

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-46360-8 - Devotions: Upon Emergent Occasions  
John Donne  
Frontmatter  
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## DONNE'S DEVOTIONS

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*JOHN DONNE*  
*ÆT. 44*

# DEVOTIONS

Upon Emergent Occasions

By JOHN DONNE

Late Dean of Saint Paul's

Edited by JOHN SPARROW, Scholar of Winchester  
College, with a BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE by  
GEOFFREY KEYNES, Fellow of the  
Royal College of Surgeons



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## INTRODUCTION

**D**URING the last thirty years such interest has been taken in Donne's personality and his writings that his *Life and Letters* have been published, his Poems edited, *Selections* taken from his Sermons, his philosophy and the doctrines which influenced it carefully explained, and a *Bibliography* of his works has been compiled. Yet his *Devotions* have been strangely neglected, though they present a more vivid and intimate picture of Donne than anything else written by himself or others, and form the only short volume which gives evidence of his powers as a writer of prose. Within twenty years of its first publication in 1624 the book went through five editions, and it is even said to have been translated into Dutch; but for the next two hundred years it was practically forgotten, and only reappeared in three somewhat unsatisfactory reprints about the year 1840. These have become scarce, and it is now difficult to obtain any copy of the book.

Perhaps the fact most necessary for a true understanding of Donne's personality, and one which it is easy to miss completely when reading Walton's *Life*, is that despite all vicissitudes of fortune, despite even the apparent changes in his character, Donne himself was always essentially the same. "Antes Muerto que Mudado" was his youthful motto; and just as Walton mistook and exaggerated the change which took place

in Donne's character, so he mistranslated these words: "How much shall I be chang'd, Before I am chang'd!" and exclaimed, "If that young, and his now dying Picture, were at this time set together, every beholder might say, *Lord! How much is Doctor Donne already chang'd before he is chang'd!*" (See *Lives*, ed. 1675.) But Donne's Spanish motto really meant "Rather dead than changed," and a less blindly adoring worshipper than Walton would have seen in both Donne's portraits, that of the gallant young adventurer, and that of the Dean in his shroud, something that indeed would die before it changed. His passions were always the same, though in later life they became the "sanctified passions" which he speaks of in his sermons.

Indeed the outward change was very great; but it was not the point of view, it was the object of his outlook, that had altered. And the change was a slow process, which started with what Walton calls "the remarkable error of his life," his marriage. It began when he settled in his "poor hospital" at Mitcham, and gradually increased from 1605 till 1617, a period during which he was vexed, as Jane Austen says of one of her characters, with "a superfluity of children, and a want of almost everything else." Donne "almost spent all his time," as he says in the *Devotions* (p. 46), "in consulting how he should spend it." How bitterly he suffered during these years of poverty can be gathered from the letters he wrote

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to his friends at the time. In 1615 he recovered from what he calls his “vertiginous giddines,” and took orders, and two years later his wife died. This, more than anything else, accounts for the “sanctification” of his character. It had the most profound influence on his remaining years, and it is from this date, 1617, that the truly “religious” period of his life begins.

To one who reads Walton’s words carefully it must be obvious that Anne Donne, of whom unfortunately we know very little, influenced him more than any other person. They were blessed with “so mutual and cordial affections, as in the midst of their sufferings made their bread of sorrow taste more pleasantly than the banquets of dull and low-spirited people”; with her “he had divided so many pleasant sorrows and contented fears, as common people are not capable of,” and at her death “his very soul was elemented of sorrow.” So in his *Holy Sonnets* Donne wrote himself,

Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt...  
 Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.

His worldly ambition was at an end; religious ardour and a new devotion to God leave their stamp on everything he wrote afterwards. But beneath lay unquenched the same fire that had inspired the passionate lover and poet. The same man wrote the *Songs and Sonets* and *Death’s Duell*. Not only with an equal, but with the same, ardour, did he devote himself to the world and to Heaven. This is not the

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only resemblance between Donne and that other great convert, Saint Paul; both give the same impression of huge strength and of a grim asceticism, and both felt, with a conviction that has rarely been equalled, the personality of the God whom they adored.

