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**‘Christ’s New Stamp’:
Imputed Righteousness and Coin Mintage
in John Donne’s Poetry**

Treball de Fi de Màster

Andrés Santiago Berrón

Jordi Coral Escola

Department de Filologia Anglesa i Germanística

Master in Advanced English Studies

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Abstract

This paper analyses John Donne's poetic exploration of a Patristic metaphor, which compares humanity to a coin that has defaced its stamp, the *imago Dei*, due to the Fall. Christ's role, thus, is to allow these coins to regain the original image they bore. Donne, writing after the Elizabethan Settlement and the Henrician Debasement, refashions this conceit in order to take account of the alterations in soteriological and economic thought that had taken place due to these events, while making constant reference to the controversial belief in the divine right of kings. In order to understand the implications of Donne's involvement with the metaphor, this dissertation follows the Protestant *ordo salutis*, describing the author's visual representation of each step according to the aforementioned conceit. In order to aid its reading of the poems, references are made both to sermons authored by Donne, and to works written by relevant Protestant theologians. By doing so, it uncovers not only a poetic reflection on the implicit relation between salvific and monetary economies, but also a preoccupation with the effects these notions have on alchemical subjects, as well as on the role played by women in religious thought and in society as a whole.

Keywords: Donne, Protestantism, Soteriology, Economy, Coinage, Theology

0 Introduction

The transformation of coinage during Henry VIII's reign, which consisted in the debasement of silver and gold coins, coincided with the outbreak of the English Reformation, both of which were directed to a considerable extent by the King himself. It could be said, then, that the renovation of the notion of monetary value introduced by Henry's Great Debasement was replicated in the field of religious discourse by the reconsideration of good works that constituted one of the most fundamental parts of the Reformation. The effects of Henry's debasement have been examined by authors such as Keith Wrightson, whose book *Earthly Matters: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* documents the material results of the change in coinage as well as the popular reaction to those numismatic alterations, affirming that these changes "rapidly undermined confidence in the currency." (119) With regards to the relationship between the Kingly right to mint coins and Christian notions about the economy of salvation, some scholars, such as Devin Singh, have thoroughly examined the interaction between the economic discourse of the Roman Empire and early Christian soteriology, noticing their interconnectedness. In the case of the English Reformation, just as the purity of the coin's metal was no longer necessary for it to be valuable, since the stamp made it current, the Christian was now saved only by faith, regardless of the insufficiency of their good works, because Christ's righteousness was imputed to them.

John Donne's complicated relationship to both of these conceptions of value informs much of his poetry. As a consequence, his usage of religious and monetary concepts has been extensively analysed, although their interconnectedness has, perhaps, not been sufficiently investigated. Due to this, not much attention has been paid to the way economic and theological discourses converge to legitimate the rule of monarchs in

this era in the history of England, in which the divine right of kings was a key governmental conviction.

The stamping of coins appears often in Donne's verse in order to illustrate the way in which Christ's righteousness justifies the sinner. This paper will attempt to explore the poet's usage of that image by focusing on the debasement of coinage and the Protestant notion of imputed righteousness. In order to achieve this, it will first introduce both the changes in coinage that had been taking place in England, and the transformation of the value of good works and justification in Christian theology. Then, it will provide an analysis of Donne's preoccupation with the stamping of coins, which he related to the new understanding of justification. By reconstructing seventeenth-century numismatic principles and establishing their connection with the Anglican view of justification, the theo-economic ideology on which the divine right of English monarchs rests will be made clearer. In order to achieve this, Donne's role as a preacher to James I as well as his son Charles I will be taken into account, and the sermons in which he mentions the authority of monarchs will be examined. Besides this, the analysis will focus on four major poems, which are complex examples of Donne's seamless integration of contemporary monetary debate and religious discourse. These poems are the two "Anniversaries", "To Mr. Tilman After He Had Taken Orders", and "The Bracelet". All of these poems, except for the last one, are part of Donne's more mature output, and thus can be unequivocally dated to a period in which he no longer thought of himself as a Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, the appearance of conceits in which the stamping of coins is compared to theological justification is something they have in common, providing us with a core poetic production in which monetary and spiritual value are treated as interchangeable. Notwithstanding the focus on these poems, references will be made to other verse works

by the author, in an attempt to generate a comprehensive view of the author's engagement with this issue.

This dissertation's structure will be based on the chronological understanding of the process of salvation known as the *ordo salutis*, as formulated by William Perkins.¹ After an introduction to the economic and religious context, it will examine the prelapsarian state of humanity, before original sin corrupted the human-coin, provoking a debasement. This first section will deal chiefly with "The Bracelet", attempting to understand why the enigmatic angel-coins, made of pure gold, are able to triumph over the currencies of other countries, whose adherence to Catholicism seems, in Donne's poetic exploration of the geopolitics of his time, to devalue the money that circulates within their territories. The following two subsections, concerned with the fallen state of humanity, and the loss of golden purity, will make use of the "Anniversaries" to establish the fact that the poet depicts the effects of original sin as economic in nature. This provokes a change in the nature of all things,—including human beings—and lessens their worth, as well as their intellectual and physical capacities.

The two chapters that follow will concentrate on seemingly tangential questions which, nevertheless, are indispensable in order to fully understand the way the conceit is developed. The question of the female role in the management of Donne's economy will then be addressed, particularly as depicted in the "Second Anniversary". Similarly, a brief overlook of the poet's usage of alchemical language in relation to conversion—as seen, for instance, in his *Holy Sonnets*—will make the transition from the debased human-coin to the saved one much clearer.

¹ While also including comments on the prelapsarian state and the effects of the Fall in the first section. The elements of the *ordo salutis* on which this study will focus are repentance, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

The next section will explore the effects of the Lutheran notion that justified Christians are *simul justus et peccator*. It will inspect the incongruity, captured in “To Mr. Tilman After He Had Taken Orders”, between the justified human-as-coin’s intrinsic fallenness and the immense goodness of its stamp, which represents God’s imputation of Christ’s righteousness to sinners. The role of sanctification and the performance of good works, which are able to circulate in God’s economy due to the Christian’s justified state, will also be examined. The last chapter will turn to the “Second Anniversary”, detailing the human-as-coin’s desire for glorification, poetically configured as the alchemical restoration of the coin’s golden state. It will explain why glorification is depicted as a change in the numismatic-human’s intrinsic value that can only take place after the resurrection of the flesh, and thus must be patiently waited for by the faithful Christian.

The economic illustration of the transformative effect of salvation is complicated by an awareness of the incongruence between the external sinfulness of the elect and the alien justness by which they are justified. As a consequence, Donne projects the definitive sanctification of the Christian’s self onto the resurrection, relating that future state of perfection to the purity of golden coins. This alchemical restoration could be compared to the restoration of the material value of coins after Henry VIII’s debasement. The debasement continued into Edward VI and Mary’s reigns, but was reversed by Elizabeth: thus, the economic rightfulness and prowess of Protestant sovereigns was made possible by the political triumph of what was perceived to be the correct doctrinal stance on soteriological matters.

This is a topic worthy of serious study, since Donne’s extensive preoccupation with monetary issues and soteriology is confirmed by his obsessive use of poetic images inspired by the stamping of coins, in particular in theological contexts, evoking the Protestant notion of justification by faith. In doing so, the poet creates a vast system of

symbolic correspondences between economic and religious languages, demonstrating that they gave legitimacy to each other for Early Modern Protestants, not only for proto-orthodox Christians in Late Antiquity, as shown by Singh's *Divine Currency*. The poet's reiterative usage of that metaphor hints at the fact that he himself perceived an intrinsic relationship between the economic and religious systems of valuation. Subsequently, an analysis of this conceit will not only contribute to the discussions regarding the theological and monetary discourse of Early Modern England, but also provide new insight into their inextricable connection. In doing so, it will participate in an academic conversation that is still ongoing, and help us understand how the power of sovereigns and their currency were sanctified by the Christian usage of their language, and how those changes in theo-economic and governmental theory have contributed to the role money plays in the present era.

1 Contexts: Economy and Soteriology

1.1 God and Mammon: The Economic Context of Post-Reformation England

Around ten years after the *Ecclesiastical Appeals Act 1532*, which formally inaugurated the Church of England's ecclesiastical independence from Rome, Henry VIII initiated the Great Debasement, thus "reducing the silver content of the coinage, while retaining its face value." (Wrightson 118) Due to this, the implicit trust which coins derive from their imprinted "affirmation of [their] origin from a centre of authority" (Singh 108) was what their economic value had to exclusively rely on. Notions of the value of currency being inherent to the coin and depending on the material they were made of competed with "an older view" (Freer 499), supported by some scholastic authors, according to which "currency had no intrinsic value, but only the value that the monarch gave to it." (499) Nevertheless, these changes "rapidly undermined confidence in the currency."

(Wrightson 119) Prices rose at an exceedingly high rate, and many considered that “venal merchants and the consumer’s vain desire for luxury” (Freer 498) were to blame.

Besides this, due to the fact that economy was not thought to be “autonomous from politics, ethics, or religious doctrine” (Landreth 148), the profound religious changes that England was undergoing decisively affected the popular and intellectual reaction to the debasement and subsequent inflation. Catholic authors, lamenting the financial upheaval and conceiving it as inseparable from the introduction of Protestantism into the *Dowry of Mary*, asserted that the “suppression of the monasteries and the debasement of the currency [were] each aspects of the same wholesale exploitativeness” (160) which characterised the reigns of Henry VIII and his intensely Protestant son Edward VI. Mary I’s reign was marked by an attempt to alleviate the issues caused by the debasement, reverting to some extent those changes, and relating the problems to the fact “that many had consented to the new order only out of fear” (Palliser 96). The English Reformation was seen by Catholics as an abuse of monarchical power, which was replicated in economic terms by the Great Debasement. Due to this, some of the revolts associated with the conservative reaction to Henrician changes to the Church have been perceived to be enticed by “almost purely economic motives” (99). Religious and monetary changes were deemed to be inseparable, with a transformation in doctrine being able to account for a mutation in numismatic practices, and vice versa.

By contrast, Protestant authors believed that “clergymen [were] to participate in the everyday ‘commerce’ of their flocks” (Landreth 160). The Protestant belief in the necessity, even for ministers, of encouraging commercial transactions, can be perceived in the works of the early reformers. Luther, for instance, affirmed that “God had not put silver and gold into the mountains for them to be left idle, without transforming them into capital for consumption and investment.” (Rössner 296) This fact notwithstanding,

Anglicans were preoccupied by the rise in prices, lamenting “the decay of charity” (Landreth 153), but rejecting the Catholic system of economic distribution, and instead advocating for a reformulation of the principles of monetary equity which, as they realised, were necessary for the wellbeing of the community.

After the Marian restoration’s attempted return to Catholicism, which involved religious and economic changes, the Elizabethan Settlement stabilised both England’s denominational affiliation and the material value of coins. Ushering in a complete renovation, Elizabeth decided to “replace all the debased coins of the prior reigns” (Landreth 160), hence restoring confidence in the value of currency, as well as the monarchy’s capacity to oversee and ensure the proliferation of just commercial transactions. Precious metals themselves were seen to be able to ground communal faith in the commercial values of the commonwealth, just as “right religion was [the commonwealth’s] means to its temporal health.” (160) In other words, it could be said that “gold [...] is the monetary equivalent of God” (Crosthwaite et al. 95), in the sense of being ancillary to commercial faith, allowing for credit and debit to be taken as meaningful. Besides this, the perceived value of gold also allows for “coinage” (Singh 91) to reinforce the Protestant Christian “theological model” (91), in which the restoration of the *imago Dei* in the soul,—or the coin’s stamp—identified with justification, must await the post-resurrection glorification in order to be replicated in the body—or the metal the coin is made of.

Furthermore, the Reformation’s assertion that the believer was justified *sola fide* meant that the implicit connection between faith itself and the regulatory function coins have on economic exchanges was becoming increasingly evident during these periods of uncertainty. Luther himself had identified the similarity between faith and trust, while these are seen by some authors to refer to different things: “Faith aims at a transcendent

God, whereas the immanent object of trust is man.” (Palaver 55) Trusting in the monarch’s sovereignty over coinage and commerce and having faith in God, thus, are two similar ways to relate to a superior power. Perhaps rooted in the “origin of money in sacrificial rituals” (56), the interconnectedness of money and religion as complex mechanisms whereby the individual and the sovereign negotiate their stance towards each other gave the foundation for the Patristic usage of coins as a productive metaphor. This form of theo-economic language, as will be detailed below, was being reformulated during Donne’s time because of the reformers’ interest in the writings of the Church Fathers.

