

DONNE JOHN

LETTERS TO SEVERALL
PERSONS OF HONOUR

John Donne

Letters to Severall Persons of Honour

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Donne J.

Letters to Severall Persons of Honour / J. Donne — «Public
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John Donne

Letters to Severall Persons of Honour

NOTE

The Letters to Severall Persons of Honour, *now for the first time reprinted in their original form, were collected and published by John Donne, Jr., in 1651, twenty years after the death of the author. Apparently the sales were not large, for three years later the original sheets were rebound with a new title page and put on the market as a second edition. Not many copies of the earlier, and still fewer of the later date, have come down to us.*

In the present volume changes from and additions to the original text are indicated by brackets, with a single exception: errors in punctuation have been corrected without comment when, and only when, they seem seriously to impair the intelligibility of the text. In the case of a few letters the reading followed is that of the original manuscripts, for which I am indebted to the great kindness of Mr. Edmund Gosse.

Readers of Mr. Gosse's brilliant study, The Life and Letters of John Donne (London: Heinemann, 1899) will not need to be reminded of the obligations under which he has placed all later students of Donne's life and work. I have, in addition, to thank him for generous encouragement and for many helpful suggestions, specific and general.

C. E. M., Jr.

Huntington, Long Island

October 14, 1910.

To the most virtuous

and excellent Lady, Mrs

BRIDGET DUNCH

Madam,

It is an argument of the Immortality of the Soul, that it can apprehend, and imbrace such a Conception; and it may be some kinde of Prophecy of the continuance and lasting of these Letters, that having been scattered, more then Sibyls leaves, I cannot say into parts, but corners of the World, they have recollected and united themselves, meeting at once, as it were, at the same spring, from whence they flowed, but by Succession.

But the piety of Æneas to Anchises, with the heat and fervour of his zeale, had been dazelled and extinguished by the fire of Troy, and his Father become his Tombe, had not a brighter flame appeared in his Protection, and Venus herself descended with her embraces, to protect her Martiall Champion; so that there is no safer way to give a perpetuity to this remnant of the dead Authour, but by dedicating it to the Altar of Beauty and perfection; and if you, Madam, be but pleased to shed on it one beame of your Grace and Favour, that very Adumbration will quicken it with a new Spirit, and defend it from all fire (the fate of most Letters) but the last; which, turning these into ashes, shall revive the Authour

from his Urne, and put him into a capacity of celebrating you, his Guardian Angell, who has protected that part of his Soul, that he left behinde him, his Fame and Reputation.

The courtesies that you conferre upon the living may admit of some allay, by a possibility of a Retaliation; but what you bestow upon the Dead is a Sacrifice to pure Virtue; an ungifted Deity, 'tis true, without Oblation, Altar, or Temple, if she were not enshrined in your noble brest, but I must forever become her votary, if it be but for giving me this Inclination, and desire of being

Madam

Your most humble servant

Jo. Donne.

[i.]

To the worthiest Lady Mrs Bridget White

Madame,

I Could make some guesse whether souls that go to heaven, retain any memory of us that stay behinde, if I knew whether you ever thought of us, since you enjoyed your heaven, which is your self, at home. Your going away hath made *London* a dead carkasse. A Tearn and a Court do a little spice and embalme it, and keep it from putrefaction, but the soul went away in you: and I think the onely reason why the plague is somewhat slackned is because the place is dead already, and no body left worth the killing. Wheresoever you are, there is *London* enough: and it is a diminishing of you to say so, since you are more then the rest of the world. When you have a desire to work a miracle, you will return hither, and raise the place from the dead, and the dead that are in it; of which I am one, but that a hope that I have a room in your favour keeps me alive, which you shall abundantly confirme to me, if by one letter you tell me that you have received my six; for now my letters are grown to that bulk, that I may divide them like *Amadis* the *Gaules* book, and tell you that this is the first letter of the second part of the first book.

*Your humblest, and affectionate
servant J. D.*

*Strand, S. Peters
day at nine.*

[ii.]

To the worthiest Lady Mrs B. W

Madame,

I Think the letters which I send to you single lose themselves by the way for want of a guide, or faint for want of company. Now, that on your part there be no excuse, after three single letters, I send three together, that every one of them may have two witnesses of their delivery. They come also to waite upon another letter from Sr *E. Herbert*, of whose recovery from a Fever, you may apprehend a perfecter contentment then we, because you had none of the former sorrow. I am an Heretique if it be sound Doctrine, that pleasure tastes best after sorrow. For my part, I can love health well enough, though I be never sick; and I never needed my Mistris frowns and disfavours, to make her favours acceptable to me. In States, it is a weakness to stand upon a defensive war, and safer not to be invaded, then to have overcome: so in our souls health, an innocence is better then the heartiest repentance. And in the pleasures of this life, it is better that the variety of the pleasures give us the taste and appetite to it, then a sowre and sad interruption quicken our stomack; for then we live by Physick. I wish therefore all your happinesses such as this intire, and without flaw, or spot of discontentment; and such is the love and service of

*Your humblest and affectionatest
servant J. D.*

Strand S. Peters day at 4.

[iii.]

To the same

Madame,

This letter which I send enclosed hath been yours many moneths, and hath languished upon my table for a passage so long, that as others send news in their letters, I send an antiquity in mine. I durst not tear it, after it was yours: there is some sacriledge in defacing any thing consecrated to you, and some impiety to despaire that any thing devoted to you should not be reserved to a good issue. I remember I should have sent it by a servant, of whose diligence I see I was too confident. I know not what it says: but I dare make this letter no longer, because being very sure that I always think the same thoughts of you, I am afraid I should fall upon the same words, and so send one letter twice together.

*Your very affectionate
servant J. D.*

Novemb. 8.

[iv.]

To the Honourable Lady Mrs B. W

Madame,

I Have but small comfort in this letter; the messenger comes too easily to me, and I am too sure that the letter shall be delivered. All adventures towards you should be of more difficulty and hazard. But perchance I need not lament this; it may be so many of my letters are lost already that it is time that one should come, like *Jobs* servant, to bring word that the rest were lost. If you have had more before, this comes to aske how they were received; and if you have had none, it comes to try how they should have been received. It comes to you like a bashfull servant, who, though he have an extreme desire to put himself in your presence, yet hath not much to say when he is come: yet hath it as much to say as you can think; because what degrees soever of honour, respect, and devotion you can imagine or beleieve to be in any, this letter tells you that all those are in me towards you. So that for this letter you are my Secretary; for your worthiness, and your opinion that I have a just estimation of them [?it], write it: so that it is as long, and as good, as you think it; and nothing is left to me, but, as a witness, to subscribe the name of

Your most humble servant

J. D.

Though this letter be yours, it will not misbecome or disproportion it that I mention your Noble brother, who is gone to *Cleave*, not to return till towards Christmas, except the business deserve him not so long.

[v.]

To the Honourable L. the Lady Kingsmel upon the death of her Husband

Madame,

Those things which God dissolves at once, as he shall do the Sun, and Moon, and those bodies at the last conflagration, he never intends to reunite again; but in those things, which he takes in pieces, as he doth man, and wife, in these divorces by death, and in single persons, by the divorce of body and soul, God hath another purpose to make them up again. That piece which he takes to himself, is presently cast in a mould, and in an instant made fit for his use; for heaven is not a place of a proficiency, but of present perfection. That piece which he leaves behinde in this world, by the death of a part thereof, growes fitter and fitter for him, by the good use of his corrections, and the intire conformity to his will. Nothing disproportions us, nor makes us so incapable of being reunited to those whom we loved here, as murmuring, or not advancing the goodness of him, who hath removed them from hence. We would wonder, to see a man, who in a wood were left to his liberty, to fell what trees he would, take onely the crooked, and leave the streightest trees; but that man hath perchance a ship to build, and not a house, and so hath use of that kinde of timber: let not us, who know that in Gods house there are many Mansions, but yet have no modell, no designe of the forme of that building, wonder at his taking in of his materialls, why he takes the young, and leaves the old, or why the sickly overlive those that had better health. We are not bound to think that souls departed, have devested all affections towards them, whom they left here; but we are bound to think, that for all their loves they would not be here again: Then is the will of God done in Earth, as it is in Heaven, when we neither premit his actions, nor resist them; neither pass them over in an inconsideration, as though God had no hand in them, nor go about to take them out of his hands, as though we could direct him to do them better. As Gods Scriptures are his will, so his actions are his will; both are Testaments, because they testifie his minde to us. It is not lawfull to adde a scedule to either of his wills: as they do ill, who adde to his written will, the Scriptures, a scedule of Ap[o]cryphall books, so do they also, who to his other will, his manifested actions, adde Apocryphall conditions, and a scedule of such limitations as these, If God would have stayed thus long, or, If God would have proceeded in this or this manner, I could have born it. To say that our afflictions are greater then we can bear, is so near to despairing, as that the same words express both; for when we consider *Caines* words in that originall tongue in which God spake, we cannot tell whether the words be, My punishment is greater then can be born; or, My sin is greater then can be forgiven. But, Madame, you who willingly sacrificed your self to God, in your obedience to him, in your own sickness, cannot be doubted to dispute with him about any part of you which he shall be pleased to require at your hands. The difference is great in the loss of an arme, or a head; of a child, or a husband: but to them, who are incorporated into Christ, their head, there can be no beheading; upon you, who are a member of the spouse of Christ, the Church, there can fall no widowhead, nor orphanage upon those children to whom God is father. I have not another office by your husbands death, for I was your Chaplaine before, in my daily prayers; but I shall inlarge that office with other Collects then before, that God will continue to you, that peace which you have ever had in him, and send you quiet, and peaceable dispositions in all them with whom you shall have any thing to do in your temporall estate and matters of this world. *Amen.*

*Your Ladships very humble and
thankfull servant in Christ
Jesus J. Donne.*

At my poor house at S.

