“The Obedience due to Princes”: Absolutism in *Pseudo-Martyr*

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Summary: *This paper attempts to tease out the contemporary political resonances found in John Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr*. While it is true that *Pseudo-Martyr* aligns itself with absolutism, it does so in a very complex and ambivalent manner, rejecting political patriarchalism and adopting a moderate sense of the obedience due to the monarch.*

Was John Donne an absolutist? The difficulty of answering this question comes not only from Donne's often remarked ideological slipperiness.¹ It is also the result of complex contemporary definitions of absolutism, a term whose subtleties were long hidden by vague uses of the term “divine right of kings.” As Margaret Judson pointed out many years ago, early seventeenth-century Englishmen had no trouble believing at once that God sanctioned kingly power and that kings were legally accountable to their people.² It was equally possible for common-law advocates such as Sir Edward Coke to insist that regal power is divinely authorized. Absolutism existed on a spectrum, from radical formulations that demanded complete obedience even to evil monarchs, to moderate beliefs in the balance between monarch's prerogative and subject's liberties; any account of Donne's absolutism must situate him along this graduated line.

To further complicate the picture, early Stuart absolutism (like all political philosophies) did not float benignly above the political fray. Rather, absolutism and its counter-arguments were formulated in various political, legal, and cultural crucibles. For Donne studies, the Gunpowder Plot and ensuing Oath of Allegiance controversy are particularly important events in this theoretical history. Not only was Stuart absolutism widely articulated

— and legitimated — during the Oath of Allegiance debate, but this event first coaxed John Donne into print, with the 1610 publication of *Pseudo-Martyr*. The book has been interpreted as a relatively derivative statement of allegiance to absolutism, one of great symbolic importance to the Donne myth because in it the author publicly rejects a Catholic political position to support the Protestant King.³ But not only does *Pseudo-Martyr* align itself with moderate absolutism; the book also stresses the continuities between Catholic/Protestant political positions as much as it insists on their differences.⁴ It is in this way only a partially obedient text, and one which suggests reservations toward the secular authority it supposedly defends.⁵

The Oath of Allegiance and the Origins of Political Authority

The Oath of Allegiance was the legal expression of overwhelming anti-Catholic sentiment that followed the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Instituted in response to the apparently real threat to the King's life, the Oath asked its takers to denounce the Pope's alleged power "to depose the King. . . or to discharge any [English] subjects of their allegiance to his Majesty. . . or to offer any violence or hurt to his Majesty's royal person, state or government, or to any of his Majesty's subjects within his Majesty's dominions."⁶ In the passage "most misliked by many Catholickes in England" the Oath also made takers swear

that I do from my heart abhor, detest and abjure as impious and heretical this damnable doctrine and position that princes which be excommunicated and deprived by the Pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects or any other whatsoever.⁷

Cardinal Bellarmine, the most famous of Catholic polemicists, may well have been thinking of this passage when he claimed that the Oath is "so craftily composed, that no man can. . . make profession of his Civill subiection, but he must bee constrained perfidiously to denie the Primacie of the Apostolicke Sea."⁸ Denouncing the Pope as "heretical," in other words, could not be tolerated by the Catholic church.

Catholics insisted that the Oath struck at the heart of the Roman Church; King James and his polemical adherents claimed it simply distinguished between spiritual and temporal jurisdictions, allowing freedom of conscience as long as Catholics swore civil loyalty to the King.⁹ The central theoretical issue was whether the Pope had the "deposing power" in temporal affairs, and even if he did — as Bellarmine and others claimed, though their

opponents never conceded — how it could legitimately be implemented, through tyrannicide, invasion, or coordinated rebellion. It was in arguing this point that Catholic polemicists produced a number of theoretical by-products which influenced contemporary conceptions of political authority. To make their opposite points, Catholics and Anglicans involved in the Oath of Allegiance debates, including Donne, argued for very different understandings of the nature and origins of political society.

