Classic Poetry Series

Edward Taylor

- poems -

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Edward Taylor (1642 - June 29, 1729)

Edward Taylor was born in Leicestershire, England in 1642. He originally worked as a school teacher, but later left England for the United States. He studied divinity at Harvard and then became a minister in Massachusetts.

Early Life

The son of a non-Conformist yeoman farmer, Taylor was born in 1642 at Sketchley, Leicestershire, England. Following restoration of the monarchy and the Act of Uniformity under Charles II, which cost Taylor his teaching position, he emigrated in 1668 to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in America.

Early Days in America

He chronicled his Atlantic crossing and early years in America (from April 26, 1668, to July 5, 1671) in his now-published Diary. He was admitted to Harvard College as a second year student soon after arriving in America and upon graduation in 1671 became pastor and physician at Westfield, on the remote western frontier of Massachusetts, where he remained until his death.

Poetry

Taylor, a New England Puritan, worked as a minister for sixty years. During that time wrote a great deal of poetry and has become known as one of the best writers of the Puritan times. His poetry has a pious quality and emphasis is given to self examination, particularly in an individual's relations to God. His works were not published until 1939 - over two years after his death. One collection was edited by Donald E. Stanford who commented:

"Taylor seems to have been endowed with most of those qualities usually connoted by the word puritan. He was learned, grave, severe, stubborn, and stiff-necked. He was very, very pious. But his piety was sincere. It was fed by a long continuous spiritual experience arising, so he felt, from a mystical communion with Christ. The reality and depth of this experience is amply witnessed by his poetry."

A custom of Taylor's was to write a poem (or 'Meditation') before each Lord's Supper. Important themes in his work included: his adoption of the Biblical David as his model for the poet; the concept of poetry as an act/offering of ritual praise; distinctions between the godly and ungodly; God's power as Creator; and God's voice as that which speaks truly and which man's voice merely an echo at best.

Taylor's poems, in leather bindings of his own manufacture, survived him, but he had left instructions that his heirs should "never publish any of his writings," and the poems remained all but forgotten for more than 200 years. In 1937 Thomas H. Johnson discovered a 7000-page quarto manuscript of Taylor's poetry in the library of Yale University and published a selection from it in The New England Quarterly. The appearance of these poems, wrote Taylor's biographer Norman S. Grabo, "established [Taylor] almost at once and without quibble as not only America's finest colonial poet, but as one of the most striking writers in the whole range of American literature." His most important poems, the first sections of Preparatory Meditations (1682–1725) and God's Determinations Touching His Elect and the Elects Combat in Their Conversation and Coming up to God in Christ: Together with the Comfortable Effects Thereof (c. 1680), were published shortly after their discovery. His complete poems, however, were not published until 1960. He is the only major American poet to have written in the metaphysical style.

Family and Death

He was twice married, first to Elizabeth Fitch, by whom he had eight children, five of whom died in childhood, and at her death to Ruth Wyllys, who bore six more children. Taylor himself died on June 29, 1729.

Ebb and Flow

When first Thou on me, Lord, wroughtest Thy sweet print,
My heart was made Thy tinder-box,
My 'ffections were Thy tinder in't,
Where fell Thy sparks by drops.
Those holy sparks of heavenly fire that came
Did ever catch and often out would flame.

But now my heart is made Thy censer trim,
Full of Thy golden altar's fire,
To offer up sweet incense in
Unto Thyself entire:
I find my tinder scarce Thy sparks can feel
That drop from out Thy holy flint and steel.

Hence doubts out bud for fear Thy fire in me
'S a mocking ignis fatuus,
Or lest Thine altar's fire out be,
It's hid in ashes thus.
Yet when the bellows of Thy spirit blow
Away mine ashes, then Thy fire doth glow.

Edward Taylor

Huswifery

Make me, O Lord, Thy spinning-wheel complete.
Thy holy word my distaff make for me.
Make mine affections Thy swift flyers neat
And make my soul Thy holy spool to be.
My conversation make to be Thy reel
And reel thy yarn thereon spun of Thy wheel.

Make me Thy loom then, knit therein this twine:
And make Thy Holy Spirit, Lord, wind quills:
Then weave the web Thyself. Thy yarn is fine.
Thine ordinances make my fulling-mills.
Then dye the same in heavenly colors choice,
All pinked with varnished flowers of paradise.

Then clothe therewith mine understanding, will,
Affections, judgement, conscience, memory,
My words and actions, that their shine may fill
My ways with glory and Thee glorify.
Then mine apparel shall display before Ye
That I am clothed in holy robes for glory.

Edward Taylor

I Am The Living Bread: Meditation Eight: John 6:51

I kening through Astronomy Divine
The Worlds bright Battlement, wherein I spy
A Golden Path my Pensill cannot line,
From that bright Throne unto my Threshold ly.
And while my puzzled thoughts about it pore
I finde the Bread of Life in't at my doore.

