



137
520
THS

JOHN DONNE AND
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX;
A STUDY IN MYSTICISM

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE
Corinne Elizabeth Kauffman
1950

LIBRARY
Michigan State
University

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.
MAY BE RECALLED with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE

JOHN DONNE AND ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX:
A Study in Mysticism

By

CORINNE ELIZABETH KAUFFMAN

Abstract of Thesis

The question of whether or not John Donne is a mystic is one which every serious student of his works must face and try to answer. It arises as much from his style as from his matter and has been answered generally in the negative. The purpose of this essay is not to reverse the decision of previous students, but to provide a less arbitrary basis for it. The test of Donne's mysticism lies, I believe, in a careful comparison of his doctrines with the system of the mystic who made the deepest impression upon him. This is St. Bernard of Clairvaux, whom Donne admires and to whom he sometimes turns for doctrinal inspiration. The value of such an approach is that it does not rely upon descriptions of the mystical states in general which cannot hope to be definitive, nor upon discernible similarities, but upon Donne's numerous direct quotations from St. Bernard.

St. Bernard's system is an epistemology which has man as its subject and God as its object. The method of knowledge is the threefold anagogic path consisting of humility, love, and contemplation.

Man, say Donne, St. Bernard and their contemporaries, is created to know and enjoy God. His special endowment

which distinguishes him from the beasts and relates him to the Trinity is his reasonable soul, created in the image of the triune God. Memory, reason, and will are the three faculties of the soul and they correspond to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, respectively. By mortification, according to Donne and St. Bernard, the body should be made subject to the soul. The soul's existence, they say, consists in animating the body and the body without the soul would be a senseless trunk.

Donne uses St. Bernard's elaboration of the idea of the image of the Trinity residing in the faculties of the soul on three occasions. Reason, memory, and will are corrupted by man's suggestion, consent, and delight in sin. But the soul may be returned to its original trinity, though not perfectly according to Donne, by the superimposing by God of a third trinity, faith, hope and charity.

The conclusion reached by St. Bernard in his Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio is accepted and preached by Donne. It is that man's will is a necessary factor in his salvation. Grace is the efficient cause of salvation, but man's free choice, his consent, is its material cause. By his consent to grace man becomes the subject of the knowledge of God.

There are two sorts of truth which a man may know, first, particular truths; and second, Truth in itself, or God. Knowledge of particular truths is both useful and

necessary, but such truths require a sanction beyond themselves, they must contribute to the knowledge of Truth, or God. Self-knowledge and scientific knowledge are classed as particular truths.

God's existence is proved by the causal argument. His essence insofar as it can be known, is determined on the basis of the ontological argument. God as Being is by participation in himself, whereas all other creatures "live and move and have their being" by participation in him.

Donne's positive treatment of the attributes of God divides him indisputably, I believe, from the via negativa of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. And the considerations of the mercy and goodness as well as the justice of God are the occasions of Donne's most exalted prose.

The doctrines regarding man and God provide the basis upon which to build the method of knowledge. Man is capable of knowing God and God has in various ways revealed himself to all men. The unanimity between Donne and St. Bernard here leads one to believe that if Donne were a mystic he would follow the anagogic path which leads to a vision of Truth belonging neither to space nor to time.

The Christian mystical epistemology rests on the tenet that like knows like, that man may come to a special knowledge of God before the resurrection by

making himself more like him. The way to attain this resemblance is, first, humility which results from a true knowledge of himself and purifies the reason and, second, love which results from a true knowledge of his neighbors and purifies the will.

To know himself as he really is means that a man, according to Donne and St. Bernard, knows that he is dignified because of the image of the Trinity residing in his soul, but made miserable and wretched because of his suggestion, consent, and delight in sin. Self-knowledge, however, is a particular truth which, in order to be worthy of man's consideration requires a sanction beyond itself. Donne and St. Bernard both apply a sanction to self-knowledge, but one is characteristic of the non-mystic, the other is that applied by the mystics. For Donne man should know himself in order to know whether or not he merits the vision of God *sicuti est* promised to all who persevere in the faith. St. Bernard studies himself because by understanding his own being he comes to understand the Being of all things before the resurrection. If Donne were a mystic he would sanction self-knowledge as a means to a special knowledge of God in this life. He is no mystic.

This, however, is not the only basis for excluding Donne from the company of mystics, although it is the primary one. Love, the second step of St. Bernard's anagogic path purifies the will. Following sufficient pro-

gress in the second step, he says, the perfect image of God is restored in the soul. The Son in humility gave faith and the Holy Ghost in love now gives charity and by these two, faith and charity, the hope of returning to the Father is aroused. By the purification of the reason and the will, then, the soul has acquired the perfection necessary for contemplation.

It is his categorical denial of man's ability to attain this perfection which provides the second basis for the decision that Donne is not a mystic. Nothing in this world, neither in spiritual or temporal things, he says, can be perfect.

Donne's final repudiation of mysticism is his pronouncement against the experience of contemplation or union which constitutes the third step of the anagogic path. In contemplation, as defined by St. Bernard, the soul withdraws from sensuous images and desires and communes intuitively with God, or pure Truth. Donne rejects as a "hypocritical [sic] counterfeiting" the purity required for such a vision. To know God by intuition in this life, he says, is to deviate from the example set by Christ who "contented himself with the ordinary way" of coming to know anything. For Donne the mystic's ineffable experience of contemplation is a sin, the sin of presumption because neither faith, hope and charity, nor purity can be perfect in this world.

Some explanation, however, must be given for Donne's frequent use of the term "union." There are, he says, two unions with God. One is reserved for heaven, the other, possible in this life, is a representation of that final union. He distinguishes three steps which lead the soul to that final union. The first is baptism which cleanses the soul of original sin. The second is the sacrament of communion which absolves the soul of actual sins and constitutes, for Donne, the unitive experience possible in this life. The third step is physical death which introduces the soul to the consummation of all knowledge and unites it to God inseparably. In heaven the soul will be perfect in all its faculties and will be able to comprehend God intuitively.

From this examination of his thought against the background of the system of the one great mystic to whom he sometimes looked for doctrinal inspiration, Donne emerges, not as a mystic, but as a great Anglican divine. He supports the Church and its ordinances, rather than private inspirations, and the universally accepted doctrines, rather than any that deviate into unknown or seldom travelled ways, or require more discipline than man's infirmities enable him to accomplish. God, says Donne, does not ask more of man than he can provide because God "looks in what earthen vessels" he has placed his image.

JOHN DONNE AND ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX:
A Study in Mysticism

By

CORINNE ELIZABETH KAUFFMAN

A THESIS

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan
State College of Agriculture and Applied Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

1950

21539790

PREFACE

The mystic, more than anyone else, deserves to be called a lover of Wisdom. This Wisdom is not the wisdom of the world, but that ineffable divine Wisdom, which is coeternal and consubstantial with God, that is, the second person of the Trinity. This Love is not the want of something absent, which is desire, but the enjoyment of something present. The Wisdom sought by the mystic is to worldly wisdom what reality is to illusion, and his Love is to desire what understanding is to faith. Many love the wisdom of the world, and many desire the Wisdom of God, but the mystic is one of the few who truly love the true Wisdom. They transcend the love of worldly wisdom, and they consummate the desire of Divine Wisdom, in the love of divine Wisdom experienced in the ecstasy of mystical contemplation. Rapt from the world to the Word, they no longer possess anything but the Word. Possessing it, they no longer seek anything, but rest in it and love it as the Bridegroom of the soul.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, of all the medieval Doctors of the Church, best deserves to be called a mystic and a Lover of Wisdom in this sense. He rises by means of the anagogic path from a knowledge of himself to the intuitive knowledge of Truth granted in this life only to perfect souls.

In regard to Donne as a mystic there has not been such certainty. There can be no doubt that the object of his metaphysical thirst is a knowledge of God, or that his transcendental consciousness was unusually acute, or that he employs on many occasions the special vocabulary associated with mysticism. But it is doubtful whether he seeks the mystic's knowledge of God, and whether he transcends the world of time in the same way as the mystic does, and whether he intends the mystic's meaning to be attached to the terms he borrows. By re-examining the doctrines set forth by Donne in the Sermons in the light of the doctrines of St. Bernard I propose to determine, insofar as possible, his relationship to mysticism.

In the preparation of this essay I have tried to do two things: first, to allow Donne to speak for himself as often as possible; second, to paraphrase, or summarize accurately those passages from St. Bernard which are too long to quote in full in the text.

That I have not intended to prove what was a preconceived notion, will be substantiated, I believe, by Professor Arnold Williams who has witnessed several of the essay's metamorphoses.

And to Professor Williams I am grateful for the original idea as well as for his guidance and interest in its unfolding.

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	111
I Introduction	3
II Man -- The Subject of Knowledge	10
III God -- The Object of Knowledge	37
IV The Anagogic Path	60
Appendix	95
Bibliography	97

We ascend Thy ways that be in
our heart, and sing a song of
degrees; we glow inwardly with
Thy fire, with Thy good fire,
and we go, because we go upwards
to the peace of Jerusalem.

Saint Augustine,
Confessions, XIII, 9.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The question of whether or not John Donne is a mystic has been a major ingredient of the criticism which centers around him. This may be due, in part, to the presence in his poetry and prose of an elusive quality which manifests itself in his ability to search out the quintessence of any given object or event. This search, moreover, is carried out with the intensity and fervency associated with the writings of the mystics.

Donne may also have been associated with mysticism because of his frequent use of its special vocabulary. He speaks often of the need for purgation, of the experiences of contemplation and union, and of the power of love.

Finally, it may be due to the fact that mysticism is not clearly defined in the mind of the critic, or, more correctly, that mysticism is impossible to define in such a way that the definition at once describes the whole movement and applies accurately to each one of its exponents. Evelyn Underhill's very valuable study comes closest perhaps to accomplishing this.¹ She considers the mystic's development under the time-honored threefold division of the mystic way. Pur-

¹ Mysticism; 12th ed.

gation she defines as the soul's "attempts to eliminate by discipline and mortification all that stands in the way of its progress towards union with God."² She describes Illumination as the state reached "when by Purgation the Self has become detached from the 'things of sense,' and acquired those virtues which are the 'ornaments of the spiritual marriage.'"³ This is followed by an intermediate step usually called "the dark night of the soul." Miss Underhill defines it as "the great desolation in which the soul seems abandoned by the Divine. The Self now surrenders itself, its individuality, and its will, completely."⁴ This prepares the soul for the third step of the mystic way which is Union. "In this state," continues Miss Underhill, "the Absolute Life is not merely perceived and enjoyed by the Self, as in Illumination: but is one with it."⁵ But even this comprehensive study of mysticism fails, I believe, to describe accurately the main outlines of the mystic way set forth by so great a mystic as St. Bernard. The three steps which he proposes, namely, humility, love, and contemplation, seem at first to conform to the traditional steps considered by Miss

²Mysticism; 12th ed., p. 169.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 170.

⁵Ibid.

Underhill. Closer examination, however, reveals that both humility and love are part of the process of purgation and that following sufficient progress in these the soul is prepared for contemplation, or union. Nor does St. Bernard, so far as I know, suffer the agonies of the "dark night of the soul," given so prominent a place in the mystic's experience by Miss Underhill.

It is possible also to distinguish several methods which have been employed to determine whether or not Donne is a mystic. The first of these is to use no method, but to assume that he is a mystic, as George Williamson does:

However, Donne's closest disciples are awakened in a profounder way by what we may call the trinity of his genius, his mysticism, logic, and passionate intensity.⁶

The second way has been to study Donne in the light of Miss Underhill's description of the mystical states. Itrat Husain has done this and concludes, "we do not know whether Donne himself reached the unitive stage of mystical life or not."⁷ Evelyn M. Simpson, working against the same background puts the height of Donne's religious experience at the stage of illumination.⁸ But to say that anyone is, or is not a mystic on the basis of his conformity to the traditional division of the

⁶The Donne Tradition, p. 235.

⁷The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne, p. 141.

⁸A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne; 2nd ed., p. 96.

mystic way is to base that decision on a definition which is necessarily incomplete.

Michael F. Moloney tries Donne as a mystic in still another way.

The test of Donne's real attitude toward mysticism and the mystic impulse then is not to be found in his casual employment of its machinery when his muse is on the wing; it is to be found rather in an analysis of his reasoned pronouncements on more sober occasions. These latter fall chiefly into two types: the first include his judgments on the alleged mystic experiences of individuals recognized by those competent to judge as true exponents of mysticism; the second embrace his own particularly private utterances in the Devotions and Essays in Divinity where his mysticism, if it were a reality, could logically be expected to reveal itself.⁹

It is true, as Moloney says, that Donne denounces two recognized mystics, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Philip Neri. And this would be a sound basis for excluding him from the company of mystics, if they were the only ones whose names appear in his writings. The fact is, however, that Donne never speaks in a derogatory way of Plotinus, or of St. Augustine, or of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,¹⁰ or of Hugh of St. Victor, or of St. Bernard, all of whom are considered mystics. For St. Bernard Donne shows great reverence and admiration. He often refers

⁹John Donne: His Flight from Medievalism. Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, XXIX, nos. 2-3 (1948), 183.

¹⁰Donne rejects his via negativa in regard to the attributes of God, but never speaks against him as a mystic.

to him as "devout and holy," or "good and holy."

In regard to Moloney's statement that the Devotions and Essays are the logical places to seek Donne's mysticism, it is to be noted that he gives no reason why this should be true. If Donne were a mystic the evidence would not be confined to his private writings. Mysticism is a way of life, a special way, which, if accepted, informs and guides every small event of a man's inward and outward existence. One cannot be a mystic in private and not manifest it in public.

Mary Paton Ramsay studies the mystical element in Donne's thought against the background of Plotinus' doctrine. She gives two reasons for doing this:

Il se peut que le mysticisme de Donne ait été directement influencé par la lecture des Enneades, alors accessibles dans la traduction latine de Marsile Ficin. Mais les auteurs que Donne lisait le plus volontiers, St. Augustin et St. Bernard par exemple, étaient tous mystiques plus ou moins influencés par le plotinisme.¹¹

Although it is true, as Miss Ramsay says, that the influence of Plotinus is to be found in later mystics, yet Donne cites Plotinus on only a few occasions while his direct quotations from St. Bernard's works in the Sermons alone number well over one hundred.¹² Many

¹¹Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne; 2nd ed., p. 225.

¹²I have chosen St. Bernard over St. Augustine because the latter's mysticism, though of great importance historically, is not the complete, well-reasoned system that St. Bernard's is.

of these deal with the central truths of St. Bernard's system which would indicate that Donne was more than slightly acquainted with his sermons and essays.

With the exception of George Williamson these critics agree that Donne is not a mystic in the full sense of the word.¹³ This, I am convinced, is undeniably true. What they fail to do is to base this conclusion on a strong foundation. A comparison, however, of Donne's thought with that of the one fully developed mystic whom he admires and from whom he quotes more than incidentally will, I believe, provide a more sound basis for judgment. Such an approach avoids arbitrary definitions and it does not rely entirely upon discernible similarities, but can be implemented with direct quotations.

These quotations, the sources of about three-fourths of which I have found, are accurate. This seems to have been important to Donne because he says that neither Christ, nor the Holy Ghost "were so curious as our times, in citing chapters and verses, or

¹³Miss Rarsay's well-informed work is almost an exception, but she too points out one short-coming: "Il se sauve de lui-même dans la communauté de l'Eglise, cherchant de forces morales dans la présence d'autres âmes en prière. Mais c'est dans la solitude que les grands mystiques ont cherché Dieu. Il manque à Donne, il lui toujours manqué, cette unification, cette harmonie intérieure, que ce grand maître des mystiques, Plotin, a tenu pour condition essentielle de la vision mystique." Les doctrines, p. 242.

such distinctions, no nor in citing the very, very words of the places."¹⁴

The difficulties involved in systematizing the mass of St. Bernard's writings can hardly be over-emphasized, but they can be reduced by regarding his doctrine as an epistemological system. The subject of knowledge is man, its object is God, and the method of attaining the special knowledge of God sought by the mystic is to follow the threefold anagogic path, consisting of humility, love, and contemplation.¹⁵

¹⁴Sermon XXXI, (Works; ed. Alford, II, 29). All references to Donne's works are to this edition, hereafter cited only by volume and page number.

