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PROTESTANTS READING CATHOLICISM: CRASHAW'S REFORMED READERSHIP

by

ANDREW D. DAVIS

Under the direction of Dr. Paul Voss

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to realign Richard Crashaw's aesthetic orientation with a broadly conceptualized genre of seventeenth-century devotional, or meditative, poetry. This realignment clarifies Crashaw's worth as a poet within the Renaissance canon and helps to dismantle historicist and New Historicist readings that characterize him as a literary anomaly. The methodology consists of an expanded definition of meditative poetry, based primarily on Louis Martz's original interpretation, followed by a series of close readings executed to show continuity between Crashaw and his contemporaries, not discordance. The thesis concludes by expanding the genre of seventeenth-century devotional poetry to include Edward Taylor, who despite his Puritanism, also exemplifies many of the same generic attributes as Crashaw.

INDEX WORDS: Richard Crashaw, Edward Taylor, *Steps to the Temple*, Metaphysical poets, Catholicism, Puritans, New Historicism, Meditative poetry, Louis Martz, Genre Theory

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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1. INTRODUCTION: A CRITICAL RECONSIDERATION

The canonical position of Richard Crashaw in relation to his seventeenth-century contemporaries has been an ambiguous one. Critical categorization of Crashaw has placed him on one hand with the metaphysical school of John Donne, and on the other hand with the continental baroque. Others have isolated his poetry as an anomaly within the seventeenth-century canon. When present-day readers encounter Crashaw, the analogs within his poetry to the Counter-Reformation tradition are apparent. Many of Crashaw's images and certainly the liturgical structures that appear in his works originate with the Council of Trent and, to an even greater extent, the meditative tradition of the Jesuit order. In his own time, however, Crashaw was arguably just as popular as George Herbert, based not only on how frequently his works were republished, but on various accounts extant in the works of Crashaw's contemporaries. Given England's supposedly-confident Protestantism by the middle of the seventeenth century, it becomes easy for a historicist reading of this contradiction to write Crashaw off as a literary anomaly. Such a reading holds only to a point; Crashaw died in 1649, during a period in which Puritans dominated the Church of England and the government at large. During this period of hyperbolic religious rhetoric, Crashaw's poetry was published in various formats in 1646, 1648, 1652, and again in 1670. His own exile and ultimately his death seemed to have no direct impact upon his increasing popularity during the interregnum period. Crashaw did not see such frequent republication again until after T.S. Eliot resurrected the seventeenth-century poets in the early twentieth century. Even today, literary criticism devoted to Crashaw receives only a fraction of the attention afforded to his contemporaries. This fact seems to contradict the position of esteem Crashaw held among his contemporaries.

Crashaw's popularity during the seventeenth century suggests that historicist readings may oversimplify the implied correlation between his religious beliefs and the content of his works. One must not search very hard to find structures and images in Crashaw's most-frequently anthologized poems that seem to originate in the continental baroque.. Indeed, even the earliest commentary on Crashaw made mention of this fact. However, the significance of these motifs has been compounded by Crashaw's Catholic identity. Because the supposedly-Catholic content of his poetry aligns with his (eventual) biographical Catholicism, it is easy to place Crashaw on one side of a Protestant/Catholic binary. This historicist reading associates poets with political and religious movements instead of generic conventions. The problem of oversimplification compounds further with the assumption that literary techniques have always corresponded to extemporaneous political movements, and further yet with the assumption that political movements (such as the Reformation) disseminated ideology evenly across society. Crashaw's poetry has been misunderstood, if not marginalized, by the larger enterprise of historicism. It is the goal of this thesis to realign Crashaw with the genre of devotional literature, and to demonstrate that his works are not so different from Herbert as to warrant isolation. It is furthermore the goal to illustrate the faults in negative readings of Crashaw's poetry put forth by eighteenth-century rationalists (those who came after Pope) and those oversimplified readings of the New Historicsts throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Though the last twenty years of Crashaw criticism have shown increased warmth towards the poet, no work has yet incorporated a full-scale reconsideration of his aesthetic qualities outside of the context of his biographical affinity.

Crashaw was far from a literary radical in the world of mid-seventeenth-century poetry. The anonymous author of the preface to Crashaw's 1646 edition of *Steps to the Temple* refers to

Crashaw as "… *Herbert's* second, but equall, who hath retriv'd Poetry of late, and return'd it up to its Primitive use" (Preface, 13-14)[1] This observation was not an isolated one. In 1668, David Lloyd states that Crashaw "was esteemed the other *Herbert* of our Church."[2] Furthermore, Crashaw's friends praised him after his death in a way that suggests his timeless personality--one removed from the political and religious turmoil of the time. Thomas Car, in his introduction to *Carmen Deo Nostro*, writes that Crashaw

> …was belou'd by all; dispraised by none.
>
> To witt, being pleas'd with all things, he pleas'd all.
>
> Nor would he giue, nor take offence; befall
>
> What might; he would possesse himself: and liue
>
> As deade (deuoyde of interest) t'all might giue
>
> Desease t'his well composed mynd… ("The Anagramme: He Was Car" 14-18).

Thomas Car emphasizes Crashaw's personal qualities in this preface, but what stands out is his implied aesthetic praise. Car describes Crashaw's mind as well composed, and emphasizes the poet's wit. Thus, one can conclude that from at least one perspective Crashaw's poetry was considered intelligent in his own time. Car's praise underscores the argument that Crashaw's image-driven poetry did indeed have contemplative depth, at least to a seventeenth-century reader.

This self-evident contemplative depth was apparently lost on Alexander Pope, who can be considered the originator of the overwhelmingly negative criticism of Crashaw that followed him. Pope writes in one of his 1710 letters to Henry Cromwell that Crashaw's works amount to

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[1] All subsequent citations from L.C. Martin, *The Poems of Richard Crashaw*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). Unless otherwise noted, citations are from the earliest printed editions.

[2] John Roberts qting Lloyd, *Richard Crashaw: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1632-1980*, (Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1985, Entry 40.

nothing more than "pretty conceptions, fine metaphors, glitt'ring expressions, and something of a neat cast of Verse (which are *properly the dress, gems, or loose ornaments* of poetry)."[3] The qualities noted by Pope in Crashaw's poetry—the embellishments—serve as the material essence of later criticism of Crashaw's theology. Indeed, if Crashaw's work is read "merely" as "something of a neat cast of Verse," then the resulting product appears blatantly partisan. Pope scorns "The Weeper" by asserting that "a reader may skim off the froth, and use the clear underneath; but if he goes too deep he will meet with a mouthful of dregs."[4] The idea that this poem is "merely a pretty surface, behind which little can be be found," as McDowell effectively glosses Pope's generalization, is preposterous and suggests that Pope has missed the point of extremely detailed surface imagery.[5] This misunderstanding of the genre of devotional poetry characterizes the mindset of Enlightenment readers of poetry. Indeed, religious readers, both Protestant and Catholic, were several generations removed from the meditative fervor of the Renaissance by the time Pope criticized Crashaw.

In one of the only instances in the letter to Cromwell where Pope makes reference to specific passages from Crashaw, he suggests that "the 7th, 8th, 9th, 16th, 17th, 20th, and 23rd stanzas" of "The Weeper" are "soft and pleasing: And if these last want any thing, it is an easier and more unaffected expression."[6] Pope's criticism of the stanzas is in line with his arguments about good poetry in the *Essay on Criticism,* but somehow misses the entire point of Crashaw's genre. The implication seems to be that, if "expression is the dress of thought," which Pope

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[3] George Sherbrun Ed, "Letter to Cromwell, 30 December 1710,) *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, Vol. 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 110 (emphasis mine).
[4] Ibid.
[5] Sean McDowell, "From 'Lively' Art to 'Glitt'ring Expressions' : Crashaw's Initial Reception Reconsidered." *John Donne Journal*. No. 24. (2005): 229.
[6] "Letter to Cromwell," 110.

posits in the *Essay*,[7] that there is little substantive thought here, and far too much expression. But what Pope seems not to consider is that the expression itself might *be* the substantive thought. The 7th stanza that he criticizes is a good example:

The dew no more will weepe,
The Primroses pale cheeke to decke,
The deaw no more will sleepe,
Nuzzle'd in the Lillies necke.
Much Rather would it tremble heere,
And leave them both to bee thy Teare. ("The Weeper" 7. 1-6).

If the subject matter of a poem is tangible and quantifiable, then it makes sense that "true expression, like the unchanging sun, / Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon,"[8] but the subject matter of this poem is *not* tangible. Rather, the entire poem emblematizes the abstract. Thus, the ornate conceits in this stanza, which Pope scorns for being too "afftected," are effective because they are not easy. The poem at large is meant to function ecstatically. It should overwhelm the senses of the reader with the ultimate goal of cognitive communion with the divine. Though Pope himself may have had a level of personal anxiety about Crashaw (given his own recusant Catholicism), his contemporaries read poetry of the century prior as ultimately alien to their sensibility. This notion of Crashaw as alien persists well into the twentieth century.

After Alexander Pope's letter, Crashaw's popularity continued to diminish. In 1785, Peregrine Philips republished Crashaw's complete works for the first time in a number of generations. Philips's edition displays an awareness of the widespread cultural distaste for seventeenth-century devotional poetry, but it also effectively argues for consistent analogs to

[7] Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Criticism," in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, Third Edition, Ed. David Richter, (New York: Bedford St Martins, 2007), 203
[8] Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 204.

Crashaw by "Pope, Milton, Young, and Gray."[9] Part of Philip's claim for Crashaw's relevance was based on his influence on later poets. This implication caused some debate throughout the rest of 1785, but as soon as such immediate criticism fell silent, Crashaw's complete works were not published again until 1872. Throughout the end of the eighteenth and the majority of the nineteenth centuries, critical discussion of Crashaw was limited to occasional quibbling as to whether or not he was worth of mention in various biographical monographs. The 1797 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for example, mentions Crashaw only to state that he was "perverted by the Church of Rome."[10] Terms such as "perversion," "conceited," "unequal, and "outrageous" dominate critical discourse through the early twentieth century. Austin Warren further explains that

> in the Romantic period, seventeenth century prose and verse drama found fervent admirers; but, except with Coleridge and the American Transcendentalists, Crashaw and Donne did not. Though the Romantic critics had revolted against neoclassical didacticism, they sought to substitute the "natural," the spontaneous, the sentimental; according to their canons, the 'Metaphysicals' were too cerebral or too labored to be truly poetic.[11]

Warren further posits that, though Crashaw regained some critical ground in the twentieth century, most readings of his sacred poetry were skeptical of his sincerity.[12] Such skepticism is warranted, as the devotional lyric, with its fundamentally meditative teleology, was a phenomenon of the Renaissance, with aesthetic and theological roots in late medieval poetic techniques and, later, the Jesuit meditative tradition. With greater distance from the period, the

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[9] John Roberts, *Richard Crashaw: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1632-1980*, Entry 93.
[10] John Roberts, *Richard Crashaw: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1632-1980*, Entry 106.
[11] Austin Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan UP, 1939), 195-96
[12] Austin Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility*, 198-200.

effectiveness of this genre is easily lost on even well-schooled critical readers. Even positive criticism of Crashaw's work, such as the review of his sacred works by F.E. Hitchinson in 1911, cannot help but qualify their positive commentary by reminding the reader that his works are primarily offensive in conceit.[13]

Since most readers after the seventeenth century lacked the kind of faith necessary to employ Crashaw's poetry as devotional tools, any critical reclamation had to be based on an attempt to recreate a worldview compatible with that period. The first critic to attempt this feat was T.S. Eliot, whose criticism did not qualify "metaphysical" poetry as novelty, and is in fact responsible for their presence in anthologies today. Eliot states most assuredly that "[the] poets of the seventeenth century, the successors to the dramatists of the sixteenth century, possess a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience."[14] These poets became unpopular, so he argues, when a "dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation as is natural was due to the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden."[15] Eliot's own interest in the metaphysical poets was primarily a formal one—their mastery of the metaphysical conceit and of paradox in general would naturally interest the critic whom many view as the first practitioner of what would eventually be called the New Criticism. This notion of sensibility binds the metaphysical poets together, and such a sensibility no doubt played a significant role in the way those poets viewed affective piety as well.

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[13] John Roberts, *Richard Crashaw: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1632-1980*, Entry 373.
[14] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays* (Mineola,NY: Dover, 1997), 127.
[15] Ibid.

Eliot questions "whether their [the metaphysical poets] virtue was not something permanently valuable, which subsequently disappeared, but ought not to have disappeared."[16] The permanent value Eliot writes about here means to me the affective power of metaphysical poetry. Post-restoration poetry, and especially the poetry of the eighteenth century, has a different aesthetic aim—that is, poetry is not designed literally to change the substance of a reader. To put it a different way, the metaphysical poets make no distinction between an appeal to the heart and an appeal to the mind. The intellectual taxonomy and rationalism of the eighteenth century made this transfigurative effect seem infantile. Out of the rationalism of the eighteenth century came historicism's taxonomy of literary periods, and the rigid categorization of social structures. The affective usefulness of metaphysical poetry becomes confused when contemporary religious structures are imposed upon it. This, I argue, bears some responsibility for Crashaw's fall from popularity and the distaste for metaphysical poetry in general.

When we label Crashaw the "Catholic baroque" poet we impose an assumed structure onto his poetry. Crashaw can fit into the category of Catholic poetry, and he also fits in the category of Baroque poetry. Using that taxonomy, Edward Taylor—an American Puritan poet who wrote several decades after Crashaw—does not fit into the category of baroque poetry, and he certainly does not fit into the category of Catholic poetry. They are, however, both devotional poets. They both use many of the same images and motifs, and they both had widespread readership. Did they hold different theological views? Certainly, but did these theological views correlate to their poetry? And more importantly, did the seventeenth-century reader notice an explicit theological difference? Twentieth century criticism emphatically denies the extant facts that indicate Crashaw's popularity in relation to his contemporaries. David Daiches writes pejoratively in 1960 that Crashaw does show "not so much the union of passion and thought

[16]T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," 126.

which is characteristic of Donne as the deliberate search for startling and paradoxical expression which will shock and excite the reader."[17] He goes on to note that "whether one considers the whole movement [of metaphysical poetry] to be a *disease* or a laudable extension of the scope of figurative language depends perhaps on individual taste and sensibility."[18] To argue such a point requires certain assumptions about popular religious practice that are overstated in the critical corpus and are not justifiable in the texts or the history.

New Historicism and Cultural Materialism at large have flooded the field of Renaissance studies with categories. The most prevalent of these categories are, of course, race, class, and gender. But in general, New Historicism seeks to categorize literature's encapsulation of culture, and vice versa. This categorization necessitates a degree of oversimplification, but ultimately that is the goal of New Historicism—to reduce culture to a negotiation of power. These power relationships imply binaries—male and female, poor and rich, black and white, heterosexual and homosexual—and most importantly, Protestant and Catholic. Cultural Materialists imagine a seventeenth-century England of confident Protestantism and undermined, oppressed Catholicism.