When that this Bird of Paradise put in
This Wicker Cage (my Corps) to tweedle praise
Had peckt the Fruite forbad: and so did fling
Away its Food; and lost its golden dayes;
It fell into Celestiall Famine sore:
And never could attain a morsell more.

Alas! alas! Poore Bird, what wilt thou doe?
The Creatures field no food for Souls e're gave.
And if thou knock at Angells dores they show
An Empty Barrell: they no soul bread have.
Alas! Poore Bird, the Worlds White Loafe is done
And cannot yield thee here the smallest Crumb.

In this sad state, Gods Tender Bowells run
Out streams of Grace: And he to end all strife
The Purest Wheate in Heaven, his deare-dear Son
Grinds, and kneads up into this Bread of Life.
Which Bread of Life from Heaven down came and stands
Disht on thy Table up by Angells Hands.

Did God mould up this Bread in Heaven, and bake,
Which from his Table came, and to thine goeth?
Doth he bespeake thee thus, This Soule Bread take.
Come Eate thy fill of this thy Gods White Loafe?
Its Food too fine for Angells, yet come, take
And Eate thy fill. Its Heavens Sugar Cake.

What Grace is this knead in this Loafe? This thing
Souls are but petty things it to admire.
Yee Angells, help: This fill would to the brim
Heav'ns whelm'd-down Chrystall meele Bowle, yea and higher.
This Bread of Life dropt in thy mouth, doth Cry.
Eate, Eate me, Soul, and thou shalt never dy.

Edward Taylor

Meditation Sixty-Two

Second Series

Canticle 1: 12: While the king sitteth at his table,
my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

Oh! thou, my Lord, thou king of Saints, here mak'st
A royall Banquet, thine to entertain
With rich and royall fare, Celestial Cates,
And sittest at the Table rich of fame.
Am I bid to this Feast? Sure Angells stare,
Such Rugged looks, and Ragged robes I ware.

I'le surely com; Lord, fit mee for this feast:
Purge me with Palma Christi from my sin.
With Plastrum Gratiae Dei, or at least
Unguent Apostolorum healing bring.
Give me thy Sage and Savory: me dub
With Golden Rod, and with Saint Johns Wort good.

Root up my Henbain, Fawnbain, Divells bit,
My Dragons, Chokewort, Crosswort, Ragwort, vice:
And set my knot with Honeysuckles, stick
Rich Herb-a-Grace, and Grains of Paradise,
Angelica, yes, Sharons Rose the best,
And Herba Trinitatis in my breast.

Then let thy Sweetspike sweat its liquid Dew
Into my Crystall Viall, and there swim.
And, as thou at thy Table in Rich Shew
With royal Dainties, sweet discourse as King
Dost Welcome thine, My Spiknard with its smell
Shall vapour out perfumed Spirits Well./p>

Whether I at thy Table Guest do sit,
And feed my tast, or Wait, and fat mine Eye
And Eare with Sights and Sounds, Heart Raptures fit:
My Spicknard breaths its sweet perfumes with joy.
My heart thy Viall with this spicknard fill,
Perfumed praise to thee then breath it will.

Edward Taylor

Meditation Twenty

Philippians II: 9: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.

View, all ye eyes above, this sight which flings
Seraphick Phancies in Chill Raptures high:
A Turffe of Clay, and yet bright Glories King:
From dust to Glory Angell-like to fly.
A Mortall Clod immortaliz'd behold,
Flyes through the skies swifter than Angells could.

Upon the Wings he of the Winde rode in
His Bright Sedan, through all the Silver Skies,
And made the Azure Cloud, his Charriot, bring
Him to the Mountain of Celestiall joyes.
The Prince o' th' Aire durst not an Arrow spend,
While through his Realm his Charriot did ascend.

He did not in a Fiery Charriot's shine,
And Whirlewinde, like Elias upward goe.
But th'golden Ladders Jasper rounds did climbe
Unto the Heavens high from Earth below.
Each step had on a Golden Stepping Stone
Of Deity unto his very Throne.

Methinks I see Heavens sparklingl Courtiers fly,
In flakes of Glory down him to attend;
And heare Heart Cramping notes of Melody
Surround his Charriot as it did ascend:
Mixing their Musick, making e'vry strong
More to inravish, as they this tune sing.

God is Gone up with a triumphant shout:
The Lord with sounding Trumpets melodies:
Sing Praise, sing Praise, sing Praise, sing Praises out,
Unto our King sing praise seraphick-wise!
Lift up your Heads, ye lasting Doore, they sing,
And let the King of Glory Enter in.

Art thou ascended up on high, my Lord,
And must I be without thee here below?
Art thou the sweetest joy the Heavens afford?
Oh! that I with thee was! What shall I do?
Should I pluck Feathers from an Angells Wing,
They could not waft me up to thee my King.

