

STRUCTURE IN THE FIRST SERIES  
OF EDWARD TAYLOR'S PREPARATORY MEDITATIONS

by

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B.S., Grace College, Indiana, 1966

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A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1989

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Abstract

Edward Taylor, pastor of the Westfield Church in Massachusetts for fifty-eight years, spent forty of those years composing meditations which he, at some point, entitled "Preparatory Meditations before My Approach to the Lord's Supper, Chiefly upon the Doctrin preached upon the Day of Administration." The Meditations consist of two series: The First Series is composed of forty-nine meditative poems, and the Second Series contains one hundred and sixty-eight.

Were the poems in the First Series written consistently upon the Doctrine preached at the following communion supper? Because no extant sermons today correspond to the First Series of Meditations, questions have arisen concerning the validity of the title which Taylor gave these poems. Thomas Davis suggests that no clearly demonstrable relationship exists between the First Series Meditations, the sermons, or the observance of the Lord's Supper. Davis speculates that this title was given as an after-thought and does not actually pertain to the total set of meditations, particularly not to the First Series, because of Taylor's seemingly irregular and inconsistent meditative practices (Davis, "Edward Taylor's 'Occasional Meditations'").

Moreover, critics have been unable to find any governing structure for the First Series. Thomas

Johnson, in 1939, recognized the existence of the Canticle units (225); Louis Martz acknowledged the Corinthian units, the sequence of Christ's gift of three crowns, and the concluding sequence on Matthew 25:21 ("Foreword," Stanford); James Callow has dealt with the Phillipians 2:9 unit of Meditations 19-22 (89-96). Jeffrey Hammond has gone farther than any of the others in attempting to find a structure for the entire series. He proposes that the First Series is made up of several poetic sequences (units) framing from three to seven poems each. "Taylor seems to be experimenting throughout the First Series, straining for a sequential formula through which he can praise God without becoming 'tonguetied'" (4). However, critics have been unable to find any overall structure for the series that can identify it as a tight unit in itself.

I would like to suggest that there is a format that Taylor followed as he wrote the First Series which gives an overall structure to the work. I would like to show the correlation between the structure of the First Series and the "Profession of Faith" which Taylor recorded in his Westfield "Church Records." This correlation indicates a planned and conscious organization of the series that progresses systematically through the entire doctrine of redemption found in the "Profession of Faith."

To see the series as a poetic filling out of the outline given in his "Profession" impacts upon our reading of the meditations. If Taylor structures his poetic responses to the theological doctrine at hand, we are dealing with a poet who is first and foremost concerned with relating to God as a pastor and as one of the elect, concentrating on the development of his relationship to God more than on his development as a poet; Taylor's development as a Christian consistently took precedence over his development as a poet.

#### THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

In 1673, shortly after he arrived in Westfield, Taylor began formulating the "Heads of Divinity." These "Heads" are a series of doctrines which are, in part, a paraphrase of the "Shorter Catechism" of the Westminster Assembly. Taylor made them uniquely his by emphasizing particular doctrines pertaining to Puritan beliefs. Some sections from the Catechism were ignored; some were condensed.<sup>1</sup> The "Heads" were written at a time when the Westfield Church was just beginning. Taylor was hoping to use these doctrines to educate his congregation before the church applied for acceptance into the fellowship of the other Puritan churches (Davis, Church Records 4).

Because no extant sermons from this era of his ministry have been found, we have no record to prove that

Taylor ever used the "Heads" in sermons. However, on the foundation day for the Westfield Church, we again see the "Heads" appear in the form of Westfield's "Profession of Faith," which represented the doctrinal statement for the new congregation. By the time that Taylor was ready to copy the version of the "Profession of Faith" into the "Church Records," he had received a copy of his father-in-law's, James Fitch's, The first Principles, which Fitch was using in his own congregation as catechetical instruction to "prevent degeneracy in the succeeding generations" (Fitch 2). It appears that Taylor replaced the abbreviated entries in the "Heads" with a series of neatly ordered categories which follow the order of Fitch's catechism (Davis and Davis xvi). In this "Profession" Taylor develops his doctrinal concerns, including the attributes of God, angels, the providence of God, the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, redemption, the Church, the sacraments, the trinity, judgement, the end of the world, and so on. The "Profession" deals at length with the covenant of works and its results, followed immediately by the covenant of grace or "Redemption." I propose that it is specifically from the section of the "Profession" that deals with "Redemption and its Application" that Taylor prepares "The First Series of Meditations." This section relates to the central issue around which communion is

celebrated, the act of redemption and its effect on the believer.<sup>2</sup>

#### REDEMPTION IN THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

Taylor's First Series of Meditations follows the format of his "Profession of Faith" as he looks at redemption and its effects on the elect. This redemption is God's response to man's failure to keep the Covenant of Works. As Taylor states in the "Profession": "Redemption is the first part of the Recovery of the Elect out of the Fall by the Redeemer." Taylor lists the results of this act of God as "Redemption and Application." It is under these "headings" (Church Records 38-52) that one can follow Taylor's progression in his First Series. The first unit under Redemption deals with the person and work of the Redeemer, his eternal nature, his human form, and his God/man nature. The second unit deals with the Redeemer's mediation which includes his offices, his humiliation and his exaltation. The third unit covers the "relative application of redemption" which includes union to Christ and communion with Christ including the aspects of justification and adoption. The fourth and final unit in the "Profession" under the heading of Redemption and its Effects covers what Taylor calls the "Real" application which is sanctification and glorification of the believer. (An

outline of the Meditations is provided at the end of this text.)

