

Classic Poetry Series

John Byrom
- poems -

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John Byrom(29 February 1692 – 26 September 1763)

John Byrom or John Byrom of Kersal or John Byrom of Manchester FRS was an English poet and inventor of a revolutionary system of shorthand. He is also remembered as the writer of the lyrics of Anglican hymn Christians Awake, salute the happy morn.

Early Life

John Byrom was descended from an old genteel Lancashire family. A Ralph Byrom came to Manchester from Leigh in 1485, and became a prosperous wool merchant. His son Adam acquired property in Salford, Darcy Lever, Bolton and Ardwick (though his wealth did not prevent his mentally ill daughter from being accused of witchcraft). Edward Byrom helped to foil a Royalist plot to seize Manchester in 1642.

Byrom was born at what is now The Old Wellington Inn (part of the Old Shambles), Manchester, in 1692, (The property was then used as an office for market tolls, with accommodation on the upper floors.) The Wellington Inn is now a major tourist attraction, and his birth is commemorated by a plaque in the bar area. However, some sources claim that he was born at Kersal Cell in Lower Kersal in the township of Broughton, near Salford just outside Manchester. According to Bailey he was one of the tallest men in the kingdom.

His privileged background enabled him to obtain an excellent education, including The King's School, Chester, Merchant Taylors' School, London. He studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, becoming a fellow there in 1714, and subsequently travelled abroad and studied medicine at Montpellier in France.

Byrom and Shorthand

Byrom invented a system of shorthand, and having perfected this, he returned to England in 1716. Some of the inhabitants of Manchester tried to persuade him to set up a medical practice in the town, but he decided that his abilities were insufficient to pursue a medical career and resolved to teach his shorthand system instead. Shortly after coming into his family inheritance in 1740, Byrom patented his "New Universal Shorthand". This system of shorthand was taught officially at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities and was used by the clerk in the House of Lords.

On June 16, 1742, His Majesty George II secured to John Byrom, M.A., the sole

right of publishing for a certain term of years (21) the art and method of shorthand invented by him.

His system of shorthand was posthumously published as "The Universal English Shorthand" which, although superseded in the nineteenth Century, marked a significant development in the history of shorthand. It was used by John (1703–1791) and Charles Wesley (1707–1788), founders of Methodism, who recorded their self-examinations in coded diaries.

Family Life

The ancestral home of the Byrom Family is Byrom Hall at Slag Lane in Lowton, (the lane facing the hall is called Byrom Lane). He lived here from time to time, but seems to have largely resided in a town house in Manchester and at Kersal Cell.

Byrom had several children, but his favourite was his daughter Dorothy, known as Dolly. In December 1745, after a romp with Dolly, he promised to write her something for Christmas; it was to be written especially for her, and no one else. The delighted Dolly reminded her father of his promise each day as Christmas grew nearer. On Christmas morning, when she ran down to breakfast, she found several presents awaiting her. Among them was an envelope addressed to her in her father's handwriting. It was the first thing she opened, and to her great delight, it proved to be a Christmas carol entitled "Christians awake! Salute the happy morn". The original manuscript is headed "Christmas Day for Dolly", and it was first published in Harrop's Manchester Mercury in 1746.

Literary Remains

Although Byrom is probably best remembered for this Christmas Carol, he was regarded by his contemporaries as a poet and a literary man. Most of his poems, the best-known of which is My spirit longeth for Thee, were religious in tone. He is also remembered for his epigrams, and, above all, his coinage of the phrase Tweedledum and Tweedledee (in connection with a dispute about the merits of two composers).

A Man of Mystery

Byrom did not lead an ordinary provincial life. He was a member of the Royal Society while Sir Isaac Newton was president, and moved in some very influential social and intellectual circles in the capital and elsewhere. Modern research has revealed him to be something of a man of mystery. In the first

place there is the question of his political views. It was once thought that he was a closet Jacobite, but it is now suggested that he may have acted as a double agent, the 'Queen's Chameleon'. When the Young Pretender briefly occupied Manchester in 1745, he certainly did his best to lie low. His views might be summed up in the verse that he composed, in the form of a toast.

God bless the King! (I mean our faith's defender!)
God bless! (No harm in blessing) the Pretender.
But who Pretender is, and who is King,
God bless us all! That's quite another thing!

Byrom died in 1763 and is buried in the Jesus Chapel, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, England. His papers, though preserved for some time after his death, were mysteriously destroyed in the nineteenth century. A few surviving items have suggested that he may have belonged to an early proto-masonic society, similar to the Gentleman's Club of Spalding, and pursued occult interests. His library of books and manuscripts was donated to Chetham's Library by his descendant Eleanora Atherton in 1870

A Poetical Version Of A Letter From Facob Behmen

'TIS Man's own Nature, which in its own Life,
Or Centre, stands in Enmity and Strife,
And anxious, selfish, doing what it lists,
(Without God's Love) that tempts him, and resists;
The Devil also shoots his fiery Dart,
From Grace and Love to turn away the Heart.