At the same time, due to “the abundance of new gold” (Freer 501), mostly coming from America, which starkly contrasted with the previous lack thereof, “money itself had become a commodity” (501), although the sense of discomfort generated by the years of numismatic trouble had not completely disappeared. On the contrary, Donne’s awareness of the disparity between intrinsic material valuelessness and imputed value—through an inscription that manifests approval from an authority—informs much of his poetry. To understand the agony that this incongruity generates, as well as the hope in an Elizabeth-like restoration of material value, we ought to examine how the notion of good works had been transformed by the English Reformation, both in its novel doctrinal formulations and its rediscoveries of Patristic soteriological language.

1.2 The English Reformation: Reconsidering Good Works

Henry VIII’s monetary policies and the subsequent gradual adoption of Protestant theological doctrines following his decision to break the English Church’s ties to Rome overlap in ways which are not merely chronological. The *39 Articles*, promulgated during Queen Elizabeth I’s reign, formalised the Anglican adherence to the Reformed notion of

justification by faith alone. The eleventh article, rejecting the *Romish* understanding of justification as a process which includes sanctification (as seen in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1989), states that “we are justified by faith only” (Book of Common Prayer 677), and “only for the merit of [...] Jesus Christ, and not our own merits” (677). This meant, according to article twelve, that good works were to be understood only as “fruits of [justifying] faith” (677), and not in any sense requirements for salvation. Palliser, providing an example of the popular English understanding of this doctrine, makes reference to Alderman Monmouth, who reportedly stated in his will, written in 1537, that he “trusted in his salvation solely through the merits of Christ's passion.” (Palliser 98) Consequently, the completion of sanctification was projected onto the future prospect of glorification after the resurrection of the dead at the Last Judgement, and deemed not possible for those still living.²

As a result of this transformation of the worth of human action, the traditional patristic association of coins with the Christian individual had to be re-examined. In theological frameworks in which good works can sanctify the believer and contribute towards the complete rectification of the *imago Dei*, “the coin” (Singh 116), referring to humanity, “continues to be made out of gold” (116), but this material value is lost due to the change in the stamp. By performing good works, a Christian can fully restore the stamp God intended them to bear, attain holiness, and be once more a golden coin.

By contrast, due to Protestant soteriological doctrines, the justified Christian-as-coin can no longer be perceived by the Creator as worth the same as a golden coin, despite the rectification of the coin's imprint, and the fact that “the metal is there already” (Donne 311) in some form. The reason why the body cannot be glorified and the faithful fully

² The protracted consequences of the controversy generated by this idea can be perceived in the birth of the Methodist movement, which affirms the possibility of this-worldly entire sanctification, or Christian perfection.

sanctified in this life is because, despite this, that metal “in [the believer]”, according to Donne, “was but a piece of copper money” (265).³ The fallen person is, according to the ninth article, “of his own nature inclined to evil” (676), and this inclination also remains “in them that are regenerated” (676). The notion of total depravity transforms the loss of gold into an actual fact: the material itself changed after the fall, and justification and baptismal regeneration do not change that. Furthermore, humanity was conceived as being “incapable of contributing in any meaningful way to its own salvation” (Willis 138). Subsequently, the good works which come forth as fruits of faith are thought to be minted by God and “[made] current and somewhat worth, even towards Him” (Donne 262), but unable to contribute towards justification, which is fully due to the redemptive work of Christ. It should be noted, nevertheless, that, in Protestant soteriology, the forgiveness of sins included both the eternal punishment of Hell and the “debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory” (Sixth Session of Council of Trent, Canon XXX).⁴ The complete remission of sins given to the penitent is a merciful concession granted to depraved humanity, and is the positive result, so to speak, of an incapacity to attain Christian perfection, since those who “say they can no more sin as long as they live here [...] are to be condemned” (Book of Common Prayer 678).

However, the desire to perceive or imagine oneself as fully sanctified or glorified did not disappear after the English Reformation. Supererogatory works, condemned by the fourteenth of the *39 Articles*, were one of the main components of the pre-Reformation universal call to holiness, yet they were now denounced as “papistical superstitions and

³ There would seem to be an implicit relationship between this notion and that of the classical Ages of Man, which also portray moral decay as metallurgic debasement.

⁴ Protestants rejected the doctrine of Purgatory, but not the existence of temporal punishment for sins.

abuses” (61) in the sermon on good works included in the *First Book of Homilies*. Their purpose had been to help devout Christians avoid purgatory by dying in a sanctified state through the “[acquisition of] merit” (Willis 173). Arguably, after the Reformation, they were replaced by an increased interaction with the hope and promise of glorification following the resurrection. Donne himself, posing for a portrait in which he wears the shroud he was to be buried in, exemplifies this anticipatory engagement with the fulfilment of the *ordo salutis*. The author also makes reference to it in several of his poems, seeking a “consoling vision of the miracle of resurrection.” (Johnson 91) This intimate willingness to imitate the appearance of the dead at their rising might be partly corresponded by the interest in “the linen of Christ’s burial and, notably, resurrection.” (Lees-Jeffries 282) By contrast, the inconstant stream of good works, which he perceives faith must produce in order to assure himself of his salvation, leads to the preoccupation evidenced in “Holy Sonnet 19”.⁵

Another fundamental element in the Reformed belief in the post-mortem completion of the process of salvation is the assertion of the unique role of Christ as a sinless mediator. Article fifteen of the Anglican Church’s *39 Articles* declares that “all we the rest [...] offend in many things” (677). This implicit rejection of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary also denotes the fact that she cannot mediate, as *Co-Redemptrix*, with Christ on behalf of humankind. Since only the incarnated Son of God is sinless, there is an increase in the difference between humankind’s imperfect state and the glorified state exemplified by Christ, which is even greater than that enjoyed by the prelapsarian Adam and Eve. This gulf used to be bridged by both Mary and the saints, whose invocation the twenty-second article describes as “repugnant to the word of God.”

⁵ Thus, Donne both affirms the necessity of trusting in the promise of glorification, and portrays the insufficiency of sanctification in this life.

(679) According to the Reformed view, Christ alone is free from the taint of sin, and thus is the only example of the undefiled *imago Dei*. As the image of the Father, as well as the “stamp used to make impressions of the *imago Dei* on humanity” (Singh 105), he prefigures the fate of glorified humanity, in which “this corruptible must put on incorruption: and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:53, 1599 *Geneva Bible*)

As a consequence of these changes to the soteriological value of meritorious good works, the notion that Christ’s righteousness was imputed to the believer in order to justify them was firmly established. This created, in Lutheran terms, a Christian who, being justified, was *simul justus et peccator*. It ought to be noted that the idea of a *iustitia aliena*, although not firmly established in England “until the late 1530s” (McGrath 230), was by Donne’s time an integral element of the moderate Calvinism that represented Anglican orthodoxy, in accordance to the doctrinal preferences of both Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. Total depravity, imputed righteousness, and the contradictory state of the saved faithful as *simul justus et peccator* meant that the Protestant Christian-as-coin, justified and reminted, bore Christ’s stamp, but was still made of a lesser material. Still sinning, and not yet fully sanctified, Anglicans had to wait for the glorification they were to receive at the general resurrection.

2 Prelapsarian and Postlapsarian Humanity

2.1 Prelapsarian Coins: *Imago Dei* and the Angels’ First State of Creation

Donne’s “Elegia I”, commonly referred to as “The Bracelet”, makes reference to England’s angel coins, and in describing them alludes not only to the qualities of the unrebelling angels, but also to the state Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall. Furthermore, the poet features angels in multiple of his poems, and points to them in

many of his sermons. In doing so, he regularly compares them to the past, present, and future states of humanity, taking into account the fact that the War in Heaven, exemplifying the extent of angelic agency, had preceded the creation of Adam. The angels that appear in "The Bracelet" are certainly "righteous angels" (Donne, line 9), but the author also has in mind the fact that "angels sinned first" ("To Sir Henry Wotton", line 40), and thus can either point one toward salvation, or towards damnation. Lacking sinfulness, these angel-coins present a perfect intermingling of precious and pure materiality and the presence of an authoritative stamp that sanctifies the method of economic exchange by depicting the patron saint of England. Besides this, the speaker asserts that "heaven commanded" (line 13) those angel-coins to "gain new friends, to appease great enemies" (line 15), demonstrating an awareness of the ability of legally approved commerce as a way to generate a non-violent "pacifying and stabilising function in society" (Singh 132), which certainly reinforces its legitimacy by the usage of religious imagery.

Nevertheless, the representation of Saint George in the coins and the preceding patristic association of gold with sinlessness leads to a seeming confusion of the soteriological role of angels with that of Christ. Patristic authors think of Christ as the "very [...] coin of the redemptive economy" (Singh 119), whose distinctiveness is characterised by the fact that he is "the paradigmatic coin, [...] pure, and unadulterated" (123), a fact which is strengthened by the "linkage between Christ and gold" (237). The poetic voice in "The Bracelet", perceiving the similarity between this paradigmatic coin and the twelve angels he contemplates, "skirts the central Christian doctrine of Christ's atonement for human sin" (Mueller 356), and projects onto them his redemptory function. Because of this, the speaker states the angels must "my sins great burden bear" (line 18), combining the New Testament's description of sin through the language of economy and

debt with the Old Testament's preference for the conception of sin as a burden, which, for instance, the scapegoat must take away from the community.⁶ An encounter between the already idiomatic usage of coins as a metaphor for humanity in the context of the economy of salvation and an actual numismatic representation of a spiritual figure results in the speaker's unintentional blurring of the distinction between theological and literal uses of language. In other words, it could be argued that the Son's appearance as a human-coin is a result of the Incarnation, but, since angels have "bodies of air" (Dickson 84), as seen in the poet's "Air and Angels", their appearance as images in a golden coin is incongruent with the patristic allusions to coinage.

In addition to this, the circularity of the coins, which is not shared by the Spanish coins,—those "unlick'd beare whelps" (line 31)—denotes their perfection. Indeed, Donne called circles "one of the most convenient hieroglyphics of God" (Mueller 480). Subsequently, the poetic voice in the "Second Anniversary", referring to the soul's "first pitch" (line 435), identifies it with a circle, beckoning the addressee to recover its form, stating: "be thou such" (line 438). Thus, the precious metal the coin is made of, joined to a sacral image and a regular, circular form, is associated with the prelapsarian state, as exemplified by the *blessed angels*. This analogy is made possible by the fact that the prelapsarian human state was believed to have been similar to that of the righteous angels, since, according to Calvin's *Institutes*, Adam, "in his primitive condition" (111) could by the gifts of "reason, intelligence, prudence, and judgement [...] rise up to God and eternal happiness" (111). The prelapsarian state is associated with unbound free will in both

⁶ "In the Hebrew Bible proper, [...] the metaphor that takes pride of place and that is used by far the most is that of sin as a burden that individuals bear on their backs. Forgiveness of sin, then, means removing the burden from the back of the person so afflicted [...] the principal ritual for eliminating sin is the scapegoat [...] When we move into the period of Second Temple Judaism [...] that idiom gradually disappears from everyday speech. [...] The idiom that replaces it is sin as a debt [...] stories told about sin and the forgiveness of sin in this period increasingly revolve around individuals who owe money and are relieved of what they owe." (Massari)

humans and angels, as seen in Salkeld's *A Treatise of Angels*, which shall be explored below.

By focusing on the enigmatic angel coins, whose value increased from Henry VIII's reign to James I's, the poem plays on the connection between the purity of gold and the authority of a coin's stamp, both of which feature in the writing of the Church Fathers. The sinless state that Christ and the angels share is imagined by Donne as a union of pure gold, without alloy, and the *imago Dei*, which connects governmental authority to divine government, and, in Saint George's case, victory over satanic forces. The twelve angels are contrasted with the "crowns of France" (line 23) and the "Spanish stamps" (line 29). Both the French and Spanish coins are identified with that which their stamps represent, and with the poetic voice's perceived understanding of their countries' character. It is notable that neither the crowns nor the Spanish *escudos* are said by the speaker to make use of Christian iconography, although many of them did feature a cross.⁷ The latter may be "as Catholic as their king" (line 30), but that *universal*⁸ nature only allows them to "pervert the cause of justice" (Mueller 357) by performing economic actions that violate the natural law, such as bribes. The English angels are not guilty of such ill usage, and that fact is partly due to the image of Saint George that is imprinted in them. The presence of the patron saint itself is connected to the coins,—as in the case of Christ, whose "image on coins made them sacred" (Singh 129)—dissuading those who possess them, such as the poetic voice, from treating them irreverently by, for instance, melting them, as he intends to do.

⁷ It is as if the sickly nature of the coins, as perceived by the speaker, discouraged the mention of their usage of Christian iconography.

⁸ The (etymological) sense in which the poetic voice uses the word Catholic.

Other poems also depict the English *angels* as victorious economic conquerors. In “Love’s War”, the speaker contrasts the French hatred for “our God” (line 10), with the fact that they “[rely] upon our angels well” (line 11). This implies that the righteous English coinage can triumph over other—non-Protestant—currencies, and that, subsequently, the Anglican Protestant notion of God’s economy, which the French hate, is superior to the Catholic one they propose.

