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Robert Eddy

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## Abstract

### Mysticism in Eighteenth-Century English Literature

Robert Eddy

In the heart of the 'age of reason' there is a hunger for transcendence, for the experience of unity of the mind and spirit of man with the Divine, both within nature and beyond. The sublime was the socially acceptable mode in which the man of reason abandoned the rules and anxiously sought to experience the transcendental. The sublime was not an aberration of the age but an inevitable outcome of the new awareness of the infinite resulting from various causes including the seventeenth-century scientific advances, the work of Newton and of Locke. The desire of the age for integration and wholeness is elucidated through examination of the work of sixteen writers. Beginning with the third Earl of Shaftesbury and ending with William Law, this thesis intends to show, first, that there was a significant amount of mystical literature written in eighteenth-century England and, secondly, that there was a vital mystical dimension in the spirit of the age. The writers examined are not part of one or two large groups atypical against the background of their century. They come from different traditions and are diffused throughout the period. The writers studied are as well-known as Christopher Smart and George Berkeley and as little known as James Usher and Alexander Dow. The oneness of mystical experience, which, to various degrees, all of the writers demonstrate in their mystical insights, impelled them to write of the oneness of internal and external reality, and of the human and Divine. They all testify, in different ways and with various emphases, that there is a divine, creative force in man which unifies all the disparate elements of self, and unites the self with God, but only when one gives all to this divine fire in the soul.

Mysticism in Eighteenth-Century English Literature

Robert Eddy

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Ph.D.

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1983

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-5. DEC. 1983

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## PREFACE

This thesis has two purposes: the first is to show that there was a significant amount of mystical literature written in eighteenth-century England, most of it of considerable quality. The second purpose is to indicate that in the very temper, sensibility and aspiration of the age there is a vital mystical dimension.

Most of the chapters are organized around individuals, not topics. Mysticism is not an idea and should not be treated as such. In spite of what its critics say, nothing is less abstract than mysticism. It is the overwhelmingly vivid experience of the Real. Each chapter includes a large number of carefully chosen quotations, sometimes rather long. This practice is a protection against loose generalizations and allows the writers, many of whom are little known, to speak for themselves. The passages are selected and arranged so as to reveal the heart of the mystical temper of the writers and of their age.

To be included in this study a writer had to satisfy three requirements: 1) he has to show clear evidence of mystical insight;<sup>1</sup> 2) his writings have to be worthy of note; 3) he has to belong firmly to the eighteenth century, not to the seventeenth or to the Romantics. John Norris of Bemerton (1657-1711) is not included since his poems were published in 1684, and he wrote little or no significant poetry after 1700. He is basically a Cambridge Platonist and belongs to the seventeenth century. Blake is not examined because he is of the Romantic period: moreover he is in no danger of being forgotten or ignored, whereas many of the writers studied herein have been largely and some almost completely neglected. The intrinsic value of their work, its force and clarity, make this neglect unwarrantable. There are in addition a fair number of very minor poets in the period who show glimmerings of mystical insight but whose work is unworthy of note. In this group one can name, for example, Lemuel Abbott, Thomas Harrison, Walter Harte and William Tans'ur.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most successful example of their work is the following stanza by Lemuel Abbott:

O thou, my great Beginning, End;  
Creator, Father, Lover, Friend;  
The highest, fairest, best!  
Thee give me as thou art to see,  
To lose my raptur'd Soul in thee,  
And be supremely blest.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For a definition of mysticism and its characteristics, see chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> For references to the works of the above named see the Bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> 'An Hymn to the Deity', viii. Poems on Various Subjects, (Nottingham, 1765).

The Bibliography is arranged in simple alphabetical order. There are no sections or subdivisions so that the reader can easily find full particulars from abbreviated footnote references.

It is appropriate in such a study as is undertaken in this thesis, that the author clearly disclose his own religious viewpoint so that the reader can balance his or her personal perspective and bias against that of the author. However, unlike Hoxie Fairchild who began his five volume Religious Trends in English Poetry by roundly declaring: 'I am an Anglo-Catholic in theory and practise', all the present writer can say is that he is nonsectarian and freely acknowledges a belief in the reality of mystical experience.

Aton Temple  
Tell El-Amarna  
1 June 1983

## INTRODUCTION

George Saintsbury's classic study of the eighteenth century emphasized the peace and stability of the age.<sup>1</sup> More recent scholarship, however, especially of the last two decades, has often shown that Saintsbury's view is incomplete, if not misleading. James T. Boulton has argued that in the political consciousness of the age there was a fear of arbitrary power which he characterized as an 'obsession'.<sup>2</sup> In 1688 a lawless king was dethroned, but it was not until a hundred years later that the last Stuart hopes died with Prince Charles. Yet the fear of arbitrary power was more than the fear of a second Stuart restoration. There was the Tory fear, shared by many Whigs, of government by a mob of thieves--the ministerial tyranny of Walpole, as seen for example in The Beggar's Opera, 1728. The Whig fear of the return of the Stuarts or of a Hanov<sup>e</sup>rian move towards absolutism was real. It was increased by the common view that ministerial tyranny could best be countered by a strong king, as enunciated for example by Bolingbroke, when he emphasized the need for a 'patriot king' to impose order on society.<sup>3</sup> For Boulton the eighteenth century was an age of anxiety which engaged in a 'prolonged debate on the source, nature and scope of political authority'. This was the age in which 'all claims to authority--whether in politics, religion or literature--were being closely scrutinized'.<sup>4</sup> J.H. Plumb concurs with Boulton that there was a 'clash of ideas and of attitudes at all levels of society'.<sup>5</sup>

Such a 'clash of ideas' and examination of the 'claims to authority' could be considered a logical outcome of a rationalist spirit. But the causes of the debate in politics, religion and literature are wider and result from more than a 'rationally' critical attitude towards reality. The non-rational element in the quest for the sources of authority is also of real importance and is part of a larger reality which includes the rational and non-rational or the spiritual and non-spiritual. In studying the interaction of these seeming opposites, since they can never be wholly divorced from each other, the important concern is to understand the dynamics of their interrelation and to determine a sense of the relative 'ratio' of the rational and non-rational.

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<sup>1</sup> The Peace of the Augustans, (1916).

<sup>2</sup> 'Arbitrary Power: an Eighteenth-Century Obsession', Inaugural Lecture, University of Nottingham, (1966).

<sup>3</sup> See ibid., p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>5</sup> 'Reason and Unreason in the Eighteenth Century: the English Experience', William Andrews Clark Memorial Library Seminar Papers: Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century England, (Los Angeles, 1971), p.21.



A recent writer has argued that the eighteenth century had an obsession with space and with confinement. This obsession, he explains, encouraged either the finding of some kind of escape or shelter, or led to the desire to experience what is most real in life.<sup>1</sup> There is in the eighteenth century a desire to deny (e.g. Hume, Mandeville), domesticate (Deists) or to unite with the infinite (the sublime), rather than merely to coexist without interrelation. There is a new awareness of the infinite and its reflection in interstellar space. Inevitably this awareness led to the question of man's relation to this more meaningful, complex and often menacing infinite. Josephine Miles' statistical study of eighteenth century poetry confirms that there is a common concern with man's relation to the infinite. Fall and rise are the most common verbs in the century, and air and sky are the most characteristic nouns. Miles believes that such words indicate the 'cosmic atmosphere and activity that prevailed'.<sup>2</sup> She adds that there is a 'brief tenure of neoclassicism in the eighteenth century, and the looming power of a cosmic art beyond the classic'.<sup>3</sup> All of the writers examined in this thesis aspired and to various degrees attained a cosmic or universal perspective. Shaftesbury, Toland, Usher, Brooke, Smart, Berkeley, and Law were the more successful. When this new consciousness of the infinite could not be dealt with or integrated psychologically, the non-rational manifested in its most negative, irrational forms and produced the commonly remarked and sadly prevalent 'madness' of the period. Northrop Frye insists that the 'list of poets over whom the shadow of mental breakdown fell is far too long to be coincidence'.<sup>4</sup>

The new concern with the infinite developed from a number of causes. Seventeenth-century scientific advances, especially those related to the telescope, required time for their real significance to be felt.<sup>5</sup> Another

<sup>1</sup> W. Carnochan, Confinement and Flight: an Essay on English Literature of the Eighteenth Century, (Berkeley, Calif., 1977), pp.8-10.

<sup>2</sup> Eras and Modes in English Poetry, (Berkeley, Calif., 1964), p.58.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp.64-5.

<sup>4</sup> 'Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility', Fables of Identity, (New York, 1963), p.136. Cf. Max Byrd, Visits to Bedlam: Madness and Literature in the Eighteenth Century, (Columbia, South Carolina, 1974), p.xiv:

...From the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century in England we find that with astonishing energy and vehemence English society assaulted the ancient idea of the extraordinary madman- indeed, it assaulted the person of the madman himself. It is from the beginning of this period that we date the widespread practice of incarceration of the insane.

It is as if the eighteenth-century man, Johnson, for example, in fearing madness, is vehement in rejecting it and unsympathetic to the mad and those dismissed as mad, like Christopher Smart.

<sup>5</sup> On this time-lag of the impact produced by the new scientific discoveries many have commented, Alfred North Whitehead, for example. See G.S. Rousseau,

cause of the new sense of the infinite was the work of Newton, who (it was felt) had returned order to nature. It had been believed until the seventeenth century that the orbits of the planets were perfect circles and that they were natural symbols and literal demonstrations of divine perfection. But seventeenth-century astronomical observations made it clear that the orbits were in fact elliptical, not circular. This discovery was a shock. Though it is difficult to measure the extent of this shock, it is reasonable to expect its effects in the more artistic and religious personalities. The discovery produced an emerging sense that the universe is perhaps lawless and irrational.<sup>1</sup> Newton's study of gravity and his work on the orbit of the moon demonstrated mathematically, and predicted into the future, the precise orbit of the moon. Since the same method could be used with planetary orbits, Pope was voicing a common and often emotional feeling when he wrote:

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.  
God said, Let Newton be! And all was light.

But Newton performed another service. He in effect divinized nature, as did Shaftesbury and Toland later and in different ways, as the vast sensorium of God. Newton, as Dobbs has shown,<sup>2</sup> did not want to destroy religious mystery with mathematics but penetrate it. He viewed the universe as a hieroglyph which he wished to decipher, and viewed scripture, especially Revelation, similarly. His deep, if not consuming interest in alchemy was conditioned by a desire to enter as deeply as possible into the mystery. There was a great depth in Newton's love of the divine and passion in his search for the One in the mathematical multiplicity of the universe.<sup>3</sup> Praised by nearly everyone, from Hume to William Law, who was uninterested in what he called 'mere' human knowledge and who regarded Newton as a great man,<sup>4</sup> Newton can stand for an important aspect of the eighteenth century

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<sup>1</sup> 'Science', The Eighteenth Century, ed. Pat Rogers, (1978), pp.154ff.

<sup>1</sup> See Marjorie Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle, (New York, 1960), especially pp.7,9.

<sup>2</sup> The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy, (Cambridge, 1975), pp.108-11.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Frances Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment (1972); Paladin paperback edn. (1975), p.244:

As a deeply religious man,...Newton was profoundly preoccupied by the search for the One, for the One God, and for the divine Unity revealed in nature. Newton's marvellous physical and mathematical explorations of nature had not entirely satisfied him. Perhaps he entertained, or half-entertained, a hope that the 'Rosicrucian' alchemical way through nature might lead him even higher.

<sup>4</sup> See Stephen Hobhouse, Selected Mystical Writings of William Law, 2nd edn., (1948), pp.397-422. Also Arthur Wormhoudt, 'Newton's Natural Philosophy in the Behmenistic Works of William Law', JHI, 10 (1949), 411-429.

mind and sensibility. He shows the spirit of science and reason at their best, accepting the mysterium tremendum in humility and wishing to demonstrate it, not arrogantly deny or dismiss it. Newton's mathematical laws and divinization of nature tended to ameliorate the terror of a vast and silent universe, as memorably voiced for example by Pascal.<sup>1</sup> Though some used Newton for mechanistic purposes, Newton himself believed that the regularity in the universe was only possible because of God's activity and omnipresence in a nature that is otherwise chaos. Newton developed this point of view in the Opticks, 1704.<sup>2</sup>

Another reason for the new concern with the infinite was the immense reputation of Locke. He was influential in two ways relevant to the present study. His rejection of innate ideas in Book One of the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, 1690, helped to turn or fix the eighteenth century gaze outward to the universe at large, where, according to the physician and philosopher, the only proof of God could be found.<sup>3</sup> His rejection of 'enthusiasm' in the Essay (Book IV, ch.19) following on the rejection of innate ideas, was a dismissal of the Inner Light as an illusion. His second influence, also resulting from the rejection of innate ideas, was that his tabula rasa became for many a psychological and religious void. This void tended to transform one's perception of the universe into an alien, impersonal and remote place with no innate relation to the human spirit. The logical outcome of the first influence was that it gave a strong impetus to the 'movement' known as physico-theology.<sup>4</sup> But the physico-theologians, who wanted to find (demonstrate) proof of God's existence and wisdom in the creation, viewed the universe as a finished handiwork, an 'object' separated from the perceiving subject. This is not the living universe of the mystic in which he participates in the life of God. Cheyne united Locke's 'sensationalism' with Newton's vast sensorium and saw the spiritual in the material world. He stated that all dimensions of reality, including the material 'can possibly be nothing else, but the supreme, immense and infinitely perfect Being, display'd, pourtray'd, and made sensible, and perceptible'.<sup>5</sup> Cheyne's uniting of seemingly disparate views of reality, was supplied for and by the century at large through the sublime. Locke's second influence--the void created by his rejection of innate ideas--by its

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R.D. Stock, The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake, (Princeton, 1982), pp.45ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Wormhoudt, pp.415ff. Also Herbert Drennon, 'Newtonianism: Its Method, Theology, and Metaphysics', Englische Studien, 68 (1934), pp.407-9.

<sup>3</sup> Other than in the gospels, rationally interpreted.

<sup>4</sup> The name, for example, of the popular book by William Derham, (1713).

<sup>5</sup> An Essay on Regimen, (1740), p.21.

very emphasis on sensation joined with the desire to fill the void, helped lead to the pervasive cultivation of the sublime. The sublime was a reassertion on the level of experience, of innate ideas, of the God within. For Longinus himself said, and experience was felt to confirm, that the 'sublime is an image reflected from the inward greatness of the soul'.<sup>1</sup> The experience of the sublime is the experience of the divine reality in the soul and in the external universe simultaneously. More than this, the experience showed the identity of the two, in God. Locke had tried to displace the Hermetic idea of the microcosm and macrocosm from ontology and fix it in psychology, thus denying it absolute reality. In the Essay Locke wrote:

The knowledge of any proposition coming into my mind, I know not how, is not a perception that it is from God.... Here it is that enthusiasm fails of the evidence it pretends to.... Light, true light in the mind, is or can be nothing else but the evidence of the truth of any proposition.... To talk of any other light in the understanding, is to put ourselves in the dark.... (IV, xix)

A number of writers on the sublime, including Shaftesbury and Usher, supplied this 'evidence'.<sup>2</sup>

The sense of wholeness and holiness in the experience of the sublime went far beyond the extensity (rationally) sought by the Latitudinarians, and also provided an intensity of experience otherwise absent in the age, except for 'enthusiasm'. Spectators 411-14 connected sublime experience of nature with divine grace. Such a uniting of religious experience with the sublime made it more sought-after and answered the need for transcending the narrow self in union with nature and the infinite. The enlarged perspective of the sublime naturally led to a taste for and increased sensitivity to large perspectives in nature and art, the nearer the unbounded the better. This is the 'cosmic art' mentioned by Miles and aspired to in so many works of the period: for example in Thomson's perspective in The Seasons, 1744; in Mallet's Excursion, 1728; and Gray's Bard, 1757, who is sublime in space, at the top of an inaccessible rock, and in time, by seeing the circle of past and present. The sublime is proof of the continuation and cultivation of powerful supra-rational forces in the eighteenth century and is a vivid example of the mystical desire to experience and unite with the infinite.

The new concern with the infinite manifested, then, in different ways. For some the new awareness meant the need to examine the sources of authority in all aspects of life. This road eventually led to the two great revolutions

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<sup>1</sup> Dionysius Longinus on the Sublime, trans. William Smith, 4th edn., (1770), p.28.

<sup>2</sup> See above, chapter 3, iv.

at the end of the century, to political reform and to Romanticism. Others saw the newly significant universe as an escape from the everyday world: the false, trivial or illusory sublime. Still others tried to find a shelter from the terrible uncertainties of an expanded universe in denial or 'domestication' of the infinite. Newton, in displaying a universe, bound by divine laws susceptible to mathematical demonstration, in which God is vitally present, made the universe more appealing and 'safer'. Locke's influence supported Newton's in pushing the human spirit towards the infinite outside the self. The sublime answered the need for certainty, self-transcendence and union with a universe divinely conceived. When the desire to unite with the infinite was answered by the sublime, which could not be sustained, it led many to the idea or perception of the microcosm. This creation or perception of the microcosm was an attempt to sustain the effects of the sublime, of certainty and oneness, and to encapsulate the union and identity experienced in the sublime. The microcosmic/macrocosmic correspondence was of profound importance for most of the writers examined in this thesis, especially Shaftesbury, Cheyne, Brooke, Smart and Law. The microcosm was also important in the eighteenth century for non-mystics who created it for rhetorical effect, as a structural device or as an image of stability providing psychological relief. Paul McGlynn has recently examined this use of microcosm in such writers as Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray, Pope, Cowper, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding and Sterne.<sup>1</sup> But for mystics the microcosm is not a human creation but the perception of divine reality. It appears in some form in all the major religions. In Hinduism it is expressed in the Vedantic 'Thou art That'; in the Mahayana Buddhist assertion 'Samsara is Nirvana'; in the Hebrew Bible in such texts as Genesis i.26, Exodus xv.3 and Ezekiel i.26 where the prophet sees 'upon the throne, a figure similar to that of a man', and in the Kabala; in the New Testament, especially in John and Paul and in the person of Christ; and in Muhammad's saying 'He who knows himself knows his Lord'. William Law's identity of the microcosm and macrocosm rivalled the Kabalists in completeness. Looking into the 'dark Centre of Nature', Jacob Boehme's Ungrund or Abyss, Law wrote: 'whether you look at Rage and Anger in a Tempest, a Beast, or a Man, it is but one and same Thing, from one and the same cause'.<sup>2</sup> Henry Brooke, also looking into the abyss and trying to outdo in comprehensiveness his friend Pope's memorable

<sup>1</sup> 'Microcosm and the Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century British Literature', SEL, 19 (1979), pp.363-385. Claude Lévi-Strauss analyzes miniaturization as a way of clarifying reality through emphasizing what is essential. See The Savage Mind, (Chicago, 1966), pp.23ff.

<sup>2</sup> Way to Divine Knowledge, (1752), Works, ed. G. B. Morgan (Brockenhurst and Canterbury, 1892-3), vii, p.250.

opening to Epistle II of the Essay on Man by emphasizing the microcosm instead of an 'isthmus of a middle state', writes:

in the womb of man's abyss are sown  
Natures, worlds, wonders, to himself unknown.  
A comprehension, a mysterious plan  
Of all the Almighty Works of God, is man;  
From hell's dire depth to Heaven's supremest height,  
Including good and evil, dark and light.  
What shall we call This Son of Grace and sin,  
This Daemon, this DIVINITY within,  
This FLAME ETERNAL, this foul mould'ring clod--  
A fiend, or SERAPH--a poor worm, or GOD?<sup>1</sup>

The telescope and microscope were perfect instruments for discovering a similarity between inner and outer reality. They also balanced each other in another way. Just as the telescope tended to minimize man's 'place' in the greatly expanded universe, and induce a sense of humility if not inferiority, so did the microscope flatter man's sense of superiority and significance.<sup>2</sup> And as the telescope helped lead to the sublime, to external illumination, in an age before science and religion were divorced, so did the microscope lead towards a sense of inner discovery, and with the influence of the microcosm point towards enthusiasm, internal illumination. Enthusiasm was rejected for many reasons: the excesses of the seventeenth century, political as well as religious, by those supposedly following the 'Inner Light'. The freedom implied by enthusiasm, of which Hume approved,<sup>3</sup> alarmed politicians and theologians. The concomitant sense of responsibility of true enthusiasts, like Shaftesbury and Law, was ignored or ridiculed.<sup>4</sup> Enthusiasts were simultaneously considered 'monkish', tainted by the Church of Rome and the extreme dissenting sects, by Romish superstition and ultra-Protestant individualism. Hume's distinction between superstition and enthusiasm was usually considered over-nice by the age and the two were generally confounded. Butler in Hudibras, 1663, and Swift in Tale of a Tub, 1704, enjoyed painting the delusion and arrogance of enthusiasts, who believed they were specially favoured by God and took shortcuts to the 'truth'.<sup>5</sup> Shaftesbury, however, was careful to distinguish the true form of illumination, which he called 'Inspiration', from its false form, which he felt is what was

<sup>1</sup> Redemption, (1772), 423-32.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Marjorie Nicolson, 'The Microscope and English Imagination', Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, 16 (1935), p.90.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Stock, p.209.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. for example the attacks against Law in Joseph Trapp, The Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger of being Righteous Overmuch, (1739).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Johnson's definition: 'a vain confidence of divine favour or communication'.

generally meant by 'enthusiasm'. Shaftesbury's distinctions were echoed by Wesley, Thomas Hartley, Byrom and Law, with different emphases, but enthusiasm was as near universally rejected as the sublime was near universally accepted. Yet the two have much in common, and are, arguably, but 'inner' and 'outer' aspects of the one reality of mystical illumination. Each emphasized and cultivated intense personal emotions which were felt at the same time to be universal and spiritual. Each transcended reason and thought-constricting systems of belief. Each was outside of the narrowly moral and systematically theological realm. Each desired to go beyond the limited and to experience the transcendental; each sought a vision of wholeness and the passionate experience of the mysterium tremendum. Both believed they were overcoming the subject/object, inner/outer dichotomy and were experiencing the one divine reality. Each desired above all else perfect union with God. However, to an age which emotionally insisted on the public mode and the consensus gentium rationally conceived, the apparent differences between the sublime and enthusiasm were considered radical if not absolute. The sublime is external and therefore 'public' and thus potentially shared and verifiable. It seemed to be object-oriented (the universe, the infinite as 'object'), and was thus considered 'objective', or at worst shared subjectivity. Enthusiasm is internal and private. It appears to be merely subject-oriented, and being considered 'subjective', it is more difficult to verify. In any event, the age much preferred to consider it ipso facto delusional, instead of dealing with the question of its true form. Wesley irritatingly reminded people of its scriptural basis as the New Birth, and William Law at the end of his last book in 1761 lamented that 'Christian Orthodoxy... at this Day condemns the inward working Life of God in the Soul, as Mystic Madness'.<sup>1</sup>

What is this 'Mystic Madness'? The next chapter is a general response to this question, and the succeeding chapters provide more specific answers.

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the Clergy, Works, ix, p.101.

## CHAPTER 1

### WHAT IS MYSTICISM?

---

There is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity.... The mystical classics have... neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates languages, and they do not grow old.

William James

The mystical has unintentionally acquired the appeal of something bizarre rather than rare or difficult to attain.

Jerzy Peterkiewicz

---

Mysticism defies definition. It can be defined only by itself. It is a--or the mystic would say the--datum of life. Mysticism is the experience of union with reality, or of the oneness in all, or of the identity of God and man. These are not three different experiences but one experience formulated and interpreted differently, possibly before as well as after the experience.<sup>1</sup> The experience is everything; the formulations which usually result from it are often important only to the individual and are as often a stumbling-block for others, a wall or barrier between them and the experience.<sup>2</sup> When mystics attempt to communicate the experience itself, free of theological and other interpretations of it, in so far as that is possible, this can often help others to put themselves in the way of the experience.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Steven Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis, ed. Steven Katz, (1978), pp.22-74.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Blake's view that he must have his own mythology or be enslaved by another man's, discussed in James Engell, The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism, (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp.246ff.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Ewer considers this a criterion by which to judge whether a work is based on true mystical experience. See A Survey of Mystical Symbolism, (1933), p.44fn.2.

But anything more than this acts as a barrier and at least tacitly implies that everyone must travel the same road to realization. All mountain roads which reach the top are true. How can one know which are true? Universal love (universal compassion) is the essential characteristic of the mystic. It separates the true from the false and the advanced from the neophyte. It testifies to the reality and completeness of the mystical experience of oneness with all: hence Christ and the Buddha. The thirteenth-century Andalusian Sufi Ibn 'Arabi wrote:

My heart is capable of every form:  
 pasture for gazelles, convent for monks  
 idol=temple, pilgrim's Kaaba  
 tables of the Tora, book of the Koran.  
 I follow the religion of love: where its caravans go  
 there is my faith, my religion.<sup>1</sup>

Some would call this inclusiveness mistiness, rather than a clear, realized state of being. Such a point of view leads to the distinguishing of types of mysticism and personal judgements. R.C. Zaehner rejects monistic mysticism as profane and defends theistic as sacred.<sup>2</sup> W.T. Stace prefers introvertive to extrovertive mysticism.<sup>3</sup> Such judgements are often of profound importance for those who make them but of less or no importance for others. It is suspected that in many cases these apparent differences result from scholars writing about mysticism with no personal experience of it, rather than from any essential differences in the experience. In addition, sectarianism, as in Zaehner's case, often plays a significant part in the evaluation of mystical experience.<sup>4</sup>

Mystical experience is one as God is one, but its interpretation varies according to the religious and cultural background of the mystic and his or her individual characteristics. Those who posit two or more different types of mystical experience are either confusing advanced with earlier stages, mystical and pathological experience, or are engaging in religious or philosophical sectarianism. The basic proof of the oneness of mystical experience is the significant unanimity in descriptions of mystical experience across religious and cultural boundaries when the descriptions are by mystics themselves and especially when the descriptions are made soon after the experience, before time and rationalization alter it in memory.<sup>5</sup> All

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Peter Lamborn Wilson, 'Eros & Literary Style in Ibn 'Arabi's Tarjuman al-ashwaq', Studies in Mystical Literature, 2 (1982), p.14.

<sup>2</sup> Mysticism Sacred and Profane, (Oxford, 1957).

<sup>3</sup> Mysticism: a Study and Anthology, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> See the careful refutation of Zaehner's position in Frits Staal, Exploring Mysticism, (Harmondsworth, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Moore, 'Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique', in Katz, pp.101-31.

descriptions emphasize either union or oneness, and the solution to the academic or sectarian debate between dualistic and non-dualistic adherents lies in the self-abnegation in relation to God, which both teach, and in the emphasis by all on absorption in God, reality, the transcendent. Whether this is ontological identity or union with a perpetual I/Thou relationship is not important at the time of the experience or for those who have had the experience, for developed or advanced mystics rarely if ever reject each other. This universalism could be considered one means of determining the degree of advancement of a mystic.<sup>1</sup>

The raw or pure experience itself is only available to the mystic at the time of the experience and is afterwards clothed in categories and conceptual forms necessary for the rational mind,<sup>2</sup> and even more necessary for any attempt at communication.<sup>3</sup> Hence the great importance of mystical literature of what Peter Moore calls first-order description,<sup>4</sup> since mystical 'experience' is only available to others, if they have no experience of their own, in the autobiographical or creative writing of mystics. But Erich Fromm would say that someone with no mystical experience, that is with no experience of union beyond the egoistic self, would go insane.<sup>5</sup> The wholeness of mystical experience is health and holiness and man's natural unfoldment. The moment of mystical experience seems like normality and the return to surface consciousness feels like deprivation.<sup>6</sup>

What are the characteristics of mystical experience? The essential elements are: 1) an attitude of serenity-bliss, 2) an expansion of spontaneity and consciousness which in its perfect form is universal love and total identity with the Ground of Being, 3) a freedom from the conditions of time and space yet immersion through love in the ebb and flow of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. for example Richard Bucke, Cosmic Consciousness, (1900), p.71: 'there is no instance of a person who has been illumined denying or disputing the teaching of another who has passed through the same experience'. Also cf. Rumi: 'What is to be done, O Muslims? for I myself do not know whether I am a Christian, a Jew, a Jabr or a Muslim'. R.A. Nicolson, Selected Poems from the Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz, (Cambridge, 1961), p.25. There are also examples in chapter 2, below, from William Law and others.

<sup>2</sup> To say that categories and conceptual forms are necessary for the rational mind is not to say, however, that reason is necessary for one to 'understand' mystical experience. The experience is its own 'meaning'. Cf. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John Harvey, (Oxford, 1928), pp.34ff.

<sup>3</sup> Unless the mystic is a spontaneous artist who creates without the influence of the rational mind.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Moore's essay in Katz, passim.

<sup>5</sup> The Art of Loving, (New York, 1956), p.7.

<sup>6</sup> For vivid examples see the quotations at the end of chapter 3, section iv, below.

world. Richard Bucke's definition of Cosmic Consciousness is a statement of the characteristics of mystical experience. The

prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe. Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence....To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully as striking, and more important than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these come what may be called a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already.<sup>1</sup>

To most people, the serenity-bliss of the mystical state is mistaken for stupor-madness: but stupor is the very negation of the mystic's passive serenity, and madness is the opposite of the mystic's active bliss. This general misreading of the mystical state when combined with the tendency at the time of unguarded bliss for mystics to make overstatements about their relationship to God, created the necessity for an esoteric-exoteric distinction, especially in the Hebrew-Christian-Islamic tradition, where such overstatements often led to persecution or death. The suppression of the quietists in the seventeenth century is a clear example both of the need for an esoteric-exoteric distinction and of the misunderstanding of the dynamic character of mystical experience. It does not lead to vacuous passivity but to an active orientation towards life.

How can one make a judgement on the validity of mystical experience? Bertrand Russell argued that the universal love of the developed mystic is of 'supreme importance for the conduct and happiness of life, and gives inestimable value to the mystic emotion, apart from any creeds which may be built upon it'. He adds that it 'reveals a possibility of human nature-- a possibility of a nobler, happier, freer life than any that can be otherwise achieved'.<sup>2</sup> However, Russell rejects the universal mystic perception of the divine indwelling in the soul and feels that the 'mystic emotion' reveals nothing beyond the emotional life of the mystic, and thus that the mystic's view of external or transcendent reality is merely a projection of emotions. The mystic claims the opposite: that the 'mystic emotion' is a transcendence of the prison of self into a fundamental unity beyond the egoistic self, beyond the dualities of inner and outer, self and nature, self and God. The mystic would say that what Russell calls the 'mystic emotion' is in fact not an emotion at all but an experience, which indeed elicits a

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<sup>1</sup> Bucke, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Mysticism and Logic, (1917), p.26.

powerful emotional response, but is not to be confused with it, and that the experience is open to anyone who attains contact with the Ground of Being. William James ended his discussion of mysticism with three conclusions: 1) he agreed with Russell that the experience of the developed mystic is 'absolutely authoritative' for the mystic himself, and has 'the right to be', since it is based on a 'direct perception of fact'<sup>1</sup> for a person who has the experience, as is the rationalist's view of reality, but James did not agree with Russell that the mystic experience necessarily communicates nothing of reality outside the self; James was more open on the question and felt rather 2) that there is no reason why others should accept the mystic's 'revelations uncritically', but also 3) that mystical experiences

break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone. They show it to be only one kind of consciousness. They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith.<sup>2</sup>

On the question of the validity of mystical experience, one can say, then, that the experience appears in all religious traditions, as well as outside them. As its descriptions show, mystical experience is one and is therefore a shared experience found throughout the ages and in all lands. The experience is repeatable, (although usually not at will), as the spiritual regimens and the greatest exemplars of each tradition confirm. Thus, since the veracity of mystical experience is not doubted by the mystic, nor are the effects of the experience lost even after long periods without its recurrence, and since the experience and its results can be integrated harmoniously and creatively with the most mundane features of daily life, as, for example, both Russell and James agree,<sup>3</sup> mysticism should therefore be accepted as at least an alternative mode of experiencing the world. Whether the experience of the mystic provides a superior point of view from which to relate to the world as compared with the perspective of the non-mystic, or whether the mystic, as he or she claims, is in contact with the final Reality are questions on which the mystic and rationalist are not likely to agree.

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<sup>1</sup> Varieties of Religious Experience, (1902), pp.382,383.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.382.

<sup>3</sup> Russell's view that the 'mystic emotion' can be constructively integrated with daily life is seen in the above quotations. For James cf. Varieties, p.358: mystical 'experiences are proved real to their possessor, because they remain with him when brought closest into contact with the objective realities of life. Dreams cannot stand this test'.

## I

It is appropriate, in a study of mysticism and literature, to end this chapter by commenting on the relationship of mysticism and language.<sup>1</sup> Mystical experience is always called ineffable but it is after all described in many books, often at great length, in all the major languages. The difficulty of communicating mystical experience in language is not so much a reflection of the limits of language itself as a reflection of the limits of common experience as reflected in language. Where there is a shared experience and an accepted, understood vocabulary, the awesome clarity and 'precision' which are characteristic of mystical experience can be communicated in language in a fairly clear and meaningful way. The established vocabulary of a given tradition will be rationalized away, however, unless the tradition remains alive, which is to say, unless there are always a group of mystics within the tradition who know from their own experience what the words mean.

But there is another important point to be made about language in relation to mystical experience, which is necessary to be borne in mind if one is to understand the mystic's attitude towards mystical language and indeed all language. Most mystical traditions, as seen for example in the work of Boehme and Bhartṛhari (450-500), point out that language is not completely arbitrary. Its origin is in the sounds emitted by each element in the creation when stirred by the Word of God. For words too are things and are the unveiling of the Logos:

Bhartṛhari goes further than just establishing the eternity of language or word (śabda). He identifies it with Brahman--all words ultimately mean the Supreme Brahman.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This concluding section is based on observations made by Peter Malekin in 'Mysticism and Scholarship', Studies in Mystical Literature, 1 (1980-81), pp.283-298.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Coward, 'Levels of Language in Mystical Experience', Mystics and Scholars, eds. Harold Coward and Terence Penelhum, (Waterloo, Ontario, 1976), p.100.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE MYSTICAL TRADITION IN ENGLAND: AN OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

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The historical view of tradition defended by Eliot and after him by F.R. Leavis has ... revealed its inadequacy. There is nothing sacred in much with which the past has burdened us, nor in history as such. A deeper meaning was given to the concept of Tradition by René Guénon and the aesthete A.K. Coomaraswamy. To both the essence of Tradition is metaphysical: adherence to some spiritual tradition is adherence to those principles in which that tradition and its culture are established. Tradition is not grounded in history at all, but in revelation. Its basis is not human achievement as such, but the abiding nature of things, and the sophia perennis, or Everlasting Gospel, is universal and unanimous; differing only (as Coomaraswamy says) in dialectical variations according to time and place.

Kathleen Raine

Mysticism seems to resist periodization. What would be the history of a timeless consciousness beyond history?

Sisirkumar Ghose

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#### I

Plato is often called the father of Christian mysticism. This title might also be given to the author who ascribed his works to Dionysius the Areopagite, but who was probably a Syrian monk of about the sixth century. The Mystical Theology, the chief work of this writer, is one of the most important works of Christian mysticism, profoundly influencing Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox mystics. This short treatise gave to Christian mysticism two of its most basic and profound ideas: that the Supreme Godhead is the Divine Darkness, beyond the negation of all the surface consciousness can perceive

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<sup>1</sup> The following discussion owes much to the work of Eric Colledge, Rufus Jones and Frances Yates. This overview is an attempt to give an idea of the span and breadth of mystical literature in England; it does not intend to be all-inclusive. It must be remembered that certain writers fit into more than one tradition.

or conceive, and that the way the soul reaches its deepest union with God is through 'unknowing':

leave behind the senses and the operations of the intellect, and all things sensible and intellectual, and all things in the world of being and non-being, that thou mayest arise, by unknowing, towards the union, as far as is attainable, with Him Who transcends all being and all knowledge. For by the unceasing and absolute renunciation of thyself and of all things, thou mayest be borne on high, through pure and entire self-abnegation, into the superessential Radiance of the Divine Darkness.<sup>1</sup>

This 'Divine Darkness' represents God as wholly other, therefore the mystic must renounce the self in order to approach the divine other. The Divine Darkness is described in the dramatic opening of the Mystical Theology:

Thou that instructeth Christians in Thy heavenly wisdom! Guide us to that topmost height of mystic lore which exceedeth light and more than exceedeth knowledge, where the simple, absolute, and unchangeable mysteries of heavenly Truth lie hidden in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence, outshining all brilliance with the intensity of their darkness, and surcharging our blinded intellects with the utterly impalpable and invisible fairness of glories which exceed all beauty!<sup>2</sup>

This negative way is the way of direct experience, not the positive or affirmative way of human reason, and points beyond theological dogma to absolute freedom. The Mystical Theology ends in this way:

neither can the reason attain to Him, nor name Him, nor know Him; neither is He darkness nor light, nor the false, nor the true; nor can any affirmation or negation be applied to Him, for although we may affirm or deny Him, inasmuch as the all-perfect and unique Cause of all things transcends all affirmation, and the simple pre-eminence of His absolute nature is outside of every negation--free from every limitation and beyond them all.<sup>3</sup>

This wordless and unconceptualized experience of the depths of being is utter freedom from every determination, and for this reason it was considered dangerous by many Fathers of the Church. The wordless prayer, or the prayer of silence, combined with the complete surrendering of the will to God was not trusted by or congenial to cataphatic theologians, who feared the dangers of its unbalanced forms and its implied freedom from theological law. The Church's reaction to Molinos and quietism is but one example of the uneasy relationship between mystical experience and doctrinal formulation. Molinos used a quotation from Dionysius to argue what the Church considered his most extreme claim: that the prayer of silence can be learned by divine aid when there is no priestly director.<sup>4</sup> The often uneasy relationship between mystics and the Church can be

<sup>1</sup> Trans. The Shrine of Wisdom. Quoted by F. Happold, Mysticism, (Harmondsworth, 1970), p.212.

<sup>2</sup> Trans. C.E. Rolt, (1940), p.191.

<sup>3</sup> Trans. Shrine of Wisdom. Quoted by Happold, p.217.

<sup>4</sup> J.M. Cohen, 'Some Reflections on the Life and Work of Miguel de Molinos', Studies in Mystical Literature, 1 (1980-81), p.246 and passim.

seen again and again in the lives of the greatest Western mystics, for example, Eckhart and St. John of the Cross.

The English mystics and mystical traditions dealt with in the following sections of this chapter are varied in intellectual outlook, social class and religious persuasion. Their abundance and their variety indicate the pervasiveness and continuity of mystical interest in England, and constitute part of the evidence for dismissing claims that mysticism is merely a socially induced phenomenon. It can also be seen that in the seventeenth century, with its freedom and its bitter doctrinal conflicts, there was a tendency among many of the mystics, encouraged by their awareness that their own experience transcended formulations, to make a plea for religious toleration and freedom of conscience. In this respect mysticism could be easily allied with the rationalistic trends in the eighteenth century, and figures like Shaftesbury evince traits from both traditions. In what follows here, Section II on the 'Catholic Tradition' establishes the link with the medieval Church, while the Anabaptists of Section IV, though springing primarily from the period of the Reformation, also have heterodox medieval forebears. The Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition of Section III goes back to at least the ninth century, but was greatly boosted by the work of the Florentine Academy in the Renaissance, while the Cambridge Platonists of Section V stand in the mainstream of European Neoplatonism. The Behmenists and Philadelphians of Section VI of course go back to Jacob Boehme, but his intellectual formulations were in their turn influenced by alchemy and the Kabala, as well as earlier German mystics. There has been a significant amount of interaction between the traditions that are treated here separately and they all helped to form the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century.

## II

### THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

The Ancren Riwe, written early in the twelfth century, is the first important Catholic mystical work in English.<sup>1</sup> It deals with the inward-turning and devotion necessary for mystical development. But it is with Richard Rolle of Hampole (c.1300-1349), a brilliant and original mystic, that the cluster of fourteenth-century mystics begins. A prolific writer, studied by some for his contribution to the development of English prose, he had the somewhat unusual characteristic of perceiving mystical truths musically.<sup>2</sup> He wrote poetry of deep devotion:

<sup>1</sup> Eric Colledge is inclined to date it later. See The Mediaeval Mystics of England, (New York, 1961), pp.11, 32.

<sup>2</sup> For example in The Fire of Love, i, xvi.

Thou art my whole desire: I long to be with Thee:  
 Kindle within me fire, that I, of earth's dross free,  
 May climb where I aspire, at last Thy face to see.<sup>1</sup>

Later in the century, the author of The Cloud of Unknowing and its companion works<sup>2</sup> was deeply involved in the psychological aspects of mystical illumination, and displayed a joy of life characteristic of the evolved mystic. In some ways a more mature and balanced mystic than Rolle, who was at times preoccupied with the eternal punishments to be suffered by his enemies, as in his Melos, the author of The Cloud was a follower of Dionysius the Areopagite. He did not follow the tradition of adducing authority for his major statements. He felt that in its pure form this practice indicated modesty but that for most writers it only evinced pedantry or ostentation. The author felt that prayer or meditation should be preceded by an offering in this spirit: 'What I am, Lord, I offer to You, having regard to no quality of Your being, but only that You are as You are, without anything more'<sup>3</sup>, a Dionysian statement of the via negativa.

Perhaps the most precise yet straightforward spiritual director in this group of fourteenth-century mystics is Walter Hilton (ob. c.1396). Unlike some medieval mystics, Hilton taught that the 'mixed life' of contemplation and withdrawal must be balanced with action in the world. The one strengthens the other. Hilton warned against the misuse of the more physical aspects of mysticism and against unbalanced 'enthusiasm'. His vision was darkened by more than the requisite sense of unworthiness. He advised people to 'Say every day: "What am I?", and judge no man',<sup>4</sup> but was active in repressing heresy.<sup>5</sup> He tends in impressive fashion to expound general ideas in concrete terms, and taught that the 'straight high road' to mystical illumination was through self-knowledge. He explains that the heavenly Jerusalem signifies

the perfect love of God, set on the hill of contemplation, which to a soul which still stands outside experience of it and is labouring to enter it is visible, certainly, but seems to be only a little thing, no bigger than a rod's length, which is indeed six cubits and palm's breadth in length. These six cubits signify the perfection of human action, and the palm's breadth the touching of the soul in contemplation. He sees clearly that this is something a little beyond human attainment, just as the palm's breadth is beyond the six cubits, but still he cannot look inside to see what it is. But if he can enter the city of contemplation, he will see far more than he saw at first.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Poem 'A Meditation on Christ's Passion', in the prose work I Sleep and My Heart Wakes.

<sup>2</sup> The first English translation of Theologia Mystica, a translation of Benjamin Minor, the Book of Privy Counsel, The Epistle of Prayer and The Epistle of Discretion.

<sup>3</sup> The Book of Privy Counsel.

<sup>4</sup> Scale of Perfection, i, 16.

<sup>5</sup> He also argued against 'recreations', Scale, i, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Scale, ii, 25.

The last member of the group of fourteenth-century mystics has a serenity and joyfulness foreign to Hilton. The 'first English woman of letters' is the title many give to Julian of Norwich (1343-ob.after 1415). At first glance this is ironic, since by her own admission she was unlettered.<sup>1</sup> Yet the title is fair, since it is generally agreed that she dictated her Revelations to one who was an amanuensis only, and that all of the Revelations' force is her own.<sup>2</sup> Eric Colledge has called her 'the one English woman mystic and visionary'.<sup>3</sup> Revelations is a work of rare power and shows a unique insight into mystical symbolism.<sup>4</sup> It is a work on the nature of divine love. Perhaps the heart of her viewpoint is that God is

nearer to us than our own soul, for man is God, and God is in us all. If we could only know ourselves, our trouble would be cleared away, but it is easier to come to the knowing of God than to know our own soul.<sup>5</sup>

Before 1934 Margery Kempe (c.1373-ob.after 1438), thus a generation or so after Julian of Norwich, was known only as the author of the fragment Contemplations. In that year a manuscript copy of The Book of Margery Kempe was discovered in the possession of an old Catholic family of Yorkshire.<sup>6</sup> It is thus the oldest autobiography in the language. Among the more interesting parts of the Book are her accounts of trips to Rome, Jerusalem and the Baltic, and a meeting with Julian of Norwich, the only known first-hand account of Julian's personality and conversation. The Book is of uneven quality. Many of her 'visions' seem like devout delusions at best, while other parts of the work are interesting and valuable, such as the accounts of her arraignment as a heretic at Leicester and being brought before the Archbishop of York. In both cases she showed unusual courage, humility and devotion in answering charges and in making some of her own.

With the coming of Protestantism, the Catholic mystical tradition in England began to wither. There are more than a hundred years between the birth of Margery Kempe and of the next noteworthy Catholic mystic.

Benedict Canfield (1520-1611) was the author of The Rule of Perfection. His influence was greatest in France, where he settled in old age. Through

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<sup>1</sup> For a woman to have been otherwise in fourteenth-century England would have been very unusual.

<sup>2</sup> David Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition, (1961), p.121.

<sup>3</sup> Colledge, p.84. Apparently he considered Jane Lead, among others, unworthy of being called a mystic and visionary.

<sup>4</sup> Revelations is based on an experience of mystical insight (of five to six hours), followed by some twenty years of meditation on the meaning of the experience.

<sup>5</sup> Revelations, ed. Grace Warrack, (1923), p.135.

<sup>6</sup> Knowles, p.139.

his pupil Madame Acarie (1566-1618), the 'conscience of Paris', reformed Carmelite houses were established in 1604, directed by Spanish followers of St. Teresa.

Less influential in England even than Canfield was Robert Southwell (1561?-1595), who took Roman orders after studying at Douai and Rome. Arrested in 1592 and frequently tortured, he was executed after three years' imprisonment. His poems, most of which were written in prison, deal with spiritual love. Ben Jonson praised 'The Burning Babe' which was included in Maeoniae, 1595. The martyr had this to say of the inner life:

My conscience is my crowne,  
Contented thoughts my rest;  
My hart is happy in it selfe,  
My bliss is in my breste.<sup>1</sup>

More influential is Augustine Baker (1575-1641), called by some the 'Venerable'. A latter-day Hilton in his occasionally black vision, he had a strong Puritan strain which remained after he became a Roman Catholic. He produced a guide to the contemplative life, the Sancta Sophia, in which he said that mystical contemplation is

either active or passive. Of these two, active contemplation is...within the compass of all who dispose themselves to it,...passive contemplation is no state, but a transient and brief experience. Therein is a special working of God above His ordinary course with men....<sup>2</sup>

Active contemplation is the discursive use of the mind. Baker emphasizes that passive contemplation is an 'experience', which like the author of The Cloud of Unknowing, he learned from Dionysius the Areopagite.

Baker preserved the works and was the director and biographer of the Benedictine nun Gertrude More (1606-1633). A direct descendant of Sir Thomas More, her 'Spiritual Exercises', which were not intended for publication, show an intense, almost frantic desire for communion with God. Her treatment of love resembles that of her contemporary, Crashaw.

The son of a noted anti-papal preacher, Richard Crashaw (1612-1649), was much influenced by the Spanish mystics. His principle work, Steps to the Temple, 1646, shows religious devotion of a mystical kind. The Flaming Heart, his hymn to St. Teresa, of whom he was the greatest of admirers, was written before he became a Roman Catholic. The poem's ending is a good example of what is sometimes called 'erotic mysticism', that is, the desire of communion with God stated in sexual terms:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Rufus Jones, Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth, (Cambridge, Mass. 1932), p.109.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Knowles, p.164.

<sup>3</sup> This type of imagery is a frequent feature of Catholic mysticism. See Underhill, Mysticism pp.162-166 and Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature, pp.113-115.

By all thy brim-fill'd Bowles of feirce desire  
 By thy last Morning's draught of liquid fire;  
 By the full kingdome of that finall kisse  
 That seiz'd thy parting Soul, and seal'd thee his;  
 By all the heav'ns thou hast in him  
 (Fair sister of the SERAPHIM!)  
 By all of HIM we have in THEE;  
 Leave nothing of my SELF in me.  
 Let me so read thy life, that I  
 Unto all life of mine may dy.

Many Catholic mystics were influenced by, or belonged to, the mystical tradition treated in the next section. The Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition, which cuts across the Catholic-Protestant divide, is but one example of mysticism's ability to bridge the gulfs created by the human spirit.

### III

#### THE HERMETIC - KABALISTIC TRADITION<sup>1</sup>

It is barely possible to do justice in an overview to this misunderstood and much maligned tradition, of which Evelyn Underhill says: '...like most other ways of escape which man has offered to his own soul, [Hermeticism] appears to have originated in the East.'<sup>2</sup> Ben Jonson's treatment of Subtle, the alchemist, who cheats and deludes people by promising the philosopher's stone, is another example of the common view of the Hermetic arts of those outside the tradition. For the purposes of an overview it is sufficient to make Hermeticism synonymous with alchemy<sup>3</sup>, except to add that the central idea of Hermeticism is that of the macrocosm - microcosm or 'as above so below' or 'the All and the One'. This is the ancient, profound idea of the existence of an analogous and harmonious relationship<sup>4</sup> between man (microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm). Alchemy is usually dismissed as the precursor of chemistry whose goal was the transmutation of base metals into gold, and was thus a merely mercenary pursuit. Some avaricious people did attempt to produce gold in this way, but they were not in the main stream of the tradition. Alchemy in reality involved the study of how to transmute the baser elements of human nature through the crucible of experience into the pure gold of divinity. Some transcendental alchemists did engage in laboratory experiments

<sup>1</sup> It is natural to treat the Hermetic and Kabalistic traditions together because a student of one was often a student of the other.

<sup>2</sup> Mysticism, p.153.

<sup>3</sup> Sense two of 'Hermetic', OED.

<sup>4</sup> The idea presupposes that for the relationship to be harmonious, natural and spiritual laws must be studied, understood and applied.

using real metals and actual fire, but solely for the purpose of proving the higher laws on the earthly plane, thus showing their universal application. The principal search of the merely physical alchemists was for a pure and penetrating matter which, when applied to metals (or any substance) exalts them. This perfect essence, this soul of matter which induces its perfect qualities, was called the philosopher's stone. To the real alchemists, the spiritual or transcendental alchemists, the philosopher's stone was not a substance but the spiritual gnosis and exalted wisdom whose virtue raises man's consciousness to a higher level.

The Kabala has been revered by mystics and occultists as a kind of synoptic outline of esoteric fundamentals. The word comes from the Hebrew qabbalah, 'tradition'. The main repository of information on the Kabala is the Zohar, or Book of Splendour. The metaphysical essay Sepher Yezirah, or Book on Creation is also of prime importance. The Zohar is a storehouse of commentary and offers many ideas regarding the Kabala, but its arrangement is confusing, and its value uneven. The two books are complementary in nature. What the Sepher Yezirah sets forth in oracular fashion regarding the method of creation, the Zohar attempts to make understandable by means of exegesis.

The main mystical doctrines of the Kabala include the 'Sephiroth', 'realized abstractions or emanations, by which the infinite entered into relations with the finite; and the belief that the letters of the biblical text, converted into numbers, may... reveal hidden truths.'<sup>1</sup>

The study of the Kabala as it was originally outlined has become almost completely submerged in a consideration of excrescences, and similar vicissitudes were suffered by the tradition of alchemy with its positive and negative applications. Many adherents of the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition, such as John Dee, suffered because the excrescences were commonly judged to be the true and essential growth.

The first English alchemist of importance is Roger Bacon (1214?-1294). His Speculum Alchymiae was first printed in Nürnberg in 1541. It was frequently reprinted in collections of alchemical writings thereafter through the seventeenth century. The first English translation, The Mirror of Alchemy, was in 1597. He emphasized, unlike Chaucer, the correct uses of alchemy.

The story of the deluded alchemical canon in 'The Canon's Yeoman's Tale', with its descriptions of materials and processes, shows that Chaucer studied alchemy with some care. But it is clear that his interest was with merely physical alchemy, and it could not have been deep or lasting.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford Companion to English Literature, 4th edn., p.131.

The opposite of Chaucer in the depth and permanence of his alchemical interest, Sir George Ripley (early fifteenth century-c.1490), produced many original works<sup>1</sup>. In 1471 he dedicated his Compound of Alchemie to Edward IV. It shows a Platonic influence. He was among the first to popularize the works attributed to Raymond Lully.<sup>2</sup> In 1476 the Medulla Alchemiae was dedicated to the Archbishop of York.<sup>3</sup> His reputation remained high after his death. His works were printed in 1649 at Cassel. Many of his English treatises appear in Ashmole's Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, 1652. As late as 1678 Ripley Reviv'd: or an Exposition upon Sir George Ripley's Hermetico-Poetical Works, an anonymous work, found a considerable readership.

Thomas Norton (fl.1477) was a student of Ripley. His important alchemical poem The Ordinall of Alchemy was not printed in English until 1652 when (indicating its high reputation) it was placed first among the English alchemical work in Ashmole's Theatrum.<sup>4</sup> It treats alchemical learning as essentially of an esoteric nature, a divine art that correctly pursued,

...voydeth vaine Glory, Hope, and also dreade:  
It voydeth Ambitiousnesse, Extorcion, and Excesse:  
It fenceth Adversity that she doe not oppresse.  
He that thereof hath his full intent,  
Forsaketh Extremities, with Measure is content.

He explained that (as much as possible) alchemy is a secret art because it is so liable to abuse. He urged his fellow alchemists to understand all the laws used in alchemical operation since

Nothing is wrought but by his proper Cause:  
Wherefore that Practise falleth farr behinde  
Wher Knowledge of the cause is not in minde:  
Therefore remember ever more wisely,  
That you worke nothing but you knowe howe and whie.

The life of John Dee provides a vivid example of why Norton emphasized that alchemy should be an esoteric art. Alchemy tends to elicit the suspicion if not the destructiveness of the general public. Dee (1527-1608), mathematician, magus, alchemist, Kabalist, astrologer, reformer of the calendar and defender of Copernicus, suffered much at the hands of the superstitious mob who felt him a conjuror. In 1583 after his departure for Holland, they broke into his house, destroying his alchemical apparatus and a significant portion of his magnificent library. They could not understand that 'Actes and Feates,

<sup>1</sup> There is an interesting study of the symbolism in Ripley's work in C.G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, (New York 1953), pp.389-402.

<sup>2</sup> Among other things an alchemist and Kabalist.

<sup>3</sup> George Nevill, who corresponded with a number of alchemists.

<sup>4</sup> It is quite long, occupying 106 pages.

Naturally, Mathematically and Mechanically wrought'<sup>1</sup> are not done by conjuring but by applying the laws of science and number. His career was unusually varied. The Athenae Cantabrigienses lists seventy-nine works by him, among which are Monas Hieroglyphica, 1564, The Compendious Rehearsal of John Dee, 1592, a kind of 'Apology for my life', and Alchemical Collections, (Ashmol. MS. 1486, V.) Frances Yates concludes that John Dee

has to the full the dignity, the sense of operational power, of the Renaissance Magus. And he is a very clear example of how the will to operate, stimulated by Renaissance magic, could pass into, and stimulate, the will to operate in genuine applied science.<sup>2</sup>

The oneness of alchemy and science is also seen in Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626). Recent scholarship has shown that Bacon's position as the 'Father of Experimental Science' must be reviewed in terms of the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition of which he was a part.<sup>3</sup> In his survey of learning, the subjects he reviews include natural magic, astrology and a reformed version of alchemy. He sought the pure aspects of these studies, and wished to eliminate the dross. Yates has shown that the New Atlantis was directly influenced by the Rosicrucian Manifesto Fama Fraternitatis, 1614. But her treatment of the subject is only short and suggestive; it remains for some scholar to examine Bacon and the Rosicrucians in depth. The next figure mentioned is more firmly associated with the Rosicrucians.

Robert Fludd (1574-1637), M.D., was a very successful physician, and a devoted student of the Kabala and of alchemy.<sup>4</sup> His opposition to modern astronomical discoveries, such as his denial of the diurnal revolution of the earth, shows that he could be reactionary. He is best known as the Rosicrucian apologist, which mystical fraternity he defended directly and indirectly in controversies with Mersenne and Kepler. His doctrine of divine immanence is strongly pantheistic and anti-Aristotleian. Among his important works are Tractatus Apologeticus Integritatem Societatis de Rosea Cruce Defendens, 1617, Tractatus Theologophilosophicus, 1617, and Summum Bonorum,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Frances Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, (1964), p.150.

<sup>2</sup> Yates, p.150. There is a study by Peter French, John Dee. The World of an Elizabethan Magus, (1972).

<sup>3</sup> Muriel West, 'Notes on the Importance of Alchemy to Modern Science in the Writings of Francis Bacon and Robert Boyle', AMBIX 9 (1961), pp.102-13. Paolo Rossi, Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science, (1968). Frances Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, (1972).

<sup>4</sup> For the medical mystics and Paracelsians see Allen Debus, The English Paracelsians, (1965). There is a useful discussion of Fludd, pp.104-27.

1629. He gave unusually thoughtful attention to the macrocosm-microcosm analogy. He taught that there is but one system of universal laws directing the forces which manifest in all things. Matter is different in its forms only. A cell of the body differs from a planet only in its particulars, its extension, or mass and function, for both are subject to the same universals, or cosmic order.

Less outspoken than Fludd but more successful in promoting Rosicrucian alchemy was Elias Ashmole (1617-1692), one of the foundation members of the Royal Society. He was a great admirer and defender of John Dee. Ashmole played a very important part in the

renaissance of alchemy in the seventeenth century, a movement which influenced many notable figures. Paracelsist alchemy was a major influence on the new medicine; Robert Boyle's chemistry was a child of the alchemical movement; and there was an extraordinary background of alchemy even in the mind of Isaac Newton.<sup>1</sup>

He sparked the revival in England mainly through his Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, 1652. His alchemy, following Dee's influence, was much involved with the Kabala and with number mysticism.

The next figure noticed has the spirit of Dee in his love of alchemy, and the vigour and directness of Fludd in defending the Rosicrucians. The spiritual alchemist and poet Thomas Vaughan (1622-1666) was a great admirer of Cornelius Agrippa. In Anthroposophia Theomagica he calls Agrippa 'Nature's apostle and her choice high priest, /Her mystical and bright evangelist'. Vaughan was anti-Aristotleian and disliked Descartes. His patron, Sir Robert Moray (1600?-1673) was himself an alchemist, and was one of the founders of the Royal Society. Vaughan's controversy with Henry More shows Vaughan in an uncharacteristically virulent mood. More accused him of being a magician, immoral, (he did in earlier life have a drinking problem) and felt he unjustly disparaged Aristotle. Vaughan answered the accusations in The Man-Mouse taken in a Trap, 1650, and had the last word in The Second Wash, 1651.<sup>2</sup> His paramount interest was in finding solutions to the mysteries of nature. He considered himself a philosopher of nature, and warned against mere physical alchemy. His published works almost entirely appear under the pseudonym Eugenius Philalethes. Among the important works are Magia Adamica, 1650, Lumen de Lumine, 1651, and Euphrates; or the Waters of the East, 1655.

<sup>1</sup> Yates, Rosicrucian Enlightenment, p.193. Recent work on this subject includes Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy, (New York, 1975), which contains a useful bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> For details of the controversy see F. Burnham, 'The More-Vaughan Controversy', JHI, 35 (1974), pp.33-49.

Henry Vaughan (1622-1695), the mystical poet, was deeply read in the medieval alchemists and Plato, and like his twin brother Thomas, was not interested in mere physical alchemy. He had wonderful insight into and new feeling for the macrocosm-microcosm correspondence which he never tired of exploring. He was, like Thomas, a philosopher of nature. Like James Thomson, he was a reverent, keen observer of nature in all her moods, not just the pretty or pleasant. His belief in pre-existence is interestingly dealt with in 'The Retreat'. 'The Hidden Flower' treats the mystery of winter's death leading to spring's life with implications of immortality. The fullness of Vaughan's mysticism can be seen by comparing his treatment of light in 'The World' where he describes eternity as 'a great Ring of pure and endless light, /All calm, as it was bright', with his treatment of Dionysius the Areopagite's 'divine darkness' in 'The Night':

There is in God, some say,  
A deep but dazzling darkness,<sup>1</sup> as men here  
Say it is late and dusky because they  
    See not all clear,  
O for that Night! where I in Him  
Might live invisible and dim.

To keep this section from being unduly large, many names have been omitted.<sup>2</sup> One, George Herbert (1593-1633), showing that he understood spiritual alchemy, addressed God in this way:

All may of thee partake;  
Nothing can be so mean,  
Which with this tincture, 'for thy sake',  
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine;  
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,  
Makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone  
That turneth all to gold;  
For that which God doth touch and own  
Cannot for less be told.

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<sup>1</sup> Vaughan's 'dazzling darkness' is borrowed from the opening of Mystical Theology: 'dazzling obscurity'.

<sup>2</sup> For example: Robert Gell, Henry More's tutor at Cambridge was a Kabalist as was Henry More himself; William Alabaster was a Kabalist; John Evelyn was a careful student of alchemy, as was Sir Thomas Browne. Yates has argued that Shakespeare subscribed to the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition. See Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach, (1975). Christopher Hill has shown that Milton was interested in and influenced by Hermeticism. See Milton and the English Revolution, (1977), pp.5-6,37,110,324,400.

## FROM ANABAPTISM TO THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

The mystical groups treated in this section moved dramatically away from the essentially esoteric world of alchemy and Kabala into the arena of social, political and religious confrontation. The actual 'confrontation' was usually dictated by the Establishment, but it is certainly true that the spiritual outlook of the groups directly undermined the established power socially and politically, as well as theologically. This section will sketch very briefly the extremely complicated subject of the Anabaptists, the Familists, the Seekers and the Quakers, the first three of which in many ways lead to the fourth.

The Anabaptists<sup>1</sup> arose in Switzerland in 1521. After the revolt at Münster in 1534 led by John of Leyden, the Anabaptists were associated in the public mind with every unthinkable religious excess that 'enthusiasts' could commit. The word 'Ranters' was used by some as synonymous with Anabaptists. Others applied it, more correctly, to the unbalanced, deluded fringe in all the mystical and quasi-mystical movements in England after the Reformation. The Ranters were not a specific sect. People of any movement who carried the doctrine of the Inner Light to unhealthy extremes were Ranters. There were Ranters in almost all sects. Some of them were in fact lunatics. Others claimed that only the inner life had meaning, and that how one lived outwardly was unimportant, hence many rationalized any excess in this way. However, such excesses and delusions were not in the main stream of Anabaptism.

The persecutions suffered by Anabaptists on the Continent at the hands of both Catholics and Protestants forced many to come to England, from the time of Henry VIII on. Their treatment here was little different.

There were several branches of Anabaptism, but they all had two ideas in common: that control of the Church should be 'returned' (as they felt) to the common people, and secondly that a visible Church should be built on the New Testament model. The leaders differed somewhat in their interpretation of the model, but they agreed it must be democratic. Their main interest was, as they said, with the 'plain people'. They believed that the Kingdom of God is within, and that anyone with the ability might prophesy if it were edifying. One leader states:

God's community knows no head but Christ. Teachers and ministers are not lords.... A true preacher would willingly see the whole community prophesy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Anabaptist' is an opprobrious nickname coined by enemies of the movement.  
<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Jones, Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth, p.31.

In spite of the violent abuses they suffered, most of the leaders preached and practised non-violence. Some few were driven by persecution to fanaticism, but on the whole they championed love and peace.

Some of the Anabaptists became Quakers, others became Seekers and Familists. Their championing of a free conscience, a spiritual Church and a pure daily life as well as their democratic principle of church organization, had far-reaching effects. They did not go as far in the direction of universal love, however, as did the Family of Love.

The Family of Love, known as the Familists, was founded by Henry Nicholas of Münster. It became, however, an exclusively English movement. It began to spread in England around 1575. Though synchronous in origin, it was independent of the Anabaptist movement. The loftiness of its mystical religion brought to public notice many of the beliefs supposed to have originated with the Quakers. The Familists were vilified for teaching 'monstrous and horrible heresies' which were 'foule and filthy' as John Knewstub, the famous Cambridge divine, put it in his Confutation of 1579. Rufus Jones, (in part quoting Thomas Roger's 1585 anti-Familist book), describes their beliefs:

They condemn all war; prohibit the bearing of arms; hold that no man should be put to death for his religion. They 'deny all calling but the immediate call of God'. They term professional ministers 'scripture-learned', 'letter-doctors', 'teaching-masters'. They call it presumptuous to preach unless the preacher receives a revelation, for the Word of God can neither be 'learned' nor 'taught'. They call churches 'common houses'; they 'contemn the Lord's Day' [on the contrary, they hold that all days are the Lord's days].<sup>1</sup> They say that the promises of blessedness are for this life, and they declare that hell is in the heart and conscience.<sup>2</sup>

Like the Anabaptists, the Familists appealed mainly to the common people, though they found the occasional scholar to help them translate the works of their founder. Many members had trades that required their moving about. In this way they made a living and simultaneously proselytized. The sect grew quite rapidly. By the time of the Commonwealth they were numerous in London, in many counties and had even spread to the American colonies.

They felt the existing Churches were spiritually impoverished, cared only for empty ritual which was listened to but not lived, and were holding hell, as it were, over the heads of the people to control them. In addition they felt sin was over-emphasized, and the possibility of spiritual rebirth in this life, under-emphasized. As with all mystically minded people, they wanted to spiritualize this life more than dogmatize about the next. They believed it possible to perfect human nature; they took St. Paul literally when he

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<sup>1</sup> Jones' addition.

<sup>2</sup> Studies in Mystical Religion, pp.444-445.

said that men must reach 'unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' But they did not look to reach this goal by the slow process of transmuting the baser elements of human nature. Rather, they believed that when a member became completely 'ready', and had complete positive 'expectancy',<sup>1</sup> God would raise him to a divine level and insight. They believed this divine level to be that which Adam knew before the fall. Their meetings emphasized the divine possibilities of man, and in this way created the proper climate for growth and rebirth.

In the end this group that tried to live the life outlined in the Sermon on the Mount, died out in its organized form, though the best of its central ideas lived on in the Quakers. Probably the main reason for its passing was its top-heavy organization which was not democratic and which tended to counteract its mystical ideals. There was an extensive external system of 'highest Bishop', 'Elders' and Archbishops, below which were three orders of priests. The processes involved in attaining to any of these offices were complicated. This feature must have kept many people from joining. That many members joined the Quakers was undoubtedly another reason for its demise.

The Seekers, by contrast, were not concerned with hierarchical organization. Nor were they at all concerned with the visible Church, which they felt was useless, and had utterly failed to carry out the spiritual work begun by Christ. To them the supreme reality was the invisible Church of the spirit of God, which all could join who turned to the Divine Light within. This idea went back to the twelfth-century Joachim of Fiore, with his conception of the three ages of world history: that of the Father, equated with the period of the Old Testament; of the Son, equated with the period of the New Testament; and the coming age of the Spirit which would give a full understanding of the significance of the Christian scriptures.

The Seekers had no founder as such, and it is not known for certain if they were native to England. In addition, dating the movement is difficult, though by the middle of the seventeenth century there were numerous groups of Seekers throughout much of England. These problems are chiefly explained by the fact that in the beginning it was more of a state of mind than an organized movement.

They believed that the true apostolic succession would be revealed only when all members of the Church exhibited the transformed, dynamic nature of the original apostles. The moral purity, the divine energy and the spiritual nature of the apostles, was their standard of what Christians must be. Like the Anabaptists and Familists, the Seekers

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<sup>1</sup> Such positive expectancy is often a psychological prerequisite for mystical insight.

were met with a pitiless storm of abuse and vilification. Their little books, full of love and tenderness, were burned, their lives were harried, and they 'wandered about destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy'. Nothing that man could devise, however, embittered their spirit. They were tender and gentle. They remained to the end calm, serene, radiant, and triumphant. Their books are unmarred by any note of hate or contention. I have read well-nigh all of them; and have felt a sense of awe as I have lived with them and seen the grandeur and nobility of their spirit of love. They succeeded in their desire to belong to the invisible Church.<sup>1</sup>

There are two main reasons for the disappearance of the Seekers. Their hatred of form and organization was carried to such an extreme that they, in a sense, disembodied the movement. Secondly, whole communities of Seekers, as well as individual members, joined the Quakers, forming the nucleus of the new group.

The Quaker movement began very modestly in 1647, but by 1652 was spreading rapidly. Many of the characteristics of the previous three sects converged in the Quakers. With the Familists they shared an emphasis on the transformation of life and the attainment of perfection on earth. With the Seekers, they shared the rejection of all external ordinances of divine worship. With the Anabaptists they shared a belief in the importance of prophesy. With all three the Quakers shared the doctrine of the Inner Light and the desire to revive 'Primitive' Christianity.

The root principle of the Quakers is more than the belief in the Divine Light; it is the belief in the 'Seed'. Resident in man is a 'Seed' of divine life which, if properly nurtured, transforms a person into a new creature at one with God.<sup>2</sup> It is this, they believe, not a mere moral change, which is necessary for salvation.

The next group treated, the Cambridge Platonists, also accepted and developed the belief in the divine seed. However, unlike the groups which led to Quakerism, the Cambridge group did not choose to be religious revolutionaries. Believing in the value of the English Church's via media between the dissenting sects and the Roman Church, they accepted this middle position, not wishing to overemphasize form, which separates Christian sects. Indeed, they moved in the direction of nonsectarianism. The Cambridge Platonists were also not essentially esoteric, although significantly influenced by the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition. Nor is it fair to say that the Cambridge group produced a 'merely' academic philosophy. Yet the Cambridge Platonists in some ways

<sup>1</sup> Jones, Mysticism and Democracy, pp.62.63.

<sup>2</sup> Developed from such Biblical passages as 1 Peter i.23 and 1 John iii.9 and especially Genesis iii.15 where Christ is the 'seed of the woman' and 'serpent bruiser', and found in the northern tradition of European mysticism, for example, in the Theologia Germanica, the works of Eckhart and of Boehme.

bastardized descendants, the Latitudinarians, did go some distance towards popularizing the Platonist concern for leading a spiritual life rather than arguing over dogma or ritual. Shaftesbury, however, more accurately perceived the true spirit of their mystical thought and tried to promulgate it in a popular form, with considerable success.

V

THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS

This group wrote at a time when they had to contend with Hobbes' naked materialism, which they heartily rejected, with the mechanistic universe of Descartes, with which they felt out of harmony, and with the Puritans, with whom they had to live. In this environment, by contrast, they produced a religious philosophy which gave wider scope for the inner life, emphasized the oneness of God and man, and tried to guarantee freedom.

It is their contention that nothing is as intrinsically rational as religion. But their definition of reason includes more than logical understanding; it includes intuitive insight; it includes conscience. They made reason synonymous with the divine spark in man. Henry More believed that reason

the oracle of God, is not to be heard but in His holy temple--that is to say, in a good and holy man, thoroughly sanctified in spirit, soul and body.<sup>1</sup>

Such a man was Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683). His philosophy provided the ideas which formed the core of this movement. The keynote of his character was an enlightened tolerance and the conviction that the responsibilities of a teacher are great. Much if not most of his creative energy went into his students, which is one reason he did not write for publication. (All his works were published posthumously).

He was a tremendously successful preacher and lecturer who, contrary to the usual practice, did not merely read a book-like discourse, but instead spoke from a few careful notes, in a manner fluent, natural and easy. He sometimes spoke with great urgency, at other times with colloquial relaxation. He always chose topics of living interest. His use of notes instead of a prepared text allowed him the freedom to react in turn to his audience's reactions so that there was dialogue between speaker and listeners. His Sunday lectures at Trinity Church, Cambridge, were enormously popular, especially with undergraduates.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Frederick Powicke, The Cambridge Platonists, (1926), p.48.

His declaration in a letter to Dr. Tuckney, his former tutor, that 'I have not read manie bookes; but I have studied a few: meditation and invention hath bin my life rather than reading',<sup>1</sup> would have pleased the Quakers.

The logical outcome of his tolerance was nonsectarianism:

God is to us according to our capacity.... [The great differences in Religion do not concern essential Truth, but are] either over points of curious and nice Speculation, or about arbitrary modes of worship.<sup>2</sup>

One of Whichcote's pupils was John Smith (1618-1652), to whom he gave financial assistance, as well as directing his studies. Whichcote must have been pleased that Smith came to believe that any conception of truth which represents the highest ideals of a person, is not false.

Truth is content, when it comes into the world, to wear our mantles, to learn our language, to conform itself, as it were, to our dress and fashions...; it becomes all things to all men.<sup>3</sup>

The following quotation gives a good overview of Smith's philosophy and that of the Cambridge Platonists generally. To the spiritual person,

True Religion never finds itself out of the Infinite Sphere of Divinity and wherever it finds Beauty, Harmony, Goodness, Love, Ingenuity, Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, and the like, it is ready to say: Here is God. Wheresoever any such Perfections shine out, an holy Mind climbs up by these Sunbeams and raises up itself to God.... A good man finds every place he treads upon Holy Ground; to him the world is God's Temple.<sup>4</sup>

These words could have been written and their spirit was certainly exemplified by Henry More (1614-1687). He was the most mystical of the Cambridge Platonists. He described himself as happy every day and all day long. Under the influence of nature or music he would sometimes be overcome by joy. He was, however, reserved except with intimate friends, and loved silence, which he considered profound. Unlike Whichcote, writing was his chief employment. From 1642 to within a year or so of his death, there was nearly always something of his in the press. Divine Dialogues, 1668, is More's best known work.

To More, Platonism chiefly meant Neoplatonic mysticism. Earlier in his career he was much taken with Pythagoras, Hermes Trismegistus and Marsilio Ficino. Later he became predominantly a student of the prophetic and apocalyptic portions of the Bible, to which he felt he had found the key.

More professed to have received his two mottoes--'Claude fenestras ut luceat Domus' and 'Amor Dei lux animae' from

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<sup>1</sup> Aphorisms, (1753), Appendix, p.53.

<sup>2</sup> Select Sermons, (1698), p.21.

<sup>3</sup> Select Discourses, (1660), p.165.

<sup>4</sup> Select Discourses, pp.422-23.

a venerable old man with whom he walked and talked in a dream--one being concealed in a silver, and the other in a golden key. Anyhow, these were the keys by means of which he actually found his way into mystic fellowship with God and His truth. It was his habit--like the Quakers--often to withdraw from the world of sense into himself as into a holy temple, that there he might listen for the voice of God, and cherish upon the altar of his heart the love of God.<sup>1</sup>

Very different in spirit from More, Nathaniel Culverwel (1618-1651) retained the harshest elements of Calvinism, such as predestination, despite his study of Neoplatonism, and is in no sense a mystic. Leslie Stephen says of Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688), that his 'profound learning in the ancient philosophy did not lead him, like his friend Henry More, into the mysticism of the later platonists'.<sup>2</sup> It can definitely be said that Culverwel was no mystic, but it can not be said of Cudworth. Henry More dedicated his Conjectura Cabbalistica, 1653, to Cudworth, who was a learned Kabalist and was well read in Hermeticism.<sup>3</sup> Cudworth certainly did not hold the Calvinistic creed as did Culverwel, more than this he was a supporter of the Arminian tenets as shown in his sermon preached before the House of Commons, 1647. It demonstrates real tolerance at a time when Puritanism was at its strongest, and shows Cudworth's moral courage.

Cudworth felt it was absolutely necessary to harmonize the thinking and feeling aspects of personality, and believed this was the natural condition, contrary to the Puritans' view. 'The mind of a rational and intellectual being will of its own accord dance to the pipes of Pan, Nature's intellectual music and harmony'.<sup>4</sup> This harmonized personality is necessary, he felt, before one could enter into a proper relationship with God, which is in essence an inner, mystical experience:

I do not urge the law written upon tables of stone without us (though there is still a good use of that too), but the law of holiness written within upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. The first, though it work us into some outward conformity to God's commandments, and so have a good effect upon the world; yet we are all this while but like dead instruments of musick, that sound sweetly and harmoniously when they are only struck and played from without by the musician's hand, who hath the theory and law of music living within himself. But the second, the living law of the Gospel, the law of the Spirit of life within us, is as if the soul of musick should incorporate itself with the instrument and live in the strings and make them of their own accord--without any touch or impulse from without--dance up and down and warble out their harmonies.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Powicke, p.172.

<sup>2</sup> DNB, Cudworth.

<sup>3</sup> On Cudworth and Hermeticism see Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, pp.427ff.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in G. Pawson, The Cambridge Platonists, (1930), p.77.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Powicke, pp.44-45.

Such a spiritual musician and instrument was Peter Sterry (c.1612-1672) who was, with Henry More, the most mystical of the school. His Platonism included a deep study of Plotinus, Proclus, Ficino and Dionysius the Areopagite. As chaplain to Cromwell, he deepened the Protector's tendency towards mysticism. He had the tolerance born of spiritual love, of a Whichcote, with whom he had a deep friendship. Most of his writings were published posthumously. Some of his most inspired work appeared in Prayers Selected from Thomas à Kempis, Everard, Law and Peter Sterry, 1785.

From the beginning he seems to have been a mystical pantheist, and to have emphasized that if God is love, then the law of life is love.

Dear Reader, if thou wouldest be led to that sea which is as the gathering together and confluence of all the Waters of Life, follow the stream of Divine Love as it holdeth on its course, from its head in Eternity through every work of God, through every creature. So shalt thou be not only happy in thine end, but in the way--while this stream of Love shall not only be thy guide by thy side, but shall carry thee along in its soft and delicious bosom, bearing thee up in the bright arms of its own Divine Power, sporting with thee all along, washing thee white as snow in its own pure floods, and bathing thy whole Spirit and Person in heavenly unexpressible sweetness.<sup>1</sup>

The progenitor of the figures mentioned in the last section, Jacob Boehme, lived in this 'stream of Divine Love' and tried to explain and present 'its head in Eternity through every work of God'. Boehme has the earnest devotion of the Catholic mystics, the spiritual power of the alchemists, the total devotion to the Inner Light of the Quakers and the comprehensiveness of the Cambridge Platonists. In Boehme, the Divine Light shone with dazzling brilliance.

## VI

### THE BEHMENISTS AND THE PHILADELPHIAN SOCIETY

The complete works of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) were translated into English between 1645 and 1662. They were widely circulated in literary, religious and scientific circles. John Sparrow (1615-1665), an officer in Cromwell's army, was the patient, devoted translator of most of Boehme's works.<sup>2</sup> In his preface to Mysterium Magnum, 1654, Sparrow answers the main charge against Boehme:

...those that mention the mystical exposition of things, are suspected to be deceivers; as if, though men do not so well apprehend divine and natural mysteries as they might do, we shall judge them for offering to search after, and but complaining of the want of such learning, as doth teach the understanding of them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Powicke, p.187.

<sup>2</sup> The other translators were Sparrow's relation, John Ellistone, and Humphrey Blunden, a publisher.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. C.J. Barker, (1924), p.xvii.

Another early student of Boehme was Charles Hotham (1615-c.1672), who gave a Commencement discourse on Boehme at Cambridge in 1646. It was published as Ad Philosophiam Teutonicam Manductio, 1648. In 1650 it was translated into English by the author's brother, Durant Hotham, who published a life of Boehme in 1654.

English students of Boehme tend also to be his defenders, since Boehme's obscure style and strong dismissal of reason invite attack. Thomas Taylor (1618-1682), a Seeker, and later a Quaker, replied to an attack on Boehme, saying

For thy light expressions of Jacob Bewman, I know in most things that he speaks a Parable to thee yet, and so his writings may well be lightly esteemed of by thee; but there is that in his Writings which, if ever thy eye be opened, will appear to be a sweet unfolding of the Mystery of God and of Christ, in divers particulars, according to his Gift. And therefore beware of speaking Evil of that which thou know'st not.<sup>1</sup>

Among the many other students of Boehme were Charles I, who was much taken with the Forty Questions; Francis Ellington, the Quaker; Elias Ashmole; Thomas Tryon; Thomas Bromley, author of Behmenist works, and possibly Milton.<sup>2</sup>

A number of students of Boehme formed Behmenist groups. The best known of these groups, the Philadelphian Society, lasted only six years, 1697-1703, but had grown out of a group of

spiritual people who for above fifty years had met together after the primitive way of attendance or waiting for the Holy Spirit, to assist them in Praying or Speaking to the Edification of each other.<sup>3</sup>

The founder of this group was John Pordage (1607-1681), rector of Bradfield. The group lived in Pordage's home, trying to experience a perfect monastic existence. One of the members was the Earl of Pembroke who was impressed with the group's purity and piety.

Pordage had studied the Kabala and alchemy, which helped him to understand that aspect of Boehme's vision. However, his grasp of Boehme's teaching was not deep, certainly not as deep as that of fellow Philadelphian Lee. His main Behmenist work was Theologia Mystica, 1683, which took the position, as Law did later, that in the end even the Devil would be saved. This was not the position of Boehme himself. The book is of extremely uneven quality. Much of it is utterly inscrutable, and not because of depth of insight. Other parts are perfectly clear, such as this passage where he views love alchemically:

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<sup>1</sup> Works, (1697), p.86.

<sup>2</sup> See Margaret Bailey, Milton and Jakob Boehme, (New York, 1914).

<sup>3</sup> Bailey, p.105.

Love is of a transmuting and transforming Nature. The great effect of Love is to turn all things into its own Nature, which is all goodness, sweetness and perfection. This is that Divine Power which turns Water into Wine, Sorrow and Hellish Anguish into exulting and triumphing Joy; Curse into Blessing; where it meets with a barren heathy Desert it transmutes it into a Paradise of delights; yea, it changeth evil to good and all imperfection into perfection. It restores that which is fallen and degenerated to its primary Beauty, Excellence and Perfection.<sup>1</sup>

In 1663 Pordage began to assist his more famous disciple, Jane Lead (1623-1704), in her study of Boehme. From childhood on she had visions, at certain periods in her life almost nightly. As always it is difficult to know whether such experiences are pathological, mere self-delusion or true mystical revelation. A genuine experience is truly a rebirth; it is, she explains, 'the bringing forth of a new-created Godlike similitude in the soul'.<sup>2</sup> The Revelation of Revelations, 1683, is an account of her visions. But her most popular work was the spiritual diary A Fountain of Gardens, in four volumes, 1696-1701. It was reprinted four times. Some consider The Heavenly Cloud, 1681, a treatise on death and resurrection, her best work.

Though popular in her lifetime, her writings have been neglected ever since, in part because of her ungrammatical language and difficult style. In addition, many of her visions are totally inscrutable.

Unlike John Pordage or Jane Lead, Francis Lee, M.D. (1661-1719) was a person of great learning. Walton calls him 'profoundly versed in the Jewish, Philosophic, and Christian Mystic science of all ages'.<sup>3</sup> Because of his knowledge of oriental literature he was called 'Rabbi Lee'.

After Jane Lead's blindness, Lee edited and published her works with prefaces of his own. He defended her writings and was in other ways devoted to her.

In 1697 he was a chief founder of the Philadelphian Society. With Richard Roach he edited its Theosophical Transactions. The society's meetings, at least at first, were very well attended.

It is believed his works were very numerous, but his modesty kept him from acknowledging many writings. Thus his paraphrase or enlargement of Boehme's Supersensual Life was ascribed by some to Law. The student of Lee constantly encounters such problems.

With Pordage, Lead and Law, he shared a belief in the finite, not infinite, duration of evil.

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<sup>1</sup> Theologia Mystica, p.81.

<sup>2</sup> The Enochian Walks with God, (1694), p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Notes and Materials for an Adequate Biography of William Law, (1854), p.188.

God communicated himself to angels and to men in the unity of his life, in the variety of lights, and in the harmony of love. This He did, that they might love him, and loving him, behold him, and beholding him, be transformed into the express image of his life, which is life eternal... By this communication of Himself, he did not design, that any angel, or man, should hate him for ever, or should be transformed for ever into a shadow of death. It was in the power of angels and men to interrupt this Divine communication in themselves, but it was not in their power totally to cut it off, any more than it was to create themselves, or to annihilate themselves; since it entered into their original constitution.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Roach (1662-1730) was an important Philadelphian, and a life-long friend of Francis Lee. He was a born mystic, and was pleased to follow Lee in his association with Jane Lead. It was Roach, not Lee as Walton believed,<sup>2</sup> who wrote the verse included in Lead's mystical works. He edited Jeremiah White's (1629-1707) A Perswasive to Moderation and Forbearance in Love among the Divided Forms of Christians, 1708.<sup>3</sup> White was a follower of Peter Sterry, and caught the essence of his master's philosophy. Roach was, here, among his own kind.

He published The Great Crisis, or the Mystery of the Times and Seasons Unfolded in 1725 (not issued until 1727). In this work Roach gives an account of contemporary mystics. It is preparatory to The Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant, 1728. The latter part of the book contains many extracts from Lead's works interspersed with verses by Roach. Since his major works first appeared well into the eighteenth century, he will be examined below in chapter five.

## VII

Even this brief survey indicates not only the continuity of an interest in mysticism in England, but its pervasiveness. It occurs in different religious traditions, in different classes of society, from the university circles of the Cambridge Platonists and the learned world of the scientists and Hermeticists to the unlettered world of the Familists and Seekers, and it appeals to those of conservative as well as revolutionary sympathies. In all these circles a mystical interest tends in the seventeenth century to stimulate a non-denominational tolerance, which was reinforced in the eighteenth century by the rationalist tendencies in European civilization. It is the interaction of the mystical and the rational tendencies and traditions in the eighteenth century which is examined in the following chapters, ending with William Law who virtually dismissed reason from the religious life, and beginning in the

<sup>1</sup> Walton, p.214.

<sup>2</sup> Walton, pp.148, 180-185n.

<sup>3</sup> This is the date of the first edition. Roach's edition is not dated.

next chapter with Shaftesbury who wanted to unite the two traditions so that each would flower in wholeness.

