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Blake's Milton: A Critical Introduction And a Commentary by  
Stacie F. Withers

Abstract

Ch. 1: Number of copies of Milton; description; where they are found.

Ch. 2: Internal evidence for date of composition (1800-4), different from date on title-page. Length of poem discussed briefly, as external references indicate an epic longer than the present work.

Ch. 3: Blake and Hayley: Biography of Blake at time of writing Milton, an intensely personal poem. Details of life and character of Hayley (Blake's patron); how he affected Blake's state of mind; Hayley's appearance as Satan in the Milton and other Felpham references.

Ch. 4: Different eighteenth-century attitudes to Milton: Romantic and view of age of sensibility; contrast between Blake's and Dr. Johnson's views of Milton; popularity of Milton's characters in painting.

Ch. 5: Blake's chief mythological characters (the four zoas and their female counterparts). Some explanation of their natures, derivations and development throughout Blake's poetry. Their part in the Fall of Man; how they embody Blake's religious and philosophical ideas; how eighteenth-century ideas (moralism, extolling nature and rational mind) are symbolised in Blake's poetry.

Ch. 6: Blake's four mythological worlds, particularly Beulah, which figures prominently in the Milton. Existence in several worlds or several planes of being at the same time. Golgonooza, city of art, and also image of the body of man.

Ch. 7: Preface to the Milton. Blake's rejection of Plato and Greek classical authors; ideas on the sublime; 'Jerusalem' lyric.

Ch. 8: Book I: plate-by-plate commentary. Reasons for Milton's journey of self-sacrifice; his spiritual battle to cast off self-righteousness and guilt (casting off his spectre); his example inspires Blake.

Ch. 9: Book II: plate-by-plate commentary. Descent of Ololon, Milton's female counterpart (also image of his creative work on earth). Both Milton and Ololon freed from spectre. The vision is highly intense personal experience of Blake's.

Ch. 10: Description of the half-plates and ten full-plate illustrations (including the frontispiece) to the Milton. Druid symbolism and influence of Blake's brother Robert.

BLAKE'S MILTON: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION  
AND A COMMENTARY

by

Stacie Susan Frances Withers

Submitted to the University of Durham for the degree  
of M.A.

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Notes on the text

1) List of abbreviations for Blake's works:

<u>Ann. Lavater</u>	Annotations to Lavater's <u>Aphorisms on Man</u>
<u>Ann. Reynolds</u>	Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds's <u>Discourses</u>
<u>Ann. Thornton</u>	Annotations to Dr. Thornton's 'New Translation of the Lord's Prayer'
<u>Ann. Watson</u>	Annotations to Watson's <u>Apology for the Bible</u>
<u>ARO</u>	<u>All Religions are One</u>
<u>BA</u>	<u>The Book of Ahania</u>
<u>FBU</u>	<u>The First Book of Urizen</u>
<u>DC</u>	<u>A Descriptive Catalogue</u>
<u>Eur</u>	<u>Europe</u>
<u>FZ</u>	<u>The Four Zoas</u>
<u>J</u>	<u>Jerusalem</u>
<u>M</u>	<u>Milton</u>
<u>MHH</u>	<u>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</u>
<u>NNR</u>	<u>There is No Natural Religion</u>
<u>SE</u>	<u>Songs of Experience</u>
<u>SI</u>	<u>Songs of Innocence</u>
<u>VLJ</u>	<u>A Vision of the Last Judgment</u>

2) Quotations from Blake's works have been taken from The Complete Writings of William Blake, edited by Sir Geoffrey Keynes. The references to the page numbers of this edition are denoted K. with the numbers following.

3) In numbering the illustrations to the Milton, I have counted the frontispiece as full-page illustration one.

4) Quotations from Milton's works have been taken from The Poems of John Milton, edited by Helen Darbishire. Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained have been abbreviated Par. Lost and Par. Regained.

5) Quotations from the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise stated.

6) In the footnotes, the place of publication of a book is usually only given if the book is published outside London. Also in the footnotes, the plate of any of Blake's works to which I have referred is indicated pl. followed by the number of the plate. A full colon divides the plate number from the line number(s) in both the text and footnotes.

Introductory note

T.S. Eliot claims that Blake was "a poet of genius" but not a "classic" poet, largely because Blake was self-educated and gathered together a "pot-pourri" of knowledge, rather than drawing on an established system of ideas.<sup>1</sup> It may be argued, however, that Blake achieved an equal balance between a well worked-out system of ideas and a highly subjective personal meaning. That he did have a system of ideas is evident; however, he drew on works which were very popular in his day, but which have now faded into obscurity. A knowledge of these may help us to understand his poetry. The influence of Bryant's Mythology, Stukeley's Abury and Thomas Taylor's translations of the Neoplatonists pervades his works.<sup>2</sup> The howlings and moanings of many of the characters of his early prophecies recall Macpherson's Ossian. He probably knew and was influenced by the Qabbalah (Kabbala). Kathleen Raine points out the influence on Blake of the alchemical writers<sup>3</sup>, though in The Song of Los (pl. 3:18-18, K. 246) and in Jerusalem (pl. 91:35-6, K. 738), he rejects Hermes Trismegistus.

Blake, who loved the Metamorphoses of Ovid, also has his own complex and well worked-out mythological system. However, although every symbol is enriched and gathers meaning every time it is used, we must be careful not to fix too rigid an interpretation on his characters, lest we miss some detail of meaning, applicable only to one particular context. The petulant, selfish Los of The Four Zoas, for example, is very different from the loving, inspiring Los of the Milton.

While the symbols and mythology of the Milton are much influenced by Blake's reading of contemporary authors, this poem is, however, perhaps the most personal of all his works. For a full understanding of the poem, it is necessary to have a very clear idea of Blake's life and state of mind at the time of composition.

While, for this reason, I have included a detailed biography of the period of composition (approximately 1800-03), a full biography of Blake's life is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, many excellent

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<sup>1</sup> 'Blake', in The Sacred Wood, seventh ed., 1950, pp. 151-8.

<sup>2</sup> For full details of the influence of the Neoplatonists on Blake, see K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vols. I and II, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> For full details, see K. Raine, *ibid.*

biographies exist, and perhaps one of the most entertaining, if not the most reliable, is the first, Gilchrist's classic, The Life of William Blake, first published in 1863. It abounds in apochryphal stories, such as that of the four-year-old William's screams when God put his head through the window; that of the tree full of angels on Peckham Rye; and that of Mr. and Mrs. Blake discovered sitting naked in their garden happily reading Milton; their astonished visitor soon learnt that playing at Adam and Eve made the poem more vivid for them.

However, many stories became exaggerated in the telling, and a more reliable account of Blake's life is given in Mona Wilson's comprehensive The Life of William Blake, first published in 1927. David V. Erdman and Jacob Bronowski both place Blake firmly in his historical setting, and Michael Davis presents a recent, very readable account. Sir Geoffrey Keynes' Blake Studies, while not a full biography, focuses vividly on many individual incidents in Blake's life from his part in the opening of Edward I's tomb to the exact contents of his library.

The theme of the poem Milton is inspiration, and the poem deals with the way in which Blake cleansed his own mind of guilt, moralism and selfishness; all this, in Blakean terms, is summed up as the way in which he "subdued his Spectre"<sup>1</sup>. Blake's mentor in this is Milton himself, who "subdues his own Spectre" by undergoing a very painful process, a deep-reaching "Mental Fight" and teaches Blake to follow him in this. In turn, Blake can teach others for his purpose is essentially a missionary one:

Mark well my words! They are of your eternal salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Blake's hurt at being misunderstood was not because he wanted fame for himself, but because he felt very deeply that he had something to say and that English people were missing something of vital spiritual importance to themselves by not listening. I hope that this thesis will help the reader to understand more clearly what Blake had in mind, as well as to enjoy the passages of sheer lyrical beauty and the dazzlingly rich images that the poem contains.