#### THE MEDITATIONS

Because the meditations are likely based upon the doctrine to be preached that communion day, obviously the doctrine must have already been chosen and most likely the sermon written. The sermon is the preparation of his mind; the meditation is the preparation of his heart. The sermon is his public service; the meditation is his private service to God. At times the poems may seem unrelated to the text. However, these are meditations based upon the doctrine behind the verse, and if we had the sermon, the connection would probably be clear. In the Christographia the correlations (between the sermons and the poems of the Second Series) are clear:

Not only does the sermon usually call the poem into being (ordinarily in the exhortation) but it also presents the subject, provides both the central and subordinate images, and sometimes even dictates the logical order in which the poem develops. ( Grabo 87)

#### THE SERIES INTRODUCTION

Meditation 1, with no scriptural reference, leads us back to Gods Determinations, where



we see the theme and the development of the larger poem on a much smaller scale (Hall 217-219). It apparently links the ideas of the earlier poem to the Meditation series as an introduction or thematic prologue to his communion meditations for the next forty years.<sup>3</sup> Thus it connects the former context and structure of his public voice to the private dialogue of meditations based on the object of the celebration of communion, the act of redemption.<sup>4</sup>

What Love is this of thine, that Cannot bee  
 In thine Infinity, O Lord, Confinde,  
 Unless it in thy very Person see,  
 Infinity, and Finity Conjoyn'd?  
 What hath thy Godhead, as not satisfide  
 Marri'de our Manhood, making it its Bride?  
 (Meditation One, First Stanza, Stanford  
 edition)

Meditation One, not only introduces the unit but points also to the conclusion of the First Series of Meditations where the ultimate relationship will take place in heaven between "Infinity and Finity." This poem focuses on the marriage of Christ and Man. Redemption is in the person of the "Redeemer," whose matchless love causes "Infinity" and "Finity" to be "conjoyn'd" when he becomes "married to our Manhood." This meditation parallels Taylor's "Profession" as Jesus Christ assumes

"human Nature in one person forever." In the first stanza Taylor looks at the beginning of the doctrine on Redemption, when this eternal Redeemer became both man and God, and follows it to the end, as man anticipates the final act of redemption when Christ will return as the bridegroom. He continues with the description of this matchless love and ends with a response that will be continued throughout the meditations, that of a desire to have God's love overflow his heart in order to make the "doctrine at hand" not only a part of his intellect, but also of his emotions. This poem provides the preliminary focus for the remainder of the series. However, the first five meditations are clearly linked to the beginning of the theme of redemption in Taylor's "Profession of Faith" which deals specifically with the "eternal" aspects of the Redeemer sent in "human form" but remaining "God/man" in all of His nature.

The next forty-eight poems will follow the outline of Taylor's "Profession of Faith" as it deals with the Redeemer, his mediation, and the effect that this act of redemption has upon the elect. The headings used in the outline of the remaining text will follow the format of the "Profession."

#### UNIT ONE: THE REDEEMER

Meditations two to thirteen

Redemption is the first part of the Recovery of the elect out of the Fall by the Redeemer, Who laying down for them the full price satisfactory to justice itselfe, hath purchased them unto eternall Salvation. & here we are to consider the Redeemer himself & Nature of Redemption. (Church Records 38)

Taylor's "Profession" introduces the topic of redemption by first considering the Redeemer himself:

The Person of the Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternall Son of God, who by an extraordinary Conception in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost, assuming humane Nature, abides two distinct natures God-Man, in one person for ever.

(Church Records 38)

The first unit of the meditations (Meditations 2 - 13) deals with the eternal aspects of the person of the Redeemer by using the Biblical types from the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup> In these types we see, not the historical Jesus, but the eternal functions of the "eternall Son of God". Meditations 2 through 5 are taken from the Song of Solomon which Taylor refers to as Canticles.

Canticles was seen as projecting a picture that transcended time, when the elect would be united with Christ at the wedding supper of the Lamb (Hammond, "A Puritan Ars Morendi"). The Song predated the Gospel and revealed it more fully. Looking forward to the Incarnate Christ, the Song celebrated the mystical Christ. Because the Bridegroom is not seen as an historical figure, he becomes a purer manifestation of the anticipated Messiah with no sin, and he can be used to portray the characteristics and functions of the Redeemer. In the Seventeenth Century, Canticles was seen as the best scriptural stimuli to a meditative knowledge of Christ. Meditations 2-5 are developed around the verses in Canticles 1:3 where Taylor speaks of Christ as the "ointment", and Canticles 2:1 where Christ is seen as the "rose" and as the "lily of the valley." Taylor uses these types to remind himself of the Redeemer's eternal attributes. In these poems Taylor uses the symbol of preparation for burial (Meditations 2 and 3 use the theme of ointment), the blood sacrifice (Meditation 4 uses the rose, a symbol of Christ's blood), and the death of the Redeemer (Meditation 5 uses the bowed head of the lily-of-the-valley to symbolize the death of Christ related in John 19:30, "And he bowed his head, and gave up His spirit"). These poems evoke Christ's redemptive nature

present in an "eternall" form even before the actual act of redemption.

Meditation 6 in this series has no date (except for the note or subtitle that it was "Another Meditation at the same time") and has no scriptural reference. Hammond suggests that this poem was written at the same time as the previous meditation and that Taylor was inspired by the suggestion of the lily to think of a particular coin that was in existence at the time with a lily on one side and an angel on the other. "The progression from the Lily to the "Angell" is perhaps derived from the image of St. Michael holding the lily, which appears on the reverse side of the seventeenth-century English coin" (Hammond, "A Structural Study" 26). Taylor apparently digresses here to a meditation of the coin and its symbols, relating them to his relationship to God: "Am I thy Gold? Or Purse, Lord, for thy Wealth;/ Whether in mine, or mint refinde for thee?" Meditation 6 is a break in the relationship of the Meditations to Taylor's "Profession," a spontaneous meditation that was simply inspired by another meditation. Because there is no date nor scripture reference, this meditation may be one of the reasons that he later felt compelled to title these meditations as ones written "Chiefly" upon the doctrine preached, and not "completely" upon the doctrine preached.

