

“Blessed are the Peacemakers”: John Donne and Péter Pázmány on Religious Tolerance

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At the Crossroads

Those familiar with the Bible will recognize the first half of the title as a quotation from the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. It is part of the Eight Beatitudes, which constitute the core of Christian moral teaching. The full beatitude reads, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). I would like to treat religious tolerance and interdenominational peace as dreamed by two seventeenth-century churchmen, hence the pertinence of the Biblical citation. These same words, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” echo the Latin motto, *Beati pacifici*, of James I of England and VI of Scotland, the Stuart monarch committed to peace in Christendom (Stubbs 337). By quoting the motto of this pacifist king, I wish to refer to a specific peacemaking attempt, which took the form of a diplomatic mission to the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II. The irenic English statesmen, with Donne as their chaplain, arrived in Vienna in the October of 1619 with the unfortunately futile mission of preventing, or at least nipping in the bud, what was to become the Thirty Years’ War. And it is during this failed peace mission that Donne may have met Péter Pázmány.

The parallel between Pázmány and Donne may seem puzzling to those who know both great churchmen and obscure to those who have limited knowledge of one or the other. Pázmány and Donne inhabited two truly different universes. Donne was a spiritual leader of a nation slowly solidifying into an empire, court preacher to King James I and his successor Charles, Dean of Saint Paul’s Cathedral and one of the greatest luminaries of the Established Church. Pázmány was the shepherd of a flock in a tenuous and difficult position between the Ottoman and Habsburg “wolves,” and the devotee of a religion rapidly declining in the circle of his own people, a defender of Roman Catholicism. Those who know both Pázmány and Donne well would be quick to add that while both men were gifted in the spiritual and intellectual realm, they could hardly be called tolerant in the modern sense of the word. After all, they spent much of their lives in rigorous pursuit and defense of the Truth.

And yet I insist on the potency and pertinence of the parallel. I shall do so by tracing the biographical and intellectual similarities between the two churchmen, redefining religious tolerance with the help of Perez Zagorin and Erasmus of Rotterdam, and examining how this Reformation brand of tolerance manifested itself in the life and works of John Donne and Péter Pázmány.

Parallel Lives

John Donne and Péter Pázmány were born two years apart, Pázmány in 1570 in Nagyvárad, Transylvania (today Oradea, Romania) into a noble family with two generations of Calvinist tradition, Donne in 1572 in London into a family of Recusants. It can therefore be safely said that at birth, Donne and Pázmány occupied the extreme opposite ends of the contemporary religious spectrum. They both went on to convert, however, and become recognized orators and defenders of their newfound faiths. In 1619, in the second year of what was to become the Thirty Years' War, both found themselves on the side of those striving after peace.

Pázmány's conversion was relatively straightforward and predictable. After the early death of his mother his father remarried, bringing into the family a pious Catholic woman. Young Pázmány soon became a student at the Jesuit boarding school in Kolozsvár (today Cluj, Romania). The Jesuits were unwelcome guests in seventeenth-century Transylvania. Although allowed to run their schools with relative autonomy, they were strictly warned against using physical or mental coercion to convert their Protestant students. Despite the interdenominational character of these Jesuit schools, the charismatic quality of Jesuit intellectualism caused a number of students, including Pázmány in his first or second year, to Catholicize. Pázmány's biographer, István Bitskey asserts that Pázmány made only a couple of insignificant references to his Calvinist past in his writings, but his deep affinity towards the Word of God can be traced back to the Bible-reading within the intimate family circle of his childhood. (*Humanista Erudíció*, 57). Following his early conversion, Pázmány's spiritual and ecclesiastical career was as smooth and predictable as it was brilliant. At eighteen, he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Poland and went on to study in Vienna and Rome, where he was ordained at the age of twenty-six. Following his ordination, Pázmány taught at the University of Graz and began his pastoral work in present-day Slovakia. In 1616, Pázmány left the Jesuit order to become a cardinal, thereby reaching the zenith of his church career. He placed the crown on the head of Ferdinand II in 1618 and reached the year 1619 graced with the love and admiration of one of the most powerful Christian monarchs of the time.

