

THOMAS H. JOHNSON

The Poetical Works of Edward Taylor



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THE POETICAL WORKS OF
EDWARD TAYLOR

THE
POETICAL
WORKS
OF
EDWARD
TAYLOR

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

THOMAS H. JOHNSON

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FOREWORD TO THE PAPERBACK EDITION

When this volume first appeared, Taylor was virtually unknown. In the intervening years he has taken rank as America's most distinguished poet of the colonial period, and no anthology of American literature fails to represent him. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that the twentieth-century reassessment of Puritanism, especially in those aspects which reveal the Puritan's feeling for beauty in his hungry search for Heaven, has been given impetus by the appearance of Taylor's poetry.

Taylor designated the verses he composed before his approach to the Lord's Supper *Preparatory Meditations*. On the same manuscript his grandson Ezra Stiles preceded that title with *Sacramental Meditations*. This reprinting continues to use the Stiles' redaction.

T.H.J.

10 November 1965

Lawrenceville, New Jersey

FOREWORD

IT DOES not seem necessary to offer a defense for presenting selections from the "Poetical Works" of Edward Taylor. The verses themselves of this hitherto unknown colonial American poet have merit enough to carry the volume. The sequence of *Gods Determinations* is a well sustained unit, and thus is published entire. The five short poems are unusual prosodic examples, unlike any other verse written by Taylor's New England contemporaries. Some selection from among the two hundred and seventeen *Sacramental Meditations* became necessary, lest the volume be swollen beyond all reasonable bounds. The thirty-two that are chosen seem to be among the best, and adequately represent the quality of all. They have been picked with an eye to displaying the essential nature of Taylor's thought and expression. Of the remaining *poemata*, none seemed of sufficient importance to merit inclusion.

In preparing the text from manuscript, the first consideration has been given to such transcription as accurately represents what Taylor wrote. Spelling, capitalization, and line-spacings follow Taylor exactly, and the few deviations that have been made are recorded in the notes. Intimate acquaintance with Taylor's handwriting has only served to increase the doubt regarding his use of capital "s"; it merges so imperceptibly into the small that some discretion has been necessary. The reader might find grounds for arguing that every "s" used is a capital.

At the same time, no useful purpose can be served by transcribing manuscript peculiarities that are merely "quaint" to the modern eye or ear, and really no part of any "flavor" that Taylor intended. To avoid them therefore, the following changes have been consistently adopted. All manuscript abbreviations have been expanded: *ye* becomes *the*; *ym*, *them*; *ſ*, *and*; *thō*, *though*; *ñ*, *mm*; *wch*, *which*; *chh*, *church*; etc. The long "s" is shortened; the double "f," intended as a capital, is capitalized; and the modern equivalents for the initial "v" meaning "u," or the internal "u" meaning "v," have been uniformly adopted. In two or three instances quotation marks, never used by Taylor, have been added to avoid confusion. In one respect only has liberty been taken, and that very sparingly. Seventeenth-century punctuation differs so markedly from present day usage that

the modern reader is sometimes confused. Taylor, for instance, invariably separated by commas such word pairs as "tall and short," "here and there." The comma for such pairs has not been retained in the printed text. But wherever his thought is clear, or wherever the punctuation or its absence produces an emphasis that may have been intended, no change is made. On the whole, Taylor punctuated carefully, and the changes are confined to obvious needs.

It would have been impossible to publish Taylor's poetry without the gracious permission of Mr. Andrew Keogh, formerly librarian of Yale University, and the cordial aid of the library staff. Lewis S. Gannett, Esquire, of New York City, entrusted to the editor the manuscripts of Taylor that have come into his possession by lineal descent, and Mr. Harold T. Dougherty, librarian of the Westfield Athenaeum, most willingly made available the Taylor manuscripts deposited in the Westfield library. Without such liberality, certain useful data must necessarily have gone unnoticed. The task of establishing such scant biographical information as can be collected would have been impossible without the ready cooperation of Taylor's descendants, who have uniformly aided by volunteering their help. No portrait of Taylor is known to exist, nor is it likely that one was ever made.