¹⁵These are the steps set forth in his essay De gradibus humilitatis, (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 941-58). That they agree with his other accounts of the method of knowledge will be seen by referring to the chart appended.

CHAPTER II

MAN -- THE SUBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

Anyone endeavoring to reconstruct the intellectual background of John Donne is impressed first by the remarkable unanimity among serious thinkers as to the nature of man and his place in the order of the universe. Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, and Christianity had been woven into a pattern, almost universally agreed upon, in which they were all but indistinguishable. This pattern, in its main outlines at least, was in Donne's time the same as that of the Middle Ages.

It was universally agreed that man was made to know and enjoy God. And it was the business of thoughtful men to enable men to fulfill this end, as well as to warn them of the dangers incurred by failing to fulfill it. In his Summa contra gentiles St. Thomas Aquinas says that if man, "who is led by faith to God as his last end, through ignoring the natures of things, and consequently the order of his place in the universe, thinks himself to be beneath certain creatures above whom he is placed," thereby derogating the natural dignity of his position, and repudiating the end for which he was made, he is worthy of the same punishment that the Scriptures promise to heretics.¹

¹II, iii. Translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

Man, then, is the subject of knowledge and God is the object of knowledge. St. Bernard tells us that the capacity to acquire knowledge is a human property; for man is a mortal, rational animal,² intermediate between irrational beasts who are unable to acquire knowledge of spiritual and intelligible things,³ and the immortal angels who possess such knowledge because of their nature, that is, eternally.⁴ This means that, as Donne says, "some things the angels do know by the dignity of their nature, by their creation, which we know not; as we know many things which inferior creatures do not."⁵

"Our nature," Donne writes to his friend Sir Henry Goodyere, "is meteoric, we respect (because we partake) both earth and heaven."⁶ Man, then, in the words of Sir Thomas Browne, is "that great and true amphibium, whose nature is disposed to live not only like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds: for though there be but one to sense, there are two to reason, the one visible, the other invisible."⁷

²De consideratione, II, iv, 7 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 746).

³Sermones in Cantica, V, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 799-800). Cf. In vigilia natiuitatis Domini, III, 8 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 98-99).

⁴Ibid., 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 800).

⁵Sermon CLIV, (VI, 184).

⁶Letter XXXVII, (VI, 346).

⁷Religio Medici, I, 34 (Works; ed. Keynes, I, 43).

Man is a citizen of two worlds in another sense, that is, because he is a union of body and soul. His body relates him to the animals, but his soul relates him to the whole Trinity.

St. Bernard believed implicitly, as did his contemporaries, that the body is a compound of fire, air, water, and earth.⁸ Despite the new discoveries regarding the composition of the body which led Donne to write in 1612:

Have not all soules thought
For many ages that our body's wrought
Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements?
And now they thinke of new ingredients,
And one Soule thinkes one, and another way
Another thinkes, and 'tis an even lay.⁹

he never, I think, really accepted them. In a sermon, undated but preached certainly after 1612, he says explicitly that man's body is composed of fire, air, earth, and water.¹⁰

The soul, according to St. Bernard and Donne, is created in the image of God and is a trinity consisting of memory, reason, and will. Donne refers to St. Bernard as he speaks to his listeners at Lincoln's Inn about the three faculties of the soul.

That plural word nos, which was used by God,
in the making of man, when God said Faciamus,

⁸Sermones de diversis, LXXXIV (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 695-96).

⁹"Of the Progresse of the Soule," ll. 263-68 (ed. Grierson, I, 259).

¹⁰Sermon XXXVIII, (II, 172).

Let us, us make man, according to our image,
as it intimates a plurality, a concurrence
of all the Trinity in our making, so doth
it also a plurality in that image of God,
which was then imprinted in us; as God, one
God created us, so we have a soul, one soul,
that represents, and is some image of that
one God; as the three persons of the Trinity
created us, so we have, in our one soul, a
threefold impression of that image, and, as
St. Bernard calls it, A Trinity from the
Trinity, in those three faculties of the
soul, the understanding, the will, and the
memory.¹¹

The corruption of both body and soul results from
man's "suggestion, consent, and delight in sin," as
Donne says, quoting St. Bernard.¹² According to St.
Bernard, the soul must be purged by love,¹³ and the body
by asceticism.¹⁴

Exactly how much mortification St. Bernard advocates
is very difficult to determine. Guillaume de Saint-
Thierry, in his biography, tells of his stern words to
novices: Leave at the door the bodies which you have
carried in the world, only spirits enter here.¹⁵ It is
probable, however, that this is an exaggeration of the
rigors of the monastic life designed to discourage all

¹¹Sermon CI, (IV, 333).

¹²Sermon XL, (II, 217).

¹³De gradibus humilitatis, III, 6 (PL, CLXXXII,
cols. 944-45).

¹⁴Sermones in Psalmum XC, Qui Habitat, X, 3 (PL,
CLXXXIII, cols. 222-23).

¹⁵S. Bernardi vita et res gestae, I, iv, 20 (PL,
CLXXXV, col. 238).

but the most sincere because his most characteristic statement is the one which Donne quotes:

Tolle corpus, ut non te ferat, sed tu illud,
Take up thy body, bring thy body into thy
power, that thou govern it, and not it thee;
and then, Arbula, non retrospectas, Walk on,
proceed forward, and look not back with a
delight upon thy former sins.¹⁶

Elsewhere St. Bernard says that the body should be to the soul as a wife, to be loved but disciplined.¹⁷

Donne knew the weakness of human flesh and the frailty of human nature and realized the need of self-discipline and mortification; he points out that even Christ, in whom nature reached its highest perfection, was not without human infirmity.

All other men, by occasion of this flesh,
have dark clouds, yea nights, yea long and
frozen winter nights of sin, and of the
works of darkness. Christ was incapable of
any such nights, or any such clouds, and
approaches towards sin; but yet Christ ad-
mitted some shadows, some such degrees of
human infirmity. . . he was willing to show
that the nature of man, in the best per-
fection thereof is not true light, all
light. . . So that no man, not Christ, con-
sidered but so as man was tota lux, all
light, no cloud.¹⁸

The end of mortification, for Donne, is the reconcilia-
tion of the body and the soul rather than the annihila-
tion of the body. "For neither the spirit nor flesh must
be destroyed in us; a spiritual man is not all spirit,

¹⁶Sermon XXXII, (II, 59-60).

¹⁷Sermones in festo omnium Sanctorum, I, 11 (PL,
CLXXXIII, cols. 458-59).

¹⁸Sermon CXVII, (V, 52-3).

he is a man still."¹⁹ The consideration of the relationship between body and soul and the amount of mortification required leads Donne to complain:

I have not body enough for my body, and I have too much body for my soul; not body enough, not blood enough, not strength enough, to sustain myself in health, and yet body enough to destroy my soul, and frustrate the grace of God in that miserable, perplexed, riddling condition of man; sin makes the body of man miserable, and the remedy of sin, mortification, makes it miserable too; if we enjoy the good things of this world, Duriores carcerem proeparamus, we do but carry another wall about our prison, another story of unwieldy flesh about our souls; and if we give ourselves as much mortification as our body needs, we live a life of Fridays and see no Sabbath, we make up our years of Lents, and see no Easters, and whereas God meant us Paradise, we make all the world a wilderness.²⁰

But Donne was decidedly against the extreme forms of asceticism, which he called "those devilish doctrines (so St. Paul calls them) that forbid certain meats, and that make uncommanded macerations of the body, meritorious." Though the soul "requires not so large, so vast a house of sinful flesh, to dwell in," he says,

yet on the other side, we may not by inordinate abstinencies, by indiscreet fastings, by inhuman flagellations, by unnatural macerations, and such disciplines, as God doth not command, nor authorize, so wither, and shrink, and contract the body, as though the soul were sent into it, as into a prison, or into fetters, and manacles, to wring, and pinch, and torture it.²¹

¹⁹Sermon I, (I, 19-20).

²⁰Sermon C, (IV, 323-24).

²¹Sermon XIX, (I, 374-75).

He knew that the process of reconciling spirit and flesh was a life-long work, a war not easily won, terminated only by death.

Our life is a warfare, our whole life; it is not only with lusts in our youth, and ambitions in our middle years, and indevisions in our age, but with agonies in our body, and temptations in our spirit upon our death-bed, that we are to fight; and he cannot be said to overcome, that fights not out the whole battle.²²

Only once does Donne ever say that he is willing to be called a Papist.

If when I study this holiness of life, and fast, and pray, and submit myself to discreet, and medicinal mortifications, for the subduing of my body, any man will say, this is papistical, Papists do this, it is a blessed protestation, and no man is the less a Protestant, nor the worse a Protestant for making it, men and brethren, I am a Papist, that is, I will fast and pray as much as any Papist, and enable myself for the service of my God, as seriously, as sedulously, as laboriously as any Papist.²³

There is in St. Bernard's thought a doctrine which, though rarely found in medieval literature, has, partially at least, a parallel in the work of Donne. This is the statement that there is no enmity between the body and the soul and that the soul cannot desire to be freed from the body itself, but only from the body of death. His point of departure is St. Paul's famous question:

Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius? (Rom. 7:24) Non queritur

²²Sermon LXXIX, (III, 454).

²³Sermon XLVII, (II, 368).

de corpore tantum, sed corpore mortis hujus, hoc est ejus quae adhuc durat corruptionis: monstrans non corpus, sed corporis molestias esse causam peregrinationis. Corpus quippe quod corrumpitur, aggravat animum (Sap. 9:15). Non corpus simpliciter, sed corpus quod corrumpitur; ut corruptio corporis oneri sit, non natura. Unde et qui intra semetipsos ingemiscunt, redemptionem expectant corporis sui, non amissionem.²⁴

Donne, so far as I know, never says that there is no "enmity" between the body and the soul, but in one place he does say, following a quotation from Tertullian, that "these two, body and soul, cannot be separated forever, which, whilst they are together concur in all that either of them do."²⁵ Three lines in his poem, "Of the Progresse of the Soule," will serve to show that whether it may desire so or not, the soul is incapable of leaving the body before death.

My body, could, beyond escape or helpe,
Infect thee /soul/ with Originall sinne, and thou
Couldst neither then refuse, nor leave it now.²⁶

To St. Bernard's statement that the body is necessary and useful to the soul both in this life and the next,²⁷ Donne agrees, but uses the "school" as his authority.

To constitute a man, there must be a body,
as well as a soul. Nay, the immortality of
the soul, will not so well lie in proof,
without a resuming of the body. For, upon

²⁴De praecepto et dispensatione, XX, 59 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 892).

²⁵Sermon XVI, (I, 322).

²⁶Ll. 166-68 (ed. Grierson, I, 256).

²⁷De diligendo Deo, XI, 30,31 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 993).

those words of the apostle, If there were no resurrection, we were the miserablest of all men, the school reasons reasonably: naturally the soul and body are united; when they are separated by death, it is contrary to nature, which nature still affects this union; and consequently the soul is the less perfect, for this separation; and it is not likely, that the perfect natural state of the soul, which is, to be united to the body, should last but three or four score years, and in most, much less, and the unperfect state, that is the separation, should last eternally, for ever; so that either the body must be believed to live again, or the soul believed to die.²⁸

The body and soul of man are brought together, then, in a most intimate way. Donne and St. Bernard both say that the soul's existence consists in animating the body²⁹ and that the body without the soul would be a senseless trunk.³⁰ Man is a blend of matter and spirit; he partakes of death and of immortality. He stands at the meeting ground of time and eternity. He is related by his intellect to the angels and by his instincts to the animals. Though his reason lifts him up to heaven, yet he is not a pure spirit. Though his passions pull him down to earth, yet he is not merely an animal. He is

²⁸Sermon XVI, (I, 321).

²⁹Donne, "Aire and Angels," ll. 7-8 (ed. Grierson, I, 22); Sermon XIX, (I, 377).

St. Bernard, Sermones in nativitate Domini, II, 6 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 122).

³⁰Donne, Sermon XX, (II, 16); Sermon CXLIX, (VI, 45); Sermon CLVIII, (VI, 285).

St. Bernard, Sermones in nativitate Domini, II, 2 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 120): "Num quid non truncus esset insensibilis caro inanimata?"

placed on a middle rung of the ladder of being, dividing his allegiance between the kingdoms of light and of darkness.

Having, thus, put man in his place in the universe as a rational, mortal being, a union of body and soul, the essential link between the world of matter and the world of spirit, we must now examine the soul more carefully.

The human soul, as defined by St. Bernard, does not live, but is life; it contains within itself the principle of life. The body, however, lives because vivified by life, or the soul.

Non stabunt pariter in gradu uno vita et vivens: multo minus vita, et quae sunt sine vita. Vita anima est vivens quidem, sed non aliunde quam se ipsa: ac per hoc non tam vivens, quam vita, ut proprie de ea loquamur. Inde est quod infusa corpori vivificat illud, ut sit corpus de vitae praesentia, non, vita, sed vivens. Unde liquet, ne vivo quidem corpori id vivere esse, quod esse: cum esse, et minime vivere possit.³¹

It is impossible to find a passage in Donne's sermons which exactly parallels this one, but since it follows logically from the fact that the soul's existence consists in animating the body and Donne does say this, it may well be that he would agree with St. Bernard.

Furthermore, the soul is immortal, that is ever living, because it is its own life; however, since it is subject to change, or passage from one being to another

³¹Sermones in Cantica, LXXI, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1172). Cf. Sermones in tempore resurrectionis ad abbates, II, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 283).

it is not eternally immutable, like God.

Vera namque et integra immortalitas tam non recipit mutationem, quam nec finem, quod omnis mutatio quaedam mortis imitatio sit. Omne etenim quod mutatur, dum de uno ad aliud transit esse, quodam modo necesse est moriatur quod est, ut esse incipiat quod non est. Quod si tot mortes quot mutationes, ubi immortalitas? Et huic vanitati subjecta est ipsa creatura non volens, sed propter eum qui subiecit eam in spe (Rom. 8:20). Attamen immortalis anima est: quoniam cum ipsa sibi vita sit; sicut non est, quo cadat a se, sic non est quo cadat a vita.³²

Donne, in a curious use of this doctrine, compliments the Countess of Bedford by telling her that God in making her soul

tooke Soules stuffe such as shall late decay,
Or such as needs small change at the last day.³³

The "change at the last day" is the same change intended by St. Bernard, that is, the change de uno ad aliud. . . esse, from one being to another. But it is also a change from a state of mutability to immutability and, as Donne says, quoting St. Bernard, "Maxima mutatio est mutabilitatem, To be changed so, as that we can never be changed more, is the greatest change of all."³⁴ Thus, death is physical death for the body and is death "in a certain sense" for the soul.

³²Sermones in Cantica, LXXVI, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1173). Cf. Ibid., LXXVI, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 940-41).

³³"To the Countesse of Bedford," ll. 23-4 (ed. Grier-son, I, 219).

³⁴Sermon CXXVIII, (V, 477).

Nevertheless, because the soul is made in the image of God and is, therefore, life "though man had a beginning, which the original, the eternal God himself had not; yet man shall no more have an end, than the original, the eternal God himself shall have."³⁵

St. Bernard is not content with defining the soul, its faculties and its relationship to the body. He applies the terms of the accepted psychology to the spiritual life and tells of the "soul" of the soul. It is at this point that one first suspects that the term of St. Bernard's system will be mysticism.

The soul, he says, which in relation to the body, is life,³⁶ may acquire its own life (knowledge) and its own sensitivity (love) by being animated by its own soul (God and his grace). God and his grace, then, bear the same relationship to the soul which the soul bears to the body.³⁷

Donne speaks of the "soul" of the soul on a number of occasions,³⁸ sometimes in the same way as such notions are used in his poetry, that is, as a conceit. At other times he uses the idea in the same way that St. Bernard does.

³⁵Sermon CX, (IV, 527).

³⁶Sermones in Cantica, LXXVI, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1172).

³⁷Sermones de diversis, X, 1 (PL, CIXXXIII, cols. 567-68).

³⁸Sermon XXXV, (II, 111); Sermon XXXVII, (II, 158).

