being at its conception, or birth, or at some time between the two. As Jerome

28 wrote, "God is daily-making souls." Augustine, developing the asso-

ciated doctrine of original sin, confessed himself unable to make up

29 his mind on the question, and was later cited as an authority on

both sides of the argument, Aquinas, however, in what was a^ain to become the Roman standpoint, insisted that Greationism was the only acceptable theory: he says of the soul, "since it is a non-material entity it cannot be caused by being venerated, but solely through creation by God;" and Traducianism is but the first step towards worse heresy: "Therefore to hold that the intellectual soul is caused by the one generating is the same as holding that it is not an independent entity and so can suffer dissolution with the body."
This certainly continued as the most widely-held opinion after the

32 Reformation, but while it is invariably stated by Roman writers,

27 Tertullian, De Anima, trans. p. Holmes, ANCL vol. 15 (Edin-
burgh, 1870), XXVII (pn.474-76).

28 St. Jerome, To Pamriachius, in Letters and Select ,','orks, trans.
W.H. Fr-r-antle et al., NPf iF vol. T/I (Edinburgh, 1893), sect.22 (p.434).

29 3t. Augustine, Letter 166, to Jer^.re, trans. 3r. 7/ilfrid
Parsons, in ?C vol. 30 (New York, 1955), ch.7, p.13; ch.10, Dp.15-16.

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e.r. Milton, DDC^I.VTI (Yale /I, p. z 1)); Donne, ^r-ons, 7.17.M9
3.Th.; 1a.118. art.-"5 (vol. XV, p.153).
e.p-. Per^rius, In Gen-'sim, vol.1, p.1° ''^ect. 1 15).

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Protestants obviously felt more doubtful about the matter. Peter du Moulin the elder, pastor of the French Reformed Congregation at Gharenton, suggests that Traducianism is a heresy characteristic of the Arminians and, having listed patristic references for various theories of the soul's origin, states his own certainty that "the reasonable soule is infused into the embryon." But traducianists could have widely varying reasons for their belief. Daniel Sennert, Professor of Medicine at tfittenberg, saying that he will argue from reasons of natural philosophy, rather than theology, asserts that the soul must be generated, since "Quicquid enim pertinet ad integritatem naturae humanae esnentialem, id propagat per generationem." He goes on to reason that this does not imply the mortality of the soul, any more than Greationism, since all created things are mortal by nature. Richard Overton, on the other hand, uses Traducianism to support his mortalism: "as Fish, 3irds, and Beasts each in their kind procreate their kind without any transcendency of nature: So man in his kind berets man, corruptable man begets nothing but what is corruptable." The Jesuit, Guy Holland, however, in his reply to Mans '-.Tort alii tie, claims that Sennert's opinion implies mortalism as much as Overton 1 s. Other writers, even some of those who state their own opinion, stress that this is a question on which th^re is no certain knowledge. Sir Thomas Browne confesses that "either opinion will consist well enough

37 with religion" and the Lutheran, John Gerhard, whose exposition of

peter du :.;oulin, The Anatomy of Arminianisme (London, 1620), pp.66-7.
Daniel Sennert, physica H.vpomnerata (Luerduni, 1637), D.261.
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;,:ans :.'.ortallitie, p.46.
Qjuy Holland], The p-^r^p-ativq of Man (n. p., 1r>45), p.40.
z Y

Re lip-to Medici , i. z o (p.3 1?).

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Lutheran, theology lone: remained standard, wrote "As concerning- the question about the production of souls, whether by way of Propagation, or by a dayly and immediate Creation; we doe not dislike the modes tie of those, which say, That it is sufficient for them to beleeve and know whither they shall come by living a godly life, although they
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be ignorant frorr whence they came."
Greationists had also to answer the question of when the newly-created soul is infused into the embryo, whether at conception, or at some later time. Aristotle had conjectured that the embryo was endowed at conception with a principle of vegetative life only, which develops into a sensitive soul after a few days, and is later succeeded by a rational soul; he thought that true human life was not present in the male embryo before forty days, and in the female before eighty or

39 ninety. Aquinas, who follows this theory of the three-fold soul,

with the exception that he believed in the direct creation of the rational soul by God, was thought to have agreed with these
numbers. So the body in some sense existed before it was "made rran": "Therefore it must be said that the intellective soul is created by God at the completion of man's coming- into-being. This soul is at one and the same time both a sensitive and nutritive life-principle, the preceding forms having been dissolved." John Woolton, later

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John Gerhard, The Summe of Christian Doctrine, trans. Ralph
V/interton (Cairn ridere, 1640), p,79»

39 De Generatione Animalium,735a, 73&a; see also The New Catholic Encyclopedia (New fork, 1967)» under "Soul, Human, Origin of."
S.Th., 1a. 118. art.2 (vol. XV, pp.153 ff.)» S.Th., vol. XV,
p.159 note. The numbers 40 and 80 are also found in Philo, Qua°stiones et Solutinnes in Genesin et Sxoflum, 1.2% who says tha u this is the tirre required to "oerfect" the child.
41 S.Th., 1a. 118. art. 2 (vol. XV, p.155).

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3ishop of Exeter refers to "diuerse aunciente Writers who affirme that God frameth anewe euerye momente reasonable soules, at such tyme as the childe is in bodye parfyted in his mothers wombe, (which, as they gesse, in a marine childe is about the fourty day, in a woman childe about the 90 day)."4 Those who held that the child is quickened by the rational soul from the moment of conception tended, like Gregory of Nys.=?a and Daniel Sennert, to be associated with

Traducianism.

The doctrine of the propa^ati n of the soul is closely linked
with beliefs about original sin, and the sense in which all men have fallen in Adam. Scriptural passages, like 1 Corinthians 15.2, and Romans 5»12-21, which provide the authority for the doctrine of origi-nal sin, present an inherent contradiction between the idea of "inherited" sin, and a personal and voluntary assent to the sin of
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Adam. Traducianism obviously provided a complete explanation of the transmission of Adam's sin, and the unity of mankind in his fall, but many felt that this theory left no room for the individual free-will, and that it suggested that only the disease and not the guilt was trans-mitted. Creationism, on the other hand, seemed to make God directly responsible for the evil in man's nature. Augustine, as we have seen, although he realized the harmony of Traducianism with his teaching

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on original sin, did not make up his mind about the matter. St. Thomas Aquinas outlines the arguments concerned in both Traducianism

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John #00Iton, A Treatise of the Immortalitie of the Soule
(London, 1576), fol.18r-v. See also Thomas Vicary, The English Mans Treasure (London, 1596), p.7l» where a different figure is ?iven.
See J.N.D. Kelly, garly -Christian Doctrines, 5th. ed. (London,
1977), p.345.
44 Au,~ustine, De Gen. ad Litt., 10.23-6, 5 L?-t .34.425-28.

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45 and Creationism, but insists firstly that the subject of original sin must be the rational soul, and secondly that Traducianism, by implying that original sin is handed on as an inherited physical defect, rules out culpability. The correct approach, he says, is this: "All who are bom of Adam can be considered as one man by reason of sharing the one nature inherited from the first parent," and we sin volun-tarily by the will of the race as a whole. St. Thomas was a Great ionist, but he denies that the flesh infects the soul, since the "flesh of

46 itself" cannot be the subject of original sin, and also that the soul itself is contaminated in its creation. It is, in fact, human nature which is the seat of original sin, in our ^ystical solidarity with Adam, and human nature is the unity of both body and soul:"it
is of the nature of the human, soul to come into being only when united to the body. 1 ' 46
Most, though not all theologians, found original sin most satis-factorily explained as beinf present in the conjunction of body and soul. William Perkins, perhaps to emphasize the Galvinist belief in the complete depravity of man, says, with little concern for God's justice: "The propagation of sinne, from the parents to the children, is either because the soule is infected by the contagion of the body, as a good ointment by a f us tie vessell: or because God, in the very moment of creation & infusion of soules into infants, doth vtterly
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forsake them." But it is more usual among both Creationists and Traducianists to try to absolve God of responsibility for original

3.Th.f 1a.2ae. 81. art.1 (vol. XXVI, pp.5 ff.)? ibid - P«9
46 S.Th., 1a.2ae. 8}. art. 1 {vol. XXVT, p. 49); ibid. p. 51.
^illiam Perkins, A Go Men Chaine, or The Description of Th^olo^ie, rrans Lated by an otheT^London, 1591), si^. C}r.

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sin; du Moulin and Overton, on opnosite sides of the debate, make the same points: God does not infuse a sinful soul into man, "for it must needs be some damnable wicked spirit, or some Divell that God puts in him," nor a pure soul into a corrupt body: "For to include a pure and innocent soule in a stinking prison, and to thrust it, as it were, into a bridewell, that it might bee corrupted there, does not seeme

49 to agree with the iustice and goodnesse of God." Gerhard repeats the theory that "The whole man is the subject of originall sin"; and summarizes the chief ways in which we participate in Adam's sin:

Adam was, and in him were we all: Adam was undone; and
in him are we all undone....
If the parents lands be confiscate, their children lose
their inheritance.
From a corrupted root spring forth evil fruits; from an
impure fountain flow forth filthy waters; and of parents
which arej-ieprous, children also are begotten which are
leprous.

It was in the union of body aid soul that original sin was to be found; what, then, was the relationship between them? Aristotle, giving an outline of earlier beliefs about the nature of the soul,
says that the two main schools of thought had defined the soul respec-tively as the originator of movement, and as that which perceives. Those who define it oy perception are led to the conclusion that the

52 soul must be formed from the elements, since like is known by like.

Aristotle denies both that movement is the defining principle of the

' Vans Mortaliitie, p.45 (wrongly numbered 44); cf. Anatomy, p.65. Anatomy, p.66; cf. rap 3 '.:ort alii tie, p.45-
Summe, p.90; pp.86-7-
51 De Anima,403b.ff. 52 cf. Plato, Timaeus,A1d.

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soul, and that the soul can know only what is like itself. Neither of these, he says, considers the reason for which the soul was placed in the body. Its purpose is to inform the body: 11 It is substance in the sense which corresponds to the definitive formula of a thing's essence. That means that it is 'the essential whatness' of a body." The body and soul are mutually defining:" That is why we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and body are one: it is as meaningless as to ask whether the wax and the shape eriven to it by the stamp are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter." The emphasis of Aristotle on body and soul as a fundamental unity was to become a part of the traditional Christian understanding of the subject. Aquinas, arguing against the proposition that "the soul is the man" asserts: "it is plain that man is no rrere soul, but a compound of soul and body." He taught that the soul was the form of the body, but also that, unlike the body, it was an in-dependent subsistence, even though it existed as a part. It could not carry on all the activities of the body alone, being dependent
on the body for sensation, but could continue after its separation from the body in death, and retained the powers of will and under-standing. Most writers continued to insist on this fundamental
unity of man; we have seen how it was used as an argument for the
57 simultaneous creation of Adam's body and soul. On the other hand, this emphasis on unity was clearly a powerful weapon in the hands of
the mortalists, who assumed it was so fundamental that separation was

^ De Anima,4l2b. ^4 S.Th., 1a.73. art.4 (vol.XI, D.19).
55 SVTh., 1a.75.art.2 (XI, 9*-13). 5 S.Th., 1a. 77.art.8 (XI, 115-7)

See Dr. 66-6? above.

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impossible: man was therefore "a Compound wholy mortall".
The Platonic tradition, however, was also strong in Christian thought. For Plato , the body had been a later and unwelcome addition 59 to the soul, a prison-house and an obstacle to the pursuit of that knowledge which was the soul's true destiny: " while we are in the body, and while the soul is mixed with the evils of the body, our desire will not be satisfied; and our desire is of the truth." This thought manifests itself in various ways. It is present behind the belief that the soul can continue to live without the body; and many Christian writers display a tendency to speak of the soul as the body's prisoner: "yet such is the true unhappiness of our condition, and the dark ignorance which covereth the eyes of our understanding, that we only prize, pamper, and exalt this vassal and slave of death, and forget altogether (or only remember at our cast-away leisure) the im-prisoned immortal soul." For examples of seventeenth-century thinkers who emphasized the separation of body and-soul in very different ways, we have the Cambridge platonists and Descartes. Descartes was to make again the absolute division between body and soul, between thought and extension, and to claim that the existence of the soul was in no way
£y

dependent on that of the body. This meant that the complete other-ness of the soul could not be described in words either of image or sensation, although Descartes has given an interesting description
of his instinctive picture of it: " I imagined that it was something

Mans Mortallitie, title page. Timaeus,41d-42d.
Phaedo,66b.
Walter Ralegh, The Histcxry of The World, in The yorVs of Sir
Walter Ralegh, 8 vols. (Oxford, 1329), vol.11, pp.^4-5-
Rene Descartes, Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting
the Reason, in The philosophical ;<r^rk3, traris. E.3. Haliane and 3.R. T. Ross (Cambridge, 1931), vol.1, D.101.

76

extremely rare and subtle like a wind, a flame, or an ether, which was spread throughout my grosser parts." He dissociated "himself" as much as he could from the body; the "I" of the famous definition refers only to the soul.
The problem of how the soul interpreted the body's knowledge, or
acted upon the body, was much influenced by Plato's dictum that two things are best conjoined by a third; this meant that Galen's physio-logical theory of spirits was enthusiastically received by the Middle Ages, and continued to be believed until the seventeenth century. There were three kinds of spirits, thought of as rarefied and pure substances, the "natural", "vital", and "aninal" spirits, formed respectively in the liver, the heart, and the brain, and distributed by the veins,
the arteries, and the nerves. Spirits are referred to by Aquinas, as by most mediaeval writers. In the sixteenth century, they are described thus by Thomas yicary: "a spirite that is clearer, brighter, and sub-tiller then any corporall or bodily thing1 that is engendred of the foure Elements: For it is a thing that is a rneane betweene the Bodie

6S and the Soule." Descartes, who also needs them to bridge the gap between body and soul says that they are like "a very subtle wind,
or rather a flame which is very pure and very vivid."
It is clear that the body is mortal; what then of the soul? It
was widely accepted that G-od had originally created Adam for immor-tality in both body and soul, conditional on his continuing obedience. This point is made by Augustine, who further explains: "For God had not made huma' beine-s in the same way as angels, that is, incapable

The First philosophy, ibid., vol.1, p.115-

64 J.Th.t 1a. 111. art.3 t^vol.XY, p.27).
65 ^6
Treasure, p.35. Discourse, vol. I, D.115*

77

67 of dying under any circumstances, e-'r en though they should have signed,"

and Aquinas agrees; "his soul was equipped by God with a supernatural force capable of preserving- the body from all decay, as lonp- as it

fifl remained submissive to God itself." Gerhard goes so far as to say
69 that death is "not the naturall condition of man" though George

Hakewill claims that even before the ?all, the body was naturally

70 "dissoluble and mortall." But while the death of the body was uni-
versally accepted as the punishment for Adam's sin, there was a wide-spread belief that, the soul continued immortal by nature. The reasons for this were not Scriptural, though Scriptural texts could be adduced, but almost entirely philosophical: while all writers ultimately referred the soul's preservation toGod, many believed that he had made it immortal, rather than that he continued by grace to preserve it. Aquinas explains that it could only cease to be if God withheld being from it, and not because it had any tendency towards non-existence.

72 It is immortal "since it subsists in its own right" and further
sign of this is found in that man feels in his own soul a desire for

73 immortality. This belief in natural immortality is echoed in the

seventeenth century by both Catholics and Protestants: Thomas Browne

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says that souls subsist "by the priviledge of their proper natures;"
75 the V/estminster Confession calls the soul "an immortal subsistence;"
and the Jesuit, Guy Holland, says that the soul

7 pe Civ. Dei, Xll.xxii (vol.IV, p.111); XIII.i (vol.IV, p.135).
8 o.Th., 1a.97* art.1 (vol.XIII, p.139). Summe, p.75.
George Hakewill, An Apolog'ie of the power and pr^vid^nc^ of
God (Oxford, 162?), p.145.
71 3.Th.,1a.75*art.6 (vol. a, p.33). 72 ibid. art.2 (vol.XI, p. 11)
* ibid. art.6 (vol. XI, p.31). Reli^io Me-iici, i.37 (p.36).

75 Ch.XXXII; Phi lit) och-iff, rh° Creeds o r the :.v angelical ?r" test-
ant Church--s (London, 1877)» p.670.

78

being- "of a simple uncompounded nature" cannot "perish by corruption." Some Reformers, however, including Calvin and <ullin~er, successor to
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Zwingli at Zurich, placed more emphasis on the soul's dependence on God, qualifying its irr^ortality: "the soule of man is both mortall and
77 immortal1 after a certaine manner of his owne."
The immortality of the soul as an independent subsistence was
the dominant tradition; but we have already seen that thpre was a stroner minor tradition among the more radical reformers of denying-the existence or activity of the soul apart from the bcdy, and teach-

78 ing its annihilation, death, or sleep at the death of the body.

Eusebius, in the third century had noted the so-called "Arabian" heresy "that human souls at the determined time perish for a while together with the bodies at their death, but that at the time of the resurrection will be revived with them," and that it was condemned by

79 Origen. The Arabian heresy was certainly known in the seventeenth
fln

century,, being referred to by Sir Thomas Browne, and also by Guy

81 Holland who cites all the references to Eusebius and Augustine,

but neither this, nor the sceptical, philosophical tradition of Epicurus, Averroes and Pomponazzi was the main influence on the Christian mortalist thinkers, who claimed to base their doctrine firmly

prerogative, p.23.

77 Henry Bulliifer, piftie Godlie and Learned Sermons, diuided
into fiue Decades, trans. H.I. (London, 1577), p.7^3; see also Calvin, Immortalytie, fols,76v-77r-
See pp.^5-6 aocr-;for a full discussion of this tradition, see
Norman T. Burns, Christian "ortalism from Tyndale to "ilton (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972).

79 Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, trans. R.J. De^rrari, 2 vols.,
FC vols. 19 and 29 (y/aching-ton, 1953-5), vol. II, p.o~2; see also Augustir.e, De haer., i.83, F.IAt. 42.46.

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Reli^io Medici, i.7 (pn.7-^). Prerogative, p. 2,

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82

on Scripture. There were three main streams of thought which denied the unbroken and independent immortality of the soul. Firstly there were the annihilationists, found amongst radical sects, such as the Fa^ilists in the sixteenth century and the Ranters and Muggletonians in the seventeenth, who, recognizing no external authority in spiritual matters, interpreted Scripture as referring entirely to the present life; they claimed that there was no resurrection, either of body or soul, although some of them believed in an impersonal immortality as part of the divine essence. Their denial of an after-life of rewards and punishments was rierhtly regarded,in their case, as undermining morality. The other two groups, believing respectively in the sleep-,
or death of the soul (psychopannychists and Thnetopsychists) were consid-erably more orthodox, though thought equally dangerous by th^ir contemporaries, and they claimed that not only were their beliefs drawn directly from Scripture, but were more clearly in accordance with the rest of their faith than the doctrine of immortality, since they emphasized the central importance of the Resurrection, and convincing-ly refuted the Roman doctrine of Purgatory. The Psychopannychists did, in fact, believe that the soul was an immortal substance, but that it slept between death and resurrection, having neither thought nor feeling. The English soul-sleeping tradition developed from the belief of Luther, who says in his commentary on Scclesiastes 9«5» "I thinke there is not a place in the scrinture of more fo^ce for the dead that are fallen in sleepe, vnderstanding naught of our state and condition, agaiist the inuocation of Saintes and *"iction of pir~atory," and speaks

8??or an outline of the phrilosonhical background, see George Wiiliamson, "Milton and the Mortal ist Her-sy", 3P,32 (1955), 553-79. //illiamsoi, however, is mistaken in placing yilton so firmly in this tra-iition; for a refutation of his position, see r«.H. Hen**y, "Milton and Hoboes: rortalism and the Intermediate State", SP,48 (1^51),
49, and ^ums, Dc.?00-01.

80

of "that secret withdrawing: place, where the dead sleepe out of this

8 "S lyfe"; Luther was attacked by Thomas More, and defended by Tyndale

in 1530, who claimed that the Roman doctrine of Purgatory contaminated Christianity with "the fleshly doctrine of Dhilosophers." But Luther's doctrine was not adopted by the Lutheran Church, and lost its respectability as it became associated entirely with conventicles. The Thnetopsychists, however, believed that the soul was nothing-other tnan the breath of life; by definition, therefore, it died
with the body, and was resurrected with it. This is a more elusive tradition, rarely slven expression in writing, and known chiefly through the attacks of its enemies; it is, however, fully expounded by the tract Mans "ortallitie, published by Richard Overton in 1643, in which he adduces the support of both Scripture and reason. He argues throughout from the unity of the whole man, stressing at the same time his belief in a final resurrection:

man hath not wherewith at all to boast no more then of dirt
vnder his feet, but is provoaked wholy out of himselfe, to
cast himselfe wholy on Jesus Christ with whome in God our
lives are hid, that when he who is our life shall appeare,
he mie-ht also with him appeare in glory, to whpme be the
honour of our immortality for ever, and ever.

jut while the mortalists committed little to writing-, there is plenty of evidence both of their existence, and the concern which they caused to the orthodox. Calvin, in 1542, published his Psycho-pannychia ap-ainst them, affirming:"Howbeit we say and maintayne the soule to be a substaunce, and tha" it liueth in very deede, aft^r

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Martin ^uthe 1", An Exposition of Galomons Booke, called 3ccle-sia:~r:es or the preacher (London,* 1573)» f.148r-v; f . 15lv.

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',Vi 1 1 i am Tynd a I * , An Anrver to 31^ ;h...m3,s MO re's :ialop-ue, ed .
H. falter, park-^r 3oc. Reprint (Ca-Tri^e, 1350), p. 180. "ans ^o^tallitie, p.^n (ir.^^-r^ctlv n'j-'^^r^d 57).

81

- 86

the body is dead, hauing sence and vnderstadin^"; it is clear from this that he condemned equally the doctrines of the sle^p, and the death of the soul. Both beliefs were condemned by Edward's Forty-Two ft T ftp
Articles of 1553» and in 164? by the Westminster Confession.

89 Zanchius censures them, and Pachard Baxter testifies to the popu-
larity of the belief: "The Socinians & many others of late among; us, think that the soul separated f ron the body, is either nothing-, or at

90 least not capable of happiness or misery." "The Presbyterian, Thomas
Edwards, in his collection of contemporary heresies among- the sects, gives the impression that various kinds of mortalism were widespread throughout the country; he lists eleven relevant heresies, representing both psychopannychism and Thnetopsychism, and also includes an account of a debate on the soul's mortality amongst a congregation of General Baptists early in 1646, in which Richard Overton seems to have been
i j 91 involved.
For those who believed in the unbroken immortality of the soul,
and the orthodox definition of death as the separation of soul and

92 body, what happened t ^ the soul between death and the General

Immortalytie, f.2r.
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art. XL; Charles Hard wick, A History of the Articles of
Religion, 3rd. ed., rev. Francis Procter (London, 1876), p. 348.

88 89 Ch. XXXII. 1; Schaff, p. ^70. Confession, p. 258.
90 Richard Baxter, The Saints Everlasting Rest, 2nd. ed. (London, 1651), part II, pp. 298-99; an example of such a statement by a Socin-ian may be found in Qjoachim Step^.^nn], Brevis Disquisitio, [trans. John Bidle] (London, 1653), pp. 26-29.

91 Thomas Edwards , Gangraena;' Or a Catalogue and Discovery of many
of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious practices of t"h"q Sectaries of this time ... 2nd, *>A. (London, 1646), I, pp. 20-1, 2h-7; III,~pp. 8-9; II, pp. 17-18. "hi? is th-= ^waHs ^ondp-inel by "ilton
in "Cn the .N'ew forcers of Con.^ience. "

92.g. A-ip-ustine, Je Civ. D p it XIII. vi (vol. 17,n. 1 53).

82

Resurrection? The traditional Roman theory had been the doctrine of Purgatory: those who have died in grace undergo a pure-ing- still due
to their forgiven sins, though they may be admitted to the si^ht of

93 God before the Last Judgment. It was expounded fully by Thomas Aquinas,

and defined as the official teaching of the Western Church at the Councils of Lyon (1274) and Florence (1439). The Reformers, teaching that salvation was by faith alone, rejected this theory comnletely-

94 in the words of Gerhard, "Away then with Pursratorie" - and it was
attacked by all Protestants as a popish superstition. The alternatives which regained to the Protestant Churches were either that the soul waited in some outplace until the Resurrection, or that it was ad-mitted to the Beatific Vision immediately upon death. Calvin, while

95 maintaining that it was not a matter of faith, presented a carefully-
devised scheme, in which the souls of the faithful go directly to their reward, and rest in a state of blessedness which was yet incomplete

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until the Resurrection: "seing a farre of y reward to come, doe reast themselues in the sure hope of the resurrection." An immediate possession of heaven became the most popular belief, though, the difficulty of maintaining at the same time the central importance of the Resurrection, is obvious:

The soule ... may imr.ediatlye, after departure from the
bod'ye, be transported into the kingdome of heauen ...
Soules being once in heauen, remaine there till the last

95 3t. Thomas Aquinas, 3umma Theologica, trans. Fathers of the
English Dominican Province, 20 vols. (London, 1911-25), Supp. LXIX. art. 2 (vol. 18, pp.4-7).

94 Summe, p.294.

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John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. J.T.
McNeill, trans. ?.L. Battles, 2 vols., Library of Jh ri a >. i-JT. Jlassi-s vols. XX and XXI (Philadelphia, 1960), III, xxv.6 (vol. II, pp.^97-8).

83

day of iudgement, where they partly magnifie the Name of
God, and partlye doe waite, and praye for the consummation
of the kingdome of glorie, and full felicitie in body and
soule." '

Hakewill suggests that as the soul may sin, or serve God, without the

99 body, it merits an extra period of reward or punishment. Jeremy

Ta.ylor attempts to avoid the danger of implying that the resurrection of the body is superfluous by maintaining on patristic authority that the souls are kept in "secret receptacles" until the General Resurrect-ion: "The Greek and many of the Latin fathers taught ... that no soul enters into the supreme heaven, or the place of eternal bliss, until

99 the day of judgment."
A belief in the resurrection of the body, after the example of
Christ, is a fundamental article of Christian faith, and appears in the earliest Creeds. St. Augustine denies the belief of pagan philo-sophers that: the soul will rejoice to be freed from the body: "it is not the body as such but a corruptible body that is burdensome to the soul," and he pictures the faithful souls in heaven as "they

101 longingly and patiently await the resurrection of their bodies."

The body will then be in perfect obedience and submission to the soul. Aquinas maintains that it is the perfect state of a soul to exist in a body, and that; the soul must inevitably lose some of its powers when it is separated from the body. The Resurrection of Christ is alike the cause of resurrection for both our souls and our bodies 9

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perkins, Golden Ghalne, sig,33v-S4r; cf. Zanchius, Confession,
p. 258; Gerhard, Summe, po. 294-5? Bullinger, Decades, p. 76?.

98 Apologie, p. 454-

"°jeremy ray lor, A Dissuasive from Popery, in ,Vhole .Yorks, ei.
C.P. Eden, X vols. (London, 184"7-54J, vol. VI, p. 197; p. 196.
100 e.g. Plato, phaedo,^7e-^8b.

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pe Civ. Dei, XIII.xvi (vol.17, p.187); XIII.xx (vol.IV, p.213)

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102 the pattern. At some periods there has been a very literal inter-

pretation of the body's resurrection; at others more emnhasis has been placed on 3t. Paul's expression "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15.4). St. Augustine notes thar, some people interpret this as meaning: "it will be changed into spirit," * but for himself he affirms that "the saints will possess at resurrection those very bodies in which they toiled in this life." This interpretation was resoundingly echoed by theologians of the seventeenth century: God would re-form men. of the very particles of dust into which their bodies were resolved. Perkins thus describes the expected scene:

Now at the sound of the trumpet, the elect, which were dead,
shall arise with their bodies: and those very bodies, which
were turned to dust, and one part rent from another, shall
by the omnipotent power of God, be restored, and the soules
of them shall descend from heauen, and bee brought againe into those bodies.

The difficulties of this belief were fully recognized:

'What, saith the Atheist and the Sadduce, shall all these
scattered bones and dust become a man? A man drowned in the
Sea is eaten by fishes, and they by men again, and these r-en
by worms; what is become of the body of that first man?
shall it rise again?

But the answer is a simple one:" Thou fool (for so Paul calls thee,)
dost thou dispute against the power of the Almighty?"
It would be the sarre body, and yet, in some important respects,

10? 3.Th., 1a. 90. art.4 (vol. Kill, p. 15).
S.Th., la. 77. art.8 (vol. XI, pp. 115-7).
S_/rh., 3a. 56. arts. 1 and 2 (vol. LV, pp.67-75).
De Civ. Dei, XIII-xx (vol. 17, D.21}); e.f. Grieren, De Principiis, III.VI.6 (ANCL vol. X, pp.2^9-71*).
De Civ Dei, XIII.xix (vol. IV, p.211).
Golden Chaine, sifr. S5r. 3axt^r, Saints Rest, Part I, p. 55.

different: " the verie same bodies, touching the substance, of euerie one, which died, shal rise again, though diuersly altered in some

107 qualities." What were to be the qualities of the resurrection

body was a question of much fascination. Aue*ustine provides a compre-hensive list of its characteristics; it will be incorruptible, and will move with the utmost ease; it will take its own most perfect form,
the size which pertained to it in youth; it will be free from all deformity, and endowed with beauty; it will retain the ability to eat

108 and drink if it wishes, but the compulsion will be removed. All
of these qualities were debated by the Schoolmen; Aquinas describes
at great length its four peculiar attributes as impassibilitas,

109 agilitas, subtilitas, and claritas. These thoughts are again re-
peated in the seventeenth century. Perkins says of the glorified body: "All the bodies of the Elect, shall be made like the glorious bodie of Christ lesus, and therefore shall be spirituall, immortall, glorious, and free from all infirmitie." Richard Sheldon describes thus the four scholastic qualities:

Impassibilitie, Subtillity, Agility, Clarity: Impassibilitie
whereby the body is made uncapable of any contrary passion,
or violent impression: Subtillity, whereby the body is made
not a Spirit, but like unto a Spirit, to bee able to
penetrate, or passe where it could not before: Agility,
whereby it is indewed with such a velocity and Swiftnes,
that the beatified may followe the Lambe whithersoever he
goeth; Clarity, wherby al deformitie, or naturall obscurenesse being taken away, the body becomes bright, shining and re-
plendent. 111

107 Zanchius, Confession, p.26l.
108 De Civ. Dei, Xlll.xviii (Vol. IV, pp.199-205); XXII.xv (711,
pp. 277-79); XXII.xix (VTI, pp.289-95); XIII.xxii (IV, p.223).

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109 gunra Theolo^ica (20 vols.), Supp. LXXXII-LXXXV (vol.18, pp Golden Chaine, sig. 35r.

1i1 Richard ,heldon, '!ans Last Snd (London, 1634), p.70.

II. Donne and Milton

Few of Donne's deeply-held beliefs about the soul seem to have
had their origin in speculation about the creation of the first man, Adam, or in his exposition of Genesis 2.7. There is no extant sermon of Donne's on this text, and the two which he delivered on Genesis
1.26 ("And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness") do not give much consideration to the process of Adam's making. He refutes in passing; the idea that the first soul shared in the divine nature: it came from God, but " Not immediately so, as that the soule

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of man is a part of the Essence of God." But the most interesting point which comes out of the small number of passa^s in which Donne considers Adam's creation, is that not only does he seem to believe that Adam's body was made before his soul, but he thinks of the body, rather than the soul, as being "man". In his Saster sermon of 1623, Donne invites us to imagine the scene in paradise, and to watch God "take a clod of red earth, and make that wretched clod of contemptible earth, such a body as should be fit to receive his breath"; and it is clear from later passages that "Adam" himself is identified with "that red earth, which he was made of." In an undated sermon on Psalm 32.8, Donne says "of a clod of earth he made a body, and into

4 that body infused a soule." The first of the two sermons on Genesis

1.26 under the sectioft entitled "hominem", considers only the clay of

Ser-.ons , IX.1 and 2. oer-ons , IX.2.79. 17.14.352; /1.7.159. 4 oQr-uns, IX.16.354.

87

which Adam's body was formed, and it is not until the second sermon that we learn that man was given an immortal soul, in the imar^ of God. The clearest expression of * this idea of nan as a body is found in Devotions ; "When God came to breath into "an the breath of life, he found him flat upon the ground." We shall notice later other examples of Donne's tendency to identify himself with the inanimate body. Donne is therefore able, to a greater extent than the exDOunders

7 of the Thomist theory to take the creation of Adam as a pattern for

subsequent generations. The making of man is s^en as a process of
two stages, analogous to the creation of the world: first the formless

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matter, and then the form, in this case given to the body by the soul. In accordance with the traditional belief, Donne thoup-ht that man had a three-fold soul, and we find references to the fact that the veg-etative and sensitive souls are subsumed in the rational, throughout his work:

Wee first have soules of growth, and sense, and those,
When our last soul'e, our soule im^ortall came,
Were swallow'd into it, and have no name.

The first two souls were not infused by God, but were generated naturally: " And the two first soules of vegetation, and of sense, wee conceive to arise out of the temperament, and g:ood disposition o"° the substance of which that man is made, they arise out of man himself e."

5 6
J Sermons, IX.1.61 ff.; IX. 2. 70 ff. Devotions, p. 15-
7
See Introduction, pp. 66-67 above.

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See Sermons, VII. 5. 108, which refers to the soul as "Forma hominis." ° "To the Countesse of Salisbury," 11.52-4 (1614); cf. "To the
Countesse of Bedford" ("Honour is so sublime"), 11.54-5? Sermons, 11.18.558 and VIII. 9. 221.
10 Sermons, III. 2. 85.

88

It is therefore clear that the unformed body of the man exists for some time after conception, before it receives the rational soul. We find a description of this belief in The Prog-resse of the Soule (1601);

and now just time it was
That a quick soule should give life to that masse
Of blood in Abels bitch, and thither this did passe.

And Donne emphasizes continually that "my Body was first made, and

12 then my Soul"; he sup^ests that there is a fitness in the order of

things, saying- that "God made the 3ody before the 3oule; Therefore there is in man a vegetative, and a sensitive soule, before an immor- — ——.—— —.. -. .1——- — -. I. —i. -».—.»-. , ' —— tall, and reasonable soule enter"; in the same way, says Donne, God establishes the temporal government before the Church.
Donne also accepts the belief that the souls of subsequent gen-erations are, like the soul of Adam, created by a direct act of God. Indeed, he is much fascinated by the instantaneousness of the soul's infusion, and its closeness both to God and to nothingness; but at the sarr.e time he felt that the question of the soul's origin was one which could be settled neither by faith, nor by reason, and that rather than trouble ourselves with vain speculation, we should turn our attention to the soul's end, and its salvation. This opposition persists in Donne's writing throughout his life. One of his earliest references to the origin of the soul is found in a letter written at Mitcham (therefore between 1606 and 1611), where he sets out fully his objections to both Creationism and Traducianism:

11.428-30. In the Paradox "That Virginity is a /ertue", tra-ditionally ascribed to Donne, a detailed description of the growth of the ernryo is s:iven, including a reference to the infusion of the soul after forty days (paradoxes, p. 57); but Helen Peters considers its place in the canon doubtful (pn.xlvi-xlviii).

12 13 Essays, n.38; cf .pseudo-Martyr, p.17» 3er-rioas , VII. 17.426

89

Hence it is that whole Christian Churches arest themselves upon propagation from parents; and other whole Christian Churches allow onely infusion from God, In both which ODinions there appear such infirmities as it is time to look for a better: for whosoever will adhere to the way of propagation, can never evict necessarily and certainly a naturall immortality in the soul, if the soul result out of matter ... And they which follow the opinion of infusion from God, and of a new creation (which is now the more common opinion)
as they can very hardly defend the doctrin of original sin (the soul is forced to take this infection, and comes not into the body of her own disposition) so shall they never
be able to prove that all those whom we see in the shape of
men have an immortall and reasonable soul, because our
parents are as able as any other species is to give us a
soul of growth and of sense, and to perform all vitall and
animall functions.

Donne does not state his own preference here, but at the same period

he is writing, again to Sir Henry Goodyer, of the soul which "is

infused when it is created, and created when it is infused." This

pattern repeats itself; like 3t. Augustine, Donne is fully aware of

the theological difficulties involved in accenting either solution,

but he finds that infusion is for him most consonant with reason, and

most interesting to the imagination. He knows that the soul's origin

is a problem, yet he speaks instinctively of its infusion. Thus we

find in The Second Anniversarie (1612) an address to the soul:

Thou know'st thy selfe so little, 'as thou know'st not,
How thou did'st die, nor how thou wast befirot.
Thou neither knowst, how thou at first cam'st in,
Nor how thou took'st the poyson of mans sin, (11.255-8)

while gssa.ys in Divinity (c.1614) speak of the soul as "sent immedi-

Letters, pp.l6-17» R.3.3ennett argues that this letter was
written not to :;ir Thomas oicy, as stated, but to Gi^ Henry Goodyer; see "Donne's Letters from the Continent," PQ, XIX (1^40), 75.

^ letters, p.53; probably written Sept. 1608 (Bald, pD.188-9).
The uatin form of this expression.is quoted both by Donne (Sermons t /.T7-349) and by 3ir Thomas 3rowne (Religio Medici, 1.36), and attrib-uted to Augustine. The exact reference has not been traced. It was obvi-ously a catch-wird of Jreationists, since C-verton remarks "as the saying-is, creando infundit'ir, et infunden-io creatur " (''ans "ortallitie, D.A2).

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ately from thee," from God. Throughout the sermons, passages alternate between wonder at the immediate infusion of the soul by God, and a theory of original sin based on this assumption; and an insistence on the limitations of knowledge, and that we should rather look to our last end than our first. In Donne's first extant sermon (Anril 1615)» he declares "if I aske a Philosopher, whither my soul came in ...
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perchance he cannot tell," and in a sermon of the next year asks, "Was not Gods judgement executed speedily enough upon thy soul, when in the same instant that it was created, and conceiv'd, and infus'd, 1 7
it was put to a necessity of contracting Original sin." Cn another occasion, he declines to dispute the question of the soul's origin,

1R assuming within a paragraph that "my soul is infus'd." A vivid pic-

ture of God's continuing activity is given when Donne says, "The

19 Father creates new souls every day in the inanimation of Children."

This opposition of certainty and uncertainty is found in Devotions, where Donne speaks of the soul as God's breath, and then emphasizes that "It is the going out, more than the coming in, that concemes us;" and it persists to the very end of Donne's life. A fine passage of admiration at the soul's creation is dated in 1629: "But to be made
of nothing; to have no other parent but God, no other element but the breath of God, no other instrument but the purpose of God, this is to

21 22 be the Ima£"e of God," whereas a sermon tentatively assigned to 1630

again disclaims this enthusiasm: "No man knows how his soul came into him; whether by infusion from. God, or by generation from parents, no

16 Essa.vs, p.38. 17 Sermons, 1.1.157; 1.2.177.
18 persons, II.1.58, 59. ' 19 3er~ons, II.15.322.
Devotions, p.13» P«92« persons, IX.2.82.

22 'Jer-ons, IX, pt). 50-31.

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man knows so, but that strong1 arguments will be produced on the other side." 25

So Donne was persistently attracted by the doctrine of Creation-
ism; and, as with the creation of the world, the excitement of his imagination cuts out all intermediate stages of the process. 7/ith the creation of the world, there is a leap in his mind from nothing to the fully formed creatures, without any consideration of the primary matter, in which Donne stated his belief,or any description of the work of days, which he appears to have understood literally. For the soul too, Donne forgets the vegetative and sensitive souls, the growth of the embryo in the womb, and insists on man's closeness to nothing. The soul, of course, is the only one of all created things which is made directly from nothing, and not from the primary matter, because it is immaterial. Sometimes Donne uses this to make a clear distinction between body and soul: "All other creatures are made of that pre-exist ent matter, which God had made before, so were our bodies too;
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But our soules of nothing;" but at other times he speaks as if the whole man were made directly of nothing: "God found me nothing, and

25 of that nothing- made me." Sometimes man's nothingness is used as a

warning to him: "shall this Man, this yesterdayes Nothing, this to morrow worse then Nothing, be capable of that honour, that dis-honourable honour, that confounding honour, to be the enemy of God." Typically, Donne sees in the soul's creation from nothing a paradox,

25 Sermons, IX.10.247; other references to the infusion of the
soul in sermons include 11.11.247; III.2.85; 7.17.349; 71.7.158-9; '/III.2.62; IX.9.213-4; X.11.233-
24 Ser~ori3 y IX.2.82; cf.IX.-l6.354.
2 ^ Ser-ons, VII.4.136; c'\ 11.11.236, 247? 71.11.227.
Sermons, X.5.134-5.

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making the soul both closer to God , and closer to non-existence: "He created thee, ex nihilo, he p-ave thee a being-, there's natter of exaltation, and yet all this from nothing; thou wast worse then a

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worm, theres matter of humiliation." This reference to "worse then a worm" reminds us of how Donne, in the consideration of the visible universe, had emphasized the absolute contrast between nothing, and existence: "To make a King of a Beggar is not so much, as to make a

28 V/orm of nothing," and we might therefore expect that the soul,

being the one instance in which Donne's imaginative interest in the juxtaposition of non-existence and completed form exactly corresponds to his understanding of theological truth, would be praised more highly than worms, elephants, or cedars. But in fact there seems to
be a suggestion that Donne ^elt that the immaterial soul did not always present a very strong contrast with nothing, particularly in
his earlier writing. In"A Nocturnall upon 3. Lucies Day" he implies that a man begotten of nothing, is nothing still:

and I am re-besrot

Of aosence, darknesse, death; things which are not. (11.16-17)

In the letter to Sir Henry Goodyer already quoted, Donne ar^rues that Greationists cannot prove "that all those whom we see in the shape of 29
men have an import all and reasonable soul," which sup-crests that the existence of one's soul is not necessarily perceptible either to oneself or to others. How do we know that the soul will not return to nothing at the last, or indeed that it exists now? Donne's final sin in "A H.ynne to God the father" may ref°r to the fear of damnation,

27 Ser-.ona, 11.11.247.

28 Sermons, I 1.2.85? see previous chapter on creation Q X nihilo. 29 Letters, p. 17.

or perhaps this fear of non-existence:

I have a sinne of feare, that when I 'have spunne
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore. (11,13-14)

I shall show later how Donne believed that the soul's preservation was every moment dependent on God, and he remarked in a serron of 1627 "that man can scarce prove the immortality of the soule to himselfe, that feel's not a desire in his soule, of something" beyond this life." The belief in the soul's continuance depends not on faith, or reason, but on a subjective impression. This uncertainty may also be behind his half-serious mocking at the soul. In Paradox VI, he argues that the soul is entirely dependent on the body for its pleasures: "our Soule (me seemes) is enhabled by our body, not this by that." While the main end of the Paradox is obviously a witty demonstration of the opposite of the commonly-assured truth, Donne is clearly interested in the question of the soul's dependence on the body, and the sug--

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n that it may be merely a physiological nhenomenon. In Essays
in Divinity, he chides the soul for being made of nothing, calling- it "a veryer upstart then our body ... for how many souls hath this world, which were not nothing a hundred years since?" Donne's ten-dency to depict the soul in bodily terms, which I shall discuss later, may also be an attempt to make the soul's existence seem tangible. Although Milton in his later work developed very emphatic ideas
both aoout the soul's coming in, and about its pains; out, he does
not seen to have displayed the same interest as Donne in either of these questions for t^eir own sake, tfhat chiefly concerned him, as we

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Sermons, /III. 2. 75- Paradoxes , p. 11. f.

See John Carey, John pcnne; Life, Vind and Art (London, 198l),p.l6

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shall see, was the most immediate problem- the present relationship
of body and soul- and his theories concerning- the origin of the soul and its fate at death were to stem directly from the way in which he understood this relationship. This understanding was to change radically during- the course of his life, from the view of Plato that the body
was not natural to the soul, but that the soul was imprisoned in it,
to an insistence on the fundamental unity of man, and the essential goodness of corporeal nature, which itself had its origin in God. This change will be best considered in a discussion of the relationshiD of body and soul, but its"implications for the origin of the soul should be noted here. Milton in his Platonic period does not make any explicit statement on the soul's origin, but it is clear from his re-peated exaltation of the soul at the expense of the flesh, that it could not have been generated by the body. He speaks in"On the Death
of a Fair Infant"of "the sordid world" (1.63), and the soul of the
child has clearly returned to its natural habitation in heaven. Similar-ly, the body assumed by Christ is described in "On the ?,'orning- of Christ's Nativity" as "a darksome house of mortal clay" (1.14), and in "The Passion'»as a "Poor fleshly tabernacle" (1.17). In. Gomus (1634), the
soul is called "prisoned" (l.255)» and the body described as "this corporal rind" (1.664). Milton offers no explanation as to why the
soul should be imprisoned in the body- the theme is curiously at odds with his religious poetry, and especially with the Nativity Ode, a poem with the professed intention of celebrating the Mystery of the Incarnation, by w-.ich the .lord became flesh- and it seems to be the case that at this period he had not attempted to reconcile what he

This is evident in some of his earUest writing-, e.g. "Cn
th*= Death of a ?air Infant", c.winter 1625/6.

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clearly found the deep attraction of platonism with his Christian theology. One interesting reference, practically the only one made directly to the soul's origin before the theory advanced by the De Doctrina, is found in The Reason of Jhurch-Qovemment (1641) where Milton speaks of "that divine particle of Gods breathing, the soul." This should be corn-oared with the definite statement in the De Doctrina, "',Ve may, however, be absolutely sure, from other scriptural passages, that when God breathed that breath of life into man, he did not make him a sharer in any thine: divdne." This change at least was in accordance with the orthodox opinion.
To turn to Milton's later theology, his exposition in the De
Doctrina of Genesis 2.7 is clearly in the tradition of those radicals

37 who denied that the soul was anything other than the life of the body. He begins by repudiating the belief of Plato and Grigen that all souls were created before the beginning: of the world (it is just possible that this was his own earlier belief), and goes on to explain that
the spirit which God breathed into man "^eans nothing- but the breath
of life, which we breathe; or the vital or sensitive or rational faculty, or some action or affection belonging; to them." "Soul" is an attribute of a living body, "for the maintenance of life and reason"; and a '_'living soul" is simply a creature which is alive, in agreement with L vert on, who holds man to be a ''living soul" in exactly the same

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sense as the animals. tfe frequently find this usage in Paradise Lost

' The Reason of Church-Government, Il.iii (Yale I, 848).
DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, 317).

57 Burns, Christian Mortalism, pp.171-81, discusses points found
in both Mlton and Cverton which are coTon to the tradition.
38 DDC, I.'/II (Yale '/I, 316-7; 317; 318; 319).

(as also in Scripture):

And God created the great whales, and each
Soul living (VII.391-2)

and Adam and 3ve exhort the other creatures to join in their morning-

hymn of praise thus:

Join voices all ye living souls, ye birds
That singing up to heaven gate ascend... (V.197-8)

Milton does make the point, however, that man differs from the beasts

because God shaped the suirit "in each individual as a fundamental

attribute, and separated its various faculties/making it beautiful

and orderly."

As for the account of man's creation in Paradise Lost, Milton

describes it in less detail and with less excitement than the creation

of plants and animals. In contrast with the life and vigour of the

stretching lions, and the bushes sprouting frizzled hair, Raphael's

account of the creation of man is brief and unembellished:

This said, he formed thee, Adam, thee 0 man
Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breathed
The breath of li^e; in his own image he
Created thee, in the image of God
Express, and thou becamest a living soul. (VTI.524-28)

There is no description of this "master work" coming to life, nor any

praise for those faculties which give him supremacy over the animals.

39 George Conklin, biblical Criticism, po.?5 ff.» suggests that
the whole body of Milton's doctrine of the soul was based on a point of philology, in his translation of the Hebrew nephesh in this verse; out it seems likely that the very major change, which, as we shall see, took place in :.:il ton's attitude toward body and soul, rather had its original impulse in his mind and imagination, and later found support in Scripture. /

40 DDC, I.VII (Yale fl, 5

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The soul, of course, could no longer supply imagery, since it was simply the for^ of the body, but it is surprising not to find more description of the coming-into-being of that unity which is man. Neither did Milton take the creation of Adam's soul as a pattern
for the creation of the souls of other men. The first man, like the first of all other species, had to be formed directly bv God's command, but implicit in the act of creation was the creation of the power of nature, by whic 1^. the creatures were ordered to be fruitful and multi-ply. Man's body was to be reproduced by natural generation, and Milton, holding that body and soul were inseparable, was bound to argue for

41 Traducianism.' His insistence upon their unity, and his belief that

the spiritual nature contained the corporeal within it, made this inevitable, but he sees in the belief many other points which are entirely consistent with his way of thought. Immediately before begin-ning- the discussion on the origin of the soul in the De Doctrina, he states, "-On the seventh day God ceased to create, and completed the entire work of creation"; and this statement involves for Milton beliefs both about the nature of Creation, and the nature of God as Creator. As I have already discussed, Milton saw in Creatirn an impulse toward continuation; it was natural to creatures to perpetuate them-selves, and the principle of regeneration was inherent in the things which were created:

Let the earth
Put forth the verdant grass, herb yielding seed,
And fruit tree yielding fruit after her kind;
/ Vhose seed is in her self upon the earth. (VII.309-12)

41 PPG, I.YII (Yale VI, 31^ ff«); again cf. Overton, Mans Mortallitie, pp.41 ff. (incorrectly numbered 40).

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DDC, I.VII (Yale /I, 319).

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The same command had been e-iven to man to produce his kind, and what he was to reproduce was the whole man: "man is a living- being-, intrinsically and properly one and individual. He is not double or separable: not, as is commonly thought, produced from and composed of two different and distinct elements, soul and body. Cn the con-trary, the whole man is the soul, and the soul the man." The unity of man, body and soul, was of course traditional, but Milton pursued the implications of this idea as far as he could* As for the nature of God as Creator as an argument against his direct creation and infusion of souls, Milton says, "If God still created every day as
many souls as man's frequently unlawful passion creates bodies in every part of the world, then he would have left himself a huge and,
in a way, a servile task, even after that sixth day of creation."
There is certainly a sense of finality about the entry of the Son
into heaven, after he has performed the work of creation as his Father's

instrument:

Open, ye everlasting- gates, they sung,
Open, ye heavens, your living doors; let in
The prreat creator from his work returned
Magnificent, his six days' work, a world. (VII.565-68)

The erates of heaven will remain open so that God and his angels may visit the dwellings of men, but not that God may continue to create; presumably he returns to his state of "holy rest" (VTI.91). And one mie:ht certainly suppose that as ardent a believer in liberty as Milton would reject any constraint imposed upon God. If "All slavery indeed 44 is a stain upon any freeborn man" then it is inconceivable that

45 DDC, I.VII (Yale VI, p.3*18); ibid., pp.319-20. Again this
point is rr.ade by Overton, Mans Mortallitie, p.44(wrongly numbered 43). A Defence of the People of England, XII (Yale 17, 532)..

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God's activity should in this sense be dictated by human activity. Beliefs about the origin of the soul are closely and necessarily linked with theories about original sin. This connection is stated
by Donne in one of his earliest references to the subject, in the letter to Sir Henry Goodyer, already quoted: "And they which follow the opinion of infusion from God ... can very hardly defend the doctrin of original sin (the soul is forced to take this infpction, and comes not into the body of her own disposition)." Yet in spite of stat-ing1 this objection, Donne at first accepted this position, sharing*
the early belief of T/Lilton that the soul is essentially pure and is polluted by the body, and rarely referring to what he clearly knew could be seen as God's injustice. He writes to the Countess of Bedford, probably in the latter part of 1609:

As men to'our prisons, new soules to us are sent,,/-
.Vhich learne vice there, and come in innocent.

That it is the body which contaminates is a theme closely linked with that of the body as the soul's prison-house. It may also be noticed that in this quotation "we" are again identified with the body, with the sinful part, and are man before the soul comes to us. The idea
of contamination is repeated in the verse letter "To Sir Edward Herbert, at Julyers", written in 1610:

As 3oules (they say) by our first touch, take in
The poysonous tincture of Criginall sinne. (11.19-20)

In the s are yea"", Donne states in ps e ud o - "a rt y r that "the purest
Soule becoT.es stain'd and corrupt with sinne, assoone as it touches

Letters, p. 17.
"To the Countesse of ^edfora" ("T'have written th^n"), 11.59-60.
r'or t~e 'late of t^.e letter, see Satires, D.? 1^*

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the body," and "the bodie by inhaerent corruption vitiates the pure
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and innocent soule." As yet there is no surest ion of the implica-tions of this contamination of sin, what it means in the experience
of man for either body or soul to be fallen. The discussion of the soul's origin in The Second Anniv^rsarie (1611/12) describes the soul in its bed of sin as an anchorite "Bedded and Bath'd in all his Ordures" (1.171).That so wretched and little a thine- as the embryonic body
could infect the soul, su^prests the soul's own helnlessness; it could not choose whether to be put into the body or not, nor did it have enough strength then, or at any subsequent time, to be free of the stain of sin:

Thinke but how poore thou wast, how'obnoxious,
Whom a s'nall lump of flesh could poison thus. (11.163-4)

It is perhaps this consideration of the enforced wretchedness of the soul which prompts Donne to say later in the -ooem:

Thou neither knowst,' how thou at first cam'st in r
Nor how thou took'st the poyson of mans sin. (11.257-8)

Apart from the characteristic uncertainty over the soul's origin, there may also be a suggestion here that the explanation of original sin is inadequate; but it was to be some years before a new theory appeared in Donne's work, and the question was by no means resolved by the time of his ordiaation. A sermon preached a year later, in 1616, though
it does not present so forcibly the purity of the soul contrasted with the foulness of the body, certainly implies that original sin is a disease which the soul catches from the body: "Was not Gods judgement executed speedily enough upon thy soul, when in the sar^e instant that

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Pseudo-:.:artyr, p.31» p.247.

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it was created, and conceiv'd, and infus'd, it was put to a necessity of contracting Original sin, and so submitted to the penalty of Adam's disobedience, the first minute?" The body, we are told in the sane passage, died spiritually even before the soul animated it, as though, in fact, it had some spiritual faculty or will of its own. A sermon of April 1618 refers to original sin simply as a "dram of

49 poyson", but does not suggest where this originates.

The first appearance of Donne's mature doctrine is in a sermon
from the spring or summer of 1618; it is discussed at length, but with the positiveness of a new-found belief:

there was no sinne in that substance of which we were made;
for if there had been sin in that substance, that substance
might be damn'd, though God should never infuse a soul into
it; and that cannot be said well then ... Here's no arrow
shot from the body, no sin in the body alone; None from the
soul, no sin in the soul alone; And yet, the union of this
soul and body is so accompanied with Gods malediction for
our first transgression, that in the instant of that union
of life, as certainly as that body must die, sOj-fiertainly
the whole Man must be guilty of Qriginall sin.

After this statement, Donne does not attribute original sin to the body's pollution a^srain, although he continues from time to time to stress the essential eroodness of the soul, and its movement towards its natural environment, heaven, and to contrast it with the earth-bound nature of the body, especially when troubled by illness.
But he seens to find his new explanation of o^iffinal sin a satisfying
one. It 'nakes neither God, nor our parents directly responsible for
the evil in our nature- God infused the soul in a pure state, and although our parents sinned in the act of veneration, there is not

52 actually any sin in the substance of which we are made- 2ven when

48 Ser-ons, 1.2.177. 49 ibid. 1.8.293. ibid. II. 1.58-9.

51 52 e.g. Ser-.ons, 71. 13 -2^5; Devotions, t>.17. ' 3e~"0"is, 7.8,171-2,

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particularly conscious of the conflict between the spirit and the
weak flesh throughout his sickness of 1623/4» Donne is still able to affirm, as he begins to recover, "that which destroies body & soule,
is in neither, but in both together; It is in the union of the body
and soule; and, 0 my God, could I prevent that, or can I dissolve that?" This belief reflects a growing emphasis on the unity of body and soul, and perhaps a growing respect for the body; as we shall see, Donne comes to insist that the body too has its measure of natural goodness and health.
In the entry of original sin in the union of body and soul, we
find one of the chief ideas which Donne associated with the soul

54 itself - that of speed. Milton also speaks of "Speed almost spiritual" although the idea does not seen to have captured his imagination; the belief that speed is spiritual depends on the theory that the heavenly spheres are moved by intelligences, or spirits. But Donne was fasci-nated by the idea of instantaneousness , in the creation of something from nothing1, the union of soul and body, the entry of sin, the passage of the soul to heaven; his idea of speed became so concentrated that
it was condensed into instantaneity. So body and soul are both pure and poisoned at virtually the same moment: "The body, being without sinne, and the soule being without sinne, yet in the first minute,
that this body and snule meet, and are united, we become in that

55 instant, s-uilty of Ad a-^s ... sinne r committed six thousand years before."

The s-;ul is created pure, and yet has not a fraction of a second in which it can exist free *"rom the stain of sin; the moment of its

Devotions, p.118; see also persons, 7.17«349»
FL, '/III. 110; corpare the emphasis on spe^i in the account of
Raohael's .journey t^ earth, 7.252 ff.
^ 3er~ons, 7.8.172.

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creation brideres these two states in such a way as to take on a duality of itself; there are not two moments, one in which the soul is uncorrupt, and another in which it is infected, but only one moment:

As S. Aug"ustin cannot conceive any interim, any distance,
between the creating of the soule, and the infusing of the
soule into the body, but eases himself upon that, Creando
infundit, and infundendo creat, The Creation is the Infusion, and the Infusion is the Creation, so we cannot conceive any
Interim, any distance, betweene the infusing and the sickning-,
betweene the combine; and the sinning of the soule. So that
there was no meanes of prevention; I could not so much as
wish, that I mig-ht be,-go sinner, for I could not wish that
I might be no Child.

God's judgment was executed speedily; sin enters us with the speed

57 of an arrow, "No man can tell me out of what Quiver." The soul, moreover, becomes a meeting-place of all opposites: "Powers, that dwell so far asunder, as Heaven, and He 11, God and the Devill, meet in an instant in my soul, in the minute of my quickning, and the Image of God, and the I~age of Adam, Originall sin, enter into me at once, in

57 one, and the same act." The chief fascination of the moment is in its ability to bring disparates together; the speed is implicit,
because it is only for a moment that the full force of their conjunction can be felt. After that moment, the soul cannot be seen without the
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disfigurement of sin.
As for the descent of original sin from Adam to all the rest of mankind, Donne, in one sense, does not need to argue its mechanics, because of his certain knowledge, from his own experience, that this has actually happened. He knows that there is some sin, some sinful inclination in himself which remains in spite of his baptism, in

err.ons, 7.17.349. 3er-ons, II. 1.59.
See also pp. 144 ff. below on ins tantaneity.

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spite of his repentance, in spite of his redemption:

though I wash my selfe with Soap, and Nitre, and Snow-water, mine own cloathes will defile me a^ain, though I
have washed my selfe in the tears of Repentance, and in the
blood of my Saviour, though I have no guiltinesse of any
former sin upon me at that present, yet I have a sense of
a root of sin, that is not grub'd up, of Original! sinne,
that will cast me back again.

This theme of anguish at a sin from which he cannot be freed, continues

all through Donne's religious writings, and forces him to search

for an explanation of its justice. This he finds in the belief that

we voluntarily acquiesce in original sin. Though it enters us at the

very moment of the union of soul and body, so that we are not able to

resist it even if we would, this does not alter the concurrence of

our wi11 in Adam s act:

though our will work not now, in the admitting of original 1
sin, which enters with our soule in our conception, or in
our inanimation and quickening, yet, at first, Si cut omnium
natura, ita omnium voluntates erant in Adam, as every man
was in Adam, so every faculty of every man, and consequently
the will of every man concurred to that sin, which therefore
lies upon every man now.

Milton does not se^m to have been much exercised by the problem

of original sin, and he does not deal with it before the De Doctrina.

He states there, as an objection to creationism, "But if we receive

the soul straight fr^m God, it must be a pure soul: for who would

dare to call it impure? And if it is pure, in what way are we 'conceived

in sin 1 when we receive a pure soul which might well sanctify our

62 impure bodies?" His own solution, like Donne's, depends on the

Semens, II. 4. 121.