We also ought to remember that the division of the angels into the categories of blessed and fallen is typologically reflected in an inverted sense by the partition of humanity. Some angels seceded from a mass of righteousness, but only some people are elected, or chosen,⁹ into salvation from the human *massa damnata*. Thus, angels point at once to the prelapsarian state of humanity, and to the fate that is reserved for the elect, which is an attainment of a superior glory than that which their first parents lost.

It is because of this that some of Donne’s addressees are imagined as possessing angelic features, or having undergone glorification,¹⁰ and are hence associated with gold. As an example of this, we could examine the Elizabeth Drury of the “Second Anniversary”, “whose soul, if we may say, ‘twas gold” (Donne, line 241). She, like the twelve righteous angels of “The Bracelet”, assumes Christlike qualities, since the poetic voice describes her as:

[...] she whose rich beauty lent
Mintage to other beauties, for they went
But for so much as they were like to her (lines 223-5)

Similarly, Christ is “the paradigmatic divine stamp” (Singh 127) which gives all of creation its mintage. Drury, appearing as an angel or a glorified Christian believer, has

⁹ “For many are called, but few chosen.” (Matthew 22:14)

¹⁰ This point shall be explored later, in the section concerning glorification.

overcome the paradoxical conjunction of opposing states which the notion of *simul justus et peccator* represents.

The Protestant emphasis on Christ as the only sinless mediator complicates the poet's allusions to the Italianate *donna angelicata*, since the problematic angelic usurpation of the Son's status—in "Armilla"—is also possible for these female figures. Christ ought to be "the chief coin" (Singh 157) and "more valuable than human coinage" (157). As a consequence of this tendency to usurp Jesus' role, the poetic voice in "Armilla", as if referring to God, assents to the addressee's wishes by saying "thy will be done" (line 79).

Angels were not ransomed by Christ's death—the eleventh of the *39 Articles* is called *Of the Justification of Man*, implying that those angels that did not rebel against God are in no need of atonement. Their righteousness is something they can call their own, and they have no need for any *iustitia aliena* to be imputed to them. According to John Salkeld's 1613 *A Treatise of Angels*, neither the blessed nor the damned angels "were created with their supernatural beatitude" (195), but instead "received it as a reward and crown of their obedience" (202) by means of "their election *ex parte Dei*" (205).¹¹ Thus, some of the angels remain sinless, but all of humanity, due the transgression of Adam and Eve, have distorted the *imago Dei* and, furthermore, exchanged their golden nature for a lesser, impure one. They have also lost their circularity, which emblematically linked them to their Creator. This degradation appears recurrently in the poet's verses, in various imaginative configurations.

¹¹ Just like Adam, as suggested in the passage of Calvin's *Institutes* that was quoted previously, could have freely attained glorification by means of his obedience in the garden.

2.2 From Gold to Copper Coins: Original Sin and Human Depravity

In the elegy “*Armilla*”, those qualities which made the twelve coins valuable are immediately contrasted with material impurities. They admit “no leaven of vile solder” (line 10), and still retain their “form”, which “gives being” (line 76). It is implied that all of those qualities must subsist in the coin in order for it to maintain its intended value. The Church Fathers, when constructing the analogy of the human-as-coin, seemed to focus almost exclusively on the stamp and its change or distortion when describing the effects of Adam’s transgression. For instance, Eusebius, influenced by Philo’s writing, emphasises the impression of “the seal of God” (Singh 110), and Tertullian writes about “the *denarius* of man’s image” (111). The latter affirms that humans bear “[God’s] image, likeness, name, and *substance*” (111, emphasis mine). Only the stamp, which denotes “human nature and character” (114), was thought to have been distorted by original sin, denoting Satan’s usurpation of God’s role, and his claim to the ownership of humanity.

However, Protestant reformers proposed an understanding of the extent of inherited sin that demanded a revision of this analogy. Because of this, Donne seems to identify the Fall with the mixture of pure gold with *vile solder*, or its exchange for lesser metals. The *39 Articles* affirm the Reformed doctrine of total depravity, according to which “concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin” (676). Those who dissent would commonly be thought of as “Pelagians” (676), or leaning to some extent towards that heretical view of human nature. The complete inability of humanity to desire to act according to God’s commandments is expressed in the thirteenth article, called *Of Works Before Justification*, which affirms that those pre-salvation works have “the nature of sin” (677), subsequently not “[deserving] grace of congruity” (677). Although Donne’s “Satire 3” expresses some doubt regarding this issue, featuring the assertion that the “merit / Of strict life might be imputed faith” (lines 12-3), other poems contain a very clear assertion

of total depravity, asserting the degradation in the human-as-coin's materiality, its very nature having changed and suffered a depreciation. In fact, some lines in "Satire 3" have been said by certain scholars to hint at the "the depravity of the reasoning faculty" (Stachniewski 691) by locating truth "on a huge hill" (line 79). William Perkins, in *A Golden Chain*, also points in this direction, defining sin as "corruption, or rather deprivation, of the initial integrity" (37), while still contradicting Donne's poetic explanation of the issue by stating that "sin is not a corruption of man's substance, but only of his faculties." (42)¹²

We ought to turn to the "Second Anniversary" in order to get a very clear glimpse of this change in value which proceeds from the loss of the innocent sinlessness in which humankind was created. When referring to the *heathen* transition from primordial monotheism to the worship of multiple gods, the speaker turns to numismatic metaphors, echoing Patristic analogical language and establishing a degree of depravation that leaves no space for the Catholic notion of congruent merit, that is, "merit prior to justification" (McGrath 159). The poetic voice states that polytheists,

[...] by changing that whole precious gold
To such small copper coins, they lost the old
And lost their only God [...] (lines 429-31)

Similarly, the "First Anniversary", echoing classical references to the descent from a primordial golden age—the first state of creation in Christian thought—to successively more degenerate ages, features the assertion that we are unable to exchange our fathers' "silver" (line 149)—which, according to Mueller, echoes the epoch of the biblical "patriarchs" (432)—"to gold" (line 148). The alchemical transformation from lesser into

¹² This discrepancy between Reformed theology and the apparent literal meaning of Donne's poetic exploration of total depravity can be explained by the fact that poetry is not meant to be doctrinal; or, at least, that its primary objective is not to produce an exclusively theological discourse.

greater is impossible: human beings have received a depraved nature and it is not possible for them to transmute it. A poem dedicated “To the Countess of Salisbury”, dated August 1614, reuses this image. The speaker refers to the present by claiming that “now, when all is withered, shrunk, and dried” (line 9), humanity has “drawn their sound gold ingot into wire” (line 18), having thus

[...] [drawn] to less
Even that nothing, which at first we were (lines 20-1)

These allusions to original sin, which has been conceived since the beginnings of Christianity as a form of “debt obligation” (Singh 140), construe the consequences of original sin as emerging from a misguided commercial transaction. Humankind seems to have suffered from the devil’s dishonest economic practices, having attempted to gain something more than that which was given by God to them. The devil has engaged in commerce with humanity from the moment they succumbed to his temptation, and sin is his money, which menaces God’s numismatic monopoly: indeed, Donne as a preacher would call approaches to sin “the Devil’s single money” (311).¹³ This has resulted in a change that is sometimes conceived as physical in character. In a sermon, the poet refers to “that body which in [him is] but a piece of copper money” (265).

Donne also compares the fruits of human depravity with the illicit confection of coins without the monarch’s approval in one of his sermons, stating that “comforts of our own nature are counterfeit, are copper” (300). Thus, it would appear that sons of Eve have completely forsaken their state of natural grace with which they were created. As a consequence, their actions, when outside the operation of grace, are inevitably injurious to God’s economy, competing next to Satan’s illicit coins with God’s legitimate coinage. The belief that good works before justification “have the nature of sin” (*Book of Common*

¹³ The description of sinful actions as coins minted by Satan might be related to Judas’ silver pieces; the Apostle Peter states that he “purchased a field with the reward of iniquity” (Acts 1:18).

Prayer 677), as expressed in the *39 Articles*, underlies this understanding of depravity, and reinforces the human-as-coin's material change, which is also reflected in the works-as-coins he produces. This negative transformation consists of a loss of natural grace, not merely of "supernatural gifts which were a garment of glory [for] Adam" (Palmer 36), as some Jesuits would later affirm.

The profound change caused by the Fall may seem to be harmful to the notion of human dignity, but it ought to be remembered that humanity's decayed state does not provoke God's utter rejection of his love towards it. Some of the *Holy Sonnets* feature poetic voices who feel themselves to be still entangled by a completely unregenerate nature, yet the possibility of repentance through God's active grace and election is never denied. Saint Augustine, a figure the reformers intensely studied, believed that even the "most depraved soul is better than light, the noblest of corporeal things" (Mann 44). The human-as-coin has lost its golden appearance, undergoing an ontological change that they cannot change by their own efforts, but the fallen nature they are bound by is still capable of "philosophic or civil righteousness" (*Book of Concord* 78). This allows for some degree of identification with the Creator, albeit a non-justifying nor meritorious one.

Besides this, the classically inspired conception of gold's decay into silver or copper is not the only analogy that appears in the poet's verse works. For instance, the poem "Good Friday, 1613" contains a reference to the speaker's "rusts, and [his] deformity" (line 40). Similarly, the poetic voice in the elegy called "Love's Progress" states that:

I, when I value gold, may think upon
The ductileness, the application,
The wholesomeness, the ingenuity,
From rust, from soil, from fire ever free (lines 11-4)

The speaker "[values] gold" (line 11) by considering its "ingenuity" (line 13), alluding to a sense of innocence, which depends on a material purity that consists in being "from rust

[...] ever free” (line 14). Hawkes details that “the use value of gold consists in its physical properties” (51), being able to “determine the value of commodities” (51). Devaluations consisting in the introduction of alloy result in a degradation of the golden coin’s essence, its nature and interiority. The references to silver and copper in other poems indicate a disadvantageous exchange, as well as a subsequent incapacity to ascertain the actual value of marketable products. However, rusts are external, and seem to evoke the outward tincture of sin, instead of the ontological transformation it provoked. The allusion to deformity contrasts with the perfect circularity that has been explored above, and also reflects an exterior diminishment.

Another aspect that ought to be taken into consideration when analysing the material degradation of the numismatic-human is the influence of the language of Sacred Scripture. A notable example of biblical allusions to gold as correlative to righteousness can be found in the fourth chapter of the *Lamentations*, traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah. Donne’s involvement with this book of the Bible is evidenced by the poetic adaptation he produced, which was based “on the Latin version of Tremellius” (Klause 337). In the fourth chapter of the book, Jeremiah laments that “the gold [has] become so dim [...] and changed” (Lamentations 4:1).¹⁴ Presaging the future Patristic allegorical usage of gold as related to sinless purity, the prophet refers to “noble men of Zion”, who were before “comparable to fine gold” but are now “esteemed as earthen pitchers” (Lamentations 4:2). There is a perceivable change in subjective commercial value, but the possibility of ontological and objective material change is hinted at.¹⁵

¹⁴ By contrast, and hinting at the opposition between the copper (lack of intrinsic righteousness) and the perfect stamp (the *iustitia aliena*) that the justified human-coin is made of: “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth (though it be tried with fire) might be found unto your praise, and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). A similar Scriptural passage is 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

¹⁵ The change in subjective commercial value is hinted at by the word *esteemed*, while the ontological change is suggested by the word *become*.

In order to understand the transformation in commercial value, divorced from any sense of alteration in the coin's composition, we ought to examine the different stamp which the human-as-coin bears after their initial disobedience. We have seen that Donne conceives of Satan's deformed copper coins as threatening God's sovereignty. However, the Devil's numismatic production also bears an image that differs from the *imago Dei* with which Adam and Eve were imprinted at their creation, offering an alternate representation of what humankind should reflect, and making their divine ownership less apprehensible to them.

2.3 The Image of Adam: Satan's Coinage and Usurpation

The Protestant reformers revived and reinterpreted Augustinian notions of the effects of original sin, and the Patristic analogical deployment of coins to refer to humanity had to be modified in order to reflect this new understanding of inherited guilt. Nevertheless, the Church Fathers' assertion that the Fall constituted a distortion of the *imago Dei*, with which Adam and Eve were impressed,—being conceived of as God's coins—can also be perceived in Donne's poetry, although in a somewhat diminished form. Grenville's "A Treatise of Religion" echoes this sentiment, stating that "sin [...] did first deface God's Image" (Streete 88), thus demonstrating the circulation of this metaphor in other poets of Reformation England. A key element in Donne's usage of the sinful stamp of the human-as-coin is the contrast between the first Adam, through whom sin entered into the world, and the last Adam, Christ, who—in Calvinist terms—triumphed against it on behalf of the elect when he died.

