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"TUNING" THE SONG OF PRAISE:
OBSERVATIONS ON THE USE OF NUMBERS IN
EDWARD TAYLOR'S
PREPARATORY MEDITATIONS

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What Secret Sweet Myserie under the Wing
Of this so much Elected number lies? (ll. 13-14)

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What is this tradition of number symbolism to which Taylor seems to have attached himself? Numerology has been a living concern in Western culture from the very beginnings through the Renaissance and deep into the seventeenth century. During this time, many thinkers, philosophers, theologians, writers, and mystics speculated about, and added to, the lore of numbers.⁶ The foundations were laid in Babylon, where in connection with astronomical observations the importance of 4, 7 and 40 was established. The Egyptians adopted the twelve-month year and thus added the duodecad which also was considered to rule the alternation of day and night and became the symbol of the completed

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circle. The Old Testament derived its number symbolism, in which 4, 7, 10, 12, and 40 play important parts, from Babylonian and Egyptian sources.

For Pythagoras, numerology became a philosophical concern; he conceived of nature and the cosmos as ordered by numbers. Discovering the numerical relation of musical intervals, he thought of the whole heaven as a musical scale ruled by the law of numbers. He established the special significance of the decad and of the first four digits of which it is the sum: $1+2+3+4 = 10$ is the sacred "tetractys" of the most revered and important numbers. As the first square number, 4 has special significance (as does 8, as the first cube). To Pythagoras is attributed a number of fundamental mathematical discoveries and speculations, such as the distinction between even and odd numbers, the discovery and interpretation of the "perfect" numbers 6 and 28, which are the sum of their aliquot parts,⁷ the meaning of the decad which he took as an expression of divine ideas of order and harmony, and the geometrical conception of mathematics. Related to the latter is the visualization of "square" and "cube" numbers and the classification of 1, 3, 6, 10, 15, 21, 28, 36, and so on as "triangular" numbers according to their geometrical layout ($1 = \cdot$, $3 = \cdot \cdot$, $6 = \cdot \cdot \cdot$), as well as the discoveries of special relations among them. The next important step in attributing cosmic meaning to numbers was taken by Plato; in his *Timaios* he elaborated the idea of a God who created the world in perfection and harmony according to a numerical structure. *Timaios* was widely read and commented upon by medieval writers and it established the concept of the creation of the world *more geometrico*.

Throughout the Middle Ages, numerology played an important role in philosophical speculation; it was adopted and ingeniously developed for the exegesis of the Bible and its many significant numbers. It actually seemed marvelously suited for this task, as is proved by the fact that according to Genesis it took God six days (perfect number 6) to complete the creation of a perfectly and harmoniously ordered world. After this labor, he "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Gen. 2:3) and ordained it as the Sabbath (Exod. 31: 13-17), confirming thus the sanctity of the 7, which the Bible manifests in many instances.

The Platonic conception of a divine master builder who creates the world according to numerical relations was validated by the word of God in the Bible, put into the mouth of Solomon (Wisd. of Sol. 9:21) that "thou hast ordered all things in number and measure and weight." These words not only authenticated the numerical interpretation of the Bible and of all creation, but also became the rationale of the numerical structuring of poetry, as Andrew Marvell echoed in his tribute to Milton:

Thy verse created like thy Theme sublime,
In Number, Weight, and Measure, needs not Rhime.⁸

It was Saint Augustine who adapted ancient numerology for Christianity and in various of his writings expounded a Christian symbolism of numbers which was to become the basis of medieval as well as early Protestant numerical speculations. For Saint Augustine numbers have a special force and dignity; their true and unchangeable laws are bound up with God's wisdom. Numbers in weight and measure have a special function in God's creation: they are above and before created matter which is dependent upon them for their existence. Furthermore, numbers provide a link between man and God in that the soul that venerates the law of numbers and order in created things is thereby enabled and induced to love God.⁹ Hence, all works of art are based on numerical construction; it is an inner light of numerical proportions that enables the artist to produce perfect works. Finally, it is in music, geometry, and astronomy that numbers are most evident.

It is from these principles that Christian numerology received its seriousness and respectability. In Augustine's numerological discussions, the Pythagorean "tetractys" of the archetypal numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 which were considered to contain all other numbers (as well as 10), received renewed attention and intricate explanations.¹⁰ In Christian thought the 3 as the symbol of the Trinity was advanced to a revered status. Less unanimously approved was the interpretation of the 4. For Augustine the 4 seems to have been important mainly in its mathematical nature and in its natural application of the initial significance of the four winds, the four seasons, the four elements, or the four ages of man,¹¹ while other medieval writers saw it also as the symbolic number of the New Testament (the four gospels, the four arms of the cross, Eph. 3:18), linking once again 4 to 10 as the symbolic numbers of the New and the Old Testaments, respectively. Ten signified the Decalogue and thus served as the number of the Old Testament. At the same time, the four gospels seemed prefigured by the four rivers of Paradise, establishing one more typological link between the Old and the New Testament.

