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Upstairs, Downstairs: Doctrine and Decorum in Two Sermons by John Donne

David Colclough

ABSTRACT In this article David Colclough considers two sermons preached by John Donne (1572–1631) to the court of Charles I in April 1626. By analyzing them in the context of their delivery to two distinct but overlapping auditories, he demonstrates how alert Donne was to the requirements of his congregations. At a time when the king's religious policy was still evolving, Donne combined a generous interpretation of the extent of Christ's atonement with a celebration of the power of preaching; reading these two sermons alongside one another qualifies claims made for Donne's sympathy with the anti-Calvinist faction in the English church. **KEYWORDS:** early modern preaching; court of Charles I; anti-Calvinism; Arminianism; pastoral edification and consolation in Donne's sermons

Christ preached on the mountaine, and he preached in the plaine; he hath his Church in both; and they that preach in both, or either, for his glory, and not their owne vain-glory, have his Example for their Action.¹

IN APRIL 1626 JOHN DONNE preached two sermons to the court of Charles I as part of his regular duties as a royal chaplain. April was the month of his attendance at court from the time of his appointment by James I in 1615, and would continue so until his death in office on 31 March 1631.² The first of these sermons was delivered on Tuesday, 18 April, nine days after Easter Sunday, to the king and his courtiers; the second

1. John Donne, "Preached upon Candlemas day" [probably 1626/7], in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley, Calif., 1953–62), VII.13.220–23. All references to the sermons are to this edition, and will be given henceforward by volume, sermon, and line number.

2. In addition to preaching two or three times at court each April, Donne delivered a sermon each year on the first Friday in Lent, in the series of Whitehall sermons that were given on every Sunday, Tuesday, and Friday during Lent; see Peter E. McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court: Precarious

was preached twelve days later, on Sunday, 30 April, to the king's household "below stairs."³ Students of Donne—especially those concerned with the nature of his religious beliefs—have paid considerable attention to the 18 April sermon, but that of 30 April has received markedly less comment.⁴ My aim here is to redirect our focus from the vexed question of Donne's doctrinal position (though I will address it) to the evidence provided by these sermons of his careful attention to the nature and perceived needs of his auditories. In particular I hope to show that if we in turn attend carefully to, and take seriously, the degree to which Donne tailored his preaching to his congregation, some of the confusion over apparently mixed messages offered by his sermons may be resolved. In addition, our sense of the relevant contexts for any particular sermon might be further refined. In the case of this pair of sermons, I shall argue, reading them as speaking to and of the royal court (rather than in the light of concurrent parliamentary debates, for instance) shows Donne treating different elements of that court as distinct bodies with individuated concerns and very specific pastoral needs.⁵ Drawing out the differences between Donne's performances for these two congregations, I will also show that these sermons are both concerned with the avoidance of doctrinal controversy and with the elevation of the preacher's ability to offer consolation. In Donne's eyes both congregations needed, above all, to be advised how to conduct themselves, and to be led toward hope of salvation rather than fear of possible damnation.

Preaching and Decorum

When an early modern preacher is found to be speaking differently to different congregations, he is liable to be labeled as a time-server, or simply as inconsistent. Perhaps the clearest example of Donne's falling foul of his critics in this way is P. M. Oliver's

'Inthronization,'" in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge, 2003), 179–204 at 182. A record of Donne's place in the preaching rota at Whitehall exists in the list of "Chaplains that Wait Monthly 1621," in Corpus Christi, Oxford MS E 297, fol. 188r, transcribed in Nicholas W. S. Cranfield, "Chaplains in Ordinary at the Early Stuart Court: The Purple Road," in *Patronage and Recruitment in the Tudor and Early Stuart Church*, ed. Clair Cross (York, U.K., 1996), 120–47 at 142. On the Lent lists, see further Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998), 68–70, 134–36, 148.

3. The sermons in question are VII.4 (118–40) and VII.5 (141–63).

4. One exception is provided by McCullough in "Donne as Preacher at Court" (185–86), where he briefly compares the two sermons.

5. In this sense this article is part of the outwork for the new *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*, gen. ed. Peter McCullough, which will arrange the sermons by place of delivery rather than (as Potter and Simpson did) purely chronologically. For previous studies of sermons in the context of their auditories, see esp. McCullough, *Sermons at Court*; Mary Morrissey, "Rhetoric, Religion, and Politics in the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1603–1625" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1998); and Millar McLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534–1642* (Toronto, 1958). On Donne, see William Gifford, "John Donne's Sermons on the 'Grand Days,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 29 (1966): 235–44; John N. Wall, "'That Holy room': John Donne and the Conduct of Worship at St. Paul's Cathedral," *Renaissance Papers* (2005): 61–84; Emma Rhatigan, "John Donne's Lincoln's Inn Sermons" (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2006). For a fascinating suggestion of how one churchman's public expressions of his doctrine might have been shaped by his local pastoral concerns, see Peter G. Lake, "Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson," *Journal of British Studies* 27 (1998): 81–116 at 101–9.

double accusation that “the great paradox of Donne’s preaching is that, although his role and status as preacher were dependent on his having an audience, he seems at times to have been only distantly aware of its members,” and that the sermons have a “habit of giving unhelpfully mixed messages.”⁶ Yet Donne was as aware as any early modern preacher—perhaps more so than most—of the importance of attending to the composition and requirements of his audiences. The epigraph of this article shows him to be alive to the need to preach “on the mountaine, and . . . in the plaine,” and to be heard in both; similarly, in a sermon to the king preached on 20 April 1630 he emphasizes the importance of reaching auditors of all capacities:

I remember S. Gregory, in handling one text, professes, that he will endeavour to handle it so, *Vt ejus altitudo non sic fierit nescientibus cognita, ut esset scientibus onerosa*; So, as that the weakest understanding might comprehend the highest points, and the highest understanding be not weary to heare ordinary doctrines so delivered. Indeed it is a good art, to deliver deepe points in a holy plainnesse, and plaine points in a holy delightfulness: for, many times, one part of our auditory understands us not, when we have done, and so they are weary; and another part understands us before we begun, and so they are weary. (IX.9.73–82)⁷

It was widely held that biblical language established the precedent for both of these aspects of audience accommodation. But Donne is equally alert to the dangers of not being heard by his congregation, or at least by those of its members who might sit comfortably, smugly convinced that what they are listening to does not apply to them:

. . . if thou heare Sermons so, as thou art glad, when those sins are declamed against, which thou art free from, but wouldst heare no more, wouldst not have thine owne sin touched upon, though all reading, and all hearing be honey, yet if thou take so little of this honey, *Ionathans* case will be thy case, *Ecce, morieris*, thou wilt dye of that hony; for the Scriptures are made to agree with one another, but not to agree to thy particular tast and humour. (V.1.160–65)⁸

To overcome this danger, he goes on to argue, the preacher must be assisted by the Holy Ghost, who will assign the various parts of a sermon to those who most need them:

6. P. M. Oliver, *Donne’s Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion* (Harlow, U.K., 1997), 242, 247. Oliver argues that the sermons evince “the inability of Donne’s writing to commit itself to a single viewpoint” (243).

7. Donne is quoting Gregory, *XL homiliarum in evangelia libri duo, homilia XIII: lectio s. evang. sec. Luc. XII, 35–40* (*Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series latina*, ed. J. P. Migne et al., 221 vols. [Paris, 1844–1903], 76.1123C); hereafter *PL*.

8. This sermon was delivered on Whitsunday, year and location unknown. Emma Rhatigan’s research suggests that it may have been preached at Lincoln’s Inn; I am grateful to her for sharing her unpublished work on this point with me.

... if as a Gardiner takes every bough of a young tree, or of a Vine, and leads them, and places them against a wall, where they may have most advantage, and so produce, most, and best fruit: So the Holy Ghost leads and places the words and sentences of the Preacher, one upon an Usurer, another upon an Adulterer, another upon an ambitious person, another upon an active or passive Briber, when the Preacher knows of no Usurer, no Adulterer, no ambitious person, no Briber active or passive, in the Congregation. (V.1.195–202)

Donne's repeated emphasis on the preacher's need to consider, as he puts it elsewhere, "Quibus, Quando, Quantum loquatur; both to whom, and at what time, and how much he is to speak," was hardly unusual.⁹ Paying attention to time, place, and persons was, of course, an essential aspect of rhetorical training in both the analysis of texts and the construction of persuasive speeches, and was established as a central part of the *ars praedicandi* by Donne's source here, Gregory the Great, in his *Regulae pastoralis* (591 CE), a copy of which Donne owned.¹⁰ There Gregory wrote that "the words of teachers should be formed according to the quality of their hearers, so that they suit each to his own needs, but never depart from the art of common edification."¹¹ Early modern writers on the art of preaching echoed Gregory, with Richard Bernard urging that "a Preacher must haue knowledge of his auditory, to fit his Text vnto them, considering where they be, and what maner of persons . . . The place must be also considered."¹² As Mary Morrissey has argued, early modern sermons thus need to be considered as events as well as texts;¹³ but even when this approach has been followed, it is the time of preaching—the immediate political or doctrinal context—rather than the place or the persons that has taken precedence.¹⁴ There are, it needs hardly be said, significant impediments to such contextual investigations: many sermons simply do not record where they were preached, and even when they do, establishing the actual

9. IV.3.95–96: "A Sermon Preached at the Spittle, Upon Easter-Munday, 1622." Donne expatiates further on the duties of the preacher at 110–14. On this topic, see also in Winfried Schleiner's brief but suggestive comments in *The Imagery of John Donne's Sermons* (Providence, R.I., 1970), 14–17.

10. Gregorius Magnus, Episcopus Romanus, *De cura pastoralis* (London, 1629), STC 12348; see Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne, Dean of Saint Paul's*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1973), 269 (L89). On the importance of these topics in textual interpretation, see, e.g., John Brinsley, *Lvdvs literarivs* (London, 1612), STC 3768, sig. R2r; see also Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 2002), 18–19. On the importance of audience in the Roman rhetorics used by early modern readers see, e.g., Cicero, *De oratore*, 3.55.211.

11. Gregory the Great, *Regulae pastoralis liber, ad Joannem episcopum civitatis Ravennae*, III. Prologue: "Pro qualitate igitur audientium formari debet sermo doctorum, ut et ad sua singulis congruat, et tamen a communis aedificationis arte nunquam recedat" (PL, 77.49C).

12. Richard Bernard, *The Faithfull Shepheard amended and enlarged* (London, 1609), STC 1940, sig. D4r; cf. Andreas Hyperius, *The Practise of Preaching*, trans. John Ludham (London, 1577), STC 11758.5, sig. B1r.

13. Mary Morrissey, "Interdisciplinarity and the Study of Early Modern Sermons," *Historical Journal* 42 (1999): 1111–23, esp. at 1115–16, 1121–23.

