

ABSTRACT

THE ANGLICAN TRADITION IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VERSE

by

Herbert Grant Sampson

This thesis is an examination of a considerable amount of eighteenth-century poetry (much of it obscure and seldom read) to determine to what extent this poetry could be helpfully viewed as influenced by an Anglican tradition.

The first chapter is an outline of some of the major characteristics which are associated with the Anglican tradition. These characteristics are determined by historical developments within the church, and by contemporary concerns between the church and other institutions. Theological writers of the eighteenth century are referred to.

The remaining five chapters illustrate how poets were influenced by these characteristics in their choice of subjects, in their structure, in their range of imagery, and in their involvement with contemporary apologetics.

During these chapters writers such as Christopher Smart, William Cowper, John Byrom, John Norris, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and Samuel Boyse are discussed. In chapter two particular attention is devoted to tracing the continuing Anglican tradition in Dryden's Religio Laici and Mason's Religio Clerici. The third chapter examines Smart's Hymns and Spiritual Songs and Ken's

Hymns for all the Festivals in the Year. Similar concern for events, structure, imagery, and poetic attitude is found in these two works.

These characteristics are also found in works by other eighteenth-century poets.

It is shown that, in Martz's phrase, the "poetry of meditation" did not die out with the deaths of Donne and Charles I. The threefold structure of meditation continued to form a substantial basis for eighteenth-century verse, and it related much of the poetry to the tradition of religious mysticism.

The conclusion is that the Anglican tradition did continue to influence writers throughout the century, both in a general, literary "atmosphere," and in a more precise, theological "attitude."

The final twenty-three pages present a bibliography of primary material--a checklist of about two hundred writers of the century--and of about fifty of the most directly relevant secondary works in the field of literary and theological studies.

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A THESIS

Submitted to the School for Advanced Graduate Studies of
Michigan State University of Agriculture and
Applied Science in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1964

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PREFACE

The following essay, I should like to believe, is the result, not only of a need to produce a doctoral thesis, but also of a valid curiosity about religious verse during the eighteenth century.

Various writers have tended to create the impression that religious verse during the eighteenth century was either most meagre or non-existent, and that writers showed virtually no interest in religious matters. For example, Malcolm Ross has written that "the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 behind the facade of a ritualistic and scholarly high churchmanship ushered in the Age of Secularism." He has admitted that many were to continue a nominal Christianity, but the "centre of gravity in English culture would no longer be Christian, although persistent habits of sentiment and ethic might obscure for a while the new situation."¹ Earlier Edward Dowden had presented this general thesis:

The interval between the publication of the second part of "Pilgrim's Progress" and that of Swift's "Tale of a Tub" is only twenty years. Yet in passing from the one to the other we seem to enter another country; we are sensible of an altered climate. And this is not merely because the individual genius of the one writer stands so wide apart from that of the other. The questions which occupied the minds of the younger generation were new; the way of regarding them was different; the temper in which they were dealt with was a different temper. The entire view of life, both individual and social, had undergone a considerable modification.²

And recently Horton Davies has traced the comparative truce between the Anglican Church and the three Dissenting bodies during the early years of the eighteenth century, and has outlined the tranquillity which lasted until "the Methodists and the Unitarians were to throw liturgical

pebbles into their placid ponds." He concludes that this tranquility "inevitably led to stagnation in the theory and practice of worship, an attitude not uncongenial to the characteristic phlegm of the Augustan age."³

These general views seem to support the usual impression that literary history turns from the appreciable number of religious poets of the seventeenth century to the descriptive, social, and moral poets of the eighteenth. But it seems unreasonable to believe that in 1660 all religious poetry stopped. The curiosity behind this essay is to discover what happened to religious verse during this period.

The conclusions are not difficult to guess: 1) religious poetry did continue during the eighteenth century; 2) it continued in appreciable quantity, often among minor writers whom many critics have not had the occasion to read; 3) the range of religious concern was very wide, extending from moral sentiment, through rigorous mysticism, to nice theological issues; 4) the general influence of religious belief and doctrine remained fairly strong upon life and literature, and -- as has been shown by such critics as Kathleen Williams in her book on Swift -- the eighteenth-century writer could talk so much about Reason because he accepted Faith so firmly that he felt little need to discuss it. I think this last conclusion is relevant in a re-assessment of the usual impression of the sensibility of the eighteenth century.

My thanks are due to a number of people who have helped me in the preparation of this essay. First, of course, they are due to my Advisory Board: A.J.M. Smith, Chairman, Lawrence Babb, Arthur Sherbo, and Herbert Weisinger. I also owe much gratitude to the librarians at several libraries who have assisted, permitted, and tolerated my probing in dusty

stacks and rare-book rooms for little-read volumes; I have used the libraries at Bishop's University, Queen's University, Harvard University, and the University of Virginia. And I acknowledge the assistance of a number of librarians at other universities who have answered my questions and requests for transcripts.

Finally, and financially, I acknowledge a Queen's University Research Grant in the summer of 1959, which allowed me time to do much of the theological and historical reading necessary as background, and a Canada Council Grant in the summer of 1960, which permitted me to spend a number of weeks at Harvard.

A personal debt is owed to Malcolm Ross and to Derek Crawley for their encouragement and interest.

Kingston, Ontario

May 1963

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Y cladd in mightie armes and siluer shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
The cruell markes of many' a bloudy fielde;
Yet armes till that time did he neuer wield:
His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,
As much disdayning to the curbe to yield:
Full iolly knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,
As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt.

Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene

...and put off
In self-annihilation all that is not of God alone.

William Blake, Milton

CHAPTER I

The Church is a Hill, and that is conspicuous naturally; but the Church is such a Hill, as may be seene everywhere...trouble not thyselfe to know the formes and fashions of forraine particular Churches; neither of a Church in the Lake, nor a Church upon seven hills; but since God hath planted thee in a Church, where all things necessary for salvation are administered to thee, and where no erroneous doctrine (even in the confession of our Adversaries) is affirmed and held, that is the Hill, and that is the Catholique Church.

John Donne, LXXX Sermons, 76 (1640)

A speculative religion is only calculated for a few philosophers, and not the gross vulgar.... For this reason the popish priests amuse them with pictures, shows, and images; the presbyterian parsons with apish gestures, fantastic expressions, and sordid similies, that are full as gross as images: The church of England goes the middle way to work, and gives them half in surplices and organs, and t'other half in good sense and reason.

The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown (1744),
vol. IV, 107

The Anglican tradition, like all clusters of beliefs and feelings, is difficult to isolate and describe. Historically it has assumed varying guises, and even some of its own adherents have accused several of these guises of being disguises. Yet spiritually the tradition has offered a central unity which has held these guises and disguises together. This central unity is expressed in the theology, in the liturgy, and in the attitudes of its communicants. But these, in turn, are difficult to describe because the tradition has incorporated a certain amount of flexibility to allow for an adaption as well as an adoption of these ideas and feelings by the age. And so in writing about the Anglican tradition the historian must keep in mind, not only the central tenets and rituals, but also the infinite variety tolerated within the bounds of the Anglican church.

The complex history of the development of the Anglican Church has often been told. The central fact is that it is not merely a product of the continental reformers; it emerges from several centuries of struggle as a distinctive and unique national cultus, neither Catholic in the sense that the Church of Rome considered itself Catholic nor Protestant in the sense that the three other major religious groups in England were Protestant. Miss Evelyn Underhill has argued that "the peculiar character of Anglicanism arises in part from the operation of history; the conflict within her own borders, both before and after her cultus took form, of Puritan and Catholic ideals." The historical

process which gave rise to the development of this cultus was both lengthy and involved; it did not spring, fully albeit discretely robed, from the Tudor settlement. "The separation of the English Church from Latin Catholicism -- once the first period of acute and sometimes excessive revolt from mediaeval conceptions and abuses was past -- was the first stage in the formation of a real national cultus: vindicating in all essentials to the continuity of Catholic tradition whilst giving expression to the peculiar religious temper of the English soul."

Miss Underhill believes that this cultus, as well as being a product of certain forces of history, is "a true expression of certain paradoxical attributes of the English mind." These she lists as "its tendency to conservatism in respect of the past, and passion for freedom in respect of the present, its law-abiding faithfulness to established custom, but recoil from an expressed dominance; its reverence for the institutions which incorporate its life, and inveterate individualism in the living of that life; its moral and practical bent."¹ From these paradoxical attributes it is obviously difficult to derive an easily describable tradition. And, of course, the suspension between the poles of Catholicism and Puritanism has widened the arc of the Anglican tradition as that of perhaps no other tradition has been widened. In an article on the Holy Communion in the Anglican Church, Stephen Neill has pointed out that two extreme views are excluded: the Zwinglian doctrine that the Holy Communion is a bare memorial of the death of Christ, only a pledge of faith, and the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation. But, "within these very wide limits, many forms of eucharistic doctrine can be professed without disloyalty to the Church of England."² These very wide limits map the via media of the Anglican tradition. It

includes both the Lambeth Articles drawn up by Archbishop Whitgift in 1595 which, had they been given royal assent, would have enforced a strictly Calvinist interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles as the only orthodox position and the famous Tract XC published by Newman in 1841. It includes both the High Church Toryism of the reign of Queen Anne and the evangelical Methodism of the reign of George I.

In 1930 the Lambeth Conference presented a description of the communion, or unifying force of the Anglican church:

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces or Regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common:-

- (a) they uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorized in their several Churches;
- (b) they are particular or national Churches, and as such promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and
- (c) they are bound together, not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the Bishops in conference.

This description is centered, of course, upon the line of the Nicene Creed: "And I believe one Catholic and Apostolick Church."

The Church, then, is not so much a physical organization, but rather, as W.H. Griffith Thomas has put it in his book The Catholic Faith: A Manual of Instruction for Members of the Church of England, "a society of believers." "And," he continues, "this is a necessary outcome of our Lord's work of redemption, the formation of a Society of those who are in direct relation to Himself, a Society of saved sinners."³ The establishment of this direct relationship with Christ can be brought about only by a church which (1) includes all the

instruments which God has ordained as the regular means of human salvation, (2) offers these universal instruments of salvation to all men, and (3) offers them to all men throughout all the generations. These are the criteria which John Wild erects for an essentially complete or "Catholic" church; and they are met fully, he believes, by the Anglican communion:

The "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" was founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ in His Life and in His Passion on the Cross to provide all men with such a purpose throughout the ages of history. One of the living branches of this universal Church is the worldwide Anglican Communion....⁴

It is by means of offering the sacraments to all men everywhere, both geographically and historically, that the Anglican church lays claim to Catholicity. Its prayers and ritual, its whole language of worship, is the language of the Bible, translated into the living language of the country. And the Bible, if properly understood, presents the essential kernel of Christianity which is expressed in the sacraments offered to all men. Thus, when carefully guarded and assimilated under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the theology, the liturgy and the feelings of the Anglican communion preserve unity of doctrine through the flux of time.

This view of John Wild parallels that which William Sherlock, dean of St. Paul's 1691-1707, expressed in his Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity: "The Catholic Faith, I grant, is so called with relation to the Catholic Church, whose Faith it is, and the Catholic Church is the Universal Church, or all the true churches in the world, which are all but one whole Church, united in Christ their Head." A true church, Sherlock points out, depends upon profession of the true Faith and Worship of Christ, and the One Catholic Church comprises all true churches, whether they be spread over all the world,

or shut up in any one corner of it. But no church is the Catholic Church of Christ, regardless of size, unless it profess the true faith of Christ; "it is downright Popery to judge of the Catholic Church by its multitudes or large extent, or to judge of the Catholic Faith by the vast numbers of its professors."⁵ The true Catholic Church is a unified church professing a sincere belief in the true Faith. A similar attitude toward the nature of the Church had been expressed earlier by John Hales (1584-1656), whose collected works were published in a three-volume edition in 1765:

Marks and notes to know the Church there are none, except we will make true profession - - which is the form and essence of the Church - - to be a mark. And as there are none, so it is not necessary there should be. For to what purpose should they serve? That I might go seek and find out some company to mark. This is no way necessary; for glorious things are in the Scriptures spoken of the Church. Not that I should run up and down the World to find the persons of the profession; but that I should make myself of it. This I do by taking upon me the profession of Christianity and submitting myself to the rules of belief and practice delivered in the Gospels - though besides myself I know no other professor in the world.⁶

Thus a central characteristic of the Anglican communion is the absence of the church as a physical body, yet a concern with the act of profession itself; the church is bound, not by administrative power, but by "mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the Bishops in conference," as the Lambeth Conference phrased it. But to some extent any church, and particularly a national church, is bound to be the product of very real physical and historical forces. This is certainly true during the eighteenth century when the influence of Convocation as a legislative counsel was considerably weakened, when not completely obliterated. The situation which the Established Church found itself in at the opening of the eighteenth century was, in part, the product of remarkable historical forces.

Following the frequently turbulent struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Anglican church settled back at the beginning of the eighteenth century into a quiet, though I do not believe complaisant, establishment. Hopes of immediate union with the Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists were abandoned, and a satisfactory, if not satisfying, peace was maintained. It was as though, at least for the present, truce was more desired than truth. Yet for the historian this situation is perhaps fortunate because it allows an easier description of one tradition in terms of the other. Both Anglican and Puritan traditions were unmistakably Protestant, and yet important differences marked their origins and principles. Horton Davies, in his recent study of this period, has traced these differences.⁷

"The basic difference," he feels, "rested upon a different liturgical criterion in each case." While the Anglican did rely upon the Bible as source and authority of tradition, he did not, as did the Puritan, rely upon it exclusively. The traditional practices and rituals of the ancient and primitive Church expressed through the writings of the Church Fathers and the Canons of the Oecumenical Councils were treated with a respect which the Puritans regarded as idolatrous. Cranmer's drawing upon the Use of Sarum, the Ancient Liturgies, the Breviary of Cardinal Quignon, and the Continental Rituals for the framing of the Book of Common Prayer struck the Puritans as too mysterious and irrelevant to the heart of worship to be acceptable. Indeed, many Puritans emphasized their differences in terms of what they rejected in the Anglican tradition, rather than in terms of what they themselves stood for. This element of negativism among the Puritans serves as a counter-balance in weighing the inclusiveness of

Anglicanism. To the Puritans, rejection of the Book of Common Prayer, of the rituals and liturgies of the Church, of the vestaments and art, of the colored tradition derived from the Middle Ages -- rejection of all these was necessary. The Puritan religious attitude was one of directness. "Religious ideas and religious emotions, under the influence of the Puritan habit of mind," says Dowden, "seek to realise themselves not in art, but without any intervening medium, in character, in conduct, in life."⁸ And Wylie Sypher characterizes the Puritan sensibility by saying that "either by nature or doctrine the puritan is one who intends to worship God in the spirit, tempering his affections and putting away the weakness of the flesh."⁹ Partly because of this sensibility little Puritan religious poetry was written; what writing was produced either (as in the case of Milton) showed strongly non-Puritan influences, or (as in the case of Joseph Hart) was confined to literal doggerel acceptable for community singing. Thus, because of remarkable historical forces, most of the religious poetry of the period derives from an Anglican background, and this background is characterized by an acute and sensitive awareness of the value and claim of the tradition of the Church of England.

The best known poetical expression of this Anglican background and its dependence upon tradition during this period is, of course, George Herbert's "The British Church." This poem provides a kind of touchstone for establishing both what is meant by "the Anglican tradition" and what influence it had upon the poets of the eighteenth century.

I joy, deare Mother, when I view
 Thy perfect lineaments and hue
 Both sweet and bright.
 Beautie in thee takes up her place,
 And dates her letters from thy face,
 When she doth write.

A fine aspect in fit array,
 Neither too mean, nor yet too gay,
 Shows who is best.
 Outlandish looks may not compare:
 For all they either painted are,
 Or else undrest.

She on the hills, which wantonly
 Allureth all in hope to be
 By her preferr'd,
 Hath kiss'd so long her painted shrines,
 That ev'n her face by kissing shines,
 For her reward.

She in the valley is so shie
 Of dressing, that her hair doth lie
 About her ears:
 While she avoids her neighbours pride,
 She wholly goes on th' other side,
 And nothing wears.

But, dearest Mother, what those misse,
 The mean, they praise and glorie is,
 And long may be.
 Blessed be God, whose love it was
 To double-moat thee with his grace,
 And none but thee.

To Herbert the British Church represents one of the constants in the world of flux. His values derive from an authority both Scriptural and traditional. He presents a moderate and rational way of life which accepts both the flesh and the spirit, both "doctrine and life," as Herbert puts it in "The Windows":

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
 When they combine and mingle, bring
 A strong regard and awe.

Through this combining of forces the Church is kept from extremes and self-distinctive exclusiveness. It is this vital principle which has animated the progress of the Church traced in "The Church Militant."

The progress, like that of the sun, was from east westward, through Spain and Germany, both of which allowed corruption to set in, until the Church settled in England:

Spain in the Empire shar'd with Germanie,
But England in the higher victorie:
Giving the Church a crown to keep her state,
And not go lesse then she had done of late.
Constantines British line meant this of old,
And did this mysterie wrap up and fold
Within a sheet of paper, which was rent
From times great Chronicle, and hither sent.
Thus both the Church and Sunne together ran
Unto the farthest old meridian.

The argument that the Church and State are essentially co-extensive is, of course, directly compatible with the views of Hooker, and it was upon this point that many of the Nonconformists, with their belief in election and conversion, leveled harshest criticism. The reflection of Hooker's polity in Herbert's poems is clear. Ross has said that " 'The British Church' contains the congealed thought of Hooker."¹⁰ The poem is a superb expression of that media via between the Church of Rome and the Continental Reformed Churches which historians have perceived as an essential characteristic of the English Church:

"Neither too mean, nor yet too gay."

Although the media via of the British Church was argued and developed during the eighteenth century by such eminent priests as William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury 1716-1737, it remained sufficiently comprehensive to claim allegiance from some Nonconformists who, while opposed to certain tenets of its doctrine or polity, did not consider themselves antagonistic to the Church itself. One exponent of this view is Simon Browne (1680-1732), a Congregationist pastor, whose "Prayer for the British Church and Nation" reflects a warm, if not uniquely poetical, affection for the church:

Shall I the British church forget,
 And God's own holy hill:
 Where he hath fixt his royal feat,
 And makes his dews distil!

No, I'll prefer the best abode,
 To ev'ry other place:
 Here Jesus sheds his love abroad,
 And shews his glorious grace.

Here he his holy will declares,
 In soft and melting sounds:
 And sov'reign balsam here prepares,
 To all our bleeding wounds.

Here frequent visits he affords,
 To poor and contrite hearts:
 Admits them often to his board
 And life to them imparts.

Whilst by his kind protecting care,
 We live exempt from fear:
 Nor foreign nor intestine war,
 Make desolations here.

Here ever may the gospel shine,
 And God vouchsafe to dwell:
 Whilst mighty proofs of Love divine,
 Both foes and fears dispel.

He may his spirit grace dispense,
 And holy life inspire:
 May sin and strife far off from hence,
 With all their train retire.

May peace on balmy wings descend,
 And bless the fav'rite isle:
 May God from threat'ning ills defend,
 And on his people smile.

In warm requests I'll breathe my love
 Nor supplication cease:
 'Till Britain's God propitious prove,
 And grant us lasting peace.

While Browne maintains the Nonconformist's position that " 'Tis faith
 that purifies the heart,/And kindles holy love" (Book I, Hymn XXXI),
 he still expresses strong attachment to the British Church; a
 similar sentiment is expressed in Hymn CLXXII: "Prayer for Britain
 Urg'd."

This orthodox position of the Congregationalist Browne stands out distinctly in comparison with these stanzas from "Divine Worship" by the Quaker Thomas Ellwood (1639-1713):

13

But yet, e'er Christ would abrogate
 A Worship so long Time in Use,
 And disannul the legal State,
 He did a better introduce;
 This Law was not in Marble cut,
 But in the Heart and Conscience put.

20

Types, Shadows, Sacraments and Signs,
 Did on this Dispensation wait;
 Who to the Gospel-worship joins,
 Shadows must leave to th' shad'wry State:
 'Tis not the fatted Calf that skips,
 Is offer'd now, but Calves of Lips.

21

Thanks and Praise, Sacrifices are
 To Got most pleasing, when they spring
 From a pure Heart He doth prepare,
 And then excites His Acts to sing:
 True Christ'ans use both Heart and Tongue,
 Where'er a Hymn or Psalm is sung.

22

Not chanting, in a formal Note,
 States touch'd in ancient Song,
 Perverting what the Psalmist wrote,
 Whose Case cannot to all belong;
 'Tis who their own Experience bring,
 With Spirit and with Judgment sing.

23

Instead of Incense to perfume
 The Altar, from the Soul arise
 In Flames (that warm but not consume)
 Sighs, Supplications, Groans and Cries,
 Which tho' but weak, do never fail,
 At Mercy's Fountain to prevail.

Ellwood's rejection of Incense, Sacrifice, Chants, and Ritual in favor of the law of heart and conscience is, of course, an essentially

Puritan characteristic. It is, in effect, a rejection of all sacrament and tradition. This is the simple directness, the worshiping of God in the spirit without any intervening medium, of which Sypher and Dowden spoke. And it contrasts with the Anglican tradition which centers upon those various media of tradition and sacrament which Ellwood rejects. Although these media were not acceptable without some qualification by Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists, they were rarely rejected by them. Browne, as well as Herbert, believed that the people of England were maintaining a tradition of worship, both unified and purified, which traced its lineage through the Mediaeval Church Fathers to St. Peter. This belief is also expressed by Thomas Ken (1637-1711), who was a firm and faithful priest of the Anglican Church, yet whose refusal to swear allegiance to William and Mary deprived him of his see of Bath and Wells. In "Providence" he writes:

Britannia's faithful Sons, who next appear'd,
Were to Ecclesia most endear'd;
She welcom'd them, they th' ancient Faith retain'd,
As first traduc'd, with Novelties unstain'd.

And so, what can rightly be described as an Anglican tradition may, in parts, be discovered in the works of writers not directly members of the Established Church. Like any vital tradition, the Anglican tradition spread its influence beyond the limits of its immediate doctrinaire supporters. Its emphasis upon the "Britishness" of the Church and its tendency toward comprehension and toleration encouraged this extension of its influence.

But the emphasis upon comprehension and toleration which the historian has found to be central to the development of religious freedom during the eighteenth century did not mean that the Anglican Church was prepared either to accept any and every doctrine which its

supporters thought themselves to cherish or to cast aside all traditions which came under criticism. Because several theological doctrines will be examined later in the present essay in relation to some poems which reflect an attitude toward them, it may be well to outline the orthodox position adopted during the century by the Established Church.

One of the central issues, which had a number of important implications and which attracted a fair amount of attention, was that of the Trinity. The mystery of the Incarnation and the relationship of Christ to other members of the Trinity -- this mental mystery of the Church had always been a target for rationalistic criticism and heretical writing. Specifically, such criticism and writing usually focused upon the Athanasian Creed, with its unequivocal doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation:

Whosoever would be saved needeth before all
things to hold fast the Catholick Faith. Which
Faith except a man keep whole and undefiled,
without doubt he will perish eternally.
Now the Catholick Faith is this: that we worship
One God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity.
* * *

Furthermore it is necessary to eternal
salvation: that he also believe faithfully
the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries this doctrine came under attack from several sources. There was a growing movement within the Church itself, as well as from outside, to regard Christianity as a reasonable and commonly acceptable set of beliefs, provable by experience and understandable by all men. John Locke's The Reasonableness of Christianity (1695) laid a convenient foundation upon which succeeding rationalists of varying degree could build. The theme of this book is the great topic of post-reformation theology: Justification by Faith.

Locke claims that subtle theological arguments must be ignored in favor of the one central belief in Jesus as Messiah. Faith alone is essential, and Faith is conceived in primarily personal and intellectual terms:

Thus from the Consideration of our selves, and what we infallibly find in our own Constitutions, our Reason leads us to the Knowledge of this certain and evident Truth, That there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being; which whether any one will please to call God, it matters not (Book IV, chapter X).

In Christianity not Mysterious (1696) John Toland adopted a position very similar to that of Locke, but he goes beyond Locke in saying that truths revealed to any faculty other than Reason are not admissible.

But I demand to what end should God require us to believe what we cannot understand?...But if by Knowledg be meant understanding what is believ'd, than I stand by it that Faith is Knowledg: I have all along maintain'd it, and the very Words are promiscuously us'd for one another in the Gospel (Section II, chapter I).

When he wrote this book Toland was a member of the Church of England, and in spite of his attacks upon other churches and in spite of his implied heresies, he did not openly criticize the Established Church. But the clergy were not unaware of the implications of Toland's arguments, and in 1701 the Lower House of Convocation requested the Upper House to suppress this work which contained passages described as "pernicious, dangerous and scandalous positions and destructive of the Christian faith." The bishops feared to do anything without licence from the king. But they faced the same problem in more acute form a decade later with the publication of An Historical Preface to Primitive Christianity (1711) by William Whiston (1667-1752). In this work Whiston argued that a study of the pre-Nicene fathers yielded evidence

to conclude that their doctrine of the Trinity was not Athanasian but "Eusebian" or Arian. This time, under the careful leadership of Tenison, Convocation censured the book, without touching the person of the author.

But in the following year complaints were again heard in the Lower House because of the publication of Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity (1712) by Samuel Clarke (1675-1729). Again, the taint of Arianism was discovered in this work, and the controversy was resumed. The writings of Clarke were admired by Bishop Hoadly who collected and edited them. In part this kept alive the name of Clarke as an Arian threat. In 1715 Stephen Nye, rector of Little Hermead, published The Explication of the Articles of the Divine Unity, The Trinity, and Incarnation, commonly received in the Catholic Church, asserted and vindicated; by occasion of the late Books of Dr. Samuel Clarke and his Opposers. And as late as 1763 the controversy still raged around Clarke's book; John Landon, rector of Newstead and Ifield in Kent published An Answer to a Book, entitled, An Appeal to the Common Sense of all Christian People, with regard to an Important Point of Faith and Practice Imposed upon their Consciences by Church Authority; wherein the Author's Erroneous Notions Concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation of Jesus Christ, together with his Mistakes in Expounding the Holy Scriptures are fully laid open: and in which likewise several Texts of Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, with his arguing upon them are occasionally considered. The issues of the Incarnation and the Athanasian Creed remained open for discussion during the entire century. For example, in 1769 Francis Lloyd published A Vindication of the Athanasian Creed, in respect to the explicit

Explanation of the three distinct Persons in the Godhead, and of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in 1785 Samuel Horsley published his A Sermon on the Incarnation.

This concern over the theological subtleties of the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation was not confined to only one part of the Anglican Church, or to the high church party within it. The Athanasian Creed was accepted without grave hesitations by the group which later came to be known as Latitude-men. A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-Men (1662) by Simon Patrick recorded that concerning the theology of the Established Church "they do cordially adhere to it, as doth sufficiently appear by their willingness to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and all other points of doctrine contained either in the Liturgy of Book of Homilies; and particularly (whatsoever may be privately whispered to the contrary) they do both devoutly adore the blessed Trinity in the Litany, and make solemn profession of their orthodox faith, both concerning it and other points, in the three Creeds, not excepting that which is commonly ascribed to Athanasius, nor is there any article of doctrine held forth by the Church, which they can justly be accused to depart from, unless absolute reprobation be one, which they do not think themselves bound to believe." Indeed, it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that attacks upon the value of theological niceties were expressed by members of the Established Church, and then, as in the case of Richard Watson, these were prompted as much by Biblical interpretation and rejection of patriotic authority as by the spread to nationalism.

Throughout the history of this tortuous controversy the Anglican position was periodically colored by the feelings of the times, but three principal points emerge as constant: 1) the Established Church

accepted the Athanasian Creed, with its doctrine of the Trinity, 2) Arian and, later, Socinian interpretations were regarded as heresies, and 3) the Athanasian doctrine that belief in the Trinity as necessary for salvation was possibly qualified in relation to savages and those who could not have known Christ. The implications of this position are numerous, but four deserve attention: 1) that the Anglican accepted tradition as well as Scripture as having final authority over conscience, 2) that reliance for salvation must not be placed upon individual conversion and faith alone, 3) that the sacraments, the liturgy, prayers and meditation all play an important part in worship, and 4) that an extreme and violent awareness of personal guilt and sin and a throwing of oneself upon the mercy of God do not form the central ritual of the religious experience. These attitudes towards religious experience, it is obvious, differ considerably from those of the Puritans and Quakers outlined earlier. The Anglican tradition is equipped with many media of expressing their worship of God. And these are enclosed within a framework of quiet reason and moderation which shuns exhibition and indulgence in much emotion. It is "neither too mean, nor yet too gay."

In writing about the poetry of George Herbert, Lord David Cecil notes a number of characteristics which, he feels, mark Herbert as a peculiarly Anglican and British poet. These characteristics appear to form what expresses itself in poetry as the Anglican tradition.

Herbert has an additional interest as the most complete exponent in our poetry of the peculiar genius of the English Church. His piety is an eminently Anglican piety; refined, dignified, with a delicate appreciation of the values of style and ceremony, but subdued and restrained; its pure outline and quiet tints, a strong contrast to the rich colours and perfumed incense-flames of Crashaw.¹¹

We shall have frequent occasion to return to this description of the style of Herbert's "eminently Anglican" piety. It is worth noting at present, however, that Louis Martz also mentions the "delicate restraint of Herbert" during his consideration of the meditative tradition in verse.¹² These are also the characteristics which a later poet, in trying very hard to express the tradition and the style of the Anglican Church, presents in his verse. The exact nature and sincerity of William Wordsworth's religious views do not concern this essay, but his Ecclesiastic Sonnets indicate something about what was regarded as the Anglican tradition. Helen Darbishire writes that "as the transcendent experiences of his early life ebbed away, he turned deliberately to seek support in the doctrines of the Anglican Church...He chose as a poetic task to trace the history of the Anglican Church in a series of Ecclesiastic Sonnets."¹³ Havens supports this suggestion of a deliberate change in Wordsworth's attitude to the Church: "In his later years he attached great importance to the church as an institution and tried, but with imperfect success, to accept its doctrinal teachings."¹⁴ The reason for this imperfect success seems to lie in Wordsworth's contemplative frame of mind; by middle age a kind of remoteness had set in which made ideas remain separate from the burning vision of experience: Wordsworth never actually saw angels. His sanity and distrust of strong emotions have been noted by Dean Inge, who comments upon his mystical qualities:

The greatest prophet of this branch of contemplative Mysticism is unquestionably the poet Wordsworth. It was the object of his life to be a religious teacher... He was a loyal Churchman, but his religion was really almost independent of any ecclesiastical system. His ecclesiastical sonnets reflect rather the dignity of the Anglican Church than the ardent piety with which our

other poet-mystics, such as Herbert, Vaughan, and Crashaw, adorn the offices of worship. His cast of faith, intellectual and contemplative rather than fervid, and the solitariness of his thought, forbade him to find much satisfaction in public ceremonial.¹⁵

Perhaps because of what appears to have been an assumed, rather than a spontaneous, acceptance of the doctrines of the Church of England, Wordsworth does succeed in presenting a traditional attitude toward both the Church and its history. The dignity and ritual of the Church Calendar -- a subject of much appeal for poets -- are praised in "The Liturgy":

Yes, if the intensities of hope and fear
Attract us still, and passionate exercise
Of lofty thoughts, the way before us lies
Distinct with signs, through which in set career,
As through a zodiac, moves the ritual year
Of England's Church; stupendous mysteries!

Praise for Archbishop Laud, unusual during Wordsworth's day, and for other Anglican divines is expressed in "Laud," "Latimer and Ridley," "Cranmer," and the two sonnets on "Eminent Reformers." A spirit of reasonable toleration colors "Latitudinarianism," and "Sacheverel" idealizes "the golden mean, and quiet flow/Of truths that soften hatred, temper strife." The services of the church are supported in the sonnets of the various parts of the Book of Common Prayer and in "Sacrament." The restraint and dignity noted by Cecil and Martz in the poetry of Herbert emerges in Wordsworth's "Ejaculation":

Glory to God! and to the Power who came
In filial duty, clothed with love divine.

And so, in spite of the difference of several centuries these two poets reflect much the same set of qualities in their verse when they are writing within the Anglican tradition. The sincerity and unconsciousness of their religious acceptance and the change in the poetic esthetic

between the centuries make, quite unexpectedly, for certain differences in style. Yet there does emerge a central attitude and theology which is an Anglican tradition affecting most strongly the poets.

As has been seen, the attempt at definition of this tradition is bound to be frustrated by the subtle nature of the matter and the constantly new lights under which succeeding generations view it. Somewhat like the chameleon, it changes to blend with its immediate environment, while still remaining the creature it is. In his book on Anglicanism, Stephen Neill has faced the ultimate question, "What is Anglicanism?" His answer clearly recognizes the difficulty of definition:

The answer is that there are no special Anglican theological doctrines, there is no particular Anglican theology. The Church of England is the Catholic Church in England. It teaches all the doctrines of the Catholic Faith, as these are to be found in Holy Scripture, as they are summarized in the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, and as they are set forth in the decisions of the first four General Councils of the undivided Church.

He points out that, relying upon the Scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation, the Church will accept any doctrine that can be proved from Holy Writ, and rejects as unscriptural and erroneous doctrines added upon other evidence. Further, it regards as erroneous any limitation of the doctrines presented through the Scriptures, particularly such doctrines as Socinianism. In these views Neill is echoing Archbishop Wake, who in his An Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England (1686) stated the Anglican attitude toward authority:

We receive with the same veneration whatsoever comes from the Apostles whether by scripture or tradition, provided that we can be assured that it comes from them. And if it can be made to appear that any tradition which the Written Word contains not, has been received by all churches and in all ages, we are ready to embrace it as coming from the apostles.

Because of this attitude, Neill admits that considerable breadth of interpretation is permitted within the Church. But "the faith of the Church is to be found in the Bible and in the Prayer Book; and on that faith the Anglican Churches have, in the four centuries since the Reformation, never compromised." His resolution to the dilemma of isolating the Anglican tradition or cultus is worthy of notice:

In the strict sense of the term there is, therefore, no Anglican faith. But there is an Anglican attitude and an Anglican atmosphere.

He admits that this itself is incapable of precise description: "It must be felt and experienced in order to be understood." His method will be the method of this study, for the influence of religious tradition upon verse seems to be in terms of the beliefs themselves and of the kind of matter noticed, the way things are said, the tone of the poem. Neill says that "All that can be done is to isolate and comment on certain elements on which Anglicans throughout the world would probably agree as characteristic of their own faith and experience."¹⁶ Therefore, it will be well to look at some poems in the attempt to achieve a kind of mutual qualification: to see what elements in them emerge as part of the Anglican tradition, and to see to what extent the Anglican tradition has determined what sort of creatures they are.

CHAPTER II

Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear.
What! is it She, which on the other shore
Goes richly painted? or which rob'd and tore
Laments and mournes in Germany and here?
Sleepes she a thousand, then peepes up one yeare?
Is she selfe truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
On one, on seaven, or on no hill appeare?
Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
First travaile we to seeke and then make Love?
Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
When she's embrac'd and open to most men.

John Donne, Holy Sonnet XVIII

While mighty Lewis finds the Pope too great,
And dreads the Yoke of his imposing Seat,
Our Sects a more Tyrannick Pow'r assume,
And wou'd for Scorpions change the Rods of Rome;
That Church detain'd the Legacy Divine;
Fanaticks cast the Pearls of Heav'n to Swine:
What then have honest thinking Men to do,
But chuse a Mean between th'Usurping two?

Earl of Roscommon, On Mr. Dryden's "Religio Laici"

Because the Anglican tradition is marked by such variety and flexibility, because it has been characterized by comprehension rather than exclusion, because (as Stephen Neill admits) it is difficult to maintain any unity in the far-flung Anglican communion¹ -- for these reasons the historian will do well to select termini for his investigations. This procedure will also enable him to distinguish and sift those concerns in the literature which are distinctive of the period. Two poems stand at either end of the present study, defining its scope with a convenience and consideration for the critic which are almost unbelievable among literary works.

In 1682 John Dryden wrote his Religio Laici: or A Laymans Faith. This work has been described by some critics, notably Bredvold,² as an expression of the author's basically Roman Catholic sympathies; it is a Roman Catholic poem in spite of its author. Evidence for this argument is found in Dryden's apparent anti-rationalism and his willingness to submit independent judgment to authority in ultimate matters of faith. Bredvold treats both Religio Laici and The Hind and the Panther (an accepted statement of Roman Catholic belief) together:

Religio Laici and The Hind and the Panther are so closely allied in their philosophy that the earlier poem might be regarded as a sort of prelude or introduction to the later; both are basically skeptical and fideistic.³

Earlier he had classified Religio Laici as belonging "historically rather to Roman Catholic than to Anglican apologetics,"⁴ and he had

said that, "Protestant though it be, it gives a clear and forceful expression of the main Catholic criticism of the Protestant doctrines regarding religious authority."⁵ However, partly prompted, no doubt, by the author's own statement that it is an expression of the Anglican position, several critics have examined Religio Laici as an Anglican poem. Douglas Grant has called it Dryden's "great defence" of the Church of England;⁶ A.W. Verrall has seen it as expressing Anglican doctrine;⁷ in it, David Nichol Smith says, "a decision is come to, and we are provided with a good statement for the via media of the Church of England."⁸ More recently, H. Fujimura has examined the evidence for these critical views of the poem and feels that the Roman Catholic interpretation, most fully presented by Bredvold, is untenable:

My opinion is that Bredvold's ideas on Religio Laici are completely unsound, and that Dryden's poem is, in most respects, a conventional work of Anglican apologetics.⁹

His conclusion is similar to that of Smith quoted above:

Essentially, Dryden asserts the via media of the Church of England of his time.¹⁰

Fujimura's view of this poem appears to be both sensitive and reasonable. He has shown the close correspondence between the thinking of Dryden and that of such eminent Anglican writers as Taylor and Hooker. In the present study we shall see this correspondence in relation to contemporary apologetics as well. In both his qualified confidence in rationalism and his willingness to submit to authority Dryden was, as Fujimura has shown, safely within the bounds of the Anglican via media.

One hundred and fourteen years after Dryden's poem -- that is, in 1796 -- Religio Clerici: or The Faith of A Clergyman of The Church of England was written by William Mason. Mason was a poet, musician, scholar, critic of painting, and priest of the Anglican Church. Through Gray's influence he was elected fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and he was a friend to both Bishop Hurd and Bishop Warburton. In 1762 the King presented Mason to the canonry and prebend of Drifffield in the cathedral church of York, together with the precentorship of that church, which had been made vacant by the promotion of Dr. Newton to the bishopric of Bristol. The biography of Mason in Chalmers' Works of the English Poets says that his life "appears to have been principally devoted to the duties of his profession, occasionally relieved by the cultivation of the fine arts."¹¹ Religio Clerici is a statement of the same tradition of the Anglican Church as that in Religio Laici. The work itself, as well as the title, is in imitation of Dryden's poem. To examine these two works in some detail may be helpful in understanding more thoroughly the nature of the Anglican tradition and the aspects of it which caught the inward eye of poets during the century.

In his Preface to Religio Laici Dryden admits that although he is attempting to make a confession of only his own faith, yet he has derived help from the "Works of our Reverend Divines of the Church of England" and has submitted the paper to a "judicious and learned Friend, a Man indefatigably zealous in the service of the Church and State." Thus the Religio Laici is more than the personal expressions of the author's beliefs; its concerns reflect the immediate concerns of those in the English Church during the later seventeenth century.

One of these concerns is the statement in the Preface to the Athanasian Creed which Dryden complained was "of too hard digestion for my Charity." The statement apparently asserts that no heathen unknowing of Christ can be saved:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things
it is necessary that he hold the Catholic
faith. Which faith except everyone do keep
whole and undefiled without doubt he shall
perish everlastingly.

This seems to be a Bill of Exclusion, legislated against the fathers, but which did not bar the sons from the succession; or it seemed "that so many Ages had been deliver'd over to Hell, and so many reserv'd for Heaven, and that the Devil had the first choice, and God the next." Although Dryden never phrased it in these particular terms, this reads like the Anglican objection to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. And the argument in each instance is similar: the doctrine places greater emphasis upon an unjust -- and, one suspects they felt, un-British -- decree of guilt and punishment, rather than upon the possibility of salvation for each individual. Dryden is aware that many texts from Scripture support this statement by Athanasius; he will not go as far as the Earl of Roscommon, who in his poem in praise of Dryden's

Religio Laici wrote:

Nor can th' Egyptian Patriarch blame my Muse,
Which for his Firmness does his Heat excuse;
Whatever Councils have approv'd his Creed,
The Preface sure was his own Act and Deed.

Dryden, rather, looks for a "kinder, and more mollified interpretation." He suggests that whosoever will be saved may be taken to distinguish between "Heriticks" and "True Believer" and not between Christians and Pagans, who at the time that the Creed was formulated were not in

the least involved in the whole problem. In other words, he approaches this paragraph of the Creed historically: the Creed is a part of the struggle against Arianism, a heresy which John Wild quotes as an example of the perpetual danger of corrupting and diluting forces within the Church:

Thus in the fourth century the early Church was almost conquered by the heresy of Arianism, which attracted a majority of those calling themselves Christians, and was only just saved from giving way by the courage and zeal of Athanasius and his small party of devoted Catholics.¹²

At the end of the seventeenth century Dryden finds the Creed useful for the same reason: "opposition to the Socinians, as there was then against the Arians; the one being a Heresy, which seems to have been refin'd out of the other." Thus, Dryden believes it difficult to accept the literal and apparent truth of his statement from the Preface to the Athanasian Creed:

For though his Creed Eternal Truth contains,
'Tis hard for Man to doom to endless pains
All who believ'd not all, his Zeal requir'd;
Unless he first cou'd prove he was inspir'd.

And so he offers two alternatives: 1) acceptance by Faith, or
2) the interpretation that the Creed was refuting Arianism:

Then let us either think he meant to say
This Faith, where publish'd, was only way;
Or else conclude that, Arius to confute,
The good old Man, too eager in dispute,
Flew high; and as his Christian Fury rose
Damn's all for Hereticks who durst oppose.

In adopting this position Dryden has worked out a solution unique neither to himself nor to his age. He is rephrasing the questioning by Jeremy Taylor thirty-five years earlier in A Discourse of the Liberty of Propheying (1647):

If I should be questioned concerning the Symbol of Athanasius ... I confess I cannot see that moderate sentence and gentleness of charity in his preface and conclusion, as there was in the Nicene Creed. Nothing there but damnation and perishing everlasting, unless the Article of the Trinity be believed, as it is there with curiosity and minute particularities explained.

Taylor is well aware of the criticism which such a position called forth upon the author by his contemporaries:

Indeed, Athanasius had been soundly vexed on one side, and much cried up on the other; and, therefore, it is not so much wonder for him to be so decretory and severe in his censure; for nothing could more ascertain his friends to him, and disrepute his enemies, than the belief of that damnatory appendix.

But this historical detection of loyalties does not justify the creed;

Taylor adopts the same attitude as Dryden:

For the articles themselves, I am most heartily persuaded of the truth of them, and yet I dare not say all that are not so, are irrevocably damned¹³

The historical influences upon the tone and phrasing of the Athanasian Creed had been recognized even earlier; John Overall, during the early years of the seventeenth century Dean of St. Paul's, recorded this recognition in The Convocation Book of 1606:

Also, with the same resolution and faith before mentioned, we receive and believe all and every one the several points and articles of Athanasius' Creed, made a little after the Council of Nice, against such blasphemous opinions as in these times were either directly or indirectly published in corners, and spread here and there to the seducing of many.¹⁴

In fact, W.H. Griffith Thomas has recently suggested that the Athanasian Creed "is not really a Creed, but an exposition of the meaning of the Nicene Creed on the two great points of the Holy

Trinity and our Lord's Incarnation. Originally it does not seem to have been intended for use as a Creed, but only as a means of instruction and as a warning against false doctrine."¹⁵

This two-fold division of the Athanasian Creed is deliberately followed by William Mason in the structure of his Religio Clerici. In an annotation to a line in the Second Part, he explains:

The first part of this Poem having inculcated the Scripture-doctrine concerning the divine union of three persons in the Deity, this second proceeds to draw from the sacred fount what is to be believed concerning the incarnation of the second person, herein pursuing the plan of the Athanasian Confession of Faith, which is divided in the same two-fold manner.

After an introduction praising Dryden's style, Mason begins his poem by discussing his creed; it is not "laical," yet free, he trusts, from "theologic pedantry." He admits its similarity to the views of Athanasius:

Nor blame him Mason, if its import be the same
With that, which bears th' Egyptian Bishop's name,
Whose rigid preface though the Bard [Dryden] arraign'd,
He own'd "the creed eternal truth contain'd."

Mason, not fully understanding Religio Laici, says Dryden thought that Athanasius expected to be believed solely on the authority of his own word. In an annotation to p.428, ver. 40 of his poem Mason quotes ll. 212-217 of Dryden's poem (without much care, for he changes the word baulk of the first three editions to hurt and alters considerably the punctuation and typographical detail) and then he adds:

We see, therefore, that it was what are called the damnatory clauses in the Confession of Athanasius, that solely offended Dryden, and which he thought ought not to have been inserted by any but an inspired person.

Then he explains his own position regarding the authority of these clauses:

It is the business of this Poem, from v. 63 to v. 69, to show that they are founded on the parabolic declaration of Christ himself.

First, Mason admits that many shared Dryden's sensitivity to these clauses:

... we find
Many good churchmen still of Dryden's mind:
Indeed so many mid a sceptic crowd,
I scarce can wonder Tillotson avow'd
His wish 'twere from the Liturgy remov'd.

This wish was expressed in a letter to Bishop Burnet, and Mason admits in his annotation to p. 429, ver. 46 that the Socinians and Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), who opened a unitarian chapel in London and wrote several treatises and a liturgy for unitarian congregations, boast having such a divine as Tillotson on their side. But Mason holds up several of Tillotson's sermons as clear evidences that he accepted the Athanasian position on the divinity and incarnation of Christ, and concludes that he expressed this wish only so that there might be less occasion for discord:

(he wished it removed)
Not because false: he ne'er suppos'd it so,
But if remov'd (vain hope) that it might draw,
By firmer cords of unity and love,
To one true faith, that creed who disapprove.

If the Preface to the Athanasian Creed were not supported by Scripture, he, too, would neglect it; no foreign doctrine can be added to the True Faith:

But why arraign the preface? if it came
 From man, if Scripture did not say the same;
 Or if discordant from its gen'ral code,
 With Dryden I'd refuse the Pharisaic load.
 Yet if in Christian soil, and that alone,
 The tree must spring, that by its fruit is known;
 And if its root be Faith, all must agree
 To take the scion from the parent tree;
 No foreign stem, if grafted there, can shoot;
 No truth can bloom on error's baneful root:
 All hope to save it is a vain desire,
 Down it is dash'd, and flung into the fire.

Mason's first argument is to show that the clauses of the Preface to the Creed are not designed to threaten man. The basic teaching of Christ is to have faith; the rejection of this means the loss of immortality; regardless of who includes this in a creed, it is found in Scripture:

If from his word I learn,
 That faith in him is my supreme concern;
 If wanting that, I lose the blessing high,
 His blood has purchas'd, immortality,
 What may I hope?

Nothing can save the unbeliever who has been misdirected by reason:

If I from reason draw
 Conclusions unsupported by his law,
 Misstate, abridge the doctrines he has given,
 I lose all place in my Redeemer's heav'n;
 And, whether I or Athanasius speak,
 The prize is lost, he purchas'd for my sake.

Faith teaches that, although man is of Adam's sinful race, he may still hope for Charity, and only those still unheeding of the means of salvation will receive punishment:

Yet still may Christian Charity aspire,
 To nurse a modest hope that those who lie
 Uncherish'd by the Day-spring from on high
 May still be blest, ev'n though a tenfold shade
 Of Pagan darkness now involves their head;
 And only those, the obstinately blind,
 Will meet the doom intail'd in lost mankind.

Therefore, the Athanasian Creed cannot be opposed as an attempt to threaten those who dare dissent from a faith established not by Heaven but by man; it is founded firmly upon the scriptural doctrine of Charity and Hope.

Secondly, Mason argues that his interpretation of the Creed is supported by history. An annotation to p. 432, ver. 126 outlines the backgrounds of the controversy during the fourth century. And Mason quotes from Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity in support of the contemporary acceptance of the Creed "as a jewel of inestimable price." The acceptance, according to Mason, marked a freeing of Christians from scholastic controversy:

But he, who duly marks th' historic page,
Will find my creed confess'd in that same age,
When Arius triumph'd now, was now subdu'd.
As emp'rors or as empresses allow'd,
When common-sense was scorn'd, and quibbling priz'd,
When myst'ry found itself more mysticis'd,
Will sanely judge a creed, whose ev'ry phrase
Was form'd to free from the scholastic maze
Well-meaning Christians: might securely fix
Their faith on Scripture, not on schismatics.

