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John Donne's Manifestations of *The Confessions*: "Holy Sonnets" 7, 9, 11, and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions IX*

Jie-Ae Yu

(Changwon National University)

Yu, Jie-Ae. "John Donne's Manifestations of *The Confessions*: "Holy Sonnets" 7, 9, 11, and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions IX*." *Studies in English Language & Literature*. 41.2 (2015): 61-79. This article aims to explore how John Donne manifests the main conceptions of *The Confessions* of St. Augustine in his divine poetry and prose, especially "Holy Sonnets" 7, 9, 11, and Chapter 9 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. In his sermons, Donne proclaims his sincere admiration for St. Augustine's religious life and writings. Numerous textual evidences of "Holy Sonnets" and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* clearly reveal Donne's considerable references to St. Augustine's prominent ideas in *The Confessions*. Despite the similarities, Donne simultaneously endorses the speakers' strife with converting to devout believers in the ordinance and mercy of God, while featuring their sense of guilt and precarious attitudes. (Changwon National University)

Key Words: John Donne, *The Confessions*, sin, "Holy Sonnets," *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*

I

A number of John Donne's sermons evidently show that he was impressed by St. Augustine's personal, dramatic way of converting to Christianity under the influence of St. Ambrose in Milan at the age of 29, after having consistently indulged in corporeal desires. Among St.

Augustine's works, it is *The Confessions* that Donne had a particular interest in when conceiving the thematic ideas of divine poetry and prose, especially "Holy Sonnets" composed around 1609 and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* written in 1623. Donne mentioned this piece of St. Augustine in his sermons of 1618, 1619, and 1625 delivered before British figures involved in significant public affairs. In a sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn in 1618 Donne declares, for the first time, his preoccupation with *The Confessions*, considering it to be St. Augustine's "gravest work" (Carey 276, Coffin 506).¹ Donne brings up one of the most important notions conceived by his honorable theologian – the irremovable stain and inheritance of man's "original sin" and "the confessions of St. Augustine" himself (Carey 276).

Another of Donne's sermons, given at Lincoln's Inn in 1618, expands the range of man's "sinful" nature from depravities committed by his ancestors in the Old Testament to "evil intentions" conceived by descendents on purpose. This speech focuses on "conversion" and "penitence" followed by "the confessions of one's sins," as St. Augustine enumerated throughout his own religious life recorded in *The Confessions* (Carey 277–79). Donne's keen awareness of this writing reemerges with his enriched interpretation during a sermon to ministers in The Hague on 19 December 1619. This preach accentuates the close relationship between man's original sin and his "boastful" attitude toward it, with reference to St. Augustine's configuration of the two features inherent within man (Coffin

¹ The texts of John Donne's sermons will be cited from the editions of either John Carey or Charles M. Coffin. See *John Donne*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) and *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin (New York: The Modern Library, 2001). In addition, the texts of Donne's "Holy Sonnets" will be quoted from *John Donne: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (London: The Nonesuch P, 1978). Donne's prose, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, will be taken from William Draper's edition of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (London: Simpkin, 1923).

478). Donne's final speech mentioning *The Confessions*, preached to the King's Majesty at Whitehall on 24 February 1625, sharpens his ongoing contemplation into man's "original sin" (Coffin 506), but his approach to this matter is augmented by St. Augustine's assurance of the death and resurrection of Jesus who ultimately brought in the emancipation and redemption of man from habitual depravities (Coffin 507).

A modern reviewer, Robert Young argues that Donne's religious poems reflect the "dramatization of a particular devotional experience" probed in *The Confessions*, through the lens of Donne's own "peculiar personal situations" (219). Achsah Guibbory details Donne's "reminiscence of human desire and indulgence in lust" in the "Holy Sonnets," which St. Augustine believes to lead to moral disruption as he observes in *The Confessions* (215). Among critics of our time, it is Kate Narveson who accentuates the significant impact of *The Confessions* on one of Donne's religious proses, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. She suggests that Donne drew on the tradition of "spiritual autobiography" established by *The Confessions* for the first time in the Western literary world (314-15). *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* certainly engages a "particular person's interrogation of experience," in which Donne's various revelations feature a "homiletic self-display," "holy soliloquy," and "spiritual devotion" (Narveson 314, 316).