14. See, in addition to references in n. 5 above (and for a rather extreme example), Peter Lake and Michael Questier, "Agency, Appropriation, and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists, and the State in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 153 (1996): 64–107.

or likely make-up of their auditory can be difficult. But in a large number of cases, we do know enough to recover some important insights, and in some the detail that can be reconstructed is surprisingly extensive.¹⁵ In the case of court sermons Peter McCullough's work in particular has opened the way for further research.¹⁶ Before I turn to the sermons in detail, however, it is necessary to say a little about Donne's preaching duties in 1626 and the contexts in which his statements from the pulpit in that year have been previously read.

Donne in 1626

We are fortunate to have a fairly full biographical record of Donne's activities during 1626; in addition, as Evelyn Simpson pointed out many years ago, we possess more sermons from this period than for any other year of his life (thirteen). Of these, eight were preached at St. Paul's, where he had been dean since 1621, three at court, and two at St. Dunstan's (his parish church). He may also have preached at his country parishes of Sevenoaks, Keyston, and Blunham during the summer, as was his habit.¹⁷ On top of his preaching duties, it is likely that Donne attended the coronation of Charles I on 2 February;¹⁸ he was chosen Prolocutor of Convocation in the same month,¹⁹ appointed to judge two cases in the Court of Delegates (on 9 July and 9 October), appointed a governor of the Charterhouse (sometime after 10 June) and attended the meeting of the governors on 7 December, and attended all of the vestry meetings at St. Dunstan's (on 13 April, 8 May, 4 and 12 July, and 10 October).²⁰ At the age of fifty-three, then, Donne was an established and respected churchman with a wide range of duties and obligations; indeed, it could be argued that 1626 marked the high point of his success in church and state.²¹ The previous year Charles I had chosen to hear Donne preach the first sermon to him as king (VI.12; Sunday, 27 March 1625), replacing Bishop Richard Neile of Durham, who would have been expected to preach on a Sunday in Lent.²² But by 1627 Donne was in trouble with Charles and—perhaps more alarmingly—the new

15. See forthcoming work by Peter McCullough on Donne's sermon "Preached at the funerals of Sir William Cokayne Knight, Alderman of London, December 12. 1626" (VII.10): research by Arnold Hunt has discovered the list of attendees at Cokayne's funeral.

16. See McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, and "Donne as Preacher at Court"; see further Jeanne Shami, "Kings and Desperate Men: John Donne Preaches at Court," *John Donne Journal* 6 (1987): 9–23.

17. See R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life*, corr. ed. (Oxford, 1986), 407; Donne presented a chalice to Blunham church in 1626 (414).

18. *Ibid.*, 481.

19. The Convocation of the province of Canterbury in 1626 sat from 7 February to 16 June. See David Wilkins, *Concilia magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, 4 vols. (London, 1737), 4:469. On Donne's participation in Convocation, see Jeanne Shami, "'Speaking Openly and Speaking First': John Donne, the Synod of Dort, and the Early Stuart Church," in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, 2003), 35–65.

20. See Bald, *John Donne*, 542–43.

21. On the high regard in which Donne was held by his fellow clergy at this point, see the encomiastic speech introducing him as Prolocutor of Convocation by Leonard Mawe in B[ritish] L[ibrary], MS Harley 7045, fols. 18–18v, quoted in N. W. Bawcutt and Hilton Kelliher, "Donne through Contemporary Eyes: New Light on His Participation in the Convocation of 1626," *Notes and Queries* 240 (1995): 441–44.

22. See McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," 189.

dean of the Chapel Royal, William Laud, for “certain slips” in a court sermon delivered on 1 April (VII.16).²³

Why Donne found himself in such high favor at this point has been the subject of some disagreement, especially given the fraught religio-political circumstances of the time. Immediately following Charles’s accession, some historians have argued, the anti-Calvinist or Arminian party in the church was attempting to establish and consolidate its power and influence,²⁴ and it is certainly the case that Arminianism—especially in the shape of the person and books of Richard Montagu—continued to raise concerns in Parliament and beyond. Parliament, which had begun sitting on 6 February, returned from Easter recess on 13 April, and immediately before Donne preached his 18 April sermon the Commons had redoubled their inquiry into Montagu.²⁵ The York House conference, convened by Buckingham on 11 and 17 February, had inconclusively investigated the same matter, and allowed Montagu to answer his accusers,²⁶ while Charles had referred the matter to Convocation; they appear, however, to have sidestepped any sustained discussion.²⁷ The extent to which Donne was a supporter or a critic of Montagu and the so-called “Durham House group,” and how far this can be established from his sermons of the period around 1626, has exercised a number of critics. Some have found clear evidence of sympathy not merely with doctrinal Arminianism (identified, broadly speaking, with a belief that both predestination and perseverance were conditional) but also with its more extreme political manifestations;²⁸ while others have sought to emphasize the presence of moderate but thoroughgoing Calvinism in Donne’s preaching at this time.²⁹ Jeanne Shami, meanwhile, has argued strongly that it is Donne’s characteristic (if not unique) determination to exercise discretion that renders any attempt to associate him unequivocally with one polemical position or another flawed from the outset.³⁰

23. See Bald, *John Donne*, 491–94. For an analysis of the likely source of Charles’s and Laud’s displeasure, see McCullough, “Donne as Preacher at Court,” 199–202.

24. See above all Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987).

25. On 17 April Pym reported the conclusion of the committee on religion that Montagu was “a publick offender against the Peace of our Church”; *Journal of the House of Commons, Volume I: 1547–1629* (London, 1802), 845.

26. On the York House conference, see Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain, from the birth of Jesus Christ until the year MDCXLVIII*, ed. James Nichols, 3 vols. (London, 1842), 3:345–46; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 125–80; Peter White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1992), 224–30; Barbara Donagan, “The York House Conference Revisited: Laymen, Calvinism, and Arminianism,” *Historical Research* 64, no. 155 (1991): 312–40.

27. See Jeremy Collier, *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain*, 2 vols. (London, 1708–14), 2:738.

28. See Achsah Guibbory, “Donne’s Religion: Montagu, Arminianism, and Donne’s Sermons, 1624–30,” *ELR* 31 (2001): 412–39.

29. See Daniel W. Doerksen, “Polemist or Pastor? Donne and Moderate Calvinist Conformity,” in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Papazian, 12–34.

30. See Shami, “Speaking Openly and Speaking First,” and “Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion in Donne’s Sermons,” in *John Donne’s Professional Lives*, ed. Colclough, 135–57. For a sophisticated consideration of the doctrinal as against the political aspects of Arminianism, and

The strongest advocate for an Arminian Donne, Achsah Guibbory, detects in Donne's writings parallels with Montagu's universalism, attacks on the doctrines of reprobation and of the perseverance of the saints, and apparent allowance of the efficacy of good works for salvation, and in general, "qualifications" of Calvinist doctrine after 1624.³¹ She introduces as evidence (while acknowledging its inconclusiveness) Donne's gift of a copy of Montagu's *A gagg for the new Gospell?* to Izaak Walton in 1625, and concludes by suggesting that Arminianism offered Donne "a way in which he could assure himself of a connection with his Catholic family and ancestors."³² Donne is thus convicted of Arminianism on the basis of similarity of thought and language, circumstantial evidence, and psycho-biographical speculation. But even as she allows that "labels are . . . problematic," Guibbory asks rhetorically "how far can one redefine Calvinism and still be considered a Calvinist?"³³ The answer, in the light of research by Peter Lake and others into the spectrum of beliefs held within the Calvinist wing of the English Church, would seem to be, "surprisingly far."³⁴ It is clear that some elements of Montagu's thought were shared by churchmen well beyond the Durham House group (including Davenant and Ward, two of the English delegates at the Synod of Dort), especially his extension of the limits of Christ's atonement.³⁵ It is these that Guibbory most successfully identifies in Donne's preaching.³⁶ But this overlooks the grounds on which Montagu most infuriated his critics and alienated Davenant and Ward, including his removal of the hypothetical from ideas of universal atonement, his refusal to identify Antichrist with the pope, his praise of the Council of Trent and of Cardinal Bellarmine, his rejection of Dort, and his vituperative attacks on "Puritans."³⁷ It is also on these latter points that he differs most with Donne, who repeatedly condemns Trent, uses Bellarmine as a punching bag throughout his career, praises Dort, and rarely condemns Puritans.

Donne's relation to them, see McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," 192–97. For a survey of the controversy over Donne's religion, see Guibbory, "Donne's Religion," 412–13 and nn.

31. See Guibbory, "Donne's Religion," 417 and passim.

32. *Ibid.*, 437, 439. The copy of Montagu is L216 in the list of books from Donne's library in Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne*.

33. Guibbory, "Donne's Religion," 433.

34. See Peter Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church 1570–1635," *Past and Present* 114 (1987): 32–76. See further Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought* (Cambridge, 1995).

35. It is also worth noting that the sheer complexity of arguments over atonement and justification has been underestimated by some scholars. For extensive analysis of the range of positions on these topics, see White, *Predestination*, and—for a wider historical perspective—Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 2005).

36. On Dort, see *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–1619)*, ed. Anthony Milton (Woodbridge, U.K., 2005).

37. On Antichrist, see Richard Montagu, *Appello Caesarem. A iust appeale from two vniust informers* (London, 1625), STC 18030, sigs. T2v–X3v (cf. Montagu, *A gagg for the new Gospell? No: a new gagg for an old goose* [London, 1624], STC 18038, sigs. L1r–L3r); for praise of Trent, see *Appello Caesarem*, sigs. N4r–P1r; on Bellarmine, see sig. L3r; for rejection of Dort, see sigs. K3r–v, P1r–P2r. Both *A gagg* and *Appello Caesarem* are shot through with dismissive references to "Classical Puritans" (*Appello Caesarem*, sig. a2v) and their lack of charity and excess of zeal. On Davenant and Ward's annoyance with Montagu, see Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church," 64.

In addition to these views—extreme by anyone’s measure at the time—it was the way in which Montagu expressed them that lost him friends and won him so many enemies. Despite paying lip service to the notion that matters such as the nature and extent of free will were “fitting rather Schooles, than popular eares or auditories,” Montagu published his views in print, and in a form fitted to the cut and thrust of polemical debate, not to academic disputation.³⁸ His tone was confrontational and dismissive, and he went out of his way to polarize opinion and to exclude, not to engage in dialogue.³⁹ He used the technique of animadversion, quoting his opponents’ accusations and tearing them apart; and he applied the same ad hominem vituperation to the Protestant “informers” who criticized *A gagg* that he did to the Catholics who insinuated themselves into his parish.⁴⁰ Given that some doctrinal positions and forms of language were shared by churchmen and believers who otherwise were bitterly opposed to one another, a few similar features cannot prove a broader identification and so turn Donne into a supporter of Montagu.⁴¹ Instead, when confronted with rhetorical similarities we need, as Peter Lake has argued, to set them “in the context of the works of the author in question and the situations he was addressing.”⁴² It is to these situations that I shall now turn.

