THE POETICS OF FAITH: REPRESENTATIONS OF PERSONAL FAITH FROM LOCK TO
HERBERT

By

Amber Helena True

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

English–Doctor of Philosophy

2016

ABSTRACT

THE POETICS OF FAITH: REPRESENTATIONS OF PERSONAL FAITH FROM LOCK TO
HERBERT

By

Amber Helena True

This dissertation examines early modern religious British lyric poetry (approximately
1450-1650) alongside Christian theological texts, and argues that representations of religious
faith are both less than and in excess of the definitions of faith provided in Christian theology
and orthodoxy. This project makes two key interventions into the field of early modern literature:
first, through an examination of Christian theological texts from Augustine to Laud, faith is
differentiated from belief as its own religious phenomenon. In most early modern scholarship,
belief and faith are conflated which disregards the nuances of religious experience. Belief relies
on cognitive processes and logical conclusions, whereas faith is the premise underlying that
logic. Belief is a process or an act, whereas faith is trust or a state of certainty. Faith is intangible
and ineffable, and as such it eludes early modern religious writers. Second, this project relies on
a global Christendom – a transnational Christian religious community – that has shared struggles
with orthodoxy and theology, particularly the theology of faith. This reliance breaks away from
the trend of categorizing and defining early modern religious writers by particular religious sects.
Instead, this project reveals continuity both between writers and time periods, as it includes
medieval and early modern writers who identify as Catholic, Protestant, and elsewhere within the
Christian spectrum. The first chapter lays out these theological and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter two, "The Role of the Temporal: the (un)Importance of Community," examines
the role of community within Christian theology and juxtaposes that against representations of
community in the poetry of Aemilia Lanyer and Robert Southwell. These authors represent

similar struggles with the expectations of Christian community, specifically that while community ought to be formative, instead it is harmful to their individual religious pursuits.

Chapter three, "The Formative Qualities of Doubt," explores the role of doubt within the Christian framework of faith, and argues that contrary to both theology and orthodoxy, doubt is represented as aiding the process of salvation. This theological framework asserts certainty as the necessary precondition for salvation, and yet authors quite explicitly struggle with doubt in lyric poetry. Both Anne Vaughan Lock and John Donne represent doubt in ways that do not foreclose upon salvation; instead, each imagines a different, hopeful result of their doubtful states of mind.

Chapter four, "Faith and the Problem of Articulation in George Herbert's *The Temple*," engages directly with the ineffability of faith. In the poems of George Herbert that address "faith" explicitly is a struggle for articulation that ultimately forecloses on complete representation; this struggle reveals an intangibility and unknowability in regard to faith that seems to be the very motivation for representation in the first place.

The final chapter, entitled "To the New World: the Continuation of Representations of Faith," moves outside both the chronological and geographic boundaries of this project to argue that these incongruous representations of faith are the continuous thread within Christian experience. In the poetry of Edward Taylor and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz are representations of religious experience that defy orthodoxy. The refusal to engage in the identification of sects of these authors suggests that representations of faith have a common thread both across time and across sects, and even further, across space – into the New World, and beyond.

We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
John Donne, "The Canonization"
And so we have.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Paradoxes of Early Modern Faith

In 1596, Anne Dowriche's poem, "Verses written by a Gentle-woman, vpon The Iaylors Conuersion," was published in the prefatory material of Hugh Dowriche's sermon, "The Iaylor's Conuersion."[1] Reflecting the religious turmoil in England and France during the sixteenth century, the poem calls upon Christians to defy the rod of the jailor who would have them recant their religious convictions and to accept life's general trials and tribulations as signs of both God's love and election. Although by the end of the sixteenth century in England proto-Anglicanism had firmly ousted Catholicism, Dowriche had the violence against French Protestants always in her mind.[2]

---

[1] Dowriche, Hugh and Anne Dowriche. *The iaylors conuersion Wherein is liuely represented, the true image of a soule rightlye touched, and conuerted by the spirit of God. The waightie circumstances of which supernaturall worke, for the sweete amplifications, and fit applications to the present time, are now set downe for the comfort of the strong, and confirmation of the weake. By Hugh Dowriche Batch. of Diuinitie.* London, 1596. Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online.* Web. 1 August 2016.

[2] Dowriche's first publication is an extended poem chronicling Protestant struggles in France. Dowriche, Anne. *The French historie That is; a lamentable discourse of three of the chiefe, and most famous bloodie broiles that haue happened in France for the Gospell of Iesus Christ. Namelie; 1 The outrage called the winning of S. Iames his Streete, 1557. 2 The constant martirdome of Anna Burgaeus one of the K. Councell, 1559. 3 The bloodie marriage of Margaret sister to Charles the 9. anno 1572. Published by A.D.* London, 1589. Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online.* Web. 1 August 2016.

THe man is blest which can indure,

Whose hart doth neuer slide,

When for his sinne, with fierie scourge,

His patience shal be tride.

No daunting feare can once attainte,

The conscience that is cleare:

The wicked waile that haue no faith,

When dangers doe appeare.

The rod that doth correct our life,

And sinfull waies reproue,

Is said, to be a certaine signe,

Of Gods eternall loue.

No tempting tryall from the Lord,

No griefe or dire annoye,

Can seuer once the faithfull hart,

From Christ, his onely ioye.

Though sinfull flesh doe oft rebell,

And fancie file our fall,

Yet happie man, that can returne,

When God beginnes to call.

Though God permit his chosen flocke,

Sometimes to walke astraie:

Yet sets he both the times and meanes,

To wayne them from their waie.

How long did Paule, with cruell hart,

The Church of Christ molest?

Till called home to see the truth,

His blindnesse did detest.

How cruell was this Iaylors hart,

To vex the poore elect?

Till trembling earth by mightie power,

His madnesse did detect.

The God, that makes the haughtie hils,

And Libans Cedars shake

When he shall take his cause in hand,

Will make the prowdest quake.

To comfort his, that be in neede,

The Lord is alwaies prest,

And all that haps to his elect,

Is alwaies for the best.

Which in this picture here is seene,

By that, which shall in sew,

Lord graunt vs grace, when he doth call,

To frame our liues anew.

The poem claims that those who are constant, whose "hart[s] neuer slide," will have no trouble facing such corporeal challenges since nothing, "No griefe or dire annoye," can alter "the

faithfull hart." However, those who despair, those "wicked" ones who "waile," are without faith. Simultaneously, even the faithful can take actions which lead them "astraie," and yet faith remains constant. Dowriche's word choice in the poem suggests an adherence to Calvinistic doctrine, but her characterization of faith extends across Christian sects, even to Catholicism. This poem juxtaposes the constancy of faith against the fallibility of action and suggests that, in spite of activity or even belief contrary to doctrine (as the example of Paul demonstrates), both faith and God's grace persist.

Dowriche's poem exemplifies the key problems of this project. First, she proposes faith as a phenomenon not independent of but unaffected by action and belief, and as action's precursor. Second, she employs poetry to present a logical case regarding a non-logical religious phenomenon, proposing her own ideas about faith without a thorough representation of the phenomenon itself. And third, her representation of faith is consistent with many other representations from across Christian sects, suggesting a religious experience that defies factionalism. The experience of faith is deeply personal and individual; the religious experience of Christians is also radically individualized, defying attempts at a unified doctrine. This study looks to lyric poetry to establish that individuality as well as the tendency to respond to and modify orthodoxy.

This chapter provides the groundwork for an examination of representations of religious experience in lyric poetry – specifically Western Christian expressions of religious experience that interrogate, contradict, and revise orthodoxy. First I examine major Christian theologians from both the medieval and early modern periods – Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, and Jean Calvin included – and compare theories of both faith and belief to establish a consistent thread of differentiating the two despite other doctrinal

differences. These theologians are the most widely cited in the early modern period in England and establish a general structure for both faith and belief which would have most likely been a part of the English Christian consciousness. Second, I outline the development of orthodoxy and the parallel development of resistance to orthodoxy; such resistance appears in a variety of forms, including increased factionalism, individual contradiction, and martyrdom. Attempts at implementing orthodoxy in sixteenth-century England were increased compared to the centuries preceding, but the history of Christian orthodoxy suggests that it is, and always has been, a failed project. Thus, the expectation that any individual Christian would or could conform perfectly to any orthodoxy, let alone the ever-shifting doctrines in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, cannot be met. Finally, I argue for lyric poetry's particular suitability for this examination into personal experiences of faith, establishing it as a both deeply personal representative form, and a dialogic form capable of these kinds of interrogations.

Under the rule of King Henry VIII, on July 30th, 1540, six Englishmen were executed for crimes of heresy, only six years after he announced the Act of Supremacy and officially separated the English church from Rome. John Foxe chronicled this day in his *Book of Martyrs*:

> Soon after the execution of Cromwell, Dr. Cuthbert Barnes, Thomas Garnet, and William Jerome, were brought before the ecclesiastical court of the bishop of London, and accused of heresy. Being before the bishop of London, Dr. Barnes was asked whether the saints prayed for us? To this he answered, that "he would leave that to God; but (said he) I will pray for you."

On the thirteenth of July, 1541,[3] these men were brought from the Tower to Smithfield, where they were all chained to one stake; and there suffered death with a constancy that nothing less than a firm faith in Jesus Christ could inspire.

One Thomas Sommers, an honest merchant, with three others, was thrown into prison, for reading some of Luther's books, and they were condemned to carry those books to a fire in Cheapside; there they were to throw them in the flames; but Sommers threw his over, for which he was sent back to the Tower, where he was stoned to death.

What makes this day notable in English history is that both Catholics and Protestants were executed for the same crime simultaneously. Three of the men, including Dr. Barnes, were questioned about the role of saints – specifically their intercessory powers with God – and were forthwith condemned for heretical views held by Catholics. The others were condemned for reading "Luther's books," an outlawed and heretical act characteristic of Protestant Lutherans. Thus, on the same day, both Protestants and Catholics in England were executed – burned and stoned – for supposed heresy and acts against the English church.

In this anecdote we witness martyrdom, the most violent clash between orthodoxy and individual belief; their deaths bear witness to both the substance and strength of their beliefs. It is an act which comes closest to revealing the most inexpressible religious phenomenon: faith. Despite a full understanding of the corporeal consequences, such adherence to belief was a common occurrence in the early modern period. While it would have been both expedient and materially beneficial to deny adherence to unorthodox beliefs, the multitude of those who instead denied themselves life points to a more deeply rooted religious phenomenon than mere practices

---

[3] As is usual, the dates recorded in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* are slightly different from the dates noted by later historians. John N. King affirms the July 30th, 1540 date in the introductory notes to the *Selected Narratives* edition of the *Book of Martyrs*.
Foxe, John. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Caxton, 1881. *Google Books*. 08 Dec. 2008. Web. 21 Mar. 2015. p. 209.
Foxe, John. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs : Select Narratives*. Oxford, GBR: OUP Oxford, 2009. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 21 March 2014.

and doctrine. It would have been reasonable for Barnes, Gamet, and the others outwardly to deny their faiths and to continue living. But early modern Christian faith is divided from reason.

A central premise of this project is that faith, as a phenomenon, is distinct from belief in early modern Christian religion. While the study of religion in late medieval and early modern literature is not novel, my focus on faith as a particular phenomenon is a new approach. Little research has been conducted on the representation of faith (as separate from belief) in this period's literature. In the realm of religious topics, literary scholars have focused on two main issues: the distinction of an author's specific religious sect, and the description of religious experience as a single broad topic that encompasses all religious phenomena. Literary critics have long nurtured an obsession to crack the code especially of early modern writers, attempting to determine the doctrinal inclinations of individuals - information even the inquisition could not discover. Henry VIII and Shakespeare are both popular figures in this pursuit.[4] Other critics have taken on the topic of religion in literature quite broadly, conflating "faith" with religion as a whole, and some looking to other religious phenomena. Adrian Streete, for instance, explores the role of Christ's presence (or absence) in drama, in *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*.[5] Brooke Conti's 2014 book, like most early modern literary scholarship, tends to conflate faith with religion.[6] Scholars of early American literature have nearly noted this distinction, however. For example, Charles Hambrick-Stowe deliberately separates the state of grace from the practices of religion when discussing "Pilgrimage as Preparation."[7] In

---

[4] Jean-Christophe Mayar's 2000 book, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith*, is an excellent example of this. Not only does it lay out the long history of the pursuit of Shakespeare's religious inclinations, it takes its own stance in the debate. Mayer, Jean-Christophe. *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion, and the Stage*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

[5] Streete, Adrian. *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

[6] *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England*.

[7] Hambrick-Stowe, Charles E. *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press, 1982. Print. p. 197.

juxtaposition to nearly all literary scholarship of this period, this project insists first on faith as its

own phenomenon, and second that individual experiences of both personal faith and belief

transcend religious doctrine – and that transcendence represents a commonality across Christian

sects that defies categorization. Those religious experiences as represented in literature,

specifically lyric poetry, reveal unique experiences and conceptions of both faith and belief

which respond to and revise orthodox religious doctrine.[8]

Beginning as early as the writings of the patristic fathers, Christian theologians have

affirmed this distinction both directly and obliquely. Saint Thomas Aquinas, reiterating the

teachings of Augustine[9] refers to faith as "certainty and no fear,"[10] pointing to an utter lack of

doubt. Martin Luther describes faith as "a living, bold trust" and "know[ing] for certain,"[11] and

like Aquinas indicates doubtlessness. Ulrich Zwingli calls faith "confidence in God,"[12] much like

Luther's "trust," and Jacobus Arminius calls it "a gift from God."[13] These distinctions

characterize faith as an absolute state. To be "certain" leaves no room for uncertainty; to possess

a "gift" eradicates entirely the not having. One has faith or one does not; one is faithful or one is

not. There is no in between, according to these medieval and early modern theologians. Belief,

on the other hand, is defined as a dynamic process dependent upon the rational mind. Belief

depends upon ideas and doctrines, and the very possibility of acceptance or denial; it depends

---

[8] Janice Knight undertook a similar project when examining the Puritans of Massachusetts, contrasting the heterogeneity of individual belief with the expectations of Puritan Orthodoxy in late seventeenth century North America. Knight, Janice. *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*. Harvard UP: Cambridge, 1994. Print.

[9] A patristic father.

[10] "Et si quidem hoc fit cum dubitatione et formidine alterius partis, erit opinio, si autem fit cum certitudine absque tali formidine, erit fides." Thomas Aquinas. "Secunda Secundae Partis, Q. 1." *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries*. Cambridge, England: Blackfriars, 1964. Print.

[11] Luther, Martin. *Works of Martin Luther with Introductions and Notes*. Ed. Adolph Spaeth. Philadelphia: A.J. Holman, 1916. Electronic.

[12] Zwingli, Ulrich, Samuel M. Jackson, and Clarence N. Heller. *Commentary on True and False Religion*. Durham, N.C: Labyrinth, 1981. p. 276. Print.

[13] Arminius, Jacobus, and Gunter, W. Stephen. *Arminius and his Declaration of sentiments : an annotated translation with introduction and theological commentary.* Waco, Tx: Baylor UP, 2012. p. 35. Print.

upon reasoning. Thomas Aquinas captures belief most concisely when he states that belief is "to think with assent".[14] Belief is a verb; it is a doing that leads to acceptance of doctrine. Faith, on the other hand, is most clearly a noun – or at least a substantive adjective. One *has* faith; one *does* belief.

That is not to say, however, that belief and faith are not theorized as inter-reliant. Belief and faith are separate phenomena as I have argued, but they rely on one another to support the Christian religion and to achieve salvation; one must engage both because faith engenders belief, as Martin Luther argues: "Because of [faith], you freely, willingly and joyfully do good to everyone, serve everyone, suffer all kinds of things, love and praise the God who has shown you such grace. Thus, it is just as impossible to separate faith and works as it is to separate heat and light from fire!"[15] Works, in Luther's writings, are belief –the practical extensions of faith; works include following the law of the Old Testament in addition to generally leading a goodly life. But any works "done outside of faith" are "nothing and altogether dead."[16] Defining what those works are, what ideas one accepts and what actions one takes, is predicated on personal faith – that unwavering, unfaltering, inalterable gift one possesses by the grace of God and by no other means.

Although many theologians separate faith from reason, logic provides an apt analogy for the relationship between faith and belief. Belief, in essence, is the process and result of deductive reasoning. While belief utilizes one's cognition and reason, deductive reasoning must have a foundation upon which to build: given premises or assumptions. Those premises are faith. One highly visible example of such assumptions is Christian creeds. Throughout Church history, specifically Western European Roman Catholic Church history, officials have articulated the

---

[14] Aquinas p. 1074.
[15] Luther, *Works*.
[16] Luther, "A Treatise on Good Works."

underlying assumptions of their religion, including the second century creed issued by Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons asserting man's relationship with God,[17] the fourth century Nicene Creed asserting the existence of the Holy Spirit,[18] and the later fourth century Apostles' Creed asserting Christ's equality with God.[19] The creeds are the basic statements of Christian faith, the assumptions upon which doctrine is built and it is notable that the creeds are neither universal nor stable over time.[20] Faith, like belief, is different from sect to sect and individual to individual, which results in the evolution of creeds. Although the Church has attempted to codify faith through a concretization of given premises, the very process of codification reveals the lack of universality in faith. Following the theological argument made by Martin Luther that belief is built upon faith, that it is the practical elaboration of the underlying assumptions of religion, belief can be understood as an extension and direct result of faith. Thus, as we see with Dr. Barnes possessing "constancy," these men become martyrs through their possession of faith, a faith which is then expressed through what secular others might call unreasoned or irrational actions.[21] The July martyrs refuse to conform their beliefs because in doing so they would deny the underlying assumptions of those beliefs; they would be forced to deny their faiths.

The crucial medieval and early modern distinction between faith as a state of being of absolute trust, and belief grounded in notions of cognitive assent, has been lacking in early modern literary scholarship thus far, much to the field's loss as the conflation of these

---

[17] MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. London [u.a.: Penguin Books, 2010. Print. p. 129.
[18] Ibid p. 143
[19] Ibid p. 219
[20] Christian creeds in English tend to begin with the statement "I believe," which ought not to be taken to mean that the creeds are beliefs. The creeds are issued as unquestioned assertions and function differently than church doctrine which is practical elaboration of those underlying assumptions. The Latin "credo" is used in the creeds, which translates both to "I trust" and "I believe," pointing to the phenomenon of faith through the language of belief.
[21] This identification of irrationality points to faith's inaccessibility. As apt an analogy of logic is for the relationship between belief and faith, the application of inductive or abductive reasoning to one's beliefs by others does not lead to an identification of assumptions, which suggests the inarticulability of faith. The creeds are the nearest articulation of faith that we have, and as has already been stated, their attempted articulations fail in revealing the faiths of believers.

phenomena has a detrimental totalizing effect.[22] The distinction between faith and belief allows for a more nuanced examination of personal religious experience, one that is in constant negotiation with the official forces imposing upon that experience, and allows for the admission of differences in faiths and thus a greater understanding of early modern writings and perhaps their authors. Faith must be examined as its own phenomenon separate from the whole of religious experience because of its lack of conformability to official impositions on belief which thwarts political intentions of conformity despite increasing and increasingly violent demands for orthodoxy during this period.

Belief and faith have frequently been conflated in early modern literary scholarship, as is the case with Ramie Targoff's *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England,* in which she uses belief and faith interchangeably.[23] Debra Shuger, too, suggests an interchangeability of belief and faith in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*: "Inquiry into the conduct of faith can perhaps more than any other lens focus the enigma of what it means to believe in something."[24] Even more misleading are common references to "faith" as a stand-in for religion as a whole, (i.e. "the Christian faith") which we see in Stephen Greenblatt's book *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern.*[25] Such representations of faith have thus far ignored faith's particularity as it is articulated in Christian theology, a particularity recognized by philosophers of religion decades ago.

---

[22] The Oxford English Dictionary definitions of faith and belief also lack this crucial distinction. The first several entries for "Belief" use "faith" as a synonym (I1a, 2, 3). However, beginning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, "belief" comes to be defined separately as "Acceptance that a statement, supposed fact, etc., is true; a religious, philosophical, or personal conviction; an opinion, a persuasion" and "assent to a proposition, statement, or fact, esp. on the grounds of testimony or authority" ("Belief" OED I6, 7). Faith's definition is in line with the theological definition as early as the thirteenth century: "The quality of fulfilling one's trust or promise; faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty; trustworthiness" ("Faith" OED AI1a).

[23] Targoff, Ramie. *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Print.

[24] McEachern, Claire, and Debora K. Shuger. *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print. p. 7.

[25] Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011. Print. p. 252.

By contrast, Richard Swinburne has theorized belief as such: "belief is relative to alternatives... You believe of one proposition as against another proposition, or propositions, that the former is more probable than any of the latter".[26] Belief, according to Swinburne, is comparative. One must engage in a cognitive process of comparison in order to determine a belief – a determination that is arrived at on an individual basis. He continues, "So my claim is that normally to believe that p is to believe that p is probable."[27] One must follow a rational process in order to determine belief in the first place, pointing to belief's logical, mental, and mutable qualities. Swinburne goes on to theorize three different views of faith, all of which are carefully differentiated from belief but incorporate belief as a related element. The "Lutheran View of Faith," for instance, is described thus: "faith involves *both* theoretical beliefs-that (Thomist faith) *and* a trust in the Living God."[28] The link between belief and faith he asserts in all three of his formulations is in line with the already proposed causal relationship between faith and belief that we find most clearly articulated by Martin Luther. So we find that belief and faith are distinct from one another and, while interreliant, are certainly not interchangeable. The relationship between faith and belief also establishes a hierarchy within religious experience: faith is the foundation, from which belief springs. Faith might also be described as theory, while belief is practice; it is a way of seeing rather than of reasoning or acting.[29] This distinction requires that in undertaking historical and literary work, one must identify the locus of religious change and recognize that faith cannot be accessed or altered through belief.

---

[26] Swinburne, Richard. *Faith and Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981. Print. p. 4.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid p. 110.
[29] The Greek root of "theory" is *θεωρία,* which is the "action of viewing, contemplation, sight, or spectacle." "theory, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2016. Web. 1 August 2016.

Considering the roots of faith and belief for Christians[30] helps to clarify the distinction between them. As early Christianity developed, there was neither a centralized organization nor a codified set of beliefs and practices. There was only individual faith. Even "Proto-Orthodoxy" did not appear until the second or third century.[31] But even those earliest iterations of orthodox practices (baptism creeds specifically) point to the reciprocal nature of orthodoxy and heresy: "The creation of [baptism] creeds gave an opportunity to all proto-orthodox Christians to memorize a brief summary of their faith, which could help them recognize and shun other views."[32] The creeds were the first attempt to codify faith – an articulation of the underlying assumptions of the Christian religion. The practice of reciting the creeds was a sign to the Christian community that one shared those assumptions, but of course such a recitation could not ensure that the spoken words corresponded to the individually held assumptions. As such, attempts to unify faith began with attempts to unify beliefs – specifically this practice of speaking the creeds. For these Christians, to know what one *was* was to know what one was *not*. The distinction, at this stage, was primarily between Christians and others. Gradually, elements of belief and practice beyond these articulated commitments accumulated, and within a few centuries they led to divisions within Christianity. Just as the fundamental creeds evolved over time, although in a much slower manner, the determination of acceptable and unacceptable practice and belief consolidated into ideas of orthodoxy – authorized or generally accepted theory, doctrine, or practice – and heterodoxy, variance from the authorized forms.

---

[30] Mainly western European Christians.
[31] Lynch, Joseph H. *Early Christianity: A Brief History*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. p. 71.
[32] Ibid.

Doctrine: Debates about Belief and Practice

Doctrine is the knowledge or precepts handed down by an authoritative body, and in this study, that body is typically the Catholic Church or leaders of the English church.[33] Personal faith is not dictated by official doctrine (or by unofficial doctrine, for that matter) and is potentially opposed to it. Further, doctrine is, in effect, a set of beliefs held and taught by a church or sect, and disagreements about and changes to doctrine were not only possible, but common. Unsurprisingly, then, over the course of Christianity's history official doctrine of the church has changed dramatically.

True Christian orthodoxy began with the Emperor Constantine (272-337 C.E.) in the fourth century. Constantine granted legal status to the Christian religion, and this new status sparked a widespread campaign of conversion and Christianization throughout the empire that was sustained for nearly three hundred years. Under Constantine, the push for orthodoxy included establishing church hierarchy and worship practices, and began the process of legislating the Empire's doctrine, and attempting to legislate its faith as well. Within the developing Christian religion, doctrinal divisiveness emerged early on as we see with Emperor Theodosius who legislated pro-Nicene Christianity in 380 by declaring it the official religion of Rome in the Edict of Thessalonica, deeming it the only legal form of Christianity to exist in the

---

[33] Doctrine is defined as "The action of teaching or instructing; instruction; a piece of instruction, a lesson, precept," "That which is taught or laid down as true concerning a particular subject or department of knowledge, as religion, politics, science, etc.; a belief, theoretical opinion; a dogma, tenet," and "A body or system of principles or tenets; a doctrinal or theoretical system; a theory; a science, or department of knowledge" ("doctrine" OED 1a, 2b, 3).

empire and displacing the previously official polytheisms.[34] Thus with Theodosius, Christian

heresy was first established through secular authority and punished through secular channels.[35]

After the fifth century, the decline of the Western Roman Empire slowed the legal and

official advancement of Christianity in Europe.[36] The decline of centralized control, along with

consistent military threats from Germanic peoples, was concurrent with what Peter Brown

describes as a "precipitating" of Christianity.[37] For approximately 600 years, between 500 and

1100, Western Christianity underwent slow changes that built toward consistency of doctrine and

practice. While the development and consolidation of the scriptures occurred earlier, during these

years monks and religious scholars worked with the ancient Christian texts, refining the

implications thereof to create a more thorough and consistent understanding of the first writings,

including those of the Apostles as well as the likes of Augustine of Hippo.

The Great Schism of 1053-1054 further codified the Western church in a process similar

to the first orthodox creeds: the church came to define itself not only as what it *was*, but what it

---

[34] Lynch p. 140. This law denied material favor to those Christians who did not adhere to the creed of Nicaea. The aims of these creeds, more than articulating the specific assumptions of the faithful, were to resolve disagreements between Christians concerning the details of the nature of God, Christ, and the Virgin Mary. Unlike the baptismal creeds which are spoken by individual Christians as a rite of passage into the religion, these creeds were forged, understood, and accepted only among major bishops, and had little direct impact on individual Christians.

[35] That is not to say, however, that disagreements regarding the various aspects of Christianity did not exist prior to 380. The nature of the Christian religion, which was formed over hundreds of years in various locations and under varying levels of secrecy inevitably produced some disagreements. Bu the Edict of Thessalonica was the first moment under legalized proto-orthodox Christianity that inextricably linked secular legal authority with Christian religious belief and practice. Additionally, the Roman emperor during this period cannot be said to be entirely distinct from the religious sphere, but he was not synonymous with the church or religion, either. A complete distinction between church and state was not articulated until Pope Gelasius I in Rome "developed the 'two swords' doctrine (spiritual and temporal) based on the Augustinian tradition" in the fifth century (79). Shortly thereafter, in the sixth century, Emperor Justinian articulated a model of church and state: "the main tenet of this doctrine was that while clearly distinguished, the religious and secular realms were not separated but complemented each other in harmony" (81). Justinian's model developed out of the tradition of ruling in Constantinople that can be traced at least as far back as to Emperor Constantine himself. Romocea, Cristian. *Church and State: Religious Nationalism and State Identification in Post-Communist Romania*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. Print.

[36] Although both the Western church (the Catholic Church) and the Eastern Orthodox church (or the Greek Orthodox Church) developed from the same early doctrine, this project focuses on the Western church in the early modern period.

[37] Brown, Peter. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. Print. p. 29.

was *not* (that being the Eastern church). Orthodoxy became increasingly narrower and aggressively enforced as the sense of threats from the Eastern church and then later on, Islam, became intensified. This declaration of difference provided a heightened need for identification, not only in the West but in the East as well. Persecutions began on both sides almost immediately, and the Crusades, though not carried out against the Eastern church directly (until the 4th Crusade), contributed to those persecutions. During the Crusades, the Western Church not only demonstrated its power and influence, it also demonstrated its control over many different secular authorities. For several hundred years the Western church had a central focus and a mission for its members. This focus was not only theological but practical, demanding more direct action from Christians than ever before. The Crusades created a war-time atmosphere with the Pope as both the military and spiritual leader, and although the Crusades ultimately failed in retaking the eastern holy sites, they more than succeeded in unifying the Western church and combining secular and religious authority in the figure of the Pope.

Orthodoxy and Heresy

Religious orthodoxy is necessarily associated with belief. Although the term "orthodox" does not appear in the English language until the fifteenth century, its historical usage is universally associated with religious doctrine and more specifically, religious belief.[38] Orthodoxy refers to established practices and doctrines, the actions and reasoned understandings of religion. Heresy is the opposite side of the orthodoxy coin, as it were. Heresy is the disagreement with or departure from orthodoxy, and because it, too, requires action and an engagement with reason in order to come to a disagreement, heresy is also associated with belief. But the pursuit of heresy by those who would promote religious orthodoxy invites manifestations of personal faith – that unreasoning, unwavering phenomenon – in the form of martyrdom. Because faith represents the

---

[38] "orthodox, adj. and n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2015. Web. 30 April 2015.

underlying assumptions of belief, and belief is the practical manifestation of those assumptions, a faithful Christian would be unlikely to recant or conform those beliefs and undermine the existing logic built upon the premises of personal faith.

The Inquisition records reveal a great deal about common understanding of religion in the period. That is, common understanding was actually extremely varied, and human invention played a role in individual understanding. A key example of just this kind of modified understanding is the case of Domenico Scandella as is laid out in Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms.*[39] Scandella, commonly known as Menocchio, was pursued by the Inquisition in Italy for decades, questioned and jailed multiple times throughout the lengthy process. Ultimately, Menocchio was burned at the stake in 1599 for heresy, but the interview transcripts paint a picture of a complex understanding of the Christian religion and the universe at large.[40] Through the transcripts, Ginzburg is able to trace the multiple sources from which Menocchio pulled for his interpretations; those sources include a vernacular Italian version of the Bible, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and an Italian translation of the Qur'an. But what is perhaps most interesting in Ginzburg's study is that not every aspect of Menocchio's interpretation can be linked to a source; some, at least, of his ideas are his own invention. The idea referred to in the title of the book is among these inventions, that all of matter at the beginning of time came together to form one large mass (the universe) just in the way that cheese forms through a coming-together process, and that within that mass came to live the angels, like worms, and also from that mass came God and the other major religious figures. Menocchio's "cheese and

---

[39] Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992. Print.
[40] Ginzburg argues for Menocchio as representative: "even a limited case (and Menocchio certainly is this) can be representative: in a negative sense, because it helps to explain what should be understood, in a given situation, as being 'in the statistical majority'; or, positively, because it permits us to define the latent possibilities of something (popular culture) otherwise known to us only through fragmentary and distorted documents" (xxi).

worms" version of creation directly contradicts his Bible's version of events, but no amount of inquisitorial effort could bring him to alter these beliefs, neither through careful reasoning nor through threat of punitive measures.

Compared to modern imaginings of the Inquisition, Menocchio faced a somewhat lax inquisitorial board, but his experience may be more typical than we tend to think. As was their general aim, their main goal in this case was to get Menocchio to recant, as well as to prevent him from spreading his heretical ideas, about which Menocchio spoke at length during his two separate trials. But even after those two trials, years of jail time, shunning, and humiliation by his community, Menocchio refused to recant. Not only that, but he continued religious discourse with his neighbors regarding those beliefs, which was explicitly forbidden by the inquisitors. Menocchio, though lacking the traditional fervor of persecuted believers, was steadfast in resisting the imposition of belief by the inquisitors, and after many years and the deaths of his wife and son, Domenico Scandella was executed by the church for heresy.

Menocchio's experience demonstrates the Inquisition's interest in belief rather than faith; Menocchio articulates a different doctrine from official Church teachings, a radical doctrine, indeed, and it is this doctrine the Inquisition intended to alter for Menocchio. However, his emphasis on analogy and metaphor reveals Menocchio's reliance on faith during these proceedings. Ginzburg notes that in the transcripts, Menocchio's speech is "redolent with metaphors from everyday life" and includes frequent references to literary works Menocchio likely read.[41] In addition to Menocchio's beliefs representing the logical outcomes of his underlying assumptions, the repeated inability to articulate his underlying assumptions points to faith as the source of his conviction. Belief is the practical manifestations of faith, but faith in itself is stubbornly inaccessible as we witness in Menocchio's transcripts.

---

[41] Ibid. p. 56-7

The Inquisition in Europe in and of itself demonstrates that as orthodoxy became ever

more defined in the Western Catholic Church, heresy too became defined – and pursued – and

faith regularly answered the persecution of heresy with martyrdom. Using such a definition of

heresy, however, immediately reveals the term's instability, which David Loewenstein points to

in his study of early modern heresy: "in a culture of great religious change and conflict, like early

modern England's, such anathematizing terms as 'heresy' and 'heretic' were far from stable:

they were subject to multiple, competing interpretations and understandings."[42] Loewenstein

traces these unstable definitions and impositions of heresy throughout the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, beginning with Sir Thomas More, and he relates the pursuit of heretics to

overarching state and social structures. He argues that the early modern culture of heresy was

pathological: "Responses to [heresy] were not only severe but sometimes visceral verging on

hysteria – as in the case of Thomas More or mid-seventeenth century heresy-hunters – in a

protracted period of religious change, division, and uncertainty when it was perceived as an

existential threat to political, religious, and social stability."[43] Thus, while the differences in

belief between Catholics and Reformers in the early modern period were not substantially greater

than the relatively minor differences between Christian sects and between heretical believers and

orthodox believers within a sect in the Medieval period, the connection between religious

concerns and state concerns made early modern questions of heresy radically more threatening.

The pursuit of heresy in England did not begin with Sir Thomas More. In response to

spreading Lollard doctrines, legislation was enacted in 1401 ("On Burning Heretics") which

allowed for the execution of heretics by fire should they refuse to abjure their heresies.[44] This

legislation was further strengthened by an additional act in 1414 that ordered secular authorities

---

[42] Loewenstein p. 1
[43] Ibid. p. 7.
[44] Ibid. p. 28.

to assist in the pursuit of heresy.[45] Through these two acts, heresy was thenceforth married to secular punishment; in effect, they "equated heresy with treason and spiritual dissent with political disobedience."[46] Prior to this legislation, Church authorities and Inquisitorial authorities acted relatively independently in the persecution and punishment of heretics. But these medieval laws were not carried out at their inception to the degree they were during Henry VIII's reign, partly because anxiety and fear were heightened in the early sixteenth century due to the beginning Reformation.[47]

The pursuit of heretics under Henry VIII was motivated by the specter of Martin Luther and Protestantism. The emphasis on orthodoxy in the Western Church had been increasing since the time of Saint Augustine to prevent the very occurrence that we find with Martin Luther. Luther's *95 Theses* criticized the official church in a rather minor way compared to popular imagination, and in a way reminiscent of many other church critics,[48] but the subsequent events created a schism the likes of which the church had not seen since its break with the East five hundred years prior. There is no evidence that Luther intended such a fundamental split from Catholicism as resulted in the Reformation, but the evidence is quite clear that the movement began with a relatively minor disagreement – the kind of disagreement the Inquisition had sought to quash since the twelfth century. Thus, English leadership was forced to witness from afar the sweeping increase in the popularity of reformation on the European continent in the very early sixteenth century, which certainly contributed to the fervor in pursuing reformation sympathizers in England.

---

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid. p. 68.
[48] Luther's theses are concerned with the topic of indulgences only. Luther, Martin. *Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*. N.p.: n.p., 1517. *Project Gutenberg*. 25 Apr. 2008. Web. 10 Jan. 2015.

The increasingly violent persecution of heretics in England began before Henry VIII

rejected Papal authority. Henry himself had been awarded the title "Defender of the Faith" by

Pope Leo X in 1521, thanks to his articulate tracts defending the Catholic sacraments against

Luther's radical reformationist ideas.[49] But quashing heresy was a much more difficult task than

expected, because although emphasis on orthodoxy had been increasing for centuries, the

actuality of orthodoxy was constantly in flux. Thus, there was little stability on either side of the

heresy issue, because the doctrines of Catholicism changed – even if only slightly – with every

Pope, and so, too the doctrines (however informal) of reformationist thinkers changed both with

Catholic changes and with each new innovator. Indeed, the Reformation was a movement that

began in quite a reactionary manner, but very quickly the door opened for innovation is

exegesis,[50] further fracturing a movement that never was unified.[51]

While Henry VIII may have undergone a change of religious conscience in the years

between 1521 and 1534, his 1534 Act of Supremacy was more instrumental than faith-driven,

asserting his own political autonomy in the context of intersecting desires for a male heir, a

younger wife, and an orthodoxy compatible with his other aims. 1536 saw the implementation of

new articles of faith reflective of reformist leanings under the influence of Archbishop Cranmer,

but many of those articles were retracted in 1539, as Henry sought to limit the "diversities of

---

[49] "Defender of the faith". *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.*
Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web. 09 Jan. 2015

[50] Clement Armstrong is an example of just this type of innovation in early modern England. In his writings
published no later than 1533, he argues that marriage is not a sacrament, which historian Ethan Shagan describes:
"This suggestion that flesh is incompatible with the sacraments implies a starkly different sacramental theology than
either Catholics or most Protestants wold have accepted". As a reformer type, Armstrong "was that most dangerous
of creatures, a literate layman, amateur preacher and theological omnivore, the sort of instinctive radical whom the
magisterial reformers at first embraced, then feared, and eventually sought to destroy." Shagan, Ethan. "Clement
Armstrong and the godly commonwealth." *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge
UP, 2002. Print. p. 65, 73.

[51] Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie assert, "Pre-Elizabethan 'Protestantism' was a loose and fractious movement a
cacophony of voices advocating personal and corporate reform through appeals to 'the Gospel.'…It was subversive,
combative, intellectual and individualistic, drawing on the printshop and the pulpit; and at the same time
hierarchical, universalist and eager to ally with the magistrate." Marshall, Peter, and Alec Ryrie. *The Beginnings of
English Protestantism*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print. p. 13.

opinions" among his subjects.[52] Thus, only a few years later, in 1539, Henry reversed many of

the reforming changes of the 1536 articles produced mainly by Archbishop Cranmer. That same

year, the officially authorized English language Bible was distributed with particular

motivations: "public uniformity in religion, supported by hierarchy and obedience to

authority...this, then, was how the verbum Dei was to be disseminated to Henry's people and

loyal aristocratic subjects".[53] Thus, although the reformation was felt in the official political and

religious doctrine of England, it was strongly flavored by the notion of obedience to the temporal

and religious authority of the new head of the Church, the king of England. This religious back-

and-forth epitomizes the later Henrician period in England as conservatives, reformers, and

Henry himself battled for control of English religious activity.

Henry VIII's religious reformation in England is the ultimate example of imposed

cultural and institutional imperatives. These imperatives are not those fashioned collectively by a

society and that bear the power of either emergent or residual culture,[54] but are a violent

imposition of newly formed dominant culture that directly conflicts with already existing

institutions and deeply held personal beliefs.[55] As such, religion exists both inside and outside

---

[52] *Treacherous Faith* p.78.
[53] Ibid. p. 79.
[54] "Residual" here is employed based on Raymond Williams's definition in *Marxism and Literature*, where he states, "The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present...In three characteristic cases in contemporary English culture this distinction can become a precise term of analysis. Thus organized religion is predominantly residual, but within this there is a significant difference between some practically alternative and oppositional meanings and values" (122). "Emergent" elements of culture are also defined by Williams as, "those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to [dominant culture]: emergent in the strict sense, rather than merely novel" (123). Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford [England: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print. Michael Schoenfeldt describes the New Historicist view that power circulates through culture in *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (11).
[55] Raymond Williams argues in Marxism and Literature that in some cases, personal experience necessarily falls outside of dominant culture: "it is a fact about the modes of domination, that they select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice. What they exclude may often be seen as the personal or the private, or as the natural or even the metaphysical" (125).

the state, and both inside and outside of dominant culture.[56] Debora Shuger comes to a similar

conclusion in her examination of Hooker's Laws: "One can, I think, argue that early modern

religion typically both creates and occupies spaces outside the jurisdiction of the state... The

point of intersection between the timeless and time is also the point of slippage between the

domains of polity and community, subjection and subjectivity."[57] One's beliefs and one's

religious identity are both within and without the state, both within and without the

institutionalized church. While figures like Henry VIII imposed laws regarding practice and

belief on the populace, there remained a part of belief that existed outside of the law.

Nevertheless, the law still tended to take action upon that part of belief to the point of death,

which in many cases revealed the intractability of faith.

Thus we can situate the persecution of the six Englishmen John Foxe describes in the

initial quotation in this chapter. These men, whose fervor for their differing religious beliefs

might outmatch the persecuted Italian Menocchio, but whose actions and ultimate end remain the

same, were the victims of state-imposed religious orthodoxy under King Henry VIII. Their faiths

were tested and proved in the foment of religious regularization through an adherence to belief

that would not be undone by the threat of corporal dissolution. Their collective choice to face

death rather than to alter their beliefs is in itself the practical, highly visible manifestation of their

underlying assumptions, and a rejection of the faulty logic they found in the alternative doctrine

offered by the English authorities.

---

[56] By suggesting that there is such a locus outside of dominant culture, I am rejecting Stephen Greenblatt's "containment and subversion" theory of culture as expressed in his essay, "Invisible Bullets." Instead, the suggestion that there are subversive elements outside of and in opposition to dominant culture is supported both by Raymond Williams's Marxism and Literature (specifically the chapter "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent") and Louis Montrose's *The Purpose of Playing*. Montrose demonstrates through Foucault that "power is never monolithic, and power relations always imply multiple sites not only of power but also of resistance, sites that are of variable configuration, intensity, and effectiveness" (10). Montrose, Louis A. *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.
[57] "'Society supernatural': the imagined community of Hooker's Laws (135).

Community and Orthodoxy

Because of Henry VIII's radical actions and the subsequent intertwining of church and state in England, it was in fashion for a time in literary criticism to consider church and state as synonymous, and to further suggest that culture and religion were also synonymous.[58] But just as boundaries cannot be carved into the ground with permanence, boundaries cannot be removed entirely either. Debora Shuger cautions against this sort of conflation explicitly: "while no one would deny that the dominant culture of the Renaissance was (in some sense) religious, the relation between religion and culture needs careful explication if religion is not to be confused with society itself or narrowed into theology."[59] Rather than saying society is the same as religion in early modern England, it would be more accurate to say that early modern culture in England was imbued with religion.

In fact, English communities centered around religious institutions for hundreds of years prior to the Reformation. For most of English history, English communities were defined by two circumstances: circumstance of location and parish divisions. Given the almost universal Catholicism in England through the late medieval period, location and parish can be viewed as one and the same, the parish being a church-determined territorial space and location being defined by more local powers (such as a king determining the borders of a duchy) – but both are essentially land divisions. Just as one was born into a particular region without choice, one was also born into a parish community.[60] Over time that compulsory inclusion was augmented as one entered into social contracts with other members of the community. In the same way, one

---

[58] For example, Peter Burke inscribes religion within popular culture during the early modern period, equating the cultural implications of sermons and plays. Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009. Print.

[59] *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (11-12).

[60] "Membership of the old communities had been compulsory – initially by the tying of the serf to the soil, latterly by government restrictions on mobility of labor," Christopher Hill notes in *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (426).

became linked to the church as a part of a necessary contract, in which one mainly – or even only – engaged other members of the community through a shared connection in the church.[61] Anne M. Meyers summarizes this circumstance in her reading of George Herbert's "The Church-porch":

> "Historically, the church porch was not only an entryway. It was also a site for meetings and exchanges, the place where bonds and contracts were formed between individual and community, between parishioner and parishioner, and between the religious and secular worlds."[62]

The church itself – the church-porch specifically in this instance – is represented as a space of community that is both "religious and secular" and is figured as necessary for the everyday connections within a community. Thus, the church through the late medieval period and into the early modern period was a social space defined, not exclusively by its spiritual function, but also by its role as communal nexus.

But over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, those parish communities faced a great deal of strife surrounding religious change – changes that not only affected religious doctrine but the everyday lives of English people. Henry VIII's break from Rome was an earthquake that produced hundreds of years of aftershocks. Religious change in England became quite rapid – lightning-fast compared to the changes happening in the Catholic Church – and as such produced a great deal of instability in England and abroad. Beginning with Henry, the Tudor monarchs began an intervention in English religious life that exceeded all previous iterations of monarchical authority. Their interference with religious doctrine placed the monarchs at the nexus of Church and State, practically conflating the two. Thus, as everyday English people negotiated the doctrinal demands of the Church, they were also necessarily

---

[61] "The church covenant was a contract, voluntarily entered into, linking the members for specific purposes" (Hill 426).

[62] "Restoring 'The Church-porch': George Herbert's Architectural Style" (430).

responding to the demands of the state. Henry VIII's break from Rome inextricably linked the monarchy to the Church of England in such a way that refusal or inability to conform to the demands of one was also a failure to conform to the other.

Between Henry's own ambivalence and the doctrinal back-and-forth of his heirs, English people faced more than twenty years of violent religious change. Edward VI embraced the Protestant Reformation zealously, implementing radical changes within the church, and allowing for Archbishop Cranmer's production and distribution of *The Book of Common Prayer* in 1552.[63] But Edward's premature death in 1553 put Mary Tudor in power, and she desired a return to Catholicism which she attempted to implement immediately and violently. While Mary's reign saw the executions of more than 300 Protestant martyrs under her persecution, Eamon Duffy argues that she had an overwhelming amount of support from the general populace for a return to traditional religious practices.[64] But, like her brother before her, Mary died before she could complete her restoration project; in 1558 the attempt to restore both Catholic doctrine and Catholic institutions in England was far from complete.

Between Henry's ambivalence about reformation, Edward's zealous piousness, and Mary's own loyalty to the Catholic Church, the English people experienced a violent back-and-forth of religious demands. In all three cases the people were given explicit doctrine which they were required to adopt regardless of personal convictions; the decrees of the monarchs meant, at the very least, repeated changes in religious practices, if not demands to change individual beliefs. Because of the country's deeply entrenched traditional Catholicism and the parish structure of communities, change was necessarily slow to take hold. Thus, in all three cases no

---

[63] John N. King notes that despite Edward's age, and: "Although King Edward lacked theological sophistication, he embraced anti-Catholic views and endorsed efforts to impose a Protestant settlement of religion by leaders of his regime" (182). " John Day: master printer of the English Reformation." *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print. p. 13.
[64] Duffy, Eamon. *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor*. New Haven Conn.: Yale UP, 2009. Print.

monarch saw the religious project to completion. But in each of those three cases the vulnerability of the populace was revealed under the demands of the monarch wielding powers of both Church and State.[65] Spiritually and corporally, the people of England faced arbitrary demands for compliance, with persistent threats to body and soul for refusing to do so, which most severely impacted those with the greatest spiritual convictions. Instability was a plague upon the lives of the everyday faithful. That said, the monarch closest to achieving religious stability during her reign was Henry's second surviving daughter, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's reign changed how nonconformity was handled by the state. Unlike under Mary, who pursued subjects directly for heresy, Elizabeth pursued subjects for the similarly heinous crime of treason. As religious reform became steadily more legislated, we see a greater number of subjects prosecuted and executed for the crime of treason than heresy, although that secular crime belied a religious motivation.[66] In this way, Elizabeth recategorized religious crimes as secular crimes, collapsing the church and state distinction. English subjects would then face a dual set of accusations if they did not bring their religious beliefs and practices in line with the state mandates: that they had forsaken both their church and their country. These additional pressures would have made conformity a more appealing choice as both charges and punishments could be worse for treason rather than heresy, but the heightened pressure also reveals the durability of faith in those who would not conform despite demands to do so.

---

[65] Mary would not have considered herself head of the Church, but as Mary's requests to Pope Julius III to formally submit England to the Pope's jurisdiction went unanswered until 1555, and the papacy itself was consumed by internal conflict and scandal, Mary maintained an equal influence on the Church in England as Edward VI and Henry VIII for most of her reign. Duffy, *Fires of Faith* p. 8.

[66] A.F. Pollard notes that approximately five people were executed per year for treason due to their Catholic beliefs during Elizabeth's reign. Of this legal conflation, Pollard says, "The vexed question, whether the Romanists died for treason or for their faith, implies an antithesis which had little meaning in that age of mingled politics and religion." Pollard, A.F. *The Political History of England …: Pollard, A.F. From the Accession of Edward VI to the Death of Elizabeth (1547-1603)*. Ed. William Hunt and Reginald Poole. Vol. 6. London: Longmans, Green, 1910. *Google Books*. Google Books, 16 Feb. 2010. Web. 28 Jan. 2015. p. 377.