60 e.P-. Zssa'/s, pp. 96-7 (1614/5); Pevoti^s , pp. 9-0 (1623/4);
Sermons, '/III. 8. 210

61 3e -:. :. as, II. 3. 106; cf. 7II.3.?18; /I-5- 1 1 7. DDC,I.7II (Yale /1, 321)

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unity of body and soul, though for very different reasons. His expla-nation is a simple one: it is the soul which is the cause of sin, since the body alone can have no moral responsibility. This idea is also expressed in Paradise Lost:

what dies but what had life

And sin? The body properly hath neither. (X.790-1)

The soul is transmitted from parent to offspring, and thus a child is produced of th° same kind as its parents, with a propensity to sin: "it is not man as a regenerate creature, but man as an aninal, that begets man." Milton seems to accept this explanation of original sin without any difficulty: it is certainly the case that he feels far less of a sense of personal guilt than Donne, and therefore a less pressing need to justify the concept of original sin to him-self. It is, of course, true that the whole of Paradise Lost is concerned with the fall of man in Adam's sin, and with the consequent need for redemption. But Milton's purpose is more to justify the ways of God to others, than to reconcile himself to original sin.
In arguing that God was "right" to give man free-will, and thus to permit the fall, and the involvement of Adam's posterity in original sin, Milton places the emphasis on liberty, the liberty allowed by God to man:

I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall, (ill.98-9)

and, in a parallel dilemma, by Adam to Eve:

Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more. (IX.372)
«

The 3in with which Milton is specifically concerned is the first sin,

5 DDC, I.IX (Yale 71, 389).

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and how that was compatible with God's justice; he does not seem to have had any strong sense of his own personal involvement in the condemnation of mankind in that act of Adam's.
The word "sin" is not a common one in Milton's poetry, and when
he does use it in Paradise Lost, it is usually in a context which
is not a personal one. The personification of Sin, the child of Satan, accounts for a larp-e proportion of the uses; other-wise sin tends to be a concept, rather than a personal attribute:

when sin

With vanity had filled the works of men (ill.446-7)

or "sin, not time,first wrought the change." (IX.70) The word appears only three times in Pardise Regained, a poem about temptation, and hardly at all in Milton's more personal poetry. There is nothing of Donne's experience of the present curse and torment of original sin. Milton addresses little of his poetry directly to God, and that which he does address to him is not that of a sinner pleading for forgiveness. Almost the only guilt which he explicitly pleads is that he has not yet begun the great work to which God has appointed him, and this presumably is removed as soon as he begins work on his epic. The
chief response to sin in Paradise Lost is pity for Adam and Eve when they lose Paradise, and also a certain horror at their fate; but how immediate is the realization that we also have lost paradise in that same act? When man's relationship with God is restored by Christ on an eternal and universal scale, there is a tendency to forget that the individual man must pass through sin and suffering before he

See John Bradshaw, A Concordance to the poetical Works of
John Milton (London, 1894).
e.g. in the sonnets "How soon hath time," and "When I consider
how my light is spent."

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attains the new life gained for him by the Lamb slain before the foundations of the world. And again, "'ichael promises to Adam:

then wilt thou not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A paradise within thee, happier far. (XII.585-7)

This promise of hope, not only in the world to come, but in the present life, predominates I think over the deepened awareness of
the effects of their sin which Adam and Eve have gained in the last books of the poem. Eve has pleaded to Adam that they may remain child-less, so that they do not produce a whole race heir to their suffering:

and miserable it is
To be to others cause of misery,
Our own begotten, and of our loins to bring Into this cursed world a woeful race,
That after wretched life must be at last
Food for so foul a monster... (X.981-6)

And the whole series of visions which Michael shows to Adam are but an elaboration of this theme, the ever-increasing horror of death, disease, war-fare, violence and vice. But it is more clearly the fate of mankind than the fate of the individual:

0 miserable mankind, to what fall
Degraded, to what wretched state reservedI
Better end here unborn... (XI.500-02)

But both Adam and 3ve are persuaded that this is the wrong response, a task which might have been more difficult had they been tormented with this future as a part of their own sin.
The section of the De Doctrina dealinsr with our sin in Ada is short, and does not fully acknowledge the difficulties of the

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question. Milton chiefly explains it by reference to the divine jus-tice; he has already accounted for its transmission fro^n one genera-tion to another in his theory of Traducianism, but this does not

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explain why we should be so involved in the consequences of Adam's sin. Adam, Milton says, was our representative, the representative of the human race: "this was true both when the covenant was made, that is, when he received God's comrands, and also when he sinned." He then adduces the proposition that the sins of the father should be visited on the children: " Moreover, it is not only a constant principle of divine justice but also a very ancient law among all races and all religions, that when a man has committed sacrilege ... not only he but also the whole of his posterity becomes an anathema and a sin-offering." It is unlikely that a man with a strong sense of personal sin, sin loathed and struggled against, would accept this argument so lightly; and indeed it is not like Milton to appeal either to ancient laws or to other religions as authority. Nor does he make Donne's point that the will of man must acquiesce in original sin before it becomes his. It seems that although Milton understands
the logical connection of the nature and generation of the soul with

6? original sin, and the penalty to be paid by the soul for its sin,

he is unable to make the connection psychologically or imaginatively. He is perhaps unable to rid himself completely of his earlier belief in the soul as the seeker after truth, and its ability to attain it: "The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the neerest by possess-
ing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the heavenly
68
grace of faith makes up the highest perfection."
To turn to the nature of the soul itself, we will find that the

66 DDC, I. XI (Yale VI, 384-5); ibid., 385 ff.
DDC, I. XIII (Yale 71, 401). Of Education (1644), Yale 11,366-7,

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perception which each poet had of it, was to change radically. Each of them began by thinking of the soul as the body's prisoner. We
saw in the discussion of original sin that for a long time Donne thought of it as a disease which the soul caught by its enforced contact with the body. His early references to the body and soul sug-gest that the body is something extraneous, most often that it is an obstacle to the soul's happiness. This theme is expressed in a variety of different images. Sometimes the soul is simply the body's dressj

And till our Soules be unapparrelled
Of bodies, they from blisse are banished;

sometimes it is a prison:

This soule to whom Luther, and Mahomet were Prisons of flesh...

sometimes even the soul's tomb:

as we were in this our living Tombe 71 Oppress'd with ignorance...

Condemnation, however, is not always implied; Donne quite often speaks of the body simply as the soul's house. It is interesting to notice that the effect of this metaphor is actually to make the soul some-thing more bodily itself. In The Progresse of the Soule, it seems almost to be treated like a small animal, living inside another; is there, for example, any difference between the way in which the soul is contained in the fish, and the fish in the swan? (1.245) It sounds

69 7 "Satyre I," 11.43-4? cf. "To his Mistris Going to Bed,"
11.34-5 (Elegies, p.15).
The Prcgresae of the joule, 11.66-7.

71 The Second Anniversarie, 11.252-3; cf. "sepulcbrall statues,"
"The Sxstasie," 1.18.

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also as if the soul had some specific size, which is not equally well

fitted to all the bodies in which it finds itself. In some, it seems

cramped and uncomfortable:

her firme destiny
Confin'd, and enjayld her, that seem'd so free,
Into a small blew shell (11.176-8)

whereas in the whale, there seems to be more body than there is soul

to fill it:

Now in a roomefull house this Soule doth float. (1-333)

Moreover, the soul itself has a preference for a large house. When,

after the spacious mansion of the whale,

having for her house
Got the streight cloyster of a wreched mouse, (11.374-5)

the soul turns to mischief and kills the elephant, in spite, it would

seem, against the great size of its body. It is suggested also, in

The First Anniversarie, that when before the Flood, men were of a

greater stature, this was more pleasing to the soul: men were

So spacious and large, that every soule
Did a faire Kingdome, and large Realme controule. (11.123-4)

The image of the house persists; we find it much later in Devotions;

That body which scarce three minutes since was such a
house, as that that soule, which made but one step from
thence to Heaven, was scarse thorowly content, to leave
that for Heaven; that body hath lo$fc the name of a dwelling
house, because none dwela in it.

But here it is no hardship to the soul to dwell in the borly. In a

72 Devotions, p.92,

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sermon of 1626, on the other hand, there is an explicit denial of the need of the soul for a large house in the body: "That we neither enlarge, and pamper it so, nor so adorne and paint it, as though the soule required a spacious, and specious palace to dwell in."
Donne uses the word "soul" most frequently in his love poetry.
If Helen Gardner's division of the Songs and Sonnets into two groups

7/1 is regarded not as chronological, as she suggests, but as represent-ing different attitudes in the poet, then we find references to the soul not in the first group, where Donne himself bullies and pre-dominates, but in the second, which celebrates and explores mutual love. Thoughts of love are proper to the soul:

soules where nothing dwells but love_
(All other thoughts being inmates),
7*5
and the child of the soul is love. The one lover is Paradise for

76 the soul of the other. Though, as in Aire and Angels, the love may demand an embodiment and be compelled, like the soul, to take "limmes of flesh" (1.8), the soul has its own realm of experience in love:

And whil'st our souls negotiate there,
Wee like sepulchrall statues lay;
All day, the same our postures were,
And wee said nothing, all the day.

Kisses suck souls, not lips; souls remain united in absence, and

Sermons, VII.3.105.

1 A. Elegies, pp.lvii-lxii; objections to her dating may be found
in the following reviews of Elegies; "111 Donne: Well Donne," TLS,
6th. April 1967 f pp.279-80; O.B. Hardison, Modern philology, LX7 (1967), 69; W. Dnpson, Critical Quarterly, 8 (1966), 269 ff.
* "The Anniversarie," 11.17-18; "Aire and Angels," 1.7.

76 "A Valediction: of my Name in the Window," 11.25-6.

"The Exstasie," 11.17-20.

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therefore the lovers

Inter-assured of the mind,
Care lease, eyes, lips, and hands to misse.

The association of the soul with love persists into the divine poems; Donne speaks of God as wooing the soul, and of the soul wooing the true Church:

79 let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,

And Donne frequently pleads for the love of God for his soul, an idea given strongest expression in the climax of "Batter ray heart, three person'd God":

for I
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee. (11.12-14)

When he is not talking about the soul in connection with love,
Donne has a strong tendency to think of it in bodily terms; this tendency seems to show no chronological development, and is present both when Donne denigrates the body as a prison, and later when he speaks of the unity of body and soul. Perhaps to speak of the soul
as material increased his sense of its reality. He is attracted by
the image of the soul eating and drinking. In The Second Anniversarie the rational soul does not transcend and subsume the vegetative and sensitive souls, but consumes them:

those two soules, which then thou foundst in mee,

78' "The Expiration," 11.1-2} "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning,"
11.19-20.

79 Divine poems, p.15» Sonnet I, 11.9-10; Divine Poems, p.15« 80 See Introduction, p.70 above.

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Thou fedst upon, and drewst into thee, both
My second soule of sence, and first of growth, (11.160-62)

so that their relation to the rational soul must be that of digested food to the body. The image occurs in other descriptions of the development of the soul:

Wee first have soules of growth, and sense, and those,
When our last soule, our soule immortall came, fl1
Were swallow »d into it...

and this same word "swallow" is repeated in the sermons: "at our inanimation in our Mothers womb, our immortall soule when it comes,

82 swallowes up the other soules of vegetation, and of sense." That

the metaphor is not one used carelessly is shown by the number of times that Donne speaks specifically of the "diet" of the soul in other contexts. The idea that the soul should eat and drink must stem primarily from Christian thinking on the Eucharist, and from such expressions as "living water" and "the bread of life" which are clear-ly spiritual food. But there is something more substantial about the way in which Donne's soul eats and drinks:

then digest,
My Soule, this wholsome meditation,

or again

The noble Soule by age growes lustier, Q
Her appetite, and her digestion mend.

In fact, this is one of the many ways in which Donne habitually transfers

81 "To the Countesse of Salisbury," 11.52-4,
82 Sernons, 11.18.358. Divine Poems, p. 11.
"To Sir Henry Goodyere," 11.13-14 (Satires, p. 78); cf. "Upon
the Annunciation and passion," 11.1-2; La Corona, 1, 1.12.

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the functions of the body to the soul, making the one play the role of the other. Thus, in "Upon the Annunciation and Passion," the command is given to the body "Tamely fraile body'abstaine to day," and that the soul is to eat twice is given aa the reason for this instruction. Donne explores the relation of the soul to the body by placing the soul in the body's positions

Let mans Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this, Qe.
Th'intelligence that moves, devotion is.

The soul here takes over the position of the body, receives a bodily function, and devotion plays the part of the soul or mover to it. The impetus is always to make the soul a more bodily thing, to endow it with bodily properties; and rarely to make the body more spiritual, which 86 was the fate that Milton envisaged for it. There is , how-ever, a facetious reversal of this tendency in one of his earlier

poems:

As soules unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must bee fl7
To taste whole joyes,

when the body assumes the soul's part in casting off its clothes. There is also a more serious example of this reversal in"Resurrection", where Christ's body in triumph is equal in glory to the soul:

Had one of those, whose credulous pietie
Thought, that a Soule one might discerne and see
Goe from a body,'at this sepulcher been,
And, issuing from the sheet, this body seen,
He would have justly thought this body'a soule,
If not of any man, yet of the whole. (11.17-22)

And in"Epitaph on Himselfe," there is a variation of Milton's idea
«

85 "Goodfriday, 1613," 11.1-2. 8 See pp. 125; 128.
87 "To his 'ttstris Going to 3ed," 11.34-5 (Elegies, p.15).

115

that sin makes the soul more bodily:

Whilst in our soules sinne bred and pamper'd is,
Our soules become wormeaten carkases.

For Donne the soul has many other corporeal properties. He talks frequently about its colour, commonly picturing it as either red, white, or black*

Oh make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke,
And red with blushing, as thou art with sinne;
Or wash thee in Christs blood, which hath thisQ gight
That being red, it dyes red soules to white.

In a long passage in a sermon he explores the idea of the soul's colour, saying that it can be red from sin, or from shame; that "there 90
growes a blacknesse, a sootinesse upon the soule, by custome in sin," and that it may be white either through distrust in God, or through innocence. Cnce the soul has stained itself, it is only Christ's

91 "red bloud, makes our red soules, white." The soul may also be 92 commanded to wash itself; it can be wounded; and it can weep. It

possesses the body's faculties - it can have limbs, the power of hear-ing and sight. The beheaded man in The Second Anniversarie is pictured as calling to his soul:

As though he beckned, and cal'd backe his Soul, (1.14)

and it is the souls of others which respond to Donne's preaching:

93 And as to others soules I preach'd thy word j

88 "Epitaph on Himselfe," 11.15-16 (Satires, p.103). For Milton,
see p.125.

an 90* 91

y Divine Poems, p.7. Sermons, VI.1.57. ibid. 7.4.111.
92 Divine poems, p.7, Sonnet 2, 1.13; "A Litanie," 1.139; "Elegie
on the Lady Marckham," 1.9.
95 "Hyrrj-.e to God my God," 1.28.

116

in both cases Donne imagines that the scul can hear. Like its other faculties, the soul's hearing will be perfected in heaven:

Up, up, my drowsie soule, where thy new eare Q.
Shall in the Angels songs no discord heare.

The soul also has eyes:

Seest thou, ray Soule, with thy faiths eyes, how he
Which fil 8 all place, yet none holds him, doth lye? ^

and even:

Thou look'st through spectacles...

The idea of "spiritual eyes is a recurring one in the sermons: "Our flesh, even in the Resurrection, cannot be a spectacle, a perspective glasse to our soul ... that flesh, though glorifyed, cannot make us
see God better, nor clearer, then the soul alone hath done, all the

97 time, from our death, to our resurrection." ' And again, "the eyes of
98
our soul, shal be so enlightned, as that they shal see God Sicuti est." So much a part of the soul's nature is sight, that in her journey to heaven at the moment of death:

Hee that charm'd Argus eies, sweet Mercury, qq
Workes not on her, who now is growne all Ey.

Perhaps the image of seeing, the equation of spiritual sight with under-standing, is a natural one, and it can, of course, be found in such Scriptural passages as "the eyes of your understanding being enlight-ened" (Sph. 1.18). But it is not just that Donne attributes to the

94 * 95 The Second Anniversarie, 11.339-40. La Corona, 3, 11.9-10. 96 97 The Second Anniversarie, 1.293. ' Ser-ons, III.3.112.
HO QQ

Sermons, IV.6.168. The Second Anniversarie, 11.199-200.

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soul the faculty of understanding, conveniently described as spirit-
%

ual sight; he repeatedly thinks of it in anatomical terms. The ultimate source for these is in the writings of the Fathers, but Donne seems
to be much attracted by them. He quotes the expression of St. Basil: "Habet & anima ossa sua ... The soule hath Bones, as well as the body, and there shall be no Rest in those Bonesj" and repeats it later with a different application: "The soule hath her Bones too; And those
are our best actions." He also picks up the saying of St. Bernard, "The memory ... is the stomach of the soul,"which clearly provides another opportunity to introduce the image of eating: "it receives and digests, and turns into good blood." When the soul arrives in heaven , it also has a face:

Heaven is as neare, and present to her face,
As colours are, and objects, in a roome
Where darknesse was before, when Tapers come,

and in a passage in Devotions, Donne presents his soul in every detail for an anatomical examination, so that physic may be prescribed for

it:

I anatomise my body to them. So I do my soule to thee, 0
my God, in an humble confession, That there is no veine
in mee, that is not full of the bloud of thy Son, whom I
have crucified, & Crucified againe, by multiplying many,
and often repeating the same sinnes; that there is no Artery
in me, that hath not the spirit of error, the spirit of
lust, the spirit of giddines in it; no bone in me that is
not hardned with the custome of sin, and nourished, and
soupled with the marrow of sinn; no sinews, no ligaments,^.,
that do not tie, & chain sin and sin together.

In passages from the sermons, we find that the soul has blood, and

100 Sermons, II.2.84; IX.12.292. 1 ° 1 Sermons, 11,11.236.
The Second Annlv^rsarie, 1.216. Devotions, p.48.

118

that it undergoes "Phlebotomy, a letting of the soule blood"; that
it suffers from "Cramps, and Coliques, and Convulsions"; and that

104 when the conscience is troubled, the soul is "erulcerated viscerally."

Donne's later attitude toward the relationship of aoul and body
is not a constant one. He no longer holds that the body is intrinsi-cally evil, but he still withholds his approval from it to varying degrees; it cannot now help being sinful, even if it was not origin-ally created so. That both body and soul have an indefinable origin
in innocence, "The body, being without sinne, and the soule being without sinne," but are yet guilty in their union, allows Donne almost endless variation in his portrayal of their relation to one another, even while accepting the traditional view that "it is the union that makes the man."
On the one hand, he believed that there was some essential good-ness in the soul of man. It is sometimes to be defined by its virtues

For who is sure he hath a soule, unlesse
It see, and Judge, and folloTr,worthinesse f
And by Deedes praise it?

or by its perception of God. The immortal soul is "the discerning of Gods image in every piece, and of the seale of Gods love in every

107 temporall blessing." The natural state of the soul is health, and
its natural environment heavenj "God himself is a Spirit, and heaven

108 is his place; my soul is a spirit, and so proportioned to that place."

104 Sermons IX.9.223; X.2.80; IX.4.124? cf. VIII. 15. 345- See John
Carey, John Donne, pp.135 ff« for a discussion of Donne's interest in surgery, and his tendency to describe things in physical terms. There
was, in fact, a general interest in anatomy in the late sixteenth
and early seventeenth centuries,, and great progress was made in ana-tomical knowledge, particularly at Padua.
105 Sermons, 7.8.172; 17.13-332. 1 ° The First Anniversarie, 11.3-5. Sermons, III. 2. 86. Sermons, 71.13.265.

119

This is clearly what the soul was originally created for, but Donne insists that even now it is not completely depraved, but has a natural tendency towards goodness: "So that the siule of man hath in it Balsamum suum, Nardum suam, A medicinall Balsamum, a fragrant Spikenard in her selfe, a naturall disposition to Morall goodnesse,

109 as the body hath to health." How then does the body relate to the soul with such a destiny? Sometimes the soul is still referred to as being in prison: Donne writes of "The miseries of man, in this banishment, in this emprisonment, in this grave of the soule, the body." Sometimes the body is the medium through which the soul acts, so that they are a partnership, though the body is always the weaker partner; sometimes they represent opposing forces. It is certainly the case that the soul does direct the body, and its move-ments: "The body, and the senses are but the tooles, and instruments,

112 that the soule workes with," but how far the soul actually needs

them to manifest itself is a matter of doubt. As we have seen, in
the love poetry such as"Aire and Angels" and "The Exstasie," the love of the soul is actually forced to become embodied: sometimes in the sermons, Donne stresses the inseparability of body and soul, but at other times criticizes the body as a hindrance to the soul's activity:

That soule, which being borne free, is made a slave to
this body, by conning to it; It must act, but what this
body will give it leave to act, according to the Organs,
which this body affords it; and if the body be lame in any
limme, the soule must be lame in her operation, in that
limme too ... If the body oppresse it selfe with Melancholy,
the soule must be sad; and if other men oppresse the body. , with injury, the soule must be sad too.

Semons, 7.17.348. 1 Sermons, VI. 2.75-
Sermons, III. 2. 112; Devotions, p. 11.
112 Sermons, 7.17.35% ^^ Sermons, 7I.2.75*

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To put this in another way, Donne is again asking whether the soul is a physiological phenomenon. On the other hand, he is to insist that the resurrection of the body will be necessary to the complete happi-ness of the soul in heaven, though he is equally certain that the soul may taste eternal bliss, and see the beatific vision without it. Donne's sense of frustration at the limitations of the body, and
its opposition to the soul, seems to have been exacerbated by its weakness in illness. Many of his statements of their contrary tenden-cies are found in Devotions, when the dissolution of the body seems imminent, and yet its power over the soul all the greater: "Earth is the center of my body, Heaven is the center of my Soule; these two are the naturall place of those two; but those goe not to these two, in an equall pacet My body falls downe without pushing, my Soule does does not go up without pulling." * The soul is essentially flawed in its inability to attain what it most desires. Even the position of his body, lying on the bed, draws his attention to its earthward journey, and the feeling that it is dragging his soul down too: "I am not in Heaven, because an earthly bodie clogges me," although the soul fights back: "and I am not in the Earth, because a heavenly Soule sustaines mee." And in a way, the soul has less self-knowledge than the body does, for it is not as sensitive to sin as the body ia

117 to sickness. It is interesting to notice that as Donne regains

his health in the course of Devotions, the theme of the essential unity and mutual dependence re-asserts itself; when the Physicians think that he is sufficiently recovered to enable them to proceed to a purge, he begins to speak of the marriage of his body and s^ul, and

Sermons, III. 3. 112. * Devotions, p. 11. Devotions, p. 17- Devotions, p. 8.

121
118
prays that the soul may take example from the recovery of the body. One of the reasons for the opposition of body and soul seems to
be Donne's belief that God is spirit t "That God, all Spirit, served with Spirits, associated to Spirits, should have such an affection, such a love to this body, this earthly body, this deserves this

119 120 wonder." He does not suggest as Milton does that spirit contains

the property of body. Although he states that God contains in him-
self all kinds of being: "Man hath but his owne beeing; J/fan hath not the beeing of an Angel, nor the beeing of a lyon; God hath all in a

121 kind of eminence more excellently than the kinds themselves," there

is no explicit statement that bodily existence is a part of this being. In fact, on one occasion, Donne draws the conclusion that since God
is spirit, less flesh, or thinness, is more God-like. He quotes Porphyry "Per tenuitatem assimilamur Dei," and goes on to say: "The attenuation, the slendernesse, the deliverance of the body from the encumbrance
of much flesh, gives us some assimilation, some conformity to God,
and his Angels; The lesse flesh we carry, the liker we are to them,
who have none." He continues to explain that we are not to fast excessively, or mortify the body too cruelly; really, the saying
means that we should not over-eat, but it remains true that "All flesh

122 is sinfull flesh." Yet in the same sermon, Donne had earlier
spoken of a loving relationship between the body and the soul: "God hath made the body to be the Organ of the soule, and the soule to be

Devotions, p.109.

119 Sermons, YI.13.265-6; cf.Pivine Poems, p.11, Sonnet 11, 11.3-4. 120 121 See p.12? below. , Sermons, VIII.5.144.
122 Sermons, VII.3.106. This should be compared with a passage
in 8i«9*v*Tos , pp. 129-30, where Donne quotes the same saying of Porphyry, and calls ifsuperstition."

122

the breath of that Organ, and bound them to a mutuall relation to 123
one another."

But sometimes the body is allotted its own measure of goodness,
and it, as much as the soul, is suited to the humble and obedient service of God. The position of the body in worship is an important matter, not because one position is inherently better than another,

124 for all positions "that are reverent, are indifferent in themselves"

but because the body should not exempt itself from participation in worship in this way. We are, in fact, to attempt to rectify the Pall by bringing about a union of body and soul in the service of God: "though we must love God with all our soule, yet it is not with our

125 soule alone." And Donne points out that the body has, after all,

been created fit to receive the breath of God the Father, "fit to
be the house of the second person in the Trinity, for God the Son to dwel in bodily; fit to be the Temple for the third person, for the

126 Holy Ghost." Yet the status of the body in this life always remains

somewhat uncertain and ambiguous; a stable relationship with the soul will be attained only in heaven.
The beliefs about the soul which appear in Milton's earlier
work are clearly much influenced by platonism. Milton himself wrote of his fondness for plato: "Thus from the Laureat fraternity of Poets, riper yeares, and the ceaselesse round of study and reading led me to the shady spaces of philosophy, but chiefly to the divine volumes

127 of plato, and his equall Xenophon," and he invokes, in II

Penseroso, the spirit of plato to teach him the knowledge of the spheres, the realms inhabited by the disembodied soul (11.88 ff.),

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125 Sermons, VII.3.104. 124 Sermons, 711.13.332.
Sermona, 711.3-104. Sermons, IV.14-352.
An Apology auralnst a pamphlet (1642), Yale I, 891.

125

He completely assimilates plato's belief in the soul as divine, suffering imprisonment in the body, and in its search for truth long-ing to be free. As I have said, the theme appears in some of his earliest writing when, as in "On the Death of a Fair Infant" and
"The passion", the soul is thought of almost as a separate being, and in complete opposition to the body. We see this in the nativity Cde, where the living Christ-Child is hardly mentioned, and is deprived of the qualities of warmth and life. His body is in opposition to light,
a prison; the Word has entered "a darksome house of mortal clay." (1.14) Elsewhere we find that the body is an obstacle to knowledge, and that the soul, once freed, is able to exercise its powers of perception to the full:

And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear ..pfl
Of human mould with gross unpurged ear.

Here also is the associated idea of the music of the spheres, the knowledge for which the young Milton felt that the soul was ultimately seeking. His soul is the instrument of perception but, unusually, its complete fulfilment is not to see, but to hear. Again, in "On the Death of a Fair Infant" this is a heaven which suggests itself to him as a possible abode for the blessed soul of the child: he asks where her spirit is:

Whether above that high first-moving sphere
Or in the Elysian fields... (11.39-40)

and one of the chief effects of the Incarnation in the Nativity Ode is seemingly to give new incentive to the soul in her tireless

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pursuit for heavenly music, by the new harmony of the universe:

1 Pft 10 "Arcades," 11.71-73.

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Nature, rejoicing

knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth, in happier union.(11.107-8)

We are exhorted to listen to the choir of the angels, not because of the news which it announces, but because it draws our attention to this new harmony, and beyond it to the music of the spheres:

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
(if ye have power to touch our senses so)...
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony. (11.125 ff.)

The idea is emphasized over and over again; in L f Allegro, Milton
asks to hear "The hidden soul of harmony1 ' (1.144)» and the Genius of the TTood in "Arcades" is accustomed to listen to the "celestial sirens 1 harmony1 ' (1.63) which, as a spirit, he presumably finds immediately accessible. The way in which this knowledge of the heavenly harmony is to be achieved by the ordinary mortal, is by a method of purifi-cation, which consists in indulging the body in as few of its normal activities as possible. In some way it is to be reduced, or subjugated to spirit, and Milton tries various solutions for this. The body may be physically lessened, it may be pared away by a diet of vegetables

129 and water: Milton boasts to Diodati of his empty stomach. Or it

may be subdued by the exaltation of chastity in Gomua, chastity here clearly meaning celibacy. The Lady herself, because of her virtue, is able to sing of "all heaven's harmonies" (1.242), and virtue

129 Elegia VI, 11.1-2 (1629).
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See E.M.W. Tillyard, Llilton, rev.ed. (London, 1966), pp.318-
326 for a discussion of Milton's attitude towards chastity; Tillyard suggests that Milton, at the time of writing Comus, "intended his celibacy to last his life " (p.323).

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itself is suggested as a means by which flesh can actually be turned into soul. Virtue, as the Spirit teaches in the Epilogue, will lead the soul to its rightful dwelling-place:

Love Virtue, she alone is free,
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime. (11.1018-20)

We find also the first appearance of a theory which is to be devel-oped more fully in paradise Lost, the idea of flesh turning to spirit; though its implications here are rather different. What happens in Comua is that the body is replaced entirely by spirit, through the action of virtue; the obverse of this is that the soul itself becomes more corporeal through sin. The bodily is not subsumed in the cor-poreal, as it is in paradise Lost, but changed:

Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turn it by degrees to the soul's essence, Till all be made immortal... (11.458-62)

Thus what is bad is replaced by what is good; later, however, as we shall see, Milton is to argue that the nature of God himself includes the corporeal. But seven years later than Comus, Milton was to voice his objection to certain forms of worship thus: "as if they could make God earthly, and fleshly, because they could not make them-selves heavenly, and Spirituall."
The idea of the separateness of the soul, its nobility, its
ability to gain salvation by its own efforts, was a persistent one, though it is difficult to determine exactly at what point Milton changed his mind. The possibility of an earned salvation was clearly deeply attractive to him; Milton would nev^r have adopted the

Of Reformation, I (Yale I, 520).

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posture of Donne's sinner, pleading with the Lord for his preserva-tion. The reference to the soul as "that divine particle of Gods breathing" comes in 1641, and in the same work, continuing the idea of the converting body and soul into one another, he speaks of worldly prosperity as "a diet puffing up the soul with a slimy

132 fleshinesse." In the divorce tracts particularly, Milton was to

emphasize the opposition of body and soul, the superiority of the soul's nature, and its intimate connection with love: "this pure and more inbred desire of joyning to itself in conjugall fellowship a
fit conversing soul (which desire is properly call'd love)." Clear-ly the soul's need for celibacy is no longer felt, but there is a deep horror of the constraint placed upon the soul's natural liberty by an unhappy marriage: "nay instead of beeing one flesh, they will be rather two carkasses chain'd unnaturally together; or as it may happ'n, a living soule bound to a dead corps." It is in connection with marriage that the word"soul" appears most frequently in Milton's prose writings, and usually in opposition to the body, although he does begin also to stress that physical and spiritual fulfilment may be to some degree interdependent. There is also some evidence at this time of a conflict between the old and the new belief. In Tetrachordon (1645)1 he makes the strong statement that "the Soul as much excells
the body, as the outward man excells the Ass and more," but in Golasterion, of the same year, he speaks for the first time of "that natural union of soul and body into one person." Though there is
not as yet any dogmatic insistence on this unity, Milton had clearly

132 The Reason of Church-Government, Il.iii (Yale 1,848;846).

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce(l643), Yale II, 251; 326.
* Tetrachordon, Yale II, 624; Colasterion, Yale II, 734.

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by 1645» taken the most important step towards this decisive change in his belief. It is also apparent that after the divorce tracts, the use of the word"soul" decreases considerably. It may have been that
a consideration of the possibilities of marriage, though his own
was at the time unsuccessful, suggested to him also the possibility that flesh and spirit could be a unity.
There is little evidence as to the development of Milton's
beliefs about the soul between the divorce tracts, and the De Doctrina (c.1658-60), in which his mature doctrine appears. His Platonic beliefs are now treated with contempt, when he refers to those who "prefer to be instructed about the nature of the soul by heathen authors"; paradise Regained also repudiates the beliefs of heathen philosophers about the soul. The two chief points of his later beliefs are firstly, that the nature of spirit is all-inclusive, and therefore no longer an opposition to the body: "spirit, being the more excellent substance, virtually, as they say, and eminently con-tains within itself what is clearly the inferior substance ... For not even God's virtue and efficiency could have produced bodies out of nothing (as it is vulgarly believed he did) unless there had been some bodily force in his own substance." It should be noticed that the body remains inferior to the soul; they never become equals, but the important difference is that when God is admitted to have some bodily force, matter is pronounced good. Secondly, and partly for this reason, man must be thought of as a unity; he is composed of body and soul in such a way that they can be separated neither in death nor in generation: "man is a living being, intrinsically and properly one and individual. He Is not double or separable: not,

DDG, I.711 (Yale 71, 317-8); PR, 17. 313
5 DDC, I.711 (Yale 71, 309).

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as is commonly thought, produced from and composed of two different and distinct elements, soul and body. Cn the contrary, the whole man

137 is the soul, and the soul the man, 11 Consequently, the soul's

means of salvation is changed. Milton is forced to realize that his Christian belief will not permit his soul to obtain ultimate know-ledge entirely by its own efforts; he must also offer God his obedience, as Adam learns at the end of paradise Lost;

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend. (XII»561~4)

But since the idea of the soul's superiority persists, and the body is therefore to be subordinated to it in some way, it is now possible for the bodily to be subsumed in the spiritual without losing its own nature. Raphael explains to Adam that the angelic nature contains both physical and spiritual, and suggests that man's destiny, if he is obedient to God, may be eventually to "turn all to spirit"(7.497)» This no longer means that the corporeal is taken away and replaced by something else, but that it turns into something else which includes all that existed before. This Raphael presents as the order of the whole of creation; as things progress upwards, their proportion of spirit becomes greater:

So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More airy, last the bright consummate flower ._„
Spirits odorous breathes...

157 DDC, 1.711 (Yale VI, 318); see also The Art of Logic 1.711
(Columbia 11, 59-61) on the soul^as form.

1 ^8 PL, V.479-82;for a discussion of this metaphor, see Elizabeth
Mackenzie, "The Growth of plants: A Seventeenth-Century Metaphor, 11 in jfriglish Renaissance Studies, Presented to Dame Helen Gardner in honour of her Seventieth Birthday, ed. John Garey (Oxford, 1980), pp.207-11.

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It is , in fact, the work of the digestive process to change the body to spirit; as with the soul's earlier search for the music of the spheres, the end can partly be achieved by correct diet. Raphael's speeches to Adam also emphasize the inherent goodness
of material things, of natural beauty, of eating and drinking, and
of seruality. Milton, I think, felt a need to be reconciled to the goodness of creation, and part of his deep response to it was the urge to renunciation, his shrugging off "this sordid world". As a Christian, Milton was bound to recognize the pre-eminence of the spiritual life; but his difficulty was not that of Donne, the being attracted to mere sensual gratification, but of reconciling his intense response to the sensuous and recognizing that God had pro-nounced it good, with the idea of spiritual progress. Milton, accept-ing the call to fulfil the task to which his task-master has appointed him, must ask in what way the physical and the material
can be used to that end. This was bound to become involved in the conflict of body and soul; and the theory that God and the angels contain both of these, is clearly a solution to it. Raphael stresses that angels do not eat merely if they want to, the traditional opinion, but that they need to eat; this is not something superfluous to their

natures:

For know, whatever was created, needs To be sustained and fed.. (V.414-5)

He endorses also Adam's view that God has given us food "for delight" (V.400), as well as for sustenance; God in the account of Creation has given his approval to a world which is warm, wet, teeming,
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fruitful, and not merely to a cold inanimate system. Elsewhere, in answer to Adam's curiosity about the love of angels, Raphael gives

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a spiritual account of sexuality, and shows that in its highest form, it is a complete union of both body and spirit t

if spirits embrace
Total they mix, union of pure with pure
Desiring; nor restrained conveyance need
As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul. (VIII.626-9)

So in a sense, the spirit is still to be freed from the body, but
in such a way that the bodily nature is itself retained, and freed from its own constraints.

The effect of this change is, inevitably, to remove any imagery directly associated with the soul from Milton's poetry. The music of the spheres is no longer a pre-occupation; the nature of the first man is described in physical and intellectual, but scarcely in spiritual terms. Body and soul could not, of course, have had in Eden the same wealth of implication attached to them which they acquired after the Pall. For pre-lapsarian man did have unity in so far as his bodily appetites were perfectly subject to the will; and pre-lapsarian Eden is the one place where the beauty of the natural world is perfectly in harmony with the search of the soul for truth . But the means by which ?£ilton now suggests that the soul is to attain its salvation, forces it to lose its identity as a separate entity from the body. The pure, chaste, spiritual search for know-ledge is gone; Milton immerses himself in paradise.
Two questions connected with the relationship of body and soul
are those of spirits, the means by which body and soul are joined, and ecstasy, whether or not the soul may be freed from the body during this life, and thus attain knowledge directly, without its
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mediation. In a Christian sense, this knowledge is the revelation of God. Donne seems to have begun by regarding the body as entirely

separable, as "'ilton did, but the knowledge which it attains in this state is not, in the earliest references, the knowledge of God. In most of the examples, too, he uses the idea of religious ecstasy as an analogy, rather than speaking of the thing itself. In a poem of 1597» a mock ecstasy enables him to see, not the Beatific Vision, but the wickedness of the Court, which presents itself to him as worse than Dante's Inferno:

My precious soule began, the wretchednesse Of suiters at court to mourne, and a trance Like his, who dreamt he saw hell, did advance It selfe on mee...

The same idea of inverted ecstasy introduces the vision of hell in Ignatius his Conclave in 1 6 1 1 :

I was in an Exstasie, and
little wandring sportful Soule,
Ghest, and Companion of my body had liberty to wander through all places, and to survey

and reckon all the roomes, and all the volumes of the * tf. 140 heavens .

Again, the separate activity of the soul is associated with love; the souls of the lovers may participate in realms of experience which are not accessible to their bodies, and thus enable them to know that which they could not have determined by the perception of the body alone:

This Extasie doth unperplex
(We said) and tell us what we love,
We see by this, it was not sexe, +.*
Wee see, we saw not what did move.

IV," }1.15-9. ' lEl^'Hl* PP- -

141 "The Exstasie," 11.29-32.

the ->ther hand, "The Jjxstasie" also emphasizes interdependence;
the lovers are fore-;' to adroit t v<it it WL=S b/ m^ns of the b< './ that they were first brought together, ani that the body is necessary to express the soul's knowledge, even as it is the soul's rightful task to inform the bor1 / with wh.it it h 5-- learned:

So must pure lovers soules descend
T 1 affections, and to faculties,
That sense may reach and apprehend,
Slse a s;reat Prince in prison lies. (11.65-68)

The same idea is expressed of friendship in a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer; while it is the souls which, separated from the bodies, meet most closely together, yet they must return with their knowledge, and convey it to their bodies:" I make account that this writing of letters, when it is with any seriousness, is a kind of extasie, and a departure

ch and secession and suspension of the soul, w doth then comunicate 142 it self to two bodies." This idea of ecstasy persists for some years; it does not appear in the Divine poens at all, but see^s a particularly com- on image in elegies and obsequies. This seems to suggest that, while Donne did not yet feel any objection to the idea of this immediate knowledge of God, he used it as a conceit, rather than wrote of it as a personal experience. Frequently the image is used as a form of flattery, suggesting that the subject of the elegy died as her habitual state of ecstasy became permanent, or that the subject being dead, a contemplation of heaven, where his soul

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now is, is the only fitting occupation for those left on earth.

Letters, p. 11 (see note 14 on P-8? above).
"A Funerall slegie," 11.81-2 (< 3£^al_a£ions_f p. 38.
The Second Anniversarie, 11.^21 ff , ; "Obsequies to the Lord Harrington " (1614), 11.10 ff.

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The first reference to ecstasy which we find in the sermons,
howr/er, i? the first of a se-!es of atta •'-:.- on Re nan "Puritans",
and their suggestion that the soul may be EO purified as to attain
to "a familiar conversation with God, and an immediate revelation from God." Donne's account of what they i-.^.y seems to be a convention?.! description of mystical experience, in which the soul is freed "not onely from passions, and perturbations, but from the ordinary way
of coming to know anything'." Donne is now stron.erly disapproving- of this experience: "Christ himself," he says acidly, "contented

145 himself with the ordinary way." This attitude is to persist through-

out the serv.ons, with the striking exception of a sermon of two years later, which is the only occasicn on which Donne spea>s lyrically of a mystical experience of God appropriated to himselfi

but I will find out another death, mortem raptus, a death
of rapture, and of extasie, that death which S. Paul died
more then once, The death which S. Gregory speaks of,
Divina conternplatio quoddam sepulchrum animae, The contemplation of God, and heaven, is a kind of buriall,
and Sepulchre, an1 rest of the soule; and in this death
of rapture, and exstasie, in this death of the Contemplation
of my interest in my Saviour, I shall find my self, and
all my sins enterred, and entombed in hi-? wounis, and like
a Lily in Paradise, out of red earth, I shall see my soule
rise out of his blade, in a candor, and in an innocence,^.,- contracted there, acceptable in the si^ht of his Father.

The vividness of this description strongly suggests that it is a record of some personal mystical experience, but it is an isolated example, in the period from 1ol6 onwards, of approval of ecstasy. In April 1624, Donne is ap-ain scornful that "Socne men draw some reasons, out of some stories of some credit, to imprint a belief of extasie,

5 Sermons, 1.3.186, March 1617. Sermons, 11,9.210-11, March 1619.

raptures" and a sermon of 1^27 closely follows the attack on
the Rciv.ari "."^iri t-=ns'', whose ecstasies ar^ new ?-. LT--^' "i--.pin--.rv am'

1A 7 illusory." Thereaft-r, the attack on ecstasy becomes increasingly

merged with a general attack on Popish superstitions, and a blanket conderaati ^n. of "He ^el^ticas , Ai>p j-~i tions , Instil rations , Motions,

1/8 and Interpretations of the private spirit."

For Milton, on the other hand, the experience of ecstasy, of the complete separation of the soul from the body and its attainment to knowledge which the bo^y could never share, was what he most longed for in his e? rly poetry. The soul sought to be freed from the body; Milton writes in "The Passion" of the vision of his soul:

There doth my soul in holy vision sit
In pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstatic fitj (11.41-2)

and in II Penseroso, he beseeches Melancholy:

Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes. (11.1n5-6)

The connection between this ecstasy and the music of the spheres, which the scul seeks to hear, is brought out in Comus, when the Spirit re;Tie:"b^rs how he was able to produce ecstasy in a shepherd boy by his singing:

he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy.(11,623-4)

But the idea of the ecstatic trance seems, like that of the music of the spheres, to have disappeared quite early from Milton's poetry. There are no later references to ecstasy, except for one in Paradise

147 S^r-ons, 71.4.101;
148 Sennms, X.*.145-6; cf.IX.6.170.

Lost, when God permits Adam, to "watch" the creation of ;Ve, by means of his internal M.p'ht:

Abstract as in a trance methought I saw» Though sleeping, where I lay ... (VIII.462-3)

But Ada- is "as in a -ranee", not in a trance, and the sle^o which God sends on him is rather like a local anaesthetic, which enables him to observe the operation being carried out on his rib, without feeling an/ pain. Milton's later theology of body and soul obviously could not admit ecstatic separation.
As for the theory of spirits, which was as ^uch of phvsiological
as theological import, Donne see^s to have accepted without question that they provided an essential mean between body and soul. He refers to them in ''The 2xstasie"s

As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like soules as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtile knot, which makes us man, (11.61-4)

and in his poetry employs the idea in images of various kinds: to describe ebbing life, or the mediation of Prince Henry between "the

149 soule of peace" and the body-politic. Passages in the sermons give

a conventional description of the function of spirits: "the spirits
in a man which are the thin and active part of the blood, and so are of a kind of middle nature, between soul and body, those spirits are able to doe, and they dee the office, to unite and auply the faculties

150 of the soul to the organs of the body, and so there is a man." As man is the union of body and soul, so the spirits are the means of

149 The First AJiniv^rsarie, 1.13; "Eieirie on Prince Henry," 11.33-4.

150 Sermons, II.12.261-2; see also 71.5.128.

that union.

Miltcfi in hi? ea*-ly vo c"«-, g,s on- ^i-'i 1: exrpeet, does not show
any interest in the theory of spirits; one who waits nothing mo-e
than the separation of the soul from the body, is not likely to pay much attention to the means of joining them toother. ?hey a-re referred to, however, in traditional language, in Paradise Lost;

The animal spirits that from pure blood arise1£-
Like gentle breaths from rivers pure...

though there is no mention here of their function of joining body
and soul together. In fact, the philosophical basis for the theory of spirits is in direct opposition to the kind of unity in which Milton believed them to exist, but he seems to have accepted them as a physiological fact.
Both Donne and Xiltcn believed that God had originally created
Adam for immortality in both body and soul. Donne claims that "God intended life and immortality for man"; and it is clear that for all Adam's posterity, God's o rip-inal intention had been crossed:" A^am might have liv'd, if he would, but I cannot." The physical death of the body resulting from sin, is a fact of which Donne is intensely conscious; but he is also Insistent on the fact that the soul is immortal, though he expresses soir.e doubt as to the nature of its immortality. The chief proof for the immortality of the soul, as indeed for its existence, is self-perception. Donne had written in The First

_ , 17,805-6; cf. 7.484-5.

1S2 Harvey, however, had expounded his theory of the circulation
of the blood to the College of physicians in 1616, and published his treatise on the subject in 1628.
Sermons, 71.18.349; 111,8.202,

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Anniversarie:

For who is sur? he hath a soule, unlesse It see, and Jud^e, and. follow worthinesse, And by Defies pr-J.se it? (11.3-6)

and later, in the s-mons, this idea is expa.v!e.i: "And truly, that man can scarce prove the immortality of the soule to hi^selfe, that feel's not a desire in his soule, of something beyond this life." Our own certainty is the only indication; the truth does not need to be proved or argued, but is self-evident: "There are so many evidences of the immortality of the soule, even to a naturall mans reason, that it required not an Article of the Creed, to fix this notion of the 1SS Immortality of the soule." JJ
The question of how the soul is preserved is, however, more
obscure, and Donne displayed some uncertainty about it. "Ye have al-ready seen how Donne feit that the soul's creation from nothing made it paradoxically closer to God, and closer to annihilation than the rest of creation, and that this perhaps led him to fear that it would finally be dissolved. It would seem that if the soul is immortal, it is at every monent utterly dependent on God for its continuation, having no principle of continuation in itself. Donne alternates between claiming this total dependence, protesting that we cannot know how the soul is preserved, and occasionally speaking as though the soul were, in fact, immortal of its own nature. In 1609» he writes to the Countess of Bedford of "Soules but preserv'd, not naturally 1S7 free," while in The Second Anniversaries (1611), the soul is denied

154 Sevens, VIII.2.75- • 155 Sermons, VIII.3-97-8.
156 See ?p. 91-95 above.

1 ^ "To the Count ess e of Bedford" ("T'have written then"), 1,58 (Satires, p.97).

knowledge of this:

Nor dost thou, (though thou '<--.<:•*•-jr., that thou art so)
By what way thou art marte iTiinortall, k"0«r. (11.259-60)

A little later, we find Donne making a typical statement of his intuition that all creation is noving ccatlnually t<••*r = r<i that nothing1 from which it ca-.es "For God hath made nothing -srhich needs him not, or which would not instantly return again to nothing: without his special conservation: Artels and our Souls are not deliver-:! from

1 Sfl this dependancy upon him. 11 This is clearly the position most con-

sonant with his understanding of the nature of the cheated universe; yet in a senon of 1619, we find Donne claiming confidently: "of that nothing he hath made thee such a thing as cannot return to nothing,

159 but must remain for ever," that is, that its immortality is natural.

An undated sermon expresses the opinion that the question "whether the soule were immortall by nature, or but by preservation" may be

160 "without any constant cleernesse yet". In pevotions, again perhaps

because of the feeling of helplessness induced by illness, we find Donne returning to an attitude of direct dependence on God: "even Angels, even our so lies ... if they were not made imr-ortall by preservation, their Nature could not keep them from sinking to this center, Annihilation.'* A sermon for Trinity Sunday 1627, says boldly "our soules shall no more see an end, then God", while the Commemoration Sermon for Lady Danvers, preached in July of the sane year, pra,ys "Preserve our soules 0 Lord, because they belong to

162 thee." This ambivalence is typical of Donne's attitude toward the

158 Essays, p.76; see also Semona, II.9.201.
Sermons, 11.11.236. ibid., 7.19.385. Devotions, p.51 Sermons, VIII.1.58; VIII.2.62; also VI.11.227; IX.2.S2; IX.5-149.

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soul.

It is equally true to say that both bod/ and ?oul p^rtav-e of mortality, and of imrortality, depending upon the e^ph^is of the speaker at the time. The whole man is given over to death:

wh?.t is there in the nature ar.d essence of yan, free from
death? The whole man is not, for the dissolution of b<My
and soule is death. The body is not; I shall as soone
finde an immortall Rose, an etemall Flower, as an
immortal 1 body. And for the Immortality of the Soule, It

is safelier sail to be imnortall, by preservation, then ,/-, immortall by nature.

And yet everlasting life is promised to both body and soul: "And man is for ever immortall in both; Imrortall in his soule by Preservation, and imrortall in his body by Reparation in the Resurrection." Both
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of these ideas are a source of imaginative strength to Donne, but the pull of decay and annihilation are emphasized as part of the course of nature, while immortality and preservation are the miracle.
^

Donne points out that the qualifications of the body's immortality apply even to the glorified body in heaven: "for they shall have a composition still; and every compounded thing may perish: but they shal be so assured, and with such a preservation, as they shall alwaies know they shall never dye."
Milton, in his earliest writings, presumably believed, like
Plato, in the natural immortality of the soul; he makes no explicit statement of this, scarcely using the word "death!f at all: like a vegetable diet, it is merely another means of casting off the flesh. In both Paradise Lost, and the De Doctrina, however, Milton states that Adam was created with a kind of immortality which we have now

Sermons, II. 9-201. 164 Sermons, VII. 10. 257-
Sermons, 71.2.7^.

uo

lost:

I at first with two fair gifts
Created him endowed, with happiness
And immortality: that fondly lost,
This other served but to eternize woe; Till I provided death; so death becomes His final re--My. (xi. 57-62)

Death is an interruption in the course of nature; in the original order of the universe, it is unnatural, and thus Milton write^ in the De Doctrina; "Therefore that bodily death which precedes resurrection came about not naturally but through man's sin." This is in accordance with Milton's beliefs about Creation: that all created things, being made of God's own substance, contain the principle of their own continuation. Milton also believed that God had created

166 nothing in vain, and that all things would therefore eventually

come to their appointed end. God, as the passage from par^di^e Lost goes on to explain, would use death as a means of restoration.
It is clear that the body dies; therefore it was clear to Milton
that the s^ul must die also. If the soul is to be defined as the breath of life, to say that the soul "lives" is meaningless for such time
as the body is dead. If man is a fundamental unity, not to be sepa-rated into the two elements of body and soul, but is "a body... or

167 individual substance, animated, sensitive, and rational," then

what we call "soul" does not die, but rather cease to exist when the body ceases to be animated. The body, being matter, continues to exist in sor.e sense evei in death, though it may no lonp-^r exist as a body; but what are we to say of the immortality of the man, when there is a time for which he does not exist at all? And what does it
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166 DDC, I.XIII (Yale 71, 399); I.VII (VI, 310).
167 DDC, I.VII (Yale '/I, 318).

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mean, when the soul is thus understood, to say as '"ilton does, that the soul dies as a punishment for sin? " The problem is co'-pli "?.ted by the fa^t that m=n does not feel his own soul to be mortal: we
see, when Adam tries to think of his own death, that it is his instinct which suggests that his soul will live, his reason that it will dies

Yet one doubt

pursues me still, lest all I cannot die,
Lest that pure breath of life, the spirit of man
Which God inspired, cannot together perish
With this co roc real clod ...
Yet why? It was but breath
Of life that sinned; what dies but what had life
And sin? The body properly hath neither.
All of m, then shall die. ff<)

So it seems in a way as if immortality remains "natural" to man even after the Fall; man has brought an unnatural fate on himself, body and soul, by an unnatural act; and God, in the Resurrection, will be bringing about the fulfilment of that which he originally intended. tVhat happens to the body at the moment of d^ath is r>lain enough:
it is COT-it ted to the grave, and to the decay toward which, for
1o9

Donne, it had been moving ever since it entered the world. Unlike Milton, he never questions the orthodox definition of death- "Death

170 is the Divorce of body and s^ule" - but there does seen to have been a Deriod during which he changed his mind as to the fate of the soul at death. It is suggested in his earlier writing that the soul remained with the body in the grave until the Last Judgment, although he is rather vag-ie about this, and makes no distinction between the death and the sleep of the soul. Oie of the earliest references to this idea is found in 1597t i n The

168 DDC, I.mi (Yale 71, 401),

9 Ssr-Qfia, II.9-197. 17° Sermons, VI.2.71.

And as sin-burd'ned soules from graves will creepe,
At the last day, some forth their cabbing p«=vr=t>e r (11.47-3)

which certainly implies that body arid soul are raised to^eth^r on the Last Day; but the contrary opinion is exrpres-ed by "The Anniv^rsarie":

"Shen bodies t-~» their graves, soules fr^i their graves remove,
(1.20)

that is, the soul leaves the body when the body dies. In La Corona, however, Dcr_ne writes:

May then sinnes sleep, and deaths soone from me passe,
That wak't from both, I againe ris^n may
Salute the last, and everlasting day? (6, 11.12-14)

171 this, and similar expressions ,of sleep in the Holy Sonnets may

seem to refer to the sleep of the soul, on the grounds that Donne would not have spoken of the body as "I", especially if he believed the soul to be in a continuing state of consciousness. It should be remembered, however, that Donne does wholly identify himself with the

172 body on other occasions. The evidence in the Holy Sonnets for
173 the sleep of the soul is discussed by Helen Gardner, who suggests

that Donne had not yet given any serious consideration to the point. Some passages clearly support the death or sleep of the soul:

arise, arise
From death, you numberlesse infinities *~.
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,

and also:

But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night

171
e.g. Divine Poems, p.9> Sonnet 6, 11.13-14.

1 72 See pp. 86-87 and 99 above.

Divine poems, pp.xliv-xlvii. Divine poems, p.8.

1 yc
My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die.

On the other hard, another sonnet begins with Pycnne wandering whether

1 76 his father's soul in heaven is able to watch him. Helen Gardner claims that it was through the writing of PSeiido -M ar tyr in late 1609 that Dcnne first cane t<- consider seriously what he believed ahout the fate of the soul at death, and therefore suggests the first part of 1609 as the latest possible date for the composition of the Holy

177 Sonnets on the _ast rhinos. It is certainly true that after ?3^ado-

Martyr, Donne is to insist on the immediate journey of the soul to heaven at death, and its instant confrontation with G-od and its own judgment, but there are indications of this change of position earlier in 1609. In the "Elegie on the Lady Marckham", who died on 4th. May 1609, we find the lines:

If carnall Death (the yonder brother) doe
Usurpe the body, 'our soule, which subject is
To th'elder death, by sinne, is freed by this, (11.30-32)

restating- the idea of "when bodies to their graves, scules from, their

T*T C3

graves remove"; and in the"Elerie on M BoulstredJ' who died on 4th. Au<ru.st 1609> Donne writes:

Her Soule is gone to usher up her corse.

A verse letter to the Countess of Bedford, associated with the elegy on Lady Ma richam, states clearly that:

175 Divine poens, p. 13*

Divine Poems, p.14> Sonnet 4? 11.1-4.

1 77 Divine poe~.s, pp.xlvi-xlvii; pse'ido-Martvr, p.111: the work
was published in January 1610.

178 Spithala^ions, p.60, 1.4^«

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as her Soule to heaven is fled,
Her flesh rests in the earth, as in a bed.

All thps?3 examples are fron elegies, and it may be that the attempt at consolation depended on the soul being thought of as already in heaven. Or the writing of Pseudo-martyr may have en courage I Donne to fix on a position toward which he was already moving. The belief tha the soul at death was instantly in the presence of God is given full poetic expression in The Second Anniversarie (1611) , ar^ is to be repeated throughout 'Donne's writings. There are no further hints at mortalisra, although there are a few passages in which Donne, speak-ing of the Resurrection of the body, does not distinguish the fate

180 of the soul. In an undated letter of consolation written by Donne

to his mother on the ieath of his sister, thought to have been in 1616, he speaks ap-ain of "my 7103 1 dear and provident Father, whose soul, I hope, hath long since enjoyed the si^ht of our blessed
181 Saviour," and in the Sermons, those who teach the sleep or death

of the soul are condemned as heretics.

Donne's imagination is to be seized by this new belief. Again
we have the bridging moment of which Donne wr^te "the instant,
•J Q-2

though it be nothing, joynes times together"; the duality of death, the simultaneity of its two aspects. Part of its fascination is that it is at once the moment of terror, the horror of decay for the body; and also a moment of terror for the soul , but of a differ-

1 ^ "To the Lady Bedford" ("You that are she and you"), 11.27-28 (Satires, p. 95).

180

e.g. Sermons, IV»5«162.

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181 Tobie ?/a theirs Collection, p. 325; for the date of the letter, see Bald, pp.
182 e.g. Serins, III. 4. 115- Letters, p. 1J9.

145

ent kind, as it is confronted with the presence of God, its entry upon the beatific vision, and an eternal life of bliss, if it is accounted virtuous. There is a fascination in looking upon the d^.-ul body, and considering: what a contrast the s.-ul now presents to it, when both were, but a short tine ago, a fund cental mixture in the same man. Indeed, they regain a fundamental mixture, but the contrasts of man's nature suddenly become extreme: "Though the soule be at the Table of the Lambe, in Glory, and the body but at the table of the

1 ft A

Serpent, in dust ... yet they are not divorced." Similarly, looking at a man upon his death-bed, we are to reflect that there is no instant of time between, his last glance upon us, and his first

sight of God: "when his hand that loves thee best hangs tremblingly t ' over thee to close thine eyes, Ecce Salvator tuus venit, behold then a new light, thy Saviours hand shall open thine eyes, arid in his light

18S thou shalt see light." There is almost a fear in the reaching out

of the hand, which even as it thinks to touch the eyes of the dead man, touches heaven unawares. Death itself has this contradiction, not intended by God, but made by manj m<=n's condemnation of himself to destruction is transformed by God as the means by which man enters heaven. So now is man to fear death, or to desire it? It divorces the soul from its natural companion, the body, yet it frees it to its natural dwelling-place, heaveni "As death is a sordid Postern, by which I must be thrown out of this world, I would decline it: But as death is the gate, by which I must enter into Heaven, would I never

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come to it?" The one gate faces in two directions, having some of the characteristics of each of them, as the one moment contains both

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Sermons, VII.10.257-8. Sermons, II.12.2^7.

186 Sermons, 711.14.359.

1 .I.

death and life. And the journey of the soul through each of therr is so swift that it takes no m-asurahle ti^e. Here a.~ain is the soul's spirit\ial speed; it journeys to Heaven "without the thousandth part of a minutes stop", possesses the Kingdom, sees God all at once. Heaven is so close on the other side of death that it is almost in-volved in it; but at the sa~e time there is a feeling that the whole universe is encompassed by the soul's journey: "my soule, as soone
as it is out of my body, is in Heaven, and does not stay for the possession of Heaven, nor for the fruition of the sight of God, till it be ascended through ayre, and fire, and Mocne, and Sun, and Planets, 187 and Firmament, to that place which we conceive to be Heaven," a theme also found in The Second Anniversarie, when the soul is so intent on her flight to heaven that she cares not to enquire about the elements .and spheres through which she passes:

But ere shee can consider how shee went,
At once is at, and through the Firmament. (11.205-6)

By her own speed, the soul cements the union of heaven and earth

And as these stars were but so many beades
Strunge on one string, speed undistinguish'd leades
Her through those spheares, as through the beades, a string,..
3o by the soule doth death string Heaven and Earth. (11.207 ff.)

But in the idea of instantareity, there is not only the there

18fi of speed and duality, but also of the present moment. Donne's

poetry has little sense of the past, and more oft^n than not a fear
of the future, perhaps the soul needs to clai^ heaven at once,

187 Sermons, VII.1.71.
188 See Robert 3llrodt, L« Inspiration Peraon-^lle et I'EapriJb
du Temps chez les Poetes Metaphysi^ues Anglais, J> vols. (Paris, 1? vol. I, pp.82 ff., for a discussiorfof Donne's poetry as "une poesie de 'oresence'."

for what we do not have at once, we may never have. His love poetry scarcely see^s to have a past longer than one day, one nirht of love:

Now thou hast lov'd me one whole day, ._
To morrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say?

He never seerrs able to assuine that it will continue until the next day. This is chiefly under the guise of the careless, scoffing; lover; he will not woo his mistress to prevent her from changing her mind:

169 For by to r^o-row, I may think e so too,

but his fear is surely that of being left. When he asks for ti^e, it

190 is not for days, or years, but merely for hours, Love is always

ending, if not by the inconstancy of the woman, or by an enforced parting, then by the rising of the sun, simply by the fact of a new day. Though the lover affects not to care, he is obviously pre-occupied by the idea of change and inconstancy:

Though shee were true, when you met her, And last, till you write your letter, Yet shee
Will bee 1
False, ere I come, to two, or three,

and if he cannot have what he will have now , then he is c
the world is changed, the chance is fled. Does not something of this feeling lie behind his desire to possess heaven for the soul even at the moment of death? And in another way, heaven is bound to the pres-ent; Donne declares that those who have no joy now, will have none in

1897 "Womans Constancy," 11.1-2; 1.1?; "The Anniversarie" is a.
rare exception to this pre-occupation.

190 ' "Loves Usury," 1.1.
191 "Goe, and catche a falling starre," 11.23-7.

heaven: "so he shall n^ver possesse the joyes of heaven hereafter, th-.t feels no joy here ...Christ shall consider what joy thcu brouX-.t-est with thee out of this world, and he shall extend and multiply that joy unexpressibly; but if thou carry none froT. henc°, thou
192 shalt find none there."

