

***LITERATURE OF THE  
REFORMATION ERA***

**TEACHER'S MANUAL**

*J. Parnell McCarter*

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**The Puritans' Home School Curriculum**

**[www.puritans.net](http://www.puritans.net)**

**LITERATURE OF THE REFORMATION ERA**  
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## **SECTION ONE: COURSE INSTRUCTIONS**

### ***Purpose***

This course provides students the opportunity to read literature of the reformation era.

### ***Books Required***

There are two books required of students for this course:

- *Literature of the Reformation Era* (available free on-line at [www.puritans.net](http://www.puritans.net) )
- *Literature of the Reformation Era Workbook for Students* (available free on-line at [www.puritans.net](http://www.puritans.net) )

### ***Check-Off List***

Grades for the course should be recorded on the check-off list in this teacher's manual.

### ***Assignments***

This course consists of assignments, presented in this teacher's manual. Each chapter in the textbook has an assignment associated with it.

### ***Grading***

The overall course grade is calculated based on scores of the assignments.

**SECTION TWO: COURSE CHECK-OFF LIST**

## ***LITERATURE OF THE REFORMATION ERA***

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Assignment Check-Off List*

ASSIGNMENT #	ASSIGNMENT COMPLETED? (X)	ASSIGNMENT SCORE (On 100-Point Scale)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
Total of Scores on 7 Assignments		
Average Assignment Score (Total of Scores/7)		

**Course Grade (Letter Grade Equivalent of Course Grade on 100-Point Scale):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Grading in this course should be done on a 100-point scale, with letter grades assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Score on 100-Point Scale	Score on 4.0 Scale
A+	97 – 100	4.0
A	94 – 96	4.0
A-	90 – 93	4.0
B+	87 – 89	3.0
B	84 – 86	3.0
B-	80 – 83	3.0
C+	77 – 79	2.0
C	74 – 76	2.0
C-	70 – 73	2.0
D	60 – 69	1.0
F	0 – 59	0

In order to determine how many points each question in a test is worth, divide 100 by the number of questions in the test. For example, if there are 10 questions in a test, then each question is worth 10 points (= 100 / 10). So if a student got 9 out of the 10 questions right, then his test score is 90 (= 9 x 10) on a 100-point scale. His letter grade, according to the table above, would then be an A-.

We supply in the above table the corresponding grade on a 4.0 scale.

## **SECTION THREE: ASSIGNMENT ANSWERS**



## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 1

1. Wycliffe, like Chaucer, wrote in Middle English. In several sentences, compare the Middle English of Chaucer (which you read in your medieval literature textbook), with the Middle English of Wycliffe.
2. Wycliffe's English language Bible, followed later in time by the King James' Version Bible, did much to standardize written English among the English-speaking people. The King James' Version Bible is written in what is called Modern English (although many people mistakenly think otherwise). In several sentences, compare the Middle English of Wycliffe, with the Modern English of the King James' Version Bible.
3. What did Wycliffe do to inaugurate the Reformation?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 2

1. What role did Petrarch play in the Renaissance movement?
2. How many lines are there in Petrarch's poem, and what does that and other evidence suggest about the nature of the poem? 14 lines; it is sonnet
3. At this time in history, Italians were foremost of the Europeans in sea commerce. How does that perhaps affect Petrarch's poem?
4. In his poem, what do you think the voyage is symbolic of? Why?
5. What is a galley?
6. Why might the poem's narrator call his lord his enemy?
7. Scylla and Charybdis is an allusion to ancient Greek literature. What do they mean in Petrarch's poem?
8. What is the tone of the poem?
9. How does Petrarch employ imagery in the poem?
10. What is the theme of the poem? life as a difficult voyage of unfulfilled romance
11. The form of Italian sonnets typically consists of 1 octave (a major group of 8 lines) followed by the sestet (a minor group of six lines), whereas the English sonnet typically consists of 3 quatrains followed by a couplet. Does the poem follow the Italian or English form? Italian
12. What is a "double star", and what does Petrarch mean for it to symbolize in the poem?
13. What in the poem is said to shred the sail? mad desire, hope, heavy sighs
14. Sonnets often address romantic themes? Does this one?
15. What is unrequited love, and does it play a part in this poem? Yes, for it appears the narrator cannot find a woman
16. Does this poem reflect a Biblical Christian perspective on life? Why or why not? No. It does not look to God as provider, nor it satisfied with His providences. The chief end of the narrator does not seem to be that of glorifying God. And whenever that is not our chief end, then we often can be dissatisfied with our lot in life.

### ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 3

1. How is Boccaccio a bridge between the medieval era of his past and the future era, and how is it reflected in *Decameron*? He lived at a time when the Medieval era was coming to an end, and giving way to what would eventually become the modern era. There are aspects of both eras in his work. For instance, the many religious allusions are reminiscent of medieval literature.
2. What great European event served as the backdrop for the stories of *Decameron*? the Black Death
3. To what did Boccaccio attribute the cause of the “deadly pestilence”? influence of celestial bodies or divine wrath on sin
4. Boccaccio indicates people responded differently to the “deadly pestilence”. What were these different responses? Some became more ascetic, some more licentious, and some took a middle course.
5. What sorts of funerals were people given during the pestilence? Much less than normal, for people were afraid.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 4

1. In which century did Thomas A Kempis live? the fifteenth century
2. Does it seem Thomas A Kempis was familiar with the words of scripture? Why or why not? Yes, because it is full of scriptural quotes.
3. What was Thomas A Kempis attitude towards reading scripture? He promoted it.
4. Describe the style and tone of *Imitations of Christ*. Didactic and simple.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 5

1. To whom did Erasmus address his preface in *The Praise of Folly*? Thomas More
2. What is the theme of *The Praise of Folly*?
3. What genre does the preface suggest *The Praise of Folly* is? satire
4. What aspects of society came under sharp ridicule in the work?
5. What was being suggested in the oration that “whoever intends to have children must have recourse to folly”?
6. According to the oration concerning Folly’s companions, who are some of the companions cited? Self-Love, Flattery, Laziness, Pleasure, Madness, etc.
7. In the oration on magical charms, which classes of men are said most to profit financially from the dispensing of “feigned miracles and strange lies”? mass priests and pardoners
8. What seems to have been Erasmus’ opinion of those churchmen who sold pardons from purgatory? He mocked them.
9. Did Erasmus trust the common people? No, for he ridicules their gullibility and proneness to folly.
10. What does Erasmus think of the Schoolmen and Scholasticism? He believes they debate about trifles
11. Does Erasmus believe the Schoolmen and Scholasticism capture the Biblical doctrines in their teaching? How or how not? No. They treat matters never touched upon in the Bible.
12. Summarize Erasmus’ conclusions concerning the Romish monks.
13. In what tone do you think the last line of *The Praise of Folly* was written? Why?

## **ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 6**

1. Briefly describe More's conception of the ideal state in a few sentences.
2. What would More have thought about this opinion: "thieves should be put to death"?

## **ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 7**

1. Martin Luther's 95 Theses were a reaction from and response to medieval Roman Catholicism. What do we learn about the Roman Catholicism of the time by reading these theses?
2. How do we know from reading the 95 Theses that they reflect a time in Luther's development before he had totally broken with Romanism? a number of the theses indicate Luther was still loyal to the Pope and still believed in purgatory
3. How are the 95 Theses testimony to the fact that reformation often comes in stages?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 8

1. According to Calvin's *Institutes*, why are knowledge of God and self mutually interdependent?
2. Why is piety requisite for the knowledge of God?
3. Briefly describe the writing style of Calvin's *Institutes*? didactic
4. Why does Calvin aver that man needs scripture, given man already has natural revelation?
5. What is Calvin's position regarding images in worship, and how does he support his position?
6. John Calvin is famously associated with the doctrine of predestination, because of his vigorous defense of it. What does it appear Calvin means by "predestination", and what arguments does he set forth in its defense?



## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 9

1. John Knox had a very different purpose in mind when writing *The First Blast of the Trumpet* than John Calvin had in writing *The Institutes*. Compare and contrast the purposes and styles of these two Reformation writings.
2. What is the thesis of Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet* ?
2. From what Knox has, does it seem that the thesis of his work was commonly proclaimed in his own day? Why or why not?
3. Does it seem that Knox was a man that was easily cowed by the opinions of others? Support your answer with evidence from his work.
4. Occasionally in his work Knox refers to the Queen of England. Who was the queen when Knox wrote it? Bloody Mary
5. What did Knox conceive to be the duty of Christian civil magistrates with respect to the Old Testament law? enforce both tables of the moral law, but not necessarily the judicial or ceremonial law of the Jews
6. What are some of the chief objections to his thesis, according to Knox, and how does he respond to them.?
7. In his "Summary of the Proposed Second Blast of the Trumpet", do you think Knox was averring the right of a parliament to impeach a wicked monarch, or was he averring the right of individual citizens to revolt?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 10

1. What is the meaning of this phrase in the *Spiritual Exercises*: “the white which I see, is black, if the Hierarchical Church so decides it”? And how does it form as it were the foundation of every other proposition in the *Spiritual Exercises*?
2. Write a critique of this phrase from a Biblical perspective: “the white which I see, is black, if the Hierarchical Church so decides it”.
3. What do the *Spiritual Exercises* teach concerning predestination?
4. How do the *Spiritual Exercises* contradict the regulative principle of worship? In what ways is the principle contradicted?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 11

1. Do you think *Don Quixote* is a satire? Why or why not? If so, what is being satirized?
2. How is *Don Quixote* a commentary on the medieval era?
3. Compose a character sketch of the character Don Quixote.
4. What is the tone of *Don Quixote*? ironic and humorous
5. What does “quixotic” mean, and how does the word relate to this work?
6. Give examples of irony from *Don Quixote*.
7. What are some examples from the story that manifest the traditional Romanist culture of the Spain of that time? He and they ate no meat on Fridays.

## **ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 12**

1. How does Machiavelli manifest lack of faith in God's word by his manner of advice regarding the ideal prince?
2. Which two animals does Machiavelli suggest a prince should mimic? a lion and a fox
3. How does Machiavelli recommend a prince should appear to the populace? merciful, faithful, religious

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 13

1. What is a pastoral lyric? Poetry that expresses emotions in an idyllic setting. It is related to the term "pasture," and is associated with shepherds writing music to their flocks. The tradition goes back to David in the Bible and Hesiod the Greek poet.
2. Is this poem a pastoral lyric? Why or why not?
3. What are the themes of this poem? The themes of the poem - *carpe diem* and the immediate gratification of their sexual passions.
4. What is the tone of the poem?
5. What is the metrical schema of the poem? It is composed in Iambic tetrameter (four feet of unstressed/stressed syllables), with six stanzas each composed of two rhyming couplets. It is often used for scholastic purposes because the poem is an good example of regular meter and rhythm. [quatrains (4 line stanzas) of iambic tetrameter (8 syllables per line, 4 measures per line with 2 syllables in each measure)]
6. What is the rhyme pattern in the poem?
6. How is the metrical schema consistent with the poem's themes?
7. How many stanzas are in the poem? 6
8. What is a quatrain? 4 line stanza
9. Is the perspective of this poem Biblical? Why or why not?
10. What does the term "passionate" in the title imply about the nature of the shepherd's love? "The use of "passionate" in the title suggests strong emotions, but may also refer to an ardent desire to possess the woman sexually, since there is never any declaration of love."
11. To what aspect of her personality does the shepherd appeal? sensual pleasures
12. There is a humanistic tradition that our problems are caused by having too many restrictions by society. If we could get away from these rules, we could return to a pristine condition of happiness. The "free love" movement of the 1960's was a modern manifestation of this utopian belief. If the nymph would go a-maying with the shepherd, they would have a perfect life. Is this realistic? Why or why not?
13. How is time presented in the poem? as static. "The poem is static in time, with no history or clearly defined future. Only the present matters. There is never any suggestion that the poet is asking the woman for a long-term commitment; there is no offer of marriage nor does he offer a long-term future together. Instead, he asks her to come and live with him and seek pleasure in the moment."
14. How does the poet use the setting of the poem to buttress the poem's theme? "The pastoral tradition is characterized by a state of contentment and of innocent and romantic love. Rural country folk are presented in an idealized natural setting, while they contemplate their perfect and peaceful world that is absent the worries and issues of crowded city life."
15. History suggests that the poet Marlowe lived a sexually licentious life. Do you think this is manifested in his poem? How?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 14

