

THE IDEA OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN DONNE'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY

"THE IDEA OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN DONNE'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY"

by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis puts forward a new interpretation of The First Anniversary. It suggests that "Shee" in the poem is the Virgin Mary, seen through the eyes of a convert from the Roman Catholic Church. Other critical interpretations are examined. The historical and biographical background to the new interpretation are shown and finally the poem is examined closely to show the validity of this interpretation.

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INTRODUCTION

It was originally my intention to write on both the Anniversaries but it soon became clear that time and space would allow me only to write on the First Anniversary. The "Anatomy" was not only written first but it was also published by itself, in 1611, probably before the "Progres" was even written. Jonson's remarks to Donne, and Donne's reply that it was about "the Idea of a Woman"¹ refer to "it": -- one poem; so they probably refer to the First Anniversary only. Of the two Anniversaries the First has been subject not only to most criticism but also to the most adverse criticism. Manley says:

The Second Anniversary . . . is generally regarded as the more successful of the two, in fact, "one of the great religious poems of the seventeenth century." But the First Anniversary is usually considered as a failure, "successful only in brilliant passages," full of "pseudo-scientific paraphernalia," "ponderous redundancy," and "splendid fustian."²

The First Anniversary then is in more urgent need of redemption than the Second. I hope to be able to show that the poem is written with a consistent central image and should be read and evaluated as a complete poem. Unfortunately, again, time and space do not allow that a critical evaluation be included, but I hope I shall show that fresh evaluation is needed, bearing in mind the points which I shall bring to bear on its central symbol.

¹Ben Jonson, Works, ed. Herford and Simpson (Oxford, 1954), I, 133.

²Frank Manley, John Donne, The Anniversaries (Baltimore, 1963), p. 10.

All quotations from the Bible are from the Douai version. The text of The First Anniversary is Frank Manley's, the Divine poems are from Helen Gardner's edition and other poems by Donne are from the Grierson edition. The letters, with one exception which will be foot-noted, are from Gosse's The Life and Letters of John Donne. I have always used the spelling and punctuation of the text; where this is modernised, therefore, the modernisation is made by its editor.

CHAPTER I

CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY AND A NEW INTERPRETATION

Early in December 1609 Elizabeth Drury died. She was not quite fifteen years old and was the daughter of Sir Robert Drury, a wealthy knight who lived in Hawstead, Surrey. R. C. Bald recounts that "It was probably not long after her death that [Donne] presented the still grief-stricken parents with the verses later printed at the end of An Anatomy of the World and entitled 'A Funerall Elegie'."¹ Nobody knows why Donne offered the verses or who suggested them to him; there is no evidence of a friendship before this date between the Drurys and Donne although Bald has shown that they had acquaintances in common.² During the next year Donne wrote the complex "Anatomy of the World" which was published in 1611 under the full title "AN ANATOMY OF THE WORLD. WHEREIN BY OCCASION OF THE VNTIMELY DEATH OF MISTRIS ELIZABETH DRVRY THE FRAILTY AND THE DECAY OF THIS WHOLE WORLD IS REPRESENTED." In 1612 the poem was reprinted with a new poem. "The Progress of the Soule," occasioned by "The Religious death of Mistris Elizabeth Drvry." The two poems were henceforth known as The First Anniversary and The Second Anniversary. From their first publication it is evident that the Anniversaries were not well received or understood. They were published while Donne was abroad and on April 14th 1612 he wrote from Paris two letters with almost identical paragraphs defending them:

Of my Anniversaries, the fault which I acknowledge in myself is to have descended to print anything in verse, which, though it

have excuse, even in our times, by example of men, which one would think should have little as done it, as I; yet I confess I wonder now I declined to it, and do not pardon myself. But for the other part of the imputation of having said so much, my defence is, that my purpose was to say as well as I could; for since I never saw the gentlewoman, I cannot be said to have bound myself to have spoken just truth; but I would not be thought to have gone about to praise anybody in rhyme, except I took such a person, as might be capable of all that I could say. If any of the ladies think that Mistress Drury was not so, let that lady make herself fit for all those praises in the book, and it shall be hers.

Of my Anniversaries, the fault that I acknowledge in myself is to have descended to print anything in verse, which though it have excuse even in our times by men who profess and practice much gravity; yet I confess I wonder how I declined to it, and do not pardon myself: but for the other part of the imputation of having said too much, my defence is to say that my purpose was to say as well as I could; for since I never saw the gentlewoman, I cannot be understood to have bound myself to have spoken just truths, but I would not be thought to have gone about to praise her or any other in rhyme; except I took such a person as might be capable of all that I could say.

If any of those ladies think that Mistress Drury was not so, let that lady make herself fit for all those praises in the book, and they shall be hers.³

It is thought (by Gosse) that these two letters are to the same person, George Gerrard. It seems very possible that this is so since the same two imputations are defended in each letter. Of course it is not known why Donne should write the same thing twice, to the same person, on the same day. His message however is clear: he regrets not having written the poem but having published them. (The Anniversaries are amongst only four poems that were published by Donne in his lifetime). Why did Donne allow these poems to be published? Again no one knows. Perhaps it was because this was the best way to ingratiate himself with Sir Robert, but perhaps he wanted them to be public poems and not private elegies. The latter supposition is substantiated by

Donne's phrases in his letter which suggest that the subject of the poem was not in fact Elizabeth Drury but "such a person, as might be capable of all that I could say." We find further evidence that Donne did not intend the poems to be merely eulogies for Elizabeth when we read his conversations with Jonson, as recorded by Drummond:

that Dones Anniversarie was profane and full of Blasphemies
 that he told Mr. Donne, if it had been written of ye Virgin
 Mary it had been something to which he answered that he
 described the Idea of a Woman and not as she was.
 that Done for not keeping of accent deserved hanging.⁴

Jonson has accused Donne of writing blasphemous praise of Elizabeth Drury, but Donne replies in the same tone as in his letter to Gerrard; that he was not describing Elizabeth, but an Ideal Woman, not as she was. The poem then is about an intangibility, about something as it might be, but is not. This conceit was for many people too complicated and until the last few years what criticism there has been, has been almost universally damning. Gosse presents his opinions forcefully:

When a year had elapsed since the death of Elizabeth Drury Donne gratified his patron by the composition of the very curious and fantastic gnomie poem called An Anatomy of the World . . . In An Anatomy of the World, the extravagance of hyperbole, which the taste of the age permitted to such compositions, reaches a height unparalleled elsewhere. It is difficult to understand how the desire to please and the intoxication of his own ingenuity can have so blinded Donne to the claims of self-respect, as to permit him to use language which is positively preposterous . . . [It] is an astonishing constellation of absurdities and beauties, of profound thoughts and maddening conceits. . . . We can but regard this elaborate . . . celebration of Elizabeth Drury as an eccentric and, on the whole, unfortunate episode in Donne's career as a poet. It is plain that he undertook and conducted it as a perfectly straightforward piece of business; he saw no reason why he should not expend his art on the eulogy of a young lady whom he had never seen, but whose father was generously expending upon him all the evidences of a princely hospitality. In return for house and home, for comforts to Donne's wife and food to his children, Sir Robert Drury asked a small expenditure of extravagantly laudatory verse,⁵ and Donne, no doubt, saw no shame in supplying what was asked for.

Gosse here distorts facts as well as interpretation. Following Walton he assumes that Drury was Donne's patron; specifically because Donne lived in a house belonging to Sir Robert. But Bald has since proved that Donne probably leased the house and that though Drury was generous to him, he was probably not Donne's patron in the full meaning of the word.⁶ Gosse's account therefore greatly oversimplifies Donne's motives for writing the First Anniversary. It is probable that it is totally erroneous. But these suspicions have remained in the consciousness of the critics of the poem: critics of the early twentieth century seem curiously shy of it. They refer to passages from it for examples variously of Renaissance thought, comparisons with other poems, passages on "new philosophy" and so on, but they rarely touch on its total meaning or significance. Instead we find comments like Moloney's "Gosse can hardly be gainsaid"⁷ or Spencer's "This whole poem . . . is really a collection of Donne's opinions about the world, concealed under a mask of exaggeration and hyperbole; he uses the girl's death . . . as a string on which to hang his notions of the world's decay and disproportion."⁸ But Spencer's remark implicitly is an advance on his predecessors' opinions for he allows that the poem is about something other than Elizabeth Drury, it is no mere eulogy. It was not however until 1949 and the publication of Majorie Nicolson's book The Breaking of the Circle, that we find any positive criticism.

Miss Nicolson opens the way for positive criticism with this statement:

There is no more sombre poem in the English Language than Donne's threnody, An Anatomy of the World . . . the poem is much more than a mere enigma. Embedded within it lies an 'Epitome' of the

intellectual universe in which Donne lived during the years that saw his transformation from "Jack" Donne to Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Pauls, and the transformation of our world from medieval to modern.⁹

She realises that Donne's poem has a much wider significance than its previous critics have allowed, and for the first time she suggests that "She" of the poem might actually really be some other person than

Elizabeth Drury:

. . . Elizabeth Drury was only a point of departure, an occasion for Donne's pondering upon far more universal problems than those involved in the death of any individual. To read the poem on one level, as did Jonson, is to miss both the poet's meaning and his art. Donne might well have replied to Ben Jonson that his poem was about the Virgin Mary, and might have added that the dead "Elizabeth" he celebrated was less a fifteen-year-old girl he had never seen than the Virgin Queen, whose recent death had marked the end of an era.¹⁰

Miss Nicolson continues her study to show that there are four "shee's" in the poem. The first is Elizabeth Drury: "References to the dead girl occur infrequently, usually at the beginning or end of the poems;" the second is Astraea and is referred to by the pronoun "shee": "[The] clue is fair enough. . . .: 'She of whom th'Ancients seem'd to prophesie, when they call'd vertues by the name of shee.' Renaissance readers would have recognised the story of Astraea, goddess of Justice, the 'Maiden', who fled a wicked world to remain forever in heaven as the constellation 'Virgo.'¹² Majorie Nicolson uses the same lines and their context to show the third and fourth "shee's":

She, of whom th'Ancients seem'd to prophesie,
When they call'd vertues by the name of shee,
Shee in whom vertue was so much refin'd,
That for allay unto so pure a minde
Shee tooke the weaker Sex; shee that could drive
The poysnous tincture, and the staine of Eve,
Out of her thoughts and deeds; and purifie

All, by a true religious Alchymie;
 Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead. F.A. 175--182

Here "She" is Mary the woman; "shee" is Astraea; but the generalised "shee" of the refrain involves, I think, still another woman, as in many passages of both poems. It is not Elizabeth Drury nor Astraea nor the Virgin Mary who is the central character in the Anniversary Poems, but a greater Elizabeth, another Virgo, another Virgin, Elizabeth the Virgin Queen.¹³

This theory seems to me to be nonsense. If it depended only on the differentiation between "shee" and "she" and if the allusions and references to each pronoun were consistent and dissimilar then it might make sense. But to involve four different figures and to point every other allusion to a different one of the four recalls the construction of a crossword puzzle more than of a poem. Some of her references are anyway, to my mind, clearly inexact or wrong. For example, as we shall see in the fourth chapter, all the references in the lines quoted above can be connected with the Virgin Mary, while it is only forced reference to connect the others to their various subjects; and in the context of the whole poem, whose chief cause of decay disproportion and so on is Original Sin, only one of her subjects is linked with the conception of Original Sin. (And even then Miss Nicolson does not note a correlation of the death of Mary with a re-inforcement of the concept of Original Sin for she does not indicate the contrast between the Catholic and Reformed Churches' contrasting views of Mary). While she has made a valuable addition to criticism of the Anniversaries by suggesting that they are actually well thought out poems with a focus which is not primarily Elizabeth Drury she fails to follow her own lead with any credibility. Three years later Marius Bewley offered another interpretation of the poem, and one that seems more convincing than

Miss Nicolson's. Like Miss Nicolson he refers to the two Anniversaries:

These two long poems, with their grotesque apotheosis of the dead girl, have inevitably presented difficulties even to their original audience . . . From a modern point of view the First and Second Anniversaries suggest a private joke . . . [they] are one of the most successful private jokes ever made, for their point is still generally missed. What the Anniversaries are, in effect, celebrating -- albeit secretly celebrating -- is Donne's apostasy from the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁴

This suggestion that the poems are private is, I think, valuable. It suggests why they have eluded comprehension for so long, and why Donne has offered us no clear interpretation of them even though he was questioned about them by his close friends. And, as I shall explain later, I agree that they are largely about his apostasy from the Roman Catholic Church. But Bewley continues his article to make assumptions of interpretation that are not, I think, supported by the text of the poem:

. . . the disturbing aspect of the two poems arises from the fact that the concealed eulogy Donne addresses to the ancient Church is seriously intended, and that in view of this sincerity the grotesque deflection of the praises to an object so improper transcends cynicism, and enters a more malevolent realm of feeling. The Anglican no less than the Catholic might be shocked by the performance, and it is understandable that Donne kept the joke as private as possible.¹⁵

Bewley makes some very good points about the text. He quotes the same lines as Miss Nicolson (174-182) and says that "The 'true religious Alchemy' that purifies all of Original Sin seems a clear reference to the Catholic Sacramental¹⁶ system; and although the Anglican Church had copied that system to some extent Donne is referring to the original and not the copy, for he insists on the fact that she is dead."¹⁷ Bewley recognises that the "religious Alchemy" purifies the world of Original Sin but his grasp of the doctrinal issues of Original Sin is faulty. There is

no Sacrament, Catholic or otherwise, which removes the effect of Original Sin. Baptism cleanses the soul but it does not remove the effect; the effect is that Man must die. Until the first, Original, Sin, man lived in perfect bliss in the Garden of Eden. He was supposedly tall and beautiful. But the result of Original Sin was that life was no longer bliss, man grew small in stature (First Anniversary, lines 135-145) was forbidden paradise and died. The major result of Original Sin is death. (An indication of the old belief that man was intended to be immortal but with the cumulative effect of Original Sin grew to less and less age is shown in lines 105-121). When Christ died on the cross his redeeming effect was to allow man entry into Paradise but man still had to die as the result of Original Sin before he could gain entry. Therefore there is no "religious Alchemy" in a church Sacrament which can purify Original Sin. Bewley continues to make some useful inferences but he has lost his major usefulness because he is still concerned with what he sees as a "grotesque deflection" of the praises. He feels that the praises are linked immutably with Elizabeth Drury and mentions that Donne's remark to Jonson "has not been revealing."¹⁸ It has not been revealing to him because he has a fixed idea that the poem is in fact about the two churches, including reference to Elizabeth I, as the head of the Anglican Church. He does not consider that the "Joke was kept as private as possible" for reasons other than the "malevolent realm of feeling," or that the fact that "eulogy addressed to the ancient church" which was "seriously intended" might reveal it was private because Donne did indeed feel seriously about the previous state of affairs -- so seriously that he did not want to publish his

vulnerability in this feeling. When Bewley says, simply, that

Elizabeth Drury alive, Donne is saying, symbolised the Catholic Church; but she is dead, and he turns to contemplate the consequence of her death for the world. All is not hopeless, for her ghost still walks abroad, and in her ghost -- or the image of Elizabeth Drury dead -- we have the image of Anglicanism.¹⁹

then he is something near an accurate interpretation. (As in the course of his article I think he presents accurate enough interpretation of certain passages). But he does not have a strong enough theological and doctrinal or textual authority to substantiate fully his thesis. He has mentioned the significance of Original Sin but he suggests no way that the concept of Original Sin is integrally linked with the concept of the death in the poem. (I think it is clear that the poem sees the concepts to be completely linked). I think that Bewley shows an inadequate knowledge of the state of Donne's religious beliefs in 1610 when the poem was written; he had completely divorced himself from the Catholic Church and although he has not adopted Anglicanism he had established (in letters, Pseudo-Martyr etc.) that he was very much against the Catholic Church over many fundamental issues. It is unlikely that he would have aligned himself as positively as Bewley suggests with that Church and against Anglicanism at this time of his life. Finally I think it is safe to say that although Donne may have been cynical in some of his religious verse it can never be shown authoritatively that his religious beliefs were not based on a very devout and well-thought out authority; in his sermons and in Pseudo-Martyr he may mock the Church of Rome but he attacks only what he considers to be erroneous belief based on false interpretation of Scripture or false virtue; he is never vindictive for fun only, but to

prove a point.

The major critic of the Anniversaries in the fifties is Louis Martz. He has very much of value to add. But his criticism seems to me to be perhaps the most frustrating of all for he skims around central issues and central interpretation without ever settling on something that is central. He dismisses the interpretations of Bewley and Nicolson with these words:

[They] . . . seem to impose a meaning upon the central image instead of allowing a meaning to develop from this image in accordance with the poems' structure. One can arrive at these views, I think, only by treating the metaphors as literal statements.²⁰

But Martz cannot offer a meaning that does develop from this image in accordance with the poem's structure. All he can do, and this he does excellently, is to discover the poems' structure. He shows that the First Anniversary is built with a fully integrated structure based on Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, and explains that, as I have pointed out for a different reason, because this was not realised and the biographical facts underlying the poems "lead readers to approach them with suspicion":

As a result the elaborate eulogies of Elizabeth Drury are frequently dismissed as venal and insincere, while interest in the poems centers on those passages which reflect Donne's awareness of the "new philosophy," on explicitly religious portions, or on any portions which provide illustrative quotations for special studies of Donne and his period.²¹

Martz discovers, specifically, that the poem is divided into five sections with an introduction and conclusion at the beginning and end. Each of the five parts has a three part structure: Meditation, Eulogy, and Refrain and Moral. (I shall use his definition of divisions in my analysis of the poem in Chapter IV). This is Martz's explanation

of the structure of the poem; I will quote from it extensively because he makes many statements which are central to the proof of my own interpretation of the poem:

It seem clear that the religious motifs in Petrarchan lament . . . have here combined with strictly religious meditation to produce a poem which derives its form, fundamentally, from the tradition of spiritual exercises. The Jesuit exercises, we recall, normally involve a series of five exercises daily for a period of about a month, each meditation being precisely divided into points, usually into three points.

At the same time it is important to recall the ways of celebrating the Ideal Woman -- the "Type, or an Idea of an Accomplisht piety" -- represented in the meditations of the rosary . . . The divisions of the Dominican rosary fall into three series of five meditations each, while, in Loarte's Instructions, every meditation "is distinguished into three pointes." Meditation on only five of those mysteries at a time was quite common: the name "rosary," says Worthington, is "used sometimes largely, and sometimes strictly;" "largely" it contains fifteen mysteries; "strictly" it contains five, "as it is commonly ment, when one is appointed for penance, or for pardon, or for other like cause to say a Rosaries." (preface) Thus the number five becomes associated with the celebration of the Virgin: the five-petaled rose becomes her flower.²² This, evidently, is what lies behind Donne's treatment of the five-petaled flower in his poem, "The Primrose" . . . With this symbolic number in mind, it is even more suggestive to consider the Jesuit Puente's directions for using the rosary to meditate upon the virtues of Mary . . . in doing this, we are to follow a three-fold procedure: "fixing the eyes and intention upon three things."

1. Upon the heroicall acts which the Virgin exercised about that virtue . . . admiring her sanctitie, reioycing therein, glorifying God, who gave it unto her, and exulting for the reward which he hath given for such a vertu.
2. To fixe mine eyes upon the wante which I have of that vertu, and upon the contrary faults and defects whereinto I fall, sorrowing for them with great confusion and humiliation . . .
3. To make some stedfast purposes, with the greatest stabilitie that I can, to imitate the B. Virgin in these acts of virtue, trusting in the favour of this pious Mother, that shee will assist me to performe the same. (2,587)

Such a threefold division of meditation, within a larger fivefold structure, has a long tradition, as Wilmart has shown by his publication of the meditations of Stephen of Salley, an English Cistercian of the early thirteenth century. Stephen gives fifteen meditations on the Joys of the Virgin, divided into three series

of fives; the most interesting aspect of them here is the subdivision of each meditation into three parts: (1) Meditatio, on the mystery itself; (2) Gaudium, a summary of the "Joy;" (3) Peticio, prayer to the Virgin invoking her assistance in the achievement of Christian perfection . . .

Meditation on the Virgin might easily influence Petrarchan eulogy; in fact Petrarch himself suggests such an influence by concluding his sequence to Laura with a canzone to the Virgin Mary. His previous treatment of Laura is different only in degree, not in kind. Thus in a poem describing what Donne calls "The Idea of a Woman," some connotations of Mary would appear to be almost inevitable for a poet of Donne's background. At any rate, in Donne's Introduction to his Anatomie along with Petrarchan hyperbole, we find Elizabeth Drury treated in terms which seem to adumbrate the practice of meditating on Mary: she is a "Queene" ascended to Heaven, attended by Saints: her name has mysterious power. . . .²³

Now if we were to allow "a meaning to develop from this image in accordance with the poems' structure" as Martz suggests, we should surely arrive at the conclusion that the poem is about Mary. It seems to me that this is exactly what the poem is about, and that Martz has suggested all but this. But no, he concludes:

Donne's Anatomie has no . . . focus: it has instead a central inconsistency which defeats all Donne's efforts to bring its diverse materials under control. For it is not correct to say, as Empson says, that "the complete decay of the universe" is represented as having been caused by the death of Elizabeth Drury. If this were so, the poem might achieve unity through supporting a dominant symbol of virtue's power, and one might agree with Empson that "the only way to make sense of the poem is to accept Elizabeth Drury as the Logos." But, after the Introduction has elaborately presented this hyperbole, one discovers in the first Meditation that Elizabeth Drury has, basically, nothing to do with the sense of decay in the poem. The first Meditation is strictly in the religious tradition; it meditates the decline of man through sin from God's original creation. . . .²⁴

Martz has made two major mistakes: first he forgets his own strong indications that the structure of the poem and the phrase "Idea of a Woman" are strong indications that the poem is in fact about Mary,

and that the Mary who is venerated in the meditations upon which he believes the First Anniversary to be based is a person who is a dominating symbol of Virtue; secondly he has misread the poem, not noticing that its meaning can be read backwards; that is that while one can (or cannot) read that her death has caused the complete decay of the universe one can also read that her death has been caused by the complete decay of the universe. Harold Love too has noted this misunderstanding by Martz:

His mistake -- which has been that of most writers on the poem -- lay in his assumption that the Eulogies were mere recapitulations of this hyperbole and that Elizabeth Drury was nothing more in Donne's system of images than a kind of cosmic embalming fluid. The essential point that he has overlooked is that Donne's initial conceit is a double one -- or rather a conjunct one, like a combined theme-counter-subject of a double fugue. Besides telling us that the death of the world has been caused by the death of Elizabeth Drury, Donne has also gone to some pains to state the apparently contradictory proposition that the death of Elizabeth Drury has been caused by the death of the world. Elizabeth Drury exists in the poem not only as the soul of the world whose withdrawal from it has caused its corruption but as the heart of the world, a heart that despite his perfections has been finally unable to avoid becoming involved in the universal process of corruption that began with the fall.²⁵

Martz's examination of the First Anniversary, though it was perhaps the most valuable criticism yet offered, as we have seen, did nothing to advance a theory of the true subject of the poem. Its critics therefore continued to seek this subject or to remain confused about it. Robert Ellrodt for example says:

Que les Anniversaires aient été composés comme des "meditations religieuses," nous le reconnaitrons volontiers après la magistrale étude de L. I. Martz. Notre dissentiment porte sur l'objet de méditation. Ce n'est certainement pas la Vierge Marie. Serait-ce le Christ? . . . la suite du poème, décrivant les conséquences de sa mort, ne s'aurait s'appliquer à la mort du Christ qui n'a pas, entraîné la "putréfaction" de l'univers mais, au contraire a racheté l'humanité. . . .