Milton's beliefs about the fate of the soul at death moved
in the opposite direction to those of Donne; he bee:an by thinking that the soul, freed fro- the confines of the body, would attain knowledge immediately at de-.th, and ca.-.e later to believe that it remained with the body in the grave until both were raised at the Last Judgment. In "Cn the De-ith of a pair Infant" death is seen as simply a means of releasing the soul, with a touch paradoxically both cold and kind:

But all unwares with his cold-kind e~bra.ce
Unhoused thy virgin soul from her fair biding-place. (11.20-21)

In fact, almost all the references to the fate of the soul at death, before the explicit exposition of the De poctrina, are to be found
in elegies, epitaphs, and Doers of consolation. As with Donne, these occasional poe^.s may have suggested the idea of the soul in heaven
as a necessary part of their consolation; it would clearly have been less comforting to speak of 'both body and soul waiting in the grave. Oi the other hand, "ilton's ideas of the soul strums-ling to free itself from earthly constraints lend support to a belief in the soul's immediate access to heaven. In "An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester", ahe is thought of as being already in heaven:

There with thee, new welcome saint,
Like fortunes may her soul acquaint,

192 3er-ons, III.16.339-40.

With thee there clad in radiant sheen,
No marchioness, bat now a queen, (11.71-4) 193
as are both Lycidas and Diodati. The latest reference which we
find to the soul's present bliss is in the sonnet "When faith and lovej written in December 164^, on the death of Mrs, Thorason, where there is still a hint of the soul emerging from the body's dead weight. The freed soul does not pass naturally and at once into the happi-ness of complete knowledge, but is first subject to the judgment of God. Though Mrs. Tho^a^on's soul had been fitted for death by good actions:

When faith and love which parted from thes never,
Had ripened thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign this earthy load ..Q.
Of death, called life, ^

she still had to appear, in order to be judged righteous,

Before the judge, who thenceforth bid thee rest
And drink thy fill of pure immortal strears. (11.13-14)

In the De poctrina, however, ? rilton completely repudiates this possibility. As w^ have already seen, his insistence on the funda-mental unity of man, and a consideration of the responsibility for original sin, led him to clai^i that the soul must die with the body, though his firm belief in the purpose of creation left hi-n in no doubt that both would be raised again. He was forced by this to deny the orthodox definition of death:

For the separation of body and soul, which is the usual
definition of death, cannot possibly be death at all.

Lycidas, 11. 165 ff.; Boi tarjij-u^Jiaronia, 11.203 ff.
194 11.1-4; cf. Comus, 11.456 ff.

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What part of man dies when this separation takes place?
The soul? HTven thc.se who adhere tn the usual definition
deny that. The body? 3ut how can that be saH to die
which never had any life of its ~wn?

Milton, however, is later in the chapter to claim that both body and soul die, which makes the orthodox definition equally invalid, but also contradicts his own proof against it. So strongly, however, does he believe in the death of the whole man, that he says that Christ himself was subject to it; as he is our pattern for Resurrec-tion, so he was also our pattern for death. Milton states on more than one occasion in the De Poetrina;"Thus even Christ's soul succumbed to death for a short time when he die^ for our sins,"
»?hat is not clear is what Filton thinks it means for the whole
man, body and soul, to die. If the soul, the principle of life, dies, dees not this simply mean that it ceases to exist? and that the Resurrection of the body must be its re-animation with this life-principle? But in this case, it is a nonsense to speak of the soul's immortality: while the body is dead, it will simply not be there. But ;.lilton sometimes speaks of death as sleen:

a death like sleep,
A gentle wafting to immortal life, (PL.XII.434-5)

which c'uld, in this passage, be interpreted as referring just to the body; but several times in the De Doctrina, the soul is explicit-ly mentioned as sleeping: in death. In an account of the raisina: of Lazarus, Milton says, "Indeed, I should not hesitate to answer that in my opinion his soul was not called down from heaven, to undergo

195 DDC, I.XIII (Yale VI, 400).

196 DOG, I.XIII (Yale 71, 405); cf. I.XVI (p.4?9). The attitudes
of both poets towards the death of Christ are fully discussed in a later chapter* pp.344

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a second time the inconveniences of the body, but was called up from the grave, and a>r--.V:ene 1 from the sleep of d^ath." But he has air?-.ry pointed out in the same passage that sleep is not a suitable metar/nor for the body in death: "the lifeless body, however, does not sleep, unless, that is, you could say that a piece of stone, for exar.ple,

197 sleeps." How much less, then, is sleep a suitable metaphor for

the non-existent life principle. Later, however, Milton says, "as
I have shown above, the soul as well as the body goes to sleep until

198 the day of resurrection." It seems that Milton gave little

thought to what it would mean for a soul, or a man -himself - to be dead; certainly he views death as a remote possibility, rather than
a pressing threat. In the greatest possible contrast to Donne, his writings show no sign of a fear of death, or of any real belief in
it for himself. The word "death" appears in his poetry chiefly in Paradise Lost, in impersonal sense, and often, like Sin, as a personi-fication. The only moment of horror, directly caused by the physical fact of death is when Adam is shown the vision of the murder of Abel:

But have I now seen death? Is this the way
I must return to native dust? 0 sight
Of terror, foul and ugly to behold,
Horrid to think, how horrible to feell (XI.462-5)

but Michael is soon able to school him to await it with detached patience. Milton seems troubled little by death; while Donne emphasizes both the fact of death and of immortality, Milton seems simply to assume continuation. Since the soul dies with the body, there is obviously no problem as to its state until the day of judg-ment, though Milton admits that to the individual there may appear to be no interval of time between death, and arrival before the throne

197 DDC, I.XIII (Yale VI,406). 1 " DDC, I.XVI (p.452).

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of God: it may be that "for those who have died, all intervening time will be as netting, so that to then it will see-: that they die 199 and are with Christ at the sane nonent." Donne has a similar remark to make about the body: it will appear to it that no ti-ne has passed in the grave, or at least that it will not be a^-rir- of its passing: "I have had no houre-glas^e in my grave to see how my time passes," though presumably the soul will be aware of the intervening 200 time.
Donne's earliest writings contain little reference to the id=a
of the Resurrection of the body, though since the soul seens happier wihout it:

And till our Soules be unapparrelled
Of bodies, they from blisse are banished

there is little reason why the question should be considered. There is a facetious glance at the recollection of the particles of the body in "The Autumnall"s

Whose every tooth to a'severall place is gone (1.4.1)

but it is again around the year 1609 that references to the resurrec tion of the body become plainer, and Donne begins to speak about it as something necessary to the full bliss of the soul in heaven. In La Corona he refers to death as the means of the body's glorifica-tion:

Flesh in that long sleep is not putrified,
But made that there, of which, and for^ich 'twas;
Nor can by other meanes be glorified.

, I.XIII (Yale VI, 410); the same point is ma^e by
Overton, ^ans Mortal11 tie, p.21.
200 Sernons, III.3.110; another example of Donne's identification with the body.
202

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He speaks also of the souls rejoining their bodies at the Resurrection:

arise, arise
From death, you number-lease infinities 2O
Of -oules, and to your scattred bodies g:>e,

although here he still thinks of the soul ur.d prying death and resurrection, as well as the body, ye are told of Mis tress 3uls trade:

2O/f Her Soule is gone to usher up her corse,

and in The Second Anniversarie, we see the saints in heaven awaiting their bodies, and awaiting them with joy:

Joy that their last great Consummation
Approches in the resurrection;
When, earthly bodies more celestiall
Shalbe, then Angela were, for they could fall. (11.491-4)

From then on, there is no doubt of the necessity of the union of body and soul in heaven.

In the sermons, although the soul was to take immediate possession
of bliss, and enter upon the Beatific Vision at death, and the body
to wait in dust and corruption until the day of judgment, and although the soul could partake of joy in heaven without the body, its happi-ness would only be complete upon their re-union. The presence of the body in heaven is a thing to be marvelled at, a miracle wrought out of God's grreat love to it, for it is by no means natural to the body that it should be there: "That this clod of earth, this body of ours should be carried up to the highest heaven, placed in the eye of God, 205

set down at the right hand of God, Miramini hoc_, wonder at this."

203 ., „ Divine poems, p.8.

204 "Elegie on M3713 Soulstred," 1.46 (gpithala^i ms, p.60).

205 Serr.ons, ;/I.13.265.

154

Several reasons are offered for this. Our bodies have been the dwelling-places, the te*n.pl»s, of the Holy Ghost, arid for this region we havs had to treat the™ with respect, as God will also: "and shall the Temples of the holy Ghost lye for ever, for ever, buried in their
p/-\/r
rubbidge? They shall not." Moreover, it is the natural state of
a soul to be united to a body; it is this for which it was created, and it is inconceivable that the soul should live eternally in a state which is less than perfect. The soul alone cannot even be properly called man: "for the union of the body and jscule makes the man, and hee whose soule and body are separated by d-ath, (as Ion/? 207
as that state lasts) is properly no man." If Christ has died to save man, then it is not the soul alone which he has saved, but the man: "My body hath sinned, and he hath not redeemed a sinner, he hath not saved a sinner, except he have redeemed and saved my body, 207
as well as my soule."
So it is by its relationship to the soul that the body is to
find itself in heaven. The soul finds its natural Dlace in heaven; this is not true of the body, but it is the natural companion of the soul, and so it follows it there. The relationship of body and soul after death is, like their relationship in life, portrayed inconstant-ly. The body in the Resurrection will be made more equal to the soul, in that it will no longer limit it, or pull it in the opposite direction from its natural inclination: "which she will no longer call her prison, nor her tempter, but her friend, her companion,
her wife," and we recognize the soul's need of the body: "wee upon earth doe know what thy Saints in heaven lacke yet, for the con-
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summation of their happinesse." ' But the body's inferiority is

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Sermons, III.3.112; Devotions, D.96.

Sermons, IY.14.356. 2°7 ibid., X.11.2}6; III.8.204.
208

15-5

stressed still. The body's re tu -»~i in -T to th» soul enables the soul to fulfil its own function, "to be the fornf of that body, the King of that Kin^ome,'1 a-" 1! therefore the soul ha.s towards it "an ? rfecticn, and a desire, even in the fulnesse of the Joyes of Heaven, 11 ° but the body cannot aid the soul to participate more fully in the Beatific Vision. The soul has, of itself, utterly clear sights "Our flesh, even in the Resurrection, cannot be a spectacle, a perspective glasse 210
to our soul." The soul will be glad that the body shares in the vision, as mothers are when they take their children with them to watch a procession, "and though the child cannot comprehend it as well as they, they are as glad that the child sees it, as that they see

210 it themselves." There is obviously some difficulty here in

expressing exactly what the importance of the General Resurrection
is.

The means by which the body was to be resurrected was a question
of great fascination to Donne. Although he declares that the way in

211 which the lead are raised is not a natter of faith, the

enthusiasm with which he describes God's recollection of the parti-cles of man, scattered to every corner of the earth, is equalled only by the enthusiasm with which he describes the decay and corrup-tion which caused that scattering. He loves to imagine the dust of the body spread as far and wide across the earth as pos-ible; "Qie humour of our dead body produces worms, and those worms suck and exhaust all other humour, and then all dies, and all dries, and molders into dust, and that dust is blowen into the River, and that puddled water tumbled into the sea, and that ebs and flows in

09 Sermons, 71. 2. 75. 21 ° gei-noris, III. 3.

211 Sermons, VII. 3. 94 ff.

212 infinite revolutions." He admits that seme men make the consuming
215 of one creature by another an a rerun en t ap-ainst the Resurrection,

but has no doubt that the power of Jod can recompact these scattered elements in an instant, and that God will not see the difficulty as we see it:

where mans buried flesh hath brought forth wrasse, and that
grasae fed beasts, and those beasts fed men, and those men
fed other men, God that knowes in which 3oxe of his
Cabinet all this seed Pearle lies, in what corner of the
world every atome, ev^ry graine of every mans dust sleeps,
shall recollect that dust, an-l then recompact that body,
and then re-inanimate that man, and that is the accon-plish-
ment of all.

Usually the task is so seemingly impossible, that God alone must retain the power to accomplish it; on one occasion, he imagines that "legions of Angels, millions of Angels shall be employed about the

215 Resurrection, to recollect their scattered dust." Again, the idea

of speed predominates; like the journej of the soul to heaven, the resurrection of the body will take place in an instant. Sometimes this is simply stated: "Though I be dead, I shall heare the voice; the sounding of the voice, and the working of the voice shall be all one; and all shall rise there in a lesse Minute, then any one dies

216 here;" sometimes the whole action of the recollection of those
millions and millions of particles is described, and compressed into
that minute: "he whispers, he hisses, he beckens for the bodies of
his Saints, and in the twinckling of an eye, that body that was
scattered over all the elements, is sate down at the rierht hand of

212 Sermons,VIII.%98. 215 Sermons, 17.13.326-7.
214 Sermons, 711.3.115. 215 Sermons, III.3-109, VII. 3-103; 17.2.69-70. Devotions, p.13. Again the body is referred to as "I".

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217 God, in a glorious resurrection," not "shall be sate", but "is

sate"; the resurrection is sirr.u.ltan<rOMS with the call to rise.
As for the nature of this glorified body, we find our example
in the Transfiguration of Christ, "for, that Transfiguration of his,

218 was a representation of a glorified body in a glorified state."
By this, we may understand two aspects of the resurrected body:

?1H "It is the sane body, and yet not s_uch a body." Donne is very

insistent that our bodies will D reserve the sa;ne identity, even to the same details, in heaven. He will be the same man, "identically, numerically, individually the sane man," and composed of the sa.^e parts: "I shall have mine old eiea, and eares, and tongue, and

219 knees," for it would be nonsense to speak of a resurrection, if we

rose with a body which had never before been our own. He is not, however, prepared to co-n-it himself as to whether we shall be able to recognize our friends in heaven, but contents himself with saying that if we believe that it will contribute to our happiness to do so,
220 we are bound to believe also that we shall. As for the nature of
the body itself, it will put off mortality and corruption, but retain whatever else belong to its own nature. The florified body must be beautiful: "the most deformed wretch that is th«=re, shall have the

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very beauty of Christ him=elfe." Donne endorses the four qualities attributed to the glorified body by the School:

Amongst those Endowments we as~igne Subtilitatem, Afilitatem;
The glorified bodia is become more subtile, more nimble,
not encumbred, not disable for any motion, that it would
make ... So have thos^3 glorified bodies Claritatem, a
brightnesse upon them from the face of God ... But of

17 Sermons, VIII.3.98; cf. IV.2.76. Sermons, III.4.118.

219 220 Sermons, III.3.109; VIII.3.98. Sermons, III.4.118-9. 221 Sermons, VII.10.273.

all the endowments of the glorified body, we consider
most, Impassibi litatem, That that body shall^suf fer nothing;
and is sure that it shall suffer nothi.n-.

But along-side these new qualities, it retains the properties of flesh and blood in the perfection of their fir.-t creation,* Donne speaks scornfully of the bodies propounded by Eutychius, "so rarifyed, so refined, so attenuated, and reduced to a thinnesse, and

223 subtlenesse, that they were aery bodies."

Milton has as little to say about the means of resurrection and
the nature of the glorified body, as he has about the decay which must precede them; in this he is in striking contrast to other mortalists, who used their belief to emphasize the central impor-tance of the resurrection. It is perhaps inevitable that since he is not beset with fears about the corruptibility of the body, no correspondingly powerful images should present themselves to him of God's re-assembling it. After his early claims that the soul would cast off the body for ever, and be glad to do so:

When once our heavenly-raided soul shall climb,
Then all this earthy e-rcssness quit, ~~.
Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit,

the theme of resurrection does not take its place. This too is to
be expected fror one with little sens=> of sins Donne, for exa-ple,
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often uses bodily resurrection as an analogy of the spiritual.
The word "resurrection" is apparently used only once in the whole of

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Milton's poetry, and then in no emotive sense. The only information

ppp 22^ Sermons, VI.2.73-4. Sermons, III.4.114.

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224 "On Time," 11.19-21. 22 ^ e.g. Semons, VI.2.72-3
PL, XII.436.

which Milton gives us is found in the De Doctrina. Clearly the unity of body and soul makes the resurrection, of both a nen^sity. 3or: y and soul are admitted to heaven, at the sane ti^e, aft^r the Last Judgment, and yilton takes Christ as a pattern for the resurrection body: "If this were not so we should not be like Christ. He entered into glory with that very same body, that very sa-ne flesh and blood,

227 with which he had died and risen again," though his pattern is

the Ascension, rather than the Transfiguration. An-^ this is all that Milton has to say on the subject. His lack of interest in that which chiefly defines man, his mortality, and that without which St. Paul says our faith is in vain, the Resurrection, is startling.

227' DDC, I.XXXIII (Yale VI, pp.^20-21).

CHAPTER 3

THE TRINITY AND THE SON OF GOD

Before considering in detail how Donne and rj.lton understood the Incarnation as manifested in the various events of the earthly life of Christ, and how they responded to them, it will be necessary to outline their beliefs about the Trinity, and the divine and human natures of Christ. Because my interest here is chiefly in the person of Christ, I will concentrate on the relation of Father and Son, and not deal specifically with the Holy Spirit.

I. Introduction

In the earliest Church, the problem of finding an intellectually-satisfying explanation of the relations in the Godhead was not attempted; the thought of the early Fathers about God was at least
as much two-fold as three-fold, although Trinitarian language was

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widespread in baptismal formulae and in catechisms. It was the difficulty of expressing the relation of Christ to the Godhead which prompted doctrinal development, and this was explained by the Apologists by the image of the Divine Logos, always immanent in the Father, and

1 Much of the information relating to the Church Fathers in this Introduction is taken from J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrinesf
and G.W.H. Lampe, "Christian Theology in the patristic Period, " in A History of Christian Doctrine, ed. H. Cunliffe-Jones (Edinburgh, 1978). The latter is hereafter referred to as Larrpe.

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See Maurice Wiles, "Some Reflections on the Origins of the
Doctrine of the Trinity," in Working Papers in Doctrine (London, 1976), pp.9-10.

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expressed by his deliberately-willed act in Creation and revelation. This interpretation displays the subordinationism characteristic of the first three centuries.
At first, it had been the primary concern of the whole Church, against the pagans, to defend the unity of the Godhead, but by the third century, conflicting tendencies in Trinitarian thought became apparent. In the East, there was an increasing emphasis on the distinction of the Three within the Godhead, while in the West, a dual concern for the unity of the Godhead and the divinity of Christ, led to a reaction against the Logos doctrine, and the emergence of

4 monarchianistn, a theory which made the deity an absolute monad. "Modalist" monarchianism, as expounded by Sabellius, held that the
only differentiation in the Godhead was a series of "modes" or opera-

4 tions, so that neither Son nor Spirit was a permanent distinction. Tertullian, on the other hand (who introduced the word "trinitas" into Christian writing), while an equally ardent monotheist, combats modalism by trying to show that the distinction of three is not incompatible with the essential unity of God, "three, however, not in condition,
but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect." But he too displays characteristic subordinationism when
he continues, "For the Father is the entire substance, but the Son is
a derivation and portion of the whole." Although the Word was always immanent in God, God could not strictly be said to have had a Son until the Word was p-enerated for the purpose of Creation.

Lampe, pp.34 ff«
4 Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, po.109-110; pp.119-23.
5 Tertullian, Adversus Praxean, ch.II (ANCLvol.XV, p.337)? ibid.,
ch. IX (p.349).
Kelly, garly Christian poctHnes, p. 112.

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In the East, a new development, influenced by Platonic thought,
was taking place at Alexandria, be^iin by Clement, and re-interpreted

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by Origen. Origen is anxious to emphasize the distinction between Father and Son. The Father alone, as Konad, is God in the strict
sense; and the Logos, whose deity is derivative, is his mediator between his unity, and the multiplicity of the world which he has created, Origen made a distinctive contribution to Trinitarian theology in stating explicitly that the external generation of the Son was from eternity, although his purpose was to maintain not the equality of the
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Son, but the immutability of the Father. Both Arius and Athanasius

9 were to make use of aspects of Origen's thought.
The problem of the relation of the Father and Son developed into
a heated controversy at the beginning of the fourth century, immedi-ately provoked by the emergence of Arianism. Arius accepted the subordinationism of Origen, and his emphasis on the utter transcend-ence of the Father, but rejected the idea of different levels of Godhead. In his concern to stress the absolute division between all that is God and all that is not God, he concluded that since God's substance is not divisible, and since there cannot be more than one divine being, the Son must be a creature, created, like all other creatures, from nothing. His generation is not from eternity: he has a beginning in time, and was produced by the Father's will. He could

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' That yJLlton's thought on the Trinity resembles that of Origen
is arsrued by H.F. Robins, If This Be Heresy; A Study of Milton and Origen, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 51(Urbana, 1963), pp.94 ff.
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See Wiles, "Sternal Generation," in Working Papers, pD.22-23:
Orifi-en actually believed all spiritual beings to be eternal existents.

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For Origen, see Lanpe, pp.73-77* and Kelly, ?arly Christian Doctrines, pp.127-30.

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not know God fully, but only so far as he was friven grace to do sojhe was in principle subject to change and sin, although in fact made morally perfect by grace. Cn the other hand, he was not "as one of the creatures," and was permitted by the Father to share in his deity, and receive the name "God".
Pew in either East or ffest found Arius ' teaching acceptable, and
it was officially condemned by the Council of Nioaea in 325. The Council asserted that the Son is God in the fullest sense, denying that he was created, or produced out of nothing, and affirming' his eternal generation: "the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father." The meaning to be attached to the word (of one substance), however, was left unexplained. As at
, this time QUO-CK could mean either the underlying being- of the Godhead, or an individual reality, and uno&ra- criS also had both these meanings, the term caused widespread dissatisfaction.
A much-needed clarification of these terms was made by the Cappadocian Fathers: oucr«x , or the universal, became restricted to that wherein the Godhead was one, and unoo-rno-is , or the particular, to that wherein it was three. "One otKrtx in three uTro<rT*<rtL$ " became the orthodox formula accepted by the Council of Constantinople in
381. As to the distinctions between the t>ersons, they maintained that there was no difference at all in their relation to the world, and in their external activity; the difference can be defined only in terms

10 See Lanpe, pp.94-6j ffiLes, "In Defence of Arius," forking
Papers, pp.33-5, emphasizes the positive aspects of Arius' thought. Quoted by Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, D.232.

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of their mutual relations: the ingenerate, the venerate, and the one

12 who proceeds. The Three who are one in substance share a unity of

will, activity, and worship.
In the tfest, the emphasis on the unity of the divine nature
found its culmination in Augustine. He did not begin by asserting that the Father was God: the Trinity itself is God, each of the Persons sharing fully and equally in the deity. The attributes of God - priory, majesty, eternity - do not properly belong to each of the three
persons individually, but to the whole Godhead. For, says Augustine,
we may speak of "the omnipotent Father, the omnipotent Son, and the omnipotent Holy Spirit, yet there are not three omnipotents, but one omnipotent," a position expressed by the so-called Athanasian Creed, which is thoroughly Augustinian. Aumistine, therefore, completely denies subordinationism: he sees the equilateral triangle, rather than the descending line, as the symbol of the Trinity: all ooints are equal, and the whole is God.
Augustine assumes the revelation of the Trinity in Scripture,
and nowhere attempts to prove it. However, all created thinfrs, especially man, must bear in some degree the reflection of the creating Trinity; and Augustine's use of analogies drawn from the human soul
to represent the Trinity is his most original contribution to Trinitarian theolopy. He represents the Trinity as the lover, the loved one, and the love which unites them; the mind, its knowledge
of itself, and its love of itself; the memory, the understanding, and

12 Wiles, Working papers, pp.13-14*

15 St. Aurustine, The Trirdty, trans. 3. McK^ina, FC vol.45 (Washington, 196}), 7.8 (p.186).
14 Lampe, p.117. 1 ^ The Trinity, 3ks. I-I7 Dassj/n (FC 45).

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•n 16 will.
The outlines of Trinitarian orthodoxy were now firmly established;
in the fiddle Afres, Thomas Aquinas is a true exponent of the theology of the Nicene and Athanasian Greeds. God is three persons in one essence, with person defined as "an individual substance of a rational

17 nature," and essence as "what is expressed by the definition." r,Ve
may say that the persons are "distinct", but not, with Arius, that

18 they are "different"; this distinction appears only in their internal
19 relations. The three persons are co-equal in all respects, and

therefore the Son's generation is eternal, by natural necessity, not
by the Father's will. Since eternity is ever present, we are permitted to say with Origen, "he is always being born, " without implying that he is incomplete.
Since the persons are distinct only by their mutual relations,
we cannot know of them by natural reason: the creation reveals only

21 their unity. Indeed, we detract from this great mystery of faith
if we try to prove it by reason, though to us who believe, there are

21 "certain confirmations from the fittingness of things." The Trinity

is revealed to us that we may rightly understand our salvation, "accomplished by the Son who became flesh, and by the prifts of the

21 Holy Ghost."

St. Thomas also makes use of Augustine's analogies of lover,

1 The Trinity, XV.6; XV. 7 (PC 45, pp.462-3? p.464; pp.465 ff«).
17 S.Th., 1a.29.art.1 (vol. VI, p.41); 1a.29.art.2 (vol.VI, p.49).

18 S.Th., 1a.31.art.2 (vol. VI, p.89).
19 S.Th., 1a.40. art.2 (val. 711, pp.145-49).
20 S.Th., 1a.42. art.2 (vol. VII, p.195).
21 S_.Th., 1a.32. art.1 (vol.VI, DP-103-09; pp.107-09; p.109).

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22 beloved, and love; and memory, understanding, and will: the latter
is particularly satisfactory in being "internal" and spiritual,
because it avoids unwanted implications of separation and external

23 action. 3t. Bernard too, in a sermon which was to achieve great
popularity, pursues Trinitarian analogies in man: "Est Trinitas creatrix: pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, ex qua cecidit creata trinitas: menoria, ratio, et voluntas. Et est trinitas per quan cecidit, per
SUP: creation em, delectationem, consensum ... Est trinitas per quam
?/f resurp-it, scilicet fides, spes, caritas."
This Trinitarian theology remained the srround of subsequent
VITestern teaching. Thus we find its doctrines embodied in the first of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and in Chapter II of the Westminster

25 Confession. The Book of Common prayer contains, of course, both
Nicene and Athanasian Creeds; Hooker defends the use of the latter

26 in public worship. y/hile this remained the orthodox belief, however,
it was challenged many times both before and after the Reformation by a significant minority who held anti-Trinitarian views. Reformation anti-Trinitarians believed that they were returning to an earlier and purer doctrinal position, and a strong emphasis on the sovereignty
of Scripture is characteristic of their thought. Cne such system was that of Socinus, developed in the Minor Church of Poland, and

2 S.Th., 1a.37- art.1 (vol. VII, p.83).
25 S_.Th., 1a.2?. art.4 (vol.VI, p.17); 1a.2?. art.1 (vol.VI, p.5).
St. Bernard, Opera, ed. J. Leclerq, 8 vils. (Rome, 1957-77),
vol. vi, pp.265-66.
* Schaff, The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches,
pp.487-8; pp.607r08^[

26 Richard looker, QT_the__Law3 of Ecclesiastical Polity, in fforks, ed. j. Keble, 7th. ed., rev. R.~Y. Church and P. Paa^t, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1888), aook V, xlii (vol. II, pp.175-89).

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published in the Racovian Catechism of l605 f the year after his death. The Catechism stresses the authority of the Bible, and the use of reason in matters of religion; using these two tools, it deduces
that God is one, and only one, and that the formula of three persons in one essence is a logical impossibility, and therefore to be rejected. Christ was not pre-existent, but an ordinary man with a

27 divinity of function bestowed upon him by God.

In England, there had been outbursts of anti-Trinitarianism throughout the reign of Elizabeth, fostered by Protestant refugees from the continent; and the more radical doctrines of the Polish Socinians were spreading to this country via the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century. The last men in England to be burnt for

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heresy, in 1612, were both anti-Trinitarians. Translations of

29 heretical books were widely available, and in 1640 Convocation

attempted to curb "the damnable and cursed heresy of Socinianism" by forbidding the importation, printing, or distribution of Socinian 29

books;its Canons, however, were never ratified by Parliament. The 1640's saw an increase of anti-Trinitarian activity; several books appeared to confute the heresy, and in 1647, two anti-Trinitarian works were openly published, Paul Best's Mysteries Discovered, and

See Maurice Kelley's Introduction to DPC; Yale 71, pp.62-3;
for a full statement of Socinian doctrine, see 3.M. Wilbur, A History of Uhitarianism, vol.1: Socinianism and its Antecedents (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1946), pp.412-415; and H.J. McLachlan, Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England (Oxford, 1951)» pp«11-15«
28 See Christopher Hill, Milton and the English Revolution (London, 1977), pp.73; 288.
2 ^ E.M. Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism, vol.11: In Transylvania, England, and America (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952), pp.184 ff? p.185. e.sr. Francis Cheynell, The Ris^, Growth, and Danger of
Socinianisme (London, 1643); Thomas Edwards, Ganrraena (London, 1645), etc. See Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, vol. II, pp.188-90.

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John Bidle's Twelve Arguments drawn out of Scripture, which refuted the divinity of the Holy Spirit, both issued from prison. Bidle's writings display typically anti-Trinitarian characteristics. The traditional doctrine, he says, is a "Gross Opinion": "it introduceth three Gods, and so subverteth the Unity of God, so frequently

32 inculcated in the Scripture." No man who "dare make use of Reason
32 in his Religion" can maintain the logical absurdities promulgated

by the Athanasian Creed. He also displays impatience with the terminology of scholastic theology, condemning- Christians who "confounded the pure and plain language of the holy Spirit with their Trinunities, Co-essentialities, Modalities, eternal Generations, eternal Processions, Incarnations, Hypostatical Unions, and the like monstrous terms, fitter for Conjurers then Christians ..." Me acknowledged Christ as the "chief" Son of God, Head of the Church, and our Lord, "the intermediate object of our Faith and Worship," but denied that he had any nature other than a human.
Arianism and Socinianism continued to flourish under the Common-wealth, and many important men were charged with holding either one

35 or the other; after 1660 its overt expression, at least, subsided,

although it was by no means extinct.
As for the person of the Incarnate Christ, it was not until
several generations after the Apostolic A^e that the Church became

See Hill, rjlton and the English Revolution, pp.290 ff., and fJlcLachlan, Socinianism, pp.149 ff«
John Bidle, A Confession of Faith Touching the Holy Trinity, According to the Scripture (London, 1648), in T_he__Apostolical and True Opinion concerning- the Koly Trinity (London, 1653), si^ si^rs. D4v-D5r.
^ ibid., sigs. E1v - E2r. 54 ibid., sifr= 38r.
" Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, pp. 290- 95.

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fully aware of the problem of the relation of the divine and human
in Christ, and not until the doctrine of the Trinity had been defined in the fourth century that the necessary concepts were available with which to approach the question. In the earliest Church, we merely
find affirmations of the presence of divinity and humanity in Christ without any attempt to explain their union; in opposition to the
early heresies of Ebionism and Docetisra, there is an increasing emphasis on the complete reality of both the divine and the human. The first real development seems to have taken place at Alexandria, where for much of the fourth century, a type of Christology known as "Word-flesh" predominated. The problem of the two natures in Christ was solved
by understanding the Incarnation as the Logos dwelling in human flesh, with no allowance made for a human soul. This in effect reduced Christ's humanity to mere animal nature, and meant that he resisted temptation automatically. The tendencies of the Alexandrian school of thought

37 were taken to extremes by Apollinarius of Laodicea, who insisted on the unity of Christ, denying any separation between the divine and the human. The flesh was the flesh of the Logos: therefore, there could be no room in the union for a human soul. Christ had one nature only.
It was impossible that there should be even potentially a conflict
of will in him; thus, he had no moral choice and was incapable of sinning. Otherwise, Apollinarius thought, he could not have saved us from sin. In this system it is the flesh which suffered and died, while

37 the Logos, its governing principle, remained impassible.

The system of Apollinarius at once aroused o-oposition, led by
the Cappadocian Fathers, who insisted on the necessity of a rational

Kelly, garly Christian Doctrines, pp.284 ff.

37 Lampe, pp.123 ff.

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soul, and hence freedon of the will in Christ. Their thinking, however, was still largely within the "Word-flesh" framework; the real alternative lay with the Antiochene, or rrtford-man" theology, which stressed the
full reality of Christ's humanity, and his participation in the actual and complete nature of man. This theory, however, also denies a real incarnation, by separating the Godhead from the "man" whom the Logos
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assumed. This teaching found its culmination in the Christology of Nestorius, who is now seen to have held a less extreme view than the heresy labelled "Nestorianism", but who insists that Christ had two natures, "nature" meaning an objective reality, each of which retained its own properties unimpaired. It could not be said that God was born, suffered, or died; at the same time, the humanity was not dominated by the divinity, but Christ lived a genuinely human life. The two natures were united, though unconfused, not "hypostatically", but "voluntarily". By this, N'estorius meant that the natures mutually

39 interpenetrated each other as the Persons of the Trinity do. His

contemporaries, however, leapt to the conclusion that ITestorius meant that the man Jesus was assumed by the Logos, in the same way, though
to a greater degree, as an inspired prophet,to whom he was "voluntarily" joined by will, or love.
Nestorius was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431? a^
agreement was finally reached in the Chalcedonian Definition of 451» which was almost universally accepted in the ffest, and which set the limits of all subsequent discussion on the Incarnation. It affirmed that Jesus Christ is "one and the same Son, the sane perfect in God-

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Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, po.310 ff. 59 Lampe, pp.132 ff.

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head and the same perfect in manhood," that manhood including a rational soul. His two natures were "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation," and were united in "one prosopon and one hupostasis." From the Tome of Leo, ratified at Chalcedon,
we learn that although the natures have separate operations, they always act in unity: "For each 'form' does the acts which belong to it, in communion with the other; the Word,that is, performing what belongs to the Word, and the flesh carrying out what belong to the
41 flesh." Implicit in these statements is the belief that "the Person
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of the God-man is identical with that of the divine Word"; while the human nature is real, and has a separate operation, it is clear that it never existed apart from the Word: it did not have an independ-
ent subsistence.

This statement on the Person of the Incarnate Christ remained
the standard of all subsequent theology; Aquinas 1 articles on the
43 Incarnation accept Chalcedon as their rule,as do orthodox seven-teenth-century writings on the subject, Roman and Reformed alike.
The second of the Thirty-Nine Articles affirms: "two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were ioyned together
in one person, neuer to be diuided, whereof is one Christe, very GOD
and very man." Radicals like the Socinians, who denied Christ's divinity, were of course, bound 45 to maintain that he had only a human nature.

quoted by Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, p.339; p.340.
Leo, The Tome, in Christology of the Later Fathers, ed. E.R.
Hardy, Library of Christian Classics, vol.Ill (London, 1954)» sect.4. (p.365).
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Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, p.337«
S.Th-, 3a.1-6 (vol. XLTIIl).
Schaff, The Greeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches, p.498
e.g. sidle, A Confession of Faith, sip-,E4v.

II. Donne and Milton

Donne seems never to have questioned the orthodox doctrine of
the Trinity, because he completely rejected the use of reason as a response to it. He places great emphasis on the doctrine's inacces sibility, which was precisely what attracted him to it; and the traditional vocabulary used in interpreting the Trinity -substantia, t (jirooT<xo-i.$ t and the like - is almost entirely absent from his writing. But his sermons are clearly based on a full acceptance of the traditional position.
He places a particular emphasis on the absolute equality of the three Persons; his concept of one God is inseparable from a belief that that one God is "three person 'd": " So, as that the Father could not be without the Son and the holy Ghost, so as neither Sonne, nor holy Ghost could be without the Father, nor without one another ... God could not be so alone, but that there have been three persons, as

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long as there hath been one God." So the Persons are co-eternal; Donne, unlike Milton, was able to accept the terms Father, Son, and Spirit as illustrative of an eternal relation, without wanting to press the analogy, so as to force them into a temporal order. Donne affirms of the Holy Spirit that he is "not Third so, as that either Second
or First, Son or Father, were one minute before him in that Go-eternity, that enwraps them all alike." It is interesting to notice that when

1 2
See below, pp. 174 ff- Sermons, 71.7.155-
^ Sermons, VII.18.435; for Donne's interest in in-1-.r.tvi^i V/, see
PP- 32-33; p.91; pp.141 ff. below.

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Donne in the "Holy Sonnets" writes of

The Father having begot a Sonne most blest, And still begetting, (for he ne'r begonne),

he expresses just that idea of eternal generation which seemed to

Milton to make the whole thing a nonsense: "If the Father is still

begetting him, he is not yet begotten, and is therefore not a Son."

The concept of the Son's eternal generation was particularly fasci-

nating to Donne. He states the traditional position that God begot

the Son by nature, rather than by will. The eternity of his generation

is a paradox: he is "as ancient as the Ancient of Days, as old as his
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Father," and "from before all beginnings." It was, Donne agreed with
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St. Basil, a question "too hard for Reason", but he loved to confront

his reason with the concept, and prove yet again the impossibility of

expressing it. tfith typical hyperbole, he asks:

who shall tell us when it was, when it was so long before
any time was, as that, when time shall be no more, and
that, after an end of time, wee shall have lived infinite
millions of millions of generations in heaven, yet this
generation of the Son of God, was as long before that
immortall life, as that Immortality, and Everlastingnesse
shall be after this life?

And this beget tins- is not only a "natural necessity" on God's part;

it is also a source of joy to him: "God seems to have been eternally

delighted, with this eternall p-eneration."

4 Divine poems, p.11. DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.262).
6
Sermons, III.12.266-7.

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Sermons, III.11.252; 250; a^ain, cf. Milton, "a real son is
not of the same are as his father," DDC, I.7.(Yale 71, p.209).

8
Semons, 71.5.127.

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ger-o-s, IH.12.266; for other rpf^enc^s to ^t-^rnal veneration, see o^r^onsTTlI. 12.258; III.5.143. 71.6.135. 711.17.418.

Semens, 7.5.113; cf. Letters, n.16/1.

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Donne stresses the equality of the three Persons in all respects; although he often likes to attribute Power, Wisdom, and Goodness to different Persons, he reminds us that "they have all a jo.ynt-
12 Almightinesse, a joynt-Wisdome, and a joynt-Goodnesse." The three

Persons are "Vnum Essentia". Christ is, in one of tonne's favourite images, "the Image of the Father, the same stamp upon the same metall"; he imagines the Father saying of the Son, "mine infinite-nesse gives me no roome nor space beyond him, hee reaches as far as
I, though I be infinite ... In mine Omnipotence, in mine Omnipresence, in mine Cmniessence, he is equall partner with me."
Prom his earliest references to the Trinity, Donne calls attention
to its insolubility, calling it "the knottie Trinitie"; like a "wise

1 7 serpent" it irKost slipperinesse, yet most entanglings hath." But

he makes no attempt to untie the knot, or to grasp the serpent, preferring to contemplate its inextricable complexities. This attitude persists throughout the sermons. He declines to present the case for the Trinity to his congregation: he will speak "not by way of subtile disputation, as to persons that doubted, but by way of godly declara-

18 tion, as to persons disposed to make use of it." Our belief in the

Trinity, says Donne, pleases God because it demands an exercise of

19 faith; the use of reason may even introduce doubt, and thus be

damaging to faith: "If we think to see this mystery of the Trinity,

11 e.g. Sermons, 1.3-199; III.12.257; III.15-327-8; VIII.1-59. Sermons, III.15.327. Sermons, 7.6.143-
* See John Carey, "Donne and Coins," in English Renaissance Studies, pp.151-163.

16 Sermons, III.11.250. Sermons, 71.£.148.
17 Divine Poems, p.12; "A Utanie", 11.30-31-
1ft 19 Ser-ons, III.12.257. Sermons, IX.1-52.

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by the light of reason ... we shall lose that hold which we had

20 before." And we offend ap-ainst the dignity of the Trinity "by

going about to prove it by humane reason, or to illustrate it by

21 weak and low comparisons." The doctrine fascinates Donne: "There

is not so fulfilling, so accomplishing, so abundant an Article as

22 that of the Trinity," but he approaches it in the attitude of St.
23 Augustine: "Tu ratiocinare, ego mirer".

Therefore he accepts the traditional belief that the Trinity
cannot be known by reason either; the "book of nature" can reveal

2.A. clearly only the one Creator. Cur knowledge comes only from Scrip-

ture, where the doctrine is hinted at in the Old Testament, and fully revealed in the New. Donne was very interested by these Old Testament hints, which he sees as "a refreshing" of the knowledge which we

25 already have of the Trinity, But the Gospel contains the full

revelation: "The manifestation of the mysterie of the Trinity was

26 27 reserved for Christ" which was first made known at Christ's baptism.

But sometimes Donne feels that not even the Gospel can clearly
2fi
represent this"Lux inaccessibilis" without the help of the Holy

29 Spirit in interpretation. Otherwise, Donne asks, "why should not

the Jews and the Arians conform themselves to this doctrine of the Trinity, as well as I."

9"i 22 Sermons, VIII.1.54-5. Sermons, 71.6.134. Sermons,71.6.139,
25 Sermons, 111.12.26?. 24 Sermons, IX.10.245?cf. III.12.264.
Sermons, III.5.143. A full discussion of Donne's use of these "insinuations", with many references, may be found in J.W. NieLsen,
"The Concept of the Divine and the Human as it Appears in the rhoue-ht
of John Donne with Special Emphasis upon the Sermons," Oxford D. Phil, thesis 1975, pp.49-56.

26 Sermons, VII.18.436; see also VIII.1.55-6.

Sermons, VI.6.133; see below, pr.. 2'55-56\
28 Semons, HII.1.54 29 Sermons, 1.3-199. Sermons, IX.10.246.

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Donne sees the one God as being utterly beyond comprehension or speech, "in his nature incomprehensible, and inaccessible in his light." In several passages, he seer^s to suggest that God's nature is not essentially three-fold, but that the infinite and incompre-hensible Cne "hath manifested himselfe to us in three Persons to be the more easily discerned by us." It is only by formulating such a division in God that we are able to know or express anything of him at all: "Now these notions that we have of God, as a Father, as a Son, as a Holy Ghost, as a Spirit working in us, are so many handles by which we may take hold of God, and so many breasts, by which we may suck such a knowledge of God, as that by it wee may grow up into him." We are unable to respond to "The erenerall notion of a mighty God"; the doctrine of the Trinity is compared to the coining of a piece of

32 gold; thus we are able to apply God to our ne^ds, in his three 32 works of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. Elsewhere,

however, Bonne expresses the more orthodox belief, as expounded by the Cappadocian Fathers, that the Persons are distinguishable only in their internal relations. Now it is the Trinity which is described as "Lux inaccessibilis"; we are able to understand something of the one God, but nothing of the distinction of Persons. Thus he flatly contradicts his own statement that God is known by means of the Trinity: "Some such things may be done towards the representing of God, as God; But towards the expressing of the distinction of the Persons in the Trinity, nothing^" In an earlier passage he claims that "in all outward works, all the Trinity concurres." There is

^ 1 "5? Sermons, III.12.263. « Sermons, IX.1.61; 52.

See .Viles, Working- papers in Doctrine, p.13-
TTH ns, VIII.1.54. Sermons, 11.15-319.

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no development in Donne's thought here, but simply, whether he was speakinp- of the oneness of God, or of the distinction of the three Persons, he stressed its incomprehensibility. Pew people, says Donne, have any idea what they mean when they speak of the Trinity;-^ but let them beware of trying to find out. God's intention is "you

37 shall know That it is, you shall not ask How it is." V7e are to
•zo

show devotion, not curiosity.

39 The Trinity is "a permanent Doctrine necessary to Salvation",
and Donne states categorically that no-one can be saved who does not

40 41 believe in it, including the Old Testament patriarchs. As to

how the patriarchs obtained this faith, he warns, "let us not too

42 curiously inquire." Compared with this belief good works are

unimportant, says Donne, improving on Christ's standard for the Last Judgment: "we shall be arraigned for not cloathing, not visiting, not harbouring the poore ... But yet, all this is but a pety larceny, in respect of that high treason, of infidelity, of denying or doubting of the distinct persons of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity. He attacks heresies which undermine this doctrine, including

45 46 Socinianism, "that pestilent Heresie", and Arianism.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the peculiar characteristic of

47 Christianity, distinguishing it from "al other professions", since

no other religion "ever inclined to a plurality of Persons in one

T. "7

Sermons, IX.3.100-01. Sermons, IX.10.24*5.
* Sermons, III.5.154. Sermons, VI.6.145.
40 Sermons, IX.1.56-7; 7.14.276. 41 Sermons, IX.1.56-7.

A 0 A^ Sermons, VIII.1.56. « Sermons, IX.1.51-2.

44 Sermons, VIII.1.59. 4 ^ Sermons, VII.10.2^6; IX.1.53-
46 Sermons, 7.6.144. 4? Sermons, III.5-U5; cf.71.6.139

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48 therefore, with St. Jerome, Donne describes the doctrine as
49 "Regula fidei." We are baptized in the name of the Trinity, and
should regard it as our first duty to inform ourselves about it.
A3 Christians, we profess the Trinity when we profess the name of Chris t.^ 1
Alongside his donnatic insistence on the necessity of believing
in the Trinity, Donne displays a real love of contemplating it, sayinpr that "it is a lovely and a religious thing, to finde out
ye s t i gi a T rin i t at i s , Impressions of the Trinity, in as many tMne^ as 52
we can." paraphrasing St. Bernard, he writes of "A Creating-, and a Created Trinity," Father, Son and Spirit, Reason, Memory and Will; and he frequently uses Augustine's attribution of power, wisdom, and love to the three Persons. He complains that so few of the London

55 City churches are dedicated to the Trinity.

Donne's insistence on the absolute equality of the three Persons continues in his consideration of the Incarnate Christ, the Saviour whom he saw, without qualification, as true God. He directly equates Christ with the Son: "in that name of our Saviour, The Lord, we apprehend the eternall Word of God, the Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity";^ and he wonders that "this Son of this blessed

57 Virgin, should also be the Son of the eternall God." But Christ

4 Sermons, VIII. 1.57. Sermons, 71.6.138.
Sermons, VI. 6. 133- Sermons, IX. 1.55.

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Sermons, III. 5. 144; of. III. 12. 264.
Sermons, III. 5. 144-5; of. V. 6.149.
54 Sermons, 1. 3-199? cf. III. 12. 257. S<=e Nielsen, "The Concept
of the Divine and the ;iuman," pp. 44-5*
Sermons, IX. 1.53-4. 5 Sermons, III. 14. 293-
IX. 5. 145; see also 71. 5. 122-3; II. 15*320.

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is not only God; he is also, in a favourite phrase of Donne's, "a
CO

mixt person of God and nan," a mystery represented by the name "Immanuel". Such a Person, "naturall reason ... cannot comprehend." Donne marvels that the necessity for the Incarnation could have come about,"that even to God himselfe, there was required something else
then God, before we could be redeemed." He stresses the reality of Christ's humanity, derived from the substance of his mother: "had it
not beene so, Christ had not beene true Man, and then, man were yet

62 unredeemed." He was lacking in nothing which belonged to either

nature, "not in power, as God, not in passibility, as man." Like
all men, the Incarnate Christ suffered some "degrees of humane infirmity;" otherwise, he would not have been able to share their humanity with
them.

Donne's exposition of the union of natures in Christ is entirely

65 orthodox. He speaks of "The hypostaticall union of the Godhead to

the humane nature," and of "both his natures, united in one

6? person." The '.Yord was united both to a human body and to a human
68 soul. The two natures were inseparable, but not confused; Christ

is "Man still, for all the ^lory of the Deity, and God still, for all the infirmity of the manhood." Different actions are proper to the

58 Sermons, 1,9.309; see also VI. 5-123; 1.8.287.
Sermons, 1.9-311? also VI. 8.169; 184-
Sermons, III. 14. 297; of. IX-5-143-
Sermons , IV. 11. 288; see p. 311 below, for the necessity of a
"mixt person" to perform the work of redemption.
/• Q /* -f

Semona , VI. 8. 182. Sermon^, IV.11. 284.
4 Sermons, III. 17. 354; VI. 17. 335-
5 See Sermons, III. 14. 298 ff. which discusses the subject at length.
66 Semens, 111.14.298. 6? Sermons, IV.11. 289.
Sermons, II. 4. 209. Se^ons, 111.14.2^9-

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different natures; Donne says of Christ at the raising of Lazarus, "he would do a great miracle for him, as he was a mip-hty God; but he would weep for him too, as he was a good natured man." On the other hand, Donne calls it "perverse wranglings" to dispute whether it was as
71 God or man that Christ redeemed us. This union of divine and human
will never be dissolved: "now there is an unseparable union betwixt

72 God and the humane nature." Donne stressed that even in death, the
73 Godhead did not depart from Christ's body. As we shall see, this

dual emphasis on divinity and humanity, expressed in glory and humilia-tion, power and weakness, is reflected in all Donne's thinking on the life of Christ.

Milton's exposition of the Trinity has been much discussed, and
while it is clear that in the De Doctrina he adopts an interpretation which is at variance with the orthodox one, there is little agreement
as to the exact doctrine there expressed, whether it is also embodied
in paradise Lost, or when Milton befan to develop his anti-Trinitarian thought. His earlier writings give evidence of complete orthodoxy:
he refers in the Nativity Ode to "trinal unity1-'; in Of Reformation (1641) to the "one Tri-personall GODHEAD", also condemning Arians in three separate places; and in Animadversions (1641) to "thou the ever-
7/f

begotten light, and perfect Image of the Father." In Of Prelatical Episcopacy, he condemns fertullian for a point which he himself is
later to argue: it is an unfaithful exposition of Scripture to claim
that "The ?ather is the whole substance, but the Son a derivation, and portion of the whole, as he himselfe professes because the Father is

Sermons, IV.13.335- . Sermons, V.5.124.
72 Sermons, II.15.322. 75 Sermons, II.9.209; see pp.344-45-
74 Nativity Ode, 1.11 (1629); Of Reformation, II (Yale I, p.6l4);
Bock I (pp.533-4; 545; 555); Animadversions, sect.4 (Yale I, p.705).

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75 greater then me." After 1641, ? 'ilton makes no further positive

statement about his own belief in the Trinity until the composition of the De Doctrina, although in Bikonoklastes (l649)» ne i- s still found condemning "the infections of Arian and Pelagian Heresies."
It is clear from the scarcity of references to the Trinity in Milton's earlier writings that it was not at first a subject which much interested him; it seems likely that he held to the traditional doctrine only until he began to give it serious thought. It had always been stressed by orthodox theologians that we could not know the Trinity through reason, and beginning from this premise, they found themselves able to accept its inherent contradictions. Milton's reason, however, was unable to acquiesce: as we shall see, he condemned the doctrine because it was not logical, a point agreed by its propounders. He wanted to see the Trinitarian formula of three in one not as a statement of a problem, but as a solution expressed in rational and

77 logical terms; since this was impossible, he rejected it. The

stringency of his reason in the De Doctrina allowed no place to the speculation or wonder of the imagination - a response which could not have been further from Donne's.
The attitude with which Milton approached his investigation of Christian doctrine seems to have made it inevitable that he would

75 Of prelatical Spiscopacy, Yale I, p. 645; of. DDC, I.V (Yale
VI, p. 219j;

7fi ' Eikonoklastes, XVI (Yale III, p. 507); I aenree with Maurice
Kelley that this is ^ilton's latest explicit statement of the orthodox position (Yale 71, p. 68). Arthur Sewell's claim in A Study in Milton's Christian Doctrine (London, 1939), pp. 47-8 that "by hin redeemed who is God" (of GiviT"power, Yale VII, p. 265), is a statement of the full deity of Christ is not conclusive, since Milton allows the name of God to Christ even in the De Doctrina (DDC, I.V; Yale 71, p. 222).
Compare his rejection of creation ex nihilo, pP- 54-35
and of the immortality of the soul, p. 140.

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reject the Trinityi firstly, he rejects all post-Nicene doctrinal development, saying that religion has "been defiled with impurities for more than thirteen hundred years"; and secondly, he proposes to derive his doctrine 78 from Holy Scripture alone. But when we consider the origins of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is clear that its source was not in the explicit revelation of Scriptu^v-, or in the inherently three-fold character of God's self-manifestation, since the thought of the early Fathers about God was at least as much

binitarian 79 as trinitarian; trinitarlan thought seems to have develop-ed from semi-credal confessions and baptismal formulae. Milton, however, recognizes no tradition as genuine, however primitive, which does not 80 find its full expression in Scripture. He begins his doctrinal discussions from a careful analysis of Scriptural texts.
He also begins his interpretation of the Trinity from an intense belief in the oneness of God which, we may note, is the typical Western approach. Unity for Milton is the culmination of all God's attributes: "The ninth attribute, that God is ONE, proceeds from the eight previous attributes and is, as It were, the logical conclusion

81 of them all;" he repeatedly draws attention to the emphasis of op Scripture that God is one. In fact, he insists on the numerical distinction of all individual beings, arguing in the Artis Lo^icae (1672), "things which differ in number also differ in essence; and never do they differ in number if not in essence.- Here let the
Q I

Theologians awake." By applying this logical principle, Milton

78 DDG, Spistle (Yale 71, p.117); ibid., p.123.
79 See Maurice Wiles, Working papers, pp.9-11.
80 DDC, I.XXX (Yale 71, p. 580). 81 DDC, I.II (Yale '/I, p.14^). 82 DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, pD.212; 217;

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Art is Lozicae, I./1I (Columbia 11, p.59)•

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deduces in Chapter 7 of the De Doctrina that Father and Son are not ft/i

co-essential. God, says "11ton, is "one God in the sa^e sense as that in which all the other things mentioned are one, that is, numerically"; co-essentiality is a "bizarre and senseless idea" invent-
Q C

ed to explain why Christ is called "God" in Scripture.
Since Milton denies co-essentiality, we have to ask what he means
by the word "essence". In defiance of the traditional distinction between the terms "hypostasis" and "essence" which had persisted in Trinitarian formulations since the fifth century, Milton begins by equating the two. Since God is one, and utterly simple in his nature, his essentia and his u~nocrTk.(ns must be equivalent; Milton then goes on to assume that it is universally true that "Hypostasis ... is clearly

86 the same as essence." Attempts have been made to argue from this

that Milton's understanding of the Trinity is traditional, by present-

87 ing it as "three essences or three hypostases in one substance," but

as it becomes clear from his subsequent statements on the relation of Father and Son, Milton is not saying merely that where others use the word "hypostasis", he prefers the word "essence", but that the different concepts which others call "essence" and "hypostasis" are actually identical; and that one essence is equivalent to one hypostasis,
op

and cannot contain more than one. And Milton makes it quite clear

84 , I.V (Yale VI, pp.212, 216). See Gordon Campbell, "The
Son of God in De Doctrina Christiana .and paradise Lost," MLR, 75 (1980), pp. 507-14, for a discussion of the debt of this section of the De Doctrina to the Artis Logicae.
DDC, 1.7 (Yale VI, p. 217; p. 212).

86 DDC, I. II (Yale /I, pp. 140-42); jUlton says elsewhere, however, that an hypostasis is a " substantial essence", DDC, I.V (Yale VI, p. 224)

87 See '.7.3. Hunter, "Some Problems in Joh/i Milton's Theological Vocabulary," HTH, 57 (19^4), p.356-
Q Q

, I.V (Yale VI, p. 212).

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89 that he intends to disagree with the traditional standpoint. That

the Son differs from the "Father in essence, or individual existence, means that his is not the divine essence; there is only one divine essence which "cannot possibly generate or be generated by an essence

90 the same as itself." There cannot be more than one God, and his

essence, like any other, is not divisible: "If you were to ascribe two subsistences or two persons to one essence, it would be a contra-

91 diction in terms." Therefore the Son is not divine in essence, though
91 he derives his essence from the Father. Thus Milton concludes, with
92 Arius, that the Son is not equal to, but inferior to the Father.

We must also discuss Milton's understanding of the word "substance", since his orthodoxy is sometimes defended on the grounds that he
thought the Father and Son "consubstantial", though J?ilton does not
93
use the word himself. Milton's use of substantia is not wholly consistent, or rather, he sometimes uses it in the sense of first

94 substance, an individual existence, sometimes in its second sense of
underlying being, at the same time denying that this underlying being is the equivalent of essentia. The latter meaning seems to predominate in discussions on the Son: substance can add nothing to the meaning

95 of essence; and nilton warns that though God imparted to the Son
something of the divine substance, "do not take substance to mean

e.g. DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.203; p.212; pp.214-15).

90 DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.263).

91 DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.212; of. p.263).
92 e.g. DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.223).
Hunter, "John Milton's Theological 7ocabulary, " pp.355-7; cf.
C. A. pat rides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966), pp.17 94 DDC, I.XI7 (Yale 71, p.423). 95 DDC, I.II (Yale '/I, pp.140-1).

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total essence." Although God "was in a real sense Father of the Son, whom he made of his own substance," the Son's share in that substance was partial, and only by the Father's will and gift. This is not an indication of participation in the Godhead, but rather the reverse. '.Vhen we turn to Milton's account of the Holy Spirit, we learn that "The Holy Spirit, since he is a minister of God, and therefore
a creature, was created, that is produced, from the substance of God... You will say that this does not really distinguish the Holy Spirit

97 from the Son." A distinction has been made between Milton aid Arius,

because Milton believed the 3on to have been created from the Father's

no

substance, while Arius believed him to have been created from nothing1; but it must be pointed out that "ilton thought all creation to have

99 been produced from the substance of God, while Arius believed in

creation ex nihilo.

Another aspect of the Son's inferiority appears here - he was
created. ,yhile the ;;icene Creed makes the distinction "begotten, not made," Milton can see no significant difference between these terms. He says that the Son is called " 'begotten;' whatever that means," and that the word can also be applied to the saints; he lists several other words as being synonymous: "it is as plain as it possibly
could be that God voluntarily cheated or generated or produced the
Son before all things." When the Son is called "only-begotten",
1 no

it is "chiefly because he is the only mediator between God and man."

9 DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.211; p.209; p.211).
97 DDC, I.71 (Yale 71, p.298).
98

See pp. 34-35 above

J. H. Adamson, "Milton's. Arianism," HTR, 53 (i960), p.273-
99

100 DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.208; p.207; p.211).

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The'Son is not God, but God's first creation; Scripture
indicates overwhelmingly that he was the first of all created things,

102 and that afterwards, all else was made through him. There are
various logical reasons why he could not have been generated from eternity: there cannot be two eternal beings}" What was made from eternity,

102
was never in the process of being made;" and "a real son is not of

102 the same age of his father*" He was, moreover, begotten not out

of natural necessity, but of God's free will; again, J.Ulton is in agreement with Arius. This position is, of course, inevitable, once
the Son's inferior nature is posited. God, says Milton, "stands in no

102 need of propagation." This is another reason why the Son's begetting

could not have been from eternity: if God begot the Son by decree, then

102 the decree must have preceded the begetting. Milton also agrees

with the Arian proposition that the Son, as one created, is potentially mutable, saying that "If he was once in the Father, but now exists separately, then he must once have undergone a change, and is therefore mutable." 103

In what sense, then, may the Son be called divine? He has some
share in the divine substance, and is also "endowed with divine nature,"

104 though God imparted to him only "as much as he wished" of these.

Later we learn that the Son is called "God", because he has received the divine name from the Father. Milton recognizes that all the

101 DDG, I. VII (Yale 71, p.303).

1D? DDG, I.V (Yale 71, p.206; p.261; p.209). Underlying all this
is "ilton's conception of eternity as everlasting duration. tf.B. Hunter suggests in "Milton's Arianism Reconsidpred," HTR, 52 (1959)» p.33, that if the decree was eternal, then so, in a sense, was the begetting, but Milton's point is. the opposite of this.
103 DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, D.262). 1 °4 ibid., p.211.
105 DDC, 1.7 (Yale /I, D.222).

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divine attributes and works are given to Christ in Scripture, and this is quite fitting, as long as we remember that, as Christ himself teaches, he has them by the gift of the father, to whom they primarily belong. Christ may also be said to be one with the Father in "near-ness and love."
We have now to consider the extent to which this body of doctrine
is reflected in paradise Lost, Much critical energy has been expended on this subject. Sewell argued for a development of Milton's anti-

107 Trinitarianisn in the course of the poem, while Kelley sought to
108 demonstrate a complete correspondence between poem and treatise; a

more recent tendency has been to argue that the poem is subordinationist, rather than Arian, or that it is substantially orthodox. Gordon Campbell, for example, claims that "In De Doctrina Milton denied to the Son unity in essence with the Father, omnipresence, and eternity. In Paradise

109 Lost Milton restored all these attributes to the Son."
This critical dissension raises the question of how we actually
seek to determine the Trinitarian position of Paradise Lost; the usual method seems to be a close analysis of short passages of the poem which seem to be making a statement about the nature of the Son. TJhder-

10 DDC, I.V (Yale VI, p. 223; p. 239).

107 Milton's Christian Doctrine, pp.85 ff> p.92.
1 08 Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument; A Study of Milton's "De Doctrina Christiana" as a Gloss upon "Paradise Lost" (Princeton, N.J., 1941), pp. 84-106; pp. 118-122.
1 ^ Gordon Campbell, "The Son of God," p. 513 5 see also Patrldes,
Milton and the Christian Tradition, pp.15 ff; Hunter, "Vilton's Arianisra Reconsidered," pp. 9-35; and J.H. Adams on, "Milton's Arianism," pp. 269-
276. Adams on 's thesis that Milton's use of the metaphor of lipht from light indicates his Athanasian orthodoxy is not conclusive, because the image was originally used by those who certainly did not af fi m the Son's eternal generation, to illustrate "the possibility of derivation without subtraction." See V/iles, Working papers, pp. 21-2.