Donne was born into a family of notorious Catholic activists, most notably on the maternal side. His best-known ancestor was of course Sir Thomas More, martyred for the faith in 1535, and subsequently canonized by the Catholic Church. More's relics, his head, blood-stained shirt and a tooth, were zealously guarded by the family. A darkly amusing anecdote recorded by Donne's first biographer, Sir Izaak Walton, illuminates the sheer physical presence of Catholicism in the Donne family. Donne's Jesuit uncles, the Heywood brothers, both ardent admirers of their martyred ancestor, desired to own the relic tooth that had stayed in the family. As the debate between them grew heated, the tooth miraculously split in two, thereby preserving family concord as the brothers became co-owners of the invaluable relic (Stubbs 12).

Catholicism had even greater corporeal effects when Donne's younger

brother, Henry, almost sixty years after More's martyrdom, died for his faith under miserable circumstances. He was arrested and imprisoned at Newgate in 1593 for his connections with a Jesuit priest. Henry Donne soon died of the plague that was raging all over London and proved especially rampant in the close quarters of Newgate prison (Stubbs 19). There is evidence that Donne was considering conversion as early as his university years, and Henry's untimely death more than likely acted as an additional impetus.

When asked about his religious position, Donne usually defined himself as simply "Christian." In a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer, one of his dearest friends, Donne made his viewpoint quite clear: "Religion is Christianity" (qtd. in Shell 65). Donne was at pains to stress that he had "never fettered nor imprisoned the word Religion" by confining it to any single Christian confession or "immuring it in a Rome, or a Wittenberg, or a Geneva; they are all virtual beams of one Sun [. . .] connaturall pieces of once circle" (65). In his will three months before his death, Dr. Donne confessed himself to be an Anglican and asserted that this was the faith in which he hoped to die and achieve salvation (65).

It is impossible to define the exact date of Donne's conversion. In the recent *Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, there is an excellent comprehensive article entitled "Donne's Religious World." Symptomatically, the article is divided into three portions: Donne as Catholic, Donne as Protestant, and Conclusion.

Some scholars are convinced that Donne remained essentially Catholic throughout his life, others argue that while he retained certain Catholic spiritual tendencies and structures, his faith was clearly reformed (Shell and Hunt). David J. Baker phrases this as the dilemma of seeing Donne either as a "conflicted apostate" or a "deeply principled loyalist," where the word "loyalist" implies firm devotion to the Anglican Establishment (112). Baker's view is that as Donne matured, he developed a syncretic theology of his own. His later sermons especially are full of "the persistence and inclusiveness of the true church" (Baker 119). Finally, Baker suggests that Donne's loyalty and adherence to the king who called himself *rex pacificus* gave him the safety he needed to continually rework his religious stance and, as doctrinal borders shifted back and forth, to appear to us to be in several churches at once (119).

I agree with Baker and would suggest that Donne gradually argued himself into the Anglican faith by redefining terms such as Catholic, martyr, heresy—especially Catholic, whose Greek etymology simply means universal, and is the name for the very church James I, the new Constantine under whom "a genuinely catholic christian doctrine would be promulgated and maintained" (Baker 115) was defending. Donne was ordained an Anglican priest in 1615 and was appointed court preacher by King James in the very same year. It is in this high rank, then, that Dr. Donne entered the fateful year of 1619.

1619 Through Hungarian and English Eyes

Ferdinand II, before his election to the position of Holy Roman Emperor, promised religious freedom to the Protestants of Bohemia. The (in)famous Defenestration from the Hradzin at Prague is historical proof of his failure to keep his promise. Ferdinand's troops attacked Prague and the city would have fallen but for the reinforcements provided by Frederick, Count of the Palatinate bordering Bohemia. Frederick being son-in-law to James, the English were brought into the fray. The *rex pacificus*, determined to avoid religious warfare at all costs, assembled a diplomatic embassy whose worldly head was Viscount Doncaster, while Donne was appointed its spiritual leader.