And yet, “sincerely devotional as Donne tried to be in the final phase, there lingers about him something unexorcised, as if Pagan incense were burning in a Christian crypt<sup>1</sup>.” And in the *Devotions* we see quite clearly what Donne was in this “final phase”; the book was written during a very serious illness in 1623, six years after the death of his wife, and two years after his appointment to the Deanery of St Paul’s. His death was actually not very far distant. Here in the *Devotions* we are admitted to the “Christian crypt,” we see Donne’s passions unveiled, in hopes and prayers and expostulations, and in vehement declarations of repentance. We see into the mind of Jack Donne, the young adventurer, of John Donne, the courtly admirer of the Countess of Bedford, of Anne Donne’s improvident and loving husband, and of Doctor Donne, the ascetic Dean of St Paul’s. All are parts played by one man, and the “Pagan incense” which still lingers in the air only proves the sincerity of his later passion.

But the *Devotions* differ from the Sermons, the chief

<sup>1</sup> From *Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*, by Rachel Annand Taylor, 1923, p. 288.

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product of his later years. He has no need to be conscious of his auditory, his own dignity, or the Cathedral in which he preached, for he is concerned only with his own soul, and has before him the prospect of immediate death. Here, says Walton, he set down “the most secret thoughts that then possessed his soul paraphrased and made public; a book that may not unfitly be called a *Sacred Picture of Spiritual Ecstasies*, occasioned and made applicable to the emergencies of that sickness.” These passionate, unadorned, “secret” thoughts give the book an intimate quality quite unique in Donne’s writings.

“We are tempted to declare,” says Mr Gosse (*Life and Letters*, ii, p. 291), “that of all great men he is the one of whom least is essentially known.” Paradoxically, the more one knows of Donne, the more one feels this to be true; the more one reads his revelations of himself, the more is one mystified as to what he is revealing. There is something unreal about him; there are characters, farther removed from us by time and association, whom we feel that we know with an intimacy altogether satisfying. It is easier—and a modern artist has indeed done so<sup>1</sup>—to picture him arriving in Heaven, than walking down a street. It is true that an inimitable description of his appearance, his conversation, and his charm, has been given us by

<sup>1</sup> “John Donne arriving in Heaven,” an oil painting by Stanley Spencer.

Walton; we can gather from his letters many of his habits and mannerisms; we possess portraits of him which we cannot doubt are like the man himself; yet it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct a picture of the Dean of St Paul's living an every-day life, and to reconcile it with the Donne who lives in that Dean's writings.

The explanation probably is that the writings which reveal him most clearly were written in moments of intense exaltation. There are two ways of arriving at the pitch of emotion necessary for the production of such writings as Donne's. One is the absolute surrender to pleasure, and the sacrifice of the ordinary standard of morals; the other is the complete banishment of pleasure, and the consistent living up to an ideal. Donne adopted both of these. His greatest poem, *The Extasie*, shows how completely body, mind and soul were enveloped in love, and an attitude of fierce indulgence marks all his poems. Rupert Brooke said that "for width and depth he is incomparably the greatest of our love-poets": his love-poems show that this is unquestionably true. Still more intimate is the picture given us in the writings inspired by his religious emotions. The austerity of his last years is but faintly indicated by Walton, who says that "now all his studies, which had been occasionally diffused, were all centred in divinity. Now he had a new calling, new thoughts, and a new employment for his wit and

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eloquence”; and again, “the latter part of his life may be said to be a continued study; for as he usually preached once a week, if not oftener, so after his sermon, he never gave his eyes rest, till he had chosen out a new text, and that night cast his sermon into a form, and his text into divisions.” Only on Saturday did he give “himself and his mind a rest from the weary burthen of his week’s meditations.” But perhaps we can best realise what Donne was in his last years by studying the strangely attractive—and to some (still more strangely) repulsive—portrait which is the frontispiece to *Death’s Duell*. All the pleasures and all the comforts of a worldly life had been sacrificed to the contemplation of “heavenly things.” In the *Devotions* this ardent asceticism reaches its climax: the menace of death was the signal for the enwrapping of all the faculties of body, mind, and soul in a fervent adoration of God.

But even this book does not banish the enigmatic atmosphere of unreality that surrounds him; rather it makes it more intense. It is as if we tried to study a man’s features with a ray too piercing: the light dazzles, and does not illumine.