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 39:10-11, K. 530.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pl. 2:25, K. 482; pl. 4:20, K. 484; pl. 7:17 and 50, K. 487; pl. 9:7, K. 489.



### Copies of the Milton

There are four copies of the Milton. Copies A and B are the earlier two. The later two, C and D, contain several extra plates. Copy C adds plates 3, 4, 10, 18 and 32; copy D has these and also plate 5, which is not included in copy C. The additional plates are largely digressive, and according to W.H. Stevenson, "one important reason for B.'s adding them seems to have been to bring the total of plates to fifty".<sup>1</sup> In copies C and D the Preface (plate 1) is omitted and plates 25 - 27 are arranged 26, 25, 27.

The following information is taken and abbreviated from William Blake's Illuminated Books: A Census; compiled by Geoffrey Keynes and Edwin Wolf 2nd, New York (Grolier Club), 1953, pp. 102-3.

#### Copy A

This consists of 45 plates on 45 leaves. The paper is watermarked J. Whatman, 1808. It is printed in black and is delicately painted with watercolours. It was bought for the British Museum in 1859 from Francis Palgrave and is now in the Print Room.

#### Copy B

This consists of 45 plates on 45 leaves. The paper is watermarked J. Whatman 1808 on ten leaves. It is printed in black and lightly painted with watercolours and touched with some dull gold; pink, yellow and blue tints predominate.

This is probably the copy from the collection of Thomas Butts. It is now in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

#### Copy C

This consists of 49 plates on 49 leaves. The paper is watermarked J. Whatman 1808 on six leaves. It is printed in black and painted with watercolours and some gold. It is now in the Lennox Collection, New York Public Library.

#### Copy D

This consists of 50 plates on 50 leaves. The paper is watermarked Ruse and Turners 1815 on eleven leaves. It is printed in various shades of red, with some black printing on some plates. It is magnificently painted with watercolours, opaque pigments and gold; most of

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<sup>1</sup> The Poems of William Blake, ed. W.H. Stevenson, text by David V. Erdman, 1971, p. 484.

the designs are outlined in ink. This copy was in the library of Godfrey Windus, of Tottenham Green. It is now in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Dating and length

The title page date, 1804, is earlier than the completion of engraving. This is usual in Blake. W.H. Stevenson points out that plate 22:11 refers to "an inspiration in a shaft of light which struck B.'s foot as he was fastening his shoe in Lambeth"<sup>1</sup>, i.e., before September, 1800. Plate 6, the latest plate in the A and B copies, is full of London references, so perhaps this plate was composed in 1804 when Blake was back in London.

A poem is referred to in Blake's letter to Butts of 25 April 1803:

But none can know the Spiritual Acts of my three years'  
Slumber on the banks of the Ocean, unless he has seen them  
in the Spirit, or unless he should read My long Poem de-  
scriptive of those Acts; for I have in these three years  
composed an immense number of verses on One Grand Theme,  
Similar to Homer's Iliad or Milton's Paradise Lost.<sup>2</sup>

However, this poem appears to be much longer than the present Milton, as Northrop Frye points out.<sup>3</sup>

Blake says that he has written the poem from the immediate dictation of eternal and so "the Time it has taken in writing was thus render'd Non Existent, & an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of a long Life, all produc'd without Labour or Study".<sup>4</sup>

If Blake is referring to the Milton here, perhaps the word "immense" refers to the grandeur of the theme and characters rather than to the length of the work.

Northrop Frye thinks that the Milton was "probably written at a time when Blake was bored with Felpham and distrustful of Hayley's influence on him", i.e., in early 1803 "before the Schofield fracas of August".<sup>5</sup>

On plate 19:59 of the Milton, the soldier Schofield, who caused Blake's trial for sedition in January 1804, is mentioned once, but this is probably a later insertion. The same may be said for the reference

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<sup>1</sup> The Poems of William Blake, 1971, p. 484.

<sup>2</sup> K. 823.

<sup>3</sup> 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton' in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Thomas Butts, 25 April 1803, K. 823.

<sup>5</sup> 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton' in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, pp. 103-4.

to "Hand" and "Coban" on plate 23:15. These terms probably refer respectively to the Hunt brothers and Cromek.<sup>1</sup> The Hunt brothers' biting attacks in The Examiner (1808-9) and the double-dealing of the publisher Cromek (1806-8) embittered Blake, and, as Northrop Frye points out, the general "serenity of tone" of the Milton makes 1805, before the embittering incidents, the latest possible date of composition. However, no copy known to exist was printed before 1808. When Blake revised the poem in 1815, after the bitterness had died down, he did so in "the same serene spirit in which he wrote it".<sup>2</sup> Plates 3, 4 and 5 "stress the universal rather than the personal aspect of the Satan-Hayley myth ... and the noisy preface disappears from the later copies, in spite of the fact that it contains one of Blake's greatest lyrics"<sup>3</sup>, i.e., the 'Jerusalem' lyric.

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<sup>1</sup> The Poems of William Blake, ed. W.H. Stevenson, 1971, p. 625.

<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104.

Blake and Hayley

From September 1800 to September 1803, William and Catherine Blake lived near Bognor, in their cottage at Felpham, so charmingly illustrated at the bottom of plate 36 of the Milton, with the Virgin Ololon descending to it. "If I should ever build a Palace it would be only My Cottage Enlarged", Blake wrote to Butts on 23 September 1800.<sup>1</sup> It was during this period that the Milton was composed. Blake actually tells us so; Los:

... prepar'd a beautiful  
Cottage for me, that in three years I might write all these Visions.<sup>2</sup>

For many of the following biographical details I am indebted to Morchard Bishop's book, Blake's Hayley and Michael Davis's A New Kind of Man. We can also get a very clear idea of Blake's state of mind at this period because numerous intimate letters have survived.

Blake went to Felpham under the patronage of William Hayley. Although later their characters were to clash violently, Blake was at first full of high hopes and of gratitude to Flaxman who had suggested the idea:

I bless thee, O Father of Heaven & Earth, that ever I saw Flaxman's  
face.

...

And now Flaxman hath given me Hayley his friend to be mine, such  
my lot upon Earth.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Blake, too, was ecstatic and wrote that "the Swallows call us" and that they would prepare "a summer bower" for the Flaxmans.<sup>4</sup> Even the Blakes could show proper sensibility there.

William Hayley, patron and poetaster, figures prominently in Blake's life and in the Milton. He was a true representative of the age of sensibility, the age that had produced Miss Lydia Languish and made Marianne Dashwood shed copious tears. It also prompted Lady Louisa Stuart to write in a letter to Sir Walter Scott:

<sup>1</sup> K. 803.

<sup>2</sup> M., 36:23-4, K. 527.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to John Flaxman, 12 September 1800, K. 799.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Mrs. Blake to Mrs. Flaxman, 14 September 1800, K. 800.

... as I was a girl of fourteen not yet versed in sentiment,  
I had a secret dread I should not cry enough to gain the credit  
of proper sensibility.<sup>1</sup>

As Morchard Bishop points out, Hayley's "dread that he should not cry enough"<sup>2</sup> has led later critics to consider his work and character insincere and that the man was something of a buffoon. Leigh Hunt thought of him as "a sort of powder-puff of a man"<sup>3</sup> until he actually met him and was surprised to see that he was a strong, well-built man. Southey believed that "everything about that man [was] good except his poetry".<sup>4</sup> Certainly he was generous and kind, even if his well-meaning acts exasperated Blake.

