*Metaphor, Cure, and Conversion in Early Modern England**

by HELEN SMITH

One of the most prevalent metaphors for conversion in early modern England was the cure of a diseased soul. This article draws together religious controversy, medical manuals, and individual accounts of conversion to chart the variety of sources that inform this metaphor, from the practical experience of the sickbed to the typological traditions of biblical interpretation. It explores the varied language of spiritual sickness in order to reevaluate both the operations of religious feeling and recent accounts of metaphor as embodied, and suggests instead that conversionary cures open up the category of imagined sensation and the complex connections between bodily and spiritual feeling in this period.

1. INTRODUCTION

In early modern England it was widely held that, in the words of the Royalist clergyman John Reading, "Christ Iesus is the true Physitian, the Scriptures a field, the precepts are medicinable plants . . . the Scripture is a full store house of the soules phisicke."[1] The allegorical structure of Reading's comparison implies a neat division between "soules phisicke" and bodily medicine, or, in Shakespeare's terms, between "a curer of souls, and . . . a curer of bodies."[2] For early modern readers, however, such a distinction was far from secure. Corporeal suffering offered an opportunity for the good Christian to meditate upon his or her spiritual health, and vice was routinely manifested in physical symptoms. Meanwhile, popular works about illness embraced the need for religious rectitude as much as for

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[1]Reading, sig. A4^{r}.

[2]Shakespeare, 197 (*The Merry Wives of Windsor* 2.3.34–35).

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dietetics or domestic cures.[3] As Reading's title-page insistence on the "comfortable use both of sicknesse and health" makes clear (fig. 1), the experience of disease or the joys of a body free of pain offered not only a barometer to monitor the believer's spiritual condition, but also an effective means to work upon his or her soul.

Scholars of both literature and the history of medicine have remarked on the diversity and force of medical metaphors in early modern England, and have particularly noted the intertwining of the vocabulary of health with the language of divine will and judgment.[4] The terms of physical debilitation and renewed health gained a particular charge in the persistent and creative twinning of conversion and cure. In his meditations upon his own near-fatal illness and spiritual odyssey, the *Devotions upon emergent occasions and seuerall steps in my sicknes* (1624), John Donne describes the reluctance of the sinner to swallow divine medication: "*every minute [God] renewes his mercy*, but wee *will not understand, least that we should bee conuerted, and he should heale us*."[5] The clergyman John Randall conflated the cure of the individual and the continuing health of the institutional church when he insisted in his *Twenty-nine lectures* (1631) that "the Church is mercifull . . . they delight not in the death of sinners, but rather that they should bee conuerted, and liue; and therefore they attempt all meanes of cure first, before they proceed in cutting off."[6] Randall's prescription is a shifting one that moves from the possibility of recovery, tied explicitly to the transformations of conversion, to the final remedy of surgery, equivalent here to reprobation and damnation.

In a sermon preached in 1622, Donne declares: "God can work in all metals, and transmute all metals: he can make a Moral Man, a Christian;

[3]Fissell, 420, notes that "although there is no definitive count, devotional works about illness were as common, if not more so, than popular medical ones."

[4]Healy, 3, 6, argues that the interpretive traffic between sickness and sin flowed in two directions, suggesting not only that "perceptions of sick bodies can influence the way we imagine and order social structures," but that "from the mid-sixteenth century, the biblical Word became increasingly indispensable for interpreting and acting upon bodily signs, especially those to do with contagious disease and pollution." Harris, 16, acknowledges that "religious rhetoric customarily embodied sin as a pathogenic *spiritus mali* that invaded the body through its sensory apertures," and notes that it was Galenic humoralism's failure to explain contagion that drove medical writers to "Hippocrates's miasmic theory of contagion, or, more desperately to arguments based on astrology or divine providence."

[5]Donne, 1624, sig. B8$^{r–v}$. A marginal note directs the reader to Matthew 13:16, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (AV).

[6]Randall, sig. S8^{v}.

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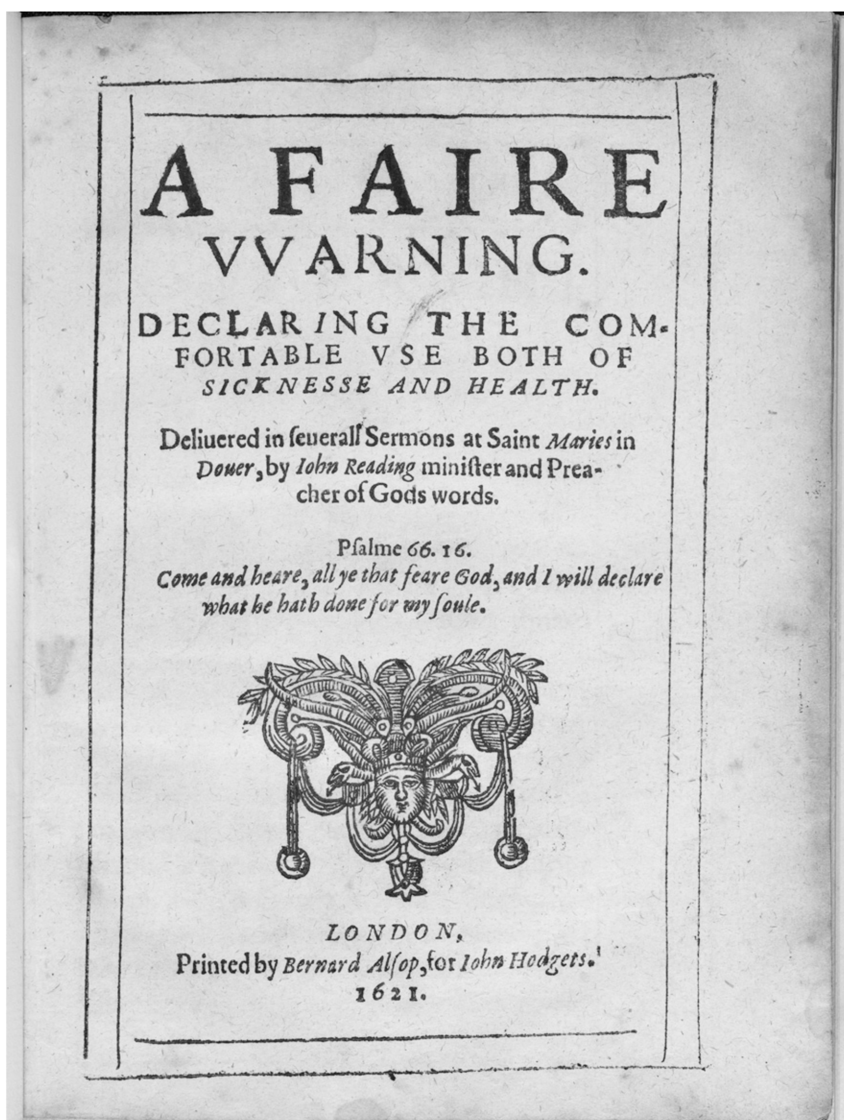

A FAIRE
VVARNING.

DECLARING THE COM-
FORTABLE VSE BOTH OF
SICKNESSE AND HEALTH.

Deliuered in ſeuerall Sermons at Saint *Maries* in
Douer, by *Iohn Reading* miniſter and Prea-
cher of Gods words.

Pſalme 66. 16.
*Come and heare, all ye that feare God, and I will declare
what he hath done for my ſoule.*

LONDON,
Printed by *Bernard Alſop*, for *Iohn Hodgets.*
1621.

FIGURE 1. John Reading. *A faire vvarning*, London, 1621. Title page. Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Rare Books 138012.

a Superstitious Christian a sincere Christian; a Papist a Protestant; and a dissolute Protestant, a holy man."[7] Donne's elaboration of the range of likely transformations, particularly when read in the context of his

[7]Donne, 1959, 4:110.

