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The Priest, The Mystic, and The Reincarnate: The Religious Experience of Poetry in Donne, Rumi, and The Karmapa

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**The Priest, The Mystic, and The Reincarnate:
The Religious Experience of Poetry in Donne, Rumi, and The Karmapa**

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Honor Scholar Program Senior Project

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Rumi's "Nothing Venture Nothing Win"

When you put a cargo on board a ship, you make that venture on trust,

For you know not whether you will be drowned or come safe to land.

If you say, "I will not embark till I am certain of my fate," then you will do no trade: the secret of these two destinies is never disclosed.

The faint-hearted merchant neither gains nor loses; nay he loses: one must take fire in order to get light.

Since all affairs turn upon hope, surely Faith is the best object of hope, for thereby you win salvation.

Introduction

John Donne, Anglican priest, was born in 1572 in London to a Catholic family; Jalaluddin Rumi, Sufi mystic, was born in 1207 in Persia; the first Karmapa, a Tibetan Buddhist leader, was born in 1110 in eastern Tibet. Although he died in 1193, he has been reborn a total of sixteen times, and the seventeenth reincarnation, Ogyen Trinley Dorje is the Karmapa recognized today (Kunsang, Pemo, and Aubèle 27). There seems to be little connection between Donne, Rumi, and the Karmapa. After all, they were born in completely different periods and in completely different regions. More importantly, they come from three different religions: Christianity, Sufism, and Tibetan Buddhism. All three religious practices have seemingly disparate rituals, practices, texts, and followers. Yet all three people were compelled to pursue the same art form: religious poetry.

Donne, Rumi, and the Karmapa all share the dual role of poet and spiritual leader. Within their poetry, they voice their experiences as religious disciples. My thesis questions the meaning of discipleship for the three poets: how does their poetry reflect their roles as followers, teachers, and students of their respective religion? Whether they ask questions about the afterlife, death, wrongdoings, forgiveness, enlightenment, peace, or chaos, these spiritual poets draw on their religious beliefs for answers to humanity's ultimate questions.

The poets discuss the same religious themes, though their approaches differ dramatically, as do their relationships with their versions of god. For instance, the Karmapa's divine voice makes him unlike either Donne's or Rumi's because the Karmapa is an extremely enlightened disciple of the Buddha. To put the Karmapa's religious role in perspective, it is easiest to refer to the Dalai Lama, a famous Tibetan Buddhist leader who is well known by the Western world. The Dalai Lama is the leader of all four Tibetan Buddhist traditions—Nyingma, Gelukpa, Sakya, and Kagyu—and the Karmapa is the leader of the Kagyu sect; both the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa are *tulkus*, or reincarnates (Martin 11). Reincarnation is a fundamental belief of Tibetan Buddhism, and certain spiritual leaders, such as the Karmapa, have overcome the cycle of suffering and ignorance, *samsara*, with their divine wisdom and enlightenment; now the Karmapa's main purpose is to teach others how to overcome *samsara* (Martin

11). This role makes the Karmapa a *Bodhisattva*, or an enlightened being who actively chooses to remain with “ordinary beings within the cycle of samsara” (Rinpoche 19). Thus, the Tibetan Buddhists consider the current 17th Karmapa to be the same person as the 1st Karmapa. Although a Western viewpoint would consider the Karmapa’s poems written by different reincarnations as separate entities written by separate people, I will adopt the eastern view that all seventeen reincarnations who composed the poems are a single person. While Westerners may have a biased view of reincarnation, thinking it is “magical and impossible,” the Tibetans view reincarnation as “a reflection of the multivalent reality described in the Vajrayana Buddhism that permeates their culture” (Martin 11-12). As the Karmapa meditates on our connections to nature, as well as each other, the Karmapa never laments his existence as Donne does, or scolds his fellow disciples as does Rumi.

While the Karmapa’s divine voice speaks to ultimate enlightenment throughout his verse, Donne’s speaker voices the concerns of a struggling disciple, desperate for God’s love and attention. In a sense, Donne is the unenlightened disciple—unsure of God’s plan and God’s love, and using poetry to express his frustration and desperation, as well as his adoration for God. Within the *Holy Sonnets*, Donne tackles both his mortality and spiritual struggles; he expresses concern for his personal salvation (Targoff 107). In the end, will God forgive him for his sins? Does God love Donne as much as Donne loves him?

While my examination of Donne focuses on the *Holy Sonnets*, I also examine some of Donne’s other divine poems such as “Hymn to God The Father,” “Hymn to God, My God, My Sickness,” “Good Friday, Riding Westward,” and the lesser-known “Resurrection, imperfect.” I have chosen Helen Gardner’s organization of the *Holy Sonnets* because of her thematic ordering. Gardner uses the 1633 edition that categorizes the first half of the *Holy Sonnets* as a discussion of the “last things” and the second half as a discussion of “divine love” (Targoff 109). Gardner’s edition make the most sense for the thematic ordering of my own paper.

Within his poetry, Donne appears exceptionally human, deliberating the struggles of his own discipleship. Rumi’s poetry lies in the middle of the spectrum, between Donne’s mortal struggles and the Karmapa’s immortal enlightenment. As a Sufi mystic, Rumi expresses his own divine wisdom to his

readers and followers. While Donne focuses on his individual experience, Rumi speaks to his disciples, sharing anecdotes about God's messages. Rumi's three major works of poetry are the *Dīwān-i Sham-i Tabrīzī*, the *Mathnawī*, and *Fīhi mā fīhi* (Chittick 5). The *Dīwān* is a collection of ghazals dedicated to his beloved friend Shams, with whom Rumi shared a spiritual connection with; the poems typically represent Rumi's individual spiritual journey as well as spiritual love (Chittick 5). On the other hand, the *Mathnawī*'s purpose is to speak to disciples of Islam about Sufi teachings and practices, often through comparisons, analogies, and allegories (Chittick 7). Rumi's voice, throughout the *Fīhi mā fīhi*, is similar to his voice in the *Mathnawī*, although the *Mathnawī* is a six-book epic written in couplets, whereas the *Fīhi mā fīhi* is mostly prose poetry (Chittick 7). Although all of Rumi's works are religious, the *Mathnawī* is, in a sense, Rumi's own religious text. Sufis could pick up the *Mathnawī* in the same way they pick up the Qur'an; it provides rules, guidance, and wisdom from a God-like voice. It is the true text of a Sufi mystic.

For this paper, I have selected poems from the *Mathnawī*, as translated and selected by R.A. Nicholson, because of the religious authority behind Rumi's poetic voice. Rumi's popularity has only grown since he was 1997's best-selling poet in the United States (Seelarbokus 268). But are Rumi's true poems actually sold and read? Most scholars pay well-deserved credit to R.A. Nicholson and A.J. Arberry for their work on translating Rumi's ancient Persian into modern English; Nicholson's translations are "so exact that his text corresponds to the original practically word for word" (Chittick 14). However, although Nicholson's translations are known to be the most precise, these translations are not America's best sellers. Nicholson brought Rumi to English speakers, but it was Coleman Barks who made Rumi a best-seller; Barks has taken Nicholson's and Arberry's translations and made them more accessible to American readers with new interpretations (Seelarbokus 271). Ultimately, Barks is not a Rumi translator; his work is a "re-interpretation of prior English-language versions of Rumi" (Seelarbokus 278). In an attempt to appeal to American readers, Barks has given Rumi an American voice, but at a massive cost: Rumi's Islam (Seelarbokus 272). In fact, it is the "total disengagement of Rumi's poetry from Islam that

explains his popularity in the United States” (Seelarbokus 272). Barks prides his Rumi interpretations on a universal spirituality that is more accessible than religion, even though “presenting Rumi as outside the Islamic faith and cultural tradition merely indicates lack of knowledge of the basic tenets of Islam” (Seelarbokus 277). Simply, Rumi is not Rumi without Islam.

For instance, both Barks’s interpretation “Chickpea to Cook” and the Nicholson’s translation “The Use of Tribulation” draw from the lines of Rumi’s *Mathnawī III*, although the stark difference between the two poems is easily detected. “The Use of Tribulation” establishes Rumi’s allegory of the housewife, the chickpea, and the fire, meant to teach Sufi followers the meaning of their deepest suffering (Nicholson 81n1). Rumi adopts the voice of the housewife, who addresses the boiling chickpea directly, which represents a suffering Sufi: “Continue, O chickpea, to boil in tribulation until neither existence nor self remains to thee. / If thou hast been severed from the garden of earth, yet though wild be food in the mouth and enter into the living” (13-14). Rumi’s theory of spiritual evolution, further explored in a later chapter, is alluded to in these lines as the chickpea evolves through different stages: “cooked, eaten, assimilated, and converted into sperm, loses its vegetable nature, participates in the animal life of man, ascends to rationality, and eventually returns to the world of Divine Attributes” (Nicholson 82n3). Furthermore, the speaker proclaims to the chickpea: “Thou grewest from God’s Attributes in the beginning: pass again into His Attributes!” (16) Ultimately, the chickpea’s suffering will return him to God. On the other hand, in “Chickpea to Cook,” Rumi’s original meaning is flattened. For instance, Barks’s boiling chickpea wonders, “Why are you doing this to me?” (3) and the housewife answers, “Don’t you try to jump out. / You think I’m torturing you. / I’m giving you flavor, / so you can mix with spices and rice / and be the lovely vitality of a human being” (5-9). There is no Sufism behind the housewife’s reasoning: neither the chickpea nor the housewife seems concerned with the divine purpose of suffering. If anything, Barks has simplified the intricate allegory of the chickpea, making the surface of the allegory accessible, but the Sufi layers beneath the story rather inaccessible. Despite Barks’s engaging sense of humor, I argue that Nicholson’s translations are just as accessible to the average reader; best of

all, the Sufism and Rumi's true voice are still intact within the poems. We do not pry the Bible from Donne's hands; we allow the Karmapa to be a Buddhist; let us let Rumi keep his Qur'an.

Donne, Rumi, and the Karmapa take different approaches to poetry; their poems are written in different forms, the poets have different relationships with God, and ultimately, they are three completely different disciples. My examination of the poets within a thematic framework—discipleship, meditations on evil, death, the afterlife, heavenly and humanly love, sin, and forgiveness—shows the overlapping topics that present themselves throughout religious poetry, regardless of the religious discipline. The Karmapa's, Rumi's, and Donne's discussions of religion expand upon the same struggles, and even come to the same conclusions. My first chapter establishes the overlapping aspects of discipleship despite the differences between the three religions. My second chapter discusses the difference between Donne's conceptualization of resurrection, the Karmapa's belief in reincarnation, and Rumi's philosophy of spiritual evolution—all differing ideas, yet rooted in the shared belief in new life after death. My third chapter discusses God's love and human love, and asks how God's immortal love both complements and conflicts with Rumi's, Donne's, and the Karmapa's mortal love for God. In my last chapter, I explore both Rumi's and Donne's discussion of sin and forgiveness and expand on why these topics are absent from the Karmapa's work.

The examination of these three seemingly disparate poets shows that—although their discussions are different—religious poems inherently explore the same ideas and struggles. Ultimately, the roots of religion are found within the poems of the Karmapa, Rumi, and Donne—and these roots can be a unifying force among seemingly disparate religions.

Chapter 1: The Role of the Disciple

Donne, Rumi, and the Karmapa are poets, but who are they as disciples of Christianity, Sufism, and Tibetan Buddhism? To understand their poetry, it is important to understand their identities as religious followers; their religious identities can illuminate their discussions of death, the afterlife, love, sin, and forgiveness. The Seventeenth Karmapa's "A Festival of the Field for Gathering Merit," Rumi's "A True Sufi," and Donne's *Holy Sonnet* 10 all discuss discipleship differently: while discipleship, for Rumi and Donne, focuses on a single God, it manifests itself, in the Karmapa's poem, in relation to many entities. The Karmapa's tranquil experience of discipleship asserts that the Sacred, or the Karmapa's version of god, is everywhere and takes many forms, such as the ultimate Lama or Buddha, nature, and different deities.

The title of the Karmapa's poem relates the disciple to different forms of the Sacred in a reference to a Vajrayana feast and celebration in which disciples gather merit from worshipping different deities (Martin 234). By beginning with the female Buddha Tara's mantra—"Om tare tuttare ture soha. / Ah ho" (1) or "a wondrous joy"—the Karmapa, as the disciple, already offers an ode to Tara, one of the most well-known and loved deities, to whom this mantra is commonly offered as a song (Martin 234). With this mantra, the Karmapa is a follower of Tara, the earth goddess; with the next line, he becomes a disciple of the earth: "The essential nature of simplicity is the ground's ever pure expanse" (3). The ground is of special significance in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition because it gives birth to everything: all nature grows from it and cannot exist without this foundation. However, the ground is also figurative for the foundation of the mind. The thoughts of nature that grow within our minds can reflect of our own ignorance. However, "When set to the enchanting music of a clear and radiant knowing, naturally present, / And matured by the jeweled rain of joy descending as the union of the three kayas, / The sovereign one, the ultimate lama, arises remembered in the center of my heart" (3-5). The Karmapa claims that enlightenment is already present in nature—to be a disciple of nature means to be a disciple of the three kayas, the sovereign one, the ultimate lama—all names for the Buddha (Martin 234). By embracing this nature, and this celebration of the deity, the Karmapa, as a disciple, also embraces Buddha into his heart.

The Karmapa feels a strong pull to many forms of the Sacred: the deity Tara, aspects of nature such as the ground, and the ultimate lama, Buddha, himself. As a follower of the deity Tara, the Karmapa praises her wisdom: “The enlightened activity of your three gates illuminates like a garland of the sun’s rays. / The hundred thousand lights of your virtuous actions spontaneously / Create a cooling shade to ease the pain of fortunate disciples” (7-9). Deity Tara is a paradox of powers: she can simultaneously illuminate and provide shade for her disciples. The three gates—body, speech, and mind—signify her ability to shine light on all levels of consciousness (Martin 234). As a thankful disciple, the Karmapa praises her powers and is in awe of her connection to the earth. Referring to her followers, the Karmapa claims that “A lotus of the three joys unfolds in the center of their hearts” (10). In response to Tara’s illumination of the three gates, her disciples offer her the three joys in the form of a lotus. Whereas the first stanza ends with “my heart,” this second stanza ends with “their hearts.” In other words, Tara’s illuminating powers have reached the Karmapa as well as other disciples.

The Karmapa’s lotus imagery continues in the third stanza as a symbol for an offering from the disciple to the deity (Martin 235): “The lotus of this life with its leisure and resources holds in its center / A stamen that befriends a mellifluous bee with its honey of renunciation” (11-12). In the lotus flower offered by the deity, the stamen, which represents the deity, “befriends” the bee, the disciple, even when the bee has honey full of rejection. The disciple may renounce his deity from time to time, but the stamen will always stay a friend. The Karmapa continues, “Grant your blessing that the true lama’s lotus feet are bathed by the sun / And the abundant petals of benefit for others open forth” (13-14). When the lama is kept happy, he will reciprocate this happiness. This relationship between disciple and lama is an everlasting cycle of love and friendship.