Hayley was born in 1745 in Chichester. He went to Eton and then to Cambridge where he painted, among other things, copies from Correggio and Titian (anathema to Blake) and some country views. He had to give up painting because his eyes were weakened by a cold in them but his poem, The Epistle on Poetry, became popular. Hayley therefore felt authorized to correct better painters than himself, not only Blake but also Romney. In 1786 on a visit to Romney, Hayley saw him painting a female head with "such exquisite expression" and suggested he should put some mimosa in the picture and call it 'Sensibility'.<sup>5</sup> Romney was more tractable than Blake, willingly followed Hayley's suggestion and sold him the painting. "Ignorant Hirelings"<sup>6</sup>, Blake called those who painted only to sell, and, far from accepting Hayley's advice, wrote:

But of this work I take care to say little to Mr. H., since he is as much averse to my poetry as he is to a Chapter in the Bible. ... he has read Part by his own desire & has looked with sufficient contempt to enhance my opinion of it.<sup>7</sup>

Other notables such as Henry Cary, George Wyndham, William Cowper and John Flaxman also came under Hayley's wing.

Hayley's reputation was established in 1780, however, by his poem The Triumphs of Temper on the "simple theme ... that if a girl wants a good husband she needs a good temper".<sup>8</sup> Dr. Johnson was very scathing

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1 Quoted by Morchard Bishop in Blake's Hayley, 1951, p. 20.

2 *ibid.*, p. 21.

3 *ibid.*, p. 121.

4 *ibid.*, p. 20.

5 *ibid.*, p. 98.

6 Preface to Milton, K. 480.

7 Letter to Butts, 6 July 1803, K. 825.

8 M. Davis, William Blake: A New Kind of Man, 1977, p. 86.

about it. Hayley took his criticism badly and caricatured Johnson in two later works.

In 1774, Hayley and his wife Eliza had set up home at Eartham, the small family estate eight miles north-east of Chichester. Hayley's home is described in the Milton in a spirit of calm and satisfaction:

The Sky is an immortal Tent built by the Sons of Los:  
And every Space that a Man views around his dwelling-place  
Standing on his own roof or in his garden on a mount  
Of twenty-five cubits in height, such space is his Universe.<sup>1</sup>

This passage refers to the famous "Turret" which was originally intended to be built for the Hayleys as a tower "but finally a house surmounted by a turret".<sup>2</sup>

In October 1780, Hayley's illegitimate son, Thomas Alphonso, was born to the housemaid, and Eliza went to Bath. In 1789, Hayley was finally separated from Eliza "with whom [he had] found it impossible to live, and equally impossible to be indifferent to".<sup>3</sup> Hayley was devoted to his son, a very studious boy, who was apprenticed to Flaxman when he was fourteen. Thomas Alphonso worked perhaps too hard at Art, Greek, Latin and History -- was he desperately trying to please his father? He fell ill with a curvature of the spine and at seventeen lost the use of both legs. He was very brave in his pain and died in May 1800, at the age of nineteen. Blake, remembering his own talented, artistic brother Robert, who had also died at nineteen, wrote affectionately to Hayley:

Thirteen years ago I lost a brother & with his spirit I converse daily & hourly in the Spirit & See him in my remembrance in the regions of my Imagination. I hear his advice & even now write from his Dictate. Forgive me for Expressing to you my Enthusiasm which I wish all to partake of Since it is to me a Source of Immortal Joy: even in this world by it I am the companion of Angels. May you continue to be so more & more & to be more & more persuaded that every Mortal loss is an Immortal Gain: The Ruins of Time builds Mansions in Eternity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M., 29:4-7, K. 516.

A cubit is the measure mentioned in Revelation, ch. 21 and Ezekiel, ch. 48, used for measuring the new temple of Jerusalem. It is the length of the arm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, very approximately twenty inches. So the turret, according to this passage, would be about forty-two feet in height.

<sup>2</sup> The Poems of William Blake, ed. W.H. Stevenson, 1971, p. 538.

<sup>3</sup> Morchard Bishop, Blake's Hayley, 1951, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to William Hayley, 6 May 1800, K. 797.

Hayley must have felt Tom's death keenly, particularly as only a few days before he had lost his dear friend Cowper. He proposed to write his Memoirs of Tom and his Life of Cowper, but the latter work was hindered by Cowper's cousin, Lady Hesketh, who did not want Cowper's madness to become known. Hayley had been devoted to Cowper whom he had first met when they had both, coincidentally, been engaged separately on the same project, writing biographies of Milton. Cowper's feeling was also strong enough to persuade him to visit Hayley at Eartham, after being a recluse for nearly thirty years. In 1792, Cowper wrote to Hayley with great affection:

Tell me, my friend, are your letters in your own hand-writing? If so, I am in pain for your eyes, lest by such frequent demands upon them I should hurt them. I had rather write you three letters for one, much as I prize your letters, than that should happen. And now, for the present, adieu - I am going to accompany Milton into the lake of fire and brimstone, having just begun my annotations.<sup>1</sup>

Romney also writes to his son of Cowper's visit to Hayley:

Mr. Cowper is a most excellent man; he has translated Milton's Latin Poems, and I suppose very well. Hayley is writing the life of Milton, so you may imagine that we were deep in that poet; every thing belonging to him was collected together, and some part of his works read every day.<sup>2</sup>

The atmosphere into which Blake stepped was already Milton saturated. Blake appears on the scene in 1800, just before the deaths of Thomas Alphonso and Cowper. He was to engrave Thomas's drawing of "The Head of Demosthenes" and make a vignette of Thomas's own head. Although Hayley was not entirely pleased with the result of these projects, he decided to employ Blake as the engraver of the plates for his proposed Life of Cowper.

Blake was very busy working for Hayley in Felpham, although he later realised that Hayley did not appreciate the nature of his genius. He found his artistic gifts were being channelled in the direction ordained by his patrons and he had not enough opportunity to exercise them freely as he wished. He was advised to follow the main chance and provide for his family, when he felt that, by doing so, he was neglecting his spiritual calling to write as the "Eternals" dictated to him. He did not want to compromise his talents and the tension between duty to his patron and duty to his visions troubled him very greatly:

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Morchard Bishop in Blake's Hayley, 1951, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., p. 165.



...if we refuse to do Spiritual Acts because of Natural Fears or Natural Desires! Who can describe the dismal torments of such a state! - I too well remember the Threats I heard! - If you, who are organised by Divine Providence for Spiritual communion, Refuse, & bury your Talent in the Earth, even tho' you should want Natural Bread, Sorrow & Desperation pursues you thro' life, & after death shame & confusion of face to eternity. Every one in Eternity will leave you, aghast at the Man who was crown'd with glory & honour by his brethren, & betray'd their cause to their enemies. You will be call'd the base Judas who betray'd his Friend! - Such words would make any stout man tremble, & how then could I be at ease?<sup>1</sup>

In the Milton, the word "hyle" is probably Blake's nickname for Hayley. It is also the Greek for matter, showing that Blake thought his patron totally wordly and artistically given to copying from Nature rather than following the spirit.