Lend mee thy Wings, my Lord, I'st fly apace,
My Soules Arms stud with thy strong Quills, true Faith;
My Quills then Feather with thy Saving Grace,
My Wings will take the Winde thy Word displai'th.
Then I shall fly up to thy glorious Throne
With my strong Wings whose Feathers are thine own.

Edward Taylor

Preface to God's Determinations Touching His Elect

Infinity, when all things it beheld
In Nothing, and of Nothing all did build,
Upon what base was fixed the lath wherein
He turned this globe and rigalled it so trim?
Who blew the bellows of His furnace vast?
Or held the mold wherein the world was cast?
Who laid its cornerstone? Or whose command?
Where stand the pillars upon which it stands?
Who laced and filleted the earth so fine,
With rivers like green ribbons smaragdine?
Who made the seas its selvedge and it locks
Like a quilt ball within a silver box?
Who spread its canopy? Or curtains spun?
Who in this bowling alley bowled the sun?
Who made it always when it rises set,
To go at once both down, and up to get?
Who the curtain rods made for this tapestry?
Who hung the twinkling lanterns in the sky?
Who? Who did this? Or who is He? Why, know
It's only Might Almighty this did do.
His hand hath made this noble work which stands,
His glorious handiwork not made by hands.
Who spake all things from nothing; and with ease.
Can speak all things to nothing, if He please.
Whose little finger at His pleasure can
Out mete ten thousand worlds with half a span:
Whose Might Almighty can by half a looks
Root up the rocks and rock the hills by the roots.
Can take this mighty world up in His hand,
And shake it like a squitchen or a wand.
Whose single frown will make the heavens shake
Like as an aspen-leaf the wind makes quake.
Oh, what a might is this Whose single frown
Doth shake the world as it would shake it down?
Which All on Nothing fet, from Nothing, All:
Hath All on Nothing set, lts Nothing fall.
Gave All to nothing-man indeed, whereby
Through nothing-man all might him glorify.
In Nothing then embossed the brightest gem
More precious than all preciousness in them.
But nothing-man did throw down all by sin:
And darkened that lightsome gem in him.
That now his brightest diamond is grown
Darker by far than any coal-pit stone.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - First Series: 1

What love is this of Thine that cannot be
In Thine infinity, O Lord, confined,
Unless it in Thy very person see
Infinity and finity conjoined?
What hath Thy godhead, as not satisfied,
Married our manhood, making it its bride?

Oh matchless love! Filling heaven to the brim!
O'errunning it: all running o'er beside
This world! Nay, overflowing hell; wherein
For Thine elect there rose a mighty tide!
That there our veins might through Thy person bleed,
To quench those flames that else would on us feed.

Oh! that Thy love might overflow my heart!
To fire the same with love: for love I would.
But oh! my straitened breast! my lifeless spark!
My fireless flame! What chilly love, and cold?
In measure small! In manner chilly! See.
Lord, blow the coal: Thy love enflame in me.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - First Series: 29

(John. 20:17. My Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God)

My shattered fancy stole away from me
(Wits run a-wooling over Eden's park)
And in God's garden saw a golden tree,
Whose heart was all divine, and gold its bark.
Whose glorious limbs and fruitful branches strong
With saints and angels bright are richly hung.

Thou! Thou! my dear dear Lord, art this rich tree,
The tree of life within God's Paradise.
I am a withered twig, dried fit to be
A chat cast in Thy fire, writh off by vice.
Yet if Thy milk-white gracious hand will take me
And graft me in this golden stock, Thou'lt make me.

Thou'lt make me then its fruit, and branch to spring,
And though a nipping east wind blow, and all
Hell's nymphs with spite their dog's sticks therat ding
To dash the graft off, and its fruits to fall,
Yet I shall stand Thy graft, and fruits that are
Fruits of the tree of life Thy graft shall bear.

I being graft in Thee, there up do stand
In us relations all that mutual are.
I am Thy patient, pupil, servant, and
Thy sister, mother, dove, spouse, son, and heir.
Thou art my priest, physician, prophet, king,
Lord, brother, bridegroom, father, everything.

I being graft in Thee I am grafted here
Into Thy family, and kindred claim
To all in heaven, God, saints, and angels there.
I Thy relations my relations name.
Thy father's mine, Thy God my God, and I
With saints and angels draw affinity.

My Lord, what is it that Thou dost bestow?
The praise on this account fills up, and throngs
Eternity brimful, doth overflow
The heavens vast with rich angelic songs.
How should I blush? How tremble at this thing,
Not having yet my gam-ut learned to sing.

But, Lord, as burnished sunbeams forth out fly,
Let angel-shine forth in my life outflame,
That I may grace Thy graceful family
And not to Thy relations be a shame.
Make me Thy graft, be Thou my golden stock.
Thy glory then I'll make my fruits and crop.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - First Series: 32

(I. Corinthians 3:22. Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas)

Thy grace, dear Lord, 's my golden wrack, I find,
Screwing my fancy into ragged rhymes,
Tuning Thy praises in my feeble mind
Until I come to strike them on my chimes.
Were I an angel bright, and borrow could
King David's harp, I would them play on gold.