Despite the aforementioned insightful suggestions, I would contend that the critics' views tend to overlook how Donne utilizes *The Confessions* in his sacred poetry and prose through his entwined conceptions of sin and conversion. This paper will focus on how Donne establishes and develops the main ideas and structure of *The Confessions* in "Holy Sonnets" and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. While dealing with this matter, the article will concentrate on "Holy Sonnets" 7, 9, and 11, and Chapter 9 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* which reflect such thematic concerns

among Donne's writings. It explores the way by which Donne undertakes his diverse manifestations of the speakers' perceptions and reactions to their delinquent behaviors in these specific divine writings.

II

One of the main motives for Donne's writing of "Holy Sonnets" was his keen awareness of the irremovable burden of man's sinful nature. His unswerving investigation focuses on the complex procedure of man's recognition of and reaction to such distress ingrained in the human mind. Highly impressed by St. Augustine's awareness of these similar problems in *The Confessions*, Donne undertakes his persistent scrutinization of such internal aspects in his divine poems. As Mary Papazian points out, Donne's "Holy Sonnets" foregrounds "St. Augustine's view of sinful man yearning for the grace that only God can give" (80). However, unlike in the prose form of his predecessor's work, Donne rears up the speaker's religious sensibility in a more intense and simultaneous manner through a condensed poetic form.

"Holy Sonnets" 11 is the work in which Donne uses the term "sin" three times, and it certainly draws the readers' attention to how and why he deploys the same word in this poem. The poem vigorously commences with the speaker's outspoken and frustrated revelation of his iniquity committed in both the past and present:

Spit in my face you Jews, and pierce my side,
 Buffet, and scoff, scourge, and crucifying me,
 For I have sinned, and sinned, and only he,
 Who could do no iniquity, hath died:

But by my death cannot be satisfied
My sins, which pass the Jew's impiety.
("Holy Sonnets" 11:1-6)

The speaker deploys the effective poetic device of a parody of Jesus' ordeal, taken on his way to Golgotha while bearing the cross. Reminiscent of Jesus' immense pain from carrying the rood, the speaker accentuates the psychological and spiritual distress from bearing his internally transformed burden of the cross. The speaker tries so hard to maintain his enduring taint of heart, as he seriously deploras. The unreserved method of disclosing the speaker's sins is intimately connected with St. Augustine's direct manner of unveiling the pain imposed by a vivid recollection of past sinful deeds arising in his mind.

St. Augustine's *The Confessions* obviously plays a significant role in establishing the thematic concerns of "Holy Sonnets" 11, where the speaker articulates his evident acceptance of deep-rooted sinfulness within his mind. St. Augustine's unequivocal acceptance of his depraved nature and conduct is closely connected with the speaker's outspoken admission of erring in "Holy Sonnets" 11:

I want to recall back to mind my past impurities and the carnal corruptions of my soul, not because I love them. And gathering myself together from the scattered fragments into which I was broken and dissipated during all that time when, being turned away from you, the One . . . the great horror of memory, with its secret, numberless, and indefinable recesses, takes in all these things so that they may be reproduced and brought back again when the need arises. They all enter the memory by their various ways and are all stored up in the memory. (*The Confessions* 10:210).

The force of "memory" is remarkable because it paves the way for the

speaker to ponder over his misconducts in the past (*The Confessions* Book 10:211). As William Bouwsma comments, memory, being one of the important intellectual entities, constitutes the "Augustinian pattern of confessions" (50). In *The Trinity*, St. Augustine emphasizes the intertwined relationships among memory, perception, and willpower, which are resonated through Donne's deployment of the concepts of sin and conversion in *Holy Sonnets* and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. St. Augustine declares that acts of recollection are as good as acts of perception; as our senses are formulated by external objects, so the human mind is formed by memory images and recalls previously recognized things (*The Trinity* 330-33).

According to St. Augustine, associated with perception and memory, human will features one of the mental trinities and directs man's senses to outside objects (*The Trinity* 504-506). In St. Augustine's opinion, the three elements of the human mind complement each other, whereby man is, in the end, able to repent precisely what they have done and then bring themselves into God's presence with true contrition and conversion (*The Trinity* 509-11). As henceforth referred to in this article, St. Augustine's theological ideas on the three mental faculties are resonated through the speakers of Donne's *Holy Sonnets* and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. Donne utilizes St. Augustine's thoughts on the mental trinities in depicting the speakers' recollected perception of their past errors which lead them to turn to God.