Grace doth not ordinarily work upon the stiffness of the soul, upon the silence, upon the frowardness, upon the averseness of the soul, but when the soul is suppled and mellowed, and feels this reproof, this remorse in itself, that reproof, that remorse becomes as the matter, and grace becomes the soul.³⁹

In another sermon Donne tells his auditory that having been baptised they must

rise, and ascend to that growth, which your baptisr prepared you to: and the heavens shall open, and rain down blessings of all kinds, in abundance; and the Holy Ghost shall descend upon you, as a dove, in his peaceful coming, in your simple, and sincere receiving him; and he shall rest upon you, to effect and accomplish his purposes in you. . . . And so baptized and so pursuing the contract of your baptism, and so crowned with the residence of his blessed Spirit, in your holy conversation, he /God/ shall breathe a soul into your soul.⁴⁰

For, as Donne says, "except our soul receive another soul, and be inanimated with grace, even the soul itself is but a carcase."⁴¹

The soul was created, as Donne says, "by consultation, by a conference, by a counsel, Faciarus hominem, Let us make man; there is a more express manifestation of divers persons speaking together, of a concurrence of the Trinity."⁴² And each of the three faculties of the soul corresponds

³⁹Sermon XXXIV, (II, 98).

⁴⁰Sermon XLI, (II, 246-47).

⁴¹Sermon XIX, (I, 377).

⁴²Sermon CXLIV, (V, 573).

to one person of the Trinity. The Father is represented by memory, the Son by reason, the Holy Ghost by will.

"Beata illa et sempiterna Trinitas," says St. Bernard,

Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, unus
Deus scilicet, summa potentia, summa sapi-
entia, summa benignitas, creavit quandam
trinitatem ad imaginem et similitudines
suam, aniram videlicet rationalem, quae in
eo praefert vestigium quoddam illius summae
Trinitatis quod ex memoria, ratione et vol-
untate consistit.⁴³

This explanation of the nature of the image was one of two which Professor Arnold Williams distinguishes as widely accepted in Donne's time.⁴⁴

Donne, in one of many references to this subject, says,

I have the image of God, in my whole soul,
and of all the three persons, in the three
faculties thereof, the understanding, the
will, and the memory.⁴⁵

Both Donne and St. Bernard feel that "it is a lovely and religious thing, to find out vestigia Trinitatis, impressions of the Trinity, in as many things as we can,"⁴⁶ but the similitude between the faculties of the soul and the persons of the Trinity is the most perfect impression.

⁴³Sermones de diversis, XLV, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 667). Cf. De conversione ad clericos, VI, 11 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 840-41); Sermones in Cantica, VI, 5 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 826).

⁴⁴The Common Expositor, pp. 73-4. The other explanation is that it consists in man's domination over the other creatures.

⁴⁵Sermon CX, (IV, 534).

⁴⁶Sermon XL, (II, 216).

St. Bernard's elaboration of this idea, however, is not to be considered as a commonplace. He teaches that spiritual death, that is the death of the soul brought about by suggestion, consent and delight in sin, results in the death of each faculty of the soul.⁴⁷ And the resurrection of the soul is the resurrection of each of the faculties by the superimposing, by God, of another trinity, namely, faith, hope, and charity.

Verumtamen hunc tam graven, tam tenebrosum, tam sordidum lapsum nostrae naturae reparavit illa beata Trinitas, memor misericordiae suae, immemor culpaе nostrae. Venit ergo a Patre missus Dei Filius et dedit fidem; post Filium missus est Spiritus sanctus et dedit docuitque caritatem. Itaque per haec duo, id est fidem et caritatem, facta est spes redeundi ad Patrem. Et haec est trinitas, scilicet fides, spes, caritas, per quam velut per tridentem reduxit de limo profundi ad amissam beatitudinem illa incommutabilis et beata Trinitas mutabilem, lapsam et miseram trinitatem. Et fides quidem illuminavit rationem, spes erexit memoriam, caritas vero purgavit voluntatem.⁴⁸

"Let us with St. Bernard," says Donne

consider Trinitatem creatricem, and Trinitatem creatam, A creating, and a created Trinity; a trinity, which the Trinity in heaven, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, hath created in our souls, reason, memory and will; and that we have super-created, added another trinity, suggestion, and consent, and delight in sin: and that God, after all this infuses another trinity, faith, hope, and charity, by which we return to our first.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Sermones de diversis, XLV, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, col.667).

⁴⁸Ibid., 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 668).

⁴⁹Sermon XL, (II, 217).

The idea that, just as it was the work of the whole Trinity to create man, so all three persons contribute to his re-creation, that is, his spiritual resurrection, adds new meaning to much that Donne has written. For example, in the Devotions when he cries:

Look upon me, and that will raise me again
from that spiritual death. . .take me again
to your consultation, O blessed and glorious
Trinity; and though the Father know, that I
have defaced his image, received in my crea-
tion; though the Son know, I have neglected
mine interest in the redemption, yet, O
blessed Spirit, as thou art my conscience,
so be to them a witness, that at this minute,
I accept that which I have so often, so often,
so rebelliously refused, thy blessed inspir-
ations; be thou my witness to them, that at
more pores than this slack body sweats tears,
this sad soul weeps blood; and more for the
displeasure of my God, than for the stripes
of his displeasure. Take me then, O blessed
and glorious Trinity, into a reconsultation.⁵⁰

And so it is for doctrinal, as much as for poetic reasons that Donne addresses himself to the "three person'd God"⁵¹ in his plea for freedom from sin.

The dignity of man consists in this threefold similarity between his soul and the Trinity and the fact that his creation was the work of the whole Trinity.

God had a picture of himself from all eter-
nity; from all eternity, the Son of God was
Colos. 1:15 the image of the invisible God; but then God
would have one picture, which should be the
picture of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost too,
and so made man to the image of the whole
Trinity. As the apostle argues, Cui dixit,

⁵⁰Prayer IX, (III, 538-39).

⁵¹Holy Sonnet XIV, "Batter my heart," (ed. Grierson, I, 328).

Heb. 1:5 To whom did God ever say, This day have I begotten thee, but to Christ? so we say, for the dignity of man, Cui dixit, Of what creature did God ever say Facia-rus, Let us, us, make it, all, all, the persons together, and to employ, and exercise, not only power, but counsel in the making of that creature?⁵²

It should be said in regard to this image of God in man's soul that nothing that man can do will erase that image.

For, thereupon does St. Bernard say, Imago Dei uri potest in Gehenna, non ex-uri: Till the soul be burnt to ashes, to nothing, (which cannot be done no not in hell) the image of God cannot be burnt out of that soul. For it is radically, primarily, in the very soul itself.⁵³

There is, in the sermons left to us by Donne, nothing that compares with St. Bernard's Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio for fulness of treatment. It must be dealt with here for two reasons: first, because it follows naturally from the discussion of the three faculties of the soul; second, because although Donne never treats the subject exhaustively he does accept St. Bernard's conclusion. The argument of the Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, as briefly and as clearly as possible, can be summarized as follows:

The will and the reason are faculties proper to man and to other rational beings, and it is precisely these faculties that distinguish man from irrational beasts.

⁵²Sermon LXV, (III, 139). See also Sermon CXIII, (IV, 576).

⁵³Sermon CX, (IV, 526). Cf. Sermon CXIII, (IV, 581); Sermon XLIII, (II, 276).

Their functions are distinct, so they are distinct faculties, but they always act together. Willing means to choose that which is willed⁵⁴; and choosing means willing that which is chosen.⁵⁵ Consent is the term used by St. Bernard to signify this joint action. And the consenting faculty, that is, the joint faculty of will and reason, is called free choice⁵⁶; the word free means willing, and the word choice means the action of the reason.⁵⁷

Free choice is free because it is voluntary, that is, of the will, and this is precisely what the word free means.⁵⁸ If a person chooses what he does not will, that means only that he wills the consequence of his choice more strongly than he wills the alternative; the stronger will prevails over the weaker will; and so the choice is truly willed and therefore truly free.⁵⁹

⁵⁴Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, II, 3 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1003).

⁵⁵Ibid., 4 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1003-04).

⁵⁶Ibid., XIV, 46 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1026): "Quid igitur? hoc ergo totum liberi arbitrii opus, hoc solum ejus est meritum quod consentit? Est prorsus."

⁵⁷Ibid., II, 4 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1003-04); ibid., III, 6 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1004-05).

⁵⁸Ibid., I, 2 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1002-03): "Non enim est consensus, nisi voluntarius. Ubi ergo consensus, ibi voluntas. Porro ubi voluntas, ibi libertas. Et hoc est quod dici puto liberum arbitrium." Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, I, 83, 2.

⁵⁹Ibid., XII, 38 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1021). For example, Peter denied Christ unwillingly, as it seemed, because his will to live was stronger than his will to acknowledge Christ.

Free choice is choice, because it is a distinction between good and bad, that is, it is a rational distinction, and this is precisely what the word choice means. The reason judges its choice as being good or bad, and this is how it differs from the non-moral discriminations made by irrational beasts.⁶⁰

Since it is part of his essential nature, man possesses it inalienably and under all conditions whatever, whether of innocence, corruption, grace, salvation, damnation, or any other condition; except only the conditions of insanity, infancy, and sleep.⁶¹ It means, in the second place, that he possesses it to an equal degree with all other rational beings, even God.⁶²

The consent of the will, being voluntary, not necessary, makes us just or unjust;⁶³ and free choice, therefore, is the capacity for blessedness or misery.

Sola ergo voluntas, quoniam pro sui ingenita libertate, aut dissentire sibi, aut praeter

⁶⁰Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, II, 4 (PL CLXXXII, cols. 1003-04): "Et merito libertatem comitatur iudicium: quoniam quidem quod liberum sui est, profecto ubi peccat, ibi se iudicat." Cf. Ibid., IV, 11 (PL CLXXXII, col. 1007): "Arbitrium quippe iudicium est."

⁶¹Ibid., II, 5 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1004).

⁶²Ibid., IV, 9 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1006): "Verum libertas a necessitate aequae et indifferenter Deo universaeque tam malae quam bonae rationali convenit creaturae."

⁶³Ibid., II, 4 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1003-04): "Cujus voluntatis consensus, utique voluntarius, non necessarius, dum aut justos probat aut injustos, etiam merito beatos facit vel miseros." Cf. Ibid., XII, 41 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1023-24).

se in aliquo consentire, nulla vi, nulla cogitur necessitate; non emmerito justam vel injustam, beatitudine seu miseria dignam ac capacem creaturam constituit; prout scilicet justitiae injustitiaeve consenserit.⁶⁴

Free choice, then is the necessary condition of good merit and of bad merit; because we are responsible only for what we do voluntarily. For this reason the case of original sin is excluded from the discussion because the individual is not responsible for it in the same way in which he is responsible for his actual sins.⁶⁵ Donne is not inclined to be so lenient, for him even original sin is voluntary.

Though this original sin that overflows us all, may in some sense be called peccatum involuntarium, a sin without any elicit act of the will, . . . and so properly no sin, yet as all our other faculties were, so Omnium voluntates in Adam,
 Augus- All our wills were in Adam, and we sinned
 tine wilfully, when he did so, and so original sin is a voluntary sin: our will is poisoned in the fountain; and, as soon as our will is able to exercise any election, we are willing to sin, as soon as we can, and sorry we can sin no sooner, and sorry no longer: we are willing before the devil is willing, and willing after the devil is weary, and seek occasions of temptation, when he presents none.⁶⁶

Free choice according to St. Bernard, is always

⁶⁴Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, III, 6 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1004).

⁶⁵Ibid., II, 5 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1004); ibid., XII, 38 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1021-22); ibid., XIII, 42 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1024).

⁶⁶Sermon XXXV, (II, 107).

free. But there is another meaning of the word "free" and in relation to it free choice is "enslaved" and must be "liberated."⁶⁷ In the state of nature man is not completely free. The existence of misery shows that man is not free to enjoy what he wills, and the existence of sin shows that he is not even able to will what is good. "I could as soon," says Donne, "believe that I had a being before God was, as that I had a will to good, before God moved it."⁶⁸ For St. Bernard man in that he lacks freedom of enjoyment is miserable; and in that he lacks freedom of counsel (the ability to will what is good) he is sinful.⁶⁹ In the state of nature free choice is the slave of sin, so that the soul is both "dead" by the corruption of the will and "blind" by the corruption of the reason.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the reason, although corrupt, still exists, and distinguishes between licit and illicit, and therefore judges its choice as good or bad.⁷¹ And

⁶⁷Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, III, 7 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1005-06); ibid., VI, 16 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1010).

⁶⁸Sermon CXIX, (V, 109).

⁶⁹Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, IV, 11 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1007).

⁷⁰Sermones in Cantica, LXXXV, 2 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1188): "Nam et malum volendo mortua erat, et bonum ignorando caeca." Cf. Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, I, 1 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 1001-02): "Porro duo mihi sunt necessaria, doceri ac juvari."

⁷¹Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, IV, 11 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1007).

the will, although corrupt, still exists, and consents freely to its choice.⁷² So that man always has freedom of choice, being able to choose what he will.⁷³

The liberation of free choice requires a twofold gift of grace, in order that it may be liberated from sin and from misery. The gift of true wisdom is the will's conversion to the good, and the gift of full power is its confirmation in the good. Perfect conversion means that only the licit pleases; perfect confirmation that nothing which pleases is any longer lacking.

Ut ergo velle nostrum, quod ex libero arbitrio habemus, perfectum habeamus; duplici gratiae munere indigemus, et vero videlicet Sapere, quod est voluntatis ad bonum conversio; et pleno etiam Posse, quod est ejusdem in bono confirmatio. Porro perfecta conversio est ad bonum, ut nil libeat nisi quod deceat vel liceat; perfecta in bono confirmatio, ut nil desit jam quod libeat. Tunc demum perfecta erit voluntas, cum plene fuerit bona, et bene plena.⁷⁴

Without going into further detail regarding the various kinds of grace and the action of each one in liberating or re-creating the free choice we can summarize by saying that God creates the soul by giving it natural life; he

⁷²Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, XI, 37 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1021): "At vero quantislibet quis in-
tus forisve tentationibus urgeatur, libera profecto
semper, quantum ad arbitrium spectat, voluntas erit:
libere quippe de suo nihilo minus consensu judicabit."

⁷³Serrones in Cantica, LXXVI, 9 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1175).

⁷⁴Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, VI, 19 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1012).

then re-creates it by giving it spiritual life. This re-creating grace liberates or saves the free choice from sin by changing it to free choice of the good, and so it is called saving grace.⁷⁵

Saving grace, then, operates salvation and, being omnipotent, is the sufficient condition of salvation.⁷⁶ But free choice is the necessary condition of salvation.⁷⁷ The inconsistency of these facts presents a dilemma: if grace is sufficient how can free choice be necessary?

This question, one of the most important in all of Christian theology, is the focal point of St. Bernard's Tractatus; it is, in fact, its raison d'être. Both God's omnipotence and man's independence and, indirectly, his moral responsibility are in jeopardy. If grace is sufficient, then man is nothing; if free choice is necessary to salvation, then God's omnipotence is marred at least.

St. Bernard's solution is admirable chiefly because he maintains the omnipotence of God, without diminishing man's faculty of free choice. Grace alone saves, and does not need any cooperation in the sense of assistance. And free choice is the very thing which is saved. To be saved means to consent to grace; and consenting is

⁷⁵Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, VI, 16 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1010).

⁷⁶Ibid., XIII, 42 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1024): "Sola salvat misericordia."

⁷⁷Ibid., XI, 36 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1020): "Nemo quippe salvatur invitus."

the function of free choice. God cannot save a man against his own will, for without it there would be nothing to save. Grace, then, is the efficient cause of salvation, but man's will and reason, his free choice is its material cause. The necessity of free choice for salvation, therefore, does not violate the divine omnipotence because it is a logical, not a psychological necessity.