Mason, then, in his arguments for the interpretation of the Preface to the Athanasian Creed as a charitable and acceptable document calls upon Scripture as a final authority.

This same foundation for authority is expressed by Dryden: "the Scripture is a Rule; ...in all things needful to Salvation, it is clear, sufficient, and ordain'd by God Almighty for that purpose." Scripture is a written record of the will of God -- "How God may be appeas'd, and Mortals blest."

The evidence for this authority comes from five sources. The first is an argument which is logically invalid because it is expressed in

the form of an alternative syllogism in which the minor premise affirms one of the alternatives:

Either the Bible was ordained by God, or it
would not have been written by men in
various places at various times and yet
have agreements.

The Bible was written by men in various places
at various times and does have agreement.

No logically valid conclusion can follow, although Dryden's rhetoric is designed to elicit confirmation of the authority of Scriptures:

Whence, but from Heav'n, cou'd men unskill'd in Arts,
In several Ages born, in several parts,
Weave such agreeing Truths?

The second evidence is presented as a rhetorical question:

Or how, or why
Shou'd all conspire to cheat us with a lye?

The heathen, Dryden argues thirdly, prove the story true because what heaven teaches in doctrine and miracles appears to them to be human sense:

And though they prove not, they Confirm the Cause,
When that is Taught agrees with Natures Laws.

Fourthly, the style bespeaks God in every line:

Then for the Style; Majestick and Divine,
It speaks no less than God in every line.

Finally, the Bible is evidently divine because it commands man to curb his lust and sin, for human reason or nature alone would not so guide:

To what can Reason such Effects assign
Transcending Nature, but to Laws Divine?

This position of Dryden is, of course, a restatement of Article VI:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand these Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

Dryden's contemporary, William Beveridge (1637-1708), Bishop of Asaph, wrote an exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles,¹⁶ Ecclesia Anglicana Ecclesia Catholica, and his comments upon Article VI follow the same train of argument as did those in Dryden's Religio Laici:

This Holy Scripture, thus written in Hebrew and Greek, in those languages wherein it was written, containeth nothing but the will of God and the whole will of God; so that there is nothing necessary to be believed concerning God, nor done in obedience unto God by us, but what is here revealed to us; and therefore all traditions of men which are contrary to this word of God are necessarily to be abhorred, and all traditions of men not recorded in this Word of God are not necessarily to be believed. What is here written we are bound to believe because it is written; and what is not here written we are not bound to believe because it is not written. I say "are not bound to believe it," but I cannot say we are bound not to believe it; for there be many truths which we may believe, nay, are bound to believe, because truth, which notwithstanding are not recorded in the Word of God. But though there be many things we may believe, yet is there nothing we need believe in order to our everlasting happiness which is not here written; so that if we believe all that is here spoken, and do all that is here commanded, we shall certainly be saved, though we do not believe what is not here spoken, nor do what is not here commanded.

But in basing doctrine upon Scriptures, Beveridge is aware of the easy possibility of controversy about matters of interpretation.

As an example he quotes the controversy between Arius and

Athanasius, "whether Christ was very God of the same substance with the Father." Both disputants claimed the right teaching of Scripture on their side, and therefore Scripture itself could not decide the controversy. "Now how can this question be decided better or otherways," Beveridge asks, "than by the whole Church's exposition of the Scripture, which side of the controversy it is for, and which side it is against?" Thus it is necessary for the Church, as a body

of all members, to offer interpretation of the Scriptures, just as it is necessary for the individual to pass his judgment upon any piece of Scripture. "And as the exposition that any particular person passeth upon the Scripture is binding to that person so that he is bound to believe and act according to it, so whatsoever exposition of Scripture is made by the Church in general, it is binding to the Church in general."¹⁷ Dryden recognizes this possibility of diversity and corruption of the text:

... the Scriptures, though not every where
Free from Corruption, or intire, or clear,
Are uncorrupt, sufficient, clear, intire,
In all things which our needful Faith require.

But, like Beveridge and Taylor,¹⁸ Dryden turns to Scripture as a just and sufficient guide.

And like them he asserts that within carefully constructed bounds tradition is needed and helpful:

Must all Tradition then be set aside?
This to affirm were Ignorance, or Pride.
Are there not many points, some needful sure
To saving Faith, that Scripture leaves obscure?

These points left obscure will be seized upon by various Fanatics, like the "bold Socinian"¹⁹ who draws from the Scripture that Christ is but a man. While Dryden suggests that in his opinion many have been saved who have never heard of this sort of theological controversy, he finds tradition convenient in these matters in establishing precedents:

Not that Traditions parts are useless here:
When general, old, disinteres'd and clear:
That Ancient Fathers thus expound the Page,
Gives Truth the reverend Majesty of Age:
Confirms its force, by bidding every Test;
For best Authority's next Rules are best.

But the authority of tradition is not sufficient to be considered proof. Originally it may well have been, but corruption by the descent through time has weakened it from truth to probability:

Thus, first Traditions were a proof alone;
 Cou'd we be certain such they were, so known:
 But since some Flaws in long descent may be,
 They make not Truth and Probability.

Since tradition has a limited authority and since this authority is denied from a general interpretation by the whole Church, only that tradition is sound which is based upon the agreement of the whole Church. It is upon this reasoning that Dryden rejects the claim of the Papists to be the sole judge of any Scriptural passage:

The partial Papists wou'd infer from hence
 Their Church, in last resort, shou'd judge the Sense.

But they are not the whole Church, but just a part:

But first they wou'd assume, with wondrous Art,
 Themselves to be the whole, who are but part
 Of that vast Frame, the Church.

This view, like the others we have examined in Religio Laici, is also in keeping with the Anglican tradition. John Wild has recently summed up the complex issues of authority within the Church in his pamphlet What Is the Anglican Communion?:

As to the charge that the Anglican Communion possesses no unrestricted, irrevocable, individual, oracular judge of Faith and Order, if it is a charge, this must be admitted. The Anglican doubts whether any such authority has ever really existed particularly since the division of the Eastern Church from the Western in the eleventh century. In the present abnormal state of the Church, there is no one office or single representative body that can speak out infallibly on matters left undecided by the individual Church of the first five centuries. Nevertheless, this is far from admitting that all authority has been abrogated. The Anglican Communion is committed to

the ancient Catholic view of authority as residing only in the whole body of the Church. She has faith in modern official declarations and pronouncements only in so far as they may really represent the final judgment of this whole body through the ages.²⁰

Thus an appeal to the whole Church is the only adequate basis for the establishment of a tradition:

In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way
To learn what unsuspected Ancients say:
For 'tis not likely we shou'd higher Soar
In search of Heav'n, than all the Church before.

Having established this principle of authority, Dryden can now restate his belief in the limitations of Reason as a religious guide, and so his attacks upon the Deists in the more frequently quoted passages from Religio Laici fall more easily into a careful and consistent pattern.

In his Preface Dryden makes the statement that "we have not lifted up ourselves to God, by the weak Pinions of our Reason, but he has been pleased to descend to us." And in the body of his poem, he asks, "Dar'st offend Infinity?/And must the Terms of Peace be given by thee?" Man's reason is limited, and the failure to recognize and accept this is a form of religious pride. "That there is something above us, some Principle of motion, our Reason can apprehend, though it cannot discover what it is, by its own Virtue." Indeed, since man cannot understand his own real nature by use of his reason, he cannot presume to come to know "Supream Nature." "They who would prove Religion by Reason, do but weaken the cause which they endeavour to support." And Dryden comes to the conclusion that we must rely upon God's own methods, not our own, to know Him:

Let us be content at last, to know God, by his own Methods; at least so much of him, as he is pleas'd to reveal to us, in the sacred Scriptures; to apprehend them to be the word of God, is all our Reason has to do; for all beyond it is the work of Faith, which is the Seal of Heaven impres'd upon our humane understanding.

Christianity, in spite of Toland's book, does remain mysterious, and the reason must not be looked to as the great de-mystifier. Jonathan Swift, in "A Letter to a Young Clergyman," writes practically the same thing:

I do not find that you are anywhere directed in the canons or articles to attempt explaining the mysteries of the Christian religion. And indeed since Providence intended there should be mysteries, I do not see how it can be agreeable to piety, orthodoxy or good sense, to go about such a work. For to me there seems a manifest dilemma in the case: if you explain them, they are mysteries no longer: if you fail, you have laboured to no purpose. What I should think most reasonable and safe for you to do upon this occasion is, upon solemn days, to deliver the doctrine as the Church holds it and confirm it by Scripture.²¹

Read against this background of the Anglican tradition, the opening lines of Religio Laici acquire increased significance:

Dim, as the borrow'd beams of Moon and Stars
To lonely, weary, wandering Travellers,
Is Reason to the Soul: And as on high,
Those rowling Fires discover but the Sky
Not light us here; So Reason's glimmering Ray
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
But guide us upward to a better Day.
And as these nightly Tapers disappear
When Day's bright Lord ascends our Hemisphere:
So Pale grows Reason at Religions sight;
So dyes, and so dissolves in Supernatural Light.

As he phrases his point of view several lines later, "Reason saw not, till Faith sprung the Light." His objection to the Deists rests principally upon their seeming confidence in reaching Heaven through their own efforts; they do not attend upon Faith, but charge ahead

believing Reason is adequate artillery for taking the Kingdom of Heaven:

Thus Man by his own strength to Heaven wou'd soar:
And wou'd not be Oblig'd to God for more.
Vain, wretched Creature, how art thee misled
To think thy Wit these God-like Notions bred!

The great Truths are not sieged and captured by man, but are bestowed
upon him from above:

These Truths are not the product of thy Mind,
But dropt from Heaven, and of a Nobler Kind.

The Deists, on the other hand, assume that the Truths and Rules are
"distributed alike to all by Heaven."

Mason, writing one hundred and fourteen years later, does not
concern himself with the Deists, but his concept of the range and power
of Reason is essentially the same as that found in Dryden. Reason is
limited:

No more of Deity, than Gospel light
Reveals, can ere be plain to Reason's sight
Is more reveal'd, than clearly she conceives?
Calm she submits, yet piously believes.

And in an annotation to these last two lines he traces his source from
Locke:

This sentiment is taken from Mr. Locke's opinion of the
provinces of Faith and Reason. "Whatsoever (says this
philosopher) is divine revelation ought to over-rule all
our opinions, prejudices, and interests, and hath a
right to be received with full assent. Such a sub-
mission as this of our reason to faith takes not away
the landmarks of knowledge: this shakes not the
foundations of reason; but leaves us that use of our
faculties, for which they were given." See Essay on
Human Understanding, Book IV. Chap. XVIII. Sect. 10.

Earlier in the first part of his poem Mason had said that Faith relieves
Reason from error:

That he is One, plain Reason can descry;
And when his word presents him to the eye,
Reliev'd by faith from error, still must shine
One Being indivisibly divine.

But in spite of this limitation and in spite of this need for correction from error, Reason is still capable of both necessary and valuable guidance; it must not be completely rejected:

But, though she here perceives herself confin'd,
 Let none but Atheists dare to call her blind.
 She still is Reason, still exerts the pow'r,
 By which she fixt her premises before,
 That God is truth, and this conclusion drew
 Justly, that all he speaks must needs be true,
 Though all not clear alike to her contracted view.

It is Reason which draws man to a number of conclusions: (1) that creative Power, redeeming Love and sanctifying Grace are from above; (2) that veneration is due the Son as the Father; (3) that the Comforter is sent from the Father and the Son; and (4) that though the three are equal and uncreated, the Son proceeded from the Father before all worlds. These conclusions are, of course, doctrines expressed in both the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds. The first part of Mason's poem concludes with an eleven line summary of his intention:

Thus for some truths, all Christians should receive
 Who hope salvation, I have try'd to give
 In careless metre....
 I trust, at least, that the impartial few
 Will find that doctrine, they before thought true,
 Not here disguis'd, though clad in vesture new.

Earlier in Part One, Mason examines the word trinity; he had been avoiding it because he knew that it would offend Lindsey and other members of the Socinian movement. But it is a necessary term, and meaningful if always used concurrently with unity; otherwise, Mason says, they call us Papists and Idolators who pray to three gods, while the Socinians admit only one and become Unitarians. The Anglican Faith does not refer to Trinity alone; it is involved with "one undivided, one

exalted pow'r" which resides in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Anglican Faith holds this "as Scripture held before." "But wherefore holds?" Mason asks. Man can understand this concept, the answer is given, only within the limited resources of Reason:

only as far as man
Thy mystic height of godliness may scan.

The ultimate awareness is a mystical experience partaken in a realm beyond the reach of Reason. While Mason does not discuss the nature of the mystical experience itself, his view of religious awareness allows for a consideration of its vitality and importance. Man may conceive that God gives salvation, "not for merit, but from grace," and reason alone is not sufficient. This is the attitude also expressed in his "Morning Hymn":

I

That, from refreshing sleep I rise
With health and reason blest,
Accept, great God, the sacrifice
Of thanks that warms my breast.

II

And O! may thy assisting grace
Conduct me through the day,
Lest Passion tempt, or Vice debase,
Or Vanity betray.

III

Correct each thought, each wish control
Save those thy laws approve,
And pour on my repentant soul
Thy pardon, peace and love.

This slight hymn is interesting as further evidence of Mason's firmly Protestant bias in the controversy about the nature of grace and good works. And for him the reception of grace could not be an earned benefit, but a bestowed privilege.

Man may conceive both that God gives salvation, "not for merit, but from grace," and that "from the Son divine Redemption springs." The Holy Spirit "on dove-like wings" still deigns to dart "its secret aid on each submissive heart." This "secret aid" is what his "Morning Hymn" is asking for. These blessings of grace, redemption, and secret aid really come from one source, and hence the trinary Divine nature becomes unified:

Thus, though deriv'd from one exhausting spring
Three plenteous streams abundant blessings bring,
The fountain head united with them all
We may not three, but one conjointly call.

Mason suspects that the Socinian may call this a metaphor, rather than an explanation, and his answer is "Yes; But, if a false one, prove me that it is." Mason develops this belief that all three are "one comprehensive sole Divinity," and in an annotation to p. 434, ver. 185 adds:

As a comment to my Poem, let me add to this note,
that the lines which follow from ver. 193 to
ver. 215 are intended as a concise exposition of
the Confession of Athanasius in part; and that
after a digression, principally historical, that
exposition is resumed at ver. 277, and continued
to ver. 298 where all asserted concerning the
trinal union of the Godhead is concluded.

During his "digression, principally historical," he sums up well the trinary manifestation of the one God:

God in trinal persons, trinal ways,
His one eternal majesty displays.

As is to be expected from an orthodox clergyman in the Anglican tradition, Mason bases these attitudes upon Scripture as the final authority:

I take with confidence the certain road,
That leads through Scripture up to Scripture's God.

The second part of Mason's Religio Clerici emphasizes a concern largely ignored in Dryden's poem; in accordance with the plan of the Athanasian Creed this part is to deal with the Incarnation. After a brief introduction Mason states his position, and again appeals to Scripture for authority:

And here assent, just as I first begun,
That all, who Scripture's genuine sense would scan
Must hold the Son of God both God and Man.

Christ is perfect man and Deity:

Inferior only to his Sire on high
But as invested with humanity:
Thus when with heav'nly earthly we compare,
Both soul and body claim an equal share
In our formation; so in his were join'd
Terrestrial substance with celestial mind.

"But is such union possible?" Mason is asked, and in answer he refers to Bishop Butler's Analogy of Religion (1736), a reply to the Deists and opponents of Revealed Religion, and an attempt to reconcile Revelation and Nature.²² Butler, like Mason, sought a solution in the finiteness of man's capacities, which leads to a necessary leap to some other order of awareness:

Take Butler's road;
Travel the path of plain analogy,
'Twill lead at least to probability,
And sure, when demonstration is deny'd,
Reason should in the next best thing confide.

Like Butler, Mason finds evidence for Christ's divinity in miracles and the events of His life; he charges the reader to find insufficient justification for his conclusions:

Come, ye vain worldly disputants, and read
This single portion of my general Creed!
Then say, if here I paint his portrait true,
First in an earthly, then a heav'nly view;
And when each sacred feature I define,
From scripture copying closely line by line,

I am not justified, one reason's plan,
 To deem my Saviour God, as well as Man,
 And with him to the Sire and Spirit raise
 One undivided hymn of equal praise?

Those who are not able to accept these obvious conclusions from Scriptures must, says Mason, go to America or Essex Street for the "lean" doctrine of Socinianism, and those who cannot accept the aid of "grace internal" must turn to Reason -- such solutions are rarely satisfying for long. Mason, like David, gives himself to prayer, "the true solace of the sickly soul,/When rul'd by Resignation's meek control." And so he resigns himself with humility and gratitude to the grace of his Creator and Redeemer, and Comforter:

Father, Redeemer, Comforter Divine!
 This humble off'ring to thy equal shrine
 Here thy unworthy servant grateful pays
 Of undivided thanks, united praise,
 For all these mercies, which at birth began,
 And ceaseless flow'd through life's long-lengthen'd span;
 Propt my frail frame through all the varied scene,
 With health enough for many a day serene;
 Enough of science clearly to discern
 How few important truths the wisest team;
 Enough of arts ingenious to employ
 The vacant hours, when graver studies cloy;
 Enough of wealth to serve each honest end,
 The poor to succour, or assist a friend;
 Enough of faith in Scripture to descry,
 That the sure hope of immortality,
 Which only can the fear of death remove,
 Flows from the fountain of Redeeming Love.

Dryden's Religio Laici received attention, not only from Mason, but also from the Earl of Roscommon, whose poem On Mr. Dryden's "Religio Laici" is a significant comment upon the attitudes expressed by Dryden:

Begon you Slaves, you idle Vermin go,
 Fly from the Scourges, and your Master know;
 Let free, impartial Men from Dryden learn
 Mysterious Secrets of a high Concern,
 And weighty Truths, solid convincing Sense,
 Explain'd by unaffected Eloquence.

What can you (Reverend Levi) here take ill?
 Men still had Faults, and Men will have them still;
 He that hath none, and lives as Angels do,
 Must be an Angel; but what's that to you?

While mighty Lewis finds the Pope too great,
 And dreads the Yoke of his imposing Seat,
 Our Sects a more Tyrannick Pow'r assume,
 And wou'd for Scorpions change the Rods of Rome;
 That Church detain'd the Legacy Divine;
 Fanaticks cast the Pearls of Heav'n to Swine:
 What then have honest thinking Men to do,
 But chuse a Mean between th' Usurping two?

Nor can th' Egyptian Patriarch blame my Muse,
 Which for his Firmness does his Heat excuse;
 Whatever Councils have approv'd his Creed,
 The Preface sur was his own Act and Deed.
 Our Church will have that Preface read (you'll say)
 'Tis true, But so she will th' Apocrypha;
 And such as can believe them freely may.
 But did that God (so little understood)
 Whose darling Attribute is being good,
 From the dark Womb of the rude Chaos bring
 Such various Creatures, and make Man their King;
 Yet leave his Fav'rite, Man, his chiefest Case,
 More wretched than the vilest insects are?

O! how much happier and more safe are they?
 If helpless Millions must be doom'd a Prey
 To Yelling Furies, and for ever burn
 In that sad Place from whence is no Return,
 For Unbelief in one they never knew,
 Or for not doing what they cou'd not do!
 The very Fiends know for what Crime they fell;
 (And so do all their Followers that Rebell:)
 If then, a blind, well-meaning Indian stray,
 Shall the great Gulph be show'd him for the Way?

For better Ends our kind Redeemer dy'd,
 Or the fall'n Angels Rooms will be but ill supply'd.

That Christ, who at the great deciding Day
 (For He declares what He resolves to say)
 Will Damn the Goats, for their ill-natur'd Faults,
 And save the Sheep, for Actions not for thoughts,
 Hath too much Mercy to send Men to Hell,
 For humble Charity, and hoping well.

To what Stupidity are Zealots grown,
 Whose inhumanity profusely shown
 In Damning Crowds of Souls, may Damn their own
 I'll err at least on the securer Side,
 A convert free from Malice and from Pride.

This poem is interesting because of its firm declaration of the Anglican tradition as a media via as well as its concern with the problem of Athanasius' Preface. Roscommon's objection to the literal meaning of the clause from the Preface (and, unlike Dryden and Mason, he makes no attempt to attach a metaphorical meaning to the passage) is on the grounds that it is unreasonable. To him, as to other writers in the Anglican tradition, "right reason" affords a powerful guide; that which is against it is to be regarded with suspicion as smacking of the non-essential in the extreme.

In his hatred of the Extremists and Zealots (particularly the Puritans) Roscommon echoes Dryden in his Preface: "Since the Bible has been translated into our Tongue, they have us'd it so, as if their business was not to be sav'd but to be damn'd by its Contents." Fanatics and Schismatics have brought back from Geneva "the rigid opinions and imperious discipline of Calvin, to graffe upon our Reformation," and have subverted the Scriptures to support their own strange beliefs. "Thus Sectaries, we may see, were born with teeth, foul-mouth'd and scurrilous from their infancy: and if Spiritual Pride, Venome, Violence, Contempt of Superiours and Slander had been the marks of Orthodox Belief; the Presbytery and the rest of our Schismaticks, which are their Spawn, were always the most visible Church in the Christian World." This is a particularly violent attitude, partly political in impetus, but it does express the Anglican dislike of Extremists of any sort. Roscommon's desire to walk a middle way -- "What then have honest thinking Men to do,/But chuse a Mean between th' Usurpting two?" -- is reminiscent of Herbert's concept of the

British Church: "A fine aspect in fit array,/Neither too mean, nor yet too gay,/Shows who is best." Thus, although there have been many changes which shifted and redecored the immediate interests of the Anglican Church, there emerges from a study of these works an awareness of a tradition which, though incapable of definition and difficult of description, does continue through the eighteenth century.

The attempt to articulate a media via for the Church of England is usually confined by historians and literary critics to the seventeenth century and even, upon occasions, earlier. Grierson has suggested that Queen Elizabeth had committed the Church to a via media, not so much as a deliberate return to primitive Christianity, but as convenient political compromise, and that it was Richard Hooker (1554?-1601) who "gave the English Church a philosophical basis."²³ And it was Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680) who stated that the Anglican Church stood "on the grounds of Scripture, right Reason, and the best and purest Antiquity."²⁴ These are precisely the characteristics of the Anglican tradition -- "Scripture, right Reason, and the best and purest Antiquity" -- with which Dryden in 1682 and Mason in 1796 were both immediately concerned. During the eighteenth century the media via of the Anglican tradition was neither so sufficiently established that it could be uncritically taken for granted nor so disinterestedly accepted that it could be completely ignored. In spite of controversies about toleration, Church polity, and natural morality, the Church was still concerned with articulating its position on the traditional issues of religious experience. The brief quotations from contemporary theologians have indicated that this concern was not confined to only Dryden and Mason. Nor was it of no interest to other poets of the age, and an

exploration of the extent and kind of this interest will be the intention of the rest of this study.

The brief quotations from contemporary theologians have also shown that the attitudes expressed by Dryden and Mason have been in keeping with those of the Anglican tradition. This tradition remains vital during the century, and colors much verse, both in terms of what Neill calls "attitude" and "atmosphere." Concerning the Creed of Athanasius, the authority of Scripture and of Tradition, the role of Reason, the Trinity, Mysticism, the Incarnation, Prayer and Resignation Dryden and Mason reflect what perhaps most conveniently can be called Anglican "attitudes." Other poets during the century reflect more pronouncedly an Anglican "atmosphere."

CHAPTER III

Tell me bright Boy, tell me my golden Lad,
Whither away so frolic? why so glad?
What all thy Wealth in counsel? all thy state?
Are Husks so dear? troth 'tis a mighty rate.

Richard Crashaw, Divine Epigram on Luke 15

While I to nobler themes aspire,
To nobler subjects tune my lyre;
Those Saints my numbers grace
Who to their Lord were ever dear,
To whom the church each rolling year
Her solemn honours pays.

Samuel Johnson, Upon the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude

An Anglican atmosphere is even more difficult to describe than an Anglican attitude. Whereas - following Stephen Neill's dichotomy - I have used attitude to apply to the kind of writing which, at least to a certain extent, indicates an awareness and a concern with some of the issues of belief, I should like to use atmosphere to apply to the structure, tone, and emotional intensity of the poems. This sounds like a convenient and simple distinction between content and form, but something more is implied. Poems have a habit of refusing to gather themselves into either convenient and simple groups or convenient and simple segments. This is particularly true of religious poems, and with them we face the additional problem of what we understand by religious poetry. Charles Glicksberg has gone so far as to say that "religious poetry is actually a contradiction in terms, unless we mean by it poetry that is explicitly designed for purposes of indoctrination." But whenever this kind of writing takes place, the product, he says, ceases to be poetry and becomes virtual dogma. "Hence the paradoxical conclusion that all religious poetry, despite its subject matter, is 'secular' in meaning."¹

Obviously this conclusion is based upon a precise poetic theory, and upon an equally careful statement of the relationship between the religious experience itself and the expression of it. Glicksberg elaborates upon his understanding of this relationship:

The realm of "spirit" lies outside the reach of the creative imagination. If it is to be captured and communicated, it can only be done by means of dramatic suggestions, pregnant hints, audacious

metaphors, sensory images, and a system of what Baudelaire called symbolic correspondences. The "spirit", in other words, must be brought down to earth, given flesh and blood, body and roots and a local habitation, before it can be comprehended.²

In general Glicksberg's theory seems to be perfectly sound; the central impetus to all creative work is, in varying degrees, to capture a kind of awareness that is not readily expressed. In religious work spirit is as handy a term as any to suggest the realm of the ultimately incomprehensible and inexpressible. The attempt at expression, at crystallization, must be, as Baudelaire suggested, by means of an elaborate system of correspondences. But here a refinement to this theory may be helpful. This system of correspondences is determined by the tradition in which the poet is writing. It is characterized by the proclivity to notice certain aspects of the religious experience and to ignore others, to comment in a certain way, to elect specific materials for poetic office. In other words, the tradition will color what kind of suggestions are dramatic, and just how dramatic, what kinds of hints can healthily carry the meaning, what kind of metaphors appear audacious and what images are sensory. The realm of the spirit must be brought down, but it must be brought down in some form and shape. The form and shape elected give evidence of the tradition.

Form seems to provide the distinguishing characteristic of art. Ernst Cassirer has suggested that "art is indeed expressive, but it cannot be expressive without being formative."³ Even the lyric poet cannot rely entirely upon emotion, upon the "thing" he is describing. In the world of art "all our feelings undergo a sort of transubstantiation with respect to their essence and their character. The passions themselves are relieved of their material burden." Art

presents the range and intensity of the "motions of the human soul," but, Cassirer suggests, "the form, the measure and rhythm, of these motions is not comparable to any single state of emotion." The effect is a dynamic process, a formative process in which the emotion is not necessarily embalmed, but allowed to gather to itself whatever images and symbols and rhythms it demands. "In the work of the artist the power of passion itself has been made a formative power."⁴

Form and shape give evidence of the atmosphere in which a poem is written, but atmosphere is more than these; it also involves style. The study of style is frequently a comment upon the author: it is personal and individual. Yet style, in a more general sense, is more than personal. Wylie Sypher has said that "a style is a vocabulary," and has then pointed out that this vocabulary, like that of a national language, is not just an idiolect, but is a means of communication for a society; "it may well be the most sensitive and explicit vocabulary of any society."⁵ The society understands because of the vocabulary, but vocabulary includes more than arrangements of phonemes; it includes gesture, pause, and intonation. So in poetry, the vocabulary includes arrangement of imagery, rhythm, and contrast. And these are given structural significance by a morphology and order by a syntax. Sypher says, "if style is a vocabulary, it is also syntax; and syntax expresses the way in which a society feels, responds, thinks, communicates, dreams, escapes. By tracing changes in literary syntax we are able to interpret the varying modes of consciousness in different eras of European culture."⁶ This is his method in Four Stages of Renaissance Style, and it can be reapplied to poetry of the eighteenth

century in order to trace the similarity in the mode of consciousness -- specifically in the Anglican tradition.

It is again convenient that two works of similar material and interest, one at the beginning of the century and one towards the end, present themselves for inspection. These are the Hymns for all the Festivals in the Year by Bishop Thomas Ken, published in 1721 as part of the first volume of his complete poetical works, and the Hymns and Spiritual Songs of the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England by Christopher Smart, 1765. These two collections are basically similar, although, as we shall see, they do not cover exactly the same occasions. The poems in them have many points of resemblance and a number of points of difference. These latter are the result, obviously, of two main forces: (1) the personal style of the poet, and (2) the sensibility of the society in which he lived. For the present essay, since it is not a close examination of the development of individual poets, these points of difference can be at present pretty well ignored. The immediate interest is the discovery of just what characteristics these two collections of poems have in common. Secondly, it will be worthwhile to explore how these characteristics relate to other writers of the Anglican tradition and how they are reflected in various other writers during the century. This is again a rather elementary scientific procedure of observing things which claim to belong to a group, of attempting to describe their more outstanding characteristics, and of then concluding that the presence of these characteristics provide the criterion for determining whether others belong in the same group.

It is not to be expected that much dogma will be found in these particular collections of poems; in no sense are they ostensibly apologetic. The peculiarly Anglican characteristics will emerge in structure, tone, imagery, and feeling -- hence the use of the word atmosphere in connection with this chapter. In fact it may seem strange to rely for valuable information upon collections by two quite different men, yet each was thoroughly devoted in his own way both to God and to the Established Church.

Thomas Ken was born in 1637, and attended Oxford where he received his M.A. in 1664 and his D.D. in 1679; he was consecrated Bishop of Bath and Wells on 25 January 1685 -- the Feast of St. Paul's Conversion -- in Lambeth Palace Chapel by Archbishop Sancroft. On that occasion his contemporary, Bishop Burnet, recorded the following description:

Ken succeeded Mews in Bath and Wells -- a man of an ascetic course of life, and yet of a very lively temper, but too hot and sudden. He had a very edifying way of preaching; but it was more apt to move the passions than to instruct, so that his sermons were rather beautiful than solid; yet his way in them was very taking. The King seemed fond of him; and by him and Turner the Papists hoped that great progress might be made in gaining, or at least deluding, the clergy.⁷

Ken did have a strong "Catholic" tendency -- Fairchild notes it in the poet's belief that the supreme vehicle of grace is the Holy Eucharist, expressed in his poem "On the Eucharist," and in his reverence for the Mother of God⁸ -- but it did not extend to favoring Papists, either in Church or State; Burnet's fears, coming from a Whig at a critical period in Church history, were unfounded. Ken proved a devout and

active bishop; he was one of the Seven Bishops who petitioned against the Declaration of Indulgence in 1688, and in April 1691, having refused to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary, he was deprived of his see, and along with the other non-jurors went into virtual retirement, although he continued to write and became involved in Church matters whenever possible.⁹ Thus his life was one of active concern with the Church, both as a profession and as a source of spiritual fulfillment. Fairchild says "Ken not only believes in the doctrines and practises [*sic*] of Holy Church, but finds them ever-flowing springs of poetic stimulation."¹⁰

Christopher Smart, on the other hand, first emerges as a religious poet half-way through the century, in 1750, when he was already twenty-eight. In that year he won the first Seatonian prize. This prize was an annual award made possible by a legacy left by Thomas Seaton (1684-1741), vicar of Ravenstone. Seaton himself had published a collection of religious verse, The Devotional Life Render'd Familiar, Easy, and Pleasant, in Several Hymns upon the Most Common Occasions of Human Life (1734), and he appears to have been a devout and public-spirited clergyman. But little is known of his biography; the editor of Musae Seatonianae (1772) records that "the anecdotes of his life which are known are but few, and indeed not very interesting." His main achievement was the Prize, established by his Will. The pertinent part of that Will reads:

I give my Kislingbury estate to the University of Cambridge forever; the rents of which shall be disposed of yearly by the vice-chancellor for the time being, as he the vice-chancellor, the

master of Clare-Hall, and the Greek professor for the time being, or any two of them, shall agree. Which three persons shall give out a subject, which subject shall for the first year be one or other of the perfections or attributes of the Supreme Being, and so the succeeding years, till the subject is exhausted; and afterwards the subject shall be either Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, etc., or whatever else may be judged by the vice-chancellor, master of Clare-Hall, and Greek professor to be most conducive to the honour of the Supreme Being and recommendation of virtue. And they shall yearly dispose of the rent of the above estate to that master of arts, whose poem on the subject given shall be best approved by them. Which poem I ordain to be always in English, and to be printed, the expense of which shall be deducted out of the product of the estate, and the residue given as a reward for the composer of the poem, or ode, or copy of verses.¹²

Smart won the first prize in 1750, and won again in 1751, 1752, 1753 and 1755. Much of this poetry is written in an inflated Miltonic blank verse, but there are a number of things in them worthy of attention; Havens, for example, points out that "Smart's Seatonian prize poems had considerable influence on the religious blank verse of the late eighteenth century."¹³ In their study of Smart Ainsworth and Noyes have noticed that "especially successful in the Seatonian prize poems are the sections that describe the more sublime creations of the Supreme Being, or the more terrifying aspects of His power."¹⁴ It is this acute awareness of the divine forces around and outside him that we notice in his Hymns and Spiritual Songs. In spite of the usual description of him as a bibulous and irresponsible hack who spent a number of years in a madhouse, Smart was an intensely devout and devoted man. He has been described by one critic as "a plump, cheerful, lively little man; a Tory and an Anglican, but neither to

excess...."¹⁵ Fairchild has written, "One can argue that Smart's Christianity was incomplete and imperfectly balanced, but one cannot deny that it was authentic within its limits...", and later, "He was always, however, a deeply pious man."¹⁶ But the best comment upon Smart's acceptance and reputation as a poet who, in spite of a somewhat ill-regulated life, did catch the glory of God, is to be found in "An Epigram, Written by Mr. G----" included in A Collection of Original Poems (1755) by Samuel Derrick. It is a light-hearted comparison of Derrick (1724-1769), translator, critic and editor of Dryden's works, with Smart:

Contradiction we find both in Derrick and Smart,
Which manifests neither can write from the heart;
The latter, which readers may think somewhat odd,
Tho' devoted to wine, sings the glories of God:
The former lives sober, altho' no divine;
Yet merrily carols the praises of wine;
Here let us a moment lay by our surprise;
And calmly survey where the preference lies;
Derrick foolishly revels in fancy'd delights;
But Smart, for the sake of a legacy, writes.

Smart, then, although not committed to the Church as a profession nor dedicated to the "ascetic course of life" which Burnet noted about Ken, was early involved in religious poetry of an orthodox and tradition kind and was fundamentally sensitive and serious about the "glories of God." And this characteristic was obvious and known during his lifetime.

The two collections have some immediate and important differences. Ken's Hymns is slightly shorter than Smart's collection. It contains 32 hymns, covering the usual and expected feasts of the Church calendar. Most of these hymns are long, and so the entire collection runs to over 200 pages in the 1721 edition.¹⁷ Smart's collection contains 35 hymns.

Of these, 6 are on subjects not directly related to the Scriptures; 5 of them are on political and patriotic occasions: "King Charles the Martyr" (V), "The Presentation of Christ in the Temple" (VI), "The King's Restoration" (XVII), "The Accession of King George III" (XXVI), and "The Fifth of November" (XXIX); the first hymn is on the "New Year." Ken's collection included only 2 hymns on these occasions: "On King Charles the Martyr" and "On the 29th of May, being the Day of the King's Restoration." This means that in Ken's collection there is 1 poem which has no parallel version in Smart's collection -- "On the Purification" -- and that there are 4 in Smart's collection for which there are no parallels in Ken's. There are 31 poems common to both. It is these 31 which will attract most of our attention. Ken's hymns seem to follow no particular order. It opens with "On the Annunciation" and continues to "On Christmas Day," but "On Whitsunday" (9) and "On Trinity Sunday" (10) come before "On Ash Wednesday." This failure to arrange the poems in order of the cycle of the ecclesiastical year is not unusual; both Gillman and Jefferson found such an arrangement in Heber's Hymns (1827) a significant innovation.¹⁸ But Heber was anticipated in his arrangement by Smart. His collection opens with a hymn to the New Year, followed by "Circumcision" and "Epiphany." The final hymn is "The Holy Innocents" (28 December), which in Ken's collection is number 15.

One of the poems to have parallel versions in the two collections is that in celebration of Christ's birth; in Ken's collection it is number 2, "Christmas"; in Smart's it is number XXXII, "The Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Ken opens with an invocation:

Celestial Harps prepare
 To sound your loftiest air;
 You choral Angels at the throne,
 Your customary hymns postpone;
 Of glorious spirits, all ye orders nine,
 To sute a hymn, to study chords combine.

This is a formal and austere beginning for a poem celebrating what is later claimed as a startling and intensely moving instant of history. It indicates the developing classical tradition in which Ken wrote, but which he qualified by his own Christian background. The Muses are alluded to, but they are carefully kept within the framework of the Christian firmament. The poem continues with a charge to perform this day music of a nobler ring:

You all your happy days,
 Pay tributary praise,
 God's mighty works you fully view,
 And give your Maker praises due;
 This day a nobler theme your powers employs
 Deserving noblest hymn, chord, love and joys.

This day (for you well know,
 Our time in flux below),
 You Sons of God together met,
 On fix'd day which Godhead set;
 This day God sent His Son to save mankind,
 You to adore this rising are enjoin'd.

There is then a stanza mentioning the first announcement to the shepherds, and this is related to man at the present time:

You wish your heavenly ray,
 Gild the expanse this day,
 You overlooking all the earth,
 To all sang God Incarnate's birth;
 Fill with your splendours the expanse again,
 Re-sing this day the same angelic strain.

The harps are commanded to hymn, not the crucifixion, but the birth. They are urged to "lead the way" to Bethlehem and to describe the wonder of the Christchild. The poet will retire in quiet worship:

I'll to my cell retire,
 In silence God admire,
 Who vilest sinners to redeem,
 Thus veil'd this Majestatic beam;
 And while I in prostration speechless lie,
 My love up to the Mystery shall fly.

It is love which is offered to Christ as worship. The Angels sing the glories of the birth, but so do the Saints who "love God most" and "sing the noblest lay":

Love on ambitious wing
 Soar'd up to hear them sing;
 And though it could not reach the height,
 Yet when it met the Sons of Light,
 It irresistibly would them entreat
 The hymns of competition to repeat.

Love would strict notice take
 Of a Saint's heaven-ward wake,
 Watch openings of the heavenly gate,
 Through that to eye the blissful state;
 How God this day in brightest glory shines,
 Fresh joys diffusing o'er the heavenly lines.

Love is not just an offering, but also a way of understanding; by watching the "openings of the heavenly gate" it comes to know the heavenly Kingdom; it affords a way of salvation. God himself is love, and so that amount of love which man shares is a part of the eternal. But love, however genuine, however quietly profound, must discover expression:

My love when back it came,
 Brought supplemental flame;
 Yet could not Jesus' Love conceive,
 But my despondence to relieve,
 Since hymns all fell too low, said, Love would best
 By copying Jesus' graces be exprest.

The poet would combine both hymns and imitation of Jesus in his praise:

My love would yet incline,
 Together both to join;
 All praise to God, Who for our sake,
 Of man's frail nature would partake;
 Born poor, to teach us riches to despise,
 Which worldly souls insensate idolize.

Then follow three stanzas of praise for the sinless presence of the "God-man." He taught man to rise above lust and the senses, and gave himself as an example of a heavenly mind.

God-man I thee adore,
 And from thy Love implore,
 Against all sin a flagrant zeal,
 Yet joys of pardon when I feel,
 Sin tempts me to rejoice, which drew God down,
 To raise vile sinners to a heavenly crown.

The poem ends with a formal declaration of praise for the God who took it upon himself to come in all humility into the world which God had created, and to share in it with man:

With joy I praises sing,
 To our great humble King;
 Thou Heaven didst leave for love of me,
 May I leave all for love of Thee,
 With Saints above this day I'll bear my part,
 O may I Thee incarnate in my heart.

This incarnation of Christ in the believer's heart, as He was incarnated in the believer's own world, is also the context of the final stanza in Smart's hymn "The Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ":

God all-bounteous, all-creative,
 Whom no ills from good dissuade,
 Is incarnate, and a native
 Of the very world he made.

The mystery of the birth lies in Christ as God humbling himself to become man, in the paradox of the powerful Saviour coming as a helpless child:

O Most Mighty! O Most Holy!
 Far beyond the seraph's thought,
 Art thou then so mean and lowly
 As unheeded prophets taught?

O the magnitude of meekness!
 Worth from worth immortal spring;
 O the strength of infant weakness,
 If eternal is so young!

This magnanimous mystery resolves doubt and evokes love:

If so young and thus eternal,
 Michael tune the shepherd's reed,
 Where the scenes are ever vernal,
 And the lives be love indeed!

See the God blasphem'd and doubted
 In the schools of Greece and Rome;
 See the pow'rs of darkness routed,
 Taken at their utmost gloom.

Through participation in this mystery nature assumes new color and life:

Nature's decorations glisten
 Far above their usual time;
 Birds on box and laurels listen,
 And so near the cherubs hymn.

Boreas now no longer winters
 On the desolated coast;
 Oaks no more are riv'n in splinters
 By the whirlwind and his host.

Spinks and ouzles sing sublimely,
 "We too have a Saviour born,"
 Whiter blossoms burst untimely
 On the blest Mosaic thorn.

The final stanza has been called by J.M. Murry "a glimpse of simple and incredible purity,"¹⁹ and Ainsworth and Noyes quote it as the most lyric of all of Smart's passages concerning themselves with the spirit of nature and with God's creatures.²⁰ It is certainly representative of Smart's acute awareness of the divinity in the objects around him and of his sensitivity to the glory of God.

The Incarnation has always appeared, especially to poets, to be the most perfect expression of the mystery of man's nature. The terrible burden of both mortality and eternity is here symbolized. This union of two conflicting natures supplies the tension for the human predicament, and an aesthetic for the bringing down, as Glicksberg put it, of the spirit into the local habitation. "Whatever else religion may be," John Livingston Lowes has written,

"it involves the attempt somehow to grasp the unseen and that which we designate as the eternal. But the unseen and the eternal...must, in order to be intelligible to finite minds, be translated into terms of the seen and the temporal...." This is the mystical problem of which the poet is painfully aware. "The central element of all poetry which has religious significance," Lowes continues, "is precisely that imaginative transformation of the unseen which is felt to be eternal into terms of things which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled. "It is exactly this gesture," Lowes concludes, "which underlines the central doctrine of Christianity, the profoundly imaginative conception of the Incarnation...the supreme translation of infinite into finite, of unseen into seen."²¹ The sense of the inward miracle of the Incarnation is caught in the middle English poem:

A God and yet a man?
 A Maid and yet a Mother?
 Wit wonders what wit can
 Conceive this or the other.

A God, and can He die?
 A dead man, can He live?
 What wit can well reply?
 What reason Reason give?

God, truth itself, doth teach it.
 Man's wit sinks too far under
 By reason's power to reach it.
 Believe, and leave to wonder.

This is, as the title of the poem says, a "Divine Paradox." But it is a divine paradox perceived by man. The knowledge and the power put on by Mary at the Annunciation is also the knowledge and the power of men. John Byrom (1692-1763), who praised Bishop Ken as a man and as a poet, is aware of the theological implications of the Incarnation in the

third stanza of his first "Hymn for Christmas Day":

Mary, prepar'd for such a chaste embrace,
Was destin'd to this miracle of grace;
In her unfolded the mysterious plan
Of man's salvation, God's becoming man;
His power with her humility combin'd,
Produc'd the sinless Saviour of mankind.

The burden placed upon Mary is, metaphorically, placed upon man as well.

The Virgin Mary, in Yeats's poem asks:

What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,
This fallen star my milk sustains,
This love that makes my heart's blood stop
Or strikes a sudden chill into my bones
And bids my hair stand up?

The attempt to formulate, to understand, and to answer this question -- the attempt to grasp man's predicament in relation to God -- has produced religious poetry.

These are the reactions of poets; to them the Incarnation is that "imaginative transformation" of the eternal into the sensuous. But these reactions are also the reactions of men of the Church; they are an orthodox and traditional response to one of the fundamental mysteries of Christianity. This wonder is expressed by a contemporary of Ken, Robert South (1634-1716), in his sermon "Jesus of Nazareth Proved the True and Only Promised Messiah":

But how was there ever any wonder comparable to this! To behold Divinity thus clothed in Flesh! The Creator of all things humbled not only to the company, but also to the cognition of His creatures! It is as if we should imagine the whole world not only represented upon, but also contained in, one of our little artificial globes; or the body of the sun enveloped in a cloud as big as a man's hand, all which would be looked upon as astonishing impossibilities, -- and yet as short of the other as the greatest finite is of an infinite, between which the disparity is immeasurable. For that God should thus in a manner transform Himself, and subdue and master all His glories to a possibility of human apprehension and

converse, the best reason would have thought it such a thing as God could not do, had it not seen it actually done. It is as it were to cancel the essential distances of things to remove the bounds of Nature, to bring Heaven and Earth, and (what is more) both ends of the contradiction, together.

Even during the eighteenth century -- that century so often thought of as wholly secular and rationalistic -- the mystery of the Incarnation held firmly to the imaginations of men. The effect of this imaginative belief will be examined later in other poems of the century which share several characteristics with the works of Ken and Smart, and which may be said to belong within the same tradition.

In the poems by Ken and by Smart we have noticed several outstanding qualities: a formality of approach to the matter of the verse, a historical awareness, an emphasis upon love as a central and mutual relationship between God and man, a quiet humbling of the personality and emotions of the poet, an acceptance of the mystery of the Incarnation, and a sharing of the historical fact by nature. There is little involved or highly colored imagery, little vivid description, little personal comment by the poet. The poems are rather objective; they are not a recording of the poet's personal ecstatic and emotional religious life. These negative qualities are equally significant. A wide range of poems reflect these qualities. One example is also called "Upon Christ's Nativity, or Christmas." It is by Rowland Watkyns, a Brecknockshire vicar whose single volume of verse, Flamma sine Fumo: or Poems Without Fictions was published in 1662:

From those dark places Christ came forth this day,
First from his Father's bosome, where he lay
Concealed till now; then from the typic Law,
Where we his manhood but by figures saw;

And lastly from his mother's womb he came
 To us a perfect God and perfect Man.
 Now in a Manger lies the eternal Word;
 The Word he is, yet can no speech afford.
 He is the Bread of Life, yet hungry lies,
 The living Fountain, yet for drink he cries;
 He cannot help, or clothe himself at need,
 Who did the Lillies cloath and Ravens feed:
 He is the Light of Lights, yet now doth shroud
 His glory with our nature as a cloud:
 He came to us a little one, that we
 Like little children might in malice be;
 Little he is, and wrapped in clouts, lest he
 Might strike us dead, if clothed with majesty.
 Christ had four beds, and those not soft, nor brave,
 The virgin's Womb, the Manger, Cross and Grave.
 The Angels sing this day; and so will I
 That have more reason to be glad than they.

The straight-forward style, the concern with the Bible story, the rejoicing in the mystery of the "God-man," the abstaining from effusion of personal emotion -- these are the characteristics that go to make up the Anglican "atmosphere" in verse. These are the characteristics noticed again in reading poems on Whitsunday by Ken, Smart, and, first of all, by George Herbert.

Herbert's "Whitsunday" opens with a formal invocation:

Listen sweet Dove unto my song,
 And spread thy golden wings in me;
 Hatching my tender heart so long,
 Till it get wing, and flie away with thee.

The second stanza concerns itself with the Biblical story:

Where is that fire which once descended
 On thy Apostles? thou didst then
 Keep open house, richly attended,
 Feasting all comers by twelve chosen men.

The next two stanzas show how nature participated in the event:

Such glorious gifts thou didst bestow,
 That th' earth did like a heav'n appeare;
 The starres were coming down to know
 If they might mend their wayes, and serve here.

The sunne, which once did shine alone,
 Hung down his head, and wisht for night,
 When he beheld twelve sunnes for one
 Going about the world, and giving light.

The fifth and sixth stanzas illustrate the significance of the event:

But since these pipes of gold, which brought
 That cordial water to our ground,
 Wore out and martyr'd by the fault
 Of these, who did themselves through their side wound,

Thou shutt'st the doore, and keep'st within;
 Scarce a good joy creeps through the chink:
 And if the braves of conqu'ring sinne
 Did not excite thee, we should wholly sink.

The final stanza is a colloquy and application to the poet and his world:

Lord, though we change, thou art the same;
 The same sweet God of love and light:
 Restore this day, for thy great name,
 Unto his ancient and miraculous right.

These same divisions, elaborated and extended, can be seen in Ken's poem on "Whit Sunday." It opens with a formal invocation presenting a specific immediate event:

O Fountain of all Grace Divine,
 Third of the co-eternal Trine,
 We on Thy sacred day
 To Thee devoutly pray,
 To Thy full praise to tune our hearts,
 That we with saints above may bear our parts.