The speaker also tells of his intimate experience with gazing at Buddha’s eyes. First the Karmapa pays tribute to Tara and nature. Now, staring at the ultimate lama himself, the Karmapa is “Gazing at the very face of primordial wisdom, luminous and self-arisen from the natural state, / And resisting at ease on the path, with nothing to add or take away” (15-16). When the Karmapa looks into the lama’s eyes, he is happy with the present moment and desires no more or no less than what he already has. He is “at ease”

with the path that the lama has cultivated. The Karmapa also says, “Grant your blessing that I take the royal seat, present from time without beginning / In the expanse of emptiness—dharmakaya’s true nature, ultimate reality” (17-18). When the speaker has a full appreciation of all his blessings, time ceases to exist, and he is able to take a “royal seat” within the ultimate reality of the lama. It is difficult but possible for the disciple to achieve the same kind of enlightenment as the Buddha.

The poem’s penultimate stanza is an aspiration for the future, hoping that the “joy” of nature and the “happiness” of disciples may “enrapture the whole world” (19-22). The ending stanza, another aspiration for future happiness and light in the “dense darkness” (24), refers to the celebratory title: “May the dulcet melody of incomparable fame, this celestial music / For the festival of a golden age without end, resound throughout the three realms” (28-29). The speaker hopes that the celebration of the relationship between the disciple, deity, nature, and the ultimate lama will never end.

The Karmapa’s poem speaks with authority about true discipleship and the speaker worships many different forms of the Sacred. Although Rumi’s poems “The Blind Follower” and “The True Sufi” also explore the idea of a disciple’s relationship with God, the speaker in “The Blind Follower,” unlike the Karmapa’s who only comprehends what a good disciple does, explains the flaws of the bad follower. The short poem begins with the allegory of the parrot: “The parrot looking in the mirror sees / Itself, but not its teacher hid behind, / And learns the speech of Man, the while it thinks / A bird of its own sort is talking to it” (1-4). This parrot represents a failed disciple; the mirror represents a connecting force between the disciple and God, who is the teacher (Nicholson 59n2). Because the “parrot” or disciple is too ignorant to recognize this medium between himself and God, he sees only himself in the mirror and thinks that his reflection is speaking to him. Rumi’s speaker reasons, “So the disciple full of egoism / Sees nothing in the Shaykh except himself” (5-6). When the disciple looks into the mirror, he should see the “Shaykh” or Sheikh as a part of his own reflection; instead, he only can see himself in the mirror. The speaker expands on this idea: “The Universal Reason eloquent / Behind the mirror of the Shaykh’s discourse— / The Spirit which is the mystery of Man—He cannot see” (7-10). The “parrot” is overlooking God’s powers, beauty, and mystery because of his own egoism. Rumi’s speaker ends with,

“Words mimicked, learned by rote / ‘Tis all. A parrot he, no bosom-friend” (11-12). By recognizing only himself in the mirror, the parrot can only mimic his own words; the true disciple would mimic God’s words instead.

Whereas in “The Blind Follower,” the parrot does everything a true Sufi does not, Rumi asks, in “The True Sufi,” “What makes the Sufi?” and answers, “Purity of heart” (1). The speaker further develops his opinion of the true Sufi: “Not the patched mantle and the lust perverse / Of those vile earth-bound men who steal his name” (2-3). Whereas many “parrots” on earth call themselves Sufis but actually practice poor behavior, the true Sufi, “in all dregs discerns the essence of pure: / In hardship ease, in tribulation joy” (4-5). During the most undesirable parts of life, the true disciple still maintains the “essence” of God and finds joy in life’s hardships. Further, the true Sufi is like the sentry who guards “Beauty’s palace-gate” with a stick (6-7). When God passes through the gate, the Sufi “gives way before him, unafraid he passes, / And showing the King’s arrow, enters in” (8-9). The loyal disciple is unafraid of God and protects his “palace” or heaven. The true disciple’s relationship with God is completely different from the Karmapa’s. Throughout both of Rumi’s poems, the speaker explains what a poorly-behaved disciple does, as well as the hardships a true disciple may face.

Whereas Rumi explores the hardships of all Sufis, Donne’s speaker throughout *Holy Sonnet 10* experiences personal hardships and focuses only on his own imperfections. As God’s loyal disciple, Donne’s speaker also differs from the Karmapa’s because instead of approaching God in a kind and loving tone, he demands God’s attention with an aggressive voice, refusing to be ignored any longer. Donne’s speaker begins *Holy Sonnet 10* with an imperative verb, “Batter my heart, three-person’d God, for you / As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend” (1-2). This call to action is no small demand: he insists upon the attention of the entire Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Dickson 140n5) The speaker wastes no time in telling God what he desires, wanting God to pummel him violently, claiming that God has treated him too gently in the past. Because of God’s mild actions, the speaker makes the paradoxical demand that parallels the earlier set of imperative verbs: “That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow me; and bend / Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new” (3-4). For God

to know the speaker, he must destroy him; this destruction is necessary for rebirth. He asks God not simply to “knock” but to “break”; not to “breathe” but to “blow”; not to “shine” but to “burn.” He does not simply want mending; instead, he wants newness. This theme of destruction is also explored the last line of Donne’s “Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness”: “Therefore that he may raise, the Lord throws down” (30). Rebirth requires death; Donne must be knocked down to rise again. In both cases, the speaker wants a resurrection—and this resurrection requires God’s violent hands. The speaker’s pleas for violence and destruction from God could not be more opposite to the voices of Rumi’s and the Karmapa’s speaker. While Rumi and the Karmapa are thankful disciples who understand God’s practices, Donne is a frustrated follower, seeking a better understanding and connection with God—only possible after ruin.

Insisting that God has abandoned him, the speaker argues that he is a town under siege, eagerly awaiting God’s rescue from the devil himself (Dickson 140n6): “I like an usurped town t’another due / Labor t’admit you, but oh, to no end” (5-6). Ideally, the speaker would like God to enter Satan’s town. However, an infinite amount of work is required to allow God’s entry, making this feat impossible for the speaker. Even though the speaker loves God and longs for his presence, he is trapped. Similarly, in *Holy Sonnet 1*, Donne admits that he loves God, but wonders, “Why doth the devil then usurp in me? / Why doth he steal, nay ravish, that’s thy right?” (9-10). In both *Holy Sonnets 1* and 10, Donne struggles with the same idea: if his heart belongs to God, why is he standing with the Devil? He longs to be a loyal and loving disciple of God, yet he is in hell. Donne continues with this tone of despair until the end of *Holy Sonnet 1*: “Oh I shall soon despair, when I do see / That thou lov’st mankind well, yet wilt not choose me, / And Satan hates me, yet is loath to lose me” (12-14). From the very beginning of the *Holy Sonnets*, Donne establishes his sense of abandonment. He even goes as far as to say that God will not “choose him,” even though he loves the rest of mankind. God has left him in the hands of Satan, who does not love him. However, Satan does not want to lose him; the speaker remains trapped without God’s love and affection. This idea bleeds through the rest of the *Holy Sonnets*, especially *Holy Sonnet 10*.

Continuing with his pleading tone, and with the ideas from *Holy Sonnet 1*, the speaker of *Holy Sonnet 10* proclaims: “Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend, / But is captiv’d and proves weak

or untrue” (6-7). A viceroy is a leader who rules in the place of an even bigger and more important ruler. Claiming that “Reason” is God’s “viceroy” inside of him, the speaker argues that this reason should defend against evil. However, his reason, captive of Satan, is actually a weakling. Even though Satan has made the speaker unreasonable, Donne still insists on his love for God, directly addressing him in the turning point of the sestet: “Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain: / But am betroth’d unto your enemy” (9-10). The sestet introduces two new metaphors that build up to a dramatic paradox. Donne would very much like his love to be requited by God, although he is married to Satan, God’s enemy. In the Karmapa’s and Rumi’s poems, they speak only of God and not his enemies. However, Donne is adamant about bringing up his relationship with God’s enemy, and even goes as far to say that he is in Satan’s town instead of God’s kingdom.

Nevertheless, he still wants to be with God, so he returns to his previous violent tone: “Divorce me, untie or break that knot again” (11). The speaker needs God to eradicate the connection between himself and Satan—the speaker never desired to marry Satan in the first place. The verb “break,” echoing his earlier request, calls on God’s forgiveness, while the adverb “again” refers to God’s redemption after Original Sin. God the Father already broke the connection between Adam and the Devil; now the speaker asks for God’s help and forgiveness once again. Further, the desperate speaker makes yet another plea for God’s love: “Take me to you, imprison me, for I, / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste except you ravish me” (12-14). Paradoxically, freedom will come only in God’s prison; chastity will come only through rape. In *Holy Sonnet 1*, Donne is “ravished” by Satan, even though this action is God’s “right” (10). But in *Holy Sonnet 10*, he claims that he wants God to “ravish” him. The speaker’s diction reflects his desire for God’s violent courting. Donne’s relationship with God clearly is unlike both Rumi’s and the Karmapa’s. In the struggling relationship, Donne feels a sense of betrayal, abandonment, and desperation.

While all three poets discuss the disciple’s relationship with God differently, all three speakers have defined what it means to be a disciple of God in their own given doctrine. Despite Donne’s title of Priest, his speaker is a desperate disciple, while the Karmapa feels harmony and balance between himself,

nature, the deity Tara, and the ultimate lama, Buddha. Both Rumi's poems give directions to Sufis and define what true Sufism means, as well as what it means to be a failed follower of the tradition. While Rumi speaks to all Sufis in general, Donne speaks to his personal relationship with God and releases his frustrations with the relationship.

Chapter 2: Evil, Death, and the Afterlife

Goodness in Evil; Evil in Goodness

Even though Donne is a struggling disciple and Rumi is a wise follower, both poets ruminate on evil. In fact, it would be a difficult task to meditate on God without also discussing the world's evils. God does not exist without the Devil; Heaven does not exist without Hell; light does not exist without darkness. These necessary dualities are the conceits within Donne's *Holy Sonnets* 5 and 19, Rumi's "The Soul of Goodness in Things Evil" and "The Relativity of Evil," and the Karmapa's "A New Arising of My Homeland, the Snowy Land of Tibet." All three poets admit that belief in a higher power may be rooted in faithlessness and darkness; although the Karmapa recognizes polarities in nature, only Rumi and Donne ruminate about explicit evils.

Even the title of Rumi's "The Soul of Goodness in Things Evil" explores the inherent juxtaposition of good and evil and operates on paradoxical statements. The speaker begins by establishing the necessary reality of truth and falsehood: "Fools take false coins because they are like the true. / If in the world no genuine minted coin / Were current, how would forgers pass the false?" (1-3). Does God produce evil, and if so, why? Evil is the false coin, but there could be no false coin to forge without a true coin. For this reason, God has made the false coin. Perhaps God's false coins can be accepted by Rumi's followers. But what is the purpose of evil men? Why does God allow them to exist? The speaker offers his insight: "'Tis the love of right / Lures men to wrong. Let poison but be mixed / With sugar, they will cram it into their mouths" (5-7). Opposite entities are intrinsically intertwined. An evil man cannot seek evil without simultaneously seeking the good. Rumi suggests that innocence leads to a misunderstanding of evil as a form of good. The speaker also alludes to the purpose of non-believers, proclaiming: "Oh, cry not that all creeds are vain! Some scent / Of truth they have, else they would not beguile" (8-9). Paradoxically, it is the non-believers who allow the existence of believers; one could not have faith without skepticism.

Finally, the speaker illustrates the truth about God's believers and nonbelievers by recognizing that there are nonbelievers among his own group of followers: "Amidst the crowd of dervishes hides one,

/ One true fakir. Search well and thou wilt find!” (12-13). His followers may think of themselves as faithful disciples of the Dervish Order, but Rumi knows the truth: both faith and disbelief live within all of them. His crowd of dervishes acts as a greater metaphor for all of earth’s inhabitants. The true fakir, or true Sufi, can be discovered within ourselves if we admit that we are inherently faulty; our own faults are the reason we recognize faults in other things (Khosla 85). As Rumi argues in “The Evil in Ourselves,” “O Reader, how many an evil that you see in others is but your own nature reflected in them!” (5). Rumi urges his ignorant followers to recognize this concept: one sees evil because of one’s own evil.

Incorporating similar paradoxes as “The Soul of Goodness in Things Evil,” Rumi’s “The Relativity of Evil” explains why evil is a purposeful part of God’s course of action. In the beginning, the speaker affirms: “There is no absolute evil in the world: evil is relative. Recognize this fact” (1). Evil is part of a larger cycle that we may not be able to conceptualize. However, good and evil are concurrent aspects of God’s divine vision (Khosla 84). Humans cannot conceptualize eternity as God can. The speaker explains further: “In the realm of Time there is nothing that is not a foot to one and a fetter to another” (2). Just as evil may be used as a means for good, good may be used as a means to do evil. Rumi insists that everything from nature to humans to animals are within God’s cycle of good and evil: “Snake-venom is life to the snake, but death to man; the sea is a garden to sea-creatures, but to the creatures of earth a mortal wound” (4). All aspects of humans and nature are interconnected in God’s infinite scheme of time. In the poet’s explanation, Rumi urges his followers to trust in God’s temporal scheme.

Rumi also offers advice to his followers about how to become closer to God and his plan. Encouraging a new outlook, Rumi advises: “Do not look on the Beautiful with your own eye: behold the Sought with the eye of the seeker. / Nay, borrow sight from Him: look on His face with His eye” (7-8). Surprisingly, paradise is found within the things we do not favor; adversity is required in reaching the afterlife (Nicholson 152n2). No one can experience God without the experience of evil as well. In Rumi’s last two lines, he alludes to God’s commandment: “God hath said, ‘Whoso belongs to Me, I belong to him: I am his eye and his hand and his heart.’ / Everything loathly becomes lovely when it leads you to your

Beloved” (9). Ultimately, God cannot exist without his followers, and followers cannot exist without God.

While Rumi presents the juxtaposition of good and evil as part of God’s plan, Donne’s *Holy Sonnet 5* voices personal frustration about the world’s evils. Rumi tells his followers how to cope with the frustrating opposites of the world, whereas Donne’s speaker struggles to cope with his contradictory attitudes. In the first quatrain, the speaker asks, “If poisonous minerals, and if that tree / Whose fruit threw death on else immortal us, / If lecherous goats, if serpents envious / Cannot be damn’d, alas why should I be?” (1-4). Like Rumi, Donne also mentions the connection between humans, nature, and animals. However, Donne’s speaker does not have faith that the aspects of the world are connected for a greater purpose. In fact, he wonders why other sinners are able to escape God’s wrath, while he is seen as a sinner. Donne’s speaker continues to struggle with this concept in the second quatrain: “Why should intent, or reason, born in me, / Make sins else equal, in me more heinous? / And mercy being easy and glorious / To God, in his stern wrath why threatens he?” (4-8). God shows mercy to the sinful fruit, lustful goat, and envious snake, but Donne’s sins are uglier because of his human morality.

As the speaker’s epiphany emerges in the sestet, Donne asks, “But who am I that dare dispute with thee / O God? Oh, of thine only worthy blood / And my tears make a heavenly Lethean flood And drown in it my sins’ black memory” (9-12). Like Rumi, Donne finally recognizes that humans cannot conceptualize God’s divine view of good and evil. The poet’s realization is dramatized with the caesura after his lament, “O God? Oh,” which creates a bold pause within the sestet. Donne’s tears are made of the same water as the river of the underworld, and he wishes that God would forgive him for his sins (Dickson 138n8). At the end of the sestet, the speaker addresses God, asking for his mercy: “That thou remember them, some claim as debt; / I think it mercy if thou wilt forget” (13-14). Above all, Donne’s speaker wants God to forgive and forget his sins. The speaker realizes that he was wrong to question God’s merciful attitude towards animals and nature, as well as his unmerciful harshness towards the speaker himself, although Donne does not conclude that the evils he experiences are connected to the

greater good as Rumi does. It is not until later in Donne's sequence of *Holy Sonnets* that Donne presents the greater connection between good and evil.