Aussi la mort d'Elizabeth Drury paraît-elle évoquer, plutôt que le sacrifice du Christ; la dissolution de l'Eglise universelle dont Donne s'est toujours vivement affligé. L'identification d'Elizabeth à l'Eglise donne un sens presque aussi satisfaisant aux passages déjà cités puisque l'Eglise, instituée par le Christ, est, aux yeux d'un esprit "catholique" (qu'il soit Romain ou Anglican), le conduit de la grâce divine. Et bien d'autres passages où Elizabeth ne saurait être le symbole du Logos se laissent aisément interpréter ainsi. Les plus frappants sont les vers 317-22 (on sait que l'Arche est un "type" de l'église) et 417-426 (sur les efforts de l'église, couronnés seulement d'un succès partiel, pour transformer les mœurs et la société) . . . quand bien même ni le Christ ni l'Eglise Universelle ne se dissimuleraient à des certains moments sous la visage d'Elizabeth, un intime émoi, une angoisse, une aspiration éperdue n'en donneraient pas moins à ces poèmes une résonance et une signification que passent infiniment leur "occasion" ou leur prétexte.²⁶

Ellrodt more or less gives up the search for the object of meditation and instead points out that the poem exhibits "un intime émoi, une angoisse, un aspiration éperdue" which belies the subjects which he sees most strongly to be suggested. George Williamson in an article on "The Design of Donne's Anniversaries" similarly avoids discussion of the central object of the poem and instead discovers structural links between the 1601 "Progress of the Soule" and the two Anniversaries. He states, quite correctly, that in "The Progress" Donne took a satirical view of Original Sin, and in the First Anniversary he "explored seriously the consequences of original sin in the world he knew." He concludes that "The persistence of this structural idea reveals a dimension of his [Donne's] thought that led to a definition of his life."²⁷ Williamson has rightly emphasised the importance of Original Sin and the importance of the theme of the Anniversaries as a definition of Donne's life. But he too offers no light on the central image. Mahony, in an unpublished dissertation for New York University, exemplifies the confusion that was again falling on interpretation of

the Anniversaries. Taking a deep breath he explains in his introduction that as far as he is concerned:

. . . In the present study Donne's own identification of her as "The Idea of a Woman" is accepted and developed. The thesis developed here is that Donne presents in the poems a number of particular manifestations or exemplifications of this "Idea;" some of these, namely Lady Virtue, Lady Wisdom and Lady Justice, are abstract, while others are concrete, or historical personages, such as the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen Elizabeth, and finally Elizabeth Drury.²⁸

This sort of analysis leads only backwards, to Marjorie Nicolson.

While Mahony obviously exhibits a scholarly background he has no real understanding of the subject of the poem and, I think, totally

misunderstands the conception of "the Idea of a Woman". (We see this

further when we read in his acknowledgements: "Most dearly I am

indebted to my wife, Maria, who has been a constant radiance and true

"idea" of this thesis).²⁹ As Donne said, he did not describe the

woman as she was but as an Idea. Therefore to relate the poem

concretely to Elizabeth Drury or Queen Elizabeth or the Virgin Mary

makes nonsense of the idea. Furthermore if Donne were to allow that

Elizabeth Drury, a girl whom he had never met and who was distinguished

only for youth and virginity, was a representative of this idea then it

is absurd to say that she was the last, latest perhaps, but not last.

But this is exactly what he does say: "All along the world has

suffered decay, and various personages such as Lady Virtue, and Queen

Elizabeth have departed. Elizabeth Drury is the last of the departures

of those who embodied the Idea of a Woman."³⁰ He has to say "last"

because if it is only the "latest" then the death does not have such

importance for we know that other embodiments of the Idea will occur.

It may be unfair to reproach him thus but I think the shallowness of Mahony's

approach is completely demonstrated by the florid and badly expressed last lines of his dissertation:

The Anniversaries are outstanding in English literary history. Just from the aspect of length, they together constitute Donne's longest poem and the longest Metaphysical poem. From the aspect of intrinsic worth, the Anniversaries in sheer breadth and force stand as Donne's best and most powerful poems. Furthermore they rank with the very highest companion poems. Finally, they list with the greatest classics of English poetry up to the present day.³¹

Sic transit gloria mundi! But meanwhile Frank Manley was writing his dissertation which was published in 1963³² and is without doubt the most valuable contribution to the understanding of the Anniversaries since, or possibly including, Martz's. Manley produced an authoritative edition of the text and included an introduction stating his interpretation, and an extensive commentary. He puts all previous criticism into a perspective of historical and biographical context and to some extent clarifies the chaos that was rapidly enveloping the poems. He explains the dilemma of the central image of Elizabeth Drury:

Critics have constantly felt that there is more to the poem than mere Petrarchanism, something that they were not quite able to put their finger on. Either the poems are a failure, or what seems to be a fantastic hyperbole is in fact a burden of extra symbolic meaning that must be understood before the poems begin to make sense. The only trouble is that symbolism of that sort seems to be out of the question. For by asking us to consider Elizabeth Drury as an Eden-image of vague and unnamed desire, Donne begins a process of coalescence that ends by making her not the sign of Eden and therefore separate from it, but in some literal way the thing itself. Through the poetry, the fundamental poetic act, what emerges is a mythical figure of woman on whom literally the entire world depends. And yet the woman remains Elizabeth Drury. It is not logical, it does not make sense, and at this point most criticism breaks down.

Manley continues to show that this apparent dilemma may be caused by our approach to the poem and not the poem itself:

But perhaps the difficulty is with us and not with the poem. For true symbols are almost always illogical. They represent a state of mind and a way of understanding prior to logic, and that is what supposedly distinguishes them from signs.³³

Later he explains:

There is no clear, explicit identification of the symbolism in the poem, and for this reason it has run off in the minds of the critics to Jesus Christ or the Catholic Church, Queen Elizabeth, the Virgin Mary, the Logos, Astraea. There is nothing to bring it into sharp focus, and we are left with a feeling of incompleteness.

I am not certain that any sharp focus is possible. The symbol is too complex for all its parts to be held in the mind at once discursively. Moreover it is in the nature of symbols to suggest more than they seem to contain.³⁴

Manley continues to show that there are many references to Wisdom in the poem. He analyses concepts of Wisdom throughout the ages and with very useful co-ordination refers them to the poems. His work is too lengthy and concentrated to have justice done to it in the short space that I can allot to it. But I think it is clear that any serious study of the Anniversaries or their interpretation should take cognizance of Manley's discussion of Wisdom.³⁵ I think his comments on the poem are more nearly totally adequate than any others. Later I shall show where I think they can be supplemented to make a "sharp focus" possible.

Love's article, which I have already referred to, is a very useful addition to the canon of criticism of the First Anniversary. Its central point is the one I have already quoted; that "Elizabeth Drury exists in the poem not only as the soul of the world whose withdrawal from it has caused the corruption but as the heart of the world, a heart that despite its perfections has been finally unable to avoid being involved in the universal process of corruption that began with

the fall."³⁶ This understanding is essential to a full interpretation of the poem and it is amazing that no other critics have realised it. It is because of this oversight that Martz has said that the eulogies were mere repetition of the hyperboles and that partly as a result of this the poem "has no focus." But Love extends this accusation to Manley and Williamson:

Martz's failure to recognise the full importance of the Eulogies is shared by Williamson and Manley, and it is because of this that they have not been able to contradict him as effectively as they meant to. To Williamson the function of the Eulogies is reduced to that of an "Elegiac antithesis" or "relevant contrast" that "crowns" the proof but does not play any relevant part of it. To Manley the relationship of the decay of the world is an extra-logical one: it "makes sense of sorts," but it is not a sense of rhetorical moulds. In his concentration on the connotive aspects of the juxtaposition, he has completely overlooked the denotive.³⁷

This understanding does indeed solve a large part of the relationship problems of the poem, but, as Love himself points out:

Not all the loose ends, of course, will let themselves be tied up. The gap between the two visions of Elizabeth Drury advanced in the poem -- animating spirit and vulnerable body -- is too wide not to set up serious strains and, indeed, it could be argued that Donne has been far less careful than he should have been about keeping them distinct from one another.³⁸

I think there is a solution which allows most of the "loose ends" to be "tied up," and which "gives the poem focus," and furthermore "sharp" focus. Yet it develops structurally from the poem and has all the looseness that Manley desires in his central symbol. But first there is one point which I wish to add to Love's: Love explains that not only can we read that Elizabeth Drury's death caused the death of the world but that we can also read that her death is caused by the death of the world; but we can go one step further and say not that

Elizabeth's death caused the death of the world but that the understanding or realisation of her death caused an understanding or realisation of the death of the world. This is central to the poem for it shows as Manley demands of his "true symbol" that the poem is centrally about "a state of mind and a way of understanding prior to logic."³⁹ But I think we can be even more specific than Manley is in indicating what this state of mind is, what symbol lies at the heart of the poem. I agree with Martz when he says that "basically Elizabeth Drury has nothing to do with the poem." Donne himself said "since I never saw the gentlewoman, I cannot be bound to have spoken just truths, but I would not be thought to have gone about to praise her or any other in rhyme; except I took such a person as might be capable of all that I could say." (My italics). He is not talking, in the text of the First Anniversary about Elizabeth Drury at all, but about someone who might be capable of all that he could say. But who might be capable of all that he could say? Not Christ, for he is capable of all that he could say. Not Elizabeth Drury, for she is not capable of all that he could say. There is no earthly person to whom the statement could apply, but there is one person to whom it might have applied: that is the Virgin Mary. In Catholic belief Mary was conceived ~~with~~ without Original Sin, she was totally pure and in her pre-lapsarian state of grace she was worthy of Heaven without redemption, therefore she did not die but was assumed into Heaven. But in Reformed belief she was not conceived immaculately, had Original Sin and therefore had to die before she reached heaven. If we adjust the two views of Mary to be read in concrete terms rather than as abstractions we see that she

might have been capable of all that could be said if she had not died. With either Catholic or Protestant belief Mary is considered to be the best part, and most highly privileged member of mankind. With either belief she can easily be understood to be the heart of mankind. When therefore a convert from the Catholic to the Protestant Church changes his understanding of Mary, realises that she has died as a result of Original Sin, then we can see how this realisation reinforces the sense of decay in the world. If its best part, its heart, did, after all, die then we see how corrupt the world must be. This dual conception of Mary is what I believe lies behind the First Anniversary. It is a true, flexible, symbol, as Manley demands that it should be, for it is about "a state of mind," or rather two states of mind. When we add Love's understanding: that "she" is not only the cause, but the effect of death; and my own that "she" is the cause not of the death but of the realisation of the death then we see that this double view of Mary can be a consistent basic symbol for the entire poem. In Chapter IV I shall demonstrate this with close textual analysis.

It may be charged that the idea is not new; that Mary has often before been suggested to be the subject of the poem. She has, but not in this particular way. Marjorie Nicolson, for example, points out references to Mary, but only generalised ones. She has not realised that there can be consistent relation of all the descriptive passages to a dual-vision or idea of Mary. All commentators who have noted reference to the Virgin have not shown awareness of the complex symbolism that has evolved around her in Catholic belief and liturgy. It is because of this symbolism that the central idea of Mary can act

as a symbol for a great deal of all that has already been read into the poem. Mary is the Spouse as well as the mother of Christ; as a result of this she is considered by the Catholic Church to be a "type" for the church. In this way many of Marius Bewley's points about the poem being about Donne's apostasy and the two Churches can be found to be entirely relevant. In the same way that in Anglican theology (as demonstrated many times by Donne in his sermons) Wisdom, and the Spouse in the Canticles, are discovered to be "types" for the Spouse of Christ which is the Church, so in Roman theology they are also applied to Mary. Manley quotes from the Book of Proverbs a passage which exemplifies one of the "major strands of tradition" of the nature of Wisdom.⁴⁰ This exact passage is related to Mary very frequently in Roman liturgy. Because of the Roman identification of Wisdom with Mary everything that Manley says in his commentary can be exactly related to the proof of my thesis of interpretation. None of his commentary is irrelevant to it. These words of Manley, for example fit my thesis to perfection if we substitute "the Virgin Mary" for Elizabeth Drury:

Donne has taken . . . a particular example of mortality and in meditating on it universalised it and found in it the source of all mortality, not only the sum total of all things that ever were or ever will be in this world, but the whole frame and fabric of the universe itself. The mysterious "Shee" in the poem is in a sense Elizabeth Drury, but she is also a symbolic creature: the idealised form in Donne's own mind of a perfect pattern of virtue. She is the "Idea of a Woman," a symbol of all the beauty man and the universe lost in the fall: the order and harmony of the outer world as well as the inner beauty of virtue we ourselves, each individual, have lost. She is the only thing this last, dying age of the world had left, the only memory of the old times in Eden. And at the same time she is the image of its mortality and evanescence.⁴¹

That is, Donne has taken a particular example of mortality and on meditating on it has found that it enforces a conception of the source of all mortality. (It is important to remember the two additions of understanding that Love and I demanded). "Shee" is, I suggest, the Virgin Mary, and in this way she is the symbolic creature; from a Catholic understanding she is the "Idea of a Woman," and was the only thing that recalled the old times in Eden; but an altered view of her re-enforces our consciousness of mortality and evanescence since even she was not perfect and had to die.

This may sound complex but actually it is quite simple. It is only complex because, perhaps, it needs a background of apostasy before this meaning is readily obvious to a reader. And yet all the major critics have suggested implicitly or explicitly that the Virgin Mary is the subject of the poem. Martz for example, as I have shown, shows that "Elizabeth Drury" is "treated in terms which seem to adumbrate the practice of meditating on Mary." At length he has shown its structural and textual relationship with the Virgin, but still he concludes that the poem has "no focus" and that "the poem does not justify the elaborate imagery with which Donne attempts to transmute the girl into a symbol of virtue's power."⁴³ Half his mistake is the one that Love has shown; but the other half is that he does not follow his own leads which suggest that the poem is not about Elizabeth Drury at all, but about the Virgin Mary. The only reference to Elizabeth Drury is on the title-page where Donne says that her death is the "occasion" for the poem. Again Marius Bewley is right when he says that the poem is a "private" one. For reasons which I shall show

in later chapters there is good evidence that Donne did not mean it to be readily fully understood and was quite content to accept that the central image would be thought to be Elizabeth Drury. When asked directly what it was about he replied that it was not about Elizabeth but about "one who might be capable of all that I could say." When Jonson told him that the only way the poem could be justified was if it was about the Virgin Mary, Donne replies evasively, he did not say that it was about Elizabeth Drury, he did not say that it was not about the Virgin Mary, he said it was about "The Idea of a Woman and not as she was" -- that is it was not about the Virgin either as a Catholic would see her or as a Protestant would see her, but as both, in her idea, and in her reality. Martz has pointed out that " . . . in a poem describing 'the Idea of a Woman,' some connotations of Mary would appear to be almost inevitable in a poet of Donne's background." When Mary replaces Elizabeth Drury as the female figure in the poem then the whole poem can be revalued from this starting point. She is the symbol which is the base for the poem, and further discussion of the inherent meanings can be related from this central, sharp, symbol which is the focus.

In the following chapters I shall discuss the sixteenth and seventeenth century outlooks on the Virgin to show on the one hand how the Catholic Church venerated her and on the other hand how Reformed beliefs demanded that she should be venerated in a much less laudatory fashion. I shall show that even then, (though the dogmas were not defined until 1854 and 1950 respectively), Catholics were emphatic in declaring that Mary was conceived without Original Sin and did not

die in the ordinary mortal sense but was assumed into heaven as a result of this privilege; and at the same time the Protestant Church was emphatic in declaring that she was not conceived without Original Sin and that she did die. I shall attempt to show that Donne exhibited Catholic understanding of Mary prior to his writing the First Anniversary and that afterwards he shows that he has modified these views. As part of a general biographical survey of his life I shall indicate how this poem can be shown to be central to his religious thought. Finally I shall examine the poem closely to show how this interpretation can be fully substantiated by the text. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt a full critical evaluation of the poem, but I hope that I shall show that it demands a full revaluation and that most of its derogatory critics were hampered by a false understanding of its basic symbol.

FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER I)

- ¹R. G. Bald, Donne and the Drury's (Cambridge, 1959), p. 69.
- ²Bald, op. cit., passim.
- ³Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne (London, 1899), I, 302-4.
- ⁴Ben Jonson, Works, eds. Herford and Simpson (Oxford, 1954), I, 133.
- ⁵Gosse, op. cit., pp. 274-8.
- ⁶Bald, op. cit., pp. 85-112.
- ⁷M. F. Moloney, John Donne, His Flight from Mediaevalism (Urbana, Ill., 1944), p. 38.
- ⁸Theodore Spencer, "Donne and his Age," from A Garland for John Donne (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), p. 191.
- ⁹Majorie Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle (Evanston, Ill., 1950), p. 65.
- ¹⁰Ibid., pp. 69-70.
- ¹¹Ibid., pp. 73-74.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 75.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 79.
- ¹⁴Marius Bewley, "Religious Cynicism in Donne's Poetry," Kenyon Review XIV (1952), 621-2.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 622.
- ¹⁶Here is further indication of Bewley's unacquaintance with Roman

Catholicism; in a Catholic vocabulary a "sacramental" is a thing distinct from "Sacrament" and is a noun describing "A rite, ceremony or observance analagous to a sacrament but not reckoned among the sacraments; e.g. the use of water and of holy oil, the sign of the cross 1450." SOED 1776i, B.

¹⁷Ibid., op. cit., p. 626.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 621.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 626-7.

²⁰Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1965), p. 355.

²¹Ibid., p. 221.

²²Martz footnotes this sentence with "See also the use of the number five in Ben Jonson's 'Ghyrlond of the blessed Virgin Marie': . . . ' Perhaps it is also relevant to add here that "Mystical Rose" is one of the titles of Mary found in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (The title is derived from passages in the Canticle of Canticles).

²³Martz, op. cit., pp. 223-6.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 229-30.

²⁵Harold Love, "The Argument of Donne's First Anniversary," Modern Philology LXIV (1966), 127.

²⁶Robert Ellrodt, L'inspiration personnelle et l'esprit du temps chez les poètes métaphysiques anglais (Paris, 1960), I, 454.

²⁷George Williamson, "The Design of Donne's Anniversaries," Modern Philology LX (1963), 191.

²⁸Patrick Mahony, "A Study of Donne's Anniversaries," a Ph.D. Dissertation for New York University, 1963, p. 14.

²⁹Ibid., p. ii.

³⁰Ibid., p. 16.

³¹Ibid., p. 161.

³²Frank Manley, John Donne, The Anniversaries (Baltimore, 1963).

- ³³Ibid., pp. 14-5.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 18.
- ³⁵Ibid., pp. 20-50.
- ³⁶Love, op. cit., p. 127.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 130.
- ³⁸Ibid., p. 131.
- ³⁹Manley, op. cit., p. 15.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 28.
- ⁴¹Ibid., pp. 13-14.
- ⁴²Martz, op. cit., p. 233.

CHAPTER II

VENERATION OF MARY IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

Since the time of, say, Ambrose and Bernard, Roman Catholic veneration of Mary grew so much that it became one of the most popular devotions of the Church.¹ Catholics believed that she had been conceived and born without Original Sin and that during her life she had never committed Actual Sin. These privileges were granted to her so that she might be a "pure vessel" for the son of God. As a result of these privileges she was exempted also from the results of sin; pain in childbirth, and death; that is; since she was pre-lapsarian in grace she did not have to suffer the results of the fall. Naturally enough this doctrine is intrinsically an enormous source of pride in two ways: firstly because it reminds man that but for the accident of the fall he too is a creature worthy of great things, and that death, pain and labour are but the results of the fall; secondly because it reminds man that though he is imperfect, one of his number is perfect, so perfect indeed that she is worthy even to be the mother of God. When Mary gave birth to Christ she gave him her flesh, and as his mother she had, they supposed, great influence with him. She was the instigator of his first miracle, at the Wedding Feast of Cana, and by popular belief she was the first person Christ manifested himself to after the Resurrection. (The proof of this is found in the fact that Mary did not visit his grave at the first possible moment, on the Sunday. She would only not have done this if she had already known that he was not there). Since Mary shared

Christ's flesh she had even more privileges than these; she was given the titles of "co-sufferer" and even "co-redemptress." The prophecy in Genesis 3:15 was applied to her: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." The words of Simeon in the temple reinforced this prophecy and indicated her suffering: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." (Luke 2:35). Mary was supposed to have played an active part in the redemption and to have suffered co-equally with Christ.

In the enormous number of prophecies applied to her Mary acquires many other virtues and privileges. These are best summed up in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin where she is described as: Virgo prudentissima, Virgo veneranda, Virgo praedicanda, Virgo potens, Virgo clemens, Virgo fidelis, Speculum justitiae, Sedes sapientiae, Causa nostrae laetitiae, Vas spirituale, Vas honorabile, Vas insigne devotionis, Rosa mystica, Turris Davidica, Turris eburnea, Domus aurea, Foederis arca, Janua caeli, Stella matutina, Salus infirmorum, Refugium peccatorum, Consolatrix afflictorum. (Virgin most prudent, Virgin most venerable, Virgin most renowned, Virgin most powerful, Virgin most merciful, Virgin most faithful, Mirror of justice, Seat of Wisdom, Cause of our joy, Spiritual vessel, Vessel of honour, Singular vessel of devotion, Mystical Rose, Tower of David, Tower of ivory, House of gold, Ark of the covenant, Gate of heaven, Morning star, Health of the sick, Refuge of sinners, Comforter of the afflicted). Nearly all these descriptions of the Virgin are derived from Old Testament prophecies and passages, particularly from the Book

of Wisdom, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Psalms and the Canticle of Canticles.

Large parts of these books were applied to her and we can see particularly well the magnitude of the devotion that Catholics paid to Mary when we read this extract from the Book of Proverbs which is part of her liturgy:

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and was old, before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived; neither had the fountains of water as yet sprung out; the mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth. He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world. When he prepared the heavens I was present; when with a certain law and compass he enclosed the depths, when he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters; when he compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits; when he balanced the foundations of the earth; I was with him forming all things, and delighted every day, playing before him at all times, playing in the world: and my delights were to be with the children of men. Now therefore ye children hear me: Blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors. He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.

(Proverbs 8:22-36)

This extract is the lesson for the feasts of both the Conception of Our Lady, and the Birth of Our Lady. Parts of it are repeated as antiphons and the like throughout her liturgy. This particular passage, as we shall see, is of great importance in the First Anniversary, and the two works are sometimes directly related.