But plunged I am, my mind is puzzled,
When I would spin my fancy thus unspun,
In finest twine of praise I'm muzzled,
My tazzled thoughts twirled into snick-snarls run.
Thy grace, my Lord, is such a glorious thing,
It doth confound me when I would it sing.

Eternal love an object mean did smite,
Which by the prince of darkness was beguiled,
That from this love it ran and swelled with spite,
And in the way with filth was all defiled,
Yet must be reconciled, cleansed, and begraced,
Or from the fruits of God's first love displaced.

Then grace, my Lord, wrought in Thy heart a vent,
Thy soft soft hand to this hard work did go,
And to the milk-white throne of justice went
And entered bond that grace might overflow.
Hence did Thy person t my nature tie
And bleed through human veins to satisfy.

Oh! grace, grace, grace! This wealthy grace doth lay
Her golden channels from Thy father's throne,
Into our earthen pitchers to convey
Heaven's aqua vitae to s for our own.
O! Let Thy golden gutters run into
My cup this liquor till it overflow.

Thine ordinances, grace's wine-fats where
Thy spirit walks, and grace's runs do lie,
And angels waiting stand with holy cheer
From grace's conduit head, with all supply.
These vessels full of grace are, and the bowls
In which their taps do run are precious souls.

Thou to the cups dost say (that catch this wine)
'This liquor, golden pipes, and wine-fats plain,
Whether Paul, Apollos, Cephas, all are thine.'
Oh golden word! Lord, speak it o'er again.
Lord, speak it home to me, say these are mine.
My bells shall then Thy praises bravely chime.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - First Series: 38

(I John 2:1. An Advocate with the Father)

Oh! What a thing is man? Lord, who am I?
That Thou shouldest give him law (Oh! golden line)
To regulate his thoughts, words, life thereby;
And judge him wilt thereby too in Thy time.
A court of justice Thou in heaven holdst
To try his case while he's here housed on mold.

How do Thy angels lay before Thine eye
My deeds both white and black I daily do?
How doth Thy court Thou pannel'st there them try?
But flesh complains: 'What right for this? Let's know.
For, right or wrong, I can't appear unto't.
And shall a sentence pass on such a suit?'

Soft; blemish not this golden bench, or place.
Here is no bribe, nor colorings to hide,
Nor pettifogger to befog the case,
But justice hath her glory here well tried.
Her spotless law all spotted cases tends;
Without respect or disrespect them ends.

God's judge himself; and Christ attorney is;
The Holy Ghost registerer is found.
Angels the serjeants are; all creatures kiss
The book, and do as evidences abound.
All cases pass according to pure law,
And in the sentence is no fret nor flaw.

What say'st, my soul? Here all thy deeds are tried.
Is Christ thy advocate to plead thy cause?
Art thou His client? Such shall never slide.
He never lost His case: He pleads such laws
As carry do the same, nor doth refuse
The vilest sinner's case that doth Him choose.

This is His honor, not dishonor: nay,
No habeas corpus gainst His clients came;
For all their fines His purse doth make down pay.
He non-suits Satan's suit or casts the same.
He'll plead thy case, and not accept a fee.
He'll plead
sub forma pauperis
for thee.

My case is bad. Lord, be my advocate.
My sin is red: I'm under God's arrest.
Thou hast the hint of pleading; plead my state.
Although it's bad, Thy plea will make it best.
If Thou wilt plead my case before the king,
I'll wagon-loads of love and glory bring.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - First Series: 39

(I John 2:1. If any Man Sin, We Have an Advocate)

My sin! My sin, my God, these cursed dregs,
Green, yellow, blue-streaked poison hellish, rank,
Bubs hatched in nature's nest on serpents' eggs,
Yelp, chirp, and cry; they set my soul a-cramp.
I frown, chide, strike, and fight them, mourn and cry
To conquer them, but cannot them destroy.

I cannot kill or coop them up: my curb
'S less than a snaffle in their mouth: my reins
They as a twine thread snap: by hell they're spurred:
And load my soul with swagging loads of pains.
Black imps, young devils, snap, bite, drag to bring
And pick me headlong hell's dread whirlpool in.

Lord, hold Thy hand: for handle me Thou mayst
In wrath: but oh, a twinkling ray of hope
Methinks I spy Thou graciously display'st.
There is an advocate: a door is ope.
Sin's poison swell my heart would till it burst,
Did not a hope hence creep in 't thus and nurse 't.

Joy, joy, God's son's the sinner's advocate,
Doth plead the sinner guiltless, and a saint.
But yet attornies' pleas spring from the state,
The case is in: if bad, it's bad in plaint.
My papers do contain no pleas that do
Secure me from, but knock me down to, woe.