Holy Sonnet 19 returns to Donne's personal struggle between good and evil, established in *Holy Sonnet 5*. In the first quatrain, the speaker laments his personal dualities: "Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one: / Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot / A constant habit; that when I would not / I change in vows, and in devotion" (1-4). Donne's erratic and conflicting emotions towards his relationship with God have become regular; evil has made Donne question his faith and devotion instead of strengthening him. In the second quatrain, the speaker meditates on the dichotomies inside himself: "As humorous is my contrition / As profane love, and as soon forgot: / As riddingly distempered, cold and hot, / As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none" (5-8). Donne's contrition changes as much as profane love, and both are forgotten easily. His love for God is both hot and cold, silent and loud, expansive and narrow; the speaker struggles to cope with his contradictory attitudes. Finally, the sestet leads Donne to an equilibrium as the speaker admits: "I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today / In prayers and flattering speeches I court God: / Tomorrow I quake with true fear of his rod. / So my devout fits come and go away / Like a fantastic ague: save that here / Those are my best days, when I shake with fear" (9-14). The speaker pursues God as though he were a bride, yet is also terrified of God's power. God's goodness highlights Donne's own insecurities, yet the speaker would rather be with God as a sinner than not be with him at all.

The Karmapa does not mention his personal struggles as Donne does. His poem "A New Arising of My Homeland, the Snowy Land of Tibet" emphasizes that certain aspects of nature cannot survive without their opposite. Similar to the comparisons made by Rumi and Donne, the point of the Karmapa's poem is that light cannot exist without darkness; summer cannot exist without winter. The Karmapa depicts an auspicious nighttime scene: "From the lakeshore, the melting white moon of merit is seen; / Its rays illuminating like the body of the Buddha with all its signs" (3-4). As an enlightened being, the Buddha has manifests himself as different forms of nature (Martin 237). The Buddha's divine power allows him to act as the darkness of night and the light from the moon all at once. The Karmapa has taken the paradoxes of nature and transformed them into the Buddha.

The Karmapa offers his ideas about the Buddha's power to transform our own minds: "Bodhichitta is a band of lamplight in the dusky horizon / Bringing joy to the weary mind. / Freedom from harm, like the fragrance of perfect joy, / Permeates the wide reach of this world" (5-8). The Karmapa, a *Bodhichitta*, has experienced a full awakening that the Buddha has achieved (Martin 237). The Karmapa likens his role as a *Bodhichitta* to the way natural light can illuminate darkness. The speaker also suggests that nature is a vehicle for meditation and awakening. The Buddha's enlightenment can be achieved if the juxtaposition of our thoughts works as well as the juxtapositions of nature: "White flowers of snow lightly fall like honeyed rain, / The glory of the mind comes softly to the ear. / The young, flawless sun is a good friend of the opening lotus; / The joyful amrita of benefiting others brings delight" (9-12). The images of the summer flowers and rain with white, winter snow exhibit the complimentary dualities of nature. The Karmapa captures the Buddha's unique sensory feelings by depicting his synesthetic powers: The Buddha is known to "see sounds, hear images, and tastes touch," (Martin 238). The Buddha's complex senses are united within nature; His synesthesia brings him to enlightenment. Finally, the Karmapa ends with an illustration of a summer storm: "With a resonant song of long life, the drums of summer thunder fill the world. / Arousing the play of myriad songs and dances of great bliss. / Flowers from a golden age fill the celestial path of the sky" (13-15). The rain affects everything from humans to other aspects of nature to the Buddha. Every drop of rain and every flower is purposeful.

Like Rumi, the Karmapa recognizes the divine connections that others may not be able to recognize. However, the Karmapa's "A New Arising of My Homeland, the Snowy Land of Tibet" voices more images of peace and harmony than do Donne and Rumi combined. Significantly, the Karmapa's poem embodies the paradoxes of the Karmapa himself: he is a divine presence living as an earthly being; he is paradise on earth. The Karmapa is also closer to God and God's temporal scheme than other disciples of Tibetan Buddhism because he is a reincarnate. Even though Donne and Rumi are a priest and mystic, respectively, they still develop striking images of earthly evils. However, the Karmapa exists in

an enlightened state; for this reason, it is impossible for him to see more than goodness, nature, and most importantly, the Buddha.

Meditations on Death

Mortality is a large part of Donne's, Rumi's, and the Karmapa's poetic discussions; their attitudes towards death are a defining aspect of both their poetry and their identities as disciples. While Donne contemplates his own impending end with a celebratory tone in "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness," *Holy Sonnet 3* takes on a completely opposite tone as Donne, terrified and anxious, contemplates his eventual death. The inconsistency of Donne's opposite tones reflects his identity as a struggling disciple; within Donne's religious poetry, it is not unusual for him to present paradoxical attitudes about the same theological idea. On the other hand, Rumi's attitude is consistent in "The Grief of the Dead" as he questions the conventional view of death as an occasion for grief and mourning; instead, he sees death as cause for celebration. Using different diction from Donne and Rumi, The Karmapa's short meditation "The Song of Natural Awareness," describes death in terms of ultimate enlightenment, meditation, and emptiness. Although the Sufi's, the Christian's, and the Buddhist's theological views of death are different, the poets' discussions provide an opportunity to see the theological overlap of their ideas.

Interestingly, Donne faces his own personal death in "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness." He is believed to have written this poem during a severe fever when he thought that the fever would kill him (Dickson 155n5). The speaker begins, "Since I am coming to that holy room, / where, with thy choir of saints for evermore, / I shall be made thy music, as I come / I tune the instrument here at the door, / And what I must do then, think now before" (1-5). Donne's speaker, knocking on the door of death, is about to enter "that holy room," or heaven, and he can hear the heavenly music playing. On his perceived death bed, Donne's speaker is tuning his instrument as he prepares to join the music and choir in heaven. This casual and joyous approach to death anticipates Donne's later approach: days before his actual death in 1631, Donne requested a memorial to be made for himself and preached his own funeral sermon

(Roberts 961). Throughout the poem, Donne's journey is deeply spiritual and personal, as he does not converse with anyone but himself and God.

In preparing for his celebration of death, Donne continues: "Whilst my physicians by their love are grown / Cosmographers, and I their map, who lie / Flat on this bed, that by them may be shown / That this is my southwest discovery" (6-9). The conceit of cartography builds as the speaker's euphemism, "southwest discovery," symbolizes his illness, fever, and impending death. Donne's speaker also likens his physicians to cosmographers and himself to their map. The speaker continues with more joyful euphemisms of death: "*Per fretum febris*, by these straits to die, / I joy, that in these straits, I see my West; / For, though their currents yield return to none, / What shall my West hurt me?" (10-13). The speaker takes joy in the straits of his fever, which they call "*Per Fretum Febris*," because the fever will lead them to the West—the direction of death (Dickson 155n8). He asks ironically if the West will hurt him, but the speaker knows that the "West" or death will not hurt him; in fact, he takes joy in the thought of the western direction.

The speaker further compares himself to the Cosmographer's map, stating: "As West and East / In all flat maps (and I am one) are one, / So death doth touch the resurrection" (13-15). On a flat map, the East opposes the West, but on a globe, the Eastern and Western directions overlap in an everlasting circle, since a globe is round. Thus, the West or "death" and the East or "resurrection" will touch on a globe, symbolizing Donne's everlasting life in heaven. The speaker finds a way to make his impending death a joyful occasion, although he is confused about the location of the God's kingdom, asking, "In the Pacific Sea my home? Or are / The eastern riches? Is Jerusalem? / Anyan, and Magellan, and Gibraltar, / All straits, and none but straits, are ways to them, / Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Cham, or Shem" (16-20). Despite his confusion, the straits of his fever will lead the speaker to places he cannot go in his life. His fever will bring him closer to God, as well as lead him to the three Sons of Noah, who are known to represent continents of the world (Dickson 155n2).

Continuing with a biblical tone, the speaker states: "We think that Paradise and Calvary, / Christ's cross and Adam's tree, stood in one place. / 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" (21-25). The speaker asks God to see him as both versions of Adam: the first Adam, the original sinner, and the last Adam, Christ (Dickson 155n3). Wanting Adam to embrace his soul, the speaker hopes that this embrace will occur after his death and lead him to the afterlife with God. Finally, the speaker demands: "So in his purple wrapp'd, receive me, Lord, / By these his thorns give me his other crown; / And as to other souls I preach'd thy word, / Be this my text, my sermon to mine own: / Therefore that he may raise, the Lord throws down" (26-30). Asking to be received into heaven wrapped in both Christ's blood and royal garments (Dickson 155n4), the speaker claims that he has preached the word of God to other people, but now the time has come to preach the word of God to himself. Donne also celebrates God's paradoxical ability to "raise" what he has destroyed; God destroys him in order to embrace him. Ultimately, Donne's speaker explores his own death through his personal relationship with God.

Unlike the optimistic tone of "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness," *Holy Sonnet 3* depicts an anxious speaker struggling with his impending death. Early in the sequence of the *Holy Sonnets*, Donne's *Holy Sonnet 3* works to establish Donne's central yet paradoxical discussion of his mortality and immortality. The first quatrain operates on three metaphors: "This is my play's last scene; here heavens appoint / My pilgrimage's last mile; and my race, / Idly, yet quickly run, hath this last pace; / My span's last inch; my minute's last point" (1-4). The metaphor of the play, the pilgrimage, and the race dramatizes Donne's impending death. Whether this is his last play, his last race, his last inch, or his last minute—his death is near. Personifying death in the second quatrain, Donne claims: "And gluttonous death will instantly unjoint / My body and soul, and I shall sleep a space; / Or presently, I know not, see that face, / Whose fear already shakes my every joint" (5-8). Donne depicts death as a monstrous force, completely opposite to the "holy room" filled with music and instruments. There is a direct parallel between the speaker's description of death and God. Both death and God instill a deep fear in Donne: the speaker wonders if death will separate his body and soul or if he will see God's face at the Last Judgment (Dickson 137n9). Nevertheless, either outcome is terrifying to the speaker.

The sestet presents an interesting paradox as the speaker envisions the simultaneous movement of his soul lifting him to heaven and his sins taking him to hell: “Then, as my soul, to’ heaven her first seat takes flight, / And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell, / So fall my sins, that all may have their right, / To where they’re bred, and would press me, to hell” (9-12). Donne claims that, after death, his body and soul will be in two different places. Very much concerned with his salvation, Donne directly addresses God in the final lines of the sonnet: “Impute me righteous, thus purg’d of evil, / For thus I leave the world, the flesh, and the devil” (13-14). His body, his sins, the devil, and the earthly world are all inseparable. He argues that God must rid the speaker of all these entities; only then can he leave the earthly world and unite with God, fully purified.

While Donne presents two opposite pictures of mortality, Rumi is consistent in welcoming death with open arms in “The Grief of the Dead.” Unlike Donne, Rumi is not a struggling disciple, but rather he is an enlightened leader, wanting to share advice with other Sufis about humanity’s ultimate question: death. The poem begins, “The Prince of mankind (Mohammed) said truly that no one who has passed away from this world / Feels sorrow and regret for having died” (1-2). Rumi wonders why, if no one regrets death after having died, are we terrified of the event. The Sufi believes that “Death is the portal to higher forms of existence” (Khosla 46), and Rumi speaks to this concept throughout the poem as he continues, “nay, but he feels a hundred regrets for having missing the opportunity, / Saying to himself, ‘Why did I not make death my object—death which is the store-house of all fortunes and riches, / And why, through seeing double, did I fasten my lifelong gaze upon those phantoms that vanished at the fated hour?’” (2-4). Rumi’s speaker admits his previous ignorance of death’s enlightenment, wondering why death has not been an object of his desire all along—all fortunes and riches can be found in death. This interpretation of death is similar to Donne’s speaker’s in “Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness,” who calls death a welcoming “holy room” filled with music and instruments. Rumi’s speaker admits: “The grief of the dead is not on account of death; it is because they dwelt on the phenomenal forms of existence / And never perceived that all this foam is moved and fed by the Sea” (5-6). The act of mourning the dead is not for the dead themselves—it is for the comfort of the living. When we feel grief because of death,

we are not grieving for the death itself—we are grieving for the life or existence. However, our earthly existence does not allow us all the answers about life or existence. As Rumi’s speaker suggests, when we are living, we cannot see the whole picture; life is only a small part of existence: it is the foam on the sea. As living creatures, we are unenlightened and thus ignorant about our entire existence. Only in death can we see the whole picture, or the whole sea. Like Donne, Rumi explains how death will lead to enlightenment.

Continuing to paint his picture of the sea, Rumi’s speaker proclaims: “When the Sea has cast the foam-flakes on the shore, go to the graveyard and behold them! / Say to them, ‘Where is your swirling on rush now?’ and hear them answer mutely, ‘Ask this question of the Sea, not of us.’” (7-8). Again, the big picture of our existence is represented by the sea, but as living beings, sometimes we can only see a small part or the “foam” of this big picture. The part cannot survive without the whole: “How should the foam fly without the wave? How should the dust rise to the zenith without the wind? / Since you have seen the dust, see the Wind; since you have seen the foam, see the Ocean of Creative Energy” (9-10). The foam cannot exist without the sea, the dust cannot exist without the wind, and life cannot exist without death. According to Rumi, the parts of the whole are important, and death allows us to see how these parts are connected. Like Donne’s speaker in “Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness,” Rumi’s speaker encourages the experience of death: “Come, see it, for insight is the only thing in you that avails: the rest of you is a piece of fat and flesh, a woof and warp (of bones and sinews)” (11). According to Sufi beliefs, the mind and body are separate entities, and the physical body cannot survive in the afterlife; in the afterlife, the “insight” or soul is the part that survives (Khosla 232). Rumi’s speaker tries to bring attention to the materialism of the physical body, and encourages his readers to view themselves as a spiritual force instead of a physical one. Lastly, Rumi’s speaker demands: “Dissolve your whole body into Vision: become seeing, seeing, seeing! / One sight discerns but a yard or two of the road; another surveys the temporal and spiritual worlds and beholds the Face of their Kings” (12-13). Again, the speaker hints at the fact that living, unenlightened beings have a narrow view of their own existence.

While living, we can only see one or two roads of the entire world. But in death, we finally have a full view of the world and see how the different roads are connected.

Starkly different from Rumi's discussion of death, the Karmapa's short meditation "The Song of Natural Awareness" seems initially unrelated to death. Although the Karmapa does not explicitly use harsh diction pertaining to death and decay, he does describe the blissful phenomena of emptiness. Traditionally, he begins the poem with a short aspiration, "Om Swasti Jayentu" (1) or "May all be auspicious, and may the good be victorious" (Martin 249); this blessing lays the foundation for the Karmapa's discussion of the blissful enlightenment found in death. In the next line, the Karmapa describes the *dharmadhatu*, or the ultimate truth that comes with emptiness (Martin 249): "Primordially pure, the expanse of all phenomena is great bliss" (2). Our true nature, in its primordial state, has never been corrupted; we can reach this uncorrupted state once again in death, or "great bliss." The phenomena of "great bliss," true emptiness, and death are inseparable experiences for the enlightened Buddhist (Martin 249).

