UNIT 14 JONE DONNE FURTHER EXPLORATIONS OF POEMS OF LOVE AND FAITH

Structure

14.0 OBJECTIVES

The present unit aims at acquainting you with some dimensions of John Donne's poetry I did not touch upon in Unit 13, with this end in view, this unit takes up a close reading of five other major poems of John Donne, secular as well as religious, and. puts focus on some new traits of his poetry.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

The present unit deals with three major love poems and two religious poems of John Donne. The love poems under discussion in this unit have some special traits which distinguish them from the love poems we have considered in Unit 13. In the preceding Unit the stress was on how John Donne reacted against the love conventions of the time, especially in the two poems of the unit, *The Flea* and *Twicknam* Garden and in the remaining two poems of that unit, The Good-?norrow and Tlze Extasie the focus was on the creation of a world of love resulting from an attempt at striking a balance between body and soul. But this metaphysic of love passes through a subtle change and the much sought after balance of visible beauty and mind or soul is upset. A close reading of the three major love poems in the present unit reveals an intellectual predominance. In *A* Valediction : *forbidding* mourning there is an explicit statement that there is a refinement of the mind which impels a lover to care less for eyes and lips than for the mind. The refinement goes to such an extent that the lovers become oblivious of their sex, and this verges on a sort of abstraction of love. In *The* Canonization, the title itself vouches for the shift that has imperceptibly come over the poet, from the fullness of love pictured in The Extasie with its metaphor of 'subtile knot' to the exaltation of the mind. Though there is a denial in a Donne poem that the lover seeks the joy of the mind, there is no denying that charge that has occurred in favour of the mind. In the poem, *A Nocturnall* upon *S. Lucies* day, there is a love ethic which flourishes on the roots of absence, darkness and death, and this is nothing but a communion of souls quite unrelated to the body whose rehabilitation the poet is at great pains to do in *The Extasie.* In short, the unmistakable trend in love poetry spirit with the attenuation of the delights of the body.

The religious poetry of John Donne is intensely personal. It is sensitive record of the clash of two opposing perceptions of life : one is the medieval ethic with a stress on the ephemeral character of life and the other is the splendour of the visible world epitomised by the Renaissance. Being a denizen of two different worlds, Donne sensitively pictures these two worlds in their basic antagonism. The varying values of life impinged on his mind and out of their collision he wrought beautiful religious poetry. In the two religious poems under study in this unit we find the poet battling with temptations and allurements of this world in his search of faith in God. In the first the poet fails to resolve the conflict raging in his soul between body and spirit, but in the second he succeeds in having God's grace,

14.2 THE CANONIZATION

The composition of Donne's poem, *The* ***Canonization*** is after his marriage with Anne More. It is because he in this poem al the very outset speaks of his ruined fortune and he ascribes the blight upon his fortune to his marriage. Though he feels quite undone, he does not know any abatement in the intensity of his love for Anne. He is so lost in his amours that he does not care a hang for the carping tongue of others and the opening line appears to be bursting with loving impulses laced with impatience and defiance : "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love". The ruling passion of his life is love and he has no regard for the riches of the world. He does not envy those who amass fortune by currying favour with the royally. In a veiled tone of disdain he speaks of their craving for earthly gains and forbids them to interfere with his love-making:

'With wealth your state, your minde with Arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his honour, or his grace, .
Or the Kings reall, or his stamped face

Donne says that his world has contracted to his companionship with his wife, and he looks upon her as his anchorage. This experience of oneness in love is a recurrent motif in his love poems. In ***The Anniversarie*** he makes an emphatic declaration of this primacy of love that admits of nothing else in life : "Here upon earth, we are Kings.. ." It is also akin to the idea of self-sufficiency in love that finds an expression in "The Sunne Rising : She' is all States, and all Princes, I". This theme of the supremacy of mutual love is not in the vein of Petrarch who, in terms of extravagant hyperboles, writes complimentary verses of adoration,
In the third stanza the poet talks about the nature of love in terms of a host of images. First he presents the traditional image of the fly and the taper with a slight variation. Here the lover and the beloved are flies and tapers :

Call her one, mee another flye,
We' are tapers too, and at our own cost die

Love is no mere transient passion. It is not the passion which slackens in the least and has the readiness to go to the extreme even to embrace death for its consummation.

In support of a further explication of his love experience, the poet reinforces three more images : "The Eagle", "The Dove" and "The Phoenix". In the medieval fable the old eagle flies upto the sun and is scorched and then plunges into a well to renew its youthful energy. This image explains the central idea of love that hopes lo renew itself through dying. The image of a dove has a religious overtone and sheds ample light on the loftiness of love the poet and his wife have for each other. In ***The*** *New* ***Testament*** there is ***an*** account of the Holy Ghost descending upon Christ at the time of his baptismal ceremony, like a dove. T.S. Eliot uses this image of the dove upon Christ in ***Four Quartets*** as a symbol of the purifying fire of God's love and looks upon it as "The only hope, or else despair", Donne correlates this meaning of dove

with his love and the love they exhibit has a purgatorial value. The phoenix image also explains the basic idea of love that discovers a sense of fulfillment in undergoing pain. The phoenix renews her youth only when she is burnt, burnt alive. It is also regarded as "one neutrall thing (sex)". The poet uses the images of 'eagle' and "phoenix" because both are images of renewal or resurrection. In his poem, Phoenix, D.H. Lawrence says, "...she is renewing her youth like the eagle". The idea of death is ambient : partly negative and partly positive, and the poet plays on the duality of implications :

> Wee dye and rise the same and prove
> Mysterious by this love.

The expression, ' we dye and rise the same' is paradoxical in the sense that the poet feels crucified to the world, but he gains by cleansing himself of the dross. The poet feels the consecration of love and becomes a saint or martyr of love :

> And by these hymnes, all shall approve
> Us canonized for love.

A.J. Smith rightly avers,

> ... at one level there is a
> consummation of 'religio amoris'
> on which the poem is built.
> *(Celebration of Donne)*

The poet does not have any regret that the lovers do not have any glamorous trappings of a hero recorded in a legend or a chronicle. He says that their canonization for love is without any fanfare, without any pretensions. It comes to them through their steadfastness and constancy in love in the face of all adversities. The experience has nothing transcendental about it. It is rooted in the stark reality of life. It becomes an archetypal pattern of love worthy of emulation, if others choose so :

> And thus invoke us; Yo11 whom reverend love
> Made one anothers hermitage

This apotheosis of love intercedes with the god of love himself on behalf of the lovers still struggling for the heroic resolution to make their love complete.