The religious exaltation of the *Devotions* is sometimes equalled by certain passages in the Sermons. Otherwise it is approached only in some of the *Divine Poems*, in the *Holy Sonnets*, and in the three great Hymns (one at least of which was composed during

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this same illness). There too the cry comes straight from the heart and goes straight to God, and there the consciousness of sin and the sinner's refuge in God are the main themes:

Spit in my face you Jewes, and pierce my side,  
 Buffet, and scoffe, scourge, and crucifie mee,  
 For I have sinn'd, and sinn'd, and onely hee,  
 Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed.

The *Holy Sonnets* were composed after his wife's death, and the fourth of them appears to refer to a dangerous illness, perhaps the same as occasioned the composition of the *Devotions*—

O my black Soule! now thou art summoned  
 By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion....

In these *Sonnets* also is manifest the triumphant certainty of the soul's ultimate victory over death—"Death be not proud"—which is one of the chief inspirations of this book; and in both the body, as nowhere else in Donne's works, seems almost in danger of losing its place in his great triumvirate of body, mind, and soul.

It is, says Professor Grierson, the "beating as it were against the bars of self in the desire to break through to a fuller apprehension of the mercy and love of God<sup>1</sup>," which forms the note of Donne's later poems, and no better description can be given of the impulse behind the *Prayers* and *Expostulations* in this book.

This revelation of Donne's soul is the chief interest

<sup>1</sup> *Poems*, ii, p. liii.



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of the *Devotions*, but by reason of its intimacy the book falls shorter of literary perfection than do the Sermons, and sometimes even exaggerates the faults of style which mar them. Much may be, and has been, said of Donne's "tortuous" and "twisted" style, his misplaced ingenuity, his extravagant conceits, and his tiresome learning. From the last fault the *Devotions* are entirely free, for Donne had not, when he wrote them, the opportunity of consulting the obscure and dull authors whose quibblings fill too many pages of his Sermons, but his "ingenuity," his "conceits," his "tortuous style," are perhaps more evident here than anywhere else. Yet in spite of them all the book contains some of the most beautiful prose he ever wrote. Examples will be found in his wonderful *Expostulation* on "hearts" (pp. 63–65), and in the lovely passage beginning "All *mankinde* is of one *Author*" (p. 97). Moreover, it is fairer to call his method of thought "tortuous" and "unnatural" than his style. When he wrote down his thoughts, his unadorned, "most secret" thoughts, as the *Devotions* show, they were usually of a curious and subtle nature, and he did not write merely in order to exercise his ingenuity. But because the thought itself is often very difficult to follow, and the ideas do not seem natural to an ordinary mind, Donne is too often set down as an obscure and artificial writer. In his poetry this charge may sometimes be justified, but when he is

writing on what may be his deathbed, and writing of all that concerns him most vitally, we realise that this method was part of his nature, and that it is when he is most in earnest that we can be least sure of a regular pattern in his thought.

If Donne's thinking leads him into obscurity of style, it may be argued with justice that the thought itself cannot be always striking or interesting; the idea should triumph over the expression, if it is worth expressing at all. Intellectual laziness on the part of his readers is no doubt the reason for much that has been said against Donne; but it is equally true that often in this book, as in almost all his works, his thoughts seem laboriously and with little profit to explore very barren country. But a mind like Donne's could not dwell long on any subject, however little the subject may attract us, without discovering some aspect that surprises us, or drawing some conclusion which makes us think. At any moment his basest alloy may be transmuted to the purest gold. Donne, as De Quincey says, *combined* "the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address with the most impassioned majesty"; and so even his apparently most artificial and elaborate images are often spontaneously mingled with the flow of his sincerest devotion, and are indeed the only form in which he could express it. However much his conceits may at times annoy us, artifice achieves effects which simplicity cannot hope for.

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A good example may be taken from the last page of his last sermon, *Death's Duell*, where he describes the darkening of the earth at the crucifixion: "Then those glorious eyes grew so faint in their sight, so as the sun, ashamed to survive them, departed with his light too."

In his most passionate prayers, just as in his most passionate love-poems, Donne's mind is for ever embarking upon "*voyages, and peregrinations to fetch remote, and precious metaphors*"; and it fetches metaphors from the absurdly every-day businesses of life. Sometimes they are elaborated till they seem to have lost their original inspiration, but there is never any effort in their introduction or their application. Donne is always awake to the apparent absurdity of the illustration, but he insists on using his own ideas without interference. This extraordinarily modern "awareness of the workings of his own mind," as Mr Pearsall Smith has called it, is nowhere put more plainly before us than in the *Devotions*.