In order to claim the Pope's deposing power, Catholic controversialists had adopted the belief that the final authority for temporal power resided in "the people." Working from the Thomistic theory of natural law coupled with an Aristotelian belief in the initial liberty of man,¹⁰ Catholic political writers argued that people in some mythical past had decided the form of their temporal government by consulting natural law — that is, by "reading" the Godly blue-print for good behavior installed inside each human being. They then gave up their individual sovereignty, pooling it in a central government which might be democratic, oligarchic, or monarchical. Whichever of these kinds of government was chosen, political authority in the state not only originated, but continued to *depend* upon, the continued sanction of the subject.¹¹ In Bellarmine's words (quoted here by one of his polemical opponents, who found the sentiments they expressed appalling):

Secular or civil power. . . is instituted by men. It is in the people unless they bestow it on a prince. It depends upon the consent of the multitude to ordain over themselves a king, or consul, or other magistrate; and if there be a lawful cause, the multitude may change the kingdom into an aristocracy or democracy.¹²

That the multitude had *continued* access to the "secular or civil power" which they originally delegated was most notoriously argued in Robert Parson's *A Conference on the Next Succession to the Crown of England*, published in 1594 under the pseudonym Robert Dolman.¹³ Parsons/Dolman argue that "[t]he approval of the people is of its very nature given conditionally; that is, it is a contract entered into by ruler and subjects"; as a result, monarchical power is "not absolute but delegated. . ." (I:73). If the monarch rules "according to the law of the land and the advice of the councilors" then he is due all "Duty, Reverence, Love and Obedience"; if he does not, "so yet retaineth still the Commonwealth her Authority, not only to restrain the Prince if he be exorbitant, but also chasten and remove him, upon due and weighty considerations. . ." (I:29). The profound similarity between Dolman/Parson's ideas, Protestant resistance theories and the English common

law tradition is suggested by the fact that in 1648 the Conference was partially republished, its original authorship concealed, as *Severall Speeches delivered at a Conference concerning the Power of Parliament, to proceed against their King for Misgovernment*.¹⁴

Despite — or perhaps because of — this similarity, the *Conference* was considered deeply seditious. Because a belief in the law of nature, discernible by each individual, seemed to lead inevitably to the conclusion that political power was instituted from below, anti-absolutist natural law theories posed a tremendous theoretical challenge for absolutism. The most resounding response to this challenge was the definition of sovereignty in Jean Bodin's *Les six Livres de la République*, widely available in Latin and French after 1576 and in English after 1606.¹⁵ Bodin defines sovereignty as the central kernel of political power that exists in every organized government. Although the *form* of government is determined by the will of the people, operating as best they can according to their perception of natural law imperatives, the *power* or "sovereignty" has its source in God alone. Once the people have created the form of government, God "will infuse this Soule of power into it," as Donne, who as we will see is deeply influenced by Bodin, describes the process in *Pseudo-Martyr*.¹⁶ Since only the form and not the power originates in the people, it can never be taken back, as Dolman and Bellarmine would have it.

The Dolman/Parsons brand of republicanism and the Bodinian response came to their radically different conclusions from a shared understanding of the origins of political authority. Catholic political polemic suggested that, since through natural law temporal governmental power *originated* in each individual man's "Nature and Reason," then the good of the subject remained the central site of sovereignty in the state. By contrast, in separating the abstraction "sovereignty" from the material form of government, a certain strand of Bodinian-derived absolutism argued that despite its formal origin in the people, political power could never be rescinded.

But another brand of early modern absolutism rejected entirely the idea that government originated when previously free citizens banded together. Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, part of which may have been composed during the Oath controversy years, is the most complete elaboration of this theory in England.¹⁷ Filmer praises some late sixteenth and early seventeenth century absolutists for having "bravely vindicated the right of kings in most points" (p. 3). But he rejects their acquiescence to the idea of originally consensual government, complaining that all these thinkers, "when they

come to the argument drawn from the natural liberty and equality of mankind, do with one consent admit it for a truth unquestionable, not so much as once denying or opposing it" (p. 3). If the "first erroneous principle" of man's "natural liberty" were challenged, Filmer suggests, then "the whole fabric of this vast engine of popular sedition would drop down of itself" (p. 3).