This is the greatest Trial; 'tis the Fight
Which Christ, with His internal Love and Light,
Maintains within Man's Nature, to dispel
God's Anger, Satan, Sin, and Death, and Hell;
The human Self, or Serpent, to devour,
And raise an Angel from it by His Pow'r.

Now if God's Love in Christ did not subdue
In some Degree this Selfishness in you,
You would have no such Combat to endure;
The Serpent, then, triumphantly secure,
Would unoppos'd exert its native Right,
And no such Conflict in your Soul excite.

For all the huge Temptation and Distress
Rises in Nature, tho' God seeks to bless;
The Serpent feeling its tormenting State,
(Which of itself is a mere anxious Hate,)
When God's amazing Love comes in, to fill
And change the selfish to a God-like Will.

Here Christ, the Serpent-bruiser, stands in Man,
Storming the Devil's hellish, self-built Plan;
And hence the Strife within the human Soul,—
Satan's to kill, and Christ's to make it whole;
As by Experience, in so great Degree,
God in His Goodness causes you to see....

The next Temptation, which befalls of Course
From Satan and from Nature's selfish Force,
Is, when the Soul has tasted of the Love
And been illuminated from above;

Still in its Self-hood it would seek to shine,
And as its own possess the Light Divine.

That is, the soulish Nature,—take it right,
As much a Serpent, if without God's Light,
As Lucifer,—this Nature still would claim
For own Propriety the Heav'nly Flame,
And elevate its Fire to a Degree
Above the Light's Good Pow'r, which cannot be.

This domineering Self, this Nature-Fire,
Must be transmuted to a Love-Desire.
Now, when this Change is to be undergone,
It looks for some own Pow'r, and, finding none,
Begins to doubt of Grace, unwilling quite
To yield up its self-willing Nature's Right.

It never quakes for Fear, and will not die
In Light Divine, tho' to be blest thereby:
The Light of Grace it thinks to be Deceit,
Because it worketh gently without Heat;
Mov'd too by outward Reason, which is blind,
And of itself sees nothing of this Kind.

Who knows, it thinketh, whether it be true
That God is in thee, and enlightens too?
Is it not Fancy? For thou dost not see
Like other People, who as well as thee
Hope for Salvation by the Grace of God,
Without such Fear and Trembling at his Rod....

The own Self-will must die away, and shine,
Rising thro' Death, in Saving Will Divine;
And from the Opposition which it tries
Against God's Will such great Temptations rise;
The Devil too is loth to lose his Prey,
And see his Fort cast down, if it obey.

For, if the Life of Christ within arise,
Self-Lust and false Imagination dies,—
Wholly, it cannot in this present Life,
But by the Flesh maintains the daily Strife,—

Dies, and yet lives; as they alone can tell
In whom Christ fights against the Pow'rs of Hell.

The third Temptation is in Mind and Will,
And Flesh and Blood, if Satan enter still;
Where the false Centres lie in Man, the Springs
Of Pride and Lust, and Love of earthly Things,
And all the Curses wish'd by other Men,
Which are occasion'd by this Devil's Den.

These in the Astral Spirit make a Fort,
Which all the Sins centre to support;
And human Will, esteeming for its Joy
What Christ, to save it, combats to destroy,
Will not resign the Pride-erected Tow'r,
Nor live obedient to the Saviour's Pow'r....

Let go all earthly Will, and be resign'd
Wholly to Him with all your Heart and Mind!
Be Joy or Sorrow, Comfort or Distress,
Receiv'd alike, for He alike can bless,
To gain the Victory of Christian Faith
Over the World and all Satanic Wrath!

John Byrom

Christians, Awake, Salute The Happy Morn

1. Christians, awake, salute the happy morn
Whereon the Savior of the world was born.¹
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.

2. Then to the watchful shepherds it was told,
Who heard th' angelic herald's voice, 'Behold,
I bring good tidings of a Savior's birth
To you and all the nations upon the earth;
This day hath God fulfilled His promised Word;
This day is born a Savior, Christ the Lord.'

3. He spake; and straightaway the celestial choir
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire;
The praises of redeeming love they sang,
And heaven's whole orb with alleluias rang.^{1a}
God's highest glory was their anthem still,
Peace upon earth and unto men good will.