For Thou to all the saints above,
 Art Author of both hymn and love,
 Thou dost exalt their sight
 To beatific light,
 Eternal hymn, love most intense,
 Rise from clear view of loveliness immense.

Then, as is usual in these poems by Ken, there follows an extended section in which the Biblical story, the significance, and the sharing by nature run parallel. First, Ken records how all nature received power from the Holy Spirit:

On chaos, dark, inactive, rude,
 Thou with creating force didst brood,
 Thou art to everything
 Of life and motion Spring,
 And when the world was made anew,
 From Thee all ghostly life and motion drew.

Man, like nature, must draw "life and motion" from the Holy Spirit;
 only this baptism can free man from the native stain of sin. Christ
 has sent the Holy Spirit to form, erect and control the Church:

Next to the Love God-man display'd,
 When on the Cross our Victim made;
 He none to us below,
 More infinite could show,
 Than when essential Love He chose,
 In whose soft care His Church He would repose.

The theme of love -- divine, redeeming, unifying -- is frequent in
 Ken's poems. It supplies a central focus for his poetry as love
 supplies a central focus for the relationship of God and man. The
 love is mutual; it prompts both the love of God for man as His creature,
 and the love of man for God as his creator and redeemer. Six times in
 this poem alone he speaks of it as "Essential Love." In this particular
 stanza it is explored in terms of the "tongues of flame":

Essential Love from Glory came
 To saints, in cloven tongues of flame,
 And resting on each head,
 All gifts, all graces shed,
 Sublimed them to celestial Light,
 And warm'd their love to a seraphic height.

Three stanzas are then devoted to the illuminating consequences of
 this love; gifts of divine understanding and ability:

These gifts essential Love bestow'd,
 When Jesu's votaries He o'erflow'd,
 Gifts which divinely shined
 On teachable mankind,
 And of the mysteries they taught
 An irresistible conviction wrought.

Several stanzas present the significance and worth of copying the
 qualities of love, concluding with a general summary:

Essential Love enlivens, leads,
 With sighs, groans, ardours, intercedes,
 Our frailties He relieves,
 Our slidings He retrieves,
 Devotion fervent He instils,
 And turns to God the pondus of our wills.

There is an extended section explaining love as "oil, water, wind, and fire," and then a final two stanzas of application, or colloquy:

May we, Thou God of Love, in prayer
 Persist, till in Thy Love we share;
 Thou canst no filth endure,
 Dost dwell in spirits part,
 O may we, wash'd in tears contrite,
 To temple in our souls Thy Love invite.

From Thee the grace of hymn proceeds,
 Its streams Thy fontal effluence feeds,
 All love, all praise to Thee,
 Since we Thy temples be,
 Within Thy hallow'd Temple's bound,
 Heaven-emulating hymns shall daily sound.

In contrast with Ken's poem of 174 lines, Smart's hymn of 32 lines appears at first to be a very slight work. Yet again we notice in it the elements discovered in the poems on the same occasion by Herbert and Ken. Smart's "Whitsunday" opens with a statement of the promise fulfilled:

King of sempiternal sway,
 Thou has kept thy word to-day,
 That the Comforter should come,
 That gainsayers should be dumb.

Then there are references to the Biblical story:

While the tongues of men transfus'd
 With they spirit should be loos'd,
 And untutor'd Hebrew speak,
 Latin, Arabic, and Greek.

The second stanza gives the reason for this event:

That thy praises might prevail
 On each note upon the scale,
 In each nation that is nam'd
 On each organ thou hast fram'd;

Every speech beneath the sun,
Which from Babel first begun;
Branch or leaf, or flow'r or fruit
Of the Hebrews ancient root.

The next section tells of the significance of the event:

This great miracle was wrought,
That the millions might be taught,
And themselves of hope assure
By the preaching of the poor.

The final stanza and a half is a prayer and application of the event to the poet and his world, an admittedly colonizing application which is generally thought of as representing the chauvinistic sentiments of the following century:

O thou God of truth and pow'r
Bless all Englishmen this hour;
That their language may suffice
To make nations good and wise.

Yea, the God of truth and pow'r
Blesses Englishmen this hour;
That their language may suffice
To make nations good and wise--
Wherefore then no more success--
That so much is much to bless--
Revelation is our own,
Secret things are God's alone.

Certain basic similarities can be noticed in these poems: an examination (usually immediate and vivid) of the event of the Biblical story, an examination (careful and usually theologically alert) of the significance of the event, and finally an application to the times and conditions of the writing. This structure has occurred, with reductions and extensions, in most of the poems of this study; further examples will emerge later on. So usual does this basic structure appear to be, that it gives evidence of a unifying tradition behind the writing of these poems. In part, the appeal was one of convenience: it provided a framework which placed emphasis upon the word of the Scriptures and

allowed for a discussion and colloquy. These characteristics have already been noticed in Religio Laici and Religio Clerici to be peculiar to the Anglican tradition. The structure shows the kind of thing which the poets were trying to do with religious verse.

But a further significance may be noted. Louis Martz has discovered this three-fold structure in much of the religious verse of the previous century, and has related it to the Jesuit traditions and methods of meditation.²² From Luis de la Puente's Meditations upon the Mysteries of our Holie Faith, with the Practise of Mental Prayer touching the same, which appeared in a two-volume translation by John Heigham in 1619, Martz quotes a passage outlining the structure of meditation:

1. ...with the memory to be mindefull of God our Lorde, with whom wee are to speake, and to negotiate; and to be mindefull also, of the mysterie that is to bee meditated, passing thorough the memorie, with clearnesse, and distinction, that which is to be the matter of the meditation....

2. ...with the understanding to make severall discourses, and considerations about that mysterie, inquiring, and searching out the Verities comprehended therein, with all the causes, proprieties, effectes, and circumstances that it hath, pondering them very particularly. In such sort that the Understanding may forme a true, proper, and enttire conceipt of the thing that it meditateth, and may remaine convinced, and persuaded to receive, and to embrace, those truthes that it hath meditated, to propound them to the Will, and to move it therby to exercise its Actions.

3. ...with the freedom of our will to draw forth sundry Affections, or vertuous Actes, conformable to that which the Understanding hath meditated...as are Hatred of our Selves; Sorrowe for Sinners; Confusion of our owne misery; Love of God; trust in his mercye; prayses of God; thanksgiving for benefits received; desire to obtaine true vertues... resignation of our selves to the Will of God....²³

This threefold division is followed and assumed by other writers upon the art of meditation. "Without expecting any hard and fast divisions, then," Martz concludes, "we should expect to find a formal meditation falling into three distinguishable portions, corresponding to the acts of memory, understanding, and will -- portions which we might call composition, analysis, and colloquy." The reason for the enormous popularity of the method of meditation, even among writers with little direct sympathy for the Roman Catholic Church, Marts finds in the fact that "it satisfied and developed a natural, fundamental tendency of the human mind -- a tendency to work from a particular situation, through analysis of that situation, and finally to some sort of resolution of the problems which the situation has presented." "The process of meditation, then, is not an isolated factor in their poetry; it exists, I believe, as a fundamental organizing impulse deep within the poetry."²⁴ During the central part of his book Marts brings forth an impressive number and range of poems which provide evidence for this tradition. In the final chapter he considers modern poetry against this background and discovers a strong similarity in the works of Yeats, Hopkins, and Eliot. He explains this similarity:

But perhaps this general movement of a poem only shows that meditative and poetic method are inevitably similar; that this movement from concrete place, to "question," to emotional resolution is a natural, common movement of the mind? As I have noted in the opening chapter, my point is not that meditative method created this tendency, but rather that meditative discipline cultivated this tendency of the mind; with the result that poetry written under such discipline shows a more explicit, more deliberate structure of this kind than can be found, for example, in Wordsworth.²⁵

But not only does this meditative tradition emerge from the wells of the seventeenth century into the twentieth, it also flows abundantly through much of the verse of the eighteenth. And it may be re-described and narrowed in so far as it forms a stream of the Anglican tradition. The "concrete place" is a Scriptural event, not infrequently, as has been seen, the occasion of a feast day. The "question" is an exploration of the religious significance of this event. The "emotional resolution" is a colloquy or prayer for divine guidance and assistance. This, in part, explains the interest in the feasts and festive occasions of the Church of England, for the theological awareness, and for the use of prayer and moral directive during the century. These aspects of the religious verse will be examined more fully later in this study. The immediate conclusion is that what Martz has traced as a meditative tradition in seventeenth-century verse can also be discovered in the religious verse of the next century, and that its more important characteristics can be seen through an examination of the basic structure of this verse.

An early, but obvious, example of this form is found in Henry More's "An Hymn Upon the Nativity of Christ." More (1614-1687) has come to be known as a theologian and leader of the Cambridge Platonists. However, during his lifetime he shrank from contemporary theological controversy and refused preferment within the Church, including the offer of two bishoprics. His life and works are a superb model of the scholarly and self-effacing Anglican clergyman. His "Hymn Upon the Nativity" evinces other similarities with the poems on the same subject by Ken, Smart and Watkyns, as well as the basic similarity of structure. In this poem More himself marginally glosses the first 4 stanzas as "The Historical Narration":

The Holy Son of God most High,
 For Love of Adam's lapsed Race,
 Quit the sweet Pleasures of the Sky,
 To bring us to that Happy Place.

His Robes of Light he laid aside,
 Which did his Majesty adorn,
 And the frail state of Mortals tried,
 In Humane Flesh and Figure born.

Down from above this Day-Star slid,
 Himself in living Earth t'entomb,
 And all his Heav'nly Glory hid
 In a pure lowly Virgin's Womb.

Whole Quires of Angels sing
 The Mystery of his Sacred Birth,
 And the blest News to Shepherds bring,
 Filling their watchful Souls with Mirth.

Then he glosses the final 6 stanzas as "The Application to the
 Improvement of Life":

The Son of God thus Man became,
 That Men the Sons of God might be,
 And by their second Birth again,
 A likeness to His Deity.

Lord give us humble and pure Minds,
 And fill us with thy Heav'nly Love,
 That Christ thus in our Hearts enshrin'd,
 We all may be born from above.

And being thus Regenerate
 Into a Life and Sense Divine,
 We all Ungodliness may hate,
 And to thy living Word encline.

That nourish'd by that Heav'nly Food
 To manly stature we may grow,
 And steadfastly pursue what's good,
 That all our high Descent may know.

Grant we thy Seed, may never yield
 Our Souls to soil with any Blot,
 But still stand Conquerors in the field,
 To shew his Power who us begot.

That after this our Warfare's done,
 And travails of a toilsome Stage,
 We may in Heav'n with Christ thy Son
 Enjoy our promis'd Heritage.

Here in this seventeenth-century Anglican poem are the characteristics which have been noticed, developed and extended in the religious poems of the eighteenth: the form, with its division into historical narrative and application, the refraining from exaggerated or highly colored imagery, the unobtrusive rhythmic and rhyme schemes, the devotion to "Heav'nly Love," the importance of the Incarnation or "Mystery of his Sacred Birth," the failure to exhibit the personality or the emotions of the poet, the tone of quiet dignity and reverence. These are the rather nebulous qualities which can best be summed up as the "Anglican atmosphere," and which we have found in Ken and Smart and which can be found in many poets between them. These are the qualities which were noted in an extract by Lord David Cecil quoted earlier in this study. He is discussing George Herbert:

Herbert has an additional interest as the most complete exponent in our poetry of the peculiar genius of the English Church. His piety is an eminently Anglican piety; refined, dignified, with a deliberate appreciation of the values of style and ceremony, but subdued and restrained; its pure outline and quiet tints, a strong contrast to the rich colours and profound incense-flames of Crashaw.²⁶

This critical description, then, seems applicable not only to the poems of Herbert, but to those of Ken and Smart, to -- in other words -- a tradition. It is a tradition of, as Ken put it in his "Holy Innocents," love, prayer, meditation, and praise:

Both by their humble Infant taught,
No worldly joy, wealth, honour sought,
To raptures ne'er aspired,
Lived humble, and retired,
In love, prayer, meditation, praise,
Form'd by His inimitable rays.

A further expression of the same atmosphere is found in Smart's Hymn XXXI, "St. Thomas":

Lo! those of God are blessed most,
Which, simple and serene,
Believe the Holy Ghost,
That operates unseen.

* * *

Tho' seventeen hundred years remote,
We can perform our part,
And to the Lord devote
The tribute of our heart.

O Lord, the slaves of sin release,
Their ways in Christ amend,
Our faith and hope increase,
Our charities extend.

Make thou our alter'd lives of use
To all the skirts around,
And purge from each abuse
Thy church, so much renoun'd.

* * *

Thy people in that choir employ
Whose business is above,
In gratitude and joy,
In wonder, praise, and love.

This last line from the end of the eighteenth century echoes the tradition expressed by John Donne in the seventeenth: "All divinity is love, or wonder."

In order to establish this as a tradition in which the characteristics are carried through a number of poems during a considerable period of time, and in order to clarify further our understanding of the Anglican atmosphere, it will be helpful to examine several more poems covering a wider range of dates and authors. There is, for example, an interesting parallel between "Ascension-Hymn" by Henry Vaughan (1622-1695) and that by Smart. Vaughan's glimpse of eternity revealed not just a great ring of pure and endless light but also a firm comprehension of the value and integrity of the Anglican Church. From a number of angles he is a central figure

in the cross-currents of religious poetry. Several critics have detected a set of qualities unifying Vaughan with an Anglican tradition of the late seventeenth century. Louis Martz has suggested that "in their habit of meditating on the 'creatures', it is possible to find a fundamental link between Vaughan, Marvell, Traherne, and even Milton."²⁷ And Rose MacAulay, after discussing the Anglican verse of Herbert, adds, "Vaughan carried on this new Anglican tradition. Indeed, he modelled his religious poetry too closely on that of 'that blessed man, Mr. George Herbert,' which gave it probably a more ecclesiastical note than was natural to his own temper." And later in her essay she suggests about Vaughan, "Less ecclesiastically Anglican than Herbert, he is more English, for he carries on to some degree the English poetic tradition of seeking images and inspiration in fields, woods, flowers, and streams."²⁸ While this last comment, written thirty years ago, cannot be regarded as a definitive criticism of the work of Vaughan, it nevertheless establishes that for several reasons Vaughan was a remarkable part of the Anglican tradition. His "Ascension-Hymn" reveals his affiliation and sympathies. It is based upon the sensitive awareness of the historical fact, and upon an awareness of the very great difference between eternity (still described in imagery of light) and the human predicament:

They are all gone into the world of light!
 And I alone sit lingring here;
 Their very memory is fair and bright,
 And my sad thoughts doth clear.

This resignation to the sad thoughts of the human dilemma is a reaction of considerable significance within the Anglican tradition. As we shall see later, many poets deliberately select it as the theme for their poems, and in many it is implied to be a mystical response.

To define precisely the nature and intensity of this response in the poetry of Vaughan is particularly difficult because, as Garner has pointed out, "Vaughan's characteristic and most intense expression of religious experience may be described as longing rather than as realization," and yet, Garner adds later in his study, Vaughan "nowhere carries his longing to the point of equating it with its mystical object, as does Crashaw."²⁹ The exact nature of Vaughan's mystical experience is not of immediate concern to this study,³⁰ but the generally accepted comments upon it establish two things of value:

1) a mystical response to the flesh and the spirit forms an important and central part of the Anglican tradition, and 2) this mystical response differs from the more intense and more extreme Roman Catholic tradition. The extent of this strain of mysticism during the eighteenth century will be explored in a later section of this study; the immediate concern is the detection of the atmosphere of quiet moderation, indeed mediation, between the flesh and the spirit as an essential and valuable part of the Anglican tradition. For, while the response looks towards the illumination of eternity, it also has the machinery to provide the poet with the valuable means of bringing down the world of the spirit for comprehension. Unlike extreme views, the Anglican tradition does not blind itself to the world of the flesh by a passionate gesture towards eternity. It seems to be this ability, both in terms of imagery and -- more important -- in terms of sensibility, to discover the eternal in the temporal which permits poetry to be a vital vehicle of Anglican expression.

Vaughan's "Ascension-Hymn" is marked by the turning to nature for imagery:

It glows and glitters in my cloudy brest
 Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
 Or these faint beams in which this hill is drest,
 After the sun's remove.

And this understanding of the spiritual through its manifestation in
 the natural shapes the imagery of the following stanza:

He that hath found some fledg'd birds nest, may know
 At first sight, if the bird be flown;
 But what fair Well, or Grove he sings in now,
 That is to him unknown.

The poem commends the virtues of humility and love:

O holy hope! and high humility,
 High as the Heavens above!
 These are your walks, and you have show'd them me
 To kindle my cold love.

The concluding two stanzas form a prayer for the spiritual freedom,
 again using imagery of nature.

O Father of eternal life, and all
 Created glories under thee!
 Resume thy spirit from this world of thrall
 Into true liberty.

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
 My perspective (still) as they pass,
 Or else remove me hence unto that hill,
 Where I shall need no gloss.

These characteristics can be found in other poems written at various
 times throughout the century.

The final two stanzas of Smart's "Hymn XIV, The Ascension of Our
 Lord Jesus Christ" are an expression of the Infinity of Christ. His
 suffering led from the indignities of His passion to His triumphant
 ascension into heaven:

The song can never be pursu'd
 When Infinite's the theme --
 For all to crown, and to conclude,
 He bore and bless'd ingratitude,
 And insult in its worst extreme.

And having then such deeds achiev'd
 As never man before,
 From scorn and cruelty repriev'd,
 In highest heav'n he was receiv'd,
 To reign with God for evermore.

At the basis of this summary, of course, lies the awareness of the powers of man being unable to fathom completely the mysteries of God: "The song can never be persu'd/When Infinite's the theme." The gulf between man and God is recognized, and quietly and realistically accepted; it is assimilated as part of a divine order. This means that the emphasis, the focus, of these poems is not upon either an idealized world quite removed from the present one or an anguished image of man's predicament. John Norris (1657-1711), rector of George Herbert's parish of Bemerton, exhibits this atmosphere of recognition, acceptance and hope in his poem "The Aspiration":

How long, great God, how long must I
 Immured in this dark prison lie;

* * *

How cold this clime! And yet my sense
 Perceives e'en here Thy influence.

Smart's poem opens with a recording of this great influence -- an influence so great that it cannot be totally recorded:

'And other wond'rous works were done
 No mem'ry can recall;
 Which were they number'd every one,
 Not all the space beneath the sun
 Cou'd hold the fair detail of all.'

The text is full, and strong to do
 The glorious subject right;
 But on the working mind's review
 The letter's like the spirit true,
 And dear and evident as light.

The closeness of this first stanza with its Scriptural origin is not obvious at first reading to any but the most well-versed scholar.

As Miss Karina Williamson has traced it,³¹ the stanza derives from the story of Christ's third appearance to His disciples after the Resurrection, as told in the Gospel according to St. John, Chapter xxi, verse 25:

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

The scriptures record the influence, and this extends to all nature.

"The tiniest and meanest, the forgotten of God's creatures," as Ainsworth and Noyes note, "were ever in Smart's mind":³²

...all that dwell in depth or wave,
And ocean -- every drop --
Confess'd his mighty pow'r to save,
When to the floods his peace he gave
And bade careering whirlwinds stop.

And all things meaner from the worm
Probationer to fly;
To him that creeps his little term,
And countless rising from the sperm
Shed by sea-reptiles, where they ply.

The final stanza of Ken's "Ascension-Day, or Holy Thursday" is a further expression of this desire to reach toward Christ from this "dark prison," yet a prison sufficiently lighted by Christ's life and ascension to indicate a way of salvation:

May we our souls to Jesus rear,
While in this vale of tear,
Long to our heavenly home to go,
While strangers here below;
A heavenly mind can never miss,
To sit like Jesus enthronized in bliss.

In his Cross-Currents in 17th Century English Literature

Sir Herbert Grierson talks of "the temper of Herbert and Vaughan and Traherne and Walton and many another for whom Christianity was not an insurance against Hell-fire but a new experience of love for God and Man."³³ This can also be read as a comment upon many writers of the

eighteenth century. We have noticed how central was this theme of love to the poems of Ken. It receives its fullest expression, as to be expected, in the hymn for "St. John's Day." The first stanza declares the theme:

Faith, hope, and tear within my breast,
Shall, Lord, this day in silence rest,
O raise my love upon the wing,
While I the loved Disciple sing;
For Love can best the song indite,
Love only can of lovers write.

This love is a humbling quality, conditioning the relationship with both God and man:

To God's high friendship, love ascends,
And dear communion used by friends;
Love gave you noblest heat and light,
You seem'd below to live by sight,
You lessen'd in self humbling view
The more, the loftier heights you flew.

This love by John was a form of divine love:

God-man who in pure love decreed
For sinners on the Cross to bleed
In you excited a fresh flame,
For all who from lapsed Adam came;
A love which copied Love Divine,
Of Jesus' lovers made the sign.

Finally, the experience of this love becomes a totally absorbing, totally consuming way of life:

In all your writings every line
Was dictated by Love Divine;
Your love the more vivacious grew,
The nearer it to glory drew;
When you a century had reach'd,
Love was the only thing you preach'd.

And we have noticed this same atmosphere in poetry by Smart, where it is most obviously seen in Jubilate Agno, but where it is also seen clearly in such passages as this final stanza from "Hymn XXVIII, All Saints":

There are thousand thousands more,
 Like the sand upon the shore,
 Through the love of Christ reveal'd,
 All in heav'n receiv'd and seal'd.

During the eighteenth century this theme of divine love provided the matter of religious poetry, both direct and indirect, to such an extent that the temper of Herbert and Vaughan and Traherne and Walton which Grierson describes did, in fact, build up a continuous tradition. It is interesting to note, as well, that in the poetry of Ken and Smart we have not discovered the use of Christianity as an "insurance against Hell-fire," to use Grierson's phrase; instead there is quiet acceptance of the sacraments of the Church as a means of grace and salvation.

The characteristics noticed this far in an assortment of works are also to be found in the poetry of a man who, by common critical consent, belonged firmly within the eighteenth-century Anglican tradition. Charles G. Osgood, in an essay from his collection Poetry As a Means of Grace, has written that "this eighteenth century London, so multifarious yet so single an embodiment of its tranquil and sanguine time, was incarnate in Johnson as in no other man."³⁴ His High Churchmanship and his practical sincerity represented a rigorous tradition of religious belief, even during a period which is sometimes regarded as secular. Neill, in his exposition of Anglicanism, feels that "it is inconceivable that Samuel Johnson should have been anything but an Englishman; and the life of this great and good man shows that, even in her worst days, the Church of England was still, what she has ever been, Ecclesia Anglicana mater sanctorum." He finds Johnson in many ways typical of Englishmen of the eighteenth century:

Johnson was typical in his sincerity, his dislike of cant and hypocrisy, his rough common sense; and in nothing was he more typical than in his vigorous, wholly unsentimental, practical Christian faith. He was regular in his attendance at divine worship, and prepared himself with almost painful earnestness for participation in the Holy Communion. The prayers that he composed breathe a spirit of deep penitence for sin, of manly resolution, and of a tender confidence in the mercy of God.³⁵

Johnson's adherence to the Established Church was (as he said about that of his ideal clergyman, Zachariah Mudge) though studious, yet popular; though argumentative, yet modest; though inflexible, yet candid; and, though metaphysical, yet orthodox. This orthodoxy led him to support the expulsion from Oxford of six students who were Methodists and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting:

I believe that they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of a garden.

Both his High Church orthodoxy and his fair mindedness are seen in his attitude towards the evangelical preacher George Whitefield, leader of the Calvinistic Methodists:

Whitefield never drew as much attention as a mountebank does; he did not draw attention by doing better than others, but by doing what was strange.... I never treated Whitefield's ministry with contempt; I believe he did good. He had devoted himself to the lower classes of mankind, and among them he was of use.

As with John Byrom, and a number of other men, the greatest influence in Johnson's religious life seems to have been his reading of William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1728). From that time, Carpenter says, he was "a devoted, humble and orthodox Christian, intolerant, with no mercy for Deists or otherwise mis-believers, tormented by the fear of hell, constantly examining and

While I to nobler themes aspire,
 To nobler subjects tune my lyre;
 Those Saints my numbers grace
 Who to their Lord were ever dear,
 To whom the church each rolling year
 Her solemn honours pays.

The next two stanzas tell of the devotion and love of God:

In vain proud tyrants strove to shake
 Their faith, or force them to forsake
 The Steps their Saviour trod;
 With breasts resolv'd, they follow'd still
 Obsequious to his heav'nly will
 Their master and their God.

When Christ had conquer'd Hell and fate
 And rais'd us from our wretched state,
 O prodigy of Love!
 Ascending to the skies he shone
 Refulgent on his starry throne
 Among the Saints above.

The following stanzas are devoted to the scriptural narrative of
 the saints:

Th'Apostles round the world were sent,
 Dispersing blessings as they went,
 Thro' all the spacious ball;
 Far from their happy native home
 They, pleas'd, thro' barb'rous nations roam
 To raise them from their fall.

Where Atlas was believ'd to bear
 The weight of ev'ry rolling sphere,
 Where sev'nmouth'd Nilus roars,
 Where the dark visag'd Natives fry,
 And scarce can breath th'infected sky,
 But bless the Northern shoars.

Simon by gen'rous Zeal inspir'd,
 With ardent love of virtue fir'd,
 There trod the Lybian sands,
 Though fierce Barbarians threaten'd death
 And Serpents with their poys'nous breath
 Infest the barren Lands.

Nor there confin'd his active Soul;
 But where the Realms beneath the Pole
 In clouds of Ign'rance mourn,
 Thither with eager hast he runs
 And visits Britain's hardy Sons
 Ah! never to return!

Nor whilst she Simons acts persues
 Art thou forgotten by the Muse,
 Most venerable Jude!
 Where Tigris beats his sounding shore
 The haughty Persian in thy gore
 His wrathfull sword imbru'd.

The final stanza follows the well-established tradition of proclaiming poetic inability to do justice to the loftiness of the matter:

Thrice happy Saints -- where do I rove?
 Where do th'extatick fury move
 My rude unpolish'd Song;
 Mind unharmonious verse profanes
 Those names which in immortal strains
 Angelick choirs have sung.

This humility is more than a convention, as Johnson's "Prayers" and "Meditations" show. The sincerity and dignity of his verse distinguished him as a noble supporter in the eighteenth century of the Church and the tradition of Donne and Herbert.

"It would be hard to overestimate the influence, direct and indirect, which Johnson exercised on the whole attitude of his contemporaries towards religion."³⁸ This influence, recognised by the Reverend Mr. Cairns, was both widespread and powerful. It is difficult to discover a book dealing with religion in the eighteenth century which does not mention him. Alfred Plummer, in his history of the Church of England during this century, says that "it was as a moralist that he was specially respected during the last twenty years of his life (1764-84), and his moral influence was closely connected with his religion." And he quotes Edmund Gosse (History of Eighteenth Century Literature) and Lord Mahon (History of England) in support of this widespread influence:

His influence was so wide, and withal so wholesome, that...he had raised a standard of personal conduct that every one admits.

...though not in Orders, he did the Church of England better service than most of those who at that listless era ate her bread.³⁹

This influence, like that of Bishop Ken, permeated much of eighteenth-century society. There is no evidence for believing that it founded a revival or a new school of religious belief. Indeed, much of it was not of a strictly theological kind; it appertained to the more indefinable yet indelible qualities of humility, dignity, restraint and reliance upon love. These are the qualities which have emerged with almost tiresome regularity in the poems of Ken and Smart, these are the themes which are heard, sometimes in counterpoint, in the poems of More, Vaughan, Herbert, Johnson, and, as we shall see, in the poems of many other writers during the century.

The discussion of a tradition is difficult, as has been shown, because of the nebulous and intangible qualities with which the scholar is dealing, and because of the interplay of personal and contemporary style and sensibility. There is the further difficulty of presuming to mutilate, and frequently even to dissect, a poem to get at its tradition. Such operations do destroy the work of art as a living organism. Yet, so long as this difficulty is recognized both by scholar and reader, it seems worthwhile to explore the kind of basic assumptions and feelings, in terms of attitude and atmosphere, upon which a considerable body of eighteenth century verse was written. Amos Wilder, in a consideration of modern literature, raises this difficulty and attempts a solution:

No doubt it is misleading to characterize works of the imagination in terms of theme or content. Nevertheless, for the moment let us look at the matter from this confessedly partial point of view. We can find some temporary justification when we recall how many critics have used a poem like Yeats' "The Second Coming" not merely for an aesthetic discussion, but as a kind of cultural document; or have discussed the novels of Kafka, not to mention those of Malraux or Silone, in a social context; or have drawn connections between such paintings as those of Dali, Chirico, Braque, and a supposed dissolution of an older kind of personal consciousness; or have pointed to D.H. Lawrence's analogous disgust with an outworn conception of plot and character belonging to a static and devitalized social order. There is surely some validity in making such cultural inferences from the work of the artist, or identifying particular social judgments implicit in poem or novel.⁴⁰

From a close examination of Dryden's Religio Laici, Mason's Religio Clerici, Ken's Hymns and Poems for the Holy Days and Festivals of the Church of England, and miscellaneous poems by several writers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, certain cultural influences and social judgments seem to be validly deduceable. The first of these is an affirmation of Stephen Neill's statement that "in the strict sense of the term there is, therefore, no Anglican faith. But there is an Anglican attitude and an Anglican atmosphere."⁴¹ The second is the historically novel, although logically obvious, conclusion that this attitude and atmosphere continue during the eighteenth century to influence most strongly a considerable body of verse.

A precise description of this influence is, as we have seen, impossible. But it would center around such phrases as the limitations of reason, the incarnation, the mystery of the trinity, the efficacy of prayer and meditation, the virtues of love and humility, the authority

of the scriptures and of tradition, and the means of salvation. Yet these phrases are in themselves meaningless; only a discovery of them in the poetry itself has given them the flesh and blood of overtones and implications necessary for understanding. Contemporary theological writings and earlier poetry have shown that there is a uniformity and a consistency which can be called a tradition. But a tradition which is vital will manifest itself in more than a few poems, and so it will be useful to go exploring for these illusive qualities in a number of minor writers and a number of scattered poems.

CHAPTER IV

Contemplative -- on God to fix
His musings, and above the six
The sabbath-day he blest;
'Twas then his thoughts self-conquest
prun'd,
And heavenly melancholy tun'd,
To bless and bear the rest.

Christopher Smart, A Song to David

The Gospel is no history of any absent, distant,
or foreign thing, but is a manifestation of an essential,
inherent, real life and death in every son of Adam;
grounded on the certainty of his first angelical nature,
on the certainty of his real Fall from that into an
animal, earthly life of impure, bestial flesh and blood,
and on the certainty of an inward redemption from it
by the divine nature given again into him.

William Law, The Way to Divine Knowledge

In the act of exploring the extent to which the tradition of the Established Church in England influenced poets during the eighteenth century, several things must be kept in mind. It has already been seen that the tradition is incapable of precise definition, either in terms of attitude or of atmosphere, and so the historian will be on the look-out for nuances of tone and sensibility, of subject matter and doctrine. And, as it has already been seen, these may appear, not only in verse written by people directly Anglican in background and sympathy, but also in that written by those who, at first, might be guessed to be antagonistic to the tradition, but who are, nevertheless, strongly influenced by it. The influence of religious beliefs and feelings upon poetry is both complex and difficult of sorting. The relationship has always been close, and if given the slightest opportunity, a sort of osmosis sets in between them. For the scholar concerned with the history of ideas their mutual influence is interesting. Basil Willey, in the "Foreword" to his Seventeenth Century Background, has pointed out how strongly both are influenced by each other and by contemporary "climates of opinion," and how both reflect the sensibility of the age. He concludes, "I hope I need offer no apology for thus classifying poetic and religious beliefs together. Both, at any rate, seem to have been similarly affected by the 'philosophic' spirit, and those who are interested in the fate of either can hardly avoid feeling some concern for that of the other."¹

It has been said that the religious feelings expressed by the poet are different from those expressed by the theologian. Just how the poet acquires and assimilates theological, or even religious,

knowledge is usually a matter of biographical or psychological concern. But there are general ways in which the relation of religion and poetry can operate; W. Boyd Carpenter has listed three. A poem may be considered religious in that it reveals the deep religious feelings of the writer; or the poetry and the religion may be inseparably intertwined through a "strong natural relation"; or the relation may depend upon historical factors. These classifications are of greater help as descriptions than as schemata, but they do attract attention to the general ways of relationship -- ways which are more valuable for the poet precisely because they avoid the dogma of a theological system:

Theological treatises appeal to the speculative intellect; but they do not carry much nourishment to the soul. They are useful, but more from a rational than a spiritual point of view. They are valuable at times in clearing the mind, but they seldom feed the heart.²

Feeding the heart so that it would grow into a productive plant is a metaphor of the poetic process which is not uncommon. The Rev. Stopford Brooke uses it in tracing kinds of relationship set up between poetry and religion:

The theology of the poets is different from that of Churches and Sects, in this especially, that it is not formulated into propositions, but is the natural growth of their own hearts.³

But it is perhaps an unfortunate metaphor in that it places the emphasis upon the poet rather than upon the poem. It is typical of the nineteenth-century concept of the poetic process. But it leads to dangerous conclusions if applied to other centuries. It might be closer to the truth to suggest that the eighteenth-century religious poet sought to feed, not his heart, but his soul. To him the matter

at hand was also at mind and soul, not just at heart. Religious poetry in itself was taken seriously. In 1701 John Dennis in The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry wrote, "'Tis now our business to show that religious subjects are capable of supplying us with more frequent and stronger enthusiasms than the profane," and eight years later Isaac Watts commented upon this statement in the preface to his Horae Lyricae:

Mr. Dennis has made a noble essay to discover how much superior is inspired poesy to the brightest and best descriptions of a mortal pen. Perhaps if his Proposal of Criticism had been encouraged and pursued, the nation might have learnt more value for the word of God, and the wits of the age might have been forced to confess at least the divinity of all the poetical books of Scripture, when they see a genius running through them more than human.

This argument for the advantages of religious material for verse was often expressed during the century. Admittedly, much of the verse produced from such impetus served the immediate ends of congregational hymn-singing and moralistic propaganda rather than the eternal standards of art, and it was this awareness which led Samuel Johnson, an eminent Anglican, to make his unexpected theory of religious verse during his "Life of Waller":

Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot please.

He concedes that "the doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactick poem," and that "a poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of Nature," but "the subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God."

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator and plead the merits of his Redeemer is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

This is the essence of Johnson's position: poetry as invention is necessarily on a lower level than contemplative piety. This is the mystic's refusal to express his experience, for he is aware that the act of expression is also an act of corruption:

Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.... The ideas of Christian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestick for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.

The accuracy of Johnson's views about the simplicity of the ideas of Christian theology might well be questioned, but his belief in the inexpressibleness of the central religious experience is not strange. Yet he himself did write religious verse, and other critics were more willing than he to see that the omnipotence, the infinity, and the perfect be given at least an attempted expression.

One of these was Daniel Turner (1710-1798) whose essay Devotional Poetry Vindicated (1785) is an answer to this theory of Johnson. His indebtedness to Watts is great, and his arguments are outlined in the earlier essay when Watts listed the advantages of Christian material for verse:

There is nothing amongst all the ancient Fables, or later Romances, that have two such extremes united in them, as the Eternal God becoming an Infant of Days; the Possessor of the Palace of Heaven laid to sleep in a manger; the Holy Jesus, who knew no sin, bearing the sins of men in His Body in the Tree; agonies of sorrow loading the soul of Him who was God over all,

blessed for ever; and the Sovereign of Life stretching His Arms on a Cross, bleeding and expiring. The Heaven and Hell in our Divinity are infinitely more delightful and dreadful than the childish figments of a dog with three heads, the buckets of the Belides, the Furies with snaky hairs, or all the flowery stories of Elysium. And if we survey the one as themes divinely true and other as a medley of fooleries which we can never believe, the advantage for touching the springs of passion will fall infinitely on the side of the Christian poet.

This apologia, with its total rejection of classical mythology and the classical tradition, is rather more violent than an Anglican writer would produce, but the firm faith in religious verse and the listing of the "delightful and dreadful" matter which the Christian poet finds at hand are fully in keeping with the Anglican tradition.

The point of this chapter, then, will be to explore the extent to which poems show the influence in attitude and atmosphere of the Anglican tradition. Partly the extent of this influence is a statistical statement; no complete listing of this sort of thing is ever possible, but a sufficient number of poems will be read to indicate that quantitatively the influence was considerable. Because, as has been suggested, the manner of influence was complex and difficult to unravel, no completely clear-cut categories can be established. But certain independent, if not mutually exclusive, topics can be organized for exploration. These are aspects of what has been seen in the previous chapter to be the Anglican tradition: concern for the festivals of the Church calendar, the doctrine of the Incarnation, meditations and prayers, humility and love, and divine justice. The wider topic of mysticism will be examined separately.

Although there were few complete sets of poems for the festivals of the Church calendar, the more outstanding occasions drew the attention of a number of writers. John Bennet, described as "a journeyman shoemaker" on the title page of his Poems on Several Occasions (1774), wrote a descriptive, and vaguely moral poem on "Christmas Eve." And the union of two mysterious forces and the quiet, almost impersonal focus upon the Biblical narrative are seen in a sonnet "On the Resurrection" by George Jeffreys (1678-1755), poet and dramatist, fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, whose Miscellanies in Verse and Prose was published a year before his death:

Proof of his Goodness by his Death he gave;
To his own Laws for others Crimes a Slave;
Nor less his Pow'r, when, of himself releas'd,
The Man he rescu'd, and the God confess'd.
Thus therefore Death by his own Dart destroy'd,
He triumph'd in the Grave, and ev'n the Cross enjoy'd;
Reveng'd, to Ground, like Samson, did he go,
And in his proper Mansion crush'd the Foe.
The Fabric Samson shook, and fell beneath;
Here shakes the World at its Creator's Death.
Convulsions Earth, for his Reception, rend,
And Angels at his empty tomb attend:
Thus to each Truth is Testimony giv'n;
Earth owns his Death; his Resurrection, Heav'n.

"A Hymn for Good-Friday" by W. Stroud, D.D., included in Samuel Philips' Miscellanae Sacra: or, a Curious Collection of Poems, Chiefly Original, upon Divine and Moral Subjects, is similar in many ways. It concentrates upon the scene itself; the imagery emerges from this scene; there is no personal agonizing. The form is a simplified version of the composition-analysis-colloquy structure which was noticed in Henry More, Ken and much of Smart, and which shows the extension of what Martz has called the "meditative tradition" into the eighteenth century.

See sinful Soul, thy Sav'ours Suff'ring, see
 His Hands, and Feet fixt to the fatal Tree.
 Observe what Rivulets of Blood stream forth
 His painful pierced Side; each Drop more worth
 Than Tongue of Men or Angels can express:
 Hast to him cursed Caitife, and confess
 All thy Mis-deeds, and Sighing say, 'Twas I
 That caus'd Thee thus my Lord, my Christ, to die,
 O! let thy Death secure my Soul from Fears,
 And I will wash thy Wounds with Floods of Tears:
 Grant me, sweet Jesus, from thy precious Store
 One cleansing Drop, with Grace to sin no more.

This recognition of the horrible responsibility for the crucifixion and this prayer for forgiveness -- both expressed without excessive personal flagellation -- are recurrent characteristics of the tradition.

The most intense passage of this kind is found in Samuel Wesley's "On the Passion of Our Saviour." Wesley (1691-1739) -- whose father had the same name, was also in holy orders, and shared his son's poetic impulse -- became master of Blunchell's School. Fairchild describes him as "an excellent example of the sterile and querulous High Churchmanship of the period."⁴ His poems, Fairchild says, "furnish a clear, energetic, and somewhat acidulous statement of his religious position. But do his beliefs kindle his imagination and make him wish to sing? They do so only infrequently, and never with results that command hearty admiration.... On the Passion of Our Saviour has somewhat more personal vitality."⁵

See streaming from th' accursed Tree
 His all-atoning Blood!
 Is this the Infinite? 'Tis he!
 My Saviour and my God.

For Me these Pangs his Soul assail,
 For Me the Death is born!
 My Sin gave Sharpness to the Nail,
 And pointed every Thorn.

The intensity and personal involvement of the opening stanza belong to the dramatic tradition of Donne and Yeats. But this "personal vitality" is rare, and the poem immediately following -- "Ode upon Christ's Crucifixion" -- in Wesley's Poems on Several Occasions (1736), although by the same author on the same subject, is a much more controlled and impersonal work.

It cannot be argued that Church festivals were the exclusive matter of the Church of England poets. Evangelists, in their varying degrees of sober sincerity, rarely turned to the festive occasions, usually with the argument that to do so was to revert to either Popism or Paganism, both of which they regarded as decidedly undesirable. However, some dissenting writers did draw upon Church festivals for their poems. One of the most interesting of those is "The Conversion of St. Paul," and it shows most of the marks of the Anglican tradition as well as an undue simplicity of rhythm and rime. It is by Samuel Say (1673-1743), a dissenting minister who for nine years was pastor at Long Ditch, Westminster. His hymn for the festival of the Conversion of St. Paul (25 January) opens with a retelling of the historical narrative:

When Saul of old, with Impious Zeal,
Pursu'd the Christians and their God:
From Land to Land envoy'd he goes;
But Jesus meets him on the Road.

Heaven opens, and Celestial Light
Pours a bright Deluge all around:
Breaks on His Head the Flood, and strikes
The trembling Sinner to the Ground.

When first a Wondrous Voice is heard!
Saul! Saul! why persecut'st thou Me?
Who art Thou, Lord? the Wretch replies,
And Jesus answers, I am He --

That Jesus I -- whose wounded Breast
 In every Martyr'd Saint does mourn:
 Forbear -- nor madly lift thy Foot
 Against the pointed Goad to spurn.

Confounded and Disarm'd He lies;
 And to the Heavenly Voice resign'd:
 For -- with the Voice, a Power Divine
 Had reach'd his Heart, and chang'd his Mind.

What would'st Thou, O much-injur'd Lord!
 Command; I'm ready to obey;
 To Do, or Suffer -- Here I am:
 Thy Pleasant, Awful Vision -- Say --

In the concluding two stanzas the poet turns to God and gives the application to the contemporary predicament:

Lord! with like Power, This Day, arrest
 Each Sinner in th'Assembly Here:
 Descend, and let the Force once more
 Of Heavenly Light and Grace appear!

We tremble when we view our Crimes;
 How Great the Guilt! how Vast the Sum!
 Oh! change our Hearts; forgive our Sins:
 Come, Jesus, Mighty Saviour, Come!

In the play upon the double meaning of Say in stanza 6 we are reminded of John Donne's similar pun in "Hymn to God the Father." In the humble recognition of guilt and the prayer for grace, we are reminded of the final two lines of Stroud's "A Hymn for Good-Friday." But in structure we are reminded (more significantly) of the meditative mould into which so many Anglicans poured their poetry.

A statistical indication of the extent to which eighteenth-century poets used the Church festivals as the impetus for verse can be got from a collection published in London in 1821. The title page reads: Poems Divine and Moral, Many of Them Now First Published; Selected by John Bowdler, Esq. This collection is divided into ten sections, of which the first is headed: "Hymns." This section contains 32 pieces, most of them without indication of authorship. Among them

are "The Lord's Day," "The Sabbath" by Mason, "2nd Sunday in Advent," "Christmas Day," "Innocents' Day," "Easter Day" by Bishop Horne, and "The Sabbath."

Another major figure who turned to the Church calendar was John Byrom (1692-1763), known mainly as a teacher of shorthand. Fairchild suggests that the line, "Let us mix Metaphysics, and Short-hand and port," symbolizes the amiable, uncritical clutter of his life.⁶ Yet a sensitive mystical strain and a sincere and meaningful devotion to the Established Church give a depth and significance to his many religious poems. He shows an awareness of the implications of contemporary religious issues and feelings which can not be passed over lightly by the historian. The list of works for special occasions is extensive: "The Collect for Advent Sunday," "Hymns for Christmas Day," "On the Epiphany," "Meditations for every Day in Passion Week" (by which he meant Holy Week), "The Collect for Easter Day," "Hymns for Easter Day," "On Whitsunday," "On Trinity Sunday," another for Trinity Sunday: "On the same," and "On the Conversion of St. Paul."

His version of "On the Conversion of St. Paul" raises several interesting points. Saul's unfriendly behavior towards Christians Byrom immediately attributes to the misdirected use of reason, thus introducing the limitations of the reason in religious experience discussed by Dryden in Religio Laici and by Mason in Religio Clerici, and which this study will examine more closely in a later section:

In Paul's Conversion we discern the Case
Of human Talents, wanting heavenly Grace:
What Persecutions, 'till he saw the Light,
Against the Christian Church did he excite!
By his own Reason led into Mistake,
Amongst the Flock what Havock did he make!
Within himself when, verily, he thought,
That, all the while, he did but what he ought.

The second stanza shows that Saul was ignorant and unenlightened, rather than perverted. And this problem of what can be done with the unenlightened who never had the chance to know God is what was distressing so deeply both Dryden and Mason. Members within the Anglican tradition are united partly because they worry over the same problems:

His Use of Reason cannot be deni'd,
Nor legal Zeal, nor moral Life beside;
Blameless as any Jew, or Greek could claim,
Who show'd Aversion to the Christian Name;
His Fund of Learning some are pleas'd to add;
And yet, with all th'Endowments which he had,
From Place to Place, with eager Steps, he Trod,
To persecute the real Church of God.

The next stanzas tell, as to be expected in this tradition, the Biblical narrative:

When to Damascus, for the like intent,
With the High Priest's Authority he went,
Struck to the Ground, by a diviner Ray,
The reas'ning, legal, moral Zealot lay;
To the plain question put by Jesus: -- why
Persecute me? had only to reply,
What shall I do? -- his Reason, and his Wrath
Were both convinc'd, and he embrac'd the Faith.

His outward lost, his inward Sight renew'd,
Truth in its native Evidence he view'd;
With three Days Fast he nourish'd his Concern,
And, a new Conduct well prepar'd to learn,
Good Ananias, whom he came to bind,
Was sent to cure, and to baptise the Blind:
A destin'd Martyr, to his Jewish Zeal,
Of Christian Faith confess the sacred Seal.

The fifth stanza develops Byrom's concept of reason and revelation -- a concept which provides the material for many of his poems:

Of nobler Use his Reason, while it stood
Without a Conference with Flesh and Blood,
Still, and submissive; when, within, begun
The Father's Revelation of the Son;
Whom, 'till the Holy Spirit rise to show,
No Pow'r of Thought can ever come to know;
The saving Mystery, obscur'd by Sin,
Itself must manifest itself, within.

The mystery of God's grace, the possibility of His mercy -- these are the questions of redemption. The truth of the conversion is clarified in the final stanza.

Thus, taught of God, Paul saw the Truth appear
 To his enlighten'd Understanding clear:
 The Pow'r of Christ himself, and nothing less,
 Could move its Persecutor to profess:
 He learn'd, and Told it from the real Ground,
 And prov'd, to all the Christian World around,
 That true Religion had its true Foundation,
 Not in Man's Reason, but God's Revelation.

This is the understanding of man's experience: that a humble recognition and acceptance of the revelation of God may lead to salvation.

This revelation is mysterious and full of power; Smart's "Hymn IV: Conversion of Saint Paul" lists a number of wondrous things accomplished by the Word. But greater was the mighty deed of God's all-powerful grace to effect the conversion of the sinner:

But greater is the mighty deed
 To make a profligate recede,
 And work a boist'rous madman mild,
 To walk with Jesus like a child.

To give a heart of triple steel
 The Lord's humanity to feel;
 And there, where pity had no place,
 To fill the measure of his grace;

To wash internal blackness white,
 To call the worse than dead to light;
 To make the fruitless soil to hold
 Ten thousand times ten thousand fold.

To turn a servant of the times
 From modish and ambitious crimes;
 To pour down a resistless blaze,
 'Go, persecutor, preach and praise.'

The same theme of God's mysterious redemptive power is found in Byrom's "Collect for Advent Sunday":

Almighty God, thy heav'nly Grace impart,
 And cast the Works of Darkness from our Heart;
 Send us thy Light, and arm us for the Strife
 Against all Evils of this mortal Life;
 O'er which our Saviour Jesus Christ, thy Son,
 With great Humility, the Conquest won:
 That when, in Glory, our victorious Head
 Shall come to judge the Living and the Dead,
 We may, thro' Him, to Life immortal spring,
 Wherein he reigns, the everlasting King;
 The Father, Son and Spirit may adore,
 One glorious God Triune, for evermore.

This poem is, of course, a close rendition of the Advent Collect in
The Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away
 the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour
 of light, now in the time of this mortal life
 (in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in
 great humility); that in the last day, when he
 shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge
 both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the
 life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth
 with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.