Upstairs: A House of Many Mansions and a Message of Consolation

The early Stuart royal court consisted of two distinct administrative and ceremonial bodies: the Chamber, or household above stairs, and the Household, below stairs.⁴³ Each heard its own sermon, preached by a different royal chaplain, that to the Household being delivered early in the morning, and that to the Chamber at around 11 a.m., before the main meal of the day.⁴⁴ The king would have been present only at services for the Chamber (and not at all of these). The Chamber and its offshoots consisted of between 580 and 620 personnel, presided over by the Lord Chamberlain (in 1626 William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke); it included the offices of the Bedchamber, Privy Chamber, Chamber, Great Chamber, Jewels, Robes, Revels, Works, and the Band of Gentlemen Pensioners, as well as various miscellaneous others including the royal

38. Montagu, *Appello Caesarem*, sig. L2v; cf. Montagu, *A new gagg?*, sig. P3v. On the use of this topos by all sides in the debate, see Donagan, “The York House Conference,” 327; for examples from Skinner and Hall, see Peter Lake, “Joseph Hall, Robert Skinner, and the Rhetoric of Moderation at the Early Stuart Court,” in *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature, and History, 1600–1750*, ed. Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter E. McCullough (Manchester, 2000), 167–85 at 168. The topos was regarded by some as suspicious and evasive, but by others as sound and tending to edification.

39. On Montagu’s polarizing rhetoric, including that in his correspondence, see Lake, “Calvinism and the English Church,” 67–68.

40. On animadversion as a technique of pamphlet polemic, see Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), 210–14.

41. See further Jeanne Shami, “Anti-Catholicism in the Sermons of John Donne,” in *The English Sermon Revised*, ed. Ferrell and McCullough, 136–66 at 138.

42. Lake, “Joseph Hall, Robert Skinner,” 173–74.

43. On the earlier history of the two parts of the court, see David Loades, *The Tudor Court*, rev. ed. (Bangor, U.K., 1992), chap. 2, “The Institutions,” 38–84.

44. See McCullough, “Donne as Preacher at Court,” 184.

chaplains and the Chapel and Vestry Staff (although the Chapel Royal was officially an autonomous entity under the direct control of its dean, Lancelot Andrewes).⁴⁵ G. E. Aylmer summarizes the functions of the Chamber and Household thus: “the Household was more concerned than the Chamber with administration in the conventional sense; it provided most of the necessities of life, while the Chamber regulated the routine and ceremony of the court. What the Household was responsible for providing, the Chamber saw was consumed with due pomp and elegance.”⁴⁶ I shall return to the issues of provision and consumption in more detail below.

On 18 April Donne preached to the Chamber, in the presence of Charles, taking as his text John 14:2, “In my Fathers House are many Mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.”⁴⁷ From the outset Donne is alert to the potential for religious controversy that lurks everywhere around him, as well he might have been in light of the events and disputes that I have outlined above. He notes ruefully, “There are occasions of Controversies of all kinds in this one Verse,” not only doctrinal, but even “Grammatical”: punctuation itself can cause division (VII.4.1, 4), and Donne addresses the problem of punctuation in his exordium. He engages openly and at length with only one controversy, the scripture-based clarity and literalism of the English Church as opposed to the obscurantism and human-based undermining of scripture by the Roman Catholics, a controversy that was so commonplace as to be virtually uncontroversial.⁴⁸ This determination to eschew explicit controversy within the Church of England, and to concentrate on divisions between England and Rome instead, also characterizes Donne’s sermon to the Household.

The sermon to the Chamber is divided into two parts, which treat in reverse the two clauses of the text; Donne explains that the first contains the “generall Rule” and the second the “particular Doctrine” (VII.4.35). It is in part one (“if it were not so, I would have told you”; VII.4.73–366) that Donne confronts his Roman Catholic adversaries. He explains that this clause contains two important affirmations: that if Christ has not told us something, it is not so; and that if he has, it is as he has said. From these points Donne draws the orthodox Protestant lesson that scripture is sufficient, and thus ridicules what he describes as the Roman Catholic tendency to question that sufficiency by introducing other, lesser proofs (such as the writings of the Church Fathers, the decrees of Councils, or the statements of popes). The Roman Catholics,

45. See G. E. Aylmer, *The King’s Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625–1642* (London, 1961); estimated numbers are given in table 4 at p. 27 and a fuller list of the component parts of the Chamber is given in table 59 at p. 473. The chaplains themselves were, counterintuitively, not officially part of the Chapel Royal; they were sworn by and answered to the Lord Chamberlain.

46. Aylmer, *The King’s Servants*, 29.

47. Charles’s presence is attested to by the unusually detailed title given to the sermon in its only copytext, *LXXX Sermons Preached by that learned and reverend divine, Iohn Donne* (London, 1640), STC 7038, sig. 3R4r, reproduced in VII.4, p. 118: “Preached to the King in my Ordinary wayting at VVhite-hall, 18. Aprill 1626.”

48. We should remember that at the time Donne was preaching, England was at war with Catholic Spain, hostilities with France appeared likely, and on 26 February English Catholics had been arrested as they emerged from Mass at the residence of the French ambassador.

Donne argues, cannot agree to allow cases to be determined by scripture because it is “constant, limited, and determined”; it leaves no room for addition and evasion. Furthermore, it is open to all, and “they should be shrewdly prejudiced, and shrewdly disadvantaged, if all emergent cases arising in the Christian world, must be judged by a Law, which others may know beforehand, as well as they” (VII.4.242–45). This, he explains sarcastically, is why many Roman Catholics “repented, that in the Council of Trent, they came to a final resolution in so many particulars” (VII.4.250–51).⁴⁹ The Roman Catholic reservation of the right to add to scripture, Donne argues, is the origin of many pernicious doctrines. These human additions will lead inevitably to a destructive focus on the worldly (particularly on matters of rank and intercession), and a distraction from the heavenly, as the sermon will go on to demonstrate.

The two primary theses of the first part of Donne’s sermon, the “generall Rule”—that scripture is sufficient and complete, and that the Roman Catholics deny this in practice even as they affirm it in their writings—are fundamental to its longer second part, which engages most closely with matters concerning the court; it is this second part, I suggest, that is tuned carefully to what he considers to be that auditory’s needs (VII.4.367–838). Here Donne addresses the first clause of his text (“In my Fathers House are many Mansions”), and notes that his treatment of it “derives it selfe into two branches; first to inquire, whether this proposition assist that Doctrine of Disparity and Degrees of Glory in the Saints in Heaven; And then the right use which is to be made of the right sense of these words” (VII.4.367–71). With typical deftness, he effects the transition into this second part by means of an argumentative hinge: the last section of part one criticizes those “who doe not beleeeve All persons to be intended in the Scriptures, who seeme to be concerned therein” (VII.4.295–96). Christ died for all men, Donne asserts; if he did not, yet said so, he would have been a hypocrite. Citing both the articles of the Synod of Dort and article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles, he states that “conditionall salvation is so far offered to every man, as that no man may preclude himselfe from a possibility of such a performance of those Conditions which God requires at his hands, as God will accept at his hands, if either he doe sincerely endeavour the performing, or sincerely repent the not performing of them” (VII.4.353–58). This position apparently extends the reach of Christ’s atonement from the band of the elect to all men, and has therefore been seized upon by those who wish to associate him with the universalism of Montagu and Laud.⁵⁰ But what is most important about this passage in the context of the sermon is its emphasis on comfort and reassurance: the declaration that “no man may preclude himselfe.” In common with many of Donne’s sermons preached in 1626, this offers a counsel against despair. Even among churchmen who held strictly predestinarian views, the good news of scripture and the concomitant dangers of falling into anxiety about one’s possible

49. Donne was obviously pleased with this line of attack; he had previously used the passage, more or less verbatim, in VI.15.298–331 (suggesting that the importance of context has sometimes been overestimated).

50. See Guibbory, “Donne’s Religion,” 426 (on this sermon); 420–21. For other examples of counsel against despair in Donne’s 1626 sermons, see VII.1.654–84; VII.2 passim; VII.3.653–68.

reprobation were common matters of pastoral concern.⁵¹

But for the purposes of my argument, I wish to call attention to the degree to which Donne's message of consolation is locally applicable, and to the way in which it is delicately combined with a degree of admonition. He begins the second part of the sermon by considering Christ's words in context. Why, Donne asks, is this reassurance necessary? It stems, he explains, from the anxiety felt by the Apostles over Christ's admonition in the previous chapter of the Gospel: "That he was to stay with them but a little while; That when he was gone, they should seeke him, and not finde him; And that whither he went, they could not follow" (VII.4.374–76, referring to John 13:33). When Peter was comforted ("hereafter thou shalt follow me"; VII.4.379–80), the other Apostles feared that they would be left out; and it was to assure them that Peter had not been given a "*Non-obstante*," or special dispensation (VII.4.537), that Christ uttered the words of Donne's text. The verse is, then, an explicit assertion that the Apostles (and, by extension, the rest of humankind, Donne will argue) are equally entitled to follow Christ and enter heaven; that no one of them (Peter) has special rank or privilege—the former a term that will play an increasingly important part in the sermon.

Does this, then, mean that the traditional interpretation of "many mansions," as implying that there are degrees of glory in heaven, is erroneous? Certainly not, Donne explains. That doctrine "scarce any ever denied"; and since heaven is a kingdom and a church, and hierarchies are essential to both such institutions, there must be degrees of glory there just as there are in its earthly equivalents (VII.4.390–94).⁵² The problem lies rather in the weight that the Roman Catholic Church accords this doctrine. Continuing his assault on the Roman Catholic error of adding to an already sufficient scripture, Donne exploits the architectural image by describing the dangerously unstable—and quite unnecessary—extensions that the Roman Catholics have built onto the Word of God: "they shake and endanger things neere foundations, by their enormous super-edifications, by their incommodious upper-buildings" (VII.4.410–12). Edification, the end of all preaching, is undermined by the Roman Catholics because instead of building up faith they "divert it upon a wrong object";⁵³ solid foundations are weakened by their jerry-built "super-edifications." Donne's use of the prefix "super" is here, as throughout the sermon, a warning sign that essentials have been discarded and replaced by misdevotion.⁵⁴ And this misdevotion is based at least in part on a mistranslation; Donne shows that the belief that different saints have different kinds of crowns in heaven derives from the Vulgate mistaking the Hebrew "*Zer zehab*" in Exodus 25:25 to mean

51. See, for example, Dewey D. Wallace Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982), 77. On consolation as the "keynote" of Donne's sermons in 1626, see Simpson, "The Biographical Value of Donne's Sermons," 340.

52. On the extent of the debate over degrees of glory in heaven, and the doctrine of reward associated with it, see Emma Disley, "Degrees of Glory: Protestant Doctrine and the Concept of Rewards Hereafter," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 42 (1991): 77–105. I am grateful to Arnold Hunt for this reference.

53. Cf. Augustine's statements on misdirected love, *Confessions* 2.6.14–2.10.18 (*PL* 32.681–82); 10.23 (*PL* 32.793–94).

54. Compare "super-induce" (VII.4.226, 415); "super-Soveraigne" (VII.4.238).

“lesser crownes” (“*Facies Coronam aureolam*”) instead of simply “a Crowne of Gold” (VII.4.429–45).