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immediately prior assertion that "a Virginian is thy Neighbor, as well as a Londoner," is a potent reminder of the currency of questions of conversion, and the varieties of religious change possible in this period, from a revelation or intensification of religious feeling to an alteration of confession or faith.[8] The combined pressures of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, the military and mercantile might of the Ottoman Empire, and encounters with indigenous faiths produced by exploration and colonial ventures came together to ensure that religious conversion haunted the early modern English imagination.

The study of conversion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has developed into a rich field in recent years: historians have charted its mechanisms and sociocultural implications, while the turn to religion in literary studies has prompted a new interest in confessional identity and seventeenth-century testimonies of Protestant and Puritan faith.[9] While some conversions were undoubtedly pragmatic in their motivations and effects, a change in religious affiliation decisively reoriented the convert in relation to family, friends, and communities, as well as to institutions and the state. The vocabulary of conversion was correspondingly rich and complex, yet the significance of its potent language has been little explored. In his extensive and influential study of movements between confessions, for example, Michael Questier dismisses metaphor as decorative effect, claiming that "anyone who did change his Church simply because of the doctrinal reasons presented by the polemicists did so on the basis of word games and literary sleight-of-hand."[10]

Though Questier is sensitive to the variety of motives for conversion, his insistence that literary technique is inherently duplicitous fails to address the ways in which religious change was described, understood, and disseminated, or the possibility that metaphors might reveal affective and embodied forms of religious sensation. Taken seriously, the rhetorical and narrative techniques that shape accounts of religious movement reveal how metaphor both prompts and describes the visceral experience of divine inspiration. The pervasive pairing of the terms of conversion and cure suggests that, in a period in which identity was "not experienced reflexively

[8]For a discussion of "the wide array of meanings and forms of divine experience that are indicated by the term 'conversion,'" see Stelling and Richardson's introduction in Stelling, Hendrix, and Richardson, 1–17 (quotation at 4).

[9]Jackson and Marotti. For historical accounts of religious change, see, for example, Dursteler; Grafton and Mills; Juneja and Siebenhüner; Luria; Strathern. For literary studies, see especially Matar; Murray; Vitkus. On the seventeenth-century conversion narrative, see Hindmarsh; Lynch; Mack.

[10]Questier, 36. Murray, 3, notes Questier's "suspicion toward the literary."

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but, as it were, relationally," both sickness and the turn from sin might constitute moments at which the self came under particular scrutiny, and the distinction between the two could collapse in the operations of sensation.[11]

This article first establishes the intimacy of the connection between these paired terms, and excavates the diverse contexts — practical, scriptural, and physiological — that contributed to the forging of a durable conceptual bond between religious change and bodily degeneration and recovery. It goes on to suggest that where recent work on medical metaphor tends to conceive of similitude as an explanatory strategy, importing terms from one domain to express the complexities of another, the early modern deployment of *conversion* as a term in both rhetoric and logic suggests that analogical figures of speech may best be read as articulating structural and experiential parallels. The metaphorics of confessional change are not simply decorative or polemical, but register the complex transformations of conversion as at once a recuperation and a painful alteration. Rather than explaining away the pangs of illness or making plain divine mysteries, medical metaphor establishes early modern spiritual experience as something that was felt as much as thought, blurring the distinction not only between ratiocination and sensation, but between bodily and imaginative feeling.[12]

Metaphors of conversion and cure were not simply structured by the physical experience of pain and disease, but constitute a moment at which the distinction between the thought and the felt wavers.[13] The capacity for converts to feel divine agency in the flesh, and for that sensation to be conveyed to the susceptible reader, opens up a category of imagined perception that cannot be fully divided from perception itself. The linguistic paralleling of conversion and cure was rooted in both practical experience and textual tradition. It also bound salvation to sensation — an embodied, but not necessarily bodily, process — and its prevalence brings into view the complex relationship between metaphor and medicine, and between somatic and spiritual experience in early modern England.

[11]Shuger, 37.

[12]This article is thus in part a response to the suggestion of Morgan, 7, that we need "a more capacious account" of belief, "one that looks to the embodied, material features of lived religion." "Religion," ibid., 8, suggests, "happens not *in* spaces and performances . . . but *as* them, carved out of, overlaid, or running against prevailing modes of place and time."

[13]Writing of *Hamlet*, Mazzio, 180, argues for an "aesthetics of feeling" that attempts to grasp fully "the extent of the sensory experience; of feeling operative in texts . . . some four hundred years ago." Mazzio suggests that "feeling" was "understood as a physical as well as an emotional phenomenon," and thus that "the full constituents of 'feeling' . . . defied rational and logical articulation."

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2. "MEDICINABLE. . .TO MANY SOULES": CURE AND CONVERSION

Conversion and cure were inherently entwined: *cure* contains within itself the meanings "to heal, restore to health" and "treat surgically or medically with the purpose of healing," as well as "care, charge; spiritual charge."[14] In the 1552 Book of Common Prayer, the section describing "The fourme and maner of making and consecrating of Bisshoppes, Priestes and Deacons" instructed priests to "teach the people committed to your cure and charge," and asked them to tend "wyth all faythfull diligence . . . aswell to the sycke, as to the whole, within youre cures."[15] In an account of the *Happy Conuersion, contrition, and Christian preparation* (1618) of Francis Robinson, hanged, drawn, and quartered at Charing Cross for counterfeiting the great seal, the minister and repeated convict-converter Henry Goodcole recalls "finding a wandering sheepe, and distressed soule, wanting cure, seeking, and earnestly desiring to be brought home againe."[16] Here the soul is in need of direction and domestication, rather than surgery or purgation. While the *OED* is confident that biblical uses of the term *cure* occupy the realm of the medical — including, for example, Christ's declaration "I cast out deuils, and I doe cures" under the heading "Successful medical treatment"[17] — the term routinely conflates the functions of corporeal and spiritual care, in ways that point to the experiences of sickness and salvation as essentially cognate.

The yoking together of conversion and cure, like the deployment of medical metaphor more generally, spanned confessional divides. A common language of spiritual malady serves to undermine both the recent critical and early modern polemical association of Catholicism with sensual practice, in opposition to a disembodied Protestant focus on the word.[18] Thus Richard Bristow, a Catholic priest, explains that he had prepared a print edition of William Allen's influential *Articles* after a friend, seeing "how medicinable it would be to many soules," begged for a copy of the manuscript that Allen had "framed" for Bristow's personal study.[19] Tobie Matthew (probably the

[14] *OED*, s.v. "cure," *v. 1*, 4a, 3; "cure," *n. 1*, 1a.

[15] *The Boke of common prayer*, sig. BB4^v.

[16] Goodcole, sig. B4^v.

[17] Luke 13:32 (AV); *OED*, s.v. "cure," *n. 1*, 6a.

[18] As Hunt, 40, notes, the "use of a shared set of commonplaces is one of the most distinctive aspects of early modern religious controversy." On the unsustainability of the binaries dividing sensual Catholicism from an austere Protestant logocentrism, see also Milner.

[19] Bristow, sig. A1^r.

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Catholic son rather than the York archbishop) penned a plea for spiritual sight that recalls the biblical episode in which the archangel Raphael commands blind Tobit to disembowel a fish (a figure for Christ) and smear it on his eyes in order to regain his vision. In the sonnet, Matthew begs for "like succor" and asks Saint Michael to "cure this hart more blind, then that blinde face / not with the gall of fish; but oyle of grace," a plea that combines metaphor with the real (and Catholic) practice of anointing.[20] This potent conflation of corporeal and spiritual vision resonates with the exemplary conversion of Paul, struck blind in order that the eyes of his soul might be opened.