The peacemakers made their way to Calais, then on to Antwerp, Brussels, Cologne, and Frankfurt, finally arriving at Heidelberg in the June of 1619. Donne met Ferdinand II personally in Salzburg. He records his impressions of the emperor: "I have known the greatest Christian prince, (in Style and Title) even at the audience of an Ambassador, at the sound of a Bell, kneele downe in our presence and pray" (qtd. in Stubbs 346). The diplomatic mission failed to achieve its ends. The Protestant Frederick was elected King of Bohemia, the fervently Catholic Ferdinand reigned as Holy Roman Emperor and total war was inevitable.

In the meantime, trouble was brewing in the East. Gábor Bethlen's troops broke into present-day Slovakia August 20 and killed a number of Catholic priests on September 7. Pázmány, upon hearing of the bloody events, fled to Vienna and urged his fellow Jesuits to do the same (Bitskey, *Pázmány* 139). When Bethlen finally marched into Vienna, Doncaster decided to make one last attempt at peace. In October 1619, he sailed into Vienna and was granted an audience with Ferdinand (Stubbs 348). It is during this audience that John Donne and Péter Pázmány may have met personally.

Donne was the spiritual leader of the peacemaking mission and had been present at the audience in Salzburg. It is therefore likely that he was in attendance at the final audience granted the English in besieged Vienna. Pázmány's presence at the audience is indicated by Ferdinand's proven dependence on his wisdom. There are entire articles written on the nature of the close ties between Pázmány and Ferdinand. Ferdinand, in a private letter, wrote that he "trusts Pázmány as [he] trust[s] his own soul." In another letter, he called Pázmány "[his] intimate friend" and asked for his advice in all his political decisions, even those not involving Hungary (Bitskey, *Pázmány* 138). Although Pázmány was not a member either of the Geheimer Rat (Secret Council) or of the three subordinate institutions at court—none of which had Hungarian members—he had strong ties with the *faccion espanuola*, the Spanish lobby, which was the faction most influential in Ferdinand's decision-making. There was not a single battle, treaty or significant political event throughout the kingdom of which Pázmány did not have sure and timely knowledge (Hiller 140). Furthermore, it was very much in the Spanish interest during the crisis in Moravia to keep the English

troops from aiding their embattled brethren. The Marquis of Gondomar, whom Stubbs calls a true Machiavellian (343), did all he could to convince King James of his own diplomatic importance. It so happened that while English diplomacy was involved with Ferdinand at the Viennese court, English troops posed no threat to Habsburg positions in Moravia. The question is how much the Spanish lobby and Pázmány himself knew of the Marquis of Gondomar's maneuvering. It is exciting to suppose that Pázmány, even before the arrival of the English ambassadors into Vienna, was expecting Donne, yet even if the two met and conversed, the lives of Donne and Pázmány overlapped for no more than a few days.

The Polish king attacked Transylvania and Bethlen was forced to surrender his tightening grip on Vienna and return to defend his own lands. Ferdinand was triumphant and any hopes nursed by the ill-fated ambassadors were dashed to pieces on the rocks of his newfound pride. Viscount Doncaster and his company left Vienna for England, where the people were already arming themselves to protect their Protestant brothers on the Continent. Donne did his utmost to portray the work of the embassy in a good light and persisted in his conviction, shared by the king, that peace was the supreme desire and good of Christendom (Stubbs 349).

Pázmány remained in Vienna until immediate danger was over and, in 1621, was instrumental in bringing about the Peace Treaty of Nikolsburg.

Reformation Religious Tolerance

Pázmány's and Donne's religious tolerance is perhaps best manifested in their devotion to the peace process between the warring Catholic and Protestant factions. In the following section I would like to define the Reformation idea of religious tolerance and the position of the two churchmen on a spectrum ranging from polite discourse to bloody conflict.