### CHAPTER 3

#### SHAFTESBURY, DEISM, AND THE SUBLIME

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The wise man recognizes the idea of the good within him. This he develops by withdrawal into the holy place of his own soul. He who does not understand how the soul contains the beautiful within itself, seeks to realize beauty without by labourious production. His aim should rather be to concentrate and simplify, and so to expand his being; instead of going out into the manifold, to forsake it for the One, and so to float upwardstoward the divine fount of being whose stream flows within him.

You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer--in which the divine essence is communicated to you. This is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite consciousness. Like only can apprehend like; when you thus cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self, its divine essence, you realize this union--this identity.

Plotinus

The elements and seasons: all declare  
For what the eternal maker has ordain'd  
The powers of man: we feel within ourselves  
His energy divine: he tells the heart  
He meant, he made, us to behold and love  
What he beholds and loves, the general orb  
Of life and being; to be great like him,  
Beneficent and active. Thus the men  
Whom nature's works can charm, with God himself  
Hold converse, grow familiar day by day  
With his conceptions, act upon his plan,  
And form to his, the relish of their souls.

Mark Akenside

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#### I

In the preface to his first publication, an edition of Whichcote's Select Sermons, 1698, Shaftesbury refers to Whichcote as the 'Preacher of Good Nature' whose writings were a 'Defense of Natural Goodness'. The same can be said with equal fairness of Shaftesbury and his works.

Shaftesbury's thought possesses mystical aspects and implications, which can hardly be accidental. Maren-Sofie Røstvig has asserted that in the earlier part of the eighteenth century the 'continuity of the Neoplatonic tradition is best illustrated by the third Earl of Shaftesbury...',<sup>1</sup> but did

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<sup>1</sup> The Happy Man, 2nd edn., (Oslo, 1971), ii, p.24.

not develop the idea. John Toland reported that when 'the old' Lord Shaftesbury was one day conferring with

Major WILDMAN about the many sects of Religion in the world, they came to this conclusion at last; that, notwithstanding those infinite divisions caus'd by the interest of the Priests and the ignorance of the People, ALL WISE MEN ARE OF THE SAME RELIGION: <sup>1</sup> whereupon a Lady in the room, who seem'd to mind her needle more than their discourse, demanded with some concern what that Religion was? to whom the Lord SHAFTESBURY strait reply'd, Madam, wise men never tell. <sup>2</sup>

Toland did not elucidate, except to add that 'considering how dangerous it is made to tell the truth, tis difficult to know when any man declares his real sentiments'.<sup>3</sup> R. L. Brett has argued that Shaftesbury's task,

as he regarded it, was not to strengthen the philosophical position of the Cambridge (Platonists), but to extend their thinking to other spheres and to bring it home to the hearts of men. Such was his disposition, and such he deemed were the demands of the times in which he lived. Shaftesbury has not been the only one to consider so-called practical issues more important than academic philosophy, and moreover there are certain considerations which vindicate his decision, if such a word can be used to describe what was probably not a self-conscious act.<sup>4</sup>

Shaftesbury's writings outline a process of spiritual development which is mystical. Of course the idea of calling it mystical or even suggesting such, would have been unthinkable given the biases of the existing milieu. It would appear, therefore, that Shaftesbury's intention was to take the esoteric philosophy of mysticism and, disguising its source, promulgate it exoterically. To do this he had to explain it in terms his reader could accept.<sup>5</sup>

The first stage of the process is purification of the personality through thorough self-examination, disinterested self-criticism, and periodic withdrawal from the world for solitude, introspection and renewal. The goal of this self-examination is to disclose all prejudice, weakness and illusion. One should be made acutely aware of imperfection. This continuing self-examination is painful and difficult, but essential, since all future spiritual development is dependent upon it.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, 'All mystics speak the same language, for they come from the same country', quoted in Underhill, p.80.

<sup>2</sup> 'Clidophorus, or of the Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy', pp.94-95; Part II of Tetradymus, 1720.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>4</sup> The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, (1951), p.209. It is rather more likely this was very much a 'self-conscious' act'.

<sup>5</sup> It is possible Shaftesbury formulated such a plan as a result of his study of the Cambridge Platonists, and/or through the influence of his long-time

HOW LITTLE regard soever may be shewn to that moral Speculation or INQUIRY, which we call the Study of ourselves; it must, in strictness, be yielded, that all Knowledg whatsoever depends upon this previous-one: 'And that we can in reality be assur'd of nothing, till we are first assur'd of What we are OUR-SELVES.' For by this alone we can know what Certainty and Assurance is.<sup>1</sup>

Of this first stage on the mystic path, Evelyn Underhill comments:

What must be the first step of the self upon this road to perfect union with the Absolute? Clearly, a getting rid of all those elements of normal experience which are not in harmony with reality: of illusion, evil, imperfection of every kind. By false desires and false thoughts man has built up for himself a false universe.... That world, which we have distorted by identifying it with our own self-regarding arrangements of its elements, has got to reassume for us the character of Reality, of God.<sup>2</sup>

One of the first results of such careful introspection is tolerance. When one's illusions about self are shattered one better understands the weaknesses of others. Shaftesbury's promotion of tolerance is a central feature of his thought. Since tolerance is promoted on the individual level by conscientious self-examination, Shaftesbury applied the same principle to society at large with his doctrine of non-violent ridicule by wit and humour.

Now what Rule or Measure is there in the World, except in the considering of the real Temper of Things, to find which are truly serious and which ridiculous? And how can this be done, unless by applying the Ridicule, to see whether it will bear? But if we fear to apply this Rule in any thing, what Security can we have against Imposture of Formality in all things?<sup>3</sup>

The next stage on the mystical path, after ongoing purification of the personality, is attunement with the Absolute. To gain this attunement one must realize the real self is not that which is identified with the ego. The real self is a spark or seed of the divine; when one perfectly identifies

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friend, Benjamin Furly (1636-1714), an English Quaker with a liberal nature and eclectic mind who had settled in Holland. His library contained many mystical and Kabbalistic works. It is interesting to note that Francis Lee met Dionysius Andreas Freher at Furly's house, and that within three years of their return to England had helped found the Philadelphian Society to promulgate and popularize Boehme's philosophy. The mystical aspects of Furly have been briefly treated in an article by T. A. Birrell, 'English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles - II' in The Downside Review, April, 1976, pp.99ff. For a suggestion that Shaftesbury was influenced by the mystic Bruno, see F. H. Heinemann, 'John Toland and the Age of Reason', Archiv für Philosophie, 4 (1950), p.56.

1 Characteristicks, 2nd edn, (1714), iii, p.192. In i, pp.195-6 Shaftesbury offers the practical advice that the use of a mirror makes self-examination more objective.

2 Underhill, pp.198-9.

3 Characteristicks, i, p.12.

with this real self, one is in perfect harmony with God. This process is not a diminution of man's spirit but an enlargement of an ultimate kind. One learns, thereby, that everything man is, is infinite; everything that man has is finite.<sup>1</sup>

Shaftesbury must have had some difficulty in deciding how to communicate this central doctrine of mysticism. Common sense demanded that he could not declare in oracular fashion that 'the real self is at one with God, therefore we must act with the universal love of God, God loving the whole creation'. Yet, he came very near to doing just this at a crucial stage in 'The Moralists'.<sup>2</sup>

Shaftesbury proceeded by having Philocles (in 'The Moralists') represent and voice public scepticism of such a doctrine. Shaftesbury did not make Philocles a straw figure, easily satisfied. The dialogue is over a hundred pages. Philocles asked incisive questions and reacted to Theocles, developing argument with insight. One of the first comments made by Philocles was inevitable:

As for a plain natural Love of one single Person in either Sex, I cou'd compass it, I thought, well enough; but this complex universal sort was beyond my reach. I cou'd love the Individual, but not the Species. This was too Mysterious; too Metaphysical an Object for me. In short, I cou'd love nothing of which I had not some sensible material image.<sup>3</sup>

Theocles in return asks if Philocles came to love his friend Palemon before he had met him, by knowledge of his character gained through their long correspondence. Philocles acknowledges this and adds that when he began to love Palemon he was forced to create a mental image of him, and that he must try to do likewise 'in the Case before us'.<sup>4</sup> Philocles announces that he might become 'a Lover' of the Whole if 'it cou'd be "sensible of my Love and capable of a Return". For without this, I shou'd make but an ill Lover...!<sup>5</sup> Theocles answers that he will attempt to show Philocles 'that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Underhill, p.132n.: 'This doctrine of Man's latent absoluteness, expressed under a multitude of different symbols, is the central dogma of mysticism, and the guarantee of the validity of the contemplative process'. It of course follows that true identification of the self with the 'Whole' is impossible without and inseparable from, love of the Whole. Shaftesbury would never argue (nor did he believe) that fear of punishment should be used to prod people to embrace this doctrine. It was to be embraced because of its logic and more importantly because divine love should be returned.

<sup>2</sup> Characteristicks, ii, pp.366ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ii, p.243.

<sup>4</sup> Ii, p.243.

<sup>5</sup> Ii, p.244.

BEAUTY which I count the perfectest, and most deserving of LOVE; and which will not fail of a return.<sup>1</sup>

In the discussion which ensues Theocles finds that he must defend himself against the charge of 'enthusiasm'. He answers by asking

whether there be any thing in Divinity which you think has more the Air of Enthusiasm than that Notion of Divine LOVE, such as separates from every thing worldly, sensual, or meanly-interested? A LOVE which is simple, pure, and unmix'd; which has no other Object than merely the Excellency of that Being it-self, nor admits of any other Thought of Happiness, than in its single Fruition.<sup>2</sup>

The discussion reaches a point where Theocles must explain the reality of violence, suffering and all other horrors if this is the best of possible worlds. His answer is the same given by many mystics:

had Goodness never met with Opposition, nor Merit ever lain under a Cloud; where had been the Trial, Victory, or Crown of Virtue? Where had the Virtues had their Theater, or whence their Names? Where had been Temperance or Self-denial? Where Patience, Meekness, Magnanimity? Whence have these their being? What Merit, except from Hardship? What Virtue without a Conflict, and the Encounter of such Enemys as arise both within, and from abroad?<sup>3</sup>

Explaining that evil may be an appearance (or personal interpretation) and not an ultimate reality since a finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite, the dialogue continues first with Theocles:

And therefore there may possibly be no real Ill in things: but all may be perfectly concurrent to one Interest; the Interest of that Universal ONE.

It may be so.

Why, then, if it may be so (be not surpriz'd) 'It follows that it must be so'; on the account of that great Unit, and simple Self-Principle which you have granted in the Whole, the Nature or Mind of the Whole will put in execution, for the Whole's Good: And if it be possible to exclude Ill, It will exclude it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ii, p.245. Mo Tzu (c.479-381 B.C.), The Chinese philosopher who was the first major opponent of Confucius, used a series of arguments in favour of 'all-embracing love' which are very similar to Shaftesbury's. In the book which bears his name are three chapters on this love of all. There is an interesting discussion of Mo Tzu and this aspect of his philosophy in Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, (1948), chapter five.

<sup>2</sup> Ii, p.270.

<sup>3</sup> Ii, p.276. One of the central postulates of Boehme's philosophy is that all manifestation necessitates duality, contraries if not opposition. In 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' Blake declares that 'Without contraries is no progression'.

<sup>4</sup> Ii, p.364. On Shaftesbury's view that one who believes in evil or a wrathful God is simply projecting into the world what is in fact within himself, compare the emblem and Greek motto of the frontispiece for the

After Theocles next disposes of the Manichean hypothesis<sup>1</sup> Philocles says that he is now convinced that 'MALICE and CHANCE (vain Phantoms!) have yielded to That all-prevalent Wisdom which you have established<sup>2</sup>.

Shaftesbury cemented his argument by the use of several mystical principles. He argued that both pain and pleasure are vexations, and hinder a person from gaining oneness with the Absolute:

If either throws the Mind off its bias, and deprives it of the Satisfaction it takes in its natural Exercise and Employment (to know the whole); the Mind in this case must be Sufferer as well by one as by the other. If neither does this; there is no harm on either side.... Has not even Nature her-self, in some respects, as it were blended 'em together, and (as a wise Man said once) 'join'd the Extremity of one so nicely to the other, that it absolutely runs into it, and is undistinguishable'?<sup>3</sup>

Shaftesbury's 'moral sense' is the term he used for the Inner Light. His Quaker friend Furly might have had some influence here. It was Fairchild who pointed out that in the eighteenth century the 'Inner Light usually appears as natural goodness, the moral sense, taste, social love, or original genius'.<sup>4</sup>

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general title of Characteristicks (made to Shaftesbury's precise specifications), which is explained by Felix Paknadel, 'Shaftesbury's Illustrations of Characteristics', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, 37(1974), pp.297-8: 'The Greek words refer to a quotation from Marcus Aurelius in treatise V, Miscellany iv, chapter 1, in which Shaftesbury reaches the core of his philosophy. The quotation reads: "What view you take is everything, and your view is in your power. Remove it when you choose, and then, as if you had rounded the cape, come calm serenity, a waveless bay" [the seascape in the background]. This is followed by another quotation, from Epictetus: "As is the water-dish, so is the soul; as is the ray which falls on the water, so are the appearances. When then the water is moved, the ray too seems to be moved, yet is not" [the vase in the foreground, and the ray falling on the water]. "And when, accordingly, a man is giddy, it is not the arts and the virtues which are thrown into confusion, but the spirit to which they belong; and when he is recovered so they are". It should be remembered that Shaftesbury considered the emblems for the second edition of Characteristicks as conveying in another medium, the main aspects of his thought. They were not mere ornaments, though unfortunately they have always been treated as such. Paknadel passim.

<sup>1</sup> Ii, p.365.

<sup>2</sup> Ii, pp.365-6.

<sup>3</sup> Ii, pp.234-5.

<sup>4</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, (New York, 1942) ii, p.150. Cf. Akenside, Pleasures of the Imagination, iii:

What then is taste, but these internal powers  
Active, and strong, and feelingly alive  
To each fine impulse? a discerning sense  
Of decent and sublime, with quick disgust  
From things deform'd, or disarrang'd, or gross  
In species? This nor gems, nor stores of gold,

The law of compensation, or cause and effect with its mystical resonance as karma, is one of the final arguments in 'The Moralists':

BEGIN then, said he, and chuse. See what the Subjects are; and which you prefer; which honour with your Admiration, Love and Esteem. For by these again you will be honour'd in your turn.<sup>1</sup>

And again near the conclusion of the treatise.

Everything has its CONDITION. Power and Preferments are to be had at one rate; Pleasures at another; LIBERTY and HONESTY at another. A good MIND must be paid for, as other things.<sup>2</sup>

Shaftesbury referred to the law of compensation earlier, in the 'Inquiry Concerning Virtue'.

... such as CAUSES are, such must be their EFFECTS. And therefore as natural Affection or social Love is perfect, or imperfect; so must be the Content and Happiness depending on it.<sup>3</sup>

Earlier in the 'Inquiry' he declared that a rational creature who voluntarily harms anyone is 'liable to such Treatment from every-one, as if he had in some degree offended All.'<sup>4</sup>

It could be argued that the law of compensation is not an exclusively mystical principle without a belief in reincarnation. Shaftesbury could hardly be expected openly to support the doctrine of reincarnation, which, as a confirmed Platonist, he would have met with in his master,<sup>5</sup> yet such a belief seems to slip out at points in the 'Rhapsody'. First, where he refers to the 'Progress of the Soul towards Perfection',<sup>6</sup> since (in its context) it implies that all souls reach perfection (an impossible idea in terms of one life), but an idea which is central to reincarnation. The second passage is in one of the more emotional addresses to the 'Guardian-DEITY', where Theocles declares that 'All lives: and by Succession still revives'.<sup>7</sup>

The last principle left to identify is Shaftesbury's living sense of the mystical oneness inherent in all things, or the essential mystical experience of the God within, which is the ultimate argument that one should

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Nor purple state, nor culture, can bestow,  
But God alone, when first his active hand  
Imprints the secret bias of the soul.

<sup>1</sup> Ii, p.403.

<sup>2</sup> Ii, p.440.

<sup>3</sup> Ii, p.110.

<sup>4</sup> Ii, p.42.

<sup>5</sup> The myth of Er at the end of the Republic.

<sup>6</sup> Ii, p.273. He does not appear to be using 'Perfection' as a synonym for God.

<sup>7</sup> Ii, p.367. This is more than a reference to reproduction. The OED in sense two defines revive as 'To return or come back to life...', and

identify (or recognize the existing oneness) with the Whole.<sup>1</sup> Theocles addresses the 'Perfection of Being':

Sole-Animating and Inspiring Power! Author and Subject of these Thoughts! Thy Influence is universal: and in all Things thou art inmost.... Thee, the ALL-TRUE, and Perfect, who hast thus communicated Thy-self more immediately to us, so as in some manner to inhabit within our Souls; Thou who art Original SOUL, diffusive, vital in all, inspiring the Whole!<sup>2</sup>

It should be remembered that at several points Shaftesbury openly states (though he had to tread softly), that the goal of love of the whole, is mystical love, and is of a higher nature than the theological doctrine of reward and punishment:

For as, on one hand, 'twill be found difficult to defend the Notion of that high-rais'd Love, espous'd with so much warmth by those devout Mysticks; so, on the other hand, 'twill be found as hard a Task, upon the Principles of these cooler Men, to guard Religion from the Imputation of Mercenariness, and a slavish Spirit. For how shall one

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quotes 'Rape of the Lock', (1712-14), v,70: 'She smil'd to see the doughty hero slain/ But, at her smile, the Beau reviv'd again'.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hoxie Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry, (New York, 1939), i, p.553:

Not all pantheists, of course, are sentimentalists, but pantheism is the form which the mysticism of the sentimentalist most easily assumes.... A person for whom the natural revelation [Inner Light] has become all-important must choose between a barren rationalism and an explicit pantheism. Once this stage is reached, even non-sentimental forms of pantheism such as Spinoza's may be interpreted sentimentally, though the philosophy of Shaftesbury would be better suited to the purpose.

<sup>2</sup> ii, pp.366,370. Cf. a previously unpublished letter to an unknown priest, dated Feb. 5, 1704: '... to see Deity as Deity, without human features or disfigurement not as a vision, a sad dream, or specter, with gloomy looks and horror; but as the best and beautifullest of sights; to see the whole administration good and perfect, without a dark part, serene and mild; even those blasts which you, Father, so lately mentioned to me (on the death of my youngest sister) that sweep away the tender blossoms as well as fruit; to see all this as wholesome, kind, and sovereign; as he who is rightly conscious ought to see it; this is what surely must give joy and inward cheerfulness enough to one who has, or is near having it his case.' Cf. also the previously unpublished prayer from Shaftesbury's private papers, which begins thus: 'Eternal Parent of Men and all things, the Spirit, Life and Power of the Universe: from whom all order harmony and beauty is derived, in whom everything exists, and by whom all things are sustained and ruled, so as to hold one order, to concur in one complete and perfect whole. Thou who art the author of all in and from whom are all things the order and motion of the heavens and of the infinite spheres; the vigour and flourishing of this earth: the breath of living creatures, and the intelligence of souls: being himself the universal soul, the eternal and infinite mind and wisdom of the whole'. heinemann, 'Philosopher of Enthusiasm', pp.308,316.

deny, that to serve God by Compulsion, or for Interest merely, is Servile and Mercenary? Is it not evident, that the only true and liberal Service paid either to that Supreme Being, or to any other Superior, is that 'which proceeds from an Esteem or Love of the Person serv'd, a Sense of Duty or Gratitude, and a love of the dutiful and grateful Part, as good and amiable, in it-self'?... And is it not to be shewn, 'That... the Motive of Reward and Punishment is primary and of the highest moment with us; till being capable of more sublime Instruction, we are led from this servile State, to the generous Service of Affection and Love'?<sup>1</sup>

The final stage on the mystical path, after purification of the personality and identification with the Absolute, is Illumination or Cosmic Consciousness, Consciousness of the All, which Shaftesbury had necessarily to leave out since there was no way to broach the subject to the reading public in his age. Moreover, such would be beyond the reach of his audience since, except for rare cases, Illumination is gained, if at all, only after years of precise and frequent spiritual exercises, prayer and meditation.<sup>2</sup> All he could do was give some small sense of the over-arching harmony and bliss of Cosmic Consciousness, which he did at certain points in 'The Moralists'.<sup>3</sup>

How effective was Shaftesbury's unique attempt to promulgate this philosophy?<sup>4</sup> R.S. Crane writes:

It has been observed that most if not all of the distinctive elements of the sentimental benevolism of the mid-eighteenth century already existed at the beginning of the century in the writing of... Shaftesbury, and it has been noted that the aristocratic author... for all the suspicions which could be cast on his religious orthodoxy, enjoyed a very considerable vogue in intellectual circles during the four or five decades following his death; from these facts the conclusion has been drawn that it was mainly from Shaftesbury and his immediate

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<sup>1</sup> Ii, pp. 272-3.

<sup>2</sup> Meditation in the modern sense. As Shaftesbury used the term (sense three, OED, in which his use is cited), it meant a 'discourse, written or spoken, in which a subject (usually religious) is treated in a meditative manner, or which is designed to guide the reader or hearer in meditation'.

<sup>3</sup> See for example ii, pp.366ff, and ii, pp.345-6, quoted at the end of the present chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Heinemann, 'The Philosopher of Enthusiasm', p.315:

His importance lies rather in that he created a new climate of sentiment, taste, and thought, and that he found new modes of expression for religious feeling in an age where people felt unable to accept the orthodox Christian tradition. It is not a new religion, has no dogmas and is therefore difficult to define. It is based on feeling and intuition, i.e. on an immediate apprehension of the beauty of the world.

The last two sentences form a fairly good definition of mysticism.

disciples that the impulses came which affected both the literary creators of the 'man of feeling' and his admirers among the public.<sup>1</sup>

Crane then qualifies this and argues that Shaftesbury was not the source, but was a transmitter of these ideas. This distinction, though valuable in Crane's essay, is unimportant for the present purpose. What matters is that he was an important influence on the eighteenth-century 'man of feeling'<sup>2</sup> and although the benevolism he helped to foster did with some degenerate into shallow sentimentalism, it was the occasion for increased sensitivity to man and nature in an ever widening circle of self.

F.H. Heinemann ended an important article on Shaftesbury by quoting some lines by George Eliot which he felt 'reveal better than anything else the secret of Shaftesbury's achievement and of his continuing influence'.

Oh may I join the choir invisible  
Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence: live  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn  
For miserable aims that end with self,  
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge man's search  
To vaster issues. So to live is heaven:  
To make undying music in the world,  
Breathing as beauteous order that controls  
With growing sway the growing life of man.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Leslie Stephen described Matthew Tindal's Christianity as Old As the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature, 1730, as an 'effective statement of the rationalist creed of the time.... The title expresses the contention of the contemporary deists, and the book marked the

<sup>1</sup> 'Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the "Man of Feeling"', ELH, 1 (1934), p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Among others his influence was central on Thomson, and through him some of Shaftesbury's principles were significantly popularized. But of greater importance for the present purpose is that Shaftesbury was popular with readers other than the 'learned'. Cf. Gerald Cragg, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century, (Cambridge, 1964), p.70:

Gibbon reports that Shaftesbury was one of the favorite authors of his aunt (an estimable but not a learned woman), and John Leland [A View of the Principal Deistic Writers] regarded him as one of the most pernicious, because one of the most popular writers of the early eighteenth-century.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Philosopher of Enthusiasm', p.322. The motto of the Shaftesbury coat of arms is 'Love - Serve'.

culminating point of the controversy'.<sup>1</sup> Gerald Cragg has explained Tindal's tone and approach:

Tindal had previously participated in a number of controversies, and he had learned that restraint is often more forceful than violence, and that personal abuse forfeits more than it gains. With a sobriety often tinged with sarcasm, he set forth as a unified system the scattered arguments which his predecessors had advanced.<sup>2</sup>

Such an approach should not be explained merely as argumentative strategy; his reticence would help him to avoid persecution.<sup>3</sup>

Almost immediately Tindal received an important answer in William Law's The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, fairly and fully stated, 1731. The first problem in analyzing Law's and Tindal's arguments is their conception of God. Law's idea of God is transcendent, and therefore he would tend to think God unknowable. Tindal's view tended towards immanence, and he would thus feel that God is 'nearer' and to some important degree 'knowable'. Since it cannot be said (except through personal preference) that one view is more accurate than the other, it is not a question of who was right. Rather, since Law's replies are made with reference to his transcendent conception, he in a sense never truly answers Tindal. This is an inherent difficulty, and there is no question of fault unless it be that Law could not see beyond his own view. Each needed the other, to have a fuller conception of the divine.

The second problem is that Tindal aimed his statements and questions at what he felt was the narrow, arbitrary, scriptural God of Christianity whereas Law replied with his transcendent conception, which was beside the point. Moreover Law hides at times behind the argument (in itself sound if the propositions are accepted) that since God is infinite and man finite, God cannot be essentially known by man. What Law overlooks in this argument, so the mystic would say, is that man is not utterly finite; (the later Law would be the first to admit this).

What was perhaps, for Law, the most difficult problem in answering Tindal was that emphasizing as he did, that infinite God cannot truly be known by finite man, he was forced to walk a tightrope. He did not want to convince people that God is utterly unknowable since this would give fuel to

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<sup>1</sup> DNE, 'Matthew Tindal'. The purpose of the following discussion is not to examine the Deist controversy in general or the Law-Tindal phase in particular, as such; rather, the intention is to point out mystical aspects and ramifications.

<sup>2</sup> Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century, p.69.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. DNB, 'No doubt Tindal thought it fair to avoid persecution by using conventional phrases....'

atheism. Also, if he pushed this point too far he might rightly be asked, if God is so unknowable how he himself could write about God.

It is interesting that the man Caroline Spurgeon calls the greatest prose mystic in English,<sup>1</sup> rejects at this time the macrocosmic-microcosmic reasoning of Tindal and the mystical doctrine that man can become one with God. Law reacts to the following passage in Tindal,

... by our repeated Acts of Virtue, we shou'd be continually making nearer and nearer Approaches to the most perfect, and the most happy Being. By this conduct, we, as the Scriptures assure us, shou'd be made Partakers of the Divine Nature, be born of God, and be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.... Hence we may contemplate the great Dignity of our Rational Nature, since our Reason for kind, tho' not for Degree, is of the same Nature with that of God's,<sup>2</sup>

by remarking:

But what greater absurdity can a man fall into, than to suppose, that a being whose existence had a beginning but a few years ago, differs only in degree from that which could not possibly have a beginning, or that a dependent and independent being, should not be different in kind, but only in degree.<sup>3</sup>

The fundamental objection mystics would make to Tindal is that reason is not the only (nor the best) way of knowing God. Another important objection from mystics involves one of Tindal's main arguments for Natural Religion and against Christianity, (which Law has trouble with and answers poorly): 'Was it not as easy for God to have communicated it [His Word] to all nations, as to any one nation or person?'<sup>4</sup> Eastern and Moslem mystics would reply that this was done, through God's messengers, prophets, or avatars, who taught in essence the same timeless truths, 'translated' into the time, place and understanding of the recipients.<sup>5</sup> Tindal (as well as Law) would not accept this argument, but it is significant that when the Deists say

truth is to be attained by every individual for himself, by the exercise of his private judgment uninfluenced by tradition or external authority; in other words, by 'the pure light of nature' which shines in all alike,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C.H.E.L., 'William Law and the Mystics', p.308.

<sup>2</sup> Christianity as Old as the Creation, p.20.

<sup>3</sup> The Case of Reason, Works, (Setley, 1892), ii, p.91.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Law, p.97.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Koran, xl.78.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Lovejoy, 'The Parallel of Deism and Classicism', MP, xxix(1932), p.285.

mystics would largely agree. They would not mean exactly the same thing by 'the light of nature',<sup>1</sup> and mystics would definitely not say that one should necessarily be 'uninfluenced' by (inspired) external authority, but Deist and mystic would alike desire a more personal and direct 'Natural Religion' than was possible in contemporary Christianity. Many Christian mystics, as for example the later Law and Boehme, would say that through the experience of the Christ within, all people--Christian and non-Christian alike--have the opportunity to hear God's Word within their soul through introspection and devotion to the divine.<sup>2</sup>

With his unusual ability to get to the heart of a question, Law states:

The dispute... betwixt Christians and unbelievers, [meaning Deists] concerning reason, is not, whether men are to use their own reason, any more than whether they are to see with their own eyes; but whether every man's reason must needs guide him by its own light, or cease to guide him, as soon as it guides him by a light borrowed from revelation? This is the true state of the question, not whether reason is to be followed, but when it is best followed? not whether it is to be our guide, but how it may be made our safest guide?... Christians oppose unbelievers, not because they reason, but because they reason ill. They receive revelation, not to suppress the natural power, but to give new and heavenly light to their reason; not to take away their right of judging for themselves, but to secure them from false judgments.<sup>3</sup>

Mystics would largely agree with Law here. They would agree that receiving the light from genuine revelation does not suppress the personal light, and they would agree that the supernal light from genuine revelation would help one correctly interpret the personal light.

The Law quotation above is from the beginning of chapter four in which Law is very successful in refuting Tindal's position that the personal light is sufficient and that the light of revelation is superfluous. However, in discussing miracles in chapter three, Law is on shakier ground. Tindal asks:

If God by reason of his own perfections must be thus mysterious and incomprehensible, both in the matter and manner of divine revelation; How can we know what revelations we are to receive as divine? How can we be blamed for rejecting this, or receiving that, if we cannot

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Henry Brooke, Gustavus Vasa, (1739), Prologue: 'Great Nature's law, the law within the breast:/Formed by no art, and to no sect confined,/ But stamped by Heaven upon th'unlettered Mind,' a proposition Deists and mystics would accept.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Law's Spirit of Prayer, (1749-50), ed. Sidney Spencer, pp.118-19 on among others Pythagoras and Plato. Also cf. 1 Cor.15.28 and Col.1.20, and Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love, chapter 62: 'all natures that God hath made to flow out of Him to work His Will shall be restored and brought again into Him by the salvation of man through the working of grace'.

<sup>3</sup> Law, p.116.

comprehend the reasons on which every revelation is founded, both as to its matter and manner?<sup>1</sup>

In answering, Law, walking his rhetorical tightrope, first concedes to Tindal that 'We are not without some natural capacity of judging right of God, of finding out his perfections, and proving what is, or is not worthy to be ascribed to him'.<sup>2</sup> But, having a transcendent conception he instantly balances the comment thus: 'Yet what the divine perfections are in themselves, what they imply and contain in their own nature and manner of existence, is altogether mysterious and inconceivable by us at present'.<sup>2</sup> Soon after this statement, feeling he has again lost balance, he adds a viewpoint Tindal would sympathize with, 'yet we may be so far sufficient judges, of the reasons for receiving or not receiving a revelation as divine, as to make our conduct therein justly accountable to God'.<sup>2</sup>

But the question is, by what means is one to judge? Law's first answer is that the 'excellence' of a revelation is acknowledged for the same reason the excellence of the creation proves it to be the work of God. But since this answer implies a judgement most anyone could make by his personal light (since only atheists would deny that the creation shows God's work), Law could not consider this a sufficient answer. In preparing the reader for his second answer, Law uses a circular argument.

For though no revelation can come from God, but what is truly worthy of him, and full of every internal excellence; yet what is truly worthy of God to be revealed, cannot possibly be known by us, but by a revelation from himself.<sup>3</sup>

To this Law adds:

And as we can only know what is worthy of God in creation, by knowing what he has created; so we can no other way possibly know what is worthy of God to be revealed, but by a revelation.... For as God alone knows how to create worthy of himself, and nothing can possibly be proved to be worthy to be created by him, but because he has already created it; so God alone knows what is worthy of himself in a revelation, and nothing can possibly be proved worthy to be revealed by him, but because he has already revealed it.<sup>4</sup>

After several more pages of such taxing circular arguments Law inserts his second answer which is inevitably the authority of scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Law, pp.99-100.

<sup>2</sup> Law, p.100.

<sup>3</sup> Law, p.101.

<sup>4</sup> Law, p.101.

For if it can be affirmed with certainty, that the creation is the work of God, notwithstanding our uncertainty about the degree of power that may belong to evil spirits; then we have the same certainty that the prophecies and miracles recorded in Scripture, are to be ascribed to God, as his doing, notwithstanding our uncertainty of the power of evil spirits.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Deists regarded the Bible 'as a fraud in so far as it pretended to be anything unique--as (at best) simply one statement of a general "religion of nature"',<sup>2</sup> they would utterly reject this answer.

It is perhaps difficult today to understand why the question of miracles was such an emotional one for Deists and Christians. Law, that brilliant man of reason, had to admit with the Deists (though for opposite reasons and in opposite ways), that with reference to miracles, reason is in reality superfluous, and one is forced to rely on the witness of the Bible. Thus Deists would inevitably be drawn to an area in which their beloved reason was considered useless. And Christians, sensing a weak spot,<sup>3</sup> defended themselves emotionally.

Understanding the Deist position on miracles<sup>4</sup> and their general anger at what they considered the narrowness of Christianity is made easier by noting Shaftesbury's emotional ending to his otherwise free and easy 'Miscellaneous Reflections'. Referring to the various Christian sects, he comments:

Whilst they have among themselves such Differences, and sharp Debates, about their heavenly COMMISSION, and are even in one and the same Community or Establishment, divided into different Sects and Headships; they will allow no particular Survey or Inspection into the foundations of their controverted Title. They wou'd have us inferiour passive Mortals, amaz'd as we are, and beholding with astonishment from afar these tremendous Subjects of Dispute, wait blindfold the Event and final Decision of the Controversy. Nor is it enough that we are merely passive. 'Tis requir'd of us, That in the midst of this

<sup>1</sup> Law, p.108.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England, (Oxford, 1954), p.172.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Stromberg, pp.171-2:

The Bible as immediate and literal revelation has, of course, fallen. The 'neo-orthodox' of our day share with the liberals an awareness that the Bible is a human document.... The Bible is a witness to... revelation; it is not the revelation. The deists both won and lost here. The Bible is not defended any more, by educated Christians, in the sense in which it was fervently defended by the eighteenth-century orthodox; it even seems most strange to us that intelligent men so close in some ways to the modern epoch could have defended it in that way.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Edward Young, Night Thoughts: 'What is a miracle? 'Tis a reproach, / 'Tis an implicit satire on mankind'.

irreconcilable Debate concerning heavenly Authoritys and Powers, we shou'd be as confident of the Veracity of some one, as of the Imposture and Cheat of all the other Pretenders: and that believing firmly there is still A real COMMISSION at the bottom, we shou'd endure the Misery of these Conflicts, and engage on one side or the other, as we happen to have our Birth or Education; till by Fire and Sword, Execution, Massacre, and a kind of Depopulation of this Earth, it be determin'd at last amongst us, 'Which is the true COMMISSION, exclusive of all others, and superior to the rest.'<sup>1</sup>

How would a mystic look at the Deist controversy in overview? Certainly as soon as the Deist calls reason a perfect or the only guide, a mystic would disagree and would do likewise if a Deist claimed that God can only be known through reason. If the Deist declares that since nothing in religion ought to be contrary to reason, that therefore nothing in religion transcends reason, mystics would be squarely on the side of the mystery, in the sense that the whole creation is a fathomless mystery to be responded to with awe and humility (qualities in short supply with most Deists).

What then is the place of reason? Reason provides a means to reflect upon experience. Without the use of reason, self-deception or delusion is a real danger, especially in the earlier stages of the mystical life, when 'insights' may go untested. Reason at its best should harmonize, and if necessary control, one's experiences and beliefs by relating new to old and experience to theory. Reason must remember, however, that it is not a creative but is instead a comparing force and that even 'in the most purely logical realm, it is insight that first arrives at what is new'.<sup>2</sup>

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The Deist controversy played a part in the movement towards romanticism, and though the main thrust of romanticism seemed to be the opposite of the Deist position,

something of deism remained, if we think of that side of deism which sought for a broad, non-sectarian spirit in religion--the quest for that 'natural religion' which depended on no special theology. Romantic religion was an answer to deism, yet a retention of some portions of it, with a new emphasis. The emphasis shifted from head to heart, from universal reason to private intuition, from the rational proofs to the individual experience, but it was a similar quest the romantics carried on for a single, non-dogmatic faith.... The creed of the Savoyard Vicar, describable as romantic deism was deeply

<sup>1</sup> Characteristicks, iii, pp.342-3. There is a study of the debate on miracles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in R.D. Stock, The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake, (Princeton, 1982), pp.61-116.

<sup>2</sup> Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic, (1917), p.12.

significant for the great figures of the next epoch. Wordsworth and then the Transcendentalists held it. Pantheistic and mystical, the immanent theology of a Schleiermacher would have shocked an eighteenth-century deist as much as an orthodox Christian. But it had developed out of deism.<sup>1</sup>

Significant for the mystical aspects of Deism is Stromberg's disagreement with the usual view that Deism was supplanted by the subjectivism of romanticism which absolutely opposes Deism's central doctrine of a single rational standard.<sup>2</sup>

... The view seems to overlook romanticism's tendency to believe that there was universal, objective truth, written in each heart to be sure but not wholly private; the individual being indeed the very basis of the universe, yet an intrinsic part of a greater organic structure. In any event the quest was similar to deism's in the rejection of formal theological creeds in favour of some simpler, immediate, and universal religion.<sup>3</sup>

In the mainstream of the eighteenth century there is of course a rejection of the merely private or personal vision or intuition and a rather fierce embracing of the consensus gentium. But true perception of the Inner Light,

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<sup>1</sup> Stromberg, pp.168-69. Cf. the following statement by one of Law's most recent editors:

Law's most fundamental conception is that of the universal divine presence in the human soul, and that is common ground among Christian mystics. It was this thought that led him to the universalism of his developed outlook. Seeing the divine Life in all, he rejoiced to see the manifestation of that Life, not only among Christians, but in non-Christian seers and saints. Here Law was far in advance of the orthodox standpoint of his time. Although he was utterly opposed to the Rationalism of the Deists, he shared the breadth of their outlook in recognising the universality of religion as rooted in the human soul. Law, The Spirit of Prayer and the Spirit of Love, ed. Sidney Spencer, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most common misunderstandings of Deism which Law, among many others was guilty of, was the assumption that Deism insisted on a single rational standard. See for instance Arthur Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), pp.310-11. The Deists did not insist on a single rational standard, unless one means by this that their only standard was reason. There was not one rational standard, rather there were as many rational standards as rational men. Cf. Tindal, p.4:

I can't see any Heterodoxy in affirming, that the Means to effect this End of infinite Wisdom must be as universal and extensive as the End itself; or that all Men, at all times, must have had sufficient Means to discover whatever God designed they should know, and practise. I do not mean by this, That ALL should have equal Knowledge; but that ALL should have what is sufficient for the Circumstances they are in.

<sup>3</sup> Stromberg, p.169.

rather than being individual and peculiar, results from attunement with the ultimate consensus gentium, the Divine Mind.<sup>1</sup> When the Inner Light is correctly perceived and followed, it is the manner of insight which may be individual (since it is intended for the person alone), not the matter. And Shaftesbury's disinterested reason, if indeed disinterested, helps to insure proper and balanced interpretation of the Inner Light.

What, then, is the importance of Deism in a study of mysticism? Deism can be seen as an earlier stage (imperfect and incomplete), of mysticism. Both Deists and mystics feel that ultimate importance rests with the personal inner light of nature (though they would define this personal light differently.) Both tend to have a broad and tolerant aspect, in each case their outlook is the opposite of the local, and tends toward universality.<sup>2</sup> But this is as far as the Deist can reach. He stops short of the main doctrines of mysticism because his undue emphasis on reason shuts the door to higher, spiritual experience and knowledge. He is weighed down by his materialist perspective and spiritual unadventurousness.

In the next section a Deist is examined who went beyond the limits of Deism in the direction of mysticism. This is a direction in which Deism can easily lead if it gives proper attention to the personal inner light of nature in the soul.

III

Several days before his death John Toland composed his own epitaph, making it clear how he wished to be remembered.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Universal Mind of the Absolute, called variously, for example, Divine Mind or Cosmic Mind, includes as the term implies, the consciousness and mind of all beings, so united as to be a consensus of mind in which every inspiration, idea, and expression of universal importance is registered, and may be contacted through proper attunement with this Universal Mind. Cf. the second Neoplatonic Hypostasis and Yeats' world soul. Through contact with the Word or the Divine Sophia, Christian mystics reach the deepest and most Fundamental Mind, alike available to all who attune with the divine indwelling in the soul.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lovejoy 'The Parallel of Deism and Classicism', p.286: '... deism being, when full-blown, not merely cosmopolitan but cosmical in its outlook and temper, could admit the claim of no people and no planet to an exceptional or even distinctive role in religious history'. Cf. also Pope's Universal Prayer, (1738):

Yet not to earth's contracted span,  
Thy goodness let me bound,  
Or think thee Lord alone of man,  
When thousand worlds are round.

<sup>3</sup> DNB.

Here Lyeth John Toland.  
 Who born near Derry in Ireland  
 Studyed young in Scotland and Holland  
 Which, growing riper, he did also at Oxford,  
 And having more than once seen Germany  
 Spent his Age of Manhood in, and about London.  
 He was an assertor of Liberty,  
 A lover of all sorts of Learning,  
 A speaker of Truth.  
 But no man's follower, or dependant,  
 Nor could frowns, or fortune bend him,  
 To decline from the ways he had chosen.  
 His spirit is join'd with his aethereal father  
 From which it originally proceeded,  
 His body yielding likewise to nature  
 Is laid again in the lap of its Mother.  
 But he's frequently to rise himself again,  
 Yet never to be the same Toland more.  
     Born the 30th of Novemb. 1674<sup>1</sup>  
     Dy'd the 11th March 1722.  
 If you would know more of him Search his Writings.<sup>2</sup>

Toland is remembered chiefly for his first publication Christianity not Mysterious, 1696, and for his political activities, travels and writings. Those interested in his political side sometimes examine Letters to Serena, 1704, since it was addressed to the Queen of Prussia, who had admitted Toland to her philosophical conversations. For present purposes, however, these aspects are of secondary importance. The works of greatest consequence to a study of Toland and mysticism are Letters to Serena, 'Clidophorus', 1720 and Pantheisticon, 1720 (translated into English in 1751).

Letters to Serena contains three letters addressed to the Queen, (and is bound with two letters on Spinoza's philosophy, addressed to a 'Gentleman in Holland'). Letter one concerns the 'Origin and Force of Prejudices'. A short letter, it powerfully decries habit and prejudice as great obstacles in the impartial search for truth. It argues that it is virtually impossible to avoid imbibing prejudice, falsehoods, fear and nonsense in one's 'education' from birth on. It is an important letter because Toland considered it the clue to all his writings, and the destruction of prejudice in all aspects of human life to be the central concern of his life.<sup>3</sup> His anger is aimed chiefly at narrow religion.

You may reason your self (for example) into what Religion you please;  
 but, pray, what Religion will permit you to reason your self out of it?

<sup>1</sup> DNB gives 1670.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Heinemann, 'John Toland and the Age of Reason', Archiv für Philosophie, 4 (1950), pp.45-46.

<sup>3</sup> F.H. Heinemann, 'John Toland and the Age of Reason', p.44. Heinemann points out that Toland 'understands prejudice in its original meaning as "pre-judicium, a judgment formed antecedently to knowledge"', ibid., p.44.

... for let any of their Doctrines be call'd in doubt or deny'd after such an Examination, and the Person that does it will pass his time very ill. If he's not put to Death, sent into Banishment, depriv'd of his Employments, fin'd or excommunicated, according as his Church has more or less Power; yet the least he may expect, is to be abhorr'd and shun'd by the other Members of the Society....<sup>1</sup>

In letter two, 'The History of the Soul's Immortality among the Heathens', Toland argues that the doctrine of the soul's immortality was first promulgated by the ancient Egyptians. The letter praises Egypt as the fount of 'Philosophy'. In ending it, he reviews his purpose.

I have freely given you my Opinion how the Heathens came by their Notion of the Soul's Immortality, with my Reasons for the same: and if I attribute the Invention of this Doctrin, as well as of Astrology, and most of the other Sciences, to the old Egyptians, 'tis not out of any Partiality to an extinct Nation (tho never so learned, wise or polite) but led by historical Proofs to a full Persuasion. In treading the Mazes of Antiquity, I am secure from all suspicion of Favor or Fear, of Interest or Revenge. I can't be thought to flatter NECEPSOS, if I should make him pass for the King of Astrologers; and I am come too late into the World to expect any Recompence from SESOSTRIS, who, I think, far exceeds all the other Heroes and Conquerors of Antiquity.<sup>2</sup>

This praise of Egypt is significant when it is remembered that the usual eighteenth-century view of Egypt was as the motherland of superstition. Shaftesbury, as did most others, held this view.<sup>3</sup>

Letter three is titled 'The Origin of Idolatry, and Reasons of Heathenism'. Toland ends it as follows:

In a word, the Subject of this long letter is elegantly comprehended in these four Lines which are in every body's mouth:  
 Natural Religion was easy first and plain,  
 Tales made it Mystery, Offerings made it Gain;  
 Sacrifices and Shows were at length prepar'd,  
 The Priests ate Roast-meat, and the People star'd.<sup>4</sup>

In 1720 Toland published Tetradymus, which contained 'Clidophorus, or of the Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy'. The title page explains that the one is open and public, accommodated to popular prejudices and the Religions establish'd by Law; the other private and secret, wherein to the few capable and discrete, was taught the real TRUTH stript of all disguises.

The purpose of the essay is twofold. Toland intends to show first that from ancient times many great philosophers have had an internal and external philosophy, and secondly that there was an absolute need for such a division.

<sup>1</sup> Letters to Serena, pp.13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Serena, pp.67-8.

<sup>3</sup> Characteristicks, ii, pp.387-8; iii, pp.42ff. James Thomson, for instance, referred to the 'mysterious superstition' of the Egyptians, Liberty, ii, 56. Berkeley was a conspicuous exception.

<sup>4</sup> Serena, pp.129-30.

He begins by declaring that to know the truth is one thing, but communicating it is quite another. Though most people claim to put truth first, in fact it is rarely so. Wealth, power or pleasure, he explains, is preferred by most.<sup>1</sup>

In explaining the necessity for esotericism Toland refers first to pre-Christian times.

... those Heathen IMPOSTORS, who perceiving that what was built upon fraud, cou'd onely be supported by force, ... made it capital to question their dictates, and highly disreputable so much as to examine, let alone to doubt of them. The Priests... and the Magistrates... have been commonly very ready to inforce those laws, by what they call'd wholesom severities.... The Philosophers therefore, and other well-wishers to mankind in most nations, were constrain'd by this holy tyranny to make use of 'a two-fold doctrine'.<sup>2</sup>

Toland deplores the fact that the need for such a two-fold distinction has continued in Christian times. He complains that Christians 'are commanded to LOVE each other, and to speak the TRUTH one to another: but they so obey, as if they were expressly injoin'd the contrary'.<sup>3</sup> He criticizes 'every sect' for seriously opposing all others, and charges them with disputing over 'airy distinctions... favorite sounds, nay oftentimes over syllables and letters'.<sup>4</sup> In short, they

manifest all the signs of a perfect hatred, ... their leaders ever showing 'em the example.... What strange turns are given to controversies, about things in themselves indifferent, and where both sides of the question may be innocently maintain'd? What secret insinuations, what barefac'd calumnies, what unkind suggestions, what injurious treatment of those, who ought to be esteem'd and cherish'd as brethren?.... In fine, daily experience sufficiently evinces, that there is no discovering, at least no declaring of TRUTH in most places, but at the hazard of a man's reputation, employment, or life.<sup>5</sup>

Significantly, Toland claims that the first people to use the twofold distinction were the Egyptians, 'who were the wisest of mortals'.<sup>6</sup> As his chief example he uses Isis, 'whom the vulgar believ'd to have been a Queen and of whom they had a thousand different fables'.<sup>7</sup> But esoterically Isis signified the 'Nature of all things' to those who held 'the UNIVERSE to be the principal

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Berkeley's ending of Siris (1744): 'Truth is the cry of all, but the game of a few'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.65.

<sup>3</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.66.

<sup>4</sup> 'Clidophorus', pp.66-67.

<sup>5</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.67. It should be remembered that Toland is very much speaking from personal experience, as the treatment he received in Ireland and England from the publication of Christianity not Mysterious clearly shows.

<sup>6</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.70.

<sup>7</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.71.

GOD, or supreme being'; this however was only 'discovered to the initiated'.<sup>1</sup> The authorities he cites for this distinction are Plutarch and Apuleius. He also quotes an inscription 'still remaining' at Capua: To<sup>v</sup>THEE, WHO ALONE ART ALL THINGS, O GODDESS ISIS'.<sup>2</sup> Toland adds:

I cou'd bring many other proofs, that Isis in the mouth of the vulgar signify'd a Queen, and Nature in that of the Philosophers. PYTHAGORAS, that I may hastily pass over all others, travelling for knowledge to the Egyptians, suffer'd himself to be circumcis'd; that getting admittance into the Sanctuaries, he might from the Priests and the Prophets learn the genuine sense of the mystical doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

After passing over the exoteric-esoteric distinction in use among the 'Ethiopians and Babylonians, the antient and modern Bramins, the Syrians, Persians, ... Chinese, Siamese and Indians', this being so 'notorious, as to be deny'd by no body'<sup>4</sup>, Toland proceeds to the Greeks. The most celebrated is the 'secret discipline' of Pythagoras, who instructed his disciples in a plain, perspicuous way. But everything was delivered to the exoteric public in an obscure manner, nothing being put clearly except 'popular and vulgar matters'. The initiated took a vow of silence. They reserved their esoteric

doctrines to themselves, as so many holy secrets; or if any others happen'd to be present, they told their minds to each other by symbols and enigmas or parables: whence it has unluckily happen'd, that scarce any thing which was of use or moment among them, is come to the knowlege of the public; this being the true reason of the obscurity or rather the almost intire loss, of the Pythagorean Philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

The vow of silence was occasionally broken.

LYSIS the Pythagorean severely chid his condisciple HIPPARCHUS, for having publish'd some points of the Esoteric Philosophy; and for having communicated to men, who were neither initiated, nor prepar'd by contemplation and the necessary sciences, their master's doctrine: whereupon he was expell'd out of the school, and a monument erected for him, according to the custom of the Pythagorians, as if he had been actually dead.<sup>6</sup>

Toland next quotes Clement of Alexandria and Aulus Gellius to support his assertion that Aristotle observed the twofold distinction. Clement is cited again when Toland calls the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers twofold. And significant space is given to prove that Plato 'wisely providing for his own safety, after the poysonous draught was administered to SOCRATES'<sup>7</sup> protected

1 'Clidophorus', p.71.

2 'Clidophorus', p.71.

3 'Clidophorus', pp.71-2. Cf. Serena, p.35: 'The Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries were only copys from those of Isis and Osiris'.

4 'Clidophorus', p.72.

5 'Clidophorus', p.73.

6 'Clidophorus', p.73.

7 'Clidophorus', p.75.

himself in this way. The section on Plato ends with Toland reminding the reader that in the second book 'de Republica, Plato divides Theology into symbolical or mystical, and into philosophical or demonstrative'.<sup>1</sup>

In defence of Heraclitus, who was charged with obscurity (for the same reason as Pythagoras), Toland quotes an epigram by an unknown author.

You must not HERACLITUS slightly read,  
The way is rugged, and the book obscure;  
But if into his sense he does you lead,  
All's plain, and like the sun itself most pure.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after quoting these lines Toland, hinting that he does himself have an inner and outer purpose, adds:

The readers wanted a key, that might open 'em a passage into his secret meaning: such a key, that I may hint it en passant, is to be, for the most part, borrow'd by the skilful from the writers themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Moving to the Jewish prophets, Toland declares that Moses among others used the double manner of teaching. In the middle of this discussion he refers twice to the Kabala, which is the epitome of the exoteric-esoteric distinction. Toland says that it is because of the double teachings 'that the Rabbins vend so many fables, and that there is such palpable darkness of the Cabala....'<sup>4</sup> To this he adds:

What can be more Esoteric in some places, than the Talmud? which makes the Worlds not only plural, but also numberless; tho it specifies the number of eighteen thousand, a certain sum for an uncertain: besides that the Cabala, we just nam'd, makes the world infinite and eternal, increated and immense.<sup>4</sup>

In the middle of 'Clidophorus' Toland pauses in his presentation of particulars and, fearing that some readers might feel that esotericists were more hypocrites than truth-seekers protecting themselves (with seeming duplicity), he inserts the following:

Not plainly to say and profess all you think, or to do it by circumlocution and figures, is one thing: but tis quite another thing, to speak positively against your own judgment, or against the TRUTH in any figure of speech whatever.<sup>5</sup>

Toland introduced this remark to give a more balanced treatment of his subject and to lead to an attack on his prime enemy, prejudice (in this case in the

1 'Clidophorus', p.75.

2 'Clidophorus', p.76. William Law was later to say the same thing in a similar way about Boehme.

3 'Clidophorus', p.76.

4 'Clidophorus', p.78.

5 'Clidophorus', p.81.

form of superstition.) He strongly denies that the propagation of superstition to 'the vulgar' as a way of keeping them in check, is a legitimate or even a viable policy. Though he feels that in some cases such a policy has apparent good effects, it must be avoided not only for moral reasons, but because superstition ultimately is a blind, dangerous force. It can by no means always be controlled, and even

PRIESTS or PRINCES, who dextrously turn it to their own interest... are not always able to direct it at their pleasure. It does not onely every where disturb private society and concord, and sometimes bring its sacred and soverain managers to the last extremities; but too often disorders, or quite overturns, most flourishing governments....<sup>1</sup>

Toland returns to particulars, and to Pythagoras for a discussion of the most famous Pythagorean doctrine, the transmigration of souls.<sup>2</sup> The popular understanding of the doctrine was that a person is reborn in the body of a human or animal depending on how they lived their previous life. A coward, for example, would be reborn in the body of a woman, 'assign'd 'em for a disgrace'<sup>3</sup>; a murderer would be reborn in the body of a carnivore as punishment. Esoterically, transmigration was a reference to the 'incessant flux or motion of all things, and the perpetual change of forms in matter, one never decaying or dying but to begin and take on another'<sup>4</sup>. Toland's purpose in discussing transmigration is to show the reader that the second reason why truths were disguised exoterically (the first reason being self-preservation) was in fact the generous one that instead of only teaching esoterically, many philosophers shared their teachings with the public on the only terms the public could accept. Timeus Locrus (a Pythagorean) is quoted.

For as we cure the bodies of sick persons with any sort of remedies, if they refuse the most wholesom; so we keep the minds of men in order by FALSE REASONS, if they will not be govern'd by TRUE ones.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Clidophorus', pp.82-3.

<sup>2</sup> It might well be asked how Toland knew the names of so many Pythagoreans (quoted in this essay), and why Pythagoras and Pythagoreans figure so prominently in 'Clidophorus'. Was Toland a Pythagorean? He may have been influenced by the French historian André Dacier's biography of Pythagoras, which he could have read either in the original or in the English translation, The Life of Pythagoras with his Symbols and Golden Verses, (1707). He would agree with Dacier that Plato and Aristotle inherited the knowledge of Pythagoras, and that Pythagoras in turn had his knowledge from the Egyptians. He would not, however, sympathize with Dacier's view that the Egyptians received their wisdom from the Jews during the captivity, ibid, p.2. Toland would feel the opposite.

<sup>3</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.84.

<sup>4</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.83.

<sup>5</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.84. The difference between this and the promulgation of superstition is intention: the one is selfish, the other generous; the one points away from truth, the other towards it.

This is an act of love and service (which brings to mind Shaftesbury), and causes Toland to exclaim

Here behold a most illustrious example of the double Philosophy, or Theology, if you'd rather have it so! Here's the true key, for opening the Egyptian and Pythagorean Mysteries!<sup>1</sup>

Above all else the esoteric philosophers were careful about divulging their real views on the nature of God,

... for they observ'd that few kept a sedate temper in discoursing on this point, either when they were not able to maintain their own opinions, nor to confute those of others.<sup>2</sup>

In short:

What Reason cannot support, Force must: and that shall not be permitted to be told, which shows the Multitude to be ridiculous, or their Guides impostors.<sup>2</sup>

Several examples are provided. Simonides was one day asked by the 'tyrant Hiero' what God was and of what nature. He requested a day to ponder the answer. After which he requested two days, and thereafter kept doubling the time until he was asked for an explanation. He replied, 'the longer I consider upon it, the more obscure this thing appears'.<sup>3</sup> When Thales was asked what he thought about the Gods, he replied 'Nothing'. Euclid, when asked of what nature were the Gods, replied that as 'to all other things, he answer'd that he was ignorant: but one thing he knew for certain, that they hated curious persons.'<sup>3</sup> These philosophers, Toland is wont to add

cou'd have all made proper answers, but they were unwilling to displease by declaring the truth; lest they shou'd bring the Vulgar on their backs, whose inconsiderateness has in all ages prov'd the greatest support of the Priests.... Wherefore, things standing on this foot, no wise man will deny but PLATO spoke divinely, when he said, that 'to discover the creator and parent of the Universe, was difficult: but to explain his nature to the Vulgar, impossible.'<sup>4</sup>

In preparing to bring the essay to a close, Toland emphasizes that it was narrow priests who caused esotericists to invent

those occult ways of speaking and writing. For while the Priests industriously conceal'd their Mysteries, lest, being clearly understood, they might be... expos'd to the laughter of the people, as fabulous, false, and useless,<sup>5</sup>

1 'Clidophorus', p.85.

2 'Clidophorus', p.88.

3 'Clidophorus', p.89.

4 'Clidophorus', pp.89-90.

5 'Clidophorus', p.94.

the esotericists, on the other hand, concealed their views so as not to be accused of impiety by the priests, with the concomitant exposure to the 'hatred, if not to the fury of the Vulgar'.<sup>1</sup>

Is there then no way to know if a person is disclosing his real opinion? Toland observes that if a man maintains 'what's commonly believ'd, or professes what's publicly injoin'd'<sup>2</sup> one cannot always be sure that he speaks sincerely, but if a person 'seriously maintains the contrary of what's by law establish'd, and openly declares for what most others oppose'<sup>2</sup>, then there is a good chance he speaks honestly.<sup>3</sup>

The only way that the exoteric-esoteric split would become unnecessary is if it were truly possible for

all men [to] freely speak what they think, without being ever branded or punish'd but for wicked practises, and leaving their speculative opinions to be confuted or approv'd by whoever pleases.<sup>4</sup>

It is almost inevitable that writing an essay on exoteric and esoteric philosophy, Toland would himself have an outer and inner purpose. His outer purpose is to write a short 'History of the Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy'<sup>5</sup>, and to hint and in the end declare, that the double teachings 'are as much now in use as ever'.<sup>6</sup> His inner purpose is an implicit declaration that he is himself an esotericist.

It seems clear that Toland was a mystic, possibly of the Hermetic-Kabalistic kind, and was probably so from an early age. Some of this becomes clearer by studying Pantheisticon, 1720, which Toland published in Latin and distributed privately.<sup>7</sup>

The following extracts form the essential definition of pantheism as presented by Toland in his long discussion of the concept in Pantheisticon.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.94. Cf. Bishop Hare, 1721, quoted in OED under 'Pantheist': 'Thus prays this Pantheist (i.e. the impious author of the Pantheisticon) whose impudent Blasphemies loudly call for the Animadversions of the Civil Power'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.96.

<sup>3</sup> Since Toland was such a person who openly declared anti-establishment opinions, one might feel that such a distinction was self-congratulatory. While a number of famous people (including friends) considered Toland arrogant, Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England, p.158, asserts that Toland's integrity was beyond question.

<sup>4</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.95.

<sup>5</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.81.

<sup>6</sup> 'Clidophorus', p.94. Thus implying that intolerance abounds as much in his time as before.

<sup>7</sup> DNB, 'John Toland', p.440. On the same page Leslie Stephen quotes (without a reference) a claim that Toland 'distributed copies with a view of receiving some presents for them, and then adds that this was Toland's real reason for writing Pantheisticon. This could not have been his main or sole motive, which becomes clear by studying the book. It is congruent that an esotericist would distribute a book on pantheism privately.

All Things are from the Whole, and the Whole is from all Things.... The Universe (of which this World we behold with our Eyes is but a small Portion) is infinite both in Extension and Virtue, but one, in the Continuation of the Whole, and Contiguity of the Parts.... Intelligent also by an eminent Reason, and not to receive its Denomination from our intellectual Faculty, unless by a slight Similitude: Finally, whose integrant Parts are always the same, and constituent Parts always in Motion.... Nothing of the Whole perishes, but Destruction and Production succeed each other by turns, and all by a perpetual Change of Forms, and a certain most beautiful Variety and Vicissitude of Things, operate necessarily towards the Participation, Good, and Preservation of the Whole, and make, as it were, an everlasting Circulation.

...The Force and Energy of the Whole, the Creator and Ruler of All, and always tending to the best End, is GOD, whom you may call the Mind, if you please, and Soul of the Universe.

...This Force... being not separated from the Universe itself, but by a Distinction of Reason alone. Gregory of Ariminum, Occhamus, Cajetanus, Thomas Aquinas even, who was canonized, to pass by Others, thought not that they contradicted the Mosaic Formation of the World, neither do I, when they taught That God was the eternal Cause of the eternal World, and that all Things, from all Eternity flowed from God without Medium; but Jerom thinks finely upon the Matter, where he says, That God is infused and circumfused, both within and without the World.<sup>1</sup>

This is a Neoplatonic universe governed by the Divine Mind and infused with Universal Soul, but without Plotinus' ambivalent attitude towards matter. The 'integrant Parts' which 'are always the same' are probably borrowed from Giordano Bruno's monads, which he called the ultimate constituents of the universe. Bruno's view that the universe is a continually developing infinite organism infused with the life of God, is a likely source of Toland's statement that the universe is 'infinite both in Extension and Virtue'. This 'Whole' which is 'infinite... in... Virtue', must be the best of possible worlds, inevitably, because it is inseparable from the Being of God.

Toland's view points away from the rational, philosophical pantheism of Spinoza towards the intuitive pantheism of Bruno, whose identity of opposites viewpoint emphasizes that reality is not subject to rational description. For mystics, pantheism is not an idea but an experience. For this reason it is rarely defined and is not always expressed consistently. It is seldomly a metaphysical argument for purely intellectual ends, and, therefore, its ecclesiastical implications are not always considered. It is the experience which is everything to the mystic, not any rationally formulated doctrine. The experience of all-God-ism bridges the hiatus between God and man, and God and the universe, and leads to the view that nothing is without spirit, 'in a Word, every Thing in the Earth is organic'.<sup>2</sup> Just as naturally, pantheism leads to the view that one is a citizen of the universe, with

<sup>1</sup> Pantheisticon, pp.15,17,18.

<sup>2</sup> Pantheisticon, p.32.

responsibility towards all life. When one

has discovered himself to be not inclosed within one Wall, the Native of any circumscribed Place, but a Citizen of the whole World, as one City: In this magnificent Appearance of Things, and in this Contemplation and Knowledge of Nature, ye immortal Powers! how well he... shall despise, scorn, and repute as nothing, what commonly is deemed the Height of Pomp and Grandeur!

... this justifies my Answer to a German Inn-keeper, who impertinently importuned me to tell him, what Countryman I was? The Sun is my Father, the Earth my Mother, the World's my country, and all Men are my Relations.<sup>1</sup>

The following quotation forms the central point of Toland's discussion of pantheism.

The Ethereal Fire environing all Things, and therefore supreme; permeating all Things, and therefore intimate... is... alone more fleet than Thought itself, and by far more subtil than any other Kind of Matter, which can with so quick a Motion run over the tended Cords and Ligaments of the Nerves, and variously agitate them, according to the different Impressions of Objects upon the Nerves. What is more, the Ether is a reviving Fire, infusing a sweet and gentle Warmth, not burning, not dissipating, not consuming as ordinary Fire.... In it is Soul, Mind... it governs All in all Things, and never suffers celestial and terrestrial Beings to be at Rest. This Fire is Horace's Participle of divine Breath, and Virgil's inwardly nourishing Spirit, heavenly Origin, fiery Vigour.<sup>2</sup>

St. Bonaventura also referred to this fire as 'sweet': 'that Fire which enflames all and wraps us in God with great sweetness and most ardent love. The which Fire most truly is God'.<sup>3</sup> To the alchemist this divine fire makes possible, as soon as man wills it so, to transmute the base elements of human nature in the flames of divine love.<sup>4</sup>

The OED defines pantheism as the 'religious belief or philosophical theory that God and the universe are identical (implying a denial of the personality and transcendence of God)'.<sup>5</sup> Mystical pantheism does not imply rejection of the transcendence of God, as Toland's discussion makes plain, especially where he quotes 'Jerom' that God is both 'within and without the World'.<sup>6</sup> Nor does the pantheist worship nature as God, as many are wont to believe. Pantheism

<sup>1</sup> Pantheisticon, pp.105,33.

<sup>2</sup> Pantheisticon, pp.22,23,24. Underhill, pp.420-1 refers to the Paradiso, xxx,64, and remarks that 'Dante saw Deity as a flame or river of fire that filled the Universe; and the 'deified' souls of the saints as ardent sparks therein, ablaze with that fire, one thing with it, yet distinct'.

<sup>3</sup> De Itinerario Mentis in Deo, chapter vii. Indians would consider this quotation a reference to kundalini.

<sup>4</sup> See Boehme, The Threefold Life of Man, vi, 88.

<sup>5</sup> Toland's use of 'pantheist' in 1705 is identified as the first use of the word.

<sup>6</sup> Pantheisticon, p.18. Cf. Spinoza, letter lxxiii and commentary in The Correspondence, trans. and ed. A. Wolf, (1928). Spinoza uses the word 'Nature' as identical with God, but his use of the word was often misunderstood to mean the material world only: 'those who think that the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus rests on this, namely, that God and Nature (by which they mean a certain mass, or corporeal matter) are one and same, are entirely mistaken'. Spinoza to Henry Oldenburg, 1675.

expounds that God permeates every manifestation of reality as a force, as an intelligence (the prana of the Hindus). God is mind, if one means by that that what exists is the result of divine intelligence. God is energy, if one means by that the dynamic movement of the universal forces. God is substance, if one means that everything which has a form, or reality, is of God.

While some consider pantheism sacrilegious for bringing God, as it were, into the world and not permitting Him an isolated transcendency, the pantheist would feel that his own viewpoint puts God on a scale so vast and sublime, and yet so completely united with man that one may more readily view God as transcending, and simultaneously pervading all reality. Rather than being irreverent, pantheists regard their viewpoint as universally sacramental.

Pantheists feel that man is never without God. It is realization that he lacks. It is therefore man's challenge to study the world of his total being. In learning of the nature of the physical world, he learns something of the nature of God and has a better chance of finding the One.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, Toland refers to pantheists as the 'Hierophants of Nature'.<sup>2</sup>

Other mystical doctrines, in addition to pantheism, are mentioned and discussed in Pantheisticon. As always, disinterested self-examination is considered the necessary first step.<sup>3</sup> There are interesting references to macrocosm-microcosm,<sup>4</sup> the Kabala,<sup>5</sup> and alchemy,<sup>6</sup> as well as to the worldsoul,<sup>7</sup> numerology,<sup>8</sup> and the coincidentia oppositorum,<sup>9</sup> which Heinemann claims Toland

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Carl Jung's commentary on The Secret of the Golden Flower, (1931), p.101. The beginning, in which everything is still one, and which therefore appears as the highest goal, lies at the bottom of the sea in the darkness of the unconscious. In the germinal vesicle, consciousness and life... are still a 'unity', 'inseparably mixed like the sparks in the refining furnace'....

According to the Hui Ming Ching the 'germinal vesicle' is nothing other than the 'yellow castle', the 'heavenly heart', the 'terrace of life', the 'square inch field of the square foot house', the 'purple hall of the city of jade', the 'dark pass', the 'space of former heaven', the 'dragon castle at the bottom of the sea'. It is also called the 'border region of the snow mountains', the 'primal pass', the 'realm of the greatest joy', the 'land without boundaries', and 'the altar upon which consciousness and life are made'. 'If a dying man does not know this germinal vesicle,' says the Hui Ming Ching, 'he will not find the unity of consciousness and life in a thousand births, nor in ten thousand aeons.'

<sup>2</sup> Pantheisticon, p.95. For the same reason, the line in Toland's epitaph, a 'lover of all sorts of Learning' is significant.

<sup>3</sup> Pantheisticon, pp.103-5.

<sup>4</sup> Pantheisticon, p.53. Toland used the notion as early as 1704. See Serena, pp.56-7.

<sup>5</sup> Pantheisticon, p.56.

<sup>6</sup> Pantheisticon, pp.29,55.

<sup>7</sup> Pantheisticon, p.61.

<sup>8</sup> Pantheisticon, p.12.

<sup>9</sup> Pantheisticon, p.36.

borrowed from the mystic Bruno.<sup>1</sup> The law of compensation is noted,<sup>2</sup> and there is a reference to reincarnation.<sup>3</sup> Toland's most provocative reference to reincarnation is in his epitaph: 'But he's frequently to rise himself again,/ Yet never to be the same Toland more'.

There is evidence beyond that in his writings that Toland was a mystic. Heinemann suggests that a comparison of Pantheisticon with Shaftesbury's Moralists might be worthwhile, and that 'Theocles bares some traits of Toland'.<sup>4</sup>

Toland's great affection and respect for Egypt<sup>5</sup>, significant because so unusual in the eighteenth century, becomes doubly significant when combined with his study and defence of the Hermetic-Kabalistic mystic Bruno, the great champion of Egyptian mysticism. Yates writes:

Giordano Bruno as he wandered through Europe had preached an approaching general reformation of the world, based on return to the 'Egyptian' religion taught in the Hermetic treatises, a religion which was to transcend religious differences through love and magic, which was to be based on a new vision of nature achieved through Hermetic contemplative exercises. He had preached this religion, enveloped in mythological forms, in France, England, and Germany.... I have suggested elsewhere that there might be a connection between Bruno's 'Giordanist',<sup>6</sup> and the Rosicrucian movement, that a secret Brunian influence might have contributed towards the development of the kind of reform which the Rosicrucian manifestos adumbrate.<sup>7</sup>

Heinemann has written that Toland

acquires historical significance by transmitting the motive power initiated by Giordano Bruno. He made Bruno known in his time. He lent to friends a translation of two dialogues and of Bruno's Asse, i.e. of the Sonetto in Lode de l'asino (Cabala del cavallo Pegaso, ed. Lagarde, p.564).... He sent Baron Hohenheim a letter about Bruno's death, containing a translation of C.Schoppius's well-known report. He added further an account of Bruno's Of the infinite Universe and innumerable Worlds, or rather a translation of Bruno's dedicatory letter to the Lord Castelnau.

But the most important fact is that he found, and made known to friends and to a wider public through a letter and through translation, the Spaccio della bestia trionfante. An important letter of his has escaped the attention of modern scholars, Lettre de Mr. Toland, sur le Spaccio della bestia trionfante, Paris, 1584; in Nova Bibliotheca Lubecensis, Vol. VII, p.158, Lubecae, 1756.<sup>8</sup>

1 'Toland and the Age of Reason', p.57.

2 Pantheisticon, pp.61(n.), 62, 73, 86.

3 Pantheisticon, p.57.

4 'The Philosopher of Enthusiasm', p.297.

5 Cf. Serena, letter two passim and Pantheisticon, p.40: 'O how often those have been made a Jest of, who ridiculed the AEgyptians!'

6 A group he founded in Germany. See Yates, Giordano Bruno, pp.312-13.

7 The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, (Paladin edn., 1975), pp.174-5. The two Rosicrucian manifestoes, Fama Fraternitatis and Confessio Fraternitatis are reprinted by Yates in an appendix of this book.

8 'Toland and the Age of Reason', pp.55-56. On pp.56-7 Heinemann declares that Bruno's influence on Toland was 'very considerable and grew with the years', and was particularly marked in Pantheisticon. For an analysis of this influence see J.F. Nourrisson, Philosophies de la nature, (Paris, 1887), pp.85ff.

In this letter Toland says of the book: 'il étoit entièrement inconnu aux curieux avant l'année 1696, que je le trouvai et le fis voir à différent personnes, quoique sans en laisser jamais prendre copie'. As Heinemann says<sup>1</sup>, this date is of great importance because it means Toland's first work, Christianity not Mysterious, 1696, was very possibly written under Bruno's influence. The main thrust of Bruno's Spaccio can be seen in the following quotation. Yates says that the basic theme of the work 'is the glorification of the magical religion of the Egyptians. Their worship was really the worship of "God in things"':

For... diverse living things represent diverse spirits and powers, which beyond the absolute being which they have, obtain a being communicated to all things according to their capacity and measure. Whence God as a whole (though not totally but in some more in some less excellently) is in all things.<sup>2</sup>

To this material can be added a letter written by the mystical Quaker Benjamin Furly to Locke showing that as early as 1693, Toland had earned his respect. It reads in part as follows:

I find him a freespirted ingenious man; that quitted the Papacy in James's time when all men of no principles were looking towards it; and having now cast off the yোক of Spiritual Authority, that great bugbear, and bane of ingenuity, he could never be persuaded to bow his neck to that yোক again, by whomsoever claymed; this has rendered it somewhat difficult to him, to find a way of subsistence in the world, and made him ask my counsell in the case. I told him I knew no way for him, but to find out some free ingenious English gentleman that might have occasion for a Tutor in his family, who would be as glad of the opportunity as himself; were my circumstances such, that I could entertain him, and he willing to abide with me, he should not be put to the trouble to seek further. But that being not so, I intreat you, Sir, to be assistant to him wherein you can, not for my sake, but for his own worth.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, a crucial bit of evidence was unearthed by Heinemann in the form of a letter first published by him, in part in 1944 (in 'Toland and the Age of Reason'), and in a fuller version in 1949 (in RES). The letter was written in June, 1694 by Edmund Gibson, Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford to the Reverend Dr. Charlett, Master of University College, Oxford. The letter gives an account of Toland's early life. As a student at Edinburgh, Toland

printed a Book in French and English, with this Title, The Sage of the Time.<sup>4</sup> He had contriv'd that there should be some appearance of a flame

<sup>1</sup> 'Toland and the Age of Reason', p.56.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Giordano Bruno, p.211.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Heinemann in 'John Toland, France, Holland, And Dr. Williams', R.E.S., 25 (1949), p.348.

<sup>4</sup> This book, apparently lost, being printed in more than one language, might be an echo of the famous Rosicrucian manifesto Fama Fraternitatis, first printed in 1614, which was circulated in at least five languages. See Yates, Rosicrucian Enlightenment, pp.71ff.

in a closet next the Street, and no harm done. When all was safe and the House not burnt down or injur'd, as the Neighbours expected, his reputation grew upon it quickly, but whether under the name of Conjuror, or what other title, I know not.<sup>1</sup>

But most important of all is Gibson's statement that when Toland left Glasgow where he had been admitted alumnus academicus, he transferred to Edinburgh 'and set up there for a Rosacrucian' and 'gave them the nice name of Sages'.<sup>2</sup>

In Summary: Bruno, probably a Rosicrucian but certainly a Hermetic-Kabalistic mystic, was a major influence on Toland beginning in his mid or early twenties. Like Bruno, Toland despised narrow religions and prejudice. Like Bruno, Toland emphasized the exoteric-esoteric distinction, and like Bruno he greatly praised the magical religion of the ancient Egyptians and held to the pantheism ascribed to ancient Egypt by Bruno. The Gibson letter shows that Toland accomplished some kind of alchemical or magical demonstration as early as his student period at Edinburgh. The Furdy letter displays the respect Toland had earned from this mystical Quaker, and finally, Gibson calls Toland outright a Rosicrucian.<sup>3</sup>

As Heinemann said in 1949, it is now time for some scholar to collect Toland's most important papers and produce a modern biography. It should be added that such a biography must have as its central concern the investigation of the least studied and most illuminating side of the man: Toland as mystic and Rosicrucian.

#### IV

It will be argued in this section that the sublime is the manifestation of mysticism in the area of aesthetics. The sublime is in essence a mystical experience which in its ultimate form is Cosmic Consciousness. The sublime and Cosmic Consciousness are part of the same continuum, the former being an imperfect, earlier expression of the latter. The sublime is often faltering,

<sup>1</sup> Ballard Collection, Bodl. Libr. v, 27, quoted in Heinemann, R.E.S., 25 (1949), p.347.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.347. On the same page Heinemann adds that this 'story can hardly be dismissed as a mere snatch of gossip, seeing that Dr. Gibson knew Toland.... Moreover, other facts related by him prove to be correct'. In addition a letter of July, 1694 by Gibson to the same correspondent mentions that Toland was with him discussing political questions, ibid., p.347.

<sup>3</sup> For a definition of 'Rosicrucian' see Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, H. Spencer Lewis, Rosicrucian Questions and Answers with a Complete History of the Rosicrucian Order, (San Jose, California, 1929) and A.E. Waite, The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, (1924).

uncertain, variable, but with some vague, subliminal sense of the grander final result: the experiencing of the sublime in its fully matured form: Cosmic Consciousness.

From a very anti-mystical position, Martin Shee observed in 1809, looking back at English thought in the eighteenth century, that with reference to the sublime,

those who talk rationally on other subjects, no sooner touch on this, than they go off in a literary delirium; fancy themselves, like Longinus, 'the great sublime they draw', and rave like methodists, of inward lights and enthusiastic emotions, which, if you cannot comprehend, you are set down as un-illuminated....<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Monk argued that the sublime was slowly developed into a subjective or semi-subjective concept by such writers as Dennis, Addison, Baillie, Hume, Burke, Kaines, Reid and Alison, and that this development was towards the subjectivism of Kant.<sup>2</sup> In paraphrasing Kant's theory of the sublime, Monk explains that the emotion which accompanies the experience of the sublime is reverence, and that moral ideas are the true foundation of the sublime.<sup>3</sup> The ultimate sublime would thus be experiencing union with God.

At least from the time of Cicero, the purpose of the grand, or sublime style was to awaken emotion in an audience. Longinus declared that the 'Sublime is an image reflected from the inward greatness of the soul'.<sup>4</sup> In talking of Samuel Cobb and the sublime, Monk refers to Cobb's belief that great art can only be produced by 'native genius expressing itself' in its own way, forgetting the rules.<sup>5</sup> Boileau felt that the sublime was able to 'elevate', 'ravish' and 'transport', this ability to awaken strong emotions being its outstanding quality.<sup>6</sup> Silvain considered the sublime able to 'elevate the soul' and intensify experience. In addition Silvain believed that the sublime enabled one to rise above fear of death.<sup>7</sup> John Dennis pointed out that nearly all the examples of the sublime that Longinus gives are drawn from religion and its emotions. Dennis believed that the most important kinds of poetry--epic, tragedy, ode--were based on poetic enthusiasm evoked by religious emotion, the

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<sup>1</sup> Elements of Art, quoted in a fuller form by Samuel Monk, The Sublime, (Ann Arbor, 1960), p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Monk, p.4. Cf. this comment p.3: '... in theories of the sublime one catches the century somewhat off its guard, sees it, as it were, without powder and pomatum, whalebone and patches'.

<sup>3</sup> Monk, p.8.

<sup>4</sup> Dionysius Longinus on the Sublime, trans. William Smith, 4th edn., (1770), p.28.

<sup>5</sup> Monk, p.27.

<sup>6</sup> Monk, p.32.

<sup>7</sup> Monk, pp.40,41. Likewise one of the results of experiencing Cosmic Consciousness is the utter destruction of fear of death. See Bucke, Cosmic Consciousness, p.51.

'sublime emotion'. The great elevation of these kinds of poetry can only be produced by great admiration, which 'exalts and lifts up the soul, and fills it with wonder'.<sup>1</sup> Akenside sees in the sublime 'an earnest of man's immortality', Monk explains,

his great soul is not content with the petty, the finite, but is always yearning for the infinite. There is an affinity between the spirit of man and the vastness of nature, and this affinity is a symbol of man's divine origin and his ultimate attainment of perfection.<sup>2</sup>

When studying the mystical aspect of the sublime, it is important to examine the little known Clio: or, a Discourse on Taste, 1769,<sup>3</sup> by the gentleman farmer turned schoolmaster James Usher (1720-1772). There is precious little material on Usher beyond the one column account in the DNB and Monk's very brief treatment.<sup>4</sup>

Clio begins with the assertion that there is an 'absolute eternal beauty', and that all minds have to varying degrees a sense of 'absolute and eternal perfections'. It is 'intuition' which communicates a sense of such eternal ideas.<sup>5</sup>

Usher's approach to taste was the same as the Deist approach to religion. Each was looking for the universal. The local, transitory and peculiar was to be rejected as erroneous, or at least incomplete.<sup>6</sup> Usher, then, defines good taste as 'the inward light or intelligence of universal beauty'.<sup>7</sup> Usher makes taste a soul quality, and declares that one must learn to 'tune those fine strings of the soul... and bring into execution the harmony they are capable of'.<sup>8</sup>

Like Dennis and Shaftesbury before him, Usher believed that religious ideas are vast and affecting, and like Shaftesbury he felt that any attempted identification of man with God was the very essence of enthusiasm and the sublime.<sup>9</sup> He begins his discussion of the sublime in this way.

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<sup>1</sup> Monk, p.51.

<sup>2</sup> Monk, pp.71-72.

<sup>3</sup> The first edition, 1767, was short and insignificant. Monk has pointed out that the second edition is London, 1769 not Dublin, 1770 as the DNB reports. It has large additions. J. Mathew produced an edition with notes, anecdotes and quotations, 1803, which was reprinted in 1809. This edition will be used in the following examination.

<sup>4</sup> Monk, pp.142-5. Also Stock, The Holy and Daemonic, p.108.

<sup>5</sup> Usher, pp.13, 14,16.

<sup>6</sup> Usher, p.34. On this aspect of Deism see Lovejoy, 'The Parallel of Deism and Classicism', pp.282-3, and passim.

<sup>7</sup> Usher, p.35.

<sup>8</sup> Usher, p.93.

<sup>9</sup> Usher, pp.98, 100, 110.

The sublime, by an authority which the soul is utterly unable to resist, takes possession of our attention, and of all our faculties, and absorbs them in astonishment.... The soul of man seems to be raised out of a trance; it assumes an unknown grandeur; it is seized with a new appetite, that in a moment effaces its former little prospects and desires; it is rapt out of the sight and consideration of this diminutive world, into a kind of gigantic creation.... It pursues a beauty in the madness of rapture, that words or description cannot contain.<sup>1</sup>

This 'new appetite' cannot be satisfied or explained by material philosophy or by the 'mere agency of reason'.<sup>2</sup> More than this, 'Sensible ideas... and the passing shew of this external world, divert the attention of the mind' and only when sense impressions recede and one turns within can such elevation occur.<sup>3</sup> Hence it is

to meet the sublime impression undisturbed, the poet retires to the solitary walks of the country;... where silence seems to take up her dwelling;... there he feels, with all the certainty of intuition, the presence of the universal genius, whose... influence... fires the imagination to rapture.... ideas grow brighter than the gilding of the sun can make them, and put on a foreign beauty.... It is the beauty of a being indistinct, and hid as it were in light, which the imagination in vain seeks to lay hold of: whence you may conceive the distress that obliges the poet to fly from image to image, to express what he feels.... The variety of his efforts shews the object the mind labors with... to be beyond the power of utterance; and yet... we are sensible of what he cannot express, because we all feel it in our own bosoms.<sup>4</sup>

Monk calls this a theory of the sublime based on an 'intuitive and mystic recognition of the soul'.<sup>5</sup>

Usher is very careful to point out that the experience of the sublime is not 'a work of the imagination', or a fantasy. This is proved, he feels, by it having a 'most constant uniform effect in the same circumstances', and by the changes it makes in one's ideas. It bestows new beauty on them through powers which are 'evidently super natural'.<sup>6</sup> It permanently changes and improves the quality of one's inner life.

At this point Usher first voices his pantheistic conviction that this 'supernatural presence' is not limited to mountains, deep forests and the ocean, places popularly associated with the sublime. He felt that if the 'universal spirit had not always dwelt in the soul, enthusiasm would not be infectuous'. He asks the stars 'lost in immense distance, does not the Father

<sup>1</sup> Usher, pp.103, 104.

<sup>2</sup> Usher, p.113. An unusual phrase in the eighteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Usher, pp.113-4.

<sup>4</sup> Usher, pp.120, 121.

<sup>5</sup> Monk, p.143.

<sup>6</sup> Usher, p.122.

of Being sustain and cherish worlds around you, who receive life and rapture from his presence?'<sup>1</sup>

After explaining that all religions are in essence one, and that a given religion 'only unites an universal passion to this or that set of doctrines and ideas',<sup>2</sup> it follows, Usher felt, that all men are searching for God though few realize it.<sup>3</sup> They go about seeking some 'unknown good' which will bring them happiness, but it seems always to elude them. What is it that keeps them searching?

an intelligence clearer than sense, and stronger than reason, characterizes it with rapture, and with inexpressible joy; and let us conceive of it as we will in theory, it is the loadstone to which the soul for ever tends with anxiety, in every unknown good and obscure prospect.<sup>4</sup>

It is intuitive promptings from within which cause one to continue the search for happiness. The sublime is of immense value because it gives some small sense of what the final result will be; it provides some confirmation that success will bring bliss.<sup>5</sup>

This train of thought leads Usher to declare what mystics in all ages have affirmed: that human 'misery... and... grandeur are connected and inseparable'.

The annihilation of that bright-beaming human hope, that travels on before us during life, would be attended with a want of curiosity; nothing would be new to us, nor any thing old; we should run into few errors, and few cares; we should be sapient, content, and worthless.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Usher, p.124.

<sup>2</sup> Usher, p.128.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St. Augustine, Confessions, i, i: 'You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you'. Cf. also Koran, xxiv.42: 'God is the final goal of all'.