Pauls. 26. Octob. 1624.

[vi.]

To my honoured friend Sr T. Lucey

SIR,

I Make account that this writing of letters, when it is with any seriousness, is a kind of extasie, and a departure and secession and suspension of the soul, wch doth then cōmunicate itself to two bodies: And, as I would every day provide for my souls last convoy, though I know not when I shall die, and perchance I shall never die, so for these extasies in letters, I oftentimes deliver my self over in writing when I know not when those letters shall be sent to you, and many times they never are, for I have a little satisfaction in seeing a letter written to you upon my table, though I meet no opportunity of sending it. Especially this summer, when either by my early retiring home, or your irresolutions of your own purposes, or some other possessions of yours, you did lesse reveale to me your progresses, and stations, and where I might crosse you by letters, then heretofore: I make shift to lay little fault upon you, because my pardon might be easier, if I transgress into a longer and busier letter then your Countrey sports admit; but you may read it in winter: And by that time I may more clearly express my self for those things which have entred into me, concerning your soul: for as the greatest advantage which mans soul is thought to have beyond others, is that which they call *Actum reflexum*, and *iteratum*, (for Beasts do the same things as we do, but they do not consider nor remember the circumstances and inducements, and by what power and faculty it is that they do them) so of those which they call *Actum reflexum* the noblest is that which reflects upon the soul itself, and considers and meditates it. Into which considerations when I walke after my slow and unperfect pace, I begin to think that as litigious men tryed with suits admit any arbitrement; and Princes travailed with long and wastfull war descend to such conditions of peace, as they are soon after ashamed to have embraced: so Philosophers, and so all sects of Christians, after long disputations and controversies, have allowed many things for positive and dogmaticall truths which are not worthy of that dignity. And so many doctrines have grown to be the ordinary diet and food of our spirits, and have place in the pap of Catechismes, which were admitted but as Physick in that present distemper, or accepted in a lazie weariness, when men, so they might have something to relie upon, and to excuse themselves from more painfull inquisition, never examined what that was. To which indisposition of ours the Casuists are so indulgent, as that they allow a conscience to adhere to any probable opinion against a more probable, and do never binde him to seek out which is the more probable, but give him leave to dissemble it and to depart from it, if by mischance he come to know it. This, as it appears in all sciences, so most manifestly in Physick, which for a long time considering nothing, but plain curing and that but by example and precedent, the world at last longed for some certain Canons and Rules, how these cures might be accomplished; And when men are inflamed with this desire, and that such a fire breaks out, that it rages and consumes infinitely by heat of argument, except some of authority interpose. This produced *Hippocrates* his Aphorismes; and the world slumbred or took breath in his resolution divers hundreds of years: And then in *Galens* time, which was not satisfied with the effect of curing, nor with the knowledge how to cure, broke out another desire of finding out the causes why those simples wrought those effects. Then *Galen* rather to stay their stomachs then that he gave them enough, taught them the qualities of the four Elements, and arrested them upon this, that all differences of qualities proceeded from them. And after (not much before our time), men perceiving that all effects in Physick could not be derived from these beggerly and impotent properties, of the Elements, and that therefore they were driven often to that miserable refuge of specifike form, and of antipathy and sympathy, we see the world hath turned upon new principles which are attributed

to *Paracelsus*, but (indeed) too much to his honour. Certainly it is also so in the Physick of our soul, Divinity, for in the Primitive Church when amongst the Fathers there were so divers opinions of the state of the soul, presently after this life, they easily inclined to be content to do as much for them dead as when they were alive, and so concurred in a charitable disposition to pray for them; which manner of prayer then in use no Christian Church at this day, having received better light, will allow of. So also when in the beginning of *S. Augustines* time Grace had been so much advanced that mans Nature was scarce admitted to be so much as any means or instrument (not onely no kinde of cause) of his own good works: And soon after in *S. Augustines* time also mans free will (by fierce opposition and arguing against the former error) was too much overvalued, and admitted into too near degrees of fellowship with Grace; those times admitted a doctrine and form of reconciliation, which though for reverence to the time, both the Dominicans and Jesuits at this day in their great quarrell about Grace and Free will would yet seem to maintaine, yet indifferent and dispassioned men of that Church see there is no possibility in it, and therefore accuse it of absurdity and almost of heresie. I think it falls out thus also in the matter of the soul: for Christian Religion presuming a soul, and intending principally her happiness in the life to come, hath been content to accept any way which hath been obtruded, how this soul is begun in us. Hence it is that whole Christian Churches are themselves upon propagation from parents; and other whole Christian Churches allow onely infusion from God. In both which opinions there appear such infirmities as it is time to look for a better: for whosoever will adhere to the way of propagation can never evict necessarily and certainly a naturall immortality in the soul, if the soul result out of matter, nor shall he ever prove that all mankind hath any more then one soul: as certainly of all beasts, if they receive such souls as they have from their parents, every species can have but one soul. And they which follow the opinion of infusion from God, and of a new creation, (which is now the more common opinion), as they can very hardly defend the doctrine of original sin (the soul is forced to take this infection, and comes not into the body of her own disposition), so shall they never be able to prove that all those whom we see in the shape of men have an immortall and reasonable soul, because our parents are as able as any other species is to give us a soul of growth and of sense, and to perform all vitall and animall functions, and so without infusion of such a soul may produce a creature as wise and well disposed as any horse or Elephant, of which degree many whom we see come far short; nor hath God bound or declared himself that he will always create a soul for every embryo, there is yet therefore no opinion in Philosophy, nor Divinity, so well established as constrains us to believe, both that the soul is immortall, and that every particular man hath such a soul: which since out of the great mercy of our God we do constantly believe, I am ashamed that we do not also know it by searching farther: But as sometimes we had rather believe a Travellers lie then go to disprove him, so men rather cleave to these ways then seek new: yet because I have meditated therein, I will shortly acquaint you with what I think; for I would not be in danger of that law of *Moses*, That if a man dig a pit, and cover it not, he must recompense those which are damnified by it: which is often interpreted of such as shake old opinions, and do not establish new as certain but leave consciences in a worse danger then they found them in. I believe that law of *Moses* hath in it some mysterie and appliableness; for by that law men are onely then bound to that indemnity and compensation, if an Oxe or an Asse (that is, such as are of a strong constitution and accustomed to labour) fall therein; but it is not said so, if a Sheep or a Goat fall: no more are we, if men in a sillinesse or wantonnesse will stumble or take a scandall, bound to rectifie them at all times. And therefore because I justly presume you strong and watchful enough, I make account that I am not obnoxious to that law, since my meditations are neither too wide nor too deep for you, except onely that my way of expressing them may be extended beyond your patience and pardon, which I will therefore tempt no longer at this time.

*Your very affectionate friend
and servant and lover*

I. Donne.

From *Micham*, my
close prison ever
since I saw you,
9 Octob.

[vii.]

To the Noblest Knight Sr Edward Herbert L. of Cherbury;

sent to him with his Book Biathanatos

SIR,

I Make accompt that this book hath enough performed that which it undertook, both by argument and example. It shall therefore the lesse need to be it self another example of the Doctrine. It shall not therefore kill it self; that is, not bury it self; for if it should do so, those reasons, by which that act should be defended or excused were also lost with it. Since it is content to live, it cannot chuse a wholsomer aire then your Library, where Authors of all complexions are presented. If any of them grudge this book a room, and suspect it of new or dangerous doctrine, you who know us all, can best moderate. To those reasons which I know your love to me will make in my favour and discharge, you may adde this, that though this doctrine hath not been taught nor defended by writers, yet they, most of any sort of men in the world, have practised it.

*Your very true
and earnest freind and servant and lover
J. Donne.*

[viii.]