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lying all such passages is some Scriptural reference, in many cases Hebrews 1.3, "being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.":

on his right
The radiant image of his glory sat,
His only Son,

or philippians 2.5-6, "Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God":

throned in highest bliss
Equal to God, and equally enjoying-
Godlike fruition. (ill.305-7)

But ^e must be very careful in interpreting these Scriptural references, bearing in mind the warning of EJnpson that "when Milton sounds heretical he is usually quoting St Paul," or as Thomas Newton expressed it
in 1749» "perhaps there is not a single expression, which may not be

112 justify'd by the authority of Holy Writ." Since Milton claimed to

have derived his doctrine of the Trinity solely from Scripture, we cannot assume his orthodoxy simply because he echoes a Scriptural
text on which the orthodox doctrine has been based. Anti-trinitarians felt that there was as much Scriptural support for their position as the orthodox did; it had been apparent even at Nicaea that Scriptural

113 terminology was not sufficient to exclude Arianism. I do not believe that we can pronounce with any certainty on the doctrinal stance of

110 PL, III. 62-4; cf. III. 138-40, and DDG,I.V (Yale VI, p. 211). William Empson, Milton'3 God, r^v. ed. (London, 19^5)» p. 281.

112 Milton; The Critical Heritage, ed. J.T. Shawcross, 2 vols. (London, 1970, 1972), vol. II, p. 156.
See A Dictionary of Christian Theology, ed. A. Richardson
(London, 19^7* under "Trinity," p

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parad iae Lost from this kind of evidence.
Qi the other hand, there are hints in Paradise Lost of unconven-tional thinking, reinforced by the fact that the poem's doctrine was held suspect before the De Doctrina had been discovered. Already in 1698, Charles Leslie was very unhappy about the exaltation of the Son as the reason for the angels' revolt, thinking: that it suggested either that the generation of the Son was not eternal, or that the angels were ignorant of the Trinity; 4 and John Dennis, in 1704, thought that the lines

Thee next they sang of all creation first,
Begotten Son, (ill. 383-4)

indicated that Milton was "a little tainted with Socinianism."
From other considerations, it seems most likely that :,!ilton did
hold ant i -Trinitarian views when he wrote P ar ad i s e Los t . tfe have seen that when Milton subjected the traditional doctrine to the scrutiny of logic and reason, he felt bound to reject it; I cannot think that Milton would have written his great epic, to which he had given years of preparation, without thus considering the basis of the fundamental Christian belief about the nature of the Godhead. At least part of the purpose of the De Doctrina must have been a theological training for the epic. This said, the poem is still not self-evidently anti-Trinitarian. Gordon Campbell points out that even if certain lines could be read as Arian, "it would need to be demonstrated why they
should be read in such a fashion, for an Arian interpretation implies

The Critical Heritage, vol. I, p.11?.

11S' John Dennis, The Critical '/forks, ed. 2.N. Hooker, 2 vols.
(Baltimore, 1939, 1943), vol.1, pp. 344-5- The debate carried on in The Gentleman's Magazine in 1738, although ostensibly about Milton's
" Arian ism", ~ in fact makes no reference at all to his views on the Trinity; see The Critical Hectare, vol.11, pp. 9} ff«

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that Milton was deceiving his readers." 7/as Milton deceiving his readers? I think that the reason for the ambiguity in Paradise Lost
is to be found in a difference of emphasis, rather than a difference
of belief, between it and the De Doctrina. Let us consider again the particular form of subordinationism professed by Arius. We should remember that Arius stresses both sides of his formula, " a creature, but not as one of the creatures," equally; Maurice Wiles writes: "Arius *s philosophical presuppositions forced him to assert a difference of between the Father and the Son and to choose the terra Krcfa as
the basic description of the relationship between them. But once having drawn the basic distinction in that way, his aim is to emphasize in the highest possible degree the qualifications which require to be made

117 in the understanding of those basic distinctions." Once it was

admitted that the Son shared in the Godhead not essentially, but by grace, all the attributes of God the Father could still be ascribed
to the Son. In this respect, Milton is entirely in agreement with Arius; and while we find in the De Doctrina an almost unmitigated insistence on the inferiority of the Son, that is because the Son's inferiority is the point at issue there. In Paradise Lost, however, Milton's
chief aim is not to prove this particular doctrinal point against his opponents, and there is therefore no obstacle to his dwelling on the glory, majesty and power in which the Son shares - whether essentially, or by grace. What is said in the De Doctrina is a true statement of Milton's belief, but it is not the whole truth, because in addition
to the logical necessity of the Son's inferiority, there is also Milton's instinct of devotion towards one whom he calls Lord. There

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116 Gordon Campbell, "The Son of God," p. 510.
117 "In Defence of Arius," in ^Vorkinp: Pap_e_rs , p. 34.

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is no indication at all that Milton wishes to deny the Son transcend-ence or honour, but rather to offer him all worship. Milton freely admits in the pe Doctrina that the divine attributes are ascribed to the Son, though in a secondary sense - glory, omniscience, authority,
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omnipotence, a share in all the divine works, and in the divine name. All this is expressed in paradise Lost . Milton calls the Son,
119 engaged in the work of creation, "God"; and he shares in the Father's
120

substance: "in him all his Father shone/ Substantially expressed."

121
He is called a "Second omnipotence," and receives the same honour
122
as that due to the Father: "Adore the Son, and honour him as me." When we consider such passages as the description of the Messiah in his triumphal chariot, and the hymns which the angels sing to the Son after he has accomplished the work of creation, it is clear that in paradise Lost, logical distinctions are subordinate to an attitude of wonder and worship:

0 unexampled love,
Love nowhere to be found less than divine I
Hail, Son of God, saviour of men, thy name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth, and never shall my harp thy praise
Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin, (ill.410-15)

The Son portrayed in paradise Lost is certainly "not as one of the

creatures."

Finally, we should note that the mystery of the Trinity itself
holds no fascination for Milton; he makes distinctions between Father
and Son, exemplified by the dialogues between them in Paradise Lost,

118 DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, pp.233 ff.)« ^ 9 PJf, VII.243? DDG, 1.7 (p.222).
120 PJi> III.139-40; cf. DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.211).
121 PL» '/I.^84; cf. DDG, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.2^)»
122 PL, III.343; cf. DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.271).

192

but he is not attracted by the ineffable, internal relations of the Godhead.
What, then, does Milton's exposition of the relation of Father
and Son surest about his understanding of the incarnate Christ? He states quite clearly the identity of Jesus Christ, and the Son of God whom he has been discussing: "God voluntarily created or generated or produced the Son before all things: the Son, who was endowed with divine nature and whom, similarly, when the time was ripe, God miracu-

125 lously brought forth in his human nature from the 7irgin yary." J In

his chapter on the Incarnation, Milton affirms the pre-existence of Jesus as the tford, against the Socinians, but again denies his essential

1 ?/! Godhead. If it really is the Son who became incarnate, this
125 furnishes a further proof that Father and Son are not co-essential.

Christ's own words indicate that he and the Father are not one in understanding or will,
Milton affirms the divine and human natures in Christ: "His NATURE

127 is double, divine and human," divine in the specially restricted
sense which Milton has already explained. But Milton also wants his own definition of "nature", aimed, as in his discussion of the Trinity, at abolishing conceptual distinctions: "nature can mean nothing in

128 this context except the essence itself." So he concludes that

"the union of two natures in Christ was the mutual hypostatic union of

128 two essences." The point of this re-definition is to oppose the

1 25 DDG, I. 7 (Yale VI, p. 211).
124 DDG, I.XI7 (Yale VI, p. 419). 125 ibid., p. 425-
126 DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, p. 229). 12? DDC, I. XT/ (Yale 71, p. 413).
1 Pfl DDC, I.XI7 (Yale 71 , p. 423); of. p. 424, where he also equates
"substance" and "person" with "essence".

193

orthodox view, which Milton illustrates by a quotation from Zanchius, ^ that Christ's human nature did not have an independent subsistence,
but wis united with the Logos at the very instant of conception. To Milton, this is a ridiculous concept: "if it assumed human nature, but

1 29 not manhood, then it became an example of human nature, not a man." In order to safeguard the true humanity of Christ, he argues that the Son must have assumed a human nature of independent subsistence- in other words, a man - at, or shortly after, conception. ^ He also emphasizes Christ's humanity with a selection of quotations, proving that he had both human body and soul. He does not make it clear how from two independently subsisting persons only "one Christ, one ens, and one person" is formed, remarking that the whole question is 131
a great mystery. The properties of each person remain individually distinct, but the union is everlasting, since "He entered into glory with that very same body, that very same flesh and blood, with

132 which he had died and risen again."

As to whether Christ had a two-fold will, or a two-fold intellect, Milton says in the De Doctrina that WP should not enquire, although he seems to incline to the view that Christ had only one will. He suggests that Christ had one intellect, which he first emptied of knowledge, and then, being taught by the Father, came to know all things.

1 29

7 DDC, I. XIV (Yale VI, p. 422; pp. 422-3).
DDC, I. XIV (Yale VI, pp. 422-3); see ff.3. Hunter, "Milton^on
the Incarnation," in Bright Essence, ed. '7.B. Hunter (Salt Lake City, 1971), pp. 131-48, for a discussion of Milton's view, and a comparison
of it with Nestorianism.

131 DDC, I. XIV (Yale VI, p. 426; pp.423, 420, 424, 427; pp. 426-7).

152 _DDC, I. XXXIII (Yale VI, p. 621).

155 DDC, I. XIV (Yale '/I, pp. 425-6); ibid., p. 425.

194

This is reflected in Paradise Regained, where Christ is at first ignorant of why he is led into the wilderness, but receives increase

134 of knowledge at crucial moments during the poem.

Finally we should notice that because Milton did not believe that Christ was true God, he claimed that he suffered in his divine nature as well as in his human (in contrast to both the orthodox and the Nestorian position), and even died in it: "Christ, the sacrificial lamb, was totally killed." 155
There is no conclusive evidence of Milton's views on the natures
of Christ in any of his other writings apart from the De Doctrina.

134 e.g. PR, 1.290-93; 1.348 ff.
DDC, I.X7I (Yale VI, p.440).

CHAPTER 4

THE NATIVITY

I, Introduction

Christmas was not one of the earliest festivals of the Church;
the first believers emphasized the living presence of the risen Christ, rather than an historical commemoration of the events of his earthly life. The origin of the feast is a complex and disputed question,
but it seems that it was first celebrated in the Zast, during the third century, as a unitive festival of the Incarnation and 3ar>tism
on January 6th.; in the ^Yest, December 25th. had been established as the feast of the Nativity at Rome by 336 A.D. Both of these dates are linked with pagan celebrations at the winter solstice, which the Church sought to transform, rathe- than a belief about the actual date of Christ's birth; the association with the re-appearance of light
in the darkness of winter was to be a rich source of Christian imagery. The development of the feast was given impetus by the great Chris tological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries. Later, the festival of January 6th. was also adopted in the '.Vest, where it was based on the adoration of the Magi.
Oice established, the feast of the Nativity developed both in religious symbolism, and secular celebration, throughout the Middle

See 0. Cullrcan, "The Origin of Christmas," in The 3arly
Church, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (London, 1956), pp.17-36; and A.A. KcArthur, The Evolution of the Christian Year (London, 1953)» PP-31

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Ages; after the Reformation, however, its general acceptance by Catholics and Protestants alike was challenged by the more radical puritans. Emphasizing the sufficiency of Scripture, and a present life in the Spirit, they reacted against the traditional, historical re-visitation of the events of Christ's life, and completely rejected the Church's calendar, celebrating the Lord's Day alone as a scriptur-

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ally appointed festival. Both Hooker, and Joseph Hall, the Bishop of Norwich, deal at length with puritan objections to festivals of human institution; Hall thought that the feast was more primitive than it actually was, arguing that it had been celebrated "ever since the second hundred year after Christ." Both Lancelot Andrewes and
4 Donne include in Christmas serr.ons a defence of its celebration. In 1644* however, the Directory for The Publirpie Worship of God pro-
hibited the observance of this, as of all other feasts except the Sabbath. Christmas was officially reinstated at the Restoration.
'fie turn now to the Church's interpretation of the historical event
of the Nativity, considering first the Virgin Birth. The Virgin Mary
is rarely mentioned in the earliest patristic writings - an interest
in her is much more apparent in apocryphal works - although the Scriptural statement that she conceived as a virgin was, of course, accepted, and seen as part of God's plan of redemption. The reason for the Virgin

<ji
See Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, 1603-1690
(Princeton Uhiversity Press, 1975), pp.21 5 ————————————
Richard Hooker, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, in Works,
ed. j. Keble, 7th. ed., rev. R. tf. Church and F. Paget, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1888), Book V, Ixix-bori. (vol. II, pp.381-407)? Joseph Hall, A Letter for the Observation of the Feast of Christ's Nativj.t^, in fforks, ed. Philip wynter, 10 vols. (Oxford, 1863), vol. IX, pp.128-37; p.133. Lancelot Andrewes, Sermons, ed. G. M. Storey (Oxford, 1967)»
p.19; Donne, Sermons, VIII.5.130.
A Directory for The Publique Worship of God (London, 1644), p.85-
e.g. Tertullian, De Came Christi, XVII (ANCL vol.XV, p.200).

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Birth was from the first seen as the avoidance of original sin. Very early, apocryphal writings had claimed that Mary was not only a virgin in conceiving, but in partu, and remained a virgin for the rest of
7

her life, but it was to be several centuries before these ideas became generally accepted. They were widespread by the sixth century, when Leo the Great stated, "a Virgin conceived, a Virgin bare, and a
o

Virgin she remained." A growing interest in the significance of Mary as the mother of God accompanied the Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries, for her role helped to define the union
of divine and human in the Incarnate Christ. The paradox of the divine Son born of a human mother is explored by Augustine in a semon on
the Nativity: " Christ was born of both a father and a mother, and He was born without a father and without a mother ... Him whom the heavens do not contain the bosom of one woman bore. She ruled our Kinp-; she

9
carried Him in whom we exist; she fed our Bread."
These ideas are confirmed by Aquinas. //hile Christ had an eternal generation from the Father, he also had a real, temporal birth, in respect of his human nature, from the Virgin Mary, and took of her substance. She bore him, however, without pain or violation, and re-mained a perpetual virgin; it would have been ungrateful in her to want any more children. Christ's miraculous conception preserved him

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Kelly, Zarly Christian Doctrines, pp.492 ff.
Q

Leo the Great, Se^-v,-,n XXII, in Letter and Sermons^, trans. C.
L. Peltoe, ;jp:,r? voU XII (Oxford ani New York, 1895) > p. 130.
5 St. Aur-^tine, Sermon 184, i^ Ser-.ona on the Liturgical Seasons, trans. Sr. Mary Sarah Huldowney, ?C 38 (New York, 1^59), p.5» P» b -
1 °S_.Th., 3a. 35. art. 3 (vol. Ill, p. 99); S^fh . , Ja. 35. art. 6
(vol. LII, p. 101); S.Th., 3a. 28. art. 3 (vol. LI, D.'

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from the taint of original sin involved in generation. Although .the whole Trinity brought about the work of Christ's conception, "the formation of the body" is actually attributed to the Spirit. Because Christ's body was fashioned by the Spirit, it was at the very instant of conception "both perfectly formed and assumed," and was animated

12 from the first. The manifold paradoxes of the Virgin Birth are, of

course, celebrated in countless medieval lyrics.
The Reformation brought a reaction against too much emphasis on
the r6le of the Virgin Mary; but the importance of her virginity was still stressed. Luther, urging us in a Christmas ser-non to "accept
the child and his birth and forget the mother, " at the same time insists on a belief in the Virgin Birth. Bullinger, successor of
it

Zwingli at Zurich, reminds us, "The Lord was borne of Marie his mother, and yet shee a Virgine still." The traditional reason for the Tirgin Birth is upheld: "Because he, who came to cleanse vs from our sinnes, 15 must needes bee cleane from sinne himselfe." Christ took his flesh from "the bloud of Marie being purified," but more abstruse specu-lation tends to be discouraged, at least by Protestants. Musculus warns us against seeking out "how this vnwonted & wonderfull

11 S.Th., 3a. 28. art.1 (vol.LI, p.37).
12 S.Th., 3a. 32. art.1 (vol.LII, p.43); S.Th., 3a.33- art.1 (vol. LII, P»59yTs.Th., 3a.33. art.2 (vol.LII, p.^3). Cf. St. Bonaventura, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ, trans. Nicholas Love, ed. L. F. Powell (Oxford, 1908), p.31.
15 Martin Luther, 'fforks, ed. J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann, 55
vols. (St. Louis and Philadelphia, 1955 ff«)» vol. 51 > P-213.

14 Decades, p.63»

* Alexander Nowell, A Cate^hisme, or Institution of Christian fleli^ion (London, 1609), si*. C5r; cf. Gerhard, Gerard s Me d i t at ions, trans. Ralph Winterton (Cambridge, 1631), p.75«
Gerhard, Summe, p.26; cf. Ames, yarrow, p.°4.

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incarnacioun of ye word was perfected;" 17 Zanchius, who did attempt to search out this mystery, earned for himself the biting sarcasm of

Milton.

AS for the birth of the child himself, the theme of all ages is wonder at the one who is both God and LTan, Word made flesh, dignity in the midst of humiliation. Svery circumstance of Christ's life witnessed either to his Godhead, or to his humanity:" He is seen as man, He is adored as Lord. He lies in swaddling-clothes, but shines amid the stars; the cradle shows His birth, the stars His dominion; it is the flesh that is wrapped in clothes, the God-head that receives the ministry of angels. Thus the dignity of His natural majesty is not lost, and His true assumption of the flesh is proved." 1 ^ Leo
the Great contrasts the baby's invisible majesty and his outward
20

appearance; Augustine emphasizes that both manhood and Godhead were 21 equally apparent. The early Church seems to have understood the humility of Christ's birth to have been balanced by the manifestations of his divinity; the Fathers do not dwell on the discomfort of the child in the manger, nor see his suffering there as a direct pre-figuring of his passion.
There also quickly grew into being a number of traditions, or
legends, concerned with the response of the natural world to the birth of the Saviour. One of the most widespread is that of the adoration
of the animals, based on Isaiah 1.3; prudentius writes:

17 ifl
Common places. fol.139a. DDC, I. XIV (Yale VI, p.422).
19 St. Ambrose, Of The Christian Faith, in Select Works and
Letters, trans. H. de Homes tin, NPNF vol. X (New York, 1896), I.iv (p.206)
20
Leo the Great, Sermon XXXIV (NPNF vol. XII, p.149).
21 Augustine, Sermon 18? (FC 38, p.13).

200

adorat haec brutura pecus, indocta turba scilicet,

and Augustine gives them symbolic meaning: "Let the two animals, symbolic of two races, approach the manger." 25 In the apocryphal Book of James, Joseph observes the whole world to stand still at the moment of the
2A birth. prudentius also tells us that the earth blossomed:

vagitus ille exordium
vernantis orbis prodidit,

and that the pagan oracles fell silent, and their shrines were emptied. 26 Augustine writes that, as light.entered into a world of sin, "night began to suffer diminution and day began to increase." ^ Other symbols are listed by Aquinas. He affirms that Christ was born at a time of bondage, because he would bring us back to liberty, and under the rule of Augustus, because the universal peace befitted the king of peace.
He also lends his authority to the idea that the Light of the World 28 da?med at the winter solstice.
We find in the Kiddle Ages not only the firm establishment of
this kind of historical symbolism, but also the growth of a new kind of deeply personal piety, which delighted to dwell on the humanity of

22 prudentius, Hymnus VIII Kal. lanuariaa, 11.81-2. in The Poems, trans. H. J. Thomson, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (London, 1949 and 1953), vol. I, p.100.

23 Sermon 189 (FC 38, p.22).
24 The Book of Janes, XVIII.2, in The Apocryphal New Testament, trans. M. R. James (Oxford, 1924), p.46.

25 Prudentius, Kal. lan., 11.61-2 (poems, vol. I, p.98).
26 Prudentius, Apotheosis, .11.438 ff. (Poems, vol.1, p.152).
27 Sermon 190 (PC 38, p.24); cf. Prudentius, Kal. lan., 11.1-12
vol. I, pp.94-6).

28 S.Th., 3a.35. art.8 (vol. LEI, p.10?; p.109).

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Christ, and lovingly to contemplate the little, homely details of the events of his earthly life. Christ's humanity is regarded mystically, rather than historically, for the human Jesus is f«=lt to be ever present as the companion and lover of the Christian soul. An emphasis on this kind of piety is apparent at the end of the eleventh century, in the prayers of St. Anselm, but the chief influences in its develop-ment were St. Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century, and St. Francis and his 29 followers in the thirteenth. In particular, Bernard's devotion to the Virgin Mary led him to look on the Nativity of Christ with great tenderness; as a young man, he had had a vision of this event, in which he had fondled the divine infant in his arms. St. Francis obtained permission to make one of the first models of a crib at Greccio, three years before his death. The nature of this devotion may be well illustrated from The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ, traditionally attributed to St. Bonaventura, Minister General of the Franciscans from 1257» and translated into English by Nicholas Love before the year 1410. Obeying the injunction of St. Bernard,
"Let IESVS 32 also be alwayes in your heart," he lovingly contemplates
the Nativity:

And anon sche/ deuoutly enclynande/ with souereyne ioye toke hym in hir armes and swetely clippyng and kessynge leyde hym in hir barme/ and with a fu! le pap/ as sche was tau$t of the holy goost/ wisshe hym al aboute with hir

swete mylkr and so wrapped hym in the keuerchiefes of hir

29 See G. L. Prestige, "Sros: or, Devotion to the Sacred Humanity," in Fathers and Heretics, Bampton Lectures, 1940 (London, 1940), pp.384 f and D. Gray, Themes and Images in the yedJ£val__gigrlish Religious Lyric (London, 1972), pp.18 ff.
Prestige, Fathers and Heretics, p.391-

L. S. Marcus, Childhood and^ Cultural Despair; A THe-.e and 7ari- ations 1978]7PP.16-17.——————————— in Seventeenth-Century Literature (University of Pittsburgh Press,
7p

St. Bernard, A Hive of Sacred Honie^CojrjeSf trans. Antonie 3att (Dou-J, 1631), p..403.

heued and leide hym in the cracche.

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33

But an emphasis on the baby's humanity did not obscure his divinity; we also find in St. Bernard a traditional meditation on the paradox of the Incarnation: he sees "power e-overned, wisdom instructed, power sustained; God, who strengthens Angels, Himself strengthened by milk; and Him who consoles the unhappy, lamenting as an infant." It is in St. Bernard too that we find that most popular of paradoxes, the yerbum infans, which he delighted to repeat in his meditations on the Nativity.
Contemplation of the circumstances of Christ's birth in human,
rather than symbolic terms, forces the realization that it was uncom-fortable and wretched. So we find firstly pity for the child and his mother, and secondly the idea that Christ's birth represents the beginning- of his Passion. St. Bernard laments thus: "thou wert thrust vnkindely into a noysome Stable, in stead of thy Princely Chamber, and layd in a homely Manger, for thy bed of honour, wrapped in swatheling clouts, and fettered like a prisoner." Christ's life, from the first, is characterized by suffering: "Since that time, oh swept lesus, thou

37 beganst to taste of the bitter Cup of humane raiserie." Affective

piety of this kind, when unrestrained by the intellect of the great writers, could easily degenerate into sentimentality.

Mirrour, p.47.
[3t. Bernard], Life and Works of St. Bernard, ed. Dom. John
Mabillon, trans. S. J. Bales, Catholic Standard Library, 4 vols. (London, 1889-96), vol.Ill, p.305.
St. Bernard, Opera, ed. J. Leclerri, 8 vols. (Rome, 1957-77)t
vol. 17, pp.198; 259f2S57
St. Bernard, Most Deuout and Diuine Meditations (London, 1632), p.157.
7 St. Bernard, Deuout Meditations, p.161; cf. Mirrour, p.44.

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The popularity of many of these devotional works persisted through
the Reformation into the seventeenth century, or were rediscovered

70 then; translations of St. Bernard were particularly popular. And the
emphasis of medieval spirituality continued among many who had re-jected the Catholic tradition from which it sprang. Louis Martz, in

39 The Poetry of Meditation, has indicated the extent to which seventeenth-

century religious poetry, both Roman Catholic and Anglican, could be based on meditative techniques, such as the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, or the less rigorous methods of St.Francis of Sales.
The attitude of the Puritans, with their rejection both of the Church calendar, and non-Scriptural symbolism, is more difficult to describe. Gordon Wafcefield has demonstrated that Martz has under-estimated their

40 practice of contemplation, and their interest in Jesus' earthly life.

But even so, descriptions of the Nativity are rarely found in their writings; they emphasized Christ's triumph, rather than his weakness, looking not to his humiliation in history, but to his present glory
as Mediator. They felt a distaste, shared by less radical Anglicans, for "Popish pictures, placeing him in his Mothers armes and keeping him in his constant infancy."
In writers on the Nativity, we continue to find the use of
paradox. Thomas Adams, quoting from Augustine, writes: "The Ancient of dayes is become a young Child. The Infinitely great is made Little.

See H. C. White, Snglish Devotional Literature (Prose)l600-
1640 (Madison, 1931), Chapter III, for an account of the various editions and translations of earlier devotional books.
Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, revised edition
(New Haven, 1962), passim.
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40 Gordon S. Wakefield, Puritan Devg_bjgjLL Its Place in
ppment of Christian piety (London, 1957), pp.87-9; 94-9.
Thomas Fuller, Good Thoughts in Worse Tines (London, 1647),
p. 128 (quoted by L.S. Marcus, Childhood and Cultural Despair, p

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A 9

The sustainer of all things, Suckesj" and Bernard's idea of "the aetemall word not hable to speake a word" was a particular favour-

43 ite. But the emphasis varied widely from author to author. Some saw a balance between the humility and glory of Christ's birth, revealing hunanity and divinity equally. The Calvinist and extreme puritan, William Ames, writes: "In the birth of Christ, there was humility of greatest poverty with an attestation of gratest glory: that both natures, and both parts of mediation, might be declared from the beginning;" an emphasis which he shares with Andrewes*
At the same time, however, Andrewes points out that we may be offended and embarrassed by the Saviour's humble birth: "but we would find Him, in some better place ... not in these clouts or cratch, but in a crimsin mantle; in a cradle of ivorie; That (lo) were somewhat

45 Saviour- like." George Warburton, in a sermon preached at Court,
claims that the Magi could not have discerned him to be a king, in
46 such wretched circumstances, but by the eye of faith. It is a
parallel scandal to that of the Cross: "Christus vix dum natus, incipit
4.7

pro nobis crucifigi." Christ was born thus, "to teach us, having
48 Food and Ra;/ment (though the meanest) to be therewith Contented."

Thomas Adams, The Workes (London, [J629]), p.160; cf. Anthony
Maxey, A Sernon preached before his Maiestie at Bagshot, September 1. Anno pom. 1616, in "certaine Sermons Preached before the Kings Maiestie, and elsewhere (London, 1619), p. 23. (This, the ninth and last of the sermons, is separately paginated.)
Andrewes, Serrons, p. 85; cf. Edward Sparke, vowrWM vel Scintilla-Altaris. Being A Pious Reflection on Primative Devotion in The geasts and Fasts of The Church of "England (London, 1660), p. 51 •
Ames, Marrow, p. 95. Andrewes, Sermons , p. 77? p. 80.
George Warburton, King Melchizedech (London, 1623), p. 28; cf.
Adams, Wo_rkes_, p.161.
47 Biblia I^tina (junius-Tremellius), marginal note on yatt.2.13;
cf. Andrewes, Sermons, p. 82.

48 r) Sparke, (yyowyrypcoi/ 9 p. 55*

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Maxey, however, contrasts the honour and glory of Christ's birth with the shame of the Cross; and Traherne speaks of "Our Saviours Birth/ Its glorious Circumstances."
The traditional themes and legends persist. Gerhard writes,

52 "He is born betwixt an oxe and an asse." The coming of Spring with the birth of the child was a popular idea with poets:

Thus He, who is thy King,
Makes Winter, Spring, ^

as was the rising Sun, which scatters the darkness of both night and winter:

The Babe lookt up, and shew'd his face, ,-.
In spight of Darknesse it was Day.

Jhere are references to the universal peace which reigned on earth at Christ's birth; and Andrewes, in a sermon on Psalm 85.10-11, "Mercie and Truth shall meet," describes how heaven made peace with the earth.

49 Certaine Sermons, pp.195-6.
^ Thomas Traherne, "Thanksgivings for the Wisdom of his WORD,"

11« 333-4, in Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1958). ————————————

For a discussion of the use of some of these themes in seventeenth-century poets, see A. B. Chambers, "Christmas: The Liturgy of the Church and English Verse of the Renaissance," in Literary Monographs, vol.6,
ed. E. Rothstein and J. A. Wittreich (University of Wisconsin Press,
1975), pp.118 ff.

52 Gerhard, Meditations, p.?6.
53 Traherne, "Cn Christmas-Day", 11.23-4? cf. Herrick,"A Christmas Carol!," in Poetical Works, ed.L.C.Martin (Oxford, 1956), P«3^4.
54 Richard Crashaw, "A Hymne of the Nativity, sung by the Shepheards," 11.19-20,. in The Poe-r-s, ed. L. C,. Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1957), P-106. 55 Gerhard, Recitations, p.75; Warburton, King Melchizedech, pp.33-4.
* Andrewes, Semon 11 of the NajivJLUe (Sermons, pp.49-74); cf.
Isaac Ambrose, Looking unto Jesus; A View of the
(Glasgow, 1758), pc.141

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57

Maxey informs us that "the Oracles were whist" at his appearance. We have finally to deal with the revelation of Christ's nativity
to the world. Prom the first, it was a commonplace that the shepherds and the Magi represented the revelation to the Jews and the Gentiles respectively; Christ was revealed to both in order to show that in
58 him was no barrier. it was therefore particularly appropriate for the Gentile Church to celebrate Epiphany. Both ideas are found re-

59 peated in many writers, up to the seventeenth century. The shepherds, perhaps because they represented the Jews, rather than the Gentile Church, do not seem to have attracted much interest from expositors. Sometimes their lack of learning is contrasted with the knowledge of the Magi, or it is suggested that they -were less wicked. Some seventeenth-century writers make a more imaginative use of them; Gerhard declares that "To the shepherds first is declared this so prreat a miracle, because the true shepheM of our souls care to bring back
the lost sheep into the way," and Crashaw has his shepherds sing:

To thee (Dread Lambe) whose Love must keepe
The Shepheards, while they feed their sheepe

Maxey sue-gests that the angels were a suitable form of revelation to
the shepherds, as the star was to the Magi, because "Shepheards
watching abroad in the night, they desire to see visions, and heere musicall songs."

Gertaine Semons, p. 1^5. Augustine, Sermon 199 (PC 38, p. 59)
e.g. Thomas Aquinas, S.Th., 3a.36- art. 3 (vol. Ill, p. 11 9);
Andrewes, Sermons, p. 103; Sparke, dvo<.«.oTnpLo* , p.143»
° Augustine, Sermon 200 (EC 38, p. 66); Adams, Workes, p. 158 5
Aquinas, S.Th.) 3a.36. art. 3 (vol. LII, pp. 119-121).
61 Meditations, pp. 76-77- ? "A Hymne of the Nativity," 11.81-2. Maxey, A Semon (Sept. 1, 1616), p. 14.

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The response to the aura of mystery about the Magi was much
deeper. Who were they, and where had they come from? It was generally agreed that they came from Persia, since the name "magus" signified a wise astronomer in that country, although other Eastern places were also suggested. References to Persian customs were perceived in their story* "The Persiens maner was not to solute kings without a preset
and therefore they broght of that which was most precious in their countrey." There seems, however, to have been some doubt about how far away Persia was. Maxey refers to "a long and tedious iourney from Persia to Palestine, 1500. miles," while Sparke puts the figure at
520 miles.66

The idea that the "agi were kings was first suggested "by Tertullian,

67 and that there were three of them, by Origen. There was some suspi-

cion of their profession. Augustine says that there is an abundance
of impiety "arid the sacrileges of the Magi", and is quick to point
out that there is no justification for astrolofry in their observation of the stars. Aquinas concurs in both these points. The Geneva Bible says that the word signifies "Philosophers, Priests, or astrono-mers," while Anthony Maxey, preaching in the presence of James I, is at pains to prove them "Princes, Rulers, and heads of the people,

^ Prudentius, Hymnus Epiphaniae, 1.25 (Poems, vol.1, p.104);
Aq'iinas, S.Th.,3a»36« art* 6 (vol. LI I, p. 131).
Geneva Bible (Geneva, 15^2), marginal note on Matt.2.11;
cf. Sparke, &ua<.*cm\ac.o\s , p.149*
A Sermon (Sept. 1, 1616), p.6; Sparke, @uo^rnpi0y t p.156.

6?' See The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. P.L.
Cross, 2nd. ed., rev. E.A. Uvingstone (Oxford, 1974), under "Magi, The" 8 Sermon 200 (FC 38, p.^6)*; Sermon 199 (FC 38, pp.61-2).
9 3.Th.,3a.36 art.5 (vol. LII, p.12?).
Geneva Bible, marginal note on tfatt. 2.1.

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71 in their seuerall countreyes." By contrast, Thomas Adams attacks
them vehemently: "confederates with Sathan in the most detestable art
72 of Witchcraft." However, there does not seem much concern to condemn
astrology, a very popular art in the seventeenth century.
It was remarked that the star was a particularly suitable sisn
by which to reveal the birth of Christ to those who studied the stars, an example of grace proportioned "to the Capacities and imployments of the Receivers." '^ Most writers were "perswaded it was a new Starre,"
75 created to reveal the Saviour's birth; some thought it to be the
76

Holy Spirit, or an angel, in the form of a star.
A significance was quickly perceived in the gifts which the Magi presented to the child. St. Ambrose writes that they came "confessing, by the gift of gold, His Royalty, and with incense worshipping Him as
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God. For gold is the sign of kingdom, incense of God, myrrh of burial." It is suggested, however, by Nicholas Love, that the baby Jesus was displeased by the sumptuous gifts,and prompted his mother to ^ive the
gold away: "perauntre turnynge away ofte sithes his face fro that oroide
or spittynge there vppon/ with ynne a fewe dayes and schorte time sche
78 ?af it al to pore men." Thomas Adams suggests that the child and his

mother were in real need of the money; he sees the gifts not as a pre-
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cedent for the acceptance of riches, but as an example of relieving the poor.

71 72
A Semon (Sept.1, 1616), p.2. Workes, p. 158-
See C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down (London, 1972),pp.70 ff.
1A Sparke, Sucnourrripiov , pp. 152-3; cf. Leo the Great, Semen XXXIII,
NPNF vol. XII, p.146; Aquinas, S.Th.,3a.36- art.5 (vol.LII, p.125).
Adams, Workes, p.157; cf. Aquinas, S.Th., 3a«36. art.7 (vol.LII,p.135)-
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Aquinas, ibid.; cf. Sparke, 0</ffHffr/i/>tw_ 9 p. 152.
Of the Christian Faith, I.iv (NPNF vol.X, p. 205); Aquinas, S^Th
3a. art. 7 (vol. LH, p. 139); Isaac Ambrose, Looking, p.145-
Mirrour, p. 58. Workes, pp. 163-4; 166.

II. Donne and Milton.

Prom the first, Donne's writing on the ITativity disclays a
strong interest in the Virgin Mary: the poems "Annunciation" and "Nativitie" from La Corona, two passages on Christ's conception and birth in "A Litanie," and "Upon the Annunciation and Passion," all of which were probably written in 1608, are closely associated with her* The connection of La Corona with the rosary known as the
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"corona of our Lady" has been discussed by Louis Martz; while the life of Christ is Donne's theme for meditation, the Virgin Mary is much in his thoughts, especially in the two sonnets on the Annun-ciation and the Nativity. The language of these sonnets is also, as Helen Gardner indicates, a recollection of the Horae Beatae Virginis Mariae. Both the stanzas in "A Litanie" which refer to Christ's birth (V & VIII), be^in by tracing his descent into the Virgin's womb. Yet these poems are concerned neither with motherhood, nor with the humanity of the Christ-child: rather, Donne uses the themes of Annunciation and Nativity as a means of exploring the intellectual paradoxes inherent in the birth of God:

That All, which alwayes is All every where,
Which cannot sinne, and yet all sinnes must beare,
Which cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die,
Loe, faithfull Virgin, yeelds himselfe to lye

See Helen Gardner, Divim? Poens, pp.152; 81; 95<
2
The Poetry of Meditation, pp.105-108.
Divine poems, pp.59-60.

In prison, in thy wombe ...

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Donne begins not with the child, who is the Son of God, but with God himself, to become a child; we are told of Christ's divinity and his office of redemption before we learn that he will enter the Virgin's womb. The sonnet "Annunciation" opens with a sen.-e of vast-ness, so that the mind is forced first to look uncomprehendingly at the "All"t and then to imagine it enclosed in space; the last line encapsulates this theme:

Immensity cloysterd in thy deare wombe.

The idea of immensity is carried into the next sonnet by the repeti-tion of this line as its first line; now we are confronted with the further paradox, that when immensity is freed from its imprisonment, it is weaker than ever:

Immensitie cloysterd in thy deare wombe, Now leaves his welbelov'd imprisonment,
There he hath made himselfe to his intent ^
Weake enough, now into our world to come.

But the end of this sonnet recalls our attention to the fact that it is that same Divine Word who has entered our world, who was from eternity:

Seest thou, my Soule, with thy faiths eyes, how he ,-
Which fils all place, yet none holds him, doth lye?

The Virgin, instrument of the Incarnation, was also part of
God's purpose from before all time, and thus shares in its paradox:

La- Corona, "Annunciation", 11.2-6; 1.14*
5 La Corona, "Nativitie," 11.1-4; 11.9-10*

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Ere by the spheares time was cheated, thou
Wast in his minde, who is thy Sonie, and Brother,
Whom thou coneeiv'st, conceiv'd; yea thou art now />
Thy takers maker, and thy Fathers mother.

This kind of paradox, a commonplace in -ediaeval poetry, has the effect of associating Christ's mother very closely with Christ in
the work of Red option. This is made explicit elsewhere in Donne's earlier writing : in his "Goodfriday, 1613", he calls the Virgin "Gods partner" (1.31), and in "A Litanie", "that faire blessed Mother-maid,/ Whose flesh redeera'd us" (ll.37-8)» Later, however, he was to

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rate the Virgin's part in achieving our salvation less hi^ly. It
was the ima^-e of Christ in the Virgin's womb, rather than of the baby in his mother's arms that attracted Donne. There is one reference to

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Mary laying the child in a stall (t'-ough the word "child" is not used), but the Virgin's womb is mentioned over and over again. Though it is
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called a prison, "In prison, in thy wombe," it is regarded with
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tenderness: the prison is "welbelov*d". In the last line of "Annun-ciation", repeated as the first line of "Nativitie'1, the womb is described as "deare", and a sense of shelter and sanctification is Q
given by the word "cloysterd". In "A Litanie", the womb is called a "strange heav'n". (1.41)
Donne's abstract meditation on the Incarnation draws him away
from the details of the scene in the stable in Bethlehem; of the details which he mentions, it is noticeable that none emphasize the child's weakness and suffering. Because the child is the Son of God,

6 1 "Annunciation," 11.9-12. e.g. Sermons, 1.3.200. "Nativitie," 1.6; "Annun.ciation," 1.6; "Nativitie," 1.2.
"cloister" could have the meaning "wo~b": O.5.D. 1b.

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poverty and discomfort are imn-.ediately transformed; the suggestion of poverty is at once counter-balanced by the arrival of the Magi to do him homage:

But Oh, for thee, for him, hath th'Inne no roome? Yet lay him in this stall, and from th 1 Orient, Starres, and wisemen will travell to prevent . Th f effect of Herods jealous generall doome.

This point is made even clearer in"A Litanie":

first thou
Glorifiedst Povertie,
And yet soone after riches didst allow,
By'accepting Kings gifts in th'Epiphanie.

Donne saw the Magi at this date chiefly as a symbol of the honour due
to Christ; a rather horrible reference in PSeudo-Martyr (1610), describes the child receiving honour from the kings in their gifts, and from the innocents in their deaths: "after he receiued the oblations of the kings, presenting part of their te-" or rail fortunes; the next thing wherein he would be glorified, was that Holocaust and Hecatombe of

12 the innocent children, martyred for his nane." The image of the
Magi led by a star to "God below" is also used in "To the Conntesse of Huntingdon"; but nowhere does Donne suggest, in hi=» earlier writing, that the "a/n. represent the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles. Nor do any of his line^ on the Nativity even mention either angels
or shepherds. The shepherds at least could not contribute much to

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that honour in which Donne seems chiefly interested.

La Corona, "Nativitie", 11.5-3-
11 11.58-61. This was not .traditionally seen as a justification
of wealth: see p. 208 above. We may compare Donne's defence of wealth in Sermons, IX.4.117-118; VT.15.303-5» etc.
12 Pseudo-Martyr, p.5. 13 11.13-4 (Satires, p.86).

14 For angels, see p. 225 below.

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When we turn to Milton's earliest writing- on the Nativity, the Nativity ode of 1629, we have not only the Ode itself, but also Milton's description of it in the Elep-ia Sexta, written to Charles Diodati in December 1629, when the Nativity Ode was seemingly
but not yet completed. This is how Milton describes the Ode:

Paciferum canirnus caelesti semine regem,
Faustaque sacratis saecula pacta libris, Vaeritumque Dei, et stabulanterri paupere tecto
Qui suprema suo cum patre re-Tia colit. Stellipammque polum, ^odulantesque aethere turmas,
Bt subito elisos ad sua fana deos.

It is a reasonable, though unspecific account of the poem. It stresses the wider effects of Christ's birth in traditional symbols - the com-ing of a blessed a^e of universal peace, and the silencing and destruc-tion of the pa^an ^ods - and it also emphasizes the heavenly origin of the Christ, witnessed to by the new star and the angelic host. The angels' song directs our attention to the celestial music which was for Milton the ultimate symbol, and the ultimate reality, of universal harmony. But there are two points which should be noticed in this account of the Ode. ?irstly, Milton does not make mention anywhere
in the Ode itself of the "va^itus Dei", the "infant cri^s of Sod",
or, more vividly, his "squalling". And it is immediately clear that this the~e could not have been used in the Nativity Ode, whi^h sets up an opposition between the angelic harmony, brought to fulfilment by the birth of the prince of Peace, and the discordant shrieks of the pa^an ?ods as they are routed for ever from their shrines. To them alone belonp- the disharmonies:

The lars, and lernur.es moan with midnight plaint,
In urns, and altars round,
A drear and 'iyin,e: sound
Affrights the flamens at their service quaint; (11.191-4)

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and now they are silenced -"The oracles are dumb 11 (1.173)- because of the birth of a force of reconciling harmony. All the heavens participate in this new music: "ilton ur^es the "crystal spheres":

... with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony. (11.131-2)

How then, could the new-born Christ possibly be allowed to squall? The second point concerns the subject of the Nativity Ode.
Although sor.e elements of the Scriptural story may be found in the Ode itself, Milton's references to them in Slegia Sexta are very selective. He does not say that his poem is about a baby bom of a virgin mother, in weakness and poverty, revealed to Jews and Gentiles, in the shepherds and ::ap-i, and honoured by them. Cnly the word "vagitus" implies in glegia Sexta that Milton is speaking of a baby: he says that the king is "stabled under a poor roof", but chiefly singles out the heavenly details, the manifestations of power - the
new star, the heavenly hosts,the destruction of the pa?an gods. We
are not told of the effect of the birth of a baby on men's hearts,
but the effect of the king who brings peace upon the heavens, the angels, and the pagan gods. So we must approach the Nativity Ode assuming that it was Milton's intention to describe the "fausta saecula" inaugurated by Christ's birth, and not the birth itself. He describes the birth only in so far as it is the occasion of his poem, and the cause of the events which he depicts. Milton's own part in the Ode
is to claim a place in t'^e cosmic choir - it is his sine-ing of the
Hymn which is the important act:

Have thou the honour £irst, thy Lord to <?reet,

The reason for the discrepancy is surely simply that Milton
had not completed the poem when he described it to Di

And join thy voice unto the angel quire. (11.26-7)

As part of this universal harroiy, he stills his so.ig at the end of poem (1.239); and his recollection of the Nativity Ode at the beginning of "The passion" shows that he saw this harmony as the poem's chief theme: " Erewhile of music, and ethereal mirth .../My muse with angels did divide to sing."
It is widely agreed that the Nativity Ode is not about the Nativity: even its title indicates that the Nativity is its occasion rather than its subject. Rosemond Tuve, while defending the poem's use of tradi-tional material, claims that its real subject is "the meaning of the Incarnation not only in history but after history is over"; Martz, however, suggests that "The Incarnation is not the essential point
of his poem: it is the Redemption and its effects on the future course 17 of hu-.an history." But the Nativity Ode cannot be so easily classi-fied. J.B. Broadbent has demonstrated how highly selective are both Milton's use of the traditional images, and his treatment of the Incarnation. He points out how persistently Milton moves "away from
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the incarnate towards the ideate," and deliberately chooses images

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which lie "at the non-human end of the spectrum." Milton's use of
the ther.e of Redemption is likewise partial. The history of Redemption, as Milton would have been the first to aerree, depends on the response
of men's hearts to the person of Christ, but this is not a the^e
of the Nativity Ode. And while there is a brief reference to the

Rosemond Tuve, Images and Themes in Five ?cema by Milton (Oxford,
1957), p.39; cf. C.A. Patrides, yjlton and the Christian'Tradition, p.258 17 The Poetry of Meditation, p.165.
18 J.'.B. Broadbent, "The Nativity Ode", in The Living Milton,
ed. ?. Kermode (London, 1960), p.235 p.17-

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Cross, this does not appear central to our redemption either. And apart from one reference to "lep'rous sin" (1.138) there is no indi-cation of what it is (other than disharmony) that we are to be

19 redeemed from. It is often said that Milton's poem should not be compared with other, devotional, poetry on the Nativity, since he is really writing on one of these other subjects; but whether MJLlton»s subject is decided to be the Nativity or not, this does not explain why the birth of Christ prompted him to write such a poeT;, and why he was attracted by those elements in the story with which he deals. Most of the details in the Scriptural narrative are mentioned
in the Nativity Ode, though they are not necessarily given the traditional significance: the most complete account of Christ's
birth is to be found in the Introduction to the Hymn, in which Milton simply sets the scene before he takes his part in the angelic choir. So the introduction contains one of only two references to Christ's mother, "Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born " (1*3) , though it says

20 nothing of the tenderness of motherhood. It is not until line

that Milton refers to the baby as "The babe", and he calls it this
only three times in the whole poem. On at least one of these occasions, his purpose is to display the child's power, not its weaVness:

Our babe to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the danned crew. (11.227-8)

He will not admit to the baby's weakness: the ~hild in the manger is still Nature's "great master" (1*34), whom Milton prefers to address
by such titles as "the infant God" (1.16); "the Prince of Light"

19 e.g. patrides, Milton ^^^J^^sji^^ra^^ior^, p.258.
20 See Broadbent, "The Nativity Ode," p.26.

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"the mighty Pan" (1.89). It is not that Milton contrasts power and weakness, but that the weakness is entirely subsumed in power. It
is interesting to notice that "On the Death of a Pair Infant" displays the same reluctance to call the baby a baby: she is a "Soft silken primrose" (1.2), a "virgin soul" (1.21). We have only to call to mind Grashaw's "A Hymne of the Nativity" to realize at once that God born as a baby had no emotional or imaginative attraction for Milton at all. Nor is he much interested in Christ's humanity. The only direct reference to the Incarnation, that Christ "chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay" (1.14), suggests a crude disguise, rather than an incarnation. Milton's views about the relationship of

21 body and soul at this date would suggest that he envisaged the Incarnation as an imprisonment of Christ's divine nature in a body

viewed as an excrescence.

Because the child is in full possession of all his divine powers,
by which he stills win^s and waters, and defeats the pap-an gods, the poverty and discomfort of his birth are scarcely noticed, 'He are given a brief description of the conditions:

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born-child

All meanly wrapped in the rude manger lies; (11.29-31)

there can be no complaint of the cold, however, since we are told
that the wintry weather is a sign of Nature's deference to her master (11.38 ff.). His infancy, we ^.re told, is "smiling" (1.151), in con-trast to the tradition which saw the child's suffering as a prefiguring of his passion. And when the stable re-appears in the last stanza of the poen-L, it has been transformed into the c^urt of heaven:

21 See pp. 94-95 above,

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Heaven's youngest teemed star,
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable,
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable. (11.240-4)

It also see-.s that while the birth of the child is recognized cosmically, there are no individual revelations:

The stars with deep amaze
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze, (11.69-70)

but, as far as we know, the "star-led wizards" (1.23), who at the beginning of the poem are hastening along the road toward Bethlehem never arrive, never present their gifts, never worship the child. Perhaps the star over the stable does suggest that their arrival is imminent; on the other hand, the Magi were agreed to represent the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles^ and before the end of the poem, the child see~s to have brought about the complete destruction of the pagan world: it is not enlightened. So it may be that the arrival of the Magi would have contradicted what had gone before. More-over, though the shepherds are referred to in the poem, they never reach Bethlehem either; it is not even clear that they find out that the Christ is born, much less go and seek him. Their state of mind when we first see them is described thus:

Pull little thought they then,
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly ccme to live with them below, (11.88-90)

and although they hear the celestial music, and respond to it (1.98), no angel speaks to them, or explains to them the -.eaninf of the words which are being sung. While we gather that the shepherds enjoyed the concert, Milton is much more interested in Nature's response to the

music than theirs:

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Nature that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling. (11.101-6)

This stanza is found between two stanzas dealing with the shepherds. But as neither shepherds nor Magi ever reach the stable, Milton never lays his Ode at the child's feet either; he has increasingly involved it in the angelic symphony, and when, at the end of the poem, all else is still, it would again be discordant for Milton to continue singing by presenting his hymn. Courteously, then, he too ceases to sing. After their poems on the Nativity, it is quite a long time before either Donne or Milton refers to the subject again. Donne does not mention it again in his poetry - it is entirely absent from the Holy Sonnets - nor in any of his prose works except the sermons. As Dean of 3t. Paul's, Donne was require! by statute to preach in the ca-

22 thedral on Christmas Day; the existence of eight Christmas sermons

from Donne's ten years as Dean cannot in itself be taken as evidence of interest in the subject. It is, in fact, clear at once that al-though certain of Donne's Christmas sermons may rightly be praised as fine expositions of the Incarnation, not one of the"- draws its

?3 inspiration from the actual circumstances of Christ's birth. None

of the texts on which Donne preached his Christmas sermons is drawn from the Gospel birth narratives: a text taken from the opening of the Nunc Dimittis suggested a sermon almost entirely concerned with
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the fitness of Simeon to receive the Christ. Only twice did Donne

r)r)
Bald, p. 405; Donne defends the celebration of Christmas in
Sermons, VIII. 5.130; Vlll.6.1 57-8.
23 Contrast Andr-ewes' Sermons 12 and 15 Of the Nativitie (Sermons,
pp. 75 ff.J pp. 99 ff.

24 ^ Sermons, 711.11.279 ff.

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preach on texts from lessons appointed for Christmas Day, on the

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opening verses of St. John's Gospel in 1621, J and in 1624, on the the prophecy of Isaiah (7.14): "a virgin shall conceive, and beare
a son," when he spoke movingly of the mercy of God, and also dis-

26 played his interest in the Virgin Birth. Most of the regaining texts

seem to have been chosen to allow Donne to pleach, on the Incarnation

27 rather than specifically on the Nativity. Of at least one text,

however, it must be said that Donne's reason for choosing- it remains obscure: that for I627t when he preached on Sxodus 4»13: "0 my Lord,

2fi send I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." Donne

emphasizes, in one of only two references to either the Nativity or the Incarnation in this sermon, that the "ancient Fathers" understood

28 this to refer to the Messiah, but he goes on to preach not of the

Messiah, but of Moses and doin^ one's duty. Donne may have avoided the joyful subject of the Incarnation because he was saddened by the deaths, during the preceding ye^.r, of his daughter Lucy, Lady Bedford,

29 and Lady Danvers; but as we shall see, there are other instances

of his sheer perve^-sity in the choice of an irrelevant text.
We shall consider next those details of the birth narratives
which Donne did choose to introduce into his sermons. An interest in
the part played in the story by the Virgin ITary is still evident.
In his first discussion of the subject in a sermon, he argues against
the doctrine that Mary was free from original sin, "for so Christ
had placed his favours and his honors ill, if he had favoured her

Sermons, III.17.348 ff. 2 Sermons_, 71.8.168 ff.
27 Sermons, 17.11.283 ff., on Col.1.19 and 20; IX.5.131 ff-» Jn.10.10,

28 Sermons, Till.5.130 ff.; ibid., p.130; p.151-
29 Sermons, Till, p.1; pp.11-13-

most who had no need of him,'1 but nevertheless he allows her an especial holiness and fitness to receive Christ: "she was preserved according to the best capacity of that nature, from p-reat and infectious sins." He continues to argue for this middle position; she may be honoured ahnve all women, but yet as one of mankind: "they hurt Religion as much, that ascribe too little, to the blessed Virgin, as they who ascribe too much; much is due to her." He defends her uniqueness: "a Virgin shall be a mother, which is a very particular

3t signe, and was seene but once," and also her perpetual virginity

in the conception and birth of Christ, and in her life afterwards.

32 To question the Virgin Birth shows a lack of humility.

Yet although Christ was both conceived "by a supernaturall way,
by the overshadowing of the holy Ghost," and miraculously born, it
is of vital importance that he was really formed of the substance of his mother: "if he took not the nature of mankinde, he hath not redeemed mankinde." In one of his favourite images, Donne describes the coining of a new image of God in man, in the Virgin's womb: "in a new Mint, in the wombe of the Blessed Virgin, there was new money coyned; The Image of the invisible God, the second person in the Trinity, was imprinted into the humane nature." Moreover, the humiliation which is to mark Christ's life is anticipated by his choice of the woman of whom he would be born; though she was indeed blessed and full of grace, she bore him under suspicion, found by her husband

37 to be with child before they were married.

30 Sermons, 1,9.30?. 51 Sermons, VI. 8. 183? 180; 181 ff.
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Sermons , VI. 9. 188. ^ Sermons, X. 9.192.
34 Sermons, VI. 17.338. 35 See J.Carey, "Donne and Coins, "pp.1 5^- Sermons, IV.11. 288. *' Sermons, VT.17» 338-9.

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This voluntary humiliation to which Christ submitted throughout
his life is a thene much stressed by Donne. On the one hand, God's purpose in it is inscrutable; one would think, says Donne, that it would have served his purpose better to be born at Rome, or Jerusalem, "then at obscure Bethlem, and in Bethlem, in some better place then
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in an Inne, in a Stable, in a ganger." Donne offers no explanation for the circumstances of Christ's birth; we are to love God even for what we cannot understand. In a meditation on the life of Christ, Donne urges us to try if "thou canst finde thy Saviour in a Manger, and in his swathing clouts, in his humiliation, and blesse God for

39 that beginning." At the same time, he sees the whole of Christ's earthly life, in its humiliation, as part of the work of salvation, '•as well his mothers swathing him in little clouts, as losephs shrowding him in a funerall sheete; as well his cold lying in the Manger, as his cold dying upon the Crosse." ' Thus the scandal of Christ's birth is linked directly with the Cross: "He found a Golgotha, (where he was crucified) even in Bethlem, where he was
born; For, to his tendernesse then, the strawes were almost as sharp as the thornes after; and the Manger as uneasie at first, as his
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Crosse at last. His birth and his death were but one coitinuall act." This imagining of the suffering of the baby Jesus leads Donne
into a certain tenderness towards the child which is not found in
his earlier writing. Before even the first of his Christmas sermons,
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Donne had had twelve children himself, and lost their mother; this may perhaps partly account for the warmer and more human note with

Sermons, VI.17.341. - Sermons, III.17.3^0.
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4 Sermons, VI.17.333: Christmas, 1625. Sermons,VII.11.279.

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Bald, Appendix B, pp.547-556-

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with which Donne occasionally speaks of the Christ Child. He is still interested by Bernard's paradox of the Verburo i-fans, "the Word

44 it selfe, and yet speechlesse," but it is followed by a less

cerebral paradox, also based on Bernard: "Hee is more, Pens lactens , God, at whose breasts all creatures suck, sucking at his Mothers

45 breast.'1 Another example of this affection is found in the Christ-

mas sermon for 1625: "And the little body of a sucking childe, was a Chappell in that Temple, infinitely more glorious than the Temple it selfe." But it cannot be said that this is a predominant theme, In writing- of the Incarnation, Donne is much interested in the theme of manifestation, or Epiphany, and especially in the image of
A T

Christ as the light of the world. This does not lead him, however,
to place any emphasis on that occasion "when Christ was manifested

48 to the Gentiles in those Wisemen of the East"; ' rather, he points
49 out in three discua sions of the word "epiphany" that the Epiphany
of God cannot be confined to one particular day, whether the Church decides to call "Twelfe day", or Christmas Day, by that name. Christ is manifested when we respond to him: "Then therefore is God manifested to us, when, as these wi?e men offer'd their llyrrhe and Frankincense, we offer the Sacrifice of Prayer; and as they offer'd their Gold,
we offer our tempo rail wealth for the glory of Christ Jesus." Donne speaks on Christmas Day of "this manifestation of Christ which you

See Sermons , VII. 1 7.416-?: "^lany of us are Fathers," etc.
Sermons , VI. 8. 184; cf. La Corona, 4> 1»5«
Sermons, yi.8.184. Sermons, VII. 11. 282.
47 See Sermons, III.1 7-351- ff • 4 Seme -is, IX. 5-131.
Sermons, 111.9.213? VII. 11. 279; IX. 5-131.
5 Sermons, IX. 5. 131. _3ermons, III. 9. 213.

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52 have had in the most blessed Sacrament this day;" thus any season
may be an epiphany: "Ev-=ry manifestation of Christ to the world, to the Church, to a particular soule, is an Epiphany, a Christmas -day'.1 So too is ev-=ry event in Christ's life a potential epiphany: "And
as even his birth, is his death, so every action a-.d passage that

52 manifests Christ to us , is his birth." More specifically, the whole

of the ti-ne between Christmas and Epiphany makes up one day, the longest festival of the year, the day of Christ's manifestation. Donne refers several times to the traditional idea that "The
Jews had their calling in that manifestation to the shepheards, and the Gentiles in that, to the wise men in the East," but does not elaborate on it. He comments that the coming forth of the Maeri out of the Gentile world represented a widespread sense that the"fullness
of time" had come: "It filled those wise men which dwelt so far in the East, that they followed the star from thence to Jerusalem." The star was an appropriate sign as it led them to the source of light: "by a Star, they found the Son of glory, Christ Jesus;" it was also fitting that a star was given as a guide to those "who were eiven to

57 the study of the Stars. " Jl The star itself was "a supematurall and
CQ

extraordinary 'Star;" Donne remarks that it "is also believed by some of the Ancients, to have been an Angel in the likeness of a Star." 58

Donne displays no curiosity about the identity of the Magi, The only reference to them which is linked with Donne's earlier emphasis

Sermons, VII. 11. 280; 279. Sermons, IX.5-13L
54 Sermons , VI. 17. 340; cf., VII. 11.2791 IX.5-131-
55 Sermons, VI.17.334. Sermons, II I. 12. 270.
57 Sermons, 11.14.304. ^ Sermons, IX.5-131? III.9.216.

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on honour paid to the child, rather than on his revelation to the world, speaks of how the homage of the kings is a recognition of

59 Christ's own kingship; another passage suggests that we may accept

riches, as Christ did from the Magi: we are to look upon him
"suddainly enrich'd by the Tributes of Kings, and doubt not but that God hath large and strange ways to supply thee."
The shepherds, and the song of the angels which revealed to them
the birth of the Messiah, seem to have had no hold upon Donne's imagination at all. He does not mention them in his poetry; and there are only a few slight references in the sermonst the shepherds represent the Jews; and as Christ was served by angels throughout his life, so

6? "an Angel told the Shepherds, that he was born." The complete

disregard of angels in this context, in spite of Donne's interest
in them elsewhere, reinforces Ellrodt's contention that what attracted him was not their singing and their glory, but merely their para-doxical nature.