It is difficult to isolate this mystique of love from the interaction of the speech rhythm with the continuous logical structure of the poem. It is a practice with the poet to bring in a bystander or an overhearer in a poem to give it a dramatic cast. The poet issues a stream of shifting injunctions, such as 'take you a course', 'get you a place' and 'observe his honour, or his grace'. These injunctions impart a vibrant dramatic life to the poem. A.J. Smith rightly points out that the poem has a dramatic syntax. This dramatic syntax inheres in the modulations of grammatical moods, now of command, now of defiance, now of pathos and now of elation. The other person is perhaps a wiseacre. Each address to the person fixes its own degree of tension by developing an interaction of opposing views resulting into a richer harmony at the end. Overruling the scepticism of the other person, the poet develops a magnificent vision that incorporates the whole world consisting of countries, towns and courts into its capacious domain. The poet, in terms of the image of the 'glasses' of the eyes, says that the whole world shrinks and becomes reflected in the eyes of the beloved.

EXERCISE - I

1. Write a brief note on the paradox inherent in the title of the poem, the *Canonization*.

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2. Has the poet used the images of 'the fly' and 'the taper in the conventional way or he has made a variation on the conventional use of them?

3 In what sense the images of 'the fly' and 'the taper' differ from the images of 'the Dove', 'the Eagle' and 'the Phoenix'?

4. Write a note on the bystander in the poem, "The Canonization".

5. Explain the phrase, "The Phoenix ridle",

6. In which sense the phoenix image has 'more wit' than the images of ' The Eagle' and 'The Dove'?

7. What does the phrase 'neutral1 thing' suggest?

8. Explain the lines,

"We dye and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love."

9. Explain the phrase, "Canonized for Love".

10. The second stanza abounds in hyperboles. Pick out two hyperboles from the stanza and mention them.

11. What is the difference between the King's real face and his stamped face?

12. Write a few words on the background of the poem, The *Canonization*

13. Try to explain that Donne's wife is an anchorage for him.

14. Does the poet think of deserting his wife when he realizes that his marriage has undone him?

15. In which sense the word 'wit' has been used in the poem?

16. What is meant by the phrase, "pattern of...love".

17. Write a note on the anti-Petrarchan element in the poem.

18. Enlist the religious words that come in support of the title conceit of canonization.

19. Jot down below a few points for a critical appreciation of the poem.

14.3 A VALEDICTION : FORBIDDING MOURNING

Talking about the composition of the poem, *A Valediction:* forbidding *mourning*, Izaak Walton, says *(Life of Donne)* that Donne writes the poem before he sets out for Paris with Sir Robert Drury in 1611. Like The Canonization, this poem has been addressed to his wife. But the galling experience of the ruin of his fortune attributed to his marriage with Anne More that finds an overt reflection in that poem does not have any mention in this poem. In this poem the poet allays his lady-love's fears and misgivings arising from his going away to a distant land and says that this separation is no separation at all and that their relationship is as abiding and constant as ever. Theirs is a love of souls so complete as to make one soul that is better than either and is exempt from change. This idea of the unity of souls is the basic proposition in the poem.

In the first stanza this proposition is supported by the analogy of the soul of a virtuous man leaving the body at the time of death without any fuss. As the soul of a pious man goes away from the body without any whimper, so will the lover take leave of the beloved without leaving any room for apprehension on either side. Generally lovers in the ardour of their passion, bewail separation from each other by shedding tears and heaving sighs. But those who are firm and unchanging in their relationship do not indulge in petty trivialities of weeping and sighing. Donne's is an expression of a rare breed and has a sacred halo about it:

> 'Twere prophanation of our joyes
> To tell the layetie our love.

The laity are persons uninitiated into the mysteries of the ecclesiastical order, and any talk by them about the soared order is regarded as a sacrilege. Likewise, discussing love in public is supposed to be a blasphemy.

In stanza 111 we have the analogy of the moving of the earth and the trepidation of the spheres. The quaking of the earth brings fear and ruin, but the movement of the crystalline sphere, higher than and at a remove from our world, causes no anxiety for us. This illustration brings the point home to the beloved that there is no worrying about his going away to a far-off place. Like the movement of the celestial body far off from our habitation, the movement of the lover engenders no trouble in the beloved. The trouble lies with those who are engrossed in sensual delights and who believe that soul is sense. Such people are called 'dull sublunary lovers'. In *The* Extasie the poet speaks of the inseparable and indistinguishable union of body and soul. But in the present poem the theme of intellectual union predominates :

Inter-assured of the mind,
Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse

Unlike in *The* Extasie, the stress here is on the refinement of feeling :

> But we by 'a love, so much refin'd
> That our selves know not what it is

However, the poet observes a fidelity to the reality of the situation by apportioning values on things in keeping with their relative importance. Consequently, he does not make any summary rejection of the body which is at the lowest rung in the hierarchy (comprising body, spirit and soul).

To reassure his beloved of constancy of their love the poet introduces two fresh analogies. The first is that of a gold-bar. The goldsmith beats the gold-bar with a hammer and the gold-bar expands into a thin leaf. This points to the expansion of the relationship between the lovers during their momentary separation. The other analogy is an erudite one and has been drawn from the Ptolemaic system. The lovers are supposed to be the two legs of a compass, the beloved being the fixed foot and the lover the other foot. When we describe a circle, one foot is fixed and the other

moves. In course of drawing a circle the fixed foot leans towards the other, and this bending of one towards the other suggests their closeness to each other. When the circle is inscribed full, the outstretched foot is brought back to the other, and the compass is closed up. While the circle is being described, the fixed foot is pinned with firmness in the centre. This elaboration of the image is an explication of the relationship the poet has with his beloved. The image is suggestiveof reciprocity, inter-dependence and inter-involvement of the poet and his lady-love. The expressions, 'lean', 'rome', and 'hearken' are also indicative of the mutuality of relationship subsisting between the two.

The image of the two legs of a compass is often regarded as incongruous. But the fact is that it has not been introduced into literature by John Donne nor has it been used inappropriately by him. F.P Wilson points out that three years before John Donne wrote this poem, Joseph Hall used this image in his poem entitled Epistles. This image was also employed by the poet-dramatist, Guarin in his madrigal of the 1580s. Guarin, too, looks upon his beloved as the fixed foot firm in the centre and the lover as the other foot suffering the rotation of fortune. Later a minor poet, Thomas Carew, uses this image in his poem, Excuse *of* Absence. These examples illustrate the point that this image has found a place in the cultivated mind of the people of the time. John Donne assimilates this image into the wardrobe of his imagination and makes use of it in a very befitting manner.

In Donne poetry there is an interplay of logical structure with the speech rhythm, and the present poem is a fine specimen of this interweaving of the two.

If on this count we compare this poem with The *Anniversarie*, we find that, in some measure, substance in The *Anniversarie* is independent of speech rhythm and easily detachable from it. But in this poem it is difficult to separate poetry from argument, because it is one continuous and close argument fused and coalesced with the poem. The simplicity and quietness of the stanza has something classical about it. A.J. Smith rightly affirms that the steady pulsing movement ovemding any jaunty rhythm "...makes the poem a series of muted and self-contained utterances, almost laconic in their extreme dipped simplicity; a character which is dramatically right and indeed part of the sense of the poem. (Celebration *of* John *Donne*).

