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THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN DONNE'S DEVOTIONS

THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN DONNE'S
DEVOTIONS UPON EMERGENT OCCASIONS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to show that John Donne arranged his Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions according to a carefully considered, overall plan. A detailed study of shifts in theme, imagery, tone and style throughout the Devotions reveals patterns demonstrating that Donne brought all the stylistic and compositional skills he had as a writer to bear upon the creation of his book. The inadequacy of critical attention given to the Devotions' structure is an important cause of the confusing diversity of presently available scholarship. A secondary benefit of this structural analysis, then, is that it will help focus attention on the better aspects of this scholarship.

Each of the twenty-three Devotions is composed of a Meditation, an Expostulation and a Prayer, but only in the most general terms is it possible to define these three sections as having a uniform nature throughout the book. The important changes that take place show that the Devotions were meant to be arranged into groups of three, and this may be further arranged into a "three-six-six-three-three-two" pattern. This progression is based on the analogy of a Christian's life with the seven days that are outlined in Expostulation 14. The first three Devotions encompass matters pertaining to the first day, the day of God's visitation of Donne with sickness. The next six involve the temporary stabilization of the disease and Donne's close examination of his conscience. On this second day God affords Donne many helps: Devotions 4-6 deal with the aid of a single physician, and Devotions 7-9 involve a multiplication of this aid. Devotions 10-12 and 13-15

deal with, respectively, a resurgence and an intensification of Donne's illness, leading him momentarily to dispute God's mercy. However, he performs the duties of the third "day" by preparing himself for a receiving of God's sacraments. This trial indeed prepares him for the fourth day, the day of his physical dissolution, which almost literally comes in Devotions 16-18 since he claims to die vicariously in the death of the man "for whom the bell tolls." Devotions 19-21 deal with the fifth day, or the day of a Christian's resurrection, which Donne links with his recovery from sickness. The last two Devotions deal with the weaknesses of body and soul, both of which are subject to relapses either into disease or sin. However, God's judgement (on this sixth day) has been manifested to Donne, and his sins have been "fully pardoned." With these last words of the Devotions Donne looks forward to the attainment of God's "everlasting Mercy," and an implied twenty-fourth Devotion may be postulated for this seventh, final day, opening out into eternity. Donne strongly suggests that the reader is to associate a possible twenty-fourth Devotion with this final day, since it would not only complete the series of tripartite groupings in the Devotions, but it would also constitute the last hour in God's single day that he speaks of in the introduction to the seven critical days: "Since a day is as a thousand yeres with thee, Let, O Lord, a day, be as a weeke to me; and in this one, let me consider seven daies, seven critical daies, and judge my selfe, that I be not judged by thee." (Expostulation 14)

Donne effects a unison of homiletic and devotional purposes (a feature of the more personal sermons of several Church Fathers) by using the "text" of his own experience, which is authored by God, as the basis for instruction to his readers. So many portions of the Devotions are similar enough to his sermons that there can be

little doubt that the Dean of St. Paul's had his congregation continually in mind during the book's composition. This quality is reflected in the care Donne took in according every aspect of the Devotions to God and to the various forms that His authorship takes. The precedents acknowledged for the Devotions are stories from the Bible (such as King Hezekiah's); Donne continually associates new aspects of his experience with that of Biblical characters (even his despairing moments echo Biblical precedents; his writing style is an attempted approximation of the Bible's "inexpressible texture"; the tripartite groupings in the Devotions reflect a devotion to the Christian Trinity; and the overall structure of the Devotions is reminiscent of God's seven-day creation of the world. God authors Donne's spiritual progress from the first day of his visitation to the sixth day, where Donne is on the verge of attaining the "Everlasting Saboth". As God's amanuensis, then, Donne takes pains to create an adequate structure in words for his perception of a divine, ordered guidance.

I would like to thank Dr. Brink for the time and care he has taken in shepherding an often prodigal thesis to its conclusion; Pat Stephenson, who helped to clarify many passages in this thesis, as well as typing it; and most of all my wife, Lorraine, whose manifold support made this work possible.

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Introduction

John Donne fell ill sometime near the end of November, 1623, with a disease that has been fairly certainly diagnosed as relapsing fever.¹ The fever is "marked by a sudden onset, . . . a severe degree of insomnia, with headache . . . with profound prostration", and a rash is a possibility, though the latter is not a common symptom.² The fever reaches a crisis point near the end of the first week, and if these "Criticall dayes"³ are survived, the sufferer is faced with the constant danger of a relapse during a prolonged convalescence. Donne suggests that he kept a record of his physical changes and his thoughts during his illness, and that in his convalescence these were composed into Devotions upon Emergent Occasions.⁴ The Devotions were registered with the Stationer

¹I. A. Shapiro, "Walton and the Occasion of Donne's Devotions", RES (1958), NS 9: 20-21. Henceforward this work will be cited as Shapiro. There are several conflicting diagnoses, and other disagreements with the ensuing outline, but Chapter 1 has been reserved for a fuller discussion of these matters.

²Ibid., p. 20.

³John Donne, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal and London, 1975), p. 74. References to the Devotions within my text are from this edition, and references to Raspa's introduction and notes will be cited as Raspa.

⁴Cf. Letter to Sir Robert Ker, Letters, 11, pp. 249-50, cited in Raspa, p. xvii.

on January 9, 1624, before Donne had completely recovered.

The Devotions, then, were composed and prepared for publication in little more than a month, and no greater testimonial may be given to Donne's brilliance than the fact that they are so carefully structured as to be far from merely a "collection of musings".⁵ Donne makes the progression of illness to recovery the basis for a consideration of the progress of his soul to God, and this progress is far enough detached from the many trivial details that compose autobiographies (in the modern sense) that the Devotions become a treatise on the progress of the Christian soul generally. Every vacillation in his physical and psychological state is immediately translated into Christian terms. Using his own recent experience as the text for an explication of God's will for all Christians, and with the emotion-arousing effectiveness of a first-person account, Donne creates a medium for both Biblical instruction and an inspiration to devotion. Whether the Devotions may be more aptly classified in the exegetical realm of the sermon or in the inspirational realm of devotional literature will be dealt with more completely in chapters two and three, but for now all that needs to be said is that Donne effectively combines the two.

Donne translates the changes of his physical condition

⁵"Introduction" to John Donne, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, ed. John Sparrow (Cambridge, 1923), p. xviii. Henceforward this book will be cited as Sparrow.

into spiritual terms through the belief that God is the instrument of both his illness and subsequent health, and that every action on God's part must be 'read' for its meanings on all levels. God provides Donne with a complete analogy-laden sermon on the progress of the soul's journey to eternal joy. As God's instrument, Donne's duty was to relay God's messages to his readers. Though the Devotions certainly represent a unique form in the Dean's writings, he had performed an essentially similar service a number of times earlier with the publication of several sermons. Reasons for writing the Devotions, then, had little to do with egoistic revelations of Donne's own personality. His book is centred in God and his Word, and is meant to move the reader to a glorification of God's guidance and mercy. In Donne's sense of Christianity, all truly Christian writings are the records of God's amanuenses: they are not in any sense the sole creations of men. Donne, clearly, is a unique amanuensis, but he sees the progress of his soul as following the same essential path followed by all Christians. It is in this sense that the book assumes its didactic and inspirational purposes as a guide for his fellow man, and Donne deliberately voids the Devotions of all the solipsistic concerns of one who may be said to consider himself an "Iland" (Devotions, p. 87).

Yet, the Devotions form an island among devotional writings, and Helen C. White remarks that it "is too individual to be representative". Just before this, however, she

writes that "Donne's book sums up some of the most characteristic elements in the religious life of his time".⁶ This is one of the most interesting aspects of the Devotions; they express a basically simple and orthodox Christianity, and yet Donne demonstrates something that may be called a Protestant disregard for tradition by not following closely any form established in European devotional literature. Donne simply returns to the sources of this literature themselves; partly to the writings of the church fathers, particularly St. Augustine, but mostly to the Bible itself.

Some of the more obvious influences of these sources on the Devotions seem to be present in the similarity of large segments of Donne's writing style with St. Augustine's,⁷ for example, but at a deeper level Donne is attempting to create a thematic and stylistic reflection of the Bible itself. The most immediate evidence of this lies in the constant equations that he draws between his own condition and that of various Biblical figures, particularly Christ's. Every time that Donne begins an Expostulation with the ejaculation, "My God, my God . . . " he echoes King David in Psalm 22 and Christ on the cross. This identification may seem odd, but

⁶Helen C. White, English Devotional Literature Prose 1600-1640 (Madison, 1931), p. 262. Henceforward this book will be cited as White.

⁷Joan Webber, Contrary Music (Madison, 1963), p. 195. Henceforward this book will be cited as Webber.

the imitation of Christ, and of the "types"⁸ that prefigured Him in the Old Testament, was considered one of the Christian's most desirable actions. Comparisons of himself with figures such as Job, Jacob, Hezekiah, David, Lazarus and Jesus, then, do much more than provide effective analogies: the progress of all souls follows an essentially similar path, and Donne's identification with these figures serves to teach him that tribulations are a part of God's guidance. Donne therefore equates himself with several Biblical figures who suffered sickness and despair which evolved into a new physical health and a reaffirmation of God's mercies.

The Christian's physical condition here seems to be too closely associated with his spiritual condition, but the importance of the latter is asserted by the fact that sickness and health may be interpreted in different ways. Donne sees his recovery as a sign that God still has uses for him on earth, and that it is symbolic of his ultimate restoration in eternity (Devotions, p. 103), but death would simply have signified that God was prepared to grant eternal communion

⁸Cf. Jonathan S. Goldberg, "Not Unto Death: The Devotions of John Donne" Diss. Columbia University, 1968, pp. 188-189. Henceforward this work will be cited as Goldberg. "Typology" in Christian terms is a process by which the meanings of the Old and New Testaments are unified. Biblical events and characters "are shadows dimly prefiguring the greater reality of Christ". Donne 'typologizes' his own experience through an identification with these Biblical "types" or events, and Christ provides the answer to Donne's "human and spiritual problems since He fulfills the event", or since He "endows all events" in life and the Bible with meaning.

with Him immediately (p. 96). This kind of interpretation may also seem suspect, but it is part of reading God's workings in this world properly, and any suggestion of God's fallibility is simply wrong. This tendency to 'interpret' every occurrence in one's life also helps to account for much of the Devotions' strangeness to modern readers. Donne sees everything in the light of God's authorship, and Donne would no doubt consider it equally strange that the twentieth century tends to view life as guided and given meaning by the individual, not by any supernatural force.

Donne brought all the stylistic and compositional skills he had as a writer to bear upon the creation of the Devotions, and the lack of critical attention given to their overall structure draws attention to the most serious fault in scholarship on the Devotions. Even reference to the Devotions in the plural is partly a concession forced by the traditional view that the twenty-three Devotions are not interdependent, and that each follows a basically similar pattern. This pattern is usually seen as beginning with doubt or despair in the Meditations, progressing to an intellectual resolution worked out through a combative analysis of God's word in the Expostulations, and ending in the affective dedication of the soul to a merciful God in the Prayers. The progressing circumstances of Donne's illness are also usually seen to connect loosely a continuously repeated, identical spiritual process, but the close relationship of

physical and spiritual conditions has already been established, and this suggests that a protracted spiritual progression should also be looked for.

Only very general criteria, such as Donne's own, can establish a uniformity of pattern for each Devotion:

1. MEDITATIONS upon our Humane Condition.
2. EXPOSTULATIONS, and Debatelements with God.
3. PRAYERS, upon the severall Occasions, to him.

Critics have attempted to make this summation much more specific by claiming a singularity of tone, style and content to distinguish each section throughout Devotions. One preliminary refutation of this opinion may be made with a comparison of several Meditations, particularly of 1 and 17. The first is marked by a violent despair, and the latter is written with a measured (though urgent) and assured power. Still other Meditations are for the most part calmly discursive. Some Meditations are almost free of direct reference to spiritual matters, while others are charged with references to the Bible and to Donne's, and all mankind's, spiritual condition. Similar differences in tone, style and theme may easily be discovered in the Expostulations and even in the Prayers, where Donne addresses God in different ways, and where he may be either calm and assured or beset with strong emotions. No explanation of the Devotions' form is very valuable, then, if it insists upon seeing them as twenty-three structurally identical units.

From his violent struggles with despair -- struggles

that carry over even into the Prayers in the first three Devotions -- to a complete assurance of God's mercy by the end of the book, Donne's soul may be seen to progress through six distinct stages. With the same criteria of tone, style, imagery and theme used by other critics to argue the uniformity of each Devotion, the Devotions may be subdivided into the following groups: 1-3, 4-9, 10-15, 16-18, 19-21, and 22-23. Each of these groups is initiated by a major change in the progress of Donne's physical condition, and these changes in turn signify the beginning of a new, spiritually critical day. The main burden of this thesis will be to show that there is a close correspondence between these critical days and those outlined in Expostulation 14.⁹

The first three Devotions deal with the day of God's visitation of Donne with sickness, an action that he learns to welcome as a sign that God "wouldest not loose" him. The next six involve both a temporary stabilization of the disease and a "Crisis and examination" of his conscience. The arrival of the physician, who in turn summons others: on this 'second day', is metaphorically linked with a new awareness of the healing powers of God, who not only helps man with Jesus, the greatest physician, but provides many other helpers as well. Devotions 10-15 deal with a resurgence of the illness which leads Donne to sink again into doubt and "unnecessary

⁹(pp. 74-76) Unless otherwise specified, all references in the following paragraph are to this section of Expostulation 14.

disputations", but he finds his way out of all "dark passages" and performs the duties of his "third day, my day of preparing, & fitting my selfe for a more especial receiving of thy Sonne, in his institution of the Sacrament". In Devotions 16-18, dealing with the fourth day, Donne is brought to the verge of a death that he is fully prepared for, and "the day of my dissolution & transmigration from hence" almost literally comes since he claims to die vicariously with the man for whom the bell tolls: "The bell rings out, and tells me in him, that I am dead." (p. 91) Devotions 19-21 may be seen in terms of the "fift day, the day of my Resurrection," in which Donne's recovery of "bodily rising" is seen as "an earnest of a second resurrection from sinne, and of a third, to everlasting glory." (p. 114) The last two Devotions deal with the weaknesses of the body and the soul, both of which are subject to relapses either into disease or sin. However, God's judgement (on this "sixt day") has been manifested to Donne, and his sins have been "fully pardoned." (p. 127) With these last words of the Devotions Donne looks forward to the attainment of God's "everlasting Mercy," (p. 127) and an implied twenty-fourth Devotion may be postulated for this seventh, final day, opening out into eternity. Donne strongly suggests that the reader is to associate a possible twenty-fourth Devotion with this final day, since it would not only complete the series of tripartite groupings in the Devotions, but it would also constitute the last hour in God's single

day that he speaks of in the introduction to the seven critical days: "Since a day is as a thousand yeres with thee, Let, O Lord, a day, be as a weeke to me; and in this one, let me consider seven daies, seven critical daies, and judge my selfe, that I be not judged by thee."

In its very reduced form, then, this constitutes the culmination of a thesis that attempts, by an analysis of the Devotions' structure, to discover the way in which Donne intended his book to be read. Critics have not yet resolved this fundamental issue, and even the gloss given at the beginning of this introduction on Donne's illness and the period leading up to the book's publication is subject to debate. These latter problems will be given a full, separate treatment in Chapter I, since the conclusions of several writers concerning the nature of Donne's illness, for example, have serious implications for the book. A look at such matters will at least partially clarify issues such as Donne's alleged egocentricity and the way in which his many references to time may be read. The second chapter of the thesis will survey the various critical approaches to the Devotions. This should aid in the progress of the final chapter's analysis of the Devotions' structure, since critics previously dealt with will not need to be given lengthy introductions. The survey will also introduce the range of philosophical concepts necessary to an understanding of the Devotions.

The last chapter, as mentioned, will offer a close

analysis of the Devotions' structure. A close reading of the changes in tone, imagery, style and theme that occur throughout the Devotions demonstrates the overall pattern that Donne envisioned for the book, and this structure is the key to an understanding of Donne's purposes in writing it. Inadequate analyses of this structure have been responsible for most of the erroneous explications of the Devotions. It is difficult indeed to believe that a detailed summary of the qualities of each section in each Devotion has formed the basis for most generalizations made about Donne's book. Critics seem to have assumed others' generalizations with little questioning or to have taken no more than three or four examples for their own. For example, despair is almost always considered to be the predominant spirit in all of the Meditations, but the majority of them at the least end in hope and several others have very little to do with despair. My third chapter, then, will provide the fundamental and detailed analysis of the Devotions that has generally been missing in criticism to date. The result, if nothing else, should provide a sounder basis for further discussions of this book or of this period in Donne's life.

CHAPTER I

DONNE'S ILLNESS AND HIS WORKING CONDITIONS

This chapter will deal with several matters briefly touched upon in the introduction: the nature of Donne's disease, the length of time involved in the Devotions' composition, and, generally, the conditions under which they were written. Attempts will be made continually to show how an assessment of these working conditions affects an understanding of the Devotions' nature and of the purpose for which they were written. In some areas this may do little more than aid one's familiarization with Donne's book, but it should be kept in mind that such assessments have often reinforced mistaken critical approaches.

Various treatises concerning the nature of Donne's illness demonstrate in microcosm the "variable condition" (cf. p. 7) of analyses of the Devotions. There is unanimity now, at least, in disagreement with both Walton's confusion of the illness with Donne's consumption in 1625, and Sir Edmund Gosse's assertion that the disease was the same that killed Donne in 1631, now identified as cancer of the stomach.¹

¹Raspa, p. xv. Cf. Raspa's discussion on pp. xiv-xvii of previous studies of Donne's illness.

Controversy centres on identification of the disease as either typhus, relapsing fever, or a combination of the latter with an earlier severe cold, and all this in turn centres on the establishment of a time period for Donne's malady.

Simpson² and Lander³ argue that the course of the disease ran about three weeks. Simpson apparently assumes this from the number of "emergent occasions" and does not seem to consider that Donne may have organized various groups around a single day's experience. Devotions 4-6, for example, during which the physician is sent for, arrives, and manifests fear, were quite clearly based on the events of one day. Lander also assumes the three week period with little explanation, and she asserts that the disease was typhus. This diagnosis would be valid if two symptoms, delirium and a cough, were present. She ignores the latter symptom, and considers the former to be the possible source of sections in the Devotions that seem to be feverishly impassioned and follow freely associating patterns of thought.⁴ This is a suspect speculation, since she may as well attribute to physiological sources any writing that resembles a "stream of

²Evelyn M. Simpson, A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne (Oxford, 1962), p. 243. Henceforward this work will be cited as Simpson.

