



<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>

Theses Digitisation:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/research/enlighten/theses/digitisation/>

This is a digitised version of the original print thesis.

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study,
without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first
obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any
format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author,
title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

THE FIGURE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM BLAKE

LESLIE-ANN HALES, B.A.HONS.

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF Ph.D.

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY

JUNE, 1980

ProQuest Number: 10646138

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10646138

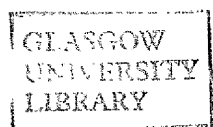
Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Thesis
6193
Copy 2.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Peter Butter for his insights, criticisms, and guidance in evaluating the ideas contained in this thesis.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my family for their enthusiasm, support, and interest in this project.

Special thanks to Kathy, Nanette, Rowena, and John.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	4
Introduction	9
Chapter One: "Setting the Scene"	36
Chapter Two: "The Legacy of Reason and Jesus Through Imagination"	88
Chapter Three: "Early Glimpses of Blake's Jesus"	124
Chapter Four: "Orc: Horrent Demon of Revolution"	158
Chapter Five: "The Maturing Vision: Los and Luvah"	189
Chapter Six: "Jesus in <u>The Four Zoas</u> "	243
Chapter Seven: "The Final Vision: <u>Milton</u> and <u>Jerusalem</u> "	305
Conclusion	352
Appendix: "The Rebel of <u>The Everlasting</u> <u>Gospel</u> "	362
Footnotes	374
Bibliography	396

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</u>	MHH
<u>Vala or The Four Zoas</u>	FZ
<u>Milton</u>	M
<u>Jerusalem</u>	J
"A Vision of the Last Judgment"	VLJ
David Erdman, ed. <u>The Poetry and Prose of William Blake</u>	E
Geoffrey Keynes, ed. <u>Blake Complete Writings</u>	K

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the development of the figure of Jesus Christ in William Blake's poetry, affirms that this figure lies at the heart of Blake's prophetic message, and clarifies the meaning of the idea of a 'radically Christian Christ'. To say that Blake's Jesus Christ is radically Christian means that he is grounded in Scripture (and is therefore intended to recall Gospel stories about Christ) but also that he transcends the restrictions of orthodox dogma, especially by his intimate association with Imagination. This view is not to be confused with the opinion that Blake's Jesus is basically a symbol for Human Imagination. Although this opinion, in various guises, is shared by the majority of Blake critics, it fails to grasp the full significance of the figure of Jesus Christ because it comes to its conclusion in the symbol itself. The statement that Jesus Christ is a symbol can only be made if we realize that, as a symbol, he points beyond himself to himself. It is not the symbol itself which liberates but rather the reality behind the symbol, the reality to which the symbol points. This reality is Jesus Christ. By re-examining pertinent passages and themes in the poetry it is shown that Blake grasped the basic information about Jesus' life, work, and death as he found it in the Gospels and then transformed it in his poetry. Here events such as incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection assume an urgent, apocalyptic, Christian vitality as Blake demonstrates how they are re-enacted in each

individual. Blake did not believe that he had invented this vision but rather that he had restored a truth about Jesus Christ long buried by the orthodox Church. The figure of Jesus is intimately associated with imagination but not because this word defines him. It is rather because he dwells in Human Imagination and because through this faculty humanity encounters, not just a symbol, but the real being of Jesus Christ. He is eternal, immanent, transcendent, and Christian beyond dogma. This is the vision which this thesis affirms and clarifies.

Chapter One outlines the orthodox presentation of Jesus Christ in the period immediately preceding and contemporary with Blake. This presentation is then contrasted with various unorthodox portraits of Christ which challenged accepted teaching on the subject. Together, these opinions form a context in which to consider Blake's own radical conception. Such a framework discloses both the similarities and the differences between Blake and other writers, both orthodox and unorthodox.

Chapter Two reveals how Blake's reaction to the philosophy of reason in science and religion led to his development of imagination as the primary faculty of perception. Furthermore it is shown how Blake presented his figure of Jesus Christ as a refutation not only of rationalist philosophy but also of the 'reasonable Christ' which emerged from the application of rationalism to religion. Finally, the discussion

notes that enquiries in the 'secular' fields of philosophy and science helped to encourage an equally challenging enquiry in Biblical hermeneutics. While Blake may not have agreed with much of the Biblical exegesis which appeared, yet he benefited in his effort to free Jesus Christ from dogmatic restriction by the general spirit of criticism and independent interpretation.

Blake's early treatment of Jesus Christ is discussed in Chapter Three, particularly with reference to The Songs of Innocence and of Experience and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. At this time Blake had not realized the full potential of the Christ figure but the characteristics of love, protection, and authority which were later to become central, are evident in the early portrayal.

Chapter Four examines how the upheaval of the Lambeth period affected Blake's evaluation of the nature of the Redeemer figure. Blake's response to the political idealism of the American and French Revolutions led him to wonder whether a militant god of war, personified in Orc, might fulfill the requirements of a Saviour. However his treatment of the Orc figure was ambivalent from the start and the failure of political idealism reinforced his suspicion that a warrior could not escape the cycle of nature and could not, therefore, liberate humanity from the tyranny of that cycle. The close of the Lambeth period found Blake returning with renewed attention to the figure of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Five explores the relationship between Los and Jesus and, more briefly, between Luvah and Jesus. The development of Los into the prophet of the Divine Vision helps to clarify the relationship between Jesus Christ and Human Imagination. Of all the zoas within the fourfold scheme, Los was the most likely to have played the role of Redeemer. As it transpired that he was to be a prophet of that vision and not the Redeemer himself, it became apparent that Jesus Christ was now destined to fulfill that role. The relationship between Luvah and Jesus is more ambiguous but, as the Prince of Love who is crucified, Luvah helps to clarify Blake's interpretation of the redemptive function of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

Chapter Six focuses on the insights revealed by the complex transition from Vala to The Four Zoas. Here we observe that Night IX retains, though not with complete success, a rather secular humanist view of Last Judgment. This position is juxtaposed with the Christ-oriented vision which dominates Night VIII and also the additions to the original manuscript. Blake's increasingly 'Christ-ian' commitment was a major factor in the ultimate abandonment of The Four Zoas for publication as it became impossible to reconcile the inconsistencies concerning the means of humanity's redemption.

Chapter Seven analyzes the pervasive influence which the gospel of Jesus Christ has on the action of Milton and the full flowering of the Christ-centred

vision in Jerusalem. Although Jesus does not play an active role in Milton yet the whole poem is largely dependent upon the gospel of Jesus for it is precisely this which is behind Milton's journey to self-annihilation. Jerusalem presents the most mature depiction of Jesus Christ, now both fully immanent and fully transcendent. In this poem Blake explodes the opinion that Jesus Christ is merely a symbol or a principle as he effects the redemption and transformation of Albion, vanquishing Eternal Death and establishing the New Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to study the development of the figure of Jesus Christ in William Blake's poetry. The foundation on which the study is based is the conviction that an understanding of Blake's interpretation of Jesus Christ is central to an understanding of the poetry as a whole. In the light of the early presentation of this figure in the poetry, of the much cooler response to the Christ figure during the middle of his career, and of his renewed and intensified concern with Jesus Christ during the composition of the later prophetic poems, the assertion is made that the significance of Jesus Christ is vitally bound up with the central thrust of Blake's prophetic message. It is not assumed that the Jesus Christ figure conceived by Blake conforms to orthodox teaching nor is it suggested that Blake's approach is that of the orthodox Christian. However Blake's own testimony that he considered himself to be a "Soldier of Christ" is taken seriously to denote a commitment to the person and gospel of Jesus Christ as he interpreted it. To underestimate this statement made about himself is to underestimate the extent to which the significance of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of Blake's prophetic message. Therefore this thesis actually proceeds in two directions. On the one hand there is an effort to understand the figure of Jesus Christ through the poetry. However these insights are then directed back at the poetry itself so that the effort is made to

understand the poetry through Blake's Jesus Christ figure. Of course it is not always relevant to make reference to Christ and certainly it is not suggested that the figure be used as a hammer to pound the poetry into a uniform and conforming whole. Indeed it is recognized that the worse mistake a critic can make in coming to terms with Blake's poetry is to attempt to impose an external framework onto the poems. Precisely the reason that the figure of Jesus Christ is seen as vitally central to an understanding of the poetry is that this figure grows in an organic fashion along with the poetry. In other words, the approach of this thesis is to make contact with the figure of Jesus Christ from within the poetry itself because what emerges is that the Christ figure is not just important in itself but also for the poetry as a whole. The effect of Blake's Jesus in the poetry is like the effect of a stone which is dropped into still water: the ripples of his gospel--Forgiveness of Sin--spread out from the central core and, as they spread, they touch and, in some way disturb, every other character. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine both the stone and the ripples, both Jesus Christ and his effect on Blake's poetry.

Blake critics seldom agree in their interpretations of Blake's poetry. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of Blake's 'religious' leanings. It would appear that most critics can agree on those facets of religion in general and Christianity in particular

which Blake most despised but they cannot agree on what direction to take from that point in saying anything positive about Blake's religious responses. This is especially true with regard to what Blake intends by his conception of God and Jesus Christ. Hence, Margaret Bottrall believes that "...no English poet can compare with him as an interpreter of the religion of Jesus...his unorthodoxy has...been much exaggerated."¹ J.G. Davies is of the opinion that "...his Christology, which remains only in bold outlines, is in the main a rephrasing of orthodox doctrine in terms of his own idiom"² although Davies concludes that "...it is regrettable that...he did not seek more help from the wisdom of the Church."³ Thomas Altizer decides that "...if only because of his faith in Jesus we must acknowledge that he was a Christian, but he is by far the most Christocentric of Christian visionaries..."⁴ while John Beer concludes : "In spite of his use of Gospel sayings for the support of his position...Blake's fashioning of God in the image of man could never be regarded as orthodox by the Christian churches."⁵ To Kathleen Raine, Blake's figure of Christ is "...very far from the notion of Jesus Christ held by official exponents of the Christian religion in Blake's time and place,"⁶ while Jacob Bronowski succinctly concludes that "... Blake's Christ is not the Word become Flesh, but the Flesh become Word."⁷ Michael Ferber, who describes Blake as "a Holy Ghost Christian, an enthusiast",⁸

maintains that "...the only person of the Trinity that he cares much about is the third person..."⁹ whereas Bernard Blackstone and Helen White believe that Blake's "...main interest is in Christ."¹⁰ Finally we have Northrop Frye's statement that "...the acceptance of Jesus as the fullness of both God and Man entails the rejection of all attributes of divinity which are not human"¹¹ and Blackstone's opinion that "...it becomes clear that Blake believes in the Divinity of Christ in the most transcendental, the most Pauline sense. Jesus is the Divine Lamb ordained from the beginning of the world to redeem the world."¹² The reader who feels no more enlightened yet as to what Blake intends by his figure of Jesus Christ will at least be aware that there are at least two decidedly different trends in response to Blake's presentation of the Christ figure. One group, in which I would include Northrop Frye, John Beer, Jacob Bronowski, W.H. Stevenson, Harold Bloom and, to some extent, Denis Saurat, Michael Ferber, Milton O. Percival, and Mark Schorer, incline towards a view which stresses the immanence of Christ as a kind of imaginative principle. These critics also tend to emphasize the humanity of Jesus because they deny any element of transcendence in Blake's conception. Thus Frye's analysis, which perhaps tends to dwell more on the identity of Christ and Imagination than on the humanity of the historical Jesus, offers the following explanation:

The Son and the Holy Spirit are therefore the same

thing. And this Son or Spirit is also the universal Man who is the unified form of our scattered imaginations, and which we visualize as a Father.¹³

Similarly Morton Paley, commenting on regeneration, again tends to identify Christ and Imagination and to keep them both firmly in the realm of the human rather than submit to any suggestion of the transcendental:

In one important aspect, however, Blake's account of regeneration differs from that of all previous writers except Boehme. For Blake, as for Boehme, the redemptive power is the Imagination...For Boehme as for Blake, regeneration is an act of the Imagination which reiterates the birth of Christ in the individual soul.¹⁴

Finally, to complete our sample of this side of the discussion, we would quote Helen White's succinct conclusion that "Blake's God is man on an enlarged scale, and very little more"¹⁵ and the following assessment by Michael Ferber in his article, "Blake's Idea of Brotherhood"¹⁶:

It is crucial to a grasp of Blake's essential thought, and not only to his idea of brotherhood, to understand that the notion of a transcendent father or creator seemed to Blake to be a profound error. From his earliest tracts through his last works he constantly repeats that God is "the Infinite in all things," that "All deities reside in the human breast," that God, as Christ, is the same as Man.¹⁷

It would be inaccurate to suppose that there are no differences among this group of critics on the subject of Blake's Jesus. Indeed there are as many different analyses as there are critics. However on the whole, the kinds of comments quoted above represent a school of thought which steers away from the notion of

transcendence in Blake's conception of Jesus.

Those critics who do not agree with this view are in the minority. However, within this group there is a distinction between those who see Blake as being, at bottom, a fairly orthodox Christian and those who, while affirming his unorthodoxy, are not averse to the possibility of transcendence in Blake's conception of Christ and who see Blake as, in some way, a radical Christian. The latter position, probably more than the former, demands careful definition if it is not to degenerate into confusing and unhelpful vagueness. Margaret Bottrall and J.G. Davies are the two critics who have most clearly seen Blake's religious sentiments as basically orthodox. In Bottrall's book on Blake's Christianity, The Divine Image, there is a certain degree of ambiguity on this point. At the beginning of her study she states that she believes that Blake's unorthodoxy has been much exaggerated,¹⁸ while at the end of the book, she offers the following opinion:

His own claim to be considered a christian poet rests far more on his comprehension of the temper, the distinctive genius, of the primitive faith, than on his acceptance of orthodox dogma.¹⁹

On the whole, although Bottrall does occasionally draw back from Davies' defence of Blake's orthodoxy, she remains convinced that Blake is undeniably Christian. Hence, regarding The Four Zoas, she writes:

In this and subsequent prophetic books, man is shown contending with "the blind world-rulers of this life, with the spirit of evil in things heavenly" and also as rent by warring elements

in his own personality. Unaided he cannot achieve his own salvation; and what is new is the intervention, among the titanic figures of Los, Urizen, and the rest, of the figure of Jesus. Blake is now concerned with the redemptive action of Christ, both in its eternal aspect and in its impact on the individual and on society.²⁰

Taking issue with the opinion that God is man writ large, Bottrall says: "At no time did Blake intend to leave God out of the picture. Man existing in his own right was for him as false as God existing in abstraction and remoteness."²¹ In this more orthodox response to Blake, Bottrall finds an ally in J.G. Davies' analysis. Although Davies apparently wishes that Blake had depended a little more on the "wisdom of the Church,"²² he feels in greater sympathy with Blake than with Shelley and Paine because, unlike them, Blake was able to escape "...the wholesale condemnation of Christianity..."²³ so that Davies takes it as "...one of the greatest proofs of his intellectual clarity that Blake could distinguish so definitely between the Churches and the religion of Christ."²⁴ In opposition to the critics whose views we have considered earlier, Davies strongly believes that Blake conceived a God one of whose attributes was transcendence:

...in other passages Blake made it plain that, while emphasizing the immanence of God, he did not lose the transcendence...Blake repeatedly spoke of God as a Being who is above man and distant from him, but Who of His mercy comes and dwells in and with man.²⁵

Davies admits that there are phrases in Blake's poetry which would seem to indicate a pantheistic turn of

mind, but he is not overly concerned with such phrases in the poetry because he believes they are wrongly interpreted as 'true' pantheism:

On the one hand, they may be extreme and unguarded expressions of the doctrine of immanence, elaborated in opposition to Deism and the tyranny of reason...On the other hand, they may be expressions of mystical experience... However, whether Blake's remarks are taken to be due to exaggeration or to mystical insight, in neither case is his essential orthodoxy affected. The truth that he was striving to enunciate is that once man perceived the 'infinite in everything', he discovers that he is inseparable from God and that God cannot be separated from him...But this is not pantheism.²⁶

With regard to the figure of Christ, particularly with reference to the Incarnation and the Atonement, Davies again defends Blake as essentially orthodox. While admitting that Blake never actually used the term Incarnation, Davies says: "Nevertheless, the substance of his belief is identical with that of the Church."²⁷ Despite Blake's rejection of the 'penal theory' of the Atonement, Davies is concerned to demonstrate that "...he did accept the doctrine in its essentials."²⁸ Davies is certainly the writer who tries hardest to interpret Blake as an orthodox Christian. However, my criticism of his interpretation is that in attempting to make the case for Blake's orthodoxy, he tends to judge the poetry from a professed position to which he tries to make Blake conform rather than allowing himself to react to the vision which Blake presents. Hence, for example, he tends to be disappointed at the ways in which Blake is not adequately orthodox, presumably

because he failed to understand the richness of the orthodox tradition which he rejected: "But like so many other individualists, who have lacked the sane equilibrium of the Catholic tradition, he conceived Christ in his own likeness."²⁹ Perhaps Davies forgets that Blake was a presenter of vision rather than a preacher of doctrine so that the attempt to make his vision conform to orthodoxy has the effect of restricting the poetry.

It was mentioned earlier that among those critics who object to the view of Blake's Christ that he is a kind of immanent human principle of Imagination, there are those who do not therefore opt for the predominantly orthodox interpretation of Bottrall and Davies. Thomas J.J. Altizer is of this persuasion and puts forward the argument that Blake is a radical Christian in his book, The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake. It is Altizer's opinion that Blake's is basically a dialectical vision based on the Hegelian style of dialectic³⁰ and, while David Wagenknecht believes "...there is more of Hegel than Blake..."³¹ in Altizer's interpretation, yet his approach helps to take us beyond the more restrictive orthodox interpretations of Bottrall and Davies. I wish to quote a passage from Altizer's book at some length because it cogently points to the fundamental problem in assessing Blake's conception of Christ. Altizer

says:

Is the Jesus who Blake named as the "Universal Humanity" and the "Human Imagination" simply a symbol of humanity itself? Has Blake merely given a poetic and symbolic expression to an Enlightenment humanism in his vision of Jesus? Does the Jesus who dwells "In" us represent an essential core of human nature which transcends the frailties of weakness and vice? These questions can be answered in the affirmative only by denying the great body of Blake's vision: they altogether ignore the violence of Blake's opposition to the "Deism" of his day, just as they set aside his continual pleas for a radical transformation of the nature of man, and ignore his total repudiation of all forms of moralism... It is not Socrates or the Buddha or the artist or the common man who is the Saviour, but only Jesus; and only Jesus is God. Humanity is deified in Jesus, not Jesus in humanity...this is the Jesus who resists every title, every name, and every notion by which the mind of man might weaken and ensnare him.³²

Altizer is convinced that Blake's vision is authentically Christian but he sees his Christianity as a radical transformation which has nothing at all to do with the doctrine and liturgy of the Church. However, because he sees Blake as a true prophet of Christ,³³ he is not surprised that Blake's message should inevitably entail a repudiation of the institutionalized forms of Christianity:

No way lies through the labyrinth of the Church to Jesus, no true image of Jesus is present in the dead letter of the Church's Bible, and the Church's dogma is a dark and subtle web of Vala's Veil. Therefore, when the regenerate Blake rediscovered Jesus he encountered him in an strange and radical form.³⁴

Like Wagenknecht, I am not entirely comfortable with the extent to which Altizer employs Hegelian dialectic to interpret Blake's Christianity. This is largely because such an approach runs the risk of imposing

a preconceived external framework of ideas on the poetry rather than letting the poetry speak for itself. Nevertheless, one must appreciate Altizer's efforts to come to terms with Blake's vision in a way which does justice both to the 'common' humanity of Jesus and to his uniqueness as the Saviour in Blake's vision. Regarding Blake's use of the name of Jesus at all, Altizer says that it:

...symbolizes the total union of God and man, and gives witness to a concrete reversal of history, and a dawning apocalyptic transformation of the cosmos. The very name of Jesus embodies the promise of these final things while simultaneously calling for a total identification with our neighbour...the repetition of the name of Jesus is a repetition of God's eternal death for man, a reliving of an ultimate cosmic reversal, a participation even now in the End which he has promised.³⁵

It is for this reason that Altizer finds it meaningful to believe that Blake's Jesus is more than "simply a symbol of humanity itself."³⁶

The above brief survey of the kinds of approaches which have been taken to Blake's religious sentiments in general and those concerning the nature of God and Christ in particular, indicate that the figure of Christ is understood by those of radically different views to be important to a study of Blake's poetry. It is the thrust of this thesis to suggest that the figure is more than important, it is central to Blake's prophetic message. Although I am of the opinion that the view which seeks to define Blake's Jesus Christ totally in terms of the human imagination and therefore steers away from any suggestion

of transcendence by any definition is restrictive, I also fully endorse the contribution of this point of view insofar as it recognizes the way in which the Christ figure represents, in part, Blake's reaction to Deism and theological abstraction. In a sense, it is my purpose to bring together the insights of both schools of criticism on this subject and then to go one step beyond them because I believe an 'either/or' conclusion stops short of and fails to do justice to the full impact of Blake's vision of Jesus. As Hans Küng says: "Christians can be humanists and humanists can be Christians...Christianity cannot properly be understood except as radical humanism."³⁷ In this thesis the attempt is made seriously to come to grips with Blake's own profession of belief:

The Thing I have most at Heart! more than life or all that seems to make life comfortable without. Is the Interest of True Religion & Science & whenever any thing appears to affect that Interest. (Especially if I myself omit any duty to my self <Station> as a Soldier of Christ)...Naked we came here naked of Natural things & naked we shall return. but while clothd with the Divine Mercy we are richly clothd in Spiritual & suffer all the rest gladly

(Letter to Thomas Butts. Jan.10, 1802. E688-89; K812-13)

It is my assessment that Blake was a Christian in a very authentic sense. His Christianity was highly individual, although it was also in accordance with a tradition, albeit an unorthodox one. Because of the unorthodox and, at times, extremely radical thrust of his Christianity in general and his conception of

Jesus Christ in particular, there is no intention to prove that Blake was a more or less acceptable son of the Church. Indeed, the whole question of Blake's Christianity or lack of it is actually secondary to the intention to examine the development of the Christ figure as an extremely fruitful way of unlocking the message of Blake's poetry. In that respect I agree with Altizer that, "If only because of his faith in Jesus we must acknowledge that Blake was a Christian seer...despite the fact that his revolutionary vision of Jesus arose out of a rebellion against the Christian Christ."³⁸ In the first and second chapters there is a discussion of the religious and philosophical trends in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by way of providing a context for Blake's particular religious position. The need to outline the immense attraction of the philosophy of reason and its religious counterpart in Deism has been universally recognized by Blake scholars. However there has been less effort to delve into more unorthodox religious trends of the period which has resulted, in my opinion, in a failure to recognize that Blake was not unique in his conception of the nature of God and Christ. In this opinion I follow the lead of A.L. Morton and Thomas Altizer. Morton's illuminating study, The Everlasting Gospel: A Study in the Sources of William Blake's Poetry, has demonstrated a number of similarities between Blake and the radical religious sects of the seventeenth century

in England. I suspect that too little attention has been paid to his suggestions regarding these similarities:

...Blake is a difficult poet, and no good is done by pretending that he is not. But I think that part of the difficulty has been created by ourselves, through forgetting the tradition in which he wrote. By rediscovering this tradition, and seeing him in relation to it, we do not remove the difficulties, but we do begin to equip ourselves to grapple with them.³⁹

Thomas Altizer also approves the recognition of the link here: "There is no evidence that Blake had any actual contact with the radical spiritual reformers in seventeenth century England but there can also be little doubt that Blake's understanding of the spiritual gospel is intimately related to theirs."⁴⁰ In the first chapter we shall also consider the more orthodox understanding and presentation of Jesus Christ for without this yardstick we are less able to judge just how unorthodox and radical Blake's conception was. There will not be a detailed discussion of Blake's Christ in the first chapter for the simple reason that this will be more effectively understood in the context of the poems themselves, which are discussed in later chapters. The purpose of the presentation of other conceptions of Christ by those preceding and contemporary with Blake is to provide a backdrop against which Blake's own Christ will appear in sharper outline. In other words, when we have some conception of the norm, as well

as some of the more radical reactions to that norm, we shall be in a better position to understand some of the reasons that Blake developed the Christ figure in his poetry in the way that he did.

The discussion of the legacy of reason which was bequeathed to the eighteenth century as discussed in the second chapter may, at first thought, appear to be going over ground which has already been adequately covered by other writers.⁴¹ However it is important in the context of this thesis to look again at this area because unless we comprehend the dynamics of Blake's negative reaction to the school of thought which was represented for him by Locke and Newton, we will not truly understand the way in which Blake approached the presentation of the figure of Jesus Christ. Blake himself, on more than one occasion, directly referred to the contrast between the Newtonian approach to belief and doubt and that of Jesus. His entry in the Notebook, for example, points to this distinction when he writes:

That is the very thing that Jesus meant
When he said Only Believe Believe & try
Try Try & never mind the Reason why
(E492; K536)

It is in Blake's reaction to the 'philosophy of doubt' and reason, and in the alternative which he proposed--imagination--that we can first begin to see where the cornerstone of his conception of Jesus lies. It is, for example, no accident that Blake's most

clearly methodical and earliest response to Locke's philosophy is couched in the language of religion. By virtue of its relevance to the question of how Blake conceived his Christ figure as well as for his approach to spiritual matters in general, one cannot gloss over his argument with Locke and Newton.

In Chapter Three, we will consider the early portrayal of Jesus Christ in Blake's poetry with reference to the particular features which Blake built into his earliest conception of the figure. At this point we shall not be concerned with what the Church had to say on the subject. Where the position of the Church is considered at all, it will only be from the point of view of Blake's interpretation of what the Church had to say as, for example, in the infamous plate 22 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Although Blake does not say specifically in this passage that the image of Jesus which the devil presents is that of the Church, the implication in terms of the imagery of this "memorable fancy" certainly suggests that this is the case. Whether or not this was indeed the way in which the Church perceived Christ will have been clarified by the discussion in Chapter One, but the concern here is with Blake's understanding of that position because it was precisely this understanding which led him to reject the Christ of the Church and to reflect with such bitterness that "the

Modern Church Crucifies Christ With the Head
Downwards." However we shall use the New Testa-
ment as a touchstone in assessing the early portray-
al of Christ, but only insofar as it appears that
Blake did so also. The Bible, probably more than
any other source, was utilized by Blake as a treasure
house of prophetic insight. Although one might
argue that his interpretation of Scripture was high-
ly individualistic, the Gospels nonetheless served
as the well from which he drew much of his inspira-
tion for the development of the Christ figure. It
has been noted by many critics that Blake seems to
have undergone some kind of alteration in the direc-
tion of his thought about the year 1802. Even those
who do not see Blake's poetry as particularly 're-
ligious' or 'spiritual' after this date have still
observed the increased emphasis on the figure of
Jesus Christ. While this is true, it would be in-
accurate to suggest that this is the first time
that Blake expressed interest in the figure or that
it was only now that the essential characteristics
of Christ came to the surface. In the third chapter
therefore, there will be a consideration of the
particular characteristics of Christ on which Blake
chose to focus in the early poems. It will become
evident that, although the figure underwent a great
deal of development and maturation in the later
poems, yet the fundamental attraction of Christ
for Blake is apparent from the time of the compo-

sition of The Songs of Innocence.

During the Lambeth years, Blake moved away from the figure of Jesus Christ but the developments of this period are crucial to his future emphasis on the character. It is perhaps at this time that the political climate in which Blake wrote most obviously intrudes upon the poetry, and the spirit of the poems of the Lambeth period is much more politically revolutionary. Not surprisingly, the character of Orc came to the fore in these poems and, for a time, it would appear that Blake planned to transfer the revolutionary characteristics of the Jesus of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell into the character of Orc with the intention of making Orc into a Saviour. This was the time of the French and American Revolutions of which Blake was, for a while, a great supporter. Little wonder, then, that the Redeemer figure of this period should bear all the marks of an idealistic but also militaristic revolutionary leader. Actually Blake's treatment of Orc was ambivalent from the start, though doubtless there was a shift in emphasis towards the figure after 1795 and the failure of the goals of the French Revolution. At any rate, Blake soon realized that Orc, bound as he was to the cycle of nature, could not possibly effect the redemption he sought for humanity. The discussion concerning Orc in Chapter Four, then, might be seen as a negative way of probing deeper into the character of Blake's Jesus. In other words, when we understand

why Orc failed in his potential role of Redeemer, we will begin to see what was unique about Christ for Blake. Perhaps it was at this stage that Blake, for the first time, abandoned the belief that humanity could effect a redeeming transformation of its fallen situation on its own. At least it is true to say that the process of change in his thinking involved the failure of a creature bound to nature and a subsequent interest in the figure of Jesus Christ. This must surely be agreed no matter how one defines Jesus Christ and the question then concerns the ways in which Christ is different from Orc, or why Christ succeeds where Orc had failed. One of the ways of answering this question is the subject of Chapter Five, for here we are concerned to look at the figures who are intimately associated with the Christ figure. If Orc puts us in touch with Christ as revolutionary, Los deepens our understanding of Christ as Imagination and Luvah that of Christ as sacrificial Lamb of God. These characters are not to be identified with Christ but many of their actions, whether they are aware of it or not, are 'Christ-inspired' or 'Christ-motivated'. For reasons which have to do with the very nature of Imagination as opposed to Love and the process of sacrifice as Blake understood them, Los becomes increasingly self-aware as well as more aware of the larger implications of the actions of the other zoas. Eventually he becomes known as the "Eternal

Prophet", the prophet of Jesus who "kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble." Luvah is altogether more passive but his association with Christ through his crucifixion and death is no less significant. Indeed, the actions of these two figures tend to be significant insofar as they point to their relationship with Jesus rather than because they are significant in themselves and apart from Jesus. Even when Christ does not take an active role (which, indeed he does not until the late addition of Night VIII to The Four Zoas), yet his presence as a separate character in his own right is firmly established. As one traces the development of Los and Luvah and, indeed, the development of the four zoas as a dramatic description of the human being, one becomes aware that Christ is outside this scheme at the same time that he is intimately an essential part of it. This suggests two things. Firstly, it points back to the fact that Blake's interest in Christ was rekindled at a time when he recognized the failure of a character who, because he was caught in the cycle of nature, could not effect humanity's redemption. In other words, the fallen condition appeared to demand a figure who stood outside this cycle in some respect. Secondly, by the intimate association of Christ with Los and Luvah, Blake prevents this 'objective' stance of Christ from degenerating into the 'abstraction' he so despised. Through the character of Los Blake manages to convey the immanence

of Jesus Christ, for Los is the Human Imagination, which is the dwelling place of Christ in humanity. That is how the human form becomes divine. That is also why humanity as a whole as well as the individual person bears within the possibility either to glorify or to crucify Christ. In an important sense, Albion's fall consists of a 'turning away' from the Divine Vision because he does not perceive the Christ within and in this act, he crucifies Christ, as he realizes at the end of Jerusalem.

Chapters Six and Seven, which confront the figure of Christ in the major prophetic poems, will probably stimulate the greatest disagreement. If the reader believes that Blake's Christ in no way exists outside the Human Imagination, then he or she will find much to argue with here. The argument of these chapters is that Blake's 'scheme' now very definitely comprises four zoas and Christ, not four zoas who somehow make up Christ when they exist in a regenerated form. This is not to suggest that Blake drew back from the notion of Christ's immanence in humanity. To have done so would have represented a total rejection of his lifelong conviction. However, the fact remains that even Los who, of all the zoas, is most aware; even Los, whom some critics see as the real agent of redemption; even Los repeatedly calls upon Jesus for aid and support. This simply makes no sense unless Jesus is, in some way, outside the process of events and unless he is, in some way, a

figure who exists in his own right apart from Los. In Jerusalem we see the action and events become increasingly dependent upon Jesus and, in the final analysis, it is Jesus who effects the redemption of Albion. Furthermore, we are told explicitly that only Jesus can heal the dread disease to which Albion has succumbed. Not Los nor Luvah nor Urizen, but only Jesus has the ability to undertake this titanic effort and succeed in it. If we deny this fact; if we attempt to argue that Jesus and Los are actually one and the same character; if we reject the transcendence of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem (while acknowledging his immanence), then we do so at the risk of denying what Blake actually wrote.

In a sense it seems to me that 'proving' the transcendence of Christ in Blake's poetry ought to be unnecessary. However the kind of confusion which has been generated on the subject of Jesus Christ by scholars on Blake seemed to require an analysis which would take into account the validity of the work which has already been done in the field and which would present a view that accepted exactly what Blake had to say. I have sought to clarify the issues surrounding Blake's Christ and to present a discussion of the subject which is true to the spirit of Blake's intention. If, as a result of the attempt to see Blake's conception of Jesus Christ in the context of the religious and philosophical ferment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as

in the poetry itself, the reader is better able to understand Blake's 'Divine Vision', then the goal of this thesis will have been achieved.

In the course of the discussion, some terms will be used which should be defined in order to avoid confusion. Perhaps part of the confusion in discussing Blake's religious responses and his figure of Jesus Christ is generated by the fact that critics used words in a loose or general way which actually have a very specific meaning. Most terms of that nature are defined in this thesis in the context of the particular subject under discussion, but it may be helpful to provide an explanation of some of the more frequently used words.

One term which is in popular usage but which suffers from hazy definition, is "humanism." The O.E.D. defines humanism briefly as:

any system of thought or action which is concerned with merely human interests (as distinguished from divine), or with the human race in general (as distinguished from individual).

Websters Dictionary goes further toward the sense in which the term is used in this thesis:

a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism, regards man as a natural object, and asserts the essential dignity and worth of a man and his capacity to achieve self-realization through the use of reason and scientific method-- called also naturalistic humanism.

Such a humanism, then, denies the possibility of a divinity which is outside or 'higher' than humanity. To distinguish from what Websters calls "Religious humanism" or "Christian humanism", I have used the

term 'secular humanism'. Webster's describes "Christian humanism" as a "philosophy advocating the self-fulfillment of man within the framework of Christian principles." According to this definition I would call Blake a Christian humanist since it is my opinion that he experienced the penetration of the natural and human cosmos by the divine, yet sought to ennoble the aspirations and capacities of humanity with a view to achieving a greater unity of humanity with God. This is what Küng means when he says the real meaning of "Christianity cannot properly be understood except as radical humanism." One can immediately see the relevance of secular and Christian humanism to a discussion of Blake's Jesus for proponents of these two philosophies will take quite different views of the essential nature of that figure.

"Pantheism" is another term which one frequently encounters with reference to a discussion of the religious meaning of Blake's poetry. It is defined by the O.E.D. as:

The religious belief or philosophical theory that God and the universe are identical (implying a denial of the personality and transcendence of God); the doctrine that God is everything and everything is God.

Sometimes, it is true, Blake makes statements which seem to be pantheistic in tone, as when he says: "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God." However the O.E.D. definition of pantheism just quoted states that, in such a theory, God and the universe are regarded as identical: Blake would have

regarded this as "natural" or "vegetative" religion, something which he completely rejects. Furthermore, pantheism can, by definition, have nothing at all to say about Jesus Christ: for Blake, Christ is central because both by example and by making the Human Imagination his dwelling place, he releases humanity from the 'mind-forged manacles' which prevent it from perceiving the infinite. Finally, it has been said that we shall discover an element of transcendence in Blake's conception of Jesus Christ and of God, and of course pantheism denies this aspect of spirituality.

"Transcendence" and "immanence" are two terms which will be encountered frequently in the course of this study of Blake's Jesus Christ. They are perhaps more familiar terms to the reader, but again, definition may avoid confusion. "Transcendence" is defined by the O.E.D. as follows: "Of the Deity: The attribute of being above and independent of the universe; distinguished from immanence". "Immanent", on the other hand, is defined as:

Indwelling, inherent; actually present or abiding in; In recent philosophy applied to the Deity regarded as permanently pervading and sustaining the universe, as distinguished from the notion of an external, transcendent creator or ruler.

With reference to Blake's poetry, I accept that part of the definition of immanence which suggests that which is "indwelling, inherent; actually present or abiding in." However I do not accept the implication which the O.E.D. attributes to "recent philosophy"

that immanence and transcendence are incompatible with each other. If it seems paradoxical to suggest that Blake's Jesus Christ exhibits both qualities of immanence and transcendence then one is agreeing to submit to the proposition of recent philosophy that these qualities are incompatible and one may well be in danger of denying the full richness of Blake's god-human, Jesus Christ, for in Blake's conception, he is both immanent and transcendent.

I have chosen to exclude the visual representations which Blake made of Christ from this study because to deal adequately with this aspect of Blake's work by comparing his visual representations of Christ with those of other characters in the poetry as well as with those of other artists of the period is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this thesis. As the title indicates, I have chosen to focus solely on the written presentation of the figure of Jesus Christ as my interest has been to clarify and correct what has been said about the poetic rather than the visual presentation of the figure of Jesus Christ.

The reader will observe that, throughout the commentary in this thesis, I have chosen to alter Blake's use of the generic "man" to "humanity". Blake uses both words interchangeably, though he consistently speaks of the "Human Form Divine" rather than of "Man's Form Divine." It is my opinion that, in commentary, the consistent use of "humanity" is

justifiably more accurate and acceptable to the modern reader. In no way is this untrue to Blake as his poetry constantly suggests that this is the intended meaning of the generic "man". I have only retained the use of "Man" in the context of its titular use as, for example, in the phrase, "Grand Man."

CHAPTER ONE

"SETTING THE SCENE"

At first glance the writings of William Blake appear to be an anomaly in the context of eighteenth-century thought. Part of the reason for this impression is the fact that the period of his life straddles the closing years of the era which is frequently (perhaps misleadingly) called the Age of Reason, and the gathering momentum of the Romantic Movement. With closer study, it may be recognized that he deals with many of the same concerns as other thinkers of the period but because his beliefs and style of writing are in violent contrast to currently accepted trends of the day it is assumed that his thought is unique. To suggest this even as a broad generalization about Blake's work is deceptive. Certainly his growing conviction that "Imagination" played a vital role in humanity's response to the universe, his application of this concept to humanity's spiritual understanding, particularly as the operative link between humanity and Jesus Christ, and his belief that humanity could achieve the ideal of the "Human Form Divine" makes Blake's work a particularly dramatic example of the reaction to the dominant philosophy and religion of the eighteenth century. However, because the style and form are different, because the presentation is more startling and compelling does not necessarily mean that the actual thought is unique. If Blake's response

to the contemporary religious and philosophical milieu is noticeably more fiery and impetuous than was common, if his remarks sometimes seem outrageous, it would be inaccurate to give the impression that his thought was completely idiosyncratic and private. This first chapter will set the scene for Blake's appearance by outlining the currents of thought which contributed to the framework out of which his poetry developed. One thing that will quickly become evident is that there is such a framework and that many of Blake's attitudes are not anomalous at all. In his response to the orthodox Church, his approach to Scripture, and particularly his reaction to the person and gospel of Jesus Christ, Blake reflected the opinions of unorthodox thinkers of varied religious persuasion both prior to and contemporary with his own lifetime. Sharing a common point of departure in nonconformity to orthodox belief, he went beyond some of the more secular writers in what became for him a passionate devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other respects he drew back from the radical extremism of sectarian fanaticism. The point is that by Blake's time a context for his thought had emerged, a context which comprised both negative and positive factors. The negative aspect, from Blake's point of view, was the extreme rationalism represented for him by John Locke and Issac Newton, its religious partner, Deism, and the

'degenerate' doctrines and conduct of the orthodox English Church. (To say that the doctrines and conduct were degenerate is to voice the opinion of its critics rather than its own view of the situation). The positive aspect of the context was formed by a widely diverse group of thinkers who dissented, as Blake did, both from extreme rationalism whether in religion or philosophy, and from orthodox Christianity. Since the philosophy of reason and Blake's concern with it is dealt with in Chapter Two, our discussion here will largely be confined to dissension in the religious sphere. However it is vital to bear in mind that scientific and philosophical speculation formed an important backdrop to religious questions: whether one professed to be an orthodox churchman, a religious rebel, or a secular reformer, it was impossible to ignore the impact of contemporary philosophy and science.

The literature of any age is produced within a context of philosophical, scientific, and theological speculation, even if this is only tacitly acknowledged. But the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stand out as a period in which there was an overtly recognized connection between the investigations of these various branches of learning. By way of contrast, it is unlikely in our own time that an announcement of a new scientific theory would precipitate any more than a slight ripple in the

theological community. Similarly, when the Church speaks out regarding God's influence on or activity in the world, there is little danger that the scientific community will feel that its authority has been challenged. If we reflect that this situation is largely due to the extreme degree of compartmentalization and specialization in diverse spheres of enquiry, then we do well to cast our glance back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the beginning of that period questions about the operations of the world, about the universe, or about God were not seen to be necessarily within the specific domain of one particular group of thinkers. However, as the pronouncements of science or "natural philosophy" increasingly strayed outside the bounds of religious authority on these subjects, a rupture was effected between the insights of science and philosophy, and the insights of religion. This division into various 'kinds' of knowledge and the resultant sense of hostility regarding exactly who had the authority to speak decisively on what might be called the 'ultimate' questions, is largely responsible for the controversies which arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Before discussing the particular doctrine of the orthodox Church on the subject of Jesus Christ and the various reactions to this doctrine, we need a sense of the dualism of science and religion which arose and which rocked the foundations of religious authority. For

the first time the orthodox Church had seriously to compete with another 'authority' on questions which had previously been recognized to be its private property. Such a spirit of 'competition' did much to encourage both the criticism and the new insights of Blake and other nonconforming thinkers.

The question of how humanity gains knowledge and what can legitimately be said to comprise that body of knowledge is a perennial pursuit. Prior to the seventeenth century there certainly existed a comprehensive view of the universe but most people were content to accept that part of the picture was destined to be shrouded in mystery: God had ordained that some matters should remain beyond the scope of human understanding. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this attitude was to alter dramatically.¹ Philosophers, scientists, and, although unwillingly at first, theologians sought to slough off the mysteries, obscurities, and superstitions of the past and to grapple with the fundamental problems of epistemology. During the Age of Revolution and the Age of Reason this problem was formulated as an enquiry into the nature of the mind itself and its relationship to the surrounding world. In the drive to answer questions concerning mind and the acquisition of knowledge with as great a clarity as possible, scientists and philosophers began to rely heavily upon human reason as the only legitimate criterion of judgment. This trend in speculative

enquiry led to an upset of religious certainty in two ways. Firstly, as reason ascended to the zenith of respectability as the only proper criterion of attaining knowledge, faith suffered a parallel and inverse decline. Indeed, faith came to be seen as mere childish superstition. Secondly, the traditional pronouncements of the Church about the manner of creation soon came under fire and indeed, even the very nature of God was forced into the open for examination, often with scandalous results as far as the doctors of the Church were concerned. Although they were responsible for initiating such challenges, seventeenth-century scientists took pains at least to present the appearance of conformity to Christian doctrine.² Even Isaac Newton, whose Principia of 1687 and Optics of 1704 did more to encourage the extreme mechanistic and rationalistic world-view of subsequent investigation than any other scientist's work, always maintained that he was a Christian and in fact wrote considerably on theological matters. However, by the eighteenth century it was religion--Christianity in particular--rather than science which was on the defensive from an attack exemplified in the following remarks made by Thomas Paine:

Religion, by such means, becomes a thing of form instead of fact; of notion instead of principle: morality is banished to make room for an imaginary thing called faith, and this faith has its origins in a supposed debauchery...³

The self-assurance of an attack of these proportions emerged as the result of a long and bitter contro-

versy. But what developed into such open critical attack actually found its origins in more neutral enquiry.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century theologians believed firmly in the authority of an infallible Bible. All investigation of the world and of human purpose was to be sought in and satisfied by a literal reading of Holy Writ. When the first tentative insights of natural philosophy suggested a new way of understanding the world in terms of causal relations, theologians responded that while this might be true, such causes were of a secondary order. The implied threat posed by the scientific discovery of natural causes and effects in the universe was staved off since God was still understood, at least by theologians, to be the Primary Cause of all. Even Thomas Paine found himself able to begin to formulate some idea of God if it was in these terms: "The only idea man can affix to the name of God, is that of a first cause, the cause of all things."⁴ The sanctity of religious authority appeared to have been temporarily preserved. That this preservation was only an appearance is strongly suggested by Paine's corollary statement: "It is only by the exercise of reason, that man can discover God."⁵ Thus reason began to demolish the Church's tradition of a God discovered through faith and revelation.⁶ Security in the religious realm was short-lived. Increasingly nature

was perceived to be subject to laws, orderly and comprehensible within a rational framework which did not look to religious authority for confirmation. Biblical infallibility became suspect, religious meaning jeopardized.⁷ The question was posed: were the Scriptures actually as dependable as successive generations of Church fathers had made them out to be? Joseph Priestley, for one, certainly did not feel bound to believe so. Of the composition of the Scriptures, he wrote:

...they were written without any particular inspiration, by men who wrote according to the best of their knowledge, and who from their circumstances could not be mistaken with respect to the greater facts, of which they were proper witness, but (like other men, subject to prejudice) might be liable to adopt a hasty and ill-grounded opinion concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their knowledge ...⁸

Nor was Priestley alone in this view of Scripture. As we shall see, the radical English sects denied Scriptural authority, regarding it as "fruits of the Curse,"⁹ and even Milton gave Scripture less credence than the knowledge of God which could be gained through the cultivation of the inner Spirit.¹⁰ The long-term result of speculative enquiry in science and philosophy and its corresponding attack on the stronghold of religious authority was four-fold. Firstly, there developed the afore-mentioned division of scientific, philosophical, and theological knowledge into separate and distinct categories. Secondly, a new school of 'rational theologians' grew up

who, attempting to keep abreast of the times, sought to formulate a type of Christianity which did not suffer from the 'burden' of revelation, miracle, or prophecy. In Chapter Two we shall observe how rational investigation of the world encouraged the development of Biblical exegesis. While some of these hermeneutical critics were actively hostile to the Church, others were devout Christians who would have considered themselves to be orthodox, but even they began to examine the Bible with 'secular' methods, a development which inevitably helped to weaken the authority of Scripture. Thirdly, there was an extraordinary proliferation of radical religious sects which flourished between 1640 and 1690 and which were still hanging on at the turn of the century. Finally, a diverse group of thinkers began individually to question the doctrines of the orthodox Church both as to the alleged infallibility of these beliefs and as to whether the modern Church authentically bore witness to the gospel of its founder. From this latter group the orthodox Church not only suffered an attack on its theology, it also suffered an equally vociferous attack on its conduct. Once again Thomas Paine's writings exemplify the kind of criticism which focused on the behaviour of the Church rather than on the validity of its theological foundations:

But since religion has been made into a trade, the practical part has been made to consist of ceremonies performed by men called priests; and

the people have been amused with ceremonial shows, processions and bells. By devices of this kind true religion has been banished; and such means have been found out to extract money even from the pockets of the poor, instead of contributing to their relief.¹¹

Paine concludes his tirade against the complacent insularity of the Church with an angry flourish:

"It is a want of feeling to talk of priests and bells while so many infants are perishing in the hospitals, and aged and infirm poor in the streets, from want of necessaries."¹²

These four results of the enquiries which were initiated in the seventeenth century should not be seen as isolated effects since the consequences were overlapping. Blake, as a writer embarking on his career in the late 1780's, experienced the consequences as a legacy of ferment regarding both what the orthodox Church said (its doctrine) and what it did (its conduct). In a very serious sense, the Church in Blake's time was on the defensive and this situation had the effect of granting a fairly liberal license to critical assault.

Robert Ryan's comments concerning the spirit of the Church in Keats' lifetime (1795-1821) provide an insight into the Church's unwilling tolerance of non-conforming thinkers at the turn of the century:

There were many who called themselves Churchmen who did not believe in the divinity of Christ and who rejected other important doctrines of the faith. Because of its loose structure the Church had little opportunity, even if it had the will, to discipline its members in orthodoxy. Even the clergy simply ignored dogmas they found intellectually embarrassing; the non-theological character of the age made it relatively easy to get by, as layman or

or priest, with the barest minimum of doctrine. A man could believe privately what he liked, without ever having his credentials as a Churchman questioned by the authorities.¹³

This state of affairs was not a position sought for or easily borne by the Church. One cannot over-emphasize the way in which scientific progress, the advance of Deism, and the reaction to both was largely responsible for the kind of challenge made by Blake and others in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However this challenge was largely due to philosophical and scientific enquiry which had begun more than a hundred years before. By the middle of the seventeenth century the fortress of infallibility and literal accuracy of the Bible and, by implication, the authority of the Church was in jeopardy. The new philosophy, with its claims about the unlimited abilities of human reason and the new science, with its claims about the 'mechanical' operations of nature, had infiltrated Christian belief even among established Churchmen. Deism gained a foothold as orthodox theologians began to formulate a doctrine of Christianity not dependent upon revelation, miracle, or prophecy. Increasingly an attitude developed which warned that religion must not be seen to offend the dictates of reason.¹⁴ If we bear this attitude in mind and realize the full implications of Paul Hazard's comments on the rationalists in his book, The European Mind 1680-1715, we will better understand the reaction which inevitably

came. Hazard writes:

They had simplified the problem, as they thought, and deemed that they had said the last word when they brought in such terms as 'Prejudice' and 'Superstition'...They had eyes for the crimes and aberrations of mankind, they had none for their deeds of heroism and devotion; they forgot all about the saints and the martyrs. They assumed in their pride that they had laid bare the whole truth; that they had kindled the light that they should make the shadows flee away and dispel the darkness, so that in the last resort they made a god of man himself.¹⁵

The rationalist attitude which this passage describes was to initiate a rebellion which gradually developed into a tradition of dissent against the static and lifeless Christianity which Reason had given birth to. If we ignore this tradition we cannot fully understand why Blake wrote about Christ and about God as he did.¹⁶ Since we are particularly concerned in this chapter to establish the context for Blake's treatment of the Christ figure, we now turn to the orthodox Church's doctrine on this subject as it was detailed in Blake's time. A consideration of the interpretation which Churchmen gave this doctrine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will provide a standard against which to measure the various forms which dissent took both prior to and contemporary with Blake's lifetime.

Doctrines of the Orthodox Church Concerning Christ

In 1571 the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England were published in a revised form. These Articles, which found their origin at the Council of Chalcedon in an epistle from Leo, Bishop of Rome in

451, were recognized to be the standard expression of orthodox belief.¹⁷ Of primary interest to our discussion is Article Two which deals specifically with the nature of the person of Jesus Christ. As an introduction to the intention of these Articles, it is helpful to note the following passage from Richard Hooker's The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, written in 1594. Hooker here outlines three historical stages in the development of orthodox doctrine: the historically accepted orthodox definition of the nature of Jesus Christ (dating from 451); the heresies which sprang up in opposition to this definition; and the statements of the four General Councils (of which Chalcedon was the latest) with an intention to re-affirm the position of the orthodox Church:

...there are but four things which concur to make complete the whole state of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Deity, His manhood, the conjunction of both, and the distinction of the one from the other being joined in one. Four principal heresies there are which have in those things withstood the truth: Arians by bending against the Deity of Christ; Apollinarians by maiming and misinterpreting that which belongeth to his human nature; Nestorians by rending Christ asunder, and dividing Him into two Persons; the followers of Eutyches by confounding in His person those natures which they should distinguish. Against these there have been four most famous ancient General Councils: the Council of Nice to define against Arians, against Apollinarians the Council of Constaninople, the Council of Ephesus against Nestorians, against Eutychians, the Chalcedon Council.¹⁸

Paul Elmore, in his prefatory essay to the book, Anglicanism, speaks of the spirit of the Church in the seventeenth century as "that love of balance,

restraint, moderation, measure, which from sources beyond our reckoning appears to be innate in the English temper."¹⁹ If that is so, the seventeenth-century Church certainly came by such a spirit honestly, for the Hooker passage is an exemplary model of the attempt to balance with "moderation" and "measure" the aspects of divinity and humanity in Christ's nature. Hooker's analysis also provides a context for Article Two of the Thirty-nine Articles, which provides a detailed definition of the nature of the person and function of Jesus Christ. Revised in 1553,²⁰ the statement could well have been known by Blake or at least would have been available to him:

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that the two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.²¹

Without wishing to pursue the point in detail at the moment, it is worthwhile to note that, in this passage, the Son proceeds from the Father, is "begotten from" the Father, although he is also said to be "of one substance with the Father." This emphasis on the origin of Christ in God as well as on the perfect union between Father and Son, pales in Blake's poetry in comparison with the focus on the figure of Jesus Christ himself. Such an emphasis is not pecu-

liar to Blake. We shall shortly examine the writings of other unorthodox thinkers who, like Blake, virtually ignored or outrightly criticized the Father and yet greatly admired the Son.

In the same work which has been quoted above, Hooker details another aspect of the person of Jesus Christ which further clarifies the orthodox understanding of his nature. Regarding Jesus, Hooker writes:

...His right and title thereunto even in that He is man, differeth from other men's, because He is that man of whom God is Himself a part. We have right to the same inheritance with Christ, but not the same right which He hath, His being such as we cannot reach, and ours such as He cannot stoop to.²²

The implication of Hooker's comments is that Jesus Christ is, in his very being, irrevocably different from humanity and therefore there are certain aspects of "inheritance" which humanity should not expect to share. The gap can never be bridged. Now, although we shall encounter instances in Blake's poetry in which he too implies that Christ is, in some sense, 'different' or apart from humanity, he comes to a totally different conclusion as to what this means concerning Christ's relationship with humanity. While Hooker appears to accept, as orthodox doctrine tends to do, that the separation is fundamental and inevitable, Blake presents a Jesus whose 'act of atonement' is intended precisely to close the gap and to re-establish the unity of humanity in Christ. In this process, forgiveness rather than "rights" is

the operative word. Although spatial analogies are inadequate to describe what happens to Los and Albion at the end of Jerusalem, Blake would have denied the final sentence of the Hooker passage, would have said that Christ can and does "stoop to" humanity (for, after all, he also dwells in human imagination), and helps humanity to "reach" unity in him.

If the definition of the Council of Chalcedon is accepted as the orthodox belief concerning the nature of Jesus Christ then we have a point of departure for a consideration of statements about Christ by orthodox Churchmen. Yet, interestingly, both orthodox and unorthodox writers tended at this time to dwell less on Christ's nature, in other words, on the paradox of his humanity/divinity, than on his function as the Redeemer and Saviour of humanity. Hence the most vehement emotion was vented on the issue of the means and meaning of salvation or redemption through atonement. It is true that Joseph Priestley, in 1782, bemoaned the introduction of the attribute of divinity with reference to Christ²³ but even in his essay that comment was designed less to provoke reaction of itself than to introduce the far more serious misinterpretation (in Priestley's estimation) regarding atonement. Article Two refers to the role of Christ as one of "sacrifice", not only for original guilt, but also for "all actual sins of men."

Commenting in a more modern context on the popular interpretation of atonement, E.J. Bicknell writes:

The word 'atonement' by its derivation means simply at-one-ment, the bringing together of two parties that have been estranged...But in modern English it has come to acquire the meaning 'reparation' or 'making amends': so to our ears it tends to denote the means by which reconciliation is made possible, rather than the reconciliation itself.²⁴

Concluding her observations on this subject, Bicknell makes the following remark: "Christ on the Cross is not only the patient sufferer, but by His acceptance of death acknowledges the justice of the divine wrath."²⁵ Bicknell does not clarify what is meant by "modern" with regard to this meaning of atonement but apparently it goes back at least as far as the seventeenth century. It was precisely the orthodox emphasis on Christ as a victim of divine wrath and on atonement as reparation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that many nonconformists, including Blake, found so appalling. This issue reflects far more dramatically the feelings and beliefs about Christ and about the relationship between God and Christ, God and humanity, and Christ and humanity than does the debate about Christ's ontological nature. For this reason it is relevant to our discussion as an expressive example of orthodox and unorthodox responses to the figure of Jesus Christ.

In 1659 John Pearson wrote An Exposition on the Creed in which he starkly defended the rigid necessity of Christ's death:

We were all concluded under sin, and, being the wages of sin is death, we were obliged to external punishment, from which it was impossible to be freed except the sin were first remitted. Now this is the constant rule, that without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that Christ should appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.²⁶

It was not only the hermeneutical exegete but also the parish preacher who expounded the point of humanity's corruption and helplessness, of God's righteous wrath, and of Christ as a payment of a humanly-incurred debt. The following extract from one of James Ussher's sermons from the mid-seventeenth century exploits an 'economic' imagery to emphasize the gravity of the debt which humanity owed to God:

Although, therefore, the Lord intend mercy, yet He will have us appear guilty; and as He is just, so His justice must not be in vain. Christ therefore thus standing for us, before His Father thus pleaded our cause...there must be a full account, as at the beginning was due. By reason of our insufficiency, Christ giveth us a bill under His hand unto the Father, that all our debts are satisfied, all are reckoned up upon His score, and therefore now being in Him we need not fear.²⁷

Isaac Barrow, whose eloquence as a preacher was admired by Coleridge,²⁸ also urged the necessity and correctness of Christ's death. He wrote of Christ's role in humanity's salvation that:

...He was designed to procure it by his death... He did it by appeasing the wrath of God which He naturally beareth toward iniquity, and reconciling God to men, who by sin were alienated from Him, by procuring a favourable dispensation...²⁹

This sermon, defending what might be called the 'penal theory' of atonement, was preached sometime before 1677. The same theory was also the dominant orthodox

belief in Blake's own lifetime. Ironically eighteenth-century writers displayed extreme emotionalism in defending this theory. Perhaps because they felt increasingly on the defensive, traditionalist writers not only endorsed the penal interpretation but also gave full rein to their expression of the bloody horror of the event. Phillip Dodderidge, whose concern writing in 1811 was to glorify rather than simply defend the doctrine, wrote with passionate intensity of "this mournful, dreadful, yet in one view, delightful spectacle,"³⁰ and acknowledged the glory of Christ that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief when he made his soul an offering for sin."³¹ There is no evidence that Blake ever read Dodderidge's The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, published in 1811, but one can well imagine his dismay had he come across the following passage which reflects in devout amazement upon a Father who "...determined to send his own son into the world...to be ...a sacrifice for the sins of man! and who would consent to his saving them on no other condition but this, that he should not only labour but die in the cause."³² William Jay, in his Short Discourses of 1805, was no less assured than Dodderidge of the correctness of such an atonement and no less severe in his righteous approval of it:

Yes, to save us he must suffer; by the shedding of his blood are we ransomed, and by his death we live...Sin renders man obnoxious to punishment; and this punishment is as sure as the justice and truth of God can make it. Now we had

sinned, and therefore must have suffered had not the Saviour become our surety and substitute. But he, standing in our place, became answerable for us; he has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us.³³

These extracts reveal an emphasis on two factors in particular. One is the concept of God as a God of wrath, of perfect justice, a God of the law who demands that the highest conceivable price be paid if the law be transgressed. Secondly there is a parallel conception of Christ as victim, as substitute, as surety, and as a "spectacle to the world." Neither William Law, who wrote extensively on how the atonement should be interpreted, nor Blake would have denied that there was a crucifixion and an atonement. Indeed there are various descriptions of the crucifixion in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem and it would be accurate to describe the finale of Jerusalem as an atonement. So the difference between Blake and the traditionalists must lie in the interpretation of the events of Christ's death and of atonement. From the quotations which have been cited above, it is clear that the following elements comprised the traditional interpretation. The wrath of God was aroused when humanity sinned against its creator. God therefore decided that humanity must be punished unless a ransom be paid. Only by the death of God's Son could reparation be made. By accepting the death of the cross, Jesus Christ made amends for humanity's sins, appeased the wrath of God, and brought humanity once more into favour with the creator. For Blake, as for Law, such an interpretation was anathema.