That is not to say, however, that heresy receded in the minds of English people during this time of the Elizabethan Settlement. There is evidence of severe anxiety related to heresy, particularly in regard to radical separatist Protestants. The Anabaptists in particular became an obsession for early modern English writers, as David Loewenstein demonstrates in *Treacherous Faith*.[67] Although violent heresy-hunting declined during Elizabeth's reign, "we find anxieties and irrational fears about heresy and heretics just below the surface and sometimes erupting, as in the heresy-making campaign against separatists during the 1580s and 1590s."[68] "Heresy-making" is the active demonization of religious activities that had not been previously identified as heretical, so Loewenstein is pointing to the increasing claims of heresy where no heresy had been found before; in their anxieties people were, in effect, redefining and expanding the definition of heresy. The imperative for conforming to orthodoxy during this time, then, was no less than during the more bloody demands for conformity of Henry, Edward, or Mary. The punitive legislation as well as the nearly pathological obsession with heresy during Elizabeth's reign ensured that. So while the religious persecutions of Elizabeth's reign may have felt fewer or less urgent given her long reign and incremental changes, they were, in fact, very similar in extremity to her monarch siblings'.

When James VI of Scotland acceded to the English throne as well, in many ways little changed in terms of the religious climate and the enforcement of orthodoxy. As monarchs, both Elizabeth and James embraced the intersection between Church and State, although in different ways. Elizabeth collapsed heresy and treason, opening new avenues for the persecution of religious nonconformists, but she actively distanced her perceived authority from the institution

---

[67] Chapter 4 examines the similarities between Thomas Nash, Edmund Spenser, and James I's works which feature this sort of Anabaptist anxiety. Loewenstein's use of "faith" in this text is also a problematic one, as he regularly uses the term to refer to the Christian religion as a whole, and frequently as a synonym for belief.
[68] Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith* p. 14.

of the church by changing her title from "Head" to "Governor" of the church in England. James, on the other hand, embraced his divine status of anointed king and reminded his subjects of that status regularly through his writings and his proclamations. Both monarchs, though, were united in their persecutions of unorthodox belief. Elizabeth targeted those who would not conform to legislation regarding religious practices, and James additionally targeted particular religious self-identifications, including Catholics and extreme Protestant sects. The notable difference in modes of persecution between these monarchs, however, is their explicitness of action. Elizabeth's use of treason was a deliberate move to muddy her perceived motivations, whereas James was consistently forthright regarding his motivations for persecuting religious nonconformists. James, too, faced danger from persecuted religious groups, including Catholics. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 in which Parliament was targeted with explosives marked the beginning of the troubled relationship between James and English Catholics, who faced increased persecution throughout James' rule,[69] a result of James's view of monarchical power which was different from and more extreme than Elizabeth's.[70] This increased persecution intensified tensions among the various religious groups in England, and those tensions reached a boiling point when Charles I succeeded his father in 1625 and immediately married Henrietta Maria, a Catholic.

The beginning of Charles I's rule is where the timeline of this project ends. My scope begins in Catholicism and ends when my poets began and ended their careers in a firmly

---

[69] McGonigle, Thomas. *A History of the Christian Tradition: From the Reformation to the Present*. Vol. 2. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996. Print. p. 38.

[70] James argues in the opening sonnet of *Basilikon Doron*, "God giues not Kinges the stile of Gods in vaine, / For on his Throne his scepter doe they swey." James emphasizes absolute divine right of kings in his works written within years of taking the English throne, a characterization of monarchical power that is more extreme than Elizabeth's "queen and godly nation" (McLaren 24). James I. *Basilikon Doron or His Majesties Instrvctions To His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince. Political Works of James I.* Ed. Charles Howard McIlwain. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918. p. 3. McLaren, A N. *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558-1585*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Internet resource.

Protestant regime, before the reintroduction of Catholic sympathies with Charles I. Those sympathies fired the fervency of radical Protestantism and enabled its mobilization for political radicalism as well, altering the nature of religion among *subjects* to be much more explicitly political than in the previous century. While the English Civil War was profoundly connected to religious issues, Charles' failures as monarch separate him from his predecessors by demonstrating the radically altered power dynamic between state authority and the people. And it is those radical changes that are outside the scope of this project.

What we find in the trajectory of the Reformation in England during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries – including both actions supporting and actions reacting to the Reformation – is an inextricable link between state actions and church actions, and that both church and state were plagued with instability and uncertainty. What is perhaps equally interesting is that this state of instability was not new, that is to say, not original to the Reformation. The Reformation in England is frequently represented by historians and literary scholars alike as either a revelation or an unparalleled tragedy,[71] when, in fact, political and religious turmoil had plagued England throughout its history.[72] There is a continuity across

---

[71] Eamon Duffy in *The Stripping of the Altars* in many ways paints the Reformation as a tragedy brought down on good English Catholics.

[72] As mentioned previously, legislation for pursuing religious nonconformity had existed for a hundred years prior to the Act of Supremacy, but political struggles for power have always existed, with King Henry VII – lauded for his ability to create stability – being an excellent example of this. Henry VII seized the crown through military action from Richard III, and he reigned for 24 years, during which the country was relatively stable – but only relatively. Inflation became a problem, one which his successor would see grow into a perilous balancing act. In terms of heirs Henry VII was rather stable; even after his firstborn son Arthur died, there was not nearly the uncertainty that Henry VIII faced in terms of succession. Even so, Henry VII faced regular challenges to his reign in the forms of other claimants to the throne (including several iterations of figures thought to be deceased) and remaining questions about his legitimacy without primogeniture. Overall, while Henry VII was accepted as king after a bloody acquisition and left his heirs relatively secure in the line of succession, his 24-year reign marks only a short breathing space in the long history of turmoil in English politics. One merely has to glance at Holinshed's *Chronicles* or at the long line of Shakespeare's histories to see the instability in medieval through early modern English politics and religion.

Sandra Logan's unpublished "Shakespeare's Histories – Ten Plays in Search of Coherence," presented at the Shakespeare Association of America, traces Hall and Holinshed's accounts of Henry VII's rule: "as represented in *Hall's Chronicle*, the reign of the first Tudor king thus replicates many of the problems of the War of the Roses, suggesting that Henry Tudor's repetition of Henry Bolingbroke's disruption of primogeniture threatened to plunge

historical periods both in terms of a history of resistance to official doctrine and overall

hierarchical structure.

Religious dissent and a top-down hierarchy within the church were no new phenomena

during the Reformation. While criticism of the church was somewhat unwelcome, it was

consistent throughout church history and generally treated mildly. [73] By contrast, dissent, which

is the disagreement with official church tenets and thus a difference in personal belief, was

perceived as dangerous and divisive, and treated as such. There is a long tradition of religious

dissidence in England, perhaps the most notably in the medieval period among the Wyclifites.[74]

The Wyclifites and, more generally, the Lollards, make clear that the English Reformation was

no revelation, but a continuation of dissent that began hundreds of years earlier in lay

communities.[75] Although Wyclif's ideas did not take hold in an official way – neither legislative

nor Church policy were affected to any great extent – his ideas and the demonstrated support for

them show that medieval religious life was in no way fixed, stable, or doctrinally-bounded.[76]

And we need not be limited by Reformation history and theology; Wyclif demonstrates

difference in personal belief that certainly extends beyond the bounds of the Catholic/Protestant

dichotomy. And with Henry VIII, the top-down power structure of the Church also was not an

innovation, as this hierarchy replicated the existing church structure, merely substituting the

England back into intestine conflict – a threat kept barely in check by Henry VII's careful internal and external diplomacy, subtle policy, and martial capability" (4). This unprecedented examination of the anxieties of Henry VII's rule demonstrates that ideas of stability and ease about this time period do not align with the political realities.

[73] Criticism of the church has been consistent throughout the Catholic Church's history, one notable example being criticism of the extravagances of priests, but as historian G.W. Bernard notes, such criticism were efforts to improve the church and reach a religious ideal rather than disagree with church tenets. Bernard, G W. *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome*. 2012. Print.

[74] Wycliffe, John, and F D. Matthew. *The English Works of Wyclif: Hitherto Unprinted*. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1978. p 347.

[75] Somerset, Fiona. "Introduction." *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*. Ed. Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, and Derrick G. Pitard. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell, 2003. Print. p. 14.

[76] See Platt, Colin. *Medieval England: A Social History and Archaeology from the Conquest to 1600 A.d*. New York: Scribner, 1978. Print. ; Bridbury, A. R. "Towns and Town Life in the Thirteenth Century." *Medieval England: A Survey of Social and Economic Origins and Development*. Leicester: Matador, 2008. 141-50. Print.

monarch for the Pope as the supreme authority. The King was understood to be anointed by God to rule the country (even though the Pope claimed the authority to grant rule), and, at least in Henry VIII's eyes, was therefore equal in power to the Pope. Thus, there is an analogous relationship between Henry and the Pope, and their impacts on church life were similar.

However, a change in the conditions of subjects directly related to the English Reformation in particular emerged with the consolidation of ecclesiastical and state power in the hands of one person, through the shift from the Pope to the king as head of the church. This consolidation of power rendered English people more directly vulnerable to persecution than they had been when ultimate Church authority lay beyond the state. As we have seen, changes within the Catholic Church came slowly, partially due to the church's expansive power structure in which only Councils could make impactful and widespread changes. The church took thirty years to respond to Martin Luther, for instance, with its own Counter Reformation.[77] But with all authority condensed into the hands of the English monarch, changes came swiftly, attached to the particular interests of the sitting monarch, and subject to rapid alteration in the change from one monarch to the next. And with those changes came punitive decrees for those who would not conform to this ever-changing orthodoxy. Between the increasing scope of monarchical power and the insularity of English religious and political matters, English subjects faced extreme dangers for their inevitable differences in personal belief.

As this brief overview of early modern religious orthodoxy suggests, conforming to doctrinal demands of the state was of mortal importance, and yet it became increasingly difficult to do so during the early modern period in England. Expanding monarchical power, overlapping church and state power structures, and rapid doctrinal change outpaced the ability of even the

---

[77] Evennett, H. Outram. *Cardinal of Lorraine and the Council of Trent: A Study in the Counter-reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ, 2011. Print. p. 47.

most willing subjects to properly conform, and those nonconformists faced intensified repercussions. Today's conformist was tomorrow's heretic (or traitor). To say that during the early modern period the stakes for English people were high when it came to religion would be a monumental understatement; as demands for conformity became more frequent the demands also became more subtle and occasionally indecipherable. At the same time orthodoxy was becoming increasingly articulated and enforced, it seems rejection of orthodoxy also increased with full understanding of the consequences thereof. And yet, we do not find all English people embracing religious conformity as a means to defend against even the most extreme repercussions. We have witnessed the martyrdom of six men on a single day during Henry VIII's reign, a result of their refusal to conform to the novel orthodoxy of that particular day. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* catalogues hundreds more like these stalwart men who held fast to their beliefs as they faced the most extreme corporal punishments for failing to accept orthodoxy, even as they demonstrated their beliefs and a state of faith consistent with theological writings. With this demonstration in view, it becomes clear that spirituality and orthodoxy are distinct; spirituality has a clear investment in faith, whereas orthodoxy does not. Men and women like Cuthbert Barnes, like Thomas Summers, and like Menocchio, defied the imposition of religious doctrine in favor of an individual understanding – or even individual invention. Those individual perspectives include unique assumptions and understandings of any or all aspects of religion, from transubstantiation to iconography, or from logical assent to the theorization of faith.

But while martyrs are highly visible examples of dissent, most often the record we have is one of refusal to provide testimony, to recant beliefs held heretical, or to agree to newly-prescribed doctrine. While these are instructive instances of the power of faith in the face of overwhelming threats, they tell us less about the nature of faith, than the nuances of its effect on

Christian believers. To explore these more nuanced perspectives, this project focuses, not on the extraordinary moment of martyrdom, but on more everyday representations of belief and faith. In literary works we can witness clear considerations of orthodoxy as well as modifications thereof – unique understandings of doctrine which are explored and interrogated through the query-based, revelatory mode of lyric poetry.

Literary Genre

The theological definitions of faith discussed above establish the expectation for what early modern individuals would experience through faith. Based on these definitions we come to expect steadfastness and certainty, contentment and trust. However, the realities of faith for early modern English people were not nearly so stable, and their representations of those experiences demonstrate a radically different experience of faith. When one considers the different media through which we are made privy to the thoughts and experiences of early modern subjects, one might conclude that the autobiography or memoir[78] genres would be most authoritative in revealing the actual lived experiences of these people. Baring one's soul would require simply writing down an unequivocal account of oneself. But, as Brooke Conti argues rather convincingly in *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England*, such accounts are among the most opaque and contradictory in regard to religious experience:

> But if these autobiographical moments are not straightforward, linear narratives, they are
> also not occasions for deep introspection: they provide neither a detailed account of a
> writer's religious history nor an examination of the soul. Indeed, it often seems that the
> more a writer says about his religion the less clear his beliefs or denominational identity
> become. These puzzling works are what I call confessions of faith: polemically inspired

---

[78] Memoir is typically differentiated from autobiography based on style; autobiography follows the style of biography by telling the story of a person's life from birth until death, while memoir can take a topical approach or provide the narrative to a select timeline in the author's life. Both memoir and autobiography tend to be written about one's own life.

autobiographies that purport to lay bare their authors' beliefs but that tend, instead, to complicate and obscure them.[79]

While Conti is an expert in the area of religious confessional writing, she does not recognize the difference between belief and faith but instead conflates the two, further demonstrating the need for intervention in this area. However, she points to a key reason for literature's particular suitability for representing religious experience: figurative language. Faith is an elusive phenomenon, even to the extent that critics attempt to identify it, and as Conti notes it eludes direct articulation. It is often only through figurative language that perceptions about and experiences of faith become tangible. Conti describes religious autobiography as a failure of representation in some respects, but there are additional reasons for autobiography's unsuitability as a locus for representations of personal faith. For instance, although autobiography suggests a particular authenticity – that is, a nearness to the subject about which the text is written – that perception of nearness is undercut by the fact that autobiographies (including letters and diaries) are written for particular audiences.[80] Thus the audience necessarily impacts the form of representation, including the assumptions and biases. Representation, in and of itself, also necessarily eludes "authenticity."[81] I would also argue that diaries and letters suffer from a lack of literariness, that is, refined, complex, condensed, and figuration-heavy language, which affects their impacts over time. These media run the risk of decontextualization over time; whereas the literary nature of other forms faces less of that risk due to their self-aware literary nature.

---

[79] Conti, Brooke. *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. Print. p. 2.

[80] Diaries as being written for particular audiences is detailed in the introduction to *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation, 1500-1660*. Bedford, Ronald, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly. *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation, 1500-1660*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. Print. p. 2.

[81] Ashley Chantler and Michael Davies address this most succinctly in the introduction to their anthology when they say, "Authenticity in art, as in life, is not reproducible." Davies, Michael. "Introduction." *Literature and Authenticity, 1780–1900: Essays in Honour of Vincent Newey*. By Ashley Chantler. Ed. Ashley Chantler and Michael Davies. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. 1-8. Print. p. 3.

Additionally, as Stephen Arch argues, the revelatory capacity granted to autobiography did not appear historically until after the 1820s when the "modern" sense of a "self" was beginning to be more fully realized.[82] As a means of understanding personal perceptions of faith, I find that literary forms are more suitable than other textual forms from the period.

The literary form I examine is lyric poetry. Lyric poetry (at least in some of its modes) aspires to represent a complex, deep, authentic self, often without conventional markers of social relations. In that way, lyric poetry simultaneously suggests and contradicts the possibility of a direct link between the text and experience. Helen Vendler's introductory description of lyric poetry best summarizes the view that poetry has the capacity to access the soul:

> Lyric is the genre of private life: it is what we say to ourselves when we are alone. There
> may be an addressee in lyric (God, or a beloved), but the addressee is always
> absent...Because the lyric represents a moment of inner meditation, it is relatively short,
> and always exists in a particular place – "here" – and a particular time – "now."...It lets
> us into the innermost chamber of another person's mind, and makes us privy to what he
> or she would say in complete secrecy and safety, with none to overhear...a lyric is meant
> to be spoken by its reader as if the reader were the one uttering the words.[83]

Although this description from Vendler is highly idealistic and somewhat simplifies the relationship between text, writer, and reader, her characterization is useful for identifying the features of lyric poetry that render it amenable to representing personal faith. Lyric poetry is highly personal, or it is at least framed as such by the poets who write it. While it cannot be taken to represent the author's 'actual' inner being, it nevertheless both posits the existence of, and expresses the emotional, intellectual, and moral dilemmas of such a being, however constructed

---

[82] Arch, Stephen. *After Franklin: The Emergence of Autobiography in Post-Revolutionary America, 1780-1830.* Hanover and London: U of New Hampshire P, 2001. Print.
[83] Vendler, Helen. *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology.* 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002. Print. p. xlii.

that being and those expressions may be. It can thus be read as a representation of a personal and internal condition, even if the reality and specificity of that representation cannot be taken for granted.

But it must also be recognized that, in the context of this trope of introspection, lyric poetry not only suggests "the innermost chamber of another person's mind," but also implicates the reader into that personal space. There is a simultaneous stasis and dynamism present in lyric poetry that captures the author's constructed moment and connects it to the reader's experience, which both contextualizes the poem historically and politically, and universalizes it by suggesting that a reader might connect with any poet's given historical/political/emotional moment. Jonathan Post argues this point in *English Lyric Poetry*, saying, "I would emphasize that an encounter with the literary (aesthetic) provides, as Heaney suggests, an encounter with history (politics) at an experiential level."[84] Heather Dubrow, too, argues for lyric poetry's dynamism: "lyric encourages or even engenders narrative, thus representing not the stasis often identified with such poetry but rather a pathway to action, even a release of blockage."[85] This connection suggests continuity over time and implies that whatever the difference (historical, political, etc.) between author/speaker and reader, the two will have enough commonality to make that connection. Lyric poetry allows for a sense of access and connection that is not readily available in other, seemingly more "experientially-grounded," genres.

Vendler's theorization of lyric poetry argues for a formation of self through poetry, but emphasizes most strongly a view of the interior self. Thus, a reader can perceive relative closeness, however constructed, to the speaker's mind or interiority. This closeness that lyric

---

[84] Post, Jonathan F. S. *English Lyric Poetry: The Early Seventeenth Century*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print. p. xii-xiii.

[85] Dubrow, Heather. *The Challenges of Orpheus: Lyric Poetry and Early Modern England*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. Print. p. 231.

poetry allows makes it unique among personal forms of writing, because not only does it allow a

perception of access into the speaker's interior, it also engages dialogically with the reader as

well as with other texts.[86] The sonnet form demonstrates this dialogic capacity most aptly, as

A.D. Cousins and Peter Howarth summarize: "From its legal beginnings, the sonnet brought

together music, desire and the arguing of a case, through the turn or *volta*, which allows the

sonnet to state more than one point of view, change its mind or adapt an interlocutor's."[87] As a

sonnet can "argue," contain multiple points of view, and most importantly "change its mind,"

this poetic form – and, I would argue, lyric poetry more broadly – demonstrates its capacity not

only to examine a problem, but also to resolve that problem.

In that same way, lyric poetry rejects stasis, as within such poetry the reader may witness

change:

> In its usual form, the lyric offers us the representation of a single voice, alone, recording
>
> and analyzing and formulating and changing its mind. Although no one else is present in
>
> fact, the solitary poet is frequently addressing someone else, someone not in the room.[88]

Here, Vendler notes the paradoxical solitary yet dialogical nature of lyric poetry; the speaker of

the poem represents his or her changing mind as if addressing an always-absent addressee. Thus,

the speaker is always alone yet always addressing his or her mind to another, creating intense

"loneliness" and a "painful asymmetry."[89] And still, Vendler argues, despite the lack of an

addressee, lyric poetry has the capacity to create striking intimacy:

---

[86] Autobiography also has this dialogic capacity, but lyric's unique capacity comes with the combination of perception of access to the speaker's interior.

[87] Cousins, A. D., and Peter Howarth. *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. *Google Books*. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. p. 1.

[88] Vendler, Helen. *Invisible Listeners: Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005. Print. p. 1.

[89] Ibid p. 2.

The intrinsic and constitutive ability of the lyric to create intimacy is perhaps most

striking when the object of intimacy can never be humanly seen or known, yet can be

humanly addressed. In such a case, the unseen other becomes an unseen listener,

anchoring the voice of the poet as it issues into the otherwise vacant air.[90]

The intimacy experienced by a reader of lyric poetry is the result of the poet's "unseen listener."

This unseen other leaves a vacuum within the dialogue, an empty subject position into which a

reader might step. The reader, then, is invited to fill this position and to engage with the speaker

directly, to receive direct communiques and even to formulate responses. The ability to respond,

of course, is merely an illusion, but it is that very illusion that implicates the timeless reader into

the speaker's dialogue and creates a sense of intimacy both with the speaker and with the poem.

At the very least, however, the inquisitorial nature of lyric poetry calls attention to sites of

discomfort, disturbance, instability, or uncertainty, and opens the way to further probing, to

additional grappling, particularly if the resolution offered is unsatisfactory to a given reader.

Lyric poetry is thus an ideal site to locate the personal. It represents the mind in dialogue

with itself and with others, in such a way that transcends historical contexts and engages directly

with its reader. Lyric poetry is intimate and revelatory, demonstrating a heightened sense of

interiority than might be expected during the early modern period. There has been some debate

about the very existence of interiority in early modern subjects, some of which is derived from

philosopher Charles Taylor's work, *Sources of the Self: the Making of Modern Identity.* Taylor

argues that the notion of the individual is a modern idea and thus misapplied in the 15th and 16th

centuries.[91] His theory relies on Descartes and Locke being the instigating forces behind the

modern objectification of the mind, which allows for the alienation of one's own inner self. This

---

[90] Ibid p. 4.
[91] Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard Univeristy, 1992. Print.

alienation, he argues, enables an individual to then impose his or her own will on his or her own inner self, an action that would not have been possible prior to Descartes and Locke, philosophers working after the timeframe of my late medieval / early modern project.[92] Other scholars have also criticized the notion of early modern interiority. Francis Barker uses the term "anachronistic" when describing the application of interiority to early modern subjects,[93] and Patricia Fumerton claims, "the private could be sensed only through the public" and that "the 'self' was void."[94]

These criticisms, however, have been met with conclusive arguments from early modern literature scholars. Katharine Maus in particular handles these arguments succinctly in the introduction to her work, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*:

> when one looks at a wide variety of printed materials produced in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, it becomes difficult to claim that Hamlet's boast of 'that within' is anachronistic – that Shakespeare has mysteriously managed to jump forward in time and expropriate the conceptual equipment of a later era.[95]

Maus's tone is representative of the current view of these claims made against early modern interiority, that the claims are beyond the scope of reasonableness in early modern literary criticism. In response to claims of anachronism, Maus figures early modern interiority as "inwardness" so as not to conflate the historically later implications of "bourgeois subjectivity" which Geoffrey Johns describes as "self-presence, the notions of privacy and an individual's

---

[92] Ibid p. 160.
[93] Barker, Francis. *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection*. London: Methuen, 1984. Print. p. 31.
[94] Fumerton, Patricia. *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Print. p. 109.
[95] Maus, Katharine E. *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print. p. 3.

entitlement to it."[96] In the decades since the publication of Maus's book, this issue has been widely considered to be resolved.

That is not to say that representing inwardness, then, is as simple as putting pen to paper. Michael Schoenfeldt's *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton*, also considers "self" and "interiority" as essentially the same, and his work on the materiality of identity revises Taylor's notions of the immaterial mind (aka modern interiority). Schoenfeldt argues that while early modern interiority is not necessarily perceived as material, it is theorized and articulated through material terms.[97] When early modern writers were imagining inwardness, Schoenfeldt suggests, they were literally imagining the inward part of the body and articulated that inwardness thusly.[98] But while some critics would call this assignation a relinquishing of mindful agency to the whims of one's viscera, Schoenfeldt insists that the Galenic language is actually empowering to the subject.[99] Ultimately, in his description of Shakespeare, Schoenfeldt brings embodied inwardness full circle with a connection to lyric poetry: "Shakespeare turns so frequently to physiological terminology because the job of the doctor, like that of the playwright and poet, is to intuit inner reality via external demeanor. Lyric poet and medical doctor, then, are both students of inwardness."[100] Additionally, the act of writing lyric poetry to reveal one's inwardness necessarily requires external action. One must lift the pen, commit ink to paper, and apply physical forces to manifest one's interiority. Writing is an act of embodiment, and thus one must recognize the conundrum of revealing one's inwardness. While it is clear that interiority does, in

---

[96] Johns, Geoffrey A. *Deformed Subjects and Transgressive Bodies: Inwardness and Monstrosity in Early Modern Popular Culture*. Diss. Michigan State U, 2013. *Islandora Repository*. Web. 23 May 2015.
[97] Schoenfeldt, Michael C. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print. p. 8.
[98] The House of Temperence in *The Faerie Queene*, Book II Canto IX, is an example of just this kind of imagining; it portrays the house as a well-governed body.
[99] Ibid p. 11.
[100] Ibid p. 75.

fact exist in early modern subjects, one must also recognize the continual struggle to represent the immaterial –or perhaps merely unseen – through the material.

Thus, lyric poetry is perhaps the most appropriate medium for pursuing representations of personal faith. In addition to lyric poetry's capacity to represent the interior self, by positing the "unseen listener," lyric poetry is particularly suited to religious representations. Lyric poems are frequently fashioned as prayers, as we see in George Herbert and John Donne, and in the early modern period these poems frequently have overtly religious themes. Even when the "unseen listener" is not necessarily fashioned as God, Helen Vendler notes that the apostrophic nature of lyric poetry "rises above the level of respect shown to a worldly patron or the veneration shown toward a beloved, and manifests a humility suitable to a speaker addressing the divine."[101] The very form of lyric poetry suggests the ability to engage with the divine.

Simultaneously, the form of lyric poetry points to the problem of representing personal faith. Lyric poetry is dynamic; it suggests a dialogue between speaker and "unseen listener," between speaker and reader. It represents a moving, formulating, changing human mind that connects with other minds across both space and time. But faith, as theorized by early modern theologians, demands stasis. Faith is a constant state of trust, unwavering, unfaltering, unchanging. Therefore, it seems, the form of lyric poetry precludes representations of faith. This, however, is not the case. Instead, early modern poets constantly represent their experiences of personal faith; however, those experiences defy the expectations determined by theologians. These poets represent a constant struggle – both for the experience of faith and the representation of faith.

For example, John Donne wrote his *Holy Sonnets* in the early seventeenth century during a time of now-recognized personal religious struggle as he converted from Catholicism to

---

[101] *Invisible Listeners* p. 2.

England's Protestantism (early or proto-Anglicanism). Perhaps the most well-known amongst these sonnets is "Holy Sonnet XIV," in which the reader may witness passionate struggle:

> Batter my heart, three-person'd God ; for you
>
> As yet but knock ; breathe, shine, and seek to mend ;
>
> That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
>
> Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
>
> I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,
>
> Labour to admit you, but O, to no end.
>
> Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
>
> But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
>
> Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
>
> But am betroth'd unto your enemy ;
>
> Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
>
> Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
>
> Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
>
> Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

This sonnet is positioned as a prayer, addressing God directly, and the speaker fashions himself as an unwilling fortress against God. His doors are locked, and while God stands at those doors waiting to be admitted, the speaker can only "Labour...to no end." The speaker sees his connection to God as broken and disjointed by the material walls that separate them and calls on God to "force, to break, blow, burn." Donne represents his heart as in a constant state of war, a war that can only be won by God's force. The speaker himself is "captive," "betroth'd unto [God's] enemy" but without the strength or agency either to free himself or to admit God into his "heart."

This poem highlights the painful loneliness of lyric poetry. Donne paints himself as both physically and emotionally isolated, trapped within the gated walls of an unbreachable fort. He is unable to open the gates or break down the walls to reach God, but he insists that force will bring the two together. Rather than waiting for entry, Donne insists that God "break, blow burn". The speaker begs God to change his tactics and take direct action on him, because waiting for the speaker to breach the walls is futile; at the same time, God must overcome the speaker's unwilling heart. Donne says outright that the only way into his heart is through the use of violence: "imprison me, for I, / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me." The violence Donne demands is specifically sexual force, a breaching not only of his heart but of his body.

"Holy Sonnet XIV" is the epitome of personal religious struggle. The speaker's condition is defined entirely through figuration, as trapped in a walled city, isolated from God and all other connections. He emphasizes his incapacities: to admit God, to free himself from God's adversaries, and to take any action at all. It is a poem about personal failing and the struggle to connect with God, a struggle that is never resolved, because at the end of the poem the speaker's cries ring out, but they meet no answer. The poem ends both with the speaker still trapped behind the city's walls, separated from God, and with God remaining silent, the suggestion of deafness hanging in the air.

This is a poem about fear, doubt, and uncertainty about the struggle for faith. The speaker's uncertainty and separation from God highlight his lack of trust and stasis as he actively seeks a change that will result in a closeness with and reliance upon God. His captivity and isolation demonstrate that he is not in a state of faith as Aquinas, Luther, or Zwingli would define it. But the speaker is clearly seeking faith; even through the problematic application of

43

human agency he seeks to move from a state of war to a state of peace. "Reason," which is a mere "viceroy," proves utterly inadequate. In this way, Donne's "Holy Sonnet XIV" is representative of much late medieval and early modern lyric poetry. Representations of personal faith are not consistent with the expectations developed in theology; lyric poetry represents no such trust, no such stasis. Instead, these lyric poems represent extreme struggle in the face of faltering faiths. Poets including George Herbert and Anne Vaughan Lock represent consistent questioning and doubt, attributes thought necessarily contrary to faith as a religious phenomenon. They doubt their abilities to have faith, and they question God's mandate that they do so. They beg for God's intervention and doubt even their own abilities to go on as Christians. Faith is inaccessible as certainty. Thus, it seems, the experience of personal faith as it is represented in late medieval and early modern lyric poetry exists in juxtaposition to the theological notions of faith, and suggests a much more nuanced understanding of Christocentric religious experience. This project engages with religious lyric poetry and its representation of such tensions, with the aim of elucidating aspects of that more nuanced understanding.

Chapters

In the first chapter, "The Role of the Temporal: the (un)Importance of Community," I explore two separate ideas of community: ideal religious communities as they are portrayed through theological writings, and real, lived-in early modern communities as represented through the lyric poetry of Aemilia Lanyer and Robert Southwell. This chapter examines the boundary between formative, fruitful temporal community and individual salvation as represented by early modern lyric poetry, and demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between them. It also juxtaposes negative experiences of exclusive, isolating community with theological and legal

expectations of community. Community bridges the gap between the state and the individual as it is inherently local and unique yet faces broader pressures politically and societally. The parish church was the center of both spiritual and secular life,[102] and that centrality remained rather stable over time. While literary representations of community emphasize community's importance in relation to spiritual life, those representations also point to a final moment of cleavage from the community prior to salvation, a sense that while community may be a necessary element to spiritual life while on earth, salvation is only granted to the individual. This chapter traces community's importance within Christianity in the writings of Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. For theoretical framing around the idea of community, I turn to Peter Burke, Benedict Anderson, Michael Halvorson, Karen Spierling, Alexandra Shepard, and Phil Withington.[103] This chapter reveals the radical discontinuity between official doctrine and individual religious experiences as well as the capacity of the early modern subject to interrogate and modify that doctrine to fit individual conviction. In so fundamentally contradicting the doctrine of community, the representations of community by Lanyer and Southwell suggest an individuality of faith that defies orthodoxy.

Chapter 2, "The Formative Qualities of Doubt," argues that literary representations of the Christian spiritual experience paradoxically assert doubt as a necessity that coexists with faith. This coexistence is paradoxical because of faith's theological definition; both Ulrich Zwingli and Thomas Aquinas define faith as "certainty." Additionally, Christian theologians like Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, and Theodore Beza exhort Christians against doubt because of its

---

[102] Christopher Hill discusses this centrality in *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*.

[103] Burke, Peter. *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print.; Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Web. 05 Nov 2015.; Halvorson, Michael, and Karen E. Spierling. *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. Print.; Shepard, Alexandra, and Phil Withington. *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.

incompatibility with faith and salvation. But Anne Vaughan Lock and John Donne represent

doubt as an accepted element of faith in their lyric poems, and point to a coming moment of

fruition where doubt will be erased and union with God is sure. For theoretical framing of

Christian doubt, I turn to William Hamlin, Richard Popkin, Brendan Dooley, Ellen Spolsky,

Alan Levine, Jennifer Hecht, and Michelle Zerba.[104] This chapter narrows the potential for

individual revisions of orthodoxy to identify revisions of the doctrines of faith specifically. Both

Lock and Donne suggest that despite their crippling doubts, they retain trust in God's potential

for salvation; in so doing, they "keep the faith," only in a modified form.

Chapter 3, "Faith and the Problem of Articulation in George Herbert's *The Temple*,"

examines explicit attempts at representation of faith in George Herbert's lyric poetry. One of the

struggles found in literary representations of faith is with the very act of representing; faith's

intangibility and fleeting nature make it difficult to express faith in language. And in these most

explicit moments of representation I find an intangibility, inaccessibility, and unknowability that

seem to be the very motivation for representation in the first place. It is through the use of

metaphor and figurative language that Herbert comes nearest to making the unrepresentable

represented, but the signifying gap of language forecloses on the possibility of complete

articulation. This lack in language, both of complete representation and of God, brings the

theological expectations of faith and the lived personal experiences of faith into direct conflict.

In *The Temple*, Herbert explicitly refers to faith in multiple poems, and in each of those poems

---

[104] Hamlin, William M. *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.; Popkin, Richard Henry. *History of Scepticism : From Savonarola to Bayle*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 7 December 2015. ; Dooley, Brendan M. *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Print.; Spolsky, Ellen. *Satisfying Skepticism: Embodied Knowledge in the Early Modern World*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2001. Print.; Levine, Alan. "Introduction." *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999. Web.; Hecht, Jennifer Michael. *Doubt: A History : The Great Doubters and their Legacy of Innovation, from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson*. 1st pbk. ed. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004. Print.; Zerba, Michelle. *Doubt and Skepticism in Antiquity and the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.

he presents different and sometimes contradictory theories of faith. He uses language to explore faith without fully representing it, ultimately suggesting that one need not fully articulate faith in order to experience, and even understand, it. This chapter returns to the theological framework of Christian theorizations of faith, including Clement of Alexandria, Thomas Aquinas, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and Jacobus Arminius.

The Epilogue of this work, entitled "To the New World: the Continuation of Representations of Faith," moves outside both the chronological and geographic boundaries of this project. This final chapter synthesizes the themes of the first three chapters and points to a continuity of representations of personal faith that exceeds the limits of time and space I have imposed on this project and briefly examines the works of Edward Taylor and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. The authors demonstrate that individual experiences of faith that conflict with orthodoxy are not exclusively a British phenomenon nor only a product of the Reformation. As suggested by the refusal to engage in the identification of sects of my authors, I argue that representations of faith have a common thread both across time and across sects, and even further, across space – into the New World, and beyond.

Chapter 1: The Role of the Temporal: the (un)Importance of Community

"For as we haue many members in one body, and all members haue not the same office: So we being

many are one bodie in Christ, and euery one members one of another." Romans 12:4-5

"Now I beseech you brethren by the Name of our Lord Iesus Christ, that yee all speake the same thing,

and that there be no diuisions among you: but that ye be perfectly ioyned together in the same minde, and

in the same iudgement." 1 Corinthians 1:10

"No man is an *Island*," John Donne says in his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*,

"intire of it self; euery man is a piece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *clod* be washed

away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse."[105] In this classic prose meditation, Donne argues that

Christian community prepares one for ascension, insofar as the afflictions of others require one

to reflect on one's sins and turn to God. Donne characterizes all Christian people as a single

"volume," members of a single church that "belongs to all." Unto death, Christians are of one

body, one community, and the death of an individual is merely a translation into the heavenly

library, "where euery *booke* shall ly open to one another." From the necessity of community on

Earth to the individualizing act of death, Donne's conception of Christian community is very

much in line with doctrinal expectations of community.

Community is the framework for the Christian experience. For early modern Christians,

Catholic, reformed, or otherwise, the very idea of the Christian religion is inextricable from

community. "And I say also vnto thee, that thou art Peter, and vpon this rocke I will build my

---

[105] Donne, John. "17. Meditation." *Deuotions vpon emergent occasions, and seuerall steps in my sicknes digested into 1. Meditations vpon our humane condition. 2. Expostulations, and debatements with God. 3. Prayers, vpon the seuerall occasions, to him. By Iohn Donne, Deane of S. Pauls, London*. 3rd ed. London, 1627. Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 1 August 2016.

Church: and the gates of hell shall not preuaile against it" (Matthew 16:18 *KJV*).[106] This Bible

passage, much debated by Christians regarding the connection between Peter and the ensuing

authority of the papacy, reveals that the central institution of the Christian religion is not the

capital-C Church – a hierarchy overseeing the worship practices of all Christian – but a body of

people sharing the same faith: a community. The word "church" in English enfolds multiple

meanings, from the physical structure in which worship takes place to the institution that one

differentiates from a nation. The Greek text from which the English bible is translated uses the

ἐκκλησία, which means "assembly," "assemblage, gathering, meeting," and in the earliest text,

according to Greek scholar Walter Bauer, "the universal church to which all believers belong."[107]

Thus, the very idea of Christianity suggests community.[108]

The inextricability of Christianity and community persists even to the modern day, and it

was also a central concern for early modern theologians, particularly around the time of the

Reformation. Its centrality to the establishment of the Christian religion as well as its central role

in structuring early modern life make it understandable that community would be framed as

closely tied to one's salvation. For early moderns, civic and religious life were nearly one and the

same, with the church building serving as the nexus for the geographically circumscribed parish

community. So in practical terms, one's religious experience and one's secular experience could

not always be separated since they shared physical spaces. Anne Meyers notes one example of

this type of shared space in her examination of George Herbert's "The Church-porch":

---

[106] I am using the 1611 King James Version of the Bible because of its attempt to combine the earlier English translations, including the Tyndale Bible (1526), the Matthew Bible (1537), the Coverdale Bible (1535), the Great Bible (1539), and the Geneva Bible (1560). This is in place of consistent references to multiple editions to which these poets would have had access.
[107] Danker, Frederick W, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Print. p. 303-4, 241.
[108] The community of the church – or the universal church – is asserted by Augustine to begin prior to Christ's appearance. Augustine, Saint. *City of God, Books 1-7*. Baltimore, MD, USA: Catholic University of America Press, 1950. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 17 July 2015

"Historically, the church porch was not only an entryway. It was also a site for meetings and exchanges, the place where bonds and contracts were formed between individual and community, between parishioner and parishioner, and between the religious and secular worlds."[109]

But this inextricability of community in general from religious experience and the necessity to participate in a closely connected religious community on the path to salvation are not readily accepted by early modern lyric poets. Despite clear theological statements regarding the necessary role of community in spiritual life from the likes of Augustine, Calvin, and the bible itself, and despite increasing emphasis on community in early modern English law, poets including Aemilia Lanyer and Robert Southwell represent community as inherently flawed and potentially a hindrance to salvation; both contradict orthodoxy and propose alternative communal structures. They represent community – real, lived community – as imperfect and counterproductive, and as violent and unjust; they represent community not even as useful as Donne does in his bleak meditation. Instead, both lyric poets assert the individual experience as paramount, as salvation is achieved on an individual basis, cleaved from the spiritual weight of community. And while their valorization of a Christ-like isolation is consistent with much devotional poetry, their maligning of community exceeds that valorization to reveal their individual interpretations of doctrine through the lens of experience. In so doing, both Lanyer and Southwell reveal the discontinuity between official doctrine and individual religious experience and suggest an individuality of faith that defies orthodoxy.

---

[109] Myers, Anne M. "Restoring 'the Church-Porch': George Herbert's Architectural Style." English Literary Renaissance 40.3 (2010): 427. p. 430.

Defining Community Orthodoxy

Peter Burke aptly describes the problem of defining community while exploring the social and cultural history of languages in *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*: "Community is at once an indispensable term and a dangerous one, whether we are practicing history or sociology or simply living our everyday lives."[110] There is an immense amount of scholarship on the term community, in the early modern period and otherwise. 'Community' is slippery; it evokes particular notions of both social inclusion and exclusion, but placing boundaries (both physical and definitional) on community is a difficult task at best, and inevitably those boundaries are permeable to some extent. Many scholars emphasize community as a term of commonality. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, a touchstone for many early modern scholars' conceptions of community, asserts commonality as the underlying feature of the largest of communities (i.e. nationality): "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[111] Community for Anderson is "a deep, horizontal comradeship."[112] Michael Halvorson and Karen Spierling summarize community as "a group of people who perceived themselves as having common interests and, thus, a common identity or self-understanding."[113] Philip Hoffman argues that community is the ties between otherwise

---

[110] Burke, Peter. *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print. p. 5.

[111] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Web. 05 Nov 2015. p. 6.

[112] Ibid. p. 7.

[113] Halvorson, Michael, and Karen E. Spierling. "Introduction." *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. Print. p. 2.

disparate, selfish individuals."[114] Craig Muldrew emphasizes that community is "a set of *interpersonal relations*."[115]

Definitions that focus on commonality tend to represent community as static – as a particular thing or condition that is more or less unchanging. But suggesting that community is static would be as misguided as claiming time itself is static. Certainly, community is built upon interpersonal relations, but those relations are also constantly renegotiated. Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington argue in the introduction to their volume that, "Community in these instances represents not a substantive way of living so much as a process of change."[116] They note that early modern English people lived in a "paradigm of transition" that existed "long before the perceived developments of the early modern period."[117] Also important is Ian Archer's observation that 'community' is not a single, all-encompassing entity; instead, multiple communities overlap, especially in his case study of London, a fact that "encouraged us to think of individual Londoners as belonging to a variety of interlocking communities (parishes, wards and guilds), each of which generated loyalties, the intensity and mobilisation of which would vary according to context."[118] So not only is one's inclusion in a community a process of change, investment in another community can cause one's experience in the other community to "vary."

Perhaps the most complete definition of community comes from Shepard and Withington:

---

[114] Hoffman, Philip T. *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon, 1500-1789*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. Print. p. 68.

[115] Muldrew, Craig. "From a 'light cloak' to an 'iron cage': historical changes in the relation between community and individualism." Shepard, Alexandra, and Phil Withington. *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print. p. 159.

[116] Shepard, Alexandra, and Phil Withington. "Introduction." *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print. p. 4.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Archer, Ian W. "Social networks in Restoration London: the evidence of Samuel Pepys's diary." *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print. p. 76.

As a process, therefore, community may be approached as a combination of six

constituent parts. First, the institutional arrangements, practices and roles that structured

it. Second, the people who did it, did not do it, did not want to do it, were excluded from

doing it. Third, the acts and artefacts – whether communicative or material – which

defined and constituted it. Fourth, the geographical places in which it was located. Fifth,

the time in which it was done and perpetuated. And, sixth, the rhetoric by which it was

legitimated, represented, discussed, used and turned into ideology.[119]

The first and fourth items on this list remind us of the claim that early modern communal

structures were not new after the medieval period. Instead, there was a great deal of continuity

between these two time periods as the thread of tradition tied present to past.[120] Christopher Hill

notes that during the medieval period, "Membership of the old communities had been

compulsory – initially by the tying of the serf to the soil, latterly by government restrictions on

mobility of labor."[121] For most people, that lack of mobility continued into the early modern

period.[122] But at the heart of the continuation in communal structures and relations is the parish

structure which is both institutionally- and geographically-bounded. [123] A parish is defined as, "a

portion of a diocese under the authority of a priest legitimately appointed to secure in virtue of

---

[119] Shepard and Withington, "Introduction." p. 12.

[120] "Rural communities obviously have long and highly localised histories, over the course of which custom, circumstance and human agency have incrementally shaped the nature of social relations. In this sense, local communities have been constituted both by a long-term historical process of structuration and sedimentation, in which successive waves of political, economic and cultural development have subtly remoulded the contours of belonging; and by short-term generational processes of adaptation and assimilation, in which, over the course of the life cycle, individuals and their families were absorbed into, and ultimately departed from, networks of association." Hindle, Steve. "Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory, and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500-1700." Halvorson, Michael, and Karen E. Spierling, eds. *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. Print. p. 96.

[121] Hill, Christopher. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Print. p. 426.

[122] Although there is an increase in unwanted mobilisation in the early modern period due to negative circumstances, including the enclosure crisis and the liquidation of Catholic institutions such as monasteries.

[123] Geography here is used in its most basic sense, referring to circumstance of place. "The geographical features or topography of a place or region, a place or region, or terrain, as characterized by such features" ("geography, n." OED 2b).

his office for the faithful dwelling therein, the helps of religion."[124] The parish was the unit by which other secular communities were measured, including geographic and political communities, as we see with the city of Westminster, which J.F. Merritt defines as, "three parishes – those of St Margaret's, St Martin in the Fields and St Clement Danes."[125]

Just as Ian Archer describes the intersections of communities within London, within a parish there were also intersecting and overlapping communities. And even in this overlap, exclusion was a primary marker of defined community, as Steve Hindle argues:

> In short, the maintenance of parochial harmony was predicated on the internalisation of a sense of 'place', both in geographical and in social-structural terms. The parish was not only a territorial and jurisdictional entity, it was also a social, economic and moral hierarchy. Since an infinite community is by definition a contradiction in terms, 'community' necessarily implied exclusion. Outsiders were 'strangers' not only in the sense that they originated beyond the physical boundaries of the community but also because their behaviour or reputation cast them beyond the pale of a moral consensus.[126]

Practically, the parish served a variety of functions that impacted people on a day-to-day basis. It bounded geographic communities,[127] anchored the local political and bureaucratic structure by overseeing the bulk of social contracts (births, deaths, weddings, etc.), served a variety of economic functions including taxation, and established morals for those within the geographic

---

[124] "Parish." Herbermann, Charles G, and Edward A. Pace. *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*. New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1913. Web. 06 Nov. 2015.
[125] Merritt, J F. *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community, 1525-1640*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005. Print. p. 6.
[126] Hindle, Steve. "A sense of place? Becoming and belonging in the rural parish, 1550-1650." Shepard, Alexandra, and Phil Withington. *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print. p. 97.
[127] Parish leaders actively defended these boundaries, notably during the Enclosure Crisis: "parishes asserted their role as guardians of communal rights and interests. Such claims over communal lands [by competing sources such as the Crown] normally tend to be associated with remote provincial areas, but these issues still carried resonance for suburban parishes in the capital" (Merritt 201).

bounds (all in addition to the expected religious functions). But, as always, to determine who the parish served meant necessarily to determine who the parish did *not* serve.

The parish community was quite literally delineated throughout the medieval and early modern periods through rogation, a Catholic perambulation ritual dating back to the fifth century during which parishioners walked and marked the boundaries of the parish to create a communal understanding of those boundaries.[128] As more economic factors came into play in the late medieval period, such as the responsibility of a parish to its poor, the exclusionary aspect of parish bounds became intensified: "Communal identity was invariably forged in opposition to the perceived interests of strangers and outsiders. As early as the fifteenth century, the inhabitants of adjacent parishes had a vested interest in approving each other's boundaries... Boundaries were perforce identified in relation to other geographical jurisdictions and the communal interests associated with them."[129] Keith Wrightson, too, emphasizes the exclusionary aspect of parish community, saying, it "was in many ways a community, an association of neighbours, a unit of identity and belonging, a primary group – but one perennially defined and redefined by processes of inclusion and exclusion."[130]

The imperative to delineate community through measures both of inclusion and exclusion is an example of orthodoxy; the geographic and practical aspects of parishes were determined by religious and legal orthodoxy. Increasingly throughout the early modern period, attempts at this sort of delineation were the result of changing religious and political policy. For instance, parish boundaries were not popularly marked prior to the sixteenth century (with fences, signposts, or other clear markings); it was only beginning in the 1520s that some parish bylaws required the

---

[128] Hindle, Steve. "Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory, and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500-1700."
[129] Ibid. p. 221-2.
[130] Wrightson, Keith. "The politics of the parish." Griffiths, Paul, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle. *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Print. p. 12.

marking of the boundaries rather than the use of popular memory, partly due to attempted impositions of adjacent opportunistic land owners and partly due to changing opinions within Catholic leadership about the establishment of rigid bureaucratic structures.[131] Conflicts over responsibility for the poor emerged between parishes in the sixteenth century as poor laws were enacted, notably the Elizabethan poor laws of 1598 and 1601 which assigned responsibility for the poor geographically, based on parish. One such conflict emerged in Shropshire over the funeral costs of a dead woman found outside her supposed home parish; the parish in which she was found geographically was required to accept responsibility based on the laws.[132] The process and celebration of marking of church boundaries during Rogationtide, too, became codified through the law – although surprisingly it was not eliminated altogether during sixteenth century reforms. Rogationtide was increasingly limited throughout the sixteenth century, limiting attendance (excluding first women and then those of lesser statuses), eliminating the display of local images or banners, and even limiting the scope of the event, reducing it from a regular celebration to a bureaucratic task.[133]

In England, for most English people, the parish constituted one's primary community. That community was both secular and religious. Its determination as a religious entity combined with the everyday functions within the geographic bounds, as well as that the increasing legal impositions on the populace were based on their parish affiliations, make the parish a complex site of community orthodoxy. Members were compelled both by church decree and by law to attend regular worship services, for instance. This community was "coercive," as Katherine French notes in *People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval Diocese*," but "it was

---

[131] The Council of Trent further necessitated the marking of clear parish boundaries. Hindle, "Beating the Bounds of the Parish." p. 216.
[132] Ibid. p. 224.
[133] Ibid. p. 210-1.

also a place where lay activity in a variety of forms – which were needed and encouraged –

allowed individual choices. The result was a sense of belonging, a sense of community."[134]

Despite – or perhaps because of – the coercive element of the parish community, personal

investment in that community still tended to develop over time as one willingly engaged through

choice.

