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THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY: EDWARD TAYLOR'S POETIC
TREATMENTS OF A 17TH CENTURY EPIDEMIC

by

SHEENA K. JOHNSON

Under the Direction of Reiner Smolinski

ABSTRACT

Edward Taylor indicates an awareness of 17th century religious melancholy in his “Preparatory Meditations,” but the minister is largely excluded from current discourse surrounding religious melancholy in Puritan communities. Taylor’s presence in this conversation serves to further understanding of religious melancholy in America and also of the complex nature of the condition that is of interest at the present time. Through an analysis of dominant images of the conversion experience from Edward Taylor’s poetry, this thesis argues that Taylor provides intimate knowledge of the nature of religious melancholy and also offers a treatment option for the ailing Puritan in the form of hope for salvation.

INDEX WORDS: Religious melancholy, Puritans, Edward Taylor, 16th century, 17th century, Christian poetry

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SHEENA K. JOHNSON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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SHEENA K. JOHNSON

Committee Chair: Reiner Smolinski

Committee: Mark Noble

Robert Lightsey

Electronic Version Approved:

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1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of melancholy and its sub-conditions, especially religious melancholy, has had a broad reach and affected individuals of various communities; thus it has dominated discussions by scholars in various fields for centuries. The true nature of the condition, whether physiological, psychological, or spiritual, has often come into question, and the answers provided by scholars appear to be at odds with one another depending on the community being studied. The discord surrounding the nature of melancholy is perhaps a result of the aim of scholars to study the condition from only one angle at a time, whether medical, psychological, or spiritual. For example, early physicians such as Hippocrates and Galen approached melancholy from a purely physiological standpoint and, therefore, did not prepare scientists of later centuries to deal with the melancholy that developed due to emotional or spiritual traumas. Despite contradictory hypotheses regarding the nature and causes of melancholy, one fact can be agreed upon: the boundary distinguishing its physiological features from its mental and spiritual characteristics is a blurry one.

One sub-condition of melancholy that has received much attention is religious melancholy, an affliction that was on the rise in the post-Reformation period, especially within Puritan communities in New England. The substantial number of cases of religious melancholy in non-Conformist communities can be explained by the requirement of creditable conversion experiences in order for members to gain church membership, and consequently be admitted to the Lord's Supper. The conversion experience began with preparatory steps, contrition and humiliation, which were necessary for a believer to experience in order to prepare himself to receive salvation and thereby, transition to the ingrafting stage of the conversion pathway. However, contrition took place when a believer's eyes were opened to the insurmountable sin of

the unregenerate; for some Puritans, the awareness of this sin often trapped them in the stage of contrition. Whereas Anglican polity dictated that good works and faith were adequate for salvation, Reformed doctrine argued that one's works were not at all meritorious or efficacious, for if they were the result of God's grace, they belonged to God, but if they rested on an individual's personal efforts, they were grounded in selfishness and mortality. Rather, a life of self-examination was required of Puritan members. The pressure placed on parishioners to identify the sin that existed within them and the knowledge that they had no power to absolve themselves of sin often left these members in a state of despair. Religious melancholy in the 16th and 17th centuries, then, was a result of an individual's being spiritually marooned in the stage of contrition, a severe condition of self-loathing and self-defeat manifesting itself in observable physical symptoms which the penitent was unable to redress. It is this phenomenon that the non-Conformist minister, Edward Taylor (1642-1729), addresses throughout a series of poems he called his "Preparatory Meditations."

As a Puritan minister, Taylor was aware of religious melancholy among his church members, and had the restorative ability to guide his congregation to and through the conversion experience because of his familiarity with the journey. His poems were accessible to his parishioners, especially because the meditations were closely tied to Taylor's sermons, and helped his congregation through bouts of religious melancholy by modeling successful movements through the initial stages and associated stresses of the conversion experience in order to achieve hope for salvation through vocation. His poems beautifully illustrate the preparatory steps of the conversion pathway, contrition and humiliation, by utilizing a narrator who appears to wallow in his sin, only to make the transition into the stage of humiliation as he comes to realize that the only way to escape the snare of self-worth is to trust in Christ's

propitiation. These poems often end with a clear indication of the narrator's transformation, as he enters the ingrafting stage and turns away from his sinfulness due to an infusion of saving grace. This paper offers a selective examination of Taylor's preparatory poems that exemplify the transition from a state of melancholic despair (symptomatic of physical and mental stagnancy in the stage of contrition), to the stage of humiliation (a process of self-emptying and self-resignation), and finally to a state of hopefulness as characterized by an infusion of grace commonly associated with vocation.

I have chosen to focus on two distinct areas in this paper. First, I provide a discussion of the history of religious melancholy, as well as the causes and effects of the rise of religious melancholia in the New England Puritan communities of the 17th century. Second, I offer analyses of several of Taylor's preparatory meditations in which he addresses the underlying issues of religious melancholy. In these poems, I isolate images of rust, frozenness, scatological, barnyard, and disease imagery, which Taylor employs to describe the damaging physiological and spiritual effects of sin. I also discuss the restorative power that these poems held for the ailing melancholiac, who was discouraged from attempting to rely on his own methods to cleanse himself of sin by implicitly trusting in the merit of his works. However, without ever being allowed to rest in his assurance of salvation, a believer was prone to falling into despair. As the English Puritan divine Arthur Hildersam put it in his popular collection of sermons, *Lectures upon the Fourth of John* (London, 1629):

And for one that Sathan hath overthrowne by desperation, there are twenty whom he hath overthrowne with this false assurance. Wee are therefore to be exhorted to examine our assurance. *Prov.8.26. Hee that trusteth in his owne heart, is a foole.* For, as the true assurance of Gods favour, is a comfortable thing; so is a false

peace and assurance one of the most grievous judgements that can befall a man.

(311)

Given the quicksand of despair and false assurance, Taylor was able to draw his parishioners out of the melancholic states into which they had fallen by offering these believers “hopeful reassurance...with heavy emphasis placed upon the accessibility of salvation, the strength of divine mercy, and the unreliability of spiritual testimony against oneself when gathered from oversevere introspection” (Gatta 2).

2 RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY AND PURITAN DOCTRINE

The foundation of early medical theory was built on the works of Hippocrates (460-377 BC) and, later, Galen (130-200), especially with regard to their understanding of the four bodily humors. The humors include blood, choler (yellow bile), phlegm, and melancholy (black bile), and the proportions in which each humor was present in the body determined one’s overall health, complexion, and even nature. The melancholy humor was characterized as “cold and dry,” and an excess of it led to prolonged “fear or a depressive mood,” which could be used to diagnose an individual as melancholic (Radden 67). According to Galen, all of a melancholic individual’s symptoms can fall into one of two groups: fear or despondency. Hippocrates and Galen came to similar conclusions regarding melancholy and its development due to a disproportionate amount of black bile; however, this purely alchemical approach to melancholy did not address the causes of the imbalance. It merely discussed the ways in which the condition presents in an individual. Therefore, the causes of melancholy became a topic of interest for early modern intellectuals, such as Robert Burton, who attempted to further discuss the condition and its variations, with specific attention paid to its causes and its symptoms.

Although Hippocrates and Galen are notable for their work in melancholy, it was Robert

Burton (1577-1640) who, more than 1,200 years after Galen, attempted to classify the different types of melancholy so as to determine its true nature, causes, and treatment options. Like his predecessors, Burton draws upon humoral theory to describe melancholy as a physiological condition in the first partition of the second edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). In a segment titled “Divisions of the Body. Humors, Spirits,” he describes the melancholic humor as “cold and dry, thicke, blacke, and sowre, begotten of the more fæculent part of nourishment, and purged from the Spleene [...]” (Burton 21, section 1, member 2, sub-section 2). As with any of the humors, the melancholic is susceptible to imbalance if the body fluctuates from its stable state.

Burton describes the physiological symptoms of melancholy that afflicted individuals may manifest, based on information provided by his predecessors, in the sub-section “Symptoms or signes of melancholy in the body.” Burton states that in regard to appearance, melancholiacs may be “*leane, withered, hollow-eyed, looke olde, wrinckled, [...with] a griping in their bellies, or belly-ake, [...and have] little or no sleepe, and that interrupt, terrible and fearefull dreames*” (230-31, section 3, member 1, sub-section 1). Other observable symptoms include inactivity, an excess or a lack of emotion, and troubled senses (Radden 140). Burton also describes psychological or emotional signs which a melancholiac is likely to experience. Scholars prior to Burton described the melancholic condition in many ways, so he establishes that two telltale causes of melancholy are fear and sorrow, or despondency. In fact, he states that “*Feare and Sorrow are the true Characters, and inseparable companions of Melancholy...*” in “Definition of Melancholy. Name, Difference” (Burton 47, section 1, member 3, sub-section 1). Fear and sorrow are not only causes of melancholy, but can also appear as symptoms. However, the two need not appear together; a melancholic person can exhibit one of the two, if not both. These

symptoms of the mind are apparent in religious melancholiacs, who especially exemplify fear.

Cases of religious melancholy were on the rise in the early modern period, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries, due to the Puritan emphasis on spiritual rebirth and conversion. As such, Puritan believers were particularly susceptible to developing melancholic symptoms, as the fears of irreversible sinfulness and damnation were constantly present. Burton describes several of these fears in “Symptoms or signes in the Mind,” which may include the fear that “Heaven will fall on their heads,” or for others, that they are “damned, or shall be” (233, section 3, member 1, sub-section 2). While he goes to great lengths to define the physiological and mental natures of the general condition of melancholy, his discussion of religious melancholy argues for a union of physiology with spirituality.