Upon such dubious foundations, Donne argues, the Roman Catholics have erected an elaborate and false rank order of saints, where some are “*Sancti Majores*, as they call them, Saints in favor, Saints in office, and fitter to receive our petitions, and mediate between God and us, then those whom they call *Mediocrates*, and *Inferiores*, Saints of a middle forme, or of an inferiour ranke” (VII.4.469–72). By thus extending “Problematicall Divinity to Dogmaticall,” the Roman Catholics “establish the Doctrine of Merits, and of Invocation of Saints” (VII.4.502–8). The most pernicious consequence of this, Donne asserts, is that individual believers are cast into doubt as to whom they should direct their prayers, and whether assurance of salvation depends “upon Christ, or mine owne, or others merits” (VII.4.552). These doubts are, though, unnecessary: “That prayer to God alone was sufficient, was never drawne into controversie . . . That to rely upon Christ alone was never drawne into Controversie” (VII.4.549–54).

If orthodox Protestant divinity relies upon a clear and simple hierarchy (*solus Christus*), the same is not true of the king’s court, which was instead organized in a complex rank order, with the status and duties of its members being carefully prescribed and designated by title.⁵⁵ The Apostles’ anxiety that one of their number might be given special favors by Christ must have resonated particularly strongly with some members of the congregation, all too accustomed to jealously observing others’ success and assessing their own standing on an almost daily basis. We might even speculate—not too wildly—that the notion of a single Apostle being allowed to follow where others could not would have evoked analogies with the elaborate system of access to the monarch that obtained at court.⁵⁶ But in 1626 Donne’s concentration on, and ultimate rejection of, matters of rank would have had special relevance. As Kevin Sharpe has shown, the most striking and immediate change from the previous reign was the new king’s establishment of “a tone of order, formality and decorum,” in complete contrast to his father’s somewhat chaotic court.⁵⁷ The Venetian ambassador reported this innovation and drew a contrast with the recent past:

The king observes a rule of great decorum. The nobles do not enter his apartments in confusion as heretofore, but each rank has its appointed place and he has declared that he desires the rules and maxims of the late

55. For a full list of the officers of the Chamber, see Aylmer, *The King’s Servants*, 473.

56. On the politics of access at court, see *ibid.*, 31. On James VI and I’s particular manipulation of the Bedchamber in this regard, see Neil Cuddy, “The Revival of the Entourage: The Bedchamber of James I, 1603–1625,” in David Starkey et al., *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (Harlow, U.K., 1987), 173–225. Anthony Milton points out that on Charles’s accession, “the degree of public access to the chapel royal was severely restricted”; Anthony Milton, ““That Sacred Oratory”: Religion and the Chapel Royal during the Personal Rule,” in *William Lawes (1602–1645): Essays on his Life, Times, and Work*, ed. Andrew Ashbee (Aldershot, U.K., 1998), 69–96 at 82.

57. Kevin Sharpe, “The Image of Virtue: The Court and Household of Charles I, 1625–1642,” in Starkey et al., *The English Court*, 226–60 at 229. On Charles’s “strict belief in rank and degree,” see further L. J. Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule* (Cambridge, 1989), 195. Cf. Richard Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life* (Harlow, U.K., 2005), 148–52.

Queen Elizabeth . . . The king has also drawn up rules for himself, dividing the day from his very early rising, for prayers, exercises, audiences, business, eating and sleeping.⁵⁸

The Chapel Royal was ordered along similar lines: particular seats were reserved for those entitled to them, and regulations first established by James I ordered that courtiers processing to Chapel should do so in orderly ranks “and not break them with pretences of speaking one with another . . . that being one of the most eminent and frequent occasions whereby men’s ranks in precedence are distinguished and discerned.”⁵⁹ A complex process of mediation, by courtiers in favor and courtiers in office, could meanwhile be observed in the part of the service when offerings were made:

a Groom of the Chamber was sent for the king’s donation—a noble (that is, 6s. 8d.). This was delivered to a Gentleman Usher, who in turn handed the coin to the most eminent nobleman present, “who shall kiss it and deliver it to the king immediately before the offering when the king is set on his knees . . .” After the king had kissed the chalice, he received the noble from the nobleman kneeling on his right and offered it to the cleric officiating.⁶⁰

Donne has thus acknowledged that hierarchy and rank, on earth and in heaven, are both fitting and necessary. But the entire final section of his sermon (271 lines in the California edition) is concerned with the eradication of such divisions and their replacement with a vision of total equality or “parity”—precisely the state that he had admitted “agrees not” with a monarchy or a church (VII.4.393–94). This is the “consolation” that Donne identifies as the “right use of the right sense” of the words of his text (VII.4.566), and in describing and then delivering it to his congregation he asserts in outspoken and unequivocal terms the authority he derives from his own office as preacher. Indeed, his very claim to be able to identify not only the “right sense” of his text but the “right use” of that sense is highly loaded, and points to his belief in the power of the preacher as an interpreter of scripture. From this point on, the sermon adopts a new register; in place of the expository tone mixed with biting anti-Catholic satire is a mode of address that combines intimacy with grandeur, as he celebrates the

58. *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. 19 [1625–26], 21; quoted in Sharpe, “The Image of Virtue,” 228.

59. James’s orders of 1623 are found in BL, Add. MS 34324, fol. 215r, quoted in Milton, “Religion and the Chapel Royal,” 94 n. 52. Milton points out that this undermines Sharpe’s insistence on the contrast between James’s and Charles’s courts; cf. Sharpe quoting Charles’s book of household regulations, probably compiled ca. 1630 (The National Archive, LC5/180, p. 16), which reproduce James’s orders verbatim, in “The Image of Virtue” (241). See, however, John Chamberlain’s comment in a letter of 9 April 1625 that Charles “continues settling his household and seeking to bring yt to the auncient forme . . . the court is kept more strait and privat then in the former time”; *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. N. E. McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1939), 2:609.

60. Sharpe, “The Image of Virtue,” 241, quoting BL, MS Sloane 1494, fols. 9–10.

preacher's powers and imagines for his congregation the many mansions that await them in the afterlife. If God offers His consolation "heartily" and "delightfully" (VII.4.585), the preacher's ability to convey this to his hearers is a privilege almost beyond measure. "Who but myself," asks Donne, "can conceive the sweetness of that salutation, when the Spirit of God sayes to me in a morning, Go forth today and preach, and preach consolation, preach peace, preach mercy" (VII.4.570–72). That mission raises the preacher to the status of a king; with the memory of Charles's coronation, just over two months earlier, in the minds of his auditory, he exclaims, "What a Coronation is our taking of Orders, by which God makes us a Royall Priesthood? And what an inthronization is the comming up into a Pulpit, where God invests his servants with his Ordinance[?]" (VII.4.591–94).⁶¹ Donne plays on the senses of "Ordinance" as the taking of holy orders, as the decrees of God that the preacher so invested conveys to his congregation, and as a whole system of government, rank, or order.⁶² Rather than the "frank acknowledgement of the king's and courtiers' worldly dignity" that McCullough finds here, perhaps we should hear instead a powerful assertion of an alternative and superior dignity: that of the sacred, not the secular, world.⁶³ That reading is certainly supported by the following lines, in which Donne revels in the extraordinary privilege he holds: "I should not onely be able to say, as Christ did to that poore soule, *Confide fili*, My son be of good comfort, but *Fratres & Patres mei*, My Brethren, and my Fathers, nay *Domini mei*, and *Rex meus*, My Lords and my King be of good comfort, your sins are forgiven you" (VII.4.610–14). Donne is a king speaking to a king; but God too is a king, who can "seale to me that Patent, *Ite prædicate omni Creaturae*, *Goe and preach the Gospell to every Creature*" (VII.4.614–15).⁶⁴ And when Donne acts as that king's courtier, he outranks several of those who would have been present at his sermon, for he acts "[n]ot as his Almoner to drop his consolation upon one soule, nor as his Treasurer to issue his consolation to a whole Congregation, but as his Ophir, as his Indies, to derive his gold, his precious consolation upon the King himselfe" (VII.4.629–33). One can only wonder what the almoner, Bishop George Mountain of London (a supporter of Montagu's, and opponent of Archbishop George Abbot) and treasurer (James Ley, first Earl of Marlborough and Lord Chief Justice of King's Bench, whose fiscal reputation was mixed, to say the least) would have made of this diminution of their offices.⁶⁵ Similarly, one might ask how those courtiers who sat as judges might have reacted to Donne's next rhetorical question, this time directly addressed to them: "What would a good Judge, a good natured Judge give in his Circuit, what would you, in whose breasts the Judgements of the Star-chamber, or other criminall Courts

61. Charles's coronation was on 2 February. On this passage, see McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," 186.

62. *OED*, s.v. "ordinance, *n.*" senses 11, 3a, 5, 14.

63. McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," 186.

64. Letters Patent were authorized with the Great Seal; hence this is the action of a king.

65. On Mountain, see *ODNB*, s.v. "Mountain [Montaigne], George" (by Andrew Foster), <http://www.oxforddnb/view/article/19038> (accessed 26 October 2009); on Ley, see *ODNB*, s.v. "Ley, James, first earl of Marlborough" (by Wilfred Prest), <http://www.oxforddnb/view/article/16619> (accessed 26 October 2009).

are, give, that you had a warrant from the King, to change the sentence of blood into a pardon, where you found a Delinquent penitent?" (VII.4.634–38).

Throughout this section of his sermon, Donne is at pains to contrast the limited efficacy of secular offices (they reach only "one soule," or at most "a whole Congregation") and their obligation to punish ("the sentence of blood") with the universal and merciful efficacy of his divine office. The contrast is effected in large part by his construction and development of an image system of feeding and rebirth, appropriate both to his text's promise of a place in God's "many mansions" and to its occasion, in the weeks following Easter. First Donne imagines himself, the preacher, as a man wrapped in "clouds of infirmity," from which God rains "dew" sweetened into manna; he then describes God opening the preacher's mouth to give his congregation "meat in due season." Next he identifies himself with Noah, the "Arke" his congregation, whom he will save and—outstripping Noah himself—even "offer these creatures a Metamorphosis, a transformation, a new Creation in Christ Jesus." And following this he reminds his listeners that the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, which is the spirit of consolation,⁶⁶

is not in a Vulture, that hovers over Armies, and infected Cities, and feeds upon carcasses, But the Holy Ghost is in a Dove, that would not make a Congregation a slaughter-house, but feeds upon corne, corne that hath in nature a disposition to a reviviscence, and a repullulation, and would imprint in you al, the consolation and sense of a possibility of returning to a new, and a better life. (VII.4.648–54)⁶⁷

Consolation, then, is the gift of God and the preacher, and it is the preacher's task to be a "Barnabas, a son of Consolation" (VII.4.664), not to imitate threatening Boanerges, or sons of thunder.⁶⁸ This celebration of the preacher's role is crucial to the argument of Donne's sermon, and leads seamlessly into its conclusion, as we shall see. But it is hard not to hear it also as a warning shot across the bows to those who would wish to diminish the importance of the sermon at court, as arguably happened once Laud became dean of the Chapel Royal in September 1626, following the death of Lancelot Andrewes.⁶⁹ Donne has by this point in his sermon looked his courtly congregation in the eye—at points, picking out individual holders of high office in the Chamber—and

66. Comfort, or consolation, is for Donne the primary attribute of the Holy Ghost, drawing on John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; see the list of instances of this usage in Troy D. Reeves, *An Annotated Index to the Sermons of John Donne*, 3 vols. (Salzburg, 1979–81), 3:102.