Attempts to create community orthodoxy in the early modern period reveal an analogous

relationship between orthodoxy and community, and orthodoxy and personal faith. Where

personal faith is one's lived experience of trust in particular assumptions, lived community is the

intersection of individuals and ideas that transcends codified boundaries. Scholars studying early

modern community – both parish community and the greater sense of community – note this

crucial distinction regularly. Halvorson and Spierling are careful to note in their introduction,

"Taken all together, this collection of essays demonstrates that it is important always to

distinguish between the rhetorical ideal of community advanced by early modern philosophers,

magistrates, and theologians, and the real communities that developed in practice."[135] However,

Peter Burke remarks on the effects of orthodoxy in community, that while the asserted

boundaries of community may not coincide with the "real" boundaries, those assertions still

impact the experience of community:

> Imagined communities, like other figments of the imagination, have real effect, and
>
> attempts to create communities by imposing particular language or variety of language
>
> have important consequences, even if they are not always the consequences intended by
>
> the planners.[136]

---

[134] French, Katherine. *Middle Ages Series : People of The Parish : Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*. Philadelphia, PA, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 7 November 2015. p. 22.
[135] p. 21.
[136] p. 6.

Unlike the relationship between faith and orthodoxy in which faith is unresponsive to orthodoxy[137] (it is unaffected by outside impositions), community has a capacity to respond to orthodoxy, though perhaps not with the readiness to conform that the "planners" would desire.

Within the larger Christian community, a different community that Benedict Anderson would categorize as "imagined" since it surpasses in size "primordial villages of face-to-face contact,"[138] the idea of community has been highly theorized. From that theoretical perspective, community is an orthodox social formation within the Christian religion just as it was in early modern and late medieval England. And it is this particular orthodoxy to which English lyric poets, including Aemilia Lanyer and Robert Southwell, respond. It is important to note that the Christian community to which I refer is exclusively the faithful on earth, and does not include the dead. While the community in some ways continues to serve the dead after their passing (as in many Catholic practices), the dead are severed from what I am proposing to be the Christian community. Christian theologians, too, propose community in this way, separating one's service to community (those on earth) from the dead; in that way, the dead can be treated as other than Christian community, though certainly not unimportant.

Christian theologians have emphasized the necessity of religious community throughout the religion's history, but that emphasis contradicts the consistent claim that salvation is individual and cannot be achieved through any human means (communal or otherwise). Augustine of Hippo, arguably the most influential Christian theologian to date, differentiates civic community from religious community in *The City of God* while pointing to the lack of Christian faith as a central reason for the fall of Rome.[139] Writing in the late fourth and early fifth

---

[137] As we see with religious martyrs.
[138] Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. p. 6.
[139] "In those early days, and in those parts of the world which saw the empires in question crash amid the havoc of war and fall into other hands, the name of Christ had not yet been preached." p. 199.

centuries, Augustine was the first theologian to divide these communities by theorizing the City

of God in contrast to the City of Man. He argues that the Romans were mistaken in identifying

the Roman Empire and the spiritual realm as the same; instead, Roman emphasis on materiality

and material worship prevented the empire from being godly.[140] The City of God is the city of

ideal Christian faithful, and in order to achieve such a status Augustine emphasizes man's

participation in imperfect religious community with the goal of perfection. This goal is

articulated most clearly in *Augustine's Rule*, a short document composed to guide monastic life.

While this document assumes that its audience seeks this particular form of religious community,

it also points to the more general requirement of engaging in Christian community:

> In this way, none shall perform any task for their own benefit but all your work shall be
>
> done for the community with greater zeal and more dispatch than if each of you were to
>
> work for yourself alone. For love, as it is written, "is not self-seeking" (1 Corinthians
>
> 13:5), meaning that it places the common good before its own, not its own before the
>
> common good. Know, then, that the more you devote yourselves to the community rather
>
> than to your private interests, the more you have advanced. Thus, let love, which remains
>
> forever, prevail in all things that minister to the fleeting necessities of life.[141]

Augustine claims that in order to "advance" one's own spiritual position, one must help others by

contributing to the spiritual community (in this case, specifically the monastic community).

Thus, Augustine proposes that service to the community is of greater importance than the

"private" needs of an individual, establishing a hierarchy of service. One ought to channel one's

---

[140] Augustine mocks the pagan gods and their specific attachments to material things: "People post a single gatekeeper to guard the house, and, because he is a man, he is quite sufficient. But the pagans had to post three gods: Forculus at the door, Cardea at the hinges, Limentinus at the threshold. Forculus was evidently unable to guard the hinges and the threshold, too." These comparisons reveal how much *The City of God* was a direct reaction to paganism and the political unifying role of the Roman Empire in accepting Christianity as a faith practiced within the empire. p. 202.

[141] Chapter 5, quoted in Augustine, Saint. "Roots of Augustinian Spirituality." Midwest Augustinians. 2013. Web. 17 July 2015.

devotion outward, rather than inward, as selflessness is intrinsically good in Christian terms. He

asserts that service to the community benefits the individual more than serving the individual

exclusively ever could, suggesting an amplified feedback loop, in which the returns of outward

contributions are greater than directly applied service to the self. This is, of course, a paradoxical

conclusion – that salvation is based on individual rather than communal action and yet this

individual action should be geared toward community. But that paradox reinforces the idea that a

person cannot affect his or her salvation, as well as the necessity to contribute to society while on

Earth and not merely wait for one's ascension to Heaven.

Thomas Aquinas, too, emphasizes community over the individual in his thirteenth

century theological texts. Following both Aristotle and Augustine, Aquinas argues that the good

of the community is "better and more divine than the good of the individual."[142] Aquinas

suggests that community is a natural state for man, and that man is by nature a social and

political animal. Because of that natural state, in order to be a good man one also must be a good

citizen.[143] However, in the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas also argues that human laws, established

through the natural process of developing social order, can be in conflict with religious virtue.[144]

Human law, the governing mechanism of society and community, cannot fully prescribe virtue;

instead, the community must be relied upon to instill virtue throughout an individual's life. But

ultimately, as philosophy scholar Peter Koritansky summarizes, "The best one can hope from

political society is that citizens will be well disposed to receive the grace available to them

through the Church, which transcends politics both in its universality as well as in the finality of

---

[142] *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, Book 1, Lesson 1, quoted in
Koritansky, Peter. "Thomas Aquinas: Political Philosophy." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Web. 18 July
2015.
[143] Koritansky.
[144] Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*. 1981. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Westminster:
Christian Classics. Print.

its purpose."[145] Grace, and therefore salvation, is only bestowed by God on the individual in a complete and unchangeable form, while community only affects one's "disposition." So for Aquinas, political and spiritual community is a natural and necessary state for man, but in terms of receiving God's grace and achieving salvation, the responsibility ultimately lies with the individual as separate from community.

Emphasis on community as a central part of good Christian life is a commonality between Catholic church fathers, such as Saints Augustine and Aquinas, as well as central figures of the Reformation, including Jean Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli. What also continues is the precarious balance between the imperatives both for community and individual salvation. Jean Calvin, who stands alongside Martin Luther as a father of the Protestant Reformation, heavily emphasized community as a necessary element of good Christian life. In his major tract on reformed religion, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin asserts the necessary relationship between individual faith and the intervention of community (specifically through the law): "See, then, the nature of pure and genuine religion. It consists in faith united with a serious fear of God, comprehending a voluntary reverence and producing legitimate worship agreeable to the injunctions of the law."[146] Just as Aquinas points to the necessity of law as a part of Christian life, so too does Calvin, all the while noting the overlapping yet divided nature of civil community (that community acted upon by the law) and religious community (community bound by shared religious doctrine). Ideally, Calvin proposes that religious and civil communities are entirely simultaneous, where the values of church and state are one and the same.

However, his practical instructions suggest his own doubt in completely reconciling the two communities, and his doctrine of the Elect undermines his assertions regarding the necessity

---

[145] "Thomas Aquinas: Political Philosophy."
[146] Calvin, Jean. *On the Christian Faith: Selections from the Institutes, Commentaries, and Tracts.* New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957. Print. p. 9.

of community in the first place. At the heart of Calvin's theology is predestination – that prior to their arrival on Earth, individuals are selected by God as the Elect (those destined for salvation and ascension to Heaven) or the non-Elect (those destined for damnation). As such, any individual, Elect or no, can have no impact on his or her status. Thus, it seems any demand for particular actions on Earth is null, including Calvin's determination regarding community. However, Calvin and Martin Luther coincide on the point that faith engenders particular actions. Luther argues that belief is the manifestation of faith, and thus individuals perform specific actions (many times in line with church doctrine) as an extension of their faiths. In the same way, Calvin argues that the Elect will manifest their status through their actions, including attention to community. So in Calvin's Geneva, one would look for outward signs of election, and those whose status was dubious would attempt to conform to those signs at the very least to represent themselves as Elect. But for all individuals, the act of participating in community could never contribute to their potential salvation; only a predetermined status doled out at the individual level would determine that. Calvin also argues that despite one's status, one always owes one's service on Earth to God.

Ulrich Zwingli, a contemporary of Calvin and Luther who rose to prominence in Zurich, poses similar dueling maxims regarding community's place in the lives of Christians. In his central theological tract, Zwingli says, "For the Church is a congregation, an assemblage, the whole people, the whole multitude gathered together."[147] The boundaries of Zwingli's "Church" extend well beyond the church building itself as they encompass "the whole people, the whole multitude." Zwingli goes further than Calvin in describing the relationship between civil and religious community; instead of gesturing toward a wish of simultaneity, Zwingli suggests that

---

[147] Zwingli, Ulrich, Samuel M. Jackson, and Clarence N. Heller. *Commentary on True and False Religion*. Durham, N.C: Labyrinth, 1981. Print. p. 176.

church and state are one and the same.[148] He argues that the values of the state are identical to the values of the church in terms of what is required of community members: "The state demands that you serve the commonweal, not your own; that dangers be shared in common, and fortunes also, if necessity arises; that no one exercise a selfish prudence; that no one exalt himself; that no one stir up strife."[149] Once again, community is asserted by a theologian to be of premier interest to Christians – an institution that always must be elevated above the self. Participation in and responsibility to community are essential elements of Christian life.

But Zwingli, too, asserts that salvation is necessarily achieved apart from community – that is, in isolation. In order to have a relationship with Christ, a prerequisite for salvation, Zwingli says, "we must first rightly know ourselves; for they that think themselves righteous receive not Christ, as is clear from His own words."[150] A lack of righteousness is a universal human condition, according to Zwingli, and thus those who believe themselves righteous necessarily lack a knowledge of the self. Those who do not know themselves consequently cannot know Christ, and as Christ is "grace itself," a lack of knowing oneself means a lack of salvation.[151] This necessity of inner knowledge breaks salvation away from the community that Zwingli and other Christian theologians assert to be an integral part of Christian life.

What this selection of Christian theologians appear to agree on is the importance of community in religious life. Christians have a responsibility to others that is paramount, and through the process of serving the community one is better serving oneself than had one attempted to serve oneself directly. A Christian can only advance through serving others. It should be noted here that service to the community in these religious texts is framed as a *sign* of

---

[148] He asks rhetorically, "How, pray, does the state differ from the church?" (294).
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid. p. 99.
[151] Ibid.

salvation rather than a cause, but of course invoking predestination still suggests causation. From a skeptic's point of view, because one cannot know one's status or another's motivations for all actions, the suggestion of particular actions as signs of salvation works as an implicit argument to convince the reader to perform said actions. That link makes separating action from status nearly impossible, because of the perennial question: does one take actions because one's status causes said actions, or does one take actions because one hopes to have said status? Does one serve the community because one is saved and demonstrates good Christian behavior, or does one serve the community because one knows salvation requires that service? Practically, these questions are unanswerable, but the suggestive nature of the theological writings complicates the purpose of serving the community; while such service ought to be a sign of salvation, knowing the status of the person behind the service is impossible and makes distinctions equally so. In addition to agreeing on the importance of community, these theologians also agree that one has a responsibility both to the religious community and to the civil community, however much those two communities might or might not overlap. But these theologians also agree that in the state of one's soul and in the process of salvation, community plays next to no role. Whether one's soul is saved through God's predestination or through the grace of Christ, salvation is served only to the individual and is not affected by one's situation within community. Again, Christians are faced with a paradox; they are obligated to serve the community at the behest of God as a sign of their salvation, and thus that service appears to contribute to the state of their souls, but simultaneously their salvation relies wholly on their isolated selves. The suggestion is that Christians must participate in and contribute to community in order to be saved, but the only way to be saved is through God's predetermined grace. A paradox, indeed.

Despite these theological assertions, the necessity of religious community was continually emphasized in everyday English life as an element of one's spiritual status and, more importantly as support for individual belief. Merritt describes Westminster preacher Robert Hill's exhortation to his parishioners: "While clerically organized catechizing may have been regarded as crucial, laypeople were also exhorted to help each other independently. Hill stressed the need for individual Christians to help one another to better understanding."[152] Especially during times of few religious leaders, as when preaching was banned altogether during Elizabeth's reign, communities played crucial support roles for religious belief. Communal worship was also a necessity for one's spiritual status, as is emphasized through legislation requiring church attendance, the argument for which included claims of backsliding and inevitable community disorder if attendance were not enforced: "local authorities considered it [church attendance] important to ensure basic conformity and to prevent the development of an urban anonymity which might encourage various forms of unorthodox behaviour and belief."[153] In that way, community and individual belief had reciprocal roles; should individuals refuse to participate, community would devolve into lawless, faithless chaos, and should community fail the individual, one might lose orthodox belief. So not only was community linked directly to one's spiritual status (demonstrating unorthodox belief would indicate a lack of saved status), but it was also employed as a force of religious normativity.

The emphasis on communal worship is a point of continuity between Catholic and reformed religious institutions in England as well. In the Catholic tradition, parishioners attended Mass to share the words of the priest as well as the spectacle of the Eucharist. One of the most valued moments in Catholic worship is the witnessing of the elevation of the Host, a moment

---

[152] p. 317.
[153] Ibid. p. 320.

necessarily shared by the community, including the priest and other parishioners (although there were many debates within the church about transfiguration). But reliance on community was also simply in the nature of Catholic practices, from turning to a priest for confession and forgiveness, to praying for the salvation of those in Purgatory. With the Reformation came moves away from such communal acts of worship as the emphasis shifted from acts and images to the Word and individual election or salvation. However, what we find historically is an increased emphasis on communal worship rather than a reduction of that emphasis, which seems rather counter-intuitive given these doctrinal shifts.

For instance, the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549 codified the necessity of communal worship in reformed England – that parishioners would share the same prayers down to the word. In *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*, Ramie Targoff figures this text as a "competing model of community" that shifts from shared visual experiences of worship in the Catholic tradition to oral and auricular experiences in reformed churches.[154] The *Book of Common Prayer* further emphasizes the necessity of communal worship by the pronoun shift in the 1552 edition, where the prayers move from "I," singular statements, to "we," plural statements.[155] This shift would remind every parishioner using these prayers that his or her experience of worship – whether within the church walls or not – is a shared experience, that it necessarily includes others to fill out that plural "we."

Legislation further codified communal worship, as throughout Elizabeth I's reign additional Recusancy Laws were put into effect, demonstrating that one role of community was to inculcate and promote orthodoxy. The 1559 Act of Uniformity required the use of the *Book of*

---

[154] Targoff, Ramie. *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Print. p. 18.
[155] Ibid. p. 28.

Common Prayer as well as requiring weekly church attendance. English people were thus forced

to take up communal worship whether their beliefs corresponded with this type of worship or

not. In 1593, harsher Recusancy Laws were introduced specifically to work against Catholic

recusants, but also to further codify the requirement of attendance at reformed church services.[156]

Such legislation had two central intentions: first, that unorthodox (including Catholic) worship

be prevented, and second, that conformity be created – that is, that people would adopt this new

English doctrine after putting it into practice. Because community has the capacity to promote

particular beliefs and practices, if unregulated it also posed a threat of heterodoxy as we see with

underground Catholic communities during the English Reformation. Targoff notes the early

modern idea that "premeditated prayers could penetrate the inner self," and thus, having

parishioners speak the words of common prayer would create belief.[157] Elizabeth and the Church

of England clearly invested in the power of imitation, that not only could parishioners learn for

themselves proper worship and belief by watching others, but also that others could learn by

watching them, what Targoff calls "bodily reverence."[158] Communal worship was seen as

necessary in the reformed English church, and increasingly so throughout the sixteenth century

both as a preventative measure and as a tool for conformity; common prayer "secretly and

imperceptibly transforms their inward nature... the bait of common prayer catches nothing less

than men's souls."[159]

The demands of community in early modern English lives were multiple, and

contradictory. These demands, as examples of orthodoxy, posed the same conundrums as the

other orthodox elements of reformed religion throughout the sixteenth century; they demand

---

[156] "An Act for restraining Popoish Recusants to some certain place of abode"
[157] *Common Prayer*, p. 13.
[158] Ibid. p. 12.
[159] Ibid. p. 56.

conformity of action to prove conformity of mind, even though they are mostly unable to effect

meaningful change. And just as imposed doctrine was not met with broad acceptance, so too

were these ideas of community met with skepticism and individual interpretation. By many,

including the disaffected, these notions of community as necessary and obligatory were

insufficient, and in some cases those notions contradicted individual understanding. In terms of

doctrine, the necessity of community on the path to salvation is particularly problematic, both

due to lived experiences of community that is not Christ-like, and due to theology of individual

salvation. In other aspects, community is negatively exclusionary, particularly for marginalized

groups like women and religious minorities. In the late sixteenth century in particular, individual

English people faced the dueling demands of orthodox community participation and the

reformed notions of *sola scriptura* and *sola fide*, and in literary representations, community is

rarely the victor.[160] For poets Aemilia Lanyer and Robert Southwell, both devoted Christians

from marginalized groups, community is an element of life fraught with suspicion, and one that

could potentially harm one's hopes of salvation rather than contribute to them.

Aemilia Lanyer and Fractured Community

Aemilia Lanyer's (1569-1645) accomplishments are notable for the same reason they

were neglected for so long: they were achieved by an early modern English woman. The records

for Lanyer's life are scarce, but her own literary publications widely persist; her most well-

known work is the poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Lanyer was born to court musician

Baptista Bassano, who had been playing in the presence of English monarchs since the reign of

---

[160] Femke Molekamp details this contradiction for women in particular in *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England: Religious Reading and Writing*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Web.

Henry VIII.[161] Having come from Venice with his brothers, Bassano became a permanent resident of England in 1545. The circumstances of Bassano's arrival and profession, as well as his family's coat of arms and tenuous connection to the London Jewish community, have produced some speculation regarding the family's religion.[162] However, recorded family practices and Aemilia Lanyer's own writings (including *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*) appear to refute these rumors. Prominent family connections also suggest inclinations toward radical Protestantism, as Bassano served Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford in 1538, and had a business relationship with Stephen Vaughan, father of Anne Vaughan Lock and close friend of radical Protestant John Knox.[163] Whatever the family's religious background may have been, Lanyer's writings represent a Christian viewpoint.

Aemilia Lanyer spent most of her life on the fringes of the English court. With her father employed as a court musician, she was frequently exposed to court life and had many acquaintances within the monarch's inner circle. She herself was not a full member of court, however. After her mother's death, Lanyer engaged in an affair with Henry Carey, Lord Hundsdon (1524-1596), and bore one child from this relationship, whom she named Henry.[164] Around the time of this pregnancy, Lanyer was forced into a marriage with Alphonso Lanyer, likely in an effort to conceal the affair.[165] Lanyer's forced marriage also pushed her out of English court and somewhat into obscurity until her husband's death. At the time of his death the couple had no surviving issue, although Henry survived until adulthood.

---

[161] Woods, Susanne. *Lanyer : A Renaissance Woman Poet*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1999. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web. 27 July 2015. p. 3-4.
[162] Ibid. p. 6.
[163] Ibid. p. 7.
[164] Ibid. p. 16.
[165] Ibid.

Immediately prior to her husband's death, Lanyer had been living in the home of Margaret Rusell, Countess of Cumberland.[166] Her role there is somewhat ambiguous as there are no records of her being the tutor to the Countess's daughter, Anne. During this time, it seems that Rusell became Lanyer's patron, which was not unusual for the Countess who was also patron to Edmund Spenser and Samuel Daniel.[167] From 1617 until 1619 Lanyer ran a small school in Westminster, which ended while in litigation between herself and her landlord,[168] and afterward she relocated to St. James Clerkenwell parish likely to be near her friend Anne.[169] Aemilia Lanyer died there, listed as a "pensioner," in 1645.[170]

Aemilia Lanyer's most productive time as a writer was during her stay with Margaret Rusell, the Countess of Cumberland.[171] At the time, Lanyer was married but separated from her husband, and Rusell acted as her patron in an all-female household.[172] It is there that she produced the "little booke," *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.[173] This text includes ten separate dedications, all to women of title, which comprises approximately one third of the book overall. In addition to the extended lyric poem, "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," the book also includes a brief prose address "To the Vertuous Reader," an even briefer prose defense of the main poem's title ("To the doubtfull Reader"), and an extended poem describing the Countess's estate where Lanyer likely had the creative space to produce her work ("The Description of Cooke-ham").[174]

---

[166] Ibid. p. 29.
[167] Ibid. p. 32.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid. p. 33.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Woods, Susanne. *Lanyer : A Renaissance Woman Poet*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1999. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web. 27 July 2015. p. 32.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Lanyer, Aemilia. "To the Vertuous Reader." *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. ed. Susanne Woods. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. print. p. 48.
[174] "Farewell (sweet *Cooke-ham*) where I first obtain'd / Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd; / And where the Muses gave their full consent, / I should have powre the virtuous to content" ("The Description of Cooke-ham 1-4).

It is notable that it took seclusion both from court and from home life for Lanyer to produce this work. At Cookeham, Lanyer would have been surrounded almost entirely by respected women; the Earl had recently died, and the Countess and her daughter Anne were working to assure Anne's inheritance. So Lanyer was writing in the context of a women's community, a writer's community,[175] and a devotional community. The long list of dedications to Lanyer's work is telling as well, since she addresses exclusively women, from Queen Anne to Countess Margaret to "all vertuous Ladies in generall."[176] Her purpose becomes explicit in "To the Vertuous Reader": "I have written this small volume, or little booke, for the generall use of all virtuous Ladies and Gentlewomen of this kingdome."[177] With this rhetorical grouping, Lanyer begins her work by establishing women as a community of their own, a community deemed separate from men through the exclusion of addresses to men in the text. Lanyer's work is an advisory text, in which she intends to represent examples of virtuous women and their actions, to which readers should aspire. But the text is not merely intended to shape the actions of readers, but also to serve as a reminder of the nature of women: "this have I done, to make knowne to the world, that all women deserve not to be blamed" either by men or by other women, and for men in particular, the narrator encourages all readers to recognize

> such points of folly, to be practised by evill disposed men, who forgetting they were
>
> borne of women, nourished of women, and that if it were not by the means of women,
>
> they would be quite extinguished out of the world, and a finall ende of them all, doe like
>
> Vipers deface the wombes wherein they were bred, onely to give way an utterance to
>
> their want of discretion and goodnesse. Such as these, were they that dishonoured Christ
>
> his Apostles and Prophets, putting them to shamefull deaths. Therefore we are not to

---

[175] Both Margaret Rusell and her daughter, Anne Clifford, wrote. Margaret primarily engaged in correspondence while Anne wrote original pieces as well.

[176] Lanyer, p. 12.

[177] "To the Vertuous Reader." p. 48.

regard any imputations, that they undeservedly lay upon us, no otherwise than to make use of them to our owne benefits, as spurres to vertue, making us flie all occasions that may colour their unjust speeches to passe currant.[178]

The use of first person plural and third person plural to refer to men reveals an us/them gender binary between Lanyer's female audience and secondary male audience. She seems to address this secondary audience when she provides a thinly-veiled warning to men who would refute her claims, saying that "they have tempted even the patience of God himselfe, who gave power to wise and virtuous women, to bring downe their pride and arrogancie."[179] Separating herself and her female audience from such men through the use of "their," Lanyer sets up arrogant men as the target of her words; they are an ancillary audience that is figured second to the female audience of the women's community.

> She then delivers the supreme example of a good man, Jesus Christ:
>
> in respect it pleased our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, without the assistance of man, beeing free from originall and all other sinnes, from the time of his conception, till the houre of his death, to be begotten of a woman, borne of a woman, nourished of a woman, obedient to a woman; and that he healed women, pardoned women, comforted women: yea, even when he was in his greatest agonie and bloodie sweat, going to be crucified, and also in the last houre of his death, tooke care to dispose of a woman: after his resurrection, appeared first to a woman, sent a woman to declare his most glorious resurrection to the rest of his Disciples.[180]

Christ is necessarily better than the men of Lanyer's time because he is "free from originall and all other sinnes," but also because of his acknowledgement of, and service to womankind. Lanyer sets up Christ as an example because in her own time, such fealty to women was

---

178 Ibid. p. 48-9.
179 Ibid. p. 49.
180 Ibid. p. 49-50.

nonexistent; women were rarely and varyingly honored, and rarely above men. In that way, Lanyer establishes her own imagined ideal community – one where women are given their due – and juxtaposes it with what she considers a fractured contemporary community in which women are "blamed" and "dishonoured," and their service to man is ignored. This notion of a fractured community appears also in the poem "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" itself.

While community has been a recognized aspect of Lanyer's poetry, her critique of community has not been noted. Rather, most scholarship on Lanyer's poems has focused on this imagined ideal female community as a site of proto-feminist patronage, neglecting the real community portrayed throughout her poetry. Barbara Lewalski, Constance Furey, and Vassiliki Markidou describe the relationship between Aemilia Lanyer and the household at Cookeham as represented in Lanyer's poetry as an egalitarian utopia.[181] Lewalski focuses on the generative nature of female patronage and argues that Lanyer's "dedicatory poems re-write the institution of patronage in female terms, transforming the relationships assumed in the male patronage system into an ideal community."[182] Furey, too, focuses on this female community as a site of discovery and self-representation: "Lanyer's utopian vision of women's place in history is the site of a dynamic exploration of what it means for women to have a place – to read, to write, to speak, to create different roles for themselves."[183] Above all, Lanyer's poems are a creative endeavor that proposes a world in which women are allowed the same secular and religious opportunities as men by critiquing the current treatment of women from a locus of exiled female community.

---

[181] Lewalski, Barbara K. "Re-Writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer." The Yearbook of English Studies 21 (1991): 87-106. Furey, Constance M. "Utopia of Desire: The Real and Ideal in Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum." Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 36.3 (2006): 561-84. Markidou, Vassiliki. "'this Last Farewell to Cooke-Ham here I Give': The Politics of Home and Nonhome in Aemilia Lanyer's the Description of Cooke-Ham." English 60.228 (2011): 4.See also: Kemp, Theresa D. "Women's Patronage-Seeking as Familial Enterprise: Aemilia Lanyer, Esther Inglis, and Mary Wroth." Literature Compass (2007).
[182] p. 100.
[183] p. 562.

Gary Kuchar highlights Lanyer's proposition as a specifically sect-less Christian problem: "Lanyer's portrait of Mary does not seem intended to line up with specific confessional or doctrinal positions so much as it works to foreground female spiritual power – a power no longer readily available in either official Protestant or Catholic doctrines."[184] Even as England's most powerful figure was a woman, opportunities for official religious involvement for women were miniscule at best.

But these same scholars also recognize Lanyer's ultimate representation of community's failures and the irreconcilable nature of Lanyer's proto-feminist proposals. Markidou argues that neither country nor court are ever regarded entirely as Lanyer's "home," and that, instead, all communities for Lanyer come to be seen as a form of "exile."[185] Lanyer's poetry then becomes the only locus which might be considered home, and indeed, "The home of mortal life should thus be understood as at best a temporary abode and at worst a site of temptation and sin to be renounced willingly."[186] Furey argues that Lanyer forecloses on the notion of any ideal community through her characterization of human relationships as contingent: "The ideal, in other words, is constructed out of materials that are inherently unstable. Even without a serpent, an explicit prohibition, and an irresistible urge to transgress, any Eden is necessarily social. It is relationships that make it idyllic – a point Lanyer underscores by portraying even the tree as a solicitous friend or lover – and relationships that make stasis impossible."[187] And Lewalski highlights the fact that although Lanyer's final poem within *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* celebrates her time at Cookeham, it is always also a "farewell" to a community that has been lost: "Lanyer offers her poem as 'This last farewell to Cooke-ham' (l. 205), suggesting that none

---

[184] Kuchar, Gary. "Aemilia Lanyer and the Virgin's Swoon: Theology and Iconography in: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum." English Literary Renaissance 37.1 (2007): 47-73. p. 72.
[185] p. 13.
[186] Markidou p. 17.
[187] p. 574.

of them will return to this happy garden state in which women lived without mates, but found contentment and delight in nature, God, and female companionship."[188]

Aemilia Lanyer's proto-feminist position in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is made explicit in the text's earliest moments, but her work does not propose a female-exclusive utopia. Rather, as other scholars have ultimately recognized, Lanyer's work critiques contemporary notions of community in which women are ruthlessly marginalized. This critique is aimed primarily at men although women, too, are indicted as accessories. Because "Farewell to Cooke-ham" has been the primary interest of scholars, Lanyer's writings have been characterized as somewhat, if not primarily, celebratory of the female community at Cookeham.[189] But taken as a whole, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* presents a scathing critique, not only of England's contemporary political conditions, but also the entire Christian community. This critique argues that at every level, from the moment of Christ's arrival on the earth, Christian community has failed to serve both Christ and Christians. Although Christ privileges women within the Christian community, Christians fail to live by the example set by Christ. And ultimately, Lanyer argues that this failure is inevitable because mankind is inherently flawed.

The failures of humanity frame the "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" poem, for which the central narrative is the Passion of Christ. Throughout the narrative, the speaker of the poem displays a great deal of anger, all the while juxtaposing her own emotional failings against Christ's perfection. When describing Christ's intention to face his accusers, the poem's narrator notes that his demeanor is "milde" as he seeks to "re-assure" his disciples.[190] He is prepared to go with the accusers if only his disciples are allowed to go free: "If him they sought, he's willing

---

[188] p. 106.
[189] These characterizations occasionally ignore the implicit resentment about the speaker's exclusion from this community as the poem is, above all, a "fare-well."
[190] "Salve," 514, 517.

to obay, / Onely desires the rest might goe their way."[191] But the poem's narrator does not hold

herself to Christ's standard of mildness: "He was content to stoope unto their Lure, / although his

Greatnesse might doe otherwise: / Here Grace was seised on with hands impure."[192] The narrator

juxtaposes Christ's actions with his abilities, considering that he "might doe otherwise" given his

"Greatnesse," and in so doing reveals her own consideration of, or perhaps even desire for, a less

mild interaction with the Romans whom she dubs "impure." Her consideration contrasts with

Christ's "contentment" to give in to their violence and sacrifice both his "Virtue" and

"Innocencie" in order to secure humanity's salvation. [193] Christ is figured as aware of the

sacrifice he must make for humanity, and also of his own perfection in contrast to man's utter

imperfection. And yet the narrator is indignant at the Romans' treatment of Christ, despite

Christ's willingness to comply and her own acknowledgement that this path allowed salvation

for all Christians: "Thus did his Torments and our Joyes beginne."[194] Christ's sacrifice

demonstrates a separation between him and humanity, an implicit separation that founds the

Christian religion.

The narrator indicts several traditional communities in her judgment of those responsible

for Christ's suffering:

> But our sweet Saviour whom these Jewes did name;
>
> Yet could their learned Ignorance apprehend
>
> No light of grace, to free themselves from blame:
>
> Zeale, Lawes, Religion, now they doe pretend
>
> Against the truth, untruths they seek to frame:
>
> Now al their powres, their wits, their strengths, they bend

---

[191] Ibid. 519-20.
[192] Ibid. 523-5.
[193] Ibid. 526, 527.
[194] Ibid. 528.

> Against one siely, weake, unarmed man,
>
> Who no resistance makes, though much he can,[195]

While it is "these Jewes" that the narrator initially targets in this stanza, her syntax expands the scope of those who betrayed Christ to include additional groups. "They" in the fourth line has an ambiguous antecedent that could refer either to the "Jewes" or to "Zeale, Lawes, Religion" personified, which are closest spatially. Given the rest of lines four and five, it seems that the ambiguity allows the narrator to criticize all of these groups as agents "Against the truth" and as actively producing "untruths." Combined, these groups use "al their powres" against a single "unarmed man" who does not resist, although again the narrator emphasizes that he could resist if he chose to.

In addition to the historical targets of blame in Christ's persecution – the Jews and other Romans – Lanyer also implicates law and religion as groups working actively against Christ, the same communities that one would expect to have been working in harmony with Christians generally. The above passage is situated in Christ's present, as we see with the emphasis on "now," and as such indicts the main contributors to his death: zeal, Roman law, and established religions, including Judaism. But with the repetition of "now," the indictment of these groups is situated both in the poem's literary present and in Lanyer's present time. The poem's narrative indicates Christ's time, but the dialogic nature of the lyric poetry invites the reader to include his or her own "now," which for Lanyer would be the early modern period in England. This layering of time is a consistent pattern in Lanyer's poem as she shifts between the times of creation, Christ's Passion, and her own historical moment, and she does so in order to make direct comparisons and correlations. Thus, the blame on "Zeale, Lawes, Religion," resonates in the early modern period as well, suggesting a much broader indictment of forces against Christ that

---

[195] Lines 545-52.

bridges the temporal gap between Christ's time and Lanyer's. Both Aquinas and Calvin assert the place of the law in a good Christian life, but the narrator figures "Lawes" as a community implicitly positioned against both Christ and herself. The law is what allowed for Christ's accusation and execution, and the narrator argues that the law is actively working against the greater good by targeting Christ with lies. By using the pronoun "they," the narrator also figures herself, her female audience, and Christ as outside of the Roman law – opposed to it.

Religion is presented in an identical way, as a force of lies working in opposition to the narrator and Christ. What is notable about the inclusion of "Religion," though, is that it does not refer exclusively to Judaism or Roman paganism (although those are certainly included). By explicitly noting the "Jewes" earlier in the stanza, and then later broadening out her accusation to include "Religion" as a whole, the narrator becomes much more inclusive in pointing out those who are culpable – another rhetorical move that includes a greater temporal span. Specifically, the Christian religion becomes implicated. The term "religion" did not appear in the English language until 1225, and from its first uses was specifically tied to the Christian religion.[196] Although in the sixteenth century the use of "religion" began to be used more broadly in the sense of organized belief systems, the word's most common usage was still tied to Christianity; that, combined with the ambiguous syntax in the stanza, suggests, if not an indictment, then a clear skepticism concerning the state of the Christian religion as an organized community across time. Thus, the narrator is not proposing Christianity as the clear counterpoint to the "Jewes" who have "No light of grace," but is casting a doubtful eye on all religious communities and their capacities to do good.

The narrator even casts doubt on the original Christian community: Christ's disciples. She specifically notes their weakness in the face of danger:

---

[196] "religion, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2015. Web. 31 July 2015.

Those deare Disciples that he most did love,

And were attendant at his becke and call,

When triall of affliction came to prove,

They first left him, who now must leave them all:

For they were earth, and he came from above,

Which made them apt to flie, and fit to fall:

    Though they protest they never will forsake him,

    They do like men, when dangers overtake them.[197]

At this point in the poem, the narrator's rage at Christ's mistreatment has faded and her tone becomes mournful and regretful, and here we can see the lyric form contributing to careful consideration. Rather than allowing the sequence to become a polemic, the speaker allows for a reflective pause from heightened emotion. She notes that despite Christ's love, even before his death the disciples run, full of cowardice, unable or unwilling to face the "triall of affliction." But ultimately, it is not their fault that they cannot live up to Christ's goodness, because of the fundamental difference between Earth and Heaven. The disciples only follow what is in their nature, that nature "Which made them apt to flie, and fit to fall." Despite the narrator's tempered tone in this stanza, her indictment of the disciples is still fairly explicit. And the narrator's blame becomes even more pointed when the disciples become gendered at the end of the stanza, as she says they will inevitably act "like men" in trying circumstances. The use of "men" here resonates with points in "To the Vertuous Reader," which separates women from men in such a way that would not allow for a usage of "men" to mean all people of all genders. The stanza, too, has a categorizing effect when the narrator moves from calling Christ's followers "Disciples," to "they," to "men." Just as Lanyer's letter "To the Virtuous Reader" situates men as "unjust" to

---

[197] "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," lines 625-32.

women, a condition that women must simply accept, so, too are men described as being innately cowardly in this stanza. This is because "They do like men" has two equally damning readings. On the one hand, the syntax might suggest that the phrase includes the preceding verb, "forsake," in combination with "do": "They do [forsake] like men." This reading points to the inevitability of man's forsaking Christ and all others. Alternately, "like men" might simply modify "do": "They do, like men." This reading would broaden man's cowardice, that forsaking is yet another element of man's bad nature. This reading invokes an image of the narrator shrugging her shoulders as if reciting the parable of the frog and the scorpion. Men simply act like themselves, and they themselves are prone to weakness. This characterization of men contrasts sharply against women's service to Christ, which is proposed as never failing. In that way, the speaker embeds herself in the poem; Christ is figured as opposed to the disciples, who then become broadened into all men, and thus the speaker becomes aligned with Christ. She suggests that she, too, is mistreated by men due to their bad nature, and further suggests that her isolation from them is salvifically beneficial.

Despite their special designation as Christ's disciples, members of a community served by the corporal hand of God, the narrator casts the Disciples as turncoat and weak. While they comprise the original Christian community, the original "religion," these men ultimately abandon both their community and their salvation, because it is in their nature as men to forsake all others and to be averse to goodness. They instead choose to serve self-interest, forsaking their duty to the community to instead pursue self-preservation and self-protection. They turn away from Christ and they turn away from the community. By representing the original, and perhaps most pure, iteration of Christian community – those with the clearest view and greatest evidence of Christ's goodness and his sacrifice – as so inherently weak and fallible in this way, Lanyer

80

indicts those at the root of Christian community. But perhaps that root was rotten from the beginning. Notably, this original Christian community includes no women; the Disciples are all men, and women are presented no opportunities to support the failing community. The narrator puts no stock in this exclusionary religious community as a force on earth to bring one to goodness, but instead casts this community as fallible as man alone. And this representation of religious community is reiterated throughout Lanyer's poem.

Even in contemporary terms, the narrator demonstrates the inevitability of community's abandonment. In an early remark to the Countess of Cumberland, the narrator notes her retreat from court: "Thou from the Court to the Countrie art retir'd, / Leaving the world, before the world leaves thee."[198] Court community, at least, only values "all-bewitching charmes," "Lust and Sinne,"[199] serving only materialistic aims, and thereby threatening spiritual purpose. Thus, at the time of life when community is most needed for spiritual aims, it serves one better to abandon this community and seek alternative community, one that is not of "the world." But even that "Countrie" community inevitably flies, as Barbara Lewalski demonstrates.[200] Country community, specifically Lanyer's own idyllic community of Cookeham, is shown to be precariously contingent in "The Description of Cooke-ham," when the absence of a single community member causes the active retreat of all of the estate's flora and fauna, mirroring the narrator's own removal from safety and joy. At Cookeham, much like with Christ's Disciples, ignoring one's duty to the community irreparably harms that community. The country community does not provide lasting refuge; it too, is merely temporary, and thus the apparently

---

[198] Ibid. 161-2.
[199] Ibid. 164, 167.
[200] p. 106.

ideal community of Christian women, which has supported Lanyer's most productive moments, collapses.[201]

Lanyer begins to establish the broken nature of contemporary Christian community when, midway through "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," she moves backward in time to describe the conditions of mankind's fall and puts multiple historical periods into conversation. Her version of the story of the loss of Eden invokes the exclusionary conditions of the garden, which deny Eve's equal place and assert hierarchy between man and woman rather than community. The narrator thereby points to the central issue of gender in relation to community, and the injustice done to women by the insistence on their sole culpability for the Fall. In this telling, Eve is cast as naive but good: "Our Mother *Eve*, who tasted of the Tree, / Giving to *Adam* what shee held most deare, / Was simply good, and had no powre to see."[202] Because Eve has no indication of the consequences of trying the fruit from the tree, and she is more easily beguiled by the serpent: "For had she knowne, of what we were bereav'd, / To his request she had not condiscended."[203] Eve's naivety thus embodies a critique of men's insistence on women's ignorance, for, had she had the benefits of Adam's knowledge she never would have succumbed to the serpent's beguilement. But Adam has no such excuse, as he is given the responsibility of both Eve and the world. Adam, as master of the earth, should have known better: "But surely *Adam* can not be excusde, / Her fault though great, yet hee was most too blame; / What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might have refusde, / Being Lord of all, the greater was his shame."[204] Adam also has explicit instructions from God regarding the Tree of Knowledge and the consequences they both

---

[201] Certainly the retreat also at least partially represents nostalgia for this previous time as well as a recognition that she does not fit within that community any longer (the community which has since been disbanded with the marriage of Anne Clifford).
[202] "Salve," 763-5.
[203] Ibid. 771-2.
[204] Ibid. 777-80.

face should they disobey.[205] If Eve is, in fact, under Adam's lordship, then not only is her failure in tasting the fruit his responsibility, his own participation is even more damning.

Adam's failure is then multiplied by history, by the common Christian assertion that the responsibility for the fall lay with Eve (and women) alone: "And then to lay the fault on Patience backe, / That we (poore women) must endure it all."[206] Men, too, are hypocrites, as they blame Eve entirely for the Fall which was caused by their (unacknowledged) joint acquisition of knowledge, yet "Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke / From *Eves* faire hand, as from a learned Booke."[207] Men assert knowledge as a virtue when they alone hold it, but they insist it is a curse when they recall Eve's role in its acquisition. And even while recognizing Eve's role in knowledge acquisition, men deny women the role of knowledge-holders. But whatever evil is in women can be found multiplied in men: "If any Evill did in her remaine, / Beeing made of him, he was the ground of all."[208] Adam is the source of Eve's faults as she sprung from him, and he is the perpetuator of those faults as he did not act as the example of goodness and strength when she succumbed to the serpent in the Garden. But by blaming Eve alone for their Fall together, Adam commits a heinous sin: "Her weakenesse did the Serpants words obay; / But you in malice Gods deare Sonne betray."[209] The "you" here refers both to Adam and men in general, as it mirrors "you all" from the previous lines, and it points to the differing sins of Adam and Eve as well as the continued sin of man wholly blaming Eve and women for the Fall. Eve is allowed pardon as it is her weakness that causes her to be swayed by the serpent, but continued "malice" toward women for Eve's forgivable fault contradicts Christ's primary role on Earth: to acquire

---

[205] "And from Gods mouth receiv'd that strait command, / The breach whereof he knew was present death." Ibid. 787-8.
[206] Ibid. 793-4.
[207] Ibid. 807-8.
[208] Ibid. 809-10.
[209] Ibid. 815-7.

forgiveness for all of mankind and secure salvation for all. And here Lanyer shifts her critique from Adam and the Disciples toward her larger audience and the previously listed communities; through the use of "you," the ancillary audience of arrogant men is readdressed.

The narrator then introduces a call to action, to right the wrong of women being blamed for an act of evil committed together, in which Adam commits the greater sin:

> Then let us have our Libertie again,
>
> And challendge to your selves no Sov'raigntie;
>
> You came not in the world without our paine,
>
> Make that a barre against your crueltie;
>
> Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdaine
>
> Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny?
>
> > If one weake woman simply did offend,
> >
> > This sinne of yours, hath no excuse, nor end.[210]

Through the narrative of Christ as savior of all people, as both men and women have sinned and do sin, the narrator makes a distinctly proto-feminist claim by calling for equality. She suggests that men are tyrants in that they are currently not allowing women to "have our Libertie." In fact, men owe women a great deal more regard for the same reason we see in "To the Vertuous Reader," that women give men life ("You came not in the world without our paine") and not directly from God, as Adam did. Men also ignore the example set by Christ in his privileging of women. Through the indictment of men in the description of the Fall, Lanyer suggests that men no longer have any claim to superiority, and that this dominance over women is not a fair or natural state; instead it's "cruelty." And this cruelty is a sin that goes far beyond Eve's original fault; it "hath no excuse, nor end."

---

[210] Ibid. 825-32.

In this way, the Christian community as it currently exists is fractured, and the fault line lies between men and women. The community does not conform to the ideal one that the narrator imagines, in which men and women are "equal" as they share in original sin. The narrator suggests that men do not share the burden at all, and instead hypocritically force women to bear it solely. The lack of equality between men and women with this burden is the most heinous sin of all; as men perpetuate the idea of themselves as being faultless (or at least less at fault) than women they add additional cruelty to the original sin, making it inexcusable.

Rhetorically, the narrative of the Fall within "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" can also be understood as an analogy for the persecution of Christ. This narrative is framed by the story of Pontius Pilate's wife, who "beg[s] her Saviours life" of her husband, who presides over Christ's trial.[211] Immediately following the description of man's inexcusable and endless sin, the narrator turns back to Pilate's wife to excuse women from this most horrible act: "To which (poore soules) we never gave consent, / Witnesse thy wife (O *Pilate*) speakes for all."[212] In this analogy, Christ is to women as Pilate is to men. Pilate is a force of "tyrannie" whose heart has the capacity to "relent."[213] But Pilate, rather than adhering to his own assessment, or accepting his wife's plea, instead "seekest to appease" the "multitude" through "base dejection of this heavenly Light."[214] Just as women "never gave consent" to their own subjection by men, the narrator asks of Pilate: "The death of Christ wilt thou consent unto, / Finding no cause, no reason, nor no ground?"[215] Thus, Christ experiences the plight of women, and women are Christ-like. They share a similar oppression under the hand of tyrannous men and are similarly blameless, yet likewise subject to arbitrary law. Pilate "perceiv'st no fault in [Christ] to be," and yet condemns

---

[211] Ibid. 752.
[212] Ibid. 833-4.
[213] Ibid. 844, 837.
[214] Ibid. 845, 846.
[215] Ibid. 859-60.

him to die.[216] In the same way, knowledgeable men recognize their shared fault with women and yet subject them to tyrannous treatment and laws, using women's role in the Fall as an excuse. From Creation to the Passion to Lanyer's own time, she presents multiple historical layers throughout her poem that, interwoven, emphasize man's greater and continuing sins juxtaposed against women's relative morality.

Through this historical layering, the narrator frames both lawful and religious communities during all three referenced time periods as unjust and fractured. All three of these time periods have ruinous faults that prevent harmony on Earth. Christ, during his time on earth, leaves these communities. Even amongst his disciples, Christ is isolated:

Although the Spirit was willing to obay,

Yet what great weaknesse in the Flesh was found!

They slept in Ease, whilst thou in Paine didst pray;

Loe, they in Sleepe, and thou in Sorow drown'd:

Yet Gods right Hand was unto thee a stay,

When horror, griefe, and sorow did abound:

His Angel did appeare from Heaven to thee,

To yeeld thee comfort in Extremitie.[217]

As Lanyer points out, the religious community does not aid Christ in his time of need. He only receives comfort from an "Angel" sent by God. Despite the presence of his disciples and perhaps all their best intentions, they do not comfort, and cannot save, Christ: "But what could comfort then thy troubled Minde, / When Heaven and Earth were both against thee bent?"[218] The powers that lead to Christ's death are far too great for mere human intervention, but even given the

---

[216] Ibid. 878.
[217] Ibid. 425-32.
[218] Ibid. 433-4.

opportunity to comfort their savior, Christ's disciples fail. They instead serve self-interest, catering to their tired "Flesh" rather than Christ's needs. They do not provide the comfort of acknowledging Christ's pain, even though their actions could not otherwise aid him; they ignore their duty to service. All they offer is their mere corporeal presence, which does not assuage Christ's "horror, griefe, and sorow."