Perez Zagorin, professor of religious history at Princeton University, recently (2003) published a seminal work on the history of tolerance entitled *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*. According to Zagorin, concepts of heresy and the idea of coercion in religion stemmed from St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, about whom, ironically, there was agreement between Catholics and Protestants who unanimously submitted to his authority. Augustine, however, never advocated death for heresy. In fact, nobody died for heresy in Europe until the eleventh century. The first burning of heretics took place in 1022 in Orleans, and the execution of heretics became universal in France in the thirteenth century (Smitha). In England, the Act of Parliament *De Heretico comburendo* was passed in 1401, promising death to anyone professing beliefs outside the dogmatic confines of the Church (Daniell xiv).

According to Zagorin, the sixteenth century into which both Donne and Pázmány were born was the most intolerant era in the history of Europe. In that century alone, thousands of people were executed for heresy. Members of different denominations destroyed one another in the hope of weeding out untruths, as, even

more shockingly, did members of the same denomination. A sad example of the latter is the death of Michael Servetus at the command of John Calvin in 1553.

A year after this fateful date, Sebastian Castellio published his *Concerning Heretics*, under a pseudonym and with false printing information, most likely out of consideration for his personal safety. Both John Calvin and his future successor, Theodore Beza, were outraged upon reading Castellio's work. Calvin called Castellio "that dog," "monster," "the worst plague of our time," and "the chosen instrument of Satan." Beza gave his radically different definition of heresy. According to him, heretics were those "who, despite admonition, obstinately resisted the truth and disrupted the peace and unity of the church with their false teaching" (qtd. in Smitha). It was the task of the church to decide who was a heretic and the task of the magistrate to punish the heretic, whose sin was a crime in the legal sense, and counted among the most heinous (Smitha).

What exactly had Castellio written that incensed Calvin and Beza to such an extent? Castellio, continuing a line of tolerance that can be traced back to Erasmus, defined heresy simply as "no more than a religious disagreement. [. . .] A heretic, claimed Castellio, is not someone whom we can say for certain is guilty of error, and we should not silence argument by destroying books or people, making it impossible to know their beliefs and what they have to say in their own defense. [. . .] Those who think themselves wiser, Castellio claimed, should teach by example rather than punish by execution. *Killing Servetus* [. . .] *Castellio [insisted], was not defending a doctrine*" (Smitha, emphasis added).

Castellio's enlightened views ultimately echo those of Desiderius Erasmus, who was berated by contemporaries for refusing to take a strong stance against Luther. What frustrated his opponents most was the distinction Erasmus made between Luther the man and Luther's teachings. A faithful though critical Catholic to the end, he could not agree with Luther's teachings, but he firmly believed in ensuring the reformer's personal safety and giving him a fair hearing. In a letter to Frederick the Wise, Erasmus wrote, "I am not involved in Luther's cause. [But] as it is your responsibility to protect the Christian religion through your own piety, you must be concerned not to deliver an innocent man who is under your protection to impious men on the pretext of piety" (qtd. in Cortright 3). Erasmus' gentleness was a stumbling block to those "who see Luther, Calvin, or Loyola as representing the only genuine Christian alternatives of the early sixteenth century [. . .] what they call Erasmus' 'velvet softness' was not the confusion of an undecided mind, but the sincere and consistent expression of Erasmus' conception of that peace that surpasses all understanding" (Dolan 12).

Zagorin eventually identifies the Low Countries in the seventeenth century and post-1640 England as two birthplaces of tolerance. In both cases, however, he shares with his readers a revolutionary notion:

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thinkers—writing from religious, theological, and philosophical perspectives—contributed far more than did political expediency or the growth of religious skepticism to advance the cause of toleration. [. . .] [*C*]oncern for the spiritual welfare of religion itself weighed more in the defense of toleration than did any secular or pragmatic arguments! (Smitha, emphasis added)

Reformation alternatives of tolerance therefore move on a spectrum from Erasmus/ Castellio to Beza, from a separation of the man and the teaching and an openness to the evolution of truth through civilized discourse to complete identification of a man with his teachings and insistence that false ideas must be destroyed by immolating their progenitors.