This reading of literary and cultural history approaches the same binaries that traditional historicism did from the opposite direction (that is, New Historicism seeks to deconstruct power relationships, whereas old historicism takes them as given). Nonetheless, the static historical categories that plague old historicism are equally present in New Historicism. Well removed from the period, this dichotomy seems accurate. Within the larger scheme of Renaissance England, Catholics represent the oppressed, whereas Protestants represent power. However, once again, the problem of oversimplified and arbitrary categorization of time periods and of religious factions presents itself. In general, Catholics were oppressed during the sixteenth and

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[17] John Roberts, *Richard Crashaw: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1632-1980,* Entry 839
[18] Ibid.

seventeenth centuries. That does not mean that Catholics and their literary output were oppressed every day of every year since the beginning of the Reformation. In the early seventeenth century, recusant Catholics enjoyed relative tolerance under James.

Furthermore, the categorization of religious factions itself creates problems for New Historicist readings. In seventeenth-century England, especially in the years leading up to the civil war, there was no such thing as a "Protestant." As the state church collapsed, the term "Protestant" applied to everyone from strict Laudians and Anglo-Catholics to the most radical Puritans who supported disbanding all vestiges of ecclesiastical structure. There were so many different sects with varying numbers of followers that the term "Protestant" cannot accurately describe the hegemonic faction in English society. If, then, there existed such a wide range of belief in the lead-up to the civil war, it follows that there existed a wide range of potential approaches to reading religious poetry. Certainly the radical Puritan who supported the closing of the cathedrals found Crashaw's poetry heretical. However, since popular belief was so variable across English society, it seems reasonable to assume that a large number of people found it aesthetically valuable. As purely aesthetic products, Richard Crashaw's poems do not embody a "Catholic" form. The form, as it were, of a devotional lyric poem is not partisan. If, then, Crashaw's devotional lyrics fit into the aesthetic categories into which Herbert and Donne were also placed, instead of into the political category of "Catholic heresy," it makes more sense to read his popularity as a consequence of an aesthetic sensibility as opposed to a religious one. Crashaw's works certainly employ primarily Catholic *imagery*. But the larger purpose of the genre of devotional lyric overrides the partisan composition of the images constructed within individual poems. Within generic convention, Crashaw's poems are not blatantly Catholic. This

reading becomes probably only if Crashaw's images are read historically, not generically, outside the context of the other devotional poetry of his time.

The binary that exists between Catholicism and Protestantism represents a historical fact. However, it goes too far to suggest that the historical binary was also a literary one. New Historicism posits that all literature encapsulates culture in a unilateral relationship, but the ideological justification for that concept becomes less solid as one becomes further removed from the present. Ultimately, though its practitioners adamantly deny it, New Historicism operates on the basis generalizations and political oversimplifications. Indeed, "like so many branches of contemporary criticism, [New Historicism] is more interested in present theories than in the past."[19] I suggest that the relationship between literature and culture is far from consistent. If seventeenth-century England is examined against the context of the Middle Ages instead of the Enlightenment, the tendency of non-committal popular religious practice prevails. New Historicism's attempt to align literary sensibility and history results in boldly radical readings of texts. Because New Historicism finds its ultimate foundation in Foucault, whose philosophy reduces culture to a series of power negotiations, New Historicism necessarily reads literary history as a succession of "subversion and containment" events.[20] However, this oversimplification results in ridiculous readings of texts. Brian Vickers uses New Historicist criticism of Shakespeare as an example, but his reasoning applies to any text from the Renaissance:

> The deeper problem is that this formula [of subversion and containment], like Foucault's thesis itself, is so shapeless and undifferentiated as to 'explain' any event. In effect, every play which comes to a coherent conclusion, and ends

[19] Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993), 218.
[20] Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare*, 220.

> neither in uproar, nor in advocating anarchy or the burning of London, can be said on Foucault's principles to 'enact order' and hence 'support state power' – if you are ready to agree that all events other than riots can be seen as legitimizing the state.[21]

To apply Vickers's argument to the problem of Crashaw, New Historicism generalizes the holistic effect of Catholic devotional poetry on the readers of the time. Because biographically-Protestant poets Donne and Herbert were complicit with the state religion, they stand in binary opposition to Crashaw, who, as a consequence of his biography, must have been subverting the status-quo. Thus, New Historicism would reduce the genre of devotional poetry to a simple political binary—Protestant devotion represented propaganda, whereas Catholic devotion was subversive. Clearly this theoretical paradigm does not fit the extant facts: Crashaw was not subversive, and his texts did not inspire riots. In like manner, Donne and Herbert were not agents of the state simply because their religion matched that of the crown. Devotional poetry, as it were, cannot be forced into the neat politicized ideological structure of New Historicism. To do so, paradoxically, neglects the historical significance of the *genre* of devotional poetry.

Stanley Fish, whose reader response criticism initially challenged the historicist aims of literary criticism at large, uses an insightful analogy when describing the intellectually-competent but wrong-headed historicist maneuvers that have encapsulated Renaissance literature into historicist taxonomies. In "Why Milton Matters; or, Against Historicism," Fish recalls that:

> The lesson is simple and it is the one I began with: in the act of assessing a performance you must always be in mind of its point, of what it is trying to do. This was a lesson forgotten by those moviegoers who in 1967 criticized Mike Nichols's *The Graduate* because in a crucial scene the hero, played by Dustin

[21] Ibid.

> Huffman, drives his Alfa Romeo across the upper level of the Bay Bridge in a direction prohibited by the traffic laws. It was said that Nichols spoiled the movie by making this mistake, but it wasn't a mistake at all; it was a cinematic choice that had to do no doubt with the position of the sun, the quality of the light, the panorama available to the camera, and the relation of all of these to the film's dramaturgy. It was to those conventions and conventional resources - the conventions and resources of movie making - that Nichols was being responsible; he was not responsible to the conventions of the documentary or the conventions of news broadcasting or the conventions of history or the conventions of driving practices. Those viewers who held him to the decorums of another practice got hung up on something that was irrelevant to his achievement, and so they missed it.[22]

Fish uses this reference to popular culture to illuminate a larger point about literary studies. The singular point of the film is not necessarily to encapsulate correct history. It is, of course, historicized, but only insomuch as historical context becomes necessary for the generic effectiveness of the film. Nichols's film was not a documentary, and thus correct history was not his primary enterprise in filming it. Indeed, Fish asserts that:

> While it is true that no discourse occupies a privileged, self-defining, independent, and autonomous place, and while it is also true that all discourses are both culturally constituted and constitutive of culture, participating in and productive of a "general social process" they affirm and modify, it can nevertheless be said of a particular discourse that it is separate and distinct; not distinct in the impossible sense of being free-standing, but distinct in the sense that it inflects the general

[22] Stanley Fish, "Why Milton Matters; or, Against Historicism," *Milton Studies* no. 44 (2005): 5

> and shared set of discursive practices in a way appropriate to its claimed function.[23]

Thus, while it is impossible not to historicize a poem in order to contextualize the generic meaning of a poem (insomuch as one must be able to distinguish the Renaissance definition of "sonnet" from the Renaissance definition of "ode"), the generic meaning—not the historical meaning—defines the aesthetic relevance of the poem.

Though Fish justifies why Milton matters by arguing against well-meaning but largely superfluous historicist readings of his texts, the same argument can be applied to Crashaw. Historicized readings of metaphysical poetry undoubtedly categorize it within cultural boundaries of religious doctrine. A historical reading of Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple* finds Catholic structures that substantiate Crashaw's (historically assumed) Catholic doctrine. It is not my goal to challenge those readings. Just as Fish admits, they are intellectually and theoretically sound. However, I pose the question "why?" regarding the critical hammering-away at Crashaw's historical situation. Historicist readings of Crashaw and Taylor place them in isolated cultural taxonomies with diametrically opposed religious doctrines. I do not deny that Crashaw's *religious ideology* was diametrically opposed to Taylor's *religious ideology*. But, as Fish argues, poetry—though unquestionably a product of culture—relies on an entirely separate cultural teleology than religious tracts. It is not entirely productive to show how the supposedly-dogmatic Catholic religious structures in Crashaw's poetry oppose the supposedly-dogmatic Puritan religious structures in Taylor's poetry because religious poems are not sermons. The readers of Crashaw's poetry were not outraged by its supposedly-partisan ideology because the *genre* lacks partisanship. Taylor can use blatantly-Catholic iconography in his Puritan devotional poetry because devotional poetry is not designed to signify specific denominational doctrines, but

[23] Ibid.

images and structures from the Christian faith at large. The discordance between Taylor's sermons and his poetry illuminate this notion; Taylor would never use Catholic iconography in his sermons because sermons are didactic and, as it follows, partisan in their composition. Though sermons were popular in the Renaissance, their audience had different needs than the audience for devotional poetry. The fact that the two genres became more aligned with the modernization of Christianity may be partially to blame for the retrospective misunderstanding of the inconsistency.

Much of this essay consists of a systematic reexamination of New Historicist (and, admittedly, old historicist) assumptions about mid-seventeenth-century England. As critics such as Alison Shell have argued, the supposedly intellectually sophisticated readings that isolate Crashaw as an "other" as just as tainted with denominational bias as the earlier readings that isolated him as "Baroque." To disregard this bias becomes necessary if we are to reconsider the inconsistent place of Richard Crashaw among his Protestant compatriots. The most useful theoretical paradigm for this explanation is not historicism. Rather, the methodology of formalism and New Criticism—the beginnings of which drew Eliot to the metaphysical poets in the first place—provides the best medium for explicating the unity of the genre of 17th century devotional poetry. The generic similarities between Crashaw's poetry and Taylor's outweigh the historical theological differences. Cleanth Brooks wrote that "the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity—the kind of whole which the literary work forms or fails to form, and the relation of various parts to each other in building up this whole."[24] Thus, just as syllabification, rhyme, and metaphor comprise the unified poem, certain formal and structural characteristics unify the genre of 17th century devotional poetry. From the perspective of the

[24] Cleanth Brooks, from "My Credo: Formalist Criticism," in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. (New York: Bedford St Martins, 2007), 798.

reader, it is this unity—not the retrospectively observed theological difference—that made Crashaw just as readable as Donne. Finally, Brooks also wrote that "literature is not a surrogate for religion"[25] A critical aspect of formalism reminds us that literature's purpose is not ultimately to convey ideology. Sermons and poems occupy different formal spaces. Their teleologies are unique. If the purpose of a poem was to convey religious dogma, it would not be a poem. This critical generic truth justifies the formal and structural unity between Taylor's devotional poetry and Crashaw's, and further justifies the theological inconsistency between Taylor's verse and his sermons. Though I do not intend to rehash the tired debate over the point of literary criticism here (it is unfortunately a fruitless endeavor), I shall use formalist methodology—close reading of structural and generic unity—to justify my argument. It is only through close reading, at least in this case, that the historical paradox of Crashaw's popularity can be resolved

2. DEVOTIONAL POETRY AS GENRE

Any attempt to categorize the output of a poet who lived almost four hundred years ago inevitably results in a degree of oversimplification. The religious literature of the seventeenth century, and in fact most aesthetic production in England during that period, stands as particularly difficult to characterize. Though the period has traditionally been anthologized as a part of Renaissance literature (or the dubious term preferred by the New Historicists, "early modern"), the continental Renaissance began two hundred years before Crashaw's generation reached maturity. The original Protestant Reformation was a distant memory to most English people in the 1640s. However, this period of literature fits no better with the rationalism of the eighteenth century; Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson criticized these poets in particular and the genre of religious literature as a whole as being aesthetically problematic and ultimately counterproductive. The religious aesthetic of the period reached its peak by the middle of the

[25] Ibid.

century, and had largely dissipated by the Restoration. These poets who wrote during this relatively short period of time produced a genre of work that defies categorization with the Petrarchan and pastoral poetry and drama of the sixteenth century as well as the highly formal, intellectual poetry that appeared after Milton. It is the goal of this chapter to explicate a more refined definition for the genre of seventeenth-century *devotional* poetry, as distinct from the larger project of "metaphysical" poetry, with an eye towards the critical realignment of attitudes towards Protestant devotional culture that occurred in the 1980s. Louis Martz provides the foundation for this argument, but I hope to employ his work in such a way that demonstrates Crashaw's mastery of the genre.

Louis Martz, in his influential monograph *Poetry of Meditation*, effectively glosses T.S. Eliot's conception of the definition of the larger genre of metaphysical poetry as texts based on

> an acute self-consciousness that shows itself in minute analysis of moods and motives; a conversational tone and accent, expressed in language that is "as a rule simple and pure"; highly unconventional imagery, including the whole range of human experience, from theology to the commonest details of bed and board; an "intellectual, argumentative evolution" within each poem, a "strain of passionate paradoxical reasoning which knits the first line to the last" and which often results in "the elaboration of a figure of speech to the farthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it"; above all, including all, that "unification of sensibility" which could achieve a "direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling…[26]

[26] Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1954), 2.

Where Martz departs from Eliot's analysis, and from which point this essay will argue, is the notion that this definition of "metaphysical" poetry represented not a sharp departure from the literary tradition, spearheaded by Donne, but that it instead represented a "normal, central tendency of religious life in [Donne's] time."[27] Martz suggests instead a *meditative,* not a *metaphysical¸* definition for the poetry typically associated with Donne. He describes "a group of writers, widely different in temper and outlook, drawn together by resemblances that result, basically, from the common practice of certain methods of religious meditation."[28] This realignment of definition away from particular aesthetic, cultural, or religious characteristics allows for different styles of development of Crashaw and his predecessor Robert Southwell to fit still into the same genre of texts as Protestant "mainstream" poets like Donne and Herbert. Indeed, Martz argues, this meditative tradition was not based on Catholic, Anglican, or Puritan partisanship, but was one that appealed to all sides of the religious debate, and was largely free of overt partisanship.

Louis Martz's larger project in *Poetry of Meditation* was to align the devotional poetry of the seventeenth century, in particular the work of Donne, Herbert, and Vaughn, to the meditative discipline of St. Ignatius. Martz describes the larger process of private devotion to consist primarily of "mental prayer"—an idea separate and distinct from liturgical prayer.[29] This mental prayer, he goes on to argue, functions as a "formal meditation, falling into three distinguishable portions, corresponding to acts of memory, understanding, and will—portions which we might call composition, analysis, and colloquy."[30] He suggests that by the time Crashaw and his contemporaries were writing, the rigid structure of Jesuit meditation (which was highly

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 26.
[30] Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 38.

intellectual) had relaxed across Europe, and that indeed meditative poetry did not necessarily remain strict to Jesuit methodology.[31] Ultimately, Martz reasons that meditative poetry "speaks a language based on that of common men, but including whatever in its own experience is unique and individual.[32] This explanation is key to Martz's argument for generic continuity between poets as far apart aesthetically and theologically as Donne and Crashaw. He goes on to justify this claim with examples from opposite ends of the meditative canon, stating that "if the self is learned and theological in its best, then common speech will be infused with learned, theological terms and ways of thought, as is in the case of Donne. However, on the other hand, "the self [may find] itself inflamed with the hagiographic devotions of the counter Reformation—these too will find their way through common speech and live within the baroque poems of Crashaw."[33] The intended effect upon the reader serves as the generic frame for devotional and/or meditative poetry. Thus, regardless of the specific theological inclination of the author, devotional poetry of the seventeenth century is designed in such a way that it has universal appeal. Protestants can read the spiritual significance of Crashaw's poems just as well as Catholics, and did so, based on the frequency of Crashaw's publication.