EXERCISE - 11

1. Pick out four images from the poem and explain the theme of the poem *A Valediction: forbidding mourning* on the basis of those images.

2. Write a detailed note on the expanded conceit of a pair of compasses.

3. Who are 'dull sublunary lovers'?

4. How does a virtuous man go from the world?

5. What does the image of the beating of gold to airy thinness suggest?

6. Do you remember another poem by Donne in which the images of 'teare floods' and 'sigh tempests' appear in an identical way? Mention the expressions concerned and name the poem.

7. Explain the anti-Petrarchan idea inherent in the lines,

'Twere prophanation of our joyes
To tell the layetie our love:

8. What do the images of the 'moving of the earth' and 'the trepidation of the spheres' suggest?

9. The keyword in the line' "Thy firmness makes my circle just", refers to a quality in the mistress and also to the theme of the poem. Which word is it?

10. "The statement "Inter-assured of the mind,/Care lesse, eyes, lips and hand to misse." gives us an idea of the love-ethic of Donne." Comment.

11. Give your idea of the occasion of the poem.

12. Tell whether the following statements are true or false.

a. The **image** of a pair of compasess **was** introduced into literature by John Donne,

b. The image of the beating of the goldbar to airy thinness suggests the beating of the beloved for taming her.

c. The trepidation of the spheres causes upheavals on the earth.

13. What do the expressions, 'leans', 'hearkins' and 'growes erect' suggest?

14. The image of a flood of tears has become a part of John Donne's poetic diction. Name his poems that contain this image.

15. The expression, "by 'a love, so much refined", recalls to our mind another poem by John Donne. There he uses it with a slight variation. Name the poem and mention the expression.

14.4 A NOCTURNALL UPON S.LUCIES DAY

Like the poem, The Dissolution, *A Nocturnall* upon *S.Lucies* day has been occasioned by the death of a mistress whose identity remains an object of conjecture for the critics of Donne. H.J.C. Grierson is of the view that Lucy, countess of Bedford, is the woman the poet has in mind. Grierson also associates the countess with Lucy, the patron saint of December 13. H. W. Garrod points out candidly that he is not clear on the point of the identity of the woman. However, he opines that both poems, *The* Dissolution and "A Nocturnall upon S.Lucies day" centre round the same woman. J.B. Leishman views the poem in the light of its tone and attitude and remarks that the woman in the poem is no other than the wife of the poet. He further says that it is not the actual or imagined death of a mistress; it is rather the loss of the mistress who loved the poet and whom the poet loved in turn. In the circumstances, it would be wise to concentrate on the end product of the poem more than on the identity of the woman concerned. Moreover, for a self-haunted poet that Donne is, it is pertinent to look into the subterranean forces in the psyche that shape his poetry. The present poem along with The Dissolution belongs to a phase in the poet's life'when he feels overpowered with dejection, emptiness, and isolatedness. Melancholy has been a persistent strain in Donne from the days of youth. This obsession with melancholy may recall to your mind. S.T. Coleridge's ***Ode*** to Dejection in which he talks about the dissipation of the shaping spirit of imagination. Donne, too, falls a prey to this acedia (the blight of desolation or the spiritual sloth). In one of his sermons Donne says,

Man is nothing, no more than a worme or a fly...
for all his actions, and himself, too, are nothing.
(Cited in Helen C.White's *The Metaphysical Poet)*

This preoccupation with the insignificance of man gets confirmation from his letter to Henry Goodyer :

The pleasantness of the season displeases me.
Everything refreshes and I wither, and my load grouses.
(Cited in Leishman's *The Monarch of Wit)*

John Donne is vulnerable to bouts of depression and has a ghastly charade during his last hours, when "...he lay contemplating the protrait of himself in his winding sheet like a grim and mortified Narcissus". (Cited in The *Monarch of Wit).* The present poem is to be studied in this backdrop of despair, a settled effect in the imagination of the poet.

The opening passage with its grave and sombre movement initiates us into the frightening realities of life. The scene is of midnight. The idea of midnight itself on December 13 in all pervasive darkness is uncanny and sinister. Lucy, the patron saint of this day, is the awful presiding deity allowing the sun to shine scarecely, for seven hours. The poet piles up sickening image of life. The sun is 'spent'. The earth is afflicted with fatal dropsy and is huddling at bed's foot, and ultimately it dies and is buried. The 'sap' of life is gone dry. On the top of it, the poet becomes the emblem of death by being an epitaph. All the images are related to disease, sickness and death and produce a horrifying effect. The fearsomeness is accentuated by the iterative verbal and schematic pattern through the line, "Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes". This pattern is sustained over the remaining lines of the first stanza in terms of macabre pictures. The thud sound in words such as 'spent', 'sunke', 'drunk' end 'shrunk' is'evokative of something that has an abrupt end with a bang. It is suggestive of life coming to a halt. The sound pattern enacts the meaning of the experience that relates to deadness all around. The rhythm is slow and akin to the mournful tolling of the bell during the burial. The dismal chant suggested through the slow and solemn pace of the line is revelatory of the plight of the poet. It appears 'that life has been tainted at its source and the sap of life does not course through nature. The poet feels that he has been robbed of everything that is good and positive in life. He feels driven upon himself and begins contemplating the sad reality. He plays on things negative, such as, nothingness, privation, darkness, emptiness, death and chaos. He lays blame at the door of love who turns malevolent and ruins him :

He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darkness, death; things which are not.

In stanza III he strikes a contrast between himself and others in life. He has nothing positive to think of, whereas others draw sustenance from good things in life. His despairing realization expresses itself in the following lines :

I by loves limbecke, am the grave
Of all, that's nothing...

Here he contrasts his sense of unrelieved desolation with the days of happiness he lived with his wife. The life of conjugal felicity is Petrarchan in tone when he says : "Oft a flood /Have we two wept, and so/Drowned the whole world, us two..." and by recalling this he throws into a sharp relief the nothingness of the present moment.