To Sr Robert Carre now Earle of Ankerum,

with my Book Biathanatos at my going into Germany

SIR,

I Had need do somewhat towards you above my promises; How weak are my performances, when even my promises are defective? I cannot promise, no not in mine own hopes, equally to your merit towards me. But besides the Poems, of which you took a promise, I send you another Book to which there belongs this History. It was written by me many years since; and because it is upon a misinterpretable subject, I have always gone so near suppressing it, as that it is onely not burnt: no hand hath passed upon it to copy it, nor many eyes to read it: onely to some particular friends in both Universities, then when I writ it, I did communicate it: And I remember, I had this answer, That certainly, there was a false thread in it, but not easily found: Keep it, I pray, with the same jealousie; let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it, know the date of it; and that it is a Book written by *Jack Donne*, and not by D[r]. *Donne*: Reserve it for me, if I live, and if I die, I only forbid it the Presse, and the Fire: publish it not, but yet burn it not; and between those, do what you will with it. Love me still, thus farre, for your own sake, that when you withdraw your love from me, you will finde so many unworthinesses in me, as you grow ashamed of having had so long, and so much, such a thing as

Your poor servant in Chr. Jes.

J. Donne.

[ix.]

To the Countesse of Bedford

Madam,

Amongst many other dignities which this letter hath by being received and seen by you, it is not the least, that it was prophesied of before it was born: for your brother told you in his letter, that I had written: he did me much honour both in advancing my truth so farre as to call a promise an act already done; and to provide me a means of doing him a service in this act, which is but doing right to my self: for by this performance of mine own word, I have also justified that part of his Letter which concerned me; and it had been a double guiltinesse in me, to have made him guilty towards you. It makes no difference that this came not the same day, nor hears the same date as his; for though in inheritances and worldly possessions we consider the dates of Evidences, yet in Letters, by which we deliver over our affections, and assurances of friendship, and the best faculties of our souls, times and daies cannot have interest, nor be considerable, because that which passes by them, is eternall, and out of the measure of time. Because therefore it is the office of this Letter, to convey my best wishes, and all the effects of a noble love unto you, (which are the best fruits that so poor a soil, as my poor soul is, can produce) you may be pleased to allow the Letter thus much of the souls privilege, as to exempt it from straitnesse of hours, or any measure of times, and so beleieve it came then. And for my part, I shall make it so like my soul, that as that affection, of which it is the messenger, begun in me without my knowing when, any more then I know when my soul began; so it shall continue as long as that.

Your most affexionate friend and servant

J. D.

[x.]

To the right honourable the Countess of Montgomery

MADAM,

Of my ability to doe your Ladiship service, any thing spoken may be an embleme good enough; for as a word vanisheth, so doth any power in me to serve you; things that are written are fitter testimonies, because they remain and are permanent: in writing this Sermon which your Ladiship was pleased to hear before, I confesse I satisfie an ambition of mine own, but it is the ambition of obeying your commandment, not onely an ambition of leaving my name in your memory, or in the your Cabinet: and yet, since I am going out of the Kingdom, and perchance out of the world, (when God shall have given my soul a place in heaven) it shall the lesse diminish your Ladiship, if my poor name be preserved about you. I know what dead carkasses things written are, in respect of things spoken. But in things of this kinde, that soul that inanimates them, never departs from them: The Spirit of God that dictates them in the speaker or writer, and is present in his tongue or hand meets himself again (as we meet our selves in a glass) in the eies and ears and hearts of the hearers and readers: and that Spirit, which is ever the same to an equall devotion, makes a writing and a speaking equall means to edification. In one circumstance, my preaching and my writing this Sermon is too equall: that that your Ladiship heard in a hoarse voyce then, you read in a course hand now: but in thankfulness I shall lift up my hands as clean as my infirmities can keep them, and a voyce as clear as his spirit shall be pleased to tune in my prayers for your Ladyship in all places of the world, which shall either sustain or bury

Your Ladiships humble servant
in Christ Iesus
J. D.

[xi.]

To Sir H. R. [To Sir H. G.]

If a whole year be but *Annus ab Annulo*, because it returns into it self, what *Annululus* shall be diminutive enough, to express our weekly revolutions? In chaines the least linkes have most curiosity, but that can be no emblem of us: but they have also the most strength, and that may. The first sphere onely which is resisted by nothing, absolves his course every day; and so doth true friendship well placed, often iterate in act or purpose, the same offices. But as the lower spheres, subject to the violence of that, and yet naturally encouraged to a reluctance against it, have therefore many distractions, and eccentricities, and some trepidations, and so return but lamely, and lately to the same place, and office: so that friendship which is not moved primarily by the proper intelligence, discretion, and about the naturell center, vertue, doth perchance sometimes, some things, somewhat like true friendship; but hath many deviations, which are strayings into new loves, (not of other men; for that is proper to true wise friendship, which is not a marr[y]ing; but of other things) and hath such trepidations as keep it from shewing it self, where great persons do not love; and it returns to the true first station and place of friendship planetarily, which is uncertainly and seldome. I have ever seen in *London* and our Court, as some colours, and habits, and continuances, and motions, and phrases, and accents, and songs, so friends in fashion and in season: and I have seen them as sodainly abandoned altogether, though I see no change in them, nor know more why they were left, then why they were chosen. To do things by example, and upon confidence of anothers judgment may be some kinde of a second wisdom; but it is but writing by a copy: or indeed it is the hardest of all, and the issue of the first wisdom, for I cannot know that this example should be followed, except I knew that it is good, and so I judge my Judge. Our assent therefore, and arrest, must be upon things, not persons. And when we are sure we are in the right way, for great persons, we may be glad of their company, if they go our way; we may for them change our place, but not our end, nor our way, if there be but one, us [as] in Religion. In persevering in it, it concerns as [us] much what our companions be, but very much what our friends. In which I know I speak not dangerously nor mis-appliably to you, as though I averted you from any of those friends, who are of other impressions then you or I in some great circumstances of Religion. You know I never fettered nor imprisoned the word Religion; not straightning it Frierly, *ad Religiones factitias*, (as the *Romans* call well their orders of Religion) nor immuring it in a *Rome*, or a *Wittemberg*, or a *Geneva*; they are all virtuall beams of one Sun, and wheresoever they finde clay hearts, they harden them, and moulder them into dust; and they entender and mollifie waxen. They are not so contrary as the North and South Poles; and that [?] they are connaturall pieces of one circle. Religion is Christianity, which being too spirituall to be seen by us, doth therefore take an apparent body of good life and works, so salvation requires an honest Christian. These are the two Elements, and he which elemented from these, hath the complexion of a good man, and a fit friend. The diseases are, too much intention into indiscreet zeal, and too much remisnesse and negligence by giving scandall: for our condition and state in this, is as infirm as in our bodies; where physitians consider only two degrees; sicknesse, and neutrality; for there is no health in us. This, Sir, I use to say to you, rather to have so good a witnesse and corrector of my meditations, then to advise; and yet to do that too, since it is pardonable in a friend: Not to slack you towards those friends which are religious in other clothes then we; (for *Amici vitia si feras facis tua*, is true of such faults) but to keep you awake against such as the place where you must live will often obtrude, which are not onely naked, without any fashion of such garments, but have neither the body of Religion, which is morall honesty, and sociable faithfulness, nor the soul, Christianity. I know not how this paper scaped last

week which I send now; I was so sure that I enwrapped it then, that I should be so still, but that I had but one copy; forgive it as you use to do. From *Micham* in as much haste, and with as ill Pen and Inke, as the letter can accuse me of; but with the last and the next weeks heart and affection.

Yours very truely and affectionately
J. Donne.

[xii.]