Martz's monograph lacks a serious analysis of Crashaw's canon. Though Martz mentions Crashaw as a crucial component of the seventeenth-century tradition, he only presents a few fragments of poetry for explication. Because of this omission, Crashaw's place among the devotional poets has remained ambiguous.

The tendency to oversimplify Renaissance-era devotional habits, and the fervor of religious partisanship, to either rigorously Protestant or subversively Catholic camps leads to the critical tendency to categorize devotional habits with vertical religious dogma. This

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[31] Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 56.
[32] Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 323.
[33] Ibid.

oversimplification results from a misunderstanding of the purpose of devotional poetry (and of devotional practice at large). Indeed, even the early critics of so-called "metaphysical poetry) misunderstood the genre's teleology to such a degree that they could only see the surface images as partisan ploys for religious dogma. Lorraine Roberts argues that

> too often discussions of wit in seventeenth-century poetry have focused on surface manifestation—the conceit and the image—and have ignored the underlying structure that is a product of wit as well. Indeed, the word conceit does not apply on to image, but has its roots in the concept *idea*; thus it is appropriate to emphasize the wit of a poem may reside not just in its surface images but in its structure as well, in its subtle unveiling of a theme[34]

The structure of devotional poetry functions as a process, not as a product, and if read as it seems to have been intended by the poets, this process does not reflect specific doctrines. No poet of the mid-seventeenth century suffered such a gross misunderstanding as Richard Crashaw. Indeed, "much attention has been given to surface features such as imagery and the use of rhetorical devices, but little or none to the way Crashaw structures his poems around a central idea."[35] Crashaw's image set and use of rhetorical devices reflects a Catholic mindset, and for that reason criticism of Crashaw takes this supposed Catholicism as a given when executing readings of his texts. If Crashaw's devotional poetry is taken out of its partisan context, though, it remains structurally consistent with the best of the "metaphysical" poets, and it is for this reason that Crashaw was just as popular as Herbert in his own time.

The ambiguity of seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry's place along the continuum of theological poetry speaks to the aesthetic and cultural turmoil of the period. Indeed, the

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[34] Lorraine Roberts, "The Truewit of Crashaw's Poetry," in *The Wit of Seventeenth Century Poetry.* Ed. Claude Summers * Ted-Larry Pebworth, (Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1995, 174.
[35] Ibid, 171.

original Reformation of the sixteenth century was a distant memory by the time Crashaw wrote, but as I mention above, there existed more theological dissonance in the mid-seventeenth century between sects of Protestants than between Protestants and recusant Catholics. This notion becomes further complicated by the fact that Protestantism in England never had a unilateral and systematic set of beliefs, despite attempts to codify such a system from the State. Christopher Haigh notes that, in so doing, the Protestant government of the sixteenth century (namely Elizabeth), "created a Protestant nation, but not a nation of Protestants."[36] There exists no doubt in my mind that the elite of English society had a fully developed notion of what it meant to be a Protestant Christian. However, as cultural studies has helped to uncover the "popular mind" as opposed to the mind of the elite, it seems very likely that the vast majority of people in England during the renaissance had "a hazy notion that being a Christian involved trying to avoid sinfulness and trying to get on with your neighbors," and that church attendance was just one of the many arbitrary laws they faced on a daily basis.[37] Heterodoxy and ambiguity dominated English theology since the split from Rome. However, the seventeenth century represented an intellectual crossroads for Protestant belief. If anything, this period can be "described as 'post-Reformation,' but not thoroughly 'Protestant.'"[38] This careful distinction explains why Crashaw's biographical Catholicism created such controversy, but his Catholic aesthetic sensibilities did not. *The Cambridge History of Early Modern Literature* paints a portrait of the period that, though dramatic, effectively conveys the spirit of the age, stating that

> it [the period 1640-60] was frequently characterized by an exhilarating freedom, a high dependence on contingency, a rugged individualism, extraordinary

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[36] Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1993) 280.
[37] Peter Marshall, *Reformation England: 1480-1642*, (New York: Arnold, 2003), 143.
[38] Peter Marshall qting Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, IN *Reformation England*, 162.

> improvisation and a central authority trying and largely failing to impose rules and inappropriate order…. As men and women saw institutions vanish which had seemed as fixed and permanent as the peak of a mountain or the course of a river—monarchy, House of Lords, the established church—so the social and cultural constructions which had seemed just as adamantine came under challenge.[39]

Against this period of cultural turmoil, the seventeenth-century devotional poets published their best work. If society at large lacked definitions for Religious institutions, there can be no doubt that the majority of seventeenth-century readers were too disoriented to associate ambiguous popular partisanship to the words they read in a poem. This dissonance between aesthetic sensibility and larger religious culture was nothing new. Throughout the Reformation, vestiges of Catholicism remained in the English popular mindset. Though the fundamental beliefs changed with time, the images associated with those beliefs were slower to change. Eamon Duffy, a historian of Medieval and Renaissance English Catholicism, notes that

> [the] religion of Elizabethan England was of course full of continuities with and developments of what had gone before. Even after the iconoclastic hammers and scraping-tools of conviction Protestantism had done their worst, enough of the old imagery and old resonances remained in the churches in which the new religion was preached to complicate, even, in the eyes of some, to compromise, the new teachings.[40]

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[39] David Toewenstein and John Morrill, "Literature and Religion" IN *The Cambridge History of Early Modern Literature*, ed. David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller, (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 664-65.
[40] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, 2nd Edition (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 4.

Thus, if typical English Protestants were still being exposed to elements of "traditional religion"[41] in their local parishes without significant discord, they probably lacked the critical foundation to distinguish between traditional and Protestant motifs in literature. Though the vestiges of traditional religion likely diminished throughout the seventeenth century, they did not disappear completely. The dogmatic language of Puritanism dominated discourse only at the most elite levels of the church and the state, from its origins in the early seventeenth century through the interregnum period. Not only that, but Puritan iconoclastic dogma did not have a unilateral effect on images (and, as it follows, images within poetry). It would be a fallacy to state that Puritanism necessarily requires the removal of all images, as much of Puritan culture was image-driven (those images varied in composition of course). What can be said of seventeenth-century iconoclasm is this:

> the scene of such writing [devotional poetry] is set at the crossroads where a lively tradition of image-making confronts a militantly logocentric theology armed not only with an overt hostility to 'images' in worship but with a deep suspicion of the idolatrous potential of the fallen mind and its fallen language.[42]

That paradigm does not mean, however, that images ceased to flourish; rather, as Gilam argues, "the creative power of sixteenth and seventeenth-century literature is released at crucial moments when the visual resources of the poet are challenged by a conception of language disinfected, in its blind and often violent purity, of any appeal to the eye."[43] Crashaw was one part of that "creative power," and existed on a continuum of interrogation of images. He did not write, as most critics have suggested, on the outside of the continuum. Louis Martz further develops this notion of the fragmentation of aesthetics and doctrine when he writes that

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[41] Ibid, 3.
[42] Ernest Gilman, *Iconoclasm and the Poetry of the English Reformation*, (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986), 11.
[43] Ibid.

> it is not surprising to find, from the evidence of printed English books, that by the opening of the seventeenth century a large proportion of the English public had taken to heart the fruits of the Counter-Reformation in the realm of inward devotion. These continental practices of meditation combined with the older traditions of primer and private prayer, and with the inward surge of Puritanism, to produce in the seventeenth century an era or religious fervor unmatched in English history.[44]

Martz's language here goes too far by labeling English devotional practices as "continental." To make that assertion suggests that the English people were aware that their methods of devotion were continental. Though they were certainly based on Counter-Reformation models, I have little doubt that they considered what they were doing to be thoroughly English. As Martz continues to argue, the substance of devotion was so essential to the late-Renaissance mind that doctrinal or geographical borders were largely irrelevant.

Uniformity of belief was a fantasy in the seventeenth century; Crashaw himself remained in the English church while he composed some of his most "Catholic" poetry. If the Catholic poet himself was not yet actually a Catholic, certainly his readers held variable beliefs. It would not be preposterous to postulate that a parishioner in a particularly Puritan area could read Crashaw's poems without a second glance. The seventeenth century was a period of disorientation in England, for poets and their readership. Order and orthodoxy are modern constructs that critics superimpose on the period to extrapolate political ideology; they were not so much present in the period itself.

Because I argue against the false dichotomy between Catholic and Protestant devotional habits in poetry based on the assumption that devotional poetry derives primarily from images

[44] Louis Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 9.

themselves—whether they are emblems, epigrams, or icons—it is necessary to explore the complex nature of iconoclasm in the post-Reformation mindset. As Eamon Duffy suggests, the destruction of images in England during the Reformation was not necessarily based on an immediate and radical shift in cultural ideology. Its effect was an organic one. Patrick Collinson notes about the extended English Reformation that

> English Protestantism regressed, becoming less not more popular in character, as we proceed from the mid-sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, and from a time when the Reformation was associated with novelty, youth, insubordination and iconoclasm (when indeed it was still a protest) to the period of its middle aged, if not middle-class preoccupations, and when its attacks on traditional culture met with widespread and popular resistance.[45]

The popular practice of Reformation theology stands particularly relevant to meditative poetry, which was, fundamentally, a public medium, just like literal icons, in an age of increasing literacy and intellectual sophistication. However, the motivation for iconoclasm was not driven entirely by doctrinal conviction. Indeed, one plausible explanation for the difference in attitude towards actual icons and towards iconographic poetry is that the fervor and anger of the Reformation, at least on the popular level, targeted the ecclesiastical structure of the Church itself. Icons represented the institution of the Church, not necessarily its beliefs. Religious poetry, though using the same images, was not an official product of the Church. As I will show below in my analysis of Edward Taylor, major theological arguments are often rooted in differences in opinion regarding ecclesiastical structure as opposed to the raw materials that

[45] Patrick Collinson, "From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation," in *The Impact of the English Reformation 1550-1640* ed. Peter Marshall, (London: Edward Arnold, 1997), 279.

support belief (like images). It is, rather, the way those images fit into an institutional system that leads to dissonance.

Aesthetic theory naturally follows the culture at large, but the progression of the former does not necessarily align promptly with the latter. Devotional poetry, and Renaissance art in general, necessitate a "deep affiliation of literary and pictorial art."[46] Poetry in particular had what might now be described as a hallucinogenic property. It was designed to generate an image in the mind's eye. Thus, its function could be both corporeal and epistemological. Ernest Gilman, alluding to Horace, describes poetry as

> A "speaking picture," its figures and structures designed by creative acts as fully visual as verbal. Yet he [the Renaissance poet] also knew, on the authority of the Reformation's attack on idolatry, that not only devotional images in churches but the very imaging power of the mind was tainted by the pride and sensuality of fallen humanity and open to the perils of worship misdirected from the Creator to the creation. From the one point of view, *picture* and *poesis* were companionable sisters in the service of the poet's art; from the other, the word was the bulwark of the spirit against the carnal enticements of the image.[47]

Gilman's last assertion defines an important distinction I hope to argue regarding the readability of metaphysical poetry. To an extent, his two points of view fall respectively to Catholic and Protestant aesthetic teleology as it relates to devotional poetry. For the Catholic reader of devotional poetry, the image depicted in verse serves as the catalyst for the imagination of an actual image, and thus the spiritual essence of the image itself (that essence being the function of all Roman Catholic icons). For the Protestant, however, the poem's words, not the image they

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[46] Ernest Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation*, 1.
[47] Ibid, 1.

construct, hold the devotional power. These epistemological perspectives are not mutually exclusive. They represent slightly different interpretations of devotional material, based on theology. Readers of devotional lyrics certainly interpreted the aesthetic content in a very individual manner consistent with their personal beliefs. Regardless of the theological orientation of the reader, the poem itself serves as a catalyst, but its imagery does not have to result in the same effect on every reader; rather, the poem's imagery aligns to the individual theology of the reader. The raw material remains the same—only the manner in which that material is used by the reader determines the theological orientation of a poem.

The theological situation of images and the words that contain them represents an essential part of my enterprise to dismantle the historical assumptions surrounding Richard Crashaw's literary reputation. Iconoclasm was not a static process, and its practice was not uniform. The Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 (almost a century before Crashaw's works), which was an essential expression of Calvinist doctrine, establishes that:

> we should not portray God in any way, nor worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word… For we should not presume to be wiser than God, who does not want Christendom to be taught by means of dumb idols, but through the living preaching of his *word* .[48]

This brief justification of Protestant iconoclasm, in the form of a dialectic, underscores an important point (though perhaps not explicitly). Iconoclasm was understood largely to condemn physical images—icons. Though the same structures and motifs that were present in the stained glass of Catholic cathedrals were present in Crashaw's poetry (often in radicalized form), even the most fundamental doctrinal arguments for iconoclasm did not make clear that physical

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[48] Alister McGrath Ed, "The Heidelber Catechism on Images of God," in *The Christian Theology Reader* 2nd Edition, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 27.

images were equal to literary images. The Council of Trent, from the opposite perspective, decries idolatry in the Twenty-Fifth session. The Catholic belief asserts that idolatry results specifically from the abuse of images, not from the images themselves. In a way, the arguments are the same; the Calvinist decree simply does not place as much trust in the believer not to misuse images. Austin Warren describes the differing Protestant and Catholic attitudes most succinctly in his monograph *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility* when he states that:

> Protestant and Catholic attitudes towards the arts differ significantly. The one will have no "graven images" of the supernatural; probably Hebrew in its origin, it reappears in [Islam], in iconoclastic movements, in Calvinism; for it, the senses are seductive—instruments of the flesh, enemies of the spirit. The other—more ancient—more indulgent—incorporates elements of Greek polytheism and Platonism; it sees a ladder of ascent from beautiful things to beautiful minds and beautiful souls, and finally, to that unchanging Beauty which is, if not God, then in God. It sees the Incarnation not only as an event in time but as a sanctification of the body and the senses[49]

Warren's characterization of Protestant iconoclasm stands starkly abstract in definition. Indeed, Protestant iconoclastic *belief* follows a simple logical pattern: Images are comprehended by the senses, the senses are intrinsically evil, and therefore because images are comprehended by evil senses, they too are evil and should be destroyed. There exists in this reasoning an obvious gap, however, in that the images themselves are *not* intrinsically evil, and Protestant doctrine does not state such an idea. Idolatry is the sin. Therefore I suggest that Protestant religious *practice* makes much more room for images than its *belief* might suggest. Since iconoclasm is understood so

[49] Austin Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan UP, 1939), 66.

abstractly, and there exists room for logical negotiation with the doctrine, there can be no doubt that certain Protestants—even Puritans—did not translate the crashing of the hammer upon altars to the destruction of emblematic poetry.