1. In what ways does Raleigh's poem satirize Marlowe's poem?
2. How many stanzas are in this poem?
3. How does each stanza in Raleigh's poem respond to each stanza in Marlowe's poem?
4. At <http://www.enotes.com/passionate-shepherd/> we read: "Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" fits perfectly into the poetic genre of the period. Poets of the Elizabethan age used poetry as a way to express their wit and talent. It is likely that Marlowe's poem would have been passed around among his friends long before its publication in 1599 in England, six years after the poet's death. Few Elizabethan poets published their own work, especially one as young as Marlowe, and so it is fairly certain that the poem was well-known long before its publication. The composition date is thought to be about 1588, and probably it generated many responses well before its publication nearly a dozen years later. Among these responses was Sir Walter Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (date unknown, but thought to be about 1592), which provides the woman's response to Marlowe's shepherd. What do you think motivated Raleigh to compose this poetic response?
5. Marlowe had used nature to buttress his theme. How does Raleigh use nature to buttress his theme? The feminine persona (the nymph) of the poem sets up a hypothetical set of questions that undermine the intelligence of the man's offer because all that he offers is transitory. She reverses his images into negative ones:
  - rocks grow cold
  - fields yield to the harvest
  - the flocks are driven to fold in winter
  - rivers rage
  - birds complain of winter (a reference to the story of Philomela who was raped and turned into a nightingale).
6. Someone has written: "Raleigh combines *carpe diem* with *tempus fugit* in an unusual way. Normally we should seize the day because time flies. Raleigh argues that because time flies, we should NOT seize the day." How so?
7. Would Raleigh see society and societal norms as spoiling love and pleasure? "Raleigh argues that it is not society that taints sexual love. We are already tainted before we enter society. There will be consequences to their roll in the grass. Time does not stand still; winter inevitably follows the spring; therefore, we cannot act on impulses until we have examined the consequences."
8. What is the metrical schema of this poem? How does it compare with Marlowe's? This poem by Sir Walter Raleigh uses the same meter and references to present "mirror images" of Marlowe's poem.
9. What does Raleigh suggest about the advisability of "free love in the grass"? "Free love in the grass is impossible now because the world is not in some eternal spring. The seasons pass, as does time. Nymphs grow old, and shepherds grow cold."

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 15

1. There was vigorous debate during the Reformation era concerning the contours of an ideal commonwealth. More had described his vision in his *Utopia*. Theologians like Calvin described it in their theological treatises. Bacon described his version in *The New Atlantis*. In what ways was Bacon's version similar to and different from these other versions? *The New Atlantis* is a utopian novel written by Francis Bacon in 1626. It depicts a mythical land, Bensalem, to which he sailed, that was located somewhere off the western coast of the continent of America. He recounts the description by one of its wise men, of its system of experimentation, and of its method of recognition for inventions and inventors. In Bensalem, marriage and family are the basis of society and family ties are celebrated in state-sponsored holidays.

2. What role did the Bible seem to play in Bacon's version versus these other versions?

3. Here is how one person has commented upon Bacon's *The New Atlantis*: "Bacon's literary executor, Dr. Rawley, published "The New Atlantis" in 1627, the year after the author's death. It seems to have been written about 1623, during that period of literary activity which followed Bacon's political fall. None of Bacon's writings gives in short space so vivid a picture of his tastes and aspirations as this fragment of the plan of an ideal commonwealth. The generosity and enlightenment, the dignity and splendor, the piety and public spirit, of the inhabitants of Bensalem represent the ideal qualities which Bacon the statesman desired rather than hoped to see characteristic of his own country; and in Solomon's House we have Bacon the scientist indulging without restriction his prophetic vision of the future of human knowledge. No reader acquainted in any degree with the processes and results of modern scientific inquiry can fail to be struck by the numerous approximations made by Bacon's imagination to the actual achievements of modern times. The plan and organization of his great college lay down the main lines of the modern research university; and both in pure and applied science he anticipates a strikingly large number of recent inventions and discoveries. In still another way is "The New Atlantis" typical of Bacon's attitude. In spite of the enthusiastic and broad-minded schemes he laid down for the pursuit of truth, Bacon always had an eye to utility. The advancement of science which he sought was conceived by him as a means to a practical end—the increase of man's control over nature, and the comfort and convenience of humanity. For pure metaphysics, or any form of abstract thinking that yielded no "fruit," he had little interest; and this leaning to the useful is shown in the practical applications of the discoveries made by the scholars of Solomon's House. Nor does the interest of the work stop here. It contains much, both in its political and in its scientific ideals, that we have as yet by no means achieved, but which contain valuable elements of suggestion and stimulus for the future." What appears to be the philosophical perspective of this commentator? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not?

4. In *The New Atlantis*, the best and brightest of Bensalem's citizens attend a college called Salomon's House, in which scientific experiments are conducted in Baconian method in order to understand and conquer nature, and to apply the collected knowledge to the betterment of society. How would you describe the Baconian method, having read *The New Atlantis*?

5. The Royal Society was founded in 1660, only a few months after the Restoration of King Charles II, by members of one or two either secretive or informal societies already in existence. The Royal Society enjoyed the confidence and official support of the restored monarchy. The "New" or "Experimental" form of philosophy was generally ill-regarded by the Aristotelian and religious academies, but had been promoted by Sir Francis Bacon in his book *New Atlantis*. Robert Boyle refers to the "Invisible College" as early as 1646. A founding meeting was held at the premises of Gresham College in Bishopsgate on 28 November 1660, immediately after a lecture by Sir Christopher Wren, at that time Gresham Professor of Astronomy. At a second meeting a week later, Sir Robert Moray, an influential Freemason who had helped organize the public emergence of the group, reported that the King approved of the meetings. The Royal Society continued to meet at the premises of Gresham College and at Arundel House, the London home of the Dukes of Norfolk, until it moved to its own premises in Crane Court in 1710. A formal Royal Charter of incorporation passed the Great Seal on 15 July 1662, creating "The Royal Society of London", with Lord Brouncker as the first President, and Robert Hooke was appointed as Curator of Experiments in November 1662. A second Royal Charter was sealed on 23 April 1663, naming the King as Founder and changing the name to "The Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge". The motto of the Royal Society, "Nullius in Verba" (Latin: "On the words of no one"), signifies the Society's commitment to establishing the truth of scientific matters through experiment rather than through citation of authority. In what ways do you think the ideal advocated in *The New Atlantis* and embodied in the Royal Society prepared for the dominant trend of the modern era? In what ways did it undermine both the medieval and reformation order of society and scholarship?



## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 16

1. In Act I, scene 1 provides the background for the plot of the play. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to do it in this way?
2. It is against the law of nature (as well as the law revealed in the Bible) to marry the sibling of one's deceased spouse. How is this law pertinent in the plot of *Hamlet*, and why would it have been such a poignant issue in mind of an English audience? Hamlet's mother has married his uncle, following the untimely death of Hamlet's father.
3. Why do you think Shakespeare chose Wittenberg as the site for the university where Hamlet and Horatio were students?
4. Why do you think Shakespeare incorporated in his plays ghosts and witches?
5. What do you think of Lord Polonius' parting advice to his son Laertes, as Laertes is leaving for France?
6. As a playwright, Shakespeare sought to justify his craft in an age when Puritans were opposed to the theater and showed from scripture its unlawfulness. How did Shakespeare's use of a play within a play in *Hamlet* serve his end, and what does it say about Shakespeare's perspective on the theater?
7. What is the debate within Hamlet's mind, voiced in his famous "to be or not to be" soliloquy? whether to commit suicide or not

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 17

1. Write an essay describing how a character in *Macbeth* struggles to gain power and its effect on other characters in the drama.
2. What is meant by the line “fair is foul, and foul is fair” in Act I, Scene I, and how does it support the overall theme of the play?
3. What should we think of actors playing the role of witches or murderers in a play like *The Tragedy of Macbeth*? Which Bible verses support your conclusion?
4. A central question in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is whether human society is fundamentally amoral, dog-eat-dog. How do you think this question is resolved in the play?
5. Which characters in the play seem to regard life as amoral, and which do not? *Macbeth* believes human life itself is meaningless and tiresome and amoral. In contrast to this are: King Edward's ministry, Malcolm's clean living, the dignified death of the contrite traitor, and the doctor's prescription for pastoral care.
6. Probably composed in late 1606 or early 1607, *Macbeth* is the last of Shakespeare's four great tragedies, the others being *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Othello*. It is a relatively short play without a major subplot, and it is considered by many scholars to be Shakespeare's darkest work. Why do you think it is regarded as such a dark work?
7. What role does nature play in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*? (*Lear* is an utter tragedy in which the natural world is amorally indifferent toward mankind, but in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare adds a supernatural dimension that purposively conspires against *Macbeth* and his kingdom. In the tragedy of *Lear*, the distraught king summons the goddess of Chaos, Hecht; in *Macbeth*, Hecate appears as an actual character.)
8. Do you think Lady *Macbeth* is portrayed sympathetically or unsympathetically? On the level of human evil, Shakespeare's Scottish tragedy is about *Macbeth*'s bloody rise to power, including the murder of the Scottish king, Duncan, and the guilt-ridden pathology of evil deeds generating still more evil deeds. As an integral part of this thematic web is the play's most memorable character, Lady *Macbeth*. Like her husband, Lady *Macbeth*'s ambition for power leads her into an unnatural, phantasmagoric realm of witchcraft, insomnia and madness. But while *Macbeth* responds to the prophecies of the play's famous trio of witches, Lady *Macbeth* goes even further by figuratively transforming herself into an unnatural, desexualized evil spirit. The current trend of humanist critical opinion is toward an upward reevaluation of Lady *Macbeth*, who is said to be rehumanized by her insanity and her suicide. Much of this reappraisal of Lady *Macbeth* has taken place in discussions of her ironically strong marriage to *Macbeth*, a union that rests on loving bonds but undergoes disintegration as the tragedy unfolds. Considered Biblically, Lady *Macbeth* is a very wicked lady.
9. Often we can be disappointed with what we placed our trust in. Compose a paragraph showing from the play a character who was deceived by what he had placed his trust in.
10. A bad conscience can destroy someone. How did it destroy Lady *MacBeth*?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 18

1. In Sonnet 18, how does Shakespeare employ imagery to describe the one he loves?
2. What aspects of summer does the poet admire?
3. What is the meter of the poem?
4. Why do you think the poet chose the sonnet form for this poem?
5. What two things are compared in the poem? summer and “thee”
6. What aspects of summer does the poet disdain? its temporality
7. Which term in the poem marks the pivot point of the comparison?
8. What is personified in line 11? Death
9. What does “this” in line 14 refer to?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 19