Dr. Cyril C. Richardson of Union Theological Seminary obligingly read the portions of the introduction and appendices which attempt to illuminate the theological terms used by Taylor. Professor Stanley T. Williams most generously consented to read the manuscript, and his excellent suggestions clarified several points. The editor's debt to Professor Donald F. Cameron and Dr. Allan V. Heely is one that cannot easily be repaid. Their learning and sound good sense preserved him from innumerable errors of fact and procedure. To Professor Austin Warren and Professor Perry Miller the indebtedness is immense. They have been in touch with the undertaking from the first, and their scholarship, wisdom, and taste have supplied many a deficiency which would otherwise have been glaringly apparent.

T. H. J.

5 February 1939

Lawrenceville, New Jersey

EDWARD TAYLOR

IT SEEMS probable that had the poetry of Edward Taylor been published during his lifetime, he would long since have taken a place among the major figures of colonial American literature. It is startling at so late a period to run upon him. Edward Taylor was an orthodox Puritan minister, who lived nearly sixty years in the frontier village of Westfield, Massachusetts, writing poetry until 1725 in the mannered style of the pre-restoration sacred poets. Though no imitator, he was really in the tradition of Donne and the Anglo-Catholic conceitists. His sole inspiration was a glowing, passionate love for Christ, expressed in terms of his own unworthiness and wistful yearning. However much the substance of his imagination was erected within the frame of a special theology, his vitality as a prosodist and his evident delight in tone and color indicate how thoroughly he enjoyed poetry as an art. It is questionable, indeed, whether the depth of his poetic imagination and the vigor of his inventive fancy were equaled in verse by any of his countrymen until the nineteenth century. Only the fact that he "gave orders that his heirs should never publish any of his writings"¹ can account for the obscurity into which his verses were consigned. The injunction happily is no longer in effect, and the "Poetical Works" can now be examined.²

Little is to be discovered about Taylor from any published record, yet there must have been qualities especially winning in his nature, if we may judge by the welcome which he received from discerning gentlemen when he disembarked at Boston, early in July, 1668. The first day or two after his passage from England, his diary records, he spent as guest of Increase Mather, even at that early date one of the leading ministers of the town, and himself but recently returned from a sojourn abroad. Taylor had come to him with letters of introduction, to be sure, but had come as a youth of twenty-two or twenty-three, with no evident background of position or accomplishment. The young man must very soon have become an intimate of the Mather family, for years later, when Taylor wrote an elegy on the death of Increase,³ he recalled how

Nigh Sixty years ago I wept in verse
When on my Shoulders lay thy Fathers herse.

The gracious reception of the Mathers gave Taylor breathing space, and doubtless helped him along. Very shortly, with more letters, he presented his duties to John Hull, the mint-master and the wealthiest New Englander of his day. Hull warmed to the personable exile, for he would not hear of Taylor's departure for a full week. It seems to have been in the hope of graduating from college and entering the ministry that the ardent young Congregationalist had left England, at that time a country which did not favor gentlemen of quick parts who vigorously advocated civil and religious liberty. But the Bay colonists were glad to receive him, and his aspirations were probably encouraged by Mather and Hull, for on the fourteenth Taylor journeyed to Cambridge, and called upon the president of Harvard. Mr. Chauncy interviewed him, and insisted upon his spending the night. Taylor stayed, sharing a chamber with the President's son Elnathan. The conference with President Chauncy terminated satisfactorily, for Taylor was immediately admitted to the class of 1671. He was thus closely associated with Increase Mather's nephew Samuel, and with one who shortly became his good friend and roommate, Samuel Sewall. Years later, in looking back upon his friendship with Taylor, Sewall recalled that "He and I were Chamber fellows and Bed-fellows in Harvard-College Two years: He being admitted into the College, drew me thither."¹ Clearly Taylor had that within, which captivated those who came to know him.

No available sources give an adequate picture of the Taylor family. Edward Taylor's diary, kept during the tedious six-weeks' voyage, mentions a brother Richard whom he left in England. In 1691, by the death of a sister's only child, William Arms, he inherited land in Virginia,² but no other clues appear. He was born in Coventry, or perhaps in the hamlet of Sketchley, not far away in the neighboring county of Leicestershire. Quite evidently the family were dissenters, and Ezra Stiles, Taylor's grandson, had it on family tradition that his grandfather was determined to leave England, after the persecutions of 1662, for liberty of conscience. He had delayed his departure for some reason not stated, teaching school at Bagworth, and thus when he entered Harvard he was two or three years older than any of his ten classmates.