Regardless, though, the Protestant eschewing of images finds its replacement quickly in the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. Indeed, Protestant diatribes on iconoclasm tend to idolize (for the lack of a better term) the *word*. Though this use is always in the context of the Biblical word, the elevation of divinely inspired *words* is not problematic for Protestant theologians. It does not push too much farther to allow for Crashaw's literary images to fit into the same paradigm of divine words. Since Protestant devotional practices were driven by the Bible, and thus by *words*, it is not out of line to suggest that Protestants might not attack Crashaw's poetry with the same iconoclastic fervor as they did their parish churches. In fact, as Eamon Duffy might argue, the literary images may have actually replaced the literal images as devotional catalysts for a people not entirely comfortable with the systematic destruction of traditional religious practice.

Devotional poetry relies upon metaphor. The affective power of that metaphor, however, depends largely upon the reader's theological context. Helen Wilcox effectively explains this generic condition by establishing a correlation between the aesthetic effect of "wit" and the religious effect of "devotion:'

> A further parallel lies in the dependence of both devotion and sacred wit on the effect they achieve. While devotion is clearly concerned with the state of an individual's soul, its main focus lies outside the worshiper, on the object of worship. Wit, too, though often apparently arising from the poet's obsessive desire to be ingenious, requires a reader for its full effect. *Devotional wit may*

> *even be defined by its influence on the audience, bearing in mind that this could be both human and divine.*[50]

This notion of wit helps to define the genre outside the bounds of doctrine or didactic teleology. Wilcox further states that "the wit of discovery , personal and communal, is one means of reconciling invention and faithfulness."[51] This act of reconciliation need not depend exclusively upon the tenants of Protestantism or of Catholicism.

Thus, there exists a fundamental relationship between the epistemological and metaphysical affective power of the devotional text and the Sacrament of the Eucharist, itself. The Eucharist remains, for both Catholics and Protestants, the most powerful sacrament (among the other six of Catholicism, and between itself and Baptism for Protestantism). As specifically codified by the Council of Trent, Catholics justify the affective power of the Sacrament by way of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. The Council of Trent reaffirmed the patristic notion of Transubstantiation in its 13th session:

> Because Christ our Redeemer declared that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the belief of the Church of God, which this sacred council reaffirms, that by the consecration of the bread and wine a change takes place in which the entire substance of the bread becomes the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and the whole substance of the wine becomes the substance of his blood.[52]

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[50] Helen Wilcox, "The Case for Devotional Poetry," in *The Wit of Seventeenth Century Poetry*. Ed. Claude Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, (Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1995, 15. (emphasis mine)
[51] Helen Wilcox, "The Case of Devotional poetry," 15.
[52] *The Christian Theology Reader*, "The Council of Trent on Transubstantiation," 555.

This metaphysical understanding of the Eucharist stands in clear opposition to Calvin's epistemological understanding of the Sacrament, as offered in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

> It seems to me that a simple and proper definition is that it [the Sacrament] is an outward sign by which the Lord seals our consciences the promises of his good will towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and by which we in turn bear witness to our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of His angels, and before human brings… it is a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign…. [53]

The difference between an epistemological and an affective interpretation of the sacrament is analogous to the difference between Catholic and Protestant reader context for metaphysical poetry. Indeed, for the Catholic reader coming from Richard Crashaw's own Catholic context, the Sacramental imagery in his poetry singularly affects the reader. Just as the Sacrament of the Eucharist literally changes accident to substance, Crashaw's meditative poetry should affect a metaphysical change in the reader's soul.

This does not say however, that Crashaw's poetry should alienate a Protestant reader who does not believe in affective piety. Indeed, the Protestant reader approaches meditative poetry the same way he approaches the Sacrament. It does not affect a corporeal or essential change in the reader; rather, like the memorial nature of the Sacrament, it is an epistemological catalyst for the mind of the saved. Just as the Protestant Eucharist serves to reaffirm faith in the mind of the converted, the Protestant meditation reaffirms the intellectual authority of the reader's faith. It cannot, in itself, change the essence of his faith, but it can fortify it.

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[53] *The Christian Theology Reader*, From *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 551.

Ultimately, I argue, the "accidents" of Crashaw's poetry are the same as Taylor's. Only in "substance" do they differ, and as is true with the Eucharist, the "substance" depends largely on the reader. It is my argument that, despite a few cursory condemnations of actual Catholic doctrine in Taylor's meditations, and a few cursory calls on Crashaw's part for the reader to join the earthly Catholic Church, the raw material in Crashaw and Taylor is the same. A Puritan could read Crashaw's poetry and use it to intellectually fortify his faith, and a Catholic could read Taylor's poetry and use it as a means of spiritual affliction and affective piety. Thus, despite theological differences, the *genre* of metaphysical poetry is not bound by *doctrine*, but by *aesthetic tradition*—which, I argue, is both inter-denominational and transatlantic.

To summarize, then, what we can say is that devotional poetry, as a genre, was broadly defined as transfigurative, affective, and ultimately Eucharistic as a rule. These characteristics are not mutually exclusive to Protestantism or to Catholicism; only the ultimate teleological ends differ between the Churches. The poetry itself employs objectively transfigruative structures which exist and operate independent of theological partisanship. The structures are ambivalent enough to acquiesce to any Christian theological system. Thus, the aesthetic composition of Eucharistic imagery in Crashaw's poetry is the same as the composition in Taylor's; both are generic enough to be compatible with Protestant or Catholic doctrine. The ecumenical Christian church finds its foundation in the same narrative, the same images, and ultimately the same spiritual effects. Puritans and Catholics both have the Eucharist. Only the interpretation differs. It follows, then, that devotional poetry as a genre is ecumenical—it is based on a common foundation and difference exists only in the theology employed in its interpretation.

3. CRASHAW'S MEDITATIVE VOICE

Richard Crashaw was the only major Catholic religious poet of the early to mid-seventeenth century. John Donne's conversion to the Reformed faith took place early enough in his life as to prevent canonical association with Catholicism. Herbert, Marvell, and Herrick were solidly Protestant, though with varying degrees of enthusiasm. There is little doubt that, by the 1640s, most English people considered themselves Protestant. The pockets of recusant, or underground, Catholics were sparse, and limited primarily to isolated, rural parishes. Thus, most readers of poetry probably would have identified themselves as Protestant when Crashaw's corpus of devotional poetry was published in 1648 for the first time. However, based upon the claim that Crashaw's work represented the culmination of the devotional tradition, largely independent of his biographical doctrines, Crashaw's work was popular in the seventeenth century because its readers did not find an obvious analog to Catholicism. What they read seemed to them as English as the work of Herbert and Donne.

There are a number of common mischaracterizations, even in major anthologies of Renaissance literature, about Richard Crashaw and his body of work. These assumptions do not imply malice, but they do demonstrate a certain historical bias against Catholicism that has existed throughout English literary history. The first of these mischaracterizations regards Crashaw's biography; he was, in fact, a "conforming member" of the Anglican communion until 1645, four years before his death.[54] This means that Crashaw composed some of his most "Catholic" and "baroque" poetry, at least in sensibility, before he converted to Catholicism. Though Crashaw was ejected from his fellowship at Peterhouse College in 1644 for his sensibilities, he was not alone; Puritan authorities associated Peterhouse with Laudianism, *not*

[54] Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660,* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1999), 93

Catholicism.[55] There was of course a clear relationship between Laud's Anglican church and the Church in Rome, but the fact that the Puritans characterized Peterhouse as a whole as heretical suggests more about the politics of the period and of the motivations of the Puritans to eliminate opposition within the religious hierarchy than it does about specific qualms with belief. Crashaw was ejected from Peterhouse not because of his "baroque" aesthetic sensibilities, but because of his political association with the Anglican Church, which had fallen from favor. Indeed, Crashaw wrote many of his most famous lyrics while he was still complicit with the Anglican communion.

Crashaw himself asserted, in verse, that devotional poetry need not embody religious partisanship. Crashaw conceded that much of his imagery derived from continental sources, but he asserted that, despite that fact, his poetry is no less English.[56] In his "An Apologie for the precedent Hymne," from *Steps to the Temple*, Crashaw writes "What soule soever in any Language can / Speake heaven like hers, is my soules country-man. / *O' tis not Spanish, but tis heaven she speaks*…" ("An Apologie," 21-23, emphasis mine). [57] Crashaw argues a generic point in this passage—not a theological or doctrinal one. Devotional poetry, Crashaw seems to suggest, should embody the divine. He infers that the divine exists independent of Church politics or national affiliation. Crashaw's supposed-affiliation with non-English, or alien, sensibilities has resulted in his negative critical reception. However, this association has as much to do with denominational bias as it does with actual aesthetic qualities on the page.

The English canon is rife with non-English sensibilities; in fact, other than the few manuscripts extant from before 1066, *all* English literature embodies international aesthetic

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid, 690.
[57] All subsequent citations from L.C. Martin, *The Poems of Richard Crashaw*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). Unless otherwise noted, citations are from the 1646 edition of *Steps to the Temple*.

sensibilities. Crashaw's work, however, receives the brunt of criticism for its purported international nature. The *Norton Anthology of English Literature* states about Crashaw's place within the English canon that he "is a phenomenon unique in Anglo-Saxon taste… his roots seem to be sunk less in English literature than in Italian, Spanish, and neo-Latin writings."[58] Because Crashaw does not embody "Anglo-Saxon" taste (whatever that means in Renaissance literature), he stands as "isolated" within the Renaissance canon.[59] Though this description is not overtly dismissive of Crashaw, it does establish his otherness among his contemporaries. However, "when Spenser writes in Italian fashions, it enriches English culture and helps to make Spenser a major poet," but Crashaw's Italianate structures are "foreign."[60] They differ, of course, in that Spenser professed party-line Protestantism and was a close ally of the Protestant Elizabethan court. They also lived in very different political and religious environments, and in fact in different centuries. Regardless, Crashaw was deemed a political outsider in his own time. The conclusion we can draw from this ideological bias posits that Crashaw's critical reception has had much to do with the political and religious controversy of the period, and the still-significant bias against Roman Catholics in England to this day. Crashaw himself believed that his devotional lyrics fit squarely into the generic tradition of his contemporaries.

I argue that, for Crashaw, the complex signification of simple doctrines, and likewise the simplistic signification of complex theological ideas, served as enlightening devotional exercises for the 17th century reader. Both Protestants and Catholics saw the devotional value of metaphysical depiction of the divine; they differed only in the ultimate effect of that depiction. That being said, I am suggesting that Protestants viewed Crashaw's poetry as imagery with the goal of establishing a mindset for spiritual conversion, while Catholics viewed it with the goal of

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[58] M.H. Abrams, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. I, (New York: Norton, 1993), 388-89.
[59] Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination*, 56.
[60] Ibid.

overwhelming the senses to *metamorphize* the spirit. Crashaw's decline in popularity that occurred in the eighteenth century agrees with the historical circumstances surrounding his biography and to the changing definition of poetic sensibilities, from affective to intellectual, that occurred at the same time. The apparently-Catholic baroque metaphysicality of Crashaw's poetry is obvious to a historically-removed eye, but not necessarily to an eye rooted deeply in devotional theology as was the seventeenth-century reader. The solution to this problem of interpretation is found not in history, but in genre. Helen Wilcox concludes that the metaphysical poets "have been shown to share distinctive attitudes to words and the Word, poetic structures, emblematic modes, transcendence, and the baptismal humility of their own calling. There was indeed a generic frame within which these poets, however uneasily, were working."[61] Indeed, this uneasy, interrogative genre does not align exactly with party-line Protestant ideology.

I do not mean to argue that Crashaw's poetry is idyllically Protestant, but for a 17th century reader, the glaring theological difference that is apparent to the modern literary critic is not so evident. Furthermore, the Renaissance definition of poetry was multi-tiered. Indeed, "not all antipoetic sentiment (and other forms of iconoclasm) stemmed from [Protestant] religious beliefs."[62] Readers of the period implied a significant difference between poetry in the service of God and mere witty expressions on the page; if metaphysical imagery works towards the divine, the Protestant mind did not find it sinful.[63] The first poem in the *Steps to the Temple* collection is "The Weeper," which is arguably one of Crashaw's most universally popular and most outrageously metaphysical texts. However theologically suspect in the modern Protestant eye, Crashaw's stanzas are complex intellectual exercises in imagination for the reader:

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[61] Helen Wilcox, "Curious Frame: The Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric as Genre," in *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth Century English Religious Lyric* Ed. John Roberts, (Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1994), 27.
[62] Paul Voss, " 'Created Good and Faire'- The Fictive Imagination and Sacred Texts in Elizabethan England," *Literature and Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (June 2000), 130.
[63] Ibid.

Vpwards thou dost weepe,

Heavens bosome drinks the gentle streame

Where th'milky rivers meet,

Thine Crawles above and is the Creame

Heaven, of such faire floods as this,

Heaven, the Christall Ocean is. (4. 1-6)[64]

We, as historically-mature and removed critics, jump right to the metaphysical imagery of the first four lines, which we associate with the baroque. It is overwhelming for a critical eye, but for an imaginative, contemplative eye, it provides a challenging depiction of heaven. Richard Rambuss notes that, for the seventeenth-century reader, "the gravity-defying heavenward trajectory of the true penitent's tears (too precious to be split) was something of a devotional commonplace."[65] As Alison Shell also notes, seventeenth-century devotional lyrics from Protestant poets work with tear-imagery, as well.[66]

This Protestant reading of Crashaw's verse may not reflect his intentions for the poem, but as the New Critics taught us, the author's intentions remain largely irrelevant to his interpretation by contemporary audiences, especially in a society where cultural literacy and common context cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, Protestants *did* read Crashaw's poetry differently from Catholics, and that is why Crashaw's poetry managed to enter the English canon during a period in English history rife with religious conflict and anti-Catholic rhetoric. Eugene Cunnar notes that "the typical Puritan/Protestant response to theological or ritual symbols was to focus on the normative or cognitive element" and that, ultimately, "interpretations of Crashaw's

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[64] All subsequent citations from L.C. Martin, *The Poems of Richard Crashaw*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

[65] Richard Rambuss. "Sacred Subjects and the Aversive Metaphysical Conceit: Crashaw, Serrano, Ofili." *ELH*. No. 71. (2004): 502.

[66] See Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination*, 56-106

liminal imagery from this perspective misreads a significant and valid part of meaning."[67] For a later reader, this common imagination is not the case, and thus the conceit seems like it must operate within a distinctly Catholic aesthetic and theological context.

