

**THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH IN THE WORK OF  
WILLIAM BLAKE, 1757-1827**

Mary Kaye Ramsey

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil  
at the  
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## Abstract

Although the body of the critical work on William Blake's theology is vast, critics have overlooked the most obvious source of the poet's religious vision: the eighteenth-century Church of England. Throughout Blake's poetry, the Established Church plays a significant role. The early poetry seems to accept and to echo Church doctrine, often incorporating orthodox concepts and symbols. As Blake's disaffection with the Church--especially with the lethargic and corrupt clergy--becomes more pronounced, the Church assumes the character of the harlot of Babylon, or of the Archfiend, Satan. Even during this period, however, Blake does not reject the religion of Christ; his antipathy is for organized religion, for the Church. To Blake, the Church is no longer the Bride of Christ; she has become the whore of the state, the vassal of natural religion. Her character, inextricably intertwined with Man's Fall and fallen condition, is the subject of this study.

This work is dedicated to Bill, Bob and Mary Ellen, for reasons understood but unexpressed.



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## Introduction

A plethora of critical works have been written on the poetry of William Blake. He has been called everything from genius to Gnostic heretic, mystic to madman. Whether or not a mystic, Blake is certainly a mystery to many. Even those who claim an understanding of Blake cannot agree in their interpretations of the man's life and work. It would be presumptuous to assume that the following essay will dispel all doubts as to Blake's poetic intent, philosophical perspective, or psychological condition. Indeed, Blake has been compared to many of the great thinkers of Western civilisation, making it possible to find works citing Blake as either Freudian or Jungian in his psychology; Kantian, Hegelian, or Neo-Platonic in his philosophy; Gnostic, Manichee, agnostic, atheist, mystic, Swedenborgian, or orthodox Christian in his religion.

While such speculation is useful in its way, it often overlooks the fact that much of what is represented as 'directly influencing' Blake post-dates him by well over a century, or that Blake was unlikely to have encountered some of the philosophies and religious traditions 'clearly outlined' in his poetry. In their zeal to connect Blake with the sophisticated, the learned, or the cosmopolitan, critics have overlooked the most obvious source of Blake's religious vision: the eighteenth-century Church of England. David Erdman would have the reader believe that

Blake is first and foremost a political poet, a "prophet against empire." Of course, Albion is England, and the poet does concern himself with the "dark Satanic mills"; he would be no prophet of any sort if he did not see the plight of men around him, the social injustice, the political manoeuvring, but at the last he, like the Old Testament prophets, preaches redemption, not by political revolution or social upheaval, but by the establishment of the City of God. Blake is fundamentally a religious poet, and his religious vision is variously in accord with and in direct opposition to eighteenth-century Church of England theology and tradition.

The Anglican church was the Established church in England in the Eighteenth Century as it is today. As the State religion, the life and health of the Church affects the lives and well-being of England and Englishmen, and the character of the church accurately reflects the character of the country. Where the clergy is lethargic, the people are indolent; where the episcopacy involves itself in politics to the exclusion of religious duty, the parishioners cease to be faithful in worship. As the Church affects the country, so the country affects the Church: there exist few things quite so English as the Anglican Church. Lord David Cecil states that the piety of George Herbert 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", [1] or, one might add, of Blake.

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[1] Lord David Cecil, ed. Oxford Book of Christian Verse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940) xx.

Blake was born in 1757, during a period when the 'refinement and dignity' of the Church had declined into snobbery and exclusiveness; 'style and ceremony' had degenerated to pomp and meaningless repetition that was so 'subdued and restrained' as to be nearly lifeless, and the 'quiet tints' had faded to shades of grey. This is not to say that the whole of the Church was dead. On the contrary, this lethargic period produced Whitfield and Wesley with their evangelistic fervour and Methodism. In fact, John Wesley remained a true son of the Church throughout his life and ministry, for although he was barred from Church of England pulpits, he nevertheless insisted that his methods were to be added to the Anglican system, not to replace it. Wesley was not much heard from in London, so that Blake, whose life was spent in that city with the exception of his stay at Felpham, never came into contact with the Evangelistic movement, save hearing of it second or third hand. Blake's experience was with the London clergy and churches of the Georgian era about which it has been said: "[They] are churches for a business man, and a successful one at that; not for a penitent, not for a perplexed and troubled soul, not for an emotional sufferer. Poor people look out of place in them." [2]

The purpose of this study is to identify the influences of the eighteenth-century Church of England on Blake's poetry and prose. In his earliest work, the poet often echoed orthodox Anglican theology; later, he violently opposed both the doctrine and the institution which propounds it; later still he blended

[2] Edward Verrall Lucas, A Wanderer in London (n.p., 1908) n. pag.

orthodoxy into his unique theology while still rejecting "organized Christianity" as evil. Blake's concepts of the nature of God, of Man, and of religion shifted dramatically during his life, settling finally into his mature philosophy, expressed in the major epics.

In Poetical Sketches, Blake's theology is in keeping with traditional Church of England doctrine. His major themes may not always spring from that orthodoxy, but all are consistent with it: the equality and dignity of all men; belief in special revelation beyond sensory perception; the destructiveness of self love; the sacredness of all life, and the idea that sin rests in motive, not in act. By the time he writes Tiriel (about 1789), the poet has become disillusioned with the Church, perceiving it to be corrupt and tyrannical, a vassal of the state.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell marks a major turning point in Blake's thought. In it, he indicates the end of his brief flirtation with Swedenborgianism, his complete rejection of predestinarianism, and the development of his theory of contraries. Blake rejects the orthodox view that evil is undesirable and must be purged before Man can enter Eternity; rather, the poet believes that good and evil are merely opposing states of the human soul, each necessary to the well-being of Man. His distrust of the Church has deepened, for the Church seeks to defeat evil (desire) in order to exalt good (reason), not realizing that to enthrone the one and destroy the other will ruin Man. In addition, Blake has seen the true evil allowed to exist in society, evil ignored and sometimes condoned by the Church: poverty, hunger, homelessness, exploitation of children

in the labour force, and myriad other social ills. True evil, which has nothing to do with what the Church labels "sin," is the denial and degradation of the Divine Humanity.

Each of the three major epics deals with the Fall of Man from Eternity. For Blake, the Fall occurred when the contrary aspects of Man became unbalanced, with one portion of Man (reason or Urizen) claiming dominion over the others. The poet's depiction of the Fall contains three elements: the disunity which caused the Fall, the chaos which characterizes the Fall, and the reunification which reverses the Fall and brings Man once more into Eternity.

Throughout Blake's poetry, the Church of England plays a significant role. In the early poetry, Blake seems to accept and to echo church doctrine, often incorporating orthodox concepts and symbols into his work. His disaffection with the Church becomes more pronounced, and the Church assumes the character of the Archfiend, Satan. Even during this period, however, Blake does not reject the religion of Christ, but only that of organized religion, of the Church. Blake continually refers to himself as a Christian, and prays for his friends in a Christian fashion, or so he indicates in his letters. To Blake's mind, the Church is no longer the true Bride of Christ, the Saviour; she has become the whore of the State, the puppet of natural religion. Her character, inextricably interwoven with Man's Fall and fallen condition, is the focus of this study.

### The Early Work, 1769-1789

Although much of Blake's life was spent struggling financially, it should not be inferred that Blake began life in poverty. At the time of William's birth, his father James was a prosperous hosier in Broad Street, Golden Square. At about age ten, Blake was sent to Henry Pars's drawing school, as he had shown remarkable talent for drawing at an early age, and as the second son, would not inherit the family business. Pars's was the only school that Blake attended, and it was during this period, 1768-9, that he began to work on some of the lyrics which later appeared in Poetical Sketches.

Little indeed is known about Blake's religious practises and beliefs during his early years. Perhaps he attended the same church as his father, who is described by Mona Wilson as "a Nonconformist (probably a Baptist)" and therefore not a practising member of the Church of England.[1] Margaret Lowery disputes this, asserting instead that James Blake was involved with the Moravian fellowship before he became interested in Swedenborgianism.[2] Regardless of which nonconformist belief James and Catherine espoused, it is curious that their infant son

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[1]Mona Wilson, The Life of William Blake, Geoffrey Keynes, ed., 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) 2.

[2]Margaret Ruth Lowery, Windows of the Morning: A Critical Study of William Blake's Poetical Sketches, 1783. Yale Studies in English,93 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1940) 14-5.

should have been christened according to the Church of England rite. Perhaps James was ensuring for his son any benefits of association with the Established Church until such time as the boy could choose for himself, or perhaps he was yielding to familial pressure. Although it is unlikely that the reason for William's christening will ever be known, it is certainly odd that a convinced nonconformist, whether Baptist or Moravian, would allow his son to be baptized, as infant baptism was one of the major points of contention between the Church of England and most nonconformist sects, including both Baptists and Moravians. Whatever the reason, his christening was one of three occasions on which Blake was involved in a Church of England service. The other during his life was his marriage to Catherine Boucher in Battersea Church, and the last was his funeral, which by his own request was conducted according to Church of England tradition and his body buried in the churchyard.

During the period Blake was apprenticed to Basire, a time of change and difficulty in his adolescence, Blake enlarged upon the material later included in Poetical Sketches, poems begun at Pars's. According to the Advertisement, the last of the works therein was completed in 1777, although the collection was not printed until 1783. It is reasonable to assume that the poems were revised and re-worked during that six-year period, but the fact remains that Poetical Sketches is the work of the artist in his youth, and as such reveals something about the development of the poet's philosophy and theology.



It would be a great mistake to use Poetical Sketches as a Blakean treasure map, providing clues to his later world view in his very earliest work. Of course, elements of his later thought may indeed have been germinating during this early period, but it is of little use to read "Samson" as a fledgling Milton, as Northrop Frye has suggested in his book, Fearful Symmetry. The reader should not fall into the trap of beginning with the more mature, more fully developed poetry and trying to trace the apparent strands of the poet's thoughts backwards through his life and works. In so doing, the student of Blake may overlook important early ideas that were eventually abandoned, thinking them insignificant because the poet did not hold with those ideas to the end of his life. By dismissing beliefs that were altered or abandoned, one may lose sight of the influences that may have caused such alterations or complete reversals. Therefore, the works will be dealt with in chronological order, in so far as the chronology is known, in an effort to prevent misreading and erroneous assumptions.

In his book, Energy and Imagination, Morton Paley asserts that "The study of Blake's thought begins with The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." [3] All work before 1790 is dismissed as fragmentary and therefore useless in a study of Blake's philosophy. But no system has ever sprung, fully mature and complete, from the thinker's brain. With Blake, the student is fortunate, for the poet has left a record of his development as a

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[3] Morton D. Paley, Energy and Imagination: A Study of the Development of William Blake's Thought (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970) 1.

poet/philosopher/theologian. It is invaluable to consider the early works in relation to crucial events and to the influence of key figures in youth. Blake's early poetry, like that of most writers, is imitative. He used Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton as tutors and tried to reproduce their effects. In this, he failed dismally, for the poet could not, even at this early stage, be enslaved by another man's system. The seasons poems do not capture the ever-changing sameness portrayed by Thomson, or the comforting inevitability of Spenser's diurnal poetry. Blake's "Samson" lacks the power of Milton's Biblical characters, and King Edward III rings hollow beside the resonance of Shakespeare's histories. This is not to say that the early work is not worth critique, but that it is instructive in a different way than that of later periods. Because the poetic technique is labourious imitation, some critics dismiss the whole of the early work out of hand, not realizing that from it there are insights to be gained into Blake, whose thought at this early stage was as unique as his prosody was conventional. The difficulty arises when he attempts to express his own developing ideas using poetic forms and language unsuited to his theme.

One such theme is Blake's belief in the equality of man. In describing kings, nobles, and commoners, the poet distinguishes only between social class and occupation, never insinuating a difference in the intrinsic worth of one man over another. When referring to men whose occupations were often disparaged, Blake copied his contemporaries by observing the convention of "dignification", choosing words with the most flattering connotation, indicating craft rather than mere labour. In "Gwin,

King of Norway", he uses "husbandman" for "farmer", and "merchant" for "trader". In King Edward III, the King speaks of all Englishmen as equal in virtue and before God, from Edward himself to the least of his soldiers: "Our names are written equal / In fame's wide trophied hall; `tis ours to gild / The letters, and to make them shine with gold / That never tarnishes: whether Third Edward, / Or the Prince of Wales, or Montacute, or Mortimer, / Or ev'n the least by birth, shall gain the brightest fame, / Is in his hand to whom all men are equal;" (i, 25-31). Accident of birth might make a man socially inferior, or bestow upon another advantage or power, but Blake maintained, as did Burns and Cowper, that "a man's a man, for a' that".

Another view which appears in Poetical Sketches is the restrictiveness of reason and Blake's mistrust of sensory perception as the sole means to knowledge. Reason is seen as insufficient and unreliable, as in King Edward III, when Sir John Chandos explains to the Black Prince that "Considerate age, my Lord, views motives / And not acts" (iii, 282-3); the experienced or wise man regards the motives that prompt men, not merely the resultant action. Action is recorded by the five senses, yet something more is required to judge motives. "And taste, and touch, and sight, and sound, and smell, / That sing and dance round Reason's fine-wrought throne, / Shall flee away, and leave him (them) all forlorn; / Yet not forlorn if Conscience is his friend." (iii, 290-3). Swift states that "The Word Conscience properly signifies, that Knowledge which a man hath within

himself of his own Thoughts and Actions." [4] Conscience is the other half of reason, the faculty that allows a man to judge his own motives, or any other thing that cannot be directly experienced by the senses. In "Then she bore pale desire," Conscience is described as "a Guard to Reason, Reason once rarer than the light, till foul'd in Knowledge's dark Prison house. For Knowledge drove sweet Innocence away, and Reason would have follow'd, but fate suffer'd not; then down came Conscience with his lovely band" (K 42). Conscience, which is a sense of moral right and wrong which affects behaviour, is the bound of reason, the moral police charged with saying 'thus far, and no farther.' [5] Blake indicates that until reason becomes experienced, and loses its innocence to worldly knowledge, conscience is unnecessary because evil is not perceived. Self love, ambition, and conceit do not exist in innocence, but only as one gains experience of this world.

The destructiveness of self love and ambition is also a major theme in Blake's early poetry. Self love is likened to Pandora in "Then she bore pale desire", a curse upon mankind that destroys natural ties and blights human relationships, specifically here, the marriage relationship. For Blake at this time, marriage was the closest possible bond between people, the most natural, the

[4] Jonathan Swift, 'On the Testimony of Conscience' in Irish Tracts 1720-1723 and Sermons. The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, IX. Herbert Davis, ed. (Oxford: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1948) 150.

[5] The Oxford English Dictionary defines conscience as: "The internal acknowledgement or recognition of the moral quality of one's motives and actions; the sense of right and wrong as regards things for which one is responsible; the faculty or principle which pronounces upon the moral quality of one's actions or motives, approving the right and condemning the wrong."

most beautiful, yet love of self could corrupt it utterly. From self love arises pride and ambition, two other destructive forces. Pride convinces a man that he is superior to his fellows; ambition prompts him to prove the reality of that superiority by gaining acclaim, wealth, power, or social position. In King Edward III, Sir Thomas Dagworth discusses the nature of ambition with his man, William. Dagworth describes ambition as "the desire or passion that one man / Has to get before another in any pursuit after glory" (iv, 14-5), and as such it is a sin, for Blake believed in the essential equality of man. This discussion of the sin of ambition gives insight into Blake's notion of sin, which lay not in the actions of men, but in the motives behind the actions. Roe states that Blake's system had no place "for a realm in which souls who have violated the arbitrary commands of a tyrannical deity are condemned to everlasting punishment."<sup>[6]</sup> The essence of God is forgiveness; man's error lies in ignoring this basic precept and, rather than forgiving his fellow men, seeks only to advance his selfhood at the expense of others. If Edward fought in France from ambition, he was guilty of sin, according to Dagworth; however, the men who fought with him were not guilty, unless they likewise acted from ambition. To rightly be called sin, an act must consciously be performed from a wrong motive, or from no motive at all, for "'tis a sin to act without some reason." (iv, 36). For Blake, then, a man could not be truly guilty of wrongdoing unless he was

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[6]Roe, Albert. "Blake's Symbolism" in Sparks of Fire: Blake in a New Age. James Bogan and Fred Goss, ed. (Richmond, Calif.: North Atlantic Books, 1982) 82.

aware that it was wrong, or was prompted by a wrong motive, wrong motives being love of self, for "inordinate self-love is the cause of all sin." [7]

Not only does Blake echo Aquinas' assertion that love of self is the foundation of all sin, he also shares Augustine's belief that "sin is nothing else than to neglect eternal things, and seek after temporal things," as Edward seeks glory for himself out of love for himself. Blake possessed a vehement antipathy toward narrow-mindedness and self-imposed blindness to eternity. In King Edward III, the king describes the enemy as fighting in fetters of the mind--how can they be free? Like guilt, freedom is a state of mind in Blake, and as such is available to all men everywhere who are willing to look into eternity with a visionary eye. In "Contemplation," the young poet states that man is a "slave of each moment, lord of eternity!" Even at this early stage, eternity was very real to Blake: the same boy who saw angels in the branches of trees, and God Himself as He peered in the window at him, had not outgrown his conviction that the realms of eternity are present in, though clouded by, this material world, and that Man was the preeminent being in both spheres.

Because this world is a distortion of eternity, Blake views death as a freeing from bondage. Sir Thomas Dagworth speaks of the souls who will leave the prisonhouse of mortality to be exalted in immortality, for "those that fall shall rise in victory." (v, 38). This sounds remarkably like the preaching one

[7] St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, vol. 25, Ia2ae. 71-80 (London: Blackfriars, 1969) 173. (Ia2ae. 77.4).

*so far as we know,*

would have encountered in eighteenth-century England. Although in life Blake attended services in the Church of England only twice, he would doubtless have been familiar with the tenor of the sermons of his day, as many were issued in printed form and widely discussed in learned circles. Although he rejected the Established Church, Blake maintained several fundamental doctrines, such as the view that death is a passage from this world to another, far better one where there is neither pain, nor evil, nor ignorance, and man is reborn into the state in which he is meant to live throughout eternity. The poet does not believe that death, or the act of dying, was an easy thing; rather, he describes it as a trial, a hard parting where one is truly alone and comfortless. In "The Couch of Death", Blake portrays a death-bed scene where a mother and sister attend a dying young man. He describes the 'valley of shadow' in traditional terms; death is a dark valley with no comfort whatsoever for the pilgrim (K 35.13-19). The boy despairs, but his mother reminds him that there is a God to whom he may look for succour (K 36.1-3). He responds that he dare not presume to call upon God, for he is sinful, yet asks that those present pray for him, because he walks through the void between the material world and eternity and can see beneath him the eternal fire (K 63.4-12). This is the only reference in Blake's early poetry to the traditional view of hell. Although the dying boy is convinced that in his sinfulness he cannot be acceptable to God, he is not consigned to the eternal fire (36.27-36). Perhaps his confession saved him, or perhaps the prayers of friends and family took effect, for at the end, "the youth breathes out his soul with joy into eternity"

(K 36.36). Or perhaps Blake makes the same distinction between sins as does Aquinas, believing that "venial sin incurs temporal punishment, whereas mortal sin incurs eternal punishment." [8] The youth felt himself to be sinful, but perhaps those sins he recalls were of a venial nature, and so would not condemn him to eternal damnation. It is reasonable that anyone with an interest in religion and theology such as Blake's would have encountered the idea of mortal and venial sin, and the punishment meted out for each.

Certainly Blake was familiar with the episcopacy of his day, for one of his most telling characterizations is his portrayal of the bishop in King Edward III. Lowery insists that

"The characters in King Edward III, while more fully portrayed than the action is outlined, are not yet fully realized. Blake selected well-marked types of characters—a prince, a bishop, a man of commerce, and a warrior; but he could not give them personality enough to lift them from the level of the type, or to give them much individuality in their separate classes." [9]

There is indeed little individuality of character in the dramatic personae. There is none of the desperation of Lear, nor the exultance of Prince Hal, nor the jollity and scheming of Falstaff. Blake's characters are very much stock characters, which leave the play rather flat, but which are ideal for the purpose of this discussion. If he were not a stock character, the individuality and idiosyncracies of the bishop might obscure the type; as it stands, the reader has a clear picture of what Blake imagined a Bishop to be. It is unfortunate that the Bishop

[8] Aquinas, 41.

[9] Lowery, 122.



appears only briefly in scene two, but nevertheless there are indications in the dialogue as to the nature of the Bishop. His most obvious characteristic is his political activism, as he attends a conference between the Queen, the Duke of Clarence, and various other lords, a man sought out for advice, though not necessarily of a spiritual nature. Indeed, the Bishop mentions God not at all, and heaven only once, and then as the bestower of England's right to maritime supremacy. He confesses that in contemplation, his mind is filled with his gardens and fields, with secular concerns of industry and commerce, and he includes himself in a statement regarding "tradesmen, / Looking to gain of this our native land." (ii, 34-5). The spiritual aspect of the Bishop is lost as he discusses tactics for manipulating merchants; his concern is not for lives and provisions lost, but for the disgrace which falls on English ships in defeat.

Blake's Bishop is reminiscent of many bishops in his own time, men who enjoyed the political power of the episcopacy to the exclusion of their church duties. The very nature of the Anglican ecclesiastical organization made this disastrous, for spiritual deterioration, especially high up in the hierarchy, had repercussions in countless parishes and individual lives. The Church of England is organised into parishes, each of which supports a church and at least one local clergyman. The reason behind the system is to ensure that each member of the Church has a place of worship and a spiritual advisor within a reasonable distance, making it possible for all to receive instruction through preaching, and to participate in the Sacraments. The ultimate responsibility for the spiritual well-being of all

members of the Church rested squarely on episcopal shoulders; unfortunately, political considerations often weighed more heavily.[10]

Problems arose for the episcopacy in the form of absenteeism, unfair division of revenue, and the methods of preferment, each of which seems connected to the political function of the bishopric, which Blake touches upon in King Edward III. Blake's Bishop must, for the sake of historical accuracy, be a Roman Catholic, as during the reign of Edward III, to be Christian was to be Roman Catholic; however, by the Eighteenth Century, the previous glory and ascendancy of the Catholic Church in England had been fully eclipsed by the Church of England, while the Catholics became a persecuted minority. The reader may assume, that Blake's knowledge of the episcopate is derived from the Church of England, and that his criticism is levelled at the Church of England Bishops of his own time, rather than at the Roman Catholics of Edward III's day.[11]

Anglican Bishops and Archbishops are members of the House of Lords. Twenty-six of them sat in the House during the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries. Bishops were voting members of the House, expected to be present in London for Parliamentary session. Attendance in London made visitation of the diocese difficult, as roads were often poor in the best conditions and impassable in foul weather. Some of the sees were so far removed

[10]G.M. Trevelyan, English Social History (London: Longmans, Green and Company, Ltd., 1944) 354-362.

[11]Charles Raymond Beazey, "The Established Church, 1715-1815" in Social England vol. v, H.D. Traill and J. S. Mann, ed. (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1904) 546-560.

from London as to make visitation impossible except during the long summer breaks in Parliamentary session. However, not all Bishops were concerned about visiting their dioceses; during the the six years in which Hoadly, a contemporary of Blake, was Bishop of Bangor, he never visited his see, despite the triennial visitation rule. Indeed, "many members of the bench regarded retirement to their sees as having somewhat of the nature of an exile, from which they desired speedily to escape." [12] Many preferred the life and influence they enjoyed in the city, and the desire to remain near the seat of secular power often overcame responsibility to provide spiritual guidance in the provinces.

In this, Blake's Bishop is typical. His place is obviously at court, where he enjoys the favoured position of adviser to the Queen and the Duke of Clarence. Rather than residing in his diocese, or engaging in visitation rounds, the Bishop is content to remain at court. Even as an adviser, his thoughts are turned, not to the spiritual well-being of his country, but rather to her commerce. His character, however briefly defined, is not one to be content with the dull existence of administering a diocese, when he can have an impact on affairs of state. Even life in one of the cathedral towns could not compare to life in the city, at court as an adviser to the crown, with influence and knowledge beyond that of most men in the kingdom.

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[12]Norman Sykes, Church and State in England in the XIIIth Century. The Birkbeck Lectures in Ecclesiastical History, delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge, 1931-3 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1934) 94.

The Bishop in King Edward III discusses his gardens and his fields in a fashion that indicates his holdings are no small concern. This may be due, in part, to the Bishop's stipend, for the different sees had widely disparate incomes, and the division was rarely based on grounds of greater responsibility, larger area, or a greater number of parishioners and clergy involved. Generally, the difference between dioceses was purely one of prestige, which was reflected in the stipend attached, as illustrated by the £450 paid per annum paid to the Bishop of Bangor as opposed to the £5000 paid per annum to the Bishop of Winchester, or the £6000 to Durham.[13] The Bishops had to protect and encourage their private secular enterprises in order to remain living in the style they deemed appropriate, although such considerations again distracted them from religious concerns. Small wonder that Blake's Bishop is portrayed as preoccupied with his lands, with industry, and with commerce. Equally detrimental to the cause of the Church was the dependence of some of the poorer prelates upon political allies and the temptation to surrender their independent judgment to manipulation in order to receive a better living. Regardless of motivation--pride, ambition, or simple economic necessity--the Bishops of Blake's time were primarily political creatures, for whom spiritual and episcopal considerations came second, if at all.

The political involvement of the Hanoverian bishops, the extent to which the higher positions in the Church were being filled in the eighteenth century by the younger sons of

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[13]R.K. Webb, Modern England (London: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1969) 40.

aristocratic and gentry families, and the fantastically disproportionate incomes from one church post to another led to many abuses: non-residence, in which the incumbent would draw the income and pay a curate (often poorly) to conduct the services; pluralism, or the holding of more than one church appointment at the same time for the sake of the income; nepotism and favouritism; and what was very like political servility.[14]

Perhaps Blake's Bishop was one who had risen to his station through such assistance, intended by his "sponsor" to be a political rather than religious figure. In fact, Blake may have patterned the Bishop in King Edward III after some specific member of the Episcopate of his own day, for many resembled Blake's Bishop.

The seven or eight years between the completion of Poetical Sketches in 1777 and the composition of An Island in the Moon (1784-5) marked a period of significant change in the life of the poet. It was at this time that Blake was introduced by his friend and fellow artist, John Flaxman, to a circle of artists that met regularly at the home of Mrs. Harriet Mathew, the wife of the Reverend Anthony Stephen Mathew. Wilson describes the group as representing "what was best in the cultured middle class which had grown up during the eighteenth century, intelligent, industrious, philanthropic, superbly didactic, pleased with themselves and their productions, but not wholly impervious to other influences." [15] It was through the influence of Mrs. Mathew, who persuaded her husband to share printing costs with Flaxman, that Poetical Sketches was produced in 1783. The printed copies were given to Blake, but in the end

[14]Webb, 59.

[15]Wilson, 21.

they were neither published nor offered for sale, but distributed privately.

In An Island in the Moon (circa 1784-85), Blake lampoons the philosophies, styles, and conventions of his day. It is generally assumed that the characters resident on the island, which is indistinguishable from eighteenth-century England, represent the members of the circle at Mathew's, and that Blake parodies the eccentricities of his acquaintances. This is entirely possible, but as yet no one has adequately proven the identity of all those included. Inflammable Gass is identified as Joseph Priestly, the radical Unitarian minister who discovered oxygen. Jack Tearguts may be Jack Hunter, a surgeon described as the founder of modern surgery, while Steelyard is probably John Flaxman. Of these characterizations, it is interesting to note that Blake portrayed himself as Quid the Cynic, one who in classical Greece would disdain ease or pleasure, or who, in Blake's time, would have little faith in the possibility of human sincerity or goodness. It is uncertain whether Blake saw himself as disdainful of pleasure or sceptical of human virtue; perhaps Quid is a mixture of both. Unfortunately, An Island in the Moon is unsuccessful as satire and makes poor drama. As an experiment, it is not an utter failure, for although it is not Blake at his best, the play does provide further insight into the author's attitudes toward organized religion in general, and the Established Church in particular, as well as toward the devotion to things spiritual evidenced by his contemporaries. In chapter four, Mrs. Nannicantipot, having been accused of ignorance of the Scriptures and hindering her husband from going to church,

asserts that one can be just as good at home as at church. It is tempting to assume that here Mrs. Nannicantipot is voicing the views of the author, who, it will be remembered, entered the Church of England for divine services on only two occasions.

Mrs. Nannicantipot's statement, whether echoing Blake's belief or not, is in keeping with some sentiments of her time regarding religion. If persons may be just as good, just as righteous, just as close to God at home, why bother going to a service that may be conducted by a minister like Inflammable Gass (Priestly), who would not go to church himself, were he not in a position to profit from doing so.

It is scarcely surprising that a sensitive and visionary spirit like Blake would be uncomfortable in such a setting, and would find it possible to be just as good at home. Although an artist, appreciative of form, of colour, of contrast, of beauty in all its manifestations, Blake was also a philosopher, whose soul stretched toward the unseen God; as such, he could hardly be content with the Established Church of his time, with its lethargy, its inner turmoil, its reluctance to deal with the social issues at hand.

An Island in the Moon describes the evils of society and efforts to allay them. Obtuse Angle sings a song in chapter nine about the virtues of Sutton, who with his own resources built a home for impoverished youth and elderly men. Sutton's goodness, which has nothing whatsoever to do with religion or the church, far surpasses the virtues of Locke, who prided himself on being a devout Christian, or Sherlock, the Tory High churchman. Locke had sought to support the Church and aid society by pointing out

the reasonableness of Christianity, the unity between mind and spirit. Sherlock supported the primacy of the Church of England by upholding the need for the Corporation and Test Acts, believing that it is necessary to protect the majority of the nation from the enthusiasm of a few.[16] Both men wrote books in service to their ideals, but in so doing did not aid mankind as much as Sutton, who realized his ideas in a building of brick and stone to help those who were incapable of helping themselves.

Not only individual members, but the Church as a whole is criticized for its lack of care and concern for people in trouble. An Island in the Moon contains the first known draft of the poem that later appears in Songs of Innocence, "Holy Thursday". The scene described is the annual service held for all the Charity Schools in London--i.e., poor children's schools, whose income was provided by voluntary subscriptions of the rich. Such services had been conducted on the first Thursday in May since 1704, and in St. Paul's since 1782. The "grey & blue & green" refers to the colours of the schools' uniforms.

For Blake, children and childhood represented a unique state of innocence, irrevocably lost in maturity. Such innocence carries with it an understanding of truth untainted by cynicism or skepticism. The children are indeed the flowers of London town, uniquely equipped in their innocence to meet God and worship Him in spirit and truth. Yet Blake subtly elicits from the reader, not praise for those who allow the children one

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[16]Edward Carpenter, "Toleration and Establishment:2 Studies in a Relationship" in From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962. ed. Geoffrey F. Nuttall and Owen Chadwick (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1962) 304.



service per year, but outrage that one is all they are given. The children are portrayed as lambs, at once identifying them with the Lamb of God, and recalling those led "as lambs to the slaughter". Blake emphasizes their innocence and their nearness to God with the word 'beneath' in the phrase "Beneath them sit the reverend men, the guardians of the poor" (ll.18). One wonders if Blake refers to them as guardians who keep the poor children safe, or who keep the children poor, thereby guarding and strengthening their own position, much as Herod did by literally slaughtering the Holy Innocents in an attempt to forestall the influence of Christ. To Blake's mind, childhood was meant to be a time of laughter and play on the green, as in the first draft of "The Nurse's Song", which appears in An Island in the Moon. Children are not meant to waste the spark of their youth and innocence in a rigid system of education or slowly killing themselves in workhouses or as chimney sweeps. Roe asserts that for Blake,

Organized religion is the worst of all, for it claims for itself divine authority and lends its sanction to the political and economic tyrannies which realize its usefulness as a repressive tool. Claiming to uphold the moral law as decreed by God, it in reality commits the supreme apostasy of setting Satan up for worship under the name of God." [17]

Surely the 'reverend men' know that the fault for the children's plight lies with the social system, with the unwillingness of good men to improve their lives. It is the responsibility of these very reverend men to right the wrongs suffered by innocent children, yet all they seem able to manage is a single annual

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[17]Roe, 46.

church service in St. Paul's, a service which feeds their own vanity but does little to benefit the children, who are far closer to God than the gentlemen beneath them. Claiming concern for the children's spiritual well-being, they succeed only in appearing devout, thereby setting up their own holiness for praise.

The collection of poems Songs of Innocence emphasizes the joy and beauty of childhood, of Innocence. Blake's view of Innocence at this time in his life is close to that of orthodox Christianity, Innocence being the state in which virtue is natural and vice is unimaginable. The Church maintains that Innocence was lost for all mankind at the Fall, whereas Blake believed children to be innocents, but in all other particulars, priest and poet would agree. Innocence is carefree and joyful, trusting and trustworthy, loving and blissfully ignorant of evil. Sometimes perplexed by what it sees, it nevertheless believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things, having infinite faith in Goodness. Perhaps as a result of this faith, or because it is pure in heart, Innocence is able to see God and to speak of Him with confidence.

Deity portrayed by Blake in this collection is very much the same as Deity described by the Church of his time, and as Deity seen in tradition. Familiar symbolism is employed in the poems: Lamb of God, God the Father, Good Shepherd, Great Physician. In "The Lamb", the speaker is questioning a lamb, asking in stanza one if it knows its Creator, and describing in positive terms the kind gifts bestowed on the simple creature by a beneficent Deity. In stanza two, the speaker has become a preacher, telling

the lamb of Jesus, the One called by his name--Lamb of God--who became a little child and by whose name all are called. By the last two lines, the speaker/preacher has become a priest, offering benediction and blessing: "Little Lamb, God bless thee! / Little Lamb, God bless thee!" The poet mentions only the coming of the Christ child, avoiding the issues of sin, judgment, the crucifixion, and redemption, and stresses only the nursery Jesus: "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild. Thou became a little child...." Doubtless this is because sin and guilt are foreign to those in Innocence; neither the child nor the lamb to which he speaks understands the need for "the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world" to "have mercy upon us".[18]

"The Divine Image" goes beyond "The Lamb" and acknowledges distress, the contrary of delight, but the emphasis is still upon the positive, for while all pray in distress to Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love, all return thanks for blessings as well. Blake's description of God incarnate is instructive. It is arguable that Blake could be describing man deified, but such an interpretation is not consistent with the other Songs, for it seems that the poet's theology is still rather conventional with regard to the Deity: "For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love / Is God, our father dear, / And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love / Is man his child and care", or "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." [19] The noblest attributes of man are those he shares

[18] "The Litany", The Book of Common Prayer.

[19] Genesis 1.27.

with God, but as man is finite in his understanding, when he prays, he prays to a God consisting of the virtues found in men, for it is in human form that God reveals himself to mankind.

"The Divine Love" is reminiscent of a church hymn. In fact, the first line seems familiar, as it echoes the lyrics of a Foundling Hospital Collection written in 1774: "Spirit of mercy, truth and love."<sup>[20]</sup> Although the metre and rhyme scheme vary somewhat, the sentiments are similar. Blake says "Then every man, of every clime," where the hymn says "In every clime, by every tongue," referring to those who pray. In both poems, God's blessings and aid are available to all men everywhere. We have seen that Blake believed in the essential equality of man; it is not surprising to note that Blake believed that all had equal access to God. Perhaps this is because all share in the human form divine, which makes no distinction between Jew and Greek. "And all must love the human form, / In heathen, turk, or jew; / Where Mercy, Love, & Pity dwell / There God is dwelling too."

Blake is a champion of love for one's neighbour and concern for those exploited and abused. Long before Dickens was to write of *Hard Times* and through his novels call attention to the dreadful conditions endured by children labouring in factories and as chimney sweeps, Blake penned a *Song of Innocence* decrying the plight of London's young sweeps. In "The Chimney Sweeper," the speaker is a young boy whose mother has died and whose father has sold him into a type of slavery before the child was able to speak properly. The lad tells of sweeping chimneys and of

[20] The New English Hymnal (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1986) 323.

sleeping in soot, yet the tone is neither angry nor bitter. An Innocent, he accepts his life without recriminations toward any, and manages to comfort one of his fellows, Tom Dacre, in a singularly tender fashion, explaining that since his head was shaved, the soot could no longer spoil his blonde curls. The speaker then recounts Tom's dream:

That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & Jack,  
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,  
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;  
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,  
And wash in a river, and shine in the Sun."

"The Chimney Sweeper" 11-16

The thousands of sweeps are not imprisoned in literal coffins, but in the black shroud of virtual slavery (symbolized by the blackness of the soot engrained in their skin and clothing). During this period, the sweeps in the cities were young lads because their size enabled them to reach places a grown man could never hope to reach. There were no child labour laws limiting the minimum age of a sweep, nor regulating the number of hours one could work in a single week, nor setting base salary, nor ensuring that the children received proper care or education. The lads worked long hours under hazardous conditions, ate poorly, often slept in the open, and had no access to sanitation or medicine; consequently, the mortality rate was astronomical, for the boys were susceptible to bronchial and pulmonary disease from inhaling large quantities of soot. Yet in their Innocence, the boys wait patiently for the Angel of Death to pass over and release them from the black coffin of their life and set them

free in eternity to laugh and play as they never could in life. It Frye often equates rivers in Blake with the River Jordan [c.f., Fearful Symmetry, p. 367]. The Jordan is where John baptized sinners as a symbol of repentance, and that the sweeps also come for remission of sins. However, the boys in this poem are Innocents who have no concept of sin and consequently none of redemption. If the river is Jordan, the boys come as Christ came: sinless, but willing to participate in ritual cleansing. Perhaps the river is the entrance to the Promised Land, as it was for the Israelites. Or perhaps the river has a healing effect, washing away the taint and corruption of society, as Naaman, the Syrian general, came to wash in the Jordan to be free of the leprosy he contracted through contact with 'unclean' men. Blake's intent can never be certainly known, but any or all of these interpretations might have been in the poet's mind. Regardless, the sweeps are freed by death and pass, cleansed, into the joy of eternity, as did the youth in "The Couch of Death."