I have no plea mine advocate to give:
What now? He'll anvil arguments great store
Out of His flesh and blood to make thee live.
O dear-bought arguments: good pleas therefore.
Nails made of heavenly steel, more choice than gold
Drove home, well-clenched, eternally will hold.

Oh! Dear-bought plea, dear Lord, what buy 't so dear?
What with Thy blood purchase Thy plea for me?
Take argument out of Thy grave t' appear
And plead my case with, me from guilt to free.
These maul both sin and devils, and amaze
Both saints and angels; wreathe their mouths with praise.

What shall I do, my Lord? What do, that I
May have Thee plead my case? I fee Thee will
With faith, repentance, and obediently
Thy service gainst Satanic sins fulfill.
I'll fight Thy fields while live I do, although
I should be hacked in pieces by Thy foe.

Make me Thy friend, Lord, be my surety: I

Will be Thy client, be my advocate:
My sins make Thine, Thy pleas make mine hereby.
Thou wilt me save, I will Thee celebrate.
Thou'lt kill my sins that cut my heart within:
And my rough feet shall Thy smooth praises sing.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - First Series: 6.

(Canticles 2:1. The Lily of the Valleys)

Am I Thy gold? Or purse, Lord, for Thy wealth;
Whether in mine or mint refined for Thee?
I'm counted so, but count me o'er Thyself,
Lest gold-washed face, and brass in heart I be.
I fear my touchstone touches when I try
Me, and my counted gold too overly.

Am I new-minted by Thy stamp indeed?
Mine eyes are dim; I cannot clearly see.
Be Thou my spectacles that I may read
Thine image do upon me stand,
I am a golden angel in Thy hand.

Lord, make my soul Thy plate: Thine image bright
Within the circle of the same enfoil.
And on its brims in golden letters write
Thy superscription in an holy style.
Then I shall be Thy money, Thou my hoard:
Let me Thy angel be, be Thou my Lord.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - Second Series: 12

(Ezekiel 37:24. David my Servant shall be their King)

Dull, dull indeed! What, shall it e'er be thus?
And why? Are not Thy promises, my Lord,
Rich, quick'ning things? How should my full cheeks blush
To find me thus? And those a lifeless word?
My heart is heedless: unconcerned hereat:
I find my spirits spiritless and flat.

Thou court'st mine eyes in sparkling colors bright,
Most bright indeed, and soul-enamouring,
With the most shining sun, whose beams did smite
Me with delightful smiles to make me spring.
Embellished knots of love assault my mind,
Which still is dull, as if this sun n'er shined.

David in all his gallantry now comes,
Bringing, to tend Thy shrine, his royal glory,
Rich prowess, prudence, victories, sweet songs,
And piety to pencil out Thy story;
To draw my heart to Thee in this brave shine
Of typic beams, most warm. But still I pine.

Shall not this lovely beauty, Lord, set out
In dazzling shining flashes 'fore mine eye,
Enchant my heart, love's golden mine, till 't spout
Out streams of love refin'd that on Thee lie?
Thy glory's great: Thou David's kingdom shalt
Enjoy for aye. I want and that's my fault.

Spare me, my Lord, spare me, I greatly pray,
Let me Thy gold pass through Thy fire until
Thy fire refine, and take my filth away.
That I may shine like gold, and have my fill
Of love for Thee; until my virginal
Chime out in changes sweet Thy praises shall.

Wipe off my rust, Lord, with Thy wisp me scour,
And make Thy beams perch on my strings their blaze.
My tunes clothe with Thy shine, and quavers pour
My cursing strings on, loaded with Thy praise.
My fervant love with music in her hand,
Shall then attend Thyself, and Thy command.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - Second Series: 143

(Canticles 6:10. Who is She that Looks Forth as the Morning,
Fair as the Moon, Clear as the Sun, Terrible as an Army with Banners)

Wonders amazed! Am I espoused to Thee?
My glorious Lord? What! Shall my bit of clay
Be made more bright than brightest angels be,
Look forth like as the morning every way?
And shall my lump of dirts wear such attire?
Rise up in heavenly ornaments thus, higher?

But still the wonders stand, shall I look like
The glorious morning that doth gild the sky
With golden beams that make all day grow light,
And view the world o'er with its golden eye?
And shall I rise like fair as the fair moon,
And bright as in the sun, that lights each room?

When we behold a piece of China clay
Formed up into a China dish complete,
All spiced o'er with gold sparks display
Their beauty all under a glass robe neat,
We gaze thereat, and wonder rise up will,
Wond'ring to see the Chinese art and skill.

How then should we and angels but admire
Thy skill and vessel Thou hast made bright thus
Out for to look like to the morning tire
That shineth out in all bright heavenly plush?
Whose golden beams all varnish o'er the skies
And gild our canopy in golden wise?

