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JOHN BYROM: AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY APOLOGIST FOR MYSTICISM

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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1967

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For the Holy Spirit has evidently chosen different modes of revealing his sacred counsels according to the circumstances of persons and times, inciting and directing at pleasure the minds of his prophets.

INTRODUCTION

Students of the first quarter of the eighteenth century have long recognized that the label Age of Reason—like most labels of literary or intellectual history—oversimplifies and, in fact, misleads. Certainly the period was predominantly one of formalism and orthodoxy in all its intellectual endeavors, a time of consolidation rather than innovation in values. Yet there were in the age revolutionary tendencies which were to change radically its character and its values. A single but noteworthy example is to be found in the poetical works of John Byrom (1692-1763), the disciple of a greater and more notable revolutionary, William Law. Both Byrom and Law are exemplars of a widespread and profound change taking place in men's minds and hearts. To them and many others the prevalent theological controversies seemed only to confirm that rational systems of theology and critical scholarship had become more important than true piety. But as the century progressed, the deistic demands for demonstrative evidence and scientific proofs of faith diminished under the impact of the Evangelical Revival. Although much of the devotional literature written by Byrom is not an overt statement of the evangelical sense that man should realize his spiritual self, it springs from the same urgent conviction.
Throughout his long and prolific life William Law (1686-1761) was involved in the religious controversy of his times. As a young Anglican priest he wrote and published letters against the Bishop of Bangor's theory that the authority of Christ was more important than any Anglican dogma or rationalization. The doctrines in his *Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call* helped significantly to give spiritual force to Methodism. And, finally, he became an avowed and dedicated proponent of the mystical doctrines of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). John Byrom was no less a churchman, but he was more in the world; he lived his convictions, taking them with him from the study to the coffee-house. As Law's appointed laureate, he became not only a sincere advocate and spiritual disciple of his friend, but a dedicated exponent of the "new" sacred poetry and "enthusiastic" sentiments which justified such verse. The notions of feeling and enthusiasm which he espoused are important for understanding Law and as manifestations of that undercurrent of mystical speculation which influenced Burke, Blake, Coleridge, and Carlyle, to mention but these.

Any discussion of the literary and religious worlds of Byrom and Law must begin with the attempt to define "mysticism." Just what constitutes this cast of mind is not easy to determine because there are probably as many definitions of the term as there are mystics, and certainly as many as there are books and commentators on the subject. The following brief discussion is
a synthesis of a variety of views, the purpose of which is to arrive at an operational definition applicable mainly to Law, and through him to Byrom.

Neither of these men was what we might call an "original" mystic. Their most important sources for mystical Christianity were St. Paul and Jacob Boehme, the sixteenth-century "Teutonic Theosopher." Some might view Byrom and Law--and many of their contemporaries did--only as commentators or slavish adapters of another man's system, but this is an oversimplification because both were sincerely convinced that Boehme's "interior religion" was the true, primitive, divinely instituted way to human salvation. Their interpretations of Boehme are only the outward manifestation of this conviction.

Of the many scholars who have written about mysticism and its influence on English religion and literature, I have chosen two whose definitions seem most relevant to the thought of Law and Byrom. In his book on the subject, William R. Inge defines mysticism "as the attempt to realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, more generally, as the attempt to realise, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal." One of the central tenets of mysticism, then, is the intuited perception of God in all things, and ultimately the unity of all things. In addition, there are three propositions necessary to explain man's relation to God and to His world: that the soul can see;
that man must be a partaker of the Divine Nature; and that without holiness, no man may see God. Each of these concepts is basic to the manner in which Boehme, Law, and Byrom perceive God, creation, Man's Fall, his creaturely life, and his salvation.

Caroline Spurgeon has noted the power, indeed the necessity, of the extra-rational element in mysticism. The mystical attitude, she states, is one "founded upon an intuitive or experienced conviction of unity, of oneness, of likeness in all things." Given this condition all creation becomes a manifestation of divine life: the informing spirit is immortal. And it also implies the mystical paradox of unity in variety, in which the central unifying force is love. As Boehme maintained, love's "power supports the heavens and upholds the earth; its virtue is the principle of all principles, the virtue of all virtues. It is the worker of all things and a vital energy through all power natural and supernatural." From such universal Love comes Christian mystical ethics, especially human benevolence.

The Christian mystics especially have always emphasized that mystical union with God brings with it an intense and burning love of God which must needs overflow into the world in the form of love for our fellow-men; and that this must show itself in deeds of charity, mercy, and self-sacrifice, and not merely in words.

This is precisely the basis for the benevolent morality of Law and Byrom, who reiterated that God is Love and that the heart of man must be totally consumed by that indwelling spirit of this love.
The obvious parallels between this view of Christian mysticism and Plato's thought should be clear. As Dean Inge has pointed out, mysticism is "the foster-child of Platonic idealism." We need to remember this connection only to remind ourselves of a long intellectual continuum of "mysticism" which reaches far back into the history of religion, literature, and philosophy. The origin and major source for the Anglican mysticism exemplified in Law and Byrom, aside from Boehme, is St. Paul, who saw all Christians as the "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I. Cor. 4.1). Again and again Paul admonishes men to realize that Christ lives within them; to live "in Christ" is to live in personal union with Him (Ep. 2.6; Col. 3.1). In addition, Boehme, Law, and Byrom advocate the Pauline theory of the duality of man, that he is an image of God (I Cor. 11.7) and a child of wrath (Ep. 2.3). As I discuss more fully in Chapter II, man must die to self before being spiritually born to God (Ep. 4. 23-24). Thus, while William Law and John Byrom have never been regarded as leaders of eighteenth-century Anglicanism, they are neither as obscure nor unimportant as their neglect by intellectual historians of the period leads us to believe. They are, as I hope to show, an important link in a chain of intellectual and literary history, a chain of devotional Anglicanism which runs from the seventeenth century well into the nineteenth.
This study is an attempt to interpret and assess Byrom's religious verse and to characterize his and Law's contribution to eighteenth-century devotional literature. The first chapter is a biographical sketch of Byrom and a brief presentation of his religious and literary thought and activities. Chapter Two reviews the major doctrines of Jacob Boehme and William Law. The third chapter is a detailed analysis of Byrom's Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple, in which I discuss the influence of Boehme and Law on Byrom's thought and imagery. In Chapter Four I strive to place Byrom's poem Enthusiasm in its intellectual context and discuss some of its most significant assumptions. The last chapter strives to characterize the general context of eighteenth-century devotional poetry and Byrom's relationship to it and place in it.
2 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
3 Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature (Cambridge, 1913), p. 3.
6 Inge., p. 22.
CHAPTER I

Byrom's Career

Let us mix Metaphysics and Short-hand and port.¹

John Byrom's first venture into print was in the Spectator, Number 586, which he signed "John Shadow." As far as the life and works of Byrom are concerned, the pseudonym is appropriate, for while he was of considerable literary importance in his own age, he has long since become a shadowy figure. It will be useful at the beginning of this study, then, to try to make the man a "substantial reality."²

Lancashire, and especially the environs of Manchester, had been the home of the Byrom family for nearly four hundred years before John Byrom was born on 29 February 1692. The records show that the first of the family, Henry de Buyroum, was living at the manor of Byrom in 1325.³ From this ancient member descended three distinct, if not distinguished, branches: the Byroms of Byrom, of Salford, and of Manchester. A coat of arms was confirmed to the parent branch in 1613, but the family evidently used it long before that time.⁴ By the time of the reign of Henry VIII the second branch was firmly established in Salford as woolen merchants, a family who "materially contributed to lay the foundation of the commercial
greatness of Manchester and Salford."\(^5\) This branch in turn founded, during the reign of Elizabeth, the Byroms of Manchester, who were also merchants. John's father, Edward of Kersall Cell and Hyde's Cross, Manchester, married Dorothy Allen in 1680. From this marriage nine children were born, of which John was the second son and seventh child.

By the standards of 1700, the Byroms were a family of substance. During the last decade of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth, Byrom's father and his Uncle Joseph began buying "portions of the respective properties of Byrom of Byrom and Byrom of Salford, as the heads of each house passed away and the name became extinct."\(^6\) But because he was the second son, it was nearly forty years before John inherited the property. The records of the first fifteen years of his life are practically non-existent, the earliest information being a letter written by Byrom to his father after the youth was settled into the Merchant Tailor's School at London. Canon Parkinson notes that until he went to London, Byrom was educated at home and at Chester.\(^7\) Early correspondence and journal entries indicate that his youth was pleasant and that he enjoyed both the love of his parents and of his one brother and eight sisters. Later, he gave the same devotion to his own wife and children.

From these days at M. T. (as he called Merchant Tailor's) two letters are of special importance, not so much because
they tell of his activities or student trials, but because they indicate his filial devotion and suggest those goals which were to be the primary concerns of his life. Writing to his father in February, 1708, Byrom affirms that he will diligently "strive to improve myself in virtue, knowledge, and learning." The rest of his life attests to the sincerity of these words, for he devoted himself to spiritual learning, to a wide range of secular scholarship, and to a life of virtue. The second letter gives us the earliest, but thoroughly characteristic, view of what we might call Byrom's "philosophy of life" and gives the rudiments of what was to develop into a rather consistent Pauline mysticism. After thanking his father for all his kindness and instruction, he pledges that "with the assistance of divine grace I hope to run the race that is set before me so as to obtain the prize." This of course could be only a commonplace employed to assuage a father's concern for his son's values, but Byrom's life proves it to be more than that. He dedicated himself to the search for a benevolent, humane life in which he could perfect his God-given talents. In him this never resulted in strict adherence to rigorous forms, a debilitating sense of duty, or doctrinal narrowness; indeed, "life" was a prize and his attempt to attain it has all the excitement and energy of the "race." Even later when his guiding light was William Law, Byrom never lost his capacity for combining a curiosity and
joyous interest in things around him with the deepest religious feelings. As I hope to demonstrate, regardless of his activity—

dining with close friends, listening to a sermon, discussing politics, copying a poem in shorthand, or giving a description of an old Roman altar he had found at Manchester—Byrom enjoyed himself and his surroundings. In an age filled with controversy, with public and private prejudice and bickering, here was a man who delighted in the variety of his world and found a considerable measure of contentment in it.

On 6 July 1708, he was admitted a pensioner to Trinity College, Cambridge, with the express intention of preparing for sacred orders. He must have taken his early studies seriously, for his biographers note that he "made great progress in the classics; but that his college scholarship was limited only to that necessary to qualify for a degree." However, he was seldom idle. He wrote to his father, to his brother and sisters, and to friends requesting books on a wide variety of subjects: patristic writers, English preachers, Biblical commentaries, secular history, music, and European literature (including Tasso, Ariosto, Petrarch, Cervantes). In addition to modern languages and Latin and Greek, he studied Hebrew, a language which fascinated him throughout his life.

Byrom was graduated B.A. in 1712, and because of Dr. Bentley's interest was elected Fellow in 1714 and
proceeded M.A. in 1715. However, during these years he decided against entering the clergy and had to relinquish his fellowship. By August, 1717, he was in France, purportedly studying medicine at Montpellier. The Lancashire historian Edward Baines believed he went to France to improve his "delicate state of health." But it was more likely he went to the continent because of the delicate state of his religious and political opinions. Manchester and the Tory-High Church Byroms had very definite Jacobite tendencies, which John had carried with him to Cambridge. Finding the University "a sad whiggish place," in good conscience he could not make a decision about the Abjuration Oath: "I am not satisfied so well as to take it, nor am I verily persuaded of its being unlawful." So in late 1716 or early 1717, he was en route to France by way of Dover and Ostend. In a letter written from Dover to his friend John Stansfield, Byrom cautions that "all will be well" and mysteriously signs himself "John Edwards." He spent a year studying "physic" at Montpellier, and was thereafter styled "Doctor" by his friends, but there is no record of his having taken a degree. At any rate, the cause for his Gallic sojourn seems not to have been merely his physical health.

For our purposes here, Byrom's trip abroad was important for another reason: while in France he discovered the mystics Malebranche and Madame Bourignon. From Malebranche he first
became impressed with the concept of seeing all things in God, but with Antoinette Bourignon, he reports that he fell in "love." While he praised Malebranche as the Atlas who bore heaven on his shoulders, Bourignon was a passion; "I grow so passionately in love with her, that there may be need to check me a little." Even after he became a disciple of Law and Boehme, Bourignon's quietism and enthusiasm remained one of his favorite topics of conversation and religious speculation.

The decade between his return to England (c. July, 1718) and 1729 found Byrom primarily concerned with the practical aspects of marriage and earning a living. Before his marriage, however, he seems to have spent 1718-19 at Cambridge championing the cause of his "loyal Master Dr. Bentley" against those Fellows who were demanding his discharge as Master of Trinity. There is evidently little doubt that Bentley was autocratic and did infringe upon the traditional rights of the Fellows, but this did not weaken Byrom's devotion. He either wrote or helped write A Review of the Proceedings against Dr. Bentley (1719), for he tells his friend Stansfield that he has written "a letter to our Friend [i.e., the public] to inform him of all the particulars concerning this Monster [i.e., Bentley] that have happened lately, that Mr. Public may know that the Monster is not so much a Monster as they would make him to be." Byrom's penchant for strong, personal attachments is illustrated by his relationship with and defense of Bentley, and in turn may help to explain that which subsequently grew between him and Law, which was clearly that of disciple to master.
The sentimental, good-natured Byrom married his first cousin, Elizabeth, appropriately enough on St. Valentine's Day, 1721, and she forever remained his "dearest Valentine."

Alexander Chalmers, his earliest biographer, maintained that Elizabeth's father, who was John's Uncle Joseph, was at first "extremely averse to the match" because "he thought our poet out of his senses." But if this were the case, the elder Byrom's attitude did not last long for John's early letters to his wife indicate no aversion on either side. These letters themselves, in addition to portraying a man of deep humility, sincere family devotion, and good humor, are the best single source of information about his thoughts on the many activities he later found himself involved in. But the responsibilities of a wife and soon, a family, forced him to embark upon a career and a pattern of life that went unbroken for over twenty years.

While at Cambridge Byrom had invented a system of shorthand which he spent many years revising and improving. His friends finally prevailed upon him to teach his system, but this necessitated his spending practically every winter in London. Thus, for many years he left his family to the care of Providence and his relatives, and for five guineas and an oath of secrecy, he taught shorthand to men representing many levels of London society: lords, clergymen, physicians, scientists, lawyers, and men of letters. Until the death of his brother Edward in 1740, shorthand was Byrom's primary source of income.
In August, 1725, he began writing a shorthand textbook, which he never finished; on Monday, 28 February 1726, at the Kings Arms Tavern, he and his students founded a shorthand society (of which he became the "Grand Master") and in 1739, he drew up a subscribed proposal for printing his system.  

Although shorthand was his major "literary" activity of these years, it was by no means the only one. Byrom already had a reputation as a poet, primarily because of Spectator Number 603 (October 6, 1714) which contained his "Pastoral on Colin and Phoebe," supposedly written for Bentley's daughter. A.W. Ward points out that years later this poem was still considered Byrom's "masterpiece" and was frequently set to music.  

During the 1720's and 1730's Byrom produced a torrent of verse: epistles, satires, burlesques, mock-heroics, and simple didactic poems. These, of course, were in addition to his strictly religious poems, which comprise nearly half of his total output. But as the follower of a provincial Muse, Byrom must be classed more as a versifier than poet. With few exceptions, only in the best of his religious poetry is there something more than the skillful use of rime and meter; only in the religious poems is there a real depth of feeling. Rime spilled from him as easily and naturally as water over a fall, and, in fact, many of his verses were the hasty productions of a coffeehouse gathering written frequently in-shorthand. In his poem "A Hint to a Young Person" he wrote "Write what occurs, forget it not;/ A good
Thing sav'd 's a good Thing got"(23-4). While everything he wrote is far from good, this couplet suggests that habit of mind which forced him to put both significant ideas and minutiae into his verse and journals. Paraphrasing was habitual with him, for in addition to the Psalms and passages from the works of Law, he paraphrased some Spectator papers, St. Bernard, Madame Guyon, Pascal, Fenelon, and many passages from his friend's letters.

In his secular poetry, as in his social life, we find him mixing different tones and attitudes. The real strength of his light verse, however, is his ability to incorporate a great deal of colloquial energy into the couplet. Following are two selections from his poem "On Buying the Picture of Father Malebranche," which not only give the personality of Byrom, but the whole atmosphere of the auction

III

The clock struck eleven as I enter'd the room,
Where Rembrandt and Guido stood waiting their doom,
With Holbein and Ruben, Van Dyck, Tintoret,
Jordano, Poussin, Carlo Dolci, et cet.
When at length in the corner perceiving the Pere,
"Ha!" quoth I to his face, "my old friend, are you there?"
And methought the face smil'd, just as tho' it would say:
"What, you're come, Mr. Byrom, to fetch me away!"

V

When at length, about noon, Mr. Auctioneer Cox
With his book and his hammer mounts into his box:
"Lot the first, number One." Then advanced his upholder
With Malebranche,—so Atlas bore Heav'n on his shoulder.
Then my heart, Sir, it went pit-a-pat, in good sooth,
To see the sweet face of The Searcher of Truth.
"Ha!" thought I to myself, "if it cost me a million,
This right honest head, then, shall grace my pavillion."
Metrical facility and good humor come together to re-create a scene for a friend out of town. Most of Byrom's private verse epistles were actually written and sent as letters. On 24 May 1725, he wrote "A Letter to R. L., Esq., On His Departure from London" in which he described Jonathan Wild on his way to execution.

Good law! how the Houses were crowded with Mobs,
That lookt like LEVIATHAN'S Picture in HOBBES,
From the very ground Floor to the Top of the Leads,
While JOHNATHAN past thro' a Holborn of Heads.

Whether at London, Cambridge, or Manchester, Byrom's world was largely one of shorthand, gossip and learned conversations. And much of his secular verse exhibits intermingling of the tones of plain good fun with serious moralizing. For example, "Tunbridgiale" (1726) is a light-hearted description of the fashionable gathering spot, but the gaiety is undercut by social criticism and moral concern:

But when to their Gaming the Ladies withdraw,
Those Beauties are fled, which when walking you saw;
Ungrateful the scene which you there see display'd,
Chance murd'ring those Features which Heaven had made.

Byrom never stopped being a social creature, but even with his constant cycles of dinners, coffeehouses, taverns and friends, the Remains are filled with questions about the validity of such a life. After all, it was "probably the gay, pleasant, diverting life" that "may render even innocent people blind." Man should look "at nothing but humility, charity, and penitence in any
outward form of life." And as he grew older and studied more widely the varieties of mystical speculation, his queries about social frivolities become more frequent. On Good Friday, 1735, he walked through London "considering how little the day is regarded." In "A Letter to R. L., Esq." he notes that "To Richard's and to Tom's full oft/ Have I stept forth"(9-10) and the habit of a lifetime was not easily changed, but his love of company, however, could never quite overcome the belief that tavern talk was idle or that it was perhaps best not to discuss religious subjects in such an atmosphere. Above all, the poems and journals manifest the real humanity and benevolence of the man: "I desire to judge none any further than needs must for one's own safety." The Remains are more than the outline of a man's life, a catalogue of the books he read, or of the letters he wrote and received. They are the record of an age observed from a purely personal point of view, a record put down without any thought to publication or public perusal.

Byrom's secular, occasional poetry covers a wide variety of subjects, from satires on almanac-makers and Warburton, epistles to friends relating London events, mock-heroics on a fencing match or on a beau's skull, to serious poems on inoculation, contentment, or Stephen Duck. And finally we need to note the "Epilogue to Hurlothrumbo," a fine example of a kind of *argumentum ad absurdum*. The author of this "play," the eccentric Manchester dancing-master, Samuel Johnson, was an acquaintance of Byrom's for several years before *Hurlothrumbo*
appeared at the New Theatre, Haymarket, 29 March 1729. Byrom's epilogue appeared with the second performance, but the wonder is that the play ran for thirty nights, for it was a five-act nonsense piece burlesquing, among other things, war, love and spiritualism. Byrom had long found the theater and opera particularly contemptible. Thus, in the epilogue he constructs a dialogue between Author and Critic, in which the absurdity of theatrical productions is the main theme. Ironically, Byrom exclaims that Lord Flame (the central "character" portrayed by Johnson himself)

is indeed, to speak my poor Opinion,
Out of the reach of critical Dominion.

(9-10)

But the essence of Byrom's spoof is the following lines. The Critic calls it "Stuff and Nonsense"(23) to which the Author answers

Lack-a-day!
Why, that's the very Essence of a Play.
Your Old House, New House, Opera, and Ball,--
'Tis NONSENSE, Critic, that supports 'em all,
As you yourselves ingeniously have shown,
Whilst on their Nonsense you have built your own.

(23-28)

Neither dramatic productions nor criticism come off very well. It might be assumed that this attitude grew out of Byrom's devotion to Law's opinions, but his total distrust of things theatrical was long antecedent to his friendship with the "Hermit of King's Cliffe."
Besides Byrom the poet and man-about-town, there was also Byrom the learned, if somewhat eccentric, scholar. On 19 March 1724, at age 32 he became a Fellow of the Royal Society, an honor which attests to the wide range of his learning and interests and to the esteem in which he was held by educated London society. His scholarly interests are nearly as varied as the subjects of his poems; indeed, those subjects reflect his interests. Like Dr. Cheyne, Byrom strongly favored a vegetarian diet. He frequently urged his wife not to give meat to their children, and his library contained a number of books on the "vegetable diet." He was an avid antiquarian. Dr. Stukeley reports that Byrom gave him "the delineation of a Roman altar found at Manchester." In later years Byrom gave papers on shorthand at the Society. His breadth of reading, his talent for languages, shorthand and poetry, led him into a variety of linguistic studies. With Bentleyan vigor, but unfortunately with a concomitant disregard for evidence or common sense, he attempted to prove that a scribal error caused St. George to be the traditional patron of England when in fact it should have been Pope Gregory. He made frequent emendations to passages from Horace, which Ward notes are sometimes "nonsensical," where "the Latinity of our author is the reverse of exquisite."
But with all his social meanderings and literary interests, he seems not to have known personally many of the important literary figures of his age. Alexander Pope evidently subscribed to his book on shorthand and Byrom notes his reading Pope's "Ethic epistle" and criticizing it, but the precise nature of this criticism remains a mystery. He knew Richardson, who was occasionally his and Law's printer, and he had read and approved of Pamela. In 1744, while traveling through York, he dined with Laurence Sterne, but this note is the only reference to him in the whole of the journals. As to the reigning Laureates, he evidently disapproved of Cibber, but thought highly of Whitehead. Byrom's failure to record table-talk is one of the frustrations of the Remains. If we depend on what he says, or does not say, it would seem that he never heard of Dr. Johnson, who is not mentioned. But we may conjecture that the years of Johnson's growth as a literary figure were paralleled by Byrom's advancing old age and his remaining more and more at Manchester. Neither Boswell nor Johnson has anything to say about Byrom. One may infer from this mutual silence that during the 1740's and 1750's Byrom became less interested in contemporary secular literature as he involved himself more deeply in Law and other mystical authors.
It remains for us now to catalog as precisely as possible those religious and speculative ideas which became the central concern and source of inspiration of his maturer years. I noted above that until 1729 Byrom was primarily taken up with the necessities of practical life. But in this year he came under the influence of a man who gave new direction and a new significance to his spiritual studies, thinking, and speculation. For on 4 March 1729, he and a few friends walked to the Gibbon home at Putney and met the Gibbons' tutor, William Law. 43

At this time Byrom was certainly no stranger to Law or his works, for he had known of the great non-juror while both were at Cambridge. Shortly before their meeting Byrom had purchased A Serious Call, and in writing to his sister, Phebe, defended Law and characterized the contemporary state of religion.

I find the young folks of my acquaintance think Mr. Law an impracticable, strange, whimsical writer, but I am not convinced by their reasons . . . for Mr. Law, and Christian religion, and such things, they are mightily out of fashion at present; indeed I do not wonder at it, for it is a plain, calm business, and here people are, and love, to be, all of a hurry, and to talk their philosophy, their vain philosophy, in which they agree with one another in nothing but rejecting many received opinions; their arguments all centre chiefly in this, that Christianity being now established, another kind of conduct is proper from that which might be required at its first appearance; to which I answer, that indeed they have established a nominal Christianity and forsaken the practical Christianity, that--but I cannot talk of Christianity in a coffeehouse. 44
This says a good deal, for "the state of religion" troubled many of Byrom's friends and contemporaries. In 1738, Dr. Cheyne deeply regreted "the present Degeneracy and Lapse of Human Nature, the present deep Corruption of the Age and this Nation;" and a few years later, Stukeley saw that "Religion, by being divided into many streams, has weaken'd its power and influence upon the morals of the people." It was, of course, the well-being of religion which precipitated the wide variety of authors, such as Tindal, Clarke, Butler, Warburton, and Law to debate and reason as they did. Men might not agree on the causes, and they certainly disagreed on the cures, but all interested observers noted an unhealthy Christianity.

The above passage also suggests much about Byrom's view of religion and religious experience at this time. Religion should be "a plain, calm business," and above all it should be "practical." At the time of his meeting with Law, Byrom was 37 and had for many years read widely in religious works and practiced his own theories of benevolence and good-nature. He was always against any doctrine which seemed to forsake "practical Christianity," but in putting his views into practice Byrom's religion becomes a kind of supradenominationalism. While he remained an adherent of all the Anglican forms, he drew liberally on other views for
whatever fitted into his growing mystical attitudes. For example, he criticized the Quakers for their worldliness, but praised them for their concept "that every man has the life of faith in him, if he would walk by it, that we must follow the light within, and be led by the Spirit of God." This also had been one of the central tenets in the teachings of Madame Bourignon. Byrom attended not only Anglican services but Anabaptist and Quaker meetings. In religious matters he was always a liberal. "I cried out against all persecution," he said on one occasion. On another in discussing religious sects, he declared that "to take the good from all and leave the rest for what it was, seemed the best way." He was totally opposed to any kind of rigidity or narrowness in learning, religion, or law, like that manifested in the Catholic Test Act, and other such bans. William Law therefore only gave added strength to a point of view and kinship of ideas and convictions which were already latent in his new disciple.

Central to much of Byrom's thinking on "practical Christianity" is the nature of morality. Even as early as 1714 the problem was important and intriguing to him; he believed morality was not simply a code of behavior established outside of religion or a system to hold society together or a doctrine only slightly associated with Christianity. In his judgment, benevolence and moral action were practical
Christianity, and morality was also a quality of the imagination. Byrom's theory of the imagination, the "inward fire" of the creative will, is so important to his poem Enthusiasm that a full discussion of it will be reserved to a later chapter. Here it is enough to review his concept of the "moral sentiment" as he implied it in Spectator Number 586 (27 August 1714), where "John Shadow" discussed the moral and ethical function of dreams.

Starting with Pythagoras' advice that scholars should spend each evening examining their daily actions, Byrom points out that each morning a man should "consider what he had been about that Night" because what "a Man imagines himself in during Sleep, are generally such as entirely favour his Inclinations good or bad" during the day (Spect. 586). Dreams are a reflection of our daily lives and desires, a "Result of our waking Thoughts," and, therefore, through "the noble Hurry of Imagination," the soul is "perpetually at Work upon the Principle of Thought."

Dreams, then, are a way in which the soul works through the imagination to judge and improve man's waking hours. As I suggest in Chapter Four, imagination is the source of man's moral sentiment. Throughout his life Byrom modified many of his ideas, but the concept that Morality was a "study superior to all others" never changed; rather, it was deepened under the influence of Law and Boehme.

A single journal entry might well function as a subhead under which to discuss the brief span of his life between 1729 and 1731: "Library, Friday, October 1st. 1731 Thinking."
The journal indicates the wide range of subjects (morality, Quakers, the futility of religious disputes, goodness, damnation, inspiration) and authors (Malebranche, Bourignon, St. Teresa, Philo Judaeus, Erasmus, Spinoza, St. John of the Cross, and many others) in which Byrom absorbed himself in a relatively short period of time. Unfortunately, the brevity of the entries and the zeal with which Ward wielded his editorial scissors make it doubly difficult to portray Byrom's mental and spiritual activities at this time. There are three subjects however which we should not overlook if we hope to comprehend Byrom's later paraphrases of Law: religion, morality, and mystical perception. In the sense that these are God-given or depend upon emanations of God, they are inter-related, but Byrom says enough about each for them to be separated and discussed adequately as individual concepts.

Morality is, for Byrom, the essence of religion. Indeed, we must know what he believed to be the truth of religion before we can discuss any poetry inspired by Law's works. The states of mind necessary for the reception of true religion are patience and contentment (two of Byrom's favorite themes). His first extant serious poem is contained in a letter to John Stansfield (17 April 1721). I quote it in full because it illustrates Byrom's early emphasis upon the efficacy of reason and upon accepting the nature of things.
AN ARGUMENT

If Reason does each private Person blind
To seek the public Welfare of Mankind;
If this be Justice and the Sacred Law
That guards the Good and keeps the Bad in Awe;
If this great Law but op'rates to fulfil
One Vast Almighty Being's Righteous Will
And if He Only, as we all maintain,
Does all things rule and Events ordain:—
Then, Reason bids each private Man t'assent
That none but Atheists can be discontent.53

As Byrom's mystical sensibility developed, Reason was replaced by the indwelling spirit, but the result remained the same: contentment with things as they are, i.e., contentment with God's plan for man as Byrom understood it. There is little mystical implication to this poem; indeed, it suggests Pope's couplet, that man must

Submit—In this, or any other sphere,
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear.

(Essay on Man, I, 285-86)

This is not, however, simply resignation to some inscrutable will. Byrom's resignation means being "voluntarily easy, hoc est, cheerful, satisfied, thankful, brisk, and be so constantly, habitually, in all times, conditions, and circumstances."54 The lack of gloom is conspicuous; the whole emphasis is on cheerfulness and briskness. This attitude was reenforced in him over the years as the basis for religion became less a matter of reason and more one of intuitive insights and responsiveness to "interior" truths, wherever they were found. In November, 1730, he wrote of "that plain-souled and irreproachable truth, that we see all things in God." God is in all, including man, where
the "spark of the Divine" works upon the heart. Man must "listen to the secret inspirations of that Good Spirit which leadeth those who attend to it into the Truth, and nothing but the truth." But the truth is not limited to any one sect or interpretation of spiritual law: "They that love Truth, wherever it is found, / Would joy to see it ev'n in romish Ground." Religion is never simply forms, doctrines or dogmas; it is the truth of Love, which becomes a prominent theme of the later poetry.

Religion, then, is Love's Celestial Force
That penetrates thro' all to Its True Source.

The "True Source" is God manifested in the heart of man.

There is the Seat, as Holy Writings tell,
Where the Most High Himself delights to dwell.

Religion, then, is an internal emotive power from which external modes must derive and have their meaning. With this spirit dwelling in the heart, there can be only one result: "Love of Him, the One Eternal Whole." Such love destroys man's selfish nature and leads to salvation. Thus Byrom's concept of contentment and patience ultimately leads through the truth and power of the indwelling spirit, to regeneration: "The Birth of JESUS in the human Soul." Only a slight transition is necessary to carry us from the concept of an internal spirit of goodness to its external manifestation in benevolence and moral action. If religion, being "the plainest thing in the world," is "not a matter of
dispute, but of practice," then the real validity must be demonstrated by active, regular moral commitment. In recalling the first couplet of "An Argument," we find that through a rational process man discovers that his own interest leads to improving society in general, an orthodox view for the first decades of the century.

The Augustan emphasis on an ordered, harmonious universe in which

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul,
(Essay on Man, I, 267-68)

required not only universal laws covering Newtonian gravitation, but a rational basis for morality, a proper balance of mind and self-love. Bishop Berkeley illustrates the proposition that the Moral Law does not necessarily have to grow out of religion.