Political patriarchalism was an attempt to get around that "first erroneous principle" simply by pressing hard on the common-sense observation that people are born, not free, but into families. By Filmer's logic, the initial subjection of children to parents meant that original liberty was not a principle of natural law. As a result, there was no theoretical need "for such imaginary pactions between kings and their people as many dream of" (p. 7). By insisting that "the subjection of children is the only fountain of all regal authority, by the ordination of God himself," patriarchalism attacks the "perilous conclusion," put forward both by Jesuits and "some over zealous favourers of the Geneva discipline" (p. 3) that the multitude has the right "to punish or deprive the prince if he transgress the laws of the kingdom" (p. 3).

Patriarchalism was a particularly extreme form of absolutism for several reasons. Since in this theoretical system "there were kings long before there were any laws," political patriarchalism put monarchs squarely *above* positive law, "[f]or as kingly power is by the law of God, so it hath no inferior law to limit it. The father of a family governs by no other law than by his own will, not by the laws or wills of his sons or servants (p. 35). Patriarchalism also claimed a particularly extreme degree of obedience from subjects, partly as the result of the associative and emotional power of the father/king analogy. James I, who may or may not have had patriarchalist sympathies himself, certainly exploited the rhetoric in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* when he argued the absurdity of rebellion by describing the hypothetical case of rebellious children:

consider. . . whether upon any pretext whatsoever, it wil not be thought monstrous and unnaturall to his sons, to rise up against [their father], to control him at their appetite, and when they thinke good to sley him, or to cut him off, and to adopt to themselves any other they please in his roome: Or can any pretence of wickednes or rigor on his part be a just excuse for his children to put hand into him?¹⁸

The only resistance against monarchs/fathers allowable in the patriarchal system is flight.

In response to the Oath of Allegiance controversy patriarchalism first began to be heard in the cultural rhetoric of early modern England. The Ecclesiastical Canons of 1606, authored in large part as a response to the Gunpowder plot, clearly derived kingly from fatherly power, arguing that Adam's

power and authority. . . although we only term it fatherly power (*potestas patria*); yet, being well considered how far it did reach, we may truly say that it was in a sort royal power (*potestas regia*); as now, in a right and true construction, royal power (*potestas regia*) may be called fatherly power (*potestas patria*).¹⁹

And one of the official Crown respondents to Catholic Oath of Allegiance polemic, Lancelot Andrewes, similarly makes the characteristic logical move of patriarchalism — from the historical assertion that fathers were the first monarchs, to an ontological conclusion that royal power was the same thing as fatherly power — in this sermon, preached before the King on August 5, 1610, describing the Genesis patriarchs:

Patriarchs were not always to govern God's people; but Kings, in ages following, were to succeed in their places. . . both in the right of their fatherhood and rule of their government, as fathers of their countries and governors of their commonwealths. . . So that two things we gain here: 1. That *jus regium* cometh out of *jus patrium*, "the King's right" from "the father's," and both hold by one commandment. . .²⁰

It is to these dueling theories of the origins of political authority that the beginning of Chapter 6 of *Pseudo-Martyr* refers:

There hath not beene a busier disquisition, nor subject to more perplexitie, then to finde out the first originall roote, and Source, which they call *Primogeniun subiectum*, that may be so capable of *Power* and *Jurisdiction*, and so invested with it immediately from God, that it can transferre and propagate it, or let it passe and naturally derive it-selfe into those formes of Governement, by which mankind is continued and preserved. . . (p. 130).

Donne's own position on this question aligns him with Bodinian theories of natural-law absolutism. Using the characteristic "imprinting" imagery, Donne claims that by consulting inner, God-given instructions men will learn that they should "be subject to a power immediately infus'd" from God (p. 131).

In keeping with Bodin's argument, Donne clearly rejects the methodology of political patriarchalism when he scoffs at attempts "to seeke out, how they which are presum'd to have transferr'd this power into [the King], had their Authoritie, and how much they gave, and how much they retain'd" (p. 131). Such efforts to legitimate political authority by tracing it historically yield little,

For in this *Discoverie* none of them ever went farther, than to *Families*; In which, they say, *Parents* and *Masters* had Jurisdiction over Children, and Servants, and these *Families* concurr'd to the making of Townes, and transferr'd their power into some *Governor* over them all (p. 131).