Wonders are nonplussed to behold Thy spouse
Look forth like to the morning whose sweet rays
Gild o'er our skies as with transparent boughs
Like orient gold of a celestial blaze.
Fair as the moon, bright as the sun, most clear,
Gilding with spiritual gold grace's bright sphere.

O blessed! Virgin spouse, shall thy sharp looks
Gild o'er the objects of thy shining eyes
Like fairest moon and brightest sun do th' fruits
Even as that make the morning shining rise?
The fairest moon in 'ts socket's candle-light
Unto the night and th' sun's day's candle bright.

Thy spouse's robes all made of spiritual silk
Of th' web wove in the heaven's bright loom indeed,
By the Holy Spirit's hand more white than milk
And fitted to attire thy soul that needs.
As th' morning bright's made of the sun's bright rays,
So th' Spirit's web thy soul's rich loom o'erlays.

Oh! Spouse adorned like the morning clear,
Chasing the night out from its hemisphere.
And like the fair face of the moon, whose cheer
Is very brave and like the bright sun 'pear,
Thus gloriously fitted in brightest story
Of grace espoused to be the king of glory.

And thus decked up methinks my ear attends
Kings', queens' and ladies' query, 'Who is this?
Enravished at her sight, how she out sends
Her looks like to the morning filled with bliss,
Fair as the moon, clear as the sun in 'ts costs
And terrible as is a bannered host?'

And all in grace's colors thus bedight,
That do transcend with glory's shine the sun
And moon for fairness and for glorious light,
As doth the sun a glowworm's shine outrun.
No wonder then and if the Bridesgroom say,
'Thou art all fair, my Love, Yea, everyway.'

May I a member be, my Lord, once made
Here of Thy spouse in truest sense, though it be
The meanest of all, a toe, or finger 'rayd,
I'st have enough bliss, espoused to Thee.
Then I in brightest glory ere 't be long
Will honor Thee singing that wedden song.

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - Second Series: 146

(Canticles 6:13. Return, oh Shulamite, Return, Return)

My dear, dear Lord, I know not what to say:
Speech is too coarse a web for me to clothe
My love to Thee in or it to array
Or make a mantle. Would'st Thou not such loathe?
Thy love to me's too great for me to shape
A vesture for the same at any rate.

When as Thy love doth touch my heart down-tossed
It tremblingly runs, seeking Thee its all,
And as a child when it his nurse hath lost
Runs seeking her, and after her doth call.
So when Thou hid'st from me, I seek and sigh.
Thou sayest, 'Return, return, Oh Shulamite.'

Rent out on use Thy love, Thy love I pray.
My love to Thee shall be Thy rent, and I
Thee use on use, int'rest on int'rest pay.
There's none extortion in such usury.

I'll pay Thee use on for 't and therefore
Thou shalt become the greatest usurer.
But yet the principal I'll ne'er restore.
The same is Thine and mine. We shall not jar.
And so this blessed usury shall be
Most profitable both to Thee and me.

And shouldst Thou hide Thy shining face most fair
Away from me. And in a sinking wise
My trembling beating heart brought nigh t' despair
Should cry to Thee and in a trembling guise,
Lord, quicken it. Drop in its ears delight,
Saying, 'Return, return, my Shulamite.'

Edward Taylor

Preparatory Meditations - Second Series: 7

(Psalms 105:17. He sent a Man before Them, even Joseph, who was Sold, etc.)

All dull, my Lord, my spirits flat, and dead,
All water-soaked and sapless to the skin.
Oh! Screw me up and make my spirit's bed
Thy quickening virtue, for my ink is dim,
My pencil blunt. Doth Joseph type out Thee?
Heralds of angels sing out, 'Bow the knee.'

Is Joseph's glorious shine a type of Thee?
How bright art Thou? He envied was as well.
And so was Thou. He's stripped and picked, poor he,
Into the pit. And so was Thou. They shell
Thee of Thy kernel. He by Judah's sold
For twenty bits; thirty for Thee he'd told.

Joseph was tempted by his mistress vile.
Thou by the devil, but both shame the foe.
Joseph was cast into the jail awhile.
And so was Thou. Sweet apples mellow so.
Joseph did from his jail to glory run.
Thou from death's pallet rose like morning sun.

Joseph lays in against the famine, and
Thou dost prepare the bread of life for Thine,
He bought with corn for Pharaoh th' men and land.
Thou with Thy bread mak'st such themselves consign
Over to Thee, that eat it. Joseph makes
His brethren bow before him. Thine too quake.

Joseph constrains his brethren till their sins
Do gall their souls. Repentance babbles fresh.
Thou treatest sinners till repentance springs,
Then with him send'st a Benjamin-like mess.
Joseph doth cheer his humble brethren. Thou
Dost stud with joy the mourning saints that bow.

Joseph's bright shine th' Eleven Tribes must preach.
And Thine Apostles now eleven, Thine.
They bear his presents to his friends: Thine reach
Thine unto Thine, thus now behold a shine.
How hast Thou penciled out, my Lord, most bright
Thy glorious image here, on Joseph's light.