4. To Bethlehem straight th' enlightened shepherds ran^{1b}
To see the wonder God had wrought for man
And found, with Joseph and the blessed maid,
Her Son, the Savior, in a manger laid;
Then to their flocks, still praising God, return,
And their glad hearts with holy rapture burn.²

5. Oh, may we keep and ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind!³
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,
From His poor manger to His bitter cross,
Tread in His steps,⁴ assisted by His grace,
Till man's first heavenly state again takes place.

6. Then may we hope, th' angelic hosts among,
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song.
He that was born upon this joyful day
Around us all His glory shall display.

Saved by His love, incessant we shall sing
Eternal praise to heaven's almighty King.

John Byrom

Epigram I

Nor Steel, nor Flint alone produces fire;
No spark arises till they both conspire:
Nor Faith alone, nor work without is right;
Salvation rises, when they both unite.

John Byrom

Epigram II.

Zeal without Meekness, like a ship at sea,
To rising storms may soon become a prey;
And Meekness without Zeal is still the same,
When a dead calm stops ev'ry sailor's aim.

John Byrom

Epigram Iii.

A Heated Fancy, or Imagination,
May be mistaken for an Inspiration -
True; but is this Conclusion fair to make,
That Inspiration must be all mistake?
A pebble Stone is not a Diamond - true;
But must a Di'mond be a Pebble too?

John Byrom

Epigram Iv.

He is a Sinner, you are pleas'd to say;
Then love him for the sake of Christ, I pray,
If on his gracious Words you place your trust,
-I came to call the sinner; not the just,-
Second his Call; which if you will not do,
You'll be the greater sinner of the two.

John Byrom

Epigram V.

Prayer and thanksgiving is the vital breath
That keeps the spirit of a man from death;
For pray'r attracts into the living soul
The life, that fills the universal whole.

John Byrom

Epigram Vi.

To own a God, who does not speak to men,
Is first to own, and then disown again;
Of all idolatry the total sum
Is having gods, that are both deaf and dumb.

John Byrom

Epigram VII.

What is more tender than a mother's love
To the sweet infant fondling in her arms?
What need of arguments her heart to move
To hear its cries, and help it out of harms?
Now, if the tend'rest mother were possest
Of all the love, within her single breast,
Of all the mothers since the world began,
'Tis nothing to the love of God to man.

John Byrom

Hymn For Christmas Day

Christians awake, salute the happy morn,
Whereon 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:
Then to the watchful shepherds it was told,
Who heard the angelic herald's voice - 'Behold!
I bring good tidings of a saviour's birth
To you, and all the nations of the earth;
This day hath God fulfilled his promised word;
This day is born a saviour, Christ, the Lord:
In David's city, shepherds, ye shall find
The long foretold redeemer of mankind;
Wrapped up in swaddling clothes, the babe divine
Lies in a manger; this shall be your sign.'
He spoke, and straightway the celestial choir,
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire;
The praises of redeeming love they sung,
And heaven's whole orb with hallelujahs rung:
God's highest glory was their anthem still;
Peace upon earth, and mutual good-will.
To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds ran,
To see the wonder God had wrought for man;
And found, with Joseph and the blessed maid,
Her son, the saviour, in a manger laid.
Amazed, the wondrous story they proclaim;
The first apostles of this infant fame:
While Mary keeps, and ponders in her heart,
The heavenly vision, which the swains impart;
They to their flocks, still praising God, return,
And their glad hearts within their bosoms burn.
Let us, like these good shepherds then, employ
Our grateful voices to proclaim the joy:
Like Mary, let us ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind;
Artless, and watchful, as these favoured swains,
While virgin meekness in the heart remains:
Trace we the babe, who has retrieved our loss,

From his poor manger to his bitter cross;
Treading his steps, assisted by his grace,
Till man's first heavenly state again takes place:
Then may we hope, the angelic thrones among,
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song;
He that was born, upon this joyful day,
Around us all, his glory shall display;
Saved by his love, incessant we shall sing
Of angels, and of angel-men, the king.

John Byrom

My Spirit Longs For Thee

My spirit longs for thee
Within my troubled breast
Though I unworthy be
Of so divine a guest:

Of so divine a guest
Unworthy though I be,
Yet has my heart no rest,
Unless it come from Thee:

Unless it come from Thee,
In vain I look around:
In all that I can see
No rest is to be found:

No rest is to be found,
But in thy blessed love:
O let my wish be crowned,
And send it from above!

John Byrom

On Church Communion - Part II.

If once establish'd the essential part,
The inward Church, the Temple of the Heart,
Or house of God, the substance, and the sum
Of what is pray'd for in -
thy kingdom come
;
To make an outward correspondence true,
We must recur to Christ's example too.