To Sir H. G

SIR,

This letter hath more merit, then one of more diligence, for I wrote it in my bed, and with much pain. I have occasion to sit late some nights in my study, (which your books make a pretty library) and now I finde that that room hath a wholesome emblematicque use: for having under it a vault, I make that promise me, that I shall die reading, since my book and a grave are so near. But it hath another unwholesomenesse, that by raw vapors rising from thence, (for I can impute it to nothing else) I have contracted a sicknesse which I cannot name nor describe. For it hath so much of a continuall Cramp, that it wrests the sinews, so much of a Tetane, that it withdraws and puls the mouth, and so much of the Gout, (which they whose counsell I use, say it is) that it is not like to be cured, though I am too hasty in three days to pronounce it. If it be the Gout, I am miserable; for that affects dangerous parts, as my neck and brest, and (I think fearfully) my stomach, but it will not kill me yet; I shall be in this world, like a porter in a great house, ever nearest the door, but seldomest abroad: I shall have many things to make me weary, and yet not get leave to be gone. If I go, I will provide by my best means that you suffer not for me, in your bonds. The estate which I should leave behinde me of any estimation, is my poor fame, in the memory of my friends, and therefore I would be curious of it, and provide that they repent not to have loved me. Since my imprisonment in my bed, I have made a meditation in verse, which I call a Litany; the word you know imports no other then supplication, but all Churches have one forme of supplication, by that name. Amongst ancient annals (I mean some 800 years) I have met two Letanies in Latin verse, which gave me not the reason of my meditations, for in good faith I thought not upon them then, but they give me a defence, if any man to a Lay man, and a private, impute it as a fault, to take such divine and publique names, to his own little thoughts. The first of these was made by *Ratpertus* a Monk of *Suevia*; and the other by *S. Notker*, of whom I will give you this note by the way, that he is a private Saint, for a few Parishes; they were both but Monks, and the Letanies poor and barbarous enough; yet Pope *Nicolas* the 5, valued their devotion so much, that he canonized both their Poems, and commanded them for publike service in their Churches: mine is for lesser Chappels, which are my friends, and though a copy of it were due to you, now, yet I am so unable to serve my self with writing it for you at this time, (being some 30 staves of 9 lines) that I must intreat you to take a promise that you shall have the first, for a testimony of that duty which I owe to your love, and to my self, who am bound to cherish it by my best offices. That by which it will deserve best acceptation, is, That neither the Roman Church need call it defective, because it abhors not the particular mention of the blessed Triumphers in heaven; nor the Reformed can discreetly accuse it, of attributing more then a rectified devotion ought to doe. The day before I lay down, I was at *London* where I delivered your Letter for *Sr Ed. Conway*, and received another for you, with the copy of my Book, of which it is impossible for me to give you a copy so soon, for it is not of much lesse then 300 pages. If I die, it shall come to you in that fashion that your Letter desires it. If I warm again, (as I have often seen such beggars as my indisposition is, end themselves soon, and the patient as soon) you and I shal speak together of that, before it be too late to serve you in that commandment. At this time I onely assure you, that I have not appointed it upon any person, nor ever purposed to print it: which later perchance you thought, and grounded your request thereupon. A Gent. that visited me yesterday told me that our Church hath lost Mr *Hugh Broughton*, who is gone to the Roman side. I have known before, that *Serarius* the Jesuit was an instrument from Cardinall *Baronius* to draw him to *Rome*, to accept a stipend, onely to serve the Christian Churches

in controversies with the Jews, without indangering himself to change of his perswasion in particular deductions between these Christian Churches, or being enquired of, or tempted thereunto. And I hope he is no otherwise departed from us. If he be, we shall not escape scandall in it; because, though he be a man of many distempers, yet when he shall come to eat assured bread, and to be removed from partialities, to which want drove him, to make himself a reputation, and raise up favourers; you shall see in that course of opposing the Jews, he will produce worthy things: and our Church will perchance blush to have lost a Souldier fit for that great battell; and to cherish onely those single Duellisms, between *Rome* and *England*, or that more single, and almost self-homicide, between the unconformed Ministers, and Bishops. I writ to you last week that the plague increased; by which you may see that my Letters – opinion of the song, not that I make such trifles for praise; but because as long as you speak comparatively of it with mine own, and not absolutely, so long I am of your opinion even at this time; when I humbly thank God, I ask & have, his comfort of sadder meditations; I doe not condemn in my self, that I have given my wit such evaporations, as those, if they be free from prophaneness, or obscene provocations. Sr, you would pity me if you saw me write, and therefore will pardon me if I write no more: my pain hath drawn my head so much awry, and holds it so, that mine eie cannot follow mine hand: I receive you therefore into my prayers, with mine own weary soul, and commend my self to yours. I doubt not but next week I shall be good news to you, for I have mending or dying on my side, which is two to one. If I continue thus, I shall have comfort in this, that my B. Saviour exercising his Justice upon my two worldly parts, my fortune, and body, reserves all his mercy for that which best tastes it, and most needs it, my soul. I professe to you truly, that my lothnesse to give over now, seems to my self an ill sign, that I shall write no more.

Your poor friend, and Gods poor patient,
Jo. Donne.

[xiii.]

To my worthy and honoured friend Mr George Garet

Sir,

I Am sorry, if your care of me have made you importune to any body else; yet I cannot be very sorry because it gives new testimonies of your favour to me, of which I shall ever be very glad, and (that which is my onely vertue) thankfull: so desperate fortunes as mine may well make friends loth to doe curtesies, because an inability in deserving or requiring takes from them the honour of having done a curtesie, and leaves it but the poor name of an alms; and alms may be given in easier proportions, and more meritoriously. But Sr, by what name or weight soever you esteem this kindnesse which you have done me, I value it so, as might alone perswade me of your care of me; in recompense of which, you must be pleased to accept new assurances that I am

Your very affectionate servant,

J. Donne.

*I pray let my service be
presented by you to
Mr Roope.*

[xiv.]

To Mr George Garet

Sir,

I Have not received that Letter, which by this, I perceive you sent to *London*; if there were anything in that, by which I might have taken occasion to have done you service before this time, I have a double reason of grief for the want of it. I came from thence upon *Thursday*, where I left Sir *Tho. Roe* so indulgent to his sorrow, as it had been an injury to have interrupted it with my unusefull company. I have done nothing of that kinde as your Letter intimates, in the memory of that good Gentlewoman; if I had, I should not finde any better use of it, then to put it into your hands. You teach me what I owe her memory; and if I pay that debt so, you have a part and interest in it, by doing me the honour of remembring it: and therefore it must come quickly to you. I hope not for return from Court, till I come thither; which if I can be master of my self, or servant to my self, which I think is all one, I hope to do some ten daies hence, making it my way to the *Bathe*. If you find any there that have not forgot my name, continue me in their favour, and hold in your self a firm assurance that I am

Your affectionate servant

J. Donne.

[xv.]

To Mrs Martha Garet

Madame,

Though there be much merit, in the favour your brother hath done me in a visit, yet that which doth enrich and perfect it, is, that he brought you with him; which he doth, as well by letting me see how you do, as by giving me occasions, and leave to talk with you by this Letter: if you have any servant, which wishes you better then I, it must be because he is able to put his wishes into a better frame, and expresse them better, and understand proportion, and greatnesse better then I. I am willing to confesse my impotencie; which is, that I know no wish good enough for you; if any doe, my advantage is, that I can exceed his, by adding mine to it. You must not think that I begin to think thus, when you begin to hear it, by a Letter; As sometimes by the changing of the winde, you begin to hear a Trumpet, which sounded long before you heard it; so are these thoughts of you familiar and ordinary in me, though they have seldome the help of this conveyance to your knowledge: I am loth to leave; for as long as in any fashion, I can have your brother and you here, you make my house a kinde of Dorvey [Dorney]; but since I cannot stay you here, I will come thither to you; which I do, by wrapping up in this paper, the heart of

Your most affectionate servant
J. Donne.

[xvi.]

To Sir Thomas Roe

SIR,

It is an ease to your friends abroad, that you are more a man of businesse then heretofore; for now it were an injury to trouble you with a busie Letter. But by the same reason I were inexcusable if I should not write at all, since the lesse, the more acceptable; therefore, Sir, though I have no more to say, but to renew the obligations I have towards you, and to continue my place in your love, I would not forbear to tell you so. If I shall also tell you, that when this place affords any thing worth your hearing, I will be your relator, I think I take so long a day, as you would forget the debt, it appears yet to be so barren. Howsoever with every commodity, I shall say something, though it be but a descant upon this plain song, that I am

Your affectionate servant

J. Donne.

[xvii.]