And, as death approaches, like all living beings Christ must then leave behind even the physical presence of community:

> Now drawes the houre of thy affliction neere,
>
> And ugly Death presents himselfe before thee;
>
> Thou now must leave those Friends thou held'st so deere,
>
> Yea those Disciples, who did most adore thee;
>
> Yet in thy countenance doth no Wrath appeare,
>
> Although betrayd to those that did abhorre thee:
>
>> Thou did'st vouchsafe to visit them againe,
>>
>> Who had no apprehension of thy paine.[219]

Christ, at the moment of his death, "must leave those Friends," his disciples, who gave their presence – although not their comfort – during his time of suffering. He presents no "Wrath" to his persecutors, but promises to "visit them againe." When referring to "them," the narrator includes all of the people around Christ during the Passion – disciples (those who "adore" him) and persecutors (those who "abhorre" him) alike – because he will return to those "Who had no apprehension of thy paine." Christ's persecutors have no "apprehension" of his pain because they have no misgivings about his crucifixion, and his disciples have no "apprehension" because they do not have an understanding or shared feeling of his pain. The disciples have already been

---

[219] Ibid. 457-64.

described as not knowing Christ's pain, and of course the persecutors, too, could not have known

such sorrow. Christ's isolation is complete, but he promises to return to all.

Christ's disciples, uncomforting and cowardly, abandon him as the rest of the lawful and

religious community does. Women, notably, do not explicitly abandon him. But Christ never

abandons community. He embraces his role in this process of salvation, and chooses to leave the

community in order to save it– disciples, tyrants, and all:

> To entertaine the sharpest pangs of death,
>
> And fight a combate in the depth of hell,
>
> For wretched Worldlings made of dust and earth,
>
> Whose hard'ned hearts, with pride and mallice swell;
>
> In midst of bloody sweat, and dying breath,
>
> He had compassion on these tyrants fell:
>
>> And purchast them a place in Heav'n for ever,
>>
>> When they his Soule and Body sought to sever.[220]

In this stanza, the narrator issues harsh judgment where Christ is providing salvation. She refers

to people as "wretched Worldlings" with "hard'ned hearts" full of "pride and mallice." Even

until Christ's last breath, his persecutors "sought to sever" his "Soule and Body." These people

surrounding Christ are evil and violent – everything Christ is not. They are sharply juxtaposed

with Christ's "compassion" which still fell upon the men even "In midst of bloody sweat, and

dying breath." In that way, Christ is shown to be outside of Christian community, and that he is

an outside force working upon it. Christ is literally not within Christian community; a Christian

must look outside of community to find Christ, and to find salvation. Unto his last breath, as he

spiritually left a community that had abandoned him multiple times, Christ still works to ensure

---

[220] Ibid. 673-80.

the salvation of the entire community, despite its fractured state. His goodness outshines the men who are "fell" (fallen). Christ's sacrifice allows for hope in community. His struggle demonstrates that community might abandon, and it might harm, and yet it still receives hope from Christ's love. In Lanyer's depiction, Christ does not abandon the community that abandoned him; instead, he gives all he has to preserve, improve, and sustain even the worst communities – lawful and otherwise.

The narrator, however, presents a mixed scene of the aftermath of Christ's sacrifice. Christ's death for the salvation of all people is viewed joyously by the narrator all the way until the end of "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum." She calls it "This wheate of Heaven the blessed Angells bread," "Sweet foode of life," and "delicious sweetnes."[221] But her view of humanity, both before and after Christ's Passion, is colored with bitterness. She refers to "Our sinking soules, out of the pit infernall" as the general state of humanity while describing the martyred Apostles who stood out as the exceptions to that rule. She describes Saint Laurence facing "The broyling gridyorne" for his adherence to Christianity, and Andrew who is "Condemn'd by Counsell" and crucified "Unto the Crosse."[222] Peter stands "Against the enemies of flesh and blood," "Not sparing Kings in what they did not right," and he faces "unseemly death."[223] The narrator juxtaposes the rare goodness of these Apostles against the brazen, overwhelming evil of the world. Her last words on the topic, before closing with two stanzas readdressing the Countess of Cumberland, are about John the Baptist accusing King Herod of incest and losing his head for it: "incestuous sin, / That hatefull crime of God and man abhorr'd: / His brothers wife, that prowd licentious Dame, / Cut off his Head to take away his shame."[224] These lines, of course,

---

[221] Ibid. 1785, 1787, 1802.
[222] Ibid. 1780, 1790, 1794, 1800.
[223] Ibid. 1810, 1813, 1815.
[224] Lines 1821-4.

resonate once again with Lanyer's own historical moment that has a clear memory of King Henry VIII's analogous marriage to Katherine of Aragon, who had first been married to his brother Arthur, creating a cross-historical simultaneity. It is here that the narrator becomes seemingly exhausted with this narrative, and chooses to cease: "But my weake Muse desireth now to rest."[225]

"Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" represents the worst in the Christian community. The narrator is skeptical of both lawful and religious communities throughout the poem, and emphasizes her own marginalized position within them. The lyric form allows her to explore and interrogate typical representations of Christ and the disciples, and to conclude that Christian community is devoid of Christ. She identifies injustice done through these community structures, and offers her own solution: equality. But with the example of Christ, the poem makes an argument for the redeemability of community, suggesting that while community is currently imperfect, there is hope for intervention for a more perfect future. Yet in all of the time periods included in the poem – Creation, Christ's life, and contemporary time – the Christian community in general is extremely flawed and is a counterproductive force against goodness and justice. And unto the end of the poem, the narrator's outlook on the attainability of true community does not change. She remains ever skeptical, ever aware of the overwhelming negatives of community. Even Lanyer's most ideal community, the all-female community of Cookeham, is still subject to the fracture that plagues Christian community in general. Thus that community, as idyllic and ideal as it was, is always represented as temporary and contingent.

On the path to salvation, the narrator portrays the Christian community as a hindrance. It prevents the proper and natural order, and it denies full participation to those women who might do the most good. For example, the poem begins situating Margaret Rusell with Christ,

---

[225] Line 1831.

describing her as most "wise" and well-suited "In doing service to the heav'nly powers," but she, like many women of her time, is "overthrown[n]" by men who "seeke, attempt, plot and devise."[226] Not only is she unable to serve a purpose for which she is well-suited on Earth, she ascends alone with Christ, demonstrating the individuality of salvation. And for Christ, community (both Christian and otherwise) leads to his death. Those among his disciples betray and abandon him, turning him over to an unjust legal community. The speaker emphasizes that Christ dies in isolation from the earthly community of men whom he has held closest, but ascends into the arms of the angels, returning to his godhead and his place at God's side. In that way, as terrible as the fractured community is represented to be, Lanyer consistently emphasizes its role on the path to salvation. Salvation is procured through injustice and the fallen state of community, and in that way is represented almost as a necessary evil. But the implication then is that after Christ's sacrifice the need for such a fractured community ceases and its continuation becomes counterproductive.

Christian community plays a clear role on the path to salvation in "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," but not one that is concordant with the ideal communities suggested by early theologians. Community is a catalyst to salvation in the story of the Passion, but only in that it procures Christ's death. It is only Christ himself who allows for salvation of all humanity. Christian community itself is not necessarily to blame for the many hardships of both Christ and women, because it is not the *theory* of community that fails Christ, but the fractured nature of the community caused by the long tradition of male malice against women. It is the very real misogyny of simultaneously blaming women for the Fall and denying their humanity which results in the negative outcomes of community. For the narrator, community becomes a necessary evil – one in which lies hope for a better future, but that currently primarily harms.

---

[226] Lines 171, 176, 207, 206.

Robert Southwell and Isolated Griefs

Because of his own tenuous communal ties, Saint Robert Southwell's (1561-1595) poetry has had a mixed reception in the centuries since his martyrdom at the hands of English persecutors. When first published, his works of both poetry and prose were banned in England and their publishers were executed, and in the early seventeenth century many Catholics embraced Southwell's poetry for the purposes of worship and meditation. But the Jesuit order and the Catholic Church were both ambivalent about Southwell's texts because of their reluctance to endorse official doctrine.[227] Most recently, scholars have spurned Southwell's poetry as uncreative and overly conventional; Scott Pilarz summarizes Southwell's neglect in literary scholarship as such: "Southwell, by implication at least, employs basic tropes in conventional ways while ineffectively expressing truths, divine and human."[228] Southwell has been ignored recently because his work has been deemed mediocre and unoriginal when, in fact, for much of history his work has been shunned because of its *un*conventionality and its unique perspective. Anne Sweeney's 2006 work, *Robert Southwell : Snow in Arcadia : Redrawing the English Lyric Landscape, 1586-95*, argues this point with astonishing thoroughness, demonstrating not only Southwell's unique place in the history of English poetry, but also his complex and ultimately effective poetic strategies. She compares Southwell's writing to his contemporaries in a discussion of his poem "Seeke flowers of heaven":

> Unlike contemporary English poetic structures, even Spenserian ones, this is almost the
> opposite of allegory, suggesting a partnership in Southwell's mind between image and
> understanding that seems to exist in part outside language. That dizzying trompe l'oeil
> manipulation of the imaginary space between God's heaven and viewer's earth seen in

---

[227] "Southwell, in obedience to his religious superiors, here and in most of his writing, forgoes denominational strife." Pilarz, Scott R. *Robert Southwell and the Mission of Literature, 1561-1595 : Writing Reconciliation.* Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003. Print. p. 37.
[228] Ibid. p. xxvii.

baroque decoration is here co-opted: Southwell collapses the distance and difference

between his reader and God, the airy gulfs of blue sky replaced by the internal spaces,

comprehension and affection of the reader, directed upwards by Southwell towards his

desired heavenly point.[229]

Sweeney describes Southwell's not-quite-baroqueness in this poem, which she aligns with his

not-quite-anything positioning. Southwell's doctrinal affiliations are not clear in his work, and it

is the inability to pin him down that has sidelined his poetry for much of history, she argues. And

it is in that unique perspective – that perspective that defies commands to adhere to any

particular orthodoxy – where I find a creative and questioning Christian voice in the lyric form.

Robert Southwell was born to a family enriched by King Henry VIII's dissolution of

Church property, but his inheritance was the Catholic religion in addition to Catholic property.[230]

At age fourteen, Southwell was sent to a Catholic school in Flanders for his education, which

was a risky move by his family since his father was imprisoned at the time for speaking against

Queen Elizabeth.[231] In fulfillment of a kind of childhood prophesy,[232] Southwell took religious

orders, choosing the Society of Jesus.[233] With the Jesuits, Southwell trained in the English and

Latin languages, studying to be a missionary in England. He was trained specifically in reformed

thought and religion in order to counter reformed ideas with his own knowledge.[234]

But Southwell's spiritual journey was not a simple one. He felt torn between differing

factions within the Society of Jesus; his teacher, William Allen, trained his students in English

disputation with the intention that they would be foot soldiers in England, fighting against the

---

[229] Sweeney, Anne. Robert Southwell : Snow in Arcadia: Redrawing the English Lyric Landscape, 1586-1595. Manchester, GBR: Manchester University Press, 2006. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 9 August 2015. p. 10.
[230] Ibid. p. 2.
[231] Ibid. p. 4.
[232] As a child, Southwell's friends and family referred to him as "Father Robert." Ibid. p. 2.
[233] Ibid. p. 4.
[234] Ibid. p. 5.

tide of reform.[235] But the official Jesuit project was not to produce missionaries for Protestant states specifically, so his particular training tended to separate him from the larger body of Jesuit students. As a Jesuit, Southwell also faced resistance from conservative Catholics in England, including his own family both because of the innovative nature of his sect and because of its close alignment with Spain.[236] Jesuits, of course, eventually faced the criminalization of their sect in England as well. So he became increasingly isolated in his religious pursuit as his education continued.

Poetry played for Southwell a mixed role. His education in disputation introduced a pedagogical aspect into his creative work, but his poems are more than mere rhetoric. Sweeney argues, "Poetry becomes communication and movement through memory to Southwell, supplying an escape, a means of self-expression (witness) and a methodology of communicating with certain people (ministry)."[237] Like many religious writers, Southwell's poems enact a speaking subject engaged in inner struggle, and to a great extent that subject aligns closely with Southwell himself, articulating his missionary goals, his effort to fulfil them, and his frustrations.

Southwell's status as a Jesuit introduces another factor to his poetry: the theology of Saint Ignatius Loyola. In terms of community Loyola's theology takes a more extreme tack than other sixteenth century theologians. Loyola argues that always and above all, man should serve God, and in order to do that, he must first attend to his own spiritual path. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, arguably the central Jesuit text, "it should be remembered that the *Exercises* are intended primarily for persons who have a real desire to free themselves from all entanglements of sin and inordinate affections for worldly things, and to give themselves entirely to God in whatever way,

---

[235] Ibid. p. 4.
[236] Ibid. p. 6.
[237] Ibid. p. 8.

and in whatever degree of perfection, He may call them to serve Him."[238] The *Exercises* are predicated upon seclusion, the condition under which Loyola himself wrote them. They suggest that the best way to elevate one's own spirituality and to gain greater access to God is through isolation and careful consideration of oneself. But while Ignatian spirituality is centered around the individual experience, the mission of the Society of Jesus (established in 1540 with the approval of the Pope) is to bring spiritual enlightenment to others. And that mission is predicated upon participating in a "Society" of Jesus – that is, a community united by a missionary purpose. In that way, Southwell would be simultaneously a part of and a servant to the broader Christian religious community.

During his life, Southwell served that missionary goal in England. After being ordained in 1584, Southwell returned to his home country in 1586 on a sanctioned mission.[239] In 1589 he became chaplain to the Countess of Arundel.[240] During his years in England Southwell was forced by circumstance to move frequently from one Catholic home to another, eluding English authorities, but always serving his mission.[241] Although he ministered to Catholics for years in England prior to his arrest, there is evidence that English authorities knew of his presence in the country even before he arrived, suggesting that the authorities did not view him as a priority for arrest early on.[242] But by 1592, political conditions for Catholics in England became even more

---

[238] Longridge, W.H. "Introduction." Ignatius, of Loyola, Saint, 1491-1556. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*. London: Robert Scott, 1919. p. xxiii.

[239] "Southwell, St Robert." *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Eds. Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone. : Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference*. 2009. Date Accessed 9 Aug. 2015.

[240] Ibid.

[241] "the outline of an administrative structure within which the priests undertook vigorous pastoral work in their allotted areas is now clear, and supersedes the earlier notion that they were forced to spend much of their time in isolation, shut away from the sight of all but those who might be most trusted." McDonald, James, and Nancy P. Brown. "Introduction." Robert Southwell. *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S.j*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1967. Print. p. xxv.

[242] Ibid. p. xxix.

dangerous due to the failed Spanish invasion in 1588, and Southwell was finally arrested. After three years of imprisonment, Robert Southwell was hanged and quartered as a traitor.

Southwell wrote the bulk of his English-language poetry while on his mission in England. As chaplain to Anne, Countess of Arundel, Southwell enjoyed some of the same freedoms as Aemilia Lanyer did with the Countess of Cumberland. James McDonald and Nancy Brown write of this time: "The generosity of the Countess of Arundel in the midst of her personal tribulations enabled Southwell to move freely about his business; at times of greatest peril she hid him in her own house, attended by her most trustworthy servants."[243] Despite the increasing persecutions of Catholics in England during Southwell's mission, he was able to find freedom and space for his creative and spiritual endeavors. And the result represents both the goals of his mission in England and the effects of his spiritual position on his interior self. Although not widely circulated during his life nor for decades thereafter, Southwell's poetry did have an audience in his very small Catholic circle in England, all likely people who knew him personally. The poems were not compiled into a manuscript until after his death, and even then the manuscript was incomplete.[244] Therefore, the existence of the poems themselves mimicked the subject and themes therein – themes of isolation and hopelessness.

Given Southwell's criminal status during his mission in England, it comes as no surprise that he must defend the lawfulness of his work. In his address "To the Reader," positioned before the sequence on the Virgin Mary and Christ, he says,

Prophane conceites and fayning fits I flie,

Such lawlesse stuffe doth lawlesse speeches fit:

With *David* verse to vertue I apply,

---

[243] Ibid. p. xxvii.
[244] Ibid. p. lxxviii.

Whose measure best with measured wordes doth sit

It is the sweetest note that man can sing,

When grace in vertues key tunes natures string.[245]

He begins by defending poetry as a genre, denying that this poetry is "lawlesse stuffe," and he asks the reader not to "censure" his poetry even though to create such a product might be a "crime."[246] Instead he invokes the biblical figure of David, linking poetry with "vertue" in an attempt to change his reader's assumed perspective that poetry is mere frivolous "Prophane conceites" that lives outside the world of virtue. Thus, through this argumentation for lawfulness, the narrator of these poems admits their potential lawlessness – actual or perceived. Despite that lawlessness, the narrator asserts that this poetry "must have a time," and, in fact, "tis a sweete repose."[247] The narrator suggests that lawlessness causes a particular virtue that allows for superior creative output. Simultaneously, Southwell aligns himself with poetry through the particular use of "lawlesse," as his readers would have known that his very existence in England was outside of the law. But it is that lawless condition that allowed him to write this poetry in the first place. In that way, being outside of the lawful community is represented in a positive light from the very beginning of the poetry sequence.

That positivity in regard to existing outside of the lawful community transitions to outright skepticism of all community in the main lyric poems. Perhaps the most positive representation of community comes in "A holy Hymme," in which the narrator reverently describes the Eucharist:

Let our praise be loud and free,

Full of joy and decent glee,

---

[245] Lines 13-18.
[246] Lines 2, 5.
[247] Lines 6, 11.

97

> With mindes and voices melody.
>
> For now solemnize we that day,
>
> Which doth with joy to us display
>
> The prime use of this mistery.[248]

The use of the first person plural is unusual in Southwell's poems, but it represents a shared joy amongst parishioners at viewing the Eucharist. The narrator, along with the others, feels a freedom and elevation of spirit that to him is like a song. Taken as a whole, this poem is a lesson about the nature of the Eucharist and Christ's presence in the bread and the wine ("When the priest the hoast devideth, / Know that in each part abideth / All that the whole hoast covered"[249]), and it emphasizes the communal nature of the experience. But the narrator is careful to point out that while the experience is communal, the effects are individual:

> Both the good and bad receive him,
>
> But effectes are divers in them,
>
> True life, or dewe destruction,
>
> Life to the good, death to the wicked:
>
> Marke how both alike received
>
> With farre unlike conclusion.[250]

Even while the joy in the experience of the Eucharist is shared, the outcomes are severed from the experience. Instead, the outcomes are tied to the nature of the individual: "good" or "bad," and "good" or "wicked." Thus the outcomes of the Eucharist are divorced from the communal experience, no matter how positive that experience may be.

---

[248] Lines 13-18.
[249] Lines 55-7.
[250] Lines 49-54.

Skepticism about community emerges more clearly in "Christs sleeping friends" when the narrator describes the failure of even the most sincere communities. In this poem, Christ calls out to his sleeping friends for aid in his time of great pain:

> With milde rebuke he warned them to wake:
>
> Yet sleepe did still their drousie sences hold:
>
> As when the sunne the brightest shew doth make
>
> In darkest shrouds the night birdes them infolde.
>
> His foes did watch to work their cruell spight,
>
> His drousie friendes slept in his hardest plight.[251]

Southwell's representation of Christ's disciples bears a striking resemblance to Lanyer's representation of the same; the disciples fail to attend to Christ's needs in his time of suffering. But it is not individual personal failings that disrupt this group; it is the inevitability of man's failure that disrupts the expectations of Christian community. The narrator of this poem compares Christ's friends to Jonah, asleep on the ship accosted by storms caused by his own failings: "The shippe was billows gaine, and chaunces pray, / Yet carelesse *Jonas* mute and sleeping lay."[252] Christ's friends, like Jonah, are both the cause of and unaware of the pain around them. Their "wonted calme did still endure" the death of their shelter and salvation, just as Jonah "Did shroud himselfe in pleasant ivy shade, / But lo, while him a heavy sleep opprest, / His shadowy bowre, to withered stalke did fade."[253] What causes this description of a traditional biblical scene to exceed simply devotional representation is that both Jonah and the disciples serve self-interest before their suffering savior, and as such they inhibit Christian community from serving its purpose. The fallibility of humans subverts community in this poem, and the

---

[251] Lines 7-12.
[252] Lines 17-8.
[253] Lines 24, 26-8.

original Christian religious community proves inadequate at best, and violent to Christ himself at worst. It is arguably the community that allows such security amongst friends ("these disciples sleeping lie secure"[254]), a security which deafens Christ's friends to his cries. And thus they, like Jonah, contribute to the loss of their shelter in Christ's death.

As synecdoche for the entire Christian community, Christ's disciples demonstrate a dangerous complacency in the presence of Christ, who is the manifestation of their salvation. For the disciples, as with Jonah, the shelter of Christ's sacrifice if enjoyed too long results in the rot of that shelter's very foundation. While they feel "secure" underneath Christ's protective "bower," their negligence of their own responsibility in maintaining that shelter causes its ultimate destruction: "Alas the glorie of your arbor dies."[255] Thus, man's imperfection yields the inevitability of his own downfall, but his active negligence through complacency deems the entire Christian community culpable. It is man's failure to enact Christian community that becomes the real crime.

Community is then represented as a hindrance to individual spiritual elevation and salvation. In "The Virgins salutation" within the sequence on the Virgin Mary, the narrator reminds the reader that only God's will and God's agency can procure salvation for man: "Man labouring to ascend procurde our fall, / God yeelding to discend cut off our thrall."[256] Once again the narrator uses the first person plural pronoun, pointing to the shared fell state of all humanity. In this poem, it is the combined sin of Adam and Eve that results in the Fall, a community dynamic of sharing and receiving. But man's will – his "haughty minde" and "pride"[257] – contradicts God's edicts and condemns him to a descent into Hell. Only then can God intervene

---

[254] Line 23.
[255] Lines 34, 39.
[256] Lines 17-8.
[257] Lines 13, 14.

to stop this descent and "cut off our thrall." Man cannot act on himself – as an individual or as a community of men – either to elevate his status or to effect his own salvation.

This point is taken even further to the extreme in "Life is but Losse," a poem well-represented by its title. In this poem, the narrator dwells on his desire to die: "in will I wish to die;" "who can like in such a life to dwell;" "for him I hope to dye."[258] The use of the first person singular and limited references to anyone aside from God and Death presents a profoundly isolated narrator who spurns the comforts of earthly life and community. Life is a curse for the narrator, a curse that he desires to escape: "Life is a wandering course to doubtfull rest."[259] Life provides nothing– no joy, no lessons, no growth. Those things in life which ought to be purely pleasurable are pain to the narrator: "Life is but losse, where death is deemed gaine, / And loathed pleasures breede displeasing paine."[260] As a Jesuit, Southwell particularly struggled to reconcile his earthly enjoyments with his Christian mission, and throughout his education he became more averse to the temptations of beauty and pleasure. Thus, those things that ought to – and do – provide pleasure also produce an enormous amount of pain for the narrator as he struggles with his conscience.[261] But this lack of pleasure is also due to the consistent doubtful state of man, in which man looks forward to death as a time of freedom from life but which is open to two distinct possibilities: Heaven or Hell. The narrator says of all people, "None being sure, what finall fruites to reape."[262] And that lack of assuredness contributes to his own desire to die: "And who can like in such a life to dwell, / Whose waies are straite to heav'n, but wyde to

---

[258] Lines 1, 17, 42.
[259] Line 13.
[260] Lines 5-6.
[261] In particular, Southwell is known to have struggled with the nature of his relationship with his friend and classmate, John Deckers. He describes Deckers in several of his letters, detailing his friend's beauty, and it is likely that the two had a physical relationship. Pilarz 117-8.
[262] Line 16.

hell."[263] The condition of doubt in regard to salvation is consistent throughout this troublesome life, but to become content in life is dangerous. The narrator asks of death why he should not be allowed to die, when "Where life is lov'd, thou ready art to kill, / And to abridge with sodaine pangues their joy."[264] Ultimately, the narrator takes comfort in God's will, no matter the outcome, but he continues to emphasize the inefficacy of all action in life. He desires salvation, and while accepting his own lack of agency in the matter, ends the poem with a tone of resignation, calling life his "brittle course / ... / To him I live, for him I hope to dye."[265]

In "Life is but Losse," the narrator's desire to die is driven by his love of God. He wants salvation and to be joined with God, and he views his time on Earth as a kind of purgatory. His life is spent waiting for an inevitable outcome, an outcome he is not entirely sure of, but an outcome he hopes will be positive. Sweeney recognizes this will to death across Southwell's works: "Southwell's ministry, his correspondence, his sermons, his poetry were all predicated upon his wish to be dissolved in Christ."[266] Throughout Southwell's life, it is clear that he tended to the Christian community avidly, in the hopes of shaping that community in the image of Christ. But in his own works, it is clear that he has no desire to persist in the Christian community; it does not contribute to his desired outcome of reconciling with Christ. On Earth, pain is the result of the endless waiting and the endless wondering. Being saved or not is a foregone conclusion to his life, a conclusion he cannot be sure of but a conclusion crafted by God alone. Life, for the narrator, is a roadblock to salvation, a roadblock filled with "theeves,"

---

[263] Lines 17-8.
[264] Lines 31-2.
[265] Lines 40, 42.
[266] p. 269.

"greeves," and "civill strife."[267] Thus he represents community: an inconvenience at best, and a restraint from unity with God at worst.

Southwell's poetry at times obliquely addresses community as hostile to salvation, and at other times does so rather specifically. In "At home in Heaven," a poem that encourages the reader to meditate on his final home rather than on material things, Southwell addresses family community – love in particular – as the narrator warns the reader off of love:

> O soule do not thy noble thoughts abase
>
> To lose thy loves in any mortall wight:
>
> Content thy eye at home with native grace,
>
> Sith God him selfe is ravisht with thy sight.
>
> If on thy beautie God enamored bee:
>
> Base is thy love of any lesse than hee.[268]

The narrator suggests that other people are unworthy of his love. He casts temporal love for other people as a waste and as potentially dangerous. The poem references the story of Samson and Delilah, highlighting romantic love as a path to betrayal and violence. But the narrator does not only deny romantic love, as would be in line with his Jesuit vows. The title of the poem suggests that both matrimonial and family love are spiritually unfulfilling and should be shunned in favor of love for God alone. Even admiration is circumscribed, as he describes Esther as "of rare and pearlesse hew," and Judith as one who "once for beauty bare the vaunt," but urges his soul, "out of thy selfe seeke God alone."[269] The narrator insists on avoiding all traditional forms of earthly love, because they are debasing to the love of God and detract from one's capacity to love God. But while the poem advocates for this denial of temporal loves, it also demonstrates a sincere

---

[267] Lines 9, 8, 12.
[268] Lines 25-30.
[269] Lines 37, 38, 41.

struggle to perform that denial. By recognizing this love's inherent attractions, the narrator gestures to his own struggle both with temporal love and community. In that way, the narrator denies *himself* the community which is undergirded by the traditional family structure. He denies *himself* the comforts of family love. In so doing, he exalts the choice of the priestly life while undermining almost the entirety of Christian community, as comforting as it may be.

In "Loves servile lot," the narrator takes a much more extreme tack with love, casting love as dangerous, deceitful, and violent by nature for a male audience. The poem works through oppositions, contrasting apparent with actual, external with internal. Hyperbolically negative, the speaker calls love "mistris of many mindes," "Corrupted in the core," a "tyrant cruell," and "poyson."[270] Love is cast as a female character, one who requires service of men, but "They reckon least how little love / Their service doth deserve."[271] This service directly detracts from man's obligation to God; it "inthrall[s] soules" and "chaines"[272] its servants. Even while love provides material and emotional joys, "Her little sweete hath many sowres, / Short hap immortall harmes, / Her loving lookes, are murdring dartes."[273] At best, this poem can be described as a polemic against love, arguing that love is a murderous, villainous demon who seeks the damnation of man. The poem ends:

> Her sleepe in sinne, doth end in wrath,
>
> Remorse rings her awake,
>
> Death cals her up, shame drives her out,
>
> Despaires her up-shot make.
>
>
> Plowe not the Seas, sow not the sands,

[270] Lines 1, 8, 41, 67.
[271] Lines 3-4.
[272] Lines 45, 46.
[273] Lines 49-51.

> Leave off your Idle paine,
>
> Seeke other mistres for your minds,
>
> Loves service is in vaine.[274]

Love is an idle occupation, like farming that bears no fruit. It is an investment of time, energy, and the "mind" that only detracts from worthier causes. Love provides no benefit to man, but instead robs him of his productivity. Therefore, investing in the community of women – a community imagined as radically different from Lanyer's women's community – through romantic attachment is inadvisable, and potentially treacherous to a man's soul. Indeed, in this poem women are characterized as anthropomorphized distraction rather than a group to be considered human at all.

While Southwell's personal struggles with romantic temptation certainly inform this polemic, it is important to remember the combined motives of his lyric poetry. He simultaneously wrote in a mode of self-expression and in a mode of ministry.[275] Therefore these railings against love are written not merely self-reflectively, but propositionally, as assertions to be accepted by other Christians. And his proposition is rather extreme, suggesting the complete overthrow of community life as those around him would have known it by attending entirely to spiritual love rather than temporal love. But the extremity of the proposition is only as great as the inevitability of that proposition's failure, because he recognizes the power of temporal love to "lure" and "binde" and "inthrall," [276] a power that, perhaps, cannot be overcome no matter how great the imperative.

Robert Southwell's lyric poems represent different kinds of community as failing to serve man's spiritual goals. Lawful community is shirked, religious community is criticized, and

---

[274] Lines 69-76.

[275] "Poetry, like passions and loves, when rightly ordered and under the influence of grace, can reconcile writers and readers to God." Pilarz p. 155.

[276] Lines 25, 29, 45.

romantic and family communities are denied altogether – at least in his own practice.

Community is shown to be unproductive in spiritual life, and in some cases inhospitable to

spiritual growth and salvation. Instead, these poems promote isolated worship as the only path to

God, an anomaly among Jesuits as Scott Pilarz notes in Southwell's prose works: "He strikes one

anomalous note, however, when describing himself as 'singled out from all my family and

kindred and called to enter the Society of Jesus' (Devotions 33)...The temptation to 'singularity

arises regularly in following entries, revealing that the poet struggled with this issue."[277]

Southwell's advocacy against particular aspects of temporal community, love in particular, exists

alongside his own struggle to deny the comforts community can provide. In some ways his

poetry's radicalism seems reactionary against the overwhelming temptations of the world.

  In the sequence on the Virgin Mary, the poem's narrator highlights the central figures of

Christianity as distinguished, and potentially isolated from, the rest of humanity – to their

benefit. Mary's status as being selected by God is emphasized in "Her Nativity": "For God on

earth she is the royall throne."[278] In "Her Spousals" Mary is described as physically separate

from the rest of humanity, as she is "Untoucht of man."[279] Because of this special status, Mary is

cut off from traditional community roles; while still married to Joseph, the couple takes a vow of

chastity to ensure "virgin did she die": "Though both in wedlocke bandes themselves assurde, /

Yet streite by vow they seald their chast intent."[280] Mary is blessed and chosen by God, and

therefore she is elevated from the rest of humanity, spiritually separated from the general

community through that elevation and from personal community through her chastity. She has no

---

[277] p. 145.
[278] Line 13.
[279] Line 2.
[280] Lines 1, 15-6.

spiritual peers. Despite that separation, she still lives within and serves that community. She is mother to but separate from the Christian community.

Christ, too, is elevated above man, and in that elevation is distinguished by his spiritual purity. In "Christs returne out of Egypt," Christ is described as worth more than others: "He shewed the parents that their babes did mone, / That all their lives were lesse then his alone."[281] He is also described as a flower and a fruit among weeds and thorns, and while he is able to return from Egypt to a "flowre," ultimately, "Ripe fruit he must with thornes hang on a tree,"[282] a reference to the crucifixion. Christ is elevated above all other men, and even within the good community he returns to, no other can breach his spiritual difference. The community becomes threatening and dangerous around him ("thornes") because of his special status ("Ripe fruit"). Within his one life is a bounty greater than the innocence of all the children killed by Herod, and all of the men in Nazareth are transformed from "flowers"[283] to "thornes" in comparison, both through juxtaposition and through their motives for achieving Christ's death (persecution and salvation). Christ's extreme goodness is transformative, but not positively. The men of Nazareth begin as "flowers," but upon Christ's arrival are transformed into "thornes," while he is transformed into "Ripe fruit." In that way, Christ's spiritual purity and potential is correlated with rejection and separation from community, where once again man fails to serve the ideal Christian community and disrupts all of community in the process. But that positioning of Christ as outside of community becomes emulated in the lyric poems, wherein the narrator accepts isolation as the necessary state of worship.

The narrator once again points to love's inadequacies in "What joy to live?" a poem that juxtaposes love's supposed pleasures against its inevitable pains:

---

[281] Lines 5-6.
[282] Lines 12, 18.
[283] Line 17.

> For that I love I long, but that I lacke,
>
> That others love I loath, and that I have:
>
> All worldly fraights to me are deadly wracke,
>
> Men present hap, I future hopes doe crave.
>
> They loving where they live, long life require,
>
> To live where best I love, death I desire.[284]

The narrator claims that he has man's love, but he shuns that love. He actively "loaths" the love of man, and anything that man has to offer. He only "desires" and "craves" Heaven, but for those he must die. So during his time on earth, the narrator accepts his emotional isolation both from community and from earthly pleasures, because he argues that to accept those things is tantamount to damnation. He must deny himself any pleasures, because "Where nature craves, that grace must needes denie / ... / Where pleasures upshot is to die accurst."[285] Southwell's own anxiety about his relationship with John Deckers is manifest in this poem; the close correlation between friendship and pleasure as they both relate to damnation reiterates the fear Southwell reveals in his letters. Friendship, for Southwell, is one kind of earthly pleasure that must be avoided to ensure salvation, which results in emotional isolation. So isolation, then, becomes a prerequisite for salvation for Southwell.

In "Content and rich," a poem that celebrates a simple life, the narrator once again emphasizes his isolation from community by arguing that the success or failure of others has no bearing on his own status. He says he neither envy nor pities others: "I envie not their happe, / Whome favour doth advance: / I take no pleasure in their paine, / That have lesse happie chaunce."[286] Whereas Southwell rages against love in the love poems, advising his readers in the

---

[284] Lines 6-12.
[285] Lines 27, 30.
[286] Lines 53-6.

strongest terms against it, this poem quietly accepts the folly of others. The narrator in "Content and rich" is contented in his isolation, which is a choice quite different from the earthly pleasures chosen by those around him. His contentment is the result of self-assuredness, that is, an assuredness of fortunes changing: "No chaunge of fortunes calmes, / Can cast my comforts downe: / When fortune smiles, I smile to thinke, / How quickly shee will frowne."[287] The narrator here demonstrates some privileged knowledge; he's in on the joke of fortune which is played on all men, although not all recognize her tempestuous ways. Those who are advanced by "favor" will most certainly meet the other side of fortune, whether or not they recognize that outcome during their happier days. But even within this otherwise contented poem, the narrator reveals a touch of bitterness; he asserts that "To rise by others fall, / I deeme a losing gaine,"[288] but he clearly takes some sardonic pleasure (he "smile[s] to thinke") in the fates of those who choose a life less deprived than his own.

Although isolation is asserted to be the path to salvation and a good religious life, the lyric poems of Robert Southwell also reveal that same isolation to be incredibly difficult and emotionally grievous. The representation of isolation as grief reoccurs throughout the lyric poems, painting a portrait of a man plagued by a state of exile. In "A vale of teares," the narrator describes a location of worship and penance, where one waits for the afterlife. It is,

> A place for mated minds, an onely bower,
>
> Where every thing doth sooth a dumpish mood.
>
> Earth lies forlorne, the cloudie skie doth lower,
>
> The wind here weepes, here sighes, here cries aloude.[289]

---

[287] Lines 61-4.
[288] Lines 57-8.
[289] Lines 33-6.

This vale is a place of mourning, a site of grief. It is a "sad and mourning vaile," even though it is a place "To which from wordly joyes they may retire."[290] The narrator finds himself in this place at the end of the poem: "Set here my soule maine streames of teares afloate, / Here all thy sinfull foiles alone recount."[291] The narrator views the mournful vale as a gateway; it is a step along the path to his own salvation. But such a place is filled only with sadness. He receives no relief by coming to this place; he receives no assurance of his future. The grief lingers, and the narrator expects the grief to persist as long as he lives: "Come deepe remorse, possesse my sinfull brest: / Delights adue, I harbourd you too long."[292] Here the narrator accepts a state of grief as the necessary path to a future with God, but he reveals his previous reluctance to do so. He admits that he "harbourd" pleasures "too long." He does not revel in this isolated grief; it is not an ecstatic self-flagellation; instead, it is a burden of self-denial he accepts reluctantly in order to resist the seductions of life.

And yet, even prior to accepting isolating grief, the narrator represents the struggle to decide to accept God's mercy as a tormented, isolated journey. In "the prodigall childs soule wracke," the narrator describes himself: "I found my selfe on every side / Enwrapped in the waves of wo, / And tossed with a toilesome tide, / Could to no port for refuge go."[293] In this poem, the narrator describes himself as alone and lost at sea, tossed by the waves which are the roiling powers of "hellish furies:" "Thus heaven and hell, thus sea and land, / Thus stormes and tempests did conspire."[294] But the narrator can find no refuge from this assault; he has "no port" where he might be received and protected. He is utterly alone and cut off from any kind of community, a forced isolation that correlates with Southwell's descriptions of Christ's isolation.

---

[290] Lines 42, 58.
[291] Lines 61-2.
[292] Lines 75-6.
[293] Lines 5-8.
[294] Lines 17, 21-4.

In the end, he is shipwrecked and imprisoned by evil forces which he has succumbed to: "Where chaind in sinne I lay in thrall, / Next to the dungeon of despaire."[295] The narrator's sins become his metaphorical chains, and while he is "in thrall," he is not actively in despair. He feels grief, but he does not submit to his imprisonment entirely because he is only "next to the dungeon." And finally, "mercy raisde me from my fall, / And grace by ruines did repaire."[296] This poem highlights the narrator's inability to achieve his own salvation, because despite his great will against evil, and his own acknowledgment that "Subdue I must or be subdude," he is still "luld asleepe in errors lap."[297] It also emphasizes isolation in the journey to salvation, an isolation which only becomes more grievous over time. And it is only at the narrator's lowest point, imprisoned, alone, and broken, that God's mercy can lift him out of his grievous life. But the narrator never loses hope; his placement next to, but not within, the dungeon of despair, demonstrates his knowledge of imminent salvation. It demonstrates his acknowledgment of this wretched journey as the path to salvation.

Isolation reoccurs throughout the lyric poems, emphasizing isolation as the necessary path to salvation. In "I dye without desert," the narrator describes himself as an "orphane... / With onely sighes and teares."[298] But it is Southwell's most personal poem, "A Phansie turned to a sinners complaint," that reveals a narrator touched deeply by grief and isolation. This poem begins by comparing the narrator's state with another's, "Whose comfort is to rue." The narrator says if another who claims grief has "the smallest sweete" or "one lightning hower," then "He is no mate for me."[299] The narrator claims grief as both cause and result of his isolation. His grief is too great for others to match and join in some grieved community, and he is further pained by the

---

[295] Lines 57-8.
[296] Lines 59-60.
[297] Lines 36, 50.
[298] Lines 13-4.
[299] Lines 9, 12, 14.

inadequacy of others. The poem describes a transformation over time as well. Where first there was "mirth," "phansies," and "joy,"[300] there is now "sower," "frighted wits," and "flint."[301] But this transformation is the narrator's just dessert for having had such a pleasurable life to begin with. He reiterates the point here that is seen repeatedly in the other lyric poems, that life's pleasures bring only pain: "Behold, such is the end, / That pleasure doth procure, / Of nothing else but care and plaint."[302] But this narrator is not contented with his lowered station; he does not merely accept this punishment for his earlier pleasures. He feels a great sense of regret, not just of his current punishment, but of the loss of those pleasures:

> O that they were not lost,
>
> Or I could it excuse;
>
> O that a dreame of fained losse,
>
> My judgement did abuse.[303]

The narrator also wonders about the state of deprivation from pleasure; it should be mitigated by the assurances of God's love and favor, but he cannot find such mitigation: "Then grace, where is the joy / That makes they torments sweete."[304] He is unsure of his position; he cannot reconcile the situation with his expectations. He had expected his deprivations to be bearable to the light of God's favor, but he fails to experience the positive effects of his devotion; where, he wonders, are "Thy sparks of blisse, thy heavenly rayes, / That shined erst so bright?"[305]

Ultimately, the narrator accepts his fate. He admits that this is the path he must walk, and that he can do nothing to change it:

> But since that I have sinn'd,

---

[300] Lines 1, 33, 46.
[301] Lines 10, 35, 54.
[302] Lines 73-5.
[303] Lines 89-92.
[304] Lines 81-2.
[305] Lines 87-8.

And scourge none is too ill;

I yeeld me captive to my curse,

My hard fate to fulfill.[306]

He bows to his "fate," but he emphasizes how troubling this fate is. He calls it "The solitarie Wood" and "The darkest dennes," and says he will feed on "wormes" while "My teares shall be my wine."[307] The description of the narrator's fate is harsh and dramatic, saying "My bed a craggy Rock; / My harmonie the Serpents hisse, / The screeching Owle my clock."[308] He will remain utterly alone in this fate, characterizing it as "My fall, and my exile."[309] In this poem, the narrator's flair for the dramatic demonstrates that while he states his acceptance of his fate, he does not feel contented with it. He describes it with extremity because he feels it is extreme. He is alone and isolated in his situation, but he ensures that isolation by putting himself in competition with others in pain. The poem ends,

Yet is my greefe not fain'd,

Wherein I starve and pine,

Who feeleth most, shall think it least,

If his compare with mine.[310]

This ending verges on a challenge. Just as the poem begins with an invitation to compare griefs, it ends with an aggressive suggestion that the griefs of no one can match his own.

The narrator's tone in "A Phansie turned to a sinners complaint" betrays his confidence. The defensive posturing reveals a lack of assuredness in the narrator. Midway through the poem he claims,

Yet that shall never faile,

---

[306] Lines 121-4.
[307] Lines 125, 127, 130, 133.
[308] Lines 134-6.
[309] Line 148.
[310] Lines 149-52.

> Which my faith bare in hand:
>
> I gave my vow, my vow gave me,
>
> Both vow and gift shall stand.[311]

The poem ends with eight stanzas describing in dramatic detail the scourge that is the narrator's life, in such a way that suggests self-pity. He is not playing the contented martyr; he is ensuring that others will know the trials he endured as he supposedly embraces the life of pain in order to achieve salvation. Thus, the narrator only tentatively accepts this fate of exile and isolation as his path to salvation. He claims to accept the theory, but his emotion betrays him. His desire does not lie in such isolation, and he is unprepared to meet this pain without God's "sweete."

Southwell's representation of struggle with isolation on the path to salvation plays two roles: it serves as a platform for the narrator's self-pity, and it provides a model for Christian suffering. It is difficult to say if Southwell advocates for such extreme suffering in the face of temptation, but there is a deliberate attempt to represent the harsh reality of living up to Christian expectations. Although his suffering is ongoing, the narrator demonstrates a clear determination to continue on his chosen spiritual path despite all doubts and despite all struggles. In that way, while he may not model himself as living an emotionally pure Christian life, he is a model for Christian actions.

In the poems of Robert Southwell and Aemilia Lanyer, the communal ideal is acknowledged but harshly criticized. Both poets represent extreme skepticism of community, both ideal and lived, and both ultimately reject the idea of the theorized perfect community through representations of biblical mythology and the emotions of struggling Christian subjects. Both of these authors represent complex, layered communities, and both were sequestered from larger communities at

---

[311] Lines 117-20.

the time they were writing. And both represent the larger Christian community as failing their religious goals.

Throughout all of these lyric poems, the fallibility of humankind is a central concern, and that fallibility prevents perfect community. For Southwell, man's focus on the material and earthly pleasures prevents him from achieving salvation, and his failings prevent him from providing meaningful contribution to the religious experiences of others. Man struggles both to achieve salvation through his actions – which he can never do, for God is the only agent in salvation – and to resist earthly temptations, which his inherent weakness will not allow. For Lanyer, it is inevitable that man will fail in his religious commitments because of his status as fallen; he may make a good-faith attempt, as Christ's followers do, but will nevertheless ultimately fail. The system of community established by men is infected with that fallenness, resulting in an inequitable distribution of authority based on gender, and thus it can never serve the religious function theorists assert it must.

Both poets also demonstrate a reluctance to engage in community because of the lack of reciprocity. For Lanyer, her status as a woman relegates her to a secondary position in society; she cannot participate as men do, and thus community becomes an imposition upon her, an element of oppression. She desires equality and demonstrates some hope for an ideal community, but she is resigned to community's imperfection and thus is more than reluctant to participate. For Southwell, other people are represented as having nothing to offer him but a snare to drag him into damnation. In that way he embraces his own isolation on the religious path, but simultaneously mourns that missing community that he recognizes as a proposed (but nonexistent) ideal.

For Southwell and Lanyer, community does not live up to the ideals proposed by either church or state. In these poems, the Christian community is represented as fractured by inequality, indifference, and fallibility – unorthodox indeed. Both authors recognize that the state of community does not live up to their desires or expectations, and they accept that they must continue their own spiritual journeys alone in spite of this imperfect community. Each leaves a weak thread of hope for ideal community in the future, but they destroy any notion of ideal or productive community in the present.

Chapter 2: The Formative Qualities of Doubt

"Iesus saith vnto him, Thomas, because thou hast seene mee, thou hast beleeued: blessed are they that haue not seene, and yet haue beleeued." John 20:29

"But let him aske in faith, nothing wauering: for he that wauereth is like a waue of the sea, driuen with the wind, and tossed." James 1:6

"And about the ninth houre, Iesus cried with a loud voyce, saying, Eli, Eli, Lamasabachthani, that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken mee?" Matthew 27:46

If faith is the central point of Christian salvation, then doubt is most certainly its counterpoint. Christian theologians affirm and reaffirm throughout Christianity's history the necessity of faith – a strong, sure, trusting faith – to be in a state of salvation, and in so doing position doubt as faith's foil. This same positioning appears in the New Testament, when Jesus exhorts his follower Thomas for only believing when his senses confirmed Jesus' miracle, and when James explicitly directs the reader against doubt, suggesting that one who engages in doubt will be spiritually lost at sea. But the bible's representation of doubt is not nearly so clear-cut as the theologians' exegesis, because also within the New Testament is Christ's most troubling articulation of his own doubt to God the Father when he, dying on the cross, cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken mee?" (Matthew 27:46 *KJV*). This desperate cry echoes Psalm 22 which begins likewise and continues, "Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I crie in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalm 22:1-2 *KJV*). What does it mean to represent a savior of humanity who best knows his own purpose and place as so fundamentally doubting his position at his time of

greatest hardship? What does it mean for the average Christian when even Christ himself doubts God?

Christ's words of doubt have been widely debated because of their problematic nature, and many of those debates return to Psalm 22. By the end of the psalm, the speaker is reconciled with God: "For he hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried vnto him, he heard" (Psalm 22:24 *KJV*). In her historical survey of religious doubt, Jennifer Hecht summarizes the bulk of this debate around Jesus' reference to the psalm: "many people have interpreted this final cry as a gesture of faith – Jesus was referring to the whole psalm and therefore never really doubted God."[312] But this dismissal of Christ's words ignores the complexity of the experience, for, even if both Christ and the speaker of the psalm end in reconciliation with God and with a trust in his deliverance, there is still a clear, discrete moment of undeniable doubt. In fact, Jesus' life as portrayed in the New Testament is one fraught with doubt, both by him and by those around him. If one traces particular vocabulary in both testaments, one can correlate a quantitative increase in the use of the word "doubt" with an increase in the particular use of "belief" to mean belief in God only in the stories of Christ in the New Testament, because Christ himself was tormented by doubt at several moments in his life.[313] Hecht aptly summarizes this New Testament innovation and its effect on Christian religions: "These moments of doubt – and the weight of the new religious idea that had given rise to them – permanently changed the history of doubt. Forever after, we have had an image of agonizing doubt as part of our model of a religious life."[314] The narrative

---

[312] Hecht, Jennifer Michael. *Doubt: A History : The Great Doubters and their Legacy of Innovation, from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson*. 1st pbk. ed. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004. Print. p. 177.
[313] Ibid. p. 175-6.
[314] Ibid. p. 174.

of Christ's life that we find in the New Testament codifies the experience of doubt as part of a Christian life and suggests that perfect faith is unachievable but also, perhaps, unnecessary.