<sup>4</sup> Usher, p.129. This is one of the timeless doctrines of mysticism. The idea is occasionally promulgated in the eighteenth century by non-mystics using magnetic, gravitational images taken from Newton. See for instance William Derham's very influential Physico-Theology, 1713, passim. In Spectator 120 (18 July 1711) Addison, referring to the idea declares:

For my own Part, I look upon it as upon the Principle of Gravitation in Bodies, which is not to be explained by any known Qualities inherent in the Bodies themselves, nor from any Laws of Mechanism, but, according to the best Notions of the greatest Philosophers, is an immediate Impression from the First Mover, and the Divine Energy acting in the Creatures.

Cf. Addison again in Spectator 465, 23 August 1712. For other examples see G. Bowles, 'The Life and Thought of George Cheyne', Annals of Science, 31 (1974), p.487. This is one of the central ideas of Dr. Cheyne, who was influenced by Newton, as Usher probably was.

<sup>5</sup> Usher, p.131.

<sup>6</sup> Usher, p.133.

Usher ends his discussion of the sublime by observing that every man experiences pleasure in the presence of a sentiment or action he feels is noble, and this 'is a plain intuition of the sublimity of his own spirit, and on that account it strikes him with rapture and exultation'.<sup>1</sup>

Monk has very little to say of Shaftesbury, and felt that 'Unfortunately he did not discuss the sublime'.<sup>2</sup> However, R.L. Brett in his study of Shaftesbury devotes an entire chapter to the subject. Brett felt that what was novel in Shaftesbury's approach to the sublime was that he connected it with the idea of infinity. It is in attempting to embrace the infinite that one experiences the sublime.<sup>3</sup> Shaftesbury related the sublime to nature rather than to art, and followed Longinus in viewing the sublime as a religious experience.<sup>4</sup> Brett explains that in Kant's account of the experience of the sublime there is a two-fold movement of the mind. First one has a feeling of awe, inadequacy, inferiority, in contemplating the infinite. The 'imagination boggles and we are conscious of our own smallness'. The second movement is a kind of recovery based on a remembrance 'that we have a rational power which transcends all sensible standards'.<sup>5</sup> The experiencing of Cosmic Consciousness is the final development or fruition of the sublime because in the experiencing of it, the second of Kant's movements, the recovery from a sense of smallness and inferiority is complete. One does not merely remember that with reason one can transcend sense standards, rather in this overwhelming mystical experience one becomes the infinite. A modern Indian mystic thus describes his first experience of Cosmic Consciousness:

My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage and streamed out like a fluid piercing light from every pore. The flesh was as though dead, yet in my intense awareness I knew that never before had I been fully alive. My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body but embraced the circumambient atoms. People on distant streets seemed to be moving gently over my own remote periphery. The roots of plants and trees appeared through a dim transparency of the soil; I discerned the inward flow of their sap.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Usher, p.136. For an etymological study of the sublime see Jan Cohn, 'The Sublime: In Alchemy, Aesthetics and Psychoanalysis', MP, Feb., 1977, 289-304.

<sup>2</sup> Monk, p.59.

<sup>3</sup> The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, pp.146, 147.

<sup>4</sup> Brett, pp.148, 149.

<sup>5</sup> Brett, p.154.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jacob Boehme:

About the year 1600, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, he was again surrounded by the divine light and replenished with the heavenly knowledge; insomuch as going abroad into the fields to a green before Neys Gate, at Görlitz, he there sat down and, viewing the herbs and grass of the field in his inward light, he saw into their essences, use and properties, which were discovered to him by their lineaments, figures

.... My ordinary frontal vision was now changed to a vast spherical sight, simultaneously all-perceptive.... The unifying light alternated with materializations of form, the metamorphoses revealing the law of cause and effect in creation.

An oceanic joy broke upon calm endless shores of my soul. The Spirit of God, I realized, is exhaustless Bliss; His body is countless tissues of light. A swelling glory within me began to envelop towns, continents, the earth, solar and stellar systems, tenuous nebulae, and floating universes. The entire cosmos, gently luminous, like a city seen afar at night, glimmered within the infinitude of my being....

The divine dispersion of rays poured from an Eternal Source, blazing into galaxies, transfigured with ineffable auras. Again and again I saw the creative beams condense into constellations, then resolve into sheets of transparent flame. By rhythmic reversion, sextillion worlds passed into diaphanous luster, then fire became firmament.

I cognized the center of the empyrean as a point of intuitive perception in my heart. Irradiating splendor issued from my nucleus to every part of the universal structure....

Suddenly the breath returned to my lungs. With a disappointment almost unbearable, I realized that my infinite immensity was lost. Once more I was limited to the humiliating cage of a body, not easily accommodative to the Spirit. Like a prodigal child, I had run away from my macrocosmic home and had imprisoned myself in a narrow microcosm.<sup>1</sup>

With this can be compared one of the addresses of Theocles in Shaftesbury's 'Rhapsody'.

'Thy Being is boundless, unsearchable, impenetrable. In thy Immensity all Thought is lost; Fancy gives o'er its Flight: and weary'd Imagination spends it-self in vain; finding no Coast nor Limit of this Ocean, nor, in the widest Tract thro which it soars, one Point yet nearer the Circumference than the first Center whence it parted.-- Thus having oft essay'd, thus sally'd forth into the wide Expanse, when I return again within My-self, I am struck with the Sense of this so narrow Being, and of the Fulness of that Immense-one'.<sup>2</sup>

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and signatures. In like manner he beheld the whole creation and from that foundation of revelation he afterwards wrote his book, De Signatura Rerum. In the unfolding of those mysteries before his understanding he had a great measure of joy.

Life of Boehme prefixed to the so-called Law edition of Boehme's works. (1764-1781), quoted by Bucke, Cosmic Consciousness, p.150.

<sup>1</sup> Paramahansa Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi, (1946), pp.149, 150, 151. For other descriptions of Cosmic Consciousness by men famous and unknown see Bucke, Cosmic Consciousness, passim. Cf. W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, (Oxford, 1935), p.33:

[In experiencing Cosmic Consciousness a man] transcends personality, and his microcosmic consciousness breaks its fetters and becomes reunited with the Macrocosmic All-Consciousness. This, the Goal of Yoga, truly is the transmutation of the limited human nature into the limitless divine nature, the blending or 'yoking' of the lower self with the One Self, or the drop with the Ocean. This supreme result, which European occultists have designated as Illumination and Buddhists Nirvāna, [the ecstasy of Plotinus], is attainable, so our Tibetan texts and teachers assure us, by whosoever shall tread the path... to the very end'.

<sup>2</sup> Characteristicks, ii, pp.345-6.

At the end of this address (only a small part of which has been quoted), Theocles asks Philocles 'How have I appear'd to you in my Fit? Seem'd it a sensible kind of Madness, like those Transports which are permitted to our Poets? or was it downright Raving?'<sup>1</sup> (Philocles replied that he wished Theocles had continued).

There are important similarities in Shaftesbury's and Yogananda's descriptions. Each saw God as an 'Ocean' which is in one case explicitly called blissful, and in the other implicitly so. Both felt that they were as much the centre of this 'Ocean' as any other point. (This feeling of being the centre has profound macrocosmic-microcosmic implications). Each had a sense of immense 'Fulness', and in the end each was stung by the smallness and narrowness of body-identification.

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In assessing Shaftesbury's contribution to the sublime, Brett reminds the reader that it was Kant who brought together into a systematic, coherent form, the various theories and aspects of the sublime advanced separately by English thinkers. Remembering this, Shaftesbury's contribution must be seen in perspective. Yet it does seem clear that Shaftesbury's influence was of

supreme importance. Addison and Burke took the sublime farther as an aesthetic idea; Thomson and Akenside expressed more fervently a feeling of the sublimity of nature; yet none of their contributions would have been possible without the background of philosophical optimism which Shaftesbury did much to popularize.<sup>2</sup>

In explaining that the sublime is experienced when one tries to 'embrace' the infinite, and is a religious experience (a pantheist could only view identification with the All as 'religious'), Shaftesbury clearly saw that the ultimate expression of the sublime would be the accomplishment of this identification with and consciousness of the divine wholeness.

V

Shaftesbury's writings provided a philosophical basis for appreciation of nature in all its variety. Simultaneously the physico-theology, which resulted from the work of Newton and others, emphasized the grandeur of the physical world.<sup>3</sup> Neoplatonism would have had a similar influence except that it would be regarded as mystical and therefore rejected, whereas physico-theology could be more easily appreciated by orthodox Christians. Shaftesbury, Usher

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<sup>1</sup> Characteristicks, ii, pp.346-7.

<sup>2</sup> The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, p.163.

<sup>3</sup> See Happy Man, ii, p.24.

and at least one Deist, Toland, were pantheists, holding that nature is divine. Other Deists felt that nature was evidence of divinity. Deism and physico-theology emphasized not that the creation is utterly fallen, and marred by sin, but rather reflects the grandeur and beauty of God, in the case of physico-theology, and in the case of Toland's Deism (pantheism) that the creation is part of and inseparable from the grandeur and beauty of God. Moreover, the much-abused, and often silly Pindaric ode was the existing pretext for 'wild', 'natural' poetry.<sup>1</sup> All of these influences helped pave the way for the acceptance and cultivation of the sublime, which in its ultimate form is the experience of Cosmic Consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> This is of course not to say that in its true form it was not a regular and very disciplined form. See Pat Rogers, 'Shaftesbury and the Aesthetics of Rhapsody', British Journal of Aesthetics, 12 (1972), p.254.

## CHAPTER 4

### DR. CHEYNE: DIVINE ANALOGY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF REUNION

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What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below for performing the miracle of one thing.

And as all things were produced from One by the Mediation of One, so all things are produced from this One thing [the ether] by adaptation.

Its father is the Sun, its mother was the Moon, the wind carried it in its belly, its nurse is the Earth.

It is the cause of all perfection throughout the whole world.

Its power is perfect if it be changed into the earth.

Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the dross, gently, and with judgment.

It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends again to earth, thus you will possess the glory of the whole World, and all obscurity will fly away.

This thing is the fortitude of all fortitude, because it overcomes all subtle things, and penetrates every solid thing.

Thus were all things created.

Hermes Trismegistus

The severe schools shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes that this visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein, as in a portrait, things are not truly but in equivocal shapes, and as they counterfeit some real substance in that invisible framework.

Sir Thomas Browne

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## I

Although many students of the eighteenth century are aware that in addition to being a fashionable doctor, George Cheyne was a mystic, that he recommended mystical books to some of his patients,<sup>1</sup> and introduced William Law to Boehme's works<sup>2</sup>, Cheyne as mystic has received very little scholarly

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<sup>1</sup> Birrell, p.110

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Hobhouse, Selected Mystical Writings of William Law, (1948), p.382.

attention. A study by H el ene Metzger of eighteenth-century popularizers of Newton's discoveries deals with some aspects of Cheyne's thought, but is not an examination of his mysticism as such.<sup>1</sup>

This lack of attention is due in part to the fact that Cheyne did not openly discuss mysticism or mention individual mystics in his published works (although he did to some extent in his private correspondence). This omission is consonant with a desire to avoid the public's anti-mystical prejudice. In his own way Cheyne attempted, as did Shaftesbury, to popularize the mystical perspective without calling it such. Perhaps another reason why his mystical thought has received so little attention is that it is always mingled with his medical or mathematical works. There is no book which deals exclusively with his mystical thought.

Cheyne was a deeply sincere and serious student of mysticism, but he cannot be considered a highly original mystic.<sup>2</sup> Yet a study of his mysticism is important for an understanding of the eighteenth century because a number of his books went through many editions and were highly influential. In addition he had a large number of famous friends, mystics and non-mystics, over whom he wielded an influence. Few men cut across so many diverse paths. His mystical friends included Law, Byrom, Dr. James Keith and probably Francis Lee. Yet he was also the 'boon companion dear'<sup>3</sup> of the 'wits', John Gay among others. Pope considered him one of his dearest friends. He was a fellow of the Royal Society, and friend to that most unmystical of Augustans, the Earl of Chesterfield. George Lyttleton, James Thomson and Bishop Burnet were friends and also David Hume, Beau Nash, George Grenville, Samuel Richardson, John Arbuthnot, and David Hartley. Cheyne knew the John Law of Mississippi scandal fame, and at least two of his books gained the approval of his patient, Samuel Johnson, particularly The English Malady, 1733. Among the group who were patients first and later became friends were Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, a member of the first Methodist society with whom Cheyne had a significant correspondence; John Wesley, the Earl of Essex, Sir Joseph Jekyll, Lord Bateman, Lord Huntingdon and Richard Tennison were of this group.

Cheyne's broadness and good nature enabled him to have diversified friendships, and since a number of his popular medical works contained sections<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Attraction Universelle et Religion Naturelle en Quelques Commentateurs Anglais de Newton, (Paris, 1938).

<sup>2</sup> Overton, William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic, (1881), p.95, refers to Cheyne as 'a mystic of a very marked type'.

<sup>3</sup> John Gay, 'Mr. Pope's Welcome from Greece', (1720): '(Gay, Maine, and Cheyne, boon companions dear,/ Gay fat, Maine fatter, Cheyne huge of size)', quoted by Charles Mullett ed., The Letters of Dr. George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson, (Missouri, 1943), p.7.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the occasional chapter which dealt with (disguised) mystical thought, Cheyne also offered anecdotes and aphorisms with a spiritual message in the middle of the expressly medical sections of his books.

which presented his mystical thought, a study of Cheyne's mysticism is particularly interesting and valuable. More than anyone else in eighteenth-century England he exposed an audience of non- or anti-mystics to mystical thought they would otherwise have avoided or neglected.<sup>1</sup> This was undoubtedly Cheyne's plan: to provide good books on diet and health with just the right amount of mystical philosophy unobtrusively presented. He wrote to Richardson:

I shall write such a Preface to it and add so much Entertainment both in Physic and in Divinity as will engage a sufficient Number to read it. Besides, I think of adding a Catalogue of all the English books that are either amusing or interesting with Innocence to Advance the Mind in mystical or spiritual Knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Cheyne was born at Methlick, Aberdeenshire.<sup>3</sup> He grew up in and around Aberdeen, spent at least three years at the university and received his M.D. gratis in 1701.<sup>4</sup> He was born at a time and place which made it possible for him to have been influenced by the Scots mystics who were identified mainly with Aberdeen.<sup>5</sup> This was a group of Scots Episcopalians who after the revolution of 1688 were largely unopposed by the Scots Presbyterians. They tended towards an eclectic mysticism which showed the influence of Antoinette Bourignon (1616-80).<sup>6</sup> At the centre of the group were two brothers, both Professors of Divinity at Aberdeen: James Garden (1647-1726) and George Garden (1649-1733). James Garden's Comparative Theology, 1700, was translated into Latin by the French Protestant mystic, Pierre Poiret (1646-1719), as part of his famous Bibliotheca Mysticorum, 1708. It was this work by Poiret which Cheyne advised Richardson to use as a model for a 'Catalogue of Pamela's Library':

<sup>1</sup> A possible exception is Shaftesbury, though it must be remembered that he was read mainly by those already interested in 'higher thought', whereas Cheyne provided those who read him exclusively as an authority on diet and health with perhaps their first introduction to mystical thought. In addition Shaftesbury did not recommend mystical books to his friends and had no clients or patients to influence.

<sup>2</sup> 4 March 1743, Mullet, p.124. The letter refers to Cheyne's plan to have a French mystical work translated. The project was never completed as Cheyne died several weeks later. When he says he wants to 'engage a sufficient Number to read it', this should not be interpreted as a mercenary motive. He told Richardson, the prospective printer, that he would pay for the translation himself and would distribute the book gratis, ibid., p.123.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Viets, 'George Cheyne, 1673-1743', Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 23(1949), pp.435-52, has provided some evidence that 1673 is the correct date. Viets' article is based on original research and is the fullest account of Cheyne's life.

<sup>4</sup> Viets, p.441. There is no evidence that he actually studied medicine at Aberdeen, the degree was awarded mainly because of Cheyne's first book, New Theory of Fevers, (1702).

<sup>5</sup> The best book on the subject which contains a valuable collection of documents is by G. Henderson, Mystics of the North East, (Aberdeen, 1934).

<sup>6</sup> Birrell, pp.108-9.

The best Model I could propose would be like the Catalogue of the mystic Writers published by Mr. Poiret wherein their Character and Contents is finely and elegantly painted...<sup>1</sup>

George Garden was the spiritual teacher of the rather unstable James Cunningham (1680-1716), who was a patient of Cheyne's. Cheyne was influenced by this group to some degree, perhaps considerably. Cheyne's mysticism is broad, tolerant and eclectic like that of the group, and each warned of the misuse of mysticism. In addition, Cheyne did hold that he had obtained the main principles of his thought at an early age.<sup>2</sup> Cheyne definitely knew and corresponded with Dr. James Keith (1657-1726), the Scots Episcopalian from Aberdeen, a considerable part of whose extensive mystical library is in the Rawlinson Collection, Bodleian Library. Dr. Keith was a friend of the Garden brothers, and of another medical-mystic, Dr. Francis Lee.<sup>3</sup> If Lee and Cheyne did meet, one must believe that 'Rabbi' Lee had some influence on the younger man. Perhaps Cheyne's desire to provide the public with a mystical library originally came from Lee who, Walton reports, had a similar desire at least as early as 1703.<sup>4</sup>

Another possible connection between Lee and Cheyne is provided by Dr. Pitcairn (1652-1713), Cheyne's 'great Master and generous Friend',<sup>5</sup> who persuaded him to leave the study of theology for medicine, as he himself had done. Dr. Pitcairn held the chair of Physic at Leyden for a year in 1691-2, at which time Lee was a medical student there.

## II

There is very little external evidence indicating which mystics Cheyne read. In addition to his reading of Poiret, noted above, there is a good chance that he read Bourignon either through the influence of the Aberdeen mystics, or through his reading of Poiret, who was Bourignon's friend and editor. Dr. Keith's library contained many Pietist and Quietist books which Cheyne could have known. Cheyne might have been influenced by Thomas Tryon (1634-1703). Both men were much taken with Pythagoras; each praises the medicinal value of water and a vegetarian diet; each was a serious student of Boehme, and each inveighed against luxury, and preferred natural, herbal remedies to chemical ones. He did recommend Law's Appeal, 1740, to Richardson. 'Have you seen Law's Appeal? It is admirable and unanswerable. I wish all the Methodists might get

<sup>1</sup> 17 September 1742, Mullett, p.111.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Cheyne's Account of Himself and of his Writings, (1743), p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Birrell, p.111. Henderson, p.67, remarks that various 'references to Cheyne in Keith's letters likewise prove his close connection with the group'.

<sup>4</sup> Notes and Materials, p.237.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Cheyne's Account, p.9.

it by heart'.<sup>1</sup> There is an earlier reference to Law: 'whom I know to be the greatest best Man, and the most solid and deep of this Island'.<sup>2</sup> It can be assumed that he was a student of Pythagoras since he praises him in the highest terms.<sup>3</sup> Cheyne's works do show a numerological interest, especially in the number three. Douglas Brooks-Davies has written that to Cheyne 'the old (the search for 3s) coexisted happily with the new (gravitation), and the universe was still a divine hieroglyph, at every point yielding symbolic meanings'.<sup>4</sup> Like Pythagoras, Cheyne was fond of using musical images when referring to the soul and its powers. Lester King has argued that Paracelsus (1493-1541) and another great alchemist, J.B. Van Helmont (c.1577-1644) influenced Cheyne.<sup>5</sup> A letter of Cheyne's to Byrom praises Marsay's Témoignage, 1738. It also mentions John Tauler (c.1300-1361), St. John of the Cross, and Madame Guyon (1648-1717).<sup>6</sup>

However, the only mystic whose influence can be clearly seen in Cheyne's works is Boehme. Parts of Cheyne's Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion, 1715, are pure, though diluted Boehme. He discusses the Abyss and the three principles in Boehme's own terms, emphasizing the 'signatures' in nature.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to Richardson of 1742, Cheyne thanks him for sending an edition of Boehme.<sup>8</sup> Of course Cheyne knew Boehme at least as early as 1713. In this year he finished writing Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion which clearly shows Boehme's influence. It was in 1713 that Baron von Metternich's Behmenist tract, Faith and Reason Compared was translated into English. This is the book that introduced Law to Boehme.<sup>9</sup> This is almost certainly too late to have influenced Cheyne's Philosophical Principles. So he must either have known it in the original: Fides et Ratio Collatae, 1708, or have been introduced to Boehme in some other way.

### III

In or about the year 1702 Cheyne went to London and began his medical practice. Having previously had a sedentary existence, he completely changed

<sup>1</sup> 9 March 1742, Mullett, p.88.

<sup>2</sup> Mullett, p.25. Law told Byrom that Cheyne introduced him to Brother Lawrence (1611-1691), in addition to Boehme. See The Private Journal and Literary Remains of John Byrom, ed. Richard Parkinson, (Manchester, 1854-7), vol. ii, pt. ii, p.363.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Cheyne's Account, p.37.

<sup>4</sup> Number and Pattern in the Eighteenth-Century Novel, (1973), p.7.

<sup>5</sup> 'George Cheyne: Mirror of 18th Century Medicine', Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 48 (1974), p.529.

<sup>6</sup> Byrom, ii, ii, pp.330,331.

<sup>7</sup> See especially pp.78-84.

<sup>8</sup> Mullett, p.107.

<sup>9</sup> Hobhouse, p.382.

his life style, and spent much time in taverns with the 'younger Gentry, and Free-livers'.<sup>1</sup> His practice prospered, but in several years his health was brought to a desperate state. He withdrew to the country, after which his 'Holiday Friends dropp'd off like Autumn Leaves', and he had a 'long Season for Meditation and Reflection...'<sup>2</sup> Believing he would soon die, Cheyne tried to discover if there were 'some clearer Accounts discoverable of that State I was then (I thought) apparently going into, than could be obtained from the mere Light of Nature and Philosophy'.<sup>3</sup> He began in earnest to study 'Spiritual Authors', but did not specify which, though he did say he had gleaned many names from his study of Newton. He felt drawn to the earliest Christian writers, and considered the Sermon on the Mount the ultimate model of behaviour. Bowles dates this period of absolute withdrawal, 1706-9.<sup>4</sup> It was at this time that Cheyne formed many of his famous ideas on diet (through trial and error), especially his milk diet.

It was from this period also that he produced his first mystical work, Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion, 1715.<sup>5</sup> Only chapter two, which has the same title as the book, will be considered here, as the rest of the work deals with the 'Arithmetick of Infinites'.

There is in all the Works of Nature, a Symmetry, and Harmony, running on in a perpetual Analogy (with proper Limitations arising from the different Circumstances of the several Parts) through the whole and the parts, or there is a regular Connexion and uniform Proportion between similar Causes and Effects, a Congruity between the End and the Means.<sup>6</sup>

He considered philosophy and mathematics 'nothing but particular Instances of this Beautiful Analogy',<sup>7</sup> and so can say

A Wise Man performs all his Works, in Number, Weight, and Measure, and sure infinite Wisdom, Simplicity, and Unity, must accomplish all it's Works, with the most Consummate Harmony, proportion, and Regularity. And this in the following Parts of this Treatise for Brevities sake, we shall call the ANALOGY OF THINGS.<sup>8</sup>

Cheyne lists three rules which govern analogy. The first states that the 'Quality, Property or Idea, on which the Analogy is Instituted, be as simple and one, as pössibly may be'. Secondly, the limitations 'arising from the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cheyne's Account, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.2,3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>4</sup> Bowles, p.475.

<sup>5</sup> Bowles dates the composition of this work 1706-13, ibid., p.478. Overton, p.95, observes that this work 'touches upon most of the points on which mystics love to dwell'.

<sup>6</sup> Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion, p.36.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp.38-9.

different Circumstances of the Two Subjects of the Analogy, as far as they may be known, must be cautiously and carefully' considered. Thirdly, both parts of the analogy 'must be known and examined into, as far as may be, in regard to the other Qualities different from those, the Analogy is instituted upon'.<sup>1</sup>

The very use of analogy implies a belief in essential oneness, and so Cheyne is consistent when he says, referring to the Platonic 'Ideas', that God being

Supreme and One, cou'd find nothing without himself that they should represent. Besides, it is absolutely impossible, that infinite Power and Perfection, shou'd bring any thing into Being, that had not his own Signature, Stamp, or Image on it, for there cou'd be nothing besides himself, whose Images they shou'd be.<sup>2</sup>

In using analogy to probe the nature of the universitas rerum omnium, Cheyne follows Boehme in describing the three principles of God as desire, object and sensation. The desire is infinite and so can only be satisfied by God in some sense 'having Himself'. Desire manifests in the material world as gravitation. This first principle can be considered the 'original' God, the 'Boundless Void'.<sup>3</sup> In Boehme this was the Abyss. The second principle is the 'begotten' God, since the infinite complete 'object' would be God Himself. In the material world this principle manifests as mass, material bodies. The third principle, sensation, is the 'represented' God. This is the 'joy' of God having Himself which Cheyne describes as 'shadowing out' through the created universe. It manifests on the natural level as motion. Cheyne of course saw these three principles in terms of the Christian trinity.

Cheyne points out again and again as did Boehme, that in speaking of the triune nature of God, one is dealing with the ultimate mystery; all reason can do is

form an Analogical imperfect Image (and that's all it can do) of this INCONCEIVABLE MYSTERY, which may in some measure help those, who have not attain'd to a more perfect Guide or higher Lights to believe the positive Relations of his own Nature, by God himself, tho' they be not able, perfectly to comprehend or express them.<sup>4</sup>

In referring to 'a more perfect Guide or higher Light', Cheyne has in mind the Inner Light.

It is from the first principle of God, infinite desire, that Cheyne forms the central doctrine of his thought, the principle of reunion:

<sup>1</sup> Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion, pp.44,45.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.84.

There must of necessity be some Principle of Action in intelligent Beings, Analogous to that of Attraction in the material System, and that is, the Principle of Reunion with the Supreme Infinite, by him originally impress'd on their Supreme Spirits.<sup>1</sup>

This principle is dual in nature. God's infinite love 'pulls' man, and man's desire for happiness 'pushes' him towards God. Most people would not equate the happiness they seek, with God, but Cheyne argues that the desire for happiness is universal and infinite, hence only God can satisfy it.

The purpose and value of the Inner Light, which Cheyne calls 'natural conscience', is first and last to promote this reunion. Thoughts and acts which hinder reunion cause pain, and what aids it yields joy. People particularly devoted to following the Inner Light 'are sometimes swallow'd up, by a Tranquility and Peace that surpasses natural Understanding'.<sup>2</sup> Thus Cheyne arrives at his definition of good and evil: what promotes the reunion is good, what retards it is evil.

The Inner Light is one's guide, but what should one actually do to promote reunion? Cheyne explains that in seeking happiness, one is seeking what he loves, and one can only love what he desires to enjoy. Cheyne then, equates desire with love. If everyone's desire for happiness is infinite, and their love is infinite, then only God can satisfy it, in which case service to God (which Cheyne makes synonymous with charity), is essential. For

Charity, or the Love of the Supreme Being, and of all his Images, in a proper Subordination, according to their Rank in the Scale of Subsistences, is the necessary effect of this Principle of Reunion, when fully expanded, and set at freedom.<sup>3</sup>

One must love God because of intrinsic worth and because of God's perfect, all-encompassing love, not because of reward and punishment. Here Cheyne is one with Shaftesbury. When one's own happiness is the sole or main motive, one is putting oneself before God. This is worshipping oneself as an idol. It is the 'most gross and blackest Idolatry'.<sup>4</sup> Cheyne reminds his reader that utter humility is essential and proper, for

Creation adds nothing essential to infinite Perfection, but a Circumstance only, which too, intirely evanishes when brought into Comparison, with the original Beauty of the absolute Infinite.<sup>5</sup>

Referring to pure, disinterested love of God, Cheyne declares:

<sup>1</sup> Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion, p.85.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.92.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.97.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.96.

The whole of Christianity is nothing but Rules for attaining this Love, or Measures whereby to remove the Impediments that hinder this Principle of Reunion (the source of Charity) from Operating... the natural Operation of this Principle of Reunion... would of itself, if not Stifled, Opposed, and Counteracted, necessarily beget this Divine Charity, whereby the Soul wou'd instantly be united with it's Center, and ultimate End the supreme and absolute Infinite.<sup>1</sup>

Cheyne believed it impossible to love God out of fear of punishment or to gain a reward, for love

belongs to the uninlighten'd Faculty of the Mind, the Will, and not to the enlighten'd Faculty, as the Understanding is, and so naturally, and of itself has no real respect to Rewards or Punishments, which are Motives offer'd by the Understanding; we Love because we will Love, without Reasoning, or because the Object of our Love is amiable, and not because it will hurt or heal us. Love is blind, and belongs intirely to the Will, and not to the Intellect.<sup>2</sup>

The essay moves to a discussion of the three orders or principles of being: material, spiritual and infinite. Man has faculties for perceiving and communicating with all three. Originally the faculties were in due subordination and perfect harmony. The Fall happens when the material, outer man presumes to be the sole or final arbiter.<sup>3</sup> When such occurs, man's

rational Faculties are impaired; his higher Faculties, in some measure obliterated, at least Buried and Oppressed by the load of present Corruption and Sensuality: And all of them in a State of Anarchy, Rebellion, and Contrariety one to another.<sup>4</sup>

In the material world the sun's light is the medium through which man perceives material reality. Likewise is God's light the medium through which the inner man perceives spiritual reality. The material world is an 'Image' of the spiritual, the spiritual of the infinite and as

Infinite Space is the Locus and Boundary of the material World, so is the supreme Infinite, the Analogical Locus (in whom they all Live, Move, and have their Being) and the Omega of all Things, Spiritual and Material. And as Space is Similar to a spiritual Substance, so is that to the Divine Substance.<sup>5</sup>

Cheyne considers matter 'infinitely condensed, or incrassated, Spiritual Substance'<sup>6</sup>. Matter is divisible, passive and unintelligent, spirit is indivisible, active and intelligent. Spirit loses its active, intelligent qualities when it is 'imprisoned' in matter, but these qualities are not

<sup>1</sup> Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion, pp.98-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.100-1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.107.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.115.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp.116-7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.119.

destroyed, they are in abeyance. As there are degrees of 'rarity' in matter: 'Earths more Dense than Water, Water than Air'<sup>1</sup>, so are there also degrees of purity in the spiritual world. The more pure penetrate the less pure 'without Confusion or Contrariety, 'till they arrive as near as is possible to the Supreme Infinite, who penetrates the whole System of Creatures'.<sup>2</sup> It follows that the spiritual is the medium of the infinite, and the material is the medium of the spiritual. This normal and harmonious interrelationship was disrupted by the Fall, and must be re-established if man is to gain his ultimate end of blissful union with God.

It was (in part) to the solution of this problem that Cheyne addressed himself in what he considered his best book, Essay on Regimen, 1740.<sup>3</sup> Referring to this work Chesterfield wrote to George Lyttelton, with some little irony:

I have had the pleasure, too, of reading a great part of your friend Cheyne's magnum opus. He has found out the whole secret of metaphysics, and is kind enough to communicate it to the public, under the title indeed, of Conjectures, but he assured me as a friend, that he did that only out of modesty, for that by the living God he could mathematically demonstrate the truth of every conjecture...<sup>4</sup>

The three mystical sections of Regimen are discourse iv, 'Philosophical Conjectures on Spiritual Nature, the Human Spirit in Particular', discourse v, 'Philosophical Conjectures on Natural Analogy', and the final section titled 'Miscellaneous Observations and Explications'. Cheyne felt this work contained nothing which was 'contrary to the Doctrine of the earliest and purest Times of Christianity'<sup>5</sup>, though he did feel the book would be disliked by the 'Stiff and Rigid' and the 'Licentious, Unguarded, Spurious, Free-Thinkers'. Showing that he held to the exoteric-esoteric distinction, and by implication that his own mystical views were being exoterically veiled, Cheyne declared:

I am sensible, that some even undoubted Truths, that may hurt the Weak, ought to be concealed, or enjoy'd only in secret; the same Degrees of Light not being equally luminous and perceptive to all Eyes.<sup>6</sup>

He intended the book to be 'a Map of the next World' and wanted to emphasize that 'there is no Possibility of Happiness here or hereafter,

<sup>1</sup> Philosophical Principles of Reveal'd Religion, p.122.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>3</sup> It did not however, sell well and Cheyne had to indemnify his publisher, DNB.

<sup>4</sup> Mullett, pp.9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Cheyne's Account, p.19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.19.

without Purity of Heart and Life...<sup>1</sup>. In explaining his use of analogy he simply observed that 'I could not but be delighted with the Universality, Simplicity, and Luminousness of the Method of Analogy', though he was quite aware the 'dark, gloomy, joyless, puzzling, and perplexing' who 'pass for the wise, prudent, guarded Men of the World,<sup>2</sup> would reject the very oneness on which analogy is based. To those who hold a negative attitude, and believe that conviction necessarily implies close-mindedness or naïveté, Cheyne affirms that

since Precision is incompatible with Finitude, if we endeavour to be constantly progressive towards Perfection, tho' by gentle steps neither stopping nor turning aside, but doing the best we can without Scrupulosity, and generously hoping and believing, that infinit Wisdom and Goodness has, or will supply the rest, in his own Time and Manner, we cannot fail.<sup>3</sup>

Cheyne would rather 'choose to be an innocent, benevolent, tho' weaker and more credulous Person, than a malicious, critical' one, for it is often critics who, with a counterfeit air of omniscience, 'delight and employ their Talents, on throwing Darkness and Doubts even on the imaginary Happiness (suppose it such) of their Fellow-Creatures'<sup>4</sup>; they forget that the 'wisest Man here is comparatively but a Child'.<sup>5</sup>

Cheyne sent a copy of Regimen to Chesterfield who wrote back that he considered all metaphysics guesswork, but that he would take Cheyne's 'guess against any other metaphysician's whatsoever'.<sup>6</sup>

Discourse iv begins by declaring that the natural attributes of God are life, intelligence and activity; God's moral attributes are justice, goodness and truth. Man's natural faculties of perception (or understanding), willing (or freedom), memory (reflection or attention) are analogous to God's natural attributes. They are analogous because man, microcosmos, was made a little Divinity'<sup>7</sup> by God, possessing God's 'radical and essential Attributes, so as at last to become similar to Him in Perfection and Happiness'.<sup>8</sup> When the three moral attributes are fully developed and perfectly united with the natural attributes, then is this perfection and happiness gained; this is so for all intelligent beings.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cheyne's Account, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.21-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.23-4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>6</sup> The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, ed. Bonamy Dobrée, (1932), ii, p.494.

<sup>7</sup> Regimen, p.121.

<sup>8</sup> Regimen, p.123.

Man was given a material body so that he might contemplate and admire the material world, communicate with lower life forms, and 'execute the Orders of the Divine Oeconomy and Providence, over the whole System of Intelligences, and material World.'<sup>1</sup>

There were two conditions under which God created man. The first was that man's 'organiz'd body should be supple, pliable, and joyfully obedient to all the Dictates and Commands of the free intelligent Spirit'.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the spirit should be likewise harmonized with the infinite. The key word in Cheyne's description is 'should'. For in fact man's body and material consciousness wrested control from his spirit. The way to regain perfect oneness with God is through manifesting pure, disinterested love and by making the self subservient to God. This is all one needs to know to begin the process. Anything more precise would confuse and possibly overwhelm the seeker. What comes next is 'wisely put out of our Reach,... till we advance'<sup>3</sup>. It is not God who keeps man blind. One's advancement is dependent on the degree of devotion to pure love and service to God.

Cheyne's approach to the problem of man's spiritual development, is in the best sense scientific. He believes man should be a walking question mark, completely openminded but utilizing dispassionate observation to avoid easy generalizations and narrow conclusions.

Culture and Experience is in spiritual Knowledge, what Experiment and Observation is in sensitive Knowledge; Analogy is to the first, what Proportion is to the second; ...the Logic of all human and natural Knowledge... is Proportion justly apply'd... Scripture, Revelation, and our own inward Feelings of the Operations of our Soul, give the Data, ...Revelation gives us the Observations; the Knowledge we have of the Nature of the Operations of our own Spirits, gives us the general Law; and Analogy may answer to Algebra and Calculation in Astronomy and mix'd Mathematics;... though of course we may err and blunder in the first for want of Care and Attention, as we may in the last, being ever finite, and consequently fallible.<sup>4</sup>

The Fall and the Bible generally, can be interpreted literally or symbolically, Cheyne asserts. He does not mean that they are but two

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<sup>1</sup> Regimen, p.129.

<sup>2</sup> Regimen, p.132.

<sup>3</sup> Regimen, p.132.

<sup>4</sup> Regimen, pp.133,4,5. In this way Cheyne is one with the tradition voiced by Bacon, Of the Advancement of Learning, book 1:

In the entrance of philosophy, when the second causes, which are next unto the senses, do offer themselves to the mind of man, if it dwell and stay there it may induce some oblivion of the highest cause; but when a man passeth on farther, and seeth the dependence of causes, and the works of Providence, then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe that the highest link of Nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair.

possible interpretations, rather, within these two subdivisions there are many possible 'correct' interpretations depending on the 'different Degrees of Purity and Perfection' of the readers.<sup>1</sup> What in the end determines the 'correctness' of a person's interpretation is whether it represents their highest ideals. One's understanding of truth and God is relative, and will vary from person to person until the time of reintegration with the Absolute Reality. Cheyne explains in this way that the sublime Biblical interpretations of his master, Boehme, and the most literal interpretation are both 'correct'. This is the kind of over-arching mystical viewpoint which Giordano Bruno believed could eliminate religious strife and provide the world with one religion.<sup>2</sup> It is quite possible that Cheyne, in addition to introducing Law to Boehme's works, had a liberalizing effect on Law's view of scripture (and his thought generally), through their friendship.

Life has become a state of 'Probation and Apprenticeship' because of the Fall. Cheyne points out that the purpose of initiation in the ancient mystery schools of Egypt and Greece was 'to produce an habitual Firmness, Force and Stability'<sup>3</sup> in one's resolution to live a life of pure love and service, in which the self is fully identified with the Absolute. This is the goal and ideal. The trial and apprenticeship involve translating the ideal into a reality.

The quest of the soul for reunion with the Absolute is to some degree based on the health of the body; when it is unhealthy it keeps the spirit from manifesting its powers and directing one's life. Cheyne explains this by likening the soul to a musician and the body to his instrument.<sup>4</sup> Though harmonious music cannot be played on an unsound instrument, it does not follow that the musician's talent is therefore defective. However, while 'imprison'd'<sup>5</sup> in a body, the spirit can only evolve when it has a healthy instrument, and a musician, to keep improving, must have finer and finer instruments. In this way Cheyne arrives at his own understanding of reincarnation. In his view the soul will 'gradually drop and put off this Adamical Tabernacle, and slide into another, and perhaps a third, according to the general Laws of Purification, and in Proportion as the spiritual Inhabitant advances in Perfection...!<sup>6</sup>

There is a second way in which the physical realm is of importance:

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<sup>1</sup> Regimen, p.136.

<sup>2</sup> Yates, Bruno, passim.

<sup>3</sup> Regimen, p.140.

<sup>4</sup> Regimen, p.159.

<sup>5</sup> Regimen, p.175.

<sup>6</sup> Regimen, p.175.

when the Mind has been duly cultivated and habituated to a Faculty of Thinking, to abstracted Sentiments, Reflections and Ideas, then rational, spiritual and closer Thinking, becomes familiar and easy: but the Rudiments, and initial Procedure, must be deriv'd through the Senses, in Perceptions and Ideas excited by Matter and its Qualities, but improved by Analogy and its Appendages, Trope, Metaphor, Similitude and Hieroglyphic.<sup>1</sup>

Cheyne believed that it is in the facing and solving of problems, in the removing of obstacles, that spiritual evolution takes place: 'the whole Progress is in a great measure our own work', but with 'Aids and Assistancess from time to time' provided by God as 'Rewards and Motives of our Diligence and Zeal'.<sup>2</sup> To this must be added the frequent 'Performance of spiritual Exercises'<sup>3</sup> so as to produce good habits and further the development of the soul's latent powers. Cheyne never says precisely what these spiritual exercises are, though it is clear that one of their purposes is to harmonize the personality with the will. For Cheyne as for Boehme the will is of central importance. It is the 'ruling and directing Faculty of spiritual Nature'.<sup>4</sup> It rules absolutely because it is the 'self-active and self-motive Principle' of the soul. It is the will which drives man towards reunion with the infinite:

the probatory and purifying Process in the lapsed State, both in the Acquisition of the moral Attributes, and in the Culture and Development of the bodily Organs, of the Faculties, gradually and by uniform Acceleration (like the Velocity of descending Bodies) receives its constant Impulse from the Will.<sup>5</sup>

As microcosmos has been made a 'little Deity' and is free, he has his own form of omnipotence which he has received directly from God. Omnipotence in microcosmos manifests as will. He is free to be selfish and separate. Only when he consciously decides to regain his divine heritage, does the process of reunion begin. In attempting to make his will coincide absolutely with the Will of God he begins to move towards the All.<sup>6</sup> At some point when microcosmos becomes worthy after many trials, his total desire for integration with the All creates a response in the Absolute. He will then receive the 'supernatural' aid to which Cheyne referred. This is God returning love and is the law of cause and effect in operation.

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<sup>1</sup> Regimen, p.160.

<sup>2</sup> Regimen, pp.171,2.

<sup>3</sup> Regimen, p.175.

<sup>4</sup> Regimen, p.177.

<sup>5</sup> Regimen, p.178.

<sup>6</sup> Each person in seeking happiness is moving towards God, but in a circuitous, indirect way. When one decides to merge with the All, one is going directly to God.

One of God's greatest gifts after life itself is pain. Bodily pain and pain of spirit (conscience) help man to avoid 'automatically', as it were, those actions and thoughts which are destructive of man's essential nature and which retard the process of reunion. The avoidance of that which causes pain, speeds the formation of positive habits. Cheyne feels it is bodily pain which originally activates the innate sense of conscience:

If the Body is strong, its Appetites and Passions are proportionally so, which inordinately gratified, naturally and necessarily beget strong and new Pains and Punishments; these, on Reflection and Remembrance, awaken Conscience, arising from an innate Instinct radically implanted in spiritual Nature, to excite and encourage a Love of Order, and punish Disorder...<sup>1</sup>

Cheyne does make a few remarks about the realized state of reunion with God. What is it that God receives from man at the time of reunion? In addition to having received man's love and devotion, God receives a 'bit' of Himself back, but in a new form, as men are

little analogical Divinities; and though they flow'd from Him as their Source, yet by this their Liberty, they are able to hold, as it were, in Property, an infinitesimal Portion of his spiritual Nature and Qualities, and thereby have something of their own to give Him back...<sup>2</sup>

God gave a little of Himself to man, a spark of Light, Life and Love, and man in return is free to keep this gift which is himself, or to duplicate in his own way God's act of giving Himself in love, by in turn giving himself to God. The accomplishment of this action of reintegration with God is more, however, than a return to the original state before the creation. For in this merging of the drop in the ocean individuality is not lost.

just as the last and least Particles of Water (being probably spherical or spheroidical) may retain their own Figure when receiv'd into the universal Volume of all Fluids of the Ocean, and are actuated by its Motions; or like the Fish, which though in the Sea, yet all of them preserve their own Forms; or rather like the Iron in the Oven, which being turn'd into liquified Fire, yet retains its own Shape. Just so, all created Intelligences may preserve their own Principles of Individualization, when they are restor'd to the Rock out of which they were hewn. But these lame and unanimated Allusions I adduce only as Illustrations of this incomprehensible Subject.<sup>3</sup>

In the last two sections of Regimen Cheyne expands his discussion of natural analogy and makes a number of observations on topics only briefly treated earlier.

<sup>1</sup> Regimen, pp.189, 190.

<sup>2</sup> Regimen, p.182.

<sup>3</sup> Regimen, pp.182-3.

His comments on oneness had been more implicit than explicit up to this point. Now he says outright that

All Creation, the whole System of the Universe, with all the particular Systems in Nature, all Beings animated and inanimat, all Substances, Qualities, and Realities whatsoever, and every individual Circumstance in Nature, is nothing, and necessarily can be nothing, but the Supreme Being, his Nature and Attributes, transubstantiated into Being and Preceptibility, portray'd and shadow'd out and drawn forth ad extra.<sup>1</sup>

He expands and somewhat clarifies his statements on rebirth by not limiting the principle to man. All links of the great chain of being 'advance to higher Degrees of Perfection and Happiness...'<sup>2</sup> Cheyne asserts, and adds that infinite 'Benevolence admits of no Stop or Bounds in its Communication of Being, Happiness and Perfection, but what arises from the Difference of the Order of Nature, or of Things'.<sup>2</sup>

The clearest statement of mystical Christianity is near the end of the book:

it may then be said, with philosophick Propriety, that a truly regenerat and sanctified Person has the Divine Nature and Substance of Jesus, GOD-Man, actuating and moving him, that is, living in him, as really and substantially as ever before his Adamical lapsed Spirit lived in him.<sup>3</sup>

In a final definition of love Cheyne affirms that spiritual evolution is brought about systematically:

Pure and disinterested Love is Love of infinit Perfection for itself only, and for its own Amiability, without any other Consideration; but this, as every thing else, admits of infinit Degrees. The great Mistake here, lies in Persons pretending to get to the Top of the Ladder, without ascending by all the Steps; and that some define the last Step as it were the first. All things belonging to Creatures must be progressive, and confirm'd Habits must be acquired by repeated persevering Acts.<sup>4</sup>

The reference to mistaking the last step for the first is a statement of the difference between abstract and concrete. When one accepts the abstract idea of pure, universal love, one is on Cheyne's first step. The last step is the full, spontaneous embodiment of divine love in all thoughts and actions. This is the realization of Cheyne's reunion with God and is a reassertion that in

<sup>1</sup> Regimen, p.203. On p.313 he refers to God as the 'Soul of the Universe'.

<sup>2</sup> Regimen, p.208. Cheyne's friend, James Thomson, held the same opinion. It combines Pythagorean metempsychosis with the chain of being, and so logically implies universal restoration. Cf. the end of Thomson's 'Hymn' to The Seasons, (1744), with which Cheyne would concur:

From seeming evil still educing good,  
And better thence again, and better still  
In infinite progression. But I lose  
Myself in Him, in Light ineffable:  
Come then expressive silence, muse His praise.

<sup>3</sup> Regimen, p.325.

<sup>4</sup> Regimen, p.332.

achieving reintegration with the Absolute, one is not returning to the condition before creation. There is a permanent individuality, within God, for the reintegrated soul, which it did not have previous to overcoming weakness and selfishness through concrete experience of the rigours of universal love.

Cheyne works out his fullest analogy between the sun and solar system and God and the creation at the end of Discourse v. Each planet is a mere point in the solar system, as each life is a point in the symbolic circle of creation. A planet's distance from the sun is analogous to one's stage of spiritual evolvment. Planets have no light of their own; they receive light from the sun, as for man God is the source of light. This quality of light is the first quality of God and of the sun. The sun's light reaches throughout the solar system as God's light illumines the entire creation. This light Cheyne considers God the Father. The second principle of God is love, which in the sun manifests as gravity. This is God the Son. What Cheyne calls the 'projectile' force of each planet is analogous to selfishly going one's own way. Without the pull of God's love or the sun's gravity all would become chaos. The third quality of the sun is heat without which life is impossible. This is the third principle of God, Life, which Cheyne sees as the Holy Spirit:

The Sun's Light is always accompanied with Heat, the Principle of Life and Vegetation. In the other celestial Bodies there is some small Degree of this Quality, but it is originally deriv'd from or produc'd in them by the solar Heat; without which they would be barren and inhospitable Desarts. This represents the Influences of the Holy Spirit, which are inseparable from the Light of the Gospel; and are the Principle of our spiritual Life, animating and cherishing every intelligent Being, and making it productive of all the Fruits of Righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

Love of God like the sun's gravity increases as one gets closer to the source. In stating what the physical outcome would be Cheyne has 'Divine Analogy' very much in mind:

it is suppos'd by the best Philosophers, that the solar Attraction will at last prevail over the projectile Force, and thereby both Planets and Comets will be swallowed up and transform'd into the Substance of the Sun.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV

The two main weaknesses of Cheyne's mystical writings are obscurity and redundancy. The latter results from the former. He sometimes used very long sentences which occasionally cover a page or more. He was often struggling

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<sup>1</sup> Regimen, pp.234-5.  
<sup>2</sup> Regimen, p.304.

to present his ideas clearly and with due subordination of constituent elements. These weaknesses reflect the strain of trying to communicate the esoteric exoterically.

Inevitably his popular books were not successful because of their mystical sections. He was quite aware of this and used the opportunity to communicate his ideas about practical mysticism. He saw no incongruity in presenting the public with a system for bodily health and the development of mystical consciousness in the same volume. To him they were part of the same continuum which led ultimately to God. His sense of oneness was not an abstraction, and so he could move from body to spirit and feel that he was looking at a different manifestation of the one divine substance.

Like an earlier mystical doctor, Robert Fludd, Cheyne gave unusually thoughtful attention to the macrocosmic-microcosmic correspondence. He naturally avoided the frequently tiresome, forced analogies of, for instance, Butler's Analogy, 1736, because to Cheyne, microcosmos, the little Deity, was not a mere intellectual concept, it was a living principle and way of life.

## CHAPTER 5

### RICHARD ROACH AND THE MYSTICAL MARRIAGE

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With Thy Sweet Soul, this soul of mine  
Hath mixed as Water doth with Wine.  
Who can the Wine and Water part,  
Or me and Thee when we combine?  
Thou art become my greater self;  
Small bounds no more can me confine.  
Thou hast my being taken on,  
And shall not I now take on Thine?  
Me Thou for ever hast affirmed,  
That I may ever know Thee mine.  
Thy Love has pierced me through and through,  
Its thrill with Bone and Nerve entwine.  
I rest a Flute laid on Thy lips;  
A lute, I on Thy breast recline.  
Breathe deep in me that I may sigh;  
Yet strike my strings, and tears shall shine.

Jalalu d'Din Rumi

If this love be perfected the soul is wedded to the Word. What can be more replete with joy than this union? If one among us feels that it is a blessing to draw near to God, if he longs for that meeting, if he desires to be dissolved and to be with Christ, such a one, thirsting for it ardently, dwelling upon the thought of it ceaselessly, shall receive the Word. This visitation will be the Bridegroom come to the soul. That is, he shall feel himself inwardly embraced, as it were, by the arms of Wisdom, and then he shall receive an inpouring of the sweetness of Divine Love. Thus is the desire of his heart granted him, though he is still in the body, a pilgrim on earth.

St. Bernard de Clairvaux

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## I

The day after he took priest's orders in 1690, Richard Roach was appointed rector of St. Augustine's, Hackney, where he remained until his death forty years later. In his two main mystical works, The Great Crisis, 1725, and The

Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant, 1728, he refers a number of times with great appreciation to the security and leisure his position allowed him. Unlike many eighteenth-century divines, he used this time for the serious study of religious and mystical subjects.

Although little is known of his life, there is detailed information on his mystical studies. This is mainly because of the short but important 'Account and Catalogue of the Spiritual or Mystical Writers, in the Several Ages of the Church' which appears in The Great Crisis. He begins it in this way:

The Mystical or Spiritual Writers of the several Ages of the Church, as they are many in Number, so their Characters are very Different. They spake and wrote at various Times, and in divers Manners, according to their various Degrees of Illumination and Experience; some in the Active, and some in the Contemplative Way.... it will be Generally found, that these Writers, Ancient and Modern, very few excepted, have not only taught the very Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, but have retain'd too the very Words and Expressions of the Holy Scripture; bating only a few Terms, such as Introversion, Annihilation, etc. which are Expressive enough of their Meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from Boehme, Jane Lead and Francis Lee, who were the major influences on his life, Roach was particularly moved by St. John of the Cross: 'Never Man wrote more Substantially and Judiciously than he did, or gave Better Rules and Marks, to prevent and detect all manner of Delusion'.<sup>2</sup> He felt that Guyon was a more considerable mystic than Bourignon, and had gone through 'the Deepest Work of Purification'.<sup>3</sup> After remarking that most of the extant mystical works had been translated into French, he adds:

And indeed it must be own'd, that no Nation or Country has produc'd more Excellent Persons, or better Writers in this kind than France has. I shall Name a few of the Principal: St. Francis de Sales, ...Mr. de Bernieres Louvigni, ...Pere Surieu, ...Mr. Olier ...and Francis Malaval.<sup>3</sup>

St. Francis of Assisi, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Suso, à Kempis, Albertus Magnus, St. Teresa, and the Theologia Germanica are given special mention. The English mystics named are: Hilton, Baker, Canfield, Julian of Norwich, Gertrude More, Thomas Bromley, Dr. Everard, Francis Rous, The Cambridge Platonists, John Norris, Dr. Gell, and Bishop Ken.

The account ends with a very useful list of 'the Principal' mystical works translated into English and available at this time.

<sup>1</sup> Great Crisis, pp.165, 166. The Account includes some fairly detailed bibliographical information.

<sup>2</sup> Great Crisis, p.167.

<sup>3</sup> Great Crisis, p.169.

Treatises of Tho. a Kempis; Michael Molinos's Spiritual Guide; (a Compendious, Easy, and Compleat System: his Chapters on Humility Admirable.)<sup>1</sup> The Spiritual Combat, and Card. Petrucci's Letters of the Love of God, etc. St. Fr. de Sales's Introduction to a devout Life; Mat. Weyer's Narrow Path of Divine Truth; Jo. Evangelista's Kingdom of God in the Soul. The Interior Christian; and The Holy Life of Mr. de Renty. Madam Guion's Short and easy Method of Prayer; Thaulerus's Evangelical Poverty, and His Life; Madam Bourignon's Light of the World, Solid Virtue, Renovation of the Gospel Spirit, etc. Mr. Poiret's Divine Oeconomy, and Arndius's True Christianity.

These or any of these may be freely Recommended; and I doubt not but the Sober and Serious Reader will find Solid Comfort and Instruction in them.<sup>2</sup>

## II

In The Great Crisis and The Imperial Standard Roach poses and attempts to answer two questions: what is the mystical marriage? How may one attain it?

An examination of the mystical marriage<sup>3</sup> must begin with a study of 'the Divine Sophia'<sup>4</sup>. In the 'explanatory index' of The Imperial Standard, which Roach intended his reader to consult first, is this definition of 'the Virgin Wisdom':

The Divine Intellectual Power, Original in the Father, Derivative in the Son, and Processive in the Holy Spirit: and thence going forth with the Divine Word to Creation, and Manifestation of God to, and in his Works.<sup>5</sup>

The conception of wisdom in Plato's Timaeus as a 'world soul' might have influenced Roach. In any case Roach's conception is of this kind.

The Divine Wisdom... is the bright Processive Efflux, Spiration, Mirror or Womb of Manifestation, wherein God is Reflected to Himself; and thro' which he is also manifested in and to the Intellectual World. And this is represented and Shadow'd out, in Nature, by the Wide Expanse, or Firmamental Womb, wherein the Sun and Moon and other lumanaries of Heaven are Exhibited to view.<sup>6</sup>

Roach considers wisdom to be dual in nature. Wisdom is first, from God the Father, justice, and secondly from the Son, love.

And as in time of Clouds and Storms, the Serene Ether and beautiful Face of the outward Heavens is veil'd, and a Partition of the Firmament made, which after they are over becomes one bright and Continual Sphere again; so is it also in the Spiritual Sphere, in the Time of her Severe Work

<sup>1</sup> Roach's insertion.

<sup>2</sup> Great Crisis, pp.170-171.

<sup>3</sup> Many Christian Mystics use the term 'spiritual marriage', the Hermetic-Kabalistic mystics call this mystery the 'alchemical marriage'.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Prov. viii.22-31, and Job xxviii. Wisdom is the second Sefirah of the Kabala, after Kether, the Crown.

<sup>5</sup> Imperial Standard, p.299.

<sup>6</sup> Great Crisis, p.90.

or Course of Judgment: Her Upper Sphere is divided from her Lower, and her Smiles and gracious Influences intercepted; but when the Storms are over, and Justice is reconcil'd in Grace and Love, all becomes One Sphere again, with the Sun of Righteousness shining thro' it; and Astrea and Sophia appear as one.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult if not impossible to give a completely satisfying, all-encompassing definition of Divine Wisdom as presented by Roach. In the first place this is because of the inherent mystery of so intimate a part of God's nature. But beyond this Boehme, who was one if not the major influence on Roach, has her appearing in at least eight rôles. Brinton lists them as

(1) the mirror of Deity, (2) the Mother of God, (3) the Divine Imagination, (4) the idea as the model of the world, (5) as that which is manifested in Eternal Nature, (6) man's heavenly genius, (7) the bride of the soul, (8) the mother of the reborn.<sup>2</sup>

These are not really eight different rôles, but eight aspects of her one rôle.

She always remains the passive idea which, when wedded to actual will, gives birth to new life. She is the given objective element in which the will sees its possibilities reflected. The will is the subjective creative element. The union of the two produces life which then becomes a new given element for a new act of will. Accordingly wisdom appears to play a varied rôle, because, each time she comes forth in the cosmic drama she manifests a higher and different type of existence. Beginning as the vaguest possible structural characteristics of the subjective abysmal will, she finally in the last act stands before God, mirroring his completed life.<sup>3</sup>

Boehme calls the Divine Sophia the 'bride of the Soul'.<sup>4</sup> Roach calls Christ the Bridegroom.<sup>5</sup> Just as the Virgin Mary was the bride of God and the mother of Christ, so is the Virgin Sophia the bride of Christ and the mother of the 'reborn', 'regenerated' human soul. But how is this to be understood? The human soul seems to be left out or merely acted on by Christ and the Virgin Sophia. The answer lies, according to Roach's presentation, in the realization that the mystical marriage takes place within the human soul. The development of the Christ within is wholly dependent upon the personal initiative and devotion of the individual soul, yet is simultaneously the work of Christ in the soul.<sup>6</sup> The Christ within is the very heart and essence of the soul of man.

<sup>1</sup> Great Crisis, p.91.

<sup>2</sup> The Mystic Will, p.184.

<sup>3</sup> The Mystic Will, pp.184-5. There is a very interesting study of Jewish wisdom speculation in Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, (1974), i, pp.153-175.

<sup>4</sup> The Three Principles, 15, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Great Crisis, p.175.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Law, The Spirit of Prayer, ed. Sidney Spencer, p.134: 'It is strictly true, that all Man's Salvation depends upon himself, and it is as strictly true, that all the Work of his Salvation is solely the Work of God in his Soul'.

It is the the consciousness or personality around which the soul of man accumulates spiritual knowledge and develops its latent spiritual attributes.<sup>1</sup> As the developing soul forms a plan for a specific action, for example, some charitable action large or small, this is the Virgin Wisdom, as passive idea, inspiring the soul, which is free to accept or reject the inspiration. The will to succeed, the active pursuit of the plan is the Christ within at work. Each aspect of the plan--the goal, and the active attempt to achieve it--is dependent on the soul's desire to be of service to God. Whether or not the plan ends as the soul intended, some spiritual development takes place so long as one made a real effort. One can then be inspired to carry out some higher, more important work.

In the second headnote to this chapter St. Bernard refers to Christ as both the Bridegroom and Wisdom. Roach holds this view.

And thus, as Cant. ii.1 he declares himself both the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the Valley; the Bridegroom and the Bride (Superior and Inferior) in One; the King and also the Kingdom; or the King in his kingdom...<sup>2</sup>

This cloaks one of the deepest mysteries of the mystical marriage, one liable to the grossest misunderstanding or misuse. In order for one to attain to the mystical marriage one must begin to think of oneself not as either male or female but as a spiritual being who is unified. Why is this necessary, and in what sense is this to be understood?

Christ as in Himself showing the Humane Nature restor'd to its Primeval Perfection must be supposed to have in Himself the whole Humane Nature restor'd, viz. in the Female Property as well as the Male; which he also receiv'd from his Virgin Mother and Spiritualiz'd; and which in him did not lye Dormant and Actless in its Distinct Nature, as the Maternal Part does in the Males descending from faln Adam; (as also the Male Nature in the Females,) who before the Separation possess'd his Virgin and Bridal Nature in himself; so truly Imaging his Maker: But This also in Christ was Quickened and actuated in the Divine Life of Love, and so became in and thro' him united to, and Representative of its Prototype the Eternal Virgin or Bridal Nature in God: which Divine Virgin Nature, as the Day of Finishing and Manifestation of the Mystery goes on, will be further reveal'd, and shown to be a Jewel Hid from the World...<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bhagavad Gita, x, 20, Krishna declares: 'I am the Self inwardly dwelling in all born beings ...the beginning, and the midst, and the end of born beings am I'.

<sup>2</sup> Great Crisis, p.92.

<sup>3</sup> Great Crisis, p..92-3. Cf. ibid., p.96:

every particular Soul is to be united to Him, and also to each other in the Marriage of the Lamb; according to that John xvii. 21,22. That they all may be One, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; (i.e. in the Love-Communion;) That they also may be one in us. And again, v.23. That they may be made Perfect in One. To which Answers, in the Mystery that of St. Paul, Gal. iii. 28. There is neither Male,



Roach was only too aware that this doctrine could be profaned by the vulgar, or be misunderstood by non-mystical Christians. He acknowledges that this doctrine

will probably give Offense to some less acquainted with the Progressive and Perfective Part of Religion; and indeed those who stand in the more Aystere Way and Spirit, will find a Difficulty at first to open into Generous Latitude, the sacred Liberties, and Immunities of the Children of the Kingdom, and... on the other Hand these things may also be made the Jest or Mock of the more Loose, and Profane.... What is the Cause of this Reserve on the one Hand, and Irrision or Mockery on the other? It will appear to be, only the Degrees of Defilement and Corruption adhering to Faln Nature. For Nature as she came out of the Hand of God had no such Ground. Heavenly, Divine Love, is a Perfection, a Glory.<sup>1</sup>

What exactly then is the mystical marriage? To even attempt an answer, it is necessary to follow Roach's explanation of how one may attain it. He dealt with the question in depth and with insight.

The aspirant must begin to think of himself as a spiritual being beyond identification with one sex because this is the nature of Christ, the perfect man. But put another way, it is necessary for microcosmos, if he wishes to merge with the macrocosm, to realize that he contains all within his true self, and must allow his full nature to develop. He must realize that he is an un-separated part of the universal soul of God, 'as a Stream from its Fountain'.<sup>2</sup>

The key to attainment of the mystical marriage is love, the deepest mystery of all. God is 'Love, only Love; the Ground and Foundation of all his Attributes, from whence they Spring, and in which they terminate'.<sup>3</sup> In which case Roach is merely being logical when he states 'Fear not: The inward Spiritual Man grows on, notwithstanding all Losses, and through all Crosses, there is still a Progress, and a Conquest'.<sup>4</sup> The best way for the aspirant to proceed then is to 'press on to the Extremity, and even dare thy Enemy to his worst. For at the worst God will appear and help'.<sup>5</sup> Who is this enemy?

Every Thought, Word, and Act that is brought forth from this Self-hood of corrupt Nature, standing upon this false Bottom, viz. Of its self and by its self, independent of God, and so in Concurrence with the Evil One, beginning from and terminating in this evil Self as its End: I say, every such Act is, in Degree, an Act of Revolt and Contempt of the Divine Sovereignty, and the Right he has in us. This is the Serpent Self or Antichrist in us....

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(without Female) nor Female (without Male). But All One in Christ Jesus. This gives us rightly to understand what the Primitive Communion of Saints under Immediate Operation of the Spirit was; which we daily profess in our Creed, but generally know so little of.

1 Crisis, p.173.

2 Crisis, p.118.

3 Standard, pp.28-9.

4 Standard, p.74.

5 Standard, p.48.

If thou wouldst love thy God with all thy Heart,  
The World, nor Devil, nor Self must then have Part,  
Then God in thee will his full Act impart.<sup>1</sup>

Roach proceeds in his argument using paradox and a favourite technique of the Kabalists, coincidentia oppositorum:

God's Strength is made perfect in Weakness: If so, then in the greatest Weakness of the Creature will appear the greatest Perfection of God's Strength.

The Conquest of the Kingdom is God's own Work, and the Concern of it is Christ's more than yours, doubt not but he will go on with it effectually, and be assured he will not starve the Work for want of Power....

Be not so uneasy under the Inroads of evil Powers or Spirits, they are but the Under-Labourers in God's Work...<sup>2</sup>

Genuine humility is essential.

Value not your self, nor despise or neglect your Brother, on Account of your own greater spiritual Talents. For he may have what you have not, and what you may sometimes stand in need of.... He that is highest in Endowment, let him, with the humble Jesus and his Apostles, be the lowest in Charity and Condescension, and the Servant of all.<sup>3</sup>

The aspirant must understand that love conquers all.

Think not of ever conquering the wrathful, or earthly and selfish Spirit, in its own Way and Principle, by opposing Wrath to Wrath, and Self to Self: but get out of their Dominions, and stand in the Principle of Love, generous, charitable, and unselfish thy self, and thou wilt supplant them easily.... If the Way of Love be the quickest Progress to its Kingdom, then every Step in the Contrary Kingdom, is going directly backwards, and proves the greatest Loss both of Time and Way. He that abides in Love, continues immur'd as in an impregnable Castle...<sup>4</sup>

Roach devised an absolutely demanding but fair test which determines to what degree one uses the law of love.

Can we take an Affront, and presently turn off our Mind and Thought from it, without Resentment? Can we receive a Wound from a Friend without returning another? Can we be dispised or injured, and spoke evil against falsly, without Ruffle and Disturbance of Mind, and put it presently on the Account of Christ, accepting for his Sake, and return nothing but Pity, Prayer, and Blessing, even for cursing; and stand, nevertheless, ready to do our Enemy all charitable Service that lies in our way? This, whatever others do, the Professors of the Ministration of Love, as at this Day, must be found in, above, and beyond all others.<sup>5</sup>

It is not Roach's opinion that one must try to convert others to Divine Love. Rather, until one has completely lost (and found) oneself in perfect love, one

<sup>1</sup> Standard, pp.85, 86.

<sup>2</sup> Standard, p.87.

<sup>3</sup> Standard, p.103.

<sup>4</sup> Standard, pp.105-6.

<sup>5</sup> Standard, p110.

should only worry about completely converting the self. For this reason one should attempt no direct reform in the lives of others. One must love and be of service to others, and be capable of what Roach calls the mystic death.

'When we patiently suffer from our Brethren, and pray for them, and forgive in the Spirit of Jesus, we do in a Spiritual Sense die with him for them'.<sup>1</sup> One must be able to 'pass an Act of absolute Forgiveness of all done against 'em by their Brethren'.<sup>2</sup>

The man of reason will ask how can one possibly attain such a perfect love in this imperfect, selfish world? Roach answers that it can only be attained by realizing that all life is one life; the Self is the Absolute:

the greatest Enemy and Opposer of the true Love, both of God and the Brethren, is thy self, or the Spirit of Self in thee, i.e. of Self-Love, Self-Will, Self-Act, Self-End. God is one, and thy End and Happiness is to be One with him, and in him with thy Brethren; but as far as thou art found in this Spirit, and standing on thy own Bottom, God and thou are Two, and thou and thy Neighbour are Two, and have two contrary Interests moving; and thus far thou defraudest God and thy Brother, of the Right they have in thee. Self-love is flat Contradiction to Christian Love... Self love breaks and divides the World into as many Parts and Interests as there are Individuals: But Christian Love unites all Mankind, all Hearts, and all Interests into one. If then thou wouldst learn to love God and thy Brother, pray, and labour and believe in God constantly and earnestly, for the rooting out of this Enemy: For it is the Anti-Christian Part, yea, the Antichrist within thee. Whereas thy true Self is the New-Man, or Christ in thee, and made one with thee in thy Regenerate Part; standing in Union and Communion with the whole Body...<sup>3</sup>

One should not start a fire of hate and selfishness and then complain of the heat; one should not stand idly by and complain of the heat when such a fire is lit by someone else or by society at large. Ultimately if all is one Self,

<sup>1</sup> Standard, p.113. Cf. Law, A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection, ed. G. Moreton, (1893), p.70:

The sincere Love of our Enemies, is perhaps of all other Tempers the hardest to be acquired, and the Motions of Envy and Spite the most difficult to be entirely laid aside, yet without this Temper we are unqualified to say the Lord's Prayer.

<sup>2</sup> Standard, p.116. Cf. the outstanding modern exponent of absolute forgiveness, Gandhi:

If loss of life becomes necessary in a righteous battle, one should be prepared, like Jesus, to shed his own, not others' blood. Eventually there will be less blood spilt in the world.

Quoted in Autobiography of a Yogi, p.448. Cf. Gandhi's ultimate fidelity to this doctrine, ibid., p.453:

As the dying Mahatma sank slowly to the ground, three bullets in his... body, he lifted his hands in the traditional Hindu gesture of greeting, silently bestowing his forgiveness. Innocent artist as he was in all the ways of his life, Gandhi became a supreme artist at the moment of his death. All the sacrifices of his selfless life had made possible that final loving gesture.

<sup>3</sup> Standard, pp.124-5. Cf. Roach's Waller quotation, ibid., p.126:

We should behold as many Selves as Men:  
All of one Family, in Blood allied.

then it is everyone's responsibility to transmute this fire into the light of love.

This certainly does not mean that there is no proper way to engage in constructive criticism. When, says Roach,

[thou art] moved by Charity to rectify the Opinion of another, having given thy Reasons, if they are not received, urge 'em not to Strife and Contention; but supply the rest with Prayer for thy Brother; which will reach him where thy Arguments cannot. But chiefly press into, and set thy Heart upon the great Essentials of Religion; and then thou wilt know how to give every Part its due Proportion of Weight in thy Regard; and wilt be drawn more both out of the Love of, and out of the Way of Jar and Contest, which is chiefly found in the less concerning Parts, and in the Bark or Outside of Religion.<sup>1</sup>

But always one must return to the realization that a 'little Love is a Holy Fire, as well as a greater Flame';<sup>2</sup> one should fan the flame, however small, not complain of its smallness. 'There can hardly be a greater Defect of Charity, than to wound the infant Rising Life of the Spirit of Christ in one another'.<sup>2</sup> For one seeking the mystical marriage,

Charity and Unity in the Spirit of God is the Wedding Garment, and the Oil for the Lamp of the Sion-Bride: till she can go forth with these to meet her Lord, she must never expect him to come as a bridegroom, or otherwise than as a Judge.<sup>3</sup>

The aspirant then must have the meekness of the lamb, but must also realize that this is only half of what he requires.

Love, in its intermediate Degrees,  
 May enter here; but not the Crown to seize;  
 That Love that hopes to win its Virgin Dower,  
 Must have its full Proportion too of Power.  
 Love answering Love in equal Measure gives,  
 To its Belov'd imparts as it receives.  
 Imperfect Love then, enters but in Part;  
 But Perfect Love possesses my whole Heart.  
 There too the Central Fiery Power you see;  
 This touch'd by equal Power will open free,  
 In equal Movement of true Sympathy,  
 Like mutual echoing concordant Strings in Nature's Harmony.  
 Know then, that the Victorious Virgin Love,  
 With its Male-Power, must here consorted move:  
 The Will on God's re-ingrafted must dispense  
 Faith's powerful Divine Magick Influence,  
 That turns the engine of Omnipotence.  
 This only can unlock the Seven-seal'd Door,  
 And Suffering Love vest with Triumphant Power.<sup>4</sup>

1 Standard, p.125.

2 Standard, p.129.

3 Standard, p.132.

4 Standard, pp.155-6.

If the aspirant seeks union with God, he needs power in addition to Love because this is the nature of God. Love without power is weakness, and cannot persevere and conquer.

He that would bring forth Truth unto Victory, for Conquest of his Opponent, must first conquer within Himself, by the Curb of his own Passion and Resentment, and by the Prudence and Moderation of his Zeal. This is not Weakness, or Tameness, as some may think, but is truly the Wisdom, Strength, and conquering Power of Love: which, tho' it carries the Lamb outwardly, has also the Lion within, which it can rouse on Occasion; yet so as to act in Conjunction and Harmony with the Lamb. Thus we see Jesus, the Lamb of God, is also the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and is also made Lord and Ruler in the Sphere of the Divine Justice and Judgment: to a Concurrence in which, by this Conquest in themselves, and Command of the Fiery Properties in their own Souls, the Children of the Love are to be advanc'd...<sup>1</sup>

The aspirant must first conquer the lower nature within himself, and then participate in such a conquest in the entire creation. The fiery power of God the Father, Boehme's first principle when untransmuted in the human personality produces self-orientation, covetousness and the tendency towards vicious attack of others. Yet this is the power which when aligned with love, conquers all. The unmanifested wrathfulness of this principle produces the absolute power of manifested love. Directed energy equals power. Undirected energy is self-consuming and wasteful. The successful conjunction of the wrathful principle of the soul with love will determine the advancement of the aspirant.

The 'wrathful' first principle in God directly and eternally leads to love. The strict, uncompromising justice of God the Father, based on the law of cause and effect, leads human souls who stay in the selfish principle and refuse the love conquest, to the same result, love, but through the most difficult route.

I am LOVE, and cannot bear to see any of my Creatures miserable to all Eternity. What they suffer in this Course of strict Justice, under which they are fal'n, is but so much as That shall require in way of Punishment for their Sins, and Purgation and Preparation for Grace. For the Justice of God, as before shewn in the Nature and Tendency of the Mosaic Law, works still to the End of Grace: Yet itself makes nothing perfect; leaving That to a Dispensation of better Hope, the Way whereof it prepares. Such Souls therefore as have neglected the Opportunity of Grace in the Time of Life, must go the long and tedious Round in the painful and Wilderness Way, and pay the utmost farthing required in the Course of strict Justice and Judgment; which yet does not require an Infinite from a poor Finite; but proportions their Degrees and Times of Suffering and Purgation according to wise and just Measures, suited to this severer Way and Process.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Standard, p.134.

<sup>2</sup> Standard, p.186.

In this way the law of cause and effect is upheld, all are saved and God's love is seen to be perfect.

The above reference to the 'Seven-seal'd Door', relates to the seven essential keys which lead one to the mystical marriage. This symbol shows the influence of numerology, Boehme and Roach's fellow Philadelphian Jane Lead.<sup>1</sup>

Believe through Love in deep Humility.  
 . . . . .  
 Believe through Love in Resignation.  
 . . . . .  
 Trust in God alone.  
 . . . . .  
 Believe in Love, and draw<sup>2</sup> with strong desire  
 . . . . .  
 Triumph on the Cross,  
 And in the Kingdom's Travail-Pangs rejoice.  
 . . . . .  
 the Great Rendition-Act of Praise.<sup>3</sup>

The seventh and by far the most difficult key, like Boehme's seventh form or principle, involves the perfect combination and balance, in unity, of the previous six. 'Come now, my Spouse, these Acts in one combin'd,/Will make your Sun in my full Glory shine'.<sup>4</sup>

What then is the mystical marriage?

I come [to] Rule in you immediately my self; as your Priest and Prophet, to instruct and lead you into all Truth, to offer the Sacrifice, and perform the holy Service in you, by the triumphant Act and Operation of my Holy Spirit. Yea, I come as your Bridegroom, and will not Deceive you; but even Transcend the utmost of your Expectations. Behold I will now speak plainly, and according to your Heart, concerning the sacred Nuptial which I have come now to consummate with my Spouse on Earth. I am then both the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the Valley, the heavenly Bridegroom and Bride in one. I possessed while on Earth the Bride in my self, (according to the Testimony of John Baptist to me as the Bridegroom;) <sup>5</sup> even the Eternal Virgin of God's Wisdom; in which I come now in a heavenly

<sup>1</sup> Standard, p.156. Cf. Jane Lead's seven states in her Ascent to the Mount of Vision, (1699). Cf. also the seven centres of kundalini.

<sup>2</sup> A bow and arrow analogy is being used here.

<sup>3</sup> Standard, pp.156, 157.

<sup>4</sup> Standard, p.157. Cf. Boehme, Signatura Rerum, 9, 2:

The Being of all beings is a wrestling power; for the Kingdom of God consists in power, and also the outward world, and it stands especially in seven properties or forms, where the one causes and makes the other, and none of them is the first or last, but it is the eternal band; therefore God has appointed six days for man to work, and the seventh day is the perfection wherein the six do rest; it is the centre to which the desire of the six days tend; therefore God calls it the Sabbath or resting-day, for therein the six forms of the working power rest: It is the divine sound in the power, or the kingdom of joy, wherein all the other forms are manifest; for it is the formed world, or divine corporality, by which all things are generated and come forth to a being.

<sup>5</sup> John ii.29, (Roach's reference).

Manner to meet the Males, and the Females as Male; and combine all together in such a Unity of Triumphant Joy, as all the Marriages on Earth if joined together, would be but a feint Shadow of.<sup>1</sup>

### III

Roach's writings point in all ways to one thing: translating the Sermon on the Mount into a living reality. All he cares about, all he works for, he regards as eminently practical: how can the attainment of that state which alone will eliminate hate and suffering be hastened. Men must not expect Christ to establish it for them. This is sloth. The matter as always rests with the individual. Until man realizes that to change society he must change himself, the Bridegroom remains far off, as does final fruition.

Roach's works are very redundant, but they are so from design. He is addressing himself to the intellectual part of man, of course, but his prime aim is to engage or invoke the inner man. He is trying through almost hypnotic and varied restatement to make the doctrine of universal love operational in the personality. He is trying as it were, to produce a habit of thought which will lead to action. He believes that until a truth is known and felt throughout the whole self, it cannot become an inner reality and exert a positive influence in one's life.<sup>2</sup>

Roach has been sneered at because he was a millenarian. Richard Rawlinson complained that he was naïvely generous and that some 'sponged on his purse'.<sup>3</sup> (Law would have agreed with Roach about indiscriminate giving of alms.) But it must be remembered that he was not, unlike most millenarians, wildly damning one group or another. Indeed, his doctrine of universal redemption<sup>4</sup> demonstrates that he was embracing all, and was perhaps proceeding in the present as if the wished for future was about to be manifested. This is an attitude (of mental creation) held by many mystics, which they believe hastens the manifestation of the desired condition. Considering the truly inspirational quality of 'The Scheme of Faith' and 'The Love Conquest',<sup>5</sup> and the tenor of his life as a whole, it is possible that in his own case the golden age had arrived with the coming of the Bridegroom, and that he mistook his own mystical marriage for a universal one.

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<sup>1</sup> Standard, pp.186-7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Law, A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection, ed. G. Moreton, p.88: For Repentance whilst it is only a Lipwork at stated Times is nothing, it has not had its Effect, till it has entered into the State and Habit of our Lives....

<sup>3</sup> Bodley MS. Rawl.D 1152, flyleaf.

<sup>4</sup> See 'A Confirmation of the Doctrine of Universal Redemption', Standard, pp.189-204.

<sup>5</sup> Standard, pp.73-99 and 100-145.

## CHAPTER 6

### HENRY BROOKE AND THE FOOL AS SAGE

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The sage comprehends the connexions between himself and others, and how they all go to constitute him of one body with them, and he does not know how it is so-- he naturally does do. In fulfilling his constitution, as acted on and acting, he (simply) follows the direction of Heaven; and it is in consequence of this that men style him (a sage). The love of the sage for others receives its name from them. If they did not tell him of it, he would not know that he loved them; and when he knows it, he is as if he knew it not; when he hears it, he is as if he heard it not. His love of others never has an end, and their rest in him has also no end-- all this takes place naturally.

Lao-tzu

If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

St. Paul

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## I

In 1745 the Earl of Chesterfield went to Ireland as Viceroy and appointed his friend, Henry Brooke, barrack-master of Mullingar. The post was a sinecure worth £400 a year. Brooke, however, immediately began investigating jobbery and other abuses and published his findings in the satiric pamphlet, The Secret History and Memoirs of the Barracks of Ireland, an action which earned him the scorn of the Government. This was one of the many occasions in his life when he emulated Don Quixote, whom he considered the greatest of modern heroes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Fool of Quality, ed. E.A. Baker, (1906), pp.44-5.

Brooke, born in 1703,<sup>1</sup> was educated by Swift's friend, Dr. Thomas Sheridan, grandfather of the playwright. After leaving Trinity College, Dublin, Brooke entered the Temple, London. At this time he met Pope and Lord Lyttelton. He had already become acquainted with Swift, who considered him a 'young man of genius, but he was sorry to find that genius incline to poetry, which of all other pursuits was the most unprofitable'.<sup>2</sup> In 1736 he took a house near Pope, and was affectionately received into the Pope-Lyttelton circle. He became a friend of Pitt, who introduced him to Frederick, Prince of Wales. The Prince was soon treating Brooke 'with uncommon familiarity, and presented him with many elegant and valuable tokens of his friendship.'<sup>3</sup>

Brooke became seriously ill in 1740 and was advised to return to Ireland. This he did, never to see England again. The rest of his literary career was taken up with political pamphlets, a dozen dramatic pieces, some poetry and late in life two novels: The Fool of Quality, 1766-1770 and Juliet Grenville, 1774. He died in 1783.

Materials for the study of Brooke's life are very scanty indeed. There is no proper biography. There is a short life by an anonymous relation who was aided in gathering materials (rather unsuccessfully) by Brooke's daughter Charlotte,<sup>4</sup> but being a child of his old age she knew virtually nothing of the first half of his life. This life and a brief sketch by Chalmers are of little value. The article written by a descendant in 1852 is of greater importance.<sup>5</sup> His correspondence with the Prince and with Pope and other literary figures was lost in a fire.<sup>6</sup> This dearth of material caused Charles Kingsley to observe that there are no

details of the real character, the inner life, of the man. One longs, but longs almost in vain, for any scrap of diary, private meditation, even familiar letter, from one who had seen, read, and above all suffered, so much and so variously. But with the exception of half-a-dozen letters, nothing of the kind seems to exist. His inner life can only be guessed at....<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The date of his birth has been variously given as 1706 and 1708. That 1703 is the correct date is shown by an anonymous correspondent, N&Q, 5th series, iv (1875), pp.131-2.

<sup>2</sup> Baker, p.ix.

<sup>3</sup> Chalmers's 'Life', Works of the English Poets, (1810), xvii, p.330.

<sup>4</sup> Prefixed to her edition of The Poems and Plays of Henry Brooke, 2nd ed., (1789). 4 vols.

<sup>5</sup> R.S. Brooke, 'Henry Brooke', Dublin University Magazine, (Feb.1852). Baker's introduction to his edition of The Fool contains some additional biographical details.

<sup>6</sup> Some half dozen letters did survive, and two letters by Brooke to Pope and one from Pope were printed by C.H. Wilson, Brookiana: Anecdotes of Henry Brooke, (1804). 2 vols. This work has surprisingly little to say of Brooke himself.

<sup>7</sup> Preface to his edition of The Fool, (1859), reprinted in Baker.

This is the situation which the Brooke student faces; he must rely almost totally on Brooke's writings. Caroline Spurgeon asserted that Brooke 'was deeply imbued with Boehme's thought, and his expression of it, embedded in that curious book, The Fool of Quality, 1766-70, reached, probably, a larger public than did Law's mystical treatises'.<sup>1</sup> Howard Brinton, one of the best interpreters of Boehme, found Brooke to be 'full of Behmenistic phrases'.<sup>2</sup> When did Brooke begin reading Boehme? How did he become acquainted with Boehme? What other mystics did he read? There is nothing approaching a final answer to the first two questions. The best guess one can make is that moving in Pope's circle, Brooke almost certainly met Dr. Cheyne. The two men had similar personalities and would probably have become friends. Cheyne could very well have initiated Brooke into Boehme's teachings. If this is the case, it could have been during any of the three times Brooke was in London. It is possible that he was introduced to Boehme through Edward Taylor's book.<sup>3</sup> Désirée Hirst says that Brooke based the following lines on the publisher's preface to Taylor's volume:

Whate'er the Eastern Magi sought  
Or Orpheus sung, or Hermes taught  
Whate'er Confucius wou'd inspire,  
Or Zoroaster's mystic fire;  
The symbols that Pythagoras drew,  
The wisdom God-like Plato knew;  
What Socrates debating proved,  
Or Epictetus lived and loved;  
The sacred fire of saint and sage,  
Through ev'ry clime, in every age  
In Behmen's wondrous page we view,  
Discovered and revealed anew....  
The trumpet sounds, the Spirit's given,  
And Behmen is the voice from heaven.<sup>4</sup>

For the third question, what other mystics did he read, there is somewhat more material from which to draw an answer. One can assume that being a serious student of Boehme, Brooke would eventually be led to Law. If Cheyne were indeed the means of Brooke discovering Boehme, then the doctor would surely have mentioned Law, perhaps in the same breath. The works of Bishop Ken (1637-1711)

<sup>1</sup> C.H.E.L., ix, p.327. The only book length study of Brooke--Helen Scurr, Henry Brooke, (Minnesota, 1922)--severely underplays Brooke's mystical thought. The author did not read Boehme, and was unfamiliar with mysticism, especially the alchemical tradition.

<sup>2</sup> The Mystic Will: Based on a Study of the Philosophy of Jacob Boehme, (New York, 1930), p.72n.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Behmen's Theosophic Philosophy Unfolded, (1691).