Taylor's undergraduate life was passed uneventfully. For two of the three and a half years during his residence he served as student butler, an office which devolved upon a sober, responsible under-

graduate, usually somewhat older than his classmates. In May of his senior year he was one of four chosen to declaim in the College Hall before the President and fellows.¹ The youthful poetaster chose to praise the superiority of English over Hebrew and the classic languages, but he had not then developed the imaginative apprehension of form and color which he later displays. Instead, he piled conceits together with labored ingenuity.

Let English then to finde its Worth be presst
Unto the touch of Generalls Speeches test.
Speech is the Chrystall Chariot where the minde
In progress rides, Cart rutting of the Winde:
Whose Coachman drives Coach and Coach horses there
Rattling along the Mouth in at the eare. . . .

One hopes that the aged President Chauncy listened to the thirty-minute declamation with kindly forbearance!

At the time of Taylor's graduation, the frontier settlement of Westfield, lying some hundred miles southwest of Boston on the other side of the Connecticut River, sent a call to Harvard for a promising young minister: the twelve or fifteen church members wished to organize under their own pastor. Westfield was less isolated than its scant population would indicate, for it lay on the northern border of Connecticut, and was near other well settled communities. Taylor seems to have been the only member of the graduating class who was pressed to accept the offer. He decided to do so, and set out for Westfield, a young bachelor, early in December, 1671. Though his ordination was delayed eight years by King Philip's War, the town voted at the end of the first year to settle him.² Having thus finally established himself, Taylor next looked about for a suitable wife, and his choice fell upon Elizabeth Fitch, a daughter of the pastor in Norwich, Connecticut. Of the seven children born to them between 1675 and 1688, none outlived their father. Elizabeth died just a year after the birth of her last child. In 1692, Taylor married a daughter of the Hon. Samuel Wyllys of Hartford, who survived her husband by a few months. All six children of this marriage lived to maturity and established families of their own, though only one son, born of this second marriage, lived to perpetuate the family name.

The afflictions that beset the minister's household were perhaps

no more severe than those which visited any seventeenth-century family, where childbirth fever claimed many mothers, and the scourge of smallpox and wasting terrors of consumption were dread threats. One can imagine the dismay which gripped Sewall when he learned, probably from the captain of a trading vessel, of the death of young James Taylor, the twenty-two year old son of his close friend. On him fell the task of breaking the news to the father. The young man had gone to the West Indies late in the year 1700 to sell horses shipped from Boston. Sewall softened the blow with what sympathy he could give. He wrote Taylor that James, having arrived at Barbados on the eighteenth of January, 1701, fell sick of a fever, died within a week, and was buried on the island. "My wife and I more than sympathize with you, the Loss is partly our own."¹ As one reads Taylor's poem "On Wedlock and the Death of Children," written some years before, with its yearning love for the broken "branches" already taken from him, and its willing surrender of them to Christ, one knows what this later blow must have cost him. But nothing represents the staunchness of his character better than the gallant verses which he penned on the day of his wife's death.² Their restraint is ennobled by the complete assurance of her salvation, and his own Christian hope of reunion.

Lord, arke my Soule safe in thyselpe, whereby
I and my Life again may joyned bee.

The Meditation is fired with a delicate animation entirely lacking in the formal elegy which he composed a few days later to commemorate the passing of this thirty-eight year old wife, who had died "at night about two hours after Sun setting."³ In none of his poems is there a hint of bitterness over his losses. The serenity of his faith was complete.

Taylor lived a life of quiet usefulness in Westfield for fifty-eight years, serving both as pastor and physician to his flock. It was an "Angelical Conjunction," as Cotton Mather had once termed it,⁴ practiced by many colonial ministers in the early period of the New England settlements. There were the annual ministers' meetings to attend, now in one town, now in another, and an occasional horse-back trip to a Harvard commencement. In 1720, when Taylor was approaching seventy-five, his alma mater conferred a master's degree upon him. Beyond the record of such events, very few contem-

porary glimpses have been handed down to enliven the portrait of the man. His grandson Stiles was too young to remember the aged gentleman who passed quietly away in 1729, "entirely enfeebled, . . . longing and waiting for his Dismission."¹ Yet Stiles of course knew about him, and set down what he had heard: that his grandfather had been "A man of small stature but firm: of quick Passions—yet serious and grave."² Indeed, the characterization was apt, and Sewall illuminates Taylor's persuasiveness with one revealing flash: "I have heard him preach a Sermon at the Old South [Church] upon short warning which as the phrase in England is, might have been preached at Paul's Cross."³