The Karmapa continues his peaceful meditation on the true enlightenment that is achieved after life: "All signs of elaboration stilled, it is spontaneously present" (3). Ultimate enlightenment, when all outside forces and actions are ceased, is when true bliss or emptiness is achieved. In his final lines, the Karmapa describes another blissful realm: "In that glad realm, where the joyous ambrosia of the three vehicles is found, / May the sun of naturally arising awareness be victorious" (4-5). The "three vehicles" refers to the three sects of Buddhism, which are all combined within the practice of Tibetan Buddhism: Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana (Martin 249). The "glad realm" is a place beyond our consciousness, where the phenomena of bliss and emptiness bring ultimate awareness. Unlike Donne's speaker in *Holy Sonnet 3* and Rumi's speaker, the Karmapa does not describe death in harsh ways; death is, instead, ultimate enlightenment. One should strive to experience this divine emptiness achieved through meditation.

The three poets realize that life is filled with ignorance and unanswered questions; in death, they will be happier, more enlightened, and all their questions will be answered. Donne's paradoxical

relationship with death leaves him joyous in “Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness” and terrified in *Holy Sonnet 3*. In contrast, Rumi is consistent in his meditation on death, preaching his wisdom to struggling Sufis: fools fear death, and the enlightened embrace it. The Karmapa’s discussion of emptiness and enlightenment remains relevant to this conversation. Although the Karmapa’s diction is different from Rumi’s or Donne’s, all disciples must embark on the journey to death, no matter the religion.

Defeating Death through Resurrection, Reincarnation, and Spiritual Evolution

The poets’ meditations on mortality are further illuminated in their discussion of immortality. The Karmapa, Donne, and Rumi all discuss the idea of everlasting life throughout their verses. While the 16th Karmapa’s “Last Testament” exemplifies the concepts of reincarnation and immortality, Rumi’s “The Ascending Soul” and “The Beauty of Death” illustrate a spiritual evolution from one level of consciousness to the next. Meanwhile, Donne’s *Holy Sonnet 6* and “Resurrection, imperfect” embody the theme of resurrection. Resurrection generally implies two lives: the earthly body and the spiritual life; the latter is determined by the body’s actions on earth (Khosla 237). On the other hand, reincarnation implies a “permanent self” that remains the same throughout this birth and the next; there may be an infinite number of births and rebirths, as well as multiple universes (Khosla 236). While the Karmapa believes in reincarnation and Donne believes in resurrection, Rumi remains somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Like Donne, he believes in two lives, the earthly life determining the spiritual life. However, Rumi also believes in an infinite number of spiritual lives, from human to angel and so on (Khosla 238).

Unlike any other poet, the Karmapa and his “Last Testament” completely exemplify reincarnation in form and practice. The name of the first Karmapa, Dusum Khyenpa, can be translated into “Knower of the Three Times” (Martin 277). Since the Karmapa’s first life, it was known that he had a special knowledge about the past, present, and future, and his name embodies his knowledge. The first Karmapa also left behind a “Last Testament” or the prediction note of his next incarnation (Martin 278). Following in Dusum Khyenpa’s footsteps, all sixteen reincarnations have also left behind a Last Testament, which

typically includes information about their next family, birthplace, various signs that may appear around the time of their birth or conception, the animal representative of their birth year, and possibly their future name (Martin 275). The Last Testaments are a form of poetry because of their metaphorical significance, symbolism, and imagery. The most recent “Last Testament,” written by the 16th Karmapa, predicted the birth of current Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje.

The 16th Karmapa wrote with certainty about his reincarnation as he penned his Last Testament: “To the north of here, in the east [of the Land] of Snow, / Lies the country where Divine thunder spontaneously blazes” (3-4). The predictions made in the Last Testament proved to align perfectly with the birth of the 17th Karmapa. As the lines suggest, Dorje was born in the eastern region of Tibet called Kham, and his birthplace is known as “Lhathok” or Divine Thunder (Kunsang, Pemo, and Aubèle 239). The speaker continues to predict certain aspects of his next life: “In a beautiful place of nomads [marked] by the sign of ‘that which fulfills all desires’ / The method is Dondrup and the wisdom is Lolaga” (5-6). The names Dondrup and Lolaga mentioned are the names of Dorje’s parents; both Dondrup and Lolaga belonged to a nomadic herding tribe in Eastern Tibet (Kunsang, Pemo, and Aubèle 239). The speaker continues, “[Born] the year of the one used for the earth / With the miraculous and far-reaching sound of the white one, / He is known as the Karmapa” (7-9). The year used for the earth can be interpreted to mean that Dorje was born during the year of the wood ox (Kunsang, Pemo, and Aubèle 239). Most interestingly, three days after Dorje’s birth, his family and all the people in the area heard a miraculous sound of a conch for an extended period (Martin 23). The conch shell and the sound of the conch are divine symbols among the Tibetan Buddhists. This sound is predicted when the speaker mentions the sound of the “white one,” and the predicted sound proved to be true. The 16th Karmapa’s “Last Testament” does more than give clues to predict his next life. The form represents the greater idea of reincarnation—and the letter itself represents life after death. It is customary for the Karmapa to entrust a close friend to find the note after his death when the time feels right; when the note is discovered, it is as though the Karmapa is alive once again.

Unlike the Karmapa's deeply held belief in reincarnation, Rumi does not believe in reincarnation (Khosla 247). He even states in his poem "The Universal Spirit Revealed in prophets and Saints," "There is not transmigration, nothing is transferred" (11). For the Karmapa, the earthly body goes through an infinite number of re-births. Instead, Rumi believes in the earthly life and the spiritual life; the spiritual body is reborn an infinite number of times. Thus, for a Sufi like Rumi, death is simply the birth of the soul into the spiritual realm (Khosla 231). This idea is explored in two poems, "The Ascending Soul" and "The Beauty of Death." The former illustrates the evolution of the spirit in death. In "The Ascending Soul," Rumi begins, "I died as mineral and became a plant, / I died as plant and rose to animal, / I died as animal and I was Man" (1-3). The speaker expresses his different forms, claiming he has been a part of the earth, a part of the animal-world, and a human. When the speaker dies, he will keep changing from form to form: "Why should I fear? When was I less by dying? / Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar / With angels blest" (4-6). Rumi wonders why he should ever fear death because he will only transform into a higher being in the spiritual world. He claims that once he dies as a human, he will become an angel in the spiritual world. However, "even from angelhood / I must pass on: *all except God doth perish*" (6-7). In the cycle of spiritual evolution, only God is excluded. Once the speaker becomes an angel, he will continue to "pass on" in the process of spiritual evolution. The speaker continues, "When I have sacrificed my angel-soul, / I shall become what no mind e'er conceived / Oh, let me not exist!" (8-10). Here Rumi hopes to achieve the unthinkable: nonexistence. No one can conceptualize nonexistence—the mind is unable to conceive it. Yet nonexistence is appealing to Rumi because it will bring him closer to God. The speaker ends, "For Non-existence / Proclaims in organ tones. 'To him we shall return'" (10-11). Because nonexistence is always followed by existence, Rumi is confident that he will always return to some form of life within the spiritual world.

The beginning of "The Beauty of Death" has the same ideas about death's so-called almighty power: "He who deems death to be lovely as Joseph gives up his soul in ransom for it; he who deems it to be like the wolf turns back from the path of salvation" (1). Rumi's speaker argues that those who are enlightened think of death as "lovely"; only fools turn their backs on death. In other words, death is a

means to salvation, and this salvation can only be obtained through liberation from fear. One must embrace the concept of death in order to free oneself from it. Human ignorance makes us love life and hate death. But death is a huge part of life itself. Death is the culmination of life (Khosla 230). According to Rumi, we should fear ignorance more than death itself; ignorance is what gives death its power, and the path to enlightenment will destroy this power.

Like Donne's speaker, Rumi's also continues to reflect on our inherent fear of death that results from our own ignorance. The speaker shares his insightfulness: "Your fear of death is really fear of yourself: see what it is from which you are fleeing! / 'Tis your own ugly face, not the visage of Death: your spirit is like the tree, and death like the leaf" (4-5). We do not actually fear death; instead, we fear our own sins and the potential supernatural punishment that awaits us. Someone who is pure and in pursuit of enlightenment would never fear death—only the ignorant have this fear. Looking at death's face is quite easy; yet looking at our own faces is the hardest challenge of life. Rumi paints the picture of death dropping like a leaf; although the leaf drops, the tree or the "spirit" remains. This picture embodies the Sufi idea of the "bodiless body" (Khosla 232). It is not the physical body that matters, but rather the spiritual one (Khosla 232). Whatever you experience in the afterlife is a result of your time on earth. As Rumi's speaker explains, "It has grown from you, whether it be good or evil: all your hidden thoughts, foul or fair, are born from yourself. / If you are wounded by thorns, you planted them; and if you are clad in satin and silk, you were the spinner" (6-7). Whatever you grow on earth will meet you in the afterlife. If you grow good things on earth, you will be met with good things in the afterlife. You will reap evil in the afterlife only if you sowed evil on earth (Khosla 231). This idea goes back to Rumi's perception of death: only the ignorant and foolish fear the afterlife.

Like Rumi, Donne's *Holy Sonnet 6* expresses a boldness and fearlessness in facing death. Rumi speaks to his followers in "The Beauty of Death," advising against the ignorance of fearing death. However, Donne's speaker is in the midst of a personal battle with Death. The speaker does not offer guidance to anyone but himself. In his opening lines, Donne's speaker mocks personified Death: "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so" (1-2). Here,

Donne's speaker directly addresses "Death" as a foe. Although most see death as the ultimate fear, Donne claims that death is not how it seems. The speaker argues that death cannot do all that it claims: "For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow / Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me" (3-4). The speaker has deprived Death of his ultimate power to kill so that it can no longer evoke its most powerful tool of manipulation: fear.

The second quatrain continues to question death's powers: "From rest and sleep which but thy pictures be, / Much pleasure; then, from thee, much more must flow, / And soonest our best men with thee do go, / Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery" (5-8). Perhaps death is not powerful or fearsome; perhaps death actually provides much needed rest. In artwork, death's image is interchangeable with rest or sleep. Donne's speaker concludes that if death is just like rest, it must be a treat rather than a dreadful event. The speaker is ambivalent about calling death by its name and wants to redefine what it means to die: death becomes the "soul's delivery," or a soul's birth into a new life. This interpretation is similar to what Rumi says about the spiritual life. With this reinterpretation of what death means to the speaker, death is not death at all—instead, it is new life.

Both Rumi's and Donne's speakers continue to destroy the preconceived notions of death as an ultimate end. Donne's speaker reveals death as a fake: "Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men, / And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell. / And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well. / And easier than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?" (9-12). From kings to desperate men, death is actually a slave to humanity. So why is death so proud? Why do we think of death as powerful, when poppy or charms have more of an effect? Finally, Donne's speaker defeats death in the final lines of the sonnet: "One short sleep past, we live eternally, / And Death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die" (13-14). Evoking the Christian belief of life after death, Donne claims that he will live eternally in the afterlife. As both Donne and Rumi suggest, once we defeat our own ignorance, we can also defeat death.

Similar to Donne's *Holy Sonnet 6*, "Resurrection, imperfect" also exemplifies the concept of death and resurrection. While Rumi speaks to his Sufi followers in "The Beauty of Death" and "The Ascending Soul," Donne's *Holy Sonnet 6* is a personal testament about death, and like the other *Holy*

Sonnets, is also a testament about his own struggling relationship with God. “Resurrection, imperfect” does not explore Donne’s personal view of the afterlife as *Holy Sonnet 6* does, but he expresses his awe of Christ’s death and resurrection. Although Rumi or Donne are not writing to their next life as the Karmapa does in his “Last Testament,” all three poets do not view death as a highly-feared, all-powerful force. Instead, death means a new life for the Karmapa; for Rumi, enlightenment and oneness with God; for Donne, a force to conquer.

Donne’s “Resurrection, imperfect” surrounds the aftermath of Good Friday. In *Holy Sonnet 6*, Donne discusses his defeat of death, whereas “Resurrection, imperfect” is a discussion of the ultimate triumph over death: Christ’s resurrection. The speaker begins, “Sleep, sleep, old sun, thou canst not have repass’d, / As yet, the wound thou took’st on Friday last” (1-2). The sun’s “wound” refers to the eclipse during Christ’s crucifixion on Good Friday (Dickson 147n6). The sun has not recovered from the eclipse, and the speaker urges the sun to sleep. The darkness that occurs while the sun sleeps indicates that the poem takes place before sunrise on Easter Sunday, the day of Christ’s resurrection (Dickson 147n6). The sleeping sun also has a dual meaning, referring to the actual son of Christ, who was crucified on Good Friday and thought dead until the resurrection of Easter morning. The speaker addresses the sun: “Sleep then, and rest; the world may bear thy stay; / A better sun rose before thee today” (3-4). The speaker can bear the sun’s darkness, but he cannot bear the absence of Christ; a better “sun” or son has risen, and Christ’s presence is the speaker’s light within the sun’s darkness. Meditating on Christ the son, the speaker explains the miracles that Christ has performed in Hell: “Who, not content t’enlighten all that dwell / On th’earth’s face, as thou, enlighten’d hell, / And made the dark fires languish in that vale (5-7). Christ was not content simply to enlighten those on Earth; he was also said to have descended into Hell and taken the faithful up to Heaven (Dickson 147n7). The speaker also proclaims that God has the ability to weaken God’s flames.

Boasting of Christ’s omnipotent ability to enlighten everyone, even those who reside in hell, the speaker expresses both his delight and awe of Christ’s resurrection: “As at thy presence here, our fire grows pale, / Whose body, having walk’d on earth, and now / Hasting to heaven, would (that he might

allow / Himself unto all stations and fill all) / For these three days become a mineral” (8-12). The speaker realizes that the purpose of Christ’s death was his eventual resurrection. For three days, God has been reduced to a mineral, but from the mineral will come the most perfect metal—gold (Mazzeo 120): “He was all gold when he lay down, but rose / All tincture, and doth not alone dispose / Leaden and iron wills to good, but is / Of power to make even sinful flesh like his” (13-16). Gold is nature’s perfect metal, although God became even more perfect when he became tincture, since tincture can turn inferior metals such as lead and iron into perfection (Mazzeo 120). Christ’s tincture quality is reminiscent of the sinners he saved in Hell—he can make anything more perfect, transforming and saving sinners (Dickson 147n8).

Scorning those who believed that Christ’s death was earthly and permanent, Donne contemplates the soul: “Had one of those whose credulous piety / Thought that a soul one might discern and see / Go from a body, ‘at this sepulcher been / And issuing from the sheet, this body seen” (17-20). Delegitimizing those who claim that they witnessed Christ’s soul, descended from his body at his gravesite, the speaker claims otherwise: “He would have justly thought this body a soul, / If not of any man, yet of the whole” (21-22). An onlooker may have believed that Christ’s resurrected body was simply his soul or perhaps another person. However, Donne himself has all his faith in Christ and Christ’s resurrection.