In grasping how different Blake's view was we should recall Bicknell's point that, although atonement has come to suggest reparation or making amends, its original derivation was "the bringing together of two parties that have been estranged." The latter meaning is much more applicable to Blake's interpretation with one qualification. Traditionally it is humanity and God who have been estranged, but Blake was never able totally to rid himself of a negative response to the idea of God the Father. Indeed, a doctrine which depicted a God who condemned, who demanded a ransom rather than freely forgiving as Blake's Christ does, did much to contribute to his hostility to God. Therefore, in his interpretation, the emphasis is shifted to Christ: humanity has estranged itself from Christ and needs to be reconciled to Christ. For his part, the Christ of Blake's poetry constantly forgives, and in so doing, dies a little death of the Selfhood. But Albion continues to turn away from this great love and it is only when Jesus has died the death of the body out of love rather than in obedience to divine legislation and because of divine wrath, that Albion realizes the truth of Jesus' statement:

...for Man is Love:
As God is Love: every kindness is a little Death
In the Divine Image nor can Man exist but by
Brotherhood

(J.chpt.4. E253; K743)

Albion, finally understanding, repeats the act of self-sacrifice which is central to Blake's conception of 'crucifixion' and 'atonement' for these are eternal acts

which humanity must repeat in every moment if it is to live according to Jesus' gospel and remain in unity with him. Blake's interpretation is not orthodox and his disagreement with the traditional view is one of the reasons that he levelled such intense criticism at the Church's view of Jesus. Significantly, he was not alone in this attack, though he probably made more effort than most critics (apart from Law) to offer an alternative interpretation. However, in their response to the penal theory of atonement of the orthodox Church, religious radical, mystic, secular reformer, and poet had at least one thing in common: they all profoundly disagreed with it. Bearing this in mind let us now consider some of the reactions to the orthodox presentation of Christ.

The Radical Religious Sects

In the wake of the first English civil war and the execution of Charles I, the religious rebels of unorthodox sects were to cause no end of annoyance to orthodox Church and state officials. Indeed, from the ranks of the sects came many who swelled the tenantry of Newgate, Bridewell, and Ludgate. The Millenarians, Fifth Monarchy Men, Muggletonians, Unitarians, Antinomians, Libertines, Seekers, Ranters, Salmonists, Coppinists, Hetheringtonians, Sweet Singers of Isreal, Gortinians, Behmenists, Philadelphians, Rosicrucians, and Soul Sleepers were the more infamous of the sects which sprang up in the period between 1640 and the turn of the century. To what extent Blake

was familiar with their writings is not known although certainly many of these would have been available to him. It is also a dubious hypothesis to suggest any direct causal tie between the views of these extremist sects and Blake's thinking, although A.L. Morton comes close to asserting such a link: "Presently I was able to trace the essentials of all Blake's main ideas in the seventeenth century writers, though Blake often deepened and enriched them."³⁴ What at least is significant with regard to Blake's thought is the particular areas of doctrine which the radicals found unacceptable. Morton would argue that there are at least as many verifiable similarities between Blake and the opinions of certain sects as there are between Blake and the theories of Jacob Boehme (or Behmen, as the name was anglicized). However, even if one hesitates to make the link as strong as Morton does, there are still many illuminating insights which testify to the fact that Blake was indeed part of a tradition which sought to free religious vision from the rigidity of dogma.

One of the earliest and most extremist of the sects was the Ranters whose period of greatest volubility came between 1640 and 1660. John Robins and Thomas Tannye were joint leaders of the sect whose theology--such as it was--was rooted in a modified pantheism. Their doctrine stated that, although God was manifest everywhere, he was most perfectly manifest in humanity by virtue of its being self-conscious.

Self-consciousness determined that humanity bore within itself the greatest proportion of the "indwelling spirit" or "Christ in man". Of all species, humanity was unique in its recognition of the indwelling Godhead,³⁵ although the Ranters believed that they possessed rather more awareness of this than most. Orthodox believers branded this doctrine blasphemous for it seemed to threaten the omnipotence of God by confining him to the material world and denying him transcendental existence. A corollary belief of the indwelling Godhead was the Ranters' uncompromising denial of the validity of the moral law and indeed, of sin itself.³⁶ It should be of interest to note that Blake has sometimes stood accused of the same blasphemy.³⁷ However, it was the belief of the Ranters that sin was merely an unenlightened delusion in the imaginations of people who had not yet recognized the Godhead within themselves. The fact of this recognition exempted the Ranters, in their opinion, from the need to construe any action as sinful. Blake, on the other hand, never actually disclaimed a belief in sin. Indeed, the central tenet of his understanding of the gospel of Jesus is "Forgiveness of Sin", and presumably one need not be forgiven that which does not exist. When we come to a consideration of Blake's conception of States we will see that what has sometimes been interpreted as Blake's denial of sin is actually a more in-depth analysis of sinning and the sinner. Blake's treatment of sin does entail the rejection of

moral dogma and the hypocritical attitudes concerning sin which he believed he saw in the Church, but it places much greater responsibility on the individual to recognize his or her sin and to die the death of the "selfhood" which is largely the determining cause of sin. In fairness to Blake, his position should not be regarded as similar to that of the Ranters.

Like Blake over a century later, the Ranters did not adhere to a literal interpretation of the Bible. According to their belief, Scripture could only act as a guiding light for human action if it was read with a symbolical approach which was strengthened and confirmed by inner spiritual inspiration. It will become apparent in later chapters of this thesis that this was very much the attitude which Blake was to take towards Scripture. Had the Ranters been content not to press this attitude to extremes, their opinion would be similar to that of Milton.³⁸ Characteristically, however, they drove a view with which some would have sympathized to radical conclusions. Convinced as they were of the sufficiency of spiritual understanding afforded by the inherent Godhead, they laid claim to an inner directing spirit which rendered the reading of Scripture superfluous: one does not require a written law if one bears the law within oneself. Blake, on the other hand, continued to the end of his career to use the prophetic visions of the Scriptures as a cherished model, constantly exploring them as a meaningful source of inspiration for his poetry.

Of the various subjects which found their origins in a general adherence to the Ranter persuasion, the Familists of Love was one whose beliefs are more similar to Blake's than those of the parent sect. Their theology was future-oriented, a vision which looked forward to the establishment of an age of spiritual love. Such an age which, in Swedenborgian terms would be called the age of the "New Jerusalem", was the great hope of adherents to the "everlasting gospel." By the mid-eighteenth century, which witnessed the organization of the Swedenborgians, this term had assumed greater political connotations, signifying the overthrow of Church and state in order that the age of the New Jerusalem might be ushered in. But the term finds its origins in the take-over by seventeenth-century sects of the mystical theories of a twelfth-century Italian mystic called Joachim of Fiore. Joachite thought divided history into three stages: the First Age, or age of the Father (based on the Old Testament); the Second Age, or age of the Son (based on the New Testament); and the Third Age, or age of the Holy Ghost. This Third Age, which was 'yet to come', was envisaged as a glorious period in which humanity would blossom in love and spiritual liberty. It was to be a time in which humanity would come to know God not from Scripture, but from a direct recognition of the Godhead within. Henry Nicholas, the leader of the Familists, considered himself to be a prophet of this new age. Like their

parent group, the Familists did not adhere to a literal interpretation of the Bible. C.E. Whiting notes how they applied an allegorical approach to the nature and function of Christ:

...the Crucifixion of Christ was the crucifying of the old man, the Resurrection was a rising to newness of life, the Last Judgment was the establishment in the natural man of the life of righteousness and equity...³⁹

A London chaplain in 1675 spoke of the Familists' belief that Christ was not to be understood as a person, but as a quality of life in which all humanity might participate. To be resurrected was to be "regenerated" with that quality of which Christ was representative while the anguish of Judgment was the "separation" from that quality.⁴⁰ Other Familist principles included the notion of Christ as an "estate" or "condition of men"; of heaven and hell as present in this world and nowhere else; of the services and rituals perpetuated by the Church as irrelevant; of a person's freedom to speak his or her religious opinions without fear of penalty of death.⁴¹ These Familist ideas on Jesus Christ approach those of Blake but ultimately they fall short. It is interesting that the Familists spoke of Christ as an "estate" or "condition of men" for although it is more likely that Blake picked up the notion of "States" as an explanation of the internal life of humanity from Swedenborg, yet the principle is similar. The difference is that Blake is willing to describe just about everything except Christ in terms

of States. Although it is Christ who, in Jerusalem, goes forth to "Create States" (J. E176; K662) yet Christ himself is not described by Blake as a State. Adam is a State and Satan is a State and one might have thought it in keeping with this notion that Christ should also be so described. The reason that he is not as Blake explains it, is one of the ways in which, as I have said, Blake's Christ goes beyond even some of the unorthodox conceptions of Christ. The explanation comes in Milton in the speech of the Angels to Milton:

Distinguish therefore States from Individuals in those States.

States Change: but Individual Identities never change nor cease.

The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself

(M. E131; K521-22)

Jesus Christ, in Blake's conception, is eternal and his dwelling place in his immanence is the Human Imagination. But if Human Imagination were a State and subject to flux and change, then Christ would have no eternal dwelling place in humanity. However, it is not a State, it is the Human Existence itself. In a sense, Blake is speaking about the Human Imagination as the 'soul' or 'spirit' of humanity. Now it begins to be clear why Jesus is not a State either, for Jesus is eternal and unchanging. To be 'in Christ' is not to be in a State but rather to have moved, imaginatively or spiritually, beyond the restrictions of States. That is not to suggest that humanity as a whole or as the individual cannot slip back into

one of the States, for these little 'falls' and 'redemptions' can happen in any moment. But that is all the more reason why it is essential that Christ himself be eternal and outside States.

If Blake was familiar with the literature of the Familists of Love he would have approved the intention of their 'Christology' but he would also have recognized that their conception was not as radical as his own. He might also have feared that their conception of Jesus as an "estate" might lead to his becoming an abstraction which would not take account of him as a real person.

Jacob Boehme

Another figure appeared on the English scene at this time whose works were to have a more pervasive and profound influence on unorthodox theology than that of the English sects. This was Jacob Boehme whose mystical writings were read by Muggleton,⁴² John Pordage and Jane Lead (or Leade), who became co-founders of the Philadelphia Society for the propagation of Boehme's works in the latter half of the seventeenth century, William Law, John Wesley and, through Law's translations, by Blake. Although the four volumes of The Works of Jacob Boehme the Teutonic Theosopher were not published in London until between 1764 and 1781, certain selected writings were available in England before this time.⁴³ Boehme's influence was pervasive throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as evidenced by the attraction

of his mystical system for such diverse figures as Muggleton, around 1650, to Blake. His system was a complex compilation of elements borrowed from astrology, theology, alchemy, and Gnosticism. Desirée Hirst's book, Hidden Riches, gives a detailed account of Boehme's system as it relates to the broader context of Blake's thought.⁴⁴ However, since much of Boehme's influence on Blake is not precisely relevant to his development of the Christ figure we will not be considering it for the purposes of this thesis.⁴⁵ What is relevant is Boehme's theory of the Fall, particularly in terms of his view of the role of Christ in relation to humanity after the Fall. There are also very pertinent statements in his work concerning the nature of Christ and the nature of humanity's redemption through Christ which clearly found their way into Blake's ideas on these subjects.

Boehme conceived the Fall as a double event.⁴⁶ His theory suggests that humanity was originally a purely spiritual being. When Adam's love and healthy self-love degenerated into discontent and selfishness, a turning in on the self, he precipitated a fall from pure spirit into matter and, what was worse, into a division of the sexes. Hence, according to this conception, the act of creation was not the happy event portrayed by orthodox theology but rather the first event of the Fall. In the 'second' Fall, the male and female aspects of the original being were split into separate and warring sexes. This

is the state of things when Genesis picks up the thread of the story, for the second Fall was completed when humanity's disobedience drove the male and female even further from the bosom of their creator. Yet God's mercy was manifest even in this disastrous descent into matter and the division of the sexes, for he limited the extent of the Fall and planted in humanity the seeds of redemption. According to Boehme, it was the role of Christ to precipitate humanity's redemption, a redemption which would return the reunified male and female to their original state of spiritual bliss. Redemption has, for Boehme, nothing whatsoever to do with outward or external actions, as he makes plain in his Mysterium Magnum: "Do not boast of your faith...nor depend on sects, temples, and rituals; for none of them can make you a Temple of Christ."⁴⁷ Rather, redemption is a profound inner process through which the individual truly invites the incarnation of Christ within. In the following passage, note also Boehme's emphasis on the role of Imagination in this process:

We receive the Christ when we imagine into him...This must be plain even to reason that we cannot receive anything (be it heaven or hell or earth) unless we imagine into it. Therefore when we, with our Imagination, draw near to the Christ and desire him in right earnest, then the Spirit of God draws us into the Humanity of the Christ...The Christ may be in us and call us, but unless with our Imagination we eat of the Divine Substance, he cannot be manifest to us as a Saviour.⁴⁸

This passage reflects precisely the kind of process

which Blake envisages as redemptive, a process which Albion first rejects and only painfully realizes at the close of Jerusalem. We noted above Boehme's reference to the individual as a "Temple of Christ", a phrase which Blake modifies only slightly in Los' reference to Albion as a "Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High." This conception of Christ dwelling in humanity as in a temple and yet separate from humanity is vital to Blake's mature conception of Christ. Boehme warns his readers to make this distinction between themselves and Christ most succinctly when he says:

If we do not die to the sinful I-hood, the Christ can not be born in us, and live in us as a New Man or an Incarnation of God...But if the Christ is born in us, we should nevertheless not think that we are the Christ; for we are only his abode; just as the plant can not say that it is the sun, because the sun works in it.⁴⁹

Blake also makes this distinction for, as we shall see, even at the end of Jerusalem, when Albion has died to the "sinful I-hood" (or "selfhood", as Blake calls it), and is redeemed, yet he does not become Christ, who remains an entity who is still, in some sense, apart from him.⁵⁰ If we were to substitute the name "Christ" for the name "God" in the following passage, we would have a conception remarkably similar to Blake's vision of the meaning of redemption in Christ:

As this world is one body, so God, the Kingdom of Heaven, angels, men, and Paradise, with all divine and heavenly things, are all One Divine Body; and in union they are called God and

Majesty. Nay, even this world belongs to the
Body of God.⁵¹

Such passages as the above indicate that well over one hundred years before Blake was born a theosopher lived who recognized the necessity of imagination as the way of approach to Christ, who spoke of the incarnate Christ being born in humanity (and yet who stressed that this did not mean that humanity was Christ), and who conceived the redemption of humanity through Christ as "One Divine Body." All of these ideas were borrowed by Blake and used, with modification, in his development of the figure of Jesus Christ. It supports but does not belittle Blake's own presentation of Jesus Christ that vital aspects of his vision had been circulating in England among unorthodox thinkers since the middle of the seventeenth century.

John Wesley and Methodism

We shall shortly be considering the views of some of Blake's contemporaries on the subject of Jesus Christ, contemporaries who made no claim to adherence to the Christian faith. John Wesley (1703-1791) and George Whitefield (1714-1770), the key figures in the birth of Methodism, differ from such thinkers as Paine, Shelley, or even Blake insofar as they originally had no desire to instigate a religious rebellion which would lead them outside the boundaries of the orthodox Church. Like his early mentor, William Law, Wesley continued to consider himself to be an Anglican long after it had

become apparent to him that he could no longer approve the judgments of ecclesiastical authority. His apprehensions with regard to the implications of the zealous missionary spirit which grew out of the Methodist movement attest to his unwillingness to stray too far from the orthodox fold. However his increasing emphasis on personal salvation through the atoning death of Christ inevitably led to his being branded an "Enthusiast." What is particularly of interest in Wesley's presentation of Jesus Christ is the emphasis on the personal intimacy of relationship which the believer can experience with the Lord. During 1738 Wesley had undergone a personal conversion to the "saving faith" of Jesus Christ which prompted his desire to lead others to the same kind of salvation.⁵² Methodism in the Wesley tradition did not purport to be a 'new theology.' In fact its thrust was quite the opposite of new theology. It took up the cause of the 'old' religion, the original message of Jesus Christ and sought to satisfy the needs and spiritual yearnings of the whole person, not just those of the intellect. There may have been, from the Methodist point of view, nothing technically wrong with official Church doctrine, but it had, in their opinion, miserably failed to teach the possibility of personal redemption through Christ available to every believer. In The Principles of a Methodist Further Explained (1746), Wesley outlined the foundations of his faith.

Principles 1 and 3 demonstrate the following basic assumptions: (a) humanity is sinful and stands in need of pardon; (b) God is merciful and grants this pardon to sinful humanity; (c) pardon is assured only through the atoning death of Jesus Christ which we are bound to believe in.⁵³ What is striking about Wesley's writing is that these principles are not set forth as mere academic abstractions but rather as vital truths which speak to every believer. The focus of Wesley's message was the appeal of Christ to the heart and soul of every single individual. It was the direct simplicity and vitality of this message which attracted Blake. That he should have found Wesley so appealing is significant for the Methodists inclined towards a highly emotional interpretation of the penal theory of atonement, a theory which we know Blake rejected. Yet as much as he must have disagreed with this Methodist doctrine and with the restrictive moral injunctions which Wesley preached, Blake was still attracted by Methodism's fervent sincerity, its energy, and its appeal to the whole person in the name of Jesus Christ.

From the middle of the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, dissenting voices became more outraged than they had been in the past as the reputation of the orthodox Church degenerated even further in the eyes of its critics. We therefore now consider the presentation of Jesus Christ by

writers who, whether or not they considered themselves to be Christian, attempted to separate the person and gospel of Jesus Christ from the teachings of the orthodox Church.

Christ--But Not the Church

Shelley expressed the following opinion of Jesus Christ:

He tramples upon all received opinions, on all the cherished luxuries and superstitions of mankind. He bids them cast aside the chains of custom and blind faith by which they have been encompassed from the very cradle of their being, and become the imitators and ministers of the Universal God.⁵⁴

Such comments could have been made, with little revision, by William Blake, Thomas Paine, or even perhaps by Joseph Priestley. They could not have been made by Butler or Coleridge. The passage is significant precisely because it so cogently reflects the kind of response to Jesus Christ which was shared by many nonconformists from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth. It is further evidence that Blake certainly was not alone in his negative reaction to the contemporary orthodox view of Jesus Christ, that, on the contrary, there existed a group of independent thinkers who, like Shelley's Jesus, sought to "...trample upon... the cherished luxuries and superstitions of mankind..." and to "...cast aside the chains of custom and blind faith." In assessing unorthodox presentations of the person of Jesus Christ, it is important to be aware that, even if unorthodox thinkers

had agreed with official doctrine (which, on the whole, they did not), they still could not endorse a Church whose conduct appeared to be so contradictory to that of its founder. In other words, because their perception of Jesus was that he did not have much in common with the modern practice of Christianity, their portrayals of him tended to emphasize the gap between the conduct of Jesus and that of the modern Church.

Summarizing the spirit of the established Church during the period from the reign of George I to the end of the eighteenth century, John Overton writes:

It is a period, for instance, of lethargy instead of activity, of worldliness instead of spirituality, of self-seeking instead of self-denial, of grossness instead of refinement. There was a grovelling instead of a noble conception of the nature and function of the Church as a Christian society, an ignoring instead of a conscientiousness and worthy carrying out of the plain system of the Church, work neglected instead of work well done.⁵⁵

Writing in 1749, David Hartley, referring to those factors "...which seem to threaten Ruin and Dissolution to the present States of Christendom"⁵⁶ speaks much more bitterly of the "...great Worldly-mindedness of the Clergy, and their gross Neglects in the Discharge of their proper Functions."⁵⁷ In the following passage Hartley displays as much contempt for the state of the clergy as Blake himself demonstrated consistently from the time of the Songs of Experience to the prophetic poems:

Many of these must be the Sons of Infidels,
thrust into the Church by their Parents for

Subsistence, or with a View to great Honours and Profits...The Superior Clergy are, in general, ambitious and eager in the Pursuit of Riches; Flatterers of the Great, and subservient to Party Interest; negligent of their own immediate Charges, and also of the inferior Clergy...The inferior Clergy imitate their Superiors, and, in general, take little more Care of their Parishes, than barely what is necessary to avoid the Censure of the Law.⁵⁸

This may appear to be an entirely one-sided view of the matter but, that even the more sincere members of the clergy recognized a certain degeneration in religious life, is evident in Joseph Butler's speech to the clergy of the Diocese of Durham in 1751 in which he said: "It is impossible for me, my brethren, upon this our first meeting, to forbear lamenting with you, the general decay of religion in this nation."⁵⁹ A few years earlier, in 1738, Bishop Secker had lamented that "...Christianity is now railed at and ridiculed with very little reserve, and the teachers of it without any at all."⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, Secker believed this ridicule to be largely unjustified, charging that criticism of the clergy had gone "...beyond all probability, exaggerating without mercy."⁶¹ J.G. Davies made the remark that Blake, unlike Paine and Shelley, did not succumb to a wholesale condemnation of Christianity in his criticisms. Davies' point is perhaps well taken if he is understood to suggest that Paine and Shelley made a wholesale condemnation of the historical practice of Christianity but not of the person and gospel of its founder. Certainly in the writings

of all three writers there is a clear distinction made between Jesus Christ and the system of religion which grew up bearing his name. Although Davies does not mention it, it is also true that Paine and Shelley tended to see Jesus primarily as the exemplary social reformer and the attitude of both is much more identifiably secular than that of Blake. Still, in spite of the fact that many critics of the Church shared the opinions regarding its conduct described by Overton and Hartley, yet they were equally anxious to communicate that they were able to respond to Jesus Christ quite apart from the Church which bore his name. This capacity to separate the original gospel message from its institutionalized dogmatic form is clear, for instance, in the following extract from Shelley's Essay on Christianity written sometime between 1812 and 1819:

The doctrines indeed, in my judgment, are excellent and strike at the root of moral evil... But these are the very doctrines which, in another shape, the most violent asserters of Christianity denounce as impious and seditious ...This alone would be a demonstration of the falsehood of Christianity, that the religion so called is the strongest ally and bulwark of that system of successful force and fraud and of the selfish passions...against which Jesus Christ declared the most uncompromising war, and the extinction of which appears to have been the great motive of his life.⁶²

Elsewhere Shelley describes Jesus as "...the enemy of oppression and of falsehood...We discover that he was a man of meek and majestic demeanor, calm in danger, of natural and simple thought and habits, beloved to adoration by his adherents, unmoved and solemn and

serene."⁶³

Thomas Paine had little use for institutional Christianity in general or for such doctrines concerning Jesus Christ as the Virgin Birth or the atonement, "...as if mankind could be improved by the example of murder."⁶⁴ Yet he did not despise Jesus Christ and, like Law, Shelley, and Blake, he perceived the reprehensible gap which had grown up between the founder of Christianity and its contemporary adherents:

...out of the matters contained in these books, together with the assistance of some old stories, the church has set up a system of religion very contradictory in character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.⁶⁵

The trend becomes clear. Dissenting opinion of this period condemns the institutional Church and, in the same breath, whole-heartedly approves its founder and his message. It is noteworthy that the issue which inevitably binds these dissenters, from the gentle divine, William Law, to the pragmatic reformer, Thomas Paine, is the issue of atonement. Coleridge was altogether more severe and moralistic in his religion, as when he said of Jesus: "His doctrines are mild and full of Love, and he blesses the meek and blesses the merciful--but they are likewise most severe and make no compromise with our Vices or our Follies."⁶⁶ Yet even Coleridge felt the penal theory of atonement to be most inadequate.⁶⁷

Perhaps a most interesting example of the con-

trasting opinions on the penal theory of the atone-
ment comes to light in the works of Joseph Butler
and Emanuel Swedenborg. Compare the following
passages, for instance, in terms of their evaluation
of the theory. The first is by Butler, written in
1736, and the second by Swedenborg, written in 1771:

And there is one objection made against the
satisfaction of Christ which looks to be of this
positive kind: that the doctrine of his being
appointed to suffer for the sins of the world,
represents God as being indifferent whether he
punished the innocent or the guilty...when, in
the daily course of natural Providence, it is
appointed that innocent people should suffer
for the faults of the guilty, this is liable to
the very same objections as the instance we are
now considering...during the progress, and for
aught we know, even in order to the completion
of this moral scheme, vicarious punishments
may be fit, and absolutely necessary.⁶⁸

Butler does not seem to realize that the same people
who object to the penal theory in Christ's case
quite probably object to vicarious punishment of the
innocent in the course of daily affairs as well.

There may well be a strong case for belief in the
penal theory, but it has not come from Butler's pen.

In the following extract, it is one of the angels
from Swedenborg's "Memorable Relations" who is speak-
ing:

Neither is it in accordance with justice and
judgment for one person to take upon himself
the guilt of another, and for the guilty thus
to be made innocent and have his guilt washed
away. Is this not opposed to both Divine and
human justice? ⁶⁹

Butler has just answered a definitive 'no' to that
question so that the opposition of the two points of

view is clear. Those who disagreed with the penal theory of atonement generally did so for two reasons. Firstly, they despised the notion of the wrathful, angry, petulant God it depicted. Secondly, like Blake, they tended to focus more directly on the person of Jesus Christ and this theory seemed blatantly to contradict Jesus' gospel of love and mercy. These writers also tended to perceive a direct link between the conduct of this God and the conduct of the modern Church, conduct which seemed a total travesty of Jesus' good news. Perhaps they would have felt less hostility had there been more preachers in the mould of Laurence Sterne. In 1776 Sterne published a sermon entitled "The Prodigal Son" for which he took as his text: "But the father said, Bring forth the best robe." Sterne rejoiced in this text:

When the affections break loose, Joy is another name for Religion. We look up as we taste it: the cold stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the music, may ask sullenly, (with the elder brother) What it means? and refuse to enter: but the humane and compassionate all fly impetuously to the banquet, given for a son who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found. Gentle spirits, light up the pavilion with a sacred fire; and parental love and filial piety lead in the mask with riot and wild festivity! Was it not for this that God gave man music to strike upon the kindly passions; that nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and as chief governess of the feast poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladness? 70

The image of the compassionate father would have had more appeal to the nonconformists but it was not a popular image with orthodox preachers. Law chided those who mistakenly perceived God as a being of

wrath who exercised a "political kind of just indignation, a point of honourable resentment." He offered instead his deep conviction of a God of love:

Some people have an idea or notion of the Christian Religion, as if God was thereby declared so full of wrath against fallen man, that nothing but the blood of His only begotten Son could satisfy His vengeance...There is no wrath that stands between God and us, but what is awakened in the dark fire of our own fallen nature; and to quench this wrath and not His own, God gave His only begotten Son to be made Man. God has no more wrath in Himself now, than He had before the creation when He had only Himself to love. The precious blood of His Son was not poured out to pacify Himself (Who in Himself had no nature towards man but love) but it was poured out, to quench the wrath and fire of the fallen soul, and kindle in it a birth of light and love.⁷¹

Like Boehme, his theosophical teacher, Law emphasized the internal nature of a redemptive rebirth taking place through the presence of Christ within humanity. In the following passage Law speaks of "the Saviour of the World" being hid in the human heart as a "spark of the Divine Nature", an image which recalls Boehme and Blake's description of the human soul as a "Temple" of Christ:

Poor sinner! consider the treasure thou has within thee, the Saviour of the World, the Eternal Word of God lies hid in thee, as a spark of the Divine Nature, which is to overcome sin and death, and hell within thee and generate the life of heaven again in thy soul. Turn to thy heart, and thy heart will find its Saviour, its God within itself. Thou seest, hearest, and feelest nothing of God, but thou seekest for Him in books, in controversies, in the Church and outward exercises, but there thou wilt not find Him, till thou hast first found Him in thy heart. Seek for Him in thy heart, and thou wilt never seek in vain, for there He dwells, there is the seat of His light and Holy Spirit. For this turning to the light and Spirit of God within thee, is the only true

turning to God, there is no other way of finding Him, but in that place where He dwelleth in thee. For though God be everywhere present, yet He is only present to thee in the deepest, and most central part of thy soul.⁷²

One immediately recognizes here the influence of Boehme. In both Boehme and Law Blake found the emphasis on the indwelling Spirit of Christ as well as an interpretation of the atonement which affirmed a reconciliation to unity which ran deeper than a blood sacrifice to a God of wrath.

The difference between Blake and most other writers who were hostile to the doctrine of atonement is that they seemed to accept almost without question that what the Church said on the subject was a truth rather than an interpretation. William Law is the only other notable exception to this trend. While other writers were extremely critical of the existing doctrine, they either were not interested or did not think to suggest that the Church had misinterpreted the meaning of Christ's death. Blake, on the other hand, also criticized the penal theory of atonement but he did so because he thought it was a misapprehension, a wrong interpretation. Therefore he offered another interpretation, as did Law, and we saw earlier how different Blake's was from that of the Church. In other words, the criticisms of people like Priestley, Shelley, and Paine were more 'secular' in the sense that their religious life was virtually non-existent and they could therefore well afford to attack one of the fundamen-

tal doctrines of Christianity without offering an alternative. But Blake wanted to rescue Jesus from what he considered to be a misconception because Jesus' act of atonement, rightly understood, was central to Blake's understanding of the gospel of Mercy and Forgiveness of Sins.

Joseph Priestley, writing in 1782, deplored the way in which the attachment of 'divinity' to Jesus Christ threatened a proper monotheistic view of the unity of God. Hence his opinion of Jesus Christ was that he was a man and that it was not Christian to think otherwise:

...the apostle Paul, giving what may be called the Christian creed, says, I. Tim.ii.5: There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ-Jesus." He does not say the God, the God-man, or the superangelic being, but simply the man Christ-Jesus; and nothing can be alleged from the New Testament in favour of any higher nature of Christ, except a few passages interpreted without any regard to the context, or the modes of speech and opinions of the times in which the books were written, and in such a manner, in other respects, as would authorize our proving any doctrine whatsoever from them.⁷³

The above passage falls far short of the Christ conceived by Blake, but other remarks made by Priestley ring more sympathetically to the Blakean approach. This is true, for instance, of their common denial of the Virgin Birth. The revised version of Article Two of the Council of Chalcedon plainly states a belief in the Virgin Birth as an element of orthodox faith. Of Christ, the Article states that he is "...in all things like to us except sin, begotten

from the Father before the ages according to His Godhead and in the last days born of Mary the virgin.⁷⁴

Blake makes it clear in The Everlasting Gospel that he disagrees with this doctrine for reasons we shall be discussing later in the thesis. Priestley, in 1786, offers the 'common sense' view that, logically speaking, the Virgin Birth is simply an unnecessary doctrine:

For anything we can judge, a body produced in the natural way was just as proper for the residence of this heavenly inhabitant, as one made on purpose. And if, on any scheme, it was fit that Christ should have human nature at all, it may be supposed to have been equally fit that he should have a proper human nature, differing as little as possible from that of his brethren.⁷⁵

Priestley betrays a certain tongue-in-cheek wickedness as he goes on to ask: "...is it not, in fact, just as humiliating to have a mother, as it is to have a father; for it is nothing more than the body that is concerned in the question?"⁷⁶ Blake and Priestley both denied the Virgin Birth in order to emphasize the humanity of Christ, but for Priestley this was less in order to say something positive about Christ than because, as a Unitarian, he wanted to ensure that the essential oneness of God was not threatened. Thomas Paine likewise had little use for the doctrine, although this is hardly surprising considering that Paine's confession of faith does not exceed a fairly stark statement of theism:

"I believe in one God, and no more..."⁷⁷ Paine's writings, like Priestley's, betray a cool, collected

reasonableness infused with just enough mockery to infuriate the orthodox reader:

...as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in a supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.⁷⁸

The statement was made earlier that writers such as Paine, Shelley, and Blake deplored the way in which the orthodox Church had twisted Jesus' gospel and perverted it into a justification for blatantly un-Christ-like conduct. If this conduct was not obviously judgmental and unmerciful (though they may have thought it to be this as well), it was at least perceived to be self-righteously complacent in a way that Christ never was. The title and content of John Tillotson's sermon, "The Advantages of a Religion to Particular Persons", is an example of this latter response to the gospel. Consider how critics of the Church, seeking to get back to the original intention of the message of Jesus, would have responded to the following lesson in Tillotson's sermon:

What inexpressible comfort does overflow the pious and devout soul from the remembrance of a holy and well-spent life and a conscience of its own innocence and integrity! And nothing but the practice of Religion and Virtue can give this ease and satisfaction to the mind of man...As to our reputation. There is nothing gives a man a more firm and established reputation among wise and serious persons...than a prudent and substantial Piety...For when all is done there is no man can serve his own interest better than by serving God.⁷⁹

Tillotson's religious motives in this sermon are at

least a little suspect (not to say smug), because he appears to be saying that one is well advised to live a Christian life because it gives one ease of conscience and ensures one's good reputation in the community. Such advice springs from a radically different interpretation of Christ's message than Law's advice to the aspiring Christian:

When once thou art well grounded in this inward worship, thou wilt have learnt to live unto God above time and place. For every day will be Sunday to thee, and where ever thou goest, thou wilt have a Priest, and an Altar along with thee.⁸⁰

If Tillotson represents one view of the effects of religion on the community, Coleridge provides another picture of the Church's effect in the bitterest of language:

He who sees any real difference between the Church of Rome and the Church of England possesses optics which I do not possess--the mask of antichrist is on both of them. Have not both an intimate alliance with the powers of this World, which Jesus positively forbids? Are they not both decked with gold and precious stones? Is there not written on both their Foreheads Mystery? Do they not both SELL the Gospel--nay, nay they neither sell, nor is it the Gospel--they forcibly exchange Blasphemy for the first fruits, and snatching the scanty Bread from the poor Man's Mouth they cram their lying Legends down his throat!⁸¹

No doubt Coleridge would have nodded his vigorous agreement with the severe warning of William Jay written in 1805: "If you seek [Jesus] he will be found of you. But if you make light of these things, how can you escape? Remember, that he is ascended to be your Judge."⁸²

Given the framework of orthodoxy and dissent concerning Jesus Christ which has been outlined, we should ask in conclusion how Blake's conception of Jesus as we understand it thus far fits into the unorthodox tradition which dissented from the established Church. One thing which has been established is that the very fact of his challenge of the Church and even the particular focus of his challenge cannot be seen as an anomaly in the context of the period from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. Like Law, Priestley, Paine, Shelley, and Coleridge, he recognized a great gap between Jesus Christ and the Church which had grown up in his name. Unlike Paine, Priestley, and Shelley, he did not conclude that this was because Jesus was primarily a great social reformer, and a good and humble being, neither which claim the modern Church could make about itself. Blake would not have disputed the idea that Jesus was a social reformer, but it was not central to his argument with the Church. Unlike Coleridge, Blake did not focus on Jesus as a great moral teacher who offers forgiveness up to a point, yet is severe in his judgment of transgressors. The forgiveness of Blake's Jesus is unlimited and unconditioned. H.N. Fairchild takes a rather sarcastic view of this unlimited forgiveness of sin, for he believes Blake subtly does away with sin altogether and therefore there is nothing for Jesus to forgive.⁸³

This is not true. Certainly Blake's Jesus does not judge and punish sinners, but this only suggests that Fairchild cannot conceive any other way of dealing with sin. But in fact, although Blake's Jesus freely forgives, Blake actually depicts an extremely demanding psychological process whereby the sinner comes to a fundamental recognition not only of the sin itself but also of the motivation for sin, which is the indulgence of selfhood. For Blake, Jesus' 'Go and sin no more' means: 'you are forgiven and now you must seek in every moment to act as I have done, to forgive even to the point of self-sacrifice.' This is precisely the lesson which Albion learns at the end of Jerusalem.

If Blake did not choose either the option of Jesus as social reformer or Jesus as moral teacher, then what was his focus? In answer to this question we should first realize that Blake had more in common with religious critics than with secular critics. Hence his conception of Jesus is more like that of Boehme and Law and, in some respects, John Wesley, than like that of Paine and Shelley. What he shared with Boehme and Law was the desire to free Jesus from the confines of orthodox dogma and to reveal to his readers a Jesus who had a truly transforming, liberating, and redemptive effect on humanity. However, because Blake's Jesus is not a tyrant, not a jealous God, Blake did not present this as something imposed

from without. However it may be that Jesus has the power to act independently of humanity, he also dwells in the Human Imagination. If humanity ignores or is actively hostile to Imagination, then it also ignores or "Murders" Jesus, as Blake puts it. Except that Law uses the word 'heart' rather than 'Imagination', his conception of Jesus dwelling immanently in humanity is very close to this. Certainly Law was more restrained than Blake and tended to lay more emphasis than the poet did on admonishing humanity to live righteous Christian lives. But Blake would probably have distinguished between the moral dogma of the Church and Law's intention, for Law believed that such a life would follow naturally from a sincere development of the spirit of Christ within. Where Blake most differed from Law and particularly from Boehme, is that, like Wesley, he was not a mystic and he never lost sight, as they were in danger of doing, of the real person of Jesus. This Jesus of his who dwells eternally in Human Imagination, who liberates and unifies, is also the Jesus of Scripture. He did not want this identity to be obscured or altogether lost, and did not intend to teach some kind of mystical spiritual way. That is why even the most complex 'Jesus passages' in Jerusalem constantly use the language of Scripture, the words attributed to Jesus, and the events which are said to have occurred in his life and death. Unlike Boehme,

Blake did not wander off into abstruse, mathematical or astrological mazes because such exercises do not really help to clarify the vision of Jesus and his gospel. Hence Blake's Jesus bears similarity to that of other unorthodox writers of the time, but the interpretation he had of Jesus was ultimately his own. His criticisms of the Church were therefore constructive rather than destructive because they were intended to point to what he believed to be the real significance of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER TWO

"THE LEGACY OF REASON AND JESUS THROUGH IMAGINATION"

In the preceding chapter evidence was provided to demonstrate that Blake's negative reaction to orthodox Christianity and his development of a Christ figure which did not conform to orthodox doctrine was not entirely unique. Indeed, it was shown that there were many writers who challenged established teaching on the subject of Jesus Christ and also that they did so for demonstrably similar reasons. In this chapter the focus shifts to the particular philosophical and, where relevant, religious trends and concepts to which Blake took exception. We shall also consider how the legacy of reason give rise to a spirit of independent interpretation of the Bible which would have abetted Blake's imaginative reading of Scripture, particularly with reference to Christ.

During the period under discussion there was no clean break between philosophical and religious concerns: the new insights of one area often implied a profound challenge to the other. The modern mind may think it odd to respond to Locke's philosophy or Newton's science with a paraphrase of a saying of Jesus, as Blake did.¹ However, although in so doing Blake's style was rather iconoclastic, the fact of his challenging philosophical claims from a religious standpoint (religious insofar as it was often in defence of Jesus Christ), was not

necessarily strange in the context of eighteenth-century debate. If, as many scholars on the eighteenth century have suggested, the powers and role of reason was a central issue of debate, then it is not difficult to understand how the concerns of philosophy and religion overlapped.² In order to come to grips with Blake's treatment of the figure of Jesus Christ it is necessary to be aware that this figure emerged from a perspective which was at odds not only with orthodox religious trends, but also with dominant philosophical ideas. An introductory paragraph from the preface of Gerald Cragg's Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century provides justification in a general way for setting Blake's 'Christology' in the context of philosophical debate. Cragg summarizes cogently the way in which rationalist philosophy, Newtonian science, Deism, and even the fervour of Methodism must be seen as inter-related phenomena:

As the seventeenth century closed, it was apparent that reason was displacing many of the authorities which an earlier generation had accepted. But the nature of its claims required careful study. Locke laid down the lines along which such an examination would proceed; Newton profoundly the atmosphere in which it would be conducted. Few were disposed to challenge the primacy of reason, but the extent and character of its authority remained a matter of vigorous debate. Was it an all-sufficient source of truth? Or did revelation provide a necessary supplement to what man's unaided powers could discover? Around this issue the Deistic controversy raged, and for nearly half a century it profoundly affected the character of English thought. But the exaggerated claims advanced on behalf of reason provoked a reaction. Scholars and thinkers of great eminence con-

tended that its powers were much less than its champions had claimed. Hume argued that reliance on reason led, not to absolute certainty but to complete scepticism. John Wesley insisted that an adequate account of human experience will allow reason a valid but a very restricted role and will assign to faith the principal part in integrating the scattered forces of man's personal life. This radical and twofold challenge to the supremacy of reason seemed to presage the end of an era, but reason, though shaken, continued to be one of the controlling concepts of eighteenth-century thought.³

Because of the intensity of the debate outlined by Cragg, one's response to Christianity and to Christ was largely determined by one's philosophy. Hence, for example, Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) determined the approach which he took to Christianity and to Jesus Christ in The Reasonableness of Christianity. Just as the latter followed from the former, so Blake's approach to Jesus Christ followed naturally from his rejection of rationalist philosophy and religion and from the high value he placed on Imagination. Further evidence that it is relevant to consider the framework out of which Blake's Christ developed is suggested by the fact that Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Samuel Clarke, Newton, Priestley, Paley, and Shaftesbury, all of whom we tend to think of writers on philosophy, science, or ethics, also wrote on religious matters. It is true that, in Blake's case, matters which might properly be called 'philosophical' tend to be obscured because they are not usually expressed in the accepted technical philoso-

phical language of period. When he does use such language it is generally in an ironic or otherwise pejorative sense. Nevertheless, Blake's treatment of the figure of Jesus Christ is pervaded by a sensibility which sets Jesus in opposition not only to explicitly religious presentations of that figure, but also to a whole philosophy, a system dependent upon the exaltation of the rational faculty. What Jesus Christ is for Blake, what his message is, how he can be perceived by humanity, and how he functions in relation to humanity together forms a coherent pattern of thought in itself, but it also challenges another more dominant pattern of thought. One of the most interesting aspects of the way in which Blake's Christ comes to the fore of his thought and challenges exaggerated rationalism whether philosophical or religious, is the fact that rationalists--Deists and Latitudinarians in particular--are remarkably silent on the subject of Jesus Christ. Of the Latitudinarians, Cragg writes:

Because they consistently minimised the power of evil, they felt little need to stress salvation...They had little to say about the Incarnation and Atonement, and almost nothing about Christ the Mediator.⁴

The religion of the Deists led them to a similar silence on the subject of Christ:

Perhaps their gravest weakness was their blindness to the significance of Jesus Christ. They were insensitive to his spiritual appeal and unaware of his transforming influence in human history.⁵

Matthew Tindal's Christianity as Old as the Creation

(1730) was also notable for "its consistent silence about Jesus Christ,"⁶ and it is certainly true that Sir Leslie Stephen's summary of the position of this Deist document makes no mention at all of Jesus Christ.⁷ When Deists did speak on the subject of Jesus Christ, it was hardly in terms that Blake would have tolerated. Alfred Benn, for instance, describes Anthony Collins' intention in his "Discourse on Freethinking" as being:

...to vindicate the cause of freethinking in religious questions, that is, the submission of every proposition, as regards its meaning and truth, to the arbitration of reason, or, as he calls it, the use of the understanding, in contradistinction to authority.⁸

If Blake was scarcely likely to have endorsed such an approach in the first place, he was even less likely to have approved the application of Collins' method to the subject of Jesus Christ:

Christ, the first begotten of God, is nothing else but reason, of which all mankind are partakers, and that whosoever live by reason... are Christians; and that such were Socrates and the like.⁹

It will perhaps appear ironic at first, or at least odd, that Locke, whom Blake thought to be the most outrageous exponent of rationalism, was actually more moderate than his followers would lead us to believe. At least in The Reasonableness of Christianity, Locke seemed to think that he should pull the reins in a bit on the unchallenged dominance of reason, as explained in the following excerpts:

We shall see how unsuccessful in this the attempts of philosophers were before our Saviour's

time. How short their several systems came of the perfection of a true and complete morality, is very visible. And if, since that, the Christian philosophers have much outdone them; yet we may observe that the first knowledge of the truths they have added is owing to revelation: though as soon as they are considered, they are found to be agreeable to reason...10

It is no diminishing to revelation, that reason gives its suffrage too to the truths revelation has discovered. But it is our mistake to think that, because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from hence...11

Yet this apparent moderation proves to be a little deceptive. It is true that Locke hastily disassociated himself from the opinions of his "would-be disciple," John Toland,¹² who "had got drunk on 'reason'; it had gone to his head."¹³ However, the trend of his thought undoubtedly placed such a high value on reason that it is hardly surprising that subsequent readers were misled. Even Donald Greene, who entitled his study of the eighteenth century The Age of Exuberance in order to dispel the notion that it was primarily an age of reason, notes that Bishop Berkeley felt compelled to correct "Locke's hankering after rationalism."¹⁴ Sir Leslie Stephen, while acknowledging that Toland's extreme Deism was based on Locke's rationalist philosophy,¹⁵ also notes that Locke maintained that Toland had misunderstood the intention of the famous Essay Concerning Human Understanding.¹⁶ At the same time, Stephen's own summary of Locke's application of the rationalist methodology to Christianity in The Reasonableness of Christianity goes a long way towards explaining

both how Toland was misled and why Blake came to see Locke as the arch-exponent of rationalism:

Locke's view of Christianity entirely ignores the aspects of the faith which have in other days been prominent. A rationalist to the core, he does not even contemplate as possible as appeal to any authority but that of ordinary reason. The truth of Christianity was to be proved like the truth of any historical or philosophical theory. It was simply a question of evidence...But the excellence of that system appeared...from its entire coincidence with the teaching of the unassisted intellect. Christianity is regarded as a new promulgation of the moral law.¹⁷

Although Locke expressed the belief that a fundamental precept of Christianity was that humanity should accept Jesus Christ as its Saviour, yet the spirit of his rationalism encouraged a kind of optimism in humanity's capacity to secure its own happiness through a reasonable adherence to the natural law. Such an attitude found its best defender in the Earl of Shaftesbury.¹⁸ It was also Locke's gift to Deism, although they intended the idea to imply that there was no real need of a Saviour, which is why they generally had so little to say on the subject of Jesus Christ. This diminished sense of the need of a Saviour was complacently juxtaposed with the acknowledgment of Christ as a great moral teacher which fact few people, least of all Locke, saw need to dispute.¹⁹ But Blake's mature thought brings the figure of Jesus Christ to the fore so that although it may appear to a reader unfamiliar with the context that Blake broke the accepted decorum of debate by attacking Locke's philosophical ideas or Newton's

science through the figure of Christ, his method actually makes sense if we realize that he was proposing the whole significance of Jesus Christ as an alternative to the philosophy and religion of reason. This is precisely the reason that some understanding of Locke's philosophy, Newton's science, Deism, and the effects of these on traditional Christianity is necessary in order to realize the profoundly different alternative implicit in Blake's Jesus Christ.

Before proceeding any further we should perhaps pause for a moment and reflect on the concepts 'reason' and 'nature' since, together, they bear so much of the brunt of Blake's attack on behalf of Jesus Christ. That this is so is evident in the following excerpts, the first concerning reason, the second concerning nature as applied to religion:

A Spirit vaulting from a cloud to turn and wind
a fiery Pegasus--Shakespeare. The Horse of Intellect
is leaping from the cliffs of Memory and Reasoning;
it is a barren Rock: it is also called the Barren Waste
of Locke and Newton.

("A Descriptive Catalogue" E536; K581)

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. This was the Religion of the Pharisees who murderd Jesus.

(J. "To the Deists" E199; K682)

Speaking of reason as it was understood and applied in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by the rationalists, Paul Hazard writes:

Well then was she a 'faculty' whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from the lower animals, and wherein it is evident he greatly surpasses them? Yes; that would be acceptable enough, provided no limits were set to the operations of this faculty, provided it could go to any lengths...Its province was to lay down certain definite, incontrovertible principles, and then, in the light of those same principles, to deduce conclusions equally incontrovertible.²⁰

Now, although reason so described hardly accords with Blake's "barren Rock", we can acknowledge that this was how the concept was understood by those who thought of themselves as rationalists. 'Nature' is a slightly more slippery idea to grasp, which may be indicated even in the fact that Blake could use its adjectival form to describe Religion, Philosophy, Morality, and the Heart. S.G. Hefelbower confirms that 'nature' was used in a variety of ways but his outline should help us to bear in mind its shifting usage:

There are also different senses of the concept nature. It sometimes is just the sensible world, the mechanically ordered realm above us. As such it stands in contrast with the spiritual world including God and man, or with the supernatural. Again it is made to include both of these. Then it is the whole of reality, the sum total of all being; and in this sense nothing is supernatural. Sometimes it seems to be an exaggerated idea of the immanence of God in His world. Then nature and God become almost identical; what nature does is the act of Deity. And often it means the native capacities in man, his natural endowment by which he is able to know truth, especially principles of action, God and his duty towards Him. And there are those who consider nature an eternal, unchangeable order, apparently independent of God, to which God and men in willing and acting must conform.²¹

It would appear that Blake applies the word nature in such a way as does not restrict it to any one of

these definitions in particular. However he usually does seem to think of the 'natural' as being that which is restricted to the sensible world and in terms of Hefelbower's reference to the "native capacities in man, his natural endowment", he thinks of it as being in opposition to Imagination. Furthermore, he sometimes, as in the excerpt from the Notebook (quoted in footnote 1 to this chapter), juxtaposes nature and reason as twin enemies in the same camp. On the other hand, Blake does not treat nature in a characteristically Romantic manner:

The Romantic revival radically altered the concept of 'nature'...By the end of the century it was regarded as the supreme manifestation of 'the sublime and the beautiful'...Nature even proved to be an incentive to worship, but it was not always the Christian God before whom men bowed in adoration. A vague pantheism became popular...at best the relations of romanticism with Christianity were nebulous and ill defined.²²

Blake's opposition to this response is most evident in his annotations to Wordsworth's poems. Here he writes that "The Natural Man is at Enmity with God" (E654; K782), and when Wordsworth suggests that the "Influence of Natural Objects" strengthens the Imagination, Blake responds:

Natural Objects always did & do now Weaken
deaden & obliterate Imagination in Me Words-
worth must know that what he Writes Valuable is
Not to be found in Nature Read Michael Angelos
Sonnet vol 2 p.179

(E655; K783)

Blake approved no nature worship, pantheistic or otherwise, for, as he says in The Marriage: "Where man is not nature is barren." In still later

discussion it will become apparent that Blake usually thinks negatively about 'nature' or the 'natural world' because it represents for him part of the division of unity which occurred at the time of Albion's fall.²³ What is important to bear in mind is that, for Blake, the concept of nature, like the concept of reason as it was perceived by contemporary philosophy, detracted from the imaginatively creative view of humanity which he held. As we shall see shortly, he strongly objected to the opinion of humanity as a 'natural' being and nothing more.

It is true that Blake consistently opposed rationalist philosophy and religion but this statement should be qualified. The conclusion might be drawn from Blake's argument with the rationalists in general and with Newton and Locke in particular, that he simply (and perhaps naively) objected to the philosophical method, to science, and to reason in itself. This was not the case. One need not delve very deeply into the prophetic poems to realize that human intellect in its reasoning capacity was intended by Blake to play an equal role with other faculties in human life.²⁴ Jerusalem, which may be regarded as the production of his most mature years as a poet, gives evidence of this at the beginning and end of Chapter 4. In the Preface "To the Christians", Blake writes:

What is the Divine Spirit? is the Holy Ghost any other than an Intellectual Fountain?...What are the Gifts of the Gospel, are they not all Mental Gifts?...O ye Religious discountenance every one among you who shall pretend to despise

Art & Science!...What is the Life of Man but Art?...expel from among you those who pretend to despise the labours of Art & Science, which alone are the labours of the Gospel...Can you think at all & not pronounce heartily! That to Labour in knowledge. is to Build up Jerusalem: and to Despise Knowledge is to Despise Jerusalem & her Builders.

(J. Chpt.4 E229-30; K717)

The first passage particularly expresses Blake's commendation of the proper (i.e. balanced) use of science and, by implication, the reasoning faculty, in the labour of knowledge. The second passage is significant in suggesting that, on the Last Day, Bacon, Newton, and Locke will be 'resurrected' in a new understanding of how reason and imagination should harness their energies together.

On other occasions Blake's intention concerning how he means to use the word reason is less obvious and one must be prepared to shift meanings, or at least to be attentive to Blake's subtlety with words. As the above passages indicate, it is not always the case that Blake means to decry science and reason. The explanation of this shifting attitude of Blake's is vital if we are not to dismiss him as an Enthusiast crank. Basically that explanation lies in Blake's belief that reason, employed by the rationalists in a manner which dismissed all other modes of knowing, was misused and abused. Like imagination or emotion, reason is best applied, in his opinion, when it is encouraged to take account of and work in conjunction with other human faculties. Perhaps in this opinion Blake was not so very different from John

Wesley, though not the Wesley characterized by Sir Leslie Stephen as "the typical enthusiast of the day,"²⁵ and as "indifferent to all philosophical difficulties."²⁶ However "enthusiastic" Wesley may have been, his quarrel was not with reason in itself but rather with excessive reason, a position similar to Blake's.²⁷ As Wesley said: "When you despise or depreciate reason, you must not imagine that you are doing God service; least of all, are you promoting the cause of God when you are endeavouring to exclude reason out of religion."²⁸ Perhaps this indicates greater tolerance on Wesley's part than Blake would have been willing to show but the point is that, while both disapproved of the exaggerated role assigned to reason, they recognized that it had a valid part to play. Whether or not he was correct in his interpretation, Blake firmly believed that the perception of the world represented for him by Newtonian-Lockean rationalism must lock humanity into an extremely rigid framework which would only serve to restrict its understanding of the world. Jesus' "Believe & try", on the other hand, envisaged humanity as a whole stirring to achieve vision.²⁹ Jesus' message demands that humanity make full use of all its powers and hence promotes a much richer experience of the world. The key idea to bear in mind in considering the argument between Blake and the rationalists is that Blake sought a way of life

for humanity which did not compartmentalize, isolate, and then exalt one of the isolated modes of knowing to the detriment of others. Such fragmentation, he believed, could only result in a diminished understanding; such fragmentation could not possibly grasp the vision of Jesus.

Few who write about Locke fail to mention the moderation, almost the modesty, of his philosophical endeavours.³⁰ In this respect Blake may have used the English philosopher harshly by suggesting that Locke was a fanatical rationalist. His professed intentions which were, he stated, "...to be employed as an Under-Labourer in clearing Ground a little, and removing some of the Rubbish, that lies in the way to knowledge..."³¹ were indeed modest. Yet no one would dispute either that Locke was "the moving spirit of the eighteenth century,"³² or that his philosophy of reason was the cause of this influence.³³

At the beginning of the chapter it was stated that Blake's Jesus developed out of a view of humanity which was at odds with dominant philosophical and religious trends. One of the by-products of Locke's rationalism was a depreciation of imagination. Bearing in mind that Blake believed that it was through the imaginative faculty that humanity could grasp the vision of Jesus Christ (who, in one sense, also dwells in human imagination), it becomes clear why the poet reacted so strongly to Locke's position as stated, for example, in the following passage:

/

But what use is all this fine knowledge of men's own imaginations to a man that inquires after the reality of things? It matters not what men's fancies are, it is the knowledge of things only is to be prized; it is this alone gives a value to our reasoning, and preference to one man's knowledge over another's, that it is of things as they really are, and not of dreams and fancies...if our knowledge of our ideas terminate in them, and reach no further, where there is something further intended, our most serious thoughts will be of little more use than the reveries of a crazy brain; and the truths built thereon of no more weight than the discourses of a man who sees things clearly in a dream, and with great assurance utters them. But I hope, before I have done, to make it evident that this way of certainty, by the knowledge of our own ideas, goes a little further than bare imagination; and I believe it will appear that all the certainty of general truths a man has lies in nothing else.³⁴

In the calm and dispassionate style so characteristic of Locke's Essay, the philosopher managed, in a few sentences, to dismiss the products of imagination or, at least, to disparage them in such a way as to make any reasonable person embarrassed at ever having thought otherwise. Yet Blake's Jesus is only available to humanity through imaginative vision so that, from his point of view, what Locke's philosophy does is to effectively quash the very door of perception through which humanity grasps the vision of Jesus. That is why Blake was so passionate in his opposition to rationalism. It was noted earlier in the chapter that Blake did not usually agree to discuss these matters in the philosophical terminology of the day. It is a sign of the urgency of his disagreement that, on this subject, he did choose to detail his position in a more prosaic, philosophical

style. We turn now, therefore, to a brief outline of Locke's epistemology, followed by Blake's response. Only when we have grasped the fundamental difference between these two positions will we be able to see why Lockean rationalism applied to religion must have denied both the way of perceiving Jesus which Blake envisaged and the particular Jesus figure itself which emerges in the poetry.

Locke's epistemology is based on experience. The source of all ideas is the information imprinted upon the mind by the senses. This first stage comprises simple ideas, while complex ideas are formed by a process of reflection during which the mind associates simple ideas with each other in an appropriate manner.³⁵ Knowledge of this type is called "sensitive", as having the senses as its immediate source.³⁶ Knowledge of the self--of one's own existence--is called "intuitive" and is a kind of knowledge which is "the highest of all Humane Certainty."³⁷ "Demonstrative" knowledge gives, for example, certainty of God's existence.³⁸ Very briefly, Locke formulates the following definition: "Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas."³⁹ Sensations from the external world "imprint" themselves upon the blank mind which Locke describes as "white Paper, void of all Characters."⁴⁰ It is difficult to locate any clear explanation in the Essay of just how this process occurs, in other

words, of just how these vital sensations actually imprint themselves on the mind. One gets the impression that Locke was not certain of this himself. Perhaps it is curious that he should stake his whole argument on a process which he could not explain, but unlike David Hartley, Locke was not interested to explain the physical aspects of the question.⁴¹ He seemed to think that this facet of the enquiry was beyond the scope of his endeavours: "These are speculations which, however curious and entertaining, I shall decline, as lying out of my way in the design I am now upon."⁴² Yet, as Blake clearly understood, this was the crux of the argument between himself and Locke for, as we shall see, Blake believed that it was the mind which actively imagined and for this precise reason was able to perceive the vision of Jesus. But Locke was confident that the mind was not fundamentally active, but passive: "For in bare naked perception the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives, it cannot avoid perceiving."⁴³ Blake disagreed (a) with the proposition that perception is an involuntary activity; (b) with the proposition that human perception is limited by organs of sense; and (c) with the proposition that knowledge is gained by reflection. In other words, he rejected the whole package. In "There is No Natural Religion", Blake answered Locke in a series of propositions of his own. The fourth and sixth propositions betray his distaste for the

Lockean position:

IV None could have other than natural or organic thoughts if he had none other but organic perceptions

VI The desires & perceptions of man untaught by any thing but organs of sense, must be limited to objects of sense. Conclusion. 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

("There is No Natural Religion" E1; K97)

One may be of the opinion that Blake twisted and deliberately misinterpreted Locke; Blake believed that he was only presenting the logical conclusion to Locke's propositions. At least Blake was right that Locke adhered to the acceptance of there being five natural or organic senses.⁴⁴ Blake did not deny that we possess five senses, he just refused to follow where Locke believed the limitation to five senses carried one. In the above propositions from "There is No Natural Religion" Blake turned the sense perception argument back on itself by saying that sense organs can only produce organic thoughts and organic desires. Blake had a very disparaging term for this kind of perception: he called it "vegetative" and contrasted it with imaginative perception, just as he contrasted the vegetative and imaginative worlds:

This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity it is the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite & Eternal whereas the world of Generation or Vegetation is Finite...