Taylor continues his focus on the attributes of the Redeemer as he focuses on the "humane nature" of this Redeemer. Meditation 7 begins, "Thy Humane Frame, my Glorious Lord, I spy" and continues referring to the human form of Christ as Taylor uses such descriptive words as "thy Mouth," "thy words," "thy lips" to give the aspect of humanity to this Redeemer. Meditations 8 and 9 show Christ as the Bread of Life that God has sent down to earth:

The Purest Wheate in Heaven, his deare-dear Son  
Grinds, and kneads up into this Bread of  
Life.

Which Bread of Life from Heaven down came  
and stands

Disht on thy Table up by Angells Hands.

(8.21-24)

In this manner, Taylor deals with the eternal Redeemer who in His human form is sent to earth to become the "Bread of Heaven" in a physical presence. Meditation 10 continues the combination of the spiritual and physical presence of Christ as it deals with the blood of Christ, "My Blood is Drinke indeed." Concentrating on the union of the two natures Taylor says:

But how it came, amazeth all Communion.

Gods onely Son doth hug Humanity,  
Into his very person. By which Union

His Humane Veans its golden gutters ly.

In the next three meditations Taylor continues to focus upon the "two distinct natures God-Man, in one person for ever." Meditation 11 begins, "A Diety of Love Incorporate/ My lord, lies in thy Flesh, in Dishes stable...", and again in Meditation 12 Taylor pictures Christ in the robes of Bozrah, "So doth the Glory of this Robe benight/ Ten thousand suns at once ten thousand wayes." Christ is again presented as the deity in human form. In Meditation 13, "All the Treasures of Wisdom," Taylor looks at the wisdom of God that is in Christ. Comparing him to the human "cabinet" or body, Taylor calls Christ, "Thou Cabinet most Choice/ Not scant to hold, nor stained with cloudy geere/ The Shining Sun of Wisdom bowling there."

#### UNIT TWO: THE MEDIATION OF THE REDEEMER

##### I. Offices Performed: Priest, Prophet and King

Meditations fourteen to seventeen

#### PRIEST

"Christs Priestly Office is the part of his Mediation transacted Godward on mans account whereby offering up himselfe a Sacrivise once to Satisfie divine Justice, he hath purchased

them to salvation, & makes continuall  
Intercession for them. (Church Records 39)

Meditations 14 and 15 are written together as one poem but are dated separately. These poems probably served as meditations on the same doctrine, and were simply revised or continued by Taylor as he meditated on the priestly office of Christ. Possibly the second part was written beginning with line 30 where the imagery changes, but Taylor gave no indication in his manuscript where or if there was an addition or continuation. In this poem Christ is pictured as the "Godward" mediator. The doctrine in this poem clearly relates to Christ's office as priest in the redemption process. Here Taylor uses the imagery of the Old Testament priest as he becomes the mediator between God and man : "I'll pay the fine that thou seest meet to set/ Upon their heads: I'le dy to cleare their debts."

Christ, the only one who can satisfy divine Justice, is offering to "pay the fine." After the purchase "To Heav'n went he, and in his bright Throne sits/ At God's right hand pleading poor Sinners Cases." Thus, the Priestly office is carried full circle, back to heaven where this Priest "makes continuall Intercession for them." Pictured in this poem are the altar, the sacrifice, and the oil that is being stirred in the lamps



of the temple, all symbols of the duties and environment of the priest.

#### PROPHET

Christ's Prophetic Office is that part of his Mediation transacted manward on God's account whereby he reveals by his Spirit the Will of God unto us so far as it is necessary for our Salvation. (Church Records 40)

Meditation 16 changes to the role of Christ as a "greater prophet." Here the prophet sheds light to mankind as he gives revelation through his spirit. He is now the true prophet who transacts his mediation "manward." In this meditation Taylor uses the imagery of eyes that have been blinded by the Fall and cannot see: "Till thy Curst Foe had with my Fist mine Eye/ Dasht out, and did my Soule Unglorify." Sinful man complains:

I cannot see, nor Will thy Will aright,  
 Nor see to waile my Woe, my loss and hew  
 Nor all the Shine in all the Sun can light  
 My Candle, nor its Heate my Heart renew.

To this sinful man whose eyes have been "Dasht out" comes revelation from the spirit in "A Bundle of Celestiall Beams up bound/ In Graces band." Revelation "so far as it is necessary for our Salvation" has illuminated the soul.

## KING

Christ's Kingly Office is that part of his  
 Mediation, transacted manward on Gods account,  
 whereby\*\*Gathering us unto himselfe into his  
 Kingdome State, he arming us with his Spirit,  
 gives us the victory unto eternall Salvation;  
 but doth destroy utterly all his  
 Enemies.                    (Church Records 40)

Continuing to follow the "Profession," Meditation  
 17 concludes the offices of Christ with his Kingly  
 office. Both in his "Profession" and in his meditation,  
 Taylor pictures Christ's role as the brave King of a  
 Brave Kingdom which is victorious in battle, defeating  
 all of the Kingdom's enemies who, according to the  
 meditation, are led by the "King Abaddon." Beginning the  
 Meditation with the shout, "A King, a King, a King  
 indeed, a King," Taylor follows with a picture of the  
 Kingdom: "This King of Kings Brave Kingdom doth Consist/  
 Of Glorious Angells, and Blesst Saints alone/ Or  
 Chiefly." Arming the elect with the Spirit He cures the  
 sinner and destroys the enemy:

His Two-Edg'd Sword, not murdering Steel so  
 base,

Is made of Righteousness, unspotted,  
bright

Imbellisht o're with overflowing Grace.

Doth killing, Cure the Sinner, kills Sin  
right

Makes milkwhite Righteousness, and Grace  
to reign,

And Satan and his Cubs with Sin ly slain.