. The major problem with essentializing the Catholic structure of Crashaw's devotional poems occurs because of the assumption that his poetry and biography are corollary. Even Cunnar admits that "any given religious lyric might be problematic in exhibiting tensions and contradictions in the author and his or her society."[68] Indeed, Sidney Gottlieb reminds us that "Yeats once remarked that the poet's church has an altar but no pulpit."[69] Crashaw was removed from his university position and exiled from England for his Catholicism. These biographical facts are quite static. However, Crashaw's books were not burned, nor were they banned from England. To assume that Crashaw's readers had a fully-developed understanding of the relationship of the poems they read to the man who was sent to Holland for his Catholicism generalizes the Protestant readership base. I do not seek to deny the historical fact that the Protestant hierarchy in England hated Catholics, and probably hated Richard Crashaw. In one instance, Puritan investigators generated an entire page of complaints about his Popish ritualistic practices.[70] However, no such complaints exist regarding the content of Crashaw's devotional poetry, which speaks volumes to the Protestant perspective on the written word. In fact, Protestant doctrine on the written word supports much of what Crashaw tries to present in verse.

The final pun in the last line of "The Weeper" further substantiates a bifurcated reading. The ambiguity between "crystal" and "Christ-all" serves as the catalyst for devotional

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[67] Eugene Cunnar, "Opening the Religious Lyric: Crashaw's Ritual, Liminal, and Visual Wounds," in *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth Century English Religious Lyric* Ed. John Roberts, (Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1994), 238.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Sidney Gottlieb, "Herbert's Case of 'Conscience': Public or Private Poem?" *SEL* no. 25 (1985): 109.
[70] Eugene Cunnar, "Opening the Religious Lyric," 259.

contemplation—the "normative" and "cognitive" material that feeds Protestant meditative practice. The Protestant reader's response must be epistemological. He considers the relationship of the corporeal "crystal" to the divine "Christ-all," and the semiotic function of these words. The Catholic reader, on the other hand, has a metaphysical response. He *sees* the crystal, and thus, by way of an imagination compelled to transfigure, *sees* Christ. The Catholic response is metaphysical, whereas the Protestant response is metaphorical. The theology behind each response is mutually exclusive, and thus the readings are irreconcilable. For the most part, the "Catholic writers stress the nearness of God to His creation, the Protestant writers the distance between God and His creation; the Protestants emphasize the risk of superstition and idolatry, the Catholics the dangers of a creation in which God in only marginally present."[71] Both types of devotional philosophy find usefulness in poetry; whereas the Protestants use it to better hone their mind to approach the greatness of God, Catholics use it to remind themselves of God's presence in their everyday lives. For both kinds of readers, the lines preceding this "catalyst" serve to situate the reader's mind and soul, metaphorically or metaphisically, *in* heaven.

The preface to the 1646 edition of Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple* outlines the poet's conception of the affective power of devotional poetry. Protestant theology is not averse to affective meditation—only the end-result is different. Both transfigurative and cognitive results seem possible based on Crashaw's justification:

> So maist thou take a poem hence, and tune thy soule by it, into a heavenly pitch; and thus refined and borne up upon the wings of meditiation, in these poems thou maist talke freely of God, and of that other state […] Divine Poetry: I dare hold it, in position against Suarez on the subject, to be the language of the angels; it is the

[71] Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination*, (Los Angeles: California UP, 2000), 5.

> quintessence of phantasie and discourse center'd in Heaven; 'tis the very ongoings of the soule (Preface, 9-12, 20-23).

McDowell notes on this passage that "readers educated in early modern rhetoric were no strangers to the function of divine poetry as a kind of spiritual meditiation, a means of literally taking charge of their spiritual/psychological conditions." [72] For the Protestant, though, the poem does not situate the reader *in* heaven, through spiritual metamorphosis, but points the spirit *towards* heaven. Overwhelming images for the Catholic reader are just that: they serve to overwhelm earthly senses and transfigure the spirit to explore divine sensations. Protestant theology does not emphasize the interplay between the divine and the earthly—they are necessarily separate spheres. But, by reading poetry which pushes the limits of earthly sensation, the Protestant exercises his mind and, thus, refines his spirit. The essential point is, perhaps, that the poems are not intended to convey dogma; furthermore, their initial readers did not draw from them polarized doctrinal structures. Doctrine is present, but not paramount, in the seventeenth-century reception of devotional lyric. They are, in themselves, devotional catalysts; or, to put it another way, they provide the raw material for devotion.

This ambivalence of theological orientation for the poetry speaks more to the genre of seventeenth-century religious *poetry* than it does to seventeenth-century religious *doctrine.* If we consider Crashaw as part of a larger generic enterprise—that of metaphysical devotional poetry—rather than the historical enterprise of recusant Catholicism—his apparent discord with his contemporaries is less blatant. Helen Wilcox recalls that, though the public theology of the English church was increasingly static, the same could not be said of the theological structures of devotional poetry:

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[72] Sean McDowell, "From 'Lively' Art to 'Glitt'ring Expressions' : Crashaw's Initial Reception Reconsidered." *John Donne Journal*. No. 24. (2005): 243.

> The poems in question were, after all, written by the first generation of English poets who had grown up alongside, or within, the post-Reformation English church. It would be quite inaccurate to suggest that this *historical positioning* gave writers any kind of uniform theology or undisturbed doctrine.[73]

The historical position of metaphysical poetry does not provide an accurate taxonomy of its meaning. However, she continues, a consideration of the genre itself is more fruitful, and serves as the basis for common ground:

> They [devotional poets] took very seriously, for instance, the potential of the English language to express, as much as any human system of expression could, their experience of the divine; the book of Common Prayer and the arguments of Sir Philip Sidney combined to release the possibilities in the vernacular at just this moment of English history.[74]

And ultimately, Protestant theology itself, with its self-conscious interrogation of historical doctrine and its emphasis on the individual contemplation of the divine "made the early seventeenth century a particularly auspicious moment for the growth of devotional writing in England."[75] Thus, to historicize Crashaw as theologically isolated from the rest of his contemporaries forces a taxonomy onto the metaphysical poets that they consciously rejected. If anything, "the intensively verbal sense of God and the redemptive process" represents a common theme throughout seventeenth-century devotional poetry, and that quality stands not as singularly Protestant or Catholic.[76]

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[73] Helen Wilcox, "Curious Frame," 10-11 (emphasis mine)
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, 12.

Later in "The Weeper," Crashaw reminds his Catholic and High Church audiences that his emphasis on ornate physicality has a clear purpose in mind. However, this conclusion stands as one to which Protestants could relate as well. While the ultimate teleological effect of the poem differs between Protestants and Catholics, the means by which that the reader receives that effect remains the same:

We goe not to seeke
The darlings of Aurora's bed,
The Roses modest cheeke
Nor the Violets humble head.
No such thing; we goe to meet
A worthier object, *Our Lords* feet. (23. 1-6)

Just as in the four stanza, above, the first four lines overwhelm the reader with a complex and imaginatively challenging image of heaven, which construct the reader's mindset for the proper reception of the devotional aphorism in the couplet. Despite the signification of Christ's physical feet, this depiction is not necessarily iconographic, as it does not blazon Christ in any way. Because of the aphorism's minimalism, it affects a Protestant devotional response just as well as a Catholic one. The Catholic reader sees a Sacramental image: Christ's actual feet are visible to the reader because his earthly senses have been overwhelmed by the first four lines, thus preventing the sensory disruption of the divine signification in the couplet. For the Protestant reader, though, a comprehension of the physical manifestation of Christ's feet does not fulfill the goal of the couplet. Rather, the Protestant reader, having contemplated the complex imagery in the quatrain, enters a more spiritually refined mindset to contemplate the idea of the feet of Christ. I am suggesting that these readings must be mutually exclusive, because each one appears

heretical to the opposing side. Although both readings are apparent to the *critical* reader, the devoted Protestant or Catholic reader will see what he wants to see here.

The goal of Catholic baroque poetry after the Council of Trent (1563) is "[to sanction] the veneration of image and by its emphasis upon transubstantiation… [giving] the pious a confidence in sensory experience."[77]The goal of the post-Calvin English Protestant devotional poem was to serve as a catalyst for the Protestant to "discern in himself and his own experience" the "well defined emotional, psychological, and spiritual states or conditions" of the conversion experience.[78] Both goals can be extrapolated from Crashaw's poetry.

The most theologically-perplexing stanza of the conclusion to "The Weeper," titled "The Teare" is its last one:

There thy self shalt bee
An eye, but not a weeping one,
Yet I doubt of thee,
Whither th'hadst rather there have shone
An eye of Heaven ; or still shine here
In th'Heaven of Mary's eye, a Teare. ("The Teare," 8. 1-6)

While I think the heretical reading of this stanza (which can be read to suggest that the tear in Magdeline's eye equates the beauty of anything in heaven) has some validity, the metaphysical imagery appears so challenging that I do not think this must be the only reading available to us. Crashaw leaves the poem open-ended with an ambiguous conclusion. Conditional words like "doubt" and "whither" imply that the reader's response to the images Crashaw presents will vary according to his own convictions. If this conclusion appears rife with ambiguity, even in the New

[77] George W. Williams qting Wylie Sypher, *Image and Symbol in the Sacred Poetry of Richard Crashaw*, (Columbia, SC: USC Press, 1963), 9.
[78] Williams, *Image and Symbol*, 20.

Critical sense, certainly it was ambiguous enough to the seventeenth-century reader to perplex both Protestants and Catholics equally, without privileging one over the other.

Barbara Lewalski notes in her influential monograph *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric* that

> two elements especially characterize Protestant meditation, whatever the subject or the formal structure: a focus upon the Bible, the Word, as guiding the interpretation of the subject and providing meditative models; and a particular kind of application to the self, analogous to the application so prominent in Protestant sermons of the period.[79]

This paradigm seems to fit Crashaw's devotional poems just as well as it fits those of the other metaphysical poets. As McDowell notes, "seventeenth-century commentators consistently alluded to Crashaw's manipulation of the passions of readers, an activity presupposing, not dismissing, sophisticated rational design." [80] Thus, McDowell implies, Crashaw's poetry seems to address the second of Lewalski's tenants of Protestant lyric devotion as well. No doubt most of Crashaw's audience in England consisted of Protestants, which means that his poetry probably displayed some compatibility with Protestant devotional doctrine, as they continued to read it.

What this ultimately comes back to is the non-partisan genre of devotional poetry. Ruth Wallerstein, who I believe succinctly describes the meditative qualities of Crashaw's devotional lyrics the best, states that they are

> an ordering of sensations and emotions in relation to each other and to a conceptual focus, as apart from mere random fancy or fragmentary ecstasy. At the same time, from the other side, from other and deeper sources of his growth and

[79] Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1979), 148.
[80] Sean McDowell, "From 'Lively Art," 231.

> feeling, the images are transmuted from intellectual forms to imaginative experiences. They have become at once the instrumentalities and the expression of his religious emotion.[81]

Thus, for a seventeenth-century reader, whether Catholic or Protestant, Crahsaw presents a worthy challenge, intellectually and spiritually. In this way his popularity is due to the affective qualities he shares with Herbert. His poetry was not burned as Catholic heresy because only Catholic readers saw it as Catholic. Even Crashaw's most Catholic poems in image composition are not necessarily iconographic, especially to a seventeenth-century eye. Crashaw's "On Our crucified Lord Naked, and Bloody," one of Crashaw's divine epigrams, follows a similar structural pattern to "The Weeper":

> Th' have left thee naked Lord, O that they had;
> This Garment too I would they had deny'd.
> Thee with thy selve they have too richly clad,
> Opening the purple wardrobe of thy side.
>
> O never could bee found Garments too good.
> For thee to weare, but these, of thine owne blood. (48. 1-6).

The emphasis for this poem should not be the body of Christ himself, but the corporeal impossibility of Christ's body. Once again, the body itself is not blazoned, and the "aphorism" in the couplet serves as a catalyst for contemplation, just like each stanza from "The Weeper." For the Protestant reader, the point of such meditation would be, I think, to contemplate the sheer impossibility of imagining Christ's essence as manifested in his body. The Catholic reader, through the metamorphosis of sensory perception on the basis of the overwhelming conceits in

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[81] Ruth Wallerstein, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Poetic Style and Development*, (Madison, WI: Wisconsin UP, 1959), 135.

the poem, in theory, sees the body of Christ—this is emblematic, not idolatrous, because the body itself is not depicted corporeally in words, but it is implied. It stands as the result of contemplation of the words.

Furthermore, the charge of idolatry fits only if we conceive the poem as a static image. That is, epigrammatic poetry fits into the modern taxonomy of religious art. As such, a contemporary reader sees the same static structures in an epigram as he would see in an icon or painting in a sanctuary. Cunnar, in "Opening the Religious Lyric," argues that Crashaw's devotional poems are largely ritualistic and, thus, not necessarily iconographic. I agree with Cunnar's basic point, though not with his historicist justification of it. Indeed, a close (re)reading of the poem opens up a means of interrogation that avoids iconography all together. The last line of the quatrain appears largely to present a static image of "Opening the purple wardrobe of thy side" (4). If the reader looks for iconography, it is easy to observe. However, the degree of this iconography diminishes if we read the line as primarily verbal, or active, as opposed to static. If, as Cunnar suggests, these poems represent ritual—in this case, a metaphor for the liminality of the Sacrament, then the word "opening" functions primarily as a verb. The process of opening the wound, of entering the opening, and receiving the contents of the opening (and thus Salvation), seems to be the *modus operandi* of this poem's meditative teleology. If, as Yeats suggested, the poet's church has only an altar, then the poem represents the *process* of the Sacrament and specifically *not* the *accidents* of the process. The poem serves as a literal reenactment of the process, not, like an image, a metaphorical imagination of the effect of the process.

The distinction between reenacted ritual and static icon becomes less clear after the Renaissance. For a seventeenth-century Protestant reader, though, an epigram that reenacts the

process of the Sacraments need not be overtly-Catholic to do so. In fact, Protestants and Catholics agree on the literal events of the Crucifixion. The Eucharist is a liminal process with true affective properties for both. Crashaw's depiction of the liminal process of the Sacrament does not necessarily require the doctrine of transubstantiation, because poems are entirely accidental. Catholics can read Crashaw's accidents as actually representative of the Catholic doctrine—that accidents literally turn into substance with consecration whereas Protestants can read the accidents as cognitive fuel for intellectual confirmation of Salvation. The poem does not pontificate upon Sacramental doctrine, rather it represents the *process* of the Sacrament itself to whomever reads it, regardless of the reader's theological inclinations.

Ultimately, Crashaw's poetry targets its orientation towards the reader and not the critic. Lorraine Roberts writes that "The poet's voice, while speaking from the position of the personal 'I,' is really the communal voice of any participant in the commemoration of Christ's death and its meaning. The reader of the poem is affected by what happens in the same way that the viewer of baroque art is."[82] Such a voice remains characteristically Christian, but only apparently Catholic to a historically-removed reader. The fact that Crashaw was popular in his time—at least as popular as Herbert and Donne—suggests that his initial audience saw something in his poetry that we do not discover initially upon reading his texts today.