This comparison of the two versions shows how very closely Byrom
 copied his source -- the greatest changes occur in end-of-line
 phrases for the sake of rime and length: "the Conquest won,"
 "our victorious Head," "the everlasting King." Fairchild accuses
 him of thinking of verse "chiefly as a means of expressing ideas with
 memorable compactness,"⁷ but this in itself may not be a very
 devastating criticism. The comparison is more significant in that it
 shows Byrom's desire to remain orthodox in his sentiments. It would
 have been much easier, either not to bother with this Collect at all,
 or to elaborate upon it as the spur-of-the-moment fancy suggested.
 That Byrom did go to the bother of writing this poem and that he was
 careful to remain faithful to the Anglican tradition -- these are
 evidences of the seriousness with which poets during the eighteenth
 century did take the tradition. This same argument applies to Byrom's

"Easter Collect" which is a slightly less imitative version of the Collect in The Book of Common Prayer. As Miss Williamson has shown, this close relation between liturgy and verse was also a deliberate characteristic of Christopher Smart's Hymns and Spiritual Songs.⁸

Byrom's "Hymns for Christmas Day" both celebrate what he calls in the first hymn, "this Miracle of Grace":

Mary, prepar'd for such a chaste Embrace,
Was destin'd to this Miracle of Grace;
In her unfolded the mysterious Plan
Of Man's Salvation, God's becoming Man;
His Power, with her Humility combin'd,
Produc'd the sinless Saviour of Mankind.

This is an orthodox expression of the doctrine of the Incarnation, as it concerned Mason in the second part of Religio Clerici:

True, as the turnsole to the orb of light,
The genuine Christian keeps his faith in sight,
Nor doubts the fact, because he knows the end,
For which that God did from his Sire descend,
Disrob'd himself of glory, and became
A man in substance, and a man in name;
Of woman-born, in whom each mortal eye
Saw all itself, save its impurity:
Thus, while a perfect man on earth he shone,
The perfect Deity was still his own;
Inferior only to his Sire on high
But as invested with humanity:
Thus when with heav'nly earthly we compare,
Both soul and body claim an equal share
In our formation; so in his were join'd
Terrestrial substance with celestial mind.

Thomas Ken's "On the Incarnation" also is an expression of this reverence for the mystery. The doctrine of the Incarnation is developed in the fifth stanza of Byrom's first "Christmas Hymn":

That Way to this, unless it had been trod
By the new Birth of an incarnate God?
Birth of a Life, that triumphs over Death,
A Life inspir'd by God's immortal Breath;
For which Himself, to save us from the Tomb,
Did not abhor the Virgin Mother's Womb.

The second Christmas hymn has entered the Hymn Book in a badly garbled version. It also presents the mystery of the Incarnation, and attributes it to God's love:

Christians awake, salute the happy morn,
Wherein the Saviour of the World was born;
Rise, to adore the Mystery of Love,
Which Hosts of Angels chanted from above:
With them the joyful Tidings first begun
Of God incarnate, and the Virgin's Son.

Byrom's "Meditations for every Day in Passion Week" combine two strains within the Anglican tradition which have been noteworthy: concern with the holy days of the Church calendar and concern with the contemplation of the objects of religious experience. The first meditation, for Monday of Holy Week, carries the rubric, "God in Christ is all Love." This is the theme of the meditation, stated in the first stanza:

Behold the tender Love of God!--behold
The Shepherd dying to redeme his Fold!
Who can declare it?--Worthy to be known--
What Tongue can speak it worthily?--His own:
From his own sacred Lips the Theme began,
The glorious Gospel of God's Love to Man.

Because of His love, He gave His son to save, not to condemn, mankind. Condemnation is the result of man's deliberate refusal to follow the example provided for his guidance:

...if Men reject the Light,
They, of themselves, condemn themselves to Night;
God, in his Son, seeks only to display,
In ev'ry Heart, an everlasting Day.

Christ's death is a perpetual reminder of this love of God, and sufficient evidence for man's way of life:

The Ground to build all Faith, and Works upon;
For God is Love--says the beloved John--
Short Word--but Meaning infinitely wide,
Including all that can be said beside;
Including all the joyful Truths above
The Pow'r of Eloquence--for--God is Love.

Here is the Anglican reconciliation, to be examined later more fully, between Faith and Works. Both are resolved in terms of love and according to Scripture, which, in Dryden's phrase, "in all things needful to Salvation...is clear, sufficient, and ordain'd by God Almighty for that purpose." Byrom says, "Think on the Proof, that John from Jesus learn'd,/In this was God's amazing Love discern'd,/Because he sent his Son to us."

The Tuesday meditation is upon the over-coming of God's wrath: "the Saviour di'd, according to our Faith,/To quench, attone, or pacify a Wrath." The rubric to the poem reads, "How Christ quencheth the Wrath of God in us." The source of this wrath is human nature; as we shall examine more fully later in this essay Byrom avoids any suggestion of a Hebraic or Calvinist interpretation:

God, of his own pure Love, was pleas'd to give
The Lord of Life, that thro' him it might live;
Thro' Christ; because none other could be found
To heal the human Nature of its Wound:

* * *

He did, he suffer'd ev'ry Thing, that we
From Wrath, by Sin enkindl'd, might be free,
The Wrath of God, in us, that is, the Fire
Of burning Life, without the Love-Desire;
Without the Light, which Jesus came to raise,
And change the Wrath into a joyful Blaze.

Wrath was unknown by man "till he had lost his first Perfection."

But now he needs redemption and restoration from his fallen state.

It is the desire of God to save, not punish -- an Arminian, as opposed to strict Calvinist, view. Salvation, and this escape from wrath, is effected through Christ:

All that, in Nature, by his Act is done
Is to give Life; and Life is in his Son:
When his Humility, his Meekness finds
Healing Admission, into willing Minds,
All Wrath disperses, like a gath'ring Sore;
Pain is its Cure, and it exists no more.

Man must be willing to accept; the characteristics are humility and meekness.

Wednesday's is a meditation upon justice: "Christ satisfieth the Justice of God by fulfilling all Righteousness." The second stanza is a restatement of the previous theme of man's fallen state:

Man had departed from a righteous State,
Which he, at first, must have, if God create:
'Tis therefore call'd God's Righteousness; and must
Be satisfy'd by Man's becoming just:
Must exercise good Vengeance upon Man,
'Till it again its Rights in them again.

Justice was satisfied through the righteousness of Christ and his offering himself as sacrifice for man, a sacrament for salvation:

'Twas tender Mercy--by the Church confess'd,
Before she feeds the sacramental Guest;
Rememb'ring him, who offer'd up his Soul
A Sacrifice for Sin, full, perfect, whole,
Sufficient, satisfactory.

The theme of sacrament is examined in the final stanza:

And when receiv'd his Body, and his Blood,
The Life enabling to be just, and good,
Off'ring, available thro' him alone,
Body, and Soul, a Sacrifice her own:
From Him, from His, so justice has its due;
Itself restor'd--not any thing in Lieu.

This approach to the crucifixion, not just as a horrible historical fact but as a way along which man can be reunited with God, appears several times in poems by Anglican writers of the eighteenth century. Its most thorough expression is found in "A Hymn on the Sacrament" by Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737). Her poems were enthusiastically praised by Samuel Johnson, and during her lifetime she was a friend to Bishop Thomas Ken. Her poem reflects this attitude of symbolic acceptance of the crucifixion; the significance of the act becomes more important than the details:

And art thou mine, my dearest Lord?
 Then I have all, nor fly
 The boldest wishes I can form
 Unto a pitch more high.

Yes, thou art mine, the contract's seal'd
 With thine own precious blood;
 And ev'n almighty pow'r's engag'd
 To see it all made good.

My fears dissolve: for o! what more
 Could studious bounty do?
 What farther mighty proofs are left,
 Unbounded love to show?

My faith's confirm'd, nor would I quit
 My title to thy love,
 For all the valu'd things below,
 Or shining things above.

Nor at the prosp'rous sinners state
 Do I at all repine;
 No, let 'em parcel out the earth,
 While Heav'n and thou art mine.

There is a general tendency for writers in the Roman Catholic tradition to emphasize the details of the crucifixion; Crashaw's "Upon the Bleeding Crucifix," "Upon the Thorns taken down from our Lord's head bloody," "On the wounds of our crucified Lord," and "On our crucified Lord Naked and bloody" present themselves to mind.

Austin Warren has traced this to a Marinistic method:

The wounds, like the Magdalen's tears, are abstracted from their psychological context and, viewed as objects of sense perception, find metaphorical counterparts in other equally palpable things. Even more than the emblem-like grotesqueness of the "blood-shot eye," it⁹ is this externality which has repelled many readers...

By way of contrast it generally might be said that Evangelicals and Nonconformists tended to revel in the emotional lushness of the imagined event. Thomas Ellwood (1639-1713) spent a number of years travelling through the west of England with George Fox organizing the Quakers and was a well-known controversialist. His poem "Agony" is somewhat unrestrained in sentiment and style:

I faint; my dying Breath will not suffice
 To midwife forth my Words; my falt'ring Tongue
 Resigns its Office to my weeping Fyes;
 Speak Eyes, and do my faithful Heart no Wrong.

Ye crystal Fountains set your sluices wide,
 Stream forth your Tears like a full flowing Tide;
 Draw up the Flood-gates, let the Torrent flow
 In its right Current, whether fast or slow.

In contrast with both Crashaw and Ellwood poets in the Anglican tradition appear to produce little of a spectacular nature. But this is their most noteworthy characteristic, reflecting, it seems, the media via of their Church. Elizabeth Singer Rowe's "A Hymn on the Sacrament" lacks both the pictorial vividness of Crashaw's "On the wounds of our crucified Lord" and the emotional intensity of Ellwood's "Agony," yet it does have a vividness and intensity of its own. These stem from its impersonality, from the refusal of the poet to indulge in public woe, from a firm faith in the significance of the crucifixion. In this sense the Anglican tradition is a pragmatic tradition in that it searches out the value of the event to contemporary society; it tends to perceive the symbolic world of the Biblical story. As in Byrom's Wednesday meditation, Christ is viewed, not solely as a suffering god descended to earth, but as a "sacramental Guest."

To the meditation for Thursday of Holy Week Byrom has affixed the rubric, "Christ the Beginner and Finisher of the New Life in Man."

The poem meditates upon the extremes of man as Adam and man as Christ:

Dead as Men are, in Trespasses and Sins,
 Whence is it in them that new Life begins?
 'Tis that, by God's great Mercy, Love, and Grace,
 The Seed of Christ is in the Human Race;
 That inward, hidden Man, that can revive,
 And, dead in Adam, rise in Christ alive.

To make mankind blessed there must be a combination of "Life natural" and "Life divine." Since the fall "Life divine" has been rejected, but Christ came to reclaim it for man: "This, for our Sakes, incarnate Love could do;/Great is the Mystery." The Friday meditation is a continuation of this theme: "How the Sufferings and Death of Christ are available to Man's Salvation."

With Hearts deep rooted in Love's holy Ground
Should be ador'd this Mystery profound
Of God's Messiah, suff'ring in our Frame;
The Lamb Christ Jesus--blessed be his Name!
Dying in this Humanity of ours,
To introduce his own Life-giving Pow'rs.

Reference to the actual cross is brief; the picture of agony is not dwelt upon; the actual human element is reduced by a depersonification of Christ as Innocence, and the referring to him as it:

Nail'd to a Cross it suffer'd and forgave;
And show'd the Penitent its Pow'r to save:
It's Majesty confess'd by Nature's Shock;
Darkness--and Earthquake--and the rent Rock,
And opening Graves--the Prelude to that Pow'r,
Which rose in suff'ring Love's momentous Hour.

The abstraction of the victim from sacrifice to sacrament, the awareness of the sharing transformation of nature, the resulting power of love -- these are the characteristics already noticed in other poems within the Anglican Tradition.

The final meditation -- that for Saturday -- is concerned with the Christian paradox that Christ through death overcame death. The mystery of this victory is explored in the opening stanza:

Jesus is crucifi'd--the previous Scene
Of our Salvation, and his glorious Reign:
Mysterious Process! tho', by Nature's Laws,
Such an Effect demanded such a Cause:
For none but He could form the grand Design,
And raise, anew, the human Life divine.

Upon this mystery stands the demand for faith and belief:

No less a Mystery can claim Belief,
Than what belongs to our redeeming Chief;
Divine, and supernatural indeed
The Love that mov'd the Son of God to bleed;
But what he was, and did, in each Respect,
Was real Cause producing its Effect.

The death and agony are not relished in themselves, but again, as a sacrament, as an essential part of a plan which is both divine and necessary:

Children of Adam needs must share his Fall;
Children of Christ can re-inherit All:
This was the one, and therefore chosen Way,
For Love to manifest its full Display:
Absurd the Thought of arbitrary Plans:
Nature's one, true Religion this--and Man's.

Authority of Scripture is evidenced by "all that we know of God, and Nature too"; these prove the "Salvation of the Gospel" to be true. The reclaiming of man's fallen nature by his divine nature was a restoration of the "Heav'n in Man" to what it was before; God's image, "clos'd in Death by Sin," is once more raised to its original place through the "Light of Life":

The one same Light that makes angelic Bliss;
That spreads an Heav'n thro' Nature's whole Abyss:
The Light of Nature, and the Light of Men,
That gives the Dead his Pow'r to live again.

This series of meditations concludes with a reaffirmation of the crucifixion as the only way to salvation:

The Way, the Truth, the Life--whatever Terms
Prefer'd, 'tis Him that ev'ry Good affirms;
The one true Saviour; all is Dung and Dross,
In saving Sense, but Jesus and his Cross:
All Nature speaks; al Scripture answers thus--
Salvation is the Life of Christ in us.

But the "Life of Christ" is not suggested as appearing with the tornado terror of an emotional conversion. It is a way of life and

of death, quietly (almost indifferently) announced. The meditations have not led to a stirring line of action; we are reminded once again of Lord David Cecil's comment upon the "eminently Anglican" piety of George Herbert: "refined, dignified, with a delicate appreciation of the values of style and ceremony, but subdued and restrained."¹⁰ These are the characteristics of the Anglican tradition noticed in this set of meditations for the days of Holy Week. The selection of these occasions, as the selection of other Festivals of the Church calendar, shows a nice awareness of ceremony. No critic could believe that each festival day inspired Ken or Smart or Byrom with intense passion to write. But it is not characteristic of the tradition to depend upon intense inspiration or passion. The spirit is moved in more subdued and restrained colors than are the emotions. What has been called earlier in this study the "attitude" and the "atmosphere" of Anglican writing, then, emerge here in the kind of poems written, in the occasions which prompted them, in the style, in the form and, more nebulously, and also more importantly, in the general tone of the poems.

These meditations reflect this Anglican tradition in many ways. But the tradition of meditation itself is of considerable significance. Louis Martz has examined in careful detail the poetry of meditation during the seventeenth century, but a number of his conclusions are of interest to this present study. He sketches the nature and historical importance of meditation at the beginning of his book:

Such meditation is the subject of this study: intense, imaginative meditation that brings together the senses, the emotions, and the intellectual faculties of man; brings them together in a moment of dramatic, creative

experience. One period when such meditation flourished coincides exactly with the flourishing of English religious poetry in the seventeenth century.¹¹

But meditation continued throughout the eighteenth century as well. The prose Meditations and Contemplations by James Hervey (1714-1758), for instance, was first published in 1746-7 and shortly became extremely popular. Thomas Gibbons (1720-1785) praised its illumination of the divinity within nature and outlined Hervey's task in the second and third stanza of his poem "To the Reverend Mr. James Hervey, A.B. on his Meditations":

To chase our sensual Fogs away,
And bright to pour th'eternal Ray
Of Deity, inscrib'd around
Wide Nature to her utmost Bound,
Is Hervey's Task: and well his Skill
Celestial can the Task fulfil:
Ascending from these Scenes below,
Arden the Maker's Praise to show,
His sacred Contemplations soar,
And teach our Wonder to adore.
Now he surveys the Realms beneath,
The Realms of Horror and of Death;
Now entertains his vernal Hours
In flow'ry Walks, and blooming Bow'rs:
Now hails the black-brow'd Night, that brings
Aethereal Dews upon her Wings;
Now marks the Planets, as they roll
On burning Axles round the Pole:
While Tombs, and Flow'rs, and Shades, and Stars,
Unveil their sacred Characters
Of Justice, Wisdom, Pow'r, and Love,
And life the Soul to Realms above,
Where dwells the God, in Glory crown'd,
Who sends his boundless Influence round.

After a Homeric simile involving Jacob and his ladder, and after a stanza developing the theme of Nature bearing man "in seraphic Extasy" to the "Throne on high," the poem concludes:

So, if small Things may shadow forth,
 Dear Man, thy Labours and thy Worth,
 The Bee upon the flow'ry Lawn
 Imbibes the lucid Drops of Dawn,
 Works them in his mysterious Mould,
 And turns the common Dew to Gold.

Gibbons was a dissenting minister of a rather evangelical choler, and as such notices most fully those elements in Hervey's work which might appear to be of little interest to him. But even here is the belief that "intense, imaginative meditation" brings together the avenues of awareness in man in a "moment of dramatic, creative experience." Like the bee's "mysterious Mould," this meditation permits a vision of the mysterious mould of nature. The "eternal Ray of Deity" is given a machinery by which to shine forth.

Dr. Nathaniel Cotton (1707-1788), while a friend to several dissenting ministers, was a member of the Established Church. His tribute to Hervey -- "To the Rev. James Hervey, on his Meditations" -- is quieter and more restrained than that by Gibbons; there is no "Monarch of the Golden Day," no "Earth in Spring's Embroid'ry drest," no "Th'eternal Ray of Deity," no "seraphic Extasy," and no Homeric simile. But what he comments on in Hervey is basically, like Gibbons, the power of nature to body forth the divinity of its creator if it is properly viewed: "To trace the genial source we Nature call,/And prove the God of Nature friend to all." Most of this 54 line tribute is devoted to expressing the vision of nature caught by Hervey's "mental landscape":

The azure fields that form th'extended sky,
 The planetary globes that roll on high,
 And solar orbs, of proudest blaze, combine
 To act subservient to the great design,
 Men angels, seraphs, join the gen'ral voice,
 And in the Lord of Nature all rejoice.

The perception of the meditation is that "The same who smiles in Nature's peaceful form,/Frowns in the tempest, and directs the storm." God is seen in everything, what man suspects to be bad as well as good. Yet the religious feeling does not narrow itself into pantheism. Hervey's work is described to be a place "where artless piety pervades the whole,/Refines the genius, and exalts the soul." The poem ends with the kind of apologia for religion which is found not infrequently within this tradition:

For let the witling argue all he can,
 It is religion still that makes the man.
 'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
 'Tis this that gilds the horrors of the night.
 When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
 When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
 'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
 Disarms affliction, or repels its dart;
 Within the breast bids purest rapture rise;
 Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies,
 When the storm thickens, and the thunder rolls,
 When the Earth trembles to th'affrighted poles,
 The virtuous mind no doubts nor fears assail;
 For storms are zephyrs, or a gentler gale.
 And when disease obstructs the lab'ring breath;
 When the heart sickens, and each pulse is death;
 E'en then religion shall sustain the just,
 Grace their last moments, nor desert their dust.

The attention attracted by Hervey's work is only one instance of the continuing interest in meditation throughout the eighteenth century. This interest seems to be a carry-over of the forces traced by Martz. His conclusions and thesis have been conveniently summarized:

From all such evidence it seems clear that there were easy ways by which the continental methods of meditation could, and did, reach a large body of educated Englishmen, particularly those of a High Church tendency, who were by no means averse to all things Roman. There is, then, reason to consider the thesis that English religious poetry of the seventeenth century represents the impact of the continental art of meditation upon English poetical

traditions. That impact was exerted to some extent through the example of continental religious poetry: Southwell and Crashaw make this plain. But fundamentally, I shall argue, the Counter Reformation penetrated to English literature through methods of religious meditation that lay at the heart of the century's spiritual life and provided a radiant center for religious literature of every kind.¹²

The precise nature of this penetration and the ways in which it colored the religious writing of the period are difficult to pin down. Martz records that the exact meaning of the word meditation was often uncertain. It appears to be related to prayer, contemplation, consideration, mental prayer, good thoughts, spiritual exercises, and examination of conscience. And he quotes Fray Luis de Granada as writing that "both meditation and contemplation, and every other good thought may be also called a Prayer."¹³ This ambiguity in use of the word is paralleled by the wide range of religious experience encompassed. Even its relation to mysticism is often close:

Meditation, then, cultivates the basic, the lower levels of the spiritual life, it is not, properly speaking, a mystical activity, but a part of the duties of every man in daily life. It is not performed under the operations of special grace, but is available to every man through the workings of ordinary grace.¹⁴

But later Martz admits that "the incentive for meditation offered by some of the most popular writers of the time was the possibility of achieving the highest reaches of mystical experience."¹⁵ The terms and degrees of religious feeling are not differentiated with the precision employed by technical writers on mysticism. Meditation and contemplation can be separated clearly in their extreme states, and so "from this point of view we can see why the term 'mystical' may,

with some justice, be applied to the English meditative poets."¹⁶ The one characteristic determinable in this tradition is that of humility. This is central to meditation, contemplation, and prayer. This characteristic is recognized in a poem published in the thirteenth number of a religious periodical published weekly from 2 March 1712/13 to 24 April 1713. The Monitor contained principally religious verses. An anonymous poem is titled "An Epigram upon Prayer":

Prayer Highest soars when She most Frostrate lies,
And when she Supplicates, she storms the Skies,
Thus to gain Heav'n, may seem an easy Task,
For what can be more easy than to Ask?
Yet oft we do, by sad Experience, find
That, clogg'd with Earth, some Pray'rs are left behind;
And some, like Chaff, blown off by ev'ry Wind.
To kneel is easy, to pronounce not Hard;
Then why are some Petitioners debarr'd?
Hear what an Ancient Oracle declar'd.
Some sing their Pray'rs, and some their Prayers say,
He's an Elias who his Pray'rs can Pray.
Reader remember when you next repair
To Church or Closet, this Memoir of Pray'r.

The subtle differences between prayer and meditation during the eighteenth century would be interesting to explore; but for purposes of the present study it is sufficient to recognize similarities within the tradition.

Although form, in the traditional sense of literary criticism, cannot be easily described in the prayers and meditations of the eighteenth century, there is, nevertheless, a strong feeling for form in these works. This feeling rarely emerges in such moulds as the sonnet or the riming couplet. But it does emerge in an "atmosphere" of discipline and restraint. This feeling among Anglican writers is, of course, a reaction against the emotional spontaneity of many dissenting ministers. On 27 November 1681 William Beveridge (1637-1703)

preached a sermon at the Parish Church of St. Peter's, Cornhill, which was printed the following year and frequently reprinted. It was a sermon upon I Corinthians xiv 26:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Beveridge proposed to "shew that that form of religious worship, which is prescribed by our Church, established by the laws of the land, and therefore to be used now in this place, agrees exactly with this rule or canon of the Holy Apostle, even that all things in it are done to edifying."¹⁷ He first proves that "the prescribing a form in general" is agreeable to this Apostolical rule, and then proceeds to prove that the forms of the Established Church are particularly agreeable. The central arguments for the need for form are based upon the acute awareness of man's corruption and diversity:

If every minister of a parish should be left to his own liberty to do what he pleaseth in his own congregation, although some, perhaps, might be so prudent as to observe this rule as well as they could, yet, considering the corruption of human nature, we have much cause to fear that others would not; at least, the Church could be no way secured that all would and, therefore, must needs be obliged to consider of and appoint some such form to be used in all her congregations, by which she may be fully assured that this Apostolical rule is everywhere observed, as it ought to be.

The advantage of established prayer is that "by a set form of public devotions rightly composed...we are continually put in mind of all things necessary for us to know or do"; this is done "by the same words and expressions, which, by their constant use, will imprint the things themselves so firmly in our minds, that it will be no easy matter to obliterate or rase them out; but, do what we can, they will

still occur upon all occasions; which cannot but be very much for our Christian edification." This argument of Christian edification, or beatific brain-washing, is seconded by a further one of the occasion for concentration in devotion:

If I hear another pray, and know not beforehand what he will say, I must first listen to what he will say next; then I am to consider whether what he saith be agreeable to sound doctrine, and whether it be proper and lawful for me to join with him in the petitions he puts up to God Almighty; and if I think it is so, then I am to do it. But before I can well do that, he is got to another thing; but which means it is very difficult, if not morally impossible, to join with him in every thing so regularly as I ought to do.

This argument is evidence of the very high seriousness in both attitude and doctrine which can be discovered among the Anglican writers of the period. To them the performance of the service was not another Sunday sport, nor is there any evidence that, as Young reports about the nineteenth century, the Communion Table was used as a depository for hats, and the font as a receptacle for umbrellas.¹⁸ But Young had already suggested a change in the national characteristics of the Englishman:

Physically, the national type was changing; the ruddy, careless Englishman of the eighteenth, turbulent but placable, as ready with his friendship as his fists, seemed to be making way for a pallid, sullen stock, twisted in mind and body.¹⁹

The careless Englishman, turbulent but placable, took his religion with an easy assurance that has been mistaken for indifference. But much evidence can be found to show that he was not indifferent. In an article upon the Holy Communion in the Anglican Church Stephen Neill suggested that "it is probable that, even in the doldrums of the eighteenth century, a much larger percentage of the adult population

were regular, though not frequent, communicants than is the case at the present day. It is noted that in a remote parish in Anglesey, where there were only 90 families, in 1734 the Easter communicants numbered 230."²⁰ It is important to keep this sort of fact in mind when trying to understand the atmosphere of the religious verse of the century.

The strain of basic seriousness, the belief in the necessity of form for prayer as a guide for concentration, the distrust of instantaneous prayer -- these themes of Beveridge are echoed in a poem by Samuel Wesley (1691-1739), "On Forms of Prayer." It is an answer to the desire for freedom from prescribed form Isaac Watts had expressed earlier:

Form stints the Spirit, Watts has said,
And therefore oft is wrong;
At best a Crutch the Weak to aid,
A Cumbrance to the Strong.

Of human Liturgies the load
Perfection scorns to bear,
Th'Apostles were but weak when God
Prescrib'd his Form of Prayer.

Old David both in Prayers and Praise
A Form for Crutches brings,
But Watts has dignify'd his Lays,
And furnish'd him with Wings.

Ev'n Watts a Form for Praise can chuse,
For Prayer who throws it by;
Crutches to walk he can refuse,
But uses them to fly.

The question of set forms for prayers remained a liturgical lance for attacking other church groups throughout the century. Concern and discussion are evidenced in such works as Thomas Comber's A Scholastical History of the Primitive and General Use of Liturgies in the Christian Church (1690), William Fleetwood's A Letter to an

Inhabitant of the Church of St. Andrew's, Holborn, about New Cermonies in the Church (1717), the anonymous Remarks on the Public Service of the Church, with Directions for our Behaviour there, by a Clergyman of the Church of England (1768), and Joseph Pott's Three Sermons on the Festivals and Fasts of the Church (1794). The attitude expressed by Samuel Wesley is that of the Anglican tradition, as seen earlier in the contrast between poems by Ellwood and Wordsworth.

The other characteristic, already noticed as central to this meditative tradition -- that of humility -- provides the theme for another piece from Poems on Several Occasions (2nd ed. with additions, 1743) by Samuel Wesley. The humility which he, as an Anglican, describes is quietly realistic and logically comprehended; it is not an emotional groveling in exaggerated baseness; depravity, also, is placed upon a media via: neither total nor imaginary, but grounded in man's nature and remediable through man's ability to rise above his merely human station. The feeling of "On Humility" is based upon a precise understanding of the limitations of man in comparison with God, but also upon an understanding that limitations means that there are definite powers which can and do operate within the limitations.

'Tis not because I sprung from nought,
I bow with Lowliness of Thought;
All but the Trinity Most High
Was nothing once as well as I.

'Tis not because I dwell in Clay,
Subject to Sickness and Decay;
This Flesh if rightly I controul,
'Tis no Pollution to my Soul.

'Tis not because this outward Skin
Contains unseemly Stench within;
Conceal'd, 'tis well, as if all o'er
I breath'd Perfume at ev'ry Pore.

'Tis not because this Carcass dead
 Will Worms and Putrefaction breed;
 'Tis well, as if from thence should come
 The violet's and the Rose's Bloom.

No, I shall ne'er deject my Heart
 By thinking in my mortal Part;
 Tho' mean, tho' base, tho' vile it be,
 'Twill put on Immortality.

'Tis not because dependent here,
 I poorly fill a narrow sphere:
 To cast our destin'd Lot aside,
 Is not Humility, but Pride.

'Tis not because in Life below
 I little act, and little know;
 In Knowledge and in Pow'r there's none
 Unlimited, but God alone.

What! in Myself then can I find
 No Cause for Lowliness of Mind?
 Ah, Yes! for Sin what thought can bear!
 'Tis there I sink! 'tis wholly there!

Here orthodox acceptance of the Trinity and of man's predicament are central. Humility is carefully described. It is a recognition of man's "narrow Sphere" and of only God's unlimitedness in Knowledge and Power. This sort of humility, as we have seen in Dryden's Religio Laici and shall see more fully later in this essay, led to the beliefs concerning the role of reason in man's salvation.

Both these characteristics of humility and the feeling for form -- both as qualified by the contemporary writers themselves -- are evident in a poem called "Litany" from John Bowdler's selection of Poems Divine and Moral, Many of Them Now First Published. The poem is not attributed to any author. The feeling is close to that of "On Humility" by Samuel Wesley; the structure is based upon the formal repetitive stanzas of the Litany:

Saviour, when in dust to Thee
 Low we bend the adoring knee;
 When, repentant, to the skies
 Scarce we lift our weeping eyes:
 Oh, by all thy pain and woe,
 (Suffered once for man below,)
 Bending from Thy throne on high,
 Hear our solemn Litany!

By Thy helpless infant years,
 By Thy life of want and tears,
 By Thy days of sore distress
 In the savage wilderness;
 By the dread mysterious hour
 Of the insulting tempter's power,
 Turn, oh turn, a favouring eye,
 Hear our solemn Litany!

By the sacred griefs that wept
 O'er the grave where Lazarus slept;
 By the boding tears that flowed
 Over Salem's loved abode;
 By the anguish'd sigh that told
 Treachery lurk'd within thy fold;
 From thy seat above the sky
 Hear our solemn Litany!

By Thine hour of dire despair,
 By Thine agony of prayer,
 By the cross, the nail, the thorn,
 Piercing spear, and torturing scorn,
 By the gloom that veil'd the skies
 O'er the dreadful sacrifice;
 Listen to our cry,
 Hear our solemn Litany!

By Thy deep expiring groan,
 By the sad sepulchral stone,
 By the vault, whose dark abode
 Held in vain the rising God;
 Oh! from earth to heaven restor'd,
 Mighty, re-ascended Lord,
 Listen, listen to the cry
 Of our solemn Litany!

The cross, the nail, the thorn, the vault, the pain and woe -- all these are realistic details of the crucifixion and they are symbolic of the God's suffering as sacrament for man. The agony of prayer and the deep expiring groan are both human and divine. This is the extreme, the paradox of the Litany. But, like the Litany itself, the

poem is in the language of common experience. Partly the simplicity of style within the Anglican tradition is due to the attempt to conceive of man's redemption in terms all can comprehend. The sacrament is offered to all men, not just to the elect. It is the style, not the experience nor the attitude toward it, that is simplified. The dread hour still remains mysterious and the Litany still remains solemn. These are the conclusions about the style of meditative poetry which Martz has derived from his reading of seventeenth-century verse:

Thus the self of meditative poetry speaks a language based on that of common men, but including whatever in its own experience is unique and individual. If the self is learned and theological in its bent, then common speech will be infused with learned, theological terms and ways of thought, as in the case of Donne. If this self is deeply devoted to the English Bible and English liturgy, this language will glow through common speech, as in Herbert. Or if, in turn, the self finds itself inflamed with the hagiographic devotions of the Counter Reformation--this too will find its way through common speech and create the baroque style of a Crashaw. And if the self has been molded, in large part, by the writing of an earlier poet, that poet's idiom will make its way into the later poet's speech, as Herbert's language speaks through Vaughan.

Meditative style, he says, because it is wrought as part of a search for the common basis of humanity, "must have common speech as a basis"; but because it is also part of a personal quest through which the common humanity is visioned, "the style must also express that one, essential personality that is every man's unique possession."²¹ This approach to style as a combination of the universal and the individual is, of course, not unusual. Marts has recognized that there are great similarities between the meditative and the poetic method. But his point is "not that meditative method created this tendency, but rather that meditative discipline cultivated this tendency of the mind; with the result that poetry written under such discipline shows a more

explicit, more deliberate structure of this kind than can be found, for example, in Wordsworth."²² For the historian of eighteenth-century verse these conclusions are of value because they supply a framework for the description of a large body of verse previously passed over.

The use of meditation, and consequently of its style, is securely a part of the Anglican tradition. In The Catholic Faith: A Manual of Instruction for Members of the Church of England Griffith Thomas

writes that "in order that the Bible may be a means of grace to us, we must ever bear in mind the necessity and power of Meditation." This he supports by Biblical passages, and then he attempts a definition: "Speaking generally, it is the brooding of mind, heart, and conscience over the Word of God." True meditation contains four elements:

1) attention, in which the mind is fixed on the verse or passage which is before it; 2) aspiration, in which the heart turns the thought into a prayer and aspires towards God -- "Every promise is to be turned into a petition, every exhortation into an aspiration, every appeal into a longing desire to experience its full meaning" -- 3) application, in which the verse or passage is read against our own lives and present needs; and 4) action, which is a summing up of everything -- "We must yield ourselves to God and seek His grace to put into practice what we have been taught in the secret of His presence." Thomas concludes, "When these four elements are combined -- attention, aspiration, application, action -- we shall know what meditation means, and what it means profitably to hide God's words in our hearts."²³

This four-fold analysis cannot be found in all meditative poetry, of course. Action belongs properly to the realm of morality, and attention is closer to the dilatation of the medieval sermon than to the structure

of poetry. But we have already noticed the frequent use of an application in religious verse.

These elements are found in Poetical Meditations on the Four Last Things, viz. on Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell published in London in 1740. In his "Preface" William Tans'ur comments:

As to the Work itself, the Four first Sections are on Things of the greatest Importance, viz, on Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell: on which every Soul ought hourly to consider, that their Ends may be well.

These first four sections consist of 4 line stanzas, each numbered and supported by one or two marginal Biblical references. The style is simple, of the common man, and the sentiments centre about such themes as redeeming Love, Guilt, and Grace. The "Meditations on Death" picture the horrors of the unjust and the fortunes of the just:

xiii

The righteous Man will now be counted wise,
Who fear'd the Lord; 'tis he who wins the Prize:
He of eternal Glory ne'er shall miss,
But be Partakers of e'erlasting Bliss.

xiv

This Man, Death cannot kill, he hath on Arms,
Satan can't hurt him, with Sin's pow'rful Charms;
His Head is helm'd, with Breast-plate on his Heart,
In Hand a Shield, which blunteth ev'ry Dart.

xv

Truth girds his Loins, his Sword is on his Thigh,
His Feet go Paths of Peace and Purity;
His Heart doth thirst for God, who hears his Call,
And gives him strength, whereby he conquers all.

xvi

Thus, fortify'd with Love, he keeps the Field,
And then lies down upon his aiding Shield:
He stands his Guard, 'Till Death is gone and fled,
His Shield's his Aid, 'till Christ doth raise the Dead.

Stanza viii of the "Meditations on the Last Judgment" contains the application:

Each Heart shall ope, before the Judge most high,
Who'll bring each Thought to Judgment 'suredly:
With so much Justice, that each one shall say,
By Sin, I threw my precious Soul away.

The "Meditations on Heaven" picture the joys of the Righteous:

ix

All Mysteries known, and ev'ry Knot unty'd,
Electing Love shall shine on ev'ry Side:
By Wisdom, we shall all Things know and see,
By Strength, do all, when we in Glory be.

* * *

xxvii

Here, Musick's Strings are tun'd in Harmony;
Each Spirit's perfum'd with perfect Sanctity:
Here, we by Love, untie the Glory-Chain,
And Streams of Life o'erflow each Heart and Vein.

The following stanza -- xxix -- is an aspiration, a prayer to "experience the full meaning" of the possibility of salvation:

Inspire our Hearts, O Lord, with thy good Grace;
Take us to Thee, in this thy heav'nly Place.
Lord, at the last, do thou our Souls befriend,
And then preserve with Thee, World without End.

The first stanza of the "Meditations on Hell" says that it is really impossible to bring to our full attention the horrors of Hell:

Hell is a State so fearful and forlorn,
None can relate the Pangs that there are borne.
Instead of Life, a Living Death is found,
And endless Sorrows ever to abound.

But the meditations, supported by Biblical references, do draw a vivid picture:

iv

Hell's deem'd a Lake, a hot and fiery Flame,
Also an Ov'n, that all may know the same;
Which is God's Wrath, incensed by the Sin
Of guilty Souls, who take Delight therein.

v

This Wrath will so torment and prick the Soul,
 As if in Burnings it did hourly roll.
 God's Absence doth as burning Brimstone make
 The Pangs of Hell -- This is its stinking State.

Death, one of the four last things, frequently provided the matter for poetical composition during the eighteenth century. Some of these poems show many of the elements characteristic of meditative verse. In them there seems to be an actual reliving of the process of understanding; there seems to be a retracing of the steps of illumination. Thus they tend to be more logical, more reasoned, than many poems, especially those of dissenting and revivalistic writers, which present a previously digested sentiment. And thus they tend to be more immediate than many poems which express an absolute certainty. They are less confident, and the imagery and language is more carefully thought-out; because they are less cliché-riddled, they appear more appropriate and vivid. These poems may be personal in that they do talk about the poet's experience and in that, as Martz has put it, the style does contain the individual poet's voice. But they are also a questioning of the poet's experience, with the focus upon the experience and not upon the poet. There is a restraint, and quiet dignity about them.

In 1735 there was published a collection of poems dealing in various ways with these subjects. It was titled The Christian Poet, or Divine Poems on the Four Last Things: (viz) Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. It contained works by Elizabeth Singer Rowe, the Earl of Roscommon, Dean Swift, Pope, Gay, Defoe, and a number of works unidentified. The "Preface" provided a raison d'être for the collection:

Whoever is Irreligious more from Custom than Principle, may be Redeem'd by a serious Prospect of Death and Eternity; Subjects, which it might reasonably be imagined, though we are every Day convinced of the contrary, no Man could think of without the deepest Concern, or without making some Provision for a State, into which he is, perhaps, the next Moment to enter, and in which he is to continue to Eternity.

But, the "Preface" points out, this serious concern is ignored by "the Gay, the Airy, and Voluptuous"; they trifle away life without a due regard to the last four things.

This Aversion from Contemplation so violent and so destructive, can only be overcome by joining Diversion with Advantages, and making what is most Salutary most Agreeable....

I have therefore chosen to lay before the Reader, a Collection of Poems in which his Removal from this World, and existence in another, are consider'd as well in a Philosophical as a Religious Light....

Several poems in this collection show strong influence of the meditative tradition. One is an unidentified work titled "Thoughts on Death":

I'm almost to the Fatal Period come,
My forward Glass has well nigh run its last;
E'er a few Moments I must hear the Doom,
Which ne'er will be recall'd when once it's past.

Methinks I have Eternity in View,
And dread to reach the Edges of the Shore,
Nor doth the Prospect the less dismal shew
For all the Thousands that have launch'd before.

Why weep, my Friends? What is their Loss to mine?
I have but one poor doubtful Stake to throw
And with a dying Pray'r my Hopes resign,
If that be lost, I'm lost for ever too.

'Tis not the painful Agonies of Death,
Nor all the gloomy Horrors of the Grave;
Were that the worst, unmov'd I'd yield my Breath,
And with a Smile the King of Terrors brave.

But there's an After-day, 'tis that I fear:
Oh, who shall hide me from that angry Brow?
Already I the dreadful Accent hear,
Depart from me, and that for ever too.

This poem has a general tone of quiet resignation. There is nothing in this poem's experience for tears, nothing to wail or knock the breast. Nor is there simple comfort in the sure consideration of the after-life. It is realistic in its inevitability, in its uncertainty, in its fear. To achieve this tone, the time span has been concentrated. There is the sense of inevitability in the image of the Glass. The association of this image with the hour-glass suggests the grave shortness of man's life. This is reinforced by the line, "E'er a few Moments I must hear my Doom." The tone of uncertainty is centered around the image of the unknown shore. Eternity is linked with the ocean, the edges of which are dreadful to reach. The image is continued in the phrase, "all the Thousands that have launch'd before" -- death is a journey into the unfamiliar. This uncertainty leads to the poem's fear. It is a "Fatal Period," and there may be intended a pun on this word: period as a length of time, man's life; and period as an ending to a statement. This image of the unappeasable ending is strengthened by the line, "Which ne'er will be recall'd when once it's past." A further pun may be intended on "a dying Pray'r": the person praying is dying, and the prayer itself may die before being completed, since he is not too sure what can be prayed for. The resolution is resignation. Man cannot know what reefs or tides lie beyond the shores of death. The feeling, when facing the awful presence of Eternity, is one of humility: "I have but one poor doubtful Stake to throw." This, indeed, may possibly be a gamble. If the promise of Eternity is empty, hope is empty, too. But then there is an additional twist in the logical structure of the poem. Having reasoned that if Eternity is lost, he is lost for ever too, the poet

then realizes that if Eternity is not lost, he may just the same be lost for ever. The voice of damnation may speak in the orthodox dictum of damnation as isolation from God: "Depart from me." This second conclusion is reinforced stylistically by paralleling the first conclusion with the end-of-line phrase, "for ever too." The stanza structure, the rime scheme, the length of line -- the whole pattern, in other words, is of interest and service as a device for presenting the matter of the poem. What appears to be a relatively ordinary little verse can be shown to possess a number of technical niceties which suggest that it was the product of a certain intensity and attention. These qualities are reflected in the technical details because they are, so to speak, endemic to the meditative tradition.

In contrast, intensity and attention are not characteristic of another work in the same collection. It is an unidentified sonnet, "Death":

When Life's first Bloom affords untainted Joy,
And Youthful Spirits warm the bounding Heart,
Death shakes his Dart in vain, his Terrors fly
Before the Scoffer's Jest, or Reasoner's Art.

How chang'd the scene when raging Pains assail,
And fainting Nature feels her Period near,
Nor Reason's Paved, nor Fancy's Charms avail,
Mirth learns to Sigh, Philosophy to fear.

Tho' Reason's Lamp, and Fancy's wand'ring Fire
Amidst the Horrors of that Night expire,
Religion kindly lends a steadlier Ray;
Her bright Effulgence dissipates the Gloom,
Expels the Terrors of the yawning Tomb,
And Guides the Joyful Soul to lasting Day.

This poem is interesting as a combination of the Italian and the English sonnet form. The three stages in the poet's progression are clearly marked, and concluding sentiments are noble and praiseworthy.

But they are also empty and abstract. The dissipating qualities of religion's bright effulgence seems hardly adequate for expelling the terrors of the yawning tomb, if these terrors are more than a poetical poise. The success formula for the joyful soul has been, it appears, to accept religion. Precisely what this involves is not made clear, or even implied. In other words, this poem affords a worthwhile contrast for poems of the meditative tradition in that its tone is one of simple-mindedness rather than simplicity, of abstraction rather than experience, of loose and hackneyed imagery rather than concrete and detailed imagery. The real difference between these poems which marks one as belonging to the meditative tradition cannot really be described; it lies in the combination of many things; basically, perhaps, these are intensity and attention. Again, perhaps, it can be viewed in terms of attitude and atmosphere.

Another poem from The Christian Poet which contrasts in intensity and attention, attitude and atmosphere with the sonnet "Death" and which belongs in the meditative tradition is by John Norris (1657-1711), the successor to George Herbert as rector of Bemerton. Fairchild's praise of him is heavily qualified:

On the whole, however, he was not unworthy of becoming rector of George Herbert's old parish of Bemerton. In him the noble tradition of seventeenth-century religious poetry, though decadent, retains some of its old beauty. He writes well enough to remind us that Henry Vaughan did not die until 1695.²⁴

But, recently Geoffrey Walton has published a plea for a wider recognition of his virtues.²⁵ He describes Norris as a "not unworthy successor of George Herbert," and while he recognizes that the individual voice of Herbert cannot be expected to be the identical individual voice of Norris, he sees a continued Metaphysical tradition

in much of Norris's verse:

In Norris one finds a Metaphysical wit, which,
though the emotional and intellectual tension
is relaxed, is still recognizably Metaphysical,
as the dominant quality of much of his poetry.

In his elaboration of this point of view Walton comes very close to Martz who has suggested that the tradition of meditation played a fundamental part in the development of the poetic qualities we have been noticing, and that with this realization the literary critic and historian may then see the metaphysical poets, not as Donne and his school, but as "a group of writers, widely different in temper and outlook, drawn together by resemblances that result, basically, from the common practice of certain methods of religious meditation."²⁶ The substitution of a meditative for a metaphysical grouping of poets is more convenient for the present study because of its more immediately religious bias. Yet it is remarkable that without this substitution Walton notices the same qualities in Norris's "Content" that have been noticed in such poems as the unidentified "Thoughts on Death":

This is devotional poetry written in the dawning
age of Reason, Truth and Nature, yet with a trace
remaining of an earlier and finer attitude; one
notices the mingled pride and hesitancy in "perhaps."²⁷

These are the qualities in Norris's "The Meditation," reprinted in the 1735 collection The Christian Poet:

It must be done, my soul, but 'tis a strange
A dismal and mysterious change,
When thou shalt leave this tenement of clay,
And to an unknown somewhere wing away;
When Time shall be Eternity, and thou
Shalt be thou know'st not what, and live thou
know'st not how.

Amazing state! No wonder that we dread
 To think of Death, or view the dead.
 Thou'rt all wrapt up in clouds, as if to thee
 Our very knowledge had antipathy.
 Death could not a more sad retinue find,
 Sickness and Pain before, and Darkness all behind.

Some courteous ghost, tell this great secrecy,
 What 'tis you are, and we must be.
 You warn us of approaching death, and why
 May we not know from you what 'tis to dye?
 But you, having shot the gulph, delight to see
 Succeeding souls plunge in with like uncertainty.

When Life's close knot by writ from Destiny,
 Disease shall cut, or Age unty;
 When after some delays, some dying strife,
 The soul stands shiv'ring on the ridge of life;
 With what a dreadful curiosity
 Does she launch out into the sea of vast Eternity!

So when the spacious globe was delug'd o'er,
 And lower holds could save no more,
 On th'utmost bough th'astonish'd sinners stood,
 And view'd th'advances of th'encroaching flood.
 O'er topp'd at length by th'element's encrease,
 With horror they resign'd to the untry'd abyss.

The similarities between this poem and "Thoughts on Death" are remarkable. The tone of inevitability, of uncertainty, of fear; the final resignation; the exploration of the real meaning of Eternity to the dying soul; the imagery of the unknown ocean -- these we have seen are all marks of the tradition. The opening two lines -- "it must be done, my soul, but 'tis a strange/A dismal and mysterious change" -- may be taken as an emblem of one characteristic of the Anglican tradition. At the back of, or indeed permeating, man's experience is the mysterious; God's intention for man is not completely knowable, and this awareness brings forth the virtues of humility and resignation. This is in contrast with many of the nonconformist writers. Carpenter quotes James Foster (1697-1753) as saying, "Where mystery begins, religion ends."²⁸ This element of mystery was, during the eighteenth

century, interpreted in a number of ways. Later this study will examine some of the implications which such a view had for the writers in an "age of Reason." It has already been shown that the relation between meditation and mystical experience is often very close, and this relation can be seen here. Walton has described Norris as "obviously not a man of the world, but a scholarly poet writing in retirement."²⁹ His retirement has apparently allowed him to see more fully and more completely. The mystical elements in his poetry are both central and genuine.

The influence of this tradition is widespread; it, like any tradition, was not confined to the subject matter it was originally designed for. An interesting example of this extension is found among the works of Henry Baker (1698-1774), known mainly as a naturalist and teacher of the deaf and dumb. His closest relation to literary fame seems to be that he married Defoe's youngest daughter. But in 1725 and 1726 he published a collection of verse in two parts, Original Poems: Serious and Humorous, which contains much worthwhile material. Largely he writes of secular -- sometimes exceedingly secular -- matters: his "To Flora Drest" is a superb bit of amorous bantering in the Cavalier vein. But this remarkable collection includes some poems of genuine religious feeling. His "On Content" expresses the quintessence of the many poems written during the century on the same subject:

Give me, O God! (for all Things come from Thee)
Content, that richest Cordial of the Soul:
Possessing This, I happier shall be,
In my neglected low Degree,
Than He who does in Heaps of Riches roll.
Chymists, long in vain, have sought
The Philosophic-Stone to find,
What Labour had been spar'd! if They had thought
To look for't where it is, in a contented Mind.