As the number of the law and of supreme mathematical importance, 10 received much attention; Augustine interpreted it as the sum of 3 (symbol of Trinity) and 7 (symbol of the created universe) and thus as the number of completeness and of the fullness of wisdom. The 3:7 was also confirmed by the distribution of the laws on the two tables. In turn, 7 received its significance as the sum of 3 and 4; two numbers of the "tetractys" to which supreme importance was attributed because, besides forming the sum of 7, their multiple is 12, which is the number of the Apostles and of many symbols in Revelations.

It is not the intention here to give a full report of Augustine's or other medieval thinkers' numerological speculations, but rather to establish the main assumption from which Taylor may have drawn his conclusions. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, biblical exegesis without an attention to numbers was hardly possible. As there is an abundance of numbers in the Bible, a great variety of diverse or even divergent evaluations were produced. There is no one binding or clear-cut system of accepted attributions, but rather a general agreement in regard to the essential numbers, supplemented by a roster or spectrum of their possible meanings according to position and context (as there is also for other numbers), from which the interpreter is called upon to choose according to the problem discussed and its ramifications.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that all such speculations in numbers were based on the belief that numbers were at the root of all creation. Thus the world as God's creation, the Bible as His word, and the work of the artist—architecture, music, or poetry—were all considered to be determined by numerological patterns to which they owe their beauty, perfection, and meaning. Numerology thus became an inspiration and a force in the medieval production of art. Otto von Simson has discussed its importance for the Gothic cathedral;¹² and investigations have in some cases brought forth exceptionally intricate numerical structures in medieval poetry.¹³ Augustine's *De ordine, De musica* and his sermons on the psalms inspired also a tradition of influential aesthetic theories which applied numerology to poetry. Most of these, among them George Puttenham's important *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), belong to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁴ The same period saw the publication of some very popular numerological summaries, such as Petrus Bongus's encyclopedic *De numerorum mysteria* (1584/85 with many subsequent editions) and William Ingpen's *The Secrets of Numbers, According to Theologicall, Arithmetricall, Geometricall, and Harmonicall Computation* (London, 1634)—which is printed on exactly 100 pages.

Edward Taylor had thus every opportunity to inform himself about numerology. Furthermore, the Augustinian authority made numerology respectable to reformed Protestants who would reject other features of medieval theology. In Meditation II, 21, Taylor has confessed belief in the "Secret, Sweet Myserie" of numbers. How far his engagement reached, which forms and directions it adopted, whether it has to be regarded as the result of a serious concern, or rather as an intermittent, playful experiment, can be determined only by the successive investigation of individual meditations.

Such an investigation should start with the observation that Taylor

throughout the *Preparatory Meditations* uses six-line stanzas of ten-syllabic lines, choosing thus a form of deep numerical significance: 10 is the number of the divine law and of the unification of creator and all creation; 6 not only signifies the completed creation but also applies to man and his redemption, because Adam was created on the sixth day and Christ was crucified on the sixth day of the week—a very fitting significance for an effort that by meditating the sacrifice of Christ strives for the renewal of divine grace.

I propose to continue the numerological discussion of Taylor's work with an analysis of Meditation 28 of the first series. Because 28 is one of the rare perfect numbers, the question is whether Taylor took notice of this quality. I think he did: Meditation I, 28 has five stanzas of 46, 51, 50, 52, and 53 words¹⁵ which amount to a total of 252 words.¹⁶ Two hundred and fifty-two is one of the symmetric numbers, to which Augustine and other numerologists attached special significance; in this case the first and the last two digits amount to 7. Furthermore, 252 is 280 (10 times 28) minus 28, or 9 times 28, $3 \times 28 \times 3$, being made up by the square number of 3 and the perfect number 28, uniting thus the Holy Trinity with perfection; or, even better, as the multiple of $3 \times 4 \times 7 \times 3$, displaying in this form all the digits that play an important part in structuring this meditation. Furthermore, 252 is a number that has played its role in medieval number speculation. The Venerable Bede computed the distance from sun to moon as 252,000 stadia rods, twice the distance between earth and moon, thus defining the relation as 2:1, equal to that of an octave and confirming thus the old idea of the musical construction of the universe.¹⁷

Meditation I, 28 is not one of Taylor's most difficult texts. With only five stanzas it is relatively short, and its images are clear and obvious. The motto is from John 1:16, yet it is actually verse 14-17 that is taken up in this poem,

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Unlike the narrator of these verses, the meditating poet cannot at first make use of the glory, of which he has only perceived mere "Bits." When he tries to bring them "home" to God it is incoherently "packt in Shreds of Praise." In Meditation I, 28 one stanza suffices to express the declaration of incapacity with which Taylor so often introduces his theme. At the beginning of his meditative effort, the poet is earthbound,

isolated, and confused; only when his concentration on the concept and power of grace exercised throughout his meditation has "prepared" him, is he able to receive grace.