1. Sermons expositing scripture texts were a central feature of the Protestant Reformation. Why so?
2. In his sermon, Mr. Sibbes notes two general purposes of the prophet Isaiah in the sermon text. What are the two purposes he cites? comfort and how to worship God
3. Every piece of literature has within it certain assumptions that the writer holds true even if not expressly stated. What are some of those assumptions of Mr. Sibbes' sermon? the Bible is the infallible word of God and foundation of all knowledge
4. The assumptions commonly held during the Reformation era in the Protestant nations were by and large rejected in the modern era. What do you think led to this rejection?
5. Based on the sermon, how would you characterize Sibbes' view of God?
6. Based on the sermon, how would you characterize Sibbes' view of man?
7. The sermon mentions the active and passive obedience of Christ. How are these defined in the sermon? Christ did what we should have done and He suffered for us.
8. A central feature of the Protestant Reformation was rejection of Romish errors which had become accepted during the medieval era. What are some of these errors specifically denounced in the sermon? other mediators, other foundations, the idolatrous Mass
9. The issue of assurance of salvation was one which the Puritans wrestled much with. What does Mr. Sibbes say about it in his sermon?
10. Mr. Sibbes explains how the elect's condition in Christ is better than Adam's was. How so? We can depend on Christ's righteousness.
11. To what does Mr. Sibbes attribute the reason why Christ did not come with more pomp into the world in His First Advent? to perform what He needed to do to redeem His people as a lowly servant
12. What lessons ought we learn from Christ's coming in humility into the world? ourselves to be humble

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 20

1. Common characteristics of Puritan sermons include: exposition of a scripture text; a focus upon Jesus Christ and His exceeding beauty and grace; calling of hearers to embrace the gospel of grace alone through faith alone, realizing their own depravity; and application of the text to the life of believers, showing how they ought to live in the light of God's revealed word. Show how each of these elements is present in Flavel's sermon.
2. How does Flavel give a brief polemical rebuke to Judaism? By noting how Messiah was to visit the second temple, but the second temple has already been destroyed.
3. How does Flavel's Calvinism show through in his sermon? He speaks of the elect who desire Christ, and how Christ died for them alone.
4. How does Flavel believe the term "nations" should be understood in the phrase "the desire of all nations"?
5. Briefly summarize how Flavel answers this question: upon what account does Christ become the desire of all nations?
6. Sketch an outline of the sermon.
7. How does Flavel press the conscience of England as a nation to act in applied response?
8. Puritan sermons were typically soul-searching. How does Flavel press the consciences of individual believers in the sermon?
9. What concluding advice does Flavel offer in his sermon for those whose hearts are cold in their desire for Christ?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 21

1. The mass of men today concentrate on that which is fleeting and material. In contrast, to meditate upon God is to consider that which is perfectly sublime and eternal. Compare some of Charnock's meditations upon God with the preoccupations of so many modern Americans on things like sports.
2. According to Charnock, how does God differ from man with respect to His knowledge?
3. According to Charnock, how does God differ from man with respect to His decrees?
4. How does Charnock reason we can deduce God's eternity from his immutability? must be eternal to be immutable
5. How does Charnock reason we can deduce God's eternity from his infinite perfection?
6. What comfort does Charnock suggest the people of God may find in the doctrine of God's eternity?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 22

1. Quoting from the Apostle Paul, Burroughs asserts “Christ is all in all”. What does Burroughs indicate is meant by the first “all”?
2. Quoting from the Apostle Paul, Burroughs asserts “Christ is all in all”. What does Burroughs indicate is meant by the second “all”?
3. What does Burroughs say is “the most absolutely necessary point in all theology”? God’s communicating Himself in His mercy to mankind through a Mediator
4. Prepare a brief outline of this sermon.

## **ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 23**

1. How does the English of the King James' Version compare with that of Wycliffe's translation?
2. What characteristics of the King James' Version make it aesthetically beautiful?



## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 24

1. How does the poet use literary techniques like imagery, metrical scheme, and syntax to reveal the poet's attitudes?

“Ballad - like four-line stanzas help to create the gently, slowly moving "feel" of the poem. The rhyme scheme is consistent and predictable all the way through, as well. The "mood" of this poem is in direct contrast to that of "[The Apparition](#)", which is very much "raw emotion". Here there is emotion, but it is confined to the "layette"-the ordinary lovers who cannot stand parting. “

2. What is a quatrain? 4-line stanza

3. Of how many quatrains does this poem consist? 9

4. At the beginning of the poem, in the first two quatrains, Donne teaches a didactic lesson by way of a comparison and analogy. What are the two things compared? At the beginning of "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," the poet, John Donne, engages in a didactic lesson to show the parallel between a positive way to meet death and a positive way to separate from a lover. When a virtuous man dies, he whispers for his soul to go while others await his parting. Such a man sets an example for lovers. The separation of the soul from the body, and the separation of lovers from each other, is not an ending but the beginning of a new cycle.

5. What is the didactic lesson in these two quatrains? At the beginning of "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," the poet, John Donne, engages in a didactic lesson to show the parallel between a positive way to meet death and a positive way to separate from a lover. When a virtuous man dies, he whispers for his soul to go while others await his parting. Such a man sets an example for lovers. The separation of the soul from the body, and the separation of lovers from each other, is not an ending but the beginning of a new cycle.

6. In poetry, what is a conceit? an elaborate, fanciful metaphor, esp. of a strained or far-fetched nature

7. Do you think Donne employs any conceits in his poem? If so, provide examples.

“The speaker in the poem is unique in that he does not compare the perfection of his love to a traditional object such as a rock or a fortress; instead he chooses to compare the twin legs of a compass to the lovers' sense of union during absence (ll. 25-36). Such a comparison would be called metaphysical according to Gardner, who states that a metaphysical conceit must concern two things so dissimilar that we "feel an incongruity" (19). Here, the poet must then proceed to persuade the reader that these things are alike in spite of their apparent differences (19-22).”

8. What is a valediction, and why do you think Donne entitled his poem a valediction? an act of bidding farewell; because in it a lover is bidding temporary farewell to his beloved

9. Describe the speaker of this poem, based upon what can be deduced from the poem.

10. Describe the listener of this poem, based upon what can be deduced from the poem.

11. It is probable that Donne wrote this poem for his wife, Ann Donne, and gave it to her before leaving to go abroad in 1611. At the time, Ann was sick and pregnant, and

apparently protested being left behind as her husband began a European tour with his friend, Sir Robert Drury. How is that biographical information consistent with what we find in the poem, and how does it affect your interpretation of it?

12. In the second quatrain, why do you think the poet uses the term 'melt' in the context? The word "melt" implies a change in physical state. The bond of the lovers will dissolve quietly like the soul of a dying man separating from his body.

13. In the second quatrain, why do you think the poet refers to others as "the laity", and how does this tie in with his use of the term "profanation"? to emphasize the sanctity of their state and bond of love in comparison to that about them.

14. In the poem Donne compares the love relationship to natural phenomena. What are some examples of this in the second and third quatrains? "The poem begins with a metaphysical comparison between virtuous dying men whispering to their souls to leave their bodies and two lovers saying goodbye before a journey. The poet says, "Let us melt and make no noise.... 'Twere profanation of our joys/ To tell the laity of our love" (ll. 5-8). The word "melt" implies a change in physical state. The bond of the lovers will dissolve quietly like the soul of a dying man separating from his body. "Noise" refers to "tear floods" and "sigh tempests" that the speaker implores his love not to release (l. 6).

He continues by comparing natural phenomena to a love relationship, the "sigh tempests" relating to the element of air, and the "tear floods" to the element of water. He uses this hyperbole to demand that his lover remain stoic and resist any show of emotion upon his departure (ll. 4-8).

Next, the element of earth is introduced. Earthquakes are perceived by everyone, and people often interpret them as omens of misfortune. It is understandable that an earthquake would be looked upon with fear because of its potential to ravage the land; whereas a trepidation affecting a celestial sphere would be viewed in a different light, especially one that is imperceptible and has no apparent meaning for the average person (Donne 444: 159 l. 11)."

15. In the third stanza the speaker presents a contrast between an earthquake and the "trepidation of the spheres" (according to the classic astronomical theory that the heavenly bodies were spherical and traveled in circles). What is the point of the contrast, as suggested in the fourth and fifth stanzas? to suggest that more earthly lovers would have problems with such a thing as being apart, but that their more celestial relationship was above such

16. In quatrain six, Donne echoes a view of marriage found in the first several chapters of Genesis. What is that view? the "two souls" of the lovers are joined together as one

17. How does Donne attempt to use that view of marriage to bolster his own argument?

He describes separation as a stretching exercise in which the joined soul of the lovers is gold beat to an "airy thinness" (l. 24). According to Pinka, the comparison is "beautiful and pure" but "fragile" since there is "expansion without increase" (142). The "airy thinness" emphasizes the stretching of the lovers' resources, in that the love continues to exist, but its strength is weakened by the circumstances. He urges the lover to look at the separation in a positive light, but he sends out undertones suggesting that he is aware of the fragility of the situation.

18. The poetic speaker, in the closing argument of his poem, changes his symbol of perfection from the sphere to the circle. In the Ptolemaic Universe, which was the model long held, the universe consists of perfect spheres and perfect circular orbits. Using the

circle, what is the closing argument of the poet? “According to Freccero, "No matter how far Donne roams his thoughts will revolve around his love.... At the end of the circle, body and soul are one" (283). In Donne's "Valediction," the human souls are described in the context of a joint soul that is stretched by the separation, or two souls joined within a circle of spiritual strength. Donne once stated in an elegy, "...perfect motions are all circular."<sup>5</sup> The circle in the "Valediction" represents the journey during which two lovers endure the trial of separation, as they support each other spiritually, and eventually merge in a physically and spiritually perfect union.”

<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/cavanaugh.htm>

## The Circle of Souls in John Donne's *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*

by Cynthia A. Cavanaugh

At the beginning of "[A Valediction Forbidding Mourning](#)," the poet, John Donne, engages in a didactic lesson to show the parallel between a positive way to meet death and a positive way to separate from a lover. When a virtuous man dies, he whispers for his soul to go while others await his parting. Such a man sets an example for lovers. The separation of the soul from the body, and the separation of lovers from each other, is not an ending but the beginning of a new cycle. The poem ends with the image of a circle, the symbol of perfection (Hall's 69, 297), representing the union of souls in a love relationship. This perfection is attained by parting at the beginning of the circle and reuniting at the point where the curves reconnect.

According to Helen Gardner, the metaphysical poem takes the reader down a certain path, a fixed line of argumentation (17). This valediction, an act of bidding farewell, proceeds in the guise of a monologue in which a speaker attempts to persuade a lover to remain faithful during his absence. The monologue is dramatic in the sense that the stay-behind lover is the implied listener. Donne's monologue is unique because he uses metaphysical comparisons to show the union of the lovers during their period of separation.

Although the poem attempts to persuade the lover as an implied listener, it also speaks indirectly to the reader who is drawn into the argument. The speaker's argument is supported by an implied reference to the authority of Greek philosophers and astronomers. According to Patricia Pinka, this use of esteemed authority to justify a view about love is a common unifying element throughout many of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* (50).

It is probable that Donne wrote this poem for his wife, Ann Donne, and gave it to her before leaving to go abroad in 1611. Ann, sick and pregnant at the time, protested being left behind as her husband began a European tour with his friend, Sir Robert Drury (Parker 56).

The poem begins with a metaphysical comparison between virtuous dying men

whispering to their souls to leave their bodies and two lovers saying goodbye before a journey. The poet says, "Let us melt and make no noise.... 'Twere profanation of our joys/ To tell the laity of our love" (ll. 5-8). The word "melt" implies a change in physical state. The bond of the lovers will dissolve quietly like the soul of a dying man separating from his body. "Noise" refers to "tear floods" and "sigh tempests" that the speaker implores his love not to release (l. 6).

He continues by comparing natural phenomena to a love relationship, the "sigh tempests" relating to the element of air, and the "tear floods" to the element of water. He uses this hyperbole to demand that his lover remain stoic and resist any show of emotion upon his departure (ll. 4-8).