But meanwhile we can see from the extract how greatly the Virgin was venerated. Actually the words of the text are in the original context ascribed to Wisdom, but applied to Mary they praise her in terms which suggest a veneration which is almost idolatrous. The text is also marked for its beauty, and Mary becomes, in Catholic doctrine, an

epitome of beauty and proportion. This is the lesson for the feast of the Assumption:

In all things I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord. Then the creator of all things commanded, and said to me; and he that made me rested in my tabernacle. And he said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance be in Israel, and take root in my elect. And so was I established in Sion, and in the holy city likewise I rested, and my power was in Jerusalem: and I took root in an honourable people, and in the portion of my God his inheritance, and my abode is in the full assembly of saints. I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress-tree on Mount Sion: I was exalted like a palm-tree in Cades, and as a rose-plant in Jericho: As a fair olive-tree in the plains, and as a plane-tree by the waters in the streets was I exalted. I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm: I yielded a sweet odour like the best myrrh.
(Ecclesiasticus 24:11-21)

This text too, in its original context, is describing Wisdom and it too will later be related to the First Anniversary. Passages describing Wisdom are often applied by the Roman Catholic Church to Mary so that she becomes formidably "Sedes sapientiae;" the beauty of Wisdom's symbols, and the complexity of its images become her attributes and her prerogative. It is a relationship that presents fascinating and wide implications and is a mark of the beauty inherent in Catholic Mariology. The doctrines of Mary are based often not on strict Scriptural proof but on their "fittingness." They were, in a way, metaphysical speculations (and we can see why they probably had great appeal for Donne). * This is perfectly exemplified by the development of the doctrine of the Assumption: St. John Damascene (died 753) was one of the first to suggest that Mary might have been assumed into heaven, and did not die in the ordinary human sense:

O how does the source of life pass through death to life?
O how can she obey the law of nature, who, in conceiving,
surpasses the boundaries of nature? How is her spotless

body made subject to death? In order to be clothed with immortality she must first put off mortality, since the Lord of nature did not reject the penalty of death. . . . What then shall we call this mystery of thine? Death? Thy blessed soul is naturally parted from thy blissful and undefiled body, and the body is delivered from the grave, yet it does not endure in death, nor is it the prey of corruption. The body of hers, while virginity remained unspotted in child-birth, was preserved in its incorruption, and was taken to a better place where death is not, but eternal life. Just as the glorious sun may be hidden momentarily by the opaque moon, it shows still though covered, and its rays illumine the darkness since light belongs to its essence. It has in itself a perpetual source of light, as God created it. So art thou the perennial source of true light, the treasury of light itself, the richness of grace, the cause and medium of all our goods. And if for a time thou art hidden by the death of the body, without speaking thou art our light, life-giving ambrosia, true happiness, a sea of grace, a fountain of healing and of perpetual blessing. Thou art as a fruitful tree in the forest, and thy fruit is sweet in the mouth of the faithful. Therefore I will not call thy sacred transformation death, but rest, or going home, and it is more truly a going home.²

These cautiously worded comments suggesting that Mary might not have died were the beginning of what was to become a flood of "proof" of the fact that the Virgin did not die. Eventually these "proofs" formed themselves into a body of material that the Catholic Church treated as evidence after the fact. Friethoff, in A Complete Mariology, asserts that St. John Damascene was the originator of the doctrine and cites many authorities including St. Robert Bellarmine, Savonarola, St. Bernardine of Sienna, Suarez, St. Francis de Sales, St. Anselm, Hugh of St. Victor, and St. Thomas Aquinas, as its defenders. (All these were before or contemporary with Donne). The arguments which he quotes from these authorities are summarised into nine points, of which these are the most important:

- (1) Mary was assumed into heaven because she is the Mother of God.
- (2) Mary was assumed into heaven because her flesh and Jesus's flesh

are one.

- (3) Mary was assumed into heaven because her body is united with the principle of life itself.
- (4) Mary was assumed into heaven because she was a virgin, especially at her parturition.
- (5) Mary was assumed into heaven because she is unstained by sin.
- (6) Mary was assumed into heaven because she is the Blessed among women.
- (7) Mary was assumed into heaven because she is the New Eve.³

Later we shall see that many of these details of Mary's virtues and privileges which resulted in her avoiding death are known and familiar to Donne. In the First Anniversary nearly all of them are touched upon or implied. By Donne's time the doctrine of the Assumption was well defined, although it was not declared official dogma until 1950. Indeed in the official declaration of the Dogma this quotation is included from St. Peter Canisius, who died in 1597:

This belief has prevailed for some centuries and is so firmly fixed in the minds of the faithful and has so commended itself to the universal Church that those who deny that the body of Mary was taken up into heaven should not be given a patient hearing but should be everywhere dismissed in derision as contentious and utterly temerarious persons, whose spirit is heretical rather than Catholic.⁴

Canisius was a Jesuit, and it could well be statements like this which occasioned Donne's remark in his preface to the Priests and Jesuits in Pseudo-Martyr:

I am so well acquainted with the phrases of Diminution and Disparagement, and other personall aspersion, which your writers cast and imprint upon such or your own side as depart from their opinions in the least dramme or scruple; as I cannot hope that any of them will spare me who am further removed from them.⁵

Donne here adopts the defensive tone which is typical of the Reformation's attitude to the Roman Catholic Church. They were particularly against all forms of mariology or rather mariolatry. We find A. M. Alchinn, himself an "Anglo-Catholic," saying of the Reformation attitude to Mary:

. . . the Churches of the Reformation, the Church of England amongst them, completely broke with [the doctrine and devotion of the Middle Ages with regard to Mary] . . . there was a very great break in devotional practice in the sixteenth century . . . Walsingham, one of the greatest shrines [of our Lady] in mediaeval England, totally destroyed, countless statues and Holy places connected with our Lady taken away, almost the whole liturgical veneration of Mary removed from the Prayer Book, invocation totally forbidden . . . it must be emphasised that this was a break in popular devotion and a protest against certain forms of popular religion . . . It was sudden and thorough.⁶

In Catholic liturgy there were seventeen feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of which two, the Conception and the Assumption, were classified as double of the first class with an octave. However in the First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI only two feasts were retained: the Annunciation and the Purification. But even here the focus of the importance of these two feasts was altered; they were seen as celebrating the Conception of our Lord, and his visit to the temple, and thus were rather feasts of Our Lord, than our Lady. In the 1549 Prayer Book there is a note "Of Ceremonies, why some have been abolished and some retayned." It contains this comment:

. . . the most weightye cause of the abolishment of certayne Ceremonies was, they were so farre abused, partely by the superstitious blyndenes of the rude and unlearned, and partelye by the unsaciabie auarice of suche as soughte more theyr owne lucre than the glorye of God.⁷

This clearly refers to Catholic veneration of Mary since it was seen to imply an over-valuing of man's estate through her being worthy of

heaven in her pre-lapsarian state. H. S. Box, in his essay "The Assumption," adds a footnote to this comment in the Prayer Book:

The seventeenth-century Bishop Cosin, in his Notes on the Book of Common Prayer, says that it [the Assumption] was 'omitted in our calendar, because there had been so many fabulous and superstitious stories devised about it in the Roman Church, where they do now observe this day with more festival solemnity than they do the Ascension of Christ himself.' He asserts that—'the story of her Assumption, now so much celebrated and generally believed in the Roman Church, is grounded only upon uncertain fables, first devised by men that gave their minds to vanity and superstition; of which kind the world never wanted store, and that it was for this reason that the Church of England did by public authority abrogate this feast of the Blessed Virgin's Assumption.'⁸

This is the tone that was set by the Reformation concerning veneration of Mary in any form. The doctrines concerning Mary, particularly that of the Assumption, were regarded as retrograde doctrines which gave man false pride in himself. But their reaction against the doctrines was extreme; to invoke her was to invoke the wrath of the establishment and to praise her was to put oneself in danger of being labelled Romanist. In connection with this Louis Martz presents an interesting appraisal of Herbert's poem To all Angels and Saints which contains these lines:

Not out of envie or maliciousnesse
Do I forbear to crave your speciaall aid:
I would addresse
My vows to thee most gladly, Blessed Maid
And mother of my God, in my distresse

Thou art the holy mine, whence came the gold,
Thou art the great restorative for all decay
In young and old;
Thou art the cabinst where the jewel lay:
Chiefly to thee would I my soul unfold.

But now, alas, I dare not; for our King,
Whom we do all jointly adore and praise
Bids no such thing:

And where his pleasure no injunction layes,
('Tis your own case) ye never move a wing.

Martz comments:

"But now, alas, I dare not." Why now? Shouldn't the argument apply always? And doesn't the "alas" show a strange regret for God's failure to supply the required "injunction" that would make such devotion possible? For God, of course, is "our King" whom "we" -- that is the Angels, Saints, Herbert, and other human beings -- "do all joyntly adore and praise." Or is it as simple as this? Isn't there at the same time a lurking suggestion of another, earthly King, who now, alas, "bids no such thing" for the Anglican? It is hard to avoid the implication. . . .⁹

I agree with Martz's understanding of the implications of this poem and think that even more, the line "Whom we do all joyntly adore and praise" has such a discordant sound and rhythm that Herbert must have intended it to be thus. He, perhaps above all other English poets, knows how to manipulate the rhythm and sound of a line to express exactly all he means to be understood. For him to leave a line so discordant must imply that the thought is discordant. And if Martz's reading of this poem is just, then we see to what extent Reformation excesses of anti-Mariolatry have led. If this is the case we can see another reason for Donne's secrecy about the true subject of the First Anniversary. Herbert's mother, as to a lesser extent was Herbert himself, was a close friend of Donne. As I shall indicate again later the imagery and description in this passage from To all Angels and Saints is very reminiscent of the First Anniversary. Perhaps this is not altogether a coincidence.

Donne was brought up as a Catholic and would have inherited Catholic veneration and estimation of the Virgin with his religion. As we shall see in the following chapter he did show particular devotion

to Mary: a devotion that was markedly altered between, say, 1609 and 1625. Doubtless his final acceptance of an attitude which was closer to the Anglican Church's attitude than that of the Roman Church was something of a sacrifice to him: Catholic mariology is a particularly beautiful doctrine; it presents the conceit that God's mother was Wisdom; it presents her as fine, pure, and beautiful in soul and body; finally it gives mankind a source of pride as it presents a perfect specimen of humanity who was not only acceptable to God without redemption, but who had power over, and influence with him. To accept that Mary is dead, suffered Original Sin, and was therefore a comparatively ordinary person, is to relinquish not only beauty and hope but also self-esteem:

Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
Thou knowest how poore a trifling thing man is.

(First Anniversary, 183-4)

We shall see in the First Anniversary it is just this attitude which is expressed.

FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER II)

¹All statements about Roman Catholic doctrine which are not specifically referred to an authority are derived from a wide number of books on Catholic theology, particularly: C. X. J. M. Friethoff, A Complete Mariology (London, 1958); Hilda Graef, Mary; a History of Doctrine and Devotion (London, 1963); Rev. John Greenwood (ed.), A Handbook of the Catholic Faith (New York, 1956); Archdale A. King, Liturgy of the Roman Church (London, 1957); Giovanni Miegge, The Virgin Mary, The Roman Catholic Marian Doctrine (London, 1955); Pius Parsch, The Church's year of Grace (Collegeville, 1963); Max Thurian, Mary, Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church (London, 1963); and others which will be found in the bibliography.

²H. S. Box, "The Assumption," from E. L. Mascall and H. S. Box eds. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Essays by Anglican Writers (London, 1963), p. 96.

³C. X. J. M. Friethoff, A Complete Mariology (London, 1958), pp. 149-64.

⁴Ibid., p. 148.

⁵John Donne, Pseudo-Martyr (London, 1610), sig.B^r

⁶E. L. Mascall and H. S. Box, eds., op. cit., p. 55.

⁷The First and Second Prayer Books of King Edward the Sixth (London, 1910), p. 287.

⁸H. S. Box, "The Assumption" op. cit., p. 89.

⁹Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1954), p. 98.

CHAPTER III

DONNE'S RELIGIOUS OPINIONS: A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF HIS EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT, HIS CONVERSION FROM THE CHURCH OF ROME TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

John Donne was born in 1572. Little is known of his father's family save that it was Catholic. His father himself was an extremely prosperous iron-merchant, who was appointed Warden of the Company of Ironmongers in 1574, two years before he died. Donne's mother, Elizabeth Heywood, came from a famous Catholic family, her great-uncle was Sir Thomas More, and her brothers, Jasper and Ellis, were both Jesuits. Apart from his great-great grandfather, who was imprisoned for being a Protestant too soon, there was no male member of Donne's family, in four generations, who did not suffer physically for his Catholicism. Even Donne's younger brother died of Gaol-fever, in the Clink-prison in 1593, where he was sentenced for hiding a Jesuit priest. We can see that Donne is well justified in describing himself as

. . . being derived from such a stocke and race, as, I beleeve, no family . . . hath endured and suffered more in their persons and futures, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, than it hath done.¹

Naturally enough his education had a Catholic bias. Walton records that after his father died:

His Mother and those to whose care he was committed, were watchful to improve his knowledge, and to that end appointed him Tutors both in the Mathematicks, and in all the other Liberal Sciences, to attend him. But with these Arts they were advised to instil into him particular Principles of the Romish Church; of which those Tutors profest (though secretly) themselves to be members.²

In 1584 Donne went with his brother to Hart Hall in Oxford. Here, we may presume, his education continued to be Catholic orientated. Charles

Coffin indicates that at this time the college was a refuge for Catholics and that "the curriculum of study [was] hardly less medieval than any that could have been devised by his previous tutors."³ Donne did not take his B.A.; to have done this would have meant swearing an oath of allegiance, Walton records that he

. . . forebore by advice from his friends, who being for their Religion of the Romish perswasion, were conscionably averse to some parts of the Oath that is alwaies tendered at those times; and not to be refused by those that expect the titulary honour of their studies.⁴

While Donne was at Oxford his uncle Jasper Heywood, who had become superior of the English Jesuits, was imprisoned. He was allowed visits from his sister, Donne's mother, and there has been speculation that Donne might have accompanied her.⁵ Certainly he would have been well aware of what was happening and at this impressionable age would have been very conscious of the burdens of sincere Catholics.

Between 1587 and 1591 nothing is known for certain about Donne's activities. Walton says that he attended Cambridge University, but no trace has been found in its records. Grierson says that "It is possible that before 1592 Donne himself had been sent abroad by relatives with a view to his entering a seminary or the service of a foreign power."⁶ Moloney finds this "a fertile field for conjecture" and comments, ". . . What if Donne had been destined for a Roman Catholic seminary by family councils? Was he, as a matter of fact, what the Irish peasant to this day calls a 'spoiled priest'? If it could be proved that he was, the explanation of his subsequent career would be much easier."⁷ The family history would support this supposition; both uncles were Priests, and it is a long established Catholic tradition that the eldest son should enter a seminary. If Donne had spent some time in a seminary then we

can see that later, as Dean of St. Pauls, he would do all he could to suppress this knowledge, as we shall see he later tried to suppress his poem The Progresse of the Soule which suggested that Elizabeth I was a heretic.

Whatever happened in the intervening years, it is certain that in 1591 he "had become a member of Thavies Inn preparatory to his admission in May, 1592 into Lincoln's Inn."⁸ It is equally certain that it is from this time that Donne's fervour for Catholicism (if it ever was fervour) began to wane. If he was intending to become a lawyer, and a letter to Sir Henry Goodyere in 1608⁹ would indicate that he had intended this for his career, then he would have to disclaim Catholicism for as Grierson has pointed out, "The position of a Catholic in the reign of Elizabeth was that of a man cut off from the main life of the nation, with every avenue of honourable ambition closed to him."¹⁰ But though he may have abandoned the formal practice of Catholicism we can see that Donne was concerned with seeking the truth in Religious matters. In 1597/8 (according to Shawcross, The Complete Poetry of John Donne, p. 412) Donne wrote these lines:

Seeke true religion. O where? Mirreus
Thinking her unhous'd here, and fled from us,
Seekes her at Rome, there, because he doth know
That shee was there a thousand yeares agoe,
He loves her ragges so, as wee here obey
The statecloth where the Prince sate yesterday.
.
Graccus loves all as one, and thinkes that so
As women do in divers countries goe
In divers habits, yet are still one kinde,
So doth, so is Religion; and this blind-
nesse too much light breeds; but unmoved thou
Of force must one, and forc'd must one allow;¹¹
And the right; aske thy father which is shee,
Let him aske his; though truth and falsehood bee
Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is;
Be busie to seeke her, beleve mee this,
Hee's not of none, nor worst, that seekes the best.
To adore, or scorne an image, or protest,

May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way
 To stand enquiring right, is not to stray;
 To steepe, or runne wrong, is. (Satyre III, 43-48, 65-70)

It seems to me that these lines make his religious position at the time quite clear. He himself seeks "true religion" but is not sure where it is to be found. He knows that it was to be found in Rome a thousand years ago — a fact which is proved again and again in his Sermons. (In the Simpson and Potter edition of the Sermons, Volume X, pp. 346-7, there is a detailed list of the references to the Fathers which can be found in Donne's sermons; generally we see that Donne understood his own Religion to be in a direct line from the Religion of the early Fathers of the Church). But equally he is not convinced that the Church of England or indeed any formal Church is "true Religion." One Religion must be chosen; his repetition of the word "force" shows this, but he also sees the enormous difficulty of a choice. Perhaps "aske thy father which is shee" indicates that as yet he is still more inclined to Roman Catholicism than to any other Religion. The last six lines of this extract are defensive in tone; "may all be bad" indicates uncertainty, "in a strange way" shows that he is aware that it is not normal and must be justified. Generally we can see that the tone of this Satyre indicates that Donne is searching, slowly for the truth, is at no point at resolution, and perhaps feels guilty that he is in such a state of vacillation. But his preference for God over Man is unequivocal: the concluding lines of this Satyre are:

So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust
 Power from God claim'd, than God himselve to trust.

Here Donne the cynic or sceptic is seen. At this stage of youth (he was

twenty) he is unwilling to follow any "Phillip, or a Gregory, a Harry, or a Martin,"¹³ and recognises only God himself.

During the years following his attendance at Lincoln's Inn Donne made two trips abroad. These are significant to a history of his religious opinions in two ways: first in that he fought against the King of Spain, a Catholic monarch, under the banner of Elizabeth, an excommunicate; and secondly because of the companions and leadership he went with. Essex was the young commander and Donne's comrades were Thomas Egerton and Francis Wooley, the son and step-son of Sir Thomas Egerton, who had just been made Keeper of the Great Seal and Lord High Chancellor. In 1597, doubtless with some help from his ex-shipmates, Donne was appointed secretary to Sir Thomas. Moloney comments:

His induction into the service of the Lord Keeper meant that whatever formal connection still linked Donne with the Roman Catholic religion had been severed. No Roman Catholic in Elizabeth's time could hold public office, and in the case of a man like Donne, whose family had been so widely known for its stubborn adherence to that faith there would have been no chance of his slipping unquestioned past the legal barriers. His renunciation of his paternal religion might have been made in either of two ways: by a formal declaration of his Anglicanism at the time of his induction, or, what is far more likely, the testimony of his conduct and manner of living during the years when he had been more or less in the public eye. The latter possibility is substantiated by Walton's statement that after his eighteenth birthday he had "betrothed himself to no religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian," and Gosse observes that "As soon as Donne found himself free from his mother's tutelage his attachment to the Catholic faith began to decline." Thus by 1597 at the latest Donne had broken definitely with his family religion, but while the formal severance was effected the weight and influence of that ages-old tradition were far from completely obliterated.¹³

There are two important points here. The first is that Donne considered himself Christian, and the second is that the influence of the 'old tradition'

remained strong. At least until he decided to take orders, in 1612, I think it is clear that Donne did only consider himself as adhering to no particular credo. In 1609 he confirmed Walton's words by writing to Sir Henry Goodyere:

You know I never fettered or imprisoned the word Religion, nor straightened it friarly, ad Religiones factitas (as the Roman call well their orders of Religion), nor immuring it in a Rome, or a Wittenburg, or a Geneva; they are all virtual beams of one Sun, and wheresoever they find clay hearts, they harden them and molder them into dust; and they entender and mollify waxen. They are not so contrary as the North and South Poles, and that they [sic] are co-natural pieces of one circle. Religion is Christianity, which being too spiritual to be seen by us, doth therefore take an apparent body of good life and works, so salvation requires an honest Christian.¹⁴

As a non-affiliated Christian Donne could pick and choose from all Religious tenets: he was able to reject Papal authority while also rejecting Elizabeth's right to religious authority; he could accept the Assumption while not accepting the then Catholic form of Baptism, which baptised "In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of the Virgin Mary."¹⁵ It was only when he was to choose a particular faith that he had to abandon the special beliefs of others. In this way he could, and did, continue to show how some Catholic tenets remained attractive to him, however much he despised much of their teaching and many of their teachers.

In 1601 John Donne married Anne More. This was a major turning point in his life, all too apt was the letter he was supposed to have written to his wife:

John Donne, Anne Donne, Undone.¹⁶

His marriage to Anne was the occasion of his losing his employment and

of his being put into prison, and was the beginning of a long period of depression. In the same year Essex, who had been a friend of Donne since their campaigns together, led a foolish revolt against Elizabeth, and was executed for it. All these things contribute to what was evidently a very strange melancholy which affected Donne that year, and which he was not to be completely free of until after he wrote the Anniversaries. This period is defined in a particular fashion by Donne's poetry. In 1601 he wrote a satirical poem entitled The Progresse of the Soule, and in 1611 he used the same title again for the Second Anniversary. I think this is not entirely a coincidence; the development between the two poems marks a very definite progress in Donne's soul. The 1601 poem is indicative of a Catholic outlook on life. Moloney says:

. . . that strange poem marks a milestone in Donne's career. Dated by Donne himself August 16, 1601,¹⁷ it unquestionably is born of a mood superinduced by the Essex debacle. It is a poor poem . . . But it is radically revealing of the state of Donne's mind with regard to religious matters. Gosse says rightly that in tone and character it is unchristian; "it is penetrated by the mocking, sensuous scepticism of the Renaissance." Yet the framework of this poem, written by a poet who, for at least four years had been formally and publically divorced from the Church of Rome, is animated by a peculiarly Catholic motif of a study of heresy.¹⁸

Ben Jonson, in his conversations with Drummond, is recorded to have said of the poem:

the Conceit of Dones transformation or *μετεμψυχωσις* [metempsychosis] was that he sought the scale of that Ape which Eva pulled, and thereafter made it the soule of a Bitch, then of a sheewolf & so of a woman. his generall purpose was to have brought in all the bodies of the Hereticks from ye soule of Cain & at last left it in ye body of Calvin. of this he never wrotte but one sheet, & now since he was made Doctor repenteth highlie & seeketh to destroy all his poems.¹⁹

But the statement about the intention of the poem is probably untrue.

We can see that this is not the course of the poem; the ultimate heretic

seems to be intended to be Queen Elizabeth.

For the great soule which here amongst us now
 Doth dwell, and moves that hand, and tongue, and brow
 Which, as the Moone the sea, moves us; to heare
 Whose story, with long patience you will long;
 (For 'tis the crowne, and last straine of my song) . . .
 (Progresse of the Soule, Stanza VII, lines 61-5)

Grierson outlines the actual progress of the soul:

Donne, who was still a Catholic in the sympathies that come of education and association, seems to have contemplated a satirical history of the great heretics in lineal descent from the wife of Cain to Elizabeth . . . for private circulation.

He continues to comment on Jonson's conversation with Donne:

Probably Donne mystified him on purpose, for it is evident from the poem that in its first intention Queen Elizabeth herself was to be the soul's last host.²⁰

With this Progresse of the Soule a precedent has been set which I think Donne follows in the First Anniversary. Donne wrote it from a very personal viewpoint; it expresses an opinion, if facetious, that he held personally and which, although he expresses it in poetry, he does not wish to be made public. Donne wished to withdraw this poem from circulation and as its meaning is clear, his reasons are obvious. In the case of the First Anniversary, I believe, the meaning was not as clear and therefore he had no reason to suppress it. (However, he never elaborated further than "the Idea of a Woman," and never explained it exactly to his public). I think both poems express clearly that Donne inclined to Catholicism "in the sympathies that come of education and association," and that both indicate a framework that is "essentially Catholic."