Donne glorifies Christ’s resurrection in his discussion of life after death, while the Karmapa describes his own reincarnation and Rumi explains his philosophy of spiritual evolution. The poets’ previous discussions of evil and death have come full circle with their discussions of resurrection, reincarnation, and spiritual evolution: even though death and evil exist, the poets overcome all earthly evils with their theological ideas of immortality. Their conceptualizations of immortality, although named differently, all operate on the same ideas.

Chapter 3: Divine and Human Love

The Separation of the Body and Soul: Microcosm and Macrocosm

The inherent duality between the human mind and body is a source of fixation for Donne, Rumi, and the Karmapa. All three poets speak with religious authority on the subject of human duality; they are certain of the separation between our divine souls and human bodies. It is this very separation that also allows for the difference between divine and human love. As a source of meditational aid, the Karmapa recognizes both the dichotomy between the body and soul and the soul's reflection of the universe. However, Donne can only speak to a human perception of the human soul. *Holy Sonnet 15* and *16* explain the poet's fixation on the parallel between the human microcosm and God's greater macrocosm. Interestingly, Rumi explains contrasting ideas in "Man the Macrocosm" and "The Witness to God." Nevertheless, all three poets expand on the intrinsic dualism of life. There is no God without man; no soul without the body; no paradise without life on earth.

Donne's first lines establish the central conceit of the microcosm of *Holy Sonnet 15*: "I am a little world made cunningly / Of elements and an angelic sprite" (1-2). Donne's poem exploits the common Renaissance theory of the microcosm and macrocosm (Mazzeo 104). Like all other elements of earth, man is the human "microcosm," existing inside the greater macrocosm of the world, and made of the four earthly elements—fire, water, earth, and air—plus the everlasting soul (Mazzeo 105). The first line is figurative, although it becomes apparent that Donne is also making a scientific statement (Mazzeo 104). As an oxymoronic "little world," made out of both earthly and divine pieces, Donne still remains a human sinner, lamenting: "But black sin hath betray'd to endless night / My world's both parts, and Oh both parts must die" (3-4). Donne specifically refers to both parts of himself: body and soul. Because of his sins, both parts of himself will suffer and die. The speaker also highlights the juxtaposition between the "endless night" or death and eternal life with God in the afterlife. If it weren't for his sins, both parts of Donne could live eternally in heaven.

In the second quatrain, the speaker addresses God directly, declaring, "You, which beyond that heaven, which was most high / Have found new spheres, and of new lands can write" (5-6).

Donne addresses God as though he were an Astronomer who has found new spheres in the Ptolemaic universe and made new scientific discoveries (Dickson 143n9). In other words, Donne has turned God into the greater macrocosm of the universe because there is not a sphere or land or a part of heaven that has not been created by God. Expanding on this conceit, Donne demands: “Pour new seas in mine eyes, that so I might / Drown my world with my weeping earnestly, / Or wash it: if it must be drown’d no more” (7-9). Since God is the entire universe, he has the power to create “new seas”; Donne wants God to purify his sins by drowning his world, although God has already made a promise to Noah never to flood the earth again (Dickson 143n1). The next purification of the world will not be a mass flood, but rather a mass fire that would purify the speaker’s soul (Dickson 143n2): “But oh, it must be burnt; alas the fire / Of lust and envy have burnt it heretofore / And made it fouler” (10-12). Lust and envy are to blame for the speaker’s sins and have made his wrongdoings worse. Finally, in desperation, the speaker begs, “let those flames retire, / And burn me, O God, with a fiery zeal / Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heal” (12-14). Since the speaker is part of God’s macrocosm, God is the one who created the speaker and thus the only one who can heal him from his sins. Here, the speaker requests that God inflicts refining flames not on the earth as a whole, but on just himself and his own sins. Ultimately, Donne is part of God’s whole, and only God can save him.

Donne’s *Holy Sonnet 16* continues to expand on the dualities between the body and soul as the speaker wonders why his soul is black with sins, while other souls remain in heaven with God. In the first quatrain, the speaker reasons: “If faithful souls be alike glorified / As angels, then my father’s soul doth see, / And adds this even to full felicity, / That valiantly I hell’s wide mouth o’erstride” (1-4). The sonnet operates on the differences between human souls and angel souls, both of which exist within God’s greater macrocosm. Angel’s souls are happy and pure, whereas Donne is stuck in the cycle of human sin. For this reason, Donne depicts himself in hell, while the angels are glorified in heaven. The speaker continues to meditate on angels in the second quatrain, wondering, “But if our minds to these souls be descried / By circumstances, and by signs that be / Apparent in us, not immediately, / How shall my mind’s white truth to them be tried?” (5-8). While angels were thought to have divine intuition, humans

are only able to reason according to their earthly surroundings. Some truths are obvious to angels, while humans must take time to reach certainty.

While Donne's human perception is limited to what he can perceive on earth, the angels know all: "They see idolatrous lovers weep and mourn, / And vile blasphemous conjurers to call / On Jesus' name, and Pharisaical / Dissemblers feign devotion" (9-12). Angels do not achieve God's level of perception, although they perceive almost everything that happens on Earth, seeing both God's loyal devotees and those who only pretend to be loyal to God. In a sense, they have a greater perception of how God's macrocosm operates, whereas Donne is left wondering in mortal confusion. Finally, Donne proclaims, "then turn, / O pensive soul, to God, for he knows best / Thy true grief, for he put it in my breast" (12-14). The speaker tells himself to turn towards God, as when, in "Good Friday, Riding Westward," Donne proclaims, "I'll turn my face" (42). The speaker recognizes in both cases that God is the knower and maker of all things. Even though Donne is only a microcosm of the world, he is still part of God's world and made of divine elements. Ultimately, even his grief and sins are divine entities made by God. Even though he cannot conceptualize God's macrocosm as the angels do, he can put his faith and trust in God.

While Donne believes himself to be a microcosm within God's macrocosm, Rumi's "Man the Macrocosm" already establishes a different conceit with the poem's title. The speaker opens with a preaching tone that contrasts with Donne's personal lament: "From the pure star-bright souls replenishment is ever coming to the stars of heaven. / Outwardly we are ruled by these stars, but our inward nature has become the ruler of the skies" (1-2). Initially, the speaker makes a distinction between human inward and outward nature, introducing the Sufi view of human dualism: physically, we are ruled by the universe, although our spiritual nature comprises of our very own universe. Thus, "while in form thou art the microcosm, in reality thou are the macrocosm" (3). This line establishes the central conceit of the poem: Rumi and other Sufi philosophers believed that the idea of humans as the microcosm existing within God's macrocosm needed adjustment (Nicholson 124n2). As the title suggests, man is the macrocosm, the origin of all causes and effects; all divine purpose can be linked back to human creation (Nicholson 124n2). The speaker expands on this idea: "Externally the branch is the origin of the fruit;

intrinsically the branch came into existence for the sake of the fruit” (4). While it is easy to mistake the origin of the fruit as the tree, the tree is actually born from the fruit. Rumi believes that the tree has no purpose without the fruit. This phenomenon is just like man and the universe—most perceive the former to come from the latter, but Rumi believes that the universe comes from man; without man, the universe has no purpose.

To further his point, Rumi depicts Mohammed’s conversation about the other prophets. Since Mohammed is considered the last prophet, it is only logical to think that Mohammed came from the prophets who were alive before him, such as Adam. However, according to Rumi, this notion is not the case. Rumi invokes Mohammed’s voice: “Hence Mohammed said, ‘Adam and all the prophets march behind me under my banner. . . .If seemingly I am born of Adam, yet in truth I am the ancestor of every ancestor’” (7-9). Mohammed is not the microcosm, but rather the macrocosm. The Sufis consider Mohammed a prophet and Adam only clay (Nicholson 124n4). Mohammed’s voice further justifies this idea: “‘Since the angels worshipped him for my sake, and he ascended to the Seventh Heaven on my account, / Therefore Father Adam was really born of me: the tree was born of the fruit. / The idea, which is the first, comes last into actuality, in particular the idea that is eternal’” (10-12). Adam had no purpose without Mohammed; thus, Mohammed is the macrocosm of the prophets; the fruit is the macrocosm of the tree; humans are the macrocosm of the universe. For Rumi, humans are not simply a little world; rather, humans are the entire universe.

Rumi’s poem “The Witness to God” further expands on the Sufi conceptualization of the human soul: “God hath not created in the earth or in the lofty heaven anything more occult than the spirit of Man” (1). There is nothing more universal than the human soul. We perceive there to be no greater place than heaven. However, the human soul is even more divine than most imagine. Rumi expands on the dichotomies between both the human body and soul and the human soul and God, explaining: “God is named ‘the Just’ and the Witness belongs to Him: the just Witness is the eye of the Beloved” (4). The speaker relates man and God to an eye-witness and judge. The judge may be perceived as the higher being, although it is actually the eyewitness’s evidence that determines the judge’s judgement. Neither the

judge nor the eyewitness can exist without each other. However, like the tree that is derived from the fruit in “Man the Macrocosm,” there can be no judge without the eyewitness. In other words, God cannot exist without his followers: Rumi has depicted the human as the macrocosm.

As in “Man the Macrocosm,” Rumi draws on the idea of Mohammed in relation to God, but introduces a new idea about Mohammed as the “Perfect Man,” the Sufi concept of a person who has come to a full realization and understanding of divine love (Nicholson 127n4): “The mystery of His amorous play with His favourite was the origin of all the veils which He hath made” (6). Depicting Mohammed as God’s favorite, only a Perfect Man like Mohammed could arrive at such a realization. Without man, there would be no purpose behind God’s earthly creations. In the final line, Rumi affirms, “Hence our Loving Lord said to the Prophet on the night of the Ascension: ‘But for thee I would not have created the heavens’” (7). The interconnection between man and God shows that humans have given God a purpose. Without the existence of humans, there would be no point in God’s own existence or his creation of heaven and earth.

Unlike Rumi and Donne, The Karmapa, in his short meditation “Equal Nature,” does not make specific philosophical statements about the juxtaposition of the world’s macrocosm and microcosm, but the speaker evokes the inherent duality between the mind and the body. This poem, said to be given to the Karmapa’s friend, Lama Tenam, as an aid for meditation, expands on how the soul is connected to the greater span of the universe. The Karmapa believes firmly in the separation of the body and soul as he begins, “From the space of the utterly pure extent of phenomena, deep and clear wisdom expands” (1). The Karmapa speaks of the phenomenon of emptiness in the vast space as the universe (Martin 239). True meditation will allow Lama Tenam to empty his mind in reflection. Furthering his advice, the Karmapa proclaims, “Mind’s primordial nature is forever free of elaboration” (2). At the primary level, the mind, like the universe, is a vast, empty space. The bombardment of the human world is what fills the otherwise empty mind. According to the Karmapa, the body hardly matters; the mind’s connection to the universe is the most important. Crucially, Lama Tenam must remember that he is capable of achieving his mind’s primordial state, free of bombardment, through meditation.

Finally, the Karmapa declares, “Not deluded by habitual mind or samsara and nirvana as they naturally arise, / To this expanse, the equal nature of all things, I bow” (3-4). If one does not allow one’s mind to become deluded in the cycle of *samsara*, nirvana is achievable. Residing in nature is the most efficient and natural way to achieve liberation from ignorance (Martin 239). The Karmapa notes in both the title and last line that all things are of “equal nature.” The mind is equal to the vast expanse of the universe if one allows it to be. The poet’s ending “bow” is a recognition of and appreciation for the mind’s and universe’s equality (Martin 239). Essentially, both the mind and body are different entities from the same source: the universe. Having achieved the enlightenment of sameness, the Karmapa wants Lama Tenam to achieve the same goal. The Karmapa’s short meditation provides new insight on the separation of the mind and body: we must free the mind from earthly bombardment in order to achieve enlightenment.

The Merging of Heavenly and Earthly Love

In recognizing the separation of the body and soul, the poets also recognize the differences between earthly and heavenly love. Throughout Donne’s *Holy Sonnets*, the speaker is conflicted between his earthly, human ability to love God and God’s heavenly, divine ability to love him. *Holy Sonnet 17* uses Donne’s love for his wife to describe his love for God, whereas in *Holy Sonnet 18* the poet experiences a crisis of faith, unable to locate the Church, which he likens to a prostitute. Rumi also expands on human and divine love, likening marriage between a man and a woman to God’s connection to the universe in “Universal Love.” The Karmapa does not mention erotic love as Donne does, nor does he mention marriage like Rumi does, although he is knowledgeable about the divine connection between earthly entities and the Sacred.

Holy Sonnet 17 meditates on the death of Anne More, Donne’s wife (Dickson 143n6). In the first quatrain, Donne uses his human love for Anne as a way to eroticize his love for God: “Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt / To nature, and to hers, and my good is dead, / And her soul early into

heaven ravished, / Wholly in heavenly things my mind is set” (1-4). In dying, the poet’s wife has paid her human debt to the earth; by paying a debt to herself by dying prematurely, Donne’s wife now resides in a better place in the afterlife (Dickson 143n7). Surprisingly, her death has actually benefited Donne: whenever the poet thinks of his wife, his mind is automatically in heaven, and thus with God. From the beginning, Donne’s human love for his wife has actually resulted in a closer, divine bond with God.

The second quatrain continues to fuse together the poet’s love for his wife and desire for God: “Here the admiring her my mind did whet / To seek thee God; so streams do show the head” (5-6). In admiring and thinking about his wife in heaven, the poet is also unconsciously seeking God because God is the source of everything, or the “head” of the “streams.” All of the poet’s thoughts circle back to God because God is the creator of everything; a simple, human thought can lead one to a divine source. As the quatrain progresses, the poet admits, “But though I have found thee’ and thou my thirst hast fed, / A holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet” (7-8). Even though the poet has found God through his thoughts about his wife, his thirst is still unquenched. His holy, “unquenchable thirst” (Dickson 144n9) is the poet’s desire to be united with God and his wife beyond his thoughts; the intensity of the thirst suggests that he cannot truly experience God’s divine love until he himself goes to heaven. Indubitably, the speaker wishes to truly experience all of God’s love in heaven.

Continuing to contemplate his erotic love for God in the sestet, the speaker has a realization: “But why should I beg more love, when as thou / Dost woo my soul, for hers off’ring all thine?” (9-10). Punning on his wife’s name, “More,” the poet questions why he should want more human love from his wife when he could have divine love from God. After all, God is the ultimate wooer of the soul, and offers divine love to the poet in lieu of “her” love (Dickson 144n1). Everything that his wife has to offer is actually a part of God or God’s doing, and his wife’s love is actually God’s. In the last lines of the sestet, Donne depicts God as a jealous lover, directly addressing him: “And dost not only fear lest I allow / My love to saints and angels, things divine, / But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt / Let the world, flesh, yea, devil put thee out” (11-14). Dramatically, the poet insinuates that God cannot survive without him; jealousy ensues if the poet extends his love to angels or saints. While the poet is still “flesh” on this earth,

there is a chance that the Devil could triumph over God for the poet's love and affection. Donne has previously admitted to God that he is "betroth'd unto your enemy" (*Holy Sonnet* 10), or married to Satan. Throughout the sonnet sequence, Donne is caught in a cycle of human, ignorant love and an awareness of divine love. Ultimately, the poet is a human and thus a sinner; as much as he wants to experience divine love along with his wife and God in heaven, it is only human for Donne's attention to be caught by the devil once again in the ending line.