- (1) When I Lord, send some Bits of Glory home,
 (For Lumps I lack) my Messenger, I finde,
 Bewildred, lose his Way being alone
 In my befogg'd Dark Phancy, Clouded minde.
 Thy Bits of Glory packt in Shreds of Praise
 My Messenger doth lose, losing his Wayes.

The first stanza is characterized by the repetition of key words: "Bits of Glory," "Messenger," "Way" (or "Wayes") all of which occur twice in this stanza. The messenger who loses his way gives a negative twist to the famous prophecy of Malachi 3:1 which is quoted verbatim in the three Synoptic Gospels: "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: . . ." and is also referred to in John 1:15, the verse just before the motto. Fallen man's messenger, instead of preparing the way, is losing it. Although a numerological interpretation here must be still tentative, the structure of words two times repeated is remarkable; 2 is generally considered to be the number of the human condition, of the two sexes, of impurity, sin and even evil, since it marks the deviation from the monad, 1, which is the principal unity, the symbol of the unity of the Godhead, the principle of all being and creation. Two was considered to symbolize the *duplex cor* and was linked to the biblical illustration of the sinner as the man who walks on two ways.¹⁸ Such a disunity of the heart is indicated by Taylor in the two qualities of "befogg'd Dark Phancy, Clouded minde" (l. 4).¹⁹

The first stanza is in content, words, and images completely distinct from the rest of the poem. In the second stanza the poet manages to address himself to Christ:

Lord Cleare the Coast: and let thy sweet sun shine.
 That I may better speed a second time:

As a matter of fact, the rest of the poem, the four stanzas from two to five, consists of an alternation of such petitions for grace and the promises of the petitioner to render the praise that grace will enable him to express.

- (2) Lord Cleare the Coast: and let thy sweet sun shine.
 That I may better speed a second time:
 Oh! fill my Pipkin with thy Blood red Wine:
 I'll drinke thy Health: To pledge thee is no Crime.
 Although I but an Earthen Vessell bee
 Convay some of thy Fulness into mee.
- (3) Thou, thou my Lord, art full, top full of Grace,
 The Golden Sea of Grace: Whose springs thence come,
 And Pretious Drills, boiling in ery place.

Untap thy Cask, and let my Cup Catch some.
 Although its in an Earthen Vessells Case,
 Let it no Empty Vessell be of Grace.

- (4) Let thy Choice Caske, shed, Lord, into my Cue
 A Drop of Juyce presst from thy Noble Vine.
 My Bowl is but an Acorn Cup, I sue
 But for a Drop: this will not empty thine.
 Although I'me in an Earthen Vessells place,
 My Vessell make a Vessell, Lord, of Grace.
- (5) My Earthen Vessell make thy Font also:
 And let thy Sea my Spring of Grace in't raise.
 Spring up oh Well. My Cup with Grace make flow.
 Thy Drops will on my Vessell ting thy Praise.
 I'll sing this Song, when I these Drops Embrace.
 My Vessell now's a Vessell of thy Grace.

The ruling image in these four stanzas is that of the vessel that is to receive the fullness of Christ's grace. "Vessel" is, of course, a pun, which also carries the meaning of vassal. The speaker declares himself a retainer of his feudal Lord and pledges homage to him:

Oh! fill my Pipkin with thy Blood red Wine:
 I'll drinke thy Health: To pledge²⁰ thee is no Crime.

In this double meaning of loyal servant and receptacle of the Lord's favors, or of grace, "Vessell" occurs once in the second stanza, twice in the third, three times in the fourth, and four times in the fifth and last stanza, altogether ten times, forming thus the perfect tetractys of $1+2+3+4 = 10$. For the image of a vessel, this suggests also a graphic, geometrical representation of a receptacle which has a slim top and a broad bottom to hold a large amount of content, a "fulness."