Meanwhile, in 1601 and 1602, Donne was undergoing his matrimonial troubles. Anne More was the niece of Sir Thomas Egerton, his employer,

and by marrying her secretly he not only offended him but betrayed his trust. The legality of the marriage was questioned and Donne was suspended from his work and imprisoned. There followed an exchange of letters between Donne, Sir George More, and Sir Thomas, which exhibit the depths to which Donne had descended. Shortly after he had been transferred, by the grace of Sir George, from the Fleet prison to the confinement of his chambers in the Strand, he wrote this letter to Sir George More:

Sir, -- From you, to whom next to God I shall owe my health, by enjoying by your mediation this mild change of imprisonment, I desire to derive all my good fortune and content in this world; and therefore, with my most unfeigned thanks, present to you my humble petition that you would be pleased to hope that, as that fault which was laid to me of having deceived some gentlewoman before, and that of loving a corrupt religion, are vanished and smoked away (as I assure myself, out of their weakness they are), and that as the devil in the article of our death takes the advantage of our weakness and fear, to aggravate our sins to our conscience, so some uncharitable malice hath presented my debts double at least.

How many of the imputations laid upon me would fall off, if I might shake and purge myself in your presence! But if that were done, of this offence committed to you I cannot acquit myself, of which yet I hope that God (to whom for that I heartily direct many prayers) will inform you to make that use, that as of evil manners good laws grow, so out of disobedience and boldness you will take occasion to show mercy and tenderness. And when it shall please God to soften your heart so much towards us as to pardon us, I beseech you also to undertake that charitable office of being mediator to my Lord, [Egerton] whom as upon your just complaint you found full of justice, I doubt not that you shall also find full of mercy, for so is the Almighty pattern of Justice and Mercy full of both.

My conscience, and such affection as in my conscience becomes an honest man, emboldeneth me to make one request more, which is, that by some kind and comfortable afflictions which I know your daughter in her mind suffers, and that (if it be not against your other purposes) I may with your leave write to her? for without your leave I will never attempt anything concerning her. God so have mercy upon me, as I am unquestionably resolved to bend all my courses to make me fit

for her, which if God and my Lord and you be pleased to strengthen, I hope neither my debts, which I can easily order, nor anything else shall interrupt. Almighty God keep you in his favour, and restore me to His and yours.

From my chamber, whither by your favour I am come,
13th Feb., 1601[2] J. Donne.²¹

It is remarkable that having had the boldness to marry Sir George's daughter secretly, he should now be requesting permission even to write to her, "for without your leave I will never attempt anything concerning her." Here he is either being hypocritical or else he is very easily made despondent. In this letter he crawls, he begs, and seems to lose all pride. Sir George and Sir Thomas are referred to in terms which make them very close to God. Indeed in the concluding sentence of the second paragraph we find it difficult to decide when he is referring to Sir Thomas and when he is referring to God. There is much to suggest hypocrisy; he does not really offer justification for the two charges (of loving some gentlewoman before, and of loving a corrupt religion), merely says that they have been exaggerated, and all the time he is insinuating requests and flattering Sir George. It could be said that the attitude which provoked this letter is the attitude which led Donne to write the First Anniversary: an abandonment of integrity in order to curry favour; but I think in both cases the charge can be dismissed. Donne's character was complex, perhaps largely due to his Catholic background and his revolt from it. He was a man inclined to be oversensitive of analysis of his actions. Just as I think he deceived Ben Jonson over The Progress of the Soule, he was unwilling to tell any man the depths of his emotional responses. At this time he was expressing himself in poetry ("For Godsake hold your tongue and let me love") but

could not express himself directly. He is intimidated by being persecuted as he is ultra-sensitive to the world's analysis of his actions. That this should be a direct result of his Catholic background is not difficult to see: he is the descendant of a fervent Catholic family; doubtless he loved his mother (in the sermons he often refers to the natural love and respect of children for their parents, and in his Will he provides amply for his "dearly beloved mother"),²² and his mother was still living and doubtless unhappy about his religious state; only a few years before he had seen his only brother die in prison as a direct result of his religion. Therefore it is extremely likely that Donne's conscience was frequently extremely sensitive about his own actions; with this sort of background he is far more likely to be uncomfortable about his motives than any ordinary person. In the letter to Sir George More he mentions his conscience three times and it is apparent that it is his own motivation that he is intent on justifying, as well as his actions. He does not want his self-assurance to be disturbed. We shall see that his actions in the following ten years continue to indicate an over-sensitivity of conscience, through an over-defensive attitude to Catholicism.

Eventually these troubles sorted themselves out and Donne obtained employment with Morton, who was engaged in writing a series of theological pamphlets against the Catholics outlining the King's viewpoint. Gosse records that from 1605-1607 "Donne was mainly employed in revising, collecting, and even perhaps composing, for Morton"²³ and Moloney comments:

At this juncture Donne's mental state must have been perturbed in the extreme. It was one thing for a descendant of the Mores

and the Heywoods to cut loose the anchor of a faith which held in check the bulging sails of his political ambitions, although such an action might still leave its author in a position of comparative neutrality. But to turn the power of his subtle intellect against the religion for which through generations, back to Henry's chancellor himself, his family had bled, was to line himself irrevocably with what from his infancy, he had been taught to consider an alien cause.²⁴

In 1607 Morton was appointed Bishop of Gloucester and offered Donne a benefice. When Walton wrote his Life of Donne Morton was still living, and from him he obtained details of Morton's offer and Donne's reply.

Morton wrote:

The King hath yesterday made me Dean of Gloucester, and I am also possessed of a Benefice . . . I . . . will quit my Benefice, and estate you in it, (which the Patron is willing I shall do) if God shall incline your heart to embrace this motion. Remember, Mr. Donne, no mans Education or Parts make him too good for this employment, which is to be an Ambassadour for the God of Glory, that God who by a vile death opened the gates of life to mankind. Make me no answer; but remember your promise, [to fast and pray] and return to me the third day with your Resolution.²⁵

Donne's reply is respectful, polite and sincere:

. . . I have been faithful to my promise, and have also meditated much of your great kindness, which hath been such as would exceed even my gratitude; but that it cannot do; and more I cannot return you; and I do that with an heart full of Humility and Thanks, though I may not accept of your offer; but, Sir, my refusal is not that I think myself too good for that calling, for which Kings, if they think so, are not good enough: nor for that my Education and Learning, though not eminent, may not, being assisted with God's Grace and Humility, render me in some way fit for it: but, I dare make so dear a friend as you are my Confessor; some irregularities of my life have been so visible to some men, that though I have, I thank God, made my peace with penitential resolutions against them, and by the assistance of his Grace banish'd them my affections; yet this, which God knows to be so, is not so visible to men, as to free me from their censures, and it may be that sacred calling from dishonour. And besides, whereas it is determined by the best of Casuists, that Gods Glory should be the first end, and a maintenance the second motive to embrace that calling; and though each man may propose to himself both together; yet the first may not be

put last without a violation of Conscience, which he that searches the heart will judge. And truly my present position is such, that if I ask my own Conscience, whether it be reconcilable to that rule, it is at this time so perplexed about it, that I can neither give my self nor you an answer. You know, Sir, who sayes, Happy is the man whose Conscience doth not accuse him for that thing which he does. To these I might add other reasons which dissuade me; but I crave your favour that I may forbear to express them, and, thankfully decline your offer.²⁶

This letter can be very favourably contrasted with the one written in prison, and here we can see the underlying motivation brought to the surface. Donne may have been ambitious but his conscience rules his ambition. He puts Morton in the unusual role of his "confessor" but even so is unwilling to reveal to him the full extent that his conscience forbids him to accept the offer. He shows his awareness of the importance of other peoples' opinions of him, and he shows some of the confusion that exists in his mind towards religious matters. As Gosse comments on Donne's refusal to accept the Benefice:

All this time, we must reflect, Donne, although he had long since abandoned the ceremonial of the Roman Church, had not ceased to be a Roman Catholic so far as to enter any other communion. He had preserved, as Pseudo-Martyr shows us, a lively curiosity in Catholic Dogma, and it was his late peculiar position, as a Roman Catholic without fervour and yet with great erudition, which had comended him to Morton. My own impression is that Donne was actually detached at this time from either church, although I am not unaware that some detachment, common enough in France and Italy, was very rare in England.²⁷

The offer of the Benefice served to increase this confusion. Louis Martz has said

Everything that we know of Donne indicates that, during the years from his marriage in 1601 down through his ordination in 1615, he was engaging in the most fervent and painful self-analysis.²⁸

but the most painful period of self-analysis was to follow the invitation

to take Holy Orders. In the following year Donne wrote to Sir Henry Goodyere:

. . . I would faine do something; but that I cannot tell what, is no wonder. For to chuse, is to do: but to be no part of any body, is to be nothing. At most the greatest persons are but great wens, and excrescences; men of wit and delightfull conversation, but as moalls for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world, that they contribute to the sustenation of the whole. This I made account that I began early, when I understood the study of our laws: but was diverted by the worst voluptuousness, which is an Hydroptique immoderate desire of humane learning and languages: beautifull ornaments to great fortunes; but mine needed an occupation, and a course I thought I entered well into, when I submitted my selfe to such a service, as I thought might imploy those poor advantages which I had. And there I stumbled too. Yet I would try again: for to this hour I am nothing, or so little, that I am scarce subject and arguement good enough for one of mine own letters: yet I fear, that doth not ever proceed from a good root, that I am so well content to be lesse, that is dead.²⁹

Theodore Spencer, in his essay "Donne and His Age" comments on this letter, "Donne's melancholy, in other words, is the result of inaction; he cannot choose; his will is in a state of paralysis."³⁰ It indicates the same unrest shown in The Progresse of the Soule, which ends:

Ther's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
Of every quality comparison,
The onely measure is, and judge, opinion.

but it is greatly enlarged so that it leads him even to thoughts of suicide. In the preface to Biathanatos, a book written to show that suicide is not necessarily against God's law, Donne expresses the inclinations in himself that lead him to thoughts of suicide. He shows that religious conflicts are rooted in his depression:

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

there bee a perplexitie and flexibility in the doctrine it selfe; Or because my Conscience ever assures me, that no rebellious grudging at Gods gifts, nor other sinfull concurrence accompanies these thoughts in me, or that a brave scorn, or that a faint cowardlinesse beget it, whensoever any affliction assailes me, mee thinks I have the keyes of my prison in mine owne hand, and no remedy presents it selfe so soone to my heart, as mine owne sword.³¹

Gosse suggests that Biathanatos was written because Donne had these inclinations and wished to justify to himself that if he should commit suicide it was not a mortal sin, "if this was not the purpose and aim of Biathanatos, then it appears to me the idlest trifling with the dry bones of disputation that was ever committed. I am willing to believe that Donne was sick in soul but not that he was a fantastic trifler."³² I think his judgement is fair, and the fact of Donne's ever writing Biathanatos shows the extent of his spiritual distress. Donne's poetical writings about this time were principally religious. Grierson has dated A Litanie as being written in 1608 or 9, "The Annunciation and Passion," as having been written on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25th 1608, La Corona during 1607-9, and "The Crosse" sometime in the period before his ordination.³³ If we examine these works it will emerge that Donne's religious outlook at this time shows a considerable Catholic sympathy, particularly in his esteem of the Virgin Mary. La Corona takes its name from a Catholic form of meditation on the Virgin related to the Rosary. Martz quotes the preface to the Society of the Rosarie which outlines its original form:

in the first part are proposed those things to be meditated, that belong to the preparatiions made for her coming, before she was borne. In the second, such as pertaine to her birth and education. In the third, how she was co-operated with the B. Trinitie, in Christs incarnation and nativite. In the fourth her participation with him, both in ioyes and afflictions, most part of his life in the world. In the fifth her singular

compassion in the time of his Passion, and death. In the sixth, the rest of her life with her death and assumption. And in the seventh and last part, her most glorious Coronation, and exaltation above all Saints and Angels.³⁴

He continues later to say:

Donne's sequence is, of course, addressed to Christ, and the life of the Virgin is carefully subordinated; this is what we would expect of an Anglican adaptation of the corona.³⁵

Notice Martz's use of the word "carefully;" he seems to suggest that Donne deliberately made his poem an Anglican expression rather than a Catholic one, but naturally inclined to the Catholic. If we examine the second poem in the sequence, Annunciation, we shall see how Catholic the view of Mary actually was:

Salvation to all that will is nigh,
That All, which alwayes is All every where,
 Which cannot sinne, and yet all sinnes must beare,
 Which cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die,
 Loe, fathfull Virgin, yeelds himself to lye
 In prison, in thy wombe; and though he there
 Can take no sinne, nor thou give, yet he will weare
 Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may trie.
 Ere by the spheares time was created, thou
 Wast in his minde, who is thy Sonne, and Brother,
 Whom thou conceiv'st, conceiv'd; yea thou art now
 Thy Makers maker, and thy Fathers mother,
 Thou' hast light in darke; and shutst in a little roome,
Immensity cloysterd in thy deare wombe.

The first thing we notice is the obvious attachment which Donne has for the Virgin. Her womb is "dear" and the first time she is mentioned it is with the laudatory adjective "faithful." (In the fourth sonnet, Temple, Joseph is described with no particular adjectives). In the following line we are told that Christ can take or receive no sin in her womb. This suggests on the one hand that Christ did not incur Original Sin, but does it not suggest also that Mary might not have any sin in her? This of course is a strictly Catholic view for the Reformers

denied that Mary was conceived without Original Sin. The Catholic interpretation is perhaps favoured more than the Anglican one in this context because the text specifically says "in thy wombe": Original Sin occurs with conception; thus in referring only to Christ's freedom from Original Sin the issue is past once the conception has occurred and the womb is already occupied. Rather the sentence suggests that he cannot come into contact with sin while he is within the Virgin, therefore she is totally free from sin. The later play with "Sonnes, and Brother," and "Father's mother," shows how closely Donne is examining each statement he makes. The reference in line nine: "Ere by the spheres time was created" is related by Helen Gardner to "Ecclus. xxiv. 9. applied to the Blessed Virgin in her office."³⁶ This text is the lesson for the feast of the Assumption which has already been quoted in the last chapter and which we shall see to be very relevant to The First Anniversary. (It is also the text quoted by Manley in demonstration of a traditional type of wisdom -- see chapter I). Later, in his sermons, Donne was to comment on the application of Proverbs 8, (the text which is applied to Mary for the feast of the Conception, and which, with the Ecclesiasticus text, is probably the most important and most often used part of Marian liturgy) but refrained from alluding to its application to Mary.³⁷ He refrained because the suggestion is too Catholic an estimation of Mary. Here in La Corona on the other hand, this allusion to Mary shows clearly that he still sees her in terms of the Catholic liturgy. There is perhaps also an implicit reference to another important part of a particularly Catholic veneration of Mary: In the "Annunciation" sonnet we are reminded that Christ took

his flesh from Mary. This fact is the basis for the Catholic doctrines of Mary co-sufferer and co-redemptress. In one sense it was Mary's flesh which underwent the passion and crucifixion, because Christ's flesh was hers; in another sense her flesh suffered because she suffered vicariously, both by understanding what her son was suffering, and because she was his mother. This in his book Mary Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church, Max Thurian concludes his chapter on "Mary the Suffering Servant" with these words:

At the foot of the Cross Mary experienced in her flesh the sorrows of Christ more than any other Christian after her, since being the human mother of the Son of God, her whole being could only shudder with agony and suffering in the presence of this Crucified One. Thus, the marks of the Cross, which she must bear in her heart as the first Christian woman and type of the Church she has experienced again most cruelly because she was the human mother of her crucified Saviour. There she completed what was lacking in her flesh of the sorrows of Christ, for His Body, and for the Church: she reveals to us the way of this likeness to Christ crucified which we must experience in our flesh in order to arrive one day at the glory of his Resurrection.

But Friethoff quotes St. Albert the Great and elaborates on this view:

And . . . she was the only one to whom this privilege was given, i.e. of sharing in the Passion. To be able to reward her for it her Son wished her to share also in the merits of the Passion; and to make her a sharer in the benefits of the Redemption, he wished her to be his partner also in the suffering of the Passion. . . . And as the whole world is indebted to God for his Passion, so all would be to their Queen for her compassion.³⁸

Mary suffered not only with Jesus but with us. Thus in the sonnet sequence of La Corona the concluding line of "Nativitie" is: "With his kinde mother, who partakes thy woe." Here "thy" woe refers to "my soule" and we are reminded that Mary partakes the personal suffering of each soul in the world. When the line is carried on to the beginning

of "Temple" the "thy" is then related to Joseph: the idea of the universality of Mary's suffering is re-inforced.

When we come to the poem "Upon the Annunciation and the Passion falling upon one day" (1608) the understanding of Mary as co-sufferer is again realised. The poem is based, as its title suggests, on the conjunction that year of the liturgical feasts of the Annunciation and the Passion but actually celebrates, I think, not only this conjunction but also the idea of Mary co-sufferer and Mary, figure of the Church. The poem is complex and needs careful analysis, in many ways it is a precursor of the First Anniversary, not only in its subject matter but in its treatment of the subject. The poem can be read through first of all as describing only the implications of the conjunction of the feasts. The images and expression are a typically "metaphysical" treatment of the ideas which are based on the conjunction of Christ's conception and his death. But I think it is quite valid then to read the poem in an entirely different light; as celebrating Mary co-sufferer and co-redeemer. Thus see the first few lines:

Tamely fraile body abstaine to day; to day
 My soule eates twice, Christ hither and away.
 Shee sees him man, so like God made in this,
 That of them both a circle embleme is,
 Whose first and last concurre; this doubtfull day
 Of feast or fast, Christ came, and went away;
 Shee sees him nothing twice at once, who is all;
 Shee sees a Cedar plant it selfe, and fall,
 Her maker put to making, and the head
 Of life, at once, not yet alive and dead;
 Shee sees at once the virgin mother stay
 Reclus'd at him, Publique at Golgotha.
 Sad and rejoyc'd shee's seen at once, and seen
 At almost fiftie, and at scarce fifteene. (lines 1-14)

We are warned that the poem is about complex conjunctions: "my soul eats

twice" and Christ is "Hither and away." There is a "circle embleme," whose "first and last concur." In the seventh line we see something "twice at once" and three more times we are shown different things "at once." Having been warned thus fully to be aware of complexities we must examine the text very closely. It seems to say that "My soule" sees these two feasts, and their implications on the same day, and that it sees the Virgin at two points of her life. It is saying this, but might it not also be saying what the Virgin sees? If we forget temporarily the first two lines, by following the difference between the "Shee" and the "she" we can see that the person in lines 2-10 is the Virgin, and that only the "she" in line 11 is related to someone else: "my soule" when we relate them to the first two lines. As we follow the rest of the poem we see that the feminine personal pronouns are obviously related at various points to alternately "my soule," the "Virgin Mother" and the Church. But there is more than one suggestion that the allocations are not alternate but simultaneous.

At once a Some is promis'd her, and gone
 Gabriel gives Christ to her, He her to John;
 Not fully a mother, Shee's in Orbitie,
 At once receiver and the legacie;
 All this, and all betweene, this day hath showne,
 Th'Abridgement of Christs story, which makes one
 (As in plaine Maps, the furthest West is East)
 Of the 'Angels Ave,' and Consummatum est.
 How well the Church, Gods Court of faculties
 Deales in some times, and seldome joyning these; (lines 15-24)

Here Donne is consistent in using "shee" to denote the Virgin Mary and he continues to develop the idea of complexities with more "at once"(s) and paradoxes. But a new conjunction is offered from this point; the key is found in the reference to the words on the cross. Catholic

teaching has always indicated that Christ's words: "Woman behold thy son" and "Son behold thy mother" are his authority for the idea of Mary as "figure of the Church" and as mother of all mankind. Max Thurian elaborates on both teachings. He quotes St. Ambrose and comments:

"There is a mystery in the fact that Mary is committed to John, the youngest of the Apostles; and we do not need to accept this with a strange ear . . . for this has to do with the mystery of the Church: formerly united with her ancient people in type, but not effectively, and after having given birth to the Word, and having sown him the bodies and souls of men by faith in the Cross and by burial in the Body of the Lord, she has, by God's command, chosen the society of the youngest people." Mary here appears as a type of the Church which is being detached from Israel in order to adopt the Gentiles, the younger people who are represented by the beloved disciple like John, the young Apostle.³⁹

Following this Thurian quotes Bishop George Nicodemia, who died after 880. Nicodemia preached a sermon on the words of Christ to Mary and John and:

paraphrasing the words of Jesus Christ to His beloved disciple, he continues: "Henceforth, I constitute her (Mary) a guide for the disciples, as a mother not only to thee, but for all the other disciples, and I will that she should be honoured with the full rights of her maternal dignity."⁴⁰

Thurian then quotes a twelfth century sermon on the same text which concludes:

Hence, suffering here truly the pangs of birth . . . in the fashion of her only son, the Blessed Virgin has brought to the world our universal salvation; that is why she is the mother of us all.⁴¹

Mary is thus identified with the Church and when we read "at once receiver and the legacie" we see that not only does Donne refer to the conception of Christ and his death, but also to his gift of mankind to her, and the gift of her to mankind. (This is perhaps not a separate reading of the poem so much as a parallel one; we are reminded of

further implications and conjunctions which are related to the primary one). From this point in the poem the feminine pronouns relate to the Church, but we are again reminded of the conception of Mary as a figure of the Church:

So God by his Church, nearest to him, wee know,
And stand firme, if wee her motion goe; (lines 29-30)

Mary was closest to Christ, both when he was in her womb and when he was on the cross. It is both her example, and the Church's example that we must follow. Line 39 refers to the Church as "His imitating Spouse;" this too is a title ambiguously referred in Catholic teaching to Mary and to the Church. It recalls the expression of St. Augustine:

. . . may Christ help us, the Son of a Virgin, and the Spouse of virgins, born after the flesh of a virgin womb, and wedded after the spirit in a virgin marriage. Whereas, therefore the whole Church itself is a virgin espoused unto one Husband Christ, as the Apostle saith (II Cor. 11:2) of how great honor are its members worthy, who guard this even in the flesh itself, which the whole Church guards in the faith which imitates the mother of her Husband and her Lord.⁴²

The whole poem seems to me to exhibit an enormous complexity of image and allusion which show not only that Donne was aware of Catholic teaching of Mary but also that at this time he followed it to a very large extent. But nearly all the references to Mary are submerged and hidden. Donne seems deliberately to hide them and gives an example (to be repeated in the First Anniversary), of public writing of private thoughts which he wishes to remain private.

The Litanie is a comparatively simple poem. It too is written from a Catholic understanding of Mary's value although Donne wrote to Goodyere:

That by which it will deserve best acceptation, is, that neither the Roman Church need call it defective, because it abhors not the particular mention of the blessed Triumphers

in heaven: nor the Reformed can discreetly accuse it, of attributing more than a rectified devotion ought to doe.⁴³

Gosse comments on it:

The "Litany" is burdened with ingenuity. From a dogmatic point of view it shows Donne still imperfectly divorced from the tenets of Rome. He still proclaims the efficacy of the Virgin Mary's prayers to God the Father for souls on Earth.⁴⁴

Martz goes even further in indicating Donne's Catholic views. After referring to Vaughan's "The Knot" which, he says, "praises the Virgin in terms that openly defy the Puritan by expressing an essentially Catholic view of place in the scheme of things," he continues to say:

The echo of the Communion liturgy in the last stanza is especially daring: such an implicit equation with Christ is exactly the point against which the Reformers directed their attack on Maryolatry. But this is only a more defensive and vehement way of saying what Donne takes for granted in a stanza of his "Litany," adding in the last two lines the doctrine of intercession which Vaughan never quite expresses.⁴⁵

The verse Louis Martz refers us to is this:

For that faire blessed Mother-maid,
Whose flesh redeem'd us; That she-Cherubin,
Which unlock'd Paradise, and made
One claims for innocence, and disseiz'd sinne,
Whose wombe was a strange heav'n, for there
God cloath'd himselfe, and grew,
Our zealous thankes wee poure. As her deeds were
Our helpes, so are her prayers; nor can she sue
In vaine, who hath such titles unto you.