This I bewail in me under this shine,
To see so dull a color in my skin.
Lord, lay Thy brightsome colors on me Thine.
Scour Thou my pipes, then play Thy tunes therein.
I will not hang my harp in willows by,
While Thy sweet praise my tunes doth glorify.

Edward Taylor

Prologue from Preparatory Meditations Before My Approach to The Lord's Supper

Lord, can a crumb of dust the earth outweigh,
Outmatch all mountains, nay the crystal sky?
Imbosom in't designs that shall display
And trace into the boundless deity?
Yea, hand a pen whose moisture doth gild o'er
Eternal glory with a glorious glore.

If it is pen had of an angel's quill,
And sharpened on a precious stone ground tight,
And dipped in liquid gold, and moved by skill
In crystal leaves should golden letters write,
It would but blot and blur, yea, jag and jar,
Unless Thou mak'st the pen and scribener.

I am this crumb of dust which is designed
To make my pen unto Thy praise alone,
And my dull fancy I would gladly grind
Unto an edge on Zion's precious stone;
And write in liquid gold upon Thy name
My letters till Thy glory forth doth flame.

Let not th' attempts break down my dust I pray,
Nor laugh Thou them to scorn, but pardon give.
Inspire this crumb of dust till it display
Thy glory through't: and then Thy dust shall live.
Its failings then Thou'lt overlook, I trust,
They being slips slipped from Thy crumb of dust.

Thy crumb of dust breathes two words from its breast,
That Thou wilt guide its pen to write aright
To prove Thou art and that Thou art the best
And shew Thy prosperties to shine most bright.
And then Thy works will shine as flowers on stems
Or as in jewelary shops do gems.

Edward Taylor

The Joy if Church Fellowship Rightly Attended

In heaven soaring up, I dropped an ear
On earth: and Oh, sweet melody:
And listening, found it was the saints who were
Encroached for Heaven that sang for joy.
For in Christ's coach they sweetly sing,
As they to glory ride therein.

Oh, joyous hearts! Enfired with holy flame!
Is speech thus tassled with praise?
Will not your inward fire of joy contain:
That it in open flames doth blaze?
For in Christ's coach saints sweetly sing,
As they to glory ride therein.

And if a string do slip by chance, they soon
Do screw it up again, whereby
They set it in a more melodious tune
And a diviner harmony.
For in Christ's coach they sweetly sing,
As they to glory ride therein.

In all their acts, public and private, nay,
And secret too, they praise impart.
But in their acts divine and worship, they
With hymns do offer up their heart.
Thus in Christ's coach they sweetly sing,
As they to glory ride therein.

Some few not in; and some whose time and place
Block up this coach's way do go
As travelers afoot, and so do trace
The road that gives them right thereto,
While in this coach these sweetly sing,
As they to glory ride therein.

Edward Taylor

The Preface

Infinity, when all things it beheld
In Nothing, and of Nothing all did build,
Upon what Base was fixt the Lath wherein
He turn'd this Globe, and riggalld it so trim?
Who blew the Bellows of His Furnace Vast?
Or held the Mould wherein the world was Cast?
Who laid its Corner Stone? Or whose Command?
Where stand the Pillars upon which it stands?
Who Lac'de and Fillitted the earth so fine,
With Rivers like green Ribbons Smaragdine?
Who made the Sea's its Selvedge, and it locks
Like a Quilt Ball within a Silver Box?
Who Spread its Canopy? Or Curtains Spun?
Who in this Bowling Alley bowld the Sun?
Who made it always when it rises set:
To go at once both down, and up to get?
Who th' Curtain rods made for this Tapistry?
Who hung the twinckling Lanthorns in the Sky?
Who? who did this? or who is he? Why, know
It's Onely Might Almighty this did doe.
His hand hath made this noble worke which Stands
His Glorious Handywork not made by hands.
Who spake all things from nothing; and with ease
Can speake all things to nothing, if he please.
Whose Little finger at his pleasure Can
Out mete ten thousand worlds with halfe a Span:
Whose Might Almighty can by half a looks
Root up the rocks and rock the hills by th' roots.
Can take this mighty World up in his hande,
And shake it like a Squitchen or a Wand.
Whose single Frown will make the Heavens shake
Like as an aspen leafe the Winde makes quake.
Oh! what a might is this Whose single frown
Doth shake the world as it would shake it down?
Which All from Nothing fet, from Nothing, All:
Hath All on Nothing set, lets Nothing fall.
Gave All to nothing Man indeed, whereby
Through nothing man all might him Glorify.
In Nothing then embosst the brightest Gem
More pretious than all pretiousness in them.
But Nothing man did throw down all by Sin:
And darkened that lightsom Gem in him.
That now his Brightest Diamond is grown
Darker by far than any Coalpit Stone.