Tolle liberum arbitrium, et non erit quod
salvetur: tolle gratiam, non erit unde
salvetur.⁷⁸

This doctrine is the basis of much that Donne says concerning the relationship of grace and man's will in the work of salvation. Against this background it becomes clear why he sometimes emphasizes man's nothingness in conversion and at other times gives man, if never an active part, at least a part. He is particularly fond of comparing man's first creation from nothing to his conversion by grace. As in his creation he was nothing, so in his conversion he "is nothing, does nothing. His body is not verier dust in the grave, till a resurrection, then his soul is dust in his body, till a resuscitation by grace."⁷⁹ But, though "man is no such a thing as can invite God to work upon him. . . he is such a thing, as nothing else is capable of his working but man,"⁸⁰ for

⁷⁸ Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, I, 2 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1002).

⁷⁹ Sermon LIX, (III, 22).

⁸⁰ Sermon CXLIII, (V, 553).

only man has a reasonable soul.⁸¹

Donne insists that "God saves no man against his will."⁸² Christ, he says,

promises to come to the door, and to knock
at the door, and to stand at the door, and
Rev.3 to enter if any man open;⁸³ but he does not
say, he will break open the door.⁸⁴

Christ calls men, he "beats his drum, but he does not
press men; Christ is served with voluntaries."⁸⁵

Trust not to an irresistible grace, that
at one time or other God will have thee,
whether thou wilt or no. Tolle voluntatem,
Ber- et non es infernus; If thou couldst quench
nard thine own will, thou hadst quenched hell;
if thou couldst be content, willing to be
in hell, hell were not hell. So, if God
save a man against his will, heaven is not
heaven, if he be loath to come thither,
sorry that he shall be there he hath not
the joy of heaven, and then heaven is not
heaven.⁸⁶

Man is an instrument in his salvation because he provides
the material cause. Donne tells his auditory, quoting
St. Bernard again:

You man know, that yourselves have a part
in those means, which God uses to that
purpose, yourselves are instruments, though
not causes of your own salvation. Salvus

⁸¹Sermon XIX, (I, 377).

⁸²Sermon CXXXII, (V, 371).

⁸³Donne is referring to Rev. 3:20: "Behold, I stand
at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and
open the door, I will come in to him."

⁸⁴Sermon CXXXII, (V, 365).

⁸⁵Sermon CXXXIX, (V, 498).

⁸⁶Sermon XLIII, (II, 295).

factus es pro nihilo, non de nihilotamen;
 Thou bringest nothing for thy salvation,
 yet something to thy salvation.⁸⁷

In other words, man does not merit salvation, yet he brings to it the consent of his will which is always his own.⁸⁸ In spite of Donne's curious way of expressing himself, he agrees, I think, with St. Bernard when he says that salvation cannot be accomplished without two things: one by which it is done; the other to which or in which it is done. Salvation is given only by God and only to free choice. To consent is to be saved.

Opus hoc sine duobus effici non potest:
 uno a quo fit; altero cui, vel in quo
 fit. Deus auctor est salutis, liberum
 arbitrium tantum capax: nec dare illam,
 nisi Deus; nec capere valet, nisi liber-
 um arbitrium. Quod ergo a solo Deo, et
 soli datur libero arbitrio; tam absque
 consensu esse (alias, effici) non potest
 accipientis, quam absque gratia dantis.
 Et ita gratiae operanti salutem cooper-
 ari dicitur liberum arbitrium, dum con-
 sentit, hoc est dum salvatur. Consen-
 tire enim salvari est.⁸⁹

Donne says essentially the same thing in other words:

In the application of that great work, the redemption of mankind, that is, in the conversion of a sinner, and the first act of that conversion, though the grace of God work all, yet there is a faculty in man, a will in man, which is in no creature but

⁸⁷Sermon L, (II, 439).

⁸⁸Sermon VIII, (I, 155).

⁸⁹Tractatus de gratia et libero arbitrio, I, 2 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1002). Cf. Ibid., VI, 16 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1010); ibid., XIII, 42 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 1024).

man, for that grace of God to work upon;
 but in the creation there was nothing
 at all.⁹⁰

To sum up. Only the human being is capable of acquiring knowledge because he alone is endowed with a reasonable soul. Furthermore, the soul of man is immortal although it is not immutable like the God in whose image it is created. Donne and St. Bernard place the image in the faculties of the soul. This image though defaced by sin may be restored by grace. But grace is inoperative without the consent of man's will. By consenting to receive grace man's potency to acquire knowledge becomes act. He is, thus, the subject of the knowledge of God.

⁹⁰Sermon CXXIII, (V, 192).

CHAPTER III

GOD -- THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE

The object of all knowledge is truth. Neither Donne nor St. Bernard would deny that all knowledge, if it is true, is good, and an end in itself. Neither would deny that knowledge requires some sanction beyond itself; that is, in order to be worth knowing, a particular truth must be not only an end in itself, as all truths are, but also a means to something further.

There are truths which are means required by the practical necessities of life, and therefore knowledge of them is necessary, even though they are relative and subject to change. Donne, in a sermon preached at St. Paul's, says concerning this sort of knowledge:

What one thing do we know perfectly?
Whether we consider arts, or sciences, the servant knows but according to the proportions of his master's knowledge in that art, and the scholar knows but according to the proportion of his master's knowledge in that science; young men mend not their sight by using old men's spectacles; and yet we look upon nature, but with Aristotle's spectacles, and upon the body of man, but with Galen's, and upon the frame of the world, but with Ptolemy's spectacles. Almost all knowledge is rather like a child that is embalmed to make mummy, than that is nursed to make a man; rather conserved in the stature of the first age, than grown to be greater; and if there be any addition to knowledge, it is rather a new knowledge, than a greater knowledge; rather a singularity in a desire of proposing something that was not known at all before, than an improving, an ad-

vancing, a multiplying of former inceptions; and by that means no knowledge comes to be perfect.¹

There are other truths which are means to the knowledge of God, Truth in itself, and it is upon these that men must focus their attention. Donne says that we must even become "blind" to the persons, pleasures, and knowledge of this world:

The sight, and the contemplation of God and our present benefits by him, and our future interest in him, must make us blind to this world, so, as that we look upon no face, no pleasure, no knowledge, with such an affection, such an ambition, such a devotion, as upon God, and the ways to him.²

In a later sermon, Donne tells his listeners that they should "keep a near, a familiar, and daily acquaintance, and conversation with the Holy Ghost," because

Ber-	nard	<u>Homines docent quaerere, solus ipse, qui</u> <u>docet invenire, habere, frui;</u> Men can teach us how to find some things; the pi- lot how to find a land, the astronomer how to find a star; men can teach us ways how to find God, the natural man in the book of creatures, the moral man in an exemplar life, the Jew in the law, the Christian in general in the Gospel, but <u>Solus ipse, qui</u> <u>docet invenire, habere, frui,</u> Only the Holy Ghost enables us to find God so, as to make him ours, and to enjoy him. ³
Ber-		
nard		

This does not mean that man should not endeavor to learn those things which other men can teach him, but that all

¹Sermon LXXX, (III, 472).

²Sermon XLIV, (II, 308).

³Sermon XXX, (II, 17).

such knowledge should be secondary to the knowledge which leads to salvation. St. Bernard and Donne both say this:

Tu qui cum timore et tremore tuam ipsius operari salutem pro temporis brevitatem festinas, ea scire prius ampliusque curato, quae senseris viciniora saluti.⁴

Blessed are they that inanimate all their knowledge, consummate all in Christ Jesus. The university is a paradise, rivers of knowledge are there, arts and sciences flow from thence. Council tables are Horti conclusi, (as it is said in the Canticles) Gardens that are sealed up; bottomless depths of unsearchable counsels there. But those Aquae quietudinem, which the prophet speaks of, The waters of rest, they flow from this good master, and flow into him again; all knowledge that begins not, and ends not with his glory, is but a giddy, but a vertiginous circle,⁵ but an elaborate and exquisite ignorance.⁵

St. Bernard and Donne teach that it is particularly useful even indispensable, to study the sacred Scriptures, because, as St. Bernard says, they are "full of divine mysteries and overflowing with celestial sweetness, provided the reader knows how to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."⁶ For God,

⁴Sermones in Cantica, XXXVI, 2 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 968). CF. Sermones in dedicatione ecclesiae, II, 4 (PL CLXXXIII, col. 523).

⁵Sermon XIV, (I, 277-78).

⁶De Laudibus Virginis Matris, Homilia I, I (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 56): "Plena quippe sunt omnia supernis mysteriis ac coelesti singula dulcedine redundantia, si tamen diligentem habeant inspectorem, qui noverit sugere mel de petra oleumque de saxo durissimo." St. Bernard is undoubtedly thinking of Leut. 32:13: "and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."

says Donne, is a God

in whose words there is such a height of figures, such voyages, such peregrinations to fetch remote and precious metaphors, such extensions, such spreadings, such curtains of allegories, such third heavens of hyperboles, so harmonious elocutions, so retired, and so reserved expressions, so commanding persuasions, so persuading commandments, such sinews, even in thy milk, and such things in thy words, as all profane authors seem of the seed of the serpent that creeps, thou art the dove that flies. O, what words but thine, can express the inexpressible texture and composition of thy Word.⁷

Donne sums up the purpose of all study, all knowledge of particular truths when he says, "all knowledge is ignorance, except it conduce to the knowledge of the Scriptures, and all the Scriptures lead us to Christ."⁸

If the reason for knowing particular truths is that they may conduce to a knowledge of God, then what are these truths? That is, what should a man know?

The first particular object of man's speculation is himself. If man was created in the image of God and made to know and enjoy God, it follows that the way to know him is to study oneself. Étienne Gilson, considering self-knowledge under the title "Christian Socratism,"⁹ sums up, as nearly as this can be done, the speculations of the Fathers concerning the relationship of the image

⁷Devotions, Expostulation XIX (III, 587).

⁸Sermon CLIV, (VI, 180).

⁹The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy; tr. A. H. C. Downes, Chapter XI, pp. 209-28.

of God, man's knowledge of it, and his knowledge of God,
by saying that

it is not solely or chiefly in virtue of
the divine image that man effectively
resembles God, but in virtue of his con-
sciousness of being an image, and the
movement whereby the soul, passing in a
way through itself, avails itself of the
factual resemblance in order to attain to
God.¹⁰

The nosce teipsum is of such great importance to St.
Bernard and to Donne that it will be necessary to return
again to it to see how it is related to humility. Here
it will be sufficient to show that they both realized
the vital importance of man's knowledge of himself and of
this knowledge in the way to the consummation of all
knowledge.

Donne believed that we are better disposed to the
study of ourselves when plunged into adversity or sick-
ness and certainly his own Devotions serve to illustrate
this. He tells his congregation of "how hard a thing
the knowledge of ourselves is, till we feel the direction
of adversity."¹¹ And he asserts that

No study is so necessary as to know our-
selves; no schoolmaster is so diligent, so
vigilant, so assiduous, as adversity. . . .
The end of knowing ourselves is to know how
we are disposed for that which is our end,
that is this blessedness.¹²

¹⁰The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy; tr. A.H.C.
Downes, p. 231

¹¹Sermon LIV, (II, 508).

¹²Ibid., (II, 509).

By the phrase "this blessedness" he means "that visio Dei, that sight of God, which in our glorified state we shall have in heaven. . .when we shall know /God/ at once, and without study."¹³

To know yourself is the beginning of wisdom; to know God is its consummation.¹⁴ This is the very core of Cistercian mysticism and the foundation of its whole epistemology. Self-knowledge, according to St. Bernard, comes first in the rational order of knowledge, because our first concern is naturally to know what we ourselves are; and it comes first in the order of utility, because it destroys pride and produces humility, which is the necessary condition of spiritual progress.¹⁵

The importance of the nosce teipsum to St. Bernard can be shown by the fact that in one sermon he commends the Augustinian doctrine that one's self is the only desirable particular object of consideration.

Huic duplici considerationi tota haec
vestra vocatio tribuatur, sicut sanctus
(St. Augustine) prabat: "Deus, noverim
me, noverim te."¹⁶

This however, must be regarded as an exaggerated reference to the priority of self-knowledge, for his consistent

¹³Sermon LIV, (II, 508).

¹⁴St. Bernard, Sermones in Cantica, XXXVII I (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 971).

¹⁵Ibid., XXXVI, 5 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 969-70).

¹⁶Sermones de diversis, II, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 542).

doctrine is much broader;¹⁷ broad enough, in fact, to include the study of any creatures whatever, provided the student does not stop there.

The only study which St. Bernard disapproves is positivism, the study of the phenomenal world without reference to the source or function of things. All things are to be studied not for their own sakes, but for the light which their teleological aspects throw on the nature of their creator. The being of things reveals God's power, the arrangement of things reveals God's wisdom, and the utility of things reveals God's goodness.¹⁸

This is the first of the threefold knowledge which St. Thomas Aquinas says a man may have of divine things. It is "that knowledge whereby he rises by the light of natural reason from the knowledge of created things to knowledge of God."¹⁹

Donne, too, advocates the "seeing of God in the book of creatures." Even the natural man by using his reason, though it is corrupt and blind, may see God because

¹⁷In his essay De gradibus humilitatis (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 941-72), three things are commended to the monk's attention: himself, his neighbors, and God. In the essay De Consideratione (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 727-808), six things are commended to the pope's attention: himself, the Church, the Romans, the papal household, angels, and God.

¹⁸Sermones in festo pentecostes, III, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 331).

¹⁹Summa contra gentiles, IV, Prologue. Translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

every creature calls him to a consideration of God. Every ant that he sees, asks him, Where had I this providence, and industry? Every flower that he sees, asks him, Where had I this beauty, this fragrancy, this medicinal virtue in me? Every creature calls him to consider, what great things God hath done in little subjects.²⁰

For the Holy Ghost "hath provided, that the world, the very world itself. . .this very world, that is nature, and no more, should give. . .an universal light of the knowledge of God."²¹ Donne also says that God's "knowledge, his wisdom, his power, his mercy, his justice, all his attributes are always manifested in all his works."²²

Knowledge of the phenomenal world, then, is justifiable in so far as it conduces to a better understanding of the God who created the earth. And, as Donne quotes St. Bernard, "everything in the world. . .can say, Creator meus es tu, Lord thou hast made me; all things that have life, and growth, can say, Pastor meus es tu, Lord thou hast fed me, increased me."²³

The world may be regarded either as an expression of meaning or as an effect produced by a cause. In the former case it is necessary to put back of it the divine intelligence and in the latter case the divine will. The one is the conceptual argument for the existence of God, the other is the causal argument.

²⁰Sermon XXVIII, (I, 557).

²¹Sermon LXVIII, (III, 203).

²²Sermon CXXXV, (V, 421).

²³Sermon XLVIII, (II, 383).

The conceptual argument does not necessarily ignore the world. What it does is simply to direct attention to the meaning expressed by the world, to its intelligibility and what is implied in it. It does not exclude the causal principle. It, rather, assumes it. But it subordinates it to the logical connection of ideas. The reality of ideas comes first. Their causal power is more or less of an inference from their reality, it is not regarded as constitutive of it.

St. Augustine, for whom both St. Bernard and John Donne have the greatest reverence, proves the existence of God by the conceptual argument. His most characteristic theistic proof is in his epistemological application of the conceptual argument. It consists in pointing out that there are certain fundamental ideas and laws of thought common to all minds, and that this community of thought can be accounted for only on the assumption that there is a universal Truth in which all individual minds share and in whose Light the intelligible world is revealed to reason in much the same way that the sensible world is revealed to the eye. The human mind cannot be its own light. For its source of illumination it must turn to a supreme Being, who is himself the Truth and the Light. Apart from such a being the light that is in us might be darkness, and in any case its community would be wholly unintelligible. The validity of reason thus requires the existence of God, who as the supreme

Reason imparts himself to all finite minds. For St. Augustine, to be true is the same as to be.²⁴ He does not distinguish between truth as a general concept and truth as objectively real. The idea of Truth implies its reality.

The causal argument, on the other hand, stresses the world as a fact, as an existence, an effect, which as such requires the divine will for its explanation. The divine will does not, of course, exclude the divine reason, but it is something other and more than the logical or rational connection of ideas. It involves a dynamic element and enters the realm of causal self-determination which is the realm of ontological reality.

It is on the basis of the causal argument that St. Bernard and Donne demonstrate the existence of God.