To this point, then, Blake is consistent in his views toward death as a step into eternity, and dying is still described in traditional images of the valley of the shadow, coffins of black, and an angel of death, while heaven is the equally familiar land of joy, of light and laughter. Equally traditional are Blake's assurances of the care and concern of Deity for his creatures, especially children. Guardian angels recur in Songs of Innocence, protecting their charges from harm and bestowing blessings upon them, as in "Night":

They look in every thoughtless nest, / Where birds are  
 cover'd warm;  
 They visit caves of every beast, / To keep them all from  
 harm.  
 If they see any weeping / That should have been sleeping,  
 They pour sleep on their head, / And sit down by their bed.

"Night" 17-20

They keep predators away from the sleepers, but should one manage to claim a victim, the angels receive each spirit into eternity. In "The Little Boy Found", no mere angel watches the boy, but God himself appears to comfort the child and lead him back to his mother. Blake's God is intimately concerned with the lives of men, so much so that He became incarnate to bring peace to men. At this point, Blake still acknowledges the stamp of God on mankind, and has not discarded the notion of Deity outside man. He describes Christ's infancy in "A Cradle Song":

Sweet babe, in thy face / Holy image I can trace.  
 Sweet babe, once like thee, / Thy maker lay and wept for me,  
 Wept for me, for thee, for all, / When he was an infant  
 small.  
 Thou his image ever see, / Heavenly face that smiles on thee,  
 Smiles on thee, on me, on all, / Who became an infant small.  
 Infant smiles are his own smiles; / Heaven & earth to peace  
 beguiles.

"A Cradle Song" 21-22, 25-26, 29-30

As in all Blake's poetry, innocents are closest to God, to eternity, yet all men are included in his care, as shown in "On Another's Sorrow." God himself, who was infant and man, is near to all, replacing grief and sorrow with his joy.

"The Voice of the Ancient Bard" is the last poem in Songs of Innocence and serves as both an invitation to youth to experience truth unclouded by doubt, and a warning to avoid the endless maze

of folly. Christ's rebuke of the Pharisees is recalled by the last three lines:

They stumble all night over bones of the dead,  
And feel they know not what but care,  
And wish to lead others, when they should be led.

"The Voice of the Ancient Bard," 9-11

Christ likened the Pharisees to whitened sepulchers, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness: outwardly clean and fresh, like the new-born truth of line three, yet inwardly a crypt full of hypocrisy and corruption. He also calls them blind guides, men who seek to lead spiritually, but who are so needful of guidance themselves as to be thought blind.[21] The poet is warning youth against following another man's interpretation of truth, but he deliberately chooses words that remind one of Matthew 23 in order to reinforce Christ's warning against the religious leaders of his time. In this way, Blake obliquely warns the reader against the religious leaders of his own time, who

bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men... [who] shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

St. Matthew 23.4-6,13

The hypocrisy of the learned churchmen of Blake's time may have been one of the reasons he disassociated himself from the Church of England. Like the New Testament Pharisees, many eighteenth-century churchmen went about their ways without

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[21]St. Matthew 23.24-27.



bothering with starving widows and orphans, London's destitute, proud that once every year they provided one service on Holy Thursday for the charity school children. One can almost hear Blake saying "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." (St. Matthew 23.3).

Such hypocrisy is also discussed in Lavater's "Aphorisms on Man" (London 1783), and Blake annotated his copy extensively; in his comments upon Lavater's writings, the reader glimpses Blake's own attitudes toward sin, death, the nature of God, Christianity, and organized religion (the Church). Recall Blake's "Holy Thursday": those who congratulate themselves on their religion are hypocrites, for the single service for the children accomplishes nothing but to set up those pious men for praise from society. They wish to appear saintly, but their self-righteousness is a sham, and obviously so in light of the children's innocence and relationship to God. It is this sort of hypocrisy Blake hated, and could be one reason he chose to disassociate himself from the Established Church. Such hypocrites could be 'cold in their Christian convictions yet as vehement as any' (292); Blake says that "There is no other devil [than 'him who prays and bites']; he who bites without praying is only a beast." The hypocrite is the devil himself, for he can pray to God while maliciously destroying God's creation and his fellow creatures.

Aphorism 342 was modified and extensively commented upon by Blake, who alters 'superstition' to 'hypocrisy' and 'superstitious' to 'hypocrite': "Superstition always inspires

littleness, religion grandeur of mind: the superstitious raises beings inferior to himself to deities." Blake added that

No man was ever truly superstitious who was not truly religious as far as he knew.  
 True superstition is ignorant honesty & this is beloved of god and man.  
 I do not allow that there is such a thing as superstition taken in the strict sense of the word.  
 A man must first decieve [sic] himself before he is thus Superstitious and so he is a hypocrite.  
 Hypocrisy is as distant from superstition as the wolf from the lamb.

(K 75)

Superstition, then, is not a negative quality in the same way hypocrisy is. Hypocrisy endeavors, for whatever reason, to simulate virtue, whereas superstition is honest, misguided belief. Blake condemns hypocrisy as destructive, fraudulent, while superstition is tolerated as innocently misdirected. In each case, it is the motive behind the action that is important for Blake, not the action itself. Feeding the poor is a worthy act, but the motive behind the gift is of more consequence. Conversely, worshipping idols is an empty ritual, but the sincerity of the worshipper endows the action with virtue. One may attend church to be seen doing so; for that one worship is meaningless, while in the same congregation may be one truly convinced of the efficacy of the bread and wine; for that one, hollow ritual is true worship. In the poet's own words: "Superstition has long been a bugbear by reason of its being united with hypocrisy; but let them be fairly seperated [sic] & then superstition will be honest feeling, & God, who loves all honest men, will lead the poor enthusiast in the paths of holiness." (annotation to aphorism 605, K 85).

Here, Blake is in complete agreement with Christ, who charged his disciples to judge motives rather than actions. Like Christ, Blake had no confidence in the religious leaders of his time. Blake underlined Lavater's assertion that the truly religious recognizes his conformity to the superior being in which he believes, which echoes Christ's statement that those who believe are sons of God, and as sons they must necessarily share his attributes. Lavater asks whether or not one who was the epitome of knowledge and power would be God (383), and Blake responds that this is indeed our Lord. Later on, Blake diverges from accepted Anglican Christology, but here, his views are still mainstream Christian.

Lavater wrote little on sin; consequently, Blake's remarks are scarce and keyed to Lavater's text, which asserts that sin is the destruction of order, as in 8 and 225. The most indicative comment on how Blake was beginning to view sin is his note on aphorism 409: "Active Evil is better than Passive Good." (K 77). This concept is repeated and elaborated in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and will be dealt with fully in chapter two, but it first appears in this place, in notes made in or near the year 1788, probably prior to his annotation of Swedenborg's Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, which is said to have influenced The Marriage.

Critics are willing to brand Blake "arch-heretic" at this early stage, without realizing that his true divergence from traditional Christianity occurs rather later [see Gleckner, Blake's Prelude, p. 127f]. Granted, he does not believe in a literal hell, as indicated by his note on aphorism 309, but many of his time shared his scepticism

concerning fire and brimstone. John Locke had demonstrated a universe running smoothly on the principles of reason and logic, and the citizens of that universe were loathe to accept a literal place of eternal punishment brought on them by their own transgressions. For them, as for Blake, "sin and destruction of order are the same." (8, K 65). Retribution comes upon them in the consequences wrought by their disturbance of order. Further, men had become convinced of their own inherent worth, and could not imagine themselves as deserving damnation. One imagines that, in any metropolitan church service at this time, a good portion of the congregation would have to admit scepticism with regard to Hades.

Blake also shares his views on the nature of God and man with many of his church-going contemporaries. God is the God of the well-made universe, visible in his creation. Lavater repeatedly asserts, and Blake agrees in notes and underline, that one need only look at man to see God (408, K 77). True worship, Blake writes, is to love the wisest and best of men, for "where is the Father of men to be seen but in the most perfect of his children?" (549, K 82). Blake also underscored that "He, who adores an impersonal God, has none..." (552, K 82). It would seem that by 'impersonal', Blake means that it is impossible to adore a God that is not a person, for he writes that "Human nature is the image of God" in response to (554 K 83). Lavater asserts that:

The greatest of characters, no doubt, was he, who, free of all trifling accidental helps, could see objects through one grand immutable medium, always at hand, and proof against illusion and time, reflected by every object, and invariably traced through all the fluctuation of things.

(16, K 66)

Blake states that this One was Christ. God indwells all men, just as He became man at the Incarnation. Blake's comment on aphorism 630 is instructive, for in it he incorporates the theology of St. John, of Christ, and of the Church, while asserting his own belief that God is in all His creation, and that everything is in its essence part of the Divine:

It is God in all things that is our companion & friend, for our God himself says: "you are my brother, my sister & my mother," & St. John: "Whoso dwelleth in love dwelleth in God & God in him,"...God is in the lowest effects as well as the highest causes; for he is become a worm that he may nourish the weak. For let it be remember'd that creation is God descending according to the weakness of man, for our Lord is the word of God & every thing on earth is the word of God & in its essence is God.

(K 87)

Blake's God is creative, and it is in the poet's creativity, in his wisdom, in his love, that he shares in the attributes of the Deity, for "As the interest of man, so his God—as his God, so he." (13). For Blake at this time, God was uniquely in Christ, yet God is in all men in varying degrees, and may be seen in all creation. Physical creation is provided by God as a place where man might be redeemed, which indicates man is in need of redemption prior to creation of the world, an idea that Blake developed in "Visions of the Daughters of Albion".

The nature of man is another theme running through Lavater's Aphorisms. First, man is constant: "As the present character of a man, so his past, so his future. Who knows intuitively the history of the past, knows his destiny to come." (43, underscored by Blake). Man, individually and collectively, is forever the same once all pretense is stripped away. Just as man is

unchanging, he is also a hybrid of good and evil—none is entirely virtuous, nor is any wholly wicked. Responding to 489, Blake writes that

"Man is a twofold being, one part capable of evil & the other capable of good; that which is capable of good is not also capable of evil, but that which is capable of evil is also capable of good. This aphorism seems to consider man as simple & yet capable of both good & evil: now both evil & good cannot exist in a simple being, for thus 2 contraries would spring from one essence, which is impossible; but if man is consider'd as only evil & god only good, how then is regeneration effected which turns the evil to good? by casting out the evil by the good? See Matthew xii Ch., 26, 27, 28, 29 v." (K 80)

Here Blake is drawn to the concept of duality of human nature in man, yet Christian background insists that it must be possible for evil to become good, while it must be equally impossible for good to truly fall. Note that Blake's comments on 248 and 533 indicate that he has not come to terms with the idea of evil as an integral part of experience. For Blake, a man cannot truly be an enemy, for if he acts ignorantly, he is not really an enemy; if maliciously, he is no man. "Man is the ark of God" (note on 533), the vessel containing the essence or presence of deity, and as such, cannot be corrupt. The young poet has not yet accepted the necessity of contraries, of the marriage of heaven and hell, but he is beginning to think in such terms.

During 1788, the year he was likely annotating Lavater's Aphorisms on Man, Blake was etching a series of three poems: "There Is No Natural Religion" (first and second series), and "All Religions Are One." In "There Is No Natural Religion", Blake begins with Locke's premise of the tabula rasa, or blank slate, which is man's experience, blank at birth and impressed

only by sensory perceptions. Man can only perceive through his senses, and by his reasoning, can only compare and judge those things in his experience. Following this argument, Blake says that no one can intuit anything foreign to his own perceptions, for "From a perception of only 3 senses or 3 elements, none could deduce a fourth or fifth." (K 97). Further, man is capable only of perceiving this world, as his senses are merely finite; therefore, he can have only "natural or organic thoughts." (K 97). This being true, man is limited in his desires, for he can only desire what he has perceived. He could have no desire for eternity, or for God, having been unable to perceive either directly through his senses. Blake asserts that deduction from sensory experience could not lead one beyond the natural world, while Locke is quite certain that, from the creature one can deduce the Creator, or, from a watch, one can posit the Watchmaker. For Locke, all things are available to man through his experience and the exercise of reason--there need be no supernatural revelation, no extraordinary intuition or imagination of things spiritual: Christianity is wholly reasonable. Blake is convinced that there must be more to man than sense and reason, which he variously calls the 'poetic', 'prophetic', or 'poetic genius.' Blake begins the first series with Locke's theory and then follows his own logic to reach a far different conclusion than Locke: "If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again." (K 97). There must be the other, mystical quality to man, which allows him to

perceive the Infinite, and having `seen' it, to desire it and strive toward it. Otherwise, men are reduced to life as little better than beasts, reasoning certainly, but caught in endless tautology, unable to escape through intuition or imagination.

The second series of "There Is No Natural Religion" is Blake's own view: "Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception; he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover." (K 97). Reason, or the sum of knowledge, is not constant, for it changes with each discovery. Proposition III has been lost, unfortunately, so the line of the poet's reasoning is broken, leaving the student an intriguing puzzle, for the next proposition begins "The bounded is loathed by its possessor." Limitations, even within a large sphere, are still limitations, and those upon whom they are imposed will hate both them and that which is responsible for their imposition. It is assumed that these boundaries are imposed by the limitations of pure reason, for Blake echoes the phrase from the first series "same, dull round," which even in a universe, "would soon become a mill with complicated wheels." The reason for this is explained in V: "less than All cannot satisfy man." Mankind naturally wants everything within his grasp, yet if he is incapable of possessing that which he desires, he is automatically damned to eternal despair. Blake could not countenance such an idea, and asserts that "The desire of Man being Infinite, the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite." One who perceives the Infinite in all things, sees God, whereas one who sees `the Ratio' only, who utilizes only reason to the exclusion of intuition or the Poetic Genius--is able to see only himself; his perceptions are clouded



and coloured by the very senses he uses. If man had only his senses to rely upon, he could ultimately see only himself in the physical sphere, but God (the Infinite) is within Man; although few in this world comprehend that reality. To perceive the Infinite in all things is to perceive it in oneself.

"All Religions Are One" begins with an allusion to John the Baptist, the New Testament prophet sent to herald the coming of Christ, the "Voice of one crying in the Wilderness." He continues his discussion of knowledge and experience with the premise that "the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences." Having shown in the first series of "There Is No Natural Religion" that reason is inadequate, of itself, to reveal the Infinite, Blake argues in the second series that man must possess intuition or imagination within himself. Here, he demonstrates that that faculty is Poetic Genius, which is the true man, the body being derived from it. Because all men are alike in form, yet vary infinitely, so are all like in Poetic Genius. Principle 3d reaffirms Blake's belief in the inherent goodness of man—that which comes from the heart is honest and ultimately conforms with truth. All sincere philosophies and theologies spring from the Poetic Genius and are adapted to the 'weaknesses' of every individual. Further, the Poetic Genius is universal, a 'collective unconscious' in which all men share, each adding his individuality, perceptions, and foibles to enrich the whole, which leads to the 5th Principle: "The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy" (K 98). The Judeo-Christian Scriptures are "An

original derivation from the Poetic Genius" (K98), necessitated by the limitations of sensory perception. One imagines that not only the Testaments, but also the Messiah, was thus necessitated, for "God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is." (K 98) [22] Yet regardless of the various derivations, all men and all religions are alike, although infinitely various, and have one source, which is the true man, the Poetic Genius. Where Locke would say that all venerate the same Deity because all discover Him through the same vehicle (sensory perception and reason), Blake indicates that all religions are one and all worship the same God because all men share in the Poetic Genius. If one discounts the means, Blake the Visionary and Locke the Scientist agree that all who worship God worship Him in spirit and truth.

Although Blake believed, as evidenced in "All Religions Are One," that the body is derivative from the spirit, the two are quite separate. In his annotations to Swedenborg's Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, Blake notes: "Observe the distinction here between Natural & Spiritual as seen by Man. Man may comprehend, but not the natural or external man." (K 90). Swedenborg asserts that there are three degrees of existence: natural, spiritual, and celestial, and that at birth man enters into the first of these. This increases in him until ultimately he reaches the "Summit of Understanding." Blake heartily disagrees: "Study Sciences till you are blind, Study

[22]By the time Blake writes the Epics, his theology on this point is far more clear, as Man, who is the Human Form Divine in Eternity, falls and becomes incarnate that he may redeem himself and so 'regain paradise.' But Blake has not yet reached that conclusion, and his early uncertainty manifests itself here in unclear argument.

intellectuals till you are cold, Yet science cannot teach intellect. Much less can intellect teach Affection. How foolish then to assert that Man is born in only one degree..." (K 92-3). The three degrees cannot be separate and distinct for Blake, though perhaps one or more could be repressed, as he underlines Swedenborg's statement "that Man, so long as he lives in the World, and is Thereby in the natural Degree, cannot be elevated into Wisdom itself..." (p. 219). Swedenborg tells of an incident where angels were instructed to think of something spiritually and afterwards tell him about it, but they could not express themselves in natural ideas. This is due, Blake would say, to the limitations placed on the soul by incarnation, by being forced to perceive all through the senses. By extrapolation, one would understand all if not trapped within the finite, or as St. Paul wrote, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away...For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known." [23]

In the midst of the period in which he annotated Swedenborg and Lavater, and wrote "There is no Natural Religion", "All Religions are One", and Songs of Innocence, Blake was also working on Tiriel, a poem Erdman sees as fundamentally political, for Tiriel is "King of the West". [24]

[23] I Corinthians 13.9,10,12.

[24] David V. Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 133-138.

Critics agree that Tiriell is a tyrannical figure, one who has enslaved his brothers, who now curse him, and suppressed his children, who rebel against his authority. Tiriell once was ruler of the West, and no entity had held more sway in the West than the Christian Church, or Organized Religion. An enthusiastic student of history, Blake may have intended that the three brothers signify the three classes of mediaeval society: Tiriell is "those who pray," or the clergy; Zazel, the enslaved brother, is "those who work"; and Ijim, who wars with spirits in the name of righteousness, represents "those who fight," a crusader of sorts. Raine would have Ijim represent ecclesiastical tyranny, while Tiriell retains his secular kingship, reasoning that, as Ijim is powerful enough to enslave Tiriell, he must therefore stand for the Church.[25] This is too facile, for the Church in Blake's time no longer wielded the political power it had centuries before. Tiriell represents the Church precisely because he is decaying, just as the eighteenth-century clergy and Church have been shown to be declining: Tiriell's house is "as false [as] Matha & as dark as vacant Orcus" (4:87). Ijim is a far more warrior-like character; indeed, his name is found in Swedenborg's True Christian Religion as one infected with a Love of Domination, one of "those who fight." [26]

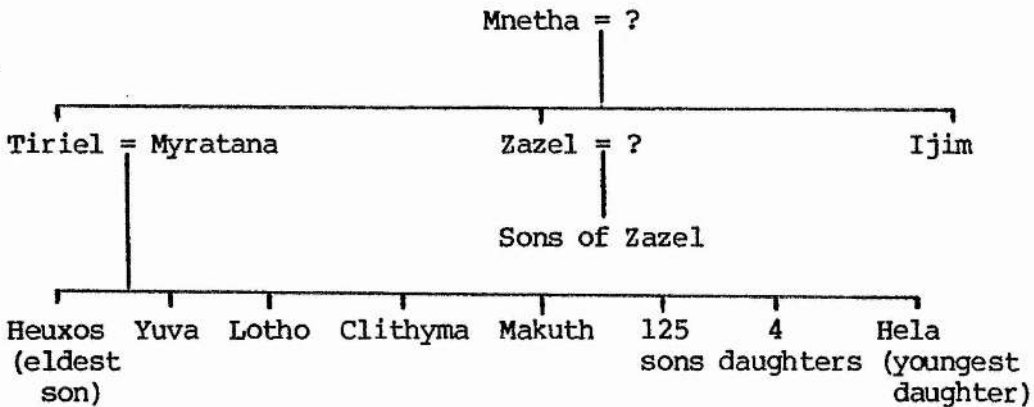
[25] Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) 61.

[26] Emmanuel Swedenborg, The True Christian Religion containing the universal Theology of the New Church, vol. 1, trans. John C. Ager (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1972) 68.

The sources for Blake's character names are highly diverse: Swedenborg and Mallet, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Although he may intend the reader to recall the original associations of Heva (in Hebrew "Havah," or Latin "Eva" for Eve) or Har (in Hebrew "mountain," in Mallet "Wise King"), it is important to recall that Blake is constantly reworking mythology, lending new meanings to old characters and concepts. Blake employs familiar metaphors and allusions, yet invests them with his own meaning. He rarely uses a whole myth or legend, but will use portions of various familiar stories in order to make certain associations. Tiriell includes elements from many different sources, including Lear and Oedipus, as well as the Passover and Joseph stories from the book of Genesis, but Blake's system is his own; while he does borrow names and incidents from other sources, he infuses them with unique significance. It is advisable, therefore, to read Blake with an appreciation for his sources, while remembering that he is creating his own mythology, and will not be enslaved by another man's.

All of the characters mentioned in Tiriell are members of one family; allegorically, they comprise the human family. The generations may be telescoped, perhaps with many names omitted from the family tree between Mnetha and Har, or between Har and Tiriell. Bentley has surmised that perhaps Mnetha is merely a nurse figure, although the allegorical meaning is clearer if the reader assumes that Mnetha is indeed an ancestor of Har and Tiriell, however close or distant that relationship may be. As there is no concrete evidence to support the nurse theory, it is advisable to take Har's word that Mnetha is indeed his mother,

Bentley concludes. He has also mapped out a family tree which illustrates the relationships between the principal characters:[27]



Blake offers no explanation as to where Mnetha came from, or of who Har's father might be. One assumes that, as in many other mythologies, the 'earth mother' needs no consort. Damon felt that Mnetha's name is a transmogrification of 'Athena', the Greek goddess of wisdom and of war, and 'mnemosyne,' the Greek word meaning memory.[28] For the purpose of this discussion, Mnetha is Poetic Genius; she is that entity in which all life and creation originate. She is aged and ageless, older than all yet not debilitated by the effects of aging, for it is she who cares for and protects the senile Har and Heva.

[27]G.E. Bentley, William Blake: Tiriell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) 16.

[28]S. Foster Damon, William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols (New York: Peter Smith, 1924, reprinted 1947) 72.

Har and Heva represent poetry and art, in decline now because of Tiriel's tyrannical rule.[29] It has been suggested that Tiriel is George III, an "old, mad, blind, despised and dying king," as Shelley described him in "England in 1819," for surely the arts in England suffered during his reign.[30] Yet it is equally probable that Tiriel is a tyrant of another kind, a spiritual despot through whose oppressive domination art and poetry have digressed into virtual unintelligibility.

It is interesting to note that Mnetha, Har, and Heva seem to be incarnate concepts rather than mere mortals, while their offspring comprise the human family in generation. For Blake, everything springs from the Poetic Genius and men are simply vessels containing that Genius. When Har fell, his offspring were cursed to be born into the physical world, limited by mortality, and tyrannized by superstition or religion. Tiriel is the clergy, while Myratana represents the Church, the Queen of the Western Plains. The poem opens with Tiriel standing "before the Gates of his beautiful palace," possibly a bishop's palace. The aged tyrant is blind, recalling yet again Christ's description of the Pharisees, the "blind guides" who were the religious leaders of his own time. Myratana, the Church, is fading in death. During the period Blake was likely composing Tiriel, the United States had won independence and established a tolerant but secular state, in which the Church had no role in the political arena, as it traditionally had in Britain. In

[29]Erdman, Prophet 133.

[30]Erdman, Prophet 122-4.

France, the revolution was well under way, and the Catholic church had by this time lost much of its influence. Hailed by many in the English artistic community as the dawning of a new age, the political revolutions in both America and France also served to seriously weaken the influence of organized religion. Perhaps Blake saw this as the beginning of the end for the Church, or perhaps he felt that, even without political upheaval to expedite her demise, the Church of England was already fading in death due to its spiritual lethargy and inward corruption. The blessings of the Church and clergy had become repressive, just as the blessing of Tiriël was a cruel curse (T 1:18). Myratana dies, and her sons arrange for her burial while Tiriël cries: "Bury your mother! But you cannot bury the curse of Tiriël." The Church may be dead and buried as far as her sons are concerned, but her children will be plagued long after by the curse or influence of the Church and clergy on politics, art, poetry, and every other facet of life. The sons of Tiriël, mankind, are indeed "Sons of the Curse"; not cursed by God, but cursed by their belief in God, their enslavement to a concept. They can rid themselves of the organization and leaders of the religious community, but the curse will linger and deprive them of spiritual life and perception of eternity.

Tiriël wanders until "he that leadeth all led him to the vales of Har." When he enters the vale, it is the innocent Har who sees him as he has been, "the king of rotten wood & of the bones of death." Tiriël casts away his staff (crozier), and in so relinquishing the symbol of his authority, becomes a harmless man whom Har and Heva accept. Corruption and tyranny have no



place in Eden, and Tiriël takes his staff once more and leaves. He has not wandered far when he encounters his brother, Ijim, the crusader with a love of domination. If Ijim is indeed the ruling class, it is not surprising that he enslaved Tiriël (T 4:25), for the clergy in Blake's day were subservient to the government as they never had been centuries earlier. Ijim takes Tiriël back to the palace: "they went on together, over hills, thro' woody dales, / Blind to the pleasures of the sight & deaf to warbling birds." Neither is able to see or hear their surroundings, to appreciate or even comprehend reality or the Poetic Genius reflected in creation, for Ijim is interested only in himself and in domination, and Tiriël was blinded long ago by his own tyranny. When they arrive at the palace, Ijim tells Heuxos that he has brought "the Hypocrite" that has plagued him in many guises for years--superstition, or the Church. Each time he thought that he had managed to destroy superstition, it came upon him in a different form, but now he has captured it in the weakened clergy--perhaps it can be destroyed completely and its influence eradicated. The poem becomes confused here, as images from the Passover and the Oedipus legend overlap, but it is clear that Tiriël escapes with his youngest daughter, Hela, leaving thirty of his sons alive "to wither in the palace" (5:34). Like Antigone, Hela leads her blind father, but it is as a slave, not as a loving child that she serves. Hela wishes that Har and Heva would curse Tiriël, but she knows that "they are not like thee! / O! They are holy & forgiving, fill'd with loving mercy, / Forgetting the offences of their most rebellious children, / Or else thou wouldest not have liv'd to curse thy

helpless children." (T 6:25-8). Art and poetry are incapable of causing the sort of destruction Tiriël has wrought, for although they are the victims of impotence and in a state of decline, they transcend evil.

Hela's name is taken from Mallet's Northern Antiquities, where she is the personification of death. In this place, death is the offspring of organized religion, and eventually leads him to his destruction.[31] Hela does lead Tiriël to the Vales of Har, where his last speech echoes the lamentations of the Old Testament prophets. Tiriël states that "men cannot be form'd all alike," that one law for the lion and the ox is tyranny, and although he deleted portions of the passage, Blake asserts here what he will repeat throughout the remainder of his poetry: No law can adequately govern all men. Death has led the clergy back to Eden, but Eden is fallen. In his soliloquy, Tiriël describes the differences between men; his description is hardly what one would expect from the representative of Christ on earth:

"Some nostril'd wide, breathing out blood. Some close shut  
up  
"In silent deceit, poisons inhaling from the morning rose,  
"With daggers hid beneath their lips & poison in their  
tongue;  
"Or eyed with little sparks of Hell, or with infernal brands  
"Flinging flames of discontent & plagues of dark despair;  
"Or those whose mouths are graves, whose teeth the gates of  
eternal death."

(T 8.12-17)

A damning portrait of mankind, which he follows with the question: "Can wisdom be put in a silver rod, or love in a golden bowl?" Can any vessel contain something that transcends it? It

[31]Paul Henri Mallet, Northern Antiquities, vol. 1. (facs., trans. unknown) (New York: Garland Publishing Co., Inc., 1979) 100.

would appear that Tiriél has no faith in the inherent goodness of man, believing that the nature of mortal man is essentially evil, fallen. If Tiriél represents the clergy, his statement in lines 35-40 is especially meaningful, for it contains confession but no repentance:

Such was Tiriél...

Compell'd to pray repugnant & to humble the immortal spirit  
Till I am subtill as a serpent in a paradise,  
Consuming all, both flowers & fruits, insects & warbling  
birds

And now my paradise is fall'n...

(T 8.35-40)

The one who prayed has become the marplot of paradise, and has destroyed all life and all beauty, rendering paradise lost through his own actions. At the end, he can do nothing but utter an ineffectual curse before he dies at Har and Heva's feet. Tiriél is destroyed by the law he created but cannot keep. It is only the religious construct that dies, leaving behind an ineffectual but ever-present curse. Tiriél, or organized religion, has attempted to legislate holiness and through a tyrannical religious code, create a heaven of joy (8.9 deleted), yet in trying "to form mankind in the image he conceives...he finds that he must curb and destroy part of the child to make this possible." [32] Man, having conceived of a deity outside of himself, has submitted himself to a superstitious construct and has formulated a tyrannical religious code, enforced by self-appointed spiritual police, in order to please a paper God.

[32]Bentley, Tiriél 18.

Tiriel is a dark poem, for there is inherent in it no promise of redemption, no hope for the future, only death and a curse. As the date of composition is uncertain, one surmises that this poem was written during a period when Blake was becoming dissatisfied with the revolution in France. Tiriel portrays the death of organized religion, but offers nothing in its place, nor any hope of better things to come. The king is dead! Long live—who? Revolution may overthrow priests and kings, but what follows is a question not addressed in Tiriel.

In 1790, Blake annotated another of Swedenborg's books, Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Providence. He vehemently disagrees with the translator, who writes that "Nothing doth in general so contradict Man's natural and favourite Opinions as truth"—for Blake, "Truth is Nature"; any other view is "Lies & Priestcraft." The translator continues, saying that although the truths of heaven are obscure and perplexing to the natural man until he becomes accustomed to spiritual enlightenment, he can eventually "behold it with Satisfaction" (p. xviii-xix). Quid the Cynic comes to the fore here, and amends "—that is: till he agrees to the Priests' interest." Of 185 and 277 Blake says that Swedenborg is as completely predestinarian as Calvin, if not actually worse, for "Predestination after this Life is more Abominable than Calvin's, & Swedenborg is Such a Spiritual Predestinarian...Cursed Folly!" Blake regarded the idea of predestination as the blackest heresy—man must be free to choose, for if he is not, his lot is no better than that of a slave. In this, Blake departs from many of the Nonconformist and radical ideas he is said to have had, and clings staunchly to

traditional teaching. In fact, Blake's comments oppose Swedenborg's in every particular in these annotations, indicating that the poet's flirtation with Swedenborgianism was decisively ended by the collision of tradition and mysticism, although fragments of the resultant philosophical debris surface later on, and are quietly incorporated into his theology, however strenuously he denounces Swedenborg in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

### The Years of Transition, 1790-1795

At some time during the period from 1790 to 1793, Blake composed the most clearly religious poem among his early work, and with it marked a shift in his personal theology. The younger Blake had embraced Swedenborgianism for a time, but his careful study of Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Providence forced him to renounce Swedenborg as a predestinarian, which doctrine Blake found especially hateful. [1] With The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, the poet shuns Swedenborg and attempts to codify his own theological position, while commenting on related concerns, particularly the nature of perception. Before beginning with the body of the poem, it is vital that the reader have a clear understanding of what Blake means when he uses certain terms, especially the words from the title: "marriage", "heaven", and "hell". The word "marriage" signifies a coming together or joining, and has within it the idea of opposites, male and female, in the relationship. For Blake, marriage was more than mere coupling; it was the fusion of opposite principles to form a unified, dynamic whole. Like the Eastern concept of yang and yin, Blake's union of opposites formed a creative tension within the whole, and neither part was complete without the other. Equally, as with yang and yin, a part of each exists at the centre of the other's being and cannot be expelled. Later, Blake incorporated into his mythology the idea of the elements of the

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[1]See p. 65ff for further discussion of the theological differences between Blake and Swedenborg.

whole man having warred amongst themselves, resulting, among other things, in the division of man into male and female as separate entities. Marriage, then, is the re-uniting of the two halves to form the original, creative whole Man.

The two remaining terms are related, for the opposite of heaven is assumed to be hell. Blake often inverts the accepted meanings of words in order to lend impact to his argument, and this he does in The Marriage. The traditional Judeo-Christian associations are reversed, leaving the reader no option but to re-align his thinking. Emery has provided definitions both for Blake's concept of organized Christianity's idea of heaven and hell, as well as for the poet's own ideas on the subject, and will be quoted here at length:

1. Blake's idea of organized Christianity's idea of

Heaven: the place and state of perfect and eternal happiness to be achieved after death as a reward for living in obedience to a negative code of morals dogmatically stipulated by a cabal of priests for the purpose of stifling individuality, desire, impulse, imagination.

Hell: the place and state of eternal punishment (no forgiveness possible) to be suffered after death by those who do not obey that negative code of morals.

2. Blake's own idea of

Heaven: (a) that state in a man here and now when—his senses, reason, passions, and imagination dynamically balanced and mutually cooperative—he achieves the grace of the four-fold vision.

(b) that physical, mental, emotional concord between a man and woman which constitutes connubial bliss.

Hell: (a) that state in a man here and now when—an excess of the rational faculty having destroyed the four-fold balance so that the four faculties war among themselves—he sees no more than the five senses permit; he permits his desires to be confined and action upon desire to be arrested; he accepts the theory of a separate, transcendent God; he accepts the theory of

a soul divided from and finding repugnant the body; he accepts the necessity and righteousness of punishment instead of forgiveness;

(b) that situation in the male-female relationship which occurs when the woman asserts her will against the man's or permits her love to descend into jealous possessiveness: 'In eternity Woman is the Emanation of Man; she has no will of her own...' [2]

What Blake is doing, then, is pointing out the tyrannical influences (religion, government, philosophy, and science) which may destroy the unity in man and cause a series of divorces: body from soul; sex from love; energy from reason; desire from action; imagination from form. The goal is a remarriage of the contraries that have been isolated into the dynamic unity which is Blake's heaven.

"The Argument" begins with the name "Rintrah", who is generally taken to be a prophet. Sabri-Tabrizi states that "...the character of Rintrah in 'The Argument' represents the selfish or false prophet who is punishing not only the people in 'Hell' but also the 'just' man in himself." [3] There is, however, no evidence to support the notion that Rintrah is a false prophet, for although he 'roars' and 'shakes his fires', such behaviour is consistent with the character of a prophet, particularly in the Old Testament. Further, prophets themselves punish no one; they are merely instruments of a higher power. Keynes is perhaps more accurate when he calls Rintrah the wrath

[2] Clark Emery, William Blake: The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1963) 22-23.

[3] G.R. Sabri-Tabrizi, The 'Heaven' and 'Hell' of William Blake (New York: International Publishers, 1973) 71.



of the poet-prophet.[4] Nevertheless, the presence and activity of Rintrah's prophetic voice indicates the imminence of a momentous event.

Structurally, 'The Argument' is divided into two parts, the first being the poetic history of the just man. Originally, the 'just man' was a meek creature making his way along the 'perilous path,' creating order out of chaos: "Roses are planted where thorns grow, / And on the barren heath / Sing the honey bees." The 'just man' here is unified man, the creative man in eternity, who creates a paradise among the perilous paths, which Keynes equates with the "paths of holiness." [5] At this point, although the agent is unclear, the eternal man descends into generation, as indicated by "Red clay brought forth", for the name Adam literally means "red clay". The eternal man is divided into contraries--male and female, righteous and evil, heaven and hell--and the villain (tyranny) who caused the Fall drives the just man into barren climes while the sneaking usurper takes his ease. After the Fall, the just man is the man who serves imagination, while the serpent or Devil is the man who serves convention, a hypocritical imitation of the just man. The entire poetical section of 'The Argument' reflects through its images the duality of man's nature, now substantially divided by the Fall into generation: just/villain; grow/barren; rose/thorn; honey bee/sting; brought forth/tomb; ease/peril; mild/rages;

[4]Geoffrey Keynes, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) n.p. (pl. 2).

[5]Keynes, Marriage n.p.

lion/serpent; bleached/red.[6] Man is divided, each entity separate and isolated, warring with one another, when suddenly the prophet stirs to herald the new age when the contraries of man's nature are re-united by a 'marriage of heaven and hell.'