## II. State in Which the Offices Were Performed:

Humiliation and Exaltation

Meditations eighteen through twenty-two

### HUMILIATION

In his next five meditations, Taylor focuses on Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Only one meditation deals with the humiliation of Christ. In his "Profession" Taylor states concerning humiliation:

Christ's Humiliation is the first part of Redemption whereby yielding obedience unto the whole Law of God perfectly satisfactory to justice itselfe, he hath purchased eternall Salvation for his People.

(Church Records 42)

Meditation 18, which is focused upon the doctrine found in Isaiah 52:14 (His Vissage was marr'd more than

any man), deals with the obedience of Christ that purchased salvation: "Oh! Beauty beautifull, not toucht with vice!/ The fairest Flower in all Gods Paradise!/ Stept in, and in its Glory 'Counters all." Christ's humiliation is seen as he steps in and takes the punishment: "Soul-piercing Plagues, Heart-Aching Griefs, and Groans,/ Woes Pickled in Revenges Powdering Trough..." In the doctrine of Christ's humiliation Taylor covers Christ's pure character, Man's sinfullness, Christ's obedience and willingness to suffer for man's sin, and the salvation that He wins for the elect.

#### EXALTATION

Christ's Exaltation is the other part of Redemption, whereby he rising from the dead up into heaven to transact the concerns of his people, doth sit down on the right hand of his father in the Throne of his glory, & shall judge the world at the last day.

(Church Records 43)

Meditations 19-22 deal with Christ's exaltation. All four meditations are centered around Phillipians 2:9, "God hath highly exalted him..." In these four meditations Taylor builds upon the doctrine of the

resurrection, beginning with 19 which reflects back to the humiliation of Christ:

The World's bright Eye's dash't out: Day-Light  
so brave

Bemidnighted; the sparkling sun, palde round  
With flouring Rayes lies buri'de in its  
grave

The Candle of the World blown out, down  
fell.

Life knockt a head by Death: Heaven by  
Hell.

Taylor then proclaims the theme of the exaltation of Christ over the grave as He from the "Counhouse" goes up in a flash of glory, dashing out all of the curses from the Covenant of Works. Meditation 20 follows Christ in the sky as he "Flyes through the Skies swifter than Angells could." This meditation is one of rapture as Taylor becomes caught up in the thought of the victory of Christ over the grave, "Sing Praise, sing Praise, sing Praise, sing Praises out,/ Unto our King sing praise seraphickwise." Yet it is also a poem where Taylor expresses a sense of near abandonment as Christ is ascended and he is still here below; "Art thou ascended up on high, my Lord,/ And must I be without thee here below?" We catch a hint here of the celebration of the

gift of the Spirit which Christ has promised to send once  
He has gone as Taylor comforts himself:

Lend mee thy Wings, my Lord, I'st fly apace...

Then I shall fly up to thy glorious Throne  
With my strong Wings whose Feathers are thine  
own.

Meditation 21 continues the theme of exaltation as we now see Christ enthroned: "Enthron'de indeed at God's right hand." Finally in Meditation 22 we see the acts of Christ as he is exalted and sitting at the right hand of God in majesty. Here Taylor mentions the "Judgement Seate" of Christ where He will sit in judgement, "Rendering to each after his Works done here...."

In the remaining meditations we will see a change of focus. Now Taylor looks back down to earth at the implications of this redemptive act of Christ on the elect. In his "Profession" he states concerning the application of the Redeemers work for the believer:

APPLICATION is the other part of the Recovery of the Elect out of the fall, whereby the Redemption purchased by Christ is made theirs & we are to consider it Absolutely, & Relatively. (Church Records 44)

Units one and two dealt with the person and the act of Redemption. Units three and four will now deal with the effect of redemption on the elect.

#### UNIT THREE: UNION TO CHRIST

Meditations twenty-three to twenty-five

In his "Profession" Taylor gives some detailed description of exactly what union to Christ involves. He sees it as an "Effectual Calling" which is the regenerating work of the Spirit of God and consists of conviction and repentance. "Conviction is the first work of the Spirit," which acts upon the understanding and which he calls illumination (45). Repentance is seen by Taylor as consisting in "Aversion from Sin & Reversion to God" (46). When a person experiences aversion to sin, he is filled with a sense of contrition and humiliation. As he turns back to God he is rewarded with a sense of love, hope, and joy (46-49). In the next meditations we can see these emotions as Taylor deals with union to Christ which involves both a turning from sin (once his eyes are opened to it) and a turning again to God.

Meditations 23 to 25 deal with the union experienced by the believers: in 23 we see union with Christ, in 24 union to the Father, and in 25 union with other believers.

In Meditation 23 Taylor deals with his union to Christ as "spouse," one of the strongest images of the relationship of Christ to His Church. Here we see the doctrine in his "Profession" again coming into play as throughout the poem he is convicted of his inadequacy to be in this position. He is "illuminated" to the fact of his inadequacy: "I am to Christ more base, than to a King/ A Mite, Fly, Worm, Ant, Serpent, Divell is,/ Or Can be, being tumbled all in Sin,/ And shall I be his Spouse?..." After he deals with the conviction of his inadequacy, he turns to the next aspect of the doctrine, as he repents and asks of God:

Seing, Dear Lord, its thus, thy Spirit take  
 And send thy Spokes man, to my Soul, I  
 pray.

Thy Saving Grace my Wedden Garment make:  
 Thy Spouses Frame into my Soul Convey.  
 I then shall be thy Bride Espoused by thee  
 And thou my Bridegroom Deare Espousde shalt  
 bee.

The next meditation finds its doctrinal base in the verse in Ephesians 2:18, "Through him we have...an Access...unto the Father." The next necessary step in union to Christ is aversion from sin and a turning to God. Because of the access that the believer has to God through Christ, the believer can effectively turn from



sin and turn to God. The access that is available through Christ "...opes this gate, and me Conducts into/ This Golden Palace ..." where the conviction and repentance have an outlet. Again we see him filled with conviction of his sin: his "sluggish affections" and his "dirty Dross."