The tetractys in a quaternion of stanzas: this is a perfect realization of number symbolism. As Alastair Fowler has pointed out in *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*,²¹ the tetractys was widely discussed by the Renaissance authorities on numbers, and the various relations of its members, their square and cube numbers were ingeniously explored and interpreted. While Pythagoras considered them to be the root and essence of all mathematics, their meaning was now extended to man and the relation of body and soul:

In Renaissance arithmology, then, the quadrate (quaternion: *tetractys*) was regarded: (1) as a base (base of numeration, fundamental principle, root or foundation of all existence); (2) more particularly, as a mean quantity (often the soul, anima) partaking of both corporal and incorporeal natures, and therefore able to unify mind and body; (3) as a principle of harmony in nature (to "quadrate" meant to harmonize); and (4) as the fountain of all virtue.²²

It emphasizes the quaternion aspect of this figure that "Earthen

Vessel" occurs four times in these four stanzas, namely once in every stanza (ll. 11, 17, 23, 25) and thus once again stresses the typological aspect inherent in the 4:10 relation, as four is on the one hand the number of the natural completeness and on the other points to the biblical revelation contained in both Testaments and enhanced in its progress or typological prefiguration of the Old to the New Testament.²³ "Earthen Vessel" is a quotation from Leviticus 6:28 (also Lev. 11:33; 14:5, 50; Num. 5:17; Jer. 32:14). It designates the ritual instrument which receives the blood of sacrificial animals; it is afterwards broken or cleansed by running water. This ritual vessel is clearly the typological prefiguration of the believer who is redeemed as recipient of Christ's blood, after the sinfulness of his nature and heart has been "broken" or washed away. He then becomes a vessel of grace, as is said about Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:15). This chosen vessel, or vessel of grace, is mentioned six times.

That this vessel be "full" is also indicated by typological suggestions and stressed by the number 6 (2×3), also the number of Christ's crucifixion. "Fulness" and "full" occur together three times in triangular form in lines 12 and 13. This motto from John 1:16 refers back to the ritual connection just discussed, especially to Numbers 18:27: "And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress." This is taken up in Meditation I, 28 as "Juyce presst from thy Noble Vine" (l. 20). "Fulness" in the New Testament is further mentioned in Ephesians 3:18 and 19, and here appears in close communion with a famous testimonial to the dignity of 4: "[that ye] May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Breadth, depth, and height indicate a natural completeness inherent in the number 4; it was also, however, equated with the arms of the cross and its directions, or anagogically, as confirmed by Ephesians 3:18, with the complete range or fullness of its redemptive meanings.²⁴

The quaternion pattern in Meditation I, 28 is continued with "Drop" (or "Drops"). "A Drop of Juyce presst from thy Noble Vine [Vein]" is four times mentioned. While in aesthetic respect "drop" is a rather plain and undistinguished word for such a sublime substance, it receives its authority from its use in Luke 22: 44: "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

The "Cup" which the meditating poet lifts to catch the drops of Christ's blood—man, the vessel, has a vessel for this purpose—is, of

course, the cup of the Lord's Supper, instituted by Christ in the Last Supper: "this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:20) While drop, or drops, of blood ($4 = \text{New Testament}$) is repeated four times, two times each in the last two stanzas, the "Cup" occurs three times, once in stanzas three to five.²⁵ In biblical exegesis, the three in reference to Christ chiefly represents resurrection, which occurred three days after the crucifixion, thus his sacrificial death and ascension as the test of his divinity.²⁶ Therefore it confirms the meaning of the "Drops," four times repeated. Together, "Cup" and "Drops" result arithmetically to seven; in regard to meaning, the drops of Christ's blood in the meditator's cup, or vessel, produce grace: "My Vessell now's a Vessell of thy Grace" (l. 30).

It comes as no surprise, then, that "Grace," the result of Christ's blood received in the sacramental cup of the Eucharist, is repeated seven times in Meditation I, 28 and "fills" the last three stanzas which bring the meditating poet nearer to the fullness of grace. (Stanza two, we can now see, with its petition for a clearing up of thoughts and its feudal imagery, describes a preparatory stage.) Grace is, of course, the all-important gift of saving faith which is to replenish and reactivate the "Springs" of the poet's soul and thereby enable him to give praise, to "sing this Song." It is, as we know from Meditation II, 21 the "Elect number." $7 \times \text{"Grace"} = 28$ and $4 \times \text{"Drops"} = 28$.²⁷ Also, together with the 10 of the vessel, the 7 of grace provides a numerical equation of John 1:17: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (see above).