Although medieval and early modern theologians propose faith as the fundamental prerequisite for salvation, both the biblical accounts of Christ and literary representations of religious experience controvert this theological perception of faith's necessity. Both Anne Vaughan Lock and John Donne in their lyric poetry represent extreme and reoccurring doubt – doubt in God, doubt in doctrine, and self-doubt – but they do not suggest that they are hopeless or utterly forsaken by God. Instead, both of these authors propose doubt as a formative experience, one which affirms faith by employing reason to determine correct belief. Lock and Donne both represent desperate struggles for spiritual certainty, and while neither completely resolves their doubts, both reconcile themselves to the general state of doubt, embracing it as a necessary element on the path to (potential) salvation.

When it comes to doubt in the early modern period, scholars have generally considered doubt's alignment with philosophical skepticism, the main point of contention being whether or not early modern English people would have had (or needed to have had) access to the classical texts of skepticism, many of which were only first printed in the sixteenth century and in Latin.[315] Several of these texts were first printed in France, and only slowly disseminated throughout the continent and across the channel to England, including Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (1562) and *Against the Mathematicians* (1569), which are key skeptical texts.[316]

---

[315] The classical skeptics include the Academics, Pyrrho, Timon, Agrippa, and Sextus Empiricus.
[316] Hamlin, William M. *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print. p. 32.

Skepticism is the philosophical position that one can know nothing with certainty;[317] although with this and other broad definitions, as William Hamlin notes, skepticism is then a self-perpetuating phenomenon: "The range of meanings and valuations with which people endow the word 'scepticism' can itself constitute grounds for doubt."[318] Scholars agree that in the works of Michele de Montaigne we find undeniable examples of skepticism, but there is some disagreement as to skepticism's presence in England prior to that time.[319] Irena Backus takes a strict definition of skepticism and argues that philosophical skepticism played no part in early modern English doubts,[320] while Hamlin argues that skepticism was indeed present in England in the early modern period, but that this "lay scepticism" is distinct from philosophical skepticism.[321]

Both Hamlin and Backus respond to the earlier work of Richard Popkin that clearly situates skepticism in the modern world as beginning in the fifteenth century, but Popkin's work does not take such a strict definition of skepticism. Instead, his work expands the language of skepticism to incorporate both doubt and belief: "Hence 'sceptic' and 'believer' are not opposing classifications. The sceptic is raising doubts about the rational or evidential merits of the justifications given for a belief; he doubts that necessary and sufficient reasons either have been or could be discovered to show that any particular belief must be true and cannot possibly be false."[322] Popkin suggests that one need not entirely purge certainty to engage in skepticism –

---

[317] There are two main skeptical viewpoints: the Academics deny all certainty and come to negative conclusions, whereas the Pyrrhonians consider their denial of certainty a complete purging.

[318] Hamlin. p. 4.

[319] See Panichi, Nicola. "Montaigne and Plutarch: A Scepticism that Conquers the Mind." Paganini, Gianni, and Jose R. Maia Neto, eds. *Renaissance Scepticisms*. Springer Netherlands: 2009. Web.

[320] Backus, Irena. "The Issue of Reformation Scepticism Revisited: What Erasmus and Sebastian Castellio Did or Did Not Know." Paganini, Gianni, and Jose R. Maia Neto, eds. *Renaissance Scepticisms*. Springer Netherlands: 2009. Web.

[321] Hamlin p. 29.

[322] Popkin, Richard Henry. *History of Scepticism : From Savonarola to Bayle*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 7 December 2015. p. xxi.

that skepticism and belief may coexist. Further, he proposes this scenario in which one skeptically examines one's own belief with a critical eye to justifications rather than questioning the belief itself. And in the latest edition of Popkin's work (which was first published in 1960), he appears to be in concordance with the skepticism historians who place the beginning of English philosophical skepticism after 1562, when the work of Sextus Empiricus was first published.[323]

Other scholars of skepticism also expand its definition beyond the classical philosophy. Brendan Dooley, working in the seventeenth century in which scholars have mostly reached consensus on philosophical skepticism's presence in England, defines skepticism as synonymous with "disbelief," although mainly in the realm of government.[324] Disbelief suggests an evaluation and rejection of a belief – critically denying a proposed truth. Ellen Spolsky further redefines skepticism in her study of "embodied knowledge" as a *failure* of attainment, rather than a rejection of certainty.[325] This definition proposes a fruitless pursuit of knowledge ending in frustration. Alan Levine, introducing the collection *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*, equates skepticism with doubt while aligning skepticism with early modern atheism (another form of doubting).[326] Thus, in early modern scholarship, use of the word "skepticism" may be restricted to the classic philosophical usage, but it is productive and well-precedented to consider skepticism more broadly, that is, more in terms of "doubt."

---

[323] Ibid. p. 35.
[324] Dooley, Brendan M. *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Print. p. 2.
[325] Spolsky, Ellen. *Satisfying Skepticism: Embodied Knowledge in the Early Modern World*. Burlington, VT;Aldershot, England;: Ashgate, 2001. Web.
[326] Levine, Alan. "Introduction." *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999. Web.

In English, "doubt" is most often used to mean either "uncertainty" or "undecidedness."[327] It is a position between acceptance and rejection, and its verb form, "to doubt," indicates the ability to move in one direction or the other.[328] As such, doubt contradicts faith which, by definition, is certainty. Doubt was present in all aspects of English lives in the early modern period as Frances Dolan details in *True Relations*, and it was most apparent in religious experience, particularly in light of the Reformation.[329] Given Luther's original path to breaking away from the Catholic Church – that is, directly questioning Catholic beliefs regarding indulgences – it is no surprise that the reformers were referred to as skeptics.[330] And yet it is the Reformers who, in their official doctrine, condemn doubt as a sure path to damnation.

Martin Luther, for example, mentions doubt frequently in his writings, and in nearly each instance exhorts the reader against it. In his treatise on good works, Luther suggests that the value of good actions are negated by the presence of doubt: "if we doubt or do not believe that God is gracious to us and is pleased with us, or if we presumptuously expect to please Him only through and after our works, then it is all pure deception."[331] He further suggests that to doubt God is to lose God: "The First Commandment forbids us to have other gods, and thereby commands that we have a God, a true God, by a firm faith, trust, confidence, hope and love, which are the only works whereby a man can have, honor and keep a God; for by no other work can one find or lose God except by faith or unbelief, by trusting or doubting."[332] Luther's stance on doubt is unequivocal; if one is to have faith, and therefore God's grace, one must not engage in doubt. Faith and doubt are ideological opposites; one cannot have both.

---

[327] "doubt, n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 22 December 2015.
[328] "doubt, v." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 22 December 2015.
[329] Dolan, Frances E. *True Relations*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2013. Print.
[330] Popkin p. 10.
[331] Luther, Martin. *Works of Martin Luther with Introductions and Notes*. Ed. Adolph Spaeth. Philadelphia: A.J. Holman, 1916. Electronic.
[332] Ibid.

Luther is also known for responding to Renaissance humanists who wrote on skepticism. For instance, in *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther responds to Erasmus' skeptical justifications for accepting Catholic church authority by criticizing his skeptic's stance: "you wish to appear to assert nothing, and yet, at the same time, to assert something, more cautious than Ulysses, you seem to be steering your course between Scylla and Carybdis."[333] He argues that Erasmus intends to present himself as one who questions, but instead brings clear assertions in his writings. Thus, Erasmus is a hypocrite, because what Christians need and should celebrate is certainty and "confirmation."[334]

Jean Calvin goes further than Luther by suggesting that those who doubt will not even be heard by God. Referring to James 1:6 he says,

> by opposing 'faith' to 'wavering,' he very aptly expresses its nature. And equally worthy
>
> of attention is what he adds, that they avail nothing, who call upon God in perplexity and
>
> doubt, and are uncertain in their minds whether they shall be heard or not...Besides, when
>
> God so frequently affirms, that he will give to every man according to his faith, he
>
> implies that we can obtain nothing without faith.[335]

Calvin argues that doubt is counterproductive for one's salvation, but he also suggests that doubt and faith may coexist to some degree. When he says God "will give to every man according to his faith," there is a correlation of magnitude established where faith may be measured and favor doled out correspondingly. Indeed, Calvin goes on to argue that if one does have doubts, God's aid can alleviate those doubts, but only if one approaches God with the faith that God will do so: "our most benevolent Father, in his incomparable mercy, has afforded a timely remedy, that

---

[333] Luther, Martin, 1483-1546. *Martin Luther On the Bondage of the Will: Written In Answer to the Diatribe of Erasmus On Free-will. First Pub. In the Year of Our Lord 1525*. London: Printed by T. Bensley for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1823. p. 4.
[334] Ibid. p. 5.
[335] Calvin, Jean, et al. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 7th American, rev. and corr. ed. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936. Web. p. 108.

allaying all perturbation, alleviating all cares, and dispelling all fears, he might gently allure us to himself, and facilitate our approach to him, by the removal of every obstacle and every doubt."[336] As elsewhere in Calvin's doctrine, this simultaneous doubt and faith experience poses as conundrum, and suggests that while one may have doubt, there are certain elements of the Christian faith one must never doubt, including God's ability to give spiritual aid.

Michelle Zerba's study of doubt aligns closely with Calvin's implicit suggestion that doubt and faith may coexist.[337] Zerba argues that doubt is similar to skepticism in that it is a process of internal questioning; she describes this questioning as a "cognitive disruption."[338] The process of doubt interrupts one's mind, which she calls "the bifurcation of certainty in doubt."[339] In that way, doubt actually becomes predicated upon preexisting faith; one may only "bifurcate" by doubt a faith that already exists. So perhaps doubt and faith may coexist to some degree as both Zerba and Calvin suggest.

Theodore Beza, reformer and student of Calvin, is yet another sixteenth century Christian figure who condemns doubt and skeptics. But Beza's work shifts the debate toward an entirely different paradigm in which one considers faith to be knowledge. Usually, knowledge was considered to be truths gained through sensory experience or through logic, but Beza argues that faith is divinely given knowledge "of being saved for those whom God had predestined for salvation."[340] Thus, for Beza, faith necessarily eradicates doubt, and the presence of doubt is an undeniable indicator of one's unsaved status. Despite Calvin's somewhat more admissible perspective on doubt, the writings of early modern theologians like Beza greatly increased

---

[336] Ibid. p. 109.
[337] Zerba, Michelle. *Doubt and Skepticism in Antiquity and the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.
[338] Ibid. p. 28.
[339] Ibid. p. 10.
[340] Backus p. 74.

anxiety around the experience of doubt, based on their generally less-accepting attitude. This represents a shift in perceptions about the role of doubt, because although prior to the Reformation doubt was not an entirely positive religious experience, it was represented as an arguably necessary aspect of Christian life by the Catholic church, theologians, and the bible itself, as we have already seen.

One way the Catholic church addressed doubt is through miracle stories, as Steven Justice describes in "Eucharistic Miracle and Eucharistic Doubt."[341] He begins with the medieval story of Saint Gregory's Mass, in which an attendee critical of transubstantiation witnesses a transformation of the communion bread into human flesh. This story, like many other anecdotal accounts of miracles, was "meant to prove empirically the orthodox doctrine of the Mass...to soothe to a decorous quiescence the turbulence of doubt, irregular belief, and unbelief."[342] The tradition of miracle stories in the Catholic church reveals an acknowledgement of and attempt to remedy doubt, but not in such a way that condemns the doubter for his or her questions. Rather, these stories attempt to prod believers into a correct understanding that further confirms their faith, and as such, "they acknowledge that such difficulty is constitutive, not adventitious."[343] Justice later argues that a degree of skepticism was encouraged in Christians through these stories because although thoughtfulness is a "gamble with danger" that could lead to misunderstanding or disbelief, the "greater danger" is that Christians "will not think at all."[344] So skepticism, although not labeled as such, is encouraged to some degree in the Catholic tradition of miracle stories, but the purpose of this skepticism is to reduce or eradicate doubt.

---

[341] Justice, Steven. "Eucharistic Miracle and Eucharistic Doubt." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42.2 (2012): 307-332. Web. 9 Dec 2015.
[342] Ibid. p. 308.
[343] Ibid. p. 312.
[344] Ibid. p. 325.

But doubt has traditionally been a part of the standard Christian narrative. One cannot deny Job's trials as epitomical of doubt which result in a complete reconciliation with God. And Christ's own doubts litter the New Testament. But in addition to these biblical examples, Christian theologians, too, have presented themselves as examples of doubt which leads to faith, suggesting that the two are not mutually exclusive. Take Augustine, for example. In his *Confessions*, Augustine details his difficult conversion to Christianity during which he struggled not only with doubts of religious doctrine, but with doubts of his own capacity to live up to Christian expectations.[345] Of course, Augustine completes his conversion and considers himself faithful, but his detailed autobiography then sets up an example for his followers and other Christians for the subsequent millennium and a half: "For Augustine, doubt had reigned for years, and now it was over. Following his lead, other Christians would see this wrangling with doubt, even to smacking oneself on the head and screaming, as an integral part of religious experience. And what was the hope? That all shadows of doubt would disappear."[346] Between the Old Testament and the New, and the fathers of Christianity like Augustine, doubt is a necessary element of the Christian experience. Christine Peters also notes that the uncertain Christian is a traditional trope within both Catholicism and Protestantism: "The resilience of Christocentric devotion was largely due to the way in which both catholicism and protestantism defined the christian (and hence the laity) in female terms. The frail, uncertain figure of the struggling christian was identified in both faiths [sects] with the weak, emotional figure of the female stereotype."[347] Christians are not represented as certain; instead, they question in order to find satisfactory answers, and to move themselves toward a more stable, less vulnerable

---

[345] Augustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo, William Watts, and W. H. D. Rouse. *St. Augustine's Confessions*. New York;London;: W. Heinemann, 1912. Web.
[346] Hecht p. 198.
[347] Peters, Christine. *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print. p. 348.

relationship with faith. And therein lies the key: doubt is acceptable within Christianity so long as it is formative for one's faith.

Despite these examples, doubt came to be reviled within Christianity, even beginning with Augustine. For, despite his own experience, by the end of his life Augustine advises explicitly against doubt, particularly doubt about biblical revelations.[348] He defines the aspects of Christianity that are acceptable to doubt, specifically that one may ask "why" and "how," but not the truthfulness of those revelations. And as Christianity became codified in the West, philosophical doubt – that is, skepticism – was systematically eradicated. In 529 CE, Emperor Justinian "outlawed paganism and closed the Epicurean Garden, the Skeptic Academy, the Lyceum, and the Stoic Porch."[349] And in 1277 broader definitions of doubt were outlawed, as the Catholic church forbade people to say: "That there is no higher life than philosophical life," "That Christian Revelation is an obstacle to learning," and "That nothing should be believed unless it is self-evident or could be asserted from things that are self-evident."[350] These moves against doubt coexist with other aspects of Christianity at this time, like the miracle stories, which accept doubt to some degree. Thus, people with doubt tended to face a gentle rebuke and guidance for that doubt, unlike the later condemnation faced by those in reformed sects, such as Lutheranism and Calvinism.

So we see that neither doubt nor skepticism appeared first with Montaigne, but had been embedded within the Christian religion since its inception. However, during the early modern period, anxiety around doubt increased measurably through the writings of reformed theologians as well as through other cultural and technological transformations. Among these, the early modern changes of record-keeping and early modern strategies for increasing memory suggests

---

[348] Hecht p. 200.
[349] Ibid. p. 208.
[350] Ibid. p. 259.

127

that the very understanding of oneself, one's place, and one's world involved some degree of uncertainty. The advent of print did not alleviate that uncertainty, because despite promises of increasing volume and regularity, "the new technology did not immediately promote confidence in the stability of the printed text, in part because of variants across a given print run."[351] This particular problem, combined with the Reformation emphasis on access to biblical texts, complicated reformed demands for unwavering faith. But of course, print versions of the Bible merely added to an already diverse array of Bible options which included the Greek, the Latin, multiple English vernacular versions (including the Tyndale version and later the King James Bible), as well as other vernacular translations, such as French and Italian. Diversity of texts, combined with a diversity of reader experiences, resulted in a diversity of individual understandings of the Christian religion, as the Catholic Church feared, for readers "were creating networks or maps of meaning with themselves or their family at the center, forging relations among texts, between texts and their experiences, and with other people."[352] The instability of early modern print culture combined with the increasing ubiquitousness of religious texts resulted in a diversity of understandings, and between those understandings necessarily erupted conflict and questioning – doubt.

But how did early modern English people understand their own experiences of doubt? Did they agree with Luther and Calvin and consider themselves damned because of their outstanding questions about God, grace, and the human capacity for salvation? Or did they identify with the trials of Jesus Christ and hope that their doubts would be resolved and that they would still be saved? Liz Koblyk takes on these questions in "Certainties and Doubts: Ways of Knowing in Early Modern England," but instead of taking on the topic of doubt directly, Koblyk

---

[351] Ibid. p. 6-7.
[352] Ibid. p. 12.

proposes "ways of knowing" that closely mirror the philosophical mode of skepticism.[353] While

much of her work elides the struggle of doubt itself by focusing on the end result of such

questioning, Koblyk comes to a conclusion very similar to what I find in early modern lyric

poets. As she describes the Egerton 2877 manuscript, Koblyk argues: "This commonplace book

sets up a self-contradictory system by which the subject is to judge her thoughts, emotions and

works, and in which the answer is always the same: please do not worry, because you are most

certainly saved."[354] This conclusion is found not only in Egerton 2877, but also in Foxe's *Book

of Martyrs* and The *Faerie Queene*. These texts, Koblyk argues, recognize uncertainty

particularly around Reformation ideas, but they seek to assure their readers of their saved state –

to provide literary certainty.

Much in the same way, I find that the lyric poems of Anne Vaughan Lock (Prowse) and

John Donne conclude with reassurances – however minor – of salvation. But rather than

examining "ways of knowing," I look to their representations of profound religious doubt, doubt

that may not be reconcilable with certain faith. Both Lock and Donne represent intense

emotional struggle that entails repeated hardships, such hardships that the reader is forced to

wonder if the poem's narrator is utterly hopeless.[355] And while there are certainly representations

of hopelessness, both Lock and Donne's poems leave the reader with a glimmer – though rather

dim – of hope, and suggest that the doubt they experience is ultimately formative.

---

[353] Koblyk, Liz. "Certainties and Doubts: Ways of Knowing in Early Modern England." McMaster University (Canada), 2005. Ann Arbor: ProQuest. Web. 8 Dec. 2015.
[354] Ibid. p. 20.
[355] John Stachniewski would argue that these poems are, in fact, representations of utter hopelessness, as he argues that the Reformation period forced those invested in *sola fide* to be "consumed by despair." Stachniewski, John. *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. Print. p. 61.

Anne Vaughan Lock's Returns to Doubt

Anne Vaughan Lock Dering Prowse (1534?-1590?)[356] was born into active Protestantism. Both of her parents had close ties to Henry VIII's court, as her mother, Margery Gwynnethe, was a silkwoman serving the queen, and her father, Stephen Vaughan, was famously tasked with finding William Tyndale on the continent and escorting him home.[357] Although Vaughan was ultimately unsuccessful in fulfilling the king's request, he gained influence with Henry and is known to have encouraged the king to read Tyndale's work, and after the Act of Supremacy, Vaughan benefitted from the dissolution of the monasteries by receiving property previously held by the Carthusians' Hospital of St. Mary.[358] Throughout his life, Vaughan pursued reformed causes, from renting his properties to other well-known reformers, to moral interventions in the lives of his servants.[359] In the same way, he pursued a moral education for his children.

Anne Vaughan had several prominent tutors as a child, including a former tutor of Edward VI.[360] Her upbringing had many advantages thanks to her parents' position just outside of court life and within the circle of Reformation thinkers. Shortly after her father died in 1549, teenaged Anne entered into an advantageous marriage with Henry Lock, the son of a family friend.[361] And soon after her marriage, Anne began a friendship with prominent reformed theologian John Knox. This relationship is carefully documented by historians of Knox, and consisted mainly of letter writing between the two.[362] Although the Locks hosted Knox more than once, political and religious upheaval in both England and Knox's home of Scotland kept the two at a distance. While Knox was exiled in Geneva, he implored Lock to leave England

---

[356] Felch, Susan. "Introduction." Lock, Anne Vaughan, and Susan M. Felch. *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughan Lock*. 21.;185.; Vol. Tempe, Ariz: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1999. Print.
[357] Ibid. p. xvii.
[358] Ibid. p. xviii.
[359] Ibid. p. xix.
[360] Ibid. p. xxii.
[361] Ibid. p. xxiii.
[362] Ibid. p. xxiv.

both for her physical safety and her risk of idolatrous thought in England during the Marian regime.

Lock did go to Geneva in 1557 and continued a correspondence with John Knox until at least 1562.[363] These letters, as Susan Felch describes them, reveal a "portrait" of Anne Vaughan Lock as "a strong woman dedicated to the Protestant cause and actively loyal to it."[364] It takes an intense dedication to uproot oneself and one's family to pursue religion. And during her time in Geneva, Lock set upon more intellectual tasks as well. She became a great admirer of Jean Calvin, whose works she set out to translate into English almost immediately upon arriving in Geneva. This 1560 translation work was her first publication, and was accompanied by her own creative piece, "A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner: Written in Maner of a Paraphrase upon the 51. Psalme of David," consisting of twenty-six sonnets, five of which are prefatory.

At least one of Anne's daughters died in Geneva during her time there, but she had three other children survive to adulthood: Henry, Anne, and Michaell.[365] Anne's husband, Henry Lock died in 1571, and that same year Anne married preacher Edward Dering, and the pair became closely aligned with the growing Puritan group.[366] On December 7, 1579, Anne married Richard Prowse, a draper by trade and prominent civic participant.[367] At this point in Anne's life, she took up intellectual publication once again by translating Jean Taffin's *On the Markes of the Children of God*, which went to print in 1590.[368] It is by comparing the text of *On the Markes* to "A Meditation" that scholars have conclusively determined that the earlier sonnet sequence was not written by John Knox, as has been previously postulated. Anne Vaughan Lock Dering

---

[363] Ibid. p. xxv.
[364] Ibid. p. xxix.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid.
[367] White, Micheline. "Women Writers and Literary-Religious Circles in the Elizabethan West Country: Anne Dowriche, Anne Lock Prowse, Anne Locke Moyle, Ursula Fulford, and Elizabeth Rous." *Modern Philology* 103.2 (2005): 187. Web. p. 197.
[368] Felch. p. xxxv.

Prowse must have left the world with a whisper, because there is no clear record of her death either in official documents or in communal writings. But her translation work went on to be widely circulated amongst Calvinists, particularly alongside Knox's works.

Lock's "A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner: Written in Maner of a Paraphrase upon the 51. Psalme of David" is a fascinating work because it is not only the first sonnet sequence written by an English woman, it is the first known sonnet sequence written in the English language. In some ways, Lock's work is very much in line with the literary engagements of other English women, mainly in that it is presented as biblical paraphrase (rather than exegesis or other original work). Common literary production for women in early modern England included such paraphrases, as well as translations of spiritual texts, which also comprise the bulk of Lock's 1560 publication.

But "A Meditation" does much more than paraphrase, as is the case with many early modern literary works in the paraphrase genre; it provides a personal perspective of the Christian religious experience through lyric poetry, a perspective that in many ways runs contrary to common ideas not only of Christian experience in general, but also of female Christian experience. Micheline White places Lock's work squarely in the evangelical category by connecting Anne to a circle of reformed women writers: "The women were all zealous Protestants who used their literary gifts, wealth, and power to promote 'godliness,' to combat religious apathy, and to eradicate Catholicism. Anne Lock, Anne Dowriche, Anne Moyle, and Elizabeth Rous can all be linked to a network of radical preachers and patrons, and all contributed to international 'godly' causes."[369] She argues that Lock's works, both the sonnets and *On the Markes*, were "contributions to public religious debate."[370] Teresa Nugent takes this

---

[369] White. p. 192.
[370] Ibid. p. 199.

line of argumentation further, suggesting that Lock's sonnets represent an Elect speaker (in the Calvinist sense) and that the sonnets openly provide biblical exegesis: "Drawing upon her experiences as a nonconformist Christian, a woman writer, and a political exile, Lock transforms the position of powerless outcast into a platform for claiming moral authority and political duty in order to create a unified, gender-neutral, and generically Christian poetic voice to represent the community of the elect."[371] Significant to Nugent's argument is the "gender-neutral" positioning of Lock's speaker. This positions Lock as gesturing toward inclusiveness and emphasizing the agency of women, both in spiritual and poetic endeavors. By invoking a universal Christian voice, Lock both asserts her agency to do so and invites all genders to read themselves into her poetic position. However, Mary Trull, pointing to the Petrarchan motif, proposes that Lock's position is, in fact, a feminine one: "Lock's use of Petrarchan imagery also places the speaker in a specifically feminine posture in relation to Christ as a lover by using the motif of the captive soul found in Petrarchan poetry and the courtly love tradition."[372] Trull's argument relies on an inaccurate generalization that the Petrarchan beloved is male and the suitor is female, and that the subordinate position in the motif is necessarily the feminine role, when that feminization is the exception to the rule (i.e. the poetry of Mary Herbert and William Shakespeare). Her argument also neglects the Christian trope of the subordinate lover of Christ who is the universal Christian – neither male nor female. Nugent and Trull are in agreement that Lock presents a "lover's passionate yearning for an unrequited love,"[373] but the gendering of that love is complicated by rather than explained through the Petrarchan motif. Lock's agency in the creation

---

[371] Nugent, Teresa Lanpher. "Anne Lock's Poetics of Spiritual Abjection." *English Literary Renaissance* 39.1 (2009): 3. Web. p. 4.
[372] Trull, Mary. "Petrarchism and the Gift: The Sacrifice of Praise in Anne Lock's "a Meditation of a Penitent Sinner"." *Religion & Literature* 41.3 (2009): 1-25. Web. p. 18.
[373] Nugent. p. 22.

of her poetry cannot be denied, but there are clear signs that her work invokes a universal

Christian voice more so than a feminized lover's voice.

Recent scholars are in agreement for the most part about Lock's nonmasculine

positioning and her clear biblical exegesis. But they all suggest that Lock's sonnets are

fundamentally and entirely public – only meant for evangelizing or preaching. Ben Burton

summarizes this idea clearly in the opening of his essay on Lock's "Poetics of the Eucharist":

"Following Calvin's commentary on Psalm 51, Lock presents her sonnet sequence as a means

for bringing sinners to repentance, and as the true 'hoste' or sacrifice of praise sought by

God."[374] And while several scholars note that the tone of the sonnets is quite "personal,"[375] they

tend to gloss over that personal nature. The importance of self-representation tends to be ignored

in favor of an examination of proselytizing. But in Lock's sonnets, a distinct point of view is

introduced alongside the translation of Calvin's works, and that point of view does not entirely

reconcile with Calvin's own theology. Nor does it reconcile entirely with the Christian

theological tradition, particularly in their representation of doubt. Calvin's theology, as we have

seen, suggests an eradication of doubt, but Lock's sonnets propose a positive outcome from the

experience of doubt – doubt of her redeemability, doubt of God's willingness to grant her grace,

and doubt that she has access to God at all – that somehow, after a great deal of necessary

struggle, doubt becomes productive and builds toward hope and certainty.

Lock's positioning of her emotional state actually aligns quite closely with Jean Calvin's

implication that faith may have magnitude that inversely correlates with doubt. She suggests

throughout the sonnet sequence that she previously had faith, and that now it is weakened: "My

feble faith with heavy lode opprest / Staggring doth scarcely creepe a reeling pace, / And fallen it

---

[374] Burton, Ben. "'the Praise of that I Yield for Sacrifice': Ann Lock and the Poetics of the Eucharist." *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 30.3 (2006): 89. Web. p. 90
[375] Ibid. p. 95.

is to faint to rise againe."[376] This faith is not inherently weak, but is overburdened and exhausted by outside forces. She begs of God to preserve her faith from complete ruination, a cry that is repeated throughout the sequence: "With thy free sprite confirme my feble ghost, / To hold my faith from ruine and decay / With fast affiance and assured stay."[377] Indeed, the main thrust of the sonnet sequence is to beseech God for his mercy, so he might grant the speaker grace despite her sinfulness. The first line of the sequence reads, "Have mercy, God, for thy great mercies sake," and the request for mercy appears in every sonnet thereafter. The central issue then becomes the speaker's loss of faith, including her belief that once she had mercy, but now does not: "Beholde againe, how now my spirite it rues, / And wailes the tyme, when I with foule delight / Thy swete forbearing mercy did abuse."[378] Her sonnets consistently switch tenses when talking about God's mercy, suggesting in the past tense that she once had mercy (as in Sonnet 5), but now in the present she does not have that mercy and must, therefore, beg for it (as in Sonnet 1). But she also uses the future tense in suggesting that she may once again have God's mercy: "Lorde, pearce myne eares, and make me to rejoyse, / When I shall heare, and when they mercy shall / Sounde in my hart the gospell of they grace."[379]

The reason for Lock's despair throughout the sonnet sequence and the five-sonnet preface is doubt, and that becomes explicit in Sonnet 14:

> But render me my wonted joyes againe,
>
> Which sinne hath reft, and planted in theyr place
>
> Doubt of thy mercy ground of all my paine.
>
> The tast, that thy love whilome did embrace

---

[376] Lock, Anne Vaughan, and Susan M. Felch. "A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner: Written in Maner of A Paraphrase upon the 51. Psalme of David." *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughan Lock*. 21.;185.; Vol. Tempe, Ariz: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1999. Print. Sonnet 12 lines 7-9.

[377] Ibid. Sonnet 14 lines 12-14.

[378] Ibid. Sonnet 5 lines 6-8.

[379] Ibid. Sonnet 10 lines 6-8.

My chearfull soule, the signes that dyd assure

My felyng ghost of favor in thy sight,

Are fled from me, and wretched I endure

Senslesse of grace the absence of thy sprite.

Restore my joyes, and make me fele againe

The swete retorne of grace that I have lost,

That I may hope I pray not all in vayne.

With thy free sprite confirme my feble ghost,

To hold my faith from ruine and decay

With fast affiance and assured stay.

This sonnet proposes that doubt displaces "grace," causing her to lose it entirely. While in a state of doubt, the speaker feels no joy and no love, but only ceaseless pain. Doubt is the root of all the negativity in the speaker's mind, and it is a seed planted by sin to usurp the place of faith. Key in this sonnet and throughout the sequence is the speaker's loss of her senses due to doubt, specifically her sight. She suggests blindness in sonnet 4,[380] and in the preface sonnets, which present an even more jarring emotional representation of the speaker, she refers to herself as a "blinde wretch" who, "Yet blinde, alas, I groape about for grace. / While blinde for grace I groape about in vaine, / My fainting breath I gather up and straine."[381] This blind groping works to reinforce the speaker's state of doubt, because "grope" in the English language is associated closely with the Christian figure of "Doubting Thomas," as Roy Clark demonstrates in his article, "Doubting Thomas in Chaucer's 'Summoner's Tale.'"[382] Doubting Thomas is represented in the book of John as a disciple incredulous of Christ's resurrection:

---

[380] Ibid. Sonnet 4 lines 13-14.
[381] Ibid. Preface Sonnet 2 lines 1, 11-13.
[382] Clark, Roy Peter. "Doubting Thomas in Chaucer's Summoner's Tale." *Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism* 11.2 (1976): 164. Web. p. 171.

And after eight dayes, againe his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: Then

came Iesus, the doores being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be vnto you.

Then saith he to Thomas Reach hither thy finger, and beholde my hands, and reach hither

thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and bee not faithlesse, but beleeuing.[383]

Clark traces English religious descriptions of this biblical moment, including medieval homilies

and even *Piers Plowman*, all of which emphasize the brute physicality of Thomas's investigation

by using the word "grope." Jesus encourages Thomas to touch him in order to assuage his

doubts, and thus, Thomas is cured of those doubts. However, the sonnet speaker finds no such

succor for her senses. Instead, she can only grope "in vaine." But her vain groping resonates with

Thomas nonetheless, as she, too, experiences extreme doubt in the face of what (she believes)

should be clear faith.

The preface sonnets represent the speaker's doubts as producing complete despair, which

would suggest an utter loss of faith. She considers her life to be disgusting and disdained when

she describes it as "The lothesome filthe." Her doubt is overwhelming, and it prevents her from

being comforted by God's light ("Can not enjoy the comfort of the light"), even though she

believes she, like others around her, ought to be. She says she can "Finde not the way that other

oft have found" which "Hath brought [them] to joy."[384] The source of the speaker's doubt is sin,

as she says in the second line of the fourteenth sonnet, so this doubt comes to be a punishment

for those very sins. Sin displaces faith with doubt, and thus is the source of all her troubles. The

speaker recognizes her own fault in this, and her culpability multiplies. In the fourth preface

sonnet, she goes so far as to say she believes God hates her:

This horror when my trembling soule doth heare

When markes and tokens of the reprobate,

---

[383] John 20:26-27. *KJV.*
[384] Lock. Preface Sonnet 2 lines 4, 7.

My growing sinnes, of grace my senslesse cheare,

Enforce the profe of everlastyng hate,

That I conceive the heavens king to beare

Against my sinfull and forsaken ghost:

As in the throte of hell, I quake for feare,

And then in present perill to be lost

(Although by conscience wanteth to replye,

But with remorse enforcing myne offence,

Doth argue vaine my not availyng crye)

With woefull sighes and bitter penitence

To him from whom the endlesse mercy flowes

I cry for mercy to releve my woes.[385]

By calling herself "reprobate," the speaker echoes Calvin's doctrine of election, as she does in

the previous sonnet in which she admits her cries for mercy inevitably have no effect on God as

he does not hear the cries of the reprobate: "In vaine thou brayest forth thy bootlesse noyse /To

him for mercy, O refused wight, / That heares not the forsaken sinners voice."[386] In this fourth

preface sonnet she reiterates how her cries will not move God because she believes herself not to

be among the Elect, and yet she ends with a clear statement of continued efforts, juxtaposing her

complete assuredness of God's deafness to her pleas against her endless capacity to cry for relief.

Ultimately, the preface sonnets suggest that the speaker feels assuredness both of her damned

state and also of God's "endlesse mercy," which results in confusion. She is subject to two

contradictory maxims, two certainties which require doubt of each other because, at least in

Calvinist terms, if she is assuredly damned then she must not be a recipient of God's mercy, but

---

[385] Ibid. Preface Sonnet 4.
[386] Ibid. Preface Sonnet 3 lines 5-7.

if she is saved then she must not be damned. She is unsure of what to do in this situation, and ultimately determines the only course of action before her is to continue beseeching God for his mercy: "And then not daring with presuming eye / Once to beholde the angry heavens face, / From troubled sprite I send confused crye, / To crave the crummes of all sufficing grace."[387] Again, like Calvin's (potentially unintentional) implication that faith has magnitude, Lock makes a similar proposal when she suggests that grace might be received in the form of "crummes" or, on the larger end of that synecdoche, bread. She clearly suggests that grace, like faith, can be divided up into pieces – some larger, some smaller – and doled out on different scales, taking up that hint from Calvin that mitigates faith's absoluteness. She insists that she would be satisfied with the smallest serving of grace, and suggests that others receive a larger portion. All the same, this plea for crumbs of salvation demonstrates the speaker's desperation. She is alone, confused, and full of despair, crying for salvation from her Lord, all the while believing he neither hears her nor will provide her with grace.

The main sonnet sequence provides a similar representation of despair, although within those sonnets the speaker provides distinct moments of hope. The sonnets establish a cycle of despair and hope which builds into a somewhat hopeful resolution.[388] It's clear even in the prefatory sonnets that the speaker has had a repetitive experience with her despair, as she says, "My fainting breath I gather up and straine, / Mercie, mercie to crye and crye againe."[389] Throughout the sonnet sequence, the speaker describes her doubt and despair as happening "again," as if these are distinct moments of doubt scattered in her life – that is, not continuous and unrelenting, but rather, interrupted at times by an emotion other than despair. She has, then, experienced doubt, despair, and relief that reassures her at different moments in her life, as

---

[387] Ibid. Preface Sonnet 5 lines 1-4.
[388] Susan Felch describes this as a "circular" movement of "complaint, repentance, and hope." "Introduction." p. lvi.
[389] Lock. Preface Sonnet 3 lines 13-14.

though her please for mercy in the past have received divine attention, suggesting some hope for future relief as well.

The sequence begins with a build-up of despair. The second sonnet begins, "My many sinnes in nomber are encreast, / With weight wherof in sea of depe despeire / My sinking soule is now so sore opprest, / That now in peril and in present fere, / I crye."[390] Her sin, ultimately, is the cause of her doubt because she judges that sin to be evidence of her reprobate status, and she believes the number of her sins is growing, increasing God's ire. By the third sonnet, she believes God to be utterly disgusted with her and choosing to look away: "So foule is sinne and lothesome in thy sighte, / So foule with sinne I see my selfe to be, / That till from sinne I may be washed white, / So foule I dare not, Lord, approche to thee."[391] Her doubt is actively keeping her from God; she believes she ought not approach God for his grace until she can be "washed clean" of her sin, but simultaneously she acknowledges that only God can cleanse her. It is here that she mentions a previous cleansed state: "Ofte hath thy mercie washed me before, / Thou madest me clean: but I am foule againe."[392] The speaker seeks a return to a cleansed, pure state in which she felt she could be near God, but her mounting sins turn her from God and cause her not only to question her access to grace, but also to deny herself the one path back into God's light which is to approach him. By the fourth sonnet, the speaker's desperation becomes clear as she says "The horror of my gilt doth dayly growe," "I fele and suffer in my thralled brest," and "My Chaos and my heape of sinne doth lie, / Betwene me and thy mercies shining light."[393] As the speaker perceives her sin to increase, her repugnance for herself grows. She views these sins as both part of herself and exterior to her, blocking her path to God, and all she can do in

---

[390] Ibid. Sonnet 2 lines 1-4.
[391] Ibid. Sonnet 3 lines 1-4.
[392] Ibid. Sonnet 3 lines 5-6.
[393] Ibid. Sonnet 4 lines 3, 5, 11-12.

response is suffer and, perhaps fruitlessly, plead. With her sins blocking the light of God, the speaker descends into blind darkness, smothered by those sins: "What ever way I gaze about for grace, / My filth and fault are ever in my face."[394]

Her desperation reaches a fever pitch in the fifth sonnet when she describes her suffering as becoming visceral: "My cruell conscience with sharpned knife / Doth splat my ripped hert, and layes abrode / The lothesome secretes of my filthy life, / And spredes them forth before the face of God."[395] The speaker lays out her despicable life in front of God as a sacrifice both of herself and to her Lord. This sonnet begins by once again pleading for mercy from God, and for a return to the mercy he had previously provided but which she had abused: "wailes the tyme, when I with foule delight / Thy swete forbearing mercy did abuse."[396] But here she also indicates that her loss of God's mercy has also happened more than once, because she indicates a time much like the time of the sonnet in which she suffered greatly due to the lack of God's mercy: "Beholde againe, how now my spirite it rues."[397] "Againe" and again, it seems, the speaker has faced the pain of losing God's mercy while trying to work her way back to grace (all the while acknowledging that her actions are not the final cause of salvation, but that only God can grant his mercy). So the speaker begs, and falls ever further into despair as she beseeches God's grace. She figuratively cuts herself open, offering her body and soul to her God, but still all her actions garner is more shame: "Whom shame from dede shamelesse cold not restrain, / Shame for my dede is added to my paine."[398] Referring both to her figurative nakedness and her mounting sins, the speaker argues that all of her actions that relate to the cycle of losing and gaining God's mercy are shameful. The more she tries to sway God, the further she digs herself into despair.

---

[394] Ibid. Sonnet 4 lines 13-14.
[395] Ibid. Sonnet 5 lines 9-12.
[396] Ibid. Sonnet 5 lines 7-8.
[397] Ibid. Sonnet 5 line 6.
[398] Ibid. Sonnet 5 lines 13-14.

But then, just at the moment when the speaker might figuratively bleed out from her fruitless self-destruction, she introduces a glimmer of hope:

> But mercy Lord, O Lord some pitie take,
>
> Withdraw my soule from the deserved hell,
>
> O Lord of glory, for thy glories sake:
>
> That I may saved of thy mercy tell,
>
> And shew how thou, which mercy has behight
>
> To sighyng sinners, that have broke thy lawes,
>
> Performest mercy: so as in the sight
>
> Of them that judge the justice of thy cause
>
> Thou onely just be demed, and no moe,
>
> The worldes unjustice wholly to confound:
>
> That damning me to depth of during woe
>
> Just in thy judgement shouldest thou be found:
>
> And from deserved flames relevyng me
>
> Just in thy mercy mayst thou also be.[399]

In this sonnet, the speaker appears to cease struggling. Her tone becomes accepting as she details the justice of her reprobate state. By using language of judgment, she demonstrates inner peace because her state is not caused at all by her own actions, or even her own sinfulness. It is God who has agency in her potential damnation. Only God can act on the "worlde;" the world cannot act upon God. But still, despite her resignation to her fate, she begins to bargain for mercy from God, arguing for the benefits God would receive from such actions. She suggests that she would become a sign of God's mercy on Earth, and that through her salvation God would silence those who "judge" him. Further, she would prove a stark counterpoint to earthly "unjustice" through

---

[399] Ibid. Sonnet 6.

God's just salvation. The speaker is certainly stretching in these bargains, but her pleas do not reek of her previous desperation; because she is accepting of her current damnation, she is now free to peacefully consider the alternative. God is equally capable of "Just" judgment, the speaker argues, as he is of just "mercy." Using "deserved" twice in the sonnet, it is clear that while the speaker greatly desires salvation, she does not believe God owes her mercy, only that that mercy is a distinct possibility. She is not so blinded by her sin in this sonnet, either, that she cannot see God's light; here she can fully see God's potential for her. Thus, at the end of the sonnet, she proposes a clear, positive outcome of "relief." Even while recognizing that her damnation is certainly "deserved," she sees a conditional, positive future when she suggests that God "may" grant her grace.

Unfortunately for the speaker, her moment of hope does not last. And the remaining fifteen sonnets form a cyclical pattern of hope and despair that follows the trajectory of the first six sonnets, although in shorter iterations. In the seventh sonnet she details her beginnings of being born into a sinful state, and in the eighth she notes once more that her "sinnes do growe" and "flowe / With such excesse, that with unfained hert, / Dreding to drowne, my Lorde, lo howe I flee."[400] She looks once again upon her sinfulness which she perceives to be growing, and once again feels it deaden her senses and turn her from God. She again doubts her own capacity to be saved from sin that overwhelms her body and soul, as well as God's willingness to do so – thus, she must continue to plead for his mercy. But then, another moment of hope – a future tense consideration of her saved self: "Wash me, O Lord: when I am washed soe, / I shalbe whiter than the whitest snowe."[401] But here, unlike in her first moment of hope, her future is not presented as nearly so tenuous – the plea imagines a 'when', not an 'if', and 'shall' indicates a future certainty

---

[400] Ibid. Sonnet 8 lines 8-10.
[401] Ibid. Sonnet 9 lines 13-14.

while 'will' is tinged with volition rather than certainty. This statement of the future is clear and strong; she knows what a saved version of herself looks like.

But again, a retreat: "I heare the soundes / Of dredfull threates and thonders of the law, / Which Eccho of my gylty minde resoundes, / And with redoubled horror doth so draw / My listening soule from mercies gentle voice."[402] It is not only her sinful nature which causes doubt and the inevitable retreat from God, but it is also the threats of the world, specifically threats of the law. Lock is surely referencing both divine law and temporal law, specifically the demands both of the Marian and Elizabethan regimes, both of which dictated a set of rules additional to the Bible and reformed teachings. Those demands are what John Knox feared for Anne Vaughan Lock in England, but Geneva was no escape from English law. And additionally, with her repeated emphasis on her own sinfulness, the speaker fears the repercussions of divine law. Whatever the source, the speaker of the sonnet notes that the law also causes her to feel guilty, and that guilt also draws her from God. And then another tumble into deafening, blinding despair: "Loke on me, Lord: though trembling I beknowe, / That sight of sinne so sore offendeth thee, / That seing sinne, how it doth overflowe / My whelmed soule, thou canst not loke on me, / But with disdaine, with horror and despite."[403] She says sin has entirely overtaken her, "Sinne and despeir have so possest my hart," and once again she offers herself as a sacrifice to the Lord: "Loe prostrate, Lorde, before thy face I lye." [404] But it is in sonnet 14, in which she explicitly mentions doubt, that the speaker returns to a state of hopefulness. She again considers that she has had God's mercy in the past ("render me my wonted joyes againe"), and she is now assured that that mercy can be returned: "Restore my joyes, and make me fele againe / The swete retorne

---

[402] Ibid. Sonnet 10 lines 1-5.
[403] Ibid. Sonnet 11 lines 1-5.
[404] Ibid. Sonnet 12 line 1, Sonnet 13 line 1.

of grace that I have lost."[405] It is also in this sonnet where she explicitly mentions "hope," a hope that had actually been emerging from the sonnet immediately prior in which her despair was overwhelming: "In faintest hope yet moveth me to pray, / To pray for mercy."[406] What was the tiniest articulation of hope in sonnet thirteen becomes fledgling hope in sonnet fourteen, as she says just following "Restore my joyes": "That I may hope I pray not all in vayne."[407] She begins to have real hope that God has not turned a completely deaf ear, and that she will eventually receive God's grace again.

By sonnet seventeen, it seems that the speaker's hope has faded: "Lo straining crampe of colde despeir againe / In feble brest doth pinche my pinyng hart."[408] Here is perhaps her darkest moment, when she is paralyzed utterly by despair: "Lord open thou my lippes to shewe my case, / My Lord, for mercy Loe to thee I flee. / I can not pray without thy movyng ayde, / Ne can I ryse, ne can I stande alone."[409] For all of her actions, including begging for mercy, the speaker requires God's aid. At this moment she feels she does not have that aid, so she cannot properly ask for mercy. And then, the final turn: the speaker allows herself to "yield" to God, and in so doing becomes grateful for her trials: "Thy mercies praise, instede of sacrifice, / With thankfull minde so shall I yeld to thee."[410] As in sonnet six, the speaker suggests a shift in her position – that instead of desperate begging she will offer herself as a manifestation of praise. She begins to consider her tribulations not as a guilty judgment by God – a denial of mercy – but as a sign of mercy. Her troubles have been the path to recognition of her sins, and the struggle against them.

---

[405] Ibid. Sonnet 14 lines 1, 9-10.
[406] Ibid. Sonnet 13 lines 11-12.
[407] Ibid. Sonnet 14 line 11.
[408] Ibid. Sonnet 17 lines 1-2.
[409] Ibid. Sonnet 17 lines 7-10.
[410] Ibid. Sonnet 18 lines 1-2.

And through this struggle she comes to recognize the potential for God's mercy despite her

sinfulness.

Again she offers herself as sacrifice, but acknowledges what a meager sacrifice she is: "I

offre up my trobled sprite."[411] She considers that God will refuse her sacrifice: "So feares alas

the faintnesse of my faithe."[412] Her faith is of a different caliber than the faiths of others; it is

weak, much like herself. She suggests that she has some form of faith, but that it is in such a state

that God would likely deny it. However, she also argues that it is the weak and troubled who God

favors: "To God a trobled sprite is pleasing hoste."[413] But it is a particular kind of trouble that

God accepts: "Such offring likes thee, ne wilt thou despise / The broken humbled hart in angry

wise."[414] God does not favor those with full, faithful hearts; he favors the doubtful, the

downtrodden, and the defeated. The speaker argues that she is not worthy of God, but that it is

her unworthiness that grants God's favor. Doubt overwhelms her and damages her spirit and her

faith, but her "broken" state brings her closer to God.

Then, quite suddenly, in the penultimate sonnet the entire scope of the sequence expands.

What have been exclusively first-person singular accounts of despair and hope in dialogue with

God become a consideration of all Christians.

> Shew mercie, Lord, not unto me alone:
>
> But stretch thy favor and thy pleased will,
>
> To sprede thy bountie and thy grace upon
>
> Sion, for Sion is thy holly hyll:
>
> That thy Hierusalem with mighty wall
>
> May be enclosed under thy defense,

---

[411] Ibid. Sonnet 19 line 11.
[412] Ibid. Sonnet 19 line 10.
[413] Ibid. Sonnet 19 line 3.
[414] Ibid. Sonnet 19 lines 13-14.

And bylded so that it may never fall

By myning fraude or mighty violence.