Anticipating John Locke's more complete evisceration of patriarchalism in *Two Treatises of Government*, Donne points up its obvious logical shortcomings. What about savages, which "never rais'd *Families*" (p. 131)? What about men exiled from their kingdoms to form new ones outside established government (pp. 131–2)? If these existed, as they demonstrably did, it would collapse patriarchalism's claim that secular power grows out of paternal dominion — and with that collapse would fall absolutism more generally. Further, given Donne's Bodinian definition of sovereignty, even if fathers did originally possess this power they could not pass it along to their sons, since it always remains with God. It is "a cloudie and muddie search," Donne tells us, "to offer to trace to the first roote of *Jurisdiction*, since it growes not in man" (p. 132). Associations between fatherly and kingly authority can only be understood as "examples and illustrations, not Rootes and Fountaines, from which *Regall* power doth essentially proceede" (p. 132).

More subtly, Donne attacks a central patriarchalist contention by reshuffling its terms in this complicated metaphor:

For God inanimates every State with one power, as every man with one soule: when therefore people concur in the desire of such a *King*, they cannot contract, nor limitt his power: no more then parents can condition with God, or preclude or withdraw any facultie from that Soule, which God hath infused into the body, which they prepared, and presented to him (p. 133).

Donne here supports the absolutist contention that the "people" cannot limit the power of the King with the assertion that this is "no more" allowable than parents are allowed to "withdraw any facultie" from the souls of their children. Parents cannot, in this comparison, destroy (or otherwise change) the *form* of their own children, once the soul has been "infused." Donne here

disagrees with the central patriarchalist assertion that parents have powers of life and death over their children, associating that claim, complexly, with *consent* theory. Just as theorists of popular sovereignty claimed that the people could rescind political authority from monarchs, so, Donne suggests, patriarchalists believe parents can rescind the child “which they prepared” from God. In this way Donne discredits patriarchalism by associating it with ideas of popular sovereignty and denying its usefulness to main-stream absolutism.

“[B]linde and stupid obedience”

Pseudo-Martyr rejects political patriarchalism, adopting instead a relatively moderate sense of the obedience due an absolutist monarch. But other passages in this text suggest an ambivalent attitude toward even the limited sense of monarchical authority proposed here. We can see this ambivalence in Donne’s treatment of the difficult question at the heart of the Oath controversy: how to rank the two authorities, temporal and spiritual, in this not atypical post-reformation crisis. In a letter to Henry Goodyer written before the composition of *Pseudo-Martyr* Donne identifies the paradox he found at the heart of this particular problem, a paradox only partially suppressed from his own subsequent contributions to the Oath of Allegiance literature:

In the main point in question, I think truly there is a perplexity. . . and both sides may be in justice and innocence; and the wounds which they inflict upon the adverse part are all *se defendendo*: for, clearly, our State cannot be safe without the Oath. . . And, as clearly, the supremacy which the Roman Church pretend were diminished, if it were limited; and will as ill abide that, or disputation, as the prerogative of temporal kings, who being the only judges of their prerogative, why may not Roman bishops. . . be good witnesses of their own supremacy, which is now so much impugned?²¹

The unsolvable problem in the debate is one which Donne, with his relentlessly analogical turn of mind, could not help but see: Catholic attempts to impugn the authority of the English royalty weakened the concept of supremacy on which the Catholic hierarchy itself depended; absolutist theory could strengthen the power of the Pope. Of course, writers had been trying to distinguish between Papal and princely authority for centuries; the question was handled continually not only in Reformation polemic (where it is

central) but in earlier disputes about the relative powers of Church and Empire.²² For Donne, the problem as it was formulated in early 17th century England remained unsolved. It is suggested with some directness in Chapter IX of *Pseudo-Martyr*:

We may bee bold to say, that there is much iniquity, and many degrees of Tyranny, in establishing so absolute and transcendent a spiritual *Monarchy*, by them, who abhorre *Monarchy* so much, that. . . they allow no other Christian *Monarchy* upon Earth, so pure and absolute, but that it must confesse some subjection and dependencie (p. 179).