To all my friends: Sir H. Goodere

SIR,

I Am not weary of writing; it is the course but durable garment of my love; but I am weary of wanting you. I have a minde like those bodies, which have hot Livers, and cold stomachs; or such a distemper as travelled me at *Paris*; a Fever, and dysentery: in which that which is physick to one infirmity, nourishes the other. So I abhor nothing more then sadness, except the ordinary remedy, change of company. I can allow my self to be *Animal sociale*, applicable to my company, but not *gregale*, to herd my self in every troupe. It is not perfectly true which a very subtil, yet very deep wit *Averroes* says, that all mankinde hath but one soul, which informes and rules us all, as one Intelligence doth the firmament and all the Starres in it; as though a particular body were too little an organ for a soul to play upon. And it is as imperfect which is taught by that religion wch is most accomodate to sense (I dare not say to reason (though it have appearance of that too) because none may doubt but that that religion is certainly best, which is reasonablest) That all mankinde hath one protecting Angel; all Christians one other, all English one other, all of one Corporation and every civill coagulation or society one other; and every man one other. Though both these opinions expresse a truth; which is, that mankinde hath very stronge bounds to cohabit and concur in other then mountains and hills during his life. First, common, and mutuall necessity of one another; and therefore naturally in our defence and subventions we first flie to our selves; next, to that which is likest, other men. Then, naturall and inborn charity, beginning at home, which perswades us to give, that we may receive: And legall charity, which makes us also forgive. Then an ingraffing in one another, and growing together by a custome of society: and last of all, strict friendship, in which band men were so presumed to be coupled, that our Confessor King had a law, that if a man be killed, the murderer shall pay a sum *felago suo*, which the interpreters call, *fide ligato, et comite vitae*. All these bands I willingly receive, for no man is lesse of himself then I: nor any man enough of himself. To be so, is all one with omnipotence. And it is well marked, that in the holy Book, wheresoever they have rendered Almighty, the word is Self-sufficient. I think sometimes that the having a family should remove me farre from the curse of *Væ soli*. But in so strict obligation of Parent, or Husband, or Master, (and perchance it is so in the last degree of friendship) where all are made one, I am not the lesse alone, for being in the midst of them. Therefore this *oleum lætitiæ*, this balme, of our lives, this alacrity which dignifies even our service to God, this gallant enemy of dejection and sadness, (for which and wickednesse the Italian allows but one word, *Triste*: And in full condemnation whereof it was prophesied of our blessed Saviour, *Non erit tristis*, in his conversation) must be sought and preserved diligently. And since it grows without us, we must be sure to gather it from the right tree. They which place this alacrity only in a good conscience, deal somewhat too roundly with us, for when we aske the way, they shew us the town afar off: Will a Physitian consulted for health and strength, bid you have good sinews and equall temper? It is true, that this conscience is the resultance of all other particular actions; it is our triumph and banquet in the haven; but I would come towards that also, (as Mariners say) with a merry winde. Our nature is Meteorique, we respect (because we partake so) both earth and heaven, for as our bodies glorified shall be capable of spirituall joy, so our souls demerged into those bodies, are allowed to partake earthly pleasure. Our soul is not sent hither, only to go back again: we have some errand to do here: nor is it sent into prison, because it comes innocent: and he which sent it, is just. As we may not kill our selves, so we may not bury our selves: which is done or endangered in a dull Monastique sadness, which is so much worse then jolity (for upon that word

I durst – And certainly despair is infinitely worse, then presumption: both because this is an excesse of love, that of fear; and because this is up, that down the hill; easier, and more stumbling. Heaven is expressed by singing, hell by weeping. And though our blessed Saviour be never noted to have laughed, yet his continuance [countenance] is said ever to be smiling. And that even moderate mirth of heart, and face, and [is] all I wish to my self; and perswade you to keep. This alacrity is not had by a general charity and equanimity to all mankinde, for that is to seek fruit in a wilderness: nor from a singular friend, for that is to ketch it out of your own pocket: but the various and abundant grace of it, is good company. In which no rank, no number, no quality, but ill, and such a degree of that as may corrupt and poyson the good, is exempt. For in nearer then them, your friend, and somewhat nearer then he, in your self you must allow some inordinatenesse of affections and passions. For it is not true that they are not natural, but stormes and tempests of our bloud and humours: for they are naturall, but sickly. And as the Indian priests expressed an excellent charity, by building Hospitalls and providing chirurgery for birds and beasts lamed by mischance, or age, or labour: so must we, not cut off, but cure these affections, which are the bestiall part.

[xviii.]

To Sir H. Goodere

SIR,

Every tuesday I make account that I turn a great hour-glass, and consider that a weeks life is run out since I writ. But if I aske my self what I have done in the last watch, or would do in the next, I can say nothing; if I say that I have passed it without hurting any, so may the Spider in my window. The primitive Monkes were excusable in their retirings and enclosures of themselves: for even of them every one cultivated his own garden and orchard, that is, his soul and body, by meditation, and manufactures; and they ought the world no more since they consumed none of her sweetnesse, nor begot others to burden her. But for me, if I were able to husband all my time so thriftily, as not onely not to wound my soul in any minute by actuall sinne, but not to rob and cousen her by giving any part to pleasure or businesse, but bestow it all upon her in meditation, yet even in that I should wound her more, and contract another guiltinesse: As the Eagle were very unnaturall if because she is able to do it, she should pearch a whole day upon a tree, staring in contemplation of the majestie and glory of the Sun, and let her young Eglets starve in the nest. Two of the most precious things which God hath afforded us here, for the agony and exercise of our sense and spirit, which are a thirst and inhiation after the next life, and a frequency of prayer and meditation in this, are often envenomed, and putrefied, and stray into a corrupt disease: for as God doth thus occasion, and positively concurre to evill, that when a man is purposed to do a great sin, God infuses some good thoughts which make him choose a lesse sin, or leave out some circumstance which aggravated that; so the devill doth not only suffer but provoke us to some things naturally good, upon condition that we shall omit some other more necessary and more obligatory. And this is his greatest subtilty; because herein we have the deceitfull comfort of having done well, and can very hardly spie our error because it is but an insensible omission, and no accusing act. With the first of these I have often suspected my self to be overtaken; which is, with a desire of the next life: which though I know it is not merely out of a wearinesse of this, because I had the same desires when I went with the tyde, and enjoyed fairer hopes then now: yet I doubt worldly encombrances have encreased it. I would not that death should take me asleep. I would not have him meerly seise me, and onely declare me to be dead, but win me, and overcome me. When I must shipwrack, I would do it in a Sea, where mine impotencie might have some excuse; not in a sullen weedy lake, where I could not have so much as exercise for my swimming. Therefore I would fain do something; but that I cannot tell what, is no wonder. For to chuse, is to do: but to be no part of any body, is to be nothing. At most, the greatest persons, are but great wens, and excrescences; men of wit and delightfull conversation, but as moalls for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world, that they contribute something to the sustentation of the whole. This I made account that I begun early, when I understood the study of our laws: but was diverted by the worst voluptuousnes, which is an Hydroptique immoderate desire of humane learning and languages: beautifull ornaments to great fortunes; but mine needed an occupation, and a course which I thought I entred well into, when I submitted my self to such a service, as I thought might imploy[ed] those poor advantages, which I had. And there I stumbled too, yet I would try again: for to this hour I am nothing, or so little, that I am scarce subject and argument good enough for one of mine own letters: yet I fear, that doth not ever proceed from a good root, that I am so well content to be lesse, that is dead. You, Sir, are farre enough from these descents, your vertue keeps you secure, and your naturall disposition to mirth will preserve you; but lose none of these holds, a slip is often as dangerous as a bruise, and though you cannot fall to my lownesse, yet in a much lesse distraction

you may meet my sadnesse, for he is no safer which falls from an high tower into the leads, then he which falls from thence to the ground: make therefore to your self some mark, and go towards it alegrement. Though I be in such a planetary and erratique fortune, that I can do nothing constantly, yet you may finde some constancy in my constant advising you to it.

Your hearty true friend

J. Donne.

I came this evening from M. Jones his house in Essex, where M. Martin hath been, and left a relation of Captain Whitcocks [Whitelock's] death, perchance it is no news to you, but it was to me; without doubt want broke him; for when M. Hollands company by reason of the plague broke, the Captain sought to be at Mrs Jones house, who on her husbands absence declining it, he went in the night, his boy carrying his cloakbag, on foot to the Lord of Sussex, who going next day to hunt, the Captain not then sick, told him he would see him no more. A Chaplain came up to him, to whom he delivered an account of his understanding, and I hope, of his belief, and soon after dyed; and my Lord hath buried him with his own Ancestors. Perchance his life needed a longer sicknesse, but a man may go faster and safer, when he enjoys that day light of a clear and sound understanding, then in the night or twilight of an ague or other disease. And the grace of Almighty God doth every thing suddenly and hastily, but depart from us, it enlightens us, warms us, heats us, ravishes us, at once. Such a medicin, I fear, his inconsideration needed; and I hope as confidently that he had it. As our soul is infused when it is created, and created when it is infused, so at her going out Gods mercy is had by asking, and that is asked by having. Lest your Polesworth carrier should cousen me, I send my man with this letter early to London, whither this Tuesday all the Court come to a Christening at Arondell house, and stay in town so that I will sup with the good Lady, and write again to-morrow to you, if any thing be occasioned there, which concerns you, and I will tell her so; next day they are to return to Hampton, and upon friday the King to Royston.

[xix.]