As an example of this, the speaker in "To Mr. Tilman After He Had Taken Orders", reflecting on the change he has undergone, looks back to the image he possessed before justification, referring to it as "God's old image by creation" (line 17). His

transformation is compared to a King's conventional change in the stamps borne by the coins minted during the commencement of his reign. The King is Christ, and his reminting of coins is due both to his eternal inheritance from the Father and to his victory over Satan's attempted usurpation. Donne's poetic voice perceives in the distorted *imago Dei* a remnant of the pure "first state of [...] creation" ("Armilla", line 12). This coincides with the Calvinistic idea that "although the image of God is lost in the fall, this loss is never complete" (Streete 93), since "the mutilation of the image" (94) is perceptible through divine revelation. In Donne's words, "the image of God [...] can never be burnt out of us" (264), even though "we [have defaced] the image of God in ourselves by sin" (264). This defaced image is a mixture of "the image of God and the image of Adam" (274). Satan's copper money, thus, has imprinted in it an image of humanity as abstracted and radically separated from its Creator. Yet the Protestant faithful can perceive, when examining the Law they believe themselves unable to fulfil, the fact that in them is stamped "a distorted and corrupt image of humanity" (Willis 170). The stark contrast between what is expected from them by God and what they are able to accomplish allows them to take note of the remnant of the *imago Dei* that they still possess.¹⁶

Furthermore, in "The Bracelet", the comparison of the righteous English coins with the unrighteous Spanish and English stamps is based on the moral difference denoted by the graven image they are associated with. As has been noted above, French and Spanish *écus* frequently bore a cross in one of their sides, yet what Donne emphasises is the coat of arms they feature. The decaying French and Spanish body politic is made present by the emblem that decorates their coins, and, in a clear denotation of their sinful, postlapsarian nature, they suffer from "their natural country rot" (line 24). It might be

¹⁶ And which, as has been mentioned before, is in a certain way expressed by their ability to perform works of civil righteousness.

said that the coins' faulty stamps, depicting the crowns of ruinous countries, cause the gold to be worthless, since the speaker would be willing to part from them in that case. In Macarius of Egypt's numismatic explanation of inherited guilt, the human-as-coin's "intrinsic value is meaningless without the rightful stamp." (Singh 116) The wrongful stamps seem to denote "the spiritual corruptions of sin" (Johnson 91), indicating the fact that the human-as-coin is now the property of a usurper, circulating in an economy of damnation. By contrast, the negative material transformation, which Donne might be deriving from alchemical concepts, corresponds to "the physical corruptions of the decaying body" (91). The human-coin's alchemical degradation is an exacerbation of the metaphoric loss of golden value caused by Satan's reminting, transformed into an actual change due to the belief in total depravity.

The image of God and that of his sinful creatures coexist in the speaker of Donne's "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness":

Look Lord, and find both Adams met in me;
As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace (lines 23-5)

The fruits of the deformed coin, corrupted by alloy and denoting, in its stamp, its state as the result of an attempted deposition of its rightful owner, are death and suffering.¹⁷ Furthermore, the lyrical voice in "Holy Sonnet 10", due to his condition of betrothal "unto [God's] enemy" (line 10), laments his debt bondage to the devil, being "like an usurped town to another due" (line 5). The "economy of grace projected throughout the poem" (Cummings 397) clashes with the Devil's economy of sinfulness, which deceitfully promises abundance yet results, according to Augustinian theology, in "the acquisition of susceptibility to physical pain, fatigue, disease, ageing, and rebellious bodily disorders,

¹⁷ Recalling a well-known verse: "For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

especially sexual lust.” (Mann 47) Thus, the painful human experience of awareness of original sin appears essentially in the guise of a dispute over ownership. The repentant Christian of “Holy Sonnet 1” is terrified by the fact that the Devil claims to possess him, being “loth to lose [him]” (line 14). He also does not understand “why doth the devil [...] usurp on [him]” (line 9) despite his willingness to associate himself to the Father’s economic salvation. The awareness that his “pains [have been] repaid” (line 6) by the Son is embittered by the acute perception that he circulates, as a coin, in two economies opposed to each other, engaged in a sort of commercial struggle. God and Satan desire to expand the reach of their numismatic authority, establishing their ownership over humanity by colonising, as it were, foreign territories, and imposing on them their currency.

A sermon which Donne preached in Easter Day 1617 affirms, in relation to this, that “the infidel hath [...] not so clear a title to anything in this world” (378). Consequently, he states, Christians may have a right to “plant Christianity in any part of the domains of the infidels [...] to despoil them even of their possessions, if they oppose such plantations” (378). The commercial struggle between God and Satan is replicated at the secular level by the conflict between Christian kingdoms and those of infidels, and the circulation of coins itself, as exemplified by “The Bracelet”, or “Love’s War”, can be an expression of that struggle.

It would seem, besides this, that many in Donne’s period believed in a certain sexual hierarchy with regards to the *imago Dei*’s impression. A verse letter to “The Countess of Huntingdon” commences by affirming that “Man to God’s image, Eve, to man’s was made” (line 2). The fact that, as Donne says in one of his sermons, the image of God is mingled with the image of Adam when original sin is inherited, would thus seem to imply that postlapsarian men are reduced to Eve’s level. Perhaps, as a

consequence, postlapsarian women were decreased to an even lower state of subjection. Christ is the new Adam, and, being sinless, can repay the debt that humanity has contracted, either to God or to Satan, in order to make the latter subject to “debt bondage to God” (Singh 135); but the question that arises due to the fact that Christ is the only human being that lacks sin, is how the Virgin Mary’s loss of her role as *Co-Redemptrix* affects female dignity and her postlapsarian relationship to the *imago Dei*.

3 Purchasing Salvation: Mariology and the Minting of the Christ-Coin

The Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary and her representation in art had created a space in which a female figure could be portrayed as mediating with the Redeemer, granting the believers a loving motherly advocate—as stated in the *Salve Regina*—whose role was effectively that of a *Co-Redemptrix* alongside the Son. The Reformation had effectively denied that Mary, or any other of the formerly called-upon saints and angels, had any ability to intercede for the Christian. Similarly, the veneration—or *latria*—and adoration—or *dulia*—distinction that Catholics and Orthodox adduced to justify their Marian devotions, as well as the general “invocation of saints” (*Book of Common Prayer* 679), were seen by Protestants, as exemplified by the *39 Articles*, as a “fond thing, vainly invented” (679). The veneration and adoration of Mary, hence, were seen by the reformers as undistinguishable violations of the first commandment.

Echoing this tradition and critiquing the popular Catholic belief in Mary’s immaculate conception, which had not yet been proclaimed as a Roman dogma—it would remain that way until 1854—, Donne’s “Second Anniversary” reflects on the Mother of God and the way she is excessively honoured by some. The poetic voice declares that “she is exalted more for being good / Than for her interest, of motherhood” (lines 343-4). It is interesting to note that, by the reference to interest, the Virgin’s role in bearing Christ

is associated with an economic investment of some sort. This idea reappears in the poet's "Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward", in which the speaker, alluding to Christ's "miserable mother" (line 30), claims that she "furnished [...] / Half of that sacrifice which ransomed us" (lines 31-2).

Donne's interest in Mary's contribution to Christ's appearance in the world as the "chief coin" (Singh 157), the perfect imaging of the Father, cannot be separated from the issues arising from the fact that Christ must in some sense take his humanity from her, despite the fact she was not preserved "by a singular grace [...] from all stain of original sin" (*Ineffabilis Deus* 21). That state would seem to have some of the aforementioned traits of the debased and deformed postlapsarian human-as-coin. William Perkins, perhaps reacting to popular misunderstandings of the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity, affirms that "sin is not a corruption of man's substance" (42), since, if it was, "Christ [could not] take upon himself man's nature." (42) Nevertheless, Donne's poetic and homiletic references to detrimental alchemy and deformity seem to express a profound distrust of the state of humanity's nature and substance itself after the Fall. It could be said that these problems and the hesitations they produce—which are considered below—are caused by an excessive reliance on a metaphor, leading to a naturalisation in which the material analogy subsumes the intended message. This problem is intrinsic to the usage of the human-as-coin metaphor: Augustine himself was aware that the "imperial coin metaphor [had] theological consequences." (Singh 120) The problematic relationship caused by theological usage of economic language was, in fact, becoming more prominent during the Reformation. According to Hawkes, "in Calvin [...] the figure of God as usurer becomes so familiar as to acquire literalistic connotations" (80). Similarly, the bishop James Spottiswood argued for the permissiveness of usury by pointing to the parable of the talents, and claiming that "the story's metaphorical imagery

must be understood as part of its substantive meaning” (83). This points to the fact that Calvinist hermeneutics often relied on the literal layer of the interpretation of Scripture even in passages such as parables, which might seem to convey meaning at an exclusively allegorical level.¹⁸ It is unsurprising, then, that the Calvinist interaction with the parable of the lost coin should produce a dogmatic tension similar to the one produced in the ethical-economic sphere by the assertion of the moral validity of the plain meaning of Christ’s parable of the minas. Also notable in this respect is Donne’s opinion, as expressed in his *Essays in Divinity*, that “the close connection between names and things has been severed” (Shell and Hunt 74), hence creating confusion and ambiguity in situations in which language operates at various levels of meaning.

Returning to Donne’s relationship to the religious appropriation of monetary discourse, we can point to his sermons in order to complement the ideas, found in his poems, that Mary furnished a part of the ransom paid by Christ, and that she had a sort of interest in Christ’s redemption due to her being his mother. In a sermon which he preached at St Paul’s Cross in 1617, the poet seems to contradict some of the ideas that appear in his verses by saying that “The Virgin Mary had not the same interest in our salvation, as Eve had in our destruction.” (268) More explicitly denying the statement that appears in “Good Friday, 1613”, he states that “nothing that she did entered into that treasure, that ransom that redeemed us.” (268) The monetary terms appear again, but this time Mary, the ideal matron¹⁹, is shown to lack any agency²⁰ when it comes to the proper

¹⁸ A related problem is that of anthropomorphism due to literalistic readings of Scriptural mentions of God as having body parts, as well as that of the polemics over how to interpret Christ’s “this is my body” (Luke 22:19), central to Eucharistic theology.

¹⁹ Devin Singh uses the term “theology of the matron” (119) when discussing Gregory of Nyssa’s reading of the parable of the lost coin, found in his text *On Virginity*.

²⁰ Other Marian features, such as that of presence, have been suggested to us, particularly in the *Stabat Mater*; yet even there, traces of her agency as seen by Medieval Catholicism can be found: “*Fac ut portem Christi mortem, passionis fac consórtem, et plagas recólere.*” By asking Mary to

administration of the economy of salvation. The homily includes the idea that “by one woman sin entered [...] rather than by the man” (268), thus implying that Eve is more responsible for the decay of the human-as-coin than Adam. Eve, unlike the housewife in the parable of the lost coin, completely forsakes the treasure she has been entrusted with. Despite this, Donne denies another idea that seems to have been discussed in post-Reformation times, which he describes in a poem addressed “To the Countess of Huntingdon”: the belief that “Man to God’s image, Eve, to man’s was made” (line 2). This implies that she possesses a reflection of the *imago Dei* that is in Adam, and not the image itself. Further on, the poetic voice states that:

In woman [...] perchance mild innocence
A seldom comet is, but active good
A miracle, which reason escapes, and sense (lines 9-11)

This assumption seems to be derived from the fact that, if woman lacked the *imago Dei*, then her *total depravity* must be even profounder, causing an increased difficulty to partake in the “certain freedom when it comes to external works” (Melanchthon 49), also called righteousness *coram mundo*, which fallen man can attain to. Demonstrating that this is merely a poetic play with some ideas that could have been circulating during that time, Donne’s sermon for Easter Day of 1630 clarifies that “no author of gravity [...] could admit that doubt, whether women were created in the image of God” (400). This fact notwithstanding, it should be noted that Peter Martyr Vermigli disseminated that idea by quoting Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, in which he says that “the woman together with her husband is the image of God [...] But when she is assigned as a helpmate [...] she is not the image of God” (89-90). This would imply that women can only possess the *imago Dei* when joined to a man by marriage, whereas man is “himself alone the image of God”

help him bear the death of Christ, the speaker seems to make her a key, active part in their salvation.

(90). Vermigli, in his *Common Places*, states that the female imaging of God depends on the question of rulership, since, compared to “the rest of the creatures, she is the image of God” (124) due to the fact that she has dominion over them. Nevertheless, she is “not said to be the image of God” when compared to man, since she “obeyeth him” (124). Donne appears to reject this idea, and instead affirms the individual feminine possession of the *imago Dei*, while making reference to that discarded belief in some of his poems, using it as something against which to contrast the outstanding virtues of his female addressees.