The close link between conversion and cure was informed by the contexts of practical experience. People were vulnerable at times of sickness, and "illness and considerations of death were generally seen as powerful persuasive factors impelling people to consider whether they belonged to the true Church."[21] In a 1697 funeral sermon, John King, rector of Chelsea, posed the rhetorical question, "How many has the smart and agony of an acute distemper reformed, who in a constant course of Health and Blessings, were uncapable of any impression from the Bible or the Pulpit?"[22] Catholics, and particularly Jesuits, used miraculous cures to demonstrate divine efficacy, while Protestants of various stripes adopted a providential structure that allowed both sickness and cure to stand as markers of divine grace, and physical harrowing to awaken a diseased conscience.[23] A tangible connection between medicine and conversion was perhaps most fully revealed in the healing work of Jesuits and missionaries in Asia and the New World, reports of which, whether positive or polemically negative, filtered back to English audiences. In England, as elsewhere across Europe, illness and the threat of death made sickbeds, as well as prison cells, sites at which questions of right religion and the embrace of the true church gained a particular urgency.[24]

Some converts made the link between poor health and a change of life explicit. In a printed letter to King James that justified the author's conversion to Rome, Benjamin Carier explains that "for these many yeares I had my health very ill. And therefore hauing from time to time

[20]"To St. Michaell Th'archangell": printed in Petti, 143. Shell, 138, discusses the sonnet.

[21]Questier, 192. See also Mayhew. Beier, 243, notes that "taking to bed" was a "signal for alterations in the behaviour of the sufferer and those around him or her."

[22]King, sig. C1^r.

[23]On providential narrative structures and typologies, see Walsham.

[24]McClain offers several examples of prison conversions.

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vsed all the meanes and medicines that England could afford. Last of all, by the aduice of my Physitions, I made it my humble sute vnto your Maiestie, that I might trauell vnto the Spaw for the vse of those waters." The cure had no effect, so he resolved to settle his thoughts "vpon another world."[25] Carier's account was mocked by his opponent, George Hakewill, who insisted "you made a virtue of necessitie . . . to fixe your thoughts vpon God, when you perceiued you could not long remaine in the world."[26] Yet for Carier the episode worked differently: once out of Protestant, persecutory England, he realized that the "cure" he sought was not spa water but spiritual revelation; a revitalized body stood as evidence of God's successful operations upon his soul. Roundly criticized by Hakewill for turning to his soul only when his body appeared to be failing, Carier reversed this priority in his own account, implicitly identifying Hakewill's narrative as his own ignorant, earlier (and Protestant) viewpoint by admitting "both Art and experience teacheth me, that all my bodily infirmities haue their beginning" in "the health of my soule . . . for if I could by any studie haue proued the Catholike Religion to be false . . . I doubt not but the contentment of my soule would haue much helped the health of my body."[27]

In 1581 the serial apostate John Nicholls, recently returned to England and to Protestantism, reminded his readers that he had previously encouraged them "to embrace Papistrie" and "constantly to take the crosse of Christ upon you in all troubles and afflictions, and couragiously to abide Martyrdome," preaching "repugnantly to maintaine popish idolatrie, against the heauenly Gospell, the newe Testament, and last wil of our Sauiour Christ." As a result, "it pleased God of his mercifull goodnesse to visite me with grieuous sicknesse both of bodie and minde." Nichols recalled his former maltreatment of his own body, when he slept upon boards, scourged himself with cords, and fasted twice a week, taking "thereby a vehement cough with continuall spitting, which . . . grewe to

[25]Carier, sig. A2r.

[26]Hakewill, sig. D4r. Hakewill borrows this phrase from Carier's letter, which he reproduces in full, and in which Carier, sig. B3r, explains that he was intellectually inclined to convert, but that "because I had heard often, that the practize of the Church of Rome was contrary to her doctrine, I thought good to make one triall more before I resolued, and therefore hauing the aduise of diuerse learned Phisitions, to goe to the Spaw, for the health of my body, I thought good to make a vertue of necessitie, and to get leaue to goe, the rather for the satisfaction of my Soule, hoping to find some greater offence in the seruice of the Church of Rome, then I had done in her books, that so I might returne better contented, to persecute and abhorre the Catholikes at home, after I should find them so wicked and Idolatrous abroad."

[27]Carier, sig. A2r.

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a dangerous disease." For Nichols these excesses became proof of his former papistry and sinful determination "to shorten mine owne life." Spiritual and corporeal sicknesses are complexly intertwined in this account: as a Catholic, Nichols inflicted himself with physical disease in the service of doctrinal error, yet it was only through divinely inflicted illness that the pricking of his conscience could stir him to doubt the dictates of the Catholic faith.[28]

Accounts of sudden cures possessed a decisive rhetorical and dramatic charge, staging divine intervention for the immediate edification of onlookers and the instruction of more distant audiences brought together through news networks, pamphlet publication, and other reports.[29] In a manuscript account of his life, the Jesuit conversion machine John Gerard presented himself as skilled in diagnosing occasions for conversion. He recalled of Sir Everard Digby that, "his illness gave me the opening I wanted. From the uncertainty of human life and the certainty . . . of suffering both in this world and the next I showed how 'here we have no abiding city,' but must look to a heavenly one."[30] Digby, convinced the end was nigh, experienced the pangs of bodily suffering as proleptic of spiritual torments and hungered for eternal felicity, duly converting to become a diligent Catholic. On another occasion, Grisell, the Catholic wife of Sir Philip Wodehouse of Kimberley, was desperately ill: "A very skilled doctor was summoned at once from Cambridge. He saw the sick lady and said that he could prescribe some physic but he could give her no hope of recovery. . . . We made use of [a priest] on this occasion to give the lady all the last rites of the Church. After making her confession she was anointed and received Viaticum and (this is the wonderful thing) within half an hour she had recovered and was out of danger."[31]

Grisell's physical health was restored, Gerard explains, because extreme unction could cure the body "when God judged it to be for the soul's good," a justification that was powerful enough to also convert Sir Philip: "amazed that the sacraments of the true Church had power to effect such changes, he was persuaded at last to seek in the same Church the restoration of his soul's health." Gerard's narrative is constructed to achieve the fullest rhetorical effect: one conversion is confirmed and renewed by the application of extreme unction, while the spiritual medicine works to convert a second,

[28]Nicholls, sigs. B3^v–B4^r.

[29]Cambers, 2011, 99, offers the example of Ralph Josselin reading providential and cautionary materials to his family in order to "make us more careful of our wayes."

[30]Gerard, 166.

[31]Ibid., 29.

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skeptical observer, who thus becomes a model for the innumerable potential converts Gerard's Jesuit readers must prepare themselves to encounter.

While Gerard's account suggests a certain satisfaction in the inability of the "skilled doctor" to save Grisell, many medical practitioners recognized the operations of God as a crucial tool in their pharmacopoeia.[32] In 1613 Barnaby Potter reminded his readers, "Howsoever men may attribute the *plague* of pestilence, to the infection of the *aire*, or party about vs . . . *consumptions* vnto want of *exercise, fevers* and burning agues to the *malignitie* of some dish of *meate* or draught of *drinke* (& rightly too, as to the *second causes*) yet the *holy Ghost* would haue vs to look to a higher hand in all these."[33] For some, the power of doctors faced with vulnerable patients prompted fears of improper influence. The virulently anti-Catholic convert John Gee — who included Gerard in his index of "The names of the Romish Priests and Iesuites now resident about the City of London" as "a secular Priest, lodging about *Westminster*"[34] — attested that he might have extended even further his hugely popular *The foot out of the snare* (1624) had he chosen to share "somewhat of my owne knowledge, concerning the insinuations & incroachments vsed by those of that stamp, who professe physic; Who, whatsoeuer they doe vnto the bodies, infuse into the mindes of many the Kings Subiects, bitter distempers; whereby those patients tongues distaste the wholesome food of our Church, and their hearts are stricken with *antipathy* against our present State."[35] Gee highlights the power of medical doctors to work upon patients' susceptible minds, and suggests — in an intensely somatic language of gustation and bodily affect — that the soul is

[32]Healy, 27, argues that the growing influence of Paracelsus, and his "belief that only Christian charitable physicians could cure the body's ills," prompted an increasing medical dependence upon the divine as the sixteenth century progressed. Henry, 89, notes, however, that humoral theory and the treatment of psychic disorders could combine "to give medicine an odour of impiety." A number of practitioners either combined clerical and medical careers or moved between them: William Bullein (ca. 1515–76), a Protestant cleric returning to England after his Marian exile, found employment as a physician, while Richard Capel (1586–1656), William Delaune (ca. 1530–1611), and Roger Drake (1608–69), all combined the practice of physic with their duties as ministers. John Ashburne (d. 1661) was both a Church of England clergyman and a madhouse keeper, while William Coward (1656/57–ca. 1725), Henry Bull (d. 1577), Lewis Du Moulin (1605?–80), and George Eglisham (fl. 1601–42) were physicians who engaged extensively in controversial theological writing. As the seventeenth century progressed, nonconformity and physic became closely aligned, with several ejected or Congregationalist ministers combining practice in both fields. See also Sheils; for the Dutch example, see Waardt.