In reflection of St. Augustine's main ideas in *The Trinity*, *The Confessions* begins by recollecting his mischievous deeds, detailing one particular instance—a theft he committed in his childhood. St. Augustine's stealing of pears with his friends did not become a simple wrong behavior, but teases him to draw upon why he had done it, despite the fact that he was brought up in a wealthy family so there was no reason whatsoever to

take them without permission. What St. Augustine concludes from his weird experience during childhood is that he was definitely allured to commit the robbery. He realizes that he has a tendency to succumb to the temptation of evil deeds, just like the tragic fall of Adam and Eve brought about by the serpent:

I became evil for nothing, with no reason for wrongdoing except the wrongdoing itself. The evil was foul, and I loved it; I loved destroying myself; I loved my sin, but the sin itself. How base a soul, falling back from your firmament to sheer destruction, not seeking some object by shameful means, but seeking shame for itself.

(The Confessions Book 2:31)

Donne adopts the recurrent motif of confessing wrongdoing from St. Augustine's work through his memory and recognition but, by using a poetic form, creatively deals with this linked subject in a much more concise and intensive way. By taking advantage of a well-organized structural pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet, Donne deploys the speaker's recollection of his past particularly in the octave section. What St. Augustine recollects and perceives from his evil thoughts and activities in his twenties and early thirties is founded upon the linear arrangement of his selected misdeeds.

Donne's "Holy Sonnets" such as 7, 11 as well as 9, however, concentrate on the speakers' keen perception of the past committed wrongdoings which have been inherited from generation to generation, i.e. original sin. Donne's distinctive treatment of the confessional narrative is to intensify the consequential state of the misconducts, in which the speaker feels remorseful and concedes to its subsequent punishment by God. The octave part of the Petrarchan sonnet largely features the speaker's illustration of diverse images to imply his misdemeanors,

whereas the sestet section shows his own intention to repent them:

All whom the Flood did, and fire shall overthrow
 All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
 Despair, law, chance, has slain, and you whose eyes,
 Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe
 But let them sleep, Lord and me mourn a space,
 For, if above all these my sins abound,
 'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
 When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
 Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
 As if thou hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.
 ("Holy Sonnets" 7: 5-14)

Donne develops the dynamic combination of the notion of sin and his resolute longing for God's mercy through the condensed classical poetic form, which he has frequently deployed in a number of earlier works collected in *Songs and Sonnets* composed in the 1590s. Recalling Chapter 7 Verses 21-23 of Genesis about the Great Flood, the writer indicates the serious level of man's corruptions which provoked God's punishment for their sins. However, as the Bible also depicts the Almighty's further beneficial treatment of human misconduct, the speaker likes to believe His promise that He will not destroy the human world again. As St. Augustine emphasizes the faculty of will in the human mind in perceiving one's sins, the speaker directs his thoughts to be aware of the undeniable divine benefaction embodied throughout the Old and New Testament.

Kate Narveson suggests an insightful idea about Donne's literary device with which he brings forth the "simultaneity of sin and grace" (315), but she has not elaborated on this point in her subsequent publications. My contention is that Donne has already anticipated in "Holy Sonnets" 7 and 11 the synchronic treatment of both the concepts of man's misconducts

and God's mercy upon them. Regarding the concept of God's grace, St. Augustine, in *On the Spirit and the Letter*, argues that human beings are capable of acting righteously through the grace of God, but also insists that mankind is still free to make their own choices (102-103). In contrast with St. Augustine, Calvin, in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, accentuates God's "irresistible grace" unaffected by man's attempt to refuse or accept it (190-95). Donne, who was well aware of Calvinism during his lifetime, resounds that idea of the Almighty's invincible grace for the salvation of man's sins, rather than referring to St. Augustine's concept of the divine pardoning, because Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* depict both the coincident aspects of man's iniquities and God's indomitable forgiveness for their misdemeanors.