He is quite right in realising the Catholic view which underlies this stanza. But perhaps there is a deeper kind of "knot" than even Vaughan realises in his poem. In this the knot is one of flesh, which leads directly to the intercession in the concluding lines of Donne's verse. The same knot is found in Donne but, again, it is slightly ambiguous. The "mother-maid" flesh that redeemed us could refer to her Son, born

of her flesh -- but it could refer to the doctrine of Mary as co-redemptress. Equally it is ambiguous as to whether it was Mary or Jesus who made "one claime for innocence" and who "unlock'd Paradise." A Protestant could read the poem to mean that Mary provided the key, i.e. Christ, to Paradise, and that her Son was the claim to innocence. But a Catholic could read that she provided the key and by being assumed into Heaven unlocked it herself. He would continue to understand that Mary's was the claim to innocence since she was Immaculately Conceived. The grammar of the sentence slightly more favours the latter interpretation than the former, since "whose wombe" unequivocally relates to Mary. It is through this dual reading that Donne makes the poem acceptable either to the Reformed Church or to the Catholic Church, but here with less ease than in others of his poems does he conceal his still-particularly Catholic view of the Virgin.

But though Donne had some Catholic views at this period it must be repeated that he was not Catholic and indeed was concerned with writing against many aspects of that faith. Walton reports that:

About this time [1609] there grew many disputes that concerned the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance, in which the King had appeared, and engaged himself by his publick writings now extant: and, his Majesty discoursing with Mr. Donne, concerning many of these reasons which are usually urged against the taking of these Oaths; apprehended, such a validity and clearness in his stating the Questions, and his Answers to them, that his Majesty commanded him to bestow some time in drawing the Arguements into a method, and then to write his Answers to them: and, having done that, not to send, but to be his own messenger and bring them to him. To this he presently and diligently applied himself, and, within six weeks brought them to him under his own handwriting, as they be now printed; the book bearing the name of Pseudo-Martyr, printed anno 1610.⁴⁶

There is some doubt as to whether Walton's account is accurate. Gosse

points out that the address to the King in the Epistle Dedicatorie would seem to disprove it and also suggests that it was written in more than six weeks.⁴⁷ I think it not unlikely that it was written in a short space of time -- there is a large and inadequate table of errata, and the last two chapters contained in the table of contents are not included in the book. And, as Gosse shows, it is possible to make a case for the Epistle Dedicatorie's being "only a blind which makes him seem to recommend his treatise, somewhat anxiously to the King's notice." If Walton's account is true or near truth,⁴⁸ then it sheds interesting light on Donne's position. It would indicate that Donne was in high favour at the time and, presumably, would have no difficulty in obtaining a preferment from the King. This in turn would indicate that though centrally concerned with religious matters Donne still felt unwilling, or unable, to take Holy Orders in the Church of England. Indeed Walton continues to say that "When the King had read and considered that Book, he perswaded Mr. Donne to enter into the Ministry; to which at that time he appeared very unwilling." Those that accuse Donne of forsaking integrity for personal ambition in writing the Anniversaries, would do well to realise that Donne refused the King's offer of a Benefice: although his total occupation and preoccupation after 1601 had been religious affairs, he twice refused offers of employment in the Church once even from the King. This would seem to suggest that it was his conscience which guided his actions more than his ambition -- a fact which we have seen that he himself suggests in his letter to Morton refusing the Benefice.

Pseudo-Martyr is centrally aimed at the Jesuits, for whom Donne seems to have developed almost a hatred. He aims bitter sarcasm at them: "Till the Jesuits have a Pope of their own, it will be (I hope) no heresie, to doubt, or call in question their sanctity,"⁴⁹ and on another occasion; "And how much more luxuriant of Miracles would their historie be, if they had not commanded Friar Conrade to doe no more miracles after his death, because he was buried outside their College."⁵⁰ When one remembers that Donne's own uncle had been superior of the Jesuits in England one realises that these attacks have an almost subjective intensity and wonders if there is perhaps some hidden part of his life that they relate to --- perhaps the years between 1587-91, when Grierson suggests that Donne might have been sent to a seminary. Whatever speculation it may provoke Pseudo-Martyr is distinctly defensive in tone:

They who haue descended so lowe, as to take knowledge of me, and to admit me into their consideration, know well that I vsed no inordinate hast, nor precipitation in binding my conscience to any locall Religion. I had a longer work to doe then many other men; for I was first to blot out, certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and to wrestle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken; and some anticipations early layde vpon my conscience, both by Persons who by nature had a power and superiority ouer my will, and others who by their learning and good life, seem'd to me justly to claime an interest for the guiding, and rectifying of mine vnderstanding in these matters. And although I apprehended well enough, that this irresolution not only retarded my fortune, but also bred some scandall, and endangered my spiritual reputation, by laying me open to many mis-interpretations; yet all these respects did not transport me to any violent and sudden determination, till I had, to the measure of my poore wit and iudgement, suruayed and digested the whole body of Diuinity, controuerted betweene ours and the Romane Church.⁵¹

But despite its defensiveness this is a major religious statement by Donne. He seems to have reached the crisis of his period of surveying

all Divinity and for the first time acknowledges how extensive his Catholic indoctrination was. He alludes to his mother, surely, when he speaks of "persons who by their nature had power and superiority over my will." He elaborates slightly more than he did in his letter to Morton the reasons why he has not ended his period of irresolution, despite the scandal it might produce; not only was he uncertain of his own calling, but he had to debate between the Divinities, specifically, of the "Romane," and "our" Church. He "had to blot out certaine impressions of the Romane Religion" -- could some of these impressions be Mariolatry? We have seen that he definitely did have Catholic understanding of Mary, and if it is already given up, then it is only recently surrendered. Though "our" Church is not designated as the Church of England, we presume, from his dedication that this was the Church he meant. This may be deliberately ambiguous, it may actually mean, as I think can be demonstrated to be true for most of his life, that "our" Church may only mean a catholic Church that is not specifically the Roman Catholic Church. At any rate Donne is fast coming down towards a articulate position about his exact religious beliefs. I think it is actually in the First Anniversary that the crisis is expressed, and in the Second Anniversary that its resolution is made clear. The First Anniversary will be fully dealt with in the following chapter; here I shall only show how others have found ^{it} important to an understanding of Donne and of his religious crises, and how some regard The Anniversaries as the culmination of these crises. Moloney says:

The history of Donne's religious vacillation serves . . . as a prelude to the artistic conflict which is the heart of his mystery. Possessed of a mind which inclined strongly towards

both the authoritarian and the dogmatic (there is scarcely a page of the sermons which does not reveal these traits) Donne's tortured attempts at self-conviction in the authenticity of the Anglican position are contradicted by the recurring expressions of doubt in his letters and poems. Even the bitterness of his invectives against Rome, repeated in a manner of one arousing himself to a deliberate frenzy, is inverted proof of the disquiet which afflicted his inner self.⁵²

Martz, concurring, would seem to add that the "heart of the mystery" is to be found in the Anniversaries

Everything we know of Donne indicates that, during the years from his marriage in 1601, down through the time of his ordination in 1615, he was engaging in the most fervent and painful self-analysis, directed towards the problem of his vocation. The crisis and culmination of these efforts, I believe, is represented in the two Anniversaries, both of which . . . may have been written in the year 1611.⁵³

In 1610 Donne met the Drurys, and published Pseudo-Martyr. In 1611, he wrote the First Anniversary, and published it -- it was re-issued with the Second Anniversary the following year. That year Donne was abroad, and on his return he had made up his mind to take Orders. He wrote to Lord Hay, enclosing a letter which was to be forwarded to Lord Rochester, the influential Robert Carr, soon to be Earl of Somerset. To Lord Hay he wrote: "I reserved myself till now, when a resolution of a new course of life and new profession makes me a little more worthy of his knowledge."⁵⁴ To Lord Rochester himself he wrote

MY LORD, -- I may justly fear that your Lordship hath never heard of the name which lies at the bottom of this letter; nor could I come to the boldness of putting his Lordship, who now delivers it, to that office. Yet I have (or flatter myself to have) just excuses of this, and just ground of that ambition. For, having obeyed at last, after much debatement within me, the inspirations (as I hope) of the spirit of God, and resolved to make my profession Divinity; I make account, that I do but tell your Lordship, what God hath told me, which is, that it is in this course, if in any, that my service may be of use to this Church and State. Since then your Lordship's virtues have made you so near the

head in one, and so religious a member of the other, I came to this courage, of thrusting myself thus into your Lordship's presence, both in respect that I was an independent, and disobliged man, towards any other person in this State; and delivered over now (in my resolution) to be a household servant of God.⁵⁵

For various reasons this suit came to nothing and it was not until early in 1615 that Donne was finally ordained, by an old friend, Bishop John King, who had been the chaplain of Sir Thomas Egerton.⁵⁶

After his ordination Donne continued to advance in fortune; in 1616 he was appointed Reader in Divinity at Lincoln's Inn. But in 1617, by an unfortunate coincidence, Anne Donne died, on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15th. This seems to have dispirited Donne greatly. It was around this time that he wrote the last six Holy Sonnets which are alternately full of faith and despair. It seems indisputable that he again felt great doubts about which was the chosen Church of Christ. Gosse says

They seem to prove that after the death of his wife, and his subsequent [sic . . .?] conversion, he hankered after some tenets of the Roman faith, or at least that he still doubted his attitude with regard to them.⁵⁷

But his formal, public, pronouncements, in the Sermons, show that Donne's position was now far from what he had expressed, sometimes half-secretly, in his pre-conversion poems. In a sermon preached at St. Paul's on Christmas day 1624, Donne firmly puts aside any Catholic understanding of the Virgin Mary. It amounts almost to a formal denunciation of his former views and is preached on one of the most significant of the Marian texts, Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and beare a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel." :

Saint Bernard spent his consideration upon three remarkable conjunctions, this Day. First, A Conjunction of God, and Man in one person, Christ Jesus; Then a conjunction of the incompatible Titles, Maid and Mother, in one blessed woman, the blessed Virgin Mary: and thirdly a conjunction of Faith, and Reason of man, that so beleeves, and comprehends those two conjunctions . . .

. . . In the third we have more steps to make; First, what this sign is in generall, it is, that there is a Redeemer given. And then how, thus; First, Virgo concipiet, a Virgin shall conceive, she shall be a Virgin then; And Virgo pariet, a Virgin shall bring forth, she shall be a Virgin then; And Pariet filium, she shall beare a Son, and therefore he is of her substance, not only man but man of her.

Donne continues to establish Mary's perpetual virginity and he teaches the worth of virginity. (Both doctrines, of course, being in full accordance with orthodox Church of England teaching). Then he returns to Mary and establishes that she gave her flesh to Christ that he might be truly a man (as opposed to being as well, co-sufferer and co-redemptress), and that her powers are limited:

Pariet, & pariet filium, she shall bring forth a Son; If a Son then of the substance of his Mother; that the Anabaptists deny; But had it not beene so, Christ had not been true Man, and then, man were yet unredeemed. He is her Son, but not her ward; his Father cannot dye: Her Son, but yet he asked her no leave, to stay at Jerusalem, nor to dispute with the Doctors, nor to goe about his Father's worke: His setting of Religion, his governing the Church, his dispensing of his graces, is not by warrant from her: They that call upon the Bishop of Rome, in that voyce, Impera Regibus, command Kings and Emperors, admit of that voyce, Impera filio, to her, that she should command her Sonne. The naturall obedience of children to Parents, holds not in such civill things, as are publique; A woman may be a Queen-Dowager, and yet a subject; The blessed Virgin Mary may be in a high ranke, and yet no Sovraigne; Blessed art thou amongst women, saies the Angell to her; Amongst women, above women; but not above any person of the Trinity, that she should command her Son. Luther was awake and risen, but he was not readie; Hee had seen light, and looked toward it, but yet saw not so clearely by it, then, when he said, That the blessed Virgin was of a middle condition, betweene Christ, and man; that man hath his conception, and his quickening (by the infusion of the soule) in originall sin; that Christ had it in neither, no sin in

his conception, none in his inanimation, in the infusion of his soule; But, saies Luther, howsoever it were at the conception, 25
 certainly at the inanimation, at the quickening, she was preserved from originall sin. Now what needs this? may I not say, that I had rather be redeemed by Christ Jesus than bee innocent? rather be beholden to Christs death, for my salvation, then to Adams standing in his innocencie? Epiphanius has said enough, 30
Par detrimentum afferunt religioni, they hurt Religion as much, that ascribe too little, to the blessed Virgin, as they who ascribe too much; much is due to her, and this amongst the rest, That she had so cleare notions, above all others, what kind of person, her Son was, that as Adam gave names according 35
 to natures, so the Prophet here, leaves it to her, to name her Son, according to his office, She shall call his name Immanuel. 58

Here Donne finally shows an Anglican realisation of Mary. He implies that she has died in (lines 4-5). He says that she has no special spiritual privileges and that those who allow her them are wrong (lines 5-11). He says that she is emphatically only a subject of God, whatever her earthly position is, and he speaks disparagingly about the earthly position, (lines 11-17). He denies her Immaculate Conception (lines 17-26), and rather defiantly says that he does not want to acknowledge the full unworthiness of man, if the redemption should be shown, by her not needing it, to be only the result of Adam's action (lines 26-29). The reference to Epiphanius (line 30), (if it is not simply the source of the quotation), may be a reference to his overvaluing the Virgin and, as we saw in the previous chapter, his hinting that her worth perhaps prevented her dying. But the conclusion of this paragraph also shows that Donne still held the Virgin in respect and admiration, though to a much more limited extent than is shown in his earlier poems.

Final evidence of Donne's lingering love of the Catholic view of the Virgin Mary is found in his will. At the same time we also

find an unequivocal statement of his religious affiliations:

First I give my good and gracious God an entire sacrifice of body and soul with my most humble thanks for that assurance which His blessed Spirit imprints in me now of the salvation of the one and the resurrection of the other and for that constant and cheerful resolution which the same Spirit established in me to live and die in the religion now professed on the Church of England.

One of the immediately following bequests is:

Item I give to the right honourable Earl of Carlisle the picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary which hangs in the little dining chamber.⁵⁹

Gosse in the extract I have already quoted, suggests that at the time of Anne More's death Donne was agitated into hankering "after some tenets of the Romish Faith." He continues

In this it is probable that he found a sympathiser in Lord Doncaster, and it is not unworthy of notice, that, by a special direction, he bequeathed to that nobleman a picture of the blessed Virgin Mary, which, until the last days of his life hung in his private dining room in the Deanery of St. Paul's. In the early seventeenth century, in England, such pictures were appreciated for their subject more and for their artistic merit less than has since become the fashion. Donne would not have kept forever before his eyes in privacy, and have passed to Lord Doncaster (then Earl of Carlisle), as a peculiar treasure, a painting of the Virgin Mary, unless they both preserved a tender interest in her cult, and were equally out of sympathy with the iconoclastic puritanism of the age in England.

To the end, then, we see that Donne venerated the Virgin Mary in a way that was abnormal in England at that time. To have to give up the Catholic view of her and to follow the attitude of the Reformed Church towards her was a step that to him had major significance, but even so his affections lingered in the tradition of his ancestors.

FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER III)

- ¹John Donne, Pseudo-Martyr (London, 1610), sig A5^r.
- ²Izaak Walton, Life of Doctor John Donne, The Lives of John Donne Sir Henry Wotton Richard Hooker George Herbert & Robert Sanderson (London, 1951), p. 7.
- ³Charles Coffin, John Donne and the New Philosophy (New York, 1958), p. 29.
- ⁴Walton, op. cit., p. 7.
- ⁵Michael Francis Moloney, John Donne, His Flight from Mediaevalism (Illinois, 1944), p. 19.
- ⁶Herbert Grierson, Donne's Poetical Works (Oxford, 1912), II, xvi.
- ⁷Moloney, op. cit., p. 20.
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹Quotes by T. Spencer in his article "Donne and his Age" in A Garland for John Donne, ed. T. Spencer (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), pp. 193-4.
- ¹⁰Grierson, op. cit., II, xvi.
- ¹¹See Grierson, op. cit., II, 115, for punctuation alternatives.
- ¹²Satyre III, pp. 96-7.
- ¹³Moloney, op. cit., pp. 22-4.
- ¹⁴Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne (London, 1899), I, 226.
- ¹⁵John Donne, Sermons, ed. Simpson and Potter (Berkeley, 1955), V, 164.

¹⁶Walton, op. cit., p. 12. See also R. C. Bald, Donne and the Druries (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 76-68.

¹⁷An interesting thought is that this poem was composed the day after the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary; we could therefore consider the years of Donne's religious uncertainty to date exactly ten years -- from this poem, to his celebration in 1611 in the First Anniversary of there being no Feast of the Assumption.

¹⁸Moloney, op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁹Ben Jonson, Works, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford, 1954), I, 136.

²⁰Grierson, op. cit., II, 219 and 70.

²¹Gosse, op. cit., I, 107.

²²Gosse, op. cit., II, 361.

²³Gosse, op. cit., I, 149.

²⁴Moloney, op. cit., p. 29

²⁵Walton, op. cit., p. 16.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 16-17.

²⁷Gosse, op. cit., I, 161.

²⁸Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1954), pp. 218-9.

²⁹Quoted by T. Spencer in his article "Donne and his Age" in A Garland for John Donne, ed. T. Spencer (Gloucester, 1958), pp. 193-4.

³⁰Ibid., p. 194.

³¹Biathanatos, ed. J. W. Hebel (New York, 1930), pp. 17-8.

³²Gosse, op. cit., I, 262-3.

³³Grierson, op. cit., II, 225-9.

- 34 Martz, op. cit., pp. 106-7.
- 35 Ibid., p. 107.
- 36 Helen Gardner, Donne, the Divine Poems (Oxford, 1964), p. 59.
- 37 Sermons, I, 238-9.
- 38 A Complete Mariology (London, 1958), p. 221.
- 39 Max Thurian, Mary Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church (London, 1963), pp. 147-8.
- 40 Ibid., pp. 148-9.
- 41 Ibid., p. 149.
- 42 Henri Daniel-Rops, A Book of Mary (Kingswood, Surrey, 1913), p. 137.
- 43 Grierson, op. cit., II, 239.
- 44 Gosse, op. cit., I, 265.
- 45 Martz, op. cit., pp. 98-9.
- 46 Walton, op. cit., p. 27.
- 47 Gosse, op. cit., I, 246-7.
- 48 See R. C. Bald's essay: "Walton's Life of Donne" in Maclure and Walt (eds.) Essays in English Literature from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age (Toronto, 1964), pp. 73-76, for further details and broad substantiation of this part of Walton's Life.
- 49 Pseudo-Martyr, p. 119.
- 50 Ibid., pp. 126-7.
- 51 Ibid., sig. B2^v-B3^r.
- 52 Moloney, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵³Martz, op. cit., p. 219.

⁵⁴Gosse, op. cit., II, 21.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Moloney, op. cit., p. 40.

⁵⁷Gosse, op. cit., II, 110.

⁵⁸Sermons, op. cit., VI, 182-3. [The numbering of the lines here is, of course, my own enumeration for the purpose of commentary].

⁵⁹Gosse, op. cit., II, 360.

CHAPTER IV

A COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY

The Anniversaries are complex poems. Their full significance lies outside the scope of this thesis; I shall undertake to explore only the central figure "she," who is the occasion for the "Anatomy of the World." We have seen in the first chapter other critical understandings of "She" but now I shall explain why I think that "she" is the Virgin Mary, Donne's Virgin, as we have seen, is a very special figure. With a Catholic understanding he has seen in her a symbol for wisdom and for the Church, and has seen that she had a very special spiritual beauty and power. In a Catholic understanding she is the very highest that man can offer to God. Mary, they considered, though completely human, was worthy of heaven without redemption, indeed she was co-redemptress. As she was completely free of sin she did not die in the normal human sense; she was assumed into Heaven to become its queen. She is therefore an enormous source of human pride. But now, when Donne finally adheres to the Protestant viewpoint and belief, he no longer can find in Mary a symbol of man's inherent worthiness. The doctrine of Original Sin receives its full import; in the very act of procreation we cause sin. This realisation of man's total worthlessness is in the first reaction a revelation of frailty and weakness; Donne realises of man "Oh what a trifle, and poore thing he is!" (First Anniversary, line 170) but now that he has come to terms with man's weakness he can build a positive response based on what he feels is a realistic appraisal of it. In this way Mary's death becomes a symbol of a turning point in Donne's religious

life. In his realisation that she had died, that she was unworthy of God unredeemed, as all men are, he comes to terms with man's inadequacies before God. But equally she still is the best that man can show to God, and from her we can take our best example. In no other interpretation of the poem can death have so much significance for in any other interpretation death is either inevitable and therefore expected, or a metaphorical death, and therefore not an absolute. In this interpretation the death is a metaphysical, intellectual and actual truth. It is an actual death but it is, or was, unexpected and its occurrence is caused by, and concurrent with, a new and realistic appraisal of the nature of man. In this interpretation "she" can support all that could be said of anyone. As Donne wrote to George Gerrard referring to Elizabeth Drury as the gentlewoman:

. . . but for the other part of the imputation of having said too much, by defence is that my purpose was to say as well as I could; for since I never saw the gentlewoman I cannot be understood to have bound myself to have spoken just truths, but I would not be thought to have gone about to praise her or any other in rhyme; except I took such a person as might be capable of all that I could say.¹

Mary as she was understood in Catholic veneration is the only person who might be capable of all that Donne could say. Catholics allowed her to be praised in terms usually applied only to God. Even when her death is realised and she is seen from a Protestant understanding she can be praised in the highest terminology applicable to man. I will comment on the First Anniversary to show where she is implied, referred to or described, and I will paraphrase to show how this understanding of the poem makes it a cogent whole, without extravagances or hyperbole, well constructed and held together by this central and consistent image. For clarity I will examine the poem in the sections discovered and

defined by Louis Martz.²

Introduction, 1-90. The world is sick, "yea, dead, yea putrified," since she, its "intrinsique balme" and "preservative," it's prime example of virtue, is dead.