Apart from a brief discussion of the circumstances of Christ's
birth in the De Doctrina, all Milton's references to it in his prose-writings are used to make some polemical point; he never uses details from the Nativity simply as imagery, or in any devotional way. Thus in Tetrachordon (1645), he uses the story of Mary's conception to illustrate what he is saying about divorce laws: "Joseph sought to put away his betrothed wife privately, least he should make her an example c< capitall punishment." Two other reference? to the

Sermons, 7111.13-303. Sermons, 17.3.130.
£ + £.+)

Sermons, IX-5.131? VI. 1*7- 340. Sermon^, III.9-216.
5 Robert Ellrodt, "Angels and the Poetic Imagination from Donne
to Traherne," in English Renaissance Studies, pp. 165-1 75-

64 Tetrachordon, Yale II, p.o73»

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Annunciation interpret the Magnificat as a political manifesto. Milton argues in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (1649) that God's people should not be subject to the tyranny of the state: "And wher-fore did his Mother the Virgin Mary give such praise to God in her profetic song, that he had now by the comming of Christ Cutt down Dynasta's or proud Monarchs from the throne, if the Church, when God manifests his power in them to doe so, should rather choose all miserie and vassalage to serve them." ^ He uses a similar argument two years later in A Defence of the People of airland. In The Like-liest Means to Remove Hirelings, on the other hand, he uses the poverty and humility of Christ's birth to illustrate that elaborate edifices and traditions are superfluous to a true understanding of the Gospel: "For notwithstanding the gaudy superstition of som devoted still ignorant ly to temples, we may be well assur'd that he who disdaind not to be laid in a mans-er, disdains not to be preachd in a

67 barn." Nor are we to suppose that some men should not be allowed

to interpret the Gospel for themselves, "since it was preached as well to the shepherds of Bethleem by angels, as to the eastern Wisemen by that starr: and our saviour declares himself anointed to preach the

67 gospel to the poore." This emphasis on humility and weakness, and

the accessibility of the Gospel represents a great change from the stress on the child's power in the Nativity Ode, and the celebration of the spiritual elite in which Milton participated then. We shall consider in a moment how far this chane-e is reflected in his later poetry.
Milton's discussion of Christ's conception and birth in the De

65 Yale III, p. 217. ^ A Defence, ch.III (Yale 17, p. 374).

67 ' The Likeliest Means, Yale 711, p. 305; P«302.

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poctrina follows a traditional pattern, dealing with the reason for Christ's miraculous conception, the part played by the Spirit, the prophecies of the Messiah's birth, and arguments which could be used against the Jews in affirming that the Messiah had come. But there are important differences from the tradition. While making the Scriptural statement that "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirity he immediately refers us to his earlier chapter on the

70 Holy Spirit, in which he has denied that the Spirit is a Person

of the Godhead. He argued there that Kary and Joseph could not possibly have understood what the angel said as a reference to the Holy Spirit as a person: "in the Old Testament either God the Father himself or his divine power is signified when the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit are named. Mary and Joseph had heard nothing at that

71 time of any other Holy Spirit." In the passage on the conception,

Milton remarks "I should say that these words refer to the power and

72 spirit of the Father himself." Milton has no earlier reference to

the subject, but his opinion here is reflected in both Paradise Lost, and Paradise Regained. In paradise Lost, Michael tells Adam that:

A virgin is his mother, but his sire
The power of the most high, (XII. 362-4?J

and in paradise Regained, the Holy Spirit is equated with the power of God in the Father's speech to Gabriel:

9 Maurice Kelley has indicated Milton's debt in this^section of
the De Doctrina to ffollebius' Compendium Theologiae Christianae (Amsterdam, 1633); Yale VI, pp.427-9-
69 DDC, I.XIV (Yale VI, p.427), quoting Matt.1.20; p.428.
70 *
; DDC, I.VI (Yale VT, pp.281-98).
71 DDC, I.VI (Yale VI, p.293). The earliest Fathe-s identified
the Spirit with the Logos here; see H. Wiles, Working Papers, p.5.

72 DDC, I.XIV (Yale VI, p.428).

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on her should come

The Holy Ghost, and the power of the Highest O'ershadow her ... (l, 135-40)

The latter expression, of course, comes from Luke's Gospel, but the

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phrasing in both these passages could be seen as designedly ambiguous. The most striking statement of ?,'ilton»s interpretation is given to Mary in paradise Regained;

0 what avails me now that honour high
To have conceived of God ... (II.66-7)

This is exactly how Milton interpreted ?,Iary's reaction to Gabriel's

73 message in the De Doctrina* In this instance, it is only the status of the Holy Spirit which is undermined by f/iilton's belief, and not

7A that of the Son. Milton agrees that this conception was miraculous, but does not refer to Mary's perpetual virginity.
In the De Doctrina, '.Ulton makes no reference to the revelation
of Christ to Jews or Gentiles, or to the poverty of his birth; the only other occasion on which he refers to the sto-ry of the Nativity
is when he cites the Magi as a proof that "there is some astrology which 75 is neither useless nor unlawful."
It is interesting to notice in paradise Lost and Paradise Regained
the wide variation in detail and emphasis between the different accounts of the Nativity. In Paradise Lost we might perhaps expect the first account of the Nativity to appear when the Son has offered himself,
and been accepted, as a sacrifice for mankind, but neither the Son's description of the Incarnation, nor the Father's, mention any of the

75 DDC, I.VI (Yale 71, p.2.93), quoted above.
74 DDC, I.XIV (Yale VI, p.428); PL, III.284-5-
75 DDC, II.V (Yale VI, p.^96); see pp. 207-08 above.

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circumstances of his birth, excent that he will be made flesh "of virgin seed, / By wondrous birth " (ill.284-5). The Father's speech is particularly at pains to point out that the Son will not be humiliated by the assumption of fleshs

Nor shalt thou by descending to assume
Man's nature, lessen or degrade thine own. (ill.303-4)

It has been much remarked that the Son's account of the Incarnation

76 makes no mention of the Crucifixion; Milton's reluctance to refer to the Cross may be linked with his reluctance in Paradise Lost to admit that the Son of God was to be born in poverty, and laid in a manger. There is no hint in paradise Lost that the birth of the Son of God will be anything other than the birth of a king. The only account of the Nativity in the poem is that given by Michael to Adam, where we find a careful selection of detail. We are, in fact, only told what tends directly to Christ's glory. Michael states initially that the king is born "Barred of his right 11 (XH.3^0), the sceptre of David, but continues "yet...", suggesting that in spite of this, his birth did not lack the accompaniment of rank. We are told that his birth was marked by a new star in the heavens, by the homage and rich gifts of the Magi, by the revelation to the shepherds by a choir of angels. There is no reference to what his "place of birth" (1.364)1 revealed to the shepherds, was to be; no reference to the inn which was full, the stable, the manger, or the swaddling clothes. If Adam responds mistakenly to what he is told, supposing the Messiah to be a mighty champion, the fault is surely in the messae-e (HI.375 Michael goes on partially to correct the impression which he has

76 See pP. 542 ff. below.

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given, by referring to the shame of Christ's death on the Cross (XII. 405 ff.). He does not, however, revise what he has said about the Nativity, so that this seemingly rich anrf glorious birth is left as a contrast to Christ's suffering and death, rather than as a prefiguration of them. This whole emphasis contrasts very curiously with Milton's stress in his prose works on the poverty and humility of Christ; it almost seems as if he sees the divine Son of Paradise Lost, and the historical Jesus as entirely different persons whom he cannot reconcile.

paradise Regained contains four passages dealing with the con-ception and birth of Christ, each of them st>oken by a different character. The first is the Father's account of the Annunciation (l. 132-40), from which I have already quoted, and which contains only the information that Christ was conceived by the Spirit of God, and born of a virgin. The second (1.234 ff»)» *hich is Christ's recollection of the story of his birth as told to him by his mother, interestingly contains more Scriptural details than any other of Milton's accounts. The purpose of this is plain, in that Christ is trying in it to assemble all the information he can. about himself in order to understand who he is, and what his mission. He attempts to use the testimonies of other people to arrive at his own interpretation of the circumstances of his birth: therefore, we are told what the an^el said to Mary; what the angels told the shepherds; what the Magi understood from the star:

Affirming it thy star new-graven in heaven,
By which they knew thee King of Israel born. (1.253-4)

He then continues to recount what was said of him by Simeon and Anna. But even in this comparatively full account, the references to Christ as a king receiving homage considerably outweigh the two lines:

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«... the manger where thou lay'st,
For in the inn was left no better room. (1.247-8)

Christ does not use the therae of humiliation to interpret the role of the Messiah; the manger and the stable seem accidental, rather than a part of God's purpose.
The next account, given by Mary when her Son has failed to return after his baptism, is in complete contrast. Troubled and fearful, she ponders the past events of his life, remembering only the sadness and affliction associated with it:

In such a season born when scarce a shed
Could be obtained to shelter him or me
Prom the bleak air; a stable was our warmth, A manger his; yet soon enforced to fly Thence into Egypt ... (II.72-6)

Here there is no reference to anything tending to honour: no angels, stars, or kings; nor does the account bear much resemblance to what

77 she had previously told Christ. Although all the details are either

Scriptural or traditional, it is clearly an unbalanced description, and we are meant to understand it as the response of a mother's fears. Milton, however, does not seem to have considered an exclusive emphasis on power and glory similarly unbalanced. }]ot even Satan's birth nar-rative refers to the lowliness of Christ's birth, though Satan has elsewhere taunted him with his obscure origins:

Thou art unknown, unfriended, low of birth,
A carpenter thy father known, thyself
Br^d up in poverty and straits at home. (II.413-5)

But his description of Christ's birth, noticing particularly:

... the angelic song in Bethlehem field

77 PR, 1.234-54.

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Oi thy birth-night, that sung thee Saviour born, (IV. 505- 6)

makes it clear that his fear was more roused by the supernatural happenings, then allayed by the obscurity of the nativity. It seems that not even Satan can be guilty of the bad taste of admitting that the baby was laid in a manger. And it cannot be denied that, apart from a polemical emphasis on Christ's humility and weakness in the political pamphlets, Milton seems to have wanted to suppress the evidence. It may have been that his political enthusiasm led him to over- emphasize Christ as an example, although the stress on Christ
78
as a servant; a slave; a tradesman, is curiously persistent in
his prose. But when his subject-matter directed his attention specifically to Christ as the Son of God, he perhaps felt, as Lancelot Andrewes describes, that the sien of a babe in a manger is rather an embarrassing one: "we find, to our thinking, a ,s:reat disparagement, and (l know not how) thoughts arise in our hearts, as if some better

79 Signe would have done better."

' The Reason of Church-Government, II.i (Yale I, pp.825-6);
A Defence, ch. Ill (Yale IV, p.374); Animadversions, sect. I (Yale I, pp.676-7).

79 Andrewes, Sermons, p.80.

CHAPTER 5

THE CIRCUMCISION AND NAMING OP

I. Introduction

After eight days, the child was circumcised and given the name
Jesus. The earliest church Fathers, still endeavouring to persuade Jewish converts that "the blood of that circumcision is obsolete, and we trust in the blood of salvation," place little emphasis on the circumcision of Christ. Circumcision had been replaced by baptism, the physical by

2 the spiritual: "so by holy baptism are we circumcised of sin." It was not until the sixth century that the festival of the Circumcision on the first of January became established in some parts of the Vest; at the beginning of the same century, St. Caesarius of Aries, in a sermon on the Circumcision, expounds it thus: "For the redemption of the human race He wished to experience the condition of human weakness, He wanted to fulfill all of the precepts of the Law, and on the eighth day, which we commemorate today, He willed to be circumcised in His body. This was not to cleanse His flesh, but to free us from all wickedness." All of these reasons for the Circumcision are mentioned by Aquinas. The Mirrour of

Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, trans. G. Reith, in ANCL
vol. II (Edinburgh, 1867), ch. XXIV (pp.116-17); see also ch. XVI (pp. 106-07), and ch. CXIV (pp.242-43).

2
St. John of Damascus, The Orthodox Faith, trans. F. H. Chase, in Writings, FC 37 (New York, 1958), IV.25 (p.398); cf. Augustine, Against Julian, trans. M.A. Schuraacher, FC 35 (New York, 1957), VI.7 (p.327).

3
See L. Duchesne, Christian Worship; Its Origin and Evolution, trans,
M. L. McClure, 5th. ed. (London, 1923), pp.273-74.
St. Caesarius of Aries, Sermons (vol. Ill), trans. Sr. Mary
Magdeleine Mueller, FC 66 (Washington, 1973), Sermon 191 (p.25).
S.Th., 3a.37. art.1 (vol. LII, pp.143-45).

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the Blessed I^yf furnishes an example of the very popular idea that the

Circumcision was the beginning of Christ's passion: "he that neuere did

synne bygan this day to bere peyne in his swete tender body for oure

6 synne."

Writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries repeat all of

these traditional expositions. Zanchius writes that Christ was "made

7
subiect to the lawe, and therefore circumcised." In the fulfillment

of the Law, the Law becomes obsolete: "When Christ came Circumcision
o

ceased, because he is our circumcision;" and baptism for repentance of
Q

sins takes its place. The theme that it was the first occasion on which

Christ shed blood was particularly popular with poets. Crashaw displays Q
an especial devotion towards the "deare drops this day were shed", and

Herrick imagines them blossoming:

from His sacred Bloud, here shed, ..«
May Roses grow, to crown His own deare Head.

It is seen directly as the beginning of the Atonement:

Can nothing else asswage ^
The wrath of Heaven but His infant blood?

12

and Crashaw has Christ speak of "these first fruits of my growing death."

Mirrour, p

7 Confession, p.54; cf. Ames, Marrow, p.96 (incorrectly numbered 94).

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Henry Smith, Sermons (London, 1592), p.76; p.77; cf, Gerhard,
Summe, p.214.

"An Himne for the Circumcision day of our Lord," 1.4 (Poems, p.141).

10 "The New-yeeres Gift, or Circumcisions Song," 11.22-3 (poetical
Works, p.366).

11 Christopher Harvey, "The Circumcision, or New Year's-day," 11.4-5.
in The Complete poe.^s, ed. A. B. Grosart, Puller's Worthies' Library (London: printed for private circulation, 1874)» pp.47-48.

12 "Our Lord in his Circumcision to his Father," 1.1 (poe^s, p.98).

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At the same time, the name Jesus, meaning "Saviour", was given to
the child, and this is related to Christ's work of redemption, which began at his Circumcision. The Junius-Tremellius Latin Bible explains that Christ was circumcised under the Law "vt nos (quod & ipsum lesu nome indicat) a maledictione Legis liberat," and Jeremy Taylor that the name Jesus, "as it was consummate in the blood of the cross, so was it inaugurated in the blood of circumcision." •* The Jesuit commentator, Cornelius a Lapide, points out that the name was not fully Christ's until he died for it: "nomen ergo lesu ... per humilitatem & obedientiam usque ad mortem raeruit & accepit Christus."
It is appropriate to consider here devotion to the Names of the
Lord, both Jesus and Christ. The name "Christ", the Greek translation of the Hebrew "Messiah", means the "Anointed One," and even when it had lost its Old Testament associations, many writers continued to develop

17 the meaning of Christ's "mystical and invisible anointing',' Irenaeus,
18

for example, speaks of the Holy Spirit as Christ's unction. But while the Fathers treated the holy Names with love and respect, it was not until the Middle Ages that a loving contemplation of Christ's humanity led also to a particular devotion to the name of Jesus; again, the first influential exponent of this cult was St. Bernard. Fervently, he urges

15 See Aquinas, S.Th., 3*.37- art. 2 (vol.LII, pp.147-49).
1 ^ Biblia Latina (Junius-Tremellius), marginal note on Luke 2.21.
1 ^ Jeremy Taylor, The Life of Cur Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in Whole Works, vol'.II, p.98.
Cornelius Cornelii a Lapide, Commentaria in Omnes D. Pauli
Epistolas (Antwerp, 1614), p.^37 (on philipp.2.9); he is quoted by Donne on the names of Christ, Sermons, VII.12.309-10.
17 Augustine, The Trinity, *XY.26 (FC 45, P-515); cf. Tertullian,
Against Marcion, III.XV (ANClTvol. VII, p.150)-
18 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, trans. J. Keble, LF 42 (Oxford, 1872), III. XVIII.3 (p-2777^

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his readers "exalt, extoll, and magnifie his glorious Name, together with me, and let our tongues tuned with one Harmonicall concord, like Golden Trumpets, sound forth his meritorious, immeasurable, still-

19 encreasing and never- diminishing prayses." In his Sermones super

Cantica Ganticorum, he explores the associations of the name Christ, and the name Jesus (etymo logically less appropriate), with the sweet perfumes described in that book: "Oleum effusum nomen tuum" (Cant. 1.J). The benefits of the ointment are explored in three metaphors: "Fovet
20 igneoi, nutrit camera, lenit dolorem: lux, cibus, medicina." Almost
all subsequent writers on the name of Jesus refer to, or are based on, Bernard.
Devotion to the Holy Name increased, influenced by the different
emphases of Bernardino of Siena, and Heinrich Suso in Germany. In England, a more balanced and Scriptural devotion developed; this popular cult had, by the later Middle Ages, found liturgical expression in the feast of

22 the Name of Jesus, which became established on 7th. August.

In the seventeenth century, devotion to the name of Jesus seems to
have continued among Catholics and Protestants alike, although Catholic writers tended towards a more extravagant belief in its miraculous and healing powers. William Perkins comments a little sourly that Papists

23 "giue too much to the very name of lesus," but Puritan though he is,

becomes lyrical himself over the sweet perfume of the name of Christ: "seeing Christ is annointed with the most pretious baulme that euer was,

23 and that for our sakes, he must be sweete & sauorie vnto vs. 11 Jeremy

St. Bernard, Deuout Meditations, p. 147.
20 St. Bernard, Opera, vol.1, p. 85. See Mirrour, p. 52.
22 See R. W. Pfaff , New Liturgical Feasts in Later Me-Ueval Sngland, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford, 1970), pp. 77-81.
William perkins, An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed? of the
Apostles (Cambridge, 1 596~) t p. 99; p. 107.

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Taylor, Anglican bishop, and John Gerhard, Lutheran theologian, both have extended meditations on the Name. Taylor exclaims, "This is the name which we should engrave in our hearts, and write upon our foreheads, and
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pronounce with our most harmonious accents," 4 while Gerhard bases his meditation on the phrase from Bernard, "0 Good Jesus be thou my Jesus." Many aspects of Bernard's devotion are reflected in seventeenth- century
26 writers. There is some evidence that "Jesus" was considered to be a

holier name than "Christ": "Christ is not the Name of God, God cannot be annointed: but lesus is the Name of God, and that wherein he

27 principally delights." An interesting example of Catholic devotion
to the Name is a book published in 1613 by the Minorite Friar, Carolus Sten^relius, entitled Sacrosancti Nominis lesu Cultus et Miracula, which gives over two hundred pages to inspiring the adoration, and extolling the powers of the name of Jesus; it is particularly interesting in that a copy of it is known to have been owned by Donne. The book draws heavily on earlier writers, especially St. Bernard, and deals with such subjects as: the Name as oleum effusum; its imposition at the Circum-cision; the miracles which have been performed in it; the martyrs who have died for it; the love of the saints for it; and its abuse in oaths. It ends with a selection of extracts from such writers as St. Bernard,

28 Bemardino, and Heinrich Suso.

24 Jeremy Taylor, The Life of Christ, p. 105.
2 ^ Meditations, p. 19, with a marginal reference to Bernard; this
phrase is also quoted by Jeremy Taylor, The Life of Christ, p. 105.
e.g. Cornelius a Lapide, Comment aria in Epis tolas, p. 639 (on
Philipp. 2.10).
2 ^ Thomas Adams , Workes, p..l203; cf. Isaac Ambrose, Looking, pp. 125-6,
28 Carolus Stengelius, Sacrosancti Nominis lesa Cultus et Miracula (Augsburg, 1613). It is designated L1 72 in Keynes' list of Donne's books: Geoffrey^Keynes, A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne, 4th. ed, (Oxford, 1973), p. 276. Donne's own copy, bearing his motto and sip-nature, is to be found in the Bodleian Library (8°. B.114.Th.). Its influence on Donne's discussions of the nanes will be indicated below.

II. Donne and Milton

Donne's references to the Circumcision, apart from one in Pseudo-Martyr which speaks of the spiritual circumcision required of the Church, are all found in his sermons; one sermon, preached on January

2 1st., 1625> takes the circumcision of Abraham as its subject. For

Donne, the blood shed in the Circumcision signifies the essential unity of Christ's life, and the pattern of blood-shedding throughout his life represents his sacrifice: "The Priest in the Law used a seven-fold sprinkling of bloud upon the Altar; and we observe a seven-fold shedding of bloud in Christ." Donne then enumerates these seven occasions. Christ's blood is precious to him, and he protests against its waste: "If he would shed bloud, it might have beene enough to have done so in the Circumcision, and scourging, without dying." But he
6

accepts that the Circumcision is a part of the "continuall passion" of Christ's life: "the bloud of his Circumcision, the bloud of his Agony, the bloud of his scourging was not enough; It must be, and so 7
it was the bloud of his Crosse."

It is fitting, since Christ's work of Redemption by his suffering
and death began with the Circumcision, that he should also have taken

Pseudo-Martyr, p.6.
2 Sermons, 71.9.186 ff., on Gen. 17.42.
3 Sermons, 17.11.295; see pp. 303 and 332 below.
4 Sermons, IV.11.296; cf. I7.14-353. * Sermons, 71.17-341. Sermons, X.11.243*
7 Sermons, 17.11.285; cf. 71.12.260. See pp-332 ff. below.

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the name Jesus at that time, when he "began to shed some drops of

8 Q blood for us." This was Christ's first act of submission to the Law,

and in it the need for circumcision was ended. Donne announces in his sermon for 1st. January 1625, "upon this Day it [circumcision] was perfected and consummated in the person of Christ Jesus."
Donne is unimpressed by circumcision as a sign of covenant, and
holds up Abraham's acceptance of it as an example of trusting obedience when God's commands seem ludicrous. He imagines Abraham as saying:
"why does God command me so base and uncleane a thing, so scornfull and mis-interpretable a thing, as Circumcision, and Circumcision in that part?" Circumcision is, however, a reminder against lust, a represen-

12 tation of baptism, and, most importantly, a prefiguration of the

spiritual circumcision, the purity of heart, with which Christ replaced the physical sign.: "This Day thy Saviour was Circumcised in the flesh, for thee; this Day Circumcise thy heart to him, and all thy senses, and all thy affections." *
Milton's poem "Upon the Circumcision", perhaps composed for the
Feast of the Circumcision on January 1st., seems closely related to
the Nativity Ode. Like the Ode, it shows a reluctance to focus on the baby who is central to its theme, suggesting him only by the abstract noun "infancy" (1.14) » a^d it begins with an exhortation to the heavenly hosts to cease from their "music, and triumphant song," (1.2). His birth is recalled as having been accompanied, as it was in the Nativity Ode, "with all heaven's heraldry" (1.10), and it is the Circum-cision, rather than Christ's birth, which represents his first entrance

8 Sermons, 1,9-311. - Semens, VI. 12.260.
10 Serrons, VI.9-186. 11 Sernons, VI.9.190.
12 Sermons, VI.9.193; cf. VI.6.136. ^ Sernons, VT-9-203; 195-

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into humiliation and suffering. The blood shed in the Circumcision is his first payment for our sins:

Alas, how soon our sin
Sore doth begin
His infancy to seize! (11.12-14)

This first seal of his obedience is also a foreshadowing of his passion (11.25-8).
Milton makes only one other specific reference to the Circumcision
of Christ, in the De Doctrina, where he lists it as one of the elements of Christ's humiliation, "formed like flesh, liable to sin;" by it, "he was bound to obey the whole law." Nowhere does Milton refer to the fact that the Circumcision was also the occasion of the child's receiving the name Jesus, which may be linked with his apparent reluctance to use the name. Milton has, however, a number of general references to the sign of circumcision which, in his impatience with external signs, he disparages: it is "vain" and "preposterous" if it is not accompanied by the spiritual purity of which it should be a sign. It has now been replaced by baptism, but its usefulness even under the Law is doubted; it has no spiritual value, but "it was a sign in the flesh, and a very obscure one at that, of the grace which

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was to be made known long afterwards." Nowhere does Milton make explicit the idea that the need for circumcision was ended in the Circumcision of Christ.
For the names of Christ, and their essential connection with his redeeming blood, and our salvation, Donne displays a great love, sharing

14 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, pp.438-9). 15 See below, pp. 245 ff-
16 Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (2nd. ed.), II.VI (Yale II, p.302); cf. PR, III.425; and Civil power, Yale VII, p.255«
17 DDC, I.XXVIII (Yale VI, p.548).

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the delight which he attributed to the Holy Ghost in Scripture, "in

1ft turning and transposing the Names every way." It finds expression,

however, only in the sermons: in all his poetry, he uses the name "Jesus" only twice, on both occasions referring to its use in oaths. As Donne points out in a sermon, the "Wretched Blasphemer of the riame
20 21
of Jesus" wounds Christ by this abuse. The "dear name" of Christ appears a little more frequently in the poems, but when Donne addresses his poem directly to Christ, he seems to prefer a more formal title,
22

such as "0 strong Ramrne", or "Mild lambe", or "0 Sonne of God."
In the sermons, Donne almost invariably used the combination of
the names "Christ Jesus," the order which he felt was logically

23 preferable; this was based on the idea that the Son is both Christ, "a person anoynted, appointed, and sent for that purpose, to reconcile God and Man, ' and Jesus who "did actually and really doe the office
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of a Saviour." Both names are temporal, because they relate to Christ's
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office in the worldj his only eternal name is "Lord". Therefore, "the Name of Christ, is in the order of nature, before the name of lesus,
26
as the Commission is before the Execution of the Commission." Christ was not "Jesus" "till he began to submit himself to the Law for us; which was first in his circumcision, when he took the name of Jesus,

1R Sermons , III. 14. 301.
19 Divine poems, p. 14, Sonnet 4, 11.10-11; "Satyre IV, " 11.215-7.
20 Sermons, IY.14-352; cf. 7.6.135- Divine Poems, p.1.
22 "Ascention," 11.9-10; "A Utanie," 1.10.
23 Sermons, III. 14. 301. Sermons, 1.8.287.
25 Sermons, III. 14-297; cf ., Stengelius , quoting Bonaventure, Siacrosancti Noroinis lesu, p. 2.
26 Sermons, III. 14. 301

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and began to shed some drops of blood for us." ' The name pertained to the whole of Christ's life: "This was his name, when he was carried to the Altar to circumcision, and this was his name when he carried his

28 Altar the Cross." Donne sums up the whole paradox of the Incarnation

by these names: "As he is The Lord , he cannot die; As he is Christ (under the Decree) he cannot chuse but die; but as he is lesus, He is

29 dead already." The Name of Jesus leads Donne to meditate on the

Cross, "lesus, accomplishing my salvation, by an actuall death."
Because he bought it with his own blood, God himself loves this name best: "it cost him his life to be a lesus."
Donne remarks that the name "Jesus" can signify either "salvatorem
32
or salutem," since Jesus is both to us. Others before Christ had
been called Jesus, or Joshuah, but Christ had made the name Jesus unique, by his unique work of salvation: "A Saviour of all the world, of all
the conditions in the world, of all times through the world, of all places of the world, such a Saviour is no man called, but Christ Jesus only."*4

27 Sermons, 1*9.311; cf. Bernard, quoted by Stengelius: "prima
effusio sanguinis Chris ti facta est in eius Circumcisione, quando vocatum etiam est nomen eius IESVS, & Saluator" (Sacrosancti Nominis lesu, p.21).

28 Sermons , 1.9-312; cf. Stengelius, "caepit proprium sanguinem
fundere, quern postea copiose effusurus erat in passione, et cruce" (p.21), 29 Sermons, III. 14-300. * Sermons, III. 14. 308.
Sermons, V. 16.326-7; cf. Stengelius, "Ita Christus nomen Dei,
Yerbi . .. sine labore habet; nomen vero ISSVS a cruce, a sanguine, a toto orbe magno cum labore redempto adeptus est" (p. 23; cf. p.117> p. 126). Sermons, 1.9.310; cf. Stengelius, "nomen est salutis, siue Saluatoris" (p.21) .
^ Sermons, III. 14. 301.
Sermons, 7.18.378; cf. Stengelius, "Nor, enim est hie ISSVS,
Saluator eo modo, quo loseph, aut losue, qui parti cularem, exip-uamque salutem attulerunt; sed omnium, & uni versa salus est omnibus" (p. 120).

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In one passage of a sermon of 28th. January, 1627, Donne reverses
the associations of the two names, so that Christ becomes the name of
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humble humanity, and Jesus of divine mystery; it seems likely here
that Donne was drawing directly on Stengelius. Acknowledging Bonaventure in the margin, he writes that "the Name of lesus, as it signifies a Saviour, first contemplates God, and the Divine nature, (which onely could save us) And then hath relation to Man, and the Humane nature... And then, the Name of Christ, (as it signifies Anointed, and appointed to a certaine purpose, as to die for us) first contemplates Man, and
the Humane nature, which onely could die, And then hath relation to
God, and the Divine nature." Stengelius also quotes Bonaventures "Chris tus enim nominat personara in humana natura, relata ad diuinam
quia dicitur vnctus. Sed IESVS nominat personam diuinam relatam ad humanam, quia ISSVS interpretatur Saluator." It is possible, of course, that Donne had read Bonaventure himself, but the great similarity between what he says about the names of Christ, and material which he could
have found in Stengelius, suggests that the latter was indeed his source. The idea that "Jesus" signifies the will to save us, and "Christ" the accomplishment of our salvation, is also found in an undated

57 christening sermon; Donne's earlier, reverse interpretation, does
not appear after 1621, in any dated sermon.
Donne urges us, "above all, be sure of thy hold upon the name Jesus
thy Saviour"; but he uses the name Christ far more often than the name of Jesus, even when he is influenced by the appearance of the

Sermons, VII. 12.308-9; cf. p-257 above.
* Sacrosancti Nominis lesu,, pp. 2-3.
37 Sermons, V.6.135- ^ Sermons, 1.9-312.

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39 latter in his text. In this, Donne may be identified with what he

himself says of St. Paul: "In the name of lesus, S. Paul abounded, but in the Name of Christ more," and with what Jerome says of the same saint: "Quern superflue diligebat, extraordinarie nominavit." Donne loves to repeat Christ's name; and meditations on the meaning of "Christ" frequently occur in the sermons. Donne was fascinated by the association of "the Anointed" with the sweet-smelling oils and perfumes used for anointing. He makes much use of the texts, "oleum effusum nomen eius " (Cant.1.3), and "unxit te Deus ... oleo laetitiae prae
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consortibus tuis » (ps. 45-7). He loves to think of the many ways
in which Christ can be said to be anointed, so that "All his garments

43 smell of Myrrhe, and Aloes, and Cassia, as it is in the Canticles."
44 Christ is anointed with the oil of gladness for the work of salvation;

and he receives the three-fold anointing proper to the three aspects
of his office, as prophet, priest, and king^ He is anointed with his

46 divinity, by which his humanity was consecrated; and this is signi-

fied by the resting of the Holy Ghost upon him. This anointing of the Lord to his office was reflected in many of the events of his life,

cf. J. W. Nielsen, "The Concept of the Divine and the Human,"
pp. 307-8. Nielsen claims that over all the sermons, Donne uses the name of Christ "over 4000 times," and the name of Jesus "only slightly more than 400 times. "

Sermons, VII. 12. 309-10; see Cornelius a Lapide, Gommentaria in Epistolas, pp. 524-5 (on Eph.1.10), referred to by Donne in this passage 41 Sermons, V.16.326; this saying is quoted by Stengelius in its correct form (p. 140).
42 See Sermons, 1.9-310; VII. 12. 309; V.16.327; V.17-351, etc. for Cant. 1.3; and III. 14-298-9; IV.14-354; VI. 5-124, for Ps.45-7-
45 Sermons, 1.9.310. . 44 Sermons, 1.9-310; VI. 5-124-
Sermons, III. 14-298; V-16.327-
46 Sermons, III. 14-298-9; IV. 14. 354; VI. 6. 146.

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4.7 "every way anointed more then others, by others." Donne gives some
examples: "Mary Magdalen made him Christ, for she anointed him before his death; And loseph of Arimathea made him Christ, for he anointed
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him, and embalmed him, after his death."4 The culmination of these anointings came when Christ, conquering death, was "anointed in his

49 owne blood." In the traditional manner, Donne also talks of the
name of Jesus as a sweet perfume, "alwaies powring, and alwaies spread-

5O ing it selfe upon all greene wounds, and upon all old sores." Donne
envisages the balm of Christ's name being poured out upon us: "The name of Christ hath been shed upon us all in our baptisme, and that hath made us Christians;" 5 and eventually its fragrance will spread

52 to all men. The Lord's two names, one Hebrew and the other Greek,

also indicate that Christ gave himself for all nations.
That Milton displays no comparable devotion to the names of Christ
is, perhaps, not to be wondered at; but his apparent reluctance to use the names "Christ" and "Jesus" is more surprising. In his discussion of the circumcision, Milton omits to mention that it was the occasion on which the child Jesus received his name. He does not refer to the name "Jesus" or its meaning anywhere in the De poctrina, and it seems that in the whole of the rest of his prose works, the name appears only two or three times, in the form "Christ Jesus". In Paradise Lost, the name occurs once, and in paradise Regained six times, compared with "Son of God" which is used thirty-seven times in the

47 Sermons, 1.9.310. Sermons, 17.14.353.
49 Sermons, VI. 5. 124- Sermons, VIII. 1.45; cf.7.l6.}27.
51 Senr.ons, VII. 3-109; cf. <7II. 1 2.308. 5 Sermons, 7.17-351-
Sermons, III. 14-303-
54 e-^ Qf Reformation, II (Yale I, p. 591); The Reason of Church-Government (preface), Yale I, p. 750- The Columbia Index records no other
uses.

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in the latter poem. It does not occur anywhere else in Milton's poetry. Before attempting to draw any conclusion from this, let us see whether the name "Christ" fares any better. Its meaninp- of "anointed" is twice glanced at in the De Doctrina, where we find Milton singing the familiar refrain: "He is, therefore, not one with nor equal to God, who

55 anointed him." It is not used at all in either Paradise Lost, or paradise Regained, and , in fact, appears only once in the whole of Milton's poetry (apart from the title of the Nativity Ode), when he urges parliament not "To force our consciences that Christ set free." On the other hand, the name Christ is used quite freely in the De Doctrina, and other prose writings.
This means, of course, that in the poems on the Nativity, Circum-cision, and passion, the Son is never referred to by either of these names - except in the title of the Nativity Ode. In Paradise Lost, his usual appellation is "the Son", while in the Nativity Ode, he is known by a variety of titles, including "the infant God" (1.16) and "the mighty pan" (1.89)«The latter is the more extraordinary in that the poem celebrates Christ's victory over the pagan gods. Louis Martz claims that the omission of the usual names in paradise Regained can be attributed to the fact that Milton is there writing about Christ 57
as "a composite generalized being," whatever that may be. But when omissions persist throughout Milton's poetry, such an explanation is surely not sufficient - casual references to Jove or Jupiter are
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slipped into Milton's poetry twenty-nine times.

55 DDC, I. VI (Yale VI, p. 297); I.V (p-207).
^ "On the New Forcers of Conscience," 1.6.
L.L. Martz, "Paradise Regained; The Meditative Combat,"
27 (1960)1 p. 231.

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See Bradshaw, Concordance.

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It is also conspicuous that none of Milton's shorter poems is addressed to Christ under any name. This is surprising because the way in which Milton most often began his shorter poems was with an apostrophe, to
a wide variety of things and people. A selection of these includes "Hail native lanruage"; "Ye flaming powers"; "Cromwell, our chief of men"; "Fairfax,..."; "Lady, that in the prime of earliest youth"; and there are many more. But apart from the translations of the Psalms, only one is directly addressed to God: "Avenge 0 Lord thy slaughtered saints." The Nativity Ode, although it is to be presented to the infant Jesus, is not addressed to him. It would seem from this that Milton
had no very strong sense of the presence of Christ, and also that in spite of his intensive study of Scripture, the names of Christ at least had a less powerful hold upon his imagination than the names of the gods and goddesses of the Greek and Latin classics.
"Saviour", the meaning of Jesus which so much recommended it to
Donne, would have had little emotional appeal for Milton who, as we have 59
seen, was lacking in a strong awareness of either sin or death. In spite of his insistence in the De Doctrina on Christ's satisfaction of divine justice on behalf of all men, it seems that Milton was much attracted by the idea of the individual sons of God working a salvation out for themselves. And whether the name "Jesus" be taken to signify the humility of Christ, or the mystery of his divinity, it is essentially connected with the doctrine of the Incarnation, a mystery which, as we shall see later, Milton made little effort to understand. The absence of the name "Christ" from his poetry is harder to
account for. His use of the names, however, in the De Doctrina suggest that he also considers Christ as a narr.e appropriate only to the

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59 See pp. 104 ft.; 150-51 above and p.272 below.
60 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.445)i see pp.275 ff. and 340 ff. below.

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Incarnate, while "the Son" is the title of his pre-existent state. It is clear from paradise Lost that Milton did not regard the Son as anointed, or appointed to his office from the beginning, since he does not offer himself as a sacrifice for man until after the war in heaven, and the creation of man. Milton also remarks in the De Doctrina

62 that Christ "was not known by that name from the beginning." He

does not say when the Son did receive that name, but he would have considered it improper to use it of the Son in heaven in Paradise Lost; in that case, its absence from references to Christ's life on earth may stem from Milton's failure to think out fully the implications
of the Incarnation for the Son.

61 PL, 111.56 ff. 62 DDC, I.I (Yale VI, p.126).

CHAPTER 6

THE BAPTISM

I. Introduction

It was quite clear to all expositors that Christ himself did not
need a baptism for repentance and the forgiveness of sins: "He who had not committed sin is baptized as if He were a sinner," a fact which inspires praise of his humility in being baptized, as Jerome says, "with
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publicans, prostitutes, and sinners." St. Bernard exclaims with wonder, "thou, oh innocent Lambe of God, didst require to be baptized," and in the seventeenth century, William Cowper, bishop of Galloway, says that "it shewes his wond^rfull loue, and rare humilitie." Christ then must have been baptized for our sake, and there are many suggestions as to how we benefit from his baptism. St. John of Damascus gives a compre-hensive list, which contains most of the interpretations commonly found in the Fathers, and in later writers: Christ was baptized that "He might 'crush the heads of the dragons in the waters, 1 wash away the sin and bury all of the old Adam in the water, sanctify the Baptist, fulfill the Law, reveal the mystery of the Trinity, and become for us a model

1 St. Jerome, Homily 75, in Homilies (vol.2), trans. Sr. Marie
Liguori Ewald, FC 57 (Washington, 1966), p. 129; of. St. Ambrose, The Patriarchs, in Seven Bxegetical Works » trans. M. P. McHugh, FC 65 (Washington, 1972), p. 255.
2 St. Jerome, Homily 89 (FC 57, p. 229).
St. Bernard, Deuout Meditations, p. 165.
4 William Cowper, "His Baptisme," in Three Heauenly Treatises, concerning Christ (London, 1612), p. 57-

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and example for the reception of baptism." 5 Some writers also associate Christ's baptism, as part of his saving work, with the shedding of his blood. Jerome says that "it is prevenient; true remission of sins is in the blood of Christ," while St. John of Damascus speaks of Christ's
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baptism in blood and martyrdom.
Was then the baptism which Christ received of John the same as
our baptism in the name of Christ? The Fathers generally felt that John's
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baptism was much inferior, and Augustine states explicitly that "they were not reborn who were baptized by the baptism of John." 9 Therefore they would have needed to be baptized again, not only in water, but in the Spirit. St. John of Damascus, on the other hand, speaks of "Domini baptisma, quo ipse baptizatus fuit," 10 which seems to imply a contrary view. But Augustine's opinion, supported by Aquinas, 11 became the accepted belief of the Roman Church. It became a point of contention with the Reformers, who held that Christ's baptism could not have sanctified ours, unless it was in all respects the same. The Lutheran Gerhard affirms, "the Baptisme of John was the same Sacrament with the Baptisme of Christ, that is, which Christ administred by his Apostles, and doth at this day administer by the Ministers of the Church: It had

St. John of Damascus, The Orthodox Faith, IV.9 (PC 37, p.347);
cf. Aquinas, S.Th., 3a.39. art.1 (vol. LIII, pp.23-25); Jereray Taylor, The Life of Christ, pp.190-91.
St. Jerome, Homily 75 (PC 57, p.129).
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St. John of Damascus, The Orthodox Faith, IV.9 (PC 37, p.347).
St. Jerome, Homily 75 (PC 57, p.123).

9
St. Augustine, Faith, Hope and Charity, trans. Bernard M. Peebles
in PC 2 (New York, 1947), ch.14 (p.410).

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10 The Orthodox Faith, IV.9 (EG. 94.11233; FC 37, pp.346-47); quoted
by Donne as "Christus baptizatur suo Baptismo," Sermons,VI.6.137.
11 S.Th.,3a.38. art.6 (vol. LIII, p.19).

also the same efficacie."

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Christ's baptism was also traditionally associated in the West with
the Epiphany; Jerome explains that although Christ had been born thirty years previously, his identity was not revealed until this time. * Aquinas suggests that the Father's witness to the Son was necessary before he began his work, "so that his teaching might become the more credible." Seventeenth-century writers almost invariably represent Christ's baptism as his official entrance into his work. John Udall, the puritan pamphleteer, writes that it is "the entraunce of Christ into
the execution of his office," in the public revelation of himself as Messiah; and Jeremy Taylor describes it as "the inauguration and

17 proclamation of the Messias." At the same time Christ was revealed as

Messiah, and began the Messiah's work. Combined with an emphasis on this revelation, we find references to the glory received by Christ at his baptism. William Perkins speaks of "the great honour and majestie
18 wherewith he was there renowned," and Sparke of the Trinity "manifest-
18 ing Christs glory at his Baptisme." Thus glory and humility were

conjoined in Christ's baptism«>

12 Summe, p.204; cf. Bullinger, Decades, pp.1031-32.
See Cullman, "The Origin of Christmas," pp. 25 ff.; the connection persisted in the second lesson at Mattins on the Feast of Epiphany in
the Book of Common prayer.
4 Jerome, Homily 89 (PC 57, p.229).
1 ^ S.Th., 3a.39. art.8 (vol. LIII, p.51).
_ John Udall, The Combate betwixt Christ and the Deuill (London,
[1588]), sig. A6r.
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Jeremy Taylor, The Life of Christ, p.191; cf. Daniel Dyke,
"Michael and the Dragon, " in TWO Treatises (London, 1631), p.213;
William Cowper, "His Baptisme," p.76.

18 William Perkins, The Combat Betweene Christ and the Devill displayed,
in Works, 3 vols. (London, 1626-31), vol. Ill, p.371; Sparke, fc
p. 143; of. Dyke, "Michael and the Dragon, " p.207.

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Christ's baptism was also seen as the first manifestation of the Trinity. St. Jerome explains: "Jesus is baptized; the Holy Spirit descends
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under the appearance of a dove, the Father speaks from heaven," and
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St. Thomas Aquinas gives his approval to Jerome's opinion. Later

writers agree that "all the holy and sacred Trinitie was present,"21
and Cowper sees all three Persons as joining here in the work of our
22 Redemption. An account of Christ's baptism (Matthew 3) is given in the
Book of Common Prayer as the second lesson at Mattins on Trinity Sunday. Since Christ's Messiahship and the Trinity were revealed by the descending dove and the voice from heaven, it was generally agreed that these signs were apparent to all present, pseudo-Bonaventure claims that
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the Trinity was "opounely schewed," and Aquinas agrees; almost all
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commentators concur in thinking that the bystanders saw the Spirit,
and that the voice was "such as all the people there present might heare,
25 & vnderstand."
The descent of the Spirit on Christ was understood to represent his
26 anointing. Christ had been anointed by a "mystical and invisible
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anointing" from the moment of his conception; the dove merely signified this, and not that Christ first received his unction at that time. Having

19 Jerome, Homily 75 (FC 57, p. 129); cf. John of Damascus, The
Orthodox Faith, IV. 9 (FC 37, p. 347).
2°S.Th., 3a.39. art. 8 (vol. LIII, p. 49). Gerhard, Meditations, p. 94
2 Cowper, "His Baptisme," pp. 89-90; cf. Gerhard, Summe , p. 207.
25 Mirrour, p. 88; cf. S.Th. , 3a.39» art. 8 (vol. LIII, p.51).
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e.g. Geneva Bible, marginal note on Mark 1.10.
25 Cowper, "His Baptisme," p.91.
Tertullian, Qi Baptism, trans. S. Thelwall, ANCL vol. XI,
(Edinburgh, 1869), ch. VII (p. 239).
27 Auenstine, The Trinity, XV.26 (FC 45, P«516); cf. Aquinas, S.Th., 3a.39. art. 2 (vol. LIII, P-27J.

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descended upon Christ, the Spirit remained with him: "The Holy Spirit descended upon Christ, and remained; He descends upon men, assuredly,

28 but does not remain." William Cowper explains fully the ways in
29 which this was a "visible signe" of Christ's anointing. 7

As for what the Father's voice actually said, a few early Christian writings give the words of psalm 2.7: "Thou art my Son; this day have
I begotten thee 1,1 but this reading was not generally accepted. The similarity of the words spoken at the Transfiguration was also noted; William Ames conflates the two speeches in the manner for which Donne criticized St. Cyprian: "This is my Sonne in whom I am well pleased,

32 heare him."

28 Jerome, Homily 75 (FC 57> p. 130); cf. Ambrose, The Patriarchs
(FC 65, p.255); Donne, Sermons, VI.6.146.

29 "His Baptisme," p.83; pp.80-84.

e.g. Clement of Alexandria, Christ the Educator, trans. S. P.
Wood, FC 23 (New York, 1954), 1.6 (p.25). Donne discusses this reading, Sermons, VI.6.148*
Cowper, "His Baptisme," p.99> Henry Hammond, A Paraphrase, and Annotations Upon all the Books of the New Testament (London, 1653)? pp.20-21.

32 Marrow, p.98; Donne, Sermons, VI.6.148.

II. Donne and Milton

Donne, who has no reference to the baptism of Christ outside the sermons, emphasizes to his congregation that even as Christ began his ministry by submitting to baptism, so we should value this sacrament as the beginning of the Christian life: "his ordinary work which he came for, his preaching the Gospel, and thereby raising the frame for our salvation, in his Church, he began not, but after his Baptisme." Christ had no need of baptism himself: "he would accept an ablution,
2 who had no uncleannesse," and he was therefore baptized for our sake, to sanctify our baptism "in his person, and in his exemplar action." Donne, following the Reformers, was indignant at those who claimed
that "the Baptisme, that Christ took of lohn, was not the same Baptisme, which we Christians take in the Church." There are accidental differences, but the substance of the sacrament, our sharing in the Passion of Christ, for which immersion in the waters is a sign, is the same. The substance of the sacrament is "the washing of our soules in the blood of Christ"; and John's baptism is incorporated in Christ's by the witness which he bore to the Lamb "slaine from the beginning of the world." Christ has baptized "the Baptist himself, and all us, in his own blood." Here is another example of the way in which, for Donne, everything in the life of Christ was directed and unified by his

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Sermons, VI.6.136.
Ser-nons, VI.6.135; 136. Sermons, II.7.172.

Sermons, V.6.140; VI.6.135,
Sermons, V.6.136.

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passion; and how every event was a preparation for it. Scripture itself, of course, makes this connection in Matthew 20.22, and Luke 12.50, as Donne points out: "In both which places, Christ doth understand by
this word Baptisme, his Passion. 11
In the Baptism, Donne saw both humiliation and honour for Christ.

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It was an "act of humiliation, when he would be Baptized by John," since he had no sin. Christ so emptied himself that it was a descent for the Holy Ghost to come upon him; we have seen Donne's emphasis on the co-equality of the Persons of the Trinity, yet now "Christ had a nature upon him, in which he was not equall to the Holy Ghost," and

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therefore, "here was a double descent in the Holy Ghost." Yet the humiliation is inextricably bound up with glory: following Augustine, Donne claims that this, Christ's second birth, was more honourable than his first, for "God, who was not known to be his Father before, declares

9 10 that now," Christ's natural birth was clouded in shame and suspicion,

but now his heavenly origins are made known to all. As always, Donne finds the presence of glory in the midst of Christ's lowliness and shame, particularly significant, and he draws attention to the Father's words, acknowledging his beloved Son even in his humiliation: "now in the exinanition of his person, now in the evacuation of his Glory ... now he is the Son of the glorious God."
Donne emphasizes the manifestation of the Trinity at Christ's
baptism; the only sermon which he preached on the Baptism was delivered

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on Trinity Sunday. The Holy Spirit itself appeared, and the Father's

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Sermons, 711.7.193- Sermons, 7.6.140.

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Sermons, V.I.48. * Sermons, VI.6.135.
10 Sermons, VI.17.338-9. " Sermons, VI.6.147-
1 Sermons, VI.6.132 ff. on Matt.3-17-

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own voice spoke \ the revelation of the Trinity is summarized by the words which the Father speaks: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; For, in that word, Meus, My, there is the Person of the Father; In the Filius, there is the Person of the Son; and in the Hie est, This is, there is the Person of the Holy Ghost." ^ It was the first time that the Holy Ghost had been sent forth in a form visible to men; and his mission was to reveal both himself and the Son, "That there
was a holy Ghost, and that holy Ghost dwelt upon this person." ^ Oi "his occasion, the Spirit acted not as a teacher, as he was to do
later, but merely as a witness. Donne points out that if the descending-dove had not indicated Christ, the people would have assumed that honour was being paid to John.
The presence of the Holy Ghost also signified the unction which
Christ had received of his Father, the continuous presence of the Spirit in him. Donne was anxious to refute the heresy that the Spirit of Christ descended into the human Jesus at the Baptism, and also the suggestion of Jerome that Christ first received the office of Messiah at that moment: Christ had received his unction "in the over-shadowing of the holy Ghost in his conception." What happened at the Baptism was merely a sign. Donne stresses the words spoken by the Spirit to the Baptist,

17 that he would "descend, and tarry still" upon Christ. The Spirit has

descended upon other men, especially the prophets, but in Christ alone

18 he tarries wholly, and for ever.
Donne is certain that the revelation was not for Christ's benefit:

1 ^ Sermons, VI.6.134; cf. p.145- Sermons, VIII.11.260.
15 Sermons, VI.6.147; 142. , Sermons, VI.6.144; 146-7.
1 7
Sermons, V.6.143: John 1.33*
18 Sermons, VI.6.146; cf. p.134; III.9.214.

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19 "Christ himself e lacked no testimony, that he was that Sonne." On
one occasion, Donne suggests that the Father's testimony "was for the
20 confirmation of lohn Baptist;" elsewhere, however, he states that
the Trinity must have been made known to all, expressing his agreement with St. Chrysostora that "both the Dove was seen, and the voyce was
21 heard by all the company."
Donne notes that the Father's voice spake the same words at the Baptism as at the Transfiguration; and it is appropriate to Donne's understanding of Christ as the same Lord in shame and in glory, that he should be witnessed to as God's Son on these two very different

22 occasions. It is therefore important that it is the "same voyce" in
23 which the Father speaks; and also that there is as little variation
as possible between the two pronouncements. Donne states his preference for the reading "Hie est" of Matthew over the "Tu es" of Mark and Luke, partly because the former is more fitting for a ereneral revelation, and partly because all three Evangelists agree in reading "Hie est" in their account of the Transfiguration, "where the same voice spake the same

23 words againe." He says, however, that St. Cyprian is wrong in adding
23 "Hunc audit e" to the words spoken at the Baptism.
The significance which Milton sees in Christ's baptism is quite different; for him it is concerned not with Christ's glory and humiliation, nor with the absolute manifestation of the Messiah or the Trinity, but with the question of identity, a theme which in Paradise Regained is closely linked with that of the temptations.
In an early reference to Christ's baptism, Milton echoes the
traditional thought that the water was "Sanctifi'd by Chris ts institute,"

, 71.6.141; contrast Milton, p. 260 bcW.

20 21 Sermons, 7.6.140. Sermons, 71.6.142; cf. 7.1.48-9-
22 23 Sermons, 7.6.140. Sermons, 71.6.144; 148; 146.

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typically making this point to condemn Papists who added embellishments
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of their own to the baptismal ceremony. He repeats the point that our baptism was sanctified by Christ's, and also that Christ was baptized to fulfil all righteousness in seeking to demonstrate in the De Doctrina that the baptism of Christ and the baptism of John are

25 "essentially the same." J If this were not the case, then we would not

share actually in Christ's baptism, nor symbolically in his "painful life, his death and his burial, in which he was, so to speak, immersed

25 for a time." But Milton does not regard the identification of our

baptism with Christ's Passion, as of vital importance, as Donne does, for a little later he comes close to yielding both these points. There is a distinction between the baptism with water, and baptism with the Spirit, and therefore "it was possible, though not necessary, to add

26 the baptism of Christ to that of John." Moreover, says Milton, it

would be his own inclination not to administer baptism to anyone brought up in the church, "if the apostle had not taught us that baptism is not merely an initiation but a kind of symbol of our death, burial

26 and resurrection with Christ." Christ's baptism is one of the events
27 enumerated as part of his humiliation,'but Milton does not elaborate

on this, nor mention the glory of the Father's testimony. Neither
does he remark that Christ, being sinless, did not need to be baptized. In the De Doctrina, Milton does not mention Christ's entrance into
the public performance of his office at his baptism, even in his

2ft chapters on the mediatorial office and its administration. He is,

however, interested in the witness borne to Christ by the Spirit. This

24 Qf Reformation, I (Yale J, p.523).
25 DDC, I.XXVIII (Yale VI, pp.550-1). ibid., pp.551-2; p.552.
27 DDC, I.XYI (Yale VI, p.438).
28 DDC, I.XV & XVI (Yale VI, pp.430 ff.).

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is one of the very few occasions on which Milton is prepared to admit that

29 " Spirit 1 can mean the actual person of the Holy Spirit." However,

having allowed the Spirit this brief moment of glory, we must realize that it does not descend here in its own right, but merely as sent by
the Father. The Spirit, after all, was quite unknown, and could not therefore be regarded as a credible witness. Nor could he confer any-thing on Christ. This then was not a revelation of the Trinity, because nothing was said which could make the identity of the Spirit known. Milton states that the voice of the Father spoke, but he does not quote

29 what was said, nor does he refer to the Transfiguration.

When we turn to paradise Regained, we find a large number of accounts
of the Baptism, given by the narrator, and by different characters:
there are a total of seven, four of which appear in the first book.
Almost the only detail which they all have in common is that Christ was then named the Son of God, reflecting the poem's preoccupation with
this title, and the exploration of it by Christ and Satan. The first account (1.18-32) marks the contrast between Christ's obscurity hitherto, "obscure, /Unmarked, unknown" (l.24-5)» and the cumulative effect of
the witness of John, the Father, and the Spirit:

but him the Baptist soon
Descried, divinely warned, and witness bore
As to his worthier, ...
... nor was long
His witness unconfirmed: on him baptized
Heaven opened, and in likeness of a dove
The Spirit descended, while the Father's voice
From heaven pronounced him his belovpd Son. (1.25-32)

This revelation is heard, and immediately reported by Satan to a council in Hell; his fears about Christ have been increased by this testimony
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(I. 64-39). Another account of the baptism is given by Mary, for whom

29 DDC, I. '/I (Yale 71, p. 285 ; p. 284).

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it is a public confirmation of what she has always known (II.82-6); while for Christ himself, his Father's voice strengthens his growing understanding that he is the Messiah, and indicates to him that it is now time to begin his work of redemption.(1.269-89). The disciples wonder to hear Jesus "Messiah Son of God declared" (II.4). In the midst of this manifold witness to the Father's voice, and the attempt to understand what Christ's Sonship means, Satan, in the first temptation, conspicuously omits any reference to the Father's testimony:

to me thou seem'st the man, whom late
Our new baptizing prophet at the ford
Of Jordan honoured so, and called thee Son
Of God... (1.327-30)

although he has already admitted elsewhere that it was "the sovran voice" which spoke (l.84). He wishes to introduce the ambiguous title at the beginning of his discussion with Christ, but does so in such a way as
to minimize its importance.
From all these accounts of the Baptism, it is clear that what the Father said was audible to all present; Christ himself says that it was "Audibly heard" (1.284). However, in support of the De Doctrina, there is no evidence that anyone except Christ recognized the Spirit. The narrative recounts that "in likeness of a dove/ The Spirit descended" (1.30-31), and Christ repeats "The Spirit descended on me like a dove" (1.282), but none of the other accounts mention the Spirit. Satan claims that although he saw the dove, he did not understand what it meant: he saw "A perfect dove descend, whate'er it meant." (1.83). The event is not seen as the ordination of Christ into his office, but more subjectively as the means by which Christ understands that he is
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now to befin his work. Satan recognizes that since Christ did not need to be baptized in order to be purified, the purpose of his baptism must have been the Father's testimony (1.77-78). Christ relates that

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he had difficulty in persuading John to baptize him, but does not explain why he wanted it done (l.277~79)» By avoiding any contrast between divine and human, glory and humiliation, Milton does not relate his accounts of Christ's baptism to Christ's mediatorship, or the incarnate nature of the Redeemer: we see Christ as a man, to whom witness is borne by a supernatural happening.

CHAPTER 7

THE TEMPTATIONS

I, Introduction

A full account of the traditional exegesis of Christ's temptations
in the wilderness is to be found in E. M. Pope's "Paradise Regained";
The Tradition and the Poem; the purpose of this Introduction, therefore, is merely to outline some of the main points of the tradition.
The first question which suggested itself to commentators on the temptations of Christ is why the Lord, who was entirely without sin, was tempted at all. We find very early the two explanations that it was to

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restore the fall of Adam, and also to give us an example in overcoming temptation. Thus by his victory over temptation, Christ was "our mediator not only by His help but also by His example." Jerome points out that the fact that the Lord was tempted is a warning to us, "so that no one might trust in his own sanctity." All of these explanations are repeated by Aquinas, who also records the traditional idea that Christ was tempted so that we may have confidence that he will be merciful and compassionate to us in our temptation. In Renaissance writers, possible explanations

E. M. Pope, "Paradise Regained"; The Tradition and the Poem
(Baltimore, 1947).
2 e.g. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 7.XXI.2 (LF 42, pp.498-99). Augustine, The Trinity, 17.13 (FC 45, p.15l)> cf. Jerome, Homily
90 (FC 57, p.234); Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 7.XXII.1 (LF 42, p.501). 4 Homily 90 (FC 57, p.234).
-* S.Th., 3a.41« art.1 (vol. LIII, pp.71-73).

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proliferate, as indeed do expositions of the temptations, with countless books, pamphlets and sermons given over to commenting on them. The traditional explanations persist. Other suggestions include the ideas that the event reveals the senseless rage of the devil; that it corresponds to the forty years spent by the Israelites in the desert; that it teaches
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ministers how to prepare for entrance upon their office; that it took

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away the force of our subsequent temptations; and that it began the work

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of our Redemption.
But the theme of the reversal of Adam's fall, and the recovery of
our happiness, predominated, and thus it was felt to be necessary that Christ's temptations should correspond to Adam's in every respect. From patristic times, it had been common to argue that the sins involved were those of gluttony, vainglory and avarice; and as Aquinas points out,

12 Satan observed this order in tempting both Adam and Christ. The order

of the temptations recorded in Matthew's Gospel - bread, pinnacle of the temple, kingdoms - was found to correspond most nearly to this scheme, and was invariably followed. Protestant writers of the Reformation , however, found the idea of a hungry man being guilty of gluttony by eating

Ames, Marrow, p.98; Thomas Manton, "The Temptation of Christ," in
Christs Temptation and Transfiguration (London, 1658)> pp.11-15» Perkins, The Combat, p.376.

7 Dyke,"Michael and the Dragon," pp.221-22.
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[Lancelot Andrewes], The Wonderfull Combate (for Gods glorie and
Mans saluation) betweene Christ and Satan (London, 1392), fol.9v.
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Cowper, "The Combat of Christ with Sathan," in Three Heauenly Treatises, pp.113-14*
e.g. Manton, "The Temptation of Christ," p.11.

11 12 See pope, pp.51 ff» * S.Th., 3a.41. art.4 (vol. LIII, p.85).

See Pope, p. 8; cf. Mirrour, pp.94-95» Andrewes, The Wonderfull Combate, fol.lr; Dyke, "Michael and the Dragon," p.2?3» etc.

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bread, objectionable; Andrewes, acknowledging that he is going against "The streame of the Doctors", but agreeing with Bucer, remarks that "There is small likelihood, that one should sinne in gluttonie by eating bread onely." They therefore reinterpreted the first temptation as a temptation to distrust: Christ was invited both to doubt that he was indeed the Son of God, and that God's providence would supply him: "First,hee labours to overthrow the faith of Christ. Secondly, to bring him to a practice of unbeleefe." Other commentators included both distrust and

17 "Inordinatenesse of appetite" in this temptation. l
The motive of Satan in undertaking the temptations had generally been
19 thought to discover whether or not Christ was the Son of God: "the
prince of the demons became uncertain of him and tempted him, trying to
19 discover whether he was the Christ." Many Renaissance writers continue
to assert this: Jeremy Taylor, for example, writes that Satan required
2O "but a demonstration of His being the Son of God." But some Protestant
theologians claimed that Satan knew Christ's identity all the time. The Puritan preacher Thomas Taylor stated firmly that "he knew well he was

21 the Son of God," while William Cowper saw Satan as trying to deceive

himself: "Sathan knew that lesus was the Sonne of God, and afterwards
hee confesseth it; yet such is the malice of his nature, that hee fighteth

See Pope, p.57-
^ The Wonderfull Combate, fol. 23r; cf. Thomas Taylor, Christs Combate
and Conquest; or, The Lyon of the Tribe of ludah ([Cambridge?], 1618), pp.79-80, Perkins, The Combat, p.381.