In stanza IV the poet hurls a very scathing accusation at himself when he says that he is neither a man nor a beast, nor a piece of stone. First Re thinks himself to be an 'ordinary nothing' and then the 'first nothing'. He is an adept in dialectics and tells

an ordinary nothing from the first nothing. The former means the absence of something, while the latter means chaos reigning in the universe before the Creation. The poet further plays on words, such as, 'quintessence' and 'elixir', and uses them in the ironic sense. These two words have a positive connotation, but here quintessence is of nothingness and elixir is of chaos. Howsoever, negative the preoccupations of the poet may be under the stress of the loss of his mistress, the two expressions, 'first nothing' and 'elixir' have redeeming features and the positive import of these two words give a new dimension to the theme of the poem. H.W. Garrod feels that the poem is bitter and J.E.V. Crofts concurs with him on this point and remarks :

> Thus the brain-sick fancies are piled up, twaddle upon
> twaddle until the whole thing explodes with
> a passionate outcry and a familiar image.
> (Essays and Study)

But John Donne's adroit handling of abstractions like 'first nothing' and 'elixir' develops a mystique of love which, despite its root in absence, darkness and death, has the amptitude of spirit that stares the reality in the face. Grierson in his book, *Mataphysical* Lyrics and Poems, observes that John Donne reaches "the majestical heights and mystical depths of love" in the following :

> Study me then, you who shall lovers bee
> At the next world, that is, at the next Spring :
> For I am every dead thing,
> In whom love wrought new Alchemie.

The poet also develops a metaphysic of love out of facts : bare, naked and stark. This metaphysic has some affinity with what the poet discovers in course of living his life with his lady-love, as it is depicted in The Canonization. In both poems the stuff of lave is pain and anguish, but the patterns of love is rich and invigorating. The theme of constancy in love that we find in *The* Canonization and *A Valediction* : forbidding mourning comes in a different way in the present poem. The love of flesh that finds a secondary place in those two poems is completely absent here, because the poet here expresses his love for his dead mistress.

The last stanza is no unqualified rumination on the nothingness of life. The poet has no grudge against those who enjoy the joy of spring. He knows that his 'Sunne' will not 'renew'. The sun is seen as the harbinger of vernal gaity. But the poet has a rich fare in store at the long night's festival of his mistress where he will have communion with her. The elegiac strain appears to be giving way to the mood of a carnival and the resulting experience sublimates into a mystical union. He pulls himself together and embarks on a journey for immersing himself in the long nocturnal festival of his lady-love :

> Since shee enjoys her long night's festivall,'
> Let mee prepare towards her, and let mee call
> This houre her Virgill, and her Eve, since this
> Both yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is.

The poem is a tour de force. Here we have an ethic of love wrung out of privation and nothingness.

EXERCISE – III

1. Write a brief note on the occasion of the poem.

2. Show that the theme of constancy in love gets an unusual treatment in the poem, ***A Nocturnall.***

3. The melancholic aspect of the poet's nature finds a poetic rendition in the poem ***A Nocturnall.***

4. What does the work 'midnight', suggest in this poem?

5. Why does the poet compare himself to 'an every dead thing'?

6. Explain the following
   (a) "The world's whole sap in sunke".
   (b) " 'Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes".
   (c) "...me, who am their Epitaph".
   (d) "...I am rebegot
   of absence, darkness, death;
   things which are not".
   (e) "...let me call
   This houre her Virgill and her Eve..."

7. Who is Lucy?

8. What picture of life do you find on St. Lucy's day?

9. How does the poet distinguish himself from the general run of lovers?

10. How does **a** living poet become an epitaph?

11. Mention the expression/lines that help the poet to draw a sickening picture of life.

12. Enlist the words that give the effect of thuds.

13. "Donne, too, followed the Petarchan pattern of love, while he was a young lover". Does the poem, *A* Nocturnal1give you any evidence in support of this statement?

14. Donne uses verbal contradictions by juxtaposing words of opposite meaning. Cite at least two examples from this poem to support the above statement.

15. The last four lines of the poem stand as a contrast to the rest of the poem. Prove it.

16. The poet's sense of despondency is contrasted with the joys of others, giving us an impression that life is an amalgam of disparate experiences. Do you agree?

14.5 BATTER MY HEART, THREE PERSON'D GOD

Donne's sonnet, "Batter my heart, three person'd God" is a passionate and dramatic prayer for freeing himself from the shackles of temptations and distractions of life. The poet wants to have the singleness of purpose to bind himself in an abiding

relationship with God. The theme of guilt and redemption has been Donne's persistent concern not only in his religious poetry but also in his sennons. Like Donne's sonnet, ***Death*** be *not proud* (See Understanding Poetry, EEG 06 Course), this sonnet is Petrarchan in structure, comprising an octave and a sestet. The octave states the experience and the sestet which is reflective in character makes an evaluation of the experience. The octave is a sensitive picture of the poet's predicament with a propensity to sin and the sestet is an overture to extricate himself from the tentacles of sin. The rhyme scheme in the octave is a b b a a b b a, falling in pattern with a common Petrarchan octave. But the rhyme scheme in the sestet of the present sonnet is slightly different from the conventional pattern, i.e. c d c d c d. Here the rhyme scheme is c d c d d d. Thematically, this sonnet is close to a La Corona sonnet. In a La Corona sonnet, too, the poet talks about the release of man's sinful soul through faith in God. But unlike in the sonnet, *Ratter my heurt*, the emphasis in a La Corona sonnet is on the doctrinal side of Christianity. Donne's poetry is religious, when we take religion in a general perspective. In its widest connotation the word, 'religion' means man's striving for making his will conform to the transcendent will. John Donne is, perhaps, the first intensely English religious poet. It is because he expresses the mind not simply of a Christian as such, but the conflicts and longings of a troubled soul. The present poem bears the imprint of **a** passionate outpouring of penetence and longing of the poet. The conflict that rages in his mind between body and soul has a magnificent articulation in this poem.

The sonnet begins with the line, "Batter my heart, three person'd God, for, you". The word, 'batter' has an onomatopoeic ring, suggestive of continuous knocking or hammer strokes. The verb, 'batter', has its subject in 'three person'd God', comprising Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God is being implored to do something for him because his life has gone amiss and requires repairs. This may remind you of John Donne's another religious poem, "Litanie" in which he makes **a** similar prayer :

> And create mee, now growne ruinous :
> My heart is by dejection, clay,
> And by self-murder, red.

His heart is sought to be battered, because it is bereft of tenderness. In one of his sonnets, Donne says, "And thou like Adamant draw my iron heart". The word 'mend' points to the fact that something has gone wrong about his life and requires urgent repair by the Maker. The expressions, 'knock', 'breath', 'shine' are active verbs indicative of a host of activities in which an artisan-like God is expected to engage Himself in the process of putting things in order. The poet also feels that a little bit of repair will not do and that there is a radical failure in the workings of his mind which needs a complete overhaul. He implores God to 'overthrow' him, suggesting thereby that his erring self needs a transmutation. He brings in the image of a blacksmith at work in his smithy. The words 'break', 'blow' and 'bum' are indicative of the work carried out in the workshop of the blacksmith. The blacksmith breathes into the bellow and makes fire for smelting iron ore. The poet is a lump of flesh susceptible to its frailties. He wallows in the mire of vile passions. He wants to be refashioned in a new and lofty image and only God can accomplish this.