In morality the eternal rules of action have the same immutable universal truth with propositions in geometry. Neither of them depend on circumstances or accidents, being at all times, and in all places, without limitation or exception, true.61

If man's rational capability enabled him to explore, decipher, and codify the laws of the universe, it followed that there seemed no reason why he could not do the same for the laws of morality. On the other hand, there is the distinctly different view expounded by Lord Shaftesbury's Characteristics (1711). Shaftesbury's psychology denied not only the efficacy of reason as the basis or source of morality, but also the efficacy of
religion. Man's moral sense was innate; benevolence was a matter of "Sentiment or Judgment of what is done, thro just, equal, and good Affection." 62

For different reasons Byrom came to oppose both views. First of all, benevolence was more than a universal law capable of being discovered by Right Reason; it was not just a theory, but a dynamic force which, when centered in religion, became a "study superior to all others." It was universal only in the sense that it was a "seed" planted in each man's heart, but the individual had to cultivate it. Whether giving "a penny to a poor young woman with a child in her arms," 63 lending aid to Manchester against a Whig-inspired workhouse, or mediating an argument between Bishop Peploe and the Fellows of the Collegiate Church, 64 Byrom was morally committed to improving man's state. 65 Secondly, while he would admit that morality was a sentiment, i.e., an attitude inspired by the indwelling spirit of Love, he strongly denied that such impetus could arise anywhere outside the bounds of religion. For benevolence is a means of Grace, a means of overcoming man's selfishness. Because of it Adam fell from life to death, and without active benevolence earthly existence can only remain death-like. Man's salvation depends upon Love: "His Love is Heav'n, and Want of It is Hell." 66

It is obvious, then, that the coloration Byrom gives to religion and morality (i.e., benevolence) depends upon his mystical perception and theory of inspiration. Most of his intellectual activities to about 1740 must be viewed as
preparation for the paraphrases of William Law, which were to constitute the major literary productions of his last twenty years. In Law, Byrom seems to have found that prophet of "heart-religion" for which his study and speculation had been the preparation. By the beginning of the fourth decade of the century Byrom was certain of the inadequacy of reason as a basis for religion and, conversely, the real necessity of a heart-centered religious experience. An aversion to Right Reason led to contempt for Deism.

I own that I am so sick of that kind of philosophy that talks of nothing but figures and sections and intersections, that amazes one with existences and subsistences, that establishes a blind nature, working wisely without intelligence, by virtue of secondary cause without regarding any first, that I would rather one would think that philosophy was excogitated by some atheist spirit as an art to exclude the consideration of God out of everything; for in effect it establishes a blind nature instead of a Providence, and I know not what secondary cause instead of the First and Only Cause for all things.67

From Byrom's point of view the scholarly intricacies of "figures" and "intersections," and its correlative reason could never be adequate for getting at Christian truth. If anything, such learning could lead only to "vain Disputings" and bibliolatry.68 On his frequent visits to Cambridge, Byrom met with, and often talked about, the Reverend Robert Greene, who is a perfect example of one dealing in "figures and sections and intersections." Greene's Principles of the Philosophy of the Expansive and Contractive
Forces is a gigantic (over 980 folio pages), mad book in which he equates himself with Aristotle, Descartes and Newton as one of the great "systematizers." In addition to squaring the circle, calling Locke's Essay a "romance," he proclaims that his system not only accounts for all matter but of the various Properties and Affections of it, as Colour, Sound, Taste, Smell, &c. Sir Isaac Newton's Gravitations, and even of the Surprising Effects in Chemistry, of the Vegetations of Plants, of the Constitution and Formation of the Parts of the Human Body, of the Reason of the Revolution of the Planets, of the Capacities and Powers of the Mind, and of the Union of the Material Systeme with it. 69

No doubt Byrom was intrigued, if not amazed, with such inclusiveness; certainly, the "Greenean philosophy" smacked of all those rational attitudes which Byrom came more and more to oppose.

But the most damning abuse of the human mind was to turn the truths of Christianity into elements for pedantic disputations, which ultimately proved nothing. Thus in "Familiar Epistles to a Friend" he castigates Warburton and other Biblical scholars who

... think that now Religion's Sole Defense Is learning, History and critic Sense. (Let. III, 15-16)

Such interpreters, says Byrom, have caused not only mistakes because of their historical or allegorical readings of Scripture, but sectarianism itself. In a poem on the conversion
of St. Paul, Byrom states that Paul did not embrace the faith until "His Reason and his Wrath" (i.e., his unconverted state of nature) were overcome by his "inward Sight." For both Byrom and Law, Scripture was meant to be taken quite literally; indeed, John 14.20 could well be the text for their entire "system": "I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

However, the relationship between reason and learning and their inadequacy as means for perceiving truth may best be illustrated by discussing his poem "On the Right Use of the Holy Scriptures." Byrom begins by noting that Scripture was written for our "Patience, Comfort, and the blessed Hope/ Of everlasting Life"(4-5). But those passages which were once "plain and sure" have been obscured by ages and ages of debates and interpretations. "Right Reason" and scholarship have been so emphasized that things have reached the stage where this "rambling Art/ Will fill man's Head, but never touch his Heart"(11-12). The primitive simplicity and purity of the text is only confused by the commentaries. And certainly these commentaries are no help in understanding Scripture, for they imply the necessity of great learning, when in truth all one needs is "a well-disposed Mind"(48), which will receive the message in the same spirit in which it was written. It is just such simplicity which must have initially led Law and Byrom to Jacob Boehme (not so much that Boehme is "simple," but that he demanded literal reading of Scripture). With the
mind and heart working together, the essence and truth of Scripture should be manifested to any reader, but if there remain difficult passages, man should "suspend/ His Judgment"(75-76) and "pray to that Good Spirit, which Alone/ Can make Its former Inspirations known"(83-84). So it is that God dwelling in the heart, not reason or learning, becomes the guide to understanding. Perception, inspiration, knowledge, whatever it is called, is heart-centered or it is only a sham.

But for the real, understanding Part
The Book of Books is ev'ry Man's own Heart.
(99-100)

By holding and publicly maintaining such a point of view, Byrom was soon recognized as one of the "admirers of the mystic divinity."72 Yet, even with his intellectual and spiritual involvement in mystical studies, Byrom the man retains his sense of humor and his ability to poke fun at attitudes and "systems" which he found unduly complex, like the "Greenean philosophy." Writing to his friend, Ralph Leycester, in October, 1730, he notes that he has been reading in the "mystical arithmetics" of Philo Judaeus, who attempted an allegorical harmonizing of Platonism and the Mosaic books. Philo was evidently particularly enamoured with the Sabbath and the number seven, for Byrom remarks on the "mystico-numerico-6ico-7ico, way which Philo has of explaining matters."73 While Byrom himself was not above speculating
on the spiritual qualities of numbers, no doubt Philo's scholarly complexities were too much for a man who desired religion be "not a matter of dispute, but of practice."

During the 1730's the veneration in which Byrom held Law and his opinions becomes pronounced. He not only praises Law as author ("the best we have at present"), but as saint: "I longed to write to Mr. Law, but it seems so like invocation of saints that I know not how to venture." The reverence Byrom felt for Law in particular and mystics in general (including the writings of Madame Bourignon) indicates a number of things about his character. First, it suggests the strong spiritual affinities which drew them together. However, while there are certain habits of mind each had in common, Byrom's personality was sharply distinct from Law's. I have already indicated that the Remains illustrate a kind of split personality: on the one hand there was the social creature, the man who taught shorthand because it gave him an opportunity to make the "acquaintance & favour of good-natured men;" on the other there was the spiritual man who had a "multitude of thoughts," who wanted to "send away the multitude and go to pray." But, like opposites, these two men complemented and attracted each other: the enthusiastic, sometimes naive Byrom; the intellectual, but often gloomy Law. Secondly, Byrom's entire frame of mind, his personality, and his need to attach himself to certain powerful characters (like Bentley or Law)
suggest his most dominant quality, sentimentalism. Certainly in Byrom, but less so in Law, the sentimental can scarcely be differentiated from the religious. His whole defense of enthusiasm is predicated on the assumption that a certain kind of emotionalism is necessary to the religious experience. Most of his serious letters, whether written to his "Dear Valentine," his children, or friends exhibit not only sincere affection, but a manly piety and sympathy.

Particular themes and concepts which Byrom and Law held in common will be analyzed later, but at this point it is important to understand something of the general nature of their friendship and of their exchange of ideas. There can be little doubt that both men recognized the bond between them, but it seems they also recognized their differences, as Byrom suggests upon recalling one of their meetings: "I went home with Mr. Law, and in his room he told me that his thought and mine had great sympathy; but that I was more easily wrought upon, and that his strings were more hard. I said that I was like an instrument that was pinned too soft, and wanted to be better quilled."78 Law's biographer, Canon John Overton, suggests two things that may help portray this friendship: first of all, Byrom was Law's Boswell, and secondly, theirs was an "odd intimacy."79 In what ways these judgments are correct may be explained by tracing the implications of Byrom's estimate of his friendship with Law. In his simplicity and good-nature, Byrom was sometimes naive. He readily admitted that "there
always seems to be something which through the affairs of worldly life escapes me too much. Like Johnson with Boswell, Law could easily be annoyed with Byrom. On one occasion when Byrom asked Law if Ruysbroeck was the first of the sober but humble mystics, Law petulantly answered, "you ask an absurd question." Not once, however, does Byrom appear critical of his master. Indeed, he accepts Law's frequently arrogant rebukes in complete humbleness, if not insensitivity. If anything angered Law it was probably Byrom's loquaciousness, for he was capable of packing his conversations with a variety of topics. He was not unaware of this, for his journals are filled with cautions about talking too much. For example, on 18 May 1737, he said, "I harangued too much," and "I should restrain my talking way." Perhaps his conversational ability was comparable to that which he had for versifying, for if he "thought and dreamt in rhyme, as others do in prose," he too frequently found that "His Words" were "dancing in Spite of his Nose." Byrom's general briskness, his constant rounds of social encounters, and his inclination to record even his most insignificant activities are characteristics like those found in Boswell. But where Boswell is sometimes too full of his own opinions and vanity, Byrom generally stands in the background and fills his memoranda with lists of coffeehouses visited, friends met in the course of a day, or subjects discussed, but regrettably too frequently without details.
Byrom was not simply a chattering magpie nor an eccentric, however. While we must give Law the position of preeminence among Byrom's friends and acquaintances, during his seasonal London visits he moved in social circles which gave him wide latitudes in topics for conversation and for speculation. In 1735 he met and became good friends with David Hartley. In 1736 he met Warburton, by which time he already knew such men as Hoadly and the Wesleys. Besides these, shorthand and the Royal Society had given him entrance into the homes and lives of over two-hundred individuals, including such nobles as the Dukes of Devonshire and Queensberry, scientists like Desaguliers, Dr. Cheyne and Sir Hans Sloane (Byrom joined the Society while Newton was President), and such men of letters as Isaac Hawkins Brown and William Melmoth. Byrom's range of social experience, therefore, was hardly narrow. And the Remains themselves indicate that drinking too much green tea, not going to bed before two or three in the morning, and enjoying a convivial bottle or two with friends did not stop him from discussing religious topics (even though he questioned the fitness of such speculations under such conditions). The following journal entry from 24 April 1735, where he has just greeted a Dr. Lancaster, is typical in suggesting the variety of his activities.

I spoke to him and went with him to his house just by and saluted his lady; she was in a little room where a man was painting her I believe, she was without her cap; we went into his study, where there were many fine pictures and curiosities and books; Captain Mainwaring from Chester called there,
and we drank a bottle of old hock thirty years old, with sugar, and talked about religion, Mr. Law; he asked the price of Mrs. Bourignon's works in English; Captain Mainwarings's son it seems never drank anything but water, said he thought that we should agree in matters. Thence to the Court of Requests, to the House of Lords.

The chatty manner, the detail, and Byrom's habit of mixing hock and religion—or as he sometimes said "shorthand and Malebranche"—illustrate the diversity of his life and his endless sociability.

One could cite many such entries to show how a social occasion became the scene for an interesting exchange of views. One is particularly noteworthy. In March, 1737, Byrom called on his good friends, the David Hartleys, and was introduced to Joseph Butler. After discussing Queen Caroline, Sir Isaac Newton, and Pascal, Byrom recalls that

We entered into a kind of dispute about prophecy, and I said I thought the Old Testament for prophecy and the New for miracles, and that miracles were the readiest proof; upon which arose an argument and talk about reason and authority, they being for reason and I for authority, that we had reason indeed to follow authority, viz. the consent of the Christian Church.

Whereupon Byrom continued by maintaining that reason could never be the judge in matters of faith because

man had a heart capable of being faithful as well as a head capable of being rational, and that religion applied itself to the heart. The Dr. talked with much mildness, and myself with too much impetuosity.

The argument is thoroughly characteristic. First, by raising personal authority above all else, Byrom spreads himself pretty thin, and leaves many points which Butler could, and no doubt
did, oppose. Secondly, the discussion clearly manifests Byrom's belief in heart-centered religion as the single necessary element of any religious experience and his willingness to plunge into an argument on the subject. And finally, if it illustrates how his enthusiasm limited his common sense in arguing with one of the strongest intellects of his age, it also shows that he was aware of having attempted too much.

By 1740 the lives of both Byrom and Law had changed. No longer needed as a tutor for the Gibbons, Law retired to his native village, King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire. Shortly thereafter he was joined by Miss Hestor Gibbon and a Mrs. Hutchinson, who remained with their spiritual mentor for the rest of their lives. In May of the same year, Byrom's brother died leaving him heir, which placed him in a financial position better than any he had previously known. Hereafter Law seldom travelled from his home, but Byrom's twenty-year habit was more difficult to break, and for the next four or five years he continued his regular travels. During these years Law spent most of his time in philanthropic work, reading, studying, writing his great Behmenistic treatises, and working on his "edition" of Boehme. Initially, Byrom was concerned with more worldly problems. He was now head of one of Manchester's leading families, and if the decrease in journal entries and increase in correspondence suggest anything, it is that he now found it
necessary to devote more time to his family and home. Early in 1742, however, he was in London attempting to get a copyright bill for his system of shorthand through Parliament. This was finally passed in May and the King was present to give his assent to the bill. But Byrom, who always seemed to have plenty to do, was late for the ceremony. While travel became less regular, it did not stop. In 1743 and 1748 he saw Law at King's Cliffe; in 1744 he dined with Sterne at York and with Lady Huntingdon and Charles Wesley at Derby; and he continued periodic ramblings to his favorite haunts at Cambridge and London.

During most of 1745, however, he was at Manchester doing his best to remain neutral as the city became a center for the Stuart uprising. At this point his journal stops altogether, but his daughter Elizabeth ("Beppy"), who was not only a good Jacobite but a keen observer, kept her own diary during these months. While she was making St. Andrew's Crosses, her father was meeting with his family and others on "how to help themselves out of any scrape, and yet behave civilly." When Prince Charles actually arrived, Beppy was one of the first to kiss his hand. Her father was less enthusiastic, however, for she recalls, "my papa was fetched prisoner to do the same." Throughout these events Beppy's remarks indicate that Byrom was not so much for Stuart or Hanover as he was for Manchester. Writing in March, 1746, he himself noted the mood in which he had found
the city and had watched the approach of the Highland army, at
whom, he says, "if London itself, was alarmed, it is no wonder
that we were so also."95 When the danger was past, he attempted
to help his friend Dr. Deacon get his two sons saved from the
executioner's rope, but even Byrom's influential friends could
do nothing. Although in Manchester he was considered a good
Jacobite, Byrom himself was never indicted as a rebel nor was
he thought of as one by his London friends.

Domestic duties took much of his time. In March, 1750,
his son Edward was married, which brought forth a characteristic
concern of a father for the happiness of his son. Whether or
not the bride was a "proper choice," whether she had the "qualities"
of a good wife, were his immediate questions. While he did not
ignore her fortune, this seemed less important than the lady her­
self. But during this decade Byrom also continued his interest
in Manchester and even took a more active role in local affairs
by becoming a Feofee of the Manchester Grammar School.96 He
maintained his long-standing interest in the Collegiate Church
(and its Byrom Chapel), especially in the election of its
Fellows.97 Generally, the sixth decade of the century found
him accepting increasing old age by travelling less and writing
more letters.

With less desire and less need for travel through the
countryside, Byrom journeyed more in the mind, in the realms
of religious speculation. As early as December, 1741, Dr. Cheyne
wrote to Byrom, believing him to be something of an authority on mysticism, as one "long conversant in spiritual writings, the approved mystics in particular." Also by this time Byrom was thoroughly committed to versifying Law. In 1743 he had noted Law's praise of Enthusiasm (not published until 1751): Law "said I had only added flame to the fire, that the verses were very good ones." In 1749 Law wrote to Byrom that "If you should come pray leave your poetry for me," so that there can be no doubt that Byrom's habit of paraphrasing and versifying passages from Law was long antecedent to his first public production in An Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple (1749). By the early 1750's Byrom had become Mon cher ami and Law, Mon cher Maitre, but Byrom appears hesitant about his poetry because "the depth and the moment of the matters" may demand "a knowledge and a leisure of a degree superior to what my situation will admit of." But Law had no qualms. In 1751, he says, "You indeed sing for me, but so sweetly, that you may (for ought I know) sing my prose out of date." Two years later, he not only praises the poet but the friend: "I have but one wish as to human help, and that is, to have you along with me." The basis for this friendship and literary association must have been the spiritual kinship which existed between them, but perhaps Bishop Hildesley, who knew them both, suggested a more "practical" one. In 1755 he questions Byrom about Law's popular appeal. He notes that the manner of The Spirit of Prayer "is very sublime, not to say sometimes mysterious" and, after
"casting his eye" on the work says "I could not help asking my-
self how they would sound delivered from the pulpit adpopulum." Any reader of Law must quickly realize that the devoutly spiritual
nature of his later writings, combined with the Behmenism and
intuitive knowledge with which his works abound, might well
limit his reading audience to an enthusiastic but meager few.
Given even the consummate artistry of his prose style, the matter
would limit, if not repel, many individuals who would normally
have read religious works. His later treatises can hardly be
called devotional literature of a "practical" kind because they
are primarily concerned not with the daily routines of worldly
existence but with a highly intellectual and spiritual response
to a level of reality above the earthly. It seems to me a
reasonable conjecture, therefore, that Byrom paraphrased certain
passages from Law not only because he was devoted to the man
and his ideas, but because he felt that even his provincial muse
might give Law a greater audience by portraying in verse "true
ideas that appear to be grand, simple, salutary." Whether
poems like the Epistle or Enthusiasm did expand Law's public is
difficult to judge. Certainly his friends went into "raptures"
whenever they spoke of Byrom's poems. But to his opponents,
like Warburton, such works were the "rankest fanaticism." In the final analysis we must probably agree with Leslie Stephen
that Byrom "did not contribute much to Law's popularity. The
poems had not a large circulation."
Following a life-time of habit, Byrom continued writing epistles both in poetry and in prose, even though during his last years the tempo of his life slowed considerably. It took him nearly two years to answer one letter from his friend Mark Hildesley, Bishop of Sodor and Man. And Law was just as tardy: "My dear Doctor: It is now drawing on to near two years since I answered your last to me." There are practically no journal entries for the last fifteen years of Byrom's life. The Remains for these years consist almost entirely of correspondence. Law's "dear Laureate" was still reading and studying. For example, he contemplated the relationship between music and religion, that the three notes of a chord paralleled the three agents of fire, light and air which "spread through the whole system, supplying, governing, and preserving the harmony of all created things." Or, he was reading Jonathan Edwards and refuting the Calvinists in general.

Flatter me not with your 'Predestination',
Nor sink my Spirits with your 'Reprobation!'
From all your high Disputes I stand aloof,--
Your Pre-'a and Re-'a, your Destin', and your Proof,
And formal Calvinistical pretence
That contradicts all Gospel and good Sense.

However, such speculations had long since become the activity of the study, not the coffeehouse or the dining room. By 1760, at 69, Byrom seldom left his house and evidently complained to
Law about being the prisoner of his chair, for Law replies:

The charge of imprisonment I take to be wrong laid; your body is the prisoner, and you are its jailer. It is because your mind has all your care, and you are always travelling with it as high and as far as you please, that your body goes nowhere, and has only the liberty of travelling such journeys as your two-armed chair takes.112

In November, 1761, Byrom answered a letter from his old friend Ralph Leycester. Byrom's reply is of little importance except that it shows his old age and inability to enjoy the company of long-time intimates:

You 'grow old!'--I grow older;--'stir little from home:'--
I less, and abroad more unable to roam;--
You 'lament that you cannot come in a Friend's way,
As you formerly could:'--the same also I say.113

Yet old age seems not to have decreased the ease or facility with which he composed verse, nor his consuming interest and curiosity in either men or ideas.

Byrom died on 26 September 1763, at age 72. He had out-lived his spiritual master William Law, by two years.114 One of his death notices points out that his "truly religious sentiment, enabled him to bear a lingering illness with exemplary patience, and a thorough Christian resignation." And a Chester newspaper of the time stated, "He was generally admired for his entertaining productions, and uncommon flow of genius; nor was he less esteemed on account of his humanity, extensive benevolence, and universal charity."115 Ten years later similar qualities were recalled by the reviewer of the first edition of Byrom's
poems: "As long as love and gallantry shall animate this island, so long shall the author of Colin and Phoebe be remembered with delight; as long as those friendships and that humanity he cultivated shall subsist, so long shall that delight be attended with affection." Even John Wesley, who frequently disagreed with Byrom in points of theology, praised the man and his poetry. Writing in 1773 he said, "In my journey from Liverpool I read Dr. Byrom's Poems. He has all the wit and humor of Dr. Swift, together with much more learning, a deep and strong understanding, and above all, a serious vein of piety." Both as man and as poet Byrom was remembered in his own time for his benevolence and for the strength of his religious convictions.

In this manner "John Shadow," the bemused and amusing "celebrated Dr. Byrom," ran his race and attained his prize. It remains for us now to look more closely at the spiritual and speculative relationship as it was manifested in selected works of Byrom and Law. Before we can give Byrom any place in the devotional and mystical edifice of eighteenth-century English literature, we must first look at one of its basic foundations in the works of Jacob Boehme and in William Law.
FOOTNOTES—CHAPTER I


3 F. R. Raines, "The Byrom Pedigrees," Remains, II, ii, 5; this article has separate pagination.

4 See Raines, Remains, II, ii, 3.

5 Ibid., 18.

6 Ibid., 39.
7 Remains, I, i, 1.
8 Ibid., 2.
9 Ibid., 2-3.
12 Remains, I, i, 11.
13 Ibid., 18. Byrom was always something of a night creature, and one of his favorite early morning pastimes was reading Hebrew Scripture or scholarly commentaries.
15 Baines, II, 376.
16 Remains, I, i, 22, 24.
17 Ibid., 34.
18 The wealthy Frenchwoman, Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680), was a mystical visionary with a rather morose piety and some very strange ideas. She believed herself infallible and denied the eternity of the Divine Word, yet at the same time she believed herself to be a devout Catholic. She wrote voluminously but most of her works were not published during her lifetime. She is frequently linked with Jeanne Marie Guyon because Poiret edited and published both of their works, but Bourignon was more of a fanatic than Guyon. In Monsignor Knox's words, "Antoinette preferred to be the world's director and do the Quietism for herself," Enthusiasm (Oxford, 1950), p. 354.
19 Baines, II, 376; Chalmers, VII, 482. In a letter to Ralph Leycester, Byrom himself admitted that we see all things in God (Poems, Appendix V, II, ii, 610).
Poems, II, ii, App. V, 645-46. Law frequently cautioned Byrom against naively accepting visionaries. Byrom records Law's saying "much about her and against her [i.e., Bourignon]" and saying "that she would puzzle any man what to do" (Remains, I, ii, 616-17).


Chalmers, VII, 482; if true, Joseph Byrom was not the last to think this.

Remains, II, i, 196; 289-95n.

Poems, I, i, 2-3.

Remains, I, ii, 541.

Ibid., 560.

Ibid., 575. Twenty-eight years later Boswell also suggested the importance of the day: "In my opinion the annual return of such holy seasons is of great use. Men are thus kept in mind of religion, and their affections are improved." But typically, Boswell grew listless and "strolled up and down all day" (London Journal, Friday, 1 April 1763).

Remains, II, i, 73.

Poems, I, i, 140. Ward quotes the motto of the play, which suggests the flavor of the piece:

Ye sons of Fire, read my Hurlothrumbo,  
Turn it between your Finger and your Thumbo  
And being quite outdone, but quite struck dumbo.  

See Law's The Absolute Unlawfullness of the Stage Entertainment Fully Demonstrated (London, 1726) in which he portrays the Satanic looseness and immorality of the theater and opera.

Remains, I, i, 76.
33 See, for example, his purchase of "Tryon about Sheep," 21 May 1736 (Remains, II, i, 46-47). In addition, he was an avid collector of coins and books on most popular and unpopular subjects. For example during the first week of July, 1729, he bought the following works: two copies of Hurlothrumbo, The Miracles of Jesus Vindicated, the London Journal, "Fog about Human Nature." During the same week he was reading such works as Palmer's Account of Printing, a book on Osteology, and Monsieur D'Herman's Nouvelle Manière d'Imprimer (Remains, I, ii, 382-86).


35 Ibid., 482.

36 Canon Parkinson notes, as I have suggested above, that all of Byrom's books "are curiosities in their way" (Remains, II, i, 46). I have been unable to locate or examine a copy of A Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Byrom (privately printed, London, 1848).

37 "On the Patron of England, in a Letter to Lord Willoughby, President of the Antiquarian Society," Poems, II, ii, 465ff. There is some evidence that this whole production was a joke; writing in 1779, Rev. William Cole said, "I had a copy of Dr. Byrom's ballad 20 years ago, and ever esteemed it no other than a lively banter and joke on our Society; and the inscription to Lord Willoughby of Parham, a zealous Dissenter, one who cared not a rush about the existence of St. Gregory or St. George, puts in past all doubt. I always looked upon it as a piece of fun, a jeu d'esprit, to which Dr. Byrom was more than ordinarily addicted," John Nichols, Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century, 9 vols (London, 1812-14) I, 680.

38 Poems, I, ii, 536.

39 Remains, I, i, 122; II, i, 162-63.

40 Remains, II, i, 404. In his poem, "The Art of Acting" (Poems, I, i, 260), Byrom praises Richardson as

He, who in plain prose
Without our Help has ventur'd to expose
Vice in its odious colours, and to paint
In his Clarissa's Life and Death a Saint.

(51-54)
Remains, II, ii, 378. The unfortunate brevity of such entries substantiates the "private" nature of his journals; they were designed as a kind of private memory bank: "when I consider that it is the most trifling things sometimes that help us to recover more material things I do not know that I should omit trifles; they may be of use to me, though to others they would appear ridiculous" (Remains, I, i, 229). Thus we learn that in 1726, sixteen walnuts cost 1d, but we never know what Byrom felt about Pope or discussed with Sterne.

On Cibber see "Epilogue to Hurlothrumbo,"

The State has given Rise to wretched Stuff.
Critic or Player, a Dennis or a Cibber,
Vie only which shall make it go down glibber.

(40-42)

Ward notes Byrom's appreciation of Whitehead (Poems, I, i, 74). Byrom also knew William Broome: "rose at eleven, at Richard's, saw Mr. Broome the poet and had talk with him" (Remains, I, ii, 345).

Remains, I, ii, 337. Law was tutor to the historian's father.

Remains, I, ii, 328-29.


Remains, I, ii, 421.

Remains, II, i, 130.


Ibid., 633.

Poems, App. V, II, ii, 583, Ward notes that he has cut long passages in which Byrom reports on sermons, discussions, readings, and reflections.

Text is from Poems, II, i, 52.
54 Remains, I, i, 44.

55 Poems, App. V, II, ii, 610; note the influence of Malebranche and the Pauline attitude of partaking in Divinity.

56 "Familiar Epistles to a Friend," Let. VI, Poems, I, i, 271.


58 Ibid., 417.

59 "Verses Written under a Print representing the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin," Poems, II, i, 61.


63 Remains, I, ii, 556.

64 F. R. Raines, The Rectors of Manchester and the Wardens of the Collegiate Church, Chetham Soc. (Manchester, 1885) VI n.s. 163.

65 In "Pascal's Character of Himself" (Poems, II, i, 111) Byrom says,

\[\text{I aim sincerely to be just and true,}\\ \text{For my Good-will to all Mankind extends.}\]

66 "On Works of Mercy and Compassion, considered as the Proofs of True Religion," Poems, II, ii, 420. The idea is a frequent one in Boehme.


68 For this word, see "Fam. Ep.,” Let. III, Poems, II, i, 260. The OED credits Byrom with the first use of the term.

Poems, II, i, 137.

Poems, II, i, 130-34; unfortunately, this poem cannot be dated precisely, but its mystical nature suggests it was written sometime during the second half of Byrom's career, probably after 1740.

Remains, I, ii, 519.

Poems, App. V, II, ii, 600. Byrom's use of language is seldom dull; in addition to coining such words as "bibliolatry," and "tweedledee" and "tweedledum" ("Epigraph on Handel and Bounoncini"), he has the ability to combine meaning with amusement; one moment of activity and confusion he notes as "the hurryment and lurryment" (Remains, I, ii, 463). He also composed several poems in the Lancashire dialect.


Remains, I, ii, 501.

Ibid., 638.

For example on 13 April 1737, Byrom visited Law at Putney, at which time Law became "very warm" with Byrom when he defended Bourignon (Remains, II, i, 106). And Wesley, probably for personal reasons, noted Law's "morose and sour behaviour" (The Journal of . . ., ed. Nehemiah Curnock, 8 vols [London, 1938] VIII, 320).

Remains, II, i, 275.

John H. Overton, William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic (London, 1881), p. 66. Overton places Byrom in some august company when he says "As Addison had his Steele, Warburton his Hurd, Johnson his Boswell, so Law had his Byrom" (p. 61).

Remains, II, i, 237.

Remains, I, ii, 617. In The Way to Divine Knowledge, Law has Theophilus say to Academicus: "Your Questions, Academicus, seem to have too much of Curiosity in them: But, as I hope you will not give way to this Temper, so I will, for once, comply with your Demands," The Works of the Reverend William Law, M.A., repr. by G. Moreton, 9 vols (Canterbury, 1893) VII, 172. Hereafter cited as Works.

Byrom notes that once with Wesley, "He set me a-talking of the truth, beauty, decency, fitness of Christianity" (Remains, II, i, 273); it was never a difficult task to set him "a-talking."
83 Remains, II, i, 162-63.
85 "Floreat Lex!" Poems, III, 17.
86 Remains, II, i, 104.
87 Green tea was evidently a common topic of conversation; Boswell praised it (London Journal, 13 Feb. 1763), while Byrom felt it made him shake.
88 Remains, I, ii, 590-91.
89 Remains, II, i, 96-97. Byrom's "impetuosity" is reminiscent of Boswell's.
90 Overton, 222.
91 Remains, II, i, 320; also Gent. Mag., XII, 329.
93 Ibid., 392.
94 Ibid., 394.
95 Ibid., 411.
96 Poems, III, 61.
97 See, for example, "Lines on a Contested Election to a Fellowship of the Manchester Collegiate Church" (1760), Poems, I, ii, 549-53.
98 Remains, II, i, 309.
99 Ibid., 366.
100 Ibid., 493.
101 Remains, II, ii, 518.
102 Ibid., 519-20.
103 Remains, II, ii, 547.
104 Ibid., 571-72.
Early in his career certain of his friends even suggested he "put in for poet laureate" (Remains, I, ii, 340).

107 Warburton to Hurd, Remains, II, ii, n.1., 522.


110 Remains, II, ii, 576.


112 Remains, II, ii, 615.

113 Poems, I, i, 251.

114 Law died 9 April 1761 (Overton, 446).

115 Remains, II, ii, 651.

116 Monthly Review, II (October, 1773), 241.

CHAPTER II

Boehme and Law

Would you know the Truths of Jacob Behmen, you must see that you stand where he stood; you must begin where he began, and seek only as he tells you he did, the 'Heart of God'.