During the last three years of his life Taylor was assisted in his pastoral duties by the Reverend Mr. Nehemiah Bull, a young graduate of Yale, who succeeded him as minister; it was he no doubt who wrote the obituary that appeared with a Westfield date-line in the *Boston News-Letter* of August 14, 1729. By will Taylor left a library of some two hundred volumes, which for the most part went to Stiles. The small personal estate of a few hundred pounds must have been soon disbursed, for out of it, Stiles says, "Uncle Eldad [Taylor's only surviving son] paid £700 Debts" contracted by Taylor: "most[ly] at Boston for Daughters Setting out."⁴ It is not surprising. There were four of them, all married between 1720 and 1722, to coming young ministers. The tombstone marking his grave is still preserved in the old Westfield burying ground, recalling that the "Aged, Venerable, Learned, & Pious Pastor . . . Serued God and his Generation Faithfully for Many Years."

HIS POETRY

ALL OF Taylor's verses are bound between the covers of a four-hundred-page manuscript volume. Aside from a few conventional *threnodia* and a half dozen short lyrics, the "Poetical Works" comprises but two general groups of any consequence: *Gods Determinations* and the *Sacramental Meditations*, both shortly to be discussed. Surveying the poetry as a whole, one is struck by Taylor's inventiveness. He plays upon the language as if it were an instrument, and the boldness of his figures allies him with the poets of the late Elizabethan period, rather than with those of his own day. Even in his choice of unusual metrical patterns he adheres to earlier fashions. He secures an effective variety in the closely knit sequences of *Gods Determinations* by using twelve metrical forms, some of them "Pindarics" without precise counterpart; and only one, the decasyllabic couplet, at all commonly found in English poetry. His six-line iambic pentameter stanza riming ababcc in the *Meditations* has the advantage of supplying a leisurely vehicle for the narrative passages, while at the same time conveying a noble serenity to the lyric outbursts.

The ardor of Taylor's love for Christ is displayed best in the songs which conclude *Gods Determinations* and in the *Meditations*, but the reader need not search afield for analogues among the verses of the seventeenth-century conceitists to explain Taylor's choice of subject. It is true that the manner and devices of his poems especially suggest the example of George Herbert, the Anglican poet beloved so much by Puritans. Five of the unusual metrical patterns of *Gods Determinations* exactly correspond to forms in Herbert's *The Temple*. There are, too, the same rhetorical devices of question, refrain, apostrophe, and direct address. There is an observable correspondence in the length of their songs, and it is further apparent that Taylor believes with Herbert that nothing is so mean but that it can be ennobled by figures from common life, from medical and chemical knowledge. He likewise draws heavily upon metaphors of taste, smell, color, and sound. But there are qualities as well in the verse which ally him more closely with Richard Crashaw than with Herbert: the moods of seraphic exaltation, in which the language of am-

orous poetry is adapted to religious ends; the prodigality of fanciful tropes; and the complete, almost physical, abandonment to Christ. Yet clearly Taylor does not merely imitate. He was possibly not conscious of the similarities, and in fact is unlikely to have read a line of Crashaw's poetry.

The spirit which animated Taylor's devotion was fully as central in Puritan as in Anglican or Catholic thought. Within Puritanism itself, though not often displayed in verse, is to be discovered all the spiritual fervor that found utterance in his poems. His intense love for Christ supplied the matter; delight in conceits, somewhat belated in point of time, determined the manner. Taylor's debt to other poets, if debt there be, is less obvious. One thinks naturally of Quarles, the laureate among Puritans, whose *Emblemes*, starting from some text of Scripture on which he finds a meditation, may well have furnished a model for the *Sacramental Meditations*.¹ One would like to know whether a copy of Sir John Davies's *Nosce Teipsum* may not have passed through Taylor's hands. Davies's combination of poetry and metaphysics, his discourses on the longing, grief, and destiny of the soul, somewhat parallel *Gods Determinations* and certain of the *Meditations*. No suggestion of the influence of Wither, so often the Puritan's inspiration, is anywhere apparent. On the whole, one's impression is that Taylor struck out for himself. The wealth of colloquial, indigenous terms, adopted from the language of everyday life, often recalled from the technical phrases used by the weavers of his native Warwickshire, produces an effect, when combined with the vigor of his thought and the sensitivity of his ear, that leaves no doubt of his originality. Taylor's delight in the sound and shading of language, a further Elizabethan characteristic, is emphasized by his word coinages: there seems to be no recorded example to match substantives like "squitchen," "glore," "reech," "pillard," and "hone."²