This theme and attitude, already sharing the characteristics of humility and simplicity, are developed in a longer poem called "The Meditation":

If Wealth produc'd Content, if Heaps of Gold
 Could Happiness insure, I too would toil,
 And break my Rest: wou'd seek the busy World
 And bustle thro' the Crowd; no Labour spare,
 No Danger shun, but resolute, through all
 Urge on, impetuous, 'till I might obtain
 An ample store of Metal: Fortune's Smiles
 Would count, obsequious, and to her prefer
 My daily Adorations.

But since she,
 With all her Gifts of Power, Wealth, and Name,
 From Care and Wretchedness cannot secure
 Her darling Minions: Since that gaudy Glare
 Which strikes the vulgar Eye, is all a vain
 Imaginary Good: Since Gold increas'd,
 Is but increas'd Anxiety, and Power
 To endless Fears obnoxious; much more blest
 Beneath this spreading Beech, am I than He
 Whose Brows a Coronet circles. Here unknown,
 Unenvy'd, undisturb'd, the Muse and I
 Enjoy an humble Quiet: O you Powers
 All-over ruling! long may we enjoy
 This humble Quiet, lowly, yet content!

And, thou, my Muse! Companion best belov'd!
 Remote from Courts and Noise, still, still, may'st thou
 Chant forth thy Strains, harmonious, in the Praise
 Of Virtue, and of Beauty: but not deign,
 O never may'st thou deign to sooth the Great!
 Or stoop to servile Flattery!--sincere
 Honest, without Ambition, still bestow,
 What little Share of Fame thou canst bestow,
 On those who best deserve! where Virtue calls,
 Or Beauty shines, or Gratitude inspires.

The outstanding characteristic of this poem is, of course, its logical structure. The paragraph-like division, with the if and since introductions to each premise, provides a framework in which the poem can explore the consequences of experience. This is a major characteristic of the tradition, and it establishes that the influence of the syllogism upon poetry did not cease with the Restoration. In fact, the syllogism, with its structure of progression, was ideally

suited to meditation. Form and discipline were usually felt to be necessary -- especially, as Samuel Wesley argued, in the Anglican Tradition -- and the general syllogistic structure provided the most convenient framework. An early example is found in "The Petition" by Thomas Beedome, published in the posthumous volume Poems, Divine and Humane (1641):

Heare mee, my God, and heare mee soone,
Because my morning toucheth noone,
Nor can I looke for their delight,
Because my noone layes hold on night.
I am all circle, my morne, night and noone
Are individable; then heare mee soone.

Thou art all time my God, and I
Am part of that eternity;
Yet being made, I want that might
To be as thou art, Infinite:
As in thy flesh, so be thou Lord to mee,
That is, both infinite, and eternity.

But I am dust; at most, but man,
That dust extended to a span:
A span indeed, for in thy hand,
Stretcht or contracted, Lord, I stand;
Contract and stretch mee too, that I may be
Straightn'd on earth, to be enlarg'd to thee.

But I am nothing; then how can
I call my selfe, or dust, or man?
Yet thou from nothing all didst frame,
That all things might exalt thy name,
Make mee but something, then, my God to thee;
Then shall thy praise be all in all to mee.

A similar playing back and forth of the argument and a similar shifting in the point of view, reminiscent of much of the poetry by John Donne, is also to be found in Beedome's "Epigram 14: Being a Meditation to My Selfe." This characteristic is still common in poems at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1821 John Bowdler (1746-1823), one of the founders of the Church Building Society and author of religious pamphlets, produced an extensive collection of

poems called Poems Divine and Moral, Many of Them Now First Published.

His religious enthusiasm, unfortunately, tended to get the better of his responsibilities as an editor, as he candidly admitted in his "Preface":

...my object was not to produce a collection of elegant poetry, but to do good; and that having entered my seventy-sixth year, I had no time to lose. I therefore hastened my work, and extracted and abridged freely, and even ventured, in a few instances, to alter a word or phrase when not suited to my purposes.

But his choice of material is interesting, both in its appropriateness to his intention and its wide range of authors included. Among them was his son, John Bowdler (1783-1815), whose "Prayer" shows many characteristics shared with Beedome's "Petition":

Father of Good, to whom belong
My morning vow, my evening song;
Again, with trembling joy to thee,
A wayward child, I bend my knee.
Myriads of angels, guard thy throne,
And I am little, I am one;
Yet all Thy works Thine eyes survey:
Then hear and help me while I pray.

Thy gifts my days with gladness crown;
Sin, only sin, hath bowed me down.
Lord, touch my heart, and make me know
My Saviour's worth, my Saviour's woe!
Then shall my angry will be tame;
Then shall I learn and weep my shame;
The weight of wrath in judgment due
Shall feel, and feel Thy mercy too.

Yet not for pard'ning grace alone
I breathe a suppliant sinner's groan:
Pardon and love are both divine:
Then give me both, and make me Thine.
Thy pard'ning grace my fears shall quell;
But love shall pride and sin expel;
While faith, in every danger nigh,
Gives strength, and peace, and liberty.

So as I walk my earthly way,
Thy mercy, Lord, my steps shall stay;
Brighten with hope my saddest hours,
And strew the pilgrim path with flowers.

And so, while life and breath are mine,
 Shall ev'ry power in concert join
 To praise the God, to whom belong
 My morning vow and evening song.

The attitudes and atmosphere of this poem are similar to those already noticed in a considerable number of poems of the eighteenth century. The awareness of sin, which "hath bowed me down"; man's total devotion to God, "to whom belong/My morning vow, my evening song"; the hope for mercy as well as wrath, "the weight of wrath in judgment due/Shall feel, and feel Thy mercy too"; the prayer for grace and love, "Thy pard'ning grace my fears shall quell;/But love shall pride and sin expel"; the sense of form in the circular pattern of the verses -- these lines, apart from intonations of the individual poetic voice, are representative of many written in the Anglican tradition which we have been examining.

If the Anglican Church expresses a media via it does so by a concentration upon Justice and Love. Neither does it concentrate upon God's wrath and punishment, nor does it preach man's innate perfection. Both Justice and Love are qualities which are shared by God and man. It is a divine Justice and a divine Love, and therefore they are beyond man's immediate grasp; but man, because he is part divine, can come to know and to understand them, at least in some small measure. They are not sudden or arbitrary, imposed by an inexplicable power acting on impulse. Because of this concept much Anglican verse reflects, in various ways, a sense of progression, of unfolding, of growth. All these are images of man's gradual wisdom. Thus much verse is concerned with the mysterious paradoxes of the Church, particularly the paradox of the union of God and man in Christ:

Two Natures in one Being to unite,
 Singulariz'd by what is Infinite:
 Strange Union! not conceiv'd by bounded Mind,
 Which God and Man unmix'd together join'd.

These lines from Ken "On the Incarnation" express one of the main mysteries of the Church. Upon it much prayer and contemplation and meditation dwell. Because of it the other great mystery of the sacrament of the Crucifixion was possible. Again, the Crucifixion is felt as an experience shared by all mankind. It did not remain solely a historical event, necessarily causing man's redemption. It was, rather, a vehicle of redemption. The important aspect of these experiences is found in their ability, their need, to be shared. Mutual illumination, not personal introspection, set off the Anglican tradition from the Puritan. In this sense the Church thinks of itself as Catholic. Such parts of the liturgy as the Venite and the Te Deum are performed by the whole congregation in union with the entire Communion of Saints.

Justice, Love, the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption -- these are the themes of the "Meditations on Christ's Death and Passion: An Emblem" by Walter Harte (1709-1774). Harte's Poems on Several Occasions (1727) contained only three divine poems: two paraphrases from the Psalms and a version of a short piece by Chaucer. However, in 1767 he brought forth The Amaranth: or, Religious Poems; consisting of Fables, Visions, Emblems, &c. These forms, as he explains in the "Preface," "are the most ancient method of conveying truth to mankind. Upwards of forty of the finest and most poetical parts of the Old and New Testament are of this cast, and force their way upon the mind and heart irresistibly, tho' they are written in prose." His "Meditations

on Christ's Death and Passion" is divided into seven sections, related and continuous, but each upon a special facet of the experience:

I

Haste not so fast, on worldly cares employ'd,
Thy bleeding Saviour asks a short delay:
What trifling bliss is still to be enjoy'd,
What change of folly wings thee on thy way?
Look back a moment, pause a while, and stay.
For thee thy God assum'd the human frame;
For thee the Guiltless pains and anguish try'd;
Thy passions (sin excepted) His became:
Like thee he suffer'd, hunger'd, wept, and dy'd.

II

Nor wealth nor plenty did he ever taste,
The moss his pillow oft, his couch the ground;
The poor man's bread completed his repast;
Home he had none, and guilt never found,
For fell reproach pursu'd, and aim'd the wound:
The wise men mock'd him, and the learned scorn'd;
Th'ambitious worldling other potions try'd;
The power that judg'd him, ev'ry foe suborn'd;
He wept un-pity'd, and un-honour'd dy'd.

III

For ever mournful, but for ever dear,
O Love stupendous! glorious degradation!
No death of sickness, with no common tear--
No soft extinction claims, our sorrows here;
But anguish, shame, and agonizing passion!
The riches of the world, and worldly praise,
No monument of gratitude can prove;
Obedience only the great debt repays,
An imitative heart, and undivided love!

IV

To see the image of all glorious Pow'r
Suspend his immortality, and dwell
In mortal bondage, tortur'd ev'ry hair;
A self-made pris'ner in a dolesome cell,
Victim for sin, and conqueror of hell!
Lustration for offences not his own!
Th' Unspotted for th' impure resign'd his breath;
No other off'ring could thy crimes atone:--
Then blame thy Saviour's love, but not his death.

V

From this one prospect draw thy sole relief,
 Here learn submission, passive duties learn;
 Here drink the calm oblivion of thy grief:
 Eschew each danger, ev'ry good discern,
 And the true wages of thy virtue earn.
 Reflect, O man, on such stupendous love,
 Such sympathy divine, and tender care;
 Beseech the Paraclete thine heart to move,
 And offer up to Heav'n this silent pray'r.

VI

Great God, thy judgements are with justice crown'd,
 To human crimes and errors gracious still;
 Yet, tho' thy mercies more and more abound,
 Right reason, spares not fresh-existing ill,
 Nor can thy goodness counter-work thy will.
 Ah no! The gloom of sin so dreadful shows,
 That horror, guilt, and death the conscience fill:
 Eternal laws our happiness oppose;
 Thy nature and our lives are everlasting foes!

VII

Severe thy truth, yet glorious is thy scheme;
 Complete the vengeance of thy just desire;
 See from our eyes the gushing torrents stream,
 Yet strike us, blast us with celestial fire;
 Our doom, and thy decrees, alike conspire.
 Yet dying we will love thee and adore:--
 Where shall the flaming flashes of thy ire
 Transpierce our bodies? Ev'ry nerve and pore
 With Christ's immaculate blood is cover'd o'er and o'er.

"Yet dying we will love thee and adore" -- this line expresses the reciprocity of the relationship of man with God. Because He created him and can forgive him, God loves man; because He did create him and has offered forgiveness, man loves God. "God from all Eternity was infinitely blessed and desired to make one infinitely blessed. He was infinite Love, and being lovely in being so, would prepare Himself a most lovely object. Having studied from all Eternity, He saw none more lovely than the Image of His Love, His own Similitude, O Dignity unmeasurable."³⁰ This excerpt from Thomas Traherne's Centuries of

Meditations is a theme upon which there was constant ornamentation:

"Thy pard'ning grace my fears shall quell; But love shall pride and sin expel," as Bowdler put it.

We have already seen how central a role was played by Love in the poems of Thomas Ken. This is also reflected in such prayers as the controversial "invocation" to the saints in his Manual of Prayers for the use of the boys of Winchester College. The "revised" 1637 version appears thus:

O ye blessed Host of Heaven, Who rejoice at the conversion of one single sinner, adore and praise my crucified Saviour, who died for the sins of the world; adore and praise that unknown sorrow, that wonderful Love, which you yourselves must needs admire.

This centrality and this concept are also found during the seventeenth century in the six cantos of Edmund Waller's "Of Divine Love" (1685) and in George Herbert's several poems dealing with divine love. They continue throughout the eighteenth century in, for example, John Byrom's poems on similar themes. John Norris's poem "Love" is a sincere clarification of the experience and its value:

Imperial passion! Sacred fire!
When we of meaner subjects sing,
Thou tun'st our harps, thou dost our souls inspire,
'Tis love directs the quill, 'tis love strikes every string.
But where's another Deity
T' inspire the man that sings of thee?

W' are by mistaken chymists told,
That the most active part of all
The various compound cast in Nature's mould,
Is that which they mercurial spirit call.
But sure 'tis love they should have said,
Without this even their spirit is dead.

Love's the great spring of Nature's wheel,
Love does the mass pervade and move,
What 'scapes the sun's, does thy warm influence feel,
The Universe is kept in tune by Love.
Thou Nature giv'st her sympathy,
The center has its charm from thee.

Love did great Nothing's barren womb
 Impregnate with his genial fire;
 From this first parent did all creatures come,
 Th' Almighty will'd, and made all by desire.
 Nay more, among the sacred three,
 The third substance is from thee.

The happiest order of the blest
 Are those whose tide of love's most high,
 The bright seraphick host; who're more possest
 Of good, because more like the Deity.
 T' him they advance as they improve
 That noble heat, for God is love.

Shall then a passion so divine
 Stoop down and mortal beauties know?
 Nature's great statute law did ne're design
 That heavenly fire should kindle here below;
 Let it ascend and dwell above,
 The proper element of love.

God becomes the omnipresent and inescapable love, much like Francis Thompson's hound of Heaven. It is love which "directs the quill," quickens the spirit, and moves Nature. "The Universe is kept in tune by love," but this is obviously a different force from that which merely makes the world go round. Here Love is the Holy Ghost, and the creator of all things. Man's good is seen in terms of sharing this divine love. These images of God have been transformed through many religious poems; it is difficult to appreciate that "God is love" is itself a metaphor and not a definition. Prayer is a gesture of meditation upon this metaphor, and attempt to enter into a relationship which cannot really be achieved with a power which cannot really be described. But the act itself is an attempt to know and to understand. The poem is the corporate voice for this act, and as such rises beyond individual worship. Evelyn Underhill has examined the nature of adoration and the way in which it brings together the person within the framework of the Church:

Hurried advocates of corporate religion have sometimes tended to regard such hidden and personal lives of prayer as exclusive, other-worldly, lacking in social value and open to the charge of spiritual selfishness. But this superficial view does not bear examination. In obeying the first and great commandment, the life of personal worship obeys the second, too. Its influence radiates, its devoted self-offering avails for the whole. Indeed the living quality of the great liturgic life of the community, its witness to the Holy, depends in the last resort on the sacrificial lives of its members; and it is only from within such intensive lives that intercessory power--the application to particulars of the Eternal Love--seems to arise.³¹

Through this means the practical, pragmatic, value of Eternal Love is realized. Evidence for this Love, of course, is found in the historical story of God's involvement with man. This is why many of the Anglican poets sought inspiration in the festivals of the Church and in the celebrations of this historical revelation. "Each of them," says Miss Underhill, "mediates God, disclosing some divine truth or aspects of divine love to us." Here lies the importance of the ordered devotion of the Church, with its recurrent memorials of the Birth, the Manhood, the Death and the Triumph of Jesus. "By and in this ancient sequence, with its three great moments of Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, its detailed demonstration in human terms of the mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption, the Christian soul is led out through succession to a contemplation of the eternal action of God."³² Yet even in history the fullness of the love of God remains mysterious and metaphorical.

This awareness of the action and devotion to the fact of God's love, and this concept of love as a reciprocal relationship, potent yet inexpressible -- these are qualities in John Norris's "The Divine Amorist," in the Reverend Henry Moore's "To Divine Love" and "Hymn:

Divine Love" from his Poems, Lyrical and Miscellaneous (1803), Thomas Blacklock's "An Hymn to Divine Love: in imitation of Spencer," and even (perhaps not unexpectedly) in series of poems -- "Love's Original," "Love's Definition," "Love Caveat," and "Integrity" -- by the Quaker poet Thomas Ellwood. They are also qualities in the seventh of Elizabeth Singer Rowe's "Devout Soliloquys in Blank Verse":

I love thee--Here the pomp of language fails,
 And leaves th'unutterable thought behind;
 The eloquence of men, the muse's art,
 Their harmony and tuneful cadence sink.
 Whatever names of tenderness and love,
 Whatever holy union nature knows,
 Are faint descriptions of celestial fires.
 But oh! may sinful breathing dust presume
 To talk to thee of love and warm desires?
 To thee! who sit'st supreme enthron'd on heights
 Of glory, which no human thought can reach?
 Shall wretched man, whose dwelling is with dust,
 That calls corruption his original,
 And withers like the grass, shall he presume,
 With heart and lips unsanctified, to speak
 On subjects, where the holy Seraphina
 Would stop their lutes; and with a graceful pause
 Confess the glorious theme too great for words,
 For eloquence immortal to express?
 Yet I must aim at subjects infinite,
 For oh! my love-sick heart is full of thee.
 In crowds, in solitude, the field, the temple,
 All places hold an equal sanctity;
 While thy lov'd name in humble invocation
 Dwells on my tongue, and ev'ry gentle sigh
 Breathes out my life, my very soul to thee.

Fairchild comments that "religious ideas, as such, are of small concern to her." Her poems, unlike that of some works within the Anglican tradition, as we shall see later in this study, reflect little concern with theological controversy or issues. They reflect mainly a fairly simple love for Jesus and a longing for union with him. "In order to enjoy this spiritual love," Fairchild continues, "it is necessary to withdraw from the crowd. Accordingly Mrs. Rowe is a great believer in

meditative retirement."³³ At moments, as do many others poets of intense, concentrated love, she verges upon the mystical. Her contemplation of divinity unites the individual will with that of God.

CHAPTER V

By love may God be gotten and holden,
by thought never.

The Cloud of Un'knowing

Thus is my joy by you not understood,
Like that of God when He said all was good.

John Norris, My Estate

Contemplation of divinity as a way of uniting the individual will with that of God has always been the impetus toward mysticism. It is a vehicle for vision, for the closer presence of God. Elizabeth Singer Rowe uses the way of vision and presence leading to contemplation as the structure of her poem "The Vision":

'Twas in the close recesses of a shade,
A shade for sacred contemplation made,
No beauteous branch, no plant, or fragrant flow'r,
But flourish'd near the fair delicious bow'r;
With charming state its lofty arches rise
Adorn'd with blossoms, as with stars the skies;
All pure and fragrant was the air I drew,
Which winds thro' myrtle groves and orange blew;
Clear waves along with pleasing murmur rush,
And down the artful falls in noble cat'racts gush.

'Twas here, within this happy place retir'd
Harmonious pleasures all my soul inspir'd;
I take my lyre, and try each tuneful string,
Now war, now love, and beauty's force would sing;
To heav'nly subjects now in serious lays,
I strive my faint unskilful voice to raise;
But as I unresolv'd and doubtful lay,
My cares in easy slumbers glide away;
Nor with such grateful sleep such soothing rest,
And dreams like this, I e'er before was bless'd;
No wild, uncouth chimeras intervene,
To break the perfect intellectual scene.

The place was all with heav'nly light o'erflow'n,
And glorious with immortal splendor shone;
When, lo! a bright ethereal youth drew near,
Ineffable his motions and his air.
A soft, beneficent, expressless grace,
With life's most florid bloom, adorn'd his face;
His lovely brows immortal laurels bind,
And long his radiant hair fell down behind,
His azure robes hung free, and waving to the wind.
Angelic his address, his tuneful voice
Inspir'd a thousand elevating joys:
When this the wondrous youth his silence broke,
And with an accent all celestial spoke.

To Heav'n, nor longer pause, devote thy songs,
To Heav'n the muse's sacred art belongs;
Let his unbounded glory be thy theme,
Who fills th'eternal regions with his fame;
And when death's fatal sleep shall close thine eyes,
In triumph we'll attend thee to the skies;

We'll crown thee there with everlasting bays,
 And teach thee all our celestial lays.
 This spoke, the shining vision upward flies,
 And darts as lightning through the clearing skies.

This poem is not a complete expression of the mystical way: the unitive stage is not implied, and the act of falling to sleep links it more closely with the medieval dream tradition. Indeed, it can be wondered why the direction of the writer's experience took such a turning, landing the poetess with a vision, not of God, but of a "wondrous youth." Yet there are several characteristics of mystical verse shared by this poem; though not a complete expression of the tradition, it owes much to it.

The final vision produces a special kind of knowledge; in this case rather finite and literary, but nevertheless a kind of knowledge. The vision comes unbidden; it is not the result of good works, but of grace. This problem of the general accessibility of the mystical experience to mankind has long perplexed the mystical theologian; the usual feeling, though, is that in some qualified sense true mystical vision cannot be acquired by a deliberate act of the will. At most, man may prepare himself for the possible reception of this grace; this means retirement, contentment, and contemplation. With proper preparation the human situation takes upon itself a meaning, the stranger on the road to Emmaus provides purpose to the traveling which had hitherto been an escape. The religious experience transforms all of man's life.

These divisions, or steps, in mystical awareness mark the paragraphs of Elizabeth Rowe's "The Vision." The first poetic paragraph describes the withdrawal into the "close recesses of a shade," where contemplation was possible. The second describes the

concentration upon various means of preparedness, waiting for the possible reception of grace. The advent of the vision is marked by the "heav'nly light" and "immortal splendor" of the fourth paragraph. Finally the vision expresses its knowledge, and departs "through the clearing skies."

Later in this essay other poems concerned with visions, with the gift of special knowledge, and with contemplative retirement will be read. As this chapter will indicate, the ritual of mystical perception provided the structure and attitude for many poems during the eighteenth century. This need not, in spite of the usual view of the century as one of rationalism, appear to be terribly unexpected. The experience of the poet is close to that of the mystic. Gerard Manley Hopkins summed up both reactions to reality at once: "All things are charged with love, are charged with God and if we know how to touch them give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of him." Elizabeth Rowe's poem recalls Henry Vaughan's "I saw Eternity the other night,/Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,/All calm, as it was bright." The mystical experience is common to all ages and to all peoples. Yet, there remains in it a relationship to the dogmatic tradition in which the voice of the poet first found its language. In writing about Vaughan, Garner has developed this relationship.

My argument is that, as Christian mysticism, Vaughan's experience of the transcendent God grew out of Christian dogma, and that at the same time the essential orientation of his personality, the attitude which dogma initiated, was similar to that of Christians all over Europe, whatever their particular creed, who felt in their own lives the Being of the transcendent God. If Vaughan's theology was peculiarly Anglican, his mysticism was nonetheless peculiarly Christian; Bunyan,

Baxter, and Blair, Protestants, were peculiarly Christian; and Juan de Valdes and St. John of the Cross, Roman Catholics, were peculiarly Christian too. The genuineness of Christian mysticism depends not upon the mystic's theology but on his experience. Nevertheless, his theology is a necessary antecedent.¹

The same argument applies to the poets of the following century.

Byrom, Cowper, Tans'ur, and Rowe reflect in their mystical emphasis the theological background of their faith. Itrat Husain has described John Norris as one "in whom the mystical tendencies are harmoniously blended with the humanism and piety of the Anglican Church."² These writers, and the many others who by image or structure or sensibility reflect some aspect of the mystical path, are evidence of the keeping alive throughout a century described as anti-mysterious of a tradition which had for centuries been a major moving force within the Anglican Church.

The works of the twelfth-century mystic St. Bernard of Clairvaux were translated and known in England during the seventeenth century. In his "Sermon on the Song of Songs" there occurs the following passage:

It is that conformity which makes, as it were a marriage between the soul and the Word, when, being already like unto Him by its nature, it endeavours to show itself like unto Him by its will, and loves Him as it is loved by Him. And if this love is perfected, the soul is wedded to the Word. What can be more full of happiness and joy than this conformity? What more to be desired than this love? which makes thee, O soul, no longer content with human guidance, to draw near with confidence thyself to the Word, to attach thyself with constancy to Him, to address Him with confidence, and consult Him upon all subjects, to become as receptive in thy intelligence, as fearless in thy desires. This is the contract of a marriage truly spiritual and sacred. And to say this is to say too little; it is more than a contract, it is a communion, an identification with the Beloved, in which the perfect correspondence of will makes of two, one spirit.³

This passage contains most of the aspects of the mystical tradition which have found expression or given impetus to poetry: the loss of concern with the minutiae of the material, the reliance upon a truth beyond human guidance, the aspiration to a kind of unity through an identification of the will, the overwhelming power and glory of divine love. The important role of love in religious poetry throughout the century has already been suggested. Coupled with the mystical passiveness it affords the theme for Norris's "The Divine Amorist":

Lay down proud heart the rebel Arms,
And own the Conquerour Divine,
In vain thou dost resist such Charms,
In vain the Arrows of his Love decline.

There is no dealing with this potent Fair,
I must my God, I must love thee;
Thy Charms but too Victorious are,
They leave me not my Native Liberty.

A Holy force spreads through my Soul,
And Ravishes my Heart away;
The World it's motion does controul,
In vain, the happy Captive will not stay.

No more does she her wonted Freedom boast,
More proud of thy Celestial Chain,
Free-will it self were better lost,
Than ever to Revolt from thee again.

Sun of my Soul! What shall I do,
Thy Beauties to resist, or bear?
They Bless, and yet they Pain me too,
I feel thy Heart too strong, thy Light too clear.

I Faint, I Languish, I almost expire,
My panting Heart dissolving lies:
Thou must shine less, or I retire,
Shade thou thy Light, I cannot turn my Eyes.

The imposition of love is fearful, the beauty is terrible, the light blinding. And in these paradoxes and plays of the imagery of light and darkness are found the paradoxes and turning of the mystic's terrifying vision of God. A quiet preparedness does not

mean sluggard inactivity; the willingness to accept the gift of grace may be followed by great pains of birth. Divine love is not mild, the German mystical writer Ruysbroeck reminds us:

The possession of God demands and supposes active love. He who thinks or feels otherwise is deceived. All our life as it is in God is immersed in blessedness: all our life as it is in ourselves is immersed in active love. And though we live wholly in ourselves and wholly in God, it is but one life; but it is two fold and opposite according to our feeling--rich and poor, hungry and fulfilled, active and passive.⁴

The attempt to reconcile these forces is the agony of mystical awareness, the price of divine love. Yet the mystic and the poet have believed in the inestimable worth of this awareness.

All religious experience is somehow a way of knowing. The person experiencing it believes that he has achieved some kind of certainty. According to the tradition in which he has been brought up, or lives, or has deliberately chosen to feel, the process of knowing may vary. But always it returns to some awareness of God. This god may be the obvious deduction of the created world, or the stern task-master, or the great forgiver. The process of knowing will be directed by what is being known. And it will be directed by the way of knowing. Mysticism is one of these ways, and it remains so during the eighteenth century. But this is also a century of rationalism, even, it would seem, among the Churchmen; and this, too, must be accounted for. But it is important to remember that men in all ages have believed themselves to be acting according to reason, and the frequent use of the word in eighteenth-century theology does not mark off these writers as fundamentally different nor their doctrines as basically divergent from those of other centuries. Cragg has reminded us that rationalism during this century "was not a doctrine about religion but an approach

to its problems."⁵ And so rationalism afforded an approach, with mysticism, to the religious problem of coming to know God and His creations. During the century these two approaches were operated side by side and mysticism cannot well be discussed without some reference to the place and claims of rationalism.

"The eighteenth century," wrote Cassirer in his exploration of the mind of the enlightenment, "is imbued with a belief in the unity and immutability of reason. Reason is the same for all thinking subjects, all nations, all epochs, and all cultures. From the changeability of religious creeds, of moral maxims and convictions, of theoretical opinions and judgments, a firm and lasting element can be extracted which is permanent in itself, and which in this identity and permanence expresses the real essence of reason." "Variety and diversity of shapes are simply the full unfolding of an essentially homogeneous formative power. When the eighteenth century wants to characterize this power in a single word, it calls it 'reason'. 'Reason' becomes the unifying and central point of this century, expressing all that it longs and strives for, and all that it achieves."⁶ This description tends to present the process as a cold and solely intellectual formulation of propositions, as purely analytic. Cassirer himself has warned of the danger of assuming that such a description accounts for the total experience of the century: "But the historian of the eighteenth century would be guilty of error and hasty judgment if he were satisfied with this characterization and thought it a safe point of departure."⁷ Later in this chapter the poems of Lady Chudleigh and John Byrom will be seen to reflect a qualified concept of Reason in which its limitations, as noted by Dryden, are again emphasized, and

which goes beyond the usual simplified definitions of rationalism. The religious life of the century had many characteristics which brought it beyond the rationalism noted by Cassirer. In addition to the evangelical movement of the mid-century the Anglican tradition included a strong mystical strain, encouraged during the century by such writers as William Law.

The importance of recognizing this other side of eighteenth century religious experience was implied by Turbeville in his outline of the social life of the period:

The religious life of the eighteenth century--particularly in the Church of England--has often been condemned as cold, listless, and barren. There is a good deal of truth in the charge. Religion that is unemotional is apt to be phlegmatic. But this is only a half-truth. The teaching of comprehensiveness and brotherly love among sects of differing doctrinal views is a great religious achievement. And the coldness and lifelessness that undoubtedly did exist in the Church of England produced its reaction--in the mysticism of William Law and the evangelicalism of the Wesleys and Whitefield. The eighteenth century contains both--Burnet and Law, Wake and John Wesley.⁸

Through Law this mystical tradition passed to the poet John Byrom. But earlier than Byrom poetry by such writers as Elizabeth Singer Rowe and John Norris had reflected a strong mystical element. And at the end of the century Christopher Smart showed signs of intense mystical experience. Nicholson, in writing about the poet William Cowper and the influence of the leaders of the Revival upon him, has suggested a debt of the Evangelicals to the earlier Mystics:

The revolt of the Evangelicals was anticipated by the Mystical Movement of the earlier eighteenth century, of which the most important, though not the most extreme, figure in England was that of William Law.⁹

Later he comments on the relation of Charles Wesley to this Mystical Movement:

Wesley's distrust of those manifestations of Enthusiasm (gasps and groanings, contortions, hearing of voices, etc.) and indeed his distrust of the entire Mystical Movement, did not alter the fact that he owed much to it.¹⁰

Interest in the mystical movement is seen in Cowper's translations of the poems of Madame Guyen (1648-1717). This French lady restated an attitude toward contemplative prayer reminiscent of that of Saint Teresa. In spite of support by Fenelon her exaggerated claims brought upon her much cruel and harsh treatment. Miss Underhill has described her as "an example of the unfortunate results of an alliance of mystical tendencies with a feeble surface intelligence."¹¹ But her sincerity and her devotion attracted many readers and followers. As an illustration of the character of her quietism Dean Inge, in his study of Christian mysticism, quotes Cowper's translation of her hymn, "The Acquiescence of Pure Love":¹²

Love! if thy destin'd sacrifice am I;
Come, slay thy victim, and prepare thy fires;
Plung'd in thy depths of mercy, let me die
The death, which ev'ry soul that lives, desires!

I watch my hours, and see them fleet away;
The time is long, that I have languish'd here;
Yet all my thoughts thy purposes obey,
With no reluctance, cheerful and sincere.

To me 'tis equal, whether Love ordain
My life or death, appoint me pain or ease;
My soul perceives no real ill in pain;
In ease, or health, no real Good she sees.

One Good she covets, and that Good alone;
To chuse thy will, from selfish bias free;
And to prefer a cottage to a throne,
And grief to comfort, if it pleases Thee.

That we should bear the errors, is thy command,
Die to the world, and live to self no more;
Suffer unmov'd beneath the rudest hand,
As pleas'd when shipwreck'd, as when safe on shore.¹³

That Cowper was familiar and concerned with the themes and the imagery of mysticism is seen in these translations. But it is also likely that his familiarity with mystical poetry went back much earlier. He owned a copy, now preserved in the National Library of Wales, of the 1650 edition of Henry Vaughan's Silex Scintillans. L.C. Martin has shown how his reading of Vaughan -- often a careful reading indicated by underscored lines -- influenced passages in "Retirement," "The Task," and "Yardley Oak." Martin admits he has not examined how far Vaughan's poems may have been a determining influence in Cowper's later development, but "the probability that there was not only some spiritual kinship but an actual contact or communication of poetic ideas between Vaughan and a writer so influential in his time as Cowper is scarcely negligible by the historian of literature."¹⁴ Hodgson has said that "if ever an Anglo-Catholic mystic existed after the Reformation, Henry Vaughan was one."¹⁵ This tradition of Anglican mysticism continues vital during the eighteenth century in the poetry of Cowper.

Other critics of Cowper have called attention to the influence of the Mystics upon some of his writings; Quinlan, without discussing his reading and the influence of Vaughan, suggests that there is a similarity in the personal intensity of the two poets:

While Cowper's distinctive personal note appears most often in his shorter pieces, it frequently breaks out in his longer poems, imparting to particular passages an intensity which, though never mystical, has the inspired fervor of the mystics.¹⁶

As an example of this mystical fervor of Cowper's personal verse Quinlan quotes a passage from Book V of The Task:

Tell me, ye shining hosts,
 That navigate a sea that knows no storms,
 Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,
 If from your elevation, whence ye view
 Distinctly scenes invisible to man,
 And systems of whose birth no tidings yet
 Have reach'd this nether world, ye spy a race
 Favour'd as our's; transgressors from the womb,
 And hasting to a grave, yet doom'd to rise,
 And to possess a brighter heav'n than your's?
 As one who long detain'd on foreign shores
 Pants to return, and when he sees afar
 His country's weather-bleach'd and better'd rocks,
 From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
 Radiant with joy towards the happy land;
 So I with animated hopes behold,
 And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
 That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
 Ordain'd to guide th'embodied spirit home
 From toilsome life to never-ending rest.
 Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires
 That give assurance of their own success,
 And that, infus'd from heav'n, must thither tend.
 (ll. 822-44)

This passage reflects the personal note which Quinlan finds in Cowper's poetry, and this personal note is close to the inspired fervor of the mystics. But this passage also reflects several specific characteristics which can be associated with the Mystical tradition.

Earlier in the poem Cowper has urged the reader to experience the conversion to God:

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
 His works.
 (ll. 779-80)

This experience will illuminate a hitherto unknown world:

Admitted once to his embrace,
 Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before:
 Thine eye shall be instructed; and thine heart,
 Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight
 Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.
 (ll. 780-84)

The world, the flesh and the heavens are seen in a new way; the divinity of creation is viewed through the vision of divinity: "The place was all with heav'nly light o'erflown." Nature is transformed,

and becomes a symbol of the power and glory of its creator. No longer does the landscape, rather than its shaper, have the praise. Without this vision, man brutishly ignores the inherent splendor; but the vision changes this reaction:

Not so the mind that has been touch'd from heav'n,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught
To read his wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.

* * *

The soul that sees him, or receives sublim'd
New faculties, or learns at least t'employ
More worthily the pow'rs she own'd before;
Discerns in all things, what, with stupid gaze
Of ignorance, till then she over look'd--
A ray of heav'nly light, gilding all forms
Terrestrial in the vast and the minute;
The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.
(ll. 796-99; 805-14)

According to Cowper, the mind has received a special gift, has been "touch'd from heav'n"; the gift is a kind of knowledge, it teaches in "the school of sacred wisdom"; and the gift is a practical, a usable kind of knowledge: it permits the receiver to "read his wonders" which had never before been suspected. The result of receiving this gift of knowledge is the perception of a whole universe of power and glory: "the soul that sees him... Discerns in all things, what, with stupid gaze/Of ignorance, till then she over look'd." This perception is really the perception of God "Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,/And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds." Nature and "rolling worlds" are manifestations of God, symbols of his power and glory. As the "Argument" to Book V put it, this is the "happy freedom of the man whom grace makes free." The elevated vision allows a firmer perspective of man's destiny. It is a return of the violated spirit to its proper home, as a traveler "darts an eye/

Radiant with joy towards the happy land." The spirit unintellectually senses certainty of its proper centre: "I feel desires/That give assurance of their own success,/And that, infus'd from heav'n, must thither tend." It has broken through the bounds of mortality. The vision produces an immediate and practical reaction. Man knows that, while "transgressors from the womb,/And hasting to a grave," yet he is "doom'd to rise." His existence has been infused with a divine love. He has been invited to God.

These passages in themselves (as Quinlan admits) are never completely mystical; as in Rowe's "The Vision" the final unitive state is not adequately achieved. Yet there are several characteristics worth noting in relation to the ritual and nature of the mystical experience. The language and organization -- the feeling these passages represent -- are equally close to mysticism as is the intensity which Quinlan notes. His use of the word elevation in line 825 may carry precise overtones from the technical vocabulary of mysticism. And the progress outlined suggests close parallels with the usual three-fold progress of the mystic way.

In his classic lectures on Christian mysticism Dean Inge outlined these stages:

Thy mystic, as we have seen, makes it his life's aim to be transformed into the likeness of Him in whose image he was created. He loves to figure his path as a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, which must be climbed step by step. This scala perfectionis is generally divided into three stages. The first is called the purgative life, the second the illuminative, while the third, which is really the goal rather than a part of the journey, is called the unitive life, or state of perfect contemplative.

He warns that we find some differences in this classification, "but this tripartite scheme is generally accepted."¹⁷ Each of these steps

is characterized by certain predominating states of mind. The purgative step includes contrition, confession, self-discipline. It involves, as Miss Underhill has put it, "a getting rid of all those elements of normal experience which are not in harmony with reality: of illusion, evil, imperfection of every kind."¹⁸ In other words, the purgative step is a cleansing through recognition and self-control of oneself from the world of false values about one, and thus purging oneself from sin. The self-discipline does not necessarily mean masochism, but the step does mean a breaking away from what has been so well-known. It is a dreadful joy. St. Teresa's plea -- "Let me suffer or die!" -- gives the two alternatives the mystic has chosen. Miss Underhill comments, "However harsh its form, however painful the activities to which it spans him, the mystic recognizes in this break-up of his old universe an essential part of the Great Work: and the act in which he turns to it is an act of loving desire, no less than an act of will."¹⁹ We have seen this poetically dramatized in Norris's "The Divine Amorist."

The second stage, the illuminative life, is the concentration of feeling and intellect upon God; it is a kind of consciousness marked by an intensity peculiar to the mystic. Supreme communion, the "marriage truly spiritual and sacred" mentioned by St. Bernard, has not yet been achieved. "In the traditional language of asceticism he is 'proficient' but not yet perfect. He achieves a real vision and knowledge, a conscious harmony with the divine World of Becoming: not yet self-loss in the Principle of Life, but rather a willing and harmonious revolution about Him, that 'in dancing he may know what is done.' This character distinguishes almost every first-hand description

of illumination: and it is this which marks it off from mystic union in all its forms."²⁰ The awareness of this stage is for the inner life; virtue relates to truth rather than to nature.

In the final stage, of course, man is joined with God. It is a consummation of the self with that of God, though it is devoutly to be wished; it is a final sharing with God of divine nature; it is a participation in absolute love. Miss Underhill has attempted a description:

The Unitive Life, though so often lived in the world, is never of it. It belongs to another plane of being, moves securely upon levels unrelated to our speech; and hence eludes the measuring powers of humanity. We, from the valley, can only catch a glimpse of the true life of these elect spirits, transfigures, upon the mountain. They are far away, breathing another air: we cannot reach them. Yet it is impossible to over-estimate their importance for the race. They are our ambassadors to the Absolute. They vindicate humanity's claim to the possible and permanent attainment of Reality: bear witness to the practical qualities of the transcendental life.²¹

This is a heavy imposition upon the mystic and the poet.

As Dean Inge has warned, there is variation in the classification and description of these stages, and seldom has the poet sufficient technical vocabulary and discipline to follow deliberately any definite arrangement of experience. But John Norris did attempt just such an arrangement in one of his poems, "The Elevation." A note to this poem explains his intention:

The general design to the precedent poem is to represent the gradual ascent of the soul by contemplation to the supreme good, together with its firm adherency to it, and its full acquiescence in it. All which is done figuratively, under the allegory of a local elevation from the feculent regions of this lower world.

The poem follows with care the progress from purgation and illumination to union; it opens with a rejection of the transitory trifles of the world.

Take wing--my soul--and upwards bend thy flight,
To thy originary fields of light.

Here's nothing, nothing here below
That can deserve thy longer stay;
A secret whisper bids thee go.
To purer air, and beams of native day.
Th'ambition of the towering lark out-vy,
And life him sing as thou dost upward fly.

How all things lessen which my soul before
Did with the groveling multitude adore!

Those pageant glories disappear,
Which charm and dazzle mortals eyes:
How do I in this higher sphere,
How do I mortals, with their joys despise!
Pure, uncorrupted element I breath,
And pity their gross atmosphere beneath.

How vile, how sordid here those trifles shew
That please the tenants of that ball below

But ah! I've lost the little sight,
The scene's remov'd, and all I see
Is one confus'd dark mass of night.
What nothing was, what nothing seems to be:
How calm this region, how serene, how clear!
Sure I some strains of heavenly music hear.

On, on, the task is easie now and light,
No streams of earth can here retard thy flight.

Thou needest not now thy strokes renew,
'Tis but to spread thy pinions wide,
And thou with ease my seat wilt view,
Drawn by the bent of the eternal tide.
'Tis so I find; How sweetly on I move,
Nor let by things below, nor help'd by those above!

The arduous task of ascent is accompanied by the purer and clearer perspective of the world and eternity. The soul, thus illuminated, recognized its rightful abode.

But see, to what new regions am I come?
I know it well, it is my native home.
Here led I once a life divine,
Which did all good, no evil know:
Ah! who wou'd such sweet bliss resign
For those vain shews which fools admire below?
'Tis true, but don't of folly past complain,
But joy to see these blest abodes again.

The final stanza is an attempt -- recognized by poets as well as by mystics as ultimately impossible -- to capture the vision and presence of God. Again, as in Vaughan and Elizabeth Rowe, the traditional imagery of light is used.

A good retrieve: but lo, while thus I speak,
With piercing rays, th'eternal day does break,
The beauties of the face divine,
Strike strongly on my feeble sight:
With what bright glories does it shine!
'Tis one immense and ever-flowing light.
Stop here my soul; thou canst not bear more bliss,
Nor can thy now rais'd palate ever relish less.

Rarely can the poet achieve the just arrangement of images to suggest, with any adequate approximation, the beauty of the unitive stage. This stage is beyond men, beyond the passions. Yeats has written: "But the passions, when we know that they cannot find fulfilment, become vision; and a vision, whether we wake or sleep, prolongs its power by rhythm and pattern, the wheel where the world is butterfly. We need no protection but it does, for if we become interested in ourselves, in our own lives, we pass out of the vision." "The world is butterfly" -- this is the real theme of Norris's poem; this is both the spur and the direction of elevation. This poem incorporates in itself the full ritual of mysticism.

The extent to which any critic is going to admit mysticism in the poetry of Norris (or any other author) will depend as much upon his understanding of mysticism as upon a close reading of the poems. Garner, for example, has reviewed the critical opinion toward the mysticism of Henry Vaughan,²² and quotes Helen White's conclusion:

(Vaughan's mysticism) is ultimately a question of what one means by mysticism, depending on whether one is primarily impressed by the range of a man's awareness of and sensitiveness to mystical elements, or whether one insists, rather, on the central core of real, developed mystical experience.²³

In general Garner accepts the older view of Vaughan's mysticism -- that if he were not as fully a mystic as, for example, St. John of the Cross, he was well on the way -- and then he raises a second question by quoting Itrat Husain's conclusions about Vaughan.

I have tried to show, by giving parallel quotations from such great mystics as St. Augustine, St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross, that Vaughan had passed through those phases of mystical life (which have been conveniently divided into the three stages of conversion or the awakening of self, purgation or the purification of the self, and the illumination of the self) which these great mystics have also experienced. But of the higher stages of mystical life (i.e., the "dark night" of the soul and the unitive stage) we do not find any clear record either in Vaughan's poetry or prose. Though he has described the "dazzling darkness" of the "dark night" of the soul he does not claim to have experienced it himself; it was only an expression of his intense longing for such an experience.²⁴

Dean Inge has warned us that the unitive stage is, in a sense, never achieved in this life, it is a "continual but unending approximation" of that complete sharing of divine love and divine nature to which prayer and meditation and purgation point. "We must therefore beware of regarding the union as anything more than an infinite process...."²⁵ Therefore the failure of the poet to express more than a longing for this union is perhaps not an unusual limitation. But, secondly, the critic must guard against letting his material slip from literature to biography. Whether the poet, in talking about certain kinds of experiences has actually had these experiences is quite irrelevant to the historian of literature or ideas. So long as the poet believes himself to be writing within a certain tradition, his "real" beliefs are of no consequence; indeed these "real" beliefs can probably never be known, even with the help of astute and scholarly psychological guessing.

This outline of the mystical sincerity of Vaughan can be applied to most other poets. At best their final stage seems to be an intense desire to complete union; but this incompleteness does not invalidate the sincerity of their experience or its mystical origins. The important fact is that Norris, like Vaughan, believed himself to be sharing in the mystical progress. From Itrat Husain's summary, it would seem that he is even further along this path than Vaughan. Norris has experienced conversion: "Take wings--my soul--and upwards bend thy flight,/To thy originary fields of light." He has purged himself from the claims of the sinful world: "How all things lessen which my soul before/Did with the groveling multitude adore!" He has even entered the dark night of the soul: "the scene's remov'd, and all I see/Is one confus'd dark mass of night." And he has looked upon the face of God: "The beauties of the face divine,/Strike strongly on my feeble sight:/With what bright glories does it shine!"

Norris's "Hymn to Darkness" is a development of the light/dark paradox. Darkness is traditionally associated with suffering, with evil and ignorance. Yet it yields to light and victory. The mourning of the night is followed by the morning of illumination. And darkness was before light, and so, in one sense, is symbolic of eternity. The opening stanza outlines this paradox:

Hail thou most sacred venerable thing!
 What Muse is worthy thee to sing?
 Thee, from whose pregnant universal womb
 All things, even light thy rival, first did come.
 What dares he not attempt that signs of thee,
 Thou first and greatest mystery?
 Who can the secrets of thy essence tell?
 Thou like the light of God art inaccessible.

This paradox is picked up again in stanza 3:

Thy native lot thou didst to Light resign,
 But still half of the globe is thine.
 Here with a quiet, and yet awful hand,
 Like the best emperors thou dost command.
 To thee the stars above their brightness owe.
 And mortals their repose below.
 To thy protection Fear and Sorrow flee,
 And those that weary are of light, find rest in thee.

From light and glory the Almighty has his radiant beauty, but from darkness he has "His terror and His majesty."

Thus when He first proclaim'd His sacred Law,
 And would His rebel subjects awe,
 Like princes on some great solemnity,
 He appear'd in's robes of state, and clad Himself with thee.

The poem concludes with praise to the awful power of darkness:

Hail there thou Muse's and Devotion's spring,
 'Tis just we should adore, 'tis just we should thee sing.

In its taking up the imagery of light and darkness mysticism was actually drawing upon a tradition extending beyond Christianity. Gillis Wetter, in his book Phos (1915), argued that this imagery, while it existed in earlier literatures, emerged most strongly in the literature of what he calls "Hellenistic Piety." But in a less refined sense darkness and light record a primitive reaction of men. Darkness hides both terrifying monsters and deeds which should not be made known. Lightness warns us of the sudden terror, but also exposes us to ourselves. These paradoxes are carried over into the New Testament:

Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.²⁶

The imagery of the poet is both part of the Christian tradition and a primitive response to his universe. The indescribable is made manifest through metaphor; and like all metaphors, that of the highest vision,

or Eternity, as light is not a complete correspondence. In Symbolism and Belief Edwyn Bevan has outlined the significance of this recurrent imagery.

We can supply the metaphor to that which God reveals of Himself within the range of our earthly experiences. There are moments, which come no doubt to poets and mystics oftener than to us ordinary men, when the natural world round us is seen clothed in a glory, analogous, in the feeling it arouses, to bright concentrated light. Still more, as the highest expressions of the spirit of man, may the great utterances and heroic deeds be regarded as manifestations of the glory of God.

But, he recognizes, we cannot perceive God directly or rationally as we do natural objects; perception itself is an act of faith.

If our idea of God, as a whole, is an act of faith, our attribution of glory to God will necessarily be part of such an act, not a matter of demonstration. What we mean is that we believe that, if we could have a more perfect apprehension of God's being than we can have under earthly conditions, that earthly apprehensions would involve something analogous to the feeling now aroused in us by bright concentrated light, something which cannot possibly be described in human language, except by our pointing to that feeling.