The interogation of notion that Catholic and Protestant poems are mutually exclusive follows not only from formal explication of Crashaw's texts, but from a critical reexamination of the historical context within which he wrote. One of the reasons critics have traditionally considered Crashaw as a literary anomaly is that "scholarly readers ignore the emblem tradition, so popular in seventeenth-century England, and fail to perceive that those elements labeled (even

[82] Lorraine Roberts, "Crashaw's Sacred Voice: A Commerce of Contrary Powers," in *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw* Ed. John Roberts, (Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1990), 77.

by Austin Warren) as 'continental' or 'Catholic' were not the exclusive property of Counter-Reformation countries, but pervaded the air in England."[83] Marc Bertonasco goes on to assert that Crashaw "shares with a certain segment of contemporary English Puritans several traits which scholars have far too hastily labeled Roman Catholic. In the religious life of the seventeenth century there are no water-tight compartments."[84] As far as the theology of devotional poetry, it seems far more prudent to characterize texts along a continuum, as opposed to an oppositional binary.

A whole-hearted reexamination of what historians define as "the Baroque" yields a better understanding of the intricacies of Crashaw's literary theology. Indeed, historians have traditionally defined the Baroque period of visual, musical, and literary art as an exclusively continental phenomenon. With the increased Catholic enthusiasm for iconography that followed the Council of Trent, there was little doubt that what we call the Baroque sensibility was ultimately a product of the Counter Reformation.[85] England, in all of its Protestant fervor, was not intellectually and aesthetically isolated. Thus, the popularity of Richard Crashaw's devotional poetry makes perfect sense. It is important to articulate the difference, in the seventeenth century, between visual icons and intellectual icons. Certainly, the visual artistry of the baroque was limited to the continent. However, what contemporary historians and critics now see as a correlation between visual art and the written word was not so self-evident to those who actively pursued these aesthetic enterprises in the seventeenth century. Marc Bertonasco again emphasizes the need for a critical reexamination:

> The student of the literature of the period must remind himself that the minds of those men who rushed with axe and torch to destroy the religious pictures of

[83] Marc Bertonasco, *Crashaw and the Baroque*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama UP, 1971), 4-5.
[84] Ibid, 5.
[85] Ibid, 47.

> Peterhouse were quite likely veritable galleries of rich, sensuous icons, eager to be pressed into the service of fervent meditation. Despoil chapels of their icons they might, but they created new ones in their own imaginations; for to this mental icon-making almost everything in the Puritan tradition conduced… Fear them, abominate them they may, but in the spirit that one despises a beautiful, almost irresistibly alluring evil… It is in his subject matter occasionally, in attribute often, but *surely not in poetic method that Richard Crashaw runs counter to the Puritan tradition*.[86]

Much of Crashaw's work fits almost perfectly with the continental emblematic tradition, but it also aligns with the poetic work of other English Protestants. Bertonasco argues for Crashaw's place among his English contemporaries, but he still argues that Crashaw primarily exemplifies the baroque. To distance Crashaw from the continental baroque, and to situate him instead within a larger genre of devotional literature, avoids the theological associations with the baroque.

When considering Crashaw's place in Protestant culture, it may be useful to subdivide our imagination of the Baroque into several different traditions, some of which were exclusively continental, whereas others enjoyed popularity in England, as well. One of these traditions that maintained an aesthetic bond across the channel was that of the emblem. The emblem tradition has its origins in the Middle Ages, and it serves a fundamentally iconographic purpose. Alan Howard provides a concise historical definition for the emblem:

> Characteristically, an emblem was an engraving or a woodcut of some symbolic person, object, or event accompanied by a brief explanatory sentenia or motto. Beneath each plate appeared a short verse interpreting the picture—often by

[86] Ibid, 48, (emphasis mine).

> detailing the points of correspondence between plate and motto—and drawing some suitable moral application.[87]

Interestingly, Howard's article explores Edward Taylor's participation in the emblem tradition, but nonetheless, his definition remains an accurate one. He goes on to explain that most English Protestants were fully engaged with the tradition and did not disdain emblems in the same violent fashion that they burned icons .[88] Thus, if we take Crashaw's epigrams within the larger context of the emblem tradition, at least the form of the poetry fits with Protestant expectations. Its baroque content, however, is more difficult to explain away.

Thomas Healy rightly chooses Crashaw's epigram on Luke 11:27 (the thirty-first in his Divine Epigrams) to serve as an exemplar of Crashaw's peculiar theological and aesthetic taste. If any singular poem represents the Baroque, it is this epigram:

> Suppose he had been Tabled at thy Teates,
>
> Thy hunger feels not what he eates:
>
> Hee'l have his Teat e're long (a bloody one)
>
> The Mother then must suck the Son. (31.1-4)

Despite its medieval analogs, and the basic scriptural authority for the epigram, Crashaw's conceit appears especially problematic. Readers outside of the seventeenth century cannot help but to view the image as perverse. Certainly, the literal and bloody construction of Christ and Mary here would seem iconographic, if not blasphemous. The scriptural source for the epigram, Healy concedes, does not provide authority for such a description, as Luke 11:27 presents the

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[87] Alan Howard, "The World as Emblem: Language and Vision in the Poetry of Edward Taylor," *American Literature* , No. 49 (1972): 362.
[88] Ibid, 363.

conceptual relationship between Mary and Christ largely in the abstract.[89] Healy establishes that "[e]xaggerating an object is designed to emphasize not the object itself but what is spiritually represented. Hyperbole acts to direct attention away from the literal, leading the reader toward an awareness of a greater religious reality that is being intimidated." [90] Though Healy does not make an explicit point in his article to delineate the theological significance of this statement, its relevance to Crashaw's Protestant readership seems clear. In order to assert the immense significance of emblem literature and meditative practices in general, it is necessary to explore the intricacies of English devotional practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

Meditative poetry has its historical origin in the emblem tradition. Even if, as in the case with Crashaw's Divine Epigrams, individual poems lack their correlating emblems, the poems derive fundamentally from images. Thus, it is impossible to deny that meditative poetry appears, to both the Protestant and the Catholic, iconographic. Protestant and Catholic interpretations of images originate differently. Even the most radically orthodox Puritans placed some value in images, especially those crafted out of words (one of the five tenants of Calvinism, of course, is *sola scriptura*, and the Bible is fundamentally a collection of divinely-inspired words). Crashaw's "On the wounds of our Crucified Lord" stands out as particularly iconographic, and describes in vivid detail Christ's body. A present-day Protestant reading of this poem would certainly lead one to a heretical conclusion. However, I do not think a seventeenth-century Protestant, or even a Puritan, had to read it that way. Crashaw writes:

> These wakefull wounds of thine!
>
> Are they Mouthes? Or are they eyes?
>
> Be they Mouthes, or be they eyne,

[89] Thomas Healy, "Crashaw and the Sense of History," in *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw* Ed. John Roberts, (Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1990), 50-53.
[90]Thomas Healy, "Crashaw and the Sense of History," 54.

Each bleeding part some one supplies. (47. 1-4)

This first stanza poses a binary opposition that underscores the entire enterprise of this chapter. Crashaw wonders aloud whether or not Christ's wounds are mouths or eyes. Mouths, I might suggest, represent an oral, verbal interpretation of Christ's wounds. Eyes, on the other hand, represent a visual, iconographic interpretation. To the Protestant subject, the description of Christ's wounds *speaks* to their mind and provides substance for contemplation of the *idea* of Christ's wounds, and the significance thereof to salvation. To the Catholic subject, on the other hand, Christ's wounds are like self-reflexive eyes. Thus, the image of Christ's wounds itself confounds the subject. The description does not provide the substance for contemplation; the description *is* the substance. To assert the viability of this metaphor as a superstructure for the entire poem is too bold, but it does confirm the idea of dual readings of images in the period. Protestants identified with the mouths metaphor, whereas Catholics identified with the eyes. Crashaw does not privilege one reading over the other—the reader is left to interpret the material Crashaw provides.

The next stanza of the poem continues to portray the corollary image of eyes and mouths. In this quatrain, however, Crashaw draws on specific Christian symbology:

Lo! A mouth, whose full-bloom'd lips

At too deare a rate are roses.

Lo! A blood-shot eye! That weepes

And many a teare discloses. (47. 5-8)

The first half of the quatrain parallels in metaphor the lips of the mouth (which itself serves as a metaphor for the wounds of Christ) to the rose. Roses also symbolize the wounds of Christ, but also a number of other abstractions (such as the Sacrament of Penance and martyrdom in

general). Ultimately, the symbolism of this most-corporeal of Crashaw's poems appears ambiguous enough to perplex the mind of a Protestant reader just as it appears affective enough to transfigure the mind of a Catholic reader. The Catholic imagery is not so overt that it would appear to a Protestant reader as distasteful.

Most of Crashaw's poetry was not so corporeal. Crashaw's few overtly corporeal poems tend to be used by critics to exemplify his entire canon, and to apply generalizations about his aesthetic craft. Most of Crashaw's poetry follows a nonpartisan theological system; one which could apply just as much to Protestantism as to Catholicism. One of the more obscure poems in *Steps to the Temple* is "Easter day," which shows just how consistent most of Crashaw's work was with that of his contemporaries. The first stanza reads:

> Rise, Heire of fresh Eternity,
>
> From thy Virgin Tomble:
>
> Rise mighty man of wonders, and thy world with thee.
>
> Thy tombe, the universall East,
>
> Natures new wombe
>
> Thy tombe, faire Immortalities perfumed Nest. (49. 1-6)

Crashaw draws upon common motifs surrounding Christ's death and resurrection. So common, in fact, that Herbert uses many of the same devices in his "Easter." The poem begins in much the same manner as Crashaw's:

> Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
>
> Without delayes,
>
> Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
>
> With him mayst rise:

That, as his death calcined thee to dust,

His life may make thee gold, and much more, just. (1-6).[91]

Both poems begin with Christ rising. The difference is a subtle one; Herbert's first line is declarative, whereas Crashaw's is imperative. Crashaw's Catholicism appears evident, then, not in his use of images, but in the grammar of his sentences. This bias is not so evident as to alarm Protestant readers. As Herbert's poem continues, he uses much of the same symbolism as Crashaw does. If anything, Crashaw's poem provides a more stimulating mental exercise than that of the Protestant Herbert. The final two stanzas of Herbert's poem read:

The Sunne arising in the East,

Though he give light, & th' East perfume;

If they should offer to contest

With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,

Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?

We count three hundred, but we misse:

There is but one, and that one ever (22-30).

Thus, the symbols that began Crashaw's poem—the immortal east and the perfume—conclude Herbert's poem. Both poets came from the same literary tradition, even if their theology was different. This comparison helps to realign Crashaw with his aesthetic contemporaries, as opposed to his religious contemporaries. Taken out of the context of the author's religious biography, Crashaw's poetry does not express self-evident radicalism.

[91] All subsequent citations from F.E. Hutchinson ed, *The Works of George Herbert*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941).

The generic similarities between Crashaw and Herbert were not lost on Crashaw, and the usefulness of Herbert's devotional poetry in *The Temple* was apparent to Crashaw. In "On Mr. G Herbert's booke…" Crashaw exclaims to an unidentified female reader:

> Know you faire, on what you looke;
>
> *Divinest love lyes in this booke*:
>
> *Expecting fire from your eyes,*
>
> *To kindle this his sacrifice.*
>
> When your hands unty these strings
>
> *Thinke you have an Angell by th' wing.*
>
> ……..
>
> These white plumes of his heele lend you,
>
> Which make every day to heaven will send you:
>
> To take acquaintance of the spheare,
>
> And all the smooth faced kindred there,
>
> *And though* Herberts *name doe owe*
>
> These *devotions*, fairest; know
>
> That while I lay them on the shrine
>
> Of your white hand, *they are mine*. (57. 1-18, emphasis mine)

Though Herbert influenced Vaughn more directly than Crashaw, there can be little doubt that, when the "anonymous writer of the preface [to *Steps to the Temple*] introduces the book 'Here's *Herbert's* second, but equall,'" he underscored the obvious relationship between the two most metaphysical of the mid-seventeenth-century devotional poets.[92] However, Herbert was far from the religious outcast that Crashaw became. Herbert was no radical; rather, he was praised by his

[92] F.E. Hutchinson, "Introduction," *The Works of George Herbert*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), xli.

contemporaries for his "complete devotion to his calling."[93] In his description of the *ethos* of *The Temple* and *A Priest to the Temple*, Hutchinson suggests that "in the lyrics [Herbert] is not directly addressing the reader, but either God or himself. They are colloquies of the soul with God or self-communings which seek to bring harmony into that complex personality of his which he analyses so unsparingly."[94] Since Herbert's audience is not the reader, his poem does not preach. Crashaw's verse operates in the same fashion.

Herbert characterizes the moderate constitution of mainline English Protestantism in "The British Church," a faith to which most English people of the time subscribed. Herbert, himself, was a main-line Anglican, and he depicted the English church metaphorically:

> A fine aspect in fit aray,
> Neither too mean, nor yet too gay
> Shows who is bes
> Outlandish looks may not compare:
> For all they painted are,
> Or else undrest.
> ……..
> But, dearest Mother, what those misse,
> The mean, thy praise and glorie is,
> And long may be.
> Blessed be God, whose love it was
> To double-moat thee with his grace,
> And none but thee ("The British Church," 7-12, 25-30)

[93] Ibid, xxxvi.
[94] Ibid, xxxvii.

To Herbert, the English church maintains doctrinal validity by not eschewing all ornament, but by valuing imagery in moderation. Herbert does not attack images themselves—rather, the way those images are valued in the Church. Indeed, he establishes a binary opposition between outlandish painted looks and undressed images. The binary implies that disregarding images all together, as was the Puritan inclination, was just as heretical (or at least doctrinally suspect) as worshiping them in the first place. He even goes as far as to state that the Puritans "wholly [go] on th' other side / And nothing wears" (23-24). Herbert's "mean," as exemplified by the Anglican Protestants, mirrored to the aesthetic tradition of metaphysical devotional poetry. Devotional poetry is not idolatrous because metaphor masks the iconography. Herbert's moderate point of view when it came to images represented the larger body of English Protestants, who may have rushed to burn icons and crucifixes, but were more hesitant to burn prayer books and, ultimately, Richard Crashaw's religious poetry.

Ultimately, Richard Crashaw's devotional poetry fits best into the generic categories of meditative, emblematic, and meditative poetry. These linked genres differ primarily from sermons in that they are not intended to be didactic, and they are not necessarily intended to convey partisan doctrine. Rather, the poems themselves serve as catalysts for devotion. Crashaw, though clearly a Catholic poet, did not write exclusively Catholic poetry. Certainly Catholic readers found many of his motifs and metaphors familiar, but that is not to say that Protestant readers found them to be alien. Indeed, the division between Protestant and Catholic aesthetic culture was not so concrete by the end of the seventeenth century as to prevent "rational" and 'word-driven" Protestants from appreciating image-driven poetry. As I have already illustrated above, Protestant aesthetic theory developed much more slowly than Protestant public doctrine. Though Protestants destroyed icons in the sixteenth century, that iconophobic fervor did not

extend to literature until well after the changes brought by the Reformation had been solidified through generations.