Burton was not satisfied with the mere listing of symptoms of melancholy; to him, identifying and redressing the causes of the condition was much more important. He was able to intimately describe the deep connection between mind and body, and understood that any sort of imbalance in one’s mental state was likely to cause physiological imbalance as well. Therefore, in his discussion of religious melancholy in his masterpiece *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton deduces that persons afflicted with religious melancholy are likely to include religious zealots and those excessively superstitious. These groups are capable of irrational thought caused by their spiritual fears. As a result, they are increasingly susceptible to mental imbalances with severe physiological consequences. For obsessive believers, religious melancholy is a common occurrence because they do not know enough about God and proper worship, a problem which Burton discusses in a section titled “Its object God, what his Beauty is; How it allureth. The Parts and Parties affected” in the third partition. He argues that these zealots are likely to participate in “impertinent, needlesse, idle and vaine ceremonies,” such as incessant fasting and prayer, or

believe that they are “better Christians, better learned, choise spirits, inspired, know more, have special revelations, and know Gods secrets [...]” (714-16, section 4, member 1, sub-section 1). On the other hand, atheists may suffer from melancholy because they are “suspitious, are still fearing, suspecting, vexing themselves with auguries, prodigies, false tales, dreames, idle, vaine works [and] unprofitable labours” (Burton 716). Both groups, however much their beliefs differ, are prone to melancholic states by the primary cause of the disposition: the Devil.

Burton describes the actions and motivations of Satan in promoting terror, doubt, hopelessness, and other symptoms of melancholy in “Causes of religious Melancholy” (section 4, member 1, sub-section 2):

We are taught in holy Scripture, that the *Divell rangeth abroad like a roaring Lyon, still seeking whom he may devoure:* and as in severall shapes, so by severall engines and devises he goeth about to seduce us; sometimes he transformes himselfe into an Angell of light [...] and by this meanes infatuates the World, deludes, intraps, and destroyes many a thousand soules [...] And to compel them more to stand in awe of him, *he sends and cures diseases, disquiets their spirits [...] torments and terrifies their soules, to make them adore him: and all his study, all his endeavour is to divert them from true religion, to superstition [...]* (Burton 720-21).

In this passage, Burton states that the Devil uses indirect methods to harm believers and atheists alike. Rather than simply afflict his victims with disease, depression, or other such traumas, Satan uses their own beliefs to entrap them in melancholy. Numerous cases of religious melancholy in Puritan societies had been recorded, and the Devil’s aim to create doubting Christians can be seen in many of them. For example, the case of Joanna Drake (1585-1625), a

member of the English Puritan community, became an important one, as she was under the care of the Rev. Thomas Hooker (1586-1647), one of the notable founders of the Hartford Colony in Connecticut and principal advocate of preparational theology in New England.¹ Mrs. Drake was ultimately marooned in a sense of guilt and contrition to the degree of suicide because of her religious zeal, and it was this problem that Edward Taylor repeatedly addresses in his sermons and poems. Burton also provides reasons as to why the Devil's hand in cases of melancholy may not be apparent to the average person: Satan does not solely rely on negative devices to encourage melancholy in his subjects. He cures diseases, as well as sends them, and disquiets the souls of believers so that they turn to him. To the unlearned man, these workings could be attributed to God, which is why a minister was usually needed to treat cases of religious melancholy.

Satan's creativity allowed for religious melancholy to be depicted in various ways, depending on an individual's perception of the condition. In the Puritan community, it was mainly considered to be an affective, or spiritual, disorder that resulted from an uncertainty of salvation that impacted a believer's psychological state. In a society so organized around spiritual health, there had to be a means of assessing members' spiritual states, which is why the experience of conversion, or turning toward God for grace, became so heavily weighted.

In order to grasp the significance of the conversion experience for the psychological state of the American Puritan, one must first understand the historical context of the tenet and its overall function in the belief system. According to a religion so deeply rooted in the desire to achieve redemption of sin and God's salvation, the human world simply became a temporary residence from which the souls of the true believers would be taken and granted eternal life in

¹ See p11 for a detailed study of Mrs. Joanna Drake's affliction in John Hart's *The Firebrand Taken out of the Fire, or, the Wonderfull History, Case, and Cure of Mis Drake* (1654).

Heaven. However, the Puritans understood these souls to be those of the Elect, a group of individuals predestined for salvation by God. At the center of the big picture of salvation was conversion, which, due to doctrinal changes in the 16th century, came to be the only way one even had a chance of attaining salvation. John Calvin (1509-64), the founder of Calvinism, developed his doctrine of conversion with a focus on justification through faith alone, as seen in several of his works, including *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (1536) and *Interim Adultero-Germanum, Cui Adiecta Est: Vera Christianae Pacificationis et Ecclesiae Reformandae Ratio* (1549). We see here in these works that according to Calvin's ideology, faith is a sufficient prerequisite to saving grace. However, this reliance on faith allows for a highly subjective and precarious determination of one's religious standing. Those who entered the Puritan *ordo salutis* were frequently in a quagmire of conflicting impulses in their efforts to attain grace through good works. There was an interdependence of works and grace, in which one's own efforts to attain grace through a process of self-abnegation came with the knowledge that one cannot merit salvation through good deeds. Therefore, while the conversion that one experienced acted as a support to one's faith, Calvin's doctrine encouraged "the faithful to look to Christ for assurance," thereby leading believers away from self-contemplation and promoting a passive faith that invited God's grace (Cohen 9).

Theodore Beza (1519-1605), the theologian who assumed John Calvin's office, did much to complicate matters, for in his works we see a dramatic shift from the passive reliance on faith (*sola fides*) to an active role of believers in self-examination and good works in determining if one was of the Elect. Cohen describes the manner in which Beza "denied that the Savior's sacrifice extends to humankind indiscriminately" and believed Christ's saving grace to be reserved for the Elect only (Cohen 10). With this change in doctrine begins the struggle for the

Puritans, as they sought to discern whether they were of the Elect. Beza's stress on the importance of self-examination caused the Puritan's struggle with faith to become a psychological struggle, one that resided in the mind and relied heavily on one's emotions and rendered the applicant prone to falling into despondency.

With the establishment of Beza's doctrine, the conversion experience became a signifier for one's possible membership to the Elect but also a prerequisite to full church membership. While one could previously rely on unwavering faith to know one was saved, as indicated by Calvin's doctrine of justification, Beza's redefinition of the soteriological process stressed the importance of the conversion experience as a prerequisite if one desired to be a full member of God's Elect and thus, a member of the invisible church known only to God. In the world in which an American Puritan believer lived, church membership was contingent on salvation. Only the full members – meaning the individuals who experienced a creditable conversion – could participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The receipt of Christ's body and blood was a sign and seal that his sacrifice did indeed apply to the new-born saint and that his redemption was thus safeguarded. However, because salvation ultimately depended on a believer's undergoing a true conversion experience, the pathway to and through conversion was often a rocky one that challenged the spiritual and physical states of the believer.

The reliance on the conversion experience opened the door to a new set of problems for the Puritan practitioners, as well as their ministers. The first matter to be dissected was what constituted a true conversion experience. In *The Iron of Melancholy: Structures of Spiritual Conversion in America from the Puritan Conscience to Victorian Neurosis*, early American history scholar John Owen King describes the beginning of the conversion experience:

The eyes of a hopeful but still sleepy saint opened suddenly to a satanic sight lying before him, a sight that strikes the saint and creates his conviction of sin...the saint, who is about to become a pilgrim, begins a trial of mental and physical anguish that may continue for years, perhaps continue for a lifetime. He has begun a battle with the devil's temptations. He sits for the moment frozen in terror, fearful that he has committed unpardonable sin, including the fear now that he is committing the unpardonable sin of despair. (14)

Religious melancholy was a condition that plagued many Puritans and was a direct result of this terror and anxiety regarding their state of grace, as they became highly sensitized to their hidden sins within. In the excerpt above, we see the awakening of a believer to his compromised spirituality, a condition that strikes terror in his heart and defines the first step in the conversion pathway, contrition. This stage is discussed at length at a later point in this section, but generally speaking, is characterized by a believer's eyes being opened to his sinfulness, which results in extreme guilt and helplessness. Countless cases of religious melancholy had been recorded in American Puritan communities by ministers and biographers, a fact that reveals the physicians of the soul were aware of the existence of the condition within their congregations. However, religious melancholy did not present itself in exactly the same way in all individuals and so, treating the condition differed case-by-case. The conversion narrative of Mrs. Joanna Drake (previously alluded to) is highly instructive. Her case is perhaps the most famous one in the 17th-century Puritan community, for her case shaped preparational theology in New England.

Joanna Drake's struggles with her sinfulness and her uncertainty of salvation were documented by John Hart (?-1666) in *The Firebrand Taken out of the Fire, or, the Wonderfull*

History, Case, and Cure of Mis Drake (1654), which was published years after her death.² John Hart was one of several prominent Puritan ministers, including John Dod and Thomas Hooker, who were called in to help Mrs. Drake. Mrs. Drake was a religious melancholiac who required constant care from members of her household, as well as from various ministers, because of the frequency of her fits and her suicidal tendencies. Hart describes her as a pleasant woman until her marriage to Francis Drake; she was “married against her will (a great over-sight in Parents) which first bred in her the foundation of those stormes and tempests, which in time were in danger to have overthrown her” (Hart 9). Soon afterward, Mrs. Drake gave birth to a daughter, but continuously suffered from headaches, stomach pains, and other such maladies that only fueled her worsening attitude. Mrs. Drake began to have fits while in bed, during which she would proclaim forlorn thoughts such as that “shee was undone, undone, shee was damned, and a cast-away, and so of necessity may needs goe to Hell...” (12). She claimed that she was “without hope of mercy, without all remedy, confident that shee must needs goe unto hell” (13). To alleviate her condition, Mrs. Drake’s parents enlisted the help of various ministers to counsel their daughter through her spiritual struggles, but she could not be persuaded to drop the accusations she made against her soul. She believed that she was a lost cause, abandoned by God, and therefore rejected the counsel of her ministers.