The *Meditations* lack the stanzaic variety of *Gods Determinations* in that they uniformly employ the six-line stanza. Their diction, like that found in the lines of the "conceitists" generally, is partly learned and Latinic, partly homely. The lines are concentrated and angular, sometimes rough: an inevitable tendency of verse called metaphysical, wherein the conceit is inspired by a philosophical concept. But at his best Taylor achieves a striking unity of design by developing one figure. He is always the object through

which Christ transmits his influence, now as a garden exhaling odor, or as a pipe conveying liquid, or a loom whereon the spirit weaves, or a mint in which God coins his image. By thus developing one single figure in a poem, Taylor avoids a fault to which almost all sacred poets are commonly prone, that is, of strewing metaphors throughout their verses with prodigal abandon. For instance, the figure of Christ as attorney pleading man's cause *sub forma pauperis* before God, the Judge, in Meditation Thirty-Eight, is carefully built up without extraneous imagery. The legal phraseology, so often seized upon to express the covenant idea, is consistently employed and brought to a climax without wrenched or tortured figures. Indeed, it becomes plain by 1685 that Taylor has enriched and deepened his concept of the poetic art to the point where thereafter his *Meditations* are often firmer and sometimes more brilliant statements of his theological position.

Puritans were especially eager to find "types," that is, analogies or correspondent realities between events or persons in the Old Testament and in the New. By such means did they feel that God's word was illuminated and man's emotions stirred. Christ, the antitype, was foreshadowed by whatever prophetic similitude the reader might discover. Thus in a few of the *Meditations* Taylor narrates Old Testament stories as "types" of Christ's advent and suffering, and at moments is able to create striking effects by the speed and concreteness of his narrative summary.¹

Jonas did type this thing, who ran away
From God and, shipt for Tarsus, fell asleep.
A Storm lies on the Ship: the Seamen they
Bestir their Stumps, and at wits end do weep:
'Wake, Jonas:' who saith, 'Heave me over deck;
The Storm will Cease then; all lies on my neck.'

Occasionally Taylor composed elegies in frigid decasyllabics.² But such "effusions" are not stamped with the image of his personality. In his devotional poetry, on the other hand, he is thoroughly at home, and the fire of that devotion abates very little with the passage of years. His last meditation, written in 1725, when he was past eighty, is as ardent in its expression of love for God as his earlier verses. The text is from Canticles, 11: 5: "I am sick of love," and opens with the cry: "Heart sick, my Lord, heart sick of Love to thee."

The poet's taste had been formed early, perhaps in Harvard College, perhaps in England before he sailed for Massachusetts Bay; and it never changed. He lived remote from the sources of poetry and from the currents and fashions of a new era. Yet, in view of his exclusive devotion to religious poetry, it is doubtful whether new fashions would have interested him, even supposing he was aware of them. The inventory of his library does not furnish a real clue, for oddly enough it contains only one book of English poetry: Anne Bradstreet's verses. Perhaps the most teasing of all questions that remain unanswered is why he directed his heirs never to publish his verse. Of the many possible answers that suggest themselves, none seems more consistent with the glimpse one catches of his quiet life, his abiding love for his Redeemer, than such as argues a modesty and a sense of human unworthiness that was thorough-going. Taylor seems to have been free from the last infirmity of noble minds.

Of Taylor's contemporaries, one is in the habit of praising "The Tenth Muse" for her charming sincerity, the very local Benjamin Tompson for smoothness, and the well remembered Michael Wigglesworth for historic importance and an occasional stanza of power. The flaws of Taylor's metrics are plain; yet here was a provincial minister and physician who chose poetry the more radiantly to honor the free and boundless mercy of Christ; one who, loving poetry for its own sake, wrote in homely language with a delicacy and brilliance unparalleled in colonial letters.