Donne implies here that the "absolute" Papal Monarchy must, for consistency's sake, admit the authority of other monarchies; he tactfully leaves out the obverse side of the argument, that secular absolutism supports broad Papal powers. By insisting on the shared use of the word "monarchy" — indistinguishable in the two spheres, temporal and spiritual — *Pseudo-Martyr* here stresses the self-defeating nature of its own argument.

This problem is also evident, more implicitly, when Donne tries to locate "the first originall roote" of power in Chapter Six (p. 166). Donne begins considering this question by tracing the original theoretical "roote" of standard responses, locating them first in the Roman Church's claim "That that *Monarchall forme, and that Hierarchie, which they have, was instituted immediately from God*" (p. 130). In order to match the "Dignities" of the Catholic Church, "[m]any wise and iealous Advocates of Secular Authoritie. . . have said the same of *Regall power and Jurisdiction*" (p. 130).²³ In this intellectual geneology, divine-right theories are traced to the Catholic claim that, as the direct heir of saint Peter, the institutional hierarchy was mandated directly by Christ. Whatever the accuracy of this statement,²⁴ the claim that divine right theory originated in Catholicism connects the two kinds of "monarchy," spiritual and secular, and casts a pall on Protestant absolutism by rooting it in Catholic arguments for the power of the Pope.

Pseudo-Martyr, as we have seen, replaces the belief in God's direct authorization of princely power with a scenario derived from natural law. God is the source of "the *Soule* of power" in secular government, though He does not determine specific governmental form. This theory, however, proves also to originate within orthodox Catholic claims for Papal authority:

[T]hat which a *Jesuite* said of the Pope, That *the Election* doth onely present him to God, wee say also of a King; That whatsoever it be, that prepares him, and makes his Person capable of *Regall Jurisdiction*, that

onely presents him to *God*, who then inanimates him with this Supremacy immediately from himselfe. . . (p. 131).

As with the direct divine right explanation earlier rejected, this definition inevitably strengthens the Papal position which it mirrors: if the King receives his sovereignty by having it infused into him by God, so, theoretically, could *Papal* power be so authorized. The opening passages of this chapter, then, have highlighted the interrelatedness of papal and monarchical superiority.

A parallel ambivalence to absolutist authority becomes clear in Donne's treatment of the chapter's ostensible subject: "*A comparison of the Obedience due to Princes, with the severall obediences requir'd and exhibited in the Romane Churche*" (p. 130). Despite this advertisement, "*the Obedience due to Princes*" is defined only vaguely. Donne stresses the *purpose*, rather than the nature, of that secular obedience, making clear that obedience is not a virtue in itself but only a means to achieve the final goal of secular government: to allow subjects to "*live peaceably and religiously*" (p. 132). On the other side of the obedience equation is monarchical sovereignty, also limited and justified by the ultimate good of the commonwealth; sovereignty is simply "*a power to use all those meanes, which conduce to those endes*" (p. 133). So subjects' obedience — and monarchical authority — is limited to the spheres, wide though they may be, of "*Peace and. . . Religion*":

for *power* and *subjection* are so *Relative*, as since the King commaunds in all things conducing to our *Peaceable* and *Religious* being, wee must obey in all those. This therefore is our first Originary, naturall, and Congenite obedience, to obey the *Prince*. . . (p. 134).

The ringing tones which proclaim this obedience are tempered by surrounding qualifications.

And rather than further define the scope of secular obedience the text digresses here into a critique of the mindless allegiance demanded by certain orders within Roman Catholicism. The church has "extolled and magnified" obedience so that it demands from its priestly adherents

an inconsiderate & undiscoursed and. . . an *Indiscreete* surrendring of themselves, which professe any of the rules of Religion, to the command of their Prelate and Superior; by which, like the uncleane beasts, *They swallow, and never chaw the cudde* (p. 134).

This bestial image marks an abrupt tonal change: the measured, scholarly persona of the chapter's opening paragraphs is transformed into a satirist, who describes with apparent relish the grotesque absurdities of Catholic humility. Who can sympathize with "*Friar Ruffin: who. . . out of his humility, desired that he might stinke when he was dead, and that he might be eaten with dogges*" (p. 136). "Who would wish *S. Henrie the Dane* any health, that had seene him, *When wormes crawled out of a corrupted Ulcer in his Knee, put them in againe?*" (p. 136)? Donne seems particularly amused by incidents in which the orders of a superior are taken with absurd literalness:

Was it due and necessary obedience, when desirous to be instructed in that point of *Predestination*, and his Superiour turning to a place in S. Augustine, and bidding him *read there*, being come to the end of the page, but not of the sentence, he durst not turne over the leafe, because he was bid to *read there* (p. 135)?