The general effect of his prose on a modern reader is discussed at length in Mr Pearsall Smith's excellent introduction to his *Selections* from the Sermons, and it has been summed up with more than his usual perception by Dean Alford (*Donne's Works*, i, p. xix); though it is somewhat melancholy to reflect that the treasures which Alford himself avowedly sought in the Sermons were not those of "diction, or genius, or

power of thought”: he found there rather “a distinct and clear exposition of the doctrine of the redemption,” and “a genuine body of orthodox divinity (in the best sense of the words).”

It is impossible to give any but a general description of the contents of the *Devotions*, for the book pretends to be nothing but a collection of musings, divided up into a series of “*Meditations*,” “*Expostulations*,” and “*Prayers*,” without any singleness of plan or idea. It is in the “*Meditations*” that the human side of Donne’s character is most apparent. They are, as the title of the book declares, meditations upon “our humane condition”; they consider it in all its aspects, and they are the reflections of a subtle, many-sided mind, the mind of one who has had profound experience of life, and whose experience has taught him an almost deliberately exaggerated and cynical pessimism. “With his strange satiric code of language, he dissects as with fine steel the curious throbbing matter of the heart<sup>1</sup>,” and of the mind too; he is scornful of man’s weakness and of men’s weaknesses, with both of which he is so well acquainted, and nothing he has learned from either is too trivial or too sublime for his pen.

The “emergencies” of his sickness suggest the subject for each meditation: change, fear, consultation, kings, sleep, bells, the heart; and he discusses them

<sup>1</sup> *Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 287.

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with illustrations drawn from the Old Testament, from History, and from men as he knew them. Whole chapters are devoted to one metaphor, while he likens men to trees in a garden, or “little worlds,” or tenants of the farm of life. The eternity of kings (“*an eternity of three score and ten yeares*”), “is in the *Apothecaries* shop”; and “those that are *great*, and pretend, and yet are loth to come,” find his infection an excellent excuse for keeping away from his bedside. There are many examples of the wit which had delighted his earlier admirers, and one or two directly autobiographical touches add an interest to the pages. He describes (p. 46) more clearly and fully than elsewhere in his later writings, the circumstances in which he entered the ministry, and his indebtedness to King James for his decision. Mr Gosse<sup>1</sup> has noticed another remark, perhaps a memory of early childhood, where he says, on p. 8, “My parents would not give mee over to a *Servants* correction.” The bells “of the Church adjoining” remind him of his foreign travels, and of bells he had heard at Antwerp and Rouen, and he tells a curious story of a “*Bell* in a *Monastery*.” Mr Gosse has given us a picture of him<sup>2</sup>, “lying there all alone, propped up in state in his great dark chamber; scribbling these funereal conceits on a tablet that rests against the fold of the coverlet, while ‘that striking clock that I ordinarily wear’ ticks on

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters*, i, p. 14.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ii, p. 183.

the table at his side.” Donne adds to the picture himself, and one of the pleasantest of all the glimpses of the Dean that are afforded us is given in his own words describing the music which came from the church through his window, and how “Where I lie, I could heare the *Psalme*, and did joine with the *Congregation* in it” (p. 95).

So he meditates, “with some passages of incomparable charm,” on the funeral bell, while the illness takes its course, and at length he is allowed to leave his bed. His description of his feelings on rising is very curious, and he recurs, as so frequently in his works, to the new doctrines which were disturbing his mind: “I am *up*, and I seeme to *stand*, and I goe *round*; and I am a new *Argument* of the new *Philosophie*, That the *Earth* moves round; why may I not beleeve, that the *whole earth* moves in a *round motion*, though that seeme to mee to *stand*, when as I seeme to *stand* to my *Company*, and yet am carried, in a giddy, and *circular motion*, as I *stand*?” (p. 128).