As can be seen in her account, Joanna Drake had lost all hope and became suicidal. As her biographer explains, Satan’s tactics to induce religious melancholy in Mrs. Drake included tempting her to give up any hope in salvation. Hart’s account states that the first lie that the devil tempted sinners to believe was that they had committed “that great unpardonable sinne against the holy Ghost; and therefore, that it was in vaine for [them], either to use any meanes for

² Refer to George H. William’s article, “Called by Thy Name, Leave Us Not: The Case of Mrs. Joan Drake, a Formative Episode in the Pastoral Career of Thomas Hooker in England” (1968) for further discussion of this case.

salvation, or hope for it..." (41-2). This whisper in the ears of sinners led them into a rut of despair from which the devil could further work his wiles. The second lie that the devil was believed to use to induce thoughts of suicide was to hint that they were "Reprobate[s, cast away], appointed for damnation" (42). Once the afflicted believed that they were damned, there was no reason to participate in spiritually enriching affairs, since there was nothing beyond the present to which to look forward. Therefore, believers were faced with the temptation to believe that their "portion[s were] now only in this life," and so the believers should "cast off all these sad and soure things of holy duties performing, which were to no purpose, now that the irrevocable Decree was past, which was unchangeable" (Hart 43). In Joanna Drake's case, she stopped attending church, would not join in family prayers, tried to harm herself, and rejected the help of ministers, all because she believed she was beyond saving.

Reverend John Dod (1549?-1645), a non-Conformist English clergyman, worked extensively with Mrs. Drake for years and attempted to dissuade her of her certainty of damnation. He was kind to her and gentle in their dealings, but he was unable to convince her to cease her self-deprecation. Mrs. Drake's most serious issue was her conviction that she could not be saved, to which Reverend Dod replied that it is impossible "either for the Devill, or any other creature to know the Decree of God, either for salvation or reprobation" (51). That is, assurance of one's salvation could never be a certainty. However, Mrs. Drake believed that until God moved within her, she was unable to pray or read the Word of God. Reverend Dod, along with several other ministers, were ultimately unable to help Mrs. Drake; however, his colleague, Thomas Hooker, a prominent non-Conformist minister, founder of the Hartford Colony, and codifier of New England's preparational theology, was able to formulate a treatment plan for

Mrs. Drake that illustrated his understanding of the psychological “barriers to grace” to draw her, and other doubting Christians, out of a melancholic state (Pettit 520).

It was Hooker’s belief that Joanna Drake was on her way to achieving assurance of salvation because the symptoms of her condition revealed that she had entered the process of regeneration, but that she was marooned in guilt because in her morbid self-introspection she believed she had committed an unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit and was therefore damned for all times. Hooker’s doctrine of assurance differed from most ministers’ views in the sense that it addressed the believer’s psychological resistances to the idea of grace. Assurance could be unattainable if the believer was prone to over-introspection, as in Mrs. Drake’s case, or an exaggerated reliance on the emotional and sensory responses to grace. Norman Pettit, a scholar of Puritan theology, discusses the curse of over-introspection in his article, “Hooker’s Doctrine of Assurance: A Critical Phase in New England Spiritual Thought.”³ He quotes Thomas Hooker’s popular sermon *The Poore Doubting Christian Drawn unto Christ* (1629) and explains that “overintrospection [sic] in the quest for assurance can ‘stop the stream of God’s practice’ and ‘let down the sluice against it,’ so that the promise cannot come into the soul; and if a poor creature thinks that his sins are unpardonable, ‘he shall never get assurance of God’s love’” (Pettit522). Mrs. Drake had succumbed to morbid introspection, as she believed her unpardonable sins to an insurmountable barrier between her soul and God’s grace. However, Hooker turned her self-defeatism on its head: by explaining to her the affective symptoms of preparation and the pitfalls of contrition, he convinced her that her frame of mind actually signified that she was experiencing the first motions of God’s grace in her soul, which had led

³ See Norman Pettit’s 2004 book, *The Heart Renewed: Assurance of Salvation in New England Spiritual Life (Studies in American Religion)*, for more information regarding Hooker’s preparation doctrine and its pitfalls.

her into this path of contrition. Instead of being damned, Hooker reasoned, she was really on the pathway toward salvation.

It was typical for a minister to propose a pathway for conversion, or the *ordo salutis*, so as to guide his flock through the trauma of conversion (King 14, 30). Although there were different models for this order of salvation, Hooker's doctrine of preparation was widely accepted and practiced, especially in New England. His preparational theology was adopted by the Cambridge Platform (1648), which dictated church polity for Puritan congregations in the colonies, as a result of the Antinomian Controversy (or Free Grace Controversy) involving John Cotton and Anne Hutchinson, who embraced the doctrine of sudden Pauline conversion in opposition to preparationism.⁴ Cotton rejected any possibility of preparation for salvation, because he believed that St. Paul's sudden transformative moment on the road to Damascus was normative. That the Antinomian Controversy constituted the decisive event for the definition of the New England Way can be seen in the 1652 version of the Cambridge Platform, which codified Hooker's preparational theology:

A personal and publick confession, and declaring of God's manner of working upon the soul, is both lawfull, expedient, and usefull, in sundry respects, and upon sundry grounds. Those three thousands, Acts 2.37.41. Before they were admitted by the Apostles, did manifest that they were pricked in their hearts at Peter's sermon, together with earnest desire to be delivered from their sins, which now wounded their consciences, and their ready receiving of the word of promise and exhortation. (Congregational Churches in New England. Cambridge Synod 17)

⁴ For other details of the Antinomian Crisis and the issue of free grace in New England, see Michael P. Winship's book, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (2002).

In this passage, we see support for an ongoing conversion experience, which begins with just a prick in the hearts of believers – the first stage in Hooker’s proposed preparational conversion pathway. This initial awareness of the presence of sin within the body begins a believer’s *ordo salutis*, which contains a series of steps that were intended to prepare a Puritan for receiving God’s grace. In each stage, a believer should feel “God’s manner of working upon the soul,” as stated in the platform, which prepared him to receive salvation.

Based on Hooker’s preparationism, Puritan doctrine held that in order to ultimately receive saving grace, one must undergo rigorous preparation, or “a fitting and enabling of the soule for Christ” (Shuffelton 83). Hooker’s preparational conversion pathway can be broken up into two stages. The first stage of conversion is preparation, during which the believer experiences contrition and humiliation. In *The Soules Preparation for Christ* (1638), Hooker describes contrition as “nothing else, but namely, when a sinner by the sight of sinne, and vilenesse of it, and the punishment due to the same, is made sensible of sinne, and is made to hate it, and hath his heart separated from the same” (Hooker 2). He believed that one’s soul must first be broken by the conviction of sin in order to allow God’s work to be done within it. During this step, the believer becomes aware of his sinful nature, begins to detest it, and attempts to turn away from it. However, the believer’s inability to break away from sin completely leads to the second step in the preparation stage of Hooker’s conversion pathway: humiliation. Hooker describes this step in *The Soules Humiliation* (1637), in which he states that the humiliation of heart occurs “when the soule upon search made despaire of all helpe from it selfe: he doth not despaire of Gods mercy, but of all helpe from himselfe and submits himselfe wholly to God, the soule strikes sale and fals under the power of Jesus Christ and is content to be at his disposing” (Hooker 5-6). When the believer experiences this humiliation of heart, he encounters the truth

that attempts to resist sin and embrace righteousness are futile. In fact, it is absolutely necessary that the soul give up the battle for salvation altogether, as no worldly works are conducive to assurance of grace. Humiliation demands that the individual allow God to take up the battle for his soul, as only He is capable of the strength required to fight sin. It is this step that convinces the future convert that God must intervene in his spiritual life if conversion and assurance of salvation are ever desired. The goal for this step in the conversion pathway is full submission to God's workings within an individual in order to bring him to the second stage of conversion: ingrafting.

Hooker's understanding of the conversion process incorporated the "Pauline metaphor of ingrafting," in which "the divine gardener pared and fitted fallen man for ingrafting into the root of spiritual life and truth, but man had to cooperate with God in cutting away his own 'swelling sufficiency'" (Shuffelton 93). The fallen believer needed to implant himself within Christ, as well as allow Christ to become one with him. This welding between the sinner and Christ allowed the sinner to reap spiritual benefits by tapping into an abundant source: Christ. However, the process of ingrafting could only begin once the Puritan believer had undergone the preparatory steps of contrition and humiliation. It was not important that the steps of ingrafting, which complete Hooker's conversion morphology, occurred in the order as follows: vocation, adoption, justification, sanctification, and glorification. Vocation is the stage in which one receives a calling or an infusion of saving grace, which indicates a change of character and turn from sinfulness. Adoption refers to the converted individuals' acceptance into the saved community of the invisible church, because their sins are now atoned through Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, and the redeemed saints are thus justified in God's eyes. Justification thus represents the removal of sins. As Christ's sacrifice has paid for the sins of the applicant, who in

the eyes of the judge is now cleared of sin, the stage of justification rendered the applicant righteous and thus ready to participate in the sign and seal of the Lord's Supper. However, the process of regeneration does not end here; it involved a life-long process of meditation and self-searching, which Puritans called sanctification. The final step in the conversion pathway is glorification, the stage in which the saved individuals are made perfect by God before they are called to live with him for eternity. As can be seen in the steps of Hooker's conversion morphology, applicants actively engaged in the process of regeneration, which involved the converts' mental faculties. The mind must first be prepared to take stock of one's spiritual health before regeneration can begin. In Joanna Drake's case, she did not have a true conviction of sin, but could only perceive it based on worldly measures. Her inability to recognize the true nature of sin kept Mrs. Drake from the first step in the conversion pathway. Her spiritual advisor, Thomas Hooker, understood only too well how to guide her on the path to spiritual health.