And the idiocy of such extreme humility is illustrated by Gonzaga, who "*desir'd to speake in publicke, because hee had an ungracious and ridiculous imperfection in pronouncing the letter R. . .*"; who would not put on boots when he was cold, or avoid the plague; and who said, "at the newes of his Fathers death. . . that nowe nothing hindered him from saying, OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN; As if it had troubled his conscience, to say so before" (p. 136).

As the above excerpts illustrate, *Pseudo-Martyr's* digressive exploration of "obedience" has a rhetorical energy absent from the preceding theoretical passages on the origins of political power. The narrator himself seems carried away by interest in his topic: "though it seeme scarce worthy of any further discourse," he says, "yet I cannot deny my selfe the recreation of surveying some examples of this blinde and stupid obedience, and false humility" (p. 134); he continues in this "further discourse" for five additional pages.²⁵ There is a political reason for ridiculing such extremes of obedience, as Anthony Raspa points out, since by the time of *Pseudo-Martyr* the tightly controlled Jesuitical organization had become a powerful "political instrument against the power of European secular rulers."²⁶ But even so, *Pseudo-Martyr* seems oddly energetic in its critique of obedience. Donne's distaste for "Indiscreete" obeisance registers in the reader much more powerfully than the assertion, repeated with the linguistic power of a platitude throughout Chapter Six, that all allegiances "are subordinate to that naturall Obedience to your Prince, as Soveraigne controller of all" (p. 137).

The closest *Pseudo-Martyr* comes to presenting a positive definition of obedience is in a curiously Utopian depiction of early monastic society, worth quoting here at length. Abbeys were at first “not all *Chappell* but *Schooles of Sciences*” in which “strict obedience” was only latterly imposed to maintain order in the face of tremendous institutional growth:

. . . because they were great confluences of men of divers *Nations, Dispositions, Breedings, Ages, and Employments*, and they could be tied together in no knot so strongly, nor meete in any one Center so concurrently, and uniformly, as in the Obedience to one Superior; And what this Obedience was, and how farre it extended: Aquinas, who understood it well, hath well express'd, *That they are bound to Obey only in those things which may belong to their Regular conversation*. And this use and office, that obedience which is exhibited in our *Colledges*, fulfills and satisfies, without any of these unnatural, childish, stupid, mimique, often scandalous, and sometimes rebellious singularities (p. 138).

Donne here praises the *limited* nature of obedience demanded in early Abbeys, much as he had earlier stressed the limits of secular obedience. Absolute obedience is necessary “only in those things which may belong to [the inhabitants'] Regular conversation,” just as Donne earlier claimed that in a temporal commonwealth obedience was necessary only in “all things conducing to our *Peaceable* and *Religious* being” (134). Further, this passage focuses not on the power of the “one Superior,” but on the consensual origin of obedience, imposed only in the pursuit of a greater good which would redound on the entire community: for monks to be able to “meete in. . . one Center so concurrently.” Missing in this positive image of a well-ordered society is any reference to the divine sanction of the “one Superior” which would preclude any re-organization from below. The ideal commonwealth is an intellectual brotherhood, most similar to “that obedience which is exhibited in our *Colledges*,” where every member's limitations are balanced by his rights, and the scope of obedience remains surprisingly narrow. Finally, the “childish, stupid” obedience of other Catholic hierarchies is itself, oddly though suggestively, described here as potentially “rebellious.” Again, as in the description of obedience in the temporal sphere, by emphasizing the purpose and limitations of obedience Donne weakens the absolutist message.