And so the imagery develops as a conventional way of organizing our perception.

Thus the light metaphor would not here be the use of a figure for mere poetical or imaginative embellishment, in order to say something which we could say more precisely in other terms: it would be the most precise way in which the Reality can be expressed in human language. And yet, while we use it, we have to recognize that it is only a figure, not a literal description.²⁷

The delicate balance between the imagery of light and its literalism is what gives mystical writing its tension. In the practice of life it presents itself as alternatives. "Thus God, in the manifestation of Himself in and by nature, sets before every man fire and water, life and death."²⁸ Norris, like William Law (1686-1761), saw life and eternity in these terms, and continued the mystical tradition during the eighteenth century.

Fairchild has attempted to outline the mystical influence upon Norris.²⁹ He recognizes that Norris was an enthusiastic disciple of Malebranche, whom he regarded as a fellow-Platonist. Norris's Essay toward the Theory of an Ideal and Intelligible World (1701-4) was an attempt to refute Locke's by using Malebranche's spiritualization of Cartesianism. In it he held that the world is conceived as divine ideas, which are part of nature. In this he has adopted a position which allows him to "realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature," as Dean Inge described the attempt of the mystics.³⁰ The world is charged with divinity, and it is basically an ideal world. Fairchild has suggested that "Norris is a link between the Neo-Platonism of the Cambridge school and that of Shaftesbury. The very different Platonism of Berkeley's later writings may also, in measure, reflect his influence."³¹ Greene has seen this relationship in suggesting a "Berkeley-Smart-Blake-Yeats" tradition of poetry.³² And Drennan, in tracing a link between James Thomson and Norris, said that "like Shaftesbury, Needler and Thomson, Norris loved to escape from the world of "business" in order to woo inspiration in the world of solitude,"³³ and that Norris's love of infinite beauty (such as expressed in "Seraphic Love") is also found in Henry Needler (1685-1760), another "careful reader" of Norris.³⁴

The mystical aspects in Needler show themselves in his acute awareness of the transformed glory of nature when viewed by a person illuminated with the true knowledge of God:

Whate'er of Goodness and of Excellence
In Nature's various Scene accost the Sense,
To Thee alone their whole Perfection owe,
From Thee, as from their proper Fountain, flow.

Also from "A Vernal Hymn in Praise of the Creator" is the clearest expression of his awareness of God's omnipotence and glory:

Incapable of Bounds, above all Height,
Thou art invisible to Mortal Sight;
Thy-self thy Palace! And, sustain'd by Thee,
All live and move in thy Immensity.

His praise for Sir Richard Blackmore's "The Creation" is based on the feeling that it captures these two qualities and implants them upon the reader's mind:

Th' extensive Knowledge You of Man enjoy,
You to a double Use of Man employ;
Nor to the Body is your Skill confin'd,
Of Error's worse Disease You heal the Mind.

But in general he reflects little of the consuming intensity that has been noticed in the verse of Norris.

Norris's mystical orthodoxy is accepted by Miss Underhill who lists him with Benjamin Whichcote and Peter Sterry among the Cambridge Platonists.³⁵ The completeness and uniformity of his desire to achieve union with God is seen in "The Aspiration," in which he looks forward to a time when he will be "all mind, all eye, all ear." Because nature and the world are divine ideals, they are good. There is not an abrupt breach between flesh and spirit which is sometimes popularly associated with mysticism. For Norris mysticism was truly "the attempt to realise, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal."³⁶ The senses are good and the final coming to know God will be through them. "The Aspiration" is an expression of the experience of awakening and the desire for purgation:

How long, great God, how long must I
 Immured in this dark prison lie;
 Where at the gates and avenues of sense,
 My soul must watch to have intelligence;
 Where but faint gleams of Thee salute my sight,
 Like doubtful moonshine in a cloudy night:
 When shall I leave this magic sphere,
 And be all mind, all eye, all ear?

How cold this clime! And yet my sense
 Perceives e'en here Thy influence.
 E'en here Thy strong magnetic charms I feel,
 And pant and tremble like the amorous steel.
 To lower good, and beauties less divine,
 Sometimes my erroneous needle does decline,
 But yet, so strong the sympathy,
 It turns, and points again to Thee.

I long to see this excellence
 Which at such distance strikes my sense.
 My impatient soul struggles to disengage
 Her wings from the confinement of her cage.
 Wouldst thou, great Love, this prisoner once set free,
 How would she hasten to be link'd to Thee!
 She'd for no angels' conduct stay,
 But fly, and love-on, all the way.

This poem represents the most common influence of the ritual of mysticism upon the poet: the initial stages of purgation and the desire to see God anew--the change in the world brought about, not through reform, but through a change in the person, a transformation of the act of perception itself.

Another characteristic of true mysticism, one which is frequently misinterpreted in the popular mind, is the firm realization that habitation upon the heights of perception is not, for the mortal, the solution to his spiritual housing problem. Norris recognizes that ecstasies to which mysticism may lead, but he also recognizes the need "to attend the charge below," as he puts it in "The Return":

Dear Contemplation, my divinest joy,
 When I thy sacred mount ascent,
 What heavenly Sweets my soul employ!
 Why can't I there my days for ever spend?
 When I have conquer'd thy steep heights with pain
 What pity 'tis that I must down again!

And yet I must; my passions would rebel
 Should I too long continue here:
 No, here I must not think to dwell,
 But mind the duties of my proper sphere.
 So angels, tho they heaven's glories know,
 Forget not to attend their charge below.

Like the true mystic, Norris is aware that heightened vision cannot be maintained for long; it is too blinding and too powerful for continued contemplation. Man, being mortal, must descend the mountain of perfection.

John Norris, then was one writer in a tradition of English mysticism which went back to the middle ages. Stephen Neill, in Anglicanism, has called these a "remarkable succession," and adds, "All perfectly orthodox in intention, these mystics sought their consolation not in pantheistic imaginings, but in intense devotion to the passion of the crucified Saviour."³⁷ This passage is an excellent description of the "Meditations on Christ's Death and Passion: An Emblem" by Walter Harte (1709-1774), examined earlier. The first meditation is a call to the awakening of the self, and to contemplation of Christ's sacrifice:

Haste not so fast, on worldly cares employ'd,
 Thy bleeding Saviour asks a short delay:
 What trifling bliss is still to be enjoy'd,
 What change of folly wings thee on thy way?
 Look back a moment, pause a while, and stay.
 For thee thy God assum'd the human frame;
 For thee the Guiltless pains and anguish try'd;
 Thy passions (sin excepted) His became:
 Like thee he suffer'd, hunger'd, wept, and dy'd.

Fairchild feels that his use of contemplation in "An Essay on Painting" probably means no more than that Harte is trying to be Miltonic,³⁸ but his relation to the mystical tradition is sufficiently close to

believe that he understood the implications of the word. His lack of sympathy with Behmen is indicated in the line from "An Essay on Satire" (1730): "And Jacob Behmen! most obscurely wise." But, like so many of the eighteenth-century writers, he was objecting to forces which had a stronger influence upon him than he suspected.

Lady Mary Chudleigh's "The Elevation" affords an interesting comparison with the similar poem by Norris. The stanzaic structure and the rhythmic and rime scheme of Lady Chudleigh's poem are much simpler. This simplicity seems to indicate a parallel simplification in the intensity of the feeling. The speaker in her poem seems to be an astronaut rather than a true mystic:

O how ambitious is my Soul,
 How high she now aspires!
 There's nothing can on Earth controul,
 Or limit her Desires.

Upon the Wings of Thought she flies
 Above the reach of Sight,
 And finds a way thro' pathless Skies
 To everlasting Light.

From whence with blameless scorn she views
 The Follies of Mankind;
 And smiles to see how each pursues
 Joys fleeting as the Wind.

Yonder's the little Ball of Earth,
 It lessens as I rise;
 That Stage of transitory Mirth,
 Of lasting Miseries:

My Scorn does into Pity turn,
 And I lament the Fate
 Of Souls, that still Bodies mourn,
 For Faults which they create.

Souls without Spot, till Flesh they wear,
 Which their pure Substance stains:
 While they th'uneasie Burthen bear,
 They're never free from Pains.

In spite of the astronomical simplification of feeling in this poem, the framework still owes much to the mystical tradition. This tradition has here been made literary, the experience of the elevation has become an attitude, yet the framework and terms of sensibility are those of Norris's poem. From one point of view the aspect of other-worldliness in Lady Chudleigh's poems should be expected to be small. In the "Preface" to her Poems on Several Occasions: Together with the Song of the Three Children (1703) she wrote:

'Tis impossible to be happy without making Reason the Standard of all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and firmly resolving to yield a constant, ready, and cheerful obedience to its Dictates. Those who are govern'd by Opinion, enslav'd to Custom, and Vassals to their Humors, are objects of Pity, if such as are wretched by their own Choice, can be properly said to deserve Commiseration. They act by no steady Principles, are always restless, disturb'd, and uneasie; sometimes agitated by one Passion, and sometimes by another, fretting about Trifles, and lamenting the Loss of such things, as others would think it a part of their Felicity to be without.

What we generally call Misfortunes, what we fancy to be Miseries, are not really so; they exist on in the Imagination, are Creatures of the Brain, Troubles of our own forming, and like phantoms vanish as soon as Reason shines clear.

At first this passage sounds like the popular statement of eighteenth-century confidence in Reason. But it becomes clear that for Lady Chudleigh Reason is a more complex agent for escaping from individualism in both personal and religious values. It is contrasted with, not Faith or Religion, but Opinion. And, much like the mystical awareness, it shines clear to show the triviality of many things of the world. This mystical concept of Reason is expressed in "The Resolve":

For what the World admires I'll with no more,
Nor count that airy nothing of a Name:
Such flitting Shadows let the Proud adore,
Let them be Suppliants for an empty Fame.

If Reason rules within, and keeps the Throne,
 While the inferior Faculties obey,
 And all her Laws without Reluctance own,
 Accounting none more fit, more just than they.

If Virtue my free Soul unsully'd keeps,
 Exempting it from Passion and from Stain:
 If no black guilty Thoughts disturb my Sleeps,
 And no past Crimes my Vext Remembrance pain.

If, tho' I Pleasure find in living here,
 I yet can look on Death without Surprise:
 If I've a Soul above the Reach of Fear,
 And which will nothing mean or sordid prize.

A Soul, which cannot be depress'd by Grief,
 Nor too much rais'd by the sublimest Joy;
 Which can, when troubled, give it self Relief,
 And to advantage all its Thoughts employ.

Then am I happy in my humble State,
 Altho' not crown'd with Glory nor with Bays:
 A Mind, that triumphs over Vice and Fate,
 Esteems it mean to court the world for Praise.

Thus, even in the mystical tradition, Reason need not be wholly rejected. Faith and Reason, Mysticism and Rationalism are not mutually exclusive categories. This is what makes a full understanding of the eighteenth century so complex an undertaking. As Cassirer pointed out in the passage quoted earlier, "when the eighteenth century wants to characterize this [formative] power in a single word, it calls it 'reason.'³⁹ Upon this term revolve different ways of knowing and various things to be known, and upon it hangs a peculiar kind of mystical insight, as seen in Lady Chudleigh's poetry.

The similarity between this qualified concept of Reason and that put forward in the "Preface" to John Dryden's Religio Laici is immediately obvious. Dryden's position is indicated in a passage in which he advocates humility in knowing God, and dependence upon Grace rather than man's own abilities:

Let us be content at last, to know God, by his own
Methods; at least so much of him, as he is pleas'd
to reveal to us, in the sacred Scriptures; to
apprehend them to be the word of God, is all our
Reason has to do; for all beyond it is the work of
Faith, which is the seal of Heaven impressed upon
our humane understanding.

We have already seen how in this reconciliation of Reason and Faith
Dryden is expressing the orthodox attitude of the Anglican Church. The
attempts, with varying degrees of emphasis, to substitute Reason for
Faith as the highest jury for man's religious experience were regularly
criticized or condemned by Convocation: both Toland and Whiston met with
official disapproval. Yet John Locke, to whom the eighteenth-century
theological rationalists owed so much, achieved a kind of acceptance
superior to theirs. James Thomson (1700-1748), son of a Scottish minister,
apostrophizing Britain and her illustrious sons, includes him among the
greatest:

Why need I name thy Boyle, whose pious search
Amid the dark recesses of his works
The great Creator sought? And why they Locke,
Who made the whole internal World his own?

And this praise was repeated in the poem "Written in Locke's Essay on
Human Understanding" by Soame Jenyns (1704-1787), author of the popular
and frequently reprinted View of the Internal Evidences of the Christian
Religion:

Long had the mind of man with curious art
Search'd Nature's wondrous plan through every part,
Measured each tract of ocean, earth, and sky,
And number'd all the rolling orbs on high;
Yet skill, so learn'd, herself she little knew,
Till Locke's unerring pen the portrait drew.
So beauteous Eve a while in Eden stray'd,
And all her great Creator's works survey'd;
By sun and moon she knew to mark the hour,
She knew, when sporting on the verdant lawn,
The tender lambkin and the nimble fawn,

But still a stranger to her own bright face,
 She guess'd not at its form, nor what she was;
 Till, led at length to some clear crystal tide,
 The shining mirror all her charms displays,
 And her eyes catch their own rebounded rays.

As is seen from these two poems, what attracted the imagination of the poets was not the doctrine of rationalism implied in Locke's works, but the apparent discovery of the true nature of man in the workings of his mind; psychology seemed to provide the mechanism for answering religious questions. Theologically, it could imply the possibility of discovering a further manifestation of man's Creator. This is not to contradict the importance of Locke, or Willey's estimate of him: "Locke stands at the end of the seventeenth century, and at the beginning of the eighteenth; his work is at once a summing-up of seventeenth-century conclusions and the starting-point for eighteenth-century enquiries."⁴⁰ But Pattison's theory that "the title of Locke's treatise, The Reasonableness of Christianity, may be said to have been the solitary thesis of Christian theology in England for the greater part of a century"⁴¹ cannot be accepted unchallenged. It was the psychological implication of Locke's Treatise which attracted the theologians as well as the poets, and they found little in Locke's writing to alarm them concerning his orthodoxy. Carpenter has described him as "what would today be called a Broad Churchman."⁴² And both he and Lecky discover Locke's great service to religion was that without lapsing into indifference or despairing agnosticism he presented a way to tolerance and civil liberty:

It is well worthy of remark that the triumph of toleration and the triumph of civil liberty should both have been definitely effected in England at the same time, and should both have found their chief champion in the same man.⁴³

Toleration did not mean agnosticism, and although, as Cragg puts it, Locke lifted Reason "to a new plane of confident authority,"⁴⁴ he did not condemn all religious experience to the criterion of Reason. Poets other than Dryden and Lady Chudleigh presented this qualified and orthodox view of Reason. John Byrom sums it up conveniently in one of his "Miscellaneous Poems" at the end of volume one of his collected poems (1773):

My Reason is I, and your Reason is You,
And if we shall differ, both cannot be true:
If Reason must judge, and we two must agree,
Another third Reason must give the Decree,
Superior to our's; and to which, it is fit,
That both, being weaker, should freely submit:
Now in Reason, submitting, is plainly impli'd
That it does not pretend, of itself, to decide.

Although Byrom in this poem has hit upon the basic problem in accepting Reason as final authority, his position is more fully presented in a series of poems in volume two of his works. Stanza eleven of his "A Contrast between Human Reason and Divine Illumination" is a statement of the Anglican attitude:

Fond of his Reason as a Man may be,
He should confess its limited Degree;
And, by its fair Direction, seek to find
A surer Guide to Things of deeper Kind:
The most sharp-sighted seek for other Men,
Who may have seen what lies beyond their Ken;
And in religious matters, most Appeals
Are made by Men to that, which God reveals.

This same attitude is elaborated in "Thoughts upon Human Reason, Occasioned by Reading Some Extravagant Declamations in It's Favour"; the use of Reason nobody denies, but because to each person believing he is following Reason the truth appears different, Reason cannot be given absolute power. The power above Reason is Faith, and the relationship

between them is carefully put forward in "On Faith, Reason, and Sight,
Considered as the Three Distinct Mediums of Human Perception":

There is a threefold correspondent Light,
That shines to Faith, to Reason, and to Sight:
The first, Eternal; bringing into View
Celestial Objects, if the Faith be true;
The next, Internal; which the reas'ning Mind
Consults in Truths of an ideal Kind;
The third, External; and perceiv'd thereby
All outward Objects that affect the Eye.

This tripartite concept of man's faculties was not unusual in Anglican theology. William Law, following Boehme, describes the Kingdom of Heaven and things created by God as having three manifestations:

The Kingdom of Heaven stands in this threefold life, where three are one, because it is a manifestation of the Deity, which is three and one; the Father has His distinct manifestation in the fire, which is always generating the light; the Son has His distinct manifestation in the light, which is always generating from the fire; the Holy Ghost has His manifestation in the spirit, that always proceeds from both, and is always united with them.... And hence it is that all angels and the souls of men are said to be born of God, sons of God, and partakers of the divine nature, which is the unbeginning majesty of God, the Kingdom of Heaven or visible glory of the Deity.⁴⁵

It is highly probable that Byrom derived his concept of the tripartite nature of man's faculties from his reading of Law, but it is found elsewhere in religious writings; the German mystic Ruysbroeck advances the image of God as triple manifestations of light, and both St. Augustine and Anselm had put forward a view of man as an image of the Holy Trinity. This idea also is found in Christopher Smart's poems; in Song to David, xlii:

Open, and naked of offence,
Man's made of mercy, soul, and sense;
God armed the snail and wilk:
Be good to him that pulls thy plough;
Due food and care, due rest, allow
For her that yields thee milk.

And in "Hymn on Trinity Sunday" he slightly changes the terms, but retains the trinitarian concept:

Man, soul and angel join
To strike up strains divine;
O blessed and ador'd,
Thine aid from Heav'n afford;
Holy, Holy, Holy Three,
Which in One, as One agree.

For angel, man and soul
Make up upon the whole,
One individual here,
And in the highest sphere;
Where with God he shall repose,
From whose image first he rose.

In the "Introduction" to his edition of the poems of Smart, Robert Brittain described this tripartite concept as a heresy, but Karina Side has carefully shown that it was neither a heresy according to the Catholic Church, nor was it peculiar to Smart.⁴⁶ That it was, indeed, acceptable to Anglican thought is further established by the writings of Law and Byrom.

Again, principally because of the influence of Law, the poetry of Byrom shows a strong and deliberate sympathy with mysticism. The essence of the mystical attitude is expressed in the final stanza of "A Penitential Soliloquy":

'Tis to infuse a salutary Grief,
To fit the Mind for absolute Relief:
That purg'd from ev'ry false and finite Love,
Dead to the World, alive to Things above,
The Soul may rise, as in its first form'd Youth,
And worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

The ritual of purgation and illumination is here outlined; all false and finite Love must be replaced by Divine Love. The final step is expressed in a line from "On Attention":

And human Will unite to the divine.

The higher union of man and his creator is the aim of the mystical way. Byrom is aware of the three stages in mystical progression, and of the significance of purgation, discipline, rejection of this world, and the need for Love through Divine Grace. In these he shows himself to be a major exponent of the mystical tradition in verse; theologically, he is one of the most complete exponents of it in English.

But the mystical tradition, in various forms, shaped the sensibility of many poets during the eighteenth century. In a most simplified and secularized form it appeared as what Norman Callan has called Augustan Reflective Poetry.⁴⁷ The passage by Nahum Tate, which he quotes as a rubric to his essay, serves well to sum up this particular tradition:

Grant me, indulgent Heaven! a rural seat
 Rather contemptible than great!
 Where, though I taste life's sweets, I still may be
 Athirst for immortality!
 I would have business; but exempt from strife!
 A private, but an active life!

A conscience bold, and punctual to his charge!
 My stock of health; or patience large!
 Some books I'd have, and some acquaintance too;
 But very good, and very few!
 Then (if a mortal two such gifts may crave!)
 From silent life I'd steal into the grave.

This sentiment can scarcely be classified as the mystical dissatisfaction which makes man a pilgrim or wanderer, searching for a Heavenly City, an Eldorado, or a Jerusalem of the perfect life. There is the implication, elaborated with much partiality and over-simplification by Becker, that the Heavenly City of the eighteenth century tended to be accepted as London, or at least the more improved parts thereof. But in spite of this implication, the essentials of religion during the century were not those listed by Becker:

The essential articles of the religion of the Enlightenment may be stated thus: (1) man is not natively depraved; (2) the end of life is life itself, the good life on earth instead of the beatific life after death; (3) man is capable, guided solely by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting the good life on earth; and (4) the first and essential condition of the good life on earth is the freeing of men's minds from the bonds of ignorance and superstition, and of their bodies from the arbitrary oppression of the constituted social authorities.⁴⁸

Later we shall see how strong the doctrine of depravity, even total depravity, remained during this period, and we have seen sufficient evidence of the concentration upon the beatific life after death by many writers.

The vision has always been an essential element in the mystic's illumination. With the hearing of voices or seeing of angels it has been part of the media by which the seeing self" truly approaches the Absolute. These are the "formulae under which ontological perceptions are expressed; are found by that self to be sources of helpful energy, charity, and courage. They infuse something new in the way of strength, knowledge, direction; and leave it -- physically, mentally, or spiritually -- better than they found it."⁴⁹ The awareness from the vision is, in some way, the awareness of God, a product of a degree of union. It is concerned with the beatific life, with a power beyond the goodness or ethical practicality of this world's "perfect freedom." At the beginning of this section of the study we read Elizabeth Singer Rowe's poem "The Vision," and noted the aspects of the mystical tradition which it shared. Mrs. Rowe was not the only eighteenth-century poet to write of the appearance of divine messengers. The divine message in her poem, a metaphorical recording of the initial phases of the purgative stage, is

similar to that received by Moses, and described in John Byrom's poem "Moses's Vision":

Moses, to whom, by a peculiar Grace,
God spake (the Hebrew Phrase is) Face to Face,
Call'd by an heav'nly Voice, the Rabbins say,
Ascended to a Mountain's Top one Day;
Where, in some Points perplex'd, his Mind was eas'd,
And Doubts, concerning Providence, appeas'd.

The vision dealt with the finding of a purse containing gold by the lad, and the stabbing by the soldier who had lost the purse of an old man who happened to be resting on the spot. The theme of the vision is the exact, if sometimes incomprehended, justice of God, for the old man, in a like fit of passion, had murdered the father of the child. The evil of the world springs from a yielding to the passions. Man, in his unenlightened stage, clings to those things which the wise man should deem it fortunate to be without. It was against the irresponsibility and the inconstancy of the Passions that Lady Chudleigh in her "Preface" erected the control of Reason. The excesses of the Passions led man into sin and damnation; they produced selfishness and pride.

Because of this attitude toward the Passions, many religious poems swing to the mystical tradition in an attempt to discover a symbolism for expressing their escape or purgation. From this impetus grow the numbers of eighteenth-century poems dealing with the control and disciplining of man's passions. One poem from Poems and Miscellaneous Pieces (1751) by John Free shows this background. The poem is titled "On the Government of the Passions":

Say, Love, for what good End design'd
Wert thou to Mortals given?
Was it to fix on Earth the Mind?
Or raise the Heart to Heav'n?

Deluded oft we still pursue
 The fleeting Bliss we sought,
 As Children chace the Bird in view,
 That's never to be caught.

O! who shall teach me to sustain,
 A more than manly Part?
 To go thro' Life, nor suffer Pain
 Nor Joy to touch my Heart.

Thou blest Indifference, be my Guide,
 I court thy gentle Reign;
 When Passion turns my steps aside
 Still call me back again.

Teach me to see through Beauty's Art,
 How oft its Trappings hide
 A base, a lewd, a treacherous Heart;
 With Thousand Ills beside.

Nor let my gen'rous Soul give way,
 Too much to serve my Friends;
 Let Reason still controul their Sway,
 And show where Duty ends.

If to my Lot a Wife should fall,
 May Friendship be our Love;
 The Passion, that is Transport all,
 Does seldom lasting prove:

If lasting, 'tis too great for Peace,
 The Pleasure's so profuse;
 The Heart can never be at ease,
 Which has too much to lose.

Calm let me estimate this Life,
 Which I must leave behind,
 Nor let fond Passions raise a Strife,
 To discompose my Mind.

When Nature calls, may I steal by,
 As rising from a Feast;
 I've had my fill of Life, and why
 Should I disturb the rest.

The sentiment of this poem is summed up in a few lines from Free's
 longer heroic poem, "Judith":

The wise Composure of an holy Mind,
 That fixt, obedient to its Maker's Will;
 Unruffled hears, and sees, and judges still.

The symbolism of Love, Bliss, the pursuit of the Bird, the indifference of the Heart to Pain and Joy, the quiet panting -- this is in accordance with the traditional symbolism of mysticism.⁵⁰ And here, in embryo, is the asceticism of the mystical tradition.

And so various aspects of a mystical tradition are at the back of the many poems on religious satisfaction and contentment, poems of the type of "The Wish" by Josiah Relph (1712-1743), Cumberland poet and curate of Sebergham:

If some good-natured Pow'r divine
Shall deign to see this shade of mine,
And if that God (as Gods have been
Delighted with a rural scene)
Well-pleased shall promise to impart
The bliss that heaves my longing heart,
This wish I'll readily present;
"Make me in every state content."

"Religious Contentment" from Thomas Scott's Lyric Poems, Devotional and Moral (1773) is a more sacred expression of the same impulse:

I Envy not the worldly Great,
Their costly viands and their pride of show.
Inchantment all; delusion's bait;
Fools rush along, and plunge in death and woe.

Give me the peasant's day-built cell,
On a coarse pillow rest my weary head,
If there with me my God will dwell,
With cheerful heart I'll bless my homely bread.

The lofty majesty of God,
Who in eternity of Glory reigns,
In visits to a mean abode,
Descends to commune with adoring swains.

O happy souls, in humble feat!
What transports from divine communion flow!
Angels will you as brethren greet,
And hail the type of their own heav'n below.

In these poems the desire is for an immediate reaping of the rewards of the unitive stage, of the direct encounter with God. Religious contentment is wished as a safe investment from the fluctuating market of man's

passions. It is the desire for a mystical experience with the necessity for a ladder to the unknown removed; the stages are telescoped into one, and this accounts for the strange two-dimensional quality in both the sensibility and the style of these poems.

But the awareness of the flux in the world is inescapable, and although few poems present a complete pattern of mystical reaction to this awareness, some symbolically open a window upon this reality, and suggest an ironical depth to man's existence. Bowdler's collection, Poems Divine and Moral includes an emblematical poem called "The Leaf" by George Horne (1730-1792), Bishop of Norwich:

See the leaves around us falling,
 Dry and withered, to the ground;
 Thus to thoughtless mortals calling,
 In a sad and solemn sound.

Sons of Adam, once in Eden,
 Blighted when like us he fell,
 Hear the lecture we are reading,
 'Tis, alas! the truth we tell.

Virgins, much, too much presuming
 On your boasted white and red;
 View us, late in beauty blooming,
 Numbered now among the dead.

Gripping misers, nightly waking,
 See the end of all your care;
 Fled on wings of our own making,
 We have left our owners bare.

Sons of honour, fed on praises,
 Flutt'ring high in fancied worth,
 Lo! the fickle air, that raises,
 Brings us down to parent earth.

Learned sophs, in systems jaded,
 Who for new ones daily call,
 Cease, at length, by us persuaded,
 Ev'ry leaf must have its fall.

Youths, tho' yet no losses grieve you,
 Gay in health and manly grace,
 Let not cloudless skies deceive you,
 Summer gives to Autumn place.

Venerable sires, grown hoary,
 Hither turn th'unwilling eye,
 Think, amidst your falling glory,
 Autumn tells a Winter nigh.

Yearly in our course returning,
 Messengers of shortest stay,
 Thus we preach this truth concerning,
 "Heaven and earth shall pass away."

On the tree of life eternal,
 Man, let all thy hope be staid,
 Which alone, for ever vernal,
 Bears a leaf that shall not fade.

The control of rime and meter and the technical mastery in this poem carefully distinguish it from those expressing a generalized and sentimentalized feeling toward religion. But the Housman-like style contains an un-Housman-like turning to an eternal absolute. Man has come to understand the human predicament. To the eighteenth-century Anglican it was one of neither irremediable depravity nor unqualified perfection. Cassirer, in An Essay on Man, underlines the paradoxical nature of man's position:

All the so-called definitions of man are nothing but airy speculations so long as they are not based upon and confirmed by our experience of man. There is no other way to know man that to understand his life and conduct. But what we find here defies every attempt at inclusion within a single and simple formula. Contradiction is the very element of human existence. Man has no "nature"--no simple or homogeneous being. He is a strange mixture of being and nonbeing. His place is between these two opposite poles.⁵¹

The eighteenth-century Anglican would have accepted Cassirer's description. Life is a paradoxical and uncertain pilgrimage toward death and resurrection. The third stanza of "The Sabbath" by John Bowdler, Junior, is a reflection of this feeling:

For, not in vain, by twilight here,
 With many a doubt, and many a fear,
 Our pilgrim path we trod;
 A little learn, a little do,
 Observe, discover, hope, pursue--
 And mingle with the dead.

The awareness of man's pitiful predicament, caught between mortality and eternity, by twilight mingling with the dead but occasionally seeing Eternity, "like a great Ring of pure and endless light" -- this awareness was as strong in the eighteenth century as in any other. All too obvious was the inescapable fact that, like the leaves, innocence, wealth, honour, knowledge, youth, and experience will pass away. True contentment -- a subject for many poems during the century -- can only be found in a quiet contemplation of the Eternal. This may manifest itself in the creations of God: nature, the human mind, or the universe. But this alone "bears a leaf that shall not fade." The gesture of recognizing this impermanence and of purging oneself of its attractions is a gesture toward mysticism. When combined with the desire for pure union with God, a direct communion without need or benefit of sacrament, the gesture becomes that of complete mysticism. Both directly, and by various subtle influences, mysticism remained an important aspect of eighteenth-century sensibility. It emerged forcefully and deliberately in several writers, it colored the concepts of Reason and man's capacity to know and by what devices he can know, it brought emphasis upon theological doctrines of Love, Grace, and Faith, and it encouraged the use of prayer and meditations. Its importance as part of the Anglican tradition can best be suggested by an extract from Anthony Horneck's The Fire of the Altar (1683), which, though intended for the inhabitants of St. Mary le Strand and the precinct of the Savoy, became extremely popular, and by 1718 had reached

a thirteenth edition. In attitude and atmosphere, intensity and imagery, it reflects the asceticism and the ecstasy of the mystical tradition:

O whither shall I go but to Thee, who hast words of
Eternal Life! Thou art my Sun; by Thee I shall be
enlightened, by Thee my soul shall be warmed. O how
comfortable are Thy beams! What a progress must the
soul make on which Thou shinest, and dartest Thy
glorious rays! Thou art that lofty cedar, whose
boughs overspread the believing world!

Under the shadow of that tree will I rest. It is the
healing of the nations. I will be glad in the Lord
and rejoice in my bleeding Jesus. While the world
despises Thee, I will honour Thee. While great men
pass by and regard Thee not, I that am poor and
needy will wait to be refreshed by Thee.

Go ye fools! Be enamoured with your trifles. Admire
your butterflies. Doat on your sensual pleasures.
Here is One that looks charming in His years, lovely
in His blood, amiable in His wounds, and is more
beautiful in the midst of all His distresses than
the brightest virgin's face, adorned with all the
glittering treasures of the East!

This exhortation expresses much of the religious feeling of the eighteenth century. As the reading of a wide range of poems has indicated, the eighteenth-century poet was influenced by the mystical tradition; he was aware of the more technical terms and patterns of that tradition; and he adjusted his concept of Reason to it. These conclusions help to clarify the perilous balance in the relation between Faith and Reason during the century. But, while the religious temperament was not exclusively and narrowly in support of Reason, it was also not exclusively in support of private or esoteric sensations. There was throughout the century an interest in the dogma and the theology of the Church, an interest of an often acute and precise kind.

CHAPTER VI

An English Divine is obliged to preach to the People of England, and to defend the Faith and Discipline of the Church of England against all Opposers. The Manner of our preaching now, which is come to an admirable height, is chiefly to be learnt from the Preachers since the Restoration of King Charles II and among them Archbishop Tillotson is unquestionably the greatest Man in that Way.

William Wotton, Some Thoughts Concerning
a Proper Method of Studying Divinity

Within the Established Church in England during the eighteenth century there could be found, not only the stream of theology formulated by Richard Hooker, but also that formulated by Jean Calvin. Books two, three, and four (1594) of Hooker's Of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Politie are a defense of the Anglican position against the Puritan charges of popish corruption and failure to rely exclusively upon the Scriptures; the fifth book (1597) is a defense of the Book of Common Prayer which had been the centre of doctrinal controversy since Pentecost Sunday of 1549.¹ The fact that, during little more than a century, some of the attitudes and beliefs dismissed by Hooker could return to prominence within the Established Church is, of course, not surprising to the historian of ideas. In the writings of Hooker himself there is the tendency towards inclusiveness which grew to become a principal characteristic of eighteenth-century religious thought. Indeed, Dom Gregory Dix, himself an Anglican monk, has admitted this almost chaotic diversity:

We have to face the facts that though the Church of England has an official liturgy more rigidly and minutely prescribed in its details than that of almost any other church in christendom; and although its observance is fortified by a most complicated and formidable system of courts and legal penalties, such as no other religious society in history has ever found necessary to secure the observance of its rites, yet the Church of England to-day presents a liturgical disorganization such as is found in no other christian body, and exhibits a liturgical diversity not commonly found in bodies which do not profess to have any set liturgy at all.²

This diversity, in fact, has been praised and encouraged by Church fathers. Jeremy Taylor in his A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying

(1647) examined in detail the varying beliefs of the Christians of the world, the firm sincerity with which those beliefs were held, and the danger to heresy to which they are liable, and he looked toward general toleration and acceptance as the only reasonable path:

If this consideration does not deceive me, we have no other help in the midst of these distractions and discussions, but all of us to be united in that common term, which as it does constitute the Church in its being such, so it is the medium of the Communion of Saints; and that is the Creed of the Apostles; and, in all other things an honest endeavour to find out what truths we can, and a charitable and mutual permission to others that disagree from us and our opinions.

Should we choose to do otherwise we are putting ourselves in an assailable and an extreme position:

...no man can be reasonably persuaded or satisfied in anything else, unless he throws himself upon chance, or absolute predestination, or his own confidence, in every one of which it is two to one, at least, but he may miscarry.³

This conclusion, with its feeling of gentle toleration and its appeal to what is reasonable, sounds as though it might well have come from the middle of the eighteenth century rather than from the seventeenth. The attitudes it expresses provided the debate material for the ardent diplomacy which went on in the 1670's,⁴ and the delicate balance it maintains between the general belief that "by the Law of Nature every man has a right of worshipping God according to his own conscience" and the belief that a commonly established and uniform religion supported by some civil authority was beneficial is precisely the grounds for William Warburton's defense of the precarious stalemate of the 1730's: The Alliance between Church and State: or, The Necessity and Equity of an Established Religion and a Test Law, demonstrated from the essence of Civil Society, upon the fundamental principles of the Law of Nature and Nations (1736).

Diversity and toleration, then were both acceptable, if not actually recommended to the sensibility of the Established Church in the eighteenth century; that is, while we can find few passages actually praising these characteristics, and while, in fact, we can find passages condemning them, the average Anglican of the eighteenth century was not likely to be on a perpetual look-out for things in the shapes and colors of heresies, nor was he likely to be righteously indignant should he discover apparent inconsistencies. It was this embracing sensibility which permitted (for example) Richard Hooker in his fifth book of the Laws to argue for what Paul Rust has described as a Puritan Prayer Book⁵ against what Hooker, and others, regarded as Puritan attacks.

The diversity within the Anglican tradition, particularly as it is seen in relation to a number of doctrines, will, then, be examined in this chapter. Stephen Neill, whose excellent work on Anglicanism has already been referred to a number of times, has described "a general Anglican willingness to tolerate for the time being what appears to be in error."⁶ This willingness has permitted doctrines to change and develop during the century. And earlier in this study we quoted his statement that "there are no special Anglican theological doctrines, there is no particular Anglican theology."⁷ But there always have been a number of theological questions to which the Anglican Church has adopted certain attitudes. In general, the influence of the theology of Calvinism was stronger than might be guessed at first glance. Already examined in some detail has been the attitude toward the Athanasian Creed and the doctrine of the Trinity, toward authority, and toward The Book of Common Prayer as these were dealt with in the poetry of Dryden and Mason. And an Anglican atmosphere was found in poems on the

Church festivals, on prayer and meditation, on love and sacrifice. Similarly, the considerable number of poems reflecting influence of mystical thought and practices were seen to form part of an Anglican tradition. Having examined these "constants" the essay can now look at a number of poems which are concerned with several basic doctrines of Christianity: the concept of God, and His relation to Christ, the extent and nature of wrath, the doctrines of Good Works and of Grace, the concept of depravity, of election, and of predestination. Because these doctrines are inter-related and the attitude adopted toward one influences the attitude toward the others, and because poets refuse to be as systematic as theologians, water-tight divisions in the considering of these poems, cannot be maintained. To begin, it may be most helpful to apply to a couple of poems the distinctions between Anglican and Puritan which were sketched at the beginning of this essay. In them can be seen both differences of style and differences in the concept of God.

On one hand there is this poem by Thomas Gibbons (1720-1785):

To Thee, my God, whose Presence fills
The earth, and seas, and skies,
To Thee, whose Name, whose heart is Love,
With all my powers I rise.

Troubles in long succession role;
Wave rushes upon wave;
Pity, o pity my distress!
Thy child, Thy suppliant, save!

O bid the roaring tempest cease;
Or give me strength to bear
Whate'er Thy holy will appoints,
And save me from despair!

To Thee, my God, alone I look,
On Thee alone confide;
Thou never hast deceived the soul
That on Thy grace relied.

Though oft Thy ways are wrapt in clouds
 Mysterious and unknown,
 Truth, Righteousness, and Mercy stand
 The pillars of Thy throne.

And on the other hand, there is this poem on the same theme by

John Newton (1725-1807):

Why should I fear the darkest hour,
 Or tremble at the Tempter's power?
 Jesus vouchsafes to be my Tower.

Though hot the fight, why quit the field?
 Why must I either fly or yield,
 Since Jesus is my mighty Shield?

When creature-comforts fade and die,
 Worldlings may weep, but why should I?
 Jesus still lives, and still is nigh.

Though all the flocks and herds were dead,
 My soul a famine need not dread,
 For Jesus is my living Bread.

I know not what may soon betide,
 Or how my wants shall be supplied;
 But Jesus knows, and will provide.

Though Sin would fill me with distress,
 The throne of Grace I dare address,
 For Jesus is my Righteousness.

Though faint my prayers, and cold my love,
 My steadfast hope shall not remove,
 While Jesus intercedes above.

Against me earth and hell combine;
 But on my side is Power divine;
 Jesus is all, and He is mine!

Both of these poems are acceptable to Church of England sentiment; in fact, both are included in Roundell Palmer's collection of religious verse.⁸ The attitude of each poem is humble and the reliance on God is sincere. Each poem looks towards Righteousness. The style of the two poems is similar. Yet, it is interesting to note that Thomas Gibbons was a dissenting minister, and that John Newton was the perpetual curate of Olney and afterwards Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in the city of London.

Read against this awareness, certain significant differences seem to emerge. Gibbons' poem is more Puritan; that is, it is written in a more customary and readable form; the language, except for several inversions (especially of verbs at the end of the line for the advantage of rime and emphasis), is that of ordinary composition; there is little imagery: "Wave rushes upon wave" has some symbolic value, as does "O bid the roaring tempest cease," but in neither does the symbolism reach beyond the arc of the common sensibility and vocabulary, and Truth, Righteousness and Mercy are personified, but again with slight literary or dramatic effect. What Gibbons' poems does, then, is to express an unambiguous and simple sentiment in a style reflecting this sensibility; the mysterious and unknown ways of God are recognized, but scarcely felt; they do not pose the emotional dilemma of Gerald Manley Hopkins' "Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord." This unadorned, uncomplicated directness of style reflecting a similar directness of experience is what critics like to view as symptomatic of Puritan art.⁹

Newton's poem, on the other hand, can be read as a more involved and complex work. The imagery is immediately recognizable as both more frequent and more essential to the structure of the poem. "Darkest hour," with its overtones of the Shadow of Death and the dark hour of Christ's agony, is a standard religious symbol. But "Tower" is a less stock image. It serves its primary function in the line "Jesus vouchsafes to be my Tower" as a symbol of guidance (the pillar of fire by night and of smoke by day) and of strength (the tower of strength). But it also carries itself over into the next line by contrast to the field of everyday struggle; Christ, above the conflict, gives guidance and hope; awareness of his presence makes the poet on the battlefield

below feel that he is set off from the "worldlings" who may weep. He believes himself to be, in Calvinist terms, one of the elect. This basic contrast is carried throughout the poem by means of the four metaphors of Christ's nature. While in the poem by Gibbons the presence of God is acknowledged, it's existence is named rather than made manifest:

To Thee, my God, whose Presence fills
The earth, and seas, and skies,
To Thee, whose Name, whose heart is Love,
With all my powers I rise.

In the poem by Newton there has been the subtle shift from God to Jesus, from the creator to the redeemer. Christ's nature cannot be accurately named; the metaphors of the Tower, the Shield, the Bread and Righteousness are intended to carry this awareness. The choice of metaphor itself is interesting; neither the Tower nor the Shield were poetic clichés in seventeenth and eighteenth century verse; the abstract image of Righteousness is both usual and vague; but the image of Bread immediately relates to the nature of Christ as sacrifice, and source of spiritual sustenance and presents a much richer symbolic universe than anything in the Gibbons' poem. Partly this richness is due, then, to the shift to the mediation through Christ, to the more complex and integral imagery, and to the more personal, less hymn-like, form.

This significant difference in style suggests a difference in thought and feeling. To Gibbons the ways of God remain wrapt, mysterious and unknown, in clouds; God is apart, austere and supported by the abstract pillars of Truth, Righteousness and Mercy. His God is less personal, less an experience to participate in. There is almost none of the intimate involvement which is found in, for example, the Holy

Sonnets of John Donne, or the Jubilate Agno of Christopher Smart, the Temple poems of George Herbert. While, on the other hand, the poem by Newton is not the personal document of either Donne, Herbert or Smart, neither is it the expected expression of Gibbon. Because it is Christ whose power is sought, the involvement is more immediate. God's mysterious and unknown ways, so to speak, have been made manifest in Christ. Gibbons' poem reflects the Old Testament; Newton's, the New. This distinction is, of course, epigrammatic, but it serves a useful critical turn in the attempt to perceive the range of sensibility in eighteenth-century religious verse and especially to distinguish the threads within the Established Church itself. Gibbon must rely on the Truth, Righteousness and Mercy of God, he can only look to God's grace. Newton has Jesus as mediator:

My stedfast hope shall not remove,
While Jesus intercedes above.

The power of intercession is felt, and so he dares address the throne of grace, though conscious of his sinful state. He has a claim for justification.

This contrast between the two poems -- richness on the one hand and a straightforward simplicity on the other, personal involvement versus a rather remote and austere concept of God, the total dependence upon the will of God versus the presumption upon grace, the direct awareness of God versus an elaborate structure of mediation -- this contrast fulfils neatly G.K. Chesterton's comments about the Puritan, and, by implication, the Catholic:

This is the essential Puritan idea, that God can only be praised by direct contemplation of Him. You must praise God only with your brain; it is wicked to praise Him with your passions or your physical habits or your gesture or instinct of

beauty. Therefore it is wicked to worship by singing or dancing or drinking sacramental wines or building beautiful churches or saying prayers when you are half asleep. We must not worship by dancing, drinking, building or singing; we can only worship by thinking. Our heads can praise God, but never our hands and feet. That is the true and original impulse of the Puritans.¹⁰

And this distinction in styles is also elaborated by W.R. Inge, echoing Dowden and Sypher quoted at the beginning of this essay:

The Protestant, in his preoccupation with ethics, undervaluates the aesthetic side of life, and thereby loses the sympathy of most persons who have the artistic temperament. Poetry plays a much larger part in life than the Protestant is willing to admit. For him a myth must be a hard fact or a wicked lie; sacramental symbolism is fraudulent magic; all the petty world of half-belief which the Catholic imagination spreads between the self and hard reality must be swept away ruthlessly.¹¹

As the feeling is thus defined, the Puritan will produce a less personal and less ornate art; Baroque is not a Puritan style. Puritan feeling will lend to produce a logical and ethical verse, one concerned with doctrine and behaviour, with orthodoxy and sanctification. The Catholic, in a general sense, will attempt a more sensuous and more symbolic art. This is obviously a convenient dichotomy, and it is frequently used in one shape or another by critics wanting to differentiate styles. But such dichotomies must not be used too absolutely. It is helpful to recall that while Thomas Gibbons was a dissenting minister, John Newton was the perpetual curate of Olney and afterwards Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, and yet he was also a Calvinist and an Evangelical; his influence upon William Cowper was strong, and, as Carpenter puts it, "it was his example and advice that brought Thomas Scott the commentator from a careless Socinianism to an earnest Calvinistic Evangelical faith."¹²

Thus, the usual dichotomy of Puritan versus Anglican - a dichotomy largely encouraged by Edward Dowden's study of seventeenth century literature¹³ -- is not really adequate for a careful study of eighteenth-century verse. Indeed, Summers has warned against applying our "fairly rigid modern conceptions of Puritan and Anglican, or of high, broad, and low" to most of the figures of the seventeenth century:

During the years of George Herbert's maturity, the members of the Church of England were troubled chiefly by questions concerning church government, ritual, theology, and the proper conduct of the personal life. On none of these issues was there simply one Puritan and one Anglican position.¹⁴

And, as has been seen, the positions during the eighteenth century became even more involved as the attitudes toward various doctrines evolved and developed. What was written by a Puritan is frequently acceptable to an Anglican (on many issues one would naturally expect Christians, though of different sects, to agree) and -- more interesting -- what is written by an Anglican is possibly not completely acceptable to another Anglican. It is wiser, in spite of the nice points of theology involved, to differentiate thought, feeling and style in terms of Calvinist rather than Puritan. Theoretically Puritans should have been Calvinists; certainly most of them were. But the question of church polity rather than of doctrine was frequently the separating mark of the eighteenth-century Puritan.

The theology of Calvin, although frequently regarded as forming a minor part of Anglican doctrine, had actually influenced an important train of English religious thought from an early period. It influenced such major works as Alexander Nowell's¹⁵ Catechism (1570) and Thomas Roger's The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England (1587), and Helen White has described the English Church before 1640 as

officially accepting the main tenets of continental Protestantism: Justification by Faith, Predestination and Election, and the appeal to the final authority of Scripture. During the lifetime of James I Calvinism was regarded as the major theology of universities and Court. But in actual practice, she points out, "no one of these theories was applied with the vigor and literal consistency which a Calvin or John Knox had contemplated."¹⁶ Charles Davis Cremeans has examined the reception of Calvinistic thought in England during the sixteenth century, and has come to this conclusion:

The extent of the acceptance of Calvinism in the Church of England is attested not only in the doctrinal content of that Church's belief, but in the acts that reveal church policy. The Institutes superseded Bullinger's Decades as the recognized manual of the clergy and the textbook used by students of divinity in Oxford and Cambridge.... Calvin's Catechism was ordered by statute to be used in the universities in 1587.... Thus we may agree with Philip Schaff who wrote: "it is not too much to say that the ruling theology of the Church of England in the later half of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century was Calvinistic." (Creeds and Christendom, vol. I, (New York, 1896), 604.) We would add, however, that Calvinism was the ruling theology of all England rather than of the Church of England alone. It must be added, too, that Calvinism consists of more than theology, and that in certain other fields of thought, mainly those dealing with church government and the relation of church to state, the Nonconformists' interpretation of Calvinism differed greatly from the Conformists'.¹⁷

The Calvinistic tradition continued during the seventeenth century, and emerged during the eighteenth century in such important works as the Theologia Reformata: or, the Body and Substance of the Christian Religion, Comprised in distinct Discoveries or Treatises upon The Apostles Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and The Ten Commandments (London, 1713)

by John Edwards, the Calvinistic divine who became minister of St. Sepaldue's, Cambridge, and the scholarly and devout trilogy by William Romaine (1714-1795): The Life of Faith, The Walk of Faith, and The Triumph of Faith.