Grace, seven times named, is curiously distributed: it occurs three times in stanza three, once in four, and three times in stanza five. This again, as in the case of "Vessell," is a striking and geometrical arrangement: ∇ . From Christ's "Choice Caske" above drops a stream of "Blood red Wine" into the meditator's cup. Numerically, this stresses the 3 by the repeated frequency in stanzas three and five, which amount to 6, to which is added 1 in stanza four, pointing thus to the perfect number 6, superseded by the even more exalted 7.²⁸ At the same time, this peculiar arrangement mirrors the seven-armed candlestick of which is said that "six branches shall come out of the sides of it, three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side" (Exod. 25:32). The seven-branch candlestick of which Christ was thought of as the center shaft, was seen as a symbol of the sevenfold grace, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.²⁹

The terms and images that set forth the theme of this meditation and create the graphic illustration of its workings: vessel ($10 = 4+6$), drop (4), cup (3), spring (3), fulness ($3/4$), and grace (7),³⁰ are all

distinguished by being repeated in specific patterns and numbers. These numbers point to their larger context and their deeper meanings. The conjunction of these terms together with their place and conjunction in the Bible forms a web of incredibly subtle and complex relationship and meaning which is reinforced, underlined, and advanced by the equally complex significance of numbers, a complexity that derives its qualifications from the same source, the word of God in the Bible, and of all creation the glory of which the poet is requested to understand and to "sing."

On the evidence of Meditations I, 28 and II, 80 one is justified in maintaining that Taylor at various times in his life in various ways used number symbolism as a vehicle to express meaning. It is a symbolism that was developed by Augustine and other exegetes for the purpose of explaining with the help of biblical numbers (God's own arithmetic) man's place in a numerically ordered universe and particularly his fate in the all-important drama of redemption.

Only further investigations can determine the extent of Taylor's numerological engagement. It can be said, however, that so far, almost all analyses that have been undertaken produced results.³¹ The participants of a Taylor seminar held in the summer of 1980 discovered other striking examples of numerological structures in Taylor's work.

Meditation II, 42 on Hebrews 10:5 "A Body hast thou prepared mee" is particularly interesting in comparison with I, 28: its theme, the human body and its relation to Christ's human part, is related to the image of the "earthen vessel" discussed in I, 28. Mrs. Hannelore Brinson in her analysis of this meditation established a striking dominance of 4 in it.³² The 4 is, of course, already programmatically indicated by the forty-second place in the series. Four as a square of 2 (it draws a basic significance from the fact of being the first square) is strikingly taken up in the fourth stanza, where "quarter" ("quarters") occurs twice. The total of words in this meditation, which has eight stanzas (4×2!), is 404, again one of Augustine's favorite symmetrical numbers, and also signifies 2×4, or 8. It seems from this evidence that 4 as the number of natural conditions and thus of the human body, in its relation to 8, the number of Christ's resurrection³³ is here at the heart of Taylor's concern. The resurrection, the ascension of Christ's body, is indeed the essential difference to the mortal human body, and the image of a rise is twice expressed in this meditation:

. . . And refin'de desire
Will rise to thee in th'Curlings of the same,
As Pillars of Perfumeing incense rise,
And Surges bright of Glory, 'bove the Skies. (ll. 9-12)

and in the last stanza

... and take

Up while I'm here, my heart to thee above.

(ll. 45-46)

The significance of the 4 in the sense of natural and human tetrads is expressed very directly in line 32 by the enumeration of the qualities that Christ shares with man: "In Matter, Form, in Essence, Properties." It is also, somewhat more obliquely, evident in the four elements of earth, air, water, and fire which are represented in the imagery of the first two stanzas.

Other convincing proof of number symbolism is provided by the remarkable sequence of the "crown" meditations: I, 43, 44, and 45 on the crowns of life, righteousness, and glory, respectively. Meditation I, 43, very properly, establishes the 3:4 which with its sum of 7 and its multiple of 12 is dominant throughout the sequence. Mr. Michael Schwerd analyzed this meditation and found that its total number of words is 363, a symmetrical number that is clearly determined by the 3, the sum of its digits amounting to 12 ($3+6+3$), as the multiple of 4×3 , the digits of the meditation's number = 12.³⁴ Correspondingly, "crown" ("crowns") occurs twelve times in this meditation, six times specified as crowns of life, righteousness, or glory, six times simply as "crown."

Meditation I, 44, the second and center meditation of the sequence and, as will be seen, in some respects the crowning achievement, was analyzed by Mr. Bernd Bröskamp who discovered that the total of words of this meditation, which like the other two has seven-stanzas, is 343, once more a symmetrical number.³⁵ Also, this remarkable number is the cube of 7, which must be regarded as a perfect solution for the center poem of three seven-stanza meditations. Seven by the power of three, or 7^3 , elevates grace (= 7) inherent in these crowns by the cube and also elevates the number of grace by that of the Trinity. It expresses also the 7:3 relation inherent in 343, because the sum of the first and the last two digits is 7,³⁶ leaving 3. The sum of all three digits is 10, which according to Augustine in the relation of 3:7 symbolizes the creator and his creature, as well as the completeness of the created universe.