Now in his outward life we plainly find,
Goodness demonstrated of ev'ry kind;
What he was born for, that he show'd throughout,
It was the business that he went about:
Love, kindness, and compassion, to display
Towards ev'ry object coming in his way.

But Love so high, Humility so low,
And all the Virtues which his actions show;
His doing good, and his enduring ill,
For Man's salvation, and God's holy will:
Exceed all terms - his inward, outward plan,
Was Love to God, express'd by Love to Man.

Mark of the Church which he establish'd then,
Is the same Love, same proof of it to Men;
Without let Sects parade it how they list,
Nor Church nor unity can ne'er subsist:
The name may be usurp'd, but want of pow'r,
Will shew the Babel, high or low the Tow'r.

And where the same behaviour shall appear,
In outward form, that was in Christ so clear;
There is the very outward Church that he
Will'd all mankind to shew, and all to see;
Of which whoever shews it from the heart,
Is both an inward and an outward part.

What Excommunication can deprive
A pious soul that is in Christ alive,

Of Church-Communion? or cut off a limb,
That life and action both unite to him?
For any circumstance of place or time,
Or mode or custom, which infers no crime?

If he be that which his beloved
John

Calls him, -
The Light, enlightening every one

That comes into the world - will he exclude
One from his Church, whose mind he has renew'd,
To such degree, as to exert, in fact,
Like inward Temper, and like outward Act?

Invisible, and visible effect
Of true Church Membership, in each respect,
Let the one Shepherd from above behold,
The Flocks, howe'er dispers'd, are his one Fold:
Seen by their hearts, and their behaviour too,
They all stand present in his gracious view.

John Byrom

On Church Communion - Part Iii.

A Local union, on the other hand,
Though crowded numbers should together stand,
Joining in one same Form of pray'r and praise,
Or Creed express'd in regulated phrase;
Or ought beside - though it assume the name
Of Christian-Church, may want to real claim.

For if it want the spirit and the sign,
That constitute all worship as divine,
The love within, the test of it without,
In vain the union passes for devout:
Heartless, and takenless if it remain,
It ought to pass, in strictness, for profane.

At first, an unity of heart and soul,
A distribution of an outward dole,
And ev'ry member of the body fed,
As equally belonging to the head,
With what it wanted, was, without suspense,
True Church-Communion in the Christian sense.

Whether averse the many, or the few,
To hold communion in this right'ous view,
Their thought commences heresy, their deed
Schismatical, though they profess the Creed;
Ways of distributing, if new, should still
Maintain the old communicative will.

Broken by ev'ry loveless, thankless thought,
And not behaving as a Christian ought;
By want of meekness, or a show of pride,
Tow'rds any soul for whom our Saviour died;
While this continues, men may pray and preach,
In all their forms, but none will heal the breach.

Whatever helps an outward form may bring,
To Church-communion, it is not the thing;
Nor a Society, as such, nor place,
Nor any thing besides uniting grace:

They are but accessaries at the most,
To true communion of the Holy Ghost.

This is th' essential fellowship, the tie,
Which all true Christians are united by:
No other union does them any good,
But that which Christ cemented with his blood,
As God and Man; that having lost it, men
Might live in unity with God again.

What he came down to bring us from above,
Was grace, and peace, and law-fulfilling love;
True spirit-worship which his Father sought,
Was the sole end of what he did and taught:
That God's own Church and Kingdom might begin,
Which Moses and the Prophets usher'd in.

John Byrom

On Church Communion - Part Iv.

A Christian, in so catholic a sense,
Can give to none, but partial minds offence;
Forc'd to live under some divided part,
He keeps entire the union of the heart,
The sacred tie of love; by which alone
Christ said that his disciples should be known.

He values no distinction, as profest
By way of separation from the rest;
Oblig'd in duty, and inclin'd by choice,
In all the good of any to rejoice;
From ev'ry evil, falsehood, or mistake,
To wish them free, for common comfort's sake.

Freedom, to which the most undoubted way
Lies in Obedience (where it always lay)
To Christ himself, who with an inward call
Knocks at the door, that is, the heart of all.
At the reception of this heav'nly guest
All good comes in, all evil quits the breast.

The free receiver, then becomes content
With what God orders, or does not prevent
To them that love him, all things, he is sure,
Must work for good, though how, may be obscure;
Even successful wickedness when past,
Will bring to them some latent good at last.

Fall'n as divided churches are, and gone
From the perfection of the Christian one.
Respect is due to any that contains,
The venerable, though but faint remains.
Of ancient rule, which had not, in its view
The letter only, but the spirit too.