The second section of 'The Argument' announces in prose the advent of the new age, stating that it is thirty-three years since the beginning of the new heaven, and that the eternal hell is reviving. If The Marriage was composed in 1790, then 1757 would mark the advent of the new heaven, the year Swedenborg purportedly saw his vision of the Last Judgment, and, perhaps significantly, the year of Blake's own birth. Interestingly, the heaven described is 'new,' while hell is 'eternal.' If "Good is the passive that obeys Reason," and "Good is Heaven," then Heaven is passive submission to religious or moral codes and is made new with each new set of religious laws or moral codes. Conversely, Hell is eternal, for the energy which produces 'the active' is eternally the same. The "Eternal Hell revives," and casts off Swedenborg's writings, the winding sheets that sought to keep energy bound in organized religion, leaving them to moulder in the tomb. Here Blake plainly states one of the major theses of The Marriage: "Without Contraries is no progression...[they] are necessary to Human existence." Nurmi suggests that the contraries of good and evil do not try to destroy each other; they merely pull in opposite directions: "The progression in human life to which they are essential is the progression of

[6]June Singer, The Unholy Bible: Blake, Jung and the Collective Unconscious (Boston: Sigo Press, 1986) 52.

continued creativity; and if it goes anywhere it goes toward fuller realization of the divinity that is in humanity through continued fruits of a life lived with the divine imagination, rather than nature, as the ground of being." [7]

The first portion of 'The Voice of the Devil' deals with the idea of contraries by explaining that they cannot be isolated from one another; to attempt such a separation is to commit the errors contained in "All Bibles or sacred codes." For Blake, body and soul are essentially one, with body as the "portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses." Energy is life, while its contrary, reason, is form and definition. Both are necessary, but, reacting to organized religion's slavish devotion to good (reason), Blake reiterates the importance of energy: "Energy is Eternal Delight." In this section, Blake reveals his attitude towards religion. The rational, traditional, and doctrinal confines of the Established Church allowed no room for Blake's concept of a God that must be approached through means other than reason. Turning to Swedenborg, Blake discovered that all organized religious systems are the same, "reflect[ing] the collective consciousness in which Body was set in opposition to Soul and the church was seen as a positive force arrayed on the side of Soul to combat the drives unleashed by Body which would otherwise be uncontrollable." [8] The error lies in enforcing the dichotomy rather than accepting the essential unity and creative

[7]Martin K. Nurmi, William Blake (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1976) 75.

[8]Singer, 62.

tension between the contraries. As he is one of the Devil's party, Blake tends to overstate the importance of energy, but he is not negating reason; rather, he is denouncing slavish devotion to rationalism.

Having enumerated the errors of organized religion and stated his own views concerning the nature of contraries, Blake proceeds in plates 5 and 6 to apply his theory to the persons of Messiah and Satan, primarily in Milton, the book of Job, and the Gospels. "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling", or "Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid courted by incapacity." Under restraint, desire ceases to be active until it is merely 'the shadow of desire.' In Milton, the usurper, or reason, is Messiah, whereas in Job, he is called Satan; both create a world of punishment.[9] Reason/Messiah believed Desire/Satan to be the one cast out, indicating that it is Reason who has dominion, but the Devil contends that Messiah fell and constructed "heaven" with what he had stolen from hell. In the Gospel account, Reason (Messiah) prays to Energy (Father) for desire (comforter or Holy Ghost) in order that progression may occur, whereas "in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son a Ratio of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost Vacuum!" Milton the theologian echoes the doctrine of the Church, which for Blake makes the Father 'an unescapable despot,' the Son an incarnation

[9] Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1965) 81.

of the infinite God necessitated by religion's dependence on reason and sensory perception, 'an uninteresting abstraction,' leaving no function for the Holy Ghost, who is consequently vacuum. [10] Milton the poet, however, could write "at liberty...of Devils & Hell...because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it." Blake saw Milton's account as being in error in those places he parrots church dogma, while he maintained the truth of the gospel account itself. In Blake's exegesis, Christ does not pray to Milton's tyrant Father; rather, he prays to Energy or Imagination. Blake's trinity, then, is reason, energy, and desire.

The first of the 'Memorable Fancies,' which are a parodies of Swedenborg's 'Memorable Relations', opens with the narrator walking in hell, delighting in "the enjoyments of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity..." The key phrase is 'look like,' as Blake begins to develop another major theme, that of perception. Because the narrator, who is generally identified as Blake himself, is a poet, he is of the devil's party, and his are the perceptions of imagination, the infernal perceptions of energy and desire. The angels see the enjoyments of Genius as torment, for they are slaves to reason and convention, and Genius appears to them as insanity.

When he returned home, possibly referring to the physical world, the narrator saw a Devil writing on the flat-sided steep at the abyss of the five senses, which alludes to Locke's theory

[10] Keynes, Marriage, n.p. (pl. 5).

of tabula rasa. The 'corroding fires' refer to Blake's method of printing, in which he wrote his text on copper plate with ink impervious to acid, then washed the plate in acid to leave the writing and the design in relief. The question written by the devil points out Blake's distrust of sensory perception, for "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" [11] Compared with imagination, the senses are severely limited, so much so that they should not be relied upon at all for evidence supporting dogmatic assertions. Further, it is the limitations of the senses themselves that close off the world of delight; otherwise, man would be free to enjoy it.

In the first 'Memorable Fancy,' the narrator states that, while in Hell, he collected some of the proverbs in order to "show the nature of Infernal wisdom." The proverbs addressed in this discussion deal with two major issues: 1) the necessity of contraries; and, 2) the nature of organized religion and of God.

The first group of proverbs deals with contraries, particularly with active and passive: "He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence"; "The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction"; "Expect poison from standing water"; "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires." The 'active which springs from energy' is always preferable to the 'passive which obeys reason,' even if the only

[11] Erdman traces the origins of this statement to Chatterton's Bristowe Tragedie: "How dydd I know that ev'ry darte That cutte the airie waie Mighte nott fynde passage toe my hearte And close myne eyes for aie?" Prophet, 250.

action possible is murder. Passivity, or enslavement to reason, is poison to the soul, pestilence to the spirit. Reason is necessary as a boundary for energy, but without the active force, reason is an empty shell. This was the cause of Blake's aversion to organized religion: in creating rational, logical explanations for the mysteries of incarnation and redemption, and in systematizing belief into rigid doctrine, religion had lost touch with God, who is life or Energy, and has become an empty tomb, as in 'The Argument.'

The second group of proverbs have as their subject the natures of organized religion and of God. The first proverb on plate 8 states that "Prisons are built with stones of Law; Brothels with bricks of Religion." Just as prisons are necessitated by the existence of the Law, so also are brothels necessitated by the existence of organized religion. Religious doctrine, which calls joy a sin, has built a prison of sorts for those who would defy the Church's moral code regarding sexual expression, just as government has built a prison for those who transgress secular law: "As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys." Blake's God is not the despot conjured up by the devotees of organized religion. In fact, the poet takes the qualities condemned by the Judeo-Christian tradition, and attributes them directly to deity:

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.  
 The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.  
 The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.  
 The nakedness of woman is the work of God.

Plate 11 explains the disparity between God and his supposed representatives.

The ancient Poet animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity;

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood; Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

Priesthood, or organized religion, is an attempt to enslave men by creating a religious system that is an abstraction, devoid of vitality, thereby robbing men of the realization of their own portion of divinity. What began as an imaginative veneration of 'sensible objects' is perverted by priesthood and made into laws meant to govern the men who originally created the deities. In this way, priesthood seeks to gain power over men, by imposing its own will and calling it the will of God.

Blake's own faith is outlined in plate 14, which describes the end of this world at the end of six thousand years. The angel who has guarded the Tree of Life since the Fall will withdraw, and when he does, creation "will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite & corrupt." The key here is the word "appears," as Blake believes that finitude and corruption are simply illusions imposed on man's perceptions by the senses: "For man has closed himself up, till he sees all



things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern." This recalls Plato's allegory of the cave, in which the inhabitants believed the shadows cast on the cave wall to be real, and refused to accept the reality of those things that cast the shadows. Man has accepted sensory perception as the only reality for so long that he refuses to acknowledge imagination. Paradise will be regained only when "the doors of perception are cleansed and everything appears to man as it is, infinite."

The cave motif is repeated in the third 'Memorable Fancy,' as the narrator visits a printing house in hell and discovers how knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. In the first chamber, the dragon-man, whom Keynes associates with sensual pleasure, is clearing away the rubbish of conventional laws and moral codes, thereby liberating man to use his imagination.[12] The second chamber contains the viper who was the tempter in Eden, now adorned with gold, silver, and jewels, venerated here for coaxing Eve to satisfy her desire. Acceptance of the viper is as vital as the rejection of conventional laws for the freeing of imagination. In the third chamber is an eagle who "caused the inside of the cave to be infinite." Keynes identifies him as the Eagle of Genius, while Singer equates him with Imagination, but the difference is slight. [13] The fourth chamber contains energy, the fifth form, while the sixth

[12] Keynes, Marriage n.p. (pl. 15).

[13] Keynes, Marriage n.p. (pl. 15).

represents memory.[14] For man to glimpse eternity and to become a man of imagination or genius, he must clear away the secular and spiritual conventions that clutter his perceptions. Only then can the imagination be freed to see the infinite in all things. Once liberated, imagination allows energy and form freedom, and the end result is the accumulation of knowledge in the mind of man, stored in the libraries of memory.

The latter portion of this 'Memorable Fancy' begins with a description of the giants who formed this world, whom Keynes identifies as the five senses.[15] Yet perhaps it would be more sensible to identify them with the five creatures in the printing house: the Dragon-man who clears away secular convention; the Viper who symbolizes a rejection of religious tradition; the Eagle who is imagination; the Lions whose energy is loosed in infinity; and the Unnamed forms, who lend definition and circumference to energy in eternity. Keynes' interpretation would require the senses to be creative, and to be "in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity." Blake states that there are always two contraries at work in the universe: Reason and Energy, or the Devourer and the Prolific: "he...distinguishes two classes of men: the Prolific, which he may equate with the poet, the genius, the man of imagination; and the Devourer, who is the man of convention, of organized religion, of reason." [16]

[14]Singer, 133-137.

[15]Keynes, Marriage n.p. (pl. 16).

[16]Singer, 141.

To the man of reason, it seems that he has energy (imagination) in chains, but he only perceives a portion of existence, believing it to be the whole. In the following sentence, Blake restates one of his major themes, that contraries are necessary to human existence; the Prolific and the Devourer depend upon one another's existence as separate forces. To attempt amalgamation between them is to seek to destroy existence. Just as man and woman must retain their individual characteristics in order to procreate, so reason and energy must remain in creative tension. Religion, in Blake's assessment, seeks to destroy existence by joining the two into a hermaphrodite. The characteristics of both might still be present, but such a creature is inevitably sterile. The only way to achieve creativity or progression is for the contraries to enter into a marriage, each balancing the other. Interestingly, the poet saw Christ as a man of imagination, rather than religious convention, for Blake states that while religion seeks to reconcile heaven and hell, Christ himself wishes to keep them separate, thereby protecting the creativity of the relationship between the two.

While Blake's Christ is 'of the Devil's party,' his angels are definitely products of organized religion's heaven. In the fourth 'Memorable Fancy', the narrator and an Angel meet and each reveals the other's eternal lot. The angel's first words have about them the character of a sermon, and mimic the language of the Authorized Version of Christian scripture, indicating that the angel here stands for priesthood. The journey begins, as does Christianity, in a stable, and rapidly descends into a

church, and from there into a church vault--wherein is housed the mysteries of the Church and the bones of religion--into the mill of oppressive dogma, beneath which lies a cave, again associated with Plato's cave. The entire structure of religion rests upon sensory perception and reason, beyond which lies a void. From this void the angel (priest) conjures a vision of the poet's eternal destiny, which consists of horrors, monsters, and fire which seem to advance upon the narrator until the angel retreats, whereupon his construct of eternity disappears. Without priesthood to invent a hell of punishment and suffering, eternity appears benevolent and inviting. Then Blake seizes the angel and shows him his lot in eternity. The beginning is the same, with the stable, recalling nativity and the Church. Once inside the church, however, Blake takes the angel to the altar and opens the Bible, which becomes a deep pit into which the two descend until they come to seven houses of brick, the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom St. John addressed his book of Revelation. They enter one of the churches and discover a number of primates, chained and turned cannibal. In this,

"Blake shows the Angel his fate, which is the fate of man when his animal aspects are chained or restricted. Man may be in a church, he points out, but it is only a vile monkey house if the two qualities which distinguish the human from the monkey--the superior brain and the creative hand--are not permitted to exercise themselves freely." [17]

The angel scolds Blake for imposing on him, to which Blake answers that they impose on one another, but as Emery suggests, this is not the creative opposition Blake exalts--perhaps that is

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[17] Singer, 156.

why the statement "Opposition is true friendship" is obliterated in some copies. [18] Blake and priesthood remain at odds, perhaps foreshadowing the next section, which explains Blake's renunciation of Swedenborg.

Blake begins by associating Swedenborg with the organized religion he rejects. As in 'The Argument,' Swedenborg is an Angel, one who believes himself "the only wise" who "boasts that what he writes is new"; Blake asserts that Swedenborg has only compiled and recapitulated old ideas, and that the ideas he has plagiarized are false, because "He conversed only with Angels who are all religious, & not with Devils who all hate religion..." Swedenborg could not adequately discuss religion because he himself was religious and saw the question from one perspective only; therefore, his works are the mechanical compilations of reason-based opinions, equal to any derivative writing. Having merely parroted previous works, Swedenborg could not be the proud man Blake perceives, for "he only holds a candle in sunshine."

The fifth 'Memorable Fancy' describes an exchange between a devil and an angel witnessed by Blake. The devil rises in flame before the Angel who sits on a cloud; at the outset, the Devil is the active, energetic foil of the passive, rational Angel. The encounter begins when the Devil states that true worship is honouring the gifts of God in man, for there is no God other than the divine humanity. The Angel, defensive because of the Devil's

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[18] Emery, 89.

assertion, begins to ask questions that seem to echo the catechism and writing of the church fathers: "is not God One? & is not he visible in Jesus Christ? and has not Jesus Christ given his sanction to the law of ten commandments? and are not all other men fools, sinners & nothings?" Notice that the angel reverts once again into the language of scripture. Orthodoxy is incapable of creative thought, and can only respond with rote phrases. The devil counters by re-interpreting the Church's doctrine: Christ was not virtuous because He obeyed the ten commandments; rather, he was virtuous because he 'acted from impulse' (desire) and violated the ten commandments. By exploding the law that tries to govern both the Ox and the Lion, the devil has persuaded the Ox to become a Lion, for "Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd."

The final portion of The Marriage is 'A Song of Liberty', which appears as an end-piece in all copies, and which forms "an apocalyptic finale to the central theme of this book--the superiority of the creative views of a rebellious Devil to those of a conventional and conservative Angel." [19] Immediately prior to the time Blake was writing The Marriage and "A Song of Liberty", the revolutions in America and France had dethroned monarchy and stripped the church of her traditional power in those countries. While The Marriage is primarily a religious poem, the appended 'Song' serves to emphasize that with the Marriage of Heaven and Hell will come the New Jerusalem where

[19]Keynes, Marriage n.p., (pl. 25).

"Empire is no more," and where religion will no longer "curse the sons of joy," for "everything that lives is Holy."

The climate surrounding the composition of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell was one of political, economic, social, and intellectual upheaval, and the poem inevitably comments on those themes, however incidentally. Fundamentally, it is a poem dealing with God and organized religion, with the necessary contraries of good and evil, necessary because each is the complementary half of the same whole, and with mankind's perception of those contraries. The 'marriage' he describes is the unification of opposing forces into a dynamic, creative whole, which, when allowed freedom, will bring about the New Jerusalem for which Blake longed.

Also composed during the years Blake is thought to have been writing and engraving The Marriage of Heaven and Hell are the fragments from his notebook (1793) and the Songs of Experience (1789-94). As most of the Songs of Experience appear in draft form in the 1793 notebook, it is logical to assume that the notebook reflects stages of the composition and revision of the Songs. While Blake abandoned some of the pieces begun in the notebook, two of those draft poems--"I saw a chapel" and "To Nobodaddy"-- provide certain insights into Blake's attitude toward religion and God Himself and will be discussed along with the completed lyrics of the Songs.

Although categorizing Blake's poetry is difficult, as each poem comments on several topics simultaneously, for the purpose of this discussion I have imposed a system on several

representative poems, which fall into six categories: 1) The introduction; 2) sexual repression; 3) cultural or societal oppression; 4) the nature of God; 5) the nature of Man; and 6) the nature of organized religion. It is also important to remember that the Songs of Innocence and Experience are intended to be comments on one another, especially Experience, for the latter songs were never published as a separate volume, but were always bound with Songs of Innocence. Having completed Songs of Innocence, Blake must have realized that those lyrics dealt with only a portion of human life, and countered those poems about love, hope, and freedom with pieces describing wrath, despair, and oppression. In fact, he went so far in his commentary as to write songs specifically to counter individual lyrics in Innocence, and often used identical titles in order to point out the relationship. [20]

The sub-title given to Songs of Innocence and Experience gives the reader an idea of the nature and purpose of the Songs, which is to show "the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul." As in the Marriage, Blake is concerned with the dichotomies intrinsic in human existence: love and hate, active and passive, energy and reason. In Innocence, the piper seems to have answers to explain everything; in Experience, the bard has only deeply troubling questions. Innocence is absolute faith; Experience is insightful questioning. What was true about the world in innocence remains true in experience. The world itself has not

[20]Where titles are identical, Innocence or Experience will be indicated after the title, as "Holy Thursday" (I).



altered; rather, the perceptions of those experiencing the world are altered and coloured by the insight of experience.

"The harmony of Innocence has been lost, but insight comes in its place. In the wisdom of Experience, as embodied in the voice of the prophetic Bard at the beginning and again at the end of the second group of Songs, lies the possibility of reorganizing man's divided self and, if not regaining the lost world of Innocence, then of forging a new unity." [21]

Yet, if one postulates a marriage of Innocence and Experience, it would not be a "forging of a new unity", but a re-forging of a divided whole. Harmony may have been lost, but innocence itself does not give way to experience; it is simply augmented by it.

Unfortunately, Blake himself was not always able to retain harmony in that volatile relationship. Cognizant of the plight of the poor and of the oppression of "the system," Blake erupts with anger and bitterness at those who are responsible: society, religion, God Himself. Joy in life gives way to outrage as the poet/prophet describes the divided world he sees through experience, but as Paley says, he hints at a future when man's divided self, and hence divided creation, will again be one.

The "Introduction" exhorts the reader to "Hear the voice of the Bard," the poet/prophet Rintrah from the Marriage, who has heard the voice of the Word, Jesus, in the world of generation. "For Blake there is no God but Jesus, who is also man, and who exists neither in the past like the historical Jesus, nor in the future like the Jewish Messiah, but now in a real present, in

[21]Morton D. Paley, ed., from the editor's introduction in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Songs of Innocence and of Experience (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1969) 4-5.

which the real past and the real future are contained..."[22] Just as there is no God except a God who is also Man, so there is not real man except Jesus, man who is also God. Thus the imagination of the poet, by making concrete and visible a hidden creative power, repeats the Incarnation.[23] The Bard, then, is admonishing all souls to heed the promptings of divinity within themselves, for they have within them the power to "controll / The starry pole, / And fallen, fallen light renew!" The third stanza calls on the physical world to awaken and asserts that "Night is worn / And the morn / Rises from the slumberous mass." Paley states that "Night, forests, and stars are frequently used by Blake as symbols of the old order, l'epaisse nuit gothique of Holy Europe." [24] Blake's choice of the words "slumberous mass" are also ironic, for 'mass' can be not only the earth, but also the religious service. If Paley is correct, the bard is harbinger of a new age in which the restraints of generation will be done away as dawn breaks the morning of the first day.

The earth herself replies, asking how man can hear and respond to the voice of divinity within himself when he is trapped in generation, and subscribes to the notion of a God separate from that found in man. That transcendent God is a construct of organized religion, the "Selfish father of men."

[22]Northrop Frye, "Blake's Introduction to Experience," Huntington Library Quarterly, XXI. 1 (1957) 59.

[23]Frye, "Introduction" 59.

[24]Morton D. Paley, "Tyger of Wrath" in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Songs of Innocence and Experience, Morton D. Paley, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1969) 85.

Earth pleads for someone to break the chains and free her from the old order in which society and religion have bound love and jealously has imprisoned joy and delight. This is far from the spirit of 'pleasant glee' evidenced in the "Introduction" to Songs of Innocence, where the piper sings and writes happy songs, yet the bard/prophet indicates that the bondage will not be much longer.

One manifestation of the bondage of the old order that Blake keenly felt was sexual repression. Adams interprets "I saw a chapel all of gold..." as a comment on such repression: "The phallic serpent of our poem is no Jesus rending the veil; nor is he a pompous high priest entering by a secret place. Instead he is a symbol of frustrated desire driven to rape by a false view of sexuality and a false view of religion." [25] Adams is doubtless correct in his assertion that this poem is primarily concerned with the frustration of sexual desire and the unhealthy effects, both physical and mental, of such tyranny over nature. Thwarted by social and religious codes, the serpent resorts to violence to gratify his desire, and in so doing profanes a holy sacrament as surely as if he had vomited upon the host.

While "I saw a chapel..." was excluded from Songs of Experience, "The Garden of Love" which discusses the same topic in a rather less graphic fashion, was included. The speaker goes to the garden of love, but upon arrival finds a chapel where an open green once lay. The chapel is the religious construct of

[25] Hazard Adams, William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963) 241.

morality and convention, with "'Thou shalt not' writ over the door." The speaker then turns away from the impenetrable chapel to satisfy his desire in the garden, but proximity to the chapel has caused the flowers to be replaced by tombstones: the false view of sexuality espoused by the church has blighted society, so that where once there was vitality and desire, now there is only repression and lifelessness. The last two lines of stanza three indicate that religious convention does not play a passive role in this repression, but actively, systematically enforces its moral code: "And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds, / And binding with briars my joys & desires."

Both of these poems deal primarily with sexual repression, but it is important to note that in both cases, organized religion, which is symbolized by the chapel, is the means of that repression. They are religious doors or boundaries that are imposed on desire, and in "The Garden of Love," the agents of repression are priests.

Similarly, the Church is indicted as tyrant in three of Blake's poems dealing with cultural or societal oppression: "Holy Thursday", "The Chimney Sweeper", and "London". Just as religion plays a major role in sexual repression by propagating a false view of sexuality, it also serves as a vehicle for portions of society to subjugate others, if in no way other than passive acceptance. In the "Holy Thursday" of Songs of Experience, the poet's outrage demands to know how there can be so very many poor, abused, and starving children in a wealthy and fruitful land such as England. With Swiftian irony, he asserts that such

cannot possibly happen, "For where-e'er the sun does shine, / And were-e'er the rain does fall, / Babe can never hunger there, / Nor poverty the mind appall." This poem is the foil to "Holy Thursday" (I), in which the children are fed spiritually with an equally "cold and usurous hand", whereas in Experience Blake describes physical starvation. The priest, or religion, who is explicit in one and implicit in the other, congratulates himself on his piety and holiness, for he has seen to it that the children are fed: "To the beadles and the grey-haired men of "Holy Thursday" in Innocence the feeding of the miserable babes is a holy thing to see; to the Bard the very fact that the children are fed as they are appalls." [26] Society congratulates itself for its efforts, yet Blake denounces its pitiful attempts at charity as hypocrisy, which seeks to appear holy and thereby elevate itself as deserving of praise.

This same theme is applied directly to the plight of a specific group in "The Chimney Sweeper" (E). In Innocence, Blake tells the story of a boy whose father sold him as a sweep when he was very young. The father is not mentioned again; instead, the lad who acts as the speaker relates the dream of another sweep, which ends happily as the boys are released from their slavery—coffins—by the Angel of Death. In Experience, the child explains that, having placed him in a type of indenture, his parents have gone to church "to praise God & his Priest & King, / Who make up a heaven of our misery." The bitterness that

[26]Gleckner, Piper 244.

was absent in "Chimney Sweeper"(I) is abundant here. Through the insight of experience, the child has discerned the hypocrisy and heartlessness in his parent's action: they go to church to praise God and to congratulate themselves on their own holiness and piety, yet they have made their own son a slave. The condemnation here is not reserved for the parents alone, but encompasses the Church, the government, and the orthodox and mistaken conception of God, who have allowed such an appalling situation to arise. Gleckner posits that the Church has a central role in the poem, which he sees as related to the grave of the sweep's mother in Innocence, suggested by the line "They clothed me in clothes of death." The clothes of death are sanctioned by the church, where the parents go to praise the system that allows the enslavement of children. Interestingly, the mother in Innocence is physically dead to her child, yet lives for him in vision, providing the dream in which he finds comfort and protection; conversely, the mother in Experience is physically alive for her son, yet dead to him imaginatively, for she has withdrawn her warmth and protection, going instead to worship the constructs that attempt to subjugate the divinity that is within the sweep. [27]

"London" also discusses the constructs that enslave men, the "mind-forg'd manacles" of sexual repression and social oppression, of government and religion. As has been seen, the chimney sweeper points out the oppression of the social order  
[27]Gleckner, Piper 248.

sanctioned by religion. Similarly, the curse of the harlot is necessitated by sexual repression, which is actively enforced by the Church, as in "The Garden of Love". Priest and King are also indicted in stanza three: "How the Chimney-sweeper's cry / Every black'ning Church appalls; / And the hapless Soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls." Leader calls "London" the "most comprehensive as well as the most powerful of Blake's indictments of experienced society and its institutions." [28] While exploring London, the speaker encounters the products of English society, which is governed by the despotic institutions ruled by priest and king. The oppression is universal, evidenced in every face, every cry, every voice. Yet here, as in "The Garden of Love", the tyranny of the social order is best illustrated by its repression of desire: "But most thro' midnight streets I hear / How the youthful Harlot's curse / Blast's the new born Infant's tear, / And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse." The Church seeks to restrain desire through moral codes and restrictions, yet desire cannot always be restrained. Since the Church has labelled monogamy virtuous and polygamy and adultery sinful, those who satisfy sexual desire outside of the prescribed marriage relationship are deemed harlots. Interestingly, it is religion itself that creates the need for harlots, as "Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion." Men have enslaved themselves to the institutions they created, for the manacles are forged in their own minds.

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[28] Zachary Leader, Reading Blake's Songs (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) 195-6.

Not only has man enslaved himself to institutions of his own making, but also to his idea of God. In "To Nobodaddy", Blake ridicules what he perceives to be the Judeo-Christian concept of God:

Why art thou silent & invisible,  
 Father of Jealousy?  
 Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds  
 From every searching Eye?

Why darkness & obscurity  
 In all thy words & laws,  
 That none dare eat the fruit but from  
 The wily serpents jaws?  
 Or is it because Secresy gains females' loud applause?

Davies omits this poem from his discussion of Blake's doctrine of God, yet Blake must grapple with this idea of deity, for he sees it as the prevalent religious belief. For the poet, the notion of a transcendent deity makes God unreachable and unsympathetic, "silent & invisible", "hid[ing] in clouds" from those who would know him. Blake asks, Why must God be mysterious? Why must there be laws forbidding gratification of desire? Why is attainment of the knowledge of good and evil a sin? As Frye suggests, for Blake there is no God separate from man--Jesus is simply the expression of divine humanity; the God of the Church is scarcely human--he is "nobody's daddy."

Although "To Nobodaddy" was not included in Songs of Experience, Blake did discuss the nature of God in Experience in what is perhaps his best-known poem--"The Tyger". In "The Lamb" of Innocence, God is a beneficent Deity, bestowing kind gifts on



his creation. The Son is the Jesus of childhood, the Lamb of God, rather than the Lion of Judah. The piper of Innocence perceives only the fatherlike, protective aspects of God; the bard of Experience is driven to search beyond the nursery to "the forests of the night" in order to understand the whole nature of deity and of creation. The central question in "The Tyger" is: "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?", or in Paley's words, "Can love and wrath emanate from the same being?"[29] The question, for Paley, then, is not one of good and evil, but of love and wrath. This is one of the central concerns of Christian theology: the reconciliation of the God of wrath and judgment in the Old Testament with the God whose own sacrifice redeems mankind in the New Testament. However, Raine interprets the question as principally concerned with the co-existence of good and evil and posits evil incarnate in the tyger.[30] This, too, is a major question of Christian theology: could a wholly good creator introduce evil into creation? Either inquiry is valid from a theological standpoint, and both may be superimposed upon the text of "The Tyger", but this study agrees with Frye, Adams, and Gleckner that "The Tyger" is either ambiguous or ambivalent regarding the nature of the Creator and of the creation. Blake leaves his question unanswered, perhaps because he realized that God the creator is the Holy Word which is Jesus, the divine human, or in Blakean terms, the Poetic Genius, and therefore

[29]Paley, "Tygers of Wrath", 75.

[30]Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol 2, 10.

transcends good and evil. Or, perhaps the poet himself never arrived at a satisfactory answer to the incisive questions of "The Tyger." From the kindly father figure of "The Lamb," the poet has come to reckon with the creator of the powerful, occasionally destructive force embodied in the tyger, the Poetic Genius to which conventional ideas of morality do not apply.

Notice that in the triumph of organic over mechanistic creation in stanza five, man is freed to discover the poetic genius in himself. Paley states that "Blake...thought of the stars as symbols of oppression because they were associated with the mechanism of the Newtonian universe and with the instrumentality of fate. The defeat of the stars signifies the casting off of both cosmic and internal constraint, freeing man to realize his potentially divine nature." [31] If man would throw off 'the passive which obeys reason,' the lifeless dogma of the Church, the mechanical oppression of Newtonian science and Lockean philosophy, and embrace the world of imagination, then he would perceive the divine humanity and come to understand that 'everything that lives is holy.'

Just as the tyger is a powerful, potentially destructive force, so too is man, for he has the potential for tremendous good or unimaginable evil. During this period in Blake's life, he was grappling with the conditions prevalent in the lives of London's poor. The Songs of Experience address such evils as small boys forced to sweep chimneys until either they were too

[31]Paley, "Tyger", 87.

old and too large to be effective, or they died from malnutrition or the host of diseases to which they were exposed; children robbed of the simple joys of childhood by long hours working in factories; men and women frustrated by a rigid moral code and denied gratification of sexual desire; a Church and government that, whether through passive acceptance or active agency, allow or support such atrocities. The creator of the tyger, whether or not he has actively created evil, has certainly created the potential for evil, which is no where more insidious than in man himself. "The Human Abstract" begins with biting irony: society, particularly organized religion, only allows poverty and misery in order to have means by which to demonstrate pity and mercy, and what should be the highest virtue, love, is selfish and cruel. The church has inspired fear, hypocrisy, and mystery; in so doing, it has shown itself the cultivator of deceit, the tree whose fruit caused the Fall when the serpent deceived Eve. Sin and death are not external; they grow in the human brain, fruit of the tree carefully cultivated by organized religion.

The theme of evil as essentially human is repeated in "A Divine Image" (E) which was etched about 1791 but not included by Blake.

Cruelty has a Human Heart,  
 And Jealousy a Human Face  
 Terror the Human Form Divine,  
 And Secrecy the Human Dress.

The Human Dress is forged iron,  
 The Human Form a fiery Forge,  
 The Human Face a Furnace seal'd,  
 The Human Heart its hungry Gorge.

No other creature is capable of these four in the way man is. The tyger can be destructive, but cannot be truly cruel. Creation is neutral, neither good nor evil; man projects his own darker nature onto the world around him, but at the last, the potential for and character of evil reside solely in the human breast. This poem is a foil to "The Divine Image" of Innocence. Just as evil is resident only within man, so too is virtue to be found exclusively in human kind. Innocence perceives mercy, pity, peace, and love in the human form divine; experience sees also cruelty, jealousy, terror, and secrecy.

"The Little Vagabond" startles the reader with its assertion that the Church should emulate the ale house in order to truly care for people. This poem reads like one of the Songs of Innocence, for the speaker is a child whom the realities of experience have not yet embittered. He is still an innocent: "The virtues of asceticism are beyond his comprehension and his simplicity of mind allows him to achieve a theological subtlety missed by most 'religious' people. The child's solutions are appalling to the angelic good..."[32] Recall Mrs Nannicantipot's belief that one may be equally good at home or at church. In Experience, Blake goes further than An Island in the Moon: one may be equally virtuous in alehouse and church, but it is in the alehouse where one may find warmth, peace, and joy--the church is cold and barren. The speaker believes that it is possible for the church to be as inviting as the alehouse; all that is needful

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[32]Adams, 268.

is for the 'angels' of the Church to express genuine love and concern. This is why the poem is a Song of Experience: the speaker's solution is simple, yet the experienced reader knows it to be impossible and is somewhat outraged by the suggestions made by the child. Thus Blake deftly turns the tables on his readers, exposing them through their outrage as true sons of the Church, those who would keep the church sterile and unwelcoming.

Another poem that reveals Blake's attitude toward religion is "A Little Boy Lost" (E). In Innocence, the poem with a similar title has a companion piece, "The Little Boy Found;" in Experience, the little boy is irretrievably lost, principally through the influence of a priest, who represents the Church.

The poem is full of curious inversions: The father spoken to is the false father or priest, not the true parent; the child's argument is really a plea for universal love rather than for self love; the priest objects because the child insults mystery with reason, when actually the child is not reasoning but acting reasonably on the basis of his innocent feelings. The priest is acting emotionally on the basis of a rational code and is the perfect image of upside-down man." [33]

It is the intrusion of the priest that necessitates the death of the boy. Were it not for the existence of organized religion with its tyrannical dogma and preoccupation with imagined sin, the child would not have been condemned for innocently speaking the truth. Here, as elsewhere in Blake, the prophet is without honour in his own country and is martyred for proclaiming the truth. Although "A Little Boy Lost" is an excellent indication of Blake's thorough dislike of priestcraft, it is nevertheless

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[33] Adams, 270.

rather heavy-handed with its indignation.[34] The answer to the final question, "Are such things done on Albion's shore?" is obviously 'yes' from the poet's perspective: "the child is executed like a heretic in the ritual of the witch hunt, his only heresy being that he did not conform to the laws of behavior and the rules of religion and love. Such things are indeed done 'on Albion's shore'." [35]

The bard of experience is horrified at the murderous tyranny of organized religion, yet such tyranny is the logical result of what he perceived to be society's beliefs concerning the nature of God and man, and of creation and the Fall. Blake's own views of God and man, creation and fall differ radically from those of the eighteenth-century Church of England, as has been demonstrated in the straight-forward verses of Songs of Experience and the 'Fancies' of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. With the symbolic books of Urizen, Ahania, and Los, Blake continues to develop his 'myth-theology' regarding the relationship between the Fall and man's entrance into the world of generation. For Blake, the two are components of the same act: when a portion of the eternal man turned his love inward and became selfish and self-aware, thereby dividing the aspects of man, the self-absorbed portion closed itself off from eternity and declined into generation. Yet the product of the Fall, the

[34]D.G. Gillham, Blake's Contrary States (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966) 87.

Bloom, 154.

[35]Gleckner, Piper, 253-4.

physical world becomes the means of redemption, for the selfish aspect, reason, is limited by the five senses. Imagination, which is boundless, is free to expose and define error so that it may be expunged, making it possible for man to return to Eternity, which to Blake's mind is true redemption.

Bernard Blackstone has constructed a scheme of the symbolic books, asserting that each poem discusses the continuum from the Fall to redemption as six historical ages: "(i) the Fall; (ii) the Druidical Age; (iii) the Patriarchal Age; (iv) classical times; (v) the Christian era; and (vi) the New Age." [36] In the first, the eternal man is divided by reason's self absorption and falls into generation. Having fallen, man begins the second, or Druidical Age, in which reason created primeval religion and men forgot that "all deities reside in the human breast." The third age is marked by the giving of the law of reason, epitomized by the Ten Commandments. The classical age, too, is a slave to reason; it is the age of philosophy and logic, ruled by men like Pythagoras and Socrates. Similarly, the Christian era is dominated by reason and reason's religion, by priests and priestcraft. Into each of these ages imagination has injected its spirit, prophecy, in order to define error and show the way back to eternity, but reason has murdered the prophets and kept man bound in the chains of religion. The final age, the New Age, will be ushered in when imagination or Poetic Genius finally triumphs over divided reason and the components of the eternal man are re-united in Eternity.

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[36] Bernard Blackstone, English Blake (Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1966) 71.

The Book of Urizen is the first of Blake's works to deal with the Fall in any detail. In the beginning, man is united in eternity, at once one and many, unified and various, characterized by infinite comprehension, infinite energy, love, and freedom. Urizen contracts his universal perception to concentrate on his own particularity; in so doing he loses sight of totality, resulting in self love which destroys the dynamic equilibrium of man in eternity: "He was no longer the Ur-Reason, the Our Reason of Eternity, but Your Reason, a thing apart bounded by his self-made Horizon." [37] He is a "self contemplating shadow" that has withdrawn from Eternity and formed an "abominable void," a "soul-shudd'ring vacuum." Not only has Urizen withdrawn from Eternity, but the other Eternals shrink away from him, horrified at his fall. "Thus, since Urizen records a fall from eternity, the fallen characters do not communicate with eternity. Nor do the fallen characters communicate with each other." [38] Sections 6, 7, and 8 describe how he imagined error (the seven deadly sins of the soul) and created religion to combat it. "The delightful diversity of Eden has thus been reduced to a sterile uniformity, and impulse codified into law." [39] Variety and desire have been bound by conformity and legality, as all are forced to obey one command,

[37] Clark Emery, William Blake: The Book of Urizen (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1966) 25-6.

[38] Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson, William Blake: The Book of Urizen (New York: Random House, 1978) 70.