As seen in Joanna Drake's case and through Hooker's conversion morphology, this terrifying experience took a toll on the psychological and emotional states of believers. Although conversion guaranteed church membership and participation in Holy Communion, it was not the cure for the struggles of a Puritan. Cohen states that "the path of assurance, which for Calvin ascends from the believer to the Redeemer at God's right hand, for Beza descends back into the self, a change of direction fraught with implications for thinking about conversion" (Cohen 11). Here, we see a new emphasis on the motives of the supposed believer, as indicated by his or her emotions and affectations. By redirecting the responsibility of one's spiritual health to the individual, Beza determined that the road to grace and redemption would be a lifelong journey, and even then, may never bring salvation. The rigors of the order of salvation did not guarantee that one would be saved. After all, only God knew if the applicant was truly saved or merely

went through the motions and remained a carnal hypocrite. The foundations of the Puritan church, therefore, rested not only in the conversion experience of its members, but also in their continued vigilance in nurturing their souls by rejecting sinfulness and embedding themselves within their spirituality on a day-to-day basis. Yet the practice of sanctification was not without its problems. If they resulted from an infusion of grace, good deeds were not meritorious because they were initiated by God; at best, they could only serve as a sign of one's salvation, never as proof, because they might be compromised by selfish motives behind the actions. Constant self-examination was therefore the only guard against self-deception.

Pitfalls of this nature were a constant in the frontier community of Westfield, Massachusetts, to which Edward Taylor ministered. More than sixty miles to the west of Boston, these outback farmers were prone to Indian attacks, diseases, and bad harvests, coupled with the belief that such Indian raids, sickness, and droughts signs of God's displeasure and divine punishments for backsliding. Taylor's preparatory poems therefore address real existentialist issues as he composed his meditations in render himself worthy to deliver his sermon and administer the Lord's Supper to the Elect about once every five or 6 weeks. The poems frequently circulated among his parishioners, who could thus retrace the stages of conversion, particularly of contrition, humiliation, and vocation. In fact, these steps are among the principal issues Edward Taylor describes in the first and second series of his preparatory meditations. However, rather than allow himself and his congregation to be marooned in the stage of contrition, with the feelings of guilt, depression, and self-denial of God's saving grace, Taylor instead offers an emotionally fulfilling cure for religious melancholy: clemency and hope for regenerative grace. The doldrums of melancholia and the ascent of hope are recurring themes in Taylor's poems.

3 IMAGES OF MELANCHOLY IN EDWARD TAYLOR'S POETRY

In his series of poems titled "Preparatory Meditations," Edward Taylor clearly depicts transitory states of melancholia, similar to the symptomatic descriptions given by Burton and his predecessors. Like Burton, Taylor often uses both spiritual and physiological terminology in order to accurately portray a condition both authors believe to be spiritual in nature. However, Taylor's knowledge of the conversion experience, combined with his interests in herbalism and alchemy, make his treatment of religious melancholy in his poetry uniquely spiritual and physiological.

Karl Keller's *The Example of Edward Taylor* provides an account of Edward Taylor's role as a physician during his time in Connecticut Valley. It was commonplace for a town minister to fill various roles, including doctor, within a community. At Taylor's disposal were medical textbooks written by the early theologian Origen (185-232), the French physician, Lazarus Riverius (1589-1655), and the New England Puritan minister, Cotton Mather (1663-1728). Taylor's medical collection also included the following: Nicholas Culpeper's *A Physicall Directory and Medicaments for the Poor*, Josephus Galeanus' *Epistola Medica*, Hendrick Gutberleth's *Pathologia*, Johannes Magirus' *Physiologiae Peripateticae*, Johann Schroder's *Pharmacopoeia Medico-Chymica*, Caspar Hoffman's *De Medicamentis Officinalibus*, and John Woodall's *The Surgian's Mate* (Keller 295 n 99). Although the collection seems adequate, Taylor's interest was in providing alchemical solutions to medical conditions, rather than in manipulating bodily mechanisms to cure ailments. He often studied and relied on herbs and other natural remedies as treatment options yet, according to Keller, Taylor was "little more than a conventional religious consoler, bloodletter, and herb-healer" (67). Despite the limitations of his medical knowledge, Taylor was indisputably aware of the melancholic condition, as one of the

purposes of Culpeper's *Medicaments for the Poor* was to provide remedies for excessive choler, phlegm, and melancholy. Taylor's knowledge of melancholy as gathered from medical texts in his library, as well as his interest in herbalism and alchemy, gave him an arsenal of information with which to discuss religious melancholy and to address its cure.

Taylor's poetic diction, imagery, and metaphors also suggest that he was not only aware of the ailment in his congregation but also may have experienced moments of melancholia himself. Anne-Marie Miller Blaise makes a similar argument regarding George Herbert in her essay, "George Herbert's Distemper: An Honest Shepherd's Remedy for Melancholy." She describes the case of William Cowper, who turned to George Herbert's poetry with the hope that it would cure Cowper's melancholy. Blaise argues that "Herbert may have envisioned himself as potentially suffering from the same malady and may have attributed to his writing a similar curative property" (Blaise). Taylor depicts religious melancholy vividly in his poetry and, similar to Herbert, offers a cure of his own.

To be sure, Taylor knew firsthand the trauma of spiritual conversion, an experience which informs the structure, imagery, and metaphors of his "Preparatory Meditations." Therefore, Taylor wrote his poems as a means of rekindling the fire in his soul and of re-experiencing the sensations associated with assurance and hope. It was every Puritan's responsibility to actively nurture his spiritual state, for a full church member was still susceptible to falling into grievous sins accompanied by bouts of depression. In Taylor's poetry, the moments of despair and fear due to his sinfulness, and his appeals to God for help are ever present. Taylor's poems make use of various physiological references and metaphors in order to display symptoms of religious melancholy. However, his descriptions often vary in their degrees of intensity and clarity. On one hand, Taylor's alchemical and medical knowledge allow him to

describe melancholic symptoms with regard to humoral imbalances and affected body areas. On the other hand, as a man of God and a poet, Taylor also portrays these symptoms using vivid disease, barnyard, and scatological imagery to help his parishioners visualize the effects of festering sin within the body.

One such symptom that appears in a large number of Taylor's poems includes physiological and spiritual inactivity or sluggishness. This symptom is, perhaps, one of the most damning for a Puritan, as it prevents the believer from progressing through the conversion pathway. Often, victims of religious melancholy lost interest in personal undertakings that actively cultivated their spiritual health, or found that they were unable to adequately pray or participate in other activities that were meant to re-awaken the soul. As in the case of Joanna Drake, it is usually the belief in one's sinfulness or unworthiness that discourages a melancholiac to attempt to nourish the soul with physical acts of spirituality.

Physical stagnancy or inactivity as a result of a believer's being marooned in contrition was only one of many observable indicators of melancholy. However, the symptom received much attention from Taylor in his "Preparatory Meditations." In several of his poems, Taylor chooses to express this physical inactivity through metaphors, rather than with explicit statements. One repetitive metaphor that Taylor employs is that of a rusted body or soul, which hinders his accessibility to God's saving grace. In Meditations 1.42, 1.49, 2.53, and 2.54, Taylor describes rusted doors, locks, or wards to the heart or soul, for which he needs oil or a proper key from God to make mobile again. The build-up of rust in the entryway of the heart indicates that the narrator has not been active in his spiritual life, and has thus allowed sin to degrade the heart and make it impure. Each of these poems, in which rust appears as a metaphor for despondency, includes an account of the narrator's sinfulness. This signifies that he has entered the preparatory

stage of the conversion pathway, but is unable to move past contrition to humiliation. However, rather than focus on the impure, rusted heart of the believer, Taylor proceeds in each poem by expanding on the rust metaphor in order to illustrate how even rust can be removed from the heart so that God may enter it, thereby drawing his reader out of contrition and toward humiliation and vocation.

In Meditation 1.42 (August 1691), “I will give Him to sit with me in my Throne,” the image of rusted doors and locks to the heart dominates the poem and offers a clear example of Taylor’s image to limn the path toward regeneration. The poem draws on Revelations 3:22, the final verse of a chapter in which the Son of God makes the following declaration: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21, KJV). The topic of this poem is overcoming sin and being washed clean so as to earn a place with God, which makes it a suitable study of Taylor’s vision of regeneration. The poem begins with imagery of “apples of gold” that “enchant the appetite, [and] make mouths to water” (1.42.1-2). The apples are reminiscent of the fall of man, and are a symbol of temptation and sinfulness. Immediately in this poem, one can see Taylor’s view of sinfulness, and the stage is set for his appeal to God’s saving grace. Taylor already experienced conversion, but his awareness of temptations and sinfulness around him place him in a state similar to that of an unregenerate applicant in the stage of contrition. For those who remained in the contrition stage for long periods of time, the risk of developing melancholic symptoms increased. Therefore, contrition signifies a stage of futility and stagnancy in spiritual development. The first stanza of Med. 1.42 raises the believer’s awareness of sin and draws attention to his inability to cure himself.

In the second stanza of the poem, Taylor states the problem he faces, which is that the lock to the door of his heart is rusted because there has not yet been a key suitable to open this lock. Taylor indicates awareness of his sinful state in the following verses:

[...]But what strang thing
 Am I become? Sin rusts my Lock all o're.
 Though he ten thousand Keyes all on a string
 Takes out, scarce one, is found, unlocks the Doore. (1.42.7-10)

Taylor confesses that he has not yet found a key that will unlock the door to his heart, and suggests that while he waits for the right key, sin eats away at this lock and keeps him indolent in his spiritual development. Though Taylor does not explicitly describe stagnation, one must recall that it was up to the believer to actively maintain his faith by prayer, worship, church attendance, and constant self-reflection. In this poem, Taylor describes a period of suspended animation while immured in sin, a precarious condition in which the unregenerate is even unable to call on God for help. This state describes the perfect conditions for the rise of melancholic symptoms. Therefore rust, in this case, describes the symptoms of stagnancy that take hold in a melancholic, sin-ridden believer, who awaits assistance from God, because no amount of self-help or prayer can remove the cause of sin from his rusty heart. Taylor portrays a position that often requires God to act as some type of muse in order for an afflicted believer to perform these acts. Therefore, the remainder of Med. 1.42 depicts the movement from the inactive stage of contrition to the later stages of the conversion process.