When that variety of new-found ways,
Which people so run after in our days,
Has done its utmost, - when,
Lo here, lo there,

Shall yield to inward seeking and sincere;
What was at first, may come to be again,
The praise of Church-assemblies amongst men.

Mean while, in that to which we now belong,
To mind in public lesson, pray'r and song,
Teaching and preaching what conduces best,
To true devotion in the private breast,
Wishing increase of good to ev'ry soul
Seems to be our concern upon the whole.

To God, and Christ and holy angels stand,
Dispos'd to ev'ry Church, in ev'ry land,
The growth of good still helping to compleat,
Whatever tares be sown among the wheat;
Who would not wish to have, and to excite,
A disposition so divinely right?

John Byrom

On Clergymen Preaching Politics

Indeed, Sir Peter, I could wish, I own,
That parsons would let politics alone;
Plead, if they will, the customary plea,
For such like talk, when o'er the dish of tea:
But when they tease us with it from the pulpit,
I own, Sir Peter, that I cannot help it.

If on their rules a justice should intrench,
And preach, suppose a sermon, from the bench,
Would you not think your brother magistrate
Was a little touched in his hinder pate?
Now which is worse, Sir Peter, on the total
The lay vagary, or the sacerdotal?

In ancient times, when preachers preached indeed
Their sermons, ere the learned learnt to read,
Another spirit, and another life,
Shut the church doors against all party strife:
Since then, how often heard, from sacred rostrums,
The lifeless din of Whig and Tory nostrums!

'Tis wrong, Sir Peter, I insist upon't;
To common sense 'tis plainly an affront:
The parson leaves the Christian in a lurch,
Whene'er he brings his politics to church;
His cant, on either side, if he calls preaching,
The man's wrong-headed, and his brains want bleaching.

Recall the time from conquering William's reign,
And guess the fruits of such a preaching vein:
How oft its nonsense must have veered about,
Just as the politics were in, or out:
The pulpit governed by no gospel data,
But new success still mending old errata.

Were I a king (God bless me) I should hate
My chaplains meddling with affairs of state;
Nor would my subjects, I should think, be fond,
Whenever theirs the Bible went beyond.

How well, methinks, we both should live together,
If these good folks would keep within their tether!

John Byrom

The Three Black Crows

Two honest tradesmen meeting in the Strand,
One took the other briskly by the hand;
'Hark ye,' said he, 'tis an odd story this
About the crows!' - 'I don't know what it is,'
Replied his friend. - 'No! I'm surprised at that;
Where I come from, it is the common chat;
But you shall hear an odd affair indeed!
And that it happen'd they are all agreed;
Not to detain you from a thing so strange,
A gentleman, who lives not far from 'Change,
This week, in short, as all the Alley knows,
Taking a vomit, threw up Three Black Crows!'
'Impossible!' -- 'Nay, but 'tis really true;
I had it from good hands, and so may you.' --
'From whose I pray?' -- So, having named the man,
Straight to enquire, his curious comrade ran.
'Sir did you tell?' -- relating the affair.
'Yes sir, I did; and, if 'tis worth your care,
'Twas Mr.' - such a one - 'who told it me;
But, by the bye, 'twas
Two
black crows, not
Three!

Resolved to trace so wondrous an event,
Quick to the third the virtuoso went.
'Sir,' - and so forth. - 'Why, yes; the thing is fact,
Though in regard to number not exact.
It was not
Two
black crows, 'twas only
One;

The truth of that you may depend upon;
The gentleman himself told me the case.'-
'Where may I find him?' - 'Why in' - such a place.
Away he went, and having found him out,
'Sir, be so good as to resolve a doubt.'--
Then to his last informant he referr'd,

And begg'd to know, if true what he had heard:
'Did you, sir, throw up a black crow?' - 'Not I!'-
'Bless me! - how people propagate a lie!
Black crows have been thrown up,
Three, Two,
and
One:

And here, I find, all comes at last to
None!

Did you say nothing of a crow at all?'--
'Crow - crow - perhaps I might; now I recall
The matter over.' - 'And pray, sir, what was't?'
'Why, I was horrid sick, and at the last
I did throw up, and told my neighbour so,
Something that was -- as
black
sir, as a crow.'

John Byrom

Thoughts On Imputed Righteousness - Occasioned By Reading Theron And Aspasio : Part I.

Imputed Righteousness! - beloved Friend,
To what advantage can this Doctrine tend?
If at the same time a Believer's breast,
Be not by
real
Righteousness possest?
And if it be, why volumes on it made,
With such a stress upon the
imputed
laid?