Despite this impression, *Pseudo-Martyr*'s attack on Catholic understandings of obedience is, in at least one sense, compatible with official Jacobean policy. The Oath of Allegiance was designed to separate moderate

English Catholics from more radical, mostly Jesuitical contingents. This strategy had been in place since the 1590s, when Archbishop Bancroft offered a modicum of shelter and support to a group of anti-Jesuit secular priests who objected to the drastic rhetoric and radically destabilizing actions of the English Jesuit mission.²⁷ Known subsequently as the Appellants, this group pushed for more moderate policies toward the English monarchy; the Allen-Parsons party was their nemesis.

The creation of the Appellant party resulted from the Pope's appointment of an "arch-priest" named Blackwell to oversee Catholic operations in England. In what Arnold Pritchard calls "the most obnoxious feature" of Blackwell's appointment, he was ordered to clear all important matters with Henry Garnet, the head of the Jesuit mission to England, "while Garnet was placed under no corresponding obligation to consult Blackwell" (p. 122). In the paper war set off by Blackwell's mandate, Cardinal Parsons insisted on the absolute obedience due to the church hierarchy, to the extent that verbal questioning of Papal decisions could be seen as subversive. The sometime-defender of republicanism in the Conference to the Next Succession now claimed absolutism as his own: "[O]ur spiritual superiors are most of all other men to be respected by us, yea before angels themselves. . . for that these men's authority is known evidently to be from God, which in angels is not."²⁸ In response to Parson's image "of the divine will descending through the church hierarchy," dissenters among the Appellants "usually portray a church run by rules and regulations independent of the will of any of its members; their view is essentially legalistic and, one can sometimes say, constitutionalist."²⁹

The attack on obedience in *Pseudo-Martyr* echoes in a number of ways Appellant problems with Papal authority. But even though Donne's engagement with this debate aligns him with the larger royal "divide and conquer" strategy, it also puts him right back in the middle of the problem identified in the Goodyer letter. For by siding with the Appellants, Donne supports a relatively conditional view of authority, as they did — one inevitably applicable to the "monarchy" of England as well as the "monarchy" of the Pope. Since Donne has already drawn attention to the parallels between royal and papal authority, this attack on obedience becomes obliquely applicable to secular obedience too.

Of course, for all these subtle internal contradictions, *Pseudo-Martyr* certainly performed its purpose: it got its author the attention of the King, and led, however indirectly, to preferment, fame, and relative fortune. The

book has little in it that could have been offensive to main-stream absolutist thought. But its tensions and ambivalences should make us leery of ascribing too great a reverence for authority even to the now-emerging Dr. Donne. As *Pseudo-Martyr* stresses continuities between Catholic and Protestant political thought, so it should alert us to continuities between the Donne of the Songs and Sonnets and Donne, the accomplished scholar and future Dean of Saint Paul's. *Pseudo-Martyr*'s awareness that terms from one side of an opposition so easily slide into their counter principle is oddly reminiscent of the metaphorical mechanics of much of Donne's poetry, in which, for example, theological doctrine is deployed to analyze love relationships, and conversely, faith is figured erotically. *Pseudo-Martyr* also reveals an ambivalence toward authority reminiscent of the speaker in "The Sunne Rising," who claims of his lover, "She is all states, and all princes, I, / Nothing else is." While these lines at once destroy the prerogative of the King seen idly off to the hunt in stanza one, they seem simultaneously to elevate princely prerogative by expanding it to an almost cosmic status. Finally, *Pseudo-Martyr* suggests that Donne's life-long involvement with Catholic doctrine and controversy shaped not only his spiritual and psychological constitution, but his political attitudes as well.

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Notes

1. See John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981); Arthur Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1986); David Norbrook, "The Monarchy of Wit and the Republic of Letters" in *Soliciting Interpretation*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 3-36, and Annabel Patterson, "Quod oportet versus quod convenit: John Donne, Kingsman?" in *Reading Between the Lines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1993), pp. 160-209.
2. *The Crisis of the Constitution: An Essay in Constitutionalist and Political Thought in England, 1603-45* (New York: Octagon Books, 1964 [1949]).
3. On the intersection of Donne's private and public motives in writing *Pseudo-Martyr* see Anthony Raspa's introduction to his recent edition (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), pp. xxxviii-liv; Raspa's essay is also the best general introduction to the work.