To Sir H. Goodere

SIR,

If this which I send you inclosed give me right intelligence, I present you a way by which you may redeem all your former wastes, and recompense your ill fortunes, in having sometimes apprehended unsuccessfull suits, and (that which I presume you affect most) ease your self from all future inquisition of widowes or such businesses as aske so over industrious a pursuit, as devest a man from his best happinesse of enjoying himself. I give you (I think) the first knowledge, of two millions confiscated to the Crown of England: of which I dare assure myself the coffers have yet touched none; nor have the Commissioners for suits any thing to oppose against a suit founded upon this confiscation, though they hold never so strictly to their instructions. After you have served your self with a proportion, I pray make a petition in my name for as much as you think may be given me for my book out of this; for, but out of this, I have no imagination. And for a token of my desire to serve him, present M. *Fowler* with 3 or 4000 *li.* of this since he was so resolved never to leave his place, without a suit of that value. I wish your cousen in the town, better provided; but if he be not, here is enough for him. And since I am ever an affectionate servant to that journey, acquaint M. *Martin* from me, how easie it will be to get a good part of this for *Virginia*. Upon the least petition that M. *Brook* can present he may make himself whole again, of all which the Kings servants M. *Lepton* and master *Waterouse*, have endammaged him. Give him leave to offer to M. *Hakevill* enough to please himself, for his *Aurum Reginae*. And if M. *Gherard* have no present hopefull designe upon a worthy Widow, let him have so much of this as will provide him that house and coach which he promised to lend me at my return. If M. *Inago Jones* be not satisfied for his last Maske (because I hear say it cannot come to much) here is enough to be had: This is but a copy, but if Sir *Ro. Cotton* have the originall he will not deny it you; if he hath it not, no body else hath it, nor can prevent you; husband it well, which you may easily doe, because I assure my self none of the children nor friends of the party condemned will crosse you or importune the King for any part. If I get no more by it, yet it hath made me a Letter. And Sir (to depart from this Mine) in what part of my Letters soever you find the remembrance of my humble service to my Lord of *Bedford*, I beseech you ever think them intended for the first, and in that ranke present them. I have yet received but one Letter from you which was of the 10 of *December* by M. *Pory*, but you see that as long as there is one egge left in the nest, I never leave laying, nor should although you had sent none since; all at last will not amount to so good a testimony as I would fain give how much I am

Your affectionate servant and lover,
J. Donne.

Sir, I write this Letter in no very great degree of a convalescence from such storms of a stomach colick as kept me in a continuall vomiting, so that I know not what I should have been able to doe to dispatch this winde, but that an honest fever came and was my physick: I tell you of it onely lest some report should make it worse, for me thinks that they who love to adde to news should think it a master-piece to be able to say no worse of any ill fortune of mine then it deserves, since commonly it deserves worse then they can say, but they did not, and I am reprieved. I finde dying to be like those facts which denying makes felony: when a sicknesse examines us, and we confess that we are willing to die, we cannot, but those who are – incurre the penalty: and I may die yet, if talking idly be an ill sign. God be with you.

[xx.]

To the same

SIR,

It is in our State ever held for a good sign to change Prison, and *nella Signoria de mi*, I will think it so, that my sicknesse hath given me leave to come to my *London*-prison. I made no doubt but my entrance-pain (for it was so rather then a sicknesse, but that my sadnesse putrefied and corrupted it to that name) affected you also; for nearer Contracts then generall Christianity, had made us so much towards one [another], that one part cannot escape the distemper of the other. I was therefore very carefull, as well to slack any sorrow which my danger might occasion in you; as to give you the comfort of having been heard in your prayers for me, to tell you as soon as my pain remitted what steps I made towards health, which I did last week. This *Tuesday* morning your man brought me a Letter, which (if he had not found me at *London*) I see he had a hasty commandment to have brought to *Micham*. Sr, though my fortune hath made me such as I am, rather a sicknesse and disease of the world then any part of it, yet I esteemed my self so far from being so to you, as I esteemed you to be far from being so of the world, as to measure men by fortune or events. I am now gone so far towards health, as there is not infirmity enough left in me for an assurance of so much noblenesse and truth, as your last Letter is to work upon, that might cure a greater indisposition then I am now in: And though if I had died, I had not gone without testimonies of such a disposition in you towards the reparation of my fortune, or preservation of my poor reputation; yet I would live, and be some such thing as you might not be ashamed to love. Your man must send away this hour in which he visits me; and I have not yet (for I came last night) offered to visit my La. *Bedford*, and therefore have nothing to say which should make me grudge this straitnesse of time. He tels me he sends again upon *Thursday*, and therefore I will make an end of this Letter, and perfect it then. I doubt my Letters have not come duly to your hand, and that I writing in my dungeon of *Michim* without dating have made the Chronologie and sequence of my Letters perplexed to you; howsoever you shall not be rid of this Ague of my Letters, though perchance the fit change daies. I have received in a narrow compasse three of yours, one with the Catalogue of your Books, another I found here left last *Saterday* by your man, and this which he brought me this morning. Sir, I dare sit no longer in my wastcoat, nor have any thing worth the danger of a relapse to write. I owe you so much of my health, as I would not mingle you in any occasion of repairing it, and therefore here ask leave to kisse your hands, and bid you good morrow and farewell.

Your very true friend and servant
J. Donne.

[xxi.]

To Sr H. G

Sir,

It should be no interruption to your pleasures, to hear me often say that I love you, and that you are as much my meditation as my self: I often compare not you and me, but the sphere in which your resolutions are, and my wheel; both I hope concentric to God: for methinks the new Astronomie is thus applicable well, that we which are a little earth, should rather move towards God, then that he which is fulfilling, and can come no whither, should move towards us. To your life full of variety, nothing is old, nor new to mine; and as to that life, all stickings and hesitations seem stupid and stony, so to this, all fluid slipperinesses, and transitory migrations seem giddy and featherie. In that life one is ever in the porch or postern, going in or out, never within his house himself: It is a garment made of remnants, a life ravelled out into ends, a line discontinued, and a number of small wretched points, uselesse, because they concur not: A life built of past and future, not proposing any constant present; they have more pleasures then we, but not more pleasure; they joy oftner, we longer; and no man but of so much understanding as may deliver him from being a fool, would change with a mad-man, which had a better proportion of wit in his often *Lucidis*. You know, they which dwell farthest from the Sun, if in any convenient distance, have longer daies, better appetites, better digestion, better growth, and longer life: And all these advantages have their mindes who are well removed from the scorplings, and dazlings, and exhalings of the worlds glory: but neither of our lives are in such extremes; for you living at Court without ambition, which would burn you, or envy, which would devalue others, live in the Sun, not in the fire: And I which live in the Country without stupefying, am not in darknesse, but in shadow which is not no light, but a pallid, waterish, and diluted one. As all shadows are of one colour, if you respect the body from which they are cast (for our shadows upon clay will be dirty, and in a garden green, and flowery) so all retirings into a shadowy life are alike from all causes, and alike subject to the barbarousnesse and insipid dulnesse of the Country; onely the employment, and that upon which you cast and bestow your pleasure, businesse, or books, gives it the tincture, and beauty. But truly wheresoever we are, if we can but tell our selves truly what and where we would be, we may make any state and place such; for we are so composed, that if abundance, or glory scorch and melt us, we have an earthly cave, our bodies, to go into by consideration, and cool our selves: and if we be frozen, and contracted with lower and dark fortunes, we have within us a torch, a soul, lighter and warmer then any without: we are therefore our own umbrella's, and our own suns. These, Sir, are the sallads and onions of *Micham*, sent to you with as wholesome affection as your other friends send Melons and *Quelque-choses* from Court and *London*. If I present you not as good diet as they, I would yet say grace to theirs, and bid much good do it you. I send you, with this, a Letter which I sent to the Countesse. It is not my use nor duty to doe so, but for your having of it, there were but two consents, and I am sure you have mine, and you are sure you have hers. I also writ to her Lap for the verses she shewed in the garden, which I did not onely to extort them, nor onely to keep my promise of writing, for that I had done in the other Letter, and perchance she hath forgotten the promise; nor onely because I think my Letters just good enough for a progresse, but because I would write apace to her, whilst it is possible to expresse that which I yet know of her, for by this growth I see how soon she will be ineffable.

[xxii.]

SIR,

Though my friendship be good for nothing else, it may give you the profit of a tentation, or of an affliction: It may excuse your patience; and though it cannot allure, it shall importune you. Though I know you have many worthy friends of all rankes, yet I adde something, since I which am of none, would fain be your friend too. There is some of the honour and some of the degrees of a Creation, to make a friendship of nothing. Yet, not to annihilate my self utterly (for though it seem humblenesse, yet it is a work of as much almightinesse, to bring a thing to nothing, as from nothing) though I be not of the best stuffe for friendship, which men of warm and durable fortunes only are, I cannot say, that I am not of the best fashion, if truth and honesty be that; which I must ever exercise, towards you, because I learned it of you: for the conversation with worthy men, and of good example, though it sow not vertue in us, yet produceth and ripeneth it. Your mans haste, and mine to *Micham* cuts off this Letter here, yet, as in littell patterns torn from a whole piece, this may tell you what all I am. Though by taking me before my day (which I accounted Tuesday) I make short payment of this duty of Letters, yet I have a little comfort in this, that you see me hereby, willing to pay those debts which I can, before my time.

Your affectionate friend

J. Donne.

First Saturday in

March. 1607.