The reader may often be struck with the similarity between the ideas, phrases and metaphors in this book and in the rest of Donne’s writings, particularly his Sermons, but sometimes even the poems of his early youth. In order to connect, as it were, the *Devotions* with the other writings some of these similarities are pointed out in the notes to the present edition, and no doubt many more could be collected. They certainly

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throw an interesting light on the workings of Donne's mind. A comparison of such passages might also help to place some of the undated sermons, but they are so widely scattered that it is often impossible to make any definite statement. Whole sentences from the *Devotions* are sometimes repeated in sermons which we know to have been preached at dates quite distant from the composition of the book. Particular attention has, however, been given to two sermons which appear in the folio of 1649 between those dated April 1624, and January 162 $\frac{4}{5}$ , which Miss Spearing<sup>1</sup> assigns to the period during which Donne was Vicar of St Dunstan's, and which might reasonably be expected from their position to belong to 1624. The second (no. XLVIII of *Fifty Sermons*, 1649) is identified by Mr Gosse (*Life and Letters*, ii, p. 94) with that preached on his wife's death, which Walton tells us was preached on the same text (*Lamentations* I. 1), but at St Clement's Church. It seems most likely, as Miss Spearing suggests, that this is an entirely different sermon on the same text, and is rightly included amongst those preached at St Dunstan's. A comparison of both these sermons with the *Devotions* alone is not enough, perhaps, to make any final decision as to their date, but they contain more noticeable similarities to passages in the *Devotions* than occur in

<sup>1</sup> "A Chronological Arrangement of Donne's Sermons," in *The Modern Language Review*, Oct. 1913.

most of his other sermons, and taken together they leave a very strong impression that they were written while the ideas which inspired the book were still fresh in his mind. Most of the similarities are in themselves slight, but one will serve as an example. On the first page of Sermon XLVIII Donne says, "But in all this depression of his, in all his exinanition, and evacuation, yet he had a crown...," and three lines later "evacuate" and "annihilate" occur together. On page 122 of the *Devotions* Donne ends his meditation with this sentence: "I am ground even to an *attenuation*, and must proceed to *evacuation*, all waies to exinanition and annihilation." Perhaps the fact that both passages contain a collection of the same extraordinary words is merely a coincidence; but such instances, collectively more striking, abound in these pages.

The *Devotions* are no model for a handbook of piety, no collection of prayers such as their title implies; their familiar invocations of the Trinity as "you three," and their reference to our bodies at the Resurrection as our "old clothes," for instance, seem to have shocked Dr Jessopp in his *Life of Donne*<sup>1</sup>. The book is not a model of Donne's prose style, though it does contain glorious examples of his work; its value is not its philosophy, its theology, or any reasoning or argument that it contains; but it is

<sup>1</sup> In the *Leaders of Religion* series, 1897.



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extraordinarily interesting as a unique revelation of a unique mind. It shows us the intensity and the complexity of Donne's feelings; it shows us his personal philosophy—not his studied opinions on intellectual or theological problems, but his secret thoughts on what concerned him most. It does not explain, it reveals; it makes clear that “natural, unnatural” perversity in Donne's nature which made him at once the most human and the most incomprehensible of beings.

The irregularities of thought and the strangeness of expression are necessary to the completeness and truth of the revelation; body, mind and soul are inseparable in the vital things of life, together they must grasp “those absolute values of passionate experience which are the only excuse for the infinite and intolerable anguish of existence<sup>1</sup>.”

Donne knew this in love, and he knew it in religion, which was to him the love of God. In the writings inspired by either of these loves, where he is describing the “passionate experience” of adoration, the faults of the mind, which is the translator of his feelings into words, are obvious and frequent. But they are necessary, and prove the genuineness and truth of what he wrote. The *Devotions*, our most intimate picture of Donne's deepest feelings, gain far more than they lose from the part played by the

<sup>1</sup> *Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 81.

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intellect in their composition. Here Donne's mind is following his soul on a pilgrimage towards Heaven, through strange and wonderful lands, by unexpected and inexplicable ways, and with many turnings, halts, and digressions; his body, once the explorer of other countries where it found much pleasure, but no repose, is the soul's companion; and in these pages that sincere and subtle mind, a vivid but perverse historian, tells us intimately of some of their adventures on the journey, and leaves us wondering where and how it was to end.

JOHN SPARROW.

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Only the Bibliographical Note is signed by Mr Keynes, but his criticism and his help have guided me through the whole book. I cannot say how grateful I am both to him and to the Dean of Winchester, who has read through the proofs and has made many helpful suggestions.