[33]Potter, sig. E4$^{r–v}$.

[34]Gee, sig. P3^{r}.

[35]Ibid., sig. Aa1^{v}.

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vulnerable when the body is in a weakened state. His choice of noun opens up the possibility of a bodily as well as spiritual aversion: "antipathy" was understood to embrace a "contrariety of feeling, disposition, or nature," rendering mutual repulsion an innate and physical quality.[36]

The twinning of conversion and cure can thus in part be understood as a recognition of the requirement for both physical and religious care, as moments of corporeal peril were necessarily also moments of spiritual risk or trial. Yet the centrality of these liminal sickbed conversions — spaces sometimes for visions of a welcoming or punitive future — to debates around revelation or constancy is not alone sufficient to explain the prevalence of medical metaphor. Several writers suggest the transformative force of spiritual medicine. For example, in *The true trial and turning of a sinner* (1607), the clergyman Thomas Tuke parallels physical and psychic cures, insisting that "God is not onely able to conuert and cure vs, but very readie to doe it, if we seeke vnto him."[37] Explaining that God "hath a salue for euery sore, and a medicine for euery maladie," Tuke turns to natural-philosophical examples: a marginal note cites Pliny as the source for his knowledgeable insistence that "the Lizardes seeke for *Calaminth* when they are wounded, beeing an hearb very excellent against the byting of serpents. The Storke feeling himselfe amisse, goeth to the herbe *Organ* for a remedie. The Rauen perceiuing himselfe poysoned with the Chameleon, flyeth to the Lawrell, and with it extinguisheth the venome: so when we are wounded or poysoned with sinne, and bitten by the serpent Sathan, we ought to goe to the Lord."[38] Tuke's instances of innate animal knowledge recall Jakob Böhme's influential theory of signatures, which suggested that God marked plants and animals with signs declaring their purpose and affinities.[39] It is in their likeness to a particular disease or organ that their restorative power is discovered. At the same time, however, the heaping up of animal examples is "radically paratactic,"[40] insisting upon the similitude not only of each pairing, but of every case, and suggesting, therefore, that the bite of a serpent and the fangs of Satan produce similarly urgent, and deeply felt, effects.

[36] *OED*, s.v. "antipathy," *n.*, 1a. The *OED* uses Holland's 1601 translation of Pliny as its example, citing "the repugnancie and contrariety in nature which the Greeks call antipathie."

[37] Tuke, sig. K5^{r}.

[38] Ibid., sig. K5^{v}.

[39] The dissemination of Böhme's doctrine thus participated in what Henry, 8, describes as a new emphasis upon "natural theology" in seventeenth-century England, rooted in the attempt to prove the existence of God through the evidence of reason and experience of the natural world.

[40] B. Smith, 1991, 127.

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The relentless logic of Tuke's extended comparison establishes the divine not simply as the foundation for the natural order, but as part of that order, possessed of its own distinctive curative effects.

Francis Rous also deployed a trope derived from Pliny in his description of squeezing poison from a scorpion onto a sting in order to draw out the venom (working by sympathy). He informed readers of his *Oile of scorpions, the miserie of these times turned into medicines and curing themselues* (1623) that "by the telling of our sinnes God knowes, that wee know them to bee sinnes, without which knowledge and acknowledgement there can be no conuersion, and without conuersion there can be no cure," a passage that one reader of the Huntington Library copy underlined and marked with marginal trefoils (fig. 2).[41] Gerard drew on the same passage from Pliny to report his successful approach to a woman who brought him an anti-Catholic polemic that had hitherto confirmed her in her Protestant faith: "She pointed out to me all the reasons and arguments it contained, and, in answer, I showed her all the dishonest quotations from Scripture and the Fathers, the countless quibbles and mis-statements of fact. And in this way, with God's help, I drew out of the scorpion itself a medicine for the scorpion's sting."[42] Gerard's metaphor seems to establish his medical practice as figurative, yet early modern theories of vision meant that the words of the book might enter the reader's eyes as subtle spirits to be processed by the common sense and imprinted on the memory or heart.[43] Textual medicines required the mediation of the corporeal eyes in order to illuminate the eyes of the soul, literalizing conversionary cure as a physiological process.

As the central texts of curative reading, scripture and the apostolic tradition offered a ready source of allusion and typology.[44] For rhetoricians,

[41]Rous, 1623, sig. L4r (Huntington Library Rare Books 69179). Rous's earlier *Diseases of the time, attended by their remedies* (1622), suggests the extent to which the discourse of sin as disease could be extended to a diagnosis of the ills of the body politic.

[42]Gerard, 19.

[43]See H. Smith. Spiller, 20–21, urges the need to think "about what books might do to readers, and not simply emotionally but physically," and suggests that "when the wear in the texts becomes the basis for the history of reading, that means that the materiality of reading is understood to inhere largely in the text, and the history of reading becomes a history of what readers do to books."

[44]Baxter, 1669, H6r, commands the "weak Christian" to "learn therefore every day more and more, to know what every truth is *good for*, that this is for the exercise and strengthening of such a grace, and this is good against such or such a disease of the soul. Every leaf in the Bible hath a healing vertue in it: They are the leaves of the Tree of Life." For more literal biblical cures, see Cambers, 2009.

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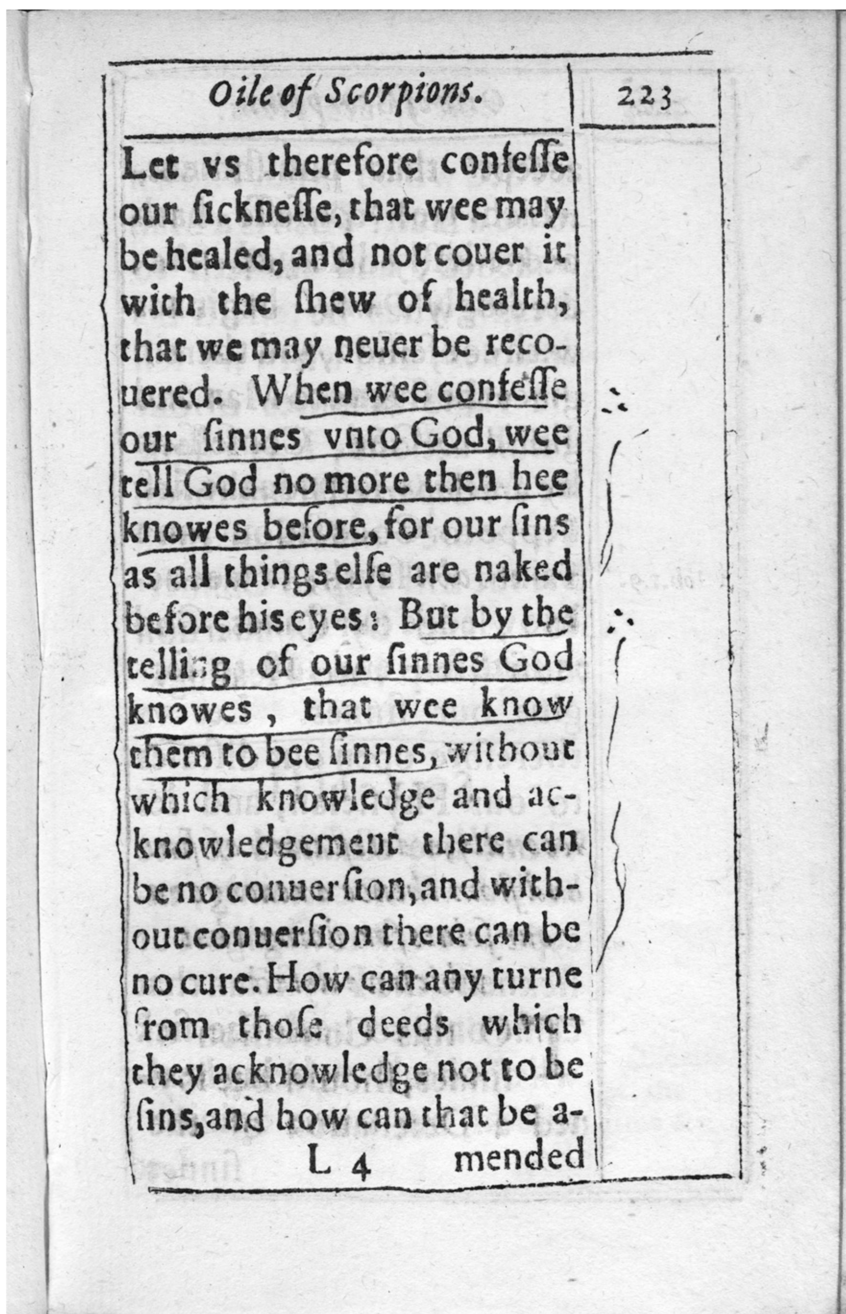
Oile of Scorpions. 223