When that rich soule which to her Heauen is gone,
 Whom all they celebrate, who know they haue one,
 (For who is sure he hath a soule, vnlesse
 It see, and Iudge, and follow worthinesse,
 And by Deedes praise it? He who doth not this, 5
 May lodge an In-mate soule, but tis not his.)
 When that Queene ended here her progresse time,
 And, as t'her standing house, to heauen did clymbe,
 Where, loth to make the Saints attend her long,
 Shee's now a part both of the Quire, and Song, 10
 This world, in that great earth-quake languished;
 For in a common Bath of teares it bled,
 Which drew the strongest vitall spirits out:
 But succour'd then with a perplexed doubt,
 Whether the world did loose or gaine in this, 15
 (Because since now no other way there is
 But goodnes, to see her, whom all would see,
 All must endeuour to be good as shee,)
 This great consumption to a feuer turn'd,
 And so the world had fits; it ioy'd, it mournd. 20
 And, as men thinke, that Agues physicke are,
 And th'Ague being spent, giue ouer care,
 So thou, sicke world, mistak'st thy selfe to bee
 Well, when alas, thou'rt in a Letargee.
 Her death did wound, and tame thee than, and than 25
 Thou mightst haue better spar'd the Sunne, or Man;
 That wound was deepe, but 'tis more misery,
 That thou hast lost thy sense and memory.
 T'was heauy then to heare thy voyce of mone,
 But this is worse, that thou art speechlesse growne. 30
 Thou hast forgot thy name, thou hadst; thou wast
 Nothing but she, and her thou has o'repast.
 For as a child kept from the Font, vntill
 A Prince, expected long, come to fulfill
 The Ceremonies, thou vnam'd hadst laid, 35
 Had not her comming, thee her Palace made:
 Her name defin'd thee, gaue thee forme and frame,
 And thou forgetst to celebrate thy name.
 Some moneths she hath beene dead (but being dead,
 Measures of times are all determind) 40
 But long shee'ath beene away, long, long, yet none
 Offers to tell vs who it is that's gone.
 But as in states doubtfull of future heyres,
 When sickenes without remedy, empayres
 The present Prince, they're loth it should be said, 45

The Prince doth languish, or the Prince is dead:
 So mankind feeling now a generall thaw,
 A strong example gone equall to law,
 The Gyment which did faithfully compact
 And glue all vertues, now resolu'd, and slack'd, 50
 Thought it some blasphemy to say sh'was dead;
 Or that our weakenes was discovered
 In that confession; therefore spoke no more
 Then tongues, the scule being gone, the losse deplore.
 But though it be too late to succour thee, 55
 Sicke world, yea dead, yea putrified, since shee
 Thy'ntrinsique Balme, and thy preseruatiue,
 Can neuer be renew'd, thou neuer liue,
 I (since no man can make thee liue) will trie,
 What we may gaine by thy Anatomy. 60
 Her death hath taught vs dearely, that thou art
 Corrupt and mortall in thy purest part.
 Let no man say, the world it selfe being dead,
 'Tis labour lost to haue discovered
 The worlds infirmities, since there is none 65
 Aliue to study this dissectione;
 For there's a kind of world remaining still,
 Though shee which did inanimate and fill
 The world, be gone, yet in this last long night,
 Her Ghost doth walke; that is, a glimmering light, 70
 A faint weake loue of vertue and of good
 Reflects from her, on them which vnderstood
 Her worth; And though she haue shut in all day,
 The twi-light of her memory doth stay;
 Which, from the carcasse of the old world, free, 75
 Creates a new world; and new creatures be
 Produc'd: The matter and the stufte of this,
 Her vertue, and the forme our practise is.
 And though to be thus Elemented, arme
 These Creatures, from hom-borne intrinsique harme, 80
 (For all assum'd vnto this Dignitee,
 So many weedlesse Paradises bee,
 Which of themselues produce no venemous sinne,
 Except some forraine Serpent bring it in)
 Yet, because outward stormes the strongest breake, 85
 And strength it selfe by confidence growes weake,
 This new world may be safer, being told
 The dangers and diseases of the old:
 For with due temper men do then forgoe,
 Or couet things, when they their true worth know. 90

From the first the "scule" is described in the highest terms. It is rich and its worthiness is so apparent that it is described in absolute terms of its faculties. (As Manley points out the three traditional

faculties of the soul are memory, will and understanding, the capacity to see, to judge and to follow).³

Mary is highly venerated, at least by Donne, whether she is believed to have been assumed into heaven or to have died. Although Mary is indubitably in Heaven in the way that all saints are: in spirit and earth, Donne's earth, nevertheless is a changed place in his apprehension. The change in apprehension is one of being conscious of the full import of Original Sin. Now he realises that if all men suffer Original Sin then the power of the words in Genesis are reinforced; God said to Eve "I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions, in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children" (Gen. 2:16) Manley shows that "Original Sin was traditionally described as languour,"⁴ and he shows the earthquake (line 11) is related to the earthquake at Christ's death. We can take this reference to be a further indication of Mary for since in Catholic belief Mary was a partner in the events of the crucifixion, it is a reminder of this previous understanding of her nature. Thus lines 11-12 are a clear statement of the full import of the reinforced understanding of Original Sin. The world "languishes" in a "common Bath of teares;" it is as it was foretold in Genesis, and it is "common" because now we realise that everyone shares it. There is also a parallel with the Passion and Mary's sharing in it. Now that she can no longer be understood as co-redemptress and sharer of the Passion she becomes part of the "common" bath of teares with us, and not part of Christ's bloody tears in the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest. Lines 15-18 show where there is a positive good to be gained from an understanding that Mary has died.

"Now" no other way there is, indicates that before there was -- Mary was thought to be able to be assumed into heaven because she was free from sin and therefore it was only the accident of sin that caused death. When it was believed that Mary had not died then it was clear that the only entrance to heaven was not through death. Now that it is clear in his understanding that she has died then it is seen that death is essential before we can see heaven, and that sin is no accident. She was the best example of human worth nevertheless, so we must follow her example to gain heaven. The following lines (19-24) perhaps refer to the Protestant reaction to Catholic mariology. In their first reaction they were extreme in denouncing the corruptness of Catholic pride in believing in the Assumption. (We have seen in Chapter II, Bishop Cosin's commentary on the prayer book's omission of the Assumption). Similarly, Luther commented on Catholic veneration in words that were surely meant to be shocking to anyone retaining any vestige of Catholic outlook on Mary:

He blames those who honour her because they make an "idol" of her. To honour her properly, she should be "stripped completely of everything and only be regarded in her nothingness, afterwards we should admire the overwhelming grace of God who looks so graciously on such a lowly, worthless human being."⁵

In other words the Reformers, seeing their health in abandoning false pride, forgot to realise the full implications of their complete acceptance of man's lowly state. They had too much pride in their humility, so that their healthy apprehension was in itself a sickness, as they forgot that their apprehension was of sickness. But "thou sicke world" is perhaps also an address to himself. In a different sense he too is struck by a sickness in his revaluation of Mary. He

finds it too difficult to relinquish his own pride and fully to estimate the worthlessness of all mankind. Line 26 is not a literal truth, but a description of his reaction; Manley points out in his note that "Original Sin was traditionally described as a wound;"⁶ it is his broken pride in being forced to accept Original Sin that might "have better spared the Sunne, or Manne." Understanding of the infinite worthlessness of man might have been part of Donne's extreme depression over the years previous to his writing of the Anniversaries. Lines 27-33 might be a description of his depression and might be paraphrased thus: The Concept of Original Sin and man's worthlessness seems indeed to be overwhelming; but that you should be overcome by this and abandon hope is worse than your reaction should be; the only redeeming factor in mankind was, you believed, Mary; but now we discover that even this was a false hope. Implicit in this paraphrase is an understanding that there is a better way, a positive way, that one must now adopt. The rest of the poem indicates which way this is to be. Manley makes extensive comments to show that this passage is about the "word," a form of wisdom.⁷ All he says may be perfectly relevant to this theme, for Mary is widely equated with wisdom in Catholic theology. But that it should refer to Donne's state of mind over the previous years is further substantiated by comparing this passage with his letter written to Goodyere in 1609:

. . . I would faine do something; but that I cannot tell what, is no wonder. For to chuse is to do: but to be no part of any body, is to be nothing. At most the greatest persons are but great wens, and excresences; men of wit and delightfull conversation, but as moalls for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world, that they contribute to the sustenation of the whole. . . . to this hour I am nothing or so little, that I am scarce subject

and arguement good enough for one of mine own letters: yet I fear, that doth not ever proceed from a good root, that I am so well content to be lesse, that is dead.⁸

The sentence in lines 33-38 is less easy to paraphrase or explain. Perhaps here Donne is employing the alternating pronoun as we have seen he has done in The Annunciation and Passion, and perhaps also in La Corona. The problem is with the "thou's;" if the "thou" in this sentence is consistent with the "thou" in the previous one, then it is still the world, or more probably Donne's world, or Donne. In this case the sentence can be paraphrased in this way: In the lethargy from which you were suffering the only indication of the worth of mankind was to be found in the Virgin Mary, in her you found your definition, your name, your pride in your state; now you are unable to celebrate her and so forget your own definition. But there is a strong indication that "thou," in the early part of the passage is Christ, and in the later part the Church. In a sermon preached at St. Paul's on Christmas Day 1624, (from which I have already quoted in the previous chapter) Donne says:

. . . they hurt Religion as much, that ascribe too little to the Blessed Virgin, as they who ascribe too much; much is due to her and this amongst the rest, That she had so cleare notions, above all others, what kind of person her son was, that as Adam gave names according to natures, so the Prophet here leaves it to her, to name her son according to his office.⁹

Thus line 37 might be a reference to Mary's naming Christ, in which case the early "thou" is Christ. In opposition to Christ, perhaps "thou hast forgot thy name thou hast" is referred to the Church. But this interpretation is so cumbersome that it seems unlikely.

Lines 38-42 are perhaps the explanation by Donne as to why he

is writing this poem in this particular way. He explains that "shee" has been dead for a long period of time that, "being dead, measures of time are all determined." Anyone who wished to believe the poem was all about Elizabeth Drury would take this to be a simple enough poetical device to explain the loss, but it could actually be a simple statement that the poem is not about Elizabeth Drury's death at all, but one who died long before. In any case it strongly suggests an understanding of a death that is far from the mere physical concept of death. It is none now that offers to tell us "who it is that's gone." Donne sees no evidence in Reformed theology of a full understanding of the weakness of mankind that is revealed by understanding that its best member was totally unworthy of heaven.

The following lines are central to the poem, both in its interpretation and construction. Much has been written in interpretation of them but here is my paraphrase: mankind thought it was blasphemy and were reluctant to admit that she had died; all religious guidance seemed to have been loosed and slacked in the Reformation, one person said one thing and another another; the only constant thing was her example, which was so positively right that it was equal to law; in this they were like some state which having no heir is reluctant to admit that the present Prince is dying or dead; that is, seeing nowhere positive to turn for example they were unwilling to allow that their perfect example was in fact imperfect. Here "mankind" is more probably again Donne's mankind, or Donne himself. The use of words such as "languishing," again reminds us of Original Sin. Perhaps lines 52-4 are a reference to the Acts of the Apostles 2:4. The description is

of the disciples receiving the Holy Ghost: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." Thus mankind, in being unwilling to acknowledge that their weakness was discovered "spoke no more then tongues," not as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. Perhaps the "soule" here is the Holy Ghost, God's true and literal inspiration. (Literal, because in the Acts of the Apostles he came as the wind). These lines then, are central because it is here that Donne almost explicitly refers to the Reformation and changing ideas, to his own difficulty in adapting and to his fault therein. It leads to the next section which is the clear definition of his intention in writing the First Anniversary. Here he states that the world is dead, (with Original Sin), and it can never be cured with life. It is dead since only by dying can it recover health. It is totally dead since Mary who had been thought to be able to be alive, even she, is dead. She is "thy intrinsique balme and thy preseruatiue" -- this is a direct reference to part of the liturgy of the Roman Church which is applied to Mary. Ecclesiasticus 24:20 is: "I gave a sweet smell like cinamon, and aromatical balm: I yielded a sweet odour like the best myrrh." This verse is applied to Mary in numerous places in the liturgy and is one of the texts most often applied to her. We find it in The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a lesson and as an often repeated Antiphon, and as an Antiphon for the first Nocturn in the Breviary's Common of the Virgin Mary. It is also the concluding verse of the Lesson for the feast of the Assumption. Mary is mankind's balm and preservative (myrrh is a preservative) because she bore Jesus, who

redeemed mankind, and also, in Catholic Doctrine, because she is the best example of mankind, since God accepts her without a personal redemption. This text from Ecclesiasticus is directly referring to Wisdom and Manley gives further notes as to Donne's use of the word in his sermons.¹⁰ Donne continues to show that he is showing "what we may gain by thy [the world's] anatomy." The metaphor of dissection and anatomy is one that he also uses in Pseudo-Martyr where he says:

. . . The Reformers . . . offered to disect and anatomise the whole Church, and thought to fill every veine, and restore and rectify every Sprane and dislocation, and to take off every Mole, and paine away every Wemme, and to alter even the fashion of her clothes . . .¹¹

Thus in the First Anniversary he is clearly aligning himself with the "Reformers" but at the same time he is trying to be constructive, to learn what we may realise from an understanding of Mary's death and our complete worthlessness in all mankind's sharing in Original Sin. Using this metaphor he indicates that The First Anniversary is a poem about what may be gained from a religious reformation. The sentence in lines 61-62 is ambiguous; it is a perfect example of Donne's ability to say two completely different things in the same words. On the one hand he is saying "we see that by her (being able to suffer) death the she, the purest part of mankind is corrupt and mortal." But equally he is referring to each man's soul and is saying "Understanding her corruption we realise forcibly that the very soul of every man is corrupt." In the Litanie he has described Mary as:

That she--Cherubim
Whose flesh redeemed us, and made
One claim for innocence, and disseiz'd sin,

Here it is unequivocally one claim; she was the only one who could

claim innocence; therefore is our purest part. But in Pseudo-Martyr he refers to his conscience as the purest part of his mind:

. . . But either they will transferre my personall weakness upon the cause, or extend the faults of my person to my minde, or to her purest part, my conscience.¹²

The mind is the being but not the soul, the conscience is part of the soul: therefore Donne is saying that the purest part of him is the soul. In both understandings of lines 61-2 the implications are the same: they indicate mankind's basic corruptness; but the actual meaning is ambiguous.

From line 67 to the end of the introduction we are told, as the note at the side of the text says: "What life the World has still." Though Mary was imperfect, though she is not an absolute in terms of human worth, still she is our best example. Her light is eclipsed but "the twi-light of her memory doth stay," and we must adjust our understanding of her worth and our worth to make the best of it through her, still best, example. In line 76, "the new world," as Manley points out, is the "traditional paradise within." Manley also indicates that lines 79-84 are a reference to the pre-lapsarian state.¹³ Its meaning indicates that Donne has still not wholly given up the Romanistic idea that (as shown by Catholic veneration of Mary as being free from Original Sin) man does not wholly suffer Original Sin through his own fault. The lines mean that Mary's example can preserve us from all Actual Sin -- that anyone free of Actual Sin is only poisoned by Original Sin which was originally brought in by "some forraine Serpent" in the Garden of Eden. The concluding lines of the introduction state, again, that man has much to learn by a positive realisation of his worth, and

that this is the best way to go through life.

Section I, 91-190: "how poore a trifling thing man is."

1. Meditation, 91-170. Because of Original Sin man has decayed in length of life, in physical size, in mental capacity.
2. Eulogy, 171-82. The girl was perfect virtue; she purified herself and had a purifying power over all.
3. Refrain and Moral, 183-90. Our only hope is in religion.

There is no health: Physitians say that we
 At best, enioy, but a neutralitee.
 And can there be worse sicknesse, then to know
 That we are neuer well, nor can be so?
 We are borne ruinous: poore mothers crie, 95
 That children come not right, nor orderly,
 Except they headlong come, and fall vpon
 An ominous precipitation.
 How witty's ruine? how importunate
 Vpon mankinde? It labour'd to frustrate 100
 Euen Gods purpose; and made woman, sent
 For mans reliefe, cause of his languishment.
 They were to good ends, and they are so still,
 But accessory, and principall in ill.
 For that first mariage was our funerall: 105
 One woman at one blow, then kill'd vs all,
 And singly, one by one, they kill vs now.
 We doe delightfully our selues allow
 To that consumption; and profusely blinde,
 We kill our selues, to propagate our kinde. 110
 And yet we doe not that; we are not men:
 There is not now that mankinde, which was then
 When as the Sunne, and man, did seeme to striue,
 (Ioynt tenants of the world) who should suruiue.
 When Stag, and Rauen, and the long-liu'd tree, 115
 Compar'd with man, dy'de in minoritee.
 When, if a slow-pac'd starre had stolne away
 From the obseruers marking, he might stay
 Two or three hundred yeares to see't againe,
 And then make vp his obseruation plaine; 120
 When, as the age was long, the sise was great:
 Marsgrouth confess'd, and recompenc'd the meat:
 So spacious and large, that euery soule
 Did a faire Kingdome, and large Realme controule:
 And when the very stature thus erect, 125
 Did that soule a good way towards Heauen direct.
 Where is this mankind now? who liues to age,
 Fit to be made Methusalem his page?
 Alas, we scarse liue long enough to trie
 Whether a new made clocke runne right, or lie. 130

Old Grandsires talke of yesterday with sorrow,
 And for our children we reserue to morrow.
 So short is life, that euery peasant striues,
 In a torne house, or field, to haue three liues.
 And as in lasting, so in length is man 135
 Contracted to an inch, who was a span.
 For had a man at first, in Forrests stray'd,
 Or shipwrack'd in the Sea, one would haue laid
 A wager that an Elephant, or Whale
 That met him, would not hastily assaile 140
 A thing so equall to him: now alas,
 The Fayries, and the Pignies well may passe
 As credible; mankind decayes so soone,
 We're scarce our Fathers shadowes cast at noone.
 Onely death addes t'our length: nor are we growne 145
 In stature to be men, till we are none.
 But this were light, did our lesse volume hold
 All the old Text; or had we chang'd to gold
 Their siluer; or dispos'd into lesse glas,
 Spirits of vertue, which then scattred was. 150
 But 'tis not so: w'are not retir'd, but damp't;
 And as our bodies, so our mindes are cramp't:
 'Tis shrinking, not close-weauing, that hath thus,
 In minde and body both bedwarfed vs.
 We seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'vndoe; 155
 Of nothing he made vs, and we striue too,
 To bring our selues to nothing backe; and we
 Do what we can, to do't so soone as hee.
 With new diseases on our selues we warre,
 And with new phisicke, a worse Engin farre. 160
 Thus man, this world Vice-Emperor, in whom
 All faculties, all graces are at home;
 And if in other Creatures they appeare,
 They're but mans ministers, and Legats there,
 To worke on their rebellions, and reduce 165
 Them to Ciuility, and to mans vse.
 This man, whom God did wooe, and loth t'attend
 Till man came vp, did downe to man descend,
 This man, so great, that all that is, is his,
 Oh what a trifle, and poore thing he is! 170
 If man were any thing, he's nothing now:
 Helpe, or at least some time to wast, allow
 T'his other wants, yet when he did depart
 With her, whom we lament, he lost his hart.
 She, of whom th'Auncients seem'd to prophesie, 175
 When they call'd vertues by the name of shee,
 She in whom vertue was so much refin'd,
 That for Allay vnto so pure a minde
 Shee tooke the weaker Sex, she that could driue
 The poysonous tincture, and the stayne of Eue. 180

Out of her thoughts, and deeds; and purifie
 All, by a true religious Alchimy;
 Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
 Thou knowest how poore a trifling thing man is.
 And learn'st thus much by our Anatomie, 185
 The heart being perish'd, no part can be free.
 And that except thou feed (not banquet) on
 The supernaturall food, Religion,
 Thy better Growth growes withered, and scant;
 Be more then man, or thou'rt lesse then an Ant. 190

The meditation is a straightforward enough evaluation of the results of Original Sin. The extended conceit on "die" and the "labour" of birth is indicative of Donne's (overly) pessimistic view of man's corruption from his very conception. It is interesting to note how this attitude, together with an apprehension of woman as being "cause of (man's) languishment," and "the weaker sex" is carried on and developed in Paradise Lost. The apprehension of the import of Original Sin is an essential seventeenth century concept. In Paradise Lost Sin is the mother of Death and it is this understanding which underlies Donne's realisation that in celebrating Mary's death we celebrate the sin of all mankind. The "first marriage was our funerall," and "one woman at one blow, then kill'd vs all" because Eve killed us all first by committing Original Sin and then by mothering all mankind. Every conception is the cause of sin.

The rest of the Meditation is a study of the effects of Original Sin. The only death that could result in a revaluation of Original Sin is the death of one who had been believed to be free of it, and who is now therefore seen not to be. There is no other member of mankind who was even remotely believed by anyone ever to have been free from all sin. If Donne were celebrating the death of Wisdom, as Manley asserts, the whole concept of Wisdom can be linked with the Roman

Catholic viewpoint of Mary, and the Reformer's viewpoint of Original Sin's omnipresence. Wisdom has had no death in a point of time, only a decay concurrent with the effects of Original Sin.

In the notes to his edition of Donne's poetry Shawcross refers the "Old Text" of line 148: "Such as Wisdom's words in the Bible, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watcheth daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.' For who so findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Proverbs viii 34:36). This text, of course, is one of the Marian texts in the Liturgy.¹⁴ When we come to the Eulogy we see that Dome is clearly referring to Mary, nothing, or nobody else fits its references as exactly.

"If man were any thing, he's nothing now" -- that is, if man were thought to be anything, he is nothing now that we realise that mankind's purest part is corrupt too. "His hart" can refer, again, either to Mary, or to the innermost part of him; it is through realising Mary's corruptness that he realises how corrupt his heart is too. The following lines (175-6) refer to the habit of the Roman Liturgy of applying the words of the prophets, psalms, and soon to Mary. We have seen in Chapter II, some extravagant texts applied to Mary. In the Challoner edition of the Douai Bible the Canticle of Canticles is prefaced with this note:

This BOOK is called the CANTICLE OF CANTICLES, that is to say, — the most excellent of all Canticles: because it is full of high mysteries, relating to the happy union of Christ with his spouse; which is here begun by love; and is to be eternal in Heaven. The spouse of Christ is the Church: more especially as to the

happiest part of it, viz. perfect souls, every one of which is his beloved; but, above all others, the immaculate and ever-blessed virgin-mother.

Line 179 can clearly be related to Mary, for in a sermon preached at Whitehall on April 21st 1616 Donne said:

I know the Fathers are frequent in comparing and paralleling Eve, the Mother of Man, and Mary the Mother of God. But, God forbid any should say, That the Virgin Mary concurred to our good, so, as Eve did to our ruine . . . It may be said; That by one woman sin entred, and death, . . . But it cannot be said, in that sense, or that manner, that by one woman innocence entred, and life: The Virgin Mary had not the same interest in our salvation, as Eve had in our destruction; nothing that she did entred into that treasure, that ransom that redeemed us. She, more than any other woman, and many other blessed women since, have done many things for advancing the glory of God, and imitation of others. . . .¹⁵

This is of great importance for it can be directly related to what Donne is doing in the First Anniversary: he is recording his change of attitude from the former point of view to the latter. He accepts a parallel but now, as we saw at the beginning of the sentence (line 175), much of the apprehension that went with it before "seem'd" to be so; it was then but it is not now. (The "seem'd" is understood for the latter part of the sentence). Lines 179-182 are perhaps also a direct reference to the hymn Ave Maris Stella, a hymn which John Julian in his Dictionary of Hymnology says has been used in the Roman Church since before the fourteenth century.¹⁶ Dryden is suggested to have translated verses two and three in this way:

Whilst we this Ave thus to thee
From Gabriel's Mouth rehearse;
Prevail that peace our Lot may be
And Eva's name reverse.

Release our long entangl'd Mind
From all the snares of ill;
With heav'nly light instruct the Blind,
And all our Vows fulfill.¹⁷

We can see that Donne almost seems to be reading these lines as he writes the First Anniversary. Remembering her virtue as shown in Catholic liturgy, the force of the loss is realised and "Shee, shee is dead" is the climax of the loss. Again he says that we must discover our weakness and purify ourselves as best we can be her example, by a "true religious alchemy." Though he relinquishes the idea of her perfection he still realises that her imperfection is the best example that we have. In the next section we will discover more of the imperfections in the Anatomy of the World:

Section II, 191-246: "how lame a cripple this world is."