To **grasp** the full meaning of a Donne poem, you are required not simply to understand the connotation of words but also to listen to the utterance, gesture, movement and larger rhythm. Donne uses speaking voice and speech rhythm to enact his meaning. A loud reading of the following lines will illustrate this point well:

> That I may **rise,** and stand, o'erthrow mee,
> 'and bend
> Your force, to breake, blowe, bum and make
> me new.

The run-on or enjambement in the first line of the passage from 'and bend' to 'your force' in the succeeding line is a fine'example of the control of intonation. The. distribution of pause is aimed at expressing its meaning in all its immediacy. Unless a reader attends to his modulation of tone, he fails to relish the meaning as it arises in the mind. The rhythm imposes on the reader the right incipient muscular movement. The pause on 'force' shows the vivid posture of someone summoning required strength and skill for performing a task in hand. When the artisan works at his smithy, he has to lift the hammer and wield it with skill, and this picture is evoked through speech rhythm. The alliteration of 'b' inn 'break, blow and bum' with its quick succession of monosyllables is indicative of a series of strokes dealt continually by the blacksmith, when he forges something new. Donne deliberately refrains from using learned images here and expresses the abstruse experience of spiritual metamorphosis in terms of the homely image of a blacksmith.

The poet who implores God for his spiritual regeneration does not hesitate telling Him the intractable stuff he is. He says that he has to be wary and circumspect in dealing with the devious workings of his mind. He has nothing to conceal from Him and reveals himself in all candour. He gives the image of a town under siege and this iinage of a usurped town suggests that he is under the sway of a different master. The assailant is within him. It is his appetite. He tells God in a forthright manner that he does not obey His commandments. But he becomes aware of the folly of betraying the trust and wants to make amends. He now desires to make God his master and 'labours to admit' Him. But his will is circumscribed : "...but Oh, to no end". The line that contains the exlamation just cited is antithetical in nature. The first part of the line is expressive of the awakening of an impulse to fit close to God and mustering of the courage for doing so. The second part is about the new-born isolation that sags his spirit. The exclamation is a pathetic admission of his failure to come out of the slough. The slack and weak rhythm of latter part of the sentence is indicative of the sagging spirit of the poet.

John Donne is in the habit of unleashing image after image and making a serial use of them to hammer his point home. After the images of a blacksmith and a usurped town, we have the image of a viceroy, a deputy of the ruler. The representative here is none else but reason in man. His reason has become a slave to passion. It has joined the band of marauders laying siege to the fort of his being. Reason has become a collaborator, a renegade, a quisling, and has jettisoned God. It has failed to resist vile passions and has succumbed to its enchantment. Further, the poet likens himself to a woman who has changed her lover and thereby broken the contract for the gratification of sexual desires. It is the image of betrothal bereft of trust and fidelity. The poet feels ashamed of having abrogated the contractual obligation and longs to cross over to His side. When all efforts fail, he beseeches God to ravish him. Probably, the ravishing is the only way to relieve him of his suffering. So we have a paradox in the word 'ravish' that suggests a use of force by God to fulfil the desire of the poet who imagines himself to be a woman. The line that carries this word, 'ravish' is paradoxical in nature, "Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me". 'Ravishing' has a prophane connotation, the violation of the chastity of a woman. This meaning is ill assorted with the protection of the honour of a woman that the word 'chaste' implies. The paradox is best understood when we unravel its meaning in the larger context of the poem. 'Chastity' means purity, the integrity of being, and God, by delivering a person from the vile path of sensuality is alone capable of restoring the primal innocence of the sinner.

Though the poet longs for the singleness and simplicity of soul, he finds that the goal is beyond his reach. This sonnet remains inconclusive in its search for securing a still centre in God. The poet does not have the peace and security within him as he has towards the end of *Hymn* to God the Father, the poem that you will read just after. However, what gives this sonnet its beauty is the war the soul wages with infinite subtleties of temptation of the labyrinth of his low passions. J.B. Leishman's remark on this point seems pertinent :

The religion which gives such passion and plangency to these stanzas is religion in its most primary and fundamental sense : what Donne asks for is purgation, purification, illumination and in Rilke's beautiful phrase, a directing of the heart.

(The monarch of wit)

EXERCISE - IV

1. Why does the poet call himself an 'usurpt town'?

2. Why does the poet ask God to 'batter' his heart?

3. What is meant by the expression, 'three-personed God'?

4. Why does the poet ask God to 'ravish' him? Does he want to secure relief from God?

5. Write a brief note on the structure of the sonnet, ***Batter*** my *heart.*

6. How does the poet create the image of a blacksmith? Why does he liken God to a blacksmith?

7. Comment on the image of the 'viceroy'

8. Enlist the images in the poem which have been borrowed from the institution of marriage and tell the function that they perform.

9. Why does the poet use amorous images in this religious poem? Enlist those images.

10. Write a brief note on the alliterative expression, "Breake, blowe, and bum."

11. Show that the poem is a passionate prayer to God.

14.6 HYMN TO GOD THE FATHER

John Donne's *Hymn* to God *the* ***Father*** marks a watershed in his religious poetry. It is a departure from the general run of his religious poetry in the sense that the poet achieves the much needed sense of security and joy in his prayers to God. In the religious poetry that precedes it the poet finds himself wading through the maze of encouragements of fleshly life accompanied by a striving for divine grace. Here he is in a different moral and spiritual clime, breathing something bracing and solutary, in a sharp contrast to what he got in the murky landscape of vile passions. The peace that he discovers in this perilous journey through the dark night of the soul is epitornised in this hymn that was composed during his illness in 1623 and sung to the accompaniment of music. He felt overwhelmed with the enchanting strain of the hymn and sang it several times in church. Its singing wrought a miracle in soothing his afflicted nerves and he fell relaxed in the ravishing beauty of this hymn. His biographer Izaak Walton, speaks of its magical property (*Life* d *John Donne).* In the religious sonnets Donne wrote before his ordination, he feels greatly disturbed, because he has a feeling that he has acquiesced into youth's fire of pride and lust and has failed to come closer to God. In the present poem, he wrestles with sin in the fond hope of redemption and comes out triumphant as George Herbert does in the poem, Love.

The hymn is composed of three close-knit stanzas. In each stanza the poet beseeches God to forgive his sins. But in the first two stanzes he is not sure that all his sins would be forgiven. It is only towards the end of the poem that he gains full faith in God's magnanimity. The wavering is due to his awareness that he has fallen into a sinful way of life. He also knows that the traitor is lodged within him and it may prompt him to swerve aside from the path of God's grace. As he points out in Holy *Sonnet,*

> But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
> That one houre myselfe I can sustain.

In one of his sermons, Donne dwells on his susceptibility to the frailties of flesh :

> ...there is a sin before then; a speechless
> sin, a whispering sin, which nobody hears
> but our own conscience.