Next, the element of earth is introduced. Earthquakes are perceived by everyone, and people often interpret them as omens of misfortune. It is understandable that an earthquake would be looked upon with fear because of its potential to ravage the land; whereas a trepidation affecting a celestial sphere would be viewed in a different light, especially one that is imperceptible and has no apparent meaning for the average person (Donne 444: 159 l. 11).<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the meaning of the third quatrain in the poem, it is necessary to consider the Ptolemaic Universe and the symbolism of the sphere. During the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan Age, the circle and sphere were looked upon as perfect shapes. The main influence behind that thinking may have been Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, who believed that since, "The motion of the celestial bodies is not straight and finite, but circular, invariable and eternal. So they themselves must be eternal, unalterable, divine" (Pannekoek 115).

The well-educated Donne, 1572-1631, certainly studied famous Greek thinkers such as Aristotle and Ptolemy, and their views concerning the universe. Donne lived during a time when many people accepted the Ptolemaic theory of the universe, which held that the spherical planets orbited the earth in concentric circles called deferents.<sup>2</sup> Writing this poem in 1611, Donne would most likely be influenced by his previous classical studies, and he chose to use the circle and the sphere to represent a perfect relationship based on reason and harmony.

The "trepidation of the spheres" is another obsolete astronomical theory, used to support the speaker's point that great changes in the heavens may be imperceptible to the layman. (ll.11-12). The speaker presents this comparison between the earthquake and the "trepidation of the spheres" to suggest that matters beyond one's control should be approached rationally.

In quatrains four and five, the speaker urges his love to remain stoic by making any change in their relationship as imperceptible to others as the "trepidation of the spheres," and again, he uses terms from astronomy to illustrate his point. The term "sublunary" refers to the surface below the moon. According to the Greek astronomers, this sublunary area, composed of the four elements, was imperfect. The sphere's surface, composed of *quinta essentia*, the perfect part, radiates light and heat (Pannekoek 115).

The dull sublunary lovers (l. 13) are imperfect human beings who do not practice mature love. The soul of their love is "sense" (l. 14), so they need physical contact to cement their relationship. However, the speaker suggests that reason can free itself from any connection with a sensory experience. Therefore, the lovers with fully developed souls "Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss" (l. 20), having developed rational souls,

the third part of the Aristotelian model for the human soul, consisting of vegetative, sense and rational parts. (Copleston, 328).

In quatrain six, Donne echoes the traditional marriage ceremony in which two become one, so the "two souls" of the lovers are joined together. He describes separation as a stretching exercise in which the joined soul of the lovers is gold beat to an "airy thinness" (l. 24). According to Pinka, the comparison is "beautiful and pure" but "fragile" since there is "expansion without increase" (142). The "airy thinness" emphasizes the stretching of the lovers' resources, in that the love continues to exist, but its strength is weakened by the circumstances. He urges the lover to look at the separation in a positive light, but he sends out undertones suggesting that he is aware of the fragility of the situation.<sup>3</sup>

The speaker then begins his closing argument, in which he changes his symbol of perfection from the sphere to the circle. One might argue that the circle and the sphere are slightly different objects and should not be considered one and the same; however, the Ptolemaic Universe consisted of both perfect spheres and perfect circular orbits, and so the concept of circle and sphere both represented perfection. Poets and songwriters have often used sphere and circle symbolism. One such work, *The Divine Comedy*, written in three books: the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso* by Dante Alighieri, still remains well-known today.

In Dante Alighieri's *Paradiso*, a story of a pilgrim journeying through Paradise, Dante sees nine concentric circles in the eyes of Beatrice, his guide. Beatrice explains to him that each of nine circles represents an angelic order. The brightest circles are in the center nearest to God and represent the highest order of angels and the greatest good. According to Beatrice, each circle also corresponds to one of the nine spherical heavens consisting of the five planets, the sun, the moon, the fixed stars, and the Prime Mover.<sup>4</sup>

It does not seem unusual for Donne to include both the sphere and the circle in his poetry as symbols of perfection, since other writers had linked the circle and the sphere together in various ways throughout the history of science and literature.

The speaker in the poem is unique in that he does not compare the perfection of his love to a traditional object such as a rock or a fortress; instead he chooses to compare the twin legs of a compass to the lovers' sense of union during absence (ll. 25-36). Such a comparison would be called metaphysical according to Gardner, who states that a metaphysical conceit must concern two things so dissimilar that we "feel an incongruity" (19). Here, the poet must then proceed to persuade the reader that these things are alike in spite of their apparent differences (19-22).

The speaker proves the point by drawing the circle with the compass. The lover who stays behind is the fixed point, and the speaker is the other leg of the instrument. Without the "firmness" of the fixed point, he would be unable to complete the journey and make the circle just (precise). The adverb "obliquely" (l. 34) may have several different meanings. John Freccero supports the interpretation that obliquely means a spiral motion, referred to by the Neoplatonic tradition as a movement of the soul (286-87). Obliquely may also indicate a slant. Either the drawing instrument can be interpreted to move in a spiral, or the motion may refer to the second foot's tilted position in relation to the fixed one in the center. Such a position would be required during the drawing of a circle.

According to Freccero, "No matter how far Donne roams his thoughts will revolve around his love.... At the end of the circle, body and soul are one" (283). In Donne's

"Valediction," the human souls are described in the context of a joint soul that is stretched by the separation, or two souls joined within a circle of spiritual strength. Donne once stated in an elegy, "...perfect motions are all circular."<sup>5</sup> The circle in the "Valediction" represents the journey during which two lovers endure the trial of separation, as they support each other spiritually, and eventually merge in a physically and spiritually perfect union.

<http://lardcave.net/tig/hsc/2eng-donne-valediction-comments.html>

### *Glossary*

**Valediction** - a farewell, but a stronger meaning than that: Valedictions for people are read at funerals, etc, and ties in with the first stanza.

**Prophanation** - sacrilegious

**Laytie** - common people. Also has religious connotations; see below.

**Trepidation** - movement. Also implies cautious, silent movement. Also implies an irregularity of movement.

**Elemented** - instigated, started, constructed. Also ties in with the other "element" imagery in the poem; see below.

### *Overall Explanation*

This is a "classic" Donne poem. In it, he shows off his vast knowledge of everything from alchemy to astronomy, and puts his most famous technique, the conceit, to great use. There is a rumor that this poem was written by Donne to his wife, before he went away on a long holiday with his friends, leaving her at home. It is impossible to prove, and doesn't really matter. I will, however, refer to the two characters in the poem as Donne and his wife in these comments.

Donne's basic argument was that most people's relationships are built on purely sensual things - if they are not together at all times, the relationship breaks down. Donne asserts that the love between him and his wife is different - it is not a purely sensual relationship, but something deeper, a "love of the mind" rather than a "love of the body". This love, he says, can endure even though sometimes the lovers cannot be close to each other at all times.

Donne uses some very evocative imagery in this poem. First of all, the parting of two lovers like Donne and his wife is likened to the death of a virtuous man. As a virtuous man dies, he knows that he has reconciled himself to God and will therefore be accepted into heaven. Thus he dies in peace and calm, and the people surrounding him at his deathbed are sad, but not anguished. In the same way, when two virtuous lovers part, there is no pain, because they know that each will be true to the other, even when they are apart. The people surrounding the dying man are quiet partly so as not to disturb him - in the same way, Donne says that too much outward show of emotion on the part of one lover would just disturb the other.

Donne is then very disparaging of the love of the rest of the population. The wails and screams and tears that "ordinary" lovers display when they must part is shown to be simply an act, with no real emotion in it.

The lovers are then likened to planetary bodies. In such a way, Donne places them above the "mortal earth". Unlike natural disasters, which are unpredictable and chaotic, the movement of the planets is peaceful and calm, even though the planets move much further.

Donne's most famous conceit is then introduced. The two lovers are likened to the two points of a compass. At first this seems ridiculous, but Donne shows how it makes sense. The idea of the wife staying and minding the house while the husband goes away is old-fashioned now, but we can still comprehend it. There is a lot more explanation of the "compass" conceit below.

### *Poetic Devices*

- Ballad - like four-line stanzas help to create the gently, slowly moving "feel" of the poem. The rhyme scheme is consistent and predictable all the way through, as well. The "mood" of this poem is in direct contrast to that of "[The Apparition](#)", which is very much "raw emotion". Here there is emotion, but it is confined to the "layetie"-the ordinary lovers who cannot stand parting.
- Conceits used:
  - Donne and wife > celestial bodies > the points of a compass.
  - The wedding ring > the path of a planet > the alchemical symbol for gold > the path traced out by a compass
  - The emotions of the common people > earthquakes and tempests

### *Imagery / References to Donne's learning*

- The circle
  - Marriage ring
  - Path of the planets (*Trepidation of the spheres*)
  - Alchemical symbol for gold was a circle with a point in the centre
  - Path described by a compass.
- Very broad range of knowledge displayed:
  - Planetary *trepidation*
  - Earthquakes, the love of "sublunary lovers"
  - Properties of gold - Gold is very **malleable** which means it can be beaten to *avery thinness*. The symbolism of gold is very important, as it is also the most precious of all the metals. It is also the **least reactive** of all metals, which ties in with Donne's placing of the lovers above the emotional *layetie*. In terms of alchemy, gold is also the most noble metal, and the most difficult to destroy.
  - Compass imagery and use.

### *Generally*

There is a lot to learn in this poem, so take it slowly...

- The two lovers are their own self-sustaining universe. They have no need of anyone else, as they are made perfect by their perfect love.

- The compass and the circle together formed the Renaissance symbol for eternal perfection.
- The first stanza, along with the standard rhyme scheme and structure already mentioned, contains a lot of sibilants [words beginning with "s"] to create a soft, gentle atmosphere. EG *some of their sad friends, whisper to their souls*.
- *Prophanation of our joyes... layetie our love* - The use of "prophanation" and "layetie" elevates the lovers to the status of a superior priesthood. Ties in with the idea of the lovers as planets being above the Earth, and the purity of gold being superior to impure emotions.
- (*Whose soule is sense*) - the brackets here indicate casuality: other people's love is really of no importance to Donne.
- *A love, so much refin'd*. "refin'd" here implies pure love, but it also ties in with the "pure element" (gold) imagery that Donne uses throughout the poem. Also the pure "substance", water, is used obliquely: the imagery evoked by *so let us melt*, for example, is that of one substance slowly becoming two. This image is evoked again in Stanza 5 with *Inter-assured of the mind*.
- *Endure not yet / A breach...* - there is some confusion over the word "yet", which seems to imply that eventually there will be a breach. Perhaps this relates to the title and the first stanza, and implies that the only way the lovers can be parted is by death.
- *And growes erect, as it comes home...* - not only does this tie in with the imagery of the compass closing and the two points coming together, but the use of "erect" also implies the emotional buildup of expectation and joy when the two lovers are together again. Since he is quick to denounce the obsession of the *layetie* with "sense", there is probably no implied sexual connotation.
- Double meanings abound. Take the lines *Thy firmnesse makes my circle just, / And makes me end, where I begunne..* Here the compass is doing two different things, and both have significance. "End where I begunne" implies the completion of a circle as drawn by a compass; only through his wife's stability in the centre, Donne argues, can his circle be drawn correctly. However "End where I begunne" also implies the closing of the compass - and Donne coming home to be with his wife.

Conceit (literary term):

5. an elaborate, fanciful metaphor, esp. of a strained or far-fetched nature.
6. the use of such metaphors as a literary characteristic, esp. in poetry.



## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 25

1. What is personification?
2. What is personified in this poem?
3. What effect do you think Donne wanted to create by use of personification?
4. Which text in scripture did Donne evidently draw upon in composing this poem? I Corinthians 15
5. Do you think the “some” referred to in line 1 of the poem at times included the poet himself? Why or why not?
6. What two things in line 5 are referred to as pictures of death? How are they pictures of death? In scripture rest and sleep are pictures of death, which is no doubt what Donne had in mind.
7. How do these two things bring pleasure, as Donne asserts?
8. What is the point of Donne’s comparison of these two things and death? to show that if these pictures bring great pleasure, the thing pictured by them (i.e., death) will bring even greater pleasure
9. In line 8 Donne mentions two pleasures or benefits that come with death. What are they? rest and the soul’s delivery
10. What do you think is the point of Donne stating that “our best men” go with death? Why did he not just say all men?
11. Lines 9 and 10 are intended to wound Death’s pride. How so?
12. In what sense is Death subject to “fate, chance, kings and desperate men”? because all of these can bring death in at their will
13. It is said that one is known by the company one keeps. How does Donne suggest this is so indicting for Death? because it dwells with such horrible things as poison, war and sickness.
14. Lines 11 and 12 also are intended to wound Death’s pride, by way of comparison. How so? Death compares poorly to poppy and charms.
15. What is a paradox?
16. The poem ends with a paradox. What is that paradox, and how is it so? the death of death. The poem ends in a paradox, as Donne concludes: "and death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die."
17. Some have called the poem “*Death Be Not Proud*” a tirade against death. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Donne mounts an impressive tirade against death, culminating in a celebration of its lack of power.
18. Donne’s wife’s death in 1617 may have been the occasion that prompted him to write this poem, as it seems it was for some other of his poems. How would the thoughts conveyed in this poem- ideas which have their source in scripture – have been a solace to Donne in just such an occasion?

Here is the commentary of one reviewer at  
<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/oliver.htm> :

Antonio S. Oliver

## Views of Death in Donne's Poetry

John Donne's complex personality plays an important role in his poetry. His intellect, and as a result his work, demonstrates various opinions that at times conflict or agree with each other. These opposing views represent one of the most fascinating aspects of his poetry. Seldom is this divergence presented as clearly and frequently as in the theme of death, as will be illustrated by the following essay.

As with most poets of his time, Donne was obsessed with death. Mesmerized by its mysteries, charmed by its allure, and convinced of the existence of an afterlife (as a result of Christian theology), he finds himself at times unable to settle on a particular view of the subject. While a considerable portion of Donne's *opus* deals with death either directly or indirectly, some poems depict death as insignificant while others present it as something he, and therefore humans, should fear. As a Christian, Donne believed (although perhaps did not understand) the concept of an afterlife. This conviction is shown by his understanding of death as a necessary stage before reaching the glory of heaven, the promised life with God. His contradictory behavior is demonstrated by a fear of death, sometimes expressed in his search for ways in which he could triumph over it instead of becoming its victim, which fueled his interest in the practice of suicide.

One of the Holy Sonnets, *Death Be Not Proud*, presents the contradictory views of Donne. The opening lines, "Death be not proud, though some have called thee/Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so" demonstrate his own uncertainty on the issue, since that "some" he mentions includes him at times. However, he denies the power of death in the very next line, and proceeds to list several reasons why. The people whom death believes it kills do not "cease to live" (in order to avoid the use of the word 'death'); death does not have such powers. Death is not all-powerful, since it is part of God's creation. Furthermore, death is not an end to life. Rather, it is a kind of "sleep," a middle stage to cross before being reunited with the creator.

The final part of the fourth line presents a familiar trait of Donne's poetry: its theme shifts from death to Donne himself. Although it is not an extreme example, for he focuses on death and himself, it demonstrates his conviction that a poem is worth writing if it regards him in some way. "Nor yet canst thou kill me/From rest and sleep" serves to reinforce the idea of death as a mere transitory stage between the earthly and the afterlives. "Soonest our best men with thee do go" is used by Donne to remind the reader that death is not a punishment only a few people receive, but an occurrence everyone will and must endure. The fact that the even "our best men" will embark on death's journey reinforces the previous argument, possibly targeted at those who fear death as the final chapter of their existence. The subsequent line explains both the physical and spiritual need for death, since it provides "rest of their bones, and soul's delivery." Not only will it rejuvenate the body, but also the spirit, readying it for the glorious return of Christ and the afterlife.

The poem's next two lines wound death's pride and diminish its power, since Donne argues death cannot act alone. An accomplice is needed to complete its mischievous deeds. A rather comprehensive list of partners is presented: fate, chance, kings, and

desperate men. Death's might must bow down to mere chance at times, and humans of such different ranks as kings and desperate beggars can obligate death to act. Thus, death is nothing special, if it can be ordered by men of such different walks of life. While poison, war, and sickness may result in death, its actual effect is as insignificant as the one resulting from mere exhaustion or drunkenness. Donne is convinced both death and sleep are the same type of action, and as result, he makes no distinction between them. The poem ends by remarking that after the resting period that death constitutes, humans will enter the afterlife, a period in which death itself will cease to exist. The poem ends in a paradox, as Donne concludes: "and death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die."

Donne's wife's death in 1617 was a prolific source of inspiration for Donne's poetry. Another Holy Sonnet, XVII, is entirely dedicated to her loving memory. Once again he presents his belief of death as a mere transitory stage between the earthly and eternal life, and appears to be resigned to his fate. According to him, Anne has "paid her last debt" on earth. Her absence is not a cause for concern or pain, for "her soul early into heaven ravished/Wholly in heavenly is my mind set." That is, her death has been beneficial, since it has allowed her to join God in the afterlife while freeing him from earthly concerns. Therefore, Donne profits from her death since he is able to concentrate his thoughts and love on God. By ascending to the skies, Anne ceases to be competition against the higher being for Donne's affection, although, as the end will prove, this does not assure his or her wellbeing.

Donne's effort to downplay the death of his wife fails, however, when he exclaims "though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed/A holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet." Scholars have debated the meaning behind these lines, but they seem to express Donne's discontent with relinquishing his wife to God in order to love him more. By being unable to transfer all this love to God, the poem turns into a bitter series of complaints to the deity.

The sonnets discussed above share the common bond of death as a theme, but differ in their representation of the subject. Although the topic of death is the main focus of both, one need only read a few lines in order to comprehend the difference between the content of the poems. In *Death Be Not Proud*, Donne mounts an impressive tirade against death, culminating in a celebration of its lack of power. In Holy Sonnet XVII, his visions of death are not identical since an attempt to come to terms with his wife's absence forces yet another search of death's significance. One would be justified in thinking that his original idea about death is greatly influenced by his wife's decease, and Donne, unable to decide on a new opinion, embarks on a journey to find his true feelings, although sonnet XVII gives the impression he has yet to find them.

Although the main focus of both poems is death, Donne's ego manages to steal the spotlight. In *Death Be Not Proud*, he manages to defend humankind against death, possibly because he feels he cannot be defeated by God. This claim is more explicitly shown in sonnet XVII, which commences as another attack on death but concludes as a protest against God for the taking of his wife. While he is indeed objecting to this action by God, the pain of loss of his wife overshadows his earlier beliefs and declarations against death. Carey writes that Donne's "feeling of loss is self-centered," (44) questioning the real motives behind the poem. This trait, however, is not exclusive to these sonnets, since it can be found in most of Donne's work.

In closing, Donne's concerns about death are well documented, as a considerable amount of his work presents references to the subject. As with most themes in his work, however, he often changes his opinion, leaving a perplexed reader to attempt to find his real belief on the subject. It is safe to assume he did not fear death in the conventional manner, for he believed in the concept of an afterlife. His faith in Christian theology calmed those fears and doubts, but at times he searched for answers to questions about death, answers that had no explanation. For this reason, his poetry is highly paradoxical, a quality that only adds to its richness and attractiveness, much to the delight of its readers.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 26

1. According to Winthrop's speech, what was the end of those who were establishing New England?
2. What does Winthrop say about the consequences of the covenant of the people of Puritan New England? that if they fail to fulfill its articles, God will judge them
3. In what sense would New England be "a city upon a hill", according to Winthrop?
4. Winthrop concludes by mentioning Moses' farewell exhortation. What parallels are there between these two peoples?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 27

1. The discipline of literary analysis requires knowledge of certain terms which are used in the context of analysis. Some of the terms include: diction, tone, detail, syntax, imagery, and figurative language. Define each of these terms.
2. Compose an essay explaining how Milton employs diction, tone, detail, syntax, imagery, and figurative language to create an impression about Adam.
3. How does Milton employ classical allusions in *Paradise Lost*? To what effect?
4. This epic poem grapples with many theological issues, including fate, predestination, and the Trinity. Explain its commentary on these three topics.
5. Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. What are some symbols present in *Paradise Lost*?
6. *Paradise Lost* includes many contrasting characters. Compare and contrast an example found in *Paradise Lost*. One example is Satan, Sin, and Death, who form an evil version of the Holy Trinity.
7. It is characteristic of a classical epic that the poet invokes the aid of his patron muse near the beginning of his epic poem. Which muse does Milton invoke, fusing classical method with Christian theme? the Holy Spirit, third Person of the Trinity.
8. In this beginning invocation, what does Milton state is the purpose of his epic poem? "Assert eternal providence and justify the ways of God to men."

<http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/poetry/paradiselost.htm>

9. Milton moves from prayer into an account of Satan's fall, by asking who or what caused man to fall. According to Milton, what was Satan's motive in effecting the Fall of man? to be above his peers
10. Next is Satan's speech to Beelzebub. Though acknowledging their sad and difficult condition, why does it seem Satan does not repent of his rebellion? his jealous hatred of Jesus Christ, "the Potent Victor"
11. In Beelzebub's reply to Satan, how does he suggest the futility of rebellion against God, in light of the providence of God? He notes how in all they will be carrying out God's "errands in the gloomy deep" of Hell.
12. Satan is able to persuade Beelzebub not to give up the fight against God. How is Satan able to do this? by instilling him with hope that they may sometimes succeed in their designs
13. Given the nature of man, there are many who have read Milton's *Paradise Lost* and come to view Satan in it as hero rather than villain. Why do so many sympathize with this quote by the character Satan: "better to reign in Hell, than to serve in Heav'n"? How has Satan deceived himself, even in believing this statement? because they are sinful rebels themselves; since all is decreed by God, even those who rebel are under God's sovereignty
14. How does Satan employ sarcasm to arouse the demon hordes to join him in rebellion rather than remaining idle in hell? He says, "...in this abject posture have ye sworn to adore the Conqueror?"

15. Beginning in line 622 of Book I, Satan begins to speak to the assembled host of demons. What futile hope does Satan plant in the minds of the demons? that they will re-ascend to heaven
16. In this same speech, how does Satan blame God for their rebellion? that God tempted them by not showing His full strength
17. Also in this speech of Satan he mentions a rumor he heard while still in heaven, planting in the minds of the demons a suggestion of what course they should take. What is this rumor? that God would create a new world
18. What is the significance in the fact that the demons are able to construct their “high Capital” of Pandemonium?
19. Book IV begins with Satan’s soliloquy, through which we have a window into the character Satan’s thoughts. How are his thoughts different from what he had said to the demons? He knew he could never defeat God and live in heaven, but to the demons he had suggested the possibility of victory.
20. Why do you think Satan is described as “pensive and slow” as he enters Eden on earth?
21. How do Adam and Eve first appear to Satan?

<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/Eng200/milton.htm> - The following is the text of lectures delivered, in part, in English 200 at Malaspina University-College in November 1998 by [Ian Johnston](#). This document is in the public domain, released November 1988:

22. There are at least some reasons to fear that John Milton had an unorthodox view of God. Is there anything you read in the poem that suggests this is the case?
23. Some have suggested that this is “the great Protestant epic poem in English”. What is an epic poem, and do you agree or disagree with this assessment?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 28

1. What does John Owen assert God intended as to purpose in the death of Christ? to ransom many
2. What is some proof that Owen offers for what he considers to be the purpose in the death of Christ?
3. John Owen lists 5 blessings effected in the death of Christ. What are the 5 blessings he listed?
4. At the end of Book 1, Chapter I Owen reveals the Arminian alternative to the Calvinist thesis regarding the death of Christ. What is this alternative?
5. For whom did Christ die to redeem, according to Owen? the elect



## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 29

1. Which scripture text is the basis for Owens' treatise "Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers"? Romans 8:13
2. Owens points out a duty, a promise, and a cause or means of the performance of the duty. What are these?
3. Of what 3 things does Owens suggest mortification of a lust consists? First, habitual weakening of it. Second, constant fighting and contending against sin. Third, success against it.

## ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 30

1. What relation is there between the word of God and the Holy Spirit, according to Turretin? The Holy Spirit impresses the written word to our hearts.
2. How does Turretin explain the preservation of the infallible word of God yet the use of uninspired copyists and printers in its preservation? Errors in manuscripts can be corrected by collation with others. God promised to preserve it in His providence.
3. Per Turretin, what is the difference between the Papist and the Protestant view on how scripture derives its authority? Papist: based on church testimony; Protestant: self-attestation
4. What is the two-fold reason the scriptures are called canonical, according to Turretin? they embrace the rule of faith and doctrines, and they contain the divinely inspired books
5. Briefly, what are the reasons the Apocryphal books should be rejected?
6. What is meant by 'apograph'?
7. Have the Old Testament and New Testament apographs come down to us uncorrupted? How do we know?
8. How do Protestants and Papists differ on the question of unwritten traditions?
9. How does Turretin contrast the doctrine of justification by Protestants and Romanists?
10. How does it appear Turretin's view of reprobation differed from that of most Roman Catholic scholars? He believed the wicked were predestined by God to damnation.
11. How are the terms "election" and "predestination" to be distinguished, according to Turretin?

## **ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 31**

1. The Canons of Dort set forth the doctrines of grace, in opposition to Arminian doctrine. These doctrines of grace are set forth in five points, known as the five points of Calvinism. Briefly summarize each of these five points.
2. What do the Canons of Dort say regarding election being based upon foreseen faith?
3. What do the Canons of Dort say is the sense in which we understand the proposition that faith is the gift of God?

## **ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 32**

1. Of what did the Westminster Standards consist?
2. According to the Shorter Catechism, what should a man's chief purpose in life be, and where should man look for guidance in that purpose? glorify and enjoy God; Bible

## **SECTION FOUR: TEACHER CLASS NOTES**

**Class 1:**

**Class 2:**

**Class 3:**



**Class 4:**

**Class 5:**

**Class 6:**

**Class 7:**

**Class 8:**

**Class 9:**

**Class 10:**

## Class 11:

[http://www2.latech.edu/~bmagee/201/marlowe/shepherd\\_&\\_notes.htm](http://www2.latech.edu/~bmagee/201/marlowe/shepherd_&_notes.htm)

*Notes for "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love."*

**Pastoral lyric:** Poetry that expresses emotions in an idyllic setting. It is related to the term "pasture," and is associated with shepherds writing music to their flocks. The tradition goes back to David in the Bible and Hesiod the Greek poet.

The themes of the poem - *carpe diem* and the immediate gratification of their sexual passions.

Love in the May countryside will be like a return to the Garden of Eden. There is a tradition that our problems are caused by having too many restrictions, by society. If we could get away from these rules, we could return to a pristine condition of happiness. The "free love" movement of the 1960's was a recent manifestation of this utopian belief. If the nymph would go a-maying with the shepherd, they would have a perfect life.

In quatrains (4 line stanzas) of iambic tetrameter (8 syllables per line, 4 measures per line with 2 syllables in each measure), the shepherd invites his beloved to experience the joys of nature.

He hopes to return with the nymph to a Edenic life of free love in nature.

*Notes for "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd."*

Raleigh argues that it is not society that taints sexual love. We are already tainted before we enter society. Raleigh combines *carpe diem* with *tempus fugit* in an unusual way. Normally we should seize the day because time flies. Raleigh argues that because time flies, we should NOT seize the day. There will be consequences to their roll in the grass. Time does not stand still; winter inevitably follows the spring; therefore, we cannot act on impulses until we have examined the consequences.

The world is NOT young--we are not in Eden, but in this old fallen world - a world in which shepherds have actually been known to lie to their nymphs.

This poem by Sir Walter Raleigh uses the same meter and references to present "mirror images" of Marlowe's poem. The feminine persona (the nymph) of the poem sets up a hypothetical set of questions that undermine the intelligence of the man's offer because all that he offers is transitory. She reverses his images into negative ones:

- rocks grow cold
- fields yield to the harvest
- the flocks are driven to fold in winter
- rivers rage
- birds complain of winter (a reference to the story of Philomela who was raped and turned into a nightingale).

We live in a fallen world. Free love in the grass is impossible now because the world is not in some eternal spring. The seasons pass, as does time. Nymphs grow old, and shepherds grow cold.



<http://www.enotes.com/passionate-shepherd/>

Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" fits perfectly into the poetic genre of the period. Poets of the Elizabethan age used poetry as a way to express their wit and talent. It is likely that Marlowe's poem would have been passed around among his friends long before its publication in 1599 in England, six years after the poet's death. Few Elizabethan poets published their own work, especially one as young as Marlowe, and so it is fairly certain that the poem was well-known long before its publication. The composition date is thought to be about 1588, and probably it generated many responses well before its publication nearly a dozen years later. Among these responses was Sir Walter Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (date unknown, but thought to be about 1592), which provides the woman's response to Marlowe's shepherd. Marlowe's poem also inspired several other notable works that were similar in tone and content, including John Donne's "The Bait" (1633), which also relies upon wit and sexuality to entertain the reader.

"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is written in the pastoral tradition that originated with Theocritus in Greece during the third century b.c. The pastoral tradition is characterized by a state of contentment and of innocent and romantic love. Rural country folk are presented in an idealized natural setting, while they contemplate their perfect and peaceful world that is absent the worries and issues of crowded city life. As was common of Elizabethan poets, Marlowe plays with the traditional pastoral formula. He introduces sexuality and includes images that make the shepherd's plea seem ridiculous rather than ideal.

The speaker in "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is a shepherd, who pledges to do the impossible if only the female object of his desires will accept his pleas. The poem is static in time, with no history or clearly defined future. Only the present matters. There is never any suggestion that the poet is asking the woman for a long-term commitment; there is no offer of marriage nor does he offer a long-term future together. Instead, he asks her to come and live with him and seek pleasure in the moment. The use of "passionate" in the title suggests strong emotions, but may also refer to an ardent desire to possess the woman sexually, since there is never any declaration of love. The shepherd makes a number of elaborate promises that are generally improbable and occasionally impossible. The woman's response is never heard, and she is not present in any way except as the object of the shepherd's desire.

Prior to the composition of "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," early English Renaissance poetry had been most concerned with romantic love. These poems, which included poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, were traditional love poems, characterized by the pleas of a rejected suitor who would find solace in the soothing atmosphere of country life. Marlowe tweaked the traditional, transforming it into a more dynamic piece. As a result, Marlowe's poem remains a long lasting and important example of the Elizabethan poet's talent. "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is included in most literature anthologies published for academic use, including the seventh edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

a four-stanza version

*The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* is a poem written by the [English](#) poet [Christopher Marlowe](#) in the [1590s](#).

In addition to being one of the most well-known love poems in the English language, it is considered one of the earliest examples of the [pastoral](#) style of [British](#) poetry in the late [Renaissance](#) period. It is composed in [Iambic tetrameter](#) (four feet of unstressed/stressed syllables), with six stanzas each composed of two rhyming couplets. It is often used for scholastic purposes because the poem is an good example of regular meter and rhythm.

*Bacon's literary executor, Dr. Rawley, published "The New Atlantis" in 1627, the year after the author's death. It seems to have been written about 1623, during that period of literary activity which followed Bacon's political fall. None of Bacon's writings gives in short space so vivid a picture of his tastes and aspirations as this fragment of the plan of an ideal commonwealth. The generosity and enlightenment, the dignity and splendor, the piety and public spirit, of the inhabitants of Bensalem represent the ideal qualities which Bacon the statesman desired rather than hoped to see characteristic of his own country; and in Solomon's House we have Bacon the scientist indulging without restriction his prophetic vision of the future of human knowledge. No reader acquainted in any degree with the processes and results of modern scientific inquiry can fail to be struck by the numerous approximations made by Bacon's imagination to the actual achievements of modern times. The plan and organization of his great college lay down the main lines of the modern research university; and both in pure and applied science he anticipates a strikingly large number of recent inventions and discoveries. In still another way is "The New Atlantis" typical of Bacon's attitude. In spite of the enthusiastic and broad-minded schemes he laid down for the pursuit of truth, Bacon always had an eye to utility. The advancement of science which he sought was conceived by him as a means to a practical end—the increase of man's control over nature, and the comfort and convenience of humanity. For pure metaphysics, or any form of abstract thinking that yielded no "fruit," he had little interest; and this leaning to the useful is shown in the practical applications of the discoveries made by the scholars of Solomon's House. Nor does the interest of the work stop here. It contains much, both in its political and in its scientific ideals, that we have as yet by no means achieved, but which contain valuable elements of suggestion and stimulus for the future.*

***The New Atlantis*** is a [utopian](#) novel written by [Francis Bacon](#) in 1626. It depicts a mythical land, Bensalem, to which he sailed, that was located somewhere off the western coast of the continent of [America](#). He recounts the description by one of its wise men, of its system of experimentation, and of its method of recognition for inventions and inventors. In Bensalem, marriage and family are the basis of society and family ties are celebrated in state-sponsored holidays.

The best and brightest of Bensalem's citizens attend a college called Salomon's House, in which scientific experiments are conducted in [Baconian method](#) in order to understand and conquer nature, and to apply the collected knowledge to the betterment of society.

The Royal Society was founded in [1660](#), only a few months after the [Restoration](#) of [King Charles II](#), by members of one or two either secretive or informal societies already in existence. The Royal Society enjoyed the confidence and official support of the restored [monarchy](#). The "New" or "Experimental" form of [philosophy](#) was generally ill-regarded by the [Aristotelian](#) (and religious) academies, but had been promoted by [Sir Francis Bacon](#) in his book [New Atlantis](#).

[Robert Boyle](#) refers to the "[Invisible College](#)" as early as 1646. A founding meeting was held at the premises of [Gresham College](#) in [Bishopsgate](#) on [28 November 1660](#), immediately after a lecture by [Sir Christopher Wren](#), at that time Gresham Professor of [Astronomy](#). At a second meeting a week later, [Sir Robert Moray](#), an influential [Freemason](#) who had helped organize the public emergence of the group, reported that the

King approved of the meetings. The Royal Society continued to meet at the premises of Gresham College and at Arundel House, the London home of the [Dukes of Norfolk](#), until it moved to its own premises in Crane Court in 1710. [\[1\]](#)

A formal [Royal Charter](#) of incorporation passed the [Great Seal](#) on [15 July 1662](#), creating "The Royal Society of London", with [Lord Brouncker](#) as the first [President](#), and [Robert Hooke](#) was appointed as Curator of Experiments in November 1662. A second Royal Charter was sealed on [23 April 1663](#), naming the King as Founder and changing the name to "The Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge".

The [motto](#) of the Royal Society, "Nullius in Verba" ([Latin](#): "On the words of no one"), signifies the Society's commitment to establishing the truth of scientific matters through experiment rather than through citation of authority. Although this seems obvious today, the philosophical basis of the Royal Society differed from previous philosophies

*Hamlet* is without question the most famous play in the English language. Probably written in 1601 or 1602, the tragedy is a milestone in Shakespeare's dramatic development; the playwright achieved artistic maturity in this work through his brilliant depiction of the hero's struggle with two opposing forces: moral integrity and the need to avenge his father's murder.