Donne propounds this concurrent link of man's depravities and God's providential mercy in the "Prayer" section of Chapter 9 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* composed 14 years after the writing of most of the "Holy Sonnets":

O Eternal and most gracious God, who art of so pure eyes as that this canst not look upon and we of so unpure constitutions as that we can present no object but sin, and therefore might justly fear that thou wouldst turn thine eyes for ever from us, as, though we cannot endure afflictions in ourselves, yet in thee we can; so though thou canst not endure sin in us, yet in thy Son thou canst. (*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions IX*, 61)

In "Holy Sonnets" Donne focuses on the speakers' clear awareness of their own sinful behaviors, whereas in the prose he extends the individualized realm of articulating his depravities into the broad range of committing the similar delinquent minds and actions. Unlike St. Augustine's unswerving endeavor to unfold his own gradual "homiletic

self-display" (Narveson 314), Donne's coherent perception of the "root of original sin" (*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* IX, 61) incorporates his keen awareness of people's general misbehaving tendency aligning with his personal sinful acts. Unlike in "Holy Sonnets," Donne deploys plural pronoun like "us" very frequently, while concurrently looking into the sense of guilt inherent within himself:

[Jesus] has taken upon himself, and presented to thee, and all those sins which might displease thee in us. There is an eye in nature that kills as soon as it sees, the eye of a serpent; no eye in nature that nourishes us by looking upon us; but thine eye, O Lord, does so. Look therefore upon me, O Lord, in this distress and that will recall me from borders of this bodily death; look upon me, and that will raise me again from that spiritual death in which my parents buried me when they begot me in sin. (*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* IX, 62)

Donne associates the speaker's discernment of original sin with the sense of "distress" caused by his penitent sentiment about the consequence of the past misdemeanors. Donne has prefigured this concurrently mingled recognition of sin and remorse in "Holy Sonnets" 11. The speaker of this poem augments the grieving heart imposed by his painful memoir of the past. For instance, in the octet section of "Holy Sonnets" 11, the speaker sharpens the irrevocable footpath of his "sins" in a direct way (6), and simultaneously reveals his penitential voice of what he has done:

They killed once an inglorious man, but I
 Crucify him daily, being now glorified.
 Oh let me then, his strange love still admire:
 Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment . . .

God clothed himself in vile man's flesh, that so
He might be weak enough to suffer woe. (7-14)

The speaker becomes tormented by this compunctious position, and this internal aspect is well associated with that of Donne's other works, for example *La Corona*. In this divine poem, the speaker is also charged with internal pain caused by his vulnerability to the seduction of evil spirits. In both *La Corona* and "Holy Sonnets," the "personal and close relationship" between the speakers and "the Absolute Being" (Yu 119) reinforces their acquisition of the significance and benevolence of the Passion and death of Christ for themselves. Donne's depiction of the coherent element between the two divine works indicates that he was intrigued by St. Augustine's *The Confessions* when delving into the bottom of the speakers' agonizing hearts brimmed with guilt and, simultaneously, contrition:

Indeed, Lord, to your eyes the very depths of man's conscience are exposed. . . now when my groaning bears evidence that I am displeased with myself, you shine out on me and are pleasing and loved and longed for, so that I am ashamed of myself and renounce myself and choose you and, except in you, can please neither you nor myself. Whatever I am, then, Lord, is open and evident to you.
(*The Confessions* 10:202)

St. Augustine's tribulation within himself is reverberated in that of the speaker of "Holy Sonnets" 9, for the saint undertook a severe conflict when driven to commit "black sin" ("Holy Sonnets" 15:3) through exercising his volition affected by bodily senses. St. Augustine's internal turbulence, chiefly recorded in Book 8 of *The Confessions* and necessitated by his instincts and physical boundaries, is reperculated in

Donne's other religious writings, for example *The Lamentations of Jeremy*, *Litany*, *La Corona*, and "A Hymn to Christ." The interlocking motto of these works is the speakers' confrontation with a transgressive desire to follow their self-indulgent way of life. They "have rebelled so much against His holy will" and "have sinned" (Donne, *The Lamentations of Jeremy* 33, 42), amidst "stormy days" representing their internal falsehood (Donne, "A Hymn to Christ" 31-32).

The speaker of "Holy Sonnets" 9 apparently remains inquisitive, maintaining an impregnable stance to God's precept for saving man from his sins by sacrificing his only son, Jesus. The speaker's turbid disposition reflects St. Augustine's alertness to the bound of man's faith, whereby he faces a problem with becoming a committed believer. St. Augustine's conversion is closely connected with Donne's own experience of becoming a devout believer after being obsessed with secular love in his youth. The similar procedure of Donne's conversion becomes one of the underlying reasons why he was attracted to the dramatic life of St. Augustine. This is why Dayton Haskin opines that Donne's fascination with the frail aspect of man recalls the term "a second St. Augustine" coined by Izaak Walton, one of his contemporary biographers (11). The speaker in "Holy Sonnets" 9 reveals a struggle with pursuing the abiding rule of God, for he is preoccupied with the solipsistic and self-centered pursuit of mundane life purposes:

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?
 But who am I, that dare dispute with thee.