Meditation 25 (Ephesians 5:25) concentrates on the doctrine of the elect, "Glorious Church." The elect are not in union with Christ alone, but are a unity in themselves. In this poem Taylor uses the imagery found in a church on communion day (bell, bell rope, the table, the Shew-Bread). Yet again he is convicted of his inadequacies and sin: "My soule starke nakt, rowld all in mire, undone." These sins turn him to repentance: aversion to his sin and a reversion to his God.

#### UNIT FOUR:COMMUNION

##### Meditations 30-49

Communion is the other Worke of Application whereby the Soul is made Partaker of the benefits of Redemption, & it consists in a Change Relative and Real.

(Church Records 50)

The remainder of the meditations deal with what Taylor terms "Communion." This involves the aspects of earthly and heavenly communion with the Father and other

believers. In his "Profession" he breaks these down into (1) the Relative Change of State for the believer which are justification and adoption, and (2) the Real State of the believer which consists of sanctification and glorification.

I. The Relative Change: Justification and Adoption

JUSTIFICATION

Meditations twenty-six and twenty-seven Justification is a gracious sentence of God passt upon a true believer in Christ, whereby on the account of Christs Righteousness, he being freed from guilt of Sin, is pronounced truely Rightous in the sight of God eternally.

(Church Records 50)

Meditations 26 and 27 are concerned with the doctrine of justification. Justification, a gracious sentence, pronounces the believer righteous. Meditation 26 based upon Acts 5:31 ("To Give Forgiveness of Sins") addresses the "Free Pardon" that the Lord gives, and begs Him to "New make my heart: then take it for thy tole." This meditation is a tribute to the forgiveness that the elect have, regardless of their sinfullness and inability to become worthy in themselves. They have eternal justification through faith in Christ's work.

Meditation 27 speaks of the fullness in God's grace which Taylor says "bringst up by hifts/ Black sinner and

White Justice to imbrace,/ Making the Glory of God's  
Justice shine:/ And making Sinners to God's glory  
Climbe." Here Taylor rejoices in the justification of  
the believer who, freed from sin is made "full" of the  
treasures "freely sent to us."

#### ADOPTION

Meditations twenty-eight and twenty-nine  
Adoption is a gracious Act of God, passt upon  
a true believer in Christ, whereby, translating  
him out of Satans famaly, as a Childe into his  
own houshould, he constitutes him a rightfull  
heire of all the Priviledges of his own child.

(Church Records 51)

Meditation 28 begins the adoption theme where Taylor  
continues the idea of Christ's "Fulness", but now begins  
to deal with the doctrine of adoption. By God's grace,  
we are heirs of all of the privileges of the Son, and  
thus if the Son has all of the "fullness" dwelling in  
Him, then "Of His Fulness wee all receive: and Grace."  
As adopted sons we are heirs to the fullness that is in  
God.

Meditation 29 continues the thought of adoption and  
its implications as Taylor compares himself to a dried  
twig that has been grafted into the Golden tree in God's  
garden "Whose Heart was All Divine...." His meditation

is taken from John 20:17: "My Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God." This gracious act of God has taken him out of "Satans famaly" and has placed him or grafted him into God's own household, where he is a rightful heir "of all the Priviledges of his own child."

## II. The Real Change: Sanctification and Glorification

### SANCTIFICATION

Meditations thirty to forty

Sanctification is a Reall Change of State whereby the Person being cleansed from the filth of sin, is renewed in the likeness of God by the graces of the Spirit.

(Church Records 51)

Meditation 30 begins the concentration on the "Reall Change of State" as Taylor focuses upon 2 Corinthians 5:17 "He is a New Creature." Here he sees himself as having been "Broke, marred, spoild, undone, Defild " and he cries for God to "Garnish thy Hall with Gifts, Lord from above." Key words of renewal are seen in this meditation as Taylor begs God :

New mould, new make me thus, me new Create  
 Renew in me a spirit right, pure, true.  
 Lord make me thy New Creature, then new make  
 All things to thy New Creature here anew,

New Heart, New Thoughts, New Words, New  
ways likewise.

New Glory then shall to thyself arise.

The next six meditations are focused on the doctrine  
found in I Corinthians 3:21,22:

...For all things belong to you, whether Paul  
or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or  
death or things present or things to come; all  
things belong to you.

Continuing the theme of sanctification, Taylor looks  
at the state of the elect as he is cleansed from his  
sinful state by the graces of God. Both of these  
aspects, sin and grace, appear again and again in these  
meditations as Taylor looks at his own sinful nature and  
then celebrates the grace of God in His renewal. In  
Meditation 31 Taylor sees himself as a "chrystall" glass  
which had "broke, and lost/ That Grace, and Glory I was  
fashion'd in..." He acknowledges that even worse than  
losing what he had before the Fall, he has also lost his  
taste: "But this is not the Worst: there's worse than  
this./ My Tast is lost; no bit tastes sweet to mee,..."  
Now we see sanctification come upon the scene as Taylor  
writes: "By mee all lost, by thee all are regained," and  
ends by recognizing the "Grace" that has brought about  
this renewal. Meditations 32-37 continue the theme of  
sanctification as Taylor looks at all that belongs to the

believer or the elect who has been cleansed from the filth of his sin and has been renewed in the likeness of God by the grace of the spirit. Meditation 32 rejoices in the grace that has cleansed what has been defiled:

Then Grace, my Lord, wrought in thy Heart a  
vent,

Thy Soft Soft hand to this hard worke did goe,  
And to the Milke White Throne of Justice went  
And entered bond that Grace might overflow.