An early commission from Hayley was to paint the 'Heads of the Poets' to decorate his enormous library. (So big was the Eartham library, containing most of the current editions of Homer and Milton, that, after Hayley's death in 1820, it was auctioned in 2,649 lots and the sale took thirteen days.) On 26 November 1800, Blake writes to Hayley that he is "absorbed by the poets Milton, Homer, Camoens, Ercilla, Ariosto and Spenser, whose physiognomies have been [his] delightful study".<sup>2</sup>

Under Hayley's persuasion, Blake produced some miniatures, six of which are extant, including two of Cowper after the pastel drawing by Romney now in the National Portrait Gallery. Lady Hesketh was horrified when she received the miniature of Cowper: "Blake had caught Romney's hint of her cousin's madness!"<sup>3</sup> It was shocking. Blake had happily written to Butts on 10 May 1801 that "Miniature is become a Goddess in my Eyes, & my Friends in Sussex say that I Excell in the pursuit".<sup>4</sup> However, by January 1803 he had changed his mind and was now writing to his brother, James:

... he [Hayley] thinks to turn me into a Portrait Painter as he did Poor Romney, but this he nor all the devils in hell will never do.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Thomas Butts, 10 January 1802, K. 813.

<sup>2</sup> K. 806.

<sup>3</sup> M. Davis, William Blake: A New Kind of Man, 1977, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> K. 808.

<sup>5</sup> K. 819.

He also balked at painting hand-screens for Lady Hesketh. Already Hayley and his associates were getting on his nerves.

Perhaps Blake's change of heart towards miniature painting was due to Hayley's condescending attitude towards him, summed up in Hayley's presumptuous letter to Daniel Parker Coke:

I have recently formed a new artist ... by teaching a worthy creature (by profession an Engraver) who lives in a little cottage very near to me to paint in miniature.<sup>1</sup>

Another early commission given to "the worthy creature" was the etching of a broadsheet 'Little Tom the Sailor', a mawkish ballad by Hayley. The project was undertaken to aid a local widow. The printing was carried out by Mrs. Blake on William's handpress. Blake illustrated Hayley's Ballads which were to be sold for Blake's own profit, but they met with no success. Blake, painting for Hayley, was painting in chains. Southey, in his review of the Ballads, also comments on Blake's illustration of the frontispiece, 'The Dog', in which the faithful animal jumps off a cliff into the jaws of a crocodile, thereby saving his master:

The poet has had the singular good fortune to meet with a painter capable of doing full justice to his conceptions, and, in fact, when we look at the delectable frontispiece to this volume, which represents Edward starting back, Fido volant and the crocodile rampant, with a mouth open like a boot-jack to receive him we know not whether most to admire the genius of Mr. William Blake or of Mr. William Hayley.<sup>2</sup>

Kathleen Raine comments, "If Blake can be blamed, it is for not having heeded his own advice: 'the eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow'"<sup>3</sup>; and Sir Geoffrey Keynes remarks that Southey's just criticism was due to "Blake's genius labouring in Hayley's fetters".<sup>4</sup>

Blake's private feelings against Hayley's tender officiousness are revealed in his notebook verses, although these were written in the period of bitterness between 1808 and 1811 when Blake was suffering through Cromek's double-dealing and the failure of his only exhibition. They were not intended for publication. Some of the comments are quite

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Sir Geoffrey Keynes in Blake Studies, Oxford, 1971, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by K. Raine, William Blake, 1970, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> William Blake, 1970, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> Blake Studies, Oxford, 1971, p. 78.

amusing:

I write the Rascal Thanks till he & I  
With Thanks & Compliments are quite drawn dry.<sup>1</sup>

Some are contemptuous:

The Sussex Men are Noted Fools  
And weak is there brain pan:  
I wonder if H[aines] the painter  
Is not a Sussex Man?<sup>2</sup>

Some are wise:

If you mean to Please Every body you will  
Set to work both Ignorance & skill.<sup>3</sup>

But many just show sheer exasperation at the restraint put on his genius:

When H-y finds out what you cannot do,  
That is the very thing he'll set you to.<sup>4</sup>

However, the Blake-Hayley conflict is depicted most clearly in plates 7 and 8 of the Milton. There are, we are told, three classes of men.

These are:

The first, The Elect from before the foundation of the World:  
The second, The Redeem'd: The Third, The Reprobate & form'd  
To destruction from the mother's womb.<sup>5</sup>

This is clearly an ironic reversal of Calvinist terminology. For Blake, real evil lies in people who think they are good Elect Christians, full of self-righteousness and moralism, like the "Angels" in the Marriage of Heaven & Hell. Satan is not an obvious demon with horns and a pitchfork: he is a country gentleman who persuades people to compromise on their spiritual ideals in order to follow worldly interest; he persuades the artist to forsake vision and copy nature for he has no real understanding of art. In short, he is Hayley. In the Milton, Satan-Hayley is a miller: he grinds people down. Finally, "by repeated offers and repeated entreaties" (pl. 7:10) he persuades Los, the spirit of Art and Prophecy, to give him Palamabron-Blake's "harrow", or position in the artistic world. The "horses of the harrow" (which draw the implement of art) rebel, maddened against a mock-poet:

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<sup>1</sup> MS Note-Book, No. 57, K. 549.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., No. 6, K. 538.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., No. 59, K. 549.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., No. 35, K. 544.

<sup>5</sup> M., 7:2-4, K. 486.

... Mean time Palamabron's horses  
Rag'd with thick flames redundant, & the Harrow madden'd with fury.<sup>1</sup>

Satan-Hayley is also mild and bland. He is so mild and persuasive that he convinces himself and others he is in the right. If evil were obvious, it would be eschewed; its power lies in making a wrong course of action seem reasonable:

Mean while wept Satan before Los accusing Palamabron,  
Himself exculpating with mildest speech, for himself believ'd  
That he had not oppress'd or injur'd the refractory servants.<sup>2</sup>

Satan belongs to the class of the ironically-named Elect; Palamabron belongs to the class of the Redeemed; Rintrah represents the class of the Reprobate. The Elect think of the Reprobate as damned and devilish because they are rebellious and energetic, speaking out against deceit in the prophetic, fiery voice of Elijah or John the Baptist. When we read that "Satan, flaming with Rintrah's fury hidden beneath his own mildness, / Accus'd Palamabron before the Assembly of ingratitude"<sup>3</sup>, this simply means that Hayley struggled to keep his temper when Blake refused to do what he wanted.

Harold Bloom also comments on this section of the Milton:

Satan's attempt to assume the harrow of Palamabron is an attack upon inspired art, with results immediately evident at the beginning of the poem's fifth plate:  
'Palamabron with the fiery Harrow in morning returning  
From breathing fields, Satan fainted beneath the artillery'.<sup>4</sup>

Blake-Palamabron would have returned to daily social life after a night of labour at Milton, and similarly he home "return'd with labour wearied every evening",<sup>5</sup> the weariness of succumbing to Hayley. Harold Bloom also points out that the activities of the three archetypes -- ploughman, harrower and miller -- are brilliantly chosen, for:

Rintrah's prophetic wrath plows up nature, making possible a new planting of more human life. Palamabron's civilising pity (of a kind that need not divide the soul) levels the plowed land, ... completing the work of the prophet.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 7:45-6, K. 487.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pl. 8:1-3, K. 487.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pl. 9:19-20, K. 489.

<sup>4</sup> H. Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, 1963, p. 313.

<sup>5</sup> M., pl. 7:9, K. 486.

<sup>6</sup> H. Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, 1963, p. 312.