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Hirst, p.234 from Arthur Hopkinson, About William Law, (London, 1948), p.119.

were in Brooke's library.<sup>1</sup> T.A. Birrell remarked in passing that Brooke 'had Pietist and Quietist sympathies'.<sup>2</sup> This is confirmed by even a cursory examination of Brooke's works. Brooke's nephew, Thomas Digby Brooke, translated Guyon's opuscula when he republished her life.<sup>3</sup> Brooke did make a positive reference to her in The Fool.<sup>4</sup> There is a significant theme of spiritual alchemy in a number of Brooke's works which will be dealt with below. In addition he does make one explicit reference to Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>5</sup> It is hardly surprising that a serious student of Boehme would be led to an interest in alchemy. Brooke had one of his characters in the Fool carefully studying Thomas à Kempis.<sup>6</sup> There are a number of references to Zoroaster.<sup>7</sup> Little can be said beyond this. One wishes that the kind of details that exist about the mystical studies of Brooke's nephew of the same name (1735-1806), who gained a reputation as an historical painter, could shed some light on the readings of his more famous uncle. But it is unfortunately not so.<sup>8</sup>

## II

Brooke's principle mystical works are: Universal Beauty, 1735-6, The Fool of Quality, 1766-70, and Redemption, 1772. Referring to Universal Beauty, Lionel Stevenson has written that Brooke's

subconscious tendency was to express his intuitive sense of God as a spiritual principle manifested in all phenomena, and the symbolism which came to him as the natural form for embodying this belief was that which the alchemists had used...<sup>9</sup>

The first reference to alchemy in the poem: 'the seasoning tinctures purge the foamy main',<sup>10</sup> emphasizes the purifying effects of what might be called 'natural' alchemy. Brooke feels that God has fashioned the creation such that there is a slow but distinct tendency (if man does not counteract it) for the refining process of spiritual evolution to take place in all aspects of creation. He gives an example:

When from on high the rapid tempest's hurl'd,  
Enlivening as a sneeze to man's inferior world:

<sup>1</sup> Brookiana, ii, p.82.

<sup>2</sup> Birrell, p.115.

<sup>3</sup> Birrell, p.115.

<sup>4</sup> Baker, p.390.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, p.265.

<sup>6</sup> Baker, p.230.

<sup>7</sup> Baker, pp.166, 337; Universal Beauty, iii, 315-318.

<sup>8</sup> For details see Birrell, pp.114-117; Hirst, chap. 9, and Isaac D'Olier, Memoirs of the Life of the Late Excellent and Pious Mr. Henry Brooke, 2nd edn., (Dublin, 1816).

<sup>9</sup> Lionel Stevenson, 'Brooke's Universal Beauty and Modern Thought', PMLA, 43 (1928), p.204.

<sup>10</sup> Universal Beauty, ii, 90.

The frigid chymist<sup>1</sup> culls the mineral store,  
 The glossy sphae rules the metallic ore;  
 Sublimes with nitre the sulphureous foam,  
 . . . . .  
 Quick, with effusion wide, the lightnings glare;  
 Disploding bolts the cloudy entrails tear;  
 The cleansing flames sweep thro' the ethereal room,  
 And swift the gross infectious stream consume:  
 Our vital element the blaze refines,  
 While man, ingrateful, at his health repines.<sup>2</sup>

Fire is not the only alchemical element which purifies:

The ALMIGHTY ALCHYMIST his limbeck rears,  
 His lordly Taurus, or his Alpine peers;  
 Suspending fogs around the summit spread,  
 And gloomy columns crown each haughty head,  
 Obstructed drench the constipating hill,  
 And soaking thro' the porous grit distil:  
 Collected from a thousand thousand cells  
 The subterraneous flood impatient swells;  
 Whence issuing torrents burst the mountain side,  
 And hence impetuous pour their headlong tide.<sup>3</sup>

The alchemist is merely accelerating processes initiated by God, the archetype of all alchemists. But the essence of the alchemist's art is selection.

The arch-chymists work as in a secret mine,  
 And nature's crude originals refine;  
 Here blending mix, here separate, here select,<sup>4</sup>  
 And purging here the incongruous parts reject.<sup>4</sup>

Brooke contrasts man's mercenary misuse of alchemy<sup>5</sup> with the 'alchemical' genius of honey bees.

Inimitable Art! do thou atone  
 The long lost labours of the Latent Stone;  
 Tho' the Five Principles so oft transpire,  
 Fined, and refined, amid the torturing fire.  
 Like issue should the daring chymist see,  
 Vain imitator of the curious Bee,  
 Nor arts improved thro' ages once produce  
 A single drachm of this delicious juice.<sup>6</sup>

This passage is from Book VI, the last in the poem, in which Brooke analyzes the manifestation of universal beauty in the animal kingdom. The passage quoted is followed by an attack on man's selfishness and pride, which is

1 Thunder and lightning.

2 Beauty, ii, 161-165, 171-176.

3 Beauty, ii, 193-202.

4 Beauty, iii, 31-34.

5 Beauty, iii, 337.

6 Beauty, vi, 77-84. Honey is wisdom (Proverbs) and feeds the gods (e.g. Dionysius), so that in itself it is the godlike wisdom of the stone. It is also liquid gold.

contrasted with the ego-less service of the honeybee which makes the harmonious existence of the hive possible. The poet's point of view, then, in the quoted passage is not anti-alchemy, but anti-misuse of alchemy by selfish men.

The purpose of spiritual alchemy is to enable the Priceless Pearls within;/ As golden grain within prolific clay,/ To shoot and ripen toward a future day'.<sup>1</sup> This can only be done by developing the Christ within so that the entire personality is transformed: 'By HIM sublimed into a nobler sphere'.<sup>2</sup>

Thus all things are secretly pregnant with their God. And the lover of sinners, the universal Redeemer, is a principle of good within them, that contends with the malignity of their lapsed state.... The breath of the love of God shall kindle upon the final fire, out of which the new heavens and new earth shall come forth, as gold seven times refined, to shine for ever and ever!<sup>3</sup>

The refining of the personality, or the development of the Christ within begins when a person is prepared to consider himself the servant of God.

But, through much grief, this Glory must be won;  
Flesh, soil'd by sin, by Death must be undone;  
Must drop the world, wherein it felt its force,  
And, giant-like, rejoiced to run its course;  
Must drop each organ of its late delight;  
A long adieu to every darling lust;  
Must yield its passive members, dust to dust,  
Within the potter's furnace to be fired,  
And leave its grossness, with its guilt, behind.<sup>4</sup>

Just as Cheyne said that in seeking happiness all men are inadvertently seeking God, and that only when a person decides to unite with the Divine does he begin to move directly to God, so likewise does Brooke believe that there is an inherent principle in the creation of spiritual evolution, 'natural' alchemy, which can be directed and accelerated when one attempts to develop the Christ within and burn away selfishness and the ego in the fires of conscience.

### III

Hoxie Fairchild calls Universal Beauty 'one of the most substantial philosophico-religious poems of the 1720-1740 period'.<sup>5</sup> The poem is, he adds, a 'not unworthy expression of a lofty vision. From beginning to end it is intensely felt--a genuinely emotional response to important scientific, philosophical, and religious ideas'.<sup>6</sup> The poem was certainly influenced by

<sup>1</sup> Redemption, 338-340.

<sup>2</sup> Redemption, 325.

<sup>3</sup> The Fool, p.320. All references to The Fool are to Baker's edition.

<sup>4</sup> Redemption, 327-336.

<sup>5</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry i, p.476. The period which saw, for example, the Essay on Man and Thomson's Seasons.

<sup>6</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, p.480.

the Essay on Man, and also shows the influence, direct or indirect, of Shaftesbury.<sup>1</sup>

Brooke succinctly states his purpose.

Ah Nature! thou hadst scaped thy only blot,  
 Could man but cease to be-- or hitherto were not:  
 Ay, there's the task, the labour of our song--  
 To prove that All is right, tho' man be wrong.<sup>2</sup>

One of the ways Brooke pursues this purpose is by mentioning man only infrequently in the poem. This puts man in perspective. In addition, Brooke emphasizes that all members of the great chain of being, even those below man, are essential. He asserts that even the plants and animals man considers despicable or insignificant are 'doubtless of greater consequence in nature, than our partial and narrow way of thinking may imagine'.<sup>3</sup> He goes beyond this and declares (referring to the Creator and the creatures):

Where ONE, and only ONE, is only GREAT!  
 All equidistant, or alike all near,  
 The reptile minim, or the rolling sphere;  
 Alike minutely great, or greatly less,  
 In form finite INFINITUDE express;  
 Express the seal of CHARACTER DIVINE,  
 And bright, thro' HIS INFORMING RADIANCE, shine.<sup>4</sup>

To leave no doubt about his meaning, he adds a footnote: 'in respect therefore of the CREATOR, all creatures are upon a level'.<sup>5</sup>

Like Christopher Smart and Blake, Brooke wrote some infinitely tender passages treating supposedly 'insignificant' animals with insight, compassion and empathy, though he does not attain as pure and complete an identification with these animals as did Smart. Such an identification bespeaks a sense of oneness not so much of thought as of feeling.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On these influences, see Scurr, pp.15ff.

<sup>2</sup> Universal Beauty, iii, 88-91. Brooke's 'solution' to the problem, in the end is the same as Pope's: 'All partial evil, universal good'.

<sup>3</sup> Beauty, v, 107 (n.) Cf. Fool, p.xxv, for Brooke's defence of 'the meanest weeds'.

<sup>4</sup> Beauty, iv, 222-228.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. Blyth, Zen in English Literature, (Tokyo, 1942), pp.22, 24:

All things have equal value, for all have infinite value. If you like this kind of mystical truth and can swallow it easily, well and good. If not, it does not matter, because it is only ordinary common sense.... If your aim is comfort, only some things, some times, some places will do. If your aim is virtue,... anything, any time, any place will suffice.

Cf. Pope, Essay on Man, i, 276-280:

As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;  
 As full, as perfect, in vile Man that mourns,  
 As the rapt Seraph that adores and burns;  
 To him no high, no low, no great, no small;  
 He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the descriptions of the worm and snail, Beauty, v, 73-106, and the relevant footnotes, which sometimes supplant the text in importance.

Another of Brooke's purposes in the poem is, of course, an examination of beauty which, significantly, he often combines with pantheistic statements.

Thus BEAUTY mimicked in our humbler strains,  
 Illustrious, thro' the world's great poem reigns!  
 The ONE grows sundry by creative power;  
 The ETERNAL'S found in each revolving hour;  
 The IMMENSE appears in every point of space;  
 The UNCHANGEABLE in nature's varying face;  
 The INVISIBLE conspicuous to our mind;  
 And DEITY in every atom shrined.<sup>1</sup>

The world is a great poem in which beauty and oneness are inseparable. If beauty is an attribute of God and God is omnipresent, then all is beautiful, or is infused with divine beauty. If man does not perceive this divine beauty, it does not mean it is not present. God cannot be held responsible for man's blindness.<sup>2</sup>

Brooke's best and clearest passage treating beauty is in the undated fragment, Conrade:<sup>3</sup>

What do I love-- what is it that mine eyes  
 Turn round in search of-- that my soul longs after,  
 But cannot quench her thirst?-- 'Tis beauty Phelin!  
 I see it wide beneath the arch of Heaven,  
 When the stars peep upon their evening hour,  
 And the Moon rises on the eastern wave,  
 Hous'd in a cloud of gold?-- I see it wide  
 In Earth's autumnal tints of various landscape,  
 When the first ray of morning tips the trees,  
 And fires the distant rock!-- I hear its voice,  
 When thy hand sends the sound along the gale,  
 Swept from the silver strings; or, on mine ear  
 Drops the sweet sadness!-- At my heart I feel  
 Its potent grasp, I melt beneath the touch,  
 When the tale pours upon my sense humane  
 The woes of other times!-- What art thou, Beauty?  
 Thou art not colour, fancy, sound, nor form--

<sup>1</sup> Beauty, iii, 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fool, p.135: 'they are no other than his own beauties that he beholds in his works; for his omnipotence can impress, but cannot possibly detach, a single grace from himself'; and ibid., p.261: 'As God is everywhere in and of himself, the fulness of all possible beings and beatitudes, he cannot create any thing independent or out of himself; they cannot be but by being both in him and by him'.

<sup>3</sup> Without any actual imitation, Conrade bears a striking resemblance to Macpherson's Ossian. For a discussion of the possibility that it was written before Ossian, and is therefore very important in the history of romantic poetry, see Scurr, pp.52ff.

These but the conduits are, whence the soul quaffs  
 The liquor of its Heaven.-- Whate'er thou art,  
 Nature, or Nature's spirit, thou art all  
 I long for!-- O, descend upon my thoughts!  
 To thine own music tune, thou power of grace,  
 The cordage of my heart! fill every shape  
 That rises to my dream, or wakes to vision;  
 And touch the threads of every mental nerve  
 With all thy sacred feelings!<sup>1</sup>

To Brooke, beauty is simply reality seen with the eyes of love.<sup>2</sup> This viewpoint harmonizes entirely with that presented by Plato in The Symposium, to which Brooke was very likely indebted. This combined with the fact that he chose the opening verses of St. John's Gospel as the motto of Universal Beauty, associates Brooke with the Cambridge Platonists and makes it fairly certain that he considered himself a Christian Platonist.<sup>3</sup> Certainly Brooke is thoroughly Platonic in the way he views the creation.

All, all-- things past-- now present-- yet to be,  
 GREAT INTELLECT! were present all to THEE;  
 While THOU sole Infinite Essential reign'd,  
 And of finites the Infinity contain'd,  
 Ideal entities in ONE SUPREME,  
 Distinguish'd endless, yet with THEE the same,  
 Thy Power their essence, and thy Will their claim.  
 Whence-- at THY WORD, worlds caught the potent sound,  
 And into being leapt this wondrous round.<sup>4</sup>

Brooke is usually regarded as being anti-pantheistic because of the following passage:

O dotage! dreamers! who could once suppose  
 The passive mass its MAKER should inclose,  
 And the formed clay its forming LORD compose.<sup>5</sup>

Here Brooke is simply at one with his age. Pantheism to the eighteenth-century reader meant atheism and Spinoza (words often used interchangeably). Spinoza's pantheism, it was felt, denied the transcendence of God and made the Creator and creation synonymous.<sup>6</sup> Brooke, undoubtedly with Spinoza in mind, is strongly rejecting this conception. This does not mean that Brooke is not a pantheist in Toland's sense. No true pantheist identifies Creator and creation. Just as man is more than a body, so is the Creator more than the creation.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conrade, 1-26.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase is Evelyn Underhill's.

<sup>3</sup> Fairchild, i, p.479. On Brooke and the Cambridge Platonists see Scurr, p.26.

<sup>4</sup> Universal Beauty, vi, 415-423.

<sup>5</sup> Universal Beauty, ii, 306-308.

<sup>6</sup> Whether this is, in fact, an accurate criticism of Spinoza is entirely another question. On Spinoza's reception in the first half of the eighteenth century, see Rosalie Colie, 'Spinoza and the Early Deists', JHI, 20(1959), pp.23-47.

<sup>7</sup> Brooke would agree with Pope that: 'All are but parts of one stupendous

Brooke arrives at pantheism by simply applying the Christian conception of God: at once transcendent (God the Father), and omnipresent (Holy Ghost): 'HE who inaccessible remains,/ Yet omnipresent thro' all nature reigns'.<sup>1</sup>

In Redemption, Brooke considers Christ omnipresent: He is omnipresent as the Divine Spark in all human souls, and also through his boundless love of the entire creation. Referring to the Fall, Brooke writes:

O LOVE, LOVE, LOVE! stupendous, wide, and steep!  
High o'er all heights, below damnation deep!  
In vain the desperate rebel would essay,  
From THEE to tear his being, far away;  
Thy Saving Hand arrests his prone career;  
For, to Thy Presence, every place is-- here!<sup>2</sup>

The poem deals with redemption through development of the Christ within. Early in the poem Christ is described as 'The imbosom'd sun, whose Inward Beam imparts/ Wisdom to souls, THE COUNSELLOR of hearts',<sup>3</sup> and as 'He, who all things unites and comprehends'.<sup>4</sup> Brooke describes the 'adoring Seraphim' present at Christ's birth, as

Amazed to see their INFINITE confined,  
THE ANCIENT OF ALL DAYS in infancy inshrined.  
With wondering eye, they pierce his filmy skin  
And lucid flesh, when, lo, A Heaven within,  
Wide as the round where yonder planets roll,  
Though stretch'd to infinite from either pole;  
Love, to whose depth no measure can descend;  
And Bliss, encircling blessings, without end.<sup>5</sup>

Before the Fall, man, like the seraphim, was not limited by material realities:

To him, of every foliage, flower and blade,  
The fabric, use, and beauty, lay display'd;  
Of living specks he pierced the fine machine,  
And open'd to himself the world within;  
Saw all with glory, as with skill, replete,  
And traced the Artist to his inmost seat.<sup>6</sup>

The Fall happened when man ceased to desire God and instead put his self first. Through the law of cause and effect and the inherent power of will, man found himself in the very state which he erroneously desired. With absolute logic,

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whole,/ Whose body, Nature is, and God the Soul'. There is a very sensible chapter on pantheism in W.T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy, (1960), pp.207-250.

1 Beauty, i, 77-78.

2 Redemption, 133-138.

3 Redemption, 29-30.

4 Redemption, 35. Cf. Fool, pp.394-5, where Brooke explains Christ's omnipresence.

5 Redemption, 41-48.

6 Redemption, 179-184.

Brooke asserts that the only way to correct this error is by reversing the process which led to the Fall.

When the Christ within, as the inherent Divine Spark in man, begins to develop, man is 'Born a new creature of a Seed Divine'.<sup>1</sup> Men are therefore 'All embryon heirs of glory and of grace'.<sup>2</sup> This begins what Brooke considers the bitter struggle between the merely sensual man, and the divine man within.

Hence, through the course of their sublunar life,  
 Though brother'd, they shall be at truceless strife:  
 What one approves, the other shall reject;  
 What one detests, the other shall affect.  
 So man, at once, shall court what he'll contemn,  
 Neglect yet reverence, do what he'll condemn;  
 At once transgress, and wish he could fulfil;  
 Be righteous and unrighteous, good and ill;  
 Bearing the witness and the seal, within,  
 Of new and old, the man of grace and sin,  
 The heart-writ story of his rise and fall,  
 The gospel of his freedom and his thrall.<sup>3</sup>

During this ongoing battle, man must attempt 'to hold himself at nought'. He must feel 'he's all a folly, all a fault;/ In deep Abasement lift his suppliant eyes,/ In Lowliness alone be taught to rise'.<sup>4</sup> During this struggle, man must be directed by his conscience first, not his reason. Through the Inner Light, man is in contact with Christ, the infinite, whereas reason is merely finite.

In the concluding sections of the poem Brooke is outspoken in reaffirming his macrocosmic-microcosmic beliefs, and reminds the reader that the poem treats a subject which is after all, perhaps God's greatest mystery:

Thus, in the womb of Man's abyss are sown  
 Natures, worlds, wonders, to himself unknown.  
 A comprehension, a mysterious plan  
 Of all the Almighty Works of GOD, is man;  
 From hell's dire depth to Heaven's supremest height,  
 Including good and evil, dark and light.  
 What shall we call This Son of Grace and sin,  
 This Daemon, this DIVINITY within,  
 This FLAME ETERNAL, this foul mould'ring cload--  
 A fiend, or SERAPH-- A poor worm, or GOD?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Redemption, 243.

<sup>2</sup> Redemption, 288. Cf. the Chinese Taoist work, Secret of the Golden Flower, trans. Richard Wilhelm, (1931), p.30:

When the Life Elixir pearl is finished [through following certain Taoist meditation techniques], the holy embryo can be formed; then the work must be directed to the warming and nourishing of the spiritual embryo.... When the energy-body of the child is fully formed, the work must be so directed that the embryo is born and returns to emptiness'. [Empty of self and therefore full of God] .

<sup>3</sup> Redemption, 299-310.

<sup>4</sup> Redemption, 265-268.

<sup>5</sup> Redemption, 423-432.

R.S. Brooke described the author of The Fool of Quality in this way:

A human creature he was, and girt with infirmities; but to the eye of man, his faults, in general, seemed to spring from the unregulated excess of his virtues: his generosity overflowed into indiscreet profusion; his benevolence diffused into the befriending the worthless; and his chivalry oftentimes passed through refinement, and lost itself in romance and extravagancy.<sup>1</sup>

Baker's biographical introduction includes this assessment of Brooke's character:

he saw the peaks of virtue in enthusiastic lights, and if he conceived that he was sailing on the current of truth, his course then became reckless, and he would scorn the rudder while he hoisted every sail to drive with the breeze or catch the blast. He had a thorough knowledge of the world in theory, and saw into character with a piercing eye; but he was simple and artless in his practical conduct, and too chivalrous for common life.<sup>2</sup>

Kingsley said that Brooke was occupied with 'the ideal more exclusively than any man of his time',<sup>3</sup> and added that his 'morality is Quixotic, and practically impossible'.<sup>4</sup> Another biographer explains that Brooke's

feelings were, even beyond those of female nature, soft, and exquisitely tender.... His temper was meek, almost to a fault: it was nearly impossible to provoke him to resentment-- and if provoked, like the Brutus of Shakespeare.

He carried anger as the flint bears fire;  
Which, much enforced, yields a hasty spark,  
And straight is cold again.

From principle, as well as temper, he 'resisted evil only with good'.<sup>5</sup>

More recently, Fairchild has described Brooke as

impulsive, innocent, tender-hearted, loveable, and slightly crack brained.... he gave up his political career to please the timorous child whom he had married, and ruined himself financially by his generosity to the unfortunate.<sup>6</sup>

Here is a man of whom Don Quixote would be proud. He did not seek the things of this world which Don Quixote so despised. He did not see virtue and ideals as of necessity relative in an 'imperfect' world. Like Quixote he 'befriended

<sup>1</sup> Dublin University Magazine, p.213.

<sup>2</sup> The Fool, p.xx, quoted from an unnamed biography.

<sup>3</sup> The Fool, p.xxxix.

<sup>4</sup> The Fool, p.liv.

<sup>5</sup> Poems and Plays of Henry Brooke, ed. Charlotte Brooke, (1789), i, p.xviii. This meekness was not weakness, cf. Kingsley, Fool, p.xxxviii: 'He was of great personal courage' and 'was an excellent swordsman'.

<sup>6</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, i, p.475.

the worthless', avoiding moral judgements and rendering service based only on need. He pursued his ideals with the foolish directness of Quixote and one feels certain that if he had been with the knight when he came upon the lake of boiling pitch with fearful creatures crawling about, he would have responded to the voice beckoning him on in the same way Quixote did, by instantly jumping-- 'And when least he imagines it, or can guess where he shall stop, he finds himself on a sudden in the midst of verdant fields, to which the Elysian bear no comparison'.<sup>1</sup>

The Fool of Quality faithfully reflects the character of its author. George Saintsbury considered it 'a wholly unpractical book and a chaotic history, but admirably written, full of shrewdness and wit, and of a singularly chivalrous tone'.<sup>2</sup> Eric Gillett felt that there was 'no moderation in it at all'.<sup>3</sup> The unmoderated pursuit of ideals would appear 'unpractical' to the man of reason, but not to Quixote and Brooke.<sup>4</sup> Their folly flows from their virtue. The Fool is not so much a book as it is life itself. True, it is not the life that most people live, but this makes it no less real. Indeed, mystics would say that the ideals and perfection insisted on are the only reality, and that everything else is illusion.<sup>5</sup>

Brooke's conception of 'The Gentleman' also bears important similarities to Quixote's vision of Knight Errantry. Brooke lists six qualities of a gentleman: charity to the poor, defence and protection of women and children, 'giving place and yielding to all with whom he has to do', 'feeling himself concerned and interested in others', being always honourable, and finally-- 'the gentleman never envies any superior excellence; but grows himself more excellent, by being the admirer, promoter, and lover thereof'. Brooke feels that the gentleman is inspired with these traits directly from God, and that therefore the qualities are timeless and changeless. It is little wonder that Brooke considered Don Quixote the greatest modern hero.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Don Quixote, Part 1, chap. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Eric Gillett, 'The Fool of Quality', London Mercury, xxx (1934), p.420.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.426.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Thoreau, Walden, (1854), 'Economy': 'One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned anything of absolute value by living Practically....'

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the Hindu concept of Maya, cosmic illusion, literally, 'the measurer'. Maya is the magical power in creation by which limitations and divisions are apparently present in the Immeasurable and Inseparable.

Cf. Emerson's Maya:

Illusion works impenetrable,  
Weaving webs innumerable;  
Her gay pictures never fail,  
Crowd each other, veil on veil;  
Charmer who will be believed  
By man who thirsts to be deceived.

<sup>6</sup> Fool, p.161.

<sup>7</sup> Fool, pp.44-5.

The hero of The Fool of Quality is Harry Clinton. The novel deals ostensibly with his upbringing and education, and ends with his marriage.<sup>1</sup> The view of childhood taken in the novel and the insistence on 'the natural life' probably owe something to the Rousseau of Émile.<sup>2</sup> Harry is considered a fool by nearly everyone because of his openness, directness and sensitivity to others, but especially because he judges people and himself by the characteristics of the gentleman mentioned above and pays absolutely no heed to 'those superficial distinctions which fashion has inadequately substituted as expressions of human greatness'.<sup>3</sup> He is completely unmaterialistic and seems to have been born with the idea that the source of all virtue lies in disregarding the egoistic self. The explanation of why one must make the All the self is stated in terms that show the influence of Cheyne and possibly Shaftesbury as well. Mr. Meekly, one of the two adult characters who instruct Harry in mystical philosophy, is addressing the Earl of Moreland, Harry's father:

Every particle of matter, my lord, has a SELF, or distinct identity, inasmuch as it cannot be any other particle of matter. Now, while it continues in this state of SELFISHNESS, or absolute distinction, it is utterly useless and insignificant, and is to the universe as though it were not. It has, however, a principle of attraction (analogous or answerable to desire in the mind), whereby it endeavours to derive to itself the powers and advantages of all other portions of matter. But when the divine intelligence hath harmonized certain qualities of such distinct particles into certain animal or vegetable systems, this principle of attraction in each is overcome, for each becomes attracted and drawn as it were from SELF; each yields up its powers to the benefit of the whole; and then, and then only, becomes capable and productive of shape, colouring, beauty, flowers, fragrance, and fruits.

Be pleased now to observe, my lord, that this operation in matter is no other than a manifestation of the like process in mind; and that no soul was ever capable of any degree of virtue or happiness, save so far as it is engaged in wishing, contriving, endeavouring, promoting, and rejoicing in the welfare and happiness of others.<sup>4</sup>

Harry, who believes that the world inverts true values, looks upon ordinary people as a sane man does madmen. He looks with amazement at their actions and value systems, and feels compassion for them. Harry is void of pride or feelings of superiority, because he believes that a person must never confide in his own strength, and that everything noble and generous in one's thoughts or actions

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<sup>1</sup> The final scenes of the marriage contain imagery which suggests that Brooke was consciously or unconsciously identifying this marriage with the mystical marriage.

<sup>2</sup> This influence can easily be overplayed. See C.E. Vaughan, 'Sterne, and the Novel of his Times', C.H.E.L., x, pp.58-9. Brooke is simply applying with energy and conviction the basic tenets of mysticism. If he did read Rousseau, which is likely, it would simply have reinforced what were Brooke's most basic and characteristic ideas.

<sup>3</sup> Fool, p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Fool, p.33.

comes directly from the Christ within. Harry himself is as nothing; he seeks nothing selfishly, but loses (and finds) himself in generous actions.<sup>1</sup> He feels that knowing is not the same as being, and that God judges a person not on his principles but on his actions.

Harry's lessons on marriage emphasize that its ultimate purpose is to begin or further the process which leads to universal love. In one of Brooke's few surviving letters, he writes to a nephew on the birth of a child:

When man, by the twofold fall, became altogether a proud and sensual self, it was needful for the Redeemer to enter into his office; but here infinite art was also necessary to sever man from his dark and narrow circle of self, without violence to the principle of freedom within him. For this purpose God produced to him a fairer self beyond his circle, through whom a further succession of endearing selfs was to be multiplied, that he might be won and carried willingly forth, in the love of his God, as a circle flowing into circles, from the midst of a lake, till it indulates and expands to the furthest shores.<sup>2</sup>

When Harry is taught that the pursuit of beauty leads ultimately to God, Brooke is stating the same position as that advanced by Usher in Clio at virtually the same time.<sup>3</sup> Each was influenced by Plato (or Plato through Shaftesbury) and probably by Cheyne also;

if nothing but God is lovely, if nothing else can be beloved, [then] he is himself the universal and irresistible magnet, that draws all intelligent and affectionate beings, through the medium of creatures, to the graces of their Creator.<sup>4</sup>

Harry observes that perpetual change is a prime characteristic of life. From this he concludes that he should ignore both happiness and sadness of a worldly kind and seek eternal, unchanging values. This leads him to a profound insight: everything depends on the mind.<sup>5</sup> The mind and will are absolutely free, and until they seek God and begin to live directly (idealistically) and naturally (selflessly) then they will be tossed about as a rudderless ship in an alternately raging and calm sea of worldly values and illusions.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Don Quixote's outcry against Sancho with reference to Dulcinea, which brings to mind the Virgin Sophia, Part 1, chap. 30:

Dost thou not know, excommunicated traitor,... that I should not have strength sufficient to kill a flea, did not she give strength to my nerves, and infuse vigor into my sinews?... The power of Dulcinea... makes use of my arm as the instrument of her act in me. She fights and overcomes in me, and I live and breathe in her, holding life and being from her.

<sup>2</sup> Dublin University Magazine, p.211. Cf. the same image in Pope, Essay on Man, iv, 363-72.

<sup>3</sup> Clio, 1767 first edition, 1769 second. The Fool was 1766-70.

<sup>4</sup> Fool, p.136.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Thomson, Castle of Indolence, (1748), II, xxxiii:

Bright as the Children of yon Azure sheen,  
True Comeliness, which nothing can impair,  
Dwells in the Mind: all else is Vanity and Glare.

The world is to man as his temper or complexion. The mind constitutes its own prosperity and adversity; winter presents no cloud to a cheerful spirit, neither can summer find sunshine for the spirit that is in a state of dejection.<sup>1</sup>

This is another way in which Harry is led to universal love. He takes responsibility for everyone and everything not in a self-righteous or consciously moral way (there is in fact no self-consciousness involved, but rather, he acts directly when there is something to be done, as one cries out when burned. Brooke means this to be interpreted as the Christ within having free movement, not having to be filtered as it were through a personal self. Harry is empty of self and therefore full of God. In this way he gains perfect disinterestedness. He is interested in everything and in nothing. By the end of the novel Harry has completely attained that state Roach would consider the mystical marriage: Christ acting directly in the soul unfettered by any narrow self. Addressing himself to the general public and in story form, Brooke would not explicitly refer to the mystical marriage, but was content to present in Harry's character the unnamed state of the mystical marriage. He made veiled (or perhaps even unconscious) reference to it by ending the novel with Harry's marriage, portrayed in imagery which calls to mind this sublime mystery.

One of the most unusual features of the Fool is the telling exchange of comments at the end of several early chapters between a 'friend' and the 'author'. At one point the 'friend', referring to folly and madness, declares: 'Troth, I believe you never would have been the writer you are at this day, if you had not adopted somewhat of both the said qualities'.<sup>2</sup> In a similar mood Mr. Meekly recounts one of his happiest memories, involving two friends:

With what pleasure did erudition cast off its formal garb; how delightfully did wisdom assume the semblance, and at times the very phrase of childhood! They laughed, they rallied me, themselves, and the world. Their merriment was as the breaking forth and exuberance of overflowing innocence and virtue. Conceive to yourself, my lord, a large room surrounded with benches, whereon are seated the principal philosophers, literati, lawyers, statesmen, chief captains, and chief conquerors in all ages; then think you behold two sportively observant children in the midst, looking and laughing at the insignificance of the several sages; taking off and holding up the solemnity and self-importance of each profession in caricature, and setting the whole world, with all its wisdom, its toils and boasted acquirements, its sollicitudes, applications, and achievements, at nought.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fool, p.181.

<sup>2</sup> Fool, p.44.

<sup>3</sup> Fool, p.360.

When Harry is waiting to be introduced to King William, having come to the King's attention because of the services he rendered to the public, someone pins on Harry's back in large letters, 'The Fool'. It is noticed after a while, and indignantly removed by one familiar with Harry's character who is surprised at Harry's response. Smiling pleasantly he says:

this must have been the office of some old acquaintance; it is the title to which I have been accustomed from my infancy, and I am well contented to carry it with me to the grave.<sup>1</sup>

V

Cheyne addressed his mystical works to the general public in the most general terms, as did Shaftesbury, without ever using the word mysticism. He wanted to expose the public interested in health and diet (i.e. potentially everyone) to mystical thought in the broadest terms. His intention again like Shaftesbury was to produce a general atmosphere of greater breadth and tolerance, and provide a philosophical basis for belief in universal love. He expounded general ideas in a formal, philosophical even mathematical style.

Roach, by the very titles he used, was addressing himself to a much narrower, selected audience already interested mystically or otherwise in the millennium, and all that it implies. His purpose was more specific than Cheyne's. Cheyne took less than a page to describe the attainment of the principle of reunion (mystical marriage). This was in keeping with his general purpose and with his addressing himself to the general reading public. Roach uses the greater part of two large volumes to present as clearly and precisely as he can, the nature of, and the attainment to this same mystery. Roach is trying very specifically to train a kind of inner circle who he hopes will then influence the general public.

Brooke combined the purposes of both. Like Cheyne he addressed himself to the general public and included some formal, philosophical dissertations in The Fool. Like Roach, he was expounding general ideas in very concrete terms. Brooke uses the high, low and middle styles to give variety, directness and the immediacy of daily life to the story he is unfolding.

In addition to the uncompromising idealism of the hero which alone would have been considered wildly unrealistic by most readers (the book was widely read in the eighteenth century), the story included the occasional brutal scene also uncompromisingly presented, and had its share of ordinary self-seeking men. These elements tended to 'balance' Harry's perfect behaviour (selfless instincts), making him more believable because of the 'mathematical'

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<sup>1</sup> Fool, p.302.

juxtaposition of nobility and selfishness: to believe one side of this equation of life one has to accept the other. Brooke intended to force the reader to accept the reality of Harry's universal love and perfect virtue by the very vividness and intensity of his actions. Likewise, Brooke wanted to shock and convince the sheltered reader of the reality of viciousness in the world (latent in each individual until emptied of self), and of the heroic quality of anyone who attempts to live a life of perfection: perfection being 'not perfect actions in a perfect world, but appropriate actions in an imperfect one'.<sup>1</sup> In this way one is forced to accept the reality of violence but also the reality of Christ-like love. This gives a certain depth to the novel and keeps it from degenerating into a superficial moral tale. It is far more 'realistic' than most of the English novels of its age.

Brooke presents in no uncertain terms the incredible depth and power of that which must be transmuted-- man's lower nature. The way to transform it is to be like Harry who possessed the perfect directness of a wild animal (i.e. he engaged in no self-conscious actions), and being emptied of self and having attained the mystical marriage, he was incapable of evil or even of wrong behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Brooke in his life and Don Quixote appeared foolish in that they lacked power and usually failed ludicrously. One does not fault their intentions. They were quixotic in that their achievements fell so short of their aspiration of divine service. Harry, however, because he attained the mystical marriage, embodied not only the meekness of Christ but also Christ's power to transform selfishness and hate into unity and love. Harry is both St. Paul's fool and Lao-tzu's sage.

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<sup>1</sup> Zen in English Literature, p.210.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Law, Christian Regeneration, (1739), Works, v, p.167, referring to one who has attained the mystical marriage:

This is he alone, that is born of God, and cannot sin, because he has no Sin in his Nature. This is he alone, that overcometh the World, because he is of a Divine Nature, and is both contrary to the World, and above it. This is he alone, that can love his Brother as himself, because the Love of God is alone alive, and abideth in him.

CHAPTER 7

CHRISTOPHER SMART'S UNIVERSAL SONG OF PRAISE

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Truly, I say to you, unless you  
turn and become like children,  
you will never enter the kingdom  
of heaven.

Jesus Christ

I think I could turn and live with animals, they  
are so placid and self-contained.  
I stand and look at them long and long.  
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the  
mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

Walt Whitman

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I

In 1756 Christopher Smart arose from what was nearly his deathbed by fever, a new man. He had experienced a spiritual rebirth. It is easy to ignore or exaggerate this change as some have done; however, no-one can deny that a significant change of character took place at this time. The old Smart was transformed into the new.

My feeble feet refus'd my body's weight,  
Nor wou'd my eyes admit the glorious light,  
My nerves convuls'd shook fearful of their fate,  
My mind lay open to the powers of night.  
He pitying did a second birth bestow  
A birth of joy-- not like the first of tears and woe.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hymn to the Supreme Being, (1756), 67-72.

The new Smart intended to devote himself entirely to God. He began (often literally) to pray without ceasing.

Ye strengthen'd feet, forth to his altar move;  
 Quickened, ye new-strung nerves, th' enraptur'd lyre;  
 Ye heav'n-directed eyes, o'erflow with love;  
 Glow, glow, my soul, with pure seraphic fire;  
 Deeds, thoughts, and words no more his mandates break,  
 But to his endless glory work, conceive, and speak.<sup>1</sup>

The conventional language here obscures absolute conviction.

It would be wrong to argue that there is none of the old Smart in the new. As his Seatonian poems show,<sup>2</sup> he had a deep if often submerged religious consciousness, which, because of near death,<sup>3</sup> was brought to the surface as the valuable and enduring part of his nature. But in the Seatonian poems he is still a spectator, and is not attempting to participate in union with the Absolute. The fever burned away much of his lower nature, and all of his superficial and frivolous qualities. Never again would he write such ditties as 'On a Lady Throwing Snowballs at Her Lover', 'The Pretty Bar-Keeper of the Mitre', 'To Ethelinda on Her Doing My Verses the Honour of Wearing Them in Her Bosom'. In the beginning of his second Seatonian poem, On the Immensity of the Supreme Being, 1751, he is already referring to himself as 'The Poet of my God', but only after 1756 is this an accurate description of a sustained state of mind. Before 1756 he was desiring (but only periodically) to

Awake my lute and harp-- my self shall wake,  
 Soon as the stately night-exploding bird  
 In lively lay sings welcome to the dawn.<sup>4</sup>

If it is true that an estimate of Smart's character and 'madness' will effect one's view of his poetry, especially in a study of Smart as mystic,<sup>5</sup> then it is necessary to try to understand the man before looking at his work. As Arthur Sherbo has said, so much has been made of Smart's insanity, especially since the discovery of Jubilate Agno, that one's response to his poetry has been conditioned by the emphasis given to this one aspect of his life.<sup>6</sup> To insist absolutely on the sanity or insanity of a poet who lived two centuries

<sup>1</sup> Hymn to the Supreme Being, 73-78.

<sup>2</sup> The Seatonian prize, open to all Cambridge graduates for the best poem treating an attribute of God, was first offered in 1750. Smart won every time he entered: 1750-1753, 1755.

<sup>3</sup> The fever was doubtless not the cause in and of itself of Smart's rebirth, but instead was the final phase in a long process.

<sup>4</sup> On the Immensity of the Supreme Being, 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> Since for many mysticism is still synonymous with madness, or delusion.

<sup>6</sup> 'The "Mad" Poet & the Sane Biographer', English Symposium Papers, State University of New York, College of Fredonia, 1 (1970), p.38.

ago, when there is only a small amount of external evidence available,<sup>1</sup> is careless if not presumptuous. Yet the anonymous reviewer of Devlin's biography felt able to assert that 'no one is going to deny that Smart was mad for part of his life...'.<sup>2</sup> Johnson, who knew Smart before he was confined, and visited him during his confinement, made contradictory statements regarding his sanity. Mrs. Thrale reports this exchange:

Charles Burney: I vex to hear of poor Kit's going to Chelsey--  
Johnson: But a madman must be confined, sir, at Chelsey or elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

In 1763, three years after this first remark, and the year in which Smart was released, Johnson declared, as reported by Boswell: 'I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society'.<sup>4</sup> This inconsistency alone in a contemporary who looked deeply into the human heart and was not unfamiliar with madness should deter modern scholars from making any absolute statements about Smart's mental state.

In the eighteenth century Smart was considered a sot and a wastrel who, after some years of hack work, wrote insane religious verse. He was dismissed as a deluded enthusiast<sup>5</sup> whose life was ruined by religious mania. In the nineteenth century he was regarded as yet another poet driven mad by the constraints of the 'Age of Reason', whose genius flared up into one great religious lyric and then was lost again. Only in this century have these two viewpoints finally been exposed as superficial. The Song to David, 1763, is not an insane poem as it was regarded in its age. Smart is not a one-poem poet whose other work shows no evidence of the greatness he achieved in the Song, as Browning felt.<sup>6</sup> Yet he is still considered a drunkard, irresponsible in financial matters, and at some points in his life, a madman.

Without trying to whitewash the case, it is possible to understand or interpret Smart's behaviour in a different light. Devlin has argued that his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sherbo, ibid., p.43:

The biographer of Smart has fewer than a dozen letters and a few remarks by his contemporaries; everything else is in the fictions that Smart created as poet and essayist.

<sup>2</sup> 'Lucky Kit?', TLS, (1961), p.921.

<sup>3</sup> Thraliana, (Oxford, 1951), i, p.176, quoted by Christopher Devlin, Poor Kit Smart, (1961), p.116.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Devlin, p.116. Smart's praying in public is often adduced as proof of his supposed insanity. Yet Johnson himself engaged in similar behaviour. Cf. Christopher Hibbert, The Personal History of Samuel Johnson, (1971), p.196: He would also 'bolt up in the midst of a mixed company', Adam Smith recalled, 'and without any previous notice, fall upon his knees behind a chair, repeat the Lord's Prayer and then resume his seat at table. He has played this freak over and over, perhaps five or six times in the course of an evening'.

<sup>5</sup> In the eighteenth century 'deluded enthusiast' would be considered redundant.

<sup>6</sup> Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day, (1887), which contains a perceptive appreciation of the Song.

involvement with alcohol at Cambridge was not so different from that of many other good-natured and popular Fellows, and that he could not have been a confirmed alcoholic after he settled in London and have produced such a large volume of work.<sup>1</sup> In any case there is no positive evidence that he was a drunkard after 1756, if before. His inability to manage his finances can be considered not so much irresponsible as irresponsible. Smart's mode of behaviour was

a throwback to a more ancient way of living. You get it in people like the Bantu who are (or were till recently) complete strangers to the idea of monetary value; to them saving money and putting a fixed price on anything seem positively evil actions, destructive of good fellowship and civilized society as they conceive it. Smart had this same deep, almost unconquerable repugnance to money values. The adjective 'Franciscan' comes to mind,... and with all idea of money value washed clean out of his mind, he was able to see things and people in brighter and more lovely colours than they appeared to others. That was why he seemed to flatter people. He did indeed flatter them; he let them see themselves as he saw them, and they were attracted to him as cold and weary travellers to a warm and friendly fire. He radiated happiness, and that was a quality which even in that venal age made any mere quantity seem little by comparison.<sup>2</sup>

This tendency was strongly reinforced by the spiritual rebirth of 1756.

As in the eighteenth century the Song to David was considered evidence of Smart's insanity, so in this century Jubilate Agno<sup>3</sup> has been described as 'clearly the work of a madman...'<sup>4</sup>. Spacks has acknowledged that it has been shown 'convincingly'<sup>5</sup> that Smart composed the Song to David, his translation of the Psalms, and the Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England,<sup>6</sup> between March, 1759 and 26 August 1760, while he was writing Jubilate Agno. However, she apparently sees no incongruity in the resultant implication, i.e. that in the same time period, Smart turned from composing mad verses in the Jubilate to producing sane ones in the Song, Psalms or Hymns. In 1954 when W.H. Bond published his edition of the Jubilate, which he re-edited from the original manuscript fragments,<sup>7</sup> he perceived that the two large divisions into lines beginning with 'Let' and others with 'For' were meant to be combined antiphonally as in Hebrew poetry, not chronologically as Stead arranged them in his edition.<sup>8</sup> Bond feels that recognition of this 'saner' arrangement, together with the fact that the manuscript is only a

<sup>1</sup> Devlin, p.164.

<sup>2</sup> Devlin, pp.43-44.

<sup>3</sup> First published in 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Spacks, The Poetry of Vision, (Cambridge, Mass, 1967), p.140.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.156. Arthur Sherbo, 'The Probable Time of Composition of Christopher Smart's Song to David, Psalms, and Hymns and Spiritual Songs, JEGP, 1v (1956), 41-58.

<sup>6</sup> Poems no-one considers insane.

<sup>7</sup> Less than half of the Jubilate has been discovered.

<sup>8</sup> William Stead, Rejoice in the Lamb, (1939). It was he who discovered the manuscript.

fragment which there is no evidence that Smart intended to publish, and which should be rather seen as a 'discarded experiment',<sup>1</sup> enables one to assert that 'now anyone who claims that a given passage shows madness must prove it'.<sup>2</sup> In his annotation, Stead traced hundreds of obscure references and thereby proved 'that many of the most fantastic statements in Jubilate Agno were not the fabrications of a lunatic but reflected wide reading and commonly accepted "fact"'.<sup>3</sup> Other scholars have contributed new annotation which process will doubtless continue.<sup>4</sup> One, then, can agree with Jean Wilkinson that less should be heard about whether Smart was 'mad or sane, comparatively speaking, when he composed a given piece or line, and a little more about conventions and traditions-- eighteenth-century mysticism among them-- within which he wrote...'.<sup>5</sup>

With the publication of Jubilate Agno, one of the most vexing biographical problems-- why Smart ignored his family upon his release-- was explained. After analyzing the relevant passages Bond concludes:

The Let verses taken alone do not appear to differ in tone from the others around them; the For verses give the impression that Smart entertained towards his mother only the kindest of feelings. Put them together, and symbols of cuckoldry, stupidity, and greed are suddenly combined with Smart's renunciation of his birthright. It becomes transparently evident that Smart felt he had been jobbed into the asylum and done out of his rights.... No wonder Smart would have nothing to do with his family when he was free.... The breach was far too deep to heal.<sup>6</sup>

Was Smart's belief that he was unfairly confined the delusion of a madman? Referring to Smart's 'second birth' in 1756 and his vow to devote himself entirely to God, Albert Kuhn writes:

as the remaining fifteen years of his life attest, Smart sought to fulfill that [vow]. In that effort he suffered confinement for several years in an asylum, and, afterward, estrangement from his family, neglect from his friends, poverty, and finally debt and death in prison. Nevertheless, it was during this period that he composed most of his religious verse and his most memorable poems.<sup>7</sup>

Middleton Murry has asked this question:

when I think that Christopher Smart and John Clare, who had perhaps more of this strange and peculiar gift of Franciscan<sup>8</sup> naïveté than any other

1 W. H. Bond, Jubilate Agno, (1954), p.17.

2 Jubilate Agno, p.25.

3 Jubilate Agno, p.25.

4 See for example Allen Seaby's letter, TLS, 17 Feb. 1950, quoted by D.J. Greene, 'Smart, Berkeley, the Scientists and the Poets', JHI, 14 (1953), p.344n.

5 'Three Sets of Religious Poems', Huntington Library Quarterly, 36 (1972-73), p.326. She argues that Smart's religious poetry is equal in quality to George Herbert's and far superior to John Keble's.

6 Bond, p.22.

7 'Christopher Smart: The Poet as Patriot of the Lord', ELH, 30 (1963), p.121.

8 Murry's term from the previous paragraph.

of our poets, were both shut up in asylums, I wonder whether St. Francis, yes, and Christ himself, would not be safeguarded in the same way?<sup>1</sup>

Finally, David Morris observes that

although men interpret his strangeness as insanity, Smart insists that his apparent madness is divinest sense:

For I bless the thirteenth of August, in which I was willing to be called a fool for the sake of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Apparent madness is traditionally one of the credentials of the prophet, and Smart, by associating himself with 'Christ's fools' and with a host of biblical figures, asks to be taken seriously as the interpreter of God's purposes. The uniqueness of his voice, including even the licensed obscurity of the prophet, emphasizes the uniqueness of his vision.<sup>3</sup>

Did Smart have the 'apparent madness' of divine inspiration, or was he merely a lunatic? Before attempting an answer by examining his poetry, it is appropriate to review the controversy regarding whether Smart read mystical literature.

## II

Stead was the first to declare that Smart read and was deeply influenced by mystical writers. Stead felt that Jubilate Agno introduced readers to

another region of [Smart's] mind, one of its most important aspects, which had never seen the light of day in his crambo ballads, his fables, and his journalistic essays. As he unveiled his hidden life during these years of silence and confinement, there came up out of the deep places a mystical or occult philosophy derived from such writers as Pythagoras, Hermes, the Cabalists, Cornelius Agrippa, Eugenius Philalethes, and Henry More.... The literature is so extensive and there was so much give and take between its authors, that an editor should be careful not to attribute an image or an idea to one specific writer as though he were the only possible source.... My illustrations, therefore, are intended only to show the community of thought between Smart and the authors of these various kinds of esoteric philosophy. That he was acquainted with some of their writings, and found them congenial, is, I think, beyond question. One might describe him as the last of the Cambridge Platonists. He was not at home either in the orthodoxy or scepticism of his age; in the Cambridge of Henry More he might have been a different man.<sup>4</sup>

In support of this claim Stead notes that the records of Pembroke College Library show that Smart borrowed Iamblichus's Life of Pythagoras.<sup>5</sup> In addition Stead's annotation of Jubilate Agno contains numerous parallel or source passages in the mystics named.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Discoveries, (1924), p.187.

<sup>2</sup> Bl, 51. All references to Jubilate Agno use Bond's arrangement of fragment and verse number.

<sup>3</sup> The Religious Sublime: Christian Poetry and Critical Tradition in Eighteenth-Century England, (Lexington, Kentucky, 1972), p.174.

<sup>4</sup> Stead, pp.37-38.

<sup>5</sup> Stead, p.38.

<sup>6</sup> Stead, pp.198, 199-200, 203, 204, 205-206, 207, 208, 209-210, 211, 212, 213-214, 215, 216, 228, 232, 233, 234, 235, 239, 240, 241, 249, 253, 269.

Arthur Sherbo, in rightly pointing out that Stead was unaware of Masonic symbolism in the Jubilate, ended an article by saying that 'Stead's contention, evident from his notes, that Smart was interested in occult literature-- other than that of Freemasonry, of course-- needs close examination'.<sup>1</sup> Two years later Sherbo supplied this examination and concluded that where Stead 'quotes or cites a mystical or occult writer as a possible source for an image or idea in the poem there is a possible source much readier at hand in Masonry, the Bible, or elsewhere'.<sup>2</sup> Sherbo's article takes a good number of Stead's notes and supplies what he feels are more or as reasonable sources 'readier at hand', mostly from the Bible or Freemasonry. In many cases, especially where Masonic sources are suggested, Sherbo's references are as reasonable as Stead's. But this merely shows that Stead was correct when he suggested that it was folly to try to ascribe what so many mystics and mystical traditions have in common to any one. For as Sherbo himself admits, Freemasonry is part, and a very important part, of the mystical and occult traditions. It is in the end illogical to say that Smart was not influenced by the mystical and occult tradition except for Freemasonry. For it is impossible to separate any of these seas from the ocean to which they belong. By using this argument Sherbo seems to imply that Freemasonry is not an important or substantial part of the Western mystical tradition. In fact, if one were to eliminate from Freemasonry the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition from which Stead derives many of his notes, the craft would crumble. Frances Yates has written that the

great mathematical and scientific thinkers of the seventeenth century have at the back of their minds Renaissance traditions of esoteric thinking, of mystical continuity from Hebraic or 'Egyptian' wisdom, of that conflation of Moses with 'Hermes Trismegistus' which fascinated the Renaissance. These traditions survived across the period in secret societies, particularly in Freemasonry.... Below, or beyond, their normal religious affiliations they would see the Great Architect of the Universe as an all-embracing religious conception which included, and encouraged, the scientific urge to explore the Architect's work. And this unspoken, or secret, esoteric background was a heritage from the Renaissance, from those traditions of Magia and Cabala, of Hermetic and Hebraic mysticism, which underlay 'Renaissance Neoplatonism'.<sup>3</sup>

Freemasonry's emphasis on an 'all-embracing' conception of God would allow if not provide Smart with the breadth of identification with myriad life-forms which was so intimate a part of his nature. He would also be most pleased to pursue scientific study so long as it was done with the correct perspective. 'Newton is ignorant for if a man consult not the WORD how should he understand

<sup>1</sup> 'Christopher Smart, Free and Accepted Mason', JEGP, 54 (1955), p.669.

<sup>2</sup> 'Christopher Smart's Knowledge of Occult Literature', JHI, 18 (1957), p.234.

<sup>3</sup> Rosicrucian Enlightenment, p.263.

the WORK?'<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Smart has been described as 'probably as well qualified in science as any poet before or since, and he was educated at Cambridge when the fame of Newton was at its height'.<sup>2</sup> Smart's complaint against Newton is not obscurantist; he wishes science to uncover as many facts as possible; it is faulty interpretation which he abhors.<sup>3</sup> For Smart, as for Berkeley, any interpretation which 'forgets' God as the active cause of all phenomena is blind and vain.

K.M. Rogers, in an article that shows wide reading in the mystical traditions, argues persuasively that the most difficult section in the Song to David,<sup>4</sup> demonstrates that Smart was a careful student of the Kabala. Into the Song Smart 'poured the religious, ethical, and mystical wisdom he had picked up in a lifetime of reading-- from the Old and New Testaments, from the Talmud and the Cabala, from Masonic lore and classical ethics'.<sup>5</sup>

John Friedman supplied specific parallel passages in Henry More and other Cambridge Platonists, but freely admitted that there is no external evidence that Smart read these works. He added the common sense remark, often overlooked, that

More's school of thought, because of its interest in occultism, its emphasis on spirit, and its hostility towards Hobbesian or Mechanistic conceptions of the universe, would have been particularly congenial to Smart.<sup>6</sup>

In a thorough and original article, the poet and critic A.D. Hope has stated:

Arthur Sherbo has recently challenged Stead's view that Smart had read extensively in the works of the Cambridge Platonists, the Kabbala, Cornelius Agrippa, and so on. But it is clear that he had some acquaintance with some of these writers and Jacob Boehme's De Signatura Rerum, 1621, was one of the books borrowed in the Pembroke library in Smart's day and may well have contributed particular details to the general theory of the interconnexion of creatures which he seems to have taken from Burthogge...<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> B1, 220.

<sup>2</sup> Greene, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> See Greene, p. 337.

<sup>4</sup> Stanzas xxx-xxxvii, Smart's account of the Creation.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Pillars of the Lord: Some Sources of "A Song to David"', PQ, 40 (1961), p. 534.

<sup>6</sup> 'The Cosmology of Praise: Smart's Jubilate Agno', PMLA, 82 (1967), p. 255. It has been argued in two PhD theses that Smart was deeply affected by mystical literature. Dorothy Griffiths, The Poetry of Christopher Smart, (Leeds, 1951), discusses his poetry by using Stead's references. Thomas Teevan, 'A Study of Christopher Smart's Jubilate Agno', (University of Washington, 1957) uses parallel passages to suggest that Boehme and Law, especially Signatura Rerum, had a great influence on Smart.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Apocalypse of Christopher Smart', Studies in the Eighteenth Century, ed. R. Brissenden (Canberra, 1968), p. 279. Richard Burthogge published Of the Soul of the World and of Particular Souls, in a Letter to Mr. Lock,

This overview of the controversy can end appropriately by examining the most recent argument against Smart's reading of mystical literature. It provides a particularly vivid example of how a critic's misunderstanding of mysticism can result in self-contradictory assertions. In her study of Smart's poetry, Moira Dearnley first argues (pp.146-150) with Sherbo that except for Freemasonry and Iamblichus' Life of Pythagoras, Smart was not influenced by the mystical tradition. She then quotes the following passage so that Smart can 'have the last word on what he felt about occult literature in general':<sup>1</sup>

Some antiquarian therefore will arise, who shall take it into his head, to give certain satisfactory and cogent reasons, why the first book of CASTLE-BUILDING consists of ten chapters precisely. He will urge perhaps that I had a particular attachment to the number ten, as some of the ancient philosophers had to the number seven; or that the aforesaid number is lucky; or that it is an ecclesiastical number, and has a connection with the tythe. But in order to be beforehand with a vengeance, I shall take the liberty of contradicting him, before he arrives at existence. I protest then, that it is not because I have any particular liking to the number ten, or because the number is either philosophical, ecclesiastical, or civil. In short, the word because is impertinent and entirely out of the question, because it is merely from the prerogative of an author, and no other reason, that I have ordain'd, and by these presents do ordain, that every book of CASTLE-BUILDING shall consist of ten chapters, neither more nor less...<sup>2</sup>

She feels this 'should deter us from reading too many elaborate occult significance [sic] into Jubilate Agno'.<sup>3</sup> This is a rather surprising conclusion considering the light entertainment purpose of the Student and Smart's approach to this hack work; the critic takes it as Smart's last word on anything at her peril. Beyond this, it can be maintained that Smart was satirizing the misuse of numerology, not its use. Considering the living power with which he wrote of numbers in the Jubilate,<sup>4</sup> and the stanzas of the Song to David, ordered in patterns of threes, sevens and nines, it is much more likely that this is indeed what he was doing. In any case, having given her argument that Smart was not a mystic, Dearnley later interprets the pearl image in several of Smart's poems 'with the help of Jungian psychology'. Referring to the line-- 'For in my nature I quested for beauty, but God hath sent me to sea for pearls'<sup>5</sup>--she writes:

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1699. Hope mentioned that De Signatura Rerum was borrowed while Smart was at Cambridge because he had explained earlier, ibid., p.273, that the ten or so Fellows, of whom Smart was one, constantly shared and discussed borrowed items. Smart was Praelector of Philosophy for at least two years. See Sherbo, Christopher Smart: Scholar of the University, (East Lansing, Michigan, 1967), pp.42ff.

1 The Poetry of Christopher Smart, (1969), p.150.

2 The Student, ii, 245-6, quoted by Dearnley, p.150.

3 Ibid., p.150.

4 See for example C, 18-35.

5 B1, 30.

Smart seems to be saying that he has failed to find 'beauty' in his own nature, and that he has been forced to look elsewhere, to the person of Christ who is symbolized as the pearl in the ocean. The poet's soul is now centred not 'in my nature' but 'in the whole'-- his soul has become God-centred instead of self-centred. In Jungian terms, Smart has turned away from the ego (self), centre of consciousness, towards the Self, centre of the totality of consciousness and unconsciousness. For Smart, this totality was Christ's nature, and the experience of this totality was salvation. Jung himself has pointed out that the experience of the Self can be specifically Christian-- Christ and Buddha being the two most highly differentiated expressions of the archetype of Self yet reached by mankind-- and also that the symbol of the Self is often a jewel, especially a diamond or a pearl.<sup>1</sup>

This is, of course, a good explanation of the heart of Christian mysticism and indeed of all mysticism.<sup>2</sup> Unaware that she had contradicted her earlier assertion that Smart was not a mystic, Dearnley adds that after reading Law's Spirit of Prayer, 1749,<sup>3</sup> she felt

it was remarkable to find that the interpretation of Smart via Jung was even further illumined by Law, who wrote, 'there is a Root, or Depth in Thee, from whence all these Faculties of thine come forth, as Lines from a Centre, or as Branches from the Body of the Tree. This Depth is called the Centre, the Fund or Bottom of the Soul...'.<sup>4</sup> 'Begin to search and dig in thine own Field for this Pearl of Eternity, that lies hidden in it; it cannot cost Thee too much, nor canst thou buy it too dear, for it is All'.<sup>5</sup> I have found no evidence that Smart had read The Spirit of Prayer, but it nevertheless seems valid enough to interpret certain lines in his poetry, which seem at first to be very obscure, in the light of Law's theology.<sup>6</sup>

One can only conclude that Dearnley is unaware that she has shown, if correct, that Smart was a mystic and a student of the most important mystical writer in eighteenth-century England.

### III

The question-- did Smart read mystical literature?-- is of course important. But a more pertinent and direct question is-- was Smart a mystic? For one can be a mystic after all, without having read mystical literature. Though Stead was the first to call Smart a student of mysticism, a number of other scholars have called Smart a mystic or described one or more of his poems as mystical.

<sup>1</sup> Dearnley, pp.288-9.

<sup>2</sup> In the introduction to Psychology and Alchemy, Jung explains that the process of becoming God-centred is the essence of Western and Eastern mysticism.

<sup>3</sup> She probably got the idea to read Spirit of Prayer from Stead, pp.28-9, where he suggests that a study of it by Smart could explain much of Smart's behaviour (ceaseless praying), and thought.

<sup>4</sup> Works, ed. Moreton, vii, p.28, quoted by Dearnley, p.289.

<sup>5</sup> Works, vii, p.29, quoted by Dearnley, p.289.

<sup>6</sup> Dearnley, p.289.

A late Victorian reviewer of the Song to David observes that to 'an age which made "sense" the highest glory of poetry, its ecstatic vein, its mystic ardent chant, its bold images and colour, must have seemed wild and improper'.<sup>1</sup> The authors of the first modern biography of Smart do not see the Song as apart from its age: 'To know Christopher Smart intimately is to understand how the mystic, burning Song to David could have its birth in an age whose poetry glittered, but rarely glowed'.<sup>2</sup> According to Edmund Blunden, 'the mystical contemplations, the earnest exhortation, the blending of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the splendour and the homeliness of the diction...'<sup>3</sup> are the main characteristics of Smart's poetry. These fairly haphazard uses of 'mystic', can be compared to Fairchild's, who believed that Smart's 'mysticism is Franciscan'<sup>4</sup>:

Smart is not easy to pigeonhole.... Although a passionate lover of nature, he transforms the universe of Newton into the universe of David. When he is most truly himself, he is a mystic of the nature-symbolist type.... If the subjective mysticism of Byrom and the objective mysticism of Smart were detached from traditional Christianity and combined, the result would be a mind like that of Blake, who had Byrom's faith in creative imagination, and Smart's ability to see angels in apple trees.<sup>5</sup>

If Smart were not generally 'pigeonholed' as mad, a case might have been made for him as a visionary possessing 'second sight'. He seems to be speaking from personal experience in this passage from Jubilate Agno:

For SOUND is propagated in the spirit and in all directions.  
For the VOICE of a figure is compleat in all its parts.  
For a man speaks HIMSELF from the crown of his head to the  
sole of his feet.  
For a LION roars HIMSELF compleat from head to tail.  
For all these things are seen in the spirit which makes the  
beauty of prayer.<sup>6</sup>

Several lines later he adds:

For the VOICE is from the body and the spirit-- and is a  
body and a spirit.  
For the prayers of good men are therefore visible to  
second-sighted persons.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Saturday Review, lxxxi (1896), p.606.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Ainsworth and Charles Noyes, Christopher Smart: a Biographical and Critical Study, (Missouri, 1943), p.163. On the relationship of the Song to its age cf. Spacks, pp.121ff, especially p.121: 'The Song represents not just a repudiation of the poetic assumptions of its time, but also a demonstration of them'.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Smart, Hymns for the Amusement of Children, (Oxford, 1947), p.ix.

<sup>4</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, ii, p.162.

<sup>5</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, pp.170-1.

<sup>6</sup> B1, 226-230.

<sup>7</sup> B1, 239-240.

Is he excluding himself here?<sup>1</sup>

Smart, as visionary, engaged in prophecy, but more in the sense of affirmation than prophecy as such: 'For I prophecy that they will not dare to imprison a brother or sister for debt /For I prophecy that hospitality and temperance will revive'.<sup>2</sup>

The fullest description to date of Smart as mystic is by David Morris.

Smart's view of the world is like that of the Franciscan or mystic who sees a profound spiritual unity comprehending the diverse and fractured phenomena of existence. Since all nature is of God, it is therefore suffused with the spirit of God; from the vast to the minute, from the angelic to the brutish, from the comprehensible to the mysterious, nature is not simply matter in motion but the manifestation of the divine spirit. In this outlook, Smart differs from the contemporary physico-theologians whose catalogs of natural lore he often appropriates for his own purposes.... The physico-theologian approaches nature more like a scientist than a mystic. Smart, on the other hand, is not primarily interested in discovering evidence of God's design; he seeks, instead, signs of his existence, aspects of his being, participation in his inexplicable ongoing processes. The physico-theologian is, in Addison's term, a 'spectator' of God's finished handiwork. Smart is a communicant in the mystery of God's continuous presence in nature.<sup>3</sup>

This desire of Smart's to participate in God's 'inexplicable ongoing processes' and to commune in the spirit, underlines his purpose as poet. Like Quixote and Brooke, he jumps with both feet into the lake of boiling pitch, symbolic of all that is frightening and ugly, to discover that it is at base an example of divine beauty, and God's omnipresence. Smart's purpose is to make visible through his poetry the universal beauty, universal presence and universal love of God which he has discovered. He believes with Brooke that even those life forms which man dismisses as expendable or obnoxious are of infinite importance to God. 'For things that are not in the sight of men are thro' God of infinite concern'.<sup>4</sup> But most important of all, he feels compelled to write poems of praise because he is driven by the conviction that when all elements of creation join in a song of praise to God, the millennium of joy will be attained.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hope, p.278, has argued that Smart based his pairing of men with animals, plants and minerals to praise God, on a correspondence perceived through second sight.

<sup>2</sup> C, 72-73. The long prophecy section is C, 57-162.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, p.171.

<sup>4</sup> B2, 334.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Thomson, 'A Hymn on the Seasons', (1746), 37-40:  
Nature, attend! join, every living soul  
Beneath the spacious temple of the sky,  
In adoration join; and ardent raise  
One general song!

## IV

There are then, two questions to answer by studying Smart's poetry: was Smart a mystic? was he inspired or insane? The questions are, of course, intimately related.

Smart himself used the word mystic at least three times. His 'Ode on Saint Cecilia's Day', which shows the influence of Dryden as well as Pope, begins: 'From your lyre-enchanted tow'rs,/Ye musically mystic Pow'rs...'<sup>1</sup> In 'An Epistle to John Sherratt, Esq.'<sup>2</sup>, 1763, Smart writes:

in the spirit all is great  
By number, melody and weight.  
By nature's light each heathen sage,  
Has thus adorn'd th'immortal page;  
Demosthenes and Plato's prose  
From skill in mystic measure flows.<sup>3</sup>

'Epiphany', from the Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1765, contains this request by Smart of his muse:

Fill my heart with genuine treasures,  
Pour them out before his feet,  
High conceptions, mystic measures,  
Springing strong and flowing sweet.<sup>4</sup>

In each case 'mystic' is used with some reference to music. Mysticism and music are, significantly, associated in Smart's mind. After 1756 and his 'second birth', Smart felt that a literal and figurative song of praise was the penultimate action. Music was for him the means of adoration of God. The goal-- union with God-- being the final, ultimate action was apparently associated in his mind with mysticism. Either Smart held this idea as early as 1746, or more likely, he is merely using a conventional conceit when he writes:

Musick's a celestial art;  
Cease to wonder at its pow'r,  
Tho' lifeless rocks to motion start,  
Tho' trees dance lightly from the bow'r,<sup>5</sup>  
Tho' rolling floods in sweet suspence  
Are held, and listen into sense.<sup>6</sup>

There is an important and impressive passage on music in Jubilate Agno.

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<sup>1</sup> I, 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Sherratt was instrumental in securing Smart's release in 1763.

<sup>3</sup> 7-12.

<sup>4</sup> viii.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Dryden, 'A Song for St. Cecilia's Day', 48-50: Orpheus could lead the savage race;/And trees unrooted left their place,/Sequacious of the lyre.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ode on Saint Cecilia's Day', iii, 1-6.

For GOD the father Almighty plays upon the HARP of stupendous  
 magnitude and melody.  
 For innumerable Angels fly out at every touch and his tune is  
 a work of creation.  
 For at that time malignity ceases and the devils themselves  
 are at peace.  
 For this time is perceptible to men by a remarkable stillness  
 and serenity of soul.<sup>1</sup>

This divine music, associated with the very act of creation, is what must be answered, antiphonally, by man and all elements in the creation. Otherwise God has been 'unanswered', and man has literally demonstrated that he is not in harmony with the divine. Pythagoras' concept of the music of the spheres probably influenced Smart who believed that 'there is nothing but it may be played upon in delight'.<sup>2</sup> He is interested in the element air and praises it because it is the medium which carries the song of praise. 'For all spirits are of fire and the air is a very benign one'.<sup>3</sup>

R.C. Zaehner, who delights in separating 'theistic mysticism' ('sacred') from 'pantheistic mysticism' ('profane'), might be disconcerted by Smart, who combines belief in Christ as man-God and as a universal soul force, with pantheism. Devlin found an 'alarming novelty' in Smart's view of Christ 'as not only a man but a universal force holding together all the levels of creation'.<sup>4</sup> For Smart, 'Christ represented not only all men but the whole creation'.<sup>5</sup> Christ is the One and the All. He unites Creator and creation. Without this connection the fallen world would have no hope of redemption. It is for this reason that Smart paired men with animals, plants and minerals, in Jubilate Agno. Man cannot gain union with God if he forgets his fundamental oneness with all life forms. To attempt to gain union with God without as it were, bringing all of creation with you is for Smart an act of appalling selfishness. More than this, it is for the pantheist an impossibility. For while God cannot be limited to the creation, He also cannot be separated from it. To attempt to

<sup>1</sup> B1, 246-249. Cf. Henry More, Annotations Upon Lux Orientalis, (1682), p.129: The whole Universe is as it were the Automatal Harp of that great and true Apollo; and as for the general striking of the strings and stopping their vibrations, they are done with as exquisite art as if a free intellectual Agent plaid upon them.

(Stead's reference). Sherbo, 'Smart's Knowledge of Occult Literature', p.236, feels that Stead's reference 'is an attractive parallel much more striking than "the harps of God" in Revelation xv.2'.

<sup>2</sup> B1, 255.

<sup>3</sup> B1, 263.

<sup>4</sup> Devlin, p.106.

<sup>5</sup> Devlin, p.107.

do this is to overlook if not reject the Holy Spirit, and additionally for Smart this would be a rejection of Christ as a universal soul force. 'For the sin against the HOLY GHOST is INGRATITUDE'.<sup>1</sup> Smart, who had a number of Quaker friends,<sup>2</sup> writes in the Jubilate: 'For I bless the Lord JESUS for his very seed, which is in my body'.<sup>3</sup> Later he adds: 'For the Life of God is in the body of man and his spirit in the Soul'.<sup>4</sup> At the end of his life, in the Hymns for Children he reasserts that 'There's God in ev'ry man most sure, /And ev'ry soul's to Christ allied'.<sup>5</sup> Human learning, however profound or satisfying, must bow to what is

greater still in each respect,  
He that communicates direct,  
The tutor of the soul;  
Who without pain, degrees or parts,  
While he illuminates our hearts,  
Can teach at once the whole.<sup>6</sup>

Like Blake, Smart writes for children without any condescension, but as equals. One effect of this is that while generally his diction is appropriate, many of his ideas must surely be beyond most children. Here again, in this passage, is the doctrine promulgated by Usher, Cheyne, Roach and Brooke that one's conscience, the Inner Light, is the work of Christ in the soul. Through this means there may be a 'direct' transference of knowledge, perceived as intuition, from the Christ within to the outer or objective consciousness. What characterizes such a communication is a sense of 'illumination' and of 'wholeness'. It is the opposite of the narrow and the dark, and is characterized by moral elevation. It is not easy to follow the Christ within who demands universal love and selfless service. Moreover, friends and society at large avoid if not actively persecute one who follows such principles because of the dissonance, the insecurity it arouses in those ruled by the old Adam. 'For I bless the thirteenth of August, in which I had the grace to obey the voice of Christ in my conscience. /For I bless the thirteenth of August, in which I was willing to run all hazards for the sake of the name of the Lord'.<sup>7</sup> Eighteenth-century society would quickly label such a person an enthusiast, and would

<sup>1</sup> B2, 306.

<sup>2</sup> See his poem 'To My Worthy Friend Mr. T.B.', (1752). All of Smart's references to the Quakers are positive except for his minor complaint that hats should not be worn, C, 135.

<sup>3</sup> B1, 144.

<sup>4</sup> B2, 375.

<sup>5</sup> 'Moderation', iv.

<sup>6</sup> Hymns for Children, 'Learning', iv.

<sup>7</sup> B1, 49-50. Bond, p.49(n), says that the year is probably 1759. This could very well be a reference to a reconfinement after a short period, or might refer to a relocation in a different asylum.

if given the opportunity, confine him for religious mania.<sup>1</sup> Smart felt that this was so in his case: 'For I am under the same accusation with my Saviour-- for they said, he is beside himself'.<sup>2</sup>

Smart's first pantheistic statement is in his second Seatonian poem 'On the Immensity of the Supreme Being', 1751:

Albeit He there with Angels, and with Saints  
Hold conference and to his radiant host  
Ev'n face to face stand visibly confest:  
Yet know that nor in Presence or in Pow'r  
Shines He less perfect here; 'tis Man's dim eye  
That makes th'obscurity. He is the same,  
Alike in all his Universe the same.<sup>3</sup>

Later he adds that 'man at home, within himself, might find/The Deity immense'.<sup>4</sup> There is a difficult but important pantheistic statement in Jubilate Agno:

For MATTER is the dust of the Earth, every atom of  
which is the life.  
For MOTION is as the quantity of life direct, and that  
which hath not motion, is resistance.  
For Resistance is not of GOD, but he--hath built his  
works upon it.  
For the Centripetal and Centrifugal forces are GOD,  
SUSTAINING and DIRECTING.<sup>5</sup>

This passage seems to show the direct influence of Boehme, who considered motion to be the manifestation of God in the world.<sup>6</sup> Line 162 is almost certainly drawn from one of the fundamental ideas in Boehme's thought, which he endlessly reiterates-- all manifestation is only possible through opposition and reconciliation.<sup>7</sup> The quotation from Boehme's Theosopia, or others like it which can be found in most of Boehme's works, could perfectly explain how and why Smart felt that centripetal and centrifugal forces are 'GOD SUSTAINING and DIRECTING'.

Smart's final passage on oneness is in the Hymns for Children:

That vast communicative mind,  
That form'd the world and human kind,

<sup>1</sup> Devlin, pp.88ff.

<sup>2</sup> Bl, 151. Smart is referring to Mark iii.21.

<sup>3</sup> 21-27.

<sup>4</sup> 136-7.

<sup>5</sup> Bl, 160-163.

<sup>6</sup> See Mysterium Magnum, 1:7, where Boehme speaks of 'the motion or life of the Deity'.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. for example Theosopia, 1:7-8:

Why does God permit the contrary will?... If it had nothing to resist it, it would continually of itself go outwards and return not again into itself. But if it returned not again into itself as into that out of which it originally went, it could know nothing of its primal being.

And saw that all was right;  
 Or was thyself, or came from Thee,  
 Stupendous generosity,  
 Above all lustre bright.<sup>1</sup>

One way in which Smart's pantheism manifests itself is through his complete identification with all animals, even the dangerous or those normally considered insignificant. In the animal passages of the Jubilate Smart mentions a positive aspect of each animal he treats. He tries to see as God does; all animals demonstrate some aspect of God's wisdom; all life leads to God. The famous passage on his cat, Jeoffry,<sup>2</sup> who was so precious a companion during Smart's confinement, will be passed over, since many 'pet' owners have little or no feeling for other animals, and of itself the passage would be no evidence that Smart identified with all animals. For many people, a cat or dog is nothing more than a diverting 'possession'. Smart does not see animals as possessions, but as equals:

Let Boaz, the Builder of Judah, bless with the Rat,  
 which dwelleth in hardship and peril, that they may  
 look to themselves and keep their houses in order.

Let Ethan praise with the Flea, his coat of mail, his  
 piercer, and his vigour, which wisdom and providence  
 have contrived to attract observation and to escape it.  
 Let Heman bless with the Spider, his warp and his woof,  
 His subtlety and industry, which are good.  
 Let Chalcol praise with the Beetle, whose life is precious  
 in the sight of God, tho his appearance is against him.

Let Joseph... praise with the Crocodile, which is  
 pleasant and pure, when he is interpreted, tho' his  
 look is of terror and offense.

Let Lud bless with the Elk, the strenuous asserter  
 of his liberty, and the maintainer of his ground.

Let Huldah bless with the Silkworm--the ornaments  
 of the proud are from the bowells of their Betters.

Let Sampson bless with the Bee, to whom the Lord  
 hath given strength to annoy the assailant and  
 wisdom to his strength.<sup>3</sup>

The lines treating animals which Smart could not have known personally, show the moral symbolism of the medieval bestiaries. (Some lines not quoted include imaginary animals which he probably got from the bestiaries.)<sup>4</sup> But the lines on animals of which he had personal experience show as complete an identification

<sup>1</sup> 'Generosity', i.

<sup>2</sup> B2, 742-770.

<sup>3</sup> A, 33, 36-38, 46, 71, 91, 93.

<sup>4</sup> See for example A, 26.

as is ever found in Blake. Especially in the description of the flea, spider and beetle, one is seeing these animals directly, and with something of the preciousness with which God must behold all life. Smart clearly feels that each animal is of infinite value. What is it that causes a sense of essential equality not only of all men but of all life? However imperfect, only something approaching universal love could enable Smart to feel the absolute worth of all that exists. Smart's love of the plant and mineral kingdoms matches his love of animals. A moving passage on flowers contains this line: 'For flowers are peculiarly the poetry of Christ'.<sup>1</sup> His considerable knowledge of herbalism is another aspect of his pantheism.<sup>2</sup> This knowledge of herbalism also correlates with an interest in alchemy, especially since there are a number of references to herbs used for 'magical purposes'.<sup>3</sup> It was the herbal alchemists who attempted to find the 'grand elixir' which would cure all disease.<sup>4</sup> It was pointed out in the Yates quotation above, that the traditions of magic and alchemy survived in Freemasonry. Smart could have been influenced in this way. There is a reference to alchemy in Smart's third Seatonian poem.

The Chemist there  
 May with astonishment invidious view  
 His toils outdone by each plebeian Bee,  
 Who, at the royal mandate, on the wing  
 From various herbs, and from discordant flowers  
 A perfect harmony of sweets compounds.<sup>5</sup>

Smart is very possibly indebted to Henry Brooke here.

Like issue should the daring chymist see,  
 Vain imitator of the curious Bee,  
 Nor arts improved thro' ages once produce  
 A single drachm of this delicious juice.<sup>6</sup>

Both poets use the honeybee, with references to alchemy, to debunk man's vanity. In each case they are arguing against the misuse of alchemy (through pride), not its use.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it was from Brooke's idea of natural alchemy

<sup>1</sup> B2, 506. A long passage showing Smart's remarkable knowledge of minerals, D, 1-73, ends with the line: 'O all ye gems of the mine bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever'.

<sup>2</sup> D, 74-167.

<sup>3</sup> D, 152. For other examples see D, 51 and D, 99-100.

<sup>4</sup> A number of Smart's references to herbs mention medicinal properties. See for example D, 115. The best recent study of herbal alchemy is Armand Barbault, Gold of a Thousand Mornings, 1975, which attempts to bridge the gap between herbal and metallic alchemy.

<sup>5</sup> 'On the Omniscience of the Supreme Being', (1752), 148-153.

<sup>6</sup> Universal Beauty, (1735-6), vi, 81-84.

<sup>7</sup> If Smart did read Brooke, this is another way in which he may have been influenced by mystical thought. Smart could have been drawn to Universal Beauty, which was popular in its day, by the very title. Temperamentally he could have written on this theme. (Like Brooke, he believed that all beauty and goodness are from God.) Moreover, it was generally believed,

that Smart developed his belief in spiritual evolution both within man and without. In the Jubilate he writes: 'For the PRECESSION of the Equinoxes is improving nature-- something being gained everywhere for the glory of God perpetually. /For the souls of the departed are embodied in clouds and purged by the Sun'.<sup>1</sup> Man is clothed in a body so that the soul may have a vehicle through which to perfect itself: 'For man is born to trouble in the body, as the sparks fly upwards in the spirit./For man is between the pinchers while his soul is shaping and purifying'.<sup>2</sup> The fire which is slowly purifying human souls and the whole creation is the spiritual fire 'environing all Things' mentioned by Toland.<sup>3</sup> This is the spiritual fire of the pantheists by which God is vitally present in the universe; the 'which Fire most truly is God'.<sup>4</sup> It is by this means that the natural alchemy of Brooke and the spiritual evolution of Smart take place.<sup>5</sup>

Smart desired union with God above all else. 'For I wish to God and desire towards the most High, which is my policy'.<sup>6</sup> He gave up all for God and made his life a song of praise: 'For I lent my flocks and my herds and my lands at once unto the Lord'.<sup>7</sup> More than this, he wanted to encourage the whole creation to join in a song of praise. It is this driving desire which gives the Song to David its irresistible overpowering energy. Smart never selfishly sought union with God only for himself. He ended his final Seatonian poem with this request:

O all-sufficient, all-beneficent,  
Thou God of goodness and of glory, hear!  
Bless all mankind, and bring them in the end  
To Heav'n, to immortality, and THEE!<sup>8</sup>

In the Hymns and Spiritual Songs (with which Smart hoped to reform the Anglican service), he placed prominently, in the very first hymn, his conviction that union with God can only be gained by total desire: 'Strive to think him, speak him, live him,/Till you find him face to face'.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of his life Smart was able to say:

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rightly or wrongly, that Pope 'corrected' this work of his friend, Brooke. This alone could have caused Smart, who had a blind admiration for Pope, to study the poem. On Smart's contact with Pope see Sherbo, Christopher Smart: Scholar of the University, pp.32-3.

1 B2, 347-8.

2 B2, 431-2.

3 Pantheisticon, pp.22ff.

4 St. Bonaventura, De Itinerario Mentis in Deo, vii.

5 Other references to alchemy in Jubilate Agno include: A, 65; B1, 144, 171, 261; B2, 330.

6 B1, 156.

7 B1, 52.

8 'On the Goodness of the Supreme Being', 136-139.

9 'New Year', ix. Cf. St. Augustine, The City of God, xi, iv: 'To will God entirely is to have Him'.

O let me meet Thee undeterr'd,  
 By no foul stains defil'd!  
 According to thy holy word,  
 Receive me as a Child.<sup>1</sup>

## V

In the beginning of this chapter, Smart's mystical rebirth was said to distinguish his later from his earlier life and writing. The differences between the 'old' and the 'new' Smart can be seen by comparing 'On the Eternity of the Supreme Being', a Seatonian poem, to the Song to David. One of the major differences is that the old Smart develops a logical argument with a recognizable train of thought. In the Song to David, the form of the poem is barely able to contain Smart's emotional, intuitive outpourings. The transitions are abrupt, yet curiously harmonious. Smart is straining to keep pace with the springs of universal love and universal perspective of which he feels himself to be an instrument. The Song in ways seems like automatic writing. It has a rhythmic, numinous quality which indicates a source deeper in the personality than that of discursive reason, yet it has too much harmony and fullness and structure to be the babbling of a madman. Smart is not concerned with making his ideas as clear as possible. The tone of urgency demands an emotional not an intellectual response from the reader. Logic dominates the old Smart; an emotional vision possesses the new. The sense of oneness which Christian mystics experience is usually passively felt within rather than actively sought without. But in the Song Smart's sense of oneness is anything but passive. He moves with no sense of separation from man, to plants, fowl, fish, to gems, all with furious speed.<sup>2</sup> Since the new Smart desired 'meat and med'cine to the soul/Which for translation pants',<sup>3</sup> the language of the Song should reflect and confirm Smart's new mystical perspective. There is a childlike directness in the Song, which one never gets in the old Smart. The directness of the Song strongly suggests an attained mystical vision and state in which the poet does not write about what he wishes to attain, or how heavenly such a state might be, but instead, unselfconsciously demonstrates the state he has achieved. Representative passages of equal length demonstrate these differences. First the Seatonian poem:

He comes! He comes! the awful trump I hear;  
 The flaming sword's intolerable blaze  
 I see; He comes! th'Archangel from above.  
 'Arise, ye tenants of the silent grave,  
 Awake incorruptible and arise;

<sup>1</sup> Hymns for Children, 'At Undressing in the Evening', iv.

<sup>2</sup> Xx-xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Lxiv.

From east to west, from the antarctic pole  
 To regions hyperborean, all ye sons,  
 Ye sons of Adam, and ye heirs of Heav'n---  
 Arise, ye tenants of the silent grave,  
 Awake incorruptible and arise'.

'Tis then, nor sooner, that the restless mind  
 Shall find itself at home; and like the ark  
 Fix'd on the mountain-top, shall look aloft  
 O'er the vague passage of precarious life;  
 And, winds and waves and rocks and tempests past,  
 Enjoy the everlasting calm of Heav'n:

'Tis then, nor sooner, that the deathless soul  
 Shall justly know its nature and its rise:  
 'Tis then the human tongue new-tun'd shall give  
 Praises more worthy the eternal ear.<sup>1</sup>

The Song ends with these three stanzas:

Glorious the sun in mid career;  
 Glorious th'assembled fires appear;  
     Glorious the comet's train:  
 Glorious the trumpet and alarm;  
 Glorious th'almighty stretched-out arm;  
     Glorious th'enraptur'd main:

Glorious the northern lights a-stream;  
 Glorious the song, when God's the theme;  
     Glorious the thunder's roar:  
 Glorious hosannah 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, called thy Son:  
 Thou at stupendous truth believ'd;---  
 And now the matchless deed's achiev'd,  
     DETERMINED, DARED, and DONE.