Let vs therefore confesse our sicknesse, that wee may be healed, and not couer it with the shew of health, that we may neuer be recouered. When wee confesse our sinnes vnto God, wee tell God no more then hee knowes before, for our sins as all things else are naked before his eyes: But by the telling of our sinnes God knowes, that wee know them to bee sinnes, without which knowledge and acknowledgement there can be no conuersion, and without conuersion there can be no cure. How can any turne from those deeds which they acknowledge not to be sins, and how can that be a-

L 4 mended

FIGURE 2. Francis Rous. *Oile of scorpions*, London, 1623. Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Rare Books 69179, sig. L4r.

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the numerous examples of Christ's cures occupied the specialist territory of advanced metaphor: the "resemblance misticall," or parabola, "as when," suggests Puttenham, "we liken a young childe to a greene twigge which ye may easilie bende euery way ye list: or an old man who laboureth with continuall infirmities, to a drie and dricksie oke. Such parables were all the preachings of Christ in the Gospell."[45] Biblical history offered the reader numerous instances of physical cure prompting conversion to a saving belief in Christ's divinity. Taking a handful of contemporary examples, readers could quickly learn that Namaan the Syrian was "cured and conuerted" by Elisha; "*Philip* at *Samaria* cured Demoniacks, Palsies, Lameness, and so converted the people of that City"; Saint Hermagoras "for his miraculous cures, and by diligent preaching, conuerted many people to the fayth of Christ"; Thaddeus, one of Christ's disciples, was dispatched to visit Abgarus, toparch of Edessa, "*whom he first cured* of an inveterate distemper, and after converted him and his subjects to the Faith"; Saint Richard "preach'd the word of God, and by many miracles and cures wrought on the sick converted many to the Faith and worship of the true God."[46] Jeremy Taylor reminded his readers of the "infinite cures" undertaken by the apostles, rendering the recovery from illness a necessary preliminary to the discovery of spiritual health: "God mercifully providing that the Body should partake with the Soul in the advantages of the Gospel, the cure of the one ushering in many times the conversion of the other."[47]

Cure and conversion came together in the experience of illness and in the polemical deployment of accounts of unexpected recovery. Yet the "soules phisicke" — which was, for John Reading, as for many of his contemporaries, copiously sprinkled throughout the pages of scripture, and which offered a parabolic language and frame for the experience and interpretation of illness — already contained within itself the allegorical and historical terms that yoked together spiritual transformation and physical recovery. The scriptures were an important source for the analogy between conversion and cure, but also insisted upon the mutuality of those terms. Biblical precedent at once offered a history and an extended metaphor of divine physic, and bound the revelation of grace together with the experience of physical transformation in ways that resonated deeply for early modern readers attuned to scrutinizing themselves for the signs of sin.

[45]Puttenham, sig. Ee1^r.

[46]Adams, sig. &6^v [signatures as given in text]; Baxter, 1667, sig. Nn3^r; K., *The Roman martyrologe*, sig. O5^v; Cave, sig. S6^r; Cressy, sig. Ee2^v.

[47]J. Taylor, sig. B6^v; the formulation was repeated by Cave, sig. C2^r, the following year.

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3. "CONUERTIBLE TERMES": FEELING, THINKING, AND FIGURATION

Reading turned to John 5:14 to discuss Christ's words, "Behold thou art healed, sinne no more lest a worse thing come unto thee." Expounding on his text, Reading insisted upon the conflation of bodily and spiritual health already registered in the biblical alignment of healing — the cure of the impotent man miraculously able to take up his bed and walk — and the turn from sin. "There is," Reading says, "an health of Body, I doubt not but [Christ] had here a respect to both [body and soul], as in a like Cure, *Matth.* 9.2. where he vseth them as conuertible termes, *Thy sinnes are forgiuen thee*, or *Arise and walke*."[48] Matthew's Christ draws, only to collapse, a distinction between spiritual and physical healing, forgiving the palsied man's sins first as the more difficult of his two miracles, and only belatedly bidding him to "take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" in order to prove the full efficacy of divine forgiveness.

It is significant that Reading describes Christ's dual cures as equivalent, or "conuertible." For early modern disputants and readers, the turns of figurative language and the turn to a new or renewed faith were tightly bound. In his 1551 *Rule of Reason*, dealing with logic, Thomas Wilson informs readers that "Conuersion, is the chaungyng or alteryng of wordes in a Proposicion, when ye former part (wherof any thyng is rehersed) and the hynder parte (which is rehersed of the former) are chaunged, the one, into the others place."[49] Thus, for Reading, physical and spiritual recovery were two sides of the same coin, freely substituted in the structures of redemption. In this rhetorical guise, conversion made an unlikely stage appearance in *The Sophister*, printed in 1639, and usually attributed to the civil lawyer Richard Zouche. This comic grammatical allegory presents the rise and fall of Fallacy, the son of Discourse, ruler of Parrhesia (candid speech). The pairing of the religiously unstable Conversion with his companion, Aequipolency (or logical equivalence), further highlights his exchangeable nature, evident even in the inverted structure of his opening question: "Can *Æquipolency* endure all this? Can all this be endured by *Æquipolency*?"[50] In his *Arte of Rhetorique*, published in 1553, Wilson offers an alternative definition of conversion as "an ofte repeatyng of the last worde" of a sentence, clause, or phrase.[51] The tension between the exchange of words within a sentence or

[48]Reading, sig. C3^r^.
[49]Wilson, 1551, sig. F3^r^.
[50]Zouche [attrib.], sig. G2^v^.
[51]Wilson, 1553, sig. Dd3^r^.

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statement, and the patterned repetition of a terminal word, suggests the negotiation between transformation and stasis inherent in religious conversion, which required at once a complete inversion and a reliable repetition to confirm itself.