In his illness he lays bare his soul in the most candid manner:

> **And** I have sinned before thy face, in my
> hypocrisies in Prayer, in my ostentation
> and the mingling a respect of myselfe
> in preaching thy word. (From a sermon).

His sins abound. He finds himself in a deluge and makes a miserable sight of himself quite unworthy of having Lord's grace. The plight is well explained in his Holy *Sonnet.*

> Depaire behind, and death before doth cast
> Such terrour.

The root of Donne's vexation of spirit lies in his incapacity to let go of himself, to surrender to God. His sins are multitudinous and he does not have any face to ask God for writing off all his sins at one go. Moreover, he is unsure of refraining from future sins. It looks preposterous to continue with sinning day in and day out and to approach God for pardon after every act of sinning.
The rhetorical elaboration of antithesis in the lines,

> Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
> which is my sin, though it were done before?
> Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I runne,
> And doe them still : though still I doe deplore'?
> When thou hast done, thou hast not done.

act as a mirror reflecting warring impulses tugging at the soul of the poet. The clauses are evenly balanced in "And do them still : though still 1 doe deplore?" and through this antithetical balance the poet reflects the two sides of his personality, the one that immerses itself in the mire of blood and the other that wants to resist the impulse to sin. This interlocking of antithesis is an improvement on the syntactical construction of the Holy *Sonnets* in the sense that here is a mature and steady deliberation close on heels of indulgence in sin. The antithesis in 'when thou hast done, thou hast not done' reveals the state of the sinner vis-a-vis God. God pardons one sin and then the poet sinner says, 'Thou has done', but when he goes for begging forgiveness for another sin, he feels disconsolate that God has not pardoned him. So he says, 'thou hast not done'. Thus the poet's conflicts and mixed feeling of happiness and disappointment is best mirrored in the antithesis. This antithetical construction is typical of religious poems in making vivid the see-saw rhythm, the to and fro motion marking the overture to divine grace by resolving to exorcise guilt, but he fails to muster sufficient strength for accoinplishing the noble goal of having God's grace. Thus in the first stanza of the hymn the poet makes vivid and life-like his divided consciousness, as does Henry Vaughan in his poem, *Retreat* :

> But (oh!) my soul with too much stay
> Is drunk, and staggers in the way.

He is poised for making it whole by cleansing his stuffed bosom. In the line, "And doe them still, though still I doe deplore?" the rhyme is quiet and introspective dispensing with the customary display of heat and flamboyance he exhibits. The poet presents the duality of impulses in him in a new way : the impulse to relish lustful thoughts and the impulse to wean himself from passions and to have faith in God.

In the second stanza the same prayer for forgiveness continues with a modification. Here he talks about his abetting others to commit a sin. He also talks about his sin that he committed a year or two ago. He shunned it and was tempted to commit numerous other sins. The tragedy is that he abjures doing evil act in one moment but the next moment he brings in its train enticements alluring him and he gives in.

The thing that saves him from prevarication and equivocation is that he does not conceal his evil doings and unburdens himself to God without any reserve in the fond

hope of getting his grace. He has nothing up his sleeve and wears his heart on his sleeve. God is merciful and He absolves the poet from his guilt. The ringing of the refrain, "When thou hast done, thou hast not done" in the first two stanzas is also indicative of the sloth of the sinner that prevents him from fighting evil passions with tenacity and remain swerving in his devotion to God. It is a reflection on the erring self of the poet that often lapses into evil doings. The line, 'I have more' is about his sinful nature. This expression also brings to our mind the sinful nature' of man. The . frailties of the poet may be taken for the frailty of mankind and his journey from darkness to light may be seen as a pilgrim's progress.

The third stanza is a resolution of the conflict that raged in the poet's mind. The conflict was between the consciousness of sin and a profound yearning for forgiveness. At last, all doubts and uncertainties are stillled and the poet has a feeling that God is satisfied with his penitence and that the divine grace that forgave many a sin of his will continue doing so in future. He hopes that God's grace will shine unfailingly on him and will illumine his soul. In sonnets before his ordination he harped on the terror of death. The imminence and inevitability of death fills him with anguish and he, therefore, says,

> 1 have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
> My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;

This fear of impending death withers away when he becomes sure of the never-failing source of abounding love in God. He has an intuitive awareness of getting deliverance from the awful prospect of perishing on the 'shore', and with a sense of incomparable serenity he breaks into a rapture :

> And, having done that, Thou hast done,
> I have no more.

Thus the unremitting self-consciousness in the poet made him sceptical of God's love in his early religious poetry; but doubts nagging at him give way to the overwhelming love of God. The poet who used to shake with fear at the idea of the awful God in many a religious poem feels assured of His love and has no doubt about His imminent deliverance. In this hymn the carping consciousness of the poet that took delight in reasoning with God is seen subordinated to faith. From this subordination of reasoning to faith results an essential insight that puts a premium on complete devotion to God. The peace and serenity that suffuse him in the hymn take him into a mystical world. In this mystical region the barrier between the egoistical self guilty of dust and sin on the one hand and God on the other is knocked down, and the poet's heart is filled with joy. This hymn is unique in the sense that it reminds us of that Dark Night of the Soul that played a considerable part in the mystical experience of St. John of the Cross. The terrible anguish which is the hallmark of mystical poetry is fused with its concomitants in the overwhelming love of God.

EXERCISE - V

1. What does the antithetical line, "Thou hast done, than hast not done" mean?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What does the line, "I have spread my last thread mean?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Does the poet have any regrets for having committed sins?

4. What sort of fear haunts the mind of the poet?

5. In what sense this hymn is different from other religious poems of Donne.

6. 'Subordination of reasoning to faith' – would it be a correct comment on the poem, *Hymn to God?*

7. "The poem *Hymn to God* is dramatic in nature". Comment.

8. What does the poet mean when he says that God's sun shall shine at his death as it shines now?

9, Enlist the conventional images in the poem.

14.7 LET US SUM UP

Through this unit you have got a perception of two varying worlds of John Donne. First is the world of love with primacy of soul and the second is the world of the questing poet with a profound yearning for Lord's grace for his redemption. The trend in favour of the primacy of soul emergent in the three love poems of this unit receives a fillip in the two religious poems, and the poet is seen sustaining his faltering steps towards the glimpse of the Lord.

14.8 ANSWERS

NOTE: Answers to most of the questions in the exercises have already been given during the discussions on the poems concerned. In this section you will have model answers only to those questions which did not receive sufficient attention during the discussions.