³Clara Lander, "A Dangerous Sickness which Turned to a Spotted Fever", SEL, II (1970), pp. 89-108. Henceforward this work will be cited as Lander.

⁴Ibid., pp. 89-90.

consciousness."

Lander also ignores Shapiro's earlier thesis, in which he points out that the possibility of typhus is eliminated by the absence of coughing and delirium.⁵ Shapiro diagnoses Donne's illness as a relapsing fever, which is sudden in its onset and reaches a crisis in five to seven days.⁶ Thus he accepts the only firm bit of evidence concerning the time period given by Donne in the Devotions, at the end of Expostulation 19: "Seven dayes, O my God, have we looked for this cloud, and now we have it . . . " (p. 103). Bald accepts Shapiro's analysis at face value in his biography of Donne, and this view is supported by the fact that the epidemic that swept through London between the months of October and January was probably relapsing fever,⁷ which gave rise to the physicians' fears in Meditation 23 that Donne might suffer a relapse.

The most recent study of Donne's sickness, by Raspa, introduces several new ideas. He accepts Shapiro's analysis that the disease was not typhus, but he also states that Donne

⁵Shapiro, p. 21. In the first edition of his Lives (1640) Walton claimed that Donne did have a cough, but he removed all references to this symptom in the second edition (1658). Donne himself makes no mention of coughing, and Raspa (p. xv) suggests that Walton initially confused Donne's illness with that of 1625. See Raspa (p. xv) and Shapiro (pp. 21-22) for fuller discussions of this issue.

⁶Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁷R. C. Bald, John Donne: A Life (Oxford, 1970), p. 450. Henceforward this book will be cited as Bald.

"describes two sets of contradictory symptoms",⁸ and that Devotion 13 marks a shift from treatments for a disease of internal origin to those for a disease of external origin:

Donne describes his first symptoms as due to inner disturbances which suggest "rewme" fever. In the medical allusions of the first and seventh Meditations, vapours move up to his head from his entrails, rather than attack him in plague form from the outside. He suffers from a hot fever typical of the "rewme" rather than the fever of a venomous illness. He is fed cordials which medical manuals stipulated for the cold, before he is given the purgative treatments they recommended for the harsher ravages of a virus. In a condition weakened by cold, Donne may have easily passed from one illness to another, with or without cause and effect. . . . Renaissance medical manuals made rigid distinctions between diseases originating inside and outside the body according to the movements of vapours, and Donne indicates that he suffered from both.⁹

It is difficult to agree entirely with Raspa, however, since he does not provide a totally convincing, specific correlation of the symptoms of "rewme" with symptoms identified in the first twelve Devotions,¹⁰ whereas Shapiro's quotation from Professor J. F. D. Shrewsbury's diagnosis of relapsing fever seems to correspond quite well with most of the prominent early symptoms: "a sudden onset . . . a severe degree of insomnia, with headache . . . with profound prostration . . . [and] a rash",¹¹ though the latter only rarely occurs. The more telling argument on Raspa's side is that contradictory

⁸Raspa, p. xiv.

⁹Ibid., p. xvii.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. xiv-xvii.

¹¹Shapiro, pp. 20, 21.

cures (for both externally and internally caused diseases) were applied to Donne.

Raspa's speculations, and his partial rejection of Shapiro's and Bald's theses, are based on a different assessment of the time period in the Devotions: "The time factor, which dominates all attempts at identifying this illness, excludes seven-day relapsing fever as the only possibility."¹² He considers the illness to have lasted at least in excess of two weeks, but his evidence for this is not very convincing. For example, he states without specific references that the fourth and fourteenth Expostulations each suggest the passage of another week.¹³ Raspa perhaps mistakes the fourth Expostulation with the Prayer, where there is a reference to a week, since the only reference to time in the Expostulation suggests the very recent onset of the disease: "But is Prayer for health in season, as soon as I am sicke?" (p. 22) Donne's reference to "seven dayes" in the Prayer is to a future elapsing of time, in which he first quotes God's words to Moses concerning Miriam's sickness, and then uses "seven dayes" as one number in a metaphorical multiplication of time preceding his obtaining the benefits of the seals of the Church:

Let her be shut up seven daies, and then retorne; but if thou be pleased to multiply seven dayes, (and seven is infinite) by the number of my sinnes, (and that is more infinite) if this day must remove me, till dayes shall be

¹²Op. cit., p. xvi.

¹³Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

no more, seale to me, my spirituall health in affording me the Seales of thy Church . . . (p. 24)

Raspa's belief that Donne refers to the passage of another week in Expostulation 14 is also suspect. Raspa bases this idea on the sentence introducing Donne's metaphorical exposition of the seven, spiritually critical days: "Since a day is as a thousand yeres with thee, Let, O Lord, a day, be as a weeke to me; and in this one, let me consider seven daies, seven critical daies, and judge my selfe, that I be not judged by thee." (pp. 74-75) Donne's metaphorical use of "days" here undercuts any suggestion of biographical evidence. Even if there is a close analogue of spiritual with temporal days in this Expostulation, Donne would only be in his third day, judging and preparing himself "for a more special receiving of thy Sonne . . . " (p. 75). He has not yet suffered anything closely analogous with the final "dissolution" of his body, which would correspond with the fourth critical day.

Raspa also suggests, as Gosse did before him,¹⁴ that Donne contracted his illness at about the time of the Sergeants' Feast, to which the participants walked bareheaded through the rain. Raspa postulates that Donne caught something akin to a severe cold or "rewme" which weakened him and made him prey to an ensuing onslaught of relapsing fever. This suggestion

¹⁴Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne (London, 1899), I, pp. 181, 183, cited in Raspa p. xvi.

also has difficulty fitting into an overall time scheme, since this feast was on October 23, 1623, and Donne was only out of danger by December 6.¹⁵ This leaves about forty days to account for. If Devotion 18 marks the end of the "dangerous period", then at least another week should be added to the time encompassed by the Devotions, and Raspa accounts for little more than three weeks.

Jonathan Goldberg, in opposition to all the foregoing theories, suggests that the concept of historical time is irrelevant to the Devotions, since all is telescoped into Christian theology's single day or instant.¹⁶ He states that even Donne's most specific reference to historical time as applied to the length of his illness, at the end of the nineteenth Expostulation (p. 103), is part of an elaborate metaphorical artifice that pays little heed to historical reality. Thus "seven Dayes" may simply refer to a chronologically imprecise correlation of Biblical story with the present, or it refers to the numerological metaphor for infinity. Goldberg writes that Donne strives to give the Old Testament an immediacy that corresponds with the New, and that the Bible generally, along with his past experience, is often transposed immediately into the moment of his present condition. This is not to be argued with, but the notion that Donne almost completely obviates the historicity of the progression of his

¹⁵Cf. Bald, p. 450.

¹⁶Goldberg, pp. 86-99.

sickness would associate him with qualities of Christian mysticism that he, with his self-avowed limitations, rarely approximates. Either this, or Donne could be accused of an "artificiality" that would have been extreme even for Jacobean audiences.

In the face of so many uncertain facts, Goldberg has good reason to avoid contentions concerning Donne's case history. However, there is no reason to doubt the veracity and the importance of what Donne does choose to say about himself and his illness, even if his principles of selection subordinate minor personal and physical details to certain devotional themes, with their locus in "everyman." After all, God is the author of the progressive stages in Donne's illness, and the nature of this progression can not be cast aside as unimportant, nor would Donne eliminate significant new developments in the disease in recording his spiritual recovery.

Goldberg nevertheless takes a valid course in focusing on Donne's interpretation of the illness, or on its larger implications, since this process comprises the major portion of the Devotions. He is wrong, however, in denying the importance of the illness's progression and its correspondence with a protracted spiritual progression to the extent that human, historical time becomes completely unimportant. He bases his view on a reading of the Devotions as the repetition of twenty-three thematically and stylistically identical units, and thus they become transposed, one upon the other, into a single moment

in time.¹⁷ Any comparison of Meditation 1 with 17 or 18, as one example, would show that this is simply not true. The time period in the Devotions may be considerably telescoped in Donne's "typological" reading of his experience, and he may often refer to a single day or to the metaphorical Christian "week" in the description of his experience, but there is also a progression of significant changes during his "long and stormie voyage" (p. 97). In other words, Donne may refer to God's consideration of a thousand years as a day (p. 74), but this day still has twenty-four hours, and twenty-three of them may be said to be accounted for in the Devotions. The final hour in the progress of the Christian soul would be death and a union with God in heaven, and Donne deliberately does not write a twenty-fourth Devotion, since he has not yet reached this final stage. Donne effects a unison of two metaphors of time by extending a day into a week in Expostulation 14, and the seven critical days outlined here form the basis of the Devotions' overall structure (though the last day, of course, like the twenty-fourth hour, has not yet begun).

The point made here with regard to Goldberg and others is that the attempt to define Donne's illness gives rise to different understandings of the Devotions. The major problem is that a foolproof diagnosis is next to impossible to make, and this gives rise to doubts concerning the Devotions'

¹⁷Goldberg, pp. 91-93, 190.

autobiographical validity. In his struggles to explain the "time factor", the symptoms, and the treatments mentioned by Donne, Raspa, for example, is led to introduce one of his paragraphs in the following way: "If Donne was not taking absolute licence with the symptoms of his fever and stretching them out for purposes of devotional speculation . . ."¹⁸ Without firmer evidence to the contrary, however, there is no reason to doubt the veracity of Donne's account. The disease seems most likely to have been relapsing fever, and the twenty-three Devotions most likely did not span more than a couple of weeks, but the important fact is that almost any severe disease could have served the specific purposes of Donne's "devotional speculation". God taught Donne with the metaphors implicit in this kind of illness: for example, the onset of the disease is the first stage in bringing man away from dwelling on vanities to a consideration of Christian doctrine; the arrival of the physician reminds one that God has sent Jesus, the greatest physician, to serve mankind; the near death or the crisis point in the disease gives rise to considerations of one's final death and of how one will be judged in eternity; and recuperation from sickness is an "earnest" of the salvation God grants to the spiritually diseased.

It is also not of great importance to establish a specific time period during which the Devotions were written. Most of the evidence suggests that this period spanned the last

¹⁸Raspa, p. xvi.

week in November, 1623, to January 9, 1624, but whether a month may be added or a week subtracted does not diminish the fact that Donne worked at a "phenomenal" pace. The important implication of this is that it is difficult to see how Donne could have taken much care with the Devotions' structure in such a short space of time. Donne's difficulties were compounded by the fact that during his illness, and "even in his convalescence, . . . he was forbidden to read."¹⁹ However, all this simply serves as an indication of Donne's thorough familiarity with the Bible and with his favourite expositors of it. The previous paragraph's outline of the relationship between stages of the disease and Donne's interpretation of them is far from being original to Donne. It was established in the Bible in the stories of Job, David, and Hezekiah, to name a few of the more prominent examples, and Donne no doubt had these in his mind from the very outbreak of his disease. The implementation of the structural device of the seven "critical days" would have caused Donne no great difficulties: it simply gives a more tightly ordered form to the same basic pattern. The tripartite arrangement of each Devotion may have some relationship to the meditational methods of the time, but more obviously they follow a natural exegetical process that Donne had honed in his many sermons. The Devotions are also grouped in a predominantly tripartite way, and this helps to suggest that Donne's devotion to the Trinity quite naturally

¹⁹Raspa, p. xvii.

gave rise to many aspects of the Devotions' form.

A look at other aspects of Donne's working conditions also shows that he would have had little encouragement to put his personality and talents on display, to indulge in undirected scholarly meanderings,²⁰ or to any manifestation of inclinations inappropriate for an Anglican and a minister of God's Word. Donne's personal crisis was intensified by a concern with his "Detracter[s]" and "Libeller[s]" (p. 64), part of an auditory that "was intent on every word" of his sermons which "was not always a comfort to him, since they often listened carefully only to relay deprecatingly."²¹ Lander also writes that Donne "was under constant surveillance for 'his constancie in the true reformed religion, which the people (as should seeme) began to suspect.'"²² She also refers to a "backdrop of urban overcrowding, persistent disease, and the multiplied evils of the Thirty Years' War", all of which detracted from "an already shakey[sic] economy", and which further compounded the "gloom" or "atmosphere of transience, instability and insecurity" that seemed to settle upon English society at about the time of Elizabeth's death.²³ Donne's dedication to his congregation, and to mankind generally, shines throughout the Devotions, and

²⁰Cf. Simpson, p. 251.

²¹Lander, p. 104.

²²Ibid., p. 104. Lander quotes John Chamberlain, Letters, ed. N. E. McClure (Philadelphia, 1939), II, p. 451.

²³Ibid., pp. 104-105.

it is apparent that a treatise on the Christian's attitude to disease and death fulfilled a very pressing need. Given the gravity of his own tribulations, Donne becomes an even more admirable figure in the light of his attempts to serve others, or in putting the *Meditations* upon his "sickness, into some such order, as may minister some holy delight."²⁴

²⁴Letter to Robert Ker, Letters, II, pp. 249-250; cited in Raspa, p. xvii.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF STUDIES DEALING WITH THE DEVOTIONS AND WITH DONNE'S CULTURAL CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter will be to review studies of the Devotions and of Donne's cultural context. The entirely favourable attitude expressed to the Devotions thus far has not been shared by other critics until about the middle of the twentieth century. After two decades of great popularity following its composition Donne's devotional masterpiece was submerged in obscurity. John Sparrow considered this neglect strange¹ (though he was far from considering Donne's work a masterpiece), and he sought to rectify the matter by putting out a new edition in 1923. This helped to include the Devotions as one of the foci in this century's general resurgence of interest in Donne. Sparrow's edition has not been improved upon until Raspa's in 1975, which will now likely come to be considered as definitive.²

More strange than the neglect previously suffered by the Devotions is the renewed critical interest, which has

¹Sparrow, p. vii.

²Raspa's introductory analysis is flawed, but in every other respect it is an excellent edition. D. W. Harding

tended to shroud Donne's book in a different kind of obscurity. The Devotions have not stimulated a plethora of criticism, but the criticism that has been accumulated is marked by many divergent attitudes. This lack of consensus is the most immediate indication that critics have yet to provide a satisfactory definition of the nature of the Devotions. Such a disparate collection of materials may be given some organization by their classification into larger groups, which are outlined in the following paragraph. They must not be considered as rigid categories since several critics, such as Andreasen, take an eclectic approach, and others who have been placed in one group may be in disagreement. For example, Raspa and Van Laan³ take quite different views as to the specific nature of Ignatius' influence on Donne.

The first group is composed of the earliest critiques of the Devotions -- the general surveys conducted by Sparrow, White and Simpson. Secondly there is the criticism centred in the influence of Ignatius and his meditative practices,

(TLS (July 16, 1976), p. 873) summarizes its qualities as follows:

In a time of shoddy affluence this edition of Donne's Devotions, beautifully produced and scrupulously edited, adds something to our real wealth. The text that Anthony Raspa has established must be as close to finality as anything can be, the bibliographical history of the work is minute and exhaustive, the notes packed with scholarly information, the erudition scarcely to be surpassed.

³Thomas Van Laan, "John Donne's Devotions and the Jesuit Spiritual Exercises," SP, 60(1963), 191-202. Henceforward this work will be cited as Van Laan.

and critics dealt with here are Van Laan, Raspa and Andreasen.⁴ Though he does not deal directly with the Devotions, Martz⁵ may be included in this group since he is responsible for inaugurating this line of study. The third group deals with criticisms centred in the relationship of other devotional genres and Christian literature to the Devotions. One of the major reasons that this constitutes a group is that the Devotions are considered apart from the meditational guides. Mueller⁶ sees the sermon form and Goldberg the book of private prayer to be the predominant structural bases respectively of Donne's book, though their differences are substantially tempered by several important similarities. One of these is that they view Donne to be primarily interested in conducting an "exegesis of experience", about which more can only be said later for reasons of succinctness here. Webber, Harding⁷ and Smith⁸ form another group, and they focus on structural and stylistic aspects of the Devotions. The final group is

⁴N. J. C. Andreasen, "Donne's Devotions and the Psychology of Assent", MP, 62 (1965), 207-216. Henceforward this work will be cited as Andreasen.

⁵Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1962). Henceforward this work will be cited as Martz.

⁶Janel Mueller, "The Exegesis of Experience, Dean Donne's Devotions", JEGP, 67 (1968), 1-19. Henceforward this work will be cited as Mueller.

⁷D. W. Harding, "The Devotions Now", in John Donne: Essays in Celebration (London, 1972), pp. 385-403. Henceforward this work will be cited as Harding.

⁸Don Noel Smith, "The Artistry of John Donne's Devotions", UDR, (Summer 1973), 3-12. Henceforward this work will be cited as Smith.

composed of several books that do not deal directly with the Devotions, but throw some valuable light on Donne's cultural background or, more specifically, on his philosophical and aesthetic principles.

Using these groups as a basis, this chapter will be organized into four sections. The first will deal with the early surveys, and the second with the group of books that define Donne's cultural background. They are placed here since they form a reaction to the attitudes of Sparrow, White and Simpson, and since they will serve as a foundation for the discussion of later criticisms. The third section will deal with the criticisms that are centred in the influence of Ignatian meditational practices. The fourth will simply group the remaining criticisms together. Several of them may emphasize entirely different matters, but they are all based on the attempt to determine the Devotions' structural principles and with methods that are not circumscribed by the influence of Ignatian meditation. Though there is also a fair number of other similarities, a concession has been made here to the fact that a strict categorization could not be maintained without assigning new sections to each of the remaining critics.

i.