In a 1617 treatise, *Davids learning*, Thomas Taylor identifies the purpose of church ministers as being "to charge men with their spirituall sicknesse . . . to make wounds in the conscience, to pare away the dead flesh, and so to make way to sound cure. . . . The conuerting of a sinner, is the curing of a sick and wounded soule, and the Phisician is God himself, who, that his cure may bee sound, first searcheth and lanceth, and stirreth in the wound, which puts the patient to much paine, before he power oyle into it, and binde it vp."[52] In an earlier commentary, Taylor rather heavy-handedly elaborated the significance of these recurring terms. Citing Paul's instructions to Titus to "*reprooue them sharpely*," he notes, "it is a metaphor taken from Surgeons, who cut and launch, and seare to the quicke." Taylor explains the trope in painful detail: "Ministers who are the Surgeons of soules, in all their launcing and cutting . . . aime at the cure, that is, the conuersion of their patients, that is, their people; that beeing freed from their corrupt diseases, that is their errors, whether in iudgement or practise, they may be brought to sound health, that is soundnesse of faith and sincere doctrine, cleauing only vnto God."[53] The metaphor is so extended here that it may more properly be described as an allegory, defined by Wilson as "none other thyng, but a Metaphore vsed throughout a whole sentence, or Oration."[54] Yet by his detailed enumeration of the correspondences between surgery and salvation, Taylor divests his figure of its potency, rendering divine physic a figurative, rather than literal, intervention, and allowing for a comforting retreat from the visceral

[52]T. Taylor, 1617, sig. H8v. Taylor was notoriously Puritan, and his metaphor owes an evident debt to Tyndale, sig. F7r: "A Christen man in respecte of God is but a passive thinge / a thinge that sofereth only and doeth nought / as the sycke in respecte of the surgen or phisicion doth but suffer only. The surgen launceth and cutteth out the deed flesh shercheth the woundes / thrusteth in tentes / sereth / burneth / soweth or sticheth and leyeth to corsies to drawe out the corrupcion / and last of all leyeth to helinge playsters and maketh whole. The phisicion lyke wise geveth purgacions and drinkes to dryve out the disease and then with restauratives bringeth helth." Ibid., sig. O6v, later concludes that God punishes sinners: "not that he reioyseth in our sorowe / but to dryve sinne out of the flesh which can none other wise be cured: as the phisicion and surgion doo many thinges which are paynefull to the sycke / not that they reioyse in the paynes of the pore wretches: but to persecute and to dryve out the diseases which can no other wyse be healed."

[53]T. Taylor, 1612, sigs. R1v–R2r.

[54]Wilson, 1553, sig. Aa1v.

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response a reader might feel at the description of a wound being searched, lanced, and stirred.

Taylor's implicit view of metaphor as a structure in which words from one domain are carried over to illuminate another is repeated in recent scholarship on medical figures of speech. Margaret Healy argues that "in the absence of medical knowledge, metaphorical understanding . . . enables human beings at least to 'get a handle on the problem': analogical reasoning, involving endowing a mysterious disease entity with human characteristics and motivations, provides a way of thinking about and articulating the 'fight' against it."[55] The terms of religious discourse thus offer a mechanism through which the mysteries of pain and bodily experience can be reckoned with and rendered at once more concrete and less terrible: indeed, for Michael Schoenfeldt, "much of the religious and literary history of the west can be explained by the ubiquitous if understandable need for a narrative that could successfully rationalize the phenomenon of indiscriminate and purposeless suffering."[56]

Paradoxically, however, a number of scholars reverse this dynamic, arguing that it was medical language that rendered divine mysteries accessible rather than vice versa. Religion in this view becomes "the continuous term, or tenor, of the metaphor and medical matters . . . the discontinuous term, or vehicle."[57] Medicine, then, becomes one way to render religious conflicts meaningful to a workaday intelligence more acquainted with toothache than with theology. Andrew Wear argues that "the use of medical and physical metaphors to explain the inexplicable or the supernatural was part of the Catholic and Protestant preachers' general use of language whereby the more familiar things of this world help to make understandable those of the spiritual and miraculous world," and later speculates that "Christianity could be remote from the experience of illness and suffering, and that preachers knew that to make Christianity relevant they had to bring medicine and the bedside into religious discourse."[58] Yet such explanations account neither for the prevalence of medical metaphor in learned as well as popular religious texts, nor for the rich biblical and

[55]Healy, 62. Sontag, 46, 51, has argued influentially against the postromantic impulse to metaphorize disease, contending that metaphor obscures physical causation, and allows for the association between disease and weakness of character, suggesting that in tuberculosis, for example, "Passion moves inward, striking and blighting the deepest cellular recesses," while metaphors relating to cancer suggest that the inability to express feeling is materialized in the body.

[56]Schoenfeldt, 2008, 36.

[57]Harley, 398.

[58]Wear, 150, 165.

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patristic tradition upon which the dual terms of conversion and cure depended. Moreover, if both plague and piety can be conceived as mysterious forces that require alternative terms to explicate them, and if each is assumed to act as a mediating term for the other, it may suggest not a revealing distance, but a startling sympathy between the two categories.

The tendency to read the terms of divine cure as strictly explanatory is rooted not only in an understanding of metaphor as the carrying over of terms from one domain to another, but in a parallel conceptual division that divorces language from sensation, and culture from the corporeal, natural body. The editor of one recent collection, for example, suggests that "the abiding conviction . . . that physical diseases and mental illnesses are the result of excessive or immoderate behaviors and moral depravity or sin is suggestive of the stubborn persistence of these literary and cultural misreadings of the body and mind that still plague us today."[59] This analysis is symptomatic — to perpetuate the use of medical metaphor — of a persistent decoupling of language from the body and experiential knowledge that insists upon the semiotic availability of body and mind for reading or misreading. The literary and cultural are held to exist apart from the physical, and from processes of habitation or lived experience, rather than being intrinsic to them, and experienced in ways that are themselves embodied and sensate.

The linguistic philosophy of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson suggests the possibility of an "embodied approach to disease representations" that can reveal "a creative culture . . . whose imaginative flights were grounded in the flesh and its perceived pathologies."[60] In this view, metaphor is not simply a linguistic or literary technique but a basic conceptual structure, allowing for the emergence of "a philosophy close to the bone."[61] Citing recent work in cognitive theory and neuroscience, Lakoff and Johnson suggest that "the very properties of concepts are created as a result of the way the brain and body are structured and the way they function in interpersonal relations and in the physical world."[62] Their hypothesis is, however, built upon the unexamined conflation of the thesis that bodily sensation and perception are instrumental in shaping the neurological hardware of the

[59]Vaught, 6 (note the tenacity of medical metaphor).

[60]Healy, 16.

[61]Lakoff and Johnson, 8.

[62]Ibid., 37. For critiques of the too-ready assumption that cognitive science has allowed for significantly new understandings of neural functioning, see Coltheart; Weisberg, Keil, Goodstein, Rawson, and Gray. Coltheart, 331, concludes with the blunt statement: "Rather a lot of people believe that you can't learn anything about cognition from studying the brain."

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developing infant, with the proposition that understanding and representation derive their terms from the operations of experience: an assertion that lends a distinctly materialist aspect to the tenor-vehicle model, but does little to displace it.

Thomas Wilson offers a rather different account of bodily metaphor, suggesting that "euery translation [one of his terms for metaphor] is commenly, & for the most part referred to the senses of the body," a point reinforced by his reference to those overreaching wits who "passe ouer such words as are at hande."[63] Wilson goes on to offer several examples of the technique by which "we alter a worde from that which is in the minde, to that which is in the bodye. As when we perceyue one that hath beguiled vs, we vse to saye: Ah sirrha, I am gladde I haue smelled you oute. Being greued with a matter, we saye communelye we cannot digest it. . . . In obseruing the worke of Nature in al seueral substaunces," Wilson concludes, "we maye finde translations at wyll."[64] Wilson's metaphorical practice is itself synesthetic: perception is described in the language of smell; bodily practice offers a frame for thinking through both feeling and cognition.

For George Puttenham, metaphor (a "sensable" figure) occupied a complex middle ground: "transport," he explains "is a kinde of wresting of a single word from his owne right signification, to another not so naturall, but yet of some affinitie or conueniencie with it."[65] Allegory, too, which for Puttenham as well as for Wilson was "a long and perpetuall Metaphore . . . is when we do speake in sence translatiue and wrested from the owne signification, neuertheless applied to another not altogether contrary, but hauing much conuiniencie with it as before we said of the metaphore."[66] Metaphor may be less a way of obscuring difference than a technique to reveal enduring and unexpected connections, revealing "not the 'thisness of a that' but rather that 'this *is* that,' insisting upon a simultaneity of experience," or, in Puttenham's terms, a distinct affinity.[67] Metaphor thus becomes a way of recognizing what is cognate or comparable, and of establishing continuity, not of altering one thing to make it serve another.