Wednesday, 20 January 1731: "Called at Noble's auction and bought some books, among the rest two pieces of Jacob Behmen." In this unobtrusive note, buried in an entry cataloguing meetings, dinners, and the conversations of coffee-house society, Byrom makes his first mention of Jacob Boehme. Although his expressed purpose in versifying Law was to propagate Law's ideas, that Byrom himself tended toward a mystical view of religious experience long before he came under Law's influence can be illustrated succinctly by one of his "thoughts after dinner" in which he contemplates words and their meanings: "Is there not in all or most words an inward and outward meaning? The body and the shadow: When truth rises in the mind at first it makes a long shadow, but when it is vertical, and shines perpendicularly through us, little or no shadow." The problems of appearance and reality, the substance and the shadow, had long been the mystics' major concern. Under Law's tutorship Byrom became convinced of the compelling reality of Boehme's explanation of Christian truth.
To judge and appreciate fully what Byrom attempted in his religious poetry one must pause long enough to "stand where Behmen stood." In this chapter, therefore, I will give a synopsis of Boehme's views, as represented in The Aurora, and of Law's interpretation of them in his own mystical writings.\(^4\) Because of the repetitive nature of Boehme's works, I have chosen to focus my discussion on his first book. Every important element is here; the book itself was the base upon which his later treatises built.

Jacob Boehme, commonly styled the "Teutonic Theosopher," was born near Görlitz, Germany, in 1575. In religion a Lutheran and by trade a cobbler, Boehme was a simple tradesman who in 1590 married the daughter of another tradesman. But here the similarity to any other humble shoemaker ends, for Boehme was one of those sensitive, contemplative, holy individuals who feel themselves to be close, if not one with God: "the same heaven is revealed in my spirit, so that in the spirit I know the works and creatures of God."\(^5\) Boehme was one of the first great Protestant mystics, but he is also part of a larger context of German mysticism and contemplative spiritualism whose exemplars were Meister Eckhart, Johann Tauler, and Jan Ruysbroeck. Like most Christian mystics Boehme was a visionary who had several mystical experiences, but unlike a St. Teresa or St. John of the Cross, his purpose in writing and explaining the knowledge he received from such experience was not simply to teach the means
for union with God; he wanted to see into and know the nature and essence of Divinity, man, and the whole creation. Hence, the appellation, theosopher. From the time *The Aurora* appeared in print in 1612 to his death in 1624, Boehme suffered periodic personal attacks from the orthodox clergy of Görlitz and banishment from his home. Unfortunately for him, one of his favorite antagonists was Dr. Gregory Richter, the most powerful Lutheran clergyman in Görlitz, who denounced Boehme from the pulpit as a fool and a crank. "The writings of Jacob Boehme," he ranted, "contain as many blasphemies as there are lines. They have a fearful odor of shoemaker's pitch and blacking." But the man whom Richter and others saw only as a dreamer and fanatic was to have an enormous impact on both Protestantism and later German philosophical idealism. His views were propounded by enduring Behmenist sects, and his philosophical influence can be traced through Schelling, Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer. Coleridge has noted that mystics like Boehme "made their words immediate echoes of their feelings" and helped "to keep alive the heart in the head." Boehme's basically romantic concepts of life as impassioned battle, movement, and genesis, and particularly his theory of contraries, of the eternal Ja und Nein were elements which contributed to the powerful imagination of William Blake.

In spirit as well as time, Boehme must be viewed as a Reformation man, not that like Luther or Calvin he founded a new "Christianity," but for the reason that his explanations
of God's ways to man have had lasting literary and religious value. He was a part of that wave of religious speculation which attempted to revitalize a religious tradition which had become static and highly formalized. In his quest for knowledge he created new symbols and myths to suggest and explain views which are largely opposed to rational theology and medieval scholasticism. Nicolas Berdyaev emphasizes his significance when he writes:

In the dynamism of his concept of the world, in the interest he shows in origin and becoming, in his feeling for the battle of opposing elements and for the ideas of freedom—which, to him, is primary—Boehme is a man of the modern age. He no longer conceives of the world as an eternally static order nor as a hierarchical and unmoving system. The life of the world is a battle, a becoming, a vast process, all fire and dynamism. There is no resemblance here to the world view of Aquinas or of Dante.

The last twelve years of Boehme's life, during which he produced over thirty treatises and pamphlets, were devoted to the development and elaboration of the principles Berdyaev emphasizes. Boehme's significance for Law and Byrom lies in his explanation of three key principles: the nature and essence of God; the creation and fall of man and nature; and the process of man's regeneration to an angelic state.

Most of Boehme's works, The Aurora included, are not simply spiritual or devotional treatises but are serious, speculative discussions which attempt to reveal the goodness of God and harmonize His existence with an evil world. Unlike many religious commentators, Boehme does not tie himself to any narrow theological view. First of all, he rejected conceptual knowledge
and placed great emphasis on the intuited, irrational, and mysterious nature of divine things. For the most part, he was intellectually isolated from the major doctrines which permeated Reformation Europe, and while he remained a nominal Lutheran, he rose above the limitations of creed and dogma. Nor, in his mysticism is he primarily concerned with himself, with what happened to him during his periods of illumination. His subjects are God, the world, and man in general. Unlike the empiricist who must see with his eyes and rationalize with his mind, Boehme's sources of knowledge were the emanations of God which he felt with his heart and soul. The intuitive nature of his knowledge does not help make his writing lucid, but then lucidity is not a virtue of any mystic in any age. Although in his later works he clarified certain principles, his writings remain obscure and confused because his speculations concern problems not only of theology, but of theogony, epistemology, and theodicy as well.

Basically The Aurora elaborates Boehme's theory of origins, his contemplation of and conceptualization of reality. "I fell into a very deep melancholy and heavy sadness, when I beheld and contemplated the great deep of this world, also the sun and stars, the clouds, rain and snow, and considered in my spirit the whole creation of this world" (p. 486). Such an experience may have affinities with the depression and purging qualities of St. John of the Cross's "dark night of the soul," which is necessary before union with God can be accomplished. But in
Boehme's view there is no need for a "rising up" to God, for God is in every man. "He is created out of the whole being of the Deity," he states, and again, "all things are in God; and so God himself is all" (p. 34). If God is ALL, he argues, then there must be infinite variety as well as eternal life within Him. In this concept, Berdyaev asserts, Boehme introduced into the idea of God "a dynamic principle opposed to the static concept of Greek philosophy and medieval Scholasticism." God then is the living, informing principle in all things. In an attempt to express such universal theism, The Aurora falls generally into two parts: the first eight chapters discuss the nature of God, and, with apocalyptic urgency, the remaining eighteen present his views of the angels, creation, man's fall and salvation.

In Boehme's "system" God was in the beginning unmanifested, and even after creation he remained unknowable, incomprehensible: "flesh and blood cannot conceive or apprehend the being of God" (p. 39). But to explain being, creation, and the existence of evil, Boehme had to go back to nonbeing, to the dark and irrational abyss which he saw as God unmanifested. This he fully develops in this theory of the Ungrund and the doctrine of freedom explained in De Signatura Rerum and Mysterium Magnum. Berdyaev's definition of these key principles is helpful: "The Unground, thus, is nothingness, the unfathomable eye of eternity and at the same time a will, a will without bottom, abysmal,
indeterminate. But it is a nothingness which is 'the hunger of Something'. . . In the darkness of the Unground blaze the flames signifying freedom, meontic, potential freedom." Bottomless existence is beyond good and evil, for evil developed only after creation of the angels. Thus Divinity has inner life, a will. In the theory of the fire of will and in that of contraries, Boehme explains the transition from nonbeing to being. But he needed some means of symbolizing this change and this was evidently suggested by the last portion of Revelations 1.4, "the seven Spirits which are before his throne." Everything is composed of these seven forms or forces. Thus his scheme for explaining how the eternal Ja und Nein, love and wrath, good and evil arise from the One, is to reveal the functions of the seven spirits which he calls the seven natural principles.

Because he depends so heavily on terms from astrology and Paracelsian alchemy these principles are obscure.13 Boehme's entire revelation of creation, for example, depends on the term "Salitter" or the fountain spirits, the power of God or God's will manifested; also he uses the word "astral," which characterizes the sidereal nature wherein the seven spirits operate and from which man's merely human life is born. In essence the seven spirits are the seven qualities, i.e., the surging vitalities of the Godhead.14 Once the eternal will (which Boehme also calls God's freedom) thirsted for light, creation took place, but in two different forms: first, that of Eternal Nature,
and second, that which has come to be known as "fallen nature."
In this manner was the hidden God manifested. There is a suggestion of Platonism in the concept of Eternal Nature because it is the archetypal body or glory of God, yet it is not God. In eternal nature all the qualities exist in harmony and perfection (which Boehme symbolizes as the *glassy sea*). "Fallen nature" is an outbirth or derivative of this ideal, uncreated "body." From the Ungrund, the undifferentiated Totality, springs the eternal process of generation through the interplay of opposites.

Simply stated the seven qualities are: **Fiat**, which is the astringent quality of desire proceeding from will; **motion** which is attraction of the desire; **strain** or anguish which results from the interaction of the first two qualities; **fire**, the purifier, which as the source of all life transforms the first three into materiality and distinctness, or fuses them with the last three in the joy of spiritual love; **light**, which is the divine love-fire that generates things as they really are; **sound** or **speech**, which is the Holy Spirit uttered in the five spiritual senses of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling; and finally, the **Word**, or **figure**, by which the essence embodies itself, i.e., takes a shape. In the Deity all these are in harmony, there having been before creation (i.e., before the time when Lucifer desired to center all in himself) no tension between them. Fire takes the pivotal position between this double trinity of qualities because in angel, man, and all creation, the fire of will is the controlling
factor. When manifested the first three forms result in wrath, anger, jealousy, which in God are never manifested. Evil grew first of all out of Lucifer's dark aspiration, and secondly out of Adam's desire for physical nature which brought about its materialization. Lucifer chose the fire of self when he refused to "be in subjection to the whole being" (p. 120) and he fell because he allowed his qualities to be "a higher, statelier, more pompous or active qualifying or operation than God himself exercised" (p. 343). In moving toward a "higher birth" Lucifer broke the harmony, created a tension and eternal enmity between himself and God and became instantly the father of four sons (as Boehme calls them): pride, covetousness, envy and wrath. Thus was evil born.

Underlying all reality, at every level of existence, are the seven informing spirits: "All the creatures are made and descended from these qualities, and live therein as in their mother" (p. 50). With the fall of Lucifer "instantly ensued the creation of this world" (p. 205). But there can be no manifestation without the contraries. Without struggle and opposition there would be only the nothingness of the Ungrund; by theorizing the battle of opposites, Boehme accounts for good and evil upon Heraclitean principles. In creation the One was separated into moral and immortal, spirit and body. "In every creature in this world there is a good and evil will and source; in man beasts, fowls . . . gold, silver, copper . . . wood, herbs,
leaves . . . and in all whatsoever than can be thought of"(p. 51). It was from this corrupted state that Adam was formed, who had been at first "an angelical power-body." He had the divine spark within and was clothed in the glory of God, but "seeing Adam's Spirit longed after that fruit which was of the quality of the corrupted earth, therefore also nature formed or framed such a tree for him as was like the corrupted earth"(p. 447). The tree and its fruit, like everything else on earth contained good and evil, so that when Adam and Eve ate of it, they took on good and evil and "a fleshly and palpable or comprehensible body"(p. 448). Thus we arrive at the twofold nature of man, an elemental creaturely body with a spiritual, divine soul. Byrom's favorite visionary, Madame Bourignon, held the same doctrine but so emphasized the "divineness" of the soul that she identified herself with God: "I no longer have a conduct, and yet I act infallibly."18

Boehme saw man's world, though fallen, as a derivative of Eternal Nature; it was not created out of nothing. If all things had come from nothing (i.e., somehow created outside of and from essences exclusive of the Ungrund), then the visible world would contain no divine revelation; God would not be immanent in all things. This doctrine Law used as one of his most telling arguments against the orthodox concept of creation ex nihilo. Boehme consistently reiterates the doctrine of the invisible in the visible. His whole "system" depends upon this, for his major source of knowledge is the mystical perception of God
emanating from all things. "But seeing God, in his great love, openeth to me the gate of his being, and remembereth the Covenant which he hath with man, therefore I will, according to my gifts, faithfully and earnestly unlock and set wide open all the gates of God, so far as God will give me leave" (pp. 561-62). Man has the possibility of opening the gates because he has dwelling in him an eternal essence. The bridge between man and God is Christ, for the unitive life can be achieved only by the imitation of Christ, who represents the divine nature of love.

Naturally, man's place in fallen nature is unhappy and difficult. However, by virtue of the seven qualities and his free will, man can generate a new birth. Again, Boehme's explanation of this process depends upon the symbolism of the double trinity of qualities. If man chooses the fire of self he will sink into a devilish, hellish state; if he chooses the fire of love he will be illuminated and live eternally in the Deity. Man's will must be wholly united with the will of God. That is the process, but the actuality is difficult to achieve, for "man is poisoned through sin, because the fierce wrathful quality, as well as the good, reigneth in him, and he is now half dead" (p. 6). Through his fall man framed himself in corruption and divorced himself from God. He thus dances "between heaven and hell" (p. 185), but if he chooses he has the capacity to be enlightened and kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit. How can a half-dead angel redeem himself? The answer lies in the depths of man's soul and in the Being of the Triune God.
The soul, according to Boehme, has "its source and descent from the being of the whole Deity" (p. 34). The true "love-fire" sparks the soul and heart of man but man must choose it, feel it, will it: "For every man is free, and is as a god himself; in this life man may change and alter himself either into wrath or into light" (p. 461). Through mystical perception and response and the action of the Trinity upon his heart man may look beyond nature, beyond the comprehensible into the Abyss of God. The depth of the mystery is the nature of the Three-in-One God, the Father who is the only Being, the All Who from eternity continually generates his son. In both there is that flash of the Holy Ghost which continually generates divine life. This is God's creative dynamism.

In the eternal structure of things Christ was created to replace a fallen Lucifer. However, because men of flesh and blood cannot apprehend the incomprehensible, they must "see" God through the medium of the Holy Spirit which "reigneth and ruleth in the whole body or corpus of God; that is, in the whole nature" (p. 53). Traditionally grace has always been the special gift of the Holy Spirit, but had been limited to the "chosen few" capable of receiving it. In Boehme's view, however, it is a universal quality coming from the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is in the Son; the Son is in the Father; and God Himself eternally emanates from nature. In Christ Love became man and put on human flesh. Love, the eternal Word, must possess
us and work in us if there is to be any re-birth. Man must respond to the "pleasant, meek, quiet wind, or whispering breath, or still voice, out of all the powers of the Father and of the Son" (p. 77).

Regeneration begins in the desire for change, in willing a free choice for God instead of Satan. But the world is no longer an "angelical kingdom." Boehme characterizes it not simply as the conventional vale of tears, but as the abode of devilish pride which burns in hellish fire. It is the house of affliction, Lucifer's "wrath-house."

For it forsaketh the love, and hangeth on covetousness, extortion and bribery; there is no mercy at all therein. Every one crieth out, If I had but money! Those that are in authority and power suck the very marrow from the bones of men of low degree and rank, and feed upon the sweat of their brows. Briefly, there is nothing else but lying, deception, robbing and murdering, and so this world may very justly be called the devils nest and dwelling-house (pp. 523-24).

This is the battle ground of the new birth. In addition to the pain and wrath of fallen nature and to the constant erosion the devil attempts in the human soul, man himself has "falsified and adulterated the right, pure Christian doctrine" (p. 190).

Following the mystical tradition of suspecting and deriding normal modes of learning, Boehme criticizes learning because it has produced only "various monsters" and schisms rather than opening the way to man's salvation. Basing its dogmas on authority, reason and intellect, worldly knowledge attempts to climb toward God on a ladder which does not nor ever could exist. For without illumination no man can understand the
mystery: "he has need of a light in his heart, that his understanding and mind may be well governed" (p. 313). Allowing the spark of the divine, the "flash" of the Holy Spirit to grow, will open the dawning of the day: "For in that light the one seeth the others, feeleth the others, smelleth the others, tasteth the others, and heareth the others, and it is as if the whole Deity did rise up therein" (pp. 262-63). Even though man is cased in flesh and contains the duality of good and evil, he was created an image or similitude of God; he has the world in his heart; all he need do is to follow the fire-love and he will "sittest in heaven, and livest and reignest with God" (p. 557). Regeneration culminates in participation with the divine life.

One might well ask, as did Dr. Richter, what are the sources of Boehme's convictions? where are his authorities? Of course, the first answer must be mystical perception, "the impulse and motion of God" (p. 37). Time and time again Boehme exclaims that the impetus for writing is not his own but God's, and that his material has nothing to do with rational intellect or borrowings from other men's writings: "All is written by God in my mind" (p. 87). At another place he says this is no story or history which someone has related to him; it is a revelation opened to him, a passionate impulse to put these mysteries on paper. The contemporary reactions to such "passionate impulses" were predictable. Johann Trick censured Boehme as "the vilest excrement of the devil," "the father of lies," and claimed that the devil himself "grunted out of his mouth."
Quite naturally, Boehme's second source is Holy Writ. On practically every page the margins of *The Aurora* contain Scriptural citations which function both as guides to the reader and as evidence of the Biblical basis for everything he says. Boehme and Law, like the great majority of Christian mystics, found the literal meaning to be the true meaning and the best guide to the sublime, divinized life with God. But Scriptural authority as such is secondary; its function is to lead man to the inner, eternal Word. For those who wish it otherwise, Boehme has little patience: "Behold! Thou blind Heathen; behold! thou render [sic], perverter, obscurer and wrester of the Scriptures, open thy eye wide and be not ashamed at this simple plainness; for God lieth hid in the centre."\(^\text{21}\)

Boehme's favorite device for presenting his ideas is analogy, for creaturely intellect can realize the ineffable God only by similitude and metaphor. Accordingly, such knowledge must be incomplete. Man is like the child first learning to walk, first trying his knowledge. To explain the struggle between heaven and hell, Boehme speaks of the "great travail, even as a woman in the birth"(p. 8); or he describes man as the microcosm in which the interior of the body "signifieth, the deep between the stars and the earth"(p. 56); or, he uses metaphor to indicate the vastness of the Abyss, for it is impossible for man "to climb so high into the Deity, and to dive so deeply thereinto"(p. 453). Such a manner of expression
is typical of that kind of contemplative mind and imagination which is aware of something taking place at a deeper level of experience than that of normal thought. It is also typical because in many ways the experiences and intuitions being expressed are incommunicable even in the most heightened style. But the mystic feels he must try.

Such a brief sketch cannot do justice to the *Aurora*, let alone the canon, but it does give us enough of Boehme's speculation to recognize his influence on Law's principles. Law and a few close friends, like Byrom and the Moravian Francis Okely, were lonely islands of Behmenism in the midst of eighteenth-century Deism and rational theology. This is in sharp contrast to Boehme's popularity in the preceding century, when John Sparrow and others translated and propagated his doctrines, when Behmenist societies sprouted all over England, and when the Philadelphians and some Quakers made Boehme little less than a saint. The reception he received by eighteenth-century theologians is precisely what we might expect; to the orthodox, rational clergyman he could only be the wildest enthusiast and fanatic. Warburton, who could use most unpriestly invective on dissenters from orthodoxy, was sure that Boehme was "a pretender to inspiration" who impressed only "fools and knaves" and that his "works would disgrace even Bedlam at full moon." Gibbon spoke of Boehme's "incomprehensible visions." Even the usually charitable John Wesley
damned him, asserting that Boehme "seduced many unwary souls from the Bible-way of salvation." On another occasion he labeled Boehme "an ingenious madman" who "over and over contradicts Christian experience, reason, Scripture, and himself." Boehme was an "original" for whom the educated, cultured Englishman had no use. William Law was an exception.

Aside from Byrom's Remains we have little contemporary information about Law's life, but from what we have, it is clear that the events of his life, the characteristics of his personality, and the nature of his religious convictions set him apart from the age in which he lived. Born in 1686 the son of a grocer at King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire, he was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and became a Fellow there, but upon the accession of George I he chose the non-juring path, which excluded him from any advancement or privilege in the Anglican Establishment. His contemplative and retiring habits of mind were well suited to the position as the Gibbons' tutor (1723-1737). Next to religious speculation, his ruling passion seems to have been privacy, for "it was very seldom indeed that he passed away more than two hours in the company of any person whatever." This does not mean he never made his opinions known; indeed, he was one of the most vocal religious writers of his time, one who was remembered even years after his death as "the celebrated mystick" and "divinely illuminated writer." Between 1717 and 1719 he wrote Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor answering Bishop Hoadly's low church, anti-catholic views.
In these letters Law defends the authority of the Anglican Church, its hierarchical system, and its relation to the secular government against Hoadly's concept that the only authority was the kingship of Christ, that in matters of conscience and salvation man owed his allegiance only to Christ. Although Law never left the Anglican Church, his mysticism eventually brought him close to, if not beyond, Hoadly's views. During his stay at Putney he also published an attack on Mandeville's Fable (1723). It was also during this period that he published his most popular works: A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection (1726) and A Serious Call (1728). Both were alternately praised and damned. Dr. Trapp prophesied "that the two books would do harm, and so it happened, for shortly afterwards up sprung the Methodists." Warburton claimed that "Mr. William Law begat Methodism, and Count Zinzendorf rocked the cradle." But not every reader was so short with Law. Dr. Johnson, who was certainly no lover of mysticism, gave real praise to Law's A Serious Call when he admitted that he "found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion." All these works are deeply rooted in a profound religious emotion which strongly appealed to the evangelically minded like Wesley and Whitefield, and they are written in a style that is both urbane and witty. The character sketches particularly in A Serious Call prove Law to have been an acute observer of contemporary manners. Even his later, high-flown mystical sentiments are grounded in the very practical business of saving souls.
But during the 1730's, Law turned more and more to contemplation and the "power of quiet and silence." At the suggestion of Dr. Cheyne, he began reading and studying Boehme, perhaps as early as 1734. In 1737 he left the Gibbon household and until 1740, spent most of his time in London. In July, 1739, Byrom found him in Somerset Gardens and their brief exchange illustrates something of Law's habits of mind. After showing Law his proposal for publishing shorthand, Byrom notes that Law "just looked at it and gave it me again," saying "that for them indeed that wanted to write down what others said it might do." Byrom thrived on conversation, but Law believed that "neither sense nor piety can bring forth their proper fruits when under the power of a talkative spirit." Such a conviction makes all the more remarkable the fellowship which existed between these two men. In 1740 Law retired to a life of religious meditation and charitable works at his village of King's Cliffe, where he was soon joined by two kindred spirits, Miss Hestor Gibbon (the historian's aunt) and Mrs. Archibald Hutcheson, a widow. At one time it had been rumored that "Mr. Law was a great beau, would have fine linen, was very sweet upon the ladies." Such a rumor, however, has never been substantiated and Byrom presents it only as an example of idle gossip. The ladies, upon whose income all three existed, looked upon him solely as their chaplain, instructor and friend. When Law died, Miss Gibbon had him buried in a tomb which she
had built for that purpose. In 1781 Mrs. Hutcheson was buried at his feet, and in 1790, Miss Gibbon beside him. Thus the triumvirate who lived for "pious meditation and the demoralization of the neighbourhood by profuse charity" remained forever united.37

Before turning to Law's later mystical works, we need to recall that he did not suddenly put on the mystical cloak after reading Boehme, that his mystical tendency was long antecedent to the Behmenistic treatises of the 1740's and 1750's. While at Cambridge he had read Malebranche. On the basis of long-standing knowledge he could recommend Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroeck, Dionysius, and St. Macarius to Byrom,38 and he had long been sympathetic to Madame Guyon's theory that in the visible we have the symbol of the invisible.39 While Law is frequently discussed as part of the English Christian mystical tradition, in many ways his own knowledge of the tradition is second-hand; his mysticism is that of the study, private meditation, and silent prayer. Again and again he cautions Byrom about being so passionately attached to Madame Bourignon's visionary, rhapsodic experiences and ideas.40 Pre-eminently a student, his knowledge of Boehme came not only from the original German editions, but from such English commentators as Dionysius Freher and Dr. Francis Lee.41 Such mystical doctrines that the soul can perceive, that man must be a partaker of the Divine, and that man must be holy were strong components of Law's devotionism before he studied Boehme. They are a necessary part even of such a non-mystical book as A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection.
By any standard the quest for Christian perfection is difficult, but in Law's discussion it is even more so because it appears less than "practical." The work is not simply a series of rules for holy living and religious conduct. What he requires is the perfection of habits of mind and heart. Significantly, the major quality of Christian Perfection is his insistence upon the vital, creative nature of Christianity: "it creates all anew." If man will only allow his will to choose the right direction he can be formed in its glorious participation with Divinity. Of course the idea of participation has been a part of the Christian tradition since St. Paul, but it had been re-affirmed near the end of the seventeenth century by the Cambridge Platonists, especially John Smith, who said the soul is Godlike and a "partaker of the Divine Nature." But in emphasizing this idea Law demands more of man than simply attending church, teaching virtue, or polishing his manners. He requires that man break through the sham which "clouds and covers all the true Appearances of Things, and keeps our Minds insensible." The mystical concept that the physical world is not the real world is one of those verities which for Law is self-evident, and it is one of his constant themes. Man must pierce through this life of vapor: "we must," he says, "with the Eyes of Faith, penetrate into the invisible World, the World of Spirits."

Man must change his nature and temper, for Christian perfection is a matter of will and holy discipline. Simply following the Articles of Faith, the modes of worship, or becoming obedient
to doctrine is not enough: there must be an entirely new principle of life, which later becomes the spirit of prayer and love. Man must renounce the world so that his whole duty is to universal love and benevolence. Thereby we have the mystical attitude of putting aside the things of this world and the enjoyment of them for a life of faith, hope and heavenly affection. In opposition to contemporary deistic ideas, Law reveals some new modes of seeing and knowing. All appeals to intellect will not be enough because they can only be partial appeals; his conviction, simply, is that appeals to Reason have no power to sway the total man and to enflame him with the power and spirit of Christ. The world, after all, is filled with the opposed forces of good and evil (a concept Law had before Boehme's influence), which means that some men are good, some bad: "I do not now appeal to the Judgment or Reason of the Reader, I leave it with his Imagination, that wild Faculty, to determine, whether it be possible for these two different Sorts of Men, to be true Disciples of the same Lord." Man must transcend rational and notional knowledge.

In this relatively early work by Law, therefore, we discover such basic attitudes as total opposition to religion which is only an external regulating force, the idea of a higher reality which the individual must partake of, and a demand for soul-inspiring spiritual knowledge. The earliest of Law's mystical or Behmenistic treatises are generally considered to be A Demonstration of ... Errors of a Late Book (1737) and An Appeal to all that Doubt (1740). The first seems to me to
exhibit little more of the mystical tendency than Christian Perfection, but the Appeal is strongly influenced by Boehme, who Law states, had "all that was old and true both in Religion and Nature... opened in him." The Appeal clearly expresses his views on the nature of man, the unity of nature, and the quality of fire (i.e., desire). For the following synthesis, however, I have chosen to use three works which exemplify the full bloom of Law's mysticism. The Spirit of Prayer (Part I, 1749; Part II, 1750), The Way to Divine Knowledge (1752), and The Spirit of Love (Part I, 1752; Part II, 1754) are the works which had the greatest impact on Byrom and which he most frequently paraphrased. In these books we find the three pillars upon which Law's theology rests, that God is love, that man is fallen, and that redemption, from the divine spark within, is possible.

Like Boehme, Law conceives God as an all-good, all-loving, Being. As he says, "from Eternity to Eternity, no Spark of Wrath ever was, or ever will be in the holy Triune God." And elsewhere he writes, "God is an abyssal Infinity of Love, Wisdom, and Goodness." The image of the abyss is no accident. Both Boehme and Law describe God in terms of totality and completeness, as an unbeginning and unending Deity Who is revealed in man's soul. In this idea Law is concerned with overcoming or invalidating the natural theological concepts of his age, which grew up from the rationalism exemplified in Spinoza's cosmic determinism or Leibniz's ultima ratio rerum. Such "systems" emphasize a God of plenitude who is manifested in
the order and regularity of the physical universe. The ultimate seat of authority in religion becomes the mind illuminated by reason; just as there are innate Laws of Nature there are also innate Laws of Human Nature and Morality which any man of Right Reason could perceive and follow. The Cambridge Platonists helped prepare for such views by attempting to fuse rational and revealed theology. But whereas for the Platonist Reason included a wide range of spiritual perception, eighteenth-century rationalism generally limited reason to common human understanding. As Locke had pointed out, while we could not know God directly, He had given us "sense, perception, and reason, and we cannot want a clear proof of him, as long as we carry our selves about us." Thus the evidence for God is maximal in an empirical sense, for as long as man can know himself, he can know God. This made it easy for Charles Blount to follow and expound upon the rational theology of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and for John Toland to prove that Christianity was not mysterious. The whole movement of rational theology and deism culminated in Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation* (1730). In this work we find emphasis on the idea that Reason and Revelation are the same: the Holy Ghost proposes arguments to convince human understanding of the true nature of things and thus influences our wills to right action. But this fusion has one important difference from the Platonists; revelation is not arbitrary, but follows established, universal patterns. To argue any other way would be to make the Holy Ghost an irrational
force which only leaves impressions on men, "as a Seal does on Wax; to the confounding of their Reason, and their Liberty in choosing."  

Certainly Law did not deny that God was Design, but the tenor of his argument emphatically and vigorously moves away from a mechanical and impersonal God to an internal, life-giving force that is a Real Presence: "God has but one Design or Intent towards all Mankind, and that is to introduce or generate his own Life, Light, and Spirit in them that all may be as so many Images, Temples, and Habitations of the Holy Trinity."  

"Generation" is the key term, for it implies that something more than a "good mind and good thoughts" should be in a man before the ever-speaking Word can have any effect. The growth of the heavenly spirit is an internal matter, perceived in the heart and soul of every individual who wills it so. Rather than confounding reason and liberty, the new life forms in a man a spirit and gives him a new view of the world.

Just as God is not the Great Clock-maker, so man is not simply a rational observer who concludes the existence of God from natural law and design. Echoing the Platonists, Law sees man as partaker in God; he "has an Eternity within Him" and in that eternity lies the divine fire, the "Mystery of an inward Life hidden in Man." Because of Adam, man's only link with God is the soul. Boehme had argued that our first parents fell because they allowed the fourth quality, fire, to choose self rather than divine illumination. They literally fell into
nature, and thus they became sensible to outward nature and even found themselves subjected to it. They became the slaves of such natural phenomena as heat and cold, pains and sickness, passions and fears. Law, like Boehme, believed in a gradual Fall. It did not happen at the instant Adam bit into the apple, but was a "gradual Declension, or Tendency of his Will, from the Life of Paradise into the Life of this World, till he was at last wholly fallen into it, swallowed up by it." So the being brought forth to be lord and ruler of a new world fell because he was created in a twofold nature, in earthly corporality with a celestial soul. His sin and his progeny's curse was falling into self, into the wrath of unregenerate nature. He died to the angelic life and was born into a corrupted natural life.

In Law's view Adam's new sensibility caused him to seek the part for the whole, to break the harmony of God and Eternal Nature. He became separated from God, and for all mankind this assertion of self, was, and is, the basis for all evil and sin. Adam generated sin: "when the intelligent Creature turns from God to Self, or Nature, he acts unnaturally, he turns from all that which makes Nature to be good; he finds Nature only as it is in itself and without God. And then it is, that Nature, or Self, has all evil in it." Sin is generated when man follows a false imagination, i.e., his desire for knowledge of good and evil as separate things, when he magnifies single parts of creation into gigantic proportions. But just as the will
of desire caused the Fall, it can be the cause of salvation if man wills the spirit of love to be reborn in his soul. The progression of salvation begins in the spirit of prayer, that "pressing forth of the Soul out of this earthly Life; it is a stretching with all its Desire after the Life of God . . . to be one Life, one Love, one Spirit with Christ in God." Man has the freedom to choose; this freedom is analogous to the divine freedom of the Ungrund, but in man desire for a new spiritual manifestation takes its form by willing the rebirth of God in man's soul. Once the choice has been made, once the love-fire gives birth to the spirit of love (which takes place in the fifth property of light), man has the true spirit of love, an eternal will to all goodness.