Sparrow considers the Devotions as "pretend[ing] to be nothing but a collection of musings, divided up into a series of 'Meditations,' 'Expostulations,' and 'Prayers,'

without any singleness of plan or idea."⁹ He feels that Donne's work is only "beautiful" in certain portions, and that elsewhere it is at best free from "his tiresome learning":

Much may be, and has been, said of Donne's "tortuous" and "twisted" style, his misplaced ingenuity, his extravagant conceits, and his tiresome learning. From the last fault the Devotions are entirely free, for Donne had not, when he wrote them, the opportunity of consulting the obscure and dull authors whose quibblings fill too many pages of his Sermons, but his "ingenuity," his "conceits," his "tortuous style," are perhaps more evident here than anywhere else.¹⁰

Sparrow sees the value of the Devotions to reside not in its philosophy or its theology, but in its revelation of Donne's personality: " . . . it is extraordinarily interesting as a unique revelation of a unique mind. . . . it makes clear that 'natural, unnatural' perversity in Donne's nature which made him at once the most human and the most incomprehensible of beings."¹¹ The Devotions are thus considered to be centred in the self, and Sparrow reflects that Donne had "no need to be conscious of his auditory, his own dignity or the Cathedral in which he preached, for he is concerned only with his own soul".¹² If for no other reason, this all-inclusive remark is surprising in light of the seventeenth Devotion, in which Donne asserts that an exclusive concern with self is impossible since "No Man is an Iland". In this Devotion Donne is also

⁹Sparrow, p. xviii.

¹⁰Ibid., p. xv.

¹¹Ibid., p. xxiii.

¹²Sparrow, p. xi.

primarily concerned with the fate of the man "for whom the bell tolls" (p. 87).

White also considers the focus of the Devotions to be Donne's own personality: "Donne's restless eyes are forever straying to that object of perennial curiosity, himself."¹³ Donne's book is like other books of devotion insofar as it "sums up some of the most characteristic elements in the religious life of his time," but "it is too individual to be representative"¹⁴ because of Donne's continual self-observation. She draws this comparison with The Private Devotions of Lancelot Andrewes:

It is the content of the book that draws us to Andrewes' and the author of the book that draws us to Donne's. It is from the first to last as a book of devotion, that we value Andrewes' work; it is as a book of religious psychology, a book of deep and intimate self-revelation, that we treasure Donne's.¹⁵

White does not fully appreciate Donne's control of the Devotions' structure, and this seems to lead to her inability to see that Donne's book is much more theocentric than it is egocentric. Donne demonstrates a profound subordination to providential design, and he continually identifies himself with all of "fallen mankind" and with Biblical figures to the extent that he fully aligns the Devotions with the general concerns of English devotional literature. White's

¹³White, p. 253.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 253.

generalizations seem to be based more on impressions than on full, exhaustive research. Her belief that the Devotions are "much more significant from the literary than the devotional point of view"¹⁶ is based on the view that they represent the unique mental wanderings of a man whose mastery of English prose gave them a great force:

If one may rely upon the tone and the countless circumstantial allusion in the book itself, it seems to have originated in a sort of diary kept during his illness, in which his anxious and restless mind recorded around the centre of pious reflection every remotely relevant idea that cropped up within its range. Indeed, everything that comes to that extraordinary mill is grist.¹⁷

Evelyn Simpson concurs with White's feelings concerning the devotional quality of the Devotions: "As a manual of devotion this curious book compares unfavourably with the Devotions of Bishop Andrewes or the Holy Living of Jeremy Taylor. It is too introspective, too metaphysical, too much overloaded by learning of various kinds."¹⁸ Her notes accord with Sparrow's, except for the difference concerning the amount of "learning" present in this book, but her aesthetic reactions are different. She is not impressed with Donne's introspective qualities, while she generally considers his style to be "brilliant":

The rich, sustained eloquence of the Sermons is lacking, but in other respects the prose of these Devotions shows

¹⁶White, p. 254.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 254.

¹⁸Simpson, p. 251.

the usual features of Donne's style -- the brilliant display of metaphysical wit, with its far-fetched allusions and similes, the immense amount of learning of all kinds, the delight in paradox, and the passionate sincerity which gives life to even the most fantastic exercises of Donne's intellect.¹⁹

She qualifies this a few pages later with a comment on "the grotesqueness of much of the imagery",²⁰ and she writes that the "ordinary reader . . . is inclined to suspect the writer of artifice and a desire to exhibit his wit and learning" in a work that is "so elaborately planned". She partially rectifies this by saying that Donne's peculiar metaphors and allusions were "habitually employed"²¹ -- they were not expressions that he had to strain for "artificially."

Simpson considers several structural principles to be at work in the Devotions in that the development of Donne's illness governs the book's arrangement, and in that each Devotion progresses to the assignation of a spiritual meaning to the subjects of meditation. She also feels that Donne's work is bound tonally with a "passionate sincerity" to which she refers several times.²² However, the Devotions are seen primarily as a loose format for the exploration of various "metaphysical conceptions":

Although the book follows in its arrangement the course of Donne's illness, the greater part of it is concerned

¹⁹Simpson, p. 247.

²⁰Ibid., p. 254.

²¹Ibid., p. 251.

²²Ibid., pp. 247-8, 251.

with the usual subjects of his meditation, whether in sickness or in health -- the power of sin, the miseries of human life, the mercy and judgements of God, the universality of death, and the hope of resurrection.²³

Even so, her list of the "usual" meditative subjects perhaps unwittingly identifies a pattern that is common to devotional literature -- the recognition of one's physically and spiritually corrupt nature, leading to an awareness of dependence upon a merciful providence, and resulting in a hope of resurrection.

Simpson is in agreement with Sparrow and White when she writes that "Donne would not offer to his God the sacrifice of a merely conventional devotion, modelled on the language and imagery of the Fathers or the Reformers. . . . [He sets] on all his meditations and expostulations with God the seal of his own paradoxical self-tormenting individuality."²⁴ As a group, these three critics tend to consider the Devotions as "curious", loosely structured and self-oriented. Though there is much to be disagreed with in their general surveys, their reactions should be kept in mind since several subsequent studies have tended to go to opposite extremes. For example, their unanimous opinion that Donne's book is unlike any other literature of this period will become particularly important in assessing several later attempts to establish the Devotions' close connections with other genres. Whether this uniqueness goes to the point

²³Simpson, p. 248.

²⁴Ibid., p. 252.

where Donne may be charged with breaches of decorum and tradition, and with one of the most serious charges of all, egocentricity, is a matter that necessitates a fuller discussion of Donne's cultural background.

A failure of these early critiques is that the Devotions tend not to be viewed from a seventeenth-century standpoint. The following section, then, is a general survey of studies which were for the most part unavailable to Sparrow, White and Simpson, and which make clearer the context (Donne's own) within which the Devotions should be considered.

ii.

Though Rosemond Tuve focuses on poetry, her analysis in Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery has several important implications for writing of this period in general. She sees a continuity between Elizabethan and metaphysical poetry in terms of their emphases on decorum, significancy and tradition, and a de-emphasis of the self.²⁵ Thus content and form were closely coordinated, the poetry concerned itself with a persuasive exegesis of some idea or feeling, it based its form and content on modes of expression sanctified by tradition, and the exploration of self for its own sake was unheard of.

²⁵Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago, 1963); cf. chapters VII and IX, which contain full discussions of these issues. Henceforward this book shall be cited as Tuve.

Martz attempts to establish that "the poetry of meditation" was in many ways a new form, but he does not disagree fundamentally with Tuve. He cites a contradicting argument by her that, in Herbert's "Sacrifice", the "supposedly Metaphysical harshness or irony in the diction is quite native to the tradition".²⁶ He then quotes a "sly rejoinder" by William Empson as part of his own response:

The key to the matter is found in the statement which Empson pounces upon: Miss Tuve's assertion that the "ambiguity, density, and ambivalence of tone that we think of as so especially 'Metaphysical' are either explicit in the tradition, or implicit in the deliberate juxtaposition of concepts and images in the liturgy. . . ."²⁷ "Surely," Empson remarks, "the act of making 'explicit' these very remarkable parts of a tradition is worth notice; it might even be worth calling a new style."²⁸

Empson thus forms a valuable summary of the simultaneously original and traditional nature of this particular poem, and Martz goes on to apply this to meditative poetry in general. Such a process can be further generalized to the Devotions (though the meditative tradition need not be seen as of paramount importance), in that Donne may be considered to use traditional elements, while fusing them in a unique way. Nevertheless, Tuve demonstrates that tradition, decorum, and subordination of self were very important concepts,

²⁶Rosemund Tuve, "On Herbert's 'Sacrifice'," KR, 12, no. 1 (1950), p. 58; cited in Martz, p. 91.

²⁷Ibid., p. 64. Cited in Martz, p. 92.

²⁸William Empson, KR, 12, no. 4 (1950), pp. 735-738; cited in Martz, p. 92.

and if they did not play substantial roles in a religious work such as the Devotions, then it must be viewed as almost impious in its variation from accepted norms.

Tuве is also important as a guide to understanding the "metaphysical" nature of the imagery used by writers such as Donne. She writes that the expression of the "abstract and intangible requires the 'help of earthly images'" ²⁹ She also states that the "minds of both writers and readers had long been accustomed to seeing a network of analogies in the world of external nature." ³⁰ Relationships between disparate objects may seem "far-fetched" to the modern reader, but to the metaphysical poets they were based on a commonly understood view of the universe. Tuве considers much of this to be linked to training in rhetoric and logic, where similitudes were most often organized around the "predicament" of "quality" in different objects. ³¹ Images were considered to be arguments, and an "image functioning as analogy . . . was bound to have considerable force to convince." ³²

Joseph Anthony Mazzeo takes issue with what he considers to be Tuве's "almost deterministic view of the influence of logic and rhetoric" on the creation of the metaphysical

²⁹Tuве, p. 155.

³⁰Ibid., p. 161.

³¹Ibid., p. 291.

³²Ibid., p. 371.

conceit. His treatment of Tuve's book is somewhat reductionistic, but he is primarily interested in re-ordering the relationship of metaphysical imagery with rhetoric and logic:

The connection between "concettismo" and Ramism, if one can be established, is not a causal relationship. Rather, they are both expressive, in different ways, of what we might call the "rhetoricizing" tendency of Renaissance humanism, the belief shared with Ramus by Valla and others that literature or rhetoric, rather than scholastic logic, revealed the true path which the mind must take in its quest for truth.³³

The "new rhetoric-logic", then, was subordinate to "'natural' laws"³⁴ and did not create or impose structures of its own.

Mazzeo sums up his article with a comment that perhaps places too much importance on Renaissance cosmology as far as

Donne's Devotions are concerned, but which puts comments such as "the fantastic exercises of Donne's intellect"³⁵ into

context: "the 'metaphysical' poets and their contemporaries possessed a view of the world founded on universal analogy and derived habits of thought which prepared them for finding and easily accepting the most heterogeneous analogies."³⁶

Mazzeo's analysis also demonstrates the general danger of attributing the products of a complex culture to one isolated

³³Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "A Critique of Some Modern Theories of Metaphysical Poetry," MP 50 (1950), rpt. in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry, ed. William R. Keast (New York, 1966), pp. 65-66. Henceforward this article will be cited as Mazzeo.

³⁴*Ibid.*, n. 4, p. 73.

³⁵Simpson, p. 247.

³⁶Mazzeo, p. 73.

school of thought, which is itself most likely to be a product of this culture.

A more complete understanding of "The Elizabethan World-Picture" may be found in E. M. W. Tillyard's book of the same name. He is in accordance with Tuve and Mazzeo in their comments on the universality of the knowledge of "the network of analogies" in nature. He explores in detail concepts such as "the chain of being" and "the corresponding planes", and writes that they were "the common property of every thirdrate mind of the age."³⁷ He also describes the nature of comparisons drawn from these structures as a "hovering between equivalence and metaphor." However, he also suggests that these imagistic relationships had become prey to a new mutability: "They no longer allowed the details to take the form of minute mathematical equivalences: they made the imagination serve these for its own ends; equivalences shaded off into resemblances."³⁸

Though the origin of this world view was Christian in that mediaeval scholars fused Platonism with the writings of the Church fathers,³⁹ C. S. Lewis writes of the "great spiritual writers" that "their cosmology and their religion

³⁷E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1967), p. 101. Henceforward this book will be cited as Tillyard.

³⁸Ibid., p. 92.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

were not such easy bed-fellows as might be supposed."⁴⁰ Together with the general diminution of the correlative precision of analogies drawn from the "booke of Nature" during the Renaissance, Donne's position in the Church makes it understandable that he should not rely too heavily on a book that is written "subobscurely, and in shadows" (p. 49).

Coffin's thesis that Donne was fully aware of the "new Philosophy" should also be mentioned as a possible reason for his sense of the "shadowy" nature of the "book of Creatures". Coffin believes that "Donne never fully believed" that the newly challenged world scheme (the "ancient bubble") was reality. As the true point of reference in Donne's previous poetry is considered by Coffin to be the poet's mind, the true centre of his spiritual life in a world that was decadent at its core (cf. Meditation 22, p. 111) was the believer's faith.⁴¹

All this has important implications for any attempt at defining more completely the philosophical centre and the imagery in the Devotions. Suffice it to say at present that Donne demonstrates many times that analogies based on metaphysical structures such as "the chain of being" and "the corresponding planes" prove very little. The interpretation

⁴⁰C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (Cambridge, 1967), p. 19.

⁴¹Charles M. Coffin, John Donne and the New Philosophy (1937; rpt. New York, 1958), pp. 87, 103, 106, 109.

of experience becomes a difficult task, and is most capably performed by a man completely schooled in the word and will of God. This would seem to challenge Mazzeo's position, for example, but the habits of thought he mentions with regard to "universal analogy" may still be seen to be at work in a new theological context. The analogies in the Devotions are based primarily on comparisons of personal experience with the experience of Biblical figures, and analogies between these figures are in turn explored on a typological basis.⁴²

Winfried Schleiner offers a number of valuable insights into the nature of the imagery of Donne's sermons which may in turn be applied to the Devotions. He posits the notion that imagery must be defined in terms of "fields."⁴³ More specifically, images are composed of both tenor and vehicle which cannot be treated separately, as Rugoff does in Donne's Imagery.⁴⁴ Several "fields" are sin (tenor) and sickness (vehicle), sacraments and seals, and the soul and modes of travelling, the most common one being sea-travel.

Schleiner illustrates the errors of Rugoff's approach with the example of the latter image. Rugoff, with an attitude very similar to Simpson's in her discussion of the

⁴²Cf. my Introduction, p. 5, n. 8, and Chapter II, pp. 63-64.

⁴³Winfried Schleiner, The Imagery of Donne's Sermons (Providence, Rhode Island, 1970), p. 11. Henceforward this book will be cited as Schleiner.

⁴⁴Milton A. Rugoff, (1939; rpt. New York, 1966).

Devotions, considers Donne's use of sea-travel as a source of imagery to be one of "the most striking illustrations of this curious but insistent impulse of Donne's imagination." He continues with the comment that Donne's association of sea-travel with danger and disaster "is certainly a memento of unhappy personal experiences with the hazards and hardships of typical Elizabethan ship travel -- an association by no means uncommon at the time, but in Donne unusual in the variety and intensity of the images which establish it."⁴⁵ Schleiner writes that the tenor of this image, usually Donne's soul or his spiritual life, is forgotten by Rugoff. This gives rise to Rugoff's comments on biographical influence and self-oriented or totally original "flights of imagination," which Tuve also proves to militate against Elizabethan and metaphysical poets' sense of decorum and tradition.

This particular field of imagery may have been uncommon to many secular writers contemporary with Donne,⁴⁶ but Schleiner points out it was well established in the Bible and in theological writing, especially that of Augustine.⁴⁷ Schleiner also establishes the exegetical value of this image by keeping the aforementioned tenor in mind -- since one progresses through various tribulations in life and must work

⁴⁵Rugoff, p. 229.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 229.

⁴⁷Schleiner, pp. 86, 88-89.

towards getting 'home' or to God safely, the image of treacherous sea-travel is effective and appropriate.

Rugoff cites the last few lines of the Devotions as one of his examples, but it is difficult to consider this substantially in the light of "the tendency to recall the more unpleasant aspects of sea travel".⁴⁸ Donne is "managing an abstraction," as Joan Webber would phrase it, or using an "analogy as a kind of trap to bring spiritual concepts into the framework of the natural world."⁴⁹ The image in the last lines of Devotions, then, concludes a series of associations between Donne's journeying soul, Noah's ark, and the ship that Christ preached out of. His fear that he may make "shipwracke of faith" (p. 127) is based primarily on remembrances of past sins and the possibility of committing new ones, and can only be secondarily rooted in the memory of dangers on a natural sea.

Imagery may become striking by a "boldness in the distance between tenor and vehicle",⁵⁰ but considerations of decorum and tradition, and a subordination of self, keep it within conventional boundaries. Thus Schleiner agrees with Tuve that imagery of this period can be "entirely consistent

⁴⁸Rugoff, p. 130.

⁴⁹Joan Webber, Contrary Music (Madison, Wisc., 1963), pp. 71, 73. Henceforward this book shall be cited as Webber.

⁵⁰Schleiner, p. 8.

with orthodox pronouncements on decorum even though it be unconventional, homely, rough, or difficult to understand."⁵¹ He is another critic who refers to the common body of knowledge possessed by the population of this period, this time with reference to "many theological beliefs and exegetical conventions". Schleiner is speaking primarily of the "mediaeval semantic theory of the word in the Holy Scriptures, a theory that is also at the basis of the threefold or fourfold interpretation of the Bible according to historical, allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses. According to this conception a word has as many potential meanings as the res that lies behind its vox has properties."⁵² This theory provides part of the explanation for many of the puns, paradoxes and the seemingly "far-fetched similes" that seem to pervade the Devotions.

Sparrow and Simpson take issue with these aspects of Donne's style, and they also agree, with varying considerations of its value, that Donne makes himself a topic of primary concern in the Devotions. Subsequent general studies place Donne within seventeenth-century philosophical frames of reference, and in doing so their authors' reactions to him tend to become much more favourable. They also prove that many comments in the early surveys of the Devotions are

⁵¹Schleiner, p. 13.

⁵²Ibid., p. 12.

suspect, since many of the qualities of metaphysical writers in general were seen to be based on a world view and on theories of literature that justified the "originality" (in a modern reader's eyes) of their style, at the same time that it bound them to concerns with tradition, decorum, and didacticism, or significancy. A result of these same concerns was that literature was generally other-oriented, and it represents a serious charge that Donne's Devotions were largely circumscribed by merely personal concerns. It is also important that theology, philosophy, education and literature all seem to share common theoretical bases. Concepts such as the "chain of being" and the multifold interpretation of the Bible were not the special properties of a simple academic discipline or religious order, but they were the "common properties" of the age. Thus any designation of undue importance to the influence of a school of thought based on these common theoretical bases is a dangerous activity. Mazzeo accuses Tuve of doing this when she attempts to establish "a causal relationship" between the metaphysical "conceit" and Ramism, whereas he sees both to be expressions of "a view of the world founded on universal analogy".⁵³

Whatever the relative merits of this specific controversy may be, it throws some light on the attempts that have been made at giving predominant importance to the influence

⁵³Mazzeo, pp. 65, 73.

on Donne of certain meditational practises and devotional genres. Few critics have considered that sources common to all devotional genres, such as the Bible, may also have served as the primary sources of the Devotions' structure. In any case, the following section will assess the merits of a group of those studies that attempt to assign the major influence on the Devotions to various devotional genres.

iii.