Donne and Pázmány Interpret Tolerance

To refine our understanding of Donne's and Pázmány's position, first we will establish that both churchmen radically distanced themselves from violent action taken against their opponents. The next step will be to follow both Donne and Pázmány along a rigorous intellectual and spiritual exercise during the course of which they identified their true opponents. Finally, this investigation will lead to an examination of the nature of the means used to fight these opponents.

Both churchmen strongly opposed violent coercion in matters of faith. Donne had a deep aversion to torture, as evidenced by the passage below, and saw physical punishment as solely excusable in the case of self-defense. Pázmány, as illustrated in a well-known anecdote, favored intellectual arms even when threatened with real ones.

In his Easter sermon from the year 1625, Donne spoke out courageously against torture. He asserted, "Transgressors of the first kinde, that put God's organ out of tune, are those inhumane persecutors, who with racks, and tortures, and fires, and exquisite inquisitions, throwe downe the bodies of Gods true servants" (qtd. in Stubbs 18). In Donne's words, then, torture is not only inefficient (an organ that is out of tune produces only false notes!) but is a sin against God, as it destroys the human body made in His image.

Pázmány also spoke against aggression, but did so in a lighthearted, playful manner entirely foreign to Dr. Donne. One of the better known anecdotes about Pázmány's life concerns a religious debate against the Calvinist preacher Péter Alvinczi which went dreadfully wrong. Alvinczi, frustrated and furious, threatened to attack Pázmány with his sword. The latter coolly recommended that, instead of cold iron, they draw pens for the battle. Those intimate with Shakespeare may remember a scene from the first act of *Henry V* (I.2.265-303) in which the French ambassador presents Henry with a casket of tennis balls, a mocking gift from the dauphin. Henry is

furious and with flaming rhetoric hurls the tennis balls back, picturing them as heavy cannonballs hurtling against the enemy gates. Pázmány's rhetoric achieves just the opposite: drawn swords turn into pens, cannonballs into volleys of rotten eggs.

Although neither Donne nor Pázmány would have advocated the later separation of church and state—Donne's king, to whom he was intensely loyal, was also the head of his church, while Pázmány himself enjoyed significant political influence—both were able to see the separate heretic and heresy, the man requiring merciful correction and the idea in need of weeding out. In an effort to identify their opponents, Donne and Pázmány committed an intellectual paring down that can be read in parallel with the phenomenon of the separation of church and state in the centuries to come and can ultimately be traced back to the soul/body dichotomy that is a cornerstone of Western culture.

In his sermons, Donne generally calls Catholics "our adversaries" and warns his listening public against subversive activities that threaten the peace and stability of the kingdom. "The Adversary," when written with a capital A, also recalls Satan, whose name in Hebrew means "enemy," "adversary." To qualify this broad statement of Catholics being synonymous with adversaries, Donne is careful to pinpoint his enemies within the Catholic camp; he does not consider everyone of the Catholic persuasion to be a dangerous enemy. In fact, adversary can mean "opponent" just as much as it is a synonym for "enemy," the former sense implying a certain equality between noble competitors. He differentiates between common Catholics, with whom one should strive for cautious neighborly relations, and the often fanatical teachers of the Romish faith, who threaten to convert unwary Protestants.

Donne's relationship to average Catholics is only slightly colored by his fear of Jesuit subversion. With them, he advises cautious, peaceful and neighborly relations. "If it be possible, saith the Apostle, as much as in you lies, have peace with all men, with all kind of men. [. . .] Keep thy self, that is, those that belong to thee and thy house, intire and upright in the worship of the true God" (Donne, *Sermons*, "Ascension Day, 1622"). He often raises his voice against those who teach the Catholic faith, more specifically, against members of the various orders, whom he considers idle and parasitical, and most specifically against the far-from-idle Jesuit order, of which he has an almost paranoid fear partly explained by his brother's unfortunate early death. An especially strong manifestation of this fear can be found in the sermon preached on the anniversary of the nation's deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot (Donne, *Sermons*, "5 November, 1622").