Outside of the seventeenth century, little doubt exists in my mind that cultural bias against Crashaw's biographical circumstances has led to his critical demise. Alexander Pope's uncomfortable relationship with his own Catholicism reflects larger issues with English critics and Catholic poets. Shell writes that

> though most critics within the last few decades would be horrified at the idea, critical discourse on seventeenth century religious poetry is still highly prone to denominationalist judgments : a variety of feelings, articulated or not, that there are right ways and wrong ways to write devotional poetry within the Christian tradition. The critical history of Crashaw in the twentieth century also reveals, in exaggerated form, a number of culture-bound assumptions about how devotional verse should be read. Both the writing and reading of religious poetry at this date are tricky problems for those from non-Christian religions, for atheists, or for the agnostic majority; but they are no less for practicing Christians, few of whom would translate comfortably into the devotional culture of three or four centuries earlier.[95]

An examination of the genre of seventeenth-century devotional poetry, as a whole, without consideration of the authors' religious partisanship, reveals a diverse range of sensibilities. To bifurcate the genre as English and non-English oversimplifies the seventeenth-century mind and eventually leads to critical contradictions in analysis, as there are more exceptions to partisanship then confirmation of it.

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[95] Alsion Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination*, 103.

CHAPTER 4: EXPANDING THE GENRE: EDWARD TAYLOR

Among the so-called Metaphysical poets, Edward Taylor occupies a peculiar position. Taylor was born in England, but spent much of his life in New England. He wrote his most famous collection of texts, the *Preparatory Meditations*, between 1682 and 1725. Though his collections of poetry were not published on a printing press, evidence suggests that it was circulated in the community. Not only was Taylor geographically separated from the other poets typically categorized in the genre, but he was theologically radical. Taylor, as an American Puritan minister, serves as an exemplar of the disjunction between intellectual doctrine and devotional poetry. Puritan iconoclasm and metaphysical poetry are ultimately incompatible, and Taylor's poetry is either "too homely to be proper or effective in sacred poetry"[96] or it is too sacred to be metaphysical in its conceit. Neither of these conditions is true for the corpus of Taylor's work. What stands out about Taylor may be that the explicit doctrine in his sermons does not always extend to the implicit doctrine in his poetry. Taylor's sermons exemplify orthodox Puritan doctrine of the most extreme sort; Taylor sincerely believed that Catholicism was evil. His sermons decry Catholicism and mainline Anglicanism almost uniformly.

Taylor's poetry, however, does not express such doctrinal conformity. This seems especially true with regard to Taylor's treatment of the Eucharist and of sacraments in general. Taylor's religious poetry served primarily a meditative purpose; he wrote poetry in order to prepare for sermons. Thus, Taylor represents the metaphysical sensibility to an even greater extent than the other poets of the period in that his work was primarily private. He did not write to convey a message to others; his poetry served exclusively as a devotional catalyst. This

[96] Kathleen Blake, "Edward Taylor's Protestant Poetic: Non-Transubstantiating Metaphor," *American Literature* 43 (1971): 1-24

catalytic effect does not align with any particular doctrine, and certainly not with the dogmatic absolutes Taylor pontificates in his sermons.

Edward Taylor's position on the Sacrament of the Eucharist was not static in his poetic work. It reveals that he held it to be a very personal, subjective event, in which the recipient of the sacrament is physically and spiritually changed, given that the recipient was sufficiently prepared to receive the sacrament with devotional meditation upon its affective power. However, this quasi-gnostic interpretation of the sacrament, which Taylor reenacts a number of times in the *Preparatory Meditations*, stands in stark contrast to the conservative stance that he takes in his debate with Solomon Stoddard over the effectiveness of the half-way covenant, and over Stoddard's decision to open communion to non-members of his congregation. What Taylor actually believed on the subject remains largely irrelevant, but what this apparent divergence of ideas on the Sacrament reveals is that Taylor—and others of his time—had a different purpose for poetry than they did for sermons. Any attempt to superimpose rigid Puritanism onto Taylor's meditative poetry fails because there exists no uniformity of doctrine—in fact, at least in the technical sense, like Crashaw, there was no doctrine at all. They are not doctrinal texts—they are devotional texts. To locate Taylor's texts on a theological spectrum oversimplifies their "sensibility" and reduces their ultimate purpose to that of propaganda.

This chapter serves to demonstrate that Edward Taylor, whose actual theology stands as far removed from Crashaw's Catholicism as is possible, employs many of the same images, motifs, and structures as does Crashaw. This comparison implies not only that Protestant and Catholic doctrines did not always manifest themselves in poetry, but that Taylor and Crashaw ultimately imagined the same purpose for poetry. Both, I argue, wrote poetry as raw material for devotion. The texts themselves did not contain the answers; rather, they provided the catalyst by

which the reader of the poetry could meditate on and find the answers. The answers are different for Protestants and Catholics, as Taylor's sermons reassure, but the means can be the same. This chapter demonstrates how a Catholic reader could interpret Taylor's poetry in a Catholic way, just as I have previously demonstrated how Crashaw's poetry can easily fall in line with the work of other Protestant metaphysicals.

Taylor draws his aesthetic theory from the doctrine of Calvinism and of predetermined election. One of the most significant components of this doctrine, at least in terms of how it can be applied to aesthetics, emphasizes the intrinsic fallen nature of man, as opposed to the intrinsically divine nature of God. Puritan theology relies primarily upon a clear bifurcation between the converted and the unconverted. In fact, Puritan congregations determined who would receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper based on whether or not church attendees demonstrated sufficient proof of their "conversion experience." The standards for this level of proof were, naturally, not always uniform. Nonetheless, the purpose of Puritan poetry in this essentially fallen world appears remarkably distinct from the aesthetic teleology of Old World devotional poets.

The doctrine of election applied not only to the administration of the sacrament, but to the viability of aesthetic products. Indeed, Taylor, as a Puritan "metaphysical," believed that "the only true poetry that does not *blot, blur, jag* and *jar* is the heavenly poetry of praise—the praise of God *in heaven*, not on earth."[97] This doctrine consciously rejects monophysite and Arian tendencies in the Protestant churches to emphasize the corporeal—not the ethereal—nature of Christ. Taylor's Puritan metaphysics placed God entirely in the divine sphere. Access to that sphere was possible only through conversion and, as such, election. Taylor therefore believed

[97] Charles Mignon, "Edward Taylor's 'Preparatory Meditations;' A Decorum of Imperfection," *PMLA* 83. No 5 (1968): 1424.

that "art is thus related to election."[98] Effective divine poetry in the Puritan sensibility reflected a truly divine essence. In other words, good devotional poetry was only good because it was divinely inspired, just like the soul of the elect was divinely inspired. Thus, Taylor's justification for emblematic poetry was that "suitable singing on earth is determined by the operation of grace, the nearest correspondence to glory… a Calvinist poet is to have a religious muse: the Holy Spirit."[99] The grounds for the justification for Grace in art were, of course, a slippery slope. The divine inspiration of a poem could only be judged based on its aesthetic standards. It is in this way that Taylor, as a Puritan, fits generically with Crashaw and the other less-Puritanical metaphysical devotional poets.

Taylor represents what I have suggested throughout this essay—that to define all of these poets as "metaphysical" disrupts the generic commonalities between them, and is based largely on an historically removed Presentist reading. With "metaphysical" comes certain associations with the Baroque sensibility and Catholic iconography. These attributions may describe Crashaw's historical context, but certainly not Taylor's. To consider the generic attributes of *devotional* poetry makes much more sense, given the paradox of Edward Taylor. The teleology of devotional poetry shows more unity than the broader metaphysical label. Indeed, a significant difference may be that

> Taylor's main desire is really for salvation, not poetic fame; his competition is therefore not with other religious poets (either moral Wigglesworth or 'metaphysical' Herbert), but *with himself for God's Grace*: the failure of his own

[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

> hyperboles in the decorum of inperfection only too well defines his fallen position both as a man and as an artist.[100]

This internal competition, I might suggest, provides the basis not only for Protestant devotional poetics within Reformed theology at large but for Protestant "misreading" of Catholic poetry. Taylor's Puritan poetry fits into the genre of devotional poetry, first and foremost, before it fits into the genre of Metaphysical poetry. An essential difference exists between the label of "metaphysical" and the label of "devotional." The former defines a category through a backwards-looking lens of primarily aesthetic criticism. The latter, however, defines a category based upon the way its components functioned within their own time, and how their audiences received them. Thus, the former relies necessarily upon Presentist aesthetic and historical taxonomies, and provides for an obvious difference between Taylor and Crashaw. A "Puritan" metaphysical appears to be a contradiction of terms, but the accidents of devotional meditation are very much the same for Protestants and Catholics. Only the affective quality, as I have suggested, differs significantly in terms of doctrine.

This argument requires a fundamental clarification of Puritan aesthetic theory at large. Indeed, the radical Protestants who braved the cold wilderness of northern New England in the late seventeenth century remain vastly misunderstood, even by literary historians outside of the area of early American literature. I must underscore, as Carol Bensick argues, that there is "a dimension of joy, even fun, to Puritan spirituality" and that Edward Taylor's poetics "have demolished the stereotype of the Puritan as someone determined to spoil everyone's fun."[101] As with the religious variability in England during the early seventeenth century, Puritan culture in

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[100] Ibid, 1425.
[101] Carol Bensick, "Preaching to the Choir: Some Achievements and Shortcomings of Taylor's *God's Determinations*," *Early American Literature*, 28. (1993): 133.

New England was not uniformly didactic. Especially in Edward Taylor's early years, the extant historical evidence suggests a Puritanism still trying to identify itself.

In Taylor's Meditation #108, the speaker reflects upon Matthew 26.26, which narrates that "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and break it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; *this is my body*."[102] On the problematic grammar of the last clause, which inspires the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence and has fueled all historical Eucharistic controversies in the Church, Taylor fires that

> It [correct belief] Consubstantiation too Confounds
>
> Bread still is bread, Wine still is wine; it's sure.
>
> It transubstantiation *deadly wounds*
>
> Your touch, Tast, sight say true. The Pope's a whore.
>
> Can bread and Wine *by words be Carnifi'de?*
>
> And manifestly bread and Wine abide? (II. 108. 13-18 emphasis mine)[103]

It seems initially that Taylor rejects both Consubstantiation and Transubstantiation equally, but his treatment of the latter is in fact far more severe. I suggest that Taylor means by "confound" the more mild sense: "To discomfit, abash, put to shame, ashame" which usually occurs in the passive, as it does in this case.[104] He still conveys the doctrine is wrong, but he seems to find fault primarily in the fact that it necessarily relies upon an ecclesiastical structure to support it. The most important lines in the stanza are "by words by Carnifi'de" – Taylor is not rejecting the power of the sacrament's effect; rather, he is rejecting the power of a priest to control that effect. He continues:

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[102] Gospel of Matthew, 26.26, *The King James Bible*, (London: 1611), (emphasis mine).
[103] All subsequent citations from Daniel Patterson ed, *Edward Taylor's* God's Determinations *and* Preparatory Meditations*: A Critical Edition*, (Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 2003)
[104] OED. "confound, *v.*[3]" *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 27 Apr. 2007.

What monstrous thing doth Transubstantiation

And Consubstantiation also make

Christs Body, having a Ubique-station

When thousands sacraments men Celebrate

Upon a day, if th'Bread and wine should e're

Be Con-, or Trans-Substantiated there? (II. 108. 19-24)

The sense Taylor implies here that the problem with these sacramental doctrines lies in their mechanistic application; in his eyes they do not require contemplation on the part of the recipients, and their effect is not contingent upon spiritual preparation. By pluralizing the "sacraments" and drawing out the hyperbolic image of thousands of people taking this sacrament in one day, Taylor trivializes the doctrinal and liturgical aspects of the Sacrament, but not necessarily their effect. Likewise, by employing the verbal forms "con" or "transubstantiated," Taylor emphasizes agency—that is, that a priest must consecrate the sacrament. The bread and wine do not transform themselves, and the Sacrament requires outside intermediation in order to manifest.

Taylor's obsession with the Eucharist was symptomatic of larger Puritan Sacramental concerns, all of which translated into Puritan aesthetics. The role of the Sacrament of the Eucharist in Puritan culture was a very important one. Because the "Protestants rejected the assumption—crucial to most ritual practices—that certain zones of time and space were sacred,"[105] the function of the Eucharist, as ritual, was the source of constant debate. New England Puritans were caught in the path of cultural changes that were the tangential results of the Reformation a century earlier. Such cultural changes involved "a range of phenomena,

[105] David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgement: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*, (New York: Knopf, 1989), p. 167

including the differentiation of institutional functions (the giving of a once religious institution a more temporal, pragmatic purpose); *the transformation of religious places into secular ones*… broadly conceived, such changes are marked by a solidifying of the boundaries between religious and political institutions."[106] The Puritan meetinghouse serves as a prime example of this shift in the spatial orientation of religion. Indeed, the meetinghouse served just as much a secular purpose as it did a religious one. It was both totally secular and totally religious, and this concept transferred to Puritan culture at large.[107] Without the ritualistic practices of the Catholic and Anglican rite faiths to differentiate secular from religious, the Puritans were forced to interrogate ritual practices like the Sacrament more closely. Taylor's anxiety on this issue was not unique by any means; the idea of a performed sacramental effect stands, in some ways, at odds with Puritan iconoclastic ideology. In the end, it was the public nature of this sacramental debate that forced Taylor to assert a more rigid position on the ecclesiastical circumstances surrounding the Lord's Supper.