But to attain salvation man must understand the relationship between God and Nature, which Law explains in terms of the Behmenistic dichotomy of Eternal Nature and fallen nature. "All Wrath, Strife, Discord, Hatred, Envy, or Pride, &c., all Heat and Cold, all Enmity in the Elements, All Thickness, Grossness, and Darkness, are Things that have no Existence but in and from the Sphere of fallen Nature." Law normally symbolizes Boehme's first trinity of forms (i.e., astringency, motion, and anguish), as the dark, cold and inert forces of nature, while Eternal Nature, the archetypal universe, is distinguished by light, air and fire (the
creative energy). In Behmenistic language, Law discusses the separation of forms:

Nature is at first only spiritual; it has in itself nothing but the Spiritual Properties of the Desire, which is the very Being and Grounds of Nature. But when these Spiritual Properties are not filled, then something is found in Nature which never should have been found, viz., The Properties of Nature in a State of visible Division and Contrariety to each other.59

Like Boehme, Law explains the natural world in terms of the pre-Adamite Fall, and in The Way to Divine Knowledge he very carefully distinguishes between the dual nature of man, not simply in terms of good and evil but in terms of man's double faculties. First of all, there are his natural powers and abilities which allow him to become proficient in science, philosophy, and art. But redemption depends upon another nature, one transcending such liberal or mechanic arts. "It belongs not to the outward natural man, but is purely for the Sake of an inward, heavenly Nature."60 Thus in both man and nature there is division and contrariety. But there is no separateness, no disunity in the Deity and Eternal Nature, for in the plenitude of God all the informing qualities are in balance and harmony. Redemption is the process of reunification with this Eternal Nature.

Given such convictions it is to be expected that Law strongly opposed the Deistic or rational varieties of natural religion; in turn, he was attacked by the rationalists.
Obviously Law's corrupted "Nature" was different from that Nature which Augustan reason had sought as the ground and reason for peace, concord and progress in the affairs of men and for the unity, proportion and order in the universe. But more precisely, natural theology failed to understand or appreciate the efficacy of the "indwelling light," or it somehow assimilated the two and made them compatible, as did the Platonists and Tindal. The eighteenth century was, after all, heir to Bacon, Descartes, Boyle and Newton and disapproved of anything tainted with the occult or enthusiasm. Science became a kind of revelation in itself because it unveiled a "divine universe," which meant, as Professor Willey notes, that "Nature was rescued from Satan and restored to God." A Deist like Tindal based his whole position on the assumption that God's existence, wisdom, and goodness were knowable from external evidence, and by doing so tended to give man a more august position in the eternal scheme of things. Law's reaction to such views began with his Case of Reason against Tindal (1732) and continued throughout his mystical works. In his arguments he reversed the position the Deists gave man by asserting the greatness of God and the littleness of humanity.

The rationalist emphasized the inherently moral nature of man, the communes notitiae which God through natural revelation "has laid within the reach of their natural faculties." Law had only contempt for any view which denied the efficacy
of revealed religion. Deism "or a Religion of Nature, pre-
tending to make Man good and happy without Christ, or the
Son of God entering into Union with the human Nature, is the
greatest of all Absurdities."63 Convinced that natural theology
denied the reality of the spirit and that it was the most radic­
ical kind of foolishness because "human Reason has no higher a
Birth, than human Ignorance, Infirmity, and Morality,"64 he
argued that the experiential limitations and one-sidedness of
reason should be self-evident. Byrom illustrates this feeling
when he says that "Reason might help to supply the place of
Religion as it might do to make a wooden leg in the room of a
natural one that was lost."65 Because it depends upon notional
knowledge and empirical data, reason is an artificial and incom­
plete basis for religion. By its very nature it removes all
imaginative and intuitive responses, all generations, from the
religious experience, which for Byrom and Law simply meant that
there could be no religion. We may conjecture that part of
Law's attraction to Boehme was the cobbler's anti-rationalism,
which Law reflects in his demands for a simple, illiterate,
unreasoning religious knowledge and faith.

Law was neither totally anti-intellectual nor opposed
to all noetic processes; art, science and general learning
were a necessity. But when they turned man's mind too much
to shadowy objections and controversies rather than the sub­
stantial truths of the religion of the heart, he became their
most vigorous critic. Again and again he objects to learning's unreason. "What a Delusion is it therefore, to grow grey-headed in balancing ancient and modern Opinions; to waste the precious uncertain Fire of Life in critical Zeal, and verbal Animosities." For the most part learned commentaries only stood in the way of salvation; "nor will I seek for anything even from such Books, but that which I ask of God in Prayer; viz., how better to know, more to abhor and resist the Evil that is in my own Nature; and how to attain a supernatural Birth of the Divine Life brought forth in me: All besides this is Pushpin."67

We need to make one final point. For all of his disputes against the advocates of a natural theology Law himself developed a "natural theology," which his mystical works expand and deepen. Boehme had exclaimed that he was sceptical of tables, formulae, and schemes because they taught him nothing. He had, he said, "another teacher, which is the living fountain of nature."68 From the same fountain Law perceived not only that an unknowable God manifested Himself but that He continually strove to revive and regenerate fallen nature.69 From the very beginning of Creation it has been God's desire to communicate good, the greatest good being the eventual salvation of man. With this as a base Law's natural religion builds on two propositions: "All that can be conceived, is either God,
or Nature, or Creature,"\textsuperscript{70} and religion "has everything in it that our \textit{Natural} State stands in need of; every Thing that can help us out of our present \textit{Evil}"\textsuperscript{71} Given his accidental, transitory fallen nature, man's religion is "natural" in the sense that it supplied all which man needs for reunification with God. By following the precepts of Law's theology—perhaps a better word is psychology—man can overcome and rise above his natural state. Indeed, it is one of Law's major departures from Boehme that he formulates the concept not only of man reconciled to God, but of the whole fallen nature restored, perfected and reunited with Eternal Nature. This, of necessity, eliminates the concept of an everlasting Hell.

Salvation has many names (redemption, regeneration, new birth, rebirth, the way to divine knowledge) but each means one and the same thing, the revival of the power of Christ in man. Interestingly enough, Law does not make much of Wesley's favorite term, conversion, probably because it suggests a definite and decisive adoption of a set of religious doctrines, and, at its worst only gives lip service to external modes. Conversion contains all the connotations of change from one state to another, but it lacks the emphasis Law wishes to give to the creative, generative power which comes with realizing Christ-in-man. Above all Law was a Christ-mystic, which term means two things. First, Christ-mysticism in his view did not identify "Christ," the divine Life or Word, with
the historical personage of Jesus. Jesus was the perfect, incarnate expression of the Word, but "Christ" is the universal principle, the divine life in every creature. Secondly, it means that Law rejected such extreme Protestant doctrines of total corruption as are implied in the Calvinistic theories of election or predestination. These, after all, would be inconsistent with the all-good, all-loving Deity. God's covenant is free and universal, open to Christian and heathen alike.\textsuperscript{72}

Before the spirits of prayer and of love can do their work, man must realize the existence of the eternal spark in his soul. No amount of doctrine, forms or dogma can replace the fire of the heart. External religious modes are only signs of an internal fervor and if this does not exist then forms are empty and meaningless. Man's first duty then must be the realization, the perception of Christ-in-man. He must be awakened from the "dreams" of rational, notional knowledge, so that he will hunger after God. He must strive for that which is "sensible, intuitive and its own Evidence."\textsuperscript{73} Such references to the magical and supernatural must have made Law's contemporaries groan with disbelief, for he is not asking that men see in the same manner they do when looking at the trees of the field or when computing some scientific problem. They must "see" with their souls and taste and feel with their hearts, so the "fire from Heaven, the Spirit of Prayer,"\textsuperscript{75} can open a
new and heavenly state and will become an inspiration for man's
ethical action. In this manner, Law's brand of Christian
ethics is based almost entirely on experiential certainty and
personal awareness. In psychological terms this means that
man will experience a redirection of will and its manifesta-
tion in desire. He will have "a change of heart from self-
preoccupation to self-development through love-will rather
than self-will." 76

With new awareness man will see that life is a trial
for the greatest good or the greatest evil, that the world is
a mixture of heaven and hell, and that life and death, salva-
tion and damnation clash within him. Unlike the cosmology of
Paradise Lost, Law's heaven and hell are not places in which
God dwells or to which Satan fell. Following Boehme and the
Cambridge Platonists, he explains heaven and hell as spiritual
states: man turned to God is in heaven, man turned away is in
hell. Heaven is everywhere if we live in God and hell is every-
where if we do not. God gave man a free will and heart to which
man must give direction. Once he has made the choice, the new
birth and spiritual change will mean a death to his previous
condition; however, it will also mean that his change must be
generated in some pain. Only by renouncing the world and the
flesh can death by sin be abolished. In place of sin will
come the "one Immortality," the spirit of life, the ever-
lasting holiness of Christ-in-man.
One might well wonder how man is to maintain his resolve in the face of such a demanding process. In answer to this Law suggests the mystical power of silence. "Let Silence, Recollection, inward and outward Retirement, have their Work for a few Days. They purify the Heart; they weaken and disarm Self; they strengthen the Spirit of Prayer, and help us not only to pray, but to find, to love, and live in God." This, then, is the essence of resignation and humility as Law and Byrom express it. It is not the resignation which is implied in the theories that whatever is, is right, or that this is the best of all possible worlds, but one predicated on the assumption that this world of weal and woe was created by an all-loving Deity as a means to a higher end, which eventually will lead not to the salvation of this or that man, but of the entire world.

Thus, Law developed a theology and Christ-mysticism designed to purify a religion incrusted with arguments over Revelation and Reason, the nature of evidence and understanding, and the place of "moral virtue" and dogma. He questioned the grounds and sufficiency of religious belief itself. As a devout advocate of faith he opposed much of what the eighteenth-century controversialists attempted to establish, and he did so by demanding a deeper basis for religious belief and faith. He was conscious of something more profound, more elemental
than rational arguments would allow, the feeling heart. It is in defense of these attitudes and concepts that Byrom wrote many of his argumentative and mystical poems. The poems discussed in the following chapters, and the enthusiasm with which Byrom approached them, give every indication that he wrote as a labor of love and as a matter of duty, in an attempt to liberate the "great restorer of true, spiritual Christianity" from "the metaphysical mist of modern theologians."
FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

1 Div. Know., Works, VII, 188-89.

2 Remains, I, ii, 452; Byrom may have read Boehme before Law.

3 Remains, I, ii, 367.

4 The major sources for this capsule version are


8 Ibid., 98.

9 Berdyaev, p. x.

10 Ibid., p. xiii.

11 The Aurora runs to well over 700 pages, and yet is unfinished. Why it is incomplete is unclear, but in 1620 Boehme added a note saying that "There wants yet about thirty sheets to the end of it. But seeing the storm hath broken them off, therefore it was not finished" (p. 722). The "storm" was evidently the outcries of Dr. Richter and his cohorts.

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12 Berdyaev, p. xix.

13 Stoudt, p. 79, characterizes The Aurora as "a primitive, profound, chaotic, exasperating, prophetic work of cant and rant as well as of insight and of revelation."

14 Aurora, p. 40, "A quality is the mobility, boiling, springing and driving of a thing."

15 Alleman, p. 96, lists them this way: "The seven qualities or principles which form the basis of the creation are: 1. Desire, the dark, the solid or the force of contradiction. 2. Essence or form in motion, the acute, the bitter or the force of expansion. 3. Anguish or restlessness which results from the opposites 1 and 2. 4. Lightning-flash. 5. Love. 6. Intelligent life or sound and, 7. Essential Wisdom, the Body of God, or the Spirit of Harmony."

16 Aurora, pp. 432-35.

17 Alleman, p. 96.


19 There is some confusion in this concept because Boehme also claims Adam was created to replace Lucifer; the solution seems to lie in the "Christ in Adam" theory which Boehme and Law adhered to. Boehme notes that the Son "is the heart and lustre shining forth from the powers of his heavenly Father; a self-subsisting Person, the centre or body of the lustre of the deep" (Aurora, p. 76). Law further points out that the Son is distinct from the historical Jesus. God's covenant through Christ was not first made known "when Christ was on Earth, and died for us, but a Covenant as ancient as our first Parents, as universal as their Offspring" (A Short ... Confutation, Works, VIII, 155). Thus, Christ was antecedent to any creation and present in the eternal All.

20 Hartmann, p. 35.

21 Aurora, p. 554. The simple, literal plainness of Scripture is the first rule of religious interpretation for Boehme, Law, and Byrom.


26 Ibid., V, 521.

27 Hutin, p. 161: "Pour le théologien du XVIIIe siècle, s'intéresser à l'illuminisme de Boehme, c'était faire preuve d'enthousiasme et de fantisme: les milieux cultivés, universitaires en particulier, considéraient Boehme comme une qualité négligeable, à ranger, comme le fait l'erudit allemand Adelung, parmi les esprits fumeux et délirants les 'Messies' fondateurs de sectes, les magiciens, astrologues et 'prophètes'."

28 Nichols, IX, 517.

29 Gent. Mag., LXX (August, 1800), 719; (November, 1800), 1040.

30 Quoted by Overton, The Nonjurors, p. 387.

31 Nichols, V, 228.


34 Remains, II, i, 259.

35 Quoted from one of Law's letters by Overton, Life, p. 348.


38 Remains, II, i, 112-113; Byrom also notes some reading of Law's in I, ii, 617.

39 Overton, Life, p. 163.

40 Law was so suspicious of Bourignon's visionary ramblings that, while at Putney, he locked up his copy so the impressionable Hestor Gibbon would not see it (Remains, I, ii, 616-17).

41 C. A. Muses, p. 54.
Christian Perfection, Works, III, 12.


Ibid., 18.

Ibid., 59.

An Appeal, Works, VI, 323-324.

Prayer, Works, VII, i, 14; because each part has a separate publication date, I have indicated which part by i or ii.


Prayer, Works, VII, i, 45.

Ibid., 3.

Love, Works, VIII, ii, 50.

Ibid., ii, 94.

Ibid., ii, 115.

Prayer, Works, VII, ii, 104.

Ibid., ii, 69.

Ibid., i, 11.


Locke, p. 360.
63 *Love, Works, VIII, ii, 43.*
64 *Div. Know., Works, VII, 168.*
65 *Remains, II, i, 168.*
67 *Ibid., 195.*
70 *Prayer, Works, VII, ii, 65.*
72 *Div. Know., Works, VII, 216, 262.*
73 *Ibid., 168.*
74 *Prayer, Works, VII, i, 30.*
75 *Ibid., ii, 116.*
76 *Muses, p. 86.*
78 *Remains, II, ii, 633.*
Incessant we shall sing
Of Angels and of Angel-men the King.

The two poems which best represent Byrom as the laureate of William Law and as a devotional poet need to be carefully considered. This chapter therefore focuses on *An Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple* (1749). The one following deals with *Enthusiasm: a Poetical Essay* (1751). Both poems are the result of years of study and contemplative piety, but unlike a Donne or Herbert, a Watts or Wesley, Byrom infrequently uses poetry as a means of direct communication with God or as a mode for expressing his own highly personal idiosyncratic religious experiences. His poetry is more studied argument than direct participation. Nor is this surprising in the Augustan Age, when verse was often the result of controversial and dialectical excesses of the time. Dr. Johnson expressed the general point of view when he noted that "the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical ... Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer is already in a higher state than poetry can confer." Generally, Byrom does not attempt such flights as those found in the best hymns of the Wesleys. His purpose was not mainly to intensify his own religious sentiments
nor simply to heighten religious emotion by the tropes and figures of poetry; it was to defend, explicate, and propagate those doctrines which he shared with Law and which he felt could generate true affection, sincerity and disinterested benevolence as the real basis for religion. Although characteristically self-effacing, Byrom was never one to hide his poetic light under a bushel. The best of his religious poems indicate how completely he adhered to the contemporary attitude that "the doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactic poem."

Byrom was not of course the first to argue that the true subjects for poetry were religious ones. In his *Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704), the neo-Longinian John Dennis advocated religious themes for English poetry when he gave high praise to Milton. Addison found good examples for English poetry in Hebrew hymns and divine odes. And in his lengthy preface to *A Miscellany of Poems* (1731), John Husbands not only defended religious subjects for poetry, but demanded them because the "Mind of Man naturally delights in what is great and unbounded." Each of these men suggested that poetry could attain greater emotional intensity when infused with a kind of religious "enthusiasm." In fact, such themes were a means of adding sublimity to poetic eloquence. There was also precedent for his choice of genre: "Subjects of the most sublime Nature are often treated in the Epistolary way with Advantage." And what subjects worked upon the imagination with more grandeur and pomp than those of Christianity? The awfulness of the Christian
story, the wonder and far-reaching implications of the divine promise of ever-lasting life, even the fear engendered in the thought of eternal damnation, were means of giving those "Images of Greatness and Terrou" to poetry.

Byrom's critical judgments and aesthetics generally spring from his evangelical concern for heart-religion. In "A Hint to Christian Poets," he illustrates his conviction that the classical conventions produced only second-rate poetry and that God's operation on the heart could be the only source of inspiration. The "Bibles of the Pagan Age" were the fictions of the classical poets, who filled their pages with "Dumb Deities" and "Worshipp'd with Sounds that echo to no Sense." This would never do.

\[
\text{The Christian Bard has, from a real Spring Of Inspiration, other Themes to sing: No vain Philosophy, no fabled Rime, But Sacred Story, simple and sublime, By holy Prophets told, to whom belong The Subjects worthy of the Pow'rs of Song. (19-24)}
\]

However, if in the themes of poetry Byrom demanded that which would "rise spontaneous in man's purer Breast!" in the style of poetry he adhered strictly to the most fundamental Augustan conventions.

In his best verse Byrom is always, in the phrase of a contemporary, more than one "of our modern Smatterers in Poetry." Although he never wrote his own essay on criticism, the first volume of Ward's edition contains three poems from
which we can synthesize Byrom’s ideas on composition: "Thoughts on Rime and Blank Verse," "An Epistle to a Friend, on the Art of English Poetry," and "A Defense of Rime." In the last of these he makes a statement which could be a motto for his own and much of Augustan poetry: "For my part I choose/ A plain, familiar, honest, rime Muse"(3-4). He could never break from the commonplace theory that rime was the primary means of distinguishing prose from poetry. He followed the contemporary doctrine that Nature and good sense must form the basis for sound critical judgment, because "If Sense, if Nature succour not the Theme,/ All art and Skill is Strife against the Stream"(127-28). Byrom believed in the theory of imitation, but his interpretation of it was much broader than most of his contemporaries would allow. In his verses defending Milton, he says that it is no crime to steal a thought from another poet, "No, that 'tis not, if it be good for aught,/ 'Tis lawful Theft"(54-55). That truth which gives us back the image of our mind could never be limited to Homer, Virgil or Horace. In the first place pagan truth could not always be reconciled to Christian truth. In the second, Byrom’s religious eclecticism never limited the scope or sources of his thinking and convictions; a heart-felt truth found in St. Augustine or St. Bernard was just as valid as one found in George Fox, Boehme, or Madame Bourignon.

Byrom was an uncompromising rimer, his favorite form being the heroic couplet. He did more than lisp in numbers; he seems to have lived in them. Obviously the couplet did not lend itself
to every subject and tone, so that in many instances the muse which he hoped would be "Grave to instruct, and willing to delight" sunk into ludicrous doggerel. A contemporary critic was quick to perceive that in much of his poetry Byrom was often careless about the relation of sound and sense. "By making poetry the vehicle of his sentiments on almost every subject, familiar or abstracted, he threw them off in the form of verse, seemingly without much regard to what the verse itself might be." So the Sacred Nine became what they had seldom been before: "casuists, antiquarians, and in pity of them be it spoken, polemical divines." But this is to characterize the worst that is in Byrom. In his best hymns and didactic poems we find a poet who blends "metrical felicity" with mythology and a concept of religious duty to produce poems at once filled with the simplicity of Biblical diction, the strength of colloquial idiom, and the emotion of an ordinary man's religious convictions, all of which can be found in the best of the evangelical singers of the middle of the century.

An Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple is designed to praise the glory and wonder of God. But it is thoroughly didactic. Its argument concerns perhaps the most sublime and most necessary element in the sacred story, the Fall of Man and the meaning of death. To our sophisticated, more secular age discussions of the Fall, sin, and death may seem naive or provincial. Yet we must not forget that a religious sense of life pervades and fills the literature of the eighteenth century, whether the author be
orthodox or free-thinker, sceptic or faithful. Religious sentiment was, after all, one of the things which made man human. Even the doubters who might have wanted to ignore religious dogma could not. This can be illustrated by certain aspects of rationalistic religion: in the anti-clericalism of the Independent Whig or Tindal's Rights of the Christian Church Asserted; in the new emphasis on reason and common sense, which viewed Christianity not as a mystery but as a history; in the radicalism of a Peter Annet who found the Bible a fraud and St. Paul "an impostor and proven liar;" or in Anthony Collins who used irony and ridicule to deny prophecy and to foster free-thinking. Against such views stood the learned clergymen of various persuasions who attempted to give Protestantism a firmer foundation. William Warburton saw Collins and Shaftesbury as those "Despisers of the Master whom I serve," the "implacable Enemies of that Order to which I have the Honour to belong." Nor could men like Thomas Sherlock or Conyers Middleton agree with the Deists, but neither could they agree with each other. Sherlock defended prophecy (and attacked Collins) in his Use and Intent of Prophecy (1725), in which he illustrated his thesis that prophecy and the Fall are factual history. In 1750, Middleton answered Sherlock by showing that the Fall was a moral fable or allegory; man must "desert the outward letter, and search for the hidden, allegorical sense of the story." Both based the whole concept of Christianity on the Fall, both defended reason as the source of their interpretations, but neither agreed with the other.
In 1749, Law and Byrom entered the fray, for early in the year Law had published Part I of the *Spirit of Prayer* and in October Byrom's poem appeared. In it he defends Law's general position that "all the laborious Volumes on GOD'S imputing Adam's Sin to his Posterity, ought to be considered as Waste Paper."\(^{17}\) In upholding such a position, Byrom automatically opposed Bishop Sherlock. In view of the fact that two of Byrom's most significant poems were published within a relatively short time,\(^{18}\) we should spend a moment cataloguing his more important activities during these months.

From Summer, 1748, to early Winter, 1749/50, Byrom was in London and Cambridge. Since he was by this time a man of property, it is likely that he was drawn to Town more for the sake of good company than for teaching shorthand. As usual part of his time was given to benevolence,\(^ {19}\) but otherwise his activities are as curious as they had been on earlier visits. We find him whimsically describing a celebration in St. James Park where the people were "all mad with thanksgivings, Venetian jubilees, Italian fireworks, and German pageantry"; on this occasion he had a tussle with four other gentlemen over a piece of fallen rocket.\(^ {20}\) (Byrom won and proudly carried the remnant to his rooms.) Or we find him a very interested observer of a mob's attack upon and near destruction of some houses of prostitution in the Strand. Or he is the conversationalist and man-of-letters dining with Lady Huntington, with Whitefield, or with Bishop Butler. But in addition to making his rounds, Byrom carried on a correspondence with Law and produced the two poems in Law's defense.
The extant correspondence during these months concerns the reception of the Epistle and the planned publication of Enthusiasm. In May, 1749, Byrom notes that "Mr. Law had published a little 12d. piece about prayer, which his printer Mr. Innys has made me a present of; he had a list of near an hundred from Lady Huntington to make presents of to her acquaintances . . . It is a most excellent thing, like all that comes from its author, who I am told has another part ready for the press, as this has been a good while." If this were Byrom's first copy of The Spirit of Prayer and if he had not seen the manuscript, we can date the composition of the poem between May and early winter of this year. The letters themselves indicate that exchanging ideas was a long-time habit of these two men; Law had been reading Byrom's poetry for twenty years (Byrom had shown him his verses on "The Pond" as early as March, 1729). Indeed, Law probably suggested that Byrom versify his prose. Writing to Byrom on May 27, he says,

You remember our last night's conversation, and what you undertook. But I might tell you that I repented of my proposal to you before I went to bed that night. Had it been your own impulse to do what was then talked of, I should have liked it very well. But you had no sooner left me but I condemned the proposal as coming from myself; and had continued to do so till now; looking upon it as justly to be suspected to have some degree of self, or self-seeking in it, and therefore I renounce it as such.
Probably then, Law gave Byrom the topics for one or both of these poems. Certainly his renunciation of self is typical of a man who delivered so many public assertions against "self-hood."

The length of this London visit soon began to annoy Byrom's Manchester friends, for on 31 July, Robert Thyer wrote, "Pray, good sir, do you never intend to come down? The ladies, I assure you, cry out most terribly against such vagrant husbands, and would gladly have Mrs. Byrom to come with all her family to fetch you." Either Thyer's gibe or the approaching marriage of Byrom's son had its effect, for by late autumn or early winter 1749, he had returned to Manchester. On his way home he evidently stopped at King's Cliffe where he and his "master" discussed Enthusiasm. Although not published until Autumn 1751, this poem had been planned, if in fact it was not partly in manuscript, for some time; the Appeal, a portion of the volume Byrom paraphrases, had been published in 1740. During 1750 Byrom was caught up in the "hurryment and lurryment" of his son's marriage. Such activities seriously limited his time for letters and for poetry. After a long wait, an irritated Law wrote in October, 1751, "Dear Doctor: It is now just two years since you have failed of your promise for October term--I am much at a loss to guess at the reasons of it. If you repent of having put your hand to the plough, I should be glad to know why. You would not favour me with an answer to my letter a
year ago.\textsuperscript{27} Evidently Byrom had promised that Law would have Enthusiasm by October term, 1749, but had missed the deadline. Law goes on, "By this I think you see the Appeal is making its way into the world, and that if you give some assistance, your labour is not like to be lost. October term was the time set; if you will send it to me or to London, I will take care to have it correctly printed--or, if you are determined to drop the affair, I should be glad to hear from you on the subject."\textsuperscript{28}

I quote extensively from Byrom's response to these inquiries because his letter not only answers the questions but illustrates his filial attitude toward Law and indicates Byrom's own thoughts on his verse.

Mon cher Maitre: When I left you at Cliffe I full purposed what I promised; but finding that the Epistle had not reached these parts, and not caring to prejudice our people pro or con by my speaking of it, I waited for what I most desired to see--the genuine reception that it would meet with without favour or disfavour to the writer... This occasioned me to think that the other verses [i.e. Enthusiasm] might better be delayed for that October term, and I proposed to be at London by the next myself, but divers domestic affairs intervened which prevented it--the marriage, chiefly, of my son, who, being the only youth that is left of the name and family, many things concurred to engage the attention of his friends and me in particular, both before and after the conclusion of a choice that we all approved of. When I was preparing to come up to town, my new daughter was taken so ill that I could not think it proper to leave her. She recovered, and gives me hopes upon the whole that I may take an opportunity to call upon you this October term... Though you may justly blame my negligence, you never need to doubt my inclination to assist in anything under proper direction that
you will be so good as to suggest to me; and if
抄录思想以诗词形式是否值得那种称呼，如果可以的话，我会非常乐意完成任何这样的委托。如果

The final sentence seems clear proof that Law "commissioned"
Byrom's writing of Enthusiasm, if not the Epistle. For some
reason, however, he never got to London; he finally mailed the
poem to Law who gave it its title and sent it on to Richardson
to be published. 30

Byrom's antagonist in the Epistle is Thomas Sherlock,
Bishop of London. In 1725 Sherlock had written his Six Dis-
courses on Prophecy to which he added an Appendix ... being
A Further Enquiry into the Mosaic Account of the Fall, and it
is to this treatise that Byrom points his argument. Who the
"Gentleman of the Temple" is remains a mystery. Ward suggests
it may have been the London surgeon John Freke, of whom Byrom
writes, "I told Mr. Freke, I remember, that the Bishop had too
much sense to be angry at it [i.e., the Epistle], and when he
saw him he was saluted with—'Well, have you helped Dr. B. to
make his verse?'—and when he came away,—'You may tell your
friend that I don't take it amiss." 31 But since this is all
the evidence we have from Byrom, the identity of the Templar
is conjectured.

Of Thomas Sherlock we can be more exact. The son of the
famous William Sherlock, the Restoration controversialist
and Dean of St. Paul's, the younger Sherlock was successively
Bishop of Bangor (1727), Salisbury (1734), and London (1748).
As a Biblical scholar and interpreter, he strongly supported "historical prophecy," i.e., he viewed Old Testament prophecies in the same light as he would any other ancient history: it was matter of fact. But in saying that prophecy is historical, he also had to admit that the history is clothed in similitudes and metaphors, a "confusion" for which Conyers Middleton chided him. There is indeed some confusion in Sherlock's book because the discourses illustrate that he himself was not always clear about point of view. Only slowly did he come to see the story of the Fall as historical fact. Early in his analysis he is content not to look too closely at metaphors; "'tis sufficient to see the general Import and Meaning of them." But in attempting to judge how much of metaphoric statement can be taken as literal statement, he could only conclude that "Metaphors do not arise out of nothing." Even metaphorical language could present history. There must be some kind of factual, i.e., historical, basis upon which the language of prophecy is founded. The center of his argument in the Appendix, with its pedantic hair-splitting, takes on the characteristics of an exchange between Thwackum and Square. On the one hand, Sherlock resigns literal meanings to the dictates of common sense; on the other, he appears less than sensible in his arguments and proof about the nature of the serpent. Whether Satan was called a serpent or whether he used a real one is the core of the whole Appendix. If the former is true then the language is figurative; if the latter is true then the language is literal. In either case,
he maintains, the history of the Fall does not change. After all this he finally resolves the question to his own satisfaction: "As to myself, how doubtfully soever I expressed myself formerly, the more I consider this case, the more inclined I am to think, that a real Serpent was seen by Eve." Byrom's general feeling is that such arguments are nonsense. They fail in their purpose because they wrench from Scripture such minutiae that

All the glad Tidings in the Gospel found  
Are sunk in empty and unmeaning Sound.  
(379-80)

Basically, however, Byrom strongly disagreed with Sherlock's concept of death, resulting from the Fall, and with his legalistic terminology. From Sherlock's point of view, Satan's action was a fraud, for which he received punishment from God: "a Judgment passed upon the visible Agent in this Fraud, was a Judgment upon the Deceiver himself." For had not God promised that a man would come forth to bruise the serpent's head? Sherlock views the Deistic position as one-sided because it looks upon revelation as an imposition on and an abridgment of man's natural powers. But only if nature and reason are combined with the voice of sacred history can we know that we have fallen from our first state. This is nowhere more obvious than in God's judgment of Adam and Eve, which "is plainly a judicial Proceeding against Offenders." "By the Sentence on Adam, his Death was respited, and he was to live to eat
Byrom could not accept the phrase, "his Death was respited." He admits the creaturely Adam might have lived 930 years after the Fall, but this means nothing, for the angelic Adam died the moment the "fraud" was accomplished. Spiritually, which for Byrom is of the greatest importance, Adam died.

The Epistle is thoroughly didactic and argumentative. It is not without its gentle mockery or the picturesque phrasing which Byrom delighted in, but it lacks the vigor and concreteness of his hymns. The raison d'être of the poem is not merely Law's book or his ideas, but the commonplace attitude that "there could not be any religion at all, without the belief of such a Creator, nor any need of a revealed religion but upon the supposition of man's fall." Christianity centers on the concept of the Fall, and if men misinterpret it they could deny the efficacy of religion. For this reason Law, Byrom, Sherlock, Middleton and others spent so much time and effort in attempting to remove the tares from the wheat; like the preacher of Ecclesiastes they wanted "to know, and to search, and seek out wisdom, and the reason of things" (8.25).

Byrom is a spokesman and apologist for Law as well as a poet. His avowed purpose is to instruct man and praise God from a ground of knowledge in the heart, not from any general theories about nature and the ancients. As such he was not simply a "maker" or a rhetorician, which might imply that
didactic poetry has only a socially instructive function. There is beyond this type the devotional poet, who like Byrom, feels he must test poetic value by the moral and religious criteria inherent in Christianity. He does not simply take some evil in society and ridicule it by using the colors of rhetoric. If his didacticism happens to promote good instruction or good sense this is fine, but the real purpose is to open new pathways to truth or to help renew the divine life within. Thus, the Epistle is a means for developing public taste for transcendental reality. The first thing man must do is accept the literalness of Scripture; secondly, man must realize the divine life within. It was in defense of these views that Byrom took portions of The Spirit of Prayer and incorporated them into this poem.