Shakespeare's focus on this conflict was a revolutionary departure from contemporary revenge tragedies, which tended to graphically dramatize violent acts on stage, in that it emphasized the hero's dilemma rather than the depiction of bloody deeds. The dramatist's genius is also evident in his transformation of the play's literary sources—especially the contemporaneous *Ur-Hamlet*—into an exceptional tragedy. The *Ur-Hamlet*, or “original *Hamlet*,” is a lost play that scholars believe was written mere decades before Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, providing much of the dramatic context for the later tragedy. Numerous sixteenth-century records attest to the existence of the *Ur-Hamlet*, with some references linking its composition to Thomas Kyd, the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Other principal sources available to Shakespeare were Saxo Grammaticus's *Historiae Danicae* (circa 1200), which features a popular legend with a plot similar to *Hamlet*, and François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques, Extraicts des Oeuvres Italiennes de Bandel* (7 Vols.; 1559-80), which provides an expanded account of the story recorded in the *Historiae Danicae*. From these sources Shakespeare created *Hamlet*, a supremely rich and complex literary work that continues to delight both readers and audiences with its myriad meanings and interpretations.

In the words of Ernest Johnson, “the dilemma of Hamlet the Prince and Man” is “to disentangle himself from the temptation to wreak justice for the wrong reasons and in evil passion, and to do what he must do at last for the pure sake of justice.... From that dilemma of wrong feelings and right actions, he ultimately emerges, solving the problem by attaining a proper state of mind.” Hamlet endures as the object of universal identification because his central moral dilemma transcends the Elizabethan period, making him a man for all ages. In his difficult struggle to somehow act within a corrupt world and yet maintain his moral integrity, Hamlet ultimately reflects the fate of all human beings.

The key question that Shakespeare seems to ask is this. Is human society fundamentally amoral, dog-eat-dog? If so, then *Macbeth* is right, and human life itself is meaningless and tiresome.

Or do the hints of a better life such as King Edward's ministry, Malcolm's clean living, the dignified death of the contrite traitor, and the doctor's prescription for pastoral care, display Shakespeare's Christianity and/or humanism?

Is the message of *Macbeth* one of despair, or of hope?

Probably composed in late 1606 or early 1607, *Macbeth* is the last of Shakespeare's four great tragedies, the others being *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Othello*. It is a relatively short play without a major subplot, and it is considered by many scholars to be Shakespeare's darkest work. *Lear* is an utter tragedy in which the natural world is amorally indifferent toward mankind, but in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare adds a supernatural dimension that purposively conspires against Macbeth and his kingdom. In the tragedy of *Lear*, the distraught king summons the goddess of Chaos, Hecht; in *Macbeth*, Hecate appears as an actual character.

On the level of human evil, Shakespeare's Scottish tragedy is about Macbeth's bloody rise to power, including the murder of the Scottish king, Duncan, and the guilt-ridden pathology of evil deeds generating still more evil deeds. As an integral part of this thematic web is the play's most memorable character, Lady Macbeth. Like her husband, Lady Macbeth's ambition for power leads her into an unnatural, phantasmagoric realm of witchcraft, insomnia and madness. But while Macbeth responds to the prophecies of the play's famous trio of witches, Lady Macbeth goes even further by figuratively transforming herself into an unnatural, desexualized evil spirit. The current trend of critical opinion is toward an upward reevaluation of Lady Macbeth, who is said to be rehumanized by her insanity and her suicide. Much of this reappraisal of Lady Macbeth has taken place in discussions of her ironically strong marriage to Macbeth, a union that rests on loving bonds but undergoes disintegration as the tragedy unfolds.

## Class 12:

<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/cavanaugh.htm>

# The Circle of Souls in John Donne's *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*

by Cynthia A. Cavanaugh

At the beginning of "[A Valediction Forbidding Mourning](#)," the poet, John Donne, engages in a didactic lesson to show the parallel between a positive way to meet death and a positive way to separate from a lover. When a virtuous man dies, he whispers for his soul to go while others await his parting. Such a man sets an example for lovers. The separation of the soul from the body, and the separation of lovers from each other, is not an ending but the beginning of a new cycle. The poem ends with the image of a circle, the symbol of perfection (Hall's 69, 297), representing the union of souls in a love relationship. This perfection is attained by parting at the beginning of the circle and reuniting at the point where the curves reconnect.

According to Helen Gardner, the metaphysical poem takes the reader down a certain path, a fixed line of argumentation (17). This valediction, an act of bidding farewell, proceeds in the guise of a monologue in which a speaker attempts to persuade a lover to remain faithful during his absence. The monologue is dramatic in the sense that the stay-behind lover is the implied listener. Donne's monologue is unique because he uses metaphysical comparisons to show the union of the lovers during their period of separation.

Although the poem attempts to persuade the lover as an implied listener, it also speaks indirectly to the reader who is drawn into the argument. The speaker's argument is supported by an implied reference to the authority of Greek philosophers and astronomers. According to Patricia Pinka, this use of esteemed authority to justify a view about love is a common unifying element throughout many of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* (50).

It is probable that Donne wrote this poem for his wife, Ann Donne, and gave it to her before leaving to go abroad in 1611. Ann, sick and pregnant at the time, protested being left behind as her husband began a European tour with his friend, Sir Robert Drury (Parker 56).

The poem begins with a metaphysical comparison between virtuous dying men whispering to their souls to leave their bodies and two lovers saying goodbye before a journey. The poet says, "Let us melt and make no noise.... 'Twere profanation of our joys/ To tell the laity of our love" (ll. 5-8). The word "melt" implies a change in physical state. The bond of the lovers will dissolve quietly like the soul of a dying man separating from his body. "Noise" refers to "tear floods" and "sigh tempests" that the speaker implores his love not to release (l. 6).

He continues by comparing natural phenomena to a love relationship, the "sigh tempests" relating to the element of air, and the "tear floods" to the element of water. He uses this hyperbole to demand that his lover remain stoic and resist any show of emotion upon his departure (ll. 4-8).

Next, the element of earth is introduced. Earthquakes are perceived by everyone, and people often interpret them as omens of misfortune. It is understandable that an earthquake would be looked upon with fear because of its potential to ravage the land; whereas a trepidation affecting a celestial sphere would be viewed in a different light, especially one that is imperceptible and has no apparent meaning for the average person (Donne 444: 159 l. 11).<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the meaning of the third quatrain in the poem, it is necessary to consider the Ptolemaic Universe and the symbolism of the sphere. During the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan Age, the circle and sphere were looked upon as perfect shapes. The main influence behind that thinking may have been Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, who believed that since, "The motion of the celestial bodies is not straight and finite, but circular, invariable and eternal. So they themselves must be eternal, unalterable, divine" (Pannekoek 115).

The well-educated Donne, 1572-1631, certainly studied famous Greek thinkers such as Aristotle and Ptolemy, and their views concerning the universe. Donne lived during a time when many people accepted the Ptolemaic theory of the universe, which held that the spherical planets orbited the earth in concentric circles called deferents.<sup>2</sup> Writing this poem in 1611, Donne would most likely be influenced by his previous classical studies, and he chose to use the circle and the sphere to represent a perfect relationship based on reason and harmony.

The "trepidation of the spheres" is another obsolete astronomical theory, used to support the speaker's point that great changes in the heavens may be imperceptible to the layman. (ll.11-12). The speaker presents this comparison between the earthquake and the "trepidation of the spheres" to suggest that matters beyond one's control should be approached rationally.

In quatrains four and five, the speaker urges his love to remain stoic by making any change in their relationship as imperceptible to others as the "trepidation of the spheres," and again, he uses terms from astronomy to illustrate his point. The term "sublunary" refers to the surface below the moon. According to the Greek astronomers, this sublunary area, composed of the four elements, was imperfect. The sphere's surface, composed of quinta essentia, the perfect part, radiates light and heat (Pannekoek 115).

The dull sublunary lovers (l. 13) are imperfect human beings who do not practice mature love. The soul of their love is "sense" (l. 14), so they need physical contact to cement their relationship. However, the speaker suggests that reason can free itself from any connection with a sensory experience. Therefore, the lovers with fully developed souls "Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss" (l. 20), having developed rational souls, the third part of the Aristotelian model for the human soul, consisting of vegetative, sense and rational parts. (Copleston, 328).

In quatrain six, Donne echoes the traditional marriage ceremony in which two become one, so the "two souls" of the lovers are joined together. He describes separation as a stretching exercise in which the joined soul of the lovers is gold beat to an "airy thinness" (l. 24). According to Pinka, the comparison is "beautiful and pure" but "fragile"



since there is "expansion without increase" (142). The "airy thinness" emphasizes the stretching of the lovers' resources, in that the love continues to exist, but its strength is weakened by the circumstances. He urges the lover to look at the separation in a positive light, but he sends out undertones suggesting that he is aware of the fragility of the situation.<sup>3</sup>

The speaker then begins his closing argument, in which he changes his symbol of perfection from the sphere to the circle. One might argue that the circle and the sphere are slightly different objects and should not be considered one and the same; however, the Ptolemaic Universe consisted of both perfect spheres and perfect circular orbits, and so the concept of circle and sphere both represented perfection. Poets and songwriters have often used sphere and circle symbolism. One such work, *The Divine Comedy*, written in three books: the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso* by Dante Alighieri, still remains well-known today.

In Dante Alighieri's *Paradiso*, a story of a pilgrim journeying through Paradise, Dante sees nine concentric circles in the eyes of Beatrice, his guide. Beatrice explains to him that each of nine circles represents an angelic order. The brightest circles are in the center nearest to God and represent the highest order of angels and the greatest good. According to Beatrice, each circle also corresponds to one of the nine spherical heavens consisting of the five planets, the sun, the moon, the fixed stars, and the Prime Mover.<sup>4</sup>

It does not seem unusual for Donne to include both the sphere and the circle in his poetry as symbols of perfection, since other writers had linked the circle and the sphere together in various ways throughout the history of science and literature.

The speaker in the poem is unique in that he does not compare the perfection of his love to a traditional object such as a rock or a fortress; instead he chooses to compare the twin legs of a compass to the lovers' sense of union during absence (ll. 25-36). Such a comparison would be called metaphysical according to Gardner, who states that a metaphysical conceit must concern two things so dissimilar that we "feel an incongruity" (19). Here, the poet must then proceed to persuade the reader that these things are alike in spite of their apparent differences (19-22).

The speaker proves the point by drawing the circle with the compass. The lover who stays behind is the fixed point, and the speaker is the other leg of the instrument. Without the "firmness" of the fixed point, he would be unable to complete the journey and make the circle just (precise). The adverb "obliquely" (l. 34) may have several different meanings. John Freccero supports the interpretation that obliquely means a spiral motion, referred to by the Neoplatonic tradition as a movement of the soul (286-87). Obliquely may also indicate a slant. Either the drawing instrument can be interpreted to move in a spiral, or the motion may refer to the second foot's tilted position in relation to the fixed one in the center. Such a position would be required during the drawing of a circle.

According to Freccero, "No matter how far Donne roams his thoughts will revolve around his love.... At the end of the circle, body and soul are one" (283). In Donne's "Valediction," the human souls are described in the context of a joint soul that is stretched by the separation, or two souls joined within a circle of spiritual strength. Donne once stated in an elegy, "...perfect motions are all circular."<sup>5</sup> The circle in the "Valediction" represents the journey during which two lovers endure the trial of separation, as they support each other spiritually, and eventually merge in a physically and spiritually perfect union.

<http://lardcave.net/tig/hsc/2eng-donne-valediction-comments.html>

### *Glossary*

**Valediction** - a farewell, but a stronger meaning than that: Valedictions for people are read at funerals, etc, and ties in with the first stanza.