("A Vision of the Last Judgment" E545; K605)

Vegetative perception results from the belief that humanity is the sum of its organic parts, its five senses. Blake rejected this definition of humanity in response to Locke's rational empiricism because it could not take account of his view of humanity as imaginative creator. He began his argument with a totally different assumption which is that humanity's perception is intimately bound up with its "desires." Locke would strongly have disapproved the presence of this word in the discussion at all because it is a feeling and would be, in his opinion, irrelevant to rational analysis. However Blake did not introduce the word just in order to be difficult; it was there because it was an important consideration for him in the subject at hand. The relation of desire to perception for Blake was that he believed humanity's perception--its capacity to experience, to know, to understand--was fitted to its desires. In the (b) version of "There is No Natural Religion" (which should only be read in conjunction with the (a) version), Blake directed the argument into the religious realm. With this in mind one need not fear that Blake in any way lost sight of the dignity of human "desire" by restricting it to the satisfaction of physical needs. If Locke wanted to characterize humanity in terms of sense information which reason appropriately analyzes, Blake wanted to say that humanity is characterized by desire. Just as reason is complementary to sensory perception in

Locke's analysis, so "Poetic Genius" is the complement of desire in Blake's. This connection is made in the conclusion to the sixth proposition of "There is No Natural Religion" as previously quoted. Blake had argued earlier that if humanity had only natural senses then its desires must be limited to the realm of the natural or organic. Likewise the satisfaction of those desires must be limited to natural or organic fulfillment. However it was patently obvious to Blake that humanity had desires which did not originate in organic or natural perception. This was so because humanity was more than the sum of the five senses and anyway, perception was not primarily the operation of the senses. It was the operation of the Poetic Genius, later to be called the Imagination by Blake. This implied two things. Firstly, the presence of Poetic Genius enabled humanity to desire the infinite, to desire that which was beyond the grasp of the five senses. Secondly, the perception and living of the infinite life was available to humanity because the means of perception--Poetic Genius--was active rather than passive. Perception viewed in this way makes of humanity a creator, a 'former' rather than a passive recipient. Locke wanted to argue that humanity was in the image of God because it was rational and reasonable. Blake, on the other hand, wanted to argue that humanity was in the image of God because it was, like God, a creator. This creativeness was

not meant by Blake only in the physical sense, though he did use in this way as when Los 'creates' Urizen after his separation from the Eternals in The First Book of Urizen and when Milton 'creates' Urizen in Milton, "Book the First".⁴⁵ He also meant that through the creative imagination humanity is able to perceive the vision of Jesus and to participate in it, activities which are not organic. He cogently outlined the situation which would result if infinite desires were destined to remain unfulfilled:

VI If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing, despair must be his eternal lot.

VII The desire of Man being Infinite the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite

("There is No Natural Religion (b) E2; K97)

The extraordinary difference between Blake and Locke is glaring when the above passage is compared with the following extract from Locke's Essay. From Blake's point of view humanity must despair if it desires to know or to be or to possess that which cannot be fulfilled. Locke, on the other hand, writes:

If by this inquiry into the nature of understanding, I can discover the powers thereof, how far they reach, to what things they are in any degree proportionate, and where they fail us, I suppose it may be of more use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension; to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether; and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities.⁴⁶

In the same situation that Blake foresaw despair, Locke counselled resignation and less "meddling".

We have seen that philosophy and religion were

frequently, in both Locke's time and Blake's, overlapping enquires. Locke himself, in 1695, published The Reasonableness of Christianity which, whether he intended it or not, provided fodder for the Deist cannons.⁴⁷ We have also noted that part of this influence was to reduce the significance of Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ That Blake, therefore, should have felt Locke's philosophy to be a direct threat to his own conception of Jesus Christ was probably justified. R.W. Harris writes of Locke's view of Jesus:

This, then, was the true purpose of the Saviour, to renew the divine sanction behind natural law; to restore the necessary connection between reason and religion...Locke saw man guided through life by the law of nature and reason, reinforced by Christ's teaching that law was in accordance with the law of God...With all his veneration for Christ, he was in danger of regarding him primarily as a great moral teacher, and thus laying himself open to the charge of Socinianism or worse.⁴⁹

Here, then, was the crux of the opposition between Blake and Locke in the religious rather than the strictly philosophical argument. Locke's philosophy led him to see Christ primarily as a rational moral teacher: "There is not, I think, any of the duties of morality which he has not, somewhere or other, by himself and his apostles, inculcated over and over again to his followers in express terms."⁵⁰ The severity of Jesus' moral teaching was stressed by Locke:

What he expects from his followers, he has sufficiently declared as a legislator: and that they may not be deceived, by mistaking the doctrine of faith, free grace, and the pardon and forgiveness of sins, and salvation by him...he

more than once declares to them for what omissions and miscarriages he shall judge and condemn to death, even those who have owned him and done miracles in his name...⁵¹

Perhaps this is the logical extension of a philosophy which conceives that "the knowledge of a God, be the most natural discovery of humane Reason"⁵² but it is a view of Jesus Christ which is in total opposition to the one conceived by Blake. In one of his last comments on Jesus written, according to Keynes, not before 1818,⁵³ Blake presented a view of Jesus Christ which was a fundamental refutation of Locke's view:

There is not one Moral Virtue that Jesus Inculcated but Plato & Cicero did Inculcate before him; what then did Christ Inculcate? Forgiveness of Sins. This alone is the Gospel, & this is the Life & Immortality brought to light by Jesus, Even the Covenant of Jehovah, which is This: If you forgive one another your Trespases, so shall Jehovah forgive you, That he himself may dwell among you; but if you Avenge, you Murder the Divine Image, & he cannot dwell among you; word del. because you Murder him he arises again, & you deny that he is Arisen, & are blind to Spirit.

(The Everlasting Gospel.K757)

Nor would Locke have been likely to agree with Blake's statement that "no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments .". Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse. not from rules." (MHH E42; K158).

Blake's opposition to Locke, then, can be charted as follows. He first denied the premises of Locke's philosophy, grounded as it was in a blank, passive mind, in perception limited by the five senses, and in the exaltation of reason. Next he denied that God or Jesus could be discovered through the application of rationalist principles. Finally, he denied the

view of Jesus Christ as reinforcer of the natural law and as moral legislator. Gerald Cragg succinctly captures the spirit of the religious application of rationalist philosophy which must have seemed to Blake, in every way, another "Murder" of the Divine Image:

God himself was expected to produce credentials satisfactory to reason. Christianity is the religion of reason; the Christian God is the God of Nature. The title of Locke's work, The Reasonableness of Christianity, epitomizes the basic conviction of the age. In this sense, rationalism was an assumption common to all the disputants; it was not a doctrine about religion but an approach to its problems.⁵⁴

The question of how one perceives and the conception of Jesus Christ may appear at first to be unrelated subjects of enquiry. But in fact the criterion one uses to judge one area of knowledge will inevitably affect another. In Locke's case, the application of rationalism and natural law to the figure of Jesus Christ led him, perhaps unintentionally, to perceive Christ as a legislator of the natural law and in all ways a figure in accordance with reason. Blake, on the other hand, started with imagination as the operative faculty of perception and this led him both to a different idea of how one perceives Christ and what Christ is. One might suspect that Blake's emphasis on the individual perceiver or imaginer leaves him with as many privately created worlds as there are creators. In one sense this is true. However, Blake was not concerned to question the homogeneity or consonance of the external world nor was he a solipsist

who denied the validity and truth of other imaginative perceptions. In this respect he differed from Berkeley, who was forced by his philosophical position to posit the existence of an external, omniscient mind of God in which all reality was perceived whether individuals perceived it or not.⁵⁵ Blake did not press his argument this far but he was adamant that the significant aspect of perception was the active imagination of the perceiver. When it comes to Jesus Christ, imagination is crucial, for not only is that how one grasps the vision of Jesus (rather than through the use of reason), but also that is the human faculty in which Jesus Christ dwells and makes of humanity a "Temple & Tabernacle of the Most High." Locke fundamentally disagreed:

For, to this crying up of Faith in opposition to Reason, we may, I think, in good measure ascribe those Absurdities that fill almost all the Religions which possess and divide Mankind. For Men have been principled with an Opinion, that they must not consult Reason in the Things of Religion, however apparently contradictory to common Sense and the very Principles of all their Knowledge, have let loose their Fancies and natural Superstition; and have been led into so strange Opinions, and extravagant Practices in Religion, that a considerate Man cannot but stand amazed at their Follies, and judge them so far from being acceptable to the great and wise God, that he cannot avoid thinking them ridiculous and offensive to a sober good Man. So that, in effect Religion which should most distinguish us from Beasts, and ought most peculiarly to elevate us, as rational Creatures, above Brutes, is that wherein Men often appear most irrational, and more senseless than Beasts themselves.⁵⁶

Locke obviously had Enthusiasts of all persuasions in mind when he made this harsh censure. He certainly would have had little use for Blake's approach which

depended so heavily on imagination.

The major function of Jesus Christ at the end of Jerusalem is to effect a unity of the scattered zoas and of humanity, in the form of Albion, with the universe and with himself, i.e. with Jesus.⁵⁷ However, as will become apparent in Chapter Seven, this was not a unity which denied the crucial importance of the individual, be it human, tree, or rock. In this belief Blake again found himself at odds with the philosophical legacy of the seventeenth century to the eighteenth. In "All Religions Are One", he says: "As all men are alike in outward form, So (and with the same infinite variety) all are alike in the Poetic Genius." The constant shift, expressed in the later poetry as the relationship between the "minute particular" and the "One Man", is intimated here. It is a delicate balance which Blake attempted never to betray. Variety and similarity--unity in diversity--lies at the heart of Blake's rejection of the reductive norms of rationalism. Donald Ault in his book, Visionary Physics, correctly perceives that in Newton's scientific system, Blake recognized what he considered to be a "Satanic parody" of his own imaginative vision. In part, this reaction was due to the fact that, in seeking to discover the order of the universe, Newton attempted to reduce everything to a single rule: all things must be seen to conform to one norm. Newton wanted to clarify and articulate to others the general law which made the universe the well-ordered system

he perceived it to be, but in so doing Blake feared that he denied both the imaginative faculty of humanity and the uniqueness of things in the universe. Two Newtonian themes in particular offended Blake's imaginative sensibilities. One was that Newton was inclined to perceive the universe as composed of millions of 'dead' or lifeless particles of matter which were acted upon by a 'living' force: he made a strong distinction between the particles and the force:

The Vis inertiae is a passive Principle by which Bodies persist in their Motion or Rest, receive Motion in proportion to the Force impressing it, and resist as much as they are resisted. By this Principle alone there never could have been any Motion in the World. Some other Principle was necessary for putting Bodies into Motion; and now they are in Motion, some other Principle is necessary for conserving the Motion.⁵⁸

Blake, on the other hand, saw the whole universe as spiritually informed and 'alive', frequently even calling it "human". He therefore reacted against the idea of things beings acted upon from outside themselves and subject to forces beyond their control. He also objected to Newton's generalizing, to the conception that everything conformed to a single law for he feared that the uniqueness of the minute particular was totally disregarded in this process. Blake's emphasis on the minute particular may also seem to be atomistic but in his vision, seeing the minute particular or seeing the whole simply depended upon whether the perceiver perceived with contracted or expanded vision, as is clear in the following

extract from Jerusalem:

...so he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect
whole
Must see it in its Minute Particulars;

But General Forms have their vitality in Parti-
culars: & every
Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the
Divine Jesus.

(J. chpt.4 E249; K738)

Other examples have been noted in which Blake freely argued against philosophical concepts with 'spiritual' language. The following passage could have been expressed in 'secular' or 'philosophical' terminology but, as is common in Blake's work, the importance of the philosophical was how it affected the spiritual. Hence he expressed his hostility to the 'one law' of Newton in a description of contracted and expanded visions of Jesus:

Mutual in one anothers love and wrath all re-
newing
We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite
senses
We behold multitude; or expanding: we behold as
one,
As One Man all the Universal Family; and that
One Man
We call Jesus: and he in us and we in him,
Living in perfect harmony in Eden...

(J. chpt.2
E178; K664-65)

Newton's errors, from Blake's point of view, were twofold. Firstly, he focused solely on one mode of knowing, namely reason. Secondly, Newton, according to Blake, suffered from 'contracted vision' and saw only the conglomeration of atomistic units functioning in time and space; he was not able to expand his vision and see that all these functioning particulars

could be understood as the pulsings and stirrings of one body. In Blake's vision, it is true, there is also a general or universal form, but this form, which is Jesus Christ, by its very nature, 'protects' the individuality of every minute particular:

...the Divine
Humanity, who is the only General and Universal
Form
To which all Linements tend & seek with love &
sympathy
All broad & general principles belong to bene-
volence
Who protects minute particulars, every one in
their own identity.

(J. chpt.2 E183; K672)

Thus, while each minute particular is a participant in the whole body, it is also in itself reflective of the whole, a "world in a grain of sand." The protective nature of Blake's universal form, the Divine Humanity, or Jesus Christ, denotes one of the most important statements which Blake made concerning the relationship between humanity and Jesus Christ. In the early poetry Blake did not articulate this connection because he had not yet recognized the full implications of an identity of the Poetic Genius as the true Man with Jesus. He was at this time, however, making claims for the Poetic Genius which contradicted the philosophy of Locke and the science of Newton. Perhaps Blake would have been sceptical of the fact that Newton was a man "of deep religious conviction,"⁵⁹ but if so, it would have been because Newton's science ended with a world view and a spiritual perception which Blake would have seen as a

"Murder" of the vision of Jesus:

After creating the world and fixing its laws, had God any further function to fulfil? Boyle believed that God kept the world from disintegrating. Newton assigned him two specific tasks: to prevent the stars from collapsing in the middle of space and to keep the mechanism of the world in good repair.⁶⁰

In every way, Blake's Jesus Christ was a challenge--indeed a refutation--of the God presented in this philosophy.

Biblical Exegesis and the Spirit of Free Enquiry

The eighteenth century witnessed the birth of another intellectual trend which, like the impact of rationalism, presented a challenge to tradition and authority. This was the advent of Biblical exegesis and critical interpretation. In the preceding chapter it was noted that Blake, like most of the adherents to the radical religious sects, did not subscribe to a literal interpretation of Scripture. Obviously this affected the development of his conception of Jesus Christ as he freely exerted his creative imagination in reading the Gospels. While the Church did not encourage the laity to make independent investigations of the Bible at this time, such exploration was undertaken and it was not only the radical sects and the actively anti-religious who became involved in it. Alfred Cobban comments on the orthodoxy of Richard Simon, who was chiefly responsible for laying the cornerstone of Biblical criticism in England:

Richard Simon...was a Catholic, an Oratorian,

a man with no sceptical or unorthodox intentions, simply bitten with the bug of textual scholarship...Like Spinoza, Richard Simon drew attention to the facts of internal evidence--alterations in style and language, the recording of events that occurred after the death of the supposed writer...which threw doubt on the accepted attribution of the Pentateuch to the authorship of Moses.⁶¹

The beginnings of scriptural analysis in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is relevant to our purposes because the very fact that secular methods of scholarship were now applied to the Bible increased the threat to the authority of the Church. In other words, while the radical religious sects may have wandered to the extreme of virtually dismissing Scripture altogether, there were others, like Richard Simon and William Lowth, who were devout defenders of the faith and who yet felt that they were unable to accept the authority of the Church fathers on matters of Scripture without question or examination. This reinforces the point of view that although Blake's conception of Jesus Christ was indeed his own, yet he was not unique in this independent response to the Bible. William Lowth, in Directions for a Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures, acknowledged that even if the Scriptures were interpreted privately, there should still be an appeal to "...the Ancient Fathers and Councils, or to the Authority of the present Guides and Governors of the Church."⁶² On the other hand, Lowth strongly disapproved "...that locking up the Scriptures, and taking the Key of Knowledge out of the Peoples Hands..."⁶³

and concluded his apology with a quotation from Numbers which Blake also quotes at the end of his Preface to Milton: "I shall not scruple to declare, that I heartily joyn in that generous Wish of Moses, (a) Would God all the Lord's People were Prophets."⁶⁴

Hans W. Frei introduces his book on seventeenth and eighteenth-century hermeneutics by saying: "If historical periods may be said to have a single chronological and geographical starting point, modern theology began in England at the turn from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries."⁶⁵ It was noted that Biblical criticism, like rationalism, offered a challenge to authority, but in some instances it was, in fact, a natural extention of the use of reason in other spheres of enquiry. This was Robert Grant's view of Spinoza's motivation in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, published in 1670:

Spinoza's distrust of the authority of scripture or of the Church is more than equalled by his confidence in the powers of "impartial" reason, working without assumptions. He lives in the springtime of rationalism.⁶⁶

Since Thomas Hobbes basically viewed theology as irrational and its statements for the most part as absurd when considered in the light of reason,⁶⁷ it is hardly surprising that he too, in the Leviathan of 1657, minimized the importance of the authority of Scripture.⁶⁸ This was clearly also true of the Deists' approach to Scripture and Anthony Collins made no secret of the fact that, in his Scriptural investigations, he was a student of Locke. For such

thinkers, says Frei, the "...meaningfulness of the biblical author's language must thus be governed by the same criteria that govern the meaning of any proposition."⁶⁹ Hence it would be misleading to suggest that Blake necessarily agreed with the content of what these critics of the Bible wrote because some were as much under the influence of reason in this enquiry as they were in every other. Rather, the importance of Biblical exegesis is that it offered the possibility of suggesting independent and original opinions about what was set down in holy Scripture. That Blake fully exploited this freedom is outrageously evident in plate 23 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and also in The Everlasting Gospel, but his original reading of Scripture also pervades the prophetic poems, most particularly in his conception of the figure of Jesus Christ. Hans Frei says: "Hermeneutical theory, like all other theory in the latter part of the eighteenth century, obeyed the slogan: Dare to think."⁷⁰ Certainly Blake 'obeyed' that slogan as well as anyone when he read the Scriptures and, although he would have disagreed with Spinoza's generally rationalistic treatment of the Bible, yet he would have approved of the philosopher's defence of that enquiry:

...I conclude that freedom of opinion belongs of right to all, and that the privilege of interpreting articles of faith is to be left to every man according to his capacity, no one being judged pious or impious save by his works.⁷¹

Spinoza searched the Scriptures for "sound moral doc-

trine" believing that "only in this way can its divineness be demonstrated."⁷² Blake, on the other hand, marvelled at the inspiration and visionary genius of the prophets and certainly he was less concerned with the stylistic niceties and details of verifiable historical accuracy than with the gospel and vision of Jesus Christ. But his very freedom to interpret independently as he did is in part a reflection of developing scholarship on the Bible. He may be considered as one of those who benefited indirectly from the enquiries of Richard Simon, an influence which Paul Hazard does not underestimate:

But there were many whom he stirred on to new and daring flights. For example, in 1707, a Neopolitan, one Biagio Garofalo, showed that there are many metrical passages in the Bible, a number of them in rhyme. Would he have dared to draw attention to these traces of human handiwork in the sacred text, if the author of the Histoire critique had not paved the way for people to say what they liked, however bold it might be?⁷³

In Chapter One, the development of Blake's Jesus Christ was placed in the context of other presentations of that figure in order to indicate that, while Blake's thought was, in many respects, original and daring, yet there was a tradition and a framework which helps to explain his position. An awareness of the enormous influence of Newton and Locke enriches our understanding of that context in a number of ways. Firstly, although by Blake's time the notion of reason as the sole guiding light of humanity had begun its decline, it still influenced most areas of enquiry.

This resulted in a depreciation, indeed, often a ridicule of imagination and vision, for these had become associated with the religious Enthusiasts of the most extreme persuasions. Since imagination was, for Blake, the key determining faculty of perception; since it was the faculty through which humanity perceived spiritual realities; since it was central to an understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, it was inevitable that he should clash with the rationalists' claims. Secondly, the fact that philosophers and scientists, among them Newton, Locke, Hobbes, and Hume also wrote on religious matters, it becomes more readily understandable why Blake directly attacked "Natural Religion and Natural Philosophy and Natural Morality" (J. chpt.3, Preface), in the name of Jesus Christ. The followers of these persuasions he equated with the murderers of Jesus, while Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, and Hume he charged with being "Pharisees & Hypocrites" for decrying and ridiculing the "Spiritually Religious" (J. chpt.3, Preface). If philosophers believed they had the right to attack religious enthusiasm, imagination, and vision on the grounds that they were but the products of superstition and were therefore incompatible with reason, Blake believed he had an equal right to attack rationalist philosophers on the grounds that they totally misunderstood the message of Jesus Christ. He did not develop his Christ figure in order to do this, but certainly it was one of the inevitable consequences

of faith in a Jesus whom he conceived as "The Divine Vision." In Chapter Three we shall examine the way in which Blake's reaction to eighteenth-century intellectual trends informed his early poetry, particularly with regard to religion, imagination, and the figure of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

"EARLY GLIMPSES OF BLAKE'S JESUS"

In his early poetry Blake's references to God as being immanent or transcendent are less significant than the spirit or character of God and the way in which humanity experiences him in this world. In other words, when Blake spoke positively about God or Christ in his more religious early poems, he was careful to communicate that, whatever God is, one only properly experiences or finds him, or ought to seek him, in the realm of human reality. Even the child speakers in The Songs of Innocence who might seem to refer to an external being still speak only out of their present experience. This tendency reflects Blake's difference from the mystic, who seeks God outside experience or at least in more esoteric forms of experience; and from the rationalist, who seeks to posit God's existence through abstract, philosophical argument.

F.X. Shea's article, "The Romantic Movement and Religion,"¹ offers an interesting insight into the religious aims of Romanticism which relates to this aspect of Blake studies. Shea argues that it was the intention of the Romantics to "re-locate reality." By reality, Shea means truth or divinity--the godhead. In his article, Shea points to the fact that the eighteenth-century rationalists, the Cambridge Platonists, and, in fact, the majority of intellectuals, had located reality in terms of truth or the godhead outside human experience, in another reality generally

assumed to be composed of ideas. Shea's interpretation of the religious thrust of Romanticism is that Romantic thinkers wanted to re-locate truth and the godhead within this reality, in human experience:

I would agree...that the experience/reality equation came about as a result of the Western world's attempt to realize the implications of its profound belief in the Incarnated God. For such a belief presents the principle of ultimate authentication, God, who alone enters into the human state and is therefore, to be sought there. Truth and human experience become identified.²

One very marked effect of Blake's writing, in terms of its religious and psychological intention, is precisely to inspire such a re-location of reality. By Blake's time there was an established tendency to emphasize the otherness of God, a tendency which, in Blake's opinion, had led to numerous ill effects in human religious experience. These ill effects are outlined with bleak directness in such Songs of Experience as "Earth's Answer", "Holy Thursday", "The Chimney Sweeper", "The Garden of Love", "The Little Vagabond", and "The Human Abstract". Many of these songs reflect such themes as hypocritical holiness, cruel conduct which results from repressed desire thwarted and re-channelled into counterfeit, sanctimonious behaviour, and the appalling victimization of innocents. Blake felt a need to re-emphasize the incarnate God/human, the God who "became a child like me", the "man of woe" in order to tear the eyes of humanity away from the sky wherein God was presumed to dwell, back to its own experience, its own human community.

He was not without precedent in this re-location of reality or even in this emphasis on the 'here and now-ness' of Christ. Certainly the German Romantics, Hamann and Herder in particular, sought to revitalize and 're-humanize' the image of God.³ It was also, of course, a main concern of the unorthodox English sects to proclaim the internal nature of the godhead.⁴ Furthermore there are several Biblical precedents as, for example, expressed in John's gospel:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one..."
(John 17: 20-23)

"Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?... Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me... At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."
(John 14: 10-11; 20)

Certainly one way to interpret the latter passage is to say that Jesus clearly identifies the Father, the Son, and the man, Phillip, to whom he speaks. At any rate the passage does not highlight the mystery or inscrutability of the Father or the Son.

D.G. Gillham correctly indicates that Blake does not actually mention Christ by name in the Songs of Innocence. There are, however, five references to God and several other references to "the maker", a "man of woe", "the Lamb", the "Shepherd", and the "kingly lion". The fact that Blake avoided naming or specifically identifying the Christian God or,

more importantly, Christ himself, indicates two things. One of these is discussed by Gillham in his analysis of "The Shepherd":

Blake's poem preaches nothing, and though we might call it a Christian one it is informed, not so much by Christian thinking as by the underlying reality of love on which much of that thinking is established...there is no important reason why this perception should not belong to 'heathen turk or jew' as well as to Christian. Blake is, in short, attempting to get down to the roots of religion in the human soul, rather than follow the branches of ramifying doctrines.⁵

Gillham's insight is significant for he perceives Blake's concern to portray the divine as it is expressed in the mundane realm of everyday human experience. The second point in this connection is that, at the time of writing of the Songs of Innocence (circa 1789) and the Songs of Experience, which were completed by 1794, Blake had not envisaged the full rich Christ who would figure prominently in the prophetic poems. The early poems declare Blake's interest in and attraction to the Christ figure, but he had not yet visualized the extent of Christ' redemptive powers. Yet the Songs still demonstrate that, even at an early stage, Blake sensed something unique and inspiring about Jesus, some quality or vision which the eighteenth-century established church had, in his opinion, failed to grasp.

In spite of the fact that the vision is still unripe in this period, the Songs still impress the reader with their obvious concern for the type of perception and participation in this world which

fosters a healthy religious soul. Such healthiness is communicated in those poems which are centred in the here and now rather than being 'other-oriented'. It is not difficult, with the exception of the "Introduction" to the Songs of Experience and possibly "The Tyger", to establish a fairly keen split between the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience on the basis of their being either grounded in experience or pervaded by a sense of abstraction. With the exception of the two aforementioned songs, the orientation of the Experience songs in terms of the characters' understanding of God is entirely other-directed. The perception of God experienced by the characters in these poems is that of Nobodaddy, the jealous, demanding God of Moses who issues commandments and punishes those who do not conform to the letter of the law. Significantly, the fact that Jesus' name is not even mentioned in the Songs of Innocence conveys an impression which is the reverse of that communicated by the Songs of Experience. Blake's understanding of the 'true' Christ and the meaning of 'true' religion is gradually disclosed, not by reference to another reality, but through the insights and behaviour either of the speakers themselves or of the relationships and situations which they describe. In the Songs of Innocence which deal directly or indirectly with the subject of God or Christ or humanity's reflection upon its own divine nature, it is notable that all, even those which ostensibly imply a God or

Christ who is, in some way, external, place greater emphasis on the presentness of God or Christ--the meaning of God or Christ as it is actually reflected in human experience. "The Divine Image", "The Lamb", and "The Little Boy Found" make explicit allusion to an outside, orthodox experience of God. Yet even these poems convey the impression that this is not the result of a rationalist analysis of what God must logically be, but rather the genuine outpouring of feeling which is, at that moment, experienced by the speaker. Blake's opposition to extreme rationalism, expressed earlier in didactic prose, is here expressed in poetic form.

"The Shepherd", placed immediately after the "Introduction" in the Erdman edition of Blake's works, provides a good example of Blake's religious position in the early poems:

How sweet is the Shepherd sweet lot,
From the morn to the evening he strays:
He shall follow his sheep all the day
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs innocent call,
And he hears the ewes tender reply,
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.

D.G. Gillham's analysis makes the point that a relationship between the Shepherd and Christ is not the main thrust of the poem. Rather its aim is to express "...the operation of watchfulness and affection on which the relationship is based."⁶ I have no argument with Gillham's point that there is an emphasis on the underlying care and love and that Blake par-

ticularly wants the reader to be aware of this. However, in the light of the later poetry, particularly the prophetic poems, it is pertinent to indicate the strong similarities between Blake's Shepherd and the image of Christ as the Good Shepherd in John 10: 11-15. The claim is not that Blake sought to write a poem based on this Biblical passage. Rather the point is that Blake undoubtedly found numerous precedents for the particular Christ figure which he developed over the years in the presentation of Christ in the Gospels themselves. John 10 is such an example:

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd
giveth his life for the sheep. 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. I am the good shepherd,
and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As
the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father:
and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Blake's poem is less didactic and perhaps a little more sentimental. But there are certainly intimations that the Shepherd of his poem is modelled on the good shepherd of the above passage. The reason, for instance, that the Shepherd's lot is sweet, is that the relationship which exists between himself and his charges is one of caring, familiarity, and trust. He spends his day wandering around the hills as the sheep stray, which they are only able to do safely because he is not a mere "hireling" but a shepherd who cares for his own. On the other hand, the peace

which the sheep enjoy springs from their awareness of protection and their trust in the Shepherd. Hence the Shepherd as Christ figure discloses love and protectiveness as Christ-like characteristics. The absence of any Nobodaddy orders or punishment or repressive commands is notable in the poem. The key to the entire relationship and to the peace which pervades the poem is love. It sounds rather simplistic to say so. Yet it is precisely the point that Blake wants to make. In other words, God, Christ, and shepherds, the poet says, do not have to relate to humanity (or sheep) through demands of obedience and punishment of transgression. Blake was not interested in a shepherd or a Christ who related to his charges in master/slave fashion. He portrayed instead a Shepherd whose relationship with his sheep was based on love and caring. Precisely this insight, tentatively explored in these early poems, would ultimately prove to be one of the reasons that a character such as Orc could not prove to be a satisfactory Saviour.⁷ Orc's code is based simply upon the violent rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor. If it includes love at all, it is only love for the oppressed, not a love which can also take account of the fallen condition of the oppressor. Such a code may be suitable for a leader of revolution but even now Blake seemed to have an insight (even though he still supported political rebellion at this stage) that it was, ironically, not revolutionary enough

for the true Saviour who is inspired by Imagination. In a later poem Blake's Christ, like the Christ of John 10, lays down his life for his 'sheep'. Also at a later stage, Blake referred to the relationship between the Divine Humanity (or Jesus Christ) and the minute particular (or every individual person) as a "protective" one (J. chpt.2 E183; K672). Both these Christ-like qualities are manifest in the character of the Shepherd.

It was noted that the speakers in the Innocence poems usually seek God in this world, seeking an understanding of godliness through the loving acts of others around them. And it is God, not 'a' God or 'a' deity to which they respond. Loving, caring, and gentleness become god-like qualities in the world of the Innocent. This naive awareness is beautifully expressed in "The Lamb", perhaps the most well-known of the Songs though, like "The Tyger", not the most well-read:

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest wooly clothing bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

(E8-9; K115)

In the repetitive rhyme of children's nursery verses, Blake reveals a number of insights not only about the way in which a child perceives the world, but also about Christ. Although this poem takes the form of the question and answer monologue of a child as it gazes at a lamb, yet one is strongly reminded of Keats' poem, "To Autumn", insofar as both poems are enchantingly whole and self-sufficient, without any signs of an "irritable reaching after fact or reason." The difference is that in the case of "To Autumn", it is the poet, Keats, who exhibits "negative capability" in the content and structure of the poem itself, while in the case of "The Lamb", it is the speaker within the poem who perceives the world with negative capability. One of the results of this openness of perception is clearly the happy confidence of the child. There is a merry, teasing quality in the question and answer structure which springs from the child's naive assurance of what he is saying. One is reminded of the child who has learned a new riddle and can hardly bear to give the adult an opportunity to guess the punch-line because he or she is so full of the excitement of knowing the answer and cannot bear to withhold it. This teasing, self-confident tone is reinforced by the repetition of the question and answer: "Little Lamb who made thee,/ Dost thou know who made thee"; "Little Lamb I'll tell thee,/Little Lamb I'll tell thee!" As a reader who lives in Experience, one wonders perhaps whence the

child gets this confidence, how he can be so certain of what he so obviously knows. Conversely, one might be tempted to dismiss the child's answer simply on the grounds that it is a child's response. Yet although Blake said that he had written songs such that "Every child may joy to hear," he did not forget that he had an adult audience as well. One sometimes runs the risk of dismissing the insights of the Songs rather too lightly because they seem so simplistic in comparison with the much more complex prophetic poems. Yet these Songs contain the seeds of most of Blake's mature thought, notably on the subject of God. Certainly this is true of "The Lamb", for in this poem, a good deal of the child's self-assurance springs from his simplistic identification of the lamb, himself, and the Lamb of God. The child intuits a fundamentally intimate inter-relationship between lamb, child, and Lamb:

He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.

Conceivably these lines might be interpreted as a gloss on John 14: 20-21: "...I am in my Father and you in me and I in you." Finally, one cannot leave this poem without commenting that, while the child emphasizes the inter-relationship between the lamb, himself, and the Lamb, he also distinguishes between the two natural creatures (himself and the lamb) and the creator (the Lamb). At this point we need just indicate that, even at this early stage, Blake

expressed the paradox of humanity's experience of God and Christ that they are both immanent and transcendent. Yet for all that, God and Christ are still to be sought in so simple an incident as the child who gazes upon a lamb.⁸

"The Divine Image" reiterates the dual aspects of Blake's understanding of the Divine. After the first stanza, Blake seems to be expressing two quite different ideas about exactly who or what it is that humanity worships:

To Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
All pray in their distress:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love
Is God our father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love
Is Man his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man in every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine
Love Mercy Pity Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk or jew.
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

(E12-13; K117)

This poem might well serve as the focal point (at least in the early poetry) for the whole controversy about whether or not Blake's Christ was intended to be immanent or transcendent. Mark Schorer, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, and John Beer place strong emphasis on the humanity of Jesus and therefore tend

to highlight the immanence of the godhead. S. Foster Damon tends to lean the other way, dwelling on the more orthodox aspects of Blake's religious thought, while J.G. Davies, as was noted earlier, sees Blake as an orthodox Christian whose theology is not seriously out of line with traditionally accepted doctrine. However, such either/or views are restrictive to Blake's own experience, understanding, and expression of Jesus Christ. It is therefore misleading to suggest that Christianity cannot and does not embrace both humanistic and theistic tendencies. Ironically that subject of the nature of the Divine about which Blake showed most inspiration and insight, has generated not only the greatest confusion and disagreement, but also the most criticism on the grounds of its being ambiguous and contradictory.⁹ Yet it is precisely in his insights on this subject that Blake often seems closest in spirit to pristine Christianity as revealed in the New Testament (especially John and Paul). Blake critics have tended to want the poet to come down on one side of the question of immanence and transcendence or the other. In the face of his refusal to do so, they have chosen to emphasize what has seemed to them to be the stronger bias in the poetry. The reason for this desire for an either/or answer to this prickly problem is discussed by Harold Schilling in his book, The New Consciousness in Science and Religion:

According to common usage, it is the "beyond"

that connotes transcendence and the "within" that suggests immanence.

Too often though, these ideas are taken to be mutually exclusive, as though God must be conceived as either transcendent or immanent, one or the other, but not both.¹⁰

Schilling goes on to quote Bernard Meland, who points out that from this "rhythmic alteration...one should distill the obvious insight that both transcendence and immanence are essential to even a limited and tentative formulation of the character of the living God."¹¹ These insights offer a more unified way of understanding immanence and transcendence in Blake's poetry, a way out of the exclusiveness of the majority of views up to the present time. How one is to cope with Blake's Christ can result in an underlying uneasiness, if not outright confusion, throughout the poetry. On this question, Schilling's analysis may provide some clarification in a general way on how immanence and transcendence might be conceived:

Perhaps it is man's proclivity for spatial, higher-or-lower, inner-or-outer analogies that is responsible at least in part for a tendency to differentiate rather sharply between transcendence and immanence--as though they were separate realms or entities of reality, or radically different relationships that God sustains towards the world.

I suggest that in its fundamental meaning the term transcendent actually does not refer directly to spatial or temporal relationships, or even to a dichotomy of the external and internal--even though the term immanent does refer specifically to the within. What "the transcendent" refers to is the supreme and ultimate in the mystery of goodness, tenderness, sensitivity, love, creativity, and remediality--all conceived as existing and operating everywhere, and at all levels of the world. Its first syllable, "trans", refers not to a spatial beyond but to the "infinitely more than" anything observable directly in us or the cosmos. If the term transcendent is

given this meaning, then immanence is indeed one important aspect of it, not something different from it.¹²

I can scarcely imagine an interpretation of transcendence and immanence which would encourage a more appropriate approach to Blake's poetry on this subject, especially with regard to "The Divine Image".

In his edition of Blake's poems, W.H. Stevenson writes in reference to "The Divine Image" that "...in praying to God, one prays to the sum of these virtues personified in man."¹³ With this statement, Stevenson reveals his sympathies with the secular humanist oriented tradition of Blake criticism. However Stevenson's remark simply does not say enough about the process which Blake describes in this poem. (It certainly is worth considering whether the remark also betrays too restricted an understanding of humanism). It seems doubtful that Blake would have bothered to have used the word "divine" if he had meant to imply only a sum of virtues. Furthermore, Stevenson's comment does not explain Blake's use of the word "Image". If one prays to a sum of virtues personified in humanity and if that is all Blake meant by God, then one wonders about the meaning of the word "Image" in the title. The O.E.D. defines the word 'image' variously as an "imitation, copy, likeness"; "mental conception"; "semblance, similitude". In this poem, there seems to be an indication of two distinct beings--God and humanity--especially in stanza two:

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love
Is God our father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love
Is Man his child and care.

God the father and humanity the child: Blake's distinction is explicit in these lines. Bearing in mind Schilling's comments, we might say that Blake here talks about God as transcendent in the sense of being infinitely more expressive of "Mercy Pity Peace and Love". That is why Blake chooses the father image, one which recalls the love and care attributed to the shepherd in the song discussed earlier.¹⁴ But, having said this, Blake then goes on to express his experience of immanence in stanzas three and five. In the third stanza, Blake's point is that although Mercy Pity Peace and Love may well be divine attributes, they are experienced by humanity as they are given and received in human interaction:

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine
And Peace, the human dress.

It is through this loving interaction that humanity becomes a "divine image". Humanity, expressing its loving behaviour, is a reflection, a semblance, a likeness of the infinitely more or transcendent qualities which are implied by the word God. Stanza five then draws two conclusions. With regard to the first, we should recall Gillham's point that Blake is "attempting to get down to the roots of religion in the human soul rather than follow the branches and twigs of ramifying doctrines"; hence Blake's rather unor-

thodox (that is, in his particular historical context) statement that Mercy Pity Peace and Love are just as likely to be found in "heathen turk or jew" and that they too can be the "human form divine."¹⁵ Secondly, there seems to be an implicit 'because' at the beginning of the third line of stanza five: one must love the human form because in so doing one is worshipping, one is showing one's love for God as well as for humanity. "The Divine Image" is a poem which, although confusing at first, expresses beautifully Blake's belief that God, or at least, human experience of God, (and in this respect, also humanity's experience of Christ) is of that which is both immanent and transcendent, not one or the other.

Three times in the Songs of Innocence Blake refers explicitly to Christ's incarnation. In "The Lamb", he says: "He became a little child." In "A Cradle Song", we find the lines, "Smiles on thee on me on all/Who became an infant small." In the last of the Songs of Innocence, "On Another's Sorrow", Blake again refers to the incarnation of Christ in the words, "He became an infant small." As in all the poems of Innocence, the emphasis in these poems is on participation, sharing, loving, and protection. Blake again picks up on the notion of humanity as the divine image of that which is infinitely more or greater when manifested in Christ. Stanzas one, two, and three of "On Another's Sorrow" form the first half of a parallel which Blake draws between the caring,

protective relationship of a father or mother with a child, and the relationship between God the father and humanity the child. Just as the human father is filled with sorrow if his child weeps, so Christ participates in even the smallest woes of each individual, feeling each sorrow, wiping away tears, offering comfort and care. This is Blake's expression of his awareness and interpretation of the meaning of Christ's incarnation. At this point and, indeed, in all the lines wherein Blake makes reference to the maker becoming an infant small, he is dealing with a strictly Christian idea. He does not always limit himself to the Christian context, but Christ is the only deity who becomes human. In Christianity, as in other religions, there is the familiar notion of prophets whose heightened insight gives them special understanding of the Word of God; but only in Christianity are we told that Christ is unique because Christ is the Son of God, incarnate as human. Even modern Christians are somewhat baffled by the notion of Christ's 'likeness of flesh'. However Blake's understanding of it does seem to be fairly similar to that expressed in Hebrews 4: 14-16. Compare the final three verses, for instance, of "On Another's Sorrow" with the gospel passage:

He doth give his joy to all.
He became an infant small.
He becomes a man of woe
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not, thou canst sigh a sigh
And thy maker is not by.
Think not, thou canst weep a tear,

And thy maker is not near.

O! he gives to us his joy,
That our grief he may destroy
Till our grief is fled & gone
He doth sit by us and moan

(E17; K122-23)

And from Hebrews 4: 14-16:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest,
that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son
of God, let us hold fast our profession. For
we have not an high priest which cannot be
touched with the feeling of our infirmities;
but was in all points tempted like as we are,
yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly
unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain
mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Perhaps the only significant difference between Blake's poem and the Biblical passage is that, in the former, it is Christ who takes the initiative in bestowing comfort, while in the latter, it is suggested that humanity should approach Christ in order to find "help in time of need."

In the Songs of Innocence then, Blake concentrates on three main areas of concern. Firstly, all the songs which have been discussed deal with Christ as one who is loving, caring, and protective of humanity in the same way that the shepherd protects his sheep or the father his child or the mother her infant. Secondly, Blake carefully reflects both the idea of transcendence and the idea of immanence in his poems, so that attempts to categorize him as saying one thing or the other exclusively are misleading and restrictive.¹⁶ Finally, Blake speaks directly of the Christian belief in incarnation in three different poems, which would suggest that, for him, the

idea of Christ Incarnate means that humanity is most likely to find Christ, not by seeking him in some other reality, but rather in the intimacy of even the smallest human sorrow.

With the exception of "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", two songs which were originally included in the Songs of Innocence but later transferred to the Songs of Experience, the Experience poems do not directly contribute to a further understanding of Blake's early Christ figure. However it is useful, by way of contrast, to determine what kind of God figures in Experience because the response and attitude of humanity to this God and the attitude of this God towards humanity is completely antipathetical to the shepherd/father Christ of Innocence.

The "Introduction" extends a final plea to Earth, the lapsed soul, to return and awake, to be resurrected in a God quite different from the cruel one who presently oppresses her. Again, the sense of newness of life to be gained from this return is not offered as a reward in the distant future, in some eternal state of blissful being after death, but here and now:

O Earth O Earth return!
Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumbrous mass.

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is giv'n thee till break of day

(E18; K210)

This has the ring of certain Pauline passages; one is reminded of 2 Corinthians 5: 16-17; 6: 2:

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh...Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things become new... (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

However, in much the same way that Albion's self-deception prevents him from believing the Saviour in the opening lines of Jerusalem, so in this poem, oppressed Earth hears only "Starry Jealousy" who is the "Father of the ancient men":

Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous fear
Can delight
Chain'd in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear.
(E18; K211)

Despite the depressing introduction to this set of songs, Blake did not suggest that there was no hope of awakening. The lack of hope is only expressive of the extent to which Earth has become disillusioned and mistrustful through oppression from a jealous God. In the complementary poems, "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", Blake depicts the possibility of regeneration from self-deceived, self-affrighted experience. The opening two stanzas of "The Little Girl Lost" provide an appropriate link to the dialogue of the "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer", for although the Bard's words fell on deaf ears then, yet still he prophesies a time when Earth will make her return through Christ:

In futurity
I prophetic see
That the earth from sleep,
(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise and seek
For her maker meek:
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

(E20; K112)

These lines also serve to foreshadow the psychological regeneration of the parents in the poem. Lyca, lost in the desert, is worried, not on her own account, but only because of her awareness of the fears of her father and mother. As yet she is still innocent. Accordingly, she lies down to sleep while the animals gather round her, not in hostility or fear, but in simple companionship. This atmosphere of peace and mildness wherein the 'sheep has lain down with the lion' (Isaiah 11: 6-9; Isaiah 65: 25), is attributed to the presence of one being. It is the attendance of the kingly lion who watches over Lyca which transforms the wild desert into "hallow'd ground." The second poem reveals more precisely who this lion is, as well as his effect not only on the animals and on nature itself, but also on the self-affrighted adults of Experience, Lyca's parents. Having plagued themselves with a "fancied image" of their starving, weeping, lost child, they are initially overcome with fear when they encounter the lion. As he stands silently by them, their fears begin to subside. It is not until stanzas nine and ten, however, that the association of the lion with Christ is intimated:

They look upon his eyes
Fill'd with deep surprise:
And wondering behold,
A spirit arm'd in gold.

On his head a crown
On his shoulders down,
Flow'd his golden hair.
Gone was all their care.

The image of Christ as a lion is not unknown.¹⁷ I therefore make the following parallel tentatively and leave it to the reader to form his or her own opinion.

If the lion be considered a Christ figure, then a new characteristic is introduced. The lion as Christ is not only the merciful protector of the child (an image we are now familiar with in the Songs), he is also a crowned spirit who is a being of authority. This aspect of Christ's character has not been clearly articulated before this. "Follow me," the lion tells the parents. Without hesitation, they obey, just as, according to Mark and John, the disciples Simon, Andrew, James, John, and Philip followed without question when Jesus said to them, "Follow me." (Mark 1: 16-20; John 1: 43). This is not the issuing of a tyrannical command, a command such as Earth would expect from the "selfish father of men"; nor is it one obeyed out of fear. Through the love, mercy, and glory of this crowned spirit, the parents, once filled with all the fears of Experience, are awakened to the peace of the "garden mild" prophesied in the second stanza of "The Little Girl Lost":

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell
Nor fear the wolvis howl,
Nor the lions growl.

(E22; K115)

If we accept the suggestion that the lion is, on one level, a symbol for Christ, then this is the first time that Blake has intimated that he sees Christ not only as protective and loving, but also as a figure of redemption justified by his own authority. (There are, perhaps oblique references to the redemptive effect of Christ in the last two stanzas of "Night").

One aspect of the poem which should be mentioned is the ambiguity created by the pervasive fact of Lyca's sleeping. It is, for example, one of the features of the poem which Kathleen Raine uses to formulate her interpretation of the poem as the Platonic narrative of the journey of the soul.¹⁸ Raine has plenty of evidence to support her thesis that the sleeping of the child is not a healthy state to be in. Ordinarily sleeping is not a productive activity in Blake's poetry; it implies that the sleeper is not alive to expanded perception and four-fold vision. Blake's constant cry is the call to "Awake!", emphasized in the opening lines of this poem: "That the earth from sleep,/ (Grave the sentence deep)/ Shall arise and seek/ For her maker meek." One cannot dispute, therefore, that there is a case to be made for Raine's position. However, one must interpret the poem not only in the light of what we know to be generally true of the body of poetry as a whole but also, and perhaps primarily, on its own terms. Approaching the poem in this way challenges Raine's position, for sleep does not seem to be a negative

condition in "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found". On the contrary, sleep is contrasted with the state of anxiety and fear. It is a state of peace and innocence in contrast with the wakefulness and worry of the parents. Blake does not convey a negative attitude towards Lyca's sleeping in this poem. However it should be said that his attitude towards sleep here should probably be seen as an exception to the rule.

The Songs of Experience, then, give some insight into the kind of God who is a travesty of Blake's true God. They also disclose Blake's view of religious hypocrisy but from the point of view of gaining insight into his early depiction of Jesus, they are not relevant to our purposes. It is in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that Blake next confronted the question of human religious experience and the character of Jesus.

In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Blake works from a fairly narrow perspective in his portrayal of Jesus. The Jesus of this poem is a revolutionary, a role which, during the Lambeth years, is assumed by Orc. This one-sided presentation of Jesus is a deliberate ploy by Blake to trigger certain responses both from the angels within the poem and from the reader. However one should recall that the poem is largely satiric and does not represent the entirety of Blake's view of Jesus Christ. In fact, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is the satiric expression

of the same message that Blake communicated in "There is No Natural Religion" and "All Religions Are One". Misunderstanding about the poem arises because the reader gets the impression that Blake simply inverts Good and Evil, reads black for white in a perverse over-turning of values. The title of the poem ought to prevent this kind of misunderstanding insofar as it purports to be a "Marriage" of heaven and hell. One example of the fact that Blake did not merely invert and condemn all traditional responses to God occurs in his treatment of Jehovah in the fifth plate. It was noted that Blake sometimes focused on the view of God as Jehovah in order to express negative or authoritarian traits of God which he associated with parts of the Old Testament. However in plate five Blake apparently does not refer to Jehovah with these negative overtones. The passage is concerned with the difference between Milton's ostensible rational conservatism ("But in Milton: the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses. & the Holy-Ghost, Vacuum!") and his true persuasion: "The reason that Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it." The whole plate is a rather confused set of statements but in the passage preceding that quoted above, Blake contrasts the Father as "Destiny" and the Son as a "Ratio of the five senses" with the true gospel account:

This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on, the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he who dwells in flaming fire. Know that after Christs death, he became Jehovah.

(MHH E35; K150)

It is a bit difficult to make much sense of this rather jumbled statement, but we can at least discern two impressions. The first is that, as the dweller in fire, the Jehovah of the Bible is being positively described, for fire is always a symbol of creativity, energy, and vitality in Blake's poetry. Secondly, the reference to the resurrection and what Blake thought it implied is suggested by the comment that Jesus "became" Jehovah after his death. It makes no sense at all to suggest that Blake here intends Jesus to be understood as human Poetic Genius, because the idea of Poetic Genius/Jesus becoming Poetic Genius/God is a meaningless tautology. The implication may be that, after his death, Jesus the man returned to a more spiritual form of burning, vital creativity symbolized by the reference to the dwelling in fire.

However, on the whole, Blake comes down much more strongly on the side of "evil" and "hell" than "good" and "heaven" in this poem, Jesus being clearly associated with the former. Yet we must also realize that good and evil are properly understood as contraries, and therefore necessary in order for there to be progress:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attract-

tion and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human Existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.

(MHH E34; K149)

Blake had no desire to eliminate one or the other of the contraries because that would simply eliminate the possibility of creative conflict. More often, Blake's tirade was against "negatives" or perversions of contraries:

There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary
The Negation must be destroy'd to redeem the
Contraries
The Negation is the Spectre; the Reasoning Power
in Man

(M E141; K533)

It is the old story of the perversion of religion which Blake denied. It is not true religion as he understood it that Blake satirized but the false, spectrous negation of religion. He described the process by which the priesthood gradually analyzed and abstracted the truly religious response into an authoritarian system sanctioned by an external god:

The ancient Poets 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 the Priesthood.

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things.

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

(MHH E37; K153)

Blake's objection to the priesthood's perversion of religious response may seem to say more about his view of the priesthood than it does about Jesus. But Jesus, in this poem, is depicted as the inspired revolutionary whose very life was a renunciation of the religion of the priesthood. Institutionalized religion was based, in Blake's opinion, on laws, rules, reward, punishment, severity, and judgment. But Jesus, said Blake, acted from impulse, not from rules, believing in contraries and progression through creative conflict. Plate 16, for instance, depicts a Jesus who manifests Blake's belief in the necessity of contraries:

These two classes of men are always upon earth,
& they should be enemies; whoever tries (pl 17)
to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence.

Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.

Note. Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but
to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and
goats! & he says I came not to send Peace but
a Sword.

(MHH E39; K155)

In the light of Blake's earlier depiction of Jesus, the reference to his coming with a sword may seem strange. However Blake was probably relating his vision of Jesus to the question of contraries (manifest in humanity as the "Prolific" and "Devouring" as two classes of people). According to Blake, Jesus would not have wanted to have reconciled these two classes of people since it is only through the interplay of contraries that progress occurs. The reference to the sword may simply imply that Jesus recognized the necessity of the existence of both sheep

and goats and did not seek to reconcile these two contraries.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, considered in conjunction with "The Song of Liberty" which is complementary to the longer poem, is concerned with revolution, with rebellion, with the throwing off of shackles. Politically, it reflects Blake's sympathy with the ideals of the French Revolution, but it also reflects his reaction to oppression in any sphere of human experience, including human religious experience. While he does not, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, turn his back on the things he suggested about Jesus in the Songs of Innocence, yet the emphasis here is more strongly on the mutinous aspect of Jesus' character. When the Devil says, in plates 22-24, that Jesus acted from impulse and not from rules, he says it partly to reinforce his outrageous refutation of the Angel's orthodox argument. And, in fact, this passage, from plates 22-24, offers a marvellous summary of Blake's Saviour figure throughout his period of political involvement and unrest:

Once I saw a Devil in a flame of fire. who
arose before an Angel that sat on a cloud. and
the Devil uttered these words.

The worship of God is. Honouring his gifts
in other men each according to his genius. and
loving the (pl 23) greatest men best, those who
envy or calumniate great men hate God, for there
is no other God.

The Angel hearing this became almost blue
but mastering himself he grew yellow, & at last
pink & smiling, and then replied,

Thou Idolater, 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?

The Devil answer'd; bray a fool in a mortar with wheat. yet shall not his folly be beaten out of him: if Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree; now hear how he has given his sanction to the law of ten commandments: did he not mock at the sabbath, and so mock the sabbaths God? murder those who were murderd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery? steal the labor of others to support him? bear false witness when he omitted making a defence before Pilate? covet when he pray'd for his disciples, and when he bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such as refused to lodge them? I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments . . . Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse not from rules.

(MHH E42; K158)

There is no mention in this passage of forgiveness of sins, the feature which Blake took to be the most significant fact of Jesus Christ's ministry (although that is perhaps implicit in the reference to the incident of the woman taken in adultery). Rather the emphasis is on all the ways in which Jesus' actions flew in the face of the laws of the very religion in which he was raised. The tendency to think that Blake merely read black where others read white and simply inverted traditional values seems, at first glance, to be encouraged in this passage. The picture of Jesus, right up to the Devil's concluding statement merely shows a rebel who denied everything which was held sacred by Judaism. There is nothing particularly honourable or godly about the Jesus depicted here, the main emphasis being the fact that rules were of little importance to him. It is only at the end of the passage that the real explanation of Jesus' actions is

disclosed. It is the Devil's contention that no virtue, no good and forgiving action, can come if one follows the letter of the ten commandments; and Jesus, because everything he did was virtuous and forgiving, was forced to contradict the law. Clearly this was Blake's own interpretation of Jesus' actions and there are many who would argue that such a description is sheer nonsense. However, in Blake's opinion, commandments, especially a set of rules which had become petrified in stone, must necessarily be negative and atrophied because they threaten strangulation and death of Poetic Genius. That is why Blake showed so much sympathy for Jesus and the prophets who came before him but could not sanction Moses, whose vision became ossified into two great inflexible tablets of stone. In Blake's view, such a set of statutes must be anathema to the gospel of Jesus. Jesus does not defend himself in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, but in "A Memorable Fancy" in plate 12, Isaiah gives an explanation of how prophets like himself and Ezekiel and, presumably, Jesus, understood their communications with God:

The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert. that God spake to them; and whether they did not think at the time, that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition.

Isaiah answer'd. I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded, & remain confirm'd; that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences but wrote.

(E37-8; K153)

The passage most aptly reveals the strength of conviction which fills the true prophet. So profound was Isaiah's sense of the infinite, and of that insight as being the "voice of God", he cared not what the consequences might be in uttering what he knew. This was also how Jesus acted, according to Blake. This was why his ministry was certain to fly in the face of conventional religion, particularly the oppression of the ten commandments. Pristine Christianity presents itself as nothing less than radical.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, for all its joy in making fun of conventional religion, Swedenborg, "conceited notions", and boring angels, yet does not manage to realize Blake's mature depiction of the Saviour. Blake was still very politically excited about the spirit of revolution which was making itself felt on so many fronts at the time that he wrote the poem. Because of this political and revolutionary fervour, he went somewhat overboard in his emphasis on Jesus' shocking nonconformity. Blake was concerned at this time with the image of Jesus as champion of the oppressed. In fact, at the time of writing The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, he was conceiving the character of Orc, who figures so prominently in the works of the Lambeth period. The passage quoted above from plates 22-24 is a sort of overlapping of Jesus-Orc traits. When he wrote "A Song of Liberty" sometime between 1792 and 1793, Blake was well on the way to the creation of a being of

energy, fire, and wrath who would free the enslaved. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake was concerned to reveal the true colours of what had, all this time, been taken for Christ's religion. There were precedents for this satire in the Songs of Experience, but in this poem, he more clearly outlines that Jesus' religion, the 'true' religion, has little or nothing in common with orthodoxy. Blake did not forget the earlier conception of Jesus, but here the focus was drastically shifted. It is not the gentle, protective Saviour of the Songs of Innocence who sends Swedenborg's angels into such paroxysms of rage; it is the Jesus who said, "I come not to send Peace but a Sword" and who apparently is far more revolutionary than forgiving. The characteristics of energy and honest indignation, the awareness of the need to shake off the shackles of hypocrisy, of religious and political oppression are certainly aspects of Blake's Jesus but they are not as central as the love and forgiveness of sins which figure more prominently after (as well as before) the Lambeth period. They are traits to be associated more with Orc than with Jesus and Blake did not choose to dwell too emphatically on them in his mature portrait of Jesus.

CHAPTER FOUR

"ORC: THE HORRENT DEMON OF REVOLUTION"

Orc's role in the prophetic poems of the Lambeth period is that of champion of the oppressed. In this respect he is, as most critics agree, associated with Jesus Christ.¹ Two characteristics in particular encourage the reader to make this association. Firstly, Orc is a figure of rebellion against oppressive authority and repressive codes of behaviour. Secondly, he achieves the temporary status of a Saviour figure. The association of Orc and Jesus actually began before the writing of the Lambeth prophecies for Blake introduced him in "A Song of Liberty", usually placed by editors at the end of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

Orc's name is suggestive in at least two ways of characteristics which had already been introduced in the character of Jesus. Kathleen Raine and Harold Bloom believe that the name suggests "Orcus" (hell),² while Mona Wilson sees the name Orc as an anagram for "cor" (heart).³ As a symbol of fire and energy, the association with hell is an appropriate one, particularly in the light of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell in which poem Blake spoke approvingly of hell. However the two interpretations of Orc's name need not necessarily be exclusive. Blake may well have intended both the characteristics of fire, energy, and rebellion as well as the gentler motions of the heart to be part of Orc's character, depending on the con-

text and situation. In any case, Orc is a figure of rebellion insofar as he is champion of the oppressed in their rebellion against tyranny. This is a function which may well involve attributes of the heart (as it does, for instance, in the case of Christ) as well as those of energy, fire, and wrath. Although he is not named in "A Song of Liberty", the "newborn terror" is none other than Orc, already engaged in a fiery battle with the tyrant "jealous king". The closing lines of the song present a much simplified version of the more complex struggle which ensues in the works that follow:

17. All night beneath the ruins, then their sullen
flames faded merge round the gloomy king,
18. With thunder and fire: leading his starry
hosts thro' the waste wilderness (pl 27) he pro-
mulgates his ten commands, glancing his beamy
eyelids over the deep in dark dismay,
19. Where the son of fire in his eastern cloud,
while the morning plumes her golden breast,
20. Spurning the clouds written with curses,
stamps the stony law to dust, loosing the eternal
horses from the dens of night, crying

Empire is no more! and now the lion & wolf shall
cease.

(E43-44; K159-60)

At this early stage, Orc, although born a "howling terror", is pictured as a fiery youth. The image of the "son of fire" may well be an unconscious association by Blake of Orc with Jesus, since he later associated the figure of Jesus with a heaven which was a place of extreme vitality and energy. At any rate, the "chorus" of "A Song of Liberty" could well serve as the motto of Blake's rebel Jesus, particularly as he was portrayed in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn, no
longer in deadly black. with hoarse note curse
the sons of joy. Nor his accepted brethren
whom, tyrant, he calls free: lay the bound or
build the roof. Nor pale religious letchery
call that virginity, that wishes but acts not!