Meditations 33-37 center around 1 Corinthians 3:22 which proclaim all that the believer has in Christ: "life is yours," "death is yours," "things present," "things to come," and finally, "you are Christ's." All of these celebrate the "Reall Change of State" as reflected against the "filth of sin" which has been cleansed by grace. Meditation 33 takes the promise, "Life is yours," and shows the ambivalence and unworthiness of sinful nature in response to God's promise:

Oh! what strange charm encrampt my Heart with  
spite

Making my Love gleame out upon a Toy?...

How do I sever then my Heart with all  
Its Powers whose Love scarce to my Life doth  
crawle.

The answer immediately follows, as Grace takes the soul, abused by "Hells Ink fac'de Elfe" to the golden Arke and locks it up in the "Mercies seate inclosde." Taylor's prayer becomes, "Lord arke my Soule safe in Thyselfe," as he is renewed by God's grace.

Meditations 38-40 continue the theme of sanctification concentrating upon the work of Christ in the renewal process. Because of man's continual sin, there must be a vehicle that God has provided by which man can be relieved from this sin. Now we look at Christ as the advocate and the propitiation for that sin. Meditation 37 has focused upon the fact that the elect belongs to Christ. The next three meditations will deal with exactly what this means to "belong to Christ." It is because of the act of Christ and because of his intercession that a person can be "cleansed from the filth of sin." In the latter part of Taylor's "Profession of Faith" he deals with the end of the world, the day of "Judgement," in some imaginative detail. It is at this Judgement Seat "when the Dead in Christ" are gathered, that Taylor paints a picture of the Court, with Christ approaching the Bench "in a most glorious way," and then sitting down to make his judgements. The sentence is an "accepting of the Plea of not guilty as to Judgment on the account of Christ to be found valid at the Throne of Grace" (Church Records 77). In

Meditations 38 and 39 we see Christ acting as "Attorney" as he pleads man's case before God the Judge. In Meditation 38 Taylor sets up the courtroom:

"God's Judge himselfe; and Christ Attorney is,/ The Holy Ghost Registerer is founde./ Angells the sergeants are...." Taylor sees Christ's role as that of pleading his case before God the Judge. Meditation 39 continues the imagery of Christ standing in as attorney for the redeemed soul, allowing him to be renewed from his sins. Meditation 40 approaches Christ's role from the standpoint of his being the propitiation or the appeaser for our sins. Again Taylor begins the meditation by focusing upon his own sinfulness. After recognizing his hopelessly sinful nature, he requires from God a cleansing "With Holy Soap, and Nitre, and rich Lye./ From all Defilement me cleanse, wash and rub....Thy Christ make my Propitiation Deare."

#### GLORIFICATION

Meditations forty-one to forty-nine

Life on earth is going to be a perpetual battle with sinful nature needing constant cleansing and renewal in the form of sanctification. However, Taylor recognizes a release from all of this as the "Reall Change of State" takes place when the elect will be translated to Glory for all eternity:



Glorification is a Reall Change of State, whereby a Person is translated out of a State of misery into a State of felicity that shall be compleated in the full fruition of heavenly Glory to all eternity.

(Church Records 52)

In the final nine meditations Taylor looks at the promises of heavenly glorification. His first meditation in this unit deals with the promise that Christ made to His disciples when He told them that he was going "to prepare a place for you," John 14:2. Again, acknowledging Christ the Redeemer's act in redemption ("Hark, harke, my Soule. He came/ To pay thy Debt,"), he now looks at what the final meaning of that redemption process will be: "Gods onely Son for Sinners thus appeare,/ Prepare for Durt a throne in glory bright!"

The following meditations celebrate the promises that the believer is to receive after he is in "the full fruition of Heavenly Glory." In Meditation 41 he will "sit with me in my throne," in Meditation 43 he will receive a crown of life, in Meditation 44 a crown of righteousness, in Meditation 45 a crown of Glory, and in Meditation 46 the elect are "cloathed" in white raiment.

In these meditations there is a focus on the place that Christ has prepared for the elect. Here we see

Taylor in contrast to his earthly laments of inadequacy and sinfulness, looking forward to a time when he will be perfected and when his praise will be perfected. He is still aware of his sinful nature and its effect upon his appreciation of the full fruition of heavenly glory. In Meditation 41 Taylor complains that his "Lock" is all rusted by sin and when it is finally unlocked by one of Christ's ten thousand keys, ".my Love crincht in a Corner lies/ Like some shrunck Crickling; and scarce can rise." Yet when his heart is unlocked and his soul is adorned, he will be able then to attend and honor his King. Taylor asks for just a "Peephole" to see the glories of heaven, but then, when he catches the glimpse, he longs to be taken in:

Then while I eye the Place thou hast prepar'de  
 For such as I, I'le sing thy glory out  
 Untill thou welcome me, as 'tis declar'de  
 In this sweet glory runing rounde about.  
 I would do more but can't, Lord help me so  
 That I may pay in glory what I owe.

Apparently in these meditations he is still battling with sin but is confident of future hope in the promises of God. Taylor relaxes in these promises of future perfection, and recognizes that in glory he will be able to pay what he ought to, that his praise will be perfected. Taylor's anguish over his inability to praise

God adequately and to appreciate His gifts seems to subside in these final poems, because he is now focusing upon the final destination of the believer. In heaven, in his final perfected and redeemed state, he will be able to perceive God's attributes clearly and to praise Him without any of the handicaps of sin.

The last three meditations are built around the verse in Matthew 25:21, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." This invitation comes after the blessing, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," from the master in the parable of the faithful servants who had managed their talents well. It in turn is a promise to the elect who have managed their gifts and talents well here on earth. This is the conclusion to the First Series, a celebration in anticipation of the final act of redemption, entering into the joy of the Lord. As Taylor meditates upon this final doctrine, he is still aware of his sinful state as in Meditation 47 he compares it to a spider's bite that has made the whole body swell to the point that he can't even fit in ".th' Entry of the narrow gate to God." But finding the Waybread leaf (Christ) as antidote, he regains his appropriate size and will be able to acquire entrance into "Those Gates of Pearle." Always in the midst of the meditations one can find the theme of redemption which is the focus of the Communion day sermons. Even when Taylor is contemplating

the eternal "joy of the Lord," he relates it back to his own sinfulness and the redemptive act of Christ.