Donne's discussion of human and heavenly love in *Holy Sonnet* 17 continues in *Holy Sonnet* 18, which operates on the conceit of the Church as a prostitute. The speaker demands, "Show me, dear Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear" (1). The poet alludes to the traditional metaphor of the Church as the bride of Christ (Dickson 144n3). Shockingly, however, he transforms this traditional trope into a scandalous conceit that romanticizes prostitution. Like a prostitute, the Church should be easily visible and accessible. However, the poet's request to see the Church insinuates that the poet cannot see the Church at all.

The speaker continues searching throughout the rest of the quatrain: "What is it she, which on the other shore / Goes richly painted? Or which, robb'd and tore, / Laments and mourns in Germany and here?" (2-4) Confused by the manifestations of the Christian church, he alludes to the Protestant view of the gaudiness of Catholicism (Dickson 144n4). Donne comments on the fragmentation of the church into a variety of Protestant sects, including Lutheranism in Germany, Anglicanism in England, and Calvinism in Geneva. (Dickson 144n5). Continuing his search in the second quatrain, the poet asks, "Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year? / Is she self-truth and errs? Now new, now' outwore? / Doth she' and did she, and shall she evermore / On one, on seven, or on no hill appear?" (5-8). The poet assigns the qualities of a promiscuous bride to the Church, wondering whether the Church is full of truth or errors; whether it is new or old. Will the church ever appear again? The "hill" may allude to either Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem, on the seven hills of Rome, or in Geneva (Dickson 144n6). Nevertheless, the poet finds the Church's location distant and inconceivable because of its fragmentation into different sects. Donne's

confusion reveals a loss of religious identity; the Church is lost physically and spiritually; there needs to be a universal location, recognized by all Christians.

However, in the turning point of the sestet, the speaker discovers how to gain the erotic love of the Church: “Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights / First travail we to seek and then make love?” (9-10). By courting the Church like a knight, the speaker is able to find her easily, unlike his frantic search throughout the first two quatrains. Further eroticizing the Church, the speaker claims that after the Church is found, she will “make love.” In the end of the sestet, Donne shockingly addresses Christ about the sexualized Church: “Betray, kind husband, thy spouse to our sights, / And let mine amorous soul court thy mild dove / Who is most true, and pleasing to thee, then / When she’s embraced and open to most men” (11-14). Donne urges God to let his spouse, the Church, become available to both himself and all other Christians. To avoid fragmentation, the Church must become like a prostitute: open to everyone. Donne’s normalization of prostitution, and the ending suggestion that the sexual church should be available to all men, would have been outrageous to any of the poet’s contemporaries.

Like Donne, Rumi was also interested in exploring divine love throughout his verse. Specifically, the poem “Universal Love” meditates on both earthly and divine forms of love and the connection between all forms of love. Throughout the poem, Rumi compares divine love to earthly love in many ways, such as meditating on a marriage between a man and his wife, as Donne does in *Holy Sonnets* 17 and 18. Rumi’s teaching voice is what makes his discussion about divine love different from Donne’s. While the *Holy Sonnets* are personal meditations on Donne’s spiritual struggles, “Universal Love” is for everyone to learn from. Above all, Rumi believes that all things are connected—one cannot love without being loved in return.

With an instructional tone, Rumi seeks to enlighten his followers about divine love in the beginning of the poem: “Never, in sooth, does the lover seek without being sought by his beloved / When the lightning of love has shot into *this* heart, know that there is love in *that* heart” (1-2). First meditating on earthly love, the poet claims that love cannot be sought by oneself; love must be shared between two. Rumi develops his beginning idea even further: “When love of God waxes in thy heart, beyond any doubt

God hath love for thee / No sound of clapping comes from one hand without the other hand” (3-4). The same rules apply to both earthly and divine love: if lovers seek, they must be sought. Thus, if a lover seeks God, God has already sought and loved the seeker. The clapping hand cannot make noise without two hands, just as love cannot be love without a union of two entities.

Further meditating on his philosophy of divine love, Rumi continues his instructional tone as he proclaims, “Divine Wisdom in destiny and decree made us lovers of one another / Because of that fore-ordainment every part of the world is paired with its mate” (5-6). God or “Divine Wisdom,” has more wisdom and knowledge than any other earthly or divine entity; God’s knowledge of and authority over time connects lovers to each other. His “fore-ordainment” or premeditated pairings promise that everything is paired with “its mate.” The divine love of God decides all human love. Undoubtedly, both divine and human love are irrevocably interconnected.

In the next couplet, Rumi meditates on both the relationship between a husband and wife, as well as oneself and God: “In the view of the wise, Heaven is man and Earth is woman: Earth fosters what Heaven lets fall. / When Earth lacks heat, Heaven sends it; when she has lost her freshness and moisture, Heaven restores it” (7-8). The love between Earth and Heaven works similarly to the love between a man and woman. The cycle of seeking and receiving is infinite and everlasting. Rumi continues his comparison between divine love and the love of a husband and wife: “Heaven goes on his rounds, like a husband foraging for the wife’s sake; / And Earth is busy with housewiferies: she attends to births and suckling that which she bears” (9-10). Starkly different from Donne’s church-bride conceit, Rumi has assigned the traditional role of food-gatherer to the husband or Heaven, while the wife or Earth has been assigned the traditional role of housekeeper. There is a marriage of heavenly and earthly beings. The next couplet instructs, “Regard Earth and Heaven as endowed with intelligence, since they do the work of intelligent beings. / Unless these twain taste pleasure from one another, why are they creeping together like sweethearts?” Rumi romantically paints the Earth and Heaven as lovers or “sweethearts,” working together as intelligent entities, and seeking what is already sought: love. As Rumi asks, if the Earth and Heaven didn’t love each other, why do they act as earthly lovers do?

In the next lines, the poet meditates on the result of having only a single half of love. Rumi asks, “Without the Earth, how should flower and tree blossom? What, then, would Heaven’s water and heat produce? / As God put desire in man and woman to the end that the world should be preserved by their union, / So hath He implanted in every part of existence the desire for another part” (13-15). The Earth cannot survive without Heaven, and Heaven cannot survive without Earth. This sentiment is the same for both man and woman: there is no sense in only one half of love; both halves of love are needed for the world to be “preserved.” Seemingly antitheses, such as Night and Day work together like lovers: “Day and Night are enemies outwardly: yet both serve one purpose, / Each in love with the other for the sake of perfecting their mutual work. / Without Night, the nature of Man would receive no income, so there would be nothing for the Day to spend” (16-18). Even enemies have the underlying source of divine love and fate to unite them. Just like the union between man and woman, the duality of night and day is what preserves human and divine life. As Rumi states in an earlier couplet, every entity is fated to find its mate.

Rumi ends his poem by discussing the pull between human love and heavenly love inside each of us individually. He has explained that love between man and a woman is just like the love between heaven and earth and night and day, but how does love function within us as individuals? Explaining the conflicting needs of the human body and heavenly soul, Rumi says, “The soul says to her base earthly parts, ‘My exile is more bitter than yours: I am celestial.’ / The body desires green herbs and running water, because its origin is from those” (19-20). While the body comes from nature and desires all things from nature, like water and herbs, the soul is in “exile” because it feels a pull to Heaven. Expanding on the soul’s independent desires from the body in the next lines, the poet explains, “The soul desires Life and the Living One, because its origin is the Infinite Soul. / The desire of the soul is for ascent and sublimity; the desire of the body is for pelf and means of self-indulgence; / And that Sublimity desires and loves the soul: mark the text *He loves them and they love Him*” (21-23). The soul wants to be with its original creator and in its original location; it wants to ascend to heaven and to experience all things divine and beautiful. Since the soul desires the sublime, the sublime also desires the soul in return. Meanwhile, he claims that the body seeks earthly, material things, such as money and other indulgences.

The poet instructs his readers or followers to mark the text of the Qur'an, specifically a section that explains the relationship between the lover and the beloved (Nicholson 123n3).

In the penultimate couplet, the poet makes another distinction between the love of the divine soul and the love of the human body: "The gist is that whenever anyone seeks, the soul of the sought is desiring him; / But the lover's desire makes him haggard, while the loved one's desire makes him fair and comely" (24-25). Rumi warns that the desire of love can often make us "haggard"; the beloved may have an easier fate. Expanding further on this idea in the final couplet, the poet explains: "Love, which brightens the beloved's cheek, consumes the soul of the lover. / The amber loves the straw with the appearance of wanting naught, while the straw is struggling to advance on the long road" (26-27). While the beloved, represented by "amber," practices his or her own self-sufficiency and sublimity, the lover, or straw, has a long road of servitude ahead (Nicholson 123n3).

While Rumi provides wisdom and instruction about divine love in his "Universal Love," the Karmapa meditates on all of his spiritual and worldly connections in "An Aspiration Prayer in Verse." Like Rumi, the Karmapa's divine wisdom is undoubtedly present in his poetry. But unlike Donne, who is the struggling disciple, the Karmapa's divine knowledge, connection to the Buddha, and supreme enlightenment give his verse special authority. There is no crisis of faith or identity—the Karmapa's faith and identity have been built over seventeen lifetimes. Even more so than Rumi, the Karmapa's poetic voice is filled with knowledge of the Sacred. However, the Karmapa does not instruct within his poems, but rather, he frames his work around auspicious events in his lifetime, while also giving thanks to his previous incarnations.

Beginning with a traditional, short prayer, "Om Swasti," (1) or "may all be auspicious" (Martin 241) the poet has set the tone for a discussion of both human and spiritual love. After this short invocation, the next four lines frame the poem's purpose: "Blazing with the full brilliance of the signs and marks, the supreme body / Liberates when seen and brings a festive joy never known before. / Through the virtue of creating such an offering to benefit beings / Just as a wish-fulfilling tree, and excellent action is accomplished" (2-5). The Karmapa centers these four lines on an offering of a beautiful statue that the

he witnessed (Martin 241). The poem is inspired by this divine occasion. This offering of the statue brings joy to the “supreme body,” or the divine Buddha, just as much as it brings joy to the people who are offering this statue. The supreme body can also refer more broadly to any *tulku*, or any physical body that embodies a spiritual incarnation (Martin 241). For instance, the Karmapa himself is considered a *tulku*. Nevertheless, both the worldly and divine are brought together by this offering from which love and devotion pour out.

The second stanza, centered around an otherworldly tree, a common symbol for the Dharma, or Buddhist teachings (Martin 241): “This tree gives a fragrant aroma of Dharma as a companion for the golden age. / Total sincerity and pure virtue are its refreshing shade. / May it always be present as a calm repose to ease the mind” (6-8). Through the symbol of the tree that represents the Dharma, the earth and the divine are fused together and form an auspicious symbol. Because the tree gives off the aroma of the Buddhist teachings, divine love has actually come from nature. The poet’s mind is eased by this image—the knowledge of the spiritual world is always connected to him on earth.

Continuing to meditate on the Dharma, the third stanza mentions the sutra and mantra, more teachings of the Buddha (Martin 241): “The flawless sutra and mantra traditions are like refined gold. / Study and practice are perfect like the lustrous image of a thousand-spoked wheel. / Through the Buddha’s teachings circling in the sky over the four continents, / May the sovereignty of the fearless Dharma remain supreme forever” (9-12). The poet alludes to the Buddha, who turned the wheel of the Dharma, symbolizing the Buddha’s teachings (Martin 241). Painting the picture of the Buddha’s teachings in the sky and the world, the Karmapa depicts divine wisdom, unarguably present on Earth. Above all, the poet is focused on spreading divine wisdom and love through this stanza.

The poet continues to juxtapose divine and earthly images in the fourth stanza: “Here in this land of medicinal herbs and sala trees, / Ringed by snow mountains, these lotus flowers in white, / The Buddha’s teachings have the radiant qualities of a nascent sun; / May the Dharma always be present in the sky of the living beings’ merit” (13-16). The poet mentions the auspicious symbols of the mountains of Tibet—the Himalayas, the Karakoram, the Kunlun, and Amnye Machen—and the lotus flowers (Martin

241-42) to demonstrate the spirituality of nature. Ultimately, the Buddha and his teachings are everywhere a human could look: the statue of the first stanza, the tree of the second stanza, the continents of the third stanza, and now the mountains and the flowers of the fourth stanza.

But what about the Karmapa's personal connection to nature and the Buddha? In the fifth stanza, the Karmapa evokes his own ties to the spiritual world, not just nature's. Mentioning his past lives, the Karmapa expresses hope: "May all those connected to me throughout the three times— / Fathers and mothers, their eyes filled with pure love, rulers, their partners, / Ministers, and attendants, every level of society, winged creatures, wild beasts, / Every single one—be completely filled with the ambrosia of awakening" (17-20). The poet's mention of the "three times" refers to the past, present, and future. Furthermore, the Karmapa also mentions his first life and his first name, Dusum Khyenpa, which is translated into "Knower of the Three Times" (Martin 277). In other words, the Karmapa mentions all those to whom he has been connected throughout his past lives. As a divine being, the poet has an immense love for all of his earthly connections, whether they are humans, animals, or plants. He wants all of these entities to have an "awakening," or to reach enlightenment as he has.

The penultimate stanza continues with the Karmapa's proclamations of divine love. Specifically, he addresses the deity and other teachers: "Chenrezik, unique protector of the Land of Snow, / And masters holding the lineage of teachings free of bias: / Residing on your fearless lion thrones, / May you remain firm and invincible in the vajra realm" (21-24). The poet wishes fearlessness, protection, and enlightenment to those spiritual teachers. As the poem has progressed, the Karmapa has acknowledged his love for everything and everyone. In this penultimate stanza, he recognizes his love of other divine entities.

Traditionally, the Karmapa ends his poems with hope for the future: "These elegant sayings, like a garland of fresh lotus blooms, / Are embellished with the gems of sparkling verse. / May dakinis adorned with jeweled earrings / Accomplish their myriad activities in brilliant glory" (25-28). The elegance of the Karmapa's verse only carries the beautiful and the good. This poem is like the lotus, an auspicious symbol for Tibetan Buddhists. *Dakinis* can be translated to "women who move through space"

(Martin 242), and the Karmapa depicts them as enlightening the world about the Buddha's teachings. Every entity throughout the poem carries a spark of divinity. Humans, animals, nature, and divine beings have all felt the Buddha's love. Throughout this verse, the Karmapa has spread his divine knowledge and love to the objects of the world.

Chapter 4: Sin, Forgiveness, and Judgement Day

The Coexistence of God's Omnipotence and Human Sin

The discussion of the body and soul, as well as divine love, is had by all three poets, whereas the theological idea of sin is only mentioned by Rumi and Donne. The Karmapa does not conceptualize sin; rather, he conceptualizes the cycle of ignorance, or *samsara*. Although the Karmapa mentions *samsara* when advising Lama Tenam in "Equal Nature," he never mentions his own personal ignorance because he is free of it, as a *Bodhisattva*. Ultimately, his poetry's focus is the exact opposite of ignorance: enlightenment. For this reason, a discussion of ignorance is generally absent from the Karmapa's work, although his understanding of ignorance can be related to Donne's and Rumi's understanding of sin and forgiveness. Although the Karmapa's belief in *samsara* contrasts with Rumi's and Donne's discussions of sin, all three poets believe that everlasting life is possible, despite either human sin or ignorance.