Taylor's private meditational theology and his public sermons display significant structural differences. This difference presents less hypocrisy than it does a dual ontology for Puritan thinking. Indeed, "this ambivalence is really a dual nature. On one hand, the Puritan pastor was personally concerned with his own salvation; on the other hand, he had as his charge all the souls of his parish. This provided the motivation for the expression of Truth in clear, convincing ways…. That idea of balance can be seen in Taylor's sermons."[108] What this dual ontology means is that Taylor's meditative poetry may have had a different teleology than his sermons, but both of them emphasized the same truth. Though Taylor's sermons are more

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[106] Gary Kuchar, *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England*, (Pittsburg: Duquesne UP, 2005), p. 4

[107] For a more complete discussion of the Puritan conception of space, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment.* 177-165 and 166-212

[108] Ibid, 20.

blatantly in line with Puritan theology, his poetry, though ornamental on the surface, appears strictly orthodox once deconstructed:

> … critics have suggested that while Taylor certainly uses ornate poetic structure and language, his use is distinctive and completely Puritan. Norman Grabo in his introduction o the *Christographia* sermons discusses the Catholic and Anglican methods of mediattion and expression and then concludes: "Though he has a great deal in common with the Catholic mystic and meditative tradition, both Protestant and Puritan expression give sufficient precedent for Taylor's practice"… Taylor… expected and exploited a "common intellectual context" found only in the unique situation of the Puritan community of New England.[109]

This common intellectual context provides for Puritan typology, and Taylor's freedom to experiment with metaphor. Therefore, Taylor's metaphors may indeed be based on the same material composite elements (or accidents) as Crashaw's or Herbert's, but the teleology of those metaphors serves ultimately to undermine the metaphors themselves, and to underscore the fallen nature of human language. Miller explains in great detail that "[Taylor] uses metaphorical language, then recognizes its inherent failure, and finally realizes its redemption in the doctrine of the Incarnation. The metaphor holds importance both as a theological and a stylistic device."[110] Whereas the iconographic poetry of Crashaw is designed to affect piety in itself, Taylor's poetry is designed to demonstrate its own failure to affect, and to point the reader towards the only *completely effective* metaphysical conceit; the Incarnation itself.[111] However, whether a Sacramental metaphor works towards its own destruction or towards the affection of

[109] Ibid, 23.
[110] Ibid, 25.
[111] Ibid, 24.

the reader, its accidental composition remains the same. The interpretation of metaphor remains totally dependent upon the reader's own theology.

Beyond the defeatist teleology of Taylor's metaphor, which necessarily relies on the superimposition of a theological structure that exists fundamentally outside the text, close readings of Taylor's meditations reveal that his rejection of Catholic theology and affective piety in general was based more on practical, as opposed to theological, grounds. Taylor's attacks against the ecclesiastical administration of the sacrament would seem to suggest that the ordained do not have any more power over the administration of the sacrament than a typical layman. This rings true in his other meditations, it seems, as they each function like a "miniature sacrament," with climactic structure. John Gatta has argued that "in their immediate historical context and in propositional substance, Taylor's views of the Supper were not only orthodox but stubbornly conservative… especially from Taylor's insistence that the requirement of testified regeneracy be maintained by those who would approach the sacred banquet."[112] But, Gatta also suggests that the Sacrament "in its American Puritan form… lacked most of the sacrificial overtones included in the Roman Catholic and even the Anglican ritual."[113] Neither of these statements is consistent with the brutal physicality of Taylor's private motivations. In fact, Taylor glorifies the sacrificial nature of the sacrament in Poem #17 from the Second Series of the *Preparatory Meditations*:

> They type, thy Veane phlebotomized must bee
>
> To quench thus Fire; *no other blood nor thing*
>
> Can Do't. Hence thou alone art made for mee
>
> *Burnt, Meat Peace, Sin, and Trespass offering*

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[112] John Gatta, *Gracious Laughter: The Meditative Wit of Edward Taylor*, (Columbia: Missouri UP, 1989), 83-84
[113] Ibid, 96

Thy blood must fall: thy life must go or I

Under the wrath of God must every fry. (II. 17. 25-30 emphasis mine).

If the conservative position on the Sacrament refutes its sacrificial implications, Taylor here does not affirm the conservative position. Not only is this entire poem blatantly sacrificial, but that sacrifice is fundamentally a physical one. Taylor's use of the conceits of blood quenching the fire of hell as well as the juxtaposition of "burnt" and "meat" to "peace, sin, and trespass" situate this poem as a meditation on the physical sacrifice of Christ. However, if the we situate the poem within the generic context of devotional poetry, it does not dictate doctrine, and it does not have to support a particular theological system. Since this poem was written in preparation for Taylor's delivery of the Sacrament, the contradiction between his self-evident beliefs and his public performance of the orthodox Puritan Lord's Supper appears blatant.

Taylor's sacramental poems do not emphasize at all the necessity of *testified* regeneracy, as that would imply affective agency on the part of the ecclesiastical structure separate from that of the lay people. The *Preparatory Mediations* emphasize a singular sacramental union between one man's "meditated" soul and Christ's essence.

The similarities between Taylor and his English ancestors extend beyond cursory abstractions. Indeed, there exist a number of poems in Taylor's *Meditations* and *Determinations* that not only mimic the same structures used by Crashaw, but employ strikingly similar images. Taylor's *modus operundi* throughout his preparatory poetry relies primarily on a powerful metaphysical conceit that links the sacred to the ordinary; the divine to the domestic. In this way, "he follows Ledesma and Crashaw when he renders sacred events in homely terms."[114]

One of Taylor's most dominant image sets involves conceits that counterpoint the Sacrament of the Eucharist to various culinary practices. Taylor's Meditation 81 from the Second

[114] A.J. Smith, *Metaphysical Wit*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 241.

Series serves as a particularly good example of this motif. If Crashaw's conceits receive criticism for their Catholic perversity and overly gratuitous metaphors, Taylor's cannibalistic kitchen-Eucharist almost certainly falls in line with Crashaw's metaphors. Taylor reflects on the hyperbolic notion of the Eucharist's substance in the third stanza:

> What feed on Humane Flesh and Blood? Strange mess!
>
> Nature exclaims. What Barbarousness is here?
>
> And Lines Divine this Sort of Food repress.
>
> Christs Flesh and Blood how an they bee good cheer?
>
> If shread to atoms, would too few be known,
>
> For ev'ry mouth to have a Single one. (II. 81. 7-12)

This language does not reflect what one would expect a Calvinist/Memorialist sermon on the sacrament to argue. However, just as Crashaw's poetry does not dictate Catholic doctrine, Taylor's verse does not have to dictate Puritanism. The poem becomes even more explicit later:

> Thou, Lord, Envit'st me thus to eat thy Flesh,
>
> And drinke thy blood more spiritfull than wine.
>
> And if I feed not here on this rich mess,
>
> I have no life in mee: no life Divine.
>
> The Spirtuall Life, the Life of God, and Grace
>
> Eternall Life, obtain in me no place (II. 81. 37-42)

This stanza stands out because of the second and the fourth lines. Taylor states confidently that Christ's blood is "more" full of spirit than wine. The implication of that comparison is that Christ's blood, or the accident of the Eucharist, is NOT wine, but rather essence. The third and fourth lines of the stanza further go against Calvinist doctrine by implying that the Eucharist is

literally necessary to “divine life.” The Puritan doctrine on the subject of salvation does correlate the Eucharist to conversion, but the conversion itself, not the memorial that takes place though the Eucharist, determines “divine life.” The poem concludes with more imagery that would appear, in a sermon, as doctrinally suspect from a Puritan perspective:

> Oh! Feed mee, Lord, on thy rich Florendine.
>
> Made of the Fruites which thy Divinity
>
> As Principall did beare (more Sweet than wine)
>
> Upon thy Manhood, meritoriously.
>
> If I be fed with this rich fare, I will
>
> Say Grace to thee with songs of holy skill (II.81. 61-66)

First, the image of men feeding on Christ’s flesh is one that Taylor eschews in his sermons and in his argument against the half-way covenant. Secondly, Taylor establishes quite clearly that the Eucharist feast takes place “upon [Christ’s] Manhood”—not, as Puritan doctrine might suggest, a feast in memory of his divinity. The poem places the emphasis on the corporeality of Christ as a surrogate to the impossible description of his divinity. This methodology—that is, to overwhelm the senses of the reader with hyperbolic sensory images with the goal of transforming the soul (or the mind), is exactly the same methodology used by Crashaw. Taylor was, however, totally opposed to Crashaw’s theology. In fact, Taylor attacks the exact same symbolism that he uses in this poem in his sermons. However, the conclusion of the poem offers some explanation of Taylor’s reasoning, as he casts the effect of the Sacrament as a means to hone his own poetic craft. In this way, the poem becomes a meta-devotion. Taylor describes the divine affection of the Sacrament in verse—the receipt of which should refine his muse and allow him to compose better holy verse—in order to be both a better minister and a better poet. This imagery is not

designed to reflect doctrine, as he does not use it in his sermons. What it does suggest, however, is that the same imagery that Catholics could use as a part of their liturgy could be used by Protestants in private devotion to hone their soul and their wit with the ultimate effect of preaching the Word more effectively.

Edward Taylor's poetry displays what we read today as clear Catholic images and structures. What we know for sure, though, is that Taylor was no Catholic, and eschewed any association with the Church he deemed to exemplify the antichrist. It would make no sense for a Puritan minister to write Catholic poetry in order to prepare him for Puritan sermons. The logical conclusion that we can draw from that paradox must be that the poems did not embody doctrine, nor were they designed to. They were merely tools to hone the mind of a minister. Though we read certain doctrinal associations in the imagery today, it seems that those indications were not apparent to or necessary for the seventeenth-century reader. There are instances where Crashaw's language seems more Protestant in its composition than some of Taylor's language in his more perverse meditations. This contradiction speaks more to a different understanding of the genre of devotional poetry than it does to sudden theological uncertainty on the part of the poets. If considered generically, the similarity between Crashaw and Taylor illustrates aesthetic continuity instead of theological difference.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Richard Crashaw's poetry occupies only a few pages in most anthologies of English literature, if it is printed at all. In the *Longman Anthology of British Literature: Volume 1B- The Early Modern Period*, Crashaw lacks even a mention . By comparison, John Donne occupies twenty pages, Herbert occupies fourteen, and even more obscure poets from the period, such as Mary Wroth and Richard Lovelace, get at least several pages each. Crashaw's complete works

have been out of print since 1970. In fact, the complete works were only published in three editions throughout the entire twentieth century. The L.C. Martin text went through two editions, while the George Williams text had only one. As far as criticism goes, the *MLA International Bibliography* identifies 233 sources with even a cursory mention of Crashaw. Many of these sources are only tangentially related to Crashaw's body of work, and very few consider it as a whole. This compares to Donne, who has 2,717 entries in the same database. One issue of the *John Donne Journal* was devoted to Crashaw, but many of the articles therein focused on theoretical approaches to a few of Crashaw's texts. In fact, most criticism from the second half of the century takes Crashaw's discordant religious context as a given.

Crashaw's religion has typically been used to typify the exception to the rule of 17th century poetry. Crashaw is, essentially, the "token Catholic" among his contemporaries. His personal religious beliefs have stereotyped the way his poetry has been read, and the unfortunate result of that typecasting has been critical disdain since the time of Alexander Pope. The only major literary figure since his own time to praise Crashaw was T.S. Eliot, and though Eliot's praise of Herbert and Donne resulted in an exponential interest in critical examination and praise for the "metaphysical" poets, Crashaw remained an exception. Eliot did praise Crashaw just as highly as he did the others. Why, then, has the majority of criticism labeled Donne as the best and Crashaw as the worst of the metaphysical poets? Indeed, I post this question: had Crashaw been a Protestant, like Herbert, with baroque tendencies, would his reputation have been so negative? As I have shown, the differences between Herbert and Crashaw's style are cursory. Other than a few poems on the fringe of Crashaw's corpus, the majority of his work was mainstream.

Crashaw's devotional poetry employs the same images and motifs as Edward Taylor's. However, few critics have blasted Taylor's poetry as perverse or gratuitous in content. Since their content is relatively similar, one can only conclude that the biographical circumstance of Crashaw's Catholicism has led to a gross misunderstanding of his body of work. This biographical circumstance did not seem to matter for Crashaw's contemporaries. His work was published a number of times during the 17th century, even at the height of Puritan control of government and press. Certainly, Crashaw's Catholicism cost him personally. He was removed from his university position and ultimately *de facto* exiled from England. However, no extant evidence suggests that his work received the same criticism. In his own time he was considering equal to Herbert, and, in fact, better than some of the now more-published poets of the period. Thus, there exists a fundamental paradox surrounding Crashaw's interpretive history. It has been my goal in this essay to redefine the genre of seventeenth-century devotional poetry against the historical grain. It is the historical circumstance surrounding the author, not the aesthetic circumstance surrounding the poetry that leads to this paradox.

Devotional poetry, as a genre, is not didactic. Cultural materialism does not distinguish between aesthetic and non-aesthetic genres of texts. As such, New Historicist readings of devotional poetry align the content of verse with the content of contemporaneous sermons and religious pamphlets. There exists, however, a critical difference between a devotional poem and a devotional pamphlet. Individuals or organizations produce pamphlets when they seek to press a particular issue into the public mind. Typically, these documents do not mask their partisanship. If they did not profess a particular ideology, there would be no reason to print them en masse. Devotional poetry, on the other hand, was usually not printed to change the mind of the population or to convince them to think a certain way. Like icons, devotional poetry assumes that

the reader has some kind of theological interpretative framework. Crashaw, Herbert, and Taylor do not provide a dogmatic foundation in their poetry. That foundation is assumed to be located in the mind of the reader so that the reader can employ the raw material provided by the poet towards the ultimate goal of honing his soul. That raw material in itself is not partisan.

Beyond the generic misunderstanding that has caused a bifurcation between Crashaw's poetry and that of his contemporaries, a gross oversimplification of the theological history itself of the time period is partly to blame. Critics and historians typically characterize seventeenth-century England as unquestionably Protestant. For the upper levels of the Church and the State, there exists no doubt in my mind that this was true. However, theological homogeneity does not exist within the Protestant churches today, and it certainly did not exist then. The heterodoxy, especially when it came to private devotional practice that Eamon Duffy characterizes as a part of the early English Reformation no doubt continued well into the 17th century. The notion of what iconoclasm truly meant did not translate from physical images to literary images until much later. What this means is that, though many Protestant readers of Crashaw's poetry were iconophobes, and may have actively participated in the destruction of Church art, there is no indication that their attitudes translated to literature. The fact that Puritan iconoclasts like Edward Taylor wrote poetry with the same Sacramental language that his Catholic enemies did, all the while preaching against that language and those images from the pulpit, implies that either he was a liar and a heretic (not likely) or that his mind, and the mind of his generation, simply did not translate public doctrine to private aesthetics right away. By the time Jonathan Edwards took Taylor's pulpit, the rationalist mind of the 18th century had solidified, and no such affective language exists in Edwards's body of work. This is despite that he and Taylor no doubt shared the same theological worldview. Taylor, however, still had a Renaissance mind, with hints of the

medieval, in which poetry had an affective power to transfigure. Even if Puritan doctrine eschewed that concept, it did not escape the popular mind for a number of generations.

If Edward Taylor, a poet, did not find Baroque imagery to be heretical, then it appears almost certain that Crashaw's lay readership did not find that same imagery heretical. No doubt his Catholic readers probably found his poetry more useful than his Puritan readers, but most of his readers were in fact English Protestants. His readers viewed his work as equal to Herbert's, and none have questioned Hebert's allegiance to the English church because of his aesthetic sensibility. This paradox ultimately suggests that Protestants who read Crashaw did not know or did not care that they were reading a product of Catholicism, because the Catholicism that now seems apparent in Crashaw's poetry was no different in aesthetic structure and content than the Protestantism that they found in the works of Crashaw's Protestant contemporaries.