Louis Martz seems reductionistic in his analyses of Ignatius' influence on several of Donne's poems.⁵⁴ His book, The Poetry of Meditation, has initiated a number of studies of the Devotions that deal in varying degrees with the influence of meditative practices, specifically those of Ignatius. Martz himself, however, qualifies the extent of the importance of these practices on the metaphysical poets:

In the course of this study I shall treat from the standpoint of meditation many passages of poetry which can be, and have been fruitfully studied from the standpoint of absolute criticism, or from the standpoint of rhetoric, liturgy, sermon-writing or the history of ideas. . . . The present study is focused on one aspect of the period; my aim is to convince the reader that this is one among the several necessary methods of approaching a full understanding of English literature in the seventeenth century.⁵⁵

Martz bases part of his thesis on the supposition that "Donne was subjected to a strong Jesuit influence during his formative

⁵⁴Cf. Raspa, p. xxxi, and Goldberg, p. 23.

⁵⁵Martz, p. 22.

years",⁵⁶ though Bald later provides a number of telling arguments against this.⁵⁷ Arguments based on impressions formed in Donne's childhood are not relied upon by Martz, however, and he concentrates on relationships perceived between poetry and meditative exercises.

He provides a summary of the exercise that serves as a basic model for much of the poetry he studies in depth, and it shall be quoted at length since it will provide a reference point for treatises by others dealing with Ignatian meditative structure in the Devotions:

All these parts of a given exercise will, when properly performed, flow into one inseparable, inevitable sequence: the imaginative "composition" will in the meditation proper be recalled by the memory, whose responsibility is to "lay open to the view of our understanding the persons, wordes and workes contained in the first point," thus "setting before our eyes the point or Myserie on which we are to meditate." Similarly the acts of the colloquy are inseparable from the affections of the will. Without expecting any hard and fast divisions, then, we should expect to find a formal meditation falling into three distinguishable portions, corresponding to the acts of memory, understanding and will -- portions which we might call composition, analysis, and colloquy.⁵⁸

Martz acknowledges the importance of other elements in poetry with a meditative cast: "In particular, the principles of Renaissance logic and rhetoric would be in evidence, for these methods of meditation are in themselves adaptations

⁵⁶Martz, p. 38.

⁵⁷Bald, p. 39.

⁵⁸Martz, pp. 37-38.

of ancient principles of logic and rhetoric."⁵⁹ Martz refers specifically to Tuve here, and it would be appropriate to quote a passage of hers dealing with "Renaissance psychological theory" that is remarkably similar to Martz' quotation:

The work of the Imagination or the Fantasy (or of the two together, when distinguished) was to receive, compare, and combine impressions of whatever the senses enabled man to perceive, and it was in the continual and unbroken co-operation with the Understanding which judged of the truth or falsity of things (by logic) and with the Will which if uninfected moved man to favorable affections toward the good, and unfavorable toward the evil. Although many distinctions are made in any treatment which now seem fantastic, the main impression one receives in reading of the process of rational activity, in any typical treatise, is an impression of the unity of the total mind-act.⁶⁰

Martz summarizes similarities such as these (of methods of meditation and logic) with the comment that "all the ways of speaking and writing that a man has learned will inevitably help to form the thoughts of the 'whole soul'",⁶¹ but he is aware that for the moment his argument concerning meditative influence is somewhat weakened by this.

The employment of a tripartite structure in other processes of thought seems to distance the influence of meditative practices even further. The "three powers of the soul" were seen as analogous to the Holy Trinity; Martz comments on this himself, and quotes Etienne Gilson's commentary

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 38.

⁶⁰Tuve, pp. 396-397.

⁶¹Martz, p. 39.

on St. Bonaventure:

Just as the Father engenders the eternal knowledge of the Word Who expresses Him, and as the Word is in turn united with the Father by the Holy Spirit, so memory or thought, big with the ideas which it encloses, engenders the knowledge of the intellect or word, and love is born from both as the bond which unites them.⁶²

Itrat Husain discusses Donne's frequent reference to this analogy in the Sermons,⁶³ and the implication is strong that any thoughts on God would naturally fall into a tripartite division, eliminating the necessity of seeing a relationship with formal meditative guides. Martz also refers to "a natural, fundamental tendency of the human mind, a tendency to work from a particular situation, through analysis of the situation, and finally to some sort of resolution of the problems which the situation has presented."⁶⁴ He deals with the concepts that seem to militate against his argument by writing this:

Meditation focused and disciplined the powers that a man already possessed, both his innate powers and his acquired modes of logical analysis and rhetorical development. The process of meditation, then, is not an isolated factor in this poetry; it exists, I believe, as a fundamental organizing principle deep within the poetry.⁶⁵

Since similarities of theme or subject matter could belong to

⁶²Martz, p. 36.

⁶³Itrat Husain, The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne (London, 1938), pp. 55-59.

⁶⁴Martz, p. 39.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 39.

a number of philosophical relationships, then, Martz's arguments are strongest when he demonstrates precise relationships between the organization or total structure of a number of poems and the structure of a full spiritual exercise.

This is one of the major reasons that Thomas Van Laan's thesis is not very convincing, since it is based upon a reading of Donne's rather flexible use of the meditative structure. He sees a fairly close correspondence between each of the twenty-three Devotions and the basic "Ignatian spiritual exercise",⁶⁶ which he generally breaks down into an opening prayer, two preludes, a meditation, and a colloquy.⁶⁷ He writes that the opening prayer is eliminated, and that the function of the first prelude, which is a "composition of place" or the establishment of a visual referent for the meditation, is taken over by the titles at the head of each Devotion. The second prelude (according to Van Laan), in which the meditator requests God to instil affections proper to the subject, is shifted by Donne to the end of each Devotion.⁶⁸ The Meditation continues the function of the title by fixing the subject in the memory, and also works towards an understanding of the subject so that some course of action may be determined. He goes on to claim that the

⁶⁶Van Laan, p. 202.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 194-195.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 200-201.

Expostulation is associated with the will and very closely resembles the Ignatian colloquy.⁶⁹ Van Laan is concerned with the overall structure of Donne's book insofar as the uniformity of individual Devotions is concerned, in which he sees the unity based on the Ignatian exercise. In summary, Van Laan's flexibility in dealing with themes and thought processes that could easily be attributed to other sources contradicts the precision that is demanded of his approach.

Andreasen takes a much less restricted view of the Devotions, and considers the meditational guides to be only one of three different devotional genres that influence this work, the other two being the practical guide (such as the private prayer book) which expounds doctrine and methods of its practice, and the spiritual autobiography, which describes the progress of the writer's soul. All of these are governed in the Devotions by something that Andreasen calls the "psychology of assent", and this in turn involves a progress through the "three powers of the soul" to the point where an "assent of the total being"⁷⁰ to God's will is achieved. Andreasen associates Ignatius with the movement from memory, through understanding, and on to will, which results in the aforementioned assent. She points out, however, that it is

⁶⁹Van Laan, p. 199.

⁷⁰Andreasen, p. 208.

open to debate, and basically unimportant, whether Donne was consciously following any specific meditational approach, such as Ignatius' or Hall's. This pattern was a general one for all devotional literature, and in other respects is "quite universal" to man in his subordination to the "will" of an ideal figure and to his acceptance of identity with mankind, which is in turn an antecedent to the gaining of "charitable love."⁷¹

She sees both the Meditations and Expostulations of the Devotions as areas in which Donne attempts to gain an understanding of his situation, and finds no specifically embodied referent to a "composition of place" in Donne's book. The first two sections of each Devotion are different only in that they focus on different subjects: the Meditations are centred in the self and the human condition, and the Expostulations are centred in scripture and God. The prayers involve the faculty of will, by which an affective assent is given to conclusions arrived at in the two previous sections.

Andreasen also suggests a structure for the Devotions as a whole: "The first five devotions present the situation: the human condition is one of frailty, sinfulness and helplessness."⁷² The major purpose of these Devotions is that Donne and the reader are to achieve humility. Devotions 6-12 deal

⁷¹Andreasen, pp. 210, 211, 216.

⁷²Ibid., p. 214.

with the various helps for the sick man, and they assert that there is also hope for a recovery from sin. Many analogies are based on "the corresponding planes", and one of the more important points made is that men must imitate the charity of God. The "climax of the plot occurs in Devotions XIII-XVIII," and Devotion 17 is seen by Andreasen to be "the pivot on which the whole volume turns."⁷³ The tolling bells "bring home . . . with freshness and power" that all men are bound in a community of sin and deserve death, that they are also bound by love for one another, and that one can escape from the self and "achieve a sense of identity" with others which is an antecedent to "charitable love."⁷⁴ The last five Devotions are seen as a sort of dénouement in which Donne at last achieves "spiritual health": " . . . the remaining devotions in the series, although they contain reminders that there is a constant danger of a relapse, are supported by a strong faith in divine providence and mercy." Andreasen concludes by writing that Donne dramatizes this entire process in "a spiritual guide that treats the arts of holy living and holy dying simultaneously", though the Devotions do not follow any generic formulae.⁷⁵ Despite the many merits of her article, Andreasen's attempts to define an overall

⁷³Andreasen, p. 215.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 215-216.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 216.

pattern for the Devotions are only partially successful, and will be discussed again in the next chapter.

Raspa does not cite Andreasen, but several of his conclusions are similar to hers. He specifies the nature of Donne's rejection of the Ignatian "composition of place" by pointing out Donne's antagonism to the evacuatio sensuum which was preparatory to the creation of an imagined picture as the subject for meditation.⁷⁶ He says that Donne replaces "the fictional picture of Ignatius with the copies of the prototypes of the Bible in contemporary history."⁷⁷ Thus Donne takes the experience outlined in the *Meditations*, again considered to be centred without variation in the human condition, and 'typologizes' it in the scripturally based *Expostulations*. Raspa differs from Andreasen, however, in stating that each section within the twenty-three *Devotions* represents a completed meditative experience as according to Ignatius:

Though one may sometimes draw a few superficial parallels between the mental cosmology of Ignatius and the tripartite sections of Donne's Devotions, the real meditative qualities accruing to the Ignatian use of the powers of mind and body are present in all parts of the work at once. Otherwise these meditative qualities and all other factors related to meditative experience would not be present in the work at all.⁷⁸

Raspa accords with both Van Laan and Andreasen, if the

⁷⁶Raspa, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. xxxiv.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. xxxix.

word "accord" may apply to analyses that vary widely in their specific applications, in saying that Donne used Ignatian principles but altered them for his own purposes. Raspa unfortunately bases much of his argument on a belief in "the indelible residual effect of Donne's upbringing in the Jesuit-dominated English recusant church of his boyhood."⁷⁹ This represents an acceptance of Louis Martz's position⁸⁰ which Bald quite effectively disproves,⁸¹ though Raspa does not explain his variance from this newest and most complete compilation of biographical evidence.

Raspa is thus led to designate as "Ignatian" Donne's "consciousness of the inner man as the seat of willed experience,"⁸² which is far too restrictive in its elimination of the many other possible sources for such a consciousness. He refers to these himself, ironically, after a passage in which he rejects the influences of both "the tripartite Ignatian division of Martz's criticism, Prelude, Meditation, and Colloquy, conducted by a toughly logical mind," and "Van Laan's suggestion of the five-part Ignatian division found elsewhere in the Exercises . . .". Raspa writes:

Thirdly, there is the meditative experience which can be described as the terminal stage of the Ignatian use of

⁷⁹Raspa, p. xxxiii.

⁸⁰Martz, p. 38.

⁸¹Bald, p. 39.

⁸²Raspa, p. xxxiii.

the mind. The use of the mind was developed by Ignatius in the Exercises by synthesizing certain ideas about psychology, philosophy, and the universe. This third influence prevailed upon Donne.⁸³

Since it is doubtful that Donne was trained at a Jesuit-dominated school in his boyhood, and since he was certain on the other hand to be fairly well schooled in the "certain ideas about psychology, philosophy and the universe" that were also used by Ignatius, it is difficult to see how a "consciousness of the inner man as the seat of willed experience" can be solely assigned to Ignatius. Raspa strains in a fashion somewhat reminiscent of Van Laan when he writes later of the elements of Ignatius' thought which Donne kept and those which he rejected.⁸⁴

Raspa's interest in the form of the Devotions is confined primarily to the nature of individual Devotions, since structure at the "purely medical level," or in the "treatment of the historical event of Donne's illness", is plain and "not dramatic."⁸⁵ In dealing with the literary characteristics of each Devotion, Raspa does not differ significantly from Webber. Each Devotion is given coherence by its imagery,⁸⁶ and individual sections are distinguished from each other by style, the repeated use of certain key words, and by content. The Book of Creatures, the Book of

⁸³Raspa, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. xxxiii.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. xxxiv.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. xxxiv.

Life (Scripture), and the second Book of Life (the Register of the Elect), form the substance of the Meditations, Expostulations, and Prayers respectively.⁸⁷ Raspa states wrongly that imagery does not unify the book as a whole, and that only in the three "tolling bell" Devotions (16-18) is it continuous for more than one Devotion. Imagistic coherence may not be extremely prominent in the Devotions, but a closer look would reveal several continuous strands. He also writes that each Meditation "is noteworthy for establishing a purity of content which the whole devotion maintains. . . . There are not only practically no references to sources outside the Book of Creatures in the twenty-three Meditations of Devotions; there are hardly any even to the Bible."⁸⁸ He bases this on Mueller,⁸⁹ who in turn uses Webber⁹⁰ as support for her argument, and all three are wrong in this respect. As the following chapter will show, the Meditations contain a fair number of references to the Bible, and the Expostulations and Prayers are far from being restricted to a single kind of content.

⁸⁷Raspa, pp. xxxv-xxxviii. These ideas are also discussed by Webber, pp. 183-185.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. xxxv.

⁸⁹Mueller, p. 4.

⁹⁰Webber, p. 185.

iv.

Though writers such as Raspa consider exegetical elements to be present in the Devotions, Mueller seems to be the sole critic who links this book substantially to Donne's concern with his position as a minister. She speaks of the value of relating the Devotions to his sermons and to the Church Fathers, who established a precedent in their own sermons for the "exegesis of experience" in spiritual terms.⁹¹ She considers "the congruence of homiletic and devotional aims" in Donne to be "revealed in the singleness of purpose linking the Devotions with the sermons: conforming the soul to Christ."⁹² She goes on to demonstrate a correlation between meditative literature and patristic preaching which is reminiscent of Andreasen's position that, along with the meditative guide and spiritual autobiography, the practical, exegetical guide such as the prayer book is partially a generic base for the Devotions:

This theme . . . is, of course, the stated concern of much meditative literature, particularly that with a strongly affective cast like the Meditations on the Life of Christ long attributed to Bonaventure. Yet this theme is also prominent in patristic preaching and gains probably its profoundest expression in Bernard's Sermones ad Tempora, where by means of figurative exegesis the hearer is made a participant at such events as the Nativity and Crucifixion.⁹³

Mueller demonstrates the affinity of the Devotions with Donne's

⁹¹Mueller, pp. 8, 19.

⁹²Ibid., p. 8.

⁹³Ibid., p. 8.

own sermons, especially those on Psalm 6 which are tentatively assigned by Simpson to the spring of 1623,⁹⁴ and she generally makes a very effective case for the public, exegetical orientation of the Devotions.

Like the other three critics mentioned so far, however, she rigidly categorizes each section within the various Devotions, saying that the same devotional process is rehearsed on twenty-three separate occasions. Along with Raspa and Joan Webber, she states that the Meditations are almost completely devoid of scriptural references and that they are "the product of a rigorously empirical perspective."⁹⁵ As mentioned before, a comparison of Meditations 1 and 17 or 18, as only one example, demonstrates that a belief in the Devotions' uniformity is groundless. Mueller would perhaps de-emphasize her notion that the Meditations exist in a uniform, non-scriptural state, awaiting spiritual or Biblical exegesis, if she looked more closely at the many Meditations that allude or refer directly to the Bible or to other spiritual matters. She could thus make a much stronger case for the Devotions' similarity to the sermons, since the Meditations and their headings quite clearly provide a "text" that comprehends much more than isolated, personal experience for

⁹⁴Mueller, pp. 8-16. Cf. Evelyn Simpson, Introduction, The Sermons of John Donne, VI, 1-2.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 4. Cf. Webber, pp. 185-189.

"amplification" in the Expostulations and "application" in the Prayers.

Joan Webber's work with the style and structure of the Devotions in Contrary Music (1963) has been one of the treatises which have most influenced subsequent criticism. Mueller and Raspa, particularly, have based their arguments on distinctions that she makes between the three sections within each Devotion. She cites Thomas Becon's treatise concerning the value of meditation for the improvement of man: "' . . . this humiliation of ourselves helpeth greatly to the advancement of our prayer. For the more that any man dejecteth himself and throweth down himself, the nearer is he made unto God.'"⁹⁶ She continues with a further definition:

Such self-consideration was generally held in check by the form of the meditation, the didactic tone of the treatise, and the Christian vocabulary of the writer, who was more apt than not to take the long view throughout, to make clear that the misery of man is a result of sin and that through penitence he can be cured of sin and misery by the mercy of God.

She then points out the ways in which Donne differs from this:

Donne limits his meditations to man and the creatures. His diction almost entirely excludes any Christian implications, and is further removed from the ordinary meditation by its ironic tone. His imagery, based on physical comparisons, avoids any links with the spiritual world.⁹⁷

She writes that Donne "flouts tradition" with his use of "the microcosm-macrocosm analogy", which is the "dominant symbol

⁹⁶The Early Works of Thomas Becon, ed. John Ayre (Cambridge, 1843), p. 160; in Webber, p. 184.