The transitions are abrupt in the Song because Smart is experiencing an intense mystical oneness. He is trying to describe a reality, a totality which he experiences at once. There are no divisions in this state of unity, and this manifests rhetorically as abrupt transitions and harmony based not on logic but on intuition. In the Song the language burns with conviction, unconscious certainty; the Seatonian poem is often merely rhetorical. The Seatonian poet is trying to understand the soul's 'nature and its rise'; the poet of the Song has passed beyond desire for knowledge, even beyond desire itself. He is there. He is in a state of dynamic mystical oneness. He does not care about knowing, only about being, and about communicating his sense of oneness.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 111-130.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. C.M. Dennis, 'A Structural Conceit in Smart's Song to David', RES, N.S.29 (1978), p.266, referring to the Song: the 'poem everywhere shows Smart's interest in the language of mystical unity...'.  
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The old Smart worries about producing 'Praises more worthy the eternal ear'. The new Smart knows that any song is glorious 'when God's the theme'. He has passed from uncertainty to certainty, and sees God's arm as 'stretched-out' in welcome, the prodigal son returned home and welcomed by a loving father. In the earlier poem there is no arm of welcome, only an arm baring a sword, a sword of righteousness, not of love, a sword which because it will judge and damn some is 'intolerable'. The earlier Smart is bound by theory and abstractions; he at once desires resurrection but fears it since he might be damned. The new poet sees and experiences a universal salvation of love. The amen is 'catholic'; God's arm is stretched out by implication to all. This love is all-pervasive, and even the sea is 'enraptur'd'. The Seatonian poem abounds in action, in verbs. There is a paucity of verbs in the Song. All the action in the Song awaits the dramatic conclusion. It is Christ who is the Divine Actor. All human action waits on him. What man must do is 'believe'; then it is Christ who acts in man. As for Berkeley, so for Smart-- God is the only true causative force. In the Seatonian poems Smart says much of God's omnipotence; in the Song he demonstrates it. The quotation from the Song is but one sentence, the main verb of which is supplied by Christ and is in the past tense, signalling attainment of union. The final verbs in the Seatonian poem are in the future tense. But the time of greatest importance in the Song, upon which all depends, and which elicits the unity and rapture of the entire creation, is the resonant 'now' of the penultimate line: the birth of God in the life of man.

## VI

It has been argued above that Smart was a mystic, that he had an intuitive conviction of fundamental unity, and that like Usher, Cheyne, Roach and Brooke, he held the doctrine of the Inner Light through the Christ within. Like all mystics, Smart's goal was union with God. He believed this union was possible for all men because of Christ's presence in the soul. As soon as man completely desires God, this union is attained. In trying to convince all men to join in a song of praise, Smart does not use a rational analysis so much as a mystical vision through which he hopes to communicate his sense of devout wonder at God's munificence and love. His sense of illumination, and communion with all life results from his seeing God in all things. God is for Smart the life of the universe. Smart beheld nature with something approaching universal love. Nature was precious to him because it is spirit itself made visible. 'For nothing is so real as that which is spiritual'.<sup>1</sup>

Like William Law, Smart believed that the intellect and human scholarship are utterly inadequate in spiritual matters. Spiritual knowledge must come from

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<sup>1</sup> B1, 258.

the Inner Light; one must experience the divine within the soul, for no human power can teach what must be experienced from and in God. Intellectual theory only impedes the attainment of this union.

Ye books, that load the shelves,  
To lead us from ourselves,  
Where things, in doubt involv'd,  
Are rather made than solv'd;  
Render to the dust and worm  
All ye question or affirm.<sup>1</sup>

The second question posed above, was Smart inspired or insane, is in the end impertinent if not impossible to answer. It would not have been raised here at all if Smart were not usually dismissed as insane or patronizingly referred to as 'Poor Kit'. Any absolute statement that Smart was insane or sane, considering the small amount of external evidence, must be dismissed as nothing but a statement of faith (or preference). This is especially true since the main source of most of the surviving 'evidence' on Smart is in the life written by his nephew, Christopher Hunter, which has been described as 'short, incomplete and undocumented, and was written by a misunderstanding and unsympathetic biographer'.<sup>2</sup> Much of the rest of the evidence comes from Johnson, who was not necessarily speaking from personal experience only. Johnson was a great admirer of Smart's wife and continued to correspond with her when she removed to Ireland after Smart was confined. Since Smart and his wife remained separated after his release, it is possible that Mrs. Smart's correspondence with Johnson was uncomplimentary to her husband and had some influence on Johnson, who had mixed feelings about Smart.<sup>3</sup>

Anti-mystical prejudice then and now helps to explain why Smart has been considered mad. Devlin portrays him as a religious maniac fighting against messianic delusion. But this view is called into serious question when it becomes clear that Fr. Devlin considers Smart's 'unorthodox' beliefs (his mysticism, especially his views about Christ) as a demonstration, if not cause, of his 'madness'.<sup>4</sup> This is Devlin's anti-mystical prejudice surfacing as is

<sup>1</sup> Hymns & Spiritual Songs, 'Trinity Sunday', vii. For Law, see The Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, pp.118-28.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth and Noyes, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> See Devlin, pp.104 ff, and Sherbo, pp.125ff. Johnson made some insulting comments about Smart. Cf. Boswell's Life, ed. G.B. Hill, rev. L.F. Powell (1934), iv, pp.192-3: Mr. Margann asks Johnson 'do you reckon Derrick or Smart the best poet?' Johnson replied, 'Sir, there is no precedency between a louse and a flea'. Boswell lists this as in 1783, some dozen years after Smart's death.

<sup>4</sup> See Devlin, pp.125ff. Cf. the most recent study of Smart, Stock, (1982), pp. 315, 319, 333:

I greatly doubt that ... Smart was mad in any very true sense; ...his madness itself, after all, may have amounted to little more than

as is made clear when he talks of 'the strange theosophizing' of Boehme, whose influence caused Law's later works to be 'barren'. Devlin announces that because of Boehme's influence, Law 'died a lonely eccentric with only two disciples, women'.<sup>1</sup> But in addition to Devlin's anti-mystical prejudice, he did not perceive that Smart's absolute statements have to be understood in the limited context in which they are made, and the specific reference must be appreciated. For example, when Smart says 'For by the grace of God I am the Reviver of ADORATION amongst ENGLISH-MEN'<sup>2</sup>, he is referring to his own spiritual rebirth and his Hymns and Spiritual Songs which he hopes will have a reforming effect. When Smart said 'I bless the Lord JESUS for his very seed, which is in my body',<sup>3</sup> and 'Newton... is more of error than of the truth, but I am of the WORD of GOD',<sup>4</sup> it is not meant to be taken exclusively; it is something any Christian mystic might say.

Finally, obscure lines and ideas in Jubilate Agno have been considered proof of Smart's insanity. This is an uncertain business at best, especially when it is remembered that the Song to David (considered 'mad' in the eighteenth century) and much of Jubilate Agno have been shown to be not insane but the work of a poetic and mystical vision upon commonly accepted 'fact'. Referring to the Jubilate, Sherbo states: 'As more and more of its mysteries are solved, the greater is one's conviction that all its lines will lend themselves to "sane", if unusual, interpretation'.<sup>5</sup> Spacks is an example of a critic who believes that the thought and language of Jubilate Agno is that of a psychotic. Yet the only cited 'authority' for her understanding of psychosis is the following anonymous letter written to the New York Review of Books<sup>6</sup> by a woman who described herself as recurrently psychotic:

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compulsive praying... Smart took literally the scriptural admonition to pray without ceasing... If Smart's insanity took the form of obsessive prayer, Cowper's was a despairing melancholy that forestalled prayer; if Smart's produced jubilant religious love, Cowper's fostered daemonic fear. The pattern of exorcism in Smart yields in Cowper to excommunication; and in place of Smart's loving, healing Savior there is only the contumelious Christ, scorner of pharisees, curser of fig trees, the avenger.

On Cowper's insanity, see the important recent study by James King, 'Cowper's Adelphi Restored: the Excisions to Cowper's Narrative', RES, 30 (1979), pp. 291-305. King calls this a 'harrowing document'. To compare this work of Cowper's with Jubilate Agno is instructive.

<sup>1</sup> Devlin, p.169. This is a wholly inaccurate statement.

<sup>2</sup> B2, 332.

<sup>3</sup> B1, 144.

<sup>4</sup> B1, 195.

<sup>5</sup> 'The "Mad" Poet and the Sane Biographer', p.38.

<sup>6</sup> 9 July 1964.

When a psychotic speaks, he speaks with absolute precision, and having chosen a word to precisely convey his thought, that word in turn, reverberates linguistically and merges many words and thoughts within it along with a host of ideas, concepts and feelings.... This multifaceted use of language with its apparent contradiction between precision and confusion is what characterizes psychotic language.... The psychotic's statements are symbolic as well as specific. Sentences teem with allusions. Words are redefined in terms of their original meaning, and invested with special meanings as the need arises.<sup>1</sup>

This use of language is characteristic, to various degrees, of all poetry. Sherbo, clearly exasperated by this argument, ends a specific answer to Spacks with this comment:

Leon Edel writes that the biographer seeks, for example, to show 'how James Joyce, visioning himself as Daedalus, scaring over a world he had mastered, created a language for it, the word-salads of Finnegans Wake-- but where the schizophrenic patient [Smart?] <sup>2</sup> creates word-salads because of his madness, Joyce created them with that method in madness which Lamb was describing when he spoke of the artist's dominion over his subject'.<sup>3</sup> The passage might be applied to the infinitely less complex 'word-salads' of Jubilate Agno. I am in earnest in suggesting that if what sets the poet apart from the rest of his fellows is psychosis (once it was called 'enthusiasmos') let us accept that as the condition of all poets and have done with it. Dryden's 'Great Wits are sure to Madness near ally'd; /And thin Partitions do their Bounds divide' comes to mind in this connection.<sup>4</sup>

A passage still considered mad is the one treating man's regaining of a horn in the centre of his forehead.<sup>5</sup> Smart's interest in 'the natural life', medieval bestiaries and his love of animals when considered together could explain this passage. When Smart says, 'For a beard is a good step to a horn' and 'when men get their horns again, they will delight to go uncovered',<sup>6</sup> he is talking about man regaining his primal purity, and his true nature. He associates this state with animals because he believes they are, like Adam before the Fall, in perfect harmony with God who directs them through instinct: 'What is that sweet pow'r, that guides the brutes, /Which ignorance calls instinct?'Tis from thee. It is the operation of thine hands, /Immediate, instantaneous'.<sup>7</sup> Man, to regain perfect and natural harmony, must like animals be entirely directed by the Christ within. Moreover, Smart clearly has the unicorn in mind. Especially to a lover of animals of Smart's depth and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Spacks, The Poetry of Vision, p.141.

<sup>2</sup> Sherbo's insertion.

<sup>3</sup> Leon Edel, Literary Biography, (1957), p.59.

<sup>4</sup> 'The "Mad" Poet and the Sane Biographer', p.39.

<sup>5</sup> C, 118-162.

<sup>6</sup> C, 131-2.

<sup>7</sup> 'On the Omniscience of the Supreme Being', 31-4.

intensity, the unicorn was the supreme animal because it was a symbol of purity, of unity and of Christ. Man, then, must emulate all that the unicorn symbolizes.<sup>1</sup>

Smart held a vision of the highest ideals as his goal, and to an unusual degree he became as Christ taught, a little child. Like a child he felt part of an ideal world of infinite possibility. He looked at the world freshly and directly, combining sense and intuitive impressions into new combinations and significance. This fitted him to see God everywhere without the maze or barrier of reason and dogma. He communed in the spirit as effortlessly, as unself-consciously and as happily, as a child at play. Everything he saw was new, significant and divine.<sup>2</sup>

Hoxie Fairchild observed that 'if to be mad is to think only of oneself, Smart was beautifully sane when he wrote, "For I pray the Lord Jesus that cured the Lunatick to be merciful to all my brothers and sisters in these houses"'.<sup>3</sup> One can agree with Fairchild that if the Song to David 'is the poem of a madman, one wishes that such insanity were more common'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. one of the most popular medieval bestiaries, Guillaume le Clerc, Le Bestiaire Divin: 'The unicorn represents Jesus Christ, who took on him our nature in the Virgin's womb.... Its one horn signifies the Gospel truth, that Christ is one with the Father....'

<sup>2</sup> Smart very interestingly exhibits nearly all the marks of Cosmic Consciousness which Bucke lists. See Cosmic Consciousness, iii, xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, ii, p.169.

<sup>4</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, ii, p.161.

## CHAPTER 8

### THOMAS HARTLEY'S DEFENCE OF THE MYSTICS

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I judge none, and to condemn any is an idle arrogancy and vain prating: The Spirit of God himself judgeth all things, and, if that be in us, wherefore should we use many words, and not rather rejoice in the gifts of our brethren? Doth any herb or flower say unto the other, I will not stand by thee? And have they not all one mother whence they grow? Even so, all souls proceed from one; why then do we boast to be the children of God, whilst we are more foolish than the herbs and flowers of the field? Doth not God impart and reveal his wisdom to us diversly, as he manifests the tincture of the mystery in the earth through diverse fair plants? even so it is in us men, who should love one another the more for his revealing his wisdom so variously in us; but he that judgeth and contemneth another in an evil way, only runneth on in pride to shew himself, and is the oppressor in Babel that stirreth up contention and strife.

Jacob Boehme

The natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ.... Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.

St. Paul

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## I

Like Christopher Smart and all mystics, Hartley was offended by any attempt to limit God to narrow rationalist standards. William Warburton provided an extreme example of this eighteenth-century tendency when he declared that God

'must be praised because His conduct was conformable to the characteristics of the same British Constitution'.<sup>1</sup> This is the man Hartley answered in A Short Defence of the Mystical Writers; Against Some Reflections in a late Work, Intituled, the Doctrine of Grace ... By William, Lord Bishop of Gloucester.<sup>2</sup>

There is very little material indeed on the life and work of Hartley. Most of what does exist are passing references to his involvement with Swedenborg as friend and translator. Aside from the very short DNB life and the brief but valuable criticism in Tyerman's Life and Times of John Wesley,<sup>3</sup> the only study of Hartley is by A.E. Beilby in his fifty-page monograph, Rev. Thomas Hartley, A.M., Rector of Winwick, in Northamptonshire, 1931.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Hartley was born in 1709, the son of a London bookseller.<sup>5</sup> He was a subsizar at St. John's College, Cambridge, and was awarded a B.A. in 1728 and an M.A. in 1745. In 1744 he became rector of Winwick, Northamptonshire, and held the living until his death, though he was non-resident after 1770 because of his ill health.<sup>6</sup> Like Roach, he did not seek preferment. As he himself explains, his early interest was in Calvinism, but he was set 'free by means of God's servants the Mystic Writers ...'.<sup>7</sup> His 'Discourse on Mistakes Concerning Religion, Enthusiasm, ...' prefixed to his collected sermons, 1754, shows profound admiration for mystical writers. It was dedicated to Lady Huntingdon.<sup>8</sup> He met Swedenborg about 1769, offered him financial assistance, and translated a number of his writings. Hartley, however, had no connection with the Swedenborg society started by Robert Hindmarsh in 1783. The obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine describes him as

a person of rare natural endowments, and he employed them in that best of purposes, the promotion of real internal piety: preferring this to all forms and names amongst men, he sought out the sincere lovers of it, under the different religious distinctions, to be his friends and companions ... In his conversation and deportment he was humble and devout, abounding in love; of charitable sentiments towards others; inoffensive as a child; instructive as the man of wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by G. Kitchin, Seven Sages of Durham, (1911), p.242.

<sup>2</sup> The Defence was published as an addition to Paradise Restored, (1764), and occupies pp.357-476. The full title of Warburton's book is The Doctrine of Grace: Or, The Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit Vindicated from The Insults of Infidelity, And The Abuses of Fanaticism: Concluding With Some Thoughts (humbly offered to the consideration of the ESTABLISHED CLERGY) With regard to The right method of Defending Religion against the attacks of either Party, (1763).

<sup>3</sup> (New York, 1872), ii, pp.518-525.

<sup>4</sup> Published by the New Church Press.

<sup>5</sup> He died in 1784, and was thus an exact contemporary of Samuel Johnson.

<sup>6</sup> On the question of Hartley's residence in Winwick, see Beilby, pp.14ff.

<sup>7</sup> Defence, p.381n.

<sup>8</sup> The friend and correspondent of Dr. Cheyne. Perhaps it was Dr. Cheyne who introduced Hartley to the mystics.

<sup>9</sup> Lv (1785), 76.

Through the quotations and references in the Defence, one obtains some information on which mystics Hartley knew and studied. In addition to Swedenborg, he was personally acquainted with William Law whom he warmly admired.<sup>1</sup> Jacob Boehme, Thomas à Kempis and Henry More seem to be the mystics who influenced him most. He quotes the Cambridge Platonist far more frequently than anyone else. He declared outright that 'I stand much indebted to the writings of Thomas à Kempis, among other authors of the same class, for admonition, instruction and consolation ...'.<sup>2</sup> Hartley refers to Boehme as 'that wonderful man', and considered Mysterium Magnum an 'incomparable book'.<sup>3</sup> The other mystics he mentioned are: St. Macarius (c.295-386), one of the Fathers of the Egyptian desert, whom Hartley quotes on spiritual rebirth;<sup>4</sup> 'that true-hearted and diligent labourer in the mystic school Peter Poiret';<sup>5</sup> Savonarola (1452-1498), whom Hartley considered a mystic; Isaac Penington (1616-1679), used as an example of the persecution of mystics; Guyon, also used as an example of persecution; Fénelon (1651-1715), the 'Seraphick Archbishop',<sup>6</sup> who was publicly denounced and exiled to his diocese by Bishop Bossuet and Louis XIV for defending Guyon in his famous Explication des Maximes des Saints Sur La Vie Intérieure, 1697; Jeremiah White, whose preface to the mystical writings of Peter Sterry, Hartley quotes<sup>7</sup>; Bishop Ken, whose book The Retired Christian is praised; Gerard Groot (1340-1384), whose preaching laid 'open the corruptions of the times in all orders and degrees of men';<sup>8</sup> Tauler, the great disciple of Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), who helped 'forward the work of vital godliness';<sup>9</sup> Ruysbroeck, mentioned with Tauler, and John Gerson (1363-1429), referred to as both a mystic and an impartial critic of those who misuse mysticism. Hartley has great praise for the Theologica Germanica, c.1350, and remarks that the book is 'extolled by Dr. H. More, by the name of That Golden Little Book which first so pierced and affected him.'<sup>10</sup>

## II

Paradise Restored has been described by Tyerman as 'by far, the most sober, sensible, scriptural, and learned work on the millennium that it has been our lot to read'.<sup>11</sup> Wesley wrote to Hartley:

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1 On Law and Hartley see anecdote, Beilby, p.31, also p.34.  
 2 Defence, p.474.  
 3 Defence, p.395.  
 4 Defence, p.370.  
 5 Defence, p.372.  
 6 Defence, p.461.  
 7 Defence, p.464.  
 8 Defence, p.472.  
 9 Defence, p.473.  
 10 Defence, p.472.  
 11 Life of Wesley, ii, p.521.

Your book on the millennium was lately put into my hands. I cannot but thank you for your strong and seasonable confirmation of that comfortable doctrine; of which I cannot entertain the least doubt, as long as I believe the Bible'.<sup>1</sup>

The book, however, has long been forgotten. If Hartley is remembered at all, it is for his Defence. Wesley considered the Defence an 'ingenious'<sup>2</sup> but not a satisfactory essay, for reasons that will be discussed below.

The Doctrine of Grace, Warburton's last 'considerable literary effort'<sup>3</sup>, was mainly a refutation of Wesley. After completing the book, he gave this account of it to his friend Charles Yorke, later Lord Chancellor:

I am afraid you will expect more than you will find in my discourse on the subject of fanaticism; I treat it less philosophically and speculatively than practically and popularly. I thought it of more use to give the picture of fanaticism in a living example, Mr. J. Westley, whose account of his apostleship I have taken from his own journals.... I have selected him from the rest because in parts and learning he is far superior to the rest, and formed of the best stuff that nature ever put into a fanatic to make a successful head and leader of a sect.<sup>4</sup>

Warburton put great energy into the production of this work, and took the surprising step of sending it to Wesley before it was printed with a request that he point out any errors. Wesley was happy to oblige; he noted in his journal that he returned the manuscript after correcting the 'false readings, improper glosses, and other errors'.<sup>5</sup> Wesley perceived what Robert Lowth was later to prove, that Warburton's scholarship was often slipshod and that he was an acute but not a profound thinker.<sup>6</sup> Wesley published a pamphlet in answer to Warburton which ended with a request that the Bishop 'be more serious. It cannot injure your Lordship's character, or your cause. Truth is great, and will prevail'.<sup>7</sup>

The Doctrine of Grace also received answers from Whitefield, John Andrews, John Payne (whose only purpose was to defend Law against Warburton's attack), and Byrom.<sup>8</sup> The main thesis of the Doctrine is that the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit ended when the canon of scripture was completed, and it thus strikes a blow at the heart of Christian Mysticism. In an interesting letter to Byrom, Warburton writes: 'You would convince men of the truth of the Gospel by inward feelings; I, by outward facts and evidence'.<sup>9</sup> To this can be compared

<sup>1</sup> Methodist Magazine, (1783), 498, quoted by Tyerman, ii, p.5 & 3.

<sup>2</sup> Journal, 5 February 1764.

<sup>3</sup> A.W. Evans, Warburton and the Warburtonians, (Oxford, 1932), p.235.

<sup>4</sup> Letters from Warburton to Yorke, p.51, quoted by Evans, pp.235-6.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Evans, p.236.

<sup>6</sup> See Evans, pp.247-54. Cf. ibid., p.277: quoting W.R. Sorley, 'of insight into history, philosophy, and religion, he does not seem to have had any conspicuous share'.

<sup>7</sup> A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester, p.114, quoted by Evans, p.237.

<sup>8</sup> See The Poems of John Byrom, ed. Ward, ii, pp.247, 278.

<sup>9</sup> The Private Journal and Literary Remains of John Byrom, ed. Parkinson, ii, p.522.

Hartley's belief that

it is not the disputing head, but the devout heart that makes the Christian.

In the love of God is that peace of God which passeth all understanding; and in this bond of peace is the unity of the Spirit; nay, after all that the wise critic and disputer of this world can have to say; the way to divine knowledge lies only through divine love; and he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.<sup>1</sup>

The differences between Warburton and Hartley are radical. Warburton is a rationalist with a profound admiration for Locke<sup>2</sup>; Hartley is a mystic who sat at the feet of Boehme and other mystical writers.

Hartley begins the Defence with what are the two main arguments of the essay: firstly: 'So highly precious above every thing that can be named by the tongues of men or angels is Christ in us, the hope of Glory', and secondly: the 'Mystical Writers ... are and have been the true teachers of Gospel-salvation, and the guardians of pure and undefiled religion, under Christ the King of saints ...'.<sup>3</sup> Referring to those who deny the Christ within (specifically Warburton), Hartley says: 'What a strange local God do all such make of their Savior, whilst they shut him up in a distant heaven, and tell us, that we are only to know him now by the letters of a book'.<sup>4</sup>

Hartley's view of the Bible is that it should not be used for disputes, nor as an 'idol', but as a means of leading one to the Christ within. The Bible is a signpost directing man towards God. It becomes an idol 'if we set up the written testimony above him to whom it testifieth as the way, the truth and the life'.<sup>5</sup>

In this case may we not be said to commit idolatry in the porch of the Lord's house? Hence it is, that so many study the Scriptures all their life long without finding the way which the Scriptures plainly teach, because instead of pursuing the directions therein laid down, they only wrangle about the characters and various acceptations of the words. How easy to be understood is that precept written on this pillar of truth: Seek ye after God, and your soul shall live.<sup>6</sup> What can be plainer except the following comment upon it: Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and seek him with their whole heart.<sup>7</sup> But how will the worldly wise, who reserve their hearts for other purposes, comment upon these words? Why thus: Blessed are they that seek him in sundry books and diverse languages, and various opinions; that seek him in multiplicity of forms and many inventions, and much criticism. Can we then want an interpreter

<sup>1</sup> Paradise Restored, p.xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Evans, p.216, calls Warburton's admiration for Locke 'almost unqualified'.

<sup>3</sup> Defence, p.358.

<sup>4</sup> Defence, pp.359-360.

<sup>5</sup> Defence, p.360.

<sup>6</sup> 'Psal. lxix.33', Hartley's reference.

<sup>7</sup> 'Psal. cxix.2', Hartley's reference.

to the following words written on the same pillar? They shall seek me, but shall not find me.<sup>1</sup>

This tendency to turn the Bible into an idol, to externalize religion completely, also manifests, Hartley feels, when Christians forget that ritual and the sacraments are means, not ends. Non-mystical Christians tend to attack idol-worship because they fear it, see it and feel it in themselves. Hartley believes that the worst kind of idolatry happens when opinions are treated as doctrines, and when people contend 'for them more zealously, than for vital godliness'.<sup>2</sup> He fears that external forms of worship including ritual and the sacraments, tend to produce complacency and self-justification when it is forgotten that they are aids to spiritual development, not spiritual development itself, and he believes that Warburton's fondness for, and promotion of, the visible and external is a great threat to spiritual development. Like man, religion has an inner and outer aspect. Likening the visible aspect of religion to a body, the invisible to the soul, he calls the former ecclesiastical, and the latter spiritual or mystical. Each requires the other, but it is soul which must rule. The external must not be belittled, for its function is to serve as a vehicle, a channel for the spiritual. The soul can only develop through contact with the external world, but when the external form blocks or denies the power of activating spirit, the union of inner and outer is dissolved, and the external form becomes a mere fossil. Hartley believes non-mystical Christians tend towards this worship of the external. Theological disputes and sectarianism promote emphasis on the external aspect of religion, and it is for this reason, Hartley says, that if you put Christ and love first, then

Give me thy hand, and let us conform in things indifferent, and wave opinions and all doubtful disputations, ... when men forsake the fountain of living waters, thus do they hew unto themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.<sup>3</sup>

In a section treating the characteristics of mystics, it is made clear that, in his opinion, the main reason mystics are disliked by non-mystical Christians is that mystics offend the pride of the 'natural man'. His pride

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<sup>1</sup> 'Prov. i.28', Hartley's reference. Defence, pp.360-1. Cf. Byrom, 'A Stricture on the Bishop of Gloucester's Doctrine of Grace', Poems, ii, i, p.278:

'The Comforter', Christ said, 'will come again,  
Abide with, dwell in'-- not your Books, but-- 'you'.  
Just as absurd an Ink-and-Paper Throne  
For God's Abode as one of Wood and Stone!  
If to adore an Image be Idolatry,  
To deify a Book is Bibliolatry.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.365.

<sup>3</sup> Defence, p.366.

in his reason, his self-orientation, his desire to avoid the difficulties of spiritual development ensure that he will try to discredit mysticism. The mystic is the enemy of the natural man in that he cares little for the niceties of theory, and commits his whole self to gaining union with God. Hartley feels that most mystics do not actively attempt to convert others to the spiritual life, but instead attempt to provide an influence through the light and example of their life. This indicates that mystics are not disliked because they arrogantly presume to convert the natural man to the spiritual life: instead, in attempting to become nothing in themselves and everything in God, mystics become a mirror in which the natural man sees all his negative traits clearly. He then has either to acknowledge his selfishness or to reject the mirror.

What, in Hartley's view, are the characteristics of mystics?

They are persons of an humble, though discerning spirit.... Their chief topics are the love of God and our neighbour, self-denial, the bearing of the cross, the contempt of the world, and that worship of the Father which is in spirit and in truth; and these subjects they enforce, not from barren speculations in their heads, but from a vital and fruitful experience of their power in their hearts.... They labour not to captivate the curious minds, or to scratch the itching ears of their readers and hearers with artificial flowers of rhetoric, ... but they speak directly from the heart and to the heart, and that divine unction which attends their words, gives them efficacy.<sup>1</sup>

Since mystics do not seek the honours and riches of this world, so this world has no power over them. This allows them a freedom and impartiality no worldly man, with his self-oriented desires, can possess. Hartley, like Brooke, considers the mystic a spontaneous servant of God: 'for true religion is a nature restored and therefore all its functions are so far natural and easy; and this is the beauty of holiness'.<sup>2</sup> The mystic is far from despising those committed to external forms of worship:

Nay, he prizes the simplicity of the infantine state in the truly devout, far above that of visions, revelations or extacies, as freer from danger, and bringing nearer to the humility of Jesus in the manger; and if such were the will of God, he would willingly resign all knowledge and every other thing that appears most excellent in the eye of man's judgment, for the unaffected innocence, filial dependence, and undissembled love of a little child.<sup>3</sup>

Hartley's first reference to the Doctrine of Grace is introduced as he begins his discussion of spiritual rebirth, which he calls the 'New Birth'. After reminding the reader that all Christian churches must accept the reality of the New Birth because it is taught in the *Gospels*, he gives an example of the doctrine from the Anglican collects for the Nativity and the Sunday following:

<sup>1</sup> Defence, pp.374-5.

<sup>2</sup> Defence, p.375.

<sup>3</sup> Defence, p.376.

'Grant that we being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit through the same our Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>1</sup> Hartley feels that none will 'seriously hold' that daily renovation refers to infant baptism, or that the reference to the regenerate signifies all baptized persons. He feels it 'lost time to content with any such'.<sup>2</sup> Christian churches use the terms 'Union, Spiritual Incorporation, Renovation, or words of like import',<sup>3</sup> to refer obliquely or explicitly to the New Birth.

Since the New Birth is a central doctrine of the Gospels, it must be treated as a holy mystery. Like Wesley, one of Hartley's main criticisms of the Doctrine is that it uses highly inappropriate banter in speaking of the New Birth. Even if Warburton is correct that what Wesley takes as examples of the New Birth are in fact delusion or fraud (Hartley agrees that in many cases this is so), it is no excuse to treat the subject disrespectfully. Hartley believes that Warburton is not, as he purports, defending the doctrine against Wesley's misuse of it, but is in fact denying the doctrine entirely, though he could not do so openly. Instead of pointing out the differences between the true doctrine and errors concerning it, Warburton attacks Wesley's viewpoint but never speaks of the doctrine positively. Moreover, in addition to rejecting Wesley's beliefs on the New Birth, and while purporting generously to 'correct' Wesley's errors, Warburton is in fact only attacking him as a 'Fanatic, Hypocrite, Empyric, etc. unbecoming the character of a Christian or a Gentleman; and only introduces Mr. Whitefield, to represent him as the madder of the two'.<sup>4</sup> Hartley reminds Warburton

that in the spirit of meekness we generally make our way best and profit one another most, nay, in this disposition we may even turn our differences of opinion into an exercise of charity; whereas invective and ridicule will only serve to banish the good spirit of peace and love from our hearts ...<sup>5</sup>

In the preface to the Doctrine, Warburton declares that in a work defending religion,

personal abuse, the favorite colour that glares most in the Fool's Rhetoric, is carefully to be avoided. For nothing can so assimilate the Answerer to the fool he is consulting as a want of Charity, which this mode of defense so openly betrays. To Charity, the Fool makes no pretensions.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Defence, p. 380.  
 2 Ibid.  
 3 Ibid.  
 4 Defence, p. 393.  
 5 Defence, p. 397.  
 6 Doctrine of Grace, p. xii.

Warburton was probably sincere in saying this, but his temper and his tendency to dismiss contemptuously those with whom he disagreed<sup>1</sup> outweighed his good intentions, and he said of Law:

When I reflect on the wonderful infatuation of this ingenious man, who has spent a long life in hunting after, and, with an incredible appetite, devouring the trash dropt from every species of Mysticism, it puts me in mind of what Travellers tell us of a horrid Fanaticism in the East, where the Devotee makes a solemm vow never to taste any food but what has passed through the entrails of some impure or Savage Animal. Hence their whole lives are passed (like Mr. Law's amongst his Ascetics) in Woods and Forest's, far removed from the converse of mankind.<sup>2</sup>

Evans considered Warburton's treatment of Law 'disfigured ... by almost wanton brutality'.<sup>3</sup> Law angered Warburton with his Short but Sufficient Confutation of the Rev. Dr. Warburton's Projected Defence (As He calls it) of Christianity, in his Divine Legation of Moses, 1757. Of the effectiveness of this work, Evans says: 'it is enough to say that the book has the moral earnestness, the absence of personal detraction, and the close reasoning that distinguish Law's other polemical writings'.<sup>4</sup> Law had refuted Warburton's argument that 'the constant abode and supreme illumination of the Holy Spirit is in the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament',<sup>5</sup> not in the heart and soul of man. Hartley notes that even after the influence of Law's 'correcting pen', Warburton still contends that Christ's promise of the Comforter abiding forever with man 'is eminently fulfilled in our being possessed of the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament'.<sup>6</sup> Hartley emphasizes that Warburton's point of view is not merely a speculative error, but an opinion which attacks 'the life and soul of Christianity'.<sup>7</sup> One of Warburton's oddest arguments, resulting from his limiting the Holy Spirit to the New Testament, received careful attention from Hartley.

A further reason for the abatement of the influences of the supporting spirit of Grace is the peace and security of the CHURCH. There was a time when the Powers of this world were combined together for its destruction. At such a period, nothing but superior aid from Above could support humanity in sustaining so great a conflict as that which the holy Martyrs encountered with joy and rapture; the horrors of death in torment. But now the profession of the Christian Faith is attended with ease and honour; and the conviction, which the weight of human testimony, and the

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1 Mark Pattison felt that Warburton's stock argument was a threat to cudgel anyone who disputes his opinion', quoted in Seven Sages of Durham, p.238.  
 2 Doctrine of Grace, p.306, quoted in Defence, pp.434-5.  
 3 Evans, p.277.  
 4 Evans, p.217.  
 5 Quoted in Defence, p.400.  
 6 Quoted in Defence, p.401.  
 7 Ibid.

conclusions of human reason afford us, of its truth, are abundantly sufficient to support us in our religious perseverance.<sup>1</sup>

Hartley considered this proof of a worldly, venal spirit. As the way to union with God is the most difficult and demanding path, so he who seeks 'ease and honour' is enchained by a worldly perspective. Hartley asks

is the outward peace and security of the church a good reason for the abatement of the influences of the supporting spirit of grace? If so, have we not cause to fear lest the Lord is angry with us, that he has thus taken away that which is better, and given us in the room of it that which is worse, as spiritual good things must be allowed more excellent than those that are temporal?<sup>2</sup>

Here Hartley shows that Warburton places the material before the spiritual. In a way reminiscent of Law, Hartley follows the implications of his opponent's argument to its final conclusion, and then states that conclusion clearly and simply. Warburton's is a striking example of a religious viewpoint which has become fossilized because the spiritual aspect has been lost. Hartley feels that most Christians in practice forget the spiritual, but it is highly unusual for one to do so in theory also. It is little wonder that Byrom insinuated that Warburton was an unbeliever and an enemy to Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Warburton is projecting his own viewpoint onto the Church, though Hartley feels that history demonstrates that the church 'declined in spiritual gifts and graces, when honours and riches and the favour of princes flowed in upon it.'<sup>4</sup> Hartley reminds Warburton:

Man's natural inability for divine knowledge without the communication of ... spiritual power is thus express'd by the Wiseman: 'The things that are in heaven who hath searched out? And thy counsel who hath known, except thou give wisdom, and send thy Holy Spirit from above'.<sup>5</sup>

Warburton would answer that he could receive this 'wisdom' and the grace of the Holy Spirit from the Bible, as interpreted by his reason. This is, to Hartley, placing the Divine Sophia and the Holy Spirit beneath human reason; 'never was the Divine Sophia so degraded before ...!<sup>6</sup> Hartley is careful to point out that he is of course not against reason in its proper sphere.<sup>7</sup> But when Warburton sets up reason as 'abundantly sufficient to support us in our religious perseverance',<sup>8</sup> Hartley answers with the text, 'My grace is

<sup>1</sup> Doctrine, p.114, quoted Defence, pp.402-3.

<sup>2</sup> Defence, p.404.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Enthusiasm: A Poetical Essay', Poems, ii, pp.184-7.

<sup>4</sup> Defence, p.405.

<sup>5</sup> 'Wisdom. ix', Hartley's reference. Defence, p.413.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.414.

<sup>8</sup> Defence, p.414.

sufficient for thee'.<sup>1</sup> Warburton finds his 'sufficiency' in his reason, not in God.

In putting reason first, Warburton shows that he does not believe in the New Birth. Human reason

can only beget a human faith, and a moral certainty, which are not sufficient for our support and perseverance in godliness, nor have they power to produce any godly motion in the soul; whereas the spirit of life in the New Birth begets in us a divine faith, which has in it a divine assurance known only of them that have it: And this divine faith always worketh by divine love; and divine love by obedience to the divine commands .... This is the true supreme illumination of the Holy Spirit, hid<sup>2</sup> indeed to them whose minds the God of this world hath blinded ....

All Warburton's unusual ideas result from what Hartley considers his 'capital error':

if Jesus did, indeed, redeem Mankind, and restore them to their lost Inheritance; the scheme and progress of Revelation is completed: which beginning at the LAPSE, naturally and necessarily ends in the restoration and recovery of Life and Immortality by the death and passion of our Lord. Christianity considered in this view (and in this view only does Scripture give it us to consider) soon detects all the artful pretences of imposture; and secures its own honour by virtue of its very Essence: the great scene of Providence being now closed, in a full completion of its one, regular, entire, and eternal purpose.<sup>3</sup>

What Hartley most dislikes about this viewpoint is the ingratitude it shows in ignoring the Holy Spirit. If the 'great scene of Providence' ended with Christ's death, then all which followed is superfluous. This view effectively denies the New Birth, since the New Birth is accomplished through God's being revealed inwardly in spirit. Hartley finds it difficult to bear this dismissal of the Holy Spirit. He cautions Warburton that

as we honour the Father and the Son, so must we in like manner honour the Holy Ghost, as thro' him we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and without whom we can have no vital communication with the Godhead, for he is the light and life of God in the soul of man, and sheddeth abroad his love in our hearts: It is from him that all our good thoughts, desires and counsels do proceed; and from his divine influence that we alone pray to and praise God acceptably....<sup>4</sup>

At this point in his essay Hartley moves to his defence of Boehme, the complete opposite of Warburton in his view of the Holy Spirit and reason. Hartley precedes his defence of Boehme by declaring that mystics are 'men of heavenly light and fire, are often carried beyond the reach of others, and are not to be scanned and circumscribed by the rule and compass of every little

<sup>1</sup> '2 Cor. xii.9', Hartley's reference, Defence, p.414.

<sup>2</sup> Defence, p.415.

<sup>3</sup> Doctrine, p.336, quoted Defence, p.424.

<sup>4</sup> Defence, p.426.

system of man's framing'.<sup>1</sup> Warburton's main complaint is inevitably that Boehme is obscure and unintelligible. He also considers him 'a pretender to inspiration', and adds that Law's The Way to Divine Knowledge, 1752, does not at all succeed in making Boehme intelligible.<sup>2</sup> Warburton declares that Boehme spoke of what 'he knew his reader could not understand',<sup>3</sup> so as to appear to be inspired without much chance of being exposed. Hartley responded that since Warburton admitted that he could not understand Boehme, how could he be sure that Boehme was a fraud instead of divinely inspired? Hartley adds that one should remain open-minded, especially since Boehme led a virtuous, humble life, and that his principles could not be far wrong since his practice of the religious life was exemplary. Hartley reports the anecdote prefixed to eighteenth-century editions of Mysterium Magnum, that the Elector of Saxony had Boehme examined in his presence by six 'Doctors in divinity, besides Mathematicians'.<sup>4</sup> They were impressed with his meekness and depth of knowledge in natural and spiritual matters. But when the Prince demanded a judgement from them, they asked for more time since there was much they could not understand, which they hoped Boehme could make simpler, if not clearer. Boehme instead asked some questions of them, and of two astrologers present, and pointed out the religious errors of the time. The 'naked truth'<sup>5</sup> of Boehme's arguments stunned his examiners. Finally, in private the Prince examined Boehme's thought and then dismissed him, being 'well satisfied with his answers'.<sup>6</sup> The final judgement of one of the examiners, Dr. Meysner, was that God 'may have designed him for some extraordinary work', and he added that one cannot 'with justice pass judgment against that which we understand not; for surely he seems to be a man of wonderful high gifts of the Spirit'.<sup>7</sup> Hartley considers Warburton's view of Boehme premature and rash, and adds that whether Boehme's inspiration was divine or not, he unlocked many of the 'secrets of universal nature'<sup>8</sup> and had a profound understanding of scripture.

Doubtless what annoyed Warburton most was Boehme's frequent and powerful assertions that reason is of no use in spiritual matters, and more often than not is a positive evil.<sup>9</sup> This is the case, he felt, with most theologians.

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<sup>1</sup> Defence, p.437.

<sup>2</sup> Doctrine, pp.150,151.

<sup>3</sup> Doctrine, p.152.

<sup>4</sup> Defence, p.444.

<sup>5</sup> Defence, p.445.

<sup>6</sup> Defence, p.445.

<sup>7</sup> Defence, pp.445-6.

<sup>8</sup> Defence, p.447.

<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, Boehme did not wish to eliminate reason. He felt it should be the outward channel of the Inner Light and completely controlled by the Christ within. See Mysterium Magnum, 36:74.

Boehme emphasizes the dangers and limitations of reason far more frequently and emphatically than most mystics. One result of this is his belief that a minister who aggressively and dogmatically puts reason uppermost is an instrument of Babel, and the greatest enemy of the Church.

Hartley concludes his defence by saying that Warburton's opposition to Boehme is in the end the same as the general opposition made against mystics-- they are disliked because they use

those weapons which the Scriptures put into their hands, to combat the boasted sufficiency of proud man, and everything in him that leads to the exaltation of that abominable idol self, insisting strongly on the necessity of denying self, bearing the cross, becoming little children, ... and coming to him as poor creatures that have nothing to give, but all to receive.... And here among all the things that we are commanded to forsake,<sup>1</sup> that so we may be disciples of Christ, there is scarcely any sacrifice that we are more unwilling to offer up than the pride or self complacency we take in knowledge, especially where any stand in a high degree of reputation in the world for their learning and skill;<sup>2</sup> and yet this right eye must be plucked out, and we become sensible, that we know nothing yet as we ought to know...<sup>3</sup>

The one time in the essay when Hartley almost lost his temper was in response to Warburton's comment about Law devouring 'trash'. As there are those who falsely claim to be mystics or who misuse mysticism, so also the greatest mystics are not free of errors or faults, but

he that can overlook the precious pearls that enrich their writings, and sit down to pick out the straws that are scattered therein, shall, for me, have his pickings for his pains. What a mean artifice is this of building up a paltry character of straw on the blemishes of great and good men! Thus vermine feed and fatten on the dung that falls from the fairest and goodliest of animals. And as they were more than common men, so neither are they to be measured by the common standard of little creeping critics, who wriggling by mood and tense thro' all the rules of Lilly's Grammar, catch words and syllables, but never soar for wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

Up to this point in the essay Hartley has attempted to emphasize that reason is of no value in spiritual matters, and that Warburton in fact rejects the New Birth. Hereafter, having finished with Warburton, and preparing to

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<sup>1</sup> 'Luke xiv.33', Hartley's reference. 'So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple'.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Evans, p.277, on Warburton's reputation:

So complete, indeed, is the eclipse into which his reputation has fallen that it is difficult to realize the commanding position he once held or the general consent of his contemporaries to place him in the foremost rank. Hurd believed that Warburton's collected works would deliver him down to posterity as the ablest Divine, the greatest Writer, and the first Genius of his age.

<sup>3</sup> Defence, p.449.

<sup>4</sup> Defence, p.455.

bring the essay to a close, Hartley attempts to give the reader some sense of the inner life of mystics. Mystics are under the guidance of the Divine Sophia, through the Inner Light. They have attained this guidance through trials, great effort and continuing purification. But they are rewarded with periods of great joy, the depth of which varies with the degree of purification attained, even the faintest of which, however, is far superior to the fleeting joy the man of reason experiences. The Divine Sophia trains her disciples with 'sharp trials and severe exercises';<sup>1</sup> ease and honour are anathema since they pull one from the centre (God) to the periphery. This does not mean that mystics deny the world. The world must lead to God. If one seeks worldly values then one is looking backwards. Mystics live in the world for love and goodness, but do not abuse or conform to the world.

The man of reason, who probably denies spiritual realities and has in any case not attained to the spiritual life, forgets that the 'operations of the Spirit of God in holy souls, are subjects of a sacred nature' and must not be treated lightly, let alone 'with the petulance of a frothy wit'.<sup>2</sup> The man of reason may not judge these people. But he does have an important and fairly reliable way in which to perceive the deluded or false person masquerading as a mystic: by his fruits. If the person is humble and attempts to live the Sermon on the Mount, then the man of reason should withhold judgement and remain open-minded. For who is 'able to comprehend all the distinct ages and growths of good minds?... There is as great a difference in the statures of souls, as of bodies, etc.'<sup>3</sup> Even more importantly,

if we cannot yet receive and embrace each other in our several growths, measures and attainments, it is because we have little, dark, narrow and contracted hearts, feel but little of the love of Christ, nor are yet filled with that Spirit which is the spring, the center and the circle to all good Spirits in heaven and on earth.<sup>4</sup>

Mystics perceive all people as equals, since all are of infinite value. They have learned that nothing good can come from self, and have taken upon themselves the burden of the whole, since this is their Self. They do in this sense imitate the life of Christ. They put their whole self into the love of God so as to be made perfect. In this love of God they perceive one Church and one reality.

This divine charity is the great compass by which the Mystics steer; it is the very pole star; nay, their latitude and longitude and center too: Their employment and delight is love; their hearts and ever pulse beat

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<sup>1</sup> Defence, p.457.

<sup>2</sup> Defence, p.463.

<sup>3</sup> Defence, pp.464-5, quoting Jeremiah White.

<sup>4</sup> Defence, p.465.

love; it is the element of their life; their summum bonum, and their summum totum. Perhaps the very angels stretch not farther into the vast expanse of love than some of these have done; for they love with the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; and therefore they love all God's creatures in heaven and in earth.<sup>1</sup>

### III

Warburton equated mysticism with delusion and madness. Hartley perceived that Warburton's views on the New Birth were identical to his views on mysticism, that if the New Birth were not a gospel doctrine he would have openly denied it. Warburton was correct in associating the New Birth with mysticism. In defending the New Birth, Hartley felt he was simultaneously defending mysticism; and in showing that the New Birth is scriptural, he suggests that mysticism is also.

Warburton disliked, if not hated, Law, not only for the reasons discussed above, but also because he believed that though Wesley later broke with Law, it was still the Nonjuror who launched Wesley's career by providing him with the necessary ideas of 'inner religion', a religion of the heart directly antithetical to Warburton's religion of reason. If Warburton were not well known for his rigorous defence of Pope's Essay on Man against the charge of Deism, Hartley might easily have argued that Warburton was himself a Deist. In any case, Hartley's defence was made easier by Warburton's extreme rationalist position.

Hartley's essay is a fairly close refutation of the Doctrine. A weakness of the Defence, perhaps resulting from this close answering of Warburton, which had to be done with great care, considering Warburton's eminence, is that it is, on the whole, rather too cautious. Hartley was carefully directing his argument to the reader who would at the least excuse dismiss him as an enthusiast, if not a madman. Hartley went to the lion's den and addressed Warburton's own party. Although emotionally committed to the defence, Hartley (with the minor exception noted above), maintains a loving attitude which is remarkable considering the insulting tone of the Doctrine. Hartley personally demonstrated the main point of his argument-- that with mystics, love is paramount.

The Doctrine was (and is) generally considered inferior to most of Warburton's other work.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson considered it a 'poor performance'.<sup>3</sup> It was excessively negative and is 'happiest at destruction'.<sup>4</sup> The Defence went unnoticed except for Hartley's friends, who needed no convincing.<sup>5</sup> Warburton

<sup>1</sup> Defence, p.476.

<sup>2</sup> See Evans, p.238.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.279.

<sup>5</sup> Law's biographer had a high opinion of the Defence. Cf. J.H. Overton, William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic, (1881), p.370, where he calls it 'one of the most interesting and rational defences of Mysticism, and especially of the mystic Law, which is extant'.

probably felt it was beneath his dignity to answer Hartley, and made no reply. That Wesley considered it 'ingenious' but not satisfactory is hardly surprising. At one point in the essay after defending Wesley against Warburton's attack,<sup>1</sup> Hartley affectionately rebuked Wesley for his extreme attack on Boehme and mysticism, which Warburton was happy to use.<sup>2</sup> Wesley, in addition to being anti-mystical, also strongly disagreed with Hartley's belief in universal redemption. Like Jane Lead, Francis Lee, Roach and Law, Hartley believed that redemption would continue 'so long as there was one soul to save'.<sup>3</sup>

By 1764, when the Defence appeared, Shaftesbury, Toland, Cheyne, Roach, Byrom and Law were dead. Smart, Brooke and Usher apparently made no reference to it. Smart, interested in the millennium as well as mysticism, and having just been released, may have read it. He did generously say of Warburton, whom he had earlier attacked in his poem on Dr. Webster: 'God be gracious to Warburton'.<sup>4</sup> Brooke was at work on the Fool, and was probably oblivious to all but the major works coming from London. With Usher, it is impossible even to say that he was interested in mystical literature. However, Hartley's own view of the Defence is known:

I have here to desire the reader not to think the less favourably or honourably of the excellent Mystical Writers, on account of any unworthiness in their present advocate; for tho' I think this Defence sufficient for the charge it is concerned with; yet persuaded I am, that no one who is not of the same order and character with themselves is fully qualified to do them justice: However, this office was incumbent on me, and I have so far discharged it with all good conscience, and in simplicity of truth, without being discouraged by any consequences, that may follow from thus defending the insulted characters of those, whom I believe from my heart to have been the most excellent among the servants of God, in every age of the church; whose holy examples I wish I had more followed than I have done; whose writings I reverence; and with whom, Lord hear my prayer! may my lot be cast for all eternity!<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Defence, p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> Doctrine, p. 151 n., where Warburton in effect says that even Wesley disliked Boehme, and implies that mystics are fools fighting among themselves.

<sup>3</sup> Defence, p. 430.

<sup>4</sup> Jubilate, C, 40.

<sup>5</sup> Defence, pp. 470-1.

## CHAPTER 9

### BERKELEY'S 'SIRIS': THE MYSTICISM OF IMMATERIALISM

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In Idealism we have perhaps the most sublime theory of Being which has ever been constructed by the human intellect: a theory so sublime, in fact, that it can hardly have been produced by the exercise of 'pure reason' alone, but must be looked upon as a manifestation of that natural mysticism, that instinct for the Absolute, which is latent in man.

Evelyn Underhill

The stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine.

Sir James Jean

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Oliver Elton made the interesting observation that both 'Law and Berkeley, deeply pious men, had begun as votaries of reason and dialectic with a strong dash of satire, and both of them afterwards plunged into mysticism'.<sup>1</sup> Berkeley and Law do have much in common. Each was an Anglican Divine. Each studied Malebranche with great care early in life. Though each disagreed in important ways with some of Malebranche's views (especially his dualism of matter and spirit),<sup>2</sup> both Law and Berkeley owed much to the French mystic. Malebranche provided much of the philosophical data which helped Berkeley formulate his doctrine of immaterialism. Law's Cambridge thesis was Malebranche, and the Vision of All Things in God. Malebranche was probably the source of (or at least reinforced) Berkeley's and Law's view of an immediately present God in

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<sup>1</sup> 'Reason and Enthusiasm in the Eighteenth Century', Essays and Studies, x (1924), p.125. It is perhaps worth observing that Elton is very much on the side of reason against mysticism, which he states outright, ibid p.136. His use of 'plunged' into mysticism is but one example of his point of view.

<sup>2</sup> Malebranche's dualism is curiously out of harmony with his philosophy and was probably forced on him by Catholic doctrine. See A. Luce, Berkeley and Malebranche, (Oxford, 1934), pp.60-61.

whom men live, move and have their being.<sup>1</sup> Both attacked Deism and Mandeville in an impassioned way. Late in life each wrote important letters dissuading friends from joining the Church of Rome and emphasized the invisible, mystical Church. Each disliked enthusiasm (although it can be argued that each was in the positive sense, an enthusiast). The late work of both was freer, more loving and tolerant, and far more mystical than their early writings. Nevertheless, their early work did possess mystical implications, and showed the effect of mystical influences. The will was central to each, and both had a living sense of fundamental unity.<sup>2</sup>

It is also natural to associate Berkeley with another mystic, Dr. Cheyne. Berkeley read Cheyne's Philosophical Principles of Natural Religion, 1705, which Luce believes must have impressed Berkeley.<sup>3</sup> The first publication of each was a mathematical treatise. Chesterfield and Pope were common friends, and Berkeley was in England a number of times for long periods, so they may have been personally acquainted. One became a physician, the other, through his use of tar-water and in the absence of doctors, was forced to practice medicine in Cloyne. Both were particularly interested in nervous disorders, and were themselves so plagued. Each was a careful student of Neoplatonism, and in Cheyne's books and in Siris, 1744, the most 'practical' health questions are combined with transcendental philosophy.<sup>5</sup> They considered the distinction between physical and metaphysical artificial.

Unlike most of the figures studied in earlier chapters, and to a greater degree than any of them, Berkeley's life is well documented. Over 270 of his letters have survived. Yet in a sense he is a more obscure figure than most, perhaps all of the men studied thus far. With one important exception, which will be discussed below, Berkeley's letters never deal with his deepest views on religion. This is the case even in his celebrated correspondence with Samuel Johnson, which treated his philosophy in some depth. Many of his letters deal exclusively with business matters or contemporary affairs and are very much written in the public mode. Even Hartley, about whose life so little is

<sup>1</sup> See Recherche de La Vérité, III, vi, 'Que nous voyons toutes choses en Dieu'.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Poiret's Fides et Ratio Collatae, (1708), the book which introduced Boehme to Law, was in Berkeley's library. See René Maheu, 'Le Catalogue de la Bibliothèque des Berkeley', Revue D'Histoire de la Philosophie, (1929), p.190. For a short description of the book, which also discusses its authorship, see Hobhouse, Selected Mystical Writings of Law, p.381.

<sup>3</sup> Berkeley and Malebranche, p.50.

<sup>4</sup> Cheyne's Regimen was in Berkeley's library. See 'A Catalogue of Berkeley's Library', item 1099. Berkeley also had the complete works of Guyon, and Fénelon's mystical works.

<sup>5</sup> Overton, William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic, p.210, n.1, writes:  
'Bishop Berkeley's Siris is essentially a mystic work.'

known, is a much clearer figure, whose essential religious point of view is undeniably and distinctly stated in the Defence. Not so with Berkeley. He has a very private side; or perhaps it is more accurate to say that his public image was cultivated with highly unusual care and thoroughness. W.B. Yeats has said outright that Berkeley, the philosopher, was a mask.<sup>1</sup> In what is now the standard biography of Berkeley, Luce has done the important work of clearing aside the witty and nasty myths which grew up, especially in the eighteenth century, around Berkeley the man.<sup>2</sup> It is Luce, who, in his many articles and books on Berkeley, has produced the most concerted argument that there is but one Berkeley, and that he is 'transparently honest and single-minded'.<sup>3</sup> One can readily grant this, but what one cannot grant is that Berkeley is 'transparently clear' in his religious and mystical viewpoint. Luce has 'produced' one Berkeley by giving insufficient attention and importance to Berkeley's last major work, Siris, which he clearly does not like.<sup>4</sup> Luce has over-reacted to those who argue for two Berkeleys, i.e. that the late Berkeley repudiates the Berkeley of A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, 1710, the first work in which Berkeley openly argues for immaterialism.<sup>5</sup> In this, one can agree with Luce. There are not two Berkeleys. The late Berkeley did not repudiate the main doctrine of his early work. But the change of emphasis is striking and very important. Siris is a development, not a repudiation, of Berkeley's early work.

Even Luce has readily admitted that Berkeley carefully 'prepared' his audience for maximum acceptance of his philosophy, and withheld what he thought would not be accepted; his important debt to the mystic Malebranche is one example.<sup>6</sup> In A New Theory of Vision, 1709, immaterialism is implied but in no sense stated. Also, this work answers in advance what Berkeley believed would be the main arguments against his philosophy of immaterialism as it would be advanced in the Principles, to be published soon after the New Theory. Though unusual, this behaviour is consistent with any author's desire to give his argument a fair hearing. But the question remains: what was Berkeley's religious point of view? and did he wear a public mask?

<sup>1</sup> See his Introduction to J.M. Hone and M.M. Rossi's Bishop Berkeley, (1931). Cf. also in Yeats' Diary, quoted by A. Luce, Berkeley's Immaterialism, (1945), preface: 'Berkeley the bishop was a humbug'.

<sup>2</sup> Luce, The Life of George Berkeley, (1949), Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Berkeley's Immaterialism, p.vii.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Luce, 'Is There a Berkeleian Philosophy?', Hermathena, xxv (1936), p.197, where he refers to Siris as 'an old man's ramble through quack remedies to Elysian fields'.

<sup>5</sup> See for example John Wild, George Berkeley, (Cambridge, Mass. 1936).

<sup>6</sup> See Berkeley and Malebranche, p.40.

Donald Davie has argued that Berkeley's diction in Siris is consciously ambiguous, so as to connect the physical and metaphysical worlds.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Davie states that the entire work 'is one great metaphor'.<sup>2</sup> John Wisdom believes that Berkeley was intellectually unfair in his various attacks on the Deists because he felt 'an unwelcome core of sympathy'<sup>3</sup> for them. It is odd that this powerful intellect who was always a free thinker in philosophy and other aspects of his life, was (at least publicly) the most orthodox of churchmen. In his Philosophical Commentaries he wrote:

I was distrustful at 8 years old and consequently by nature disposed for these new Doctrines.<sup>4</sup>

G.A. Johnston has noted that, like the Deists, Berkeley's regular line of argument in philosophy is 'Do not believe anything which you cannot prove for yourself'.<sup>5</sup> An entry in the Philosophical Commentaries shows that Berkeley excluded religion from his free-thinking principle: 'N.B. To use utmost caution not to give the least handle of offence to the Church or Churchmen.'<sup>6</sup> Johnston argues that Berkeley's motive in not angering the Church, was, in part, the realization--simple and absolute--that preferment depended on his orthodoxy.<sup>7</sup> It seems more likely, however, that the preferment motive was secondary to Berkeley's desire to defend and advance religion, and in any case to avoid injuring it. It is unfortunate that (partly because he felt the 'pull' of Deism), Berkeley believed he could best defend religion, negatively, by attacking Deism, rather than by a positive promotion of religion. Alciphron, 1732, which is his major defence of religion (i.e. attack on Deism), though brilliant and his best work as literature, is particularly unfair to Shaftesbury, who is misrepresented.<sup>8</sup> But, very significantly, in this his major religious statement, Berkeley's own religious viewpoint is not at all clear; the work is

<sup>1</sup> 'Berkeley's Style in Siris', The Cambridge Journal, 4(1950-51), p.428.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.430. This is literally true since Siris was the old Egyptian name for the Nile, from the Greek word for cord or chain. Cf. Berkeley's letter to Thomas Prior in Works, ed. T. Jessop, v, p.185: 'The virtue of tar-water, flowing like the Nile from a secret and occult source, brancheth out into innumerable channels, conveying health and relief wherever it is applied'. Cf. full title of Siris: A Chain of Philosophical Reflexions and Inquiries Concerning the Virtues of Tar-water, and divers other Subjects connected together and arising One from Another.

<sup>3</sup> The Unconscious Origin of Berkeley's Philosophy, (1953), p.157.

<sup>4</sup> In Works, ed. A. Luce, i, p.33, B, 226. Hereafter cited with notebook letter and number.

<sup>5</sup> The Development of Berkeley's Philosophy, (1923), p.331.

<sup>6</sup> A, 715.

<sup>7</sup> Johnston, pp.330-337.

<sup>8</sup> See Dialogue III. There is a fine discussion of Berkeley's criticism of Shaftesbury in Paul Olscamp, The Moral Philosophy of George Berkeley, (The Hague, 1970), pp.154-172; Olscamp notes ibid., p. 154, that 'Berkeley and Shaftesbury actually agreed with each other more than they disagreed....'

almost wholly taken up with attacks on various kinds of free-thinking from which it is impossible to sift Berkeley's philosophy of religion. Thus it seems clear that Berkeley, who never did anything half way, did not publish his personal religious viewpoint or apply his brilliant and sceptical mind to a study of religion (publicly, that is), because he could not have done so without endangering his position as an orthodox churchman. It was therefore almost inevitable that he would attack the Deists. This would ipso facto demonstrate his orthodoxy, help him in securing preferment,<sup>1</sup> and, he believed, would be a defence of religion, which he genuinely wished to produce.

Berkeley exercised the exoteric-esoteric distinction so strictly in his religious viewpoint that most scholars (including Luce), take his exoteric statements to be his essential if not absolute point of view.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, were it not for the important evidence provided in Berkeley's private letter to his friend Sir John James,<sup>3</sup> in which he talks of the Inner Light and of the universal, invisible Church, Berkeley would have been completely successful in concealing his mystical viewpoint. This is not to say that there is no other evidence, for Siris itself is evidence of Berkeley's esotericism. However, the James letter is the most important external evidence.

Peter Wenz provided evidence of Berkeley's esotericism with his argument that Berkeley was a Christian Neoplatonist.<sup>4</sup> Luce asserts, as does Jessop (with less assurance) that Berkeley did not accept the Platonic Ideas.<sup>5</sup> Wenz, however, argues that not only did Berkeley believe that 'abstract ideas exist in the mind of God and that the world was created by God using these ideas as models or archetypes',<sup>6</sup> but, moreover, that this viewpoint is implicit as early as the Principles. Wenz clearly shows that Berkeley's famous attack on abstract ideas is limited to human beings, and is not an argument that abstract ideas are logically impossible.<sup>7</sup> Wenz ends the article by explaining why Berkeley concealed his Christian Neoplatonism until the publication of Siris.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, i, p.86, quoted by Johnston, p.336: 'The dissection of a deist was a recognised title to obtaining preferment'.

<sup>2</sup> In Siris, 337, Berkeley speaks approvingly of Pythagoras' and Plato's use of the exoteric-esoteric distinction. All numerical references to Siris are to paragraphs which Berkeley conveniently numbers.

<sup>3</sup> Written in 1741, several months before James' death. The letter will be examined below.

<sup>4</sup> 'Berkeley's Christian Neo-Platonism', JHI, 37 (1976), pp.537-546.

<sup>5</sup> For Luce see Berkeley and Malebranche, p.176, and for Jessop see Siris, Works, v, pp.16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Wenz, p.537.

<sup>7</sup> Wenz, p.538.

Now at the time he wrote the Principles Berkeley was convinced that idealism promised the solution to all philosophical perplexities, including skepticism. Thus, ... he blames 'the arguments urged by skeptics in all ages... on the supposition of external [material] objects' (Princ.87). So Berkeley thought his philosophy would avoid skepticism so long as it remained immaterialist; he did not think the existence of archetypal ideas, even abstract archetypal ideas, would entail skepticism. At the same time, however, he was aware that some philosophers considered archetypes, especially abstract ones, to entail skepticism. Given his conservative record, one would naturally expect Berkeley to avoid all mention of archetypal ideas, abstract or otherwise, until such time as he could present, in reply to the probable objection that they entail skepticism, a decisive argument showing that though skepticism stems from a belief in external matter, none results from an immaterialist neo-Platonism... [Yet] abstract archetypal ideas are most obviously productive of skepticism in a philosophy such as Berkeley's, according to which humans can have no abstract ideas at all and so could never hope to have adequate knowledge of abstract archetypes. As no one else had yet noticed that his use of archetypal ideas entailed that those ideas must be abstract, Berkeley had every reason to remain totally silent on this point until he had prepared an adequate reply to these probable objections. Not surprisingly, however, since the belief in abstract archetypal ideas really does entail as much skepticism as does the belief in matter, Berkeley's hoped for argument reducing all of skepticism to a belief in matter was never forthcoming. Thus his fear of the charge of skepticism forced him to conceal his Christian neo-Platonism until his interest in the whole problem of skepticism had waned. And then he wrote the Siris.<sup>2</sup>

This is, one feels, an accurate explanation, except in one important detail. It is not clear why Wenz believes Berkeley lost interest in the question of skepticism. Berkeley always made God the unum necessarium, especially in his later life and in Siris. It is most unlikely that he would lose interest in the question of skepticism: rather, the very solution to the problem was offered in Siris. But the answer was not given openly. Berkeley adheres to the exoteric-esoteric distinction. For the solution involves mysticism which Berkeley would not openly espouse for the reasons mentioned above, and because he knew that the majority of people would be unable to utilize it. Thus, to support mysticism openly would be bad for the Church since it would confuse or lead astray those not prepared for inner, spiritual religion. And in any case Berkeley would want to avoid offending the Church. To satisfy the exoteric, orthodox reader that he (Berkeley) was not promoting mystical doctrines, and simultaneously to inspire the esoteric reader to follow the chain of suggestions being offered, Berkeley states:

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<sup>1</sup> Wenz's addition.

<sup>2</sup> Wenz, pp.545-6. Naguib Baladi, 'Plotin et Berkeley: Le Témoignage de la Siris', Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 24 (1970), pp.338-47, treats the important similarities in the life and work of the two men.

The displeasure of some readers may perhaps be incurred by surprising them into certain reflections and inquiries for which they have no curiosity. But perhaps some others may be pleased to find a dry subject varied by digressions, traced through remote inferences, and carried into ancient times, whose hoary maxims (Sects. 298,301),<sup>1</sup> scattered in this essay, are not proposed as principles, but barely as hints to awaken and exercise the inquisitive reader, on points not beneath the attention of the ablest men. Those great men, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, the most consummate in politics, who founded States, or instructed princes, or wrote most accurately on public government, were at the same time most acute at all abstracted and sublime speculations; the clearest light being ever necessary to guide the most important actions. And, whatever the world thinks, he who hath not much meditated upon God, the human mind, and the summum bonum, may possibly make a thriving earthworm, but will most indubitably make a sorry patriot and a sorry statesman.<sup>2</sup>

Berkeley the strategist is much in evidence here. He knows that the disclaimer not 'proposed as principles', does not much weaken the favourable impression he gives the doctrines dealt with in the essay, and it frees him from openly supporting them. Thus, he has it both ways. Significantly, Jessop uses the disclaimer as 'expressly' showing that Berkeley is 'reporting, and perhaps only reporting'<sup>3</sup> the doctrines, not supporting them.

But what is this mystical solution to Berkeley's problem of acknowledging abstract, archetypal ideas in the Divine Mind, yet holding also that the human mind can have no abstract ideas at all, thus allowing if not encouraging scepticism? What Berkeley required (and supplied in Siris) was the bridge which mysticism provides between man and God. Through mystical union with God, man can 'know' abstract, archetypal ideas in the Divine Mind. Through the Christ within, the spark of the Infinite in man, the human mind overcomes its finite inability to know the Divine Ideas.

## I

Berkeley wrote a poem, 'On Tar', which gives a good overview of Siris.

Hail vulgar juice of never-fading pine!  
 Cheap as thou art, thy virtues are divine.  
 To show them and explain (such is thy store)  
 There needs much modern and much ancient lore.  
 While with slow pains we search the healing spell,  
 Those sparks of life, that in thy balsam dwell,  
 From lowest earth by gentle steps we rise  
 Through air, fire, aether to the highest skies.  
 Things gross and low present truth's sacred clue.  
 Sense, fancy, reason, intellect pursue

<sup>1</sup> Berkeley's insertion. 298 contains references to Hermes Trismegistus and Iamblichus; 301 refers to the human mind as 'clogged and bourne downward by the strong and early impressions of sense....'

<sup>2</sup> Siris, 350.

<sup>3</sup> Works, v, p.16.

Her winding mazes, and by Nature's laws  
 From plain effects trace out the mystic cause,  
 And principles explore, though wrapt in shades,  
 That spring of life which this great world pervades,  
 The spring that moves, the Intellect that guides  
 Th' eternal One that o'er the Whole presides.<sup>1</sup>

Siris was Berkeley's most popular book in his lifetime. It went through six editions in 1744.<sup>2</sup> He put more time and effort into it than into any of his other works.<sup>3</sup> As with Dr. Cheyne's books, it was not read for its mystical philosophy but for its medical content. Berkeley numbers each paragraph (which he calls 'sections'), to a total of 368. The first 151 sections present specific instructions on how to prepare tar-water, what its medicinal values are, and the ailments for which it is recommended. In so doing Berkeley touches in some detail on the anatomy of plants and the chemistry of acids, salts, air and light. It is sufficient here to say that Berkeley took great care in 'scientifically' analyzing the possible uses of the drug and apparently obtained some significant results.<sup>4</sup> It is at this point that most eighteenth-century readers stopped, and where the present examination must begin.

The scope of the second half of Siris is considerable, and can be gauged by a brief synopsis: sections 152-219--the natural primacy of aether or fire, sections 251-264--Nature, non-causative, the effect of a Cosmic Mind, sections 256-332--the wisdom of the ancients supports the spiritual interpretation of the universe, sections 333-368--the knowledge of God.

To understand Siris aright, it must be remembered, as the full title makes clear, that the work is a series of hints. Although the hints are connected ('A Chain of Philosophical Reflexions... connected together'), the work does not have an organized, developing argument in the usual sense. Like the river and the mystical truth it symbolized,<sup>5</sup> Siris flows on naturally and organically with 'Subjects... arising One from Another'. Siris, like all rivers, eventually flows into the ocean, symbolic of Truth and union with the Absolute.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the first half of the poem. For a brief statement by Jessop of its history, see Works, v, p.223.

<sup>2</sup> For bibliographical information see Works, v, pp.3-5.

<sup>3</sup> Luce, Life of Berkeley, p.200.

<sup>4</sup> Luce, Life of Berkeley, pp.196-206, gives a fine overview of the existing health conditions in Cloyne which, because of requent famine, epidemics and the absence of doctors, virtually forced Berkeley to act as a physician. There is a thorough treatment of the considerable contemporary influence of tar-water in Marjorie Nicolson and G. Rousseau, 'Bishop Berkeley and Tar-Water', The Augustan Milieu, ed. H.K. Miller et al, (Oxford, 1970), pp.102-137.

<sup>5</sup> The Egyptians viewed the Nile much as the Hindus do the Ganges. Flowing from heaven, it was sacred, a giver of life, and symbolic of man's eventual reunion with God.

One of the most striking aspects of Siris is its similarity of structure and purpose to Boehme's Signatura Rerum. Each deals in considerable depth with the alchemical importance of salts, acids and oil, and analyses the physiology of plants. Each deals with the problem of finding a panacea, which Berkeley felt he had discovered in tar-water. Each work combines physical with metaphysical questions, and both authors held that the state of the soul is the real cause of health or disease.<sup>1</sup>

The sections treating aetherial fire (152-219) begin with a brief restatement of Berkeley's view of causality, a main feature of his philosophy, first stated in the Principles.<sup>2</sup> Mind is the only true cause in the universe. All so-called 'corporeal' causes are in fact merely instruments used by God, not of necessity,<sup>3</sup> but to insure the uniform course of nature so that finite spirits can perceive order and structure and so have a basis for understanding, and therefore of action. The invisible fire, Berkeley regards as the first 'corporeal' instrument of the Divine Mind. It is the substance of light. Since Berkeley is an immaterialist, he emphasizes that he uses the term 'corporeal' merely to accommodate common terminology, and that when 'therefore, we speak of corporeal agents or corporeal causes, this is to be understood in a different, subordinate, and improper sense.'<sup>4</sup> The aether operates directly on air and through air, on everything else. All effects in nature proceed from aether, which necessarily can only be known by its effects. Fire is the vehicle of the soul, the means whereby it operates.<sup>5</sup>

After giving examples of the place of aether in Greek philosophy, such as Aristotle's view that the heat of a living body is divine because God, immediately united to the aether, is the source of it,<sup>6</sup> Berkeley moves to Eastern thought. He notes the Hermetic view, as stated in the Asclepian Dialogue, that all life springs from 'a fine subtle aether',<sup>7</sup> directed by the Divine Will. He mentions similar Chaldean, Persian and Chinese views, and emphasizes that Zoroastrians did not worship fire, but used visible fire to honour the invisible aether which upholds creation. Berkeley notes the place of universal fire in alchemy

<sup>1</sup> Signatura Rerum. x: 'Of the Inward and Outward Cure of Man.' Berkeley had at least one of Boehme's books in his library. See R. Aaron, 'A Catalogue of Berkeley's Library', Mind, xli (1932), p.474.

<sup>2</sup> See Principles, 25-33.

<sup>3</sup> This would be putting a limitation on God since instruments, 'tools' are necessary only when an action cannot otherwise be accomplished.

<sup>4</sup> Siris, 154.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Law, Christian Regeneration (1739), Works, v, p.139: 'every Life, whether spiritual or corporeal, consists in Fire, or rather is Fire...'

<sup>6</sup> Siris, 170.

<sup>7</sup> Siris, 177.

and modern chemistry, and explains the action of the aether in plants and animals (212-219). It operates on them through light, heat, air and food.

The criticism of mechanistic philosophy (220-250) is not very detailed. This is to be expected, since he fully explains his philosophy of immaterialism in the Principles and in Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous, 1713, the latter presenting his immaterialism for the more general reader, omitting some of the detailed philosophical argument, and modelled on the Platonic dialogues.

Berkeley pays a great tribute to Newton's 'singular penetration' and 'profound knowledge'<sup>1</sup> in discovering many of the laws relating to attraction and repulsion, but notes that

the great men of antiquity resolved gravity into the immediate action of an intelligent incorporeal being. To which Sir Isaac Newton himself attests and subscribes,<sup>2</sup> although he may perhaps sometimes be thought to forget himself in his manner of speaking of physical agents, which in a strict sense are none at all, and in supposing real forces to exist in bodies, in which, to speak truly, attraction and repulsion should be considered only as tendencies or motions, that is, as mere effects, and their laws as laws of motion.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of science for Berkeley is to observe the course of nature so as to discover the laws whereby it operates. This is an important contribution to human knowledge, but is not the supreme contribution which science believes it to be. Berkeley believes the work of science is more modest than it realizes. Science, contrary to what it thinks, can never deal with causes since all it perceives are effects. The scientist has his back to the light and is in Plato's cave, barely observing what are in truth mere shadows.<sup>4</sup> His most serious mistake is confusing effects with causes. This is for Berkeley the original sin of intellect. It has caused the substitution of matter for God.<sup>5</sup>

In sections 251-264, where he talks of nature, non-causative, being the effect of a Cosmic Mind, Berkeley presents his interesting view that the phenomena of nature are a visual divine discourse for the benefit and instruction of all. Berkeley's explanation of this natural language is based on his theory of causality. Since God is the only true cause, and since He acts regularly

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<sup>1</sup> Siris, 245.

<sup>2</sup> Siris, 246.

<sup>3</sup> Optics, III, i, 31 (Jessop's reference).

<sup>4</sup> Sir Arthur Eddington, The Nature of the Physical World, (Cambridge, 1929), p. xvi: In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. It is all symbolic, and as a symbol the physicist leaves it. Then comes the alchemist Mind who transmutes the symbols.... To put the conclusion crudely, the stuff of the world is mind-stuff.

<sup>5</sup> See Works, i, p.108.

(i.e. through the laws of nature) so that finite spirits have the ability to understand (to various degrees) external reality, it follows that the relation between cause and effect is arbitrary.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Berkeley's theory of causality is in reality a doctrine of signs. The mediate 'cause', which is usually considered the immediate or true cause, as for example lightning striking a house, is in fact merely a sign. To Berkeley, therefore, causality does not involve cause and effect, merely sign and thing signified. The fire which one sees is not the cause of the pain one feels if too close to the fire; it is merely the natural sign that forewarns one of it.<sup>2</sup> The laws of nature form a 'grammar'<sup>3</sup> for the Language of Nature.<sup>4</sup> Berkeley explains that

We know a thing when we understand it; and we understand it when we can interpret or tell what it signifies. Strictly, the sense knows nothing. We perceive indeed sounds by hearing, and characters<sup>5</sup> by sight; but we are not therefore said to understand them. After the same manner, the phenomena of nature are alike visible to all; but all have not alike learned the connexion of natural things, or understand what they signify, or know how to vaticinate by them... The phenomena of nature, which strike on the senses and are understood by the mind, form not only a magnificent spectacle, but also a most coherent, entertaining, and instructive Discourse; and to effect this, they are conducted, adjusted, and ranged by the greatest wisdom. This Language or Discourse is studied with different attention, and interpreted with different degrees of skill. But so far as men have studied and remarked its rules, and can interpret right, so far they may be said to be knowing in nature. A beast is like a man who hears a strange tongue but understands nothing.... The formation of plants and animals, the motions of natural bodies, their various properties, appearances, and vicissitudes, in a word, the whole series of things in this visible world, which we call the Course of Nature, is so wisely managed and carried on that the most improved human reason cannot thoroughly comprehend even the least particle thereof; so far is it from seeming to be produced by fuddled or confounded reason.<sup>6</sup>

Since there is no necessary connection between sign and thing signified, the relation must be learned. Fire does not of itself suggest pain. Yet if the Language of Nature is a divine language, it must therefore be a perfect language. This can only mean that though the relation between sign and thing signified is arbitrary, being for the aid of the creatures not the Creator, the relation must also be natural. Indeed, when review sub specie aeternitatis, the laws of nature, since they exist in the mind of God, must have a perfect reality. Thus, men do not have to fear that though the connection between sign and thing signified is artificial,<sup>7</sup> that it is therefore capricious, nor do they have to fear a plurality of signs. Every sign as 'cause' and every sign as 'effect'

<sup>1</sup> See Principles, 106. The relation is arbitrary, but of course not capricious.

<sup>2</sup> Principles, 65.

<sup>3</sup> Siris, 252.

<sup>4</sup> Berkeley's term.

<sup>5</sup> 'Commonly used for "letters",' Jessop's note.

<sup>6</sup> Siris, 253, 254, 255.

<sup>7</sup> See The Theory of Vision or Visual Language shewing the immediate Presence and Providence of a Deity Vindicated and Explained, (1733), 40ff.

always and only suggests its one cause or effect. There is a perfect one to one pre-established relationship through which God insures that the Language of Nature is systematic and perfectly adjusted.

How would Berkeley answer those who claim that nature is either a blind force, or at least imperfect or evil or amoral? He answers that God's notation, His symbolism, is not self-evident; as in mathematics the notation must be learned so that what seemed meaningless can take on meaning. This is what the real work of science should be. It can never know causes; its business is to help elucidate the relation of sign and thing signified. In the Principles, Berkeley asserts this:

... it is the searching after and endeavoring to understand these signs instituted by the Author of Nature, that ought to be the employment of the natural philosopher; and not the pretending to explain things by corporeal causes, which doctrine seems to have too much estranged the minds of men from the active principles, the supreme and wise Spirit 'in whom we live, move, and have our being.'<sup>1</sup>

The Language of Nature must be inclusive enough to instruct all levels of finite spirits with their different degrees of intellectual and spiritual knowledge. Moreover, finite spirits at all stages of development must be encouraged to advance systematically, and so each stage, each link in the great chain, is more vivid than the one below it. Yet one must not be so enchanted by one level that one ceases to aspire. The letters and words of the Language of Nature are often so engaging and pleasurable that many do not go on to their meaning and purpose. They turn means into ends, and their advancement is thereby delayed. This is particularly true of those trapped by the senses.<sup>2</sup>

Berkeley's answer to those who complain that nature is imperfect or amoral, is that all things do tend towards the Good; if one does not see this, it is because of imperfect understanding either of God's notation or of the meaning of the divine language. The Spirit and Mind of God insure ultimate harmony.

The hidden force that unites, adjusts, and causeth all things to hang together and move in harmony--which Orpheus and Empedocles styled Love--this principle of union is no blind principle, but acts with intellect. This divine Love and Intellect are not themselves obvious to our view, or otherwise discerned than in their effects. Intellect enlightens, Love connects, and the Sovereign Good attracts all things.

All things are made for the supreme good, all things tend to that end; and we may be said to account for a thing when we show that it is so best.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Principles, 66.

<sup>2</sup> Siris, 264.

<sup>3</sup> Siris, 259-260.

At this point it may be asked what place finite beings have in Berkeley's theory of causality; or put another way, what is Berkeley's view of human freedom? To answer this it is first necessary very briefly to sketch Berkeley's view of external reality. Though Berkeley denied the existence of matter, he did not--contrary to Samuel Johnson's stone-kicking 'refutation'--deny external reality. Indeed, he gave it more reality than did Locke. Berkeley agrees with Locke that all one knows of external reality is the ideas of it which exist in one's mind. But unlike Locke who said that matter causes ideas and is itself unknowable, Berkeley holds that external reality is only inert ideas. The ideas are the reality. Their existence is based solely on mind, solely on being perceived, Berkeley's esse est percipi. In the following quotations from the Philosophical Commentaries, it is in this sense that Berkeley refers to 'ideas':

Qu: how is the soul distinguished from its ideas? certainly if there is no sensible ideas there could be no soul, no perception, remembrance, love, fear, etc. no faculty could be expected.

The soul is the will properly speaking and as it is distinct from Ideas.<sup>2</sup>

For Berkeley, will is the root-force in man. It is the source of his freedom and of his identity. This could very well be the influence of Boehme, who felt that personality is centred in the will.<sup>3</sup> Will is of central importance to both men. A person is what he wills to be. Man's freedom is in his will; so for Berkeley as for Boehme, voluntary actions are indeed free. What are these voluntary actions of which finite spirits are capable? The causality of finite spirits manifests in two ways. Finite persons can create images and can produce motion in their own bodies, other bodies and in objects.<sup>4</sup> Finite spirits are incompletely causal in that they derive their being from God and live in a world they did not create. They cannot create other spirits or ideas (in the sense referred to above).<sup>5</sup>

The last hundred sections of Siris deal with the dependence of the world on God and with the problem of the knowledge of God. Berkeley holds that nature is mind-dependent. Reality is spiritual. In studying nature, one learns about

<sup>1</sup> The reason why ideas continue to exist when no finite spirit is perceiving them is that they exist in the mind of God which gives them their ultimate reality. In Berkeley's view the only realities are God, finite spirits and ideas. In Siris, Berkeley's view of ideas changes in its emphasis as will be noted below. Cf. Three Dialogues, Works, ii, p.235:

The question between the materialists and me is not, whether things have a real existence out of the mind of this or that person, but whether they have an absolute existence, distinct from being perceived by God, and exterior to all minds.

<sup>2</sup> A, 478, 478a.

<sup>3</sup> Or Boehme through Dr. Cheyne. On will in Boehme see Law, The Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, pp.138-9. Cf. Boehme, Six Points, (1620), 1:1: 'Every life is essential and is based on will.'

<sup>4</sup> See Johnston, Development of Berkeley's Philosophy, pp.206-7.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Three Dialogues, Works, ii, pp.236-7.

God because there is an essential unity. Referring to these last hundred sections of Siris, Johnston notes that

Berkeley has a mystical veneration for unity, derived largely from his study of the Neoplatonists. 'The One' ... appears frequently in his pages as a name for God, or alternatively for the universe. The supreme principle is unity, which is spiritual; and whether we call it God or the world makes very little difference.<sup>1</sup>

After noting the differences in the various pantheistic philosophies of ancient Greece and Egypt, Berkeley asks:

Might we not conceive that God may be said to be All in divers senses?--as He is the cause and origin of all beings; ...as the vous is the place of all forms; and as it is the same which comprehends and orders (Sec.320) and sustains the whole mundane system.... And although there are some expressions to be met with in the philosophers, even the Platonic and Aristotelic sects, which speak of God as mixing with or pervading all nature and all the elements; yet this must be explained by force and not by extension, which was never attributed to the mind (Sects.290,293,297, 319) either by Aristotle or Plato. This they always affirmed to be incorporeal; and, as Plotinus remarks, incorporeal things are distant each from other not by place, but (to use his expression) by alterity.<sup>2</sup>

Berkeley had begun his discussion on pantheism by stating its real basis.

Such is the mutual relation, connexion, motion and sympathy of the parts of this world, that they seem as it were animated and held together by one Soul: and such is their harmony, order and regular course, as sheweth the Soul to be governed and directed by a Mind.<sup>3</sup>

Berkeley believes in an immediately present God in whom men live, move and have their being. He holds the Neoplatonic view that the Divine Mind 'contains all, and acts all, and is to all created beings the source of unity and identity, harmony and order, existence and stability'.<sup>4</sup> He says of this belief: 'Nor is this doctrine less philosophical than pious. We see all nature alive or in motion'.<sup>5</sup>

In the final sections of Siris which deal with the problem of attempting to gain knowledge of God, Berkeley unobtrusively suggests that this can be gained by turning to the Christ within, the Inner Light, though he never uses these terms. Here especially are the 'hints to awaken'<sup>6</sup> the esoteric reader to the solution to his (Berkeley's) problem of acknowledging abstract, archetypal ideas in God, but holding that man cannot know abstract ideas, with the resultant scepticism.<sup>7</sup> Berkeley begins his suggestions on the Inner Light by mentioning

<sup>1</sup> Johnston, pp.252-3.

<sup>2</sup> Siris, 328, 329.

<sup>3</sup> Siris, 273.

<sup>4</sup> Siris, 295.

<sup>5</sup> Siris, 291.

<sup>6</sup> Siris, 350.

<sup>7</sup> Hereafter referred to as 'Berkeley's philosophical problem'.

'notions'. His view of notions is as important in his philosophy as his concept of ideas. But whereas his concept of ideas has been much studied, his view of notions has been comparatively neglected. Probably the main reason for this is that his theory of ideas plays a prominent part in his major works; this is not the case with notions, which would have been treated in Part II of the Principles, the partly completed manuscript of which Berkeley lost in Italy and never rewrote.<sup>1</sup> Berkeley uses the word in a number of different ways in his earlier works including its common usage. But in Siris it has been identified with the Platonic Ideas. After noting that Aristotle denied innate ideas, Berkeley says

Some, perhaps, may think the truth to be this--there are no ideas, or passive objects, in the mind but what were derived from sense: but that there are also besides these her own acts or operations; such are notions.<sup>2</sup>

It is a maxim of the Platonic philosophy that the soul of man was originally furnished with native inbred notions, and stands in need of sensible occasions, not absolutely for producing them, but only for awakening, rousing, or exciting into act what was already... latent in the soul;...<sup>3</sup> To understand and to be are, according to Parmenides, the same thing. And Plato in his seventh Letter makes no difference between... mind and knowledge. Whence it follows that mind, knowledge, and notions, either in habit or in act, always go together.<sup>4</sup>

In his earlier works Berkeley uses 'idea' to mean the inert object of the understanding (i.e. what most people call 'matter'). But in Siris he usually uses 'Idea' (upper case) as Plato did.