Nowhere in the Sermons does Donne discuss in a systematic way the proofs for the existence of God. His closest approach to such a discussion is in a sermon preached in 1622 in which he says:

He that made a clock or an organ, will be sure to engrave his me fecit, such a man made me; he that builds a fair house, takes it ill, if a passenger will not ask whose house is it. . . . Can any man look upon the frame of this world, and not say, there is a powerful, upon the administration of this world, and not say, there is a wise and a just hand over it?²⁵

²⁴On the Trinity, VIII (Basic Writings; ed. Oates, II, 679-83).

²⁵Sermon CXII, (IV, 561).

This is not a clear example of the causal argument, but it does show that Donne believed that the order evident in the world requires "a hand over it." The world is a fact,

a work, a limited, a determined, a circumscribed work; and it is opus eius, his work, says Elihu there.²⁶ But whose? Will you lay hold upon that? upon that, that Elihu only says, Remember his work, but names none. But two verses before, (with which this verse hath connexion) he does name God.²⁷ But let the work be whose it will, whosoever be this he, this he must be God, whosoever gave the first being to creatures, must be the Creator. If you will think that chance did it, and fortune, then fortune must be your god; and destiny must be your god, if you think destiny did it; and therefore you were as good attribute it to the right God, for a god it must have; if it be a work, it was made, if it be a creature, there is a creator; and if it be his work, that he, must be God, and there are no more gods, but one.²⁸

Here Donne certainly has in mind the argument from cause.

He goes on to say that man need not consider the whole universe in order to discover God as its cause. He may

take but the Georgics, the consideration of the earth, a farm, a garden, nay seven foot of earth, a grave, and that will be book enough. Go lower; every worm in the grave, lower, every weed upon the grave, is an abridgment of all; nay lock up all

²⁶Job 36:24: "Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold." Donne's text is Job 36:25: "Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off."

²⁷Donne refers here to verse 22: "Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?"

²⁸Sermon CXII, (IV, 559).

doors and windows, see nothing but thyself;
 nay let thyself be locked up in a close
 prison, that thou canst not see thyself,
 and do but feel thy pulse; let thy pulse
 be intermitted, or stupified, that thou
 feel not that, and do but think, and a
 worm, a weed, thyself, thy pulse, thy
 thought, are all testimonies, that all,
 this all, and all the parts thereof, are
opus, a work made, and opus ejus, his work,
 made by God.²⁹

One other passage, taken from a sermon preached at White-
 hall in 1618, will serve to point up Donne's admiration
 for cosmic order, and its dependence upon an Author:

The correspondence and relation of all
 parts of nature to one Author, the consin-
 uity and dependence of every piece and joint
 of this frame of the world, the admirable
 order, the immutable succession, the lively
 and certain generation, and birth of effects
 from their parents, the causes: in all these,
 though there be no sound, no voice, yet we
 may even see that it is an excellent song,
 an admirable piece of music and harmony; and
 that God does (as it were) play upon this
 organ.³⁰

On the basis of these passages and a few others,³¹ it is
 fairly clear that Donne, in spite of his unphilosophical
 terminology, would prove the existence of God from the
 cosmological or causal argument.

The reason that Donne rarely discusses the proofs
 of God's existence lies in the fact that atheism is for
 him inconceivable. In order to be an atheist, a man must

²⁹Sermon CXII, (IV, 561).

³⁰Sermon CXLIV, (V, 574).

³¹Sermon CXLIX (VI, 36); Sermon LXVIII, (III, 202);
 Sermon XXVIII, (I, 557).

believe himself to be nothing.

Poor intricate soul! riddling, perplexed, labyrinthical soul! thou couldst not say, that thou believest not in God, if there were no God; if there were no God, thou couldst not speak, thou couldst not think, not a word, not a thought, no not against God; thou couldst not blaspheme the name of God, thou couldst not swear, if there were no God: for, all thy faculties, however depraved by thee, are from him; and except thou canst seriously believe, that thou are nothing, thou canst not believe that there is no God.³²

Arguments for the existence of God are not found often in the works of St. Bernard, either, but he supports the causal demonstration. The invisible things of God may be understood by means of the things which are created.

Tanta haec formarum varietas, atque numerositas specierum in rebus conditis, quid nisi quidam sunt radii Deitatis, monstrantes quidem quis vere sit a quo sunt, non tamen quid sit prorsus definientes? Itaque de ipso vides, sed non ipsum. Cum autem de eo, quem non vides, caetera vides; scis indubitanter existere quem oportet inquirere, ut inquirentem non fraudet gratia, negligentem ignorantia non excuset. Verum hoc genus videndi commune. In promptu enim est, juxta Apostolum, omni utenti ratione, invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspicere (Rom. 1:20).³³

Just as the existence of brilliant objects proves the existence of the sun which is the source of their light, so the existence of all creatures proves the existence of the God who created them, without, however, proving anything about his essence.

³²Sermon XLVI, (II, 354).

³³Sermones in Cantica, XXXI, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 941-42). Cf. De diligendo Deo, II, 6 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 977-78).

The essence of God is determined by Donne and St. Bernard by means of the ontological argument.

The human intellect endeavoring to comprehend God as he appears to it meets with the extremest difficulties because, as Donne says, "to comprehend is not to know a thing as far as I can know it, but to know it as far as that a thing can be known, and so only God can comprehend God."³⁴

St. Bernard defines God as that than which nothing greater or better can be thought.³⁵ Donne's nearest approach to this classic definition is: "when thou hast called God what thou canst, he is more than thou hast said of him."³⁶

This definition of God implies that he has no attributes such as good, just, or wise, since these terms can never be used without implying wiser, and more just, or if we call him best or some such phrase, then "highest degree respects some lower, and mean one, and are these in God?"³⁷

According to St. Bernard, God cannot be called good, in the same sense in which other things are good, because

³⁴Sermon II (I, 38).

³⁵De Consideratione, V, vii, 15 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 797). So far as I know neither Donne nor St. Bernard ever drew any inference concerning God's existence from this definition.

³⁶Sermon XXXVI, (II, 134).

³⁷Donne, Essays in Divinity; ed. A. Jessopp, p. 51.

he is that very goodness by participation in which good things are good; otherwise goodness would be something greater than God. To predicate any attribute of God, is to commit the fallacy of confusion of types. God cannot be called great, good, just, or wise, because he is greatness, and goodness, justice, and wisdom.³⁸

St. Thomas Aquinas held that these names of God cannot represent him in the same way that one being can represent another of the same species or genus as itself, but rather as the principle whose effects they are and in regard to whom "the effects are defective."

As regards absolute and affirmative names of God, as good, wise, and the like, various and many opinions have been given. . . the aforesaid names signify the Divine Substance, but in an imperfect manner, as creatures also represent It imperfectly. So when we say, God is good, the meaning is not, God is the cause of goodness, or God is not bad; but the meaning is, whatever good we attribute to creatures, pre-exists in God, and in a more excellent and higher way. Hence it does not follow that God is good, because He causes goodness; but rather, on the contrary, He causes goodness in things because He is Himself good, according to what Augustine says, Because He is good, we are.³⁹

Before considering Donne's treatment of these attributes of God it will be necessary to consider the concept of Being as it applies to God and to man. "To speak of a Supreme Being," writes Gilson,

³⁸Sermones in Cantica, LXXX, 7 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 1169-70). Cf. De consideratione, V, v, 12 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 795).

³⁹Summa theologiae, I, 13, 2. Translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

and to give the words all their weight, is first of all to admit that there is but one being really worthy of the name of God, and then, in the second place, that the proper name of this God is Being, a name that is applicable to this unique being in a sense in which it is applicable to no other.⁴⁰

The idea of God as Being is a purely Christian doctrine, it is "the corner-stone of all Christian philosophy, and it was not Plato, it was not even Aristotle, it was Moses who put it into position."⁴¹

Donne says that in order that he might "know the mind" and have the heart of him that sends him. . .

God gives Moses a cypher; God declares to Moses, his bosom name, his visceral name, his radical, his fundamental name, the name of his essence, I am; go, and tell them, that he whose name is I am, hath sent thee. It is true, that literally in the original, this name is conceived in the future; it is there, I that shall be. But this present acceptance, I am, hath passed through all translators, and all commentators, and fathers, and councils, and schools, and the whole church of God rests in it. . .all intend, that this is a name that denotes essence, being: Being is the name of God, and of God only.⁴²

Beside this passage from Donne we may place one from St. Bernard in which he says the same thing: Being is the most appropriate name for God.

Quis est? Non sane occurrit melius, quam Qui est. Hoc ipse de se voluit responderi, hoc docuit, decente Moyse ad populum, ipso

⁴⁰The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy; tr. A. H. C. Downes, p. 43.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 51.

⁴²Sermon V, (I, 93-4).

quidem injungente; Qui est, misit me ad vos (Ex. 3:14). Merito quidem. Nil competentius aeternitati, quae Deus est. Si bonum, si magnum, si beatum, si sapientem, vel quidquid tale de Deo dixeris; in hoc verbo instauratur, quod est, Est. Nempe hoc est ei esse, quod haec omnia esse. Si et centum talia addas, non recessisti ab esse. Si ea dixeris, nihil addidisti: si non dixeris, nihil minuisti.⁴³

God is; he is in a different and higher sense than that in which creatures are, because he, being being, is, not by participation in something other than himself, but by participation in himself.

Creatures are by participation in being, they have being because they are derived, as Donne says, from God who is Being: "In being derived from God, we have a being, we are something, in him we live and move and have our being."⁴⁴ And the degree to which man participates in being makes him "the nearest representation of God" except for the angels, of course. Donne considers four of the gradations constituting "the vast chain of being":⁴⁵

First, esse, being; for some things have only a being, and no life, as stones: secondly, vivere, living; for some things have life and no sense; as plants: and then, thirdly sentire, sense; for some things have sense, and no understanding. Which understanding and reason, man hath with his being, and life and sense; and so is in a nearer station to God, than any other crea-

⁴³De consideratione, V, vi, 13 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 795-96).

⁴⁴Sermon CLVII, (VI, 259).

⁴⁵For a full treatment of this subject see Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being.

ture, and a livelier image of him, who is the root of being, than all they.⁴⁶

St. Bernard asks whether anything which is not God, if compared to the Supreme Being, can be considered to be at all.

Jam si vidisti hoc tam singulare, tam summum esse; nonne in comparatione hujus quidquid hoc non est, judicas potius non esse, quam esse?⁴⁷

And Donne provides the answer: "If we be compared with God, our being with his being, we have no being at all, we are nothing."⁴⁸

In another sermon Donne enlarges upon this statement using Plato as his authority.

Plato says well, Ejus nomen est potius non esse; The name of the Creator is, I am, but of every creature rather, I am not, I am nothing. He considers it, and concludes it, in the best, and noblest of creatures, man; for, he, as well as the rest, plus habet non entis, quam entis; man hath more privations, than positives in him; man hath but his own being; man hath not the being of an angel, nor the being of a lion; God hath all in a kind of eminence more excellently than the kinds themselves, only his name is I am.⁴⁹

God, then is that without which nothing is; he is for himself and for all things.

Quid item Deus? Sine quo nihil est. Tam nihil esse sine ipso, quam nec ipse sine se

⁴⁶Sermon CX, (IV, 527).

⁴⁷De consideratione, V, vi, 13 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 796).

⁴⁸Sermon CLVII, (VI, 259).

⁴⁹Sermon V, (I, 94).

potest. Ipse sibi, ipse omnibus est. Ac per hoc quodammodo ipse solus est, qui suum ipsius est, et omnium esse.⁵⁰

As being, God was not, nor will be, but is -- uncreated, unending, invariable.⁵¹ "God hath had as long a forenoon, as he shall have an afternoon; God hath been God, as many millions of millions of generations, already, as he shall be hereafter."⁵²

In a passage not quoted by Miss Ramsay in her study of Donne's relation to the via negativa of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, ⁵³ Donne asserts that God cannot be defined by negations.

Canst thou rely and lean upon so inferior a knowledge, as is delivered by negations? And because a devout speculative man (Dionysius) hath said, Negationes de Deo sunt verae affirmationes autem sunt inconvenientes, will it serve thy turn to hear that God is that which cannot be named, cannot be comprehended, or which is nothing else, when every negation implies some privation, which cannot be safely enough admitted in God.⁵⁴

And his positive treatment of the attributes of God goes far towards proving his disapproval of the via negativa.

One important attribute of God, according to Donne,

⁵⁰De consideratione, V, vi, 13 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 796).

⁵¹Sermones in Cantica, XXXI, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 940-41).

⁵²Sermon CLVII, (VI, 760).

⁵³Mary Paton Ramsay, Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne, pp. 153-73.

⁵⁴Essays in Divinity; ed. A. Jessopp, p. 51.

is his universality.

How often God admits it into his own name, this addition of universality, Omne, all, as though he would be known by that especially. He is omnipotent, there he can do all; he is omniscient, there he can know all; he is omnipresent, there he can direct all. . . . So God is all centre, as that he looks to all, and so all circumference, as that he embraces all.⁵⁵

Because "God sees all, and works upon all, and desires perfection in all," Donne concludes that "his most extensive attribute, or denotation. . . is his mercy."⁵⁶

It is Donne's description of God's mercy which George Saintsbury has called

a passage than which I hardly know anything more exquisitely rhymed in the whole range of English from Ælfric to Pater. . . . The Shakespearian magnificence of the diction, such as the throng of kindred but never tautological phrases in "wintered and frozen," etc., and the absolute perfection of rhythmical -- never metrical -- movement, could not be better wedded. It has, I have said, never been surpassed. I sometimes doubt whether it has ever been equalled.⁵⁷

It illustrates also what H. J. C. Grierson calls "the unique quality, the weight, fervour and wealth, of Donne's eloquence."⁵⁸

God made sun and moon to distinguish seasons, and day and night, and we cannot have

⁵⁵Sermon LXVII, (III, 189).

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷A History of English Prose Rhythm, pp. 162-63.

⁵⁸Cambridge History of English Literature; ed. Ward and Waller, IV, 221.

the fruits of the earth but in their seasons; but God hath made no decree to distinguish the seasons of his mercies; in Paradise, the fruits were ripe the first minute, and in heaven it is always autumn, his mercies are ever in their maturity. We ask our daily bread, and God never says you should have come yesterday, he never says you must come again tomorrow, but to-day if you will hear his voice, to-day he will hear you. If some king of the earth have so large an extent of dominion in north and south, as that he hath winter and summer together in his dominions, so large an extent east and west, as that he hath day and night together in his dominions, much more hath God mercy and judgment together; he brought light out of darkness, not out of a lesser light; he can bring thy summer out of winter, though thou have no spring; though in the ways of fortune, or understanding, or conscience, thou have been benighted till now, wintred and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damped and benumbed, smothered and stupified till now, now God comes to thee, not as the dawning of the day, not as in the bud of the spring, but as the sun at noon, to illustrate all shadows, as the sheaves in harvest, to fill all penuries, all occasions invite his mercies, and all times are his seasons.⁵⁹

Towards the end of his life Donne, preaching before the king at Whitehall on the text, "But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand, (Is. 32:8)." relies upon St. Bernard as he sets forth the goodness of God.

Deus est voluntas omnipotens, is excellently said by St. Bernard; God is all Almightiness, all power; but he might be so and we never the better. Therefore he is voluntas omnipotens, a power digested into a will, as willing as able to do us all, all good. What good! receive some drops of it in St. Bernard's own manna, his own honey; creans mentes ad se participandum, so good as that he hath first given us souls capable

⁵⁹Sermon II, (I, 25).

of him, and made us so, partakers of the Divine nature; vivificans ad sentiendum, so good as that he hath quickened those souls, and made them sensible of having received him; for, grace is not grace to me, till it make me know that I have it alliciens ad appetendum, so good as that he hath given that soul an appetite, and a holy hunger and thirst to take in more of him; for I have no grace, till I would have more; and then, dilatans ad capiendum, so good as that he hath dilated and enlarged that soul, to take in as much of God as he will.⁶⁰

Donne's treatment of the mercy and goodness of God has been under-emphasized while his almost terrified awareness of God's awful majesty and justice has been more than adequately pointed up. Although it is true that the consideration of God as Judge has been the occasion of great eloquence for Donne, as for example, in the famous passage beginning, "That God should let my soul fall out of his hand, into a bottomless pit, and roll an unremovable stone upon it,"⁶¹ it is evident from the foregoing passages that the inexhaustible goodness and mercy of God also raise him to unequalled heights of eloquence. Hell and the absence of God may be very real to Donne, but he never rests on that note. For example, Donne concludes the passage referred to above by reminding the believers of the joy and glory promised them if they persevere in the faith.