J. S.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

### THE TEXT

**D**ONNE'S *Devotions* were first published just 300 years ago, in 1624, in a thick duodecimo volume of 322 leaves. The book was printed for Thomas Jones by Augustin Mathewes, whose initials appear in the imprint of most copies, though one has been recorded from which they have been omitted<sup>1</sup>. This first edition is a rare book, and probably the issue was a small one, for it seems to have been soon exhausted and was reprinted in the same year. The second edition, though the text closely follows that of the first, was somewhat reduced in bulk, containing only 300 leaves. It is also a rare book, but the edition was sold in the course of two years, and a third was printed towards the end of 1626, again forming a volume of 300 leaves. That it was printed late in the year may be inferred from the facts that the colophon on the verso of the last leaf is dated 1627 and that some copies have this date also on the title-page. Copies dated 1627 do not, therefore, constitute a fourth edition, as they are in every other respect identical with those dated 1626 and were printed from the same type. The third edition, though by no means a common book, is more

<sup>1</sup> A second copy with this imprint, formerly in the library of Lord North, is now in my own possession; the title-page of this copy is reproduced in the present edition.

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often to be met with than either of the editions of 1624. The printer's name does not appear, but it was no doubt also from the press of Augustin Mathewes, as it contains the same printer's flowers and initial letters as before. These three editions were all that were published in Donne's lifetime, and they have been used as the basis of the text in the present edition.

In 1634, two years after Donne's death, a fourth edition was printed at the same press as before, but for a new publisher, Charles Greene. It was set in somewhat smaller type, making only 262 printed leaves, and was embellished with a frontispiece delicately engraved by William Marshall. This represents the marble effigy of Donne which was formerly in old St Paul's, and, having survived the fire of 1666, is still to be seen in the chancel of the present Cathedral. The effigy is surmounted by a skull wreathed with laurel, and is flanked by four scenes from the Old Testament. In 1638 a fifth edition was printed by Mathewes for Richard Royston. The type is somewhat more closely set, occupying only 226 printed leaves, and the book has the same frontispiece as before. Both these editions are now, for no obvious reason, exceedingly rare, being certainly less often to be found than even the first edition of 1624.

No further editions were published in England in the seventeenth century, but it is curious to find a

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definite statement that it was translated into Dutch and published at Amsterdam in 1655. The authority for this is Morhof who in his *Polyhistor* (ed. 2, 1714, lib. vi, cap. iv, § 18) states that Donne “*Scripsit et Meditationes super morbo suo sacras, quæ in Linguam Belgicam conversæ et Amstelodami 1655 in 12° editæ sunt.*” No such edition, however, is now known to bibliographers, and if it indeed exists very few copies can have survived. Perhaps it may yet emerge from the obscurity in which it has so long been hidden.

After the publication of the fifth edition of 1638 the *Devotions* were not again printed for more than two centuries; but at last in 1839 they appeared at the end of the third of the six volumes of Donne’s Works edited by Dean Alford. This constitutes the sixth edition. The seventh edition was tastefully printed at the Chiswick Press and published by William Pickering in 1840. To this edition were added two sermons, that on the death of Lady Danvers and *Death’s Duell*, Donne’s own funeral sermon, as it was called, and an enlargement of Marshall’s engraving was inserted as frontispiece. Finally an eighth edition was printed by D. A. Talboys at Oxford and published in 1841. In all of these recent editions the spelling was modernized and Donne’s peculiar use of capitals and italics was ignored. Yet both these peculiarities were certainly deliberate, so that part of the author’s intention is missed if they are abandoned.

xxviii *Bibliographical Note*

These editions contain moreover numerous corruptions, which are due partly to the fact that the texts follow that of one of the later editions and partly to errors made in copying these originals when they were right. A few are due to attempts on the part of the editors to modernize and to emend the original text. The majority of these corruptions are unimportant, but they serve to make nonsense of some passages, and to spoil the point of others. Alford's emendation of "altercation" for "alteration" on the first page is an instance of this injudicious editing.

The text of the present edition, the ninth of the series, is based primarily on that of the first edition, but it has been carefully collated with those of the second and third editions. Where variations have been detected—chiefly in the use of capitals, italics, and punctuation, but occasionally also in words and phrases—that reading which in the editor's judgment seemed to be the best has been adopted. The more important of these variations will be found recorded in the footnotes, where also are noted the few instances in which an emendation has been supplied by the editor. The texts of the editions of 1634 and 1638, published after Donne's death, have not been regarded as having any authority. The original spelling, capital letters, and italics have been restored (except that j, v and s have been substituted for the archaic i, u and f), so that the book may again be read in very