⁹⁷Webber, p. 185.

for portrayal of man's condition". The Meditations do not deal with "the Book of the Creatures" as such because Donne does not yet deal with "the larger truth which might be observed by consideration of man as matter informed by soul",⁹⁸ or as part of the book clearly 'written' by God. She also writes that the key word of the Meditations is "misery," which reinforces an impious pessimism in which Man is considered to be "the innocent plaything of a malevolent world".⁹⁹

In the attempt to temper Webber's bleak view of the Meditations, the analyses of Tillyard, Coffin and Lewis may be brought to mind again, all three of which showed that Renaissance cosmology was itself subject to mutability. Lewis also points out that it never was too valid a source for theological arguments.¹⁰⁰ The pessimistic view of man and nature as essentially decadent is consistent with the doctrine of original sin, and Donne may be seen as using it to de-emphasize man's values and emphasize his dependence on God's mercies. It is also doubtful that Donne would consistently exploit a deliberately impious position throughout each Meditation. The implication would be that his newly won understanding and his reconciliation with God in every Devotion is immediately voided at the beginning of the next one, and surely Donne does not

⁹⁸Webber, pp. 188, 185.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁰⁰Lewis, p. 19.

forget his lessons that easily.

The Expostulations are seen by Webber to start a process of rectification in that "Donne begins for the first time to make Christian parables of his sickness and to suggest in imagery that man's life in a material world can have eternal significance."¹⁰¹ This sickness begins to be equated with sin, and man's misery is seen as part of a humiliation initiated by a loving God. The understanding in this section is arrived at through a restless struggle. Donne is still exploring and questioning the truth in a vacillating manner which is often resolved only at the end of the Expostulations. Thus "the tone of these questions ranges from fear and 'murmuring' to believing sincerity as Donne explores the world of Scriptures." "'Murmuring'" is seen by Webber to be "the key word of the expostulations". The sentence structure "is built around a question form", and, as part of a "searching consideration of man and God", is reminiscent of Augustine's Confessions.¹⁰² This leads Webber to consider the style of the Expostulations as "restless Augustinian".¹⁰³

The Prayers represent a calm resolution "after the feverish pace of the meditations and expostulations,"¹⁰⁴ and

¹⁰¹Webber, p. 192.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 193, 195.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 196.

in them Donne asserts the authority of the Church and man's dependence on it. "The tone of the prayers is set by the words 'eternal' and 'merciful'," and the sentences are generally balanced and "leisurely":

Those which are short or fragmentary are not ragged; they do not have the interrupting effect of the brief question [as in the Expostulation], nor do they have the sharp aphoristic independence of the curt period [as in the Meditations]. Rather they are interwoven, by the use of repetition, with sentences before and after; they are apt to be long, rolling, parallel clauses whose sweep increases with the progress of the paragraph.¹⁰⁵

Webber sees these as "Anglican periods", and they constitute a third distinct style employed in the Devotions, which forms one part of "his public, and contrary, music."¹⁰⁶

Goldberg differs somewhat from Webber in that he sees slightly stronger Christian implications in the Meditations. He writes that Donne "implies an identification of sin with sickness", and an identification of himself with all mankind, in the opening sentence of the Devotions. Nevertheless, he preserves the idea that the sections of each Devotion form part of a tonally and thematically uniform process. The structurally identical twenty-three Devotions foster a sense that there is a collapse of time into a single eternal moment.¹⁰⁸ The "occasions" of the sickness form "the barest excuse for a

¹⁰⁵Webber, pp. 198, 199.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁰⁷Goldberg, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 188-190.

plot", and he is in accord with Simpson when he writes that they are simply used as the springboards for a series of spiritually significant topics.¹⁰⁹

Goldberg's understanding of the time factor and the repetitive nature of the Devotions is based upon an understanding of typology as the theological basis for the Devotions. Donne "typologizes" events of his own life by associating them with events in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, and he carries this through to a fuller identification with Christ. Thus Donne's "sickness is real, certainly, but its meaning has more reality." The "metaphorical identification of illness with sin and salvation . . . is not simply a devotional commonplace. Donne transforms the metaphors of the traditional prayer book into typological realities." A fuller definition of typology and Donne's use of it in the Devotions runs as follows:

For typology, events are always historically concrete and real and yet, at the same time, are shadows dimly prefiguring the greater reality of Christ.

Every meditation in Donne's Devotions is such a shadow. Each one considers a physical fact -- the arrival of the physician, the tolling of bells -- only to discover a spiritual meaning. The interpretation found in every meditation always points to man's fallen state. An identification is made with the sinfulness of the human condition. With the help of the Bible, the expostulations translate the physical event. Individual experience is placed within the context of Christian history; the ambiguity of the event is explored through a survey of spiritual meanings possibly involved in the event. The solution to the human and spiritual problems is represented in the prayer. Typically, Christ provides the answer to the problems since He fulfills the event. The

¹⁰⁹Goldberg, p. 85.

earthly career of Christ, His suffering, endows all events with a further meaning which points to Him.¹¹⁰

Goldberg's earlier references to the prayer books are the result of an argument that he makes for them as one of two shaping, generic influences on the Devotions, the other being Tudor autobiography.¹¹¹ Goldberg's discussion can only be given a very brief summation here, but it is valuable in that it again establishes the "congruence of homiletic and devotional aims" in the Devotions, as Mueller phrases it. He writes that all the standard themes of the prayer books, especially the sin-sickness identification, are used by Donne, though there are generally no structural similarities. There is one book by Sir John Hayward entitled Sanctuarie of a Troubled Soul,¹¹² however, which bears remarkable similarities to Donne's, and since Goldberg feels that Donne would have had to operate from some basis in a defined genre, he posits this book as the most likely precedent. He also writes that the definition of self in various forms of autobiography of this period had a shaping influence on the Devotions. The self was usually identified with all mankind, and elements of "reality" generally were reshaped by the author in his greater consideration for thematic development.

¹¹⁰Goldberg, pp. 188-189.

¹¹¹Cf. Goldberg, pp. 28-86.

¹¹²(London, 1604), in Goldberg, p. 65.

Goldberg's denial of the autobiographical validity of the Devotions is greatly dependent on what he sees to be Donne's admission of artifice in the dactylic hexameter form given to the list of Latin headings on the title page.¹¹³

It is not entirely clear why Goldberg should make so much of Donne's "duplicity" here. Donne may just as easily be suggesting that his "poem," reminiscent of Hezekiah's in Isaiah, represents the "text" of his experience, and it is not too blasphemous to attempt a poetic form for events that God's hand has "written."

Goldberg also rejects the influence of Ignatian meditative structure. He writes that "tripartite structure is so common in the Renaissance that to insist that all works displaying such a structure conform to the Ignatian pattern is a curious notion indeed." He concludes his discussion of the writings of Martz, Van Laan and Andreasen (to whom we may add Raspa) by saying: "With such confusion surrounding the term there hardly seems to be any advantage in maintaining Ignatian influence on the tripartite division of the Devotions."¹¹⁴

It may be added to this that one clearly related book of private prayer (Hayward's) does not provide a substantial generic base for the Devotions either, and that Donne was using themes that are just as often found in his sermons and in devotional literature generally. The typological basis of

¹¹³Goldberg, pp. 76-79.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 22-23.

the Devotions is the most convincingly developed argument by Goldberg, and he sees this as Donne's further development of the simpler metaphors found in books of private prayer.¹¹⁵ This, however, demonstrates a certain departure from identity with the prayer book, and since typology is also a major element in the theological exegesis in his sermons, Mueller's argument concerning the close relationship of the sermons with the Devotions is given added support.

Two recent articles on the Devotions do little towards providing an elucidation of its philosophical construction, but they offer several interesting comments on its general structure. D. W. Harding thinks Donne's devotion to God to be of less importance than his achievement of "self-acceptance", and that the Devotions have a continuing, instructive relevance for man, regardless of his religious background. He writes that Donne's "Christian idiom is shot through with the realities of a sensitive and intelligent man's experience," and that the general plan of the Devotions gives his "religious concepts a firm anchorage in human events and emotions."¹¹⁶ This reading is difficult to reconcile with Donne's own belief that such an anchorage inevitably leads to a drowning, (cf. Prayers 20, 23), and that an "affirmation of life" or a "reconciliation to himself,"¹¹⁷ as Harding would

¹¹⁵Goldberg, pp. 100-135, 188.

¹¹⁶Harding, p. 401.

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 385, 401.

put it, is entirely dependent on God's mercies.

Harding suggests that Donne's sermon technique is the major influence on the Devotions. He sees the general movement of many sermons to be in evidence in each Devotion -- the building up to "a crescendo followed by a falling movement to emphasize his [Donne's] submission."¹¹⁸ He also stresses that Donne's purpose in the Devotions is to advise, but through personal example, and Mueller later proves this to be a tradition established in patristic preaching. Harding also ingeniously suggests that Donne deliberately set the number of his Devotions at twenty-three, "perhaps because he recovered and the last hour for him was yet to strike",¹¹⁹ and this fits in with Goldberg's thesis that time in the Devotions is telescoped into a single day.

Don Noel Smith claims that the Devotions need to be read as a whole, or as a processive work of art, and he attempts somewhat paradoxically to do this by concentrating on form and not content. He cites Andreasen's identification of "two different techniques or formal principles, the rhetorical and the dramatic." The rhetorical organization pertains to individual Devotions, which are "divided . . . into three distinct parts, each part reflecting a different rhetorical approach: expository, argumentative, and

¹¹⁸Harding, p. 390.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 386.

suppliative."¹²⁰ Smith decides to concentrate on the dramatic action of the Devotions, and in so doing he skirts Andreassen's description of the dramatic movement by merely giving it a general summary, leaving out her association of this with specific numbers (the five-seven-six-five division).

His own division of the Devotions into groups of three, nevertheless, is a fairly convincing one, and it shall be quoted at length:

Devotions I-III deal with Donne's falling ill: the sudden outbreak of the fever, his failing faculties, his taking to bed. The central consideration of this group is the capriciousness of man's fortunes. Devotions IV-VI concern the visit of the first physician: he is sent for, he comes and examines, he fears. The focus here is upon the helplessness of man by himself to combat the misery that afflicts him. Devotions VII-IX deal with diagnosis and prescription: the request of the first physician for support, the coming of the King's physician, their consultation. This group considers further man's need for assistance, the threats to him being so numerous and complex that a pooling of wisdom and resources is advisable. Devotions X-XII cover the treatment of the disease: the physicians observe its increase, use cordials for the heart, and apply pigeons to the head [sic].¹²¹ Considered here is the treachery man faces from himself and how to confront it. Devotions XIII-XV pertain to the critical period: the disease manifests itself, the physicians pronounce a crisis, the patient gets no rest. The dominant consideration is man's final impotency, despite all assistance and remedies -- he waits and suffers. Devotions XVI-XVIII cover the crucial phase: the tolling bell brings to mind the common fate of all, proclaims that the hearer too must die, reveals that in another's death one also dies. These three reflect variously upon the meaning of death as the common denominator and bond of mankind, representing both loss and gain -- for just as one shares in the death of a fellowman, he shares in the resurrection of Christ. Devotions XIX-XXI concern the

¹²⁰Smith, p. 3.

¹²¹The pigeons were applied to the feet or to "lower parts" to draw vapours from the head. Cf. Devotions, p. 65.

recovery: the physicians have hope, they purge, the patient arises from bed. Donne reflects here upon the significant irony that hope, mercy, redemption are yet accompanied by apprehension, pain, misery. Devotions XXII-XXIII stand outside the tripartite groupings as a kind of postscript on the action. The first takes up the root cause of the illness, which Donne sees as ultimately inherent in the nature of man; and the second considers the possible effect of the disease, a relapse, which will pose a constant threat.¹²²

Smith attempts to show that Donne has "compressed the action" by avoiding "irrelevant and digressive incidents", thus giving it a greater dramatic intensity. Donne groups the divisions further for reasons of economy and balance in this way, according to Smith:

We note that Devotions contains an exposition, in which we are acquainted with Donne's condition and its correspondence to that of mankind; a complication, devoted to the development of the conflict; a crisis and a climax, in which the outcome is in doubt; a resolution, consisting of the recovery; and a conclusion, in which cause and effect are weighed. The proportions run three devotions to the exposition, nine to the complication, six to the crisis and climax, three to the resolution and two to the conclusion.¹²³

While Smith retains a healthy sense of the reality of the "emergent occasions" and their more than incidental importance to Donne, his dichotomizing of content and form bring him into several difficulties. For example, there may be no "digressive incidents", but there certainly are intellectual digressions that may be said to detract from the dramatic intensity of the Devotions. Smith also makes this rather weak

¹²²Smith, pp. 8-9.

¹²³Ibid., p. 9.

point: "Up to the crucial point of the illness, Donne has been carrying on a one-way conversation with God, who has remained a silent, apostrophized presence. Symbolically, the bells ringing from the Church are God's answer."¹²⁴ It must be remembered that from the first Devotion on Donne refers many times to God's direct communication with him through the Book of Creatures and the Book of Life (Scripture), and that his illness in the first place was the work of God's own "hand." Perhaps a fuller integration of content with form would have helped to bring Smith's contribution to a reading of the Devotions' structure into sharper focus.

Though it has been difficult to limit editorial comment on these works of criticism, this chapter has attempted to outline the issues around which an understanding of the structure of the Devotions must be organized. The problem of its processive or repetitive nature seems to be one of the most important. Each devotional unit does not differ radically in terms of theme, tone, and style according to Webber, Van Laan, Mueller, Raspa and Goldberg, but Andreasen and Smith make counter claims in their analyses of Devotions' spiritual and dramatic progress. This problem in turn centres on a definition of the nature of each section within the twenty-three Devotions. While arguments concerning their uniformity

¹²⁴Smith, p. 11.

or their progressive changing follow along the same above-mentioned lines, there is almost no agreement between any two writers as to the exact nature of these three sections, and, naturally, of the whole devotional unit. An issue associated with this question concerns the existence of imagistic continuity, which Raspa claims to exist only in individual Devotions, excepting Devotions 16-18. Other disagreements centre in the extent of the various generic and philosophical influences on the Devotions. The succeeding chapter should make some progress in sorting out the influence of the methods and concerns of various meditative structures, other devotional genres, and sermon-related exegesis. Another possibility suggested by critics such as Sparrow and White is that there is no generic precedent or "singleness of plan" at all. Finally, the extent to which Donne is concerned with self in the Devotions is another matter that needs to be clarified. Chapter III, then, will focus on an analysis of the Devotions themselves in the attempt to put these issues into as clear a light as possible.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURE OF THE DEVOTIONS

Several indications of Donne's intentions concerning the nature and structure of the Devotions may be determined from his title page, the dedicatory epistle, and the table of contents or the list of title headings for the "stations" of his illness. The title, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, and severall steps in my Sicknes, suggests that Donne himself and the physical events of his illness will play roles of no inconsiderable importance. This may seem obvious enough, but it must be borne in mind that they have both been points of contention. This title, however, is immediately generalized into a proclaimed consideration of larger matters. The occasions and steps in his sickness have been "digested," or "reduced into a systematic form" with the secondary connotation of an assimilation of "food",¹ into "Meditations, upon our Humane Condition", "Expostulations, and Debatelements with God",

¹The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 725.

Donne's later references to God as the author of Donne's humiliation and, through Jesus, the "bread of life" or the source of his sustenance, have important implications for Donne's choice of this word.

and "Prayers, upon the severall Occasions, to him". Thus Donne immediately assumes an identification with all mankind, but he maintains the importance of his "occasions" by referring to them again in his outline of the Prayer. He also seems to identify his Devotions with matters of rhetorical and metaphysical just as much as meditative importance. He is to consider the "Humane Condition" generally, and he is to "debate" and expostulate with God, which seems to have rhetorical and exegetical purposes more than it seems to propose the conducting of colloquies.

The dedication to Prince Charles is primarily important for its justification of the Devotions' publication and for its establishment of a 'generic' precedent: "It might be enough, that God hath seene my Devotions: But Examples of Good Kings are Commandements; And Ezechiah writt the Meditations of his Sicknesse, after his Sicknesse." Donne begins a series of identifications with Biblical figures in this epistle, then, and he claims a relationship with no other tradition or genre than one found in the Bible.

The exegetical aspect of the Devotions is further established by Donne's casting of the list of his twenty-three stages of the illness into lines of Latin dactylic hexameter. Goldberg may be right in considering Donne's composition of his own text for elucidation (reminiscent of Hezekiah's complex poem in Isaiah, 38: 9-20) to border on blasphemy.²

²Goldberg, pp. 78, 133.

Donne himself, perhaps sensing a possible impropriety, altered the form of this table of contents in the second edition of the Devotions. However, Donne frequently refers to God as the "authorial" hand in every stage of his illness.³ Thus it is not necessarily inconsistent with piety, in the association of his experience in the "Book of Creatures" with Scripture, to cast this human experience into poetic form. The establishment of this 'text' as the basis for an ensuing exegesis seems to link the Devotions with the sermon form⁴ more than it can be forced into the role of a concrete, visual referent, or of a "composition of place," for ensuing meditation.⁵

The twenty-three stages of the illness must also be seen as determinants of the nature of tone, style and content in each Devotion. Regardless of the immediacy with which Donne jumps to the greater, "usual subjects of his meditation",⁶ the nature of the illness still determines the kinds of metaphors employed in his Devotions. When the disease breaks out in spots (Devotion 13), for example, the word "spots" dominates the Devotion through every level of interpretation, historical,

³It is doubtless an insignificant point, but the capitalized words in the title of this book form the acronym, DEO, as if Donne meant to place God's signature upon his book.

⁴Cf. Mueller, p. 10, n. 23.

⁵Van Laan, p. 197.

⁶Simpson, p. 248.

allegorical and anagogical. Perhaps the clearest example of an "occasion" which dominates every aspect of the Devotion is the famous seventeenth, where Donne's sense of impending death and of his vicarious death in another man is expressed with an intensity that is reinforced by the omnipresent tolling of bells.

Donne's association of himself with all mankind, and with Christ Himself, receives its profoundest expression in the three tolling bell sections (16, 17, 18). He also no longer needs to struggle with the pervasive, debilitating despair that marks the first three Meditations. Thus a sense of spiritual development is seen to coincide with the progress of the disease. The stages of this overall progress may be further grouped into sets of three. Smith is the originator of this preliminary division, though this and his subsequent ordering of the Devotions into groups of three, nine, six, three and two do not seem adequately to reflect shifts in theme and tone. It must also be kept in mind that the following triadic groupings are not hard and fast divisions, and that images, ideas and attitudes cannot be considered to be locked up in categories of three.