17 1R Dyke, "Michael and the Dragon," p.246. Pope, pp.31 ff.
19 Augustine, De Civ. Dei, IX.xxi (vol. Ill, p.233); see also Aquinas,
S.Th., 3a.41. art.1 (vol. LIII, -p»73)» Mirrour, p.94-

9O The Life of Christ, p.192.
?1 Christs Combate, p.76; cf. Giles Pletcher, Christs Yictorie. and Triumph in Heauen and~Earth, over, and after death (Cambridge, 1610), p.34.

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22 against his knowne light." Satan's motive in this case is the overthrow
23 of Christ's kingdom.
It was agreed by all commentators that Christ was perfectly without
sin; how then could he undergo temptation? Aquinas explained that "temptation which comes by way of an enemy can be without sin, because it >jt
comes about by mere outward suggestion," and it was emphasized that the devil's suggestions could have no power at all over Christ's mind and imagination. Cowper writes that he was "so full of the holy Ghost, that not so much as a contrarie motion of euill could enter into him, no 25

more then liquor can be conuaied into a vessel, which is full already," or as Dyke expresses it, "Chris ts heart to Satans tentations was as a
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stone or brasse-wall to an arrow, repulsing them backe present ly.'f Most writers, therefore, assumed that the temptations were entirely external: that Satan appeared to Christ in bodily form, carried him physically on to the mountain and the pinnacle of the temple, and showed him actual

27 sights. William Cowper writes that the temptations were "presented by
28 externall voices and obiects to his eare and eye." Aquinas, however,

records a tradition that "Christ was led to the Holy City, not really, but

29 in an imaginary vision." Daniel Dyke admits that "I hold it not

"The Combat of Christ with Sathan," p. 169.

23 Dyke, "Michael and the Dragon," p. 21 5- 14-

24 S.Th., 3a.41. art.1 (vol. LIII, p. 75).
* "The Combat of Christ with Sathan," pp. 126-27.
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"Michael and the Dragon," p. 21 9; cf. Thomas Taylor, Ghrists Gombate, p. 33-
7 See Pope, pp. 20- 21.
28 "The Combat of Christ with Sathan," p. 131 5 cf. Man ton, "The
Temptation of Christ," pp. 31-34? Perkins, The Combat, p. 388.
29 S.Th., 3a.41. art. 2 (vol. LIII, p. 77).

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impossible that Christ might be tempted by suggestion,"^ and the Puritan pamphleteer and Hebrew scholar John Udall states definitely that Satan "came vnto him not in bodely manner, but by offeryng vnto him such cogitations." E. M. Pope sees in the latter tradition an indication of the importance which commentators placed on the fact that Christ underwent temptation as man, and overcame Satan in our nature, 2 and in fact Udall goes on to explain that it was right that Christ should be tempted in
the same manner as we are. pope records that some Protestant commentators emphasized Christ's human nature to the extent of denying that he even knew why he was led to the wilderness.
Christ's being subjected to temptation was seen as a further degree
in his humiliation. Irenaeus points out that Christ's hunger after
fasting shows him to be a real man, with real infirmity, and St. Bernard uses it as an example of Christ's suffering. Amongst later writers, Dyke explains that Christ deliberately laid aside his divine power to draw Satan on, leaving himself "naked, and destitute of all helps";^ otherwise, perkins thought, "Satan durst not have meddled with him." There were various aspects to this humiliation: Andrewes speaks of the

*Q "great indignitie" of his being assailed by devils ; Perkins of the abasement of his dwelling amongst wild beasts; and Manton of the

"Michael and the Dragon," p.220.
Udall, The Combat betwixt Christ and the Deuill, sig.CSr; cf.
Jeremy Taylor, The Life of Christ, p.192.

32 Pope, p.21; pp.13 ff»» cf. Manton, "The Temptation of Christ,"
p.12; Perkins, The Combat, p.376.
The Combate betwixt Christ and the Deuill, sig. C8r. ^ Pope, p.20.
5 Against Heresies, Y.XXI.2 (LP 42, p.498).
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Deuout Meditations, pp.166-67. "Michael and the Dragon," p.207.

58 39 The Combat, p.375. The Vonderfull Combate, fol.3v.
40 The Combat, p.378.

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humiliation of his feeling hunger. Although to feel the infirmity of hunger was a source of humiliation to Christ, it was universally agreed
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that "Thys fast was miraculous". Therefore, as Dyke explained, the
fast could be seen "To shew; the glory of his Godhead in the humiliation
of his manhood." There was some disagreement as to whether Christ hungered during the forty days, or not until they were ended. The latter
is clearly the more Scriptural position (Matthew 4.2; Luke 4.2), and is followed by most writers. Aquinas writes, "after the fast, hunger followed," and Udall states firmly that "in all which tyme, hee was not hungry, neither had any desire of corporall nourishment." However, Philippe Bosquier, the Minorite Friar, whose interpretation was referred to by Donne,
claims that Christ hungered all the time, and that when Scripture says "esuriit", it means "non quod turn primum famen pati coeperit, sed quod
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pati se externo signo demonstrarit." ' If Christ had not hungered before, Bosquier thought that "IEIWIYM Christi non fuisse virtutis, quia non
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difficile." The Puritan Thomas Taylor is quite prepared to admit, however, that "it is no commendation to fast when one hath no stomacke* or is not

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hungrie, as Christ was not."

41 "The Temptation of Christ," p.2?.
42 Geneva Bible, marginal note on Luke 4»2j cf. Cowper, "The Combat
of Christ with Sathan," p.149; T. Taylor, Christs Combate, p.48; Udall, The Combate betwixt Christ and the Deuill, sig. C5r.
"Michael and the Dragon," p.229; cf. Manton, "The Temptation of
Christ," p.2?; Henry Hamraond, A Paraphrase, p.21.
S.Th., 3a. 41. art.3 (vol. LIII, p.79).
The Combate betwixt Christ and the Deuill, sig. C4v; cf. T. Taylor, Christs Combate, p.48.
46 8tt6*Vitro$, p. 129.
Philippe Bosquier, Monomachia lesu-Christi, & Luciferi, Incruenta,
in Opera Qnnia, 3 vols. (Cologne, 1620-28), vol. I, p.612. Christs Combate, p.48.

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From early times, Christ's forty-day fast in the wilderness had
also been seen by the Church as an example for our own mortification; thus St. Jerome urges, "let us fast for our sins as many days as the

49 Lord fasted for our evil deeds." Such a Lenten discipline was
5O traditionally seen as a preparation to share in the Passion of Christ.

49 Jerome, Homily 90 (PC 57, p.233).

50 Augustine, Sermon 20? (FC 38, p.90); cf. Thomas Ken, Prose Works,
ed. W. Benham, Ancient and Modern Library of Theological Literature (London, JJ889]), p.85.

II. Donne and Milton

Donne displays but scant interest in the temptations of Christ, rather
a surprising fact when we remember both the seventeenth-century enthusiasm for expounding this theme, and also Donne's own intense consciousness of human sinfulness, and the difficulty of resisting temptation. He has one early reference to the temptations in D/tvAvtfOS, where he attempts to refute the argument that the Devil 1 s urging Christ to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple is a proof that suicide is unlawful, by pointing out that Christ was at other times willing to expose himself to quite as much danger as the Devil tempted him to : "for though Christ would not satisfie the Devill, nor discover himselfe, yet he did as much when it conduced to his owne ends, as the Devill tempted him to in this place, or the other; both in changing the species and nature of water into Wine, and in exposing himself to certaine danger when he walked upon the waters," Thus Donne removes the argument against suicide, but he is also anxious to uphold Christ's power. Thus he repeats in a sermon, "Christ had been able to have done as the Devill would have had him doe,

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to have made bread of stones." It is emphasized that Christ resisted temptation by his own power, and that the angels did not come to him until Satan was vanquished. During the temptations, as at all times, Christ's actions and passions were entirely under his own control, to the extent that he did not display anger even to the Devil.

9 pp. 168-69. Sermons, IV. 7. 185.
Sermons, III.9.216. Seraons, IV.13-329.
Sermons, III. 15.324.

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There are also a few references to Christ's fast. This too is discussed
in x*WftJft where Donne asks whether this long fast could be taken as an approach to suicide. Qi the question of whether or not Christ was
hungry during the forty days, Donne diverges from the main tradition to agree with Bosquier that Christ had been hungry all the time, and that by the word esuriit we understand "That then he perceived his body to languish and suffer detriment by fasting." The conclusion is then that, seeing his body impaired, "Our Saviour Christ exceeded not 40- dayes in his fast,
Ne sui Homicida videretur. " Clearly, this argument provides little support for Donne's case in defence of suicide; it may be that Donne made this choice because he was more attracted by the idea of a body impaired, or corrupted, by going for forty days without food, than by the simple miracle of Christ being sustained without need of food. Also, the traditional opinion may have seemed to him to cast doubt on the full reality of Christ's

7 human nature, and his participation in the lot of man. In a sermon of

1626, Donne gives the same quotation from Bosquier, and remarks, "a
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fasting when a man is not hungry, is no fasting." Elsewhere, however, Donne comments that so long a fast in Christ is a miraculous work, and a
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proof of his divinity.
Most of the questions which so fascinated the commentators - why
Christ was tempted, what his victory over temptation achieved, how the temptations were carried out - are not dealt with at all by Donne. There is a brief hint of Satan's motive, to ascertain whether Christ was the Messiah, when we are told in QMVMtTOs that Christ would not "discover himself e", but that is all. Why was Donne so little interested in the temptations of Christ? It was certainly not that he was unaware of the

6 ^^*7"4'.f pp. 128-30; p. 129. 7 of. Sermons, 111,9.213-14.

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Sermons, VII. 3. 10?. Sermons, III. 14-295-
10 p. 168.

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difficulty of overcoming temptation, since his writings are full of references to the anguish of struggling against the temptations which continually beset even the regenerate man. Nor was it that these particular temptations, mistrust of God's providence, and the desire for worldly wealth and preferment, were unfamiliar to him. But he apparently finds no comfort in the reflection that Christ in the wilderness van-quished temptation. Perhaps he felt that Christ in the Gospel account , and in the exegetical tradition, overcame temptation so simply and easily that he was an unhelpful example. Being incapable of "any approaches
12 towards sinne," he was tempted only externally by the Devil, who could not move him. Thus the account of Christ's temptation may not have seemed to Donne to correspond to his own experience - "where we are, we tempt temptations, and wake the Devil" - and so he prefers to emphasize the power of Christ's blood in washing the sinner clean from his sin, than to follow an impossible example in mastering all temptation. Nor could it have been that Donne wished to avoid the idea that Christ was tempted, as a threat to the perfection of his nature; as we shall see later, Donne drew much comfort from meditating on Christ's agony in Gethsemane, his prayer that the cup might pass from his lips, and his apparent fear of death. Donne, in fact, wanted to believe that Christ had "some such degrees of humane infirmity," not of sin, but of weakness. He affirmed the divinity of the Christ who repulsed temptation automatically, but
it did not correspond to his own experience, and he could not identify

11 Sermons, 7.10.205; IX-15-339-40; "A Utanie, "1.1*5; Devotions,
pp.8-9.
12 Ser-.ons, III.17.354- Sermons, II.1.57.
14 See below, pp.333-55- 15 See below, pp.337-39.
Sermons, III.17-354.

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17 himself with it. He nowhere portrays Christ's victory over Satan as

the reversal of Adam's fall, but rather sees the Cross as the sole ground of our salvation, commenting "this fall of Adam cost the bloud of

18 Christ. 11 Even those who do not find the force of their temptations

weakened by Christ's victory; even those of bad lives and comfortless

19 deaths, who have not imitated Christ's repulse of Satan, may still hope

in the atoning power of Christ's death.
Milton's attitude toward temptation forms a complete contrast with
that of Donne; far from being tormented by the continual opposition of temptation to his attempts to follow Christ, he rather seems to welcome it as an opportunity of proving his virtue, arguing in Areopagitica that

20 "that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary, 11

and concluding in the De Doctrina that since God uses temptation in order to prove righteous men, "Good temptation, then, is rather to be

21 desired." This unconcern for his own temptations, he combines with a

major poem on the temptations of Christ.
patrides has described the temptations as "the one event in the life

22 of Jesus which appealed to him [Milton] ", but outside Paradise Regained,

Milton shows curiously little evidence of regarding this event as either interesting or significant. Twice Milton uses Christ's refusal of honour

23 and wealth as a reproach to the leaders of the Church of England, and

in Eikonoklastes, he demonstrates the foolishness of a comparison in

For Donne's desire to identify himself with Christ, see p.254
above and pp336-37 and 373-74 below.

1ft 19 Sermons, 7.10.201; cf. VI.1.47. Sermons, IV. 11.297.

Areopagitica, Yale II, p.515. cf. pp.527-28.

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DDC, I. VIII (Yale VI, p.339).
22 Milton and the Christian Tradition, p.145«
2^ Animadversions, sect.13 (Yale I, pp.718-19); An Apology
a pamphlet, Yale I, p.949-

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the Eikon Basilike of Charles I to Christ on the pinnacle of the temple. ^ In the discussion of temptation in the De Doctrina, no reference is made to Christ's temptation. Milton does not mention Satan in this section, other than to comment that God may allow a man to be tempted by him; ' Abraham and Job are cited as examples of good men proved by temptation,
25 but Christ is not. In the whole of the three chapters on Christ as
26 Mediator, the only reference which Milton makes to the temptations is

to include them in the list of humiliations to which Christ submitted during his life: "his temptation, Matt.iv; Heb.ii.18 and iv.15." 2 ^ It is interesting to notice that the reference here is to the account of Matthew, and not of Luke, the order of which Milton followed in Paradise Regained. Presumably he referred to the account traditionally thought to contain the historical order of the temptations before he had worked out his own interpretation of them in the poem. Although Milton also states that to conquer his enemies sin, death and Satan, is a part of Christ's

28 kingly function, he does not include any reference to the temptations,

as Christ's victory over Satan, among his proof-texts.
Why, then, did Milton choose to write a poem on the subject of Christ's temptations; and why, moreover, did he call it paradise Regained, when he had stated clearly in the De Doctrina that it was "AT THE PRICE OF HIS
29
OWN BLOOD" that Christ had redeemed all believers? It certainly seems that until Milton came to write Paradise Regained, he had given little thought to Christ's temptations. This fact suggests that there may be at least some truth in the story that Thomas Ellwood's famous question:

4 Eikonoklastes, 7 (Yale III, p.40^)»
2 ^ DDC, I.VIII (Yale VT, p.'338).
2 DDC, I.XIV-XVT (Yale VI, pp.415-452).
2? DDC » I.XVI (Yale VI, p.439). 28 DDC, I.XV (Yale VI, p.437).
9 DDC, I.XIV (Yale VI, p.415); see pp.316-18 below.

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"Thou hast said much here of paradise lost; but what hast thou to say of

3O paradise found?" prompted him to consider in what way the new Paradise,

foretold by Michael at the end of paradise Lost might be seen to have been realized. As we have seen, the Christian tradition saw Christ's conquest of temptation as a reversal of the fall of Adam, so that in a sense, Milton's choice of subject matter was an obvious one; but there
is also an ambivalence in the tradition, since the effects of original
sin were removed not by Christ's resistance to temptation, but by his atoning death on the Cross. Milton, as we shall see, seems deliberately to have avoided the image of the Crucifixion, and certainly could not
have chosen it for the subject of his second epic, but he knew that Christ's victory in the wilderness alone did not complete our regeneration, and so there is an internal contradiction in the poem as to what it actually achieved. In his statement of the theme of the poem, Milton suggests a
full restoration: :

I who erewhile the happy garden sung, By one man's disobedience lost, now sing Recovered paradise to all mankind,
By one man's firm obedience fully tried
Through all temptation ... (1.1-5)

a claim which is echoed by the song of the angels at the close of the action

now thou hast avenged
Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise,
And frustrated the conquest fraudulent. (lV.606-09)

But it is equally clear from the poem that Christ's work is not complete once he has overcome the temptations, and that since Satan is not finally vanquished,paradise is not finally regained. The Father explains
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Thomas Ellwood, The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood (London,
1714), p.234-
See below, pp.340 ff.

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that it is only after this trial in the wilderness that Christ will conquer Satan,

and drive him back to hell,
Winning by conquest what the first man lost By fallacy surprised. (1.153-55)

The wilderness is only the training-ground for "his great warfare" (I.158)» and the real battle with Sin and Death is still to come. Since the whole poem is based on discussion between Christ and Satan as to the means by which Christ's kingdom should be established, that kingdom will not have been established simply because their discussion comes to an end. Christ knows that the accomplishment of his mission is to be long and hard (ill.181 ff.), and that the conquest of temptation can be no more than
its beginning; only by his death can he finally redeem men from their sins:

my way must lie
Through many a hard assay even to the death,
Ere I the promised kingdom can attain. (1.263-65)

And while the angels claim that Christ has"regained lost Paradise" (IV. 608), they immediately urge him:

Queller of Satan, on thy glorious work
Now enter, and begin to save mankind. (lY.634-35)

It is clear that it is not Milton's intention to substitute the temptations for the death of Christ as the supreme act of redemption; to regain Paradise by overcoming temptation is something quite different from reconciling God and man in the Atonement. Milton obviously wished to renain faithful to the traditional interpretation of the Atonement, but at the
32
same time, he did not find it an attractive doctrine, while he was much
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attracted by the possibility of man's self-mastery, and thus the

See below, pp.315 ff« for a discussion of Milton's interpretation
of the Atonement.

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attainment of true freedom. Michael had instructed1 Adam in Paradise Lost;

yet know withal,
Since thy original lapse, true liberty
Is lost. (xil.82-84)

This liberty of self-mastery, which clearly meant more to Milton than salvation from sin and death, was first regained by Christ.
Thus all men might learn from Christ to regain the "paradise within", before such time as Christ's universal reign was wholly established. Qie of the traditional reasons for the temptations was that Christ might act as an example to us in overcoming them. E. M. Pope comments that "Milton does not emphasize the exemplary function of the temptation,'* but
while Milton does not explicitly urge imitation, he does emphasize the extent to which it is possible for us to equal Christ's resistance to Satan. Other men have been equally proof against temptation; God himself says as much, when he remembers how Satan

failed in Job,
Whose constant perseverance overcame
Whate'er his cruel malice could invent. (1.147-49)

This is one of Satan's chief difficulties, to devise a test which will successfully differentiate this "Son of God" from any other. He has found Christ

proof against all temptation as a rock
Of adamant, and as a centre, firm
To the utmost of mere man both wise and good, Not more; for honours, riches, kingdoois, glory Have been before contemned,and may again: Therefore to know what more thou art than man, Worth naming Son of God by voice from heaven, Another method I must now begin. (17.533-40)

Therefore, all men may imitate Christ by controlling their own passions

Pope, p.29.

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and resisting temptation; Milton believed that a man might emerge victorious from his struggles with temptation, and thus regain for him-self the self-mastery lost by Adam. As for the establishment of an external kingdom, Christ's rule on earth, it must have been clear to Milton after the Restoration that the saints had tried to bring it about

35 too soon, even as Christ knew that political action on behalf of Israel would fail, because the people were not ready for their freedom. paradise, therefore, could not be regained by the rule of the saints
in the forseeable future; the most which every son of God could do to hasten its advent was to prepare himself for it by self-mastery, and the control of passion by right reason. This is the "paradise within" promised by Michael to Adam, when he should submit himself in complete obedience to God again. As Christ explains to Satan:

Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king:
Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes,
Subject himself to anarchy within,
Or lawless passions in him which he serves, (ill.466-72)

So Christ demonstrates the self-mastery of the individual, the pre-requisite for his universal rule, throughout the poem. It is emphasized by the limitations of his knowledge. He does not know how he is to begin his
work of salvation, nor why he is led into the wilderness, but displays
a perfect trust in God, who reveals to him all that it is necessary for him to know:

And now by some strong motion I am led
Into this wilderness, to what intent

cf. DDC, I.VIII (Yale '/I, p.339).
^ See C. Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, pp.415-18.
36 PR, III.247 ff.

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I learn not yet, perhaps I need not know;
For what concerns ray knowledge God reveals. (1.290-93)

His response to each of the temptations emphasizes his readiness to wait

37 on God, trusting that in the fullness of time, his kingdom will be
established.

The temptations offered to Christ were wholly external; his inward control was already perfect. They are spoken by Satan in disguise; the banquet set before Christ is "no dream"; and Christ is carried bodily by
58 Satan on to the mountain, and on to the pinnacle of the temple. The
complete externality of the temptations emphasizes the internal calm and self-mastery of Christ; while the storm rages round him, the Son of God

39 stands unshaken. This externality is emphasized by the fact that Christ
hungered neither during the forty days, nor during the first temptation, although even when he is hungry, it seems a matter of indifference to him whether he eats or not.(II.321-22). Milton also makes it clear that the fast was a miracle performed not by Christ himself, but by his Father (ll.245~59)> who so sustained his body that it did not need food. This means that there was no merit in his fast, as Christ himself points

out:

that fast

TO virtue I impute not, or count part
Of what I suffer here; if nature need not,
Or God support nature without repast
Though needing, what praise is it to endure? (II.247-51)

PR, 1.347 ff-J Ill- 182 ff.; IV.146 ff. etc.
38 fR» I.3U; 11.298-300; 11.337; III.251-52; IV.541 ff.
17.420-21. The parallel between the temptations of Christ described
by Milton, including those invented by him, and the temptations of Adam, are fully discussed by Pope, pp/£>3 f f . , and Barabara K. Lewalski, yjlton's Brief Epic; The Genre, Meaning, and Art of "paradise Regained" (providence,
.222 ff.
40 PR, 1.308-09; 11.252.

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Christ's humiliation is not, in fact, an important theme in Paradise Regained; the poem invites us not to share after our capacity in Christ's suffering, but to participate fully in his triumph.
In addition to the unresolved contradiction about the extent of
Christ's saving work in the poem, there is also an ambiguity about the person of Christ himself: how far is his divine nature manifested in his speech and actions, and how far is it understood by Satan and by Christ himself? The source of this ambiguity may lie in the unreconciled contradiction concerning the means by which Paradise is regained: Milton is perhaps divided between the wish to portray Christ as the one able to make an all-sufficient sacrifice atoning for the sins of man, aord the wish to show him as an example of the "exalted man" able to win the inner freedom for himself. It was traditionally supposed that Christ had over-

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come temptation as a man, and it would not accord with Milton's usual interpretation of Christ's life to introduce a manifestation of divinity
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where one was not generally seen. As we have already noted, Christ did not need to use divine power to withstand temptation prior to the scene on the pinnacle of the temple (IV=535 ff-)» ^e resisted no temptation which other men had not already resisted. The critical discussion about whether Christ did use divine power to stand on the pinnacle of the temple or not, is itself an indication of the ambivalence of Milton's presentation. It also seems to be the case that in the course of the action, Christ receives supernatural insights , concerning both the nature of his tempter (1.355-56), and his own mission (1.460-64). Again, this need not suggest that Christ himself is divine, but only that he receives divine assistance: "For what concerns my knowledge God reveals" (1.293).

41 pope, pp.13 ff. 42 See pp. 226; 257 above; p.290 below.
e.g. pope, pp.94 ff.» Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic, pp.315-17.

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Even the Father emphasizes Christ's humanity (1.130 ff.).
Furthermore, Christ's words and actions in the course of the poem
do not, according to Satan, furnish him with the incontestable proof he requires of Christ's identity. Both E. M. Pope and Barbara Lewalski maintain that Satan is really in doubt as to the meaning of the term '•Son of God", a doubt which governs the action of the poera, while D. C. Alien is of the opinion that Satan's claim not to know who Christ is, is a deception. Satan is certainly aware that Christ is the promised Messiah. He knows as soon as he witnesses Christ's baptism that the time has come
when that fatal wound
Shall be inflicted by the seed of Eve Upon my head, (1.53-

and he alone in the poem recognizes that Christ was not baptized "thence to be more pure" (l.77)» having no sin. He admits to the council in Hell that the Father's tesimony was unambiguous: Christ was baptized

to receive

The testimony of heaven, that who he is Thenceforth the nations may not doubt, (1.77-79)
and understands that Christ's Father, in a special sense, is "He who obtains the monarchy of heaven " (1.87). While he taunts Christ with his doubts about the meaning of the term "Son of God" - "The Son of God I also am, or was" (IV- 518) - it is stated by the narrator that Satan's purpose in tempting Christ was

So to subvert whom he suspected raised
To end his reign on earth so long enjoyed. (1.124-25)

44 pope, pp.36 ff.
4 ^ Lewalski, ? fqlton's Brief gpic, pp. 134-35; p-162.
Don Carneron Alien, The Harmonious Vision; Studies in Milton's Poetry (Baltimore, 1954), pp.111 ff.

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Satan also admits that Christ is:

With more than human gifts from heaven adorned, Perfections absolute, graces divine. (II.137-38)

What Satan does not appear to recognize, however, is that this Messiah is that same Son who has already triumphed over him in heaven. The only direct reference which Satan makes to the pre-existent Son is when he

comments:

His first-begot we know, and sore have felt, When his fierce thunder drove us to the deep; Who this is, we must learn ... (1.89-91)

Whatever allowance is made for Satan's deception in speaking these lines, they cannot be taken to prove that Satan realizes the identity of Christ and the pre-existent Son; nor is it clear that he fully understands who Christ is, when at the end of the poem Satan falls in amazement from the pinnacle.
Similarly, Christ too is aware throughout the poem that he is the Messiah, though his understanding of his mission deepens as the action progresses; but there is no unambiguous recollection of his earlier existence. Immediately after his baptism Christ is wondering:

How best the mighty work he might begin
Of Saviour to mankind, (1.186-87)

and admits that even before that time, he had identified himself with the Messiah foretold by the prophets (1.260 ff.). But while he speaks of Satan cast out of heaven, he does not recollect his own part in the battle (1.406 ff.). Lewalski argues that at the moment S*tan falls from the pinnacle, Christ's nature is^ fully understood by both Satan and Christ, but this can only be supposition. Clearly Milton does not wish

Milton's Brief Epic, pp.317-19-

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to make the position as unambiguous as that. It is only the angels who explicitly state Christ's true identity when they praise his victory:

True image of the Father whether throned
In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
Conceiving, or remote from heaven, enshrined
In fleshly tabernacle, and human fonn.(17.596-99)

Perhaps Christ does not realize it until this moment; the identity is certainly not embodied in the poem itself.
It seems likely that this ambiguity stems from Milton's own difficulty
in imaginatively accepting the Incarnation, in reconciling the glory of
the pre-existent Son and the humiliation of the earthly Christ; his attitude toward the latter is consistently more guarded than his praise of the Son
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in paradise Lost. He never succeeds in achieving a balance between the divine and the human natures: either, as in the Nativity Ode, he fails to recognize Christ's humanity, stressing his power to the extent that he

49 makes the baby a monstrosity; or, as in his polemical writings, he denies

Christ any divine powers or glory at all. It is certainly the case that by traditional exegetical standards, the Christ portrayed in Paradise Regained does not display any characteristics which need make him other than man. We must remember Milton's insistence in the De Doctrina on the unity of Christ's two natures; whatever Christ says of himself must be understood as "a whole person speaking about a whole person". It may
be that given Christ's humanity in the Temptations, Milton cannot determine what would have been a decisive proof, in Christ's words or actions, of his pre-existence.
In fact the Christ portrayed by Milton in Paradise Regained is not
an attractive character, appearing for the most part as cold, proud and

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48 See pp.190-91 above. See pp.216-17 above.
50 See pp.226; 232 above. 51 DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, p.228).

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scornful. Many readers have remarked that they do not find him a sympathetic figure, and much more importantly, do not see in him a reflection of the Christ of the Gospels. Various reasons have been suggested for this: Pope claims that Christ »s apparently negative attitude is formed by the need

52 to conceal his identity from Satan; M. Y. Hughes claims that Christ is

based on Aristotle's "magnanimous man"; Don M. Wolfe sees a conflict
in the poem itself between Milton's different conceptions of the personality of Christ. But pope's conclusion that the nature of Christ's speeches
was "so little in harmony with Christ's character as a whole that a writer more overwhelmingly conscious of the personality of Jesus might well have avoided it at any cost" remains true. Milton's Jesus who calls the
people "a herd confused/ A miscellaneous rabble" (ill. 49- 50) a^d judges
them not worthy of freedom presents a sour contrast with the Christ of
the Gospels. Again, this may stem from Milton^ awkwardness in handling the Incarnation: his attempts to show Christ's perfect human - or divine - self-mastery only succeed in making him appear inhuman.

52 Pope, pp.38-40.

Merritt Y. Hughes, "The Christ of Paradise Regained and the Renaissance Heroic Tradition," SP, 35 (1938), 258 ff.
Don M. Wolfe, "The Role of Milton's Christ," Sewanee Review, 51 (1943), 467-75-

55 pope, p.40.

CHAPTER 8

THE TRANSFIGURATION

I. Introduction

The purpose of Christ's Transfiguration was traditionally seen as two-fold: it was a solemn confirmation of Christ's person and office, and an indication both of his glory in heaven, and the glory which the saints will share with him. Thus it fulfilled Christ's saying to the disciples six days previously that some of them would not taste death until they had seen the kingdom of God. Jerome says that "they saw him in the glory that would be his," and Chrysostom that "He chose by the known example [the sunj to set forth the future brightness of the

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saints." The splendour of Christ's body in the Transfiguration was not identical with his future glory, however, since there was no alter-ation in the substance of his body, but rather a temporary outflowing
of his divinity, which usually lay hidden. The seventeenth-century Presbyterian writer Thomas Manton explains it thus: Christ's Godhead
lay concealed, "as the Sun in a Rainy Cloudy day is not seen, but now
as it might discover his Divine Nature, it would break out in Vigor and Strength." It was therefore stressed how much greater would be the

1 Luke 9.2?; Matt.16.28; see Jerome, Homily 80 (FC 57t pp.160-61; p.l6l)

2
St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew, trans.
Rev. Sir George Prevost, rev. M. B. Riddle, NPNF 1st. series, vol.X
(New York, 1894) Homily LVT.7 (p.349); cf. Aquinas, S.Th., 3a. 45- art.
1 (vol. mi, p.151).
^ S.Th., 3a. 45« art.2 (vol. LIII, p.153).
Thomas Manton, "The Transfiguration of Christ," in Christ3 Tempt-
a,tion and Transfiguration, pp.48-49 (this second part of the work is separately paginated).

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true glory of Christ in heaven. William Cowper writes, "When he was transfigured, his face shined like the Sunne, but now the bri^rhtnes of his face far surmounts the glory of the sunne: among all the creatures none in beauty comparable to him." But although transfigured, Christ retained his features in a recognizable form. Thomas Aquinas, quoting Jerome, writes, "nemo putet Christum, per hoc quod transfiguratus dicitur, pristinara formam et faciem perdidisse, vel amisisse corporis veritatem." Again we find Thomas Manton in agreement: "otherwise how could it be
7 known to be Christ."
Christ's person and office were confirmed by this revelation of his glory, and also by the Father's voice which spoke at this "mystery of
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the second regeneration" as it had at Christ's Baptism. Here too the Trinity is manifested, "the Father in the voice, the Son in the man,
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the Holy Spirit in the bright cloud." The voice testifies to the Son-ship of Jesus, and also indicates that his testimony is to be preferred

9 above the Law and the Prophets, represented by Moses and Elijah. All

three, however, exist in harmony: one of Peter's mistakes in wanting to build three tabernacles was that "he wolde haue seuered hem thre that were alle one as in goostly felynge/ the lawe/ the prophetes/ and Jesu."

William Cowper, "Meditations for Instruction and Consolation, "in
Three Heauenly Treatises, p.313» of. Geneva Bible, marginal note on Mk.9-3 S.Th. , 3a. 45. art.1 (vol. LIII, p. 151); cf. Donne's quotation
from Jerome, Sermons, III.4«11 Q » an^L Jerome, Gomm. in Evangelium Matthaei, III, on ch.17.2 (P. Lat. 26. 121-22).
7 Manton, "The Transfiguration of Christ," p. 49.
8 S.Th., 3a.45. art. 4 (vol. LIII, p. 163); cf. Jerome, Homily 80
(PC 57,~p7T67).
e.gc Jerome, Homily 80 (F£ 57, po.167 -68); Hammond, A Paraphrase,
p. 93 (on Matt. 17.5).
10 Mi r roar, p. 150; cf. St. Ambrose, The Patriarchs (PC 65, p. 259); Manton, ""The Transfiguration of Christ," p.60.

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It was also appropriate that witnesses from both the past and the present should receive a foretaste of Christ's glory.

12 Some exegetes like Origen and Jerome favoured a spiritual, and

not a literal interpretation of this event, in which we are called apart by a spiritual ascent to witness Christ's glory.
The Feast of the Transfiguration on Auerust 6th. was not proclaimed
as a universal feast until 1457t although it had been observed locally much earlier than that. Even by the beginning of the sixteenth century it was not observed everywhere in Britain. It appears as a black-letter day in the Book of Common Prayer, without any appropriate readings.

Aquinas, S.Th., 3a.45« art.3 (vol. LIII, p.157).

12 Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, trans. J. Patrick,
ANCL, Additional Volume (Edinburgh, 1897) Bk. XII.36 (p.469); cf- Jerome, Homily 80 (FC 57, p.l6l).
See R. W. Pfaff, New Liturgical Feasts, p.13; pp.38-39.

II. Donne and Milton

Donne mentions the Transfiguration only in his sermons. He notes
the analogy between the Baptism and Transfiguration, when the Father's voice was heard to speak the same words; the two occasions are, however, fundamentally different: "It is twice testified by the Father; both in Christs act of humiliation, when he would be Baptized by John ... And

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he testifies it againe in his first act of priory, in his transfiguration. " It is curious that Donne here refers to the Transfiguration as Christ's "first" act of glory, when he has emphasized the close conjunction of glory and humiliation throughout his life, but he may be referring just
to the visible manifestation of splendour, as when he says that the Transfiguration was "the greatest degree of glorification which he ac-cepted upon earth." The Father's testimony was given to the disciples that they in turn might bear witness to Christ, "for that satisfied

4 three, and three such as were to carry it farre." Donne quotes the

reference to the Transfiguration in the Second Epistle of Peter in support of this. And just as the Father acknowledges his Son in both glory and humiliation, so are we to do: "Thy love is not required ... onely in
the Transfiguration of Christ, when Christ appeares to thee in some particular beames, and manifestation of his glory; but love him in his Grucifi^atur, then when it is a scornfull thing to love him."
But just as Donne drew our attention to manifestations of Christ's

See p. 257 above.
2 3
Sermons, V.6.140. Sermons, III.17.354-
* Sermons, 7.6.140. Sermons, III.14.304.

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glory in the midst of his humiliation, now when speaking of Christ's glory, he is at pains to remind us that we must not expect that we shall always see Christ like this. Surprisingly, he does not dwell on Christ's glory revealed at this time, but rather underlines its limita-tions. Most of his references to the Transfiguration are intended to make a point about something else - to illustrate the whiteness of snow,

7 or the weakness of the disciples. Cn two occasions, we find passages

emphasizing the incompleteness of Christ's glory in the Transfiguration, one describing how much more glorious Christ will be when he comes to Judgment: "Nor was the Transfiguration so eminent a manifestation of the glory of Christ, as this his comming in the ayre to Judgement shall
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be;" and the other pointing out,not even Christ in his Transfiguration
9 was "true light, all light," since he still shared in human nature.
Thus Donne affirms his vision of the inseparable conjunction of glory and humiliation in Christ's earthly life.
To the idea that the Transfiguration was "a representation of a glorified body in a glorified state," Donne devotes a long section of a sermon. His interest in the nature of the resurrection-body has-been discussed elsewhere, but here he sees other circumstances of our life in heaven denoted. We, as Christ here, shall have "the same

12 true, and reall body," so that it will still be recognizable: "nor
12 shall glorification so change us, as that we shall not be known."
12 We will share in Christ's own glory. The presence of the disciples
12 indicates company, so that we do not think "heaven is an Srmitage,"

and the conversation of Moses and Elijah shows that our constant theme

(\ 7
Sermons, V.15-314- . Sermons, VII.10.270.
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Sermons, 17.2.84. Sermons, III.1?.354.
10 Sermons, III.14.118 ff. See Pp.157-58 and p.361.
12 Sermons, III.14.118; 121.

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in heaven will be the sacrifice of the Lamb.
7arious other aspects of the tradition are reflected in what Donne says about the Transfiguration: it took place by Christ permitting the divine nature to shine through his flesh; the Father's voice saying "Hear him" showed that the Gospel was to be preferred above the Law and the Prophets. Surprisingly, however, he does not refer to the manifestation of the Trinity.
It can be seen that most of Donne's references to the Transfigu-ration, as also to the Baptism and the Temptations, are found in his earlier sermons; with one exception, the last dated reference to the

17 Transfiguration is Easter 1622. This may suggest a slight change of
emphasis in Donne's understanding of Christ's life; perhaps after his serious illness of 1623, his attention became increasingly focussed on the redeeming power of Christ's death, to the exclusion of other details As we shall see later, certain emphases in Donne's discussions of

18 Christ's death seem to have developed after this illness.
The Transfiguration made no impression whatsoever on the imagi-
nation of Milton* as far as I am able to determine, he does not mention it at all, either in his prose works or in his poetry. The nearest he comes to acknowledging that the event took place is to <juote twice
in the De Doctrina , II Peter 1.16-17s "with our own eyes we have seen

19 his majesty." He uses the verses on both occasions to support his
theory of the inferiority of the Son to the Father, and does not say

17 14

J Sermons, III.4.122. Sermons, III.17-354.
1 ^ Sermons, 71.6.148. Sermons, 711.10.270, 12th. Dec.1626.

17 Sermons, 17.2.84; two undated sermons, containing references
to the Transfiguration (7.15-314; 7.6.140), are thought by Evelyn Simpson to have been preached before the middle of 1623 (Ser-ons, 7, pp.3 ff.).
18 See below, pp.337-39.

19 DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, pp.273, 277).

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to what they refer. This omission may not be of any significance - the Transfiguration was not regarded even by Anglicans as a major feast, and it attracted very little exposition in comparison with, for example, the Temptations. Cn the other hand, it is surprising that Milton does not mention it even in his chapter in the De Doctrina on Christ's

20 humiliation and exaltation, and here one may wonder if the avoidance

of it is deliberate. Certainly it does not fit the scheme which Milton there outlines of humiliation before the Resurrection, exaltation afterwards; nor does it accord either with his portrayals of Christ as

21 the poor and humble servant, or as the Son of God able to control

passion and temptation by the exercise of reason. Christ's acceptance of glory before his death might be seen as a weapon in the hands of the wealthy and proud prelates, against whom Milton persistently urges

22 Christ's poverty; and furthermore there is implicit in contemporary

interpretations of the Transfiguration a belief in the underlying Godhead of Christ, always ready, just below the surface, to break out in a miraculous way, which Milton may have wished to deny. Milton

23 consistently avoids the miraculous elements of Christ's earthly life;

the exaltation which Christ finally achieves, says Milton, is the result

24 "PARTLY OF HIS-OWN MERIT AND PARTLY OP THE FATHER'S GIFT."
The other aspect of the Transfiguration, as a type of the glorified body in the Resurrection, held equally little interest for Milton. I have already discussed how little he has to say of both death and resurrection; * since he is not concerned to enquire what the glorified body will be like, he does not study the Transfiguration as a represen-tation of it.

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20 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, pp.438-52). See p. 226 above.
22 e.g., see pp.226, 272 above. * See p. 2?8 above, for example,
24 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, pp.440-41). 25 See pp. 1515 158-59 above.

CHAPTER 9

THE ATONEMENT AND THE CRUCIFIXION

I. Introduction

The belief that man is redeemed through the life and death of Christ
is central to Christian faith and experience, but the Church has never made an official formulation on the manner in which this redemption is achieved. The Church Fathers did not attempt any systematic explanation of the mystery, offering in its interpretation various ideas and images which were not seen as mutually exclusive. One of the earliest ideas about the savinp- work of Christ, found in the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists, was that he brought illumination, a revelation of the Father and his 2

laws, and thus opened to mankind the way to immortality, Irenaeus
taught that Christ "commenced afresh the long line of human beings", and thus, even as the first Adam involved all mankind, his descendants, in
the Fall through disobedience, so Christ, the second Adam, was able by
his obedience to restore them to immortality. Both of these ideas emphasize Christ's life and teaching, rather than his death. The thought that Christ

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Discussions of the development of the doctrine of the Atonement
may be found in H. Rashdall, The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology, Bampton Lectures, 1915 (London, 1919); J. N. D. Kelly, Sarly Christian
. Doctrines; R. 3. Pranks, The Work of Christ; A Historical Study of Christian Doctrine, 2nd. ed. (London, 19^2); Gustaf Aulen, Chris tus Victor; An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonenent, trans. A. G. Herbert (London, 1931)-
Kelly, Tarly Christian Dcrctrines, pp. 1^3-^6: Franks, The Work of
" ^r-iqf v-ij.-o'j, 7-) c: r, in u . j j y I \J *
Irenaeus, Against Heresies, trans. A. Robprts ani 'ff.'d. Rambaut,
A.VCL vol. -f (sdinbureh, rs^d) , Tfl. XVIII. 1 (D.338); Rarh^al!, Th^ Id^a of Atcr.-^.-rit, :?. 2^1 :'f.

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was man's representative is typical of Patristic teaching. In many writers, there is a two-fold understanding of the means of salvation. On the one hand, it is a direct result of the Incarnation, represented by Athanasius 1 saying, "For He was made man that we might be made God";-' there was also
a belief that an obstacle to the reconciliation of God and man was removed by Christ's death. One way of explaining this was to use the Scriptural image of the life of Christ as a ransom for many (Matthew 20.28); it is found in Irenaeus, and also in Origen who thought that Christ's death was a ransom paid to Satan for man, whom he had acquired through the Fall-the devil, however, could not hold Christ, who proved stronger than

7 death. Some form of this theory predominated for nearly a thousand years, although some writers, like Augustine, who claimed that the devil had no absolute rights over man, but that man had inevitably fallen into his power through sin, explained that Satan was made to give up mankind as a
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penalty, when he exceeded his powers by seizing Christ. A strong sense of the defeat of the devil and the powers of evil through Christ's death is seen by Aulen as the main emphasis of the early writers. Augustine also introduces the two ideas that Christ would never have come had there been no Fall, and that there was no absolute necessity for Christ's death as a means of Redemption.

4 Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, pp. 376-77.
St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation of the Word, in Select Works and Letters, ed. A. Robertson, NPNF vol. 17 (Oxford, 1891), sect. 54 (p. 65). See Rashdall, pp. 241-42.
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gent, in Matthaeum, Tomus XVI. 8 (P.G. 13.1398-99).
8 The Trinity, XIII. 12-15 (FC 45, pp. 391-98).
Aulen, Christ us Victor, pp.52 ff.
St. Au/r is t i n e , Semens on Selected [^"cn^ of the I^w T°star"^ (vol.2), LF 20 (Oxford, 1854), 3e— "n~CLXXI7. 1 1 (p^ 31); The Trinity, XIII. 10 (FC 45, p. 588).

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Anselm., in his Cur Dens Homo,, the first systematic treatment of the question, written at the end of the eleventh century, begins by rejecting as unsatisfactory the main ideas about Christ's saving work: the theory of recapitulation has no basis in reason; and the theory of redemption from the devil is irreverent, since the devil can acquire no rights against

11 God. Anselm begins the account of his own theory, by endeavouring to

prove an absolute necessity in Christ's Incarnation and death, and that man's sins could not be justly forgiven in any other way than by the voluntary sacrifice of one who was both God and man. Sin he regards as
the failure to give God the honour (honor) due to him by obeying his commands. Anyone who sins must make satisfaction to God, by returning not only something of equivalent value, but something additional as reparation

12 for the injury to God's honour. The divine justice will not permit the
12 forgiveness of sins without reparation being: made. Any sin against

God's honour, however, is an infinite injury, and man, because of his sin,

12 cannot make infinite satisfaction to God. Oily God himself could make
an offering of infinite worth; and yet, the debt must be paid by man, because man had incurred it. The satisfaction, therefore, could only be made by one who was both God and man.
Christ's life, because of the infinite value of his person, was able
to make satisfaction for our infinite sins; his death, interpreted by Anselm as the gift of his life, was more than he owed, and entirely voluntary, so that by it he gained an infinite merit, which must in justice be rewarded. So great was the offering which he had made, that its merit would extend to men of all ages, if they appropriated it to

St. Anselm, Cur Deus Homo, 3ifl-lish translation (Edinburgh,1909)» I.I7..(pp.~-7); 1.711 (pp.3-12); see Franks, The ,y~rk of Christ, pp.12- ff. for an account: of Anselm's theory.
12 Cur peus Homo, I.XI (pp.23-M): I.XII (pp.?=?-?); I.XX (pp.-17-.n).
^ :ur Deus HOP-.O, II.VT-7II (DP. — -^); II. XI (DD.77-80); II.XIX (pp.

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themselves.

Anselm's theory had a far-reaching- influence in the Middle Ages, although few writers accepted it without modifying the idea of an absolute necessity in Christ's death; and in some, we find completely opposing ideas. Peter Abelard (d.1142) denied both the ransom theory, and any expiatory theory which seemed to surest that God took delight in the death of his innocent Son, as unethical. God could have forgiven man's sin without the death of Christ if he had wished to do so; but he chose to show his love for us on the Cross, that he might kindle our love toward him. This subjective interpretation of the Atonement was condemned by the Council of Sens in 1141» Thomas Aquinas, though he accepts Anselm's definition of satisfaction, denies that the death of Christ was absolutely necessary; God's justice did not require it, and he could have forgiven freely had he so wished. Since God chose this way of salvation, how-

17 ever, we must believe that it is the most fitting way. Aquinas' explana-
tion of the efficacy of Christ's death includes the ideas of both ransom,
18 and satisfaction. Like Anselm, he teaches that Christ's satisfaction
18 was given infinite merit by the infinite value of his Godhead. Because
of the value of his person, Christ merited an eternal salvation for us "From the moment of his conception", but for a number of reasons, it was

19 still fitting that he should die. Aquinas thought it preferable to
20 hold that without the Fall, there would have been no Incarnation.

14 Cur Deus Homo, II. XVI (pp. 88-89).

1 ^ Franks, The ffork of Christ, pp. 142-49; Rashdall, TDD. 357 ff
16 S.Th. , 3a.4o. art.1 (vol. LIV, p. 5); art. 2 (p. 11).
17 S.Th. ,3a. 46. art. 3 (vol. LIV, p.^

18 S.Th., 3a. 48. .".rt.4 (vol. LIT, :>.85); art. 2 (p. ^9).

19 S.Th., 3a. 18. art.1 (vol. LI7, p. 77).
20 3.Th. f 3a. 1. ar^.3 (vol. XL/HI, D.'9).

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The teaching of Anselm that there was an absolute and rational
necessity for Christ's death was finally undermined by Duns Scotus and the Oxford Franciscans. Emphasizing the supremacy of God's will, they taught that the Incarnation would have occurred even apart from the Fall; but as a means of salvation, it was purely arbitrary. God could have forgiven sin without satisfaction, or allowed man to satisfy by contrition, but he chose not to. Nor does Christ's work have any necessary value:
it is accepted as of infinite worth, not because of the worth of Christ's person, but because God, moved by love, willed so to accept it. 21
This insistence on the arbitrary will of the Father is also found
in both Luther and Calvin. The interpretation of Luther's teaching on
22 the Atonement is disputed, although a belief that Christ's work is the sole ground of salvation is clearly essential to the doctrine of justi-fication by faith. Luther seems to have considered that Christ's satisfaction was required not by God's injured honour, as of a private man, but by his violated decree, as by public law. This was to lead to the typical Protestant thought that what Christ suffered was actually the punishment due to our sins, and required by that law. Thus he was judged as our substitute, not our representative, and his merit consisted in
2^ his willing endurance. Calvin carried still further the idea of sub-stitution: Christ was treated by the Father as though he were guilty man-kind. He did not only suffer death, but bore all our sins, and suffered torment in his soul: otherwise, he would have redeemed only the body, and P j
not the soul. As a result of this change in legal analogy, a dispute arose as to whether Christ redeemed by his active obedience in fulfilling the law, or his passive, in enduring suffering and death. The Lutherans

21 Rashdall, pp.384-85; Frank.-, The Work of Christ,
en, Chris tus Victor, pp.117 ff. 22
23 24
Pranks, rh^ 'tfo-^k of Christ, p. 297. ibid., p.

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held that Christ's fulfilment of the Law was voluntary, and therefore meritorious, while the Reformed (the Calvinists) regarded him, in respect of his humanity, as being under the Law like all other men, and therefore bound to keep it. The Lutherans also held that Christ's satisfaction was sufficient and efficacious for all men, while the Calvinists restricted its efficacy to the elect. -*
The Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 base their brief statement on the Atonement on the Lutheran Confession of Augsburg: Christ died "to reconcile his father to vs, and to be a sacrifice, not only for originall gylt, but
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also for all actuall sinnes of men." Clearly, this is not very specific, and we find a variety of references to sacrifice, satisfaction, and substitution in Anglican and other English Protestant writers, frequently combined with other sets of imagery derived from Biblical or Patristic
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sources. A challenge to the Protestant form of the theory of satis-faction was offered by the Socinians, who claimed that Christ is our Saviour not because he obtains our salvation, but because he makes it known. The idea of one man satisfying for another is seen as irrational and immoral; it displays neither God's justice,nor his mercy. ¥e obtain
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salvation by imitating Christ, our example.
Christ died on the Cross to redeem mankind, but without the Resurrec-tion the benefits of that redemption could not have been applied; the early Christians, intensely conscious of this truth, were therefore reluctant to dwell on Christ's death. This attitude is reflected both in

25' Franks, The Work of Christ, pp.353-59.
26 Art. II: Hardwick, A History of the Articles of Religion, pp. 291 -3.
27 See pat rides, Milton and* the Christian Tradition, pp. 137-39, for numerous references to seventeenth- century writers on trie Atonement.
28 Franks, pp.365 ff . » McLa^hlan, So^inianism in Seventeenth-Century
5m? I and, pp. 14-15.

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the nature of the Church's earliest liturgical feast, the Pascha, a unitive festival celebrating a redemption "effected by the passion and Resurrection

29 of Christ in combination", and in a reluctance to depict the Crucifixion
in art. The use of the sign of the Cross in baptism and in private devotion was early recognized: Hippolytus urges, in times of temptation, "always reverently seal thy forehead <with the sign of the Cross^. For
this sign of the passion is displayed and made manifest against the devil," and the sign of the Cross is also found in the catacombs. But the earliest

52 known depictions of the Crucifixion are not found until 400 and 430 A.D.;

and the desire to depict it was still very much an exception. Even when portrayals of the Crucifixion became more common, they invariably represented Christ as ruling victorious from the Cross, wearing not a crown of thorns but a diadem, with his head erect, and his eyes wide open. Not until the tenth century do we find a depiction of Christ on the Cross with his eyes
32 closed in death.
So it is not surprising that we do not find in the Church Fathers -
any verbal description of Christ's suffering on the Cross, or any specialized devotion to that aspect of his earthly life. Their devotional and theological emphasis is on Christ as triumphant. Their references to the Cross are more designed to argue its fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, or the historical reality of Christ's death, than to kindle
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devotion. G. L. Prestige takes Ignatius of Antioch as an example of an

29 See Gregory Dix, The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, rev. H. Chadwick (London, 1968), p.74- The first historical celebration of the Crucifixion and Resurrection on different days is found in Jerusalem in the 4th. century; see McArthur, The Evolution of the Christian Year, p.112. C. E. Pocknee, Gross and Crucifix in Christian Worship and
Devotion (London, 1962), pp.33-34? P«38.
The Apostolic Tradition, ed. Dix, p.68.

52 Pocknee, Gross and Crucifix, pp.38-39; p.-2.
^ e.g. Jus tin Martyr, Pi a I OP- i* with Tr.rpho, chs. XCVTI-XCIX (ANCL
vol.II, pp.221-4); Tertullian, De 'Jam* JuristL, 7 (ANC^ vol. XV, op. 172-4).

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early writer who displayed a particular devotion to Christ's passion,
and emphasizes the distinction between his and the medieval attitude: like the rest of the early Fathers, "Ignatius does not forget that the scars
of the passion, though ever glorious, are healed; that Christ's time of suffering lies behind in the past, and that what is present is His eternity of triumph;" he does not want "to return to Golgotha and watch the sacred blood drip to the ground."^ So too we find little description
of the passion in St. Augustine. He urges conformity with Christ:"Let us imitate His cross, fastening to it our passions subdued by the nails of abstinence," but does not forget that our example is also risen. St. John Chrysostom portrays Christ as the triumphant hero, "For He went forth bearing His cross as a trophy in opposition to the tyranny of death"; this theme of triumph is well represented by Venantius Fortunatus' famous hymn, Yexilla Regis, written in 569 on the arrival of a fragment of the 37 True Cross at the monastery of Poitiers.
Similarly, the blood which Christ shed on the Cross is seen as that
blood which we now receive through the Sacraments. Clement of Alexandria explains that Christ's blood is understood in a two-fold sense: "one is corporeal, redeeming us from corruption; the other is spiritual, and it
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is with that we are anointed." Augustine says that the blood and water which poured forth from Christ's side (John 19«34) represent the
39 Eucharist, and he also closely identifies Christ's blood with the water

G. L. Prestige, Fathers and Heretics, pp. 375-77; p. 376; p.377-
St. Aup-ustine, Sermon 207 (PC 38, p. 90).
St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John (vol. 2),
trans. Sr. Thomas Aquinas Gog,~in, FC 41 (New York, 1960), Homily 85 (p. 4 28).

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37' Pocknee, Cross and Crucifix, p.35«
^8 Clement of Alexandria, Chr\st the _ friucator, 1 1. 2 (FC 23, p.
59 Aupnistine, Sermon 218 (FC 39, p. 1^9).

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of baptism: "Your sins will be like the Egyptians, following the Israelites, pursuing only up to the Red Sea. What does 'up to the Red Sea 1 mean? Up
to the font consecrated by the cross and blood of Christ."
As we have already seen, the Middle Ages brought a great change
in the temper of devotion and personal piety, a new adoration of Christ's humanity. And the contemplation of the Cross, as the centre of Christ's suffering and love for mankind, became also the centre of this new devotion, represented and directed by St. Bernard and St. Francis. Impetus was
given to the vivid description of Christ's suffering by St. Francis'
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reception in September 1224 of the stigmata of Christ's five wounds,
an incident which also epitomizes the realism of mediaeval devotion to the Cross. St. Bernard's passionate tenderness towards the crucified Christ, though he intended it to be but a stepping-stone to a higher mystical experience, formed popular devotion for several hundred years to come:
"let the meditation of thy bitter passion be as a glasse alwaies set before mine eyes, that taking a daily view of the miserie which thou didst suffer in thy humanitie, for the transgressions of mine iniquitie, I may truely sorrow for my sinnes." The purpose of the meditation is at once to inspire love for Christ, and repentance in the sinner, through compassion for his Saviour's sufferings. We are to grieve the more in that the suffering which we contemplate has been caused not just by the "cruell lewes", but, in a thought to be echoed by many later writers, by our own sins: "yea, I daily crucifie thee by my sinnes, and pierce thy blessed side, with mine iniquity." Remembering this, we are urged to picture his physical torment in the most meticulous detail: "his cheekes bedewed

40 Sermon 213 (FC 38, p. 128.). 41 See pp. 200 ff. above.

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pocknee, Cross and Crucifix, p.d8.
St. Bernard, His Meditation?; or 3_iL^r\e_s_,_ _3o_n_r^j_,_ jtnd_ Tejiros, vpon
pur Sau.iours Fusion {'Lon.i-n, 1^.M)i pp.75-74; 3.12'T; p.'^-}.

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with bloud, running out of the veines of his head, wounded with a Crowne of sharpe thornes."44 And Bernard also gives a new immediacy to the desire to be conformed to Christ, as represented by St. Francis' stigmata: "I desire to be crucified with thee, (oh my most sweet lesu) I long to suffer on the crosse with thee."44 He continually remembers that Christ was sacrificed upon "this woodden Altar" for the remission of sins, 45 and seeing his blood as a "precious Balme" to the sinners wounds, 45 he prays "infuse and dip my heart in thy bloud."45 Another popular devotional idea, explained by 2t. Thomas Aquinas, is that Christ endured all types of human suffering.4 The excess to which this "affective" piety could some-times lead can be seen in the paintings of Matthias G-runewald (d.1528), which portray Christ on the Cross as horribly tortured and contorted; the triumph of the Cross was then completely forgotten.
The extent to which the influence of such devotion persisted after
the Reformation amongst Protestant writers has been a matter of some dispute. It is true that neither Luther nor Calvin display any fervency towards the sacred humanity of Christ, but it seems that the fervour displayed by their followers has sometimes been underrated. 48 We have already noticed the popularity of translations of St. Bernard in the
49 seventeenth century, and perhaps the most striking fact to emerge from a reading of Reformation writers on the Crucifixion is the extent to which Catholic, Anglican, and Puritan alike, they are influenced by

44 Bernard, Sighes, Sobbes, and Teares, p. 242; p. 300.
45 Sighes, Sobbes, and Teares, p. 305; p. 190; p. 79. See also the description of the Crucifixion in Pseudo-Bonaventure, yL i_rrour, pp.237 ff. S.Th., 3a. 46. art. 5 (vol. LIV, pp. 21-23).
47 pr°sti?:e, Fathers and H^r^tics, pp.J.Oj-05.

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43 tfakefieli, puritan Devotion, p. Q 5- "lainvaiis t^is against

' See D. 203 above.

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Bernard's ideas and expressions. A greater restraint may be observed in the Protestant than in the mediaeval writers, and it is necessary to search quite hard amongst non-conformist writers to find the Passion treated at any length; but as Gordon '.yakefield has demonstrated, there are examples amongst Puritan writers of as ardent a devotion to the Cross as could be desired, writers such as John Preston, Francis Rous, and

50 Isaac Ambrose. He suggests that what distinguishes their spirituality

from the Anglican is not, as Martz and Helen White suggest, that they pay more attention to Christ's official role than to his personality, but that, more in the manner of the early Church, they refuse to "separate

52 Christ Crucified from Christ Triumphant." Oi the other hand, of course,

the Puritans repudiated all visible representations of the Cross, not only the Crucifix but even the sign of the Cross in Baptism, as remnants of popery. Even in Anglican churches at this time, however, a cross on the altar would be very rare. The Puritans also rejected the liturgical calendar, which fostered this kind of historical devotion.
The exhortation to keep the passion always before the mind's eye is repeated by many writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the Puritan John Preston, who succeeded Donne as preacher at Lincoln's Inn, exclaims, "If I looke to Golgotha, I see thee nayled to the Crosse, and thy heart broached, that I may drink thy blood and live, and I cannot but love thee for that," and the Lutheran Gerhard exhorts us, "Beloved, let

Wakefield, puritan Devotion, pp.85 ff.
^ 1 Martz, The poetry of Meditation, p.163; H. C. White,
Devotional Literature, p.195*
C T

puritan Devotion, p. 96.
^ Hooker, Of the Laws of Scclesiast Leal Polity, Book V, Ixv (vol.11, PP.; 17-37).
pocknee, Cross and Crucifix, p. 76.
John Preston, A He3.y_^n_ly_?_r^aj:j.sp of "he Divine Love of Christ (London, 1^40), p. 91-

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us heare his cries, let us behold his teares: he cries from the crosse," with a marginal reference to Bernard. Joseph Hall, in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross in 1609, reminds us, "Euery day therefore must be the

57 Good-friday of a Christian." >l Detailed descriptions of Christ's suffering,

devotion towards his wounds, and repentance of the sin which has caused them, are also to be found in many writers, Catholic and Puritan alike. Isaac Ambrose, a Presbyterian minister, writes: "Oi what a sight was here! his head and members are all on a bloody sweat; this sweat trickles down, and bedecks his garments, which stood like a new firmament studded with
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stars," while the Jesuit, Henry More, sees the legend of our sin carved

59 in Christ's wounds. There is a widespread consciousness that our sins

caused Christ's death, and that "we are not to thinke more hardly of the lewes for crucifying him then of our selves." As Ambrose dramatically expresses it: "Oht what is that cross on the back of Christ? My sins; ohl what is that crown on the head of Christ? my sins." Thomas Adams, who from 1618-23 held the preachership of St. Gregory's under St. Paul's Cathedral, points out that our sins still have this effect: "Yea, they are not few, that with their blasphemies and oppressions still crucifie,

6? and that the glorified body of Christ." The desire to be crucified with

Christ seems less in evidence; we are to crucify our desires spiritually: "But nayle thyself, by dayly and hourely purposes, never to part from

Gerhard, Meditations, p.11.

57 Joseph Hall, The Passion Sermon, Preached at Paules Grosse on
Good-Friday. Apr. 14• 1609 (London, 1609), p.2; cf. Sparke, Bucr^o-rnpTo p.217» who elves a reference to Bernard.