Meditations 48 and 49 continue the pattern. Taylor is no longer struggling with the fact of his sin. The focus of this doctrinal unit is the eternal rewards of glorification which go far beyond his own sinful limitations to the final act of redemption.

After forty-nine meditations, Taylor ends the series and begins the Second Series which he will continue until his death. What puzzles many critics is why Taylor would choose to end at forty-nine and start all over with a new series. The most common assumption is that at this point Taylor has reached a point where he is comfortable with his poetry and his approach to Christ through this poetry. The First Series is seen as an experimental approach to using poetry to praise God effectively and also to find an extended structure. Hammond believes that by the time Taylor has finished forty-nine meditations he has finally moved away from the impediment of sin that characterized the earlier poems in the series, and moves toward greater poetic impersonality and objectivity about the theme of sin:

At this point [Meditation 41], sin is no longer an impediment to the creation of verse; the structural uses of depravity begin to stabilize. The references to sin in these

final Meditations reveal that Taylor is evolving the kind of poetic structure which informs the Second Series. (164)

Taylor now, according to this approach, can begin a new series with this revelation: he can treat the excellency of Christ without becoming tongue-tied by an overwhelming awareness of sin. He can incorporate the theme of sin into the structure of the poetry. Thus, the First Series is, by Hammond, seen simply as a training ground for what will become his more polished and structured work, the Second Series.

I believe, however, that we can look at the First Series as a completed structure in itself, planned and executed for ten years by a very systematic and disciplined theologian. I believe that there was an intention to lead his congregation through the entire doctrine of redemption and its effects on the believer through sermons which he preached on communion days. If the First Series is read with the "professions" outline in mind, we will see individual poems as responses to the doctrines with which he was dealing. There was a reason for Taylor's First Series of Meditations to be filled with the subject of sin and the depravity of man. And because these were his own personal preparations of heart, he was concentrating on his own depravity. Without the failure of the Covenant of Works, there would

have been no need for the Covenant of Grace and the plan of redemption. Man's depravity was the purpose behind the need for a Redeemer. Thus, the First Series or the "Redemption Series" was structured around God's response to the depravity of man.

Why then did Taylor end with the forty-ninth meditation? Why did he use such an uneven number? Why not forty-five or fifty? The answer to this I also believe is hidden in the subject that he chose for the series, redemption. According to Leviticus 25:8-55, after seven sabbath years, on the Day of Atonement the trumpets were to sound throughout the land proclaiming the fiftieth year as "God's year of release." Seven sabbath years were forty-nine years. This is the Year of Jubilee, and is understood by Biblical scholars to represent also or typify the End-time Year of Jubilee which is prophesied in Isaiah 61:1-11 when the messianic prophet will "bring good tidings to the afflicted, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

The forty-ninth year is the sabbath of sabbath years. And the sabbath in itself is bound up entirely in the doctrine of redemption:

The feast of creation is the feast of completion or consummation.... Because this

consummation of creation in the sabbath also represents creation's redemption...it will also be permissible for us to understand the sabbath as the feast of redemption. (Moltmann 277)

The symbolism then behind the forty nine meditations takes on added dimensions as we see it directly connected to the theme of redemption through the system of numbering and also because the content has led us to the actual celebration of that final "Year of Jubilee."

Taylor's poetry reveals a structured and disciplined pastor, poet, and human being. To understand this series as something that he planned and then executed over a period of ten years simply affirms what we already know about this man, and adds to our admiration of his qualities that have become evident through study of his works.

OUTLINE OF THE MEDITATIONS: FIRST SERIES

Introduction: Meditation 1 (Unnamed)

Unit One: The Redeemer

I. The Eternal Son of God

Meditation 2: "Thy Name is an Ointment Poured Out"

Canticles 1:3

Meditation 3: "Thy Good Ointment" Canticles 1:3

Meditation 4: "I am the Rose of Sharon" Canticles

2:1

Meditation 5: "The Lilly of the Vallies" Canticles

2:1

Meditation [6]: "Another Meditation At The Same

Time"

II. His Human Form

Meditation 7: "Grace in thy lips is poured out"

Psalms 45:2

III. God-man in One Person forever

Meditation 8: "I am the Living Bread" John 6:51

Meditation 9: "I am the Living Bread" John 6:51

Meditation 10: "My Blood is Drinke indeed" John

6:55



Meditation 11: "A Feast of Fat things" Isaiah 25:6

Meditation 12: "Glorious in his Apparell" Isaiah  
63:1

Meditation 13: "All the Treasures of Wisdom"  
Colossians 2;3

Unit Two: Mediation of the Redeemer

I. Christ's Offices: Priest, Prophet, King

Meditation 14 & 15: "A Great High Priest" Hebrews  
4:14

Meditation 16: "A Greate Prophet is risen up" Luke  
7:16

Meditation 17: "King of Kings" Revelation 19:16

II. Christ's Humiliation

Meditation 18: "His Vissage was marr'd..." Isaiah  
52:14

III. Christ;s Exaltation

Meditation 19 - 22: "God Hath Highly Exalted Him"  
Philippians 2:9

Unit Three: Union to Christ

Meditation 23: "My Spouse" Canticles 4:8

Meditation 24: "Through Him We have - Access - unto  
the Father" Ephesians 2:18

Meditation 25: "A Glorious Church" Ephesians 5:27

Unit Four: Communion with Christ

## I. Relative Change

## A. Justification

Meditation 26: "To Give Forgiveness of  
Sins" Acts 5:31

Meditation 27: "In Him should all Fulness  
Dwell" Colossians 1:19

## B. Adoption

Meditation 28: Of His Fulness wee all receive:  
and Grace" John 1:16

Meditation 29: "My Father, and your Father,  
to my God, and your God" John 20:17