According to that philosopher, goodness, beauty, virtue, and suchlike are not figments of the mind, nor... abstract ideas in the modern sense,<sup>5</sup> but the most real beings, intellectual and unchangeable, and therefore more real than the fleeting, transient objects of sense (Sect. 306), which, wanting stability, cannot be subjects of science (Sects. 264, 266, 297), much less of intellectual knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Through notions man is connected (in essence) with the Divine Ideas and therefore with God. What man must do is awaken this most divine part of his nature. He must meditatively turn within and shut out the barrier of sense. Berkeley notes

<sup>1</sup> Luce, Life of Berkeley, p.48. For a further explanation of why Berkeley's concept of notions has been neglected, partly resulting from Berkeley's own reticence, see Désirée Park, Complementary Notions: A Critical Study of Berkeley's Theory of Concepts, (The Hague, 1972), Appendix I, which examines Berkeley's use of the word.

<sup>2</sup> Jessop notes that this is Berkeley's own view. Works, v, p.142, n.6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Blake's note on this paragraph in his copy of Siris, Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. G. Keynes, (1927), p.820: 'The Natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul or Spiritual Body'. Siris was one of Blake's favourite books. See George Harper, The Neoplatonism of William Blake, (Oxford, 1961), p.35. Also cf. Hone and Rossi, p.236: 'Blake's comments written in the margin of his copy of Siris, are noteworthy as a proof of the mystical import of the book'.

<sup>4</sup> Siris, 308-9.

<sup>5</sup> That is, in Locke's sense. See Essay Concerning Human Understanding, book I.

<sup>6</sup> Siris, 335.

that the same procedure was followed in the Egyptian mystery initiations. At first the initiate was confronted with many gods, symbolic of multiplicity, of external reality, but was eventually led to one God and ultimately to participation in 'the very Deity'.<sup>1</sup> Likewise,

If the soul look abroad, she beholds the shadows and images of things, but returning into herself she unravels and beholds her own essence. At first she seemeth only to behold herself, but having penetrated farther she discovers the mind. And again, still farther advancing into the innermost sanctuary of the soul, she contemplates the Θεῶν ἕνεκεν. And this, [Proclus] saith, is the most excellent of all human acts, in the silence and repose of the faculties of the soul to tend upwards to the very Divinity, to approach and be closely joined with that which is ineffable and superior to all beings. When come so high as the first principle, she ends her journey and rests. Such is the doctrine of Proclus.<sup>2</sup>

Proclus holds that contemplation of the soul and its essence eventually leads, if one perseveres, to mystical union with God. In a classic example of coincidentia oppositorum, Socrates takes the opposite path (to the same result). Only in contemplating God may one begin to understand one's soul, one's true self. 'As the eye, saith he, looking steadfastly at the visive part of a pupil of another eye, beholds itself, even so the soul beholds and understands herself while she contemplates the Deity...'.<sup>3</sup> Socrates identifies the human soul with God. God is present in the human soul, if not the very soul itself. This would be considered self-evident to a Hindu, but in eighteenth-century England it would be condemned as blasphemous to make the human soul one with God, let alone to say God is the human soul (which of course is not to limit God to the soul). It is hardly surprising therefore that the Bishop of Cloyne who wrote in his private notebooks that he must remember to use the 'utmost caution not to give the least handle of offence to the Church',<sup>4</sup> would use considerable discretion in suggesting a mystical solution to his main philosophical problem, which was identical with the problem of knowing (uniting)<sup>5</sup> with God. Berkeley utilized the exoteric-

<sup>1</sup> Siris, 333.

<sup>2</sup> Siris, 333.

<sup>3</sup> Siris, 334. Cf. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, iii, vii, 15, referring to Brahman: He who dwelling in all things, yet is older than all things, whom all things do not know, whose body all things are, who controls all things from within,--He is your Self.

<sup>4</sup> A, 715.

<sup>5</sup> Berkeley says that knowing and being are identical, on the level of the Divine Ideas. Cf. Siris, 309: 'To understand and be are, according to Parmenides, the same thing'. Therefore to 'know God' is to unite with, to be one with, God. The final sections of Siris really deal with the problem of how to unite with God. But since this is explicitly the goal of mysticism, Berkeley instead uses the term 'knowing' God, which is more acceptable to the orthodox. Cf. Law, Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, p.202:

All true Knowledge, either of God or Nature, must be born in you. You cannot possibly know anything of God, but so far as God is manifested in you; so far as his Light and Holy Spirit is born in you, as it is

esoteric distinction just as he defended its use by Pythagoras and Plato.<sup>1</sup>

Through notions one is connected with the Divine Mind, the second Neoplatonic hypostasis. Through being alive, having a soul, man is connected with the Universal Soul, the third Neoplatonic hypostasis. But man is also connected with the first hypostasis.

It is the opinion of Plato and his followers that in the soul of man, prior and superior to intellect, there is somewhat of a higher nature, by virtue of which we are one; and that by means of our one or unit, we are most closely joined to the Deity. And as by our intellect we touch the divine Intellect, even so by our  $\tau\delta\theta\upsilon$  or unit, the very flower of our essence, as Proclus expresseth it, we touch the first One.<sup>2</sup>

The solution to Berkeley's philosophical problem, and the problem of knowing God, involves awakening and developing the divine in man. The essence and ultimate end of this process is stated in the conclusion of the Enneads. The quest of the human soul for God is literally 'the flight of the one to the One'.<sup>3</sup>

## II

That Berkeley held the doctrine of the Inner Light is confirmed in his important letter to Sir John James.<sup>4</sup> James was an old and close friend who accompanied Berkeley to America. Berkeley wrote the letter to dissuade him from joining the Roman Church. This was an emotional subject for Berkeley, and it called forth observations and beliefs he normally kept to himself. His treatment of the subject is balanced and reasonably tolerant, yet shows complete commitment emotionally and intellectually to the English Church.

After opening the letter with general theological statements, Berkeley declares:

There is an indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit, there is an inward light. If there be an ignis fatuus that misleads wild and conceited men, no man can thence infer there is no light of the sun.... There is an invisible Church whereof Christ is the head, the members of which are linked together by faith, hope, and charity. By faith in Christ, not in the Pope.... There is a secret unction an inward light and joy that attends the sincere fervent love of God.... You ask how I shall discern or know this? I answer much more easily than I can that this particular man or this particular society of men is an unerring rule. Of the former

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born in him, and liveth and worketh in you, as it liveth and worketh in him. A distant, absent, separate God, is an unknown God.

Also cf. Frank Cleobury, God, Man and the Absolute, (1947), p.58: 'Complete knowledge is identification; knowledge which is an external relation is but partial knowledge'.

<sup>1</sup> Siris, 337.

<sup>2</sup> Siris, 345.

<sup>3</sup> Enneads, vi, ix, 11.

<sup>4</sup> The letter, unfortunately, has not come down in its entirety. There is a gap after page eight of the manuscript which Luce says involves four lost pages. See Works, vii, p.141. The present brief discussion of the letter will be limited to its mystical aspects and will omit the theological questions.

I have an inward feeling jointly with the interior or exterior λογος to inform me. But for the later [sic] I have only the Pope's word and that of his followers.<sup>1</sup>

Berkeley believes that men must be directed by an external, formal theology and led by 'the inward light of God's grace'.<sup>2</sup> The advantage as he sees it of the National Church is that 'we see, as all must do, with our own eyes, by a common light but each with his own private eyes. And so must you too or you will not see at all'.<sup>3</sup> Though Berkeley states the importance of the external aspect of religion, he gives ultimate importance to the universal, invisible Church, and emphasizes that 'Christ's religion is spiritual and supernatural'.<sup>4</sup> Members of the invisible Church may outwardly be members of different religions, but Berkeley believes that they would pray with him 'not that I shall live and die in the [English] church, but in the [invisible] church'.<sup>5</sup>

In countering his friend's main reason for wanting to join the Church of Rome, Berkeley demonstrates his belief that the Inner Light is not limited to certain people though its utilization is.

But perhaps you will say there is need of an infallible visible guide for the soul's quiet. But of what use is an infallible guide without an infallible sign to know him by? We have often seen Pope against Pope, Council against Council. What or whom shall we follow in these contests but the written word of God, the Apostolical traditions, and the internal light of the λογος that irradiates every mind<sup>6</sup> but is not equally observed by all?<sup>7</sup>

### III

The whole basis of Berkeley's rejection of matter, which is opposed to Locke's Deus ex machina conception, was his desire to make men aware of the immediately present God of the mystic, the only reality and cause, in whom men live, move and have their being.<sup>8</sup> In this sense Berkeley literally subscribes to all-God-ism.<sup>9</sup> He believes that one of the values of immanence is that

the apprehension of a distant Deity, naturally disposes men to a negligence in their moral actions, which they would be more cautious of, in case they thought Him immediately present, and acting on their minds without the interposition of matter, or unthinking second causes.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Works, vii, p.145.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.146.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.146.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.148.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John, i.9: 'That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world'.

<sup>7</sup> Works, p.148.

<sup>8</sup> Berkeley uses this biblical phrase again and again. It forms the motto of Theory of Vision Vindicated. (Acts, xvii.28)

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Thomas McFarland, Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition, (Oxford, 1969), excursus note xi, 'Berkeley's Idealism and Pantheism', pp.300-303.

<sup>10</sup> Three Dialogues, Works, ii, p.258. Cf. Law, Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, p.202: 'A distant, absent, separate God, is an unknown God'.

It was almost inevitable that Berkeley, actuated by his philosophy of a mind-dependent universe, would recognize his kinship with and turn to mysticism since it holds that reality is spiritual and also solves his philosophical problem. Indeed, since, as Luce has shown, the mystic Malebranche was a major influence on Berkeley at the very time when the essence of his philosophy was being developed, perhaps it is more accurate to say that Berkeley was in some sense a mystic from an early age.<sup>1</sup>

In that part of his article entitled 'Berkeley Upholds the Mystic Thesis', Waheed Ali Farooqi notes that in Siris Berkeley 'revived the ancient conceptions of Active Intelligence, gradation in existence, and the constant animation of the Universe'.<sup>2</sup> He also raises the question of whether Berkeley engaged in the mystical identification of subject and object?<sup>3</sup> In the final section of the Enneads, Berkeley read: 'There were not two; beholder was one with beheld; it was not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended'.<sup>4</sup> In answer to the question it can be said that since Berkeley believed in mystical union with God as Universal Soul, Divine Mind and the One, it follows that he considered subject and object one. In Siris, referring to Aristotle, he wrote:

He also asserts with Plato, that actual knowledge and the thing known are all one.... Whence it follows that the things are where the knowledge is, that is to say, in the mind. Or, as it is otherwise expressed, that the soul is all things.<sup>5</sup>

Like all mystics, Berkeley put learning in perspective. Just as most mystics care little for the niceties of theories, so Berkeley rejected abstract ideas, and aided by his sense of oneness, he tried to synthesize commonsense thought and metaphysics.

My endeavours tend only to unite and place in a clearer light that truth, which was before shared between the vulgar and the philosophers: the former being of opinion, that those things they immediately perceive are

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<sup>1</sup> It should be recalled that Wenz holds that Berkeley's Christian Neoplatonism is implicit at least as early as the Principles. Cf. Hone and Rossi, pp.229-30. We are also faced with a series of influences, which are wholly independent of the technical need for explaining the virtues of tar-water, and have more to do with mystical Neoplatonism than with Plato and more with alchemy and chemistry--a quite new interest for Berkeley--than with the sciences that had previously occupied him. He embarked on this course of meditation long before Siris, at a time when he was hostile to the conception of "the solar light, the universal soul of the world" and it is quite evident that the true cause of his further tenets, of his change of position regarding a mystical explanation of nature and regarding the value of Platonic doctrines, is not to be found in a growing influence of Plato but in the direct influence of this bulk of neoplatonic, alchemical, mystical theories which were an interest for him long before coming to tar-water and which are the true basis, the leading thought of Siris.

<sup>2</sup> 'Berkeley's Ontology and Islamic Mysticism', New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy, ed. Warren Steinkraus, (New York, 1966), p.130.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> VI, 9, 11.

<sup>5</sup> 310.

the real things; and the latter, that the things immediately perceived are ideas which exist only in the mind. Which two notions put together, do in effect constitute the substance of what I advance.<sup>1</sup>

In Siris, the way in which he put learning in perspective becomes clearer.

There are traces of profound thought as well as primeval tradition in the Platonic, Pythagorean, Egyptian and Chaldaic philosophy (Sect. 179, 226). Men in those early days were not overlaid with languages and literature. Their minds seem to have been more exercised, and less burdened, than in later ages....<sup>2</sup>

Like Toland, Berkeley had an unusually high opinion of Egyptian mysticism. Hone and Rossi note that in Siris Berkeley 'gives leading importance to the so-called "corpus hermeticum" which is the classic source of all alchemical theories...'.<sup>3</sup> Berkeley holds Egyptian mysticism in such high esteem because it rejected the doctrine of real, absolute, external space,<sup>4</sup> saw God in all, and was the source of many Greek mystical philosophies,<sup>5</sup> as well as an important influence on Neoplatonism.

Berkeley made external reality more real than Locke did, through his principle of esse est percipi. Yet by the time he came to write Siris, he denigrates the world of sense as nothing more than 'fleeting phantoms' which 'beset and overbear the mind'.<sup>6</sup> He no longer regards sensible things as truly real. Berkeley sounds like Shankara explaining his concept of maya when he refers to the world of matter as a 'kind of waking dream'.<sup>7</sup>

It is amusing to consider that Byrom, the great defender of enthusiasm, had this to say of the rather grave (publicly at least) Bishop of Cloyne: 'Berkeley a man of genius, but a little whimsical. Berkeley's system approaches something to Malebranche's'.<sup>8</sup> One contemporary reader had this to say about the author of Siris: 'You know how wild ingenious enthusiasts are; but the book deserves to be read for the elegance of its style, a thing rarely met with in this age of bombast'.<sup>9</sup> Unlike Shaftesbury and Byrom who openly defended

<sup>1</sup> Three Dialogues, Works, ii, p.262, quoted by Agnes Arber, The Manifold and the One, (1957), p.101.

<sup>2</sup> 298.

<sup>3</sup> Hone and Rossi, p.230.

<sup>4</sup> Siris, 270.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Siris, 177.

<sup>6</sup> Siris, 294. Cf. 330.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 318. Shankara, the outstanding monistic Vedantist, developed the doctrine of maya, cosmic illusion. He regarded the phenomenal world as pure illusion, and in his commentaries on the Upanishads and devotional hymns, he constantly refers to external reality as a 'dream'. For a discussion of Berkeley's philosophy from the perspective of Indian mysticism, see D.M. Datta, 'Berkeley's Objective Idealism: An Indian View', New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy, pp.110-122. Sir William Jones, who will be studied in the chapter on Hinduism, connected Berkeley's philosophy with the concept of maya.

<sup>8</sup> Remains, ii, i, p.107. Byrom wrote this in 1737, thus before Siris.

<sup>9</sup> C. Pratt, letter of 29 April 1744, in Illustrations of the Literary History of the 18th Century, ed. J. Nichols, 1817, i, p.645, quoted by Jessop, Works, v, p.7. Berkeley was a master of English prose.

'enthusiasm' yet were reserved and unemotional men, Berkeley, like Wesley, denigrated enthusiasm, and for the same reason as Wesley. Wesley felt that the well-being and growth of his movement was endangered by identification of it in the public's mind with wild enthusiasm. Likewise Berkeley felt that the association of his theory of immaterialism, which implies that reality is only spiritual, with enthusiasm, would assure its rejection by the public. Berkeley and Wesley both reject enthusiasm for the simple reason that they were enthusiasts: emotional men with a driving idealism who considered the practical means of establishing and furthering their respective work as of paramount importance.<sup>1</sup>

Berkeley ended Siris by declaring: 'Truth is the cry of all, but the game of a few.... He that would make a real progress in knowledge must dedicate his age as well as youth, the later growth as well as first fruits, at the altar of Truth'.<sup>2</sup> He wrote to his friend Samuel Johnson: 'It is a common fault for men to hate opposition, and be too much wedded to their own opinions. I am so sensible of this in others that I could not pardon it to myself if I considered mine any further than they seem to me to be true...'.<sup>3</sup> Later he adds: 'I do not ... pretend that my books can teach truth. All I hope for is, that they may be an occasion to inquisitive men of discovering truth, by consulting their own minds, and looking into their own thoughts'.<sup>4</sup>

Berkeley, a man of great personal courage, went wherever the truth took him: whether that was to America, to immaterialism, or to mysticism.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warburton felt that Berkeley was nothing less than a visionary. Evans, Warburton and the Warburtonians, p.262, quotes Warburton: 'He is indeed a great man, and the only visionary I ever knew that was'. This is an interesting judgement coming from the enemy of mysticism and enthusiasm.

<sup>2</sup> Siris, 368.

<sup>3</sup> 25 Nov. 1729, Works, ii, p.279.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.282.

<sup>5</sup> On Berkeley's attempt to found a university in the New World see Luce, Life of Berkeley, pp.94-135. For examples of his courage see ibid., pp.76,224. Berkeley's wife was a follower of Guyon and Fénelon, ibid., pp.111,180.

## CHAPTER 10

### HINDUISM IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE: the Contact with Eastern Mysticism

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The classical Upanishads throughout believe in liberation, into complete harmony and union with the divine. This is the mysticism of 'absorption into the Deity'. And then there is the second great line of Hindu thought: in the Bhāgavad Gita the 'Classical Devotional Mysticism' arises from faith in a personal God, who shows grace to his devoted follower.

Geoffrey Parrinder

The Hindoos fill a larger circle of benevolence than our morals take in and extend their goodwill to the whole animal creation.

Edmund Burke

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#### I

Hinduism was the only Eastern mysticism which found a place in eighteenth-century English literature. Buddhism had not been accurately identified and was usually disparaged or ignored.<sup>1</sup> China, the most respected of Asian cultures (especially in France), was studied for its Confucian politics and religion, not for its mystical philosophy ('Taoism').<sup>2</sup> Sufism was dismissed with Islam as the traditional enemy, and in addition Islam was considered recent, derivative and in decline.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. Welbon, The Buddhist Nirvana and its Western Interpreters, (Chicago, 1968), pp. 18ff.

<sup>2</sup> A. Reichwein, China and Europe: Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century, trans. J. Powell, (1925), especially pp. 77ff.

<sup>3</sup> P. Marshall, ed. The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century, (Cambridge, 1970), p. 1. This chapter owes much to the work of Marshall for orientation and sources. For the reader's convenience, quotations have been taken wherever possible from Marshall's generous selections of Holwell, Dow, Halhed, Wilkins and Jones, since many of these works are fairly inaccessible.

It must be emphasized that this chapter will not presume to be a study of Hinduism, but is instead a study of the response of certain representative writers to what they believed was Hinduism. Perhaps it is inevitable that in reading these works one learns more about the religious assumptions of the writers than of Hinduism itself. This was the age in which Britain was 'discovering' India and its religion. Inevitably, when the English mind began looking at Hinduism it was seeing it through its own perspective and to a large extent it was seeing what it expected or wished to find.

The study of Hinduism in eighteenth-century English literature naturally divides itself into two. It was in the 1760's that books on India and Hinduism began appearing in significant numbers. This was directly related to British military conquests which began in the second half of the century. 'The British were particularly interested for pragmatic reasons to find a workable administrative policy for India. The theories on India were based on second-hand sources, from the Indian informers and Persian works'.<sup>1</sup> The rulers of British India needed reliable, first-hand knowledge of Indian society, and since religion was at the centre of Hindu society, it had to be studied with special attention. Referring to the works thus generated, Mukherjee notes that most were produced by company officials, who 'worked independently without an organization and without a scientific or methodological approach'.<sup>2</sup>

Before the 1760's Europe's familiarity with India was based on reports from missionaries, travellers, and merchants. These were usually very inaccurate, sometimes wildly so.<sup>3</sup> For present purposes the most important of the missions was the Danish Lutheran mission established on the Coromandel Coast early in the eighteenth century. This was the work of the Pietist chaplain of King Frederick IV of Denmark.<sup>4</sup> The Pietists who established the mission were badly in need of material assistance, and turned for aid to various friends. Among these friends were the Philadelphians principally Richard Roach. At this time Roach was living with Sir Thomas Cooke, Governor of the East India Company.<sup>5</sup> Roach was asked to persuade Cooke to allow materials to be carried on company ships.<sup>6</sup> The result of this influence was that the catalogue of the Church of the New Jerusalem at Tranquebar, issued in 1714, showed a Pietistic bias and included

<sup>1</sup> S. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India, (Cambridge, 1968), p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. This observation applies to the pre-Jones era.

<sup>3</sup> On Europe's contacts with India from late medieval times to the eighteenth century, see Mukherjee, pp.4-16, and Robert Sencourt, India in English Literature, (1923), pp.29-181.

<sup>4</sup> For an account of the mission see K. Latourette, History of the Expansion of Christianity, (1940), iii, pp.277ff.

<sup>5</sup> Birrell, p.107.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Gell's Remains, 1676, Everard's Some Gospel Treasures Opened, 1653, and Baker's Sancta Sophia.<sup>1</sup> The mission provided a considerable number of letters, some of which appeared in English collections.<sup>2</sup> Here Western and Eastern mysticism met.

Since the sources were faulty and very sketchy, one must expect references to India and Hinduism before the 1760's to be inaccurate or superficial. There is nothing of Hinduism and little of India in Dryden's Aureng-Zebe, 1676. Likewise, Thomas Tryon used India as a vehicle to comment on contemporary European affairs in A Dialogue between an East Indian Brackmanny... and a French Gentleman, 1683. Often references to India were used to comment on Christianity, almost always to the detriment of Hinduism. Shaftesbury, however, provided an exception in his Miscellaneous Reflections, 1714. He writes that a

CERTAIN INDIAN of the Train of the Ambassador-Princes sent to us lately from some of those Pagan Nations, being engag'd, one Sunday, in visiting our Churches, and happening to ask his Interpreter, 'Who the eminent Persons were whom he observ'd haranguing so long, with such Authority from a high Place?' was answer'd, 'They were Embassadors from the ALMIGHTY, or (according to the Indian language from THE SUN.' Whether the Indian took this seriously or in raillery, did not appear. But having afterwards call'd in, as he went along, at the Chappels of some of his Brother-Embassadors, of the Romish Religion, and at some other Christian Dissenting Congregations, where Matters, as he perceiv'd, were transacted with greater Privacy, and inferior State; he ask'd 'Whether These also were Embassadors from the same Place.' He was answer'd, 'That they had indeed been heretofore of the Embassy, and had Possession of the same chief Places he had seen: But they were now succeeded there, by Others. If those therefore, reply'd the Indian, were Embassadors from the SUN; these, I take for granted, are from the MOON.'<sup>3</sup>

If there is any doubt that Shaftesbury is satirizing sectarianism, it is made clear in the remainder of his essay.

Before the 1760's India was used chiefly by writers interested in foreign travel (through books), and exotic lands. In The Seasons, 1744, Thomson wrote of the peace and beauty 'where the Ganges rolls his sacred wave'.<sup>4</sup> He desired to be led 'through the maze,/ Embowering endless, of the Indian fig'.<sup>5</sup> In Smart's poem of praise, 'On the Goodness of the Supreme Being', 1756, he is in a mood similar to Thomson's.

And thou, fair India, whose immense domain  
To counterpoise the Hemisphere extends,  
Haste from the West, and with thy fruits and flow'rs;  
Thy mines and med'cines, wealthy maid, attend.

<sup>1</sup> Birrell, p.106.

<sup>2</sup> Propagation of the Gospel in the East, 2 Parts, (1710) and Several Letters Relating to the Protestant Danish Mission at Tranquebar in the East Indies, (1720). Marshall, p.4, mentions the mission.

<sup>3</sup> Characteristicks, iii, pp.338-339.

<sup>4</sup> 'Summer', 718.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 670-671.

More than the plenteousness so fam'd to flow  
 By fabling bards from Amalthea's horn  
 Is thine; thine therefore be a portion due  
 Of thanks and praise: come with thy brilliant crown  
 And vest of furr, and from thy fragrant lap  
 Pomegranates and the rich ananas pour.<sup>1</sup>

## II

John Zephaniah Holwell published Interesting Historical Events Relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan in 1765. Part two appeared in 1767, and part three in 1771. Holwell (1711-1798) has been called 'the first European to make a study of Hindoo antiquities'.<sup>2</sup> He received a mercantile education, but found commerce unpalatable. He decided to study medicine, and first went to India as a surgeon's mate in 1732. He was there only a short time but returned to Calcutta in 1736. He remained for eleven years, and after a short stay in England for health reasons, he returned to India. In addition to practicing medicine, he became a municipal administrator. He was capable and honest, and eventually became governor of Bengal. He left India for good in 1760. His career was rather contentious, and he had a number of enemies, but on his death the Gentleman's Magazine called him brilliant, benign, and 'the most amiable of men'.<sup>3</sup>

For present purposes, the most important section of his Interesting Historical Events is on 'The Religious Tenets of the Gentoos'.<sup>4</sup> In the preface, Holwell claims to have read all available European material on India, and to have found it all 'very defective, fallacious, and unsatisfactory to an inquisitive searcher after truth...!<sup>5</sup> He chiefly blames the Catholic missionaries who 'hesitate not to stigmatize those most venerable sages the Bramins...!<sup>6</sup> He feels that the 'religious vanity' and 'condemning spirit' of sectarianism proceeds from one of three causes: 'a defect in understanding; a want of knowledge of the world (in men and things); or a bad (and restless) heart'. Holwell notes, moreover, that the 'salvation of mankind, so much pretended, has no place in the wishes or labours of these zealots'.<sup>7</sup> His own point of view is broad and tolerant.

Men who have been conversant with foreign countries, and made proper and benevolent remarks on the manners and principles of their inhabitants; will not despise or condemn the different ways by which they approach the Deity; but revere it still as a divine worship, though they may piously lament it deviates so much from their own.<sup>8</sup>

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1 106-115.

2 DNB.

3 Lxviii (1798), ii, p.999.

4 From the second part of the work, 1767. Marshall reproduces these chapters.

5 Marshall, p.47.

6 Ibid., p.48.

7 Ibid., p.49.

8 Ibid.

Later he was to drop the proviso and say outright that all religions are based on the same 'primitive truths revealed by a gracious God to man'.<sup>1</sup>

Holwell's purpose in his treatment of Hinduism becomes clear when he states that to 'rescue distant nations from the gross conceptions entertained of them by the multitude, of all other persuasions, is the true business and indispensable duty of a traveller'.<sup>2</sup> He omits mention of modern, complicated methods of worship and concentrates on what he considers the original principles of the ancient Hindus.

He sees a divine tradition in which the priests of Egypt, the Magi of Persia, Zoroaster and Pythagoras, all traveled to India to receive instruction, not to give it.<sup>3</sup> He believes that Pythagoras took the doctrine of metempsychosis from the Brahmins, and suggests that the main principles taught in the Eleusinian mysteries were also taken from India. Holwell holds that the the three major principles taught in the Eleusinian mysteries were 'the unity of the godhead, his general providence over all creation, and a future state of rewards and punishments',<sup>4</sup> all of which were prominent in Hinduism.

Holwell's main interest was in the doctrine of transmigration and related to this, in vegetarianism. He was himself a vegetarian. He believes that transmigration was instituted by a benevolent God to enable the rebellious angels to regain paradise. Giving what he calls 'a literal translation from the Chartah Bhade<sup>5</sup> of Brama',<sup>6</sup> he writes:

And the Eternal One spake again unto Bistnoo<sup>7</sup> and said: I will form bodies for each of the delinquent Debtah<sup>8</sup>, which shall for a space be their prison and habitation; in the confines of which, they shall be subject to natural evils, in proportion to the degree of their original guilt....

When all was hushed, the Eternal One said again unto Bistnoo, the bodies which I will prepare for the reception of the rebellious Debtah, shall be subject to change, decay, death, and renewal, from the principles wherewith I shall form them; and through these mortal bodies, shall the delinquent Debtah undergo alternately eighty-seven changes, or transmigrations; subject more or less, to the consequences of natural and moral evil, in a just proportion to the degree of their original guilt, and as their actions through those successive forms, shall correspond with the limited powers which I shall annex to each; and this shall be their state of punishment and purgation.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Part three, (1771), pp.4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, p.49.

<sup>3</sup> For materials related to this question see Marshall, p.62n.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.63. In his major work, The Divine Legation of Moses, Warburton argued that the Egyptians were more ancient than the Indians. His long treatment of the Eleusinian mysteries was one of the most important in the eighteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Chautah Vada (Marshall's glossary). Marshall was unable to identify the text from which Holwell is quoting. See ibid., p.18.

<sup>6</sup> Marshall, p.76.

<sup>7</sup> Vishnu.

<sup>8</sup> Angel (Holwell).

<sup>9</sup> Marshall, p.73.

The essence of this doctrine is the law of karma.

The delinquent and unhappy Debtah, shall yet have it in their power, to lessen and soften their pains and punishment, by the sweet intercourse of social compacts; and if they love and cherish one another, and do mutual good offices, and assist and encourage each other in the work of repentance for the crime of disobedience; I will strengthen their good intentions, and they shall find favor. But if they persecute one another, I will comfort the persecuted, and the persecutors shall never enter the ninth Boboon<sup>1</sup>, even the first Boboon of purification.<sup>2</sup>

Man is the last form in the eighty-seven transmigrations, and the most challenging since he alone (in the animal kingdom) has true free will. At this stage the rebellious angels are again utterly free to put themselves first and regress or put God first and consequently move towards divine union. Holwell believes that nearly all mortal forms are vehicles for the spiritual evolution of delinquent angels.<sup>3</sup> The exceptions are the obedient angels, some of whom inhabit mortal forms to aid their brethren in times of trial and hardship. The greatest examples of such aid are the nine avatars of Vishnu.<sup>4</sup> (Holwell, an anti-trinitarian, considers the Hindu trinity the three supreme angels, below God). This he considers the true basis of Hindu vegetarianism: in eating any animal, man either destroys the vehicle of a delinquent angel working out his karma, or more horrendously, consumes the body of an obedient angel helping in the general work of redemption. This is a serious crime because it interferes with God's plan for the purification of the fallen angels. Man suffers diseases from eating meat, which itself shortens the life of a delinquent angel inhabiting a human form, and is therefore a double crime. The heart of the doctrines of transmigration and vegetarianism for Holwell is that

every animal form is endued with cogitation, memory and reflection... indeed it must consequentially be so, on the supposed metempsychosis of the apostate spirits, through these mortal forms. Every state of the delinquent spirits' abode... is a state of humiliation, punishment and purgation, that of Mhurd<sup>5</sup> not excepted;... the purpose of the Eternal One would be defeated by himself, had he not endued them with rationality and a consciousness of their situation. In the form of Mhurd alone, is the spirit's state of probation, because in this form only, he again becomes an absolute and free agent.<sup>6</sup>

Voltaire was impressed with Holwell's work, and thanked a man 'qui n'a voyagé que pour nous instruire'.<sup>7</sup> Holwell had no Sanskrit, but he did have a working knowledge of Arabic and Persian, and considering his municipal positions

<sup>1</sup> Bhuvana, a world (Marshall's glossary).

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, p.74.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>4</sup> The tenth having not yet occurred. In part three, pp.71ff, Holwell argues that Christ was an avatar carrying essentially the same message as the other avatars, though in a new form.

<sup>5</sup> Man (Holwell).

<sup>6</sup> Marshall, p.89.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in DNB.

he must have had some Hindustani and Bengali.<sup>1</sup> Holwell's main weakness particularly in his later work, is that it is difficult to separate his personal beliefs from his presentation of Hinduism. This is seriously complicated by the fact that most of the texts he uses have not been identified. His work received considerable attention from the reading public and from reviewers, and the response was generally positive. The Critical Review, however, considered Holwell's presentation of Hinduism 'such a continued series of nonsense, rhapsody, and absurdity, that the quoting it must insult the common understanding'.<sup>2</sup> The Annual Register considered it 'a very curious and important acquisition to the general stock of literature in Europe'.<sup>3</sup> The reviewer noted that in Holwell's presentation of Hinduism, 'metempsychosis is the fundamental principle'.<sup>4</sup> But the reviewer was most interested in Holwell's claims for the antiquity of Hinduism, which challenged the accepted view of the Mosaic account.<sup>5</sup> The reviewer in the Gentleman's Magazine thought that Holwell had shown the 'original simplicity, and present corruption'<sup>6</sup> of Hinduism. Both the Annual Register and the Gentleman's Magazine reproduced large sections from Holwell's 'Shasta', which they believed was the Hindu Bible. They considered this the chief value of the work and felt they now had an accurate text of ancient Brahminism, but for a reliable text produced through a knowledge of Sanskrit, the English public had to wait for men like Wilkins and Jones.

### III

Alexander Dow, like Holwell, was educated for a mercantile career. There are few details of his life.<sup>7</sup> In 1760 he was in India, having joined the Bengal infantry in September of that year, and by 1769 he was a lieutenant-colonel. He spent approximately a year in England on leave in 1768 when he wrote a tragedy, Zingis, 'which was acted with some success at Drury Lane'.<sup>8</sup> In England again, in 1774, his second tragedy, Sethona, was produced by Garrick.<sup>9</sup>

The first two volumes of The History of Hindostan appeared in 1768. A third volume was added in 1772. Volume one contains 'A Dissertation Concerning the Customs, Manners, Language, Religion and Philosophy of the Hindoos'.<sup>10</sup> Dow

<sup>1</sup> See DNB and Marshall, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Xxii (1766), p.343.

<sup>3</sup> Ix (1766), ii, p.307.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.316.

<sup>5</sup> For Holwell's qualified support of Hindu claims to great antiquity, see Marshall, pp.61-4.

<sup>6</sup> Xxxvi (1766), p.542.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, p.6, puts 1735 or 1736 as his year of birth. He was born in Perthshire. He died in India in 1779.

<sup>8</sup> DNB.

<sup>9</sup> Baker's Biographia Dramatica, as quoted in DNB, claims that Dow was not the author.

<sup>10</sup> Reproduced by Marshall, pp.107-139.

begins, like Holwell, by emphasizing that most European writings treating Hinduism are little more than fiction, chiefly because of European prejudice and arrogance. Dow is very impressed by the tolerance of the Brahmin, who does not have those prejudices for his religion, 'which men of inferior parts not only imbibe with their mother's milk, but retain throughout their lives'.<sup>1</sup> Hindus choose 'rather to make a mystery of their religion, than impose it upon the world, like the Mahommedans, with the sword, or by means of the stake, after the manner of some pious christians'.<sup>2</sup> Hindus are tolerant because they believe that heaven 'is like a palace with many doors, and every one may enter in his own way'.<sup>3</sup>

In his treatment of Hinduism, Dow only examines two of the six philosophical schools, and is apparently unaware of the others.<sup>4</sup> 'The Hindoos are divided into two great religious sects: the followers of the doctrine of the Bedang,<sup>5</sup> and those who adhere to the principles of the Neadirsin'.<sup>6</sup> He begins with the Vedanta by giving what he says is a literal translation of the 'original Shaster'.<sup>7</sup> The dialogue is between 'Narud' (reason) and 'Brimha' (Divine Wisdom):

Narud: What dost thou mean, O Father! by intellect?

Brimha: It is a portion of the Great Soul of the universe, breathed into all creatures, to animate them for a certain time.

Narud: What becomes of it after death?

Brimha: It animates other bodies, or returns like a drop into that unbounded ocean from which it first arose.

Narud: What is the nature of that absorbed state which the souls of good men enjoy after death?

Brimha: It is a participation of the divine nature, where all passions are utterly unknown, and where consciousness is lost in bliss.

Narud: Thou sayst, O Father! that unless the soul is perfectly pure, it cannot be absorbed into God: now, as the actions of the generality of men are partly good, and partly bad, whither are their spirits sent immediately after death?

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, pp.109-110. Dow was very much a Deist of the Toland type (that is, tending towards mystical pantheism). To the above Dow quotation, cf. Toland, Letters to Serena, (1704), letter one, on prejudice: 'We are presently after our Birth deliver'd to Nurses... who infuse into us their Errors with their Milk'.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, p.110.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.115.

<sup>4</sup> The other four are Sāmkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā, and Vaiśeṣika. These are the 'orthodox' schools. The three main 'unorthodox' schools are the Buddhist, Jaina and Cārvāka. For examinations of each of these systems, see S. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, (Cambridge, 1922), i. Vedanta.

<sup>5</sup> Nyāya. Marshall, p.119.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Dow believes the Vedanta system is older than the Nyāya.

Brimha: They must atone for their crimes in hell, where they must remain for a space proportioned to the degree of their iniquities; then they rise to heaven to be rewarded for a time for their virtues; and from thence will return to the world, to reanimate other bodies.<sup>1</sup>

Marshall states that this quotation is apparently from the Bhagavat Purana which is not Vedantist, but of the Sāmkhya school.<sup>2</sup> This may be so, but in any case the quotation emphasizes karma, rebirth and ultimate union with the Divine, doctrines which all the schools share.<sup>3</sup> Anticipating that his reader will reject the doctrine of rebirth as a strange Eastern idea, Dow declares that the 'opinion of this philosopher, that the soul, after death, assumes a body of the purer elements, is not peculiar to the Brahmins. It descended from the Druids of Europe, to the Greeks...'.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps with Toland in mind, Dow notes that the Vedanta is pantheistic: 'a portion of the Great Soul or God, animates every living thing'.<sup>5</sup> His treatment of the Vedanta ends with the following quotation:

Narud: How is God to be worshipped?

Brimha: With no selfish view; but for love of his beauties, gratitude for his favours, and for admiration of his greatness.<sup>6</sup>

Narud: Thou, O father, dost mention God as one; yet we are told, that Ram,<sup>7</sup> whom we are taught to call God, was born in the house of Jessarit: that Kishen,<sup>8</sup> whom we call God, was born in the house of Basdeo, and many others in the same manner. In what light are we to take this mystery?

Brimha: You are to look upon these as particular manifestations of the providence of God, for certain great ends.... But you are not to suppose, that God... is liable to human passions or frailties, being in himself, pure and incorporeal. At the same time he may appear in a thousand places, by a thousand names, and in a thousand forms; yet continue the same unchangeable, in his divine nature.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, pp.123-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.119(n.).

<sup>3</sup> Dasgupta, pp.71ff.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, p.127. Dow probably got this idea about the Druids from Toland. See Toland's 'History of the Druids', Miscellaneous Works, (1747), i, pp.161-3 and 'letter three' passim.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall, p.127.

<sup>6</sup> This is precisely Shaftesbury's position. See especially Characteristicks, ii, pp.272ff.

<sup>7</sup> Rama, the sixth and seventh incarnations of Vishnu.

<sup>8</sup> Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu.

<sup>9</sup> Marshall, pp.129-30. Marshall notes (p.127n) that it is not possible to identify the text from which Dow is quoting.

Dow makes no comment on this passage except to restate that Hinduism has been very misrepresented in Europe. He is apparently referring to the charge of polytheism which he feels has thus been answered.

He moves to a brief treatment of Nyāya with which he is more at home. Nyāya emphasizes the cultivation of logic as an art and in general takes a 'common-sense' view of reality. One of its main characteristics is a rejection of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness, which in its way is similar to Berkeley's esse est percipi. Instead, Nyāya teaches, rather like Locke, that 'Things exist not because they can produce an impression on us, ... but because existence is one of their characteristics'.<sup>1</sup> Dow is very much a matterist,<sup>2</sup> and so agrees with the Nyāya's rejection of maya.

"The author of the Bedang," says Goutam<sup>3</sup> "finding the impossibility of forming an idea of substance, asserts, that all nature is a mere delusion. But as imagination must be acted upon by some real existence, as we cannot conceive that it can act upon itself, we must conclude, that there is something real, otherwise philosophy is at an end".<sup>4</sup>

Dow wrongly believes that the monistic Vedanta of Shankara with its principle of maya is held by all Vedantists. The dualistic Vedantists reject Shankara's theory of illusion.<sup>5</sup> However, Vedanta and Nyāya are mutually antagonistic systems, as Dow suggests. Dow rightly emphasizes that one of their principal divisions is on the question of soul. The Vedantists hold that there is no soul but the Universal Soul of God, while Nyāya teaches that in addition there are individual souls, which they believe is the only reasonable way to explain evil.

Evil, according to the author of the Neadirsen Shaster, proceeds entirely from Jive Attima, or the vital soul.<sup>6</sup> It is a selfish, craving principle, never to be satisfied; whereas God remains in eternal rest, without any desire but benevolence.<sup>8</sup>

Dow gives the broadest possible outline of the two systems, and so adds nothing beyond the above statement to the different views of evil in Vedanta and Nyāya. After brief and very general comments on the Nyāya's six categories of reality,

<sup>1</sup> Dasgupta, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Luce's term. One who believes in matter. A matterist is not necessarily a materialist.

<sup>3</sup> Gautama, also called Akṣapāda, the reputed author of the Nyāya sūtras.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> For examples, see Dasgupta, pp. 420-21. Also see Geoffrey Parrinder, Upanishads, Gita and Bible, (1975), p. 36. It must be remembered that when Dow speaks of the Vedanta he is in fact speaking only of the monistic Vedanta of Shankara.

<sup>6</sup> The individual soul.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Boehme's first principle.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, pp. 132-3.

which Dow calls 'substance, quality, motion, species, assimilation and construction',<sup>1</sup> he prepares to end the essay by concluding that both systems admit the unity of God: 'the polytheism of which they have been accused, is no more than a symbolical worship of the divine attributes'.<sup>2</sup> He concludes with an interesting observation on the charge of idolatry.

That in any age or country, human reason was ever so depraved as to worship the work of hands, for the creator of the universe, we believe to be an absolute deception, which arose from the vanity of the abettors of particular systems of religion. To attentive inquirers into the human mind, it will appear, that common sense, upon the affaires of religion, is pretty equally divided among all nations. Revelation and philosophy have, it is confessed, lopped off some of those superstitious excrescences and absurdities that naturally arise in weak minds, upon a subject so mysterious: but it is much to be doubted, whether the want of those necessary purifiers of religion, ever involved any nation in gross idolatry, as many ignorant zealots have pretended.<sup>3</sup>

Like Holwell, Dow had no Sanskrit. All his translations were from the Persian, or from 'the vulgar tongue of the Hindoos'.<sup>4</sup> His work was well received,<sup>5</sup> and reviewers considered him 'a sensible, rational man'.<sup>6</sup> Dow appears in Voltaire's correspondence and in a number of his works, always in a very positive light.<sup>7</sup> As Toland's Deism was mystically based, so Dow tried to turn Hínduism into a mystical Deism.<sup>8</sup> This attempt was made easier by Dow's very general and rather vague descriptions of Vedanta and Nyāya. One does not know whether he did this by choice or through lack of real familiarity with the two systems. Reviewers were ready to admit that he had shown 'the unity, eternity, omniscience and omnipotence of God'<sup>9</sup> in Hinduism, but felt that Hinduism as presented by Dow was a mixture of 'true philosophy' and 'materialism' with an admixture of 'Pythagorism' and 'debased Christianity'.<sup>10</sup> More recently it has been claimed that Dow 'was the first really to make known to England the lofty philosophy of Hinduism...'.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, p.131. For a discussion of the six padarthas see Dasgupta, pp.313-319.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, p.138.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, p.139.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, p.108.

<sup>5</sup> DNB calls his work 'a great success' in its own age.

<sup>6</sup> Critical Review, xxvi (1768), p.81. The phrase implies that the subject was otherwise.

<sup>7</sup> See Marshall, p.8 (n.5).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dow's History of Hindostan, i, p.lxxvi: '...whatever the external ceremonies of religion may be, the self-same infinite being is the object of universal adoration!'

<sup>9</sup> Monthly Review, xxxix (1768), p.386.

<sup>10</sup> Critical Review, xxvi (1768), p.83.

<sup>11</sup> Sencourt, India in English Literature, p.227.

## IV

Nathaniel Brassey Halhed was born at Westminster in 1751, the son of a director of the Bank of England. He was educated at Harrow where his friendship with Richard Brinsley Sheridan began, and at Christ Church, Oxford, where he met William (later Sir William) Jones. Jones urged him to study Arabic. Having just lost a Miss Linley to Sheridan, Halhed left for India in 1771 as a writer in the East India Company's Bengal service. He soon attracted the attention of Governor-General Warren Hastings, who urged him to translate a Hindu law code. This was published in 1776 as A Code of Gentoo Laws, or Ordinations of the Pandits. It brought him considerable literary notoriety at an early age, and began what everyone considered a promising career. In 1778 he published A Grammar of the Bengal Language<sup>1</sup>; A Narrative of the Events... in Bombay and Bengal Relative to the Mahratta Empire appeared in 1779. Halhed returned to England in 1785 with Warren Hastings, and expected to continue his career as an oriental scholar. In 1790 he was elected M.P. for Lymington, Hampshire, but in the same year he lost most of his fortune invested in France. Yet it was in 1795 that his career was ruined by his unfortunate espousal, in Parliament and the press, of the claims of Richard Brothers. Brothers was a religious maniac who insisted that he would soon be revealed as the ruler of the world, under Christ.<sup>2</sup> This apparent aberration of Halhed's did not last long, as he soon repudiated Brothers' claims, but it did force him to resign his seat. He went into seclusion until 1809 when he was given a charitably comfortable job in East India House. It is said that his temporary support of Brothers was due to the apparent similarity of Brothers' earlier philosophy to Oriental mysticism, of which Halhed was a serious student in India and later.<sup>3</sup> Halhed died in 1830, but published nothing on Hinduism or India after he left the country, some forty-five years before his death. He had, however, made considerable progress on a translation of The Mahabharata between 1800 and 1816, but for some reason it was not completed, and remained unpublished.<sup>4</sup> Halhed has been described as possessing 'some peculiarities, due to excessive sensitiveness', but he 'endeared himself to his many friends'.<sup>5</sup> Sir Elijah Impey declared that he had 'seldom met a man who knew so much of so many things, or who had so ready a command of all he knew'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Sen, History of Bengali Literature, (New Delhi, 1960), p.178, quoted by Marshall, p.9, calls Halhed's knowledge of Bengali and its literature 'astounding for the day'.

<sup>2</sup> See the DNB life of Brothers (born 25 December), for a list of the people, some of them prominent, who supported him.

<sup>3</sup> DNB.

<sup>4</sup> The manuscript is in the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

<sup>5</sup> DNB.

<sup>6</sup> Memoirs, (1846), p.355.

Halhed's only published treatment of Hinduism is in his 'Translator's Preface' to A Code of Gentoo Laws.<sup>1</sup> His purpose was to introduce the law code and explain its religious basis. He states at the outset that many Hindu laws 'are interwoven with the religion of the country, and are therefore revered as of the highest authority'.<sup>2</sup> Hindu laws should, therefore, be retained whenever possible. Halhed hoped to convince the British public and government that 'a well-timed toleration in matters of religion'<sup>3</sup> was essential if British India was to remain stable. The Code which he translated was produced by eleven pandits who took the essential laws from various originals and transcribed them without alteration. The articles were translated from Sanskrit into Persian under the supervision of one of the pandits. Halhed then translated the Persian into English. Halhed hoped to establish 'one plain position, that religion in general, at its origin, is believed literally as it is professed, and that it is afterwards rather refined by the learned than debased by the ignorant'.<sup>4</sup> He uses this statement to introduce his discussion of the Vedic horse sacrifice. He notes first that the Mosaic scapegoat ritual was a very similar custom. Halhed believes that Jews in that period literally believed that the victim paid for the crimes of men, but that later it was seen as a beginning of the doctrine of absolution. Likewise, the Vedic horse sacrifice, which was described in the body of the Code, was at first a literal sacrifice. Later it was seen symbolically. Giving a translation of the beginning of the Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad, Halhed shows how the sacrifice is symbolically understood. His long quotation ends as follows:

The intent of this sacrifice is, that a man should consider himself to be in the place of that horse, and look upon all these articles as typified in himself; and, conceiving the Atmā (or divine Soul) to be an ocean, should let all thought of self be absorbed in that Atmā.<sup>5</sup>

Here is mystical union with the Divine stated in Neoplatonic terms.<sup>6</sup>

Halhed gives a short account of the prosody of Hindu religious poetry. In Hinduism, religion and poetry are very often one.

A good man goes not upon enmity,  
But is well inclined towards another,  
even while he is ill-treated by him:

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by Marshall, pp.142-181.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, p.143.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, p.142.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, p.147.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall, p.149.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Cheyne, Essay on Regimen, pp.182-3, for an example of the Neoplatonic drop in ocean analogy of union with God.

So, even while the Sandel-tree is felling,  
It imparts to the edge of the axe its aromatic flavour.<sup>1</sup>

Halhed considers the images 'lively and pleasing, the diction elegant and concise, and the metre not inharmonious'.<sup>2</sup>

A number of the laws in the Code are unintelligible without recognition of the doctrine of rebirth. Halhed notes that Hindus in all ages have believed in the transmigration of souls. He provides one example.

An ancient Shaster, called the Gēētā, written by Adhâê Doom, has a beautiful stanza upon this system of the transmigration which he compares to a change of dress.

As throwing aside his old habits,  
A man puts on others that are new,  
So, our lives quitting the old,  
Go to other newer animals.<sup>3</sup>

He does not explain the Hindu view of rebirth, but instead refers the reader to an 'ingenious author of our own',<sup>4</sup> for a full explanation.

Halhed was most impressed by the tolerance of the Brahmin. Referring to the short 'Preliminary Discourse' to the Code, written by the pandits, he writes:

Nothing can be more remote from a superstitious adherence to their own domestic prejudices, or more truly elevated above the mean and selfish principles of priestcraft, than the genuine dignity of sentiment that breathes through this little performance. Few Christians, with all the advantages of enlightened understandings, would have expressed themselves with a more becoming reverence for the grand and impartial designs of providence in all its works, or with a more extensive charity toward all their fellow creatures of every profession. It is indeed an article of faith among the Brahmins, that God's all merciful power would not have permitted such a number of different religions, if he had not found a pleasure in beholding their varieties.<sup>5</sup>

In preparing to end his preface, Halhed offers a few specific explanations of parts of the code which seem strange or unjust to European minds. Since the Brahmin, like all mystics, is exclusively concerned with gaining union with the Absolute and in aiding others to do likewise, he does not believe that wealth or heritage entitles anyone to monopolize resources of nature, which are 'owned' by God for the benefit of all. Chapter two of the Code, on ownership and inheritance, reflects this attitude. A man does not own land. Rather, he is

<sup>1</sup> 'Ashlogue Aryachhund, or Irregular, From a Collection of Poems', Marshall, p.154.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, pp.162-3. The quotation is from the Bhagavad Gita, ii, 22. Cf. the translation in the Everyman's Library edition: 'As a man lays aside outworn garments and takes others that are new, so the body-dweller puts away outworn bodies and goes to others that are new'.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.163. Halhed is referring to Holwell.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall, pp.164-5. The 'Discourse' is reproduced ibid., pp.182-3. It is quoted from below, at the end of the present section.

considered a 'tenant for life'; he may not therefore distribute 'his effects by will, after his death',<sup>1</sup> though he may do so while alive. The Brahmin does not exclude himself from these rules. Halhed feels that most Brahmins demonstrate impressive 'moderation and self-denial', and are free of 'all the narrow principles of self-interested avidity'.<sup>2</sup> After explaining other points in the Code, that do not bear directly on religion, Halhed concludes by declaring that there is a danger in the 'characteristic enthusiasm of the Gentoos'.<sup>3</sup> This characteristic is dangerous, Halhed feels, when it influences the working classes. In an unfortunately typical example of the eighteenth-century attitude towards the 'labouring millions', Halhed wrote that the law prohibiting the lower castes from reading the Vedas, was necessary

for the general peace and good order of every community. The vulgar in all nations are tied down to the continual exercise of bodily labour for their own immediate subsistence; and their employments are as incompatible with the leisure requisite for religious speculations, as their ideas are too gross for the comprehension of their subtlety; add to this, that illiterate minds are usually so apt to kindle at the least touch of enthusiastic zeal, as to make their headstrong superstition the most dangerous of all weapons in the hands of a designing partizan; like the Agnee-aster<sup>4</sup>, it rages with unquenchable violence, and separating into a thousand flames, all equally destructive, subsides not but with the exaltation of a Cromwell, or a Massacre of Saint Bartholomew.<sup>5</sup>

This was the typical view of the eighteenth-century Establishment towards Cromwell, who did have pronounced mystical tendencies<sup>6</sup>, and towards all 'enthusiasts', i.e. Methodists, Quakers, some Catholics and all mystics. Halhed himself, of course, did not denigrate mystics by considering them 'enthusiasts'; rather, to Halhed, an enthusiast was a working-class person presuming to be a mystic and misusing the doctrine of the Inner Light through superstition and delusion. Considering Halhed's 'enthusiastic' promotion of Richard Brothers, some twenty years after he wrote this passage, it must be considered sadly ironic.

Warren Hastings considered Halhed an 'incomparable genius', and added

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall, p.169.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, pp.170,171.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, p.170.

<sup>4</sup> Halhed had earlier explained, Marshall, p.167, that Agnee-Aster was the Indian version of 'Greek Fire', a liquid fire used as a weapon, which could not be extinguished once lit.

<sup>5</sup> Marhsall, p.180. Cf. the Duchess of Buckingham, quoted by Wylie Sypher, (ed.) Enlightened England, (New York, 1962), p.20: 'the Methodists were "most repulsive and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors." "It is monstrous," she went on, "to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl the earth".'

<sup>6</sup> See Rufus Jones, Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth.

that his Code and Grammar of the Bengal Language were 'crowned with every success that the public estimation could give them'.<sup>1</sup> The Code was in a third edition by 1781, and was translated into French and German in 1778. Mukherjee claims that the Code 'received universal attention throughout Europe'.<sup>2</sup> Halhed obtained good reviews except for his tentative claims for Hindu antiquity.<sup>3</sup> Burke had a high opinion of Halhed's work, as did most other commentators.<sup>4</sup> Halhed was fluent in Persian, Arabic and Bengali, but had only a slight knowledge of Sanskrit, mainly grammar. He is considered, however, a 'pioneer of modern philology'<sup>5</sup>, since he perceived the affinity between Sanskrit words and those of Persian, Arabic, and even of Latin and Greek'.<sup>6</sup> Sir William Jones was soon to build on Halhed's observations.

The Preliminary Discourse by the pandits, which Halhed included in his Preface, was very well received. The Critical Review called it 'a most sublime performance'.<sup>7</sup> It breathes a spirit which Halhed himself seems to have possessed.

From men of enlightened understandings and sound judgment, who, in their researches after truth, have swept from their hearts the dust of malice and opposition, it is not concealed, that the contrarieties of religion, and diversities of belief, which are causes of envy, and of enmity to the ignorant, are in fact a manifest demonstration of the power of the Supreme Being.... The truly intelligent well know, that the differences and varieties of created things are a ray of His glorious essence, and that the contrarieties of constitutions are a type of His wonderful attributes; He appointed to each tribe its own faith, and to every sect its own religion; and having introduced a numerous variety of castes, and a multiplicity of different customs, He views in each particular place the mode of worship respectively appointed to it; sometimes He is in the temple, at the adoration of idols; sometimes He is employed with the attendants upon the mosque, in counting the sacred beads; the intimate of the Mussulman, and the friend of the Hindoo; the companion of the Christian, and the confidant of the Jew. Wherefore men of exalted notions, not being bent upon hatred and opposition, but considering the collected body of creatures as an object of the power of the Almighty, by investigating the contrarieties of sect, and the different customs of religion, have stamped to themselves a lasting reputation upon the page of the world....<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Letter to Nathaniel Smith' in Wilkin's Bhagvat-Geeta, (1785), reproduced by Marshall, pp.184-191.

<sup>2</sup> Op.Cit., p.163.

<sup>3</sup> See Gentleman's Magazine, xlvii (1777), p.636. Also, G. Costard, A Letter to Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, (Oxford, 1778).

<sup>4</sup> See Marshall, pp.11,40. The Code's great success was as a literary curiosity, not as a law code. See ibid., p.11.

<sup>5</sup> DNB.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in DNB.

<sup>7</sup> Xliv (1777), p.178.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, pp.182-3.

Charles Wilkins was born in 1749 or 1750 in Somerset. Nothing is known of his education. Like his close friend Halhed, he went to India at about the age of twenty as a writer in the East India Company's Bengal service. It was Halhed who persuaded him to make a serious attempt to learn Sanskrit.<sup>1</sup> In 1778 he helped Halhed produce a printing press for Oriental languages, without which Halhed's Grammar could not have been published. Wilkins made great progress in his study of Sanskrit and began a translation of the Mahābhārata. In 1784 Warren Hastings persuaded him to publish separately, from the Sanskrit, a translation of the Bhagavad Gita. It appeared in 1785 under the auspices of the East India Company. This made it the first translation of a major Sanskrit work into a European language.<sup>2</sup> Wilkins was certainly the first Englishman to gain a 'thorough grasp of Sanskrit'.<sup>3</sup> His friend, Sir William Jones, referred to Wilkins as the man who 'first opened the inestimable mine of Sanscrit literature'.<sup>4</sup> Jones said that without Wilkins' 'aid he would never have learned'<sup>5</sup> Sanskrit. In 1786 Wilkins was forced to leave India for health reasons. Hastings felt that the cause of his declining health was overwork.<sup>6</sup> Wilkins' studies had to be carried out after his daily work for the company. He published The Heetopades of Veeshnoo-Sarma, a series of fables, at Bath in 1787. In 1793 his Story of Sakuntala, from the Mahābhārata appeared, and in 1808 his Sanskrit Grammar. He became librarian of the East India Company in 1800, and at the establishment of the company's college at Haileybury, he became examiner and visitor. He was elected F.R.S. in 1788, and in 1825 the Royal Society of Literature gave him their award as 'princeps litteraturae Sanscritae'. He was knighted in 1833, three years before his death. Perhaps his most remarkable achievement was deciphering the old Indian characters of the Monghyr Inscription of Devapāla which even the pandits of the day found unintelligible.<sup>7</sup>

In his Preface to the Bhagavad Gita, Wilkins refers to the teaching of Krishna as 'Unitarian', and as designed to eliminate polytheism and to encourage the believer to see God as present in all images and as the object of all religious ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> Wilkins emphasizes that 'the text is but imperfectly

<sup>1</sup> See Wilkins' Grammar of the Sanskrita Language, (1808), p.viii, where he says that in about 1778 his 'curiosity was excited by the example of his friend Mr. Halhed to commence the study of the Sanskrit'.

<sup>2</sup> A seventeenth-century Dutch priest, Abraham Roger, published a translation of Bhartṛhari's proverbs, which was the first direct translation into a European language of a Sanskrit text. See Mukherjee, pp.10,115.

<sup>3</sup> DNB.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, p.261.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in DNB.

<sup>6</sup> Marshall, p.188.

<sup>7</sup> Mukherjee, p.77 calls it 'a revolutionary move', and adds that 'We have no knowledge of the methods Wilkins used in deciphering these characters'.

<sup>8</sup> The Bhagvat-Geeta, (1785), p.24.

understood by the most learned Brahmans of the present times', and therefore it is impossible entirely 'to remove the veil of mystery'<sup>1</sup> which surrounds the Gita at many crucial points. Wilkins does provide some notes, but on the whole he has omitted the use of any commentaries because they are, he feels, more obscure than the text itself. His prose translation tends to use vague, general terms in place of specific mystical conceptions. This can be seen in comparing a modern prose translation to Wilkins'. For example, in the Everyman's Library, Krishna says

Knowing that, thou wilt never again fall into such bewilderment, O son of Pāndu; by that thou wilt see born beings altogether in thy self, and likewise in me.<sup>2</sup>

Wilkins translates this--

which having learnt, thou shalt not again, O son of Pandoo, fall into folly; by which thou shalt behold all nature in the spirit; that is, in me.<sup>3</sup>

In a footnote Wilkins feels it necessary to explain 'in me' as 'In the Deity, who is the universal spirit'. Thus he considers the mystical idea of man's unity with God through the self, and of an essential, over-arching oneness as sufficiently unfamiliar to warrant annotation. Wilkins takes the idea of man as microcosm, particularly that all other beings are part of man's true self, and makes it 'thou shalt behold all nature in the spirit'. The interpretation of Wilkins' translation turns on the ever slippery eighteenth-century term, 'nature'. In some uses it included man and in others it did not. In any case Wilkins avoids emphasizing man as part of the Universal Spirit, and rather Deistically views 'all nature' as part of or evidence of God and His work. Wilkins either did not understand monism or was consciously softening it. He always translates 'Self' as 'soul'. What Everyman translates as 'I am the Self inwardly dwelling in all born beings'<sup>4</sup>, Wilkins makes 'I am the soul which standeth in the bodies of all beings'.<sup>5</sup> As this comparison shows, the reviewer in the Gentleman's Magazine who complained that Wilkins uses too many physical, bodily images was correct.<sup>6</sup> Wilkins often interprets 'God within', 'Self' and similar concepts in a literal, bodily sense. One wonders whether this was his own response to and understanding of the text, or whether he felt he had to be so literal to be comprehensible to the general public.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bhagvat-Geeta, p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Iv, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Bhagvat-Geeta, p.55.

<sup>4</sup> X, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Bhagvat-Geeta, p.85.

<sup>6</sup> Lv, pt.2 (1785), p.977.

The latter view is probably more correct, although he is at times completely bewildered by the text. Referring in a note to the end of lesson fifteen which teaches that God is at once transcendent, the world-soul, and the essence of matter, Wilkins writes: 'This, and the following period, [verses sixteen to twenty, twenty being the final one] are so full of mystery, that the Translator despairs of revealing it to the satisfaction of the reader'.<sup>1</sup> Another and related way in which he misinterprets or consciously softens the doctrine of the necessity of transcending the 'I', is by interpreting it not as the necessity of transcending selfhood, but instead excessive selfhood, i.e. pride. For example, what Everyman makes--'He whose spirit is not brought to thought of an I...',<sup>2</sup> Wilkins translates as--'He who hath no pride...'.<sup>3</sup>

Wilkins is the least mystical of the writers studied in this chapter. More than anyone else, he tended to create Hinduism in his own Christian image. It is no coincidence that the reviewer in the Gentleman's Magazine felt that in Wilkins' Gita 'many expressions are similar to some in our Scriptures'.<sup>4</sup> An important example is Wilkins' translation of the charama-sloka.<sup>5</sup> Everyman renders it-- 'Surrendering all the laws, come for refuge to me alone. I will deliver thee from all sins; grieve not', while Wilkins makes it--'Forsake every other religion, and fly to me alone. Grieve not then, for I will deliver thee from all thy transgressions'.<sup>6</sup> The Everyman translation suggests that laws are like maps which when one reaches the destination are no longer necessary, whereas Wilkins insists on emphasizing the one true map. He forces the most tolerant and inclusive of the major religions to demand an exclusiveness which is no part of its nature.

The review in the Gentleman's Magazine lists Wilkins' titles of the eighteen sections of the Gita and gives a one-page extract from the conclusion of 'lecture' eleven. However, the reviewer makes no judgements except to repeat Hastings' view:

One blemish will be found in it, which will scarcely fail to make its own impression on every correct mind; and which for that reason I anticipate. I mean, the attempt to describe spiritual existences by terms and images which appertain to corporeal forms. Yet even in this respect it will appear less faulty than other works with which I have placed it in competition;<sup>7</sup> and defective as it may at first appear, I know not whether a doctrine so elevated above common perception did not require

1 Bhagvat-Geeta, p.153.

2 xviii, 17.

3 Bhagvat-Geeta, p.126.

4 Lv (1785), p.977.

5 'Final verse', xviii, 66, usually felt to contain the essence of the Gita.

6 Bhagvat-Geeta, p.133.

7 Iliad, Odyssey, Paradise Lost.

to be introduced by such ideas as were familiar to the mind, to lead it by a gradual advance to the pure and abstract comprehension of the subject.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

William Jones was born in 1746 in London. He was the youngest child of William Jones, the famous mathematician, who was a friend and editor of Newton. The father was also acquainted, as his son was later, with Samuel Johnson. Jones was a precocious and brilliant child. He was quoting Shakespeare at the age of four; while as a junior boy at Harrow, he could write, from memory, The Tempest in its entirety.<sup>2</sup> He was at Harrow from 1753 to 1764, and in addition to becoming an excellent classical scholar<sup>3</sup>, he learned French and Italian and some Hebrew and Arabic. He entered University College, Oxford, and took his B.A. in 1768 and M.A. in 1773. At Oxford he became fluent in German, Spanish and Portuguese, mastered Arabic and Persian, improved his Hebrew, and began the study of Chinese.<sup>4</sup> His first publication was a translation from Persian into French of a life of Nadir Shah. It appeared in 1770 and was commissioned by King Christian VII of Denmark. It was very well received. In the same year he published Traité sur la Poésie Orientale, which included a verse translation of some odes of Hafiz (c.1300-1388), the great Sufi poet. His reputation as an Oriental scholar was secured in 1774 with the publication of Poeseos Asiaticae Commentariorum, Libri Sex. He became F.R.S. in 1772, and a year later became a member of Johnson's Literary Club, in which he was admired for his modesty. He found, to his great annoyance, that although he gained fame as an Oriental scholar, he obtained little money. He was forced to study law after all, in order to make a living. Eventually appointed a judge of the high court at Calcutta, he was knighted early in 1783, and sailed for India in April. He was in India from December 1783 until his death in April 1794. Almost immediately, he founded the Asiatick Society of Bengal, with the aid of Wilkins. Mukherjee has called this the 'greatest contribution of Jones to India'.<sup>5</sup> Not only did Jones coordinate, through the Society, the work of men who had been labouring independently, he also saw to it that methods became far more scientific. He tried to eliminate hasty conclusions, European

<sup>1</sup> Introductory 'Letter to Nathaniel Smith', which precedes Wilkins' own introduction to the translation. Marshall, p.188.

<sup>2</sup> Mukherjee, p.19.

<sup>3</sup> The headmaster claimed that Jones knew more Greek than he did; at Harrow, when urged to become a lawyer, Jones refused because he could not bear to read the 'bad Latin' in old English law books. Ibid., p.19 and DNB.

<sup>4</sup> He wrote a fascinating essay 'On the Chinese', treating language and philosophy, Asiatick Researches, ii, pp.365-81.

<sup>5</sup> Mukherjee, p.140.

prejudice, and the tendency to write with the 'European appetite for the exotic'<sup>1</sup> very much in mind. Jones used the Royal Society of England as a model. As the King was its patron, he wanted the Governor-General to become the first president of the new Society. Hastings declined, however, explaining that for the good of the Society it should be led by one 'whose genius planned the institution and is most capable of conducting it to the attainment of the great and splendid purposes of its function'.<sup>2</sup> Jones accepted the nomination and became its first president. Initially, there were thirty members. By 1792 membership had increased to 110, but attendance at ordinary meetings was rarely more than a dozen, and Jones had to work assiduously to keep it in existence in the first years.<sup>3</sup> As there were too few papers submitted, he wrote most of them himself. But by the time of his death, the Society was firmly established, and its journal, Asiatick Researches, was spreading interest and enthusiasm for Indian studies throughout Europe and India.<sup>4</sup> One of the most basic and important services he rendered to the Society, with Wilkins, was in mastering Sanskrit. In this way he was able to make a direct exploration of Indian religion and literature, and help other members do likewise. He had no Sanskrit before coming to India, but with the help of Wilkins and several pandits, he made excellent progress. He was already making translations in May 1786.<sup>5</sup> His first published translation was in 1789 in Calcutta, Sacontala or the Fatal Ring, an Indian Drama, by Calidas. It was frequently reprinted and was perhaps his most important translation. He considered Kālidāsa to be Shakespeare's equal as a dramatist and poet.<sup>6</sup> This was not the first Sanskrit work put into a European language, as both Wilkins and Abraham Roger, the Dutch priest, preceded Jones; but their publications were translations of religious works, whereas Jones' was the first translation of an Indian work of literature. He also translated some hymns, (which will be discussed later), and selections from the Vedas.<sup>7</sup> In addition, he published a lovely translation of the Gita Govinda, an important mystical work.<sup>8</sup> This publication and his translation of Sakuntalā 'put Indian literature on the world map'.<sup>9</sup> Having been in India less than a year, Jones wrote: 'I am in

1 Mukherjee, p.81.

2 Quoted ibid., p.84.

3 Ibid., p.85.

4 For examples of the kinds of papers it published, covering a wide spectrum of subjects, see ibid., p.88.

5 Marshall, p.14.

6 Mukherjee, pp.115-6.

7 For a full list of his Sanskrit translations and other Indian writings, see Mukherjee, pp.182-3.

8 Asiatick Researches, iii, pp.185-207.

9 Mukherjee, p.121.

love with Gopia, charmed with Crishen, an enthusiastic admirer of Raama and a devout adorer of Brimha, Bishen, Mahiser<sup>1</sup>...'.<sup>2</sup>

Jones was also a poet. Johnson considered him 'as splendid a literary character as any to be named'.<sup>3</sup> But he was not an outstanding poet. He was simultaneously overinfluenced by Pope and Johnson, and unable to embody in verse his romantic feelings for nature, primitive life, and religion. His heroic couplets lack life and variety, and he seems afraid to allow his romantic sensibility to manifest.<sup>4</sup> However, he certainly deserves a place among the minor poets of the eighteenth century. Some of his best poetry appears in his translations of Sufi and Hindu works, since as a translator he could use more exotic language and imagery, which, one feels, came naturally to him. Chalmers considered him an important poet because he provided 'a new set of images', and 'new sources of the sublime' through presenting 'the scenery and manners of the eastern regions'.<sup>5</sup> Jones felt that imagery should be suggestive, and agreed with Johnson that the tulip should not be painted too minutely: 'poetry delights in general images;... a scrupulous exactness of description and similes, by leaving nothing for the imagination to supply, never fails to diminish or destroy the pleasure of the reader, who has an imagination to be gratified'.<sup>6</sup> Jones read Henry Brooke,<sup>7</sup> and like him frequently uses uncommon, rich sounding place names in his poetry.<sup>8</sup> Mysticism forms one of the main themes of his work. In his 'Hymn to Sereswaty', the shakti of Brahma to whom Hindus direct worship of imagination, invention and creativity in general, Jones says 'Oh, joy of mortal hearts, / Thy mystic wisdom teach'.<sup>9</sup> Jones sees creativity itself as mystical. He was also a keen student of Berkeley, and his poetry shows that Berkeley's esse est percipi had become a living principle for him. He composed a fine paraphrase of the ending of Siris:

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1 Maheshvara: Shiva in his aspect as Lord of Renunciates.

2 Letter to Richard Johnson, August 1784, quoted in Mukherjee, p.117.

3 Boswell, Life of Johnson, iv, p.524. Jones also admired Johnson.

4 In his translation of the Gita Govinda, which possesses wildly emotional and sensuous imagery, Jones is careful to point out 'that not a single image or idea has been added by the translator', Asiatick Researches, iii, p.183.

5 'Life of Sir William Jones', Works of the English Poets, xviii, p.440.

6 Ibid., p.475.

7 See Jones quotation, Mukherjee, p.44.

8 See especially Jones' 'A Persian Song of Hafiz', one of his best pieces.

9 It should be remembered that Jones' translations of the Hindu hymns are as much interpretations as translations. He adds, for instance, a Platonic element to the poems. See R. Hewitt, 'Harmonius Jones', Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, xxviii (1942), p.57. V. de Sola Pinto, 'Sir William Jones and English Literature', Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, xi (1943-46), p.692, calls Jones' nine Hindu hymns the best true odes in English poetry between Gray and Wordsworth.

Before thy mystic altar, heav'nly Truth,  
 I kneel in manhood, as I knelt in youth:  
 Thus let me kneel, till this dull form decay,  
 And life's last shade be brighten'd by thy ray:  
 Then shall my soul, now lost in clouds below,  
 Soar without bound, without consuming glow.<sup>1</sup>

In the 'Hymn to Narayena', his best hymn, the influence of Berkeley, and the goal of all mystics, are of central importance. In the 'Argument' which precedes the poem, Jones writes:

It will be sufficient here to premise, that the inextricable difficulties attending the vulgar notion of material substances, concerning which

we know this only, that we nothing know,

induced many of the wisest among the ancients, and some of the most enlightened among the moderns, to believe that the whole creation was rather an energy than a work, by which the Infinite Being, who is present at all times in all places, exhibits to the minds of his creatures a set of perceptions, like a wonderful picture or piece of music, always varied, yet always uniform; so that all bodies and their qualities exist indeed to every wise and useful purpose, but exist only as far as they are perceived; a theory no less pious than sublime, and as different from any principle of atheism, as the brightest sunshine differs from the blackest midnight. This illusive operation of the deity the Hindu philosophers called Maya; or deception.

This quotation not only demonstrates that Jones read Siris, understood Berkeley's view of external reality as a Divine Language, and was moved by Berkeley's esse est percipi, but that in addition he saw that Berkeley's view of external reality in Siris, if not earlier, was very similar to Shankara's maya. The poem opens with an address to Narayena, the Spirit of God.

SPIRIT of Spirits! who through ev'ry part  
 Of space expanded and of endless time,  
 Beyond the stretch of lab'ring thought sublime,  
 Bad'st uproar into beauteous order start,  
     Before Heav'n was, thou art:  
 Ere spheres beneath us roll'd, or spheres above,  
 Ere Earth in firmamental ether hung,  
 Thou sat'st alone: till through thy mystic love,  
 Things unexisting to existence sprung,  
     And grateful descant sung.

But what is maya and how does it operate?

Wrapt in eternal solitary shade,  
 Th' impenetrable gloom of light intense,  
 Impervious, inaccessible, immense,  
 Ere spirits were infus'd or forms display'd,  
     Brehm his own mind survey'd,  
 As mortal eyes (thus finite we compare

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<sup>1</sup> For the original, see conclusion of Berkeley chapter, above.

With infinite) in smoothest mirrors gaze:  
 Swift, at his look, a shape supremely fair  
 Leap'd into being with a boundless blaze,  
     That fifty suns might daze.  
 Primeval Maya was the goddess nam'd,  
 Who to her sire, with love divine inflam'd,  
 A casket gave with rich ideas fill'd,  
 From which this gorgeous universe he fram'd;  
     For when th'Almighty will'd  
     Unnumber'd worlds to build,  
 From Unity diversified he sprang,  
 While gay creation laugh'd, and procreant nature rang.<sup>1</sup>

This conception of maya is very similar to Boehme's and Roach's Divine Sophia. They are each the 'mirror' of Deity, the Divine Imagination, the idea as model of the world, and the womb or 'casket' of (what seems to be) material reality. The last line suggests that the creation is God's play, not his work. The creation as God's lila, his play, forms an important aspect of Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> But it is not an exclusively Hindu conception; Boehme also sees the universe as God's play.<sup>3</sup> If the universe is seen in this way, maya becomes a more understandable conception. Just as some dreams are vividly real until one awakens to reality, so is the world-appearance (maya) real until one gains union with Reality (God). It is not that at the time of mystical union with God maya is removed, 'for it is not a thing, but the whole world-illusion is dissolved into its own airy nothing never to recur again'.<sup>4</sup> As Isaac Penington observed: 'All truth is a shadow except the last. But every truth is substance in its own place, though it must be but a shadow in another place'.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Jones ends the poem, declaring:

Hence vanish from my sight:  
 Delusive pictures, unsubstantial shows!  
 My soul absorb'd one only being knows,  
 Of all perceptions one abundant source,  
 Whence ev'ry object ev'ry moment flows,  
     Suns hence derive their force,  
     Hence planets learn their course;  
 But suns and fading worlds I view no more:  
 God only I perceive; God only I adore.

Though this is clearly someone writing about a wished for experience rather than one which has been attained, Jones uses images of accomplished mystical union with God, of the absorption kind. In one of his essays which will be discussed below, he uses images of mystical marriage with a personal God rather

<sup>1</sup> 19-36.

<sup>2</sup> Dasgupta, i, p.324.

<sup>3</sup> Mysterium Magnum, vii, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Dasgupta, i, p.470.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Jessop, Siris, p.19.

than absorption into an impersonal Deity. Jones was equally happy with either conception, and provides an example that the two are not mutually exclusive.

In his essay 'On the Philosophy of the Asiatics', Jones again demonstrates an interest in Berkeley's philosophy, Shankara's maya and the Vedanta. The monism of Shankara's school of Vedanta has been one of the most difficult aspects of Hinduism for Christians to understand, let alone accept.<sup>1</sup> Jones, however, had no such problem. He explains that the

fundamental tenet of the Vedanta school, to which in a more modern age the incomparable Sancara was a firm and illustrious adherent, consisted not in denying the existence of matter, that is of solidity, impenetrability, and extended figure (to deny which would be lunacy) but, in correcting the popular notion of it, and in contending that it has no essence independent of mental perception; that existence and perceptibility are convertible terms; that external appearances and sensations are illusory, and would vanish into nothing, if the divine energy, which alone sustains them, were suspended but for a moment: an opinion which Epicharmus and Plato seem to have adopted, and which has been maintained in the present century with great elegance, but with little public applause; partly because it has been misunderstood, and partly because it has been misapplied...<sup>2</sup>

Most Christians reject the monistic Vedanta doctrine of the unity of the individual soul and God. They consider it an outrage which allows man to view himself as divine. On this question Jones observes:

I have not sufficient evidence on the subject to profess a belief in the doctrine of the Vedanta, which human reason alone could, perhaps, neither fully disprove, nor fully demonstrate; but it is manifest, that nothing can be farther removed from impiety than a system wholly built on the purest devotion....<sup>3</sup>

In European terms, Jones' understanding of Vedanta was far in advance of its age. He saw that Sufism was influenced by the monistic Vedanta, a fact which has only been acknowledged in recent years.<sup>4</sup> He made this important observation in beginning his essay 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus'.<sup>5</sup> Jones argues that Christian, Moslem and Hindu mysticism are in essence one. In a long passage which shows, perhaps better than any he wrote, that Jones was himself a mystic, and that he was capable of poetic if not rhapsodic prose, he declares that Christian mystics, Sufis, and Vedantists all

concur in believing that the souls of men differ infinitely in degree, but not at all in kind, from the divine spirit, of which they are particles, and in which they will ultimately be absorbed; that the

<sup>1</sup> See Marshall, pp.40-41, for some examples.

<sup>2</sup> Asiatick Researches, iv, p.164.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Zaehner, Mysticism Sacred and Profane, pp.161ff.

<sup>5</sup> Asiatick Researches, iii, p.165.

spirit of GOD pervades the universe, always immediately present to his work, and consequently always in substance; that he alone is perfect benevolence, perfect truth, perfect beauty; that the love of him alone is real and genuine love, while that of all other objects is absurd and illusory; that the beauties of nature are faint resemblances, like images in a mirror, of the divine charms; that, from eternity without beginning, to eternity without end, the supreme benevolence is occupied in bestowing happiness, or the means of attaining it: that men can only attain it by performing their part of the primal covenant between them and the Creator; that nothing has a pure absolute existence but mind or spirit; that material substances, as the ignorant call them, are no more than gay pictures, presented continually to our minds by the sempiternal artist; that we must beware of attachment to such phantoms, and attach ourselves exclusively to GOD, who truly exists in us, as we exist solely in him; that we retain, even in this forlorn state of separation from our beloved, the idea of heavenly beauty, and the remembrance of our primeval vows; that sweet musick, gentle breezes, fragrant flowers, perpetually renew the primary idea, refresh our fading memory, and melt us with tender affections; that we must cherish those affections, and, by abstracting our souls from vanity, that is, from all but GOD, approximate to his essence, in our final union with which will consist our supreme beatitude. From these principles flow a thousand metaphors, and other poetical figures, which abound in the sacred poems of the Persians and Hindus, who seem to mean the same thing in substance, and differ only in expression, as their languages differ in idiom!<sup>1</sup>

This passage shows that Jones, in Henry More's phrase, is totally God centred. He sees no other lasting reality but God. He considers the only real life to be one which is a total love offering to God. He is an immaterialist after Berkeley and Shankara, and his supreme goal is mystical union with the 'beloved'. It is little wonder, therefore, that the central concern of his essay 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus' is the mystical marriage. He gives examples of this mystery in various Sufi and Christian mystics, and suggests that the mystical marriage is 'mystically shadowed in the Song of Solomon'.<sup>2</sup> He explains that the imagery of sexual love in the Gita Govinda between Krishna and Radha is an allegory in which Radha represents the human soul and also 'the whole assemblage of created souls, between whom and the benevolent Creator' there is a 'reciprocal love'.<sup>3</sup> Jones addresses the man who scoffs at the seeking of mystical union with God by reminding him that if the love for a woman 'with its basis on air, affects thee so violently, and commands with a sway so despotick, canst thou wonder, that they who walk in the true path, are drowned in the sea of mysterious adoration?'<sup>4</sup> Jones was one of the very few Englishmen who could accept that the allegorical sexual imagery used in descriptions of the love between Krishna and his devotees represented the mystical marriage, and 'is no

<sup>1</sup> Asiatick Researches, iii, pp.170-1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.172.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.181.

proof of depravity in their morals'.<sup>1</sup> However, Jones' own statement of his desire to unite with God is more circumspect, though no less intense.

'Would I were yon blue field above,  
(Said Plato, warbling am'rous lays)  
'That with ten thousand eyes of love,  
On thee for ever I might gaze.'

My purer love the wish disclaims,  
For were I, like Tiresias, blind,  
Still should I glow with heavenly flames,  
And gaze with rapture on thy mind.<sup>2</sup>

Jones emphasizes that beauty beyond physical form is, as the Symposium teaches, of a higher order, and nearer to absolute Reality than anything in the material world. Jones was very much a Platonist and was not afraid, as he does here, to best Plato in the application of Platonic doctrine.

Jones' reputation as an Oriental scholar was immense in his lifetime, but there is disagreement on the extent of his influence on European thought. Marshall holds that Jones' presentation and where necessary his defence of Indian religion and literature were 'conspicuously successful'.<sup>3</sup> His admirers included Goethe, Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, Chateaubriand, Quinet, Michelet, Hugo, Lamartine, de Maistre and Lamennais.<sup>4</sup> His influence in England through the contributions to Asiatick Researches was considerable.<sup>5</sup> The Monthly Review<sup>6</sup> and the Gentleman's Magazine<sup>7</sup> were both impressed, particularly the former. The first volume of Asiatick Researches was so popular that a pirated edition appeared in London, and from 1793 until the 1830's, reprints were published, on average, every other year.<sup>8</sup> His influence on English writers falls mainly outside the eighteenth century, and includes Byron, Southey, Tennyson and especially Shelley. Hewitt has shown the important influence of Jones' 'Hymn to Narayena' on Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', and V. de Sola Pinto believes that it was largely due to Jones' influence that Shelley moved from

<sup>1</sup> 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', Asiatick Researches, i, p.255. Cf. Zaehner, Mysticism Sacred and Profane, p.141: '... as ānanda, 'bliss', [Brahman] is also Love, for ānanda is the ordinary word used for sexual pleasure and the 'bliss' it denotes is primarily the bliss occasioned by the union of the sexes: and no one who is at all familiar with the writings of Christian mystics and the image of the soul as the bride of Christ which is so constantly employed, is likely to quarrel with the parallel drawn between the physical union of the sexes and the union of the soul with God'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Au Firmament'.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.17. For other viewpoints see Mukherjee, p.141 and R. Schwab, La Renaissance Orientale, (Paris, 1950), pp.59-71.

<sup>5</sup> Mukherjee, p.88.

<sup>6</sup> Lxxxix (1789), pp.648-53.

<sup>7</sup> Lix (1789), pp.1020-1.

<sup>8</sup> Mukherjee, pp.88,166.

'the atheistic materialism of his early writings to the mystical pantheism of his mature works'.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of his death, Jones knew thirteen languages 'thoroughly and twenty-eight fairly well'.<sup>2</sup> He used this genius for languages to great purpose in his study of Near-Eastern and Asian cultures. It is symptomatic of his sense of mystical oneness that he always emphasized the similarities among cultures.<sup>3</sup> He considered it his mission to bring Europe and Asia closer together by providing the West with reliable translations of Indian religious and literary classics. Jones was of course a Christian, not a Hindu, but in many ways he was nonsectarian.<sup>4</sup> He believed that the Church of England 'would inevitably fall and the Religion of the Gospel be substituted in its place'.<sup>5</sup> He thought there was little point in trying to convert India because Hindus

would readily admit the truth of the Gospel; but they contend, that it is perfectly consistent with their Sastras. The Deity, they say, has appeared innumerable times, in many parts of this world, and of all worlds, for the salvation of his creatures; and though we adore him in one appearance, and they in others, yet we adore, they say, the same God, to whom our several worships, though different in form, are equally acceptable, if they be sincere in substance.<sup>6</sup>

As noted above, he found the monism of Shankara particularly appealing. But a second aspect of Hinduism which he found especially moving was the doctrine of rebirth. Showing that he was quite capable of preferring a basic Hindu belief to a central doctrine of Christianity, Jones writes:

I am no Hindu but I hold the doctrine of the Hindus concerning a future state to be incomparably more rational, more pious and more likely to deter men from vice than the horrid opinions inculcated by the Christians on punishment without end.<sup>7</sup>

Jones had a reverence for all life,<sup>8</sup> and believed that God was best worshipped in one's work, avoiding theological controversy. His interests were near

<sup>1</sup> V. de Sola Pinto, p.694. See Hewitt, pp.57ff. Also, see E. Koepfel, 'Shelley's Queen Mab and Sir William Jones's Palace of Fortune, Englische Studien, xxxiii (1899), pp.43-53.