But vicenti et credenti, to him that believes aright, and overcomes all temptations to a wrong belief, God shall give the accomplishment of fulness, and fulness of joy, and joy rooted in glory, and glory es-

⁶⁰Sermon LXXXV, (III, 360-61).

⁶¹Sermon LXXXVI, (III, 386.87).

tablished in eternity, and this eternity is God; to him that believes and overcomes, God shall give himself in an everlasting presence and fruition. Amen.⁶²

Donne and St. Bernard propose substantially the same doctrines of man and God. Man is a creature whose intermediate position on the ladder of being places him above the beasts and just below the angels. He is the subject of knowledge because of his reasonable soul which is created in the image of the Trinity and because he is capable of receiving grace and then of cooperating with God in his salvation.

God is the object of knowledge because he is ultimate reality, or Truth in itself. Both Donne and St. Bernard assert that to know particular truths is not enough; they must conduce to a knowledge of the highest truth, that is, God. Every particular truth whether it is self-knowledge or scientific knowledge requires this sanction, or end beyond itself. Otherwise, the man who studies either himself or the natural world wastes his time in a fruitless endeavor.

It is of great importance to establish unanimity here because these doctrines, although not to be considered peculiar to Donne and St. Bernard, form the foundation upon which the mystic builds his way to the vision of Truth in itself before the resurrection.

⁶²Sermon LXXXVI, (III, 387).

CHAPTER IV

THE ANAGOGIC PATH

The knowledge of God as he manifests himself to the contemplator is the end of St. Bernard's anagogic path. The path itself consists of three steps of truth, namely, humility or knowledge of truth in yourself, love or knowledge of truth in your neighbors, and contemplation or knowledge of Truth in itself. St. Bernard's most famous disciple describes the same three-fold path to God in language more beautiful even than his. Dante has three guides along the anagogic path. Virgil conducts him through purgatory, where he recognizes his own sins, pride first of all. Beatrice conducts him through paradise, where he enjoys the communion of saints. St. Bernard conducts him, purified by his passage through purgatory and paradise, to the vision of Truth.

It is from Dante that we learn the meaning of the term anagogical in relation to literal, allegorical, and tropological. In his Il Convivio¹ Dante distinguishes four ways in which the Scriptures may be interpreted. The literal interpretation means to employ words in their standard usage, and symbols of the arbitrary-association and descriptive types only. The allegorical interpretation means to extract from the

¹II, 1 (Opere; ed. Moore and Toynbee, p. 251-52).

words truths related to humanity as a whole or to Christ as the head of humanity. The moral or tropological interpretation applies specifically to the moral lesson which might be learned from any event. The anagogic interpretation means to extract from the words ultimate truth belonging neither to time nor to space.

The standard illustration of the relationship between the four senses of Scripture was that of the four Jerusalems. Literally, Jerusalem is the historical city of the Jews; allegorically, it is the Church; tropologically, it is the Christian soul; anagogically, it is the heavenly city where every soul will experience the special vision of Truth sought by the mystics in this life.

It is in the anagogic interpretation that the mystic excels. Although he may interpret the Scriptures in each of the other three ways, his major emphasis is always on the fourth. He is not satisfied with literal, allegorical, or moral truths, but presents the way to a direct acquaintance with, or intuitive knowledge of Truth itself.

The way, in general, is a process of purification of the reason and the will founded on the tenet that like knows like, that the greater the similarity between the subject and object of knowledge, the more perfectly will the subject know the object. This method of knowing God by making oneself more like him is the touch-

stone of Christian mystical epistemology. Since it begins with the anagogic interpretation of Scripture and rises to the vision of ultimate Truth which transcends space and time, the way may be called the anagogic path.

If Donne is to be considered a true mystic he must not only desire a direct acquaintance with God before the resurrection, but must ascend to that intuitive knowledge by means of the purification of the will and the reason accomplished along the anagogic path. At this point a careful comparison of Donne's thought with that of St. Bernard, the one great mystic from whom he quotes frequently and reverently, will provide the true test of Donne's mysticism.

Humility, the first step of truth, is, according to St. Bernard, the preeminent monastic virtue, because it is through humility that the monk knows himself by seeing how miserable he is. Humility is that thorough self-examination which makes a man contemptible in his own sight.² This is not inconsistent with Plotinus' doctrine that honoring yourself is the beginning of knowledge. Both mystics teach that we must know ourselves as we really are before we can proceed to seek Truth. Plotinus, living in a materialistic age, may have feared

²De gradibus humilitatis, I, 2 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 942). Cf. De moribus et officio episcoporum, V, 19 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 821): "Humilitas est contemptus propriae excellentiae." Sermones de Diversis, XII, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 571).

that his readers would underestimate themselves, believing themselves to be soulless animals, and so urged them to consider that they were souls. St. Bernard feared the other extreme; his monks knew that they were men, but were apt to forget that they were subject to the animal passions, sinful and miserable.

Donne's auditory is different from both but closer to St. Bernard's than to that of Plotinus. He feared that his listeners, often the nobility, would put too much value upon their stations and honor and wealth and so forget that they were miserable men, full of sin. He tells his congregation at Greenwich that because of their sins their souls "which at first were all sold in gross, for (perchance) an apple. . .are now retailed every day for nothing."³ By "nothing" he means wealth, and power and favor at court because he continues,

Let no man present his dutals, his court
rolls, his bacus, his good debts, his
titles of honour, his maces, or his staves,
or his ensigns of power and office, and say,
Call you all this nothing? Compare all
these with thy soul, and they are nothing.⁴

St. Bernard does not mean that a man should believe himself to be worse than he really is. The virtue, for him, is to know yourself as you really are: a soul dignified because made in the image of God, but miserable

³Sermon CXLII, (V, 542).

⁴Ibid., (V, 544).

because separated from him by sin.⁵ This virtue is a mean between two extremes. One extreme is pride, love of your own excellence, which is ignorance of yourself by overestimating your own merit.⁶ The other extreme, equally false although not equally dangerous, is false humility, which is ignorance of yourself by underestimating your own dignity.⁷ Two things are necessary to know: first, what you are, and second, that you are not of yourself. And two sorts of ignorance are to be avoided: first, false humility, unduly diminishing your inherent dignity, and second, pride, attributing this dignity to yourself instead of to its proper source, God.

Utrumque ergo scias necesse est, et quid sis, et quid a te ipso non sis: ne aut omnino videlicet non glorieris, aut inaniter glorieris. . . .Itaque valde cavenda haec ignorantia, qua de nobis minus nobis forte sentimus: sed non minus, imo et plus illa, qua plus nobis tribuimus: quod fit, si bonum quodcumque in nobis esse, et a nobis decepti putemus.⁸

With St. Bernard's doctrine of humility and self-knowledge in mind, Donne's readers have an adequate explanation for his vacillations between the considerations

⁵Sermones in Cantica, XXXVII, 6 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 973).

⁶De gradibus humilitatis, IV, 14 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 949).

⁷Sermones in nativitate Domini, II, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 120).

⁸De diligendo Deo, II, 4 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 976-77).

of man's dignity and his miserable condition. The paradox of man's situation is, I believe, one of the predominant themes in all of Donne's work.

He advocates a twofold knowledge similar to St. Bernard's and he says that it is humility, but he uses St. Augustine's words.

Duo nobis necessaria, says St. Augustine. Ut cognoscamus quales ad malum, quales ad bonum: There are but two things necessary to us to know, how ill we are, and how good we may be; where nature hath left us, and whither grace would carry us. . . .To know that we have no strength of ourselves, and to know that we can lack none if we ask it of God, are St. Augustine's two arts and sciences, and this is the humility of the Gospel in general.⁹

In other words, you must know that you combine qualities of misery and of dignity. And that though you are capable of improvement, it is only because of grace. Donne perhaps from his own experience, knows that this twofold knowledge is not easily acquired. He says that

it is the hardest thing of all, for a sinner to return to his own heart, and to find out that, after it is strayed, and scattered upon so several sins. . . .If he inquire for his heart, at that chamber where he remembers it was yesterday, in lascivious and lustful purposes, he shall hear that it went from thence to some riotous feasting, from thence to some blasphemous gaming, after, to some malicious consultation of entangling one, and supplanting another; and he shall never trace it so close, as to drive it home, that is, to the consideration of itself, and that God that made it.¹⁰

⁹Sermon CXLV, (V, 600-01).

¹⁰Sermon CXXXVII, (V, 465).

Man is to consider himself as a soul dignified by the image of God imprinted in his natural faculties, memory, reason, and will, and as a body dignified by Christ's incarnation.¹¹ But he is also to consider in what way he has defaced that image and deformed that body. Man, says Donne, should know that he forfeits his dignity

for that which is less than all, than gold, than beauty, than honour; for sin; sin which is but a privation, (as darkness is but a privation) and privations are nothing. ¹²

The sins of the mind, as distinguished from the sins of the flesh, deface the image of God in man. The image, however, can never be destroyed, as Donne points out on St. Bernard's authority.

Beloved, whensoever we commit any sin, upon discourse, upon consideration, upon purpose, and plot, the image of God which is engraved and imprinted in us, and lodged in our understanding, and in that reason which we employ in that sin, is mingled with that sin; we draw the image of God into all our incontinencies, into all our oppressions, into all our extortions, and supplantations: we carry his image down with us, to eternal condemnation: for, even in hell, Uri potest, non exuri imago Dei, says St. Bernard; The image of God burns in us in hell, but can never be burnt out of us: as long as the understanding soul remains, the image of God remains in it, and so we have used the image of God, as witches are said to do the images of men; by wounding or melting the image, they destroy the person: and we by defacing

¹¹Sermon CXIX, (V, 113).

¹²Ibid., (V, 112).

the image of God in ourselves by sin, to the painful and shameful death of the cross.¹³

To sin so, upon reason, is to

surrender that, which is the form, and essence of man, reason, and understanding, to the service of sin. When we come to sin wisely and learnedly, to sin logically, by a guia, and an ergo, that, because God does thus, we may do as we do, we shall come to sin through all the arts, and all our knowledge, to sin grammatically, to tie sins together in construction, in a syntaxis, in a chain, and dependence, and coherence upon one another: and to sin historically, to sin over sins of other men again, to sin by precedent, and to practise that which we had read: and we come to sin rhetorically, persuasively, powerfully; and as we have found examples, for our sins in history, so we become examples to others, by our sins, to lead and encourage them in theirs.¹⁴

Man, according to Donne, derogates the dignity imparted to the body in the incarnation by committing sins of the flesh. By such sins he crucifies Christ who is "exalted thus, to sit in that despised flesh, at the right hand of our glorious God."¹⁵ Donne calls upon the "unclean adulterer" to remember that

that Jesus, whom thou crucifiest, in stretching out those forbidden arms in a strange bed, thou that beheadest thyself, castest off thy head, Christ Jesus, that thou mightst make thy body, the body of a harlot, that Jesus, whom thou defilest there, is exalted.¹⁶

The miserable condition of man consists in the fact that he is caught between what Donne calls "inward decay"

¹³Sermon CXLII, (V, 543).

¹⁴Sermon CXXXVIII, (V, 471).

¹⁵Sermon XVI, (I, 315).

¹⁶Ibid.

and "outward violence." He tells his auditory to

contemplate man, as the receptacle, the ocean of all misery. Fire and air, water and earth, are not the elements of man; inward decay, and outward violence, bodily pain, and sorrow of heart may be rather styled his elements; and though he be destroyed by these, yet he consists of nothing but these. . . .As though man could be a microcosm, a world in himself, no other way, except all the misery of the world fell upon him.¹⁷

In the Devotions Donne contemplates his own misery until he is brought to the place where he can ask, "O who, if before he had a being, he could have sense of this misery, would buy a being here upon these conditions?"¹⁸

It cannot be denied that Donne's main emphasis is upon the sinfulness and wretchedness of man and how he corrupts and murders his own soul, defiles his body. In his sermons Donne literally carries out what he himself once said regarding the duties of the preacher.

It is not the depth, nor the wit, nor the eloquence of the preacher that pierces us, but his nearness; that he speaks to my conscience, as though he had been behind the hangings when I sinned, and as though he had read the book of the day of judgment already.¹⁹

To the end of his life he continued to preach not only as though he knew the particular sins of every member of his auditory, but as though he had a special knowledge which enabled him to analyze and describe in de-

¹⁷ Sermon CI, (IV, 339-40).

¹⁸ Devotions, Meditation XI, (III, 546).

¹⁹ Sermon XL, (II, 214).

tail and with eloquence every possible sin. Pride, envy, adultery, ambition, presumption, desperation, sins occasioned by various occupations, sins of youth and sins of old age, all of them come under Donne's intense scrutiny and all of them combine to make man for him the most miserable creature in the universe.

However, although it is impossible to read very far in the Sermons without encountering a passage in which Donne deals with the wretchedness of man, it would be incorrect to suppose that he never brings his congregation to consider the true dignity of man. One of the best examples of this is found in a sermon preached at St. Paul's in 1622, in which Donne says:

A painter can hardly diminish or contract an elephant into so little a form, but that that elephant, when it is at the least, will still be greater than an ant at the life, and the greatest. Sin hath diminished man shrewdly, and brought him into a narrower compass; but yet, his natural immortality, (his soul cannot die) and his spiritual possibility, even to the last gasp, of spending that immortality in the kingdom of glory, and living forever with God, (for otherwise, our immortality were the heaviest part of our curse) exalt this valley, this clod of earth, to a noble height.²⁰

And in another sermon Donne says that it is not only because of what he will be after the resurrection that man has a special dignity.

Lk.6:35 Even here he /God/ hath made him filium
 Jn.3:19 Dei, the son of God, and seren Dei, the
 II Pe. seed of God, and consortem divinae na-
 1:4 turae, partaker of the divine nature,

and deos ipsos, gods themselves, for ille dixit Eii estis, he hath said we are gods. . . .David asks that question with a holy wonder, Quid est homo? What is man that God is so mindful of him? But I may have his leave and the Holy Ghost's, to say, since God is so mindful of him, since God hath set his mind upon him, What is not man? man is all.²¹

"Man" says Donne, "is an abridgment of all the world; and as some abridgments are greater, than some other authors, so is one man of more dignity, than all the earth."²² The idea of man as a microcosmos, so widely accepted and used in Donne's time, is the background for this statement. Donne, however, seldom content to rest in a definition or to entertain an idea without qualifying it, says also that man is more than a world in little and that he is so because of his soul.

The philosopher draws man into too narrow a table, when he says he is a microcosmos, an abridgment of the world in little; Nazianzen gives him but his due, when he calls him mundum magnum, a world to which all the rest of the world is but subordinate: for all the world besides, is but God's foot-stool; man sits down upon his Tertul-right hand. . . .Man therefore is Cura lian divini ingenii, A creature upon whom not only the greatness, and the goodness, but even the study and diligence of God is employed. And being thus a greater world than the other, he must be greater in all his parts, and so in his lights; and so he is: for instead of this light, which the world had at

²¹Sermon LXV, (III, 140-41).

²²Sermon CXIX, (V, III).

first, man hath a nobler light, an immortal, a discerning soul, the light of reason.²³

St. Bernard, as we have seen, teaches that man must know himself as he really is in order to avoid being guilty of two extremes of ignorance. The first extreme he calls false humility. This ignorance arises from man's failure to fully understand the significance of the three-fold image of God imprinted in the faculties of his soul and manifests itself in his underestimation of himself.

Donne also warns his listeners against false humility. However insignificant a man might be, according to Donne, he is still endowed with natural faculties which place him above the beasts and make him capable of receiving grace and then of cooperating with God.²⁴ For him, as for St. Bernard, to forget or to derogate this dignity is false humility.