## II. The Real Change

## A. Sanctification

Meditation 30; He is a New Creature" II  
Corinthians 5:17

Meditation 31: "All things are yours" I  
Corinthians 3:22

Meditation 32: "Whether Paul or Apollos, or  
Cephas" I Corinthians 3:22

Meditation 33: "Life is Youres" I Corinthians  
3:22

Meditation 34: "Death is Yours" I Corinthians  
3:22

Meditation 35: "Things Present" I Corinthians  
3:22

Meditation 36: "Things to Come are yours"

I Corinthians 3:22

Meditation 37: "You are Christ's" I Corinthians

3:23

Meditation 38: "An Advocate With the Father"

I John 2:1

Meditation 39: "If any man sin, we have an

Advocate" I John 2:1

Meditation 40: "He is a Propitiation for our

Sin" I John 2:2

#### B. Glorification

Meditation 41: "I go to prepare a Place for you"

John 14:2

Meditation 42: "I will give Him to sit with me

in my Throne" Revelation 3:22

Meditation 43: "A Crown of Life" Revelation

2:10

Meditation 44: "A Crown of Righteousness" II

Timothy 4:8

Meditation 45: "Ye shall receive a Crown of

Glory" I Peter 5:4

Meditation 46: "The same shall be cloathed in

White Raiment" Revelation 3:5

Meditation 47: "Enter thou into the joy of thy

Lord" Matthew 25:21

Meditation 48; "Enter into the Joy of thy Lord"

Matthew 25:21

Meditation 49: "The joy of thy Lord" Matthew  
25:21

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Taylor does not follow the question and answer format of many catechisms. His "Heads" are simple statements or outlines of the basic doctrines. Units such as those dealing with Christ's office as Prophet, Priest, and King which cover questions 23-26 in the Westminster Confession, Taylor covers under a single statement in the "Heads." A number of headings included in Taylor's "Heads" were topics not usually found in catechisms such as "Dancing," "Stageplays," "Foolish Songs," "Gluttony," etc. (Davis, Church Records xvi). These particular headings were dropped, however, when he wrote his "Profession of Faith" into the Church Records.

<sup>2</sup>Because Covenant Theology was the foundation of Puritan belief, Christ's willing sacrifice under the new Covenant of Grace was extremely significant. The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, although not the physical

presence of Christ, was seen as the real spiritual presence of Christ. The covenant theology of the Puritans demanded that believers approach the communion table with a prepared heart. The Puritan practice of self-examination and spiritual preparation was especially crucial in preparation for this celebration. Taylor, in a sermon in 1693, stated: "Not to prepare is a Contempt of the Invitation; and of the Wedden...It is to abide in a Sordid, and filthy, wicked and Sinfull State" (qtd. Stanford 16). The act of redemption was the cornerstone of the Covenant of Grace and the focus of the celebration of communion. To come to the table with a prepared heart was crucial. Communion was seen by the Puritan as an opportunity to remember and experience the ardent intensity of Christ's redeeming love: "In a Word, it is to be a commemoration of the greatest Love, which cannot be done as it ought to be without the reciprocation of our most ardent and intense Love...(Samuel Willard qtd in Johnson, Poetical Works 28). Thus, these meditations, tied so closely to the theme of communion, are significant both in theme and in practice as Taylor himself prepares his heart for serving at this celebration of redemption.

<sup>3</sup>There is no clear indication for the dates for God's Determinations apart from a study of the poem's structure, sources, contexts, and manuscript evidence. These indicators point to dates between the late 1670's and the early 80's (Davis qtd in Hall 175). Thus, is it is probable that it is a transitional poem between his "apprentice" work and the Meditations.

<sup>4</sup>In the Meditations Taylor employs what he calls "secret praise," a dialogue between himself and God. God is his only audience. It is possible that in God's Determinations we find an embryo of a concept which will find its maturation in what Taylor will begin in his Meditations. Dean Hall (212-213) suggests that in the final lyric in God's Determinations we see Taylor's intention or awareness of the use of "secret praise": "In all their Acts, publick, and private, nay/ And secret too, they praise impart." According to Hall, throughout Taylor's apprentice work he has used poetry as a tool to serve specific public purposes (the elegies) and private purposes (the love letters). Here he comes upon a new function - the secret, intimate praising shared only by himself and God. When he begins the labor of God's Determinations, he seems to expect to continue his

of poetic ability and election to praise God. Therefore, he turns inward or upward, from public to private to secret poet, and begins the poems which will be his praise for the next forty years. The goal of this "secret" praise will be to privately prepare his heart for public ministry on the Sacrament day.

<sup>5</sup>The three unnumbered meditations interspersed throughout this unit appear to be placed here perhaps as a reminder to Taylor himself of a spiritual experience and response, rather than as a part of the doctrinal teachings or preparations for communion sermons. Because there are no scriptural references, dates, or numbers, and because there are references to a particular "experience" that Taylor seems to have had and his expression of a longing to relive it again, I feel that these poems, "The Experience," "The Return," and "The Reflexion" are not part of the overall structure of the series that would have been presented to the public in the form of communion day sermons. Therefore, I am not including them in the overall relationship of the "Profession of Faith" to the structure of the First Series.

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STRUCTURE IN THE FIRST SERIES  
OF EDWARD TAYLOR'S PREPARATORY MEDITATIONS

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1989

Abstract. The First Series of Edward Taylor's Preparatory Meditations can be seen as a completed structure that is based upon the doctrine of Redemption as it is stated in his "Profession of Faith." The meditations follow the pattern that is outlined in the "Profession" beginning with the person and mediation of the Redeemer, and continuing with the results of redemption for the believer: union, communion, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. This correlation indicates a planned and conscious organization to the series that progresses systematically through the entire doctrine of redemption as Taylor outlines it in his "Profession."