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Ambrose, Looking, p.269.

59 Henry More, The Life and Doctrine of our San lour lesus Christ (Ghent, 1656), p.68.
Perkins, An ^reposition of the 3yrcbole, p. 194.
Ambrose, Looking, D.298. Adams, Workes, P.1187.

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the will, and appointment and commandment of God." The Book of Homilies refers to "the Altar of the Cross" 4; Perkins, however, claims that "The altar was not the crosse, but rather the godhead of Christ."
A devotion towards the saving power of Christ's blood is also apparent: Richard Baxter asks, "of all the flowers that grow in the Garden of Love, can there be brought one more sweet and beautiful to the Garland, then
this Bloud?" and Gerhard, who declares his intention to hide in Christ's wounds, prays, "Let thy sacred and holy bloud, 0 Jesus, Let that bloud succour me, which ranne out of thy side at thy death and passion." ^
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Ambrose declares,"There is in Christ's blood an infinite treasure."
Gordon Wakefield even produces examples of a Puritan devotion toward the Sacred Heart. Another motif is the idea that Christ shed his blood six
(or seven) times: "five times in his "Life, and once here after his Deathl"-
at his Circumcision, his Agony in the Garden, his scourging, the crowning with thorns, the Crucifixion, and the piercing of his side by the spear

70 after his death. These six bleedings, by the inclusion of the Circumcision,
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span the whole of Christ's life: "All his life was but a perpetuall Passion."

More, Life and Doctrine, p. 74? cf. Perkins, An Sxposition of the
Symbole, p. 150.
Gertaine Sermons or Homilies, appointed to be read in Churches ...
And now thought fit to be reprinted by authority from the Kings most Excellent Majesty, 2 Parts (London, 1640), part II, p. 177; cf. Maxey, Gertaine Sermons, p. 21 6.
65 "
An Exposition of the Symbole , p. 219.

66 The Saints Everlasting Rest, part I, p. 84.
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Meditations, p. 31; p. 57. Looking, p. 307.
Puritan Devotion, pp. 99-101.

70'
Sparke, Quewrripcov , pp. 231-32; cf. Adans, Wo-kes, p. 827; Henry
King, A Sf?r~on of Deliverance, Prpached at the Spittle on Sister Monday, ~~~ ~ 1626 (London, 1626). pp ~.~2(^2~2^y , Certain 3ernp.2l9.

71' Hall, Thp Passion Sermon, p. 26; cf. Adams, .Vork^s, p. 826;
Certaine Ser^.cns, p.177.

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Christ's glory, however, is not entirely forgotten. Gerhard, with a marginal reference to St. Bernard, contrasts Christ's suffering on the Cross with his eternal glory: "That head, at which the angels tremble, is crowned with thorns. That face which was most beautifull above the sonnes

72 of men, is defiled by the spittings of the ungodly." The transformation
73 of the crown of thorns into a crown of glory is noted by several writers.

An emphasis found in Reformation writers which is not derived from
St. Bernard, is upon Christ's mental and spiritual suffering, probably
as a result of Calvin's extreme teaching on substitution. Thomas Adams states that "His Soule was in our soules stead: what they would haue felt,

7/f if they had been in the stead of his," and he and other writers explain

that Christ, unlike thoughtless men, fully understood how great the torments of hell would be: "Neuer man was so afraide of the torments of

75 hell, as Christ (standing in our roome) of his fathers wrath." Not only

did Christ suffer this vicarious fear of his Father's wrath, but like all other men, he was afraid of death: "0 death how bitter art thou to him, whose bloud runnes fresh in his veines ... and the sweeter the coniunction

76 is between body and soule, the more grieuous is the separation." And
77 by his agony, Christ has sanctified death for us.
TO turn to the more technical question of what actually happened to Christ at the moment of death, it was traditionally believed that Christ chose the moment of his own death, and therefore died before nature

72 Gerhard, Meditations, p. 7; of. Hall, The Passion Sermon, p. 34;
Isaac Ambrose, Looking, p. 289-
, Meditations, p. 38; Perkins, An Exposition of the 3ymbole,p. 145. 74 yorkes, p. 827-
^ Hall, The passion. S^rron, p. 38; Max-?y, Certaine Sermons, p. 184; oparke, ffuetxcrr//^* , p.23l»
^ Maxey, :>rtaine Sermons, p. 186; cf. A^a.-s, tfnrkes, p. 820.
' Max?y, Certaine Sermons, D.22%

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demanded it. St. Augustine explains that he died "because He willed, when

78 He willed, and how He willed," and goes on to point out that the Gospel
78 records that Pilate marvelled because Christ was so soon dead. Aquinas
79 confirms this point, which is repeated by various later writers: "In
spight of all the world he might haue kept his soule within his body; hee would not. The world should haue been burnt to cinders, and all creatures on earth resolued to their originall dust; before he could haue beene

8O enforced. Man could not take away his Spirit, therefore he gaue it."
Christ's body and soul were, of course, separated in death, since
this was how death was traditionally defined. But it was believed that even in this separation, the hypostatic union could not be dissolved, St. John of Damascus writes, "And so, even though as man He did die and His sacred soul was separated from His immaculate body, the divinity remained
81 unseparated from both - the soul, I mean, and the body." This belief
Op is restated by Aquinas, who quotes Damascene, and is repeated by various
Reformation writers. Adam Hyll writes, "he was wholy in the graue with
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his flesh, wholy in hell with his soule." This belief safeguarded the reality of the hypostatic union, and also supported the belief that Christ's body did not corrupt; Aquinas says, "To show his divine power, he wanted
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his body to remain incorrupt." A question which interested the School-men

78 The Trinity, IV.13 (FC 45, p.150); of. Sermon 232 (PC 38, p.213).
79 S.Th., 3a.47- art.1 (vol. LIV, pp.55-57).

80 Adams, Workes, p.820; cf. Isaac Ambrose, Looking, p.328; Hall, The passion Sermon, p.75; perkins, An Exposition of the Symbole, p.205.
8l The Orthodox Faith, III.27 (PC 37, p.332).
82 S.Th., 3a. 50. arts.2 & 3 (vol. LIV, pp.119-27).
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Adam Hyll, The Defence of the Articlp; Christ descended into Hell.
With Arguments obl^'cTed against the truth of the same doctrine: of one Alexander Humes (London, 1592), fol.9v; cf. perkins, An Sxposition of the Symbole, p.242.
84 S.Th., 5a.5l. art.3 (vol. LIV, p.U7); cf. Perkins, An Sxpoaition
of the Symbole, p.209.

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was whether Christ remained a man during the time of his death; Aquinas argues that he did not, since the union that makes the man was dissolved: "What one can say, however, is that during those three days Christ was
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a dead man." He condemns Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard for
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maintaining the contrary opinion.
We have finally to consider the descent of Christ into hell. Although this belief did not make its first credal appearance until 359 (the Fourth Formula of Sirmium), the idea that Christ spent the three days between his death on the Cross and his Resurrection in the underworld, was a

86 commonplace of Christian teaching from the first. One interpretation

suggested that Christ preached salvation to those in the underworld, and baptized them; the second that he triumphed over Satan, and liberated the

RT righteous in the Harrowing of Hell. ' The latter was the teaching of St.

Augustine, who asked in a question frequently quoted by later defenders of orthodoxy, "Who, then, but an unbeliever will deny that Christ was in

8ft hell?" It became the established belief in the West, expounded at Length
89 by Aquinas, that Christ descended to hell to confound the damned, to

bring hope to those in Purgatory, and liberate the righteous patriarchs. This interpretation is repeated by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catholic writers, such as Henricus Vicus, whose book De Descensu lesu

90 Christi ad Inferos was owned and annotated by Donne.

There was also, however, in the Middle Ages, a mystical tradition

QC> S.Th., 3a.50. art. 4 (vol. LTV. p. 129).

86 J.N.D. Kelly, garly Christian Creeds, 3rd. ed. (London, 1972),
pp. 378-83.

8 7
Acts of Pilate, part II, in The Apocryphal New Testament, pp.117 ff.
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St. Augustine, Letter 164, To Bvodius, trans. Sr. Wilfrid Parsons,
in FC 20 "(New York, 1953), p. 383*.
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' S.Th., 3a. 52. art. 2 (vol. LI7, p. 159).
90 Hen ri cus 7i -:us , De DPSCPHSU lesu Christ! ad Infpros, ex Svmbolo ADOstolorum *t Ja^rls Scripturis Liber (Antw°rp, 1700): SPQ c..M7 'lel-Vw.

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which regarded heaven and hell as spatial metaphors, and interpreted this article as referring to the intense spiritual anguish suffered by

91 Christ on the Gross; and it was this tradition which was followed by

Luther and Calvin. Calvin, for example, says, "No wonder, then, if he is said to have descended into hell, for he suffered the death that God in

92 his wrath had inflicted upon the wickedl" This interpretation, however,
did not find favour with the Church of England, and it is clear that the matter was much disputed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Adam Hyll, writing to Archbishop whitgift, says that if the controversy is
not soon settled, "there will grow up among vs enuy, strife, sedition,

95 and al manner of euill workes." The official Anglican position inter-
preted the article literally, as stated in the Thirty-Nine Articles, but thought that while Christ preached to confound the damned, he did not

94 free the souls of the faithful, since they were already in bliss. This
is the position expounded by Hyll whose book, The Defence of the Article;

95 Christ descended into Hell, was also owned by Donne. All these writers

testify to an abundance of other interpretations: that of Calvin; that
the article simply meant that Christ was dead; or that of Christopher

97 Carlile who merely denies that the article is genuine. It was widely

91 See George H. Williams, The Radical Reformation (Philadelphia,
1962), pp.840-41.

92 Calvin, Institutes, II.xvi.10 (vol. I, p.5l6).
95 Hyll, The Defence, sig.A3v; cf. Thomas Rogers, The Faith, Doctrine, and religion, professed, & protected in the Realme of England ... Expressed
in 39 Articles (Canbridge, 1^07)» pp.16-17.

94 Art. Ill: Hardwick, A History of the Articles of Religion, p.293. 95 See pp.346-7 below.See also Rogers, The Thirty-Nine Articles,
pp.15-17; and Nowell, A Gatechisme, sig.C8r-v.
?erk ins, An Exposition of the 3ym'oole, p. 248.

97 Christopher Carlile, A Discourse ... setti-ip- toorVn vn~o vs Christians,
wh a t we are to conceiue, touching the des .^pns ion of our Javiiour Christ
into H*H (London, 1582J, fols. ?6v - 77r.

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known in the seventeenth century that it was a later addition to the 98 Apostles' Creed.

98 Perkins, An Exposition of the Symbole, p.243.

II. Donne and Milton

Perhaps not surprisingly, we can obtain little evidence of Donne's understanding of the technicalities of the Atonement from his religious poetry; it is pervaded by the emotive image of Christ's saving blood, but without need to refer to the manner of its efficacy. Once or twice in the Holy Sonnets, we find the Scriptural image of purchase:

Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine,

and God in the Incarnation is pictured as seeking to repurchase what has
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been stolen from hims

And as a robb'd man, which by search doth finde
His stolne stuffe sold, must lose or buy'it againe: ~
The Sonne of glory came downe, and was slaine.

Donne also refers in the Holy Sonnets to the idea that Christ bore our 3 4
punishment, and that we receive his righteousness by imputation. But it is only from the sermons that we can gather any exposition of the Atonement.

Donne in his sermons confines himself to no one theory of the Atonement, but makes use of a wide range of images and ideas drawn from Christian tradition. Nowhere does he attempt a complete explanation of redemption, rather tending to condemn the Schoolmen and others for an irreverent disputation on this mystery. Typically, however, on a small

Divine Poems, p.6. Divine Poe.r.s, p. 11
^ Divine Poems, p.9» Sonnet 7, 1.10.
Divine poems, p.7» Sonnet 3» 1.13»

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number of disputed points, he himself becomes dogmatic. He begins by denying that there was an absolute necessity in Christ's death, choosing the alternative which emphasizes God's power: "as for his death, so for the manner of his death, (by the Grosse) it was not of absolute necessity," If God had so wished, he could have chosen some other way of redemption: "For God could have saved the world by his word, as well as he had made

6 7 it so." We are not, however, to dispute about God's choice. Nor was

there any compulsion that Christ should offer himself for us: "(if we might so speak) no God, no person in the Trinity, could have sent him,
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if he had not been willing to come;" all the Trinity, then,, concurred
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in the plan of redemption. Christ gave himself freely and willingly
out of his own love toward us, as Donne emphasizes over and over again. He writes in a sermon of 1622, "There was nothing more arbitrary, more voluntary, more spontaneous then all that Christ did for man," repeating almost the same sentence in his last sermon nine years later. And yet paradoxically, Christ's very willingness to offer himself had bound him

12 to this course of action, and there had never been a time when he was not contracted to it: "And when shall we date this obligation, this oportuit, this necessity? when shall wee say that begun? Certainly this decree by which Christ was to suffer all this, was an eternall decree, and was there any thing- before that, that was eternall?" In the words of Scripture, "Christ was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," a text of which Donne seems to have been fond.

5 Sermons, IV.11. 296; cf. 1.9.309; III. 6.162.
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Sermons, 1-9.309. Sermons, IV.11. 288.
8 9
Sermons, VII.5-155. * Sermons, V. 18. 379.
10 Sermons, IV.11. 296. 11 Sermons, X. 11. 244; cf. III. 6.162.

1? 15 Sermons, VII. 18. 441. Sermons, X. 11. 244; V. 18. 378.
14 Sermons, IX.5-143; cf. 1.9-305; V.%122 (Rev. 13-8).

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Donne considers the question of whether the Incarnation would have taken place apart from the Fall, commenting: "It is a perplex't question in the School, (and truly the Balance in those of the middle age, very-even);" he agrees with Augustine and Aquinas that the opinion that Christ would not have come other than to save us "is more agreable to the Scriptures." Christ came, because even in heaven "He thirsted our salvation."
Much of the language which Donne uses of the Atonement is based on Anselm's theory of satisfaction, although in the typical Protestant manner, he also speaks of punishment which is, strictly speaking, incora-

17 patible. God, says Donne, chose "the way of Justice;" he avoids the

distinction between the justice of the Father and the mercy of the Son by pointing out "the unexpressible mercy of the Father, in that he would

18 accept any satisfaction at all for all our Sinnes." Following Anselm,
19 he explains that the way of justice demanded full satisfaction, which
20 since our sins were infinite, could only be made by one who was both

God and mans "for God could not dye, nor man could not satisfie by death; and both these were required in the way of Justice, a satisfaction

21 and that by death." Christ thus paid for us the debt which we owed
22 to God, making reparation for our infinite sins by the infinite merit
of his death: Donne writes with characteristic hyperbole, "for, if there had been as many worlds, as there are men in this, (which is a large multiplication) or as many worlds, as there are sins in this, (which is

25 an infinite multiplication) his merit had been sufficient to all."

1 ^ Sermons, 1.9.303; p.304. Sermons, III.14.302.

17 18 ' Sermons, I.9.309- Sermons, 7.5-122; 711.18.410.
19 Sermons, 17.11.284; 1.9-309. ° Sermons, IX.10.247.
21 Ser-nons, 1.9-309; see also 17.11.284; 71.17-355-

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Serrons, 17.11.288; II.2.92. ' Sermons, U.S.159.

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Donne emphasizes that Christ died not only for the elect, but for all men: "there is nothing hid from him, no place, no person excluded from

?/i the benefit of his comming. "

In admitting a rational basis for this way of salvation, Donne
agreed with Aquinas, but on the question of the source of Christ's infinite merit, he sides with the Scotists: "we place it, I say, rather

25 in pacto, then in persona." J Again, this alternative emphasizes the

power of the Father. Donne gives as his reason for this belief, "if we place it absolutely in the person ... then any act of that person, the

26 very incarnation it self had been enough to save us." And sometimes

he protests against the need for Christ's death: "we might think in reason, and in piety too, that when he would humble himself to take our salvation into his care, it had been enough, to have beene under the
law of Mos es , to live innocently, and righteously, without shedding of

27 his blood." The least action, or suffering of Christ's person could

have merited, but God had willed to be satisfied only by his deaths
"one drop of his bloud had beene enough to have redeemed infinite worlds,

28 if it had been so contracted, and so applyed;" As for the finer points

of the doctrine, such as "whether Christ gave his divinity for us, or
his humanity," whether "it were his active, or his passive obedience
that redeemed us," Donne considers discussion of them as so many "spirituall wantonesses." ° In a letter written to Sir Henry Goodyer from Paris in
1612, Donne had referred to a dispute among the French churches on this latter point of active or passive obedience: without offering his own opinion, Donne protests that "I doe (l thank God) naturally and heartily

24 Sermons , IX.5-147- Sermons, IV.14-353; cf. IX.5-139; 1-9.309-10,
26 Ser-rons, 1.^.309- 2T Sermons, VI. 17-341.
28 Sermons, IV.11. 296. 29 Sermons, V.5-123-4; cf. 7-*. 134; IX.5.13^

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abhorre all schism in Religion." Perhaps his experience of this dispute strengthened Donne's condemnation of the kind of speculation which it represented.
In addition to the idea that Christ discharged the debt incurred
by our sins, Donne also uses the thought of Luther and Calvin, that he suffered the punishment for them. Christ became our substitute to the
extent that, but that he committed no sin himself, he knew all the
miseries of mankind: "which hath himself e formerly felt all our infirmities," including the fear of death. As we look at Christ in his Passion, we
can see "the miseries of Man, in their exaltation, and in their accumula-

32 tion too." And on several occasions, Donne describes at length the
great variety of sin which lay upon Christ, the sins of all times, people, and places: "All thy sins, and all thy Fathers, and all thy childrens
sins, all those sins that did induce the first flood, and shall induce the last fire upon this world ... all kinds of sins, and all particular sins of every kind, were upon him, upon Christ Jesus." Thus sin is defeated: "so God gathered the whole nature of sinne into one Christ, that by one action, one passion, sin, all sin, the whole nature of sinne might bee overcome." As Donne goes on to explain, God considered Christ a sinner in our place: "It was sin that was upon Christ, else God could not have been angry with him, nor pleased with us." Else-where, he states that Christ not only bore our sin, but "the punish-ment of the sin, in his owne person."

50 Letters, p. 132. 51 Sermons, 71.13.275; see below, pp. 3)7-39-Sermons, II. 2. 91.
55 Sermons, 71.2.78; of. 71.13-275; 7.18.377-78; IX.10.-47.
Sermons, II. 5-137-
35 Sermons, IX.11. 259; cf- Dev6tions, pp.10; 14; 55; 69; 90.

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Other theories of redemption are referred to in the sermons. Oice Donne uses the word "recapitulare," "to bring all things to their first head, to Gods first purpose;" all things are reconciled when they are "united in Christ Jesus." In another place, he uses the Athanasian idea "Verbum caro factum, ut caro resurgeret," citing

37 Athanasius in the margin. The subjective, or exemplar, theory, how-ever, he condemns, in the contemporary interpretation of the Socinians: "A Redeemer, by way of good example; but no Redeemer, by way of equi-
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valent satisfaction, say those Heretiques." To the theory of a ransom

39 paid to the devil, Donne makes no explicit reference.
Rather surprisingly, Donne's imagery of the Atonement does not
often seem to be drawn directly from Scripture; many of his discussions of it contain no Scriptural references at all, as may be seen from the passages already cited. His favourite image of the Atonement is undoubt-edly that of a financial transaction, and while this is clearly derived from Scriptural phrases, he develops the image independently, without alluding to its source. A favourite word is debt: "we paid our debt in Christ Jesus ;" Donne likes to consider the coin in which the debt was paid, pointing out that Christ has paid "not in single money ... but in massie talents."41 As for the currency itself, "he must pay it

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in such money as was lent; in the nature and flesh of man." The latter point is developed at length in Donne's first extant sermon, on the words, "Ye shall be redeemed without money;" the text does not mean

36 Sermons, IV.11.300; another possible reference to this theory is
at IX.10.247.

38, 37 sermons, 111.3.113- ^Sermons, 711.10.266.
39 But Sermons, II.3-115; VI.17-345 refer to our being sold.
40 sermons, IX.10.247- ^ Sermons, IX-5-U7-48.
42 sermons, IV.11.288. 43 Sermons, 1.1.151 ff. (la^i^ 52.5).

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that we were redeemed without cost: "therefore we were not redeemed with corruptable things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of

44 Christ". A particularly noticeable omission is that Donne does not

use, in any of his discussions of the Atonement, the image of Christ laying down his life "as a ransom for many." Perhaps he associated it with the theory of ransom from the Devil; or perhaps it did not attract him as much as metaphors with a purely commercial background.
In Milton's earlier works, we find only a few scattered references
to the Atonement, but so far as we can tell from these, Milton's beliefs about the Atonement seem to have changed less in the course of his life than his beliefs about most doctrines of comparable importance. He seems to have held throughout to a typically Protestant interpretation, using the ideas of both satisfaction and substitution. Thus he wrote in "Upon the Circumcision," that Christ

that great covenant which we still transgress
Entirely satisfied,
And the full wrath beside
Of vengeful justice bore for our excess, (11.21-24)

and we find several references to that salvation which "Christ hath purchas'd for us with his blood." Later, in Of Civil Power, he states

46 that "Christ hath satisfied eternally" for our sins; it is not clear

whether the phrase in the same work "by him redeemed who is God," may be

47 taken to imply the full deity of Christ or not. But although certain
differences with the traditional interpretation were to be forced
on Milton by his belief that Christ was not of one essence

44 sermons, 1.1.166 (I Pet. 1.18-19); of. II. 3-115; VI. 17. 344.
4 5 The Reason of Church-Government, I.iii (Yale I, p. 7
SJkonokLastes, XIII (Yale III, p. 492); Of Civil Power, Yale 711, D.266.

46 Of Civil Power, Yale VII, p. 249.
Of Civil Power, Yale VII, p. 265; see p. 181 above.

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with the Father, he seems never to have considered fully the difficulty involved in his denying the basis of the orthodox understanding of Christ as Mediator.

In the De Doctrina, Milton makes no suggestion that his interpret-ation of the Atonement is anything but orthodox. He does not deal explicitly with the question of whether or not there was an absolute necessity in the Incarnation; it seems likely that Milton would have
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chosen the alternative which emphasized God's power and freedom. But he emphasizes that Christ redeemed mankind "IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ETERNAL PLAN AND GRACE OP GOD THE FATHER," quoting I Peter 1.20, "of

49 the lamb foreknown before the foundations of the world were laid."
50
Since Milton denied that the Son had been begotten from eternity, we may infer that the plan pre-dated the Son's acceptance of it. This suggestion is supported by the Father's words to the Son in Paradise

Lost:

All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are, all
As my eternal purpose hath decreed, (ill. 171-2)

The Son freely agrees to the Father's eternal plans Milton makes it quite clear that Christ "SUBMITTED HIMSELF VOLUNTARILY, BOTH IN LIFE AND IN DEATH, TO THE DIVINE JUSTICE." Neither is the contingency of the Incarnation on the Fall discussed explicitly, but the reasons which Milton gives for Christ's becoming man are all dependent upon Adam's sin.-*2 We may be sure that Milton, like Donne and Aquinas, would have

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e.g. DDC, I.Ill (Yale VI, p.154).
DDC, I.XIV (Yale VI, p-416); cf. I.VI (p.l68). DDC, I.V (Yale VI, p.26f).
DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.438); I.XIV (pp.415-6). 52 DDC, I.XIV (Yale VI, p.416).

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chosen the more obviously Scriptural position.
Milton defines redemption as that act by which Christ "REDEEMED
ALL BELIEVERS AT THE PRICE OF HIS OWN BLOOD:" 4 the method of redemption is satisfactions "CHRIST AS QEWeP&ncs. FULLY SATISFIED DIVINE JUSTICE BY FULFILLING THE LAW AND PAYING THE JUST PRICE ON BEHALF OF ALL MEM." This is the traditional idea of Christ paying a debt demanded by the Father's justice, but some other ideas originally connected with it are denied by Milton. Chiefly, although he calls Christ the Mediator
, he undermines what had been seen as the reason for this
union of God and man, by denying that Christ was essentially God. In fact, says Milton, had Christ been God, he could not also have been Mediator: "it is quite inconceivable that anyone could be a mediator to himself or on his own behalf." This suggests that Milton saw neither man's sin, nor Christ's merit, as infinite; and he placed the source
of Christ's merit not in the worth of his person, but, as one might expect, in the will of the Father: "he made full satisfaction because

57 that was the will of his Father." Moreover, Milton says, while Christ

offered himself as (m/foajrros , "it was especially in his human nature

58 that he offered himself." As a man, Christ discharged much of man-

kind's debt by his obedience to the Law, of which Milton saw his death as a necessary consequence: "So Christ fulfilled the law by his perfect love of God and of his neighbor until, obedient to his Father in all

55 peter Fiore, "Account Mee Man," HLQ, XXXIX (1975-76), 51-56, thinks, however, that Milton's language about Christ as the Head of the Church, could be taken to imply the opposite view.
54 DDC, I. XIV (Yale VI, p. 415). DDC, I. XVI (Yale VI, p. 443).
56 DDC, I.V (Yale VI, p. 218,- cf. p. 243? p.2?0).
57 DDC, I. XVI (Yale VI, p. 449). ^ DDC, I. XV (Yale 71 , p. 434).

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things, he sought death for his brothers. u^
Milton is also very insistent that Christ died for all men; he
argues at some length that Christ died not only for the elect, but even "the so-called reprobate." All men might be saved if they would,
for Christ had made "a satisfaction which was not only sufficient in itself but also effectual, insofar as God's will was concerned, for all ,,6°

men."

Milton does not make a clear distinction between the ideas of satis-faction and substitution; or rather, Christ satisfied by suffering in our stead. He submitted himself to the Father in order to "SUFFER ALL THE THINGS WHICH WERE NECESSARY FOR OUR REDEMPTION," 1 and Milton is quite certain that Christ suffered not only in his human nature, but in his divine nature too. The whole punishment which was due to us, became his: "and the curse due to us was transferred to him, Gal. iii. 13, along with a horrifying awareness of divine anger being poured upon

61 him." Milton explains that Christ himself took our place: " ava

t a ransom for all. The Greek words plainly signify the

62 substitution of one person for another." And he closely follows the

Lutheran doctrine of imputation: "He paid the price, and imputed our sins to himself ... We receive his righteousness, imputed to us, as a gift." He firmly denies the Socinians 1 exemplar theory of the Atonement: "Those who maintain that Christ sought death not in our place and for the sake of redemption, but only for our good and in order to

64 set an example, try in vain to evade the evidence of these texts."

59 DDC,I.XVI (Yale VI, p. 444). 6° DDC, I- XVI (Yale VI, p. 447).
1 DDC, XVI (Yale VI, p-438j p. 439).
62 DDC, I. XVI (Yale VI, p. 444). 3 DDC, I. XXII (Yale 71, p. 486).
4 DDG, I. XVI (Yale VI, p. 444).

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This interpretation of the Atonement is largely supported by
paradise Lost. When the Father explains to the hosts of heaven how man, alienated from God, may be restored, he emphasizes the demands of justice; man, having lost all, has nothing with which to make expiation for his sin, unless some other undertake it on his behalf:

Die he or justice must; unless for him
Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death. (ill. 210-12)

These lines, however, may be taken to imply that there could have been no other method of salvation. In accepting the Son's offering of himself, God repeats that this is perfectly in accordance with justice (ill.294-5) The Son is offering to take man's place in every respect, and to bear not only the punishment due to man's guilt, but also God's angers

Behold me then, me for him, life for life
I offer, on me let thine anger fall; /-_
Account me man...

And as he is accounted guilty in man's place, man will be imputed righteous in his (XII.293 ff.). His satisfaction will be made firstly by obedience to the Law, which man failed to keep, and secondly by bearing death, the punishment due to man's sins

nor can this be,
But by fulfilling that which thou didst want,
Obedience to the law of God, imposed
On penalty of death, and suffering death,
The penalty to thy transgression due. (XII.395-99)

We see from the scene in paradise Lost in which the Son offers
himself for man, that the Incarnation is contingent upon the Fall. Certainly the Father had had the. plan in his mind for all eternity (ill. 172), but he does not speak of it until the temptation of Sve is

65 PL, III.236-38; cf. PR, 1.266-6?.

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imminent. Moreover, it is dependent upon the Son's free and willing-offering of himself; the Father says that satisfaction can only be made by a "willing" substitute (ill.211), and the Son is described as "Glad to be offered" (ill.270). The dramatic situation in which the Father outlines the destiny of man leaves us for a moment in suspense as to whether man will be saved or not:

He asked, but all the heavenly choir stood mute,
And silence was in heaven ... (ill.217-18)

It seems possible for a moment that one of the angels will offer, or that Christ will not. Of course, everything falls out in accordance with the eternal plan, because the Son is bound to the Father in filial obedience, but Milton has shown the operation of freedom within it. The way in which the angels are given the opportunity to offer themselves underlines Milton's point that God is not needed to be a mediator to
n God..1 66
Both Donne and Milton accepted the fundamental importance of the doctrine of the Atonement; we have now to consider the impact which
its means, the death of Christ on the Cross, made on their imaginations. Donne's writing, both poetry and prose, is full of allusions to the Crucifixion, yet his earliest references to it are very formal: as in

67 his poetic descriptions of the Nativity, he is more readily drawn

by the paradox of God made man, than by Christ's participation in human suffering. As we shall see later, Donne early began to cherish Christ's blood as a symbol of his redemption, but he did not at first extend
this into tenderness and compassion for the wounded and dying Christ

DDC I.V (Yale VI, p.218.). See patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition~p.140, for an account of Milton's brief allusions to the theories of ransom and recapitulation.
67 See above, pp. 209-10.

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himself. What is probably his earliest reference to the Crucifixion is found, a little incongruously, in The Progresse of the Soule, where he speaks of:

That Crosse, our joy, and griefe, where nailes did tye
That All, which alwayes was all, every where;
Which could not sinne, and yet all sinnes did beare;
Which could not die, yet could not chuse but die; (11.73-6)

the idea which seizes Donne's imagination is clearly not the man on the Cross, but the thought-defying opposition of the "All" confined by nails to a particular spot. This kind of opposition was traditional, but the extent to which the fascination of the paradox leads Donne's mind away from the event which he is considering, can be seen by the fact that these lines are almost exactly repeated in the La Corona sonnet on the Annunciation:

That All, which alwayes is All every where,
Which cannot sinne, and yet all sinnes must beare,
Which cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die. (11.2-4)

This time, God is imprisoned, or confined, by the Virgin's womb, rather than by the nails of the Cross, but the same lines will do equally well to express what Donne sees as the peculiar mystery of both these events. He is primarily conscious not of the torment of a painful death, the birth of a baby, but of the conjunction of limitation and infinity, which these two events represent in common. And in fact, the tendency of the lines from The progress e of the Soule is to minimize even that degree of suffering which they introduce. The only vivid and emotive word in the passage is "nailes"; but nails do not "tye", they pierce. Christ is not mentioned as a person, merely as an abstraction, and we are urged to remember that while* the nails confine him, he cannot really be confined; nor can he really die. These lines also contain a reference to the idea that the Cross and the Forbidden Tree stood in

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the same place (11.77-78), an idea which Donne repeated at least twenty years later in "Hynme to God my God." No source for this belief has
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yet been found.
The "Crucifying" sonnet of La Corona shows a similar pre-occupation with paradox. After describing some of men's reactions to Christ, Donne says that those who killed him:

unto th'immaculate,
Whose creature Fate is, now prescribe a Fate,
Measuring selfe-lifes infinity to 1 a span,
Nay to an inch ... (11.6-9)

Again the image of constrained infinity is used, and we see the self-deception of those who think to mete out a fate to God. This is followed by the conjunction of the two ideas that Christ bore his cross, and that the Cross bore Christ. We scarcely realize that human flesh and blood is at the centre of these events, or rather at the centre of this intricate pattern of language and abstract thought. The way in which the figure of Christ slips from Donne's attention is illustrated by the next sonnet, "Resurrection," in which Donne hinself, and not Christ , has become the subject of the poem.
However, others of the Holy Sonnets, written only a little later, display a startling contrast to this detached formality, in their portrayal of the Crucifixion. Influenced by the Ignatian method of meditation, they present a vivid scene to the imagination, sometimes in exaggeratedly emotional language; yet Donne still contrives to displace Christ at their centre:

Spit in my face yee Jewes, and pierce my side, Buffet, and scoffe, scourge, and crucifie mee,
For I have sinn'd, and sinn'd, and onely hep,

68 See Helen Gardner, Divine poerr.s, pp.135-37-

Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed

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Donne himself, craving to be punished for his sins, is not content merely with chastising himself for his wrong-doing, but arrogantly

70 imagines himself actually in Christ's place on the Cross. The pain is

real enough, but it is Donne's, not Jesus': he cannot share Christ's passion through pity and compassion, but must appropriate it to himself. He is forced to admit, however, that "by my death can not be satisfied/ My sinnes" (11.5-6),and therefore, ousted from the principal position
on the Cross, he immediately assumes the other key role in the story, that of the crucifying Jews - except that he surpasses them in wickedness:

They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I Crucifie him daily, being now glorified,

71 The belief that Christ is daily crucified by our sins is a common-place,

but here the idea seems attributable to Donne's desire to be at the centre of his picture. Similarly, the sonnet beginning irwhat if this present were the worlds last night?" evokes a picture of Christ on the

Cross:

Teares in his eyes quench the amasing light,
Blood fills his frownes, which from his pierc'd head fell,

not in order to inspire pity and love for Christ, but to test whether
or not Christ will feel pity for Donne at the Last Judgment:

This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde.

In "A Litanie", Donne combines the two images of his own crucifixion,

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Divine poems, p.9
See Patrick Grant, "Augustinian Spirituality and the Holy Sonnets
of John Donne," ELH, 38 (1971), pp. 542-43.

71 72 n See above, p. 299- Divine Poems, p. 10.

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and the daily re-crucifixion of Christ by imploring:

O be thou nail'd unto my heart,
And crucified againe,
Part not from it, though it from thee would part,
But let it be by 1 applying so thy paine,
Drown'd in thy blood, and in thy passion slaine; (11.14-18)

it was not until later that Donne was able to resolve the exhortation to share in the way of the Cross, and the belief that Christ's death was all-sufficient.

"Goodfriday, 1613", which shows a more balanced understanding of
the Crucifixion, is particularly interesting because it was apparently written on Good Friday itself; no sermons preached by Donne on that day are extant. Hitherto, the dying Christ has not dominated any of Donne's lines on the Crucifixion: now, when Donne honestly admits that he cannot bear to look on him -

Yet dare I'almost be glad, I do not see
That spectacle of too much weight for mee - (11.15-16)

his presence is more powerful than it has ever been before. While the inevitable paradox describes Christ's sacrifice:

There should I see a Sunne, by rising set,
And by that setting endlesse day beget, (11.11-12)

the emphasis is on what Donne would actually see, if he dared to turn to the East: "What a death were it then to see God dye?" (1.18). The terrible picture of Christ crucified is strongly present to his mind, if not to his bodily sight; Donne's dread of it creates in us the peculiar fascination of what we know is just behind us, yet will not turn to look on. Par from wanting to take Christ's place, Donne now asks only to be purged by Christ's anger, and to receive correction:

Restore thine Image, so much, by thy «rrace,

325

That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face. (11.41-2)

Again there is no description of Christ's suffering, but this only adds power to the image of the silent figure, watching the humbled Donne retreating across the world.
Finally, we may notice "The Crosse," a poem for which an early

73 date is suggested, in which Donne expounds the value of both material

and spiritual crosses;

Materiall Grosses then, good physicke bee,
And yet spirituall have chiefe dignity. (11.25-6)

We are exhorted to love the image of the Cross for the sake of Christ who died on it; if we welcome our redemption, we should not scorn its instrument. Donne lists all the likenesses to the Cross which had been

74. found in nature by early Christian writers; and it seems, as Helen
Gardner suggests, that he "is defending the cross as a pious and proper

75 personal possession." Donne changed his own seal to the image of
Christ extended upon an anchor, and had the same emblem engraved as a

76 memorial for certain of his friends just before his death* The only

other reference to an image of the Cross which L.have found in Donne's writings, is a passage in which he says that we should resist temptation by "that powerfull exorcisrae of Nazianzen, ... Depart from me, lest the

77 Crosse of Christ, in my hand, overthrow you." Donne also defends

73 Divine poems, p.92.

^ For sources, see J.A.W. Bennett, "A Note on Donne's Crosse,"
RES, n.3. 7 (1954), 168-69.

7S J Divine poems, p.92.
See "To Mr. George Herbert," and the discussion of this poem
in Divine poems, pp.138-47*

77' ' Sermons, VI.1.47-

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the use of the sign of the cross in baptism: he speaks in "To Mr. George Herbert" of "The Crosse(my seal at Baptism)", and in a baptismal sermon reproves those who "had rather crosse one another, and crosse the Church, then crosse the child,"
Milton first refers to the Crucifixion in the Nativity Ode (l629)s

The babe lies yet in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss; (11.151-3)

these lines are remarkable only because they mention the Cross, which "The passion", probably written for the following Easter, does not.
It is well known that Milton was so dissatisfied with his attempt to write a poem on the Passion that he left it unfinished, finding the subject to be "above the years he had when he wrote it;" and it is not hard to see why JAilton felt it to be inadequate. The lines seem to be all preamble, as Milton attempts to approach, from various directions, his ostensible subject. Recalling the contrast between the present scene, and the lately-celebrated "heavenly infant's birth" (1.3)» he
says that his subject is the Lord's suffering: "Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so •* (1.11), though he does not name the worst.
He continues to describe the humiliation of Christ in entering this

79 "Poor fleshly tabernacle" (1.17)» an humiliation which culminates in death: "the stroke of death he must abide" (1.20). Still Milton neglects to mention what kind of death it is. Then, with blatant self-contradiction, he retreats from the event which he had seemed to approach, by claiming, "These latest scenes confine my roving verse 11 (1.22), and wanders
away into praise of Vida. There is no further reference to Christ in

78 Sermons, 7.4.108; see also 7.11.219. The use of religious
images is defended at 711. 17*432.
Tne wor^s "mask" and "disguise" in this stanza strongly suggest Docetism, though probably unintentionally,

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the remaining thirty lines of the poem. Instead, we watch Milton working himself into a state of ecstatic grief, as he urges the mantle of night, in some particularly revealing lines, to

work my flattered fancy to belief,
That heaven and earth are coloured with my woe. (11.31-2)

Why should Milton's fancy be flattered to suppose that the universe grieves with his grief, when it mourns the death of its Creator? The Gospels indicate that the sun was darkened at the Crucifixion (Luke 23.44-5). Milton then imagines himself borne in spirit to Jerusalem; the last ten lines leave him wondering what he will do when he gets there. What he does not seem to be able to do, is to describe the scene about which he keeps promising to write.
Were it not that Milton, throughout the rest of his life, displayed
a seeming reluctance to mention the Crucifixion, his own apology for the poem, that he did not have a sufficient maturity to understand the subject, would serve to explain its failure. But his inability, or disinclination, to describe it persisted, as we shall see; and it seems unlikely that Milton avoided it merely out of diffidence. The Cruci-fixion was in any case as much a subject for devotion as for mder-standing; Louis Martz has suggested that in this poem Milton is attempting to apply formal meditative techniques to a subject itself
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unattractive to Puritans, but Gordon Wakefield has shown, by his discussion of puritan devotion to Christ's passion, that this was by no means an inevitable attitude, and warns lest we should treat Milton's failure to complete "The passion" "as more representative of the
81
Puritan attitude than it is." Moreover, Milton's "Puritanism" at

80 The Poetry of Meditation, pp.167-68.
81 puritan Devotion, pp.95 ff.» p.101.

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this date is not very well-defined; and he was interested enough in the subject to begin a poem on it. His later avoidance of the Passion must be studied carefully for suggestions as to why he never succeeded in describing it.
Donne, in the sermons, regards the whole of Christ's life as foreshadowing the passion: "The whole life of Christ was a continuall

82 passion." The Cross is reflected in every aspect and event of Christ's

life; in a passage which finely represents Donne's deepest under-standing of it, he writes:

He found a Golgotha (where he was crucified) even in Bethlera,
where he was born; For, to his tendernesse then, the strawes
were almost as sharp as the thornes after; and the Manger
as uneasie at first, as his Crosse at last. His birth and
his death were but one continuall act, and his Christmas-
day and his Good Friday, are but the evening and morning of
one and the same day.

So he sees the Circumcision as the first shedding of Christ's blood,
Q-r

when he first became Jesus, our Saviour. Christ's baptism in Jordan

84 is a prefiguration of his baptism in his own blood; and Lent, as

we remember Christ's fasting and temptations, is to be our own preparation to suffer the way of the Cross with him: "He that will dy with Christ
8S
upon Good-Friday, must hear his own bell toll all Lent." We learn
from the conversation of Moses and Elijah with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration that "All that we shall say, and sing in heaven, will

86 be of his passion," as indeed Donne made Christ's sacrifice the centre

of his preaching on earth.
So now we come to Donne's understanding of that great event to
which his sermons continually point. And perhaps what we notice first,

Sermons, 711.11.279. Sermons, IV.11. 296; 1.9.311. 82
84 Sermons, V1I.7.193; II. 7-172. Sermons, VIII. 7-174; X.11.243 Sermons, III. 4. 122.

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remembering the devotional tradition of St. Bernard and his followers, is the lack of detail, either Scriptural or traditional, associated with Donne's portrayal of the Cross. The only occasion on which Donne follows closely the Scriptural narrative of the events leading up to the Crucifixion is in his last sermon, "Deaths Due 11," when he is confronted by the approach of his own death. Perhaps it is the desire for conformity to his Saviour at the moment of death, which leads him to trace the passion story, dealing with the Institution at the Last Supper, the trial of Christ before Annas and Caiaphas, and Pilate, the denial of Peter, the choice of Barabbas, for virtually the only time in his preaching career. And indeed, Donne asks his congregation, after the recounting of each event, whether their souls are in conformity

87 with Christ in that action. In no other passage does he use this

narrative. This may be partly due to the fact that there are no extant sermons, which were preached by Donne on Good Friday, which would have been the most obvious occasion for its use; but it may also be, as we shall see, that Donne wanted to concentrate on the simple fact of Christ's death, unobs cured by a mass of detail. The incidents of the Gospel narrative are rarely referred to: once Donne speaks of the
oo 39

treachery of Judas; once he mentions Simon of Gyrene; and once,

90 Veronica's handkerchief. compared too with the gruesome descriptions
of St. Bernard of the suffering and ghastly physical torment inflicted on Christ by his persecutors, Donne is conspicuously restrained, though

91 he did not usually fight shy of physical horror. There are no details

of the scourging or the piercing of the nails; there is one reference 92
to the mocking of Christ with kingly garments. Donne refers to the

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87 Sermons, X. 11. 245-48. Sermons , III. 15. 31?.
Sermons, II. 14. 301-2. Sermons, 17.3.125-
See p. 155 above. Sermons, II. 5. 140.

530

fact that Christ shed blood "in his scourging; in his crowning, and

93 in his nay ling," but gives no description. On the one hand, he seems

to be storing up all the emotional impact of Christ's suffering for the moment at which he sees him on the Cross; but at the same time, he sometimes seems to want to guard Christ from shame. For he emphasizes Christ's glory even in "his lowest humiliation": the crown of thorns is a crown of glory too: "But blessed be this Crown of Humiliation, whose flower cannot fade." And in urging us to take up our crosses and follow Christ, he affirms: "it is a royall progresse, not a

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pilgrimage to follow Christ to his Crosse."
A surprising omission is the lack of reference to Christ's mother
and his disciples at the foot of the Cross, and the words which Christ spoke to them. Donne used this picture in "Upon the Annunciation and passion," but does not dwell on it again. He is to fix his eyes only on the suffering Christ on the Cross, who dominates the landscape as he did in "Goodfriday, 1613". Donne seems, uninterested in the historical detail: by purging away from his imagination the figures of Pilate, the soldiers, Mary, and John, he makes the solitary figure on the Cross an ever-present reality, constantly shedding his blood, in which the sinner may be washed. This is consistent with Donne's use of the theme that Christ is daily crucified by our sins: "he suffers patiently a quotidian crucifying; we kill the Lord of Life every day." Donne knows the truth of this; his own veins are "full of the bloud of thy Son,

97 whom I have crucified, & Crucified againe."

Sermons , IV.11. 295; see also 17.13-331. Sermons, VI. 14. 28?.
95 Sermons, 11.14.299-
96 sermons, IX-5-135; cf. 7.6.135, 144; 17.14.352; IV.11. 302.

97 Devotions, p. 48.

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Donne uses the words of Pilate to represent his image of Christ
on the Cross: "If you will see the miseries of Man, in their exaltation, and in their accumulation too, in their weight, and in their number,

98 take them in the Bcce homo, 1? Look not at Christ's persecutors, or

his friends, but behold the manl It is noticeable too that Donne has very little reference to those who actually caused Christ's suffering;
in the Ecce homo passage, which consists largely of quotations from the prophets, Christ's agony is described entirely in the passive voice:

98 "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, "

We are told that God afflicted him, but not that anyone else did, and therefore the action of suffering seems all Christ's. This is emphasized by the idea that the shedding of blood was a voluntary action on Christ's

99 part, "when he wept, when he sweat, when he powred out bloud;" almost
all the references to hia bleeding seem to give the initiative to Christ himself: "he is preparing himself e to suffer scorne, and scourges, and thornes, and nailes, in the ignominious death of the Crosse;" "he gave us, a morning showre of his bloud in his Circumcision, and an evening showre at his passion." On one occasion, Donne speaks of
the weapons which tortured Christ without any reference to the people who used them, and the same sentence gives an active verb to Chris ts
"he drowned the sins of all mankinde, in those several channels of
Blood, which the whips, and nailes, and spear, cut out of his body in

102 the day of his passion. 11 Oi one of the rare occasions on which the

wounding of Christ is made the action of some other person, it has the rhetorical purpose of emphasizing the freedom of his tears: "they nailed him, they pierced him, and then blood came; but he shed teares voluntarily,

Sermons , II. 2.91; 92 (Isaiah 53.5). Sermons, 7.6.136,
100 Sermons, 71. 6. 147- 1 ° 1 Sermons, IV. 11. 296; cf. X.11.243.

102 T ,; oc, Sermons , I.O.254.

332

and without violence. 11
Christ's blood is the dominant feature of Donne's picture of Christ
on the Cross; to shed blood was the very purpose for which Christ came: "His Blood was the Substance, the Materials of our ransome, and actually, and really delivered, and deposited for us." 4 The theme of blood
shed runs, as we have seen, all through Christ's life, as it appears
in the idea of the "seven-fold shedding of bloud in Christ," 10^ from
his Circumcision to the final piercing of his side. The blood shed on the Cross was the climax of his life of suffering, and the consummation of his triumph: "the bloud of his Circumcision, the bloud of his Agony, the bloud of his scourging was not enough; It must be, and so it was the bloud of his Crosse." Donne does not describe Christ's wounds in great detail, but he draws our attention to them, calling up our devotion: "There now hangs that sacred Body upon the Crosse, rebaptized in his owne teares and sweat, and embalmed in his owne blood alive. There are those bowells of compassion, which are so conspicuous, so

107 manifested, as that you may see them through his wounds." And the
subsequent glorification of Christ consists in the healing of these wounds: "Christ Jesus now, sate down in glory at the right hand of his Father ... all his Stripes heal'd, all his Blood stanch 'd, all his

1 08 Wounds shut up, and all his Beauty returned there." Christ *s blood

was a sacrifice, his altar the Cross: he poured out his blood "all the

109 while that he was upon the altar, sacrificing himselfe in his passion."

Absent from all this is any detail of the particular kind of suffering

sermons, 17.13-331. 1 °4 Sermons, VII. 18. 437.
sermons, 17.11.295? cf.. p. 238 above. Sermons, 17.11.285. Sermons, X. 11. 247. Sermons, III. 9. 218.
109 Sermons, 7.6.136; cf. 1.9.312.

333

which the Cross involved; there is, however, one passage, based on St. Bernard, in which we are actually invited to see the torture of the Cross: "I see those hands stretched out, that stretched out the heavens, and those feet racked, to which they that racked them are foot-stooles.., I see him that cloathes this body with his creatures ... and cloathes this soule with his Righteousnesse ... hang naked upon the Crosse.'*
The blood of Christ was a favourite theme with Donne, even when
he was not thinking explicitly of the Crucifixion; from the earliest of the Divine Poems, he uses the image of the sinner washed clean in Christ's blood. In "A Litanie" Donne implores Christ to be nailed to his own heart:

But let it be by'applying so thy paine,
Drown'd in thy blood, and in thy passion slaine, (11.17-18)

and the Holy Sonnets abound in references to the idea that we are bought at the cost of Christ's bloods "Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine." The strength of Donne's belief in the power of Christ's blood can be seen from his prayer in "A Litanie" to be kept

From trusting so much to thy blood,
That in that hope, wee wound our soule away. (11.138-9)

A persistent image is of the blood of Christ as a sea; this is already

112 implicit in the idea that it can drown Donne's sinful heart.
In the Holy Sonnets Christ is asked, of Donne's tears and his own blood, to

make a heavenly Lethean flood, -
And drowne in it my sinnes blacke memorie.

110 sermons, III.14.308.
111 Divine poe^.s, p.6; see also La Corona, "As cent ion," ll.lOff.;
Divine poer^.s, p.8, Sonnet 4» 1.14.
112 "A Litanie," 11.17-18. Divine Poer.s, p.8.

534

But in the sermons, the image is developed further. In a sermon of March 1617» Donne'urges his congregation "never to shut your eyes at night, till you have swept your conscience, and cast your foulness into that infinite sea of the blood of Christ Jesus, which can contract no foul-ness by it;" a representation of Christ's blood is seen in the Red

115 Sea. When Donne himself was preparing to cross the sea to Germany

with Doncaster in 1619» he proposed it to himself as a religious symbols

What sea soever swallow mee, that flood ^x-Shall be to mee an embleme of thy blood,

an idea which is echoed in a sermon preached for the same occasion: "though we must sail through a sea, it is the sea of his blood, where

117 no soul suffers shipwrack." This sea is bottomless, infinite, so
118 that it can cover all the sins of all men. Christ's blood is also
119 seen as medicinal: "He makes physick of blood, and of his own blood;"
120 but like a medicine, it is not efficacious unless it is applied.

There is a wanton waste of "that immaculate and unvaluable bloud" if there is "no antidote, no plaister, no fomentation in the application

121 of that bloud." The blood may be a nourishing food for our souls;
Donne speaks of Christ "begetting the Church by his blood vpon the

122 Crosse, and feeding her still with the same blood in the Sacrament;"
or a refreshing drink: "To satisfie the thirst of our soules, there
123
was a necessity that the bloud of Christ Jesus, should be shed."

124 We are fed "with the blood of our most Blessed Saviour all our lives;"

114 Sermons, 1.3.205. 115 Sermons, II.5.140.
116 "A Hymne to Christ," 11.3-4- Sermons, 11.11.249.
118 Sermons, Y.3-37; IX.9.224; V.16.318. 119 Sermons, I.9.313-
120 Sermons, II.2.93- ™ Sermons, III.6.163; cf.71.17.344.
122 PSeudo-Martyr, p.6. 125 Sermons, III.6.162. Essays, p.48.

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the close of Donne's last sermon leaves him sucking at Christ's wounds,

125 drinking in his blood. There are also many references to the soul

being washed clean, or dyed red or white, in Christ's blood; Donne
urges his soul:

wash thee in Christs blood, which hath this might 12/-
That being red, it dyes red soules to white.

127 127 Christ's blood to Donne is "that precious liquor," "so rich a treasure;"

J. W. Nielsen has drawn attention to the very large number of sermons
which Donne ended with some reference to our redemption purchased with

128 "the inestimable price of his incorruptible Blood." He seems fascinated

by this sacred blood; on Christmas Day 1622, he devoted a large part of

129
a sermon to it, showing how "effusion of bloud" is the way of peace,
and invites us to share in the outflowing of blood: "we must be content
to bleed the streames of naylings to those Crosses, to continue in them

129 all our lives." The words of his text on this occasion, "having
129 made peace through the bloud of his Crosse" (Col. 1.20), were close

to Donne's heart.

Typically, Donne sees both honour and humiliation in Christ's death.
He calls it "this shame, this painfull, and this ignominious death,"
and protests against it: "If he would die, it might have been enough
to have dyed some lesse accursed, and lesse ignominious death, then the

125 Sermons, X.11.248.
pivine poems, p. 7; cf. Sermons , V.8.173; The Second Anniversarie,
1.106; Devotions, p. 67; "An Hymne to the Saints," 11.33-36 (Spithalamiona, P-75).
127 sermons, III.6.163; Essays, p. 100.
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128 "The Concept of the Divine and the Human," p. 302; Sermons,
VIII. 3. 109. Examples in Sermons, vol.7111 iiay be found on up. 93, 109, 173, 191, 218.
129 sermons, IV.11. 291 ff.; p. 297; p. 283- Serr-ons, IV.11.

336

death of the Cross e." Yet we must accept that God's ways are not
our ways. And in the Cross, we see Christ's generosity towards man: "though any death had beene an incomprehensible ransome, for the Lord
of life to have given, for the children of death, yet he refused not

132 the death of the Crosse." Donne also sees glory in the Cross, as he

has done in all the other humiliations of Christ's life. We have already noticed that he called the path to the Cross "a royall progresse", and saw the crown of thorns as a crown of glory, and he emphasizes that Christ is truly the Son of God in this self -emptying: "now that
he is preparing himself to suffer scorne, and scourges, and thornes,
and nailes, in the ignominious death of the Crosse, now he is the Son
of the glorious God." we may also notice here that Donne uses the word "ignominious" of Christ's death much more frequently than the word "painful"; as we have already noted, he seems reluctant to dwell on
the Lord's physical suffering. And in one passage where he does elaborate on the torment inflicted on Christ by his persecutors, Donne sees it
as a way through which Christ's glory is increased: "that all their buffetings should but knead him, and presse him into a better forme ... that their nayling him upon the Crosse, should be a set ling of him upon an everlasting Throne." Christ, accepting humiliation, transforms
it into glory.
Once in the sermons we find the idea, represented earlier in the sonnet "Spit in my face yee Jewes", of Donne himself taking the place
of Christ on the Cross. Again, the desire to suffer on the Cross with

137 Christ is present in St. Bernard, but the thoroughness with which

151 sermons, VI. 17. 341; 342^. ' Sermons, 17.11.296.
See pp. 221-22; 255? 269-70 above.
134 Sermons, 11.14.299; '/1. 14. 287. 133 Sermons, VI. 6.147.
136 Sermons, 17.14.352. 15? 3i.-±15.?._ So^li. and_ rea-r^s, p. 300

337

Donne pictures himself* as at one with the dying Christ is startling: "so when my crosses have carried mee up to my Saviours Cross e, I put
my hands into his hands, and hang upon his nailes ... I put my mouth upon his mouth , and it is I that say, My God, my God, why hast thou

1 ^8 forsaken me?" But Donne is not here displacing Christ from the

cross, but rather seeking to bring himself into complete - and literal - conformity with him. He recognizes our dependence on the Cross of Christ: "For, if I could dye a thousand times for Christ, this were nothing,

1
if Christ had not dyed for me before."
There are a few circumstances associated with the Crucifixion
which seem particularly to have caught Donne's attention. The first of these is the words spoken by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane: "O
my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26. 39).

139 The words show the enormity of Christ's suffering1, and his unselfish-

ness, in that though he had wept for others, he did not weep for himself while he spoke them. But far more importantly for Donne, we learn from these words that Christ had "some shad owes , some such degrees of humane infirmity," showing that man's nature, even "in the best

141 perfection thereof", though without sin, is not without human weakness.

Though Christ immediately added, "Yet not my will 0 Father, but thine
be done , " it was possible for him in the sadness of his soul to ask
for that which he knew was not in his Father's will. The particular human infirmity which Donne was comforted to find in Christ was the
fear of death. In Devotions , seeing the Physician's fear, Donne confesses, "I see hee feares, and I feare with him; and in his prayer to overcome the fear of death, he remembers, "Many of thy blessed

*

138 Ser-nons, 11.14.300; 302. 139 Sermons, II. 5-140.
140 Sermons, 7.4.111. U1 Sermons, III. 17-354.

143 Sermons, 17.13.328. Devotions, p. 29-

338

Martyrs , have passed out of this life, without any showe of feare; But thy most blessed Sonne himself e did not so." Later still in the progress of his illness, he again reminds God that Christ himself "had a reluctation, a deprecation of death, in the approaches thereof." After this time, when Donne had really believed that he was dying, the same thought also appears in his sermons. The example of Christ shows that there is nothing to be ashamed of in the fear of death; all that Donne himself feels, Christ felt too, for he had "as heavy a feare of Gods forsaking him in the agony of death, as we can have." Christ's words in Gethsemane also appear in Donne's last sermon, when he knows that he is finally approaching death: he merely notes that Christ prayed to avert what could not be averted: "Si possibile, says Christ, If it be possible, let this Cup passe, when his love expressed in a former decree with his Father, had made it impossible." The thought of Christ's agony was with him throughout the preceding section of the sermon, in which he urges the remembrance of "Gods care that
the soiile be safe, what agonies soever the body suffers in the houre of death." 146

Donne was also drawn by the words of Christ on the Cross, "My God,
my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27. 46) He is hesitant about how these words can be applied to Christ, suggesting that they were

1/17 spoken under the burden of our sin, or on behalf of the Church.
But Donne also saw in the words a representation of the battle of the human soul with death, an idea which again appears for the first time
in Devotions. We learn from these words that God does not always deliver

144 Devotions, p. 34; p. 61. ^ 143 Sermons, VI. 13-275; cf. VII. 5-155-
146 Sermons, X. 11-243; 240; 242.
Sermons, II. 5-141; Devotions, p. 90; for other suggestions, see
Sermons, 71.17-342; III.6.161.

339

us from our sufferings, although he will still take our souls to himself: "When thy blessed Sonne cryed out to thee, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken mee, thou diddest reach out thy hand to him;

148 but not to deliver his sad soule, but to receive his holy soule."

Christ did not come down from the Cross, but yielded his soul to his

149 Father: thus, "Even Christ himself e could apprehend a dereliction."

Since death is contrary to human nature, both the sinful and the sinless will struggle with it: "thinke it not a light matter to dye. Death made the Lyon of Judah to roare; and doe not thou thinke, that that which we call going away like a Lambe, doth more testifie a conformity with Christ, then a strong sense, and bitter agony, and

1 SO colluctation with death, doth." J Thus Donne does not find in Christ's

death an example to allay his fears, but a kinship which helps him to accept and to justify them.
Finally, Donne is interested in the idea that Christ chose the
moment of his own death, yielding up his life rather than having it forced from him, just as he pictured Christ choosing to shed his own blood. He first refers in "A Litanie" to

thy gallant humblenesse
Which thou in death did'st shew,
Dying before thy soule they could expresse, (11.176-8)

and the image of the gallant hero, gladly meeting death, is also found in Bt*0xv*ro$ where Donne uses it as an argument in favour of suicide: "it is an Heroi^ue Act of Fortitude, if a man when an urgent occasion is presented, expose himselfe to a certaine and assured death, as he " 1 ^ 1 Donne uses all the traditional arguments for the belief that

148 Devotions, p.61. U9 Sermons, VI. 16.330; X.9.20%
150 sermons, 711.12.322. ^ &a0*vxro5 , p. 191.

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Christ chose the moment of his own death, quoting Augustine; dying- much sooner than was usual for those who had been crucified, "Christ dyed 152 because he would dye." There are many brief allusions to Christ's voluntary dying, ' and again the idea appears in the final paragraph of Donne's last sermon: "And then that Sonne of God ... delivers that soule (which was never out of his Fathers hands) by a new way, a voluntary emission of it into his Fathers hands." ^ Perhaps Donne saw this power as an integral part of Christ's triumph over death; perhaps, through the complete conformity with Christ in his death which he preached, he hoped that in the hour of his own death, he might
have the same choice.

When we turn to Milton's response to the Cross, we can only conclude that he deliberately avoids it. In all his prose writings, apart from the De Doctrina, he scarcely refers to it, although on several occasions, he denounces the use of crosses in devotion. In Of Reformation (1641)» he reproves Constantine and St. Helena for seeking out the true Cross, and deplores the respect given to religious objects: "stones & Pillars, and Crucifixes have now the honour, and the almes due to Christs living members." In Eikonoklastes, the King is condemned for bemoaning
"the pulling down of Crosses and other superstitious Monuments;" there
is no place at all for their use: "How little this savours of a Protestant, is too easily perceav'd." As we have seen, Milton believed quite orthodoxly that we are redeemed through Christ's death, but he does
not seem to have seen the Cross as a symbol of that redemption. I have found only one passage in which he uses it in this way, when he

152 Sermons_, 11,9.208. 1 -53 e.g. Sermons, II.5-141; 7.5-121; VI.2.79
154 Sermons, X.1 1.248. 1 ^ Of Reformation, I (Yale I, p.55^; P.547).
156 gikonoklastes, XX (Yale III, p.535); cf. A Defence of the
People of England, ch.II (Yale 17.1, pp.372-73).

