

# Edward Taylor Prologue Analysis

## 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 gloire.

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 prosperities to shine most bright.  
And then Thy works will shine as flowers on stems  
Or as in jewelary shops do gems.

*Edward Taylor*

# Edward Taylor's Prologue: An Analysis

**Edward Taylor's Prologue** serves as a significant entry point into his poetic world, allowing readers to glean insights into his life, beliefs, and the milieu of the 17th-century Puritan experience in colonial America. Taylor, a minister and poet, used his writing to explore the intersection of faith, personal experience, and the divine. In this article, we will delve into the themes, structure, and stylistic elements of Taylor's Prologue, shedding light on its importance within his body of work and its broader cultural context.

## Historical Context

To fully appreciate Edward Taylor's Prologue, it's essential to understand the historical and cultural context in which he wrote. Born in England in 1642, Taylor emigrated to the American colonies in 1668. His poetry reflects the complex blend of Puritan beliefs, the challenges of a new life in America, and the artistic influences of his time.

- **Puritanism:** Taylor was deeply rooted in Puritan ideology, which emphasized a personal relationship with God, the importance of grace, and the necessity of introspection.
- **Colonial Life:** The experience of living in 17th-century New England shaped Taylor's worldview, as he navigated the trials of a new environment, community dynamics, and religious fervor.
- **Literary Influences:** Taylor was influenced by both English poets and the metaphysical style, drawing on the works of John Donne and George Herbert.

## The Structure of the Prologue

Taylor's Prologue is structured to introduce his poetic intentions and to set the stage for the deeper themes explored in his poetry. It functions as a preface, revealing Taylor's motivations and his commitment to his faith.

## Form and Meter

The Prologue is crafted in a traditional poetic form, often using iambic pentameter, which lends a rhythmic quality to his work. The use of rhyme schemes is consistent, creating a musicality that enhances the reading experience.

## Imagery and Symbolism

Taylor employs rich imagery and symbolism throughout the Prologue, establishing a visual and emotional landscape that conveys his spiritual journey. Notable elements include:

1. **Natural Imagery:** Taylor frequently references the natural world, using it as a metaphor for spiritual growth and divine presence.
2. **Religious Symbols:** The Prologue contains numerous religious symbols that reflect his Puritan beliefs, such as light, grace, and the concept of the soul's journey.
3. **Personal Reflection:** Taylor uses autobiographical elements to connect his personal experiences with broader spiritual themes, allowing readers to engage with his inner life.

## Key Themes in the Prologue

Several key themes emerge in Edward Taylor's Prologue, each reflecting his complex relationship with faith, art, and the human experience.

### The Search for Spiritual Truth

One of the most prominent themes in the Prologue is the search for spiritual truth. Taylor expresses a yearning for a deeper understanding of God and his own faith. This pursuit is characterized by doubt, questioning, and a longing for divine connection. Through his poetry, Taylor grapples with the challenges of faith, ultimately seeking solace in God's grace.

### Art as a Means of Worship

For Taylor, poetry is not merely an artistic endeavor; it is an act of worship. He views his writing as a means to glorify God and explore the complexities of faith. The Prologue emphasizes the importance of art in the spiritual life, suggesting that creativity can serve as a conduit for divine expression.

### The Role of the Poet

Taylor's reflections on the role of the poet reveal his belief in the poet as a spiritual intermediary. He sees himself as a vessel through which divine truths can be communicated. This theme underscores the significance of poetry in the Puritan tradition, where the written word was seen as a powerful tool for conveying spiritual insights.

## **Stylistic Elements**

Taylor's Prologue is notable for its stylistic richness, which enhances its thematic depth. Several key stylistic elements contribute to the overall impact of the poem.

## **Metaphysical Conceits**

Taylor employs metaphysical conceits—extended metaphors that draw surprising connections between disparate ideas. These conceits invite readers to engage with complex concepts, deepening their understanding of spiritual themes. For example, Taylor often compares the soul's journey to that of a seed growing into a plant, illustrating the transformative power of faith.

## **Sound Devices**

The use of sound devices, such as alliteration and assonance, adds a musical quality to the Prologue. These elements not only enhance the poem's aesthetic appeal but also reinforce its spiritual themes. The rhythm and sound patterns create a sense of harmony that mirrors Taylor's quest for divine connection.

## **Imagery and Sensory Language**

Taylor's vivid imagery and sensory language draw readers into his poetic world, allowing them to experience the emotions and spiritual struggles he describes. By appealing to the senses, Taylor effectively communicates the intensity of his faith and the beauty of God's creation.

## **Conclusion**

Edward Taylor's Prologue is a profound exploration of the intersection between faith and art, offering readers a glimpse into the mind of a deeply introspective poet. Through its rich themes, structured form, and stylistic elements, the Prologue serves as an invitation to engage with the complexities of spirituality and the human experience.

As a work that stands at the crossroads of Puritan ideology and artistic expression, Taylor's Prologue remains a vital piece of American literature. It challenges readers to reflect on their own beliefs, the role of creativity in spiritual life, and the enduring quest for divine truth. Understanding Taylor's Prologue not only enhances our appreciation of his poetry but also enriches our understanding of the cultural and historical context of 17th-century America.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

## **What is the central theme of Edward Taylor's prologue?**

The central theme of Edward Taylor's prologue revolves around the relationship between the poet and God, emphasizing the importance of divine inspiration in creating poetry.

## **How does Taylor use metaphors in his prologue?**

Taylor employs metaphors extensively in his prologue, comparing his poetic endeavor to a spiritual journey, where he seeks to weave his words as threads in a divine tapestry.

## **What literary devices are prominent in Taylor's prologue?**

Prominent literary devices in Taylor's prologue include imagery, alliteration, and personification, all of which enhance the emotional depth and spiritual significance of his reflections.

## **In what way does Taylor's Puritan background influence his prologue?**

Taylor's Puritan background greatly influences his prologue, as it reflects his deep religious convictions, focusing on themes of grace, redemption, and the struggle for spiritual purity.

## **What role does nature play in Taylor's prologue?**

Nature plays a significant role in Taylor's prologue, serving as a metaphor for God's creation and a source of inspiration, highlighting the interconnectedness of the divine and the natural world.

## **How does Taylor address the concept of humility in his prologue?**

In his prologue, Taylor addresses humility by acknowledging his limitations as a poet and expressing a desire for God's guidance and approval in his creative work.

## **What is the significance of the title in Taylor's prologue?**

The title of Taylor's prologue signifies the opening of a sacred dialogue between the poet and God, setting the tone for the exploration of faith, artistry, and the quest for spiritual truth.

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