Amongst the Disputants of later days,
This in its turn, became a favourite phrase;
When much is divided in religious Schemes,
Contending Parties ran into extremes:
And now it claims th' attention of the age,
In
Hervey's
elegant and lively page:
This his
Aspasio
labours to impress,
With ev'ry turn of language and address.
With all the flow of eloquence, that shines
Through all his (full enough) embellish'd lines.

Though now so much exerting to confirm
Its vast importance, and revive the term,
He was himself, he lets his
Theron
know,
Of diff'rent sentiments not long ago.
And friends of yours, it has been thought, I find,
Have brought Aspasio to his present mind.
Now having read, but unconvinc'd I own,
What various Reasons for it he has shown;
Or rather Rhetoric - if it be true,

In any sense that has appear'd to you;
I rest secur'd of giving no offence
By asking - how you understand the sense?
By urging in a manner frank and free
What reasons, as I read, occur to me;
Why
Righteousness
, for man to rest upon,
Must be a
real
not
imputed
one.

John Byrom

Thoughts On Imputed Righteousness - Occasioned By Reading Theron And Aspasio : Part II.

To shun much novel sentiment and nice,
I take the thing from its apparent rise;
It should seem then, as if
imputed sin

Had made
imputed Righteousness
begin:

The one suppos'd, the other to be sure,
Would follow after - like disease and cure:
Let us examine then imputed guilt
And see on what foundation it is built.

As our first parent lost a heav'nly state,
All their descendants share their hapless fate,
Forewarn'd of God, when tempted not to eat,
Of the forbidden tree's pernicious meat;
Because incorporating mortal leaven
Would kill, of course, in them the life of heaven.
They disobey'd, both Adam and his wife,
And died of course to their true heav'nly life:
That life thus lost the day they disobey'd,
Could not by them be possibly convey'd;
No other life could children have from them,
But what could rise from the parental stem:
That love of God, alone, which we adore,
The life, so lost, could possibly restore:
Their children could not, being born to earth,
Be born to heaven, but by a heav'nly birth:
God found a way, (explain it how we will),
To save the human race from endless ill;
To save the very disobeying pair;
And mad their whole posterity his care.

Has this great Goodness any thing a-kin,
To God's
imputing

our first parents' sin
To their unborn posterity? - What sense
In such a strange, and scriptureless pretence?
For though men feel - (so far we are agreed)
The consequences of a sinful deed:
Yet where ascrib'd, by any sacred pen
But to the
doers
, is the
deed
of men?
Where to be found, in all the scripture through,
This
imputation
thus advanc'd anew?

John Byrom

Thoughts On Imputed Righteousness - Occasioned By Reading Theron And Aspasio : Part Iii.

Adam and
Eve
, by
Satan's
wiles decoy'd,

Did
what the kind Commandment said - avoid.
To them with justice therefore you impute
The sin of eating the forbidden fruit:
And ev'ry imputation must in fact,
If just, be built on some preceding act;
Without the previous deed suppos'd, the word
Becomes unjust, unnatural, and absurd.

If as you seem'd to think the other day,
All
Adam's
race, in some mysterious way,
Sinn'd when he sinn'd; consented to his fall,
With justice then impute it to them all:
But still it follows that they all contract
An imputation founded upon fact.
And
Righteousness of Christ
, in Christian heirs
Must be as deeply and as truly theirs;
A heav'nly life in order to replace,
As was the sin that made a guilty race.

Old
Eli
thus, not knowing what to think,
Imputed
Hannah's
viol'nt pray'r to drink.
Little supposing that it would prepare

A successor to him, her silent pray'er.
There may be other meanings of the phrase,
To be accounted for in human ways;
But God's imputing to the future Child,
The sin by which his Parents were beguil'd;
Seems to establish, an unrighteous blame,
That brings no honour to its Maker's name.

John Byrom

Thoughts On Imputed Righteousness - Occasioned By Reading Theron And Aspasio : Part Iv.

What num'rous texts from
Paul
, from ev'ry saint,
Might furnish our citations, did we want?
And could not see, that Righteousness, or Sin,
Arise not from
without
, but from
within?

That
imputation
where they are not found,
Can reach no farther than an empty sound:
No farther than imputed health can reach
The cure of sickness, though a man should preach
With all the eloquence of zeal and tell,
How health imputed makes a sick man well.
indeed if sickness be imputed too,
Imputed remedy, no doubt may do;
Words may pour forth their entertaining store,
But things are just - as things were just before.