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considers "Whether then Prelaty do not make of none effect the crosse

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of Christ." He uses Christ's agony in Gethsemane as an example of a permissible repetition in prayer, 158 and refutes Salmasius' suggestion that the execution of the king was as wicked an act as the Crucifixion 159
of Christ. oi a number of occasions, he also uses the image of the sinner redeemed by, or washed in, Christ's blood. 160
When we come to the De Doctrina, references to the Cross are
equally scarce. It is important, however, that a distinction be made here: Milton is quite clear that Christ "REDEEMED ALL BELIEVERS AT THE PRICE OF HIS OWN BLOOD;" 161 the only thing which is absent is reference to the particular way in which Christ died. Chapter XIV, which deals with the definition of redemption, contains many proof-texts which speak of Christ's blood, but none which mentions the Cross. Chapter XV, which deals with Christ's three-fold mediatorial office, contains three texts, all from the Epistles rather than the Gospels, which speak of

i£? the Crucifixion; Milton does not coranent on any of them. In fact, apart from a passage which uses the Crucifixion as an example of the way in which God brings good out of men's evil intentions, all that Milton says about the means of Christ's death is: "philipp. ii.8: made obedient right up to his death, even the death of the cross; a death which was a supreme disgrace, Deut. xxi.23: the hanged man is accursed

1 S7 The Reason of Church-Government, II.i (Yale I, p.824).
1 Rfl Animadversions, sect. 2 (Yale I, p.682).

159 A Second Defence, Yale IV.I, pp.599-600.
Of Reformation, I (Yale I, p.547); The Reason of Church-
Government, I.iii (Yale I, p.765); Of Civil Power, Yale III, p.266. 161 DDC, I.XIV (Yale VI, p.415).
162 I. Pet.2.24 (Yale 71, p.433; 434); Col.1.20 (p.434).
163 DDC, I.VIII (Yale VI, p.335).

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in the sight of God, and the curse due to us was transferred to him."
In the cry of Christ on the Cross, "my God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?" we see Christ bearing the full weight of God's anger for our sins. So Christ suffers on account of the shame of the Crucifixion, and from God's anger; there is no reference to the pain of his death. There has been some discussion about the omission of any mention
of the Crucifixion from the speech in paradise Lost in which the Son offers himself as a sacrifice for man. Re knows that he will die:

and for him lastly die
Well pleased, on me let Death wreak all his rage; (ill.240-1)

but does not refer to the means of his death. Obviously there is some difficulty in accounting for this omission, even in the context of the poem; considering it in conjunction with the poem's confused chronology of the Son's return to heaven, Empson suggests that "Milton considered death by torture such a trivial sacrifice that he thought the Son must have offered a longer mission than the Father decided to require of him." But as Smpson himself recognizes, in suggesting that the reason behind the omission was that "Milton would not dirty his fingers

165 with the bodily horror so prominent in the religion," to explain

Milton's avoidance of the Crucifixion in terms of artistic intention, is inadequate. Milton omits the Crucifixion in almost every passage where we might expect to find it; and the humiliation and suffering love which the Cross represents are so close to the heart of the Gospel that it seems unlikely that Milton could have decided, on artistic grounds, that it was not worth mentioning. To count the Cross "a trivial sacrifice" would have displayed an astounding failure of imagination ;
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Tillyard's contention that devotion to it "expressed a type of feeling

164 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.439). Milton's God, p.129; p.128.

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outside that puritan myth to which in this passage Milton was certainly loyal," is no explanation, since it does not recognize the possibility

16? of Puritan devotion to the Passion. And in any case, it was not a

typical Puritan characteristic to ignore the fact that Christ died by

16s crucifixion. It seems most likely, although this can only be a

tentative suggestion, for which there is only negative, and no positive evidence, that Milton for some reason felt a strong distaste for the popular devotion which placed such an emphasis on Christ's physical suffering, his pain and his wounds, and reacted against it by deliberately avoiding all reference to it. Perhaps he thought that it was the vulgar who lacked imagination, or taste, in so portraying their Lord. We have already seen that in the De Doctrina, Milton refers to the shame of
the Crucifixion, and also to the outpouring of God's anger; while these ideas make only brief appearances in Paradise Lost, they are certainly not excluded as rigorously as the idea of physical pain. Christ, in offering himself for man, knows that he must bear God's anger: "on me let thine anger fall."(ill.237). When Michael instructs Adam about the means of his redemption, he refers to the ignominy of Christ's death:

thy punishment
He shall endure by coming in the flesh
To a reproachful life and cursed death, (XII.404-6)

and then continues, in the only direct reference to the Cross in the poem:

E. M. W- Tillyard, Studies in Milton (London, 1951)> p.163.
167 See pp.301 and 327 above.
2. L. Marilla, "Milton on the Crucifixion," Etudes Anglaises,
22 (1969), 7-10, argues that Milton was interested in the Crucifixion; but his argument may be discounted since it entirely fails to make any distinction between the fact that Christ redeemed us by his death, and the manner of that death.

344

and to death condemned
A shameful and accurst, nailed to the cross
By his own nation, slain for bringing life. (XII.412-14)

But like both Father and Son, he passes quickly over the death of Christ, adding "so he dies/ But soon revives" (HI.419-20).
Similarly, Paradise Regained, if we set aside the question of why it
is not about the Crucifixion, does not refer explicitly to the Cross. The Father explains that the temptations are intended to "exercise" Christ,

ere I send him forth
To conquer Sin and Death the two grand foes,
By humiliation and strong sufferance, (l.158-60)

but does not make it clear that Christ will conquer death by dying. Christ himself knows that his way lies "Through many a hard assay even to the death " (1.264)* but does not suggest what kind of death it will be. The nearest approach to mentioning the Cross is made by Satan, who tries to frighten Christ by the prospect of his "cruel death" (IV.388); but clearly he too could have made a much more powerful use of the Crucifixion. Not only was Milton's devotional response to Christ not increased by the recollection of his suffering, but he was not prepared to make any other use of the Passion either. Surely this was not mere indifference on Milton's part, but a deliberate avoidance.
Both Donne and Milton interest themselves in the technical question
of what happened to Christ at the moment of death. With an insistence somewhat out of proportion to the doctrine's apparent importance, Donne expounds the position of Aquinas that although, in the separation of his soul and body, Christ could not be said to remain a man in death,
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yet the hypostatic union of the Godhead with both body and soul was not dissolved. Like Aquinas, he mentions Hugo de S. Victor and peter Lombard as proponents of the view that Christ did remain a man in death;

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but the theme that"the Godhead never departed from the Carcasse" is obviously the more important aspect of the belief to him. ° He states it thus: "When Christ lay dead in the grave, the God-head remained united to that body and that soule, which were dis-united in themselves; God was so united to man, as that he was with man, when man was not
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man, in the state of death." ' Many repetitions of this idea can be found in the sermons; it is always stated in much the same way, and

171 indeed, the doctrine does not lend itself to poetic treatment. The

belief carries with it the consequence that Christ's body could not have been subject to corruption in the grave. While Christ laid himself

172 "a cold, and bloudlesse carcasse in the bowels of the Earth," his
173 body remained perfectly preserved by his divinity. Perhaps Donne,

fascinated by the thought of man's corruption and putrefaction in the
174
grave, was attracted by the contrast of the incorruptible body of Christ; he gives a further clue to his interest in this doctrine in his funeral sermon for Sir William Cokayne (December 1626)', when he says that "no
more then the God-head departed from the dead body of our Saviour, in
the grave, doth his power, and his presence depart from our dead bodies

1 75 in that darknesse." He found in the continuing presence of God with
176 the dead body a further comfort for his fear.

Sermons, IV.13.332. For Donne's insistence that "the union
makes the man" (ibid.), see pp. 119 ff- above.
170 Sermons, IX.15.348.
171 See also Sermons, II.5.140; II.9.209; III.3.103; 7.6.134;
71.7.155; 711.10.277; IX.8.207.
172 Sermons, 7.6.130. 17^ Sermons, III.3-103; 106; cf. II-5.UO-1.
17^ Donne often uses the word "incorruptible" of Christ's blood:
see p-335 above.
17 ^ Sermons, 711.10.277.
176 Donne apparently had in his study a "Picture of layinge Christe
in his Toombe;" see Bald, p.565*

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Milton's interest in the death of Christ is very different, and
what he says about it depends firstly on his mortalism, and secondly on his belief that the Son is not of the same essence as the Father. We see his primary concern for the unity of the individual, when he argues that Christ's soul, like the souls of all men, died: "Thus even Christ's soul succumbed to death for a short time when he died for our

177 sins," and then, that if Christ really died, then his divine nature,
as well as his human died. Milton admits that this is a doubtful matter: "As for his divine nature, it is more questionable whether that also

178 succumbed to death." The words of Christ to the thief "today you
1 7ft will be with me in paradise," give him a moment's pause, but the

cause of unity is stronger, and he concludes, "the fact that Christ became a sacrifice both in his divine and in his human nature, is questioned by no one. It is moreover, necessary for the whole of a sacrifice to be killed. So it follows that Christ, the sacrificial lamb,
1 78

was totally killed." Milton is not, of course, saying that God died, since Christ and the Father are not one in essence. He does not refer to this belief about Christ's death in his poetry; it may be implied by the Son's words in paradise Lost,

Though now to Death I yield, and am his due
All of me that can die, (ill.245-6)

but the doctrine certainly cannot be extracted from them.
We have finally to consider their interpretation of that vexed
article, "he descended into hell." Donne says little about it, which
is surprising, since he was interested in other aspects of what happened to Christ at death, and also owned two books on the subject, Adam Hyll's

177 DDC, I.XIII (Yale VI, p.405).
178 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.439; 440).

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The Defence of the Article; Christ descended into Hell, and Henricus

179 Yicus 1 De Descensu lesu Christi ad Inferos. The copy of Vicus

contains pencil markings, which suggest that Donne had read it; it
is possible that Vicus was the source of Donne's only patristic reference in discussing the question: "Quis nisi Infidelis negaverit, apud inferos

1QO fuisse Christum? saies S. Augustine," Prom the little which Donne

says on the subject, he seems to have held the orthodox Anglican position. He says in "Resurrection" that Christ

enlightned hell,
And made the darke fires languish in that vale, (11.6-7)

where "enlightned" presumably refers to his preaching. Donne also asserts that the descent was the beginning of Christ's triumph: "And if he beleeve that to be a limme of the article of the Resurrection, His descent into hell, must be rather an inchoation of his triumph, then
181
a consummation of his Exinanition," and in several passages implies disapproval of the idea that Christ actually suffered the pains of

-f QO hell. In one place he condemns those who believe that "it amounts
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to no more, then a departing into the state of the dead." Other 1flA
passages simply record that the descent was made; Donne makes no imaginative use of the picture in the sermons.
Milton's belief that Christ died in both body and soul, divine
and human natures, obviously precludes a literal descent into hell.

1 ^ See pP-306-7 above.Hyll is designated L105 and Vicus L186
in Keynes' list of books from Donne's library (Keynes, p.271; p.277)- 180 Sermons, IV.14-354; De Descensu, p.25: both Donne and Vicus, however, -isquote Augustine in slightly different ways.

* 1 ftp 181 Sermons, IV. 14-355- Se^ons, II.5.142; III.6.i6l.

185 sermons, IX-10.246. 184 Sermons, VI.2.79; V.6.134.

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Milton does not interest himself in the question, calling- it a "peevish controversy," and simply stating that the article means that "the grave held him for three days after death."

185 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.439).

CHAPTER 10

THE RESURRECTION

I. Introduction

The early Church regarded the Resurrection of Christ as of supreme importance; at the Paschal feast, and on the Lord's day, they were not merely commemorating a past event, but were celebrating their own share in the life of their risen Lord. St. Jerome says of the joy of Easter, "To me, it seems that this day is brighter beyond all other days. A brighter sun has begun to shine upon the world. 11 This day belongs especially to Christians; as Augustine points out, a belief in the Resurrection is the peculiar characteristic of a Christian: "Pagans, wicked peoule, and Jews believed in the passion of Christ; Christians 2"
alone believe in His Resurrection." The Resurrection was seen as "the first and greatest foundation of faith," since to believe in Christ's risen presence leads to a personal commitment to him: "For whosoever believes Christ has been restored to life, quickly searches for Him, comes to Him with devotion." The emphasis on the Resurrection as the foundation of the Christian faith continued, of course, unchanged. Bullinger calls the article of the Resurrection "the chiefe of all the reste," and the Book of Homilies describes it as "the very lock, and key of all our Christian Religion." Without it, as St>arke exDlains,

1 Jerome, Homily 93 (?C 57r p.247) - the inage of the sun is based
on valachi 4.2; Honily 94 (?C 57, p.253).
2 Augustine, Serron 233 (?C 38r p.217).
5 Ambrose, Joseph (?C 65, p.235)- 3ullinge-, D^cad^s, p.67. Homilies, Part II, p.189.

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"all christs former Actions and Passions, had been fruitless."
By rising again, Christ was seen to be Lord: Augustine says of
Thomas, when the risen Christ appeared to him: "He touched a Man; he recognized God." 7 Aquinas explains that thus our faith in Christ's divinity is confirmed; 8 or as Henry King, writing in the seventeenth century, expresses it, "His Passion spake him Man, His Resurrection God." 9 It is emphasized that since Christ is Lord, then he must have risen by his own power. St. Ambrose explains, "He did all things by His own dominion; will He need the help of someone else to rise again?" 10 Aquinas stresses that because Christ is God, his power and that of the Father are one: "Christ rose both by his own divine power and by that of his Father." This, argues Isaac Ambrose, demonstrated the uniqueness of Christ: "some were raised before Christ was incarnate, but not any by
1 O1

himself, or by his own proper power." "Christ," says Perkins, "giue life to himselfe beeing deade in the graue."
That Christ was risen gave hope to his followers that they would
rise too, in his power. Origen writes that "the resurrection of the Saviour from the passion of the cross contains the mystery of the resurr-ection of the whole body of Christ," 4 and Tertullian that "if we believe

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, p. 292. ' Sermon 258 (PC 38, p. 367).
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S.Th., 3a..53« art.1 (vol. L7, p. 5).
9 Henry King, A Sernon of Deliverance, p. 28; cf. Perkins, Sxposition
of the Symbole, p. 252. ———————— St. Ambrose, The Patriarchs (PC 65 » p. 253); cf. Augustine,
Semon 221 (PC 38, pp. 178-79).
1 S.Th., 3a. 53. art. 4 (vol. LV, p. 17).
12 Isaac Ambrose, Looking, p. 338; cf. Suarke, QuoL^or^pcov f p
Sxposition of the 3ymbole, p. 253.
(Driven, Conr.entary on the Gospel of John, 3k.X.18 (AN3L Additional Yolume, pu. 400-01).

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in the resurrection of Christ, we believe in our own." Our rising1 is in Christ our Head, and indeed in him we are already risen. Isaac Ambrose writes that "Christ rose again as a common person, he stood in our stead, and therefore when he rose from death, we and all the church of Christ rose together with him and in him." We may take confidence that if the Head is risen, he will not suffer his members "to be con-

18 sumed, and vtterly destroyed by death."
The Lord's resurrection also brings about a spiritual resurrection
in his followers, "not only the resurrection of bodies but also the

19 resurrection of souls." Augustine explains, "the risen Christ is in

us if we live well, if our former evil life is dead, and if a new life

20 is daily making progress."
Christ was also, as St. Augustine explains, "the first to show us
an example of incorruptible resurrection"; by this example, "we might know what to hope for at the end of the world in regard to our own

21 bodies." The nature of Christ's risen and glorified body therefore

attracted a great deal of interest. The properties of a glorified body

22 have already been discussed, but it should be noted here that Christ's

body was held to be in a state of glory after the Resurrection. St. John of Damascus writes that it was a body "which entered through the

Tertullian, patience, trans. Sr. Emily Joseph Daly, in PC 40
(New York, 1959), ch.9 (p.209); cf. Aquinas, S.Th., 3a.53- art.1 (vol. LV, p.5)-
16 S.Th., 3a. 53. art.1 (vol. L7, p.5).
17 Looking, p.337; cf. Perkins, Exposition of the Symbols, p.252.

1R Nowell, A Catechisme, sig. D1r.

19 Aquinas, S.Th., 3a. 5^. .art.2 (vol.L7, pp.73-75).
20 Sermon 232 (FC 38, p.216).
21 Sermon 235 (?C 38, p.231); Ser-on 240 (PC 38, p.251).
3ee above, pp» 83-85-

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closed doors without difficulty, and which needed neither food, nor
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sleep, nor drink." Aquinas explains that until Christ's Passion, his glory had been veiled by his flesh, but after the Resurrection, "glory immediately overflowed into his body." 24 Seventeenth-century writers abound with details: "a true, perfect, incorruptible, powerful, spiritual,
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agil, and glorious body." -> Several questions about the glorified body were raised by the Gospel narratives of the Resurrection. Firstly, why did Christ ask the disciples for food? (Luke 24. 21). He was not hungry; he ate, says Augustine, as "a manifestation of power, not of need," 26
to confirm the faith of his disciples in the verity of his body. 27 There was general agreement on this point. 28 How it was possible for Christ's
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body apparently to pass through other solid bodies, such as the closed doors or the stone which sealed the tomb, was less easily resolved. It was universally believed by the Church Fathers that such an action presented no difficulty to the Son of God. Chrysostom writes that "He had arisen while the stone and the seals still lay on the tomb. But, since it was necessary for the others also to be informed, the tomb

29 opened after the Resurrection." * And a parallel between the closed doors and the Virgin's womb was very popular: "even before the Lord rose again

The Orthodox Faith, IV.2? (FC 37, p. 405); the Biblical evidence
for the nature of Christ's risen body is slight.
24 S.Th., 3a.54. art. 2 (vol. LV, p. 25).
2*5

Ambrose, Looking, p. 340; see also Ames, Marrow, pp. 105-06; Perkins, Bxposition of the S.ymbole, p. 251; Sparke, QuaKo-Tfptov 9 pp. 30?- 10.
Sermon 242 (FC 38, p. 266).

27 St. Augustine, Sermons on the New Testament (vol.1), trans. G-
R. MacMullen, LF 16 (Oxford, 1844), Sermon LXVI (p. 481).
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28 Aquinas, S.Th., 3a.54» art. 2 (vol.LV, p. 25); Ambrose, Looking:,
p. 340: perkins, Sxrposition of the Symbols, p.26l.
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7 St. Jchn Chryscstom, CoT.mpnUry- on St. John (vol.2), Homily
85 (FC 41, p. 438).

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He was born through closed doors." Again these ideas are repeated by Aquinas. To Reformation writers, however, the reasonableness of believing that one body could pass through another seemed open to question, and the belief was labelled "papist". William Perkins warned that "two bodies
at the same instant cannot be in one proper place," and thinks that the
"52

angel rolled away the stone to allow Christ to leave the tomb. Isaac Ambrose agrees. Less "Reformed" writers like Henry King, however, still followed the older belief, citing the Church Fathers in their support. Just in case it ahould be thought that Christ's injunction to Mary Magdalen, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father " (John 20.17)» implies that his risen body was not real, it was generally agreed that he intended by it to raise her mind from his mere corporeal presence to the contemplation of his glory.
A further example of the General Resurrection was provided by those
who rose from their graves after the Crucifixion (Matthew 27*52-3)• It was generally believed that although the graves opened when Christ died, the bodies did not arise until after he had arisen, an interpretation apparently first suggested by Jerome; a more interesting question was whether those who had risen died again or not. St. Jerome, by comparing them to Lazarus, seems to imply that they did die again, and this is

Augustine, Sermon 247 (FC 38, p. 298); cf. Gregory the Great,
Horn, in 3vangelia, Bk. II, Horn. XXVI (P. Lat. 76.1197).
31 S.Th., 3a.54- art.1 (vol. L7, p. 21).

33 exposition of the Symbole, p. 254. Looking, p. 339.

A oemon of Deliverance, pp. 30-31-
St. John Chrjsostom, Gomr.entary on St. John (vol.2), Homily
86 (FC 41, p. 449); Augustine, Sermon 244 (FC 38, p. 284); Aquinas, S.Th., 3a. 55. art. 3 (vol. L7, pp. 61-6J); Henry Bull, Christian Prayers and Meditations (London, 15^8), p. 2
Jerome, Co mm. in ^/anprelium '-Tatthaei, 17, on ch.27.53 (p.Lat.
26.213); Ariinas7^7ThT7~Ta.33« art. 3 (vol. L7, p. 13) 5 A~b-ose, Looking, p. 339.

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37 certainly the opinion attributed to him by Donne. Augustine, whose
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opinion is approved by Aquinas, also thought this more likely. Again we find Reformed writers differing; from this opinion. William Perkins writes, "seeing they rose for this end to manifest the quickening vertue of Christs resurrection, it is as like, that they were also glorified

39 with Christ, and ascended with him to heauen." Thomas Rogers, however,

claims that we should "altogether dissent" from this latter opinion, which he attributes to "Germane diuines."

37 Jerome, Comm. in Svangelium Matthaei, IV, on ch.27«53 (P.
26.213). Donne, Sermons, VI.2.77.
TO

Augustine, Letter 164, To Evodius (PC 20, pp.387-88); S.Th.»
3a. 53. art.3 (vol.LV, pp.13-15).

39 Sxposition of the Symbole, p.256; cf. Isaac Ambrose, Looking, p.340,

Rogers, The Thirty-Nine Articles, p.19; p.20.

II. Donne and Milton

Donne naturally accepted Christ's resurrection as the foundation
of the Christian faith, a theme which he was to expound triumphantly in the sermons; but again we find that his earlier references to it are very formal. The poem "Resurrection" is based on an alchemical conceit in which the pure gold of Christ's body is refined by its burial in the earth into a "tincture", which has the power to change other metals to gold toot

Hee was all gold when he lay downe, but rose
All tincture, and doth not alone dispose
Leaden and iron wills to good, but is
Of power to make even sinfull flesh like his. (11.13-16)

But in spite of the formality and detachment of this image, Donne introduces here what he saw as the most important aspect of the Resurrect-ion: that our resurrection is accomplished in Christ's. He continues
this thought as he suggests that Christ's risen body might be seen as
"a soule, / If not of any man, yet of the whole"(1.22): that is, the risen Christ is the life of his members. Again in this poem, Christ seems an abstraction, rather than a person: he is named only as "A better Sun" (1.4); nor does Donne appropriate to himself any share in the resur-rection which has been won. That he did place the greatest importance, however, on his own participation in that Resurrection can be seen in the "Resurrection" sonnet of La Corona, the only poem of the sequence
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which does not have Christ as its subject. The rest of La Corona leads us to suppose that the subject of "Rpsurrection" would be the Godhead, unable really to die, rising from the dead. In fact, the subject of the

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poem is Donne, and his own victory over death. His is the only resur-rection mentioned:

May then sinnes sleep, and deaths soone from me passe,
That wak't from both, I apraine risen may
Salute the last, and everlasting day, (11.12-14)

and the sonnet's position in the sequence is the only hint we have that Donne's resurrection is in Christ's.
There are only two other slight references to the Resurrection in Donne's poetry, one using the idea that Mary Magdalen was the first to receive tidings of the Resurrection, and the other facetious.
Again, it is to the sermons that we turn for a full statement of
Donne's understanding of the importance of the Resurrection. References to it may be found in sermons preached at all seasons, although Donne speaks of it at greatest length in the series of sermons which he deliver-2
ed in St. Paul's on Easter Day. The extent to which Donne actually deals with the Resurrection of Christ in these sermons varies considerably, from a detailed exposition of Matthew 28.6, "He is not here, for he is risen," to the sermon for 1628 which, apart from an introductory sentence, contains no reference to the Resurrection either of Christ, or of man.

Donne proclaims the joyful truth, "Christ Jesus is awake: he dyes

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no more, he sleepes no more," as the very basis of all his faith and hope. Quoting St. Augustine, he affirms that it is this belief that distinguishes a Christian: "The Heathen confess Christs death; To beleeve

1 "To Mrs. Magdalen Herbert," 11.4-5 (Divine Poems, p.1); "To the Countesse of Bedford," 11.1-6 (Satires, p. 104)-
2 We have also one faster semon preached "to the Lords 1 ' in 1619: Sermons, II. 9-197 ff.
5 Sermons, IX. 8. 189 ff. Sermons, VIII. 9. 219 ff.
* Sermons, 17.14.360.

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his Resurrection,is the proper character of a Christian." The Gospels, and Christ himself, point to it as the essential element of our belief
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and witness, flfe celebrate it at Easter, but should keep it in continual remembrance; Donne condemns the man "that never thinks of a Resurrection,
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but upon Easter-day." For as Donne points out, if we doubt the
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Resurrection, "the whole frame of our religion fals." He illustrates this point by an anecdote about a West Indian King-, which seems to have attracted him, since he told it in his Easter sermon of 1626, and again four years later in 1630. The Indian King, who was being instructed in the Creed, came to the "crucified, and dead, and buried," and "impatient of proceeding any farther, amd so losing the consolation of the Resurrection, he asked only, Is your God dead, and buried? then let me

9 return to the worship of the Sun, for I am sure the Sun will not die."

To those who do not know of, or believe in, the Resurrection, the rest of the Christian faith can mean nothing. And so Donne asks, "If Christ be dead and buried, that is, continue in the state of death, and of the grave, without a Resurrection, where shall a Christian look for life?" If we ask why Donne thought that the Resurrection was so important,
the theme which pre-occupies him is clear at once: "The Head is risen, therefore the Body shall." He makes a few references to other ideas: by the power of the Resurrection, sin and death are defeated; Christ

12 is made Lord; and his divinity is manifested: he is "by this his rising,

declared to be the Son of God." But what mattered above all to Donne was that Christ was "Meritoriously, the onely cause of our Resurrection,"

6 Sermons, 17.14.355; Augustine, Sermon 233 (FC 38, p.217).
7 Sermons, 17.14.355-56. ^ Sermons, 711.3.94; 96.
9 Sermons, 711.3-96; cf. IX.8.207. Semons, 711.3-96; 101.
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11 Sermons, 17.2.71-72. Sermons, 17.14-359; 346.
1 ^ Sermons, IX.8.202.

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and "Exemplarily, the onely patterne." 4 Without Christ, there would have been "no such thing as a Resurrection"; Donne emphasizes over and over again that Christ is "the root of the Resurrection, he upon whom our Resurrection, all ours, all our kindes of Resurrections are founded." 1 7
But of these Resurrections, from calamities, from sin, and from death, the resurrection from death is of supreme importance. Christ is the cause of the General Resurrection: "in him , we all rose ... And they that are not dead yet, nay, not alive yet, not yet borne, have a Resurrection in him, who was not onely the Lambe slaine from the beginning, but from before all beginnings was risen too; and all that shall ever have part

1ft in the second Resurrection, are risen with him from that time." The
19 faithful are raised already in their Head. We rise in conformity with
20 Christ; but no repentant sinner will be denied a share in the Resurrec-

tion: "they will slander our Resurrection, (as they did Christs) if they will say, that it is ... impossible that a man of so bad life, and so

21 sad and comfortlesse a death, should have a joyfull Resurrection."

Donne himself, in his last sermon, leaves his congregation in dependence upon Christ, to die with him on the Cross, "and lye downe in peace in

22 his grave, till hee vouchsafe you a resurrection." Donne must have

known that he was bidding them farewell until the General Resurrection. Donne's intense interest in the General Resurrection, and partic-
ularly in the re-composition of the scattered elements of the corrupted

23 body has already been discussed; but here we see the most important

point of contrast between the Resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection

1/* sermons, 71.2.78. Sermons, 17.14.357.
16 Sernons, 71.2.64; cf. 7HI.9.219; VII.15-371; Till.16.355-
17 Sermons, Till.16.355- 18 Sencns, 711.10.258. 19 Sermons ,VII.3.98.
20 Sermons, 7.10.213. 21 Sermons, 17.11.297. Sermons, X.11.248.

23 See pp. 155 ff- above

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of the rest of mankind, for Christ's body did not see corruption. As we have seen, Donne was concerned to emphasize this point; but it deprived the Resurrection of Christ of what was for Donne the most fas-cinating part of the General Resurrection. He described at great length, and with great vividness how God would call together from all over the world, the particles which had made up a man; but to the details of Christ's rising from the tomb, either imagined, or as recorded in Scripture, he gives almost no consideration. In this at least, Christ was not our example for Resurrection. Donne also displays a strong inclination to preach about the resurrection of the body on Easter Day, sometimes to the complete exclusion of any mention of the Risen Christ. On. occasion, he makes explicit the connections "our last resurrection

25 from the grave, is rooted in the personall resurrection of Christ";

at other times, he does not, preaching a sermon on the General Resurrec-
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tion, without even relating it to the feast on which it was preached. Evelyn Sinrpson suggests of this particular sermon that it was preached in the evening, and that the morning preacher had dealt with Christ's

27 own resurrection; but it was not usual for Donne to feel much con-
strained either by the occasion, or by his text, and it seems more likely that he found Easter a good excuse to develop this perennially attractive subject. After all, he preached on this same subject, with no appropriate-

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ness at all, at a wedding. Pour of Donne's ten Easter sermons have the

29 General Resurrection as their exclusive theme; one discusses angels

at £reat length in order to deduce something about our own condition in

25 See p. 345 above. Sermons, IV.2.71.
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e.g. Sermons, YT.13.^2 <ff- Sermons, vol. VI, p. 2?.
28 sermons, 7III.3-?4 ff.
29 sermons, IV.2.^3 ff . ; VI. 13-262 ff.; VII. 15-370 f f . ; 7111,9.219 ff,

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heaven.
This p re- occupation with Resurrection may also be seen in Donne's interest in the dead who rose at the same time as Christ (Matthew 2?. 52). In two sermons, he quotes St. Gregory the Great, arguing that it would have been no stranger to see "the bodies of men rise out of the grave, at Christs Resurrection" than "to see an Oake that spreads so farre, rise out of an Akorne;" we are helped to believe in the General Resurrection because "such men, as thou art, did rise at the Resurrection

32 of Christ." Qn several occasions, Donne quotes Jerome's interpretation

of the verse: "The graves were opened, presently upon Christs death; but yet the bodies did not arise, till Christs Resurrection." He agrees with "the strongest opinion," the Roman as against the Reformed, "Many of the dead rose, but they died again." Perhaps in this opinion, Donne wished to preserve what he saw as the unique drama of the General Resurrection.
Apart from the incorruption of his body, there was another important respect in which the Resurrection of Christ differed from ours: "Christ is the first Resurrection; others were raised; but he only rose; they by a forraine, and extrinsique, he by his owne power." Again, this is a point which Donne emphasizes over and over again. He quotes St. Bernard to demonstrate the uniqueness of Christ: "Qnnes alii suscitati, Chris tus solus resurrexit, sayes S. Bernard . .. We shall be raised by a power working upon us, he rose by a power inherent, and resident in himself e."
It is this power, which never left Christ, even in death, which was so important to Donne: "he shall even in the jawes, and teeth of death, and
in the bowels and wombe of the grave, and in the sink, and furnace of

3 er-ons, 'fill. 16. 355 ff. Sermons, III. 3. 97. Sernons, 17.14-359
33 oQr-.ons, 7.10.214; cf. 71.2.77? 7I.18.3--2. * 4 3e-ion3, '/1. 2. 77.
^ 3*™"-™3, HI. 3. 100; for Bernard, see Op^ra, vol.7, p. 82.

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hell it selfe, retaine an Almighty power, and an effectuall purpose, to deliver his soule from death, by a glorious, a victorious, and a Triumphant Resurrection." Donne sees in the retention of this power, a proof of Christ's Godhead.'
Christ's Resurrection is also the pattern of "how we should walke,
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when we are up," the nature of the Resurrection body. In fact, Donne says very little of Christ's resurrection body, although, as we have already seen, he discussed the nature of the glorified body at some

39 length in other contexts. Perhaps because there is more Scriptural

evidence for it, he seems to have preferred to take the Transfiguration as "a representation of a glorified body in a glorified state." In speaking of the Resurrection, he merely comments that Christ's body was "uncorruptible"; that it retained some of the qualities of flesh and

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blood; and that "Christ himselfe ate Honey, but after his Resurrection; when his body needed not refection." Donne does not claim, however, that this act of eating was done to confirm the disciples'faith in the Resurrection; indeed, he argues elsewhere that "Christs bodily actions after his resurrection, they were not such, as without admitting any

44 opposition, might induce a necessity of confessing a resurrection."
45 Although Christ ate, angels in assumed bodies had done as much.

Typically, Donne goes on to conclude that Christ's appearances were not

Sermons, II.9.209; cf. p.345 above, for Donne's insistence that
the Godhead did not depart from Christ's body in the grave.
37 sermons, IX.8.203; of. II.9-198; 17-14-359; 17,3.130; IX.8.199.
38 Sermons, VI.2.78. 39 See pp.157-58; 288 above.
40 Sermons, III.4.118; see also p. 288 above.
41 Semons, III.3.108. 4 Sermons, III.4.114. * Sermons, 111.10.2^4.
44 sermons, 711.3-99-
Donne's interest in angels assuming bodies may be seen in "Aire and Angels"; see also Ellrodt, "Angels and the Poetic Imagination," p.167.

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a proof of the Resurrection, but only supported what was already believed by faith: "the reasons for the resurrection, doe not convince a naturall man at all, neither doe they so convince a Christian, but that there
is more left to his faith."4 In fact, if Christ's bodily actions did not prove the Resurrection, Donne is saying that there cannot be proof that Christ rose again.
As usual, Donne has little to say of the details and circumstances
of the Resurrection as recorded in Scripture. He remarks that Christ ordered Mary Magdalen not to touch him, because he wanted her to dwell not on his bodily presence, but on the glory which was his when he

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ascended to the Father; and he comments that the disciples were slow to understand the Resurrection. Qice he refers to the angel who removed the grave-stone, seeming on this occasion to agree with the Reformed, rather than the Roman tradition, that it was removed before Christ left

49 the tomb. The only occasion on which Donne discussed in any detail the

Gospel narrative of the Resurrection was in his Easter sermon for 16^0 - his last Easter sermon - when he preached on "He is not here, for he
is risen, as he said" (Matthew 28.6). In it, he speaks at length of the devotion of the women, and of the importance of the angel's message to them, typically stating it as the most extreme paradox: "Here was God, the God of life, dead in a grave, And here was man, a dead man, risen out of the grave." But the hope of resurrection for Christ's members clearly had a more powerful and lasting influence on Donne than the details of the Gospel narrative.

4 Sermons, VII. 3-100.
47 Sermons, 711. 10. 26?; see also 711.17-430; 1.5-244, for
references to Mary Magdalen.
48 sermons, III. 3-94? cf . 711.3.^9. 49 Sfirr.ons, 71.2.78.
50 Sermons, IX-8.189.

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Although Milton presumably accepted, as Donne did, the truth of Christ's Resurrection, and its necessary place as the foundation of the Christian faith, his writings contain almost no references at all to it prior to the De Doctrina? And indeed, although he acknowledges its place in the administration of Redemption in the De Doctrina - "CHRIST, HAVING TRIUMPHED OVER DEATH AND LAID ASIDE THE FORM OF A SERVANT, WAS RAISED TO IMMORTALITY AND TO THE HIGHEST GLORY BY GOD THE FATHER, FOR OUR

52 GOOD" - the very small amount of space which he gives to it, and some

of the remarks which he makes about it, scarcely reinforce an impression of its importance. With a monotonous predictability, Milton, as the quotation above suggests, finds the chief interest of the Resurrection
in its usefulness in proving that Christ was not of the same essence
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as, or equal to the Father. The regularity with which he adapts every detail of Christ's life to support this theory makes it apr>ear an obsession; its basis is perhaps to be sought in Milton's own desire to
be adopted as a Son of God, so that he tries to make Christ more represent-ative, and less unique.
Milton is concerned to prove that Christ did not rise by his own
power, but was raised by the Father. He argues in his chapter on the Son, "Look how many texts there are which say that the Son was raised up by the Father alone. Surely that single instance in John ii.9* destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days, ought not to outweigh all these 1" Later in the same chapter, he returns to the point: "it was
the Father alone who resurrected him from the dead," illustrating it

54 with some more texts. In his chapter on "The Administration of Redemption", he continues the attack, insisting "RAISED BY GOD THE FATHER"

51 por exarnle, in Of Civil Power, Milton merely states that Christ
"dy'd and rose and livd again" (Yale "/I I, p. 265).
52 DDC, I. XVI (Yale 71, p. 440). 55 DDG, I.V (Yale '/I, P.2}1).
54 DDC, I.V (Yale VI, p.2?0).

55 and quoting yet more texts. Similarly, he is at pains to deny that

the confession of Thomas is a proof of Christ's divinity. Thomas is merely exclaiming, "Lord! What do I see"; "It is incredible that he should so quickly have perceived the hypostatic union of a person whose resurrection he had just doubted."
Milton says little else of the Resurrection. He comments, in speaking
of the General Resurrection that we, like Christ, will rise with the same bodies which we had before: "He entered into glory with that very same body, that very same flesh and blood, with which he had died and risen

57 again." He also notes that we share in Christ's death, burial and
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resurrection through baptism. His final comment on the Resurrection in the De Doctrina is to object to celebrating it every Sunday: "If it is the day of the Lord's resurrection why, may I ask, is that day to be considered the Lord's Day any more than the day of his birth or the day
59 of his death or the day of his ascension?" This last remark does in
fact suggest that Milton did not see the Resurrection as the key-stone of the faith.

References to the Resurrection in paradise Lost are similarly brief, although they do not have the same obviously polemical purpose. On the contrary, almost every reference to the Resurrection speaks of Christ rising - he "rises", not "is raised":

ere the third dawning light
Return, the stars of morn shall see him rise
Out of his grave, fresh as the dawning light, (XII.421-23)

55 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.441; p.439); cf. I.XIII (p.413).
56 DDC, 1.7 (Yale 71, P-240). 5? DDC, I.XXXIII (Yale 71, p.621).
58 D' DG > I.XXVIII (Yale VI, p.544; p.552).
59 DDC, II.711 (Yale 71, p.712).

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or:

So man, as is most just,
Shall satisfy for man, be judged and die, And dying rise, and rising with him raise His brethren.

This latter quotation strongly suggests that the power by which Christ rises is his own, since by it he also raises his people; it is also the only reference to the belief that Christ's members share his risen life. On the other hand, the Son's words to the Father, "Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave / His prey11 (ill.247-48) imply that he was dependent on the Father to raise him. None of these references to the Resurrection in paradise Lost emphasize its importance; it is merely a necessary step in restoring the Son to that place in heaven at the Father's right hand, which he rightfully occupies.
We have already seen the scant interest taken by Milton in his own resurrection - or death - and so it is scarcely surprising that he is not interested in the death of Christ, by which death was destroyed, or in the Resurrection of Christ, in whom is the root of all other resurrections. There could not be, in this respect, a more complete contrast between Milton, and Donne who speaks of "our mortality, and our immortality, which are the two reall Texts, and Subjects of all our

6? Sermons," a remark profoundly true of his own preaching.

60 PL, III. 294-97; cf. III. 250; x.185-86.

9 See pp. 150-51; 158-59 above. Semona, II.18.361.

CHAPTER 11

THE ASCENSION

I. Introduction

From the first, a belief in the Ascension was recognized to be an essential element of the Christian faith; although in the earliest writers it received little exposition, it is widely found asserted in early credal
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formulations. Irenaeus, using his theory of Recapitulation, expresses the idea that we share in the ascended life of Christ: "as by a conquered man our race went down unto death, so by a conquering Man we might go
up into life"; and we will eventually undergo both resurrection and ascension ourselves. Hippolytus notes that at the Ascension, human flesh entered heaven for the first time: "before this there was no flesh in heaven." A rather diffprent attitude is found in Origen, who urges a spiritual, rather than a physical, interpretation of the Ascension;
this idea found little response in later expositors.
The Ascension was to find a place too in the Arian controversy,
where those who argued the inferiority of the Son claimed that the texts

See J. G. Davies, He Ascended into Heavens A Study in the History
of Doctrine, Hampton Lectures, 1958 (London, 1958), from which ^iuch of the information in the first part of this Introduction is taken.

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e.g, Jus tin Martyr, The First Apology, ch. XXI (ANCL vol. II, p. 25).
* Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V.XXI.1 (LF 42, p. 497).
4 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V. XXXI. 2 (LP 42, p. 523).
HiDpolytus, Against the Heresy of one Noetus, trar.s, S. D. P.
Sal-nond, in ANCL vol. IX (Edinburgh, 1869), sect. 4 (p.
Origen, Prayer, trans. J. J. O'Meara, in Ancient Christian Writers,
vol. 19 (London, 1954), 2%2 (pp. 77-73).

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which spoke of Christ's exaltation as Lord at the Ascension, proved that •j
he was not Lord before. Thus the orthodox distinguished between the Godhead of Christ, always equal with the Father, and his manhood, which
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was exalted in the Ascension.
It is not until the establishment of the Ascension as an independent feast in the latter part of the fourth century - before that, it and Pentecost had formed a unitive festival9 - that we find the subject expounded for its own sake. In some of the earliest homilies on the Ascension, Chrysostgm makes the point that unlike Elijah, a type of
Christ in the Ascension, Christ was not taken up, but went up: "Uhigenitus autero ascendit propria potestate." 10 Cyril of Alexandria notes that the Ascension represents the completion of the divine "economy". 11 St. Augustine, who preached a large number of Ascension homilies, developed an interpret-ation which was to exercise considerable influence on later writers.
He taught that Christ alone has ascended into heaven (John 3.13), but
as he is our Head, and we are his members, we shall ascend also: we are "destined to ascend, not by reason of our own virtue, but on account of

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our oneness with Him." As to the exact nature of Christ's bodily ascension, he warns that "it belongs not to our frailty to discuss the

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e.g. philipp. 2.9-11. See Davies, He Ascended into Heaven, pp. 96-7.
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e.g. Athanasius, Four Discourses Against the Arian.3, trans. J.H.
Newman, rev. A. Robertson, in Select Works and Letters, NPNF vol. IV (Oxford, 1892), 1.41 (p. 330).
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A. A. McArthur, The Evolution of the Christian Year, pp. 141-57. Chrysostom, EXPOS itio in psalmum XL VI (P.G- 55.214).
11 Cyril of Alexandria, In psalmum XLVT (P.G. 69.1053).

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Davies, He Ascended into Heaven, Dp. 136-40.
St. Augustine, On the Christian Conflict, trans. C. L. Cornish,
in Seventeen Short Treatises of 3. Augustine, LP 22 (Oxford, 1847), sect. xxv (p. 179).
14 Augustine, Sermon 263 (PC 38, p. 394).

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secrets of the heavens." 5 He also developed the symbolism of the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, relating it to Moses
on the holy mount, the Israelites in the wilderness, and Christ himself

in the desert.

All of these ideas about the Ascension were repeated by medieval
writers, who indeed added little to its interpretation; the Ascension
was, as J. G. Davies comments, "scarcely an object of absorbing interest." 17 Aquinas makes the distinction between Christ's human nature which was exalted, and his divine nature which was above exaltation, 18 adding that
it was through the power of his own divinity that he ascended to heaven. 18 The reasons for his ascension are to make a pathway to heaven for us,
to exalt our human nature, and there to intercede for us; our salvation
is furthered in as much as our minds are raised to heaven, because our
19 Lord is there.
This remained the basic interpretation of Reformation writers, although Calvin made the Ascension a point of supreme importance in his theology: "the Lord by his ascent to heaven opened the way into the Heavenly Kingdom, which had been closed through Adam. Since he entered heaven in our flesh, as if in our name, it follows, as the apostle says, that in a sense we already 'sit with God in the heavenly places in him, 1 so that
we do not await heaven with a bare hope, but in our Head already possess 20 it." Therefore, all the Christian^ faith and hope is fixed on Christ

St. Augustine, Of Faith, and of the Greed, trans. C. L. Cornish,
sect. VI (LP 22, D.25).
Augustine, Sermon 264 (PC 38, pp.403-04).
1 7 Davies, He Ascended into Heaven, p.147.
18 S.Th., 3a.57« art.2 (vol. LV, D.83); ibid., art.3 (p.87).
19 3.?h., 3a. 57. art.6 (vol. LV, p-97).
Calvin, Institutes, II.xvi.16 (vol.1, p.524).

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in heaven, and the whole of his life is directed towards the fulfilment of what Christ has already won for him in the Ascension. Similarly, the Collect for Ascension Day in the Book of Common Prayer prays that as we believe Christ to have ascended, "so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell." 21
Christ returns, writes Alexander Nowell, to "most noble glorie,and excellent estate, euen the same which he had before." 22 A popular Reformation image was that there were three decrees to Christ's exaltation, corresponding to those of his humiliation; the Ascension is the second
of these: "his ascending into Heaven opposed to his descending into the
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Grave." Ames also explains that Christ ascended actually in his human nature, but figuratively in his divine nature; 24 it was by "the mighty power of his God-head" that Christ ascended in his body. 25 The theme of our first entry into heaven is celebrated by Sparke: "This is the first day ... of our right to Heaven ... The first day that our Nature entered ?6 there." Bullinger explains how the way to heaven is now open to us: "God hath placed in heauen the very humanitie that hee tooke of vs: which is in deede a liuelye and unreproveable testimonie, that all mankinde shall at the laste be translated into Heauen also. For the members must 27 needes be made conformable to the heade." Gerhard adds, "nor onely so,
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but that they have possession there already." Writers continued to
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find symbolism in the forty days, and in the Ascension from the Mount

21 22
cf. Gerhard, Meditations, p. 11 3. A Catechisme, sig. D2r.
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Ames, Marrow, p.106; cf. Perkins, Golden Chaine, sig. E4r.
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Ames, Marrow , p. 108. Isaac Ambrose, Looking, p. 401.
O 7

Sparke, ^(ri^ffrcov , p. .319. Decades, pp. ^9- 70.
28 Meditations, p.116.
29
e.g. Henoch Clapham, A Briefe of the Bible, drawn e first into
Snp-lish Poe*sy, and then illustrated by apte Annotations (Edinburgh , 1 59^) ,
p.U7.

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of Olives, from which Christ had also gone to his Passion.
A theme new to the Reformation was to use the Ascension as a proof against the Ubiquitarians, a Lutheran sect who held that Christ in his human nature was present everywhere. The belief was condemned by almost every writer on the Ascension; Christ's body really ascended to heaven, and "it is flat against the nature of a true body to subsist in many places at once."

50 Gerhard, Meditations, p. 114; Sparke, B(/trcMr7jp JQV , p. 327.
Perkins, Exposition of the Symbole, p. 287; cf. Ames, Marrow,
p. 108; Rogers, The Thirty-Nine Articles, p. 19-

II. Donne and Milton

The last sonnet of La Corona, in which Donne closes his meditation
on the mysteries of the Incarnation, is a poem on the Ascension. We have already seen that the preceding sonnet "Resurrection" contains no refer-ence to the Resurrection of Christ or our dependence on him, but is entirely concerned with the resurrection of Donne's own soul from sin, and from death. Similarly, "Ascention" opens with a call to the righteous soul to rejoice on the Last Day, and only then urges it to behold the ascending Christ:

Behold the Highest, parting hence away,
Lightens the darke clouds,which hee treads upon. (11.5-6)

We may wonder why Donne chooses to juxtapose the ascending Christ, and the dawn of the Last Day. We have already seen his love of conflating disparates; here he is representing imaginatively the traditional belief that because Christ our Head is ascended, we, his members, are in a sense possessed of heaven already, and as all will rise again on the Last Day, so the faithful will also actually ascend with Christ:

Nor doth hee by ascending, show alone,
But first hee, and hee first enters the way. (11.7-8)

Although Christ's own ascension was accomplished long before the Day of Judgment will come, it is not until that time that its ef f ect will be fully realized in his followers. Donne uses the idea that Christ, by his
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Ascension, first opened heaven to us, and also sees it as the culmination

1 See pp. 103; 144-46; 172 above.

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of his saving work, referring it again to Christ's Passion:

0 strong Ramme, which hast batter 1 d heaven for mee,
Mild lambe, which with thy blood, hast mark'd the path. (11.9-10)

Throughout La Corona Donne has emphasized the eternal and divine nature
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of Christ, "All changing unchang'd Antient of dayes," contrasting the infinite Word with the limitations of time and space imposed by the Incarnation. By a seeming confusion between Christ's Ascension, and the Last Day, Donne is able to show the eternal meaning of Christ's actions. Thus, like all the other sonnets of La Corona, "Ascention 11 is stripped
of historical detail.
Almost all other references made by Donne to the Ascension of Christ
are to be found in the sermons, and as we would by now expect of him, almost none of these references appear in the two sermons which he preached on Ascension Day, or in the two preached on the Sunday following Ascension Day. The two Ascension-Day sermons were delivered at Lincoln's Inn in
1622 and 1623 respectively; each has only one brief reference to the Ascension, the first opening with a quotation from Psalm 24» "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?", and the second, preached at the dedication of a new chapel at Lincoln's Inn acknowledging only in the opening prayer that "this day wee celebrate his Ascension to thee." The two sermons for the Sunday after Ascension Day, preached at St. Paul's in 1626 and 162? make no concession at all to the season. Donne was apparently required to preach at St. Paul's on Ascension Day, but no such sermons have been preserved.
References to the Ascension in other sermons are invariably short,

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2 La Corona, 1, 1.4-
^ There is one brief reference in Devotions, p.1?.
4 Semons, IV.4-132 ff.; 17.15-362 ff. 5 Bald, p.40%

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and usually used to illustrate some other point. Most of them merely repeat a commonplace and traditional idea; there seem to have been no images associated with the Ascension which Donne's imagination was fired to develop. He refers to the idea that Christ was made Lord by his Ascension, pointing out that at the same time, the Father is glorifying him again "with that glory, which he had with him from the beginning,
7
in his Ascension." At the Ascension, Christ returns finally into that state of glory, which he had formerly masked by his voluntary humiliation. Thus we see that the Ascension marks the accomplishment of Christ's mission in the Incarnation: "all that which lay upon Christ, from his

8
Incarnation, to his Ascension, was executed," or, in a phrase borrowed from St. Bernard, "his Ascension was Foelix clausula totius itinerarii,

q

The glorious shutting up of all his progresse."
Donne shows rather more interest in the idea that by faith we are
already ascended in Christ, our Head, "So that, as though the glory of heaven were too much for God alone, God hath called up man thither, in the ascension of his Sonne, to partake thereof." For the first time, in Christ, human nature has entered heaven: "his Ascending, by which he carried up our flesh to the right hand of his Father, gave us our possess-

11 12 ion." The dignity of sitting in heaven with Christ is "inexpressible," and in the eagerness for complete identification with Christ which we
have noted before, Donne exclaims, "And all my sins shall no more hinder my ascending into heaven, nor my sitting at the right hand of God, in

f\ T ft
Sermons, IV.14.346. Sermons, VI.17.336. Sermons, VII.18.442,
q
Sermons, X.1.52. This is, incidentally, the only quotation used
by Donne on the Ascension; it is surprising that he took it from St. Bernard, who has almost nothing «to say on the subject. See J. G. Davies,
He Ascended into Heaven, p.161; the quotation may be found in St.
Bernard, Opera, vol.V, p.216.
10 Sermons, VI.15.297. Sermons, X.1.52. Sermons, 7.2.76.

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mine own person, then they hindered him, who bore them all in his person, mine onely Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus." Like Christ, we will ascend in a cloud, notes Donne, making an explicit connection with the Last Day. 14

Various other points are made about the Ascension, but none of them
are developed: angels were present at the Ascension; * Elijah's "Exodus

16 and issue out of this world was a figure of Christs ascension"; the

Ascension is a proof against Transubstantiation: "Because he is ascended, he cannot be here, here in the Sacrament, so, as you may break or eat

17 that body." Surprisingly, when we remember Donne's emphasis that Christ

rose from the dead by his own power, he does not refer to the traditional idea that Christ, unlike Elijah, also ascended by his own power. In fact, he makes the opposite point: "He could have ascended immediatly of himself,

18 by going up, yet he staid till he was taken up." He does not refer to
any of the historical details of the Ascension.
Milton apparently makes no reference to the Ascension earlier than
the De Doctrina; in that work, he is concerned to demonstrate, yet
again, that although Christ was received into glory and sat at the right hand of God, this means not that he is equal with God, but rather the
19
reverse. The Son is returning to the glory which he had in the beginning, but it is not divine: "when the Son ascended to him, the Father restored him to that place of glory which he had previously occupied ... Moreover the place in question is, no one will deny, the right hand of God ...

Sermons, II.5.143? contrast with Ames, Marrow, p.110, who states
that sitting at God's right hand pertains to Christ alone.
14 sermons, IV.2.84; based on 1 Thess. 4«17«
1 ^ sermons, IX.9.206. Sermons, X.11.245.

1 ft 17 Sermons, IX.8.202. Sermons, VI.2.79.

^ Note that this is contrary to the Arian position, which held that Christ had not been Lord before the Ascension.

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But the right hand of God implies a glory not primarily or supremely

20 divine, but only approaching that of God." Elsewhere he glosses "right
hand" as "a Hebraism meaning that he is raised to a g-lory and power next

21 to God's." There is, moreover, a distinction between the ascension of

the two natures, the divine to its former state, and the human to a new

21 dignity. Milton emphasizes that the gifts which the ascended Christ
P?

gave to men (Ephesians 4.8) were first received from his Father, and in a rather contorted exposition of "God was... received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3-16), claims that the Father "returned with the Son into glory, or withdrew into that supreme glory which he had obtained in the
. 22 Son."
In discussing the administration of Redemption, Milton accepts the place of the Ascension in God's plan, using the traditional idea that

23 it is the second degree of Christ's exaltation. He notes that Christ

"entered into glory with that very same body, that very same flesh and
0 A

blood, with which he had died and risen again," and makes the con-ventional condemnation of the Obiquitarians: Christ's hunan nature "exists in one definite place and not, as some people would like to think,
25 everywhere." The idea that the way to heaven has been opened for
human nature by Christ's Ascension is illustrated only by Scriptural
P/r

quotations; Milton does not refer to the idea of the believer sharing on earth in the life of the Ascended Christ. Nor is there any reference to the historical circumstances of the Ascension.
The only references to the Ascension in Milton's poetry are a few

20 DDC, I.V (Yale VI, p.2?2). 21 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.442; p.443).
22 DDC, I.V (Yale VI, p.250; p.245). ^ DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.442)
24 DDC, I.XXXIII (Yale VI, p.621). ^ DDC, I.XVI (Yale '/I, p.442).
26 DDC, I.XVI (Yale VI, p.450).

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passages in paradise Lost, describing the return of the Son in triumph to heaven, and based on Ephesians 4.8, "he led captivity captive," a text which Milton does not use of the Ascension in the De Doctrina:

I through the ample air in triumph high Shall lead hell captive maugre hell, and show The powers of darkness bound.

These passages too emphasize that the Son is returning to that glory which was formerly his:

Then to the heaven of heavens he shall ascend With victory ...
Then enter into glory, and resume ^
His seat at God's right hand.

Again there is no information about the circumstances of the Ascension; but it may be noted that in the much-discussed speech in Book III, where the Son appears to speak of only one absence and one return to heaven (11.260 ff.), Milton is conflating the Ascension of Christ, and the entry of the "multitude of my redeemed" into heaven on the Last Day, in exactly the same way as Donne in the "Ascention" sonnet.

27 PL, HI.254-5^; cf. X.185-88; XII.451-55.
28 PL, XII.451 ff-; cf. 111.261-62.

CONCLUSION

Robert Ellrodt comments that "two poets can never be alike at one
point if they thoroughly differ at another," the truth of which is amply demonstrated by the fact that within one framework of Christian belief and practice, Donne and Milton convey to us an entirely different under-standing of, and response to, human existence. For each of them, it was imperative that he should struggle to make his beliefs a part of the way in which he looked at the world: orthodoxies and heresies alike become deeply involved with the needs of their personalities, as they demand of Christian doctrine a spiritual, intellectual and emotional satisfaction. Both Donne and Milton seek to find reflected in dogma all which attracts, inspires, or disturbs them about life. Thus in different contexts, we find their various preoccupations recurring again and again.
Donne portrays,through the doctrines and images of his Christian
faith, a world which is mysterious beyond man's understanding; a precarious world, created of nothing, and moving- relentlessly toward annihilation; a world, like himself, full of the conflict of disparates. He gladly accepts articles of faith which are inaccessible to reason; he delights in contemplating the insoluble, and in professing the incompre-hensible, whether it be the mystery of three Persons in one God, the creation of the world from nothing, or the infusion of the soul into the body. Yet he is haunted by the insubstantiality of life, occasionally doubting even whether the soul of man really exists, in a world where

1 Robert Ellrodt, "Angels and the poetic Imagination," p.164.
? 3
See pp.174 ff.; pp.29-31; pp.88-91 above. See pp.92-93 above.

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there is nothing "that a man may re lie upon, and find permanent." Everything about him can serve to remind him of decay and death; we see Donne's fear of death reflected both in his response to the death of Christ, and in the deep attraction which the doctrine of the Resurrection of the body has for him. Thus he acknowledges the emotional and actual dependence of man on God for his being, and on Christ for his salvation, trusting in Christ's blood as his only hope of being washed clean of the
7

sin from which he cannot free himself, and clinging to the name of
7 Jesus as Saviour.
He sees in life too a conflict of disparates which can only rarely
be reconciled: being and nothing; innocence and guilt; life and death; decay and resurrection, unlike Milton, for whom Creation was born out of
Q

warring elements, Donne found no fruitfulness in conflict. Rather, the moment of meaning for him was that instant which "though it be nothing,

9 joynes times together." Thus he emphasizes God's act of creation as the
conjunction of nothingness and being, the infusion of the soul as the conjunction of innocence and guilt. At the moment a man dies, he bridges this sordid, decaying world, and the everlasting joy of heaven; and the

11 sound of the last trumpet brings together corruption and resurrection.

We have seen that Donne emphasizes the opposing elements of glory and humiliation in the life of Christ, and finds their meaning in Christ's

12 death on the Cross. And in Christ himself, we find the conjunction of

man and God: Donne insists on the fullness of each of Christ's natures.

Sermons, VII.10.271.
5 See pp.337-40, 344-45 and pp.155-58, 288-89, 358-62 above.
6 See pp.42-4-1; pp. 137-39. - 7 See pp.332-35; pp.240 ff. above.

ft See pp.37 ff. above. 910 Letters, p.139. See pp.30-31; 100-03 above
1 O

11 See pp.144-46; 156-57 above. See pp.335-36 above.
See pp.178-80 above.

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The picture of the world which Milton finds reflected in Christian doctrine, even when he actually accepts the same dogmas as Donne, is entirely different. It is defined by a kind of self-confidence, an assurance of man's ability to control himself and to understand God, a firm belief in the purpose and stability of his own existence, and the self-perpetuating power of nature, and an insistence on the unity and wholeness of every individual. Thus he rejects certain traditional doctrines for precisely
the same reason as Donne accepts them: creation ex nihilo, the infusion
of the soul, three Persons in one God, are not compatible with reason, and can be disproved by logical argument. The nature of God is accessible
to man»s reason. Furthermore, Milton is little troubled by sin, believing that man can both overcome, and profit by, his temptations. Although he

17 states his belief in the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, he tends

rather to interpret Christ's life as an example for the regenerate man to follow. He is startlingly unconcerned by the thought of death, and

19 consequently finds no deep need satisfied by the doctrine of Resurrection.

One of his chief concerns is his intense belief in the unity and
uniqueness of the individual, whether it be of man or of God. God is numerically one in the same sense as all other individuals, that he is one is the culmination of all God's attributes, and to say that one God can

19 be three persons is a nonsense. Thus, the inevitable inferiority of
20 Christ is stressed in every possible context. Yet Milton insists equally

on the unity of Christ, in whom two natures are inseparable to the extent

21 that the divine, as well as the human, dies. Man, likewise, cannot be

14 See p.40; pp.45-46; p.140 above. 15 See pp.34-35; 97-98; 181 ff.
16 See pp.104 ff.; p.272 above. ' See pp.315-18; p.363 above.
18 See pp.150-51; 158-59; p.290; pp.363-65- 19 See pp.182-83.
20 See p.51; pp.185 ff.; p.246; pp.289-90; 363-64; 374-75 above.
1 See pp.192-93; p.346 above.

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separated into the two elements of body and soul: they are propagated

22 together, they die together, and they are raised together. Because

man cannot be thus divided into opposing elements, Milton completely lacks that sense of paradox which for Donne encapsulates the human condition. It is, however, important to recognize that while Donne and Milton
make their beliefs very much a part of their individual understanding' of life, and use them to reflect a very different experience, they have yet subjected those beliefs to a strict discipline, Milton to the authority of Scripture, and Donne to the authority of both Scripture and the Church.

25 While Donne was willing to take on trust from tradition what Milton
?A insisted that every man must work out for himself, yet they were both

clearly concerned that belief should be based on God's revelation in Scripture and in Christ, and not on "thine owne inventions,thine owne

25 imaginations." It must be remembered that they did not only use

Christian doctrine as a vehicle to convey their own experience, but that that experience itself was moulded by a received truth.

22 See p.95; pp.97-9^; pp.149-5U p.159 above.
2^ Sermons, 11.14.299. DDG, Epistle (Yale VI, pp.118-24).
25 Sermons, 11.14.299.

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