The acceptability of this tradition to Anglican writers is seen in the curious version by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791) of a couple of poems by John Mason (d. 1694), the Calvinist preacher whom Richard Baxter called "the glory of the Church of England." Lady Huntingdon was herself a member of the Established Church, and, like her close friends the Wesleys, she regarded herself as a loyal supporter of it.¹⁸ Her separation from the Establishment was a forced issue on the basis of legal standing. Plummer records that "in 1781, Lady Huntingdon's chapels were declared to be dissenting meeting-houses, in which no minister of the Church of England might officiate. But the Methodists were as yet very indignant at being called Dissenters, and the English Dissenters gave them little sympathy."¹⁹ The poem is a compilation of two stanzas taken from No. 23 (with slight changes) and two taken from No. 28 of Mason's Songs of Praise:

The world can neither give nor take,
Nor can they comprehend
The peace of God, which Christ has bought,
The peace which knows no end.

The burning bush was not consumed
Whilst God remained there;
The Three, when Jesus made the Fourth,
Found fire as soft as air.

God's furnace doth in Zion stand;
But Zion's God sits by;
As the refiner views his gold
With an observant eye.

His thoughts are high, His love is wise,
His wounds a cure intend;
And, though He does not always smile,
He loves unto the end.

This poem is on the same theme as the two, by Gibbons and Newton, already examined. God is still man's sole support, and Christ has bought the means of grace. But Lady Huntingdon proceeds to add the final two stanzas with their peculiar imagery. The world has become much more than Newton's field of struggle; it is now God's furnace, and man is not a contestant shielded by Christ, but raw ore for the melting down. God is present, of course, but not as part of the earth, and seas and skies; he is overseeing the smelting "As the refiner views his gold/ With an observant eye." Righteousness and Mercy are not mentioned. God has become the just God, the wrathful God; his wisdom overrides his compassion and his "wounds a cure intend." Although he loves, he "does not always smile."

The feeling of the poem is far removed from this poem on the same subject matter by Thomas Ken (1637-1710), Bishop of Bath and Wells:

By various names we thy perfections call,
 But pure, unfathom'd Love, exhausts them all;
 By love all things were made, and are sustain'd,
 Love all things, to allure man's love ordain'd;
 Love vengeance from lapsed human race suspends,
 Love our salvation, when provided, intends;
 Love, Lord, the infinite perfections join'd,
 Into all forms of love to save mankind;
 Enlightening wisdom, and supporting might,
 Grace to forgive, compassion to invite;
 Thy bounty in regards which thought exceed,
 Munificence to promise all we need;
 Truth to perform, paternal, tender care,
 A patient mildness long to wait, and spare;
 A justice, to chastise love's hatefull foes,
 With jealousy, cursed rivals to oppose;
 Benignity, to hear a sinner's cry,
 Unbounded all-sufficiency, to supply;
 They all are love, love only is their aim,
 My verse shall love, and hymn Thee by that name.

The feeling expressed by Ken is close to that of John Donne in its emphasis upon the encompassing nature of God's love. This feeling, as has been seen earlier, is closely related to the mystical tradition. In

several of his sermons Donne dwelt upon the communicableness of God, upon his relation with man which makes it possible for man to know him and his ways:

Our first step in this first part, is the sociableness, the communicableness of God; He loves holy meetings, he loves the communion of saints, the household of the faithfull.... They say we cannot name God by plurally; so sociable, so communicable, so extensive, so derivative of himself, is God, and so manifold are the beames, and the emanations that flow out of him.²⁰

And on another occasion he warned that failure to appreciate this communicableness would lead to a God who, like John Mason's, was austere and remote, essentially separated from man with whom man could scarcely communicate:

For it is not enough to find Deum, a God; a great and incomprehensible power, that sits in luce, in light, but in luce inaccessibili, in light that we can not comprehend. A God that enjoys his owne eternity, his owne peace, his own blessedness, but reports not us, reflects not upon us, communicates n nothing to us.²¹

This close relation between God and man, a relation made conceivable through a concentration upon the nature of charity and love rather than upon justice and wisdom, is found as the background of the poem

"Love-joy" by George Herbert:

As on a window late I cast mine eye,
I saw a vine drop grapes with J and C
Anneal'd on every bunch. One standing by
Ask'd what it meant. I, who am never loth
To spend my judgement, said, it seem'd to me
To be the bodie and the letters both
Of Joy and Charitie. Sir, you have not miss'd,
The man reply'd; it figures Jesus Christ.

To say that the tradition suggested here by Ken, Donne and Herbert represents that of the Established Church, is, of course, to grossly over-simplify to the point of unscholarly inaccuracy. Cremeans and

Schaff have both argued for the recognition of the importance of Calvinistic doctrine in England, and M.M. Knappen has supported these findings by tracing the influence of the Reformed Churches in impressing a religious attitude upon the average communicant:

It was the attention given to the layman, and the responsibility put upon him, that made the Reformed Churches such efficient instruments for the inculcation of religious attitudes.²²

For the understanding of eighteenth-century religious verse of the Established Church it is necessary, therefore, to read some of the works against a background of Calvinistic thought and feeling.

John Mason's lines, as arranged by Lady Huntingdon, represents the Calvinistic concept of God; in fact Mason's God seems the God of Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God":

...thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out: and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

This description of the wrath of God is extreme for any writer, whether within or without the Established Church, but it does sum up the emotional lengths to which Calvinism can lead.

During the second half of the eighteenth century the fearsome Calvinist William Grimshaw is reported as having interrupted a somewhat conciliatory sermon to his congregation by the visiting Whitefield with the warning, "For God's sake do not speak so. I beg you, do not flatter them. The greater part of them are going to hell with their eyes open."²³ And in so saying Grimshaw was echoing Calvin's own sombre comment on man's plight; in the Institutes he defined original sin as "a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature extending to all parts of the soul, which first makes us guilty of the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh."²⁴ Although not as unnerving, this experience of religious awe is found in a version by Charles Wesley (1707-1788), who until 1755 considered himself a full member of the Anglican Church, of a poem by Isaac Watts (1674-1748):

Before Jehovah's awful throne,
Ye nations, bow with sacred joy;
Know that the Lord is God alone,
He can create, and He destroy.

His sov'reign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay, and formed us men;
And when like wandering sheep we strayed,
He brought us to His fold again.

We'll crowd Thy gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill Thy courts with sounding praise.

Wide as the world is thy command,
Vast as eternity Thy Love;
Firm as a rock Thy truth must stand
When rolling years shall cease to move.

The experience of the past is not one of grateful humility; there is no awareness of the mediatory powers of Christ. The Lord is God alone, in every sense. What he has done has been without our aid and without our covenant. His power is sovereign; his command is world-wide. He is the God of power, not of mercy. And, in fact, Wesley has softened the

tone from Watts's original; in omitting the first stanza of the original poem, Wesley also changed the opening lines of the second from

Nations attend before His throne
With solemn fear, with sacred joy.

To the Non-conformist Watts's solemn fear is a more important religious attitude than it is to Wesley. But it conditions the whole poem. The austerity of the feeling is again reflected in the austerity of the language and form; the seriousness of the meaning can afford no confusion because of elaborate expression. The awful majesty of God is a simple experience, and so must be its expression.

The fear of God's wrath, and the discovery of it in unusual tempests of nature, produced an amount of verse warning man of incipient damnation. An earthquake on 8 March 1749 provided Thomas Gibbons with the title and illustration of God's wrath, but also (since the earthquake proved not to be a complete cataclysm) of God's mercy:

And Gracious too, since, limited by none,
He his own Might restrain'd, and only prov'd
In Hints of Wrath th'Omnipotence behind.

In the same tradition is An Essay on the Conflagration (1720) by the Reverend Samuel Catherall, fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, Contemporary "infidelity, heresie, and profane scoffing at religion" have become widespread that the day of judgment is conceivably close at hand. In Book II Catherall suggests that after the saints are received into heaven, and the sentence is passed upon the wicked, "the world shall kindle into flames, and make a Hell for them." All this will happen because of God's wrath.

But not all poets were prepared to agree with such a violent and immediate interpretation of a wrathful God as the more strict Calvinists proposed. John Byrom (1692-1763) devoted several stanzas of philosophic

verse to exploring the grounds for accepting a concept of wrath, and the means of reconciling it with the concept of God as love. The title outlines the intention of the verses: "On the Meaning of the Word Wrath, as applied to God in Scripture."

That God is Love--is in the Scripture said;
That He is Wrath--is nowhere to be read;
From which, by literal Expression free,
"Fury (he saith himself) is not in me:"
If Scripture, therefore, must direct our Faith,
Love must be He, or in Him; and not Wrath.

And yet the Wrath of God, in Scripture Phrase,
If oft express'd, and many different Ways:
His Anger, Fury, Vengeance, are the Terms,
Which the plain Letter of the Test affirms;
And plain, from two of the Apostle's Quire,
That God is Love--and a consuming Fire.

If we consult the Reasons that appear,
To make the seeming difficulty clear,
We must acknowledge, when we look above,
That God, as God, is overflowing Love:
And wilful Sinners, when we look below,
Make (what is call'd) the Wrath of God to flow.

Wrath, as St. Paul saith, is the treasur'd Part
Of an impenitently harden'd Heart:
When Love reveals its own eternal Life,
Then Wrath and Anguish fall on evil Strife;
Then lovely Justice, in itself all bright,
If burning Fire to such as hate the Light.

If Wrath and Justice be indeed the same,
No Wrath in God--is liable to blame;
If not; if righteous Judges may, and must,
Be free Themselves from Wrath, if they be just,
Such Kind of Blaming may, with equal sense,
Lay on a Judge the Criminal's Offence.

God, in Himself unchangeable, in fine,
If one, eternal Light of Love divine;
In Him there is no Darkness, saith St. John,
In Him no Wrath--the Meaning is all one:
'Tis our own Darkness, Wrath, Sin, Death, and Hell,
Not to love Him, who first lov'd us so well.

This kind of verse -- a philosophic argument, possibly revolving around an apparent paradox -- is as rare in eighteenth-century verse as is the solution to the problem which Byrom offers. Fairchild has called him

"seldom more than a versifier of ideas,"²⁵ but this is not a completely fair judgment. To him, as to many eighteenth-century writers, the issues of religion and of religious controversy verse more than material for idle speculation. These were, indeed, the very stuff of life and death. And so involvement in theological controversy became more than abstract discussion; it became personal involvement as well. The versifying of ideas frequently became powerful literature because the ideas themselves were powerful ideas. And the ideas were often fused with this personal involvement to produce an alloy of considerable value. A convenient example of this transformation can be seen by looking at another poem by Byrom.

In "The Meaning of the Word Wrath" Byrom is exploring the reconciliation of the God of love with the God of wrath. His solution is to discover wrath as a depravation within man: "'Tis our own Darkness, Wrath, Sin, Death and Hell,/Not to love Him." This material appears in his "Meditations for Every Day in Passion Week: Tuesday":

i

The Saviour di'd, according to our Faith,
To Quench, attone, or pacify a Wrath--
But--God is love--he has no Wrath his own;
Nothing in him to quench, or to attone:
Of all the Wrath, that Scripture has reveal'd,
The poor fall'n Creature wanted to be heal'd.

* * *

iii

He did, he suffer'd ev'ry thing, that we
From Wrath, by Sin enkindl'd, might be free,
The Wrath of God, in us, that is, the Fire
Of burning Life, without the Love-Desire;
Without the Light, which Jesus came to raise,
And change the Wrath into a joyful Blaze.

iv

The Wrath is God's; but in himself unfelt;
 As Ice, and Frost are his, and Pow'r to melt:
 Not even Man could any Wrath, as such,
 Till he had lost his first Perfection, touch:
 God has but one immutable good Will,
 To bless his Creatures, and to save from ill.

* * *

vi

All that, in Nature, by his Act is done
 If to give Life; and Life is in his Son:
 When his Humility, his Meekness finds
 Healing Admission, into willing Minds,
 All Wrath disperses, and like a gath'ring Sore;
 Pain is its Cure, and it exists no more.

As Fairchild has pointed out, most of the third stanza is an explanation of God's anger in Behmenistic terms.²⁶ And from this Byrom is led into mysticism; the imagery of fine, light and burning pertaining to the consuming love of God is typically mystical symbolism. But his concern with the conflict of love and wrath shows him as stemming from a religious situation in which the dogmatic tenets derived from Calvinism were still a vital force. Even though his final resolution is partly mystical, and not wholly Calvinistic, it is within the bounds of traditional Christianity and Anglicanism. The invocation of wrath is part of the Fall: "Not even Man could any Wrath, as such,/Till he had lost his first Perfection, touch." But history has progressed to a remedy for wrath. Byrom's fifth stanza develops the not unusual image of Christ as Physician; like the physician, he has come to cure what is evil; like the sore, wrath is dispersed, although suffering is involved. It is this emphasis upon the action of Christ in relation to the wrath of God which remains central in the Calvinistic tradition.

For example, in his collection Poems Divine and Moral (1821)

John Bowdler quotes an extract from a poem by Dr. Roberts, in which the theme of mediation once more is present:

"On Me, on Me,"
Exclaimed the Son of God, "on Me alone
"let all Thy wrath be poured: their's was the offense,
"Be mine the punishment." He spake, and left
The golden city's hyacinthine walls;
And thro' the middle of the eastern gates,
Heav'n from one solid emerald, as he pass'd,
The angel bowed obeisance. Earth receiv'd
Her gracious visitant. By Him subdued,
Legions of spirits accursed their mangled prey
Reluctant quitted, and with horrid yell
Howled hideous: touch'd by Him the palsied hand,
Long wither'd, felt his genial warmth return,
Circling thro' every vein. He spake, and straight
From the thick film was purg'd the visual ray.
Awed by His potent word, the grave op'd wide
His marble jaws, and yielded back to life
His putrid dead. But what could all avail?
Insulted, scorn'd, betray'd by those He lov'd,
He fell. Yet bleeding on the accursed tree,
While the last bleeding hung quivering on His lips,
His mercy still endured. Towards heaven He cast
The last faint glares of His closing eye,
Forgive them, O forgive!—He bowed, and died.

What happens in this poem is a reflection of what had happened much earlier in the sensibility of many writers. The God of ire is appeased by the sacrifice of Christ. The feeling of terror, to which the strict Calvinistic doctrines could easily lead, has been balanced with that of relief. The doctrines of wrath, guilt and Hell are still felt, and often felt most painfully and precisely, but they are pushed to the background. In part the over-wrought and over-simplified emotion of the poem has caused an excessively dramatic and uncontrolled style.

Awareness of sin, on one hand, and the possibility of salvation, on the other -- these offer a violent contrast of feeling ready for poetic material. The "boding Conscience" of rigorous Calvinism is mitigated by the mercy of the "injur'd Savior." But both the guilt and the mercy are

felt; both are real; both are burned into the marrow of the religious sensibility. While the Calvinistic doctrine of wrath, which could cause the believer to "shriek at the glare of Hell's impending fire," was being weakened, or slighted, or ignored in favor of emphasis on Christ's redemption of the world, there was common during the eighteenth century a period of clear consciences and untroubled religious practice.

Basil Willey's summing up is typical:

One meets everywhere a sense of relief and escape, relief from the strain of living in a mysterious universe, and escape from the ignorance, and barbarism of the Gothic centuries.²⁷

What is here said is true, but it must not be understood as a complete description of the feeling of the age. Throughout many of the major writers, as well as throughout the Tory satirists, there is that gloom which Boldvold has examined.²⁸ The century could not succeed in escaping totally from the demanding and austere concept of eternity and its God which Calvinism had brought. At the back of much of the sensibility and much of the verse it hovers faintly. It took more than a Restoration and Newton's laws to exorcise this spirit.

The combination of the Calvinistic doctrine of wrath and guilt with the liberal one of general atonement is found in "A Midnight Thought in Sickness" by Robert Luck (1674-1749):

Who knows the Honor and Despair,
Which is the Dark unwholesome Cell,
Of Inquisition, Papal Hell,
The wretched Pris'ners bear?
If innocent, himself can only guess
What weighty Woes a guilty Soul oppress.

See o'er the Waves the Gally ride!
A hundred Slaves incessant strain,
Whose whip-gull'd Sides and rattling Chain
Proclaim their Tyrant's Pride.
Then pamper'd Tyrants, who vile Lusts obey,
Are faster bound, are veryer Slaves than they.

Ten thousand Spots the Leopard mark,
 Which Time itself cannot displace.
 The sable Moor, as Midnight dark,
 Shall never change his Face.
 But what's sable Moor, the spotted Brute
 To him, whose Soul invet'rate Sins pollute!

Ah! who the weight of Guilt can ease?
 Its Wo remove, O Lord, but Thee?
 Sin's shackled Slave who can release,
 And set the Captive free?
 O Gracious change, (for Thou canst all things do,)
 The Leopard's Spots, and Ethiopian's Hue.

Happy the Man, whose wand'ring Heart
 Thou deignest to reclaim by Smart,
 A Father's Fondness for a Son
 Is in th'Almighty shewn.
 I'll bless Thy chast'ning Hand, whilst Pain denies
 Rest to my Limbs, and Slumber to my Eyes.

My conscious Heart, e'en sunk with Fear,
 When e'er thou seem'st to hide thy Face,
 Revives, when Mercy makes me hear
 The sweet Returns of Grace.
 Then such refreshing Streams of Pleasure flow,
 As none but pardon'd Penitents can know.

So when black Storms the Sun o'er-cast,
 The Herds forsake the flow'ry Lawn,
 The frightened Birds to Covert haste,
 'Till the dark Veil's withdrawn.
 His Beams more glorious for th'Eclipse appear,
 And Joy o'erspreads the brightened Hemisphere.

The imagery of the first three stanzas is unusual for a poem of this date (Luck's A Miscellany of New Poems, On Several Occasions was published in 1736). The initial metaphor of the sinner as bound captive as is the galley-slave plunges the reader into the matter of the poem without the abstract or conventional opening which is often associated with eighteenth-century verse. The opening line is ambiguous; it can be either literal or metaphoric. From the second and third line it appears to be metaphoric:

Who knows the Horror and Despair,
 Which is the Dark unwholesome Cell,
 Of Inquisition, Papal Hell....

But by the end of the second stanza it has become apparent that a strange thing is happening to this imagery. The direction seems to have reversed. Originally it compared the horror and despair of the slaves to that of the sinner in hell; this, presumably, was to intensify the plight of the slaves; the "wretched Pris'ners" whose "whip-gall'd Sides and rattling Chain" proclaim their subjection to the Tyrant are to be pitied as a sinner in the depths of "Papal Hell." Yet it is the sinner who emerges as the center of the poem's concern. The galley-slave becomes the thing compared with. Subject and object of the metaphor have changed place. This is possible because the poet can accept with equal reality both terms of the metaphor. The sense of sin is, to Luck, as strong and vivid as the horror of the slaves. Each clarify each, although Lust is a more commanding tyrant. The thing compared turns out to be more vivid and more horrifying than the thing with which it is compared. The very purpose of metaphor is shown to be useless.

Then the poem looks to the miracle of God's forgiveness. It is given to some individuals, not earned, nor deserved. Here, again, is the Calvinistic influence. Grace is bestowed upon a limited and chosen few. Through the "Father's Fondness for a Son" some may be saved; but they must be penitent. Luck also introduces the idea of pain as a cleansing experience; it purifies and yields the "refreshing Streams of Pleasure" which "none but pardon'd Penitents can know." Suffering, in the imagery of nature in the final stanza, is withdrawn, and "Joy o'erspreads the brightened hemisphere."

It is this latter aspect of the experience which attracts the attention of a number of writers during the century. Because it is, generally, a single aspect of experience which is being written about,

the verse does not have the complexity or intensity of either structure or imagery that was noticed even in Luck, a poet of hardly supreme achievement. As the acceptance of the doctrines of religion weaken, so the religious sensibility becomes less intense, precise and real. And so the verse becomes more general, more abstract, and more moral. Most of the verses so far considered have had little concern with morality, or the doing of acceptable things, as such. Their concern was usually with a more involved set of awarenesses; and the Calvinistic doctrine of justification by Faith alone (which will be considered more fully at the end of this chapter) prevented a legalistic relationship with God. But as the doctrine becomes less rigid, legalism sets in, and the doing of acceptable things assumes a prime importance. The question naturally arises, "acceptable to whom?" and there seem to be two stages in the answer. On one hand, they may be acceptable to God, in which case there is implied either a Catholic doctrine of Good Works or a legalized Calvinism. On the other hand, they may be acceptable to society, in which case there is a basically secular sensibility. In describing the eighteenth century too many critics have passed over the first of these alternatives, and have failed to give full recognition to an important range of feeling.²⁹ They have recognized the weakening of Calvinistic doctrines, but have assumed too abrupt a conversion.

The reason for the weakening within the Established Church of the concept of the God of ire is a complex historical one of the relation between the eighteenth-century Calvinists and evangelicals. From the beginning of the religious revivals, especially in Wales under Giffith Jones (1683-1761) and Howell Harris (1714-1773), whom Belden described as "the co-founder with Whitefield of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism,"³⁰

there was a strong element of Calvinism in the evangelical movement; Carpenter calls them "for the most part moderate Calvinists."³¹ But in concentrating upon the Atonement rather than the Incarnation as the basis for Christian belief, they appealed to the hopeful and optimistic side of man. God was not just the Hebraic God of punishment, vengeance and wrath, he was also the God who saved. And salvation was more assured than was being withheld without covenant from the flaming pits of hell. In more theological language, the doctrine of the absolute and just sovereignty of God was shadowed by that of irresistible grace. The aspect of conversion, of a complete change of heart in which God is no longer man's enemy, receives attention.

This development can be traced in the work of Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778), author of "Rock of Ages," and of The Historical Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England (1774). In spite of his Calvinism he claimed no longer to fear the terror and wrath of God. He recorded that "though awakened in 1755 I was not led into a full and clear view of all the doctrines of grace, till the year 1758, when, through the great good of God, my Arminian prejudices received an effectual shock, in reading Dr. Manton's Sermons on the xviith of St. John."³² From that time he was a vigorous Calvinist, engaging in several controversies, and writing several important works supporting his position: The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination stated and asserted; with a preliminary Discourse in the Divine Attributes; accompanied with the Life of Zaccheus (1760), The Church of England vindicated from the charge of Arminianism (1769), and the two volume masterpiece Historical Proof. Yet, with this Calvinistic background he is able to write this poem:

A debtor to mercy alone,
 Of covenant-mercy I sing;
 Nor fear, with thy righteousness on,
 My poem and offerings to bring:
 The tenors of law and of God
 With me can have nothing to do;
 My Saviour's obedience and blood
 Hide all my transgressions from view.

The work, which his goodness began,
 The arm of his strength will complete;
 His promise is Yea and Amen,
 And never was forfeited yet:
 Things future, nor things below nor above,
 Not all things below nor above,
 Can make him his purpose forego,
 Or sever my soul from his love.

My name from the palms of his hands
 Eternity will not erase;
 Impressed on his heart it remains,
 In marks of indelible grace:
 Yes, I to the end shall endure,
 As sure as the earnest is given;
 More happy, but not more secure,
 The glorified spirits in heaven.

In this poem the theme is not the awareness of the power of God and experience of his wrath. God is still powerful: "Not all things below nor above/Can make him his purpose forego." But the emphasis has swung to two things which Jonathan Edwards's sermon passed by. First is the older Puritan interest in a covenant relation with God. This was most clearly expressed in The Covenant of Grace by Thomas Shepherd (1605-1649), a graduate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who came to America in 1635:

The blessed God hath evermore delighted to reveal and communicate Himself by way of Covenant. He might have done good to man before his fall, as also since his fall, without binding Himself in the bond of Covenant.... But the Lord's heart is so full of love (especially to His own) that it cannot be contained so long within the bonds of secrecy--viz. from God's eternal purpose to the actual accomplishment of good things intended--but it must beforehand overflow and break out into the many streams of a blessed Covenant. The Lord

can never get near enough to His people, and thinks He can never get them near enough unto Himself, and therefore unites and binds and fastens them close to Himself, and Himself unto them, by bonds of a Covenant. And therefore when we break our Covenant, and that will not hold us, He takes a faster bond and makes a sure and everlasting Covenant, according to Grace, not according to Works; and that shall hold His people firm unto Himself, and hold Himself close and fast unto them, that He may never depart from us.³³

The Covenant becomes a kindness through which man may lay a claim on God; it becomes a vehicle through which the poet can feel God's presence, and be confident of his concern. This aspect of Calvinism was one of the things which contributed to the religious confidence and optimism already noted in the eighteenth century. The second emphasis is in the poet's feeling for the atonement. Christ has redeemed man: "My Saviour's obedience and blood/Hide all my transgressions from view." Exaltation is possible because Christ has suffered for us. Conversion of the poet has allowed him to realize this.

This second placement of emphasis is that which was noticed during the consideration of the poems by Gibbons and by Newton. Gibbons, the dissenting minister, saw himself and man in terms of God:

To Thee, my God, alone I look,
On Thee alone confide.

His dependence is possible because he has faith in God's justice:

Thou never hast deceived the soul.
That on Thy grace relied.

Although he may not understand the incommunicable ways of God, he will trust them:

Though oft Thy ways are wrapt in clouds
Mysterious and unknown,
Truth, Righteousness, and Mercy stand
The pillars of Thy throne.

Basically this is the feeling expressed in the well-known poem by William Cowper (1731-1800):

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill;
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his Sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will open fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a better taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

Cowper was a close friend and disciple of Newton. Yet his poem has more of the characteristics and feelings of a "Puritan" work, as seen in the Gibbons poem, than of the Evangelical Newton. But as a critical tool, rather than as a scholarly statement, it can be generalized that the Established Church tradition during the eighteenth century emphasized the Atonement and Christ, whereas the dissenting tradition emphasized what Chesterton has called "the essential Puritan idea": that God can only be praised by direct contemplation of him, and its assumption that only God can be praised. The vitiation of the critical distinction comes with the transference of the power of redemption from Christ to God.

Calvin said that the true knowledge of God depended upon a knowledge of him as creator and also as redeemer. Men are consumed by their awareness of guilt, then "feeling how destitute they are, they take refuge in his mercy, rely upon it, and cover themselves up entirely with it; renouncing all righteousness and merit and clinging to mercy alone as offered in Christ to all who long and look for it in true faith. In the precepts of the Law God is seen as the rewarder only of perfect righteousness and the stem avenger of wickedness. But in Christ his countenance beams forth full of grace and tenderness towards poor unworthy sinners."³⁴ Since all are poor unworthy sinners, all must rely upon many through Christ. But because of the strong Calvinistic emphasis upon the total and absolute sovereignty of God, Christ tended to be felt as rather a pawn in God's celestial game of chess. This is not to imply that Calvinism led to Socinianism; in doctrine the two were completely separate. But the writer, especially when more concerned with intensity of feeling rather than orthodoxy of dogma, easily attributed what theologians regarded as Christ's self-sacrifice as God's will. This failure to distinguish clearly between God the creator and Christ the redeemer is again found in this stanza from Cowper's poem on "Grace and Providence":

Almighty King! whose wond'rous hand,
Supports the weight of sea and land;
Whose grace is such a boundless store,
No heart shall break that sighs for more.

The power of God (in the earlier symbolism of regality) sustains the earth, and it appears to be the same power which bestows grace, but not through the person of Christ; the poem does not maintain the careful distinction found in the poem from Songs of Praise by the earlier writer John Mason: "The peace of God, which Christ has bought."

This failure on the part of writers to maintain a nice theological distinction was, as seen, due largely to the climate of feeling in the eighteenth century. But it emerges most clearly in the works of Cowper. His praise of both God and Christ at the same time -- a sort of trinity-minus-one -- is explained in a poem called "Jehovah-Jesus":

My song shall bless the Lord of all,
My praise shall climb to his abode;
Thee, Saviour, by that name I call,
The great Supreme, the mighty God.

Without beginning, or doctrine,
Object of faith, and not of sense;
Eternal ages saw him shine;
He shines eternal ages hence.

As much, when in the manger laid,
Almighty ruler of the sky;
As when the six days' works be made
Fill'd all the morning-stars with joy.

Of all the crowns Jehovah bears,
Salvation is his dearest claim;
That gracious sound well-pleas'd he hears,
And owns Emmanuel for his name.

A cheerful confidence I feel,
My well-plac'd hopes with joy I see;
My bosom glows with heav'nly zeal,
To worship him who died for me.

As man, he pities my complaint,
His pow'r and truth are all divine;
He will not fail, he cannot faint,
Salvation's sure, and must be mine.

In this poem are the various shifting concepts of God which have been detected as forming part of the background for the experience, the feeling, and the style of other poems examined. Like Pope in his "Universal Prayer," Cowper praises "the Lord of all"; he calls him the "great supreme, the mighty God"; and he calls him "saviour." Thus in the one stanza Cowper is addressing God as creator, as orderer, and as redeemer. It is this general embracing of all aspects of religious

sentiment which weakens the intensity of much Calvinistic and Enthusiastic verse of the eighteenth century. The strict distinctions and rigid dogma in the Calvinism of the seventeenth century believers, especially of the New England Puritans, have broken down, and in their place is a reliance on sincerity. Emotional appeal has replaced intellectual accuracy. The Enthusiasts are saved because they feel right, rather than because they either know what is right, or do what is right. Emotionalism has been substituted for both theology and ethics.

From the literary point of view this shift of interest has meant a vaguer and more generalized style. The imagery is understandably limited and customary. Since the poets were exploring a pleasantly pedestrian concept of God, one boasting both simplicity of comprehension and unambiguity of meaning, the poems were built of simple and unambiguous blocks. The opening stanza from Cowper's "Jehovah-Jesus," with its inclusion of God as creator, ruler and redeemer, records an awareness much vaguer and generalized than does this poem on the same theme by N. Ingels, D.D.; it is included in Samuel Philips' Miscellanae Sacra:

We bless Thee God, the Father of us all,
And celebrate the World's Original.
The Heav'ns and Earth made and restor'd by Thee,
Joyn Praises in a grateful Harmony.
Accept our thankful Hymn, though such poor Lays
Fall infinitely short of worthy Praise.
And since, great Source of Being, we can never
Praise Thee enough, we'll sing and Praise Thee ever.

Both stanzas express the desire to praise God. But whereas in Cowper's the desire is a vague recognition of the greatness and might of this Jehovah-Jesus group, in Ingels' the desire is made more immediate. Precisely what is being praised is clarified, the third line illustrates the feeling of the first. The reference to "Harmony" in the fourth opens

up the overtones of the great chain of being and the order of the world as sustained by its creator. In other words, this poem by Ingels is unified by a firmer concept of the deity and an attempt to be precise and accurate. Cowper's stanza reflects no such definite attitudes or feelings.

The concluding stanzas of Cowper's poem are unmitigated optimism. This is in contrast with the guilt-ridden awareness of Calvin's teachings. According to his view man is utterly incapable of doing good, and undeserving of salvation: "For our nature is not only utterly devoid of goodness but is so prolific in all kinds of evil that it can never be idle."³⁵ Thus man is totally depraved and liable to the wrath of God. The high optimism found in Cowper and most of the Calvinistic Enthusiasts is possible, of course, because of their strong sense of being one of the elect. Calvin has explained this particular doctrine:

God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless but at the same time incomprehensible judgment. In regard to the elect, we regard calling as the evidence of election, and justification as another symbol of its manifestation, until it is fully accomplished by the attainment of glory. But as the Lord seals his elect by calling and justification, so by excluding the reprobate either from the knowledge of his name or the sanctification of his Spirit, he by these marks in a manner discloses the judgment which awaits them.³⁶

In other words, the Lord chooses some for salvation, and ignores some. This stands in contrast with the orthodox Catholic position, but Calvin has honestly admitted the inequality stated by his doctrine:

The covenant of life is not preached equally to all, and amongst those to whom it is preached does not always meet with the same reception. This diversity displays the unsearchable depth of the divine judgment, and is without doubt subordinate to God's purpose of eternal election.³⁷

While those who did not receive election were condemned to an existence of gloomy misery -- we do not have a religious library of how they felt; they presumably went on and enjoyed themselves while they could -- those who were members of the elect were condemned to an eternity of ecstasy. This experience seemed sufficiently close to a poetic frenzy to supply the basic feeling of much verse. Both conversion and poetry have at times been attributed to inspiration.

But by the eighteenth century the rigor of this doctrine of election and predestination had pretty well broken down. It had never been as strong in England as it had been in New England, and the pressure of the age was against it. But the ecstasy of salvation was still strong, and came to be related, not so much to irresistible grace, as to conversion. The register of acceptable candidates has considerably lengthened, and the interior was the overwhelming desire for salvation, manifested in a complete conversion. It is this experience of conversion, a making-over, which Simpson finds as the essence of Puritan life:

The essence of Puritanism--what Cromwell called the "root of the matter" when he surveyed the whole unruly flock--is an experience of conversion which separates the Puritan from the mass of mankind and endows him with the privileges and the duties of the elect. The root of the matter is always a new birth, which brings with it a conviction of salvation and a dedication to warfare against sin.³⁸

Yet, while the Puritans certainly stressed the form of sudden conversion, the experience cannot be said to be limited solely to Puritans. William Cowper records a similar experience in his Memoir.³⁹ He had been obsessed by the awareness of guilt:

Conviction of sin and expectation of instant judgment never left me.

Eventually his physician Dr. Cotton believed that Cowper was feeling better -- he called it a recuperation -- but the poet was still deeply troubled. He found that he was not even capable, as some sinners whom he envied, of wallowing in all the delights of evil and thus deserving the damnation to which he believed he was assigned.⁴⁰ From this spiritual agony he apparently found the first step of emergence during a visit by his brother to Dr. Cotton's hospital. John Cowper had attempted to console his brother after his attempts at suicide in December of 1763, but he was not successful, and withdrew when Cowper called for help from an Evangelical clergyman, a cousin on his father's side of the family, the Reverend Martin Madan. This earlier contact with evangelical religious experience had brought temporary relief; during the visit of John in July 1764 the brother told him that he had as sufficient an opportunity for salvation as anyone.

Here for Cowper was a break with the strict Calvinistic doctrine of election. John Cowper, as an ordained clergyman of the Established Church, was articulating the doctrine of Free Grace which had been held by the majority of Anglican priests. The Synod of Dort in 1619 had condemned the views of the Dutch theologian Jacob Harmensen (d. 1609), particularly those which rejected predestination, and the responsibility of God for evil. In spite of this condemnation, his views spread and were embraced, in whole or in part, by many of the Reformed Churches. And as early as 1625 the tenets of the Synod of Dort had been rejected by Anglican writers; for example Richard Montague (1577-1641):

Those that like the Decrees of that Synod, or are bound to maintain the Decrees of that Synod, let them maintain them if they like them. Non equidem invidio. I have no

part nor portion in them. I am not tied to uphold them farther than they consent unto that which I am bound to maintain, the doctrine of the Church of England....For my part, I nor have, nor ever will, subscribe that Synod absolutely and in all points (for in some, it condemneth, upon the bye, even the discipline of the Church of England), but so far forth only, as their determinations shall be found and made comfortable unto the doctrine of our Church; nor I think will the ferventest amongst you subscribe it in every point. For sure I am your Divines, as you call them have disavowed sometimes some things resolved of in that Synod; as, for instance, Co-operation of Free-Will and Grace, Reprobation negative rather than positive. But, as I said, the Synod of Dort is not my rule....⁴¹

And in Peter Heylyn's historical account of the controversy with Calvinists over the Five Articles put forward in 1600 and condemned by the Synod of Dort -- Historia Quinquarticularis; or a Declaration of the Judgement of the Western Churches and more particularly of the Church of England in the Five Controverted Points reproached in These last times by the name of Arminianism; Collected in the Way of an Historical Narration out of the Public Acts and Monuments and Not Approved Authors of those Several Churches -- there is a sustained attack on the Calvinistic position. It is an important document because it states clearly and forcibly the position of the Established Church at the time of the Restoration, and sums up the main trend of Anglican thought until the eighteenth century and the publication of, for example, John Edwards' Theologia Reformata (1713). Heylyn, who had been ordained in 1624 and was a sympathizer with the policies of Laud,⁴² was opposed to the doctrine of Calvin which made God the author of sin:

For not content to travel a known and beaten way, he must needs find out a way by himself which neither the Dominicans nor any other of the followers of St. Augustine's vigours had found out before, in making God to lay on Adam an unavoidable necessity of falling into sin and misery, that so He might have the opportunity to manifest His mercy in the electing of some few of his posterity, and His justice in the absolute rejecting of all the rest.⁴³

Thus, within the Established Church there was a general rejection of the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election, and yet in the background was always felt its shadow, coloring the feeling, if not the doctrine, of many writers. This peculiar combination of Calvinism and Arminianism helped to produce the Evangelical revival in the mid-eighteenth century of which Cowper was a part.

This combination meant that, on the one hand, the century inherited a deep and moving feeling of guilt. Even those who did not consider themselves to be Calvinists were aware of the profound soul stirrings to which man could be subject; they were aware of the knowledge of sin for which they were responsible. Few felt eternally damned because of this awareness, and few worried about the justice of damnation. As has been seen, the concept of a wrathful God plays a minor role in the theatre of eighteenth century man's sensibility. Yet, while this concept was neither frequently accepted as part of dogma nor frequently articulated as part of belief, it was frequently a feeling which acted as an assumption upon which to base other concerns and other actions. For example, Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), the leading Low Church divine and most prominent English philosopher during the latter part of the reign of Queen Anne and the reign of George I, represented generally the optimistic tradition usually associated with the century. His Boyle lectures for 1705 were a contribution to the current discussion about the claims of natural religion and revelation. His argument is that "considering the manifold wants and necessities of Men, and the abundant Goodness and Mercy of God" it is reasonable to believe that God has and does provide man with help and guidance; both natural religion and revelation are mutually co-operative and from these all men are able to achieve

direction for a pleasant and happy salvation. Yet, in spite of this optimism, Clarke shows overtones of the doctrine of election; it is the eighteenth century theological version of the political theory which says that all men are born equal, though some more equal than others:

The Truth is: As God was not obliged to make all his Creatures equal; to make Men, Angels; or to endure all Men, with the same Facilities and Capacities as Any; So neither is he bound to make all Men capable of the same Degree or the same kind of Happiness, or to afford all Men the very same means and opportunities of obtaining it. There is ground enough, from the consideration of the manifest corruption of Humane Nature, to be so far sensible of the Want of a Divine Revelation....

but it does not at all from hence follow, either that God is absolutely bound to make such a Revelation; or that, if he makes it, it must equally be made to all Men....⁴⁴

The combination of Calvinism and Arminianism meant that, on the other hand, the century inherited an equally deep and moving feeling of conversion. The Arminian view that each man could be saved if he is appropriately converted allowed for a widening of hope, and for a most powerful rejoicing when the individual believed himself to be saved. The Evangelicals within the Established Church were all the more jubilant because of their Calvinistic inheritance of depravity and election. This was Cowper's joy in July of 1764.

The morning after his brother had told him he could be saved as readily as anyone Cowper picked up a copy of the Bible and came upon verse 25 of the third chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans:

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

This passage, with its reminder that the sacrifice of Christ has effected forgiveness for mankind, struck Cowper as the answer to his agony. From the reading of it he measured his conversion. And around

it center many of his poems and many of his themes. In the long poem "Truth" he uses Biblical imagery of the tempest⁴⁵ to describe a soul redeemed after the uncertain journey:

'Tis done--the raging storm is heard no more.
Mercy receives him on her peaceful shore.

(ll. 275-6)

His best known hymn on this theme is "Praise for the Fountain Opened":

There is a fountain fill'd with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plung'd beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoic'd to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Wash'd all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its pow'r;
Till all the ransom'd church of God
Be sav'd, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler sweeter song
I'll sing thy power to save;
When this poor lisping stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

Lord, I believe thou hast prepar'd
(Unworthy tho' I be)
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me!

'Tis strung, and tun'd, for endless years,
And form'd by pow'r divine;
To sound in God the Father's ears,
No other name but thine.

The most striking characteristics of this poem are its intensity and concreteness. Many hymns, not only of the eighteenth century, are concerned with moral platitudes. But those of Cowper and the Evangelicals

usually avoid these common limitations. The principal reason, of course, is that the subject matter of their work is itself highly personal and intense. These hymns remind one of the intense and personal lyrics of Herbert and Donne. But two major differences mark the change in sensibility from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth. In the Evangelical verse the emphasis is upon the certainty of having been redeemed; the conversion is past; the salvation has been attained. The eighteenth century was a century which had been saved; the seventeenth was not sure, though it very much wanted to be. This is a theological explanation for the thread of optimism which ran throughout the tapestry of the age; politics, philosophy and economics as well as literature. This shift of concern is seen if this hymn by Cowper is read against "Redemption" by George Herbert:

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
 Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
 And make a suit unto him, to afford
 A new small-rented tease, and cancell th'old.
 In heaven at his manour I him sought:
 They told me their, that he was lately gone
 About some land, which he had dearly bought
 Long since on earth, to take possession.
 I straight return'd, and knowing his great birth,
 Sought him accordingly in great resorts;
 In cities, theatres, gardens, parks and courts:
 At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
 Of theeves and murderers: there I him espied.
 Who straight, Your suit is granted, said, & died.

Herbert is focusing his experience upon the process of redemption; Cowper is focusing his upon the accomplished fact. This is a change of focus, not of subject matter. Yet it is a significant change. It is found developing early in the century, even among the High Church party. For example, Samuel Wesley the Younger (1692-1739) wrote both "On the Passion of our Saviour," which focuses on the agony of Christ as shared by the poet, and "The Resurrection," which emphasises the jubilant and triumphant effects of the accomplished fact:

The Sun of Righteousness appears,
 To set in blood no more!
 Adore the healer of your fears,
 Your rising Sun adore.

The Saints, when He resign'd his breath,
 Unclosed their sleeping eyes,
 He breaks again the bonds of Death,
 Again the dead arise.

Alone the dreadful race he ran,
 Alone the wine-press trod;
 He died and suffer'd as a man,
 He rises as a God!

In vain the stone, the watch, the seal,
 Forbid ~~an~~ early rise,
 To Him who breaks the gates of Hell,
 And opens Paradise.

This optimistic faith in the resurrection is an attitude commonly met with later in the century among the Evangelicals. The same is true of the simple, undecorated style of the verse. Wesley deliberately eschewed pagan allusion and mythology, and warned against it in his Advice to One Who was about to Write, to Avoid the Immoralities of the Antient and Modern Poets. Fairchild does not think much of the poems of Wesley, and contrasts them with those of the High Churchman Thomas Ken (1637-1711).⁴⁶ But this comparison is itself a historical comment which shows the change in poetry as it reflects the change in religious doctrine and tradition. The more complex and symbolic work of Ken belongs to an earlier sensibility. It slowly yielded to the unadorned style of Wesley, and it is this simple directness which then allowed the later Evangelicals to celebrate the highly personal experience of redemption in a highly immediate language. This unadorned, unparadoxical stylistic tradition is the second difference which sets off the eighteenth century Evangelical writers from the seventeenth century metaphysicals.

The poem by Herbert is constructed upon the extension of the tenant-lord relationship; the languages and images obtain their vitality and direction from this central metaphor. The source of the imagery in Wesley's poem is split; there is both the symbol and the statement. The "Sun of Righteousness" is itself a pun; then it travels from son to sun by the verb set. The realistic level then enters with blood. The third line can be taken as a literal description of the work of Christ. Thus in the opening stanza of Wesley's poem is the disintegration of the symbolic or metaphoric center of a religious lyric as the feeling involved becomes itself less ornate, less embellished, less paradoxical. To Cowper, as to the Calvinists, salvation was not the complex problem it was to Herbert. It was closer to an either-or proposition. The intensity of the experience of conversion precluded paradoxical expression.

But poetry of the Evangelicals is marked by a singular vividness of imagery. The paradox and the wit and the conceit are gone, but left is an immediate the direct concreteness. This is what has attracted readers to Cowper's opening stanza:

There is a fountain fill'd with blood
 Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
 And sinners, plung'd beneath that flood,
 Lose all their guilty stains.

The images are almost morbid in their perversion of the rite of baptism, although mild in comparison with some of Crashaw's or even Herbert's conceits. Yet it is this strength that gives the verse artistic sincerity. Nicholson has devoted attention to this particular hymn:

Cowper's mind was less Miltonic than that of Watts-- his effects are rarely grand and never sonorous. Even in this hymn, which combines sacramental and anatomical imagery with a boldness equal to that of Donne, there is the same emotional reticence, the same ruminative tenderness which we find in "Oh! for a closer walk with God." But while Cowper cannot equal Watts in his scenic

effects, he is able, being the greater poet, to penetrate much more deeply to the inner meaning of his symbols. In this poem we are aware, not only of the rituals of the Old Testament, but of the sub-strata of significance which cannot be explained by rational exegesis. There are hints and quiverings of meaning and of experience which go far beyond the conventional religious life of eighteenth century Anglicanism. It may be true that Cowper's poetry on the whole is lacking in unconscious context; that his images too rarely become symbols; but here, at least, this is not so.

His final evaluation is one of praise, both as a poem and as an example of Evangelical sensibility.

For my own part, there are few poems in the English language which evoke such a response in the lower layers of consciousness: it seems to set root-tips moving and searching in my mind, drawing on the hidden stores of unrememberable memory. It may make the agnostic groan and the humanist shudder, but it remains a superb hymn and a remarkable expression of Evangelical piety at its purest.⁴⁷

This is very high praise for a hymn from the eighteenth century, and a very high estimate of its aesthetic value and of personal appeal to the individual reader. Yet its frequent reprinting testifies to its popularity. The reason for this popularity is suggested by Nicholson's final sentence: "...it remains a superb hymn and a remarkable expression of Evangelical piety at its purest." The sincerity of the expression of conversion has found meaning beyond the sensibility of orthodox Calvinism. The Calvinistic tradition which grew within the Established Church during the eighteenth century gave to poets a central experience of both personal integrity and universal significance. This fortunate combination accounts for the aesthetic validity which Nicholson feels. It is this combination which Quinlan notes in commenting upon this hymn:

The particular beliefs of the authors are expressed rather in the tone of certain hymns and in the emphasis accorded certain doctrines. Thus when Cowper speaks of faith, he shows that by faith he

he means the strong assurance which, according to the Evangelicals, a convert should experience at the new birth. He writes:

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Perhaps Cowper was not here thinking of his own conversion but he clearly had in mind the transformation that occurred upon the Evangelical's sudden realization of the significance of the atonement.⁴⁸

Again, the strength of the Calvinistic influence in the Anglican Church can be felt if in contrast to this "sudden realization of the significance of the atonement" we examine the poem "Love" by the non-Calvinistic George Herbert. Once more the contrast is between the "sudden realization" in Cowper -- a realization which produces a verse of vividness and great personal intensity -- and the gradual, reflective "process" in Herbert.

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guiltie of dust and sinne.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lack'd anything.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

Although in Herbert are to be found the emphasis upon guilt and depravity from the original state of man which are acceptable to Calvinism, there is not the instantaneous joy of conversion. "Love" is a reflective poem by

comparison; the experience and feeling which it describes are quiet and reflective. The language of Calvinistic verse is simple and lacking in conceit because the poet's senses have not been given time to reflect or argue to salvation. The basic emotion is that of joy; "Joy in the Holy Ghost" by John Mason, rector of Water Stratford, is an early example in this tradition:

There is a stream, which issues forth
 From God's eternal throne,
 And from the Lamb a living stream,
 Clear as the crystal stone!
 This stream doth water paradise,
 It makes the angels sing:
 One cordial drop revives my heart,
 Hence all my joys do spring.

Such joys as are unspeakable,
 And full of glory too;
 Such hidden manna, hidden pearls,
 As worldlings do not know.
 Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,
 From fancy 'tis conceal'd,
 What Thou, Lord, hast laid up for thine,
 And hast to me reveal'd.

I see thy face, I hear thy voice,
 I taste thy sweetest love;
 My soul doth leap: but, O for wings,
 The wings of Noah's dove!
 Then should I flee far hence away,
 Leaving this world of sin:
 Then should my Lord put forth his hand,
 And kindly take me in.

This theme of conversion and of joy in its reality is repeated during the mid-eighteenth century in "Praise for Redeeming Love" by Cowper's friend John Newton (1725-1807):

Let us love, and sing, and wonder,
 Let us praise the Saviour's Name,
 He has hush'd the Law's loud thunder,
 He has quench'd Mount Sinai's flame:
 He has wash'd us with his blood;
 He has brought us nigh to God.

Let us love the Lord who bought us,
 Pitied us when enemies,
 Called us by his grace, and taught us,
 Gave us ears, and gave us eyes;
 He has wash'd us with His blood,
 He presents our souls to God.

Let us sing, though fierce temptations
 Threaten hard to bear us down!
 For the Lord, our strong salvation,
 Holds in view the Conqu'ror's crown;
 He, who washed us with his blood,
 Soon will bring us home to God.

Let us wonder, Grace and Justice
 Join and point to Mercy's shore;
 When through grace in God our trust is,
 Justice smiles, and asks no more.
 He who wash'd us with his blood,
 Has secured our way to God.

Let us praise and join the chorus
 Of the saints enthroned on high,
 Here they trusted Him before us,
 Now their praises fill the sky;
 "Thou hast wash'd us with Thy blood!
 Thou art worthy, Lamb of God!"