Besides Catholics, Donne also distances himself from Puritans and other Low Church factions. When in doubt about where to position himself on a certain dogmatic issue, he resorts to the Anglican *locus classicus* of the *via media*, the middle way, according to which the Established Church in England is a moderate, peaceful compromise between the extremes of Popery and Anabaptism. In one of his earliest sermons he commends King James for not straying from the sweet middle way of Anglicanism. In the sermon preached on March 24, 1616, on the anniversary of the

coronation of King James I, Donne contrasts Queen Elizabeth with her successor:

It is wonderful in our eyes: First, That a woman and a maid should have all the wars of Christendom in her contemplation, and govern and balance them all; And then, That a King, born and bred in a warlike nation, and so accustomed to the sword, as that it had been directed upon his own person [. . .] should yet have the blessed spirit of peace so abundantly in him, as that

[. . .] he should sheath all the swords of Christendom again [. . .]. The Papists could not make him place any hopes upon them, nor the Puritans make him entertain any fears from them; but his God and our God [. . .] brought him *via lactenta*, by the sweet way of Peace, that flows with milk and hony (*Sermons*, “24 March, 1616”).

Throughout the forty pages of the sermon, Donne positions himself under the protective wings of his irenic king whom he admires because he treads “the sweet way of Peace.”

Violent Catholics must be restrained by the state in an effort to protect innocent people, but non-violent Catholics, average Catholics, are a different matter. They are the ones who can be won over if the root of their obstinacy, memory, is defeated. Donne, in a moment of great psychological insight gleaned from his own personal experience, acknowledges memory as the main hindrance to Catholics of good will from conforming to the Established Church. In a letter to a close friend, Sir Henry Goodyer, he writes, “You shall seldom see a Coyne, upon which the stamp were removed, though to imprint it better, but it looks awry and squint. And so, for the most part, do mindes which have received divers impressions” (qtd. in Shell 79).

Pázmány, in his polemical works, usually calls his opponents “atyafiak” (brethren) or “új tanítók” (new teachers). Although “atyafi” literally means son of the father (i.e. of the same father, hence a brother) there is a definite tinge of irony when Pázmány takes up the title so often used among Protestants addressing one another. His phrase “new teachers” makes it clear that Pázmány, like Donne, took issue most with the teachers in the opposite camp, those with the power to sway the opinions and beliefs of simple, pious people. The epithet “new” would of course stick out like a sore thumb in the eyes of Protestant readers, who were often confronted with accusations that their teachings were newfangled and unfounded. Pázmány accuses his opponents of willful blindness to the truth:

There is nothing more false than hating something one does not know, even if it is worthy of hatred. To have an excuse for his hatred man must know something to be worthy of his hatred. If they [heretics] understood that which they hate, they would cease hating it at once. But the mind of man is lazy. He does not seek to understand what he

has come to hate without reason. (29)

Protestants raised on Protestant teaching alone do not have access to the truth, which they would love if they could get to know it.

In sum, then, Donne identifies Catholic memory as lying at the root of Catholic obstinacy, while Pázmány sees ignorance of the fullness and beauty of Catholic truth lying at the heart of Protestant refusal to admit being in the wrong. Memory and ignorance, however, cannot be combated by violence. Memory is intricately bound up with profound, emotional aspects of our identities. To combat memories, one can either eradicate them or redefine them. Donne chooses the latter, gentler method. Ignorance is best combated with firm, persuasive education in which the wholeness of the truth is presented again and again, as many times as is needed, until the beloved opponent is finally illuminated.

Donne devoted a great deal of energy to the production of religious polemic. All of his works of religious prose are polemical in nature, and out of this vast collection of writings, *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), the reading of which, according to Walton, inspired King James to urge Donne to take up the preaching profession, and *Ignatius his Conclave* (1611) are especially passionate examples. Donne's only non-polemical religious prose work is his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), which is an intimate collection of reflections, devotions and meditations from a man who believes he is lying on his deathbed. Donne's 160 sermons reached the greatest audience by far both during and after his death. Most of them were preached at the Lincoln's Inn Chapel to an audience of men of law and at White Hall, King James' royal residence, to an elite audience well versed in the theological nuances of the day. Throughout his polemical works, especially in his sermonic oeuvre, Donne redirects Catholic memory and ways of thinking by redefining key terms deeply bound up with Catholic identity, terms such as "martyr," "anathema" and "Catholic"—thereby showing Catholics that they are most fully and truly Catholic as members of the sweet Anglican compromise.