Defend thy chirch, Lord, and advaunce it soe,

So in despite of tyrannie to stand,

That trembling at thy power the world may know

It is upholden by thy mighty hand:

That Sion and Hierusalem may be

A safe abode for them that honor thee.[415]

This moment is quite odd in the sonnet sequence, because it interrupts a deeply personal account of the speaker's heart in a quest for mercy, and asks for temporal favors. She asks for an intervention in temporal law against the "tyrannie" of those who would attack Christians, an invocation of a variety of oppositional factors including English law regulating Christian belief, Catholic attacks on the Reformed throughout Europe, and the medieval wars over Jerusalem (the fall of which still haunted the early modern imagination). Above all, she asks that God protect Jerusalem against sin, that which early modern people credit with the fall of Jerusalem; Beatrice Groves summarizes this view: "The message contained in the fall of Jerusalem concerns Christ's divinity, but it is also an admonition to the faithful of God in every age to fly from sin."[416] Alluding to George Herbert's description of Jerusalem's fall as "a letter sealed, and sent,"[417] Groves summarizes the view that early modern people considered Jerusalem's fall a message both of warning and of hope – that sin brought about the holy city's destruction, but that Christ's sacrifice still provides salvation from that sin. Thus, the sonnet's speaker asks that God build up Jerusalem against human sin – both personal sin and those perpetrated by temporal law – and

---

[415] Ibid. Sonnet 20.

[416] Groves, Beatrice. *The Destruction of Jerusalem in Early Modern English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. Web. p. 6.

[417] Herbert, George. *The Works of George Herbert*. ed. F.E. Hutchinson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953. Web. p. 282-3.

provide a sanctuary for the faithful. Only in such a protected space, she suggests, can good Christians properly "honor" God, and that includes herself, as she describes in the final sonnet:

> Then on thy hill, and in thy walled towne,
>
> Thou shalt receave the pleasing sacrifice,
>
> The brute shall of thy praised name resoune
>
> In thankfull mouthes, and then with gentle eyes
>
> Thou shalt behold upon thine alter lye
>
> Many a yelden host of humbled hart,
>
> And round about then shall thy people crye:
>
> We praise thee, God our God: thou onely art
>
> The God of might, of mercie, and of grace.
>
> That I then, Lorde, may also honor thee,
>
> Releve my sorow, and my sinnes deface:
>
> Be, Lord of mercie, mercifull to me:
>
> Restore my feling of thy grace againe:
>
> Assure my soule, I crave it not in vaine.[418]

She suggests that in a safe, sacred space assured by God's protection, men and women (as she is carefully not gender-specific) can properly honor him. Those "humbled harts" will be yielding and thankful, just as the speaker is during her moments of greatest hope in the sequence. They articulate their faiths together, by crying out as one voice for "onely" God. In such a space, with such faithful people, the speaker then suggests she might also have her doubts assuaged and her faith assured. This is another, final moment of hope for the speaker as her verb tense looks forward and can see God's potential. However, all that remains at the end of the sequence is the hope that such hope is not "in vaine." She asks God to relieve her sorrow because she still feels it

---

[418] Ibid. Sonnet 21.

acutely, even with this vision of a utopic future. She still feels the weight of her sins when she asks God to take them away. And she does not feel God's grace, ultimately, because her final request is to feel his grace "againe."

Throughout the sonnet sequence, Lock's speaker experiences doubts, but those doubts for the most part align with the limited proper doubts that the Catholic theologians describe. She doubts her own worthiness and election, and her ability to win salvation or mercy from God, but never God's capacity to grant her salvation or his potential for mercy. Her central concern is God's *willingness* to save such a foul creature. Thus, while she descends into emotional depths, she never plunges fully into a despair that belies faithlessness.

Anne Vaughan Lock's personal and emotional account of her struggle with doubt does not end in a clear resolution. But it does end with hope. Throughout the sonnet sequence she clearly represents coexisting faith and doubt, and represents her faith as alterable both in strength and magnitude. If doctrinal theology emphasizes the constancy of faith, Lock emphasizes quite a different condition for a committed Christian – faith that wavers and nearly fails as she faces her own inevitable sinfulness and longs for a clear sign that she has been granted grace and salvation. This unorthodox representation of faith suggests that Lock was not proposing her sonnet speaker as a traditional Christian exemplar, because that voice contradicts theological definitions of faith, including Calvin's. So it is safe to retreat somewhat from claims that her work was designed to be entirely evangelizing. However, Lock may be proposing a different kind of exemplar, one that embodies the formative qualities of struggle and doubt. She presents a speaker who cycles through doubt and faith, and who never entirely eradicates that doubt, even at her moments of greatest hope; but she also never entirely eradicates her hope, either. But she is assured of God's agency and his ability to grant her grace, even when she doubts her own

deservingness of that grace. And with the inclusion of physical community at the end of the sequence, it also becomes clear that all of the speaker's doubts build up toward something greater, toward a community of faithful Christians who might together bring greater glory to God. Lock's sonnets bring an entirely new perspective to both doubt and faith in early modern Christians, one that acknowledges and exemplifies the vicissitudes of lived human emotion and perception, and of the doubt such vicissitudes produce, even as she also recognizes the fundamental Christian certainties of God's existence, potential for mercy, and salvific power.

John Donne and Doubt's Fear

John Donne's (1572-1631) spiritual life took a very different trajectory than Anne Vaughan Lock's. His formative years were spent with his Catholic family in England, and only when he reached adulthood did he then convert to proto-Anglicanism.[419] He married but once, to Anne More, and eventually became ordained within the Church of England. But like Anne Vaughan Lock, Donne represents extreme struggle with doubt and faith in his lyric poetry. His struggle, however, is motivated specifically by fear: fear for his body, fear of and for God, and fear of damnation. Doubt is both the result of fear, and potentially fear's resolution, as the speaker of Donne's poems argues that doubt is formative and does not foreclose upon the possibility of faith. Through lyric poetry, Donne attempts to reconcile fear by reasoning through religious doubt, but the limitations of language and the limitations of rational thought itself do not allow for such a reconciliation and demonstrate man's own limitations in affecting God and effecting salvation. Although the *Holy Sonnets* fail to eradicate both fear and doubt, fear ultimately becomes a sign of stability, and a sign of hope. While Donne is unable to assuage his

---

[419] This conversion demonstrates, if not a struggle with faith, then certainly a struggle with belief.

fears through poetic expression, he reconciles himself to that fearful state, embracing it as a path to hope, and while still murky, the clearest sign of salvation.

The first eighteen years of Donne's life were spent fostering his Catholicism. He was related through his mother to Sir Thomas More, and the family's social circles were formed around a shared adherence to the traditional religion.[420] His first tutors were likely Catholic priests, and at the age of eleven he matriculated at Oxford.[421] Donne had a great deal of educational privilege. While at Oxford, he made many valuable social connections, but he did not complete his program because he chose to drop out before the age of sixteen, when the Oxford Matriculation Statute would have required him to take an oath accepting the Act of Supremacy.[422] In 1591 Donne moved to London to study law, and by 1592 he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn although he did not complete his studies there.[423] The 1590s were a time of upheaval for Donne as he moved around and pursued different career paths, including in the military. By many accounts, Donne's youth was "raucus."[424] We know from 1596 to 1597 that Donne was with the military in Cadiz and the Azores, and at the end of that trip he was in the employ of Thomas Egerton.[425]

The 1590s is also when scholars identify the beginnings of Donne's conversion from Catholicism to a version of English reformed Christianity (the particular form of which is constantly under debate). Henry Donne, John's brother, died in prison in 1593 where he was being held for hiding a Catholic priest. Jonathan Post suggests that this death was merciful given

---

[420] Post, Jonathan F.S. "Donne's life: a sketch." ed. Guibbory, Achsah. *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*. Cambridge, UK;New York;: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Web.
[421] Ibid.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid.
[424] Ibid.
[425] Ibid.

Henry's sentence of hanging, drawing, and quartering.[426] Although there is little writing by

Donne about his brother, it is no stretch to suggest that this event instilled some fear in Donne,

especially as anti-Catholic legislation increased. Whether or not that fear contributed to Donne's

eventual conversion we cannot say, but we do know that his conversion was quite a long process.

David Edwards argues that even by the time Donne was ordained within the Church of England

in 1615 he was not a true convert and still harbored Catholic beliefs.[427] Though many Donne

scholars have spent a great deal of time attempting to pin-point his exact moment of conversion

and his particular Christian sect, the fear and anxiety surrounding his religion are of most

interest, no matter his affiliation. Throughout Donne's life, his beliefs flew in the face of

orthodoxy – as a Catholic living in reformed England and as a Catholic apostate within the

Church of England. Thus, it seems, he never even had a chance to completely conform to any

orthodox doctrine. Additionally, Donne himself intimated on several occasions that there was no

one true church to adhere to, suggesting that he never fully conformed to any one sect.[428]

Adding to Donne's spiritual hardship was his ejection from Egerton's service and social

favor following his marriage to Anne More. More was Egerton's niece, and the pair chose a

clandestine civil service in 1601 without her father's permission.[429] This act of deception

abruptly ended Donne's promising diplomatic career, as Anne's father had him thrown in jail

and attempted to have the marriage annulled.[430] When the marriage was ruled valid, Donne was

released from jail but Egerton refused further service, pointing to Donne's moral failings. For the

following decade, Donne could not find sufficient favor or patronage to provide a comfortable

---

[426] Ibid.

[427] Edwards, David Lawrence. *John Donne : Man Of Flesh And Spirit*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web. 8 Jan. 2016. p. 147.

[428] Donne, John. "To Sir HR." *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour. Early English Books Online*. 2010; 1651.

[429] Post.

[430] Ibid.

life, so he, Anne, and their ever-increasing family moved regularly during this time in search of stability.[431] It was only in 1609 when Donne and Anne's father reconciled that Donne was granted Anne's dowry.[432]

Donne wrote most of his verse between 1590 and 1613. In 1611 he chose to publish one of his works, "An Anatomie of the World," which met with sharp criticism. He scolded himself in a letter, regretting his error of "descend[ing] to print anything in verse."[433] But he did not swear off publishing verse altogether, as he suggests in a letter that he must print his verse "as a valediction to the world before I take orders."[434] Ultimately, Donne did not follow through with this suggestion, instead turning wholly to his new life in the church.

In 1617 Anne died, leaving Donne with seven surviving children.[435] While Donne rose rapidly within the church, preaching in a variety of prominent locations and receiving a great deal of favor, it is readily apparent in his writings that he continued to experience spiritual struggle. *Biathanatos: a Declaration of that Paradoxe or Thesis that Self-homicide is not so Naturally Sin*, is perhaps the most extreme example of his struggle during this time.[436] But as he grew older and his health declined, his sermons reflected that struggle as well; "Deaths Duell" is an excellent example. His dedication to his position and to his parishioners is quite clear in his later life, but his writings never quite shake that fear perhaps sparked by his brother's death in 1593. He deeply mourned his wife and his five children who died in infancy, and he never embraced religious ecstasy in his career as others had done.

---

[431] Ibid.
[432] Ibid.
[433] Donne, John. P. M. Oliver ed. *John Donne: Selected Letters.* New York: Routledge, 2002. Web. p. 62-3.
[434] Ibid. p. 80.
[435] Post.
[436] Donne, John. *Biathanatos: A Declaration of that Paradoxe Or Thesis that Self-Homicide is Not so Naturally Sin, that it may Never be Otherwise : Wherein the Nature, and the Extent of all those Lawes, which Seeme to be Violated by this Act, are Diligently Surveyed*. London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, and are to be sold at his shop, 1648. Web.

Donne was very passionate about his role as a spiritual leader, and his numerous surviving sermons speak to that passion. He was known as a gifted orator, and he shared that gift right up until his death in 1631. He certainly considered himself a teacher and preacher, but despite his enormous output of verse prior to his ordination, Donne did not consider himself a poet, as Ramie Targoff notes: "Donne seems to be indifferent to poetry as a vocation: he more or less abandons the medium of verse once he enters the church; he never publishes his collected poems; and he never presents himself in either private or public as a dedicated poet."[437] His poems were not crafted for the same audience or with the same intentions as his sermons, which is clear both from his personal circumstances and from his own correspondence during the time. As such, they cannot be read as directed at the same didactic goals as his sermons; they are deeply more personal. That is not to say they serve no teaching purpose whatsoever, but that the focus of Donne's verse is not wholly on his flock. They reflect secular passion as well as spiritual contemplation, pose questions and struggle with circumstances that are intensely personal, and they are apparently not intended, at least not primarily, to provide doctrinal or theological guidance to others.

Because of their inherently personal nature, it would be foolish to claim that Donne's poems proposed or endorsed a particular theology. Instead, they work through spiritual debates in which, as Robert Jackson argues, "the poet is speaking to himself."[438] Mary Papazian maintains that throughout Donne's life, he was so involved with resolving spiritual issues for himself that he could not possibly propose a clear theology for others; instead, "Donne viewed

---

[437] Targoff, Ramie. *John Donne, Body and Soul*. Chicago, IL, USA: University of Chicago Press, 2008. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 7 January 2016. p. 24.

[438] Jackson, Robert S. "'Doubt Wisely': John Donne's Christian Skepticism." *Cithara* 8.1 (1968): 39. Web. p. 40.

the world as a practical, pastoral preacher and poet, not a systematic theologian."[439] Indeed, by both the nature of Donne's conversion struggle and the nature of the sixteenth century in England, it is no wonder that his verse represents a very anxious struggle with competing doctrines; Catherine Martin argues that in both the *Holy Sonnets* and the *Anniversaries*, Donne "reflects the reckless competition for psychic and social assurance prevalent throughout a 'culture of anxiety,' which in his case was greatly aggravated by the competition between rival theological models of salvation."[440] Martin references Robert Young, who combines the previous anxiety with the particularities of Calvinism popular in England at the time: "Calvinist notions of grace pervade the Holy Sonnets... not as a principal theological inspiration, but as a lingering fear of faithlessness haunting the background of poems that in most of their features resemble the Catholic devotional poetry of the Continent."[441] Donne certainty exhibits fear in his verse, a fear for his body on Earth, a fear of and for God, and a fear of his status with God. And alongside that fear, in an attempt to resolve his spiritual suffering, comes questioning – and doubt.

In the *Holy Sonnets* in particular, we find Donne's lyric poetry rife with doubt – doubt of his purpose on earth, doubt of his ability to resist the Devil, doubt of reason's capacity to resolve his fears and the paradox of the Elect, and above all, doubt of his own agency to achieve any progress for his soul. Targoff details the series of questions that recur throughout: "In sonnet after sonnet Donne asks, why did God make me, and what are his obligations toward me? Who is responsible for my decay and sinfulness? How can I understand the apparent absence or neglect

---

[439] Papazian, Mary Arshagouni. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation : New Perspectives*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 6 January 2016.
[440] Martin, Catherine Gimelli. "Unmeete Contraryes: The Reformed Subject and the Triangulation of Religious Desire in Donne's *Anniversaries* and *Holy Sonnets*." Papazian, Mary Arshagouni ed. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation : New Perspectives*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 6 January 2016. p. 193.
[441] Young, Robert V. *Donne's Holy Sonnets and the Theology of Grace*. qtd in Martin, Catherine Gimelli. "Unmeete Contraryes: The Reformed Subject and the Triangulation of Religious Desire in Donne's *Anniversaries* and *Holy Sonnets*." Papazian, Mary Arshagouni ed. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation : New Perspectives*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 6 January 2016. p. 197.

of my maker? Will God save me from damnation at the final judgment?"[442] Robert Jackson calls

Donne a "Christian skeptic," particularly so in his years before ordination.[443] His verse lacks

assurance, and the dialogic nature of lyric poetry promotes direct questioning that flies in the

face of theologian-defined Christian faith. Donne sought answers through his poetry that could

not be sufficiently found in Catholic or reformed theology, and in many cases, it seems, even the

probing of doubt through the self-exploration of poetry fails to assure him. In fact, the success of

Donne's work in providing spiritual aid is foreclosed upon – an attempt that is doomed to fail –

because of the very nature of language. While Targoff argues that Donne's use of verse is the

"Word made flesh," suggesting that the act of writing would be considered both Good Work and

ritual sacrament, Martin emphasizes the inevitable failure of taking such an action because

sacramental actions were stripped of their efficacy in the Reformation: "Donne associates

sacramental loss not just with the elimination of holy acts, images, sanctuaries, and relics, but

with the loss of the ritual power of language itself."[444] Thus Donne's work, through the process

of exploration, self-negates. Poetry itself is inevitably a failed response to the lack of sacramental

ritual power, even though poets like Donne seek connections with the divine through language

that is inherently beyond the material in its referentiality. But the emphatic presence of doubt in

his poetry suggests an unorthodox lack of faithful certainty, while the process of writing gropes

for tangible connections to God that were lost in the Reformation. In that way, Donne's poetry

represents both loss and defeat.

Perhaps the most-studied example of John Donne's doubt is "Satire III." This poem was

written in the mid-1590s, during what was, perhaps, the peak of Donne's religious struggle as he

---

[442] Targoff. p. 107.
[443] Jackson. p. 45.
[444] Targoff. p. 24, Martin. p. 196.

began his transition away from Catholicism.[445] Richard Strier is careful to note that although many scholars paint the Satires as ascribing to Catholic beliefs, "what is most striking in the religious references of these satires is their independence from any established religious position."[446] And "Satire III" exemplifies that independence. In fact, the poem rejects forced orthodoxy dictated by either church or state. The speaker of the poem asks of his listener, "Foole and wretch, wilt thou let thy Soule be tyed / To mans lawes, by which she shall not be tryed / At the last day?"[447] This question comes after a brief survey of different circumstances of one religion being asserted as the "true religion,"[448] including Catholicism and Calvinism. But what stands out most clearly in this poem is the speaker's assertion that doubt is a wise and fruitful condition: "doubt wisely; in strange way / To stand inquiring right, is not to stray; / To sleepe, or runne wrong, is."[449] These lines indicate that questioning belief (specifically responding to the debate about idolatry in images) is not necessarily to "stray" from one's faith; instead, questioning is a path to truth. The path to truth is winding and dangerous, but one must actively seek it: "On a huge hill, / Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will / Reach her, about must and about must go, / And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so."[450] But there is still some danger in doubt, because while one can be safe in doubting "wisely," one can nevertheless take an incorrect path of inquiry. Referring to the Stoics, the satire begins by wondering if their "strict life may be imputed faith," while the faltering of a good Christian would cause him to be "damn'd."[451] Because the Stoics lived during the "blinded age," before Christ's revelation, their adherence to "vertue" might be understood as a lesser kind of faith, but one that might still

---

[445] Strier, Richard. "Radical Donne: "Satire III"." *ELH* 60.2 (1993): 283-322. Web. p. 285.
[446] Ibid. p. 286.
[447] Donne, John. "Satire III." *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*. Ed. Charles M. Coffin. New York: Modern Library, 2001. Print. Lines 93-5.
[448] Ibid. line 43.
[449] Ibid. lines 77-9.
[450] Ibid. lines 79-82.
[451] Ibid. lines 13, 15.

provide salvation despite their use of reason against monotheism.[452] They had no direction from Christ or God to guide them to salvation, and yet this satire suggests that their strict virtue could nevertheless accomplish salvation. But Christians who have all the benefits of God's instruction might actually be more likely to be damned, both for not heeding those instructions and instead giving into "Lusts," and for incorrectly implementing reason.[453] Implementing reason – and doubt – does not necessarily indicate a lack of faith, nor does it suggest faith's presence, but it can threaten a Christian soul if used improperly. And equally dangerous to this incorrect doubting, is not to doubt at all – "To sleepe."

At the end of "Satire III," the speaker reiterates the call not to give in to man's claims of a true religion: "So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust / Power from God claym'd, than God himselfe to trust."[454] He vividly illustrates the potential choices for the reader, suggesting that clinging to man's ill-reasoned doctrinal certainties will lead to potential damnation because to do so is to accept human authority over divine authority. However, the speaker himself does not make a definitive decision nor provide a direct call to action for the reader. Instead he ends by weighing the options and provides an opportunity for his reader to exercise his or her own best reasoning skills; indeed, the reader's only possible response is to make a decision for him or herself, without direct intervention on the part of the speaker, an argument in itself that doubt is a necessary step on the path to salvation, or at least that questioning and the uncertainties it embodies are necessary. The speaker does not invite the reader to have faith in him and his arguments, but instead guides the reader to doubt, which will hopefully yield to the reader's Christian faith in the decision-making process. While he notes that to choose trust in God is preferable to choosing man's claims, he does not assert that choosing God is *the* choice to make.

---

[452] Ibid. line 7.
[453] Ibid. line 9.
[454] Ibid. lines 109-10.

Thus, even knowing in theory how not to let his soul "perish," the speaker remains undecided and solitary in his independent status, in the same way as the "blest flowers"[455] who through the arduous process of doubt become "lost"[456] at sea. Strier reads this as a "positive" image because it remains in agreement with the poem's earlier assertion that one ought not "stray" in one's doubts.[457] I agree that the speaker does not end the poem in despair, but by not definitively choosing trust in God he allows uncertainty to linger. The poem ends in a desire to choose trust – a desire to choose God – that goes unfulfilled.

Perhaps even more interesting than the lack of clear resolution at the end of the poem is the motivation behind the speaker's doubt: fear. At the beginning of the poem, the speaker wonders if he and the reader, unlike their fathers and unlike the ancient philosophers who have been granted salvation, will be "damn'd?"[458] In this early moment, the poem is both personal and didactic as the reader has used both first person singular and first person plural subject positions, beginning with a representation of his own experience ("I must not laugh, nor weepe sinnes, and be wise") and moving into inclusive questioning ("As wee do them in meanes, shall they surpasse / Us in the end").[459] Fear of damnation – a theoretical possibility – is emphasized at the beginning of the poem as the speaker instructs his reader to share in this fear: "O if thou dar'st, feare this."[460] The speaker encourages his reader to embrace that fear because it is not mere fear, but a strength or virtue to be implemented throughout life: "This feare great courage, and high valour is."[461] Fear as courage is then described in several heroic scenarios, including exploring the "dungeons of the earth" and "frozen North discoveries," scenarios in which fear is a natural

---

[455] Ibid. line 103.
[456] Ibid. line 107.
[457] Strier. p. 312.
[458] "Satire III." line 15.
[459] Ibid. lines 3, 10-11.
[460] Ibid. line 15.
[461] Ibid. line 16.

reaction but is not allowed to paralyze progress.[462] Although these forays may be terrifying and

the risks are ever present, the reward is greater than the risk.

His fear of damnation is then imagined as a metaphorical war, like the wars Donne had

seen himself. In that war, the Devil is his enemy, as are his material investments. He asks of

himself and of his reader, "O desperate coward, wilt thou seeme bold, and / To thy foes and his

(who made thee to stand / Sentinell in his worlds garrison) thus yeeld"?[463] Will they all submit to

fear, and thus the Devil? Or will they embrace that fear as courage, understanding the risks they

take and fighting the better for it? As a warrior fighting against the Devil, the speaker gives a

command that should lead his side to victory: "Seeke true religion."[464] There is hope in this

solution; it is achievable not because there is one 'true religion' but because one must pursue

religious truth. However, the poem immediately describes several figures who believed they had

found true religion, but ultimately had not, including Mirreus who looked to Rome, Crantz who

looked to Geneva, Graius looked to friends and family as examples to follow, Phrygius who

"abhorred / All" knowing some to be incorrect, and Graccus who "loves all as one" believing

one religion to be as good as the next.[465] Truth will inevitably triumph, the speaker suggests,

because it is a superior force: "though truth and falsehood be / Near twins, yet truth a little elder

is."[466] But the path to Truth is an arduous one, and its description as a steep and dangerous

mountain climb mirrors the proposed heroic acts at the beginning of the poem; just as it took

courage – courage that embraces fear – to achieve those discoveries of the Earth, so too does it

take an acceptance of fear to ascend Truth's mountain. But as we have already seen, his quest to

seek that religion is not complete by the end of the poem, and thus, fear must remain.

---

[462] Ibid. lines 20, 22.
[463] Ibid. lines 29-31.
[464] Ibid. line 43.
[465] Ibid. lines 62-3, 65.
[466] Ibid. lines 72-3.

Nevertheless, that fear is boldly claimed by the speaker as a shield and as a sign of his quest for salvation, his quest for trust in God, which is the only religion one ought to completely embrace. With its involvement with fear and its ultimate lack of resolution, "Satire III" works as a basic outline of the themes in the *Holy Sonnets*. But the sonnets are not nearly so positive, nor do they propose a lack of resolution as similarly formative.

The *Holy Sonnets*, nineteen in all, do not have a definitive creation date, nor do they have a definitive ordering as there is no clear narrative, and the ordering varies from manuscript to manuscript.[467] They were published first in 1633, after Donne's death, because he never intended them for publication. We know that they were written almost entirely prior to his ordination, except number seventeen which references his wife's death in 1617.[468] The sonnets continue to captivate readers and scholars alike because of their depiction of acute spiritual struggle. Targoff proposes that Donne's fear regarding salvation in particular becomes more severe in the *Holy Sonnets* than elsewhere, comparing them to *The Second Anniversarie* in which he fears the separation of the body and the soul: "In the *Holy Sonnets*, by contrast, Donne's fears fall squarely on his hopes for salvation. It is here that he confronts the flawed nature of his physical and spiritual being. It is here that he questions what will become of him not in the grave, but in the aftermath of his resurrection. It is here that he demands immediate attention from God."[469] A central feature of the sonnets for scholars has been the materiality of the speaker's spiritual struggle, as Targoff argues in her book noted here.[470] But doubt – cognitive, reasoning doubt – plays a central role in the sonnets. At least ten of the nineteen pose direct questions, including the

---

[467] Parrish, Paul, and Gary Stringer. "General Textual Introduction." Donne, John. *Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*. United States: Indiana University Press, 2005. Web.
[468] Targoff. p. 108.
[469] Targoff. p. 106.
[470] See also Coles, Kimberly Anne. "The Matter of Belief in John Donne's Holy Sonnets." *Renaissance Quarterly* 68.3 (2015): 899. Web.

first line of sonnet one: "Thou hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?"[471] He questions God forthrightly, and he also questions other aspects of religion: "Why doth the devill then usurpe on mee? / Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?"[472] For more than half of the sonnets, the speaker performs reasoned inquiry in an effort to establish correct belief, though sometimes with irrational overtones, seeking to affirm an elusive faith and salvation from God.

What becomes ever present in the sonnets, though, is fear. The speaker describes feeling trapped on earth in the first sonnet: "I dare not move my dimme eyes any way, / Despaire behind, and death before doth cast / Such terrour, and my feeble flesh doth waste / By sinne in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh."[473] He is but a sinking stone, falling helplessly into hell. He fears his own limitations, and his certain death. He sees nothing to redeem him on earth but, in the traditional shift of a Petrarchan sestet, he recognizes that God is "above," to whom the speaker can look "By thy leave."[474] And straightaway, we find that much of the speaker's fear is the result of his own powerlessness; he does not have the ability to escape his emotions or fate on earth, and he also does not have the ability to bring himself to God, or to even look at God without God's aid. Thus the poem ends with a turn toward God's potential for intervention; he says such intervention is the only way he might resist the devil: "Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art, / And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart."[475] Grace acts for God to whisk the speaker away from the Devil's schemes while God's very being is the power that "draw[s]" the speaker in. There is no path to God that the speaker may walk; instead, the path to God is one of passivity on both ends, one benefitted by the speaker's hardened, unyielding, "iron heart." Powerlessness drives the speaker's fear in this poem, but by the end he has accepted that

---

[471] "I." line 1.
[472] "II." lines 9-10.
[473] "I." lines 5-8.
[474] Ibid. lines 9, 10.
[475] Ibid. lines 13-4.

powerlessness to a certain degree as the necessary condition for salvation. The uncertainty of the speaker's position remains, as does his fear, but he recognizes both as markers on the path to God.

The speaker's powerlessness seems to pervade all aspects of his spiritual life. In the second sonnet, the speaker describes an utter lack of personal agency in matters concerning salvation and a relationship with God: "I am thy sonne, made with thy selfe to shine, / Thy servant, whose paines thou hast still repaid, / Thy sheepe, thine Image, and, till I betray'd / My selfe, a temple of thy Spirit divine."[476] Immediately prior, the speaker describes the general human condition of existing wholly in the possession of God, at once held by and holding God, and allowed salvation by virtue of Christ's "blood" and not through human agency.[477] But individually, his intervention destroyed that privileged standing. That he actively betrayed himself suggests that the speaker might have had some agency, but only to harm his spiritual status. He goes on to indicate that he was also powerless against the great Temptor: "Why doth the devill then usurpe on mee? / Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?"[478] With no suggestion that he can resist this usurpation, the speaker reiterates his status as object and vessel, a vessel into which the devil can enter, unhindered, and displace God, but the speaker wonders why God does not intervene to preserve what is rightfully his. In this sonnet, the speaker is extremely conflicted, knowing simultaneously that he must wait for God's approach, but also that it is his own fault, his own actions, which turn God away. He created the conditions under which the Devil claimed dominion, seizing territory that ought to be God's. Despite this conviction, however, the speaker still poses his questions to God. He still desires a response, a reason that God is absent, and without that reason, as long as he remains isolated from God and

---

[476] "II." lines 5-8.
[477] Ibid. line 4.
[478] Ibid. lines 9-10.

in the dark as to his motivations, he "shall soon despair."[479] He does not understand the lack of reciprocity when he devotes himself to God but feels God does not devote himself to the speaker; he wonders at God's obvious offer of salvation, but God's simultaneous failure to guarantee it. The sonnet ends with the speaker juxtaposing his convictions, that on the one hand, God "lovest mankind well," but on the other, God "wilt not choose me," and it is these irreconcilable facts that lead to his despair.[480] These points are emphasized by the feminine endings of the final two lines; "chuse me" and "lose mee" retreat from emphasis on the speaker himself and instead place emphasis on God's (as of yet unused) agency. The only resolution the sonnet achieves is an understanding of the speaker as a passive object currently in the hands of Satan that must wait to be acted upon by outside forces. By employing reason in an attempt to assuage his fears about his position with God as well as his powerlessness, the speaker only leads himself into greater confusion, and toward despair.

That same confusion reappears in the fourth sonnet, in which he compares himself to a flawed pilgrim. He says of his soul, "Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done / Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled, / Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read, / Wisheth himselfe delivered from prison."[481] In situating himself as a pilgrim, the speaker describes a path taken to expiate sin in the course of which, through his own moral failings, he has committed worse sins than those he bore with him, and now may not return to his home. As a thief, he longs for freedom from restrictions of belief when he imagines death to be far off, but for the security of those restrictions when death is imminent. He knows that the only way to be saved is through God's grace, but he is powerless to attain that grace: "Yet grace, if thou repent,

[479] Ibid. line 12.
[480] Ibid. line 13.
[481] "IV." lines 3-6.

thou canst not lacke; / But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?"[482] Here Donne has

poeticized a key issue for grace-centered Christians: if one repents, one may be saved, but in

order to be saved one first must be granted grace by God. Thus, repenting alone is a useless act,

and agency proven ineffective. Additionally, repentance is something that God must teach:

"Teach mee how to repent; for that's as good / As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy

blood."[483] There is some irony in these lines, because God *did* seal mankind's pardon with his

blood – through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But the speaker feels he must do more to achieve

salvation and to gain God's grace. Of course, even those with God's grace through their own

agency can lose said grace as is emphasized with the conditional 'if' – "if thou repent." Everyone

has the agency to damn themselves, but no one has the power to acquire God's grace and further,

salvation.

But the speaker is suggesting an additional problem for humanity: how does one repent

without grace to begin with? If God neither instructs man in repentance, nor grants grace to

allow for repentance, who then is the party responsible for damnation? Certainly the speaker

argues for his own culpability in falling from God's grace, but this emphasis on instruction

points to those who are abandoned by God and damned out of hand. If God does not respond to

the speaker's fervent request for instruction and for a return to grace, then is the speaker truly

culpable for his damnation? In his many requests, the speaker introduces doubt as to his position

with God, and to his responsibility as a subject of God. The speaker emphasizes the paradox of

man's lack of agency in the final resolving couplet: "wash thee in Christs blood, which hath this

might / That being red, it dyes red soules to white."[484] One may take the action of accepting

Christ's sacrifice, but that action is not the cause of salvation; instead, it is Christ's blood which

---

[482] Ibid. lines 9-10.
[483] "VII." lines 13-4.
[484] "IV." lines 13-4.

miraculously, against the laws of nature, cleanses one of sin and allows for God's grace to act. Sonnet IV highlights the multiple factors of salvation, while revealing their illogical connections. Reason does not triumph in this sonnet; truth is not revealed, and thus the speaker rests on Christ's intervention in the process of salvation. Doubt remains at the end of the sonnet, because as in Sonnet II it fails to resolve any confusion but instead reveals the paradox of salvation, an inherently irreconcilable conflict.

Sonnet VI reiterates both the speaker's fear of death, and his powerlessness to save himself from damnation. He says, "gluttonous death, will instantly unjoynt / My body, and soule, and I shall sleepe a space, / But my'ever-waking part shall see that face, / Whose feare already shakes my every joynt."[485] His fear of death is persistent; he believes he will find no rest either on earth or in his final resting place, because whoever awaits him (either God or the devil, it remains ambiguous) inspires fear. That fear consumes him and produces a kind of death-in-life by shaking apart the "joynts" that death will ultimately sever. In that way, fear threatens to break up his very body before his soul can depart and hopefully ascend to Heaven. He also fears that his soul will be allowed that ascent, but will quickly fall due to the weight of his numerous sins: "So, fall my sinnes, that all may have their right, / To where they are bred, and would presse me, to hell."[486] Again, he fears that his soul will not escape the weight of his body, particularly the weight of sin attached to his body. He might become a falling stone, weighed down by sins that are the result of the devil and be doomed to an eternity in hell. And again, the only way to achieve salvation is to turn himself over to God; otherwise, he will remain weighed down and cannot ever hope to ascend to heaven: "Impute me righteous, thus purg'd of evill, / For thus I

---

[485] "VI." lines 5-8.
[486] Ibid. lines 11-2.

leave the world, the flesh, the devill."[487] The speaker is not, nor can he make himself, righteous. "Imputation" resonates with an expulsion of sin, and its theological use is typically, "The attributing to believers of the righteousness of Christ, and to Christ of human sin, by vicarious substitution."[488] Righteousness for him is not the result of actions or behavior, but an attribute to be assigned by God alone, through the sacrifice of Christ, and that righteousness allows for a clean break from the sins of the body and of the world.[489] Thus, even without sin there is no hope of salvation through one's own agency. Without righteousness, the speaker fears he will be chained to the weight of his sins and unable to ascend. Only God can grant grace; and that powerlessness is terrifying. Once again, the speaker's powerlessness is emphasized by the feminine endings of the final couplet, reminders of the speaker's submission and lack of agency.

The speaker of the sonnets displays consistent fear regarding his salvation, and that fear becomes amplified by his overwhelming and irreconcilable doubts. In addition to doubting his saved status, he doubts his ability to achieve salvation. He doubts God's intervention on his behalf, and he doubts the capacity of reason to come to correct belief. The lack of agency he feels manifests in doubt, and the end result is terror at what he sees as impending damnation. But taken as a whole, the *Holy Sonnets* do not propose a ready resolution for this problem; indeed, the resolving sestets and/or couplets of many of the sonnets suggest an acceptance of that lack of agency as the only possible resolution. To a certain degree, the sonnets recognize and accept that powerlessness as part and parcel of the paradox of salvation. But acknowledging the irreconcilability of this paradox does not resolve the speaker's anxieties. The sonnets instead leave a sense of unabated instability and uncertainty.

---

[487] Ibid. lines 13-4.
[488] "imputation, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2016. Web. 24 June 2016.
[489] "impute, v." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 10 January 2016.

Never in the nineteen sonnets does the speaker suggest that he is saved by God, but he does demonstrate knowledge of the path to salvation (a path man may walk only if led by God, as in the first sonnet). And his desperation for God to guide him on that path is most clear in the fourteenth sonnet, in which he beats at the walls of his spiritual prison where he is sequestered from God's grace. Here again the speaker notes his powerlessness to act for his own salvation: "I, like an usurpt towne, t'another due, / Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end."[490] The multiplicity of commas in this sonnet conveys a desperate breathlessness, as if he is physically assaulting his restraints. But of course, his attempted actions are all to no avail. The sonnet ends: "Divorce mee, 'untie, or breake that knot againe, / Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I / Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free, / Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee."[491] The speaker asserts God's power over him, and God's exclusive agency. But at the end of the poem, despite this clear recognition, the speaker does not feel the satisfaction he craves. He is still bound, far from God, and wanton. After what is perhaps his most fervent supplication, the speaker remains alone and unacknowledged, knowing with certainty only that without God's intervention, he "never shall be free." Donne's enclosure in Sonnet XIV ultimately suggests that, for him at least, there is no path to God. Despite his poetic searching, he can find no release, no key that opens a door to the path God might lead him across. Only God can provide the release the speaker requires to find both relief and salvation, but as God remains absent and silent, the speaker's unanswered questions and unanswered pleas allow doubts about his status and God's potential willingness for intervention to remain.

The nineteenth sonnet, presented as the final poem in most printings of the series, appropriately conveys the complete lack of resolution in the speaker's search for grace.

---

[490] "XIV." lines 5-6.
[491] Ibid. lines 11-14.

Oh, to vex me, contraryes meet in one:

Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott

A constant habit; that when I would not

I change in vowes, and in devotione.

As humorous is my contritione

As my prophane Love, and as soone forgott:

As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,

As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.

I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day

In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God:

To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod.

So my devout fitts come and go away

Like a fantastique Ague: save that here

Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.[492]

This sonnet valorizes fear as the "best" state, because it is the most authentic in body and soul. He suggests that in his moments of supplication he is merely "flattering" God, a most insincere kind of devotion. But while fear is consistent in this sonnet as we have seen in others of the *Holy Sonnets*, the piece that is missing is powerlessness in the face of damnation; this sonnet does not feature failed attempts to effect salvation but instead features a more general failure of the will in the day-to-day. The speaker elides that specific powerlessness, opting to argue for the ineffectiveness of his agency because his will is so inconstant.

The problem here is not that he is necessarily powerless, but that the little power he has (in "devotione" and "contritione") is rendered ineffective by his "distemper'd" nature. Even from day to day he views heaven differently, and his love comes and goes like a fever. But what

---

[492] "XIX."

remains constant, even in his "cold and hott" cycle, is fear – though in varying degrees. He knows that in the past he shook with fear, unable even to hope for salvation when he dared not even to "view heaven." In the present he feels able to look upon God to the degree that he might pray and "flatter," but these efforts are still bargaining against potential damnation, a constant idea lingering in the background. And he knows with a great deal of certainty that "To morrow" he will "quake" again. Past, present, and future are all shaped by – and sometimes overtaken by – fear. And it is in those moments when he is physically overtaken with that fear that he has his "best dayes." His fearful state is his most authentic state; his faith is strongest when he is most disabled by fear, when he makes no attempt to woo God, and when he gives himself over to the magnitude of God's wrath – and perhaps his goodness. But fear is the closest to resolution that this sonnet, and any of the sonnets, comes. His resolution is not recognition from God; it is not comfort in his faith. It is not even turning himself over to God. It's a clear settling into doubt – digging in, wriggling his toes in the torturous, ecstatic experience of not knowing if he is saved, or if God desires to save him. It's a dwelling built in the knowledge that his actions are worth nothing, and so the preferable state is far from supplication and within the realm of uncertainty. Doubt, for Donne, is safety.

Is there anywhere for Donne then to go? There is one clear moment in the *Holy Sonnets* when Donne demonstrates a flash of hope, and a hint of hope for his doubts to result in some measure of fulfillment. He wonders in Sonnet III, "O might those sighes and teares returne againe / Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent, / That I might in this holy discontent / Mourne with some fruit, as I have mourn'd in vaine; / In mine Idolatry what showres of raine / Mine eyes did waste? what griefs my heart did rent?"[493] Although it is but a flash, for a moment the speaker considers his despair, fear, and doubt as bearing "fruit." He hopes that although his

---

[493] "III." lines 1-6.

past griefs have been but "in vaine," there is some conditional future in which all of his doubts and spiritual struggles will amount to something. He presents his struggles as different from the struggles of others, because others at least "Have the rememberance of past joyes, for reliefe / Of comming ills."[494] But for him, he "is allow'd / No ease; for, long, yet vehement griefe hath beene / Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne."[495] There is a kind of purity in the speaker's grief, because it is not offset by any joys. The grief of others is contaminated by memories of joy, whereas the speaker has no such distraction. But he knows that even with the spark of hope that lies in his pain, it will come to nothing because he experiences that grief *as* grief. It is his self-pity that condemns him to endless torture. He says, "To (poore) me is allow'd / No ease," which is why his grief has been both the cause and effect. His experience of grief is perpetuated because he dwells on this grief as a negative experience – thus he is punished with more grief for the sin of pitying himself about that grief. Unlike "Satire III" which argues for the positive, formative outcomes of doubt, this sonnet dwells on the impossibility of such an outcome. And thus his grief cannot bear spiritual fruit, because he has perverted what he elsewhere correctly identifies as the ideal state for one with ineffective agency. Before his hope of doubt building into something greater even truly takes shape, it is undermined by his own nature.

John Donne is a demonstrated skeptic in his lyric poetry, but his verse does not suggest that it is doubt that condemns him. Instead, his greatest fault is attempting to use his agency to achieve salvation. He suggests that perhaps the nearest one can be to God is to revel in one's utter ineffectiveness against God's omnipotence. This does not conform to Donne's pattern in preaching, a pattern found throughout other devotional literature, which "typically bear[s] a formal pattern of fall and redemption, a distinctively Protestant emphasis in devotional

---

[494] Ibid. lines 11-2.
[495] Ibid. lines 12-4.

experience, which aims to move the congregant or reader to feel profoundly his or her complete dependence on God's grace and to respond with faith in Christ."[496] While in very broad terms this general pattern appears in the *Holy Sonnets*, Donne never suggests redemption in the sonnets; the nearest he gets is settling utterly in fear and doubt. Still, that final yielding to fear as an end-state and the submission to doubt is a form of hope in itself. While Donne points to these phenomena as the limits of his agency, he does not fall back into despair – utter hopelessness – which would be among the gravest Christian sins. He clearly notes in the sonnets that he has felt despair, but distinguishes his fear from that extreme desolate state. His fear leads to an acceptance of his own uncertainty, and more importantly, of God's complete control over his fate.

The doubt that John Donne and Anne Vaughan Lock seek to overcome in their lyric poems is the paradoxical doubt of self – the doubt that they have the ability or capacity to overcome sinfulness in order to achieve salvation. This doubt is paradoxical because both readily admit their own lack of agency in salvation, and yet they must somehow become suitable candidates for God's grace as a prerequisite for that which was granted (or not) before their births. But both Donne and Lock represent doubt as a necessary part of the Christian experience. They both suggest that it is inevitable, given the demands for complete submission to God and the demand for total faith. For Lock, there is a clear sense that her doubt is building toward something greater; whereas with Donne, doubt is presented as an end-stage to spiritual struggle. But for neither of these authors is that doubt completely satisfactory; despite acceptance of doubt as inevitable and necessary, the poems allow feelings of desolation and dissatisfaction to remain. The very

---

[496] Nelson, Brent. "Pathopoeia and the Protestant Form of Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions." Papazian, Mary Arshagouni ed. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation : New Perspectives*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 6 January 2016. p. 247-8.

existence of these linguistic and logical attempts to reconcile the paradox of Christian salvation is evidence of desires unfulfilled, tangible accounts of failure to intervene in one's own fate. These poems reify failed attempts even at understanding the Christian experience of doubt. But they also preserve doubt, representing the necessity of carrying that doubt forward even if one is dissatisfied and uncertain, for, perhaps, doubt is where the Christian soul lives until the final judgment. Above all, Lock and Donne demonstrate rhetorically that human agency cannot acquire God's mercy, but that they must still use their agency in life while God takes the path toward them.

Chapter 3: Faith and the Problem of Articulation in George Herbert's *The Temple*

When examining representations of religious life, what we see most readily is belief. The reason for that visibility is that when representing life, we focus on action and opinion – what people do and what people think. And both of these processes, the process of acting and the process of reasoning, constitute belief. Even the greatest religious literary works in history primarily focus on belief. When Dante Alighieri describes the nine circles of Hell in *Inferno*, from their location within the earth to Judas' perpetual mastication by the devil, those details constitute belief because they are reasoned doctrinal details specified in works within the written Christian canon and extrapolated upon by Dante's well-informed imagination. When Geoffrey Chaucer criticizes the purchase of relics in *The Pardoner's Tale*, he is proposing particular practices of worship while criticizing others through a reasoning process, which is the basis of belief. When John Donne reveals his assurances about death in his sermon *Death's Duell*, he is revealing belief about the afterlife as outlined in the gospels. Because of its visibility in material manifestations, belief is easily accessed – at least more easily accessed than faith.

Faith is a hidden phenomenon. It is buried deep beneath the visible practices of religion, beneath good works, under reasoned belief, and far below assumption. It is the bedrock of a spiritual life, if we concur with Christian theologians defining faith. Definitions of faith clearly differentiate faith from belief, proposing that it is both certainty and trust, but those definitions in and of themselves are problematic because they ultimately lack content. What is it that individuals have certainty *about* or trust *in*? What are the particularities of faith? One would expect to find an articulation of faith's particularities in literature, as we see articulations of belief. But instead, those representations are few and far between, and what we find are attempts at articulation that fail.

174

One such representation is in George Herbert's *The Temple*, a series of religious poems published posthumously that offers a somewhat sustained examination of faith as a particular religious phenomenon. But Herbert's text reveals two problems with faith. First, his individual theorizations and experiences with faith do not cohere to produce one consistent account of faith. And second, while the poems employ an abundance of figurations to articulate faith, ultimately those articulations fall short of full-fledged representation. Through an examination of George Herbert's *The Temple*, I argue that faith is ultimately inarticulable despite attempts at direct representation. And part, at least, of that inarticulability stems from both God's and faith's locus in the signifying gap of language between word and meaning, and the implications of Derrida's unstable sign.[497] The implications of such unfixity encompass not only general literary attempts at representation, but also to explicit, doctrinal representations made by spiritual authorities including the Church of England, the Catholic Church, and English monarchs since Henry VIII.[498]

An historical problem with early modern literary scholarship dealing with Christianity is the failure to differentiate between faith and belief. This problem has become less pronounced in recent years, but it persists. Although a broad definition of "faith" is still widely accepted, faith and belief are two distinct phenomena of the Christian religion, and they are articulated as such by early modern and earlier theologians; therefore, contemporary scholarship using "faith"

---

[497] For a thorough overview of Derrida's différance, see: Sands, Danielle. "Thinking through Différance: Derrida, Žižek and Religious Engagement." *Textual Practice* 22.3 (2008): 529-46. Web.

[498] Certainly it includes all doctrinal statements made by monarchs in English history, but Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy concretizes the monarch's role in shaping both doctrine and orthodoxy.

uncritically is problematic at best.[499] Indeed, this differentiation is necessary to reveal the nuance endemic in the representational practices of lyric poetry.