Humilitas non nititur stupiditati,²⁵ An undiscerning stupidity is not humility, for humility itself implies and requires discretion, for humiliation is not precipitation: when the devil enticed the Jesuit at his midnight studies, and the Jesuit rose and offered him his chair, because howsoever he were a devil, yet he was his better, this was no regulated humility.²⁶

Now, the second thing constituting self-knowledge,

²³Sermon CLIV, (VI, 159).

²⁴Sermon CLXIII, (V, 555).

²⁵Donne gives no source for this phrase.

²⁶Sermon CXLV, (V, 601).

according to St. Bernard, is to know that you are not of yourself. This is closely related to the knowledge of yourself as you are, because to know that you are created in the image of the Trinity means also to know that you are created and hence dependent. Since it is implied by the first knowledge there is no need to dwell upon it here. Donne says that we are dependent upon God for our natural faculties, our dignity, as much as for grace.

Why should we be loath to acknowledge to have all our ability of doing good freely from God, and immediately by his grace, when as, even those faculties of nature, by which we pretend to do the offices of grace, we have from God himself too? For that question of the apostle involves all, What hast thou that thou hast not received? Thy natural faculties are no more thine own, than the grace of God is thine own.²⁷

By knowing that his only dignity depends not upon anything that he himself has done, but upon God's giving it to him in his creation, man avoids the second sort of ignorance. When a man understands that he is not of himself he cannot then be proud, or love his own excellence. For St. Bernard pride is more dangerous than false humility.

Donne, in a sermon preached upon the text, "Be not as the horse, or the mule, who have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee, (Ps. 32:9)," tells his auditory of exactly this sort of pride.

²⁷Sermon LXII, (III, 101). St. Paul's question is in I Cor. 4:7.

This is the pride that is forbidden man; not that he think well of himself, In genera suo, That he value aright the dignity of his nature, in the creation thereof according to the image of God, and the infinite improvement that that nature received, in being assumed by the Son of God; this is not pride, but not to acknowledge that all this dignity in nature, and all that it conduces to, that is, grace, here, and glory hereafter, is not only infused by God at first, but sustained by God still, that nothing in the beginning, or way, or end, is of ourselves, this is pride.²⁸

St. Bernard associates the incarnate Christ with humility; he is, in fact, the example to which the monk is to conform. Speaking to Christ, St. Bernard uses the words of John 14:6, "Thou art the way, the truth and the life," and he adds to them his own interpretation: the way in example, the truth in promise, the life in reward.²⁹ Christ while on earth provided men with the perfect example of humility, which is the way to contemplation, or truth in promise, which is itself a means to a higher end, namely, eternal life.

Donne says also that the human life of Christ is the only perfect example of humility. His text is Matthew 4:18,19,20, the account of the calling of Peter and Andrew, "And he [Jesus] saith unto them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Half of the sermon is devoted to showing the sorts of pride which are

²⁸Sermon LX, (III, 46).

²⁹Sermones in ascensione Domini, II, 6 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 304): "Tu es via, veritas et vita (Joan. 14:6); via in exemplo, veritas in promisso, vita in praemio."

avoided by following Christ. And these are the two parts of that first half:

First, that there is an humility enjoined them, in the sequere, follow, come after. That though they be brought to a high calling, that do not make them proud, nor tyrannous over men's consciences; and then, even this humility is limited, sequere me, follow me; for there may be a pride even in humility, and a man may follow a dangerous guide; our guide here is Christ, sequere me, follow me.³⁰

Self-knowledge and humility, then, are considered by Donne and St. Bernard to constitute the condition necessary for spiritual progress. St. Bernard says, "He is not wise who is not wise to himself."³¹ And to know yourself as you really are is, as Donne says, "the humility of the Gospel in general."³²

Self-knowledge, we have said, falls into the classification of particular truths which need a sanction beyond themselves in order to make them worthy of man's consideration. It is the nature of the sanction applied to self-knowledge which divides mystics from non-mystics. The mystic, unsatisfied with particular truths and with the traditional religious means of knowing God, seeks direct acquaintance with Truth itself. And the Truth with which he seeks direct acquaintance is Being. Nothing is so incomprehensible as the being of all things.

³⁰Sermon LXXII, (III, 280).

³¹De consideratione, II, iii, 6 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 745): "Non ergo sapiens, qui sibi non est."

³²Sermon CXLV, (V, 601).

Yet nothing is so immediately knowable to the mystic as his own being. These he finds to be identical, for there is only one being, which is the being of himself and of all things which are. When the problem of knowledge is stated in these terms, that is, when this sanction is applied to self-knowledge, then its solution is mysticism; for mysticism is that introspection whereby a man, by knowing himself comes to know the being of all things, which he finds to be the same as his own.³³

It is at precisely this point that the unanimity between St. Bernard and Donne vanishes. An examination of the sanctions which they apply to self-knowledge will make it very clear that Donne does not follow St. Bernard along the anagogic path beyond this point.

The sanction applied to self-knowledge by St. Bernard is that, being itself the first step of truth, it prepares the monk for the second step, love, or knowledge of neighbors, and this in turn leads him to the third step which is contemplation, or knowledge of Truth itself, in this life.

Ad primum³⁴ ratio ducit, qua nos discutimus; ad secundum affectus perducit, quo aliis miseremur; ad tertium puritas rapit, qua ad invisibilia sublevamur.³⁵

³³Pantheistic mysticism maintains that man is the same being as all things; monotheistic mysticism maintains that man has the same being as all things.

³⁴That is, the first step of truth.

³⁵De gradibus humilitatis, VI, 19 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 952).

The sanction which Donne applies to self-knowledge is found in a passage already quoted:

The end of knowing ourselves is to know how we are disposed for that which is our end. . .that visio Dei, that sight of God, which in our glorified state we shall have in heaven.³⁶

The difference is apparent immediately. For Donne man should know himself and his miserable condition because it prepares him, not for St. Bernard's vision of God on earth, but for the vision reserved for the soul after the resurrection.

Although this is enough to separate Donne forever from the mystics who devote their entire lives to the attainment of the direct acquaintance with God in this life, it is not the only ground on which he denies the possibility of the mystical experience. In order to see this it will be necessary to continue with St. Bernard along the anagogic path. The second step of this way is love.

St. Bernard distinguishes three kinds of love: that which is emotional but not spiritual, that which is spiritual but not emotional, and that which is both emotional and spiritual; only the last is love in the strict sense.³⁷

Insofar as it is an objective emotion, with an ob-

³⁶Sermon LIV, (II, 508, 509).

³⁷Sermones in Cantica, I, 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1022).

ject outside the lover himself, it is consensus or sympathy, which is community of will between lover and beloved.³⁸ This requires a psychological union of wills.³⁹ Just as marriage makes two bodies to be one flesh, so love makes two souls to be one spirit.⁴⁰ Love, says Donne,

is a possessory affection, it delivers over him that loves into the possession of that that he loves; it is a transmutatory affection, it changes him that loves, into the very nature of that that he loves, and he is nothing else.⁴¹

The proper objects of a man's love, according to St. Bernard, are himself,⁴² his neighbors,⁴³ and God, or Love, by which he loves and is loved.⁴⁴ God is the supreme object of man's love.

Donne proposes the same three objects of man's love, they are:

³⁸Sermones in tempore resurrectionis, II, 8 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 286): "Communis voluntas caritas est."

³⁹Sermones in Cantica, LXXXIII, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1182): "Complexus plane, ubi idem velle, et nolle idem, unum facit spiritum de duobis."

⁴⁰Sermones in Cantica, VIII, 9 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 814).

⁴¹Sermon CLIII, (VI, 101).

⁴²De diligendo Deo, VIII, 23 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 987-88); Sermones de diversis, CIII, 1 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 728). Self-love, however, is not sympathy because it involves only one will.

⁴³Sermones in Cantica, XVIII, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 860).

⁴⁴De consideratione, V, xiv, 30 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 806).

Love to thy God, and love to his image,
thyself, and love to thine image, that
man whom thy virtue and thy example hath
declined, and kept from offending his,
and thy God.⁴⁵

In another sermon Donne asks, "If a man love not the Lord, if he love not God, which is, which was, and which is to come, what will please him? whom will he love?"⁴⁶ In other words, as St. Bernard says, only those who love God, that is, Love,⁴⁷ are satisfied; those who do not are constantly seeking.⁴⁸ The extent of man's love for God, if proportioned to the loveableness of its object, must be infinite.⁴⁹

The cause, that is, the efficient cause, of love, even of self-love, is God's grace.⁵⁰ And the condition of receptivity of this grace is humility.⁵¹

⁴⁵Sermon CXLVII, (VI, 9).

⁴⁶Sermon XXXVIII, (II, 185).

⁴⁷Sermones in Cantica, LXXXIII, 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1183).

⁴⁸De diligendo Deo, VII, 19 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 985-86).

⁴⁹De diligendo Deo, I, 1 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 974): "Vultis ergo a me audire, quare, et quomodo diligendus sit Deus? Et ego: Causa [that is, the final cause] diligendi Deum, Deus est; modus, sine modo diligere."

⁵⁰Sermones de diversis, CIII, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 729-30).

⁵¹De gradibus humilitatis, II, 3 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 943). Cf. De moribus et officio episcoporum, V, 17 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 820-21).

The desired product of love is love itself.⁵² The reward or fruit, which the lover does not seek but nevertheless obtains, is twofold -- knowledge and purity. Just as the first step of truth, knowledge of yourself, is the fruit of humility; so the second step of truth, knowledge of your neighbors, is the fruit of love. This knowledge enables you to commiserate with others who are miserable.

Et hic est secundus gradus veritatis,
quo eam in proximis inquirunt; dum de
suis aliorum necessitates exquirunt;
dum ex his quae patiuntur, patientibus
compati sciunt.⁵³

The other fruit of love is purity of the will,⁵⁴ which makes the mind's eye capable of contemplation,⁵⁵ or the perfect love of God.

⁵²Sermones in Cantica, LXXXIII, 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1183): "Is per se sufficit, is per se placet, et propter se. Ipse meritum, ipse praenium est sibi. Amor praeter se non requirit causam, non fructum. Fructus ejus, usus ejus. Amo, quia amo; amo, ut amem." By the last sentence St. Bernard does not, I think mean "I love because I realize that loving is good for me." Rather, he means, "The emotion by which my beloved attracts me is sufficient to move me without any rationalization; will, not reason, provides the only motive." The lover, then, loves the beloved, not his love.

⁵³De gradibus humilitatis, V, 18 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 951).

⁵⁴Sermones de diversis, XLV, 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 668): "Caritas vero purgavit voluntatem."

⁵⁵De praecepto et dispensatione, XIV, 36 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 881): "Ego vero ut interior oculus vere simplex sit, duo illi esse arbitror necessaria, charitatem in intentione, et in electione veritatem."

Donne, we have seen, makes self-knowledge a preparation for the vision of God in heaven rather than for the mystic's intuitive knowledge of him on earth. Now we will see that he denies the possibility of attaining what is for St. Bernard one of the fruits of love and the prerequisite of contemplation, that is, purity or perfection.

Humility, according to St. Bernard, has purified the reason, love has purified the will. In the monk's soul after the second step of the anagogic path the original image is restored, it is now perfect in reason, will, and memory and is ready for the consummating experience of contemplation. The Son, in humility, gave faith, the Holy Ghost taught love and by them, that is, faith and love, the hope of returning to the Father was aroused. And this is the trinity, namely faith, hope, love, with which as with a trident that changeless and blessed Trinity has brought back the changeable, fallen and wretched trinity from the slime of the abyss to its lost beatitude.⁵⁶

Donne uses this idea of the "creating and created Trinity" three times in the Sermons,⁵⁷ which indicates

⁵⁶Sermones de diversis, XLV, 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 668): "Et haec est trinitas, scilicet fides, spes, charitas; per quam velut per tridentem reduxit de limo profundum ad amissam beatitudinem illis incommutabilis et beata Trinitas mutabilem, lapsam, et miseram trinitatem."

⁵⁷Sermon XL, (II, 217); Sermon LXXXVI, (IV, 100-01); Sermon CI, (IV, 333).

that he had grasped the central truth of St. Bernard's system.⁵⁸ That he does not carry it to St. Bernard's conclusion has been shown first by his treatment of self-knowledge and is now substantiated by his denial of the possibility of attaining perfect purity in this life.

Absolute pureness cannot be attained to in via. It is reserved for us in patria; at home in heaven, not in our journey here, is that pureness to be expected,⁵⁹

In another sermon Donne distinguishes "three great dangers in this consideration of perfectness, and purity." One of these dangers is "to presume upon God, nay upon thy own right, in an overvaluing of thine own purity, and perfectness." He continues by saying that "against. . .this presumption in God, to think ourselves so pure, as that God is bound to look upon us. . . Christ arms us by his example,"

he receives these sisters of Lazarus, and accomplishes as much as they desired, though there were weaknesses in their faith, in their hope, in their charity. . .for there is nothing, not in spiritual things perfect.⁶⁰

We can conclude, then, that when Donne speaks of the return to the original image of God he does not mean that

⁵⁸See Étienne Gilson, La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard. Études de philosophie médiévale, Vol. XX. St. Bernard's system is treated by Gilson entirely on the basis of this elaboration of the doctrine of the Trinity, and only indirectly as an epistemological system.

⁵⁹Sermon CLIII, (VI, 106).

⁶⁰Sermon LXXX, (III, 483).

the soul is then the perfect soul described by St. Bernard as flawless through humility and unruffled through love.⁶¹

The third step of St. Bernard's anagogic path for which the other two steps prepare the soul is contemplation. He defines it as the mind's true and certain intuition of any object, or as the indubitable apprehension of a truth.⁶² The supreme object of mystical contemplation is Truth in itself.⁶³

In contemplation the soul departs from the remembrance of things present, it puts away not only the desire for but even the images of lower and material things and has communion with those things in which the image of purity resides. This is ecstasy, or communion with pure Truth.

Sed moriatur anima mea morte etiam, si dici potest, angelorum, ut praesentium memoria excedens, rerum se inferiorum corporearumque non modo cupiditatibus, sed et similitudinibus exuat, sitque ei pura cum illis conversatio, cum quibus est puritatis similitudo. Talis, ut opinor, excessus aut tantum, aut maxime contemplatio dicitur.⁶⁴

⁶¹De gradibus humilitatis, VII, 21 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 953): "Tandem jam perfectam animam propter humilitatem sine macula, propter charitatem sine ruga."

⁶²De consideratione, II, 11, 5 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 745): "Potest contemplatio quidem definiri, verus certusque intuitus animi de quacumque re, sive apprehensio veri non dubia."

⁶³De gradibus humilitatis, III, 6 (PL, CLXXXII, 944-45); ibid., VI, 19 (PL, CLXXXII, cols. 951-52).

⁶⁴Sermones in Cantica, LII, 5 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1031).

The necessary condition of contemplation is purity because only the pure in heart can see pure truth.⁶⁵

Contemplation is the ineffable experience of the absorption of a pure soul into God or of the descent of God into the soul, so that God is in the soul and the soul is in God. As air flooded with sunlight is transformed into the same brilliant light, so that it seems to be no longer lighted but rather light itself, so in contemplation every human emotion must finally melt away in some ineffable way and be wholly absorbed into the will of God. The substance of man remains, but in another form, another glory, another power.

O amor sanctus et castus! o dulcis et suavis affectio! o pura et defaecata intentio voluntatis! eo certe defaecatior et purior, quo in ea de proprio nil jam admixtum relinquitur: eo suavior et dulcior, quo totum divinum est quod sentitur. Sic affici, deificari est. Quomodo stilla aquae modica, multo infusa vino, deficere a se tota videtur, dum et saporem vini induit et colorem; et quomodo ferrum ignitum et candens, igni simillimum fit, pristina propriaque forma exutum; et quomodo solis luce perfusus aer in eandem transformatur luminis claritatem, adeo ut non tam illuminatus, quam ipsum lumen esse videatur: sic omnem tunc in sanctis⁶⁶ humanam affectionem quodam ineffabili modo necesse erit a semetipsa liquescere, atque in Dei penitus transfundi voluntatem. Alioquin quo-

⁶⁵De gradibus humilitatis, III, 6 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 945): "Pura veritas non nisi puro corde videtur. Cf. Sermones in Cantica, XXXI, 4 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 942); ibid., XXXII, 3 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 946).