The troubling idea explored in “To the Countess of Huntingdon” was not the only issue connected to the difference between male and female inheritance of original sin, as attested in Calvin’s *Institutes*, in which he denounces both the so-called two-seed doctrine and the idea that “Christ is free from taint” because “it is not the seed of the woman that is impure, but only that of the man.” (308) The poem also seems to point to that conception of womanhood as an exceptional remnant of prelapsarian innocence, albeit restricting it to some select women. The addressee is told that “[virtue] gilded us, but you are gold” (line 25), and “Soft dispositions which ductile be / [...] she makes not clean, but new” (lines 27-8). The addressees in Donne’s poems seem to share these prelapsarian semi-divine qualities, enabling them to share their untainted virtue with others. Thus, in “Armilla”, the female can be reasonably be perceived by the speaker as someone to whom “thy will be done” (line 79) can be spoken, and coins sacrificed to in the same way “money [originated] in sacrificial rituals” (56), and Christ is offered as payment to the Father. Similarly, the female ability, described in the “Second Anniversary”, to lend one’s mintage to others, a capacity extended to the Virgin Mary in other poems authored by Donne, suggests that these exceptional examples of female righteousness have much in common with God’s ability to produce human-coinage. A further example can be found in “A Valediction of Weeping”, wherein the female face’s reflection in the speaker’s tears

“coins them, and [her] stamp they bear, / And by this mintage they are something worth” (lines 3-4). Because of the idea of reflection, the association with the *imago Dei* is clear, since the human-as-coin is meant to represent a “secondary imaging” (Singh 120) of the Father. This notion, perhaps derived from the analogy between Creation and childbirth, underlies Donne’s association of the human-as-coin metaphor to women in general, and to the Mother of Christ in particular. The stamped tears in “A Valediction of Weeping” are indeed “pregnant of [the female addressee]” (line 6), seemingly confirming this connection.

In addition to this, the implicit role Mary has in contributing something to the mintage of the pristine Christ-coin is made clear in “To Mr. Tilman After He Had Taken Orders”. The human-as-coin’s change in stamp—his justification—is directly compared to “new crowned kings [who] alter the face” (line 15) found in the coins they issue, and the God-as-King metaphor is sustained throughout the poem until the point where the Virgin is mentioned. Her function is expressed in political terms: her “prerogative was to bear Christ” (line 41). The relationship between the female and *oikonomia*, the management of the house—which is evoked in the parable of the lost coin—has significant theological repercussions, even in a religious system in which the Mother of God cannot be called upon. Mary, representing “the feminine soul-coin, [...] contributes to an economy of generosity” (Singh 119). As an ideal matron, Mary is able to “[demonstrate] fruitful management of household resources and [contribute] toward financial gain.” (90) This financial gain, as shall be discussed later, is Christ’s appearance as a perfect coin and the subsequent restoration, by means of the resurrection which he himself undergoes, of the golden standard in all saved human-coins.

Furthermore, in the “Second Anniversary”, an explicit allusion to the female contribution to the numismatic-human’s mintage is made by the speaker. The female’s

“rich beauty lent / Mintage to others’ beauties” (lines 223-4). The poem also contains an explicit affirmation that the female human-as-coin bears the *imago Dei* too, even if in a distorted form, when the poetic voice states that the female addressee, as “coin” (line 521), “bears [no] other stamp than [H]is” (line 521) who gave life to both the speaker and the addressee.

Yet even if Mary has inherited sin, Donne the preacher still affirms that Christ’s “Blessed Virgin Mother” (400) lacks any “suspicious note of incontinency.” (400) The affirmation of her virtuous character is motivated by an awareness that the Mother of God could be said to lend, furnish, or have an interest in the Son’s figuration as human being, and, as a consequence, must aid the process whereby the “divine stamp [can] become a coin” (Singh 123) by contributing part of her mintage. This is something that, in the extended human-as-coin metaphor, it is evident all mothers must do in order to generate descendants. Perkins, sensing—as the sermons’ Donne seems to do—that Mary must have some special characteristic that sets her apart from all the other females, in whom the *imago Dei* is disfigured, states that “the Virgin Mary continued a virgin until her dying day, even though we do not make this opinion any article of our belief” (61). The perpetual virginity of Mary, as a consequence of the rejection of Mary’s sinless state, a divine property only Christ can claim, becomes the mark of her exceptionality, setting her apart from the other women “named in Christ’s pedigree in the Gospel” (Donne 400). John Calvin purveys a further explanation of the reason why Mary, of all possible women, had to become the Mother of God, exploring the issue in the thirteenth chapter of the second book of his celebrated *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Although the “power of woman [in birth] is passive” (307), Christ received because of his mother the dignity of being “begotten by her of the seed of David.” (307) As to the fact that she possessed original sin, Calvin solves the issue by stating that “[Christ] was sanctified by the Spirit,

so that the generation was pure and spotless, such as it would have been before Adam's fall." (308)²¹

Having analysed the way in which the Christ-coin enters the world, and how the the Protestant reconsideration of Mary's position—and, as a consequence, that of women in general—affects the feminine human-as-coin and its relationship to the *imago Dei*, the rightful prelapsarian stamp, we ought to examine what happens to the human-coin after Christ pays the price for its redemption. Images of melting, fire, recreation, and destruction abound in Donne's description of this process or event, hinting at an alchemical subtext that will reappear in more explicit terms later. An underlying theme is God's necessity to destroy that which he has paid so much for in order to definitively assert the fact that He is its rightful possessor.

4 Heart-melting: Remintage and the Mechanisms of Justification

The Patristic writers, when expressing their view of justification, tend to integrate the language of the human-coin into their discussion of the workings of salvation. Thus, they deploy a “soteriological language of reminting and reissuing coins” (Singh 105), by which the God-as-king can re-establish His sovereignty and the trust of his subjects, just like Queen Elizabeth I had done by recalling the coins which had undergone debasement. In order to change the human-as-coins' stamp—to replace the image of Adam for that of Christ—it is understood that some sort of melting, or breaking down, is required. This is associated with the material means of grace that signify the transformative process of conversion, particularly baptism, as attested to by “Gregory of Nazianzus' sermons on

²¹ This also implies that men and women were created in the image of God to the same degree, since: “Thus God created the man in his image: in the image of God created he him: he created them male and female.” (Genesis 1:27)

baptism” (106). Tuke’s seventeenth-century *The High-way to Heaven* also features the declaration that “the outward instruments whereby our justification is *sealed* and confirmed to us, are the two sacraments” (152, emphasis mine). Donne’s involvement with this language of reminting is manifested in his alchemical references and in the multiple allusions to melting that appear in his sermons concerning salvation, and in several poems, some of them belonging to the *Holy Sonnets*.

A sermon Donne preached before Charles I in 1629 features a meditation on what he refers to as “nullification of the heart” (398). In order to “give God [...] a new place to create a new heart in” (399), the believer must peruse the Scriptures, so that “God’s judgements” (399), which are the “fires of God” (399), can soften the sinner’s hearts and start to change them. The preacher compares the heart to “metal” (399) which is made “soft for better impressions” (399), thus hinting at the conceit he so often makes use of in other occasions. Providing an example of a poetic formulation of the same metaphor, the speaker in “Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward” asks God to “burn off [his] rusts, and [his] deformity” (line 40)—both symptoms, as has been detailed above, of the human-as-coin’s postlapsarian depravity—in order for Him to be able to “restore [his] image” (line 41). As in the sermon, the poetic voice associates this melting or burning off with a punishment,²² asking the Creator to “think [him] worth [His] anger” (line 39). Hence, the sinner needs to come to an awareness of God’s fiery judgements in order for his heart—in which, as shall be seen later, the new stamp of Christ will be engraved—to be remade in a way that can appropriately express God’s ownership over him, and his ability to

²² Relevant to this concept is John the Baptist’s statement about Christ: “Indeed I baptise you with water to amendment of life, but he that cometh after me [...] will baptise you with the holy Ghost, and with fire. Which hath his fan in his hand, and will make clean his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:11-2) This also points at the double signification of fire as a destructive and purificatory force.

circulate in the economy of salvation reinstated by the Christ-coin's reissuing of golden coinage.

Further exploring this idea, multiple parts of Donne's "A Litany" refer to the liquification of the heart. The first stanza addresses the Father, featuring, once more, a plea: "re-create me, now grown ruinous" (line 4). As in the previously mentioned poems, the third stanza—in which the speaker turns to the Holy Ghost—links the judgement of sinfulness with purging fire, contrasting "youth's fires, of pride and lust" (line 22) with the flame of God, located "in [his] heart" (line 24). In addition to this, the fourteenth stanza explicitly links the fiery transformation of the speaker's heart with the economic transactions by which God's grace purchases His elect, stating that the celestial Church must be

warmed with one all-partaking fire
[...] that none be lost, which cost thee dear (lines 120-1)

The speaker asks for a corrective melting of hearts which would seem to extend from justification to the glorified experience of heavenly bliss, albeit in a different sense, in which the human-as-coin is not melted and remade, but takes part in a heavenly fire. Mentioning the saints in Heaven—while "warning that we should not trust in such prayers" (Carey 453) as are addressed to them—is necessary according to Donne, since it provides a middle way between the "Roman Church" (169) and the "Reformed" (170), the latter of which cannot "accuse [the poem] of attributing more than a rectified devotion ought to do" (170). In the poem, the theo-economic understanding of Catholic theology—in which Mary and the saints participate in some sense in the believer's salvation—is also being adjusted to the Reformed emphasis on justification as an event in which a *iustitia aliena* is judicially imputed to the believer.

The *Holy Sonnets* also make mention of the melting or destruction of the heart in order to describe what appears to be justification by faith, in which Christ's righteousness

is imputed to the believer, an action signified by the numismatic change of stamp carried out by Kings. In “Batter my heart”, for instance, the poetic voice’s description of himself as a “usurped town” (line 5), which introduces the idea of divine ownership of humanity, is preceded by a petition: the speaker asks God to “break, blow, burn, and make [him] new” (line 4). This is a violent endeavour which God must undertake, having to “bend / [His] force” (lines 3-4) and destroy His rightful property in order to reclaim it. Similarly, “I am a little world” features a speaker realising that he “must be burnt” (line 10). Contrasting the “fire / Of lust and envy” (lines 10-1) with the salvific “fiery zeal / [...] which doth in eating heal” (lines 13-4). The sinners seem to burn themselves through misbehaviour, further debasing the coin of God they are meant to be, yet the Creator is able to burn the sinners in order to heal them, and thus restore the image that was lost by their first parents.

Interestingly, in “Since she whom I loved”, the poetic voice asserts that “a holy thirsty dropsy melts [him] yet” (line 8), pointing to a heart-nullification that is not caused by God’s punishment of sins, or by an acknowledgement of one’s unrighteous behaviour, but by a form of desire for God, an “unquenchable thirst” (Dickson 144). This is so because, for “malleable human nature” (Singh 153), the “engine of movement is desire” (151). In the poem, the speaker’s desire for God provokes his transformation, indicating that his desire is now properly ordered. The implication is that the poetic voice valued his beloved excessively before, and thus misvalued the economy of salvation. Furthermore, the numismatic-human’s infinite thirst, when not focused on God, produces a “lust for wealth” (Singh 152)—an “unlimited desire” (152) that money is exceptionally able to fuel.

Nevertheless, it ought to be remembered that Donne frequently makes usage of and reference to ideas related to alchemy, and these allusions to melting as a way to

understand conversion could be read in this sense too.²³ According to Brian Cummings, they bring to light a conceit hidden “in the concept of conversion, of an alteration in chemical state, an alchemy of person” (371), which also hints at the belief—articulated by Johannes Kepler—that “fire [forms] the centre of every heavenly body” (Albrecht 97).

It could be argued that this alchemical fire points not only to baptismal regeneration and justification, but also to the hope in the resurrection, and in the eschaton. This is due to Kepler’s asseveration that “the dual function of fire is to destroy and to renew” (Albrecht 97). Thus, Donne evokes, in “A Fever”, the “schools, that search what fire / Shall burn this world” (line 13-4), referring to the pursuits of “academic theologians.” (Carey 440) Besides this, in “An Elegy upon the Death of Mistress Bulstrode”, an implicit association to the heart is made, since Bulstrode’s “heart was that strange bush, where, sacred fire, / Religion, did not consume” (lines 45-6). Perhaps this fire, which in the “Elegy on the Lady Markham” is referred to as God’s “last fire” (line 26) that shall “[annul] this world” (line 27), could be compared to the fire that destroys the angel-coins in “The Bracelet”. They are “damned and in the furnace thrown” (line 19), sent to “that hell” (line 22) wherein they shall be condemned; yet the imagery of alchemy is mentioned and ridiculed in line 44. The speaker would like for the damning fire to be similar to that one which purifies objects and souls, or to the portentous fires that do not consume. The burning bush is not the only example; it may be said that when the speaker says “unto the fire this martyrs I betray” (line 82) he is echoing the story of the three men thrown into the furnace, taken from the Book of Daniel—in which the

²³ Concerning the liquefaction of the heart, Schuon affirms, in an Islamic context: “‘His eyes overflow’ (*fadhat 'aynahu*) and ‘the earth is watered’ (*yusibu 'l-ardh*): there is both an inward and an outward liquefaction, the latter responding to the former: when the ego is ‘liquefied’, the outward world, from which it is in large measure compounded, seems to be drawn into the same alchemical process, in the sense that it becomes transparent, so that the contemplative sees God everywhere, or sees all things in God.” (154)

victims are preserved from harm, prefiguring the redemptory fire of God—and hoping that the melting and damning fire into which he is to cast the coins can possess such qualities.