Finally, the free-associative nature of each Devotion must be kept in mind should the following exposition give the impression that they are more precisely ordered than they are. Donne's style is generally an expansive one: whatever the sentence structure, ideas are developed with long trains of

analogies and images that are often connected by nothing more than a common "tenor," or theme. This "figurative exposition"⁷ generally progresses through four forms of exegesis -- historical, allegorical, anagogical and typological. The first deals simply with Donne's descriptions of the physical stages of the disease; the second deals with his association of subjects such as sickness with sin, and himself with the body politic and the macrocosm; the third deals with his translation of physical events into spiritual significance in the light of the Scriptures; and the fourth deals with the linkage of his own spiritual state with Biblical characters, and this "typologizing" culminates in an identification with Jesus Christ. These four kinds of progression are not isolated within separate sections of each Devotion, though the Meditations contain most of the historical, the Expostulations the anagogical, and the Prayers the completed typological expositions. Donne often introduces scriptural matter or associates himself with a Biblical type right in the Meditations, and the rest of the Devotion often contains elements of all these various forms of exegesis.

With these qualifications in mind, then, the following exploration will deal with succeeding groups of three Devotions. A general introduction concerning matters of thematic and tonal progression will first be given to each group, and will be followed by a look at significant developments in the four

⁷Mueller, p. 19.

forms of figurative exposition.

The first three Devotions comprise the sudden onslaught of the disease, and the process to a reconciliation with God involves an intense struggle. In each of the three Meditations Donne associates his sickness with others', and each ends in a passionate, despairing exclamation concerning the misery of mankind. The Expostulations do not reach a resolution until their ends, and even the Prayers are not so much calm submissions as they are exorcisms of sinful inclinations. There is nothing "leisurely"⁸ in the first prayer, for example:

. . . That in all the beginnings, in all the accesses, and approaches of spirituall sicknesses of Sinn, I may heare and hearken to that voice, O thou Man of God, there is death in the pot, and so refraine from that, which I was so hungerly, so greedily flying to. (p. 10)

Donne resolves the problem of the "punishment" of himself and mankind by seeing it as a necessary humiliation, as part of a process of purgation that must be undertaken prior to acquiring a worthiness for salvation. The following exemplifies this process. At the end of Meditation 3 he allegorizes the condition of being forced to bed: "Miserable, and, (though common to all) inhuman posture, where I must practise my lying in the grave, by lying still, and not practise my Resurrection, by rising any more." This is resolved in the beginning of the Prayer in the same Devotion: "O most mightie and most merciful God, who though thou have taken me

⁸Cf. Webber, p. 198.

off my feet, hast not taken me off of my foundation, which is thy selfe . . . " This passage also continues an imagistic development concerning the comparison of man with a building, which is begun in Meditation 1 where the effect of the disease is seen as a "Cannon" that "batters all".

The reference to resurrection in Meditation 3 is only one of a number of outright Christian references in the first three Meditations. It is hard to understand why Webber, Van Laan, Mueller, Goldberg and Raspa are so adamant about the non-existence of a Christian idiom or of scriptural and spiritual references in this section of each Devotion. The opening line of Meditation 1 strongly suggests the sudden reversal of Job's fortune, and any informed Christian reader would immediately be aware of such an allusion. Subsequent lines are also reminiscent of Job's expostulations with his "advisors" and with God. The following passage in the same Meditation further demonstrates a spiritual context: "O miserable condition of Man, which was not imprinted by God; who as hee is immortall himselfe, had put a coale, a beame of Immortalitie into us . . . " (p. 7) In the second Meditation as well there are references to the "Angells" and their "Ladder to goe to Heaven . . . " and to "Adams punishment" (pp. 11, 12). The general focus of the first three Meditations may be on the Book of Creatures, and Donne may be in the throes of despair, but the text is placed in a Christian framework.

Donne's association with Biblical types is centred in the trials of Job (Meditation 1, Expostulations 1, 2), Jacob (Expostulations 1, 2) and David (Expostulation 2, Prayer 3). The first two are especially appropriate to his condition since Job went through a lengthy period of despair himself, and Jacob went through a struggle with the angel to win his blessing. Donne's identification with the goal of this typological development, Christ, is completed at the end of each of the first three Prayers. The last one is particularly interesting in the syntactic equation of Jesus with himself: "Doe this, O Lord, for his sake, who did, and suffered so much, that thou mightest, as well in thy Justice, as in thy Mercy, doe it for me, thy Sonne, our Saviour, Christ Jesus." (p. 19)

Devotions 4, 5 and 6 deal with the beginning of Donne's physical and spiritual rectification, in the hands of a single Physician. The Meditations are much less inclined to the sins of intellectual pride and despair, and they become slightly more discursive and less intense. Each of the three Meditations ends in an increasingly positive fashion as opposed to the uniform exclamations of man's misery in the first three. The sixth Meditation ends in a resolution that in the first three was possible only at the end of the Expostulation: " . . . but as my Phisicians fear puts not him from his practise, neither doth mine put me, from receiving from God, and Man, and my selfe, spirituall, and civill, and morall

assurances, and consolations."⁹ (p. 30) The Expostulations still contain an intense questioning of God's word and will, but Donne's difficulties seem to be resolved more immediately, and the final resolution is not held off until the last few lines. The Prayers again stress a repentance for pervasive sin, but along with this sense of attempted purgation there is a stronger awareness of God's mercies.

Solitude and the association of Christ with the Physician are two themes that unify these three passages. They are both related in that man can not effect his physical or spiritual rectification alone, but requires the help of another, or the "Physician" (Meditation 4, p. 21). Donne's consideration of his dependence on others also reflects a new awareness of his sickness and its cure as an example for others:

. . . if this day must remove me, till dayes shall bee no more, seale to me, my spirituall health in affording me the Seales of thy Church, & for my temporall health, prosper thine ordinance, in their hands who shall assist in this sicknes, in that manner, and in that measure, as may most glorifie thee, and most edifie those, who observe the issues of thy servants, to their owne spirituall benefit. (Prayer 4, p. 24)

The "Solitude" (a "torment, which is not threatened in hell it selfe" (p. 25)) that Donne fears in Meditation 5 is resolved at the end of the Expostulation with the presence of "one person, that Phisician, who is my faithfull friend." (p. 28) A sense of progression is established in these three

⁹Again, this Meditation's specifically Christian idiom should be noted.

Devotions by the greater number of assistances afforded to Donne which he describes at the end of Meditation 6 (p. 30).

The microcosm-macrocosm analogy, which plays an important role in the first three Meditations, again forms a major part of the second three, but with several important variations. Donne is not being blasphemous or "untheological"¹⁰ when he limits the exegetical value (due to man's insufficiencies) of "the Book of Creatures." Man's salvation cannot be won through his own intellection or understanding of the world: all that is of importance is derived from and dependent upon God's grace. Accordingly, Donne writes in Meditation 6: "My weaknesse is from Nature, who hath put her Measure, my strength is from God, who possesses, & distributes infinitely." (p. 30) Donne simply seeks to undermine a pride that tends to be engendered in man's belief that he is a "little world" (Meditation 1), that he is part of a "constant . . . Earth" (Meditation 2), and that his erect stature is analogous to being closest to heaven (Meditation 3).

The difference between Donne's treatment of this analogy in the two groups of Meditations is that he uses it to illustrate the "variable", "perplex'd", and particularly the "miserable condition of Man" (p. 8) in the first three, but he downplays misery considerably in the second three. The illustration of the variability of man's

¹⁰Webber, p. 187.

condition is now the prominent emphasis: "A man that is not afraid of a Lion, is afraid of a Cat; not afraid of starving, & yet is afraid of some joynt of meat at the table" (Meditation 6, p. 29). The lighter tone of these three Devotions is also obvious in passages such as this.

In Devotions 7, 8 and 9 Donne's sense of the miseries of his own illness is overwhelmed by the manifold helps extended to him on both a physical and spiritual level. This new height of hope and thankfulness springs imaginatively from the arrival of more physicians, including the King's own, and Donne is simultaneously impressed with the largesse of God's mercy:

O my soule, when thou art not enough awake, to blesse thy God enough for his plentiful mercy, in affording thee many Helpers, remember how many lacke them, and helpe them to them, or to those other things, which they lacke as much as them. (Meditation 7, p. 37)

This passage also illustrates Donne's ever-increasing sense of others and his responsibilities towards them. Donne's consideration of the variability and perplexity of man's lot is not diminished ("a haire, a feather", has killed a man (p. 35)), but it gives rise to the more profound knowledge of his dependence on a charitable God.

In the Meditations of these three Devotions Donne's understanding of and compliance with God's will are greater than any shown in the first six. Early in Meditation 7 Donne recognizes that it is not his "part to choose" whether he or the disease is in its "Autumne". His calm acceptance of the

physician's desire "to have others joyned with him" almost immediately follows upon his preliminary conception of "more feare". Meditations 8 and 9 are not as affirmative as this one, but they too contain a resolution of Donne's problems well before the end.

The Expostulations are not so much "debatelements" with God as they are sermon-like interpretations of His word. One of the most striking indications of this is the small amount of the questioning which dominates the previous six Expostulations. Donne's explication in the Expostulations is centred in a series of physician-King-God analogies which are also the source for the imagistic unification of these three Devotions. The frequency with which Donne returns to various forms of these analogies is almost as pronounced as the frequency of the bell image in Devotions 16, 17 and 18.

David is the most frequently mentioned king, and Donne's association with this Biblical 'type' also marks a shift away from previous associations with the struggles of Jacob and Job. There is one more reference to "Jacobs ladder" in Expostulation 7 (p. 38), but this is used to show that angels have "maintain'd the trade between Heaven and Earth," or between God and Man. David is also an image of Jesus' taking on of humanity, or part of this same "trade": "So thy servant David applies him selfe to his people, so he incorporates himselfe in his people, by calling them his brethern, his bones, his flesh" (Expostulation 8, p. 43). Donne's

typological identification with both David and Jesus is established with the cry, beginning with Devotion 6, that now begins each Expostulation in this specific form: "My God, my God . . . " This re-invokes both David's exclamation at the beginning of Psalm 22 and Jesus' on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15: 34, Matthew 27: 46) As David and Jesus before him, Donne follows this despairing cry by, in essence, "commending his spirit into the hands of the Lord" (Cf. Psalm 31: 5, Luke 23: 46).

The Prayers in these three Devotions also begin in a form that becomes standard for the rest of the Devotions: "O eternall, and most gracious God . . . " (Prayer 7) In Prayers 3, 4 and 6, God had been invoked as both "mightie" and "merciful," two attributes that are associated with the power or the "rod" (in either its application or its withholding) of God the Father. God's eternity and his greatest mercy, grace, afforded through the sacrifice of Jesus, and the stronger expression of the love which is inspired by the Holy Ghost, are thus all expressed in the new, standard form of the Prayers' invocations.¹¹

Devotions 10, 11 and 12 represent a rather severe relapse, so to speak, from the spiritual strength so prominent in every section of the previous three. The attitudes

¹¹Cf. Husain, pp. 56-59, and his discussion of Donne's association of varying attributes with the three members of the Holy Trinity.

displayed by Donne here are again intimately associated with the nature of his physical condition, which returns to the forefront of his considerations. The disease itself had literally been forgotten since Devotion 3 with his interest in secondary aspects of the "occasions" of his illness, such as the arrival and consultation of the physicians. Now, however, the disease is seen "to steale on insensibly," and Donne despairs once again with the notion that it "hath established a Kingdome, an Empire in mee . . . " (Meditation 10, p. 52) The tenth Meditation is also very closely linked with Meditation 1 in terms of idea, image, and tone. In both Donne is unsure of the nature of his illness, and though this time he has no "false apprehensions," it is significant that the idea is re-introduced. The "Canon" doing "hurt against a wal", "the rack", "the pulse, the urine, the sweat" that "give no Indication of any dangerous sicknesse", "blazing starres", the inability to prevent or foretell disease, and the image of man as a "little World" or a microcosm of the world in "Natures nest of Boxes" (pp. 51-52), are all ideas and images that are repeated from Meditation 1. The only difference in the sense of "decay, ruine," and misery that suffuses these two Meditations is that Meditation 10 ends on a hopeful note. The next two Meditations are also dominated by melancholy, particularly the eleventh, which ends in this way: "O who, if before hee had a beeing, he could have sense of this miserie, would buy a being here upon these conditions?" (p. 58).

The Expostulations are also written without the assurance in God's workings that they had in Devotions 7, 8 and 9. Donne must again struggle mightily against his doubts and fears towards a full understanding of God's word. Part of this struggle is carried over into the Prayers, which resume the intensity born of a sense of his own sins, and which are again reminiscent of the first three:

. . . yet I humbly beseech thee to manifest alwayes a more effectuall presence in my heart, then in the other Offices. Into the house of thine Annoynted, disloyall persons, Traitors will come; Into thy House, the Church, Hypocrites, and Idolatrers will come; Into some Roomes of this thy House, my Body, Tentations will come, Infections will come, but bee my Heart, thy Bed-chamber, O my God, and thither let them not enter. (Prayer 11, pp. 60-61)

This passage also outlines the most frequently used images in these three Devotions, which are based on body-soul and body-body politic analogies. In each Devotion the disease is unseen, and this gives rise to considerations of hidden sins, such as the "inclination" (Expostulation 10, p. 54) to sin, and the "pestilent vapours" (Expostulation 11, p. 60) which a man's heart is subject to. These internal, sinful "vapours" in turn give rise to images of the "few whisperers, and secret plotters" that are more dangerous to "Commonwealths" than "Twentie rebellious drums" (Meditation 10, p. 52). Perhaps the clearest statement of these analogies occurs in Meditation 12:

But extend this vapour, rarifie it; from so narrow a roome, as our Naturall bodies, to any Politike body, to a State. That which is fume in us, is in a State, Rumor, and these vapours in us, which wee consider here pestilent, and infectious fumes, are in a State infectious rumors,

detracting and dishonourable Calumnies, Libels. (p. 63)
 On the simplest level these images reinforce the continuity of the narration of a sickness that, throughout the three Devotions, has not yet declared itself openly. On both an allegorical and an anagogical level, these images weave through a consideration of the internecine dangers to the state and to the soul. Donne has once again, then, arranged his Devotions in a fairly close-knit trinity.

Donne's most frequently referred to Biblical figure, apart from Christ, is once again David. David refers continually to his enemies in Psalms, and the following passage is just one example:

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies:
 for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such
 as breathe out cruelty. (Psalm 27: 12)

Passages such as these, with the breath of enemies naturally associated with "pestilent vapours," may have been in the forefront of Donne's mind when he took "Detracter[s]" and "Libeller[s] . . . at home" (Meditation 12, p. 64) into account. Donne rarely employs biographical or historical material that does not have some explicit relation to the Bible, or that does not immediately admit of a spiritual interpretation.

These three Devotions also represent a radical shift from a concentration on his numerous helps in Devotions 7, 8 and 9, to the "enemies" of 10, 11 and 12. Granted, Donne fends off his physical and spiritual enemies with the help of his

physicians and God, but this involves a defensive process of negation or purgation. This shift in focus, then, argues against the unity of Devotions 6-12 or the unity of Devotions 4-12 that Andreasen¹² and Smith¹³ alternately postulate.

Andreasen and Smith are perhaps correct in seeing another division between Devotions 12 and 13, however, since Devotion 13 begins a series of three in which the disease makes a newly manifest assault. They represent an even greater intensification of the struggle with the spiritual implications of his physical state, a struggle that had been resumed in the tenth Devotion after the achievement of a relative calm in Devotions 7, 8 and 9. The image of "the Rack" in Meditation 13 (p. 68) again signals the beginning of a triad of Devotions, as it does in Meditations 1 and 10. This time it is used to illustrate a further descent into the despair that his sickness inclines him to. Donne believes that the administration of "Cordials" has been responsible for these "outward declarations" of the sickness, but he likens it to a "Confession upon the Racke" which does not augur well, allegorically, for the state of his soul:

. . . though wee come to knowe the malice of that man,
yet wee doe not knowe, whether there bee not as much
malice in his heart then, as before his confession; wee
are sure of his Treason, but not of his Repentance . . .
(p. 68)

¹²Andreasen, pp. 214-215.

¹³Smith, p. 9.

Meditation 13 then ends on a despairing note, and Donne draws attention to the severity of this new relapse by beginning this Meditation (man "mowes misery, and hee gleanes happinesse" (p. 67)) in the same way that he began Meditation 8: " . . . of happines hee is but the farmer, but the usufructuary; but of misery, the Lord, the proprietary" (p. 41) Meditation 8, however, concludes with a lengthy resolution of its introductory melancholy. The fourteenth Meditation follows the thirteenth in ending pessimistically, and Meditation 15 is different only in that its ending suggests a resolution, though it is in the form of a question.

The Expostulations demonstrate the depth of the despair which Donne must overcome in their prolonged suspension of the scripturally based resolutions. Donne worries that God will not accept a "spotted sacrifice" in Expostulation 13 (p. 68), and in Expostulation 15 he construes his lack of sleep to be a sign of God's irrevocable malediction. The latter perhaps contains the best example of an internal debate in which two contradictory arguments are played off against each other, with both based in Biblical text. Donne begins by heaping up a number of references in which a lack of sleep signals God's condemnation, and he counters this with texts that associate wakefulness with Christian duty. Another manifestation of the intense, struggling nature of these Expostulations is that Donne once again identifies himself

with Jacob:

But O my God, with thy servant Jacobs holy boldnes, who though thou lamedst him, would not let thee goe, till thou hadst given him a blessing, Though thou have laid me upon my hearse, yet thou shalt not depart from mee, from this bed, till thou have given me a Crisis, a Judgment upon my selfe this day. (Expostulation 14, p. 74)

This passage touches off a lengthy consideration of the Christian's spiritually critical days, which is in turn part of a treatment of the themes of time and happiness that may be said to unify Devotions 13, 14 and 15. These two concurrent themes are dealt with throughout the Devotions, but their prominence in these three is pronounced and gives them an identity separate from other groups of three. The two themes perhaps find their best expression in Meditation 14:

. . . if this Imaginary halfe-nothing, Tyme, be of the Essence of our Happinesses, how can they be thought durable? . . . If we consider Eternity, into that, Tyme never Entred; Eternity is not an everlasting flux of Tyme; but Tyme is as a short parenthesis in a longe period . . . ¹⁴
(p. 71)

Both the sadness and the shortness of earthly life are resolved in the Prayers by an "eternall and most gracious God," and Donne wishes to be established "in so bright a day here, as may bee a Criticall day to me, a day wherein, and whereby I may give thy Judgement upon my selfe, and that the words of thy sonne, spoken to his Apostles, may reflect upon me, Behold, I am with you alwaies, even to the end of the world." (Prayer 14, p. 77)

¹⁴Cf. Meditation 13, ll. 14-20, p. 67, and Meditation 15, ll. 25-34, p. 78 for similar treatments of these themes.