Three, 4, 7, and 10 then, similar to I, 28 but used differently, are very properly the structuring numbers in this meditation. The thematic image of "crown of righteousness" occurs three times, "crown" by itself ten times.³⁷ Other key words, repeated throughout the meditation are head, heart, and hand. Of these human members, head occurs six times (three times as "Holy" or "Righteous Head," three times simply as head),³⁸ heart occurs four times (number of natural world and creature), while hand appears five times, all in stanza three. Five is an unexpected number in this context; a closer inspection reveals, however, that a distinction is

made here between the hand of Christ ("A Milk whit hand," l. 13) and "An Hand Unrighteous" (ll. 14 and 18), to which also belong the twice mentioned "such an hande" (l. 15): this again gives us the hand of natural man, mentioned four times. Finally, a different kind of numerical pattern based on 7: Of the forty-two (6×7) lines of this meditation, twenty-one begin with an *A* or *O*, "Alpha and Omega," displaying a progression from *A* to *O*. The *A* is altogether fourteen times at the head of a line, the *O*, seven times. This gives us a numerical relation of 7:14:21 (42) or 1:2:3 (and 6), which can be compared to the pattern of the "crown" in individual stanzas (see n. 1).³⁹

The "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" (Rev. 1:8) which is Christ, is in this meditation ruled by 7 and its multiples, by "this much Elected number" (Med. II, 21, l. 14) of grace. Note that Taylor placed this statement about the holiness of 7 in line 14 (2×7), that is within the third stanza, of Meditation II, 21 (3×7 !) Such patterns as well as the numerologically controlled frequency of key words have to be taken into account when his meditations are interpreted and his intentions investigated. To find a key term repeated three times in a stanza is not only a rhetorical device, it may be also part of a strategy of meaning.

The evidence assembled so far seems to indicate that Taylor based his numerical schemes on the archetypal numbers of the tetractys: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 10. Of particular significance are 3 and 4, their sum 7, and their multiple 12, as well as 10 as the sum of 3 and 7 which signifies the unification of the creator and his creation, the completeness and perfection of God's works. The "much Elected number," 7, he took to signify the completed creation, the Sabbath, and, above all, grace in all its dimensions.⁴⁰ As the number of grace, election, and redemption he understood 7 as a representation, of both the divine and the human actors in the drama of redemption, uniting as the sum of 3 and 4 Christ, the dispenser of grace, and man, its recipient. Twelve as the multiple of 3 and 4 always regarded as close to 7 in its meaning, served him to signify the fullness of grace or its "crowning" achievements symbolized by the crowns of life, of righteousness, and glory.

These numbers Taylor applied in a double function: they helped him explore and reinforce the glory and beauty of God's creation and the mystery of redemption—of which they are the numerical factors—and, true to Augustinian prescription, he used them to shape his meditations on the glory of God and the mystery of grace and thus to achieve the poetic and well-ordered form of his praise. It can thus be said that Taylor meditated in numbers:

... For such shew God most Wise.
I will adore the same although my quill

Can't hit the String that's tun'd by such right Skill.
(Med. II, 21, ll. 16-18)

The idea that the rule of numbers corresponds to God's wisdom is Augustinian, and so are the convictions behind the rest of the quotation: the belief that the reverence for numbers puts a man in communion with God, "provokes" him, as Augustine said, to love God: "*Ad Dei amorem provocatur anima ex numerorum et ordinis ratione quam in rebus diligit.*"⁴¹ On the basis of this idea it is man's duty to care for numbers, and it seems that Taylor in his meditative preparations used numbers as one of the aids to love God and understand the glory of his creation.

It should be noted that Taylor uses here one of his favorite musical images to illustrate and confirm these convictions, taken in this instance from the virginal, the strings of which are touched with a quill, a goose feather which, of course, is also the poet's writing tool. Taylor thus draws on the contemporary doctrine *ut musica poesis*,⁴² which must be considered basic to the aesthetic creed of a poet who classifies his meditations as songs of praise. Music and the musical imagery used by Taylor are not merely metaphors; they signal the possibility of a communion between man and God on the basis of a harmony that rules heaven and earth and unites Christ the Musician and his instrument, or singer, the poet:

Be thou Musician, Lord, Let me be made
The well tun'd Instrument thou dost assume.
And let thy Glory be my Musick plaide.
Then let thy Spirit keepe my Strings in tune,
Whilst thou art here on Earth below with mee
Till I sing Praise in Heaven above with thee.
("The Return," ll. 49-54)⁴³