For every thing that lives is Holy

(E44; K160)

Hence, by 1793, Blake already had a clear conception of the character of the Orc who embodies the spirit of rebellion until the close of the Lambeth period. In his book, Prophet Against Empire, which concentrates largely on the political context for Blake's poetry, David Erdman digresses from Orc's political associations to that of his role as saviour:

During the long night he has grown and now has burst his chains. The "secret child" of Experience, ready to tread the vintage of wrath. He is the avenging Christ of Saint John's prediction: his eyes are as a flame of fire and his clothes are bloody, "and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword...and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."⁴

Erdman's allusion to the Revelation portrayal of Jesus Christ is undoubtedly justified, but what should be understood as an association of Orc with Jesus tends, in his phraseology, to suggest an identification of the two figures:

Rightly understood the Preludium is an oracle of the second coming of Christ and of the Armageddon of 1793 which must end in the final doom of the kings of the earth and their armies. Orc-Christ is coming as tiger, not as lamb...⁵

Whether or not Erdman intends to suggest that Orc and Christ are meant by Blake to be one and the same figure, it is certainly the impression which one is left with. Michael Tolley, in his article, "Europe 'To those ychain'd in sleep'", takes issue with Erdman on

this point on the grounds that such an identification is an over-simplification.⁶ This is a valid complaint because, although the absence of Christ during the Lambeth period directs the spotlight onto the revolutionary Orc, Blake did not intend that the one should be identified with the other. Certainly the reader is encouraged to recall the rebel Christ presented in plates 22-24 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, but that is not to say that Blake believed that the character of Christ could be effectively subsumed by that of Orc. Orc frequently acts on behalf of the oppressed as Blake believed Christ had done, and he also seems to have the same motives, but there are two major differences between the characters. Ontologically speaking, Orc cannot hope to liberate the oppressed, the fallen victims under fallen rulers in a fallen world because he too is fallen. In fact, Orc has the dubious honour of being the first child actually to be conceived and born into the fallen world, son of Los and Enitharmon. Although he is able to champion the downtrodden and, temporarily at least, subdue their oppressors, he too, in the final analysis, is subject to the same laws of fallen nature to which they are subject. He too must die. Because of the cyclical element built into Blake's Lambeth prophecies, a new Orc will be born again to rise like a phoenix out of the ashes of death. This is a consolation and a source of hope. But the distinctive characteristic of cycles is that they repeat

themselves endlessly unless there is someone who can effectively break through their tyranny. Orc is himself part of the cycle and cannot, therefore, act as the agent who makes that break in the unceasing revolutions of the cycle. The other difference between those speeches and actions of Orc which appear to be similar to those of Christ is that the motives and aims are ultimately truly disparate. Orc acts with the handicap of partial vision, able to see only some or the oppression, certain forms of tyranny, certain kinds of suffering. He recognizes only the pain, suffering, and despair of the victims. For him the situation is easily defined: the enemy is clearly identifiable and the task at hand is to utterly destroy that enemy. At times it appears that Orc almost seems to enjoy wreaking the vengeance which he so believes to be justified. It is not his purpose to destroy tyranny, only tyrants. Christ, on the other hand, acts out of the wisdom of whole vision. He is sensitive not only to the suffering of the obvious victims but also to the moral infirmity of the oppressors. It is not his purpose to destroy one group of people in order that the others might be free but rather to free all, to transform all from their state of perceptive frailty to a state of redemption. Whatever one decides Blake's ontological statement about Christ is, or whether this is the point at all, one becomes increasingly aware that Blake sees this particular ability to redeem as somehow the unique office

of Christ. This will become more evident in the poems which will be discussed in later chapters. However at this point one can begin to consider the vital difference between Orc and Christ which Erdman tends to ignore in order to make the Orc/Christ identification. In fact, in order to cement this identification, Erdman has had to focus on Christ's rebelliousness and then exaggerate that characteristic into armed militance so that it might seem to be the same as the rebellion of Orc. Furthermore, he tends to ignore what Blake so passionately believed to be Christ's unique feature: his unceasing and total ability to forgive. Acting out of partial vision and incomplete understanding, Orc wishes to fight, to destroy the enemy, to demolish every last remnant of the old order and those who have established it. Acting out of whole vision and perfect understanding, Christ wishes to forgive, to forgive the oppressor as well as the victim, and to transform the old order so that all might be redeemed. Quite simply, the difference is that Orc cannot forgive.

There is one other aspect of the discussion which can be mentioned before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the poems of the Lambeth period. This concerns the variety of names and titles which Blake uses with reference to Orc and Christ. This issue of the variety of descriptions, although perhaps equally applicable to many of Blake's characters who, never completely stable, shift their roles, personalities, and

sometimes even their familial relationships, is particularly noteworthy with regard to Orc and Christ because it reveals the subtle difference in the way in which Blake presents the two characters. Describing Orc in the Lambeth books, Blake uses the following names and phrases: "red Orc"; "hairy youth"; "terrible boy"; "Demon red"; "Human shadow"; "horrent Demon". Certainly there are at least as many names for Christ scattered throughout the poetry: "the Shepherd"; "Jesus the servant"; "Saviour"; "Human Form Divine"; "Lamb of God"; "Messiah"; "Holy Lamb of God"; "Lord". Blake's use of a variety of names in describing Orc seems to reflect an inherent ambivalence in his response to the figure; in the case of Christ, this is not so. Describing Christ with sundry names does not imply that Blake did not really know what he meant by Christ. It is due to the fact that Blake recognized that there is no easy, catch-all term he could have used which would comprehensively describe the whole being of his Christ figure. The variety of epithets is reflective of Blake's attempt to call attention to each facet of a many-sided diamond. Hence, "Saviour" may conjure up for the reader a different aspect of Christ than "Human Form Divine" or "Lamb of God" would. Blake had a convincing precedent available to him in this diversity of titles in the New Testament itself. Oscar Cullmann, in his book, The Christology of the New Testament, makes exactly this point:

The reason for his being described in so many different ways is that no one of these titles by itself can comprehend all the aspects of his person and work. Each of them shows only one particular aspect of the whole wealth of convictions of faith about him which we find in the New Testament...We must not forget for a moment that all the various concepts are united in Jesus himself.⁷

That last statement is also true of Blake's Christ. Cullmann's view cannot be applied to Blake's treatment of Orc. It would seem that the names themselves, even in a context wherein Blake is predominantly sympathetic towards Orc, trigger an ambivalent response in the reader. A "horrent Demon" or a "terrible boy" may well be what the situation seems to demand but likewise it may be less than what the situation actually needs. Now, it is true that some of the epithets which describe Orc reflect the perception of his enemies rather than Blake's own perception. Hence the reader can only applaud Orc if he is, as Albion's Angel fears, a "Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities/Lover of wild rebellion, and transgressor of God's law." Blake probably intends that the reader respond sympathetically to the Orc who inspires this venomous outburst since the Devil, with whom Blake's sympathies lie, said much the same thing about Jesus in plates 22-24 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Blake's sympathetic depictions of Orc usually occur in those instances in which Orc acts in a Christ-like manner. However there are many other instances which trigger a more ambivalent response in the reader. Orc's birth as related in The Book of

Urizen is such an example; or the symbol of the serpent which is frequently associated with Orc; or the fact that Fuzon (basically an Orc figure) having, as he thinks, defeated Urizen in good Orcian fashion, tries to set himself up as a God; or even in so subtle a point as the fact that, in Europe, Orc actually "rejoic'd" to hear "the howling shadows" of his defeated enemies, actually seemed to enjoy the bloody battle. These examples leave the reader slightly uncertain about how to respond to this character. Increasingly, the reader will lose that sense of uncertainty because, whatever Blake may have felt in the early 1790's, by the middle of the decade he was convinced that Orc had outlived his efficacy. As a character of significance he undergoes considerable alteration in Vala or The Four Zoas and Milton and virtually disappears altogether in Jerusalem.

Finally, there are two points with regard to Orc and Christ which reflect Blake's own reaction to the political situation during his time in Lambeth and his development as a result of that reaction. In the first place, the suggestion is sometimes made that Orc is somehow an 'early' Christ figure which implies either that Blake had not conceived a Christ figure at that time or that the character of Orc essentially equals the character of Christ. As we have seen in Chapter Three, this suggestion is not tenable in the light of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and the Songs of Innocence and of Experience. It is clear from the

discussion of the Songs that Blake had, at that time, already begun to shape what was to become the most important aspect of his nature. Furthermore, this suggestion misses the point that Orc may, as Los does and as Luvah sometimes does, take on certain aspects of Christ without actually being Christ.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell obviously reflects a more rebellious Christ (plates 22-24) so that if one figure is to be seen as a prototype for the other, it would seem chronologically sensible that the Christ of the early period serves as the prototype for Orc rather than the other way round. The second point is that, just at the time that Blake was engaged in the writing of the Lambeth poems, the French Revolution, followed closely by England's declaration of war on France, after the French convention sent Louis the Sixteenth to the guillotine, was in full swing.⁸ It became the most politically oriented stage of Blake's career. Already activitated by the ideological thrust of the American War of Independence, Blake's thoughts at this time were directed both towards the ideals of the French Revolution--"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"--and towards the injustices of a corrupt and oppressive government. As a poet and thinker, he was also outraged about the Royal Proclamation in England of May 21, 1792, which was directed, as it declared, against "divers wicked and seditious writings."⁹ Throughout the early and middle years of the 1790's, pestilence and starvation attacked the hungry poor

of France. Inflation had upset the English economy; the Rights of Man was under suspicion by the government; hundreds of young men were called up to serve in the militia in the war on France.¹⁰ We do not need to pursue the political reference for Blake's poetry too closely as that lies outside the aims of this thesis; but it can be helpful to be aware of the social context in which these poems were conceived. The poetry of this period of Blake's life gives the impression that, shocked by all that was happening, he transferred some of his anger into the figure of Orc, a god of war who would avenge the downtrodden masses as only a wrathful militant could do. It must have seemed that a leader who was prepared to shed blood was demanded by the situation and not a self-sacrificing saviour who was prepared to shed only his own blood. Yet, even as Blake shaped the character of Orc and put him into the front lines of battle, he recognized that Orc's revolution could not provide the ultimate solution. Already he saw that the laws of nature dictated that what was young must become old, that the oppressed would inevitably become the oppressor. Furthermore, he had already conceived the "states" of Innocence and Experience and he knew that liberating people from their physical chains was no guarantee of liberating them from their 'mind-forged manacles'. It is quite possible that, in the fervour of the moment, Blake truly believed that what was needed was not a Christ but an

Orc. Yet his uneasiness with this idea was always just beneath the surface for no one poem is without ambivalence. As the decade progressed, as he saw, as did Wordsworth and other Romantic poets, that the American and French Revolutions had not fulfilled the ideals which had been envisaged, his disillusionment set in. However it was a necessary disillusionment because it had only been an illusion in the first place to believe that Orc could bring about the true liberation and redemption from the fallen condition. Orc's prominence could only have come during the political uproar of the Lambeth years.

W.H. Stevenson notes that the passage of Orc's development in the Lambeth period was from The First Book of Urizen, to "Africa" (Song of Los, part 1), to America, to Europe, and finally to "Asia" (Song of Los, part 2).¹¹ We shall also want to consider Fuzon in The Book of Ahania, not only because he is an Orc figure but also because in that role he expresses Blake's realization by 1795 of Orc's inevitable failure. Chronologically there may be some question about placing The First Book of Urizen at the beginning since it is dated 1794 while America is dated 1793. Imaginatively however, this movement is logical. It is only with Urizen's fall as related in his story and the subsequent oppression and tyranny which occurs that the need for a champion, a leader of the rebellion arises. Furthermore, it is in The First Book of Urizen that the first account of Orc birth is given.

Perhaps because he wished to make quite clear the implications of the fall, Blake drew heavily on serpent imagery in his description of Orc's birth. The birth of this "Human shadow" is an unparalleled disaster from the point of view of the Eternals because it is the first time that the creative act has meant generation, the reproduction of an already existent form rather than the creation of a new and original form. It is worth quoting the entire section of the poem which relates the story of Orc's birth because the imagery, in fact, the whole atmosphere of the passage, is curiously unconvincing if it is the story of the birth of the saviour of humanity:

3. A time passed over, the Eternals
Began to erect the tent;
When Enitharmon, sick,
Felt a Worm within her womb.
4. Yet helpless it lay like a worm
In the trembling womb
To be moulded into existence
5. All day the worm lay on her bosom
All night within her womb
The worm lay till it grew to a serpent
With dolourous hissings & poisons
Round Enitharmons loins folding,
6. Coild within Enitharmon's womb
The serpent grew casting its scales,
With sharp pangs the hissings began
To change to a grating cry,
Many sorrows and dismal throes
Many forms of fish, bird, & beast,
Where was a worm before.
7. The Eternals their tent finished
Alarm'd with these gloomy visions
When Enitharmon groaning
Produced a man Child to the light.
8. A shriek ran thro' Eternity:
And a paralytic stroke;
At the birth of the Human shadow.

(E78; K232)

Blake did not necessarily view all birth in this way. "Infant Joy" offers an enchanting interchange between mother and child at the birth of the infant. In this description, though, the lines are full of phrases of pain, grief, and gloom. Enitharmon is said to be "sick"; there are "dolourous hissings" and "gloomy visions". One might argue that the birth of Orc could hardly have been anything but an unmitigated disaster since it is perhaps the most striking confirmation of the fall. But while this is true, it does not explain Blake's initial attitude towards Orc himself. In the very next chapter his attitude becomes more sympathetic during the binding of Orc with the "Chain of Jealousy". That sympathetic attitude is reaffirmed in numerous passages in the Lambeth books. However it is noteworthy that, at the very beginning, Blake chose to describe Orc in such a way as to prevent the reader from experiencing any feeling of warmth, any yearning towards this creature.

The serpent imagery is inherently ambivalent. On the one hand, Blake may have been thinking of the serpent as Satan, the great archytype of the rebel, the one being who refused to serve God's law. In this sense, Blake associated Orc with Satan, perhaps the early Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost. It is an association he now saw as positive for it implied energy and rebellion. On the other hand, the imagery implies a far less positive character if only because the serpent here is associated with poison, gloom,

sorrow and disaster. In the later poetry, Orc's serpent form does not seem to carry any positive associations at all. He is finally seen coiled around the Tree of Mystery. By then he has become a figure of cunning and deceit and, after a period of oscillation between 'good' and 'evil', he finally loses all relation to the Christ figure.

It is interesting to note that in Chapter 7, wherein Orc is chained like Prometheus to the top of a mountain, Blake discontinues his use of serpent imagery. Orc is now the child whose "young limbs" are bound down to the rocks. It is in this form, as the innocent but already condemned child, unfairly bound by his father's chain of jealousy, that Orc first emerges as a sympathetic character. In fact, in this chapter, there is a definite association of Orc with Christ which relates to his role as one who can bring new life:

5. The dead heard the voice of the child
And began to wake from sleep
All things. heard the voice of the child
And began to wake to life.

(E79; K233)

In these lines the reader is reminded that the purpose of the birth of Christ was to bring the promise of new life to a fallen and weary world. Yet one has to wonder what effect it has on the reader to consider this passage and the birth passage juxtaposed as they are within thirty lines of each other. A purely personal response to the question is that the birth story is much more vivid and striking. One seems to

hear the hissings and grating cries and almost to experience the scaly serpentine length coiled round Enitharmon's loins. Perhaps it is intended as a warning against placing too much hope in the Orc figure as the ultimate redeemer.¹²

The Song of Los, title page 1795, is also of the Lambeth period, although obviously a later work. However it is more helpful to look at this group of poems in their imaginative sequence than in their chronological one as it gives a clearer picture of Orc's development. The poem is divided into two distinct subtitled sections, "Africa" and "Asia". W.H. Stevenson suggests that they may have been written at different times. This seems a credible suggestion since the last line of "Africa" is also the first line of the "Prophecy" of America. America in turn forecasts Orc's eventual move to Europe in the hyponymous poem and Stevenson suggests that the war finally ends up in Asia.¹³

In "Africa", Orc is pictured howling, still enchained with the Chain of Jealousy on Mount Atlas. Urizen's fall has thrown the world into a state of disease, political oppression, and moral restriction but, as yet, Orc has been unable to burst the chains which bind him and assume the role of warrior against tyranny. Although it is worth noting briefly a situation which no doubt influenced the pessimism which hangs over "Africa", the reader is referred to Erdman's Prophet Against Empire for a more comprehensive account.

In 1789 the French people had seized the Bastille, Rousseau was still in favour from Blake's point of view, and the monarchy seemed in danger of being toppled. However, as starvation, poverty, and unemployment spread, the outlook became bleak.¹⁴ One does not need to suggest that there is a direct correlation between contemporary affairs and the state of affairs in Blake's poems. However it is probably true that the general unrest and pessimism of the period contributed in a general way to the darkness of the Lambeth poems. The appalling situation in Blake's myth reveals that he believed that the time had come for drastic action, for a fiery god of war to take the lead:

The human race began to wither, for the healthy
built
Secluded places, fearing the joys of Love
And the disease'd only propagated:

These were the Churches: Hospitals: Castles:
Palaces:
Like nets & gins & traps to catch the joys of
Eternity
And all the rest a desert;
Till like a dream Eternity was obliterated &
erased.

Since that dread day when Har and Heva fled.
Because their brethren & sisters liv'd in War &
Lust;
And as they fled they shrunk
Into two narrow doleful forms:
Creeping in repile flesh upon
The bosom of the ground:
And all the vast of Nature shrunk
Before their shrunken eyes.

(E66; K246)

The last line of this section of The Song of Los, read in conjunction with the hints in The Book of Urizen

that the dead wake to the voice of the Child Orc seems to ring ominously: "The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent." It is clearly time for Orc to burst his chains and challenge the Guardian Prince. But the question which lurks in the background here for Blake, as in the other Lambeth poems, is: has the Apocalypse actually arrived or not? Erdman, in the passages quoted earlier, answers a confident 'yes' to this question. Blake did not answer so readily and it was not until 1795, when he wrote The Book of Ahania that he seemed to have become aware that it was not the time of the Apocalypse after all. Indeed, one of the concerns of the "Africa" section is with false prophets, including Jesus, or at least, the Jesus who was presented to the world by the Church. In a very few lines, Blake runs through human intellectual history up to contemporary times and what he sees does little to convince him of prophetic effectiveness. Things seem worse now than they ever were. Even Jesus seems to be reduced in stature and effectiveness at this stage: "And Jesus heard her voice (a man of sorrows) he recievd/A Gospel from wretched Theotormon," The fact that Jesus receives rather than creates a gospel is bad enough; the fact that it comes from Theotormon is even worse. In Visions of the Daughters of Albion Theotormon is mostly characterized by a moral rigidity and repression, and an unwillingness to consider the

life of liberty to which Oothoon calls him. From such a being Jesus now receives his gospel. What Blake presents in "Africa" is an encapsulated version of the affairs of the world over the eighteen hundred years that comprise Enitharmon's dream in Europe. The dream might more accurately be described as a nightmare from the standpoint of everyone except Enitharmon. However, although Blake's feelings of optimism in the effectiveness of Orc are riddled with ambivalence, yet Orc takes up the challenge in America with a vengeance.

America's title page is dated 1793, the same year that Louis the Sixteenth was beheaded. As the "Preludium" opens, Orc is still chained, fed by the "shadowy daughter of Urthona" out of iron baskets. Orc's role in this poem is predominantly positive but still Blake cannot rid himself of ambivalent feelings. The first instance of this dual response occurs in the "Preludium" in Orc's sexual encounter with the shadowy daughter:

Silent as despairing love, and strong as jealousy,
The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the
wrists of fire;
Round the terrific loins he siez'd the panting
struggling womb;
It joy'd: she put aside her clouds & smiled her
first-born smile;
As when a black cloud shews its light'nings to
the silent deep.

(E50-51; K196)

On the one hand, the encounter seems to fulfil the prophecy that Orc would awaken the dead; the sexual encounter has won a "first-born smile" from the sha-

dowy daughter and she herself confirms the prophecy:
"Thou art the image of God who dwells in darkness of
Africa;/And thou art fall'n to give me life in regions
of dark death." Orc, then, has been shown as a fert-
ilizing, liberating force. However there are two
rather less positive elements in this encounter. The
first is the sense of violence as Orc takes the sha-
dowy daughter, a violence which is hardly attractive.
It is a description of sexual mastery and dominance
of the female by the male, not an encounter of mutual
desire and love. Even if the "struggling womb" joyed
it does not excuse the violence of that awakening.¹⁵
Secondly, the scene foreshadows the capture of Orc's
energies by Vala who, in her fallen capacity, repre-
sents the alienated dominance of nature. On that occa-
sion, the joining is altogether disasterous, and it
is no mere coincidence that Blake included that omin-
ous note in the violence of this first encounter.

In the "Prophecy" itself, Orc assumes the aspect
of the terrible rebel. Yet note that Blake's descrip-
tion of Orc's enemy, Albion's wrathful prince, is cur-
iously similar to his description of Orc. Perhaps
it was Blake's subtle hint that these two enemies are
not actually as polarized as they believe themselves
to be:

...on his cliffs stood Albions wrathful Prince
A Dragon form clashing his scales at midnight he
arose,
And flam'd red meteors round the land of Albion
beneath(.)
His voice, his locks, his awful shoulders, and his
glowing eyes,

Appear to the Americans upon the cloudy night.
(E51; K197)

Red rose the clouds from the Atlantic in vast
wheels of blood
And in the red clouds rose a Wonder o'er the
Atlantic sea;
Intense! naked! a Human fire fierce glowing, as
the wedge
Of iron heated in the furnace; his terrible limbs
were fire
With myriads of cloudy terrors banners dark &
towers Surrounded;
(E52; K197)

It is true that the second passage, the description of Orc, emphasizes the very Orcian characteristics of fierceness, fire, and redness. Yet one could not really be faulted for mistaking the first passage to be a description of Orc. This is actually the first introduction of the more mature Orc. In that introduction the reader is given a vision of such intensity, a vision so terrible, that even the King of England, with Albion's Angel to protect him, trembles at the awesome sight. This is Orc at his most terrible and his most glorious. He comes to challenge Urizen and his perverted "ten commands": "That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion abroad/To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves". Orc's power may well be limited and temporary in the sense that he too is bound by the laws of nature and the laws of decline, but he brings youth, life, and energy to a dead and dreary world. Nowhere is this aspect of Orc's character and role more impressively evident than in the following passage:

The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen
leave their stations;
The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen
wrapped up;
The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews
shrunk & dry'd.
Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing! awaken-
ing!
Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds
& bars are burst;
Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into
the field:
Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the
bright air;
Let the inchained soul whut up in darkness and
in sighing,
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary
years;
Rise and look out, his chains are loose, his
dungeon doors are open.

(E52; K198)

Perhaps the politically, socially, and morally radi-
cal Blake shared some of Orc's youthful enthusiasm.
This is, of all Orc's speeches, the one which does
him most justice as a prophet of Christ. In this
connection, it is significant that in the three major
speeches in America--the one just quoted, Orc's speech
in challenge of "pale religious letchery" in plate
9, and the defiant speech of Boston's Angel in plate
11 as he throws down his sceptre and call the other
Angels to Orc's aid--the lines are steeped in the lan-
guage of religion rather than the language of politics
as one might expect. It is against religious hypocr-
isy, religious oppression, religious tyranny that both
Orc and Boston's Angel direct their challenges. The
significance of this lies in the fact that, whatever
the political or social situation, Blake was always
more inclined by nature to express oppression and
slavery in 'spiritual' terms. The longer passage

quoted earlier from plate 6, for instance, makes obvious reference to the resurrection of Christ. Stevenson notes that the last three lines owe their origin to Ezekiel XXXIII: 1-10, especially 10: 7-8.¹⁶

This is not to suggest that Blake, living in an imaginative fantasy world of his own creation, managed to overlook the political and social realities. It is rather to suggest that, in describing such realities, he naturally made the leap to humanity's own state of self-oppression and slavery and hence found the language of religion, the language of spirituality more powerfully expressive of the problem as a whole. It is also a significant hint that, in the long run, he would recognize that a warrior, a leader of battles, would not be the redeemer. In that sense, the Christ figure is a more profound rebel than Orc, for he does not use the methods with which humanity and Orc are fully familiar: the methods of war. It is the same Nobodaddy God against which both Orc and Christ rebel, the God so starkly unmasked by Boston's Angel:

What God is he, writes laws of peace, & clothes
him in a tempest
What pitying Angel lusts for tears, and fans
himself with sighs
What crawling villain preaches abstinence &
wraps himself
In fat of lambs? no more I follow, no more
obedience pay.

(E54; K200)

Blake seems here to have the uneasy feeling that the way of liberation cannot be gained by using the methods of war which are the very methods of the tyrant.

We said, however, at the beginning of this chapter,

that Blake's question throughout this period concerned whether or not the Apocalypse had arrived. For all his uneasiness, he seems to indicate at the end of America that perhaps Orc has triumphed after all, that perhaps he is the redeemer:

Stiff shudderings shook the heav'nly thrones!
France Spain & Italy
In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the
ancient Guardians
Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their
own plagues
They slow advance to shut the five gates of their
law-built heaven
Filled with blasting fancies and with mildews of
despair
With fierce disease and lust, unable to stem the
fires of Orc;
But the five gates were consum'd, & their bolts
and hinges melted
And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens,
& round the abodes of men
(E56; K203)

Ambivalence seems absent here for these lines seem to indicate the triumph of Orc. Not only has he defeated Urizen, but also his flames are burning up the restrictive rule of the five senses. A note of victory has apparently been sounded.

In plate 16 of America Orc's appearance in Europe was forecast: "And then their end should come, when France reciev'd the Demons light." Although his spirit is crucial to the poem, Orc appears very seldom. His name is mentioned only ten times in the whole poem. However a vital clue is given in the "Preludium" of Europe as to the reason for Orc's ultimate failure as the one who will lead humanity to redemption and liberation. The nameless shadowy female, now able to speak, defies Enitharmon's recurrent cycle

of nature:

My roots are brandish'd in the heavens. my fruits
in earth beneath
Surge, foam, and labour into life, first born &
first consum'd!
Then why shouldst thou accursed mother bring me
into life?

Unwilling I look up to heaven! unwilling count
the stars!
I sieze their burning power
And bring forth howling terrors, all devouring
fiery kings.
Devouring & devoured roaming on dark and desolate
mountains
(E59; K239)

In order to maintain the dominance of the female will, Enitharmon is perfectly happy that the cycle of nature be maintained as it is. She believes Orc to be firmly chained, and, fallen creature that she is, proclaims the message that "Womans love is Sin!" The nameless shadowy female despairs of this infinite, self-consuming cycle, not realizing that the time is due for the resurgence of Orc. The rebirth takes place in the opening of the "Prophecy":

The deep of winter came;
What time the secret child,
Descended thro' the orient gates of the eternal day:
War ceas'd, & all the troops like shadows fled to
their abodes.
(E60; K239)

Significantly, at this time when Enitharmon has established the morality of hypocrisy in sexuality, Orc descends through the orient gates which, as Damon remarks, is also the place of the passions.¹⁷ The same passion which freed the shadowy daughter of Urthona in America is now born into Enitharmon's dominion of the female will.

Enitharmon is a very sinister female in this poem and, although the reader may feel hopeful at the beginning of the poem, the hope seems soon to have been unjustified. We might expect Enitharmon to be dismayed at the birth of Orc, but instead we are told: "Now comes the night of Enitharmons joy!" Her speech is the song of triumph of the female will and the cruelties of female cunning: "Forbid all Joy, & from her childhood shall the little female/Spread nets in every secret path." The suggestion is forceably made that the female will has indeed won out and Enitharmon's dream of eighteen hundred years seems to confirm this. She is pleased at the birth of Orc because she assumes that he too will fall under her control. Her dream relates, in the compressed but vivid imagery common to dreams, the Christian human history from the birth of Christ to contemporary eighteenth-century England. But the promise implicit in the birth of Christ does not seem to have been fulfilled.

Plates 13-19 bring the reader back to the contemporary situation and the impression of these plates is that Orc, unknown to Enitharmon, is beginning to break the bonds of her dominion: "The Guardian of the secret codes forsook his ancient mansion,/Driven out by the flames of Orc"; "Between the clouds of Urizen the flames of Orc roll heavy /Around the limbs of Albions Guardian, his flesh consuming." Although we are again led to believe

that Orc may, indeed, triumph, Blake once again pulls the reader back from total acceptance of Orc's actions: "Thus was the howl thro' Europe!/For Orc rejoic'd to hear the howling shadows." Orc's rejoicing is perhaps hardly surprising but it reaffirms the great gap between his "war" and that of Christ. The warrior obviously rejoices in the destruction of the enemy, as Orc does; but Christ's mission is to bring salvation to those who are in the state of Satan as well as those who are their victims. Christ takes no joy in revenge, only in forgiveness and in cleansing the "doors of perception".

At the end of Europe, Enitharmon awakes to discover that the Orc she believed to be firmly under her control, is rampaging in fury against her. Her dominion, suspended in an eighteen hundred years' dream, is threatened by the "thick-flaming thought-creating fires of Orc." In "Asia" his fury is finally come to the east. Plate 7: 35-40 reiterates the allusion to Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones which was encountered first in America. This allusion, coupled with the closing lines of "Asia" reaffirms the role of Orc as an awakener of the dead in spirit as Christ must be for Albion in Jerusalem:

The Grave shrieks with delight, & shakes
Her hollow womb, & clasps the solid stem:
Her bosom swells with wild desire:
And milk & blood & glandous wine
In rivers rush & shout & dance,
On mountain, dale and plain.

(E68; K248)

For once, Blake seems to be unequivocally pro-Orc. The tone of the concluding lines of The Song of Los is one of orgiastic frenzy in the Orc-inspired resurrection of the dead. But our joy in Orc's victory is short-lived, for although The Song of Los is Orc's last appearance in the Lambeth books, and although he seems to have gone out in a burst of glory, optimism turns out to have been premature.

The Book of Ahania, 1795, was the penultimate poem of Blake's stay at Lambeth. Orc does not appear in the poem at all but Blake re-introduced Fuzon in this poem whose only other appearance was in the closing lines of The First Book of Urizen wherein he played a Moses-like figure leading the survivors of Urizen's fall out of the land which Blake also called Egypt. The description, role and fate of Fuzon in The Book of Ahania is simply too Orc-like to be accidental on Blake's part. For this reason the poem is most significant in disclosing that, at the end of the Lambeth period, Blake had become aware of Orc's necessary demise. Note first how, in the opening lines, the reader might easily mistake the description to be one of Orc if Blake had not explicitly revealed that it is, in fact, Fuzon:

1. Fuzon, on a chariot iron-wing'd
On spiked flames rose; his hot visage
Flam'd furious! sparkles his hair & beard
Shot down his wide bosom and shoulders.
On clouds of smoke rages his chariot
And his right hand burns red in its cloud
Moulding into a vast globe, his wrath
As the thunder-stone is moulded.
Sons of Urizens silent burnings

(E83; K249)

The flames, the fury, the red burning, the wrath: all are characteristics which we have come to associate with Orc. But a new dimension is added at the end of the above passage. Fuzon is said to be "Son of Urizen." In this phrase Blake shows his awareness more clearly than in any other instance thus far, of the real relationship between Orc and Urizen, and also adds another dimension to the symbolism of the cycle. No longer does he portray these two figures as opposites. Now he digs deeper into the relationship and signifies them to be father and son. And like the father, the son must become old, must, in fact, become the father. At first, Fuzon's quarrel with Urizen is exactly like that of the allied Orc and Boston's Angel. Fuzon sees Urizen for what he is in his fallen state, but without recognizing his own weakness: "...this abstract non-entity/This cloudy God seated on waters/Now seen, now obscur'd; king of sorrow." Blake again alludes to Fuzon as a Moses figure in the phrase, "the fiery beam of Fuzon/Was a pillar of fire to Egypt," so that, in the first chapter, our sympathies are with him. (Blake also described Orc as a "pillar of fire" in the closing lines of A Song of Los). Another association of Fuzon with Orc is the fact that the fiery beam which he aims at Urizen is directed at the father's "cold loins". The phallic symbolism here combined with the challenge of passion and energy to cold, rational tyranny recalls Orc's role as the character of fire, passion, energy, and even filial rebellion. However, it is at this

moment, when Fuzon-Orc believes he has killed his father that he makes his fatal error:

8. While Fuzon his tygers unloosing
Thought Urizen slain by his wrath.
I am God. said he, eldest of things!
(E85; K251)

The Orc cycle is once again complete. The child has become the father. The revolutionary has become the reactionary. But Urizen is not dead, and, in retaliation, he nails the pale "corse of his first begotten" to the Tree of Mystery, an image which foreshadows Orc's later fate to be left coiled round the same accursed tree. It may also foreshadow, in an ironic way, the crucifixion of Christ, whose death, unlike those of Fuzon and Orc, will break the cycle of nature and death itself. It is the last we see of Fuzon as he hangs, groaning, upon the tree. The remainder of the poem is occupied by Ahania's lament at her separation from Urizen. With Fuzon hanged upon the Tree of Mystery, the cycle of the Lambeth books ends, apparently no further advanced than in the period following Urizen's fall in The First Book of Urizen.

It is plain that, by the end of the Lambeth period in 1795, Blake was clearly aware that an armed revolutionary should never be the saviour of humanity. In the group of poems discussed in this chapter, he outlines, from various perspectives, one full revolution of the cycle. He carefully brings us round full circle from the birth of the rebel Orc to the fatal error of Fuzon's "I am God" as he himself became in-

creasingly disillusioned with the ideological failures of the French Revolution. Armed rebellion as the path to liberation was a misplaced hope for it could not end in anything other than the establishment of new tyranny. On the whole, the tone of the poems of the Lambeth period is riddled with ambivalent suggestion. At one moment Blake seems to believe in the triumph of Orc, but in the next he draws back from such optimism. First Orc melts the gates of the five senses with his flaming fury and then Fuzon is nailed to the Tree of Mystery by his own father. It would seem that such contradictions as these point to the fact that, try as he might, Blake could not believe wholeheartedly in Orc. Redemption was not to be achieved through war and therefore not through Orc.

CHAPTER FIVE

"THE MATURING VISION: LOS AND LUVAH"

Part 1: Los, the Prophet of Jesus

In July of 1800 Blake wrote to George Cumberland that he was beginning to "Emerge from a Deep pit of Melancholy." Two years later he wrote to Thomas Butts and described with typical earnestness of his improved, indeed, inspired, state of mind:

And now let me finish with assuring you that though I have been very unhappy I am no longer I am again Emerged into the light of Day I still & shall to Eternity Embrace Christianity and adore him who is the Express image of God but I have travelled thro Perils & Darkness not unlike a Champion I have Conquered and shall still Go on Conquering Nothing can withstand the fury of my Course among the Stars of God & in the Abysses of the Accuser My Enthusiasm is still what it was only Enlarged and confirmed

(E691; K815-16)

No doubt this pit of melancholy into which Blake had sunk was due in part to his disillusionment in the aftermath of the ideological failure of the French Revolution. In any case, a marked change began to emerge in Blake's poetry in the years following the Lambeth period. Kathryn Kremen, in The Imagination of the Resurrection, calls this transition a process of "Christianization."¹ Provided one recognizes, as Kremen undoubtedly does, that this "Christianization" was infused with a distinctively Blakean spirit, then the designation is an apt one. Although it is not certain, it is probable that Blake began work on Vala in 1797.² At this stage he had not yet formulated his subsequent vision of the "Four Mighty Ones",

or the "zoas". Indeed, he did not even use the word "zoa" until the composition of Milton which began in earnest around 1804. However he had begun to conceive the idea of a Universal Man and the four eternal characters which he named Urthona, Urizen, Luvah, and Tharmas. It was also at this time that Blake began the great task of recording the imaginative history of "The Sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through/ Eternal Death! and of the awakening to Eternal Life." The major prophecies were to describe Blake's interpretation of the Fall, the wandering, and the redemption of humanity. As such, whether the vision was orthodox or not, it was certainly sacred rather than secular.

As Blake's vision began to expand, as its scale-- psychologically, historically, and 'geographically'-- became grander, more cosmic than the early poetry, other characters who had not yet played a role assumed new import and began to usurp the limelight in which Orc had previously basked. Because Blake's was a four-fold vision, all four zoas would have, in their own right, important parts to play, both in the Fall and in the regeneration of the Universal Man. However, two characters in particular began to assume special significance in making that regeneration more Christ-oriented. In this chapter we shall examine the activity and faith of Los and, more briefly, the symbolism of Luvah's character in order to trace Blake's increasing emphasis on the uniqueness of

Christ's gospel as he interpreted it.

One point should be clarified at the start of this discussion since it is of central import to the theme of the thesis. Some critics who take the more secularly humanist line are inclined to identify the figure of Los with the figure of Jesus Christ.³ Certainly it is valid to wonder, in the light of the decline of Orc as a saviour figure, whether Los was destined to assume that role. It is even justifiable to argue that, in some instances, particularly in the original manuscript of Vala, Blake implies exactly that. From this point of view the cluster of symbols which surrounds Los--guardian of Time, Imagination, Spirit of Prophecy, blacksmith, and eternal Prophet--and the activities which are associated with these epithets, are taken to be sufficient to achieve the regeneration of humanity, or Albion. Edward J. Rose inclines towards this view when he writes with reference to Los that:

To behold God or the divine in man is to act with Los, since it is impossible to recognize the Holy Spirit in others unless one acts in and with the Holy Spirit. Not only is Los identified with that spirit and with the ever present Elias, he is described as of the likeness and similitude of Jesus.⁴

One of the main thrusts of this chapter is to argue that Los is not the saviour and should not be identified with Jesus: he is repeatedly said to be the prophet of Jesus. On the basis of this statement one must surely object to the way in which Rose has reversed Blake's actual words on plate 96 of Jerusalem:

"And the Divine Appearance was the likeness & similitude of Los." It is not mere pedantic quibbling to draw attention to Rose's reversal for in so doing, he reverses not only the words, but also Blake's intention to convey the dynamics of this crisis in the drama. One might also question whether taking Los' title as the Spirit of Prophecy and making the rather daring leap to Los as the Holy Spirit is not a similarly dubious identification. An exploration of the development of Los in the light of the assertion that he was not intended by Blake to be identified with Jesus will support the disagreement with Rose's point of view.

Although the claim is made that neither Los nor Luvah is meant to be identified with Jesus, it is acknowledged that their special significance results from their distinctive association with Jesus. In the case of Los this association arises from his unique characterization as the Poetic Genius-- which is the 'true' Man--develops in his role as the Spirit of Prophecy and Guardian of the Divine Vision, and climaxes in Blake's dramatic description of the assimilation of the prophet by Jesus at the end of Jerusalem. Luvah, in his variety of personifications, is a more ambiguous figure. However, as the Prince of Love who suffers crucifixion, he too is associated in his eternal self with the crucified Lamb of God. Luvah's introduction in the poetry is relatively later than that of Los. Although Luvah's name is

is mentioned in The Book of Thel (title page 1789), he does not really appear as a character until the composition of Vala. Therefore Los will be considered first since he had already made some impact during the Lambeth period.

To note the number of times that a particular character appears in a group of poems may strike one as a rather pedantic exercise. Nonetheless, in tracing the waxing importance of Los in comparison with the waning importance of Orc, such a numbers game proves to be illuminating. For instance, excluding the names as they appear in the titles of the poems of the Lambeth period, one is rather surprised to discover that the name of Los appears thirty-nine times while Orc's name appears only twenty-six. Those thirty-nine references to Los suggest that even though Blake dwelt largely on the exploits of Orc in the Lambeth poems, he had also begun to consider the character of Los in some depth. More revealing is the increasing parallel importance of Los and the decreasing emphasis on Orc as a redemptive figure after the Lambeth period. Hence, in The Four Zoas, Los appears one hundred and eight times and Orc sixty-three; in Milton, Los appears one hundred and ninety-nine times, Orc only once.⁵ With reference to The Four Zoas it is vital to recognize that the title refers to the poem Vala only after numerous additions and alterations, changes which Blake continued to make at least until as late as 1804.⁶

H.M. Margoliouth, in the introduction to his edition of the original form of the early Vala manuscript, warns that "...to understand Los in Vala we must forget the reformed Los of the additions to Night VIII, still more must we forget the Los of Milton and Jerusalem." ⁷ Perhaps we need not forget so much as bear in mind that Los is a growing rather than a static figure and that it was in the alterations to the original manuscript that this growth began to emerge. ⁸

Although Los plays a fairly important role in the Lambeth period, the significance of his role as it relates to Jesus Christ does not occur until after this period. We might only wish to say briefly that, on the whole, his actions in the Lambeth period are creative, merciful, and unselfish, providing the basis for his future intimacy with Christ. However, probably because Blake continued to believe, however tentatively, in Orc during the early 1790's, Los remains a fairly indeterminate figure in the Lambeth poems. It is true that he manages to confine Urizen's fall for a short time, but ultimately he fails in this task. He himself suffers a fall into division, jealousy, and fear, becoming the source not only of the first divided female, but also the father of the first child to be born into the post-lapsarian world. The reader is presented with tantalizing expectations of the character, but Los tends to be overshadowed by Orc and in no way manifests the great

prophetic character assumed by him in the later prophecies. Therefore the discussion will first consider the character of Los in Vala before proceeding to the additions to that poem which transformed it into The Four Zoas. Although I have made use of the Margoliouth edition of Vala in order to assess the poem's original outline, quotations from The Four Zoas will be made from the Erdman edition of Blake's poetry.

Whatever changes occurred in respect of the primacy of Los' role as an agent of redemption, Blake never betrayed the importance of his characterization as the Human Imagination. The cluster of symbols which surrounds Los finds its source in the basic fact of his function as Imagination. What happens during the development of Los is not that he ceases to be Human Imagination or even that Blake essentially altered his view of its crucial role. Rather Los is seen increasingly in conjunction with Jesus rather than as a character whose significance is self-justified. As this transition is clarified, Los, instead of becoming a less interesting character, becomes a much richer and more substantial figure. This is because the energies which tend to be somewhat dissipated through his confusion in the early manuscript of Vala, are provided with a focus and justification in the figure of Jesus Christ and are therefore channelled in a much more fruitful manner. Los, then, benefits as a character from the transition from potential

redeemer to prophet of Jesus Christ, who is the true Redeemer, and this is climactically confirmed in the final plates of Jerusalem.

Los' role in Vala as Poetic Genius is evident from the first moment of his appearance, but it is also abundantly clear that his status has in no way protected him against the effects of the Fall:

Los joyd & Enitharmon laughd, saying Let us go
down
And see this labour & sorrow; They went down to
see the woes
Of Vala & the woes of Luvah, to draw in their
delights
And Los & Enitharmon joyd, they drank in tenfold
joy
From all the sorrow of Luvah & the labour of
Urizen
(E314; K285)

It is a deluded, fallen, divided, and bewildered Los who figures largely in the early Nights of Vala. In fact, at least until Night V, Los' attempts to act according to the prophetic character seem as ill-destined as they were in The First Book of Urizen. It is not really his own initiative which activates the work of rebuilding in motion after the Fall, but rather the angry prodding of Tharmas. However it is during this initial attempt to rebuild that Blake makes the first reference in Vala to Los as Time:

Frightend with cold infectious madness. in his
hand the thundering
Hammer of Urthona. forming under his heavy hand
the hours
PAGE 53
The days & years. in chains of iron round the
limbs of Urizen
Linkd hour to hour & day to night & night to day
& year to year
In periods of pulsative furor.
(E329; K302)

Los' proper business as Poetic Genius is to create. Paradoxically, because the world is fallen, he must create in Time in order to help free the world from Time. In this regard, the Spectre of Urthona might be said to represent Chronos--logical, linear time--while Los represents Kairos--the intrusion of sacred time into linear time.⁹ However in a fallen world, chaos must be defined as Los here defines it, in terms of hours, days, and years. Ordinarily Blake encourages the idea of the Spectre as a totally negative being, a being who repeatedly tempts Los away from his faith. Yet it is not always the case that Los' Spectre is presented in quite so unfavourable a light. The necessity of Chronos, of the linear time in which Los must work, at least for the present, is one explanation of the reason that the Spectre is not always seen to be a negative force. In some respects he is a means to an end and from that point of view, he too is involved in the complicated process of redemption. The connection between Los as the Spirit of Prophecy and Los as Time (a connection which obviously strengthens his association with Jesus Christ), lies in the desire to make Chronos explode into Kairos, to make every moment explode so that all time is sacred time--Blake's "eternal moment".

The binding of Urizen ought ideally to be an act of mercy on Los' part just as the creation of the material world is an act of mercy on the part of God. But Los does not act in the spirit of mercy: "absorb'd

in dire revenge he drank with joy the cries/Of Enitharmon & the groans of Urizen fuel for his wrath." Work-int to confine, but with vengeful feelings of hate and cruelty, he becomes "what he beheld":

The Prophet of Eternity beat on his iron links &
links of brass
And as he beat round the hurtling Demon. terrified
at the Shapes
Enslavd humanity put on he became what he beheld
Raging against Tharmas his God & uttering
Ambiguous words blasphemous filld with envy firm
resolvd
On hate Eternal in his vast disdain he labourd
beating
The Links of fate link after link in an endless
chain of sorrows
(E329; K302)

One trend that the reader becomes familiar with in Blake's poetry is that many of the events which appear to be absolutely negative in themselves carry within them the seeds of hope for a future time. This is the case in the incident quoted above for although Los continues to feel revenge, he also suffers involuntarily with Urizen and Enitharmon, which is a sign of his essential unity with them. Los is not yet aware of this dynamic (an indication of his immature prophetic character), but by becoming what he beholds, he manifests it all the same. This process is vividly portrayed in Los' grotesque imitations of the very form he detests and seeks to bind: "The bones of Urizen hurtle on the wind the bones of Los/Twinge & his iron sinews bend like lead & fold/Into unusual formd dancing & howling stamping the Abyss." Blake's point is subtle but essential to his understanding of the unity of these characters. That unity, indicated

by Los' monstrous contortions at the end of Night IV, is reinforced at the beginning of Night V. It is simply impossible, if Urizen is fallen, that Los should not suffer the affliction as well. Blake's image of the Universal Man is well chosen, for, just as, when one suffers a localized ailment one's whole body tends to become affected or ill, so here Urizen's 'ailment' causes a corresponding suffering in Los. Hence the very figure who is expected to confine the fall of Urizen instead finds himself unwillingly caught up in it:

Now fixd into one steadfast bulk his features
stonify
From his mouth curses & from his eyes sparks of
blighting
His feet shr(u)nk withering from the deep shrink-
ing & withering
And Enitharmon shrunk up all their fibres withring
beneath
As plants witherd by winter leaves & stems &
roots decaying
Melt into thin air while the seed drivn by the
furious wind
Rests on the distant Mountains top. So Los &
Enitharmon
Shrunk into fixed space stood trembling on a
Rocky cliff
(E332; K305)

Perhaps Los' predicament can be seen as a perverse sort of foreshadowing of the fact that Jesus too will participate in and "assume" the suffering of humanity but, unlike Los, he will not be overwhelmed by it.¹⁰

A more recognizable sign of hope comes near the end of Night V as Los repents of his jealous binding of Orc:

But when returnd to Golgonooza Los & Enitharmon
Felt all the sorrow Parents feel. they wept to-
ward one another

And Los repented that he had chaind Orc upon the
mountain
And Enitharmons tears prevaild parental love
returnd
Tho terrible his dread of that infernal chain...
(E335; K309)

Although Los is unable to free Orc because the chain has taken root and become part of his son's being, the fact that he wishes to do so is vital. Hence, with regard to Los, two impressions emerge by the end of Night V which remain unreconciled for a time. On one level, Los' actions actually seem to perpetuate the fallen condition. On another level, though, Blake reminds us in incidents such as Los' compulsive imitations of Urizen and his repentance of the chaining of his son, that buried within himself, Los bears the insight and compassion necessary for regeneration. These glimpses of Los' true nature, obscured though they are, indicate the possibility of regeneration long before the climactic explosion of Night IX wherein Los initiates the Apocalypse. Perhaps on the face of it Los does not seem to do very much to actively encourage the coming of the Last Judgment. However, his suffering, particularly with regard to Orc, Urizen, and Enitharmon, has been immense and, in Blake's poetry, the fact of suffering, especially suffering in repentance, is a sign that the process of regeneration has begun. Los' honour in initiating the Apocalypse in the opening of Night IX then, may not necessarily be as abrupt as Northrop Frye, for one, takes it to be.¹¹ Certainly it is an awesome

moment:

...Los his vegetable hands
Outstretched his right hand branching out in
fibrous Strength
Siedz the Sun. His left hand like dark roots
coverd the Moon
And tore them down cracking the heavens across
from immense to immense
Then fell the fires of Eternity with loud &
shrill
Sound of Loud Trumpet thundering along from heaven
to heaven
A Mighty sound articulate Awake ye dead & come
To Judgment from the four winds Awake & Come
away
(E372; K357)

Perhaps this moment provides the most powerful indication that Blake wondered whether Los might prove a suitable replacement for Orc as the redeemer. The image of the sun and moon being torn from the heavens suggests that Los has succeeded in breaking through the tyranny of the vegetable universe in order to usher in a new, more imaginative age. However two points should be made in this connection. The first is that this is not the first time that a character seems to have succeeded in breaking the tyranny of vegetable existence. At the end of America Orc appeared to have accomplished much the same thing. We know this attempt to have been unsuccessful so that a certain degree of scepticism in response to Los' action is not unwarranted. The second point concerns the issue of the many alterations made to the original Vala manuscript, alterations which certainly benefited the character of Los. In fact, Margoliouth believes that it is wise to consider Vala and The Four Zoas as two separate poems:

He called the poem Vala, and only at a very late stage, when 900 lines had been added to it and--I should conjecture--when he had already used the word 'zoas' in Milton, did he tentatively change it in pencil to The Four Zoas, and that only on the title-page. The new title may have been an improvement. It is certainly easier to justify for the poem as it now exists, but it cannot be used for the poem here printed which Blake never knew as anything but Vala. It is good practice to discriminate between the original and the expanded form by calling the original form Vala and the expanded The Four Zoas.¹²

During the years between 1797 and 1804 when Blake was continually making alterations to the Vala manuscript, he added considerable material to the shaping of the character of Los and shifted the onus for redemption onto the figure of Jesus. It is these additions which make Los a more convincing prophetic figure. As Blake began to shift the actual means to redemption to Jesus, he was better able to mould the character of Los as the prophet of Jesus. This is the process to which Kremen refers as "Christianization". Perhaps the best way to consider the passage at the beginning of Night IX in which Los ushers in the Last Judgment is to say that, in the original manuscript of Vala, Blake emphasized the regenerative abilities of Los and therefore saw fit to grant him the honour of initiating the Apocalypse. However, as he began to make the shift to Jesus, evidenced in the additions to the early manuscript and especially in the addition of Night VIII, Los' action became somewhat inconsistent unless it was seen in the light of a Christ-inspired action. As yet Los' action is not really defensible as Christ-inspired and we must accept a certain

ambiguity which is perhaps best explained by Blake's own transitional position on the matter.

The expanded poem, The Four Zoas, is centrally concerned with the fall and regeneration of Albion but in the new Night I, it is Urthona, the eternal form of Los, who first occupies Blake's attention:

Los was the fourth immortal starry one, & in
the Earth
Of a bright Universe Empery attended day & night
Days & nights of revolving joy, Urthona was his
name

PAGE 4

In Eden; in the Auricular Nerves of Human Life

Fairies of Albion afterwards Gods of the Heathen,
Daughter of Beulah Sing

His fall into Division & his Resurrection to
Unity

His fall into the Generation of Decay & Death &
his Regeneration by the Resurrection from
the dead

(E297; K264)

It is a vital clue to Blake's change of direction that Urthona's fall should be noted first. Urthona is Imagination and, as early as 1789, in "All Religions are One", Blake had written that "the Poetic Genius is the true Man." If Urthona is the true or essential faculty in Albion, then it is appropriate that, in relating Albion's fall, Blake should choose to relate the fall of the true element in the Universal Man. Actually, Blake does not enter into a specific account of Urthona's fall at this point; rather he assigns the first 'blame' to Tharmas. However, it is Urthona's fall which is being sung, because no matter who actually initiated the whole disaster, the poem is concerned to relate its effect

upon the "true Man", who is Urthona. From this point of view, Los represents the residual good of all the zoas and not just the Imagination. Symbolically, Urthona's fall is indicated by the birth of Los and Enitharmon, Los' emanation. Los is conceived in division by an emanation, Enion, and the Spectre of Tharmas and is then born into an already fallen world. In this respect his birth is not unlike that of his own son, Orc, especially as that birth is related in The First Book of Urizen. Yet for all Blake's awareness of the fallen condition into which Imagination has descended, it is still in Los that any hope of future regeneration is placed: "His head beam'd light & in his vigorous voice was prophecy." This is strengthened in a confrontation between Urizen and Los wherein Urizen demands to know whether Los is a "visionary of Jesus the soft delusion of Eternity." Significantly this line and the following four lines in which Urizen mistakenly claims that "The Spectre is the Man the rest is only delusion & fancy," are additions. They did not appear in the original Vala. Hence it would appear that the gradual shift of focus in the changes Blake made not only made the vision increasingly Christocentric but also they conceived and strengthened the association of Los and Jesus, or Imagination and Jesus.

From the time of Urizen's fall in Night IV until the added lines which begin on page 330 of the Erdman edition, everything appears doomed. However, in the

added lines, Blake's Jesus appears to the Daughters of Beulah, clothed in Luvah's robes of blood, and takes decisive action the purpose of which is to prevent humanity from falling into Eternal Death. Responding to the prayer of the Daughters of Beulah, the Divine Vision answers in a paraphrase of the words which the historical Jesus spoke to Mary and Martha in the Gospels when they entreated him to save their dead brother Lazarus:

The Saviour mild & gentle bent over the corse
of Death
Saying If ye will Believe your Brother shall
rise again
And first he found the Limit of Opacity & namd
it Satan
In Albions bosom for in every human bosom these
limits stand
And next he found the Limit of Contraction &
namd it Adam
While yet those beings were not born nor knew
of good or Evil

Then wondrously the Starry Wheels felt the divine
hand. Limit
Was put to Eternal Death Los felt the Limit & saw
The Finger of God touch the Seventh furnace in
terror
And Los beheld the hand of God over his furnaces
Beneath the Deeps in dismal Darkness beneath
immensity

(E331; K304)

It is probably noteworthy that, by this point in the reworking of the poem, it is Jesus and not Los who takes this action, for it may be an indication that, however prophetic Los is and whatever powers that role gives him, there are still certain measures which can only be taken by Jesus. Indeed, although he has seen and felt the Divine Hand, Los does not seem to understand the redemptive nature of the act

performed by Jesus in this definition of the Limits of Opacity and Contraction. Los' prophetic character is indeed ambiguous in The Four Zoas. What seems to characterize him, at least until Night V, is his utter confusion and the internal struggle between his essential goodness and his outward hostility and fear. It is as if we were observing a prophet in the making, a character who might conceivably sink into utter despair or violent hatred and yet who never does to quite the extent that the others do. Blake repeatedly brings Los back from the brink, for it is absolutely essential that the prophet retain some awareness of his task, the task which relates him to Jesus. Hence, on the one hand, in fear of "Eternal Death & uttermost Extinction", he begins to build Golgonooza, but on the other hand, his jealousy initiates the binding of Orc. His efforts at redemption are spasmodic and partial at best. However, until he reunites with his Spectre and with Enitharmon, he cannot hope truly to begin the process of Albion's redemption. Because he has not yet realized this, he continues to fumble along, occasionally exploding into spectrous fits of revenge and cruelty, occasionally resuming his proper business of attempting to build Golgonooza. Not until Night VII(a) is Los able to take the initiative in reuniting with his Spectre and with Enitharmon. Yet perhaps the reverse side of the coin of Los' struggle is that he is always active. Unlike Albion, whose sleep continues throughout most

of the poem, Los is almost always doing something. Frequently he is not doing what he ought to be, or doing it for the wrong reason without any clear understanding of why (as, for instance, the building of Golgonooza). But for all that, he rarely rests. Even when he lets the Hammer of Urthona fall from his hands, the paralysis is not absolute. Fumbling and bewildered he may be, but static he is not.

In Night VII(a), Los begins the painful mental process of recognizing the fatal error which continues to perpetuate the fallen condition of all the zoas and their emanations:

Los saw her stretchd the image of death upon his
witherd valleys
Her Shadow went forth & returnd Now she was pale
as Snow

Silent he stood oer Enitharmon watching her pale
face
He spoke not he was Silent till he felt the cold
disease
Then Los mournd on the dismal wind his jealous
lamentation

(E349-51; K324)

The actual crisis of reconciliation of Los with the Spectre of Urthona and with Enitharmon is an added passage. Night VII(a) ends at line 22 on page 353 of the Erdman text in the original Vala.¹³ Yet this is undoubtedly a crisis in the struggle for regeneration and, significantly, it is Los who initially repents of his error and accepts the Spectre and Enitharmon back into himself:

Obdurate Los felt Pity Enitharmon told the tale
Of Urthona. Los embracd the Spectre first as a
brother
Then as another Self; astonishd humanizing &
in tears

In Self abasement Giving up his Domineering
lust
(E353; K328)

Having made this initial acceptance, it is a natural step to the next passage in which he welcomes Enitharmon: "So spoke Los & embracing Enitharmon." By "Divine Mercy inspird", Los again "performd Wonders of Labour", building the pillars of Golgonooza. However, although Los seems finally to have begun to manifest his prophetic character, all is not yet well, for Enitharmon still fears that, having sinned, she and Los are doomed to Eternal Death unless a ransom be paid. In a sense, this passage is a re-interpretation of the Biblical story of the temptation of Adam by Eve, for Enitharmon has plucked the fruit of despair and encourages Los to take it and eat as well. Like other scenes mentioned earlier, this incident carries within it the bitter-sweet seeds of regeneration. In Milton's version, Adam is deceived by Eve, but Los suffers no such deception. One is naturally inclined to respond to the eating of the apple as a disasterous incident, but Blake re-focuses the attention and invests the story with new meaning. His depiction of the scene is a tender portrayal of the warmth of feeling which has begun to grow between Los and Enitharmon:

When In the Deeps beneath I gatherd of this
ruddy fruit
It was by that I knew that I had Sinned & then
I knew
That without a ransom I could not be savd from
Eternal death
That Life lives upon Death & by devouring appetite

All things subsist on one another thenceforth in
Despair
I spend my glowing time but thou art strong &
mighty
To bear this Self conviction take then Eat thou
also of
The fruit & give me proof of life Eternal or I die
(E354; K329-
30)

Los does take and eat the fruit but it is not disaster which ensues. Rather it opens Los' eyes to the presence of the Lamb of God and, trembling, he attempts to comfort Enitharmon:

Tremble not so my Enitharmon at the awful gates
Of thy poor broken Heart I see thee a shadow
withering
As on the outside of Existence but look! behold!
take comfort!
Turn inwardly thine Eyes & there behold the
Lamb of God
Clothd in Luvahs robes of blood descending to
redeem
(E355; K330)

As the passage moves forward towards the close of Night VII(a), it is not only Los and Enitharmon but also Rintrah and Palamabron, Orc and Tharmas who seem to be at least partially redeemed. Los even surprises himself by feeling "love & not hate" for his former enemy, Urizen. Many of the characters who formerly have been engaged in exploits of cruelty and revenge against one another now slowly and timidly begin to follow the example set by Los and Enitharmon and allow their love to emerge. At the same time, however, they suggest a certain resignation to the fate they fear. Los and Enitharmon, still with imperfect understanding, expect to be punished for their sins even as they experience this change of heart:

But Los lov'd them & refusd to Sacrifice their
infant limbs

And Enitharmons smiles & tears prevaild over
self-protection
They chose to meet Eternal death than to destroy
The offspring of their Care & Pity Urthonas
spectre was comforted
(E357; K332)

They are now living as the Saviour would have them live but Los does not really comprehend this. If he really understood he would realize that Eternal Death, vengeance, or what might seem to be justice for their sins, is simply not the way of the Divine Vision. At least up to this stage in The Four Zoas, Los is no more aware of this than any of the other characters. In light of the fact that Los attempts to labour in the building of Golgonooza and has been the first to embrace his spectre and his emanation, one can perhaps visualize the direction which his development will take. As yet, though, he has not fully matured as the Eternal Prophet.