The third stanza of Med. 1.42 features Taylor's appeal to God's intervention and to remove the corrosion and to quicken the encrusted heart. Taylor indicates a shift from the preparatory step of contrition to that of humiliation, as he calls out to God to enter his soul by

providing oil for the rust on the lock: “Lord ope the Doore: rub off my Rust, Remove/My sin, And Oyle my Lock. (Dust there doth shelve)” (1.42.13-14). It appears that the narrator has finally realized that he is incapable of removing sin from his heart; therefore, he turns to God for absolution and asks Him to purify his soul. As soon as Taylor moves through these stages, the reader experiences a vivid transformation expressed in language of heightened energy. However, Taylor does not rest here. Rather, he allows his narrator to surpass humiliation, enter the stage of ingrafting, and receive a life-giving grace in vocation. He states: “My Wards will trig before thy Key: my Love/Then, as enliven’d, leape will on thyselve” (1.42.15-16). Clearly, God’s intervention is necessary to bring the believer out of his sluggishness (humiliation) and infuse a sense of liveliness and saving grace into him (vocation). The remainder of the poem features the narrator’s positive language and praise to God, as well as promises of love and happiness so long as God works within him. Metaphors of rusted doors and locks to display the pattern of movement from a stage of contrition to that of humiliation, and ultimately, hope of salvation through vocation, are recurrent devices in Taylor’s meditations and can be seen in many of his poems, but most prominently in Meditations 1.49, and Meditations 2.53 and 2.54.

Just as in Meditation 1.42, Taylor begins Meditation 1.49 (February 1692), “The joy of thy Lord,” with descriptive declarations of his sinfulness. The poem is based on Matthew 25:21: “His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (KJV). Matthew 25 tells three different parables, but Taylor’s focus in this poem is on the parable of the five talents. The lesson of the parable is that one should employ God-given gifts, such as one’s healthy body and material blessings, for the glory of God. Characteristic of Taylor’s oeuvre, the first lines of the poem illustrate a diseased body by describing it as a spoiled nut, in which its

“kirmell rots,” eaten away by sin (1.49.2). Taylor further describes the sinfulness that permeates the narrator’s body and soul by illustrating the hold that the Devil has on him: “A Lock of Steel upon my Soule, whose key/The serpent keeps, I fear, doth lock my doore” (1.49.7-8). It is important to note that Taylor uses “serpent” rather than any other term to describe who has the control and power over the narrator’s soul. The serpent was the instigator of original sin and the reason for man’s banishment from Eden and mortality. By claiming that the serpent, the mastermind of the Fall of Man, is the one who holds the key to the narrator’s soul, Taylor stresses the allure of sin that the narrator faces. However, rather than leave the narrator wallowing in contrition, Taylor refocuses the narrative structure away from a life of pollution to a state of spiritual cleanliness: “Wards are rusty,” the narrator deplors his stagnancy, previously mentioned in Med. 1.42, but actively turns to God to request that He “Oyle them till they trig/Before thy golden key: thy Oyle makes glib” (1.49.11-12). Here, we again see the transition from a state of contrition to that of humiliation in Taylor’s narrator. For Taylor’s readers, the implication is that the only way to surpass contrition is by relinquishing control over one’s inefficacious acts of self-redemption, by imploring God to do the work for him. The poem calls for actively seeking God’s forgiveness and saving grace, rather than incessantly dwelling on one’s sin and stagnancy. Typically, the poem does not end with the narrator’s salvation, but rather with hopeful desire, even joyful anticipation that God’s transformative grace will cure his diseased body, remove the rust that encrusts the heart, and enable him to praise God with all his powers: “’Twill turn my water into wine: and fill/My Harp with Songs my Masters joys distill” (1.49.29-30). In these verses, it is clear that the narrator knows what is in store for him, if only he turns to God for cleansing. Taylor does not promise salvation to the believers who submit themselves wholly to God’s will. Instead, he shows them that the faith in God’s love and mercy

that comes with humiliation can provide something equally powerful: hope for salvation. Armed with this information, then, Taylor's parishioners could battle the fear and despondency that fueled their suspension in contrition and thus, could drag themselves out of melancholy. This poetic structure is a powerful tool in curing melancholia in his parishioners. Thus, Taylor wrote several other poems, including Meditations 2.54 and 2.53, which follow a narrator's progression from stagnation in contrition to joyful activity in anticipation of salvation.

Meditation 2.54 (August 1703), "All Power is given mee In Heaven, and in earth," draws on Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (KJV). Matthew 28 contains an account of Christ's resurrection, as well as His command to his disciples that they spread His Word throughout the world and baptize the believers. In Med. 2.54, the narrator offers praise to the Son of God and requests that He wash the narrator clean to make him worthy to receive sanctification. As in the previously discussed poems, Taylor begins with a description of a dysfunctional body that is deteriorating. He compares the believer's body to an untuned instrument, with "Cankard brassy wire/'S unfit to harp thee Musick," or unfit to worship God because it is sullied by sin and has collected rust (2.54.1-2). However, Med. 2.54 differs from the others in its use of the extended musical metaphor. In this poem, Taylor's depiction of the body as a rusted instrument has a more direct physiological significance than Med. 1.42 and 1.49, which do not associate the rusted locks or wards with the body, so spiritual and physiological inactivity must be inferred. Med. 2.54 explicitly describes a body that is so ridden with sin, that it is incapable of proper function and has thereby rusted.

The shift from contrition to humiliation takes place in the second stanza, in which the narrator asks Christ to renew his spirit: "File off the rust: forgive my sin, and make/My Heart thy

Harp [...]” (2.54.7-8). Here, the narrator asks that he figuratively and literally be made Christ’s instrument, to do with as He wills. Following this stanza, a dramatic change is seen in the narrator’s attitude, as he unabashedly worships the Son of God. While the previous poems contained extensive descriptions of sinfulness and shame, Med. 2.54 quickly shifts from shame to submission and renewal. Taylor’s focus in this poem is on Christ’s power and faithfulness, and His ability to restore the mortal body to wholeness or newness. The image of rust in this poem is a fleeting one, whereas it dominates Med. 1.42 and 1.49 because of Taylor’s intensive focus on the sin that corrupts the soul. Despite Taylor’s different treatments of rust in these poems, he is consistent in that he offers the image of rust as a sign of spiritual and physiological stagnation that can be removed by divine cleansing. Med. 2.54 is evidence of this, as the poem ends with the narrator’s transformation, as he receives an infusion of grace and turns completely to God: “I shall then cloath’d be with the Sun, and shine[...] Lord, so be it. My rusty Wires then shall/Bee fined gold, to tune thee praise with all” (2.54.51, 53-54). The believer appears to have received his calling and exhibits God’s grace working within him to purify the body by transmuting the rust into gold. After the body has been cleansed, it is fit to be an instrument of God and can actively praise Him, as it is no longer hindered from doing so by the sin that rusted its parts. Med. 2.54 is a clear example of how Taylor uses the rust image and his poetic structure to model the progression from the preparatory steps of conversion to the ingrafting stage, thereby curing the stagnation caused by sin.

Similarly to Meditation 2.54, in Meditation 2.53 (June 1703), “All Power is given mee In Heaven, and in earth,” Taylor presents physiological stagnancy more directly than in Meditations 1.42 and 1.49 by using the image of rust. Med. 2.53 is also based on Matthew 28:18, but provides a greater emphasis on the narrator’s sinfulness and pleas for divine healing than does

Med. 2.54. For the first several stanzas, the narrator describes the melancholic state in which he resides with juxtaposed images. For example, he asks if he should be “lumpish when such lightsome showers/Of livning influences still on [him],” or “lowring, when such lovely flowers/Spring smiling up, and Court [him] too for thee” (2.53.7-8, 9-10). In these lines, Taylor contrasts the narrator’s low, deadened state with positive, lively images to emphasize the rut he is in due to the weight of sin. Med. 2.53 also differs from Med. 2.54 in that the narrator uses plural possessive pronouns to suggest that many believers suffer from symptoms of melancholy, whereas in Med. 2.54, the narrator only illustrates his personal suffering. Therefore, Med. 2.53 shows Taylor’s awareness of an audience in need of godly assistance to remove the lethargic, deadened state in which these believers find themselves.

A major deviation that distinguishes Med. 2.53 from Med. 1.42, 1.49, and 2.54, is that the rust image appears well into the poem as opposed to within the first few stanzas as has been seen thus far. As such, this poem seems rather inconsistent, as it contains several images of sinfulness and corresponding cures that compete with one another. For example, the narrator’s requires “A Smiting Hammer” to hammer emendations into the heart, so that it may have “a better frame” (2.53.15-17). These lines indicate that the heart is a malleable organ; for in God’s smithy His divine hammer and anvil can reshape amorphous hearts. Following this, Taylor also describes the narrator’s need for a “golden key, that doth unlock/The heart of God” (2.53.19-20). Despite the variety of images that Taylor uses to illustrate the believer’s compromised spiritual state, he manages to resolve the inconsistencies in the final stanza, in which he cries to God to melt his soul and drill his heart so that He may enter.