Edward Taylor

Upon A Spider Catching A Fly

Thou sorrow, venom Elfe:
Is this thy play,
To spin a web out of thyselfe
To Catch a Fly?
For Why?

I saw a pettish wasp
Fall foule therein:
Whom yet thy Whorle pins did not clasp
Lest he should fling
His sting.

But as affraid, remote
Didst stand hereat,
And with thy little fingers stroke
And gently tap
His back.

Thus gently him didst treate
Lest he should pet,
And in a froppish, aspish heate
Should greatly fret
Thy net.

Whereas the silly Fly,
Caught by its leg
Thou by the throate tookst hastily
And ‘hinde the head
Bite Dead.

This goes to pot, that not
Nature doth call.
Strive not above what strength hath got,
Lest in the brawle
Thou fall.

This Frey seems thus to us.
Hells Spider gets
His intrails spun to whip Cords thus
And wove to nets
And sets.

To tangle Adams race
In’s stratigems
To their Destructions, spoil’d, made base
By venom things,
Damn’d Sins.

But mighty, Gracious Lord
Communicate
Thy Grace to breake the Cord, afford
Us Glorys Gate

And State.

We’l Nightingaile sing like
When pearcht on high
In Glories Cage, thy glory, bright,
And thankfully,
For joy.

Edward Taylor

Upon A Wasp Chilled With Cold

The bear that breathes the northern blast
Did numb, torpedo-like, a wasp
Whose stiffened limbs encramped, lay bathing
In Sol's warm breath and shine as saving,
Which with her hands she chafes and stands
Rubbing her legs, shanks, thighs, and hands.
Her pretty toes, and fingers' ends
Nipped with this breath, she out extends
Unto the sun, in great desire
To warm her digits at that fire.
Doth hold her temples in this state
Where pulse doth beat, and head doth ache.
Doth turn, and stretch her body small,
Doth comb her velvet capital.
As if her little brain pan were
A volume of choice precepts clear.
As if her satin jacket hot
Contained apothecary's shop
Of nature's receipts, that prevails
To remedy all her sad ails,
As if her velvet helmet high
Did turret rationality.
She fans her wing up to the wind
As if her pettycoat were lined,
With reason's fleece, and hoists sails
And humming flies in thankful gales
Unto her dun curled palace hall
Her warm thanks offering for all.

Lord, clear my misted sight that I
May hence view Thy divinity,
Some sparks whereof thou up dost hasp
Within this little downy wasp
In whose small corporation we
A school and a schoolmaster see,
Where we may learn, and easily find
A nimble spirit bravely mind
Her work in every limb: and lace
It up neat with a vital grace,
Acting each part though ne'er so small
Here of this fustian animal.
Till I enravished climb into
The Godhead on this ladder do,
Where all my pipes inspired upraise
An heavenly music furred with praise.

Edward Taylor

Upon Wedlock, And Death Of Children

A Curious Knot God made in Paradise,
And drew it out inamled neatly Fresh.
It was the True-Love Knot, more sweet than spice
And set with all the flowres of Graces dress.
Its Weddens Knot, that ne’re can be unti’de.
No Alexanders Sword can it divide.

The slips here planted, gay and glorious grow:
Unless an Hellish breath do sindge their Plumes.
Here Primrose, Cowslips, Roses, Lilies blow
With Violets and Pinkes that voide perfumes.
Whose beautious leaves ore laid with Hony Dew.
And Chanting birds Cherp out sweet Musick true.

When in this Knot I planted was, my Stock
Soon knotted, and a manly flower out brake.
And after it my branch again did knot
Brought out another Flowre its sweet breath’d mate.
One knot gave one tother the tothers place.
Whence Checkling smiles fought in each others face.

But oh! a glorious hand from glory came
Guarded with Angells, soon did Crop this flowere
Which almost tore the root up of the same
At that unlookt for, Dolesome, darksome houre.
In Pray’re to Christ perfum’de it did ascend,
And Angells bright did it to heaven tend.

But pausing on’t, this sweet perfum’d my thought,
Christ would in Glory have a Flowre, Choice, Prime,

And having Choice, chose this my branch forth brought.
Lord, take’t. I thanke thee, thou takst ought of mine,
It is my pledg in glory, part of mee
Is now in it, Lord, glorifi’de with thee.

But praying ore my branch, my branch did sprout
And bore another manly flower, and gay
And after that another, sweet brake out,
The which the former hand soon got away.
But oh! the tortures, Vomit, screechings, groans,
And six weeks fever would pierce hearts like stones.

Griefe o’re doth flow: and nature fault would finde
Were not thy Will, my Spell, Charm, Joy, and Gem:
That as I said, I say, take, Lord, they’re thine.
I piecemeale pass to Glory bright in them.
I joy, may I sweet Flowers for Glory breed,
Whether thou getst them green, or lets them seed.

Edward Taylor