However, "to be harrowed is [also] to be tormented and distressed", as Palamabron-Blake was. Satan "grinds down created life" like a miller -- he seeks his "own reductive and meaningless ends".<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the inspiration for this imagery came from a seemingly everyday country scene, noted by Blake immediately after his arrival in Felpham:

Work will go on here with God speed. - A roller & two harrows lie before my window. I met a plow on my first going out at my gate the first morning after my arrival, & the Plowboy said to the Plowman, 'Father, the Gate is Open.' - I have begun to Work, & find that I can work with greater pleasure than ever.<sup>2</sup>

When Rintrah, angry on account of Satan-Hayley's "soft dissimulation of friendship / Flamed ... red and furious", Satan too glowed "angry & red".<sup>3</sup> This probably indicates some direct quarrel between Hayley and Blake. At this point, a character named Thulloh is smitten and slain and buried. S. Foster Damon suggests that Thulloh represents the natural affection between Blake and Hayley, which has now been permanently destroyed.<sup>4</sup> Enitharmon (Mrs. Blake?) is not permitted to hear this lest she should be too upset. Foster Damon also suggests latent homosexuality in Hayley, pointing out his inability to maintain a stable relationship with women.<sup>5</sup> (In 1809, a considerable time after Eliza had left, he married again, but his second wife, Maria, also left him after about three years.) However, Foster Damon is the only critic who suggests this, and it is only conjecture. It is more likely that Hayley was simply a very irritating person to live with, as Margoliouth and Frye point out.<sup>6</sup> Eliza had actually gone mad; Cowper went mad and Blake was thought to be mad. Hayley quite literally maddened the horses of the harrow.

However, it was not only the relationship with Hayley that made the Blakes decide to leave Felpham. The cottage that had so enchanted them when they arrived was damp and both William and Catherine, especially Catherine, became ill. Blake writes about his wife with touching solicitude:

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<sup>1</sup> H. Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, 1963, p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Thomas Butts, 23 September 1800, K. 803.

<sup>3</sup> M., pl. 8:35-36, and pl. 8:38, K. 488.

<sup>4</sup> A Blake Dictionary, 1973, p. 403.

<sup>5</sup> ibid., p. 178.

<sup>6</sup> H.M. Margoliouth, William Blake, 1951, p. 136; Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 330.

Your very kind & affectionate Letter ... found My Wife & Myself so Ill, & My wife so very ill, that till now I have not been able to do this duty. The Ague & Rheumatism have been almost her constant Enemies, which she has combated in vain ever since we have been here; & her sickness is always my sorrow, of course.<sup>1</sup>

Then there was the disturbing and dangerous incident with the soldier Schofield, whom Blake found trespassing in his garden in August 1803. A quarrel ensued and Blake marched him out of his garden and down the road in public view. In order to be revenged, Schofield accused Blake of saying 'Damn the King' and of other seditious utterances. Blake was duly brought for trial. He was acquitted but, at a time when Napoleon was threatening an invasion of the English coast, the outcome could have been very serious.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it was fortunate that Blake's earlier more revolutionary work was not better known.

Hayley immediately gave most generous and practical help. Blake knew this, was grateful for it, and thanked him for his "generous & tender solicitude about [his] devoted rebel".<sup>3</sup> It was a few years later that Blake penned the bitter epigram saying that when Hayley "could not act upon my wife" he "Hired a Villain to bereave my Life".<sup>4</sup>

This was most unfair to Hayley who had done all he could, standing bail and finding Blake a lawyer, Rose, even if he was not a very able one. Blake wrote these lines at a time when, because of the Cromek and other affairs, he felt (with reason) that everyone was persecuting him. As for the words "act upon my wife", as Margoliouth points out, perhaps Hayley only said "'Mrs. Blake, could you not persuade your husband to pay more regard to his own interests and yours?'"<sup>5</sup> and Blake, suffering under a temporary persecution complex, magnified this.

The final comment on the Blake-Hayley conflict belongs to Margoliouth. Plate six of the Milton shows a horseman riding under a gigantic Druid trilithon, for Blake the symbol of spiritual blindness. The horseman "rides sedately but like one in his own country",<sup>6</sup> and Margoliouth suggests he is Hayley, with or without the umbrella that he usually carried to protect his eyes while riding, and that so often

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Thomas Butts, 10 January 1802, K. 811.

<sup>2</sup> For full details, see David V. Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, pp. 403-415.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to William Hayley, 7 October 1803, K. 829.

<sup>4</sup> MS Note-Book, 1808-11, No. 35, K. 544.

<sup>5</sup> William Blake, 1951, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. 132.

made him lose his balance and fall off. "Finally at the bottom, trudging along with staff and pack, is a pilgrim whose home is not here".<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of adversity, perhaps Blake could still see his situation with a certain sense of humour.

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<sup>1</sup> H.M. Margoliouth, William Blake, 1951, p. 132.

Milton in the eighteenth century

Blake was very deeply influenced by Milton, perhaps more than by any other poet. He writes that "Milton lov'd me in childhood & shew'd me his face", whereas Shakespeare only came "in riper years".<sup>1</sup>

In this he is no different from many other writers and poets of the eighteenth century, for Milton was held in great esteem. However, these writers differed widely in their attitudes to Milton. A close examination shows how strongly Dr. Johnson, for example, reflects the views of the Age of Enlightenment, which Blake was equally strongly pulling away from.

Dr. Johnson's 'Life of Milton'<sup>2</sup> gives us a straightforward but often harsh biography, with some comment on Milton's character. He particularly mentions Milton's display of "calm confidence" in "his high opinions of his own powers" as opposed to any mere "ostentatious exultation", and he comments that Milton was one "who could easily find arguments to justify [his] inclination". He speaks of Milton's diligence and stresses that he "was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment", such as school-teaching. He also refers to the occasion on which Milton's first wife, Mary Powel, had to go down on her knees to beg forgiveness after their separation.<sup>3</sup>

Johnson disapproves of Milton's teaching curriculum, which placed emphasis on "reading those authors that treat of physical subjects, such as the Georgick, and astronomical treatises of the ancients".<sup>4</sup> Johnson also takes the opportunity to make a firm stand for the Moralists against the Nature poets:

... if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his [Socrates] labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to John Flaxman, 12 September 1800, K. 799.

<sup>2</sup> In Lives of the Poets, first published 1779 and 1781. All the following quotations are from Collins (Fontana) edition, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 88. Gilchrist reports that Blake's wife had to do the same thing, after an argument with Blake's brother, Robert. This quarrel, however, was very quickly made up and the Blakes are famous for their marital felicity. Alexander Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, first published 1863; Everyman edition, 1942, pp. 50-1.

<sup>4</sup> Lives of the Poets, Fontana ed., 1963, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 83-4.



Blake's attitude to the Moralists is clear:

If Morality was Christianity, Socrates was The Savior.<sup>1</sup>

However, Blake was not exactly in agreement with the Nature poets either, although he loved nature and he and his wife would often go for long walks as far from their London home as Primrose Hill or Croydon, in his time all countryside. He was keenly observant and some of his best poetry describes the small things in nature -- the lark, the wild thyme and the dragonflies "gorgeous clothed .../Upon the sunny brooks & meadows".<sup>2</sup> However, Blake was not a nature poet in the way that Wordsworth was. Blake believed that Nature was only an image of a still more beautiful eternal world and should not be worshipped for her own sake. The shadow should not be taken for reality. While appreciating Wordsworth's poetry, Blake thought him a pagan<sup>3</sup> and in no way shared "the nineteenth century's legacy from Rousseau, faith in nature and piety toward the natural heart".<sup>4</sup>

Two points which Blake and Milton had in common were their anti-clericalism and their love of liberty, both spiritual and physical liberty, in revolutionary times. Dr. Johnson does not applaud these characteristics in Milton, largely because he suspects their motivation:

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of controul, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character in domestick relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ann. Thornton, K. 786, and Laocoön plate, K. 775.