67. The linguistic pressure that Donne wishes to put on this message of rebirth through consolation is perhaps evinced in the fact that his use of "reviviscence" (return to life, or animation) is the earliest recorded in *OED*; his use of "repullulation" in IV.4.134 (preached on Ascension Day 1622, 30 May) is the earliest cited by *OED*; see also Thomas Howell, *A Sermon Preached at the Fvnerall of the Right Worshipfull Sir Robert Boteler Knight, of Wood-Hall: In the Parish of Watton in Hertford-shire, the ninth of Ianuary, 1622* [i.e., 1622/3] (London, 1623), STC 13873, sigs. B4r, C1v.

68. For Barnabas, see Acts 4:36; for Boanerges, the surname given by Christ to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, see Mark 3:17.

69. See McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," 198–99.

told them that their status is, in fact, inferior to his. He has explained that controversy of the sort initiated by his Roman Catholic opponents over the words of his text is divisive and concerns a matter of indifference (*adiaphora*), not of fundamental doctrine—and he has done so by himself employing vehement and vituperative language. These apparently distinct moves have in common their desire to redirect his congregation's attention from inessentials (the doctrine of degrees of glory in heaven, and worldly rank) to essentials (Christ's message of consolation as mediated by the preacher). Donne's next section continues this strategy, but raises it to a new level of intensity. It does so as he considers the four "beames" of consolation that his text offers: that God has a house; that it was his father's and so is now ours; that in that house there are mansions, and that there are *many* mansions.

The immediate connotation of God's house of many mansions is, Donne acknowledges, a courtly one: this could be construed as an image of grandeur, whereby heaven is a celestial version of Whitehall (itself a sprawling house of many mansions, containing at this time "perhaps two thousand or more rooms, with additional closets, garrets and kitchens").⁷⁰ Donne invites this interpretation even as he dismantles it, weaving the language of the court into his analysis: he contrasts heaven, God's "standing house," with the church, which is His "progresse house," or "removing house"—the places where a monarch would stay on a state progress, or when not in his or her main court buildings (Hampton Court was a "removing house" for the Stuart monarchs, for example).⁷¹ He notes the hyperbolic descriptions of heaven's glory found in the Bible (citing Rev. 21) in a work attributed to Augustine,⁷² and in the writings of the schoolmen, but then emphasizes that the consolation lies not in the magnificence of the house but in the security it affords (VII.4.730). This house is ours by inheritance; echoing Holy Sonnet 12, "Father, part of his double interest," Donne argues that "we are not joynt purchasers of Heaven with the Saints, but we are co-heires with Christ Jesus" (VII.4.733–34).⁷³ Moving on to the third "beame" of consolation, Donne once more distinguishes true consolation from distracting worldly concerns by invoking the physical details of the space in which his auditory sat, and in which they performed their duties:

... if the Consolation is not placed in this, That some of these Mansions
are below, some above staires, some better seated, better lighted, better

70. Sharpe, "The Image of Virtue," 229.

71. A standing house was a royal residence that "had its own standing complement of furniture which was never moved from one house to another"; see Sir John Summerson, "The King's Houses," in *The History of the King's Works*, ed. H. M. Colvin, 6 vols. (London, 1963–82), 4:1–364 at 28–29. For extensive analysis of the architectural settings of court preaching, see McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, chap. 1.

72. Anon. (ps. Augustine), *Meditationum Liber Unus, Caput XXVI. Rhythmus de Gloria paradisi*, ll. 13, 16 (*PL*, 40.920). Donne notes the uncertainty of the attribution to Augustine (VII.4.714).

73. I follow the numbering of the Holy Sonnets in the "revised sequence" taken by the Variorum editors to represent Donne's latest intentions for the poems; see *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne, volume 7 part 1: The Holy Sonnets*, ed. Dennis Flynn et al. (Bloomington, Ind., 2005). On Holy Sonnet 12, see Jeremy Maule, "Donne and the Words of the Law," in *Donne's Professional Lives*,

vaulted, better fretted, better furnished then others; but onely in this, That they are *Mansions*; which word, in the Originall, and Latin, and our Language, signifies a *Remaining*, and denotes the perpetuity, the everlastingnesse of that state. (VII.4.745–50)⁷⁴

Even the most fixed and tangible aspects of the court, or of its heavenly type—its architectural fixtures—are transitory and irrelevant compared to the eternity that is its defining feature and the source of its consolation.⁷⁵ This is a “state of but one Day, because no Night shall over-take, or determine it . . . *Methusalem*, with all his hundreds of yeares, was but a Mushrome of a nights growth, to this day” (VII.4.750–58). In this everlasting and secure state the final consolation once more mirrors, but almost unimaginably exceeds, a quality of life on earth, and in court, namely society and conversation. This is “one great element and ingredient into the joy, which we have in this world” (VII.4.775–76), but in heaven

we shall be so far from being enemies to one another, as that we shall not be strangers to one another: And so far from envying one another, as that all that every one hath, shall be every others possession: where all soules shall be so intirely knit together, as if all were but one soule, and God so intirely knit to every soule, as if there were as many Gods as soules. (VII.4.783–88)⁷⁶

Following this description, which combines admonition (not to pay too much attention to worldly and courtly cares) with pastoral edification (holding the glorious vision of conversation in heaven before his auditors, and placing them in a position of quite un-courtly equality), Donne’s peroration returns briefly to local and pressing concerns, as he warns his congregation away from “wrangling and disputing” over the real presence and counsels them not to fall into despair over the state of their souls.⁷⁷ His

ed. Colclough, 24–36. A “purchaser” is one who acquires property in any way other than by inheritance; cf. Holy Sonnet 12, l. 3.

74. Donne elsewhere stresses the significance of the present participle as a marker of eternity, and of eternal providence; cf. IX.3.254–70 and *passim*.

75. Cf. I.11–13: “Though as Princes are Gods, so their well-govern’d Courts, are Copies, and representations of Heaven; yet the Copy cannot be better then the Original.” For a rough description of the architecture of the Chapel Royal at Whitehall, see David Baldwin, *The Chapel Royal: Ancient and Modern* (London, 1990), 101–3.

76. Compare Donne’s celebrated description of heaven in a Whitehall sermon of 29 February 1627/8 as “that house . . . where there shall be no Cloud nor Sun, no darknesse nor dazzling, but one equall light, no noyse nor silence, but one equall musick, no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession, no foes nor friends, but one equall communion and Identity, no ends nor beginnings, but one equall eternity” (VIII.7.646–50). Cf. also his emphasis on the “*sociableness*, the *communicableness* of God” in a sermon of 13 June 1624 (VI.7.68–9) and on the “Communion of Joy and Glory with all” in heaven, in a St. Paul’s sermon on Easter Day 1624 (VI.2.542).

77. On 26 March Godfrey Goodman, bishop of Gloucester, had preached a sermon before the king which discussed the real presence and was considered to tread too closely to the borders of Roman Catholicism. Charles referred the matter to Convocation and appointed Laud, Abbot, Andrewes, and

disquisition on the conversation and equality of God's many mansions not only explicitly urges his auditors to turn their contemplation from worldly to heavenly matters, but it also, in one of the most dazzling yet subtle moves of the entire sermon, enacts the very contrast he has built up between what is evident before us and what awaits us. For this section consists in fact of unacknowledged quotations from, and glosses on, two texts by Donne's favorite Church Father, St. Augustine.⁷⁸ Appropriately for a sermon to the well-read members of Charles's court, Donne has cited no fewer than twenty-seven authors by this point, from Protestant and Catholic commentators to classical and more recent writers including Aristotle, Virgil, Livy, and Machiavelli. Five Church Fathers are quoted and acknowledged, with three of those quotations coming from Augustine. But in his passage on society in heaven Donne draws closely on the most obvious Augustinian work for his text: *In Joannis Evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, where the Saint provides his commentary on John 14:2. There Augustine explains that in heaven

God will be all in all in such a way, that, as God is love, love will bring it about that what is possessed by each will be common to all. For in this way every one really possesses it, when he loves to see in another what he has not himself. There will not, therefore, be any envying amid this diversity of brightness, since in all of them will be reigning the unity of love.⁷⁹

The most theologically learned of Donne's congregation would surely have noted the absence of any explicit allusion to Augustine's explication of the biblical text; they might also have recognized his silent incorporation of it into his own words. Such careful listeners may also have heard the invocation of another Augustinian text, this one more doctrinally pointed in its relevance to Donne's message: the very last chapter of *De civitate dei* (bk. 22, chap. 30, "Of the eternal felicity of the City of God, and of the perpetual Sabbath").⁸⁰ In this ecstatic conclusion to his great work, Augustine imagines the joy and wonder of heaven, pointedly contrasting them with the burdens and the sin of the city of man. In heaven there will be "true glory," "for none will be praised

Neile to adjudicate when it was discussed on 29 March. Donne would have been present and his chief auditor—the king—would surely have caught the reference. See Bald, *John Donne*, 482; ODNB, s.v. "Goodman, Godfrey" (by Nicholas W. S. Cranfield), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10977> (accessed 10 February 2009); James Bliss, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud, D.D.*, ed. James Bliss, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1847–60), 3:186; Peter Heylyn, *Cyprianus Anglicus: or, the history of the life and death of the most reverend and renowned Prelate William* (London, 1668), Wing H1669, sig. Xr; Jeremy Collier, *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain*, 2 vols. (London, 1708–14), 2:738. See further Shami, "Labels, Controversy, and the Language of Inclusion," 148–49.

78. On Donne and Augustine, see Katrin Ettenhuber, *Donne and Augustine: Renaissance Cultures of Interpretation* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press).

79. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium tractatus CXXIV, tractatus LXVII*, 2: "ita Deus erit omnia in omnibus, ut quoniam Deus Caritas est, per charitatem fiat ut quod habent singuli, commune sit omnibus. Sic enim quisque etiam ipse habet, cum amat in altero quod ipse non habet. Non erit itaque aliqua invidia impari claritatis, quoniam regnabit in omnibus unitas charitatis" (*PL*, 35.1812).

80. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), 1178–82. All translations are taken from this edition.

in error or flattery”; there will also be “true honour” and “true peace.”⁸¹ There may be, he admits (as Donne had admitted) “degrees of honour and glory” there, “but each will have the gift of not wanting more than he has.”⁸² And time will be an “eternal Sabbath”:

whose end will not be an evening, but the Lord’s Day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal rest not only of the Spirit, but of the body also. There we will rest and see, see and love, love and praise. Behold what will be, in the end to which there shall be no end! For what other end do we set for ourselves than to reach that kingdom of which there is no end?⁸³

At the end of his sermon of consolation, delivered just nine days after the message of Easter, Donne tacitly quotes the end of his master Augustine’s analysis of the failings of the secular state, itself a polemical statement of consolation. His concealment of his source is both a test of his auditory’s knowledge and a mimetic enacting of his entire argument: that essentials lie beyond and behind inessentials, and that they outstrip their earthly types in glory.⁸⁴ The court is a gilded house of many mansions, but it must not distract us from our contemplation of heaven; its officers have great power, but that power is as nothing compared to the preacher’s ability to convey God’s consolation; Donne is an eloquent preacher, but behind him is Augustine, Father and Doctor of the Church. Having negotiated the troubled waters of controversy to find a place of stillness and devotion, Donne can conclude his pastoral discourse with a final, direct, and unambiguous piece of counsel to his courtly audience, and his king, applicable to their daily lives at Whitehall as much as to their daily prayers: “Trouble not thy selfe with dignity, and priority, and precedency in Heaven, for Consolation and Devotion consist not in that, and thou wilt be the lesse troubled with dignity, and priority, and precedency in this world, for Rest and Quietnesse consist not in that” (VII.4.834–38).

Downstairs: Society, Service, and Sin

On Sunday, 30 April, Donne preached to the other half of the king’s court: his Household “below stairs.” Peter McCullough described this as “the only example I know of a sermon unambiguously assigned to ‘the household’”; while I have identified two other such sermons, Donne’s nonetheless remains a rare example of what McCullough calls “household fare,” and it sheds fascinating light on the ways that a preacher might have tuned his discourse to an auditory that was distinct from and yet sometimes similar to that “above stairs.”⁸⁵ Although the relationship between the two auditories was porous,

81. *Ibid.*, 1178, 1179.

82. *Ibid.*, 1179.

83. *Ibid.*, 1182.

84. Donne’s strategy here also contrasts with Montagu’s polemical use of Augustine’s writings throughout both *A gagg* and *Appello Caesarem* as proof texts for his controversial opinions.

85. McCullough, “Donne as Preacher at Court,” 185; as McCullough explains, “members of the court elite could and did attend both sermons. The two other Household sermons that I know of are George Meriton, *The Christian Mans Assvring House. And A Sinners Conuersion. Two Sermons*,

the permeability only operated in one direction; that is, members of the Chamber could attend sermons to the Household, but not vice versa. Donne's 30 April sermon displays a number of striking markers of its address to a different congregation from that of the Chamber, the most blatant of which evince a sense of the Household's lower intellectual capacity. At times, as McCullough says, Donne's tone is one of "near condescension";⁸⁶ his syntax is often far simpler than that of the 18 April sermon; he pays no attention to the vexed questions of translation that had occupied him two weeks previously; and the forest of references to controversialists and secular authors with which the Chamber had been confronted is trimmed down severely.⁸⁷ But this sermon is directed to the composition, and the perceived needs, of its hearers in more subtle ways, too; as with the previous appearance at court, he carefully develops a discourse of pastoral edification that speaks to his congregation as a society in miniature and that addresses very current concerns of that society.

Although they were preached twenty-three years apart, and by churchmen of quite different doctrinal colors, the other two Household sermons I have located share some noteworthy features. George Meriton's fiercely Calvinist sermon to James's Household of 1614 makes use of courtly analogies; speaking of Christ's mission on earth, he reminds his congregation that "[w]hen Kings are in their Courts, and keepe their Priuy Chambers, none may speake vnto them, nor yet approach neere them, but Nobles and parsonages of great account: but if they walke into the fields, take a iourney, or ride a hunting, euery shepherd and Peasant of the Country may haue free accesse and speake his minde."⁸⁸ He further declares that "*Wisdome* doth teach vs to square

The former, preached before the Prince his Highnesse at St. Iames: The other to his Maiesties Houshold at Whitehall, on Sunday the 6. of February (London, 1614), STC 17837; and John Gore, *The Man for Heaven. A Sermon Preached at the Court to his Majesties Houshold, Anno Domini, 1637* (London, 1639), STC 12073. Meriton (d. 1624) was chaplain to James I and Anne of Denmark; he was elected dean of Peterborough in 1612 and dean of York in 1617; see *ODNB*, s.v. "Meriton, George" (by Bertha Porter; rev. Lori Anne Ferrell), <http://www.oxforddnb/view/article/18588> (accessed 2 November 2009). Gore was instituted to the rectory of Wendon Lofts, Essex, on 7 March 1621 on the presentation of John Mead, Esq., the county's High Sheriff, whose "chaplain" he described himself as. He matriculated at Lincoln College, Oxford, on 7 December 1616, was ordained deacon at Salisbury Cathedral by Bishop Fotherby on 18 September 1619 and priest on 27 May 1621 by Bishop Morton of Coventry and Lichfield. He was still rector at Wendon Lofts in 1640. See *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835*, <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk> Person ID 26548 (accessed 20 March 2010). I am indebted to Kenneth Fincham for this information. See also Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 216–18.

86. McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court," 186.

87. In contrast to the 18 April sermon's twenty-seven citations (five to the Fathers, and twenty-two to other authors), the 30 April sermon contains considerably fewer, several of which are inaccurate: Augustine is cited four times (though one of these references is in fact to Gregory the Great, and one to Jerome); Ambrose twice (though one reference is to St. Bonaventure—see below); Gregory of Nyssen twice, and Clement of Alexandria, Hilary, Chrysostom, and Jerome once; and there are five citations of others (the Jesuit Maldonatus is cited twice; Barradas, Cicero, and Chrysologos once).

88. Meriton, *The Christian Mans Assvring House. And A Sinners Conuersion*, sig. F3v (note that sig. F3 is mis-signed E3). This sermon is marginally less hotly Calvinist than that preached to Charles's court at St. James, which is on the text, "Wherefore Brethren the rather giue diligence to make your Calling and Election sure" (2 Peter 1:10); it asserts, *inter alia*, that "the number of the elect in the iudgement of verity, is small" (sig. B4r).

and apply our selues vnto that place wherein we are conuersant: A Courtier must not behaue himselfe like a Country man, nor a Country man like a Courtier.”⁸⁹ The Arminian John Gore’s sermon to Charles’s household, preached in 1637, pays more sustained attention to the nature of its auditory. As well as using courtly analogies (“after you have served and attended our gracious King and Queene below, you may be preferred and taken up by the Angels of Heaven to accompany and attend the King of Glory above”),⁹⁰ like Meriton Gore addresses his hearers directly, telling them at the outset that “here is a Text of Scripture fit for persons of your rank and quality,” and even exploiting the way that they were physically disposed around the chapel: he tells them that charity is “a celestiall, a heavenly quality, whether it bee in men or women; in persons of noble, or of meaner rank.”⁹¹ It was, of course, precisely according to rank and gender that the congregation were seated before him, and one can imagine the gesture that would have accompanied this passage. Gore also deploys a range of homely metaphors that were presumably chosen with his household auditory in mind,⁹² and he applies his text (Phil. 3:20: “Our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we looke for the Saviour, the Lord Iesus Christ”)—as Donne had his—to their experiences as a community: “You know there is no one thing that breeds so much entirenesse, so much familiarity and acquaintance among all sorts of persons, as living, and loving, and conversing together.”⁹³

Donne’s sermon to the Household goes further than Meriton’s or Gore’s in its applicability to his auditory, although he is careful to make the *applicatio* itself (the second section of his second, “Catechistical” part, how the words of the text are “necessary for us”) as universal as possible (VII.5.143, 75–76). On close inspection, it can be seen that the sermon speaks directly and comfortingly to a congregation who had quite clearly defined duties in the court; who were under some pressure at a time of transition; and who, while unified by their status as members of Charles’s household, doubtless took a variety of places on the spectrum of belief available within the English church in the mid-1620s. Preaching on Matthew 9:13 (“I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”), Donne addressed the question of service (how should it be defined, and how best carried out?) and attempted to establish criteria for conformity that would take into account the hazards of sin that beset Christians at every moment of their lives.

Like the Chamber, the king’s Household in 1626 was experiencing change and scrutiny in the months following Charles’s accession. This section of the court was, as we have seen, concerned above all with provision: its roughly 305 officers (plus around

89. Meriton, *The Christian Mans Assvring House. And A Sinners Conuersion*, sig. G4r.

90. Gore, *The Man for Heaven*, sig. A3r.

91. *Ibid.*, sig. C4r.

92. See Gore, *The Man for Heaven*, sigs A4v (“Iust as you see a Hog, that never looks to Heaven, till he be over-turned...”) and C1v–C2r (“let us doe by our affections, as Husband-men do by their corne, if it lie low in a damp room...”).

93. Gore, *The Man for Heaven*, sig. B2v. Gore’s analysis of conversation is an instructive contrast to Donne’s in his 18 April sermon, and is also dependent on Augustine for its description of charity and of the eternal sabbath.

195 servants' servants) were responsible, under the authority of the Lord Steward and his Board of Greencloth, for the supply and preparation of food and drink that would be consumed by the Chamber, as well as, crucially, for the management of finances required for this. Its departments included the cellar, the kitchen, the larder, the bakehouse, the woodyard, and the servants of the hall.⁹⁴ Despite—or perhaps because of—the Household's elaborate hierarchy, it was a site of appalling waste, due in part to inefficiency and incompetence and in part to speculation and sharp practice.⁹⁵ Above stairs Charles had made it his mission to introduce order, decorum, and sobriety; below stairs the problems were more far reaching, and required considerable administrative effort if these Augean stables were to be thoroughly cleaned. The first efforts at reform took place in the year of Donne's sermon, but a more profound and efficient overhaul had to wait until 1629–32.⁹⁶ Knowledge of abuses in the household was widespread, and these had been the subject of a heated attack by Sir Edward Coke at the Oxford Parliament of 1625; his focus was on the needless multiplication of offices and hangers-on, with a sideswipe at the social mobility whereby merchants were able to obtain positions of influence and “leap from the shop to the Green Cloth.”⁹⁷

The Household was in flux in another way. Since the death of the Marquess of Hamilton in 1625, its head office of Lord Steward had lain vacant, with the duties in Parliament being undertaken by William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, and Edward Somerset, fourth Earl of Worcester (for the 1625 and 1626 parliaments, respectively). At the time that Donne was preaching, therefore, Somerset was temporary Lord Steward. The situation would be resolved in August 1626 when Pembroke took over permanently, giving his office of Lord Chamberlain (the head of the Chamber) to his brother, Philip Herbert (later fourth Earl of Pembroke).⁹⁸ Pembroke and Somerset were among the most important figures at court and had played significant parts in Charles's coronation;⁹⁹ furthermore, in early 1626 Pembroke was exercising his con-

94. See Aylmer, *The King's Servants*, 472–73, for details of the numbers of officers and the departments of the Household. For an insight into the vast amount of personnel and equipment attached to the Household, see Arthur MacGregor, “The Household below Stairs: Officers and Equipment of the Stuart Court,” in *The Late King's Goods: Collections, Possessions, and Patronage of Charles I in the Light of the Commonwealth Sale Inventories*, ed. Arthur MacGregor (Oxford, 1989), 367–86.