GODS DETERMINATIONS

LOVE to Sweeten my mouth with a piece of *Calvin*, before I go to sleep," John Cotton is reported to have said,¹ and in his own day Cotton's remark would have caused no bewilderment. His taste for knotty problems of theology was not the curious whim of an obscure divine, and it is vain to hope for understanding of Puritan literature without realizing that Cotton's predilection was shared by nearly all seventeenth-century gentlemen. Indeed, as we know today, theological dogma, passing through the alembic of Milton's genius, is not unlovely; and in Taylor's verse sequence, dwelling as it does on election, reprobation, free grace, and church fellowship, Puritan doctrine can at times take on a radiant sweetness. Stripped of its specialized theology, Taylor's theme is one that has

taxed men's profoundest creative faculties through the ages. It is moral in the sense that all great stories essentially must be, whether written or sung or painted. It is the story of man's struggle to understand himself in his relation to God. The particular "fable" with which Dante or Milton, Wigglesworth or Taylor chooses to clothe a moral truth becomes tedious only when the art of its presentation or the spirit behind its conception fails to convince. Yet none of the four, the great together with the lesser, can be understood until the philosophic pattern is displayed. Taylor, as much as Milton, was writing to justify God's ways to man, but his emphasis is different. He did not purpose to give epic effects to Chaos, Heaven, and Hell, but to justify Covenant theology by way of poetic exposition in highly wrought imagery. The limits that he set himself brings *Gods Determinations* more closely into line with *The Day of Doom* than with *Paradise Lost*, though it is actually quite unlike either. But within the limits, Taylor displays a talent more akin to that of the greater poet for dressing old concepts in memorable language.

To the extent that *Gods Determinations* is written with speaking characters it resembles a morality play, but the speakers develop no dramatic individuality. In all, six are presented: Mercy, Justice, Christ, Satan, the Soul, and a Saint, that is, the "Pious Wise" man, who has experienced reversion to faith. In delineation Satan, even as with Milton, is the most nearly dimensional, though even the shadowy Satan achieves no dramatic entity. The thirty-five sequences have lyric, rather than dramatic, unity, and the seven paeans which conclude the poem move with splendid swiftness to a finish that raises the whole sequence far above mere versified expositions. The color and tone rarely sink into bathos. Taylor carries to his Saviour "wagon-loads" of love; Satan appears with "goggling eyes," inducing sinners as "Jayle Birds" to ride "pick-pack." The metaphoric extravagances seldom strain the reader's sense of the appropriate, and the imagery is drawn from the homely experiences of a pastor and physician; from the world which Taylor knew, not from literary conventions. It is in such characteristics that the charm of Taylor's individuality finds scope.

Gods Determinations opens with a "Preface" celebrating God as the Creator who molded the world, laid its cornerstone, spread its canopies, made its curtain rods, bowled the sun in a cosmic bowling-ally, and above the whole hung the stars as "twinckling Lanthorns."

Man was created, sinned, and thereby lost the world. In the short "Prologue" following, man, a "Crumb of Earth," will glorify this "Might Almighty," and Taylor, breathing a hope that his pen may move aright, invokes God's aid lest his "dull Phancy" stir, not mercy, but scorn. The story begins with a brief account of man's fall, and his consequent fear of divine retribution. Justice and Mercy, seeing the creature "Sculking on his face" fall to debate, in language couched in the legal phraseology so often adopted by Covenant theologians, over the question whether man deserves salvation. Mercy argues that

Though none are Sav'd that wickedness imbrace,
Yet none are Damn'd that have Inherent Grace.

He points out that Christ, as scapegoat, took upon himself the sins of mankind, purchasing for the creature His "milkwhite Robe of Lovely Righteousness." But the creature is still crippled by his fall. Mercy pities his infirmity, but realistically concludes that, though man has "broke his Legs, yet's Legs his Stilts must bee." The pity goes further still, for grace will mend the injury, yet man has blindly and foolishly rejected it. Mercy's gift is scorned:

But most he'l me abuse, I feare, for still
Some will have Farms to farm, some wives to wed:
Some beasts to buy; and I must waite their Will.
Though while they scrape their naile or scratch their head,
Nay, though with Cap in hand I Wooe them long,
They'l whistle out their Whistle e're they'l come.