**Prophanation** - sacreligious

**Laytie** - common people. Also has religious connotations; see below.

**Trepidation** - movement. Also implies cautious, silent movement. Also implies an irregularity of movement.

**Elemented** - instigated, started, constructed. Also ties in with the other "element" imagery in the poem; see below.

### *Overall Explanation*

This is a "classic" Donne poem. In it, he shows off his vast knowledge of everything from alchemy to astronomy, and puts his most famous technique, the conceit, to great use. There is a rumor that this poem was written by Donne to his wife, before he went away on a long holiday with his friends, leaving her at home. It is impossible to prove, and doesn't really matter. I will, however, refer to the two characters in the poem as Donne and his wife in these comments.

Donne's basic argument was that most people's relationships are built on purely sensual things - if they are not together at all times, the relationship breaks down. Donne asserts that the love between him and his wife is different - it is not a purely sensual relationship, but something deeper, a "love of the mind" rather than a "love of the body". This love, he says, can endure even though sometimes the lovers cannot be close to each other at all times.

Donne uses some very evocative imagery in this poem. First of all, the parting of two lovers like Donne and his wife is likened to the death of a virtuous man. As a virtuous man dies, he knows that he has reconciled himself to God and will therefore be accepted into heaven. Thus he dies in peace and calm, and the people surrounding him at his deathbed are sad, but not anguished. In the same way, when two virtuous lovers part, there is no pain, because they know that each will be true to the other, even when they are apart. The people surrounding the dying man are quiet partly so as not to disturb him - in the same way, Donne says that too much outward show of emotion on the part of one lover would just disturb the other.

Donne is then very disparaging of the love of the rest of the population. The wails and screams and tears that "ordinary" lovers display when they must part is shown to be simply an act, with no real emotion in it.

The lovers are then likened to planetary bodies. In such a way, Donne places them above the "mortal earth". Unlike natural disasters, which are unpredictable and chaotic, the movement of the planets is peaceful and calm, even though the planets move much further.

Donne's most famous conceit is then introduced. The two lovers are likened to the two points of a compass. At first this seems ridiculous, but Donne shows how it makes sense. The idea of the wife staying and minding the house while the

husband goes away is old-fashioned now, but we can still comprehend it. There is a lot more explanation of the "compass" conceit below.

### *Poetic Devices*

- Ballad - like four-line stanzas help to create the gently, slowly moving "feel" of the poem. The rhyme scheme is consistent and predictable all the way through, as well. The "mood" of this poem is in direct contrast to that of "[The Apparition](#)", which is very much "raw emotion". Here there is emotion, but it is confined to the "layetie"-the ordinary lovers who cannot stand parting.
- Conceits used:
  - Donne and wife > celestial bodies > the points of a compass.
  - The wedding ring > the path of a planet > the alchemical symbol for gold > the path traced out by a compass
  - The emotions of the common people > earthquakes and tempests

### *Imagery / References to Donne's learning*

- The circle
  - Marriage ring
  - Path of the planets (*Trepidation of the spheres*)
  - Alchemical symbol for gold was a circle with a point in the centre
  - Path described by a compass.
- Very broad range of knowledge displayed:
  - Planetary *trepidation*
  - Earthquakes, the love of "sublunary lovers"
  - Properties of gold - Gold is very **malleable** which means it can be beaten to *avery thinnesse*. The symbolism of gold is very important, as it is also the most precious of all the metals. It is also the **least reactive** of all metals, which ties in with Donne's placing of the lovers above the emotional *layetie*. In terms of alchemy, gold is also the most noble metal, and the most difficult to destroy.
  - Compass imagery and use.

### *Generally*

There is a lot to learn in this poem, so take it slowly...

- The two lovers are their own self-sustaining universe. They have no need of anyone else, as they are made perfect by their perfect love.
- The compass and the circle together formed the Renaissance symbol for eternal perfection.
- The first stanza, along with the standard rhyme scheme and structure already mentioned, contains a lot of sibilants [words beginning with "s"] to create a soft, gentle atmosphere. EG *some of their sad friends, whisper to their soules*.
- *Prophanation of our joyes... layetie our love* - The use of "prophanation" and "layetie" elevates the lovers to the status of a superior priesthood. Ties in with the

- idea of the lovers as planets being above the Earth, and the purity of gold being superior to impure emotions.
- (*Whose soule is sense*) - the brackets here indicate casuality: other people's love is really of no importance to Donne.
  - *A love, so much refin'd*. "refin'd" here implies pure love, but it also ties in with the "pure element" (gold) imagery that Donne uses throughout the poem. Also the pure "substance", water, is used obliquely: the imagery evoked by *so let us melt*, for example, is that of one substance slowly becoming two. This image is evoked again in Stanza 5 with *Inter-assured of the mind*.
  - *Endure not yet / A breach...* - there is some confusion over the word "yet", which seems to imply that eventually there will be a breach. Perhaps this relates to the title and the first stanza, and implies that the only way the lovers can be parted is by death.
  - *And growes erect, as it comes home...* - not only does this tie in with the imagery of the compass closing and the two points coming together, but the use of "erect" also implies the emotional buildup of expectation and joy when the two lovers are together again. Since he is quick to denounce the obsession of the *layetie* with "sense", there is probably no implied sexual connotation.
  - Double meanings abound. Take the lines *Thy firmnesse makes my circle just, / And makes me end, where I begunne..* Here the compass is doing two different things, and both have significance. "End where I begunne" implies the completion of a circle as drawn by a compass; only through his wife's stability in the centre, Donne argues, can his circle be drawn correctly. However "End where I begunne" also implies the closing of the compass - and Donne coming home to be with his wife.

Conceit (literary term):

5. an elaborate, fanciful metaphor, esp. of a strained or far-fetched nature.
6. the use of such metaphors as a literary characteristic, esp. in poetry.

Antonio S. Oliver

### Views of Death in Donne's Poetry

John Donne's complex personality plays an important role in his poetry. His intellect, and as a result his work, demonstrates various opinions that at times conflict or agree with each other. These opposing views represent one of the most fascinating aspects of his poetry. Seldom is this divergence presented as clearly and frequently as in the theme of death, as will be illustrated by the following essay.

As with most poets of his time, Donne was obsessed with death. Mesmerized by its mysteries, charmed by its allure, and convinced of the existence of an afterlife (as a result of Christian theology), he finds himself at times unable to settle on a particular view of the subject. While a considerable portion of Donne's *opus* deals with death either directly or indirectly, some poems depict death as insignificant while others present it as something he, and therefore humans, should fear. As a Christian, Donne believed (although perhaps did not understand) the concept of an afterlife. This conviction is shown by his understanding of death as a necessary stage before reaching the glory of heaven, the promised life with God. His contradictory behavior is demonstrated by a fear of death, sometimes expressed in his search for ways in which he could triumph over it instead of becoming its victim, which fueled his interest in the practice of suicide.

One of the Holy Sonnets, *Death Be Not Proud*, presents the contradictory views of Donne. The opening lines, "Death be not proud, though some have called thee/Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so" demonstrate his own uncertainty on the issue, since that "some" he mentions includes him at times. However, he denies the power of death in the very next line, and proceeds to list several reasons why. The people whom death believes it kills do not "cease to live" (in order to avoid the use of the word 'death'); death does not have such powers. Death is not all-powerful, since it is part of God's creation. Furthermore, death is not an end to life. Rather, it is a kind of "sleep," a middle stage to cross before being reunited with the creator.

The final part of the fourth line presents a familiar trait of Donne's poetry: its theme shifts from death to Donne himself. Although it is not an extreme example, for he focuses on death and himself, it demonstrates his conviction that a poem is worth writing if it regards him in some way. "Nor yet canst thou kill me/From rest and sleep" serves to reinforce the idea of death as a mere transitory stage between the earthly and the after-lives. "Soonest our best men with thee do go" is used by Donne to remind the reader that death is not a punishment only a few people receive, but an occurrence everyone will and must endure. The fact that the even "our best men" will embark on death's journey reinforces the previous argument, possibly targeted at those who fear death as the final chapter of their existence. The subsequent line explains both the physical and spiritual need for death, since it provides "rest of their bones, and soul's delivery." Not only will it

rejuvenate the body, but also the spirit, readying it for the glorious return of Christ and the afterlife.

The poem's next two lines wound death's pride and diminish its power, since Donne argues death cannot act alone. An accomplice is needed to complete its mischievous deeds. A rather comprehensive list of partners is presented: fate, chance, kings, and desperate men. Death's might must bow down to mere chance at times, and humans of such different ranks as kings and desperate beggars can obligate death to act. Thus, death is nothing special, if it can be ordered by men of such different walks of life. While poison, war, and sickness may result in death, its actual effect is as insignificant as the one resulting from mere exhaustion or drunkenness. Donne is convinced both death and sleep are the same type of action, and as result, he makes no distinction between them. The poem ends by remarking that after the resting period that death constitutes, humans will enter the afterlife, a period in which death itself will cease to exist. The poem ends in a paradox, as Donne concludes: "and death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die."

Donne's wife's death in 1617 was a prolific source of inspiration for Donne's poetry. Another Holy Sonnet, XVII, is entirely dedicated to her loving memory. Once again he presents his belief of death as a mere transitory stage between the earthly and eternal life, and appears to be resigned to his fate. According to him, Anne has "paid her last debt" on earth. Her absence is not a cause for concern or pain, for "her soul early into heaven ravished/Wholly in heavenly is my mind set." That is, her death has been beneficial, since it has allowed her to join God in the afterlife while freeing him from earthly concerns. Therefore, Donne profits from her death since he is able to concentrate his thoughts and love on God. By ascending to the skies, Anne ceases to be competition against the higher being for Donne's affection, although, as the end will prove, this does not assure his or her wellbeing.

Donne's effort to downplay the death of his wife fails, however, when he exclaims "though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed/A holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet." Scholars have debated the meaning behind these lines, but they seem to express Donne's discontent with relinquishing his wife to God in order to love him more. By being unable to transfer all this love to God, the poem turns into a bitter series of complaints to the deity.

The sonnets discussed above share the common bond of death as a theme, but differ in their representation of the subject. Although the topic of death is the main focus of both, one need only read a few lines in order to comprehend the difference between the content of the poems. In *Death Be Not Proud*, Donne mounts an impressive tirade against death, culminating in a celebration of its lack of power. In Holy Sonnet XVII, his visions of death are not identical since an attempt to come to terms with his wife's absence forces yet another search of death's significance. One would be justified in thinking that his original idea about death is greatly influenced by his wife's decease, and Donne, unable to decide on a new opinion, embarks on a journey to find his true feelings, although sonnet XVII gives the impression he has yet to find them.

Although the main focus of both poems is death, Donne's ego manages to steal the spotlight. In *Death Be Not Proud*, he manages to defend humankind against death, possibly because he feels he cannot be defeated by God. This claim is more explicitly shown in sonnet XVII, which commences as another attack on death but concludes as a

protest against God for the taking of his wife. While he is indeed objecting to this action by God, the pain of loss of his wife overshadows his earlier beliefs and declarations against death. Carey writes that Donne's "feeling of loss is self-centered," (44) questioning the real motives behind the poem. This trait, however, is not exclusive to these sonnets, since it can be found in most of Donne's work.

In closing, Donne's concerns about death are well documented, as a considerable amount of his work presents references to the subject. As with most themes in his work, however, he often changes his opinion, leaving a perplexed reader to attempt to find his real belief on the subject. It is safe to assume he did not fear death in the conventional manner, for he believed in the concept of an afterlife. His faith in Christian theology calmed those fears and doubts, but at times he searched for answers to questions about death, answers that had no explanation. For this reason, his poetry is highly paradoxical, a quality that only adds to its richness and attractiveness, much to the delight of its readers.



**Class 13:**

**Class 14:**

**Class 15:**