Fundamentally, Byrom argues that Sherlock does not follow Scripture. If we were to judge Byrom and the poem only on its merits as a refutation of the Bishop's interpretation of the Fall, we would have to conclude that Byrom indulges himself in some very "nice" pedantry. At some points the distinction between Byrom's view and Sherlock's is not much of a distinction at all. Both demand a literal interpretation of the text; both realize that Adam died because of his action; and both agree that Satan was cursed for his duplicity. What Byrom wishes clarified is the Bishop's legal terminology, his observation that Adam did not immediately die (which the Bishop never
actually says), and the ramifications which Sherlock's ideas suggest about the nature of life, sin, death, and salvation. Byrom begins by saying that Sherlock does not "give us fairly, in its full Extent,/ The Scripture Doctrine of that dire Event" (5-6); because he lived over 900 years, Adam, Sherlock argues, was reprieved from his sentence. To which Byrom caustically replies,

It will be said, perhaps, that it appears,  
That **Adam** liv'd above Nine-hundred Years  
After his Fall.--True; but what **Life** was that?  
The very **Death**, Sir, which his **Fall** begat.  

(21-24)

Echoing both Boehme and Law, Byrom interprets Adam's death mystically, not as a physical, but a spiritual fact. That Adam's death was separation from God and from the angelic life to which he was created has been previously noted in Chapter II. Here Byrom suggests that "Life" is a meaningless thing once the divine fire has been snuffed out. The Fall extinguished the spiritual life and created the living death. "So Man, no longer breathing heav'nly Breath,/ Fell to this life and died the Scripture Death" (29-30).

The argument continues as Byrom discusses the new sensibility Adam received after the Fall (35-44), as he contrasts the old (spiritual) Adam with the new fallen Adam (45-58), and as he shows that if we take the Bishop's interpretation to its logical conclusion it can mean only one of two things: that Adam did not suffer for his crime until 900 years after the
event; or that he suffered only 900 years and was released from his torment when he died. Sherlock, Byrom argues, ignores the central paradox of "death," that while Adam "died" to the divine life at the same time death itself becomes the impetus for man's spiritual life in a fallen world:

... this State of Time and Place,
Where, dead by Nature, Man revives by Grace;
Where, tho' his outward System must decay,
His inward ripens to eternal Day.

(91-94)

Byrom distinguishes the life offered to us by Christ from the earthly life, which is but "a Life no-nam'd,—A Life of Animal and Insect Breath;/ That in a Man is rightly styl'd a Death"(120-22).

Having once established the nature of death, he must consider the attributes of God, in order to confute any suggestion that evil and wrath inheres in the Godhead. Adam was doomed, "not by any Act of Wrath in God"(135), for God "is all Glory, Goodness, Light and Love"(139), an attitude which Byrom suggests the Bishop is not very positive about. The way of death was Adam's way, not God's. After having been warned of the fatal consequences by God, Adam still chose "what Light and Love forbid"(142). The interior principles of Light and Love did the forbidding, a concept he elaborates upon.

No Test was made by positive Command,
Merely to try if he would fall or stand,
Like that, the serpentine Satanic Snare,
Of which the Man was bidden to beware.
'Eat not thereof, or thou wilt surely die,'
Was spoken to prevent, and not to try,
To guard the Man against his subtle Foe,
Who sought to teach him what 'twas Death to know.

(147-54)

Basically, this is Law's concept that God's charge was not an
"arbitrary Command," but a warning given as "loving Information"
to keep man from regarding the outward world or desiring "a
Sensibility of its Good and Evil." 40

From this point, Byrom elaborates upon the nature of the
Fall and life before the Fall, the source of evil, the nature
of man's guilt (which grew out of his power of choice), and
the characteristics of Satan and of earthly creation resulting
from the Satanic fall (155-260). After recounting the fall of
the Satanic host, he depicts the coming of the "Almighty's
Gracious Fiat" which "stopp'd the Spreading of the hellish
Flame" (307-08). Next he characterizes man's mortal position
in the world.

This Husk of ours, this stately stalking Clod,
Is not the Body that we have from God.
Of Good and Evil 'tis the mortal Crust;
Fruit of Adamical and Eval Lust. 41

(347-50)

And finally, Byrom turns to the effects modern learning has
had on Scriptural interpretation (373-412), to which he
appends a short passage praising Law. Here he not only ad-
mits his indebtedness, but defends the universal truth of
Law's ideas.
O how much better he from whom I draw,
Thou' deep, yet clear, the System,—Master LAW!
'Master' I call him; not that I incline
To pin my Faith on any One Divine;
But, Man or Woman, whose'er it be
That speaks true Doctrine, is a Pope to me.
Where Truth alone is Interest and Aim,
Who would regard a Person or a Name;
Or, in the Search of it impartial, scoff
Or scorn the meanest Instrument thereof?
(413-22)

Obviously, Byrom was happy in his eclecticism, but others
were not. The reference to William Law as a "Pope" brought
an immediate and irritated reaction from Warburton, who sug-
gested that by applying the term to Law, Byrom gave him "higher
prerogatives than the Apostle ever claimed."42 Nor was
Warburton pleased to find himself alluded to in the poem.
In line 435, Byrom uses the epithet "Warburtonian Jews" to
portray those who look too much to this world for the answers
to religious questions. Warburton's answer to these and other
charges will be described more completely in the following
chapter.

The Epistle concludes with a recapitulation of the major
arguments and a final affirmation that

Life, to conclude, was lost in Adam's Fall,
Which CHRIST, our Resurrection, will recall.
(445-46)

Adam's death was a real one and all the talk about who or
what the serpent was or represented is of no value whatever
until the depth of this matter is understood. In the last
paragraph of the poem Byrom turns once more to Satan, but
this time he is given the character of a critic who by twisting words and sense obscures plain truth. Such a comparison at this point not only suggests Byrom's opinion of Sherlock, but almost certainly of Warburton as well. From Byrom's point of view the scholarship of these men, as different as it was, could only "take away the Marrow and the Pith/ Of all that Scripture can present us with" (477-78). 43

With this general survey of the argument and flow of the poem, we can now turn to its poetic and mystical elements, which, I think, give the poem greater significance than it has if viewed only as one of the many publications the 1749 edition of Sherlock's works occasioned. First, it allows us to analyze Byrom, as paraphraser, at work. Secondly, the poem contains some of the major mythical metaphors and themes which he wrote about. For the poem is more than a polemical rebuttal. The Epistle is structured on the central questions the religious mystic attempts to solve, especially those involving the spiritual (i.e., order, harmony, divine things) versus the earthly (i.e., chaos, sin, Satanic nature). This dichotomy is represented in man by the traditional opposition drawn between body and soul. And Byrom uses such antipodal concepts as informing principles.

But before looking at the mythological and symbolic levels of the poem, we must recall that Byrom is almost always the paraphraser. In the passage where he praises Law,
Byrom indicates his reasons for tagging Law's thought.

Since diff'rent Ways of telling may excite
In diff'rent Minds Attention to what's right,
And Men (I measure by Myself) sometimes,
Averse to Reas'ning, may be taught by Rimes,—
If, where One fails, they will not take Offence,
Nor quarrel with the Words, but seek the Sense.

(425-30)

These lines not only suggest some things about his theory of poetry but illustrate certain characteristics of his style. 44

The personal allusion is enlightening because it implies Byrom's disappointment with or lack of interest in discursive treatises. In its balance and antithesis ("Averse to Reas'ning, may be taught by Rimes") the middle couplet suggests that poetry is somehow distinct from or does not contain the same type of rational involvement which argumentative prose depends upon. Thus he intimates that balanced line, rimed couplets, and formal patterns may give that extra degree of delight and instruction which make poetry a more powerful weapon of argument than prose.

Also this passage illustrates that Byrom's facility with the couplet and figurative language is not always slip-shod. Here we find the heroic couplet used for purposes neither dramatic nor satiric, but expository. He gives his reasons for versifying Law in precise language and patterns. (Note the final line, in which the antithetic "quarrel" is played off against "seek," and "Words" against "Sense.") The contraries are resolved within a single balanced pattern of iambics and rime in order to give the right emphasis at the right time. But
the formal constraints do not inhibit the conversational nature of the poem. In the simple diction, the use of parenthetical expressions, and the constantly shifting caesura there is a colloquial energy which allows the sense to progress without falling into a sing-song pattern. Of course, there is a heavy rhetorical cast to his verse, but his was an age of "rhetorical" verse. Not only his purpose, but his subject ("Christian sympathetic thought" and the sentiments of heart-religion) seem more suitable to poetry than prose.

Always at the center of this poem, and most of Byrom's religious verse, are Law's ideas. The kind of paraphrasing we find in the Epistle presents not only Law's ideas but frequently his language. Basically, Byrom's argument is an extended version of Law's concept of the Fall as stated in the first part of The Spirit of Prayer. "Our Fall is nothing else but the Falling of our Soul from this celestial Body and Spirit into a bestial Body and Spirit, of this World. Our rising out of our fallen State, or Redemption, is nothing else but the regaining our first angelic Spirit and Body, which in Scripture is called our 'inward, or new Man,' created again in Christ Jesus." This is the general theme of the poem and subject of such statements as: "Death to his pristine Spirit-life Divine,/ And Separation from it Sacred Shrine"(155-56); or,
... once convinc'd that Adam by his Crime
Fell from eternal Life to that of Time;
Stood on the Brink of Death eternal too,
Unless created unto Life anew.

(387-90)

In discussing the new life, Byrom uses Law's concept of re-generation. It becomes a "mysterious Birth of Life"(359), or "That quick'ning Spirit to a poor dead Soul"(361), or again, direct reference is made to "CHRIST, our Resurrection"(446).

He follows Law's postulates that Adam fell from an angelic state both of body and spirit, that in God there is no wrath, that man fell because of his own free will ("His Trial follow'd from his Pow'r of Choice"), and that the created world arose from Satan's fall.

Not only the ideas but the language is thoroughly Behmenistic; indeed the diction is frequently from Boehme by way of Law. For example, in discussing creation Byrom employs the terms "materiality" and the image of the "glassy sea." The elements of the earth "Were now disclos'd, divided and opaque; Their glassy Sea became a stormy Lake"(299-300). This is very close to Law's statement: "their glassy Sea in which they dwelt, was by the wrathful rebellious Workings of these apostate Spirits broke all into Pieces, and became a black Lake." At another point Byrom describes Satan's domain before his fall as an "Ocean of Bliss, a limpid crystal Sea"(207). He goes on to evoke this angelic kingdom in language drawn directly from Law. Thus we see that Law's remark, the angels "treasured
up in their glassy Sea, unfolded themselves, and broke forth in ravishing Forms of Wonder and Delight,”\(^4^9\) becomes the major source for Byrom's description of Satan's sphere of glory:

... Height and Depth its Angels might survey,
Call forth its Wonders, and enjoy the Trance
Of Joys perpetual thro' its whole Expanse.
Ravishing Forms, arising without End,
Would in Obedience to their Wills ascend.

(208-12)

Byrom's imitative ability is neither plagiarism nor an unwillingness to be inventive. After all, he used Law's ideas with his blessing. We must take Byrom at his word, that "diff'rent Ways of telling may excite/ In diff'rent Minds Attention to what's right." It seems in fact that Byrom made every effort to use Law's figurative language. This can be illustrated first with a passage from Law: "As a Wheel going down a Mountain, that has no Bottom, must continually keep on its Turning, so are they whirled down by the Impetuositites of their own wrong-turned Will, in a continual Descent from the Fountain of all Glory, into the bottomless Depths of their own dark, fiery, working Powers."\(^5^0\) In the verse, the language remains much the same.

There is no Stop in self-tormenting Self.
Just as a Wheel, that's running down a Hill
Which has no Bottom, must keep running still,
So down their own Proclivity to wrong,
Urg'd by impetuous Pride, they whirl along;
Their own dark fiery working Spirits tend
Further from God and further to descend.

(278-84)
His primary concern is truth, and he found truth in many places, but his basic sources here are Scripture, Law and Boehme. What he attempts is to give truth a more formalized pattern and imaginative treatment.

While *The Spirit of Prayer* is the most important single source for the ideas, we should note the Biblical basis for the argument itself. At the beginning of the poem Byrom quotes both Genesis and Sherlock to prove that the Bishop's view is in error. "'The Day thou eatest,' are the Words, you know"(13); God said that Adam would die for eating from the tree. After quoting from Sherlock, Byrom opens the poem by posing the questions, the answers to which will serve as refutations of Sherlock's position.

'Sentence,' says he, 'was respited.' But, pray, Where does the Scripture such a Saying say? What Word that means 'respite' or 'revoke' Appears in all that GOD or Moses spoke? (17-20)

Initially, then, it is the letter of Biblical statement and Sherlock's interpretation of it which give Byrom his subject matter and theme. But within a short space Law's position becomes the main source of evidence against Sherlock and the Bible is alluded to only to substantiate Law's ideas. Ward has noted the more important Biblical sources for Byrom's language and ideas; here, we can focus more specifically on the Behmenistic influences which seem to operate within the poem.
I have already noted how Boehme's "crystalline sea" becomes Byrom's "crystal Sea," but there are other parallels of thought and phrasing which came through Law, but ultimately derive from Boehme. The most clear-cut example is Byrom's description of creation, when "Nature's Six Properties had each their Day,/ Lost Heav'n, as far as might be, to display,/ And in the Sev'nth, or Body of them all"(315-17) the material world was created. Here the source is clearly Boehme. And there are more indirect references. The central symbolism of the poem depends upon the Behmenistic contraries of wrath-fire and love-fire, of a glorious heaven and a disordered earth; indeed fire (for good or for ill) is the basic metaphor in much of Byrom's poetry. He discusses redemption in terms of fire, that pivotal desire which leads either to damnation or rebirth. With the fall of the angels there "Awak'd in Nature the chaotic Fire"(330) that informing principle of a material, creaturely world. Opposed to this is the fire of redeeming love, enkindled to "purge from Ill these temporary Skies"(334). Boehme had called this love (the power of Christ) the "moving springing joy" and the force which "will spew out the wrath-fire."51 In addition, there is throughout the poem the opposition of the spiritual man,

Sons of Eternity, tho' born on Earth,
There is within us a Celestial Birth,

(344-45)

with that of the brutish man forced to live out his years of toil and struggle in a world characterized by tension, lust
and gloom. Such opposition helps to focus and symbolize that mystery which must be manifested within each individual, as well as to heighten and intensify the nature of the struggle within each human breast.

We need to turn now to those qualities of the poem which are particularly mystical and which Byrom uses in constructing a Behmenistic mythical and symbolic view of creation and the Fall. As the work is structured, the inclusion of the mystical elements seems necessary for two reasons: on the one hand, it would be difficult for Byrom to paraphrase Law and at the same time remove the mystical doctrine; on the other, the problems which the poem discusses allow Byrom to fuse the traditional concepts of the Fall with Behmenistic interpretations in order to explain God's ways to man. Ultimately, the questions which the poem attempts to answer cannot be limited to the simple ones: was Bishop Sherlock right or wrong? and if wrong, why? This is perhaps the point of origination, but the poem presents a much more complex religious vision, particularly in the middle section (193-336), which comprises a theodicy vindicating God by portraying Satan, his fall, the creation and origin of evil. This section is preceded by a shorter one (87-192), which visualizes Adam and the nature of life in a fallen world. Thus over half the poem is filled with images of Behmenistic contraries, sections which contain some of Byrom's best poetry.
These passages are built upon images of oppositions: God and Satan, God and man, Satan and man, body and soul, heaven and earth, chaos and order, dark and light, damnation and redemption, and the world before the fall and after. Through contrast Byrom evokes love of nature, awe of God's power and love, anger at Satan, and a mystical joy in God's gift of salvation through Christ. One of the major ideas suggested by the middle portion of the poem is the Behmenistic co-existence of good and evil. Indeed, as evil is symbolized through Satan and the birth of sin in the world, evil is a dynamic, active force. Boehme maintained that good in the world could only rise out of evil. In a gloss to the _Aurora_, Boehme's early French editor, St. Martin, notes that wrath is as much a part of eternal power as is justice, light, and love. The devil had kindled the wrath of God, "which, indeed, had otherwise rested eternally in secret." But it was Boehme's contention that the Satanic fire and rage does not reach deeply into the center or heart of God (i.e., Christ), so that while Lucifer reigns in the outward or comprehensible parts of creation he has no power to destroy the totality of God.

In much of Byrom's poetry there is the mystical consciousness of eternal action and struggle as well as the intuited or revealed conviction that ultimately this stress and strain will be resolved into the harmony of God and the unitive life. This concept, and much of the following imagery, is predicated on the Behmenistic paradox that while God is everywhere, after the fall of Satan there exists a correspondent evil in eternal enmity with God.
Certainly Byrom's poetry is in many ways conventional, but in fairness we should also note that the best of it does not simply drop into "the flat of mere rhymed prose." What saves the Epistle from being merely the dull monotony of the couplet gone stale, is the tension created by the inherent calm and balance of the heroic couplet at odds with the vigorous struggle symbolized in the imagery and figurative devices themselves. Byrom's mythology is basically the traditional Judaic-Christian concept of man being created to rule but falling through his own error and choice. Underlying this view we discover the stress of Behmenistic contraries, which in these lines are either stated or suggested by antithesis and paradox. Byrom uses antithesis consistently in two ways: either by opposing terms as in "dead by Nature, Man revives By Grace" (92) where the adjective "dead" contradicts the verb "revives" (also here the verb carries the burden of emphasis), or by opposing contradictory ideas, as in the following couplet

Where, tho' his outward System-must decay,
His inward ripens to eternal Day,
(93-94)

in which one line of the couplet is balanced and opposed to the other. In this manner the poet can consistently re-emphasize the duality of both the cosmos and man. For example, in discussing Adam before his Fall, Byrom uses the figure "heav'nly Flesh and Blood" (114), suggesting the paradox that Adam was creature and spirit at the same time. However, a few lines later the compound "Flesh and Blood" reappears, but this time in a context echoing St. Paul's "body of death" (Rom. 7.24),
i.e., an earthly flesh and blood which, not having come from heaven, cannot enter there. Thus the poet draws one more distinction between Adam before the Fall and after, and at the same time he reminds us that even the angelic creature contained contraries.

For convenience I have called these two middle portions the "Adam section" and the "Satan section" because they are the primary subjects and symbols. However, these passages contain more complex ideas than merely descriptions of our first parents and their foe; the nature of the complexity I hope is explained by the following analyses. Pursuing Law and Boehme, Byrom tells us that because of divine Providence Adam did not fall to hell, "But to this Earth,—this State of Time and Place"(91). The portrayal of a material world limited by time and space is a frequently recurring one as Byrom attempts to define the difference between eternal and physical (fallen) nature.59 Throughout this section there is the tragic, though not hopeless, implication of Adam's fatal step as representative of all mankind, for here was a species created "to rule the new-created Scene"(159) who because he wanted to know too much or did not understand the limitations of his habitat chose to act immoderately and was forced to suffer the consequences.

The "Adam section" makes two significant points: that God has no wrath, and that Adam was a ruler who fell from grace. Aside from the fact that Boehme and Law both extol the goodness of God, Byrom in opposing the Bishop needed to establish the
hope and love of God to refute Sherlock's suggestion that God is some kind of judge-advocate condemning law-breakers. God, in Byrom's view, has the qualities of a benign professor rather than a stern policeman. As a Being "all Glory, Goodness, Light and Love"(139), God tells Adam to be careful so that he will be protected from knowledge which would be detrimental to his existence. As Law had argued, Adam was "created out of the Chaos or Ruins of the Kingdom of fallen Angels," and when he neglected God's instruction he was shortly swallowed up by the life of this world. Secondly, God's kindness is shown by the fact that He created Adam to bring "the Wonders of this World to View,/ And ancient Glories to an Orb renew"(161-62). Had Adam remained true to his original creation he would have carried out God's plan, which was

To use his outward Body as a Means
Whereby to raise in Time and Place the Scenes
That should restore the once angelic Orb,
And all its Evil introduc'd absorb.
(189-92)

Adam failed the task; but this only reveals an even greater instance of God's goodness, for rather than condemning man He immediately supplied the means for man's salvation: "Life in Adam lost, in CHRIST regain'd"(130). Thus, on a note of hope for God's plan but with the melancholic reminder of Adam's failure, Byrom concludes the "Adam section." Adam did not restore the angelic kingdom: "He ate--he fell--he died"(145). Having told us what the material world could have been, the poet next turns to a review of Satan and the creation of the material world with all its inherent evils.
Because there is no chronological progression in the overall structure of the poem, we find the concepts of death and Adam's Fall portrayed before that of Satan's rebellion. The exigencies of historical chronology may have seemed unnecessary to the poet, who after all is arguing with a man who demanded the Mosaic books be read as historical fact. The mystic recognizes truth or feels it at a deeper level of personality and soul than is demanded by the nature of historical evidence. Byrom interprets the Scriptural story in its most sublime sense. It is literal statement, yet it touches the deepest part of the imagination and soul. He emphasizes the truth of the ideas, not the facts or the pattern in which the information is presented. We must not forget that Byrom was a student of the mystics in general and of Law in particular, so that his predominant concern for the quality and character of mystical knowledge rather than the form it takes may give a partial explanation for the somewhat haphazard structure of this poem. It is also possible, given the epic nature of the events involved, that he is simply depending upon the epic convention of beginning a narrative in the middle. Finally, this poem is a rebuttal occasioned by Sherlock who in his Appendix seldom so much as alludes to Satan's fall and the concurrent birth of evil. It appears then that Sherlock only supplied Byrom with a cause for expounding his and Law's view of Satan and the Behmenistic concept of the creation of the world.
At any rate, the "Satan section" continues the pattern of contraries which pervade the poem; in fact, these images become more numerous and multi-leveled. In this section the opposition between life and death, the spiritual and creaturely life, centers in the being of Satan and what he symbolizes.

First of all, the angelic Lucifer (and the world before his rebellion) is opposed to the devilish Satan (and the world after his fall). In structuring this portion around such a general antithesis the section falls into three distinct parts: a description of Lucifer as glorious archangel (193-214); a romantic intermezzo on nature (215-242); and a description of Lucifer's fall and the formation of the material world (243-336). Satan's history thus becomes the archetypal pattern for the Adamic fall.

Byrom introduces this section with four couplets in which he suggests the relationship between evil, Satan, and reason. He notes that evil did not arise from Adam's Fall, but from Satan's, "From him, whose Name in Heav'n is lost"(194). Adam was created into and lived within a world of good and evil, only it could not reach him (173). Satan worked his deception upon Adam and Eve by operating "under Reason's plausible Disguise"(197). Here Byrom alludes to an idea developed more thoroughly at the end of the poem, the mystic's distrust of "reasonable" evidence and empirical proofs. Satan made his argument very reasonable and sensible, and Adam and Eve helped
him by rationalizing their own actions. By implication Byrom suggests that reason and the appearance of reason may lead not to truth, but to error. In opposition to the contemporary attitude which asserted that reason was the real measure of man's humanity, Byrom sees it as a kind of universal weakness, if not hysteria. Immediately following these lines, in a passage characterized by images of grandeur, glory and magnificence, he enters into a description of the Archangel Lucifer. At this time Lucifer was a prince, a "thron'd Archangel"(201), a being so "immensely luminous" (205) that there was no need for the light of sun or moon. The cosmological political division represented in these lines and elsewhere (256-60) evidently comes from Boehme's belief that God's universe had a tripartite division, with the archangels Lucifer, Michael, and Uriel each prince-regents of a kingdom. Lucifer's realm was a region of wonder, bliss, and joy, containing neither day nor night, only the beauty of angelic forms ascending, changing "fresh Glories to their View" and tuning "the Hallelujah Song anew"(213-14). Byrom creates the image of a heavenly abode filled with the triumph and the eternal melody of Te Deum Laudamus. In this sphere of "Glory, Beauty, Brightness, ev'rywhere" (206) Lucifer ruled in harmony and unity with God.

Following this evocation of splendour come thirty-seven lines in an entirely different mood and with a different subject. The poet here is simply viewing an evening sky, in its
calm contentment, as God's display-case. However, fallen nature only reflects a portion of the realities of Eternal Nature.

If, when we cast a thoughtful, thankful Eye
Towards the Beauties of an Ev'ning Sky,
Calm we admire thro' the ethereal Field
The various Scenes that even Clouds can yield,—
What huge Delight must Nature's Fund afford,
Where all the rich Realities are stor'd
Which God produces from its vast Abyss
To His own Glory and His Creatures' Bliss:

(215-22)

In the humble thankfulness and admiration with which the poet observes evening beauties, we find parallels to some of his brief, incidental pieces on quiet contentment and solitude. Although most of these are not strictly religious poems, here Byrom uses nature to suggest the harmony which permeates "the ethereal Field." In the first four lines of the passage, he suggests the beauties of physical nature, and in the final four lines he contemplates how much greater must be the wonders of Eternal Nature. His spirit sees with a "thankful Eye" as the physical surroundings symbolize something transcendental. In this suggestion of a pervasive and plastic spirit, Byrom's poem has affinities with the works of Edward Young or with James Thomson. In Thomson's Seasons, for example, the details of the landscape are used to present a kind of natural sublimity which suggests an ideal or spiritual world. The thaw with which Winter ends brings with it the promise of redemption.
The glorious morn! the second birth
Of heaven and earth! Awakening Nature hears
The new-creating word, and starts to life
In every heighten'd form.

But we should note that Byrom is not a "nature poet"; this is one of the few such passages in all of his poetry. What we do have, it seems to me, is one of those rare moments when Byrom the mystic comprehends a portion of the "vast Abyss." His purpose seems clear. He has just finished describing the lost heavenly splendor; then he moves directly into a passage suggesting that in the calm of an evening, the mind can sense what those glories were, and are, by responding to "The various Scenes that even Clouds can yield," and by realizing that in Eternal Nature are the "rich Realities." It is an imaginative experience. Blake, who is explicit in arguing that the only realities are mental, said "There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature." Byrom expresses the mystical attitude which sees God emanating from the universe, but his vision depends upon the language of Boehme: the "Abyss" out of which God produces "Nature's Fund."

The next stanza envisions nature as God's great exemplum. "His Glory, first, all Nature must display;/ Else how to Bliss could Creatures know the Way"(223-24)? Thus, nature illustrates that for the sake of order, man must subject his will to the Eternal Will. Such a notion places Byrom closer to the
exponents of natural theology than it does to those who stand in romantic "sympathy" with nature. Man's mind must be resigned to "the Fountain of its Life" (228), so that he will "Think, speak, and act, in all things for His Sake" (229). While the diction evokes the calm resignation, if not subjection, normally associated with the moderate course of Augustan Right Reason, such language also suggests the elements of the mystical tranquillity and peace which arise from prayer and silence.

"This is the true Perfection of its Make" (230): that is, man can attain perfection because he was created for this purpose. Under these spiritual conditions, then, man responds to nature and sees in her the possibility of God's glory and beauty.

Both Men and Angels must have Wills their own,
Or God and Nature were to them unknown.
Tis their Capacity of Life and Joy
Which none but they can ruin or destroy.

(231-34)

The key to man's "Capacity of Life and Joy" is his recipient will, without which he cannot "see" God or understand nature. Ronald Knox has shown that the quality of "recipieny" or "infused contemplation" is one of the mystical characteristics by which a man can be carried away by a force stronger than himself.67 This is the essence of that communion which, Law states, is not the work of any particular action, faculty, time or place, "but is the Work of man's whole Being, which continually stands in Fulness of Faith, in Purity of Love, in absolute Resignation, to do, and be, what and how his Beloved
pleases. This is the last State of the Spirit of Prayer, and is its highest Union with God in this Life." Just as a "thankful Eye" can respond to natural beauty, the mind's eye can see goodness and God Himself. Byrom, following Law, notes that this must be the work of man's entire being, a lesson which "Nature's and Religion's Creed"(237) teaches. Men who receive this message will be illuminated, will discover themselves as part of the "enriching Flood"(236) which flows from God; men who shut themselves off from such divine outpouring are dead: "Good cannot dwell in such an harden'd Clay,/ But stagnates and evaporates away"(241-42). Byrom concludes his discussion of nature by emphasizing the necessity of man's response to it. The couplet just cited is a straightforward, almost prosaic statement of fact. Emotionally we have moved further down the plane, from the splendor of Lucifer's reign in heaven, to the beauty and calm of physical nature, and finally into a moral about how men must unselfishly act to receive God.

The final and longest passage of the "Satan section" describes Satan's revolt with its heavenly disorder, and God's creating fiat which brought partial order out of chaos. The scene shifts back to heaven, but one immediately distinguishable from that praised earlier. Satan, a once-splendid prince of light, becomes the proud, boasting angel bent upon making his Creator's powers his own.
Then **Self**, then **Evil**, then apostate **War**
Rag'd thro' their **Hierarchy** wide and far;
Kindled to burn what they esteem'd a Rod,
The Meekness and Subjection to a God.

(249-52)

Satan and his legions resolve to leave their own orbit and
secure for themselves one of the three angelic kingdoms,
"where Majesty Divine/ Shone in Its Glorious **Outbirth Unito-**
**trine**" (257-58). Both the subject and imagery of this passage
stand in direction opposition to that presented in the des-
cription of harmonious heaven. Here the key verbs are "fell,"
"boast," "rag'd," "kindled," "aspir'd," and "estrang'd." Some
of the important epithets are "apostate War," "proud Imagina-
tion," "devilish Intent," "self-tormenting **Self,**" "impetuous
Pride," "dark, fiery working Spirits," and "disorder'd Raging."
In its language, imagery, theme and tone this passage offers
an obvious contrast to the two preceding ones. The images evoke
the discord, hostility, the collision of wills, and the chaos
arising from celestial strife. The glassy seas have become
the stormy lakes.

The following stanza illustrates the imaginative power
by which Byrom can fuse the doctrines and language of Boehme
and Law with the traditional story of the Satanic revolt.
The poet's sentiment finds definition in the scene which it
creates.

Straight, with this proud Imagination fir'd
To **Self-Dominion** strongly they aspir'd;
Bent all their Wills, **irrevocably** bent,
To bring about their devilish Intent.
How ought we Mortals to beware of Pride,
That such great Angels could so far misguide!
No sooner was this horrible Attempt
From all Obedience to remain exempt
Put forth to Act, but instantly thereon
Heav'n in the Swiftness of a Thought was gone.
From Love's beatifying Pow'r estrang'd,
They found their Life, their Bliss, their Glory chang'd;
That State wherein they were resolv'd to dwell,
Sprang from their Lusting and became their Hell.

(261-74)

Here are the traditional conceptions of Satan falling because
of his pride, his lack of obedience, and his resolve to reign
in heaven. But in addition we find the Behmenistic concept
of a "proud Imagination" firing Self and creating a lust which
which destroys "Love's beatifying Pow'r," so that in attempting
to rise above God, the fallen angels in fact created their own
hell.

The concept of "Self" is important enough that we should
spend a moment considering it further. In Boehme, Law, and in
Blake the Self defies the harmonious One in whom men and angels
should be absorbed. The combination of Satan's force and man's
self-hood forms the "Nature-Fire," of which Byrom wrote in an­
other poem, "This domineering Self, this Nature-Fire,/ Must be
transmuted to a Love-Desire." Only when "Self-Lust and false
Imagination dies" can the fire of Self be transformed into the
fire of love. In both Byrom and Blake pride is the source of
Self. In Blake, of course, Self is a real evil because it is
"self-limiting." It must be annihilated before man's imagina­
tion and central humanity can regain vision and a sense of unity
with the Divine.
In the stanza cited from the Epistle, Byrom also suggests a relationship between pride, self and hell, for hell is less a place than a state of mind and imagination. Unlike Milton, who had God create Hell, Byrom has the Satanic horde do so. Hell was their own creation just as it is each man's.

He made no Hell to place His Angels in;
They stirr'd the Fire that burnt them by their Sin,
(285-86)

and by this act they broke the bounds and order of nature and created Chaos.