("Holy Sonnets" 9:5-9)

"Holy Sonnets" 9, however, simultaneously embeds the dramatic turn of the speaker's doubtful inclination. In particular, the sestet of "Holy Sonnets" 9 demonstrates how he conceives the other positive side of his tendency - to search for the grace and mercy of God, which directs him to become a faithful individual. This aspect of the speaker's religious stance indicates the author's "complexity" in dealing with his conversion to a devout believer (Byatt 250). Recalling St. Augustine's accentuation of the function of human will in perceiving one's recollected sins, the speaker exerts his resolution to direct his wavering position into a firm belief in His divine guidance and mercy.

The last four lines of "Holy Sonnets" 9 show the speaker's attempt to sustain his faith in God's omnipotent power, which enables him to be liberated from the entrapment of the irremovable wrongdoings from his mind:

Oh! Of thine only worthy blood,
And my tears, make a heavenly Lethan flood,
And drown in it my sin's black memory;
That thou remember them, some claim as debt,
I think it mercy, if thou wilt forget.

("Holy Sonnets" 9: 11-14)

The indicative image of "blood" here denotes the suffering and death of Jesus who died on the cross in order to compensate for human sins. The picture of the speaker weeping, overstated through the image of "flood," is paralleled to Noah's Flood in the Old Testament which symbolizes the sustaining feature of human sinful behaviors. The speaker also deploys the figurative picture of "debt" while regarding his mistakes which renders him to pay back with a return of good deeds.

The speaker's sincere turn to pursuing God mirrors St. Augustine's

enhancement of his religious faith revealed especially in Book 13 of *The Confessions* (323). The speaker also resounds St. Augustine's determination to conceive a clear affirmation of his "hope in the Lord" and the transformation of "dark" into "light," which represents the enlightenment and "health" of his spiritual consciousness (*The Confessions* 13:323). Escaping from the internal labyrinth suppressed with the darkness of sin, St. Augustine is willing to entirely come into the "presence" of God (*The Confessions* 13:323). This demonstrates remarkable power and confidence in his faith, for he becomes resilient to the "guidance of self-centered thought and desire" which brings about his dissociation from the Almighty (*The Confessions* 13:314).

Donne vigorously extends the speaker's return to God through Chapter 9 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. In this case, Donne has lowered the degree of the aggressive manner of the speaker, for he is more interested in conveying his humble attitude to the grace and domination of God:

O, blessed Spirit, as thou art to my conscience so be to them a witness that, at this minute, I accept that which I have often, so rebelliously refused, thy blessed inspirations; be thou my witness to them that, at more pores than this slack body sweats tears, this sad soul weeps blood; and more for the displeasure of my God, than for the stripes of his displeasure. Take me, then, O blessed and glorious Trinity, into a reconsultation, and prescribe me any physic.

(*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* IX, 62)

Donne's continual use of the image of "blood" intends to rebuke his occasional defiant attitude by which he has "so rebelliously refused" to abide by the divine conduction. This assured and confident mentality is remarkably dissimilar to the stance of the speakers in "Holy Sonnets" 9

and 11, which is largely tumbled by their internal sins and inability to rely on God. The speaker of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* IX certainly tones down his previous articulation of the blurred, unsettled faith in God. The recurrent picture of "blood" is, on this occasion, combined with his "tears," which suggests that he wishes to entirely take the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus with a great hope for having the "stripes of his displeasure" removed by the Almighty. Reminiscent of Augustine's thoughts on the formation of willpower associated with memory and perception of past guilt, the speaker now becomes determined to secure a strong belief in the forgiveness of God upon his unsettled religious heart. In the "Prayer" section of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* IX, in particular, Donne accentuates his willingness to trust in God's predestined mercy on his "sad soul" embittered by his guilty behaviors (*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* IX, 62).