In so important a concern as that,
Which good
Aspasio's
care is pointed at;
A small mistake, which at the bottom lies,
May sap the building that shall thence arise;
Who would not wish that Architect, so skill'd,
On great mistakes might not persist to build;
But strictly search, and for sufficient while,
If the foundation could support a pile?
This
Imputation
, which he builds upon,
Has been the source of more mistakes than one:

Hence rose, to pass the intermediate train
Of growing errors, and observe the main,
That worse than
pagan
principle of fate,

Predestination's
partial love and hate;
By which, not tied like fancied
Jove
to look,
In stronger Destiny's decreeing book;
The God of
Christians
is suppos'd to will
That
some
should come to
good
and some to
ill
:
And for no reason, but to shew in fine,
Th' extent of
goodness
, and of
wrath divine
.

Whose doctrine this? I quote no less a man,
Than the renowned
Calvin
for the plan;
Who having labour'd, with distinction's vain,

Mere Imputation
only to maintain;
Maintains, when speaking on another head,
This horrid thought, to which the former led;
'Predestination here I call,' (says he
Defining) 'God's eternal, fix'd decree;
'Which having settl'd in his Will, he past,

What ev'ry man should come to at the last;
And lest the terms should be conceiv'd to bear
A meaning less, than he propos'd, severe;
'For all mankind (he adds to definition),
Are not created on the same condition:'

Pari conditione

- is the phrase,

If you can turn it any other ways;

'But life to some, eternal, is restrain'd,

To some, damnation endless pre-ordain'd.'

John Byrom

Thoughts On Predestination And Reprobation : Part I.

Flatter me not with your Predestination,
Nor sink my spirits with your Reprobation.
From all your high disputes I stand aloof,
Your
Pres
and
Res
, your Destiny, and your Proof;
And formal Calvinistical pretence,
That contradicts all Gospel, and good sense.

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?

But that eternal, absolute decree
Has damn'd before-hand either you, or me,
Or any body else? That God design'd,
When he created, not to save mankind;
But only
some
? The rest, this man maintain'd,
Were so decreed, Damnation pre-ordain'd.
No, Sir; not all your metaphysic skill
Can prove the Doctrine, twist it as you will.

I hate the man for Doctrine so accurst,
In Book the third, and Chapter twenty-first;
Section the fifth - a horrid, impious lore,
That one would hope was never taught before;

How it came after to prevail away,
Let them who mince the damning matter say;
And others judge, if any Christian fruit,
Be like to spring from such a pagan root.

John Byrom

Thoughts On Predestination And Reprobation : Part II.

Pagan - said I - I must retract the word,
For the poor Pagans were not so absurd:
Their Jupiter, of gods and men the king,
Whenever he ordain'd a hurtful thing,
Did it because he was oblig'd to look,
And act as Fate had bid him, in a book:
For gods and goddesses were subjects, then,
To dire necessity, as well as men;
Compell'd to crush a Hero, or a Town,
As Destiny had set the matter down.

But in your scheme, 'tis God that orders ill,
With sov'reign pow'r, and with resistless will;
He in whose blessed Name in understood
The one eternal will to ev'ry good,
Is represented, thought untied by fate
With a decree of damning, to create.
Such as you term the Vessels of his wrath,
To shew his power, according to your faith:
Just as if God, like some tyrannic man,
Would plague the world, to shew them that he can
While others, (they for instance of your sect)
Are mercy's Vessels, precious and elect;
Who think, God help them! to secure their bliss,
By such a partial, fond conceit as this.

Talk not to me of Popery and of Rome,
Nor yet foretell its Babylonish doom;
Nor canonize reforming saints of old,
Because they held the doctrine that you hold;
For if they did, although of Saint-like stem,
In this plain point we must reform from them:
While freed from Rome we are not tied I hope,
To what is wrong in a Geneva Pope;
Nor what is right, should surname supersede,
Of Luther, Calvin, Bellarmine, or Bede.
Rome has been guilty of excess, 'tis true,
And so have some of the reformers too;
If in their zeal against the Roman seat,

Plucking up tares, they pluck'd up also wheat;
Must we to children, some what they have said,
Give this Predestination stone for bread?
Sir, it is worse, this your Predestination,
Ten thousand times than transubstantiation:
Hard is the point, that Papists have compil'd,
With sense and reason to be reconcil'd;
But yet it leaves to our conception, still,
Goodness in God, and holiness of Will;
A just, impartial Government of all;
A saving love; a corresponding call
For ev'ry man, and, in the fittest hour,
For him to hear, all offer'd grace and pow'r;
Which he may want, and have, if he will crave
From him, who willeth nothing but to save.

John Byrom

Thoughts On Predestination And Reprobation : Part Iii.

Whereas, this Reprobation Doctrine, here,
Not only Sense and Reason would cashier;
But take, by its pretext of sov'reign sway,
All goodness from the Deity away;
Both heav'n and hell confounding with the cant,
Virtue and Vice, the Sinner and the Saint;
Leaving (by irresistible decree,
And purpose absolute what man shall be),
Nothing in Sinners to detest so much
As God's contrivance how to make them such.