In this Prayer Donne alludes to the future sixth critical day, the day of judgement, and it may be said that Devotion 15 is comparable to the ending of the third critical day. On this day Donne is to fit himself "for a more especial receiving of thy [God's] Sonne," and the fourth critical day is the day of his death, his "dissolution & transmigration from hence" (Expostulation 14, p. 75). Since Donne dies vicariously in the man "for whom the bell tolls" in the next three Devotions, and since his "Resurrection" (the fifth critical day (p. 76)) occurs three Devotions after that, Donne seems to be suggesting a structure for the progress in the Devotions based on this list of seven critical days. It must also be remembered that Donne is making "a weeke" out of a day (p. 74), and this seems to present a partial explanation for the number of Devotions, one short of the number of hours in a day. A hypothetical twenty-fourth hour may be linked to the yet to occur seventh critical day, and this would in turn account for the lack of an eighth grouping of three Devotions each. A fuller explanation of these matters will be dealt with following a more detailed look at the next eight Devotions.

Devotions 16, 17 and 18 represent another radical shift to a new assurance in and conformity to God's will. The Meditations are not permeated with despair, the Expostulations do not contain debate with God as much as they take issue "with them, who dare doe that" (Expostulation 16, p. 83), and the Prayers represent Donne's most profound sense of unity

with God yet. These Devotions are also the most artistically effective in that Donne's expression maintains an intensity grounded in a singularity of theme and image that bonds the three sections of each Devotion and the three Devotions together. The tolling bells bring home "a repetition Sermon" (Expostulation 16, p. 84) which teaches Donne his own mortality and his complete identification with other men, in whose death he also dies. This brings home the greater lesson of his participation in Christ's death, which in turn teaches him that his own functions as a "Doctor" of divinity are not discontinued by his isolation, since he is "teaching Mortification by Example, by dying" (Meditation 16, p. 82).

The intensity wrought by Donne's awareness of his nearness to death, and his majestic subordination of self in the face of it, is embodied in the subordination of a mind wandering through superficially divergent conceits to a thematic and imagistic touchstone. Meditation 17 is perhaps the best example of this. It is composed of a barrage of aphoristic declarations that are in themselves reminiscent of the separate tollings of various, sonorous bells that nevertheless have the same, basic tenor. The various metaphors place mankind in the universal church, in a book, in a "Librarie", in one church's congregation, in the earth, and specifically in a continent. The concluding conceit is a monetary one, in which affliction is seen to be a treasure that the tolling bell "digs out". The unifying themes are

the oneness of mankind, the lessons that its afflicted members represent for one another, and that the "onely securitie" in life is found in God. The medium of these lessons is the language of the tolling bells, and it is very important to an understanding of the Devotions' structure that Donne identifies this as "a repetition Sermon". The frequency with which he uses literary imagery for experience (his own and others') argues that any understanding derived from them is part of a sermon-like exegesis which he, in his capacity of the Dean of St. Paul's, is putting into print for his congregation.

The text of Donne's experience reaches an extremely important point in this group of Devotions, which correspond closely to the most significant event in Scripture -- Christ's death. Donne's imitation of Christ in Prayer 17 seems almost to border on impiety in this closeness of its correlation. Near death himself, he repeats both of Jesus' lines spoken on the cross in the understanding that he, too, is a "Sonne" of God. He has spoken lines essentially like these before, but now he uses them outright: " . . . Into thy hands, O Lord I commend my spirit" (p. 90). It must be remembered, however, that David also speaks this line in Psalm 31: 5, and that before this, in Psalm 22: 1, David speaks the words that Christ repeats on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As characters in the Old Testament are seen to prefigure Christ, and as the New Testament generally provides

the candle by which the Old must be read (Expostulation 9, p. 49), so is any man's experience following the New Testament to be read by its light. The obvious links between David and Christ give Donne the opportunity to associate the text of his experience with David's illness, and both are given meaning by the events on the cross. A Christian's soul, then, follows a pattern established by Christ, and there is nothing blasphemous in attempting as complete a correspondence as possible.

Donne's identification with Christ is furthered by the metaphorical positing of his own death in the death of the neighbour for whom the bell tolls. This puts the conclusion of Prayer 17 into an interesting light, because Donne literally assumes Christ-like responsibility for his unseen neighbour's soul since he repeats Christ's words on this man's "behalf":

When thy Sonne cried out upon the Crosse, My God, my God,
Why hast thou forsaken me? he spake not so much in his
owne Person, as in the person of the Church, and of his
afflicted members, who in deep distresses might feare thy
forsaking. This patient, O most blessed God, is one of
them; In his behalfe, and in his name, heare thy Sonne
 crying to thee, My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?
 and forsake him not; but with thy left hand lay his body
 in the grave, (if that bee thy determination upon him) and
 with thy right hand receive his soule into thy Kingdome,
 and unite him & us in one Communion of Saints. Amen. (p. 90)

These three Devotions should also put to rest any notion that Donne gives himself an importance that obstructs the devotional quality of this book. Not only does he subsume his identity in his neighbour, in whom he 'dies', but he sees the value of his experience in terms of its fulfillment of

others' needs as much as he makes it the consummation of his own devotional experience. The best indication of the extent of his concern for the well-being of others is that he concludes Prayer 17 by beseeching God not to forsake his neighbour, when he is on the verge of death himself.

In Devotions 19, 20 and 21 Donne continues a correlation of the progress of his soul with the life of Christ, but at the same time he makes his inferior position in the comparison quite clear. These three Devotions deal with the process of physical recuperation, and this is used to symbolize Donne's spiritual resurrection. However, as he cannot sustain his first rising from the bed, he is led to consider the miserable, limited condition of mankind, and the end of the twenty-first Meditation once again marks a re-ascendance of pessimism in Donne's mind: "At last, I must bee raised by others; and now I am up, I am ready to sinke lower than before." (p. 111) The seeds of the resolution of this difficulty are inherent in this passage itself, however, as Donne later realizes with gratitude that he is dependent on the support of a merciful God.

These three Devotions are again linked by themes rooted in the exigencies of the illness, which now involve "the path to recovery." The predominant image of this aspect of the body's and the soul's recovery is a sea-voyage, which is introduced in the heading of Devotion 19: "At last, the Physitians, after a long and stormy voyage, see land" (p. 97).

The ideas that the afflictions and the sins of mankind are the waters into which the soul might sink, and that Jesus represents the safety of the "Arke", are introduced in Expostulation 19 (p. 101) and repeated a number of times in the succeeding two Devotions.¹⁵ It is also interesting that Donne should here provide the clearest typological association between Noah's Ark and the ship from which Jesus occasionally conducted his ministry (pp. 101-102). It supports Schleiner's view that the form of Donne's imagery is determined by the theological appropriateness of the vehicle to the tenor, and that furthermore the source of Donne's imagery is primarily Scriptural.¹⁶ Rugoff's belief that Donne's use of sea-travel imagery is a "striking" example of an ingenious imagination rooted primarily in personal memories, is clearly wayward in its emphases.

Devotion 19 also brings to prominence a line of

¹⁵Cf. particularly Prayer 20, p. 109, and Expostulation 21, p. 113.

¹⁶It is most likely that Donne's use of the metaphor of "spiritual navigation" was strongly influenced by Augustine, but Schleiner attempts to establish the Bible as its primary source, and to show that Augustine himself was but one writer in a long-established tradition:

To continue the investigation on a broader basis, I will consider the idea of man's spiritual navigation as an expansion of the biblical life-pilgrimage field. That such metaphors actually do belong together is indicated by the fact that they seemed to the preacher easily exchangeable, as in the passage in which Donne paraphrased a "spiritual navigation" metaphor of Cyprian -- a usage showing, incidentally, that the basic analogy existed long before Augustine's metaphor . . . (p. 88)

maritime imagery that winds its way throughout Devotions.¹⁷ The sea-voyage image also concludes Donne's book, as he worries about making a "shipwracke of faith" now that his sins have been "fully pardoned" (Prayer 23, p. 127). Raspa believes that imagery only unifies individual Devotions, and is continuous only throughout Devotions 16, 17 and 18.¹⁸ This is not only disproved by the continuity shown to exist between many groups of three Devotions, but a continuity is seen to run through the Devotions as a whole as this example of the sea-voyage alone demonstrates.

Devotions 22 and 23 deal with Donne's attempts at consolidating the physical and spiritual advances he has made throughout Devotions, and the fact that there is danger of a physical relapse provides Donne with a particularly appropriate metaphor for his spiritual condition. Donne persists in

¹⁷Cf. Meditation 1, p. 8; Prayer 3, p. 18; Meditation 4, p. 19; Expostulation 6, pp. 32, 34; Expostulation 7, p. 39; Meditation 8, p. 41; Meditation 10, p. 51; Prayer 10, p. 55; Expostulation 11, p. 59; Expostulation 12, pp. 65-66; Prayer 12, p. 66; Meditation 13, p. 67; Meditation 17, p. 87; Meditation 18, p. 92; Devotion 19, pp. 97-104; Prayer 20, p. 109; Expostulation 21, pp. 112-113; Meditation 23, p. 121; Expostulation 23, p. 125; Prayer 23, p. 127.

The preceding list could be twice as large, but it is meant simply to illustrate the consistency with which Donne uses such imagery. His references to the story of Noah are frequent enough that the Ark's voyage tends to be brought back to mind with other nautical references, such as analogies of sin with treacherous waters and of spiritual comforts with dry land. However, Donne is not as concerned with retracing the passage of Noah as he is with illustrating his (and all Christians') perilous journey through life.

¹⁸Raspa, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

viewing man and the world he lives in as inherently corrupt: "The whole world is a pile of fagots, upon which wee are laid, and (as though there were no other) we are the bellows . . . Our fathers have imprinted the seed, infused a spring of sinne in us: As a fountain casteth out her waters, wee cast out our wickednesse . . . " (Expostulation 22, pp. 118-119). Through original sin, then, and added to by innumerable subsequent sins, man and nature have been corrupted. Donne uses this assessment to draw a theologically consistent¹⁹ connection with man's dependence on the grace of God to overcome his corruption. There is a realization in both Prayers that the commission of new sins is inevitable, but that God will not forsake man.

Devotions 22 and 23 are thus thematically unified, but there is no prominent imagistic continuity. Both of them, however, conclude series of images that thread through the entire book. Meditation 22 deals once again with the image of man as the tenant-farmer of a corrupt earth, and Devotion 23, as mentioned, concludes the sea-voyage imagery. This latter image emphasizes the fact that the Devotions are progressive, and this progression of the soul may be said to end for Donne on the sixth spiritually critical day, or "The day of Judgement" (Expostulation 14, p. 76). Donne, of course, does not refer to the final day of judgement in Prayer 23,

¹⁹Cf. Webber, pp. 185-187.

In the same way that his day of "resurrection" in Devotion 21 is an earnest of the final resurrection, this passage, dealing with a present judgement, may easily be seen as precursory to the final judgement day:

. . . yet, O God, let mee never put my selfe aboard with Hymeneus, nor make shipwracke of faith, and a good Conscience; and then thy long-livd, thy everlasting Mercy, will visit me, though that, which I most earnestly pray against, should fall upon mee, a relapse into those sinnes, which I have truely repented, and thou hast fully pardoned. (p. 127)

Donne refers to this judgement as already completed, but the visitation of God's "everlasting Mercy" is yet to come. This may be regarded as a reference to the seventh critical day, the "Everlasting Saboth" (Expostulation 14, p. 76), which is the only day not accounted for in Devotions. A more specific correlation of the seven critical days outlined in Expostulation 14 to the stages of the soul's progress in Devotions would provide the key to an understanding of the structure of this book.

The first three Devotions may be said to encompass the first critical day, the day of God's visitation to Donne. That God should visit himself upon Donne in the form of a violent disease is answered throughout Devotions with the paradox that God corrects those he loves. Donne brings this to mind again when he writes: " . . . therefore, howsoever thou come, it is a Crisis to me, that thou wouldest not loose me, who seekst me by any means." (p. 75)²⁰

²⁰Unless otherwise specified, quotations in this discussion of critical days are taken from Expostulation 14, pp. 75-76.

Donne then explains the transition to the second critical day: "This leads me from my first day, thy visitation by sicknes, to a second, to the light, and testimony of my Conscience. There I have an evening, & a morning; a sad guiltinesse in my soule, but yet a cheerfull rising of thy Son to . . . " It may be remembered that Devotions 4 to 6 mark a new assurance in Donne's tone, and that the arrival of the physician is likened to the arrival of Christ, which is brought to mind with this reference to the "rising of thy Son". Devotions 7 to 9, dealing with the arrival of many new assistances, further the transition from a darkness in Donne's soul to the establishment of a new light. Gratitude for God's mercies and a subordination of the despair wrought by an awareness of his sinful nature are two elements that constitute this new light, and Donne seems to refer directly to Devotions 4 to 9 when he writes:

. . . Thy Evenings and Mornings made dayes in the Creation, and there is no mention of Nights; My sadnesses for sins are evenings, but they determin not in night, but deliver me over to the day, the day of a Conscience dejected, but then rectified, accused, but then acquitted, by thee, by him, who speaks thy word, & who is thy word, thy Son.

There is a close similarity, then, between Donne's discussion of the second critical day and an outline of the attitudes and understanding in the six Devotions following the first three.

Devotions 10 to 15 were also seen to mark a radical shift into a spiritual darkness engendered in a new concentration on the ravagements of the disease. Donne's "receiving"

of Christ in each of these Devotions is only gained after intense struggle. These qualities are summed up in Donne's commentary on the third critical day:

From this day, the Crisis and examination of my Conscience, breakes out my third day, my day of preparing, & fitting my selfe for a more especial receiving of thy Sonne, in his institution of the Sacrament: In which day though there be many dark passages, & slippry steps, to them who wil entangle, and endanger themselves, in unnecessary disputations, yet there are light houres inough, for any man, to go his whole journey intended by thee . . .

Devotion 14 is itself part of the third day, and Donne makes the connection specific with his discussion of spiritual darkness and light in the Prayer. Devotion 15 is a good example of the "unnecessary disputations" that the Christian may become temporarily mired in on this day, since the Exposition contains a lengthy consideration of Biblical passages that prove, in a very tenuous fashion, that a lack of sleep represents a divine commination.

Devotions 16 to 18 again represent a shift from the previous six in that they are almost uniformly devoid of the fear or pessimism based on vexations of sickness and impending death. The extensiveness of this reversal is demonstrated by the difference between Meditations 15 and 16 -- in the first Donne fears the implications of something as relatively minor as a lack of sleep, and in the second he is not only unafraid of death but he almost desires it: " . . . so when these hourelly Bells tell me of so many funerals of men like me, it presents, if not a desire that it may, yet a comfort whensoever mine shall come." (p. 83) Donne's discussion of the fourth

critical day again reflects these changes:

. . . I am the lesse afraid of the clouds or storms of my fourth day, the day of my dissolution & transmigration from hence. Nothing deserves the name of happines, that makes the remembrance of death bitter; And O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that lives at rest, in his possessions, the Man that hath Nothing to vex him, yea unto him, that is able to receive meat? Therefore hast thou, O my God, made this sicknes, in which I am not able to receive meate, my fasting day, my Eve, to this great festival, my dissolution.

A full correlation of this day and the succeeding three to stages of Donne's progress in the Devotions is difficult, because in some way Donne must be seen to die, to be resurrected, to be judged and to gain the "Everlasting Saboth". Donne provides the links himself with metaphorical readings of the latter stages of his illness that border on equivalence: "The bell rings out, and tells me in him, that I am dead." (Devotion 18, p. 91) The fourth day, then, as described in Expostulation 14, is more than adequately represented by Devotions 16 to 18.

The next three Devotions deal with Donne's "Resurrection" from his illness and his bed, and this is seen as a "type" or an "earnest" of his spiritual resurrection. The fifth critical day, the day of Resurrection, is thus accounted for. Donne's momentary worries about condemnation in his sinful body ("I have been fifty yeeres, in this putrification . . . " (Expostulation 21, p. 112)) give his description of the dual possibilities of this day an even closer correlation to Devotions 19 to 21:

Then wee shall all be invested, reapparell'd in our owne bodies; but they who have made just use of their former

dayes, be super-invested with glorie, whereas the others, condemned to their olde clothes, their sinful bodies, shall have Nothing added, but immortalitie to torment. (p. 76)

The correlative precision of the seven critical days to groups of three or six Devotions now seems to break down because there are only two more Devotions to account for, and the final two days of judgement and of the "Everlasting Saboth" seem to be incapable of representation in a man who is still prone to sin. In his description of these two days, however, Donne makes the last follow immediately upon the first:

. . . The day of Judgement . . . is truely, and most literally, the Critical, the Decretory day; both because all Judgement shall be manifested to me then, and I shall assist in judging the world then, and because then, that Judgement shall declare to me, and possesse me of my Seventh day, my Everlasting Saboth in thy rest, thy glory, thy joy, thy sight, thy selfe . . . (p. 76)

Donne speaks of both in the last sentence of the Devotions as well, with Judgement having been passed as the last four resounding words indicate (" . . . thou hast fully pardoned"), and with God's "everlasting Mercy" about to "visit" Donne. A twenty-fourth Devotion may be postulated for this seventh day, and this may be seen as more than speculative since the number of Devotions would then correspond to the twenty-four hours of a day.²¹ It may be remembered that Donne has "created" these seven days out of a single one: "Since a day is as a

²¹Harding, p. 386. Harding mentions as a possibility that the number of Devotions correspond to hours in a day, and that the last hour in a twenty-fourth Devotion is yet to come.

thousand yerres with thee, Let, O Lord, a day, be as a weeke to me; and in this one let me consider seven daies, seven critical daies . . . " (pp. 74-75). The last two almost simultaneous days are thus accounted for in the last "three" Devotions.