Taylor’s reference to the rust image only appears for the first time in the fourth stanza, in which he states: “These gleames may liven our dead Spirits then/File bright our rusty brains, and

sharpen them” (2.53.23-24). These lines serve the dual purpose of describing the inactive state of the believers and offering an appeal to God for help. Taylor’s use of a rusted bodily organ, the brain, to portray the stagnancy of sinful Puritans indicates his understanding that the burden of sin does not only affect one’s spiritual health, but also hinders proper mental performance. Without God’s assistance, a believer is susceptible to the corrosive effects of Taylor’s “rusting,” a physical inertia caused by spiritual uncleanness.

After describing the narrator’s need for God’s transformative grace, Taylor sets out to establish God’s supreme power of volition. However, rather than appeal to God’s faithfulness as he did in the poems previously discussed, the narrator enters the humiliation stage by relying on God’s laws and His “iron Scepter” (2.53.40). Consequently, the narrator submits completely to the will of God, regardless of whether His will is to smite the narrator or to cleanse him. Taylor’s narrator in Med. 2.53 leaves his soul wholly to God’s mercy, and the reader sees a total emptying of any will of his own. While previous poems have maintained positive language, especially after the narrator achieves humiliation, Med. 2.53 awakens the parishioner’s consciousness that the gracious effects of ingrafting can never be taken for granted. Rather, he is completely dependent on God’s will.

In Meditations 1.42, 1.49, 2.53, and 2.54, the rust image appears to indicate a level of sinfulness that results in physical inactivity or stagnancy, a symptom which can be used to diagnose religious melancholy in the narrator. However, Taylor is often inconsistent in his use of images or metaphors that describe a believer who is sin-ridden and cemented in the stage of contrition. Evidence of this can be seen in Med. 2.53, in which Taylor depicts the impurity of the narrator’s soul in various ways. One of his popular metaphors is that of frozenness. For instance, in Med. 1.14/15 and 2.73 the narrator is described as suffering from frozen affections or a frost-

bitten heart, and implores God to warm these affected areas. In these poems, Taylor explicitly uses icy imagery to reveal the inactive nature of the believer suggesting instances of sluggishness, lifelessness, or dullness. These metaphors bespeak the absence of God's indwelling grace. In Med. 1.22, Taylor uses terms such as "speechless," "blockish," and "dumb" to demonstrate the narrator's lack of mobility and activity in the presence of God because he believes he is sullied and unworthy of God's affection. By visualizing his figuratively frozen state, the reader can understand the physiological and spiritual effects of sin from yet another angle. Sin, like rust, is a time-dependent impurity; it builds up over a span of time and is an increasingly corrosive force. Ice, while also time-dependent, is not destructive – rather, it completely immobilizes its victim and renders the effects palpable to the melancholic believer, ice-covered in contrition.

Meditation 1.14/15 (November 1685), "A Great High Priest," is based on Hebrews 4:14, which states, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (KJV). Hebrews 4 discusses the promise of rest from laborious works that God gave to His believers, so long as they hold fast to their faith. In Med. 1.14/15, we see a narrator who desperately clings to his faith in God for salvation. The poem begins with beautifully detailed imagery of Christ's glory. He is dressed in "A Gold Silk Stomacher of Purple," a color of royalty, and is "Blancht o're with Orient Pearles" (1.14/15.9, 10). However, the wonder that one experiences when contemplating the luxuriousness of His dress quickly turns into bewildered amazement when, in the next stanza, the reader realizes that Christ, in all His glory, is offering Himself up as a sacrifice in order to clear the debts of sinners: "I'le pay the fine that thou seest meet to set/Upon their Heads: I'le dy to cleare their debts" (1.14/15.17-18). Taylor effectively has Christ act as a first-person suitor, which increases the

power of His words. Immediately, the reader's response is to feel shame and guilt, as he is confronted with the truth that the Son of God in all his unspeakable glory gave Himself up to eradicate sin, and yet, sin still exists within the believer. These feelings of shame and guilt are seen in the following stanzas, in which Taylor incorporates imagery of frozenness to describe the contrite narrator.

In the sixth stanza, the narrator withdraws from observing God's glory in order to perform self-examination. He finds that "Frost bitten Love" and "Frozen Affections" inhabit the "icy Chrystall mountain" that is his heart (1.14/15.31, 32). Taylor uses these terms to indicate that the narrator's love and affection for Christ are not free to be spread. Rather, they are contained within a "Congealed Heart," and therefore, it is impossible "to make Frozen Affection fly, and Icicles of Frostbitt Love to run" (1.14/15.37, 39-40). Here, the narrator experiences melting shame as he finds that even when faced with Christ's selfless love, he is incapable of responding with love and affection. These are telltale signs of a believer suffering from melancholy; while he desperately searches for the cause of his irresponsiveness to Christ's love, he engages in self-flagellation. The narrator appears to understand the tremendous sacrifice that Christ made, and yet, he is unable to allow himself to be saved. In fact, the horrendous number of his transgressions he discovers through self-examination, ironically, makes the penitent reject Christ's propitiation because the sinner deems himself unworthy of saving; metaphorically, he remains frozen in a pool of self-condemnation and contrition. Here, we see the issue faced by many Puritan believers: they were constantly reminded that Christ's sacrifice redeemed the Elect, but their own self-doubt – Thomas Hooker calls it their "pride" – kept them from accepting His grace. This issue is one that Hooker addresses in the 1684 version of his highly influential *The Poore Doubting Christian*, originally published in 1628:

So it is many times with a proud, pettish, rash, and distempered Heart: if we have not what we would, and when we would, then we are all amort, and murmur, and say, Why should we wait any longer? Thou hast done foolishly. Hast thou prayed and looked to the Promise thus long, and wilt thou now give over? The Lord would have comforted thee, hadst thou gone on, but the Lord hath withdrawn himself from thee, because thou hast withdrawn thy Heart from the Promise.

(Hooker 172)

Hooker argues here that it is not God who has forsaken the believer, but the believer who has isolated himself from God's promise. Therefore, it was essential for a believer to give himself up completely and to cast himself at Christ's feet. Taylor clearly understands the difficulty for his parishioners to do so, as evident in Med. 1.14/15. However, as he does with rusted bodies, Taylor provides an antidote for frozen, inactive bodies – Christ as a warming flame, which encourages believers to turn themselves over to him for healing.

As is standard in many of Taylor's poems, in Med. 1.14/15 the narrator breaks through the wall he had erected through excessive contrition between his heart and Christ's saving grace. In the eighth stanza, the believer exhibits his faith that Christ can break through the ice in which his heart is lodged:

Lord may thy Priestly Golden Oares but make
 A rowing in my Lumpish Heart, thou'lt see
 My chilly Numbd Affections Charm, and break
 Out in a rapid Flame of Love to thee.
 Yea, they unto thyselve will fly in flocks
 When thy Warm Sun my frozen Lake unlocks. (1.14/15.43-48)

The narrator acknowledges that he requires divine healing to melt the ice that holds his affections hostage. Christ's restorative power does not simply warm the affected, chilled areas. It also brings mobility and action back to the believer's spiritual state. His love and affections, which were once unable to fly or run, can now "break out in a rapid Flame of Love" to Christ. We see the narrator transform from a shameful, guilt-ridden sinner to a joyful believer confident in the restorative powers of his God, so long as he completely resigns himself to His will.

Sin's propensity to freeze the believer's physiological and spiritual states is also apparent in Meditation 2.73 (February 1706), "Received into Glory," which is based on 1 Timothy 3:16: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The chapter describes the standards that must be met in order for one to hold a leadership position within the church. These include the ability to rule a house well and to exhibit the qualities of a man of faith. As such, he must be "blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous" (1 Tim. 3:2-3). While the biblical chapter focuses on all of the features that constitute a good leader, Meditation 2.73 juxtaposes the qualities of a righteous person with all those ineptitudes of the narrator, who is entirely unsuitable for the leadership task.

Med. 2.73 is similar to Med. 1.14/15 in that it utilizes the image of frozenness to describe a believer who is marooned in contrition and is therefore physiologically and spiritually apathetic. However, Med. 2.73 differs from many of the poems discussed thus far, which contributes to its effectiveness. While many of Taylor's poems dealing with lethargy begin with a declaration of the narrator's sinful nature, Med. 2.73 rejects this pattern in favor of an

enthusiastic proclamation of God's glory. Taylor spends the first six stanzas building a detailed image of God's omnipotence. In fact, he personifies God's glory in the third stanza, which reads:

Glory was never glorified so much,
 She ne'er receiv'd such glory heretofore.
 As that that doth Embrace her, (it is such,)
 As she unto my Lord, doth ope her doore. (2.73.13-16)

Without God, glory cannot reach its potential; it is God who makes glory glorious. This description serves two purposes: first, it builds on the positivity of the poem and juxtaposes with the negativity of sin portrayed in later stanzas. Second, it successfully illustrates God's beauty and power, which in turn, throws man's imperfect nature into greater relief:

Let some, my Lord, of thy bright Glories beams,
 Flash quickening Flames of Glory in mine eye
 T'enquicken my dull Spirits, drunke with dreams
 Of Melancholy juyce that stupefy.
 A Coale from thy bright Altars Glory sure
 Kissing my lips, my Lethargy will Cure. (2.73.37-42)

As in previous poems, Taylor includes an appeal to God for His saving grace amidst descriptions of sluggishness and inactivity. The narrator cries out for God to shed light upon the dark recesses of his soul, which is afflicted by dullness and the juices of bilious phlegm. The most notable aspect of this excerpt is Taylor's reference to the melancholic humor, a purely physiological substance that somehow, impacts his spirit although it is an entity entirely separate from the body. Here, we see that Taylor attempts to yoke body and soul, the physical and the spiritual, to indicate that spiritual lifelessness begets physical sluggishness. The absence of God's glory and

the accumulation of melancholic juice within an individual create the perfect combination to promote inactivity in a believer. The absence of grace forces the narrator to dwell on his unworthiness to receive God's gift, which ultimately precipitates his fall into the quagmire of contrition. The physiological buildup of bilious phlegm impacts the body and reduces the desire to perform any activity, especially those spiritual exercises which might pull him out of the slough of despond. Without God's working within a Puritan believer or without his access to God's vivifying grace, he is subject to the effects of sin on the body and soul. Taylor expands on this connection between spiritual affliction and physiological suffering by incorporating the image of frozenness to describe a rigid spirit and heart.