Their own disorder'd Raging was their Pain;
Their own unbending, harden'd Strength their Chain;
Renouncing God with their eternal Might,
They sunk their Legions into endless Night.
(289-92)

Thus Boehme's imagery of smooth harmony and limpid bliss finds its reversal in hardness and rigidity and strain. The first three forms (astringency, attraction, and strain) grind together creating the wrath-fire. In stirring up the fire Satan awoke the wrath in God and the regions of eternal lights instantly became the dark, fiery place of "endless Night."

There can be little doubt that such imagery and the general structural pattern of opposing contrarities grows out of Law, but Byrom does not take only the ideas; he appropriates Law's language as well. Byrom's line "Heav'n in the Swiftness of a Thought was gone" is merely a metrical version of Law's "in the Swiftness of a Thought Heaven was lost."

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What had been a paradise could not endure the "rebellious Workings" of "raging Fiends," so that the clear materiality of the angelic abode became the "now disclos'd, divided and opaque" (299) deep of gloomy Chaos, the deformed ruin of a once splendid edifice. This was the nativity of evil and sin. But this was also the moment of Creation, for God the eternal symbol of Order and Harmony came forth to stop "the Spreading of the hellish Flame"(308) and by doing so turned the immaterial into the material, the tempest into a calm. "Earth, Sea and Land, Sun, Moon and Stars appear'd"(312) as His seven informing principles gave qualities material form.

Nature's Six Properties had each their Day,
Lost Heav'n, as far as might be, to display,
And in the Sev'nth, or Body of them all,
To rest from, what they yet must prove, a Fall.

(315-18)

In the irony of the last couplet, we discover that the calm of God's creating fiat is only the calm before the storm, for in halting the spread of Chaos and creating the world, He produced the stage for the drama of the human Fall. The world is a fallen paradise, a place lacking divine harmony; it has as its distinguishing characteristics creatures, objects and "noxious Qualities"(324).

Byrom concludes this portion of the poem exactly as one expects. Man can be redeemed and the power of the devil overcome by the force of love. Given this Behmenistic inspiration, the key term must be fire, his major symbol of change. In the
following couplets fire has the dual value and power of a Satanic force and of a redeeming force. Fire is a means of symbolizing the energy and strength of desire and imagination.

... as the rebel Creatures' false Desire Awak'd in Nature the chaotic Fire,
So, when Redeeming Love has found a Race Of Creatures worthy of the Heav'nly Place,
Then shall another Fire enkindled rise,
And purge from Ill these temporary Skies,—
Purge from the World its Deadness and its Dross,
And of lost Heav'n recover all the Loss.
(329-36)

The rebirth of this fire is a constant theme of Byrom's poetry. Through God's promise in the form of Christ, the wrath of fire can be changed into a joyous blaze, for the death which was born in Adam's Fall lost all its power in the death of Christ. Death itself becomes a symbol of the gate of life, or paradise regained. The salvation implied by the final couplet is universal; not just man but the entire world, "all the Loss" will be reunited in Divine Harmony. The place of time and space will be fused with eternity. Christ "made Salvation possible for ALL"(372). Such an attitude is strongly linked with the mystic's "other worldliness." We find the de contemptu mundi tradition ("Why look we, then, with such a longing Eye/ On what this World can give us or deny," 337-38) combined with the mystic's emphasis on the celestial birth. At the center of this birth lies the power of the imagination and the will: "A Life that waits the Efforts of our Mind,/ To raise itself within this outward Rind"(345-46). In speaking of the mind, Byrom does
not mean only the ratiocinative part, but the whole of the soul, will, and imagination which culminates in "that new, mysterious Birth of Life"(359). In Law's view "Nothing less than this mysterious Incarnation (which astonishes Angels) could open a Way or being a Possibility for fallen Man to be born again from above, and made again a Partaker of the Divine Nature." And this, Byrom concludes, is not a "Part of Scripture Doctrine, but the Whole"(362).

Thus we discover that the Behmenistic elements, the ideas drawn from Law, and the Mosaic story are evidence used against Sherlock's interpretation of Scripture, elements in a polemical controversy. But, also, they are parts of a poem, the ideas and images which the poet has combined into a basically coherent sequence presenting a view of divine and human life and the possibility of redemption. The poem is not simply expository, for the poet uses his material and his themes to give a valid perception of reality, and in doing so, to emphasize the validity of human sentiments. The poem invigorates a traditional mythology with the ideas and imagery of Boehme, which leads Byrom at the philosophical level to express the world and human existence not as static, immobile, but as a warring dynamism in which the contraries become symbols of the duality of man and nature. A cursory reading of the poem would indicate its dependence upon such traditional symbols as light (God and the good) and dark (Satan and evil), a reading which would not be incorrect, only
incomplete. For one soon discovers that there is not a single quality of light but a series of qualities. Of course God is light, the glassy and crystalline sea, but light itself is not a static symbol. Satan was a being of light, one who existed near the very center of the Godhead, but the light becomes fire, and the fire, wrath. In this transmutation, the fire of love is opposed to but co-eternal with the fire of wrath. On the one hand, light represents the eternal qualities of divine goodness, and on the other, those of eternal evil, lust, and violence. As Byrom expresses this opposition, we discover the mystical realization that these contaries are not dead, that God's creating fiat did not stop the enmity, but only encased it in a fallen nature and a fallen humanity. Thus while the Satan-created "wrath of God" is the curse of the world, the mystic perceives that the quality of light, channeled through the will and imagination of the soul, constitutes the redemption of the world.

In addition to those representing the opposition of light and dark there are significant groups of images reflecting another aspect of Behmenism, the counterpointing of heavenly fluidity and liquidity with earthly hardness and compactness. In the *Aurora* the bitter, astringent, hot and hard are consistently opposed to the sweet, smooth, warm (i.e., the warmth of love emanating from God), and the soft. Before the Satanic rebellion these characteristics flowed together in celestial
harmony which Boehme normally describes "as a holy sport, play or scene." Byrom draws upon such contraries to characterize the "materiality" resulting from Satan's fall and the birth of evil. In addition to the conventional harmony-discord images he suggests the qualities of air, light, fluid motion, which help symbolize the nature of the harmony. Heaven and the angelic life were "Pure, Unmix'd, Incorruptible"; it was a sphere "Immensely luminous"; it was not a static place but a realm of "Ravishing Forms, arising without End". Thus motion has a quality like that of perpetual music, rhythms flowing up and down the scale, separate yet harmonized. But in describing the earthly condition the terminology contains both the denotations and connotations of outward, separate forms. In man and nature there is strife and the clash of good and evil; the sportive play and intermingling have become harsh attraction or opposition. There are images of enclosure. The evil man is one who shuts himself up in Self, the "harden'd Clay" in which good cannot exist. Using the metaphor of water (i.e., goodness) trapped in a vessel, Byrom says it will stagnate (i.e., become impure, foul, poisoned) or dry up (i.e., in the Behmenistic sense of contracting within itself.
rather than flowing outward). Self is a compacted hardness negating the outpouring of the celestial life within. Earthly density (suggested by "opaque" in line 299) is opposed to the clear and pure "materiality" of a former condition.

Kinesthetic values like height and depth, time and place, and the motion of and the tension between objects become realizable, measurable quantities or qualities. And while "various Beauties clos'd the various Breach"(314) when God ordered a halt to chaos, the "breaches" are still very evident; earth, rock, and stone are forever separate (321). For this reason, then, Byrom's imagery of salvation stresses the reunification, the removal of separateness, of an elemental world with a divine nature. Salvation, in part, constitutes purging "from the World its Deadness and its Dross"(335). Such imagery calls into sharper focus the distinction between internal and external; the earth is only an "outward Rind"(346), man's body only this "Husk of ours"(347), good and evil comprise only the "Mortal Crust"(349). All of this is to be distinguished from "the Body that we have from God"(348), which is not the physical body but what Boehme called "the soulish life." It is the "quick'ning Spirit"(361), the "only Help of Man forlorn, / The Incarnation of the VIRGIN-BORN"(365-66). Christ becomes the means for reversing the effects of Satan's rebellion and Adam's Fall, and this is accomplished not by modes and forms
Byrom's Epistle, then, is not an artistic record of a mystical experience. It is a testimonial to his dedication to Law and his recognition that in Law and Boehme lay language and ideas which could be used to express a universal condition and set of values. Basically his subject is the Christian myth of creation, fall, and salvation through Christ. But the poet has elaborated upon this by employing Boehme's doctrine of contraries, which gives a new vitality and energy to the myth. There can be little doubt that he felt very deeply the truths he presented, but they were truths based on study and association, not mystical vision or profound imagination. He found in Law and Boehme the language, symbols, and doctrine for which he had complete sympathy, and in employing these elements he is less a "myth-maker" than a "myth-imitator." As I have suggested in this chapter, Byrom ordered his poem around the perceptions of others. This does not necessarily invalidate the work as poetry, but it does point up the imitative nature of his verse. His lines are not always polished, his couplets sometimes exhibit only a mechanical craftsmanship; as a maker of poetry he has the right to his minor role in the history of English literature. But as a spokesman of mystical ideas and values, and as an advocate of the sentiments of the heart
he deserves more notice than he has received. While we cannot ignore the ragged edges of his poetry nor his stylistic conservatism, we must note that he did make a conscious effort to produce viable religious verse. He infused into his didacticism a content and imagery which attempted to give new values and a new interpretation to a traditional body of knowledge. As a liberal and an "enthusiast," he endeavored to portray man's sentiments and affections as his most powerful religious weapons. In the Epistle we can see how he used new materials; now we need to view him as the apologist for the emotions of the heart and the imagination.
"Christians, awake, salute the happy morn," Poems, II, i, 19-22.


Ibid.


E.g., see Spect. 633.

Spect. 618.

Spect. 333.

Poems, II, i, 126-28.

Spect. 58. Byrom's best works are his hymns and didactic pieces, but he could work in other forms besides the heroic couplet. For example, his "An Hymn for Easter Day" uses alternating rime and the ballad refrain to create a simple lyric in praise of Christ. Or, in "The Desponding Soul's Wish" he imitates Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" and in its question and answer pattern gives Elizabethan flavor to the work. One of Byrom's favorite poets was not a poet at all, but the non-juring Bishop Thomas Ken (1637-1711), whose hymns for morning, evening and midnight have become standard religious songs. In "A Letter to a Lady on Ken's Poems" (Poems, II, i, 114-26), Byrom suggests his critical abilities by giving Ken stature above Dryden and Pope. But his poetic criteria were not simply literary ones; he could criticize Horace or Virgil, Dryden or Pope because their source of inspiration was "the Tinsel of the fab'd Nine," rather than Holy Writ or God speaking in the human breast. Like Ken, Byrom labored "to disperse/ Ungrateful Discord by harmonious Verse"(115-16). But between the theory and the practice lies the abyss.
Poems, I, i, 178-92; the full title is "Verses, Intended to have been spoken at the Breaking-up of the Free Grammar School in Manchester, in the Year 1748, when Lauder's Charge of Plagiarism upon Milton engaged the Public Attention."

"Dulces ante Omnia Musae," Poems, I, i, 163-64.


Ibid.


Spirit, Works, VII, i, 27.

Until the edition of 1773, the bulk of his poetry was not published at all; this suggests that those pieces which he did publish must have been important to him.

Byrom's good Manchester friend, the non-juror Dr. Deacon, had three sons involved in the Stuart uprising of 1745; two were executed and the third was imprisoned. During his London visit Byrom used his frequent meetings with nobility to plead for the boy's freedom: "One can only try, as occasion offers, what mercy can be got from trying" (Remains, II, ii, 448), and again, "I am not sorry that I have spoken my thoughts about him as opportunity offered" (Ibid., 455). Unfortunately, the boy was deported early in 1749.

Byrom had some trouble remembering Law's address, for Law writes, "I had the favour of yours, which might have been sooner answered had you remembered the right direction, which was near Stamford in Lincolnshire" (Remains, II, ii, 443). About the same time we have another instance of Byrom's forgetfulness; a young lawyer called to learn shorthand; Byrom took his money but never thought of getting the man's name (Ibid., 452).

Remains, II, ii, 492.
Portions of Enthusiasm were probably in manuscript as early as May, 1743, when Byrom discussed the verses "about Enthusiasm" with Law (Remains, II, ii, 366).

For which Law cryptically reminds him (5 Feb. 1751): "you took a direction how to write to me in your pocket book" (Remains, II, ii, 515).

It is characteristic of Byrom's personality and critical sensibility that he wanted the poem to be taken on its own merits and not on those of its author. We must remember that Byrom was not completely unknown as a poet; aside from his "Pastoral" (1714) and "Tunbridgial" (1726), his poetry was known among his wide circle of acquaintances and he even had the honor of being parodied: in "Alexis; or, the Distrest Shepherd" (1740) and by Ralph Tomlinson, "A Slang Pastoral" (1780). Of his serious poetry, two of his renditions of Madame Bourignon had appeared in the Wesley Hymnal (1739). And, as we shall shortly see, Byrom had enough of a reputation that Warburton stooped to correspond with him.


Appendix, p. 16.

Ibid., 17.

Ibid., 28.

Ibid., 39.
The obvious pun on Eve and evil, the intrusion of such harsh images as "Husk" and "Clod," and the alliteration of a stately stalking clod, illustrate Byrom's habit of playing with a serious subject and undercutting the stateliness of his argument with "false wit" and somewhat whimsical metrical devices. This tonal break becomes more apparent when contrasted with the preceding lines, which have depended so heavily on the diction of Law and Boehme.

In writing to Law in 1751, Byrom alludes to Warburton when he says, "Men of some characters, and one in particular which the verse [i.e., Enthusiasm] has painted, may think to demolish truth when it is only a name they can justly censure" (Remains, II, ii, 520).

Byrom accepts the commonplace idea that poetry will "excite" the mind, will give pleasure, and also that it will teach.

Ward cites the relevant passages which Byrom drew from his source, so it seems unnecessary to repeat them in this discussion.

The source of this image is, of course, Rev. 4.6, but water imagery is Boehme's most frequent means of symbolizing the unity of Eternal Nature and the outpouring of God's spirit to man. Some of the more common in the Aurora are: God as "fountain" or "sweet spring water" (205); angels described as "a crystalline sea" (270); heaven as "the superior water of nature" (663) or "clouds of water" (611); and the heart of God as the "water of life" (713). He frequently depends on such verbs as drink, purge, boil, soak, distill. These are opposed to evil or creaturely things which are described as solid or dried up.
Aurora, pp. 462.

Cf. Coleridge: "that not Heat but Light is the Heart of Nature is one of those truly profound and pregnant Thoughts that ever and anon astonish me in Behmen's writings," quoted from Alice D. Snyder, "Coleridge on Böhme," PMLA, XLV (1930), 618.

Aurora, p. 5.

Ibid., 428.

Aurora, p. 380, "now shew thou me any place, to which thou sendeth thy covetous or lustful spirit, where God is not; be it to man, beasts, garments, fields, money or anything whatsoever. From him is all, and he is in all, he himself is all, and he upholds and supporteth all."

Aurora, p. 428, enkindled by Satan the fire-wrath of God does "not reach in nature into the innermost kernel of the heart, which is the son of God, much less into the secret glory of holiness of the spirit," but only into the created world.


Also this figure helps give active physical characteristics to a personality which otherwise might be a vague essence or rather lame spirit.

He also characterizes the world as "this intermediate temporary Life"(165), and as a creation raised in "Time and Place"(190); in addition it was Adam's tragedy to fall "from eternal Life to that of Time"(388).

Prayer, Works, VII, i, 5.


Cf. Paradise Lost, V, 658-61:

Satan, so call him now, his former name
Is heard no more in heaven; he of the first
If not the first great archangel, great in power,
In favor and pre-eminence.

This he develops in lines 377-88, where "Learning's piteous Pretence"(377) leads only to "empty and unmeaning Sound"(380). In "A Contrast between Human Reason and Divine
Illumination" (c. 1753), he notes that there is a light superior to that of reason or sight, that

Such Words as Nature, Reason, Common Sense, Furnish all Writers with one same Pretence.

(25-26)

64 See Aurora, pp. 296-308; in Boehme's system each prince symbolizes attributes of God: Michael is strength; Uriel is that flash which represents the Holy Ghost; and Lucifer (who received this name after his fall) had been united with God the Son at the very center of the Godhead and had for his domain "the created heaven and this world" (p. 300).

65 In an undated poem, "Fragment of an Hymn on the Goodness of God" (Poems, II, ii, 387-91), Byrom discusses God's power in and upon nature:

For Nature itself is a Darkness express,
If a Splendour from thee does not fill it and bless,—
An Abyss of the Pow'rs of all creaturely Life,
Which are in themselves but an impotent Strife
Of Action, Re-action and Whirling around,
Till the Rays of Thy Light pierce the jarring Profound;
Till Thy Goodness compose the dark, natural Storm,
All enkindle the Bliss of Light, Order, and Form.

(33-40)


68 Prayer, Works, VII, ii, 128.


70 Ibid., 366.

71 Prayer, Works, VII, i, 15.

72 Boehme discusses the relationship between the first four principles and the first four days of creation in Aurora, Chr. 19-22.

73 Prayer, Works, VII, i, 42.

74 Aurora, pp. 307, 339.

75 Ibid., 339.
CHAPTER IV

The Ethical Enthusiast

Unable to express Celestial Things
Imagination adds expanded Wings.¹

The Spirits Swelling, by th' attesting Pen
Of all th' inspired, is in the Hearts of Men.²

All is in Man--Good, Evil, Grace, or Sin,
Heav'n, Earth or Hell, are all of them within.³

I have chosen to begin this chapter with these couplets from unrelated poems written at different times in Byrom's life, because each of them states one of the major assumptions upon which Enthusiasm, a Poetical Essay, In a Letter to a Friend in Town (1751)⁴ is based. These lines also indicate that the "problems" of enthusiasm are suggested in many of Byrom's poems, but Enthusiasm is his definitive statement upon the ethical relationship of mind, imagination, and the salvation of the soul.

Upon its appearance, the poem was immediately labeled "a heavy attempt towards a vindication of Enthusiasm and Mr. Law."⁵ In an age guided by the light of Locke and his dictum that "Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything,"⁶ religious enthusiasm, with its suggestion of ungoverned feeling and its emphasis on the indwelling spirit, was a tendency which most eighteenth-century minds abhorred. By defending enthusiasm Byrom took the unpopular side in the argument. The orthodox

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clergyman, free-thinker, dissenter, evangelical, all opposed
enthusiasm even though each had to define it in his own terms
to fit his own particular religious prejudices. Byrom's poem,
in fact, is only a small part of a controversy that had raged
in England since the middle of the seventeenth century when
Meric Casaubon's Treatise concerning Enthusiasme (1655) and
Henry More's Enthusiasmus Triumphatus, or a Discourse of the
Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiasme (1656) discussed
the tendency as an infection of the understanding by the
imagination. Restoration and Augustan literature is filled with
treatises, sermons, and dialogues on the subject. Here, all we
can attempt is to sketch a frame-work for Byrom's poem and there­
by suggest the significance it had both for religion and aesthetics.

The Age of Reason was necessarily one of religious dissention
and uncertainty, so much so that by the middle of the century one
observer could note "there are almost as many sects in this metrop­
olis, as there are parish-churches." The vagaries of religious
emotion and dogma make definition of enthusiasm difficult because
each user of the word drew upon his own standards and connotations
as he applied the term to a specific sect or religious idea. A
few, like Wesley, cautioned men against the vagueness of the term:
"If enthusiasm be a term, though so frequently used, yet so rarely
understood, take you care not to talk of you know not what; not to
use the word till you understand it. As in all other points, so
like wise in this, learn to think before you speak." Unfortunately, his advice was not taken.
The OED entries show that the term "enthusiasm" has generally connoted supernatural inspiration or prophetic frenzy. But in the eighteenth century the connotation of poetic or extraordinary emotion was overshadowed as the term came more and more to represent "a vain confidence of divine favour or communication." What had once been divine or prophetic inspiration became for the Augustans diabolic raving whose major conceit was "the light within." During the Restoration the term had been frequently applied to the Puritans. Robert South called them those "seraphic pretenders." Dryden depicted them as a "Host of dreaming Saints . . . Of the true old Enthusiastick Breed." Still others were more general in their criticism. Thomas Hobbes viewed enthusiasm as "the insignificant Speeches of Mad-men, supposed to be possessed with a divine Spirit," and Joseph Glanvill talked about "Enthusiasm and Fanatical pretences to the Spirit." Eighteenth-century commentators elaborated upon the religious and psychological imbalance represented by the term. Thinkers as different as Locke, Shaftesbury, and Wesley, for example, were practically in agreement in their conceptions of enthusiasm.

The central issue in each of their discussions was that reason, not imagination, must be the arbiter in all things. Extremes of imagination led only to un-reason. Locke was emphatic in asserting that enthusiasm "takes away both reason and revelation, and substitutes in the room of it the ungrounded
fancies of a man's own brain, and assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and conduct."\(^{15}\) Reason is the natural revelation by which God gives man that portion of truth which his natural faculties can accept. Revelation, on the other hand, is man's natural reason vouchsafed by proofs and testimony from God. No reasonable man could give credence to the position that illumination (from any human source) was its own justification for being. In effect, the enthusiast removes the natural limitations of revelation and reason by so emphasizing revelation that he puts out the light of reason, which Locke's contemporary, Robert South, said was the only light God gave man.\(^{16}\) Enthusiasm then is spawned by imagination, "the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain," whereby the enthusiast is swayed by figurative language: "Similes so impose on them, that they serve them for certainty in themselves, and demonstration to others."\(^{17}\) Locke never denies that revelatory truth may be given to man, but he requires that such truth be tested by the dictates of right reason and Scripture. Basically, he sees enthusiasm as a religious and emotional ignis fatuus wherein a man allows his belief in immediate revelation or illumination to get the better of his reason. It is a condition arising from a supreme egotism, which makes an individual believe that he has a direct line to and can have immediate intercourse with Deity.
Both Locke and Shaftesbury begin their discussions by noting that Enthusiasm is not truthful. In Shaftesbury's view it is a brain-sickness turning religion into "a panic," manifested by "strange voices and involuntary agitations" of the French mystics who had recently found shelter in England. Indeed, the mystic makes every dream and frenzy an inspiration, every affectation a doctrine to be zealously guarded.

Shaftesbury's place in the history of eighteenth-century enthusiasm is important because he attempted an extensive definition. In Section VII of the Letter concerning Enthusiasm, he notes that enthusiasm is a universal quality (with which Byrom was to agree), that it is "wonderfully powerful and extensive" even allowing for "enthusiastical atheists." Secondly, he distinguishes between two kinds: "For inspiration is a real feeling of the Divine Presence, and enthusiasm a false one. But the passion they raise is much alike." Thus,

inspiration may be justly called divine enthusiasm; for the word signifies divine presence, and was made use of by the philosophy whom the earliest Christian Fathers called divine, to express whatever was sublime in human passions. This was the spirit He allotted to heroes, statesmen, poets, orators, musicians, and even philosophers themselves. Nor can we, of our own accord, forbear ascribing to a noble enthusiasm whatever is greatly performed by any of these.

Here he suggests a relationship between an enthusiastic state of mind and a sublime one, but of course it is limited to "true" enthusiasm. False enthusiasm is that "snappish spirit" which may be found in any religious sect when an inflamed
imagination burns up judgment. One determines whether he is under the influence of inspiration or enthusiasm by using his common sense: "For to judge the spirits whether they are of God, we must antecedently judge our own spirit, whether it be of reason and sound sense; whether it be fit to judge at all, by being sedate, cool, and impartial, free of every biasing passion, every giddy vapour, or melancholy fume." Locke and Shaftesbury agree that enthusiasm is hyper-emotionalism, but in distinguishing between two types, Shaftesbury suggests a good and bad form, which at least allows for the possibility of a valid enthusiastic state. However, he undercuts the significance of this by arguing that imagination working in man can never be the Divine Presence unless it agrees with what judgment will allow. Recta ratio, not feeling, remains the controlling factor.

In turning to Wesley's discussion of the term, we shift from Augustan to Evangelical England, and should expect to find Wesley defending the tendency. In fact, however, he is defending himself against the charge of being an enthusiast. For our purposes Wesley's remarks are especially significant because he was not only Byrom's contemporary, but also his frequent antagonist. Byrom, in fact, became so incensed over Wesley's authoritarian manner that on one occasion he referred to him as "Pope John" and "Your Holiness." Byrom generally opposed Wesley's views on inspiration: "I said that it seemed to me that the
deists in their way, and the Methodists in their way, and so
others, denied inspiration since the apostles, if there.\textsuperscript{25}

Nevertheless, Wesley's religious principles were similar to
Byrom's. He believed in a religion of the heart, in the
righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Ghost;\textsuperscript{26} yet he
vigorously attacked enthusiasm.

He accepts the conventional attitude that enthusiasm is
an evil, "a disorder of the mind," "a species of madness," and
defines the tendency as "A religious madness arising from some
falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God; at least,
from imputing something to God, which ought not to be imputed
to him, or expecting something from God, which ought not to be
expected from him."\textsuperscript{27} By discussing a "falsely imagined in-
fluence or inspiration" he declares, as did Locke and Shaftesbury,
that an aberrated imagination or the wrong-headed belief that
God is working directly upon an individual generates enthusiasm.

He maintains the traditional position that enthusiasm is fun-
damentally opposed to reason. He discusses three kinds of
enthusiasts: those who imagine they have grace when they have
not; those who believe they have special miraculous powers from
God;\textsuperscript{28} and, finally, those who imagine they can attain religious
ends through the immediate power of God without the religious
means. The test between enthusiasm and true religion must be
the law and testimony, i.e., "the plain, scriptural, rational
way to know what is the will of God in a particular case."\textsuperscript{29}

The enthusiast is the greatest sinner because his attitudes give
rise to the pride of an unconvincible spirit. Wesley's final word is thoroughly anti-mystical. "Trust not in visions or dreams; in sudden impressions, or strong impulses of any kind," he counsels. "Remember it is not by these you are to know what is the will of God on any particular occasion; but by applying the plain scripture rule, with the help of experience and reason, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit of God." All this sounds very much like Shaftesbury and indicates the range of distrust the eighteenth century maintained in religious enthusiasm.

In each of these discussions the epithets "prophetic frenzy," "brain-sickness," "melancholic fuming," "over-weening brain," "fiery zealot," and "imaginary" Christianity are used to label the cast of mind. Each phrase connotes the simple fact that the enthusiast bases all his religious knowledge in personal religious experience and in extraordinary emotion, thus blinding himself to reason or established authority. Personal affectation becomes truth and individual attitudes and prejudices are accepted as divine inspiration or as standards for judging all things religious. When all one should expect is the "ordinary assistance of the Spirit of God," everything else is beyond the bounds of reason.

Shaftesbury notes the primary difficulty in understanding the true nature of enthusiasm when he says that the passions which both true and false enthusiasm engender are too much alike; accordingly, it becomes difficult to distinguish who is right
from who is wrong. Each man concludes that man's God-given rational faculty must observe and analyze by judging religious doctrine on the basis of Holy Writ. Enthusiasm, then, opposed every accepted principle of Right Reason, order, decorum, and observed principles, so that when Law and Byrom defended the necessity of an enthusiastic state of mind as an adjunct to a religious one, they were indeed being "original." In fact, the eighteenth century associated enthusiasm with insanity or atheism, or both: "A religion founded on madness and enthusiasm, is almost as bad as no religion at all." 31

In the following analysis of Byrom's poem, I want to suggest that he not only defends such a state of mind but that his language, in its emphasis upon feeling and the imagination, insists upon a creative psychology which gives meaning and value to man and his universe. The order he defends is one composed of the "Fire within the human Soul"(273), "The Seed of Heav'n ... / The Spark of Potency, the Ray of Light"(374-75). Humanity's basic forces are desire, will and imagination; these set man above the beasts, make him human, and make possible salvation. As he raises imagination into the position of pre-eminence, reason becomes a second-class faculty. He does not accept a rational order of Nature nor will he allow that man's place in Nature, his relationship to God, or his eventual salvation can be determined only by reasoning upon what he sees about him.
If the Augustans felt that man had to see before he could reason, Byrom argued that man must feel before he could see. Man depending only upon reason is incapable of grasping spiritual reality.

Byrom introduces his poem with a prose letter (dated Manchester, September 3rd, 1751) in which, like Wesley, he criticizes the indiscriminate use of the term "enthusiasm." Like many of his predecessors he argues that it is of two kinds, or, more properly, that there is only one enthusiasm which an ignorant and indifferent public exaggerates out of all proportion. The common attitudes toward it are those of unknowing gossip and blind prejudice, from which men accept "stale Exclamations" and "affected Retailing of Madness, Mysticism, Behmenism," as if there were sense and wit in such labels. In reality, he asserts, enthusiasm is the "genuine Effect of a true Life and Spirit, arising from what is lovely, harmonious and substantial."32 It is interesting that here, and throughout the poem, the language by which Byrom shows the effects of enthusiasm is very like the wholeness, coherence, and proportion which Shaftesbury and the neoclassicists used to portray the sublime.33 In Byrom these properties are part of the mystical qualities inherent in enthusiasm, a state which reaches "after that Godlike State and Condition to which all Mankind were originally created."34 Enthusiasm leads ultimately to unity. However neither Byrom, Law, nor any of the other commentators I have mentioned, attempt to distinguish between the mystical and enthusiastic types of Christian sensibility.
To the eighteenth-century mind meditative and contemplative mysticism were undifferentiated from the excessive action and emotion which characterized enthusiasm. While the traditional mystical regeneration was a slow, arduous task whereby one ascended to God gradually on the wings of unceasing prayer, the enthusiast experienced regeneration instantaneously. From the moment the light was revealed within, God became his only teacher. As Byrom suggested, the enthusiast lived a never-ending epiphany, an "enduring Rest, Light and Liberty."  

The primary source for Byrom's poem is the concluding portion of Law's Some Animadversions upon Dr. Trapp's Reply, which he had published with his Appeal to All that Doubt in 1740. In 1739 Trapp had published a Discourse on the Nature, Folly, Sin and Danger of being Righteous Overmuch, a book which annoyed Law because Trapp failed to recognize enthusiasm as a universal quality in human nature and because he suggested that this type of religious extremism was not only dangerous, but sinful. While Trapp was particularly critical of the Methodists, generally he merely repeated attitudes about enthusiasm which had existed since the middle of the preceding century. Law's--and Byrom's--reaction to the traditional view of the enthusiast is one indication of the movement toward sentimentalism which permeates the religious and creative literature in the latter half of the century. Byrom, especially, shows the shifts toward the positive connotations of the term. Religious feeling is not only defended as natural but necessary.
The poem is itself a vigorous, vital defense of the term. Quoting Dr. Trapp (probably only because Law cited him), Byrom opens by giving the commonplace labels for the tendency.

"Fly from Enthusiasm! It is the Pest, Bane, Poison, Frenzy, Fury,—and the rest." This is the Cry that oft, when Truth appears, Forbids Attention to our list'ning Ears; Checks our first Entrance on the main Concern, And, Stunn'd with Clamour, we forbear to learn. 36

Public outcries, the "common Cant"(7) will never reveal that "deeper Sense of Something"(9) planted within the human soul. The clamor of controversy, Byrom argues, does not get to the heart of matters, and therefore, he exhorts his readers to follow a studious regimen. Mystical meditation must be fused with the enthusiasm. Before man can know the beauty of the inner light, he must remove himself from the bustle of earthly life.

Let us a while from noisy Scenes retire; Let us examine Sense as well as Sound, And search the Truth, the Nature and the Ground. (20-22)

With an echo of Augustan pastorals and pieces on solitude, Byrom appears to suggest, as he did briefly in the Epistle, that man look to that world of the ideal represented in nature, where the real and the ideal are fused, where he can find the harmony of all things. If this were so, Byrom would simply be another example of the enthusiasm displayed by Whitehead or Warton. But in fact he seems only to be using a conventional rhetorical pose, or more probably he wished to evoke the contemplative mood necessary for the consideration of such serious matters. In any
case, Byrom could not proclaim, as did James Thomson, "NATURE!
great Parent" [The Seasons, Winter, (105)], could not find in
Nature the harmony of Eternal Nature. The passage in the Epistle
is basically a simile; physical nature may, under certain con-
ditions, represent the beauty and richness of Eternal Nature,
may be "like" it, but cannot be identified with it. Boehme and
Law had taught him that earthly nature was not harmonious but
permeated with wrath, after the calm evening comes the storm.
Nature was a devilish mimicry of Eternal Nature. In his poem
"On the Union and Threefold Distinction of God, Nature, and
Creature" he shows "Natur's Contrariety and Strife," and "Natur's
wrathful, separated Forms." He could never delight with
Warton's enthusiast in "the Sun and Showers/ And genial
Earth"(81-82) or in woods "tipt with Gold"(165).