<sup>2</sup> M., pl. 26;2-3, K. 512.

<sup>3</sup> See Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Blake Studies, Oxford, 1971, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> Deborah Dorfman, Blake in the Nineteenth Century, New Haven and London, 1969, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Lives of the Poets, Fontana ed., 1963, p. 120.

Blake's view of Milton's "domestick relations" is explored in the Milton when Milton descends to "resume his emanation" by casting off self-righteousness and severity. His emanation is six-fold because he had three wives and three daughters. In plate 2 of the Milton, Blake criticises Milton for obeying without murmuring, not for rebelling.

Still concerning Milton's "domestick relations", Gilchrist reports a story by Crabb Robinson in which Blake is "alleged to have complained that Milton was grievously in error in saying that the pleasures of sex arose from the Fall".<sup>1</sup> However, Crabb Robinson's story has generally been discredited, particularly by the fact that Blake "made at least four illustrations of Satan watching the love-play of the unfallen Adam and Eve"<sup>2</sup>

After his comments on biography and character, Dr. Johnson proceeds to evaluate Milton's poetry. In many ways, his views are the antithesis of Blake's. He finds the pastoral style of Lycidas "uneasy, vulgar and therefore disgusting", and one may well conjecture what the author of "Piping down the valleys wild" and its accompanying illustration, would have thought of this passage:

Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Johnson's objection is that "awful and sacred truths" are mingled with friction, or "polluted with ... irreverent combinations", especially where "the shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock".<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Johnson, however, likes L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, both of which Blake illustrated. Johnson's fair comment is that:

No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Northrop Frye, 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, p. 101 (footnote 2).

<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, *ibid.*, pp. 101-2 (footnote 2).

<sup>3</sup> Lives of the Poets, Fontana ed., 1963, pp. 123-4.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 126.

Here Blake's personality is in complete contrast to Milton's:

I hate scarce smiles: I love laughing.<sup>1</sup>

As for Comus, which Blake was to illustrate, Dr. Johnson found it deficient as a drama, though he enjoyed its poetry and its defence of virtue. Blake, on the other hand, believed Virginity to be a symbol of female domination and selfishness. Northrop Frye comments:

Now in the character of Comus Milton has begun to sketch a Satan far more essentially Satanic than his later prince of throned powers, and to make a seduction a climacteric revelation of evil is a grotesque anticlimax. Similarly, the frozen negative moral virtue of the Lady is praised as something good in itself, whereas in fact it is something much worse than anything Comus proposes to her.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Johnson's first comments on Paradise Lost are directly contrary to Blake's ideas. Dr. Johnson begins:

Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason<sup>3</sup>,

and he continues

His [Milton's] purpose was the most useful and the most arduous; to vindicate the ways of God to man; to shew the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.<sup>4</sup>

All that Blake ever wrote, said, praised, painted or stood for was to free man from slavish obedience to the moral law, the rationality of which deprived him of the law of grace and limited his imaginative spirit.

Johnson says little of the Devil, except that he thinks him suitably rebellious and, therefore, very devilish. On the other hand, Blake, in his belief that "Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God"<sup>5</sup> would have been inclined to agree with Johnson's opinion, if not his praise, of the arch-angel Raphael:

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Ann. Lavater, K. 67.

2 Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 354.

3 Lives of the Poets, Fontana ed., 1963, p. 128.

4 ibid., p. 129.

5 MHH., pls. 5-6, K. 150.

6 Lives of the Poets, Fontana ed., 1963, p. 130

This description exactly fits Blake's Satan in the Milton, who "with incomparable mildness ... with most endearing love ... soft entreated Los to give to him Palamabron's station"<sup>1</sup> and who exculpated himself "with mildest speech".<sup>2</sup> It also fits Blake's satirically drawn "angels", apopleptic rather than apocalyptic in blue indignation, holier-than-thou figures who people The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790-93):

The Angel hearing this [Blake's unorthodox opinion] became almost blue; but mastering himself he grew yellow, & at last white, pink, & smiling.<sup>3</sup>

By the time of the Milton in 1804 this "angel" will have become one of the class of the ironically-named Elect, first-born of whom is Satan himself.

Dr. Johnson's last comment on Paradise Lost is that Milton:

... saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter .... He should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight .... The confusion of spirit and matter ... pervades the war in heaven.<sup>4</sup>

Of allegorical abstractions, like Sin and Death, he writes:

To give them any real employment or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity.<sup>5</sup>

Blake, being no dualist, was much concerned to portray the union of body and soul and the fusion of spirit and matter. For this reason, both Blake and Fuseli were harshly criticised by Robert Hunt in the following extract from the Examiner (1808):

Whatever is simply natural, such as 'the death of a wicked strong man', is powerfully conceived and expressed; nearly all the allegory is not only far fetched but absurd, inasmuch as the human body can never be mistaken in a picture for its soul, as the visible can never shadow out the invisible world, 'between which, there is a great gulph fixed' of impenetrable and therefore indescribable obscurity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 7:6-9, K. 486.

<sup>2</sup> M., pl. 8:2, K. 487.

<sup>3</sup> MHH., pls. 22-24, K. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Lives of the Poets, Fontana ed., 1963, pp. 138-9.

<sup>5</sup> ibid., p. 139.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Deborah Dorfman in Blake in the Nineteenth Century, New Haven and London, 1969, p. 12. The two preceding quotations from Johnson's 'Life of Milton' are also cited by her in a footnote on p. 13.

The work that caused Hunt particular offence was Blake's illustration to Blair's The Grave. A rather beautiful woman (the soul) is seen hovering over the body she has just left. Deborah Dorfman writes:

Hunt's comment, like others directed against Blake's over-naturalistic abstractions, reflects a taste still prevalent, formed according to the principles Samuel Johnson had expressed in objecting to Milton's Sin and Death, and his angels -- Milton's error in trying to embody unseen things.<sup>1</sup>

As he concludes his essay, Dr. Johnson briefly comments that Paradise Regained has been "too much depreciated" though it is "in many parts elegant, and everywhere instructive", whereas Samson Agonistes has been "too much admired" although it has no "well-connected plan".<sup>2</sup>

His final comment is interesting as it concerns Homer, to whose "Stolen and Perverted Writings" Blake objected in the Preface to the Milton because the classicists set them up "by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible". Blake believed that Homer "curb'd" Milton's style, but Dr. Johnson thinks that:

The highest praise of genius is original invention .... But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thought or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them.<sup>3</sup>

From this comparative study we can see that William Blake and Dr. Johnson were so much at variance not only in general outlook but also in their particular view of Milton that the former was goaded to mock the latter in satire:

"Lo the Bat with Leathern wing,  
"Winking and blinking,  
"Winking and blinking,  
"Winking and blinking,<sup>4</sup>  
"Like Doctor Johnson."<sup>4</sup>

In the above-mentioned Preface to the Milton, Blake complained about "Hirelings", and it is clear he thought Dr. Johnson was one of them:

Was Johnson hired to Pretend to Religious Terrors while he was an Infidel, or how was it?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Blake in the Nineteenth Century, New Haven and London, 1969, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Lives of the Poets, Fontana ed., 1963, pp. 141-2.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> An Island in the Moon, ch. 9, K. 54.

<sup>5</sup> Ann. Thornton, K. 786.