EXERCISE - I

2. The fly and the taper are conventional images for lovers. The taper stands for faminine beauty and the fly symbolises sacrifice in love by the lover. John Donne makes a variation on the traditional use of these twin images and says that both he and his mistress are the taper and the fly in turn, suggesting thereby that both have made sacrifices in love. This also suggests that in this poem the poet does not attach any importance to the physical aspect of love and, hence, symbols associated with a particular sex has been avoided by the poet. It may also not be out of place to mention that John Donne generally avoids using conventional images in the traditional way.

3. The images of the fly and the taper differ from the three succeeding images in the sense that 'the Eagle' and 'the Phoenix' are symbols ofrenewal and 'the Dove' is a symbol of purgation, while the fly and the taper are symbols simply of sacrifice in love.

5. The poet himself explains 'the Phoenix ridle' in stanza III of the poem. The other images used to suggest the obliteration of sexual identities of the lovers have traditional associations with either of the two sexes, thus coming in the way of the communication of the idea of sexlessness in love. This idea is unambiguously conveyed through the image of 'the Phoenix' because it is a ''neutrall thing'. It is believed to belong to the neutral sex, thus representing both male and female sexes. This image also helps the poet to 'dye and rise the same' and thus becomes mysterious by love. The idea about the neutrality of the sex of the phoenix and also the story of its emerging from the ashes seem queer and puzzling. So the poet calls it the 'Phoenix ridle'.

6. The word, 'wit', if we take it in the context it is used here, implies the art of discovering points of resemblance between things apparently dissimilar and giving a pleasant surprise to the reader because of its quality of newness. John Donne is in the habit of using wits one after another to make his point clear. Having used the wits reflected through the images of the fly, the taper, the dove, the eagle and the phoenix, he ransacks his mind in search of 'more wit' exemplified by a better image or conceit. He discovers the similarity between the phoenix on the one hand and himself and his mistress on the other, The lovers are unmindful of their physical existence and enjoys the union of mind. The more they are refined by love the more they are unmindful of their sexual identities. This idea of neutrality in respect of sex is better expressed through the phoenix symbol than it has been expressed through the other symbols referred to by him. The idea of renewal after destruction, too, is expressed better through the Phoenix Symbol than it is done through the symbol of the eagle.

7. Neutrall sex. The Phoenix is supposed to be sexless.

10. a. Drowning of ships by sighs.
b. Overflowing of the ground by teares.
c. Removal of a spring by colds.

11. The real face of the king is the king's face, while his stamped face is the picture of his face as it is stamped on the coins.

14. No

15. See answer number **6.**

18. Legend, urne, ashes, hymnes, reverend, hermitage, and peace.

EXERCISE - II

3. The phrase 'dull sublunary lovers' refers to those lovers who are interested only in physical love and indulge in sensual delight. For them 'soule is sense'. They cannot peep into the souls of their beloveds and cannot bear physical separation from them. Such separation for them are like quacking of the earth and these separations are likely to make them cause tear-floods and sigh-tempests. They follow the Petrarchan pattern of love.

4. A virtuous man go away from the world silently.
A similar idea is expressed by Alexander Pope when he says in his poem, Ode on Solitude, that he wants to 'steal' from the world.

6. In the poem, The Canonization, the poet expresses the images of teare floods' and sigh tempests' in an identical way. In that poem he asks,

> What merchants ships have my sighs drown'd?
> Who saies my teares have overflow'd his ground?
> When did my colds a forward spring remove?

9. Firmness

10. These lines are concerned with the love ethic of the poet who in this poem lays stress on the importance of the mating of the mind and the union of souls rather than on the show of beauty embodied in human form and the demonstration of passion. This poem is different from "The Extasie" in the sense that in "The Extasie" the poet speaks of the union of body and soul and dwells upon the respective importance of both body and soul. But here his philosophy undergoes change and he cares less for organs like 'eyes' and 'lips' than he does for the mind.

12. a. False
b. False
c. False.

13. The fixed root of the pair of compasses leans towards the moving foot, hearkens to it during the period of the movement and grows erect when the distant foot completes its task and is re-united to the fixed foot. Likewise the beloved who remains at home is mentally responsive to the travelling lover and her ears are attuned to his silent sound. She feels leaning towards him and grows erect with firmness and is reunited in an abiding relationship when the lover returns home.

14. a. *A* Valediction :forbidding mourning
b. The Canonization
c. *A Nocturnall* upon *S.Lucies* day
d. *A Valediction* : of weeping

15. ***The Extasie:***
"so by love refin'd"

EXERCISE - III

2. There is a difference in the treatment of the theme of constancy in love between this poem on the one hand and the poems like *A Valediction: forbidding mourning* and *The Canonization* on the other. In other poems dealing with this theme the poet shows love for his living mistress. But here he feels himself poor because his mistress is dead. But his love for her knows no abatement. He is mentally 'leaning' like the fixed foot of the pair of compasses towards his dead mistress. He is occupied with the sense of separation, somewhat like a sublunany lover. He knows that physical union with her would be impossible. Me is reminded of the 'teare floods' and 'sigh tempests' that they made in the Petrarchan vein while they were young lovers. The loss of the mistress envelops him into thick darkness. The world around him becomes sapless, meaningless and hollow. It is an emblem of nothingness. But he is able to give a mystic twist to his thought and by sheer power of imagination, is able to celebrate his mystic union with his beloved. All this shows a never-ending affair with his mistress. Even death is not able to keep them apart.

4. The midnight here suggests the darkest period of one of the coldest and the shortest days of the year. It is the midnight of the day that has seen the sun for scarcely seven hours. The time of this midnight has been deliberately chosen to reflect the melancholic state in the poet's mind. It is probably the period of the worst suffering of the man (Donne) who has viewed his life as a prolonged dying and who has a habit of relapsing into a state of melancholy from time to time.

5. The poem is on the death of his mistress. He is in a state of deep melancholy and regards this time as the blackest hour. The time that he chooses is the midnight of December 13. He is brooding over the idea of death and sees himself as a part and parcel of his dead mistress. There is a spectre of deadness around him. So he imagines himself to the like every dead thing.

6. a. Because of the feeling of the loss of his beloved the poet feels the absence of life all around. The whale world appears dry and sapless to him. The feeling of sadness is compounded by darkness of the midnight, the coldness of the day and the shortening of the day, The 'sun' of the Lord that shines upon him in the *Hymn to God **the Father*** is completely absent here. He sees no life on earth and so he thinks that the world has become sapless. This also suggests that the poet is in a state of spiritual sloth and the world looks like a wasteland for him.

b. The repetition of the word 'midnight' in a prolonged sentence suggests that midnight is one of the darkest, coldest and saddest midnights, the darkest and coldest time not only of the day but of the year. This speaks of the deep distress of the poet

c. The poet compares himself to an Epitaph. He feels himself a sapless and senseless and lifeless thing. He is also a record of the good deeds of his beloved. So he compares himself to an Epitaph and thinks himself to be an emblem of sorrow.

d. After a lot of negative reflections the poet is filled with a sense of hope. He is able to distinguish between an ordinary nothing and first nothing. The first nothing was followed by Creation, So the poet feels inspired to be rebegot and to create something out of nothing. Thus the poem takes a turn towards hope, though in the mystical sense.

e. The poet now wants to celebrate the St. Lucy Day. He is now able to have a mystic communion with his dead beloved. He wants to dance with her. As he wants to obliterate the sexual distinction between himself and his wife, so on the day of their mystic union they will be able to change their sex in turn. So he says that he will be 'her Virgill' and 'her Eve'.