95. Aylmer, *The King's Servants*, 31. On the Household's bureaucratic structure in the sixteenth century, see Loades, *The Tudor Court*, 42.

96. See G. E. Aylmer, “Attempts at Administrative Reform, 1625–1640,” *English Historical Review* 72, no. 283 (1957): 229–59 at 230, 246–48. Aylmer notes at p. 248 the deleterious effect of heavy spending in 1625–26; the first reforms took place in June 1626.

97. See *Proceedings in Parliament 1625*, ed. Maija Jansson and William B. Bidwell (New Haven, Conn., 1987), 400. Coke's speech was part of the debate on supply on 5 August; it circulated widely in manuscript. For various versions of his comments on the Household, see 392, 405, 408, 546, and 658. Coke's direct target was Sir Simon Harvey, clerk comptroller of the Household, a former grocer who had already been named in the Commons' list of grievances in 1624. See further Stephen D. White, *Sir Edward Coke and the Grievances of the Commonwealth* (Manchester, 1979), 210.

98. See Sir John Sainty's provisional online list of office holders, hosted by the Institute for Historical Research: <http://www.history.ac.uk/resources/greencloth.html> (accessed 4 November 2009).

99. Worcester appeared at the coronation as Lord Great Chamberlain; Pembroke bore the crown. See *ODNB*, s.v. “Somerset, Edward, fourth earl of Worcester” (by Pauline Croft), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26005> (accessed 4 November 2009); *ODNB*, s.v. “Herbert, William, third earl of Pembroke” (by Victor Stater), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13058> (accessed 4 November 2009).

siderable parliamentary influence against his former protégé, Buckingham.¹⁰⁰ But the two men also represented very different styles of doctrinal affiliation (showing also how fluid such affiliation could be): Somerset, while in the words of his biographer “impeccably conformist,” nonetheless sheltered a Jesuit at his estate and granted the order lands and farms; his wife was rumored to be a Roman Catholic; and several of his children certainly were.¹⁰¹ Pembroke, meanwhile, was, in the words of Nicholas Tyacke, a “moderate Calvinist”: known for his godly Protestantism and anti-Spanish convictions (as chancellor of Oxford University he had opposed the Arminian faction), he had spoken against the doctrine of predestination at the York House conference.¹⁰² Donne was acquainted with Pembroke (Bald goes so far as to describe him as a “friend”), and sat on the court of High Commission with him in November 1627, but we know nothing of the state of their relations at this point.¹⁰³ It is possible that they were strained, and Donne must certainly have been performing an awkward balancing act, given his continuing reliance upon Buckingham’s favor.¹⁰⁴ A range of religious affiliation and belief existed at Charles’s court; in the early months of his rule, widespread curiosity and anxiety prevailed over which direction the king’s own ecclesiastical patronage would take. Charles’s chapel at St. James’s had encompassed godly preachers even as his father moved toward hardened anti-Calvinism; in early 1626 it was yet unclear which party would be ascendant in the new reign—a question partly resolved with the appointment of Laud as dean of the Chapel Royal in September of that year.¹⁰⁵ As Donne was preaching, then, churchmen were jostling for position, a

100. See *ODNB*, s.v. “Herbert, William.”

101. See *ODNB*, s.v. “Somerset, Edward.” There is also evidence that late in Elizabeth’s reign Somerset’s secretary was serving as the Jesuit Robert Persons’s principal intelligencer, supplying information about Privy Council discussions. See Patrick Martin and John Finnis, “The Identity of ‘Anthony Rivers,’” *Recusant History* 26 (2002): 39–74. I am grateful to Kenneth Fincham for this reference.

102. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 169. On Pembroke’s role at York House, see further White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic*; Donagan, “The York House Conference Revisited.” Pembroke was also a patron of his kinsman George Herbert.

103. See Bald, *John Donne*, 351 (a letter from Pembroke to Doncaster in 1619, sending the earl’s “best loue” to Donne), 420–21 (the case in High Commission against Sir Robert Howard and Lady Purbeck). John Donne Jr. edited Pembroke’s poems in 1660 and made a (characteristically dubious) claim to kinship with the Herberts (Bald, *John Donne*, 21).

104. Donne hoped to draw on Buckingham’s protection when he was questioned over the sermon delivered at court on 1 April 1627 (VII.16); see Bald, *John Donne*, 493, quoting John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (London, 1651), Wing D1864, sig. 2R3v. Note, however, that as Lord Chamberlain Pembroke was nominally in control of the court preaching lists, so Donne’s presence suggests his continuing favor.

105. See McCullough, “Donne a Preacher at Court,” 189–91, and n. 66 above. Andrewes died on 25 September 1626; on 30 September Buckingham informed Laud that the king would appoint him as Andrewes’s successor; *The Works of Laud*, ed. Bliss, 3:196. Laud was sworn in by the sub-dean, Stephen Boughton, on 6 October 1626; see *The Cheque Books of the Chapel Royal*, ed. Andrew Ashbee and John Harley, 2 vols. (Aldershot, U.K., 2000), 1:109. On the question of Charles’s doctrinal position, note the meeting between Andrewes, Laud, Neile, and Wren in 1623, where the bishops inquired as to the prince’s attitude to the Church of England (Christopher Wren, *Parentalia, or the Family of the Wrens* [1745], 69); Cosin’s conviction after York House that the king supported “our cause” (Cosin, *Works of John Cosin*, ed. J. Sansom, 5 vols. [1843–55], 2:74), and Montagu’s gloomier assessment that “the king and God favour us never so little”; *Correspondence of John Cosin*, ed. G. Ornsby, 2 vols. (1869–72), 1:90.

situation thrown into particularly strong light by the hitherto unnoticed fact that on the day that he delivered his sermon to the Household, the preacher to the Chamber was William Laud himself.¹⁰⁶

What “household fare” did Donne offer to his congregation of courtiers and cooks amid all of this? A defining feature of his sermon is its concentration on faith and action in daily life, and its—relatively simple—structure reinforces the focus on his scriptural text’s efficacy and applicability in its original context and in the present. The *divisio* sets out its component parts as follows, each being further divided into four subsections that in turn frequently divide into two (line numbers in parenthesis):¹⁰⁷

Part I (Historical): the occasion of Christ’s words

- (i) Christ justified feasting (129–201)
- (ii) He justified feasting in an Apostle’s house (202–58)
- (iii) He justified feasting in the company of publicans and sinners (259–362)
- (iv) The iniquity of the Pharisees’ calumny against him
 - (a) in its manner (363–90)
 - (b) in its matter (391–445)

Bridge: Christ’s words are a response to this calumny (446–91)

Part II (Catechistical): the words themselves

- (i) The Actions:
 - (a) Christ is actually come (492–505)
 - (b) he is come freely (506–27)
- (ii) The Errand: he is come to call, not
 - (a) to meet us (528–49)
 - (b) to compel us (550–92)

Digression: the necessity of preaching (593–615)
- (iii) The Persons:
 - (a) negative (not the righteous) (616–92)
 - (b) positive (but sinners) (693–741)
- (iv) The Effect: to repentance, not
 - (a) to satisfaction (741–62)
 - (b) to glory (763–91)

Peroration (792–826)

Donne’s exordium seems at first curiously disjointed from the sermon proper and its focus on the context of Christ’s words. He begins with a rather schoolmasterly (and far from original) disquisition on the discrepancies between the Gospels, pointing out that some things appear in only one of them, some things in all four, and some—like his present text—in some but not all. But he uses this to establish some of his main themes in the minds of his auditory: the examples of things that appear in only one

106. *Works of Laud*, ed. Bliss, 3:189: “April 30. Sunday, I preached before the King at White-Hall” (“Die Solis, Concionem habui apud White-Hall coram rege”). Laud’s sermon does not survive.

107. Parenthetical line numbers refer to Potter and Simpson’s text.

Gospel move from the domestic (Joseph's suspicion of Mary's pregnancy; Matt. 1:19) to the ceremonial (Christ's use of "ceremonies" in healing the deaf and dumb man; Mark 7:31), then to the personal and devotional (Mary and Joseph losing Christ in the Temple; Luke 2:42), and, finally to Christ's approval of the use of his creatures (his changing of water into wine at the marriage in Cana; John 2:1–11) (VII.5.141–42, 1–46). Donne's example of something common to all four evangelists raises another of his sermon's primary concerns: the inefficacy of human works and actions without God's grace. John the Baptist's declaration that he was not worthy to carry Christ's shoes is interpreted by Donne to show "[t]hat the best endeavours of Gods best servants, are unprofitable, unavailable in themselves, otherwise then as Gods gracious acceptation inanimates them" (VII.5.52–54).¹⁰⁸ Finally, he explains why his text appears in all the Gospels except John's: "onely S. *John*, who doth especially extend himself about the divine nature of Christ, pretermits it; but all the rest, who insist more upon his assuming our nature, and working our salvation in that, the Holy Ghost hath recorded, and repeated this protestation of our Saviour's" (VII.5.60–64). This emphasis on Christ incarnate and among his people mirrors Donne's pastoral aims in his sermon: his is a homiletic discourse focused on the obligations and the spiritual dangers of daily life—and life in the king's Household. It is the most glaring contrast with his 18 April sermon, whose movement was in precisely the opposite direction, from earthly to heavenly things (and in this context it is worth restating that the earlier sermon drew its text from John's Gospel).¹⁰⁹

As his use of John the Baptist's statement of humility suggests, Donne is concerned in this sermon to remind his congregation that all their best efforts are as nothing if they are not subject to God's grace. While dismissing a Roman Catholic (or extreme Arminian) works-based theory of justification, he also avoids the opposite extreme: in the second part of the sermon he explains that Christ came neither to meet man (since man has no "pre-disposition in Nature to invite God") nor to compel him (Donne dismisses the idea of irresistible grace to "the later School," that is, Reformed scholastics such as Perkins; VII.5.532–33, 552). In effect, Donne invoked the technical and controversial debates over free will and necessity only to sideline them almost entirely. Thus, while outlining a moderate (some at the time would have said Arminian) position, this aspect of his sermon is nonetheless hortatory and admonitory. Its final section (II.iv in the scheme above) is a call to repentance. But this is not a fire-and-brimstone call to repent in the face of divine judgment; both the final section and the sermon as a whole are directed above all at the promulgation of a comfortable doctrine, and one especially suited to Household officers and servants.