1. Meditation, 191-218. The "universall frame" has received injury from the sin of the Angels, and now in universe, in state, in family, " 'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone."
2. Eulogy, 219-36: Only this girl possessed the power which might have unified the world.
3. Refrain and Moral, 237-46. Contemn and avoid this sick world.

Then, as mankinde, so is the worlds whole frame
 Quite out of ioynt, almost created lame:
 For, before God had made vp all the rest,
 Corruption entred, and deprau'd the best:
 It seis'd the Angels, and then first of all 195
 The world did in her Cradle take a fall,
 And turn'd her braines, and tooke a generall maine
 Wronging each ioynt of th'vniuersall frame.
 The noblest part, man, felt it first; and than
 Both beasts and plants, curst in the curse of man. 200
 So did the world from the first houre decay,
 The euening was beginning of the day,
 And now the Springs and Sommers which we see,
 Like somes of women after fifty bee.
 And new Philosophy calls all in doubt, 205
 The Element of fire is quite put out;
 The Sunne is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
 Can well direct him, where to looke for it.
 And freely men confesse, that this world's spent,
 When in the Planets, and the Firmament 210
 They seeke so many new; they see that this
 Is crumbled out againe to his Atomis.
 'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
 All iust supply, and all Relation:

Prince, Subiect, Father, Some, are things forgot, 215
 For euery man alone thinkes he hath got
 To be a Phoenix, and that there can bee
 None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.
 This is the worlds condition now, and now
 She that should all parts to reunion bow, 220
 She that had all Magnetique force alone,
 To draw, and fasten sundred parts in one;
 She whom wise nature had inuented then
 When she obseru'd that euery sort of men
 Did in their voyage in this worlds Sea stray, 225
 And needed a new compasse for their way;
 Shee that was best, and first originall
 Of all faire copies; and the generall
 Steward to Fate; shee whose rich eyes, and brest,
 Guilt the West Indies, and perfum'd the East; 230
 Whose hauing breath'd in this world, did bestow
 Spice on those Isles, and bad them still smell so,
 And that rich Indie which doth gold interre,
 Is but a single money, coyn'd from her:
 She to whom this world must it selfe refer, 235
 As Suburbs, or the Microcosme of her,
 Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowst this,
 Thou knowst how lame a cripple this world is.
 And learnst thus much by our Anatomy,
 That this worlds generall sicknesse doth not lie 240
 In any humour, or one certaine part;
 But, as thou sawest it rotten at the hart,
 Thou seest a Hectique feuer hath got hold
 Of the whole substance, not to be contrould,
 And that thou hast but one way, not t'admit 245
 The worlds infection, to be none of it.

Manley suggests that "shee" is wisdom but he has not noticed or noted
 the significance of the text as a proof of his argument. In the breviary
 the Little Chapter at Lauds for the Feast of the Conception of Our Lady
 is Proverbs 8, 22-24. The text describes wisdom, but the church applies
 this to Mary:

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he
 made any thing from the beginning. I was set up from eternity,
 and of old, before the earth was made. The depths were not as
 yet, and I was already conceived, neither had the fountains of
 waters as yet sprung out.

This, and the next eleven verses, as I have noted in the second chapter,

is also the lesson for the Mass of the Feast of the Conception. It can be distinctly related to lines 192-6. If we believe that Mary was not immaculately conceived then we see, that if this text is to apply to her, corruption entered "before God had made up the rest." Martz's précis in this instance seems inaccurate. Corruption entered with the Angels and not from the Angels. If we are to adopt the application of the words from Proverbs and simultaneously realise that Mary was conceived with Original Sin, then we see that corruption entered with Mary, who was conceived before the world was and presumably therefore at the same time as the Angels. (Note the interesting play on "conceive" -- the thought 'conception' and the physical 'conception' are treated as meaning the same). The next lines are a simple enough reference to the Garden of Eden and the curse of God in Genesis. There follows a reference, probably, to the state of "new Philosophy" about which Charles Coffin has written extensively in his book John Donne and the New Philosophy. It is in lines 220-235, the Eulogy, where we are again expressly reminded of Mary. Once again Donne shows that he is aware of the hymn "Ave Maris Stella." This is its first verse, and what is suggested to be Dryden's translation:

Ave Maris stella
 Dei Mater alma
 Atque semper Virgo
 Felix coeli porta.

Bright Mother of our Maker, hail
 Thou Virgin ever blest,
 The Ocean's star, by which we sail
 And gain the Port of Rest.¹⁸

This is exactly the same image as Donne employs in lines 221-6. In the hymn Quem terra pontus sidera, which Julian traces to eleventh-

century manuscripts¹⁹ and which is used in the liturgy for the Purification and for the Common Feasts of the Virgin Mary we find this verse: (This is the translation given in the Roman Missal)

O Mother blest! to whom was given
 Within thy compass to contain
 The Architect of earth and Heaven
 Whose hands the Universe sustain.

This again uses the same images as this section of the First Anniversary. Mary possessed the "Magnetique force . . . to draw, and faste sundred parts in one" through the virtues which she was believed to possess in Catholic belief, and through the physical fact of having carried the Son of God in her womb. Mary is the only person to whom the words "best and first originall" could be applied. In lesson v in the Nocturn for the Common of the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary we find these words from a sermon of St. John Chry. . . . stom

The blessed Mary . . . was in truth a great wonder. For what greater or more wonderful one has ever at any time been discovered, or can at any time be discovered? She alone is greater far than heaven and earth. What is holier than she? . . . in truth no creature whatever, whether visible or invisible, is to be found greater or more excellent than she.

She is the "steward to Fate" because she has such favour with God. Her "rich eyes and brest" are reminiscent of the Canticle of Canticles, where the beloved is frequently described in such terms. The extended image of the perfumed breath is again from Ecclesiasticus 24:20. Here the image is extended in verses 21 and 24.

And I perfumed my dwelling as a storax, and galbanum, and onyx, and aloes, and as the frankincense not cut, and my odour is as the purest balm.

As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour: and my flowers are the fruit of honour and riches.

In the same way as Ecclesiasticus goes on to mention riches, so Donna

continues his image to include them. His reference to her worth seems to refer us again to Proverbs 8, this time to verses 18-21. This is from the lesson ii for the Common of Feasts of the Virgin Mary.

With me are riches and glory, glorious riches and justice.
 For my fruit is better than gold and the precious stone,
 and by blossoms than choice silver.
 I walk in the way of justice, in the midst of the path of judgement.
 That I may enrich them that love me, and may fill their treasures.

When we think of Mary in these terms then we can easily see how the world should regard itself as her suburbs, or microcosm. And realising her in these terms we can well imagine the impact of her too being sinful and dead. The world's sickness (that is, Original Sin) is indeed general. If it were to spare any member then it would spare her. But it has not and we can see the strength of the fever of sickness. The only way to avoid the sickness is not to be part of humanity. This line (246) is an odd touch of humour at such a serious part of the poem. But it is 'black' humour, and serves to emphasise the now discovered rigidity of the doctrine of Original Sin. We continue in Section III to discover how black and ugly the world is discovered to be.

Section III, 247-338: "how ugly a monster this world is."

1. Meditation, 247-304. Proportion, the prime ingredient of beauty, no longer exists in the universe.
2. Eulogy 205-34. The girl was the "measure of all symmetric" and harmony.
3. Refrain and Moral, 325-38. Human acts must be done "fitly and in proportion."

For the worlds subtilst immateriall parts
 Feele this consuming wound, and ages darts.
 For the worlds beauty is decayd, or gone,
 Beauty, that's colour, and proportion.
 We thinke the heauens enjoy their Sphericall
 Their round proportion embracing all.
 But yet their various and perplexed course,
 Obseru'd in diuers ages doth enforce

Men to find out so many Eccentrique parts, 255
 Such diuers downe-right lines, such ouerthwarts,
 As disproportion that pure forme. It teares
 The Firmament in eight and fortie sheeres [shares],
 And in those constellations there arise
 New starres, and old do vanish from our eyes: 260
 As though heau'n suffred earth-quakes, peace or war,
 When new Townes rise, and olde demolish'd are.
 They haue empayld within a Zodiake
 The free-borne Sunne, and keepe twelue signes awake
 To watch his steps; the Goat and Crabbe controule, 265
 And fright him backe, who els to eyther Pole,
 (Did not these Tropiques fetter him) might runne:
 For his course is not round; nor can the Sunne
 Perfit a Circle, or maintaine his way
 One inche direct; but where he rose to day 270
 He comes no more, but with a cousening line,
 Steales by that point, and so is Serpentine:
 And seeming weary with his reeling thus,
 He meanes to sleepe, being now falne nearer vs.
 So, of the stares which boast that they do runne 275
 In Circle still, none ends where he begunne.
 All their proportion's lame, it sinks, it swels.
 For of Meridians, and Parallels,
 Man hath weau'd out a net, and this net throwne
 Vpon the Heauens, and now they are his owne. 280
 Loth to goe vp the hill, or labor thus
 To goe to heauen, we make heauen come to vs.
 We spur, we raine the stars, and in their race
 They're diuersly content t'obey our pace.
 But keepe the earth her round proportion still? 285
 Doth not a Tenarif, or higher Hill
 Rise so high like a Rocke, that one might thinke
 The floating Moone would shipwracke there, and sink?
 Seas are so daepe, that Whales being strooke to day,
 Perchance to morrow, scarce at middle way 290
 Of their wish'd iourneys end, the bottom, dye.
 And men, to sound depths, so much line vntie,
 As one might iustly thinke, that there would rise
 At end thereof, one of th'Antipodies:
 If vnder all, a Vault infernall be, 295
 (Which sure is spacious, except that we
 Inuent another torment, that there must
 Millions into a strait hote roome be thrust)
 Then solidnes, and roundnes haue no place.
 Are these but warts, and pock-holes in the face 300
 Of th'earth? Thinke so: But yet confesse, in this
 The worlds proportion disfigured is,
 That those two legges whereon it doth relie,
 Reward and punishment are bent awrie.

And, Oh, it can no more be questioned, 305
 That beauties best, proportion, is dead,
 Since euen grieffe it selfe, which now alone
 Is left vs, is without proportion.
 Shee by whose lines proportion should bee
 Examin'd, measure of all Symmetree, 310
 Whom had that Ancient seen, who thought soules made
 Of Harmony, he would at next haue said
 That Harmony was shee, and thence infer,
 That soules were but Resultances from her,
 And did from her into our bodies go, 315
 As to our eyes, the formes from objects flow:
 Shee, who if those great Doctors truely said
 That th'Arke to mans proportions was made,
 Had beene a type for that, as that might be
 A type of her in this, that contrary 320
 Both Elements, and Passions liu'd at peace
 In her, who caus'd all Ciuill warre to cease.
 Shee, after whom, what forme soe're we see,
 Is discord, and rude incongruitee,
 Shee, shee is dead, she's dead; when thou knowst this, 325
 Thou knowst how vgly a monster this world is:
 And learnst thus much by our Anatomee,
 That here is nothing to enamor thee:
 And that, not onley faults in inward parts,
 Corruptions in our braines, or in our harts, 330
 Poysoning the fountaines, whence our actions spring,
 Endanger vs: but that if euery thing
 Be not done fitly'nd in proportion,
 To satisfie wise, and good lookers on,
 (Since most men be such as most thinke they bee) 335
 They're lothsome too, by this Deformitee.
 For good, and well, must in our actions meete:
 Wicked is not much worse then indiscreet.

I think that the first two lines of this section as defined by Louis
 Martz may perhaps better belong in the previous section. The actual
 beginning is the line "for the worlds beauty is decayed, or gone"
 which introduces the subject of the following lines. This passage
 is complex and contains many allusions, well documented by Manley,²⁰
 to new scientific discoveries and to old scientific beliefs. The
 message is not as Martz summarises: "how ugly a monster this world is"
 until the very end of the Meditation. The approach to the material

in this section is the same as the approach to the whole poem: that is it regrets a changing apprehension of reality, not a changing reality. Nothing is really changed in the Universe, it is only our understanding of its nature which is being extended. The proportion which we had seen to exist in the Universe is now, we discover, disproportion. In this newly acquired knowledge man is over-proud of his achievement for he thinks the heavens are "now . . . his own" (line 280). The progression is not as well made as in previous sections and the sentence from line 283 changes the subject and becomes a discussion of the magnitude of the earth's dimensions. Implied, but not stated, is the connecting sentence that man in becoming familiar with the immensity of the universe belittles the size of the earth. Donne defends the size of the earth by pointing out that though it is not actually great in size it is still too big for valid conception to embrace. The hills still seem so high that "the Moone would shipwrecke there," and the seas are still far deeper than we would imagine. Man may think, in his new knowledge, that the hills and seas are "but warts, and pock-holes in the face / Of the earth," but this knowledge upsets all the proportion that we have known.

The terms used to describe the world in this passage are very similar to the terms used in Proverbs 8, 22-30, a text which we have seen to be applied to Mary. The phrase "reward and punishment" is the link, clumsy though it seems, between the changing spiritual perception. In both perceptions our evaluation is being altered and in both senses proportion seems to be lost. Now, in the Eulogy, we return again to contemplation of Mary. In the Book of Proverbs she

has been talked about in terms similar to those used by Donne in the meditation of this section. Now we find that he talks of Mary in terms similar to those used in Catholic liturgy, where her beauty and symmetry are frequently described. This is an antiphon for the feast of the Assumption:

Virgo prudentissima, quo progredieris quasi aurora valde rutilans?
Fila Sion, tuta formosa et suavis es; pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol. (Virgin most prudent, whither goest thou like to the rosy dawn? Daughter of Sion, all-beautiful and sweet art thou, fair as the moon, chosen as the sun).

Another antiphon of Mary, frequently used in her litany is "Tota pulchra es," or "thou art all beautiful." The verse, "Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum," "thou art beautiful above the sons of men" is often detached from the psalm and applied in various parts of Masses of the Virgin. When Mary is revalued, as physical concepts of the universe are revalued, as being as worthless as the rest of us then much of her beauty is lost. She is no longer the person "by whose lines proportion should be examin'd, measure of all Symmetree," for her beauty is no longer perfect. She is no longer "Mediatrice of all Graces" so that we can longer consider that all we have is bestowed through her (lines 314-6). The reference to the Ark recalls the description of Mary in the Litany as "Ark of the Covenant." Hilda Graef examines the references to Mary in the Scriptures and explains where this title comes from:

The very next event the Evangelist [Luke] records is that "Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste" to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who said to her: "Whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? . . . And Mary abode with her about three months." Compare with this the story of David taking the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem: "And David was afraid of the Lord that day, saying: How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? . . . And the ark of the Lord abode in the house of Obededom the Gethite three months."

The similarities between these two accounts are too obvious not to be intentional: evidently the author of the narrative meant to present Mary as both the true daughter of Sion and the living Ark of the Covenant . . .²¹

Lines 321-324 can be related to Proverbs 8, 12-17. These verses are part of the Breviary's common of the Virgin Mary, and are from one of the chapters of the Old Testament which is most frequently applied to

Mary:

I, wisdom, dwell in counsel, and am present in learned thoughts.
 The fear of the Lord hateth evil: I hate arrogance and pride, and every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue.
 Counsel and equity is mine, prudence is mine, strength is mine.
 By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things.
 By me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice.
 I love them that love me: and they that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me.

The refrain and moral are, as Manley points out, difficult to interpret.

Perhaps he best paraphrases them:

Donne shifts from the inner proportion in the mind and heart of a just man to the manifestation of that proportion in the decorous, harmonious actions of his daily life. Lines 332-338 are particularly difficult: if wise and good observers are not satisfied with the performance of our actions, then the actions as well as their sources are undoubtedly loathsome and deformed because almost all men are exactly what the majority of men think they are . . . See . . . Sermons, VI, 155. The last two lines (337-38) recapitulate the entire section: the inner source of our actions (good) and the outward performance of those actions (well) must harmonise, for wickedness is not much worse than its outward manifestation, indiscreetness.²²

The Virgin Mary, "shee" as I suggest, is not, of course, the only factor in the poem. It is a reappraisal of her worth that motivates an anatomy of the world; but in this anatomy the primary thing to be explored is not what she is but what the world is. She is a starting point and reference point. Many of the other critical interpretations of "shee" can be incorporated into this interpretation. It is important to

emphasise this at this point because this part of the poem is the part which is perhaps least concerned with her and most concerned with an anatomy. References to her serve only to link the line of thought to some central point. Here the link, though it exists, is weak, and the complexity and difficulty of the thought emphasises the structural weakness of this part of the poem. The next section is slightly less difficult:

Section IV, 339-376: "how wan a Ghost this our world is."

1. Meditation, 339-58. "Beauties other second Element, Colour, and lustre now, is as neere spent."
2. Eulogy, 359-68. The girl had the perfection of color and gave color to the world.
3. Refrain and Moral, 369-76: There is no pleasure in an ugly world; it is wicked to use false colours.

But beauties other second Element,
 Colour, and lustre now, is as neere spent. 340
 And had the world his iust proportion,
 Were it a ring still, yet the stone is gone.
 As a compassionate Turcoyse which doth tell
 By looking pale, the wearer is not well,
 As gold fals sicke being stung with Mercury, 345
 All the worlds parts of such complexion bee.
 When nature was most busie, the first weeke,
 Swadling the new-borne earth, God seemd to like,
 That she should sport herselfe sometimes, and play,
 To mingle, and vary colours euey day. 350
 And then, as though she could not make inow,
 Himselfe his various Rainbow did allow.
 Sight is the noblest sense of any one,
 Yet sight hath onely color to feed on,
 And color is decayd: summers robe growes 355
 Duskie, and like an oft dyed garment showes.
 Our blushing redde, which vs'd in cheekes to spread,
 Is inward sunke, and onely our soules are redde.
 Perchance the world might haue recouered,
 If she whom we lament had not beene dead: 360
 But shee, in whom all white, and redde, and blue
 (Beauties ingredients) voluntary grew,
 As in an vnuext Paradise; from whom
 Did all things verdure, and their lustre come,
 Whose composition was miraculous, 365
 Being all color, all Diaphanous,
 (For Ayre, and Fire but thicke grosse bodies were,

And liueliest stones but drowsie, and pale to her,)

 Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowst this,

 Thou knowst how wan a Ghost this our world is: 370

 And learnst thus much by our Anatomie,

 That it should more affright, then pleasure thee.

 And that, since all faire color then did sinke,

 Tis now but wicked vanity to thinke,

 To color vitious deeds with good pretence, 375

 Or with bought colors to illude mens sense.

Donne continues his discussion of Beauty by discussing "Colour, and lustre." These qualities too can be related to Mary. It is interesting to note that in his poem "To All Angels and Saints" Herbert uses similar imagery to Donne's in the first lines of this section. Describing the Virgin Mary, Herbert says:

Thou art the holy mine, whence came the gold.

 The great restorative for all decay

 In young and old;

 Thou art the cabinet where the jewel lay.

In Donne's images the world is like a ring without its stone, that is, its best part which it frames and can present with pride. It is as though it (the world) has its purest element (gold) tarnished. Lines **347-349** are perhaps a direct reference to Proverbs 8, 28-31, verses which we have already seen to be applied to Mary by the Church in the liturgy for the feast of the Conception:

When he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters:

 When he compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits: when he balanced the foundations of the Earth;

 I was with him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times;

 Playing in the world: and my delights were to be with the children of men.

These lines are so close to Donne's that the parallel must be intentional.

Both lines refer to the creation of the world, and both describe her as

"playing." Since the verses preceding the playing are particularly about the waters there is a further connection, since the Rainbow is caused by the effect of water. It was when God finally set a law to the waters that he established the Rainbow. We see in the poem that God "seemed to like, that she should sport herself sometimes, and play." Now, we realise it is different. The verses were misapplied, and so it is that now we have new apprehension of the Virgin we have lost the old apprehension, that it was she who was the jewel the world framed, that it was she who was the earth's purest element, and that it was she who provided colour in the world. Now it is changed and the world has no perfection, no colour. Next we find that the concept of Original Sin is what has pervaded the world in her stead. Manley gives a note²³ on the connection between "blushing red" and sin; and he quotes this passage from Sermons, IX, 64-66:

He made us all of earth, and all of red earth. Our earth was red even when it was in Gods hands: a rednesse that amounts to a shamefastnesse, to a blushing at our infirmities, is imprinted in us, by Gods hand. . . . But the redness, which we have contracted from bloud shed by our selves, the bloud of our own souls, by sinne, was not upon us, when we were in the hands of God. . . . Our sinnes are our owne, and our destruction is from our selves. . . . We have dyed our selves in sinnes, as red as Scarlet. [Isaiah 1:18]

To this we must add a quotation from Pseudo-Martyr:

. . . they which are in possession of that Laurell, [of Martyrdom] are such as have washed their garments, not in their owne blood onely (for so they might still remaine redde and staine) but in the blood of the lambe which changes them to white.²⁴

But this reference from a sermon of 1623 is even more important for it shows (implicitly) Donne's awareness of Mary in connection with the concept of redness and whiteness; he uses a verse from the Canticle of

Canticles which we have seen to be applied in Roman Liturgy to Mary:

White alone is palenesse, and God loves not a pale soule, a soule possest with horror, affrighted with a diffidence, and distrusting his mercy. Rednesse alone is anger, and vehemency, and distemper, and God loves not such a red soule, a soule that sweats in sin, that quarrels for sin, that revenges in sin. But that whitenesse that preserves it selfe, not onely from being died all over in any foule colour, from contracting the name of any habituall sin, and so to be called such or such a sinner, but from taking any spot, from comming within distance of a tentation, or a suspition, is that whitenesse, which God meanes, when he sayes, Thou art all faire my Love, and there is no spot in thee. [Cant. 4:7]. . . To avoid these spots is that whitenesse that God loves in the soule. But there is a rednesse that God loves too; which is this Erubescence that we speak of; an aptnesse in the soule to blush, when any of those spots doe fall upon it. . . . that soule that goes not to confession to it selfe, that hath not an internall blushing after a sin committed is a pale soule, even in the palenesse of death,²⁵ and senselesnesse, and a red soule, red in the defiance of God.

We then are the "oft dyed garment" for we have sinned often. When we were in Gods hands, in Paradise before the Fall we blushed too --- but then it was a blush in acknowledgement of our inferiority to God, that is, humility which is a virtue. Now however, with Original Sin as well as Actual, the blush is sunk "inwards." It is now not a blush of humility but of shame, realisation of lack of virtue or sin. This redness is not just the result of actual sin; if it were, the blood of the martyrs would have washed their souls clean. It is the result of Original Sin which can only be changed to white by the blood of Christ which redeemed us. If Mary had not died (line 360) then we might have recovered some of our pride in the pre-lapsarian state of worthiness. We have seen the significance of red and white --- might not the addition of blue (line 361) traditionally Mary's colour, further indicate that Mary is the person referred to --- she had the red of humility, and the white of purity as well as her own colour blue.

She was thought to have possessed all virtues. (As Manley indicates, red, white, and blue were thought to be the colours of the theological virtues.)²⁶

The virtues which existed in an "unvext Paradise," and was thought to be perfection in all things but now we realise that "Shee, shee is dead," she was imperfect and none of these superlatives of beauty had any relevance to any part of mankind as it actually is. The moral says that we must not assume false pride, deceive ourselves with false colours. What beauty we can attach to Mary should frighten us more than pleasure us for by realising how even she is imperfect we realise how much more we are. Perhaps this line (373) is an indirect reference to two verses from the Canticle of Canticles which, again, are often to be found in Marian liturgy:

Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem:
terrible as an army set in array. (Cant. 6:3)

and

Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the
moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?
(Cant. 6:9)

In the next section we see that as our apprehension of her beauty changes so does our apprehension of her power. Perhaps Martz's summary misplaces the possession of the "influence:"

Section V, 377-434: "how drie a cinder this world is."