Near the beginning of Night VIII, the whole of which is a fairly late addition to the poem, Los and Enitharmon again, to their astonishment, behold the Divine Vision.¹⁴ Their astonishment is due to the fact that the Divine Vision does not descend in wrath but in love:

Then Los said I behold the Divine Vision thro
the broken Gates
Of thy poor broken heart astonishd melted into
Compassion & Love
And Enitharmon said I see the Lamb of God upon
Mount Zion
Wondring with love & Awe they felt the divine
hand upon them
(E357; K341)

They are further comforted by the fact that when

Jesus descends, he does so in a "Human form". Now they truly know that this vision is the Saviour; they worship him at the same time that they are comforted by him and exultant in his presence. The descent of Jesus at this moment reveals to Los and Enitharmon that Eternal Death is not to be their fate after all. They behold the Divine Vision all around them and see that he has (or will) conquered sin and death:

They saw the Saviour beyond the Pit of death &
destruction
For whether they lookd upward they saw the
Divine Vision
Or whether they lookd downward still they saw
the Divine Vision
Surrounding them on all sides beyond sin &
death & hell

(E358; K342)

Significantly, in Night VIII, Los is the first to recognize the import of Jesus' descent and if anything is certain, it is certain that the Divine Vision is Jesus and not Los. Insofar as Los is Imagination and, in a sense, the residual good of all the zoas and their residual perception, it is appropriate that Los should be the first to have this insight. As we shall see in Chapter Six, Night VIII becomes quite Christian while Night IX remains fairly secularly humanist in tone. It was probably for this reason that Blake ultimately abandoned The Four Zoas for publication and turned his attention to Milton and Jerusalem.¹⁵

Blake develops a number of characteristics of the Los figure in the course of the composition of

The Four Zoas: that he is "the fourth immortal starry one"; that he is meant to be the builder of Golgonooza; and that he is the Eternal Prophet. There are also hints of a future, more intimate relationship between Los and Jesus. Yet although no real explanation is given as to why the regeneration of Urthona has such an effect upon humanity and the universe, it is to this effect that Blake devotes the final lines of the poem:

The Sun arises from his dewy bed & the fresh airs
Play in his smiling beams giving the seeds of
 life to grow
And the fresh Earth beams forth ten thousand
 springs of life
Urthona is arisen in his strength no longer now
Divided from Enitharmon no longer the Spectre
 Los
Where is the Spectre of Prophecy where the
 delusive Phantom
Departed & Urthona rises from the ruinous walls
In all his ancient strength to form the golden
 armour of science
For intellectual War the war of swords departed
 now
The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science
 reigns
 (E392; K379)

There is a certain symmetry in ending the poem in glorification of Urthona's regeneration since it was his fall which was first recorded at the beginning of Night I. However, Urthona/Los has not yet achieved his true status as prophet. One does not wish to suggest that Los' role is not vital in the regeneration of Albion, only that this role is not convincingly fulfilled until Jerusalem. In The Four Zoas, Jesus' assumption of Luvah's robes of blood and his defining of the Limits of Opacity and Contraction

are demonstrably more vital to the crisis of redemption than Los' actions. Of course, the entire section from the beginning of Night IX until the top of Erdman page 374 is all added material and it is in that section that Los suddenly manifests his essential nature by heralding the Last Judgment. It is possible, therefore, that, as Blake began to place greater emphasis in his own mind on the relationship between Los and Jesus, he began to make revisions in The Four Zoas which would reinforce the vital role of Jesus and so alter that of Los. However, if this was the case, the change would no longer be consistent with the generally humanist trend of the poem. It must be remembered, though, that The Four Zoas was never completed for publication by Blake and one of the reasons for this may have been the fact that he began to envisage a different role for Imagination in the redemption of Albion.

Los in Milton

The emergence of Los as the Spirit of Prophecy and as the Watchman of Eternity is more profoundly evident in Milton than in the poems which precede it. The initial section of the poem need not concern us except insofar as it reinforces the characteristics of Los which Blake had introduced prior to this poem. The first point in this connection is that Blake's adjustment in the treatment of Los does not affect his role as the character who attempts to 'confine' the effects of Urizen's fall:

Urizen lay in darkness & solitude, in chains of
the mind lock'd up
Los siezd his Hammer & Tongs; he labourd at his
resolute Anvil
Among the indefinite Druid rocks & snows of
doubt & reasoning.

(E96; K482)

The second point is that Los is portrayed from the beginning of the poem as a figure of authority, even if he does not always wield that authority successfully. In the incident involving Satan and Palamabron, it is to Los that Satan turns for permission to assume the working of the Harrow; and it is to Los that Palamabron turns for justice in the argument which ensues: "What could Los do? how could he judge, when Satans self, believ'd/That he had not opres'd the horses of the Harrow, nor the servants." A few lines later, Los reflects: "Mine is the fault!" Los, then, is recognized as a figure of authority whose duty it is to mete out justice and maintain order. On the other hand, neither now nor later is he presented as infallible or self-justified in his position. This is evidenced by the fact that he is deceived by Satan's dissembling love and later by the fact that it is only after Satan's statement --"I am God alone"--that Los realizes who Satan is: "Then Los & Enitharmon knew that Satan is Urizen." However one cannot be too critical of Los' ignorance up to this point, for if he has been slow to recognize Satan, he is still the first to do so (as he generally is first in realizing the truth of things). The other members of the Assembly are much

less perceptive in this revelation of Satan's real nature and hence are less inclined to blame him than to blame Palamabron and Elynittra. The question of blame and fault is less important, however, than the question of insight, and, significantly, it is Los who perceives the connection between Satan and Urizen.

Plates 10 through 22 deal primarily with the details of Milton's descent, his struggle with Urizen, and his successful triumph over the temptations of the "Twofold form Hermaphroditic" who seek to lure him into the "bands of war" in Canaan. Apparently Los has not understood the significance of Milton's journey for, horrified by Milton's descent into the Caverns of the Mundane Shell, he "gave himself up to tears." At the moment of his greatest desperation, however, he recalls a Prophecy in Eden:

That Milton of the Land of Albion should up
ascend
Forwards from Ulro from the Vlae of Felpham;
and set free
Orc from his Chain of Jealousy...
(E114; K503)

Los' failure to recognize the import of Milton's descent is due in part to the influence of Enitharmon and, in fact, it is not until Milton's descent 'into' Blake that the Family of Eden finally understands the meaning of the Bard's song and realizes that it is not Satan but Milton 'the Awakener' who has descended. At this point Ololon makes her crucial decision to descend and reunite with Milton.

Concomitant with her descent is Los' descent to Blake. However one should remember that, in Milton, linear time sequences are relatively unimportant in terms of narrating events as they seem to happen: all these events take place in that moment which "Satan cannot find."¹⁶ Blake is terrified by the terrible "flaming Sun" which confronts him,

...but he kissed me and wished me health.
And I became One Man with him arising in my
strength
Twas too late to recede. Los had enterd into
my soul:
His terrors now possess'd me whole! I arose in
fury & strength.

(E116; K505)

As he enters Blake's soul, Los reveals his recognition of his special prophetic mission in the role of the Watchman of Eternity:

I am that Shadowy Prophet who Six Thousand
Years ago
Fell from my station in the Eternal bosom.
Six Thousand Years
Are Finishd. I return! both Time & Space obey
my will.
I in Six Thousand Years walk up and down: for
not one Moment
Of Time is lost, nor one Event of Space unperm-
anent.
But all remain: every fabric of Six Thousand
Years
Remains permanent: tho' on the Earth where Satan
Fell, and was cut off all things vanish & are
seen no more
They vanish not from me & mine, we guard them
first & last(.)

(E116; K505)

This passage provides the most impressive statement of the character of the 'new' Los, that is, the Los that Blake is reforming in the light of his rekindled interest in Jesus as the Redeemer. Los is here called the Guardian of Time: since Time is the "Mercy

Of Eternity," Los is the guardian in Time of the path of humanity's redemption. This is the first time that Los has confidently stated full recognition, understanding, and acceptance of his prophetic mission. It is not long before his new faith is tested, for when he and Blake arrive at the Gates of Golgonooza, Los finds his sons "clouded with discontent. & brooding in their minds most terrible things." Not realizing that Milton has gone down to Eternal Death, the sons of Los blame Milton's "Religion" for the cruel perversions of Jesus' gospel: "Asserting the Self-righteousness against the Universal Saviour." It is completely beyond them to understand why Los, who has the power to destroy, insists on permitting this evil to continue. But Los, even though he has to admit to his sons that he does not fully understand the 'spiritual logic' of these events, stands steadfast in the face of their unrest, counselling patience. If he does not yet see the course of redemption to which Milton's descent will bring them all, he does at least know that war and violence, revenge and retaliation, are not to be the way of resolution:

And thus Los spoke. O noble Sons, be patient yet
a little(.)
I have embracd the falling Death, he is become
One with me
O Sons we live not by wrath, by mercy alone we
live!
I recollect an old Prophecy in Eden recorded in
gold; and oft
Sung to the harp: that Milton of the land of
Albion
Should up ascend forward from Felphams Vale &
break the Chain

Of Jealousy from all its roots; be patient
therefore O my Sons

Remember how Calvin and Luther in fury premature
Sow'd War and stern division between Papists
& Protestants
Let it not be so now! O go not forth in Martyr-
doms & Wars
We were plac'd here by the Universal Brotherhood
& Mercy
With powers fitted to circumscribe this dark
Satanic death
And that the Seven Eyes of God may have space
for Redemption
But how this is as yet we know not, and we cannot
know;

(E118; K507-8)

Los' sons remain unconvinced for they can see no hope
of resolution in their father's conduct. But Blake
reiterates that "He is the Spirit of Prophecy the
ever present Elias", and the reader knows that it is
Los and not his sons whose counsel is correct, whose
awareness reflects the spirit of the Divine Vision.

Plates 24 through 29 truly belong to Los, ex-
ultant in the confirmed awareness of his role. It
is his "labour of Six Thousand Years" which is de-
scribed in these plates and much of the imagery of
the Harvest and Vintage is reminiscent of the closing
plates of The Four Zoas. Two passages in particular
will serve to illustrate that, by the time of the
composition of Milton, Blake had become more confi-
dent in his vision of the role of Los, especially
as it was to relate to the role of Jesus. The first
passage occurs at plate 24:

Los is by immortals nam'd Time Enitharmon is
nam'd Space
But they depict him bald & aged who is in eternal
youth
All powerful and his locks flourish like the

brows of morning
He is the Spirit of Prophecy the ever apparent
Elias
Time is the mercy of Eternity; without Times
swiftness
Which is the swiftest of all things: all were
eternal torment:
All the Gods of the Kingdoms of Earth labour in
Los's Halls.
Every one is a fallen Son of the Spirit of
Prophecy
He is the Fourth Zoa, that stood around the
Throne Divine.

(E120; K509-10)

The identification of Los with Elias confirms the association of Los with Jesus: just as Elias was a prophet of God so Los is also to be a prophet of Jesus. This relationship is strengthened in plate 25. The fact that Los speaks of the Lamb and of "the Lords coming" also reinforces the argument that Los and Jesus are not intended by Blake to be identified: "Lambeth mourns calling Jerusalem. she weeps & looks abroad/For the Lords coming, that Jerusalem may overspread all Nations(.)" Certainly Milton gives abundant evidence that Blake now knew that he need not sacrifice the impressiveness of the status of Los as prophet in transferring the gospel and the means of redemption to Jesus Christ. This impression of Los is carried forward to Jerusalem.

Los in Jerusalem

Chapter 1 of Jerusalem primarily relates the implications of the fall of the "perturbed man" not only as they affect Albion but also as they affect the other zoas, their emanations, and their sons and daughters. The major role of Los as prophet

is introduced in the first chapter. In this poem that role is fully exploited.

By the end of plate 5 Los' emanation has divided from him and, in plate 6, his spectre also divides. In wrath and terror Los throws down the Hammer of Urthona and weeps in pain and rage. As he stands, panting and terrified, his spectre confronts him and seeks "...by other means/To lure Los: by tears, by arguments of science & by terror:/Terrors in every Nerve, by spasms & extended pains." Using every argument he can think of, the spectre attempts to dissuade Los from his friendship with Albion and from his forgiveness. Los' response to the spectre, even as he recognizes his own fallen condition, reveals a substantially developed Los who, even at this low point, can confirm his faith:

I know that Albion hath divided me, and that
thou O my Spectre
Hast just cause to be irritated: but look sted-
fastly upon me:
Comfort thyself in my strength the time will
arrive
When all Albions injuries shall cease, and when
we shall
Embrace him tenfold bright, rising from his
tomb in immortality
They have divided themselves. they must be
united by
Pity: let us therefore take example & warning
O my Spectre,
O that I could abstain from wrath! O that the
Lamb
Of God would look upon me and pity me in my fury.
In anguish of regeneration! in terrors of self-
annihilation:
Pity must join together those whom wrath has
torn in sunder,
And the Religion of Generation which was meant
for the destruction of Jerusalem,
Become her covering, till the time of the End.

(E149; K626)

Such a response to the spectre reveals Los as the true prophet. Los is fully aware of the validity of the spectre's complaints. He is approached when he is at his most vulnerable and hence most likely to surrender to the expostulations of his spectre. Yet in spite of this, he refuses to abandon his belief in pity and forgiveness, refuses to abandon the Divine Vision. In anger he turns on his spectre, warning him against revenge: "Unless thou desist/I will certainly create an eternal Hell for thee." Los knows well the state into which he has fallen but he knows equally well the role he must play and the crucial need for himself, at least, to hold faith: "I am inspired: I act not for myself: for Albions sake/I am now what I am: a horror and an astonishment." If Los is a prophet of Jesus, then one ought to be able to learn more about Jesus by observing the actions of Los. It is true that Milton's determination to go to Eternal Death and self-annihilation in the preceding poem are Christ-like acts, but because our attention is more focused on Milton, Blake, and Los, we are less aware of the connection with Jesus. In Jerusalem, however, the relationship between Los and Jesus is more intimate and Los' actions seem to be more directly the result of his living awareness of the Divine Vision. Certainly this is so in the excerpt of Los' speech to his spectre which was quoted above. Los' insight in these words reveals an undeniably profound understanding both

of Albion's crisis and of Jesus' remedial gospel. In pain he recognizes that he is a horror and an astonishment but that is less important to him than the need to embody the spirit of Jesus' gospel. Yet nowhere in Blake's poetry does he suggest that the way of Jesus' gospel and the path of regeneration are to be easy, even when faith and belief in that gospel are firm. Los says: "But still I labour in hope, tho' my tears flow down." In fact, it is just because Los is the Eternal Prophet and understands the profound implications of acting for another that he bears the greatest burden of pain. It is easy to accuse, to revenge, and to blame when one has no deep feeling of unity with another, no vision which defines the radical destructiveness of such action. But Los (like Elijah) as a prophet and instrument of such a Divine Vision cannot help but feel more heavily the temptation to surrender to the helplessness and loneliness he feels.

As the terrible work continues, the Daughters of Beulah and the Daughters of Los leave the furnaces, lamenting with Los the division of Jerusalem from Albion and her abandoned vulnerability to the perverse forces which seek to "undermine her foundations." Again Los is tempted by hopelessness and dejection, for the ever-multiplying terrors of the Fall seem to render his work vain and ineffective. But once more he affirms his absolute faith and his recognition of the need for error to be consolidated,

defined, and unveiled if it is to be cast off:

Yet why despair! I saw the finger of God go forth
Upon my Furnaces, from within the Wheels of
Albions Sons:
Fixing their Systems, permanent: by mathematic
power
Giving a body to Falsehood that it may be cast
off for ever.
With Demonstrative Science piercing Apollyon
with his own bow!
God is within, & without! he is even in the
depths of Hell!

In a later description of the building of Golgonooza,
Blake outlines more clearly the purpose of the city.
Up till now the city has appeared to be somehow cru-
cial but there has been no indication of precisely
what role it plays:

He views the City of Golgonooza, & its smaller
Cities:

And all that has existed in the space of six
thousand years:
Permanent, & not lost nor yet vanished, & every
little act,
Word, work, & wish that has existed, all remain-
ing still

(E156; K634)

Like Time itself, the building of Golgonooza is an
act of mercy, and like every act in Blake's poetry
which is truly redemptive, the city is neither sta-
tic nor lifeless. Golgonooza serves to protect in
the sense of making things permanent: "For every-
thing exists & not one sigh nor smile nor tear,
One hair nor particle of dust, not one can pass
away." Greater than this though, Golgonooza is, in
effect, the harbour and refuge of Imagination itself.
The path of redemption leads ultimately to the glor-
ious four-fold beauty of Jerusalem. In the fallen,

generated, vegetated world, there is no Jerusalem, but mercifully, there is Golgonooza.¹⁷ The obsessive compulsion with which Los inevitably returns to his task of building Golgonooza hinges on the city's role as interim fortress of the Imagination. If Golgonooza is the refuge of Imagination and the works of the Imagination, then it is also, on one level, the refuge of the spirit of Jesus. Los is also building to protect the spirit of Jesus in the fallen world.

Without wishing to write another poem, one might question the implications of Los' giving up in his role as prophet of Jesus. What would happen if he just surrendered to despair, abandoned the building of Golgonooza, and left the others to their own devices? Assuming that Blake was not a pessimist and would not therefore have left everything in a state of chaos and death, his only recourse would have been to bring Jesus directly into the drama and let him set things to rights. Part of the reason that Los is so important and must not give up is that Blake did not wish to convey his vision of Jesus Christ in this way. For one thing, it would be degrading to humanity, in his view, that it should play no part in its own regeneration. More importantly, if humanity is the "Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High," and if the spirit of Jesus resides in the Human Imagination, then the surrender to despair is a betrayal of the Divine Vision. It is a contribution

to his Crucifixion. This is what Los understands.
This is why he continues to stand firm.

As Los relentlessly pursues his task, the fallen forces of Albion's Sons persist in their efforts to undermine Jerusalem:

...Jerusalem is our Harlot-Sister
Return'd with Children of pollution, to defile
our House,
With Sin and shame. Cast! Cast her into the
Potters field.
(E161; K640)

While Jerusalem pleads for mercy and forgiveness Albion, in his delusion, can only blame her and see her in terms of sin and shame. However Albion is so filled with confusion, despair, and desperation, that he is torn between his spectrous condemnations and his remorse: "O Human Imagination O Divine Body I have Crucified/ I have turned my back upon thee in the Wasteland of Moral Law." The difference between Albion and Los is striking in this lament. How glaring is the contrast between Albion's words and those of Los: "But still I labour in hope, tho' still my tears flow down." To the same degree that Los accepts his honour and responsibility as prophet of Jesus and temple of the Divine Vision, Albion abdicates all responsibility in accusing self-pity. Like some raving Lear, stamping and raging in the wilderness, now in desperate remorse, now in accusing fury, he oscillates wildly between desolation and self-righteousness. It is really Albion himself, in his fall and its effects, who has generated the

sufferings of all the others, particularly Luvah, but Albion in the first place, blames it on God and accuses the Lamb of God of being a delusion; and in the second place, cannot understand that the Lamb of God, in Luvah, suffers for Albion himself. It is precisely this self-denying act of mercy which Albion cannot grasp. The dynamics of his attitude are understandable enough. If he were able to accept responsibility for the present state of affairs and acknowledge his error, he would have one foot on the path to redemption. As yet he is nowhere near that acknowledgment.

Chapter 2 of Jerusalem is marked by three main themes: the continued denial by Albion of the Divine Vision, his emanation, and those who love him; the failure of the Four Zoas in their attempt to save Albion; and the persistent faith and strength of Los which inspires him to keep the Divine Vision in time of trouble. Yet Los is the "Eternal" prophet only insofar as the Divine Vision is also eternal. One of the reasons that he is able to persevere is that he never doubts the constancy of the sustaining strength of Jesus. If he doubts at all, it is his own endurance which he doubts. Certainly Blake did not imply that the gospel only has meaning during time of great adversity, but he did imply, through the character of Los, that its spirit can illumine even the most dreadful destruction which humanity (Albion) can devise for itself. Furthermore,

a greater consolidation of the perverted female will in the form of Vala begins to make itself felt and Luvah now enters the State Satan, the State of Eternal Death. In fact, as Vala articulates her 'right' to rule over Albion, Los' struggle begins to focus on the female will which Albion allows to exist, a trend which foreshadows Jesus' own need to confront the female will at the time of the Crucifixion.

In Jerusalem the fact that Los persists in defending a position inspired by the merciful religion of Jesus actually generates a good deal of his feeling of helplessness in aiding Albion. Like Jesus, he embodies a gospel which seems to bear no relation to the situation in which he finds himself. Mercy and forgiveness, the vision which Los defends, appears to be a hopeless idealism in the face of a world in which "a Man dare hardly to embrace/His own Wife, for the terrors of Chastity that they call/By the name of Morality...". However distraught Los may become, his refusal to submit to the hypocritical, bloody, and murderous morality which prevails testifies to his right to be called Elias.

Blake informs us that "Los was the friend of Albion who lov'd him most," but Albion, almost peevishly, refuses Los' counsel and friendship, persisting in a kind of terrible self-pity and self-indulgence of his own alienation: "God hath forsaken me, & my friends are become a burden/A

Weariness to me, & the human footstep is a terror to me." Albion's plea for a "Ransom" throws Los into the terrible position of wanting to help Albion without being able to give in to Albion's blind demand: "Must the Wise die for an Atonement? does Mercy endure Atonement?/No! It is Moral Severity, & destroys Mercy in its Victim." It is not that Los selfishly refuses to die for Albion but that he cannot die as an "Atonement" and by this he means atonement as Albion and, presumably, the orthodox Church understand it. To die in order to appease an angry God, which is evidently how Albion understands the process, would fly in the face of the very Mercy which Los seeks to defend. It would be submitting to the rule of lex talionis--an eye for an eye--which "Forgiveness of Sins" seeks to supplant. It would involve Los' betrayal of the gospel of Jesus. Albion, in his disease, insists on accusing and blaming Los for perpetuating his present state and for not correcting things in the way that Albion would have him do. Reproaching him for ingratitude and turpitude, Albion demands "righteousness and justice", though it is not his right to demand anything and Los is well aware that he cannot afford Albion the sort of righteousness and justice that he seeks. In the face of Albion's demand, Los, for the first time, really takes him to task in the same way that he upbraided the zoas earlier. Perhaps Albion's misplaced charges of deceit and ingratitude have finally snapped Los' seemingly infinite patience with

his friend for now he does not shirk from laying his cards on the table and showing Albion just how things stand:

Los Answerd. Righteousness & justice I give thee
in return
For thy righteousness! but I add mercy also,
and bind
Thee from destroying these little ones: am I to
be only
Merciful to thee and cruel to all that thou hatest(?)
Thou art in Error; trouble me not with thy righteousness.
I have innocence to defend and ignorance to instruct:
I have no time for seeming; and little arts of
compliment,
In morality and virtue: in self-glorying and pride.
Therefore I break thy bonds of righteousness; I
crush thy messengers!
That they may not crush me and mine: do thou be
righteous,
And I will return it; otherwise I defy thee thy
worst revenge:
Consider me as thine enemy: on me turn all thy
fury
But destroy not these little ones, nor mock the
Lords anointed:
He hath cast thee off for ever; the little ones
he hath anointed!
Thy Selfhood is for ever accursed from the Divine
presence

(E188; K670).

Not surprisingly, Albion calls upon Hand and Hyle to take revenge on "the Abhorred fiend." But as Los stands with the Divine Hand upon him, he is beyond the fear of whatever fate awaits him. He continues to pray for assistance and for the Saviour's promise to "rend the veil." Courageously he enters the "interiors of Albions bosom" and there appreciates as he has never done before the terrible extent of the fall: "And every minute particular, the jewels of Albion, running down/The Kennels of the streets & lanes as if

they were abhorred...And all the tenderness of the soul cast forth as filth & mire." Los knows that he cannot take vengeance on those responsible for these crimes, for "he who takes vengeance alone is the criminal of Providence." Again and again in Jerusalem Los' faith is tested by moral dilemmas which strike like so many well-aimed spears at the very heart of his prophetic spirit. Like Ezekiel, perhaps like Job, and certainly like Jesus himself, Los stands completely alone in a world where his efforts are continually thwarted by an all-pervasive murdering injustice. But throughout the trials of Chapters 2 and 3, Los obstinately refuses to give in to what must be gnawing away inside him: the weary desire to capitulate.

Chapter 3 ends with the revelation of the perverse female will in the form of Rahab. Chapter 4 opens with her crowning as Babylon the Great. Enitharmon is also touched by the disease of female will and refuses reconciliation with Los, threatening to do her utmost to dominate him. But Los knows that redemption cannot occur unless he reunites with Enitharmon and, once again, he is the first to recognize this fact: "For Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations/ Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each Humanity." Increasingly one is struck by the growing similarity between the prophet Los and Jesus himself: "The blow of his Hammer is Justice, the swing of his Hammer: Mercy,/The force of Los's Hammer is eternal

Forgiveness." Los cries for Jesus to descend and "Take on the Satanic Body of Holiness." In Chapter Seven we shall examine in detail the dynamics of Jesus' assumption of the Satanic Body in consideration of Blake's final vision of Jesus. For the moment we need only be aware that Jesus puts on Selfhood, of which Satan is the prime representative, in order to cast it off.

As the chapter proceeds, Los continues to cry, like John the Baptist, for awakening, return, and repentance. As that awakening draws nearer, Los himself begins to merge with the spirit of Jesus, as Los and Blake merged in Milton: "Fear not my Sons this Waking Death. He is become One with me/Behold him here! we shall be united in Jesus." In a sense, this is the last appearance of Los in the poem, for immediately after this speech, Jesus does descend and, in his descent, there is no longer any distinction between Los and Jesus. The descent of Jesus is signalled by the phrase: "Time was Finished!" This is the redemption of Time, the penetration of Chronos by Kairos for which Los has laboured throughout the poem. "The Breath Divine Breathed over Albion" who awakes to restore his scattered zoas to order. Finally Jesus appears to Albion in the climactic passage in which the prophet Los is taken up into the form of Jesus and Jesus himself takes on the form of Los. It is only fitting that it should be so, for Blake has informed us that Los is not only Time but also Imagination and that Imagination is the

true Man. Hence Jesus 'ends' the tyranny of linear Time by entering it, and enters Time as the essential or true Man. We shall want to consider the ensuing conversation between Albion and Jesus in greater detail in Chapter Seven, for it concerns Blake's understanding of the death of Christ, the Atonement, and the nature of the relationship between humanity and Jesus. Our interest here has been more strictly to follow the progression of the prophet Los towards a final assimilation by Jesus himself, a movement which hinges on Los' continual labouring in the service of self-annihilation and eternal forgiveness of sin.

Part 2: The Symbolism of Luvah in Relation to Jesus

We shall have less to say about the character of Luvah than that of Los because Luvah's role is less dynamic and 'growing' than that of the prophet. However he does help to enlarge on our understanding of Blake's Christ figure, especially with regard to the Crucifixion. On the whole, Luvah is much less self-aware as well as less aware of the import of that which goes on around him. For these reasons, although it would be inaccurate to say that Luvah is a less sympathetic character, it is probably true that the reader will feel a greater empathy with Los both because his development can be observed and because he arouses greater emotional response in his anguish for Albion and for the degraded state of the universe in general. At a very fundamental level, Luvah's importance lies in his role as the Prince of Love for Love is scarcely

less essential to the Blakean gospel of Jesus than Human Imagination is. If Human Imagination is the "body" of Jesus, then Human Love is the activity of Jesus. If for no other reason, Luvah is drawn into one of the most crucial scenes of the entire drama: the Crucifixion.

In The Four Zoas, an addition on page 303 of the Erdman text introduces the association of Luvah with Jesus. Luvah, Prince of Love, is, by this stage, fallen and divided from Vala, his emanation. In his division, Luvah assumes so many different forms (or enters so many different states) that it is sometimes difficult to keep track of his various identities. Hence, he is Luvah, Orc, Satan, and Vala. She in turn is also Rahab, and in that form, she is known as the cruel feminine principle which animates Satan. These various identities are not revealed in Night I but they become increasingly significant in the light of the following appended lines:

But Luvah & Vala standing alone in the bloody sky
On high remaind alone forsaken in fierce jealousy
They stood above the heavens forsaken desolate sus-
pended in blood
Descend they could not. nor from Each other avert
their eyes
Eternity appeared above them as One Man infolded
In Luvah(s) robes of blood & bearing all his
afflictions
As the sun shines down on the misty earth Such was
the Vision

(E303; K274)

This much appended first Night introduces Luvah's central association with Jesus.¹⁸ Blake certainly disagreed with the orthodox doctrine of the Crucifixion

and the Atonement, but both events occur in his poetry reinterpreted according to his understanding of Jesus. The element of the Crucifixion in Blake's poetry which is in common with the orthodox view is that Jesus 'descends' (or is incarnated), assumes humanity's terrible suffering, and even submits to crucifixion. In orthodoxy during Blake's time the rationale of an 'atoning' death, a death which pays a ransom for a debt incurred by humanity, was much emphasized. In Blake's poetry the action is accomplished totally out of love, out of forgiveness of sins, and out of a gospel of annihilation of the selfhood. Hence, in Luvah's crucifixion later in the drama, it is Jesus who is crucified in Luvah. Inversely, one might say that it is Love (Luvah) which is crucified in Jesus. Thomas J. Altizer interprets the connection in the following way:

[Luvah] ...symbolizes the sacrificial movement of energy or passion from its initial fall to its ultimate self-sacrifice in Christ, and thence to the repetition of this sacrifice in the suffering of humanity; and...he also embodies the dark or evil forces of passion and must himself become Satan if he is to accomplish his work.¹⁹

Perhaps this interpretation takes us more deeply into the Luvah-Christ relationship than we are prepared for in Night I, but the "robes of blood" in which Jesus appears to Luvah and Vala is a recurring image, an image of willing self-sacrifice and voluntary assumption of suffering by Jesus. In fact, it may be that the reason for Luvah's apparent simplicity and lack of self-awareness--the very characteristics which make him

so different from Los--is that Blake saw love as more primitive, less sophisticated than Imagination. In other words, Luvah's own personal suffering is somehow less terrible because it is actually being assumed by Jesus. The key-note of Imagination, on the other hand, and indeed of prophecy, is perception and awareness, so that Los cannot help but perceive and experience the fall in all its horror.

Night II really belongs to Luvah for it is concerned with his fall and the separation of his emanation. Again, most of what concerns us in terms of the association of Luvah with the Lamb of God, is added material.²⁰ This is hardly surprising since it would only have been after Blake began to re-focus attention on Jesus that he would have realized and exploited the connection between Jesus and Luvah. Just how little Luvah himself understands of his own relationship with Jesus is revealed in his despair of eternal death, as in the following speech which is addressed, at least in part, to Jesus:

...O Lamb
Of God clothd in Luvahs garments little knowest
thou
Of death Eternal that we all go to Eternal Death
To our Primeval Chaos in fortuitous concourse of
incoherent
Discordant principles of Love & Hate...
(E311; K282)

Blake is gently ironic in this speech for it is Luvah who suffers the very ignorance which he attributes to Jesus: only by Jesus going to Eternal Death and breaking its tyranny is the rest of humanity freed from that

fate. Luvah has it all backwards with his comment,
"little knowest thou."

The fact that Jesus appears in Luvah's robes of blood as early as Night I and again in Night II is an important point for it signifies that Jesus' participation and the work of redemption is in process even in the initial stages of the fall. The Divine Vision, personified in Jesus, does not simply step in and set things to rights. In added lines on page 315 of the Erdman text Blake gives us a salient clue as to Jesus' purpose in descending in the robes of blood:

For the Divine Lamb Even Jesus who is the Divine
Vision
Permitted all lest Man should fall into Eternal
Death
For when Luvah sunk down himself put on the robes
of blood
Lest the state call'd Luvah should cease. & the
Divine Vision
Walked in robes of blood till he who slept should
awake
(E315; K287)

It is crucial that the state Luvah should not cease for if that were to happen, humanity would indeed, as Luvah fears, be condemned to Eternal Death. But Jesus takes on Luvah's robes, his afflictions and even, eventually, his crucifixion in order that the state be made permanent until Albion awakes. He appears repeatedly in the robes of blood throughout The Four Zoas (in added lines) but it is in Night VIII that this symbolism seems to explode in all directions. Here the connection between Luvah and Jesus becomes fully manifest but, in their fallen perception, it causes endless con-

fusion for Urizen and Rahab, as well as a premature sense of triumph for Rahab. As we have noted, the expectation of linear narrative is not usually satisfied in Blake's poetry. Hence the Sons of Eden apparently perceive the Lamb of God putting "off the clothing of blood" before the Crucifixion actually takes place. Again, prior to the Crucifixion, Los seems to have had a vision which clarifies for him that it is Jesus who is crucified in Luvah and that, although this is necessary, it is only a means to a more glorious end:

Los said to Enitharmon Pitying I saw
Pitying the Lamb of God descended thro' Jerusalems
gates
To put off Mystery time after time & as a Man
Is born on Earth so was he born of Fair Jerusalem
In mysterys woven mantle & in the Robes of Luvah

He stood in fair Jerusalem to awake up into Eden
The fallen Man but first to Give his vegetated
body
To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body
may be Revealed

(E363; K347-48)

The imagery of the Crucifixion is rather fluid, so fluid that it is interesting to note the lines which deal with the same event as Blake portrayed it in The Four Zoas and then in Jerusalem. In The Four Zoas, Blake writes that: "Urizen call'd together the Synagogue of Satan in dire Sanhedrin/To Judge the Lamb of God to Death as a murderer & robber." Then follows the actual Crucifixion:

Thus was the Lamb of God condemn'd to Death
They nail'd him upon the tree of Mystery weeping
over him
And then worshipping calling him Lord & King
(E365; K349)

Now compare the judgment and death quoted above with the doublet in Jerusalem: "They vote the death of Luvah, & they naild him to Albions Tree in Lambeth." In the following plate 66, we read: "They put into his hand a reed, they mock: Saying: Behold/The King of Canaan whose are seven hundred chariots of iron!" In The Four Zoas it is Jesus who is judged and condemned, Jesus who is nailed to the tree, Jesus who is mocked. In Jerusalem, exactly the same events occur, but they are said to happen to Luvah. The "King of Canaan" title and the crown of thorns which Luvah wears in the Jerusalem version cement the association with Christ but even though Blake uses the names interchangeably in describing the same event we are not meant to assume that Jesus and Luvah are one and the same being. In this fluid interchange of names we must concentrate on precisely who Luvah is. We have noted earlier his title of "Prince of Love"; Blake intends to make the point that when Jesus is crucified, Love is crucified in him because Jesus' act is not only one of necessity, it is also one of overwhelming love. The Four Zoas account clarifies the distinction between the two characters:

But when Rahab had cut off the Mantle of Luvah
 from
 The Lamb of God it rolld apart, revealing to all
 in heaven
 And all on Earth the Temple & the Synagogue of
 Satan & Mystery
 (E365; K350)

Now the confusion is ended for the robes of blood in which Jesus has appeared and which have so confused

Urizen are cut away to reveal the Lamb of God triumphant over Rahab and Death.

There is another aspect of Luvah's association with Christ which we will mention now although this is part of the larger issue of the "Satanic Body of Holiness" which will be discussed in Chapter Six. Considering that we have concentrated on the identity of Luvah as the Prince of Love, the following passage may strike the reader as confusing:

Those who dare to appropriate to themselves
Universal Attributes
Are the Blasphemous Selfhoods & must be broken
asunder(.)
A Vegetated Christ & a Virgin Eve, are the Hermaphroditic
Blasphemy, by his Maternal Birth he is that Evil-
One
And his Maternal Humanity must be put off Eternally
Lest the Sexual Generation swallow up Regeneration
Come Lord Jesus take on thee the Satanic Body of
Holiness

So Los cried in the Valleys of Middlesex in the
Spirit of Prophecy
While in Selfhood Hand & Hyle & Bowen & Skofield
appropriate
The Divine Names: seeking to Vegetate the Divine
Vision
In a corporeal & ever dying Vegetation & Corruption
Mingling with Luvah in One, they become One Great
Satan.

(E247; K736-37)

In order to understand Luvah's role in this we must draw together the cluster of symbols which surrounds him rather than confine ourselves to the single identity of Love. Vala, who is Luvah's feminine portion and therefore really a part of him although we see her as a separate character becomes, in her most fallen form, Rahab. In this state, she is Goddess of Nature

and of Natural Religion, goddess too of the cruelest tyranny of love. Nature and love in this state are alienated, objectified, and tyrannized; it is the world of the perverse female will to have dominion over the male in love. In his fallen condition, then, Luvah 'becomes' Satan because this condition of Nature and its attitude toward death is precisely the state of Opacity which elsewhere defines Satan. Blake's point in the above passage is to deny what he saw as the emphasis of the Church on the death of Jesus. It is not only the mystery of death over which Christ must triumph, it is also implicitly the whole vegetated, alienated, objectified, tyrannical attitude to Nature and, through Luvah-Vala/Satan-Rahab, to love. Hence there is a two-pronged association between Luvah and Jesus one aspect of which concerns the fallen Luvah who has descended into the State Satan. We shall consider this Satan-Christ imagery in greater detail in the discussion of Jesus and the "Satanic Body of Holiness."

The significance of Luvah in relationship to Jesus is, as we said at the beginning of the chapter, more symbolic and localized than that of Los. However it is nonetheless of major importance in understanding another aspect of the dynamics of Blake's response to the Crucifixion of Christ. With his anti-orthodox views, we might have expected Blake to have omitted the crisis of Crucifixion altogether. That

he did not choose to do so is an indication that he saw it as crucial, but for reasons quite different from those advanced by the orthodox Church.

Blake's development of the Los figure from his early role as a watchman delegated by the Eternals at the time of the fall of Urizen to the climax of his assimilation by the Divine Vision at the end of Jerusalem has been an arduous journey for the prophet, a journey riddled with error, doubts, and anguish. Luvah's character is more static (though the actual function of his association with Jesus is not) insofar as he does not significantly change throughout the poetry in relation to Jesus. He is, in his fallen form, a more ambiguous figure than Los, but that is because his fall as the Prince of Love brings humanity to the very nadir of error in the establishment of the perverse world of Nature in which Love is victimized by Luvah's emanation, Vala. Luvah consistently has less understanding than Los has so that, in a sense, he is a more unconscious instrument of the Divine Vision than the self-conscious prophet is. However it is impossible to consider the character either of Los or of Luvah apart from that of Jesus for their every movement is subtly guided by the Divine Vision who is never absent from the drama. By observing the symbolic significance of the actions of these two characters, the reader is given an insight into the gospel of Jesus which Orc failed to manifest. Having seen that gospel in action we can now confront

its creator: Blake's Jesus Christ in the mature
vision.

CHAPTER SIX

"JESUS IN THE FOUR ZOAS"

Blake's vision of Jesus Christ may well differ from that presented in institutional Christianity but the fact remains that it is fundamentally based on his understanding of the Jesus of Scripture and his own spiritual experience. If we are to accept Harold Bloom's understanding of Blake as an "apocalyptic humanist"¹ (surely a strange and vague juxtaposition of words) then we must largely ignore, as Bloom does, Blake's expression of two distinctively Christian tenets. It is certainly possible to defend the thesis that Blake was a secular humanist and not a Christian in any sense of the word but in order to do so we must dilute (if not dismiss) both the direct statements which Blake makes about Jesus, particularly in Jerusalem, and the whole atmosphere of Jerusalem, an atmosphere which constantly suggests an awareness of and dependence upon Jesus as a decisive figure in the process of redemption.

In order to understand the question at all of whether or not Blake was a secular humanist, it is necessary to define what we mean by the term humanist. C.E. Hartshorne cogently summarizes the basis of secular humanist thought as follows:

In general...the humanists hold that, as far as we know, man is the highest type of individual in existence, and that therefore, if there is any proper object of religious devotion, and 'real' God, it can only be humanity considered in its noblest aspirations and capacities, together with nature so far as expressed in and serviceable to humanity.²

In essence, then, the secular humanist, in seeking to ennoble and encourage the capacities of human endeavour, rules out the possibility of the spiritual world, of a divinity which is 'higher' than humanity or, what amounts to the same thing, places the spiritual world within the human mind. We have to ask whether this was Blake's own intention or, what is more within the grasp of the critic, whether this is the impression that he conveyed in his poetry.

'Christian humanism' may seem at first glance to be a self-contradictory phrase. However it reflects a valid religious experience, for it is the response of one who does indeed recognize and experience the penetration of the natural and human cosmos by the divine (or, one might say, of time by eternity) but who still legitimately seeks to ennoble the capacities of enlightened human intellect to the highest possible degree. The fundamental difference between the secular humanist and the Christian humanist regarding this urge to ennoble humanity's fullest potential is that for the secular humanist, this task must be an end in itself (for there is nothing beyond humanity) whereas for the Christian humanist, the whole endeavour is intimately bound up with achieving a better relationship, indeed, unity with God. In suggesting that Christian humanism was Blake's position, one is far from ignoring or belittling his sustained and frequently vituperative censure of institutional Christianity as presented by the orthodox Church. Indeed,

only the crisis precipitated by the Lockean tabula rasa philosophy which threatened to humiliate humanity as a passive recipient of external sensations on the one hand and, on the other, an abstract Deism which "...conceives the life of God in terms of a celestial monarchy or empire, investing God with the attributes of autocracy and self-sufficiency,"³ could have kindled what I call Blake's Christian humanism. Nicholas Berdyaev, in Freedom and the Spirit, notes that medieval theocracy was much to blame for the rise of humanism because it failed to sanctify the nobility of human creativity and so unwittingly instigated a rebellious reaction which expressed itself in the non-religious, inventive, scientific, and creative aspirations of humanism.⁴ It is at least ironic that Christianity itself should have given rise to the humanism which took this form. But Berdyaev comments on the inevitable tragedy which resulted from the antagonism between abstract monotheism (or Deism, as it was expressed in Blake's own time) and humanism: "If patristic anthropology deviated in fact, if not in principle, towards a certain monophysitism, humanistic anthropology is equally monophysite, though at the opposite pole."⁵ Our question is whether, in reaction to Deism and to the orthodox Church, Blake was a victim of such a humanistic monophysitism; whether Blake would have agreed with the following as a description of his principles:

Humanism sees exclusively in man the child

of the natural world for humanistic anthropology is naturalistic. It no longer sees in man a being who belongs to two worlds and to two orders, the point of intersection between the spiritual and natural spheres...Humanist thought places man finally in this world and on the surface of the earth.⁶

It is by no means philosophical irrelevance to consider these two positions seriously, for Blake has a significant readership of people who see in his poetry the ultimate statement of secular humanism. Harold Bloom's book, Blake's Apocalypse, is such a testimony to Blake's secular humanism. One of the main points of attention for the readers who take this view, is Blake's usual denigration of the "Father" image of God, the "Nobodaddy" God of tyranny, jealousy, and abstract authority. One need not go so far as Bernard Blackstone in saying that "Blake's is a Christianity from which the Father is left out,"⁷ because we have seen that Jehovah is sometimes treated positively by Blake. However, while the negative response to the Father image is not unusual in the poetry, it is certainly not fatal to the hypothesis that Blake was a Christian in a very profound sense. What would be fatal would be the proven assertion that, in playing down the Father, Blake, in one stroke, dismissed all indications of any understanding of the spiritual or divine which, in some sense, however potentially unified with humanity, is still independent. It is at this juncture that Blake's treatment of Jesus Christ comes to the fore for it reveals an extraordinarily insightful response to the abstract

Deism versus secular humanism issue which has been outlined. Three elements comprise this response: two of these speak to the two sides of the crisis; and a third expresses Blake's understanding of the possibility of a way out of the crisis.

With respect to Blake's hostile treatment of the Father, we are in agreement with Blackstone that, for Blake, the idea of the Father image usually bears negative connotations.⁸ Indeed, his Urizenic God figure from the time of Tiriel onwards is a petty-minded, raging, rather pathetic Lear-type figure for whom no one could possibly feel the least stirrings of religious devotion. But this stark parody is a rebellious response precisely to the abstract Deism which, as Berdyaev noted, "...invested God with the attributes of autocracy and self-sufficiency." More particularly it is a rebellion against the eighteenth-century sky god of rationalist theology. It is a refusal to acknowledge that 'man is a worm sixty inches long' whose creativeness, inspiration, and imagination are of no value. Given the tradition preceding Blake and the Deistic state of mind in the theology of his own time, it cannot even be considered too exaggerated a response. One is here fully admitting the errors of the rationalist Christianity which incited such a response. However, if it is seen in the light of a reaction to those errors, then the response does not rule out the possibility that it was abstract monotheism in general, Deism in particular rather than the whole idea

of the divine which Blake parodied.

The second element in Blake's response exhibits a similar concern but it is directed against a different error. Just as abstract monotheism tended to threaten humanity with grovelling insignificance, so the philosophy of Locke and his followers threatened to reduce humanity to the status of an enslaved passive animal. Locke's tabula rasa with all that it implied about the human mind, could hardly be said to dignify the creative powers of human intellect and imagination. Here too, Blake's intention was to restore the dignity of creative human endeavour. Today we say glibly that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder.' Blake drove the implications of that cliché to new heights of imaginative potential. His dictum that "where man is not nature is barren" is another way of saying that, not only beauty, but also the whole world is in the eye of the beholder. On the same theme, he says in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees." The three major poems reiterate the disturbing process whereby, in fallen vision, the characters 'become what they behold.' Hence, while attacking in the opposite direction, in other words, while attacking statements about the nature of humanity rather than statements about the nature of God, Blake actually had in mind the same concern: the restoration of the dignity of human intellect and imagination. The humanist reader will have no qualms

about agreeing with this analysis and will at this point assert that, having made this two-pronged attack, Blake proceeded to exalt, indeed, to deify humanity itself. It is at this point that I must part company with the secular humanist interpretation for it is at this point that the third element of Blake's response comes to the fore.

In Blake's mind, the figure of Jesus Christ effectively answered all misconceptions about the nature of humanity and the nature of God. This statement brings us to the poetry for it is in the revisions to The Four Zoas, in Milton, and in Jerusalem that Blake most clearly expresses his increasingly firm belief in the role of Jesus Christ as Saviour. It also necessarily encourages us to consider that, as embarrassing as it might be for the secular humanist, Blake's understanding of Jesus Christ is not merely a personal vision, a construct of his imagination as, for example, Urizen is. Blake drew on two identifiable New Testament strands of thought in the development of his Jesus Christ. (One must bear in mind, of course, that these would not have been traditions at the time of the writing of the Gospels, but they would have developed as such by Blake's own century). On the one hand, there is the tradition which focuses on Jesus as Messiah, as the Saviour, as the Deliverer to redemption which is reflected, for instance, in the Good Shepherd imagery of John's gospel. On the other hand, there is the tradition of Jesus the Christ as

the incarnate God, as the essential figure in whom the god-humanity unity is realized. Humanists tend to ignore just how solidly Blake's vision of Jesus is based on these two New Testament interpretations but if they agree with Bloom that Blake despised "every shred of institutional and historical Christianity,"⁹ then it is certainly understandable that they must ignore, or at least explain away, his use of these New Testament attempts to understand the phenomenon of Jesus Christ. Of course it is true that we cannot make the statement that Blake's Christianity was orthodox (which is scarcely an argument against its being Christian) or even that he expressed his Christianity consistently throughout the whole body of his poetry. In earlier chapters we have seen some explanation of this reflected in an attack on the Church so convinced and sustained that it is hardly surprising that parody and satire of the Church's God were the immediate results. Furthermore, the general optimism generated by the ideals, if not the facts of the French Revolution turned Blake temporarily toward the armed revolutionary as possibly representing the hope of liberation, indeed, of salvation. But we have also seen how Blake eventually realized that this hope, personified in the figure of Orc, was an illusory one. In other words, although there was a trend in the development of his thinking towards a Christianization of his vision, a trend understandable in retrospect, a meaningful discussion

of his Christianity can really only begin with the revisions to The Four Zoas and the following poems.

Before moving on to a more detailed examination of the poetry in the light of this hypothesis, we may consider a little further the considerable opposition to the thesis that Blake can legitimately be called a Christian on the basis of his treatment of Jesus Christ in the poetry.

In Blake's Apocalypse, Harold Bloom makes the suggestion that Blake despised "every shred of institutional and historical Christianity," and further that "If Blake was a Christian (and he always insisted that he was) then the vast majority of Christians are not."¹⁰ In fact, Bloom concludes by suggesting that he, for one, would feel more at ease in calling Blake an "apocalyptic humanist", albeit with the qualification that Blake would probably have disliked the term.¹¹ Bloom's is perhaps as clear a secular humanist interpretation of Blake's poetry as exists to date. Yet Bloom's very telling failure to relate Blake's statements about Jesus Christ to New Testament passages on the same subject, as well as his blatant denial of Blake's own characterization of himself as a Christian inevitably raises the question of whether he has allowed subjective presuppositions to distort his evaluation. The statements quoted above, which are typical not only of Bloom's interpretation, but of the secular humanist approach in general, clearly demand a response if we are to offer an alternative explanation of

Blake's position.

To begin with the first of the statements quoted above in which Bloom says that Blake rejected institutional and historical Christianity, one must reply that the comment is only at all creditable regarding institutional Christianity. Even in this case, "rejection" may be too strong a word just as the phrase "every shred" is a misleading phrase with regard to the implied comprehensiveness of Blake's response. Blake's approbation of the lowly monk and his treatment of the cathedral cities in Jerusalem suggest that he was not unequivocally against the Church and saw it as a potential instrument of the Divine Vision. It is true that Blake's understanding of Christianity as it was enshrined in the established Church led him to make the charge against it of hypocrisy and perversion of Jesus' gospel. However, that Blake also turned away from what he understood as the essence of 'historical' Christianity must be denied on at least four counts: (1) that Blake drew heavily on the body of Scripture which is the first premise and reference point of historical Christianity; (2) that, in the later poetry, especially in Jerusalem, he treated Jesus Christ as the Redeemer and Saviour of humanity and, in some way, as God-incarnate; (3) that he called himself a Christian and believed himself to be firmly in the tradition of the Judeo-Christian prophets; and (4) that he described, not just an apocalypse, but a remarkably Christian apocalypse. Each of these factors

in itself must surely act as a bothersome thorn in the side of the secular humanist critic; taken in conjunction they provide weighty evidence of Blake's adherence to some form of Christianity.

Moving on to Bloom's statement that if Blake was a Christian then the vast majority of Christians are not, two responses come to mind. In the first place, as unfortunate as it undoubtedly is, it is probably true that a majority of Christians are 'bad' or unthinking Christians: if Blake was unlike these, it is hardly a reason for suggesting that he was not a Christian. In the second place, Blake's particular interpretation of Christianity may well have been unusual at the time that it was expressed. But again, merely to say that it was out of line with the 'usual' expression of Christianity is no good reason in itself to suggest that it was not Christianity. Yet perhaps this is to respond to Bloom's statement from the wrong angle altogether. The direction of Bloom's argument and his eventual admission that he would prefer to call Blake an apocalyptic humanist (a term, one might add, not satisfactorily defined in his book) and then proceed with his interpretation from that point, would seem to suggest that the quotation we are considering is something of a red herring on Bloom's part. Since he is extremely ill at ease with Blake's own statement that he was a Christian, what Bloom really means to suggest is that the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians are indeed so, in which

case he can happily conclude that Blake was not. Or can he? Even expressed this way one is left with the suspicion that Bloom has thrown out the baby with the bathwater. On the grounds that the vast majority of Christians do not express their religion in the way that Blake did, Bloom comes to the dubious conclusion (a) that Christianity cannot legitimately be expressed as Blake expressed it and (b) that Blake therefore was not a Christian. As one who finds the term "apocalyptic humanist" an intriguing juxtaposition of words but an unsatisfactory and inaccurate description of Blake, I should prefer to venture the hypothesis that, in Blake's poetry, we do encounter a vision which, however unorthodox, can accurately be said to be Christian insofar as it moves, admittedly in jerks and jolts until after the alterations to The Four Zoas, towards a focus on the figure of Jesus Christ as the means of redemption for humanity. Undoubtedly the vision is not a reflection of all elements of the Christian tradition. Indeed, this vision of Blake's is rather narrow in focus. But since that focus ultimately is Jesus himself and the message of love and forgiveness of sins, then it can be said that the vision reflects the response of a poet who called himself a Christian to a fundamental tenet of the Christian message.¹²

It is a curiosity of Bloom's book that he nowhere advances a clear definition of the very principles on which his interpretation of Blake's poetry depends.

One must reason inductively from the particular things Bloom says about Blake's apocalyptic humanism to a general conception of just what that term means, at least for Bloom. Such particular statements are found, for example, on pages 194, 245, 265, 276, 343, and 363. However, from what we accept as the secular humanist position from which Bloom argues and from which he understands Blake's three major poems, it can only be considered something of an embarrassment that Blake used religious language at all. If he had stayed strictly within the bounds of an 'orthodox' secular humanism such as that suggested by Principal Hughes when he wrote that "...the forces needed for redemption and for the ennobling of life are to be found within man,"¹³ then presumably Blake would not gravitated towards the figure of Jesus Christ. It is interesting that Bloom never deems it necessary to question exactly why it was that Blake felt himself to be so strongly in the prophetic tradition or why he focused so much attention on Jesus Christ. Bloom apparently believes that what Blake depicted was a painful growth from humanity to Humanity to Humanity/God, all without ever having left the realm of the human. He might therefore tentatively agree with C.E. Hartshorne that "humanism is not so much atheism as a reinterpretation of God."¹⁴ Now, although humanists may in fact, as Professor Hartshorne suggests, be reinterpreting God, they certainly will not admit that this is their intention or, indeed, their need.

We noted Blackstone's comment about the absence of the Father from Blake's Christianity. The emphasis is almost exclusively on the Son, Jesus Christ. Bloom follows what he takes to be the logical extension of what he notes in passing as the identification of Man with Jesus and assumes that this means also the implicit identification of humanity with God. Conclusion: Humanity is God.¹⁵ Two points must be made in reply to this. The first is that we certainly do not wish to deny a movement in Blake's poetic drama towards a unity of humanity in Jesus, of identification in the sense of unity. However our understanding of identification depends here precisely on there being a relationship between two parties, humanity and Jesus, in which it is possible to be in unity or out of unity. Bloom's identification of Humanity/God is quite different from this for, in his analysis, there is no relationship because there are not two parties involved. There is only Humanity, one party, who is God when enlightened through the powers of the Imagination. The deification of humanity (and it is no less than deification no matter how strange a move it seems for a secular humanist to suggest) simply strikes God out of the picture altogether. The second point about Bloom's Humanity/God identification is that it curiously by-passes Blake's focus on Jesus Christ, denies that the Father is usually left out, and moves back to a preoccupation with the very God which Blake, as Bloom delights in proving,

parodied. The old God is cast out, a new God, Humanity, is set up in his place, and Jesus Christ somehow gets lost in the shuffle. In doing this Bloom entirely misses Blake's starting point which Berdyaev also takes to be the starting point of theology, which is that it is "...not God or Man, but the God-man whose theandric nature is above and beyond this anti-thesis."¹⁶ Although our purpose here will be to deal primarily with the three major poems, we must digress for a moment to a much earlier work because in Bloom's analysis of it we find possibly the best expression of the secular humanism which he later applies to The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem.

In arguing that Blake denied the existence of the divine outside humanity on the grounds that this represents a dualism, Bloom ends up by setting Blake up in yet another dualism. In his discussion of "There is No Natural Religion", Bloom says: "But the creative energy of man, not natural in its dependency, is expressed in the Poetic or Prophetic character...There is no Natural Religion because the religious ideas of man are Poetic in origin and owe nothing to nature."¹⁷ Surely this statement, whether consciously or otherwise, betrays another dualism, except that instead of a dualism of humanity versus God, it is now humanity versus nature, or Poetic Genius versus nature. Yet Blake is adamant that the perception of nature as alien and hostile is a condition of the fallen world, of fallen perception.

One might further suggest that these two dualisms are disturbingly analogous since the exalted position to which Bloom's interpretation raises the Poetic Genius over against nature is strikingly similar to the dualism by which Deism sets God over against nature and humanity.

Propositions VI and VII and their applications in "There is No Natural Religion" provoke a similar response from Bloom. Blake's proposition says: "He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God. He who sees the Ratio only, sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are that we may be as he is." Bloom's analysis of this is as follows:

The linements of gratified desire will come to man only when he possesses the infinite power of God, for Whom desire and fulfillment are one. To see the infinite in all things is to see God, and to see the Infinite in one is to see God in one...God is man, but man is not altogether or always God. In a humanistic displacement of the doctrine of the Incarnation, Blake daringly concludes by having God becoming altogether man, infinite desire, that we may be as he is, infinite fulfillment.¹⁸

Now it is true that Proposition VII states that, "The desire of Man being Infinite, the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite." Yet because Blake suggests that humanity is capable of infinite possession does not necessarily imply (as Bloom concludes) that humanity is the means whereby it comes into possession. Hence this is not necessarily a daring "humanistic displacement of the doctrine of the Incarnation"¹⁹ but precisely the opposite: a recognition that it is only through Christ's Incarnation ("God becomes as we

are") (emphasis mine) that humanity is open to the possibility of infinite possession.

Bloom's conclusion to his analysis of this tract is open to the same argument:

Since the desire and fulfillment alike come from the Poetic character...the next step must be to identify the Poetic character with the true or real Man who is also the source of the real God.²⁰

Bloom is saying one of two things here. Either he is arguing that the humanity which lives according to the highest precepts of the Poetic character is God or, (and the phrase "is the source of" suggests the following) that humanity, living according to the Poetic character creates or invents the true God. Surely it is worth noting that what Blake actually says is not that the true Man is the source of the real God, but that the true Man is the source of religions, which is hardly the same thing. But ultimately since Bloom wants to raise humanity to the godhead, the two possibilities end up in the same place. Yet the true secular humanist ought presumably to have no desire either to be God or even to create God. The whole point of secular humanism is that it has no need of God at all and the whole concept of God is seen to be an unnecessary encumbrance to humanity. The ambiguity that Bloom betrays in this interpretation of Blake is that, in trying to explain and, one fears, explain away, Blake's insistence on talking about God, Jesus, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the redemption of humanity, he

ends up by exalting the Human Imagination itself into a God and, presumably, the object of Blake's religious thought and devotion. One is forced to ask just how humanistic a humanism it is which discards the God of "institutional" and "historical" Christianity only to replace it with the God of Human Imagination. Bloom does not want to limit Imagination to "the flesh", to the "natural man", but at the same time he refuses to recognize the existence for Blake of any concept of divinity outside humanity, in short, any concept of God. His is a tenuous position.

What Bloom does in his analysis of "There is No Natural Religion" is consistent with his analysis of the rest of Blake's poetry. The error of his argument as I see it is twofold. In the first place, he attempts to interpret the whole body of the poetry as a cohesive and unified body of work. It is only if Bloom believes that there was relatively little change in Blake's thinking from the time of "There is No Natural Religion" in 1788 to, perhaps, 1804, by which time Blake had returned from Felpham to London, had completed most of the revisions to The Four Zoas, and had begun work on Milton and Jerusalem, that he can make the same kinds of statement about Blake's early concept of God and his later, more Christ-centred beliefs. The kinds of comments, in other words, that Bloom makes about Blake's ideas on God as they were expressed in 1788 are the same kind of comments he makes about the works written from 1804

onwards. Yet numerous studies, not least among them A.W.J. Lincoln's Ph.D. thesis entitled, "The Composition of Vala or The Four Zoas",²¹ give abundant evidence that Blake's thought underwent profound alteration during his "three years Slumber" at Felpham. To his studies of Greek, Blake, while at Felpham added the study of Hebrew, and his letter to James Blake of January 30, 1803, is particularly revealing with regard to this study:

I go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin; am very sorry that I did not begin to learn languages early in life as I find it very Easy. am now learning my Hebrew...I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar & the Testament is my chief master. astonishing indeed is the English Translation it is almost word for word & if the Hebrew Bible is as well translated which I do not doubt it is we need not doubt of its having been translated as well as written by the Holy Ghost

(E696; K821-22)

Surely the religious ideas of Blake, who not only undertook to learn Greek and Hebrew in the first place, but who also used the New Testament as his "chief master" must have been significantly influenced by the study. Admittedly, Blake is here referring to the New Testament in terms of language instruction, but we need only glance at the prophetic poems in order to see how deeply infiltrated they are by New Testament reference.