[39] Blackstone, 73.



to revel in one joy, to fulfill one desire, to endure one curse, to bear one weight, to employ one measure, to revere one king, to worship one God, to conform to one law. But "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression," Blake claimed in The Marriage. Urizen is the ultimate tyrant; he has separated man from eternity and perpetuates that alienation through organized religion, the Church: "I unfold my darkness, and on / This rock place with strong hand the Book / Of eternal brass..." (emphasis mine), which echoes Christ's words in St. Matthew xvi.18: "On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The irony is that Christ is positive in Blake, as is hell, while the Church is a negative entity. Urizen is a false Messiah, establishing his organized religion to withstand the influence of hell, which is imagination and energy.

Los, or the imagination, separates from Urizen in order to create the physical world. Blake alludes to the creation myth in his refrain "And a first Age passed over, / And a state of dismal woe," another version of "And there was morning and evening the first day." The first age is spent in the creation of the skull, spine, and bones, as well as the nervous system; the second sees the creation of the heart and circulatory system, and the last five witness the emergence of the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, respectively. Los has chained the tyrant Urizen in generation and

All the myriads of Eternity,  
All the wisdom & joy of life  
Roll like a sea around him,

Except what his little orbs  
Of sight by degrees unfold.

And now his eternal life  
Like a dream was obliterated.

Cut off from life & light, frozen  
Into horrible forms of deformity.

Then, having watched Urizen separate himself from Eternity, Los becomes what he has beheld, and he also divides, becomes male (Los) and female (Enitharmon or pity), and "beget[s] his likeness / On his own divided image." The offspring of imagination and pity is Orc, the Christ figure who is the "universal humanity," who ultimately redeems man and Urizen through love and sacrifice.[40] Los and Enitharmon chain him to the rock (the Church) beneath slumbering Urizen. For Blake, then, Christ was capable of redeeming man and guiding him back to eternity, but he is helpless, inextricably bound to the Church, which is dominated by the tyrant reason, who wakens and curses his sons and daughters, "for he saw / That no flesh nor spirit could keep / His iron laws one moment." Reason has extended his laws everywhere as organized religion, "The Net of Religion" which suggests a trap. Caught in the net of religion men ceased to discern the hypocrisy of the Church as their perceptions narrowed:

Six days they shrunk up from existence,  
And on the seventh day they rested,  
And they bless'd the seventh day, in sick hope,  
And forgot their eternal life

No more could they rise at will  
In the infinite void, but bound down

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[40]Blackstone, 70.

To earth by their narrowing perceptions  
 They lived a period of years;

And form'd laws of prudence, and call'd them  
 The eternal laws of God."

The Book of Urizen ends ambivalently, for man is left trapped in the net of Religion, closed off from eternity by his narrowed perceptions and bondage to Urizen. Fuzon has escaped with some few of the children of Urizen, but Blake will not depict Fuzon's failure until The Book of Ahania. "And the salt Ocean rolled englob'd," suggests an endless pattern, reinforcing man's seemingly eternal bondage to Urizen and his net of religion, a salt ocean incapable of sustaining life in man, who requires fresh water.

The Book of Ahania continues the story with Fuzon attempting to lead a revolt against Urizen. Fuzon is fire, created by Urizen in chapter viii of The Book of Urizen when the tyrannical reason creates the elements: Thiriel (air), Utha (earth), Grodna (water), and Fuzon (fire), who represents passion. Fuzon rebels and casts the burning globe of his wrath at Urizen. The globe pierces Urizen's loins, and he divides; his emanation is Ahania, whom he calls Sin. She is in reality desire, and Urizen renounces that desire; consequently, he feels weakened when he embraces her and seeks to hide his desire in darkness and silence: "Hopeless! abhorr'd! a death shadow, / Unseen, unbodied, unknown, / The mother of Pestilence."

Blake suggests that Fuzon is the God of Moses, the God whose passion for his chosen people caused him to send plagues upon Egypt to secure their release, who "Was a pillar of fire to

Egypt." He believes that his wrath has slain the tyrant, but Urizen is one of the Eternals, and so cannot die. Urizen's "dire Contemplations" produce what Blackstone calls the "serpent of materialistic science.[41] From the serpent's ribs and sinews, Urizen fashions a bow, and poisons the rocks with its blood. He then shoots the poisoned rock at Fuzon, who appears to have been slain by the stone, the tablet of the law, or Ten Commandments, for "...the rock fell upon the Earth, / Mount Sinai in Arabia." Urizen carries Fuzon to the Tree of Mystery, which grows out of the rock of the Church. Blake's irony here is brilliant, for the rock has, through his fancies, 'petrified', or turned to stone. Something which has petrified has not always been lifeless rock; it was once living and vital, but is now cold and hard--lifeless. Yet Blake's word choice again recalls the words of Christ in St. Matthew xvi.18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [Petros], and upon this rock [petra] will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Church, once a living, vital entity is now cold and dead, supporting only the Tree of Mystery, upon which Reason will crucify Passion.

In chapter iv, Fuzon is alive, "the pale living Corse on the tree." There is hope, then, for although passion is bound, he is alive, and the "Eternal Prophet beat on his anvils". The prophet, Los, is still active. Ahaniah (desire) is also alive, however invisible, and she weeps round the tree of Fuzon,

[41]Blackstone, 75.

recalling the scene at Christ's crucifixion, his mother weeping for her son. The suggestion is that although the mother now weeps as Mary wept for Christ, like Jesus, Fuzon (passion) will rise again, and his mother (desire) will be venerated above all others.

The Book of Los, was also printed in 1795, and begins, as does The Book of Urizen, with an account of the Fall. This time, however, it is Los and not Urizen who is the central character. Blake repeats the story of Urizen's separation from eternity, of his creation of the physical world, and of Los's intervention: "He creates light, and begins to bind Urizen. He forms the sun, and fastens Urizen to it; but the cold spirit of reason is too strong for the sun of poetry and soon puts it out." [42] Here, there is no hope, implicit or explicit, for Blake ends the book on an ominous note. There is no light from poetry, and man is trapped in a benighted, "...a Human Illusion / In darkness and deep clouds involved." Man is trapped, and the poet indicates no exit from the darkness.

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[42] Blackstone, 76.

### The Four Zoas, 1795-1804

The Lambeth prophecies, discussed in the preceding chapter, may be considered independently or as a Blakean trilogy, with the Books of Urizen, Ahania, and Los presenting accounts of the Fall of Man which vary in perspective, although not substantially in content. The Lambeth books seem to have been Blake's first attempt to compose a comprehensive account of man's fall from eternity, his fallen state, and his hope of redemption. Apparently, the poet was initially satisfied with each book, for each was printed: Urizen (1794), Ahania (1795), and Los (1795). He was not, however, content to abandon the theme, nor had he expressed his complete eschatology, for during the decade following the printing of the shorter prophecies, Blake was labouring over the manuscript of his first epic, The Four Zoas.

In two letters, both addressed to Thomas Butts, Blake mentions "an immense number of verses on One Grand Theme, Similar to Homer's Iliad or Milton's Paradise Lost," "a Grand Poem," which he describes as "perfectly complete."<sup>[1]</sup> Having no more definitive statement, it is reasonable to assume that, at the time he wrote to Butts, Blake considered The Four Zoas complete. In a study of the development of Blake's thought, this consideration is paramount. His changing worldview might have led him to rethink or reject this poem in favour of later work,

[1] Blake, Complete Writings, 823, 825. Letters to Butts, 25 April 1803, 6 July 1803.

but it is more important that he did, however briefly, consider the work 'perfectly complete.'

Although Margoliouth centred his discussion on Vala, rather than The Four Zoas, his dating of the Nights is valid for this study: his Night I would have been written in 1797 or soon after, with the other Nights (excluding Night VIII) completed between Blake's arrival at Felpham and the renewal of war in May 1803, and Night VIII written in 1804.[2] Mellor concurs with this opinion, noting similarities between Blake's illustrations and several of the misericords in Chichester Cathedral, which Blake visited during his tenure at Felpham and mentioned in a letter to Thomas Butts on 2 October 1800.[3] Although the usual explanation is that VIIa and VIIb (VII bis for Margoliouth) are simply alternative versions of the same Night, with b (bis) accepted as the earlier, Margoliouth states that, far from being two separate versions, they are in fact two halves of the same Night, for "when the accretions have been removed and VII bis printed in Blake's original order, beginning at line 122 in SW (p. 326 K), it appears that VII bis follows straight on VII." [4] Both parts were retained by Blake; logically he wished to include at least part of both. He would have had to amalgamate them into a single Night, or perhaps reorder and renumber other portions of

[2]H.M. Margoliouth, William Blake's Vala (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) xxiv.

[3]Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, Blake's Human Form Divine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 170-1.

[4]Margoliouth, xii-xiii. SW is Sloss and Wallis' William Blake's Prophetic Writings, 1926. K is Geoffrey Keynes' Poetry and Prose of William Blake, 1939.

the manuscript in order to accommodate both and still retain Young's structure of nine nights, but that he so intended is not incredible.

Another point of contention is the nature of the poem, whether it should be read as allegory, as an intricate poetic structure, as a deeply moving story, or as a myth. Wilkie and Johnson accommodate each of these perspectives in their analysis.[5] Frye insists that the poem be read as the title page directs: a dream, of Nine Nights.[6] Margoliouth suggests that Vala is best considered as a mere flight of fancy, believing that the imaginative quality of the poem is more important than the symbolic or allegoric significance.[7] Certainly each of these aspects is present in the poem, and each offers questions to consider; however, while each perspective is valuable, the most important view in a study of Blake's relationship with the Church would be the allegorical sense, in which each character is representative. The story itself is deeply moving and wonderfully evocative, but it is not until the Zoas are equated with the primal faculties of the eternal man that the poem takes on universal significance and epic proportions. The dream atmosphere serves to place the struggles of the Zoas in the realm of the extraordinary, while also alluding to St. John's Revelation.[8] Further, the imaginative quality of the poem

[5] Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson, Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) vii.

[6] Frye, 270.

[7] Margoliouth, xv.

[8] Revelation 1.1-2,10.



subtly reminds the reader that the struggles of the divine humanity are not physical conflicts, as the preface states: "For our contention is not with the blood and the flesh, but with dominion, with authority, with the blind world--rulers of this life, with the spirit of evil in things heavenly." (Ephesians vi.12). The theme of the poem is threefold: the fall, fallenness and recovery or redemption of man, or, more precisely, the struggles of the divine humanity in each of these states. Nights I-III relate the fall from the unity of eternity into discord as Tharmas divides, as Urizen and Vala ally to keep Luvah in subjection, and as, in Night III, Urizen perverts Ahanian's plea for love and mercy into the dogma of mystery.[9] In Nights IV, V, VI, VIIa, and VIIb, Blake describes the binding of Urizen, the oppressive nature of the human form and, paradoxically, the possibility of regeneration through the physical world. Urizen explores his kingdom and is horrified at the things he has created; unable to escape, he retreats, then begins again the cycle of repression, exhaustion, rest, and renewed repression.[10] The account of the fall is retold at length, and the spectre of Urthona appears to supplement the story.[11] Also, Nights VIIa and b describe the total corruption of the human condition, the mutiny of Orc, and the war song of Urizen. Nights VIII and IX recount the rise, by degrees, from the fallen state. In Night VIII, Jesus and Jerusalem enter the human heart

[9]Mellor, 182.

[10]Mellor, 185.

[11]Margoliouth, xx.

to illuminate it. Luvah, the Christ figure, is crucified, and Los despairs, much as the disciples despaired before Easter. The final Night is the apocalypse, Blake's Revelation, which describes the resurrection to unity as Los and Enitharmon build Jerusalem, and Los sets in motion the destruction of the fallen natural world. The greater part of the Night is devoted to the process of redemption, and only the last few lines reveal the ultimate result of regeneration: unified, blissful humanity.[12]

The principal characters in The Four Zoas are the zoas themselves, the four primal components of humanity: emotion, reason, creativity, and imagination, or Luvah, Urizen, Tharmas, and Urthona, respectively. Each of the four zoas divides, losing the essential unity within itself and separating from the other components of the divine humanity, or Albion, the eternal Man. What began as the one, Albion, with four equal aspects, has become the many, disinherited, disaffected fragments, some seeking dominion, some release. It is the interaction of the faculties of man that is the action of the poem: their fragmentation, struggle, and reunification.

The role of religion and the Church in The Four Zoas is central to understanding Blake's developing eschatology. Organized religion for Blake is the product of the fall of man into disunity. When man was one, he perceived his divinity and gloried in his role as creator; however, once man's primal elements are divided from one another, he loses sight of his divine nature and Urizen creates Mystery, a god outside man, the

[12]Wilkie and Johnson, 207ff.

orthodox view of God: the mysterious YHWH who hides himself behind the veil of the temple. This is the essence of fallenness: man divided, not realizing his own divinity and consequently worshipping an illusion outside himself. [13]

DiSalvo asserts that The Four Zoas is based on Milton's Paradise Lost and strives to illuminate the "contradictions in the Western God." [14] Milton employs the combat myth: a war in heaven, with Satan's banishment; Blake carries this further, beyond the Adam and Eve myth to a truly universal fall.

"Thus Blake's Urizen depicts the triumphs of that deity [Milton's God], from the development of inequality and injustice religiously mystified both in Babylonian and Egyptian theocracy and in Hebrew religion, through the development of Christianity and [in Blake's mind] its medieval perversion, to the rise of modern Puritanism as the concomitant of the new commercial order." [15]

The idea of God created by the Judeo-Christian tradition and espoused by Milton was repugnant to Blake; for him, there is no omnipotent God outside the unified divine humanity, only the false claim to omnipotence—it is "the recurrent fearful impulse toward idolatry and self-protection that destroys life." [16]

[13] Frye states that "...the essential barrier between man and his divine inheritance is the belief in a non-human God founded on the fallen vision of an objective nature." Frye, 270.

[14] Jackie DiSalvo, War of Titans (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983) 185.

[15] DiSalvo, 185.

[16] Leonard W. Deen, Conversing in Paradise: Poetic Genius and Identity-as-Community in Blake's Los (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1983) 129.

Yet, although he rejects the orthodox view of God, Blake still prays for his friends, refers to God in orthodox fashion in letters, describes Jesus as his saviour, and casts a Christ-figure (Luvah, who is crucified) as redeemer in The Four Zoas. Biblical allusion is scattered throughout, and Jesus himself appears in the later nights. Blake may reject the Church, but he is a profoundly Christian poet; it is the tension between his rejection of dogma and his acceptance of the figure of Christ and primitive Christianity that lends dynamism to the poem.

The plot of *Night the First* is relatively simple: Tharmas divides and his emanation, Enion, bears Los and Enitharmon, for whom Eno creates the physical world. Luvah forsakes his rightful place in the heart, goes to the brain, and seizes the Horses of Light. War erupts in eternity until rebellion is quelled. The first draft ended with the Nuptial Song of Los and Enitharmon and the lament of Enion, with man sunk into illness. The second draft includes the Council of God, and domination of Urizen over Luvah, and the wanderings of the Eternal Man.

While the story is straightforward, the meaning often is not, for the significant allusions are numerous, mainly drawn from Paradise Lost and the Christian scripture. The Eternal man is a unity of four principles identified above. The Fall from Eternity is occasioned by the rebellion of one of these four against the creative tension that holds them balanced. What was once the Divine Humanity, "The Universal Man, to Whom be Glory Evermore," has become a house divided against itself, with each faction struggling against the others to the detriment of the

whole man. The Four Zoas is the account of "His fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity: / His fall into the Generation of decay & death, & his / Regeneration by the Resurrection from the dead."

Blake parallels Milton's account, as Tharmas becomes a Lucifer figure, who was once "the loveliest son of heaven" (line 38), but has become 'terrible', the archetypal rebel. Interestingly, Blake not only explains the Fall and the fallen condition of Man; he also comments upon the nature of God and upon the traditional Christian view of God, for in lines 151-3, the Spectre of Tharmas speaks as El Shaddai, the jealous, judging almighty of the Old Testament: "If thou hast sinn'd & art polluted, know that I am pure / And unpolluted, & will bring to rigid strict account / All thy past deeds..." The jealous Old Testament God, like the Spectre, is a creation of divided man, the "delusive tempter" that tricked Enion into murdering the loves and graces of Tharmas, who is the heart or emotions (lines 161-9). Religious dogma was for Blake the source of all evil, for it insists on the repression of desire, the murder of love and grace, which is alone truly evil. This is a prevalent theme in The Four Zoas, as in all of Blake: that sin is a construct and "All deities reside in the human breast." [17]

Particularly hateful was the Church's position on sexuality, which made sexual desire something to be concealed, spoken of only in whispers, and acted upon only within a monogamous marital relationship. The spectre of Tharmas replays such repression, as [17] Marriage of Heaven and Hell, pl. 11. (K 153).

he convinces Enion to murder Tharmas' secret loves and graces, and then guards her jealously, the Eve figure on whom he lays blame for the fall: "'Tis thou hast darken'd all My World, O Woman, lovely bane." (line 178).

Following this portrait of the jealous false god of organized religion, Blake reminds the reader of the true God:

But those in Great Eternity Met in the Council of God  
As One Man, hovering over Gilead & Hermon.  
He is the Good Shepherd, He is the Lord & Master  
To Create Man Morning by Morning, to give gifts at Noon day."

The Christ, who is the Universal Man, who dwelt among us as Blake quotes in the margin of line 11, is the Good Shepherd, the benevolent creator. This view of God is also doctrinally consistent with Church dogma, so that here, as throughout the poetry, Blake incorporates those teachings of the Church with which he agrees, and vehemently repudiates the rest.

In a later addition, the physical world is created by Eno as a dwelling for the children of Enion—Los (time) and Enitharmon (space). During their wandering in the world, Enitharmon sings a Song of Vala, a Song of Death, which describes still another aspect of the fall, as Luvah leaves his rightful place in the heart and steals the Horses of Light from Urizen. Love, or passion, attempts to overcome wisdom, or reason, and the relationship between the other pair of zoas is destroyed, with the result: "Sick'ning lies the Fallen Man, his head is sick, his heart faint: / Mighty atchievement of your power! Beware the punishment!" (lines 288-9).

The remainder of Night the First is a description of the war between the zoas and the total breakdown of unity, as the emanations pair with other Zoas: a portion of Urthona flees to Tharmas, while Urthona seeks out Enion. Following this, the destruction of Jerusalem (who is both spiritual liberty and man's emanation) is described: the children are slain, and all survivors are led away into captivity, as happened repeatedly to the historical city of Jerusalem.

As has been shown, the cause of the Fall was a breakdown of the unity of the primal human characteristics; the consequence was war between the aspects of man and descent into generation. The culmination of the fall will be redemption and regeneration, which, while incomplete in the first night, are foreshadowed throughout in references to Christ, the redeemer. Lines 9-11 describe him, while the scripture reference indicates his imminence. By echoing Paradise Lost, Blake both reiterates the Christ as saviour motif and subtly corrects Milton's account. The eternal Lamb of God is described in line 97, the word choice recalling the sacrifice that will redeem fallen man, while also reinforcing the poet's link with Christian tradition.

But we, immortal in our own strength, survive by stern debate  
 Till we have drawn the Lamb of God into a mortal form.  
 And that he must be born is certain, for One must be All  
 And comprehend within himself all things both small & great,  
 We therefore, for whose sake all things aspire to be & live,  
 Will so receive the Divine Image that amongst the Reprobate  
 He may be devoted to destruction from his mother's womb.

Blake continues the motif as Los and Enitharmon partake of the Eucharist, the memorial of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice, both of which were foreordained. Recalling the words of Isaiah

53, Jesus appears "as One Man infolded / In Luvah's robes of blood & bearing all his afflictions" (lines 363-4). Next, he is the Eternal Saviour, the Rock of Ages, supporting the stricken man, and "Watching over him with Love & Care" (line 468). Originally, Night the First ended here with man in Jesus' arms, but Blake carried on with the hope of regeneration as Albion becomes Lazarus, the dead man Christ raised after four days' entombment. Both the language and the situation recall the eleventh chapter of St. John's Gospel: "He / Whom thou lovest, is sick...", "The Eternal Man wept...", Unfortunately, Urizen and Luvah awake before Albion can be raised, but the promise of ultimate redemption lies in Jesus, "The Lamb of God, blessed for ever," who remains with man throughout his wanderings, despite his blindness to the Divine Image.

As in Night the First, the basic plotline of the second night is simple: Urizen and Vala unite to keep Luvah down; Urizen subjugates Vala and orders the destruction of the "Mundane Shell"; Ahania separates from Urizen; Los and Enitharmon separate from each other. Yet the import of the action is the same as in the first Night: the division of the zoas leads to disunity and fall. Night the Second recounts Urizen's subjugation of Luvah, or "the triumph of abstract reason over imagination." [18] "Symbolically, the orderly mind and the gentler feelings combine to keep down the stronger passions (not exclusively the sexual passions). When that has been successfully accomplished, even  
[18]Mellor, 182.



the gentler feelings fade and become mere slaves to 'duty'." [19] Albion, gravely ill from the division within himself, summons Urizen, Prince of Light, and gives him control, admonishing him to have pity on his brother Luvah. Instead, Urizen uses his new power to enslave Luvah and Vala, becoming by line 215 'King' rather than 'prince' of Light. He commands the band of heaven to reshape the world, and the world they fashion is in his image, a Mundane Shell.

To extrapolate, reason takes charge of the man, first by using his gentle affections to imprison his passions and emotions, then by enslaving the gentle affections themselves. Once the passions are dealt with, reason begins to shape the world to conform to himself. In his world, where science replaces art, the compass, the quadrant, the rule, and the balance are the most important tools, "petrifying all the Human Imagination into rock & sand" (line 38), until men reject vision in favour of science and industry, claiming that "We see no Visions in the darksome air" (line 127). Like the Pharaohs, who built the pyramids with the lives of countless thousands of slaves, Urizen erects a temple to himself, the Golden Hall of Urizen. This hall might represent any of several manifestations of the age of reason, or all of them at once. Certainly, the imagery utilized in the description is religious, leading the reader to equate the Golden Hall with the eighteenth-century Church. The references to an altar on the east side, with its sculpture and engraving recall the furnishings of a church, while

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[19]Margoliouth, xx.

the perfumes, 'blue smoke,' and 'Victims sacrificed' echo divine service. In deifying reason, man blocks his access to heaven, or eternity: "On clouds the Sons of Urizen beheld Heaven walled round; / They weigh'd & order'd all, & Urizen comforted saw / The wondrous work flow forth like visible out of the invisible" (lines 258-60). However, the saviour figure is also present in Night the Second: "For the Divine Lamb, Even Jesus who is the Divine Vision, / Permitted all, lest Man should fall into Eternal Death" (lines 261-2).

Jesus is present, as he was in Night I, although not as obviously. He is the Divine Vision of lines 2 and 247, appearing in Luvah's robes of blood, symbol of both his incarnation and his sacrifice for the regeneration of man. Enitharmon foretells the Incarnation in her song: "For every thing that lives is holy; for the source of life / Descends to be a weeping babe". Blake's basic Christology is quite traditional: Jesus is God incarnate, born a tiny babe who ultimately, through bloody sacrifice, opens a way for man to re-enter eternity. This night ends, as did the first night, with man divided and the zoas struggling against one another, but also with redemption and re-unification foreshadowed. Although man cannot see it, the Divine Vision is always with him, waiting until the appointed time to affect regeneration.

Night the Third is the final night of the first, or Fall, section of the triad, and relates the absolute desolation of the human condition, the depth of man's fallenness. In the opening lines, Ahaniah asks Urizen why he is disturbed, and he prophesies the birth of Los, who would eventually supplant him. Ahaniah

retells the story of the Fall from her perspective, thinking to relieve Urizen's despair; perversely, Urizen becomes angry and casts Ahania from him. Immediately, his kingdom and temple crumble into chaos, and Tharmas reappears to reassert his control; he is impotent, however, and chaos reigns as "Love and Hope are ended" (line 204).

Allegorically, the Night begins with the assurances of intellect that reason's dominion over man is secure. Ahania is "the embodiment of everything graceful and urbane and human about the intellectual life...ingenuous but wise, forthright but tactful, voluptuous but delicate in mind and personality." [20] Yet reason fears the rebirth of imagination, which will ultimately command reason, and wonders "what will become of me at that dread time?" (line 23). Ahania tries to reassure him that man has intended reason to rule, and recounts the Fall.

For this study, the central concern is man's creation of a god from his own fallen intellect; as in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, man constructs a deity in his own image, worships it, and forgets that his god is only "a wat'ry vision of Man" (line 52). Urizen is the 'primeval priest' in The Book of Urizen, wherein he also creates a shadowy god (himself) for worship. [21] That Blake believed eighteenth-century religion to be the worship of human reason has been demonstrated; in Night III, that false view of God is one of the primary agents in the division of the Eternal Man. Guilt-inducing Christianity leads to fear of

[20]Wilkie and Johnson, 65.

[21]Deen, 127.

everlasting punishment and death, as Albion sees the future "like a dark lamp before me," where "Eternal death haunts all my expectation" (line 75).

Urizen's response to Ahanian's proffered insight into "the deathlike nature of a lonely and false holiness"--the fruit of organized religion--is to reject violently both Intellect and the wisdom she offers.[22] Reason degenerates into madness and the entire world is destroyed in a flood as "the swelling sea / Burst from its bonds in whirlpools fierce" (lines 136-7). The cataclysm destroys Reason's world with fire and flood, lightning and thunder, but also obliterates order and hope as confusion and despair overwhelm the characters. At this point Tharmas, or power, appears to assume control; yet he is impotent, for the struggle of the zoas and emanations within man has reduced Tharmas to instinct, 'residual humanity.' He cannot impose order on the chaos within man, and night the Third ends in despair and confusion, with the destruction of Urizen's Mundane Shell symbolizing the nadir of the fall.

Although the descent of man seems complete and irreversible, it is important to note that, while Ahanian wanders on "the Margin of Non Entity," and Enion is reduced to a disembodied voice, both exist still, as do the other emanations and zoas; they are devastated but not destroyed; as long as each exists, there is hope of reunification. Scant hope, to be sure, until the reader recalls the prophecy: imagination will return, bringing light to shine in Urizen's darkness, a Christ figure (the light of the

[22]Wilkie and Johnson, 76.

world) and therefore a saviour of sorts. Also, Albion perceived the image of Christ, the "Son of Man" in Luvah, descending from the cloud of religion. Jesus the Messiah is obliquely present in Night III, but as yet he has not begun his redemptive work.

For Blake, however, essential humanity is community (whether of zoas within the Eternal Man, or of men in the physical world) acting as one.[23] Curiously, although the divisions in man result in struggles between the zoas, those conflicts are never portrayed as a war between good and evil, as they are in Paradise Lost. "In Blake's cosmos evil is only a delusion, and God ultimately is entirely loving and merciful. Because of that love, no individual identity will be condemned eternally as Milton's Satan is." [24] Urizen is not evil, merely misguided, for all that his delusion nearly causes the extinction of man. Evil in Blake is a 'selfhood-inspired delusion' that same delusion that fashions a God in man's own image and creates prohibitive laws to enforce a false morality. For Blake, "the eating of the fruit is not a fall at all. It occurs after man has descended into the delusion of materialism and morality...in fact, it represents the beginning of man's return to Eternity. The difference implies that where Milton saw evil as Disobedience to a divine prohibition, Blake saw evil as a self-hood inspired delusion, part of which included prohibition; breaking the

[23]Deen, 20.

[24]John Howard, Infernal Poetics: Poetic Structures in Blake's Lambeth Prophecies (London: Associated University Presses, 1984) 222.

delusion of prohibition is the only way back to eternity." [25] In Milton, evil is breaking a code; in Blake, evil is the code itself. By extension, the Church for Milton was good, for it protected and enforced the divine prohibitions that keep man from sin; for this same reason, organized religion was pernicious to Blake, for it is the vehicle of Urizen's 'laws of iron' that neither flesh nor spirit could perfectly keep, one of the principal agents in the continuing fall of Nights I and II that reaches its nadir in Night III.

The action of Night IV opens with Tharmas surveying the abyss and commissioning Los to rebuild man. The Spectre of Urthona is summoned, and together Los and the Spectre bind Urizen and create the physical human body. Reason is bound by his incarnation, for in the physical world, he will be dependent on the senses. The Council of God weeps over the body of fallen man. It is unclear exactly who the council is, but it is reasonable that it is comprised of those aspects of man that remain in eternity. It has been shown that all that exists is part of man; therefore, the council, as well as the Divine Vision itself, is in some way an element of Mankind.

Tharmas, whose quality is power, appears again as El Shaddai, the almighty God of the Old Testament, and charges Los and the Spectre of Urthona (whose quality is imagination) to rebuild man, thereby associating Los with the Son, who is the creative aspect of the Trinity, the logos. [26] Tharmas' speech re-enforces the

[25]Howard, 220.

[26]Howard, 212.

association, for he calls Los "My Son, Glorious in brightness" (line 26). The poet considered the Old Testament deity to be a product of man's fallen vision; the creation they bring forth is a body of death and decay, the product of fallen creators, yet necessary for the ultimate redemption of man. Once man has been enclosed in flesh, the Incarnation is possible, wherein the saviour becomes flesh and dwells among us, bridging the gap between the Eternity lost in the Fall and man's present state.

The process of binding Urizen in a physical body recalls the biblical story of creation, not only in the seven day period of creative work, but also in Blake's diction in the repeated line "And a first age passed & a state of dismal woe," which echoes the first chapter of Genesis "And the evening and the morning were the first day." The first age saw the formation of the skeleton, especially the skull and spine; the second, the heart, arteries, and veins. The last five ages are devoted to the vehicles of each of the senses: eyes, ears, nostrils, tongue, and limbs. When the creation/binding is complete, the Council of God weeps over the body, yet in the midst of their sorrow, the Divine Vision, Jesus appears to comfort the Daughters of Beulah.

"Perhaps the Daughters of Beulah are Blake's personification of hope; certainly it would be anomalous if so profoundly Christian a poet as Blake did not give a large place in his scheme to what is sometimes considered the most distinctively Christian virtue."<sup>[27]</sup> Blake has taken care to offer hope for man's salvation in each of the preceding nights, even Night III, in

[27]Wilkie and Johnson, 29.

which man's plight might seem utterly devoid of hope. At the end of Night IV, the Daughters of Beulah repeat the speech of Mary and Martha of Bethany on the death of their brother, Lazarus:

Lord Savior, if thou hadst been here our brother had not  
died,  
And now we know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God  
He will give it thee; for we are weak women & dare not lift  
Our eyes to the Divine pavilions; therefore in mercy thou  
Appearest cloth'd in Luvah's garments that we may behold thee  
And live." (lines 253-8)

Luvah's robes of blood have a multiple meaning here: they are literally a covering of blood, for Christ had been scourged; they are the covering of flesh, indicating Christ's incarnation; but they are also the scarlet robe given to Jesus at his trial, symbolizing his crucifixion for the redemption of mankind. The Saviour assures the Daughters of Beulah (and the reader) that Albion does not sleep in eternal death, for "If ye will believe, your Brother shall rise again" (line 270). Notice that Jesus does not create the limits of Opacity and Contraction; he simply named them, having found them within Albion himself. The only limit he actually creates is the limit put on Eternal Death, to keep man from annihilation before he can become regenerate.

As in Night IV, the action of Night V is uncomplicated: Los and Enitharmon leave Urizen bound; Enitharmon bears a son, Orc, who remains with them fourteen summers; at the end of that period, Los becomes jealous of Orc, and binds him with a chain of jealousy; the parents come to repent their chaining of Orc and attempt to free him, to no avail; in misery, Los and Enitharmon disappear and Urizen awakens.



Allegorically, the fallen aspects of imagination give birth to the fallen form of their brother zoa, Luvah, as Orc, who represents fallen love or passion. Jealousy becomes a chain with which the imagination binds passion, and although Los and Enitharmon regret their action and try to free Orc, fallen love and jealousy have grown inextricably intertwined. Imagination flees as reason awakens, knowing that intellect will try to regain its lost authority.

Los, or imagination, is in both Nights IV and V the creator figure. In Night IV, he fashioned the physical body for Urizen, and in Night V, he causes the birth of Orc. Now that both reason and emotion have been embodied, the eternal antagonists are again ready to act out their struggle. The incarnation of the fallen zoas is both necessary and inevitable, for both are vital to the ultimate redemption of man, toward which the epic is inexorably moving. As Blake states repeatedly, "Without Contraries is no progression."

Not only does the presence of the contraries, Reason and Desire, portend progress, the repentance of Los and Enitharmon also bodes well for the ultimate regeneration of man. Always before, Los and Enitharmon have acted selfishly, with disastrous results. Now, they are finally stirred to act from love and self sacrifice as they vainly endeavour to free Orc. "For the first time we see them acting in the spirit of unselfish sacrifice that later, when it is finally tested and then fully confirmed, will set the work of redemption in motion."<sup>[28]</sup> Los, especially, is                       
<sup>[28]</sup>Wilkie and Johnson, 110.

transformed; he who formed the chain of jealousy in the first place, is determined to remove it, "Even if his own death resulted" (line 154).

The stage is set with the contraries present and the first stirrings of noble feelings in the imagination: there is indeed hope for the regeneration of man, although the slow rise from the fall does not properly begin until Night VII. As Nights IV, V, and VI form the second part of the triad, depicting as they do the fallen state, there is still Night VI to be endured before the work of regeneration can begin in earnest.

In Night the Sixth, Urizen sets out to explore his dens, and encounters three of his daughters; when they refuse to give him water, he curses them and continues on his way. He sees the ruins of his creation and laments, resolving to recreate the world. Urizen wanders until he discovers Orc, where he is confronted by Tharmas and the Spectre of Urthona. The Night ends with Urizen having retreated into his Web.

Newly awakened reason explores his creation which was ruined in Night III, when the Fall reached its nadir. He encounters three of his daughters, who are the last remnants of intellectual beauty, and who may also encompass the three graces and the three Fates. In a curious inversion of the scene of Christ with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's Well, the daughters refuse to bestow the waters of life upon Urizen, the tyrant rationalism, for they fear what might happen if he gains eternal life. Angered, reason shows himself as he is, a cruel despot, who curses his daughters when they resist his will. He continues his wandering, and perceives the utter ruin of his children and his world: "He knew

they were his Children ruin'd in his ruin'd world" (line 130), and "O, thou poor ruin'd world! / Thou horrible ruin! once like me thou wast all glorious, / And now like me partaking desolate thy master's lot." (lines 209-11).

Reason resolves to rebuild his destroyed world, yet he begins 'the same dull round' again as he forms

"vast instruments to measure out the immense & fix / The whole into another world better suited to obey / His will, where none should dare oppose his will, himself being King / Of All & all futurity be bound in his vast chain, / And the Sciences were fix'd & the Vortexes began to operate / On all the sons of men, & every human soul terrified / At the turning wheels of heaven shrunk away inward, with'ring away." (lines 230-6).

As before, reason places himself on the throne, and rules with science and instruments of measure. The 'turning wheels,' Blake's symbol for oppression, grind away inexorably, once again enslaving the sons and daughters of the zoas.

Reason continues his quest until he discovers Orc in the vale of Urthona, where he encounters Tharmas (power) and the Spectre of Urthona, the last vestiges of imagination, as Los and Enitharmon have departed. War is about to be joined when Reason retreats into the security of the web of religion, knowing that the forces of imagination cannot breach the dogmatic walls of rational, organized religion. Religion in this Night is a spider's web, 'dusky & cold,' certain death to the unwary victim, while it is both home and security to Reason, the venomous spider, personification of death.

Such death- and corruption-related images are prevalent in Night VI, which describes Reason's reassertion of his power, just as life and growth images dominate Night V, which recounts the

incarnation of love or passion in Orc. Also, while the development in V is linear, it is circular in VI: Los and Enitharmon have progressed from selfishness to self-sacrifice, and Orc, although in chains, has been brought into the world in Night V; in Night VI, Urizen begins where he was originally bound, in the Vale of Urthona, wanders through his creation for a time, and returns again to the world of Urthona. In fact, it is indicated by the word choice that he would have continued in that circular pattern, had Tharmas not "stay'd his flight" (line 302). The wheels, the circles, the death and ruin images all portray Urizen as a negative figure, the tyrant king under whose rule life withers and fades.

Yet, even in the midst of this gloomy night, in which Reason seems to have regained his authority, there is an inkling of hope for mankind's ultimate salvation, for Urizen is guided by a power stronger than he. "The ever pitying one who seeth all things" (line 157) saw his fall, and created 'a bosom of clay' that he not be destroyed utterly. "The divine had him led" (line 176) in his wanderings, and "Providence Divine conducted... / Lest Death Eternal should be the result" (lines 282-3). Urizen, tyrant though he now is, must survive, for he is as important to the health of the Eternal Man as any of the zoas. Thus, at the conclusion of Night VI, which ends the section of the poem that describes fallenness, the forces of reason and of imagination seem poised on the brink of apocalyptic battle, a battle reason is hesitant to join as he retreats to consider his options within the web of rational religion. The stage is set for the first act of redemption.

Night VII is the first night of the third section of The Four Zoas, the section that traces the zoas (and man's) gradual rise from the Fall. As has been stated, there are two nights headed 'the seventh,' and it is not known whether Blake would have combined them, or rejected one. For this reason, both will be dealt with here, with what is generally held to be the earlier night discussed first, following Keynes' ordering of the text.