7. Lucy is the patron saint of December 13

8. The poet describes himself as one whose "Sunne will not renew", whose pleasures of life is not to be restored and who is not going to have his good old days back. He contrasts his fate with that of other lovers for whom the sun will bring new lust. They are soon to experience the summer of their life, suggestive of their joys.

11. a) 'The Sunne is spent'
b) 'no constant rays'
c) 'The world's whole sap is sunke'
d) 'The general balme the hydroptique earth hath drunk'
e) 'life is shrunke'
f) 'dead and enter'd'
g) "rnee, who am their Epitaph'
h) ' I am every dead thing'
I) nothingness
j) emptiness
k) He ruin'd mee
1) 'absence, darkness, death; things which are not'
m) 'I... am the grave'
n) 'nothing'
o) 'nor will my Sunne renew'

12. 'Spent', 'sunke', 'drunk' and 'shrunk'.

13. The poet in the third stanza says in a hyperbolic vein that he and his beloved often caused tear-floods that 'drowned the whole world'. He adds that they were like 'two Chaosses' and cared for worldly things. During the times of separation they would not behave the way he prescribes in *A Valediction: **forbidding mourning.*** All this, particularly the habit of causing delude with tears is a Petrarchan way of demonstrating love. It appears that Donne, too, followed the Petrarchan pattern, while he was a young lover.

14. a. 'A quintessence even from nothingness',
b. 'of the first nothing, the Elixir grown',

15. The last four lines takes the poet from despair to hope. Though it is a hope only of a mystic union with his beloved, still it is something like a re-union. The atmosphere is quite contrary to the one presented in the rest of the poem, particularly in the first four stanzas. The sense of pathos is lurking there. But the demonstration of melancholy is absent from these lines.

EXERCISE - IV

1. The poet reveals his mental state through this image. A conqueror invades a land and makes its inhabitants captive. The inhabitants have to obey the command of the new ruler. Here'the poet is an usurped town and his passion or appetite is his ruler. It exacts obedience from him and he, like the inhabitants of a vanquished nation, has to obey the dictates of the invador.

2. The poet asks God to 'batter' his heart because his heart has become home to sins and the poet fails to relieve his heart of the temptation to sensual pleasures. Probably it will be a stroke pr a knock from God. This he thinks to be the only way of jolting him from the slumber. This reminds us of the knocking at the gate in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" that has the effect of awakening Macbeth into consciousness after the commission of the murder of Duncan. The word 'batter' here means the hammer stroke of God in the form of a blacksmith for the purpose of repairs.

3. Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

4. The word 'ravish' means the rape of a woman. But here it implies the use of force against a devotee or woman for purging him of the dross. The poet imagines himself to be a woman under the evil influence of a lecherous person. Howsoever he tries, he is not able to free himself from the influence. So he seeks God's help to help him to be divorced fiom the base passion. For this a use of force by God would be welcomed by him.

6. The poet likens God to a blacksmith because he is a maker like the blacksmith, and like the blacksmith He is supposed to have hammer and anvil and bellow and create man in the way a blacksmith makes an instrument. The image of God as a blacksmith is built up by the use of words like 'knocke', 'breathe', 'shine', 'mend', 'o'erthrow', 'bend', 'force', 'breake', 'blowe' 'bum' and make...new'. All these images have been borrowed from smithy.

7. The 'viceroy' is the deputy of a ruler. Reason is supposed to be the representative or ambassador of God housed in the mind of man. But this viceroy is a captive to passions and is unable to provide vision to the man whose eyes are blinded to reality.

8. 'heart', "love", 'betrothed', 'divorce', 'untie', 'break the knot', 'eathrall', 'imprison', 'chaste' and 'ravish'. These words create the images of a bridegroom for God and a bride for the poet. They also show that the bride has been under the temporary influence of an enchanter in the form of passion and asks God to use force for exorcising the enchanter, freeing him from the spell and pulling him into His fold.

9. The amorous images have already been mentioned in answer to the preceding question.

10. John Donne makes no difference between religious and secular poems in respect of vocabulary and images. All experiences are parts of life and we find a logical amalgam of disparate experiences in all his poems. In this sense, it is said, Donne remains the same in his religious and secular poems

One may call all of Donne's poems either love poems or religious or metaphysical poems. Of course, there is an evolution in his ideas and maturing is his vision, but love remains his basic propositioh and has its appearance in most of the poems, either in this way or that. In his early poems he is interested in courting his mistress and enjoying the physical proximity with her. Even in those poems we have casual appearance of religious words. Then we have his metaphysic of love, and finally, he directs his loving heart towards the Lord. A glimpse at the following lines from his ***Holy Sonnet*** will illustrate this point well :

Since she whom I lord, hath payd her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her soule early into heaven ravished,
Wholy in heavenly things my mind is sett
Here the admyring her my mind did whett
To seeke thee God..."

11. The poem is, in fact, a passionate prayer of the poet to God. He himself becomes a beloved and sees God as his husband. He even asks Him to enthrall him and ravish him so that he may be free from the evil influence of his worldly lover. The poet is impassioned to be united to God who is his husband and seeks His help in achieving his end.

1. The line in question means that one sin has been forgiven and the others remain to be forgiven.
2. The spinning of the last thread suggests death. The poet refers to the time of his death.
3. Yes. But it is difficult for him to retreat from the sinful way of life.
4. He is afraid that God will not pardon him because he does not give up the habit of sinning.
5. This hymn is different from other religious poems by Donne in the sense that it is probably the only religious poem in which he feels assured, though after a considerable conflict, that he will be pardoned by God of all his guilts.
6. The poem is dramatic in the sense that it enacts a conflict in his mind. The poet is unsure that he will be able to give up his sinful habit and that God will pardon all his sins. But towards the end of the poem he acquires the faith that God's sun will shine upon him in the same way 'as it shines now'. The poet is also seen reasoning with God.
7. The poet acquires the faith that God will remain as merciful to him at the time of his death as now. The scene is a symbol of joy , wisdom and God's grace.
9. a. spinning of the last thread
   b. perishing on the shore
   c. shining of the sun.

Comment: Use of conventional images in the traditional way is not a normal practice with Donne. His images are generally erudite and are brought from diverse branches of knowledge, especially cosmology, chemistry, theology and botany.

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