The Four Zoas itself is one long testimony to the kinds of changes Blake underwent. Lincoln, who sees both the overt and indirect Christian references in the revisions to The Four Zoas as late additions,

added where particular events such as the Crucifixion were analogous to the context of Blake's own myth,²² bears witness to the fact that Blake's thought, particularly his concept of redemption, was undergoing change. It may well be true, as Lincoln suggests, that the Christian references were not intended by Blake substantially to alter the myth he had conceived.²³ But the very fact that they were added at all before the draft was transcribed to proof-leaves by 1804, that crucial year in which he began seriously to turn his attention to Milton and Jerusalem, suggests that a change was foreshadowed for the means of redemption, particularly in Jerusalem. It would seem that Bloom does not take this development into account, a development which I would describe as spiritual.

With regard to the other disagreement I have with Bloom's analysis, I am indebted to a distinction made by Donald J. Unruh in "Jerusalem: the Primitive Christian Vision of William Blake", between Blake's use of "divine" and "divinity".²⁴ Unruh maintains that Blake believed humanity to be divine, but that he does not extend this to mean that humanity is a divinity. Humanity may well be God-like insofar as it is in the "divine image" and insofar as it responds to Jesus' gospel of forgiveness, but this is not to say that humanity is God. The secular humanist will undoubtedly argue with this distinction (a) because it is a Christian concept, and (b) because it is only by blurring or dismissing this distinction

that one is able to draw the conclusion that, for Blake, humanity was not only divine, it was also divinity, or God. We have noted this conclusion in Bloom's analysis, but Unruh's distinction offers a cogent explanation of how such a conclusion as Bloom's can arise.

Considering the secular humanist argument about Blake's poetry as it is expressed by Bloom has given us some understanding of how the interpretation arose, and why it ultimately limits the poetry. It is only fair to add that an orthodox interpretation, such as that advanced by J.G. Davies can suffer from limitation as well, although in this case, it is on the side of orthodoxy. Just as one gets the feeling that the secular humanist must feel vaguely ill at ease with Blake's increasing focus on Jesus Christ, so the orthodox Christian critic must wish that Blake had stayed a little more obviously within the boundaries of accepted doctrine. Blake's anti-institutionalism with regard to Christianity entails setting the Church aside almost entirely. Davies in particular does not want to abandon Blake as an enemy of the Church yet there is nothing in the poetry or the letters to suggest that Blake would have approved Davies' approach. Davies wants to believe that Blake's God is his God too, and while this may well be true, the fact of the matter remains that there is little evidence to suggest that Blake's method of coming to an understanding of humanity's relationship with Jesus

Christ had anything at all to do with the Church-- either Davies' or any other. It may be a hard pill to swallow but both secular humanist and orthodox Christian must finally concede that Blake's position transcends the limitations of both analyses.

The Four Zoas

Any analysis of The Four Zoas must take into account some biographical awareness of Blake's life at the time of its composition. This is not to suggest that we are dependent upon a knowledge of particular incidents in order to understand the poem, for it would be worse than an insult to Blake's own statements concerning "Inspiration" rather than "Memory" as the source of creative genius to suggest that the poem is merely a record of biographical events. At the same time, though, the many revisions, deletions, and additions which transformed the poem from Vala into The Four Zoas, and the fact that it was ultimately abandoned for publication implies that Blake's ideas were not in a state of repose while he was writing the poem. A.W.J. Lincoln's thesis has added immensely to our understanding of the amazing amount of revision which the poem underwent. Lincoln stresses that Blake's ideas were not fully matured or settled during the period of his removal from London to Felpham and back to London three years later.²⁵ The fact that he was having personal difficulties with his patron, Hayley, at the time; the fact that his quarrel with Scholfield brought him to trial for sedition; the fact that his wife was not well; the fact

that he was now reading Greek and Hebrew--all these factors must be taken into account. By 1797, the title page date given in the Erdman edition for The Four Zoas, Blake had begun work on the poem. It was not long since the end (and, from his point of view, the failure) of the French Revolution. It was also not long since Blake had recognized that the warrior Orc had failed in the role of Saviour. Much as his energy might continue for a while to symbolize the desire for regeneration and a revolution of some description, his enslavement to the cycle of nature prohibited him from being further exploited by Blake as the true Redeemer. It is part of Lincoln's thesis that one of the changes in Blake's thought at this time was the movement from the abandonment of Orc to the hope of Los as Redeemer, a movement which he sees evidenced in The Four Zoas.²⁶ Lincoln has made what is perhaps the most thorough textual study of the development of the poem from its state as Vala to the substantially altered The Four Zoas, examining in minute detail the many re-arrangements of pages, the additions and the deletions. The complexity of Lincoln's study itself suggests that it would be foolhardy to make generalized statements concerning Blake's thoughts on the subject of the figure of Jesus. We might agree, however tentatively, that the Redeemer figure in the first draft of the poem was Los; but Lincoln's observations on the introduction of Christian references late in the period of revision (probably

around 1804) are significant to our purpose:

The active intelligence in Eternity was identified as the Council of God, which, when acting as One Man, assumes the identity of Christ. History was now seen to be guided by a divine plan for Man's salvation, and passively observed by a lower intelligence, the daughters of Beulah. The divine plan reached fruition when error assumed its ultimate form, at which point Christ descends to cast out error and redeem the fallen Man. Blake introduced this scheme to Vala by making an addition at the end of IV and by completely reorganizing VIIa, a part of which was transcribed as a new beginning to the ninth Night, another part being incorporated into a new seventh Night, and part becoming VIIb.²⁷

Lincoln then notes that, as a result of this new scheme, Man's struggle to awaken and redeem his own faculties in Night IX now lost its force in the light of a power apparently beyond his control.²⁸ However the poem was not left in this state and Lincoln refers to a "new enlightenment" after VIIb had been transcribed but before the transcription of VIIb which resulted in the return to the idea of humanity once more being responsible for its own redemption through the unification of inner faculties, a process largely dependent once again on the labours of Los.²⁹

Lincoln's purpose is to examine in detail the process of the writing of the poem, a process which continued from London in 1797 to Felpham in 1800 and back to London in 1803 with additions still continuing until 1804. He notes the gradual decline in importance of the figure of Vala herself and the move toward the fourfold scheme which centred attention on Los.³⁰ Whether this transition to Los as the figure of Imagination responsible for the Last Judgment is successful

is a debatable point. Northrop Frye, for instance, remains unconvinced that the efforts of Los are as effective as they would appear to be. He wonders:

...how far this ninth Night is the real climax of the vision, and how far it has been added as an effort of will, perhaps almost of conscience ...Certainly there is little connection between its opening and the close of the preceding Night. The Last Judgment simply starts off with a bang, as an instinctive shudder of self-preservation against a tyranny of intolerable menace. If so, then it is not really the work of Los, though the opening action is ascribed to him...³¹

As we have seen, Lincoln goes at this problem rather the other way round by suggesting that the Last Judgment of Night IX was rendered irrelevant from the point of view of Los' efforts by the late Christian additions. In other words, while Lincoln might sympathise with Frye's criticism, he would answer that such additions were not meant to restructure the whole scheme of the poem, and that Blake actually tried to return to the notion of Los' importance in initiating the Last Judgment. Perhaps there is no final answer to this problem. We know that in 1804, when all significant changes had been made in The Four Zoas, Blake was already beginning to work on Milton and Jerusalem. This would seem to indicate that Blake had realized by this time that The Four Zoas did not satisfactorily express what his vision was finally coming to mean. Milton and Jerusalem perhaps represented for him the hope of clarifying the confusion which had been generated by the re-workings of The Four Zoas so that the latter had to be abandoned, albeit with the intention

of using material from that poem in the new poems. Yet bearing all this in mind, it is still constructive to look at some of the passages which give evidence of those undeniably Christian overtones which crept in towards the end, because in a sense, they presented a large problem in sustaining consistency in the poem. In other words, such passages give us an indication of the direction in which Blake's vision now seemed to be headed. Many commentators acknowledge that they intend only to deal with the final form of the poem (final, that is, as it ever became) and this is probably wise. Indeed, we are not concerned here to make a chronological textual study of the poem. At the same time, our recognition of Lincoln's thesis that the introduction of distinctively Christian or, perhaps, Christ-oriented passages, is late in the overall reworking of The Four Zoas manuscript should not be underestimated for two reasons. Firstly, their inclusion is one of the factors which eventually rendered the theme of the way of redemption inconsistent in the poem thus explaining what may appear to be two different methods of achieving salvation. Secondly, their late introduction, as we have noted, suggests a change in Blake's mind as to the possibility of humanity (through Los) effecting its own redemption. This does not necessarily imply that the process whereby Blake came to believe this was one of rational, philosophical reflection upon the idea which inevitably led to the changes being made. Blake was not only a poet, but also a visionary and an artist and he gives

ample evidence of his distrust of too much rationalizing or 'intellectualizing', in our contemporary use of the word. It is rather more likely that he gradually intuitively grasped the real significance of Jesus in the process whereby the human and the divine are united. The human mind seldom comes to devotion to any belief purely through rational analysis. In this respect, Kierkegaard's insight concerning the "leap of faith" which the human mind constantly makes, is correct. The point is, perhaps, not important enough to belabour, however it may provide a partial answer to those who turn away from Blake's prophetic poems, especially The Four Zoas, in frustration or confusion. Faith, that seed of hope which often seems to lie so deeply buried in the drama that it cannot be unearthed, is never completely stifled. It is never totally absent from the poem and there is always some character (often Enion, appropriately, who, as the emanation of Tharmas, bears strong association with instinct and intuition) from whose lips there falls a wistful longing that, dark as things are, they may improve. The point is not that Blake relinquished his faith in humanity but rather that he came to see that a real faith in humanity was inextricably bound up with faith in Jesus Christ. The Four Zoas may suggest this only sporadically. Milton and Jerusalem convey much greater conviction.

In the first three Nights of The Four Zoas we are presented with the snowballing effect of the fragmentation of Albion, the Ancient Man. Yet even before

Blake mentions that he is to speak of "His fall into Division", "His fall into the Generation of Decay & Death" (which lines, in the context, may be presumed to refer both to Urthona and Albion) Blake notes two passages from John's gospel. These passages immediately introduce that longing, never quite dashed, of which we have spoken, and also two vital elements in his approach to Jesus. According to an eighteenth-century edition of the Authorized version of the Bible, the first passage Blake notes is as follows:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also
which shall believe on me through their word:
That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in
me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in
us...I in them, and thou in me, that they may be
made perfect in one...

And from John 1: 14:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us
(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the
only begotten of the Father) full of grace and
truth.

Blake's reference to these particular passages is significant insofar as they are employed in the form of a gloss on the following lines:

Four Mighty Ones are in every Man;
a Perfect Unity
Cannot Exist. but from the Universal
Brotherhood of Eden
The Universal Man. To Whom be
Glory Evermore Amen
(E297; K264)

As a gloss, the Johannine passages provide that curious juxtaposition which will be encountered repeatedly, of the fourfold scheme with the more Christian influence. The secular humanist might well argue (although, on the whole, there tends to be no more than passing

reference made to these two Gospel passages) that Blake was using these two texts as a gloss in order to demonstrate his own new version of the situation. However if this were the intention, it would better have suited Blake's purpose to have omitted the quotation from John 1: 14. Clearly it is the spiritual (if not organic) unity of the John 17 passage that Blake intended to emphasize. And certainly that theme of unity--unity lost and unity sought--acts as a constant undercurrent throughout the three prophetic poems. However, the second passage plainly speaks of the Word being made flesh and dwelling among us. Even the order in which Blake chose to include these passages is noteworthy for he has not quoted them in the order in which they appear in the Bible. But there is, perhaps, an order in respect of what Blake intends to convey. The first passage he notes (John 17) speaks about unity between God and humanity; the second (John 1) speaks of how this is made possible, in other words, by the Word being made flesh. It is, then, no accident that Blake includes the two texts in this particular order. Paraphrased, Blake's message is that humanity can live in unity with God and the way that this is possible is through the Incarnation of Jesus. By noting these texts, Blake cogently points to the three aspects of Christ which are his particular emphasis: the earthly, historical aspect, ("and dwelt among us"); the immanent aspect ("I in them, and thou in me"); and the transcendent aspect ("And the Word was made flesh")

(emphasis mine). The John 17 text also mentions the urge towards universal union which Jesus seeks to kindle and encourage ("that they may be made perfect in one"). One may now better consider the passage upon which these texts are a gloss. The reference to the "Four Mighty Ones" is Blake's introduction of the four zoas who will play the major roles in the poetic drama which is about to unfold. Lincoln suggests, as mentioned earlier, that this transition to the four-fold scheme probably took place during Blake's stay at Felpham. Absence of the Johannine texts at this early stage of the poem might justify us in denying any 'religious' or "spiritual' tone (not to mention Christian) at least at the beginning of the poem. By their inclusion, at whatever date, we cannot take this attitude. Yet in no way does this thwart Blake's intention to write the drama of the four zoas. Since he perceived the human being (and, for that matter, the universe) ideally as possessing fourfold unity, it is appropriate that he should narrate a fall and wandering in terms of the fragmentation of that unity and the resultant chaos. Certainly one must bear in mind that The Four Zoas was abandoned for publication and does not consistently express the degree of Christianization of Milton and Jerusalem. However in this poem we are confronted by an example of the process of maturation of a vision, not its final and completed form so that as Jesus later on became an essential figure in the drama, Blake must have felt compelled

to inject these insights back into even the early parts of the poem. This may well confuse or disrupt the smooth flow of the drama, but it gives a keen insight into what revisions would have to be made in order for Milton and Jerusalem to cohere, at least in terms of the process of redemption and salvation.

In The Four Zoas the word which best describes the role which Jesus plays is Saviour. Presumably, if Jesus is to be regarded as Saviour, then the implication is that humanity is in a situation from which it requires salvation. One must reiterate that it was not necessarily Blake's intention from the beginning to cast Jesus in this role and indeed the case can be made that, in The Four Zoas, it is Los upon whom salvation seems to depend. We have noted that Frye, among others, considers Los' function to be ineffective in bringing about the Last Judgment. However, in the previous chapter the significance of the relationship between Los and Jesus was established, so it is easy to understand how Blake might, for some time, have continued to place great emphasis on Los' duties. This emphasis makes sense particularly in view of the nature of the fall. In The Four Zoas, as later in Milton and Jerusalem, the fallen condition from which humanity requires to be redeemed, is one of restricted vision, of too narrow understanding or imagination. It is while in this condition that the characters, including Los, fail to perceive not only the rightful condition of unity within the human individual but

also the rightful and holy condition of universal unity. Humanity is not divine while it remains in this state, or perhaps more accurately, its capacity to be open to unity with the divine (Jesus) is disastrously curtailed and obscured. Chaos in the prophetic poems originates in this failure of perception. The fragmentation, jealousy, tyranny, moral oppression, mistrust, and confusion which abound in The Four Zoas can all be traced to humanity's inability to perceive unity as its appropriate form of existence. As is the case with many of Enion's lamentations, her mourning in Night I accurately describes not only how the fall of the "parent power", her counterpart, Tharmas, has distorted their own relationship, but also on the larger scale, how "Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love":

And stern demands of Right & Duty instead of
Liberty.
Once thou wast to Me the loveliest son of heaven -
But now
Why art thou Terrible and yet I love thee in thy
terror till
I am almost Extinct & soon shall be a Shadow in
Oblivion

I have lookd into the secret soul of him I lov'd
And in the Dark recesses found Sin & cannot return
(E297-98; K265)

The fall of Tharmas is, of course, only the beginning, for once the 'instinct' for unity has fallen, it is inevitable that the other zoas will fall also. Yet even here, when the whole process is just beginning, Blake interrupts the action with a passage which is the planting of that seed of hope which he never allows to die:

There is from Great Eternity a mild & pleasant rest
Namd Beulah a Soft Moony Universe feminine lovely
Pure mild & Gentle given in Mercy to those who
sleep
Eternally. Created by the Lamb of God around
On all sides within & without the Universal Man
The Daughters of Beulah follow sleepers in all
their Dreams
Creating Spaces lest they fall into Eternal Death
(E299; K266-67)

One might say that the creation of Beulah by the Lamb of God anticipates his later action whereby he locates the Limits of Opacity and Contraction. Both actions have as their motive that humanity should not "fall into Eternal Death". Even now there is an indication of Jesus' actions as 'saving' actions, for the implication in this case, for example, is that if the Lamb of God had not created Beulah with its feminine keepers, humanity would indeed fall into Eternal Death. Even in The Four Zoas one can detect the ways in which Blake attempted to marry his concept of fragmentation through fallen vision with an increasing perception of Jesus as Saviour. Such an attempt manifests two Biblical influences in particular. There is firstly a Johannine influence of Jesus as Saviour or Good Shepherd who leads back to the fold the sheep which was lost; and secondly a Pauline influence that the work of the sheep being 'found' involves a revelation of unity rather than selfhood, to put it in Blakean terms, as the proper condition of humanity's existence. This function abounds in the Pauline texts. Ephesians, for instance, prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation,

in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." (Ephesians 1: 17-18). In the same chapter, at verse 10, the author reveals precisely what that hope is: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." It is just such an enlightenment and urge towards unification which Urizen denies in Night 1:

Thus Urizen spoke collected in himself in awful
pride

Art thou a visionary of Jesus the soft delusion
of Eternity
Lo I am God the terrible destroyer & not the
Saviour
Why should the Divine Vision compel the sons of
Eden
to forego each his own delight to war against his
Spectre
The Spectre is the Man the rest is only delusion
& fancy
(E303; K266-67)

Significantly, this is an added passage and, as such, gives evidence of that new dynamic--the role of Jesus --which Blake was attempting to inject back into the original drama.

We know that the gospel of Jesus, according to Blake, is essentially one of eternal forgiveness of sins, which necessarily involves the continual death of the selfhood. In Night 1, Blake introduces another aspect of the saving function of Jesus in an added passage which associates Jesus and Luvah:

Eternity appeared above as One Man infolded
In Luvahs robes of blood & bearing all his
afflictions
As the sun shines down on the misty earth Such
was the Vision
(E303; K274)

In the descent and in the robes of blood there are two implicit references, one to the Incarnation and the other to the Crucifixion. It is a complex image which, later in the poem, also connects Jesus with Satan, for the fallen Luvah is later said to have entered the State Satan. This association becomes more pertinent in Night VIII during the actual Crucifixion scenes, but it is noteworthy that Blake added an awareness of this Jesus-Luvah-Satan connection in Night I because it is a sign that Jesus is actively involved in the suffering ("bearing all his afflictions") and that this assumption is a sign of hope, even if it is not so perceived by the characters themselves.

In The Four Zoas Jesus is Lord and Saviour but he is also "the Divine Vision". (It was as a vision that Luvah and Vala perceived him in the robes of blood). In this phrase Blake expands his view of Jesus beyond the Good Shepherd imagery of the Johannine passage. Jesus is the "Universal Family", the "One Man", and in this respect, he represents the culmination of the redemptive process. Not only is Jesus the Saviour --the means of redemption (remembering the ambiguity in The Four Zoas as to whether Jesus or Los seems more prominent in this role), he is also salvation itself --the culmination of the state of radical unity. This may well be one of the single most important alterations in Blake's vision in the eight or nine years that he worked on The Four Zoas. Within the four-fold scheme, Los is the one who most probably would

have acted as Saviour. Nevertheless, Blake felt the need for Jesus Christ, who is outside the fourfold scheme, to assume that role. Blake, either because he came to believe that humanity was incapable of effecting its own salvation or because that belief followed naturally from a new faith in the role of Jesus Christ, deviated from the rigidly secularly humanist view of redemption. Jesus has already been introduced in Night 1 in association with the merciful creation of Beulah, in connection with Los, and in connection with Luvah. Now he appears in an almost paradoxical way as both a person and as the culmination of spiritual redemption. This function of Jesus as the culmination of salvation is conveyed in Night 1 in the 'Council of God' passage:

Then those in Great Eternity met in the Council
of God
As one Man for contracting their Exalted Senses
They beheld Multitude or Expanding they behold
as one
As One Man all the Universal Family & that one
Man
They call Jesus the Christ & they in him & he in
them
Live in perfect harmony in Eden the land of life
(E306; K277)

One does not wish to press Blake's Christianity in any direction that it does not naturally lead, but there is a plain reference in this passage to "Jesus the Christ". By inserting "the" between "Jesus" and "Christ", Blake implies that "the Christ" is a title, and it is a title which recognizes the role which Christ plays in the unification of humanity with the divine. The idea contained in this passage is not without

precedent. In Romans 12: 5, Paul writes: "So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Certainly the passage also recalls the John 17 text discussed earlier. At this point it is pertinent to note an observation of the French Jesuit priest, Teilhard de Chardin. Profoundly influenced by the thought of St. Paul, Teilhard developed a Christology which is remarkably similar in its insights to Blake's conception of Jesus. It has occasioned an equal charge of radicalism in the twentieth century to that laid against Blake's vision in the early nineteenth. In Science and Christ, Teilhard writes:

Christ teaches purity, charity, and self-denial. But what is the specific effect of purity if not the concentration and sublimation of the manifold powers of the soul, the unification of man in himself? What again does charity effect if not the fusion of multiple individuals in a single body and a single soul, the unification of men among themselves? And what, finally, does Christian self-denial represent if not the deconcentration of every man in favour of a more perfect and more loved Being, the unification of all in one?³²

Blake might have disagreed with Teilhard's comment on "purity" but the "unification of all in one" and "the one body in Christ" is none other than a modern expression of the "One Man all the Universal Family" of which Blake speaks in the 'Council of God' passage. The fact that the One Man is called "Jesus the Christ" indicates Blake's belief at some later stage in the writing of the poem that Jesus Christ not only inspires humanity towards this vision of consummation, he also is the consummation. Is it a supernatural

consummation? If so, then it would represent one of Blake's more orthodox images. It is not a concept that he worries too much about nor does he seem terribly interested in pushing the image too far in this direction. That, perhaps, may be due to his all too great awareness of what the deus ex machina philosophy of Deism had done to distort the concept of God. One cannot deny indications of transcendence, but so conscious is Blake to avoid unnecessary and distorting dualisms that he tends not to dwell too much on defining transcendence. Blake was not a philosopher but a poet, a visionary, and an artist. What he has left us is a vision, not a philosophical dissertation. However we will want to look a little more closely at this subject in Night VIII.

The final point concerning the presentation of Jesus in the opening Night concerns a passage which occurs on Blake's page 19. The Messengers of Beulah have reported on the state of the fall, presumably to those in Great Eternity, and the passage deals with the action which is then taken:

The Family Divine drew up the Universal Tent
Above High Snowdon & closd the Messengers in
clouds around
Till the time of the End. Then they elected
Seven. called the Seven
Eyes of God & the Seven lamps of the Almighty
The Seven are one within the other the Seventh
is named Jesus
The Lamb of God blessed for ever & he followd
the Man
Who wanderd in mount Ephraim seeking a Sepulcher
His inward eyes closing from the Divine Bosom & all
His children wandering outside from his bosom
fleeing away

(E308; K279)

Presumably it is within the power of the Council of God to act by intervention, but this is not what hap-

pens. Exactly who these Seven Eyes of God are is not certain, but they appear to be watchers. Jesus, the Seventh Eye, is particularly singled out by Blake as "The Lamb of God blessed for ever" and it is he who follows Man, watching, caring, suffering, yet allowing what must happen to happen. Again the passage combines those two elements of Jesus sharing in the fall yet acting in a subtle way to ensure that Man does not fall into eternal annihilation. It is another glimpse of that seed of hope which Blake does not allow to perish. This is carried forward into Night II, again, in added passages, except that here we are told that the fall of Luvah, which occurs in Night II, the robes of blood, and the inevitability of the action are all intimately bound up together:

For the Divine Lamb Even Jesus who is the Divine
Vision
Permitted all lest Man should fall into Eternal
Death
For when Luvah sunk down himself put on the robes
of blood
Lest the state call'd Luvah should cease. & the
Divine Vision
Walked in robes of blood till he who slept should
awake
(E315; K287)

These are, from the secular humanist point of view, curious lines insofar as Blake says that Jesus "Permitted all." Presumably only one who has the power to interfere and change things has the power to permit them. Yet likewise, he does not simply walk away from fallen Man: again there is the image of the Saviour assuming Luvah's robes of blood. At this stage, only

Jesus understands that it is only when error has been completely revealed and defined that it can be cast out. Much greater anguish must be suffered before the point has been reached when the real error can be defined. Jesus, were he to act in any other way than he does, would be little more than a puppeteer, and Blake avoids such a presentation assiduously. Yet it is one of those passages which suggests that, at a later stage in Blake's thought, Jesus would command greater attention.

Although Blake did not speak about the Incarnation of Christ in just those words, many passages suggest an implicit awareness that such an Incarnation is central to the function of Jesus. "Descending" is a word frequently used to describe Jesus' appearances in the poems, usually in Luvah's robes of blood. Perhaps this is Blake's way of suggesting that there is an intimate connection in his mind between Incarnation and Crucifixion imagery. Near the end of Night II, a phrase occurs in Enitharmon's song which apparently refers to the Incarnation in terms which have appeared in earlier poems:

Arise you little glancing wings & sing your infant
joy
Arise & drink your bliss
For everything that lives is holy for the source
of life
Descends to be a weeping babe
(E317; K289)

The reader will recall the phrase "everything that lives is holy" from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and, in fact, the first three lines of this passage (up to the

word "holy") are to be found in the closing lines of Oothoon's final speech in Visions of the Daughters of Albion, title page 1793. In neither of these first two instances of Blake use of the phrase, "every thing that lives is holy" did he go on to explain that the reason that this was so was that "the source of life descends to be a weeping babe." It is certainly more than likely that, in 1793, Blake would not have seen the connection and therefore would not have seen the need to explain the phrase thus. The significant point is that now the implication is made that the source of life is Jesus, and the reason that every thing that lives is holy is by virtue of the Incarnation. In other words, the Incarnation of Jesus makes a fundamental difference to humanity for, by effecting in his own person the unity of the human and the divine, Jesus 'transforms' all humanity's potential to participate in that unity. This is not to say that humanity is not intrinsically divine but rather that, after the fall, the Incarnation was essential in order to lead humanity back to regeneration and its proper state of unity.

Night III deals with the fall of Urizen and Night IV with the fall of Los. Pages 55 and 56 of Night IV of Blake's manuscript are of particular interest because they contain passages concerning Jesus which subtly change the original movement of the drama. Page 54 comprises an expanded version of The First Book of Urizen's description of Los' attempt to 'form'

Urizen into a body. In the Urizen version, the seven ages of dismal woe pass over and Los shrinks from his task in despair. Originally Blake had said only that Los "...saw Urizen in deadly black,/In his chains bound, & Pity began." But it is a destructive kind of pity for it only leads to a further division from Urizen and ultimately from Enitharmon as well. However, Blake later interposed with thirty lines before returning to state that Los finally "In terrors shrunk from his task." These lines reiterate the reference to the Council of God and Jesus' weeping over the Body of Man, then go on to paraphrase the words of Mary and Martha to Jesus in the story of the raising of Lazarus ("Lord Saviour if thou hadst been here our brother had not died"). Finally, on page 56, Blake recorded Jesus' finding of the Limits of Opacity and Contraction. The lines following this passage reveal the import of this action: "Then wondrously the Starry Wheels felt the divine hand. Limit/Was put to Eternal Death..." This is perhaps the most hopeful sign in the drama so far and, notably, these lines are absent from the Urizen version. Effectively Jesus has defined the limits beyond which humanity cannot fall. As we noted in Chapter 5, the action is 'non-interventionary' in character insofar as Jesus "finds" rather than imposes or creates the Limits. Yet the action is deceptively simple. Remembering that the process of redemption demands that error must be defined, clarified, and revealed before it can be cast out, we recognize the

import of Jesus' action here, for now that all the
zoas have fallen, he is the only one who can find the
Limits because he is the only one who is outside the
fourfold scheme.

The intervention of these thirty-three lines be-
tween the time that "...a seventh age passed over &
a state of dismal woe" and Los' shrinking from his
task seems to have an effect on the closing lines of
the Night. Possibly there is a connection between
Jesus' action and the subsequent response of Los to-
wards Urizen and Enitharmon, for in this version, he
now experiences a strange participation in the very
agony which Urizen suffers: "...he became what he
beheld/He became what he was himself doing he was him-
self transformd." Without any conscious intention or
desire that it should be so, Los is now inextricably
united in the agonies of Urizen:

Spasms siezd his muscular fibres writhing to &
fro his pallid lips
Unwilling movd as Urizen howld his loins wavd
like the sea
At Enitharmons shriek his knees each other smote
& then he lookd
With Stony Eyes on Urizen & then swift writthd
his neck
Involuntary to the couch where Enitharmon lay
The bones of Urizen hurtle on the wind the bones
of Los
Twinge & his iron sinews bend like lead & fold
Into unusual forms dancing & howling stamping the
Abyss
(E331; K305)

Words like "Unwilling" and "Involuntary" suggest the
almost biological bonds which tie Los to Urizen and
Enitharmon. It is no longer possible, although the
characters are still alienated, to see them as complelely

separate, for they are all caught up in what is essentially Albion's pain. Yet without wishing to push the preceding 'Jesus passage' too far, one might suggest that one of the effects of Jesus' finding the Limits of Opacity and Contraction and thereby setting a limit to Eternal Death is that the process of fragmentation and alienation is limited. In other words, the action means that Los, quite physically, cannot simply give up the task and walk away into isolation. He is part and parcel of Urizen's agony, he shares it even though unwillingly because it is also his. Surely it is not accident or coincidence on Blake's part which led him to insert the lines concerning Jesus' action precisely where he did.

Night V does not seem to present a smooth flow of any positive movement towards redemption and the reader may be frustrated that the signs of hope in Jesus appear to be all but obscured again. Yet in spite of the fact that it is in this Night that Los' terrible jealousy drives him to the chaining of his son, Orc, there is a complementary positive sign in his great repentance and his desire to undo his error. When he and Enitharmon realize that they cannot free Orc because the chain "became one with him a living Chain Sustained by the Demons life", they return to Golgonooza "Satiated with grief". Where there is repentance of this intensity, where there is pity and grief, there is also hope of redemption. But it is precisely because Blake believed so strongly in the role which humanity must play in its own salvation,

the role, that is, of liberating its perception and imagination and thereby making itself open to the gospel of unity and forgiveness, that the way is slow and painful. Night VI reiterates this belief in another form, for although it is Urizen's decision to explore his dens, he does not do so alone, though this is perhaps unknown to him: "Endless had been his travel but the Divine hand him led." And again:

And now he came into the Abhorred world of Dark
Urthona
By Providence divine conducted not bent from his
own will
Lest death Eternal should be the result for the
Will cannot be Violated

(E344; K319)

There is a sense throughout The Four Zoas that the whole process of the wandering is inevitable that, in a way, none of the struggle or warring can be considered futile. But if this is the case, it is so for two reasons. The first is that Blake seems to have believed that the fragmentation of any part of Albion set up a chain reaction of splitting off and alienation and that it was necessary in order that the full horror of the original error be revealed. The second reason is that a quick and sure intervention by Jesus would represent a complete travesty of Blake's understanding of the way in which Jesus participates in the action. That is why Jesus "Permitted all" except that he prevents the fall from reducing Man to the utter annihilation of Eternal Death. There is a sense of that Biblical faith that redemption will occur in "the fulness of times", and though The Four Zoas does not

succeed in portraying a coherent and smooth movement to the point where humanity is open to redemption, yet the poem does point in that direction.

Towards the end of Night VIIa Los becomes reconciled with his Spectre and with Enitharmon. This reconciliation is a positive step forward but it is more evident to Los than to Enitharmon. After their reconciliation Los says: "turn inwardly thine Eyes & there behold the Lamb of God/Clothd in Luvahs robes of blood descending to redeem." But Enitharmon does not understand that the descent of the Lamb entails forgiveness rather than punishment:

Enitharmon answerd I behold the Lamb of God descending
To Meet these Spectres of the Dead I thought therefore that he
Will give us to Eternal Death fit punishment for such
Hideous offender Uttermost extinction in eternal pain
An ever dying life of stifling & obstruction shut out
Of Existence to be a sign & terror to all who behold
Lest any in futurity do as we have done in heaven
Such is our state nor will the Son of God redeem us but destroy
(E355; K330-31)

It is not until Night VIII, which was probably added after most of the other Nights had been completed, that real recognition of Jesus' descent begins. The following passage occurs precisely when Los and Enitharmon have begun to work with pity and "parental love" for the Spectres:

In Golgonooza Looking down the Daughters of Beulah saw
With joy the bright Light & in it a Human form
And knew he was the Saviour Even Jesus & they worshipped

Astonishd Comforted Delighted in notes of
Rapturous Extacy
All Beulah stood astonishd Looking down to Eternal
Death
They saw the Saviour beyond the Pit of death &
destruction
For whether they lookd upward they saw the Divine
Vision
Or whether they lookd downward still they saw the
Divine Vision
Surrounding them on all sides beyond sin & death
& hell
(E358; K342)

Blake does seem to be speaking here about a Jesus who is outside humanity but spatial definitions of transcendence in such a passage as this are restrictive. That the Divine Vision is present 'transcendently' beyond sin and death and hell and also present everywhere throughout the universe may seem to invite the charge of pantheism. However pantheism locates God beneath consciousness, as an unconscious animation ubiquitously present in the universe. The profound difference of Blake's vision is that Christ's presence is the result of the highest exaltation of consciousness, perception, and imagination.

Night VIII witnesses the climax of the opposition of the Satanic forces, whose impulse is destructive, and Jesus, whose impulse is redemptive. On the side of tyranny are ranged the combined efforts of Satan, Rahab, Tirzah, and the Daughters of Amalek. Jesus, Los, Enitharmon, the Spectre of Urthona (insofar as he is now reconciled with Los), and Jerusalem comprise the forces of redemption. However it is not entirely accurate to see the 'battle' marshalled in this way since Jerusalem is a virtually passive figure in need of protection and Los and Enitharmon are

totally dependent upon Jesus for the inspiration to carry on. The struggle, then, is really between Satan/Rahab on the one hand, and Jesus on the other.

Blake devised a curious process whereby Jesus overcomes these Satanic forces, for he is said to "Assume the dark Satanic body," a complex which requires further exploration into the various meanings of Satan. The image is somewhat clarified when we realize that Jesus puts on this "body" in order that it may be cast off; but it is still necessary to investigate exactly what it is which is being assumed and cast off. The nature of Satan is bound up with the negative concept of the enclosed Selfhood and furthermore is described as a State of Death. As the Limit of Opacity, Satan represents the lowest boundary of the fall, the most vegetated, naturalistic, unimaginative understanding of death and mortality. His 'philosophy' is one which attempts to convince humanity that the ultimate meaning of life is death, from which there is no escape and towards which all life proceeds. Satan is the natural religion which focuses on the dead body of Christ on the Cross rather than on the resurrected eternal Christ. He is the "Accuser", the materialist principle of doubt and unbelief. He is revenge as opposed to forgiveness, hatred as opposed to love, and death as opposed to life. Finally, he is also intimately associated with Rahab, who is "Mystery Babylon the Great Mother of Harlots" and it is impossible to fully understand the one without reference to the other.

In the hermaphroditic union of Satan and Rahab, Blake carries the concept of male-female counterparts (Jesus and Jerusalem, Los and Enitharmon, Urizen and Ahania, Tharmas and Enion, Luvah and Vala), over into the realm of the Satanic. This was suggested in the "shadowy female" who is Enitharmon in Europe, a female whose will is to dominate the male. As Rahab, this female is the antithesis of Jerusalem just as the earlier Enitharmon could be seen as the antithesis of Oothoon in Visions of the Daughters of Albion. Yet it is inappropriate to see Rahab as an independent character; just as Satan is the embodiment of the most fallen form of Urizen (or sometimes Luvah) so Rahab is the embodiment of the most fallen characteristics of Vala. Hence she is Nature, but Nature alienated, externalized, and idolized. Through her daughter, Tirzah, she is Natural Religion (or Deism at the end of Night VIII), the worship of the material as opposed to the spiritual. Sexually, Rahab and Tirzah represent Mystery, hypocritical chastity, scornful domination of the male, and tyranny in love. Rahab is at once whoredom and the repression of a healthy expression of sensuality and sexuality. She is the feminine counterpart of Satan, the "Female Will" which animates him. The union between Satan and Rahab is that of a monstrous hermaphrodite:

The war roard round Jerusalem's Gate it took a
hideous form
Seen in the aggregate a Vast Hermaphroditic form
Heard like an Earthquake laboring with convulsive
groans
Intolerable at length an awful wonder burst

From the Hermaphroditic bosom Satan he was namd
Son of Perdition terrible his form dishumanized
monstrous
A male without a female counterpart a howling
fiend
Forlorn of Eden & repugnant to the forms of life
Yet hiding the shadowy female Vala as in an ark
& Curtains
Abhorrd accursed ever dying an Eternal death
(E363; K347)

It is this veil covertly dwelling in Satan's bosom
which Christ must rend.

Blake had a definite conception of what he understood as the Satanic in the female and what was divine in her, a concept which is manifest in his portrayal of Rahab and Jerusalem. It is not a portrait with which one will necessarily sympathise because it is curiously traditional and consistent with accepted views. In such a poem as Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Blake revealed a less conventional understanding of the female than he did in the later poems. Jerusalem is, for example, representative of everything that is free, lovely, and best in the female--the Bride of Jesus, the soul of humanity. Yet she is of a curiously passive and quiescent sort of loveliness. Unlike Rahab, who is incessantly active, albeit in the pursuit of destructive ends, Jerusalem really contributes nothing to Jesus by way of helping him to defeat Satan/Rahab. She is constantly in need of counsel, comfort, and direction so that the burden of the struggle against Satan/Rahab falls totally upon Jesus. One might wish that Blake had chosen to invest Jerusalem with more of the initiative and enthusiasm of Oothoon. Similarly the characteristics which are singled out as most

representative of the fallen female, Rahab, are relatively conventional. That she is sometimes called a "Male-Female" suggests that her power and aggression are to be understood as wrongly-appropriated male characteristics, the Satan in her. Coupled with these characteristics is the very conforming suggestion that the female is cunning, deceitful, secretive, self-consciously mysterious, and wantonly modest. Certainly one grants that these are characteristics that are only assumed by the female in the fallen condition, a condition for which she is not entirely responsible or even initially so. Nonetheless, the fact that Blake chose these particular characteristics which, neither in his writing nor in the works of most male writers are ever associated with the male, reveals the way in which, on this point, he followed the sociological and cultural norms which define the 'intrinsic' nature of the male and female. That this is a consistent position in Blake's poetry (with the exception of the characterization of Oothoon) is supported by June Singer's comments on Blake's portrayal of the female in the Proverbs of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

Blake characterizes the nature of woman in a way that reveals his concept of the feminine disposition; she is to wear the fleece of the sheep. He sees her as a creature who must be provided for; it is not she who goes after the hunt. Indeed, she is to be protected, for it is her art to be relatively passive and to fall into a panic in the face of danger. Softness and warmth are her covering, and she can bring a man comfort and a kind of peace. Unlike the lion she does not go forth alone, but is one of the flock, giving her presence to others and receiving from them. She must be guided for she is incapable of finding her own way. In relationship she is secure; separated

from the flock she may become lost. No animal permits herself to be more easily mastered than the sheep.33

Although these remarks were made with particular reference to the Proverbs of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, they are also relevant to the characterization of the female in the later poetry, especially in regard to the eponymous 'heroine' of Jerusalem. Rahab, in Night VIII, is nothing short of a travesty of Jerusalem, her opposite in every way. All the same, the devising of such a travesty is only possible when one has a clear conception of the ideal to which it is opposed, and Blake's ideal female, Jerusalem, is a passive, frightened, rather fragile creature who contributes little to the male (Jesus) in the struggle against evil. Having registered this point, we return to Satan/Rahab and agree that the characteristics which describe them are, at any rate, the manifestation of fallen mentality. The intimate relationship between them is a "devouring" rather than a "prolific" one; they feed on each other, perpetuating and exacerbating each other's perversities. Rahab is described as an "ark" within the bosom of Satan. Hence when Jesus destroys, or overcomes, or nullifies the power of Satan, he also overcomes Rahab. On page 104 of Night VIII, the Sons of Eden sing:

We now behold the Ends of Beulah & we now behold
Where Death Eternal is put off Eternally
Assume the dark Satanic body in the Virgins womb
O Lamb divine it cannot thee annoy O pitying one
Thy pity is from the foundation of the World &
thy Redemption
Begun already in Eternity Come then O Lamb of God
Come Lord Jesus come quickly

(E363; K347)

Two factors emerge when one grapples with the meaning of Jesus' assumption of the Satanic body of holiness. The first is that he "assumes" it, he "Puts it on", an image which recalls his assumption of Luvah's robes of blood. With regard to the latter assumption it is clear that Jesus does not actually become Luvah. Rather he "assumes" the burdens and suffering of Luvah as a cloak because Luvah is not strong enough or enlightened enough to bear the burden and withstand the agony himself. Yet Jesus remains himself, remains what he truly is as Jesus. Similarly Jesus does not actually become Satan; he "assumes" the Satanic body as a covering or cloak which can be cast off. Likewise he remains what he truly is in himself throughout this process. That is why the Sons of Eden sing that the assumption of the dark Satanic body cannot "annoy" Jesus for he is beyond the power of the illusion of Eternal Death. Perhaps a helpful analogy is the Biblical paradox whereby Jesus 'takes on' the sins of the world at the same time that he remains himself without sin. If we consider the assumption of the Satanic body in this way we do not fall into the confusion of thinking that, in the assumption, Jesus is somehow absorbed into or subsumed by Satan.

The second point is that, just as Rahab is said to be a "shadowy" or "false" female, so Satan is a "false" or "spectrous" body of holiness. It is a false perception, a false sensibility, a false view of mortality, a false belief in the vegetated life of humanity that Jesus assumes. We will remember that Palamabron

and Los demand "That he who will not defend Truth, may be compell'd to/Defend a Lie, that he may be snared & caught & taken." Essentially this is what Jesus forces Satan to do. He forces Satan/Rahab to defend their position and then, by his very nature, his very existence, proves the falsity of their position. Since an essential part of that false Satanic position concerns the proposition that humanity is a vegetated mortal being who is destined for Eternal Death, Jesus proves the falsity of the position by 'dying' and passing the "Limits of possibility." Jesus proves that Eternal Death is a lie by putting himself forward as the embodiment of Eternal Life. That is why, in Night VIII, the Daughters of Beulah see the Saviour "beyond the Pit of death & destruction", "beyond sin & death & hell." The Satanic doctrine was a lie in the first place and Jesus' appearance in this manner unveils it in all its perversity. Los attempts to explain this process to Enitharmon when he says of Jesus:

He stood in fair Jerusalem to awake up into Eden
The fallen Man but first to Give his vegetated
body
To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body
may be Reveald

(E363; K348)

These lines may seem to contradict Blake's usual position that there is no body distinct from the soul. However Satan is not only Death, he is also the Selfhood and it is the Selfhood which is vegetated, mortal, closed in upon itself, and alienated from the Divine Vision. In assuming the Satanic body of holiness, Jesus not only disproves the power of Eternal Death, he

also assumes and casts off Selfhood. There are two suggestions as to what Blake may mean by this. On the one hand, he may intend that Jesus, like Milton, is saying: "I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One!", and is therefore struggling within himself to cast off his own selfhood. This would seem to be the line that Kathleen Raine takes:

The relationship between the Divine Humanity and Satan the Selfhood was, for Blake, of the most intimate possible; that is to say, the two were, and are, eternally united in man. Jesus "descends" into generation and dies on the Cross, both to overcome and to "save" Satan, and in his human selfhood is that Satan whom he overcomes. It is in his own human nature that Jesus meets Satan, and he is himself the battlefield. He "takes on" human sin in precisely this sense... The human selfhood of Jesus is the Satan which on the Cross was finally and absolutely overcome. 34

Certainly this suggestion makes sense in terms of the Miltonic annihilation of Selfhood or Satan in Milton, and also in terms of Blake's insistence on the necessity of the Divine Vision to "descend" into generation, into human life. I do not wish to disagree with Raine's insight on this point but rather to suggest a complementary idea. If Jesus' struggle with Satan is, in fact, a struggle with his own selfhood, then we must presume that, as late as Night VIII, Jesus is not the perfected Divine Vision. Yet there is no indication in Night VIII that Jesus carries the imperfection of Selfhood within himself. In fact, the opposite view seems to prevail, which is to say, the view that it is only because Jesus is not flawed with the disease of Selfhood, that he is able to overcome Satan.

Although this is the case, yet Selfhood, the State Satan, still persists and it is therefore necessary that Jesus, himself without selfhood, descend and assume the Satanic body in order that it be annihilated for ever. In this interpretation, one could still see Jesus as the "battlefield", as Raine puts it. It is not a question of suggesting that this is an either/or situation, for even if one agrees with Raine that Jesus assumes and casts off his own selfhood, it is also true that he assumes and casts off Satan, the State of Selfhood. Similarly, just as Jesus himself emerges beyond the Limits of Death Eternal, so he abolishes these limits for all humanity.

In defeating Satan, Jesus also defeats Rahab who is the Veil of Mystery within the bosom of Satan. Rahab, with her code of false morality, hypocritical chastity, domination of the male by sexual deceit, seeks also to dominate Jesus. This recalls the Enitharmon of Europe who fears no threat from the birth of Orc because she believes that he must submit to her control. Hence Jesus is confronted by "A False Feminine Counterpart Lovely of Delusive Beauty/Dividing & Uniting at Will in the Cruelties of Holiness." But sexual mystery and war are no more to be tolerated than metaphysical mystery or religious mystery. Rahab too must be compelled to defend a lie in order that the abominable falseness of her position be revealed. In fact, the struggle against Rahab is but ambiguously resolved at the end of Night VIII or, for that matter, in The Four Zoas. At the end of this Night, Rahab is resur-

rected out of the Ashes of Mystery as Deism. However the following passage gives some indication that her confrontation with Los' sympathy towards her has led her to reconsider her alliance with the Synagogue of Satan:

She commund with Orc in secret She hid him with
the flax
That Enitharmon had numberd from the Heavens
She gatherd it together to consume her Harlot
Robes
In bitterest Contrition sometimes Self condemning
repentent
And Sometimes kissing her Robes & Jewels & weeping
over them
Sometimes returning to the Synagogues of Satan in
Pride
And Sometimes weeping before Orc in humility &
trembling
(E371; K356-57)

However it really requires the more comprehensive resolution of Jerusalem before the domination of the Female Will is ended.

The issue of the Female Will and of feminine domination occupies a considerable place in Blake's prophetic poems. Of the male versus female side of this issue we have already spoken, noting that Blake usually took a fairly conventional stand on the characteristics which are said to be properly 'male' or 'female'. However it is not only the proper relationship between male and female with which Blake is concerned in the defeat of Satan and Rahab, but also the proper relationship of the masculine and feminine within the individual. There is little possibility of a loving relationship between the male and female if there is not a corresponding acceptance of the masculine and feminine within the individual. This may seem to be a rather

modern concept, one which we are familiar with through the works of Carl Jung. However, when one remembers that the struggles in Blake's prophetic poems are, on one level, to be understood as the inner fragmentation of the one being, Albion, who is finally brought to a life of radical unity from a state of radical disunity, then one sees that Blake is also talking about the inner life of the individual. Blake evidently believed that, through the enlightened imagination and through the understanding and practice of the gospel of Jesus, the individual could be brought to a state of integration of the psychic life. Religion hid in war, Satan and Rahab within the self, would be rendered impotent.

One of the themes of Blake's later poems, a theme which is evident in The Four Zoas before the additions of the Christ-oriented passages, and even more afterwards, is the crucial need to "organize", to take that which has degenerated into formless confusion and mould it into that which has outline, form, substance, and unity. Jesus is, for Blake, the principle of unity: it is in that function that Los calls upon him for aid. This trend begins to be manifest in The Four Zoas. Whenever Los feels that he may not be able to withstand the rolling chaos, he calls upon Jesus to sustain him; whenever the chaos threatens to overwhelm, Los prays to Jesus. Given that Night IX, with its apocalypse initiated by Los, had probably been written before such passages as those we have noted, it is clear how Blake had got himself into the predicament

of having responsibility for the apocalypse rest with Los (or with humanity) while moving towards a belief that it was not humanity, but only Jesus who had that power. The move towards such a belief in Jesus is suggested in Night VIII on page 104, first portion:

Then sang the Sons of Eden round the Lamb of God
& Said
Glory Glory Glory to the holy Lamb of God
Who now beginneth to put off the dark Satanic body
Now we behold redemption Now we know that life
Eternal
Depends alone upon the Universal hand & not in us
Is aught but death In individual weakness sorrow
& pain
(E361-62; K346)

That humanity is incapable, unaided, of achieving its own salvation, will be challenged by some. It is true that Los, in Jerusalem, makes a vital plea to the other zoas to look to themselves for strength rather than moaning about their own helplessness. On the whole, however, by 1804 Blake suggests that, although the spirit of Jesus exists in the Human Imagination, yet Jesus himself must act in order that this faculty be 'activated'. Yet Blake did not wish to introduce this theme at the expense of the very important role which Los plays. Thus one begins to see the inner logic of the gradual transformation of Los the Redeemer to Los the prophet of Jesus, a sort of John the Baptist or Elias who keeps the faith in preparation for the descent of Jesus.

Before moving on to Milton and Jerusalem wherein some of the themes discussed in this chapter are more clearly expressed, we should note one other designation which Blake assigns to Jesus in Night IX. As the

Apocalypse begins, Blake uses a new title in reference to Jesus:

They see him whom they have piercd they wail
because of him

And after the flames appears the Cloud of the Son
of Man

All Nations look yp to the Cloud and behold him who
was Crucified

(E377-78; K364)

In his book, A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Chris-
tology, Norman Perrin explores the derivation and de-
velopment of the "Son of Man" tradition in Judaism and
Christianity. In fact, the whole Son of Man question
is one of great complexity and some controversy among
theologians. However, without getting into that spe-
cialized argument, we can at least note the precedent
for the crucified Messiah and the apocalyptic imagery
in Blake's own use of the term Son of Man. Perrin
notes three Christian exegetical traditions which de-
veloped out of references to the Son of Man in the
Bible:

First, there is an exaltation tradition in which
Jesus' Resurrection is interpreted as his exalt-
ation to God's right hand as Son of Man...Then,
secondly there is a use of Dan.&: 13 in connec-
tion with early Christian passion apologetic...
in connection with the concept of a crucified
Messiah, the crucifixion is interpreted in terms
of Zech. 12: 10ff. (as in John 19: 36) and then
this passage is developed along the lines that
"they" (the Jews) have seen him crucified, so
"they" will have occasion to mourn, namely, at
his coming as Son of Man. This is exactly what
we find at Rev.1: 7...Thirdly we have the full-
blooded apocalyptic use of Dan.7: 13 in Mark 13:
26 par. and 14: 62 par.35

The first line which we have quoted from Night IX is
a direct reference to Rev.1: 7: "Behold he cometh
with clouds: and every eye shall see him, and they

also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." The latter three lines in Blake's passage are reminiscent of those texts in Mark which Perrin referred to:

And then shall they see the Son of man coming
in the clouds, with great power and glory.
(Mark 13: 26)

And Jesus said, "I am: and ye shall see the Son
of man sitting on the right hand of power, and
coming in the clouds of heaven."
(Mark 14: 62)

At the time of writing, these passages would not have been traditions. They were attempts to interpret a particular phenomenon--the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. While it is true that such traditions may well have been established by Blake's time, it is less likely that he was aware of them than that he responded to the original passages as supportive of his own understanding of Jesus. At the same time, we must remember that Blake parts company with traditionalists insofar as the whole process of fall, wandering, and redemption is not necessarily by him only in a futuristic manner. On another level, it happens each in that "moment that Satan cannot find", in the moment in which the perception of the individual is heightened, is made open to the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. In this sense, Blake alters the meaning of "apocalypse" and does not remain strictly within the apocalyptic tradition. Perhaps one cannot, or even need not draw rigid conclusions concerning Blake's use of 'Son of Man' in Night IX. We might only wish to note that he did choose to use the title and that, in so doing, he

suggests a particular interpretation of the meaning of the Resurrection or, at least, opens it for our imaginative consideration.

Ultimately, The Four Zoas is less interesting in terms of what it can offer us as a finished product than because of the way in which it repeatedly points to changes and new directions in Blake's vision. It is certainly required reading for the reader who wants to understand Milton and Jerusalem because it is rich in material which, however ambiguous it appears to be in this poem, becomes much more clearly expressed in the other two prophetic poems.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"THE FINAL VISION: MILTON AND JERUSALEM"

Milton is approximately only half as long as The Four Zoas. In this shorter poem Blake demonstrates, through Milton's journey, how Jesus' gospel of love and forgiveness of sins, in other words of "self-annihilation", is to be achieved. Before looking more closely at the poem, we would do well to consider to what extent Milton expands the themes we encountered more sporadically in The Four Zoas. With regard to the timing of the composition of these poems, it is wrong to think that Blake, having more or less abandoned The Four Zoas, then began work on Milton. It is quite possible that he had been working on Milton and Jerusalem concurrently with The Four Zoas even though they bear a later title page dating. Milton bears the title page date 1804. Two years prior to this, in 1802, Blake had indicated in a letter to Thomas Butts that his spiritual life had become more Christ oriented:

The Thing I have most at Heart! more than life
or all that seems to make life comfortable with-
out it. Is the Interest of True Religion &
Science & whenever any thing appears to affect
that Interest. (Especially if I myself omit any
duty to my self <Station> as a Soldier of Christ)
It gives me the greatest of torments...

(E688; K812)

By 1804, when the major work on The Four Zoas had been completed, Blake appears to have come to a fairly clear understanding of his vision of Jesus Christ. Evidence of this is manifest in the additions to that poem. Although Jesus is not mentioned by name so often and

does not appear directly as a character in Milton, the gospel of Jesus pervades the poem and provides the motive for action. At the beginning, Blake admits his need of inspiration from the Daughters of Beulah, "From out the Portals of my Brain, where by your ministry/ The Eternal Great Humanity Divine. planted his Paradise." Later in "Book the First", Blake seems to give himself up completely to the will of Jesus, writing the poem only insofar as Jesus grants him the power and inspiration to do so. This theme is taken up at the beginning of Jerusalem when Blake goes so far as to say that Jesus actually "dictates" the words of his song to him. To what extent Blake is speaking metaphorically in these statements is less important than the indication they give of Blake's commitment to a particular vision which focused largely on the figure of Jesus. As in The Four Zoas, Jesus is here called by a variety of names, many of them only slight variations of those we have already encountered: "Jesus our Lord"; "holy Lamb of God"; "Jesus the image of the invisible God"; "Jesus the Saviour"; "Divine Family as One Man even Jesus"; "the Divine Vision"; "the Divine Humanity"; and "the Eternal Great Humanity". Blake's proliferation of names and images regarding Jesus may be seen in one respect as a refusal to let any single image control or distort his vision of Jesus who, as the Incarnational revelation of God, must be protected from limiting, distorting descriptions. The intention of the emphasis on Jesus is that Blake wishes to make

abundantly clear the means by which one (in this case, Milton) can strive towards the gospel of Jesus. Previously it was noted that his gospel, which is comprised of love and forgiveness of sins, is one of annihilation of Selfhood. The greatest enemy of the gospel, therefore, is the Selfhood and, in Milton, Blake presents numerous manifestations of the dialectical struggle between those who defend and retain Selfhood and those, who, understanding the gospel of Jesus, renounce Selfhood. Thus, on one level, it is a poem about sacrifice or renunciation of the Selfhood in the interests of awakening, reconciling and unifying that which is divided. Such renunciation is precisely the means whereby Milton becomes the 'hero' of the poem. Seeing his emanation divided from himself, "scatter'd thro' the deep", he understands that he must "go down into the deep her to redeem & himself perish." In fact, if one were to replace the word "her" with "Albion" or "humanity", one would have in a nutshell the deed which is performed by Jesus. Repeatedly in Milton, the theme of renunciation of self and of a consequent joining together or unification of figures, is witnessed. Milton himself goes down to "self annihilation and eternal death,/Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate/And I be seiz'd & giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood." Milton and Blake are joined together in a union which inspires Blake to even greater heights of perception (plate 21: 4-14; E114; K503). Ololon, in "Book the First", reaches the same realization achieved by Milton: "And Ololon said, Let us

descend also, and let us give /Ourselves to death in Ulro among the Transgressors." Blake becomes "One Man" with Los. Milton is reunited with Ololon. In one respect all these acts of renunciation of self (Milton's being the focal example in this poem), are imitations of the act of Jesus, which act, outlined by Blake, is a constant backdrop against which the drama unfolds: "Faith in God the dear Saviour who took on the likeness of men:/Becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross." Hence, although Milton and Blake play much more prominent roles than Jesus does in this drama, yet the means of unification and redemption by learning the fundamental lesson which Jesus teaches--the annihilation of Seflhood--is a recurrent point of reference for the characters. John Howard also sees the parallels between the acts of Milton and those of Jesus, the primary one being the act of self-annihilation. Yet ultimately, Howard seems to believe that Blake's point is to make a distinction between the two acts, this contrast being the significant point:

The sacrifice of one man for another in the law of retribution is required...This is the meaning put on Christ's death by the church. But self-annihilation takes place in a context where man annihilates himself for another willingly, without constraint, for self-annihilation is really the removal of barriers from the true essence of each man. It is not required as atonement. It is simply given. Thus the allusive parallels between Milton's journey to self-annihilation and Christ's journey to Golgotha suggest a discrimination in purpose. Milton, the eighth eye of God following Jesus, has, as part of his task, the correction of the doctrine of atonement, the ultimate absurdity of the law of retribution.¹

At the beginning of the above paragraph, Howard admits that the doctrine he is discussing is "the meaning put on Christ's death by the church." However as his discussion proceeds, he seems to argue as if it is the meaning put on Christ's death by Christ himself (and hence it is really Christ who needs correcting), and what is more to our purpose, the meaning put on Christ's death by Blake. Yet, in "A Vision of the Last Judgement", Blake states that "The Modern Church Crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards", an explicit rejection of the Church's interpretation of Christ's death as atonement. This would seem to suggest that he never wrote about Christ's death in a way which accepted that interpretation. To suggest that part of Milton's task is to correct the traditional doctrine of the atonement does not necessarily mean that Blake believed the doctrine afforded the real reason (as, perhaps, understood by Christ himself) for Christ's death. Howard's implication is that Milton's journey to self-annihilation is more perfect than Christ's Crucifixion. Yet, given the fact that the whole gospel of self-annihilation is propagated by Jesus in the first place, it does not seem to make sense that Milton's expression of it is more true than that of Jesus. Howard seems to have confused Blake's reaction to what he freely admits to be the Church's response to Christ's death with Blake's personal response. In other words, Blake 'corrected' the Church's doctrine of the Crucifixion through his Christ, not through Milton. Blake may well have been

wrong just as the Church may well have misunderstood or not completely grasped the meaning of Christ's death. However, unlike Howard, I would be very hesitant to suggest that the motive for Milton's journey to self-annihilation is different or more perfect than that of Christ. It is only different from what the Church said about it, a distinction either not made, or not made clear by Howard.