Donne's perspective on the other ethereal world is enriched by his reference to "St. Augustine's prediction and belief" in the earth, which transcends the corporeal territory (Papazian 83). Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* deepens the hilarious manner of the speaker of "Holy Sonnets" 7, in which he feels strongly bounded by the "abundance" of God's "grace" and His pardon for his sin ("Holy Sonnets" 7:11, 14). The author's depiction of the speaker's interest in the blessings of the afterworld is also connected with his concurrent publications composed during the same year as the prose work, for example "Hymn to God my God" and "Good Friday." Indeed, Donne magnifies the exuberated manner of the speakers when realizing the possibility of being emancipated from the internal burden of their sins, errors through the omnipotent intervention of God's redemptive benevolence.

III

This paper has examined how John Donne's "Holy Sonnets" 7, 9, and 11, and Chapter 9 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, adopt St. Augustine's *The Confessions* in the light of its key notions associated with sin and conversion to God's grace and providence. The article has found three things which modern commentators have not investigated in detail when mentioning the close relationship between the two authors' aforementioned writings. Firstly, Donne maximizes the advantages of the poetic form and a short, succinct style of prose in reworking *The Confessions*. He brings about the intense dramatization of the diverse speakers' memories, perceptions, and willpowers involved with the ineradicable feature of sin inherent within their minds. The fundamental structure of St. Augustine's *The Confessions* is founded upon the author's linear illustration of his life from his childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, until he has fully accepted God, the Bible, and the Holy Trinity. Donne's "Holy Sonnets" 7, 9, and 11, however, intensify the entwined method of incorporating the speaker's confession, repentance, and willingness to conversion within the works. Donne propounds this manner of poetic strategy in the prose form, Chapter 9 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. The prose work details the specific kinds of internal sins and concurrent emergence of the speaker's resolution to turn to God's grace for his frailties.

Secondly, there has been a significant development of the link between "Holy Sonnets" and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* where Donne utilizes St. Augustine's major notion of human beings' commitment to sinful behaviors. In "Holy Sonnets" 7, 9, and 11, Donne's depiction of man's vulnerability is characterized by his personal exposition of his past and present wrongdoing. However, in dealing with this Donne departs

from the detailed accounts of St. Augustine's display of his theft, lust, and indulgence in pagan gods and studies. Such a detailed memoir of events gone by is, for Donne, remarkably condensed and it concentrates on the undeniable facet of original sin and misconducts themselves inherited from generation to generation. With a clear perception of man's iniquitous trait, Donne emphasizes man's consequential affliction and subsequent wavering attitude toward repentance and belief in God's forgiveness. This humanistic manner of the speaker's confession in "Holy Sonnets" is expanded through Chapter 9 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. Donne, on this occasion, evolves the personal range of revealing the speaker's misdemeanors into the communal domain of people committing similar offences deriving from man's moral and religious frailty.

Finally, Donne also distinguishes his "Holy Sonnets" and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* from St. Augustine's *The Confessions* when depicting the procedure by which the speakers become assured of God and His providence. Whereas St. Augustine highlights his inner turbulence on whether or not to become a devout Christian at the age of 32, which is largely recorded in Book 8 of *The Confessions*, Donne's representation of the inner turmoil is one of the dominant literary motifs related to his interwoven treatment of thematic concerns with sin and conversion. Donne's "Holy Sonnets" dramatize the speaker's conflicting battle with the process of transforming into a strong believer. His *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* Chapter 9, however, tones down the speaker's introspective conflict between good and evil, and belief and doubt. Donne's battling voice now lowers due to his humble and confident attitude toward God's mercy and guidance. Indeed, Donne substantiates one of his great literary achievements through reinvigorating the dynamic procedure of the speakers' various spiritual experiences to the condensed entity of poetic and prose works.

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유지애

주소: (641-773) 경남 창원시 사림동 9번지 창원대학교 인문대학 영어영문학과

전화: 055 213-3128 / 이메일: jieaeyu@changwon.ac.kr

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LibriVox recording of Devotions upon Emergent Occasions by John Donne. Devotions upon Emergent Occasions is a 1624 prose work by the English writer John...
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(Donne does not clearly identify the disease in his text.) The work consists of twenty-three parts describing each stage of the sickness. Each part is further divided into a Meditation, an Expostulation, and a Prayer. The seventeenth meditation is perhaps the best-known part of the work. It contains the following passage: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.