Debora Shuger provides an apt definition of faith in "The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric" when she notes, "The emotions present a threat to rational objectivity but not to faith, particularly if one understands faith in the Protestant sense of fiducia, or trust."[500] Indeed, Martin Luther himself proposed trust as the fundamental definition of faith, calling it "a living, bold trust" and "know[ing] for certain."[501] But this definition of faith was an innovation neither in the sixteenth century nor in the twenty first. In the second century, Clement of Alexandria defined faith not only as a state of knowledge or a state of trust as Luther does more than a millennium later, but he is also careful to differentiate faith from belief; in the *Stromateis* he says, "Now to know is more than to believe."[502] He also says, "For the gates of the Word are gates of reason, opened by the key of faith,"[503] indicating that faith is a static possession, unlike reason which involves process. John Spencer Hill summarizes Clement's view on faith and belief: "In sum, then, faith is the capacity of spiritual recognition, while 'knowledge...is the perfection of faith' effected through the exercise of reason."[504] In that way, Clement's view – which we shall see reconciles easily with the views of other Christian theologians – pairs nicely with a logical analogy where faith is the premise preceding the process of logic, which grounds belief. Faith is a certainty, an accepted supposition that in itself cannot be altered, and from that

---

[499] For example, Thomas Betteridge's *Writing Faith and Telling Tales* never examines the term "faith" but instead wields it broadly as a synonym both for the Christian religion and for religious belief. Betteridge, Thomas. *Writing Faith and Telling Tales: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Work of Thomas More*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013. Web.
[500] Shuger, Debora. "The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric." Jost, Walter, and Wendy Olmsted. *Rhetorical Invention and Religious Inquiry: New Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000. Web. p. 52
[501] Luther, Martin. *Works of Martin Luther with Introductions and Notes*. Ed. Adolph Spaeth. Philadelphia: A.J. Holman, 1916. Electronic.
[502] Hill, John Spencer. *Infinity, Faith and Time: Christian Humanism and Renaissance Literature*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997. Web. 6.14, qtd p. 4.
[503] Protrepticus I, qtd in Hill p. 5
[504] Hill p. 7.

certainty reasoned doctrine and practical applications build. From faith come Works, as Luther says, but Works alone do not constitute faith. While faith is a part of the cognitive process of theological and doctrinal logic leading to belief, it is not subject to that process. Clement alone quite thoroughly undermines the "post-Enlightenment prejudice that faith and reason are incompatible."[505] Faith is not blind, but a lens applied to the world.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, in concurrence with Saint Augustine, writes that faith is "certainty and no fear."[506] For them, faith is thorough acceptance and utter assurance to the exclusion of all doubt and trepidation. Doubt must be excluded from faith because doubt suggests an evaluation and potential for change. But faith is unwavering; it is a solid object like Clement's key, a state of complete submission like Luther's trust. Faith allows no room for the questions of doubt or the uncertainties of fear. William Tyndale concurs with Aquinas's demand for certainty: faith is "none opynyon, but a sure felyng."[507] Faith is not a product of the mind as an opinion might be, but it is an assuredness grounded in experience. Ulrich Zwingli refers to faith as "confidence in God," another indication of assuredness and trust, and Jacobus Arminius calls faith "a gift from God."[508] Repeatedly and throughout the writings of early modern and

---

[505] Ibid. p. xi. Faith and reason are assumed to be incompatible in part because of the supposed objectivity of reason and the subjectivity of faith. Thus, any use of logic with faith as its premise must be faulty because those conclusions are not built on objective ground. However, logic must always begin with a priori premises, and the nature of language and the limits of human knowledge foreclose on the possibility that those are irreducible facts or truth. Aristotle concedes that premises used in the process of reasoning (in syllogisms and in enthymemes) can be popularly accepted ideas, or can be the proposition of an individual logician given the individual has enough credence. Additionally, classical use of reason did not exclude religious or supernatural elements despite their inaccessibility. Aristotle proposed a "prime mover," and Plotinus proposed a cosmological theory based on three entities: the One, the Intelligence, and the Soul. Aristotle, and Thomas Hobbes. *Aristotle's Treatise on Rhetoric*. New ed. London: H.G. Bohn, 1847. Web.; Atkinson, Michael, and Plotinus. *Plotinus, Ennead V. 1: On the Three Principal Hypostases : A Commentary with Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Web.
[506] Aquinas, Thomas, and Anton C. Pegis. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. New York: Random House, 1945. Print. p. 1060.
[507] Clarke, Elizabeth. *Theory and Theology in George Herbert's Poetry: Divinitie, and Poesie, Met*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Print. qtd p. 19.
[508] Zwingli, Ulrich, Samuel M. Jackson, and Clarence N. Heller. *Commentary on True and False Religion*. Durham, N.C: Labyrinth, 1981. Print. p. 276, p. 35.

earlier Christian theologians faith is referred to both as a static state of trust, sureness, and certainty, as well as a possession one is entrusted with – God's gift or key.

But if faith is a state or a gift, we are left wondering: a state of what? Faith is a state of knowing for certain, but knowing what? Therein lies a problem of articulating faith through language. Even belief, understood as enacted and as the result of cognitive processes, may seem to be more expressible, but is difficult to articulate. For instance, Brooke Conti, commenting on religious autobiography in *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England*, notes that, "it often seems that the more a writer says about his religion the less clear his beliefs or denominational identity become."[509] Her book demonstrates that the more authors attempt explicit representation of religious experiences, the more obscure those experiences become. Conti's study suggests that explicitness is a roadblock to effective representation and that an abundance of language only serves to obscure meaning. Thus lyric poetry, with its figurative language and relative compression, is a more effective medium for the representation of religious experience, not least because it relies upon polysemy for its effects.

Although poetry – specifically secular poetry – remained suspect throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[510] the figurative possibilities of verse provided access to representational forms that genres like autobiography could not. It also avoids the over-articulation that becomes problematic in autobiography and other genres. Frances Cruickshank's *Verse and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne* presents a compelling case for spiritual representations in lyric poetry. She argues that "Using the material of language, poets make

---

[509] Conti, Brooke. *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. Print. p. 2.

[510] Brian Cummings notes that the Puritans were especially distrustful of rhetoric, and Elizabeth Clarke notes that "Tyndale used the word 'poet' as a term of abuse" (1). Herbert himself distrusted his own poetic output, which is notably demonstrated in his indecision regarding the potential post-humus publication of his poetry. Cummings, Brian. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.

things which are other than and more than the material out of which they are made," and "Verse enacted a transfiguration of matter through the incarnation of flesh made words."[511] She creates a correlation between Christ's incarnation and the decarnation of religious experience – Christ ultimately returns to the Father, and poetry is an attempt to transcend materiality through language while inevitably remaining bound to the material due to poetry's made-ness. And just as Christ the man was endowed with far more than humanity, the intention of religious poetry is to endow language with more than mere linguistic meaning. Her argument presents an interesting alignment with Catholic sacraments, suggesting a crossover of rite and Word. Poetry, then, is necessarily a *more than* – more than the themes, more than the words, more than the material. The poetic attempt, she argues, is to "knit divinity to earth and invest materiality with immortal hopes."[512] Poets invest their poetry with the desire to access the divine, and that desire expands the poetry beyond its material and linguistic immediacy; the poetic language reaches out for something as of yet unattainable. Central both to poetry and to all religious discourse, Cruickshank argues, is metaphor.[513] Metaphor mobilizes what Derrida calls the unstable sign – the relationship between signifier and signified – and according to Cruickshank, "the ellipsis of metaphor is the leap of faith."[514] What she points to is the inaccessibility of the signified and the gap between signified and signifier that understanding must bridge somehow. The signified is inarticulable, perhaps even unutterable, and thus Cruickshank proposes that only an ellipsis can

---

[511] Cruickshank, Frances. *Verse and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010. Web. p. 1.

[512] Ibid. p. 13.

[513] Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's theory of conceptual blending describes the cognitive process behind this sense of "more than" in poetry, specifically through the use of metaphor. Metaphor engages with multiple sets of knowledge, and to process the entirety of a metaphor, the brain must access multiple areas simultaneously to blend sets of information. For the most part, we are unaware of this cognitive process and do not witness its effects, including the discovery of patterns and connections across information areas. Thus, the phenomenon of "more than" can feel mysterious in real time despite the distinct cognitive processes going on. This sort of effect can be compared to other phenomena, like deja vu, which trigger an experience or emotion despite clear intelligibility through cognitive studies. Theodorou, S. "Metaphor and Phenomenology." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Http://www.iep.utm.edu/met-phen/#H6, n.d. Web. 23 May 2016.

[514] Cruickshank. Ibid. p. 63.

stand in. While the ellipsis is a reminder that we *do not know* that which is between metaphor and understanding, representing both gap and substance – the ever-present but unknowable, it is not the most apt metaphor for this gap. An ellipsis suggests that which has been previously articulated and subsequently excised, but this study proposes that the signified is not and cannot be articulated.

This theme of an ellipsis reappears throughout *Verse and Poetics*. Cruickshank first refers to religious knowledge as existing in a type of middle space: "salvation lies within the emptying of textual cavities to make room for the incarnation of the Word of God."[515] God's true Word resides not within the words themselves, but within the surrounding space – the space between and around material words. One must look not to the words themselves, but to the surrounding area to draw out spiritual meaning. In that way, accessing the Word relies entirely on the reader. Later, when discussing metaphor, Cruickshank refers to all metaphors as vessels: "The poetic mode comprehends all artifacts as potential metaphoric carriers, particularly those sanctioned in the canonical imagination, but any which furnish the immediate context of the poetic conscience can be turned by verse into vessels."[516] While language in and of itself transfers particular meanings, the introduction of metaphor provides additional capacity for meaning, and also perhaps a new trajectory. Metaphor adds new potential signifieds, increasing the instability of the sign, and it thereby enriches the potential meanings of the language.

Other scholars also suggest that representations of faith only succeed outside of language. Brian Cummings, for example, says, "A God that seemed to be immanent in language was just as much occluded in language...Any truth beyond this, lies beyond language."[517] Shuger argues that sacred rhetoric "turns the heart toward spiritual reality by fulfilling, not subverting, the human

---

[515] Ibid. p. 39.
[516] Ibid. p. 113.
[517] Cummings. p. 417.

need for the sensible and corporeal. It gives invisible truth a local habitation."[518] She also says,

"Rhetoric in this sense, then, is not below but beyond reason."[519] And Elizabeth Clarke notes that

readers of Herbert would look not only to the tangible words on the page, but also for "traces of

divine 'motions.'"[520] With these many assertions then, it should come as no surprise that early

modern poets struggled to articulate faith.[521] There are several factors at work: the idea that the

divine imbues the world of matter with significance, that the matter of the world 'figures forth'

the divine as Genesis tells us, and that Christ is a centrally important example for Christians of

that figuring forth. Figuration, the fundamental expressive mode of poetry, thus replicates the

process and the outcome of divine creation, rendering concepts into words, translating words into

concepts, linking material, spiritual, and divine, abstract, concrete, and transcendent, making

matter meaningful while both matter and meaning remain indeterminate and ungraspable in their

bridging of material and divine. Even knowing the impossibility of building such a bridge

through language, and that one's own fingers might never meet with the divine, the expectation

to try remained. To articulate faith, one must attempt to unpack the ellipsis. This is what we find

in George Herbert's *The Temple*.

George Herbert (1593-1633) was born into a powerful and wealthy family. He was the seventh

of ten children born to Magdalen and Richard Herbert, all of whom lived to adulthood.[522] After

his father's death in 1596, his mother moved the family from Montgomery (bordering between

---

[518] Shuger. p. 54.

[519] Ibid. p. 60.

[520] Clarke. p. 267.

[521] Even the church struggled to articulate faith. Working with faith as the premise(s) of religion and belief, the Creeds, explicit statements of belief, come closest to the Church's articulation of faith. But the Creeds are neither universal nor stable over time. Ashwin-Siejkowski, Piotr. *The Apostles' Creed: the Apostles' Creed and its early Christian context*, T & T Clark, New York;London;, 2009.

[522] Drury, John. *Music at Midnight: The Life and Poetry of George Herbert*. London;New York, N.Y;: Allen Lane, 2013. Print. p. 27.

England and Wales, considered to be quite wild) to her widowed mother's home at Eyton upon Severn, about twenty miles closer to his mother's preferred version of civilization.[523] Only three years later when Magdalen's mother died, she moved the family once again, but this time to Oxford.[524] There, Magdalen began a friendship with John Donne, who would become a lifelong influence in George's life. During this first interaction, however, Donne was beginning a relationship with Ann More that would quickly upend his professional life.

In 1601 the Herberts settled in London where Magdalen, still an influential figure in society, would become famous for her hospitality.[525] Magdalen was also passionate about education, first teaching her children at home (George was tutored by her and a few hired tutors between the ages of eight and eleven) and then sending them to school for formal education.[526] Herbert's first experience with formal education was Westminster School, where "Prayer and the precise use of language were the School's fundamental disciplines."[527] There he was taught by Lancelot Andrewes and his successor, Richard Neile, both of whom emphasized the power of poetry to move and inspire readers.[528] During his time at the school, Herbert was exposed more to John Donne and his works. Donne and Magdalen kept up a frequent correspondence during this time, and they would see one another when Donne came into London on somewhat infrequent business.[529] During these years Donne continued having problems with employment due to his marriage to Ann, something he confided to Magdalen.

In 1609 at age sixteen, the same year Herbert's mother was remarried to Sir John Danvers, Herbert was elected as a scholar of Trinity College where he would live for fifteen

---

[523] Ibid. p. 31.
[524] Ibid. p. 38.
[525] Ibid. p. 42.
[526] Ibid. p. 54.
[527] Ibid. p. 55.
[528] Ibid. p. 66.
[529] Ibid. p. 76.

years.[530] His devotion to poetry continued at Trinity, and his Latin skills continued to progress.

He was consistently taught and tested on disputation, a format that is mirrored closely in the

dialogic nature of many of Herbert's poems.[531] In 1613, Herbert graduated with a Bachelor of

Arts degree, and continued academic advancement made him a public lecturer by 1618.[532]

Between 1618 and 1619, Herbert greatly desired the position of Orator, a public and political

position affiliated with the Church. But Sir Francis Nethersole, the Orator at the time, suggested

that Herbert was not fit for such a political position given his more theological inclinations.

Through a series of letters to Danvers, Herbert revealed how troubling this time was for him,

how it threw his identity into question.[533] Herbert had been pursuing public office, and imagined

himself in such a role for most of his life, so to have Nethersole question that goal so directly put

a strain on Herbert's self-perception. Ultimately, he did gain the Orator position, but the

demands of the position soon caused an even greater strain as the responsibilities of the job were

immense and kept Herbert from both friends and family for long periods of time.

After delivering a triumphant oration upon the return of Prince Charles, Herbert expected

a greater government appointment, but he did not receive one. Indeed, Sir Isaak Walton suggests

that Charles was offended by the oration. Instead, he briefly served as a member of Parliament

for his home of Montgomery, the only evidence of which is his service on a committee

reviewing complaints against schoolmasters and college heads as parliament convened only

rarely during this time.[534] In 1624, Herbert was made a deacon, which negated his eligibility to

serve as an MP or serve in any secular position.[535] In 1626, Herbert was installed at Leighton

---

[530] Ibid. p. 81.
[531] Ibid. p. 91.
[532] Ibid. p. 96.
[533] Ibid. p. 114.
[534] Ibid. p. 164.
[535] Ibid. p. 165.

Bromswold, very near Nicholas Ferrar's recently acquired Manor of Little Gidding.[536] For the rest of his life he would be involved in that religious community.[537] But shortly thereafter, he left his position to a proxy and took somewhat ill. His mother too took ill, and she died in 1627, leaving Herbert upwards of 3000 pounds in lands and goods.[538] His sudden wealth allowed him to resign from his Orator post, but also left him quite idle.

During his idleness, Herbert carefully considered the priesthood and following in John Donne's footsteps, but before he could make up his ever-changing mind he fell in love with and married Jane Danvers in 1629.[539] Shortly thereafter, Herbert took a position as Rector of Fugglestone and Bemerton in Wiltshire, all the while still weighing the option of taking orders, and considering the greater duty associated with such a role.[540] Ultimately, of course, Herbert did not take orders but remained a Rector for the remainder of his life. Whilst in Bemerton with Jane, Herbert took in three of his orphaned nieces, Dorothy, Magdalene, and Katherine Vaughan.[541] Dorothy died after only about a year in his home, but the other two girls served as readers for manuscript versions of *The Temple*.[542] It was during this time that Herbert composed "The Country Parson" and completed the version of *The Temple* that he would hand off for publication.[543] His life as a Rector was quiet and content as far as letters reveal, but in 1633 he fell quite ill and died.

---

[536] Ibid. p. 172.
[537] Little Gidding was a community Anglican in nature and included approximately thirty prominent individuals including Ferrar. Herbert is known to have participated in the practices of this community, such as night vigils, regular meditation, and mortification practices (specifically involving a temperate diet). Ransome, Joyce. "George Herbert, Nicholas Ferrar, and the 'pious works' of Little Gidding." *George Herbert Journal* 31.1-2 (2007): 1+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 5 Mar. 2016.
[538] Drury. p. 186.
[539] Ibid. p. 201.
[540] Ibid. p. 203.
[541] Ibid. p. 229.
[542] Ransome.
[543] Drury. p. 231.

While ill, George Herbert was visited by Nicholas Ferrar, who provided a doctor in an attempt to cure Herbert's illness. It was then that Herbert handed over his manuscript of *The Temple*, with the instruction that Ferrar should read it, and only if he deemed it fit for publication should he send it to be printed. Due to their intimate relationship and association through Little Gidding, it is no surprise that Herbert entrusted Ferrar with this responsibility. But that transfer of responsibility also speaks to Herbert's uncertainty regarding the ultimate purpose of his poetic works. Despite his nearly lifelong commitment to poetry, Herbert was uncertain about the value of his poetic works, because, developed as worship, the poems would almost certainly prove unworthy of God and perhaps also unworthy of Herbert's parishioners even as guidance. But with dozens of editions printed since 1633, Ferrar's decision to send George Herbert's poems to print has been proven to be justified.

George Herbert's devotional life had two main expressions: religious contemplation and poetry. Because his scholastic and theological educations were coincident, Herbert consistently used poetry as a tool for particularly religious self-expression. Although we have many of Herbert's earlier poems in letter and manuscript form, *The Temple* is the only of Herbert's works to be published, and it was only printed after his death. In that way, his poetry is extremely personal; it was not initially intended, as far as we can tell, for wide distribution. It was viewed privately by friends including those in the Little Gidding community, but the poems are much more personal in nature than poetry intended for print and public distribution. That is not to say, however, that they did not serve a public purpose. Although Debora Shuger argues that Herbert's poems were a "private spirituality split off from a historicized and rationalized account of political and social behavior,"[544] they cannot possibly be split so absolutely from Herbert's historical and professional context. Herbert's pastoral role imbues the poetry with an additional

---

[544] Shuger, Debora. *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance*. Berkeley: Univ. of CA Press, 1990. Web. p. 105.

intended outcome – guiding the reader.[545] Amanda Taylor argues that this guidance is tied to

Herbert's desire for productivity, specifically productivity within the self: "Herbert shapes and

revises the self through revising his texts, an ongoing process lasting until his death. By

changing, deleting, and adding poems, Herbert enacts and experiences re-vision. He sees things

again, from an altered perspective, and in those moments of viewing again, he struggles to be

both useful and use-full, actively productive and passively used."[546] Herbert, Taylor argues,

desired to be useful in a variety of ways: to his parishioners and readers as a spiritual guide, to

himself in the act of worship, and to God in any way he could. All of those uses ultimately were

perceived to serve the glory of God, and all are connected to the poetry itself – both through the

writing and the reading. This guidance has two perspectives: one, the guidance is for the writer,

for Herbert as he works through problems in the dialogic poems; two, the guidance is for the

potential reader (who is not Herbert) who can then read him or herself into the speaker's

position. Because of those dual perspectives, and the almost exclusively private distribution of

his poetry during his life, it would be incorrect to suggest that Herbert's poems are purely

didactic in nature, or intended for his parishioners. At their most basic level, George Herbert's

poems are personal and private, and invite a personal reading.

However, it is well-established that *The Temple* is grounded in liturgy, and it has many

correlations with the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.[547] In that way, Rosemary van Wengen-

Shute argues, it mirrors the concept of liturgy which is "a public act by which the worshippers

---

[545] Esther Gilman Richey argues that the text itself was a political statement made by Herbert as he entered into an existing Stuart debate about the writing and circulation of devotional writings. Richey, Esther Gilman. "Herbert's "temple" and the Liberty of the Subject". *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 102.2 (2003): 244–268. Web. p. 246.

[546] Amanda Taylor. ""Use alone": Usefulness and Revision in George Herbert's *The Temple*." *George Herbert Journal* 34.1 (2010): 78-101. *Project MUSE*. Web. 5 Mar. 2016.

[547] Wengen-Shute, Rosemary van. "Time and Liturgy in George Herbert's 'the Temple.'." *Theology* 106.830 (2003): 98. Web.

identify themselves with a continuing community."[548] In so identifying, worshippers

participating in liturgy can overcome individual struggles: "The great strength of this 'continuing

community' is that it is capable of accommodating any inadequacies or temporary lapses of faith

on the part of individual worshippers."[549] Liturgy does not require active emotional investment,

but one goal of communal worship is to invoke such an investment.[550] For Herbert, the

connection to liturgy allows for a tempered tone and clear consideration, very unlike John

Donne's rages or Robert Southwell's melancholy. Liturgy allows for some emotional

detachment: "The liturgy is a source of spiritual equilibrium. It forms an unchanging backdrop

against which the transient emotions of an individual are brought into perspective. It is the

constancy of his faith that allows Herbert to express his doubts and dissatisfaction with such

candour, yet still to participate in the Church's acts of worship even when he is not overflowing

with joy and praise."[551] Indeed, Herbert's poetry does represent a constancy of faith that we have

not seen with Lanyer, Southwell, Lock, or Donne. *The Temple* does not engage with salvation in

the same ways as these other authors. Lanyer and Southwell find Christian community

problematic for salvation, posing as an obstacle rather than an aid, while Lock and Donne engage

with the failures of faith and certainty. Herbert, however, is unwavering in his faith; his struggle

is instead for full understanding and articulation of this phenomenon. Herbert, rather than

seeking or lamenting the elusiveness of personal salvation, seeks an understanding of the nature

of salvation itself.

Six poems in *The Temple* use "faith" explicitly: "The Sacrifice," "Holy Baptism (II),"

"Faith," "Trinitie Sunday," "Divinitie," and "Death." I will be examining four of them here. Two

---

[548] Ibid. p. 99.
[549] Ibid.
[550] See also Ramie Targoff.
[551] Wengen-Shute. p. 100.

of these poems are outliers, and do not use "faith" in a mode of theoretical articulation. Among these two, "The Sacrifice" is one of the longest poems in *The Temple*, and narrates Christ's crucifixion through Christ's perspective. "Faith" is employed once in this poem, describing the hands of Christ's loyal followers as compared to the violent hands of "fury" with which the Romans seized him.[552] The combination of divine perspective and ancillary use of "faith" place "The Sacrifice" outside the scope of this examination. Similarly, "Death" employs "faith" in the adjectival form to modify "grave," and so it also falls outside the scope of this study.[553]

The first poem in which we witness the struggle for understanding is "Holy Baptism (II)," one of the first instances in *The Temple* where Herbert explicitly attempts to articulate faith. Faith plays a key role in baptism, which is made clear by its prominence in this poem. It appears in the first stanza in the final and shortest line, a place of emphasis, but it is never repeated. The poem theorizes the ownership, locus, and temporality of faith, as well as faith's connection to God's agency. Faith persists, the poem suggests, even when God has removed his hands. Faith then serves as a reminder of what once existed – closeness to God, childhood, and health. What else faith might have to do within the speaker's life remains unclear, but in this representation faith is not a wholly joyful phenomenon. It is a necessary conduit to God, but it is a conduit only God can access.

> SINCE, Lord, to thee
> A narrow way and little gate
> Is all the passage, on my infancie
> Thou didst lay hold, and antedate
> My faith in me.

---

[552] Line 46.
[553] Line 23.

O let me still

Write thee great God, and me a childe **:**

Let me be soft and supple to thy will,

Small to myself, to others milde,

Behither ill.

Although by stealth

My flesh get on **;** yet let her sister

My soul bid nothing, but preserve her wealth **:**

The growth of flesh is but a blister **;**

Childhood is health.

This poem reflects upon infant baptism, but does not recount the sacrament as "Holy Baptism (I)" does. In that poem, which typically precedes "Holy Baptism (II)" in the poem series, the speaker says, "O blessed streams! either ye do prevent / And stop our sins from growing thick and wide, / Or else give tears to drown them, as they grow" (lines 7-9). In this poem, however, Herbert waxes nostalgic about his childhood, when he was still soft and easily swayed by religious experience and when he was still well. He laments his betrayal by his "stealthy" body, the growth of which is accomplished slower than the eye can follow, because childhood is the epitome of health – both physical and spiritual. The body plays a dual role in this poem; it represents the material failings of life on Earth, and it bears witness to the spiritual failings of the speaker. The blundering body builds on itself spatially and temporally, continually distancing the speaker both from purity and from God.

The speaker also juxtaposes the size of the path to God against the unwieldy largeness of adulthood. That path is "A narrow way and little gate," its smallness emphasized by being recognized as "all the passage." That's all there is, the speaker says, just before he mentions his "infancie." He clearly hopes that his physical size will match that narrow way when he asks that he remain "Small to myselfe." Thus, the lamentations against the flesh "getting on" make sense not only when the reader knows of Herbert's later ill-health as an adult (thus the comparison between an aging body and a "blister" becomes quite apt), but when the speaker suggests that one's path to God is physically quite small and thus better accessed through the bodies of children. As the physical body grows, so too does the body of sin in one's life; in that way, the body becomes gross and loathsome, expanded and encumbered by the corruptions of life, both material and spiritual. Also, to remain "Small to myselfe," Herbert must perceive himself as small, and thus not as a grand figure. This request is also for the speaker to remain humble.

What is most notable in this poem is the figuring of childhood as closest to God. The moment of baptism is paramount; it is the moment of cleansing one's soul of original sin and first accessing the potentiality of salvation. Indeed, the potential for salvation seems to be what the speaker has faith *in*, in this poem. The passage to God is opened, and through baptism he is allowed access through God's intervention with his faith. Thus, baptism is one's moment of greatest purity in life. It is not only that the body is susceptible to betraying a person (due to any of the multitude of physical maladies that might ensue), but also that the soul is susceptible to corruption. Yet this poem does not focus on corruption, as we only see one line on the issue; instead it focuses on childhood, clinging to a spot of brightness clearly situated in the speaker's past. For it is this moment when "on my infancie / Thou didst lay hold." The speaker figures God as physically close at the moment of baptism, as if God is laying his very hands upon the child's

190

body. But it is not just the child's body, it is the child's entire being that is being taken in hand: his "infancie." God holds the child during his childhood, and the direct contact suggests a great amount of control over both the child's life and soul. By figuring such a childhood in the direct care and control of God as what the speaker now longs for in his moment of reflection, the speaker conveys a glimpse of a life separated from God – estranged at the very least from that first feeling of closeness imbued with the sacrament of baptism. And it is that feeling of loss that then becomes associated with faith, because the speaker's retrospective stance when describing closeness to God suggests an always already experienced end to that proximity and a longing for return.

Separation from God is at the forefront of this poem. Curtis Whitaker argues that this poem correlates directly with the Book of Common Prayer's baptismal service where "the Adamic 'old man' in the child is cast off, and the child in the adult is regenerated when the mature Christian reflects on his own baptism."[554] He suggests that reflecting on one's baptism inspires joy and hope as one relives that moment of casting off the burden of sin in the hands of God. But from the beginning, we find the speaker at the wrong end of the "passage," noting a physical distance between himself and God, much like John Donne. The consistent, jarring enjambment reinforces that feeling of separation, breaking lines awkwardly particularly between references to the speaker and to God. While enjambment frequently serves to smooth and connect line transitions, here, it becomes the manifestation of the speaker's fractured experience. In the first stanza "to thee" stands on its own, disconnected from the articulation of the path to God, and the speaker's "infancie" is separated from the touch of God's hands upon it. And the speaker's "faith" is separated by space on the page from the hands in the previous line that act

---

[554] Whitaker, Curtis. "Baptisms and burials: the presence of the book of common prayer in Herbert's nature poetry." *George Herbert Journal* 27.1-2 (2003): 82+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.

directly to "antedate" it. Again and again, the speaker is physically separated from God, both through direct references in the language of the poem and in the poem's structure.

"Faith" appears in the fifth line of the poem, and in the fifth line only. While describing God taking his infancy in hand, the speaker remarks that God "antedate[s] / My faith in me." "Antedate" works in two ways simultaneously; it is used both to mean "predate," and to mean "fixes an earlier time to something."[555] So God and/or the "narrow way and little gate" are observed to have existed prior to the speaker's baptism, and the speaker's faith is affixed with an earlier date through God's intervention. The former can be taken as simply a true statement, a clear, inarguable observation on behalf of the speaker, but the latter proposes a particular theory of faith that fixes its position in space and time. If God were to affix a new, earlier date to the speaker's faith, that suggests that the speaker's faith was created more recently than is ideal – thus God's inclination to assign the earlier date. It is easy to surmise that the time when the speaker's faith is created is at the time of the Holy Baptism, the time the speaker is reflecting on but not speaking to directly. In fact, except for the reference to God laying hands on him, the speaker only alludes to the sacrament in this poem. Instead, the focus is deliberately much more broad, situating the joy and comfort of God's salvation all throughout childhood rather than in a single moment in time.[556]

Through the use of "antedate," the speaker suggests God has expansive abilities with faith. Through the baptism sacrament, one gains access to God via the narrow path, and God might then reach out and activate, as it were, one's faith. That faith, though, remains in the

---

[555] "antedate, v." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 6 March 2016.

[556] Alternatively, John Drury argues that "antedate" ought to be read as "anticipate," and that baptism is then the foundation of faith. This reading comes from Richard Hooker who proposes that faith is a habit, and thus infants cannot yet have faith instilled in them. Hooker's proposition, found in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, misconstrues Saint Augustine's definition of faith and conflates faith with practice. The result of "anticipating" versus fixing earlier in time are still rather similar in terms of interpreting "Holy Baptism (II)" because both scenarios require God's direct intervention to affect faith. p. 50.

possession of the baptized. The speaker claims his faith through the pronoun "My," and does not suggest it is an outside force or bestowment, unlike Theodore Beza and Jacobus Arminius who assert faith to be a gift delivered to man by God.[557] Faith is awakened, rather than bestowed. It is something within him that God can then access and alter. This is in line with John Wycliffe's articulation as faith as a moral virtue, an intrinsic part of man's character that can flourish.[558] In that way, the speaker's faith is separate from God himself – insofar as man can be separate from God. Faith is a greater part of his humanity than God's divinity. After his baptism and after his childhood, the speaker must move away from God's hold – the hold that only lasted for one brief moment in the past – and into the pain and corruption of growth and adulthood. Thus, it is with nostalgia and a tinge of sadness that the speaker reflects upon his baptism. He still holds his faith; there is a constancy to "My faith in me," but God's touch was devastatingly brief. His faith, then, which was once directly affected by God, is a heavy reminder of that which has been lost over time, but that which is a conduit to God's effects.

The speaker's request to God in this poem is that he might retain some access to God through his writing after his baptism. He begs, "O let me still / Write thee great God, and me a child." He hopes both to write in praise of God, and to keep the experience of childhood as he does so, to keep his health and to keep that closeness to God. The ambiguity of "Write thee" suggests he intends to write both to and of God, to write about God for others, perhaps, and to God in worship. And of himself, he will literally write himself a child, as he has done in this poem; he will write the relationship that has been lost or diluted – in effect inscribing a condition that no longer exists. "Holy Baptism (II)" is an attempt at transformation; the speaker hopes that

---

[557] Arminius, Jacobus, and Gunter, W. Stephen. *Arminius and his Declaration of sentiments : an annotated translation with introduction and theological commentary.* Waco, Tx: Baylor UP, 2012. Print. p. 35.
[558] Wycliffe, John, and F D. Matthew. *The English Works of Wyclif: Hitherto Unprinted*. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1978. Print. p. 347.

through his craft, he might reinscribe those lost ideal childhood qualities of softness and pliability under God's direction, as well as humility and kindness, into his mature and corrupted form. This poem enacts the speaker's greatest hopes in retaining childhood, creating a window to the past, but the sadness of the present inevitably remains. The perspective of reflection never disappears, and the speaker never forgets his present, presumably grown and corrupted, self.

While in "Holy Baptism (II)" faith is proposed as a virtue existing just as independent of God as man himself, "Trinitie Sunday" suggests that faith is, in fact, endowed directly by God.

> Lord, who hast form'd me out of mud,
>> And has redeem'd me through thy bloud,
>> And sanctifi'd me to do good;
>
> Purge all my sinnes done heretofore:
>> For I confesse my heavie score,
>> And I will strive to sinne no more.
>
> Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
>> With faith, with hope, with charitie;
>> That I may runne, rise, rest with thee.

This three-stanza poem comprised of three lines each materializes the holy trinity of God, Son, and Holy Spirit. David Ormerod, emphasizing the visual element of this representation, calls the poem a "hieroglyph" of the trinity.[559] Indeed, the tri-partite nature of the poem cannot be

---

[559] Ormerod, David. "Number theory in George Herbert's 'Trinity Sunday' and 'Trinitie Sunday'." *George Herbert Journal* 12.2 (1989): 27+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 14 Mar. 2016.

ignored, from the stanza structure to the three-item lists in the final stanza, which Camille Slights argues align the tri-partite nature of man ("sin, repentance, regeneration; past, present, future") with the holy trinity.[560] The poem also invokes the three ways one person attempts to communicate with the divine: feeling, speaking, and praying. But simultaneously, the poem insists on the three parts as one, using singular nouns to bookend the poem: "Lord" and "thee." Unity of parts then becomes a central theme of the poem, and the speaker hopes that he might be included in that unity when he suggests as an outcome "That I may runne, rise, rest with thee." In that way this is an aspirational poem where the speaker ultimately hopes to join God, but he must first ask for God's assistance both in "purging" his sins and in "enriching" his mind, body, and spirit.

Slights takes the "human responsibility to act in the world" as the poem's culminating point because the poem is balanced upon the speaker's actions in stanza two ("I confesse" and "I will strive"), but such a reading does not account for the poem's representation of the centrality of divine action in enabling human action.[561] The first stanza embodies that divine action, each line noting another point of indebtedness for the speaker, from being formed out of mud by God, to being redeemed through Christ's sacrifice, to being "sanctified." Even against the speaker's agency of confessing, it is only God who can forgive the speaker's sins, sins that likely emerge despite previous promises of striving. And in the third stanza, the only way the speaker suggests he might "runne, rise, rest" with God is through God's agency once again; God must first "enrich" the speaker with particular attributes before he can then take his own actions.

One of those attributes that the speaker suggests God must enrich him with is faith. The features of the speaker which are being enriched are his "heart, mouth, hands," so these are the

[560] Slights, Camille. "Herbert's 'Trinitie Sunday'." *Explicator* 38.1 (1979): 13. Web. 14 Mar. 2016
[561] Ibid.

features the speaker already has and which are being increased or improved through God's intervention. These are also the three modes of communication to/with God: feeling, speaking, and praying/groping. Insofar as the speaker's physical features were deficient, so too were his modes of accessing God. Like fallow ground, these three features are then fertilized with the additions of "faith," "hope," and "charitie" – the three Christian virtues as articulated by the Apostle Paul.[562] This alignment with virtues conforms in part to Wycliffe's theorization of faith which proposes faith as a virtue. The parallel structure between the physical features and the spiritual endowments suggests that faith is located in the heart and physically separated from articulation as it is not near the mouth. Faith is also separate from the hands, which would suggest a separation from enactment and materiality, which are the domain of the hands. Together, faith, hope, and charitie form a unified whole, and they act as a whole to activate the agency of man. But faith is only one part of that whole.

Unlike in "Holy Baptism (II)," "Trinitie Sunday" theorizes faith as a gift from God. The speaker takes no ownership of faith in this poem as he does in "Holy Baptism (II)," and he suggests the only way he might obtain faith is through God's intervention, whereas in "Holy Baptism (II)" the emphasis is on God's activation of faith. He recognizes his severe shortcomings in this poem; he knows that despite his divine origins he is still sinful, and will likely continue to sin. He knows that he might only reach his goal of unity with God if God gives him the greater tools to do so than his humanity will allow. Here, as with "Holy Baptism (II)," the specific attributes of faith remain ambiguous as it is mentioned only once. But while those specifics are occluded, the importance of faith is emphasized. The tri-partite nature of man must include faith as one of those parts, and only when those parts come together might he join God. In that way, faith alone is not paramount. "Trinitie Sunday" aligns closely with the Catholic

---

[562] "And now abideth faith, hope, charities, these three." 1 Corinthians 13:13 *KJV* 1611.

perspective on faith, that it is but one essential virtue. Even the most Catholic-aligned reformed theologian, Arminius, elevates faith over the other virtues, but this poem proposes tri-partite balance.

For Herbert, then, perhaps *sola fide* is too simplistic, ignoring the equally weighted hope and charity. If we continue the parallel already established between heart and faith, the final alignment would then be with the speaker's desire to run in the "runne, rise, rest" progression which ends with the company of God in Heaven. It follows that hope would lead to a rise – the ascent to heaven – and charity, after enactment, would allow for rest. Faith works prior to hope, prior to the rise, by allowing the speaker to move forward, to run toward God. Faith is the driving force pushing the speaker onward, working in this life on Earth to bridge the gap between man and God. Thus, the poem suggests that the speaker has faith *in* unity with God; he trusts that the end point of human struggle is potentially salvation and is propelled forward. In order for man to even move toward unity with God, he must be endowed with faith, and that faith is absolutely necessary, but not unparalleled.

For that reason, I cannot argue entirely against Slights's claim regarding human action. Charity, being love which drives good works, aligned so closely with faith in this poem supports her claim in that it requires good works on Earth prior to achieving rest in Heaven. Still, the speaker makes clear that charity, like faith, is endowed by God. The spirit of charity must first be received through divine action before effective human action can take place. This poem in and of itself is an example of human action that is ineffective without God's endowment, as its three-fold materiality (three stanzas of three lines with three rhymes) attempts unity with God but explicitly reveals that charity thus far has been lacking, and that, therefore, unity with God is unachievable. The speaker attempts to transform himself through the language, but falls short

197

due to his as yet missing virtues. Although the speaker recognizes his shortcomings, the transformative intent of the poem allows hope to linger that upon receiving the three virtues, unity – and salvation – will be achieved. Thus, perhaps human action *is* the "culmination" of divine intervention, but it is not in any way equally weighted with that divinity. It is instead a necessary mile on the road to unity with God, but unachievable in separation from other virtues.

"Trinitie Sunday" both emphasizes the importance of faith and argues against the doctrine of *sola fide*. As with the tripartite God, man's path to salvation is also tripartite, requiring the combination of traits endowed by God (faith, hope, and charity) and man's threefold connection to God (feeling, speaking, and praying). All three features of the poem, God, man, and the path to salvation, are represented as complex and intertwined, with no one feature outweighing the rest. God, though, tripartite in himself is never forgotten as the premier figure of the poem and of man's life. Bookending the poem and as the only agent of influence in the poem, God's glory clearly shines as the unchangeable constant in the speaker's journey.

Herbert's intermingling of faith and works in his poetry is widely noted throughout scholarship on *The Temple*. He is rarely represented as strictly Lutheran or Calvinist, though some suggest his balance of faith and works to be more of a struggle than I would suggest here. Kenneth Graham, in his article "Herbert's Poetry and Rhetorical 'Divinitie,'" is in line with my own assessment when he says, "For Herbert, injunctions to works and calls to faith, the spirit of the Law and the spirit of the Gospel, are equally authentic parts of God's Word."[563] Works and faith are both called for in the gospels, and Herbert advocates not for a particular doctrine but for obedience to God's command. This call for obedience to both faith and works is manifest in the poem "Divinitie," the fifth poem in *The Temple* to explicitly refer to "faith."

---

[563] Graham, Kenneth J. E. "'Clear as Heav'n': Herbert's Poetry and Rhetorical 'Divinitie'." *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 29.2-3 (2005): 183. Web. p. 189.

As men, for fear the starres should sleep and nod,

    And trip at night, have spheres suppli'd;

As if a starre were duller then a clod,

    Which knows his way without a guide:

Just so the other heav'n they also serve,

    Divinities transcendent skie:

Which with the edge of wit they cut and carve.

    Reason triumphs, and faith lies by.

Could not that wisdome, which first broacht the wine,

    Have thicken'd it with definitions?

And jagg'd his seamlesse coat, had that been fine,

    With curious questions and divisions?

But all the doctrine, which he taught and gave,

    Was cleare as heav'n, from whence it came.

At least those beams of truth, which onely save,

    Surpasse in brightnesse any flame.

Love God, and love your neighbour. Watch and pray.

    Do as ye would be done unto.

O dark instructions; ev'n as dark as day!

    Who can these Gordian knots undo?

But he doth bid us take his bloud for wine.

Bid what he please; yet I am sure,

To take and taste what he doth there designe,

Is all that saves, and not obscure.

Then burn thy Epicycles, foolish man;

Break all thy spheres, and save thy head.

Faith needs no staffe of flesh, but stoutly can

To heav'n alone both go, and leade.

This poem juxtaposes a satirical view of natural philosophy against an earnest call for obedience to God. Such a juxtaposition is not unusual for Herbert, as he presents similar themes in "Vanities (I)" and "The Agonie," but this poem is the only one with this theme to directly refer to "faith."[564] The poem begins by mocking "men" who feel the need to intervene with the heavens, who would assume that they are superior to the natural phenomenon. These men work from the assumption that the stars are slower and more opaque than even the dullest "clod" who can still navigate without the need for this kind of intervention. The "spheres" these men supply refer directly to the astronomical theory of Celestial Spheres that organize the planets and the stars, a theory that had been under scrutiny and rapid change in the sixteenth century. The raging debate around changing theories of astronomy likely would have influenced Herbert's perception of the matter, as it was of particular interest to reformer theologians.[565] This treatment of the

---

[564] Margaret Turnbull maps out these similarities in her article demonstrating the influence of Bishop John Jewel's *A Treatise of the Holy Scriptures* which argues for the primacy of the Word. Turnbull, Margaret. "George Herbert and John Jewel: "Vanitie" (I), "the Agonie," and "Divinitie"." *George Herbert Journal* 26.1 (2002): 83-93. Web.

[565] The theory of celestial spheres was a classical invention and survived into the medieval period through classical education, but Nicolaus Copernicus threw a wrench into the established astronomical system by proposing that it was not the Earth at the center of the spheres, but rather the sun. His theory was later supported by Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. But these new propositions in the sixteenth century created a raging debate that involved both natural philosophy and religion, because part of the celestial spheres model occasionally included the very location

stars, the speaker argues, is the same treatment these men give to Heaven ("the other heav'n"), and just as their treatment diminishes the glory of the stars, so too does this treatment "cut and carve" the glory of God's domain. The violence men inflict both on the natural world and on divinity is carried out by "wit" and "Reason." They impose meaning, assumption, and misunderstanding in an effort to "triumph" over these other domains.

As a direct result of conquering all of the heavens with reason, "faith lies by." Cast off, faith is figured as separate from and lessened in stature by reason. But in and of itself, faith is not diminished by men's reasoning or their use of violence. It is ignored, yes, but it is not conquered; it is not pared down. Set aside, faith bears witness to the violence of reason and bides its time, remaining near to but separate from the fray. It is important that faith is not a participant in the reason versus God and nature conflict, because Herbert is suggesting here that faith and reason are not an either/or. Faith and reason exist in the poem and in the second stanza simultaneously, not coexisting harmoniously, but not struggling over an exclusive position. When reason wreaks its violence, this stanza suggests, faith is disused, but not obliterated.

The third stanza continues to mock the reasoning men, ironically referring to "wisdome" as the means by which they might also "thicken" and sour the sacrament of the Eucharist. Their questions might also serve to destroy a fine garment, picking at the seams with the power of divisiveness. Had such questions been necessary, this stanza suggests, Christ's wisdom which allowed the wine to flow would have posed them. But he did not, and questioning men overreach.

---

of Heaven in the outermost ring. And the placement of the sun at the center rather than the Earth affected ideas of the doctrine of Creation. Figures including Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon responded directly to Copernicanism. Boner, Patrick J., and SpringerLink (Online service). *Change and Continuity in Early Modern Cosmology*. 27. Vol. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011. Web.

The fourth stanza, sitting directly center in the seven-stanza poem, provides a turning point from ironic mockery to earnest supplication. There is a clear counter-argument made to the first several stanzas regarding reason, as it begins with "But." The speaker makes an appeal to the Word, arguing that it requires no explication, no extended exegesis as the medieval Scholastics were apt to provide.[566] The speaker says "the doctrine.../Was clear as heav'n," and so applying reason to it would be as foolish as is demonstrated in the first three stanzas – as ridiculous as intervening in the matters of Heaven themselves. Alluding to the light of a candle upon a manuscript, the speaker says "those beams of truth.../Surpasse in brightnesse any flame." Only God's truth can illuminate the world and provide clarity to the mind; the use of reason and education is a shadow against the greatness of the Word. The purpose of that truth is to "onely save," and truth is the only way *to be* saved. Reason cannot save; exegesis cannot save; knowledge cannot save. The truth – God's word – is the only path to salvation. Thus, the fourth stanza argues that faith should be taken up while reason lies by. Reason and faith are at odds in that reason tends to be favored over faith, but the Christian struggle is abandoning such presumption for faith. But, like faith, when reason lies by it does not cease to exist.

While the speaker argues that reason cannot save, the poem itself is a reasoned argument. The speaker makes claims and counter-claims, pitting the Word against scientific discovery. As he denigrates the efficacy of reason in matters of religion, he relies on reason for religion's ultimate triumph over natural philosophy. This use of reason emphasizes the coexistence of faith and reason, suggesting that, when applied correctly, reason can aid faith.

A hint of sarcasm reemerges in the fifth stanza after the speaker reiterates the basic commands upon man by God – the Golden Rule. In the simplest of language, the speaker paraphrases: "Love God, and love your neighbour. Watch and pray. / Do as ye would be done

---

[566] Graham. p. 189.

202

unto." He then emphasizes that simplicity by calling these commands "dark as day!" They do not require exegesis to be understood; they are not "dark instructions." The speaker, ironically placing himself in the position of a helpless layperson or perhaps an endangered lady, cries out for a hero: "Who can these Gordian knots undo?" He invites the foolish to step forward, to claim the superior and chivalric position of one totally unneeded. The speaker mocks the Scholastics and the exegetes by allowing the simplicity of God's commands to condemn their pretensions.

The final two stanzas return to supplication and didactic instruction, cautioning men not to question God. He says God will "Bid what he please," and for that reason only is he "sure, / To take and taste what he doth there designe." He will obey, no matter the conflict around transubstantiation; he accepts the command to "take his bloud for wine."[567] The speaker's argument is not about doctrine; it is, in fact, the opposite. Men may endlessly debate the points of doctrine, but for the poem's speaker, at the foundation of salvation is obedience to God. He does not need to agree or to understand, he simply needs to obey because what God commands "Is all that saves." This exhortation is similar to the conclusion of "The Collar" which represents struggle with doctrine quite clearly, but concludes ultimately with an immediate and complete submission to God. What man is required to do by God is simple, and man's rational intervention merely "obscures" that simplicity. The very nature of the poem reinforces the idea of simplicity and ease with its uniformity of meter and rhyme; the alternating iambic pentameter and tetrameter lines move with a guiding ease. The movement and rhyme become like a familiar melody that one cannot help but hum along to.

Indeed, the poem's lyrical features ensnare the reader and place him in the speaker's position. The poem begins by carefully referring to those who might push reason too far in the third person – those people are neither the speaker nor the reader, but a group that they both

---

[567] But perhaps not to the wine for blood.

know. The first four stanzas all employ the third person, but in the fifth when repeating God's commands, the speaker employs the second person and shifts the reader's perspective. Suddenly the reader is addressed, as though by God, not by the speaker – at least not directly. The sixth stanza brings the reader back into the fold, but reinforces the division between the speaker and the reader by first pointing to the multiplicity of "us," and then to the clear separation of the speaker's "I." Simultaneously using the first person singular and the first person plural emphasizes the multiple positions, and suggests that the speaker is now addressing the reader rather than inviting him to share his position.

But then the last stanza comes as a shock; the speaker turns on the reader and addresses him with ferocity. All traces of satire gone, the speaker orders the reader to turn the violence of reason upon his intervening knowledge: "burn thy Epicycles, foolish man; / Break all thy spheres, and save thy head." The consequences of allowing these features of natural philosophy to run rampant are clear: the reader will not be saved. He must take drastic action to save himself; it is not enough that he turn toward God, but he also must completely forsake and destroy what he leaves behind. The poem, too, abandons reason in the last stanza. There is a shift from reasoned argument to demands of adherence and unquestioning acceptance, a sign that when the conversation is over, what is truly essential is faith – faith in God's commands and in the Word, the only true authorities on Earth. But the speaker makes his final case with pointed ambiguity; what is saved through acting is "thy head" which plainly points to the reader's life. Yet the reader's life is not what has been at stake throughout the poem; the uncertainty in the poem resides with the fate of the soul. However, reasoned intervention and exegesis pushed too far would certainly put one at risk during this time as the threat of heresy remained constant. One only need be reminded of Menocchio to recall the devastating outcome of even the most

innocent extrapolation. Thus, foolish indeed would be the man to publicly elevate natural philosophy over religion, as his head could very well be at stake.

However, the head is not necessarily needed for salvation. Used as an extremely corporeal synecdoche, "head" reminds the reader of the materiality and temporality of the body. Presented immediately after "head" is the striking juxtaposition of faith. Unlike the reader, "Faith needs no staffe of flesh." Faith can exist and persist without the presence of a body – without a head. Faith is superior to the body, which the speaker emphasizes threateningly when he says it "stoutly can / To heav'n alone both go, and leade." Faith has the strength and constitution to proceed to Heaven, and it can do so either "alone" or with the reader.