1. Meditation, 377-98. Physical "influence" of the heavens upon the earth has been weakened.
2. Eulogy, 399-426. The girl's virtue has little effect upon us now because of this weakened "correspondence" between heavens and earth; in fact the world's corruption weakened her effect while she lived.
3. Refrain and Moral, 427-34. Nothing "Is worth our travaile, grieve, or perishing," except the joys of religious virtue.

Nor in ought more this worlds decay appeares,
Then that her influence the heau'n forbeares,

Or that the Elements doe not feele this,
 The father, or the mother barren is. 380
 The clouds conceiue not raine, or doe not powre
 In the due birth-time, dowme the balmy showre.
 Th'Ayre doth not motherly sit on the earth,
 To hatch her seasons, and giue all things birth.
 Spring-times were common cradles, but are toombes; 385
 And false-conceptions fill the generall wombs.
 Th'Ayre shoves such Meteors, as none can see,
 Not onely what they meane, but what they bee.
 Earth such new wormes, as would haue troubled much,
 Th'Egyptian Mages to haue made more such. 390
 What Artist now dares boast that he can bring
 Heauen hither, or constellate any thing,
 So as the influence of those starres may bee
 Imprisoned in an Herbe, or Charme, or Tree,
 And doe by touch, all which those starres could do? 395
 The art is lost, and correspondence too.
 For heauen giues little, and the earth takes lesse,
 And man least knowes their trade, and purposes.
 If this commerce twixt heauen and earth were not
 Embarr'd, and all this trafique quite forgot, 400
 Shee, for whose losse we haue lamented thus,
 Would worke more fully and pow'rfully on vs.
 Since herbes, and roots by dying, lose not all,
 But they, yea Ashes too, are medicinall,
 Death could not quench her vertue so, but that 405
 It would be (if not follow'd) wondred at:
 And all the world would be one dying Swan,
 To sing her funerall prayse, and vanish than.
 But as some Serpents poison hurteth not,
 Except it be from the liue Serpent shot, 410
 So doth her vertue need her here, to fit
 That vnto vs; she working more then it.
 But she, in whom, to such maturity,
 Vertue was growne, past growth, that it must die,
 She from whose influence all Impressions came, 415
 But, by Receiuers impotencies, lame,
 Who, though she could not transubstantiate
 All states to gold, yet gilded euery state,
 So that some Princes haue some temperance;
 Some Counsaylors some purpose to aduance 420
 The common profite; and some people haue
 Some stay, no more then Kings should giue, to craue;
 Some women haue some taciturnity;
 Some Nunneries, some graines of chastity.
 She that did thus much, and much more could doe, 425
 But that our age was Iron, and rusty too,
 Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowst this,
 Thou knowest how drie a Cinder this world is.
 And learnst thus much by our Anatomy,

That 'tis in vaine to dew, or mollifie 430
 It with thy Teares, or Sweat, or Bloud: no thing
 Is worth our trauaile, grieffe, or perishing,
 But those rich ioyes, which did possesse her hart,
 Of which shee's now partaker, and a part.

Martz in his summary obviously relates the possessive "her" in line 378 to "the heau'n forbears." I think it is possible that it in fact relates to the subject of the poem, "shee": that is heaven forbears to effect her influence and therefore there is no correspondence between heaven and earth. (Earthly matters are her preoccupation, as in the verse of the Canticle of Canticles already quoted: "Playing in the world . . . my delights were to be with the children of men.") Manley in his note to "her influence" defines it as "The influence of Donne's symbolic she as identified and equated with the influence of the stars."²⁷ This supports my interpretation rather than Martz's. The difference in significance is not great, but this interpretation adds a unity to the poem that Martz does not allow. Mary is called in the Litany and elsewhere: "Help of Christians, Refuge of sinners, Health of the sick, Comforter of the afflicted, Gate of Heaven." Her influence with God was supposed to be paramount; she is "Mediatrice of all graces." But under Reformed belief much of her power is no longer acknowledged. Invocation of Mary was forbidden and belief in her power was scorned. We have already seen in Chapter III that Donne in a sermon preached at St. Pauls on Christmas day 1624 denies the strength of intercessionary powers: "He is her son, but not her ward; . . . Her Son, but yet he has asked her no leave to stay in Jerusalem, nor to dispute with the Doctors, nor to goe about his Fathers worke: His settling of Religion, his governing the Church,

his dispensing of his graces, is not by warrant from her." He continues specifically to indicate that the Roman Church estimates her power too highly: "They that call upon the Bishop of Rome, in that voyce, Impera Regibus, command Kings and Emperors, admit of that voyce, Impera filio, to her, that she should command her some. The naturall obedience of children to Parents, holds not in such civill things, as are publique."²⁸

One of the most noted Roman definitions of Mary's power of intercession is a sermon called "the Aqueduct" preached by St. Bernard. From Hilda Graef's summary of it we shall see it is related to the First Anniversary:

The Sermon on the Aqueduct . . . treats ex professo of her mediation between her Son and his faithful. St. Bernard compares this meditation . . . to an aqueduct which leads the divine waters to earth. If, Bernard says, the flood of grace did not reach earth for so long, the reason was that an aqueduct was lacking . . . But how, he asks, could the aqueduct reach so sublime a source? He answers: Through the vehemence of her desire, the fervour of her devotion and the purity of her prayer. Thus Eve is justified in her daughter, and God wants us to honour Mary with the most affectionate devotion, because, "He has placed the fullness of all good things in Mary, so that we should know that all there is of hope, grace and salvation in us flows from her . . . Take away Mary, this star, of the sea, of a sea so large and wide, what else is left but surrounding gloom, the shadow of death and densest darkness . . ."²⁹

Mary and a star are here identified, and her intercession is compared to a flow of water. In this section of the Anniversaries Mary and the stars are identified and the next image is "the clouds conceive not raine." Elsewhere in the poem we have seen where the world is gloomy with the shadow of death without her. Lines 385-6 are again a reminder that in conceiving we are the cause of Original Sin. It is because of the new consciousness of Mary that we are made conscious of the fact of omnipresent Original Sin, so that cradles become tombs. Manley notes

the significance of the "new wormes" in line 389 and shows, amongst other things, that Donne refers to them as being "bred from corruption."³⁰ But Donne has also used the word in the sermon previously mentioned, in the context of proving Mary's virginity and purity: "Christ sayes of himself, vermis sum, I am a worm, but says St. Ambrose, vermis de Manna, a worm out of a pure substance . . ."³¹ Thus we see that he connects the word "worms" not only with corruption but also, indirectly, with the Virgin Mary. The Eulogy says that although her influence would be more strong if she had not died she still has some effectiveness. Thus if Mary had been conceived immaculately, and had been assumed bodily into heaven, she would be a much greater figure than we see her actually to be. If God did not allow her these privileges, and if, like the rest of us, she was born with Original Sin, then it is absurd to allow her more than Donne allows in his sermon. But, as Donne states in another sermon, the Virgin Mary is someone "whom no man can honour too much, that makes her not God."³² Therefore, because of her, there exists some good in the world, even though that good is obviously not representative of what it ought to be. The moral of the section is, as Martz summarises, "no thing is worth our travaile, grieffe, or perishing, But those rich ioyes, which did possess her hart." We must seek true religious spirit and we will not find it through any short cuts which the Roman Church might offer in their veneration of Mary. Instead we will find it through her example. She enjoyed what is the highest that man can actually obtain and we should strive to attain it as she did. Now Mary is fully realised to be dead, and with her false pride in humanity. From here the poem concludes and leads

to the Second Anniversary and the new part of Donne's life. He has completed his religious anatomy, discovered what is wrong and which is the right path to follow. The crisis is past and only its conclusion and resolution remain to be stated:

Conclusion, 435-474

But as in cutting vp a man that's dead, 435
 The body will not last out to haue read
 On euery part, and therefore men direct
 Their speech to parts, that are of most effect;
 So the worlds carcasse would not last, if I
 Were punctuall in this Anatomy. 440
 Nor smells it well to hearers, if one tell
 Them their disease, who faine would think they're wel.
 Here therefore be the end: And, blessed maid,
 Of whom is meant what euer hath beene said,
 Or shall be spoken well by any tongue, 445
 Whose name refines course lines, and makes prose song,
 Accept this tribute, and his first yeares rent,
 Who till his darke short tapers end be spent,
 As oft as thy feast sees this widowed earth,
 Will yearely celebrate thy second birth, 450
 That is, thy death. For though the soule of man
 Be got when man is made, 'tis borne but than
 When man doth die. Our body's as the wombe,
 And as a mid-wife death directs it home.
 And you her creatures, whom she workes vpon 455
 And haue your last, and best concoction
 From her example, and her vertue, if you
 In reuerence to her, doe thinke it due,
 That no one should her prayes thus reherse,
 As matter fit for Chronicle, not verse, 460
 Vouchsafe to call to minde, that God did make
 A last, and lastingst peece, a song. He spake
 To Moses, to deliuer vnto all,
 That song: because he knew they would let fall,
 The Law, the Prophets, and the History, 465
 But keepe the song still in their memory.
 Such an opinion (in due measure) made
 Me this great Office boldly to inuade.
 Nor could incomprehensiblenesse deterre
 Me, from thus trying to emprison her. 470
 Which when I saw that a strict graue could do,
 I saw not why verse might not doe so too.
 Verse hath a middle nature: heauen keepes soules,
 The graue keeps bodies, verse the fame enroules.³³

As the crisis passes a note of humour enters the poem. In Section V lines 419-24 were satirically funny and in the same tone the beginning of the conclusion shows a wry sense of humour. The conclusion could be paraphrased thus: As in dissecting a body it will not last until it is absolutely explored so I will terminate this anatomy rather than leave mankind no hope for itself; and anyway a full detailing of the diseases would probably be more than mankind could accept. Therefore I will end the poem and ask that you, blessed maid, who has been the actual subject of not only all that I have said but all that is ever well said, will accept this poem as a tribute to you and as a year's rent. Every year from now I will celebrate your second birth, that is your death. For now I realise fully that man's state on earth is nothing but an awaiting for death, which is the entrance to heaven and true happiness. Though the soul is born at the conception it does not really live until the body has died. You, mankind, who are the creatures of the maid, can find your best medicinal influence in her example and virtue. If you consider it blasphemous to praise her in verse remember that God himself asked Moses to spread his message in song, because song or verse is more easily remembered than prose. It was because I wanted her to remain in memory that I ventured into this poem. When I saw by her death that it is indubitable that the earth keeps bodies and only soul goes to heaven then I thought I would preserve her fame in this verse.

Mary is the only human person described by whatever is "spoken well by any tongue," since she is, as was mentioned at the end of the commentary on the previous section, the person "whom no man can honour too much, that makes her not God." Perhaps the line

preceding this (line 444) is something of an apology for mentioning only Elizabeth Drury by name in connection with the poem. If the poem were really about Elizabeth's virtue then why not say her name or some clear reference at this point? Instead Donne makes the cryptic remark "blessed maid, Of whom is meant whatever has been said" (my italics) which suggests that the Elizabeth Drury is perhaps not the person meant. Other interpretations of the poem suggest that lines 446-451 mean that Donne intended to offer similar "rent" every year. Although he says in line 521 of the Second Anniversary ". . . take this for my second yeeres true rent," I do not think that these lines are a definite statement of intention to write a similar poem every year, rather that Donne will continue to celebrate her death, with or without "paying rent" for the rest of his life. When Donne accepts that even Mary died his understanding of the fact that all earthly life is only a preparation for heaven is reinforced. This is why this fact must be the final conclusion of the poem. But in understanding Mary to have died and to have been as the rest of the human race is, imperfect, Donne still recognises her worth and that she is the best example man has. Therefore we must imitate and revere her and therefore Donne makes her the subject for a poem such as this. Lines 464-6 are another touch of humour. It is benign sort of humour which is tolerantly amused. Now that Donne has reached a realistic appraisal of the weaknesses of humanity he can afford to be amused without bitterness. Finally he fully acknowledges that as Mary has died, and that she has not been assumed bodily into heaven then there is no longer any doubt as to the statement and the implications thereof that

"heauen keepes soules, the graue keeps bodies." Therefore he will enroll Mary's fame, and implicitly her example, in his verse. The word "incomprehensiblenesse" in line 469 may have a double meaning. Either Mary is so great that her virtues are beyond his full understanding or -- could it be -- his verses are contrived to be so incomprehensible that they may have little actual effect towards this end (of enrolling her fame) except in his own consciousness. This interpretation of the word may be specious but it fits in with the aura that has surrounded this poem ever since it has been published. Donne was never explicit as to its meaning and all its critics have been divided in their interpretations. That the poem should be incomprehensible is a final joke which shows how essentially this poem is a personal poem about his conversion and religious understanding of the nature of humanity. Whether or not Donne is saying with 'incomprehensible' that the poem is not meant to be publicly understood the fact remains that it has eluded comprehension over many years. I believe that this interpretation, where 'she' is the Virgin Mary, is perhaps the key to true understanding of this poem as the transition of Donne's (religious) outlook on life. In it we find traces of all stages of his thought: there is the humour of his early poems, the seriousness of his religious poems, the pessimism of the previous ten years of depression, and the religious optimism and confidence in God that he exhibits in his sermons. Not only is the poem complex, it is central to his whole poetry and character.

FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER IV)

¹Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne (London, 1899), I, 304.

²Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1965), pp. 222-223.

³Frank Manley, John Donne: The Anniversaries (Baltimore, 1963), p. 124.

⁴Ibid., p. 125.

⁵Hilda Graef, Mary: a History of Doctrine and Devotion (London, 1964), II, 8.

⁶Manley, op. cit., p. 129.

⁷Ibid., pp. 128-9.

⁸Theodore Spencer (ed.), A Garland for John Donne (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), pp. 193-4.

⁹Simpson and Potter (eds.), The Sermons of John Donne (Los Angeles, 1962), VI, 183.

¹⁰Manley, op. cit., pp. 131-2.

¹¹John Donne, Pseudo-Martyr (London, 1610), pp. 125-138 (125 misprint for 137).

¹²Pseudo-Martyr, sig B2^r.

¹³Manley, op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁴The Complete Poetry of John Donne, ed. Shawcross (New York, 1967), p. 406.

¹⁵Sermons, I, 200.

- 16 John Julian, Dictionary of Hymnology (London, 1892), p. 625, i.
- 17 Noyes and Potter (eds.), Hymns Attributed to John Donne (Berkeley, 1937), p. 98.
- 18 Ibid., p. 98.
- 19 John Julian, op. cit., p. 994, i.
- 20 Manley, op. cit., pp. 150-4.
- 21 Hilda Graef, op. cit., I, 10.
- 22 Manley, op. cit., pp. 156-7.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 159-60.
- 24 Pseudo-Martyr, sig E^r-E^v.
- 25 Sermons, VI, 57-8.
- 26 Manley, op. cit., p. 160.
- 27 Ibid., p. 161.
- 28 Sermons, VI, 182.
- 29 Hilda Graef, op. cit., I, 237-8.
- 30 Manley, op. cit., p. 162.
- 31 Sermons, VI, 181.
- 32 Ibid., VIII, 143.
- 33 "The graue keeps bodies, verse the fame enrroules": In the Noel Douglas Replica edition of the second edition (1625) it is clear that it is actually "verse the same enrolles." Manley notes in page 169 of his edition of the Anniversaries: "Grierson did not record the variant, same, even though Grosart noted cryptically that 'in a copy of the 1612 edition now before me, Donne (I think) has himself

written 'fame', lest the long s, so like an f, should be mistaken.' Grosart had before him the Hugh-Hagen-Chev-Harmsworth copy (now in the Folger Shakespeare Library), in which someone corrected a few obvious misprints." In his Historical Collation Manley notes that the 1611 edition said "same," the 1612 edition corrected it in the errata to "fame" but that all subsequent editions until after Donne's death repeated "same." "Fame" is probably contextually more accurate although we can make sense of "same" by explaining that it means that Donne wished to maintain memory of her body or earthly state. But whichever reading is right one thing is clear: once Donne had written the poem he was not very much concerned with making it clear to his public. This supports the idea that it was essentially a private poem and one he did not want either to explain or to be widely understood. This is why "shee" is such an elusive figure.

CONCLUSION

If it had been of ye Virgin Mary . . .

My commentary on the First Anniversary was not intended to be comprehensive but rather to indicate where there are references which can be applied to the Virgin and how the understanding of Mary as the central symbol makes the hyperbole redundant and allows the poem to be read as a cogent whole rather than as a collection of interesting passages. My suggestion that the Virgin Mary is the central symbol, though it has been advanced positively, is perhaps more tentative than I have shown it to be. Certainly I do think that it is extremely likely that hers is the death that is eulogised. This however does not make other commentaries on the poem redundant. I have already said this in Chapter I, but it bears repeating that I am referring to a central symbol: a figure that is itself symbolic of many other things. This is why Manley's analysis, for example, can still be totally relevant to the poem. I feel that this addition to the poem, since it gives it a "sharp focus," is a culmination of analysis that has been relevant before, particularly Martz's, Love's, and Manley's. When its structure and the poem's basic symbolism have thus been delineated criticism can now concentrate on the total poem rather than aspects of it, and can approach a completely positive appraisal. The poem is, I am sure, a poem worthy of much attention: but full critical evaluation of it must necessitate more space and time than I am able to give it. Without stating my reasons perhaps I can conclude with these words: it is something.

APPENDIX

An article by Richard E. Hughes entitled "The Woman in Donne's Anniversaries" appeared in ELH in 1967. I would have included examination of it in Chapter I except that it seemed to me to be so totally out of contact with all previous criticism of the Anniversaries that it was almost irrelevant there. However as it has exact bearing on, as well as exact contradiction of, the subject of my thesis I shall include examination of it here. Hughes suggests that St. Lucy is near the centre of the poem; he states his idea in this manner:

. . . Elizabeth Drury died in December 13, 1616: The Feast of St. Lucy. For an imagination not alert to such announcements of a pattern working itself out in human affairs, a coincidence, nothing more. For Donne, the death of a virginal fourteen-year old girl on this particular day, and who like St. Lucy died almost on the eve of her marriage, was an indisputable declaration, a demand being made on him; and the simple coincidence became the charged symbolic core around which Donne's major ideas and intuitions arranged themselves: a solar system whose center involves Lucy, the patroness of Light.¹

The footnote referred to is this:

So Donne believed; actually her death was reported on Dec. 13, but there are no records to prove the exact date. See R. C. Bald, Donne and the Drurys (Cambridge), p. 68.

Eagerly we turn to the relevant page of Bald's book, to find:

Early in December Elizabeth fell sick and died . . . Her death is first alluded to in a letter of 13 December, and seems to have occurred in London for the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Clement Danes record these items . . .

¹Richard E. Hughes, "The Woman in Donne's Anniversaries," ELH, XXXIV (1967), 307-326.

and so on; but there is no evidence here to tell us that Donne thought she died on that day. Where had Hughes got this idea that Donne thought Elizabeth died on the 13th? I can find it nowhere. Similarly I can find no evidence, in Bald or elsewhere, to suggest that Elizabeth died almost on the eve of her wedding. Perhaps he meant it in a metaphorical manner; that all girls approaching their fifteenth birthdays are almost on the eve of their weddings. It is evidently Hughes rather than Donne for whom simple coincidences become charged cores. Perhaps he is aware of the dubiousness of his assumption for he says of the poem:

We can only sequentially and wilfully attempt to retrace what was accomplished instantaneously and intuitively; and it would be vain to imagine that we can entirely elucidate the causes and full scope of the symbolic ordering that goes on within the Anniversaries. Like all great poems, they finally frustrate the invasions of rational analysis. But, like following the vapor trail of an elusive electron in a cloud-chamber, we can see traces of the developing symbol.²

But Hughes has, I think, something of value to add to analysis of the poem. He suggests that, following Martz's analysis of the meditative structure:

. . . the very completeness of the meditative act in these poems suggests the personal quality; the subject and the auditory is not Elizabeth and Sir Robert Drury, but John Donne.³

This may be true, that is, that the poems are personal poems, and the "world" referred to in them is Donne's personal world, or Donne. He continues to suggest that the "death" celebrated is in fact Donne's (metaphysical) death.

²Ibid., pp. 309-10.

³Ibid., p. 310.

Donne dated his own death in 1601: writing to Wotton from France early in 1612, Donne spoke of his "Metaphorical death," and remarked:

If at last I must confesse, that I dyed ten years ago . . . yet it will please me a little to have had a long funeral, and to have kept myself so long above ground without putrefaction.⁴

I think this too may be relevant to the poem for it seems to me that there is a definite emotional relation between the 1601 "Progress of the Soul" and the 1611/2 "Progress of the Soul" whose crisis is in the Anatomic, and resolution in the Progres. There may be indeed an understanding of this metaphorical death in the poem. (See Chapters III and IV). But it is when Hughes returns to St. Lucy that he seems to me to be once more over-reaching himself. He says that "The mythic structure of human life was demonstrated to Donne in the coincidence of Elizabeth Drury's death and St. Lucy's festival."⁵ And continuing to discuss the Idea of a Woman he says: "She appeared to Donne as St. Lucy, and beginning as Lucy she expanded into the universal symbol which caught up Donne, time and eternity in one great cluster. That St. Lucy was the energising source of Donne's symbolism is clear from the text of The First Anniversary."⁶ The first lines that he quotes in support of this thesis are these:

For there's a kind of world remaining still,
Thou shee which did inanimate and fill
 The world, yet in this last long night,
 Her Ghost doth walke; that is, a glimmering light,

⁴Ibid., pp. 313-4.

⁵Ibid., p. 316.

⁶Ibid., p. 318.

A fainte weake loue of vertue and of good
 Reflects from her, on them which understood
 Her worth; And though she have shut in all day,
 The twi-light of her memory doth stay. (lines 67-74) [sic]

These lines, Hughes assures us, are an allusion to St. Lucy's day, the shortest day and longest night of the year. I would say that they are a reference to the "last long night" which is the night since the realisation of the concept of Original Sin has enforced the realisation that all life is but death and that only death releases us into life, or day. There is to be no more night once we are released into heaven, hence it is last. Hughes' only support is the actual phrase "last long night" and this, taken in its context, does not suggest that it is the long night of St. Lucy's day. Similarly Hughes quotes:

Her death did wound, and tame thee than, and than
 Thou mightst have better spar'd the sunne, or Man. (125-6)

and relates this to Lucy's having died a martyr's death. But, to suggest that Lucy's death caused this reaction in Donne is almost as much hyperbole as to suggest that Elizabeth's did. Manley indicates that Original Sin "was originally described as a woman"⁷ and it is obvious, in context, that Donne is talking about the effect of Original Sin here. Lucy's death, thought it was tragic, was expected at some point or other, that she should have died a martyr's death is the only outstanding fact about it. The death referred to here should have a direct relationship with Original Sin. I think that it is only in the realisation of Mary's death that we are forced to a realisation of Original Sin.

⁷Frank Manley, John Donne, the Anniversaries, p. 129.

Hughes continues to point "specific" relationships to Lucy, but I think it is clear that none of them are in fact as specific as he insists. Like his original assumption of the coincidences of Elizabeth Drury's and Lucy's death they are based on possibilities which he accepts as probabilities without questioning them further. It is only in the passages where he relates the poems to the context of the previous ten years of Donne's life that we can find any useful matter in his article.

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