You forget to send me the Apology; and many times, I think it an injury to remember one of a promise, lest it confesse a distrust. But of the book, by occasion of reading the Deans answer to it, I have sometimes some want.

[xxiii.]

To the Countesse of Bedford

Happiest and worthiest Lady,

I Do not remember that ever I have seen a petition in verse, I would not therefore be singular, nor adde these to your other papers. I have yet adventured so near as to make a petition for verse, it is for those your Ladiship did me the honour to see in *Twicknam* garden, except you repent your making; and having mended your judgement by thinking worse, that is, better, because juster, of their subject. They must needs be an excellent exercise of your wit, which speaks so well of so ill: I humbly beg them of your Ladiship, with two such promises, as to any other of your compositions were threatenings: that I will not shew them, and that I will not beleeeve them; and nothing should be so used that comes from your brain or heart. If I should confesse a fault in the boldnesse of asking them, or make a faulte by doing it in a longer Letter, your Ladiship might use your style and old fashion of the Court towards me, and pay me with a Pardon. Here therefore I humbly kisse your Ladiships fair learned hands, and wish you good wishes and speedy grants.

Your Ladiships servant

J. Donne.

[xxiv.]

To the Honourable Knight Sir H. Goodere

Because things be conserved by the same means, which established them, I nurse that friendship by Letters, which you begot so: though you have since strengthened it by more solid aliment and real offices. In these Letters from the Country there is this merit, that I do otherwise unwillingly turn mine eye or thoughts from my books, companions in whom there is no falshood nor forwardnesse: which words, I am glad to observe that the holy Authours often joyne as expressers and relatives to one another, because else out of a naturall descent to that unworthy fault of frowardnesse, furthered with that incommodity of a little thinne house; I should have mistaken it to be a small thing, which now I see equalled with the worst. If you have laid my papers and books by, I pray let this messenger have them, I have determined upon them. If you have not, be content to do it, in the next three or four days. So, Sir, I kisse your hands; and deliver to you an intire and clear heart; which shall ever when I am with you be in my face and tongue, and when I am from you, in my Letters, for I will never draw Curtain between you and it.

Yours very affectionately

J. Donne.

From your house at

Micham friday morning.

When you are sometimes at M. Sackvills, I pray aske if he have this book, Baldvinus de officio pii hominis in controversiis; it was written at the conference at Poissy, where Beza was, and he answered it; I long for it.

[xxv.]

To Sir H. G

SIR,

I Hope you are now well come to *London*, and well, and well comforted in your Fathers health and love, and well contented that we ask you how you doe, and tell you how we are, which yet I cannot of my self; If I knew that I were ill, I were well; for we consist of three parts, a Soul, and Body, and Minde: which I call those thoughts and affections and passions, which neither soul nor body hath alone, but have been begotten by their communication, as Musique results out of our breath and a Cornet. And of all these the diseases are cures, if they be known. Of our souls sicknesses, which are sinnes, the knowledge is, to acknowledge, and that is her Physique, in which we are not dieted by drams and scruples, for we cannot take too much. Of our bodies infirmities, though our knowledge be partly *ab extrinseco*, from the opinion of the Physitian, and that the subject and matter be flexible, and various; yet their rules are certain, and if the matter be rightly applied to the rule, our knowledge thereof is also certain. But of the diseases of the minde, there is no *Criterion*, no Canon, no rule; for, our own taste and apprehension and interpretation should be the Judge, and that is the disease it self. Therefore sometimes when I finde my self transported with jollity, and love of company, I hang Leads at my heels; and reduce to my thoughts my fortunes, my years, the duties of a man, of a friend, of a husband, of a Father, and all the incumbencies of a family: when sadnesse dejects me, either I countermine it with another sadnesse, or I kindle squibs about me again, and flie into sportfulnesse and company: and I finde ever after all, that I am like an exorcist, which had long laboured about one, which at last appears to have the Mother, that I still mistake my disease. And I still vex my self with this, because if I know it not, no body can know it. And I comfort my self, because I see dispassioned men are subject to the like ignorances. For divers mindes out of the same thing often draw contrary conclusions, as *Augustine* thought devout *Anthony* to be therefore full of the holy Ghost, because not being able to read, he could say the whole Bible, and interpret it; and *Thyreus* the Jesuit for the same reason doth thinke all the Anabaptists to be possessed. And as often out of contrary things men draw one conclusion: as to the *Roman* Church, magnificence and splendor hath ever been an argument of Gods favour, and poverty & affliction, to the *Greek*. Out of this variety of mindes it proceeds, that though all our souls would goe to one end, Heaven, and all our bodies must go to one end, the earth: yet our third part the minde, which is our naturall guide here, chooses to every man a severall way: scarce any man likes what another doth, nor advisedly, that which himself. But Sir, I am beyond my purpose; I meant to write a Letter, and I am fallen into a discourse, and I do not only take you from some businesse, but I make you a new businesse by drawing you into these meditations. In which yet let my opennesse be an argument of such love as I would fain expresse in some worthier fashion.

[xxvi.]

To Sir G. F

SIR,

I Writ to you once this week before; yet I write again, both because it seems a kinde of resisting of grace, to omit any commodity of sending into *England*, and because any Pacquet from me into *England* should go, not only without just freight, but without ballast, if it had not a letter to you. In Letters that I received from Sir H. Wotton yesterday from *Amyens*, I had one of the 8 of *March* from you, and with it one from Mrs *Danterey*, of the 28 of *January*: which is a strange disproportion. But, Sir, if our Letters come not in due order, and so make not a certain and concurrent chain, yet if they come as Atomes, and so meet at last, by any crooked, and casuall application, they make up, and they nourish bodies of friendship; and in that fashion, I mean one way or other, first or last, I hope all the Letters which have been addressed to us by one another, are safely arrived, except perchance that packet by the Cook be not, of which before this time you are cleare; for I received (as I told you) a Letter by M. *Nat. Rich*, and if you sent none by him, then it was that Letter, which the Cook tells you he delivered to M. *Rich*; which, with all my criticismes, I cannot reconcile; because in your last Letter, I find mention of things formerly written, which I have not found. However, I am yet in the same perplexity, which I mentioned before; which is, that I have received no syllable, neither from her self, nor by any other, how my wife hath passed her danger, nor do I know whether I be increased by a childe, or diminished by the losse of a wife. I hear from *England* of many censures of my book, of Mrs *Drury*; if any of those censures do but pardon me my descent in Printing any thing in verse, (which if they do, they are more charitable then my self; for I do not pardon my self, but confesse that I did it against my conscience, that is, against my own opinion, that I should not have done so) I doubt not but they will soon give over that other part of that indictment, which is that I have said so much; for no body can imagine, that I who never saw her, could have any other purpose in that, then that when I had received so very good testimony of her worthinesse, and was gone down to print verses, it became me to say, not what I was sure was just truth, but the best that I could conceive; for that had been a new weaknesse in me, to have praised any body in printed verses, that had not been capable of the best praise that I could give. Presently after Easter we shall (I think) go to *Frankford* to be there at the election, where we shall meet Sir H. Wotton and Sir Ro. Rich, and after that we are determined to passe some time, in the Palatinate. I go thither with a great deale of devotion for me thinkes it is a new kinde of piety, that as Pilgrims went heretofore to places which had been holy and happy, so I go to a place now, which shall be so, and more, by the presence of the worthiest Princess of the world, if that marriage proceed. I have no greater errand to the place then that at my return into *England*, I may be fitter to stand in her presence, and that after I have seen a rich and abundant Countrey, in his best seasons, I may see that Sun which shall always keep it in that height. Howsoever we stray, if you have leasure to write at any time, adventure by no other way, then M. Bruer [*Brewer*], at the Queens Armes, a Mercer, in *Cheapside*. I shall omit no opportunity, of which I doubt not to finde more then one before we go from *Paris*. Therefore give me leave to end this, in which if you did not finde the remembrance of my humblest services to my Lady *Bedford*, your love and faith ought to try all the experiments of pouders, and dryings, and waterings to discover some lines which appeared not; because it is impossible that a Letter should come from me, with such an ungrateful silence.

*Your very true poor friend and
servant and lover
J. Donne.*

This day begins a history, of which I doubt not but I shall write more to you before I leave this town. Monsieur de Rohan, a person for birth, next heire to the Kingdome of Navar, after the Kings children, (if the King of Spaine were weary of it) and for allyance, sonne in law to D. Sully, and for breeding in the wars and estate, the most renarkable man of the Religion, being Governour of S. Jean d'Angeli, one of the most important towns which they of the Religion hold for their security, finding that some distasts between the Lieutenant and the Maior of the town, and him, were dangerously fomented by great persons, stole from Court, rode post to the town and removed these two persons. He sent his secretary, and another dependent of his to give the Queen satisfaction, who is so far from receiving it, that his messengers are committed to the Bastile likely to be presently tortured; all his friends here commanded to their houses, and the Queens companies of light horse sent already thitherward, and foot companies preparing, which troops being sent against a place, so much concerning those of the Religion to keep, and where they abound in number and strength, cannot chuse but produce effects worthy your hearing in the next Letter.