Here is where we find a third unique theorization of faith. Unlike in "Holy Baptism (II)" where faith is possessed by the speaker or in "Trinitie Sunday" when faith is a gift bestowed by God, "Divinite" proposes faith as an independent agent that could very well abandon man. It may exist and act independent of man, but it cannot exist independent of God. For not only can faith go to Heaven on its own, "heav'n alone" is where it can go – that is, it can have no other end point. Faith is a guide with the potential to "leade" man to Heaven; it is stronger than flesh and thus has the capacity to guide the weak. But as we see earlier in the poem, man may cast off faith in his emphasis on reason, demonstrating faith's capacity to exist independent of both man and natural philosophy. Faith needs no assurances, no logic; it is a leader in and of itself, prepared to guide men to Heaven, but also prepared to go alone should man choose not to burn and break his unnecessary science.

"Divinitie" provides the clearest articulation of faith so far of the poems in *The Temple* that invoke "faith" directly. This poem claims that faith is a leader with the capacity to guide man's soul to Heaven. It is free from flesh, and it coexists with reason (although tends to be

205

treated badly by reason). But this poem suggests faith is an autonomous agent, not an experience. Faith is proposed here as something external to the self and in some ways disconnected from God, very unlike the virtue of faith we see in "Holy Baptism (II)" and "Trinitie Sunday." Faith here is more akin to Dante's Virgil than Luther's certainty, an external guide leading to salvation rather than an internal conviction that allows for salvation. That difference, both from *The Temple*'s other proposed theories of faith and from theologians' theories, speaks to the purpose of this poem compared to other poems. While "Holy Baptism (II)," "Trinitie Sunday," and "Faith" (described below) represent personal experience, "Divinitie" is an exhortation against the overuse of reason by foolish Scholastics. Thus, faith is described in terms of superiority and utility, because the poem is making an argument for faith against would-be usurpers. It loses its softness and spirituality as it is presented as more crusader than shepherd. That is not to say that Herbert negates those other, perhaps more important, features of faith, but highlights another side, a more persuasive side.

Because "Divinitie" is more about persuasion than representing a personal experience of faith, it cannot stand alone in Herbert's repertoire. It is not a be-all end-all representation of faith, but it does illuminate an interesting side of this phenomenon as understood by Herbert, as well as an interesting side of Herbert himself and his parish duties. This poem has a rather militant edge to it, and this representation of faith suggests that faith, too, can be militant and mercenary.

For a more personal representation of faith in Herbert's words, I look to his aptly-named "Faith." This poem takes the most in-depth look at the phenomenon, and in so doing reveals the problem with representing faith at all.

Lord , how couldst thou so much appease   dimme,

Thy wrath for sinne, as when mans sight was   And could see little, to regard his ease,

And bring by Faith all things to him?

Hungrie I was, and had no meat:
I did conceit a most delicious feast;
I had it straight, and did as truly eat,
As ever did a welcome guest.

There is a rare outlandish root,
Which when I could not get, I thought it here:
That apprehension cur'd so well my foot,
That I can walk to heav'n well neare.

I owed thousands and much more:
I did beleeve that I did nothing owe,
And liv'd accordingly; my creditor
Beleeves so too, and lets me go.

Faith makes me any thing, or all
That I beleeve is in the sacred storie:
And where sinne placeth me in Adams fall,
Faith sets me higher in his glorie.

If I go lower in the book,
What can be lower then the common manger?
Faith puts me there with him, who sweetly took
Our flesh and frailtie, death and danger.

If blisse had lien in art or strength,
None but the wise or strong had gained it:
Where now by Faith all arms are of a length;
One size doth all conditions fit.

A peasant may beleeve as much
As a great Clerk, and reach the highest stature.
Thus dost thou make proud knowledge bend &
crouch
While grace fills up uneven nature.

When creatures had no reall light
Inherent in them, thou didst make the sunne,
Impute a lustre, and allow them bright;
And in this shew, what Christ hath done.

That which before was darkned clean
With bushie groves, pricking the lookers eie,
Vanisht away, when Faith did change the scene:
And then appear'd a glorious skie.

What though my bodie runne to dust?
Faith cleaves unto it, counting evr'y grain
With an exact and most particular trust,
Reserving all for flesh again.

Both the title of the poem and the multiple direct references to faith throughout indicate the narrator is attempting to present some kind of explicit statement about faith. The first stanza asserts that the Lord brings faith itself and other blessings via faith (affirming the notion that faith is not effected by man's personal agency). The fifth stanza makes two claims: "Faith makes me anything," and "Faith sets me higher in his glory." In the sixth stanza, the explicit claims about faith begin to embrace metaphor as the narrator claims that faith "puts me there with him," referring to Christ in the manger. The use of metaphor increases in the seventh stanza when faith is referred to as a lengthening of arms to achieve equity. By the penultimate (tenth) stanza, the description of faith becomes entirely metaphorical, referred to it as a lens with the power to alter one's scenery for the better. Finally, faith is described as its own entity, separate from the human body, but wielding the power of "trust" to carry the narrator to the afterlife come the apocalypse. The progression in the narrator's descriptions of faith from clear, definitive statements to vivid metaphor demonstrates, if not the failure of explicit articulation, then the necessity of figurative language to convey even the barest meaning in regard to faith.

But metaphor is not necessarily the entire key to success in describing faith. The second, third, and fourth stanzas all employ metaphor to assert what faith is: faith is food to the starving, panacea to the wounded, and repayment for the debtor. And yet all of these scenarios have a great lack – their investments in physical matter cause them to fall short in various ways. When describing the meal produced by "conceit" alone, the narrator says he eats "As ever did a welcome guest." And yet the narrator has no host, none to welcome him, and no actual sustenance. When describing the cure to his ills, the narrator says he is so well cured that he can "walk to heav'n well near," implying that his cure is, in fact, death. Thus, the poem first

broadens out its defining statements for faith, moving from concrete categorizations into descriptions of ability where faith can make him "anything" and set him "higher" in God's glory – statements that are vague at best. But this broadening, despite its ambiguity, is a real turn as the narrator moves from attempting to define what faith *is* to defining what faith *does*.

In those same moments when metaphor fails, the speaker also subordinates belief to faith. In the fifth stanza, the speaker asserts that "Faith makes me any thing, or all / That I beleeve is in the sacred storie." The speaker has beliefs; he believes in what he finds in the gospels. But faith is the acting agent; faith does the making, and faith "sets me higher in his glorie." Belief has effects in the material world, the poem argues, such as when the debtor and the lender both come to believe that the debt is paid in stanza four.[568] In this world a peasant "may beleeve as much / As a great Clerk" and thus be elevated in social status, but, stanza eight argues, it is "grace" that "fills up uneven nature." Belief can fill material gaps, but only faith and God's intervention can alter one's inner self. So not only does "Faith" attempt to articulate what faith *is*, but also what faith is *not* by differentiating faith from belief. However, belief and faith are posed as intimately connected in this poem; the equal capacity of the debtor and the lender, and of the layman and the Clerk, to believe demonstrates grace's full scope to spiritually elevate those who were materially low. While belief is consistently subordinated to faith, much in the same way reason is subordinated to faith in "Divinitie," it is still figured as connected to faith and an important element in the religious experience.

The sixth stanza presents a moment of submission when the narrator asks, "If I go lower in the book, / What can be lower than the common manger?" This moment shifts the focus of the poem from looking upward at God to looking down into the Word. From there the narrator

---

[568] Stanza four can also be read with God as the creditor, suggesting that man's actions in fulfilling supposed religious commitments could never possibly repay the debt to God, creating a critique of the balance-sheet model of faith. But the materiality of owing "thousands" grounds this stanza also in temporal concerns of lending and debt.

settles into a metaphorical mode, embracing the intimacy and clarity that mode brings, which we first see in the same stanza when he imagines himself not full, or healed, or wealthy, but merely in the company of Christ: "Faith puts me there with him." And from that moment, emotion begins bursting from the lines where it had not previously. Faith brings "bliss," in stanza seven, and proud stature in stanza eight. It "Impute[s] a lustre" where before there was "no real light" in stanza nine, and opens up "a glorious sky" in stanza ten. The metaphorical portion of the poem is overflowing with joy and possibility, as if infused with and driven by a spiritual force, where the first four stanzas or so feel too carefully crafted and unwieldy. That is not to say, however, that these are failures or shortcomings of the poets, but a deliberate representation of the attempt to access faith.

The change to joy is simultaneous with the narrator's evacuation of the self. The first four stanzas are laden with "I," but by the seventh stanza the narrator has altered his stance to be outward-looking. Where previously he describes his personal circumstances bluntly ("Hungry I was, and had no meat"), he switches to a broader, more impersonal perspective by referencing "None but the wise," "A peasant," "creatures," and "a looker." This perspective maintains the emotion of the individual as we see in the speaker's mounting joy, but its inclusiveness more clearly represents the magnitude of faith's power. He drops the limits of his individual material body, and opens up to the breadth of the intellect, society, nature, the land, and sky. And it is through these references that the reader can then begin to witness the edges of faith, the suggestion of a phenomenon that fails more than once to be revealed in the poem.

It is those limits in the first stanzas that prevent faith's revelation. The focus on the individual experience, the emphasis on material results from spiritual action, and the reliance on personal agency obscure faith with self. Because Christ himself is a material metaphor for

salvation, the speaker's attention in "Faith" shifts from one set of metaphors to another; his attention shifts from high to low and self to Christ. Even his topical focus shifts by the end of the poem, when in stanza nine the speaker, already looking out onto the horizon, notes that "Faith did change the scene." Faith did not come onto the scene; it does not become an object on the vista. Faith is a new lens through which the speaker looks upon the world, altering his focus, but in itself as visible as clear glass. The first metaphors in the poem prioritize individual agency and action, suggesting belief is the guiding force; they do not take a wide enough view to allow faith to bring focus.

When is faith fully revealed? Only after death, the poem suggests, are faith's actions most fully discernible and distinct. When the speaker's body has "run to dust," faith uncovered "cleaves unto it" and cares for "ev'ry grain" until it is restored for Heaven. Faith will continue to act when the speaker cannot; it will continue to exist when the speaker does not. Faith exceeds man at every turn, in itself evading articulation and functioning in a capacity that man could never hope to achieve. But it is ever-present, both in life and in death. This final moment in the poem is the most lucid in describing faith by once again describing what faith does rather than what faith is, and it demonstrates that man may not act upon faith, but faith will forever act upon man.

Herbert's explicit poetic attempt to represent faith demonstrates faith's problematic nature. He suggests the impossibility of articulating this particular religious phenomenon, despite his intimate experience of it. In this way, Herbert's poetry and the poetry of others who represent similar struggles of articulation (John Donne, for instance) cast doubt on the viability of any articulation of faith, including those coming from religious authorities. In many ways, the problem of Herbert's poem is the very problem of the Reformation, the paradox of the power of

the Word and the failures of human mediation through language. While the Word itself may be accepted as "bypassing human expression" as Sarah Beckwith suggests, creeds, doctrine, and orthodoxy distributed by the various authorities cannot do the same.[569] And perhaps that is why, as many scholars have noted, George Herbert is reluctant to adhere to a strict doctrine in his poetry. Instead, as Daniel Doerksen notes, Herbert's poetry "gained strength and comprehensiveness, not narrowness, through seeking to conform, not to the letter, but to the Word."[570] In the end, Herbert's poem succeeds most in representing faith when he approaches it not head-on through explicit description, but from the periphery, pointing to spiritual and emotional flickers that, combined, begin to hint at a phenomenon that is otherwise obscured by human mediation.

George Herbert's singular work does not produce a coherent theory of faith, either consistent with early modern theologians or not. At different points, Herbert's representations of faith are consistent with reformer theologians or with traditional Catholic theories of faith or with none at all. As readers, we get to experience several possibilities of what faith is as well as what faith does. But in Herbert's work, faith is persistent, unlike with the other poets in this study. *The Temple,* even in its most explicit attempt at representation, does not achieve clarity on this topic, but that in and of itself is a kind of success. Lyric poetry is ultimately a consideration, a dialogue, a mulling-over, and that is just what Herbert is doing with these poems. Herbert is also engaging the transformative nature of poetry, to shape experience and to shape the self in such a way that opens a path to God, so that God might reach down and endow him with or activate faith. His poetry is a work that seeks to worship and obey in order to complement faith. And in reading, we

---

[569] p. 5-6
[570] p. 139

too are invited to consider what faith is and how it might be represented. We are induced to experience the elusiveness of this religious phenomenon, not just read about it. And this is the most persuasive rhetorical move of all; Herbert doesn't need to make assertions and persuasions to promote theories of faith. Through the inability of his poetry to fully describe faith the reader must then turn to his or her own imagination, to his or her own experience to fill that gap. The reader's own experience is reinforced through Herbert's lack, and through the failures of language, and one is reminded that faith – no matter the authoritarian impositions – is radically individual. Doctrine and orthodoxy, even the orthodoxy of language, cannot impose upon and alter faith. It must be found in the silence of the self.

Epilogue: To the New World: the Continuation of Representations of Faith

The Reformation in England produced more than a century's worth of anxiety over religious doctrine and practices, but as this project has demonstrated, in the early modern period lyric poetry representations of personal religious experience and the troubles therein were not necessarily (or even primarily) produced from those particular anxieties. Instead, even the most devoted members of a particular sect, like George Herbert or Robert Southwell, interrogate and even contradict Christian doctrine through the lens of individual experience. These poets attempt to reconcile lived experience with doctrinal expectations, but sometimes those reconciliations are impossible. Thus I find that above all, religious belief is fundamentally individual and constantly individualizing. In spite of any and all attempts at orthodoxy, personal religious experience always supersedes imposed doctrine.

In that way, these representations of struggle and exploration in lyric poetry have the potential to transcend sectionalism, periodization, and even geography. While the Reformation was a flashpoint in Western history in terms of religious conflict, in the entirety of the Common Era the narrative of Christianity has been doctrinal change. So despite sects, and within and without the early modern period, representations of religious struggle in the face of orthodoxy – representations that interrogate and contradict doctrine – persist. Therefore, while this project does not seek to encompass all major literary time periods, I would like to point to two examples of poets who demonstrate a continuity over time in terms of this representation of struggle, and struggle for representation.

Both Edward Taylor and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz lived in North America in the seventeenth century but under very different circumstances. Edward Taylor was born in England in 1648, and because of the pressures he felt as a Puritan in England left for the Massachusetts

Bay Colony in April 1668.[571] He attended Harvard University, and thereafter took a post as a

pastor in Westfield, Massachusetts, where he worked and lived for the remainder of his life.[572]

Taylor wrote continuously throughout his life, producing a great deal of work never intended for

public distribution including his poetry.[573] He married twice, had fourteen children, and died in

1729.[574] Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was born in 1648 just southeast of the city of Mexico, and her

voraciousness for learning led her to her aunt's home in the city of Mexico at the age of ten.[575]

Despite exclusion from formal education, Cruz pursued learning and writing somewhat

independently, but with the support of aristocratic friends, including the Viceroy and Vicereine,

Antonio Sebastián de Toledo and Leonor Carreto.[576] To legitimately pursue her scholarly

interests, Cruz took religious orders and became a nun in 1667, and in 1669 settled permanently

in the Convent of Santa Paula of the Hieronymite order.[577] She wrote copiously for nearly the

remainder of her life, including both secular and religious texts, correspondence with prominent

intellectual figures throughout the Western world, poetry, and drama. At the end of her life she

abruptly ceased writing, and there are no records of her producing any work for the final two

years of her life, a circumstance described as a "capitulation" to the pressures of the disapproving

Archbishop Aguiar y Seijas and the ambivalence of the new Viceroy.[578] In 1695 Cruz died of the

plague.[579]

      Both Cruz and Taylor were dedicated adherents to their Christian sects. In fact, as both

Puritan doctrine and Catholic doctrine shifted in the seventeenth century, each of these figures

---

[571] Taylor, Edward, and Daniel Patterson. *Edward Taylor's Gods Determinations and Preparatory Meditations: A Critical Edition*. Kent: Kent State UP, 2003. Print. p. 2.
[572] Ibid. p. 5.
[573] Taylor wrote some 2,000 pages of prose and 40,000 lines of poetry. Ibid. p. 1.
[574] Ibid. p. 40.
[575] Trueblood, Alan. "Introduction." *A Sor Juana Anthology*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988. Print. p. 2.
[576] Ibid. p. 3.
[577] Ibid. p. 5.
[578] Ibid. p. 10.
[579] Ibid.

resisted the imposition of change, preferring to adhere to the traditions of their own experiences. By 1679 when the Reforming Synod was held, requirements for church membership in the Massachusetts Bay Colony congregations had been relaxed from the 1648 Cambridge Platform, specifically allowing for the baptism of children of "halfway members" (those members who had not yet related their conversion stories and were therefore not full members of the church).[580] And many ministers in New England were considering additional allowances to bolster church membership, which would potentially allow such "halfway members" and others to participate in communion.[581] But Edward Taylor denied these changes and any changes from the original 1648 platform: "Because the Lord's Supper offered the Elect the highest of spiritual experiences and because it occupied a central place in Taylor's conception of religious experience, Taylor gave decades of intellectual energy to this theological controversy."[582]

Because of her gender, Cruz faced a different set of religious impositions. As a combined result of the Counter Reformation efforts to thwart changes analogous to Reformed sect innovations (such as increasing gender equality among Quakers) and the backlash against increased visibility and autonomy for women in Spanish cities sending men to New Spain, seventeenth century Spanish women were subjected to increasing prosecution for perceived improprieties and increased enclosure.[583] Cruz's life-long pursuit of knowledge and intellectual discourse flew in the face of these conservatisms, and her own writing confronted biblical arguments for women's submission head-on. She responded to a written chastisement of her work by a local bishop in "La repuesta de la poetisa a la muy illustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz," in which she repeatedly addresses the Pauline epistles which were (and are) regularly wielded in a

---

[580] Patterson. p. 9.
[581] Ibid.
[582] Ibid. p. 9-10.
[583] Perry, Mary Elizabeth. *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990. Print.

misogynistic manner due to this verse: "Let your women keepe silence in the Churches, for it is not permitted vnto them to speake; but they are commanded to bee vnder obedience: as also saith the Law."[584] "La repuesta" insists that Saint Paul's words be examined as a whole, and not in the piecemeal manner which results in this above statement standing alone; Cruz argues for the varying viewpoints of women throughout the epistles and above all for historical context.[585] She pummels the misogynistic arguments from all angles, asserting her rightful place in religious and intellectual discourse. Cruz maintained her convictions throughout her life, writing constantly as both an intellectual and creative voice, but her final two years of silence are perplexing. Once her aristocratic friends returned to Spain, Cruz was under pressure to cease her confrontational work consistently until her "capitulation" in 1693. We can only surmise her motivations for her sudden silence, so the last years of her life remain a question mark. But up to that point, Cruz's writings portray a strong voice always resisting the imposition of doctrine with which she did not agree.

A piece that captures that voice is Cruz's villancico on the Saint's Day of Catherine, written in 1691. The villancico is an Iberian and Spanish poetic form that became popularly used for devotional songs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The songs would be sung during matins on the saints' days.

---

[584] 1 Corinthians 14:33. *KJV*.
[585] Merrim, Stephanie. *Early Modern Women's Writing and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1999. Print. p. xxii.

I've a strange thing to sing you.

       What is it now? What?

If you'd hush up, I'd tell you.

       What is it? Hurry, I'm dying to know.

If you'd hush up, I'd tell you.

       There once was a girl –

you'll see who I mean –

whose years had reached

the age of eighteen.

If you'd just hush up,

my meaning you'd glean.

       This girl (don't ask how

'cause here words fail)

knew a lot, so they say,

though she *was* female.

If you'd just hush up,

you'd hear my tale.

       Now people are always

saying ... you know ...

that all girls can do

is spin and sew.

If you'd just hush up

and not fuss so.

       But her, she could argue

with grown men and win,

so kids couldn't lick her

to save their skin.

If you'd just hush up

and not butt in.

       The makings of sainthood

was in her, they say;

even knowing so much

didn't get in her way.

If you'd just hush up

and let me say.

       Now when word reached old Nick,

who don't shut an eye,

she's so holy and smart

he made like he'd die.

If you'd just hush up,

I'll tell you why.

       Because if there's one thing

drives the Devil up a tree,

it's hearing of a woman

who's smarter than he.

If you'd just hush up

and let me be.

       So what does he do?

Goes and urges a King

to tempt her in her faith

and demand she give in.

218

If you'd just keep still	and let me end.
and not butt in.	No more questions now
His terrible threats	'cause all I can say
didn't make a dent:	is that Catherine will live
she would sooner die	forever and a day.
than ever relent.	You needn't hush up,
If you'd just hush up	I've had my say.

Catherine of Alexandria, the subject of this verse,[586] was a Catholic saint martyred in the fourth century at the age of eighteen for converting many people to Christianity. She is known particularly for her debate acumen; part of her prosecution was an oral debate with fifty learned pagan men in which she is said not only to have triumphed, but to have converted the pagans as well.[587] In that way, Saint Catherine is a clear analogue for Cruz.

The central conceit of the poem is that Saint Catherine is incredibly intelligent and talented in disputation, and because of this talent she is targeted by the Devil who hates any woman smarter than him. Therefore, she is not targeted either for her faith or beliefs, nor merely for being intelligent, but for being an intelligent woman. To carry out his retribution, the Devil easily convinces the King to persecute her in order to draw her away from her faith. However, Saint Catherine is steadfast and never betrays her convictions, preferring instead to die which, as a martyr, the reader understands that she does.

The poem is an explicit argument both for women's devotional strength and for women's participation in religious debate. The speaker of the poem positions herself as both able and willing to tell the tale of Saint Catherine, but she herself is facing an immediate conflict in doing

---

[586] The verse was composed in Spanish, and this translation is by Alan Trueblood. The verse is translated to preserve the meter and rhyme of the original, as well as the repetition. Trueblood, p. 144-5.

[587] Di Berardino, Angelo. "Catherine of Alexandria." *Encyclopedia Of Ancient Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web. 8 Sept. 2016.

so. The repeated appeals to a second voice at the end of each stanza reveal the speaker's tenuous position of always being one stanza or one line away from being silenced, and thus silencing Saint Catherine. But the speaker forcibly quiets this voice with the language of a mother to a child, that is, not with exceeding hostility. She consistently recognizes the agency of the other voice and the necessity of a willingness to listen with conditionals like "If...you'd hear my tale" and "If you'd...not butt in." The story then becomes preparation for a conversation, carefully quieting the other voice for a limited span of time to set out the required information before opening up discussion. Indeed, the last stanza closes with an invitation to the other voice.

The main oppositional force in the poem is the Devil who uses a legal authority to defeat Saint Catherine. The king targets Catherine on the Devil's behalf, so it is unclear if his motivations for this persecution are identical to the Devil's, that is, if he resents women's intelligence in particular or if he has other motivations to which the Devil speaks. Either way, legal authority is used to enact demoniacal ends and counteract Saint Catherine's faith. But Catherine's faith is so strong that the poem does not portray any time of consideration; Catherine's lack of consideration for change highlights the king's weakness in so easily succumbing to the Devil. Catherine is merely steadfast, and for that strength in conviction her temporal form is destroyed. However, this destruction is not the end of Saint Catherine, the poem says, because she will live "forever and a day." Indeed, in its very existence this poem is a reification of Saint Catherine, a reanimation of her person and her faith.

This poem mirrors the Counter Reformation pressures on women to remain silent on intellectual and religious matters and obedient to authority in the figures of the Devil and the king. But both the structure and content of the poem forcefully remind the reader of the tradition of women's participation in the Christian church, not only as handmaidens and servants but as

charismatic proponents of the religion. The women of this poem – both the speaker and Saint Catherine – intervene in the seventeenth century conversation about women's roles in the church in a way that demonstrates both their strength and their dedication to the cause. They are relentless, and they do not seek permission. They do, however, seek a listening ear and a dialogue, and those repeated appeals reiterate the personal nature of the poem. The speaker asks that the reader "hush" and "hear *my* tale" (emphasis mine), suggesting not only ownership of Catherine's story but an investment therein. And the speaker's continued appeals coincide with the action of Catherine's story, such as when she calls for the reader to "let me be" just as the Devil is intervening with the king to persecute Catherine and when she asks the reader to "let me end" immediately after gesturing toward Catherine's martyrdom. The two women become intertwined in the poem as the actions of the past become gestures toward the speaker's current state, transforming this otherwise narrative poem into a personal and revealing lyric.

In the guise of a simple devotional song, Cruz's poem intervenes in the doctrinal conversation about women's place in the church. Using her strengths of debate, she calls upon a recognized saint who closely mirrors her own position to make a pathos appeal to the reader. She claims that it is the Devil pursuing such devout and intelligent women, and nothing else. She argues that this is a trial that women such as Saint Catherine have surmounted, though at the cost of their lives. And in so doing, she stakes her own claim, linking herself to a martyr and refusing to change merely at the demands of others. The repeated appeals to the reader to let her finish establish her strengths of character and conviction, but they also convey the urgency she feels in this task, that she must be allowed to share this story else there might be consequences. But once the story is out and all has been revealed, she feels secure enough to enter into a discussion and reenter the intellectual conversation, self-assured and undaunted. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's

poetry as a whole typifies personal experience trumping doctrinal impositions, and until the end of her life, she was unrelenting in her devotional and intellectual pursuits. While this poem takes a strong point of view, it also reveals her struggle against the religious impositions in her life, particularly toward the end. Her struggle was resistance, resisting the pervasive temporal forces influenced by the Devil who would turn her from her convictions and away from God.

While the struggle represented in Cruz's poem is against temporal forces that would contradict her convictions, Edward Taylor's struggle is with faith itself. Like George Herbert, Taylor's poetry theorizes about faith, considering what it is, what it does, and how it functions. In his 1712 meditation upon Matthew 26:26-27, Taylor argues that faith is a lens that focuses reason, but never blinds it, but in his 1715 meditation upon Song of Solomon (Cant) 5:15 Taylor suggests that the lens of faith might, in fact, be clouded, but that God can clear that cloudiness to let in images of the promised land.[588] Finally, in his 1720 meditation upon Hebrews 11:6, Taylor theorizes faith as a link between individuals and God, a "Golden Twist thou hast / To tie my soule to thee my Lord most Fast," a "golden Button," "the Curious Girdle that ties to / The King of Glory," and "The Golden Belt that doth unite also / Christ and the soule together."[589] In his varying poems, Taylor suggests that faith lives within the soul alongside God's grace, that it strengthens and nourishes other virtues, and that it allows for a clear view of the world.

But Taylor's struggle with faith is most explicit in his 1691 meditation upon Revelations 2:10, "A Crown of Life." This poem echoes Donne's "Holy Sonnet XIV" in a number of ways. It begins by valorizing fear, noting, "My sin doth keepe out of my heart thy Feare."[590] If he truly understood God's omnipotence, he suggests, then his heart would be filled with fear. Instead, sin

---

[588] Taylor. p. 406, 438.
[589] Ibid. p. 487-9.
[590] Ibid. p. 192.

has made him fearless and without regard for God's salvific power. He asserts in the fourth

stanza, however, that he has faith, but faith is failing him:

Why mayn't my Faith now drinke thy Health, Lord, ore,

The Head of all my sins? and Cast her Eye,

In glorifying glances on the Doore

Of thy Free Grace, where Crowns of Life do lie:

Thou'lt give a Crown of Life to such as bee

Faithfull to Death. And shall Faith faile in mee?[591]

In this stanza he characterizes faith as the preexisting agent that accesses God's grace, if God is

willing to bestow that grace. But he wonders if his faith is deficient, unable to achieve access on

its own. He is frustrated, but also helpless to rectify this failure. Therefore, he beseeches God to

activate his faith in him in the following stanza:

A Crown of Life, of Glory, Righteousness,

Thou wilt adorn them with, that will not fade.

Shall Faith in mee Shrinke up for Feebleness?

Nor take my Sins by th'Crown, till Crownless made?

Breath, Lord, thy Spirit on my Faith, that I

May have thy Crown of Life; and sin may dy.[592]

Without being bolstered by God, he fears his faith will wither and that he will lose all capacity to

access God's grace; he will die because of his sins. But God's intervention of breathing life into

[591] Ibid. p. 193.
[592] Ibid.

his faith will grant him salvation that his faith on its own could not. By bringing everlasting life to the speaker, God kills his parasitic sins.

But this intervention by God is paramount; the speaker may possess faith without grace, but that faith is inadequate and likely to deteriorate. Thus, the poem ends by again beseeching God, and wondering if and when God will answer:

When thou shalt Crowne me with these Crowns I'l bend

My shallow Crown to crown with Songs thy Name.

Angels shall set the tune, I'le it attend:

Thy Glory'st be the burden of the same.

Till then I cannot sing, my tongue is tide.

Accept this Lisp till I am glorifide.[593]

Until God grants the speaker grace and activates his faith, he cannot so much as praise God adequately. He knows that with God's aid he can then respond to the calls of angels and sing songs of God's name, and that, in fact, such praise will be the necessary responsibility attached to such a gift. But until that time, just as Donne never could be free until God might "ravish" him, Taylor's tongue is "tide" and unable to provide such praise until he is "glorifide."

Edward Taylor's powerlessness and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's urgency represent individual struggles in their religious experiences. Taylor's poetry works through the problem of faith much like George Herbert while simultaneously representing the emotional fever pitch of John Donne's struggle for agency. Cruz, like Aemilia Lanyer, struggles to defend the legitimacy of her experience because of her gender while simultaneously fending off the impositions of others upon her understanding and experience. She maintains her convictions and condemns

---

[593] Ibid.

224

those who would tempt her for any reason and by any means away from that faith, mirroring her very real circumstances as an active intellectual nun in New Spain.

While Taylor and Cruz are but a tiny sampling of the vast poetic work going on in the Americas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they speak to a continuation of responding to orthodoxy in lyric poetry. Taylor and Cruz both respond to interior and exterior questions regarding their own Christian sects in their poetry, and they tackle those questions very explicitly in their lives. What their poetry demonstrates is that the practices of interrogating and responding to religious orthodoxy lives on outside of England, and outside of the early modern period. Anne Vaughan Lock, Aemilia Lanyer, Robert Southwell, John Donne, and George Herbert are part of a practice that exceeds one geographic location and one time period; they may all have experienced the rather violent fallout of the Reformation in England, but their experiences reveal a much larger pattern in poetry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Web.

Arch, Stephen. *After Franklin: The Emergence of Autobiography in Post-Revolutionary America, 1780-1830*. Hanover and London: U of New Hampshire P, 2001. Print.

Aristotle, and Thomas Hobbes. *Aristotle's Treatise on Rhetoric*. New ed. London: H.G. Bohn, 1847. Web.

Aquinas, Thomas. "Secunda Secundae Partis, Q. 1." *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries*. Cambridge, England: Blackfriars, 1964. Print.

--*Summa Theologiae*. 1981. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Westminster: Christian Classics. Print.

Aquinas, Thomas, and Anton C. Pegis. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. New York: Random House, 1945. Print. p. 1060.

Archer, Ian W. "Social networks in Restoration London: the evidence of Samuel Pepys's diary." *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.

Arminius, Jacobus, and Gunter, W. Stephen. *Arminius and his Declaration of sentiments : an annotated translation with introduction and theological commentary.* Waco, Tx: Baylor UP, 2012. Print.

Ashwin-Siejkowski, Piotr. *The Apostles' Creed: the Apostles' Creed and its early Christian context*. New York: T&T Clark, 2009. Web.

Atkinson, Michael, and Plotinus. *Plotinus, Ennead V. 1: On the Three Principal Hypostases : A Commentary with Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Web.

Augustine, Saint. *City of God, Books 1-7*. Baltimore, MD, USA: Catholic University of America Press, 1950. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

--"Roots of Augustinian Spirituality." Midwest Augustinians. 2013. Web.

Augustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo, William Watts, and W. H. D. Rouse. *St. Augustine's Confessions*. New York;London;: W. Heinemann, 1912. Web.

Backus, Irena. "The Issue of Reformation Scepticism Revisited: What Erasmus and Sebastian Castellio Did or Did Not Know." Paganini, Gianni, and Jose R. Maia Neto, eds. *Renaissance Scepticisms*. Springer Netherlands: 2009. Web.

Barker, Francis. *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection*. London: Methuen, 1984. Print.

Bedford, Ronald, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly. *Early Modern English Lives: Autobiography and Self-Representation, 1500-1660*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. Print.

Bernard, G W. *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome*. 2012. Print.

Betteridge, Thomas. *Writing Faith and Telling Tales: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Work of Thomas More*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013. Web.

Boner, Patrick J. *Change and Continuity in Early Modern Cosmology*. 27. Vol. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011. Web.

Bridbury, A. R. "Towns and Town Life in the Thirteenth Century." *Medieval England: A Survey of Social and Economic Origins and Development*. Leicester: Matador, 2008. 141-50. Print.

Brown, Peter. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. Print.

Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009. Print.

-- *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print.

Burton, Ben. "'the Praise of that I Yield for Sacrifice': Ann Lock and the Poetics of the Eucharist." Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme 30.3 (2006): 89. Web.

Calvin, Jean. *On the Christian Faith: Selections from the Institutes, Commentaries, and Tracts*. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957. Print.

-- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 7th American, rev. and corr. ed. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936. Web.

Clark, Roy Peter. "Doubting Thomas in Chaucer's Summoner's Tale." *Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism* 11.2 (1976): 164. Web.

Clarke, Elizabeth. *Theory and Theology in George Herbert's Poetry: Divinitie, and Poesie, Met.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Print.

Coles, Kimberly Anne. "The Matter of Belief in John Donne's Holy Sonnets." *Renaissance Quarterly* 68.3 (2015): 899. Web.

Conti, Brooke. *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. Print.

Cousins, A. D., and Peter Howarth. *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. *Google Books*. Web.

Cruickshank, Frances. *Verse and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010. Web.

Cummings, Brian. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.

Danker, Frederick W, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Print.

Davies, Michael. "Introduction." *Literature and Authenticity, 1780–1900: Essays in Honour of Vincent Newey*. By Ashley Chantler. Ed. Ashley Chantler and Michael Davies. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. 1-8. Print.

"Defender of the faith". *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web.

Di Berardino, Angelo. "Catherine of Alexandria." *Encyclopedia Of Ancient Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web.

Dolan, Frances E. *True Relations*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2013. Print.

Donne, John. "17. Meditation." *Deuotions vpon emergent occasions, and seuerall steps in my sicknes digested into 1. Meditations vpon our humane condition. 2. Expostulations, and debatements with God. 3. Prayers, vpon the seuerall occasions, to him. By Iohn Donne, Deane of S. Pauls, London.* 3rd ed. London, 1627. Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online*. Web.

-- *Biathanatos: A Declaration of that Paradoxe Or Thesis that Self-Homicide is Not so Naturally Sin, that it may Never be Otherwise : Wherein the Nature, and the Extent of all those Lawes, which Seeme to be Violated by this Act, are Diligently Surveyed*. London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, and are to be sold at his shop, 1648. Web.

-- *Music at Midnight: The Life and Poetry of George Herbert*. New York: Allen Lane, 2013. Print.

--"Satire III." *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*. Ed. Charles M. Coffin. New York: Modern Library, 2001. Print.

--"To Sir HR." *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*. *Early English Books Online*. 2010; 1651.

Donne, John. P. M. Oliver ed. *John Donne: Selected Letters*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Web.

Dooley, Brendan M. *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Print.

Dowriche, Anne. *The French historie That is; a lamentable discourse of three of the chiefe, and most famous bloodie broiles that haue happened in France for the Gospell of Iesus Christ. Namelie; 1 The outrage called the winning of S. Iames his Streete, 1557. 2 The constant martirdome of Anna Burgaeus one of the K. Councell, 1559. 3 The bloodie marriage of Margaret sister to Charles the 9. anno 1572. Published by A.D.* London, 1589. Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online*. Web.

Dubrow, Heather. *The Challenges of Orpheus: Lyric Poetry and Early Modern England*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. Print.

Duffy, Eamon. *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor*. New Haven Conn.: Yale UP, 2009. Print.

--*The Stripping Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580.* New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. Print.

Edwards, David Lawrence. *John Donne : Man Of Flesh And Spirit*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web.

Evennett, H. Outram. *Cardinal of Lorraine and the Council of Trent: A Study in the Counter-reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ, 2011. Print.

Felch, Susan. "Introduction." Lock, Anne Vaughan, and Susan M. Felch. *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughan Lock*. 21.;185.; Vol. Tempe, Ariz: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1999. Print.

Foxe, John. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Caxton, 1881. *Google Books*. 08 Dec. 2008. Web. 21 Mar. 2015. p. 209.

-- *Foxe's Book of Martyrs : Select Narratives*. Oxford, GBR: OUP Oxford, 2009. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 21 March 2014.

French, Katherine. *Middle Ages Series : People of The Parish : Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*. Philadelphia, PA, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Fumerton, Patricia. *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Print.

Furey, Constance M. "Utopia of Desire: The Real and Ideal in Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum." Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 36.3 (2006): 561-84. Web.

Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992. Print.

Graham, Kenneth J. E. "'Clear as Heav'n': Herbert's Poetry and Rhetorical 'Divinitie'." *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 29.2-3 (2005): 183. Web.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011. Print.

Groves, Beatrice. *The Destruction of Jerusalem in Early Modern English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. Web.

Halvorson, Michael, and Karen E. Spierling. *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. Print

Hambrick-Stowe, Charles E. *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press, 1982. Print.

Hamlin, William M. *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.

Hecht, Jennifer Michael. *Doubt: A History : The Great Doubters and their Legacy of Innovation, from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson*. 1st pbk. ed. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004. Print.

Herbert, George. *The Works of George Herbert*. ed. F.E. Hutchinson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953. Web.

Hill, Christopher. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Print.

Hill, John Spencer. *Infinity, Faith and Time: Christian Humanism and Renaissance Literature*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997. Web.

Hindle, Steve. "Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory, and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500-1700." Halvorson, Michael, and Karen E. Spierling, eds. *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. Print.

--"A sense of place? Becoming and belonging in the rural parish, 1550-1650." Shepard, Alexandra, and Phil Withington. *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.

Hoffman, Philip T. *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon, 1500-1789*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. Print.

The iaylors conuersion Wherein is liuely represented, the true image of a soule rightlye touched, and conuerted by the spirit of God. The waightie circumstances of which supernaturall worke, for the sweete amplifications, and fit applications to the present time, are now set downe for the comfort of the strong, and confirmation of the weake. By Hugh Dowriche Batch. of Diuinitie. London, 1596. Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online*. Web.

Jackson, Robert S. "'Doubt Wisely': John Donne's Christian Skepticism." *Cithara* 8.1 (1968): 39. Web.

James I. *Basilikon Doron or His Majesties Instrvctions To His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince. Political Works of James I.* Ed. Charles Howard McIlwain. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918.

Johns, Geoffrey A. *Deformed Subjects and Transgressive Bodies: Inwardness and Monstrosity in Early Modern Popular Culture*. Diss. Michigan State U, 2013. *Islandora Repository*. Web.

Justice, Steven. "Eucharistic Miracle and Eucharistic Doubt." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42.2 (2012): 307-332. Web.

Kemp, Theresa D. "Women's Patronage-Seeking as Familial Enterprise: Aemilia Lanyer, Esther Inglis, and Mary Wroth." Literature Compass (2007).

King, John N. "John Day: master printer of the English Reformation." *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

Knight, Janice*. Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*. Harvard UP: Cambridge, 1994. Print.

Koblyk, Liz. "Certainties and Doubts: Ways of Knowing in Early Modern England." McMaster University (Canada), 2005. Ann Arbor: ProQuest. Web.

Koritansky, Peter. "Thomas Aquinas: Political Philosophy." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Web.

Kuchar, Gary. "Aemilia Lanyer and the Virgin's Swoon: Theology and Iconography in: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum." English Literary Renaissance 37.1 (2007): 47-73. Web.

Lanyer, Aemilia. "To the Vertuous Reader." *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. ed. Susanne Woods. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.

Levine, Alan. "Introduction." *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999. Web.

Lewalski, Barbara K. "Re-Writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer." The Yearbook of English Studies 21 (1991): 87-106. Web.

Lock, Anne Vaughan, and Susan M. Felch. "A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner: Written in Maner of A Paraphrase upon the 51. Psalme of David." *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughan Lock*. 21.;185.; Vol. Tempe, Ariz: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1999. Print.

Loewenstein, David. *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. Print.

Longridge, W.H. "Introduction." Ignatius, of Loyola, Saint, 1491-1556. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*. London: Robert Scott, 1919.

Luther, Martin. *Works of Martin Luther with Introductions and Notes*. Ed. Adolph Spaeth. Philadelphia: A.J. Holman, 1916. Electronic.

-- *Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*. N.p.: n.p., 1517. *Project Gutenberg*. 25 Apr. 2008. Web.

-- *Martin Luther On the Bondage of the Will: Written In Answer to the Diatribe of Erasmus On Free-will. First Pub. In the Year of Our Lord 1525*. London: Printed by T. Bensley for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1823.

Lynch, Joseph H. *Early Christianity: A Brief History*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. London u.a.: Penguin Books, 2010. Print.

Markidou, Vassiliki. "'this Last Farewell to Cooke-Ham here I Give': The Politics of Home and Nonhome in Aemilia Lanyer's the Description of Cooke-Ham." English 60.228 (2011): 4. Web.

Marshall, Peter, and Alec Ryrie. *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

Martin, Catherine Gimelli. "Unmeete Contraryes: The Reformed Subject and the Triangulation of Religious Desire in Donne's *Anniversaries* and *Holy Sonnets*." Papazian, Mary

Arshagouni ed. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation : New Perspectives*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Maus, Katharine E. *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.

Mayer, Jean-Christophe. *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith: History, Religion, and the Stage*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

McDonald, James, and Nancy P. Brown. "Introduction." Robert Southwell. *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S.j*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1967. Print.

McEachern, Claire, and Debora K. Shuger. *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print.

McGonigle, Thomas. *A History of the Christian Tradition: From the Reformation to the Present*. Vol. 2. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996. Print.

McLaren, A N. *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558-1585*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Internet resource.

Merrim, Stephanie. *Early Modern Women's Writing and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1999. Print.

Merritt, J F. *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community, 1525-1640*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005. Print.

Molekamp, Femke. *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England: Religious Reading and Writing*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Web.

Montrose, Louis A. *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

Muldrew, Craig. "From a 'light cloak' to an 'iron cage': historical changes in the relation between community and individualism." Shepard, Alexandra, and Phil Withington. *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.

Myers, Anne M. "Restoring 'the Church-Porch': George Herbert's Architectural Style." English Literary Renaissance 40.3 (2010): 427. Web.

Nelson, Brent. "Pathopoeia and the Protestant Form of Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions." Papazian, Mary Arshagouni ed. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation : New Perspectives*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Nugent, Teresa Lanpher. "Anne Lock's Poetics of Spiritual Abjection." *English Literary Renaissance* 39.1 (2009): 3. Web.

OED Online. Oxford University Press, September 2016. Web.

--"antedate, v."

--"belief, n."

--"doctrine, n."

--"doubt, n.1."

--"doubt, v."

--"geography, n."

--"imputation, n."

--"impute, v."

--"orthodox, adj. and n."

--"religion, n."

--"theory, n."

Ormerod, David. "Number theory in George Herbert's 'Trinity Sunday' and 'Trinitie Sunday'." *George Herbert Journal* 12.2 (1989): 27. *Academic OneFile*. Web.

Panichi, Nicola. "Montaigne and Plutarch: A Scepticism that Conquers the Mind." Paganini, Gianni, and Jose R. Maia Neto, eds. *Renaissance Scepticisms*. Springer Netherlands: 2009. Web.

Papazian, Mary Arshagouni. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation : New Perspectives*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Perry, Mary Elizabeth. *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990. Print.

Peters, Christine. *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.

Pilarz, Scott R. *Robert Southwell and the Mission of Literature, 1561-1595 : Writing Reconciliation.* Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003. Print.

"Parish." Herbermann, Charles G, and Edward A. Pace. *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*. New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1913. Web.

Parrish, Paul, and Gary Stringer. "General Textual Introduction." Donne, John. *Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*. United States: Indiana University Press, 2005. Web.

Platt, Colin. *Medieval England: A Social History and Archaeology from the Conquest to 1600 A.d.* New York: Scribner, 1978. Print.

Pollard, A.F. *The Political History of England: Pollard, A.F. From the Accession of Edward VI to the Death of Elizabeth (1547-1603)*. Ed. William Hunt and Reginald Poole. Vol. 6. London: Longmans, Green, 1910. *Google Books*. Google Books, 16 Feb. 2010. Web.

Popkin, Richard Henry. *History of Scepticism : From Savonarola to Bayle*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, 2003. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Post, Jonathan F.S. "Donne's life: a sketch." ed. Guibbory, Achsah. *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006. Web.

--*English Lyric Poetry: The Early Seventeenth Century*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Ransome, Joyce. "George Herbert, Nicholas Ferrar, and the 'pious works' of Little Gidding." *George Herbert Journal* 31.1-2 (2007): 1. *Academic OneFile*. Web.

Richey, Esther Gilman. "Herbert's "temple" and the Liberty of the Subject". *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 102.2 (2003): 244–268. Web.

Romocea, Cristian. *Church and State: Religious Nationalism and State Identification in Post-Communist Romania*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. Print.

Sands, Danielle. "Thinking through Différance: Derrida, Žižek and Religious Engagement." *Textual Practice* 22.3 (2008): 529-46. Web.

Schoenfeldt, Michael C. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.

Shagan, Ethan. "Clement Armstrong and the godly commonwealth." *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

Shepard, Alexandra, and Phil Withington. *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.

Shuger, Debora K. *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture.* Toronto: Toronto UP, 1997. Print.

--"The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric." Jost, Walter, and Wendy Olmsted. *Rhetorical Invention and Religious Inquiry: New Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000. Web.

Slights, Camille. "Herbert's 'Trinitie Sunday'." *Explicator* 38.1 (1979): 13. Web.

Somerset, Fiona. "Introduction." *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*. Ed. Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, and Derrick G. Pitard. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell, 2003. Print.

"Southwell, St Robert." *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Eds. Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone. : Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference*. 2009.

Spolsky, Ellen. *Satisfying Skepticism: Embodied Knowledge in the Early Modern World*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2001. Print.

Stachniewski, John. *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. Print.

Streete, Adrian. *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Strier, Richard. "Radical Donne: "Satire III"." *ELH* 60.2 (1993): 283-322. Web.

Sweeney, Anne. *Robert Southwell : Snow in Arcadia: Redrawing the English Lyric Landscape, 1586-1595*. Manchester, GBR: Manchester University Press, 2006. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Swinburne, Richard. *Faith and Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981. Print.

Targoff, Ramie. *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Print.

-- *John Donne, Body and Soul*. Chicago, IL, USA: University of Chicago Press, 2008. ProQuest ebrary. Web.

Taylor, Amanda. ""Use alone": Usefulness and Revision in George Herbert's *The Temple*." *George Herbert Journal* 34.1 (2010): 78-101. *Project MUSE*. Web.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard Univeristy, 1992. Print.

Taylor, Edward, and Daniel Patterson. *Edward Taylor's Gods Determinations and Preparatory Meditations: A Critical Edition*. Kent: Kent State UP, 2003. Print.

Theodorou, S. "Metaphor and Phenomenology." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Http://www.iep.utm.edu/met-phen/#H6, n.d. Web.

Trueblood, Alan. "Introduction." *A Sor Juana Anthology*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.

Trull, Mary. "Petrarchism and Gift: The Sacrifice of Praise in Anne Lock's "a Meditation of a Penitent Sinner"." *Religion & Literature* 41.3 (2009): 1-25. Web.

Turnbull, Margaret. "George Herbert and John Jewel: "Vanitie" (I), "the Agonie," and "Divinitie"." *George Herbert Journal* 26.1 (2002): 83-93. Web.

Vendler, Helen. *Invisible Listeners: Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005. Print.

--*Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002. Print.

Wengen-Shute, Rosemary van. "Time and Liturgy in George Herbert's 'the Temple.'." *Theology* 106.830 (2003): 98. Web.

Whitaker, Curtis. "Baptisms and burials: the presence of the book of common prayer in Herbert's nature poetry." *George Herbert Journal* 27.1-2 (2003): 82. *Academic OneFile*. Web.

White, Micheline. "Women Writers and Literary-Religious Circles in the Elizabethan West Country: Anne Dowriche, Anne Lock Prowse, Anne Locke Moyle, Ursula Fulford, and Elizabeth Rous." *Modern Philology* 103.2 (2005): 187. Web.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.

Woods, Susanne. *Lanyer : A Renaissance Woman Poet*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1999. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web.

Wrightson, Keith. "The politics of the parish." Griffiths, Paul, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle. *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Print.

Wycliffe, John, and F D. Matthew. *The English Works of Wyclif: Hitherto Unprinted*. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1978.

Zerba, Michelle. *Doubt and Skepticism in Antiquity and the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.

Zwingli, Ulrich, Samuel M. Jackson, and Clarence N. Heller. *Commentary on True and False Religion*. Durham, N.C: Labyrinth, 1981. p. 276.