In Milton there is a greater strand of that type of statement which the secular humanist is inclined to focus on. A few quotations from "Book the First" will serve to indicate this trend. At the beginning of his song, the Bard refers to the Divine Vision: "And of the sports of Wisdom in the Human Imagination/ Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus, blessed for ever." At the end of his song, the Bard attributes the veracity of its content to the source or authority of his inspiration:

The Bard replied. I am Inspird! I know it is
Truth! for I sing

According to the inspiration of the Poetic Genius
Who is the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity
To whom be Glory & power & Dominion Evermore Amen
(E107; K495)

These two statements have sometimes been interpreted as Blake's assertion that Jesus is the Poetic Genius or the Human Imagination and that this is the totality of what Jesus means for Blake. Certainly it is possible to defend this point of view but in the context of Milton as a whole, it does not supply a sufficient explanation. It is perhaps enough, on the psychological level, to accept that such characters as Urizen or Los

are personifications, albeit rich and substantial ones, of human faculties of the mind. In their case, the characters never existed until Blake's imagination created them and gave them life. Even from this point of view, Jesus, unlike any of the other characters, is substantially different. Jesus of Nazareth, as Blake understood him, was, at the very least, an historical being who lived in a given time and place, and who had an extraordinary effect on those who came into contact with him. Blake may not have dwelt excessively on the historical figure of Jesus as a person (except in The Everlasting Gospel), but it is the historical Jesus who is the starting point of Blake's understanding of Jesus Christ, just as it ought to be for a Christian of whatever orthodox or radical persuasion. Furthermore, Blake also chose to appropriate many of the titles by which Jesus is known in the New Testament. Hence Jesus is called Saviour, Lord, Son of Man, Son of God, Christ--all which titles can be traced to New Testament texts. Blake also employed other titles which, although they may not be locatable as titles in Scripture, might arguably be traced to concepts or interpretations of Jesus' life, work, and death. To ignore or downplay the Scriptural antecedents of so many of the names by which Blake called Jesus simply robs the poetry of a richness which it otherwise affords. It is reductionist insofar as it betrays the need to find an explanation for these names and, indeed, for Blake's response as a whole to Jesus without affiliating him too closely with Christianity. It is

limiting insofar as it distorts Blake's intention to reveal spiritual realities through the use of symbol and instead treats the symbol as an end in itself rather than as a sign which points beyond itself. However, if we are to make this criticism of the approach which interprets such passages from Milton in this way then we must advance an alternative approach for consideration.

We have noted that Bernard Blackstone sees Blake's vision as a Christianity from which the Father is absent.² Without making that statement quite so strongly, one can agree that, for Blake, the idea of Fatherhood usually bore negative connotations and hence, the central figure of Christianity for him is Christ. Certainly the traditional idea of the 'Three in One', Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is remarkably absent from the poetry. However the idea of an indwelling spirit, although it is not usually called by the name of Holy Ghost or Spirit, is a prominent idea in the poetry. The explanation of this is that, for Blake, the true meaning of Jesus includes the idea of the indwelling spirit. Nor is this so strange or unorthodox a way of perceiving the relationship between the two. J.C. Granberry examines a remarkably similar phenomenon in John and Paul, both which New Testament writers we know to have influenced Blake's thought:

...the abiding presence of the spiritual Christ continued a matter of conscious experience, and great mystics like John and Ignatius could not dispense with bold vital expressions of their sense of union with the Lord...for his Christ had already come and was realized as an invisible and abiding presence.³

The passage in which Granberry speaks of Paul in this respect is also strikingly akin to what appears to have been Blake's experience:

Paul did not distinguish sharply in his experience between the influence of Christ and that of the Spirit (1 Cor. 15: 45; 2 Cor. 3: 17)...In his own experience the presence of the Spirit was that of Christ, and meant life, freedom, sonship, as well as certain specific gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 4-11). The pre-Pauline Christ was in Heaven, exalted at the right hand of God, and he sent down his Spirit upon men. Paul needed no such mediation; Jesus himself was a lifegiving Spirit, and he saved a man by taking up his abode within him (Gal. 1: 16; 2: 20; 3: 27; 4: 6; 4: 19; Rom. 8: 10)...In becoming united to Christ a man becomes a partaker with him of the divine nature...His personality is in harmony with the Spirit, he is a spiritual man.⁴ (emphasis mine).

Is there anything in these passages which is less startling than Blake's own emphasis on the 'indwelling spirit'? Is there anything so very different from our impression of Blake's personal experience of Christ? If one hypothesizes that Blake, like Paul, needed no mediation of the Spirit, then passages such as those quoted from Milton wherein he speaks of Jesus' body as the Human Imagination and of the Poetic Genius as "the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity" need not submit only to a secular humanist interpretation. Paul's experience was of the presence of the indwelling Christ and his Christ-Spirit imagery is fluid; for him there was no real need to distinguish between Christ and the Spirit. Blake, experiencing Christ in a way similar to Paul, practically did away with the Holy Spirit (at least by name) altogether, seeing its function as an integral part of the meaning of Jesus Christ. Of all the human faculties, the Human Imagination was undoubt-

edly considered by Blake to be potentially the most fruitful in inspiring and aiding the process of humanity's redemption. It is through the unleashing of the powers of this faculty that humanity is able to envisage the 'yet to come' unity towards which it strives. Therefore it must be with the Human Imagination that the Spirit of Jesus is associated, which is how it becomes, for Blake, the 'body' of Jesus. Human Imagination is the body of Jesus insofar as it opens itself to and manifests his spirit, the spirit of forgiveness of sins and self-annihilation. Using the same imagery, Los tells Albion in Chapter 2 of Jerusalem that, ideally, he is a "Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High." Such a phrase also connotes the idea of spirit as indwelling in humanity, or the Human Imagination as the vehicle of spirit. All in all, it is neither stretching a dubious point nor imposing on the lines a meaning which they will not support, to say that humanity is divine because Jesus Christ is, among other things, indwelling in the Human Imagination. Such an hypothesis also recalls the closing lines of Blake's

Preface to Milton:

...believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just & true to our own Imagination, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; in Jesus our Lord.

(E94; K480)

The reason that works of "Memory" are 'sinful' in Blake's view is that they are opposed to and set limits to the free development of the spirit of Jesus, which

is Human Imagination. This hypothesis also explains why, in "Book the Second", the Seven Angels of the Presence tell Milton that "The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself." Human Imagination, if ideally it is the spirit of Jesus, cannot be likened to States because the latter are phases or conditions of being which humanity enters and passes through. Imagination, on the other hand, because it houses the spirit of Jesus, is the essence, the very life and soul of human existence.

Thus, in Milton, Blake, far from abandoning the ideas contained in the late additions to The Four Zoas, actually expanded them. It is sometimes flippantly suggested that, in Milton, Blake rather audaciously 'revived' his predecessor in order to correct him and bring him round to Blake's own point of view. But it was only because Blake revered Milton to the extent that he did that he thought he could empathize with the earlier poet, particularly with how his Spectre had controlled too much of his poetry. It was not just witty impertinence on Blake's part when he wrote in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true poet and of the Devils party without knowing it." Blake might have chosen to write his poem about Shakespeare, of whom he says in the Preface to Milton that, like Milton, he also was "curbed by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword." The fact that Milton is the 'hero' of the poem

is indeed a great tribute to the poet, and we would do both Blake and Milton less than justice to suggest otherwise.

It is the Bard's song in "Book the First" which moves Milton to go down to Eternal Death to redeem his "scatter'd Emanation, now divided six-fold." This is the journey to self-annihilation which Howard parallels with Jesus' journey to Golgotha. During the course of the two Books of Milton there are four main themes which relate to the mission of Jesus and which also look forward to Jerusalem. Briefly these can be summarized as: (1) the way in which fall, redemption, and Last Judgment are manifest for Blake both on the individual and the cosmic levels; (2) the idea of the delusive and subtly destructive female; (3) the need for the unveiling and revealing of Satan; and (4) the belief that forgiveness of sins and self-annihilation are the means of redemption. The first point is connected with our earlier comment that Blake departed from traditional apocalyptic writing in envisaging fall and redemption in a way which does not necessarily point to a particular time in the future which generations await with resignation or hope. The second and third points comprise much of the struggle which Jesus must contend with prior to and at the time of his apparent defeat in crucifixion in Jerusalem. The fourth point is, as we have said, the very essence of the gospel of Jesus. With reference to the first point, Howard reinforces the idea of the potential immediacy of fall and Last Judgment:

In Milton there are several references to other falls, and in these references, Blake reinforces the idea that the cosmic fall of Satan is a paradigm of the fall of any individual. This notion complements Blake's view of the last judgment expressed in his "Vision of the Last Judgment". As there was an original fall for all men, so there will be a Last Judgment for all men as there is a last judgment for each man. One must realize that Blake is not interested in the temporal sequence of history. Rather he shows the multiplicity of falls symbolizing the psychic nature of the fall.⁵

Milton's noble speech in response to the Bard's song aptly demonstrates this double vision of fall and Last Judgment. We will note the passage in full because it is easier to recognize this point over the whole speech than in isolated lines:

And Milton said, I go to Eternal Death! the Nations
still
Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam; in pomp
Of warlike selfhood. contradicting and blaspheming.
When will the Resurrection come; to deliver the
sleeping body
From corruptibility: O when Lord Jesus wilt thou
come?
Tarry no longer; for my soul lies at the gates of
death.
I will arise and look forth for the morning of
the grave.
I will go down to the sepulcher to see if morning
breaks!
I will go down to self annihilation and eternal
death,
Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate
And I be siez'd & giv'n into the hands of my own
Selfhood.
The Lamb of God is seen thro' mists & shadows,
hov'ring
Over the sepulcher in clouds of Jehovah & winds of
Elohim
A disk of blood, distant; & heav'ns & earth's roll
dark between
What do I here before the Judgment? without my
Emanation?
With the daughters of memory, & not with the daughters
of inspiration(?)
I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One!
He is my Spectre! in my obedience to loose him
from my Hells
To claim the Hells, my Furnaces, I go to Eternal
Death.

(E107; K495-96)

This passage illustrates beautifully the way in which Blake weaves the individual and the cosmic implications of events together. The first five lines refer to a universal fallen condition which afflicts the nations. The next eight lines are far more personal in tone; Milton is concerned about his own fallen condition, his own state of unannihilation, the Satan within himself. It is his own Last Judgment about which he is concerned at this point, though this does not negate the possibility that Blake also intends to refer to a more universal Last Judgment: Milton's condition is only one instance of what is a universal condition. The three lines beginning "The Lamb of God is seen" seem to shift the emphasis back again to the universal level. Partially this is effected by the fact that Milton moves from the active voice which has predominated so far to the passive voice in saying "The Lamb of God is seen" (emphasis mine), a reference to what is being seen apart from his own individual viewpoint. But then Milton moves immediately back into the active voice and, for the last five lines, retains that sense of personal urgency. Again, however, there is a marrying of the cosmic and the individual insofar as Satan who, up till now, has been seen only as a separate character, now becomes a reality within Milton himself. We are immediately brought back to the wholeness of Blake's vision. It is not enough simply to say that Satan or Palamabron or Rintrah fell and go our own merry way absolved of responsibility. Milton is correct that, in his Selfhood, he is Satan, as we all are. But if Milton is,

in this respect, Satanic, he is also potentially divine. The spirit of Jesus, still seen "thro' mists & shadows", is awakening in him the recognition that only by going to Eternal Death through self-annihilation, will he too (like Albion) be resurrected from the "sleeping body".⁶

As Milton begins his journey, he comes to the River Arnon, associated with the escape of the Israelites from Egypt, where he meets his great opponent, Urizen. Here the journey parallels both that of Jesus and of Moses, although the references to Arnon, Canaan, and Beth Peor more readily call to mind an association with Moses. The connection with Moses is more by way of contrast than similarity for Blake strongly disapproved of the hardening of Moses' vision into tablets of stone, and of his brutal destruction of the Canaanites on his way to the promised land. Moses knew that he would not reach the promised land but this was not his own choice. It had been determined by God. In plates 19 and 20 of the poem, Blake presents a call to Milton into Canaan almost as a test which he can pass only by refusing the alluring temptations put before him by Rahab and Tirzah, temptations which are permeated by female contempt for Milton:

Come then to Ephraim & Nanasseh O beloved-one!
Come to my ivory palaces O beloved of thy mother!
And let us bind thee in the bands of war & be thou
King
Of Canaan and reign in Hazor where the Twelve Tribes
meet.

(E113; K501)

But Milton ignores and stands unmoved: "Silent Milton

stood before/The darkend Urizen; as the sculptor stands before/His forming image; he walks round it patient labouring." The parallel with Jesus is more compatible in this section, for one cannot help but be reminded of the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness. He too refused the temptations offered him by Satan, knowing that Satan was appealing to his selfhood and refusing to be dominated by it. Reference to the temptation is not expressly made in this passage but the whole attitude and presentation of Rahab and Tirzah clearly recalls the trials of Jesus. Indeed, the presentation of Rahab and Tirzah bring us to the second point, the theme of the delusive female, for this evil force which tempts Milton will, in Jerusalem, become the major adversary of Jesus. Blake spares no effort to describe the full horror of this divided female:

The Twofold form Hermaphroditic: and the Double-
sexed;
The Female-male & the Male-female, self-dividing
stood
Before him in their beauty, & in cruelties of
holiness!
Shining in darkness, glorious upon the deeps of
Entuthon.

(E112; K501)

This passage looks forward to Jerusalem wherein it is Rahab who officiates at the death of Jesus. They are associated with Natural Religion, with hypocritical holiness, with ritual sacrifice, with delusion, in fact, with everything which comprises the Veil of Mystery which Jesus must rend. This is one of the themes which justifies Frye's observation that the whole of Milton is like a prelude to Jerusalem, because this delusive feminine Satanic force is not actually defeated in

Milton and remains active in the later poem.⁷ The theme was first introduced in Milton at the time of the Great Assembly when Leutha admitted her part in the fall of Satan: "Like sweet perfume I stupified the masculine perceptions/And kept only the feminine awake. hence rose his soft/Delusory love to Palamabron." The Sons of Los take up the theme in mistaken fear of Milton's descent: "To raise up Mystery the Virgin Harlot Mother of War,/Babylon the Great, the Abomination of Desolation!" Near the end of "Book the Second" we again encounter the Mystery Harlot:

Glorious in the midday Sun in Satans bosom glowing
A Female hidden in a Male, Religion hid in War
Namd Moral Virtue; cruel two-fold Monster shining
bright
A Dragon & hidden Harlot which John in Patmos saw
(E140; K532)

The image of Rahab glowing in Satan's bosom is a terrible and stark reversal of the image in Night VIII of The Four Zoas: "Wondering she saw the Lamb of God within Jerusalems Veil/The divine Vision seen within the inmost recess/Of fair Jerusalems bosom in a gently beaming fire." Rahab is not defeated in Milton: that can only be accomplished in the confrontation with Jesus in Jerusalem. But there is a growing attention on Blake's part to the vital role which the delusive female plays in perpetuating and exacerbating the fallen condition.

The necessity to unveil and reveal Mystery as regards the delusive female also applies to the need to reveal Satan. Los finds himself in the dilemma early in the poem which results from an imperfect recognition of Satan: "What could Los do? how could he judge, when

Satans self, believd/That he had not oppres'd the horses of the Harrow, nor the servants." Even Palamabron appears (though in anger) to have greater insight into Satan at this stage: "Seeming a brother, being a tyrant, even thinking himself a brother/While he is murdering the just." Indeed, Satan himself is not without inner conflict for it later transpires that Leutha is partially responsible for his taking over of Palamabron's harrow. When the Bard finishes his song, the Assembly itself has confused reactions as to the true victims and the truly blameworthy in the story of Satan and Palamabron. Much of this section of "Book the First", focusing on this quarrel, concerns hidden truths, seeming truths, and appearance and reality. Satan is the first to change this when he answers the accusations of Palamabron: "Saying I am God alone/ There is no other! let all obey my principles of moral individuality." This is the first sign of truth revealed for Los and Enitharmon now begin to realize who he is: "Then Los & Enitharmon knew that Satan is Urizen." A second indication of such clarification occurs near the end of the Bard's song when "the Divine hand found the Two Limits: first of Opacity, then of Contraction/Opacity was namd Satan, Contraction was namd Adam." This is a slightly different sort of clarification than the recognition of Satan as Urizen, but it still is an attempt to make clear that which was hid. In The Four Zoas we saw that the finding of these limits determined that there would now be a point beyond which

humanity could not fall. It carries the same significance here, though not many in the General Assembly recognize it as such. Yet on plate 23 of "Book the First" Los, now one with Blake, shows some sign of having understood and, more importantly, signs of faith--a faith that the truth will be revealed. The following passage is a hint of Los the prophet who, while misunderstood by the others, still believes:

We were placed here by the Universal Brotherhood
& mercy
With powers fitted to circumscribe this dark
Satanic death
And that the Seven Eyes of God may have space for
Redemption
But how this is as yet we know not, and we cannot
know;
Till Albion is arisen; then patient wait a little
while,
Six Thousand years are passed away the end approaches
fast;
(E118; K507-8)

The importance of Los' speech is not that he is uncertain but that, in his uncertainty, he still has faith that all will be revealed.

In "Book the Second" the theme of unveiling is taken up with respect to the twelve spectrous sons of Albion. Satan himself clarifies the intention of the divided body when he declares:

But I alone am God & I alone in Heav'n & Earth
Of all that live dare utter this, others tremble
& bow

Till all Things become One Great Satan, in Holiness
Oppos'd to Mercy and the Divine Delusion Jesus be
no more
(E139; K530)

This speech seems to spark off the finale of the poem with the descent of Milton into Blake's garden at Felp-ham, the reconciliation with Ololon, and the appearance

of the "One Man Jesus the Saviour." Yet although the poem closes on the exultant note that "All Animals upon the Earth, are prepar'd in all their strength/To go forth to the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations", yet the Last Judgment has not yet arrived, or at least not on the universal scale which these lines imply. Milton's great speech on plate 41 implies that he, at least, has found the way to redemption, but if there is victory in the poem, it is only a localized one. The fact remains, however, that throughout the poem, Blake reiterates the need for the unveiling and revelation of error in order that it may be cast off.

Coupled with the necessity to unveil and cast off error is the theme of self-annihilation as the means to redemption. For the most part, this theme is disclosed in the speeches of Milton, particularly in "Book the First", plate 14 and "Book the Second", plates 38 and 41. However the process of self-annihilation, which is not the death of the 'true' self but rather of the spectrous selfhood, is the gospel of Jesus, summarized on plate 22: "Faith in God the dear Saviour who took on the likeness of men:/Becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross." The pattern is repeated in Ololon's descent to Ulro; but the essence of what both Milton and Ololon achieve is explained by the Angels to the "real and immortal Milton" as he lies on the Couch of Death:

States Change: but Individual Identities never
change nor cease:
You cannot go to Eternal Death in that which can
never Die.

Satan & Adam are States Created into Twenty-Seven
Churches

And thou O Milton art a State about to be Created
Called Eternal Annihilation that none but the
Living shall

Dare to enter: & they shall enter triumphant over
Death

And Hell & the Grave: States that are not, but ah!
Seem to be.

• The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human •
Existence itself

• For God himself enters Deaths Door always with those •
that enter

And lays down in the Grave with them, in Visions
of Eternity

Till they awake & see Jesus & the Linen Clothes
lying

(E131; K521-22)

Again, in the last three lines, the action of Jesus is the reference for the process of self-annihilation and redemption. This process is not universalized in Milton and the forces of Mystery still have to be defeated before it can be so. But in this poem, Blake has clarified and made more coherent the themes of the individual and cosmic levels of redemption, the delusive female Mystery, the need to reveal Satan and Mystery, and the explanation of self-annihilation as the way to redemption.⁸

Jerusalem

In Jerusalem Blake's vision of Jesus is brought to fruition. Here we encounter all the imagery that we have met with in the two former poems, but the figure of Jesus now dominates the whole poem in a manner not hitherto attempted by Blake. The climax of the vision, in which humanity finally finds complete unity in Jesus Christ, is certainly not without precedent. A common theme in the New Testament letters of Paul is the idea

of the unity of all believers in the body of Christ,
as exemplified in the following texts:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

(1 Cor. 12: 12-14)

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

(1 Cor. 12: 27)

So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

(Rom. 12: 5)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

(Gal. 3: 28)

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joynted together, and compacted by that which every joynt supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the deifying of it self in love.

(Ephes. 4: 14-16)

Such passages are concerned to demonstrate that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is such that it gathers up the many and makes them into one, without destroying the uniqueness of the particular; and that one body is called the body of Jesus Christ. Blake's reference to the "One Man Jesus the Saviour" and to "the Divine Humanity" are intended to convey much the same point.⁹ The "Divine Family" phrase implies the presence of a father but Blake is generally more concerned to stress the idea of brotherhood. In this too there is precedent in the New Testament, for Hebrews 2: 9ff. emphasizes Christ's brotherhood with humanity. Jerusalem, whose goal is the achievement of such divine unity,

opens with Jesus' affirmation of precisely this oneness and brotherhood:

I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;
Within your bosom I reside, and you reside in me:
Lo! We are One; forgiving all Evil; not seeking
recompense!

Ye are my members ye sleepers of Beulah, land of
shades

(E145; K622)

As if he has already come to the perception which Jesus attempts to offer to Albion, Blake beseeches Jesus for his blessing: "O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:/Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!" The image of Jesus as Saviour and as Good Shepherd is retained in this poem, but now there is greater emphasis on Jesus' self-sacrifice in order that Albion might be saved rather than, as in Milton, an emphasis on the self-sacrifice of other characters. Hence, while Los performs the major office of "Eternal Prophet", yet his strength and hope rest entirely on his faith in the saving power of Jesus. As in Milton, this salvation depends upon the definition of error so that it may be cast off: "Giving a Body to Falsehood so that it may be cast off forever." Just as one strand of Paul's theology sees Jesus the Saviour as "All in all", participating fully in the sorrows of humanity, so Blake's Jesus assumes Luvah's robes of blood and offers himself up as the victim of error. Although, from one point of view, Jesus is beyond error because he can triumph over it, and even beyond the ultimate attacks of Satan and Rahab, yet he does not stand juxtaposed to the suffering of the fall: to suggest otherwise would be to deny Jesus his full human

significance. The paradox of suffering participation and transcendent power is suggested in the final plate of Chapter 1:

As the Sons of Albion have done to Luvah, so they
have in him
Done to the Divine Lord & Saviour who suffers with
those that suffer:
For not one sparrow can suffer & the whole universe
not suffer also,
In all its Regions, & its Father & Saviour not
pity and weep.
But Vengeance is the Destroyer of Grace & Repen-
tence in the bosom
Of the Injurer: in which the Divine Lamb is cruel-
ly slain:
Descend O lamb of God & take away the imputation
of Sin
By the Creation of States & the deliverance of
Individuals Evermore Amen
(E169; K648)

The first four lines of the above passage are reminis-
cent of Matthew 25: 40:

And the King shall answer, and say unto them,
Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye have done
it unto one of the least of these my brethren,
ye have done it unto me.

Blake's parallel is deliberate, for he means to imply that unity between Jesus and humanity of which we spoke earlier, which is also the intention of the gospel text. Yet side by side in these lines is the reality of the cruel slaying of the Divine Lamb with a prayer that this very Lamb descend and save. Some notion of transcendence, at least in the sense of overcoming the very power of the evil he endures, is suggested here. And, in fact, it is not an insignificant point, for it is only faith in this very power of Jesus which allows Los to continue to work as the Eternal Prophet. The whole poem hinges on this duality of Jesus' nature: the capacity and willingness to assume Luvah's robes

of blood, and the ability to transcend the State Satan into which Luvah has fallen. The faith of Los is manifest in Chapter 1 during the confrontation with his Spectre:

I labour day and night, I behold the soft affections
Condense beneath my hammer into forms of cruelty
But still I labour in hope, tho' still my tears
flow down
That he who will not defend Truth, may be compelled to defend
A Lie: that he may be snared and caught and snared
and taken
That Enthusiasm and Life may not cease:
(E151; K628)

Just as Urizen, in The Four Zoas, and Satan in Milton, and even Albion, in the fourth plate of Jerusalem seek to undermine Los' faith in Jesus as the Saviour, so here the Spectre attempts to deny Los' faith by pointing out to him what he perceives as the 'true' nature of God:

...The joys of God advance
For he is Righteous: he is not a Being of Pity & Compassion
He cannot feel Distress: he feeds on Sacrifice & Offering:
Delegating in cries & tears & clothd in holiness & solitude
(E152; K630)

Whenever he wants to set up the false, distorted image of Jesus, Blake inevitably returns either to images from Deism or to the Nobodaddy God which he sees manifest in much of the Old Testament. It is another example of the way in which Blake read the Bible, which is that there is a disjunction between the God of the Old Testament and the God revealed by Jesus. By contrasting the two, Blake intended to show that Jesus provides a purification of the revelation of God. In the above

passage, it is the Old Testament rather than Deistic images which predominate. And, as usual, it is the spectrous understanding of God, an understanding which Los must constantly deny in order to remain faithful to Jesus. Of course, this also necessarily implies Los' faithfulness to Imagination, because the God described by the Spectre in the above passage is also the God who denies the free expression of Imagination, the God who prefers rigidly imposed laws to creativity.

Just as we saw earlier that there is an intimate connection between the necessity to reveal Mystery and the delusive female power, so in Jerusalem, the forces of error combine to degrade and destroy Jerusalem, who is at once the bride of Jesus and the emanation of humanity. So sing the deluded Hand and Hyle:

Cast! Cast ye Jerusalem forth! The Shadow of
delusions
The Harlot daughter! Mother of pity and dishon-
ourable forgiveness
Our Father Albions sin and shame!

Blake uses the same method here that he used earlier in the Spectre's description of God. Hand and Hyle set up Vala, representative of Natural Religion, hypocritical holiness, and chastity, as the true goddess, while Jerusalem is seen as an Harlot who brings with her defilement and pollution and who must therefore be destroyed. This most fundamental travesty of the truth must be forced to consolidate itself into one body of error. When this does occur, it is Jesus himself who confronts and triumphs over it. In fact, in Chapter 1, Albion is moved by Jerusalem's piteous plea to be returned to the Divine Vision, her "Lord and

Saviour." But Albion's misery and terror overwhelm him so that he totally misunderstands how true repentance and forgiveness would be received by Jesus. His agonized speech recalls Enitharmon's in The Four Zoas when she too despaired of the response of Jesus in descending (as she feared) to punish:

Blasphemous Sons of Feminine delusion! God in
the dreary Void
Dwells from Eternity, wide separated from the
Human Soul
But thou deluding by whom imbu'd the Veil I rent
Lo here is Valas Veil whole, for a Law, a Terror
& a Curse!
And therefore God takes vengeance on me: from my
cold-clay bosom
My Children wander trembling victims of his Moral
Justice.

(E167; K646)

Albion's speech recalls both Lear and Ahab, raging against a tyrannous destiny but blind to the disease within themselves. That Albion should open himself to Jesus does not occur to him at this stage for, unlike Los, he cannot believe in the Divine Vision which he erroneously perceives to be a delusion.

Chapter 2, which is dedicated "to the Jews", states a fact concerning Blake's religion of Jesus which is, unfortunately, probably true: "Ye are united O ye Inhabitants of Earth in One Religion. The Religion of Jesus: the most Ancient, the Eternal: & the Everlasting Gospel - the Wicked will turn it to Wickedness, the Righteous to Righteousness." The Sons of Albion, the Spectres, the fallen zoas, and, ultimately, Rahab, all manage to do exactly this in Jerusalem. All that is loving, free, and creative in the gospel of Jesus is distorted into sinfulness and wickedness or into right-

eous commandments. This veil over the truth is the Veil of Mystery which Jesus must rend. The "Eternal Ones" indicate their recognition of this fact when they say that "...the Divine Mercy/Steps beyond and Redeems Man in the Body of Jesus Amen." In Jerusalem, unlike the earlier poems, Jesus plays a more verbal role, and the message he usually brings to those in despair is based on his own awareness of his power to transcend the worst that Satan-Rahab can do:

Jesus replied. I am the Resurrection & the Life.
I die & pass the Limits of possibility, as it
appears
To individual perception.

(E211; K696)

The quotation is based on John 11: 23-27 and is repeated in the phrase from Chapter 2: "In Me all Eternity/Must pass thro' condemnation, and awake beyond the Grave!" In no poem prior to Jerusalem are we made so conscious of what might best be termed Jesus' 'authority'. This is hardly surprising given Blake's extreme distaste for authority in its abused earthly or institutional expression. In other words, it was probably not till the maturation of his vision of Jesus in the years after 1804 that Blake was able to consider authority from a more positive point of view. At the same time, the word authority carries a variety of nuances. The O.E.D. may be of some assistance in defining what Blake's intention was.

While the first definition which the O.E.D. gives of authority is "Power to enforce obedience" (clearly the more institutional sense), the sixth meaning speaks

of a "power to inspire belief, title to be believed." Certainly it is evident by now that Blake would have discounted a Jesus who enforced obedience to himself. Such a concept is foreign to the whole meaning of his gospel of love. The latter meaning quoted above is, however, more relevant because it suggests a type of authority which is amenable to Blake's Jesus. In Jerusalem, Jesus is his own justification beyond which no further reference is required. When he speaks to Los or Albion or Jerusalem, two tones of voice are always present. One is Jesus' overwhelming love and sympathy, his protection of those who have fallen and are in despair. The other tone is the confidence (as opposed to arrogance) of authority, his awareness of the power and truth of his own ability to redeem. Perhaps the most striking example of Jesus' authority occurs in plate 31(35) of Chapter 2, wherein he says:

Albion hath enterd the State Satan! Be permanent
O State!
And be thou for ever accursed! that Albion may
rise again:
And be thou created into a State! I go forth to
Create
States: to deliver Individuals evermore! Amen
(E176; K662)

In a considerably softened tone of voice, Jesus speaks to Jerusalem with similar authority in Chapter 3, saying: "Only believe in me that I have power to raise from death/Thy brother who sleepeth in Albion..." And in Chapter 4, Jesus says to Albion: "...Fear not Albion unless I die thou canst not live/But if I die I shall rise again & thou with me." Los is the only other character who even begins to approach the degree of assur-

ance rests precisely upon his faith in Jesus, and even Los is subject to attacks of despair and confusion. Jesus stands out clearly as the "God of Fire and Lord of Love" and the redemption of Albion depends upon Jesus' assurance of authority, of his power to overcome error and to redeem.¹⁰ This dependence upon Jesus is a new element in Blake's vision. There were indeed hints of it in the additions to The Four Zoas and a more pervasive awareness of the role of Jesus in Milton. But it is only in Jerusalem that we see the fully developed vision. Such dependence is recognized by Bath in his speech to Albion in Chapter 2:

In Selfhood we are nothing: but fade away in
mornings breath.
Our mildness is nothing: the greatest mildness
we can use
Is incapable and nothing! none but the Lamb of
God can heal
This dread disease: none but Jesus! O Lord descend
and save!

(E185; K675)

These lines recall Blake's admission in Milton that he too is "nothing and vanity", dependent upon Jesus even for the creative power to write the story of Milton's deed. The repeated affirmation "only in Jesus" reveals how completely Blake has given himself over to a 'Christ-ian' vision. Only in Jesus is the possibility of redemption and salvation. Only in Jesus is the universe brought to unity. Only in Jesus does humanity gain the possibility of achieving its full potential. Only through Jesus does humanity open itself to the New Jerusalem. This is not merely the affirmation of the powers of the Human Imagination, though neither does it belittle it. For one thing, Blake seems to have too

little faith in humanity's ability to redeem itself by itself to conceive a redemption based solely on a human faculty. At the same time he recognizes the potential power of Human Imagination to work for humanity insofar as it opens itself to and manifests the spirit of Jesus. To the extent that Human Imagination is the "throne of God" and a "Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High", it is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus and not the cruel perpetrator of his Crucifixion.

The relationship between Jesus and Los is a crucial one and the poem would certainly have been a different one if it were not for the presence and work of Los. The transition from Los as potential Redeemer to Los as Eternal Prophet is a natural one for Blake wished to retain the rich potential of Los at the same time that he saw the need to transfer the actual power to redeem to Jesus. Hence, when Los' anger is aroused, it is the prophetic anger of the true Elijah which speaks. The most impressive of these speeches, one which is at once an exasperated reproach of Albion and a defence of the gospel of Jesus, is at plate 42:

Therefore I break thy bonds of righteousness, I
crush thy messengers!
That they may not crush me and mine: do thou be
righteous,
And I will return it; otherwise I defy thee thy
worst revenge:
Consider me as thine enemy: on me turn all thy
fury
But destroy not these little ones, nor mock the
Lords anointed:
He hath cast thee off for ever; the little ones
he hath anointed!

So spoke Los: then turn'd his face & wept for
Albion

(E187-88; K670)

The last line is not the least moving, for even in his anger, Los weeps for his friend. In many ways this speech is more inspiring and more sublime than any speech which Milton makes in the earlier poem. Perhaps this is because Milton's speeches tend to be majestic and noble rather than emotionally moving. One seems to feel both Los' anger and his anguish over his friend's disease in a way which Milton's speeches about self-annihilation never evoke. Milton's speeches seem to betray the tone of a statement of principle of a rather abstract nature whereas Los' are the heartfelt plea of emotional unrestraint. Secondly, although one does not wish to suggest an element of pride in Milton's character, since the whole point of his journey is the annihilation of the Selfhood, yet there is that quality of the solitary 'outsider' about Milton. We never seem to be deeply touched by his journey to self-annihilation because we are never made fully aware of its emotional effect on him. Los, on the other hand, is less concerned to state principles about his own conduct than to protect the "little ones" who are the Lord's anointed: "on me turn all thy fury", the implication being, 'but leave these innocents alone for they are blessed in the sight of God.' And yet, even now, while he waits on the revenge of Albion, Los is able to turn aside his face and weep for his friend. This is the gospel of Jesus manifested in a way which is unprecedented in Blake's poetry and we are told that "...the Divine hand was upon him, strengthening him mightily."

Despite Los' efforts Albion finally collapses altogether with the words: "Hope is banish'd from me." But "...the merciful Saviour in his arms/Receiv'd him in the arms of tender mercy." Jerusalem remains banished and degraded by Vala, "Because thou art the impurity & the harlot: & thy Children!/ Children of whoredoms." As Chapter 2 ends, then, there seems to have been little progress made, except that Los refuses to relinquish his task as the Eternal Prophet. Yet in spite of this apparent hopelessness so despairingly betrayed by Albion's final words, there is still an undeniable sense of the abiding presence of Jesus, in whom some still continue to place their hope. Like the Angels of the Couch of Death in Milton, Erin instructs the Daughters of Beulah in the gospel of Jesus, saying that distinguishing between States and Individuals "...is the only means to Forgiveness of Enemies." Near the end of the chapter, Erin succinctly outlines both the state of the world and also the hope of delivery from that state:

The Atlantic Mountains where Giants dwelt in Intellect;
 Now given to stony Druids and Allegoric Generation
 To the twelve Gods of Asia, the Spectres of those
 who Sleep:
 Sway'd by a Providence oppos'd to the Divine Lord
 Jesus:
 A Murderous Providence! A Creation that groans,
 living on Death.
 Where Fish & Bird & Beast & Man & Tree & Metal &
 Stone
 Live by Devouring, going into Eternal Death continually:
 Albion is not possess'd by the War of Blood! the
 Sacrifice
 Of Envy Albion is become, and his Emanation cast out:
 Come Lord Jesus, Lamb of God descend, for if, O Lord!
 If thou hadst been here, our brother Albion had not
 died.
 Arise sister! Go ye & meet the Lord while I remain
 (E197; K681)

The prose passage, dedicated "To the Deists" which opens Chapter 3 is as serious and passionate a defence of the gospel of Jesus and a polemic against Deism as is to be found in Blake's work. We are familiar from the earlier works and from the fragments and epigrams of the Notebooks with just how satiric and vituperative Blake could be when he so chose. In this passage, however, he completely dispenses with that mode of attack. It is the serious, impassioned, and faithful Blake who speaks in these lines, clearly expressing his understanding of the gospel of Jesus which, in this passage, he calls Christianity. That he should finally choose to use the name Christianity and align himself with it is a significant step. If, like Harold Bloom, we do not wish to call Blake a Christian, then we are left to conclude that what Blake says about Christianity in this prose passage is an inaccurate representation of that religion. The passage should be read in full in order to set Blake's comments about Christianity in their proper context, but the following excerpts provide a good précis of Blake's point:

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, Namd by the Divine Name...

But you deists also charge the poor Monks & Religious with being the causes of War: while you acquit & flatter the Alexanders & Ceasers, the Lewis's & Fredericks: who alone are its causes & its actors. But the religion of Jesus, Forgiveness of Sin, can never be the cause of a War nor of a single Martyrdom.

Those who Martyr others or who cause War are Deists, but never can be Forgivers of Sin. The Glory of Christianity, is to Conquer by Forgiveness. All the Destruction therefore, in Christian Europe has arisen from Deism which is Natural Religion.

(E199; K682)

"The Glory of Christianity, is to Conquer by Forgiveness." This, in one statement, is Blake's belief about the true message of Jesus and the true nature of Christianity. Again one must be on guard to distinguish between Blake's response to what he understood as the essential truth of Christianity and what he usually said about the Church. Otherwise we are caught up in an endless argument which need not trouble us if we pay attention to the above quotation. To some extent, Blake is playing the role of apologist in this passage and perhaps it is simply not true to say that Christianity has never been the cause of war. Probably Blake's reply would have been that the Church may have been the cause of war, but the true Christianity which embodied the gospel of Jesus could never have been the cause of war.

The climax of the poem occurs in Chapter 4 but Chapter 3 plays a crucial role in driving the forces of Mystery and delusion into greater opposition to the gospel of Jesus in preparation for the end. There is greater emphasis in this chapter on the female element, both the 'good' and the 'evil'. It is expressed in the opposition between the banished Jerusalem and Vala, or later, between Jerusalem and Rahab and Tirzah, as well as in the difference between the work of the Daughters of Los, of whom it is said that "...none pities their tears/Yet they regard not pity & they expect no one to pity/For they labour for life & love," and the consorts of Rahab. It is perhaps Jerusalem who suffers most in the early parts of Chapter 3, believing,

yet despairing and forever mocked by the cruelties
of Vala:

All night Vala hears, she triumphs in pride of
holiness
To see Jerusalem deface her linements with bitter
blows
Of despair. While the Satanic Holiness triumphd
in Vala
In a Religion of Chastity & Uncircumcised Selfish-
ness
Both of the Head & Heart & Loins, closd up in Moral
Pride.
(E208; K693)

But Jesus again speaks to Jerusalem's despair in lines
based on Matthew 28: 20, assuring her that Vala's tri-
umph is not to be permanent. Such reassurances of
Jesus shine like brief shafts of light through the
gloom of Jerusalem's despair and Albion's death: "Fear
not! lo I am with thee always." But they are also more
than mere comforting platitudes. The action is moving
inevitably towards the confrontation of Jesus with
Rahab, and Jesus now begins to disclose hints of what
is to come:

Jesus replied. I am the Resurrection & the Life.
I Die & pass the limits of possibility, as it
appears
To individual perception.
I will command the cloud to give thee food & the
hard rock
To flow with milk & wine, tho thou seest me not a
season
Even a long season & a hard journey & a howling
wilderness!
Tho Valas cloud hide thee & Luvahs fires follow thee!
Only believe & trust in me. Lo. I am always with
thee!
(E211; K696)

It is this vision of the Lamb of God which causes Los
to live and breathe in hope. The above speech is note-
worthy insofar as Jesus makes no cliché promises about
the way forward being easy. He knows that there is yet

a great conflict to be faced before Jerusalem and Los can see him clearly. He asks of them belief and trust. He promises life. This is the single most important characteristic of Jesus in Jerusalem. Turning his back, Albion has lost the Divine Vision and precipitated events till things have reached the condition described by Erin at the end of Chapter 2. Yet Jesus has the power, the desire, and the intention to restore life to Albion, to restore Vala to Albion, and to restore humanity to union with the divine. Blake manages a finely balanced juxtaposition of Jesus' human-divine, or earthly-transcendent nature in this respect, for the things which Jesus says to Jerusalem, to Albion, and to Los are largely based on the gospel reports, in other words, on that which Jesus is reputed to have said while he lived as a man. But in Jerusalem, this is not quite the case. Jesus speaks from a position of transcendence, from a position which is, in some sense, continually above or outside the drama at the same time that it is intimately involved in it. This may well be part of Blake's point about the paradox of Jesus; that he is somehow immediate and constantly present, but by virtue of that very fact, is also eternal and transcendent.

Two other events occur in Chapter 3 which pertain to the task of Jesus in Chapter 4. The first of these is, perhaps, less an event than a trend, and concerns the consolidation of the spectrous female forces. Later in the chapter (plate 67) this female will be called Rahab, but here she is still called Vala. From one

point of view, the consolidation of the Daughters of Albion into Vala seems a portent of disaster. It is, however, actually a progression for it is only when this Mystery and error has been revealed that it can be cast out. Hence, when, in the following passage, the Daughters of Albion consolidate, it is actually a positive sign, horrible as it appears, insofar as Vala is finally being unveiled in her true colours:

Then all the Daughters of Albion became One before
Los: even Vala!
And she put forth her hand upon the Looms in dreadful howlings
Till she vegetated into a hungry Stomach & a devouring Tongue.
Her Hand in a Court of Justice, her Feet; two
Armies in Battle
Storms & Pestilence: in her Locks: & in her Loins
Earthquake.
And Fire. & the Ruins of Cities & Nations & Families & Tongues.
(E213; K698)

This is followed by the consolidation of Vala with the Spectre, "a dark Hermaphrodite", and it is they who "...vote the death of Luvah & they nailed him to Albions Tree in Bath." As sacrifice follows bloody sacrifice, Rahab's consorts descend into a frenzy of torment and blood. Of Rahab, Blake says: "...her heart is drunk with blood/Tho her brain is not drunk with wine..."

This double event, of the consolidation of Rahab and the symbolic crucifixion of Luvah, drive the action forward to the climax in Chapter 4. This is the female animating Satan, and now that she has begun to consolidate, the time is nearly come which has been awaited by those in despair.

Chapter 4 is dedicated "To the Christians" and bears a riddle-like epigram at its head:

I give you the end of a golden string
Only wind it into a ball:
It will lead you in at Heavens gate,
Built in Jerusalems wall

(E229; K716)

This epigram could almost be a rule of thumb for reading the poem Jerusalem and, indeed, for reading all the prophetic poems, for it is a call to the reader to expand his or her imagination and read the poem by exercising the "Divine Arts of Imagination." In 1810, while writing "A Vision of the Last Judgment", Blake again referred to this point, the following passage reading like a gloss on the epigram in Chapter 4:

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air, & then he would be happy

(E550; K611)

This is precisely the response which Blake hopes for from his reader of the prophetic poems, particularly of Jerusalem. The association of Imagination with spirituality in the introductory prose passage of Chapter 4 reinforces this point:

The Apostles knew of no other Gospel. What is the Divine Spirit? What are all their spiritual gifts? is the Holy Ghost any other than an Intellectual Fountain?...What is Mortality but the things relating to the Body, which Dies? What is Immortality but the things relating to the Spirit, which Lives Eternally! What is the Joy of Heaven but Improvement in the things of the Spirit?

(E229; K717)

This passing back and forth between the imagery of the Imagination and that of the Spirit may be interpreted by some as a simple equation. But there is no real

need to do this, and the fluidity of the imagery of Imagination and Spirit remains much richer if one does not. We know from the quotation from "A Vision of the Last Judgment" that Blake believed that one could only truly understand his poetry and painting if one opened oneself to them through one's imagination. In the same way, opening oneself to Jesus occurs through the development of the Spirit, which is, from Blake's point of view, an exercise of the highest imaginative faculty possessed by humanity.

Chapter 4 opens, as we are led to expect from the events of Chapter 3, with the forces of Rahab combining against Jesus and against Jerusalem: "Albions Twelve Sons surround the Forty-two Gates of Erin,/In terrible armour, raging against the Lamb & against Jerusalem." Division still remains, and even Enitharmon, the emanation of Los, continues to express her desire for dominion over him. Yet Los continues to act as the Eternal Prophet. Blake's words about Los throughout this chapter could almost have been written about Jesus, particularly those which occur in plate 88: "The blow of his Hammer is Justice. the swing of his Hammer: Mercy./The force of Los's Hammer is eternal Forgiveness." The terrible hermaphrodite which has become one with the antichrist continues to rage against Los but he continues in the struggle to relay the message of Christ that "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..." And now Los is assured

in his faith in Jesus, that he will triumph over Rahab and over death: "Fear not my Sons this waking Death. He is become One with me/Behold him here! We shall not Die! we shall be united in Jesus." The experience of Jesus becoming one with Los heralds the climax of the whole poem, and although the extended passages of almost Bacchic violence of the harvest and vintage are absent, yet the drama climaxes in a more impressive manner: "Time was Finished! The Breath Divine Breathed over Albion." This does seem to be an act of intervention on Jesus' part for two reasons. In the first place, one cannot really say that Albion has contributed anything to his own awakening since he has remained in a deathly torpor throughout the poem. Secondly, even though Albion is awakened by the Breath Divine and rises in anger to resume command of the fragmented zoas, yet he still must undergo a session of learning or instruction from Jesus (plate 96) before he achieves that state of unity already granted to Los. In other words, although it takes place in a very few lines compared to the length of the whole poem, Albion's awakening is not so much an end as a beginning. Of course, on one level, one must remember that what has happened to all the other zoas has also happened to Albion because they are Albion. On the other hand, he has been presented as asleep and he too must learn the message of Jesus' gospel before real unity can be achieved.

Jesus' descent to Albion in plate 96 has generated a good deal of interest and inquiry because of the

particular form in which Jesus appears:

Then Jesus appeared standing by Albion as the
Good Shepherd
By the lost sheep that he hath found & Albion
knew it
Was the Lord the Universal Humanity, & Albion saw
his Form
A Man. & they conversed as Man with Man, in ages
of Eternity
And the Divine Appearance was the likeness & sim-
ilitude of Los
(E253; K743)

Some readers interpret this passage as further evidence that Jesus is, for Blake, a personification of Human Imagination. However, I shall advance another explanation of this event which supports the view of Blake's Jesus which I have put forward in this chapter. Basically I would argue that it is Los who is subsumed by Jesus, not Jesus by Los. A number of factors suggest this interpretation. Firstly, there has been no indication in the poem thus far that Jesus and Los are one and the same being. It is true that Los has "kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble" and that he has acted as the prophet of Jesus, but this only indicates that there is someone other than Los who is the Divine Vision. Secondly, it is Los himself who calls upon, prays to, and is strengthened by Jesus. It would be tantamount to a kind of strange tautology to suggest that Los is merely calling upon himself for aid. Thirdly, there is the statement by Bath that "none but the Lamb of God can heal/This dread disease: none but Jesus." Finally, there is Albion's amazement and wonder in the climactic passages of Chapter 4 at what he calls Los' "sublime honour".

If Blake somehow intends that Los is Jesus, then there is no honour involved in Jesus' appearance in Los' form. The honour lies in the very fact that, after all his prodigious efforts, Los has finally been united in Jesus so that the 'body' of one is the 'body' of the other. Perhaps the following quotation from Teilhard will clarify this phenomenon:

The vital logic of action is such that we cannot conquer our own selves and increase our stature except through a gradual death of ourselves. To act worthily and usefully, we have seen, is to achieve unity. But to be united is to be transformed into a greater than oneself. Ultimately then, to act is to leave behind the material, the immediate, the self-centred, and so advance into the universal Reality that is coming to birth.¹¹

The result of Los' "I act not for myself" is precisely that he has now been transformed into a greater than himself, and has been completely unified in Jesus. As Teilhard says: "Everything that is good in the universe, (that is, everything that goes towards unification through effort) is gathered up by the Incarnate Word as a nourishment that it assimilates, transforms, and divinises."¹² Indeed this is what happens, not only to Los but also to Albion at the moment that the latter finally shakes off his Selfhood:

So Albion spoke & threw himself into the Furnaces
of affliction
All was a Vision, all a Dream: the Furnaces became
Fountains of Living Water from the Humanity Divine
(E253; K744)

The "Furnaces of affliction" are now understood as the delusions of Selfhood with no more substance than a bad dream. But insofar as Albion has "not for himself but for his Friend Divine" thrown himself into these

furnaces, he has achieved salvation in the "Fountains of Living Water." Albion's act of selflessness has brought him into unity with the spirit of Jesus, but again, it is important to recognize that, even after this event, Blake does not identify Albion and Jesus any more than he identified Los and Jesus or Luvah and Jesus. Certainly language presents a difficulty in discussing the dynamics of the relationship between Albion and Jesus because in this instance I should certainly want to make a distinction between 'unity' and 'identification'. We seem not to encounter this complexity in ordinary conversation, for we are able to say that two people are unified without fearing that we convey that they no longer possess separate identities. However, the moment we begin to speak theologically, we incline also to begin thinking literally rather than imaginatively. In John's gospel, even Jesus himself used a metaphor to describe exactly the state which Blake seeks to articulate: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15: 5). It is a state of unity such as this into which Albion has entered. He has not become Jesus, for after the passage in which Albion emerges from the furnaces of affliction into the "Fountains of Living Water", Blake continues to speak of Albion and Jesus as distinct identities: "...Then Albion stood before Jesus in the Clouds/Of Heaven Fourfold among the Visions of God

in Eternity." Immediately after this, as Albion calls to Jerusalem to awake, Blake says: "So spake the Vision of Albion & in him so spake in my hearing/ The Universal Father." Blake does not say that Albion is the Universal Father. He says that the Universal Father spoke in, or perhaps, through Albion. He is attempting to convey that what Albion now says and does is said and done 'in the spirit' of the Universal Father. Twice in the same plate (plate 97) Blake says that the resurrection to new life in which Albion now participates is "In Forgiveness of Sins according to the Covenant of Jehovah." It is not the Covenant of Albion but of Jehovah which has been fulfilled, which again suggests that the Universal Father or Jehovah is somehow separate from humanity.

It would seem that Blake's language is clear enough until we try to start changing what he actually says. Any religious language properly and inevitably is the language of symbol and image and as long as we are guided by this principle, we need not entangle ourselves in complex ontological discussions, at least with regard to the final plates of Jerusalem. In seeking to respond to and understand the figure of Jesus Christ in his poetry, Blake asks only that we use our imaginations.

The prophetic poems, and particularly Jerusalem, present a vision which conveys an increasing sense of urgency and an increasing clarity on Blake's part as to the mature form of that vision. Hence it is in a study of the prophetic poems that one wishes to be most

careful in identifying the dominant preoccupation of the poet. The conclusion of this chapter that the prophetic poems reveal an increasing concern with the figure of Jesus Christ; that the particular focus on a gospel message of self-annihilation and forgiveness of sins is central; and that his vision gives evidence of an intensely Christian belief, however unorthodox and anti-institutional, is not a thesis which finds general agreement. Few theses on Blake's poetry do find such agreement. However it is my belief that the richness of Christianity has not been exploited by critics as usefully as it might have been. In some cases, this has been because Christianity has been seen as too restrictive and, in other cases, because it has seemed to offer too simple an explanation. Blake himself evidently did not regard the central figure of Christianity, Jesus Christ, as conveying a message which was either restrictive or simple. The journey to redemption through Jesus Christ in the prophetic poems is certainly not simple, and its whole purpose is to free from restriction. Certainly this is not the only way in which the prophetic poems need be interpreted and perhaps part of their appeal lies precisely in Blake's repeated entreaty to the individual response of his readers. On the other hand, any person who proclaims himself to be a Christian, as Blake did, and who attempts to understand the message of Jesus Christ with such intense commitment, cannot be denied the description of Christian even if this necessitates careful

qualification in the light of general and often loosely-defined conceptions of Christianity. So long as one does not stumble into the trap of becoming fixated or dogmatic or morally didactic in one's assertions about Blake in this respect, then, I believe, the interpretation offered here provides a way into the prophetic poems which takes account of the richness of Blake's mature vision. To suggest anything else would be to commit the 'Urizenic' error of believing that there is "one law", one key which unlocks the complexities of the poetry. It is one delusion of which Blake's prophetic poems make one properly wary.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps some would argue that to call Blake a Christian and to focus on his treatment of Jesus represents an attempt to impose an interpretation on the poetry which it will not readily support. Certainly this was not the intention and I hope that I have indicated that Blake's increasing emphasis on the figure of Jesus Christ seemed naturally to invite the kind of study which I have made here. Although we need to be aware of the profound differences between the traditional teachings of the orthodox Church concerning Jesus Christ and the presentation of Jesus in Blake's poetry, we need not shy away from the implications of his treatment of that figure. No one would dispute Blake's anti-institutionalism with regard to organized religion, but his purpose in criticizing the Church was remedial, a point which the secular humanist approach to his poetry fails to consider seriously. Blake's Christianity was firmly Christocentric and his criticisms were intended to point to the ways in which the Church had allowed, or even encouraged the vision of Jesus Christ to degenerate into mere dogma. If one definition of radical Christianity is to ignore doctrine and dogma, to home in directly on the figure of Jesus Christ, and to give imaginative expression to the gospel of Jesus via one's own spiritual and social experience, then Blake was, without a doubt, a radical Christian. In the person and prophecy of Jesus Christ Blake found the ultimate expression of human, spiritual, imaginative vision. Jerusalem in particular discloses that Blake

also saw in Christ the Redeemer of humanity. The later prophetic poems witness to belief in a Redeemer who could fully understand the need for redemption because he dwelt immanently in Human Imagination, and a Redeemer who could effect redemption because he transcendently possessed the will and the power to do so. In a society in which the transcendence of the godhead had not been allowed to degenerate into abstract Deism, Blake might not have felt the need to be at all circumspect in his expression of the transcendence of Jesus Christ. As it was, his desire not to overbalance in this direction led him to treat this aspect of divinity with delicacy. However to treat the transcendence of Christ delicately is not the same thing as doing away with it: the late additions to The Four Zoas and Jerusalem witness to the fact that Blake retained belief in transcendence in his conception of Jesus Christ for it is ultimately transcendent power which redeems Albion from Eternal Death. Secular humanist interpretations of Blake's poetry certainly ignore this factor and, although they do not necessarily ignore the figure of Jesus Christ, they do tend to reduce him, to dilute his significance, or to subtly mould him into a principle which is in accordance with secular humanism. But this is simply not the way that Blake responded to the figure of Jesus Christ. No one will question that the figure of Jesus in Blake's poetry is also immanent and intimately associated with Human Imagination through the figure of Los but to give

sole consideration to this aspect of the figure is to limit oneself to a partial interpretation and also to fail to do justice to the wholeness of Blake's vision of Jesus Christ.

Blake began his career with some idea of the Christ figure and we have seen how this is expressed in The Songs of Innocence . Jesus may not be a major focus of the Songs but undeniably he is depicted there, and significantly, it is a positive depiction. Not surprisingly, The Songs of Experience say little about Jesus. For our purposes, what is noteworthy is that although these songs offer strong criticism of the Church and of the "Nobodaddy" God which, in Blake's opinion, it enshrined, nowhere is this Church or this God associated with Jesus Christ. Even at an early date Blake saw a marked contrast between Jesus Christ and the Church which had grown up in his name. Rather than being a point which is clearly articulated at this time, the reader comes to this awareness by contrasting the "Innocence" poems with the "Experience" poems. Emphasis on the contrast is not definitely expressed until the later poetry.

Probably the crucial time with regard to the subsequent fate of Jesus Christ in Blake's poetry came during the political uproar of the years which Blake spent in Lambeth. With social, political, and religious oppression all around him, it is not surprising that Blake began to question the Messianic promises implicit in the birth of Christ. In the poems of this period he

seems to be wondering whether the Apocalypse has arrived unannounced. At no other time in Blake's poetic career could Orc, even temporarily, have assumed the role of Redeemer. Even if Jesus had not later become the true Redeemer in the poetry it seems probable that Orc would have given way to Los. We need not ignore this period just because Jesus does not figure in it. On the contrary, it is of interest that Blake still felt the need of some kind of Redeemer and it is important that the themes of nativity, with the implicit promise of new life, and crucifixion are woven into the characterization of Orc because it indicates that Blake still had the figure of Jesus Christ in mind, even if it was, for the moment, in the back of his mind.

The post-Lambeth period, particularly from the time of Blake's sojourn to Felpham and back to London, is one long testimony to Blake's renewed interest in and then commitment to Jesus Christ both as the embodiment of imaginative vision and as the Redeemer of fallen humanity. By this time, Imagination, personified in the figure of Los, had become central in Blake's thinking but gradually he began to perceive that he need not sacrifice the centrality of this notion in order to elevate the figure of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, the association between Imagination and Jesus gradually crystallized for Blake. That is why the association between Los as prophet of the Divine Vision and Jesus as Redeemer gradually became so rich and intimate, an intimacy which climaxes in plate 96 of

Jerusalem. Blake's own Christianity was no more a static affair than his poetry is. His work demonstrates the emergence of a developing commitment to the vision of Jesus Christ, a vision which Blake characterized as "Forgiveness of Sins" through self-annihilation. Of course this commitment had little to do with the Church or with orthodox doctrine for it was pristine and unequivocal in its focus. Even if ritual and dogma had not been actively harmful and hypocritical, as Blake thought them to be, it is probable that he still would have seen them as irrelevant because such formal structures must inevitably dilute the original vision of Jesus Christ. And Blake sought a totally undiluted Christianity.

Associated with the attitude of secular humanism which has so far been discussed, is the way in which Blake tends to be subject to different treatment from other writers whose work is largely symbolic. Emanuel Swedenborg and Jacob Boehme are, if anything, far more complex and esoteric than Blake in their use of symbolism and it is from them that Blake picked up such concepts as "the Human Form Divine" and the notion of States. Yet one does not find that critics respond to them as being non-religious, or quote them as examples of secular humanist thought. Perhaps because they are self-confessed mystics, they come in for different treatment than Blake does, but their symbolism is generally accepted for what it purports to be--an imaginative attempt to express spiritual realities through the medium of symbolical language. Indeed, the reli-

gious language which was not symbolical would be strange indeed. The Jewish and Christian prophets and, for that matter, Jesus himself, used image, symbol and metaphor all the time to express that which simply could not be expressed in 'rational', prosaic language. The interesting thing is that when Blake, by his own admission, attempts to do exactly the same thing, he comes in for a totally different response. It is true that Blake was anti-institutional and one might think that this is what gets in the way of thinking of him as expressing spiritual realities. But Swedenborg, Boehme, or even Jesus can hardly be considered to be orthodox. At any rate, for whatever reason, there does seem to be a resistance to the interpretation of Blake's treatment of Jesus Christ as Christian which, it would seem to me, is simply not justified by the poetry itself.

Blake's own time resembles our own insofar as both reveal a yearning to articulate human dignity and achievement apart from the shackles of tradition. Perhaps this yearning was expressed more aggressively in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than it is now. However it should be remembered that such figures as Bacon, Newton, and Locke opened up a whole new world to their contemporaries. Scientific knowledge in particular became very quickly dated and quaint. When one considers just how recently it has been that the Newtonian model of the world has been challenged, one can begin to imagine how profound the effect of that

model must have been. It is hardly to be wondered at if it quite suddenly seemed that there was little in the universe which could not be understood and explained by the faculty of human reason. And if that was the case, then it was not a large step to taking a second look at religion and questioning whether God himself had perhaps become a rather unsophisticated and outmoded concept. Rationalized Christianity or even secular humanism must have seemed an exciting leap forward in humanity's intellectual development.