The Devotions, then, are not a gathering of twenty-three units that proceed each time to the same end in a tonally, stylistically and thematically identical fashion. As there are various stages in Donne's illness, so there are various stages in the progress of his soul to the verge of eternity, and each stage of Donne's physical condition provides the imagery, tone and, generally, the form of his "metaphysical" translations. Furthermore, as these physical stages may be further grouped into sets of three, Donne's closely related spiritual progress belongs to the same division, and each group, naturally, has its own thematic and imagistic unity. Two pairs of these triads may again be united, since the second three in each case simply represent an intensification of a process that had begun in the first three. Devotions 7 to 9 signal the arrival of even more assistances to Donne, and confirm the establishment of the spiritual light that had come with the arrival of a single "Physician" in Devotions 4 to 6. Devotions 13 to 15 involve an intensification of the spiritual struggle, or a darkening of the "dark passages, & slippry steps" (Exposition 14, p. 75), that had been newly descended to in Devotions 10 to 12. The twenty-three Devotions, then, follow

in a three-six-six-three-three-two division, and these six groups in turn correspond to the first six critical days outlined in Expostulation 14. As mentioned, the only tenuous link in this striking correlation is the lack of representation for the seventh day. However, since Donne has made a week out of a day, the number of the Devotions suggests that the last day, or the twenty-fourth hour, the moment at which God's everlasting mercy is to begin, is yet to come.

Furthermore, the Devotions are unified by recurrent images, such as that of the sea-voyage. This in turn reinforces a designation of Donne's book as progressive and, as the following passage suggests, this progress is through different stages:

Though the rockes, and the sands, the heights, and the shallows, the prosperitie, and the adversitie of this world do diversly threaten mee, though mine owne leakes endanger mee, yet, O God, let mee never put my selfe aboard with Hymeneus, nor make shipwracke of faith, and a good Conscience . . . (Prayer 23, p. 127)

Donne is concerned with reading every aspect of his experience in a theological light, and he furthermore casts this experience into a balanced, ordered structure which seems to throw its autobiographical validity into doubt. This is, perhaps, simply not an issue. Donne has provided his readers with a believable sequence of events, but he is not concerned with exploring himself or his physical condition to the extent that would satisfy a modern biographer. The correspondence of the spiritual and the physical occasions of his illness is of primary importance, and Donne has no doubt

avoided a consideration of details that would give undue significance to his disease by itself, or to details that would detract from the effective narration of his soul's progress. He also places great importance on his unity with and responsibilities to mankind, and the Dean thus provides his readers with material that may guide them to God and that "may minister some holy delight", as his sermons do.

A final reading of the nature of (and Donne's foci in) the Devotions will be developed in my conclusion. A brief look at the ways in which a mistaken reading of the Devotions' structure has led to other errors in criticism to date, particularly in the attempts to locate Donne's book within the confines of specific genres or some other limited frame of reference, will first be undertaken. In varying degrees, much of this criticism is pertinent. However, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions is a work of considerable scope, and it is unfortunate that the care Donne has taken with its structure and artistry has not been adequately appreciated.

Conclusion

Thomas Van Laan and Joan Webber, both writing in 1963, are responsible for a new penetration of the depth of the Devotions. It may be argued that John Sparrow's new edition of Donne's book in 1923 and Evelyn Simpson's study of Donne's prose in 1924 generated a new interest in the Devotions, but neither seems to have provided much seminal material for subsequent criticism. Both Simpson's and Sparrow's discussions are general and impressionistic, based on early twentieth century reactions to the Devotions as a manifestation of a self-oriented, "metaphysical" writer's sensibility. Webber and particularly Van Laan, however, attempt to relate the Devotions to aspects of Donne's cultural context, and both have attempted explanations of the structure of Donne's work. Webber has been more influential than Van Laan, whose work has rarely been corroborated, but who seems to have inaugurated the idea that the art of meditation had considerable influence on the Devotions.

Webber has been primarily responsible for the belief that the Meditations, Expostulations and Prayers retain the same basic shape throughout Devotions. To her the Meditations are devoid of scriptural reference or any sort of theologically-based language. They are seen to be based on the Book of

Creatures (without any sign of God's signature), they are written in a skeptical, "curt Senecan" style, and their most often used word is "misery". The Expostulations are based in Scripture, are written in a restless Augustinian style, and their key word is "murmuring". Lastly, the Prayers are centred in The Book of Life, or the Register of the Elect, they are written in leisurely, "Anglican periods," and their key words are "eternal" and "merciful".

The rigidity of these divisions does a great injustice to the Devotions, and in no single Devotion is her analysis completely applicable. Almost every Meditation contains a number of direct references as well as numerous allusions to Scriptural or spiritual matters, for example, and many Meditations such as 7, 16, 17 and 18, to name the most pronounced examples, have little to do with pessimism or misery at all. The Expostulations in these same four Devotions contain considerably less "murmuring" than others. The Prayers in other Devotions, such as the first three, are much less leisurely and involve a continuation of the spiritual "wrestling" in the Expostulations. Nevertheless, Andreassen, Mueller, Goldberg, Smith and Raspa have all, in not widely varying degrees, accepted her categorization. This reading of structure has had a detracting effect on their analyses of the Devotions, and this will be discussed in fuller detail shortly.

Van Laan attempts a different categorization, though

almost as restrictive. He writes that the Devotions are identical in that each resembles a completed, meditative exercise. Without going into the full details of his analysis, it should suffice to say that Van Laan takes a fairly supple attitude in attempting to find places in the Devotions for the various parts of a formal, Ignatian meditative exercise. The argument for the influence of meditative practices on literature of this period depends on a precise correlation, however, since tripartite structures were quite common and since the subject matter and purposes of all religiously oriented literature were often quite similar. Van Laan's article is unconvincing for this reason, and Raspa runs into the same problem with his discussion of the ways in which Donne employed certain qualities of the Ignatian meditative experience and left out others.

Raspa follows Webber in stating that the three sections of the Devotion are based, respectively, on the Book of Creatures, Scripture, and the Register of the Elect. He also insists that Donne was primarily interested in achieving an Ignatian meditative experience, and he states that this is accomplished in each section within each Devotion. The rigidly uniform and distinct nature of each section, for example, bespeaks an Ignatian discipline.¹ Raspa has simply not looked closely enough at the Devotions themselves since they are often, as it has been shown many times, quite different in

¹Raspa, p. xxxv.

terms of theme and tone. Many Meditations contain "references to sources outside the Book of Creatures", and others can only be forced with difficulty into a definition as completed meditative experience: where is there a proper understanding or conformity of will in Meditation 1, for example? There is little of the Ignatian discipline as Raspa defines it in sections such as this one, and Raspa also asserts, against a compelling, negative argument by Bald, that Ignatius must have affected Donne considerably in his Jesuit-dominated, childhood education.

Goldberg also accepts the identical nature of each devotional unit. He is thus led to postulate that Donne telescopes time in the Devotions to a single instant, since the similar Devotions may be superimposed upon each other, and that there is no spiritual process at all except within individual Devotions. This in turn leads him to declare the Devotions' thematic affinity with the genre of the book of private prayer, and he extends this rather restrictive correlation by citing a single, structurally similar prayer book as Donne's generic precedent. His reading of Donne's paratactic style as an effective embodiment of a typologically oriented theology is excellent for the most part, but this too is marred by the belief that each Meditation is not at all scripturally oriented, and that the typologizing process does not begin until the Expostulation.

Andreasen is the first critic to see a progress in

the Devotions as a whole, and she also takes the first step towards seeing a breadth of scope in Donne's work in that it represents a union of several devotional genres -- the spiritual autobiography, the practical guide and the general psychological progression of the meditative exercise. Her reading of the Devotions' structure seems to be generally accurate, but she simply does not account for the various changes by which Donne clearly meant to divide his book. Andreasen groups the Devotions into a five-seven-six-five structure,² and this neglects, for example, the radical shifts between Devotions 9 and 10 and between Devotions 15 and 16. Her discussion of Donne's movement towards an "assent" given to God and to a love for mankind, which is common to all devotional literature, is much more valuable in that she does not restrict the Devotions to a single genre or to one predominant source.

She focusses too much attention, perhaps, on Donne's progress in the Devotions to the achievement of "a sense of identity" with mankind "which is a necessary antecedent to charitable love."³ Her belief that Donne only achieves this "sense of identity" with mankind fully in Devotion 17 is a rather weak or imprecise point. Donne demonstrates a "sense of identity" with mankind from the first line of the Devotions on, and the most important fact in Devotion 17, as it is in

²Andreasen, pp. 214-216.

³Ibid., p. 216.

every Devotion, is that Donne works towards a union or identification with Christ. It is in a role that is primarily analogous to that of Christ's that Donne is unified with and may pray on the behalf of his dying neighbour.

Smith also attempts to establish a structure for the Devotions as a whole, but he attempts to do this by treating form as separate from content. He divides the Devotions into groups of three, which is valid enough since the occasions of the illness are grouped in this way. However, he does not seem to be fully attuned to the nature of Donne's spiritual development, nor to the nature of its interpenetration with his physical development, and his further groupings reflect his limited approach. This three-nine-six-three-two division may represent a superficial progression in the Devotions, but again it does not reflect the rather severe shifts in tone, structure, and subject matter between Devotions 9 and 10, and between Devotions 15 and 16. Smith's imprecise reading of content is also demonstrated by statements such as the one that God does not communicate with Donne until the sixteenth Devotion,⁴ when Donne declares throughout the Devotions that the various aspects of his illness are different expressions of God's word, or a new form of His "visitation."

Mueller provides the most convincing correlation of a literary form with the Devotions. She points out a great number of similarities with a series of Donne's own sermons

⁴Smith, p. 11.

on Psalm 6 given earlier in 1623, and in doing so she establishes the exegetical character of the Devotions. She points out Van Laan's limitations, for example, by showing that the Expostulations contain a vast number of Biblical references and an exploration of them that is much more reminiscent of Donne's sermons than it is of the Ignatian colloquy.⁵ She also demonstrates that the "figurative exposition" which forms the stylistic medium of the Devotions becomes increasingly predominant in his sermons in the years following 1623.

Weaknesses in this article are once again based on an inaccurate reading of the Devotions' structure. She accepts Webber's categorical definitions of each section within the Devotions and is led to postulate that Donne first explores his own, privately important experience, which only receives a spiritual transliteration beginning with the Expostulations. Donne certainly recognizes that such a process would border on blasphemy, and his Meditations are not at all devoid of spiritual and Scriptural references. If Mueller had looked more closely into the nature of the Meditations she would have been able to make an even stronger case for the exegetical focus of the Devotions. She would also have been able to assert with a greater force that the headings to each Devotion exist as a "text" awaiting interpretation, an idea that Donne quite clearly suggests by his gathering of these headings into

⁵Mueller, p. 3.

a dactylic hexameter poem in his table of contents. Mueller also does not identify the processive nature of Devotions, and each Devotion is seen as an isolated exegetical, sermon-like unit, which unfortunately limits the complexity of Donne's work.

It must be remembered that Donne claims but one "generic" precedent for the Devotions, and that is the story of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38-39, a king who was stricken ill, prayed for mercy, and was granted another fifteen years of life. Donne follows the "example" (p. 3) of Hezekiah in writing a paean to God "when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness" (Isaiah 38: 9). The originality of the Devotions is that Donne creates a form that does not follow the structure of any known devotional genre,⁶ but which reflects in many details the trinitarian form of God himself and the forms of His creations, including Scripture and the seven day creation of the world.

This is not to deny that there are many links to a number of devotional genres whose forms may have been "indigenous" to Donne's mind. A limited case may be made for a host of devotional forms: the meditative exercise (Ignatian or otherwise), guides to the arts of holy living and holy dying, spiritual autobiography, books of private prayer, the homiletic literature of writers such as Augustine, and the form of Donne's own sermons. Most of the approaches taken

⁶As White, pp. 247-248, points out, and which has not been successfully refuted.

along these lines do not really warrant a comprehensive discussion, since there is no precise correlation of the Devotions' structure to any of them, though there are many shared concerns. Perhaps the most profitable study of the Devotions has been undertaken by Mueller, who establishes that Donne creates a text out of his own experience, that the Expostulations are exegetical in character, and that the primary concern of the Devotions is a homiletic one. This does not take the processive nature of Donne's work into account, however, and the Devotions demand to be read as a whole as well as a group of homiletic units.

The notion that each Devotion follows the same process, through similar Meditations, Expostulations and Prayers, gives rise to other readings of the Devotions as a loosely related group of meditative exercises or sections of a prayer book. Again, this is clearly erroneous as a comparison of the first three Devotions with Devotions 16 to 18, for example, would immediately demonstrate. This leaves the form of spiritual autobiography possibly to account for the progress of the Devotions, but this is also inadequate since Donne uses so much material from both the Bible and from contemporary metaphysics, which he casts into a specifically exegetical framework,

The originality of the Devotions may be that Donne takes a number of themes and structural elements from these traditional sources and unifies them in a unique way. While this is in some ways a satisfactory view, it lacks the focus

that would account for the consistency of the progressive patterns in the Devotions. The solution for these problems seems to be that Donne originates a new form based on the source of these other forms, the Bible itself. He attempts to accord his style with that of the Bible, his imagery is almost exclusively taken from the Bible or from a world view that is itself based on the Bible, he continually aligns his experience with that of Biblical figures, the tripartite arrangement of both individual Devotions and groups of Devotions reflect the Trinity, and the overall structure of the Devotions is based on a seven day pattern reminiscent of the days of creation.

Donne defines the nature of God's expression as both "literall" and "metaphoricall", but he dwells on the latter in this passage in Expostulation 19:

A God in whose words there is such a height of figures, such voyages, such peregrinations to fetch remote and precious metaphors, such extentions, such spreadings, such Curtaines of Allegories, such third Heavens of Hyperboles, so harmonious eloquutions, so retired and so reserved expressions, so commanding perswasions, so perswading commandements, such sinewes even in thy milke, and such things in thy words, as all prophane Authors, seeme of the seed of the Serpent, that creepes; thou art the dove, that flies. O, what words but thine, can expresse the inexpressible texture, and composition of thy word; in which, to one Man, that argument that binds his faith to beleieve that to bee the Word of God, is the reverent simplicity of the Word, and to another, the majesty of the Word . . . (p. 99)

Donne uses this passage partly to justify his own use of a sea-voyage image, and there is an implicit justification of his extensive use of metaphor and allegory throughout the

Devotions. Accordingly, Donne seems to be attempting an approximation of God's "inexpressible texture". Perhaps Simpson, for one example of a negative reaction, is not altogether wrong in identifying Donne's use of imagery as "far-fetched" and "grotesque",⁷ since even his view of God's "third Heavens of Hyperboles" seems to be a bit far-fetched. At times there is not a great deal of "reverent simplicity" to act as a counterbalance in Donne's words either, though perhaps his Prayers may generally be seen as performing this function.⁸ Nevertheless, Donne establishes the aims and the source of his style as an attempted adaptation of Biblical expression.

Donne continually reads his experience in terms of the experience of a number of Biblical characters. The most prominent of these in the Devotions are Job, Jacob, Hezekiah, David, Lazarus and Jesus. In various ways each of the characters before Jesus prefigures Him in some way, or is seen as a "type" of Him. Typology thus seems to be the theological basis of the Devotions,⁹ and Donne associates himself with these types in his own attempts at conforming his soul to Christ, a purpose that is common to both devotional and homiletic literature.¹⁰

⁷Simpson, pp. 251, 254.

⁸Cf. Webber, pp. 198-201.

⁹Goldberg, pp. 188-189.

¹⁰Mueller, p. 8.

Donne's overriding concerns with the primary source of his beliefs is also mirrored in the tripartite ordering of both individual Devotions and groups of them. The three-fold movement of meditative practices, through the powers of memory, understanding and will, was itself seen to accord with the alternately prominent attributes of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.¹¹ The vestiges of a similar process may be seen in each Devotion, with the Meditations centred in memory, the Expostulations in understanding, and the Prayers in will. There are no strict divisions here, however. The process of understanding, for example, is often further developed in each one of the three sections.

Both Tuve and Martz throw some light on the nature of the transition between the three mental and spiritual faculties. Tuve stresses the "unity of the total mind-act" in her discussion of Renaissance psychology,¹² and Martz points out that an advanced meditation involves no clearly defined transition between memory, understanding and will. The Trinity itself was not a juxtaposition of three clearly different beings -- each possessed the attributes of the other, but in a slightly different proportion. Thus God the Father may be associated with predominant qualities such as justice, power, and the faculty of memory, Jesus with understanding, and the Holy Ghost with love and will.¹³ While Donne manifests no

¹¹Cf. Martz, pp. 35-36.

¹²Tuve, pp. 396-397.

¹³Cf. Husain, pp. 55-58.

specifically structural association with meditative practices, he does seem to have in mind this process through the three powers of the soul, and therefore each Devotion may be said to reflect the Trinity. A devotion to the Trinity also manifests itself in the tripartite grouping of the twenty-three Devotions.

The overall structure of the Devotions is based on the seven "critical" days that are outlined in Expostulation 14. As God created earth in seven days, he "authors" Donne's spiritual progress in the Devotions in seven days, beginning with His visitation of the sickness upon Donne. Donne emphasizes the fact of God's authorship of his life in almost every detail, including the arrangement of the Devotions' table of contents into a poem. Donne's final unison with God is designated as an "Everlasting Saboth": as God rested on the seventh day, so will Donne rest in God at the end of his life. A twenty-fourth Devotion would deal with this final day, and if anything could be written at such a time, bells would no doubt be a prominent image, tolling for mankind's last hour.

A close reading of the structure of the Devotions, then, establishes both its devotional integrity and a basis for its definition. Other approaches, in a rather restrictive fashion, have tended to link the Devotions with single manifestations of a large cultural movement. Donne encompasses the various devotional forms of this time, yet he goes beyond them to their Biblical sources. He attempts to accord every

aspect of the Devotions to God and to the various forms that His authorship takes. This accordance with both tradition and piety tempers any notion of the "curiousness" or the impropriety of a number of sections in the Devotions. Even his despair in several Meditations and the pessimism of several of his "debatelements" with God have Biblical precedents, such as Job's expostulations, Jacob's "holy boldnes", and the same despairing cry from David on his bed and from Jesus on the cross.

The only charge against the Devotions that remains to be countered in this conclusion is Donne's supposedly overt dwelling upon himself. Not only does Donne consider himself as a representative and a part of all mankind, but he feels himself to die in another man's death. Donne also subordinates every detail of his own and others' experience to a Biblical and not a personal interpretation. Donne is conscious of his readers throughout the Devotions which, in their interpretation of a divinely ordained experience, represent both a consummation of his own devotion to God and a sermon for others. Finally, the Devotions are structured and written in such a way that the reader is not only beckoned to a consideration of Donne's example and instruction, but also to a complete involvement with him as he progresses upwards, through the various steps of his sickness, to the "Everlasting Saboth".

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