[63]Wilson, 1553, sig. Z3^{r}.

[64]Ibid., sig. Z4$^{r–v}$.

[65]Puttenham, sig. V4^{v}. Like Wilson, Puttenham refers metaphor to sensation, "as to say, *I cannot digest your unkinde words*, for I cannot take them in good part; or as the man of law said, *I feele you not*, for I vnderstand not your case, because he had not his fee in his hand": ibid.

[66]Puttenham, sig. X4^{r}.

[67]Jackson, 138.

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4. "AGUISH PIETIE": FEELING CONVERSION

Taking the language of cure seriously allows the growing scholarship on religious experience to be brought into dialogue with, and to inform, recent work on embodiment as well as the relationship between subject and environment.[68] Gail Kern Paster has influentially argued that the passions were a psychophysiological phenomenon, and that mental life was fundamentally a bodily effect: "there was," she suggests, "no way conceptually or discursively to separate the psychological from the physiological."[69] In the early modern period, physical illness could have direct spiritual consequences: Thomas Newton's 1576 translation of Levinus Lemnius's influential *The Touchstone of Complexions* reminded readers that "if the bodye do abounde and be full of ill humours, if the Spirites bee unpure, and the brayne stuffed full of thicke fumes proceeding of humours, the bodye and Soule consequentlye cannot but suffer hurte, and bee thereby likewise damnifyed."[70] Bodily disposition did not simply accompany, but explained a propensity to shift in religion: Richard Montagu drew on the theophysiology of vital spirits when he complained that "many, once *Puritans*, turne often *Papists*. . . . Men of moving, violent, Quick-silver, Gun-powder spirits, can never rely upon middling courses, but . . . runne on headlong into extremes."[71] An inattention to or abuse of the body could produce the physical grounds out of which heresy and irreligion might grow: in his 1610 *Doctrine and use of repentance* Richard Stock advises against "a daintie and full diet, as at the first entrance by heating the bodie, it inflameth the soule, stirring within it excessiue joy, pleasure, boldness, confidence, and presumption."[72]

Precisely because the body was constituted of a combination of matter and subtle spirits that allowed for bodily operations, sensation, and movement, the soul was frequently understood to be affected by corporeal annoyances. Spirits were "variously and contradictorily defined as medium, instrument or engine of the soul. . . . Expressions such as 'thin and subtle body,' 'lucid and ethereal body,' 'subtle vapour' and 'fine and spiritual corpuscle' (*corpusculum tenue et spiritale*) referenced the double affinities of *spiritus* with both corporeal and incorporeal substances, the link, but also the

[68]See especially Floyd-Wilson and Sullivan Jr.; Paster, Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson; Schoenfeldt, 1999; B. Smith, 2009. Ingold argues for an embodied approach to phenomenology in a series of essays on perception.

[69]Paster, 12.

[70]Lemnius, sig. C3^{v}.

[71]Montagu, sig. P4^{v} (cited in Questier, 83).

[72]Stock, sig. H2^{v}.

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confusions and contaminations between 'physical and natural' and 'incorporeal spirits' such as the soul."[73] The soul was the primary site of feeling and sensation, whether in a dualist model that distinguished between the physical and the more perfect spiritual senses, or within a monist philosophy that insisted upon the corporeality of the soul. For Ambroise Paré, the influential French barber-surgeon, the soul "feeleth, imagineth, judgeth, remembreth, understandeth, and ruleth all our desires, pleasures and animall motions; it seeth, heareth, smelleth, tasteth, toucheth."[74]

While arguing that the soul is "really distinct from the Body," Henry More, the most prolific of the Cambridge Platonists, nonetheless insisted that spirits were the instruments "by which the Soul hears, sees, feels, imagines, remembers, reasons."[75] His sometime pupil Anne Conway devoted a significant part of chapter 8 of her resolutely monist *Principles of the most ancient and modern philosophy* (published posthumously in 1692) to proving that "The Union and Sympathy of Soul and Body may be easily demonstrated" through the question of bodily suffering: "Why is the Spirit or Soul so passible in corporal Pains? For if when it is united with the Body, it hath nothing of Corporeity, or a bodily Nature, Why is it grieved or wounded when the Body is wounded, which is quite of a different Nature? . . . If it be granted, that the Soul is of one Nature and Substance with the Body . . . then all the aforesaid difficulties will vanish, and it will be easily conceived, how the Body and Soul are united together, and how the Soul moves the Body, and suffers by it or with it."[76] While Conway's conclusions reflect her particular philosophical project, her deductions proceed from what she suggests is a commonplace observation: that the soul experiences bodily sensation, and suffers real hurt when the body is wounded. Accounts of the pains of conversion play upon this dynamic, insisting that mortal suffering has the capacity to stir the soul, while at the same time offering a tantalizing glimpse of a parallel possibility: that the workings of religious belief might be felt in — and might act upon — the body. In these terms, the twinning of conversion and cure is revelatory of the intensity and tangibility of spiritual struggle.

Paster's analysis — put forward as a corrective against what she sees as the dominance of a pervasive dualism in accounts of the early modern body — corresponds to accounts of the spiritual dangers of bodily abuse, but grants little power to the psyche as an organ correspondingly constitutive of

[73]Göttler, xx.
[74]Paré, sig. Ffff4^r.
[75]More, sigs. V5^v–V6^r.
[76]Conway, sigs. I7^r, K2^v.

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physical health.[77] For John Reading, God was constantly engaged in "excitation, the stirring vp our attention," whether by "discouering to the ignorant the good they haue . . . reprehending the vnthankefull . . . remembering the forgetfull [or] comforting the afflicted."[78] "Excitation" is a physiological process, "to set in motion, to stir up": God's intervention is distinctly medical.[79] However, Reading reminds his readers, the four humors, those familiar keystones of Galenic medicine, were understood not simply as a corollary, but as a result of sin: "Health in it *esse* and proper being, was that vncorrupt disposition of bodie in mans innocencie, when the foure first qualities in Man, as a Citie at vnitie in it selfe, by their brotherly agreement, fortified him against all assaults of Paines, Aches, Sicknesse, Wearinesse, Decrepednesse, Old Age . . . till the ambitious mind taught them to mutinie: then Heat and Cold, Moist and Drie, eagerly as it were fighting for soueraignetie, by restlesse ciuill warres ouerthrew Mans body, the little modell of a State, neuer ending their intestine quarrell, till the great Vsurper Death entring through the breach of sinne, surprized all."[80] The pun that brings together the internal — or "intestine" — conflict of a country (a prophetic vision in 1621) and the emboweled conflicts of the physical body, allows Reading's invocation of disease to provoke a gut reaction in his readers and listeners, recognizing their own internal rumblings as part of the larger war of good and evil. At the same time, it suggests the mutual influence of body and soul, with the former first transformed by the ambitions of the latter.

In his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton captures concisely the debates surrounding the relationship between body and soul, noting that "as the distraction of the mind, amongst other outward causes and perturbations, alters the temperature of the Body, so the distraction & distemperature of the Body, will cause a distemperature of the Soule, and t'is hard to decide which of these two doe more harme to the other." While Burton provides copious citations in support of his view that "the Body, being materiall, worketh vpon the immateriall Soule, by mediation of humors and spirits," and concludes that "as wine savours of the caske where it is kept, the Soule receiues a Tincture from the Body, through which it

[77]Paster, 20. In contrast, Vidal, 35, notes that early modern accounts of the interconnections between the corporeal and the psychic routinely incorporated the soul: "Man's essence was that he was a composite of both soul and body, two substances which functioned together and interacted in accordance with humoral cosmology."