<sup>2</sup> DNB.

<sup>3</sup> For some examples see Mukherjee, p.40.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Monthly Review, lxxxix (1789), p.653: 'we were almost apprehensive that our excellent countryman had, with his situation, changed his religion...'

<sup>5</sup> Letter of 1787 quoted by Mukherjee, p.118.

<sup>6</sup> 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India', Asiatick Researches, i, p.274.

<sup>7</sup> Letter of 1787 quoted in Mukherjee, p.119.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jones quoted by A. Arberry, New Light on Sir William Jones, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, xi (1943-46), p.684:

I have lately met with a Persian couplet, which pleased me, because it expresses my sentiments on two great points, 1st. kindness to all living creatures (one great article of the primitive religion delivered by God to man) and secondly, the necessity of labour, if we wish to be virtuous and happy.

universal as was the perspective he tried to assume. This universal perspective was an expression of universal love and the deep desire to serve God and man. His successor as president of the Asiatick Society, referring to Jones, wrote:

Knowledge and truth were the objects of all his studies, and his ambition was to be useful to mankind. With these views, he extended his researches to all languages, nations, and times.<sup>1</sup>

## VII

The writers studied in this chapter reached a considerable audience, with the possible exception of Wilkins, and had some influence on contemporary authors. For example, in 1786 John Courtenay wrote:

Here early parts accomplished Jones sublimes,  
And science blends with Asia's lofty rhymes;  
Harmonious Jones! who in his splendid strains  
Sings Camdeo's sports, on Agra's flowing plains,  
In Hindu fictions while we fondly trace  
Love and the Muses, decked with Attic grace.<sup>2</sup>

Gibbon obtained much of his knowledge of the East from Jones, who appears in some of Gibbon's monumental footnotes.<sup>3</sup> Burke was so influenced by Halhed and Jones that he 'spoke of the piety of the Hindoos with admiration, and of their holy religion and sacred functions with an awe bordering on devotion'.<sup>4</sup> In the second edition of his translation of The Lusiad: or the Discovery of India, an Epic Poem, 1788, William Mickle added a discussion of the religion of the Brahmins. It is based almost entirely on Holwell and Dow, who are praised for their 'systematical accounts of the doctrines of the Gentoës'.<sup>5</sup> John Scott was particularly moved by Holwell, Dow and Jones, who frequently appear in his footnotes.<sup>6</sup> In 'Serim; or the Artificial Famine. An East-Indian Eclogue', 1782, Scott is very much on the side of the Hindus against their European conquerors. He asks as 'Serim':

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Crush not yon ant, who stores the golden grain:  
He lives with pleasure, and will die with pain:  
Learn from him rather to secure the spoil  
Of patient cares and persevering toil.

<sup>1</sup> John Shore, 'Discourse Delivered at a Meeting of the Asiatick Society on 22 May 1794', Asiatick Researches, iv, p.177.

<sup>2</sup> 'A Poetical Review of the Literary and Moral Character of Samuel Johnson'.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. J.B. Bury, (1896-1900), v, p.325n.

<sup>4</sup> Lord Holland, Marshall, p.39.

<sup>5</sup> Chalmers, xxi, p.713. Mickle (1735-1788), who wrote pseudo-medieval ballads and defended chivalry against the man of reason, was a moral purist who was urged to take orders by Bishop Lowth. He wrote against Deism in Voltaire in the Shades.

<sup>6</sup> Scott (1730-1783), a Quaker, was respected as a poet by Young, Lyttelton and Beattie. He wrote an important long essay on Thomson's Seasons.

What right have ye to plague our peaceful land?  
 No ships of ours e'er sought your western strand:  
 Ne'er from your fields, we snatch'd their crops away,  
 Nor made your daughters or your sons our prey.<sup>1</sup>

Scott explains Hindu pantheism in this way: 'the intelligent part of the natives do not worship "sticks and stones" merely as such; but rather the Supreme Existence, in a variety of attributes or manifestations!'<sup>2</sup> Scott refers to the doctrine of rebirth.<sup>3</sup> Most of the writers studied were much taken with this doctrine, and none came out against it. Halhed and Jones were particularly moved, but Holwell was most attracted of all. He wrote a Dissertation on the Metempsychosis, 1771, which forms part three of his Interesting Historical Events, and which sets out the doctrine in great depth. All the writers were impressed with the tolerance of the Brahmins towards other religions. They tended to see Hinduism as a mystical Deism. John Shore, friend and biographer of Jones, wrote that Hinduism 'is pure Deism and has a wonderful resemblance to the doctrines of Plato. I doubt if any of his writings are more metaphysically abstract than some of the Hindoos'.<sup>4</sup>

It is significant that none of the writers were interested in what Hinduism meant to Hindus at large. The only caste they were involved with were the Brahmins, and before Wilkins and Jones mastered Sanskrit, this bias severely limited the prevailing view of Indian religion. The writers 'were, in effect, chelas of their pandits'.<sup>5</sup> Their vision of Hinduism, though often superficial or inaccurate, was generally clear and sometimes comprehensive. This clarity and comprehensiveness was especially marked in Jones who, because he was a great linguist and scholar, and had larger sympathies than the other writers, gave the most complete and accurate picture of Hinduism in the eighteenth century. Like all explorers and pioneers, the writers were largely amateurs. They all carried out their studies after their daily routine for the East India Company. They were all overworked without their studies, and what is more, the absence of standard texts and other research material was a severe handicap.<sup>6</sup> It was inevitable, therefore, that their major weakness was the absence of sufficient positive information to develop an accurate overview of Hinduism. There was much unintentional distortion. Yet, for all its exploratory and inevitably superficial quality, the work of Holwell, Dow, Halhed and Wilkins, and especially of the more accurate Jones, did dramatically

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<sup>1</sup> 21-24.

<sup>2</sup> 'Serim', fn.8.

<sup>3</sup> 167-168.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Mukherjee, p.78.

<sup>5</sup> J. Steadman, 'The Asiatick Society of Bengal', Eighteenth-Century Studies, 10 (1977), p.478.

<sup>6</sup> see Mukherjee, p.78.

change the English view of Hinduism through providing specific information. This can be seen by comparing the specific names and doctrines in Jones' Hindu poems with Isaac Watts' tremendously vague treatment of Brahminism in 'The Indian Philosopher', 1701. At his most specific, Watts writes:

a venerable priest,  
Risen with his god, the Sun, from rest,  
Awoke his morning song;  
Thrice he conjur'd the murmuring stream  
The birth of souls was all his theme  
And half divine his tongue.

He sang th'eternal rolling flame  
The vital mass, that still the same  
Does all our minds compose;  
But shap'd in twice ten thousand frames  
Thence differing souls in jarring names  
And jarring tempers rose.<sup>1</sup>

To call the poem vague is not to criticize Watts, since there were no reliable sources on which he could draw.

One of the most engaging aspects of these writers is the energy and enthusiasm of discoverers which they possess. This is doubtless a main reason for their contemporary popularity. If they are not always accurate, thorough or balanced, they are interesting, original, and dedicated. They all wrote with at least affection and respect for their subject. They wished to portray Hinduism in a positive light to European audiences. If they were guilty of shortsightedly casting Hinduism in too Christian a mould, it was at least in part from a desire to avoid 'the vain warfare of controversial divinity'.<sup>2</sup> They provided the superstructure upon which others built, and if that superstructure was not perfect, it was sufficiently sound to withstand the furious assault of James Mill and others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 19-30.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, quoted by Mukherjee, p.26.

<sup>3</sup> Mill's attack on Hinduism and its English defenders (especially Jones), is in the opening chapter of his History of British India, (1826).

## CHAPTER 11

### JOHN BYROM: THE MYSTICAL BOSWELL

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Enclosed with the soul in the narrow self, two forces, the desire to know more and the desire to love more, are ceaselessly at work. Where the first of these cravings predominates, we call the result a philosophical or a scientific temperament ; where it is overpowered by the ardour of unsatisfied love, the self's reaction upon things becomes poetic, artistic, and characteristically--though not always explicitly--religious.

Evelyn Underhill

Consciously or unconsciously all creatures seek their proper state. The stone cannot cease moving till it touch the earth, the fire rises up to heaven: thus a loving soul can never rest but in God; and so we say that God has given to all things their proper place: to the fish the water, to the bird the air, to the beast the earth, to the soul the Godhead.

Meister Eckhart

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## I

Fairchild's final judgement of Byrom is that even 'disregarding his indebtedness to Law, Byrom is anything but an important mystic. His historical interest, however, is great'.<sup>1</sup> One must agree with this judgement, especially if all of Byrom's works are considered, not just the few poems and essays published in his lifetime. He was not an original mystic or thinker. Yet not only is he of considerable importance for the light he sheds on Law's character and works, but in addition his view of the imagination (taken partly from Law) has important affinities with the Romantic view of the imagination especially as set forth by Coleridge and Blake.<sup>2</sup> This is apparently what Fairchild had in

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<sup>1</sup> Religious Trends in English Poetry, ii, p.161.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge acknowledged his debt to Boehme and Law as Blake did to Boehme. See S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. Arthur Symons, (1906), pp.75-6. For Blake on Boehme see 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'.

mind when he wrote, rather obliquely, that in Byrom 'Protestant mysticism of the Inner Light points toward the romantic faith in those "important faculties" which, reigning imperiously over matter, "carve out deep realities for us"'.<sup>1</sup>

John Byrom was born in 1692 in Manchester. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, being awarded a B.A. in 1712 and an M.A. in 1715. He became a fellow the college in 1714. Byrom had strong Jacobite sympathies, and was troubled by the oath of abjuration. He settled the question by not taking orders, necessary for retaining the fellowship, and by leaving for France.<sup>2</sup> His ostensible reason for going to Montpellier was to study medicine, but the trip may have had political implications. He told Law that he kissed the Old Pretender's hand at Avignon.<sup>3</sup> When the Young Pretender entered Manchester in 1745, Byrom was summoned, and kissed the Prince's hand. But he was too common-sense and peace-loving to support a doomed rebellion in any active sense.<sup>4</sup>

Byrom returned to England in 1718 without a medical degree, though his friends thereafter called him 'doctor'. The most important result of his time in France was his introduction to the works of Malebranche and Bourignon. Both mystics had a profound influence on his development. He called Malebranche 'the greatest divine that e'er liv'd upon earth',<sup>5</sup> and wrote of Bourignon that God 'was Himself her Guide, /And she knew more than all the World beside'.<sup>6</sup> Byrom retained great admiration for Malebranche and Bourignon throughout his life, though they were overshadowed in the 1730's and thereafter by Boehme and Law. Byrom read Boehme before Law knew the great German mystic.<sup>7</sup> He first met Law on 4 March 1729 at Putney, and was thereafter his ardent disciple. Their relationship was much like that of Boswell and Johnson. Byrom, like Boswell, was simply and sincerely devoted to his 'master'. He treated him like an oracle and had a child-like, rather uncritical, admiration. Though not to the same degree as Boswell, Byrom lovingly recorded all he could of his hero's thoughts, words and actions. In each case, the master's treatment of his follower was often brusque, yet could hardly conceal a deep affection.

<sup>1</sup> Religious Trends, ii, p.161.

<sup>2</sup> DNB dates his departure as 1717; Henri Talon in his Selections From the Journals and Papers of John Byrom, (1950), p.5, puts it as early 1717.

<sup>3</sup> The Private Journal and Literary Remains of John Byrom, ed. Richard Parkinson, (Manchester, 1854-7), ii, i, p.259.

<sup>4</sup> For an interesting account of the Pretender's stay in Manchester, see Remains, ii, ii, pp.385-414.

<sup>5</sup> The Poems of John Byrom, ed. Adolphus Ward, (Manchester, 1894-1912), i, i, p.84. Byrom wrote this in 1727, before he met Law.

<sup>6</sup> Poems, iii, p.66.

<sup>7</sup> Walker, William Law: His Life and Thought, (1973), p.71. See Remains, i, ii, p.452.

Byrom, a second son, did not inherit his father's prosperous linen-dra- per's business until the death of his elder brother in 1740. On his return to England in 1718 and especially after his marriage in 1721, he was forced to make a living by teaching the method of shorthand which he developed at Cambridge. He did not publish his system, but instead gave personal instruction. Each student paid five guineas and promised not to divulge the system. Byrom's many students included John and Charles Wesley, David Hartley, Horace Walpole, Lords Chesterfield, Delaware and Halifax, the Duke of Queensbury, and the Duke of Devonshire. The fee was high, and Byrom had to work assiduously. Manchester was then a town of only 12,000; very few people could pay the fee. Consequently, Byrom spent only the summer with his family in Manchester. The rest of the year he was mainly in London and Cambridge, teaching his system. In 1724 he became a fellow of the Royal Society, and gave two papers on shorthand. It is in Byrom's private diary and frequent letters to his wife, that one gains a charming and quite intimate view of coffee-house life between 1720 and 1740. (On becoming head of the family in 1740 Byrom left Manchester only infrequently). The two outstanding features of coffee-house life as seen through Byrom's eyes are its joviality and interest in philosophical and religious questions. This reflects the two main aspects of Byrom's mind and heart: his sense of humour and happiness, and his deep commitment to mysticism. He often combined the two in ways Law did not approve of, nor understand. In 1727, before meeting Law, he wrote a poem to a friend, 'On Buying the Picture of Father Malebranche at a Sale', which he ends as follows:

And now, if some evening, when you are at leisure,  
You'll come and rejoice with me over my treasure,  
With a friend or two with you, that will in free sort  
Let us mix Metaphysics and Short-hand and port:  
We'll talk of his book, or what else you've a mind  
Take a glass, read or write, as we see we're inclin'd;  
Such friends, and such freedom!-- What can be more clever?  
Huzza! FATHER MALEBRANCHE AND SHORT-HAND FOR EVER!

Law's influence was such that within a year of knowing him, Byrom's perspective had changed, as seen in this diary entry:

... supper at the Mitre with Chilton, Hough, Taylor (Professor) and Coppendale, talked about Hebrew points, happiness, Law, stage plays, we paid 2s., I two bottles-- too much for a defender of Law to drink.<sup>1</sup>

Byrom seems to have carried on in much the same way as before, except he now had pangs of guilt. In time, Law's influence deepened his guilt, but apparently without changing his actions. At 'The Ship' with friends, Byrom notes:

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<sup>1</sup> 31 January 1730. Remains, i, ii, p.420.

we talked about mathematics, poetry, etc., and the reflection upon my own vain, idle words does not please me, for, being sensible that tavern talk is wrong, yet I go to it; it was twelve o'clock when we came away, and so the evening was lost.<sup>1</sup>

This lament over lost time reminds one of Dr. Johnson. It also shows Byrom's high standards of personal conduct befitting an admirer of à Kempis. He reproached himself over matters most people would consider trifling. Byrom was 'humble, unselfish, and warm-hearted, conscientious but strikingly free from censoriousness, admirable in all domestic relations, capable of wholehearted hero-worship, above all, ardently devout'.<sup>2</sup> Even Warburton, whom Byrom attacked, liked him and recognized his essentially loving, conciliatory nature.<sup>3</sup>

Even allowing for the influence and effect of Byrom's interests and perspectives, his diary shows that there was greater interest in mysticism at this time than is generally realized. One finds many passages like the following: 'Mr. Lloyd and I went into the city and to W. Chad's, whom we found in his counting place, and had some mystical talk;'<sup>4</sup> or: 'we went to Bevan's,... talked of Mr. Clements who frequents Slaughter's, and is a great man for the mystics, for Jacob Behmen'.<sup>5</sup> One important objective proof of this interest in mysticism is the significant number of mystical books which were available. This is shown in Byrom's diary:

bought Thomas à Kempis' works,... Malbranche's Morality, Van Helmont's Great and Little World,... Ignatius Loyola Essercitti Spir., 6 d; in another shop I bought Pordage and Philothea of brother John of the Cross, ... Van Helmont,... Bourignon's works,... two pieces of Jacob Behmen.<sup>6</sup>

Among the many mystical writers whose works he was able to purchase are the following: Angela of Foligno (1248-1309)<sup>7</sup>, Hilton,<sup>8</sup> Margery Kempe,<sup>9</sup> Jane Lead,<sup>10</sup> Ruysbroeck,<sup>11</sup> St. Macarius,<sup>12</sup> St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510),<sup>13</sup> and Origen (183-253).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 4 May 1735. Remains, i, ii, p.604.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Osmond, The Mystical Poets of the English Church, (1919), p.252.

Arthur Hopkinson, often an unsympathetic if not harsh critic of Law, agrees with Osmond's assessment of Byrom's character: Byrom's 'character was above reproach'; About William Law, (1948), p.17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Remains, i, i, p.320, where Byrom ends an argument by making both parties laugh. Byrom's relations with Warburton will be discussed below.

<sup>4</sup> Remains, ii, i, p.100.

<sup>5</sup> Remains, i, ii, p.594. Dr. Cheyne also testifies to the considerable interest in mysticism, even in coffee-houses. See Remains, ii, ii, p.363.

<sup>6</sup> Remains, i, ii, pp.447,448,452.

<sup>7</sup> Remains, i, ii, p.638.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.551-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.631.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.444.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.531.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.579.

<sup>13</sup> II, i, p.50.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.54.

An even clearer picture emerges from the catalogue of Byrom's library. He owned some dozen books on the Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition, including Rosicrucianism. He had works by Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, Elias Ashmole, Augustine Baker, complete Boehme (seventeen volumes), Berkeley, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Bourignon (thirty-three volumes), Thomas Bromley, Bruno, Cheyne, Crashaw, St. John of the Cross, John Dee, Dionysius the Areopagite, John Everard, Fénelon, George Fox, St. Francis of Sales (1567-1622), Joseph Glanvill, Guyon, Hermes Trismegistus (The Divine Pymander, trans. Everard), Iamblichus, Ken, complete Law (thirty volumes), Francis Lee, Malebranche (seventeen volumes), Michael de Molinos (1640-1697), Henry More (eight volumes), John Norris, Paracelsus, Poiret (ten volumes), John Pordage, Roach, St. Teresa, Tauler, six copies of four editions of the Theologia Germanica, à Kempis (twenty volumes), Toland's 'Clidophorus, or the Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy', Thomas Tryon, Thomas Vaughan, and other mystical writers.<sup>1</sup> Byrom was interested in all aspects and schools of mysticism, wherein he differs greatly from Law. Books from all five traditions outlined in chapter two appear in Byrom's diary and library. The Catholic tradition is well represented, including the English Catholics. The Hermetic-Kabalistic tradition is also well represented, particularly works related to the philosopher's stone. Byrom was drawn to the Kabala from two directions: mystical and linguistic.<sup>2</sup> There are books on the Anabaptists, Seekers and Quakers. The Cambridge Platonists are represented by More and Cudworth. There are many works by and about Quietists, including the work of its 'founder', Molinos. The Behmenists are heavily represented, including the Philadelphians; no one tradition, however, dominates the collection. In its way this shows that Byrom was balanced in his mystical studies. His tastes were catholic yet specific, and though he was sympathetic to various degrees, with all the traditions,<sup>3</sup> his chief interest was in Behmenism as promulgated by Law. When this evidence of interest in mysticism and availability of mystical books is combined with that supplied in Roach's list, in which many of the same names appear,<sup>4</sup> it becomes clear that the usual view of the first half of the eighteenth century as completely anti- or unmystical is false.

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<sup>1</sup> A Catalogue of the Library of the Late John Byrom, M.A., F.R.S., (1848).

<sup>2</sup> Byrom studied Hebrew all his adult life. For his interest in symbolic language and the Kabala see Remains, i, ii, p.442.

<sup>3</sup> He was least sympathetic to the Hermetic tradition since, with Law, he did not like the exoteric, esoteric distinction. See Poems, ii, i, p.184 and Remains ii, ii, p.541.

<sup>4</sup> For Roach's list of 'the Principal' mystical works available in 1725, see above, section I of the chapter on Roach.

## II

Byrom's poetry can be divided into two groups. There are a series of poems in which he closely or freely paraphrases sections from Law's works and occasionally the work of other mystics as well. His longest and most substantial poems are in this group. The second group is composed of poems which though rarely if ever original, contain what is more nearly his own thought. Often these poems are purely and earnestly devotional. His four principal paraphrases of Law are: An Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple, 480 lines; Enthusiasm, 406 lines; Familiar Epistles to a Friend, 592 lines; and On Church Communion, 336 lines. The Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple was written and published in 1749. It was printed by Samuel Richardson, for whom Byrom had a high regard. In 'The Art of Acting', Byrom praises the man who

ventur'd to expose  
Vice in its odious colours, and to paint  
In his Clarissa's Life and Death a Saint?<sup>1</sup>

The Epistle contrasts Law's doctrine of the Fall as set forth in The Spirit of Prayer, 1749, with that of Bishop Sherlock in the Appendix to his Dissertation on the Sense of the Ancients Before Christ on the Circumstances and Consequences of the Fall, Being a Further Enquiry into the Mosaic Account of the Fall, 1725.<sup>2</sup> In Sherlock's legalistic account, Adam's Fall is viewed as a figurative death, and a punishment from God for disobedience. Byrom feels that not only is this an error, it in addition seriously mistakes the nature of man, the depth of the Fall and thus the difficulty of spiritual rebirth through the Christ within. Sherlock called the death Adam experienced upon eating the forbidden fruit figurative, in that 'the sentence was requited' until the end of Adam's long life.<sup>3</sup> Byrom, following Law, explains that in reality 'The Life that Adam was created in/ Was lost the Day, the Instant, of his Sin'.<sup>4</sup> What he lost was 'his pristine Spirit-life Divine'.<sup>5</sup> Adam fell not by disobeying the arbitrary command of a wrathful God, but in choosing to be separate, by exercising his free-will. Adam fell when he put self first, not God. His rejection of spiritual oneness, his desire for separation, was achieved through Adam's divinely received imagination and will, which were free and powerful. Byrom believes that

<sup>1</sup> Poems, i, i, p.263. It is interesting to recall that Warburton wrote the preface to Clarissa. Richardson, in addition to being the correspondent and friend of Dr. Cheyne, was thus also associated with Byrom. Richardson was also the printer and an admirer of Byrom's most substantial poem, Enthusiasm. See Poems, ii, i, p.141. For references to Richardson in Byrom's journal see Remains, ii, i, p.304; ii, ii, pp.520-1, 596.

<sup>2</sup> For a good overview of Sherlock, Bishop of London, and the background to the poem, see Ward's introduction, Poems, ii, i, pp.138-144.

<sup>3</sup> Sherlock, quoted by Osmond, The Mystical Poets of the English Church, p.255. 25-26, Poems, ii, i, p.145.

<sup>5</sup> 155, ibid., p.151.

a man is whatever he wills himself to be. This is the essence of the freedom man receives from God. God was not testing Adam in forbidding him to eat of the fruit; he was trying to prevent the Fall.

Man perish'd by the deadly Food he took,  
 And needs must lose the Life that he forsook,  
 Not unadvis'd. The Moment he inclin'd  
 To this inferior Life his nobler Mind,  
 God kindly warn'd him to continue fed  
 With the Food of Paradise, with Angels' Bread;  
 . . . . .  
 Who can suppose that God would e'er forbid  
 To eat what would not hurt him if he did;  
 Fright His lov'd Creature by a false Alarm;  
 Or make what in itself was harmless, Harm?<sup>1</sup>

Sherlock, in having Adam fall simply from disobedience, severely underestimates the depth of the Fall. Adam chose not merely to disobey God but to replace Him with his own self. The seed of Christ in the soul, which develops when man imagines and wills it to, has not merely to make man obedient to God; man must be made divine and whole again. His entire will must again be centred in God. Christ's work in the soul is thus more difficult and extensive than Sherlock implies; it is man himself, not God, who creates evil and Hell. 'He made no Hell to place His Angels in; /They stirr'd the Fire that burnt them by their Sin'.<sup>2</sup> What is true for angels is true for men:

by Abuse of Thought and Skill  
 The greatest Good, to wit, Free-will,  
 Becomes the Origin of Ill.<sup>3</sup>

Man must take full responsibility for his chosen condition. God did not test, then damn him. Byrom is following Law's sublime and simple logic.

They are not in Hell, because Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are angry at them, and so cast them into a Punishment, which their wrath had contrived for them; but they are in Wrath and Darkness, because they have done to the Light which infinitely flows forth from God, as that Man does to the Light of the Sun, who puts out his own Eyes: He is in Darkness, not because the sun is darkened towards him, has less Light for him, or has lost all Inclination to enlighten him, but because he has put out that Birth of Light in himself, which alone made him capable of seeing in the Light of the Sun.... They no more have their Punishment from God himself than the Man who puts out his Eyes, has his Darkness from the Sun itself.<sup>4</sup>

Byrom ends the poem by castigating those who idly speculate on the nature of the serpent when they do not understand the Fall itself. Byrom feels justified in identifying critics such as Sherlock with the serpent.

<sup>1</sup> 395-400, 409-412, Poems, ii, i, p.475.

<sup>2</sup> 285-6, ibid., p.157.

<sup>3</sup> 'On the Origin of Evil', 19-21, Poems, ii, ii, p.475.

<sup>4</sup> An Appeal to All that Doubt, Works, vi, p.129.

One Thing he was, Sir, be what else he will,  
 A Critic that employ'd his fatal Skill  
 To cavil upon Words, and take away  
 The Sense of that which was as plain as Day.<sup>1</sup>

Byrom's view of the dangers of literalism and the misuse of reason in matters of the spirit becomes clear in his relationship with the champion of literalism, Warburton. Hartley's answer to Warburton's anti-mystical writings was published a dozen years after Byrom's confrontation with Warburton, and owed something to Byrom's approach. It should be remembered that Warburton's comment that Law spent a long life 'devouring the trash dropt from every species of Mysticism',<sup>2</sup> which so offended Hartley, was made after Byrom's interaction with the former lawyer. Byrom's first public reference to Warburton is in the Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple.<sup>3</sup> This brief and tame reference was followed by a longer and more serious one, in Enthusiasm, 1752. The passage of more than forty lines begins by satirizing Warburton's interest in ancient Egypt: 'Another's heated Brain is painted o'er /With ancient Hieroglyphic Marks of yore',<sup>4</sup> but later suggests that he has neglected his parish duties. The passage ends in complete seriousness.

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 thro' the Letter humbly hope to trace  
 The living Word, the Spirit, and the Grace.<sup>5</sup>

Warburton, the man of letters, was as impressed by the poetry as annoyed at its contents. He wrote to his friend Hurd that Byrom

is certainly a man of genius, plunged deep into the rankest fanaticism. His poetical Epistles show him both, which, were it not for some unaccountable negligence in his verse and language, would show 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.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 469-472, Poems, ii, i, p.166.

<sup>2</sup> Doctrine of Grace, p.306, quoted in Defence, pp.434-5.

<sup>3</sup> 431-6, Poems, ii, i, p.164. Byrom met Warburton in March, 1736, and made the following entry in his journal, Remains, ii, i, pp.28-9: I called at Dr. Hartley's after their dinner, found three clergymen there, viz., Mr. Watley, Blackerby I think, and the author of the Alliance Between Church and State, they talked much about religious matters and Sir Is Newton, and the author [Warburton] said that he rejected the Canticles; the stupidity of these learned people when not moved by the Holy Ghost, to reject the finest works, which are proved to be such by the comments of the Saints upon them....

<sup>4</sup> 127-28, ibid., p.184.

<sup>5</sup> 165-170, Poems, p.187.

<sup>6</sup> Letter of January 1752, quoted by Parkinson, Remains, ii, ii, p.522n.

This is a fair and useful criticism of Byrom's poetry. Warburton wrote to another correspondent that Byrom,

a fine genius, but fanatical even to madness, has published a poetical Epistle on Enthusiasm; in which he has plentifully abused Middleton and me. He is too devout to cultivate poetry, otherwise he would have excelled in it.<sup>1</sup>

Though appreciating Byrom's heroic couplets, Warburton did not ignore this attack. It is interesting that he decided to answer Byrom privately through a personal letter rather than publicly, and it is significant that he never answered or mentioned Byrom's charge of neglecting his parish duties. This was doubtless a question that a clergyman holding several livings did not wish to discuss, especially publicly. Byrom's concern for parishioners, which was deeply sincere, either touched Warburton's heart or pricked his conscience, and caused him to respect Byrom's sensitivity and earnestness. The correspondence consisted of two letters from Warburton, and Byrom's replies. That Byrom found the correspondence difficult, and thought it might continue after his second reply, is shown in a note to Law. He refers to 'this new and unexpected correspondence', and asks Law 'how to manage in returning civilities and preserving freedom properly in case of a continuance, with which you will favour his excellency your poet'.<sup>2</sup> Byrom was after all in a rather difficult, though amusing, position. The last thing he expected was a private letter from Warburton. Since he was paraphrasing Law, not promulgating his own ideas, he was indeed in an especially awkward position. This awkwardness manifests in the prose of his letters to Warburton which is often highly convoluted with tortured syntax. It took him two and a half months to reply to Warburton's first letter (which Warburton answered the same day). He sent Law copies of all the letters, which shows that on some level at least he was still paraphrasing Law, not dealing with his own ideas. Warburton's first letter to Byrom is a fine epistolary effort, which with measured eloquence and easy clarity, displays a side of his nature usually ignored or forgotten. It shows also that Byrom could bring out the best in people, a rare and magic quality. Warburton was, in his way, a serious Christian. Though quick-tempered and heartless when aroused, he was capable of large-minded and genuine benevolence.<sup>3</sup> The letter is worth quoting at length.

<sup>1</sup> John Nichols, Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century, (1817-58), iv, p.733.

<sup>2</sup> 21 April 1752, Remains, ii, ii, pp.542-3.

<sup>3</sup> For example, he denounced the slave-trade while Wilberforce was still a child, and--strange as it sounds--he wholeheartedly stigmatized 'that opprobrium of our common nature, persecution for opinions'. Quoted by Evans, Warburton and the Warburtonians, p.1.

Sir; I read with pleasure your Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple some time ago, and just now your Essay on Enthusiasm, in both of which I find myself honoured with your censure. But it is not this I pretend to complain of. You have doubtless an uncontrolled right to speak your sentiments of my writings. What I think an injustice to myself, and inconsistent with your professions of Christian charity and universal benevolence, are your insinuations of my being an unbeliever and an enemy to Christianity, that I regard Christians as a brainsick, visionary Crew. What handle have I ever given for so unchristian a reflection? I have... made frequent professions, and without the least ambiguity, of my sincere belief of Revelation. I have done more. I have composed books in defence of it; and though on such principles as you condemn, that can never justify you in representing me as an infidel, unless the faith be to be transferred from Jesus and His doctrine, to your Apostle Mr. Law and his. You would convince men of the truth of the Gospel by inward feelings; I, by outward facts and evidence. But for this difference, why should I be any more an infidel to you than you are to me? It was not thus the first preachers of the Gospel treated each other, when one attempted to bring men over to the name of Christ on Jewish principles and reasoning, and another on the pagan. The thing which seems to give you most offense is my laying it down from a principle that the early Jews had little notion of, and were not at all influenced by, the doctrine of a future state; and I appeal for the support of it to their history as we find it in the Bible. You may have a clearer revelation of this matter. Yet as the error, if it be one, was not enforced to depreciate Revelation, but to show the necessity of the Gospel (for infidels having urged it with that bad design, I endeavoured to turn it against them to a contrary purpose), methinks it did not deserve so severe a censure as accusing the writer of infidelity.

But I have dwelt too long, perhaps, on a matter merely personal....

I don't know whether I am to apologize, or have a right to your acknowledgements, 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. It concerns me, therefore, to find you in such company, and that I have no better an opportunity of professing myself to be, what in truth I am, Sir, your affectionate servant and faithful brother in Christ---W. Warburton.<sup>1</sup>

Warburton began to get warm in asking if the faith should be transferred from Jesus to Law, but quickly stopped himself. He enjoys satirizing the Inner Light by saying with ironic but not harsh understatement that Byrom 'may have a clearer revelation' on the question of early Jewish belief in an afterlife. Warburton returns Byrom's protestation of anti-Christian behaviour, with some fairness, in Byrom's making 'so unchristian a reflection' on Warburton's state of belief. On the whole, Warburton is restrained, fair and large-minded. Byrom must receive some of the credit for this surprising letter since he elicited it, and to some degree conditioned its tone. Warburton would hardly want to fulfil Byrom's poetic portrait of a vain, worldly, contentious, and unbelieving clergyman. After receiving a copy of this letter from Byrom, Law wrote back in surprise: 'I never saw him write in so humble a style before'.<sup>2</sup> In his long

<sup>1</sup> Bath, 12 December 1751, Remains, ii, ii, pp.522-24.

<sup>2</sup> 27 March 1752, Remains, ii, ii, p.532.

answer Byrom emphasizes that he did not intend to suggest that Warburton was an unbeliever, rather that Warburton was rejecting--'not Christians in general but-- quoting Law's Appeal "those Christians as brainsick visionaries who are sometimes finding out a moral and spiritual sense in the bare letter and history of Scripture facts".<sup>1</sup> Byrom acknowledges that their difference had not led Warburton into 'any censure' but what Byrom 'might fairly take, and believe to be intended, in very good part'.<sup>2</sup> In polite but no uncertain terms he took exception to Warburton's comment about changing the faith from Jesus to Law. Byrom adds:

I would desire to have no personal aversion or regard to you or him or any other; but, wishing well to all, to trace their footsteps only whom amica Veritas appears to have conducted. While I am persuaded that many grand and important truths are admirably set forth by an honest, judicious, and impartial writer, you will excuse me if I reckon such a one not my apostle, any more than you my infidel, but what I would call, without flattery to him or offence to you or any of the literati, for the sake of truth alone, my Plato pro omnibus; for I would not with Cicero, in another fit of philosophical enthusiasm, errare cum Platone neither.<sup>3</sup>

Not surprisingly, Byrom wants to make it clear that he is not an abject follower of Law.<sup>4</sup> Before ending the letter, Byrom graciously rejects Warburton's compliment that Byrom was 'the only honest man' who 'abused' Warburton to the public. Byrom insists rather, that he wrote 'not to abuse at all, but to undeceive, if possible, and disabuse; or if in the wrong' to be corrected himself by 'more enlightened judgements'.<sup>5</sup> Byrom's ending provides an example of his awkward, obscure syntax<sup>6</sup> and of his sincere desire to exemplify the mystical perspective paraphrased from Law.

I employed the first proper leisure that I had to write fully and freely in reply to yours; and should have sent it sooner but that I had also taken the liberty of expostulation upon some of your treatments, which I knew not how to reconcile to your just remark upon the practice of the first preachers of the Gospel. Unable to contract within compass, and doubtful of transgressing upon your indulgence farther than my own defense required--that of others, which, if my hopes avail, your own recollection will render needless, I thought it better to forbear, and to add no more but my sincerest thanks for your fraternal professions of affection in Christ; with an hearty desire of being, in return (through His grace) with all affectionate fidelity, Reverend Sir, your real friend, well-wisher, and humble servant.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 22 February 1752, Remains, ii, ii, p.526.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.525.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.528.

<sup>4</sup> To some degree he was an uncritical follower of Law, whom he occasionally addressed as 'Master'.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.529.

<sup>6</sup> The awkwardness and obscurity are much more evident in the second letter.

<sup>7</sup> Remains, ii, ii, pp.529-30.

Warburton saw that Byrom was trying to reconcile Warburton's treatment of opponents with the clergyman's remark about the understanding and love shown to each other by the first preachers of the Gospel. In his second letter Warburton attempts to explain the apparent inconsistency.

You seem to hint at my treatment of some persons or parties, which you cannot reconcile to a remark of mine in that letter. If you mean particulars, give me leave to tell you that I never began with any man, nor ever wrote an answer to any book. I never treated any one roughly till I had been atrociously injured; and of a hundred writers against me, never answered above two or three.<sup>1</sup>

Byrom takes up this point in his reply, and finally becomes clear and direct.

Not being conversant in the writings of those who have atrociously injured you, I may not be a judge whether you were sufficiently provoked to any treatment that appeared to me to be hardly reconcilable to your just remark upon the conduct of the primitive Christians. But this hardship must needs occur where no such provocation is specified....

I will confess to you that what most affected me was a note that treated Mr. Law's Appeal as a system of rank Spinozism (which passes commonly, you know, for Atheism), by one who has defended Mr. Pope from that atrocious imputation, so compendiously, that in one page of the Appeal (p.302) the sum of all the arguments in favour of the poet appear in the divine's discussion of Dr. Trapp's unthinkingness about enthusiasm; and one has the satisfaction to see in one particular... Law and Warburton agreed.<sup>2</sup>

The deeper basis of Byrom's dislike of Warburton, at this time, is not the clergyman's literalism and view of the Holy Ghost, but his arrogant dismissal of opponents, especially Law. It is for this reason that Byrom's side of the correspondence displays tension. At this point it was not a question of personal philosophies so much as personalities which divided them, and therefore Byrom found it difficult to be honest and direct without falling either into Warburton's blatant censoriousness, or falling below Augustan standards of polite behaviour. In the above quotation, Byrom is pleased to imply that Warburton is again being inconsistent, this time on the question of 'Spinozism'. He does not press the point, and is still trying to bring the parties together. These two intentions--to point out Warburton's inconsistency, if not hypocrisy, and yet to reconcile differences--are to some degree mutually exclusive and caused the tension which Byrom experienced, and mentioned to Law.

Warburton began his second and final letter to Byrom by admitting that he was perhaps a bit rash in his references to Law in the first letter. But he reminds Byrom that although he (Warburton), in complaining about 'hard words' should not have returned them, 'yet a private letter and a public paper are

<sup>1</sup> Prior Park, near Bath, 3 April 1752. Ibid., p.534.

<sup>2</sup> Manchester, 10 April 1752. Remains, ii, ii, pp.537,538.

two very different things'.<sup>1</sup> Warburton ended the letter with a great and sincere compliment to Byrom's poetic talents.

Your translation of the fine passage from Tully<sup>2</sup> I think equal to the original; which gives me an opportunity of saying how much I think the literary world loses by your not applying your talents more to poetry, in which you appear naturally formed to excel. I know you will say that you have higher and more serious objects before you; which may be true. However, to cultivate an Horatian genius, in a vicious and debauched age--non ultima laus est.... You are found in that which the best writers aspire to: modesty therefore should not hinder you from reflecting, that a dash from your pen is not an indifferent matter.<sup>3</sup>

When Law heard this extravagant though honest opinion of Byrom the poet, he cautioned his friend to beware of pride. Law, in so doing, is somewhat ungenerous to Warburton. 'I believe I need not desire you to consider them [Warburton's compliments] as all of a piece with the erudition which you have called unblessed'.<sup>4</sup> Byrom wrote back that the compliments were 'unexpected and extraordinary; but if I should pride myself upon them, a reverse... would as justly humble me'.<sup>5</sup>

In his answer to Warburton's second letter Byrom accepts Warburton's distinction between public and private criticism by remaining silent on the point. Byrom, perhaps showing a lack of confidence in not publishing more poetry containing his own thought, explains to Warburton that he has omitted to do so not because 'higher and more serious objects' have demanded his time, but because he is certain that the poetry would be rejected because of the mystical philosophy it would contain.<sup>6</sup> To Warburton's comment that a dash of Byrom's pen 'is not an indifferent matter', he replies: 'You have given me a genteel rebuke, and I thank you for it'.<sup>7</sup> He reminds Warburton that the same is true of the clergyman's pen, and ends the correspondence by thanking Warburton for his 'corrections' and compliments.<sup>8</sup>

In a study of mysticism in the age of reason, this correspondence must be considered remarkable, and of at least symbolic value as a confrontation between the personification of Augustan literary and religious values, and the apostle

<sup>1</sup> Remains, ii, ii, p.533.

<sup>2</sup> Contained in Byrom's first letter, ibid., p.529.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp.534-5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.545.

<sup>5</sup> 16 October 1752, ibid., p.546. Byrom then quotes the review of Enthusiasm in the Monthly Review: 'nothing but an heavy attempt to vindicate enthusiasm and Mr. Law'. See Parkinson's note on the same page deflating this criticism.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.539.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.538.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Parkinson's final comment on the correspondence, ibid., p.539n: 'And now exit Byrom from the lion's den safe and unscathed, the only individual who ever as an aggressor sought the monarch of the wood without carrying back with him some terrible evidence of the encounter'.

of the greatest mystic of the period. Warburton was impeccably neoclassical, Lockean, and latitudinarian; Byrom, like Law, regarded Locke's rejection of innate ideas a pernicious doctrine, and believed that latitudinarianism was simply laxness. Byrom was not, by the usual definition, neoclassical. But as most definitions of neoclassical tend to be narrow and reflect stereotyped views of the eighteenth century, it is important to remember that as one recent writer has it, 'Byrom and Law are as much representatives of an exuberant and heterogeneous Augustan age, as iconoclastic relics and prophets'.<sup>1</sup> Yet leaving aside the question of who was or was not Augustan, it is certainly true that the relationship between Byrom and Warburton, especially as reflected in their correspondence, was a confrontation between utterly opposite aspects of the eighteenth-century mind and spirit. Although it can be argued that Warburton is not a perfect example of the eighteenth-century Establishment, he is at least representative of its Lockean, Whiggish and latitudinarian aspects. It is also important to remember the historical implications of their respective positions. The Romantics did after all largely reject what Warburton represented, and held essentially Byrom's position on enthusiasm, reservations about Locke, and high opinion of the power and importance of imagination, inspiration and emotion. In the person of Byrom, eighteenth-century mysticism was sufficiently strong and articulate to gain Warburton's respect, if not admiration, and at least temporarily to call forth the best in Warburton's character. That Byrom's presentation of mystical love and total devotion to God, and his own conciliatory nature could transform the lion of debate into a humble, sensitive creature, is a considerable, even remarkable achievement.<sup>2</sup> Law recognized this when he wrote to his friend: 'I much approve of the manner in which you have treated your expostulator, which is both suitable to the lenity of your nature and that spirit which has more power in you than nature'.<sup>3</sup>

Although direct contact between Byrom and Warburton ceased after their second letters, Byrom had more to say of the lawyer turned clergyman. In his Familiar Epistles to a Friend, completed by October, 1752, Byrom does not paraphrase any specific work of Law. However, his argument could have flowed from

<sup>1</sup> John Hoyles, The Edges of Augustanism: the Aesthetics of Spirituality in Thomas Ken, John Byrom and William Law, (The Hague, 1972), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> It cannot be fairly argued that the only basis of Warburton's respect for Byrom was Byrom's poetic talents. Warburton told Byrom's brother-in-law, J. Houghton, that he had a 'great respect and esteem' for Byrom's 'good heart'. Houghton reports these comments in a letter to Byrom, Remains, ii, ii, p.535.

<sup>3</sup> Remains, ii ii p.545.

Law's pen.<sup>1</sup> The 'Friend' addressed is almost certainly Law. In a letter of 16 October 1752 to Law, Byrom writes:

I was afraid that the letters which I sent you might have miscarried, and am glad that they came to your hands and met with your approbation. I am the more indifferent to any other, because I think I am only accountable to you for the freedom taken with your writings, and am only glad if any one like the verses as a token that they enter into the sentiments of the prose.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that Byrom did not publish this poem.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it was probably never intended for publication. It is not nearly as effective or polished a work as Enthusiasm or Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple. All that is known of its date is in the letter quoted above. It was probably written after the correspondence with Warburton ended. Byrom was in the habit of collecting his thoughts by versifying them.<sup>4</sup> He probably wrote the poem for himself, for Law, or to circulate in manuscript among his friends. In any case, he would not publish the poem because it would have been hypocritical to attack Warburton publicly after their agreeing that the first preachers of the Gospel always put love first and never criticized one another publicly. Byrom's reaction to Warburton's literalism and view of the Holy Spirit was essentially the same as Hartley's, though Hartley's response was given added point by Warburton's insulting references to Boelme and Law, made after the correspondence with Byrom. In the Familiar Epistles to a Friend, Byrom fairly states Warburton's general position.

They think that now Religion's sole Defence  
Is Learning, History and critic Sense;  
. . . . .  
To look for Inspiration is absurd;  
The Spirit's Aid is in the written Word:  
They who pretend to His Immediate Call,  
From Pope to Quaker, are Fanatics all.<sup>5</sup>

Warburton, like most eighteenth-century divines, responded to Locke, Deism, and the spirit of scientific inquiry, on its own ground. Law and Byrom had come to feel that religion was indefensible if the heart of it was ignored

<sup>1</sup> See Ward's comments Poems, ii, i, p.247. The subtitle of the poem is, 'Upon a Sermon Entitled the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit, by the Rev. Mr. Warburton'. The edition of the Doctrine of Grace which Hartley answered was published in 1762, and contained the long section on enthusiasm and Wesley. The sermon to which Byrom is reacting, which was later expanded to form the Doctrine of Grace, is probably the 1750 edition in Warburton's Sermons.

<sup>2</sup> Remains, ii, ii, p.546.

<sup>3</sup> It was first published in 1773 after his death and in Miscellaneous Poems, ed. J. Nichols, (Leeds, 1814), ii, p.78. This edition is based on the Manchester edition of 1773, at which date Warburton was still alive (died 1779); he thus may have read it.

<sup>4</sup> See Poems, ii, i, p.168.

<sup>5</sup> III, 15-16, 25-28, Poems, ii, i, p.259.

and it was limited to its rational aspect. Thus to limit religion was to turn it into a history of theological doctrines, and to push it entirely into the sphere of the scholar, grammarian and linguist. The crucial point for Byrom is that though it appeared that Warburton was trying to combat Deism with its own weapons, Warburton and most Anglican divines instead accepted the premises of Deists that religion's 'sole Defence /Is Learning, history and critic Sense'. Byrom felt that this clearly showed that in fact there was little difference between the Deist and neoclassical divine. They each limited religion to a literal, lifeless religion of reason.

To Warburton's argument that since the Apostolic Age the work of the Holy Spirit has been limited to the text of the New Testament, Byrom replies:

Tho' plain the Words, 'tis difficult to solve  
 What Christian Sense he meant them to involve;  
 In ev'ry Way that Words and Sense agree,  
 'Tis perfect Bibliolatry<sup>1</sup> to me.  
 No Image-Worship can be more absurd  
 Than idolising thus the written Word.

. . . . .  
 For God's Abiding Guide  
 Withdrew, it seems, when the Apostles died,  
 And left poor Millions ever since to seek  
 How dissonant Divines had construed Greek.<sup>2</sup>

The ironic final line of this quotation must be considered literally true if Warburton's position is accepted. Byrom felt that this attempt by the letter to enslave the spirit is shown to be absurd whenever it is applied practically, as here. Byrom wondered if the real motive behind Warburton's view of the Holy Spirit was not an honest search for truth, but that if accepted, the viewpoint 'pre-demolish'd' the claims of all Christian mystics.

These Suppositions if a Man suppose,  
 You see th' immediate Consequence that flows:  
 That Men and Churches afterwards attack'd  
 Are pre-demolish'd, by asserted Fact;  
 Which, once advanc'd, may with the greatest Ease  
 Condemn whatever Christians he shall please;  
 Owing to his Forbearance in some Shape,  
 If ought th'extensive Havoc shall escape.  
 . . . . .  
 With narrow Proofs, and Consequences wide,  
 Sets all Opponents of its Rote aside;  
 The PAPISTS first, and then th'inferior Fry,  
 FANATICS, vanquish'd with a 'Who but I?'  
 These are the modish Epithets that strike  
 At true Religion and at false alike.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The OED credits Byrom with the first recorded use of this word.

<sup>2</sup> III, 59-64, iv, 21-24, Poems, ii, i, pp.260-61,263.

<sup>3</sup> V, 73-80, 91-96, Poems, ii, i, pp.269-70. In the second portion of this quotation Byrom is reacting to a specific section in Warburton's Sermon, of which the following is representative: 'Here especially, all the superstitions and fanatical pretences of the Church of Rome to supernatural powers

In using the narrowest of 'Who but I?' arguments, Warburton is inevitably guilty of indiscriminate criticism, as Byrom emphasizes in the final line quoted. Byrom's reference to 'modish Epithets' suggests that Warburton is more a man of letters than a divine, an argument fairly easy to maintain. In the climax of the poem, Byrom calls Warburton 'foolish' and 'profane' for presuming to limit the work of the Holy Spirit.

Altho' untouch'd with a Celestial Flame,  
 How could an English Priest mistake his Aim,--  
 So far forget the Maxims that appear  
 Throughout his Church's Liturgy so clear;  
 Wherein the Spirit's ever Constant Aid  
 Without a feign'd Distinction is display'd,--  
 Without a rash attempting to explain  
 By Limitations foolish and profane  
 When, and to whom, to what degree and End,  
 God's Graces, Gifts and Pow'rs were to extend,--  
 So far withdrawn that Christians must allow  
 Of nothing 'extra-ordinary' now,--  
 The vain Distinction which the World has found  
 To fix an unintelligible Bound  
 To Gospel Promise,--equally Sublime,  
 Nor limited by any other Time  
 Than that, when Want of Faith, when earthly Will,  
 Shall hinder Heav'ns Intentions to fulfil?<sup>1</sup>

If Byrom seems a bit harsh in metaphorically referring to Warburton as 'the World', a man lacking faith, with an 'earthly Will', who hinders 'Heav'ns Intentions', one has but to imagine what Blake would have written in Byrom's place. Byrom is, however, a son of the age of satire. His use of irony is even more extensive in his most important, substantial and effective poem, Enthusiasm, 1752, which was reprinted a number of times. Significantly, this poem is a remarkably close paraphrase of Law's able defence of enthusiasm in his Animadversions upon Dr. Trapp's Reply, 1740. Ward has conveniently footnoted the passages Byrom used, which leave no doubt about the closeness of the paraphrase. Yet in spite of this direct indebtedness, which is infrequently verbal, in addition to borrowed ideas and images, Byrom did write to Warburton that he had tried 'to enlarge upon' Law's treatment of the subject, though obliged to keep to Law's 'account of it as nearly as I could'.<sup>2</sup> These comments, written after publication of the poem, are an intimation of how he viewed his efforts. However, it must be remembered that he would want to appear more than a mere copyist to such a man of letters as Warburton. After reminding the reader that the charge of 'enthusiasm' is used to reject, blindly, whatever religious

---

are detected and exposed;... all the LEGENDARY MIRACLES of their... canonized Saints....' Quoted by Ward, ibid., p.269n.

<sup>1</sup> VI, 63-80, Poems, ii, i, pp.272-3.

<sup>2</sup> Remains, ii, ii, p.526.

viewpoint has something of depth or fire in it, Byrom defines enthusiasm and emphasizes that it is by no means limited to religion.

'What is Enthusiasm?' What can it be  
 But Thought enkindled to an high degree,  
 That may, whatever be its ruling Turn,--  
 Right or not right,--with equal Ardour burn?  
 It must therefore be various in its Kind,  
 As objects vary that engage the Mind.

And hence the Reason why the greatest Foes  
 To true Religious Earnestness are those  
 Who fire their Wits upon a diff'rent Theme  
 Deep in some false enthusiastic Scheme.<sup>1</sup>

Enthusiasm is found among fops, beaux, wits, critics, poets, virtuosos, connoisseurs, philosophers, politicians, even among atheists and infidels. But Byrom is particularly incensed by the worshippers of Augustan Rome. Byrom the satirist comes to the fore in describing the despair felt by the Augustan enthusiast when contemplating Rome

despoil'd of all her glorious Pride;  
Time, an old Goth, advancing to consume  
 Immortal Gods and once eternal Rome;  
 When the plain Gospel spread its artless Ray,  
 And rude uncultur'd Fishermen had Sway,  
 Who spar'd no Idol, tho' divinely carv'd,  
 Tho' Art, and Muse, and Shrine-Engraver starv'd;  
 Who sav'd poor Wretches, and destroy'd alas!  
 The vital Marble and the breathing Brass.  
 Where does all Sense to him and Reason shine?  
 Behold, in Tully's Rhetoric divine  
 'Tully?' Enough; high o'er the Alps he's gone,  
 To tread 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  
 Whereupon this elevated Genius stood.  
 When forth on Catiline, as erst he spoke,  
 The Thunder of 'Quousque tandem' broke.

Well may this Grand Enthusiast deride  
 The Dulness of a Pilgrim's humbler Pride,  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 75-80, 87-90, Poems, ii, i, pp.181-182.

<sup>2</sup> 98-126, ibid., pp.182-3.

Unlike most eighteenth-century writers, Byrom is on the side of the Goths because they helped destroy worldly Rome, the enemy of Christianity. The Goths and Christians are identified in that they are each the enemy of Rome, and are both 'plain', 'artless', 'rude', and 'uncultur'd. Here culture and learning are worldly and hamper the work of the spirit when they cease to be kept in their proper sphere, which for Byrom and Law is indeed a very modest one.<sup>1</sup> There is a nice irony in the passage, especially in Byrom's use of oxymoron: Rome was 'once eternal'. Roman statues were 'divinely carv'd' and became 'vital Marble' and 'breathing Brass', yet they have perished, whereas 'poor Wretches' have been saved. Rome has fallen because of her 'glorious Pride'. Byrom points a fine irony by juxtaposing the enthusiasm for Rome and its 'divinely carv'd 'breathing' sculpture, thus suggesting it is literally worshipped as 'divine', with the enthusiasm only proper to those who worship God. The Augustan Enthusiast goes to Rome to worship Tully and the 'humbler' pilgrim goes to Palestine to worship Christ. Byrom is deeply concerned that eighteenth-century society promotes enthusiasm for Rome but not religious enthusiasm.

One is enthusiastic for whatever one most desires: 'However poor and empty be the Sphere, / 'Tis All, if Inclination centre there'.<sup>2</sup>

That which concerns us, therefore, is to see  
What Species of Enthusiasts we be:  
On what Materials the fiery Source  
Of thinking Life shall execute its Force;  
Whether a Man shall stir up Love or Hate  
From the mix'd Medium of this present State.<sup>3</sup>

Byrom's view of proper and improper enthusiasm prefigures Coleridge's distinction of genius and fanatic. Coleridge insists that Boehme 'was an enthusiast, in the strictest sense, as not merely distinguished, but as contra-distinguished, from a fanatic'.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere Coleridge states that

no two qualities are more contrary than genius and fanaticism. Enthusiasm, indeed, is almost a synonym of genius; the moral life in the intellectual light, the will in the reason; and without it, says Seneca, nothing truly great was ever achieved by man.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Remains, ii, i, p.271, where Law tells Byrom that 'learning had done more mischief than all other things put together, yet that it was useful like a carpenter's business or any other'.

<sup>2</sup> 177-8, Poems, ii, i, p.187.

<sup>3</sup> 249-254, ibid., p.191.

<sup>4</sup> Biographia Literaria, ed. Arthur Symons, (1906), p.73.

<sup>5</sup> On the Seventeenth Century, ed. R. Brinkley, (Durham, North Carolina, 1955), p.477.

Byrom agrees with Coleridge that will is central in producing the truly moral life. When one persists to will 'the Light /The Love, the Joy' of 'a Life Divine', then one is attuned with 'God's Continual Will'; they

who in His Faith and Love abide,  
Find in His Spirit an Immediate Guide.  
This is no more a Fancy or a Whim,  
Than that 'we live, and move, and are in Him'.  
Let Nature, or let Scripture, be the Ground,--  
Here is the Seat of true Religion found.<sup>1</sup>

If this doctrine--'that ev'ry good Desire and Thought /Is in us by the Holy Spirit wrought'<sup>2</sup>--is denied, then Byrom feels it inevitably leads to self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency. This is to worship the self, not God; this caused the Fall and keeps man unregenerate. This is to say 'not Thou in me, Lord, but I'. But when the doctrine is accepted, and the will is centred in God,

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.<sup>3</sup>

The universal love that irresistibly flows from the heart when the will is centred in God is the most sublime result of true religious enthusiasm. It is the source of genius and all creativity.

### III

The three dominant themes in the poems which more nearly represent Byrom's own thought are the proper use of reason, the relationship of the inner and outer aspects of religion, and the theme that interested and moved him most--the place of divine love in the scheme of things.

In the poems treating reason, Byrom's main argument is that Deists and other unbalanced defenders of reason should be opposed not because they reason, but because they reason wrongly. Byrom feels the question is not whether reason should be followed, but instead, when it is best followed. When one thinks reason can judge of divine matters, let alone that reason is the only means to explore higher reality, then one 'reasons wrong /And draws the Dupes, if

<sup>1</sup> 303-38, ibid., p.193.

<sup>2</sup> 315-6, ibid., p.194.

<sup>3</sup> 345-352, ibid., p.195.

plausible, along'.<sup>1</sup> Those with true divine illumination,

when they reason'd, reason'd very well;  
But how enabl'd, let their Writings tell?  
Not one of all, but who ascribes the Force  
of Truth discover'd to an Higher Source.<sup>2</sup>

The proper use of reason is to analyse experience and the data from the senses, and to control the passions. These are vital functions which Byrom values highly. Using Plato's celebrated comparison of reason to a charioteer, driving the horses of will and appetite, which are mutually opposed, Byrom argues that Plato does not, however, mention the goal of this movement; 'there the Question should begin: What Spirit drives the willing Mind within?'<sup>3</sup> Byrom believes the will determines the goal, and if the will renounces 'the Pride /Of an own Reason for an only Guide; /As God's unerring Spirit shall inspire'<sup>4</sup>, then the movement is towards regeneration. The elements of man's being, including reason, must be in proper balance.

To heal Defect, or to avoid Excess  
The Greater Light should still correct the less,  
And form within the right obedient Will  
A seeing, reas'ning and believing Skill;  
While Body moves as outward Sense directs,  
And Soul perceives what Reason's Light reflects,  
And Spirit, fill'd with Lustre from above,  
Obeys by Faith and operates by Love.<sup>5</sup>

The second major theme in Byrom's poetry--the relationship of spirit and form in religion--virtually leads him to nonsectarianism. In 'Divine Love, the Essential Characteristic of True Religion', he declares: 'Jew, Turk or Christian be the lover's Name, /If same the Love, Religion is the same'.<sup>6</sup> He sadly notices that most sects seem 'to take a Pride /In satanising all the World beside'.<sup>7</sup> In 'Denominations' he combines humour and seriousness, and again makes love the measure of true religion.

Churchmen are orthodox, Dissenters pure,  
But Quakers are God's people to be sure;  
The Lutherans follow Evangelic Truth,  
But all the Elect are Calvinists, forsooth;  
The Baptists only have regeneration,  
While out of them there can be no Salvation.

<sup>1</sup> 'A Contrast Between Human Reason and Divine Illumination', Poems, ii, i, p.329.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.330.

<sup>3</sup> 'Thoughts on the Constitution of Human Nature', Poems, i, i, p.242.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.242.

<sup>5</sup> 'On Faith, Reason, and Sight', iv, Poems, ii, i, p.340.

<sup>6</sup> Poems, ii, ii, p.416.

<sup>7</sup> 'An Expostulation with a Zealous Sectarist', Poems, ii, ii, p.519.

We form a Church [compact<sup>ed</sup>?]<sup>1</sup> of the seven;--  
 'Lo, here is Christ; lo, here the way to Heaven!'  
 Thus do the sons of England, Rome, Geneya,  
 Adjure by Jesus like the sons of Sceva,<sup>2</sup>--  
 Wanting the Love that should enforce the Call,  
 An evil spirit overcomes them all.<sup>3</sup>

Byrom feels that since man has all qualities and propensities within him, outer effects are very valuable because they give evidence of one's inner state. Inner and outer, spirit and form, are both important and should be harmonized. Certainly to argue or fight over form is folly, as it is foolish to be narrowly sectarian, for it 'is no proof of men's Religious claims /To give their neighbours irreligious names'.<sup>4</sup> Those who are narrow are bigots, and would be so no matter what sect they were born into. In such a case, form is devoid of spirit. Some who see that all sects are imperfect, thereby reject all form. Most who do this are merely rationalizing laxness and self-indulgence. But some few 'saintlike' individuals who reject form for themselves, although not for others, are, Byrom feels, beyond his power to judge, although he is certain that saints would never reject form for the generality of Christians. Yet though Byrom insists that internal and external are both important, when pressed he makes inner dominant since at best form merely reflects the spiritual state. But he is afraid to push this doctrine with the general public since he is only too aware of what excesses it could encourage. That Byrom regards the Christ within as final arbiter is made clear in many of his poems. A poem on Bourignon ends:

'O Lord, take pity on my tender Youth;  
 All Men are Liars--do Thou teach me Truth!  
 God heard her Prayers, and was Himself her Guide,  
 And she knew more than all the World beside.<sup>5</sup>

Byrom's view of reason, and of spirit and form in religion, is stated in poetry which is on the whole commonplace. Although earnest, it is by no means inspired or inspirational. Byrom's verse is strongest and sweetest when he writes of divine love, which he considers the deepest mystery, yet present everywhere. A. Thompson has written that 'Byrom, indeed, was a mystic whose contemplation of the "mystery of Love"... deserves more attention than it has received'.<sup>6</sup> The most powerful, dramatic images Byrom conceived celebrate divine love in simple language. His devotion is demonstrated by and flows

<sup>1</sup> Editor's addition.

<sup>2</sup> Alludes to Acts, xix.13-16; vagabond Jewish exorcists who used the name of Jesus to try to eliminate evil spirits, but instead were overcome by them.  
<sup>3</sup> Poems, ii, i, p.71.

<sup>4</sup> 'On the Acceptance and Rejection of Forms', iii, Poems, iii, p.88.

<sup>5</sup> 'Upon Madame Antoinette Bourignon', Poems, iii, p.66.

<sup>6</sup> 'The Mystical Element in English Poetry', Essays & Studies, viii (1922), p.100.

from the extreme simplicity. He tended to see divine love in terms which Erich Fromm calls 'motherly love', that is unconditional, unselfish love which wants only what is best for the child, and can never be lost. Fromm feels that in its truest form such love is universal and embraces 'other children, strangers, all human beings'.<sup>1</sup> Byrom's conception is certainly of this kind.

Now, if the tend'rest Mother were possest  
Of all the Love within her single Breast  
Of all the Mothers since the World began,--  
'Tis nothing to the Love of God to Man!<sup>2</sup>

Byrom felt to the depth of his soul that this love could never be lost.

Extinguish all Celestial Light,  
The Fire of Love will not go out;  
The Flames of Hell extinguish quite,  
Love will pursue Its wonted Route!  
. . . . .  
Let Heav'n be darken'd, if It will,--  
Let Hell with all its Vengeance roar,--  
My God Alone remaining, still  
I'll love Him, as I did Before.<sup>3</sup>

Byrom feels that when the mystic's heart has been purified he discovers that his love of God is identical with God's love of him. Byrom's love is not in response to God's love; this he considers 'interested love', but is in reality an unseparated part of God's love. There is but one love, as there is but one God. All love which is not selfish flows forever from the Divine. The purpose of love is to lead man beyond the confines of his narrow self. Man must realize that his only happiness lies in union with the Divine source of love which alone frees him 'from selfish, mercenary Will'.<sup>4</sup> In perhaps the finest couplet he ever wrote, Byrom gives an excellent definition of religion.

Religion, then, is Love's Celestial Force  
That penetrates thro' all to Its True Source.<sup>5</sup>

#### IV

Estimates of Byrom as a poet vary greatly. Dean Inge refers to him as 'a sorry versifier'.<sup>6</sup> Edmund Gosse wrote that Byrom 'delights in the anapaestic tetrameter, which he wields very smoothly'.<sup>7</sup> Oliver Elton agrees with Gosse:

<sup>1</sup> The Art of Loving, (New York, 1956), p.44.

<sup>2</sup> 'God's Love to Man', Poems, ii, i, p.73.

<sup>3</sup> 'On the Same Subject' (Disinterested Love of God), viii, xi, Poems, xi, ii, pp.400,401.

<sup>4</sup> 'On the Disinterested Love of God', vi, Poems, ii, ii, p.398.

<sup>5</sup> 'Divine Love and True Religion', vii, Poems, ii, ii, p.417.

<sup>6</sup> Studies of English Mystics, (1906), p.131.

<sup>7</sup> History of Eighteenth-Century Literature, (1889), p.215.

'Byrom excels in anapaestic verse, his tri-syllabic feet go easily; and when they are cast into his long slippery lines, they sound like actual speech'.<sup>1</sup> Chalmers felt that the 'entire works of Byrom are too interesting to be longer neglected'. This biographer adds that

he wrote with ease: it is more to his credit that he wrote in general with correctness, and that his mind was stored with varied imagery and original turns of thought, which he conveys in flowing measure, always delicate and often harmonious. In his Dialogue on Contentment, and his poem On the Fall of Man in Answer to Bishop Sherlock, he strongly reminds us of Pope in the celebrated Essay, although in the occasional adoption of quaint conceits he appears to have followed the example of the earlier poets. Of his long pieces, perhaps the best is Enthusiasm, which he published in 1752, and which is distinguished by superior animation and a glow of vigorous fancy suited to the subject. He depicts the classical enthusiast, and the virtuoso, with a strength of colouring, not inferior to some of Pope's happiest portraits in his Epistles.<sup>2</sup>

This rather generous criticism was shared by

his contemporaries [who] thought highly of his efforts. Law himself deeply valued the work of his paraphrast; Warburton eulogised his poetical talents; while John Wesley, though hostile to Law's teaching, declared, with a curious inconsistency, that his disciple's verse contained 'some of the noblest truths expressed with the utmost energy of language and the strongest colours of poetry'.<sup>3</sup>

Elton felt that Byrom 'thought and dreamt in rhyme, as others do in prose'.<sup>4</sup> Osmond agrees and makes the interesting judgement that herein lies the 'secret of his failure: he was too fluent, and might have done better work if versification had not been so easy to him'.<sup>5</sup> One can agree with this judgement, but it is important to remember that Byrom by no means viewed himself principally as a poet. He sometimes took his poetry seriously, as when paraphrasing Law, or writing of divine love, but on the whole it served as a kind of recreation for him. It is significant that of his long poems the one which is not a paraphrase of a particular work of Law, is the most unclear and uninteresting one.<sup>6</sup> He was successful in communicating the thought of others, not in generating it. He was chiefly a man of feeling, and when he gave free rein to his feelings, as when writing of divine love, his own poetry is most successful. He seemed almost entirely to lack a poetic imagination; this is the main weakness of his poetry. Its main strength is his gift of epigram and conciliatory humour.

<sup>1</sup> A Survey of English Literature (1730-1780), ii, p.35.

<sup>2</sup> 'Life of Byrom', Works of the English Poets, (1810), xv, p.181.

<sup>3</sup> Osmond, Mystical Poets of the English Church, p.265.

<sup>4</sup> Elton, p.35.

<sup>5</sup> Osmond, p.265.

<sup>6</sup> 'Familiar Epistles to a Friend, upon a Sermon entitled The Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit, by the Rev. Mr. Warburton', Poems, ii, i, p.247.

Like Boswell, Byrom had a remarkably eclectic mind,<sup>1</sup> was capable of wholehearted hero worship, and tended to attach himself to various kinds of people whom he always treated warmly. Indeed, it is characteristic of Byrom that he often ended the arguments of others with humorous verse.<sup>2</sup> What he most disliked was harshness and narrowness. Both his good nature and his teaching of shorthand fostered his participation in coffee-house life, and here he rendered an important service for mysticism. In this regard it is worth quoting Hoyles at length.

If one considers that the tradition of Sancroft and Ken had dwindled into the eccentricity of non-juring Jacobites setting up the so-called British Catholic Church, then Byrom and Law must be seen as transcending the limitations of their impoverished heritage. In the first place, their contacts with the new religious ferment which challenged the establishment, provide a link between 17th century and 18th century dissent, at the very moment when Defoe and Watts were succeeding in associating the traditional forces of dissent with the new régime. And in the second place Byrom and Law register and participate in the controversy at the heart of the English Enlightenment. Byrom was particularly good at registering; it was usually Law who laid down and initiated the lines of participation.

Byrom's rôle is nonetheless crucial. His contacts with the various tendencies in English thought were remarkably catholic for a man nourished in a dwindling and extremist tradition. Although he was for a time a disciple of Malebranche, he also had access to the highpriest of Enlightenment metaphysics, Samuel Clarke:

'I went in the morning to pay a visit to the famous Dr. Clarke of St. James's... Mr. Glover is a great disciple of his, and knowing me a disciple of F. Malebrance,... was very well pleased to hear the confabulation, which you may be sure was mighty philosophical'.<sup>3</sup>

One may suspect that controversy brought down to an Addisonian level of coffee-house confabulation may lack the rigorous method and intellectual integrity of the old-style polemic. But Byrom's tactics surely suited his age. For all his amateurish bonhomie, his persistence in taking sides in confabulations of this sort ensured that what Locke would have called 'obscure enthusiasm' had its say in the genial parrying of 18th century coffee-house dilettantes.<sup>4</sup>

Hoyles adds that 'the second half of Byrom's journal is full of references to the new mystical trends in English religious life'.<sup>5</sup> Byrom in his journal and through his published poems thus documents a considerable interest in mysticism. This documentation is Byrom's chief value in a study of mysticism

<sup>1</sup> For example, Bonamy Dobrée calls Byrom's essays on dreams, Spectator 586, 593, extremely advanced for their time', English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, (Oxford, 1959), p.365. Byrom's originality and insight have also been acknowledged by Colin Martindale, 'A Note on an Eighteenth Century Anticipation of Freud's Theory of Dreams', Journal of the History of Behavioural Sciences, 6 (1970), pp.362-4.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Remains, i, i, p.320.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to his wife, 4 January 1728, Remains, i, i, p.287.

<sup>4</sup> Hoyles, pp.81-2.

<sup>5</sup> Hoyles, p.83.

in the age of reason. However, it should be remembered that in addition to registering this interest in mysticism, Byrom also participated in, and through his poems and personal contacts, extended this interest in mysticism.

One of the main values of Byrom's journal is that it puts us in the very presence of Law. It is the most intimate biographical source existing of Law, the man. The journal gives a delightful and intimate view of eighteenth-century life, and one can agree with Ward that 'if more widely known', the journal 'would rank among the popular works of English biographical literature'.<sup>1</sup> Stephen's comment that Byrom is at times too brief is explained by the fact that the journal was private. Byrom notes in 1726:

I must not, I think, discontinue the journal any longer, but only, if I have a mind, omit some trifling articles; though 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; but as nobody is to see them but myself, I will let myself take any notes, never so trifling, for my own use.<sup>2</sup>

This explains why the journal is skeletal at times, but also shows that it is real autobiography with no self-consciousness and no posturing. The view of Byrom which emerges from a study of the journal as a whole can best be summed up in the following extract:

I said it was very well to be against an evil in all manners, some one way, some another, but I only wished that good people would not find fault with one another,... and I said, to take the good from all and leave the rest for what it was, seemed the best way.<sup>3</sup>

This shows a character at once eclectic, conciliatory and benevolent. Byrom the mystic tried to promote goodness wherever he found it, and was pleased to find it in all manner of people.

<sup>1</sup> Poems, i, i, p. iv. Leslie Stephen agrees although he feels that at times Byrom is irritatingly brief, as when he meets Sterne, but does not repeat any of the conversation. Studies of a Biographer, p.79.

<sup>2</sup> Remains, i, i, p.229.

<sup>3</sup> April 1737, Remains, ii, i, pp.115,130.

CHAPTER 12

WILLIAM LAW AND THE NEW BIRTH

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He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Paul

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

Jesus

---

In 1761 Law began his last work by declaring:

I would not turn my own Thoughts, or call the Attention of Christians, to any Thing but the one Thing needful, the one Thing essential.... If it be asked, What this one Thing is? It is the SPIRIT OF GOD brought again to his FIRST POWER OF LIFE IN US.<sup>1</sup>

This had been Law's one purpose and passion at least since the middle 1730's when his somewhat latent interest in mysticism was opened through his study of Jacob Boehme.<sup>2</sup> In what is generally and rightly regarded as his first mystical work, in 1737, Law wrote that if a man will

co-operate with that inward Redeemer which God has put into his Soul; if he will suffer his Spark to kindle, his Instinct of Goodness to spread itself, the Light of the Life to arise in him, the Voice of God to be heard in him; then will the Divine Life, the inward Man, be brought forth in him; and when his Body breaks off, Heaven will be made manifest in his Soul, and he will fall into all the Fulness of God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the Clergy, (1761), Works, ed. G.B. Morgan (Brockenhurst and Canterbury, 1892-3), ix, p.5. All references to Law's works are to this edition, except for Spirit of Prayer and Spirit of Love which have been edited by Sidney Spencer, Cambridge, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> On Boehme and Law see Peter Malekin, 'Jacob Boehme's Influence on William Law', Studia Neophilologica, xxxvi (1964), pp.245-260, and A.K. Walker, William Law: His Life and Thought, (1973), pp.96-110.

<sup>3</sup> Demonstration, (1737), Works, v, p.74.

Thus, as the New Birth was all in all for Law, this chapter will be an examination of his view of the New Birth, especially his figurative language, and his instructions on how to reach the New Birth. The chapter will end by arguing that the strength, insight and beauty of Law's vision of regeneration results from his personal experience of divine rebirth and his literary ability to create a figurative language worthy of the experience.

## I

Law considered it unwise to overemphasize key words in the process of regeneration. The concepts and words are the work of reason and partake of reason's limitations. Law's most recent biographer writes that

Regeneration, pardon of sins, justification, sanctification, and redemption are not sharply to be distinguished. They are 'so many different denominations of one and the same principal thing'.<sup>1</sup>

With this corrective in mind, it is necessary to study Law's figurative language in order to appreciate his vision of the New Birth. It is essential to study his figurative language because Law insisted that such expressions

are not a Language adapted to our Reason, to increase its Ideas; but are the Language of Heaven to the heavenly Part of us, and are only to excite, direct, and confirm... to raise, increase, and exercise our Hunger, Thirst, and Desire of the new Birth of Christ in our Soul.<sup>2</sup>

The very terms 'Hunger', 'Thirst', and 'Desire' should not be interpreted figuratively, for this robs them of their real significance. When Bishop Hoadly wrote that 'we may be said (by a strong Figure of Speech) to dwell in him, and he in us; to be one with Christ',<sup>3</sup> Law answers that

if Christ is a Principle of Life to us, and this Life is drawn into, or formed in us by means of our Faith; then how justly are we said to eat Christ as the Bread of Life, to eat his Flesh, and drink his Blood, etc., when by Faith we draw him into us, as our Principle of Life? For what can express the Nature of this Faith, so well as Hunger and Thirst? Or how can it be a real Faith, unless it have much of the Nature of Hunger, of a strong Desire, and ardent Thirst?

Therefore all these Expressions are as literally suited to the Nature of the Thing, to that which Christ is to us, as human Words can be....<sup>4</sup>

Hoadly's reference to the various Pauline and Johannine statements of being 'in Christ' as figurative and Law's insistence that they are literal, is a typical

<sup>1</sup> Walker, p.147. Walker is paraphrasing and quoting Andreas Freher (1649-1728) whose manuscripts on Boehme, Law read with care and considerable approbation. For Freher see C.A. Muses, Illumination on Jacob Boehme: the Work of Dionysius Andreas Freher, (New York, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, p.112.

<sup>3</sup> A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, quoted in Demonstration, Works, v, p.113.

<sup>4</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, p.112.

example of a central problem of mystical language. The mystic does not regard spiritual realities and experience as vague or attenuated copies of physical experience. Indeed, the mystic believes the very opposite: 'As above, so below'.<sup>1</sup> When a mystic communicates a spiritual experience, process, or relationship through symbolism and analogy, the physical representation is more vivid and real than the spiritual element for most readers. This makes the mystical experience seem improbable, unconvincing or simply unreal. The opposite is true for the mystic. Mystical analogy, as emphasized above, in the chapter on Dr. Cheyne, is predicated on the conviction that matter is spirit made visible. In one sense, the mystic, like Plato, views the material world as an imperfect shadow of the spiritual world. In another sense, the mystic believes that the spiritual world manifests in and through the material. Matter is simultaneously the gross form of spirit and a mere shadow of it. This corresponds to Law's insistence that spirit and matter are one but opposite.<sup>2</sup> Law considers matter a gross form of spirit because he holds the Gnostic view that matter resulted from sin. Using Boehme's first property to explain, Law insists that

Thickness, Hardness, and Darkness (which are the Essence of Matter) are the effects of the wrathful predominant Power of the first Property of Nature, and as no Property of Nature can be predominant, or known as it is in itself, till Nature is fallen from its harmonious Unity under the Light and Love of God dwelling in it, so you have the utmost Certainty, that where Matter, or which is the same Thing, where Thickness, Darkness, &c., are found, there the Will of the Creature has turned from God, and opened a disorderly Working of Nature without God.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this view of matter as selfish separateness, Law holds that although matter is the result of sin, nevertheless it was created by God. God created the material world to limit the Fall, and provide a 'Theatre of Redemption'. When redemption is completed

in the Unity of the one Will of Light and Love, then Hot and Cold, Thick and Thin, Dark and Hard, with every other Property of Matter, must give up all their Distinction, and all the divided Elements of this World lose all their Materiality and Division in that first heavenly Spirituality of a glassy Sea, from whence they fell.<sup>4</sup>

Matter is both the result of sin and of God's love. In his early period Law associated matter exclusively with sin. He only used nature imagery to emphasize man's fallen state. The later Law increasingly saw Divine Love manifesting through matter. He now writes:

<sup>1</sup> Smaragdine Table. Quoted in the headnote of the Cheyne chapter above.

<sup>2</sup> Spirit of Love, (1752-54), p.177:

Body and Spirit are not two separate independent Things, but are necessary to each other, and are only the inward and outward Conditions of one and the same Being.

<sup>3</sup> Spirit of Love, p.174.

<sup>4</sup> Spirit of Love, p.175.

...all that is sweet, delightful and amiable in this World, in the Serenity of the Air, the Fineness of the Seasons, the Joy of Light, the Melody of Sounds, the Beauty of Colours, the Fragrancy of Smells, the Splendour of precious Stones, is nothing else but Heaven...manifesting itself..., and darting forth in such Variety so much of its own Nature.<sup>1</sup>

Since mystics experience the spiritual world as vivid reality, and most readers view it as shadowy or imaginary, then the most serious weakness of any mystical writing would be abstract vagueness. Jerzy Peterkiewicz feels that unfortunately mystical writing is often characterized by this failing.

The purity of the words...has to be permanent.... Without this quality, whether it is accepted or not, most mystical writing seems to be unsatisfactory.... With time the vocabulary shows up its weakness. The wrong precision or the abstract vagueness will be noticed sooner or later....<sup>2</sup>

The tendency towards abstract vagueness in mystical writing results from analysis and speculation by those with no mystical experience of their own. Law is vehement in his rejection of the abstract.

All abstract Reasoning, or ranging of Ideas into a Form of Argument, cannot be any Proof of a God, or Immortality found in Man, because they partake not of the Nature of the Things to be proved, and so must be as false and fictitious, as that Conclusion, which has nothing of the Nature of the Premises in it.<sup>3</sup>

The abstract for Law is anything which has not been experienced in wholeness and completeness.<sup>4</sup> It is no coincidence that imagery of the physical and spiritual senses is prominent in his writing. He was in love with the concrete, with that which is most real, and his writings deal entirely with what one's relationship should be to this final Reality. Thus, the senses are so important because of what they teach about relationship. As the physical senses provide awareness of one's relationship to environment, so the spiritual senses inform man of his relationship to God. The goal of this relationship is Divine Union and so spiritual touch is, finally, the most important sense of all. In Law's

<sup>1</sup> Appeal to All Who Doubt, (1740), Works, vi, p.117.

<sup>2</sup> The Other Side of Silence, (1970), p.109.

<sup>3</sup> Confutation of Warburton, (1757), Works, viii, p.180. Cf. Yeats in a letter written three weeks before his death: 'The abstract is not life and everywhere draws out in contradiction. You can refute Hegel but not the Saint or the Song of Sixpence'. Joseph Hone, W.B. Yeats, 1865-1939, (1942), p.510.

<sup>4</sup> Way to Divine Knowledge, (1752), Works, vii, p.148:

...he only is able to declare with Spirit and Power any Truths...who preaches nothing but what he has first seen, and felt, and found to be true, by a living Sensibility and true Experience of their Reality and Power in his own Soul. All other Preaching, whether from Art, Hearsay, Books, or Education, is, at best, but playing with Words, and mere trifling with sacred Things.

Ibid., p.168:

...all right and natural Knowledge...is sensible, intuitive, and its own Evidence.

earlier period the dominant images are visual and essentially intellectual. Images of sight, which imply the desire to understand, but which also imply, like the faculty itself, separation, begin to give way in Law's middle period to hearing imagery, and its concomitant desired state of harmony. In Law's latest works, especially the Spirit of Love, touch is the dominant image, for Divine Union is the ultimate expression of spiritual contact. But what is the relationship for Law of the physical senses and the spiritual senses? As is made clear in the above quotation from the Appeal to All Who Doubt, Law does not seek among physical experiences for specific analogies to spiritual experiences; instead, he perceives in physical experiences themselves a revelation and interpretation of spiritual reality.<sup>1</sup>

Law's imagery of the senses proceeds chronologically in his works as a whole, from vision and comprehension (sight), to harmony and adjustment (hearing), and finally to abiding oneness (touch). It is interesting that Law, like most western mystics, seems to distrust or dislike smell and taste as mystical symbols. There is no significant imagery of either sense in his earlier period and precious little in his later. Though both senses are evident in the Bible, and fairly common in Hinduism, Sufism and Taoism, Christian mystics including Law seem naturally to regard them as essentially animal sensations and therefore unworthy of the spiritual life.

Law regards the proper use of the senses as vital for appreciating our relationship to reality, but also because when we understand the importance of the senses we can then put reason in perspective and recognize its limitations

I will grant you much more than you imagine in respect of Reason; I will grant it to have as great a Share in the good Things of Religion, as it has in the good Things of this Life....

Now how is it, that this World, or the good things of this World are communicated to Man? Are his Senses or his Reason the Means of his having so much as he has, or can have from this World?

Now here you must degrade Reason, just as much as it is degraded by Religion. And as we say, that the good Things of Scripture and Religion are not proposed to our Reason; so you must say that the good Things of this World are not proposed to our Reason....

For everyone knows, that we know no more, can receive no more, can possess no more of anything that is communicable to us from this World, than what we know, receive and possess by our Senses.... Sounds are only proposed to our Ears, Light to our Eyes; nothing is communicated to our Reason; no Part of the World hath any Communication with it. Reason therefore has no higher Office or Power in the Things of this World, than in the Things of Religion. The World is only so far known, received and possessed, as we receive and possess it by our Senses. And Reason stands by, as an impotent Spectator, only beholding and speculating upon its own Ideas and Notions of what has passed between the World and the sensible Part of the Soul.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Spirit of Love, p.212.

<sup>2</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, pp.116-7.

Law's anti-intellectualism is an intellectual manoeuvre. Law's obvious pleasure in his flight from the intellect is only open to an intellectual. Implicitly, since he was himself an intellectual, Law was in fact seeking to balance reason with intuition and the senses, not replace it. All his attacks on the intellect emotionally and psychologically balance what he regarded as his society's worship of reason.

Law believes that if man uses his sensual desires properly, they will lead him to God. All people seek sensual gratification and union with what they desire.

Grown Men are under the same Sensibility of Nature, want only what the Child wanted, viz., to have their Senses gratified, but they have the Cunning not to own it, and the Fraud to pretend something else.

And thus it must be with every human Creature. He must be governed by this Sensibility of his Nature, must be happy or unhappy, according as his Senses are gratified, till such time as he is born again from above, till the new Birth has awakened another Sensibility in him, and opened a way for divine Communications and Impressions to have more Effect upon him, than the Things of this World have upon his natural Senses. For no created Being whatever, can any Moment of Time be free from Communications and Impressions of some kind or other; if it is not governed by Communications and Impressions from above, it is certainly governed by Communications and Impressions from below.<sup>1</sup>

The correct use of the senses is to seek 'Communications and Impressions' from God. Reason is dangerous when it replaces the senses and speculates about religion and the New Birth, instead of allowing the 'sensible Part of the Soul' to seek the experience of union with God.

For a God without any Communications and Impressions upon us, and a God afar off, are equally atheistical Tenets, equally destructive of all Piety....

And when Men have once lost all Sense of the Necessity of being inwardly, invisibly, and secretly supported, assisted, guided, and blessed by Communications and Impressions of God upon their Souls, it signifies not much what Religion they profess, or for what Reason they profess it, whether they have the Reason of Epicurus, or Hobbes, or this Author.<sup>2</sup> For a Religion has no good of Religion in it, but so far as it introduces the Life, Power, and Presence of God into the Soul.<sup>3</sup>

The basic Deist attitude that reason is the divine element in man is a literal denial, as Law sees it, of the New Birth. What is more, this exaltation of reason was common even among Deism's most vociferous opponents. Late in Life, Law answered Warburton's claim that reason is the image and likeness of God in man,<sup>4</sup> with the bite of his earliest controversial writings.

<sup>1</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, p.121.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Hoadly.

<sup>3</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, p.122.

<sup>4</sup> Warburton developed this idea at length in his Divine Legation of Moses, (1738-41, revised throughout his life). In this work he violently attacked the Deists, particularly in his Dedication, in part no doubt because he recognized the uncomfortable similarity of their view of reason to his own.