In addition to these instances in which conversion or justification are compared to melting, the “Second Anniversary” features another image that seems to complement the previously described allusions to God’s remaking of the sinful human after destroying them, in order to impute Christ’s righteousness to them. The poetic voice, speaking of the soul, states that it has three births: “creation gave her one, a second, grace” (line 215). That second birth of grace is “conferred by [...] baptism” (Mueller 439), a sacrament that, as has been mentioned above, is an outward means of grace that signifies a death and rebirth,—consider Romans 6:3-4—or a destruction and a reconstruction, by which the human-as-coin is imprinted with the stamp of Christ, and becomes justified.²⁴

The violent nature of these descriptions of conversion (which occurs at the same time as justification) suggests that Donne agreed with Cranmer’s opinion that “conversion happened in an instant” (Null 189). Nevertheless, it must be noted that these references to the nullification of hearts have also been understood by certain scholars, such as Paul Cefalu, to refer not to the “initial stage of the sinner's struggle” (77), but to the “justified saint's desire to continue the process of regeneration” (77). In order to understand the hardships faced by sinners after justification, we ought to dissect the results of the stamping of Christ’s image, by which the Son’s righteousness is imputed to the penitent believer, and to explore the notion that those who are justified must endure an incongruent existence, being *simul justus et peccator*.

²⁴ The relationship between childbirth and stamping has already been mentioned in the preceding section, and could also be taken into account when examining this poem.

5 Justification by Imputed Righteousness, Sanctification, and Glorification

5.1 Christ's New Stamp: Imputed Righteousness and the Mintage of Coins

The Protestant understanding of justification, according to which Christ's righteousness was imputed to the believers in order for them to be declared just, caused those who were justified to realise that they were "both righteous and a sinner, holy and profane, an enemy of God and yet a child of God." (Luther 245) Anglicanism affirms the doctrine the doctrine, inherited from Catholicism, that baptism is one of those sacraments that "impress on the soul" (Roman Catechism 109) a certain "character" (109) that is referred to as "a distinctive impression stamped on the soul which [...] cannot be blotted out" (109). Because of this, it could be argued that Donne, reconciling this view of baptism with the idea that baptised Christians are *simul justus et peccator*, revised the numismatic metaphor exemplified by the Catechism of the Council of Trent by contrasting the debasement of the human-as-coin with the alien righteousness they had been imprinted with by means of the sacrament of baptism.

The clearest expression of Donne's Reformed version of the patristic conceit can be found in "To Mr. Tilman After He Had Taken Orders", in which the poetic voice asks the addressee:

Are you the same materials, as before,
Only the stamp is changed, but no more? (lines 13-4)

In this case, Holy Orders, which were not considered to be sacraments by the Church of England, are being referred to. Despite their status being lesser than that which Catholicism conferred to them, they were perceived by Anglicans to have an effect similar to that of a sacrament, and were therefore supplied with a specific liturgical form—consider, for instance, the *Edwardine Ordinals*. Bloomfield Jackson's *The Anglican Ordinal* quotes the canons of the Church of England relevant to the issue in question. Canon 34 states that one of the requisites for the ordinand is for him to be "able to yield

an account of his faith in Latin” (Jackson 11); this indicates that the ordinand must already possess some qualities that separate him from the common Christian. The ceremony nevertheless implied a further change in status, which, like baptism, was not believed to provoke an extreme change in the works performed by the one who benefitted from it, instead providing the ordinand with a distinct character²⁵ (as expressed in the *Roman Catechism*) which was indelible. In a sermon preached before Charles I in April 1626, Donne meditates on ordination, stating that, by it, “God invests his servants with his ordinance, [...] and then *presses* that cloud with a *Vae si non*²⁶” (370). The impression of God’s word on the ordinand also recalls numismatic conceits, emphasising the transformative power of inscriptions, which “proclaimed and could reconfigure one’s destiny.” (Singh 107) Sacraments and rituals such as that of ordination, thus, implied a change in God’s relationship with and view of the believer, not in the elements that contributed to their external actions. To become justified was to undergo a reminting, to be treated by the God-as-King as a golden coin despite remaining full of alloy.

The aforementioned poem further delineates the economic implications of this metaphoric understanding of imputed righteousness. The speaker compares the change experienced by the addressee to an economic situation which could have been perceived by contemporary readers as reminiscent of Edward VI’s ascension, during whose reign the Henrician debasement continued. The poetic voice wonders if the ordination has altered Tilman in the same way “new crowned kings alter the face, / but not the money’s substance” (lines 15-6). The quasi-sacramental character of the ordination is reinforced

²⁵ It is also worth noting that the Greek term for the “royal divine stamp” (Singh 113) which Philo evokes is “*charaktêr*” (113).

²⁶ Referring to: “For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to rejoice of: for necessity is laid upon me, and woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.” (1 Corinthians 9:16) The stamp stating *Vae si non* establishes the economic role of purchase of other souls by means of preaching that the ordained coin must perform.

by the assertion that “grace” has “changed only God’s old image by creation, / to Christ’s new stamp” (lines 16-8). God’s economy of grace—which operates in the world through the sacraments, instilling a subjective value in those who receive them, and making them able to circulate in the divine economy—is replicated by the King’s ability to impart value to coins, by which human effort can be measured in commerce. The relationship between God’s economy and the King’s economy was not perceived to be one of opposition, but one of collaboration. God was perceived to give authority to the monarch as a manager of his *oikonomia* by enabling him to regulate the commerce for God’s created goods in his Kingdom through the mintage of coins, paralleled by God’s mintage of souls in baptism. God’s economy is enlarged through baptism and ordination because those who have received those stamps are able to transform more souls into God’s currency; the King’s numismatic endeavour allows him to amass wealth he himself has given value to by means of taxation. Similarly, Donne affirms in *Pseudo-Martyr* that “all power is from God” (191), and that “God has immediately imprinted in man’s nature and reason to be subject to a power immediately infused from him” (192), demonstrating his belief in—or consent of—James I’s understanding of the divine right of kings, which is also expressed by means of the numismatic language of imprinting. The opening sonnet from James’ *Basilikon Doron* is quite clear on its author’s view of the power of monarchs: “God gives not Kings the style of *Gods* in vain” (line 1). The King and God have similar authorities, and God Himself recognises this by calling monarchs gods.

Stamps featuring the King’s face and the image of Christ alluded to in “To Mr. Tilman” are able to confer value to something that is intrinsically worthless, or even, in the case of humanity, deserving of damnation. This is made possible through God’s delegation of power, which is depicted in “To Mr. Tilman” as similar to the King’s election of ambassadors:

What function is so noble, as to be
Ambassador to God and destiny? (lines 37-8)

Those who have been ordained convey God's word and administer the sacrament of baptism, by means of which souls are reminded. God colonises and conquers the world through the ordained ministry, in a similar way to how Kings make their authority known in other territories by their ambassadors. In those lands where God and the King rule, their currency, which they issue and which eventually returns to them, signifies their control of the transactions in which their subjects are involved.

As is the case with other aspects of the human-as-coin conceit, stamping and the value of impressions made upon coins are also evoked in amatory poems, which nevertheless enrich the theological usage of the language of economy by intermingling it with another analogy for the Creator's relationship to its creatures, the language of love.²⁷ In Donne's "Image of Her Whom I Love", it is the beloved's "fair impression in [the speaker's] faithful heart" (line 2) which "makes her love [him]" (line 3). By comparing this form of the conceit to the soteriological one we could say that God loves the Elect because they bear the stamp of his Son, and because, as "kings do coins" (line 4), God imputes his value to them (see lines 4-5). In addition to this, the poetic voice in "A Valediction of Weeping", states that his tears "are something worth" (line 4) because the beloved's "face coins them, and [her] stamp they bear" (line 3), as God justifies those who are penitent by rectifying his image in them, which was distorted before. The King's authority derives from God's authority, and the beloved's ability to impart value to the otherwise insignificant lover mimics the Creator's judicial transformation of the believer through desirable and meaningful physical actions, such as the sacraments or the rite of

²⁷ An example of the circulation of the amatory understanding of God's redemptory activities in Donne's England, particularly as influenced by Spanish mystics, is the poetic *oeuvre* of Richard Crashaw.

ordination. Similarly, in “To His Mistress Going to Bed”, the speaker attributes his ability to access the female “mystic books” (line 41) to his “imputed grace” (line 42). The link between the soteriological notion of *iustitia aliena* and the lover’s dignity in the eyes of the beloved is reiterated in multiple poems, reinforcing the aforementioned threefold working of justificatory power by means of stamping: the beloved and King stamp their images on others, making the lover and the subject valuable, yet this is only possible because these activities themselves image God’s election of the saints.

Yet, beyond this fact, the dignity the *imago Dei* confers to the justified Christian is similar to the dignity afforded to the coins by the presence of the King’s image. In a sermon preached at Greenwich in April 1615, Donne compares sinning and thereby “defacing the image of God in ourselves” (264) to “[carrying the Prince’s] pictures into any low office, or into any irreverent place.” (264) Indeed, from the time of the Roman Empire, to “[infringe] on the dignity of the imperial portrait [...] whether stamped on a coin or a ring” (Ando 221) was perceived as an act of treason. Consequently, in his *Basilikon Doron*, James I features “false coin” (20) in a list of “horrible crimes that you are bound in conscience never to forgive” (20). Both God and King, made present through numismatic impressions (in the soul and in coinage, respectively) were offended by witnessing sinful acts and by their image being supplanted by an imitation.

Since, according to the Anglican understanding of justification, “we are accounted righteous [...] only for the merit of [...] Jesus Christ by faith” (*Book of Common Prayer* 677), identifying the stamp of Christ in the believer’s soul is fundamental in order to gain a sense of assurance of salvation—being only paralleled by an awareness of the justified Christian’s good works, which help “a lively faith” to be “evidently known” (677). As a consequence of this, Donne’s poems often feature a poetic voice that affirms the presence of Christ’s image in their heart. “To Mr. Tilman” mentions “Christ’s new stamp” (line

18), seemingly seeking to compel the addressee to consider the change he has undergone: he now bears the image of the Son of God, and the image of Adam he had inherited has been rectified. In the “Second Anniversary”, the ability to recognise the stamp of Christ in one’s soul is alluded to when the speaker asserts that the poem itself is made worthy because that “coin [bears] [no] other stamp than his, / that gave [her] power to doe; [him], to say this.” (lines 521-2) The addressee can be given homage by the poetic voice because both bear the *imago Dei*. In addition to this, the association of humanity with coins is also made clear in this occasion, implying that the addressee and the speaker can participate in the mutual exaltation offered by poetry due to the fact that they circulate in God’s economy: the eternity of the poem’s lines and the eternal blessedness awaiting those who have been justified are implicitly equated.

A further example of the search for God’s image in one’s inner self can be found in the Holy Sonnet “What if this present were the world’s last night?”, in which the speaker introspectively beckons his soul to notice “the picture of Christ crucified” (line 3) in the heart, the dwelling place of the soul. This heart, which has, presumably, been melted and transformed, as described in the previous section, now bears Jesus’ image, representing the event by which the individual’s salvation was paid for. Besides this, the difference between the alien righteousness of the stamp and the intrinsic fallenness and sinfulness of the human-as-coin is made clear by the last line, which declares that “this beauteous form assures a piteous mind.” (line 14) Justification by imputed righteousness is only granted to those who recognise their debasement and seek to be rectified in order to circulate amongst God’s just coins: only a recognition of impurity can initiate the process whereby the primordial human golden purity is recovered.²⁸

²⁸ In relation to this, Christ says: “The whole have no need of the Physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance.” (Mark 2:17) This also explains the

The notion that value resides in the act of minting by an authoritative figure and in the resulting imaging of the King is a conception of economic value that is meant to negate the difficulties arising due to debasements. However, the fact that the speaker asks the addressee of “To Mr. Tilman” if there is nothing beyond that hints at the fact that the process of sanctification, which Protestants understood as completely different from justification, was perceived to be of an extreme importance, and that, similarly, the loss of the intrinsic value of coinage was not readily accepted. The Christian had to produce good works in order to assure himself that he would be rectified and fully remade as a golden human-as-coin in the resurrection, just as the debased coins had been recalled and reissued in Elizabeth’s reign.