Icy, frozen images appear in the eighth and ninth stanzas, in which the narrator describes his sinful state and at the same time, appeals to God for spiritual assistance. The poet complains that his spirit is "Cold and Chill" and that his heart is "frost bit" (2.73.45, 49). These images bring to mind a picture of a believer who is spiritually lifeless, unable to develop his faith because sin has taken hold of him. Although a direct reference to sin is not given in this poem, the believer's state of inactivity can only be ascribed to the Devil's wiles and the believer's own fear and despondency that he experiences in the face of damnation. Despite the forces working against the narrator, though, Taylor offers him hope for salvation by leading him to self-emptying humbleness, the soteriological state in which the sinner is given some hope of pardon: "Lord make thy beams my frost bit heart to warm/Ride on these Rayes into my bosom's chill/And make thy Glory mine affections Charm" (2.73.49-51). With these requests for God to enter into him, the narrator receives sufficient strength to pull himself out of his gloominess and attains some hope for salvation. He shows his faith in God's ability to restore him to functionality and promises "in Glories Tower thy praise will sing" (2.73.53). Although Taylor's

unregenerate parishioners might thus retrace the steps toward conversion in their imagination, the prospect of hope was sufficient to dispel the gloominess and encourage despondent churchgoers to turn to God for spiritual cleansing.

The image of frozenness need not be explicit in Taylor's meditations to show that the presence of sin within the believer inhibits his ability to function properly, especially when faced with God's omnipotence. In Meditation 1.22 (June 1687), "God hath Highly Exalted him," the language Taylor uses suggests that the narrator experiences bouts of frozenness, as he is unable to adequately describe the divine glory he experiences, or praise his Maker.⁵ The poem features a narrator who despairs in his ability to properly worship his Creator as other creatures do. The meditation is based on Philippians 2:9, which reads: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (KJV). Philippians 2 exhorts believers to emulate Christ's humility and selflessness, but most importantly, it asks the reader to allow God to work within him. Philippians 2:12-13 make the following request: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (KJV). It is this context upon which Taylor's Med. 1.22 draws. The meditation portrays sinful Taylor as a struggling poetaster, who is unable to use his art as a means to properly worship the Creator or capture the glory before him. However, Taylor does not allow this temporary writer's block to cripple him. Instead, he battles through the stagnancy throughout the poem and pleads his faithfulness to God as much as his preparedness for judgment day.

The poems opening lines illustrate the shining glory of God, which overwhelms Taylor in his efforts to praise Him through his verses. His metaphors point at the "inke" that pollutes his

⁵ See also Meditations 1.24, 1.27, 2.1, 2.43, ad 2.53 for more examples of metaphorical frozenness.

sight and hinders his worship (1.22.12). Taylor's disgust with his failure to appreciate the glory of God is apparent in the following verses:

But I who see thy shining Glory fall
 Before mine Eyes, stand Blockish, Dull, and Dumb?
 Whether I speake, or speechless stand, I spy,
 I faile thy glory: therefore pardon Cry. (1.22.15-18)

Here, we see a stark contrast between Christ's glory and Taylor's failings as a poet. Taylor is aware that he falls short of adequately singing praises in response to the beauty before him. In fact, he mentions the birds, which "sing forth thy Praise," and the bees, which offer a "thankfull Hum," to further highlight his shortcomings. Taylor's shame in his inability to properly celebrate Christ's glory appears to stem from his identity as a fitful poetaster. This is seen in Taylor's essentialist approach to emulate the acts of birds and bees, for birds sing, bees hum, and poets praise. By defining himself as a poet, Taylor uses an essentialist approach to reduce a multi-dimensional narrator, who is a minister, a believer, and a poet among other things, to show that without the ability to praise his Creator, he is nothing. This becomes clear by his use of adjectives such as "blockish," "dull," "dumb," and "speechless" to describe his physiological and spiritual state. Not only does Taylor resemble a block because he cannot find the right words with which to express his wonder, but his mental faculties are diminished and he is incapable of speech. Thus, the image of frozenness presents itself through these terms, as a body with this level of dysfunction would appear much like a lifeless statue rather than a lively, mobile human. Although not explicitly stated as in Med. 1.14/15 and 2.73, the image of frozenness usually appears when the narrator is faced with God's glory and is unable to fathom the extent of it, or finds that he lacks the faculties to describe it. Norman S. Grabo, a pioneer of Taylor scholarship,

discusses the significance of language to Taylor and why his poetic block causes him such pain:

“There are thus two reasons why Taylor so often laments his own failure of language in the meditations. The first is not because his vocabulary is particularly limited, but because his subject is beyond the compass of human reason” (58). Grabo’s assessment of Taylor’s relationship with language indicates that Taylor as poetic narrator is at a loss for words because it is simply impossible to describe the ineffable. If this is the case, one would never expect Taylor to adequately illustrate the glory of God. It is only through an infusion of God’s grace (poetic inspiration) that one can even hope to find the words that sufficiently fathom His glory.

However, God cannot work within the poet to stir up the praises hidden in the recesses of the mind unless sin is cleared from the body. This fact leaves Taylor in a state of perpetual contrition, defined by his melancholic speechlessness and inactivity, until he pulls himself out of the rut of despair and experiences self-emptying humiliation. This explains, then, why Taylor asks Christ to be his “song,” and that he be Christ’s “pipe” in the fourth stanza (1.22.24). According to Grabo, “the true poet, then, must be inspired in a sense – filled with the spirit of the Lord – actually filled with saving grace” (59).⁶ Therefore, by requesting that Christ be his song and that he be Christ’s pipe, Taylor demonstrates his self-denial and self-emptying (humiliation). In effect, he is pleading for the influx of saving grace that will allow him to sing praises as he is meant to. Because Taylor believed the act of creating poetry to be an act of worship, he requires divine inspiration to accurately portray that which can neither be understood nor performed by the unregenerate. Therefore, we can expect the narrator to remain in a state of frozenness until God bestows His grace in vocation.

⁶ See also Meditations 1.34, “The Return,” 2.6, 2.36, and 2.60[B] for additional references to the artist’s need for divine inspiration.

In Mediations 1.14/15, 2.73, and 1.22, Taylor expertly uses the image of frozenness to show how sin, when it exists within the body, creates a roadblock between a believer and God's saving grace, which is required for regeneration and inspiration. Although sin is not expressed as directly in these poems as in the meditations that incorporate rust imagery, they are valuable to readers who wish to view the effects of melancholy on Puritan believers from different points on a spectrum. The rust images that Taylor uses in his poems shows the deteriorating effects of sin on the believer, whose introspection leaves him in a state of hopelessness for salvation. Taylor's images of rust, frozenness, ice, and immobility, then, serve to educate his parishioners on the many ways in which sin can affect the body and soul, as well as on the measures that can be taken to file away the rust and melt the ice that keep believers from progressing through the conversion pathway. However, as sin can exist in many forms, it has the potential to affect its victims in ways much more extreme than has been discussed thus far. In several poems, including Meditations 1.40 and 2.26, Taylor uses graphic barnyard, scatological, and disease imagery to paint a vivid picture of how sin sullies and eats away at the bodies and souls of believers. The images may appear grotesque and unorthodox to modern readers, but Taylor's parishioners consisting of peasant farmers are all too familiar with animal excrements and the stench of dunghills.

In Meditation 1.40 (February 1690/91), "He is a Propitiation for our Sin," Taylor uses barnyard and scatological imagery to paint an extreme picture of the effects of sin on the body. In Taylor's meditation on 1 John 2:2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," the apostles exhort sinners to turn to Christ for the cleansing efficacy of atonement. Perhaps the most notable aspect of the chapter is that it warns believers to be cautious of the temptations of the world, including "the lust of the flesh, and the

lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16, KJV). The chapter appears to be a suitable foundation for Med. 1.40, which contains Taylor’s lengthy criticism of his spiritual state. He claims that he has fallen into worldliness and because of this is covered in the excremental filth of sin. Taylor begins this meditation with a vivid description of his sinfulness. His hopelessness, shame, and guilt are evident from the very first stanza: “Oh! woe is me! Was ever Heart like mine/A Sty of Filth, a Trough of Washing-Swill/A Dunghill Pit, a Puddle of mere Slime” (1.40.2-4). Taylor’s sins are not minor enough to qualify for a simple mention; they are so numerous that they require a catalogue. In the first stanza alone, Taylor compares his heart to a pigpen, a pit of excrement, and other such grotesque images, which left no doubt in his parishioners’ minds that a soul so sin-ridden is a horrid sight. The poet expands on the barnyard imagery by using other unpleasant metaphors, including that of a “Civit-Box of Sins,” which traditionally held a musky, displeasing animal scent (1.40.6). The narrator’s civit-box is his heart, which contains sins offensive to the senses. In addition to the list of offenses Taylor applies to himself, he repeatedly asks if there “was ever Heart like [his],” which compels the reader to believe that the narrator thinks he is the greatest sinner of all, much like Joanna Drake in her biographer’s narrative (1.40.2, 7, 19, 30, 43). In the first several stanzas of this poem, the reader is privy to the narrator’s verbal barrage of self-accusation. Taylor appears to be exhibiting the very action he warns his parishioners against: the danger of over-introspection in the following verses: “I faintly shun’t: although I see this Case/Would say, my sin is greater than thy grace” (1.40.47-48). Taylor had experienced conversion, so it can be assumed that he uses the narrator’s presumption of his unworthiness as a lifeline for his parishioners. He offers them a frank account of the very thoughts they had, as they hoped for salvation but struggled to move past their contrition.