[78]Reading, sig. C3^r.

[79]*OED*, s.v. "excite," *v.*, 1.

[80]Reading, sig. C3^v.

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workes," he nonetheless insists upon the subtle, mutual shaping of mental and physical passions.[81]

Paré's insistence that "the eye doth not of it selfe perceive that it seeth, nor the nose that it smelleth, nor the eares that they heare, nor the tongue that it tasteth, nor the hands that they touch. For all these things are the offices and functions of the common sense," invokes the *sensus communis*, which received and interpreted the messages of touch, taste, hearing, smell, and sight as "the one sense shared by all the individual senses and felt, however faintly and however intermittently, in all sensation: the sense of sensing."[82] The divine Samuel Gott, writing in 1670, reminded readers that "God made the Sensitive Soul to be a Living Perceptive Spirit . . . Sensitives being Perceptive *Animals* do not only Imagin, Feel, and the like, but also Perciev, that they do so."[83] The operations of the perceptive soul form part of a history "still to be recovered, in which the relations between cogitation and perception, thought and feeling, were not what they became."[84]

Both conversion and cure were experiences that directed attention to the capacity for experience and to the operations and alterations of perception. The powerful psychic and physical effects of pain were frequently invoked "to invest other, non-bodily categories of experience with the authority and palpable reality of bodily sensation."[85] This formulation suggests that the terms of cure could lend the transformations of conversion a tangible quality, rooted in prior experience. Given the convert's precarious status, and the ever-present danger of backsliding, the terms of physical alteration might render spiritual change significantly more concrete. Schoenfeldt goes further, arguing that strong feeling — in the sense of emotional response — may produce sensation. Where he begins by suggesting that grief is "imagined to have a palpable, material presence in the body," he goes on to argue that "flesh is not a realm completely separate from the soul, but is a name for the thickening and coagulation of emotion around the intense sensations of pain and grief."[86] Rather than simply signaling the presence of a sensitive soul, or recording the body's shaping effects on understanding

[81]Burton, sigs. O7^{v}–O8^{r}.

[82]Heller-Roazen, 41. Heller-Roazen's embrace of Aristotle's doctrine that nothing is in the intellect that was not previously in the senses, allows for a stimulating account of "the sense that we are sensing," but only briefly addresses the question of sensation without object in chapter 23, "Phantoms, In which Bodies feel Parts they do not possess, and alternately fail to feel those Parts that are truly theirs": 253–70.

[83]Gott, sig. Ggg1^{r}.

[84]Heller-Roazen, 41.

[85]See *The Sense of Suffering*, 1–17 (quotation at 6).

[86]Schoenfeldt, 2008, 30.

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and representation, the terms of medical metaphor conjure the power of psychic perturbation to be felt in the flesh — an example of the sense of sensing operating powerfully enough to produce sensation in the absence of an external object or cause. Where sensation provokes the sense of sensing, the invocation of sensation may, in "conuertible termes," prompt sympathetic feeling.

In Donne's *Devotions*, the terms of suffering create space for bodily empathy, encouraging the reader (or hearer) "to participate in the experience of a disease which the reader has probably never felt."[87] The language of suffering might do as much to provoke sympathetic and novel sensations of the invasion or revolt of the flesh as to evoke particular past experiences. Further, reading about spiritual pains in corporeal language might produce a response that is felt as much as thought. Donne, in an account of "The Litanie" — a poem that deals explicitly with the "sacred Academie" of "Doctors," i.e., the church fathers — begs God to allow the possibility

> That wee may change to evennesse
> This intermitting aguish Pietie,
> That snatching cramps of wickednesse
> And Apoplexies of fast sin, may die.[88]

Here he pleads for spiritual revelation and a conversion to grace in metaphors whose vivid immediacy reduces the gap between referent and vehicle, suggesting again the possibility that the "senses, which thy souldiers are"[89] might be intimately involved in the experience of religion, and that religious doubt might be intensely felt. Donne's poems provide "a wonderful training ground for exploring the convulsive congress between spirit and matter."[90] Striving to "cure" his "eares sicknesse" and direct his aural skills toward their proper object, Donne highlights the determined disciplining of perception that establishes religious feeling as both mental effort and embodied response.[91] His description of piety as "aguish" suggests the almost paradoxical requirement that conversion might be desired or willed but should nonetheless be experienced as unwilled: it is God who provokes the pangs of piety but also who is begged to translate uneven feeling into a secure intent. Medical terms thus offer a particularly potent

[87]Lund, 328.
[88]Donne, 1633, sigs. Aa1^{v}, Aa4^{r}.
[89]Ibid., sig. Aa3^{v}.
[90]Schoenfeldt, 2009, 149.
[91]Donne, 1663, sig. Aa4^{v}.

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means to express the crucial urgency of submission to God's will, experienced as an invasive and impulsive bodily presence.

It is tempting to suggest, as several commentators do, that religion offers an object for pain, allowing the sufferer to "project it into an object which, though at first conceived of as moving toward the body, by its very separability from the body becomes an image that can be lifted away, carrying some of the attributes of pain with it."[92] Physical suffering and imagining should be understood as boundary states: where physical pain "is an intentional state without an intentional object; imagining is an intentional object without an experienceable intentional state. . . . They together provide a framing identity of man-as-creator within which all other intimate perceptual, psychological, emotional, and somatic events occur."[93] Elaine Scarry brings together pain and imagination to argue that it is through their relationship that an object can be created for pain, that "pain will be transformed from a wholly passive and helpless occurrence into a self-modifying and, when most successful, self-eliminating one."[94] Yet the evidence, explored above, that early modern religious feeling might not only derive from, but prompt bodily effects suggests a more complex relationship between belief and sensation: intense belief may be a movement into rather than out from bodily experience.

Disease and divinity functioned in convertible ways for early moderns who felt both external and internal pain, and suffered interior as well as exterior wounds. Rather than being a perpetual struggle between flesh and spirit,[95] many experienced and understood conversion as a complex and tightly bound negotiation, even collaboration, between the extremes of matter and divinity, encapsulated in the human body. In his preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault suggests that "disease is at one and the same time disorder — the existence of a perilous otherness within the human body, at the very heart of life — and a natural phenomenon with its own constants, resemblances, and types."[96] Religion too can be understood to insist upon

[92]Schoenfeldt, 1999, 172–73. For Scarry, 180, in a biblical context, "'to believe' is to perpetuate the imagined object across a succession of days, weeks, and years; 'belief' is the capacity to sustain the imagined (or apprehended) object in one's own psyche, even when there is no sensorially available confirmation that that object has any existence independent of one's own interior mental activity."

[93]Scarry, 164.

[94]Ibid., 164–69. As ibid., 162, explains it: "While pain is a state remarkable for being wholly without objects, the imagination is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects."

[95]Questier, 67.

[96]Foucault, xxiv.

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the internal alterity of the convert within a larger typology, as the faithful or staggering Christian experienced religious change as a physical trial and remaking. For Donne, such a change constituted a third nativity: he rejoiced in his "preter-naturall Birth, *in returning to* Life, *from this* Sicknes."[97]

Metaphor, then, is neither a purely decorative effect, nor a means to render the ineffable accessible: it is both the discovery and the expression of a compelling likeness, possessed of the force at once to describe and to produce visceral connections. Conversion in early modern England was not simply like medicine, nor was medicine simply a way to sweeten the pill of the ineffable workings of God. Conversion was a cure and cure could effect religious change: the two possessed a convertible energy, or, in Puttenham's terms, a powerful "affinitie or conueniuncie." Within the terms of a historicized phenomenology that seeks to discover the ways in which past believers knew the world around them, both cure and conversion must be understood as being at once a transformation and a restoration. The powerful sense of intense sensation, itself an interlocking corporeal and spiritual experience, persisted in and structured the altered corpus — both flesh and spirit — of the feeling believer.

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[97]Donne, 1624, sig. A2^{v} (mis-signed A3^{v}).

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