Milton undoubtedly enjoyed great popularity during Blake's life-time, both at home and abroad. He was compared with Bossuet, as they showed "the same serious fervor, the same severity, the same confidence in their own opinions, the same intolerance towards adversaries in sentiment, the same majestic turn of imagination".<sup>1</sup> The fashionable poet, Klopstock, whom Blake abhorred but Hayley adored,<sup>2</sup> called himself "the German Milton"<sup>3</sup> in self-styled praise. Blake expressed his contempt in his scurrilous poem beginning:

When Klopstock England defied,  
Uprose terrible Blake in his pride;  
For old Nobodaddy aloft  
Farted & Belch'd & cough'd.<sup>4</sup>

Blake was not always writing from the land of Eden.

Dr. Young, whose Night Thoughts Blake abundantly illustrated, extolled Milton and Homer together in the resounding terms of his luxurious Gothic:

I rowl the Raptures, but not catch their Flame:  
Dark, tho' not blind, like thee Maeonides!  
Or Milton! thee; ah, cou'd I reach your Strain!  
Or His, who made Maeonides our Own.  
Man too he sung.<sup>5</sup>

Miltonic references are sprinkled, albeit lightly, through the works of another, but better-balanced eighteenth-century "grave-yard practitioner", Thomas Gray. For example, the Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, which Blake cleverly illustrated, contains a satirical comparison to Milton's Eve,<sup>6</sup> viewing herself with satisfaction in the 'Lake' until she sees a

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Influence of Religious and Patriotic Feeling on Literature', in The London Magazine, January 1820, collected edition printed for Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1820, Vol. I, p. 35. Blake would have regarded Bossuet as the representative of all that was harsh and that put a curb on freedom. Bossuet was responsible for the imprisonment of the quietist Mme. Guyon who was one of the "gentle Souls / Who guide the great Wine-press of Love". J. 72:51-2, K. 712. See also S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary, 1973, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Hayley even had a model of Klopstock's head in his library at Eartham. For Hayley's liking for Klopstock, see Morchard Bishop, Blake's Hayley, 1951, pp. 265 and 289.

<sup>3</sup> Coleridge, in a lecture entitled, 'Milton and the Paradise Lost' on 4 March 1819, was one of the few who saw the inferiority of Klopstock and, unlike most of his contemporaries, makes the comparison with indignation: "The inferiority of Klopstock's Messiah is inexpressible". See The Romantics on Milton, introduction and notes by J.A. Wittreich, Jr., Cleveland, 1970; p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> Poems from the Note-Book, 1793, No. 61, K. 186.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Edward Young, Night Thoughts, Night the First, fifth ed., 1743, pp. 34-5.

<sup>6</sup> Par. Lost, IV, 456-66. Milton is the only literary reference for Eve's gazing into the lake at herself.

'gleam' in the water:

Demurest of the tabby kind,  
The pensive Selina reclined,  
Gazed on the lake below.<sup>1</sup>

Although under "the modern bondage of rhyming", a poet such as Gray would appeal to Blake on account of his love of liberty, especially Celtic liberty, as portrayed in 'The Bard'. Perhaps it was Milton's republican desire for liberty that appealed to both Gray and Blake.

We know also that Blake was well-acquainted with the Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, a champion of liberty who described the British people as "a great, and yet free, though a sunken, falling people". Blake's cries to Albion to awake in the Milton echo this view. As David Erdman records, these Memoirs contained many Milton portraits engraved by Cipriani, and the documents and coins in the Memoirs were engraved by Basire's apprentices, of whom Blake as a boy was one.<sup>2</sup> Hollis acclaimed Milton for the same reason as Blake did: both believed he was the "anticipator of Wilkes and Liberty".<sup>3</sup>

Amongst Blake's immediate friends and associates there was a great deal of interest in Milton. In 1799, Henry Fuseli opened his own Milton Gallery, which, however, was only moderately successful. Stothard and Romney also illustrated Milton's work, favourite scenes being those of Satan, Sin and Death and scenes from Il Penseroso and L'Allegro. Stothard's Satan, Sin and Death have something of a drawing-room elegance about them, rather than the fearsomeness of Milton's originals. Romney's Penseroso, who looks the moral character, is attempting to hold back his Allegro from the mountains and country in view. She is smiling at us seductively.

The figures of Sin, Death and Hell were well-known enough to be used in Gillray's political cartoon of 9 June 1792. Queen Charlotte is sheltering Pitt from the vengeance of the fallen Chancellor Thurlow.

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<sup>1</sup> This subject was a well-known contemporary one, used to illustrate the vanity of woman, as in Nathaniel Hone's portrait of Kitty Fisher, the famous courtesan (National Portrait Gallery, London). The bowl of goldfish by her side in the picture and the kitten, which is dipping a paw tentatively into the water, illustrate her name and nature.

<sup>2</sup> Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 35.

The Queen had assumed a great deal of power during the period of the King's insanity. David Erdman comments:

Gillray's lurid caricature is an instructive link between Blake and Milton. Thurlow is a muscle-bound Satan, Pitt a gaunt and naked King Death wearing 'the likeness of' the British Crown ... and Queen Charlotte a hideous 'snaky' Sin wearing the key to the back-stairs, 'the Instrument of all our Woe.'<sup>1</sup>

In Erdman's view, Blake also gives a political interpretation to his characters; for example, Rintrah represents Pitt, and Leutha represents the spiritual form of Marie-Antoinette.

The Milton-saturated atmosphere of Hayley's house has already been described. When one of Hayley's many protégés died in 1789, Hayley's redoubtable lady admirer, the poetess, Anna Seward, wrote to him in terms resonant with suitable sensibility:

What a similarity in your fate to Milton's - the visual powers pained and impeded, though, thank God, not quenched; - and now you mourn a Lycidas sunk beneath the waters!<sup>2</sup>

We can see, therefore, that eighteenth-century attitudes to Milton range from Johnson's carefully weighed, if sometimes harsh judgments to the sentimental admiration of the end of the century. Blake himself had a very great admiration for Milton, although he believed that, in Paradise Lost, Milton's Devil attracts rather than repels the reader, because he is so energetic and human; the Father and the Son, however, alienate the reader because the one is tyrannical and the other is very wooden and boring:

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 Devil's party without knowing it.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps it is this view that has lasted the longest of all.

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<sup>1</sup> Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Morchard Bishop, Blake's Hayley, 1951, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> MHH., pls: 5-6, K. 150.



Blake's mythology: the people

Blake's philosophy is expressed most richly in the symbols and figures of his complex mythology. An understanding of them is necessary to our appreciation of the prophetic books: the symbols gather meaning every time they are used and there are many cross-references. I shall therefore attempt to explain the significance of some of the figures and their relation to the Milton before going on to deal with a plate-by-plate exposition of the poem itself.

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Albion, the Eternal Man

In a sense, there is only one man in Blake's poetry, Albion, the Eternal Man. Before the Fall, all men were united; all men -- in fact, the whole universe -- were contained in "the mighty limbs of Albion" until he fell into division and disunity and all human beings became separate from and at variance with one another. Nature itself, to the visionary eye, is the fallen form of the Eternal Man: Northrop Frye beautifully describes this world in such terms:

But the imagination sees that the labyrinthine intricacies of the movements of the heavenly bodies reflect the labyrinth of our brains. It sees that lakes and pools reflect the passive mirror of the eye. It sees that the revolving and warming sun is the beating and flaming heart of the fallen Albion, and is reproduced in the 'Globe of Blood' within our own bodies. It sees that the tide flows and ebbs in the rhythm of Albion's fallen lungs. It sees that the ridges of mountains across the world are Albion's fractured spine. It sees that the natural circulation of water is a human circulation of blood. It sees that nature is the fossilized form of a God-Man.<sup>1</sup>

However, unlike other fossils, Albion, the Eternal Man, is coming to life. The Apocalypse is approaching when he will "arise from sleep" and there will be a "resurrection into unity". In fact, in the Milton, the "Prelude to Apocalypse"<sup>2</sup>, he begins to stir:

Now Albion's sleeping Humanity began to turn upon his Couch,  
Feeling the electric flame of Milton's awful precipitate descent.<sup>3</sup>

Further on in the Milton, a very English poem--after all, one reason for writing an epic was to teach a nation its own traditions-- the whole of England, its rocky coast-line, washed by stormy seas, is seen as Albion,

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<sup>1</sup> Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, pp. 349-50.