The level of self-condemnation apparent in Med. 1.40 undoubtedly affects the narrator's spiritual state, as made clear by several verses that argue for the futility of grace, patience, faith, and repentance; Taylor believes that these redeeming elements are beyond his reach. He also suffers the physical consequences of contrition, which include lifelessness and inactivity. Taylor writes, "My Spirits spiritless, and dull in mee/For my dead prayerless Prayers: the Spirits winde/Scarce blows my mill about. I little grinde" (1.40.40-42). The narrator likens his body to a mill that is not performing the function for which it is meant – to grind grain, which sustains life. In this impaired condition, he is unable to perform the tasks necessary to supporting his spiritual life. His spirit is resigned, his prayers are lifeless, and his body is incapable of conducting life-sustaining, spiritually-enriching activities. In Puritan societies, prayer is not simply the routine of speaking with God, which is why the Puritans rejected the Anglican Book of Common Prayer; they believed it appeared to force individuals into empty recitations of prayers that were insincere. Heartfelt prayers could only occur, they argued, when believers felt particularly moved to express their love, sorrow, gratitude, or praise – the sole efficacious means to nourish the soul (Grabo 67). Therefore, we see that the narrator's deadened state is an impediment to the physical, active sustenance of faith.

Taylor understood that physical inactivity due to spiritual sickness was an ever-present risk for Puritan believers, so he offers a means to combat the onset of inactivity and stagnancy – the discouragement of a contrite heart. In later stanzas of the Med. 1.40, Taylor returns to the dirtiness of the body and soul plagued with sin by asking Christ to make him clean:

Lord, take thy sword: these Anakims destroy:

Then soake my soule in Zions Bucking tub

With Holy Soap, and Nitre, and rich Lye.

From all Defilement me cleanse, wash and rub.

Then wrince, and wring mee out till th'water fall

As pure as in the Well: not foule at all. (1.40.55-60)

Taylor does not deviate from the pattern he has established in several poems discussed in this paper, as can be seen in the transition from one preparatory step to the next. The effectiveness of the barnyard and excremental imagery is seen here, as Taylor moves from filth to cleanliness. Even as sullied as the narrator's heart is, he still reaches for the cleansing power of Christ, a lesson that any of Taylor's melancholic parishioners could take to heart. The narrator makes no claims that by entering humiliation, his sin is washed away. Rather, the line between contrition and humiliation is a blurred one, for God's redeeming power heightens, rather than eradicates, awareness of sin. As one of Taylor's prominent modern critics puts it, Taylor seems to "stress the connection between preparation and saving faith to the point where all final differences dissolved. Preparation itself became an efficacious stage in the continuous process of conversion" (Gatta 6). In the passage above, Taylor is aware that his sin still exists within him, but despite this, turns to God for cleansing. This liberal view of the step of the conversion pathway signaled to believers that the preparatory steps were not meant to eradicate sin; rather, they were meant to prepare believers to accept the Lord into their hearts so that He may adequately prepare them as His chosen. Although the scatological and barnyard language that Taylor uses in his meditations may be considered worldly or bawdy, the truth of the matter is that he provides "honest talk...of how God's grace works" (Keller 193). The only way to be made clean is to recognize one's filthiness. By employing images of dung and filth throughout his "Preparatory Meditations," Taylor asks his readers to internalize contrasting images of

corruption with Christ's redeeming blood in order to encourage them to recognize their compromised spiritual states and look to Christ for the cure.⁷

Another foul image that Taylor uses to describe the vileness of the soul contaminated by sin is that of disease, which appears in Meditation 2.26 (June 1698), "How much more shall the blood of Christ, etc." The poem's basis is Hebrews 9:13-14: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" In Hebrews 9, St. Paul first describes the Mosaic tabernacle, and then establishes Christ as the High Priest who was only able to enter the tabernacle "not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:7, KJV). The passage on which Med. 2.26 is based asks how little the blood of animal sacrifices means when compared to the redeeming blood of Christ.

Taylor's poem begins much like Med. 1.40, with a detailed expression of the narrator's foulness. This meditation is one that could easily be used to describe the state of his unregenerate parishioners stated earlier; consequently, Taylor's unenviable task as a poet was to find words that sufficiently expressed the glory of God. While this is impossible unless one received divine inspiration, it was certainly possible for the narrator to describe the sin that moved through his body like a disease and rendered him spiritually weak. Although the Puritans were familiar with disease – upon their arrival in the New World they were exposed to unfamiliar diseases. Leprosy, well-known in Europe and depicted in the Bible as one of God's most dreaded punishments, furnished the Westfield poet with ample material to scare the unregenerate straight. The use of such horrific descriptions of decaying flesh to describe the effects of sin on the soul certainly

⁷ See also Meditations 1.18, 1.19, 1.31, 1.45, 1.46, 2.3, 2.34, 2.67[B], 2.75, and 2.77 for additional references to scatological and barnyard imagery.

would have resonated with Taylor's parishioners. Leprosy is also an effective condition to use to describe how sin afflicts the body and soul because Puritan readers had encountered the disease in their readings of the Bible. Lepers were traditionally outcasts in society and were considered to be cursed by God. The leprosy image in Med. 2.26, then, is more than appropriate to describe the state of a sinner, who believes his physical condition mirrors his reprobate soul.

The disease imagery serves to illustrate how closely connected the spiritual is with the physical. Taylor did not choose leprosy for poetic aesthetics – its physiological symptoms, with which individuals during his time were familiar, were too gruesome to be stylistically beautiful in any way. Whereas normal flesh should appear smooth and hydrated, the skin of lepers bubbled up with lumpy sores. The disease also often left its victim immobile, as it caused severe numbness and nerve damage (“Leprosy Overview”). The physiological manifestations of leprosy supplied Taylor with effective descriptions of the narrator's flesh. The unconverted individual is likened to a leper in that he is an outcast of the visible church, as without a public confession of a creditable conversion experience, the believer could not be a full member of the Church or partake in the Lord's Supper. This is made clear in Med. 2.26, in which the narrator asks, “I am not so: but fowle: What shall I doe/Shall thy Church Doors be shut, and shut out on mee/Shall not Church fellowship my portion bee?” (2.26.10-12). However, this hopelessness in attaining church membership does not only apply to the physical church that appeared on Earth. Instead, his perception of his sinfulness also made him believe he is an outcast among the Elect and therefore, eternally barred from membership in the invisible church reserved for the saved. While Taylor and Thomas Hooker would have argued that this honest reflection of one's spiritual state is a sign that the believer has entered the conversion pathway, the believer's backwards reasoning concluded that salvation was inaccessible to him. Therefore, Taylor, mindful of this

trap, draws upon the saving power of Christ's blood in Hebrews 9 to show his congregation that entrance to both churches can, in fact, be gained through the blood of Christ; that is, through the Eucharist and ultimately, through justification. Prior to reaching this point of assurance, though, the believer must first leave behind his fear, shame, and contrition that keep him marooned in the initial stage of conversion. Taylor provides this progression for his narrator, whose soul is too filthy to be purified by the ashes of a red heifer (a young cow). Instead, he requires the strength of Christ's blood to wash away his sin and enter the visible and invisible churches, as is supported by Hebrews 9.

Taylor's comparison of the sinful narrator to a leper provides a depth of knowledge regarding the impact of self-examination and self-vilification on one's soul that can take place during a believer's entry into the conversion pathway. The image of leprosy is only one of many disease images that Taylor utilizes in his meditations to describe the low spiritual state of the sinner.⁸ Despite the hopelessness that came with a Puritan's lack of assurance of his salvation, Taylor provides hope for redemption by reminding his parishioners that recognition of their diseased conditions is necessary, but also dangerous, if they cannot grasp that Christ's offer of grace is readily accessible if one seeks it. By doing so, Taylor was able to "minister effectively to doubting souls plagued by the self-destructive disease of scrupulous melancholy" (Gatta 1).

4 CONCLUSION

It was Taylor's belief that there is something divine in the poetic art, as there exists a "congruity of the human with the divine mind" if the believer has cleansed himself of sin (Grabo 56). Therefore, as a converted believer, Taylor wrote more than two hundred "Preparatory Meditations" in his attempt to capture the glory and character of God. No doubt, Taylor's

⁸ See also Meditations 1.47, 2.3, 2.14, 2.27, 2.67[B], and 2.69 for additional examples of disease imagery.

meditations pose more than a mere challenge to modern readers unfamiliar with his peculiar brand of preparational theology. The result of Taylor's attempts is a collection of abstract images that attempt to describe the failings of believers, as they fall short of God's presumed expectations. Images of rust, frozenness, excrements, barnyard dunghills, and loathsome diseases dominate Taylor's "Preparatory Meditations," as they effectively describe the manner in which sin corrupts and deforms the soul, thereby immobilizing unbelievers in contrition. The guilt and shame associated with this step of the conversion pathway often hindered these individuals from trusting that salvation was within their reach. Bouts of melancholy, characterized by fear and despondency, as well as lethargic indifference were phenomena common enough in the well-shriven congregations of Puritan New England. However, Taylor employs his images not to crush, but to save his congregation from their spiritual sluggishness by offering the only means by which the rust of their souls could be filed away, their frozen hearts be melted, and their sullied souls cleansed.

The images discussed in this paper only represent a handful of the poetic devices in Taylor's arsenal, all of which are used to describe the spiritual state of the sinful narrator. It is unfortunate that little if any work has been done to examine Taylor's works for his therapeutic efforts redress the melancholic apathy among many of his congregants. Taylor's "Preparatory Meditations" provide valuable insight into the Puritan conscience before the turmoil of the Great Awakening would roust them from their spiritual stagnancy. Moreover, further studies of Taylor's dominant images describing the pitfalls of the Puritan *ordo salutis* seem called for to document just how deeply his poems are informed by his knowledge of religious melancholia.

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