Justice advises that the best way for man to achieve happiness is to obey the moral law, the Ten Commandments; for he can never win salvation on his own merits.

Whos'ever trust doth, to his golden deed
Doth rob a barren Garden for a Weed.

But Mercy's plea wins Justice over, for by the terms of the new covenant of grace God's mercy supersedes His justice. Man therefore is bound over to Mercy, who knows that salvation is promised by God to all who have faith in Christ, whose purchase procured man's pardon.

For Justice nothing to thy Charge can lay;
Thou hast Acquittance in thy surety.

The significance of the debate and its conclusion is lost on man, who peeps about "With Trembling joynts, and Quivering Lips," aware only of his lapsed estate, fearing the consequences of the compact which he broke.

Thus man hath lost his Freehold by his ill:
Now to his Land Lord tenent is at Will,
And must the Tenement keep in repare,
Whate're the ruins and the Charges are.

Crippled and footsore, mankind is invited by God to a "mighty sumptuous" repast, and for the journey thither "the Sinfull Sons of men" are provided a royal coach. But most of them regard the feast of graces spread before them as mere "Slobber Sawces." So froward are they in their dullness that they "hiss piety" and scant all graces. Mercy and Justice are angered into a pursuit of men, to bring them to the table by force, but the congregation divides into ranks and flees from God's presence. Soon captured, the "poor souls" sue for pardon, while Satan appears to taunt them. In their despair they address Christ for aid, and his reply cheers them, until Satan, who "Doth winnow them with all his wiles" charges them with apostasy, saying that no hope exists for men so steeped in villainy and sin. In extended debate between Satan and the Soul, both the inward and the outward man are accused of deadly sins. The Soul cries out in agony to Christ again, and is answered with lines that radiate a graciousness so real, so poignantly touching, that the reader cannot fail to experience with Taylor his devout emotion. The ecstasy of joy prompted by Christ's reply brings to an end the part of the poem dealing with the second rank: those who, seriously regenerate, have found salvation by faith.

At this point a third rebellious rank, who have progressed but a short way in their regeneration, come under Satan's lashing sophistry, and are moved to bewail their helplessness in a threnodial dialogue. But even though they fully anticipate eternal death, they look about once more to be comforted by their former champion Mercy, for "If dy we must, in mercy's arms wee'l dy." The Soul is now prepared to receive assistance from one who has truly experienced sanctification; one who is properly regenerate and knows how to sympathize with as well as instruct unregenerate man. In the person of such a "Pious Wise" one, or Saint,¹ the Soul finds

help, and with him enters into dialogue. The Saint knows how to resolve the doubts which the Soul raises.

But muster up your Sins, though more or few:
Grace hath an Edge to Cut their bonds atwo.

Satan, he explains, is impotent in the face of Christ's limitless grace. Even after we are reborn we tend to revert to our natural state, and such flaws as appear even in saints darken or stain the color of "that thrice Ennobled noble Gem," the Soul:

Are Flaws in Venice Glasses bad? What in
Bright Diamonds? What then in man is Sin?

But the grace working in us is the needlework of Providence, sometimes weather beaten, and never fully unrolled. It is therefore not to be judged now, when we would be able to see and understand so little of it. We know only that the grace within *does* work. Above all, the Saint reminds his listener, that

If in the golden Meshes of this Net,
(The Checkerwork of Providence) you're Caught,
And Carri'de hence to Heaven, never fret:
Your Barke shall to an Happy Bay be brought.

And finally, the Saint advises, lose yourself in contemplation of the happiness which is the end for which God designed his creature. Give over the questioning whether God cares for you.

Call not in Question whether he delights
In thee, but make him thy Delight.

It is at this point that the arguments for grace and faith and regeneration in terms of Covenant theology, neatly presented as they have been, give way to an art that raises the poem by a lyrical outburst into a place far beyond anything achieved by Americans until long after Taylor's day. The Soul is now convinced of its sin, the first step in regeneration, and moves rapidly through the stages toward glorification, that final state of felicity which can never be completed on earth. The last seven lyrics, each conceived in a different metrical pattern, animate religious doctrine with creative fire. Though they can stand as authentic lyrics by themselves, viewed as a climax to the whole sequence, their effect is symphonic. The awak-