According to Rumi and Donne, both an omnipotent God and human free will exist simultaneously. But how is it possible for such a divine power and human willpower to exist at the same time? In "Faith and Works" and "Moral Responsibility," Rumi explains the duality between fate and free will. Donne depicts this duality differently throughout "Hymn To God the Father," focusing mainly on his own struggle with sin. This poem is not Donne's only poem that discusses his sins, although it presents God's omnipotence in interesting ways through the form of the hymn.

Rumi's "Faith and Works" begins with a metaphor of the relationship between human free will and divine destiny: "God hath placed a ladder before us: we must climb it, step by step. / You have feet: why pretend to be lame? You have hands: why conceal the fingers that grip?" (1-2). In Rumi's world, both divine destiny and free will exist in a worldly duality (Khosla 69). For this reason, the duality between good and evil also exists within man: "half of him is honey-bee and half snake; half earthly; half good and half evil" (Khosla 70). From the beginning, Rumi's preaching tone establishes the importance of his message to his followers about their personal volition, mocking the Sufi who pretends to be helpless when he or she really have the power to make decisions, be they good or bad. God has given

them a ladder to climb, although humans must make the personal decision to climb the ladder. Rumi does not think that humans are simply God's puppets. In fact, a life lacking agency is a life full of ignorance.

The speaker introduces the idea of free will: "Freewill is the endeavour to thank God for His Beneficence; your necessitarianism denies that Beneficence" (3). A point of fixation for Rumi is the character of the "Necessitarian," who considers himself powerless and unable to change his own fate because God dictates all actions and events (Khosla 77). However, the Necessitarian leads himself on a path of irresponsibility, indifference, and even stupidity; he is even offensive to God's goodness and charity when he decides that he is helpless in the grand scheme of God's plan (Khosla 77). Rumi tells his followers that if they really wanted to thank God for his graciousness, they would make wise decisions even though they have the option of making foolish ones. The speaker expands on this idea: "Thanksgiving for the power of acting freely gives you more power to thank Him; necessitarianism takes away what God hath given" (4). Necessitarianism leads to sinful indifference. Rumi challenges his followers, telling them to make use of their free will by thanking God.

Further directing his fellow Sufis, Rumi insists that they must not act without agency: "The brigands are on the road: do not sleep until you see the gate and the threshold!" (5). This metaphor alludes to the Sufi idea of the traveler on his way to God's kingdom (Nicholson 69n2). The traveler must not sleep until he is reunited with God in death; constant action is required on this journey. The one who sleeps on this journey is practicing Necessitarianism. Further, Rumi advises: "If you put trust in God, trust Him with your work! Sow the seed, then rely upon the Almighty!" (6). In this final statement, Rumi suggests that one should partner one's own action with trust in God. Ultimately, the partnership between one's own agency and trust in God is the perfect combination for traveling towards God. If one relies on one's own actions, one avoids becoming a Necessitarian who relies only on God's omnipotence.

While Rumi's "Faith and Works" fully expands on the Sufi perception of free will, Rumi's "Moral Responsibility" expands on the connection between free will, human suffering, and sin. As in the former poem, Rumi begins with a metaphor explaining the relationship between God and human destiny. The speaker meditates, "If we let fly an arrow, the action is not ours: we are only the bow, the shooter of

the arrow is God” (1). An action, such as shooting an arrow, is not purely created by God or man; the action is created by a combination of both entities (Nicholson 155n1). The speaker meditates on the fact that our actions, cultivated by both ourselves and God, are meant for a divine cause: “This is not compulsion (*jabr*): it is Almightyness (*jabbāri*) proclaimed for the purpose of making us humble” (2). All actions are connected to a greater purpose, even actions that cause suffering. Rumi explains that every human compulsion is sent from God. In fact, God refers to himself as “*al-Jabbār*” or “the Compeller” to remind his followers that everything comes from him (Nicholson 155n2). Even though everything is derived from God, Rumi still whole-heartedly believes in human willpower. He even questions: “If we are not free, why this shame? Why this sorrow and guilty confusion and abashment? / Why do masters chide their pupils? Why do minds change and form new resolutions?” (4-5). If God controlled all human decisions, why do we lack perfection? Rumi meditates on all the emotions that come from our sins: shame, guilt, confusion. These emotions would not be felt by a perfect human, purely ruled by God’s omnipotence. The speaker also refers to God as a teacher and a Sufi as a pupil. Would God need to teach his pupils anything if they were already perfect? This metaphor portrays God as the “*al-Jabbār*,” yet the student must decide what to do with the information sent from God.

The speaker continues to refute any claim made against the notion of freewill. Rumi challenges the Sufi who thinks he has no control over his actions: “You may argue that the asserter of Free-will ignores God’s Compulsion, which is hidden like the moon in a cloud; / But there is a good answer to that: hearken, renounce, unbelief, and cleave to the Faith!” (6-7). With this controversial statement, the speaker claims that to deny free will is to renounce the Sufi faith. While God’s reasoning behind his compulsions may be cloudy, the Sufi still has no excuse not to assert his human willpower. The speaker expands on how human suffering is part of both God’s will and human will: “When you fall ill and suffer pain, your conscience is awakened, you are stricken with remorse and pray God to forgive your trespasses. / The foulness of your sin is shown to you, you resolve to come back to the right way” (8-9). Rumi explains how human willpower actually benefits God as much as it does the Sufi. God expects the Sufi to suffer from his own sins and poor decisions. However, human suffering always leads the Sufi to awakening,

remorse, and forgiveness. The cycle of free will is actually beneficial and complementary to God's omnipotent power.

Addressing the Sufi who has learned from his sins, Rumi says, "You promise and vow that henceforth your chosen course of action will be obedience. Note, then, this principle, O seeker: pain and suffering make one aware of God; and the more aware one is, the greater his passion" (10-11). The sinner has a greater purpose than disobedience; his purpose is to learn from his sins and develop and even greater love for God. If humans lacked free will, their love for God would be flat; it is the sin and suffering that come along with free will that makes the Sufi's love for God true and rich (Nicholson 156n3). Finally, Rumi addresses the Necessitarian once again, asking him, "If you are conscious of God's Compulsion, why are you not heart-broken? Where is the sign of your feeling the chains with which you are loaded? / How should one make merry who is bound in chains? Does the prisoner behave like the man who is free?" (12-13). If the Necessitarian were truly aware of God's compulsions, he would be just as distraught and heartbroken as the sinner because he would realize his own ignorance (Nicholson 156n3). Rumi has no pity for the foolish Sufi who believes he knows all of God's truths and has nothing to learn. Instead, the speaker celebrates those who recognize their free will, repent their sins, and in turn, become closer to their almighty God.

While Rumi explains to his fellow Sufis how sin is connected to both God's will and free will, Donne's discussion of sin in "A Hymn To God the Father" is introspective and full of personal lament. Sin is a central discussion throughout all of Donne's religious poetry, but "Hymn To God the Father" is unique among Donne's works because of the musical quality of the hymn, as the title suggests. Interestingly, Donne pairs his discussion of sin with rhyme and meter. For instance, the speaker begins: "Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun, / Which was my sin, though it were done before?" (1-2). Donne puns on his name by rhyming "done" and "begun." This rhyme actually alludes to Original sin, the causation of every other sin committed by humankind (Nicholson 156n6). The speaker's casual yet direct address to God shapes the personal nature of the hymn itself. Unlike Rumi, Donne is meditating on his own personal sins. While they both discuss the birthplace of sin, Rumi claims that sin and suffering are

derived from human free will, whereas Donne alludes to Adam and God's relationship as the original source of sin.

Operating on repetition, Donne continues his direct address to God: "Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run, / And do run still: though still I do deplore?" (3-4). The speaker laments his sins and asks for forgiveness, yet he also recognizes that he will commit the same sins over and over again. Donne juxtaposes his human sinfulness with God's powers. Perhaps God forgives just to wait for another sin to be committed. The speaker continues with this notion: "When thou hast done, / thou hast not done, / For, I have more" (5-6). In addition to making his own name a pun, Donne also puns on his wife's name with "more" (Dickson 156n7). With both the pun on his own name and his wife's name, Donne has established a central rhyme scheme where all rhyming words either rhyme with his name or Anne More's. The hymn becomes more personal because of the rhyme scheme. Interestingly, Donne also uses this rhyme to make a statement about the nature of his own sins. No matter how many times God forgives Donne's sins, he will undoubtedly have more.

In the second stanza, Donne's lament becomes even more specific. The speaker asks God, "Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won / Others to sin? and, made my sin their door? / Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun / A year or two: but wallowed in a score?" (7-10). The speaker's concern has grown because of the sins he has caused others to commit. Between Original sin, Donne's personal wrongdoings, and the misdeeds he has encouraged in others, the number of sins in his world have accumulated. However, Donne's continuing refrain, "When thou hast done, thou hast not done, / For I have more" (11-12), creates a sense of hopelessness. There are many sins to be forgiven, although if God were to show his mercy, the speaker would simply sin again.

In the third stanza, the speaker begins to think about where these sins will lead him after death, admitting, "I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun / My last thread, I shall perish on the shore" (13-14). Alluding to the mythology of the three Fates, a human life is represented by a thread (Nicholson 156n8). By spinning his "last" thread, Donne paints the picture of his own death. However, the speaker has a pivotal moment in the final quatrain with his use of an incremental refrain: "But swear by thyself,

that at my death thy son / Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore; / And, having done that, thou hast done; / I fear no more” (15-18). By recreating his original refrain, the speaker fully recognizes God’s mercy, claiming that the “son” or Christ will shine down upon him, regardless of his sins. Christ’s light will reach him in the present and in death. Recognizing that God has him in his grasp, Donne no longer fears retribution for his sins.

Both Donne and Rumi perceive the juxtaposition between God’s almighty, omniscient power and the human power to sin. Rumi explains sin’s connection to free will, which surprisingly brings us closer to God. Donne’s personal lament shows his own inferiority in the light of God’s greatness. The cycle of human sin and God’s forgiveness represents both God’s mercy and God’s need for humans. As Rumi and Donne explain in their own ways, human sin is inevitable. However, within all of the poems, sin’s purpose is to bring one closer to God in the end.

Sin and Forgiveness

Donne’s “Good-Friday, 1613. Riding Westward” and Rumi’s “The Man Who Looked Back on His Way to Hell” are spiritual poems derived from the same school of thought. Donne’s speaker realizes he is traveling westward on the day of Christ’s crucifixion, when he should be traveling eastward, in the direction of Christ himself. Rumi’s poem describes a sinner on his way to hell, knowing that he is moving away from spiritual enlightenment. As the verses progress, both Rumi’s sinner and Donne’s speaker eventually seek forgiveness and face the correct way: in the direction of God. Both poems depict seemingly dissimilar religions and create mirror images of the same theological idea, although both speakers have different relationships with God. While Donne’s poem centers itself on a personal contemplation of the speaker’s sins, the allegory of Rumi’s poem relates back to the Sufi disbelief in eternal Hell. For a Sufi, there is always a way to enlightenment, even in the worst situation: those who goes to Hell will suffer in order to remember the feeling of God, and this remembrance will lead them to repent their sins and ask for purification and forgiveness (Khosla 239).

The subject of Rumi's "The Man Who Looked Back on His Way to Hell" is being led in the direction towards hell, as the opening lines suggest, "The guardian angels, who used to walk unseen before and behind him, have now become visible like policeman / They drag him along, prodding him with goads and crying, 'Begone, O dog, to thy kennel!'" (1-2). On a reverse spiritual journey, Rumi's subject, a sinful man, is moving away from enlightenment on the path to Hell, his guardian angels treating him no better than an animal and his guides looking forward to trapping him in existential prison. Early in the poem, there is a turning point when Rumi's man looks towards God, realizing that he is on the wrong path: "He looks back towards the Holy Presence: his tears fall like autumn rain. A mere hope—what has he but that?" (3). In a moment of ultimate crisis, Rumi's man feels the painful urgency to look in God's direction, feeling the vast emotion that comes with looking at God's face. The man receives a sign from beyond: "Then from God in the realm of Light comes the command— 'Say ye to him: 'O ne'er-do-well destitute of merit, / Thou hast seen the black scroll of thy misdeeds. What dost thou expect? Why are thou tarrying in vain?'" (4-5). In this dramatic moment, God addresses the man directly and insinuates that the sinner cannot be surprised that he is going to hell. The man can no longer hide from his sins or God, and he must confess his sins in order to be reunited with God in the right direction.

Seeking forgiveness, Rumi's man expresses his inadequacy in the presence of God, admitting: "Lord, Thou knowest I am a hundred times worse than Thou hast declared; / But beyond my exertion and action, beyond good and evil and faith and infidelity, / Beyond living righteously or behaving disobediently— I had a great hope of Thy Loving-kindness'" (6-8). The man readily admits that he is even worse than God had assumed. Rumi's man has moved in the exact opposite direction of God, although his soul has always been with God's love and goodness. Announcing that he is turning in the direction of God once again, the man proclaims: "'I turn again to that pure Grace, I am not regarding my own works. / Thou gavest me my being as a robe of honour: I have always relied on that munificence'" (9-10). Dramatically, the man has physically and spiritually faced God once again, but will God forgive him for his sins?

God commands the guardian angels to show mercy for the sinful man: ““Bring him back, for he never lost hope of Me. / Like one who recks of naught, I will deliver him and cancel all his trespasses”” (11-12). God is willing to forgive Rumi’s man now that he has admitted his love and devotion. Even though the man left God’s path physically on his way to Hell, his spirit clearly never left God. Symbolizing the speaker’s purification, God asserts his healing powers: ““I will kindle such a fire of Grace that the least spark thereof consumes all sin and necessity and free-will. / I will set fire to the tenement of Man and make its thorns a bower of roses”” (13-14). The depicted cycle of sins, fire, ashes, and new life represents God’s power to create goodness from sin, and life from death. This optimistic view of eternal suffering is exemplified in this poem.

So too, in Donne’s “Good Friday: Riding Westward,” the speaker counts on God despite his sinfulness. Significantly, Donne was traveling west to visit a friend while he composed this poem on Good Friday, as the title suggests (Dickson 149n4). Traveling westward, in the opposite direction of Christ’s eastward crucifixion, Donne experiences a spiritual plight. Interestingly, both Donne’s speaker and Rumi’s sinful man ask for forgiveness in moments of spiritual crisis.

Considering the way the soul is connected to God, Donne begins with his conceit of Ptolemaic system of the universe’s spheres (Dickson 149n5): “Let man’s soul be a sphere, and then, in this, / The intelligence that moves, devotion is; / And as the other spheres, by being grown / Subject to foreign motions, lose their own” (1-4). With his almighty power, God moves the soul as though he were moving the spheres of the universe, although some souls are moved by foreign forces. Meditating further on the spheres, the speaker explains, “And being by others hurried every day, / Scarce in a year their natural form obey: Pleasure or business so, our souls admit / For their first mover, and are whirl’d by it” (5-9). Even though some souls appear to be moved by outside forces, all forces are derived from God, or the “first mover” who has caused all other motions (Dickson 149n7). Overall, Donne’s conceit proves that God controls everything and everyone—especially the speaker himself.