⁶⁶But the description applies equally to mystical contemplation in this life, the possibility of which is being considered in this chapter.

modo omnia in omnibus erit Deus, si in homine de homine quidquam supererit? Manebit quidem substantia, sed in alia forma, alia gloria, aliaque potentia.⁶⁷

With this definition and brief description of contemplation in mind it is necessary to quote only one passage from Donne to see his unqualified rejection of the mystic's experience of extasis.

Yet there is no foulness so foul so inexcusable in the eyes of God, nor that shall so much aggravate our condemnation, as a false affection, and an hypocritical [sic] counterfeiting of this purity. There is a pureness, a cleanness imagined (rather dreamed of) in the Roman church, by which (as their words are) the soul is abstracted, not only a passionibus, but a phantasmatibus, not only from passions, and perturbations, but from the ordinary way of coming to know anything; The soul (say they) of men so purified, understands no longer, per phantasmata rerum corporalium; not by having anything presented by the phantasy to the senses, and so to the understanding, but altogether by a familiar conversation with God, and an immediate revelation from God; whereas Christ himself contented himself with the ordinary way; he was hungry, and a fig-tree presented itself to him upon the way, Matt. 21:20 and he went to it to eat.⁶⁸

For Donne the mystic's ineffable experience of contemplation is a sin, the sin of presumption. It is so because neither faith, hope, and charity, nor purity can be perfect in this world. But Donne's denial of the possibility of mysticism need not rest entirely on this. In a passage which appears to be autobiographical he

⁶⁷De diligendo Deo, X, 28 (PL, CLXXXII, col. 991).

⁶⁸Sermon CLIII, (VI, 102).

denies the possibility of maintaining what St. Bernard considers the pre-requisites of contemplation: perfect intention of the will, and withdrawal from sensory impressions.

I throw myself down in my chamber, and I call in, and invite God, and his angels thither, and when they are there, I neglect God and his angels, for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door; I talk on, in the same posture of praying; eyes lifted up; knees bowed down; as though I prayed to God; and, if God, or his angels should ask me, when I thought last of God in that prayer, I cannot tell: sometimes I find that I forgot what I was about, but when I began to forget it, I cannot tell. A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of tomorrow's dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine ear, a light in mine eye, an any thing, a nothing, a fancy, a chimera in my brain, troubles me in my prayer. So certainly there is nothing, nothing in spiritual things, perfect in this world.⁶⁹

He has called the purity required as the theoretical basis for contemplation a sin. Now from his own experience Donne denies the practical basis, the ability to empty the mind of all sensuous desires and images. Donne is no mystic.

It remains to ask and to try to answer what is after all a very important question: If Donne is not a mystic, then what explanation is to be given for the occurrence, in the Sermons, of the terms "union" and "contemplation?"

⁶⁹Sermon LXXX, (III, 476-77).

We may begin with a passage based on St. Bernard's elaboration of the doctrine of the Trinity.

God created one trinity in us; (the observation, and enumeration is St. Bernard's) which are those faculties of our soul, the reason, the memory, the will; that trinity in us, by another trinity too, (by suggestion towards sin, by delight in sin, by consent to sin) is fallen into a third trinity; the memory into a weakness, that that comprehends not God, it glorifies him not for benefits received; the reason to a blindness, that that discerns not what is true; and the will to a perverseness, that that wishes not what is good; but the goodness of God by these three witnesses on earth regenerates, and re-establishes a new trinity in us, faith, and hope, and charity; thus far that devout man carries it; and if this new trinity, faith, hope, and charity, witness to us Interitatem Christi, all the work of Christ, if my faith testify to me, that Christ is sealed to my soul; and my hope testify, that at the resurrection I shall have a perfect fruition in soul, and body, of that glory which he purchased for every believer; and my charity testifies to the world, that I labour to make sure that salvation, by a good life, then there is a trinity of trinities, and the six are made nine witnesses: there are three in heaven that testify that this is done for all mankind, three in the church that testify, this may be done for me, and three in my soul, that testify, that all this is applied to me.⁷⁰

The three witnesses on earth, or in the church are the spirit, the water, and the blood; or the preacher, baptism, and communion.⁷¹

This passage provides a clue to the solution of the question. For St. Bernard the first two steps of the

⁷⁰Sermon LXXXVI, (IV, 100-01).

⁷¹Ibid., (IV, 100).

anagogic path restore the soul to its lost beatitude, but according to Donne the image of the trinity is restored through the sacraments of the church. This becomes clear when the passages where Donne deals at length with the idea of "union" are examined.

First, distinguish with Donne two unions, One is reserved for heaven.

We call it visionem Dei, the sight of God, and we call it, unionem, an union with God; we shall see God, and we shall be united to God: for our seeing, we
I Jn. shall see him sicuti est, as he is; which
 3:2 we cannot express, till we see him; Cog-
I Cor. noscam ut cognitus, I shall know as I am
 13:12 known, which is a knowledge reserved for that school, and a degree for that commencement, and not to be had before.⁷²

The other is a representation in this world of the final union in heaven.

Such an union, as that the church of which we are parts, is his spouse, and that is eadem caro, the same body with him; and such a union, as that the obedient children of the church are idem spiritus cum domino, we are the same body, and the same spirit: so united, as that by being sowed in the visible church, we
I Jn. are semen Dei, the seed of God, and by
 3:9 growing up there in godliness and holiness, we are participes divinae naturae, partakers of the divine nature itself. . . our baptism, at our entrance into this world, is a seal of this union; our marriage, in the passage of this world, is a sacrament of this union; and that which seems to be our dissolution, (our death) is the strongest band of this union, when we are so united, as nothing can disunite us more.⁷³

⁷²Sermon LXXXVI, (IV, 120).

⁷³Ibid., (IV, 120-21).

In this passage he names three steps which lead to the union reserved for heaven, namely baptism, spiritual marriage, and death.

Baptism cleanses the soul from original sin, but not from actual sins.

In the church there is Mare aurem, a golden sea, which is baptisterium, the font, in which we discharge ourselves of all our first uncleannesses, of all the guiltiness of original sin; but because we contract new uncleannesses, by our unclean ways here; therefore there must be ablutio pedum, a washing of our feet, of our ways, of our actions.⁷⁴

The sacrament of communion absolves the soul of actual sins and constitutes, for Donne, the unitive experience, the spiritual marriage, possible in this life.

Now, as God provided a liquor in his church, for original sin, the water of baptism, so hath he provided another for those actual sins; that is, the blood of his own body, in the other sacrament. In which sacrament, besides the natural union, (that Christ hath taken our nature) and the mystical union, (that Christ hath taken us into the body of his church) by a spiritual union, when we apply faithfully his merits to our souls, and by a sacramental union, when we receive the visible seals thereof, worthily, we are so washed in his blood, as that we stand in the sight of his father, as clean, and innocent, as himself, both because he and we are thereby become one body, and because the garment of his righteousness covers us all.⁷⁵

If the sacrament of holy communion has been preceded

⁷⁴Sermon LXXXVI, (IV, 124).

⁷⁵Ibid., (IV, 125).

by repentance and so received worthily, then the soul thus cleansed is united to the Saviour and is capable of contemplating Christ crucified.

If I can say, That the blood of my Saviour runs in my veins, that the breath of his Spirit quickens all my purposes, that all my deaths have their resurrection, all my sins their remorse, all my rebellions their reconciliations, I will hearken no more after this question,⁷⁶ as it is intended de morte naturali, of a natural death, I know I must die that death, what care I? Nor de morte spirituali, the death of sin, I know I do, and shall die so; why despair I? IICor. But I will find out another death, 12. tem raptus, a death of rapture, and of ecstasy, that St. Paul dies more than once. . . and in this death of rapture, Acts and of ecstasy, in this death of the 9 contemplation of my interest in my Saviour, I shall find myself, and all my sins interred, and entombed in his wounds, and like a lily in Paradise, out of red earth, I shall see my soul rise out of his blade, in a candour, and in an innocence, contracted there, acceptable in the sight of his Father.⁷⁷

This is certainly contemplation, but it is not what St. Bernard considers the highest form. He describes two levels of contemplation proper and a third level which is meditation. For those perfect souls who have the capacity for mysticism, and who have made sufficient progress in humility and love, there is mystical contemplation of the hidden treasures of Wisdom.⁷⁸

⁷⁶That is his text: What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? (Ps. 89:47)."

⁷⁷Sermon XXV, (I, 513-14).

⁷⁸Sermones in Cantica, LXII, 6 (PL, CLXXXIII, cols. 1078-79).

For monks less proficient, there is contemplation of the saints and angels in heaven. These souls, not perfect, are content to intuit mentally the glory of the saints.⁷⁹ If anyone finds even this impossible, says St. Bernard, to him the Church presents Jesus crucified; so that even such a one, without any labour of his own, may dwell in those clefts of the rock on which he has not labored.⁸⁰ The feeble and inactive soul is shown a place already excavated where it may lie until it grows strong enough to cut out its own clefts in the rock, by which to enter into the heart of the Word by means of vigor and purity of mind.⁸¹ In other words, for those incapable of mystical contemplation, there is meditation upon Christ crucified which will lead to the overcoming of their disabilities.

Donne, however, does not meditate on Christ crucified in order to become a proficient mystic. For him,

⁷⁹Sermones in Cantica, LXII, 6 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1079): "Contenti vel gloriam sanctorum mente intueri."

⁸⁰According to the symbols set up at the beginning of the sermon, the rock is Christ and the clefts of the rock are his wounds. St. Bernard's text is Songs of Solomon 2:14: "My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollows of the wall."

⁸¹Sermones in Cantica, LXII, 6 (PL, CLXXXIII, col. 1079): "Si cui ne hoc quidem possibile sit, huic sane proponet Jesum, et hunc crucifixum: ut et ipse absque suo labore, habitet in foraminibus petrae, in quibus non laboravit. . . .Infirmae adhuc et inertī animae fossa ostenditur humus ubi lateat, donec convalescat et proficiat, ut possit et ipsa per se cavare sibi foramina in petra, per quae intret ad interiora Verbi, animi utique vigore et puritate."

only physical death introduces the soul to the consummation of all knowledge and unites it to God inseparably. Salvation through the ordinances of the Church is the union possible in this life, but in heaven, he says,

salvation is eternal salvation; not the outward seals of the church upon the person, not visible sacraments, nor the outward seal of the person, to the church, visible works, nor the inward seal of the Spirit, assurance here, but fruition, possession of glory, in the kingdom of heaven; where we shall be. . .fully wise, and that without ignorance of necessary, or study of unnecessary knowledge. . . where we shall see God face to face, for we shall have such notions and apprehensions, as shall enable us to see him, and he shall afford such an imparting, such a manifestation of himself, as he shall be seen by us; and where we shall be as inseparably united to our Saviour, as humanity and divinity are united together; this unspeakable, this unimaginable happiness is this salvation, and therefore let us be glad when this is brought near us.

And this is brought nearer and nearer unto us, as we come nearer and nearer to our end. As he that travels weary, and late towards a great city, is glad when he comes to a place of execution, because he knows that is near the town; so when thou comest to the gate of death, glad of that, for it is but one step from that to thy Jerusalem.⁸²

Not only the perfect union of the soul and God, but the end of St. Bernard's anagogic path, the knowledge of God by contemplation, or intuition, is reserved for heaven when the soul will be perfect in all its faculties.

⁸²Sermon CXLIX, (VI, 50-51).

In heaven, I shall have continuitatem intuendi; it is not only vision, but intuition, not only a seeing, but a beholding, a contemplating of God, and that in continuitate, I shall have an uninterrupted, an unintermitted, an undiscontinued sight of God; I shall look, and never look off; not look, and look again, as here, but look, and look still, for that is, continuitas intuendi. . . . Totam lucem, et totus lux aspiciam; I shall see the whole light; here I see some parts of the air enlightened by the sun, but I do not see the whole light of the sun; there I shall see God entirely, all God, totam lucem, and totus lux, I myself shall be all light to see that light by. Here, I have one faculty enlightened, and another left in darkness: mine understanding sometimes cleared, my will, at the same time perverted. There, I shall be all light, no shadow upon me; my soul invested in the light of joy, and my body in the light of glory.⁸³

From this examination of his thought against the background of the system of the one great mystic to whom he sometimes looked for doctrinal inspiration, Donne emerges, not as a mystic, or "searcher of majesty,"⁸⁴ but as a great Anglican divine. He supports the Church and its ordinances, rather than private inspirations,⁸⁵ and the universally accepted doctrines, rather than any that deviate into unknown ways,⁸⁶ or require more dis-

⁸³Sermon CXXV, (V, 253-54).

⁸⁴Proverbs 25:27.

⁸⁵Sermon LXII, (III, 95-96); Sermon LXXIV, (III, 344).

⁸⁶Sermon CLV, (VI, 213-19); Sermon CXXXVII, (V, 454); Sermon LXII, (III, 83-4).

cipline that man's infirmities enable him to accomplish. God, says Donne, does not ask more of man than he can provide because, "though God look upon the inscription, he looks upon the metal too, though he look that his image should be preserved in us, he looks in what earthen vessels this image is put, and put by his own hand."⁸⁷

⁸⁷Sermon LXXX, (III, 483).

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

EQUIVALENT PHRASES USED
IN ST. BERNARD'S WORKS

	I			II	III
<u>De gradibus humilitatis</u>	superbia	humilitas	opera	charitas	contempla- tio
	diligere seipsum propter seipsum	diligere Deum propter se		diligere Deum propter ipsum	nec seipsum diligere nisi propter Deum
<u>De diligendo Deo</u>					
	liberum arbitrium	bona cogitatio	liberum consilium		liberum complacitum
<u>De gratia et libero arbitrio</u>					
	servus	mercena- rius	discipu- lus	fillus	sponsa
<u>Sermones in Cantica, VII</u>					
	creans gratia	praeven- iens gratia	provehens vel salvans gratia	vivificans gratia	consummans gratia
<u>De gratia et libero arbitrio</u>					

meritum

praemium

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Editions.

S. Bernardi. Opera Omnia; ed. D. Joannis Mabillon (1667), reprinted in Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series II: Patrologia Latina; ed. J. P. Migne. Paris, 1844-64. Vols. CLXXXII - CLXXXV bis.

Donne, John. Works; ed. Henry Alford. London, 1839. 6v.

———. Essays in Divinity; ed. Augustus Jessopp. London, 1855.

———. Poems; ed. H. J. C. Grierson. Oxford, 1912. 2v.

II. Primary Sources.

Aquinas, St. Thomas. Summa theologiae; tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, 1913-42.

———. Summa contra gentiles; tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, 1923-29.

Augustine, Saint. The Basic Writings; ed. Whitney J. Oates. New York: Random House, 1948. 2v.

Browne, Sir Thomas. Works; ed. Geoffrey Keynes. London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928. 6v.

Dante. Opere; ed. E. Moore and Paget Toynbee. Oxford, 1924.

III. Secondary Sources.

Gilson, Étienne. The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy; tr. A. H. C. Downes. New York: Scribner's, 1940.

———. La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard. Études de philosophie médiévale, Vol. XX. Paris: J. Vrin, 1947.

- Grierson, H. J. C., "John Donne," Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IV, Ch. 11; ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller. Cambridge, 1909.
- Husain, Itrat. The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne. London: S. P. C. K., New York: Macmillan, 1938.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. The Great Chain of Being. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1936.
- Moloney, Michael F. John Donne: His Flight from Medievalism. Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. XXIX, nos. 2-3. Urbana: Illinois U.P., 1948.
- Ramsay, Mary Paton. Les doctrines médiévales chez Donne, le poète métaphysicien de l'Angleterre, (1573-1631); 2nd ed. Oxford, 1924.
- Saintsbury, George. A History of English Prose Rhythm. London, 1912.
- Simpson, Evelyn M. A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne; 2nd ed. Oxford, 1948.
- Underhill, Evelyn. Mysticism; 12th ed. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1930.
- Williams, Arnold. The Common Expositor. Chapel Hill: North Carolina U.P., 1948.
- Williamson, George. The Donne Tradition. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1930.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 02540 7812