The two essential features of Byrom's definition are that
enthusiasm is natural to all mankind and that the mind is
creative. Unlike Locke, Shaftesbury, or Addison (Spect. 201),
who believed that the fictions of the imagination were means
of sustaining the enthusiast in his frenzy, Byrom emphasizes
desire as the key to the mind and to the perception of the
"secret cogitative Cause"(30) of all things. In this he is
thoroughly Behmenistic, for during his last years Boehme came
more and more to see imagination as the means of grace. It was
"the formative power in the eternal wisdom," and as such became
man's most powerful weapon for salvation. Man "should by the
imagination continually go out again into the lightworld for
which he was created, in order that the light may give him
lustre, that he may know himself and see the outer Mystery.
Then he is a man."  
Imagination, more than any other faculty,
is the essence of man's humanity. Desire, will, and imagination
are a single force and a means to vision.

'Tis Will, Imagination and Desire
Of thinking Life that constitute the Fire.
(22-23)

As Byrom explains it, the psychology of the imagination demands
certain qualities. First, the will must be fixed upon the object
of desire. This, however, is not simply the province of a chosen
few, of the poet or prophet, but is characteristic of all men.
In fact, enthusiasm is only the word men give to define the
effects of imagination and desire, which in God and man are the
essential means by which life generates itself. Before this
force or process becomes clear we must understand Byrom's second
quality of imagination, that mind governs matter. With the fire
of will and desire fixed, the imagination becomes a creative
faculty, an informing principle in the life of man.

Imagination, trifling as it seems,
Big with Effects, its own Creation, teems.
(37-38)

Through this power men carve their "deep Realities"(42). Blake
of course was to insist upon the same thing when he said that
the "Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists,
Really & Unchangeably."  

One of the necessary assumptions underlying this imaginative activity is freedom. Boehme's "system" depends upon freedom for the genesis of being, both good and evil. Further, he associates freedom with imagination, especially in his concept of the fall of Satan and of man, where evil aspiration grew out of false imagination (self-assumption). As Byrom phrases it, God created an understanding mind which "Moves as its own Self-bias is inclin'd" (48). This implies an analogy between man's freedom of choice in following either the fire of salvation or of damnation, and the "enthusiastic power" creating either fictions or realities. The fire of imagination leads either to truth or to falsehood. Law expressed it this way: "as every intelligent Creature is its own Self-mover, so every intelligent Creature has Power of kindling and enflaming its Will, Imagination and Desire, as it pleases, with Shadows, Fictions or Realities; with Things carnal or spiritual, temporal or eternal." The balance of the last portion of this sentence is significant because it shows Law's mystical perception that the fictions are temporal things, the spiritual realities eternal. Man creates only what he wills himself to. Because of the imaginative faculty, he can vigorously seek the good, i.e., "Union, Harmony, and Love" (62), or evil, i.e., "a selfish, separating Pride" (63). Obviously, from Byrom's point of view, the fusion of desire, imagination and will into enthusiasm is less an aesthetic power than an ethical one, for it leads ultimately to salvation. Unlike his contemporary, Akenside, who saw the
imagination as a poetic, inspiring force analogous to the divine, creative act. \(^{42}\) Byrom presents it as the divine spark, that hunger and thirsting for God, by which man revitalizes religious experience and redeems his eternal soul. By emphasizing the universality of the "spark," but the extremely personal nature of its individuality and focus, he moves toward that point whereby transcendent experience becomes the agent for salvation. Thus he parallels the contemporary aesthetic movement wherein such experience became the material of the sublime.

Within the first one-hundred lines of the poem, then, we find enthusiasm portrayed as a kind of universal energy 
['"Thought enkindled to a high Degree"\(^{(76)}\)'], a driving intellectual and emotional force born of the will, imagination and desire. As such it had to be opposed to the purely reasonable or rational, which has its birth in sense impression. Man does not simply perceive the "rich Realities"; he creates them. As in the Epistle, the concept of the inward flame is Byrom's basic metaphor, but here the emphasis falls upon the effects of the "desire" rather than upon an explanation of its birth and source. The enthusiast is one whose energies, creative or destructive depending upon the direction they take, are totally focused upon his ruling passion, whatever it be. He actively exercises his spirit, imagination, and intellect on the object of his desire. This has important aesthetic implications, for it contrasts strongly with the eighteenth-century mirror theory, that
images were only replicas of sense impressions. Professor M. H. Abrams has shown how invention demanded that the poet start with known parts and reorganize them into an artistic pattern. Imagination recombined; it did not create. Reasonable men who found design in nature transferred the necessity of design to literature, giving a philosophical and aesthetic basis for contemporary poetry. The ideal for beauty and the sublime centered in concordia discors, with the emphasis falling upon the rhetorical aspects of beauty, of harmony, balance, elegance, grace. At its most mechanical level, the artist simply represented objects and ideas by executing a purposeful design.

Of course, Byrom does not actually elaborate upon the artistic implications his theory had for poetry. Nevertheless his lines suggest that, like his contemporaries, he believed that the enthusiast harmonized disparates into a unified whole. At the same time he argues vigorously for creative originality.

The imagination

Must have the Pow'r to kindle and inflame
The Subject-matter of its mental Aim.
Whether it bend the voluntary View
Realities, or Fictions, to pursue,—
Whether it raise its Nature or degrade,
To Truth substantial or to phantom Shade,—
Falsehood or Truth accordingly obtains;
That only which it wills to gain, it gains.  

(51-58)

The creative activity here is not artistic but ethical and religious; it is the means by which the enthusiast, guided by his own individual light, desires and attains the truth and holiness of salvation or the darkness of the damned. Man raises
his nature through imagination not reason. In fact, Byrom, following Law's anti-rationalism, insists that reason and learning are the surest and quickest means of building idols to self-pride and other types of phantom shades.

Having given this basic statement about the imagination and its relationship to enthusiasm, Byrom turns to some illustrations of the many varieties of enthusiastic conviction. His whole purpose is to generalize the term, for there can be as many kinds of enthusiasm as there are objects to engage the mind (78-80). Thus he moves the denotative meanings of the word out of a confining religious context. In fact, he suggests the irony in religious argument itself; what men call controversy is nothing but hostility between opposing enthusiasms (87-90).

By giving enthusiasm an inclusiveness it had never had before, he brought the term close to the values it has for us today, whereby it specifies intense feeling or eager pursuit of a person, cause, or object. For Byrom, the man who "Dotes on old Rome and its Augustan Age" (92), who finds all sense and reason in "Tully's Rhetoric divine!" (108) is, in his own way, as much an enthusiast as the religious pilgrim who travels great distances and suffers hardship for his devotion to an ideal (117-26). Byrom's genius for contrasting mood is illustrated by these two passages, for the antiquarian is viewed humorously. The following lines are taken from Law, but Byrom manages to poke fun at the type of man who loses himself so completely in his
"classic Rage" (91), when

high o'er the Alps he's gone,
To read the Ground that Tully trod upon;
Haply, to find his Statue or his Bust,
Or Medal green'd with Ciceronian Rust;
Perchance, the Rostrum,—yea, the very Wood
Whereon this elevated Genius stood.

(109-14)

The delightful mockery of "Ciceronian Rust" and the double entendre of "elevated Genius" make this virtuoso slightly ridiculous. In contrast, the pilgrim is presented with all humility. For he is one

Who paces to behold that Part of Earth
Which to the Saviour of the World gave Birth;
To see the Sepulchre from whence He rose,
Or view the Rocks that rended at His Woes;
Whom Pagan Reliques have no Force to charm
Yet ev'n a modern Crucifix can warm,—
The Sacred Signal who intent upon,
Thinks on the Sacrifice That hung thereon.

(119-26)

The tone is entirely different. Here is no mockery, no gentle chiding, but only an attempt to illustrate the intensity and humble devotion with which the pilgrim takes up the burden of his personal vigil. Thus, at the same time that Byrom presents the variety of ways in which enthusiasm manifests itself, he controls the tone of his remarks to censure as well as praise.

Although he believed that enthusiasm was a universal quality, not once does he suggest that each and every sort is as good as or equal to every other. Nowhere is he more critical than in his characterization of scholarly fanaticism, especially the Warburtonian type.
Another's heated Brain is painted o'er
With ancient Hieroglyphic Marks of yore;
He old Egyptian Mummies can explain,
And raise 'em up almost to Life again.

(127-30)

In Byrom's judgment any man who expended so much energy and zeal on the paradoxical argument that the absence of any reference to immortality in Mosaic law was the proof of the divine mission of Moses had to be a prime example of misdirected enthusiasm. Both Law and Byrom opposed the kind of myopic scholar-clergy-man who could clear up the questions of antiquity, but who ignored the immediate concerns of salvation.

To soar aloft on Obeliskal Clouds;
To dig down deep into the Dark—for Shrouds;
To vex old Matters chronicled in Greek,
While those of his own Parish are to seek,—
What can come forth from such an antie Taste,
But a Clarissimus Enthusiast,
Fraught with Discoveries, so quaint, so new,
So deep, so smart, so Ipse-dixit true?
See Arts and Empires, Ages, Books and Men,
Rising and falling, as he points the Pen.

(151-60)

The presumption of men who put their trust in learning and "critic sense" to explain man, nature and the universe becomes the major source of error. Every "system" has its own enthusiasts who argue among themselves and with the devotees of other "systems." All this results in ambition, pride and self-conceit, without answering the real questions.

But this is only one kind in a world filled with an infinite variety of types. The fop, the beau, wit, critic, poet, philosopher, politician, connoisseur—each in his own way is
an enthusiast. Even the libertines, deists and atheists, who are "dark Enthusiasts indeed" (207) are driven by some controlling fire. "Self-love, in short, wherever it is found, / Tends to its own enthusiastic Ground" (201-02). Self-love is an enormous weight which sinks each man into himself and into his own particular brand of enthusiasm. In a way, Byrom's psychology of enthusiasm is analogous to the humour theory by which the Renaissance man explained human motives; it is a means of explaining not only what men are but why they act as they do.

Enthusiasm, in effect, is part of the eternal fitness of things. It is the universal condition:

Think not that you are no Enthusiast, then!
All Men are such, as sure as they are Men.
The Thing itself is not at all to blame;
'Tis in each State of human Life the same,
The fiery Bent, the driving of the Will,
That gives the Prevalence to good or Ill.

(225-30)

Each man has his own "fiery Bent," which supplies the means for salvation. Once Byrom has established this fact he can turn to the ethics of enthusiasm, which he does in the final 150 lines of the poem. The structure of this work, then, is fairly traditional. In the first portion he illustrates a concept and in the final part he comments upon and draws conclusions from his examples.

The real question, says Byrom, is not what enthusiasm is, but what species of enthusiast we are, what direction our enthusiasm takes.
Whether a Man shall stir up Love or Hate
From the mix'd Medium of this present State.
(253-54)

The "mix'd Medium" is the Behmenistic concept of an earthly condition permeated with an infinity of forms, of contraries. These are suggested more precisely a few lines later when Byrom builds to a climax by setting up pairs of oppositions. He begins with a hyperbole emphasizing the impossibility of overcoming enthusiasm. Be it divine or diabolic, action and thought have their source within the human breast. The very act of choosing between contraries is a manifestation of creative energy.

'Fly from Enthusiasm?' Yes, fly from Air,
And breathe it more intensely for your Care!
Learn that, whatever Phantoms you embrace;
Your own essential Property takes Place;
Bend all your Wits against it,—'tis in vain:
It must exist, or sacred or profane.
For Flesh or Spirit, Wisdom from above
Or from this World an Anger or a Love,
Must have its Fire within the human Soul.
(265-73)

The essence of human nature is the essence of enthusiasm. While the enthusiastic prototype is God's outpouring of love and creative energy, each man imitates (or mocks) this vitality by giving direction to his desire. Its source may be only the "Flame of Straw" (194) which inspires the fops and critics in their quest for the phantoms of this life. Or it may be the "Fire within the human Soul," but in either case man's "own essential Property" will have its way. Each man has a circle of influence which he can spread or control. He may allow
"smoth'ring Lusts" (276) to choke conscience, develop faint, superficial ideas which never touch the substance of things, or he may be fired with a true "celestial Ardour" (281) which "makes a Man in Sight of God to shine/ With all the Lustre of a Life Divine" (285-86).

Enthusiasm, then, points its force toward any of a multitude of objects by becoming an individual's ruling passion. Byrom promotes a psychology which ignores all the Augustan emphasis on reason by analogy between the Laws of Nature and of Human Nature. Mankind's "common notions" are not rational, but enthusiastic, emotional, i.e., each man acts, thinks, and intuits because of feeling. God's influence is not analogical but direct: "ev'ry good Desire and Thought/ Is in us by the Holy Spirit wrought"(315-16). In God men live and move and have their being. Through the drive of enthusiastic imagination, men can ascend to a god-like state. Conversely, each evil desire grows from false imagination, self and pride. Deism, and even the more moderate course of mid-eighteenth-century Anglicanism, placed faith in reason and universal moral law. Byrom and his mentor Law saw this as illogical, for without the drive enthusiasm gave ethical principles, right reason and moral sensibility were worthless and atrophied. Enthusiasm must be the cause of action. Reason and morality might codify principles of conduct, but only if man followed the power within him could morality be substantiated, made viable by right action.
'Reason and Morals?'—And where live they most?  
In Christian Comfort, or in Stoic Boast?  
Reason may point unpractis'd Truth exact,  
And Morals rigidly maintain—no Fact;  
This is the Pow'r that raises them to Worth,  
That calls their rip'ning Excellences forth.  

(321-26)

Byrom does not deny the validity of reason nor of morality,  
but he demands first things first, that Christians realize the  
necessity of the interior spirit before they talk of piety,  
virtue and salvation. Enthusiasm, in fact, is the first virt-  
tue, productive of all others. Man is after all a "Son of  
Elements and Earth"(335), and before he can be anything else,  
heart and soul must be revived. Not until man's "willing  
Heart" learns the lesson of enthusiasm can he be "christen'd  
Man"(333-34).

Byrom's constant emphasis upon the spiritual man and the  
simplicity of the inner light naturally leads to an enthusi-  
astic state of mind far above faction and harangue. Enthusiasm  
results in an infallible benevolism. True enthusiasm is the  
powerful desire for complete dependence upon God. Its effects  
are earthly love, benevolence, and good will. The final effect  
is the fusion of disparates, the reunion of man and the "mix'd  
Medium" with the Divine Whole. Such a benevolism based upon  
enthusiasm contrasts strongly with that espoused by Pope and  
others earlier in the century. Byrom argues that each man is  
benevolent because his  

Heart is fix'd, its whole Dependence plac'd;  
The Hope is rais'd, that cannot but succeed,
And found **Infallibility** indeed.
Then flows the Love that no Distinction knows
Of **System, Sect or Party, Friends or Foes,**
Nor loves by halves; but, faithful to its Call,
Stretches its whole Benevolence to All,—
It's universal Wish th' Angelic Scene:
That God within the Heart of Man may reign,
The True Beginning to the Final Whole
Of Heav'n and Heav'nly Life within the Soul.

In contrast to an Augustan frame of mind which viewed man both
as a reasonable and a social creature in whom "the Contriver of
Human Nature hath wisely furnished . . . with two Principles of
Action, Self-love and Benevolence," Byrom opposes the concept
that benevolence could ever grow out of self-love, or any other
form of self. Pope, looking up through Nature to Nature's God,
reasoned that by giving pleasure to ourselves we gave pleasure
to those around us. The "one close system of Benevolence" (IV, 358)
with which he closes *An Essay on Man* suggests how he arrives at
a benevolism based upon self.

   Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
   As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
   The centre mov'd, a circle strait succeeds,
   Another still, and still another spreads;
   Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;
   His country next; and next all human race;
   Wide and more wide, th' o'erflowings of the mind
   Take ev'ry creature in, of ev'ry kind.

This is a system realized by the mind and acted upon by the
mind. God is the goal of such benevolence. In Byrom, God is
the source, for it is "God within the Heart" which inspires man.
Both views result in universal benevolence, but the significant
difference is the change in values suggested by each point of
view and by their major assumptions. Pope emphasizes the reasonable, the social and temporal benefits, and only latterly the eternal ones. Byrom, in stressing feelings, emphasizes the spiritual and eternal; in fact, the social benefits are secondary to the eternal. Byrom simply assumes that given man's "fiery Bent" towards heaven, social benevolence will logically follow.

The poem concludes with a discussion of the functions of prayer and the church sacraments, which Byrom argues are not viable unless emanating from true religious enthusiasm. Without it prayer is only lip-service, "the mouthing Waste/ Of heartless Words without an inward Taste"(379-80). The rituals of the church have their meaning only in the God within man, and they are instituted to "keep up, to strengthen and employ/ This lively Faith, this Principle of Joy"(393-94). Ultimately, all the rites, sacraments and institutions of the church are meant only to sustain and give outward expression to the

Truth and Spirit of an inward Life,
Wherein th' Eternal Parent of all Good
By His own Influence is understood;
That Man may learn infallibly aright,
Blest in His Presence, seeing in His Light,
To gain the Habit of a Godlike Mind,
To seek His Holy Spirit,—and to find.

(398-404)

What Byrom's poem suggests about the relationship between enthusiasm and imagination or inspiration is most important. The je ne sais quoi element of literature and the
supra-rational of religion have an affinity. For the "grace beyond the reach of art" could not be explained merely by rules, education, and reason, nor could the "Light within" be interpreted only from a rational basis. In both "grace" is an important term; God grants genius to the artist, and to all mankind he presents the gift of eternal life. Byrom was not simply defending a religious state of mind but advocating a principle which did have in his own time (and would have, especially in Blake) tremendous effects upon literature. But the association of imagination and intense passion had long been commonplace, especially in "poetic enthusiasm."

Shaftesbury suggested that divine inspiration "may be justly called divine enthusiasm" because it expressed "whatever was sublime in human passions." Even so imagination had to be controlled or insanity would result: "He who was unable to support his cause by reason, would naturally lose his temper and grow violent."^45

Byrom's friend and shorthand pupil, William Melmoth, saw a positive and necessary resemblance between enthusiasm and fancy. "In a word," he asserts, "this enthusiasm for which I am pleading, is a beneficent enchantress, who never exerts her magic but to our advantage, and only deals about her friendly spells in order to raise imaginary beauties, or to improve real ones."^46 While this statement suggests the magical or fictional qualities traditional to considerations
of things imaginative, Melmoth does bring an enthusiastic state of mind closer to a creative one. The effect of beauty is more psychological, i.e., it is more in the eye of the beholder than inherent in the object. Melmoth's views are somewhat utilitarian, for he focuses on that charm of enthusiasm which helps man to live in a world otherwise dismal. Even so his attitude and Byrom's are indicative of that movement toward aesthetic self-discovery. Pope had demanded that man know himself and his relation to the eternal order of things, but men began looking more at particular experience and at the vital energies within the mind, the means man has for recognizing his own creative role in perception. "Mind, mind alone," said Akenside, "The living fountains in itself contains/ Of beauteous and sublime." The kind of discovery Byrom advocates is self-revelation, realizing the possibilities of human desire and imagination.

While men might condone poetic enthusiasm, they would never admit to religious enthusiasm for this suggested that a stage of insanity was necessary for salvation. Even so imagination was not above suspicion; Pope warned against imagination's "dang'rous art"(EM, II, 143) and later Dr. Johnson urged that "All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity." Byrom made imagination distinct from sense or knowledge and made it the root of all experience; knowledge and ethical values had to come from within. In
allying himself with such wild views, he was confronted by one of the most powerful and arrogant intellects of his age: William Warburton, scholar, theologian, editor of Shakespeare and Pope, and defender of the faith against dissenters and enthusiasts. Warburton bemoaned the state of religion: "What will this poor nation come to! In the condition of troops between two fires: the madness of Irreligion and the madness of Fanaticism." An inveterate labeler, he called Bolingbroke a "pigmy giant," Hume a "pagan," and Okley a "saracen." He characterized Edward Young as the "finest writer of nonsense, of any of this age."

No doubt it was Byrom's open affection for Law and his specific criticism of Warburton in these two poems which brought him to the latter's attention. Not having much information, Warburton wrote to Hurd (2 January 1752):

> Pray do you know Byrom's character? or have you seen his two epistles, one a year or two ago on occasion of Sherlock's book of Prophecies, and one other just now, on Enthusiasm? He is certainly a man of genius, plunged deep into the rankest fanaticism. His poetical epistles shew him both; which, were it not for some unaccountable negligences in his verse and language, would shew us that he has hit upon the right style for familiar didactic epistles in verse. He is very libellous upon me; but I forgive him heartily, for he is not malevolent, but mad.

To Warburton, who believed rational, critical thought was a thing of the past, Byrom must have represented the worst that religious thought and letters had to offer.
Warburton wrote the poet two letters in which he defended his person and his thought from Byrom's censure. In the first he was quick to state the basic difference between them: "you would convince men of the truth of the Gospel by inward feelings; I, by outward facts and evidence." This is a deceptively simple assertion, but the assumptions underlying it and the implications it has for the religious polarity of the age are enormous. In a time turning more and more to sentiment and "interior principles" for the answers to its religious, moral, and literary questions, Byrom found Warburton something of an anachronism: "What can come forth from such an antic Taste"(155), he asked in Enthusiasm. Indeed, he continued, criticism based upon antiquity was more than out of fashion, it was irreligious and ignored the sentiments of the heart.

Where Erudition so unblest prevails,
Saints and their Lives are legendary Tales;
Christians a brainsick, visionary Crew,
That read the Bible with a Bible-View,
And tho' the Letter humbly hope to trace
The living Word, the Spirit, and the Grace.

(165-70)

The irony was not lost on Warburton, for he sternly denied that he ever called any Christian, of any sensible variety, "brain-sick." The type of learning which he represented so annoyed Byrom, however, that Warburton became one of the poet's favorite subjects. In the six poems, "Familiar Epistles to a Friend," Byrom criticized the subjects and methods of Warburton's sermons, his heavy emphasis on "learning, History
and critic Sense"(III, 16), and his total inability to accept "Heart-Consent"(IV, 68) as the means to grace. The vanity of learning always resulted in a full brain and an empty heart. As Law argued, not only the methods but the results of such learning were unacceptable.

I would not take the Method generally practised by the modern Defenders of Christianity. I would not attempt to show from Reason and Antiquity, the Necessity and Reasonableness of a Divine Revelation in general, or of the Mosaic and Christian in particular. Nor enlarge upon the Arguments for the Credibility of the Gospel-History, the Reasonableness of its Creeds, Institutions, and Usages; or the Duty of Man to receive Things, above, but not contrary to his Reason. I would avoid all this, because it is wandering from the true Point in Question, and only helping the Deist to oppose the Gospel with a Show of Argument.56

Warburton could not accept emotion, or the feeling of "A deeper Sense of something" as the basis for knowledge. His position was the one Locke had stated decades earlier: an enthusiast develops when the conclusions upon which he bases his convictions exceed his evidence.57 As he explains it to Byrom,

You suppose enthusiasm consists in the mind’s being carried with eagerness and violence towards its object. I imagine this alone does not constitute the passion, and that justly to charge the mind with this weakness you should add, that, in its progress for the establishment of the supposed truth which it makes its object, the conviction of its conclusions exceed the evidence of its principles. From this time truth begins to be betrayed, and the inquirer after it justly incurs the character of an enthusiast.58
Given such beliefs, any type of enthusiasm was bad, but the religious enthusiast was the worst kind because the object of his quest was so much more important than that of any other kind. The enthusiast lost control of himself and ultimately of salvation.

Warburton's second letter defines more specifically the relationship between enthusiasm and inspiration. "As to enthusiasm," he says, "it is generally agreed there are two sorts, an innocent and a hurtful. The first of which is chiefly employed in drawing pictures from the imagination; the other, in advancing opinions as the result of judgment." His basic distinction is not unlike Shaftesbury's. But while Shaftesbury blamed false enthusiasm on the imagination which resulted in "visionary fancy" or visionary phenomena, he admitted that enthusiasm added a dimension to life. "I know not, in reality, what we should do to find a seasoning to most of our pleasure in life, were it not for the taste or relish which is owing to this particular passion, and the conceit or imagination which supports it. Without this, we could not so much as admire a poem or a picture; a garden or a place; a charming shape or a fair face." Like the majority of their contemporaries, both men agreed that an "enthusiastic state of mind" is a necessary adjunct to imagination, on the part of the creator of art and also the observer of it. They realized
there was "a kind of enchantment or magic in that which we call enthusiasm;" however, by setting up two categories of enthusiasm they could direct the good connotations to art and morals and the bad ones to frenzied religion.

As I noted earlier, Byrom would not accept such a distinction in kind. In his preface he suggests that what critics call enthusiasm, or passion, is only "the Sourness of Controversy, the Bitterness of Party, and the Rotation of Amusement." And if men attempt to remove the enthusiasm, which they are viewing from such prejudiced points of view, they may force it to be replaced by something infinitely worse: "Ercùmniiasm, " i.e., passions arising from the demon of factionalism. Byrom seems to be arguing that party spirit and controversy have applied the label "enthusiast" so indiscriminately and so narrowly that they have turned a perfectly natural quality into an insidious variety of delusion. Years later Coleridge said very much the same thing when he drew a distinction between enthusiasm and fanaticism. "Enthusiasm is the absorption of the individual in the object contemplated from the vividness or intensity of his conceptions and convictions: fanaticism is heat, or accumulation and direction, of feeling acquired by contagion, and relying on the sympathy of sect or confederacy." By 1800, the enthusiastic concept of losing oneself in the object perceived has no pejorative
overtones, but at mid-eighteenth century, Byrom, to use Law's phrase, was plowing new ground. By distinguishing between types of drives, he attempted to define the term more realistically.

Throughout the poem Byrom argues not only for a state of mind (a means to an end), but for a means to vision. "Desire is all" is the key for understanding the psychology of "heart-consent" and its implications for ethical, as well as, artistic vision. The analogy between God and artist was commonplace, of course, so that Byrom's emphasis on the creative mind is nothing new. However, most commentators limit the analogy specifically to God and the artist, the primary and secondary makers. For Byrom there are no such limitations. The creative imagination is inherent in each person; it has to be for this is the means by which he chooses God or the Devil. Desire, will, imagination are vital productive forces.

Mind governs Matter, and it must obey;  
To all its opening Forms Desire is Key;  
Nor Mind nor Matter's Properties are lost,--  
As that shall mould, this must appear emboss'd.  
(33-36)

Mind controls what it sees, or creates what it does not. All the world is embellished and adorned by the power of the active imagination. The ethical and moral values of such a doctrine are lost if limited only to a single species of humanity or only to the creative act.
Life itself is a continuing process of creation, but only if man has the freedom, and liberty, in which to operate.

It matters not, whatever be the State
That full-bent Will and strong Desires create.
Where'er they fall, where'er they love to dwell,
They kindle there their Heaven or their Hell.
The chosen Scene surrounds them as their own;
All else is dead, insipid or unknown.
However poor and empty be the Sphere,
'Tis All, if Inclination centre there.

(171-78)

To say that one man has more of this instinct than another is folly.

Think not that you are no Enthusiast, then!
All Men are such, as sure as they are Men.

(225-26)

Imagination, desire, enthusiasm are born in us; their ultimate purpose is salvation. These internal principles are means of realizing what eternally exists. As Blake was to say, they are means to the vision: "Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably."

At the same time that Law and Byrom argued against the dominance of Self (i.e., greed, pride, selfhood), they were arguing for self-absorption, a turning inward. Self, considered from this view, becomes the agency for ethical experience. It was no longer pertinent to divide experience into sense, imagination and understanding, with the understanding controlling the others. No longer did the eye see, the memory record, and the rational faculty refine; feeling, emotion and sensation became reliable and honest responses to
experience. The emphasis on sentiment would be carried to extremes in such later eighteenth-century works as MacKenzie's *Man of Feeling*, but at mid-century such psychological factors were evidenced in the poetry of Thomson and Akenside, in the criticism of Burke and Lowth, and in the religious sensibility of Law and Byrom. The neoclassicists had always been interested in the spontaneity and range of imagination (invention), but they were just as concerned with controlling imagination by reason. In Byrom (and other of his contemporaries) we begin to see the enthusiastic "self" defended as a means of and to sympathetic understanding. Subjective feeling becomes the judge of experience.

In fact, Byrom argues for a response to the sublime of the heart. By comparison we can see how he differs with the values prevalent earlier in the century. In Addison we find a convenient representative of Augustan attitudes concerning the relationship of the sublimity of God to the imagination. In discussing the effects of greatness, he notes that "wide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding" (*Spect.* 412). The contemplation of God is relegated to the highest faculty, reason. Byrom reverses this by making the imagination the proper faculty of understanding. In the literature of mid-century new ways were found to respond to nature; thus Addison's categories (great, uncommon and
beautiful) were enlarged to include astonishment, terror, vastness and manifestations of power. The emphasis moved from a rhetorical sublime to a psychological one as men responded to God or some kind of ideal in Nature. For Thomson it was Nature; "I know no subject more elevating, more amusing, more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment, than the works of Nature."64 For similar reasons, Akenside could find his inspiration in heaven.

From Heaven my strains begin; from Heaven descends
The flame of genius to the human breast.

But his heaven was a Platonic one, his God an "Almighty One" who "In his unfathomed essence, viewed the forms,/ The forms eternal of created things."65 Neither a Platonized God nor spiritualized Nature would do for Byrom; he championed a direct response to the Deity found in the heart of every man. As he said, "All is in Man." Through feeling and imagination he reacts to the sublime in the soul, the God within.

Perhaps more than anything else, the real nature of Byrom's ethical enthusiasm is that he argues for man's Humanity. Devotion, inspired by desire and imagination, is the measure of Humanity, for it turns life into unending prayer and intercourse with God.

Had not the Soul—this Origin, this Root,
What else were Man but a two-handed Brute,—
What but a Devil, had he not possest
The Seed of Heav'n, replanted in his Breast,—
The Spark of Potency, the Ray of Light,
His Call, his Help, his Fitness to excite
The Strength and Vigour of Celestial Air,
Faith, and the Breath of living Christians, Pray'r.
(371-78)

This is the core of Byrom's mystical attitude toward life.
The whole concept of enthusiasm is part of his long-standing
belief that "In Him all things really subsist; in Him all our
capacity of seeing and understanding." His life and
writings are perhaps the best evidence for his continuous
fight against the theory that inspiration was a power God
leased out to the primitive church and recalled with its
passing. Without devotion, enthusiasm, and imagination,
man would live in a Half-world; he would see all things in
the Devil and in Self.
"Verses Written under a Print Representing the Salutation of The Blessed Virgin," Poems, II, i, 59. In this and the following citations, the number refers to the page on which the lines appear.

"A Stricture, on the Rev. Mr. Warburton's Doctrine of Grace," Poems, II, i, 277.


Poems, II, i, 172-197.


Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language.


Absalom and Achitophel, 529-30.


Essay, p. 360.
16 South, Sermons, I, 422: the light within is nothing but recta ratio, "that intellectual power or faculty of the soul which every one is naturally endowed with."

17 Essay, p. 361; cf. South, Sermons, II, 403, "But metaphors, we know, are but weak mediums to prove anything."


19 Char., I, 21.
20 Ibid., II, 180.
21 Ibid., I, 37.
22 Ibid., 38-39.
23 Ibid., 39.

24 How violently the Methodists were treated in the public press is discussed in Albert M. Lyles, Methodism Mocked (London, 1960).

25 Remains, II, ii, 630-31. Even as early as 1739, Byrom was concerned and confused by the Wesleys and their distrust of mysticism (see Remains, II, i, 215-17).