At the same time, however, we can, from our vantage point, be sympathetic to those like Blake who perceived that the nurturing of the whole person was in great danger of being abandoned in favour of the advancement of one particular faculty, namely, human reason. It was not only because Blake was a poet that he so strongly objected to the devaluation of imagination, emotion, and sensuality. It was also and more essentially because he recognized that this trend could only produce a fragmented, one dimensional human being. In Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The First Book of Urizen, and the prophetic poems, he demonstrated the disastrous effects of the repression and oppression of everything in the human make-up except reason. Blake may well have disagreed with the Church but this disagreement certainly did not lead him to endorse Deism as an alternative. The effect of rationalist philosophy on the development of a psychology of mind was correspondingly manifest in the effect of ration-

ist religion on the attitude towards human spirituality. Blake did not see this trend simply as an impoverishment; he saw it as a terrible degradation of that which was truly human.

Blake's criticism of the Church proceeded on many levels, but at base, his fundamental charge was that the Church's teaching (as this had evolved by the eighteenth century) had failed to grasp just how radical and visionary Jesus Christ was. One of the principle manifestations of this failure, from Blake's point of view, was that the Church had become obsessed with the fact of sacrificial death, the dead body of Jesus on the Cross and had lost sight of the risen Christ. It seemed to Blake that the Church was constantly seeking to contain, to limit, and to define Jesus into a phenomenon which was manageable, unchallenging, and unthreatening. It was his intention to remove those restrictions and limitations, even if, in so doing, his own interpretation involved precisely such a challenge and threat to complacency. To do any less he would have seen as a compromise and a betrayal of the vision of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that we need not fear the association of Blake with Christianity, for his was a Christianity which focused on the figure of Jesus Christ himself, resulting in what I have called a 'pristine' Christianity. Certainly Blake was concerned to rid religion of the negative aspects of Mystery, of moral and social hypocrisy, of the denial of the body and the emotions, and of crippling dogma. But if he considered himself to be,

as he said, a "Soldier of Christ", then his vision can hardly be considered anti-Christian or un-Christian. As much as any secular humanist, Blake strove to defend all aspects of the human being, to enrich them, and to restore them to harmony. This was precisely why he was attracted to the person of Jesus Christ, a figure who addressed himself to the whole person and not just to his or her intellect. Blake did not see Jesus as some kind of super-psychologist whose significance could easily be re-embodied by another character within the fourfold scheme. Los was not, finally, the Saviour, but the prophet of the Saviour. Blake saw Jesus Christ as unique at the same time that he emphasized Christ's intimate relationship with the rest of humanity through his own humanity. How strongly he believed this is expressed in Bath's statement in Chapter 2 of Jerusalem: "...none but the Lamb of God can heal/This dread disease: none but Jesus! O Lord descend and save!"

Such a passionate statement appears relatively late in Blake's poetic career. Just as it would be unwise to impose a scheme upon the poetry, so it would be inaccurate to suggest that Blake would have written such lines during the Lambeth period or before. Blake's response to Jesus Christ and hence his treatment of that figure is a phenomenon which grows organically, reflected in the poetry as a slow maturing of a gradually realized conviction. That is one of the reasons that committing oneself to a study of Blake's poetry can be so rewarding. Gradually one loses the sense

of frustration in confronting a complex and difficult poet; gradually one enters into relationship with an artist who, on every page, offers his vision and his humanity to be shared.

APPENDIX

"THE REBEL JESUS OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL"

The Everlasting Gospel is usually passed over by critics somewhat casually, or exploited for the shock value of some of its more outrageous claims. Presumably the reasons that it has not evoked as much comment as other of Blake's works are that it appears only in fragmentary form in Blake's Notebook (sometimes referred to as the Rossetti MS) and that it is not considered to contribute much in the way of new or original material which would increase our understanding of Blake's thought. A recent thesis by P.B. Grant entitled "Blake's The Everlasting Gospel: An Edition and Study" (Pennsylvania, 1976)¹ disagrees with the general consensus that this work is a series of fragments and proposes an ordering of the various lines which, he believes, demonstrates the coherence and orderly structure of a self-contained poem. Grant's commentary, however, does not then propose that The Everlasting Gospel makes radically new statements. Rather it suggests that the poem reflects the various influences on Blake (Swedenborg, Boehme, and the seventeenth-century radicals) and that it acts as a more concise and direct summary of themes which other critics find adequately expressed in the main body of work. In other words, even if The Everlasting Gospel is perceived as a unified whole rather than as a series of fragments, the consensus seems to be that Blake did not here radically contest or deny the insights which he had expressed in other poems. Yet even if The

Everlasting Gospel does not offer any fundamentally new insights, it does contain some of Blake's most striking and cogent statements about Jesus. It is therefore to our purpose to consider this late work.

The Everlasting Gospel contains, from an orthodox point of view, some of Blake's most aggressive and outrageous lines on the subject of Jesus. Some readers may well take issue with his attack on the accepted view of Jesus, with the denial of the Virgin Birth (and probably, implicitly, the Immaculate Conception), and with his contempt for the rationale of orthodox morality. Yet however great one's disagreement with the specific sentiments expressed in the poem, one cannot deny that Blake's purpose was to free what he understood as the true gospel of Jesus, the real meaning of his life and death, from a restricted, unimaginative perspective. As early as The Songs of Innocence and of Experience and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake's approach to the religion which Jesus had taught had been to demonstrate that it was qualitatively different from organized religion. When he returned to this concern in the later additions to The Four Zoas, in Milton, and in Jerusalem, Blake again centred on those aspects of Jesus' ministry which are not bounded by moral or historical perimeter, those which reflect that which is truly visionary about Jesus. In The Everlasting Gospel, Blake again attacked on both these fronts, expressing his lifelong belief that the historical and moral perspectives had little

to do with the Jesus who was the focus of his thought:

The Vision of Christ that thou dost see
Is my Visions Greatest Enemy
Thine has a great hook nose like to thine
Mine has a snub nose like to mine
Thine is the friend of all Mankind
Mine speaks in parables to the Blind
Thine loves the same world that mine hates
Thy Heaven doors are my Hell Gates
Socrates taught what Meletus
Loathd as a Nations Bitterest Curse
A benefactor to Mankind
Both read the Bible day & night
But thou readst black where I read white
(E516; K748)

It is probably true that Blake had his tongue in his cheek when he wrote this fragment, particularly lines three and four. All the same, a more serious purpose underlies these lines; they represent more than just an attempt to turn institutional religion on its head. In the major poems, Blake was concerned to demonstrate Jesus' gospel of Forgiveness of Sins in action through the confrontation with Satan, the ultimate personification of opaqueness of perception. Hence the reader witnessed the triumph of Jesus over Death and the reconciliation of Albion with the Divine Vision. The Everlasting Gospel does not deal with a different struggle but rather with the same struggle on a different plane. Here Blake brings the conflict down to a more mundane human level as opposed to the cosmic drama of the prophetic poems. He demonstrates how the gospel of Jesus offended and affronted the political, religious, and moral norms of his time to the extent that he must be sacrificed for the injury he had committed. Having said that, however, Blake then goes on to outline how the orthodox Church focused on the

'wrong' meaning of the Crucifixion by centring on the actual fact of sacrificial death, the dead body of Jesus, rather than on the vision of the risen, triumphant Christ. This latter view of Blake's is the same concern which is expressed in the line from "A Vision of the Last Judgment": "The Modern Church Crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards." The Everlasting Gospel represents a last attempt by Blake to transform dogma into vision, or perhaps, to show how vision had degenerated into dogma.

As in the earlier poetry, Blake's concerns in this poem focus on the gospel of Forgiveness of Sins; on the opaqueness and hypocrisy of institutional religion; on the development of imaginative perspectives; and on the quality of human identity as it relates to one's vision of God. Because he deals here with events of a more historical nature, in other words, with his interpretation of the circumstances of Jesus' life and death as these are recorded in the Gospels, these issues are not, perhaps, so immediately recognizable as they are in the prophetic poems. The short lines and rhyming couplets result in a series of sharp, cursory, and abrasive statements. The events, even if one disagrees with the interpretation which Blake gives them, are well known. The general overtone of the poem is one of outraged and outrageous criticism. Yet if one searches beneath the arrogance that such a tone implies, it will become apparent that Blake is as serious here in his defence of Jesus' gospel as he was in any of his

earlier works.

The section beginning "Was Jesus gentle" is clearly aimed to unseat the popular notion of "Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild" which the protestant evangelists propagated. The idea of such a Saviour connoted for Blake the image of the "Antichrist Creeping Jesus". However one must be careful to note that Blake does not always use such words as "gentle" or "humble" or "proud" in precisely the same sense. Just as we have seen that "mercy" and "pity" may well be employed either in a pejorative or in an approving sense, so "pride" and "humility" vary in their meanings in this poem. The meaning of such words usually depends on whether it is Blake's point of view or the attitude of the Church which is being expressed. Hence, when Blake enquires whether Jesus was gentle, he does not exactly mean to imply that he was not. Certainly Jesus' response to Jerusalem or to the Daughters of Beulah in the prophetic poems gives ample evidence of Jesus' gentleness. What he intends is that Jesus did not affirm the type of gentleness which would have been affirmed by those he called the "Pharisees", a gentleness which was, for Blake, nothing less than a mere creeping obedience. The rest of this fragment, significantly, does not go on to give evidence that Jesus was cruel or mean (as opposed to gentle). Rather it moves on to discuss Jesus' remarkable lack of obedience:

"Come said Satan come away
Ill soon see if youll obey
John for disobedience bled
But you can turn the stones to bread
Gods high King & Gods high Priest

Shall plant their Glories in your breast
If Caiphas you will obey
If Herod you with bloody Prey
Feed with the sacrifice & be
Obedient fall down worship me
(E515; K749)

This is a quite different presentation of Satan from that with which we are accustomed in the prophetic poems, though it bears greater resemblance to the Satan taught by the Church with regard to the Satanic characteristics of deceit and cunning. In former poems, Satan, as the Limit of Opacity and mortality, was the representative of the State of Eternal Death, a totally limited, vegetated, inturned persepective. While Blake is not now altering this view of Satan, he is now also painting him in the more traditional role of Tempter. To some extent, Satan as Tempter is implicit in the former portrayal of Satan, since it will always be a temptation to sink into a static, atrophied existence. Here that temptation, not of stasis, but of the lure of a narrow, worldly complacence, is made explicit for Jesus as the temptation to despair was, for example, for Los in the prophetic poems, particularly in Jerusalem. Although Satan makes a reference to the transformation of the stones into bread and to the glories which will be Jesus' if he submits, the main focus of attention in the temptation as Blake sees it is Satan's call to absolute obedience. If only Jesus will submit and obey, then not only shall he live, but also he shall share in the rewards of this world. Jesus' reply is unequivocal: "And Jesus voice in thunders sound/Thus I seize the Spiritual Prey/Ye smiters

with disease make way/I come your King & God to seize."
The fragment goes on to show just how disobedient Jesus
was with a reference to the purging of the temple and
closes with an image of crucifixion similar to that
encountered in Night VIII of The Four Zoas:

And in his body tight does bind
Satan & all his Hellish Crew
And thus with wrath he did subdue
The Serpent bulk of Natures dross
Till he had naild it to the Cross
He took on Sin in the Virgins Womb
And put it off on the Cross & Tomb
To be worshipping by the Church of Rome
(E515; K749)

Blake's use of the image of Jesus binding Satan "in
his body" suggests that he retained his belief is
(as Kathleen Raine puts it) the "battleground" of the
war between Satan and the Divine Vision. In this
sense, the war being waged is happening on two levels:
Jesus, in himself, struggles against Satan, but also
his clash with Satan as Tempter to Death is on behalf
of all humanity.²

Two segments of the poem begin with the question:
"Was Jesus Humble or did he/Give any Proofs of Humil-
ity?" The second of these fragments (called the "d"
fragment in the Keynes edition of Blake's poetry) is
the one which actually bears the title of "The Ever-
lasting Gospel." These two sections continue the
theme of Jesus' fundamental disobedience and also con-
trast Blake's view of pride with that of the Church.
Hence, in the first segment, Blake writes: "But he
acts with triumphant honest pride/And this is the
reason that Jesus died." Prior to the repetition of
these lines in the second segment, Blake writes: "I

was standing by when Jesus died/What I called Humility they called Pride." The idea of such a pride--honest and incorruptible--is evidently important to Blake, for it comes up again in The Everlasting Gospel. The significance of this pride is considered by Blake to be essential in humanity's relationship with God, for any attitude which belittles or degrades humanity must implicitly belittle and degrade God:

And when he Humbled himself to God
Then descended the Cruel Rod
If thou humblest thyself thou humblest me
Thou also dwellest in Eternity
Thou art a Man God is no more
Thine own humanity learn to adore
(E511; K750)

Some readers will interpret these lines as the ultimate proof that Blake did not really believe in God, unless God is taken to mean humanity and nothing else. However I suspect that we are again confronted in this excerpt with Blake's belief that the relationship with God is so intimate that any degrading or limiting of the human results in a corresponding degradation of God. If, as he maintains elsewhere, humanity is ideally the "Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High", the dwelling place of God, then humanity bears a great responsibility for the life or death, the glorification or degradation of God. One of the reasons that the figure of Jesus continues to exert such a compelling influence on Blake is that the events of Jesus' life and death represent the glorification of God, not his degradation or humiliation. At the same time, these events do more, as far as Blake is concerned, to uplift

and honour the name of humanity than any other human being. That is why humbling himself (and now Blake uses the word "humble" in the "creeping" sense) would necessarily have humbled God before those who would have revelled in such an humiliation; that is why Jesus must remember to adore and nourish his own humanity in the best sense of that word.

The section "Was Jesus Chaste", although equally direct and uncompromising, is perhaps less unorthodox than some of the other passages. There are, however, important differences between Blake's interpretation of Jesus' response to Mary's adultery and that of the orthodox Church. Both Blake and the Church emphasize that Jesus forgave Mary rather than judged her, and that this was in opposition to the moral laws of the day (Moses' law, says Blake). But the Church accepts that the actual act of adultery was indeed a moral sin, and here Blake parts company once more with the traditional interpretation. As far as he is concerned, Mary's sin was not that she committed adultery but that her acceptance of the moral norms regarding chastity and sexuality and then her transgression of those norms in a deceitful manner was a degradation both of love and of the human form divine. Blake makes this clear through Mary's response to Jesus question: "Was it love or Dark Deceit". She replies:

Love too long from me has fled
Twas dark deceit to Earn my bread
Twas Covet or twas Custom or
Some trifle not worth caring for
That they may call a shame & Sin
Loves temple that God dwelleth in

And hide in secret hidden Shrine
The Naked Human form divine
And render that a Lawless thing
On which the Soul expands its wing
But this O Lord this was my Sin
When first I let these Devils in
In dark pretence to Chastity
Blaspheming Love blaspheming thee
Thence Rose Secret Adulteries
And thence did Covet also rise
My sin thou hast forgiven me
Canst thou forgive my Blasphemy
(E514; K755)

Blake's point here is clearly reminiscent of his message
in Visions of the Daughters of Albion:

Are not these the places of religion? the rewards
of continence?
The self enjoying of self denial? Why dost thou
seek religion?
Is it because acts are not lovely, that thou seekst
solitude,
Where the horrible darkness is impressed with re-
flections of desire.
(E49; K194)

It is a morality such as these lines suggest which, in
Blake's opinion, has led Mary to the act which is more
truly her sin: she has tacitly agreed to the "dark
pretence to Chastity", hence "Blaspheming Love blaspheming thee." It is not the act itself but rather the rationale for the act, a rationale involving hypocrisy, pretence to chastity, dark deceit, and shame which constitutes the sin. In this opinion Blake is obviously in strong opposition to the Church, but the passage is in complete accord with the view he had expressed throughout the poetry.

The section beginning "Was Jesus Born of a Virgin Pure" constitutes Blake's disagreement with the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. His reaction here is not on the grounds that such an event is miraculous and

therefore not worthy of an intelligent person's consideration. Rather he suggests that it makes much more sense that Jesus should have been conceived in a completely human manner if he were truly to take on the burden of humanity:

Or what was it which he took on
That he might bring Salvation?
A Body subject to be Tempted,
From neither pain nor grief Exempted?
Or such a body as might not feel
The passion that with Sinners deal?
(K756)

Given Blake's passionate belief in the real and profound humanity of Jesus, it is hardly surprising that he should object to a doctrine which threatens to make Jesus something different or other than fully human. Although he does not say so explicitly, it is probable that Blake would also have objected to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception on the same grounds that the mother of Jesus ought not to have been seen as any different from other human beings. Such a denial of the Virgin Birth may well shock some Christian readers. However one should realize that Blake's intention was not to degrade Jesus but to free him from mystery and to bring his life and his act of salvation in closer proximity to humanity.

The supplementary prose passage to The Everlasting Gospel deserves to be quoted in full for it contains the most succinct expression of Blake's fundamental understanding of the gospel of Jesus:

There is not one Moral Virtue that Jesus Inculcated
but Plato & Cicero did Inculcate before him; what
then did Christ Inculcate? Forgiveness of Sins.
This alone is the Gospel, & this is the Life &

Immortality brought to light by Jesus, Even the Covenant of Jehovah, which is this: If you forgive one another your Trespasses, so shall Jehovah forgive you, that he himself may dwell among you; but if you Avenge, you Murder the Divine Image, & he cannot dwell among you; (word del.) because you Murder him he arises again, & you deny that he is Arisen & are blind to Spirit.

: (K757)

Blake returns to this theme repeatedly in his poetry. He is still insisting on it at the end of The Everlasting Gospel: "If Moral Virtue was Christianity/ Christs Pretentions were all Vanity." The religion of Jesus, he repeats, has little to do with Moral Virtue, "For Moral Virtues all begin/In the Accusations of Sin", and accusation is anathema to a gospel of forgiveness.

The Everlasting Gospel offers a concise summary of many of the themes explored in greater depth in the longer poems. In fact, the cursory and blunt impact of the poem might well make it a poor introduction to a reader new to Blake's thought since much of what he says here should be considered in the light of the body of poetry as a whole. On the other hand, this same quality renders it a fitting late poem for it serves to confirm in no uncertain terms the vision on which he based his major poetry.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Margaret Bottrall, The Divine Image (Rome: Edizioni Di Storia & Letteratura, 1950), p.7.
- 2 J.G. Davies, The Theology of William Blake (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p.110.
- 3 Ibid., p.160.
- 4 Thomas J.J. Altizer, The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967, 1967), p.140.
- 5 John Beer, Blake's Humanism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), p.13.
- 6 Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), II, p.189.
- 7 Jacob Bronowski, William Blake and the Age of Revolution (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p.57.
- 8 Michael Ferber, "Blake's Idea of Brotherhood," PMLA, Vol.93, no.3 (May, 1978), pp.439-40.
- 9 Ibid., pp.439-40.
- 10 Helen C. White, The Mysticism of William Blake (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1964), p.185.
Bernard Blackstone, English Blake (London: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p.367.
- 11 Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p.32.
- 12 Blackstone, op. cit., p.373.
- 13 Frye, op. cit., pp.52-53.
- 14 Morton Paley, Energy and the Imagination (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1970), p.147.
- 15 White, op. cit., p.210.
- 16 Ferber, op. cit., pp.438.47.
- 17 Ibid., p.439.

- 18 Bottrall, op. cit., p.7.
- 19 Ibid., p.111.
- 20 Ibid., p.47.
- 21 Ibid., p.21.
- 22 J.G. Davies, The Theology of William Blake (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p.160.
- 23 Ibid., p.21. Davies here quotes Allardyce Nichol, William Blake and his Poetry in support of his argument.
- 24 Ibid., p.21. Davies here again quotes Nichol.
- 25 Ibid., p.87.
- 26 Ibid., p.88.
- 27 Ibid., p.110.
- 28 Ibid., p.117.
- 29 Ibid., p.110.
- 30 Thomas J.J. Altizer, The New Apocalypse (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), pp.42 ff.
- 31 David Wagenknecht, Blake's Night (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973), p.145.
- 32 Altizer, op. cit., p.145.
- 33 Ibid., p.140.
- 34 Ibid., p.65.
- 35 Ibid., p.146.
- 36 Ibid., p.145.
- 37 Hans Küng, On Being a Christian (Glasgow: William Collins Sons Co. Ltd., 1978), p.31.
- 38 Altizer, op. cit., p.58.

- 39 A.L. Morton, The Everlasting Gospel: A Study in the Sources of William Blake (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p.64.
- 40 Thomas Altizer, The New Apocalypse (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p.58.
- 41 On the subject of the legacy of reason to the eighteenth century, see Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), chapter 2. Also Donald Ault, Visionary Physics, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974). The former discusses the 'argument with Locke' while the latter deals with Blake's reaction to Newton.

CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Paul Hazard, The European Mind 1680-1715 (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), p.182; p.301.
- 2 Ibid., p.283; p.289.
- 3 Moncure Daniel Conway, ed., The Writings of Thomas Paine (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), IV, p.189.
- 4 Ibid., p.47.
- 5 Ibid., p.47.
- 6 Hazard, op. cit., p.166; p.168; pp.183-83.
- 7 Ibid., p.213; p.216.
- 8 Ira V. Brown, ed., Joseph Priestley Selection From His Writings (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), p.303.
- 9 A.L. Morton, The Everlasting Gospel (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p.43
- 10 Denis Saurat, Blake and Milton (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p.134.
- 11 Conway, op. cit., IV, p.249.
- 12 Ibid., p.250.
- 13 Robert Ryan, Keats The Religious Sense (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.25.

- 14 Paul Hazard, The European Mind 1680-1715 (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), pp.165-66.
- 15 Ibid., pp.183-84.
- 16 A.L. Morton writes: "Blake is a difficult poet, and no good is done by pretending that he is not. But I think that part of the problem has been created by ourselves, through forgetting the tradition in which he wrote. By rediscovering this tradition, and seeing him in relation to it, we do not remove the difficulties, but we do begin to equip ourselves to grapple with them." The Everlasting Gospel (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p.64.
- 17 E.J. Bicknell, A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (London: Longman, Green, and Co. Ltd., 1963), p.59.
- 18 P.E. More and F.L. Cross, eds., Anglicanism (London: SPCK, 1962), p.262.
- 19 Ibid., p. xxii.
- 20 Bicknell, op. cit., p.54.
- 21 Ibid., p.54.
- 22 More and Cross, op. cit., pp.260-61.
- 23 Ira V. Brown, ed., Joseph Priestley Selections From His Writings (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), p.289.
- 24 Bicknell, op. cit., footnote p.82.
- 25 Ibid., p.91.
- 26 More and Cross, op. cit., p.284.
- 27 Ibid., p.287.
- 28 Ibid., p.lxiv.
- 29 Ibid., p.289.
- 30 Phillip Dodderidge, The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul (London: William Baynes, 1811), p.90.
- 31 Ibid., p.90.
- 32 Ibid., pp.88.89.

- 33 William Jay, Short Discourses (Bath: M. Gye, 1805), pp.292-93.
- 34 A.L. Morton, The Everlasting Gospel (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p.11; p.64.
- 35 Ibid., p.42.
- 36 Ibid., p.42.
- 37 H.N. Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), III, p.124; p.132.
- 38 See Chapter One of the thesis, p.43.
- 39 C.E. Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism 1600-1688 (New York and Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1931), p.286.
- 40 Ibid., pp.286-87.
- 41 Ibid., p.252.
- 42 Ludowick Muggleton, a tailor, became the leader of a radical religious sect called the Muggletonians in the mid-seventeenth century. He claimed to be the only authentic prophet of God ever to appear on earth. His self-appointed mission was to identify the 'elect' and 'reprobate' in society and to bless or curse them according to their spiritual condition. See Whiting, op. cit., chapter 6 for an account of this sect.
- 43 Whiting notes Muggleton's awareness of Boehme's works as early as 1650. He also observes that John Pordage introduced selected Boehme writings into England around 1652. Whiting, op. cit., chapter 6.
- 44 Desirée Hirst, Hidden Riches (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), pp.90-91.
- 45 Hirst gives a detailed account of Boehme's system in Hidden Riches. Although we are more directly concerned with Boehme's understanding of the Christ figure, it is noteworthy that Blake was also influenced by the following Behmenist theories: (1) Good and Evil are no longer to be seen in moral terms but rather as two naturally opposing forces both of which are necessary for there to be progress in the universe and in human life; (2) Boehme made extensive use of geometry and numerology and particularly focused on the number 'four' as a symbol of wholeness and harmony. Blake drew on this in his concept of the "four zoas" and the fourfold conception of humanity.

- 46 Ibid., p.92 ff.
- 47 Herman Vetterling, The Illuminate of Görlitz or Jacob Boehme's Life and Philosophy (Liepzig: Markert & Petters, 1923), pp.1187-88.
- 48 Ibid., p.1087.
- 49 Ibid., p.1087.
- 50 See Chapter 6 of the thesis pp.346-49.
- 51 Vetterling, op. cit., p.128.
- 52 Eric Baker, A Herald of the Evangelical Revival (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), p.18.
- 53 John Wesley, John Wesley's Works (London, 1829), VIII, pp.429-30.
- 54 D.L. Clark, ed., Shelley's Prose or the Trumpet of a Prophecy (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1954), p.200.
- 55 John Overton and Frederick Relton, eds., A History of the English Church from the Accession of George I to the End of the XVIII Century (London: The Mac-Millan and Co. Ltd., 1906), p.1.
- 56 David Hartley, Observations on Man--Part the Second (London, 1794), p.441.
- 57 Ibid., p.441.
- 58 Ibid., p.447; pp.450-57.
- 59 W.E. Gladstone, ed., Joeseeph Butler The Analogy of Religion (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1896), p.397.
- 60 Overton and Relton, op. cit., p.63.
- 61 Ibid., p.63.
- 62 Clark, op. cit., p.214.
- 63 Ibid., p.198.
- 64 Moncure Daniel Conway, ed., The Writings of Thomas Paine (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), IV, p.65.

- 65 Ibid., p.42
- 66 Lewis Patton and Peter Mann, eds., The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1971), p.165.
- 67 J.R. Barth, S.J., Coleridge and Christian Doctrine (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), p.142.
- 68 W.E. Gladstone, ed., Joseph Butler The Analogy of Religion (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1896), pp. 271-72.
- 69 Emanuel Swedenborg, The True Christian Religion (New York: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1965), I, p. 198.
- 70 Robert Nye, ed., The English Sermon Vol.III 1750-1850 (Cheshire: Carcanant Press Limited, 1976), p. 83.
- 71 William Law, The Works of the Reverend William Law (London: Printed for J. Richardson, 1762), V, pp.156-57.
- 72 Ibid., VIII, p.28.
- 73 Ira V. Brown, ed., Joseph Priestley Selections From His Writings (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State Univeristy Press, 1962), p.283.
- 74 E.J. Bicknell, A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (London: Longman, Green, and Co. Ltd., 1963), p.59.
- 75 Brown, op. cit., p.306.
- 76 Ibid., p.306.
- 77 Moncure Daniel Conway, ed., The Writings of Thomas Paine (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), IV, pp.21.22.
- 78 Ibid., p.26.
- 79 C.H. Sisson, ed., The English Sermon Vol.II 1650-1750 (Cheshire: Carcanant Press Limited, 1976), p.196; pp.198-99; p.204.
- 80 A.W. Hopkinson, The Pocket William Law (London: Latimer House Limited, 1950), p.135.

- 81 Lewis Patton and Peter Mann, eds., The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1971), I, p.210.
- 82 William Jay, Short Discourses (Bath: M Gye, 1805), p.257.
- 83 H.N. Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), III, p.124.

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Blake applies this method, for example, in the following extract from his Notebook (circa 1808-1811):
 You dont believe I wont attempt to make ye
 You are asleep I wont attempt to wake ye
 Sleep on Sleep on while in your pleasant dreams
 Of Reason you may drink of Lifes clear streams
 Reason and Newton they are quite two things
 For so the Swallow & the Sparrow sings
 Reason says Miracle, Newton says Doubt
 Aye thats the way to make all Nature out
 Doubt Doubt & dont believe without experiment
 That is the very thing that Jesus meant
 When he said Only Believe Believe & try
 Try Try & never mind the Reason why
 (E492; K536)
- 2 Gerald Cragg adopts this view in Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1964). It is also implicit in Paul Hazard's The European Mind 1680-1715 (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), and in Alfred William Benn's The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1962), I. Sir Leslie Stephen's classic work, English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Peter Smith, 1949) I and II amply documents the overlapping philosophical and religious thought of thinkers during this period.
- 3 Cragg, op. cit., ppvii-viii.
- 4 Ibid., p.60.
- 5 Ibid., p.90.
- 6 Ibid., p.69.
- 7 Stephen, op. cit., I, pp.136-45.
- 8 Benn, op. cit., I, p.119.

- 9 Anthony Collins, A Discourse on Freethinking (London, 1713), pp.123-24
- 10 John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity (Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963), pp.139-40.
- 11 Ibid., p.145.
- 12 Benn, op. cit., I, p.116. See also H.R. Fox-Bourne's Life of John Locke (London, 1876), II, p.416.
- 13 Hazard, op. cit., pp. 176-77.
- 14 Donald Greene, The Age of Exuberance: Backgrounds to Eighteenth Century Literature (New York: Random House Inc., 1970), p.107.
- 15 Sir Leslie Stephen, English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), I, p.109.
- 16 Ibid., p.111.
- 17 Ibid., p.100.
- 18 Hazard, op. cit., pp.176-77.
- 19 Locke, op. cit., p.122; pp.125-26.
- 20 Hazard, op. cit., p.145.
- 21 S.G. Hefelbower, John Locke and English Deism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918), p.49.
- 22 Gerald Cragg, The Church and the Age of Reason (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), pp.253-54.
- 23 See, for example, the relation of Satan to Rahab and of both to the fallen, natural world as discussed in chapter 6 of the thesis.
- 24 The discussion in chapter 6 and 7 of the thesis on The Four Zoas and Jerusalem confirms that the reasoning, intellectual faculty (Urizen) is not the only zoa to fall and that any faculty or zoa which seeks to usurp power and exalt itself is doomed to increase humanity's fragmentation.
- 25 Stephen, op. cit., II, p.414.
- 26 Ibid., p.416.

- 27 Gerald Cragg, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1964), p.158.
- 28 John Wesley, Works (1872 edition), VI, p.360.
- 29 See footnote 1 of this chapter for the entire Notebook entry from which this phrase is taken.
- 30 Gerald Cragg, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1964), pp.6-7; Paul Hazard, The European Mind 1680-1715 (Middlesex: Penguin University Books Ltd., 1973), p.278.
- 31 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1975), p.10.
- 32 Cragg, op. cit., pp.5-6.
- 33 Ibid., p.6; Sir Leslie Stephen, English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), I, p.100; Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1959), V, p.109; Gerald Cragg, The Church and the Age of Reason (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p.76.
- 34 Locke, op. cit., Bk.IV, Chpt.IV, p.536.
- 35 Ibid., BK.II, Chpt.XXII, p.292. See also Copleston, op. cit., V, pp.79-86 for a clear analysis of this aspect of Locke's philosophy.
- 36 Locke, op. cit., BK.IV, Chpt.II, pp.537-38.
- 37 Ibid., BK.IV, Chpt.XVII, p.683.
- 38 Ibid., BK.I, Chpt.IV, p.89; Bk.IV, Chpt, XV, p.654.
- 39 Ibid., Bk.IV, Chpt,I, p.525.
- 40 Ibid., Bk.II, Chpt.II, p.104.
- 41 Alfred Cobban, In Search of Humanity (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), pp.85-86; pp.114-15.
- 42 Locke, op. cit., Bk.I, Chpt.I, p.43.
- 43 Ibid., Bk.II, Chpt.IX, p.143.
- 44 Ibid., Bk.II, Chpt.II, pp.12021.

- 45 David Erdman, ed., The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), pp.74-75; p.111; Geoffrey Keynes, ed., Blake Complete Writings (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp.228-29; p.500.
- 46 Locke, op. cit., pp.44-45.
- 47 Sir Leslie Stephen, English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), I, pp.100-101; R.W. Harris, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (London: Blandford Press, 1968), p.75.
- 48 See p.91 of this chapter, especially Gerald Cragg's remarks concerning the Deist response to Jesus Christ.
- 49 Harris, op. cit., pp.77-78; p.79.
- 50 John Locke, The Works of John Locke (Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963), VII, p.122.
- 51 Ibid., pp.125-26.
- 52 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1975), Bk.I, Chpt. IV, p.95.
- 53 Keynes, op. cit., p.757.
- 54 Gerald Cragg, The Church and the Age of Reason (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), p.159.
- 55 Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy (London: Burns Oates, & Washbourne Ltd., 1959), V, p.240.
- 56 Locke, op. cit., Bk.IV, Chpt.XVIII, p.696.
- 57 "All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth
& Stone. all
Human Forms identified, living going forth & re-
turning wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days &
Hours reposing
And then Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of
Immortality
(J. E256; K747)
- 58 Sir Issac Newton, Opticks (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1952), pp.397-98; p.399.
- 59 Gerald Cragg, The Church and the Age of Reason (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), p.74.

- 60 Ibid., p.74.
- 61 Alfred Cobban, In Search of Humanity (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), p.53.
- 62 William Lowth, Directions for a Profitable Reading of the Scriptures (London: Printed for H. Clements, at the Half-Moon in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1708), p.2.
- 63 Ibid., pp.4-5.
- 64 Ibid., p.5.
- 65 Hans W. Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), p.51.
- 66 Robert M. Grant, A Short History of the Bible (London: Adam & Charles Black, Ltd., 1965), p.120.
- 67 Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1959), V, pp.5-6.
- 68 Grant, op. cit., p.116.
- 69 Frei, op. cit., p.82.
- 70 Ibid., p.94.
- 71 Benedict de Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (London: Tribner & Co., 1862), p.28.
- 72 Ibid., Chpt.VII, p.145.
- 73 Paul Hazard, The European Mind 1680-1715 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), p.231.

CHAPTER THREE

- 1 F.X. Shea, "The Romantic Movement and Religion," Studies in Romanticism, Vol.9, no.4, pp.285-96.
- 2 Ibid., p.289.
- 3 Ronald Taylor, The Romantic Tradition in Germany (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1970), p.27.
- 4 A.L. Morton, The Everlasting Gospel (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p.42.

- 5 D.G. Gillham, Blake's Contrary States (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p.227.
- 6 Ibid., p.227.
- 7 Orc also fails in the role of Redeemer because he is bound by the cycle of nature. One of the results of this is that he cannot envisage a way of liberation which takes account of oppressor as well as oppressed.
- 8 One of the explanations of the immanent godhead which Blake presents in the early poems is undoubtedly his negative reaction to the abstracted, aloof, sky-dwelling God depicted by Deism.
- 9 H.N. Fairchild, in Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), III, is one of Blake's harshest critics on this subject. He is sceptical that there is really anything which one can credibly call Christian about Blake's Christ and says that Blake "...draws his completely human Christ back toward pantheism." (p.109). I believe Fairchild's response fails to appreciate Blake's constant emphasis on the person of Jesus which prevents him from sliding back into pantheism. Fairchild describes Blake's position on Christ as "idealistic anthropopantheism" (p.97). However, for Blake to depict a Christ who is immanent as well as transcendent is certainly Christian rather than pantheistic.
- 10 Harold Schilling, The New Consciousness in Science and Religion (London: SCM Press, 1973), p.189.
- 11 Ibid., p.190.
- 12 Ibid., p.191.
- 13 W.H. Stevenson, ed., The Poems of William Blake (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972), p.69.
- 14 Blake usually used the Father image with negative connotations. However he was not consistent on this point, even in the prophetic poems. It is therefore necessary to be aware of its use in context since otherwise we may make the mistake of assuming that Blake only used the image in a pejorative or ironic sense.
- 15 Although Blake's articulation of the universality of what had hitherto been narrowly regarded as Christian virtues was still unorthodox, increasing world travel by people who then wrote about other races, as well as investigations of world religions, meant that such a view was becoming more common. See Carl Becker,

The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), pp.107-111 on this subject.

- 16 One might have thought that, at this early stage, Blake might have ignored the transcendent aspect of Jesus Christ in reaction to Deism. That he did suggest a transcendence which is positive indicates that he recognized that transcendence need not degenerate into abstraction any more than immanence need degenerate into pantheism.
- 17 In a more context, C.S. Lewis uses the image of the lion to symbolize Christ in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, one of the books in the Narnia series.
- 18 Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), I, pp.138-42.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 Raine, op. cit., I, p.349; David Erdman, Prophet Against Empire (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), p.245; John Beer, Blake's Humanism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), p.19; George Quasha, "Orc as a Fiery Paradigm of Poetic Torsion," Visionary Forms Dramatic, edited by David Erdman and John Grant (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p.281; Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p.137.
- 2 Raine, op. cit., I, p.339; Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1963), p.119.
- 3 Mona Wilson, The Life of William Blake (3rd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p.100.
- 4 David Erdman, Prophet Against Empire (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), p.249.
- 5 Ibid., p.245.
- 6 Michael Tolley, "Europe 'To those ychain'd in sleep'," Visionary Forms Dramatic, edited by David Erdman and John Grant (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp.115-45.
- 7 Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955), p.6.
- 8 David Erdman, Prophet Against Empire (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), p.135; p.185.

- 9 Ibid., p.197.
- 10 Ibid., pp.198-99.
- 11 W.H. Stevenson, The Poems of William Blake (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1971), p.241.
- 12 Blake's attitude towards Orc is, as was noted, ambiguous from the start. Hence, although Christ does not figure in the poems of this period, it is possible that Blake's earlier interest in Christ prevented him from placing whole-hearted trust in Orc at any time.
- 13 Stevenson, op. cit., p.241.
- 14 David Erdman, Prophet Against Empire (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), p.169.
- 15 This negative aspect of Orc's taking of the shadowy daughter recalls the war of dominance between the sexes in "The Mental Traveller", particularly as expressed in the following lines:
- Till he becomes a bleeding youth
And she becomes a Virgin bright
Then he rends up his Manacles
And binds her down for his delight
- He plants himself in all her Nerves
Just as a Husbandman his mould
And she becomes his dwelling place
And Garden fruitful seventy fold.
- (E475-76; K425)
- 16 Stevenson, op. cit., footnote p.194.
- 17 S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1965), p.113.

CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 Kathryn Kremen, The Imagination of the Resurrection (Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1972), pp. 165-66.
- 2 In his edition of Blake's poetry, David Erdman makes no comment on the title page date of 1797. Geoffrey Keynes opts for 1795-1804 as the period during which Vala was written. G.E. Bentley Jr., (William Blake's Writings, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1978), II,

dates the poem as ?1796-?1807 (p.1721). He suggests the first draft of Vala was written in 1796-97, then revised, transcribed, recopied, and newly titled as The Four Zoas between ?1803-?7 (II, p. 1722).

- 3 H.N. Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), III, p.110; Edward J. Rose, "Los, Pilgrim of Eternity," Blake's Sublime Allegory, edited by Stuart Curran and J.A. Wittreich, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), p.98.
- 4 Rose, op. cit., p.98.
- 5 David Erdman, ed., A Concordance to the Writings of William Blake, I and II. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967). Regarding Orc: II, pp. 1360-62; regarding Los: I, pp.1127-34.
- 6 H.M. Margoliouth, Blake's Vala (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956), pp.xxiv-xxv; G.E. Bentley Jr., William Blake's Writings (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1978), II, p.1722.
- 7 Margoliouth, op. cit., p.xxiii.
- 8 A.W.J. Lincoln, in "The Composition of Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas" (Ph.D. thesis, Bangor, 1976), takes the view that Blake intended Los to remain the dominant figure, although the addition of Night VIII with its strongly Christian overtones made this difficult. (pp.372-73); p1374). I would argue that, as Blake became increasingly interested in the figure of Jesus Christ, he realized that the role of Los could be profitably altered to that of prophet of Christ without damaging the importance of Los' association with Imagination.
- 9 Mircea Eliade makes the distinction between Chronos and Kairos in his analysis of 'sacred time', saying: "Thus, an instant or a fragment of time might at any moment become hierophantic...All time of whatever kind "opens" on to sacred time--in other words, is capable of revealing..the absolute, the supernatural, the superhuman, the superhistoric." Patterns in Comparative Religion (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), pp.388-89.
- 10 An incident such as Los' unwillingly participation in Urizen's plight, which is a perversion of Jesus' willing assumption of humanity's suffering is a common technique in Blake's poetry. It recalls the incident discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis in which Fuzon's crucifixion is a negative foreshadowing of the eventual crucifixion of Jesus in Luvah. In themselves, such

events are not hopeful, but they point to the possibility that crucifixion and participation in suffering may, in another context, be redemptive acts.

- 11 Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p.308.
- 12 Margoliouth, op. cit., p.xix.
- 13 Ibid., p.45.
- 14 Margoliouth dates the composition of Night VIII "...in or after, 1804." (Ibid., p.xxv). Erdman, in Prophet Against Empire, dates it at least after Blake's return from Felpham to London.
- 15 S. Foster Damon says: "Proof that The Four Zoas was not intended to be given to the public is to be found in the fact that Blake later utilized long passages of it for the two later epics..." William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), pp.396-98.
- 16 Frye's comment on the "Bard's Song" is applicable to the whole of Milton. He writes: "The chief difficulty in understanding the "Bard's Song" is that it does not relate a sequence of events, but tells the story of the dispute of Palamabron and Satan and then brings out its larger significance by a series of lifting backdrops." Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947) p.332.
- 17 Kenneth Johnston suggests that Blake's positive attitude towards Golgonooza is qualified: "Blake's attitude towards Golgonooza is not totally enthusiastic because as a fallen creation its splendour is sometimes more akin to Urizen's tightly closed cathedral city than to Jerusalem's open traceries." "Blake's Cities," Visionary Forms Dramatic, edited by David Erdman and John Grant (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p.431. However, it is not so much the case that Golgonooza is inherently "ambiguous" as Johnston suggests, (at least not in the way that Orc is), but rather that it is destined to remain imperfect because it is in the fallen world. The role of Golgonooza will be assumed by Jerusalem after Albion is regenerated, a view supported by Northrop Frye, op. cit., p.248.
- 18 The following sections in the Erdman text of the final draft of Night I did not appear in the original version as Margoliouth edited it: PAGE 9, lines 9-17; PAGE 12, lines 25-29; PAGE 13, lines 4-10; PAGE 18, lines 9-15; PAGE 21, lines 1-7.

19 Thomas J.J. Altizer, The New Apocalypse (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), pp.79-80.

20 Added sections in Night II are as follows: PAGE 23, lines 1-2; PAGE 25, lines 5-23; PAGE 27, lines 9-13; PAGE 30, lines 15-52; PAGE 32, line 14; PAGE 33, lines 10-15; PAGE 34, lines 16-96.

CHAPTER SIX

1 Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), p.372.

2 C.E. Hartshorne, quoted by W.S. Urquhart in Humanism and Christianity (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1945), p.41.

3 Nicholas Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit (London: Geoffrey Bless: The Centenary Press, 1935), p.190.

4 Ibid., p.215.

5 Ibid., p.215.

6 Ibid., p.217.

7 Bernard Blackstone, English Blake (London: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p.367.

8 Ibid., p.367.

9 Bloom, op. cit., p.371.

10 Ibid., p.371.

11 Ibid., p.372.

12 On this point, we might recall Altizer's statement: "If only because of his faith in Jesus we must acknowledge that he was a Christian seer, but he is by far the most Christocentric of Christian visionaries..." The New Apocalypse (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p.140.

13 Principal Hughes, quoted by Urquhart, op. cit., p.37.

14 C.E. Hartshorne, quoted by Urquhart, Ibid., p.40.

15 Bloom, op. cit., p.28.

- 16 Berdyaev, op. cit., p.95.
- 17 Bloom, op. cit., p.27.
- 18 Ibid., p.28.
- 19 Ibid., p.28.
- 20 Ibid., p.28.
- 21 A.W.J. Lincoln, "The Composition of Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas". Ph.D. thesis (Bangor, 1976), p. 213; p.215.
- 22 Ibid., p.213.
- 23 Ibid., p.215.
- 24 Donald J. Unruh, "Jerusalem: The Primitive Christian Vision of William Blake". Ph.D. thesis (University of Southern California, 1970), pp.210-12.
- 25 Lincoln, op. cit., p.283; p.375.
- 26 Lincoln says: "When Los had been reassessed he became a character capable of making an enlightened contribution to Man's awakening. There would therefore be two initiatives within the scheme of salvation--that of Los, working with Enitharmon; and that of the "external" divine agent." Ibid., p.264.
- 27 Ibid., p.372.
- 28 Ibid., p.372.
- 29 Ibid., p.372.
- 30 Ibid., pp.372-73; p.374.
- 31 Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p.308.
- 32 Teilhard de Chardin, Science and Christ (London: Collins, 1965), p.34
- 33 June Singer, The Unholy Bible (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), p.100.
- 34 Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), II, pp.233-34.

- 35 Norman Perrin, A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp.34-35.

CHAPTER SEVEN

- 1 John Howard, Blake's Milton (London: Associated University Press, 1976), p.200.
- 2 Bernard Blackstone, English Blake (London: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p.367.
- 3 John Cowper Granberry, Outline of New Testament Christology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), pp.99-100.
- 4 Ibid., pp.45-46.
- 5 Howard, op. cit., p.80.
- 6 H.N. Fairchild writes of Milton: "Like Jesus, from whom function in the poem his own is indistinguishable, he must take upon himself the body of death in order that it may be cast off forever." Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), III, p.120. He also doubts whether there is any difference between Albion and Jesus or Los and Jesus (Ibid., p.110). I do not think that Blake at any time intended to make such an 'identification' and although Fairchild admits throughout his analysis that Blake is complex, he seems determined to make the poetry confusing. The point that Blake made was that Milton, Los and, ultimately Albion, were able to grasp and apply the gospel of Jesus because he first manifested it for them. In no way does this imply that all the characters are really one character, but rather that they learn to live, through imagination, like Jesus. I suggest that Fairchild's opinions on this point result from a confusion of the concepts of 'pantheism' and 'immanence,'
- 7 Frye says: "Milton and Jerusalem, then are inseparable, and constitute a double epic, a prelude and fugue on the same subject, for Milton is Blake's longest, greatest and most elaborate "Preludium". (Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p.323.
- 8 Speaking about the annihilation of selfhood in Blake's poetry, H.N. Fairchild says: "For him self-annihilation means transcendence of sensuous limit-

ations for the sake of increased personal imaginative power. It is not the suppression of self, but the removal of all that hinders self. Blake desire to be released from selfhood through limitless expansion of his ego." Op. cit., p.121. I see nothing in Blake's presentation of the gospel of self-annihilation as manifest in Jesus to suggest that Blake thought Jesus taught the "limitless expansion of his ego." On the same page, Fairchild charges that Blake intended that "everyone must share the visions of William Blake." Surely Blake adequately refutes such a charge when he says at the beginning of Chapter 4 of Jerusalem:

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball:
It will lead you in at Heavens gate,
Built in Jerusalems wall.

(E229; K716)

9 Fairchild says: "Since "all Deities reside in the human breast," there is a sense in which His very existence depends upon the mind of Los, and hence upon the mind of Blake...There is nothing to suggest that Jesus is exempt from the omnipotence of human imagination." Ibid., p.111. I believe that Jerusalem patently refutes these statements. Even in The Four Zoas Blake emphasized that Los is dependent upon Jesus, not the other way round: FZ IV, E331; K304. VII(a), E355; K330. VIII, E357, K341. VIII, E358, K342. Also J, E149, K626. Secondly Blake's Jesus is very much the Jesus of Scripture and therefore not dependent on the mind of Blake. Finally, the fact that Jesus, not Los, intervenes to redeem Albion testifies to his independence and authority.

10 The above statements quoted from Fairchild suggest that he see no such authority in Blake's Jesus. However that authority becomes crucial in Jerusalem in effecting Albion's redemption.

11 Teilhard de Chardin, Science and Christ (London: Collins, 1965), p.69.

12 Ibid., p.69.

APPENDIX

1 P.B. Grant, "Blake's The Everlasting Gospel: An Edition and Study". Ph.D. thesis. (Pennsylvania, 1976).

2 Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition (London:
Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), II, pp.233-34.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Erdman, David. The Poetry and Prose of William Blake. New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1970.
- ed. The Illuminated Blake. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974.
- Keynes, Geoffrey, ed. Blake The Complete Writings. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- ed. The Letters of William Blake. 2nd ed. London, 1968.
- Margoliouth, H.M. Blake's Vala. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956.
- Stevenson, W.H., ed. The Poems of William Blake. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972.
- Watkins, Adrian, printer. The Holy Bible. English. Authorized. Edinburgh, 1749.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Adams, Hazard. William Blake A Reading of the Shorter Poems. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963.
- Altizer, Thomas, J. The New Apocalypse. Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967.
- Ault, Donald. Visionary Physics Blake's Response to Newton. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Baker, Eric. A Herald of the Evangelical Revival. London: The Epworth Press, 1948.
- Barth, Robert, S.J. Coleridge and Christian Doctrine. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Beare, F.W. "The Gnostic Gospels of Nag-Hammadi," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXXI (1961-62, no. 3), 362-77.
- Becker, Carl. The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932.
- Beer, John. Blake's Visionary Universe. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969.
- Blake's Humanism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968.

- Bennett, Jonathan. Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Bentley, G.E. Jr. Blake Records. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Blake Books. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Berger, Peter. William Blake Poet and Mystic. London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1914.
- Bicknell, E.J. A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1963.
- Bindman, David. Blake as an Artist. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1977.
- Blackstone, Bernard. English Blake. London: Cambridge University Press, 1949.
- Bloom, Harold. Blake's Apocalypse. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1963.
- "Blake's Jerusalem: the Bard of Sensibility and the Form of Prophecy," Eighteenth Century Studies, IV (1970), 6-20.
- Blunt, Anthony. The Art of William Blake. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Bowra, C.M. The Romantic Imagination. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949.
- Brinton, H.H. The Mystic Will Based on a Study of the Philosophy of Jacob Boehme. New York: Macmillan, 1930.
- Bronowski, Jacob. William Blake: A Man Without a Mask. Trenton, England: Wessex Press, 1943.
- William Blake and the Age of Revolution. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1972.
- Brown, Ira V. Joseph Priestley Selections From His Writings. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962.
- Buchdahl, Gerd. The Image of Newton and Locke in the Age of Reason. London: Sheed and Ward, 1961.
- Chardin, Pierre de, S.J. Science and Christ. London: Collins, 1965.
- Clark, David Lee, ed. Shelley's Prose or The Trumpet of a Prophecy. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1954.

- Cohn, Norman. The Pursuit of the Millenium. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961
- Conway, Daniel Moncure. The Writings of Thomas Paine. New York: Burt Franklin, 1969.
- Cook, F.C., ed. The Bible Commentary: New Testament. Vol.III. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896.
- Copleston, Frederick, S.J. A History of Philosophy. Vol. 5. New York: Image Books, 1964.
- Cragg, Gerald. Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century. Cambridge: at the University Press, 1964.
- The Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970.
- Cullmann, Oscar. The Christology of the New Testament. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1955.
- Curran, Stuart and Wittreich, J.A. Jr., eds. Blake's Sublime Allegory. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973.
- Damon, S. Foster. William Blake His Philosophy and Symbols. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924.
- A Blake Dictionary. Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1965.
- Blake's Job. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1966.
- Davies, J.G. The Theology of William Blake. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948.
- Digby, George W. Symbol and Image in William Blake. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- Dodderidge, Phillip. The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul. London: William Baynes, 1811.
- Eliade, Mircea. Patterns in Comparative Religion. London: Sheed and Ward, 1958.
- England, Martha. "Blake and the Hymns of Charles Wesley," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, Vol.70, no.1, (1966), 7-251.
- Erdman, David, ed. A Concordance to the Writings of William Blake. 2 vols. New York: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- Blake Prophet Against Empire. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954.
- and Grant, John, eds., Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970.

- Fairchild, H. N. Religious Trends in English Poetry. Vol. III. New York: Columbia University Press, 1949.
- Fisher, Peter F. The Valley of Vision. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961.
- Fox, Susan. Poetic Form in Blake's Milton. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Frei, Hans. The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Frosch, Thomas. The Awakening of Albion. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974.
- Frye, Northrop. Fearful Symmetry. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947.
- "The Keys to the Gates," Some British Romantics: A Collection of Essays. Edited by James Logan, J.E. Jordan, and Northrop Frye. Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1966.
- Furst, Lilian R. Romanticism in Perspective. London: Macmillan, 1969.
- Gardner, Stanley. Infinity on the Anvil. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954.
- Gibson, James. Locke's Theory of Knowledge and its Historical Relations. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960.
- Gilchrist, Alexander. The Life of William Blake. rev. ed. Ruthven Todd. London: J.M. Dent, 1942.
- Gill, Frederick. The Romantic Movement and Methodism. London: The Epworth Press, 1937.
- Gillham, D.G. Blake's Contrary States. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Gladstone, W.E., ed. Joseph Butler The Analogy of Religion. Oxford: At the University Press, 1896.
- Gleckner, R.F. The Piper and the Bard. Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1959.
- "Blake's Religion of the Imagination," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XIV (1956), 359-69.
- Granberry, John Cowper. Outline of New Testament Christology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909.
- Grant, Philip Bernard. "Blake's The Everlasting Gospel: An Edition and Study". Ph.D. thesis. Pennsylvania, 1976.

- Greene, Donald. The Age of Exuberance: Backgrounds to Eighteenth Century Literature. New York: Random House, 1970.
- Hagstrum, Jean. "The Wrath of the Lamb," From Sensibility to Romanticism. Edited by F.W. Hilles and Harold Bloom. New York, 1965. 311-30.
- Hamblen, Emily. On the Minor Prophecies of William Blake. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1930.
- Hamilton, K.M. "William Blake and the Religion of Art," Dalhousie Review XXIX (Autumn, 1949), 167-82.
- Harper, G.M. The Neoplatonism of William Blake. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Harris, R.W. Reason and Nature in the Eighteenth Century. London: Blandford, 1968.
- Hartley, David. Observations on Man--Part the Second. London, 1749.
- Hazard, Paul. The European Mind 1680-1715. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1973.
- Helms, Randall. "Ezekiel and Blake's Jerusalem," Studies In Romanticism Vol. 13 (1974), 127-40.
- Hill, Christopher. Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1973.
- Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Hirst, Desirée. Hidden Riches. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964.
- Hopkinson, A.W., ed. The Pocket William Law. London: Latimer House Limited, 1950.
- Howard, John. Blake's Milton. London: Associated University Press, 1976.
- Jay, William. Short Discourses. Bath: M. Gye, 1805.
- Jessop, Augustus. The Coming of the Friars and Other Historic Essays. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906.
- Keynes, Geoffrey. Blake Studies. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Kiralis, Karl. "The Theme and Structure of Blake's Jerusalem," English Literary History XXIII (1956), 127-43

- Kremen, Kathryn. The Imagination of the Resurrection. Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1972.
- Küng, Hans. On Being a Christian. Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1978.
- Law, William. The Works of the Reverend William Law. Vol.5. London: Printed for J. Richardson, 1762.
- Lincoln, A.W.J. "The Composition of Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas". Ph.D. thesis. Bangor, 1976.
- Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Edited by A.D. Woodzley. Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1964.
- The Reasonableness of Christianity. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958.
- Lowry, Margaret. Windows of the Morning. New Haven: Yale Univeristy Press, 1940.
- Lowth, William. Directions for a Profitable Reading of the Scriptures. London: Printed for H. Clements, at the Half-Moon in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1708.
- Manuel, F.E. The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Martenson, Hans L. Jacob Boehme. rev. ed. London: Rockcliff, 1949.
- Mellor, Anne. Blake's Human Form Divine. Berkley and London: University of California Press, 1974.
- More, P.E. and Cross, F.L., eds. Anglicanism. London: SPCK, 1962.
- Morton, A.L. The Everlasting Gospel A Study in the Sources of William Blake. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1954.
- Murry, John Middleton. William Blake. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1933.
- Newton, Sir Isaac. Opticks. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1952.
- Nye, Robert, ed. The English Sermon Vol.III 1750-1850. Cheshire: Carcanant Press Limited, 1976.
- Overton, J. and Relton, F. A History of the Church of England from the Accession of George I to the End of the XVIII Century. London: The MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1906.
- Patton, L. and Mann, P., eds. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1971.
- Paley, Morton. Energy and the Imagination. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

- , ed. Twentieth Century Interpretations of Songs of Innocence and of Experience. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
- Percival, Milton O. Blake's Circle of Destiny. New York: Columbia University Press, 1938.
- Perrin, Norman. A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.
- Phillips, Michael, ed. Interpreting Blake. London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Raine, Kathleen. Blake and Tradition. 2 Vols. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968.
- William Blake. London: Thames and Hudson, 1970.
- Randall, J.H. Jr. "Romantic Reinterpretation of Religion," Studies in Romanticism Vol.2 (1962-63), 189-212.
- Raven, Charles. Teilhard de Chardin: Scientist and Seer. London: Collins, 1962.
- Roberts, Mark. The Tradition of Romantic Morality. London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1973.
- Robertson, John M. A Short History of Freethought Ancient and Modern. 3rd edition, revised and expanded. Vol.II. London: Waits & Co., 1915.
- Rose, Edward J. "Wheels Within Wheels in Blake's Jerusalem," Studies in Romanticism XI (1972), 36-47.
- Rosenfeld, A.H., ed. William Blake Essays for S. Foster Damon. Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1969.
- Rosten, Murray. Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism. London: Faber & Faber, 1965.
- Royle, Edward. Radical Politics 1790-1900. Bristol: Longman Group Ltd., 1971.
- Rudd, Margaret. Divided Image. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953.
- Ryan, Robert. Keats The Religious Sense. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Saurat, Denis M. Blake and Modern Thought. New York: MacVeagh Press, 1929.
- Blake and Milton. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964.
- Schilling, Harold K. The New Consciousness in Science and Religion. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973.

- Schorer, Mark. William Blake The Politics of Vision.
New York: Holt, 1946.
- Shea, F.X. "Religion and the Romantic Movement," Studies in Romanticism, Vol.9 (Fall 1970, no.4), 285-96.
- Singer, June. The Unholy Bible. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970.
- Sisson, C.H. ed. The English Sermon Vol.II 1650-1750.
Cheshire: Carcanant Press Limited, 1976.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.
London: Tribner & Co., 1862.
- Stephen, Sir Leslie. History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century. 2 Vols. 3rd ed. London: John Murray, 1927.
- Swedenborg, Emanuel. Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom. London: Swedenborg Society, 1969.
- The True Christian Religion. New York: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1965.
- Swinburne, Algernon C. William Blake A Critical Essay.
rev. ed. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1906.
- Taylor, Isaac. Wesley and Methodism. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851.
- Taylor, Ronald. The Romantic Tradition in Germany.
London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1970.
- Todd, Ruthven. Tracks in the Snow: Studies in English Science and Art. New York: Scribner, 1947.
- Unruh, Donald J. "Jerusalem: the Primitive Christian Vision of William Blake". Ph.D. thesis. University of Southern California, 1970.
- Urquhart, W.S. Humanism and Christianity. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1945.
- Vetterling, Herman. The Illuminate of Görlitz or Jacob Boehme's Life and Philosophy. Leipzig: Markert & Petters, 1923.
- Walling, William. "The Death of God: William Blake's Version," Dalhousie Review, XLVIII (Summer 1968), 237-50.
- Whiting, C.E. Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution 1660-1688. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1931.
- Wickstead, Joseph. Blake's Innocence and Experience.
New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1928.

----- Blake's Vision of the Book of Job. 2nd ed. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1924.

Wiley, Basil. The Seventeenth Century Background. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1962.

Wilkie, Brian and Johnson, Mary Lynn. Blake's The Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream. Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Wilson, Colin. Religion and the Rebel. London: Victor Gollancz, 1957.

Wilson, Mona. The Life of William Blake. 3rd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Wittreich, Joseph A. "Divine Countenance: Blake's Portrait and Portrayals of Milton," The Huntington Library Quarterly, Vol.38 (1974-75), 125-60.