[xxvii.]

To Sir H. G

SIR,

Because I am in a place and season where I see every thing bud forth, I must do so too, and vent some of my meditations to you; the rather because all other buds being yet without taste or virtue, my Letters may be like them. The pleasantnesse of the season displeases me. Every thing refreshes, and I wither, and I grow older and not better, my strength diminishes, and my load growes, and being to passe more and more stormes, I finde that I have not only cast out all my ballast which nature and time gives, Reason and discretion, and so am as empty and light as Vanity can make me; but I have over fraught my self with Vice, and so am riddingly subject to two contrary wrackes, Sinking and Oversetting, and under the iniquity of such a disease as inforces the patient when he is almost starved, not only to fast, but to purge. For I have much to take in, and much to cast out; sometimes I thinke it easier to discharge my self of vice then of vanity, as one may sooner carry the fire out of a room then the smoake: and then I see it was a new vanity to think so. And when I think sometimes that vanity, because it is thinne and airie, may be expelled with vertue or businesse, or substantiall vice; I finde that I give entrance thereby to new vices. Certainly as the earth and water, one sad, the other fluid, make but one bodie: so to aire and Vanity, there is but one *Centium morbi*. And that which later Physicians say of our bodies, is fitter for our mindes: for that which they call Destruction, which is a corruption and want of those fundamentall parts whereof we consist, is Vice: and that *Collectio stercorum*, which is but the excrement of that corruption, is our Vanity and indiscretion: both these have but one root in me, and must be pulled out at once, or never. But I am so farre from digging to it, that I know not where it is, for it is not in mine eyes only, but in every sense, nor in my concupiscence only, but in every power and affection. Sir, I was willing to let you see how impotent a man you love, not to dishearten you from doing so still (for my vices are not infectious nor wandring, they came not yesterday, nor mean to go away to day: they Inne not, but dwell in me, and see themselves so welcome, and find in me so good bad company of one another, that they will not change, especially to one not apprehensive, nor easily accessible) but I do it, that your counsell might cure me, and if you deny that, your example shal, for I will as much strive to be like you as I will wish you to continue good.

[xxviii.]

To the Honourable Kt Sr H. Goodere

one of the Gent. of his Majesties privy Chamber

SIR,

You may remember that long since you delivered Mr *Fowler* possession of me, but the wide distance in which I have lived from Court, makes me reasonably fear, that now he knows not his right and power in me, though he must of necessity have all, to whom you and I joyn in a gift of me, as we did to him, so that perchance he hath a servant of me, which might be passed in a book of concealment. If your leisure suffer it, I pray finde whether I be in him still, and conserve me in his love; and so perfect your own work, or doe it over again, and restore me to the place, which by your favour I had in him. For Mr *Powell* who serves her Maty as Clerk of her counsell, hath told me that Mr *Fowler* hath some purpose to retire himself; and therefore I would fain for all my love, have so much of his, as to finde him willing when I shall seek him at Court, to let me understand his purpose therein; for if my means may make me acceptable to the Queen and him, I should be very sorry he should make so farre steps therein with any other, that I should fail in it, onely for not having spoke to him soon enough. It were an injury to the forwardnesse of your love to adde more; here therefore I kisse your hands, and commend to you the truth of my love.

*Your very affectionate
servant and lover
Jo. Donne.*

*From my lodging in the Strand,
whither I shall return on Munday,
13 June 1607.*

[xxix.]

To Sr H. G

SIR,

You husband my time thriftily, when you command me to write by such a messenger, as can tell you more then I can write, for so he doth not onely carry the Letter, but is the Letter. But that the naming of some things, may give you occasion to ask him farther, and him to open himself unto you, give me leave to tell you, that the now Spa. Embassadour proceeds in the old pace, the King hath departed from his ordinary way so farre, as to appoint 9 of the Councell to treat with him; but when they came to any approaches, he answered, that he brought onely Commission to propose certain things, which he was ready to doe, but he had no instructions to treat, but expected them upon an other return from his Master. So that there is no treaty for the marriage begun yet: for I know you have heard *Olivarez* his free acknowledgement, that til the Prince came, there was no thoght of it. The King in his gests of this progress, hath determined it, not as heretofore, at *Windsor*, but at *Farnham* during pleasure: so he is within a journey of *Southampton*; and even that circumstance adds to some other reasons, that he expects the Prince this Summer, and that Sir *W. Crofts*, in his last dispatches, enlarged the Prince in his liberty, from his Father, to come away, if he would. Amongst all the irregularities of this age, to me this is as strange as any, That this year there is no peace, and yet no sword drawn in the world; & it is a lost conjecture to think which way any of the Armies will bend. Here it is imagined, that *Yukendorfe* and *Gabor* (for, for any concurrence of love, it is but a dream) may so farre distresse *Bohemia*, as that *Tilly* must be recalled thither; and that if he be, *Brunswikes* way is open into *Baviere*, where he may recompense great losses, whilest *Mansfield* and *Gonzales*, and his Excellency and *Spinola*, keep the ballance even in their parts, by looking upon another. This noble friend of yours is in his last minute, in this Town; and I am going into the Coach with my Lo. to *Hanworth*. If I might have forborn the sealing the rest till my return from thence, you might have heard something more from

*Your very true poor friend and humble
servant in Chr. Jes. J. Donne.*

No straitnesse makes me forget my service to your daughters: If my Bell were tolling, I should pray for them, and though my Letter be sealing, I leave not out my wishes, that their fortunes may second their goodnesse. Amen.

[xxx.]

To Sir H. G

SIR,

This *Tuesday* morning, which hath brought me to *London*, presents me with all your Letters. Me thought it was a rent day, I mean such as yours, and not as mine; and yet such too, when I considered how much I ought you for them, how good a mother, how fertill and abundant the understanding is, if she have a good father; and how well friendship performs that office. For that which is denied in other generations is done in this of yours: for here is superfetation, childe upon childe, and that which is more strange twins at a latter conception. If in my second religion, friendship, I had a conscience, either *errantem* to mistake good and bad and indifferent, or *opinantem* to be ravished by others opinions or examples, or *dubiam* to adhere to neither part, or *scrupulosam* to incline to one, but upon reasons light in themselves, or indiscussed in me, (which are almost all the diseases of conscience) I might mistake your often, long, and busie Letters, and fear you did but intreat me to have mercy upon you and spare you; for you know our Court took the resolution, that it was the best way to dispatch the French Prince back again quickly, to receive him solemnly, ceremoniously, and expensively, when he hoped a domestique and durable entertainment. I never meant to excell you in weight nor price, but in number and bulk I thought I might, because he may cast up a greater summe who hath but forty small monies, then he with twenty Portugueses. The memory of friends, (I mean onely for Letters) neither enters ordinarily into busied men, because they are never employed within, nor into men of pleasure, because they are never at home. For these wishes therefore which you won out of your pleasure and recreation, you were as excusable to me if you writ seldome, as Sir *H. Wotton* is, under the oppression of businesse, or the necessity of seeming so; or more then he, because I hope you have both pleasure and businesse: onely to me, who have neither, this omission were sinne; for though writing be not of the precepts of friendship, but of the counsels, yet, as in some cases to some men counsels become precepts, and though not immediately from God, yet very roundly and quickly from his Church, (as selling and dividing goods in the first time, continence in the Romane Church, and order and decencie in ours) so to me who can do nothing else, it seems to binde my conscience to write; and it is sinne to doe against the conscience, though that erre. Yet no mans Letters might be better wanted then mine, since my whole Letter is nothing else but a confession that I should and would write. I owed you a Letter in verse before by mine own promise, and now that you think that you have hedged in that debt by a greater by your Letter in verse, I think it now most seasonable and fashionable for me to break. At least, to write presently, were to accuse my self of not having read yours so often as such a Letter deserves from you to me. To make my debt greater (for such is the desire of all, who cannot or mean not to pay) I pray read these two problemes: for such light flashes as these have been my hawkings in my sorry [Surrey?] journies. I accompany them with another ragge of verses, worthy of that name for the smalnesse, and age, for it hath long lien among my other papers, and laughs at them that have adventured to you: for I think till now you saw it not, and neither you, nor it should repent it. Sir, if I were any thing, my love to you might multiply it, and dignifie it: But infinite nothings are but one such; yet since even Chymera's have some name and titles, I am also

Yours.

[**xxxi.**]

To your selfe

SIR,

If this Letter finde you in a progresse, or at *Bath*, or at any place of equall leasure to our *Spâ*, you will perchance descend to reade so low meditations as these. Nothing in my L. of *Salisburies*

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