26 John Wesley, Sermons, II, 329.
27 Ibid., 330-31.

28 Here Wesley is especially critical of mystics and visionaries like Boehme "who imagine that God dictates the very words they speak; and then, consequently, it is impossible they should speak any thing amiss, either as to the matter or manner of it," and again, "How are they misled by pride, and a warm imagination, to ascribe such impulses or impressions, dreams or visions to God, as are utterly unworthy of him! Now this is all pure enthusiasm, all as wide of religion, as it is of truth and soberness" (333). For the relationship between Law and Wesley see Peter Malekin, "William Law and John Wesley," Studia Neochilologica, XXXVII (1965), 190-99.

29 Wesley, Sermons, II, 334.
30 Ibid., 337.
31 *The Connoisseur*, No. 61, 79.

32 *Poems*, II, i, 168.

33 See, for example, *Char.*, I, 136, 216.

34 *Poems*, II, i, 169.

35 Ibid.

36 Again, Ward cites the relevant passages from Law.

37 *Poems*, II, ii, 469; 473.


39 Ibid., 43.


41 *Some Animadversions*, Works, VI, 197.

42 For a discussion of how Akenside attempted to show imagination mixing with practically all human activity, see the chapter in Robert Marsh, *Four Dialectical Theories of Poetry* (Chicago, 1965).


44 Spect. 588.

45 *Char.* II, 222.


49 *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate to One of his Friends*, ed. Richard Hurd (New York, 1809), p. 34.

50 Ibid., 101.

51 Ibid., 181.
Let. to Hurd, 213. Warburton saved some of his keenest barbs for William Law. Never an adherent to the Proverb that "He that hath knowledge spareth his words" (17.27), Warburton inserted a long note in the second volume of *The Divine Legation* (3rd ed., 1742) charging Law with madness. "The Primitive, or, to speak more properly, the Original Mr. William Law hath been pleased, in a Pamphlet lately written against the Reverend Doctor Trap, to go out of his Way to abuse the Author of the Divine Legation; whom he represents as an Enthusiast" (x). Warburton ironically comments that "he knew no more of Law's being a Methodist than of his being a Mandarin" (x). In his judgment Law was no "more mad than the Tartuff of Moliere, or the Nonjuror of Cibber" (xi). Many of Warburton's most vitriolic criticisms of Law, Boehme and like-minded individuals can be found in his *Doctrine of Grace* (1762), especially Bk. II, Ch. v-vi.

Let. to Hurd, p. 71. Warburton was often impatient and arrogant toward his antagonists, but even he could praise Byrom's integrity. In the conclusion of his first letter, Warburton says, "I don't know whether I am to apologize, or have a right to your acknowledgments, for this expostulation; for it is the first I ever made to the vast numbers who have abused me to the public; and you are entitled to it, as I think you the only honest man of that number" (Remains, II, ii, 524).

Let. to Hurd, 31 March 1755: "I have lived to see reasoning on principles and criticism on antiquity out of fashion" (p. 141).

Remains, II, ii, 523. Warburton first met Byrom at the Hartleys in March, 1736 (Remains, II, i, 28).

Div. Know., Works, VII, 150; in *The Spirit of Prayer*, Part I, he said, "Turn to thy heart, and thy Heart will find its Saviour, its God within itself. Thou seest, hearest and feelest nothing of God, because thou seekest for Him abroad with thy outward Eyes, thou seekest for Him in Books, in Controversies, in the Church, and outward Exercises, but there thou wilt not find Him, till thou hast first found Him in thy Heart" (Works, VII, 28).


Remains, II, ii, 524.

Ibid., 533.
60 Char., II, 175.
61 Ibid., 173.
CHAPTER V

Aesthetic Enthusiasm

Speak from within, not from without.¹

For a variety of reasons the eighteenth century has been called an Age of Reason, or of Satire, or of Sensibility, but seldom an age of Divine Song. Yet it is a century from which we have copious materials revealing a serious and consistent concern for devotional literature. In this chapter I wish to speculate briefly about Byrom's place within this context; indeed, his true significance as a poet emerges only when we realize that he was part of an eighteenth-century tradition of sacred poetry beginning with Isaac Watts and finding its most eloquent exponent in Charles Wesley. "Reproducing Paradise again/ And God's lost Image in the Souls of Men"² was Byrom's purpose in all that he wrote. To attain this end he combined a Behmenistic-Pauline mysticism with a heart-centered religious sensibility, which resulted in poems of intense piety, moral urgency and, what John Wesley called, "a deep and strong understanding."³ Byrom, then, is a representative of that religious poetry which during the middle of the century implies and illustrates a new aesthetic. In the following
analysis I wish to emphasize two aspects of inspirational, enthusiastic verse. First, we need to remind ourselves of the eighteenth-century link with the Renaissance tradition of real inspiration, which saw the poet as a divine instrument, "endued naturally with this Divine and heavenly gift." And secondly, in the eighteenth century itself we must note the new direction in poetry and the new critical values which justified divine verse. This context will allow us better to evaluate Byrom's achievement.

It had, of course, been a Renaissance commonplace to associate poetry with truth, and to see it as a means by which God's law and presence were first announced to mankind. The poet enjoyed not only divine favor but communication. George Puttenham noted that the earliest poets uttered prophesies and could foretell the future, but, more important, he saw that the poet's "perfection can not grow but by some divine instinct--the Platonicks call it furor." By virtue of his gift the poet came close to Divinity. Critical theory also assumed that the poet's genius was a power beyond rule and reason. "Sacred poesie" and "poetical furie" were the cliches of the age, all of which suggests a basis for making "enthusiasm" a proper attribute of the poet. The OED notes that the etymology of the term begins with the Greek entheos, to be inspired by a god, and for English poetry this quality was a commonplace, at least until the middle of the seventeenth
century. In the Argument to the "October Eclogue" of The Shepheardes Calender, for example, Spenser states that poetry is "a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by laboure and learning, but adorned with both: and poured into the witte by a certaine ἐνθουσιασμός [enthousiasmus] and celestiall inspiration." And later, Ben Jonson spoke of poetry as the "Queen of Arts, which had her Originall from heaven," and who required within the poet a rapture that "utters somewhat above a mortall mouth."7

By the end of the seventeenth century the real, or feigned, belief in a supernatural inspiration was more frequently called into question. The reference to poetry as "Queen of the Arts" became little more than an empty figure. Ultimately, of course, the whole theory of inspiration was held up to ridicule by Hobbes— to cite only him—who asked "why a Christian should think it an ornament to his Poem, either to profane the true God or invoke a false one." The whole thing, he continues, is a matter of reasonless custom "by which a man, enabled to speak wisely from the principles of nature and his own meditation, loves rather to be thought to speak by inspiration, like a Bagpipe."8 As poets and critics emphasized the rational elements in the art and craft of poetry, the significance of the divine impulse fell into even greater disrepute. Professor George Williamson has illustrated the Restoration revolt against enthusiasm,9 and much of
what I noted in the preceding chapter indicates the intensified suspicion toward it which was manifested in the early eighteenth century. But the idea of divine inspiration working in poetry was not so easily defeated. In fact, even as the term became more frequently applied to the different varieties of religious fanaticism, "enthusiasm" remained a means of explaining poetic invention.

The decline of the belief in real inspiration as a source of poetry can probably be traced to several causes, or a combination of them. Meyer Abrams suggests that the influence of Horace, with his emphasis on education and the development of craftmanship, weakened the whole theory that a poem came instantaneously from some heavenly source. George Williamson has shown how the rise of the new science and of a Restoration "rational rhetoric" helped establish a "correct" enthusiasm, one controlled by judgment. Generally the age was one of aristocratic, impersonal literature. It prized the genres which lent themselves to philosophical speculation or social criticism. While poets certainly did not ignore religion, the rational tenor of the times made divine song an unpopular, if not unsophisticated, mode. With exceptions like the criticism of Dennis and an occasional paper by Addison (e.g., Spect. 405 or 453), literary theory refused to consider religious subjects valid for verse. During the first half of the century, personal, sincere devotional poems can be found mainly in the works of
Watts, Husbands, Smart, Byrom and the Wesleys. Even Byrom's didacticism and his constant dependence on the heroic couplet leave us with the impression of something less than real ardor in his lines, although clearly he was sincere, if not zealous, in all he thought and wrote.

Finally, there is another indication of the decrease in the "inspired" character of verse. The invocation to heaven or to the Muse became merely a convention. There can be little doubt that many poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries believed in divine inspiration and invoked the Deity accordingly. We need only recall that Milton invoked his "heavenly muse" to illumine what was dark and raise what was low. However, the eighteenth-century poet called upon a divine agent or invoked the muse because there was classical authority for doing so, or because he had a specific purpose in mind (frequently satiric as in Pope's mock invocations in The Rape of the Lock or The Dunciad). In critical theory the idea of the divine was generalized under such terms as "genius" or "grace," by which Augustans attempted to explain the supra-human element in poetry. But to a rational age the idea of prophetic inspiration or of divine participation in the creative mind was madness. With the exception of a Christopher Smart, it was not generally believed possible, in such a modern age, to have a truly divine poet, in the sense that the Biblical David was. And of course, every one knew Smart was "mad."
In spite of all the furor religious enthusiasm generated in the age, eighteenth-century literary commentators on imagination and on enthusiasm share (at least tacitly) a common ground. First, there are certain common generalizations which one finds in discussions of both subjects. In Chapter IV, I noted that the critics of enthusiasm blamed this state of mind on a charged-up language. Both imagination (fancy) and enthusiasm had to be controlled by reason, for both were strongly influenced by the passions. However, the terms used to describe an enthusiastic cast of mind are frequently close to those used to describe an imaginative one. In his papers on the "Pleasures of the Imagination," Addison not only established an analogy between beauty and religious experience (Nos. 412-13), but shows that one can be "transported with a Passage," that "The Fancy must be warm" (No. 416), that some subjects can "raise a secret Ferment in the Mind of the Reader" and can "work, with Violence, upon his Passions"(No. 418). Shakespeare's imagination, he argues, conjures up "Ghosts, Fairies, Witches and the like Imaginary Persons"(No. 419). In his final Paper he concludes that a "Mind disordered by Dreams or Sickness" may be "over-run with wild dismal Ideas, and terrified with a thousand hideous Monsters of its own framing"(No. 421). Such diction is very much like that by which the age characterized religious enthusiasm. What we begin to see is that imagination and enthusiasm were different degrees of the same quality,
except that enthusiasm was more condensed, a more intense level of thinking and feeling. And, probably because it created more public turmoil and unrest, it was considered a greater evil than imagination. At any rate, we can see that in its own way Addison's language is enthusiastic.

If the belief in a real inspiration withered during the early years of the century, a new variety of sacred poetry grew to rich abundance. Many of the most eloquent examples of eighteenth-century devotional verse are the hymns, both those designed specifically for public worship and those more "literary" artistic productions of private meditation. Isaac Watts, Joseph Addison, James Thomson, Christopher Smart, John Byrom, and Charles Wesley are a few of the more significant of the hymn writers. We need to distinguish between the psalm used for church services and the term "hymn" as I use it in the remainder of this chapter. With great regularity, the Church of England used the Old Version (1562) of metrical psalms or the so-called New Version brought out in 1696 by Laureate Nahum Tate and the Reverend Nicholas Brady. All the poets listed above paraphrased or adapted the Psalms in their own verse, but the selections from their works used here are from original hymns. We should remember that the modern Protestant congregational hymn first developed during the eighteenth century, and that it comprises the single most important variety of devotional verse popular at this time.
The clarion call for the eighteenth-century hymn was sounded by Isaac Watts in his *Horae Lyricae* (1706) and his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707). Basically, the hymn is a song or lyric poem praising the attributes of God. Its common elements are earnestness of purpose, piety, simplicity, intensity of emotion, and a frequent didacticism. It was designed to involve the heart of the common man with the nature of God and of human salvation in an age in which the attributes of God were argued, disputed, and ridiculed. The same year that Watts published his *Hymns and Songs*, Anthony Collins published his *Essay concerning the Use of Reason*, in which he ridicules God's attributes by saying that

God (a) rests; (b) repents; (c) is capable of anger; (d) is ignorant of the State of Adam; (e) is cheered with wine; (f) comes down to earth to see how things are; (g) stands before Moses on the Rock of Horeb; (h) has a face; (i) a finger with which he writes, and (j) back parts.

I quote this only because it illustrates, by contrast, the personal sincerity of the hymn and because it suggests at least one aspect of the religious milieu of the age. But free-thinking represents an extreme point of view; the majority opinion is probably more adequately expressed by Addison. In praising Hebrew poetry he noted the real value of hymns for increasing religious sentiment. Music, he said, "raises noble Hints in the Mind of the Hearer and fills it with great Conceptions. It strengthens Devotion, and advances Praise into Rapture" *(Spect. 405).*
In Watts we find some of the few examples of truly personal poetry written during the Augustan era. In his Preface to *Horae Lyricae*, he noted that poetry "whose Original is Divine" had been turned by an elegant and sophisticated age to "the Interests of Hell." Satire, he continued, is only a "grinning and growling Muse." His important critical judgments are to be found in his praise of the vigor and strength of Hebrew verse and in his defense of religious subjects for poetry. Classical models should be given up for Christian ones, for "the naked Themes of Christianity have something brighter and bolder in them, something more surprising and celestial, than all the Adventures of Gods and Heroes, all the dazzling Images of false Lustre that form and garnish a Heathen Song." Like many of his contemporaries he bemoaned the state of religion. Feeling that he was living in an age of dying piety, he hoped that poetry would surprise, delight, and spur devotion in minds which "reasonable" sermons failed to reach. The hymn would carry men "into a brighter Region" and give them "a Glimpse of Evangelic Day." The typical critical reaction the hymnists received is illustrated by Dr. Johnson's comment on Watts: "his devotional poetry is, like that of others, unsatisfactory." And, he continues, "the paucity of its topics enforces perpetual repetition, and the sanctity of the matter rejects the ornaments of figurative diction. It is sufficient for Watts to have done better than others what no man has done well."
But there was a growing opposition to that critical position. Not only Watts, but Joseph Trapp and William Law vigorously urged the importance of the enthusiastic qualities inherent in the poetic and devotional imagination. Watts saw that there could be no religious poetry unless the heart was inflamed by heaven. Trapp was more specific in relating the poetic to the enthusiastic state of mind: it is the *furor poeticus*, that "poetic pathos, or enthusiasm, viz., which consists in the marvelous, and raises admiration by impressing, upon the mind something great, unusual, and portentous."¹⁹ Nor does he limit this quality merely to religious poetry, as his copious selections from classical poets illustrate. Following the Longinian tradition he assumes that the art of poetry is to move the passions, the primary means of attaining sublimity. William Law argued along very much the same lines but for a different purpose. In Chapter XV of *A Serious Call* (1729), he demands that man begin each prayer with a psalm, not just thinking it, but singing it. "Whilst you only read it, you only like it, and that is all; but as soon as you sing it, then you enjoy it, you feel the delight of it; it has got hold of you, your passions keep pace with it, and you feel the same spirit within you that seems to be in the words."²⁰ Singing affects the heart and it is the heart which attunes the spirit to the glorification of God.
Secondly, Law, who defined devotion as "delight in God," notes the necessity of an imaginative state of mind. One cannot be devotional until he gives free reign to his imagination. Devotional response is aesthetic response.

Be still, and imagine to yourself that you saw the heavens open, and the glorious choirs of cherubims and seraphims about the throne of God. Imagine that you hear the music of those angelic voices that cease not day and night to sing the glories of Him that is, and was, and is to come. Think upon this till your imagination has carried you above the clouds; till it has placed you amongst those heavenly beings, and made you long to bear a part in their eternal music. Law emphasizes not only the effects of a poetic sensibility, but the manner in which it becomes an integral part of the religious experience. We should remember that this book preceded by several years his first Behmenistic treatise; nevertheless, he argues vigorously for the power of the imagination and feeling for developing the devout and holy life. While the disciples of Locke and Shaftesbury were criticizing the over-indulgence in imagination and passion which led to enthusiasm and fanaticism, men like Watts and Law were advocating the enthusiastic imagination as a means of realizing devotional poetry.

Poetry in the early eighteenth-century is characterized by its elegant sophistication, restraint, and impersonality. In the hymn we have not only a difference in tone but in experience because the hymn becomes the plain song of the plain people. It brought theology and salvation down from the pulpit
and allowed each individual soul to partake of the glory of

God. Toward the middle of the century this variety of sacred

poetry reached a crest, predominantly in the Wesleys, but also

important are Thomson and Smart. The mature hymns of

Charles Wesley, who wrote over 9,000 poems, many of which

were specifically designed for use in congregational worship,

are the best of their kind. In Watts there had been certain

elements of the Dies Irae tradition as well as certain obvious

Calvinistic ingredients, as one modern commentator has said,

"in his songs is the insignia of Calvin's personal crest." Typical are these lines from his poem "The Day of Judgment."

Hark the shrill Outcries of the guilty Wretches!
Lively bright Horror and amazing Anguish
Stare thro' their Eye-lids, while the living Worm
lies Gnawing within them.
(17-20)

But Wesley emphasizes passionate feeling, a more subjective

and personal relationship with God. In the best of his hymns

we find not only joyful trust in Divine Providence, but also a

sense of personal struggle and urgency, often combined with a

sense of insufficiency. In the best of them, there is lyrical

fervour, as in the joy of his famous Easter hymn,

'Christ the Lord is risen to-day,'
Sons of men and angels say,
Raise your joys and triumphs high;
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply.
(1-4)
On the other hand, in his "Morning Hymn" he cries out, in fact, pleads for the spirit of God to wipe away his sin and warm his heart.

Visit then this Soul of mine,
Pierce the Gloom of Sin, and Grief,
Fill me, Radiancy Divine,
Scatter all my Unbelief,
More and more Thyself display,
Shining to the Perfect Day.

Such poems illustrate greater passion than characteristic of eighteenth-century verse in general, where the poet and reader are purposely detached. Detachment invalidates the whole intention of the hymn. In "Wrestling Jacob" Wesley portrays the struggle between the soul and the power of Christ. "In Temptation" he responds with a sense of helplessness to the thought of being left without God, "Leave, ah leave me not alone"(11). Significantly such elements of a personal, devotional relationship with God have become a viable, energetic subject for poetry. In the poet's desire for God, we can note certain elements of Byrom's "enthusiasm." Such poems suggest the new emphasis on sentiment, as well as a new sensibility.

One final example of devotional poetry needs to be noted, but here we turn to works not specifically written for public worship. More and more Nature became a source not only of descriptions by which to praise God's handiwork, but of material to prove that all Creation exalted before the throne of God.
We need to note two aspects of this as illustrated in the "enthusiastic" Deism of James Thomson and in the original devotional and prophetic verse of Christopher Smart.

James Thomson's "Hymn to the Seasons" (1730) not only praises the seasons as the "varied God" (2), but is a catalog illustrating how each particle of Nature somehow realizes the Infinite and sings Its praise.

NATURE attend! join every living Soul,
Beneath the spacious Temple of the Sky,
In Adoration join; and, ardent, raise
One general Song!
(37-40)

Rocks, herbs, fruits, flowers, gales, thunder and clouds all
tell the glory of God, Who permeates all. For

GOD is ever present, ever felt,
In the void Waste as in the City full;
And where HE vital spreads there must be joy.
(105-07)

Ultimately, Thomson writes of a "nature spiritualized," much as James Hervey did in his Meditations and Contemplations (1745; enlarged ed., 1747). As Hervey meditated among the tombs and reflected upon a flower garden, his religious sensibilities and moral enthusiasm marveled at the all-creating God at work in Nature. In both of these men, the Divine Presence is not only seen, but felt in each and every particle of earthly existence. Thomson responds to God in Nature in a manner not unlike that in which Warton's enthusiast responds to Nature itself. Such poems as these are significant because they use Nature as a means to devotion and make devotion itself a fit subject for verse.
However, in showing how all Creation exalted before the throne of God, Thomson is far less personal and passionate than Christopher Smart, who in *Jubilate Agno* portrayed all Nature as a choir lifting its voice in praise of its creator. The poet himself becomes "a kind of choir-master leading the creation in an answering song."  

Rejoice in God, 0 ye Tongues; give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb.  
Nations, and languages, and every creature, in which is the breath of life.  
Let man and beast appear before Him, and magnify His name together.  

(Flowers, animals, fish, precious metals, earth and heaven--even his cat Jeoffry--praise God. Smart's is a poetic and prophetic vision of a spiritualized nature, a nature in which God lives and moves and has His being. In *Jubilate Agno* and his paraphrases from Psalms we can note Smart's personal involvement with his God, and this is nowhere more originally exemplified than in his "Song to David." While the character and poetic virtues of King David give the poem its subject, it soon becomes a hymn of ecstatic praise and adoration for the union of Creator and creation. Like David, Smart sang "To God th' eternal theme"(57). It is man's function to "Work emulation up to heaven/ By knowledge and by zeal"(287-88). The poem concludes with a list of all the creatures--domestic and wild--all the seasons, all the land and its products, indeed, the universe itself rejoices in the adoration of God. The poem concludes in an effusion of splendor, of evangelical brilliance.)
Glorious the northern lights astream;
Glorious the song, when God's the theme
    Glorious the thunder's roar:
Glorious hosanna from the den;
Glorious the catholic amen;
    Glorious the martyr's gore:

Glorious—more glorious is the crown
Of Him that brought salvation down
    By meekness, call'd Thy Son;
Thou that stupendous truth believ'd,
    And now the matchless deed's achiev'd,
    DETERMINED, DARED, and DONE.

As the age came more and more to articulate its devotion
in the forms of hymns and sacred poetry, Robert Lowth pointed
literary criticism directly at religious verse when he pre­
sented his Oxford lectures on Hebrew poetry (1741-51, pub.,
in Latin, 1753). In giving a Longinian reading to Biblical
poetry, Lowth not only praised the enthusiastic imagination of
the prophets, but suggested an aesthetic basis for the devotional
poetry of his own century. Even though he continued the
Renaissance tradition of viewing poetry as an art which not only
delights but instructs, he re-established the critical relation­
ship between poetry and enthusiasm, thus once more giving criti­
cal sanction to aesthetic enthusiasm.

For, what is meant by that singular frenzy of
poets, which the Greeks, ascribing the divine
inspiration, distinguished by the appellation of
enthusiasm, but a style and expression directly
prompted by nature itself, and exhibiting the
true and express image of a mind violently agi­
tated? when, as it were, the secret avenues,
the interior recesses of the soul are thrown
open; when the inmost conceptions are displayed,
rushing together in one turbid stream, without
order or connexion.25
Imaginative enthusiasm is thus perfectly natural as well as truthful. The "one turbid stream" which resulted from inspiration did not, however, terminate in madness. Lowth argues that the Divine Spirit never takes complete possession of the imagination and genius of the poet; "the natural powers of the mind are in general elevated and refined, they are neither eradicated nor totally obscured."

For our purposes Lowth's explanation of the sublimity of sentiment and his defense of divine poetry is significant because the terms in which he describes such verse could easily be applied to the type of eighteenth-century verse we have been discussing. Watts and the Wesleys wrote their poems to stimulate piety, to raise in the hearts of worshippers a sense of the divine glory and awe, even in the men of "plainest Capacity," Lowth finds the sublimity of sacred poetry in the fact that "it strikes and fires the admiration by the contemplation of the Divine Majesty; and, forcing the affections of love, hope, and joy, from unworthy and terrestrial objects, elevates them to the pursuit of the supreme good: how it also stimulates those of grief, hatred, and fear, which are usually employed upon the trifling miseries of this life, to the abhorrence of the supreme evil, is a subject, which at present wants no illustration." He takes it for granted that the efficacy of devotional verse needs no substantiation. Of course, his primary topic is Hebrew poetry, but in arguing for the artistry of this divine
song, he notes that genuine enthusiasm is a natural adjunct to inspiration. Thus divine or prophetic poetry "excels in the brightness of imagination and in clearness and energy of diction, and consequently rises to an uncommon pitch of sublimity: hence also it often is very happy in the expression and delineation of the passions, though more commonly employed in the exciting of them; this indeed is its immediate object, over this it presides as its peculiar province."²⁹ In his emphasis on clearness and pointed diction, Lowth suggests his neoclassical background, but he goes beyond this to show that the grandeur, admiration, and sublimity of sacred poetry lies as much in its thought as in its plain or elegant modes of expression. He defends the psychological and aesthetic impact of the emotional qualities inherent in such verse. It is that which "strikes and overpowers the mind, which excites the passions, and which expresses ideas at once with perspicuity and elevation" which is the essence of devotional and sublime poetry.³⁰

The idea of the poet's intense contemplation of an object is basic to an "enthusiastic" theory of poetry. In An Essay on Genius (1774), the associationist Alexander Gerard, linked this idea with that of divine inspiration. He argued that "the fire of genius, like a divine impulse" raises the mind above itself and that enthusiastic ardor elevated imagination "by engrossing us wholly in the present subject."³¹ Thus the qualities of religious enthusiasm are taken up by aesthetic criticism and used to explain the relationship between the poet's inspiration and his perception. Byrom helped in this for by generalizing
the term "enthusiasm" he aided in bringing what had once meant only the "exploded ravings of madmen" to represent the natural, spontaneous response to what is "lovely, harmonious and substantial" in themselves and in creation.

Finally, we must ask, what is Byrom's significance in this context? Because of his belief that God continuously and gratuitously bestows his favor on all mankind, he appears somewhat out of place. When he speaks of imagination and desire as the divine working in man, he means just that; it is a statement of plain, simple fact. While many of his contemporaries linked the imaginative faculty with the divine, they frequently did so in an analogic or metaphoric way. For example, in his first ode "To Fancy" (1746), Joseph Warton portrayed imagination first as "An all-commanding magic wand"(14) and secondly as a "warm, enthusiastic maid" who gave that "powerful, vital aid/ That breathes an energy divine/ That gives a soul to every line"(89-92). But certainly the maid is not God, nor is the "energy divine" something that any supernatural agent lends to the verse. These lines merely explain an effect of the beauty and meaning within the poet's work and are metaphorlic means of describing the poetic function. While Byrom does not seem to have believed he was inspired each time he sat down to compose a verse, he does help to shape the context of devotional poetry which I have tried to sketch in this chapter.

To make a final judgment about Byrom the poet, we must understand two things: as a stylist he was certainly an "unenthusiastic" maker of verse, but as a thinker he defended
inspiration and devotional literature in general. Like Law, he believed sentiments were easier to feel than to explain. Law had said, "Sometimes the light of God's countenance shines so bright upon us, we see so far into the invisible world, we are so affected with the wonders of the love and goodness of God, that our hearts worship and adore in a language higher than that of words, and we feel transports of devotion, which only can be felt." In "An Hymn on the Omnipresence" Byrom explained the same sentiment this way.

Thou art always about me, go whither I will,
All the Paths that I take to, I meet with thee still;
I go forth abroad, and am under thine Eye,
I retire to myself, and behold! thou art by;
How is it that thou hast encompass'd me so
That I cannot escape thee, wherever I go?
Such Knowledge as this is too high to attain,
'Tis a Truth which I feel, tho' I cannot explain.
(9-16)

Byrom's poetry, then, is characterized by several elements. In all of his verse there is an obvious Horatian influence. He was seldom a satirist, but almost always a rhetorician. He believed that the figures of thought and diction were the most viable means of poetic statement, that poetry was regular, ordered, sensible. His constant dependence upon the heroic couplet and balanced or antithetical phrase are the best evidence of his neoclassical training and of his belief that the poetic function is "To clear the Head, to animate the Heart." He was, after all, an apologist for Law's ideas, and therefore, his single most characteristic quality is didacticism. His central purpose was to explain a religious and moral doctrine. And he did his work well; as we have seen even Warburton attested
to this. In Byrom's mind the reader's profit should come first, his pleasure second. In every verse, rime becomes the dress of thought: "Just and improving Sentiments deserve to be placed in any Light that may either engage the Attention of a Reader or assist his Memory, and Verse, as I have found by experience, does both." 34 Any educated Augustan would have agreed with such sentiments.

But to look at the style is to see only half the poet. In this and the preceding chapter I have suggested the ways in which Byrom may be associated with the tradition of Longinian criticism as well as an aesthetic enthusiasm which found its major expression in devotional verse. By drawing on random lines from other of his poems we can see in what ways Byrom argued for inspiration and carried on the inspirational tradition. His basic tenet is that God's free gift of grace never ceases, if only men will open their hearts. With St. Paul he called on all men to admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3.16). Byrom knew it was impossible to judge of things heavenly without a heavenly light in man's soul, a theme which appears over and over, "The Seed of Christ is in the Human Race." 35 He never argued for the validity of visions or uncontrolled transport, but for that mystical instinct to which the mind may be subjected. 36
What, though no sounds shall penetrate the ear!
To listening thought the Voice of Truth is clear.
What, though no object strike upon the sight,
Thy Secret Presence is an Inward Light.37

Man needs no outward signs; divine inspiration is a continuous process dating from the moment of creation. This allows God to work in the hearts of pious, but unlettered men; the Word is "oft understood,/ By Persons unlearn'd, but pious and good,/ Who have much better Helps than mere Learning can yield."38

In the best evangelical spirit, Byrom demands that even the lowly, ignorant man can be inspired--after all, Boehme was. With constant echoes of Law's disparagement of learning, Byrom argues that educated reason only stands in the way of sincere devotion. He criticizes the Deists and sceptics because they "Seek to unfasten the prophetic Chain."39 Because he believed man could be inspired, indeed, had to be "enthusiastic" to gain salvation, he harkens back to a tradition no longer "true" for his age.

For the views he espoused, his own age called him a fanatic. In reality, he was an anachronism--and a prophecy. He was of another age because he upheld a belief in inspiration and in the indwelling spirit that had largely died out during the preceding century, but he was also an augury because he anticipates Blake and Romanticism in general. Blake held the same radical notions concerning the divine spirit in man. His great task, as he notes in Jerusalem, was
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.
O Saviour pour upon me Thy Spirit of meekness & love!
Annihilate the Selfhood in me: be thou all my life!  

Of course, Byrom's mystical tendencies place him in a larger
and longer, and ultimately more important tradition. He gave
an inclusiveness to inspiration so that it covered the whole
human race. For this he was labeled mad. If we are to assess
Byrom on the basis of his attainment in promoting Law and his
theories, we must conclude he had little success. But if we
judge him--and Law--as a defender of enthusiasm, of inspiration,
and of the affections of the heart we must pronounce him success­
ful. His poem Enthusiasm illustrates a mature talent; more
important, it reveals Byrom's depth of feeling, his ability to
argue cogently for the truths he felt. He mused, and argued,
but never doubted.

Led by this Faith, when Man forsakes his Sin,
The Gate stands open to his God within:
There, in the Temple of his Soul, is found
Of inward Central Life the Holy Ground.

(363-66)

Not in the sanctuary of "Learned Reason," but in the temple of
the human soul and imagination lay man's true humanity and
spiritual greatness. Byrom is a constant echo of Law's conviction
that faith is "simple, illiterate, unreasoning."  
The "John Shadow" of the Spectator or the good-natured Dr. Byrom
of Tom's and Richard's coffeehouses are interesting in them­selves, but the sincere warmth, honesty, and piety of John Byrom,
mystical apologist and laureate of Law, are the real measures of
the man and poet.
FOOTNOTES—CHAPTER V


3 Journal, July 12, 1773, V, 518.


7 Timber, or Discoveries, Spingarn, I, 51-52.

8 Answer to Davenant, Spingarn, II, 59.

9 "The Restoration Revolt against Enthusiasm," SP, XXX (1930), 571-603.


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20 *Works*, IV, 147.


27 Watts, p. xxii.

28 Lowth, I, 376.


31 Elledge, II, 894-95.

32 *A Serious Call*, Works, IV, 135.

33 "*Dulce ante Omnia Musae,*" *Poems*, I, i, 164.
Prefatory Epistle, Enthusiasm, Poems, II, i, 168.


C. D. Baker notes this as one of the means of and for divine instruction, 315.


Epistle I, "Four Epistles to the Rev. Mr. L—, late Vicar of Bowden, upon the Miracle at the Feast of Pentecost," Poems, II, i, 284.

"Remarks on Dr. Middleton's Examination of the Lord Bishop of London's Discourses Concerning the Use and Intent of Prophecy," Poems, II, i, 239.


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