In response to the threat posed to him at the end of Night VI, Urizen rises and Tharmas and the Spectre of Urthona flee, whereupon Urizen descends into the caves of Orc. As he sits brooding enviously over Orc, the root of Mystery grows under his heel. Urizen speaks, offering false pity to Orc, who rejects him. Urizen then asserts his deity and preaches his wisdom, which Orc curses before becoming a serpent and climbing into the tree of Mystery. At this point, the focus shifts to Los, who is lamenting his separation from Enitharmon. The tree bears the fruit of mystery, paralleled by Enitharmon giving birth to Vala. Los attempts to reunite with Enitharmon and the Spectre of Urthona, but Enitharmon flees. Los creates physical bodies which the spectres of the dead inhabit. Urizen divides, and is now in Los' power.

Allegorically, Reason triumphs over the abortive rebellion and, feeling that his position is secure, descends to the Caves of Orc to contemplate his enemy. Interestingly, although passion is bound fast in the chain of jealousy, still reason fears it and will not draw near; instead, he ranges his moral codes and books of iron laws about him like a defensive wall, protection from bound passion. Reason's hatred and envy of energetic passion

takes root and becomes the Tree of Mystery. The exchange between Urizen and Orc echoes a similar episode in Paradise Lost, in which Satan tries to ascertain whether Christ is indeed the Son of God; here, Urizen attempts to discover if Orc is in fact Luvah. Reason expounds the wisdom of eighteenth-century morality, Blake's perception of a society with reason and organized religion in control:

Compell the poor to live upon a Crust of bread, by soft  
 mild arts.  
 Smile when they frown, frown when they smile; & when a man  
 looks pale  
 With labour & abstinence, say he looks healthy & happy;  
 And when his children sicken, let them die; there are enough  
 Born, even too many, & our Earth will be overrun  
 Without these arts. If you would make the poor live with  
 temper,  
 With pomp give every crust of bread you give; with gracious  
 cunning  
 Magnify small gifts; reduce the man to want a gift, & then  
 give with pomp.  
 Say he smiles if you hear him sigh. If pale, say he is  
 ruddy.  
 Preach temperance: say he is overgorg'd & drowns his wit  
 In strong drink, tho' you know that bread & water are all  
 He can afford. Flatter his wife, pity his children, till we  
 can  
 Reduce all to our will, as spaniels are taught with art.  
 (lms 117-29)

This is one of Blake's most vicious indictments of eighteenth-century society in general, and of the Church in particular, for the wisdom here offered is diametrically opposed to the true Christianity contained in the words of Christ, who instructed his disciples to give generously and without pride to those in need, to treat all men as brothers, and to be motivated in everything by love. Urizen's gospel is antithetical to Christ's (and Blake's) gospel of love, just as Urizen is the

contrary of Orc, whom he forces to take on the form of a serpent. Blake abruptly shifts the reader's attention back to Los (fallen imagination), who is lamenting his separation from Enitharmon, another aspect of the imagination. Los tries to unite with the other portions of Urthona--Enitharmon and the Spectre--but is successful only in reuniting with the Spectre: "fallen man's will and imagination are joined and the humanizing process at last begins." [29] The imaginative power creates physical forms for the spectres of the dead, and thereby begins rebuilding eternity, encouraged by Enitharmon. The Night ends as reason divides and imagination perceives that his enemy is not 'in his hand,' yet Los discovers love in himself for the redeemable portion of reason. Recovery from the fall will be affected, then, when this love for the eternal portion of divine humanity in each zoa conquers their selfishness and pride; this love is central to Blake's Christianity.

The person and work of Christ are alluded to throughout Night VII as the verse repeatedly echoes New Testament images: "I will destroy / That body I created; then shall we unite again in bliss" (lines 300-1); "Destroy this temple, and in three days..." (St. John ii.19). "...for beneath / was open'd new heavens & a new Earth" (lines 379-80); "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away..." (Rev. xxi.1); "without a ransom I could not be sav'd from Eternal death" (line 389); "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his

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[29] Bloom, 277.

life a ransom for many." (Matt. xx.28). Yet perhaps the most startling allusion to Christ is found in the serpent form Orc assumes. Orc becomes a snake, and climbs onto the branches of the tree of Mystery, parodying the crucifixion, even as the verse imitates the words of Christ: "And I, if I be lifted up for the earth, will draw all men unto me." (St. John xii.32). "But Christian typology has always recognized the connection between the serpent of Eden and the crucified Christ, a clear example of the way its mythical understanding runs deeper than doctrinal purpose." [30] Jesus both reverses the damage done by the serpent in Eden, and acts also as his 'parallel countertype', the living fulfillment of the promise symbolised by the brazen serpent Moses lifted up to save the Israelites in the wilderness. This allusion is one of Blake's most compressed uses of symbol: Orc (passion) is the brazen serpent and the crucified Christ, necessary to regeneration of the Eternal Man. He is also the tempter of Eden, who led Eve to independence from false moral constraints in Blake's view, to sin and depravity in the eyes of the Church.

The inadequacy of the Church's concept of God, particularly in the Books of the Law, is another theme in Night VII. Urizen appears as that jealous deity, enviously brooding over Orc and proclaiming himself God of the world, ruined though it is. He is also the God of law, whose books of moral codes and iron prohibition protect him from any influence love or desire might have. Also like the Church's God, he is a God of mystery, hiding

[30]Wilkie and Johnson, 151.



himself in the holy of holies, behind the veil, in superstitious liturgy and symbol. Moreover, he is a God who exacts punishment for sin, the infraction of his tyrannical laws, for Enitharmon fears that without a ransom, or payment for her sins, she could not be saved from eternal death. For Blake, Genesis is the beginning of a slave morality which denies man the right to determine his own future, his own morality, or his own lifestyle. These things fall under the purview of God, who as creator, has absolute authority over human existence. Eve's sin, and Blake's, is in challenging this system. For Blake, God is Christ, the Divine Humanity, which is in every person: "Turn inwardly thine Eyes & there behold the Lamb of God / Clothed in Luvah's robes of blood descending to redeem" (lines 415-6). Blake rejects the Church and the doctrine it has constructed regarding Christ, yet he fervently embraced the Christ of the New Testament, and therefore, presumably, the Christ underlying repugnant Church tradition.

Another theme in Night VII is the necessity of a physical form as the vehicle of regeneration. Birth into the physical world, although fallen, is the beginning of salvation, for Christ is eventually embodied, human history progresses toward the Last Judgment, and mankind is redeemed.[31] Paradoxically, then, division into fallen physical form is not only a result of the spiritual disunity in Man, the Fall, it is also the crucial first step toward regeneration, "For without a Created body the Spectre is Eternal Death" (line 410). Yet the `fabricated semblances'

[31]Howard, 215.

are originally created to be a sacrifice, "To form a world of sacrifice of brothers & sons & daughters" (line 443); they are not intended to become man's eternal form. Here again Los is the logos, the creative Word, who has begun to rebuild eternity, and who fashions a physical form for the 'spectrous dead.'

Enitharmon's speech in lines 447-55 is rather ambiguous, as it is unclear whether it is the 'piteous spectres' or the 'forms sublime' that are to be 'ransoms for their Souls that they may live,' but the sentence structure (in as much as Blake's sentence structure may be relied upon as a guide) seems to indicate that it is in fact the physical form, rather than the spectres themselves, that is to be sacrificed. The body must be created, that Christ may come and be crucified to restore fallen Man.

In Night VIIb, Urizen again sits on his rock and claims dominion over the world, and commissions a temple to be built in his honour, for his worship. Los appears to foretell war, but Tharmas assures Urizen that he will protect him. Enitharmon, still separated from Los, laments her condition. Here the focus shifts to other figures as Vala, who was born in Night VII and has become Urizen's harlot, stands before Orc. He achieves momentary freedom before he is defeated by Urizen and crucified on the Tree of Mystery. Orc becomes a serpent, and the scene shifts again, this time to Vala and Tharmas, each pining for his absent, other self--Vala seeking Luvah as Tharmas seeks Enion. The end describes the formation of the state known as Satan.

Reason is still convinced of his mastery over the world, although imagination warns him of coming war. Tharmas, or power, has surrendered himself to reason's domination, and assures

Urizen that his position is secure. The gentler affections, now enslaved by reason, taunt bound passion which breaks free for a moment before it is suppressed by reason and sacrificed. As in Night VII, Orc then becomes a serpent in the tree of mystery. Affection and power, still divided from their other halves, vow that they will stay in the world, however fallen, until Luvah is loosed. The poem ends with hope, for the 'promise Divine' must be fulfilled: "If ye will believe, your B[r]other shall rise again" (line 294). That hope may seem misplaced, for Satan takes form at the conclusion of the night, but paradoxically, that too is cause for hope, for Satan, traditionally the contrary to the Christ who raised Lazarus, must be present for the resolution of man's Fall.

Also contrary to Blake's view of Christ is organized religion, which is both a creation and a slave of reason. In this Night, as elsewhere, his descriptions of priests is highly derogatory: "The priests / He ordain'd & Priestesses, cloth'd in disguises bestial, / Inspiring secrecy..." (lines 26-28). The word choice 'intoxicating fumes' alludes to the use of incense, while also suggesting that reason's religion has a narcotic effect, robbing men of perspective, of balance, or perceptions of reality. It is the 'Priest of God' in lines 114-20 who guides Urizen's battles and who guards the 'seven diseases of man, who issues curses. Here, in a curious inversion of Christian tradition, Blake refers, not to the Seven Deadly Sins, but to the Seven Cardinal Virtues as the diseases of man. The true curse of religion is not condemning sin; it is, rather, the enforcing of a false, repressive morality. That which the Church calls sin is

in truth simply the uninhibited gratification of desire, while that which the Church calls virtue is the repression of desire, and is alone truly evil.

Also present in Night VIIb are numerous allusions to Christ, who personifies the hope of salvation. As in the New Testament account of Jesus' crucifixion, where the Sanhedrin voted to condemn him and the Roman soldiers cast lots for his clothing, nailed him to a cross, and pierced his side with a spear, so it was with Orc (who is Luvah in generation):

They give the Oath of blood, they cast the lots into the  
helmet,  
They vote the death of Luvah & they nail'd him to the tree,  
They pierc'd him with a spear & laid him in a sepulcher  
To die a death of Six thousand years, bound round with  
desolation."

(lines 165-8)

Interestingly, in Blake's day the period of six thousand years was taken to be the approximate length of time between the creation and the Eighteenth Century, Blake's present. Also, the word "they" refers back to "all the Elemental Gods" in line 146; therefore, Luvah--the Christ figure--was crucified from the foundations of the world, as "Blake here accepts the traditional Christian solution to the fall of man, the solution celebrated in Young's Night Thoughts: man's fallen mortal body will be redeemed after physical death as a purified spiritual body." [32] Christ's sacrifice has redeemed men, who no longer need fear death, knowing that they will be resurrected, as it were, into a new spiritual body to dwell in the new heaven and new earth. As in

[32] Anne Kostelantz Mellor, Blake's Human Form Divine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 189.

each of the Nights, Blake's Christ is present as the hope of fallen Man for redemption.

The Eighth Night is one of the most clearly biblical and most hope-inspiring of the Nights. The meeting in the Council of God has produced the limit of contraction, which is physical form; man cannot fall any further from Eternity, nor will his visionary capacity be allowed to fall below what is appropriate to mankind. Los and Enitharmon set about fashioning bodies for the spectres to inhabit, and as they create, they glimpse the Lamb of God, who with Jerusalem (spiritual liberty) has entered the human heart to illuminate it. [33] Reason has also seen the Lamb and launches a war against him, during which the form of Satan emerges. The Lamb descends into the world of Los in order to redeem it, but is apparently defeated when he is condemned and crucified. Los and the other fallen portions of humanity despair, believing their Saviour dead. Notice that all of the zoas and emanations are present in Night VIII, even Enion who became a disembodied voice early in the epic. All of the aspects of the Divine Humanity have congregated, although they gather in despair, for they, like the disciples, believe the Lord departed for all time in death. "Night VIII is the time when Jesus is at last recognized on the human plane, but it is also the time—analagous both to the Saturday before Easter and to the two thousand years of Christendom—when he seems indisputably dead, most painfully absent from those who have been working through

[33]Wilkie and Johnson, 166.

time for human salvation." [34] Yet, in these tortuous hours before the dawn of Man's redemption, Enion prophesies the return of Christ: "The Lamb of God has rent the Veil of Mystery, soon to return / In Clouds & Fires..." (lines 556-7). Enion offers hope that the absent Christ will come again and complete the work of salvation, the same hope implicit throughout the poem.

The character of Christ in Night VIII is much like that in the New Testament, both in the action and the diction employed. He is repeatedly called the "Lamb of God," a designation frequently found in the writings of St. John. The Daughters of Beulah recognize him as the saviour and worship him (lines 43-44). He is the holy Lamb of God, blessed forever, who assumes the dark Satanic body in the Virgin's womb. The description of his death and interment echoes the biblical account, even identifying Los with Joseph of Arimethea, who laid Jesus' body in his own tomb:

Thus was the Lamb of God condemn'd to Death.  
They nail'd him upon the tree of Mystery, weeping over him  
And then mocking & then worshipping, calling him Lord & King.

Los took the Body from the Cross, Jerusalem weeping over;  
They bore it to the Sepulcher which Los had hewn in the rock  
Of Eternity for himself: he hew'd it despairing of Life  
Eternal.

(lines 325-327; 338-340)

Enion's speech also echoes Scripture, for she refers to Christ as the 'bridegroom', the one who 'has rent the Veil of Mystery', even as the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom in the Gospel account of the death of Christ. Blake's Jesus is the Jesus of the New Testament, the Christ of true Christianity, not the construct propagated by the Church.

[34]Wilkie and Johnson, 166.

The distinction between those two concepts of Christ is most evident in their interpretation of the crucifixion as sacrifice. For the Church, Christ has paid a ransom for the sins of Man; he has become a sin offering to appease the El Shaddai of the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments. For Blake, however,

"Jesus is not a Redeemer--in the etymological sense of buying back--but a Savior; he is not suprahumanity taking on the burden of sin through a specious human disguise, but full and true humanity freeing fallen man from enslavement to the guilt and self-contempt implied in the conventional notion of sin as the violation of some transempyrean code." [35]

Christ's willing sacrifice negates the Law and its attendant punishment, so that he comes not as love and as the fulfillment of the Law, but as love alone. "Only in this sense does Christ die for man: not in payment of man's debt, but for the sake of man, for an end to the justice that is vengeance." [36]

Seemingly unrelated--indeed, the final lines were added by Blake after the original conclusion of Night VIII--is the death of Rahab (Mystery) by fire and her phoenix-like resurrection as Deism. Rahab is organized religion, which Bloom identifies as the eighteenth-century Church of England. [37] She is Christianity in its worst guise, that of inquisitor and accuser, yet is herself guilty of the very transgressions she accuses in others. She is hypocritical in the extreme:

...sometimes Self condemning, repentant,  
And sometimes kissing her Robes & Jewels & weeping over them;  
Sometimes returning to the Synagogue of Satan in Pride,

[35]Wilkie and Johnson, 152.

[36]Deen, 148.

[37]Bloom, 284ff.





the call, the dead arise, 'Bathing their limbs in the bright visions of Eternity' as their 'mental fires' are kindled. This is not resurrection from physical death only, but from spiritual death as well, from insensibility to Eternity into renewed mental fires, for as the perceptions are cleansed, man beholds everything as it is: infinite. (MHH pl. 14; K 154.).

As the poem progresses, Mystery is aflame and her tyrants, kings and priests, are destroyed. After the destruction of tyranny, Albion awakes and calls Urizen, Prince of Light, charging him to resume his rightful place among the zoas. The Eternal Man foretells the reunification of the zoas in Eternity as all men gather together, each 'as he had liv'd before.' Christ descends "with power and great glory," as in the Liturgy. The instruments of war are converted for use in peaceful endeavours (swords beaten into plowshares), and Urizen sows the Seed of Men. Here Blake inserts a pastoral scene in which Vala cares for two children, Tharmas and Enion. This scene serves two thematic purposes: first, it shows the redeemed view of physical nature, and second, it portrays the psychic redemption of passion as innocence.[39] The seed Urizen sowed flourishes, is harvested, threshed, winnowed, and milled, and the grapes are gathered into Luvah's winepress. Albion arises from the pseudo-Eucharist and evil is consumed as his perception expands. Unity is achieved and "sweet Science reigns." (line 855).

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[39]Wilkie and Johnson, 225-7.

One of the major themes in Night IX is the necessity of physical as well as spiritual regeneration, although some critics see this emphasis as a parody of Christian dogma. Yet, throughout the poem Blake has stressed the necessity of Incarnation, of physical creation. In Night VII, the Spectre of Urthona persuades Los to create physical forms for the spectres of the dead, "For without a Created body the Spectre is Eternal Death." (VII, line 410). In Night VIII, the poet asserts that the Fallen Man must "first...Give his vegetated body / To be cut off & separated, that the Spiritual body may be reveal'd" (lines 265-6). The spectres are incarnate that they may be redeemed, and redeemed that they may be regenerate, or re incarnate. "The traditional Christian interpretation of the resurrection of the body--an article of faith that dominates Blake's later works--makes more sense as a gloss on his ideas in Night IX than do the tortuous efforts by some exegetes to defuse and neutralize them as ingenuous parodies of Christianity." [40] As has been stated, Blake's was a profoundly Christian vision, and lines 825-855 of the final night clearly describe the life of the redeemed Man in Eternity, as well as obliquely mentioning his regenerate body: "Man walks forth...", "His eyes behold...", "He walks upon the Eternal Mountains, raising his heavenly voice..." Albion, like the redeemed in Revelation, is given a new physical body, as Blake once again tailors a Church doctrine to fit into his unique Christian (and uniquely Christian) mythology.

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[40]Wilkie and Johnson, 209.

Blake borrowed much from Christian scripture, particularly the apocalyptic ending. Di Salvo states that the poet's utilization of 'apocalypse' springs from his fondness for the figure of Christ as liberator, who will ultimately enter human history to reconstruct an egalitarian order. Albion rises when each of the zoas and their emanations resume their proper places and occupations, a reversal of the Fall, which occurred when Urizen elevated himself as 'King and God' over all. The joy and bliss pictured at the conclusion of Night IX mirrors the state of the redeemed in St. John's heaven.

If Blake found much in Christian scripture to assimilate into his work, he found at least as much in the Christian Church to abhor and denounce as utterly evil. Organized religion, particularly the 'natural religion' of the Eighteenth Century, was for Blake a creature of reason, or rationalism, which he calls "Schoolmaster of souls, great opposer of change" (line 131), and "dread form of Certainty" (line 133). When Albion wakes and perceives his illness, he tells Urizen that his anger is greater against him than against Luvah, for "thy religion, / The first author of this war & the distracting of honest minds / Into confused perturbation & strife & honour & pride, / Is a deciet [sic] so detestable that I will cast thee out / If thou repentest not..." (lines 152-6). Religion, then, is the cause of the war between the zoas, for it was Urizen's iron books, his moral codes, that tyrannized love and imagination, seeking to repress desire and to become more than man; instead, he became far less.

The Church is the bride of Christ in Christian tradition; in Blake, she is the harlot Mystery, who has "made the nations drunk with the cup of Religion" (line 658). Jerusalem (spiritual liberty) is the true bride of Christ, "a City, yet a Woman, / Mother of myriads redeem'd & born in her spiritual palaces, / By a New Spiritual birth Regenerated from Death" (lines 222-4). In Jerusalem, where "The dark Religions are departed," Albion is free of the false morality of organized religion, and is unified within himself by that freedom, as each zoa performs his appointed task.

For all his dislike of the Church, Blake utilized one of its most holy sacraments, the Eucharist, as a symbol of reunification in his account of the harvest and the winepress. As with so many of his borrowed symbols, Blake inverts the traditional idea of Communion into a type of "reverse transubstantiation" in which the blood of human sacrifice becomes the wine of eternal life.[41] The processes of the harvest of grain and the baking of the bread, together with the gathering of grapes and pressing of wine are suggested by I Corinthians x.16, in which "...Paul refers to the sacrament of the Eucharist, using it as a symbol of unity between man and God. Blake, extending the apostle's idea, has made man the sacramental bread and wine that is also God. The process of birth, life, and death is a growing into unity after the primal fall into disunity. Man is to be both sacrament and God." [42] This, in fact, is the key: it is the divine

[41]Wilkie and Johnson, 231.

[42]Howard, 225-6.

humanity in man that redeems man. Christ is not an external figure; he is the Human Form Divine, the sacrificial Lamb of God, the bread and the wine, and also the very God himself in all men that is capable, through selfless sacrifice, of restoring Man's internal harmony. The fundamental error of religion was making the divine separate from humanity and enforcing a false morality to please this false, jealous god. Jesus both demonstrates and restores the original unity.

The result of this reunification is the picture of absolute harmony and bliss painted in the final 31 lines, harmony made possible because divisive religion is departed. However, paradise may not be secure, for religion is merely departed, not destroyed. Searle asserts that

"The 'story' Blake was trying to tell portends an 'apocalyptic' finale only because the epic and dramatic conventions he employed presuppose it, while the content of his poem implies that such a strategy would only mean an end to human life or a return to a moment before the fall with nothing to prevent it from happening again in exactly the same way." [43]

Sweet Science' may reign at the end, but there is nothing in the poem to suggest that religion might not return again to tyrannize Man. It is curious that Blake offered hope to the reader throughout even the darkest of the Nights, yet ended the epic on an ambivalent note, as if unsure that man can retain unification once he has achieved it.

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[43] Leroy Searle, "Blake, Eliot, and Williams: The Continuity of Imaginative Labor" in *William Blake and the Moderns*, Robert J. Bertholf and Annette S. Levitt, ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982) 48.

That Blake was preoccupied with religion, especially Christianity, is evident from the works he read and annotated extensively during this period, among them "An Apology for The Bible in a Series of Letters addressed to Thomas Paine by R. Watson, D.D., F.R.S." (1798), "Essays Moral, Economical and Political" by Francis Bacon (about 1798), and Boyd's translation of Dante's Inferno. From his annotations, the student is able to glean considerable insight into the poet's attitudes toward priests, the Established Church, the gospel, and the scriptures. Blake is particularly derisive about Watson's attack on Thomas Paine, for although he does not in every place agree with the Deist Paine, he can accept portions of his argument, and joins ranks against Watson, whose argument crystalizes the errors of the Church.

Watson's other failing was in being a Bishop, a veritable Lord in a society Blake intensely disliked: "I should expect that the man who wrote this sneaking sentence would be as good an inquisitor as any other priest" (W p. 2; K 385). In The Four Zoas, the priestly function of Urizen is that of inquisitor; he has made laws of iron that none can keep, then exacted punishment for the slightest transgression. Both Watson and Urizen are 'Presumptuous Murderers,' who wish their brother's death: Watson states that Paine's death would have been preferable to his publishing his tract, while Urizen actively sought the destruction of his brother zoas, particularly Luvah in the form of Orc. Priests and "all the Commentators on the Bible are Dishonest Designing Knaves, who in hopes of a good living adopt the State religion...I could name an hundred such" (W p. 10;

K390). This comment may be in response to the widespread practice among eighteenth-century clerics of adopting the 'party line' in order to secure a better living, a higher position within the church hierarchy, or some other form of advancement. Blake challenges the reader to "Read the xiii Chap. of Matthew & then condemn Paul's [and his own] hatred of priest if you dare" (W p. iii; K383).

Not only does Blake condemn the priests, he also condemns the Church they serve, the "...State Religion, which is the source of all Cruelty" (W p. 25; K393). In all the prophetic writings, from the Lambeth books through The Four Zoas, organized religion has been depicted as an ally of the tyrant, another arm of the state through which the despotic Reason can ensnare and enslave man. It is the superstition that has taken the place of moral rectitude (W p.1; K384), the self-created worship that has divorced deity from Man and made him mysterious, transcendent, wholly 'other' than the Divine Humanity of Blake's theology. The false Christianity of the Church is repressive, leading the poet to agree with Paine that it "put a stop to improvement" (W 6-7; K388), that it does not allow man to grow, to develop, or, perhaps most important to Blake, to create.

Another of Blake's criticisms of Judeo-Christian religion is that it boasts exclusivity and election beyond other men: "That the Jews assumed a right Exclusively to the benefits of God will be a lasting witness against them & the same will it be against Christians" (W p. 7-8; K389). Blake had rejected Swedenborgianism because it seemed to him to contain elements of Calvinistic election; yet even without any predestinarian

concepts, Christianity has traditionally been a religion that teaches special privilege and blessing for its adherents, for "extra ecclesia nullam salutem"—there is no salvation without the church. Such doctrine is divisive in the extreme, and therefore repugnant to Blake. "Wherefore did Christ come? Was it not to abolish the Jewish Imposture? Was not Christ murder'd because he taught that God loved all Men & was their father..." (W pp. 4-5; K387). True Christianity is the veneration of the Divine Humanity in all men, it is "whatever is Humane" (B p. 4; K398). Division and hierarchy are diametrically opposed to Blake's vision of ideal Christian society in heaven, which is "the direct Negation of earthly domination" (B p. 137; K407). In the fallen world ruled by Urizen, mankind is divided against itself, bound by its factions, hierarchies, and classes in which one person or group is forever struggling for dominion over the others in order to oppress them. But for Blake, "What is Liberty without Universal Toleration?" (D p. 133-4; K413).

In keeping with his idea of true Christianity, Blake believes in the "Bible Unperverted," which is not the history of a select group of God's chosen, nor is it Urizen's book of iron laws; rather, it is a guidebook to be used in conjunction with the assistance of the individual's conscience (K 387). Doubtless the poet's own words best express his approach to Christian scripture:

I cannot concieve [sic] the Divinity of the books in the Bible to consist either in who they were written by, or at what time, or in the historical evidence which may be all false in the eyes of one man & true in the eyes of another, but in the Sentiments & Examples, which, whether true or Parabolic, are Equally useful as Examples given to us of the perverseness of some & its consequent evil & the honesty of others & its consequent good. This sense of the Bible is



equally true to all & equally plain to all. None can doubt the impression which he receives from a book of Examples. If he is good he will abhor wickedness in David or Abraham; if he is wicked he will make their wickedness an excuse for his & so he would do by any other book."  
(K 393).

### Milton, 1804-1808

Upon his return to London from Felpham in the autumn of 1803, Blake began work on the second of the major prophecies:

Milton. [1] Like The Four Zoas, Milton is concerned with man's fall into disunity, as well as his ultimate regeneration; indeed, portions of text seem to have been excised from the earlier work and grafted onto Milton. However, while the two poems share common themes, they are quite different in focus. The Four Zoas self-professedly deals with the 'torments of love and jealousy in the death and judgment of Albion The Eternal Man,' and discusses the interrelations of the zoas, and the consequences of their disharmony, for themselves as individuals, as well as in the aggregate: Man. In that work, Urizen is the villain, the zoa who has proclaimed himself King and God, usurping the power and privilege of his fellows. The resultant struggle necessitates the creation of the physical world both to limit the Fall and to provide a vehicle for regeneration. Throughout, it is the elevation of reason or rationalism that is seen as the cause of Man's fall; traditional Christian characters and symbols, while important, play only a subsidiary role to the interactions of the zoas. In Milton, however, orthodox Christianity plays a major

[1]For the purpose of this study, I have adopted Keynes' numbering of the plates, which follow the arrangement of Copy D, the only complete copy of the original, with 50 plates. The pages without text are not included in the numbering.

role as Satan. The universal theme is the same as in the first epic: the fall and redemption of man. Urizen becomes Satan, organized religion, which for Blake is the progenitor of all disunity and repression. John Milton, Blake's poetical mentor, must return to this world in order to correct the damage his writings have done, for Milton's type of religion reigns in Blake's England.

The motivation behind Milton is stated on the titlepage: "To Justify the Ways of God to Men." Immediately, the reader assumes that the poet intends, as the Oxford English Dictionary defines justify, "to confirm or support by attestation or evidence", "to show or maintain the justice or reasonableness of (an action, claim, etc.)", "to adduce adequate grounds for, to defend as right or proper", or "to account just or reasonable; to approve of, to ratify." Although Blake would perhaps object to the words 'reasonable' and 'reasonableness', it is assuredly his intention to defend, or vindicate, the ways of his God. However, Blake's God is not the God of orthodox Judeo-Christian tradition; thus, it is with brilliant subtlety that the poet 'justifies' both his God and the deity of the Church, for 'to justify' could also mean "to execute justice upon (a malefactor); to condemn to punishment...to punish with death, execute." Milton's religion and concept of God must be condemned, for "in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son a Ratio of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost Vacuum!" (MHH pl. 5). For Blake, the God worshipped by the Church is actually Urizen, an imitator of the true God, who dwells in all men. As in The Four Zoas, Urizen/Jehovah/Satan

"negates imagination, emasculates the human existence itself, by fracturing the soul into Zoas, sons, fratricidal and fallen emotions." [2] Through the works of Milton, rationalism and natural religion tyrannize Western man; in Milton, that tyranny is exposed for what it is, and 'justified'—condemned.

Blake calls upon the 'Young Men of the New Age' to beware the 'Hirelings' in the government, the universities, and the churches, those "who would, if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War." The choice of the word 'hireling' recalls Christ's parable of the Good Shepherd in St. John's gospel: "But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." [3] The supposed 'shepherds of the flock,' the clerics, are hirelings, who take no care for the sheep, but only for self-preservation. The Church (Satan) and its orthodoxy are founded on selfishness and self-glorification, and join with the State to prolong corporeal war--Bishop Watson, among others, supported the war effort--thereby suppressing the imagination and mental struggle, "those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live forever in Jesus our Lord." Jesus is Blake's Good Shepherd, whose self-sacrifice fuels Blake's 'mental fight'

[2] James Rieger, "The Hem of Their Garments': The Bard's Song in Milton" in Blake's Sublime Allegory Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. ed. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973) 265.

[3] St. John x.12-13.

and stands as the antithesis of self-centred orthodoxy.

Ironically, the verse portion of the Preface, which asserts the poet's intention to join mental, rather than corporeal, battle against both the repressive State and the Church that supports it, has become an hymn sung in that very Church to stir pride in and loyalty to that very state in the breasts of Englishmen.

By his own account, Blake was influenced by the works of Milton from an early age: "Now my lot in the Heavens is this, Milton lov'd me in childhood and shew'd me his face." [4] He saw Milton, as he saw himself, in the role of the poet/prophet, the visionary artist. Like Blake, Milton was a profoundly religious man, and two of his best and surely most famous works deal with the Fall, judgment, and regeneration of Man, as do Blake's epics. Yet the latter perceived Milton to be theologically misguided, for the God of Paradise Lost is Reason, and bears no resemblance whatsoever to Blake's God. Milton's deity is the rational, legalistic, jealous Jehovah who tries to bind men's desires through his iron laws, which repress inspiration and art. He is transcendent and untouchable, the antithesis of Blake's forgiving deity, who is eternally present within all men.

Blake asserts that Milton's propagation of his Puritanical theology and doctrine is the primary cause behind rational religion. The widely read Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained contained not only Milton's idea of God, but also his concepts of sin, death, regeneration, the nature of man, and man's

[4] Blake, Complete Writings, 799. From a letter to John Flaxman, 12 September 1800.

relationship to his God. Sin is transgression of Urizen's moral 'laws of iron,' punishable by death. Regeneration is made possible by the sacrifice of Christ at a particular point in time/space. Man is a creature of God's, and totally subject to his will. Man is also possessed of a dual nature, body and soul or mind. The mind is good; the body is evil. Reason is virtue; desire is sin. Blake cannot accept this, for Milton's God is Urizen, a portion of man trying to subjugate the whole. His codes are spurious, created only to bend man to Urizen's will through guilt and fear. And if the laws are spurious, the 'sin' is meaningless. The regeneration, or reunification, of man is not affected for Blake by Christ's crucifixion in a single moment of time/space; rather, it is a continual process of selflessness and giving that truly redeems man. Further, redemption is not necessary because man has transgressed the Law, but rather because he has divided against himself. Most importantly, God is not transcendent, but immanent, existing in all men as the Poetic Genius, the Divine Humanity. Yet it is the same orthodoxy Milton believed, not Blake's deviation, that was widely accepted in eighteenth-century England, and which had served as the basis for rational or natural religion. Therefore, it is Milton who must be enticed to expunge the errors his writings propagated.

Milton proper begins with Blake's invocation of the muses (M 2.1-15). The work of the muses must be done in the Bard that he may speak, but the muses are reliant upon the poet as the vehicle of poetry/prophecy. Each depends upon the other, but the tone of the invocation suggests that the Bard is in control, commanding

the Daughters of Beulah to utilize his hand, his right arm, his brain. He even suggests the content of "the Poet's Song", that it tell of Milton's journey, and of the "False Tongue" which eventually preyed upon Christ. The 'False Tongue' is orthodox religion, vehicle of the spurious Word, the distorted image of Christ that the Church worships. Milton's task will be to denounce the 'False Tongue' and the sham Christ, to reveal the true God and announce the possibility of redemption.

With line 16, Blake interrupts himself to ask what motivated Milton, who had been resident in Eternity for a century, to return to the physical world and certain annihilation. The answer is: "A Bard's prophetic Song!" The song of the Bard recapitulates cosmic history from the creation of man, through the Fall, to the tyranny of religion. Plate three recounts, in verse taken from The Four Zoas Night IV, the creation in seven days of a physical body for Albion, the eternal Man: the brain and skull (reason); the heart (desire); the eyes (sight); ears (hearing); nostrils (smell); tongue (taste); and limbs (touch). At last, Enitharmon bears Satan, the "Miller of Eternity", "Prince of the Starry Wheels". These words recall There Is No Natural Religion: "The same dull round, even of a universe, would soon become a mill with complicated wheels." The reader now suspects Satan's identity, and the words of Los confirm that suspicion:

"art thou not Prince of the Starry Hosts / And of the Wheels of Heaven, to turn the Mills day & night? / Art thou not Newton's Pantocrator, weaving the woof of Locke / To Mortals thy Mills seem every thing, & the Harrow of Shaddai / A Scheme of Human conduct invisible & incomprehensible" (M 4.9-13).

Satan is orthodoxy, that entity which seeks to subjugate everything to reason, rational religion which describes the world in Lockean and Newtonian terms, viewing the universe as an elaborate clock, and affirming a transcendent clockmaker God.

Plate 5 contains a description of man in generation, the word choice conveying the image of a prisoner: "shut in narrow doleful form," "clos'd up & dark", "shutting out / All melodies", "A little sound it utters & its cries are faintly heard." Here, Blake portrays man's limitations in some of his finest verse:

"Can such an Eye judge of the stars? & looking thro' its  
tubes  
"Measure the sunny rays that\themselves point their spears on  
Udanadan?  
"Can such an Ear, fill'd with the vapours of the yawning pit,  
"Judge of the pure melodious harp struck by a hand divine  
"Can such Nostrils feel a joy? or tell of autumn fruits  
"When grapes & figs burst their covering to the joyful air?  
"Can such a Tongue boast of the living waters? or take in  
"Ought but the Vegetable Ration & loathe the faint delight?  
"Can such gross Lips perceive? alas, folded within themselves  
"They touch not ought, but pallid turn & tremble at every  
wind."

With man in such a dismal state, he is subject to the impositions of dogmatism, and the three classes of men are created: The Elect, The Redeem'd, and the Reprobate. These three are fully described in plate seven, and Satan is said to be one of the Elect. Although the terms `Satan' and `Elect' seem antithetical, Satan in Milton is the accuser of man; in Blake he is still man's accuser in the guise of organized religion, which counts itself Elect. Satan usurps the position of Palamabron, who is



associated with love, emotion, art, and desire.[5] Yet codified religion cannot control desire and imagination and manages only to torment those 'horses of the Harrow' into maddened fury. Palamabron expresses Blake's hatred of the Church and its clergy: "You know Satan's mildness and his self-imposition, / Seeming a brother, being a tyrant, even thinking himself a brother / While he is murdering the just" (M 7.23-5). Los advises the two to look each to his own task, but Satan persists in accusing Palamabron, for religion "himself believ'd / That he had not oppress'd nor injur'd the refractory servants" (M 8.2-3). Organized religion only perceives sin in others, never within itself.

The Eternals assemble in plate 9 to judge the case, and judgment falls on Rintrah, who is vision or prophecy. Yet the condemnation of Rintrah does not appease Satan, who creates "Seven deadly Sins, drawing out his infernal scroll / Of moral laws and cruel punishments upon the clouds of Jehovah, / To pervert the Divine Voice in its entrance to the earth..." (M 9.21-3). Having failed to achieve desire/passion's condemnation and execution by the council, Satan—who is at once the Elect, the Church, and the repressive Jehovah—creates Sin, proclaims himself the only God, and vows to condemn all transgressors of his oppressive moral code. On plate 10, Los and Enitharmon identify Satan as Urizen. Rational religion had set reason up for worship, created moral codes to re-enforce reason's

[5]Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947) 277-278.

domination, condemned passion or desire as evil, and divided the nations of men through the differences in their religions. Blake aptly portrays the Church in his description of Satan on Earth:

Where Satan, making to himself Laws from his own identity  
Compell'd others to serve him in moral gratitude &  
    submission,  
Being call'd God, setting himself above all that is called  
    God;  
And all the Spectres of the Dead, calling themselves Sons of  
    God,  
In his Synagogues worship Satan under the Unutterable Name."  
  (M 11.10-14)

Here follows one of the most difficult passages in the Bard's Song, in which an Eternal explains why Rintrah is punished in Palamabron's place, yet it is Satan the accuser who is truly guilty. The reader's sense of justice is outraged, but the Eternal's counsel to the Assembly recalls Caiaphas' advice to the Sanhedrin concerning Jesus: "Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people" (St. John 8.14). As high priest, Caiaphas, like Satan, becomes a symbol for codified orthodox religion, Blake's truly guilty party. Palamabron is the love and desire to which both Satan and Caiaphas object, and Rintrah/Christ is the true prophet, who sacrifices himself, becoming reprobate in order to redeem passion. The Elect (Religion) can never be redeemed, because it is forever the accuser and is incapable of self-sacrifice.