Pázmány's works can be divided into two groups regarding their polemical contents. Starting with his first work, *Felelet az Magyarai István prédikátornak, az ország romlása okairól írt könyvére* (Reply to Stephen Magyarai) (1603) his entire oeuvre is polemical in nature, with the *Keresztyéni imádságokönyv* (Christian Prayer Book) (1606) and his translation of Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* (1624) being the only exceptions by virtue of their genres. Pázmány's approximately 100 sermons appeared in publication in 1636, in the year of his death, and in these sermons Pázmány opens a discursive space in which the *usus*, to use a rhetorical term, can be *informatio*, *consolatio*, *admonitio*, *humiliatio*, *gratiarum actio* (Bartók 329-30) but never polemic. He carefully states his intention to refrain from polemic in the introduction to the volume. It is important to remember that Pázmány's sermons were given in a socially much more varied environment than were those of Donne and collated by the author himself so that they may serve as a textbook of sorts to priests of modest rhetorical

skill. This implies that Pázmány, like Donne, expected his sermons to last longest and to reach the widest circle of people across the religious spectrum. Throughout his 102 sermons, he stops to define Protestant positions no more than a handful of times. Instead, he imparts a solid, truly catholic body of religious knowledge so cogently and flawlessly assembled as to impress upon Catholic and Protestant hearers alike the monumental unity of truth.

In closing, I wish to illuminate the very different sources of Donne's and Pázmány's religious tolerance. Donne's conversion was a process that stretched over a good portion of his life. His best known religious poems, the *Holy Sonnets*, were written according to some in the years 1609-1610, while other scholars insist they may have been written after 1615, the year of Donne's ordination to the Anglican priesthood. Izaak Walton, Donne's first biographer and one who knew the seventeenth-century divine personally, was convinced that they were written after Donne's ordination which makes their subject matter all the more unusual. In his "Holy Sonnet XVIII," Donne begs Christ to reveal to him his one true bride. "Show me dear Christ, thy spouse so bright and clear" (line 1). In traditional Christian thought, the church is seen as the bride of Christ, so in this passionate sonnet Donne is asking his Savior to show him the church that saves. The poet seeks this church on seven hills (i.e. Rome), on one hill and no hill at all, he seeks her in the "one that goes richly painted"—i.e. Roman Church—and the one that languishes "robbed and tore"—i.e. the persecuted Protestant Church (line 3). And in finding, he wishes to embrace: "And let mine amorous soul court thy mild dove," (line 12) he begs God. A man who is an established Anglican preacher and Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral and is still seeking the true church of his salvation is a man who is better able to forgive others for their personal insecurities and doubts concerning faith.

Pázmány's religious tolerance stemmed not from insecurity but from immense confidence in the truth and his God-given ability to defend it. It is precisely because of this unshakeable confidence that he is able to speak with a light heart, with a sense of humor about the truth which was the bedrock of his life, a truth about which Donne could only be in deadly earnest. In his *Az mostan támadt új tanulmányok . . .* ("Ten Arguments Proving the Falsity of the Present Science . . ."), Pázmány writes:

Men should be persuaded of many things with laughter, so that we who seek to persuade them may not appear to overestimate those questions which are worthy only of laughter. Truth and laughter are good neighbors, because truth is full of cheer, and she may occasionally play with her enemies because she is sure of victory and replete with courage. (37)

Even as a mountain does not move while the seasons change about it, Pázmány awaits the final victory of truth in monumental tranquility.

Note

This study was translated and significantly expanded from “‘Boldogok a békeszerzők:’ John Donne és Pázmány Péter a vallási türelemről,” a paper given at *The State of English in Hungary* Conference and published in Hungarian in the conference proceedings.

All translations from the Hungarian—excepting the titles of select works—are my own.

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