It is particularly interesting that the musical image which in the third stanza of Meditation II, 21 is attached to the "Secret Sweet Myserie" of numbers includes the concept of "tuning," as does the stanza quoted above. "Tune" ("to tune," "tuned," "the tune") is one of Taylor's favorite words.⁴⁴ It is used in the negative to lament the poet's unpreparedness ("... my Soul is damp Untun'd," II, 152); much more often, however, at the end of his meditation-songs to express joyfully that as a result of the meditative effort and of the gift of grace the poet is "tuned" to Christ ("... tun'de to thee, my King", II, 16, l. 48) and thus able to sing his praise:

When thou unto thy praise my heart shalt tune
My heart shall tune thy praise in sweetest fume. (II, 145, ll. 35-36)

Only in being tuned by Christ is the meditating poet in turn able to tune his praise to harmonious and melodious song; he is then, so to speak, on

the same wavelength with his God. In musical terms this means that the pitch is perfect, a true musical harmony between God, the meditator, and his song.⁴⁵

This concept of tuning his song on Christ which Taylor obviously loved and used so consistently is essential to his idea of successful meditating. It is based on a compound of beliefs and facts which from the very beginning was part of number symbolism: the numerical relations of intervals, the Platonic conception of the music of the soul, and the Pythagorean vision of a musically ordered universe, of the music of the spheres, which had been accepted by medieval Christianity and in the sixteenth century had been revived and developed by Kepler. All of these ideas were widely discussed in Renaissance thought.⁴⁶ When Taylor declares that he has "tuned" his song to praise the beauty of creation and the glory of God ("Musicking thy glory," II, 54, l. 5) he relied on these conceptions; above all, however, on Augustine who in *De musica* had discussed the numerical proportions in music which he regarded as an analogy to all being, since all created things—the world, the soul of man, as well as music—are dominated by numbers.⁴⁷ It can be assumed that Taylor intended to suggest that this tuning was achieved with the assistance of sacred numbers which rule both the song and the harmony of the created world:

When thy rich Grace doth tune my Song, sung high
Thy Glory then shall rise its melody. (II, 49, ll. 41-42)

NOTES

¹ In Med. II, 22 Taylor discussed the significance of 50 (Pentecost). Meditations are quoted from Donald E. Stanford, ed., *The Poems of Edward Taylor* (New Haven, Conn., 1960).

² Dante's amazing use of numbers was explored by Manfred Hardt, *Die Zahl in der Divina Comedia* (Frankfurt/M., 1973).

³ See Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (London, 1964) and the essays in Alastair Fowler, ed., *Silent Poetry, Essays in Numerological Analysis* (London, 1970).

⁴ Grube, *Early American Literature*, 13 (1980), 231-37.

⁵ The significance of the total number of words in a meditation was discovered and interpreted by participants of a Taylor Seminar held at the Kennedy-Institute of the Free University in 1980: Michael Schwerd, Hannelore Brinson, Bernd Bröskamp, and Christine Fock. See below.

⁶ I am indebted in this outline to Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expressions* (New York, 1938); Heinz Meyer, *Die Zahlenallegorese im Mittelalter. Methode und Gebrauch* (Munich, 1975); Ursula Grossmann, "Studien zur Zahlensymbolik des Frühmittelalters," *Zs. f. Katholische Theologie*, 76 (1954), 19-54; and Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (London, 1976).

⁷ There are only three perfect numbers between 1 and 1,000: 6, 28, and 496, which are all also triangular numbers. The next is 8,128, also already known to antiquity.

⁸ Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "Structure as Prophecy: The Influence of Biblical Exegesis Upon Theories of Literary Structure," in *Silent Poetry*, p. 33.

⁹ About Augustine's numerological thought see Grossmann, "Studien," pp. 19-54.

¹⁰ Grossmann, "Studien," p. 25.

¹¹ It seems that Taylor often followed Augustine in that, although 4 as the number of natural man theologically always implied the hope of grace promised in the New Testament.

¹² Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, 2d ed. (New York, 1962); see esp. chap. 2, "Measure and Light."

¹³ See Wolfgang Haubrichs, *Ordo als Form. Strukturstudien zur Zahlenkomposition bei Otfrid von Weissenburg und in karolingischer Literatur* (Tübingen, 1969). There is a general discussion of numerology in chap. 3: "Harmonie und Zahlenlehre."

¹⁴ Røstvig, "Structure as Prophecy," pp. 32-71.

¹⁵ The five contractions in this poem (ll. 10, 23, 26, 29, 30) have been counted as one, except for the one in l. 23, where the ten-syllabic line demands them to be read as two; this seems to be indicated also by the added *e*: "I me."