"Satan is fall'n from his station & never can be redeem'd  
But must be new Created continually moment by moment.  
And therefore the Class of Satan shall be call'd the Elect, &  
    those  
Of Rintrah the Reprobate, & those of Palamabron the Redeem'd:

For he is redeem'd from Satan's Law, the wrath falling on  
Rintrah."

(M 11.19-23)

Through a characteristically Blakean inversion, the Calvinist Elect, who believe themselves to be predestined to salvation, become the ones who are irrevocably damned, while the Reprobate, whom the righteous Calvinists view as irreversibly condemned, become the vehicles of salvation through their self-sacrifice.

Upon hearing of Satan's condemnation, Leutha descends to defend him by assuming his guilt before the Assembly. She recounts Satan's mismanagement of Palamabron's Harrow and horses, and in the course of her speech reveals her identity: Sin. By extension, then, sin is the creation of the Church's reasoning, and it is on sin, rather than on itself, that religion hopes ultimate conviction will fall. Sin becomes religion's excuse for its own misdeeds, for the Church/Satan camouflages its cruelties and impositions on men by erecting a moral code, and then punishing the inevitable transgressors:

"To do unkind things in kindness, with power arm'd to say  
The most irritating things in the midst of tears and love:  
These are the stings of the Serpent!

Cloth'd in the Serpent's folds, in selfish holiness demanding  
purity,  
Being most impure...

Who calls the Individual Law Holy and despises the Saviour,  
Glorying to involve Albion's Body in fires of eternal War?

(M 12.32-4,46-7;13.5-6)

The ideas here expressed are similar to thoughts expressed in the Songs, in which the Church, although corrupt and evil, sets itself up to judge men. In the name of love, kindness, and

holiness, the Church has burnt innocent 'heretics,' as in "A Little Boy Lost"; it supports the State, and thereby the social system which allows widespread poverty and disease, as in "London" and "The Chimney Sweeper"; and it condemns all desire and passion as evil, as in "The Garden of Love."

As a result of divine pity, Enitharmon created a 'New Space'--the physical world--to protect Satan from punishment, and the Eternals posted a Guard, first Lucifer, then Molech, Elohim, Shaddai, Pahad, and Jehovah. None of these first six was able to redeem Man in generation, until the Lamb of God came to die as a reprobate and be punished as a transgressor. Christ, the Reprobate, sacrificed himself in order to redeem man, making him worthy of praise: "Glory! Glory! Glory! to the Holy Lamb of God!" The poet then recounts a meeting between the Elect and the Redeemed. The Elect are astonished to discover their Saviour in the Transgressor, but it is intentionally unclear from the word choice whether Blake means that the Elect are astonished to see their supposed saviour, the Church, as the true Transgressor, or whether they are shocked to see the true saviour as a transgressor in light of religion's laws. Nevertheless, the Elect remain unredeemed, and Blake mocks them as he parodies Calvinist doctrine in their statement: "We behold it is of Divine / Mercy alone, of Free Gift and Election that we live: / Our Virtues & Cruel Goodnesses have deserv'd Eternal Death" (M 13.32-4). Although the Elect believe themselves redeemed by the grace of God in spite of their actions, the bitter irony is that eternal Death and a 'hell of their own making' is exactly their

destination, for the Sin created by religion ultimately "bore the shadowy Spectre of Sleep & nam'd him Death."

Bloom states that the relationship between the three classes of men is such that the Redeemed and the Reprobate are Contraries, and that the Elect is the 'reasoning negative'; further, he asserts that all three classes (like all four zoas) are present at all times in every man, with one dominant at any particular time.[6] This complements the supposition that Satan is at once the Elect, organized religion, and Jehovah, for all these manifestations of Satan are selfish and self-centred. The self must be sacrificed in order that the remaining aspects of man and society might be redeemed, yet the sense of self is ever-present. The struggle in Milton, indeed in all the prophecies, is the creative struggle of the contraries, in this case, the redeem'd and the reprobate, to negate dogmatic, self-righteous, tyrannical selfishness.

The most interesting of the three classes described in the Bard's Song is that of the Reprobate, whose most famous and seemingly unlikely member is Christ. Classifying Jesus among the Reprobate startles the Christian reader, whose background has instilled in him that Christ himself was innocent and took on sin to redeem the damned. Whether the reader believes this is immaterial; it is simply given in Judeo-Christian mythology. Yet Blake has inverted Calvinism's classes, so that those who perceive themselves as Elect are truly damned, and those who are

[6] Bloom, 341.

seen by religion to be worthy of condemnation are not only innocent, but are the means of salvation for the third class, the redeemed, which has fallen into disbelief, yet is not dogmatic & self-righteous like the Elect, and can therefore be saved. "The reprobate never ceases to believe; he questions, as does the redeemed, but he has the strength to answer; he has the strength to remain open to the recognition of error and its redemption, but he also has the ability to remain firm in his beliefs only if they have been tested..."[7] Rintrah is the Reprobate, the true prophet, as in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Like the Old Testament prophets, as well as John the Baptist, and Christ, the Reprobate knows the truth, proclaims the truth, and is sacrificed for the truth. In fact, the Bard who sings the Song is also a prophet; he reveals the truth to Milton while also showing his error, just as Blake himself is doing through the poem Milton. The character of the Bard encompasses many personae: he is Blake, pointing out Milton's errors; he is a prophet, telling the future in light of the past; he is a teacher, who is attempting to instruct all men in the 'ways of salvation'; he is, finally, the Poetic Genius who lives in all men.

Satan likewise represents many characters, but most central to this discussion he is the Church, organized religion that considers itself Elect, predestined to avoid judgment and damnation. Religion has created the unobservable moral code of Jehovah, and had devised cruel punishments for the inevitable

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[7]Easson, 165.

trespassers. It has proclaimed itself God, and through morality, born of sin, seeks to control: "...I am God alone: / There is no other! let all obey my principles of moral individuality. / I have brought them from the uppermost innermost recesses / Of my Eternal Mind: transgressors I will rend off for ever..." The rational religion of the Eighteenth Century seeks to legislate morality based on rigid, oppressive codes of behaviour, while secretly believing itself immune to judgment and punishment, twin cudgels used to bludgeon the populace into moral submission. Milton's puritanism, reflected in his writings, added credence to the claims of religion to control men, and led to the dominance of the rational religion so hateful to Blake, who through the Bard calls upon Milton to return and right the wrongs he has precipitated.

In response to the Bard's Song, Albion trembles and Milton rises from the heavens that have been his dwelling since his physical death. Upon arising, he "took off the robe of the promise & ungirded himself from the oath of God" (M 14.9). Milton forsakes the heaven he has attained in order to return to the world of generation. Interestingly, it is necessary for him to shed the 'oath of God,' which is his puritanism, in order to redeem his emanation and correct the effects of that religion in society. Milton states that he is going to eternal death, to self-sacrifice and annihilation, for how can he remain content in heaven without his emanation (Ololon), with memory and not inspiration? The vision that has moved Milton to act, that has radically altered his perception is that "I in my Selfhood am

that Satan: I am that Evil One!" (14.30). The historical Milton, who believed himself elect by virtue of his religious doctrine, has come to understand that Satan is within him, his selfhood, and in the selfishness of all men. If Milton were truly of the Elect, he would have been damned, but as Blake stated in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he was a true poet and of the devil's party (reprobate) without knowing. Milton separates into multiple parts and leaves his body in Eden in the care of the 'Seven Angels of the Presence,' while his consciousness enters his shadow and travels through infinity to the world of generation.

In a passage that seems little more than a lengthy aside, Blake describes the very nature of infinity in some of his most profound verse. As one travels through eternity, one's perceptions--and therefore understanding--are directly related to the progress one has made. As with space travel, during which the earth, or rather, the astronaut's perception of the earth, alters radically, the traveller in eternity experiences perceptual reorientation. The astronaut first sees earth as do all her inhabitants: a plot of ground that is really a rather insignificant part of the whole; similarly, Blake's man views "His corn-fields and his valley of five hundred acres square." Next, the space traveller is struck by the vastness of the land, then of both the land and the sea as continents become discernible from his vantage point in space. Finally, the whole earth appears as a blue and white marble rolling endlessly in space:



"...and when once a traveller thro' Eternity  
 Has pass'd that Vortex, he perceives it roll backward behind  
 His path, into a globe itself infolding like a sun,  
 Or like a moon, or like a universe of starry majesty..."  
 (M 15.22-25).

Heaven is a vortex already passed, but earth is not yet passed in the poem. This seems paradoxical, for the traditional Christian view is that man was created on this earth, thereby making earth the 'known' and heaven the 'unknown' quantity. However, in Blake man is eternal, and once fell, not from an earthly paradise, but from paradise or eternity to the physical world; therefore, heaven is known, the vortex passed, while earth is not as yet passed.

Milton's shadow discovers Albion upon the Rock of Ages; bending over him, the poet falls into the world of generation. Blake's word choice recalls the fall of Satan in Paradise Lost: "Then first I saw him in the Zenith as a falling star / Descending swift as the swallow or swift" (M 15.47-8). Blake himself observes the coming of Milton, and is obviously going to serve as the vehicle for Milton's work, for the shadow enters Blake through his left foot. Through Blake, Milton perceives the 'cruelties of Ulro' which he had written down 'in iron tablets,' and discovers that "his body was the Rock Sinai, that body / Which was on earth born to corruption" (M 17.14-5). The 'Rock Sinai' is the Mosaic code, the iron laws of Urizen which Milton in his Puritanism is seen to embody. Through his union with Blake and under the influence of the Bard's Song, Milton now sees that the Law of Moses is corrupt and that all deities truly

reside in the human breast. Blake compares Milton and Moses in this passage, for just as Moses began to see the cruelties endured by the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, Milton sees the 'cruelties of Ulro'. Both 'journeyed in Midian' for a time before they began their work of freeing those enslaved, and both were responsible for imposing Urizenic codes on their societies.

Lines 29-30 seem unrelated to the rest of plate 17, but as with so many of Blake's brief insertions, they are charged with profound meaning. Two editors of Milton have stated that all of the settings for action within the poem are derived from the human body, its anatomy and its physiology of perception, thereby equating the Mundane shell with the body of man, or more specifically, with the skull.[8] In these lines, Blake asserts: "For travellers from Eternity pass outward to Satan's seat, / But travellers to Eternity pass inward to Golgonooza" (M 17.29-30). The importance of these lines cannot be overstressed, for what the poet is saying is that Eternity is within man: those travelling from Eternity pass out of the Mundane Shell, while those journeying to Eternity must pass into it. 'Satan's seat' is outward, external. The self-centred principle, Satan (who is manifest in organized religion) has externalized both Eternity and Deity, destroying the harmony of the four principles within man as it attempts to gain domination through one of the Zoas, Urizen. This, in essence, is the fall, both in The Four Zoas and in Milton: man elevates a portion of the Divine Humanity, reason,

[8]Easson, 140.

and fancies that it alone is God, just as in the fall described in the Zohar, Adam beholds the Shekinah and believes it to be the totality of the Godhead.

Both according to the kabbalah and according to Blake, everything in the unfallen world was enmeshed and intertwined with everything else, and all levels of being formed links in a consecutive chain. Hence what was spontaneous and flexible becomes hard and rigid, what was inward becomes exteriorized, and what was unified and coherent becomes discrete and inharmonious. The living dialogue between creatures of the earth, the cementing force which held together the different strata of being, man's sense of interrelatedness with the cosmic environment—all these suffer disruption.[9]

Similarly, Milton's error was in projecting Satan, as he did in Paradise Lost; now, he has realized that Satan is within his Selfhood. To journey back to Eternity, the traveller must pass inward to Golgonooza. Therefore, if Satan is selfhood in religion, Golgonooza is self-sacrifice; indeed, the name Golgonooza is considered by some to be a transmutation of 'Golgotha,' the setting for the ultimate self-sacrifice, and perhaps relevantly, 'the place of the skull.'

Immediately following these lines, the focus shifts from Milton/Blake to Los and the other Zoas. Enitharmon believes that Milton has come to loose Satan, and Los attempts to block his path. The Shadowy Female laments the coming of Milton, and her speech indicates that she is the Church, the false bride of Christ, for Jerusalem is his true counterpart. Her description of her garment is an indictment against the Established Church

[9]Asloob Ahmad Ansari, "Blake and the Kabbalah," in William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon Alvin H. Rosenfeld, ed. (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1969) 209.

which, in Blake's view, glories in "the misery of unhappy Families...dire suffering, poverty, pain & woe." Recall "The Chimney Sweeper" in Experience, which condemns "God & his Priest & King, / Who make up a heaven of our misery." Or "The Garden of Love" in which "...Priests in black gowns were walking their round, / And binding with briars my joys & desires." The writings that each Infant must "get by rote as a hard task of a life of sixty years" alludes to the catechism, the basic tenets of religion that children are expected to memorize, and the rules they are expected to observe throughout their lives are inscribed on her garment, 'woven of sighs & heart broken lamentations.'

"I will have Kings inwoven upon it & Councillors & Mighty  
Men:  
"The Famine shall clasp it together with buckles & Clasps,  
"And the Pestilence shall be its fringe & the War it its  
girdle,  
"To divide into Rahab & Tirzah that Milton may come to our  
tents.  
"For I will put on the Human Form & take the Image of God,  
"Even Pity & Humanity, but my Clothing shall be Cruelty:  
"And I will put on Holiness as a breastplate & as a helmet,  
"And all my ornaments shall be of the gold of broken hearts,  
"And the precious stones of anxiety & care & desperation &  
death  
"And repentance for sin & sorrow & punishment & fear,  
"To defend me from thy terrors, O Orc, my only beloved!  
(M 18.15-25)

Politics and power are inextricably woven into the garment of the Church; adversity strengthens it, war upholds it. Interestingly, the Shadowy Female will try to tempt Milton into forsaking his redemptive work with Rahab and Tirzah, who are Moral Virtue and Law, the foundations upon which Milton's Puritanism rested. The following lines reveal, as do the Songs of Experience, Blake's antipathy toward hypocritical religion, which masquerades as God,

seeming to be human and loving, while truly being cruel and untouchable, protecting itself with its false holiness and enjoying the pain and suffering of men.

Urizen emerges, and plate 19 describes the struggle between Milton and Urizen, who tries to bar the poet's way. Just as Jacob wrestled with the Angel, Milton wrestles with Urizen, who attempts to baptize the poet into rational religion by pouring the 'icy fluid of abstract reason' onto Milton's brain. Milton counters this action by giving flesh or substance to reason, attempting to humanize him. "For Blake, Jacob's victory is a victory of man over a Urizenic God and a prototype of his own struggle against a Church which 'Crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards,'" which permits and even blesses social injustices and war. Urizen attempts to baptize Milton into this 'Druidical' religion with the icy waters of abstraction and materialism, but Milton struggles to flesh his skeletal opponent with the red clay of a new Adam, "to turn the ossified literalism of religion back into material to be shaped by art." [10] Rahab and Tirzah again attempt to entice Milton from his quest, asking him to bring Jerusalem to them, that she may be sacrificed to natural religion, to Tirzah, to the law's spurious idea of holiness. Milton ignores their blandishments, and continues to clothe Urizen in flesh. Albion begins to stir on his couch in response to Milton's efforts, and Milton himself falls "thro' Albion's heart." Los fears Milton's coming, until he recalls an old

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[10]DiSalvo, 243.

prophecy: "That Milton of the Land of Albion should up ascend / Forwards from Ulro from the Vale of Felpham..." Blake here repeats the account of Milton entering his body, claiming that he did not know at the time that it was Milton. In some of the most striking lines in Blake's work, he describes how the whole world of generation appeared to him "As a bright sandal form'd immortal of precious stones & gold. / I stooped down & bound it on to walk forward thro' Eternity" (M 21.13-14).

Immediately following, Blake introduces Ololon into the poem, referring to her as "a sweet River of milk & liquid pearl / Nam'd Ololon..." She is Divine Vision, or revealed (true) religion, unlike Rahab and Tirzah who are false manifestations of religion. Like Milton, Ololon feels compelled to redeem the fallen world. The Divine family approves, and sets her to watch over the world, charging her to "Obey / The Dictate!" Blake has employed a play on words here, for the Dictate is the Word, the Son of God. This impression is strengthened by the allusion to Christ's 'Great Commission' in St. Matthew's gospel "Lo! I am with you alway." Jesus' commission to Ololon is to watch over the world and renew it to Eternal Life through Divine Vision, which "remains Every-where For-ever. Amen" (M 22.2).

Los finds Blake/Milton and joins with them as One Man, the Shadowy Prophet, who arises in fury and strength. Six thousand years are now accomplished in the 'World of Sorrow' and the hour of redemption is at hand. Rintrah and Palamabron plead with Los to destroy Milton, for they fear he will loose Satan upon Albion. Through their speech on plates 22 and 23, Blake

enumerates the charges against Milton's religion, the Puritanism that has become natural religion, which "asserts the Self-righteousness against the Universal Saviour." Natural religion perpetuates war and glory and the laws of sin; it perverts Swedenborg's visions; it seeks to destroy Jerusalem and to glorify Mystery in her place. Rintrah claims that he raised up George Whitefield, and Palamabron raised up Wes[t]ley (presumably John rather than his brother Charles), to preach "Faith in God the dear Saviour who took on the likeness of men, / Becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross" (M 22.57-8). According to Rintrah and Palamabron, however, the two witnesses lie dead in the street, no faith is evident upon the earth, and the "Book of god is trodden under Foot." They call for Albion to awaken and for Los to chain Milton lest he bring destruction upon them. Los responds by assuring them that he has joined with Milton, who has come, not to destroy but to redeem. He reminds them of the harm done by Luther and Calvin, who "in fury premature / Sow'd War and stern division between Papists & Protestants" (M 23.47-8), and cautions them to be patient a short time longer. Rintrah and Palamabron are not convinced, but descend with him to Bowlahoola (law) and Allamanda (commerce).

Throughout Milton the term 'wine-press' is taken to mean war, and on plate 25, Blake describes the 'Wine-press on the Rhine'—the war with France—where "Human Thought is crush'd beneath the iron hand of Power." Los addresses the labourers in Eternity, saying that the time for the Last Vintage is at hand. The Awakener (Milton) has come, and Albion awakes as the prophecy

is fulfilled. Los charges the labourers to bind the sheaves of men not by race or family, but according to the three classes. The Elect are bound in a separate bundle, for "they cannot Believe in Eternal Life / Except by Miracle & a New Birth." The Reprobate 'who never cease to believe,' and the Redeemed who are tormented by the Elect are bound as twin-bundles 'for the consummation / But the Elect must be saved [from] fires of Eternal Death.' Here again is typical Blakean irony, for the Elect, who believe themselves preserved from consummation in order that they will gain Eternity, are in fact the only ones who will not reach the Supper of the Lamb & his Bride, for the consummation is necessary to enter Eternity.

Plates 28 and 29 contain Blake's perceptions of the nature of time and space. Every unit of time is unique, having its own identity: "every Hour has a bright golden Gate carved with skill...And every Month a silver paved Terrace builded high / And every Year invulnerable Barriers with high Towers..." (M 28.51,54-5). Although each unit of time has distinct characteristics, time is itself simply a construct whose laws apply only in the world of generation. For this reason "Every Time less that a pulsation of the artery / Is equal in its period & value to Six Thousand Years, / For in this Period the Poet's Work is Done: and all the Great / Events of Time start forth & are conceiv'd in such a Period, / Within a Moment, a Pulsation of the Artery" (M 28.62-29.3). Similarly, the idea of space has meaning only in the world of generation, for in Eternity, all are one and the concept of space is meaningless. In this world, a



man's space is dictated by his perceptions: if he stands on his house and looks about, that which he sees is his universe. Whether he looks at microorganisms through a microscope or at heavenly bodies through a telescope, his Universe is comprised of what he sees.

The world of time and space having been created, Los sets the limits of opacity and contraction; he then charges Rintrah and Palamabron to guide "The Souls clear from the Rock of Death, that Death himself may wake / In his appointed season when the ends of heaven meet." (M 29.45-6). Los guides the spirits, and Enitharmon and her daughters attempt to give the spirits 'lovely heavens' until Judgment, but Rintrah and Tirzah pervert their efforts and "The veil of human miseries is woven over the Ocean / From the Atlantic to the Great South Sea, the Erythean. / Such is the World of Los, the labour of six thousand years" (M 29.62-4).

The second, much shorter book of Milton begins with a description of Beulah, the habitation of emanations and state of rest from man's labours in Eternity. Into the pleasant and secure rest of Beulah Ololon descends, bringing with her the Lord "In the Clouds of Ololon with Power & Great Glory." Satan and the members of the kingdoms of the earth are terrified at his coming, for they cannot be regenerated, having known only generation. The gods of the kingdoms of earth have engendered chaos, having set "Element against Element, opposed in War / Not Mental, as the Wars of Eternity, but a Corporeal Strife / In Los's Halls, continual labouring in the Furnaces of Golgonooza. / Orc howls on the Atlantic: Enitharmon trembles: All Beulah

weeps" (M 31.24-7). Therefore, Satan and Rahab fear, for they see in the coming of Ololon and the Lord the beginning of the end of their power.

With the eternal in Beulah and Generation cringing on the brink of apocalypse and judgment, Blake shifts scene completely to the dawn of Spring, heralded by the song of the nightingale and lark. As morning breaks and drives away the shadows of Satan's dominion, the lark arouses his fellows and 'leads the Choir of Day,' harbinger of the coming of Ololon and the Lord. Similarly, the blooming of certain flowers announces the coming of Spring, a new beginning for the earth. The poet is not merely entertaining a Romantic flight of fancy in these verses which glorify nature; rather, he employs the birds and flowers as symbols for Milton. Just as the lark announces the dawning of a new day, just as the appearance of wild thyme indicates the coming of spring, so too the coming of Milton and Ololon heralds the "Last Vintage" and Great Judgment.

Plate 32 recounts conversations between Milton and the Seven Angels of the Presence, in which Milton describes his heaven as being built on cruelty, which is his puritanism and which frees Satan to stalk Divine Vision and reason to attempt to destroy imagination:

"I have turned my back upon these Heavens builded on cruelty;  
 "My Spectre still wandering thro' them follows my Emanation,  
 "He hunts her footsteps thro' the snow & the wintry hail &  
 rain.  
 "The idiot Reasoner laughs as the Man of Imagination,  
 "And from laughter proceeds to murder by undervaluing  
 calumny."

(M 32.3-7)

The angels explain to Milton the difference between states and individuals: states can change, although individual identities can 'never change nor cease.' Therefore, states can be annihilated but individuals cannot, for "You cannot go to Eternal Death in that which can never Die" (M 32.24); "The imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself" (M 32.32). The essential man cannot be annihilated, the poet explains, because imagination is unannihilable. Satan, who is Milton's Puritanism or natural religion, has attempted to enslave man through fear of annihilation, just punishment for sin against Satan's spurious moral code, but the Divine Humanity cannot die. Satan set himself up as god and created the tyrannical Church, comprised of

"...those combin'd by Satan's Tyranny, first in the blood of  
 War  
 "And sacrifice & next in Chains of imprisonment, are  
 Shapeless Rocks  
 "Retaining only Satan's Mathematic Holiness, Length, Breadth &  
 Highth,  
 "Calling the Human Imagination, which is the Divine Vision &  
 Fruition  
 "In which Man liveth eternally, madness & blasphemy against  
 "Its own Qualities, which are Servants of Humanity, not Gods  
 or Lords.

(M 32.16-21)

The religion against which Blake rails has deified reason and its proportions and condemned as blasphemy the imagination of man, which is in truth God in man. The Divine Vision also condemns the Church, the Bride of Christ, in plate 33. He states that when they first married, he thought that his Church would "love his loves and joy in his delights." She became jealous and cruel, however, and the Lord has lost his love for the Church, who loves and serves Satan. For this cause has Milton descended,

to redeem religion through his annihilation. The eternal portion of Milton cannot die; what will be annihilated is his Selfhood, Satan.

The inhabitants of Beulah attempt to comfort Ololon, who laments for the annihilation of Milton, and they show her the 'Four States of Humanity in Repose,' and the Four universes of the Zoas, which were at one time a glorious single universe: "But when Luvah assumed the World of Urizen in the South / All fell towards the Center sinking downward in dire Ruin." (M 34.38-9). Ololon sees the chaos, the corpse of Albion, and the wars of man, wherein "Brotherhood is chang'd into a Curse & a Flattery / By Differences between Ideas, that Ideas themselves (which are / The Divine Members) may be slain in offerings for sin" (M 35.4-6). Ololon cannot see Golgonooza beyond Ulro, for it cannot be seen until one becomes "Mortal & Vegetable in Sexuality." Like Thel, Ololon is faced with a choice between entering the world of generation or remaining in Eternity; unlike Thel, Ololon is equal to the sacrifice and so descends to the 'vegetable' world of Los and Enitharmon, thereby opening a wide road to Eternity. This action reverses the action in Paradise Lost, where Sin and Death create a wide road to hell by their passage. The images of the wild thyme and the lark recur here, messengers bringing news of Ololon's descent to Eden and to the Twenty-seven churches. Ololon descends into the world as 'a Virgin of twelve years' who appears to Blake in his garden at Felpham, which had been prepared as a place for the poet to record "all these Visions / To display Nature's cruel holiness, the deceits of Natural

Religion" (M 36.24-5). This, then, is the central reason for the descent of Milton, (in Blake's view, England's last and finest prophet) and of Ololon, the divine Vision: they are come to assist Blake in recording his Visions, which show the error and cruelty of natural religion, and rationalism's Church.

Blake asks that Ololon comfort his wife, yet Divine Vision will not be deflected from her quest. Milton's shadow hears that Ololon has come for him, and condenses and consolidates his strength for the encounter. Yet within the majestic and beautiful shadow, Blake sees Milton's selfhood, that Satan within him: "I beheld Milton with astonishment & in him beheld / The Monstrous Churches of Beulah, the Gods of Ulro dark, / Twelve monstrous dishumaniz'd terrors, Synagogues of Satan" (M 37.15-7). Here the poet explicitly states that what Milton has come to destroy is within himself. On the surface beautiful and majestic, like his works, nevertheless Milton has within him and has put into his works the spectre of selfhood who is Satan or religion. Milton also descends to Blake's garden and Satan is terrified by his descent. At this point the poem becomes rather confused, as Satan "stands upon the roaring sea," Milton is in Blake's garden, and yet Blake states that he 'also'--presumably meaning 'along with' Milton--"stood in Satan's bosom & beheld its desolations." However, the passage is not important for the positions but for the perceptions of the principles. The ruin he perceives in Satan's bosom is the ruin that the Church has caused: a ruined man, who is the temple of God, ruined palaces, furnaces of affliction, "Arches & pyramids & porches, colonades &

domes, / In which dwells Mystery, Babylon; here is her secret  
 place, / From hence she comes forth on the Churches in delight; /  
 Here is her Cup fill'd with its poisons in these horrid vales, /  
 And here her scarlet Veil woven in pestilence & war; / Here is  
 Jerusalem bound in chains in the Dens of Babylon" (M 38.22-7).

Milton confronts Satan, stating that he has power to annihilate Satan and to become a greater Satan until one greater still should depose him, for that is how Satan's Eternity is ordered. Satan's purpose, and that of his priests and churches, is to teach men to fear death. Milton has come to teach men to despise death, to go to self annihilation, and thereby to live in Eternity. Satan reasserts that he is the only God and that his purpose is to make all things like himself and to destroy the 'Divine Delusion,' Jesus. The 'Starry Seven' call on Albion to awake, and the Eternal man arises but cannot walk and so sinks back to his couch.

On plate 40, Ololon confronts Milton, saying that she sees his struggle with Urizen, that he is giving himself to annihilation that Man might be redeemed. She fears that she, Divine Vision, has been the cause of the errors of natural religion, of Newton, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Milton's answer is that everything that can be annihilated must be in order to bring about regeneration. Hearing this, Ololon realizes that she is Milton's emanation, and as such must join with him in his sacrifice. She fled into the depths of Milton's shadow, and the Starry Eight (of whom Milton/Blake/Los/Ololon is the eighth) combine and become "One Man, Jesus the Saviour." Christ has

indeed come in the clouds of Ololon with power and great glory,  
and the world is poised on the brink of "Resurrection & Judgment  
in the vegetable Body" as

Rintrah & Palamabron view the Human Harvest beneath.  
Their Wine-presses & Barns stand open, the Ovens are  
prepar'd,  
The Waggon ready; terrific Lions & Tygers sport & play.  
All animals upon the Earth are prepar'd in all their strength  
To go forth to the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations."  
(M 42.36-43.1)

One of the major difficulties faced when deciphering Milton is its lack of clear linear development. Like The Four Zoas, Milton's chronology is completely garbled, with the result that progressive time is non-existent. This is because the action occurs in Eternity where there is no time. Everything described occurs in that moment when Blake falls to the ground in his garden at Felpham. It must be recorded linearly, however, for such is the nature of language. The Bard's Song describes creation and Fall, the interactions of the Zoas in eternity. The second half of Book I deals with Milton's descent from Eden and his union with Blake and Los, and seems to portray the events leading to an apocalyptic climax at the end of Los' labour of six thousand years. Book II, however, takes the reader back to Eden and discusses again the fall of man and the coming of Milton, preparing yet again for the finale. The key to understanding this lack of linear development is to remember that Blake is not so much concerned with the "end of the world" as he is with the processes that make its continuance possible, albeit in an altered state. That is, the poet does not dwell on the finality

of judgment; rather, he focuses on the acts of self-sacrifice and forgiveness that lead to regeneration.

"Inevitably, in epic-prophecy, the poet's concern is not with endings, not with deaths, but with processes--the processes by which men and their civilisations continue to live. Without revelation there is no revolution--the one is the cause, the pattern, the effect of the other." [11]

This emphasis on process rather than product stands at the very centre of the poet's antipathy for orthodox Christianity. He perceived that the love and mercy of the Saviour was at all times in all places present as the potential for man's redemption, that sacrifice, forgiveness, and redemption are never ending processes, and "Blake came to realize the repressive and anti-Christian reality of a salvation-history whose authority derives from the codified memory of a series of events that are irrevocably past and intrinsically irreversible." [12] The sacrifice of Christ must not be a past event, locked into a moment of time and space which enslaves man to an alien moment that is alien simply because it is past, and isolates him from both present and future reality: "When the death of Jesus is known only as an occurrence of the past, it cannot be repeated as a universal and external event because it remains enclosed in its own particularity." [13] For this reason, Christ is the Divine

[11] Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975) 160.

[12] Thomas J.J. Altizer, The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967) 106.

[13] Altizer, 143.



Humanity, present in all men, in order that all men may reenact his acts of redemption and salvation, love, and mercy may be eternally present.

Also like The Four Zoas, Milton is modeled on Milton's works; where The Four Zoas is a Blakean retelling of Paradise Lost, Milton is said to parallel Paradise Regained, a theodicy illuminating God's justice and "man's realization of that justice in his relation to God." [14] While it is true that Blake patterned his epic after Milton and often alludes to occurrences in those two works, it is equally true that he tends to invert the action and symbol, to distort Milton's account for his own ends. Satan in Milton is the fallen angel, the accuser of man, and is subordinate to Jehovah, who is God the Father. In Blake, Satan is also fallen, the accuser of man, but he is the God of Paradise Lost, who claims to be the only God and who has created 'iron laws' of morality in order to tyrannize man through fear of Satan's creatures, Sin and Death.

"...Satan, making to himself Laws form his own identity, / Compell'd others to serve him in moral gratitude & submission, / Being call'd God, setting himself above all that is called God; / And all the Spectres of the Dead, calling themselves Sons of God, / In his Synagogues worship Satan under the unutterable Name." (M 11.10-14).

In Milton, the sinless Christ descends from heaven to earth in order to sacrifice himself and to redeem man 'once for all.' In Blake, Milton is the Christ-figure who descends from Eternity into generation, and the differences are marked. Milton is not  
[14]Bloom, 334.

innocent of sin; in fact, he is seen to be the author, for it is 'Milton's religion' that must be expunged in order to bring about regeneration. John Milton's God was a transcendent God, wholly removed from the physical world; William Blake's God is an immanent deity, present in every man and an integral part of all existence. Milton perceived the church as the bride of Christ; Blake saw it as the harlot of the state. [15]

Perhaps the greatest irony is Blake's portrayal of Milton himself. The poem identifies Milton as one of the Elect (M 23.56), and so, no doubt, would Milton have considered himself: Elect and heaven-bound. Yet Blake inverts the meanings attached to Calvin's three classes of men, and makes the Elect the class that cannot believe, and the Reprobate the class that 'never ceases to believe.' Milton is one of the Reprobate; when he finally understands that he is not Elect, he is able to perceive Satan for what he is, to find him within himself, to sacrifice himself, and ultimately, to become one with Christ, the Saviour. Blake's Milton recognizes God within himself, and seeks to purge away everything that is opposed to that vision. "What justifies the ways of God to men in Milton is finally just and only this: that certain men have the courage to cast out what is not human in them, and so become Man, and to become Man is to have become God." [16]

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[15]Howard, 123.

[16]Bloom, 402.

### Jerusalem, 1808-1820

The last of Blake's epics, and, in the opinion of some, the finest of his works is Jerusalem, a poem of one hundred plates, existing today in only six known copies. The first five are printed in black and are uncoloured, while the sixth is printed in orange and finished in watercolour. It is presumably this sixth copy that is mentioned in a letter to George Cumberland dated 12 April 1827.[1] In two copies, the order, although not the content, of the plates has been altered, but like Keynes's study, this analysis adopts the arrangement of the majority of copies. The date on the title-page, 1804, may be the date Blake began Jerusalem, or simply the year he conceived the idea; however, most of the work was probably completed after he finished Milton in 1808. Keynes notes that the evidence of the watermarks of extant copies indicates that printing was not begun before 1818, nor finished until 1820.[2] This does not pinpoint exactly when the poem was actually composed, although the student can be reasonably certain of the sixteen-year period 1804-1820, with most of the composition between 1808 and 1818.

[1]Blake, Complete Writings 878.

[2]Keynes, 918.

The four-part structure of the epic has elicited a great deal of conjecture, but its most likely pattern is the gospel accounts of the four evangelists.[3] Like the gospels, Jerusalem relates the same story from four perspectives and follows in the tradition of the 'oral epic' with its loose narrative. It is episodic and repetitious like the gospels, absolutely non-chronological and non-linear in structure. The verse itself is not English blank verse, with its "Monotonous Cadence" and "bondage of Rhyming", but is as free-flowing as the thought it expresses. In fact, there is some question as whether it constitutes verse at all, as the lines have widely varying syllable counts, and no consistent, recognizable metre. However, Blake specifically states that this liberty is not haphazard; rather, it springs from the subject itself and "is studied and put into its fit place; the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild & gentle for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic for the inferior parts; all are necessary to each other" (J pl 3). Also like the Gospels, the grand theme of Jerusalem is the redemption of man. Blake dealt with this theme in The Four Zoas, but never completed that work to his satisfaction; he began again in Milton, but the emphasis in that work is more on Milton himself and the struggles of the poet/prophet than on Albion, the Everyman who is blind to spiritual perception.

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[3]Witke, 35.

Like the structure, the identity of the characters in Jerusalem is the topic of unceasing debate. Many of the names are directly related to people who had touched Blake's life, as Kwantok, Peachey, and Brereton, who were John Quantock, J.P.; John Peachey, J.P.; and William Brereton, J.P., who were the magistrates at Blake's trial, or Scofield and Kox, the soldiers involved in the accusations that resulted in Blake's trial.[4] These are plausible identifications, and it is consistent with Blake's temperament that he should identify his personal enemies with the enemies of mankind. The reader is already familiar with the leading characters: the Four Zoas and their emanations; Los, the creator or imagination, whose name recalls the logos, or creative word of God, lux, the Latin word for light, and 'loose' as in chains or fetters. All of these are facets of the Christ: the logos, the light of the world, the one who came to set the captive free. Coban is an anagram for Bacon, while Hand is Newton and Hyle is Locke (Hylas was a devotee of Locke). One of the new elements introduced is Erin, naturally associated with Ireland. Witke presses that identification and equated Erin with Berkeley, a native son of Ireland, an opponent of natural religion, and a 'faithful son of the spirit.' [5] Like Blake's, Berkeley's works met with a mixed reception and often heated debate as he was variously labelled an atheist, a deist, a sceptic, and a defender of the faith.[6]

[4] Damon, 436.

[5] Joann Witke, William Blake's Epic: Imagination Unbound (London: St. Martin's Press, 1986) 77.