That ever Christians blest with Revelation,
Should think of his decreeing men's damnation!
The God of Love! the Fountain of all good!

Who made
, says Paul,
all Nations of one blood,

To dwell on earth; appointed time
and
place,

And for what end this pre-ordaining grace?
That they might seek, and feel, and surely find,
The life in God, which God for man design'd.

We are his offspring - for in that Decree,
The pagan Poet and St. Paul agree:
We are his offspring - now, Sir, put the case
Of some great man, and his descending race;
Conceive this common Parent of them all,
As willing some to stand, and some to fall:
Master, suppose of all their future lot,
Decreeing some to happiness, some not;
In some to bring his kindness into view,

To shew in others what his wrath can do;
To lead the chosen children by the hand,
And leave the rest to fall - who cannot stand.

I might proceed, but that the smallest sketch
Shows an absurd, and arbitrary wretch;
Treating his offspring so, as to forbid
To think that ever God Almighty did;
To think that creatures, who are said to be
His offspring, should be hurt by his decree;
Which had they always minded, Good alone,
And not a spark of Evil, had been known:
For his Decree, Appointment, Order, Will,
Predestinating Goodness, Pow'r and Skill,
Is, of itself, the unbeginning Good,
The pouring forth of an un-ending flood:
Of ever-flowing bliss, which only rolls,
To fill his vessels, his created souls.

Happy Himself the true divine desire,
The love that flames through that eternal fire;
Which generates in him th' eternal light,
Source of all blessing to created light,
Longs with a holy earnestness to spread,
The boundless glories of its Fountain-head?
To raise the possibilities of life,
Which rest, in him, into a joyful strive;
Into a feeling sense of him, from whom
The various gifts of various blessings come.

John Byrom

Thoughts On Predestination And Reprobation : Part Iv.

To bless is his immutable decree,
Such as could never have begun to be:
Decree (if you will use the word decreed)
Did from his love eternally proceed,
To manifest the hidden pow'rs, that reign
Through outward Nature's universal scene:
To raise up creatures from its vast abyss,
Form'd to enjoy communicated bliss.

Who does not see that ill, of any kind,
could never come from an all-perfect mind?
That its perception never could begin,
But from a creature's voluntary sin.
Made in its Maker's image, and imprest
With a free pow'r of being ever blest:
From ev'ry evil, in itself so free,
That none could rise but by its own decree?

To certain truths, which you can scarce deny,
You bring St. Paul's expressions in reply:
Some few obscurer sayings prone to chuse,
Where he was talking to the Roman-Jews;
You never heed the num'rous texts, so plain;
That will not suit with your decreeing strain:

Who willeth all men to be saved
- is one,
Too plain for comment to be made upon;
So that if
some
be not the same as
all
,
You must directly contradict St. Paul.

Paul's open, gen'rous, and enlighten'd soul,
Preach'd to Mankind a Saviour of the Whole,

No part of human race; the blinded Jew
Might boast himself in this conceited view:
Boast of his Father Abraham, and vent
The carnal claims of family descent:
But the whole family of heav'n and earth,
Paul knew if blest must have another birth:
Paul never tied salvation to a Sect,
All who love God, with him are God's Elect.

All who love God - how certain is the key!
Whate'er disputed passages convey;
In Paul's Epistles if some things are read,
Hard to be understood, as Peter said,
Must this be urg'd to prove in men's condition,
This pre-election, and their preterition,
Of all absurd decree, the most absurd,
Is into form definition wrought,
By your Divines - unstartled at the thought
Of sov'reign pow'r, decreeing to become
The Author of salvation but to some;
To some, resembling others, they admit,
Who are rejected - why? He so thought fit:
Hath not the potter power to make his clay
Just what he pleases? - Well. And tell me pray,
What kind of potter must we think a man,
Who does not make the best of it he can?
Who, making some fine vessels of his clay,
To shew his pow'r, throws all the rest away.
Which, in itself, was equally as fine?
What an idea this pow'r divine!

Who can conceive the infinitely Good
To shew less kindness than he really could!
To pre-concert damnation, and confine
Himself, his own beneficence divine?
An impotency this, in evil hour,
Ascrib'd to God's beatifying pow'r,
Though true in earthly monarchs it may be,
That majesty and love can scarce agree;
In his Almighty Will who rules above,
The pow'r is grace, the majesty is love;
What best describes the giver of all bliss,

Glorious in all his attributes is this,
The sov'reign Lord all creatures bow before,
But they who love him most, the most adore.

John Byrom