5.2 Good Works Made Current: Sanctification, and the Incongruent Coin

The Protestant distinction between *justification* and *sanctification*—which contrasts with the Catholic belief that the differentiation is an innovation, since “none was conceded before” (McGrath 188)—opens up multiple poetic and homiletic possibilities for Donne. The copper human-as-coin has been given a new stamp, and now they can circulate in an economy of good works, which would have been worthless without their stamp, as one of the *39 Articles* declares. The thirteenth article’s assertion that pre-justification works not only “are not pleasant to God” (677), but “have the nature of sin” (677), makes the inability of humanity to merit salvation on its own quite clear. Yet the twelfth article places a great emphasis on the works produced by “a lively faith” (677), not merely because they are a way to discern one’s salvation, but because they are “pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ” (677). The problematic issue of usury is also evoked by the

aforementioned connection between the numismatic effects of the Fall and sickness, as well as death.

author's treatment of sanctifying good works, since the barren human-as-coin, intrinsically worthless yet made subjectively precious by its stamp, must produce a sort of currency, which, as will be shown, is conceived by Donne as able to circulate in God's economy thanks to the remintage that the penitent has undergone.

Let us firstly examine Donne's allusions to works in his sermons. In a sermon preached at St. Paul's on Christmas Day 1621, the poet pronounces a statement with regards to the worth of "our actions" (303) that appears consistent with the twelfth and thirteenth of the *39 Articles*. Comparing the worth of human works with the refinement of precious stones, Donne states that in order for "our actions" to become "precious or acceptable in the eye of God" (303), they first need to have been "conceived from heaven from the word of God" (303). Then, "a holy deliberation" (303) must be undergone in order for the faithful to ensure "the root thereof" (303), to ascertain that the action they are about to perform is really mandated and approved by God. Precious stones are made worthy by purification, and then they "become precious in the [...] estimation of men" (303). Similarly, human works must first be purified by justification, in order for the human-as-coin to produce other sorts of coins that also bear the stamp of Christ. Further confirming this notion, a fragment from a sermon dated the 2nd of February of 1623, Donne considers the "debt of prayer" (323),²⁹ which "will not be paid with money of our own coining" (323), but with "current money, that bears the King's image, and inscription" (323). Here the author contrasts *extempore* prayer with the approved liturgy and prayers of the Church of England, upon which the King has "set his stamp" (323). Here, interestingly, it seems unclear whether Donne is referring to God or to the sovereign of England. The Book of Common Prayer had been first approved by Edward VI and then

²⁹ Possibly derived from a key biblical passage that, in an inversion of Donne's usage of the conceit, relates good works to a debt that God owes to those that perform them: "Now to him that worketh, the wages is not counted by favour, but by debt" (Romans 4:4).

re-established by Elizabeth I, and it seems clear that a convinced Anglican would believe that this fact was authorised and approved of by God. Nevertheless, the image of the King appears to refer simultaneously to the King of England and the God-as-King, making their authority indistinguishable. James I, who was King when this sermon was preached, was a firm believer in the divine right of kings—his son and successor, Charles I, would inherit this conviction. His role as the Supreme Governor of the Church of England is undoubtedly connected with his authority to regulate the prayers of his subjects, having the power of making them worth something to God. God stamps the hearts of the believers with the image of his Son in order to justify them and make their actions valuable. Similarly, the King, anointed by God, can stamp the liturgy and prayers used by the faithful, making them able to circulate in the economy of praise directed towards the Triune God.

A fragment from *Essays in Divinity* serves as a more direct assertion of the numismatic value conferred to good works by the stamp of Christ imprinted onto the copper human-as-coin. Donne interestingly affirms that:

We fetch part of our wealth, which is our faith, expressly from his treasury; and for our good works, we bring the metal to his mint (or that mint comes to us) and there the character of baptism and the impression of his grace makes them current and somewhat worth, even towards him. (262)

Good works are described as coins that, when stamped by God, become valuable. This conception of value relies on doctrines about sacramental character that have been explored before; their relationship with justification was a topic of contention among Protestants. In this fragment, Donne seems to be expressing a belief in the indelible effects of baptism, which contrasts with the views of those who would have been referred to in the period as anabaptists and sacramentalists. It must also be noted that, according to Richard Hooker, the works produced after justification become part of the Christian's property. Hooker writes that "by [justification] we are interested in the right of inheriting;

by [sanctification] we are brought to the actual possessing of eternal bliss” (7). God mints those coins and considers them worthy, but they are part of the believer’s received inheritance, to be fully received after their death, which they have early access to.

Besides the homiletic and polemic references to the effects the stamp of Christ has on a believer’s actions, Donne’s poems emphasise the transforming effect of Christ’s cross, placed in the speaker’s heart. Its effect is similar to that of the sacraments, albeit a gradual one, instead of an instantaneous one which can be temporally located. One of Donne’s religious poems, “The Cross”, challenges those who oppose the practice of crossing oneself, asserting the relevance of imaging as a religious practice, and limiting the iconoclastic impulse that had characterised much of the English Reformation. Radical Calvinists asserted that “like heresy, [idolatry] stemmed from a lack of sensory control.” (Milner 254) Yet the poet’s defence of the physical action in which the Saviour’s cross is made present and commemorated is a clear attempt to harmonise the Reformed desire to attain assurance of salvation with the Catholic-inherited reliance on certain rituals which some regarded as superstitious. In “The Cross”, the speaker rejects the Puritan “[denial]” (line 2) of Christ’s “image, the image of his cross” (line 2). The debate regarding the sign of the cross, to which this poem, according to Mueller (477), responds, was related particularly to its use in baptism. At its conclusion, King James approved a revision of the Book of Common Prayer which meant to “take away all scruple concerning the use of the sign of the cross in baptism” (Mueller 478).³⁰ The priest, seemingly coining the baptised infant, and using Christ—or his cross—as the “type and die used to imprint the image of God on the coins of humanity” (Singh 129), would appear to be performing an incomplete baptism if he omitted the sign of the cross. The cross which is received in

³⁰ The King’s role in resolving the dispute points back to the idea, expressed above, that he ‘minted’ the liturgy, enabling liturgical actions to circulate, in an economic sense, towards God.

baptism,—and which is able to make Christ himself present in the believer’s heart—according to Donne’s poetic voice, is the ultimate agent of sanctification, since, when Christians love that image, “the cross of Christ [works] fruitfully / Within our hearts” (line 61-2).

Besides this, the “Second Anniversary”, once more, establishes a link between the female beloved and God’s ability to modify the value of the lover, or, in this case, of his good works. The poetic voice explicitly delineates the relationship between the beloved’s imprint and God’s stamp, stating that:

She coined in this, that her impressions gave
To all our actions all the worth they have (lines 369-70)

An inherited numismatic metaphoric repertoire is deployed throughout the poem, and used to transpose God’s justification and sanctification to the female addressee, making her a clear example of the perfect theological matron, who manages God’s *oikonomia*, and enlarges His household by lending to others the mintage she herself was given by God (see lines 521-2). This sanctifying mintage seems to allow those who receive it to produce good works.

Since the human-as-coin is able, by “justification through imputed righteousness” (McGrath 236), to produce value, it is made clear that sanctification is a process whereby coinage attains some sort of intrinsic value which goes beyond that which God-as-King imparts to it by means of the stamp. McGrath refers to the English Reformation’s understanding of sanctification as relying on a development of “inherent righteousness” (236). Nevertheless, for the human-as-coin to regain its golden materiality, as English coins under Elizabeth had done, was seen by Anglicans as impossible before the Resurrection. Thus, the human-as-coin could produce valuable good works, and develop some measure of righteousness to call their own, different from the *iustitia aliena* of

Christ, but had to project their hopes of complete restoration onto the period following their death.

5.3 Glorified Bodies: Resurrection and the Promised Restitution of Gold

Donne's intense yet hopeful involvement with the prospect of Resurrection is made evident by his "concerns [when] posing for his own funeral monument" (Lees-Jeffries 269), in an attempt to be portrayed in the way he expected to look at the moment of the *parousia*. The good works provided by the process of sanctification were meant to comfort the Christian and provide them with assurance of salvation, yet glorification, the fulfillment of the *ordo salutis*, had to be preceded by death. The poet, thus, drawing on the image of the human-as-coin, meditated on its alchemical restoration, representing the bodies which believers were to be granted at the resurrection as coins that, stripped of all alloy, would once more be materially precious.

The post-justification contrast, made explicit in "Mr. Tilman", between the altered stamp and the unaltered materials of the addressee had been partially resolved by an assurance of the continuing effects of sanctification. In spite of this, it is evident that the gulf between Christ's merits and the believer's own works and their inherent righteousness cannot be overcome by means of good works, which merely confirm and witness to one's salvation. Donne nevertheless confers such dignity to some of his female addressees, that they explicitly appear as examples of a figurative pre-resurrection state of glorification. Their goldenness appears to have been re-established, making them mirrors of the prelapsarian state and a foretaste of the final step of the *ordo salutis* to the Christian lover. In "Honour is so sublime perfection", the poetic voice describes the Countess of Bedford—the addressee—in this manner:

You, for whose body God made better clay,
Or took soul's stuff such as shall late decay,

Or such as needs small change at the last day. (22-4)

The countess enjoys an early material refinement, seeming to suffer less from the effects of original sin than others, and hence prefigures, in a similar way to Christ after rising from the dead, the fulfilment of God's promise to his Elect. Yet the honour, referred to in the first line, with which she is blessed circulates from lower people: her economy of praise depends on "labourers' ballads" (line 14). As "Kings / [...] direct our honour, not bestow" (lines 8-9), she must "show" (line 8) herself to those who she would like to be flattered by in order for honour, her currency, to return to her. Taxation is made possible by forms of desire activated, in the ideal economic situation, both by the stamps' display of religious imagery and the purity of the coin. Christ's resurrection makes possible the return of the other human-coins to their Creator, since the resurrected Jesus demonstrates the moral attractiveness of a glorified human, the potential for other coins to be recalled and remade.³¹

Christ's pre-eminence as the only Mediator³² and the only sinless human being³³ forces the belief in other examples of perfection—not only Mary in Medieval Catholicism, but also the saints, whose invocation in prayer is disallowed by Article 22—to be limited to mere poetic conceits, as that used by Donne in this poem. The pious' lady pre-death glorification, despite this, is described in a firmly Protestant way, since it is attributed to God's sovereign election, and not in any sense to some worth she has earned due to her own virtue. The "First Anniversary", also elevating the status of its addressee,

³¹ Perhaps this could be considered part of a poetic usage of the moral influence theory of atonement, which was popular with certain Protestant groups, such as Socinians.

³² "It is not without cause, therefore, that Paul, when he would set forth Christ as the Mediator, distinctly declares Him to be man. There is, says he, 'one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1Ti 2:5)." (Calvin 5)

³³ "We do not hold Christ to be free from all taint merely because He was born of a woman unconnected with a man, but because He was sanctified by the Spirit, so that the generation was pure and spotless, as it would have been before Adam's fall." (Calvin 22)

Elizabeth Drury, includes the affirmation that “she could not transubstantiate / All states to gold, yet gilded every state” (lines 417-8). As was the case with the Countess of Bedford in the previously discussed poem, Drury is able to distribute or image what appears to be a portion of the “glorifying righteousness of men”, which exists only “in the world to come” (Hooker 4). The divine economy is expanded by a desire to imitate a role model; it is usually Christ, the divine coin, but also other fallen humans. The latter, despite their inferiority with regards to the “unchanging royal image” (Singh 122) by which they have been minted, can exemplify the rewards—for instance, their treasury of divinely minted good works—that others might receive if they accept God’s claimed ownership of them.³⁴ In this case, those believers are able to perform a function similar to that which Mary performed in Medieval Catholicism, gilding others with the same gold which their bodies would be remade with after the resurrection.

Besides the projection of sanctification or glorification onto his female addressees, Donne also expresses in his poems some interesting notions regarding what is transformed by the last stage of the *ordo salutis*. In “A Letter to the Lady Carey, and Mistress Essex Rich, from Amiens”, states that, in this life, “We’re thus but parcel-gilt” (line 31). By contrast, “to gold we’re grown / When virtue is our soul’s complexion” (lines 31-2). The human-as-coin seems to have been stamped by justification with an alien righteousness, then gilded with his imperfect works, but later will be completely golden, having become perfectly virtuous. This corresponds with Hooker’s understanding of the

³⁴ This could also be seen as an explanation for the popularity of moralistic allegories, such as that of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, in the English-speaking Protestant world, or the moralistic character of some of the early English novels, as exemplified by Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*. In both, fictional characters become the *foci* for imitative efforts on the part of the reader; this relies on a knowledge of the relationship between the reading of fiction and its mimetic performances—explored, for instance, in Cervantes’ *Don Quijote*.

three forms of righteousness³⁵: “The righteousness wherewith we shall be clothed in the world to come is both perfect and inherent. That whereby we are justified is perfect, but not inherent. That whereby we are sanctified, inherent, but not perfect.” (4) The numismatic-human can bear the right image and have their materiality reconstituted, recovering their prelapsarian state—or perhaps a more elevated one—by the grace of post-resurrection glorification, in which their value is both inherent and perfect. This is something they could not experience during their earthly life, during which the incongruity of the righteousness of justification—a perfect stamp, but not one to call their own—and the righteousness of sanctification—imperfect gilded coins, but ones they actually possess—had created a tension only reconcilable after suffering death. It is then that “the bodies of the Elect shall be made like the glorious body of Christ Jesus” (Perkins 250), so that all human-coins will finally recover their likeness to the Logos, who is “[God’s] very treasury and the treasure within” (Singh 130).