[6] John Redwood, Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

The general introduction to the poem and, more specifically, to the first chapter is found on plate three, and is addressed 'To the Public.' In this passage, the poet re-introduces his work and characters after "three years slumber by the banks of the Ocean." The second paragraph is noteworthy to the student of Blake's theology, for it states that the spirit, or essence, of Jesus is continual forgiveness of sin. Like St. Paul, Blake recognized that "There is none righteous, no not one" according to the Law, but that the gospel of Christ is forgiveness and freedom from the law.[7] Also like St. Paul, Blake states that he is perhaps chief among sinners. He does not pretend to holiness according to legalistic definitions, but is confident that he is forgiven by the Friend of Sinners, with whom he 'converses daily as man with man.'

Just as plate 3 serves to preface chapter one, so also does the first chapter introduce and generally outline the theme and action of the whole epic. At the top centre of plate 4, the motto "Jesus alone" appears. Mellor indicates that this may refer to St. Luke 9.36, but that the most probably source is St. John 8.9, which is the only phrase in the Greek Bible of Blake's time to use the exact phrase the poet employs.[8] In this passage, Christ forgives the woman taken in adultery, traditionally identified as Mary Magdalen, and the phrase is translated "Jesus was left alone." This source for Blake's motto is consistent with his emphasis on forgiveness in the preface 'To the Public.'

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[7]Romans 3.10.

[8]Mellor, 292-3.

The first two lines of Chapter One are the essential matter of Jerusalem: "Of the sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through / Eternal Death! and of the awakening to Eternal Life." This is the theme that possessed Blake, which 'called to him in sleep and awakened him at dawn.' Throughout his life and work, Blake concerned himself with the division between man and woman, man and man, and man and himself, as well as the consequences of the fall from unity. The Saviour calls upon Albion to awaken, stating a truth central to Blake's Christianity: "I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine...I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend; / Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me: / Lo! we are One, forgiving all Evil, Not seeking recompense" (J 4.7,18-20). The Saviour is the Human Form Divine, the eternal essence of man, in whom all are one. Albion rejects this unity, convinced by the evidence presented by his senses and judged by reason, that "We are not One: we are Many." He denies Jerusalem, his liberty, and indentures himself to reason and empiricism, deifying rationalism and natural religion, stating that "By demonstration man alone can live, and not by faith."

Plate five describes the effects of Albion's rejection of unity, liberty and humanity in geological terms, as Albion's mountains run with blood and earthquakes rock the land, while 'wars and rumours of wars' resound throughout the land. At line 16, the author/narrator intrudes, describing his task, which is to "open the immortal Eyes / Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity / Ever expending in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination" (J. 5.18-20). Here, as elsewhere in the poetry, Blake explicitly states that Eternity is within Man

himself. Heaven, or paradise, is not otherworldly; it is man's natural state, to which he will return when he has put off the division and limitations of this world. Albion has rejected that vision, and his sons and daughters war against Imagination and its voice, Blake. Scofield and Kox are mankind's enemies, corrupt sons of Albion, because they are Blake's enemies, and the poet is attempting to redeem Albion through his works. He names these sons and daughters as the representatives of "Abstract Philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination / (Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus, blessed for ever)" (J. 5.58-9). Los hears Jerusalem weeping for her sons and daughters, and his Emanation and Spectre divide from him.

Separate now from him, the Spectre endeavors to tempt Los to forsake his task and abandon Albion. As before, Los' Spectre is Satan, false religion, who uses spurious reasoning to convince imagination to renounce man. The Spectre asks Los "Wilt thou still go on to destruction? / Till thy life is all taken away by this deceitful Friendship?" What the Spectre does not recognize is the fact that Los' life is not 'taken away' by an external force, but is freely given in forgiveness and love. He enumerates the catastrophes that have arisen and will arise as the Spectre of Albion asserts his domination over Los, and 'separates a Law of Sin to punish Los.' Los answers that although he did not know of the things described by the Spectre, he does know that Albion shall be resurrected, 'rising from his tomb in immortality. Further, the Spectre who has divided against him will assist Los in his labours on Albion's behalf; through the powers that try to negate it, the Imagination will



accomplish its teleological function. The Spectre perceives Los' creative role and bows at his feet in pretended acquiescence to his will, but secretly desiring to take his life.

In the last half of plate 8, Los identifies his Spectre, his word choice indicating that the Spectre is false religion, for the lines echo condemnations of false doctrine elsewhere in Blake's works: "Pride & Selfrighteousness", "Uncircumcised pretences to Chastity", and "Thy holy wrath & deep deceit". Further, Los states that if he, Creativity, were dead, then the false, rational religion might be 'pitied & lov'd'; fortunately for Albion, creativity is not dead, and he will press into service even the false religion that seeks to kill both him and mankind. He continues to explain the fallen state, in which the Sons of Albion labour to destroy Humanity: "I saw the limbs form'd for exercise contemn'd, & the beauty of / Eternity look'd upon as deformity, & loveliness as a dry tree. / I saw disease forming a Body of Death around the Lamb / Of God to destroy Jerusalem & to devour the body of Albion, / By war and stratagem to win the labour of the husbandman" (J 9.7-11). The joys of Eternity and the products of Imagination are condemned in the world ruled by reason and reason's doctrines: "...the Emanations buried alive in the earth with pomp of religion, / Inspiration deny'd, Genius forbidden by laws of punishment" (J. 9.15-16). Curiously, it is in the flames of Hand, Hyle, and Coban that Los melts down (and presumably purifies) the substance of his creation. Against all odds, imaginative labour still operates within the eighteenth-century culture, using even the rationalism and deism of the time to refine art. Even though his creations

are perverted into 'forms of cruelty,' he still hopes, believing that if error can be defined, it can be cast out, just as in The Four Zoas, where the incarnation of error was positive, as error incarnate can be destroyed.

Through the labours of Los and the Spectre, the 'Spaces of Erin were perfected.' As stated, Witke equates Erin with Bishop Berkeley, whose philosophy Blake often echoes. This identification is consistent with the idea of Los as Imagination and the Spectre as false religion, for Berkeley, a creative thinker as well as a Bishop of the Church of England, is like Erin, a product of the combined efforts of Imagination and true religion, albeit he is working within the enemy camp.

The poet continues by describing the 'manner' of the Sons of Albion, who take the two contraries necessary for progress (as in MHH), call them Good and Evil, and create from them an abstraction, or Negation. Simply stated, they create through reasoning the notions of Moral Virtue and of Sin, "An Abstract objecting power that Negatives every thing" (J 10.14). This "Spectre of Man, the Holy Reasoning Power" is that to which Blake so strongly objects in his work, the moral code of false religion that 'binds with briars both joys and desires.' Hidden within that hypocritical holiness is the 'Abomination of desolation,' which is the notion of Sin. To combat this false holiness that represses creativity and destroys humanity, Los continues his labours to build Golgonooza, to create his own system, lest he be enslaved by rational religion's system, which reasons and compares good and evil, thinking one superior to the other. Los' business is not to condemn imagined sin; it is to create.

The Spectre breaks silence and accuses Los, saying that his sons and daughters, the products of his creative work, are truly sins, which the law of God commands to be sacrificed. Here the Spectre expounds Blake's concept of eighteenth-century religion, which views products of the imagination as sinful, demanding they be destroyed on the altar of reason. That God is righteous, according to his own Moral Law, and shares in none of the noble sentiments of humanity: "...he is not a Being of Pity & Compassion, / He cannot feel Distress, he feeds on Sacrifice & Offering, / Delighting in cries & tears & clothed in holiness & solitude" (J 10.47-49). He is a God afar off, unlike the true Saviour introduced in plate 4. The product of belief in this type of God is despair, which the Spectre feels keenly. The prayer of rational religion is vain, addressed as it is to a transcendent deity incapable of compassion or mercy. Such religion is "...all evil, all reversed & for ever dead: knowing / And seeing life, yet living not" (J 10.57-8).

Los continues his labours, and the spaces of Erin emerge, wherein the sons and daughters of Los are re-united with him. After the joy of that meeting is exhausted, they begin to lament Jerusalem's plight, wondering how they may best aid her. Again, Los states that God will fix the systems of Albion's sons (Bacon, Newton and Locke) "by mathematic power / Giving a body to Falsehood that it may be cast off for ever" (J 12.12-3). Assured of this, they continue building Golgonooza, whose name is taken from Golgotha, the place at which Christ offered himself in the ultimate act of 'forgiveness of sins.' Therefore, Golgonooza may be identified with true Christianity, the "Spirit of Jesus

[which] is continual forgiveness of Sin" (J 3). The following passage which describes the building recalls George Herbert's The Church Floore, in which the Christian virtues are the materials used to construct and furnish the building.

The stones are pity, and the bricks, well wrought affections  
 Enamel'd with love & kindness, & the tiles engraven gold,  
 Labour of merciful hands: the beams & rafters are  
 forgiveness:

The mortar & cement of the work, tears of honesty: the nails  
 And the screws & iron braces are well wrought blandishments  
 And well Contrived words, firm fixing, never forgotten,  
 Always comforting the remembrance: the floors, humility:  
 The cielings, devotion: the hearths, thanksgiving.

(J 12.30-37)

The description of the city after line 44 echoes Revelation with its four gates and the beasts guarding each. Yet the city is surrounded by the land of eternal death, in which pain and misery, despair and melancholy rule in the twenty-seven heavens. If one recalls that the Church of England at this time was composed of twenty-seven dioceses, Blake's comment on the Church is obvious. In this land, there is flame but no light, darkness but no repose. In the world created by rational religion, the way is dark and twisted, the ground unsteady and full of `snares & traps & wheels & pit-falls & dire mills,' a world where "Self-righteousnesses conglomerate against Divine Vision." The religious of England, secure in their twenty-seven heavens, are those arrayed against Divine Vision, who call physical pleasures and artistic expression sin, condemning the imagination and his works.

On plate 14, Los (and the reader) view the world and its inhabitants, the zoas and their emanations, Albion's sons and daughters, Los' own children, and finally Jerusalem, mankind's liberty. Originally, chapter one ended here, with Los' vision of Jerusalem bending eastward. She is in anguish, certainly, but her continued existence holds the promise of ultimate redemption. Yet the vision does not end here. Los also sees Hand and Hyle 'rooted into Jerusalem' as Newtonian physics and Lockean philosophy threaten man through reason and rational religion. He also sees the four-fold (whole and holy) Man sunk in sleep, his Emanation Jerusalem and man's Spectre with its cruel shadow, which is rational religion and the Church. The poet calls on the true divinity to sustain him as he strives to free Albion from rationalism's 'vast serpents' of reasoning which try to smother the influence of imagination.

Line 14 of plate 15 echoes the first lines of Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who hath made heaven and earth..." A psalm of comfort in distress, of faith in the midst of trial. Yet Blake lifts up his eyes unto the Schools & Universities, and sees only the strongholds of his adversaries, Newton and Locke, whose cruelties grind mankind within the moving cogs of their clock-maker's universe and whose tyrannies wrap Europe within the shroud of reason, rendering it dead to imagination. The disease of rationalism infects the world, and the poet sees the earth in the grasp of reason and reason's religion. He enumerates the symptoms of the disease, symptoms all too evident in Blake's time: war, prostitution, sexual

repression, disintegration of family and disregard of the closest of relationships. The last portion of the plate relates the counties of England, Wales and Scotland to the twelve sons of Israel, making it obvious that the drama Blake is relating intimately concerns his readers. He is not discussing an aboriginal tribe removed physically and intellectually from Englishmen; he is addressing Britain herself, attempting to point out the effects of rationalism and natural religion on Albion, Everyman.

Los' Spectre divides from him, and Los compells him to labour for Albion's redemption. The reader will recall that the Spectre divided from Los in plate 6. The poet sees "Past, Present & Future existing all at once" (J 15.8); the chronology of Jerusalem cannot be relied upon. Therefore, the verb 'divides' and a great many other present tense verbs should be read as actions that continue throughout an indefinite period of time. The Spectre, Satan, therefore divides continually from Los in order to "make a way for the Children of Los to come from the Furnace" (J 17.5). Los describes the false love of the world of generation which he so fears, which pretends to love in order to destroy love, as hypocritical and cruel. This false love is the love of religion, "that Holy Love which is Envy, Revenge & Cruelty / Which separated the stars from the mountains, the mountains from Man / And left Man, a little grovelling Root outside Himself." The teaching of rationalism is that everything in the universe is distinct, separate from man, which reduces him to something far less than man, and leaves him alienated from himself. In that situation, he is susceptible to the generative

world's idea of 'holy' love, which is not true love (that is, love of man for man) but is rather the love of man for power and position (envy, revenge and cruelty). Los then describes the nature of negation. Contraries are necessary to one another and exist mutually, as in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

Negations, however, do not truly exist. They are phantasms of reason, whereby the existence of good and evil prompt reason to introduce the concept of sin, which is the result of the supposed moral ascendancy of good over evil.

Hand and Hyle cry out for the destruction of the saviour in plate 18. They call Jerusalem harlot and demand her destruction as well. The deism made possible by Hand and Hyle discounts all miracles and thereby seeks to destroy Christ, while the moral code enforced by orthodox religion accuses Jerusalem of sin and seeks the death of man's liberty. Jerusalem's actions and teachings are those of Christ: practising pity, forgiveness, peace and love, meeting with transgressors in brotherhood. Yet eighteenth-century society rejects true Christianity, and calls instead for Barabas, natural religion with nature as the goddess virgin-mother (for nature has no consort) in the city of Vala. Plate 19 recounts the effects of rationalism's tyranny:

His Children exil'd from his breast pass to and fro before  
 him,  
 His birds are silent on his hills, flocks die beneath his  
 branches,  
 His tents are fall'n; his trumpets and the sweet sound of his  
 harp  
 Are silent on his clouded hills that belch forth storms &  
 fire.  
 His milk of Cows & honey of Bees & fruit of golden harvest  
 Is gather'd in the scorching heat & in the driving rain.  
 Where once he sat, he weary walks in misery and pain,  
 His Giant beauty and perfection fallen into dust,  
 Till, from within his wither'd breast, grown narrow with his  
 woes,

The corn is turn'd to thistles & the apples into poison,  
 The birds of song to murderous crows, his joys to bitter  
     groans,  
 The voices of children in his tents to cries of helpless  
     infants,  
 And self-exiled from the face of light & shine of morning,  
 In the dark world, a narrow house! he wanders up and down  
 Seeking for rest and finding none! and hidden far within,  
 His Eon weeping in the cold and desolated Earth.

(J 19.1-16)

Human majesty and beauty has disappeared, leaving only "cruelty and abhorrence, / Superstition & revenge; & the seven diseases of the Soul..." Whether Blake was referring to the seven deadly sins, or the seven repressive virtues, or perhaps to both as encompassing the whole of 'moral virtue' is unknown, but it is certain that such an allusion is intended, for soon after, Vala and Jerusalem stand over the body of Albion, discussing the nature of sin. Jerusalem asks why Vala has caged liberty, making it impossible for her to live in innocence as she had done previously. Vala replies, accusing Jerusalem. Human liberty was once free to enjoy delight and innocence, but morality has transformed the 'sweet regions of youth and virgin innocence' into the 'winter of human life.' Jerusalem pleads with Vala to forgive what she calls sin, which is "but a little / Error & fault that is soon forgiven" (J 20.23-4). Albion, despairing and ill, having given reason dominion and believed in natural religion's morality, fears that "All is Eternal Death unless you can weave a chaste / Body over an unchaste Mind" (J 21.11-12). He has believed religion's moral law, and knowing himself to have transgressed that code, he is assailed by doubt, shame, and guilt, enfolded in moral law. Vala speaks to Albion; she who was borne before the army in a golden ark (identifying her further



with the Law), has looked into Albion's soul and detected sin. Having no pity or compassion for him, she withdraws. Albion despairs and commands Jerusalem to depart, asking Vala to drain his blood, his life, his passion, to the last drop and to take it as a sin offering. He recognizes Vala's veil as "a Law, a Terror & a Curse" but he is unable to rend it a second time. Plate 24 contains a Blakean condensed history of religion, which stretches from the Druid oak to the Christian palm between which trees he stands (J 23.24). Albion recounts his Druidism, when he 'reared mighty Stones' and 'danced naked around them' until shame, the sense of guilt produced by the spurious code of morality, caused him to cease. At that point, all light flees as the sun and moon abandon Albion to his false 'light of reason.' Albion confesses that he has forsaken Jerusalem's liberty in favour of Vala's veil of moral virtue, and in so doing has executed the imagination, which is the true humanity: "O Human Imagination, O Divine Body I have Crucified, / I have turned my back upon thee into the Wastes of Moral Law" (J 24.23-24). Babylon, founded on Human desolation and moral law, is antithetical to Jerusalem. Where Jerusalem is constructed with pity, compassion, affection, kindness, etc. (pl. 12), Babylon is the product of human suffering:

"The Walls of Babylon are Souls of Men, her Gates the Groans  
 "Of Nations, her Towers are the Miseries of once happy  
     Families,  
 "Her Streets are paved with Destruction, her Houses built  
     with Death,  
 "Her Palaces with Hell & the Grave, her Synagogues with  
     Torments  
 "Of ever-hardening Despair, squar'd & polish'd with cruel  
     skill."

(J 24.31-35)

Albion recognizes Jerusalem and the Lamb of God, yet he believes that his rejection of them has been complete, that he has destroyed them utterly and no hope is left to him. Embracing reason as God, Albion has 'educated his children in the crucifying cruelties of Demonstration,' and has slain his Saviour. Believing that hope is banished from him, Albion sinks down again insensible. Plate 25 records the lamentations in Beulah, in which the inhabitants of that state call upon the Saviour to descend and redeem. The chapter ends where it began, in the sleep of Ulro, with redemption a possibility only, not yet a reality.

The central conflict in chapter one is between Albion and the Saviour. Albion denies the essential unity of man, while the Saviour (through Los, the creative imagination) continually offers an alternative to the division Albion's reasoning has produced. Fundamentally, the conflict is religious, for at the centre, Albion's rejection of man's unity causes the aspects of man to divide against one another: good and evil, passion and reason. Albion has chosen reason as his ruler, and rationalism has created a God distinct from humanity, has denied a vital part of man's nature, and has created a false code of morality to repress those aspects (imagination and passion). This is the false worship of orthodox religion, which "adores a God who is separate from man, one who ultimately turns out to be a human rational projection, and establishes codes of sin and punishment to live under that inevitably lead him into war: internal wars with his natural human desires and external ones with his brothers." [9]

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[9] Minna Doskow, William Blake's Jerusalem: Structure and Meaning in Poetry and Picture (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982) 47.

In chapter two, the focus shifts from the conflict between Albion and the Saviour to Albion's choice of moral virtue sprung from the natural religion of his deified reason. That choice made, Albion becomes priestly 'punisher & judge' (28.4), rejecting the prophetic tradition in favour of the patriarchal system typified by Jewish tradition.[10] Plate 26 leads the reader to compare the author with St. Paul, who often illustrated his meaning with allusions to running and races. After his vision of the Saviour, Paul, like Blake, preached liberty from the law and forgiveness of sin, seeking "to unite all the Inhabitants of earth in one Religion, the religion of Jesus, the most Eternal & the Everlasting Gospel" (J 27). Hence, St. Paul travelled, preaching true religion to Jew and Greek alike, and wrote letters encouraging new believers and chastising those who had forsaken the faith. Through his poetry, Blake also preaches to these: the Christians, who have fallen away, the Greeks whose deity is intellect (for Greeks, read deists), and first of all, the Jews, whose traditions, laws, and prophecies prepared the way for the Coming Saviour, but who could not accept Jesus as the Messiah. In Blake's mythology, the Jews are the originators of patriarchy and legalism grounded in a false religious system and the belief in a transcendent God, a "God who dwells in Chaos hidden from the human sight" (J 28, 16). The separation of God from man is a fundamental aspect of Albion's fall from unity.

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[10]Doskow, 30.

Chapter two proper begins with plate 28, which opens with a brief description of the Garden of Eden before man's fall into division with its 'ornaments of perfection' and 'labours of love.' These became 'an envied horror, a remembrance of jealousy, a Crime' when man abstracted a deity from within and believed it separate and transcendent. Albion became a punisher and judge and declared that man be separate from man, that love and friendship are sins. The deadly tree of Moral Virtue and the Law of God sprang up, 'an endless labyrinth of woe.' This false moral code caused a fundamental shift in man's attitudes toward himself and others, for where before self-sacrifice had been seen as vital for redemption and reunification, now men erroneously preached atonement, the sacrifice of supposed enemies on the altars of justice and truth.

Just as in chapter one, the fall into disunity has occurred, the false code of moral virtue has grown up, and Albion's sons have begun to plot Jerusalem's destruction. The Divine Vision appears and prophesies Albion's sleep and resurrection, for although he has been led astray, "Albion shall rise again" (J 29.26). Two of the immortals relate the story of Albion's ruin, resulting from his deification of reason which brought rational religion, "a shadow from his wearied intellect,...a sweet entrancing self-delusion." Albion fell prey to this delusion, and prostrated himself in idolatrous worship of his own shadow. Luvah strove with the Shadow, but Albion banished Luvah, and Los' Spectre and Enitharmon alone escaped to relate the story to the Divine Family (J 29.82-30.2). They rejoin Los, who prays for the Saviour to arise and rend the veil of moral law. His prayer

points out the abuses of religion, which supports the state in making men poor, and then gives with self-righteous pride. The Church exhorts these hungering and thirsting souls to praise God for his blessings, and condemns the enjoyment of one of his great gifts, sexuality. The priests are "the Opressors of Albion....Humanity knows not of Sex" (J 30.28-33). So saying, Los follows Albion and witnesses his degradation and despair. Under the influence of rationalism and its religion, every Universal Form and every tenderness of humanity hardened into barren and desert waste.

As he follows Albion, Los encounters Jerusalem, who contends with Vala for possession of Albion. Vala emmeshes Albion in the threads of her veil of Moral Virtue and Law, and accuses Jerusalem of harlotry and impurity, calling her liberty sin. Seeing this, Los takes up his tools and calls for divine aid. In response, Albion's sons arise to oppose him and his creative, redemptive labour. Albion's Spectre, Satan, who is organized religion, appeals to the man's reason, refuting Divine Vision and asserting that the human form is an insignificant if not depraved creature. Vala appears, and nature seduces man under the sway of rationalism. Los overhears the exchange and speaks, condemning Albion for allowing himself to be subjugated by Mother Nature, the natural order of Newton, Bacon and Locke. The divine hand appears and creates Satan and Adam, the limits of opacity and contraction in discussed in The Four Zoas and Milton. These boundaries limit man's fall and create states of existence, so that condemnation may fall on the states rather than on the individuals passing through those states.

In plate 36 reason interposes itself between the natural and the spiritual man, and the divisions within the universal man are recalled (J 33.25-32). Chaos results from the division caused by the Reasoning Spectre. The Eternal Ones view the result of the disunity, and mock its product, slavish obedience to a false morality. This moral code causes a man to refrain even from embracing his own wife in order to satisfy repressive Chastity. The delusion of moral virtue and of the rationalism that created it has become reality to those who believe: "What seems to Be, Is, / To those to whom / It seems to Be, & is productive of the most dreadful / Consequences to those to whom it seems to Be, even of / Torments, Despair, Eternal Death..." (J 36.51-54). The morality and natural religion wrought by the false 'reality' of rationalism produces only torment of conscience, despair of the spirit, and eternal death of the soul, resulting from imagined sin. While Albion has succumbed, those in Eternity offer the hope that the divine mercy will redeem man and that man will once again obey the divine vision.

Still Albion turns away and steels himself against the exhortations of the Divine Family, who attempt to remind him of universal love and the unity of man, for if Albion ceases to recognize love and sympathy, he will cease to exist (J 38.12-13). The Family preaches the unity of all men in the One Eternal Man, Jesus the Christ. Their speech is absolutely consistent with Christian dogma and reaffirms Blake's ties with mainstream Christian and specifically Anglican orthodoxy. Christ is "in us, and we in him / Live in perfect harmony in Eden, the land of life, / Giving, receiving, and forgiving each other's

trespasses. / He is the Good shepherd, he is the Lord and master, / He is the Shepherd of Albion, he is all in all, / In Eden, in the garden of God, and in heavenly Jerusalem" (J 38.20-25). London's speech also echoes Christian teaching, as London affirms the efficacy of self-sacrifice, which in this instance will save Albion (mankind) and Jerusalem (his liberty).

The narrator begins in line 44 to describe the humanity of all creation: in his vision, all partake of humanity, so that cities are men, as are rivers and mountains; not only are they men, they are also single aspects of humanity, so that Jerusalem is at once a city, a woman, and the liberty of all mankind. Similarly, the Gate of Los, which "admits the wandering souls / Of multitudes who die from Earth" (J 38.58-9), is also an aspect of human existence, creativity and vision, for Los is the Creative Zoa. Satan's watch-fiends cannot find the Gate, nor can they ever enter into Albion by that Gate. Without, Satan has constructed his Mill, and "here begins the System of Moral Virtue named Rahab" (J 39.10).

Albion, not realizing that his salvation lay within, in the unification of mankind, flees outward from himself, shunning the Divine Vision. Los asks where Albion is going, and Albion replies that he is going to Eternal Death, for God has forsaken him. He asks that someone become a ransom for him, not realizing that such an act of supposed atonement would not redeem him, for Mercy cannot endure atonement, which "is Moral Severity & destroys Mercy in its Victim" (J 39.26). Albion does not yet grasp that his redemption lies in his willingness to sacrifice himself, not in assigning his supposed guilt to a scapegoat or a sacrificial lamb outside himself.

Los calls the "Friends of Albion," the zoas with their emanations, who mourn for Albion in his self-inflicted illness. His plight is almost unbearable for his friends, for they see that he has `leagued himself with robbers' and `taken into his bosom those who devour his soul' even as he has rejected his friends and despised those who would give their lives for him. Man has been persuaded to believe the falsehoods of rational religion, and the very fabric of Creation may be rent apart if he is not saved. If he is not, "Man himself [will] become a Fiend, wrap'd in an endless curse, / Consuming and consum'd for-ever in flames of Moral Justice" (J 40.29-30). The worst thing that can happen to man, Blake's true hell, is to subject himself to a spurious moral code and, divided against himself, to exact retribution for infractions of the Law, "Under pretence of Moral Virtue, filed with Revenge and Law" (J 40.35). Albion would then be chained by his morality to the Law, and would thereby be tortured until the end of days. But here Blake interjects the hope of Albion, the unity of the Divine Family in the person of Jesus the Saviour, `Human Divine, blessed for ever and ever.' Curiously, it is not Christ alone mentioned here, but also his Church, in this case the Church of England, and Selsy in particular. Selsy Cathedral was destroyed as the tides encroached upon the land and eventually covered the entire town. This self-sacrifice to the waves of despair, as Blake saw it, resulted in the relocation of the cathedral to Chichester, which lay on higher ground. Winchester is also portrayed as legitimately working toward Albion's salvation, as is Bath, which may represent Richard Warner, known for publishing an anti-war sermon. [11]

[11] Erdman, P&E, 476-8.



At this point, Albion is ill with the disease of moral virtue and seeks to destroy the emanations of the Zoas. Jerusalem has vanished, hidden from Satan by the daughters of Beulah. Man's liberty cannot be found, so man is enslaved to his Spectre, Satan, who was earlier identified as organized religion and who has bound man in chains of morality, judgment, and law. Blake sums up his plight in the inscription on the illustration on plate 41: "Each Man is in his Spectre's power / Until the arrival of that hour / When his Humanity awake / And cast his Spectre into the Lake." In Satan's power, Albion sits brooding on evil. Los shows him that those things he has cursed are his own beloveds; Albion responds to this knowledge by cursing Los and demanding righteousness and justice rather than mercy. Los answers that he will respond to Albion in justice and righteousness, but also in mercy, in order to save Albion's sons and daughters from his self-righteous retribution based on his false morality. Los declares that Albion is in error, and although he has slain the other three Zoas, he will not destroy Los, the creative vision of man. Albion sends Hand and Hyle (Newton and Locke) to seize Los and bring him to Albion's judgment, which will result in his condemnation and death. Yet Los draws strength from the divine hand, and in his furnaces builds the mundane shell in the four regions of humanity. This accomplished, the zoas reappear, "Urizen cold & scientific, Luvah pitying & weeping, / Tharmas indolent & sullen, Urthona doubting and despairing, / Victims to one another & dreadfully plotting against each other / To prevent Albion walking about in the Four Complexions" (J 43.2-5). Divided from one another, the zoas

despair and call upon God for deliverance. Here Los voices one of Blake's own arguments, asking why they stand about in fear and call upon a transcendent deity, when God dwells within them? Mankind's problem is that he has abstracted a deity for worship; in the resultant chaos, friendship becomes a trap, benevolence cruelty, and "The wine of the Spirit & the vineyards of the Holy-One / Here turn into poisonous stupor & deadly intoxication, / That they may be condemn'd by Law & the Lamb of God be slain" (J 43.28-30). Virtue is perceived as vice, while vital aspects of humanity are threatened with extinction by counterfeits: "A pretence of Art to destroy Art; a pretence of Liberty / To destroy Liberty; a pretence of Religion to destroy Religion" (J 43.35-6). The power and character of God is in man, yet by abstracting his deity and dividing from it and from himself, Albion has created a world in which man is by nature the enemy of man, generalizing art and science until both are lost (J 43.52-4). Los vows to withstand Man's division and fallen state even though Albion's sons and daughters 'caught the infection of sin and repentance,' the disease of false morality and spurious religion.

At Los' reproof, the Sons of Albion attempt to carry their parent back into Eden, yet Albion resists. His reluctance clouds the Gate of Los, obscuring creativity and making every particle of light and air opaque, black and horrible (J 44.10). Albion remains suspended over the "Rock of difficulty & a Cliff / Of black despair (J 44.11-12). The voice of the city of Bath is faintly heard on plate 45, encouraging Man and drawing a lesson from his plight: Albion is in this position, despairing and

divided, because he chose to assert his individuality, to create a God separate from the Divine Humanity, and to venerate reason above the other Zoas.[12] Bath's teaching is that "however loving / And merciful the Individuality, however high / Our palaces and cities and however fruitful our fields, / In Selfhood, we are nothing....none but the Lamb of God can heal / This dread disease, none but Jesus" (J 45.10-13,15-16). As in orthodox Christianity, nothing but the intervention of Jesus can make man whole again, and Bath calls upon Christ to descend and save, lest Albion slay Jerusalem and, having thus destroyed his liberty, be bound forever in his disease.

Interestingly, plate 46 lists the cathedral cities of the Established Church (and by extension, the presiding bishops) in a positive light: Bath as Eternal Physician, Hereford as builder of the palaces of Eden; Lincoln, Durham and Carlisle as Counsellors of Los; Ely as Scribe of Los; and Oxford as the Immortal Bard. Blake seems to be commending the authorities of the very church he so often condemns, until lines 25-28, where he makes his meaning clear: these seem to be working for Albion's redemption, but beware! "The time will come when a man's worst enemies / Shall be those of his own house and family, in a Religion / Of Generation to destroy, by Sin and Atonement, happy Jerusalem, / The Bride and Wife of the Lamb" (J 46.25-8).

[12]The voice of Bath is presumably Richard Warner, minister of St. James Parish whose staunch belief in non-violence led him in 1804 to publish War Inconsistent with Christianity. (Erdman, PAE, 476-481).

In despair Albion utters his last words: "Hope is banish'd from me." At these words, the Saviour receives Albion into his arms and prepares a couch for him. Jerusalem wakes in Beulah and descends to Albion's bier, walking among the 'ornaments of mourning' and the furnaces of Los. Erin speaks to the Daughters of Beulah, condemning the false religion that makes the "Place of Holy Sacrifice / Where Friends Die for each other...become the Place / Of Murder & Unforgiving, Never-awaking Sacrificer of Enemies / The Children must be sacrific'd! (a horror never known / Till now in Beulah) unless a Refuge can be found / To hide them from the wrath of Albion's Law that freezes sore / Upon his Sons & Daughters" (J 48.55-61). Albion's religion of Law has turned self-sacrifice for others into sacrifice of others, murder for supposed transgressions against Albion's cold and unfeeling morality, in order to satisfy the demands of his false religion. Blake describes that false religion as a 'Polypus of Death,' a spectre that withers humanity by demanding sacrifice for sin, that through its own self-centredness murders the Divine Humanity (J 49.24-30). Under the domination of this religion, man has become less than man, so much less, in fact, that the Human Form Divine is scarcely discernible in Blake's scathing description:

"Creeping in reptile flesh upon the bosom of the ground!  
 "The Eye of Man, a little narrow orb, clos'd up & dark,  
 "Scarcely beholding the Great Light, conversing with the  
 ground:  
 "The Ear, a little shell, in small volutions shutting out  
 "True Harmonies & comprehending great as very small:  
 "The Nostrils, bent down to the earth & clos'd with senseless  
 flesh  
 "That odours cannot them expand, nor joy on them exult:  
 "The Tongue, a little moisture fills, a little food it cloys,  
 "A little sound it utters, & its cries are faintly heard."  
 (J 49.33-41)

Under the influence of organized religion, man seems to have lost all resemblance to the Eternal Man. Yet Erin recalls that man is actually blameless, so that guilt can only be imputed to the state into which he has entered; in this way, he can be delivered. Therefore, Erin admonishes the Daughters of Beulah to learn to distinguish between the states and the individuals in those states. The chapter ends with Erin and the Daughters of Beulah calling upon the Lamb of God to descend for Albion's regeneration. Like chapter one, chapter two ends with Albion sunk in death-like sleep, for although the Lamb is called, he does not appear before the close of the chapter.

In chapter two, Blake deals with the consequences of adherence to a spurious code of moral virtue. Much like the Jews, Albion has constructed a religion that worships a deity outside man himself. A part of that worship includes strict obedience to a moral Law, the infraction of which must be punished, usually with a blood offering for the sin.[13] Like the Jews, Albion has so embraced the letter of the law that the spirit of the law eludes him. For this reason, it is sin for a man to embrace his own wife, for one to act upon his desires. Also like the Jews, Albion requires a Saviour to free him from the rigid confines of his guilt-engendering law. For the Jews, Jesus' distillation of the whole Law, the prophets and the teachings was to love one's God and one's neighbour. For Albion, it is the same, expressed by Erin in terms of unity and self-sacrifice.

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[13]Note that in Hebrew law, sin offerings must be blood sacrifice.

"To the Deists" shifts the focus from the Jews and their tradition of adherence to a moral law to the Deists of Blake's time, whose emphasis on natural religion and nature's God outraged Blake and drove him to produce some of his finest verse in order to expose their error. Blake focuses on the great names of the time as types on which to centre his attack: Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon and Hume, as well as Bacon, Newton and Locke. Certainly Blake had read their works, but his wrath is not for them as individuals as much as it is for them as the representatives and spokesmen of Enlightenment philosophy and natural religion.

Blake's charges were not levelled solely at these, but also against the Church, which had allowed Deism to taint the religion of Jesus, which is forgiveness of sin. "The central fact about the Church of England in the eighteenth century was its complete identification with the state and the ruling class, whose 'natural religion' was a reaction against the religious 'fanaticism of the Civil War era.'" [14] Willey agrees with this assessment, and emphasizes the acceptance of Deism even by the staunchest proponents of orthodoxy, for "During the Christian centuries religion had rested upon revelation; now it rested largely upon 'Nature,' and even the orthodox, who retained the supernatural basis, felt that faith must be grounded firmly upon Nature before one had recourse to super-nature." [15]

[14]Stuart Crehan, Blake in Context (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, Ltd., 1984) 282-93).

[15]Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background (London: Chatto and Windus, Ltd., 1957) 3.

The poet's denunciation of Natural Religion (which he equates with Deism) is vehement: "He never can be a Friend to the Human Race who is the Preacher of Natural Morality or Natural Religion; he is a flatterer who means to betray....You, O Deists, profess yourselves the Enemies of Christianity, and you are so: you are also the Enemies of the Human Race & of Universal Nature" (J 52). Blake's criticism is founded on the Deist belief in the essential righteousness of Man 'in his Vegetated Spectre.' Deism believed the inherent righteousness of the whole man, including his physical nature; Blake believed man's incarnation to be evidence of his Fall, or his separation from Eternity. The poet seems here to echo orthodoxy's insistence that Man is born reprobate due to his fall in Adam. Essentially, that is indeed Blake's own view, bearing in mind that for Blake, the Fall was not the result of disobedience but of division.

Blake asserts that Man, by his nature, must have some religion; if not of Jesus, then of Satan. Deism is a religion of Satan, for "Every Religion that Preaches Vengeance for Sin is the Religion of the Enemy & Avenger and not of the Forgiver of Sins, and their God is Satan, Named by the Divine Name. Your Religion, O Deists! Deism, is the Worship of the God of this World by the means of what you call Natural Religion and Natural Philosophy, and of Natural Morality or Self-Righteousness, the Selfish Virtues of the Natural Heart" (J 52). Deism, then, is essentially the same as the Judaism of the Pharisees who condemned Christ, and whose state Blake condemned in chapter two.

Christianity which is the forgiveness of sin, is the only true religion of Jesus; everything else is the religion of Satan pretending to the Divine Name, including orthodox Christianity that has been infected by Natural Religion. Those within such a church call Forgivers of sin like Whitefield and Wesley hypocrites, but how, Blake reasons, can one who confesses his sin before the world and preaches forgiveness for all men be a hypocrite? He ends the prose section of plate 52 with a brutal accusation, asserting that deists are responsible for all of the war and suffering and evil in Europe.