Hark! the Name of Jesus sounded
 Loud from golden harps above!
 Lord, we blush, and are confounded,
 Faint our praises, cold our love!
 Wash our souls and songs with blood,
 For by Thee we come to God.

The degree and power of the conversion provide the material for "the
 Heart Enlarged" by Thomas Harvey:⁴⁹

What a blessed change I find,
 Since I entertain'd this guest!
 Now, methinks, another mind
 Moves and rules within my breast;
 Surely I am not the same
 That I was before He came;
 But I then was much to blame.

All the ways of righteousness
 I did think were full of trouble;
 I complained of tediousness,
 And each duty seem'd double;
 While I served Him but from fear,
 Every minute did appear
 Longer far than a whole year.

But the case is alter'd now;
 He no sooner turns His eye,
 But I quickly bend and bow,
 Ready at His feet to lie;
 Love hath taught me to obey
 All his precepts, and to say
 Not "to-morrow," but "to-day."

These three works by Mason, Newton and Harvey afford a convenient contrast with "Redemption" and "Love" by George Herbert quoted earlier. Much of the imagery is derived from similar sources: the redeeming and forgiving love, the willing death, the undeserving guest or tenant. Just as it is impossible to classify verse as Anglican or Non-conformist on the grounds of its imagery, so it is also impossible to classify verse within the Calvinistic or the Arminian tradition on the grounds of doctrine. Quinlan, already quoted, has shown that there is not a uniqueness of imagery or doctrine in verse of the Evangelical school:

What, if anything, is peculiarly Evangelical in the hymns? Not the references to the sacrifice of Christ, for the atonement is a likely theme for any hymn-writer. Nor is there anything necessarily Evangelical in celebrating faith and hope, in finding comfort in prayer, or in asking for grace. The particular beliefs of the authors are expressed rather in the tone of certain hymns and in the emphasis accorded certain doctrines.⁵⁰

While the imagery in Calvinistic and non-Calvinistic verse may be similar, the way it is handled sheds significance on the works themselves and on the sensibility which produced them. In Herbert's poem love is personified; it is described as being "quick-ey'd"; it is an abstraction for a divine characteristic or set of behaviour patterns, but this abstraction has been fleshed and made man. George Ryley read the poem as concerned with the soul's reception into heaven because of its position in The Temple;⁵¹ but, Summers adds, "However we read it the poem is moving, but it gains immensely in richness when we recognize the relationships it

establishes between this world and the next, between abstracted and incarnate Love."⁵² Incarnation of the images is characteristic of seventeenth-century religious verse; we find it again in Donne's famous "Death, be not proud." In Newton's poem love remains a verb: "Let us love the Lord who bought us"; in Mason's it remains an object of attention: "I taste thy sweetest love." The images in these Calvinistic verses remain abstractions of divine characteristics. The kind of religious tradition has pushed the concentration upon different aspects of the experience.

Both Herbert and Newton express personal feelings. But in the works of Herbert they remain private. In those of Newton, they are shared by all the elect. Conversion is not only a private experience, but also a corporate one. Writers of this tradition were able, in fact were forced because of the nature of their religious experience, to generalize their feelings. "The devotional poets of the seventeenth century had not been able to do this", argues Nicholson:

Then poems remained peculiarly their own, and could not be adapted to the expression of a corporate emotion. When their poems are included in our hymn-books they are rarely popular with congregations. The conceits of Herbert are too involved, too intellectual, while the passion of Donne seems almost indecent in the pew. It is easy enough to say that we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; but it is not easy to say:

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I began,
Which is my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin through which I ran,
And so do still: though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

This is intensely private--a matter between God and the sinner and no one else; it is an emotion which belongs to this one sinner alone.⁵³

But while it is accurate to point out the private nature of Donne's or Herbert's feeling, these words have to be qualified again before they are helpful critical terms. Qualification is especially necessary because critics have frequently tended to imply that the personal element of seventeenth-century religious poets contrasts with the public dress of eighteenth-century verse. Such a contrast is too superficial and inaccurate to be a helpful critical tone. For example, Thomas writes that "some of his 'Hymns' are poems of personal doubt and conflict rather than songs of faith and assurance."⁵⁴ And Thomas is describing, not the poems of Herbert or Donne, but of Cowper. This critical observation is extended in an introduction to a collection of religious verse; in the Olney Hymns, it is written, the emotion is too personal to be appropriate to congregational singing. But in their unemphasized poignancy they are the perfect mirror of their author's religious mood, tender, strained, expressing an agonized longing for faith rather than faith itself."⁵⁵ Summers, in the passage quoted above, has commented upon the leaping between this world and the next inherent in Herbert's "Love". Leishman has noted a similar dichotomy in Donne: "In Donne as a young man there seems to have been a, to us, strange mixture of worldliness and other worldliness, an intense love of life and, at the same time, a certain detachment from life, a certain sense of the shadowiness and vanity of this world and its shows."⁵⁶ This detachment Leishman has explained earlier in his chapter with particular reference to the

Anniversaries:

In these poems...there is something especially characteristic both of Donne and of his age, or of part of his age, that comparative detachment from this life and that longing for the next, which, if we are to believe the Preface to *Biathanatos*, seems to have been his even during his brilliant youth, and that sense of vanity and shadowiness which seems to have been his even when he seemed most immersed in the

parsoit of vanities and shadows--these characteristics, which had been deepened by the long period of isolationness and hope deferred which followed the ruin of his fortunes, find their completest verse-expression in the two Anniversaries.... For Donne here expresses something of what one might call the disenchantment of the later Renaissance--the disenchantment of men whose outlook was still half-medieval, but for whom the medieval world-order had been shaken and the medieval world-picture partly antiquated-shaken and partly antiquated, but neither superseded nor replaced.⁵⁷

Disenchantment and a shaken or even questioned world-order are kept in the background of the eighteenth-century Evangelicals. Their writing reflects an easily achieved certainty and confidence, rather than the affirmation of Donne or the faith of Herbert. The Jacobean figure of death is no longer hovering perpetually in the background. The experience of conversion has brought about the joy recorded by Mason and Newton and Harvey.

And so there is the critical paradox that the verse of the Evangelicals is more personal than that of the metaphysicals, and yet that it is more corporate. But the explanation lies in the fact that the metaphysicals felt a disintegration in the absoluteness of their beliefs which the Evangelicals apparently did not. Donne and Herbert recorded their questioning and their faith; the Evangelicals recorded their certainty. And the certainty was a more observable and sharable feeling than the detached disenchantment of the metaphysicals. It is by means of this apparent paradox that Cowper, the recluse and refugee from a mechanistic world of the philosopher and the industrialist, was able to express the experience of many of his contemporaries.

Nicholson has outlined Cowper's position of violation and eccentricity, and asks, "How it is that, afflicted as he was, he yet could make this contact with the common man of his time?" The answer, Nicholson says in

an argument which he develops elsewhere,⁵⁸ must be given in terms of the religious background:

It was because, through the Evangelical Revival, he was able to join in a great movement of popular thought. In the Revival he was able to share the fears and excitements of people from many different levels of society; in the Revival he was able to forget much of his self-consciousness and much of his sense of isolation. Though he still remained a solitary, he had the knowledge that his views were shared, and shared with great fervour, by many to whom, in the ordinary way, he would have been a stranger.

In fact, Nicholson argues, so important is the religious tradition in which he found himself that the whole of Cowper's poetry is dependent upon it:

Without the Revival Cowper would have been able to gain little understanding of the world outside Olney; without the Revival it is hard to imagine what sort of poetry he would have written; it is hard, indeed, to imagine that he would have wanted to write poetry at all.⁵⁹

In his final chapter Nicholson returns to this issue, and adopts a firm position:

...without the Revival he would never have become a poet, for it gave him a deep emotional experience, a prolonged fervour which for many months lifted him like a love affair above the compromises and consequences of everyday life. At the heart of this experience, life took on a new significance, and was valued in a new way, so that his physical weakness and his comparative failure in the world no longer mattered at all. In the doctrine of total depravity he found, for a time, something very like self-respect, and in the gospel of salvation of Christ he found not only self-confidence but life-confidence.⁶⁰

And so the poetry of Cowper, like that of most religious writers, can only be properly understood with reference to "the movement which influenced him so greatly."

The personal element in the verse of Donne and Herbert is different from that in the verse of Cowper and Newton. The style of their verse is different because the style of their religious tradition is different. And within each tradition further distinctions are possible. Thomas, from an examination of the Olney Hymns (1779), has concluded that "hints of pure Calvinism--or, in milder degree, of an Old Testament religion based upon fear--are proportionally much more evident in Cowper's than in Newton's contributions":

...while Cowper is characteristically preoccupied with personal salvation and characteristically stresses the need of a vicarious sacrifice to appease a jealous God, Newton in practice often gives an ethical interpretation to the Movement.⁶¹

As an example of Newton's ethical interpretation Thomas quotes the first twelve lines of his "In Evil Long I Took Delight":

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopp'd my wild career:
I saw one hanging on a Tree
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd His languid eyes on me,
As near His Cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look:
It seem'd to change me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke;
My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His Blood had spat,
And help'd to nail Him there.

Alas! I knew not what I did!
But now my tears are vain:
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain!
--A second look He gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive;
This Blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die, that thou may'st live."

Thus, while His death my sin displays
 In all its blackest hue,
 Such is the mystery of grace,
 It seals my pardon too.
 With pleasing grief, and mournful joy,
 My spirit now is fill'd,
 That I should such a life destroy,--
 Yet live by Him I kill'd!

Thomas argues that Newton's "own very individual accent" is not found in the more rigorous Calvinistic statements he made, that he, unlike Cowper at the time, was broadminded enough to associate with dissenters, and that "throughout Newton's pages there is far more of love than of fear."⁶² But beside this liberal kindness of Newton, there are the traditional central beliefs of the Calvinist:

If we admit the total depravity of human nature, the only way we can account for the conversion of a soul to God is by the doctrine of election. It is impossible for the sinner to seek the Lord, for he is so steeped in sin he is at enmity against God. (Moreover, his will is depraved, probably, so he can't.) Since the sinner can't seek God, God seeks him and sheds grace upon him. But all do not come to a knowledge and love of God, for all do not receive grace; therefore only some are elected.⁶³

In this brief passage is conveniently expressed in Calvinistic terms the doctrine of depravity and conversion. Both the dogma and the language are orthodox. The broad-mindedness which Thomas notes is due to Newton's belief that personal experience, rather than theological exposition, must be responsible for conversion. A knowledge of election could be achieved only after an awareness of one's guilt, a turning to God, an acceptance of the atonement and through it one's salvation. Because this pattern alone led to sanctification, Newton admitted he seldom preached upon the nicer points of Calvinistic theology:

I am an avowed Calvinist; the points which are usually comprised in that term seem to me so consonant with Scripture, reason (when enlightened),

and experience, that I have not the shadow of a doubt about them. But I cannot dispute; I dare not speculate. What is by some called High Calvinism I dread. I feel much more union of spirit with some Arminians than I could with some Calvinists; and if I thought a person feared sin, loved the word of God, and was seeking after Jesus, I would not walk the length of my study to proselyte him to the Calvinist doctrines. Not because I think them mere opinions, or of little importance to a believer-- I think the contrary; but because I believe these doctrines will do no one any good till he is taught them by God.⁶⁴

Here lies the explanation for the question of the vigor of Newton's Calvinism; in fact, here lies the explanation for the peculiar coloring of Calvinistic thought within the Establishment during the eighteenth century. The orthodoxy of Calvinism had combined with the Evangelical spirit. The Evangelical movement was a more embracing one than strict Calvinism; it opened the door to all believers by accepting a wider candidacy for conversion. And since it gave more people the chance to be saved, the tone it acquired was one of optimism. The penalty of damnation was felt to be due, not to the inexorable laws on high fixed of old, but to the obdurate perversity of the individual. The doctrine of total depravity, supported by the Synod of Dort, was changing to that of total perversity. In other words, the issues of theological controversy, waged intensely during the early part of the century, especially among the High Churchmen, was generally glossed over by a certain section of the Church membership in favor of direct experience of God and of conversion. This section saw their distinction from the High Churchmen in terms of renewed sincerity which they re-introduced through their contacts with such groups as Moravians and Methodists. Stevens, in his history of Methodism, has called Newton "One of the chief founders of the Low Church party which was then, through

the influence of Methodism, rapidly rising in the Establishment, and of the great 'Benevolent Enterprises' which, organized in the latter part of his life in London, embodied there the moral energies of England to be put forth in the ends of the earth."⁶⁵ The qualifications given the Calvinistic tradition by the Revivalist Movements of the eighteenth century produced a type of religion which was related to a sensibility different from either the High Churchmanship of Samuel Johnson or the Evangelicalism of George Whitefield. This sensibility felt its way along a central path, retaining most of the doctrine of Calvinism, but modifying them by disregard or by decree whenever the occasion seemed to be auspicious.

This is not to say that all Evangelicals within the Church of England were Calvinists: Bishop Beiby Porteus (1731-1808), supported the evangelical movement in his see of Chester and then of London without identifying himself with the Calvinistic doctrines of these groups. In his long poem "Death," for example, wrath is qualified by mercy, the horror of death is qualified by the hope of salvation, and ruin brought about through man's greed and ambition is qualified by the beneficence of nature:

Man went to till the ground
From whence he rose; sentenced indeed to toil
As to a punishment, yet (even in wrath,
So merciful is Heaven) this toil became
The solace of his woes; the sweet employ
Of many a live-long hour, and surest guard
Against disease and death

* * *

Such in the infancy of time was man
So calm was life, so important was death!
O had he but preserved these few remains,
The shatter'd fragments, of lost happiness,
Snatch'd by the hand of Heaven from the sad wreck
Of innocence primaeval; still had he lived
In ruin great; tho' fallen, yet not forlorn;

Though mortal, yet not every where beset
 With death in every shape! But he, impatient
 To be completely wretched, hastes to fill up
 The measure of his woes.--'Twas man himself
 Brought death into the world; and man himself
 Gave keenness to his darts, quicken'd his pace,
 And multiply'd destruction on mankind.

* * *

'Twas not enough
 By subtle fraud to snatch a single life,
 Puny impiety! whole kingdoms fell
 To sate the lust of power: more horrid still
 The foulest stain and scandal of our nature,
 Became its boast. One murder made a villain;
 Millions a hero.

* * *

Still Monarchs dream
 Of universal empire growing up
 From universal ruin. Blast the design
 Great God of Hosts, nor let thy overtures fall
 Unpitied nations at ambition's shame!

This particularly modern sounding lament for the unnecessary slaughter of mankind is based upon essentially the same assumptions as most modern laments. Man himself is responsible for his ruin, because he himself has willed it. That is, man has had a free will. It is through his own corrupt desires or ambitions that he has willed evil: "'Twas man himself/Brought death into the world." This is not the Calvinistic view stated by Newton: "It is impossible for the sinner to seek the Lord, for he is so steeped in sin he is at enmity against God. (Moreover, his will is depraved, probably, so he can't.)" Indeed, strict Calvinists would omit Newton's limiting "probably." With original sin the will, according to Calvin, became perverted. Not only had man fallen, but also had his desires. Thus on his own, through his own efforts, he could do nothing. The most well-intentioned deed by man is still displeasing to the sight of God. It was necessary for the Calvinists to emphasize this doctrine in order to avoid the Roman Catholic reliance on good works. Torrance, in his exposition of Calvin's doctrine of man, argues that

Calvin's insistence upon total corruption was to combat "the teaching of Rome that, when man was deprived of supernatural gifts at the fall it did not really make any difference to his nature as man, and that while his natural gifts were corrupted, that was held to mean only in the sensual part of man's nature so that reason remained entire and the will was scarcely impaired." Torrance says that against this view "Calvin insists that when man was deprived of the spiritual image, that entailed the corruption of his whole nature, of mind and all, so that there was nothing in the heart of man but perversity."⁶⁶ This doctrine of the perversity, and accompanying irresponsibility, of the will is central to Calvinistic theology. Further on in his consideration of Calvin's doctrine of man Torrance returns to the question of man's ability to achieve anything by himself:

Calvin's position would seem to be that God allows sufficient light to reach man in his perverse will that he may see the distinctions between good and evil, but he cannot see his way out to God as long as he remains in his perversity. It is as if the light shines through a frosted glass such that it enables men to walk and order their lives in the world not in total darkness, but such nevertheless that they are unable of themselves to trace the light back to its true source, and so to know God.⁶⁷

This view of man as an ill-illuminated battle-ground of good and evil is rarely found expressed during the century by Anglican writers, although it does supply the imagery for Cowper's "The New Convert." But it is present in verse by some dissenting writers; for example in this hymn, "Danger and Dependence," by Thomas Gibbons:

Man is a Structure built by Heav'n
 Upon this earthly waste,
 And to the Heart, the Charge is giv'n
 To keep the Entrance fast.
 * * *

Almighty God, around me spread
 Thine adamantine shield,
 Smite each intestine Rebel dead,
 And dear th'embattl'd Field.

But the Anglican tradition does maintain the severe limitations of man, although it does not usually express these limitations in the language and imagery of Calvinistic depravity. As a comparison with Gibbons's "Danger and Dependence" there is "the Ignorance of Man" by James Merrick (1720-1769), a scholar, poet, and author of a well-known versification of the Psalms, who was an ordained priest, but chose to live in college rather than accept a parish:

Behold yon new-born infant, griev'd
 With hunger, thirst, and pain;
 That asks to have the wants reliev'd,
 It knows not to explain.

Aloud the speechless suppliant cries,
 And utters, as it can,
 The woes that in its bosom rise,
 And speaks its nature man.

That infant, whose advancing hour
 Life's various sorrows try,
 (Sad proof of sin's transmissive power)
 That infant, Lord, am I.

A childhood yet my thoughts confess,
 Though long in years mature;
 Unknowing whence I feel distress,
 And where, or what its cure.

Author of good! to Thee I turn;
 Thy ever-wakeful eye
 Alone can all my wants discern,
 Thy hand alone supply.

O let Thy fear within me dwell,
 Thy love my footsteps guide:
 That love shall vainer loves expell,
 That fear all fears beside.

And O, by error'd force subdu'd,
 Since oft my stubborn will,
 Preposterous, shuns the latent good,
 And grasps the specious ill;

Not to my wish, but to my want,
 Do Thou Thy gifts apply:
 Unask'd, what good Thou knowest, grant;
 What ill, though ask'd, deny.

The similarity of these two works reminds us of the warning at the beginning of this study that it is not critically wise to set up any absolute critical standards in terms of an Anglican/Dissenting anti-thesis. Many of the basic doctrines of both groups were derived from the same Calvinistic source, and many were accepted by each, with only minor changes of emphasis and coloring. The concept of man, with his limitation through ignorance, his proclivity to danger, and his dependence upon God -- this concept was widespread throughout the eighteenth century, both within and without the Established Church. This had led to T.F. Hulme's definition of classicism in terms of the belief that man is essentially finite and limited,⁶⁸ but it must be reconciled with the view of the eighteenth century as an age of optimistic enlightenment.

Doumergue, in his biography of Calvin, finds this doctrine of the limitations of man central to even those of Providence and Predestination:

Personne ne contestera que les trois doctrines de la Providence, du Serf-arbitre, et de la Prédestination ne soient, au moins en un sens, les trois doctrines caractéristiques de toute la théologie des Réformateurs. Le Serf-arbitre, c'est le centre du centre; la Providence y aboutit; La Prédestination en part.⁶⁹

This central doctrine, then, states that human virtue is completely overthrown so that the great power of God in man may be allowed to operate. Limits are set to the two fields in which force will might operate: 1) a power of reason to distinguish good and evil, and 2) a power of will to choose good rather than evil.⁷⁰ Man is totally dependent upon God's mercy for Grace. This is the theme of Cowper's "Submission" and "Dependance", of many hymns written during the

eighteenth century, and of this short work by Toplady (1740-1778), who had written in defense of the Calvinism of the Articles:

Lord! it is not life to live,
If Thy presence Thou deny;
Lord! if Thou Thy presence give,
'Tis no longer death--to die.

Source and Giver of repose
Singly from Thy smile it flows;
Peace and happiness are Thine,--
Mine they are, if Thou art mine.

The attitude towards the relationship between man and God expressed in a number of these poems shows the direct influence of the Calvinistic doctrine of Justification by Faith, as opposed to good works. "Thus we simply interpret justification," says Calvin, "as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favour as if we were righteous; and we say that this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ."⁷¹ This is the nature of justification. Dakin, in his outline of Calvinistic theology, continues from this quotation by saying that "this can be only because God has so willed it and made it possible in Christ. So that our salvation depends solely and entirely on his mercy." He sums up this relationship through Christ between man and God:

The position is that man has no righteousness of his own and no possibility in this life of getting any. But there is a righteousness in Christ made available for him. Such he can receive by faith, and ~~once~~ he has received it, God then accepts him as righteous, the actual righteousness of Christ being imputed to him in the sense that it counts as his. Thus is God able to forgive and take even sinful man into his favour.⁷²

The nature of this relation, then, is that of one-sidedness; man has no power to demand, let alone deserve, forgiveness. The righteousness which is obligatory to salvation may be received only through faith in the

righteousness of Christ. No sort of good works, the Calvinist points out, will suffice. Nor will Calvin admit that justification might be earned by a mixture of faith and works. Good works are not the cause but the evidence of justification.

This doctrine is part of Anglican theology; Article XII reads:

Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.⁷³

And the inefficacy of good works to produce justification is more clearly developed in Chapter XVI of the Westminster Confession, which Curtis describes as "the last great Creed-utterance of Calvinism, and intellectually and theologically it is a worthy child of the Institutes, a stately and noble standard for Bible-loving men." Curtis, outlining the background of this Confession, continues, "While influenced necessarily by Continental learning and controversy, it is essentially British, as well by heredity as by environment; for not only is it based upon the Thirty-Nine Articles, modified and supplemented in a definitely Calvinistic sense at Lambeth and at Dublin, but it literally incorporates Usher's Irish Articles, accepting their order and titles, and using, often without a word of change, whole sentences and paragraphs."⁷⁴ The second paragraph of the chapter on good works makes clear the Calvinistic stand:

These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the Gospel, stop the mouth of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto; that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.

This is the background for Cowper's hymn "Not of Works":

Grace, triumphant in the throne,
Scorns a rival, reigns alone;
Come and bow beneath her sway,
Cast your idol works away:
Works of man, when made his plea,
Never shall accepted be;
Fruits of pride (vain-glorious worm)
Are the best he can perform.

Self, the god his soul adores,
Influences all his pow'rs;
Jesus is a slighted name,
Self-advancement all his aim:
But when God the Judge shall come,
To pronounce the final doom,
Then for rocks and hills to hide
All his works and all his pride!

Still the boasting heart replies,
What! the worthy and the wise,
Friends to temperance and peace,
Have not these a righteousness?
Banish ev'ry vain pretence
Built on human excellence;
Perish ev'ry thing in man,
But the grace that never can.

Thomas, quite rightly, identifies this hymn as "Calvinism almost indebted."⁷⁵ The last four lines are a paraphrase of the idea in Calvin's Institutes that human virtue is totally overthrown so that the power of God in man may be exalted.⁷⁶ The same theme of disdain of physical or spiritual deeds is to be found throughout much of Cowper's poetry -- for example in his versification of Calvinistic doctrine in "Truth."

A knowledge of this same tradition is essential to an understanding of the second and third stanzas of Toplady's well-known hymn "Rock of Ages":

Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring;
 Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
 Naked, come to Thee for dress;
 Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
 Foul, I to the Fountain fly;
 Wash me, Saviour, or I die!

Here neither the labors of man's hands nor offerings of man's gifts can avail anything. It is solely man himself, unadorned with good deeds or claim to justification, who must be presented to the Cross in search of salvation. Nothing he can do or bring can atone for his sin. Here the rigorous doctrine of justification by faith combines with the vigorous doctrine of the atonement as central to man's redemption.

But while this combination is inherent in Church of England doctrine, the clarity it receives in the Thirty-Nine Articles, let alone in the directly Calvinistic Westminster Confession, has not always been maintained by religious poets. Within the Established Church there was a movement which tended toward placing equal emphasis upon both Faith and Works. As early as the first half of the seventeenth century this tendency can be found. In his Table Talk, John Selden, who had taken part in the discussions of the Westminster Divines in 1643 and recorded a practical and sometimes cynical commentary on their accomplishments,⁷⁷ wrote, "It was an unhappy division that has been made betwixt faith and works, -- though in my intellect I may divide them, just as in the candle I know there is both heat and light. But yet put out the candle, and they are both gone; one remains not without the other. So it is betwixt faith and works."⁷⁸ This is the attitude expressed by John Byrom (1692-1763). "A Soliloquy, on reading a Dispute about Faith and Works" begins:

What an excessive Fondness for Debate
 Does this dividing Faith from Works create!
 Some say, Salvation is by Faith alone--
 Or else, the Gospel will be overthrown:
 Others, for that same Reason, place the Whole
 In Works, which bring Salvation to a Soul.

But, with what is often felt to be typically eighteenth century disinterest in theoretical theological controversy, Byrom turns to the Bible where he finds (he believes) that the two can be reconciled:

Gospel of Christ, consistently appli'd,
Unites together what they both divide:
It is itself, indeed, the very Faith
That works by Love, and saves a Soul from Wrath:
A new Dispute should some thrice Party pave,
Nor Faith, nor Works, but Love alone would save.

He then writes a stanza showing how evidence from Paul is used to contradict evidence from James. In this fourth stanza, however, he points out that Faith, Works and Love are really the same:

There is no End of jarring System found,
In thus contending not for Sense, but Sound;
For Sound, by which th'inseparable three
Are so distinguish'd, as to disagree;
Altho' Salvation, in its real Spring,
Faith, Work, or Love, be one and the same thing.

One Pow'r of God, or Life of Christ within,
Or Holy Spirit washing away Sin;
Not by Repentance only; or Belief
Only, that slights a penitential Grief,
And its meet Fruits, and justifies alone
A full conceiv'd Assurance of its own.

* * *

God has a never-ceasing Will to save,
And Men, by Grace, may savingly behave:
This would produce less Fondness for a Sect,
And more Concern about the main Effect;
Then Faith alone might save them from the Fall,
As one good Word, in Use, that stood for all.

By native Union, all the blessed Pow'rs
Of Grace, that makes Salvation to be ours,
One in another, spring up in the Breast,
No Soul is sav'd by one without the rest:
Since then they all subsist in any one,
Division ceases,--and Dispute is gone.

The theological ambiguity in these stanzas are a further sign of the weakening of strict Calvinistic thought which so easily takes place.

The attempted resolution of both Faith and Works into a plane of Love reflects a sensibility more concerned with Benevolence than with Wrath. It

is, as was seen earlier in this essay, a resolution in terms of mysticism -- an approach for which Byrom had great sympathy. Within the framework of the orthodox Calvinistic tradition there has come about a mitigating of the ardor of accepting the doctrines in favor of a generalized and practical Biblism. From this it is easy to understand why, when John Wesley preached before the University at St. Mary's Oxford on 11 June 1738 he chose the topic "Salvation by Faith: A Gospel for Sinners." There was a current feeling that an imprecise and certainly undoctrinaire sanctification awaited all men. To this extent Byrom did not go; although he did not take holy orders he remained a firm and sincere member of the Established Church. His range of religious verse testifies to his continual and well-informed concern. Yet another of his poems on this theme reflects a similarly unorthodox attitude. "On the Nature of Free Grace, and the Claim to Merit for the Performance of good Works" begins with perfectly traditional doctrine:

Grace to be sure is, in the last Degree,
The Gift of God, divinely pure and free;
Not bought, or paid for, merited, as claim'd,
By any Works of ours that can be nam'd.

What Claim, or Merit, or withall to pay,
Could Creatures have before creating Day?
Gift of Existence is the gracious one,
Which all the rest must needs depend upon.

All boasting then of Merit, all Pretence
Of Claim from God, in a deserving Sense,
Is in one Word excluded by St. Paul--
Whate'er thou hast, thou hast receiv'd it all.

While man cannot claim anything as his, since all was given to him in the initial act of creation and to offer the creator a gift would be to return what had been given originally, man may, nevertheless, use his given powers as well as he is able:

But sure the Use of any gracious Pow'rs,
 Freely bestow'd, may properly be ours;
 Right Application being ours to chuse,
 Or, if we will be so absurd, refuse.

In this sense, man is responsible for his works, and so they deserve reward. The sixth stanza sums up this theme:

Grace is the real saving Gift; but then,
 Good Works are profitable unto Men;
 God wants them not; but if our Neighbours do,
 Flowing from Grace, they prove it to be true.

It also sums up a great deal more. Theologically this stanza is sound; Grace is recognized as the central gift upon which all virtues depend. But the very practical swing from what God wants to the business of what our neighbors want belies a not completely doctrinal commitment. The dusty points of theology are being swept away to get at the floor of Christianity. Man, as Pope's proper study of mankind, is being considered. This poem ends:

When human Words ascribe to human Spirit
 Worthy, Unworthy, Merit or Demerit,
 Why should Disputes forbid the Terms a place,
 Which are not meant to derogate from Grace?

All comes from God, who gave us first to live,
 And all succeeding Grace; 'tis ours to give
 To God alone the Glory; and to Man,
 Impow'r'd by Him, to do what Good we can.

And so the rigorous Calvinistic tradition which is at the back of Cowper's poem is here weakened. The doctrine of Justification by Faith is slowly being changed to a justification through benevolence as the religious sensibility of the periods changes.

Although works of mercy are only the evidences of sanctification (or, as Byrom calls it, "true religion"), it is a good thing to perform, because, while they do not aid justification, they do make life pleasanter for one's fellow beings. This is the feeling and the theme of Byrom's

"On Works of Mercy and Compassion, considered As the Proofs of True Religion":

Of true Religion, Works of Mercy seem
To be the plainest Proof, in Christ's Esteem;
Who has himself declar'd what he will say
To all the Nations, at the Judgement Day:
Come, or depart, is the predicted Lot
Of brotherly Compassion shown, or not.

Then, they who gave poor hungry People Meat,
And Drink to quench the thirsty Suff'rers' Heat;
Who welcom'd in the Stranger at the Door,
And with a Garment cloath'd the naked Poor;
Who visited the Sick to ease their Grief,
And went to Pris'ners, or bestow'd Relief--

These will be deem'd religious Men, to whom
Will found--ye blessed of my Father, come,
Inherit ye the Kingdom, and partake
Of all the Glories founded for your Sake:
Your Love to others I was pleas'd to see,
What you have done to them was done to me.

On the other hand, Byrom says, there are those who have offered no assistance to those in need:

Then, they who gave the hungry Poor no Food;
Who with no Drink the parch'd with Thirst bedew'd;
Who drove the helpless Stranger from their Fold,
And let the Naked perish in the Cold;
Who to the Sick no friendly Visit paid,
Nor gave to Pris'ners any needful Aid--

These will be deem'd of irreligious Mind;
And hear the--Go, ye Men of cursed Kind,
To endless Woes, which ev'ry harden'd Heart
For its own Treasure has prepar'd--depart:
Shewn to a Brother, of the least Degree,
Your merciless Behaviour was to me.

Byrom is assuming that deeds to man will be interpreted as deeds to God; there is a legal relationship taken for granted, and one which ignores the inequality between man and God -- an inequality which can be repaired through atonement.

Here, all ye learned, full of all Dispute,
 Of true and false Religion lies the Root:
 The Mind of Christ, when he became a Man,
 With all its Tempers, forms its real Plan;
 The Sheep from Goats distinguishing full well--
 His Love is Heav'n; and Want of it is Hell.

Byrom's view of the problem of Grace and Election, and the use he makes of these in his poems, cannot be understood as typical, either of Calvinism or of Anglicanism. The compromise is pretty much his own, and his feelings always tend towards what can best be thought of as mysticism.

But others besides Byrom unequivocally rejected the narrow interpretation of the doctrine of Grace imposed by orthodox Calvinism. For example, John Bowdler the younger (1783-1815), son of one of the founders of the Church Building Society and nephew of the editor of Shakespeare, in the fourth stanza of his "For a Charity Sermon" emphasizes the universal quality of Divine Grace:

No bounded Love, no partial grace,
 The heavenly heralds sing;
 They told of joy to every race,
 Of praise in every tongue.

Mercy is open to everyone. The supreme virtues are becoming kindness and benevolence. All men are invited to share in a ration of mercy. Life has been given a meaning.

For, not in vain, by twilight here,
 With many a doubt, and many a fear,
 Our pilgrim path we tread;
 A little team, a little do,
 Observe, discover, hope, pursue--
 And mingle with the dead.

This third stanza from Bowdler's "The Sabbath" is based upon the traditional image of man as a pilgrim in this world, but for him life has become more tolerable and enjoyable; few men of the eighteenth century, even within the Established Church, felt that they were strangers in the world around them.

While maintaining the supremacy of Faith, many writers altered the general concept. Calvin has explained it in precise and careful terms.

Dakin sums up the Calvinistic position:

Man needs the saving knowledge of God. This is given in Scripture, Scripture pointing to Christ. Christ is the mediator, divinely appointed, by whom our salvation is wrought. The salvation is apprehended by faith which enables us to get both the requisite knowledge and the assurance. Faith leads to repentance which issues in regeneration. This however is never completed in our earthly life nor can the good works which are the outcome of faith and the evidence of regeneration in any sense commend us to God. We are commended to him solely by the work of Christ in our behalf. This work of Christ is the one ground of our justification, and so far as we are concerned it is ours by faith and faith alone.⁷⁹

There is a definite pattern to this process; it is almost ritualistic in nature. But the stations are subject to individual and social qualification. Thus the concept of Faith can assume moralistic overtones. This happened particularly among the dissenting writers, who as a group tended to adopt moral attitudes. One example is this hymn by the congregationalist Simon Browne:

'Tis gross mistake to dream of heav'n,
And make a foolish boast,
Of saving faith, and sin forgiv'n,
Whilst we are slaves to lust.

The moralistic tone in much of this verse is the result of a weakened doctrine of election -- one in which the believer, having been sanctified by Divine Grace, allows his faith to degenerate into either idle self-assurance or moralistic justification. Joseph Hart (1712?-1766), an independent preacher, warns of this danger in "Of Sanctification":

The Holy Ghost in scripture saith
Expressly in one part,
Speaking by Peter's mouth, "By faith
"God purifies the heart."
* * *

But here, my friends, the danger lies;
 Errors of diff'rent kind
 Will still creep in; which dev'ls devise
 To cheat the human heart.

"I want no work within, (says one)
 "'Tis all in Christ the head,"
 Thus careless he goes blindly on,
 And trusts a faith that's dead.

"'Tis dangerous (another cries)
 "To trust to faith alone;
 "Christ's righteousness will not suffice,
 "Except I add my own."

The orthodox-Calvinistic attitude toward election is also expressed during this period in several poems. A limited number of people have been chosen for salvation, according to Calvin. Those who have been are set apart from both the rest of mankind and the corruptions of the earth. It is not surprising to discover this feeling in the congregationalist Browne:

I now look down with vast disdain
 On all inferior things:
 In vain wealth shews its charms, in vain
 Soft pleasures hide their stings.

Grandeur and state I now despise,
 In all their pomp array'd:
 Whilst to my glad believing eyes
 A brighter scene's display'd.

For heav'n mine heart is fully fix'd,
 Nor will its hopes forego:
 There boundless treasures, joys unmix'd,
 And living pleasures flow.

But Cowper also displays little sympathy for the unelect; they have deliberately neglected to know God. Although, in Book V of The Task he implies that salvation is open to all:

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
 His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
 Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before;
 Thine eye shall be instructed; and thine heart,
 Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight
 Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.

The doctrine is more rigorous in "Abase of the Gospel":

Too many, Lord, abuse thy grace,
 In this licentious day;
 And while they boast they see thy face,
 They turn their own away.

* * *

Ah Lord, we know thy chosen few
 Are fed with heav'nly fare;
 But these, the wretched husks they chew,
 Proclaim them what they are.

In this stanza the doctrine and the feeling of the Calvinist is fundamental. The number of the elect is few and they are specially nourished. As has already been seen, Cowper's belief in the qualification for election wavered; sometimes it was predestination, sometimes conversion. Byrom, in "Thoughts on Predestination and Reprobation: A Fragment" unequivocally rejects predestination.

When God declares, so often, that he wills
 All sort of Blessings, and no sort of Ills;
 That his severest Purpose never meant
 A Sinner's Death, but that he should repent:
 For the whole World, when his beloved Son
 Is said to do whatever he has done;
 To become Man, to suffer, and to die,
 That all might live, as well as you, and I;
 Shall rigid Calvin, after this, or you,
 Pretend to tell me that it is not true?

In general the Established Church during the eighteenth century tended to loosen these doctrines of predestination and election. Robert Sanderson (1587-1663), bishop of Lincoln, had before the Restoration come to admit "the harshness of that opinion which Calvin and Beza are said to have held, and many learned men in our Church have followed, concerning the Decrees of Election and Reprobation."⁸⁰ And, as Cragg has traced this doctrine, there was an "eclipse" during the century.⁸¹ But the eclipse did not mean a complete blackout. Joseph Hart has written two poems (numbers 42 and 60 of Hymns &c composed on Various Subjects, 1759) expressing the strict Calvinistic view of election. The

first of the two is a succinct statement of orthodoxy:

Brethren, would you know your stay?
 What it is supports you still?
 Why, tho' tempted ev'ry day,
 Yet you stand, and stand you will?
 Long before our birth,
 Nay, before Jehovah laid
 The foundations of the earth,
 We were chosen in our Head.

God's election is the ground
 Of our hope to persevere.
 On this rock your building found,
 And preserve your title clear.
 Infidels may laugh;
 Pharisees gainsay, or rail;
 Here's your tenure (keep it safe),
 God's elect can never fail.

As this chapter has indicated, religious writers in the eighteenth century were both interested personally and intensely in the nature and range of their experience and aware of the traditional body of doctrine which they had inherited from Hooker and from Calvin. Some of these doctrines underwent transformation because of the changing needs of the individual and of society and because of the characteristics of toleration and diversity which Anglican scholars have admitted as an essential aspect of the Anglican tradition. But the transformations were rather a subtle and gradual shift of emphasis than a complete break with the past. At the core of many religious poems can be found the traditional theological pattern of guilt, repentance and redemption, the pattern of man's awareness of sin and his hope for salvation. This pattern was doctrinally sound and intensely meaningful for writers of the period. The various stages dictate the structure as well as the feeling for this poem by Thomas Morell (1703-1784), rector of Buckland:

'Tis a sad painful living Death he dies,
 Who from his God, his Guardian, faithless flies,
 And vainly hopes in Sin's soft Arms to find
 Joys, that will satiate his luxurious Mind.
 Mistaken Wretch, a Tide of bitter Woes
 Sudden pours in, and the sick Heart o'erflows.
 Can Riches save him? or can Galen's Art,
 With some kind opiate kill the raging Smart?
 No; ever-wakeful Guilt still racks the Sight
 With ghastly Goblin shapes, dread Sons of Night:
 Nor all Peru can bribe the Powr's above,
 Or the dire Inmate of the Soul remove.
 But hear the Prophet's Voice, a voice from Heav'n,
 That cries, Repent, your Sins shall be forgiv'n.

Has then Repentance such a mighty Charm,
 To stay the Thunderer's uplifted Arm;
 To arrest the flying Bolt, prevent the Blow,
 And smooth the Terrors of his angry Brow;
 To give a Theme for Praise around the Throne,
 And glad all Heaven with a newborn Son?
 Can it recall the Sinner's fleeting Breath
 From the dread Confines of eternal Death;
 Heal his Sick Heart, and pleasingly controul
 The various Passions of the stormy Soul?
 Can it resolve them into Peace and Love,
 Fit for the Converse of the Saints above;
 The Faith confirm, the dying Hopes revive,
 With all that Man can ask, or God can give?
 And will you not repent? Unthinking Fool!
 To sport thus long with an immortal Soul;
 To give it up a Prey to sullen Grief,
 And all the hideous Horrors of Despair;
 To plunge in an Abyss of Misery,
 When 'twere as easy to ascend the Sky;
 To urge th'unmeasur'd Hate of God above,
 When 'twere as easy to regain his Love.

'Tis but to bow the stubborn knee to Heav'n,
 And ask with Heart sincere to be forgiv'n;
 To look with Faith to the Almighty's Throne,
 And plead the Merits of his dying Son.
 So shall the glorious Paraclete descend,
 And from thy Bosom drive the basie Fiend.
 Whence all thy Fears, and anxious Doubts shall cease,
 And ev'ry Scene of life be blest with Heav'nly Peace.

During the century different writers, according to theological background and training, chose different parts of the pattern to focus their experience upon. But all showed a profound knowledge and acceptance of the

traditional theological doctrines, and their verse reflects this knowledge and acceptance. There was throughout the century an interest in the dogma and the theology of the Church, an interest of an often acute and precise kind.

CHAPTER VII

The Church, like the Ark of Noah, is worth saving, not for the sake of the unclean beasts and vermin that almost filled it, but for the little corner of rationality that was as much disturbed by the stink within as by the tempest without.

Nathaniel Lardner, "Letter" to Bishop Hurd

An interest in the dogma and the theology of the Church, a concern with the traditions of ritual and liturgy, an awareness of the significance of Love and Reason and Faith, a sensitivity to mystical illumination, a respect for the festivals of the Calendar -- these are characteristics which have been noticed in this reading of a number of poems written during the eighteenth century.

Obviously, not all poems nor all poets were strongly influenced by the more precise characteristics of the Anglican tradition. But it appears that a considerable number were. The once dominant and historically prominent "school" of religious poets of the seventeenth century did not suddenly disappear with the approach of Charles II. The change in courtly and popular appreciation meant the rise to prominence of different kinds of writing; these new kinds have attracted the critics' attention. But the age cannot be summed up by these writings alone.

Much of the critical writing about the eighteenth century has tended to emphasize this newer tradition of polish, riming couplets, and social satire. The exploration into the remoter volumes of eighteenth-century verse has been slight, and -- as in the work done by H.H. Fairchild -- it has been pretty general.

From this reading of a number of these remoter volumes of verse it appears that the religious tradition of the seventeenth century continued during the eighteenth. It continued, not only with vague

gestures towards the generalities of God and goodness, but also with precise concern and debate over the traditions and theology of the Established Church. There were poets of religious, as well as of political, controversy.

And from this reading it appears that a firmer understanding of certain eighteenth-century "clusters of belief" may emerge. The relationship between Faith and Reason, between ways of knowing, and between the Church and society may be seen against a more complete background. Poets of any age cannot succeed in exorcising Gods any more than devils; there is strong evidence that poets during the eighteenth century did not want to do so. While the Anglican tradition often exercised the poets, they were fully aware that they were a part of it, and that it had a considerable influence upon their verse.

FOOTNOTES

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- ¹Worship (New York, n.d.), 316-321.
- ²The Holy Communion, ed. Hugh Martin (London, 1947), 54.
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- ¹¹Oxford Book of Christian Verse (Oxford, 1949), xx.
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- ¹⁴R. D. Havens, The Mind of a Poet, vol. I (Baltimore, 1941), 198.
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⁷Lectures on Dryden (Cambridge, 1914), 2-3.

⁸John Dryden (Cambridge, 1950), 61.

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¹⁶See also Gilbert Burnet's Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles (London, 1690).

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¹Literature and Religion: A Study in Conflict (Oxford, 1960), 61, 62.

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⁸W. A. Fitchard, Religious Trends in English Poetry, Vol. I (New York, 1933), 104, 102.

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¹⁴Edward G. Ainsworth and Charles E. Noyes, Christopher Smart: A Biographical and Critical Study (Columbia, 1942), 25.

¹⁵J. G. G. "Smart, Berkeley, the Scientists and the Poets: a Note on Eighteenth-Century Anti-Newtonianism," ib., xiv, 300.

¹⁶Op. cit., II (New York, 1942), 162, 163.

¹⁷In 1668 a considerably lengthened edition of Ken's Hymns was published under the title, Bishop Ken's Christian Year, or Hymns and Poems for the Holy Days and Festivals of the Church. It contained 91 hymns, arranged in order of the Church calendar, from "Advent" through "Trinity" (including 25 hymns for the Sundays therein), plus hymns for special Saint-days. Two of the more political poems from the 1721 edition are omitted: "On King Charles the Martyr" and "On the 29th of May, being the Day of the King's Restoration." For the bulk of Ken's hymns this 1668 edition of Ken's poems has been used in the present essay.

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²⁵Id., 36, 39.

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³¹For a detailed study see H. A. W. Jaffarson, The Mystical Element in the Metaphysical Poets of the Seventeenth Century (London, 1948), chapters v, vi and vii.

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- ¹⁶Maurice J. Quinlan, William Cowper: A Critical Life (Minneapolis, 1953), 217. See also Lord David Cecil's The Stricken Deer; or, The Life of Cowper (London, 1929).

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- ³⁵Ibid., II, i, 6.
- ³⁶Ibid., III, vii, 7.
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⁴⁰Part of his feeling of guilt seems to have started from his having committed the unpardonable sin of Scripture. See Maurice J. Quinlan, "William Cowper and the Unpardonable Sin," Journal of Religion, XLVII (April 1943), 110-16, and his discussion in William Cowper: A Critical Life (Minneapolis, 1953), 31-44.

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⁵⁶The Research of Wit, 4th ed. (London, 1959), 246-7.

⁵⁷Ibid., 230-9.

⁵⁸Nicholson, op. cit., 71-2: "Cowper has little of Wesley's superb technical virtuosity and nothing at all of his uninhibited fervour. He was shy and diffident, and even when he joined in what one might call the mass enthusiasms of the Evangelicals, he never quite merged his emotions with those of the others. Yet, like Wesley, he was able to bridge the gap between the devotional poem (the personal expression of a personal feeling) and the hymn. He did this, as Wesley did, by expressing the emotion so that it could be shared by the congregation, each one of whom associated himself with the "I" of the hymn. This is all the more remarkable since he did not deal with the stock emotions of the Revival. His verses have none of the crudity and violence of the popular preacher, and they rarely reinforce their appeal by reference to the better-known passages of Scripture. They tell, in fact, of spiritual experience which might often have been beyond the range of many of the singers, yet they are able to evoke an immediate response. Each one feels that here is an experience which, at least, he right have had, an experience he can understand and accept. Wesley identifies himself with the singer; Cowper calls on his sympathy."

⁵⁹Ibid., 7-9.

⁶⁰Ibid., 162.

⁶¹Thomas, op. cit., 187, 188.

⁶²Ibid., 172, 181, 189.

⁶³John Newton, Forty-one Letters on Religious Subjects (London, 1869), 256. See also the following extracts quoted by Thomas, op. cit., 171: "We find depravity so deep-rooted in our nature, that, like the leprous house, the whole fabric must be taken down before we can be freed from its defilement." "I believe that sin is the most hateful thing in the world; that I and all men are by nature in a state of wrath and depravity, utterly unable to sustain the penalty, or to fulfil the commands of God's holy law; and that we have no sufficiency of ourselves to think a good thought." Against these extracts Thomas quotes the following lines:

Love and fear are like the sun and noon, seldom
seen together.

God's word is certainly a restraint, but it is such a
restraint as the irons which prevent children getting
into the fire.

Don't tell me of your feelings. A traveller would like fine
weather, but if he be a man of business, he will go on.

Thomas concludes (p. 174) that Newton's Calvinism was comparatively mild, and his character was sincere and charming.

⁶⁴Josiah Bull, ed., John Newton (London, 1864), 212.

⁶⁵Abel Stevens, History of Methodism (London, 1876), II, 70.

⁶⁶T.F. Torrance, Calvin's doctrine of Man (London, 1949), 90.

⁶⁷Ibid., 152.

⁶⁸See his essay "Romanticism and Classicism," Speculations (London, 1924).

⁶⁹E. Doumergue, John Calvin (Lausanne, 1899-1927), IV, 155.

⁷⁰Calvin, Institutes, II, ii, 1;4.

⁷¹Calvin, Institutes, III, xi, 2.

⁷²A. Dakin, Calvinism (Philadelphia, 1946), 63.

⁷³For a full discussion of this Article in relation to Anglican history and theology, see W.H. Griffith Thomas, The Principles of Theology: An Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles (London, 1956), 199-209.

⁷⁴W.A. Curtis, A History of Creeds and Confessions of Faith (Edinburgh, 1911), 275.

⁷⁵Op. cit., 187.

⁷⁶II, ii, 1.

⁷⁷For a detailed account of the history and a discussion of these Divines, see S.M. Carruthers, The Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly (Philadelphia, 1943).

⁷⁸Table Talk, ed. S.M. Reynolds (Oxford, 1892), 69.

⁷⁹Dakin, op. cit., 64.

⁸⁰Sanderson, Works (Oxford, 1854), V, 262-3.

⁸¹See G.R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (Cambridge, 1950), Chap. I.

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