We also ought to consider that Elizabeth I’s “recoinage act of 1560-1” (Wrightson 156), due to which all debased coins were recalled and melted down in order for new, purer coins to be remade, is one of the clearest historical manifestations of this preoccupation with the purity of coins. The task of putting better coins into circulation “was accomplished with complete success – indeed with a surprising degree of profit coming to the Crown” (Davies 205). At its finalisation, the English currency’s “high prestige had been restored” (207). It is unsurprising, then, that James I’s *Basilikon Doron* instructs the Prince to “make [his] money of fine Gold and Silver; causing the people to

³⁵ Also, consider: “Works can be considered in three ways: either with reference to justification or sanctification or glorification. They are related to justification not antecedently, efficiently and meritoriously, but consequently and declaratively. They are related to sanctification constitutively because they constitute and promote it. They are related to glorification antecedently and ordinatively because they are related to it as the means to the end; yea, as the beginning to the complement because grace is glory begun, as glory is grace consummated.” (Turretin 2:705)

be paid with *substance*, and not abused with *number*” (26; emphasis mine). Similarly, Guénon, writing in a very different time, asserts that money, having lost all connection to gold, has “lost all guarantee of a superior order” (111), dissolving into an affair of “pure quantity” (111). As has been noted above, the representation of the Christ-coin as a payment to God for humanity’s sins is derived from “origin of money in sacrificial rituals” (Palaver 56), but that understanding of money is a qualitative, not a quantitative one. Christ suffices as payment for infinite sins not in a cumulative sense, but due to his incomparable purity, being the “principal coin of the Father’s kingdom” (Singh 130). In other words, the value of the Christ-coin is purely qualitative, and not in any sense quantitative, as made obvious by his uniqueness. Furthermore, Christ’s payment ultimately results in the recoinage of all Elect human-coins after their death, their glorification.

In one of his homilies, Donne seems to confirm James I’s feelings about Kingship, expressed in the opening sonnet of *Basilikon Doron*, by stating that God “[sheds] beams of power [...] upon those, whom himself calls Gods in this world” (301). Elsewhere he affirms that “the kings of the earth are fair and glorious resemblances of the king of heaven” (325), and that “they are like gods, they are gods” (325). Elizabeth I’s restoration of coinage and James I’s assertion of the need to maintain currency pure indicate the relevance of this issue: their ability to produce mintage was derived from the Father’s ability to mint humanity into existence, and their restoration of golden coinage is justified by the Father’s reintroduction of pure money through his incarnated Son, the Christ-coin.

Donne’s sermons also demonstrate an awareness of the coincidence between the Elizabethan recoinage and glorification understood as part of the *ordo salutis* undergone by the figurative human-as-coin. Donne preached a sermon at Temple Church, possibly in June 1615, in which he includes a meditation on what a Christian ought to expect after

death. He states that the “body of a sinful man”, which “was in [him] but a piece of copper money” (265), God “shall make a talent of gold” (265). Yet this transformation is not merely corporal, because “the angels shall [...] rejoice at [his] resurrection” (265), since in his “soul, [he has] all they have, and in [his] body, [he has] that that they have not” (265). The angels, being immaterial, are conceived by Donne as possessing God’s stamp—their soul, their subjective value, their transcendent approval and declaration of ownership by God—but not the formal goldenness that constitutes the numismatic-human’s intrinsic righteousness and material value, made perfect by God after “[opening]” the believer’s “grave” (265). This righteousness, in addition, is immanent in quality.³⁶

The question of the human-coin and its relationship to the glorified body becomes essential for Donne, in order to combat semi-Gnostic notions about eternal life. Angels, being part, in metaphysical terms, of the “formless manifestation” (Guénon 195), may be immaterial, but humanity is forever God’s coin. Humans need the perfection of both of their elements, the external and inward, corresponding to the material and the stamp respectively, in order to return to their primordial state, which makes the post-Resurrection closeness to God possible. Accordingly, Donne asserts that “the Heaven of Heavens, the Presence Chamber of God himself, expects the presence of our bodies” (306). The numismatic conceit is justified in Donne’s constant usages of it in that it can successfully provide an analogy for all human states, from original innocence to eternal glorification, while allowing for a simultaneous description their corporal and spiritual dimensions. The tension created by the imperfectly gilded works performed by the divinely restamped—though still made of copper—human is resolved by the

³⁶ As opposed to the *iustitia aliena* of justification, which is clearly transcendent in quality.

glorification, which actualises those transformations in coinage which had only virtually re-established (by means of the sacraments) the innocence of the believer.

Donne further explains that, in death, “the person falls into [...] a divorce of body and soul” (369), which shall be solved when God “[re-compacts] and [re-compiles]” (369) the body in order to “re-unite that soul” (369) to it. Thus, in a sense, the glorification of humanity by God necessitates a process which is similar to Elizabeth’s solution to the debasement of coins: all human-coins must be recalled by death, their materiality destroyed, and, this formal aspect being then restored with the appropriate qualitative change, the stamp, which is the immortal soul, can then be imprinted back on it. According to Donne, to “recompact [the] body, and then re-inanimate that man, [...] is the accomplishment of all” (369).

The promises made by God through Christ, which were only partially fulfilled by justification and sanctification during the believer’s life, had resulted in a sense of anxiety at the incongruity between the perfect *iustitia aliena* of justification, and the imperfect inherent righteousness of sanctification. This forced the believer to live in “fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), projecting all of their hopes onto the resurrection, and, as has been shown before, intensely engaging with it by means of their imagination. The glorification concludes the *ordo salutis* by perfecting the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the believer, maintaining the perfect stamp received during the Christian’s life, and alchemically returning the copper coin to its original golden form. The human-coin must conditionally circulate in God’s economy, despite their imperfection, in order to produce good works, yet its final transformation is meant to fully restore its value, in turn re-establishing that which was which was cut short by a “false numismatic restamping of humanity” (Singh 116) caused by disobedience: the Edenic golden age.

6 Conclusions

The reconsideration of Patristic thought caused by the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation had far reaching cultural consequences. Some of the images used by the Fathers, such as the one which has been considered in this dissertation, appeared in literary and homiletic discourses, a fact that establishes the importance they must have had for those involved in theological debates. Henry VIII's debasement and the distrust in the value of coinage it produced in the people, a problem that was only completely solved by Elizabeth I's reissuing of coins, indicates that multiple understandings of monetary value circulated in the scholarly and popular circles of Renaissance-era England. An ambivalence as to whether the value of the coin resided in the authority indicated by its stamp, or in the quality of the metal can be perceived in the way Donne approaches the subject. The poet seems to compare the former belief to the mechanism of justification, whereby a perfect but foreign righteousness is imputed to the Christian, paralleling the striking of an image onto a coin. The latter belief is related to sanctification, which consists in the addition to that stamp of an intrinsic, yet imperfect righteousness, described by Donne as a form of partial gilding. It might be said that the emphasis on God's grace as the sole agent of justification coincided with the belief that the authority to grant value to money resided with the monarchy only, whose role as rulers, confirmed instead of questioned by the Magisterial Reformation, was approved by their divinely-appointed authority.

This investigation has followed this analogy through the chronological description of salvation known as the *ordo salutis*. The analysis performed in the first section, nevertheless, by finding a correspondence between the righteous angels of "The Bracelet" and the prelapsarian state of humanity, made us realize that the human-as-coin conceit is inevitably connected with questions of geopolitical conflict and its relation to God's

dispute with the devil over the ownership of humanity. Similarly, in the discussions concerning the loss of the material and subjective values³⁷ of the human-coin, a similarity between the classical description of the ages of man and the numismatic interpretation of the Fall was described, as well as the importance of the commercial subtext. Satan emerges as a deceitful merchant, whose “single money” (Donne 311) produces a deficit after accumulation. His coins—that is, humanity’s sins—provoke a decrease in wealth and in the value of the human-coin, making humanity incur an ever-increasing debt. In addition, he is also a usurper of God’s kingship, since the Creator’s coinage is meant to proclaim his sovereignty, which Satan, at the moment of restamping it, challenges. The subject of this dispute is the numismatic-human; the repentant Christian understandably feels terror when noticing, as in “Holy Sonnet 1”, that both God and the Devil have a claim on him.

Complicating the relationship between the Father’s creative and salvific activity and the monarch’s issuing of coins is the question of women, in romantic, domestic, and intercessory contexts. The Marian subtext of Donne’s poetry establishes a clear link between these female functions and that of God and King. The beloved engages the lover’s attention through mechanisms of desire,—including exhibiting beauty or virtue—and beckons him to respond with submission and adoration. Women, thus, can “[lend] / Mintage to others’ beauties” (“Second Anniversary”, ll. 223-4) just like Kings and the Creator can imprint their image on their coins in order to make them “something worth” (“A Valediction of Weeping”, l. 4). In addition to this, an alchemical subtext pervades Donne’s poems and sermons concerning conversion, since the human-coin needs to be

³⁷ Corresponding to the material the human-coin (later repaired by sanctification and glorification) is made of, and to the image (reminded *via* justification) it bears imprinted on itself, respectively. The value of the stamp on which justification acts is subjective in the sense that that step in the *ordo salutis* consists in “‘being reputed as righteous before God’ (*iusti coram Deo reputamur*).” (McGrath 234)

materially transformed, as if transmuted. The melting of the heart plays a very important role, serving in a sense as the inversion—or rectification—of the fate of the angel-coins found in Donne’s “*Armillia*”.

The poet’s descriptions of justification and sanctification are clear examples of a Protestant reformulation of the human-as-coin conceit, Patristic in origin, and described in detail in Singh’s *Divine Currency*. Engaging with the belief in the contrast between the *iustitia aliena* that justifies believers and the intrinsic righteousness that sanctifies them, Donne produces seemingly novel variations of the conceit. The poet contrasts the impurity of the material with the purity of the stamp, and refers to the imperfect good works produced during sanctification as creating “parcel-gilt” (“A Letter to the Lady Carey, and Mistress Essex Rich, from Amiens”, l. 31) numismatic-humans. Coupled with this is the conviction that entire sanctification, implying the attainment of a sinless nature,³⁸ is possible only after death, a fact which creates certain anxieties—as in “Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness”—that can be alleviated by a sense of assurance of salvation.

The glorified state which justified believers waited for was also expressed in numismatic terms by Donne, particularly in his sermons. It is in this section that we have clarified the mutually reinforcing relationship, constructed by means of the human-as-coin conceit as well as the belief in the divine right of kings, between God and King as managers of a righteous economy. Elizabeth I reversed the Henrician debasement, but also re-established the Anglican Church; thus, the virtual reconstitution of the Edenic golden age³⁹ was both religious and economic. The long connectedness of these two

³⁸ Both in the sense of it possessing no sins,—all of which have been blotted out by Christ’s redemptive sacrifice—and of it being unable to sin.

³⁹ In the same sense in which Augustus’ reign was perceived—or depicted—by authors such as Virgil as a return to the primordial age.

systems of valuation was rekindled by the language of the Reformation, as exemplified by Donne. Nevertheless, what is interesting about his formulations is not merely that they seem to assent to the ideological discourse of the time, but that they add onto it new ideas, enriching it significantly. Examples of this can be seen in his projection of the language of glorification onto his female addressees, thus reasserting the triple relationship between divine, monarchical, and feminine economies which has been mentioned above.

6.1 Further Studies

As for the question of future research, some possibilities are as follows: investigating the theology of the matron could yield much more interesting insights, and exploring the alchemical subtext in Donne's references to soteriological issues might also prove worthwhile. Besides this, a comparison between Donne's numismatic-human conceit and that of other poets—such as Greenville, whose "A Treatise of Religion" was briefly mentioned in this dissertation—would enrich our understanding of the theo-economic thought of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, which we have merely attempted to provide a glimpse into by the allusion to sixteenth and seventeenth-century theological and political treatises.

It is also worth mentioning that a more comprehensive study of Donne's works could also undoubtedly deepen the conclusions that have been derived from this research, which had to be restricted in scope due to limitations of time and length. Many poems were not analysed, or mentioned only tangentially, due to this; but examining them in detail might provide further insights into Donne's usage of the human-coin metaphor. In addition to this, the frequent allusions to Devin Singh's *Divine Currency*, which has served as our main theoretical framework, could be expanded by means of his yet to be

finished *Sacred Debt*, which will no doubt contribute much to this complicated field of research.

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