The verses on plate 52, a draft of which is contained in the Notebook, 1800-1803, reinforces the concept that true religion can never support, much less actually cause, war. The fifth stanza encapsulates Blake's argument: the God of Natural Religion, Satan, has wrenched from the Gospel of Love and forgiveness a false moral law, which demands vengeance and approves war. This same slavish devotion to spurious religion caused the crucifixion of Christ at the hands of the Jews, for "When Satan first the black bow bent / And the Moral Law from the Gospel rent, / He forg'd the Law into a Sword / And spill'd the blood of mercy's Lord" (J 52.17-20). Deism is in error because Natural Religion advocates war, not forgiveness. Also, it abstracts the deity and fashions a transcendent clock-maker God that bears no resemblance to the Human Form Divine.

Chapter III begins as chapters I and II have done, with Albion falling into division. Los, the 'Vehicular form of Urthona,' is divided from his emanation as a result of the division of Albion, for whom he weeps even as he labours, knowing



that "Man divided from his emanation is a dark Spectre" (J 53.25). Without his liberty, which should be an integral part of him, Man is an horrific shadow, lacking substance yet credited with the potential to injure or destroy. The first five lines of plate 54 contrast Albion's divided state with Man's ideal situation in Eternity, in which man and liberty are united, sharing in the Human Form Divine. Significantly, Blake indicates that ideally Jerusalem (liberty) is in every man, so that man's ideal state is unification with liberty in the Divine Vision.

"But Albion fell down, a Rocky fragment from Eternity hurl'd / By his own Spectre, who is the Reasoning Power in every Man, / Into his own Chaos, which is the Memory between Man & Man" (J 54.6-8). As indicated in the other epics, Albion fell when the Zoas divided against one another, with Reason claiming dominion. Here again, Reason has thrown man into divided chaos. This point is especially important in chapter III, where Blake addresses the Deists, whose veneration of Reason is the source of all eighteenth-century ills. The reasoning Spectre arises and asserts his deity as man's rational power (J 54.16), proclaiming himself to be God as Lucifer did before being cast out of heaven. The Spectre's identification as Satan is strengthened as he calls upon the 'Friend of Sinners,' Christ, to come into the desert and turn the very stones into bread. Reason's gospel runs counter to the gospel of Christ, illustrated in lines 22 in a curious inversion of Christ's encounter with St. Thomas, in which Jesus admonishes the apostle to believe without experiment. The Spectre, however, calls that Man foolish who will believe without experiment.

Plate 55 contains a glorious description of man in Eternity, without the veil of moral law Satan placed between Adam and Eve, and which the Saviour rent. The Eternal man has neither superior nor inferior, and all his members "equal share / Divine Benevolence & joy" (J 55.10). Regardless of moral law and natural religion which contend for Albion, or of his temporary state of division, Man in Eternity is "One Family, One Man blessed for ever" (J 55.46). Blake obliquely reminds the reader that judgment will ultimately fall upon the states through which man passes, not on Albion himself. Those in heaven continue to expound the poet's 'social gospel' in lines 49-66, saying that it is better to prevent misery than to relieve it, to prevent error than to rehabilitate the offender. If men would attend the Minute Particulars of poverty, ignorance, disease, etc., "those who are in misery cannot remain so long" (J 55.52). One of Blake's major objections to his society was their rather vague ideas concerning the General Good. He observes, as does the epistle of St. James, that it is one thing to say to the poor and hungry, 'Be of good cheer and go your way filled', and quite another matter to take specific steps to see to it that the hungry are actually fed, the ignorant educated, the homeless sheltered (James 2.15-17).

"He who would do good to another must do it in Minute  
Particulars:  
General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite &  
flatterer,  
For Art & Science cannot exist but in minutely organized  
Particulars  
And not in generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power.  
The Infinite alone resides in Definite & Determinate  
Identity;  
Establishment of Truth depends on destruction of Falsehood  
continually,

On Circumcision, not on Virginitv, O Reasoners of Albion!"  
(J 55.60-66).

Here, Blake is not discussing actual Circumcision and Virginitv only, but the universal concepts they symbolize. Virginitv symbolizes repression by the spurious moral code which denies sexuality, demanding Chastity in its place. Circumcision symbolizes a covenant relationship, as circumcision was the sign which identified participants in the Hebrews' covenant with YHWH (Genesis xvii). Just as the covenant relationship continued through Hebrew history, regardless of the state in which the people found themselves, so also is Albion an eternal part of the Human Form Divine, although his various aspects are divided. Emphasizing Blake's dependence on Old Testament theology, the Great Voice of Eternity echoes the call of the Lord to the prophet in Isaiah vi: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (verse 8).

The question remains unanswered, at least directly, for plate 56 reveals Los at his labours and his song recalls another of Blake's themes, namely that the physical world is transient, existing only to provide for man's redemption and his re-entry into eternity. He calls upon the daughters of Albion to labour with care lest Man, the infantine Terror, refuse incarnation as Thel did, and flee to the void: "...rock the Cradle while, Ah me! Of that Eternal Man / And of the cradled Infancy in his bowels of compassion / Who fell beneath his instruments of husbandry & became / Subservient to the clods of the furrow; the cattle and even / The emmet and earth-Worm are his superiors & his lords" (J 57.33-37). The Eternal Man fell down to worship

his reason, which is in reality only one of his instruments, and in so doing became subservient even to the earth, which stands for nature, now made ascendent by Deism, reason's religion. The Great Voice of the Atlantic attempts to show Albion that the distinctions he has created through his reason are merely fabrications based on false principles, but reason is intent on dividing the essential unity of man; to avoid hearing the truth of its message, Albion flees the Divine Vision (J 57.8-11).

However, the Divine Vision is intent upon Albion's redemption and, although Albion's world is divided by war & judgment, jealousy & cruelty, Los continues his labours in the world of death to create a world of generation in which Albion might be redeemed. Once again, Albion utilizes the images of the oak groves of Druid sacrifice for atonement and the Palm-strewn avenues of Christian self-sacrifice for reunification as depicting the space which will become the Mundane Shell, the world of generation "& Place / Of Redemption & of awakening again into Eternity" (J 59.8-9). Blake recounts the story of the Zoas, each standing on a point of the compass until Luvah attempted to usurp Urizen's world in the South. The Zoas divided and Albion was thrust into chaos and ruin, while the East became void, the South a burning fire, the West raging water, and the North unfathomable darkness. Yet, in the midst of this destruction and despair, the universe of Los & Enitharmon exists eternally, offering hope for Albion's eventual re-unification and return to eternity. To this end, the Daughters of Los labour, enduring hardship and pain, delighting in their work, "For they labour for life & love regardless of any one / But the poor Spectres that they work for always, incessantly" (J 59.37-38).

The Divine Vision reappears to gather Jerusalem's children, asking why she rends herself apart, when he has given her 'liberty and life in the garden of God.' Why does she now serve false religion and sacrifice herself and her little ones to "the pretended chastities of Uncircumcision?" (J 60.30). Man's liberty has sold herself to false religion, whose morality is indeed 'pretended chastity,' and she is imprisoned, hopeless and helpless, in the Dungeons of false religion. Yet even here, the Saviour figure appears beside her, offering her hope of forgiveness and redemption. "Babel [Deism] mocks, saying there is no God nor Son of God, / That thou, O Human Imagination, O Divine Body, art all / A delusion" (J 60.56-58). Deism admits no miracle, no Son of God fully man, fully divine, no super nature whatsoever, no need for divine forgiveness and reunification. The Divine Voice comforts Jerusalem, retelling the story of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph to emphasize the role of forgiveness in redemption. In Blake's version, the mother of Jesus was a harlot; Joseph's act of forgiveness resulted in the salvation of Man, for had he not forgiven but denounced her, she would have been stoned according to the Law and Christ never born. For Blake, Joseph's forgiveness is far more important than Mary's supposed purity, for Chastity is merely a physical condition required by a repressive moral code, while forgiveness is the very means of redemption. Further, Mary reasons: "If I were pure, never could I taste the sweets / Of the forgive[ne]ss of Sins; if I were holy, I never could behold the tears / Of love of him who loves me in the midst of his anger in furnace of fire" (J 61.11-13). Joseph's response incorporates the basis of

Blake's Christianity, that God does not forgive a debt on the condition that it be paid, nor pollution on conditions of purity. Rather, his salvation is without price; it is "the Continual Forgiveness of Sins, / In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity; for behold / `There is none that liveth & Sinneth not! And this is the Covenant / Of Jehovah: If you Forgive one-another, so shall Jehovah Forgive you, / That He Himself may Dwell among You..." (J 61.22-26). Mary's response, lines 34-46, is a Blakean 'Magnificat' in which she praises the God of forgiveness, glorying in her sin, which allowed her to experience that forgiveness and salvation.

Jerusalem beholds the vision and replies that she is outcast and reviled; she is the Magdalen, taken in sin and forgiven by Christ. Echoing the scene between Martha and Mary of Bethany and Jesus, Jerusalem asks if Albion will rise, and states that she knows he will rise on the last day. Jesus' reply is a direct quotation from St. John's gospel: "I am the Resurrection & and the Life." He continues, explaining that he must die through self-sacrifice to prepare the way for man to return to Eternity. The last line of his speech, "Only believe & trust in me. Lo, I am always with thee!" encapsulates two major tenets of Blake's faith: the Saviour requires only belief and trust, not obedience to the Law, not Chastity; and the Saviour is ever-present with(in) Man. Los sees the Divine Vision and renews his labours in despair mingled with hope, for the Saviour promised that Albion would indeed rise again.

Although Los has cause to hope, the world is still submerged in darkness and chaos as war, death and vengeance have control. Vala and the Reasoning Spectre unite to decide between the worlds of justice and mercy. Interestingly, the two seem to be mutually exclusive here, for justice denotes extraction of punishment for infraction of a law or code, where mercy denotes forgiveness and salvation. In a re-enactment of Christ's crucifixion, they vote for the death of Luvah, the saviour figure, cast lots, and nail him to a tree. As in the Gospel accounts, the sun was darkened and noon was as dark as midnight. As a result, the sons of Urizen abandon their plow and harrow, loom, hammer and chisel and take up instead the instruments of war and death. Simplicity yields to complexity as the artisans give way to industrialization. Industrialism, war with France, and natural philosophy are destroying Albion, Blake's England/Everyman. One of the finest passages in literature that exposes the inhumanity of eighteenth-century industrialism's factories is found on plate 65, lines 16-28:

And all the Arts of Life they chang'd into the Arts of Death  
in Albion.  
The hour-glass contemn'd because its simple workmanship  
Was like the workmanship of the plowman, & the waterwheel  
That raises water into cisterns, broken & burn'd with fire  
Because its workmanship was like the workmanship of the  
shepherd;  
And in their stead, intricate wheels invented, wheel without  
wheel,  
To perplex youth in their outgoings & to bind to labours in  
Albion  
Of day & night the myriads of eternity: that they may grind  
And polish brass & iron hour after hour, laborious task,  
Kept ignorant of its use: that they might spend the days of  
wisdom  
In sorrowful drudgery to obtain a scanty pittance of bread,  
In ignorance to view a small portion & think that All,  
And call it Demonstration, blind to all the simple rules of  
life."

Man is reduced to a drudge, kept ignorant and subservient, blind to his nature in the Human Form Divine.

It has been noted that the progression in Jerusalem is non-chronological. Having alluded to industrialism and the war with France immediately following a discussion of the Virgin Mary, Blake proceeds to the erection of Stonehenge on plate 66. However, Stonehenge is not here a Druid structure, per se, but rather a Deist structure, built with stones of Reasonings and unhewn Demonstrations, "a wondrous rocky World of cruel destiny" (J 66.6). No doubt this refers to the Deists' belief in a clockmaker God, who constructed the world to operate on certain immutable laws and principles both physical and moral, which may be deduced from nature. This being the case, there is no room for miracle or super-nature and the unfolding of history is a 'cruel destiny' that cannot be altered, rather like the predestinarianism which Blake thought so pernicious: "The Building is Natural Religion & its Altars Natural Morality, / A building of eternal death, whose proportions are eternal despair" (J 66.8-9). To further the identification with Deism, Vala's Covering Cherubs are named Voltaire and Rousseau, while Bacon, Newton and Locke are aspects of her tabernacle.

Seeing the construction of Deism, Los continues working, but the Daughters of Albion cruelly sacrifice their victim, Luvah, upon the altar. They begin to alter the human form, presumably taking the Human Form Divine and changing it into physical man; the knotted veins being the heart, the knotted nerves being the brain, and the double-knotted seed being the testes. When man is



incarnate (literally 'enfleshed'), his perceptions begin to dissipate into the Indefinite, 'cloudy shadows in darkness & separation.' He must regain Eternity for his perceptions to be cleansed. Nature itself here reflects the chaos within the divided fallen man: the Sun forgets his course like a drunkard, the Moon is leprous, diseased, the stars flee, and the very land shrinks in upon itself (J 66.74-82). The Daughters of Albion create males, then divide themselves into counterparts for their creatures. They adore the Warrior and nourish him with the blood of the Innocent, but are ashamed to give love to a merciful man. In this way, Dan, Gad, and Joseph are consumed while enemies of man such as Skofield and Kotope are fed. Men of war are approved and encouraged by eighteenth-century society, even by the Church itself, for the warriors rage beneath 'consecrated banners,' implying that they have the blessing of the Church. Hereafter, the poet describes the cruel sacrifice of humanity, whether in war or as a sin offering to false religion and its moral law. Plate 69 describes this repressive religion that punishes individuals enough to make them actually commit crimes (J 69.27). It is a religion of Chastity, of false moral law that punishes in jealousy, and it is this false veil that Jesus rends, removing both false law and false holiness. Every minute particular is holy, being a part of the Human Form Divine, as is sexual intercourse, although the poet is quick to remind the reader that such is not the only form of intimacy, for "Embraces are Cominglings from the Head even to the Feet, / And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place" (J 69.43-44).

The three-headed form of Hand appears on Albion's cliffs with three brains and three faces, Bacon, Newton, and Locke. These three oppose Blake's veneration of ideas and imagination, "rejecting Ideas as nothing & holding all Wisdom / To consist in the agreements & disagree[me]nts of Ideas" (J 70.7-8). According to Locke's theory, the human mind is blank at birth, containing no innate knowledge or insight. Sensory impressions 'write' upon this blank slate, and man thinks by the arranging and rearranging of these impressions. For Blake, this leads Man to "the Ratio of all things, & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again" ("No Natural Religion", 1st). In the fallen world, the forms of Newton, Bacon, and Locke spread over the whole Earth, while deep within them dwells Rahab, the harlot Religion, "Imputing Sin & Righteousness to Individuals... / Brooding Abstract Philosophy to destroy Imagination, the Divine / Humanity..." (J 70.17,19-20). "Sin and righteousness belong to the states of being through which all men must pass, but Rahab the harlot, type of the Church's claim to exclusiveness in salvation, is the inward conviction that destroys, whether she persuades to an unalterable sense of damnation or election." [16] Natural philosophy and natural religion are two aspects of the same beast, Deism, whose influence threatens to envelope Blake's world.

One of Blake's central themes is elucidated in Plate 71: everything that exists, does so within man, the Human Form Divine. All creation and all that appears external to the

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[16] Bloom, 459.

physical eye is in reality an integral part of man. "For all are Men in Eternity, Rivers, Mountains, Cities, Villages, / All are Human, & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk / In Heavens & Earths, as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven / And Earth & all you behold; tho' it appears Without, it is Within, / In your Imagination, of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow" (J 71.15-19). This runs counter to the Church's and the Deist's view, that man is a separate part of the physical world, whether created or evolved. Interestingly, although Blake disagrees with the Church and the Deists, he agrees fully with Christ, who is recorded in St. Luke's gospel as saying to the Pharisees "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or lo, there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (St. Luke 17.20-21). For Blake, the kingdom of God and all it encompasses, is within men, and all men are eternally one Man, the Human Form Divine. Yet now, "Albion is darkened and Jerusalem lies in ruins..." (J 71.54). Los shouts to heaven for Divine aid, weeping although he faithfully continues his labours.

As in chapters one and two, Blake enumerates the connections between the enemies of man and specific geographic locations in Britain: Coban dwelt in Bath, Peachey had North Wales, Skofield had Ely, Kox had Oxford, etc. Blake begins in his own land to convince his countrymen of their involvement. Lines 38-44 include the nations of the world in the influence of natural religion & philosophy, but also identify the whole world with the hope of redemption. There is no elect, no chosen race for Blake. All men in every nation share in the Human Form Divine.

The eternals continue their labours, and Los fixes the limits of opacity and contraction lest Albion be forever lost. Voltaire (Deism) insinuates these are cruel works of God, mocks the Resurrection, and sets up Kings "in wrath, in holiness of Natural Religion." Blake recalls again how the Four Zoas, locked into opposition, entered into the reasoning power and forsook imagination. When that happened, they became spectres, leaving their truly human forms lifeless in Beulah, and seeking ultimately to destroy imagination through the Law: "The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man, & when separated / From Imagination and closing itself as in steel in a Ratio / Of the Things of Memory, It thence frames Laws & Moralities / To destroy Imagination, the Divine Body, by Martyrdoms & Wars" (J 74.10-13). The Sons of Albion are opposed to melody, and so ruin music; they oppose liberty and so create rational morality, which gives rise to Moral Virtue, 'the fair deceiver', which judges and condemns 'the little ones.' Rahab, (the earthly manifestation of Vala, the harlot religion), has purportedly destroyed Jerusalem and stands triumphant with her twenty-seven fold poisons, the dioceses of the Church of England. Los continues his labours and Rahab is revealed as religion in war. Jesus opens up Time and Space, that a world might be created to bring about Albion's redemption. However, the time is not yet, and chapter three ends as chapters one and two, with promise of salvation, but Albion still sunk in darkness and chaos.

"To the Christians" stands as the introduction to chapter four, and the prose section is perhaps the clearest statement of Blake's later theology. The Christianity practised by the Church

has been affected by Natural Religion and Morality; it is repressive and legalistic, giving more care to the actions of the transitory physical man than to the thoughts and desires of the eternal mind and heart. Blake's Christianity is based on freedom and forgiveness, on the pursuit of Jerusalem which is man's liberty. Further, the poet claims that Christ and his apostles knew of no other Christianity apart from this; the religion practised by the Church must therefore be false. This is the meaning behind the motto on plate 77: "I give you the end of a golden string, / Only wind it into a ball, / It will lead you in at Heaven's gate / Built in Jerusalem's wall." In the Greek myth Ariadne gave Theseus a ball of string to unwind as he went into the labyrinth so that, having vanquished the Minotaur at its centre, he might find his way out. Here, Blake gives the reader the end of a golden string, signifying that mankind is already lost within the labyrinth of distorted Christianity at whose heart is the monster, Natural Religion. The Church has so distorted Christianity that the poet/prophet must now lead man out, away from the monster and into Eternity and freedom, for there is "no other Christianity and...no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination, Imagination, the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow, & in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more" (J 77).

The verse section of plate 77 reiterates this theme as the poet stands among the valleys and sees a wheel of flame rotating counter to the current of creation and destroying everything in

its path. He asks a 'Holy One' what the wheel is, and the Watcher replies that it is the wheel of Religion. The poet weeps and asks whether this is the religion of Jesus, to which the Holy One replies "Jesus died because he strove / Against the current of this Wheel; its Name / Is Caiaphas, the dark Preacher of Death, / Of sin, of sorrow & of punishment: / Opposing Nature! It is Natural Religion" (J 77.16-20). Conversely, Jesus is the Preacher of Life and of forgiveness. The Watcher commands the poet to go into the world to cast out devils and to heal the sicknesses of spiritual disease, to proclaim truth and teach True Happiness. He is not to go as a Pharisee (the representative of organized religion and so the Church), who condemns sin and metes out punishments to the terror of men; rather, he is to go in pity and joy in Christ's name, for he has seen "The dungeons burst & the Prisoners set free" (J77.35). The last section of plate 77 calls for England to awake to Jerusalem's call. The poet/prophet has done his work, "And now the time returns again: / Our souls exult, & London's towers / Recieve the Lamb of God to dwell / In England's green & pleasant bowers."

Chapter four proper opens with Albion sunk in deathlike slumber while his spectrous sons revolve around his still form, seeking to devour the 'sleeping humanity.' They are prevented from so doing by Los, the imagination, who continues to labour for the awakening of Man. Unable to assault Albion directly, the Sons of Albion attack Jerusalem and the Lamb (Man's liberty and liberator). The twelve crown Vala, the harlot Religion, and give her power over the earth. Religion and the Church strive to build the Throne of God and the Lamb, that they might murder the

Lamb and claim the throne for themselves. In view of this, Jerusalem is utterly cast down, believing herself forsaken. The poet's description of her plight recalls that of the historical Jerusalem, destroyed and carried into captivity, as recorded by the Old Testament prophets. Her lament, which begins on plate 78 and continues until plate 80, accuses God of forsaking her and allowing her to be taken captive, her children slain. She seeks the balm of Gilead and the succour of Goshen, but cannot find them in the desolation. Jerusalem recalls the world before her captivity, when her reign extended from East to West, when her children delighted in her, when her house was full of music and singing around the Lamb of God. Now, however, her fires are corrupt, her altars run with blood, and her eternal form is shrunken and enfeebled.

Vala appears beside her, attempting to seduce the Lamb away from his redemptive work and accusing Jerusalem of being the 'harlot daughter'. She explains that she is keeping Albion 'embalm'd in moral laws,' just as Christianity keeps man bound in its moral code. Rahab, the earthly name of Vala, hovers over all the earth, "Calling the definite, sin, defacing every definite form / Invisible or Visible..." (J 80.53-54). Hand and Hyle reappear and the theories and philosophies of Newton and Locke 'run in tender nerves across Europe.' Each is given a physical body, "Compell'd into a shape of Moral Virtue against the Lamb, / The invisible lovely one giving him a form according to / His Law, a form against the Lamb of God, oppose'd to mercy..." (J 80.77-79). Hand and Hyle become, not what they beheld, but what they believed. They believed that man is only a part of

creation, a physical being born without knowledge or insight; believing, they and man become exactly that, cutting themselves off from Imagination and Eternity.

Just as Hand and Hyle have made Man less than Man, so Gwendolen (a Daughter of Albion) has done her utmost to destroy the humanity of man: she mocks those who refuse cruelty while admiring the warrior; she refuses love to the merciful on grounds of false chastity; she creates harlots for the warriors' desire; she sets up 'The Cruel-one of Albion' for worship, calling him Jehovah of Hosts. Gwendolen realizes that Albion and Jerusalem must remain bound, for should they rise and unite, all that is false will perish. To accomplish her ends, Gwendolen lies to her sisters, telling them that Enitharmon and Los plan to scatter them, and to leave Albion desolate and alone. She calls upon her sisters to cut off Jerusalem by means of the tree of Mystery in Religion, the same tree Blake described in detail in Milton. On that tree they will "judge the Friend of Sinners" and murder Albion's Saviour.

The Daughters of Albion begin to fashion physical forms for mankind in Los' furnaces. Los sees this and is comforted for he knows that, as in the other epics, once error is incarnate, it can be cast out. Los affirms that he will continue to labour for Albion until he awakens. Although Albion's plight seems hopeless, Los stands watch and calls upon the Lamb to "descend among the Reprobate" and save mankind (J 83.15). Cambel and her sisters sit within the Mundane Shell and form the world within that sphere; they then weave the forms of men to inhabit their world. Earlier, the Mundane Shell was likened to the human



skull; here it seems to be the physical world. Though paradoxical, this is consistent with Blake's belief that all things, including the physical creation, exist within the Human Form Divine. "As a beautiful Veil, so these Females shall fold & unfold, / According to their will, the outside surface of the Earth, / An outside shadowy Surface superadded to the real Surface / Which is unchangeable for ever & ever." (J83.45-48). Los allows them to fashion the physical world, knowing that it is but a shadow of the real world of eternity. This world will lie in confusion until Albion's awakening, but Los intimates that Albion shall indeed rise.

The Daughters of Albion lament, then unite into Rahab, the earthly name for Vala, the harlot religion, who turns 'the iron Spindle of destruction.' Gwendolen's falsehood grows and grows until it becomes the physical universe, 'a Space & an Allegory around the Winding Worm.' Los brings the Twelve Tribes, Moses, and David into the world, the people of the covenant, thereby assuring that deliverance will come for Albion. Los sings on his watch, calling for the Daughters of Albion to leave off building an earthly kingdom in which they, as Rahab, would reign in pride and oppression, "to mix the Cup of Delusion" (J 85.31). Los then describes his vision of the New Jerusalem builded in Albion, 'terrible to behold for its extreme beauty and perfection.' His vision recalls St. John's description of the New Jerusalem recorded in Revelation and again offers hope for the ultimate redemption of Albion, and with him, Jerusalem. Toward this end, Los continues his labours, along with his sons and daughters.

On plate 86, Enitharmon and Los separate, victims of the creation of the physical world which relies on separateness of male and female to operate. The separation is painful, as is the discovery that, once parted, they have two wills and two intellects, not one as before. Having become two personalities, Los and Enitharmon contend with one another, no longer bound by love but separated by pride and jealousy, no longer two complementary aspects of one being, but opposites. Enitharmon asserts that she will create a Tabernacle for Moral Law "That he who loves Jesus may loathe, terrified, Female love, / Till God himself become a Male subservient to the Female." (J 88.20-21). The reader may wonder what force could possibly have caused such bitter war between Los and his emanation; the answer is given in lines 34-36 of plate 88: "A sullen smile broke from the Spectre in mockery & scorn; / Knowing himself the author of their divisions & shrinkings, gratified / At their contentions..." The Spectre of organized religion has driven a wedge between Imagination and his emanation, hoping to divert him from his labour of redemption.

Although his work is justice, mercy and forgiveness, Los is rendered impotent for the moment, divided from Enitharmon as the sexes war for control. While Los is thus hindered, Antichrist appears, 'a Human Dragon terrible' whose brain is 'a reflexion of Eden all perverted.' Israel, representing the chosen race, is in bondage to his 'generalizing' gods, who deny or enslave the minute particulars. Here again, Blake alludes to the bondage of Israel by naming surrounding nations who were not included in the covenant, nations known for their pagan deities: Moab, Ammon,

Babylon, Philistea, and Rome. The harlot religion appears, hidden in the dragon of war, and unites with Antichrist.

The action seems to shift as male and female separate once again and mankind is incarnate. Los cries out that "those who dare appropriate to themselves Universal Attributes / Are the Blasphemous Selfhoods, & must be broken assunder" (J 90.32-33). Such selfhoods are Hand, Hyle, Bowen and Skofield who attempt to take on the Divine Names in order "to Vegetate the Divine Vision / In a corporeal & ever dying Vegetation & Corruption..." (J 90.41-42). The enemies of mankind, such as Newton and Locke, seek to Vegetate the divinity of man, making man out to be only a higher animal, denying the Divine humanity of Eternity and sentencing Man to death and corruption. They plot to destroy both Albion, the Eternal Man, and Los, his Imagination, "Denying in private, mocking God & Eternal Life, & in Public / Collusion calling themselves Deists, Worshipping the Maternal / Humanity, calling it Nature and Natural Religion" (J 90.64-66).

On plate 91 Los cries out against the Deists and the Church that harbours them, calling them 'Fiends of Righteousness.' His instructions to the Spectre are instructive, and will be quoted here at length:

"...Go to these Fiends of Righteousness,  
 "Tell them to obey their Humanities & not pretend Holiness  
 "When they are murderers: as far as my Hammer and Anvil  
 permit.  
 "Go, tell them that the Worship of God is honouring his gifts  
 "In other men: & loving the greatest men best, each  
 according  
 "To his Genius: which is the Holy Ghost in Man; there is no  
 other  
 "God than that God who is the intellectual fountain of  
 Humanity.  
 "He who envies or calumniates, which is murder & cruelty,  
 "Murders the Holy-one. Go, tell them this & overthrow their  
 cup,

"Their bread, their altar-table, their incense & their oath,  
 "Their marriage & their baptism, their burial & consecration.

"He who would see the Divinity must see him in his Children,  
 "One first, in friendship & love, then a Divine Family, & in  
 the midst

"Jesus will appear; so he who wishes to see a Vision, a  
 perfect Whole,

"Must see it in its Minute Particulars, Organized , & not as  
 thou,

"O Fiend of Righteousness, pretendest; thine is a  
 Disorganized

"And snowy cloud, brooder of tempests & destructive War.

"You smile with pomp & rigor, you talk of benevolence &  
 virtue;

"I act with benevolence & Virtue & get murder'd time after  
 time.

(J 91.5-15,19-26).

The practices of the Church are absolutely inconsistent with  
 Blake's Christianity. The sacraments of the Church are hollow,  
 for God is not to be found there, but rather in his Children, the  
 divine family who comprise the Human Form Divine. The Spectre  
 works counter to Los's purpose, attempting to make Los indefinite  
 and refusing, as did the Deists and empiricists, to believe  
 without demonstration. Because of this, Los must alter his  
 Spectre; he admonishes the Spectre to shun the self-righteous  
 holiness of false religion, to put on Intellect, and to obey his  
 commands. Los looks and sees all of the Nations of the earth  
 uniting into one nation: Albion. Enitharmon fears for her life,  
 knowing that if that Albion touches her looms, she will vanish.  
 Los answers that when Albion awakens, all divisions shall be  
 healed: Enitharmon will not cease to be; she will merely cease to  
 be separate, for the Spectre of Religion that first caused the  
 division will be destroyed. At that time, all of morality's  
 crimes, punishments, accusations of sin, jealousies, revenges,

murders, cruelties and deceit' will appear as they are, superficial, and will be eradicated by the mutual forgiveness of sin (J 92.13-18). Los assures his sons that they shall not die; rather, they shall be united with Jesus. Natural Religion, the Body of Doubt that seems but is not, is a creation of the Deists who deny conscience, eternal life, miracle, and the Divine Humanity. Its appearance is not cause for desolation but for hope, as its advent along with mystery, the goddess of nature, the Druid dragon and the hidden harlot is the signal for the end of days and Albion's awakening.

Plate 94 shows Albion still bound in slumber, cold and lifeless, with England reposing on his bosom. The Breath Divine breathes on the sleepers, and Brittannia rouses. She fears that through her adherence to Moral Law she has slain Albion. But Albion, roused by her voice, moves upon the rock and opens his eyes to behold England. He rises and in his fury takes his bow and arrows (perhaps of desire, as in Milton) and compels each of the zoas to return to his appointed place and duty: Urizen to the plow, Tharmas to the sheepfold, Luvah to his loom, and Urthona (Los) to his anvil. Brittannia unites with Albion as Jesus, the Universal Humanity, appears and converses with Albion "as Man with Man in Ages of Eternity" (J 96.6). Albion is distraught, for he knows that portions of himself have been warring against the Divine Vision for six thousand years. Jesus replied: "Fear not Albion: unless I die thou canst not live; / But if I die I shall rise again & thou with me. / This is Friendship & Brotherhood: without it Man Is Not...Thus do Men in Eternity / One for another to put off, by forgiveness, every sin" (J

96.14-16,18-19). Albion is distressed by this and asks if man cannot exist in another way. Jesus replies that there is no other way, whereupon the two are divided by a cloud. Albion stands in terror, but not for himself; he fears for his friend and loses his sense of self in faith and wonder at the Divine Mercy and Jesus' willingness to sacrifice himself. So conquered is his Selfishness, that Albion cannot bear to remain while his friend suffers for him, and so throws himself into the Furnaces of affliction. In that selfless offering of his own life, Albion redeems himself; the furnaces become fountains, the cities rouse, the sons and daughters of Albion waken, and the four zoas take their proper places in Albion's bosom. Through his self-sacrifice, the Eternal Man has re-entered four-fold Eternity and destroyed all of the false states of the temporal world.

Blake ends this chapter and the epic with the reunification of the elements of man in four-fold Eternity. Man had divided against himself in the beginning; one of the major results of that division was the growth of religious error, which Blake perceived as central to mankind's difficulties. "Religious error...not only denies man's indwelling divinity and distorts his idea of God, of man, and of woman, but it also perverts his churches and his moral codes, planting revenge, denial, and enmity as principles of action and poisoning his laws and social relations." [17] Because of false religion, embodied in Judaism's belief in a transcendent deity and adherence to a moral code, Deism's veneration of nature, and the Church's relative

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[17] Doskow, 22.

acceptance of both during the Eighteenth Century, Albion has been bound in slumber, divided against himself and denying his participation in the Human Form Divine. When men lose sight of the divinity within themselves and their fellows, they become less than men.

## Conclusion

Several threads run throughout the woof of Blake's works, and none is more bold than the strand of religion, for Blake is primarily a religious poet. His earliest works reflect a mind grappling with the nature of God, of man, and of man's relation to God. His last works show the conclusions reached, as well as the disparities and similarities between those conclusions and the accepted doctrines of the Church of England.

The role played by the Church varies in each poem, but the Church is indisputably present in the major works. In Poetical Sketches, the influence of the Church is seen in Blake's ideas concerning sin, the equality of men before God, and the destructiveness of self love. King Edward III illustrates the poet's perception of a Bishop as a man of commerce and politics, more concerned with his fields and his position in government than with the spiritual well-being of the souls within his care. "The Couch of Death" echoes Church teaching regarding death and hell, as Blake utilizes traditional language to describe them, i.e., "valley of the shadow" and "eternal fire." Even at this early stage, the poet is struggling to codify his theology, to examine traditional doctrine and structures in order to reject that which is inconsistent with his perceptions. An Island in the Moon demonstrates his disaffection with the Church, which he perceives to be administrated by hypocrites. Several of the



Songs of Innocence describe this false piety on the part of parents, priests and governors, reflecting the poet's horror that supposed representatives of Christ can allow the evil he sees in eighteenth-century English society. By the time Blake writes Tiriell, his perception of the Church has shifted from hypocritical to tyrannical.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell marks a shift in Blake's theology, for it indicates the poet's repudiations of Swedenborgianism, with which he had had a brief flirtation. The central theme of The Marriage is the necessity of contraries: good and evil, heaven and hell, reason and desire. This diametrically opposes Church doctrine, which espouses the necessity of repudiating evil. For Blake, the quality the Church calls evil is desire, which is the other side of reason—it is not truly evil; it merely violates the false moral code of the Church. True evil, in Blake's works, is the maltreatment of children, the denial of desire, and the hypocrisy of the religious, who allow society's ills in the name of Christ. Although the poet rejected the Established Church, he continued to call himself Christian and to believe what he perceived to be the Christianity of Jesus in the New Testament, a religion freed of false moral constraints and motivated by love.

Like Songs of Innocence, Songs of Experience points out the evils and abuses in eighteenth-century England, particularly London, with which the poet was most familiar. Not content to confine his efforts to England, Blake composed The First Book of Urizen, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los. Each of these deals, not with the plight of Englishmen, but with the Fall of

the universal Man. Although Blake was initially satisfied with these works, as all were engraved, he could not abandon the idea, and began work on the first of the epics.

The Four Zoas relates the Fall of Albion, the Everyman of Blake's works, from the unity of Eternity into division and chaos. The Fall is caused by the self-aggrandizement of one of the four aspects of man, reason. Reason exalts itself over the other zoas and so loses sight of the necessity of the other portions of man, particularly imagination and desire. The Church has aided reason's tyranny, for it creates a false code of morality to chain desire and exalts reason above all else. The Church is no longer the tyrant of Tiriel; in The Four Zoas, as in the later epics, she has become Mystery, the harlot of the state and the tool of reason. All is not lost, however, for the poem ends with the apocalyptic Night IX, in which Christ, the true Saviour, liberates Man from tyrant kings and hypocritical priests.

Milton is similar to The Four Zoas in that Blake continues to deal with the three-fold theme: the Fall, the consequences of the Fall, and redemption from the Fall. In Milton, however, organized religion plays a major role as Satan, the accuser of Man, and progenitor of all disunity and repression. Blake calls upon John Milton, his poetical mentor, to return to this world and correct the damage done by rational religion. Here again, religion has deified reason and denied imagination, desire, and creativity. Through Milton's self sacrifice, he becomes one with Christ, who descends to save Man in the final scene.

The theme of self-sacrifice as the means of redemption is

central to Blake's final epic, Jerusalem. The prose section of "To the Christians," which stands as the introduction to chapter four of Jerusalem, is perhaps the clearest statement of Blake's later theology. The Christianity of the Church is tainted by natural religion and morality, and as such is repressive and legalistic. Blake's Christianity is based upon freedom and forgiveness, and the willing sacrifice of one's self for another. God is not to be found in the hollow rituals of the Church, but in his children, the divine family who comprise the Human Form Divine.

To the end of his life, Blake considered himself a Christian, and reconciled himself to the fact that his Christianity was not the religion of the Church of England, for the Church 'read black where Blake read white.' Throughout his poetry, he wrestles with orthodoxy and orthodoxy's God. Convinced that the God worshipped in the Church is actually reason's construct, repressive Moral Virtue, Blake made it his life's work to oppose that tyrannical vision:

"Seeing this False Christ, In fury & Passion  
I made my voice heard all over the Nation."

"The Everlasting Gospel" (g, K 756)

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