¹⁶ I owe the discovery of this sum and its relation to 28 to Mr. Michael Schwerd who also pointed out the fact that 28 is the seventh triangular number (the sum of $1+2+3+4+5+6+7$).

¹⁷ See Haubrichs, *Ordo als Form*, p. 64.

¹⁸ Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, pp. 113-14.

¹⁹ It should be added that the first stanza has a sum of forty-six words; 46 being the number given Adam (see Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, p. 163).

²⁰ "To pledge" also can mean "to toast."

²¹ Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, particularly Appendix 1.

²² Fowler, p. 279.

²³ Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, pp. 123-27.

²⁴ Meyer, p. 126, and Ursula Grossmann, "Studien," pp. 31-32. It should also be noted that "Lord" appears in all stanzas but the last, thus is also named four times.

²⁵ Like "Cup," "Spring" (or "Springs") of grace also occurs three times.

²⁶ Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, p. 118.

²⁷ Other examples of such interaction of meditation number and numbers suggested in the text are II, 10 which begins "Moses farewell . . ."; II, 32 speaks of "twoness Humane" and a "Divine . . . Third" in the second stanza; in II, 58 "Isr'el 40 years, Christ 40 days in Wilderness" are discussed ($5 \times 8 = 40$).

²⁸ This higher quality is stressed by Augustine who considered 6 as a symbol of the perfection of the natural world which was crowned by the seventh day in which God rested from creation. See Ursula Grossmann, "Studien," p. 33.

²⁹ Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, p. 86 and 133ff., see also n. 16 above.

³⁰ See above: 252 is the multiple of $3 \times 4 \times 7 \times 3$, also, of course, of $6^2 \times 7$.

³¹ The preceding meditation, I, 27, is also on the theme of "Fulness." Its numerical structure is, as far as I can see, not as intricate as that of I, 28. The total number of words is 375 ($= 3 \times 5^3$); the key term "fulness" occurs fourteen times (including the motto) which is the sum of the meditation number digits: $14 = 2 \times 7$.

³² I am summarizing Mrs. Brinson's findings with some of my own additions.

³³ Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, p. 139, and Ursula Grossmann, "Studien," p. 35: Christ's resurrection happened on the eighth day, the day after the Sabbath.

³⁴ Mr. Michael Schwerd presented a very intricate arithmological analysis of this meditation.

³⁵ I am reporting Mr. Bröskamp's finding, and adding some of my own.

³⁶ This is also true for 252.

³⁷ Mr. Bröskamp's analysis shows that there is a symmetrical occurrence of "crown" through the seven stanzas. The frequency per stanza is 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3.

³⁸ It is the head which is to be crowned by the crown of righteousness, hence it appears three times in a petition for a "Holy" or "Righteous Head," which leaves three other occurrences expressing the desire or hope that the natural head receive this crown.

³⁹ The third meditation of the sequence, I, 45, on the crown of glory appears to display less striking numerical evidence. The intended sum of words seems to be 366 (if two hyphenated words are counted as one); the key word "crown" ("crown'd," "becrown'd") occurs seven times.

⁴⁰ The interpretation of 7 as the sum of 3 and 4 goes back to Augustine; other medieval writers also interpreted it as the number of the seven spiritual gifts and of sevenfold grace, see Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, pp. 133-39. C.G. Jung has discussed the psychology of numbers, particularly of 3 and 4, in various of his writings; about it see Marie-Louise von Franz, *Zahl und Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1970).

⁴¹ Ursula Grossmann, "Studien," p. 24.

⁴² About this: John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700* (Princeton, N.J., 1961).

⁴³ Stanford, p. 11. "The Return" expresses the desire for such a union and communion in the seven times repeated "Oh! that thou Wast on Earth below with mee Or that I was in Heaven above with thee." "Earth" occurs ten times, "Heaven," fourteen times.

⁴⁴ "Tune," "tunes," "tuning," "tun'd" and "tun'de" occur over a hundred times in the meditations. See Gene Russell, *A Concordance to the Poems of Edward Taylor* (Microcard Edition, 1973), p. 346.

⁴⁵ The actual tuning of the instrument, which is the poet, is suggested by such lines as "Tle tune an higher pin" (I, 45, l. 40 and I, 47, l. 30); "screw my Strings up to thy tune" (I, 46, l. 49); or "e'ry string Screwed to the highest pitch" ("The Experience," ll. 26-27).

⁴⁶ See the chapters on "Renaissance Thought" and "Scientific Numerology — the Case of Kepler" in Butler, *Number Symbolism*.

⁴⁷ Meyer, *Zahlenallegorese*, pp. 28-29.