4. A quality noted of the book's theological content by Raspa in "Time, History and Typology in John Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr*," *Renaissance and Reformation*, 11 (1987), 175–183.
5. Debora Shuger comes to very different conclusions about Donne's absolutism in *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); her analysis is focused, however, on the sermons instead of *Pseudo-Martyr*.
6. The text of the oath is from J.P. Kenyon. *The Stuart Constitution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 459.
7. The complaint is from the Catholic Archpriest Blackwell (administrative head of Catholics in England), qtd. in Charles McIlwain, ed. *The Political Works of James I* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), p. lix, n. 3.
8. The text is from King James' own "Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance" (McIlwain, 83) in which Bellarmine is quoted extensively.
9. See McIlwain's discussion of the controversy in his introduction (pp. xlix-lxxx); see also J.H.M. Salmon. "Catholic Resistance theory, Ultramontanism, and the Royalist Response, 1580–1620," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 219–253, especially pp. 247–253.
10. On the amalgamation of various philosophical traditions in these arguments, see Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572–1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially pp. 137–146 and 260–265.
11. See on resistance theories generally Quentin Skinner. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 volumes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), II: 191–238 and II: 302–348; and J.P. Sommerville. *Politics and Ideology in England 1603–1640* (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 69–77.
12. Quoted by Robert Filmer, in his *Patriarchia*, in *Patriarchia and Other Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 5–6.
13. *A Conference to the Next Succession of the Crown of England*, 2 volumes (London, 1594). Though this work pre-dated the Oath controversy it was often cited in those debates to prove the inevitably seditious nature of Catholic political thought.
14. McIlwain, pp. xcii-xciv.
15. The 1606 edition (tr. Richard Knowles) has been reprinted in facsimile as *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, ed. Kenneth Douglas McRae (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). On Bodin's concept of sovereignty, see McRae, Introduction, A13-A22; Julian H. Franklin. *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), passim; and Skinner, II, pp. 284–301.
16. P. 131. This and subsequent references are to the 1993 Raspa edition (see above, n.3).
17. On controversy over dating this work, see Sommerville's introductory essay to his edition, "The Date of Filmer's *Patriarcha*" (p. xxxii-xxxiv). See also Richard Tuck, "A New Date

for Filmer's *Patriarcha*," *The Historical Journal*, 29, I (1986), pp. 183–186: "The authors dealt with, and in many ways the issues. . . belong to the period between 1606 and 1614 when James I was in conflict with his Catholic opponents over the Oath of Allegiance" (p. 185).

18. McIlwain, p. 65.
19. *Ninety-Six Sermons by the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1967), 4, p. 48.
20. Quoted in Somerville, p. 30.
21. From Edmund Gosse. *The Life and Letters of John Donne Dean of St. Paul's* (London, 1899; rpt. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959).
22. Three of the contemporary and medieval disputes which "touched directly on the definition of secular and spiritual powers" (p. xxiii) constitute a lion's share of Donne's references in *Pseudo-Martyr*, as Raspa suggests in his "Introduction": "the conflict between Paul V and the state of Venice. . . the simmering quarrel between the Spanish crown and the papacy. . . [and] the now historic twelfth-century quarrel between Pope Saint Gregory VII and the German Emperor Henry IV over lay investiture" (pp. xxiii-iv).
23. This question of theoretical geneology is slightly different than the problem of the chronology of the development of secular and religious societies; on that issue, Donne "argued that the existence of the spiritual state originated from an already existing temporal state" (Raspa, p. xlviii).
24. In fact, the theory that monarchs received direct authorization from God probably originates, at least in the sixteenth century, with Luther, who "could scarcely be more explicit in acknowledging that all political authority is derived from God" (Skinner II, p. 15). The Thomist revival, Skinner suggests, is largely a response to this heresy (II, pp. 136–73).
25. Five pages, that is, in the original 1610 text. See the facsimile edition, reprinted with an introduction by Francis Jacques Sypher (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1974).
26. Thomas S. Clancy. *Papist Pamphleteers* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964), pp. 79–87; also Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyatism in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 120–174.
27. *A Briefe Apology or Defence of the Catholic Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 204–4b; quoted in Pritchard, p. 131.
28. Pritchard, pp. 133–134.