What is the Difference between Reason in St. Paul, a Spinos, a Hobbes, or a Bolingbroke? None at all, or no other than in their outward Shape. Therefore if Reason be the Divine Image and Likeness of God in Man, a Hobbes and a Bolingbroke, had as much of it as St. Paul. And a Man that is all his Life long reasoning himself into Atheism, and the Wisdom of Living according to his own Lusts, must be allowed to give daily continual Proof of his having the Image and Likeness of God, very powerfully manifested in Him.<sup>1</sup>

Law's fundamental criticism of reason is that it always follows the state of the heart and is merely the servant of the heart. 'What the Heart loves, that Reason contends for....'<sup>2</sup> For Law, when it comes to religion, which is all of life, reason must be more or less forgotten; one must look to the heart to find the reasons why the New Birth is essential.

It was stated above that in Law's earlier writings the dominant images are visual and intellectual. Visual imagery in a religious writer tends naturally to be a celebration of light. No Christian writer would presume to be able to describe God, and so a description of God's light is appropriate and devotional. Law's Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, 1728, the masterpiece of his earlier period, has a number of descriptions of light. These passages are the expression of the desire to understand God, as, for example, the following: 'sometimes the Light of God's Countenance shines so bright upon us that we see far into the Invisible World....'<sup>3</sup> Here, as throughout the Serious Call, Law is trying quite literally to 'see' God. God's light is still perceived as outside; this basic separation from God is apparent in Law's perspective in the Serious Call and is the very theme of the book. A decade later Law writes that with the rebirth of God in the soul, man begins to see 'by means of a divine Light, shining forth from the Kingdom of God', which, because of the New Birth, has been 'opened within'.<sup>4</sup> In his mystical period Law has moved beyond a desire to see and understand God and cares only about overcoming separation and uniting with God.

Visual imagery (intellect, which dominates Law's earlier writings, is replaced in importance in Law's middle period by hearing imagery (will). If one has made a sustained attempt to see and understand God, and has had any success in penetrating deeper into reality, then one must seek to adjust to this deeper reality or give up the mystical path. The natural symbolism for representing this adjustment is hearing symbolism. If one begins to hear the Word of God within and wills to adjust to the Word, then one seeks to become inseparable from the Word through perfect harmony with Christ. If perfect harmony is

<sup>1</sup> Confutation of Warburton, Works, viii, p.189.

<sup>2</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, p.98.

<sup>3</sup> Works, iv, p.135.

<sup>4</sup> Law's italics. Christian Regeneration, Works, v, p.138.

achieved, then one is perpetually hearing the Word and is an instrument of the Word. The work of the mystical path is perfecting the instrument, the self. Law's final development of hearing symbolism is in the Spirit of Love:

the greatest Artist in Music can add no Sound to his Instrument, nor make it give forth any other Melody, but that which lies silently hidden in it, as its own inward State....

It is strictly thus with ourselves. Not a Spark of Joy, or of Wrath, of Envy, of Love, or Grief, can possibly enter into us from without, or be caused to be in us by any outward Thing. This is as impossible, as for the Sound of Metals to be put into a Lump of Clay....

Persons, Things, and outward Occurrences may strike our Instrument improperly, and variously, but as we are in ourselves, such is our outward Sound, whatever strikes us.

If our inward State is the renewed Life of Christ within us, then every Thing and Occasion, let it be what it will, only makes the same Life to sound forth, and show itself; then if one Cheek is smitten, we meekly turn the other also.<sup>1</sup>

If one is seeking to be entirely the instrument of Christ, then any experience is valuable, however discordant, because it demonstrates the state of the instrument and the degree to which Christ can manifest in and through it.<sup>2</sup> Law uses the musical instrument symbol because it illustrates that all is within. In addition, the symbol indicates God's omnipotence because not only does God 'play' the instrument, but, as the Christ within, God fashions and develops the instrument. What is more, the symbol demonstrates man's passivity in relation to God, yet simultaneously shows man as co-creator with God in this world. Although it is strictly true that the New Birth is solely the work of God, it is also true that the New Birth is dependent on man's preparing his instrument by willing harmony with the Christ within; until one hears the Word within and attunes to the Word, the Christ within cannot sound forth in action and adoration.

Even with hearing symbolism, as well as visual symbolism, there is still separation from God. Only touch requires the immanence of the Divine. It is thus appropriate to analyse Law's symbols of Divine 'contact', below, in the discussion of his symbolism of mystical union.

The symbolism of the spiritual senses communicates mystical experiences. These experiences are by their very nature temporary and imperfect. Law's symbols of progress in mystical development imply how one should use the momentary mystical experiences of the spiritual senses to move forward on the mystical path. When experiences of the spiritual senses are sought for excitement and pleasure, rather than to help lead the soul to God, one is guilty of lust is taking, not giving. Symbols of mystical progress tend to give a telescopic

<sup>1</sup> Pp.212,213.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Blyth, Zen in English Literature, p.24: 'If your aim is comfort, only some things, some times, some places will do. If your aim is virtue, ... anything, any time, any place will suffice'.

perspective of the mystical life, as symbolism of the spiritual senses gives a microscopic view. The most obvious example of a symbol which yields a telescopic perspective is the most common symbol of all, the mystical 'path'. However, Law does not develop a pilgrimage or quest symbol because he wants people to turn within, not without. He explains that you should not seek the New Birth by 'taking up your travelling Staff, or crossing the Seas..., No. The Oracle is at Home....'<sup>1</sup> Another reason why Law does not use this class of symbols is because it is natural to distinguish fundamental stages when developing a journey symbol. Since the only purpose of his books is to help readers reach the New Birth, Law is concerned that if a reader believes he is in a higher stage of development than is the case, he may become complacent or begin to rely on self, not on God. Law is very typical of his age in rejecting any piety which has more 'of Heat than of Light in it'.<sup>2</sup> He is concerned about the influence of those, for example the Methodists, who were perpetually trying to discover the state of their spiritual development. Law felt that questions like: 'have you an absolute Assurance of your Salvation, and that you cannot possibly fall from your State of Grace?'<sup>3</sup> are arrogant and dangerous. Questions like this

are a great Bait to all kinds of Hypocrites, who must find themselves much inclined to enter into a Religion, where they may pass immediately for Saints, upon their own Testimony, and stand in the highest Rank of Piety, and of Interest in Christ, merely by their own laying Claim to it.<sup>4</sup>

In any case, Law thinks it does no harm, and probably considerable good, to believe, wrongly, that one is a mere neophyte. Therefore Law does not wish to emphasize stages overly much, and accordingly develops symbols of transmutation or of natural, steady growth.

Byrom noted in his diary that Law referred to the Philosopher's Stone 'as if some had had it, or, had it'.<sup>5</sup> Law's belief in alchemy is not a mere passive acceptance of Boehme's theosophy. The fire of God's love, which is perpetually purifying man, is at the centre of Law's apprehension of reality. This divine fire of love 'is the Root or Seat of Life, and ... every Variety of human Tempers is only the various Workings of the Fire of Life' which is the 'Refiner of all Grossness'.<sup>6</sup> In a letter to his closest friend, Thomas Langcake, Law describes Christ as the 'Divine Magus' and adds: 'that which can make the Soul

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Love, p.214.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Regeneration, Works, v, p.173.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.176.

<sup>5</sup> 28 August 1739. Remains, ii, i, p.275. Byrom adds that the Stone 'is not to be found by philosophers'.

<sup>6</sup> Appeal, Works, vi, p.133.

to have only one Will, and one Love, is the universal Tincture...'.<sup>1</sup> Christ is the 'universal Tincture', the one 'heavenly Will', the 'Spark of the Deity'.<sup>2</sup> The spark can only become an all-enveloping, transmuting fire when a person overcomes 'a Multiplicity of Wills,...the one only Evil, Disease, and Misery'.<sup>3</sup> When one wills to be entirely a servant of Christ's love, one is purified and exalted by 'the Fire of Love'.<sup>4</sup> Like all spiritual alchemists, Law associates gold with the human soul.

Our outward Man must be tormented, crucified, mortified in the Fire of our own Flesh and Blood; and then it is as the gross Gold in the Crucible heated by earthly Fire. But as no fiery Torments of our own Flesh and Blood, can glorify our inward Man, and set Him in his first angelic State, so no outward Fire can torment Gold into its first Heavenly State... Heaven is dead in Gold, just as it is dead in Man; and its heavenly Tincture can only be made alive, in the same Manner, and from the same Power, as the inward Man is born again of the Water, and Spirit from above.<sup>5</sup>

Law sees the alchemical 'Fire of Love' at work in all life forms, but especially in flowers and fruits.

The Perfection of every Life is no way possibly to be had, but as every Flower comes to its Perfection, viz., from its own Seed and Root, and the various Degrees of Transmutation which must be gone through before the Flower is found: it is strictly thus with the Perfection of the Soul: All its Properties of Life must have their true natural Birth and Growth from one another. The first, as its Seed and Root, must have their natural Change into an higher State; must, like the Seed of the Flower, pass through Death into Life, and be blessed with the Fire, and Light, and Spirit of Heaven, in their Passage to it; just as the Seed passes through Death into Life, blessed by the Fire, and Light, and Air of this World, till it reaches its last Perfection, and becomes a beautiful sweet-smelling Flower.<sup>6</sup>

In emphasizing steady, natural development, each change growing out of the previous, Law answers and instructs those who insist on sudden, dramatic enlightenment as the only true kind. Law admits the fact of sudden enlightenment, but insists that there are few St. Pauls. Most people who claim sudden enlightenment are deluding themselves or others and have more of 'Heat than of Light' in their religion.<sup>7</sup> Law acknowledges 'Degrees of Transmutation' but leaves them underlined for usually they are imperceptible. What is essential is the natural

<sup>1</sup> 16 October 1752. Letters, Works, ix, p.193.

<sup>2</sup> Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, p.218.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Langcake quoted above.

<sup>4</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.125.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Langcake quoted above.

<sup>6</sup> Spirit of Love, p.189.

<sup>7</sup> In Christian Regeneration, Law says that dramatic conversions should not be confused with the New Birth, which 'is something entirely distinct, from this first sudden Conversion, or Call to Repentance'. Regeneration 'is not done in an Instant, but is a...gradual Release from our Captivity...'. Works, v, p.180.

and full development of human nature born of the Seed which is the Christ within. The unguessed potential and significance of the human soul must unfold fully if man is to realize his divine nature.

Among Law's symbols of progress in mystical development, his garden symbolism and symbolism of spiritual romance are the most important because they are dynamic and lead to the bearing of 'fruit'. In these two classes of symbols the element of love is developed in the former and fulfilled in the latter, despite Law's extreme modesty in referring to romance and union because of their earthly manifestation. Spiritual romance is a powerful symbol for him, though it is usually merely hinted at or referred to obliquely. Law, in his use of understatement and indirectness, is the opposite of Whitman, though one senses that Law's desire for union with the Beloved was at least as strong as Whitman's.

Law felt that because of Boehme's insight into nature and Law's own explication and development of Boehme's vision,

the Veil is now taken off from Nature, and every Plant and Fruit will teach with the clearness of a Noon-day Sun...that the Soul, which is dead to the Paradisaical Life, must be made alive again by the Birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God in it, in the same Manner as a dead Seed is, and only can be brought to Life in this World, by the Light and Spirit of this World.<sup>1</sup>

For Law, the comparison of a fruit to a man or even to an angel should not be considered amusing or fanciful because there is but one life force at work in all creation:

all the Creatures of God...are all raised, enriched, and blessed by the same Life of God...For the Beginnings and Progress of a perfect Life in Fruits, and the Beginnings and Progress of a perfect Life in Angels, are not only like to one another, but are the very same Thing, or the working of the very same Qualities....<sup>2</sup>

What then is the difference between man and a plant? The plant's will is from earth and therefore it cannot reach timeless perfection. After a plant's moment of flowering and fruitage, it must decay. The will of man, however, is a birth of heaven:

The Seed of everything that can grow in us, is our Will....It has all Power....It enters wherever it wills, and finds everything that it seeks; for its seeking is its finding. The Will over-rules all Nature, because Nature is its Offspring, and born of it...The Will of Man...is...a genuine Birth of the eternal, free, omnipotent Will of God. And therefore, as the Will of God is superior to, and ruleth over all Nature; so the Will of Man, derived from the Will of God, is superior to, and ruleth over all his own Nature.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Appeal, Works, vi, p.87.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.71.

<sup>3</sup> Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, pp.210,211.

The will is in essence a hunger after one's source and perfection.

Every Seed has a Life in itself, or else it could not grow. What is this Life? It is nothing else but an Hunger in the Seed after the Air and Light of this World; which Hunger, being met and fed by the Light and Air of Nature, changes the Seed into a living Plant. Thus it is with the Seed of Heaven in the Soul. It...Hungers after God and Heaven; which no sooner stirs, or is suffered to stir, but it is met, embraced, and quickened, by the Light and Spirit of God and Heaven; and so a new Man in Christ, is formed from the Seed of Heaven, as a new Plant from a Seed in the Earth.<sup>1</sup>

Here, in the symbolism, God's love of man becomes explicit. Using the imagery of the return of the Prodigal Son, for Law the most powerful and moving of Christ's parables, it is made clear that the soul's love of God is immediately reciprocated. More than this, God's love precedes and supports man's budding desire for union. But the manner in which God's love supports man's desire is, paradoxically, that God's love appears to be withdrawn after man's experiences of progressive development. Using the symbol of a grain of wheat which desires the life of this world (and the desire is returned because the grain is the offspring of this world), Law explains that the union cannot be realized until 'the Husk and gross Part of the Grain falls into a State of Corruption and Death, till this begins, the Mystery of Life hidden in it, cannot come forth'.<sup>2</sup> This death of the 'Husk' is, in the symbolism of the spiritual romance, the dreadful but necessary 'dark night of the soul'. The dark night is proof of profound progress in mystical development and is the final stage before, and the most severe preparation for, the complete union of the soul with God. Law uses the term 'coldness' to represent the dark night.<sup>3</sup> The light and warmth of the sun are withdrawn so that one learns of one's total dependence on God. This last and most intense trial is the greatest blessing because it demonstrates to the depth of the soul that God is All.

The spiritual romance is an important symbol for the reason mentioned above, of 'fruitage', but also because anyone who has been in love can imagine the power of divine love and appreciate the symbolism as a logical development of human love and spiritual desire. But the symbolism causes problems. How can a writer describe or demonstrate progress in the romance? Law refers obliquely to God wooing the soul away from other lovers by 'Allurements',<sup>4</sup> but other than this symbolism of the beginning of the romance, the only ready and powerful means of indicating progress is the dark night. The dark night is an emptying of self which is complete at the hour of greatest darkness, when the soul, in 'trembling

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.133.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.145.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Regeneration, Works, v, p.178.

Desire',<sup>1</sup> waits for 'the midnight Call of the Bridegroom's Voice',<sup>2</sup> and the soul which has been emptied of self is 'filled' and 'united'<sup>3</sup> with God.

With the ending of the dark night in fulfilment, progress symbols give way to union symbolism. The language of union in Law, as in most mystics, is qualitatively and quantitatively different from his other language. Law's figurative language of both the spiritual senses and of progress in mystical development is more explicit and detailed than his figurative language of mystical union. This is so not only because of the unspeakable mystery involved in divine union, but also because the goal is so distant for most of his readers that it is pointless for Law to give more than a few glimmerings of the journey's end. Law is writing for those who he thinks must take the first steps on the road to illumination. For such readers, too much emphasis on union and veritable perfection would thwart any latent or budding spiritual aspirations. Readers should be enticed, but not overwhelmed by the difference between their present state and the unimaginable bliss of divine union. Another reason why Law's figurative language of union is less developed than his symbolism of the spiritual senses or of mystical evolvment is because the experience of union is so intimate and so intense that the obvious earthly analogy is sexual union, which Law would be loath to develop. Instead, he balances symbolism of the mystical marriage with union analogies drawn mainly from inanimate nature.

The most important of the union symbols Law takes from nature are air and light. Air and light, so common, so unappreciated, are for Law powerful symbols of divine union since without them there is no beauty and no life. But for Law the identity goes deeper. In Law's system of mystical analogy, air is the very manifestation in the mundane world of the Holy Spirit of God. Air, everpresent, is a perfect symbol and example of God's overflowing, life-giving power. Through perpetual respiration, the Holy Spirit, as air, powers the internal life of the body. Likewise with the soul:

if Goodness can only be in God, if it cannot exist separate from Him... then...Perpetual Inspiration...is in the Nature of the Thing as necessary to a Life of Goodness, Holiness, and Happiness, as the perpetual Respiration of the Air is necessary to animal Life.<sup>4</sup>

Goodness comes only from divine contact. In his last book, completed only days before his death, Law draws the inevitable conclusion. This conclusion must have startled his brother clergy by its simple logic and vital challenge to them as ministers and Christians. It is Law's final volley of loving warning

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<sup>1</sup> Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, p.252.

<sup>2</sup> Answer to Dr. Trapp, (1740), Works, vi, p.16.

<sup>3</sup> Spirit of Love, p.183.

<sup>4</sup> Spirit of Love, p.206.

and direction. 'Without the New Birth, or which is the same Thing, without immediate continual Divine Inspiration, the Difference between the Christian and the Infidel is quite lost...'.<sup>1</sup> This New Birth is only attained when man gives back to God man's one possession--his life. At the moment of perfect giving of man's life to God, 'the Light of God...joyfully breaks in upon us, turns our Darkness into Light, our Sorrow into Joy, and begins that Kingdom of God and Divine Love within us, which will never have an End'.<sup>2</sup> Through a fathomless mystery, when man gives his life to God, it is God who is giving His life to man: one action, one love, one life. Before the New Birth, one is literally in 'Darkness', and therefore sees nothing in perspective. Any intended action is either self-assertion, since one has not overcome the self, or an ignis fatuus because one has no light. Law explains the absolute need for perpetual divine inspiration by asking, rhetorically: 'can any Thing reflect Light, before it has received it? Or any other Light, than that which it has received'?<sup>3</sup> Here Law's regenerate man resembles the Cambridge Platonists' 'candle of the Lord'.<sup>4</sup> The light which shines forth from the regenerated man is the 'uncreated Light of God'<sup>5</sup> which has power over nature and is the source of the sun's light. The regenerated man's awesome power cannot be misused since the Divine strength is grounded in, and powered by, universal love. Divine love manifests spontaneously and freely through him, and so the actions of the regenerated man are the direct actions of God. The blessings afforded to mankind by the regenerated man attaining the New Birth go beyond his being an inspiration to others. His life is now inextricably tied to the life of all mankind. In experiencing oneness with God, the regenerated man automatically attains oneness with the entire creation. The work of universal redemption becomes the one work of the illumined soul. Since there is fundamental unity in God's creation, the work of universal restoration must extend to nature itself.

The Fire of Love kindled by the Light and Spirit of God in a truly regenerated Man, communicates a twofold Blessing, it outwardly joins with the meek Light of the Sun, and helps to overcome the Wrath of outward Nature; it inwardly co-operates with the Power of Good Angels, in resisting the Wrath and Darkness of Hell....<sup>6</sup>

The 'Wrath of outward Nature' and the 'Wrath and Darkness of Hell' are one, and result, in Boehme's system, from the separation of the qualities of Eternal

<sup>1</sup> Address to the Clergy, Works, ix, p.47.

<sup>2</sup> Spirit of Love, p.294.

<sup>3</sup> Address to the Clergy, Works, ix, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> This is a frequent and unifying symbol for the Cambridge group. It is discussed at length in Culverwel's The Light of Nature, (1652). The phrase is from Proverbs xx.27: 'The understanding of a man is the Candle of the Lord'.

<sup>5</sup> Spirit of Love, p.183.

<sup>6</sup> Appeal, Works, vi, p.112.

Nature caused by the Fall of Lucifer. When separated from the other principles, what Law calls the 'Fire of Wrath', 'wills nothing else' than to 'devour all that it can lay hold of....'<sup>1</sup> It is an implosion of self and hate which can only be overcome by the out-going riches of the fire of love. Given his deep respect for Newton and science, if Law were writing today he would probably identify this fire of wrath with the black hole. Boehme makes it clear that there are 'dark stars' which swallow light and that the assuaging of the fire of wrath by the fire of love is a spiritualizing process. This process does not end with the destruction of the fire of wrath but by its being in complementary harmony with the fire of love and the other principles of Eternal Nature.<sup>2</sup> When this harmony is regained, nature, mankind and the fallen angels will all have been redeemed.<sup>3</sup>

Having been freed from his own prison of self and hate, the regenerated man participates in the liberation of nature and mankind. The illumined soul has learned from personal experience, to the depth and breadth of his being, that only love can overcome self and hate, and that complete dependence on God is the essence of human freedom. Although the very term 'New Birth' invites the development of a 'Child of God' symbol, Law resists this. A child becomes increasingly independent of parents, whereas the process of regeneration requires the ever increasing dependence of the soul on God. Law emphasizes that this dependence is the source of human freedom, as the bird is dependent on the air for its freedom, because God is the only medium in and by which man can realize his full potential and then develop it. With the New Birth one gains 'the blessed Freedom of a Spirit, that is all Love, and a mere Will to Nothing but Goodness'.<sup>4</sup> The regenerated man not only has freedom to express himself fully (St. Augustine's 'love and do what you will'), but also freedom from all that is undesirable. 'Divine Love is perfect Peace and Joy, it is a Freedom from all Disquiet, it is all Content, and mere Happiness';<sup>5</sup> the New Birth is a 'Security from all Evil, and all Delusion...'.<sup>6</sup>

It was stated above that garden symbolism and the mystical marriage are special because, as symbols, they are not static, but involve the bearing of

<sup>1</sup> Appeal, Works, vi, p.112.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ibid: These are the two Fires of Eternal Nature, which were but one in Heaven, and can be only one wherever heaven is; and it was the Separation of these two Fires that changed the Angels into Devils, and made their Kingdom a Beginning of Hell.

<sup>3</sup> For references to the relevant texts in Boehme and a commentary, see Robert Eddy, 'Jacob Boehme and Black Holes', N&Q, N.S.24 (1977), p.535. For Law's belief in universal restoration see Address to the Clergy, Works, ix, pp.85,86 and Walton, p.601. Boehme never gave up his belief in everlasting Hell.

<sup>4</sup> Spirit of Love, p.198.

<sup>5</sup> Spirit of Love, p.270.

<sup>6</sup> Spirit of Love, p.286.

'fruit' and spiritual 'offspring'. In one sense, the spiritual offspring, by adoption, of the mystical marriage of God and the soul are all unredeemed people who are loved as precious children lost and in pain. In another sense, the offspring of the spiritual marriage are all the souls influenced and helped and especially led to the New Birth by the creative love of God manifested in the redeemed soul. The idea of spiritual offspring is subsumed in the symbol of the ever-growing 'Marriage Feast' in which the collective betrothed of God, all 'Virgin-hearts made ready for the Marriage Feast'<sup>1</sup> are united to Christ, 'Flesh of his Flesh, Bone of his Bones, Spirit of his Spirit...'.<sup>2</sup> This concrete image of oneness, vividly physical as well as spiritual, unites body and soul, hope and joy, but also becoming and being, and progress and perfection. For the state of union with God is not static or uneventful or unchanging. Since the soul married to God is united to the divine nature, there can be no limits to the soul's bliss in God. The New Birth is the state of perfect freedom in love, and so there can be no limits of any kind; the New Birth opens 'an Infinity of Wonders, Births, and Beauties',<sup>3</sup> an 'eternal Increase of Union, Perfection, and Glory',<sup>4</sup> an 'ever increasing newness of Delights in Eternity...'.<sup>5</sup> All of these unnumbered glories result from the oneness of divine love which has fully manifested and is operational in the redeemed soul. The beginning and the end of the New Birth is love.

Through all the Universe of Things, nothing is uneasy, unsatisfied or restless, but because it is not governed by Love, or because its Nature has not reached or attained the full Birth of the Spirit of Love. For when that is done, every Hunger is satisfied, and all complaining, murmuring, accusing, resenting, revenging, and striving are...totally suppressed and overcome.... If you ask, Why the Spirit of Love cannot be displeased, cannot be disappointed, cannot complain, accuse, resent or murmur? It is because Divine Love desires nothing but itself; it is its own Good, it has all when it has itself, because nothing is good but itself, and its own workings; for Love is God, and he that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in Love.<sup>6</sup>

## II

What, then, is the New Birth as Law understands it and communicates it in his figurative language? Law can best answer this himself. The New Birth

is a new Life, and new Nature, and introduces you into a new World; it puts an End to all your former Opinions, Notions and Tempers, it opens new Senses in you, and makes you see high to be low, and low to be high; Wisdom to be Foolishness, and Foolishness Wisdom; it makes Prosperity and

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Love, p.292.

<sup>2</sup> Address to the Clergy, Works, ix, p.65.

<sup>3</sup> Letters, Works, ix, p.147.

<sup>4</sup> Warburton, Works, viii, p.185.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.186.

<sup>6</sup> Spirit of Love, p.270.

Adversity, Praise and Dispraise, to be equally nothing.... When Divine Love is born in the Soul, all childish Images of Good and Evil are done away, and all Sensibility of them is lost, as the Stars lose their Visibility when the Sun is risen.<sup>1</sup>

One's 'Nature' and 'Tempers' change because now love alone is operational in the soul. One's 'former Opinions' and 'Notions' end because opinions and speculations can only rule until the light of reality shines. The New Birth must open 'new Senses' because one is experiencing new levels of reality. High and low, and wisdom and foolishness, and all dualities must be exactly reversed because the centre of identity has moved from self to God. 'Prosperity and Adversity, Praise and Dispraise' are 'equally nothing' because neither duality can move one's centre from God, who is alone Real and united to the soul. The moving simile which ends the passage shows that the 'Images of Good and Evil' eliminated by the New Birth are 'childish' because they are based on selfish desires only. The stars symbolize that before the New Birth one's many desires and self-oriented view of reality are the only lights by which one's life is guided. God's light, born in the soul at the time of regeneration, awakens one from the dream of self which the light of reality shows to be a mere phantom; multiplicity of selfish desires is changed into the oneness of love.

The New Birth makes a person whole, and a spontaneous servant of God. The New Birth is the full development of one's humanity. It makes God the centre and circumference of life, and love the only means and end. The New Birth, in making man fully human, makes him divine.

How, according to Law, can one attain to this rebirth? Law emphasizes that rules cannot lead one to the New Birth. Does one need rules to know how to love?<sup>2</sup> The New Birth transcends all rules. One must be taught of God, not from men and books; the New Birth is wholly the work of God; all that men can do is 'comply with the Terms'.<sup>3</sup> The terms are that one's selfish nature must be entirely given up so that all direction in one's life is left to God. Law advised a fellow clergyman that when

you visit the Sick, or well Awakened, or dully Senseless, use no pre-contrived Knowledge, or Rules, how you are to proceed with them, but go as in Obedience to God, as on his Errand, and say only what the Love of God and Man suggests to your Heart, without any Anxiety about the Success of it; that is God's Work....Think not, that here Severity, and here Tenderness, is to be shown; for nothing is to be shown to Man, but his Want of God; nothing can show him this so powerfully, so convincingly, as Love.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Love, p.270.

<sup>2</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.141.

<sup>3</sup> Regeneration, Works, v, p.163.

<sup>4</sup> 10 April 1756. Letters, Works, ix, p.127. Cf. Mark xiii.11.

Rules, therefore, can obstruct the free movement of the Holy Spirit because they give the old self room to operate and, as it were, to decide how one will be saved.

God is always Present, and always working towards the Life of the Soul,... but this inward Work of God, though never ceasing, or altering, is yet always, and only hindered by the Activity of our own Nature, and Faculties, by bad Men through their Obedience to earthly Passions, and by good Men through their striving to be good in their own Way, by their natural Strength, and a Multiplicity of seemingly holy Labours and Contrivances.

Both these sorts of People obstruct the Work of God upon their Souls. For we can co-operate with God no other Way, than by submitting to the Work of God, and seeking, and leading ourselves to it....God is found, as soon as he alone is sought.<sup>1</sup>

Since Law thus argues against rules, it is appropriate that he give directions about avoiding the rules of men and self and adhering solely to the love of God. Law's directions involve five elements: 1) the desire of turning wholly to God; 2) the desire must be given time to transform the inner nature; 3) the desire itself is from God, so one can have no pride in one's growing holiness; 4) realizing the desire is from God, one must reverence it as a divine call from death to life and from self to love; 5) through introversion, one must be humbly attentive to the voice of God within; this inner passivity is necessary for the development of divine union. Thus, desire is the whole matter in the New Birth. The five elements are contingent on giving oneself wholly to the desire for God. But what if one wants to desire only God but seems unable to achieve such a state? This is one of the most difficult and important questions Law had to address himself to, and he gave years of attention to it. It is, after all, the crucial question for most aspiring souls. Law felt that once one attains this state of desiring God only, growth towards the New Birth will be more or less natural, and fruition will come in its time. In the Spirit of Prayer, which is written in dialogue form, Academicus asks Theophilus (Law's mouthpiece) the very question at hand and implies that Theophilus is too rigorous. In all of his mystical writings, Law invariably replies to comments or implications that he is too rigorous by becoming even more rigorous, though harmoniously and convincingly so. In answering the question, Law says that man must see reality as it is, unclouded by a selfish perspective. Theophilus, who never minces words but is a fount of love, answers that those who want to desire only God but seem unable to overcome other desires, must realize that 'everything short of this earnest Desire to live wholly unto God, may be called a most dreadful Infatuation or Madness, an Insensibility that cannot be described'.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Letters, Works, ix, p.121.

<sup>2</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.138.

basis of this answer is not abstract theology but mystical experience. Law says that the absolute need to desire only God in order to grow towards the New Birth is not too rigorous; it is no greater severity than to be kept from all that can cause pain and to be introduced to the source of pleasure and joy. Pain begins with the desire for something other than God;<sup>1</sup> all such desires must 'sooner or later be torn from one with the utmost Smart'.<sup>2</sup> But although any desire other than for God is foolish or even mad, it does not follow from this judgement that Law teaches or even implies that man can achieve by his own power the state of desiring God only.

It is but lost Labour, to strive by any Power of your Reason, or Self-activity, to work up this one Will and one Hunger within you, or to kindle the true Ardency of a Divine Desire, by anything that your natural Man can do.--This is as impossible, as for fallen Adam to have been his own Redeemer, or a dead Man to give Life to himself.--The one Will, and one Hunger which alone can eat the true Nourishment of the Divine Life, is nothing else but the Divine Nature within you, which died in Adam no other Death, but that of being suppressed and buried for a while, under a Load and multiplicity of earthly Wills.<sup>3</sup>

If man can only grow towards the New Birth by desiring God alone, but is unable to achieve this state himself, then what is man to do? The 'Secret of Secrets'<sup>4</sup> is that man must eliminate his desires and attain complete emptiness. This passive, negative, yin condition leaves all 'room' for God; this emptiness

is that which stops the Workings of the fallen Life of Nature, and leaves room for God to work again in the Soul, according to the good Pleasure of his holy Will. It stands in such awaiting Posture before God, and in such Readiness for the Divine Birth, as the Plants of the Earth wait for the inflowing Riches of the Light and Air. But the Self-assuming Workings of Man's Natural Powers shut him up in himself, closely barred up against the inflowing Riches of the Light and Spirit of God.<sup>5</sup>

The state of mind that results from this emptiness is essential humility and simplicity. This orientation causes the soul ever to point towards God, like the needle towards the lodestone. In this state of heart, all experiences, whether bitter or sweet, are a blessing from heaven; all experiences further divine growth because having the right orientation towards God, the soul perceives that all beauty and love are from God and all anger, pain, failure and frustration are caused by the absence of God, when one is lost or imprisoned in self. Law symbolizes this state, aptly, as that of the bee, that 'takes its

<sup>1</sup> In saying that pain begins with desire, Law, sounding like the Buddha, is developing a Behmenist perception. See especially Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, pp.239ff.

<sup>2</sup> 5 March 1753, Letters, Works, ix, p.151.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp.151-2.

<sup>4</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.137.

<sup>5</sup> Address to Clergy, Works, ix, p.57.

Honey even from bitter Herbs'.<sup>1</sup> This emptiness is not a mere void because one is ever awaiting God's gift of total desire for the divine; it is, therefore, a dynamic passivity which because of its vacuity can contain all: God alone can fill this vacuum because God alone is All.

### III

In January 1735, Law told a correspondent: 'I am... a stranger to, and utterly unworthy of that divine illumination which she pretends to...'.<sup>2</sup> This statement, made more than two years before the publication of his first mystical book, has been accepted by some students of Law as proof that he had no mystical experience of his own. In this letter Law refers to the 'visionary' experiences of Antoinette Bourignon, which he is not sure should be accepted as true and certainly should not be held as an ideal. Law would not want to identify himself with such experiences because he felt that humility and love were proof of progress towards the New Birth, not psychic experiences.<sup>3</sup> It should be remembered that Law's comment that he is unworthy of divine illuminations of the sort Bourignon claimed, was made in a limited context before the beginning of his mystical period and before the nine years silence which preceded the Spirit of Prayer, 1749. These nine years were a time of deepening spirituality, as the tone and style of the late works confirm. In addition, Law's deep humility would preclude his making any positive comments at a later date about his mystical development.

In all biographies, including the latest by Walker, Law is treated as a naturally saintly man who 'battled' against sins others would consider trifling. Such a view paints Law as essentially passionless or disembodied with tinges of the fool, fighting against what is not real or substantial. In evidence of this view, authors list the rules Law composed at age eighteen or nineteen. The list is too long to quote in full, but its character can be seen in item twelve: 'to call to mind the presence of God, whenever I find myself under any temptation to sin, and to have immediate recourse to prayer'.<sup>4</sup> But the rules could indicate the very opposite: that Law's deep spirituality was achieved at great cost and that in his pre-mystical period he did not always overcome significant 'temptations'. Naturally saintly characters tend not to write such rules, because by definition they do not have to work to overcome negative elements.<sup>5</sup> There are a number of negative reports of Law in Byrom's journal which are usually rejected

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.137.

<sup>2</sup> Byrom, Remains, i, ii, p.559.

<sup>3</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.157.

<sup>4</sup> Walton, p.345fn.

<sup>5</sup> For a modern example, see Paramahansa Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi, 1946.

as mere gossip or humour. Byrom's first reference to Law is in 1713, more than fifteen years before they met. He refers to a speech Law made 'on a public occasion' reflecting badly on the government. Byrom notes that Law 'has the character of a vain, conceited fellow'.<sup>1</sup> In 1731, Byrom was told that Law 'was a great beau, would have fine linen, was very sweet upon the ladies, and had made one believe that he would marry her, that he made his great change in the year 1720...'.<sup>2</sup> A 'Prayer of Deep Humiliation' of c.1720 shows the depth of Law's desire to overcome his lower nature. The prayer does not mention for what act he is seeking absolution; it is written with deep earnestness: 'O God, let me never see such another day as this. Let me never again be so oppressed, with guilt, as to run away from thy presence...'. He refers to himself as an 'unclean worm', 'a forlorn creature', and pleads: 'let not my sins utterly separate me from thy mercy in Christ Jesus'.<sup>3</sup> The usual view of 'angelic' Law makes this prayer rhetorical and the sins imaginary. Rivington, a bookseller, told Byrom in 1734 that 'Mr. Law was curate to Dr. Heylin and was a gay parson'.<sup>4</sup>

It is more reasonable to assume that these reports and Law's private prayers have some substance to them, than to believe with Walker that they have no substance at all.<sup>5</sup> If one accepts the typical judgement, as, for example, of Talon that Law had 'such native purity of heart as made him incapable of understanding...the perversions of human nature', then one must agree with Talon that in 'every man, William Law could see an incipient saint; and swept away by his earnestness, he became oblivious of the infirmities of our nature'.<sup>6</sup> If this judgement is sound, then Law's writings must be severely limited by a narrow view of human nature. Viewed from this perspective, Law's writings are essentially a dialogue of the mind with itself and must have failed to influence a wide or varied audience. If, as is more likely, Law personally experienced 'the infirmities of our nature' and perceived 'an incipient saint' in every person not by ignoring human nature but by seeing through it, then his writings must be viewed in a different light. He could desire to lead others to heaven with such singleness of purpose because he had experienced something of hell and of the weakness of human nature. Law told Byrom in 1735 that it is necessary 'for every one to feel the torment of sin,...to die in this manner and to descend into hell with Christ, and so to rise again with him'.<sup>7</sup> His total resolve to direct others to

<sup>1</sup> Byrom, Remains, i, i, p.21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., i, ii, pp.444-5.

<sup>3</sup> The prayer is found in Walton, pp.346-8fn.

<sup>4</sup> Byrom, Remains, p.542. On the obscure period in Law's life, after leaving Cambridge and becoming tutor to Edward Gibbon, father of the historian, see Peter Malekin, 'William Law's Career, 1711-23', N&Q, 212 (1967), pp.405-6.

<sup>5</sup> Walker, pp.11-12.

<sup>6</sup> Talon, p.46.

<sup>7</sup> Byrom, Remains, i, ii, p.618.

the New Birth does not come from underestimation of the wretched side of human nature but from knowing, rather, that it is indeed too strong for man to overcome.

Fancy as many Rules as you will of modelling the moral Behaviour of Man, they all do nothing, because they leave Nature still alive, and therefore can only help a Man to a feigned hypocritical Art of concealing his own inward Evil and seeming to be not under its Power. And the Reason why it must be so is plain; ...Nature is immutable in its Working and must be always as it is....It can no more change from Evil to Good, than Darkness can work itself into Light. The one Work therefore of Morality is the one Doctrine of the Cross, viz., to resist and deny Nature, that a supernatural Power, or Divine Goodness, may take Possession of it, and bring a new Light into it.<sup>1</sup>

Law told his readers in 1737: 'I have too much Experience myself of the Weakness and Mistakes of Human Nature to reproach any Degree of them in other People'.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence of the truth of this statement that Law did not feel superior to people who regarded themselves as great sinners and that contrary to Talon et al he did not underestimate man's lower or perverse nature is found in his correspondence with one Thomas Yeates. Yeates wrote to Law in 1756 as a 'fornicator and heavy drinker'. He heard Wesley preach and feeling no hope of redemption, he wanted to take his own life. He had had 'religious experiences' but seemed unable to overcome his lower nature. In Law's Regeneration he read that God is pure love and that wrath is only in man. It was a profound experience for him and he continues to read Law and other spiritual writers, but temptation and sin remain. Law's answer is not at all censorious. Indeed, one could argue that he is too understanding of human weakness. Concerning his vices, all Law tells Yeates is to live as temperately as he can, avoiding temptation where possible. The rest of the letter is a moving description of how to expect all from God and how to overcome self. Law wrote a prayer for him which he is to use as often as possible. Since Yeates published the letter more than twenty years after Law's death, he apparently received benefit from it.<sup>3</sup> Law accepts Yeates, sins and all, with the 'Tenderness and Affection of Christian Love'. He emphasizes his supportive feelings:

You seem to apprehend, I may be much surprised at the Account you have given of yourself; but I am neither surprised, nor offended at it; I neither condemn, nor lament your Estate, but shall endeavour to show you, how soon it may be made a Blessing and Happiness to you.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Love, p.191.

<sup>2</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, p.101.

<sup>3</sup> Walton, pp.570-2fn.

<sup>4</sup> Letters, Works, ix, p.177.

Law encourages total self-acceptance so that one can unify the disparate elements of self in preparation for self-renunciation and the centring of the will in God. One cannot renounce the self completely until the self is unified, 're-collected' through self-acceptance.

The purpose of this present line of argument that Law was an imperfect man with common weaknesses is to attempt to measure his achievement as a man and writer more realistically. His mystical writings are a more impressive and precious achievement if written by a man who moved from the common condition of men to mystical oneness. Law never felt he was special; therefore, his attaining the unitive life he believed not only possible but necessary for all people.

It is well to remember that Law was not the little read author that is sometimes suggested. His mystical writings went through a number of editions in his lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Christian Regeneration was in its seventh edition in 1783;<sup>2</sup> the Spirit of Prayer reached its seventh edition in 1773.<sup>3</sup> He commanded a considerable readership; and if he was not influential with men of letters, scholars and critics as learned men, he never intended nor wished to be. His attacks on learning in the spiritual life made that clear. He wished only to influence them as fallen men needing divine rebirth like all people.

Law's influence on readers is difficult to gauge or document. Since he did not wish to influence scholars and attacked reason, he received few published testimonies from them. As the only purpose of all his mystical writings is to help lead people to the New Birth, how can one gauge his success? It seems reasonable to assume, since his mystical writings reached a number of editions, that he had a positive influence on his readership.

A measure of the kind of influence he had can be gleaned from his correspondence. George Ward and Thomas Langcake, the editors of Law's Collection of Letters said that they were 'experimentally found of great private Benefit'.<sup>4</sup> They were speaking largely from personal experience since thirteen of the twenty-five letters included in the Collection were written to them. Of the remainder, most deal with the problems encountered in seeking Regeneration, and the theological implications of Law's view that there is no wrath in God. The Thomas Yeates correspondence is an example of how Law's view of God as pure love gave hope and a chance for progress to a soul who despaired when he contemplated the wrath of God and his own conduct. Law's correspondence

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<sup>1</sup> Walker, p.57.

<sup>2</sup> Hobhouse, p.241.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.257.

<sup>4</sup> Headnote, Letters.

was considerable and varied. A man wrote from Pennsylvania in 1742 to ask if a lawyer could follow the spirit of Christ.<sup>1</sup> A clergyman writing on behalf of himself and two other ministers asked how they could be useful in their ministry. Law answered:

All Things must be set right in yourself first, before you can rightly assist others, towards the attaining to the same State...otherwise your Instruction would be of such practical Things, of which you had no practical Knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Since Law's mystical works all deal with reaching Regeneration, this implies that he attained the New Birth. In The Way to Divine Knowledge, Law stated unequivocally that one can have no real knowledge of 'unpossessed Matters'.<sup>3</sup> What is the evidence that Law experienced rebirth?

If Law was a man of common weaknesses, then his attainment of the New Birth is more significant, and his claims that it is attainable by all, more reasonable. First, it must be stated that, of course, one cannot give conclusive proof that Law reached the New Birth. What could prove this? Yet there is strong evidence, not the least of which is the testimony of his most recent biographer.

It is probable that we should include Law among the mystics. In The Spirit of Prayer, The Way to Divine Knowledge, and The Spirit of Love he writes with such directness about God and sanctification and makes autobiographical hints indicative of deep penetration into God that any other description seems inadequate....He never simply copied out Boehme's revelations. It seems that he absorbed them, meditated upon them and came to see things in terms of them. Law himself became a visionary.<sup>4</sup>

In a private letter Law said that after the Bible, all he read was Boehme but only so far as the German mystic 'helps to open' in him that which God had opened in Boehme.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of his answer to Dr. Trapp, Law says that he has universal love for mankind, and that he will only write in 'that naked Light, in which the Spirit of God' directs him.<sup>6</sup> In the Spirit of Love, where he is arguing against the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, he says that 'the true Philosophy of this Matter, known only to the Soul that by a new Birth from above has found its first State in and from God, is this...'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Walton Collection, 186.4(12). Dr. Williams' Library.

<sup>2</sup> 10 April 1756, Letters, Works, ix, p.123.

<sup>3</sup> Works, vii, p.205.

<sup>4</sup> Walker, p.237. In his last book Law makes himself syntactically Boehme's equal: 'Behman and myself, when we speak of natural Reason, mean only the natural Man (as is over and over declared by us)...'. Address to the Clergy, Works, ix, p.32.

<sup>5</sup> Walton, p.123fn.

<sup>6</sup> Works, vi, pp.3,4.

<sup>7</sup> P.176. Law then explains his view that man is born out of God and that contrary to the dualism of Descartes and Locke, body and soul are not two separate things but the inner and outer aspects of one reality.

The two most important 'autobiographical hints', as Walker calls them, that Law experienced the New Birth, are both in the Spirit of Love. But before looking at these two passages it is well to ask why Law chose the dialogue form for his most important works, The Spirit of Prayer, The Way to Divine Knowledge, and The Spirit of Love. Boehme used this form in a number of writings. Berkeley, whom Law must have respected, used the form to great effect. Perhaps they or Plato influenced Law. But in any event, there are probably two reasons why he chose this form. The first reason is mentioned by Walker when he comments on Law's performance in writing dialogue: 'Law's mastery is wanting here. His characters are somewhat lifeless and usually ploys to enable the person representing Law to state the truth'.<sup>1</sup> Law wanted to state 'the truth' clearly and answer the major objections of Deists and scholars. The second reason, more apposite for the present discussion, is that using the character Theophilus as a mouthpiece, Law could speak in the first person about his personal experiences of the New Birth, and thus give a more concrete, direct and powerful sense of the reality of Regeneration. In the first of the two 'autobiographical hints', Theophilus says that belief in the 'Spirit of Love' (the New Birth) and the desire to live wholly under its power, is not the same as having experienced it. After telling one character that he is only 'under the Law, or outward instruction' of the Spirit of Love, Theophilus tells the other character in the dialogue:

The same may be well suspected of you, Eusebius, who are so mistaken in the Spirit of Love, that you fancy yourself to be wholly possessed of it, from no other Ground, but because you embrace it, as it were, with open Arms, and think of nothing but living under the Power of it. Whereas, if the Spirit of Love was really born in you from its own Seed, you would account for its Birth, and Power in you, in quite another Manner than you have here done; you would have known the Price that you had paid for it, and how many Deaths you had suffered, before the Spirit of Love came to Life in you.<sup>2</sup>

The second 'hint' appears to be a literary rendering of personal experience:

Oh Theogenes, could I help you to perceive or feel what a Good there is in this State of Heart; you would desire it with more Eagerness, than the thirsty Hart desires the Water-Brooks, you would think of nothing, desire nothing, but constantly to live in it. It is a Security from all Evil, and all Delusion; no Difficulty, or Trial, either of Body or Mind, no Temptation either within you, or without you, but what has its full Remedy in this State of Heart.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walker, p.95.

<sup>2</sup> Spirit of Love, pp.268-9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.286.

The 'thirsty Hart' that 'desires the Water-Brooks' is also the thirsting human heart which needs Christ's water of life, but is led astray by other desires, by 'delusions', 'difficulties', 'trials' and 'temptations'. The hart knows where to satisfy its need and man must give himself up to the singleness of desire of the hart thirsting for the water of life. This is an image of self-transcendence through total, unifying desire, which becomes a more and more common feature of Law's style in his later works. The change in style in the mystical writings provides the best proof of his having attained the New Birth, and will be mentioned below.

The fundamental evidence that Law reached the New Birth lies in the sanctity of his developed character, his behaviour in the controversies, especially with Trapp and Warburton, and his complete singleness of purpose in helping others to reach Regeneration. Law never wrote in the spirit of an adversary and never answered personal attacks even when he was insulted by Trapp and others. When his friend Langcake offered to send him criticisms he had received of the Appeal, Law replied that he was 'incapable of disputing with anyone in the defence of it. I wrote it only for those who want such light as is there discovered'.<sup>1</sup> Law told Byrom that Freher's studies of Boehme should not be published because Freher, whom Law had met, admitted that he wrote 'only historically'.<sup>2</sup> Law felt that works on Boehme and on the New Birth should only be undertaken at the direction and under the influence of the spirit of God. Presumably, therefore, Law regarded his mystical works as inspired by God. Law would not allow directions from the self, as is shown, for example, in a letter to Byrom.

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 have 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. An assistance that comes in unlooked and unsought for, I can rejoice in, as coming from God, but I have the fullest conviction that I ought to be as fearful of desiring to be assisted as of desiring to be esteemed.<sup>3</sup>

In another letter to Byrom, Law says:

I have no trust or sense of my own abilities, but am so satisfied with the cause I am engaged in that I have no concern at all who it is that opposes. I have but one wish as to human help, and that is, to have you along with me.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Walton, p.542fn.

<sup>2</sup> Byrom, Remains, ii, ii, p.365.

<sup>3</sup> 27 May 1749, ibid., p.493.

<sup>4</sup> Undated, Byrom, Remains, ii, ii, p.547.

Law later adds:

God alone must do all the good that can be done by our writings, and therefore we must remove all meum and tuum from them; and whether we plant or water, have nothing in our eyes but the will and call of God either to this or that.<sup>1</sup>

The manner in which Law regarded his writings is clearly indicated in a letter to 'a Person of Quality', almost certainly Lady Huntingdon. It is worth quoting at length.

As to myself, I seem to myself to have no other Part to Act, nor any Call to any Thing else, in this Hurry, and Struggle of Zeal against Zeal, in such a Variety of Forms, but only, and fully to assert the true Ground, and largely open all the Reasons, of that one inward Regeneration, which is equally the one Thing needful to every Sect, and the one Thing alone that can make every Sect, or Method, or outward Form, not hurtful to those that adhere to it....

The Doctrines I have published, are in their best State with regard to the Reader, as they stand in my Books, and will be less useful to him, when they are drawn into Controversy. For this Reason, I can lend no Help to that.

This may perhaps seem to your Ladyship, as if I had too great an Opinion of what I had done.----And I believe, such a free Way of speaking sometimes in Conversation of my own Books, may have been suspected of smelling too much of Self-esteem.----But I can with Truth assure you, Madam, that when I speak of the Fulness and Clearness of my own Writings, I feel no other Sentiments of Self-sufficiency, than when I speak of the Goodness of my own Eyes. Nor do I know how to consider the one, more than the other, to be any Merit of my own; and therefore when any Man, great or little, contemns, reproaches, or asperses me, or my Books, as void of Sense, Truth, and Light; I feel no more inward Uneasiness, or think myself any more hurt, than if he had only told the World, that my Eyes were miserably bad, and I could scarce see to read, even with the best Spectacles. And so have no Desire controversially to defend the one, more than the other, but contentedly leave them both, to be their own Proof of what they are.<sup>2</sup>

In the first paragraph Law says that his writings 'fully' assert the 'true Ground' and open 'all the Reasons' for the New Birth. In the final paragraph he mentions the 'Fulness and Clearness' of his writings. Either Law was writing under the influence of the Spirit of God or he was writing, as Hopkinson says, 'with an inexcusable assurance of infallibility'.<sup>3</sup> His writings contain phrases like 'the full Proof',<sup>4</sup> the 'Truth is this...'.<sup>5</sup> After giving his view of the Fall, Law adds: 'from this short, yet plain and true Account of this Matter, we are at once delivered from a Load of Difficulties that have been raised about the Fall of Man, and Original Sin'.<sup>6</sup> Yet if Law did write merely under

<sup>1</sup> Remains, ii, ii, p.548.

<sup>2</sup> 16 February 1756, Letters, Works, ix, p.168. This is the famous letter in which Law gives his opinion of John Wesley.

<sup>3</sup> Hopkinson, p.100.

<sup>4</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.87.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.89.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.27.

the direction of the spirit of self, he could not have 'contentedly' ignored criticism and felt no 'inward Uneasiness' when attacked. He would, if self-directed, feel some hurt at the indignity of having cherished ideas criticized. Law leaves his works to be of help to whomever they reach, and since he regards them as God's work in him, he cannot be hurt by human criticism. Of course, if Law wrote under a delusion of divine direction, he might still be immune to criticism and be able to refer to his works 'objectively' as having 'Fulness and Clearness' since he regarded these characteristics as not really his own. However, anyone who admits the possibility of divine inspiration would almost certainly not regard Law as deluded in his receptivity and devotion to the Spirit of God. The depth of his love of God and man, his life of service and charity, the consistency and sanctity of his developed character and the numinous quality of his late prose, all point convincingly to his being inspired of God.

Law's prose has been almost universally well received. Talon called him a 'great artist';<sup>1</sup> Hobhouse said that Law wrote 'language of rare beauty';<sup>2</sup> Spurgeon believed he was 'a great literary craftsman'<sup>3</sup> and England's 'greatest prose mystic',<sup>4</sup> and Hopkinson judged Law to be 'unexcelled as a mystical writer'.<sup>5</sup> All of these scholars are referring more especially to Law's mystical period. There is development in his prose, but continuity as well. The strength, irony and wit of the earlier style manifest in the mystical period as images of ironic reversal, of the impossible and of the absurd. Law's later style is better than the earlier because it retains the virtues of the earlier period, though in a new form, and adds the tenderness and emotion of the 'Style of Love', without any loss in clarity, vividness or Law's 'closely logical habit of mind'.<sup>6</sup> C.S. Lewis compared the earlier and later style in this way, referring specifically to the Appeal:

I like it much better than the 'Serious Call', and indeed like it as well as any religious work I have ever read. The prose of the Serious Call has here been all melted away and the book is saturated with delight and the sense of wonder; one of those rare works which make you say of Christianity, "Here is the very thing you like in poetry and the romances, but this time it's true"....<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Talon, p.85.

<sup>2</sup> Hobhouse, p.397.

<sup>3</sup> C.H.E.L., ix, p.324.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.308.

<sup>5</sup> Hopkinson, p.85.

<sup>6</sup> C.H.E.L., ix, p.324. The late style omits the early vice of occasional stridency.

<sup>7</sup> Letters of C.S. Lewis, ed. W.H. Lewis, (1966), p.143.

Law called his new style the 'Style of Love'. In his first mystical book, he interrupts his logical argument and uses direct address:

Study not...how to find fault with me, or to dislike the Words, or Manner of my Style, for it is the Style of Love....If you condemn anything but Love in it, you condemn something that is not there.<sup>1</sup>

This distinctive combination of deep emotion and rigid logic, Spurgeon considers the chief characteristic of the later style.<sup>2</sup>

Law's imagery and symbolism tend to be directly instructive or based on the absurd, the impossible, or the ironic. There is never a middle path for Law and he never accepts a 'both/and' argument or solution. On all matters of importance, Law uses an 'either/or' argument to cut the world into the sacred and profane, into that which directly furthers Regeneration and that which does not. Not surprisingly, therefore, he tends to be guilty of dismissing opposing views, sometimes rather contemptuously. In his answer to Trapp's discourse on The Nature, Folly, Sin and Danger of Being Righteous Overmuch, Law resolves Trapp's position into a metaphor of the absurd, of foolish, destructive misjudgement: 'he has been throwing cold Water upon Charity, before there was any Flame in it'.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Law says that Warburton's projected defence of Christianity in the Divine Legation of Moses 'is not more promising than a Trap to catch Humility'.<sup>4</sup> More seriously, Law seems, once, to sublimate his anger at and distaste for Warburton's syllogistic reasoning about divine matters (the Divine Legation is based on a syllogism) in this simile:

For was not God in Man, as a Principle of Life, and Man in God, as a Birth of Him, and in him, or in Scripture Words, did He not live, and move, and have his Being in God, He could no more begin to form a Thought of Enquiry after God, or have the least Desire of knowing any Thing about him, than the Worms in the Earth can begin to hunger after the Power of Syllogisms, and crawl about in quest of them.<sup>5</sup>

In Law's defence it should be noted that he was insulted by both Trapp and Warburton in a most ungentlemanly fashion. Yet, Law was not angry at these men but at what he considered their dangerously misleading ideas. At the end of his book, Law says that he has 'Good-will' and 'Respect' for Warburton, and there is no reason to doubt this. The contention on Law's side was not personal but 'doctrinal'. After all, many eighteenth-century divines held

<sup>1</sup> Demonstration, Works, v, p.84.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.324. Cf. Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, (1881), ii, p.396: Law's 'sensitiveness to logic is as marked as his sensitiveness to conscience'.

<sup>3</sup> Trapp, Works, vi, p.32.

<sup>4</sup> Warburton, Works, viii, p.212.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.182.

exactly Trapp's and Warburton's attitude towards Law and enthusiasm. Because Law truly and artlessly distinguishes between a man and his ideas, he is able to condemn ideas vigorously without, to his purpose and perception, engaging in controversy with the man. Law rejects personal controversies as unChristian and unproductive of Regeneration. Law's use of images of the absurd where he is not thinking of any person but only of opinions and ideas, indicates that, as he said, he had no 'personal Contention with any Man'.<sup>1</sup> For example in the Way to Divine Knowledge when he is emphasizing that rebirth can only come directly from God, Law writes: 'the highest Angel neither hath, nor ever can have, any more of a redeeming Power in it, than the dead Paper on which the Scriptures are written'.<sup>2</sup> In the Spirit of Prayer, Law says that arguing that only reason can find God 'is as vain a Pretence, and as gross a Mistake, as if ye were to say, that you had nothing but your Feet to carry you to heaven'.<sup>3</sup>

In each of these two examples, and this is characteristic, the image indicates the absurdity of the view Law is satirizing by showing what Law regards as its real basis and the logical conclusion of the attitude or idea. In the first example, it is what Law considers the worship of the Bible that prevents one from seeking redemption from the Christ within. In the second example, Law is demonstrating that the Deists are at base materialists, if not proud atheists.

Law's images of the impossible are different from his images of the absurd in both technique and purpose. Law psychologically manipulates the reader by trying to create a habit of thought of complete insufficiency and, therefore, he hopes, of humility. In Christian Regeneration Law tells his readers: 'think not of saving yourselves. It is no more in your Power, than to save the Fallen Spirits that are in Hell'.<sup>4</sup> In the same work, when emphasizing that spiritual progress is God's work in the soul, Law says that man is 'as unable to alter his own State, as to create another Creature'.<sup>5</sup> In the Spirit of Prayer Law explains that one must believe with certainty in the need for Regeneration, 'in such a manner as a Man knows and believes that he did not create the stars, or cause Life to rise up in himself'.<sup>6</sup> In the Way to Divine Knowledge Law declares that to ask your reason how God is within your soul is 'like asking your Hands to feel out the Thickness, or the Thinness, of the Light'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appeal, Works, vi, p.156.

<sup>2</sup> Works, vii, p.208.

<sup>3</sup> P.139.

<sup>4</sup> Works, v, p.141.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.161.

<sup>6</sup> P.60.

<sup>7</sup> Works, vii, p.169.

The first three examples, involving actions only God can perform, encourage an attitude of total reliance on God. The three examples, characteristically, involve relationships of which readers must be aware. The first example suggests that before rebirth, people are similar or equal to the spirits in hell. The second example implies that Regeneration is as divine an action as creation; it is a re-creation. In the third example, the creation of the myriad stars in the heavens is not more sublime than the creation of man, and Regeneration is equal to both. In the last example, reasoning about the Christ within is the same as trying to feel the density of light because Christ is the light and is beyond sensual perception; and reason relies on sense data for observation, comparison and abstraction. The last simile portrays the man of reason as a foolish materialist trying to grasp and measure the infinite with finite tools.

Law's images of ironic reversal are intended to startle or wake the reader from his usual ways of thinking. 'Choose any Life, but the Life of God and Heaven, and you choose Death'.<sup>1</sup> 'Wrath has no more Place in God, than Love has in the Devil'.<sup>2</sup> Law's relentless use of an either/or argument in his images of ironic reversal is an attempt to eliminate hazy thinking and indecisiveness. Laxness in religion was as much Law's enemy as exaltation of reason. Law's images of ironic reversal seem to be out of harmony with, if not to contradict, his sense of coincidentia oppositorum, which often manifests in his style. 'For no one can enter into Heaven...till the Spirit of Heaven is entered into him'.<sup>3</sup> 'Why was the Son of God made Man? It was because Man was to be made...Divine'.<sup>4</sup> The relationship of Law's images of ironic reversal and of coincidentia oppositorum becomes clearer in passages where the two are one: 'Every Vanity of fallen Man shows our first Dignity, and the Vanity of our Desires are so many Proofs of the Reality of that which we are fallen from'.<sup>5</sup> Images of ironic reversal and coincidentia oppositorum are Law's way of dealing with the problem of the one and the many. Usually Law's images of ironic reversal are half way towards coincidentia oppositorum. In images of ironic reversal the many is resolved into two through his either/or argument which focusses attention on the extreme differences usually concealed in the world or obscured by laxness, indulgence or an uncritical attitude towards life. Law's image of ironic reversal illuminates the essential extreme difference (i.e. self or God) which must be seen and acted on, or a person remains lost in the many. Images of ironic reversal show that A is the opposite of

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.114.

<sup>2</sup> Letters, Works, ix, p.140.

<sup>3</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.57.

<sup>4</sup> Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, p.162.

<sup>5</sup> Appeal, Works, vii, p.162.

B and therefore completely different. Coincidentia oppositorum says that A is the opposite of B and yet completely the same. This rejection of logic and reason is in fact the rejection of self. For it is only in God, not the self, that opposites coincide.<sup>1</sup> In the above example from the Appeal, what is 'Reality' in God is 'Vanity' in man. In God all is one.

The relationship of imagery and symbolism is important to Law's style. Often he transforms his images into symbols to illuminate the oneness in creation, as, for example, in the Spirit of Prayer:

Look, Academicus, at the Light and Air of this World, you see with what a Freedom of Communication they overflow, enrich and enliven every Thing; they enter everywhere, if not hindered by something that withstands their Entrance. This may represent to you the ever-overflowing free Communication of the Light and Spirit of God, to every human Soul. They are everywhere; we are encompassed with them; our Souls are as near to them, as our Bodies are to the Light and Air of this World.<sup>2</sup>

Since in Law's view, air and light are the direct manifestations of the Holy Spirit and Christ in the material world, the symbols are true and complete because they are symbols and the thing symbolized simultaneously: air is the Holy Spirit; light is the love of Christ. Thus, the symbols are not really Law's but result from God's oneness. Law often intends his imagery to be symbolism simultaneously, not only to instruct, but to delight:

All Religion is the Spirit of Love; all its Gifts and Graces are the Gifts and Graces of Love; it has no Breath, no Life, but the Life of Love. Nothing exalts, nothing purifies, but the Fire of Love; nothing changes Death into Life, Earth into Heaven, Men into Angels, but Love alone. Love breathes the Spirit of God; its Words and Works are the Inspiration of God. It speaketh not of itself, but the Word, the eternal Word of God speaketh in it; for all that Love speaketh, that God speaketh, because Love is God. Love is Heaven revealed in the Soul; it is Light, and Truth; it is infallible; it has no Errors, for all Errors are the Want of Love. Love has no more of Pride, than Light has of Darkness; it stands and bears all its Fruits from a Depth, and Root of Humility. Love is of no Sect or Party; it neither makes, nor admits of any Bounds; you may as easily enclose the Light, or shut up the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nicholas of Cusa, The Vision of God, trans. E.G. Salter, chap.ix:

I give Thee thanks, my God, because Thou makest plain to me that there is no other way of approaching Thee than that which to all men, even the most learned philosophers, seemeth utterly inaccessible and impossible. For Thou hast shown me that Thou canst not be seen elsewhere than where impossibility meeteth and faceth me. Thou hast inspired me, Lord, who art the Food of the strong, to do violence to myself, because impossibility coincideth with necessity, and I have learnt that the place wherein Thou art found unveiled is girt round with the coincidence of contradictories, and this is the wall of Paradise wherein Thou dost abide. The door whereof is guarded by the most proud spirit of Reason, and, unless he be vanquished the way in will not lie open. Thus 'tis beyond the coincidence of contradictories that Thou mayest be seen, and nowhere this side thereof.

<sup>2</sup> P. 134.

Air of the World into one Place, as confine Love to a Sect or Party.  
It lives in the Liberty, the Universality, the Impartiality of Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

The joy with which Law traces the oneness in creation through the omnipotence of love matches and illuminates the resultant moral and intellectual instruction. By seeing that 'Love is God' and is the source of oneness, it is easier to understand and be in harmony with the creation. Then one can ride the ebb and flow of the phenomenal world instead of being tossed about or swallowed by it.

Law's mystical works all have the one purpose of helping to lead readers to rebirth, and yet there are few descriptions of the New Birth, or of the experiences leading up to it. Jerzy Peterkiewicz's general statement explains Law's reticence: 'excessive description is often fatal to mystical writing; it increases the atmosphere of mere freakishness'.<sup>2</sup> Especially in Law's age, any amount of 'freakishness' would doom a work. Law acknowledged this when he rejects, in true eighteenth-century fashion, any 'affected Singularity of Expression'.<sup>3</sup> Law avoids excessive description and relies instead on reiteration, usually effectively varied. Another reason why Law uses reiteration is that it is connected with his living sense of fundamental oneness. Law's best prose is almost always a manifestation of his experience of the oneness in creation, a theme which inspires him with reverence and eloquence.

There is but one Fire throughout all Nature and Creature, standing only in different States and Conditions. The Fire that is in the Light of the Sun, is the same Fire that is in the Darkness of the Flint; That Fire which is the life of our Bodies, is the Life of our Souls; that which tears Wood in Pieces, is the same which upholds the beauteous Forms of Angels: It is the same Fire that burns Straw, that will at last melt the Sun, the same Fire that brightens a Diamond, is darkened in a Flint: It is the same Fire that kindles Life in an Animal, that kindled it in Angels: In an Angel it is an Eternal Fire of an Eternal Life, in an Animal it is the same Fire brought into a temporary Condition, and therefore can only kindle a Life that is temporary: The same Fire that is mere Wrath in a Devil, is the Sweetness of flaming Love in an Angel; and the same Fire which is the Majestic Glory of Heaven, makes the Horror of Hell.<sup>4</sup>

The use of parallel main clauses reminds one of the New Testament. There is a simplicity, fullness, clarity and vividness in Law's style, as in this quotation. Hobhouse feels that such qualities are achieved states resulting from mystical experience. Agreeing with G. Whiting, Hobhouse quotes his judgement that Law's later style has 'a power of imagery which is clearly the fruit of mystical experiences'.<sup>5</sup> Law's best images come from two sources. The flash or lightning

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Prayer, p.125.

<sup>2</sup> The Other Side of Silence, p.111.

<sup>3</sup> Appeal, Works, vi, p.132.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.136.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted without source, Hobhouse, p.241.

image, learned from Boehme, for whom it is central, is one source of Law's most vivid images. The kindling of a fire is 'a Flash or transitory opening of heavenly Glory'.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, at the moment of rebirth the 'Light of God and Heaven, joyfully breaks in upon us'.<sup>2</sup> Law's most powerful images come from the intersection of his most basic ideas concerning love and wrath, and what he considers the mere abstractness of reason, which cannot touch the earth nor reach the heavens. To those who say there is wrath in God, Law answers that 'Wrath is his, just as all Nature is his, and yet God is pure Love, that only rules and governs Wrath, as He governs the foaming Waves of the Sea, and the Madness of Storms and Tempests'.<sup>3</sup> Law's love of the concrete directs his attack on reason and is his most basic characteristic:

True and genuine Religion is Nature, is Life, and the Working of Life; and therefore, wherever it is, Reason has no more Power over it, than over the Roots that grow secretly in the Earth, or the Life that is working in the highest Heavens.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appeal, Works, vi, p.133.

<sup>2</sup> Spirit of Love, p.294.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.224.

<sup>4</sup> Way to Divine Knowledge, Works, vii, p.232.

## CONCLUSION

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Command thy Soul to go to India, and sooner than thou canst bid it, it will be there. Bid it likewise pass over the ocean, and suddenly it will be there; not as passing from place to place, but suddenly it will be there. Command it to fly into Heaven, and it will need no Wings, neither shall anything hinder it.

Hermes Trismegistus

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The writers examined in this thesis are from varied backgrounds theologically, politically and economically but they all show to various degrees the experience of the mystical. They are evidence of the presence of mysticism in eighteenth-century English literature.

The fundamental characteristic which unites all of these writers is their unremitting effort to connect the human with the divine. This common feature is more fundamental and important than any differences, and gives an underlying unity to the significant and varied ways in which they were sons of their age. Shaftesbury did much to promulgate sentimentalism and foreshadows the mystical tendency found in its healthy and fully developed form.<sup>1</sup> In its turn the tendency of sentimentalism to see God in nature and within man as the essential reality points steadily to the sublime and beyond that to Cosmic Consciousness. Shaftesbury's 'cosmic smile' is the manifestation of the mystic's serenity-bliss. Toland shared Shaftesbury's perception of the divine in all, and as one of the most famous Deists, he showed how the apparent cul-de-sac of Deism could lead beyond a barren rationalism to the passionate experience of all-God-ism. Usher follows Shaftesbury and the age in the importance he places on the sublime: like John Dennis and others, he highlighted its religious basis and connected the sublime with enthusiasm. Cheyne, a fellow of the Royal Society and a spiritual son of Boehme, demonstrates the possibility of the uniting of science and mysticism, a development also sought by Toland, Brooke, Smart, Berkeley and Law. Cheyne used Newtonian gravity and divinization of nature to power his Divine Analogy towards reunion with the mystic centre, and, like Shaftesbury, he acted as a bridge between the Cambridge Platonists and sentimentalism. As his letter to Richardson quoted above in chapter four shows, he helped Richardson launch the novel of sensibility. Roach and Hartley show, like Wesley and his movement, that an emotional commitment to Christian rebirth tends to produce millenarians. Indeed Roach and

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<sup>1</sup> See Fairchild, i, pp. 52ff.

Hartley felt part of Christ's Kingdom already. Their spiritual perceptions and deep desire to share with all people the joy of union with Christ, impelled them to millenarianism. But, unlike Wesley, Roach and Hartley also show that the oneness of mystical experience tends, when outside of a dogma which forbids it, to produce mystical universalism, a rejection of the idea of eternal punishment. Sentimentalism also exhibits this tendency. Brooke is one of the most vivid examples of the 'Man of Feeling'. He is also a Newtonian as well as a follower of Shaftesbury, and in addition he reveals the tendency of the age towards the sentimental primitivism that gives Conrade its lyrical delicacy and beauty. His very popular novel of sensibility was reprinted by Wesley and was a favourite with generations of Methodists. Smart is typical of the unifying current of thought in the century which saw science as an important aid to religion. Human knowledge of external reality, ever increased by science, is part of God's plan of gradual revelation, but only when science sees deeply and religiously enough to perceive a pre-established harmony, and finally the oneness, of inner and outer reality. Smart was more deeply versed in science than perhaps any other eighteenth-century poet, which is one reason why the Jubilate seems obscure or bizarre in places. D. J. Greene has written that 'the feeling of anyone well acquainted with both Smart and the eighteenth century is that if anyone is a true child of that century it is Smart--- unless it is Bishop Berkeley'.<sup>1</sup> Berkeley, one of the great philosophers of his century, indeed touches it at many points. His attacks on Deism and his attempt to formulate propositions about God's nature from which to derive a world-view, morality and theology which all men could accept, is another example of the desire for the universal in the spirit of the age, which both the Deists and their opponents sought. Berkeley used the popular dialogue form to great effect, raising eighteenth-century prose to new levels of philosophical precision and literary grace. His attempt to marry the medical and 'material' to the mystical was implicit in the age. Holwell is typical of the era in his anti-Catholic feelings, but he also exemplifies the undercurrent, stronger than is usually noted, of belief in vegetarianism and Pythagorean rebirth. This influence was significant on Thomson, Toland, Cheyne, who tried to popularize it, Roach, Brooke, Smart, Dow and Jones. Holwell possesses a strongly nonsectarian mind derived from Deism, from his belief in reincarnation and from the universal spirit of Hinduism. Dow also shows the influence of Deism, in a stronger and even

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<sup>1</sup> 'Smart, Berkeley, the Scientists and the Poets', JHI, 14 (1953), p.330.

more significant form than Holwell. Dow followed Toland's Deism to mystical pantheism, and presented Hinduism as a mystical Deism. Halhed represents the aristocratic attitude towards British rule in India, towards the labouring classes and towards popular religious movements like Methodism: only men of 'enlightened understandings and sound judgment'<sup>1</sup>, which Halhed obviously believes can only be found in his class, are fit for religious contemplation and are able to react properly to religious enthusiasm without it degenerating into the superstition of 'the vulgar'. Wilkins illustrates the rationalized Christianity of the age which is so hard to differentiate from Deism. This enervated rationalism manifests in his translation of the Gita, which does justice to the universal perspective of the original but tends to make it vague, general and rather dull. Jones, a member of Johnson's Club, shared a love of the sublime with his age. He agreed with many of Johnson's critical ideas about literature, and his poetry shows the excessive influence of Pope and Johnson. He is an example, like Brooke, of the interest in the primitive, natural life with its overtones of the Golden Age and the Noble Savage, but he combines this poetic enthusiasm with the scholarly objectivity of Gibbon, in whose prodigious footnotes he appears. Byrom is the personification of the best features of coffee-house life, combining intellectual integrity with urbane bonhomie in the midst of frequently vehement confabulations, more often than not about religion and literature. This was an important resource of the age for meaningful debate, for the examination and promulgation of opinions and ideas. In this world Byrom, like Cheyne before him, made his mark and promoted mysticism in the most representative setting of the age. Law wrote the most famous and influential book of 'practical divinity' of the century, and, as mentioned above, had a typical eighteenth-century mind: logical, sane and balanced, with a desire for wholeness which led him to the mystical. Gibbon praised him 'as a wit and scholar' and Leslie Stephen commended Law's 'controversial ability in which he had scarcely a superior in that time'.<sup>2</sup> In spite of his attacks on reason, which were only meant to put it in its proper place, Law evinces an extremely impressive eighteenth-century marriage of reason and mysticism. His mysticism is robust, practical and concrete, and shows a Newtonian love of precision, but it is also intense, emotional and enthusiastic, and demonstrates a Blakean love of the imagination; it combines a brilliant, imperious intellect with profound mystical experience. These writers make eighteenth-century mysticism compelling and alive, pregnant

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall, p.182

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Walker, p.xi.

with import for the future, especially in their desire for wholeness, for the marriage of science and mysticism and of the finite and infinite Self.

The sixteen writers studied are in vital contact with and influence the life of their time in all its essential features. They are distributed throughout the period and their works appeared in every decade of the century. They are not part of one group atypical against the background of the age. Nevertheless many links did exist between them. Byrom was a follower of Law. Cheyne and Hartley were friends of Law, and in addition Roach and Brooke, as well as possibly Smart and Berkeley, were students of Boehme. In the case of Roach and Brooke, and of course Law, it is fair to say that they were deeply imbued with Boehme's thought. Therefore as students of Boehme, if not Behmenists, one can list Cheyne, Roach, Brooke, Hartley, Byrom and Law, and possibly Smart and Berkeley. The evidence mentioned in the respective chapters suggests that Smart and Berkeley read Boehme and were influenced by the German mystic. Berkeley's main debt seems to be on the importance of will, the interrelation of spiritual and bodily health and spiritual alchemy. Smart also seems to have been influenced by Boehme's view of will, by the related idea of the 'motion' of the Divine and by the more 'scientific' aspects of his vision. The group composed of friends and students of Law, of whom Smart may be one, is a subgroup of those who were readers or followers of Boehme. This assemblage around Boehme is the largest natural group of writers examined in this study. There are a number of other groupings. It is interesting to note that Cheyne, Brooke and Berkeley were all close friends of Alexander Pope. Smart possibly met the elder poet, corresponded with him and had his portrait taken holding a letter from Pope. It could be objected that such a grouping around Pope is coincidental and merely reflects the magnetic power of a major literary figure. This, however, does not seem a sufficient explanation, especially when it is remembered that Pope was significantly influenced by Shaftesbury, wrote a paraphrase of à Kempis, a Rosicrucian poem: The Rape of the Lock<sup>1</sup>, and the strongly pantheistic lines in the Essay on Man.<sup>2</sup> Pope's habit of stating antitheses, both halves of which are valid, is akin to the Zen technique of making the

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<sup>1</sup> For a Rosicrucian interpretation of the Rape, see Douglas Brooks-Davies, The Mercurian Monarch: Magical Politics from Spenser to Pope, chapter 5, in press.

<sup>2</sup> Included in the Oxford Book of Mystical Verse. Also see Douglas Brooks-Davies, 'Pope's Alchemical Epic: the Mystery of the King in the Dunciad', Studies in Mystical Literature, in press.

mind jump beyond rational formulations, and has affinity in the West, for example, with the comments on the limitations of reason found in Plotinus. It could be argued that Pope had a usually submerged mystical aspect. If this is the case then this mystical temper manifested not only in the ways just mentioned above, but also in his friendships. Smaller groups also exist. For example, Berkeley was an important influence on Jones. Toland was very significantly influenced by Shaftesbury, with whom he was personally acquainted. Shaftesbury also influenced Usher, Cheyne, Brooke, Holwell, Dow and Jones, at the very least. Toland and Berkeley, however opposite they appear on the surface, were both deeply interested in Egyptian mysticism. Toland coined the word pantheism and especially in Siris, Berkeley wrote of his vision that all is within God.

It was said in the Preface that the present study has two purposes. The first is to show that there was a significant amount of mystical literature written in eighteenth-century England, most of at least considerable merit. The second purpose is to show that there is in the spirit and aspiration of the age a fundamental and important mystical dimension. The two purposes are of course interlinked. The examination of the work of sixteen writers, undertaken in pursuit of the first aim, provided strong evidence that the age as a whole did indeed have a mystical dimension. The writers examined, as mystics, were sons of eternity, but they were also sons of their age. What, then, is this 'mystical dimension' in their age? The Introduction has given the background of the answer to this question, but it is necessary to fill in the essential details.

A generation ago the usual view of the eighteenth century, still held in some quarters, emphasized the 'dryness' of a rationalist religion and universe. The ordered garden of neoclassical art was regarded as a veritable straitjacket for men of genius and originality. Other scholars applauded this supposedly predominant rationalism for dispersing the last of the medieval enchantments: the sense of superstition and mystery.<sup>1</sup> It was in 1736 that the witchcraft laws were replaced and its reality implicitly denied.<sup>2</sup> But what has not been satisfactorily determined is the relationship and the 'ratio' of the rational and non-rational forces in the century. Whitehead called the period an age of reason based upon faith.<sup>3</sup> Boulton, in delineating the fear of arbitrary power in the age, implies that its rationalism was rather a veneer and a quietly desperate

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the work of C.L. Becker, Peter Gay and Eric Voegelin, listed in the Bibliography. Also cf. Basil Willey, The Eighteenth-Century Background, Pelican edn., p.110.

<sup>2</sup> Stock, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Willey, p. 124.

attempt to stem the tide of irrational forces; such forces were doubtless fuelled by their suppression. J. H. Plumb writes:

There was an edge to life in the eighteenth century which is hard for us to recapture. In every class there is the same taut neurotic quality: the fantastic gambling and drinking, the riots, brutality and violence, and everywhere and always a constant sense of death.<sup>1</sup>

Hume supported instinct over reason and logic<sup>2</sup> and could even speak of his similarity to the mystics.<sup>3</sup> In his defence of reason, Oliver Elton wrote that what 'we need never forget is the profound streak of the mystical and transcendental at the very heart of the rational age, outside as well as inside poetry and art.'<sup>4</sup> Paul Fussell has argued at length that the rationalism of the period predominates only at the tip of the social and artistic iceberg, in men like Samuel Johnson.<sup>5</sup> Can the sublime and its widespread appeal and cultivation be considered rational? The age itself, of course, considered the sublime supra not irrational. But what matters is that the at least veneer of reason was cultivated, often nervously and insecurely, by many in the period including some of the mystics examined in this study. Except for extremists who argue that either the rational or the non-rational should completely disperse its opposite in the human personality, what is being sought in the eighteenth century is the proper balance or relationship of the rational and non-rational forces. The century was not conspicuously successful in this attempt, but the very endeavour is significant. To understand this attempt for harmony and wholeness, for a proper integration of the rational and non-rational, one must recognize the persistence and strength of the non-rational forces in the eighteenth century, but one must also understand that rationalism

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<sup>1</sup> England in the Eighteenth Century, p.95.

<sup>2</sup> Willey, p.110.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hume's letter quoted by Stock, p.207:

I have notic'd in the Writings of the French Mysticks, & in those of our Fanatics here, that ... they mention a Coldness & Disertion of the Spirit. (He considers his own state of depression to be) 'pretty parallell' (with their own dark night of the soul).

<sup>4</sup> 'Reason and Enthusiasm in the Eighteenth Century', Essays and Studies, x (1924), p.125.

<sup>5</sup> The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism, (Oxford, 1965). Johnson, on whom Fussell writes with insight, was never sure of the relative strength of the non-and irrational forces in his own life. Plumb, to an important degree, reverses Fussell's position. See 'Reason and Unreason in the Eighteenth Century: the English Experience', Some Aspects of Eighteenth-Century England, p.6.

can sharpen one's desire for the transcendental and help in reacting to and interpreting in a balanced way the experience of transcendence.

Theodore Roethke has written that

a very sharp sense of the being, the identity of some other being---and in some instances, even an inanimate thing--- brings a corresponding heightening and awareness of one's own self, and, even more mysteriously, in some instances, a feeling of the oneness of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

This experience of vivid otherness opening to an identity of opposites and then towards a larger experience of oneness is precisely the 'movement' of the sublime. Such an experience is fostered when the distinct often painful sense of separateness, of 'otherness' which is an essential feature of rationalism and science (Newtonianism), exist in a setting which seeks to combine them with the non-rational in a natural harmony.

What is this 'movement' towards unity, oneness, identity? It was said in the Introduction that the sublime and enthusiasm only 'appear' to be opposites. It was also said that the experience of the sublime is the experience of the divine reality in the soul and in the external universe simultaneously. The sublime is not only the experience of rhapsodic oneness without but of self-realization within.<sup>2</sup> The 'movement' is simultaneously inward and outward turning and results, in the fully developed experience, in the overcoming of these and all other dualities. The expansion and the intensity are one. Such a mystical 'movement' or 'motion' is clearly promoted in an atmosphere which seeks and defines otherness but desires identity. The experience of taking into the self a larger (external) reality and releasing the divine, creative force imprisoned in the egoistic, separatist self, show that 'external' reality in its Ground of Being exists only in the Oneness of the Divine, and in the human spirit when it participates in the life and oneness of God.

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<sup>1</sup> On the Poet and his Craft: Selected Prose of Theodore Roethke, ed. Ralph Mills, Jr., (Seattle, Washington, 1956), p.251.

<sup>2</sup> See the suggestive essay by Martin Price, 'The Sublime Poem: Pictures and Powers', Yale Review, 58 (1968-69), pp.194-213. Cf. Susie Tucker, Enthusiasm, (Cambridge, 1972), pp.91-92, quoting Angus Fletcher, Allegory, referring to Burke and others: 'These authors "were concerned with an enthusiastic experience based on an oceanic involvement of the self with the Universe"'.

This eighteenth-century attempt to integrate the rational and non-rational elements of life came to be associated with the idea of imagination. The eighteenth century 'created the idea of the imagination'<sup>1</sup>. Figures like Addison, Hume, Akenside, Young, Johnson and others contributed to the development of the philosophical, critical side of the idea of 'imagination', whereas the mystics examined above, developed and exemplified the experiential side of imagination. Writers like Roach Brooke, Smart and Law are clearly writing about experience of the imagination and its limitless power, not about ideas. Beginning with Shaftesbury and ending with Law, and at least implied by most if not all of the other writers treated above, the imagination was seen as the means to unify the disparate elements of human nature and human experience. Paraphrasing Law, Byrom wrote:

Imagination, trifling as it seems,  
Big with effects, its own creation, teems.  
We think our wishes and desires a play,  
And sport important faculties away.  
Edged are the tools with which we trifle thus,  
And carve our deep realities for us.<sup>2</sup>

Byrom is versifying the following passage in Law's Appeal:

We are apt to think that our Imaginations and Desires may be played with, that they rise and fall away as nothing, because they do not always bring forth outward and visible Effects. But indeed they are the greatest Reality we have, and are the true Formers and Raisers of all that is real and solid in us. All outward Power that we exercise in the Things about us, is but as a Shadow in Comparison of that inward Power, that resides in our Will, Imagination, and Desires; these communicate with Eternity....This Strength of the inward Man makes all that is the Angel, and all that is the Devil in us....Now our desire is not only thus powerful and productive of real Effects, but it is always alive, always working and creating in us,... and forms and transforms the Soul into every Thing that its Desires reach after: It has the Key to the Kingdom of Heaven, and unlocks all its Treasures, it opens, extends, and moves that in us, which has its Being and Motion in and with the Divine Nature, and so brings us into a real Union and Communion with God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Engell, The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> 'Enthusiam', 37-42.

<sup>3</sup> Works, vi, pp. 134-35.

A person will become whatever he imagines the self to be; the relation to 'external' reality will become what he imagines it is; the Divine Imagination can lead to identity with God. This unifying, divine power of the Imagination thus transcends the duality of subject and object, and what seemed to be 'external' objective reality and 'internal' subjective reality interpenetrate and in the end become or are revealed as One. The shaping power of Imagination is the final Reality because it is the Infinite 'I Am' of God-Man. The Imagination for Byrom and Law, as for Blake and Coleridge, demonstrates that reliance on one's own reason is egotistic solipsism. The Imagination is the means of overcoming the narrow self, of experiencing the Reality which is One and eternal; it is the universal creature power.

Here it is appropriate to ask why the sublime was almost exactly an eighteenth-century phenomenon? The sublime was born and died with the century first because of this attempt at the integration of the rational and non-rational and secondly because of the strong sense of otherness together with a tendency to seek oneness. The strong sense of otherness of rationalism and science disappeared in the greatest Romantics, and the history of what happened to this eighteenth-century attempt for wholeness is the history of the Romantic Movement. Unlike eighteenth-century science, which was not divorced from religion, the increasingly materialist scientific advances of the nineteenth century were a prime cause of the 'break up' on the imaginative level of the vision of oneness, and made matter separate, external, a 'proven fact', and imagination 'imaginary', an illusion.

The eighteenth-century mystics, who fulfilled the desire of the age for wholeness, made an important contribution to the idea of Imagination, an idea created in their century; this contribution was the experience of Imagination and the communication of the experience in their writings. By the time of Byrom and Law the idea and experience of the Imagination are given clear and powerful formulation and expression. Their experience always gives more than an abstract, analytical quality to their writings and the works of men like Roach, Smart and Law promote the experience itself; from the very action of reading, one can be led to experience something of the creative oneness of the Imagination.

Imagination, thus, in the sense developed above, is another name for mysticism, shorn of religious dogma, theological labels and sectarian interpretation. Indeed it is of inestimable value, crucially important to the building of one world, to have such a clear image of the mystical

experience itself transcending sectarian formulations and limitations. The flowering of Imagination, where it becomes more than an idea and realizes its desire for unity, is the timeless experience of mysticism.

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