The speaker introduces the important idea of his own direction: “This day, when my soul’s form bends towards the east. / There I should see a sun by rising set, / And by that setting endless day beget”

(10-12). Although the title suggests that Donne is moving westward, his soul remains in the east, the direction of Christ's crucifixion. On this holy day of Good Friday, the speaker acknowledges that if it were not for Christ's death, sin would have taken over the universe: "But that Christ on this cross did rise and fall, / Sin had eternally benighted all. / Yet dare I almost be glad, I do not see / That spectacle of too much weight for me" (13-16). Ambivalent about looking in the direction of Christ's crucifixion, Donne is afraid that the image of Christ's death will be too heavy for him to carry. In fact, the disturbing image would kill him: "Who sees God's face, that is self life, must die; / What a death were it then to see God die?" (17-18). Undoubtedly, for the speaker, Christ's death is the most extreme image of mortality: the picture even makes "Nature shrink" (20) and the "sun wink" (21). These allusions to the earthquake and eclipse, occurring on Good Friday, suggest the momentousness of Christ's death.

Donne's speaker, much like Rumi's man, acknowledges his own sins in a moment of crisis: "Could I behold those hands, which span the poles / And tune all spheres at once, pierc'd with those holes?" (21). He doubts if he is even worthy of beholding God's image; Donne recognizes that his human powers are nothing compared to God's the omnipotence with which he controls the spears, even with holes through his palms. Donne questions, "Could I behold that endless height, which is / Zenith to us, and our antipodes, / Humbled below us? Or that blood which is / The seat of all our souls, if not of his, / Make dirt of dust, or that flesh which was worn, / By God, for his apparel, ragg'd and torn?" (23-28). Ironically, knowing that he is a sinner and incapable of God's power and beauty, the speaker expresses his fears about viewing Jesus's crucifixion. His rhetorical questions express an awe-inspiring view of God's power to hold the Earth together from the highest point to the lowest point— from "Zenith" to "antipodes." Returning to Donne's beginning idea—God as the source of everything—Donne has depicted Christ's blood, an ingredient in everyone and everything. Despite his initial fear of viewing Christ's crucifixion, Donne dares to imagine his wounded flesh on the cross.

However, the speaker remains in a state of perpetual terror, not daring to look in Christ's direction and but looking instead towards Mary, the "miserable mother," (30) who must watch her son die. In the poem's sudden turning point, Donne admits that there is actually no way to avoid the image of

the crucifixion: “Through these things, as I ride, be from mine eye, / They’re present yet unto my memory, / For that looks towards them; and thou look’st towards me, O Savior, as thou hang’st upon the tree” (34-36). Like Rumi’s man, Donne’s speaker comes to the conclusion that he can no longer avoid his sins, imperfections, or his inability to look at God: he realizes that no matter how much he resists the viewing of God’s death, the image already exists in his own mind. In God’s moments of death on the cross or “tree,” he still looks at his followers with love and forgiveness; Donne owes this acknowledgement to God and dramatically overcomes his fear.

Recognizing his lack of direction and sinfulness, Donne addresses God directly, a stark contrast to his earlier hesitancy to even look at God: “Oh think me worth thine anger, punish me, / Burn off my rusts, and my deformity” (39-40). Interestingly, both Rumi and Donne allude to God’s ability to burn away a disciple’s sins. Donne’s request symbolizes the religious significance of fire, which is a purifying force. This cycle of life, death, and rebirth is implicit in Good Friday and Easter. Although Jesus died on Good Friday, Easter Sunday signifies his resurrection, making Christ the killer of death. Donne longs to be a part of this cycle of new life, recognizing God’s almighty power in spite of his crucifixion on Good Friday. Finally, Donne is reunited with God in the eastern direction: “Restore thine image, so much by thy grace, / That thou may’st know me, and I’ll turn my face” (41-42). Even though Donne is still riding westward, he is finally ready to face towards the east, in the direction of God. This change in direction circles back to the beginning spherical conceit and can be considered Donne’s “resurrection” or “Easter” moment: he has emerged out of the darkness and despair that underlies the entire poem.

By the end of their respective poems, both Rumi’s man and Donne’s speaker change their directions, spiritually and physically. Significantly, both are reunited with God by the end of their verses. Both the Sufi and Christian poet depict the acts of sinning and forgiveness in similar ways, even though Rumi alludes to a Sufi allegory and portrays a sinful man, while Donne expands on his own sinful nature in a personal lament.

The Ladder to Heaven: A Guide to Judgment Day and Paradise

Both Donne and Rumi use the notions of Judgment Day and heaven in order to define human sin. Rumi speaks often about sin and directs his followers on a path of forgiveness, whereas Donne laments his own sins, an overlapping theme throughout the *Holy Sonnets*. Yet both poets make definitive statements about judgment day within “The Reward of the Righteous,” “The Ladder to Heaven,” *Holy Sonnet 4*, and *Holy Sonnet 9*. Not surprisingly, Rumi’s Sufi perception of judgment day is starkly different from Donne’s Christian perception.

Rumi’s “The Reward of the Righteous” draws on a Qur’anic story about the day of Judgement: “At the Gathering for Judgement the Faithful will say, ‘O Angel, is not Hell the common road / Trodden by the believer and infidel alike? Yet we saw not any smoke or fire on our way’” (1-2). According to the Qur’an, everyone, even the faithful, will enter Hell on judgment day (Nicholson 85n2). Rumi depicts the faithful people being led by an angel through Hell, although the faithful people perceive hell as the earthly world that they have known all along. This confusion allows Rumi to explain that the human perception of hell is flawed. The Angel replies to the faithful people, ““That garden which ye saw as ye passed / Was indeed Hell, but unto you it appeared a pleasance of greenery. / Since ye strove against the flesh and quenched the flames of lust for God’s sake, / So that they become verdant with holiness and lit the path to salvation” (3-6). As the Qur’anic story goes, if a person is truly faithful, their light will extinguish the flames of hell on judgment day (Nicholson 85n2). The faithful followers cannot see the flames of hell because their righteousness has altered their perception.

Rumi continues his depiction of the Angel’s teachings at the end of the speech to the faithful followers: ““Since ye turned the fire of wrath to meekness, and murky ignorance to radiant knowledge; / Since ye made the fiery soul and orchard where nightingales of prayer and praise were ever singing— / So hath Hell-fire become for your greenery and roses and riches without end”” (7-9). With this conversation between the faithful followers and the Angel, Rumi has not only explained the Sufi perception of judgment day and expanded on the Sufi philosophy of opposites. According to Rumi, what you are looking for exists in its opposite. All along, the faithful followers who look for paradise find it in

an unexpected place: hell. In fact, the followers have transformed hell into paradise; thus, paradoxically, ignorance becomes knowledge, damned souls become singing nightingales, and fire becomes roses. Even the Angel itself is in hell instead of heaven, bringing enlightenment to the otherwise damned. Rumi's illustration of hell on Judgment day proves to be the picture of paradise.

Rumi elaborates on the Sufi perception of paradise in "The Ladder to Heaven": "The worldly sense is the ladder to this world; the religious sense is the ladder to Heaven" (1). With this notion, Rumi explains how man's spirituality exists in his earthliness (Nicholson 52n3). Earth's ladder is what leads man to heaven; what exists on earth could build or break this ladder: "The spiritual way ruins the body and, having ruined it, restores it to prosperity: / Ruined the house for the sake of the golden treasure, and with that same treasure builds it better than before" (3-4). While the ladder to heaven comes from earth, earth is often ruined by heaven for reasons that humans cannot comprehend. As Rumi explains, this earthly ruin cannot be fully understood until one climbs the ladder of heaven: "Cut off the water and cleansed the river-bed, then caused drinking-water to flow in it; / Cleft the skin and drew out the barb, then made fresh skin grow over the wound" (5-6). Human purification cannot begin until all earthy matter is taken away; only then can it be replaced by divine essences (Nicholson 52n4). This path is necessary for true Sufis to find their way to paradise: God must ruin one to allow one's divine growth.

However, an unenlightened Sufi may still wonder, why is God ruining all earthly essences? Rumi clarifies God's seemingly contradictory nature: "Sometimes the action of God appears like this, sometimes the contrary: (true) religion is nothing but bewilderment. / I mean not one bewildered in such wise that his back is turned on Him; nay, but one bewildered and drowned and drunken with the Beloved" (8-9). Rumi explains that bewilderment arises when one contemplates the inconceivable, divine actions of God. Bewilderment is the most wonderful emotion one can experience: true and faithful followers are often bewildered by God's reasoning. It is actually unholy men who claim to be certain of God's reasoning: "Since many a devil hath the face of Adam, you should put a hand in every hand; / For as the fowler whistles to decoy a bird he is bent on catching, / Which hears the note of its mate and comes down from the air and finds itself entrapped, / So does a vile man steal the language of dervishes to fascinate

and deceive one who is simple” (12-15). Religious hypocrites often appear as their divine opposites.

Rumi depicts the devil as Adam and the unholy man as a dervish to prove that the bewildered are closer to God than they appear. The way in which one reaches God’s paradise is not by wearing the mask of Adam or reciting the chants of a dervish. God reveals himself to the faithful followers through their human confusion and astonishment.

Like Rumi, Donne’s *Holy Sonnet 9* also contemplates the events of Judgment Day, establishing the setting of the poem with the beginning line: “What if this present were the world’s last night?” (1). Drawing on the Christian belief that Christ will return to earth once again, the speaker imagines the night before the day of Christ’s return. Expanding on his initial thought, the speaker addresses his own soul: “Mark in my heart, O soul, where thou dost dwell, / The picture of Christ crucified, and tell / Whether that countenance can thee affright” (2-4). For the speaker, there is hardly a more disturbing or frightening image than the picture of Christ’s crucifixion, which he also establishes in “Good Friday, Riding Westward, 1613.” The image of Christ’s death causes a personal crisis within the speaker’s soul. The meditation continues with a disturbing yet fantastic image of the crucifixion: “Tears in his eyes quench the amazing light; / Blood fills his frowns, which from his pierc’d head fell” (5-6). Awestruck by the vision of Christ, Donne feels protection from Christ’s tears, which filter the “amazing light” that comes from God above in heaven; this blinding light is too much for a human to process. With the depiction of Christ’s blood and tongue, Donne shows Christ’s dual nature, simultaneously human and divine. He cries the tears and bleeds the blood of a human, yet while he is dying, he communicates with God and asks that all earthly sinners are forgiven (Dickson 140n1): “And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell, / Which pray’d forgiveness for his foes’ fierce spite?” (7-8). Even though Christ is known for praying for his sinners on the cross, Donne wonders about Christ’s power to cast judgment upon sinners. Would Christ send him to hell?

Donne answers his own question in the turning point of the sestet, replying, “No, no” (9), Christ would not be so merciless as to send a sinner to hell. Donne explains, “but as in mine idolatry / I said to all my profane mistresses, / Beauty of pity, foulness only is / A sign of rigor” (9-12). If beauty is a sign of

pity and foulness of rigor, then Donne's soul can take comfort in this time of Judgment. He addresses his own soul further: "so I say to thee, / To wicked sprites are horrid shapes assign'd; / This beauteous form assures a piteous mind" (12-14). Referring to the previous image of Christ's crucifixion, Donne claims that this disturbing image within his mind is actually a sign of devoutness (Dickson 140n4). This assertion eradicates all of his anxieties concerning the "world's last night."

Conclusion

Living at completely different times, the Karmapa, Rumi, and Donne never met with or spoke to one another. However, in my thesis, the three seemingly dissimilar poets engage in an intriguing, mind-opening conversation about both religion and poetics. They are three different disciples: Donne, the struggling, desperate, but loving Christian; Rumi, the wise Sufi mystic, with no shortage of advice or allegories; the Karmapa, knower of the past, present, and future, with his supreme enlightenment found in nature and the Buddha. The disciples worship differently yet have the same conversations about evil, death, the afterlife, heavenly and human love, and one's connection to God. Donne's discussion of death and resurrection, the Karmapa's belief in reincarnation, and Rumi's philosophy of spiritual evolution all preach the same idea: death is not an end, but rather a new beginning. There will always be a disconnection between the human conceptualization of God's love, yet all three poets argue that a human's purpose and God's purpose are interconnected; the two different kinds of love, human and heavenly, both contrast with and complement each other. Even although the Karmapa's Buddhist philosophy does not incorporate a discussion of human sin, and even though the Karmapa's belief in the cycle of ignorance, or *samsara* contrasts with Rumi's and Donne's discussions of human sin and divine forgiveness, all three poets believe that eternal life is possible for everyone, despite either sin or ignorance.

In spite of the general themes that connect the poets, what I found most interesting was their distinctive voices and style. It would be impossible to take a line from the Karmapa and attribute it to Donne; a line from Rumi to the Karmapa; and so on. Ultimately, their differences are what inspired my thesis the most. I admit that, although I am attracted to the way their contrasting voices emerge in their poetics, I am limited to only their English translations, as I am not a native speaker of either Farsi or Tibetan, nor am I ever likely to experience a true reading of the Karmapa or Rumi in their mother tongues. However, making an active effort to select the most precise English translations, I believe that I have presented a fairly accurate reading of the Karmapa and Rumi. Acknowledging my own Western biases, I took care to keep their personal voices intact—a practice that some English interpreters, like

Coleman Barks, tend to forget about. It is worth mentioning that the very label of Tibetan Buddhism is a Western one. It's doubtful that the Karmapa personally identifies with the label, or introduces himself as a Tibetan Buddhist, as I have introduced him for the purpose of categorizing his religion. Overall, the Karmapa's religion is actually a way of life; a philosophy; a way of seeing the world; a way of appreciating our connection to the Sacred.

Above all, Eastern and Western schools of thought reach a meeting of the minds through the poetics of Donne, Rumi, and the Karmapa. Westerners tend to think that the Tibetan Buddhist principle of reincarnation is mysterious or even inconceivable. However, the Karmapa's principle of reincarnation, juxtaposed with Donne's Christian view of resurrection, does not appear so foreign after all. Likewise, juxtaposing Rumi's and Donne's voices highlights the similar religious themes of Islam and Christianity, respectively. In the current state of American politics, Islam has been cast in a dark light; acknowledging the similar roots of Islam and Christianity is key for concord. I believe that Rumi's poetry has the potential to change America's skewed perception of Islam and to show that, in fact, Islam preaches an abundance of peace and harmony. Rumi's potential for peace and change is why I find some English interpretations of Rumi so problematic. Some Rumi interpreters transform the poet's persona into one that is pleasing to Westerners: an exotic mystic with a sense of humor. However, students of Islam know the truth about Rumi: foremost, he is a Muslim; second, his poetry is infused with Sufism. When an interpreter strips Rumi of his Islam, both his personal identity and his potential to be a positive force of change for the American and Muslim community is lost.

The interdisciplinary nature of my work in three different traditions has led me to focus on primary sources and the editors' explications of the texts. Because I quickly became enamored with juxtaposing the poems themselves, I did not use as many secondary sources as I had originally intended. In investigating and even interrogating the primary sources, I probed their poetic and religious significance. My close reading of the poems shows that religious poetry inherently explores the same ideas and struggles, while highlighting each poet's distinctive voice. Ultimately, poetry can serve as the

unifying force among the three religions represented by Donne, the priest; Rumi, the mystic; the Karmapa, the reincarnate.

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