Part I of Donne's sermon is at once historical and contemporary in its focus. It purports to establish the context of Christ's words, but the context that it conjures up would be strikingly familiar to the Household below stairs. The occasion was a feast

108. See Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27.

109. The Gospels provide scriptural texts for the largest number of Donne's sermons (thirty-seven altogether), the sources for the two sermons considered here (John and Matthew) share top billing, providing sixteen each (X, p. 295). The 18 April sermon is the only sermon on John given to Charles's court.

laid on by St Matthew “at his house, soon after his calling to the Apostleship” (ll. 68–69), to which he admitted publicans and sinners. Supplying and arranging feasts was one of the Household’s primary duties, as we have seen; and there may have been a few wry smiles among its members at the thought of the publicans and sinners who had dined at court, as well as at the Pharisees within and outside the court who cast aspersions on such feasting. Donne vigorously defends feasting, and takes his warrant from Christ’s own actions both in his text and in the example he had previously given from the wedding at Cana; twice in the space of a few lines he refers to Christ’s approval of the “plentiful use of God’s creatures” (VII.5.45, 82), and the language of plenty recurs.¹¹⁰ This feasting is “more than was merely necessary, for society, and cheerful conversation”: it is apparently excessive, but actually essential (VII.5.79–80).¹¹¹ The lesson to be taken is one of toleration: toleration of what might seem to be indulgence of the flesh, and toleration of those who might seem beyond the pale: “we must not be in things of ordinary conversation, over-curious, over-inquisitive of other mens manners: for whatsoever their manners be, a good man need not take harm by them, and he may do good amongst them” (VII.5.84–88). Quoting St. Bonaventure on God’s creation of light (but attributing the quotation to Ambrose), Donne argues that “God . . . had made creatures to no purpose, if he had not allow’d Man a use, and an enjoying of those creatures” (VII.5.134–36);¹¹² he goes on to explain that such enjoyment is a part of our service to God. We must not assume, he states, that serving God requires us to abandon all our worldly possessions and duties; such service can in fact sit easily with cheerful conversation and, by implication, with service to a secular master (VII.5.202–58).

This is not to say that we, like Christ and his Apostles, will not be criticized for feasting, and especially for feasting with sinners. Donne first addresses the potential dangers associated with keeping bad company (including a brief digression on the honorable status of publicans, who were the ancient equivalent of early modern tax-farmers),¹¹³ and then exposes the Pharisees’ lack of charity. Their calumny is full of “iniquity,” because it is not spoken openly, but as a “privy whispering” (VII.5.364, 369): it is slanderously and divisively addressed to Christ’s servants. Again this would have strong resonances for Donne’s audience, some of whom would have been the subject of such whispering, and some of whom would doubtless have been party to it; and these

110. See VII.5.167, 232.

111. Again Donne hammers home his point by repeating “cheerfulness of conversation” at l. 83; cf. VII.5.130, 177, 180, 196–97, 206.

112. Donne’s tag, “*Frustra fecisset*,” is taken from Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum*, II, Art. 1, Quaest. 1, 4: “if, therefore, on the first and second day there were no plants to be warmed, nor animals, nor men, to whom this light would be of use, it seems that God would have made it in vain on the first day” (“si ergo primo et secundo die non erant plantae, quae foverentur, nec animalia nec homines, quibus ista lux aliquod ferret obsequium, videtur, quod Deus frustra fecisset eam in primo dierum”). Donne uses the same tag (again attributed to Ambrose) in IV.3. 803–5. On the distinction between use and enjoyment (*usus* and *fruitio*) see Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 1.22–23 (*PL*, 34.26–27).

113. Many of the members of Charles’s court would have performed publican-like activities; Donne quotes Cicero’s description of publicans as “*Flos Equitum Romanorum, Ornamentum Civitatis, Firmamentum Reipub.*” (VII.5.314–16; quoting Cicero, *pro Plancio*, 9). On tax- and custom-farming, see *OED*, s.v. “farmer,” sense 1. See further n. 117 below.

resonances are intensified by a direct analogy: the Pharisees “would aliene Christ from his Disciples, and his Disciples from him; the King from his Subjects by some tales, and the Subjects from the King by other” (VII.5.377–80). Equally, the iniquity lies in the Pharisees’ failure to acknowledge the necessity of charity toward sinners:

howsoever we have a perfect hatred, and a religious despite against a sinner, as a sinner; yet if Christ Jesus shall have been pleased to come to his door, and to have stood, and knock’d, and enter’d, and sup’d, and brought his dish, and made himself that dish, and seal’d a reconciliation to that sinner, in admitting him to that Table, to that Communion, let us forget the name of Publican, the Vices of any particular profession; and forget the name of sinner, the history of any mans former life; and be glad to meet that man now in the arms, and to grow up with that man now in the bowels of Christ Jesus. (VII.5.421–30)¹¹⁴

This exhortation to charity, and fierce dismissal of pharasaical puritanism, provides Donne with the perfect bridge to the second part of his sermon. He moves—by way of a brief and pointed assertion of the need to answer calumnies, and not let them take root—from the presence of Christ at St. Matthew’s feast, to a consideration of his errand, announced in the second part of the text, and he does so by merging the historical feast with the “feast” that is the Eucharist; itself imagined as an invitation to sinners to come to God. The dietary imagery of this passage is heavily loaded, so that we are led from the idea of supping with Christ to supping *on* him, and finally to growing, in regeneration, *in* Christ—in his very “bowels.” That journey is only possible if we hear and understand the words, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The discussion of service in the first part has created an apparently clear division between the righteous and sinners: Christ and the Apostles are surely the righteous; the publicans and sinners invited to their table, and the Pharisees, are the sinful ones. But Donne almost immediately breaks down this distinction as he moves into the application of his text; for none of us is an Apostle, and Christ is not with us in person. Indeed, we are not even capable of inviting him to us, but we can be called to him, and we are called by preaching: “not by the Word read at home, though that be a pious exercise; nor by the Word submitted to private interpretation; but *by the Word preached*” (VII.5.594–96). Preaching is done under God’s “Great Seal” (cf. above, n. 64) and, Donne warns (with a backward glance to his opening mention of Mary and Joseph’s loss of Christ in the Temple), “if there be a discontinuing or slackning of preaching, there is a danger of loosing Christ” (VII.5.597, 603–5).¹¹⁵

The distinction between the righteous and sinners is finally exploded when Donne considers whom Christ came to call: there are, he asserts emphatically, no righteous in the world. The “righteous” referred to by Christ are “those who thought themselves righteous” (II. 668–69); they are, in historical but also in very charged local

114. For “a perfect hatred,” see Ps. 139:22; Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.6.

115. On this passage, see McCullough, “Donne as Preacher at Court,” 198–99.

terms, Pelagians and Puritans, who either “thought Nature sufficient without Grace” or “thought the Grace which they had received sufficient” (VII.5.681, 683). We are all sinners; we are all called to repentance (and by implication, we are all promised redemption); but some, like the publicans (and the courtiers?), “by their very profession and calling, are led into tentations, and occasions of sin, to which some Callings are naturally more exposed then other” (VII.5.715–17). This should not, Donne dryly and darkly adds, lead a man to hope for sureness of salvation because he has “supplanted more in the Court, or oppressed more in the City” (VII.5.730–31): it is not the extent of a person’s sin that saves him, but the extent of his repentance.¹¹⁶ Repentance is what Christ demands: he neither requires satisfaction (which would be an impossible burden to place on his people) nor promises immediate glory “without doing any thing between” (VII.5.764–65).¹¹⁷ Treading a middle course again between Puritanism and Pelagianism, despair and complacency, Donne ends his sermon by returning to its beginning. There he had used John the Baptist’s self-abnegation to remind his congregation of the ineffectual nature of their works unless they are animated by God’s grace; in its second part he quoted Augustine, asking, “How should I pray at first, that God would come into me, whenas I could not onely not have the spirit of prayer, but not the spirit of life, and being, except God were in me already?” (VII.5.534–36).¹¹⁸ Now he shows that the action required of all men, of all sinners, is to respond to God’s call with repentance, which he describes in resolutely physical terms: “it is *Aversio*, and *Conversio*; it is a turning from our sins, and a returning to our God” (VII.5.778–79).¹¹⁹ Service, to God or to the King, involves and requires feasting—the feast of the Eucharist (“he feasts you often here”), or courtly feasts—and “he admits Publicans to this feast, men whose full and open life, in Court, must necessarily expose them to many hazards of sin” (VII.5.794–96). The very generosity of the English Church’s attitude to communion means that “the Pharisees, our adversaries [that is, the Roman Catholics] calumniate us for this; they say we admit men too easily to the Sacrament; without confession, without contrition, without satisfaction” (VII.5.796–98). This, Donne counters, is a calumny as iniquitous as that directed at Christ’s Apostles, and as necessary to resist and to refute.¹²⁰

The entire movement of Donne’s sermon has been from passivity to action; from an acknowledgment of the fruitlessness of men’s actions to an exhortation to take action. By passing over controversial topics such as free will and grace, he redirects his hearers’ attention to the implications for them in their daily lives. In a location where service, allegiance, calumny, and even feasting were at the forefront of everyone’s mind, Donne aptly concentrates on the question of how to live, and how to perform

116. Donne’s example is St. Paul, whose self-description as the “chief of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15) he interprets as meaning “not that he was *primum peccator*, but *primus Confessor*” (ll. 739–40).

117. Donne refers to those who promise immediate glory as “Farmers,” continuing his allusions to tax collecting (cf. ll. 310, 321).

118. Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.2.2.

119. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [1559], trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, Mass., 2008), 3.3.5 (388–89).

120. In his riposte to these Roman Catholic calumnies Donne sounds close—whether deliberately or not it is impossible to tell—to some of Montagu’s comments; see Montagu, *A gagg for the new Gospel!*, sigs. M2r; N1r.

one's duties with cheerfulness, charity, and godliness. Among the many obligations laid upon his auditory, one is paramount, and stands out from the regularity and repetitiveness of others. That one obligation is repentance, which is singular and eternal: it is, he asserts in his ringing last clause, with its triplicate use of the prefix "ever," "an everlasting Divorce from our beloved sin, and an everlasting Marriage and super-induction of our ever-loving God" (ll. 825–26).

In his sermon to the Chamber on 18 April, Donne deftly combined controversy with consolation. He invoked the splendid surroundings of Whitehall, and directly addressed his noble and royal auditory, while revealing their insignificance in comparison with the glories of heaven's "many mansions" and the conversation to be enjoyed on the "eternal Sabbath." Speaking to the humbler audience of the Household on 30 April, he acknowledged the "hazards of sin" into which courtiers and servants might all too easily fall—backbiting; an overindulgence of the flesh; assurance of salvation, or despair at the possibility of reprobation—and converted them, again, to a consolatory message, encouraging a proper enjoyment of God's creatures and of sociability, a forthright repudiation of slander, and a full and proper repentance and answering of Christ's call. Preaching "on the mountaine, and . . . in the plaine," Donne identified the pastoral needs of his two related congregations, and adroitly provided for each: acknowledging current controversies in order to diminish them, he urged members of the Chamber to look beyond themselves, and those of the Household to look to themselves. Such a commitment to edification, and awareness of the power and peril of his office, gives Jasper Mayne's deliberate and satirical hyperbole a more serious application:

In such temper would thy Sermons flow,
So well did Doctrine, and thy language show,
And had that holy feare, as, hearing thee,
The Court would mend, and a good Christian bee.¹²¹

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121. "On Dr. DONNES death: by Mr. Mayne of Christ-Church in Oxford," in John Donne, *Poems, by J. D. With elegies on the authors death* (London, 1633), STC 7045, sig. 3E2r.