<sup>2</sup> The term is used by Harold Bloom in Blake's Apocalypse, 1963, p. 304.

<sup>3</sup> M., 20:25-6, K. 502.

stretched out upon "the Rock of Ages". This time he actually attempts to rise, but fails:

... groaning he sat above  
His rocks. London & Bath & Legions & Edinburgh  
Are the four pillars of his Throne: his left foot near London  
Covers the shades of Tyburn: his instep from Windsor  
To Primrose Hill stretching to Highgate & Halloway.  
London is between his knees, its basements fourfold;  
His right foot stretches to the sea on Dover cliffs, his heel  
On Canterbury's ruins; his right hand covers lofty Wales,  
His left Scotland; his bosom girt with gold involves  
York, Edinburgh, Durham & Carlisle, & on the front  
Bath, Oxford, Cambridge, Norwich; his right elbow  
Leans on the Rocks of Erin's land, Ireland, ancient nation.  
His head bends over London.

...

He mov'd his right foot to Cornwall, his left to the Rocks of  
Bognor.  
He strove to rise to walk into the Deep, but strength failing  
Forbad, & down with dreadful groans he sunk upon his Couch  
In moony Beulah.<sup>1</sup>

Here Albion is England because Blake's message is specifically to the English; throughout his poetry he admonishes them for their selfish treatment of one another, their cruel laws and hypocritical morality, causing pain, guilt feelings and shame amongst the innocent:

The weeping child could not be heard,  
The weeping parents wept in vain;  
They strip'd him to his little shirt,  
And bound him in an iron chain;

And burn'd him in a holy place,  
Where many had been burn'd before:  
The weeping parents wept in vain.  
Are such things done on Albion's shore?<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of Milton's descent is to cast off selfishness: his self-sacrifice provides an example for the English. His individual example is repeated on a wider scale when the collective soul of England, Albion, eventually rises up in Jerusalem and, obeying Jesus, voluntarily throws himself into the "Furnaces of affliction" which immediately turn into "Fountains of Living Waters" on account of the loving self-sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps eighteenth-century England had more need of the message of love than other nations: she showed great hostility to her

<sup>1</sup> M., 39:34-52, K. 531.

<sup>2</sup> SE., 'A Little Boy Lost', K. 218-19.

<sup>3</sup> J., pl. 96:35-8, K. 744.

fellow human beings abroad, enslaving Africans, trying to keep America in subjection and warring against France with the feeble excuse of gallantry towards its royalty.<sup>1</sup> In any case, while Albion here has a particularly English character, we must still remember he is, on a wider scale, the original Universal Man, containing not only all peoples, but also sun, moon and stars within himself.

In the resurrected Albion, all men will be infused with one spirit, and, as at the beginning, there will be no separation. As Northrop Frye says:

In the imaginative world everything is one in essence, but infinitely varied in identity, as Blake remarks in a note on Swedenborg. We sometimes use the word identical to mean very similar, as in the phrase 'identical twins', but if twins were really identical they would be the same person, and hence could be different in form, like a tree and a dryad.<sup>2</sup>

Blake, on the beach at Felpham, gazes at the grains of sand, and the whole of nature takes on human form, as if spirits of men were living in it:

... Each grain of Sand,  
Every Stone on the Land,  
Each rock & each hill,  
Each fountain & rill,  
Each herb & each tree,  
Mountain, hill, earth & sea,  
Cloud, Meteor & Star  
Are Men Seen Afar.

...  
Heavenly Men beaming bright,  
Appear'd as One Man;  
Who Complacent began  
My limbs to infold  
In his beams of bright gold.<sup>3</sup>

For Blake, the Universe is infused by one Spirit; all human beings have gathered together in One Man. More recently, the French theologian, Teilhard de Chardin, has made the same point:

Hitherto, the prevailing view has been that the body (that is to say, the matter that is incommunicably attached to each soul) is a fragment of the universe - a piece completely detached from the rest and handed over to a spirit that informs it.  
... My own body is not these cells or those cells that belong

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion, see David V. Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton New Jersey, second ed., 1969, 'The American War': pp. 3-85; the English 'Crusade Against France': pp. 201-25, especially p. 222; on Slavery: pp. 226-42.

<sup>2</sup> 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, pp. 107-8.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Thomas Butts, 2 October 1800, lines 25-32 and 50-4, K.804-5.

exclusively to me: it is what, in these cells and in the rest of the world feels my influence and reacts against me. My matter is not a part of the universe that I possess totaliter: it is the totality of the Universe possessed by me partialiter.<sup>1</sup>

The Chinese Christian writer, Watchman Nee, has also expressed a similar idea:

Heaven will never be crowded. Throughout heaven there will only be one Man, not two, and certainly not a crowd! The only Man in heaven is God's one new Man - God's Son Himself and those who by faith are in Him .... God views His people not as unrelated units but as that one heavenly Man: Christ the Head, and we the members.<sup>2</sup>

Blake, however, probably took the idea from Swedenborg:

The whole heaven is a form of divine order on the largest scale, and is in the sight of God like one man .... I have seen as one man a community of angels consisting of several thousand.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps Blake also got the idea of multitudes of individuals making up the body of the Eternal Man from the simple words of St. Paul:

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body .... If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?<sup>4</sup>

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#### The Four Zoas

When Albion fell, all humanity fell with him because the fall consisted of the separation of one being from another. Blake believed there were two falls; the first took place before the creation of Eve: the very creation of Eve out of Adam was part of this fall because the feminine principle was now separated from him. There is no division of the sexes in Eternity. Separation is the Fall itself. We may compare Urthona when

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<sup>1</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, Science and Christ, trans. René Mague, pub. in English, New York, 1968, pp. 12-13, points d and g.

<sup>2</sup> Watchman Nee, What Shall This Man Do?, London and Eastbourne, 1961, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, Divine Love and Wisdom, 11; quoted by J.G. Davies, in The Theology of William Blake, Oxford, 1948, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> I Corinthians, ch. 12, vv. 14 and 17.

the female principle separates from him:

Dividing from his aking bosom, fled  
A portion of his life; shrieking upon the wind she fled.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did all humanity fall, but the whole universe fell as well. Before the Fall, the Universe was contained within "the mighty limbs of Albion" -- all was within. Now the Universe is outside us. The four zoas, the four attributes of the Eternal Man, fell together: the fall of one of them automatically entailed the fall of all the rest. These four zoas are the four living creatures round the chariot of God in Ezekiel and round the throne of God in the Book of Revelation:

One to the North, named Urthona: One to the South, named Urizen:  
One to the East, named Luvah: One to the West, named Tharmas;  
These are the Four Zoas that stood around the Throne Divine.<sup>2</sup>

The word zoa is a direct transliteration of the Greek for beast or living creature. Northrop Frye points out that in classical mythology the god in the chariot is drawn by some creature that represents the nature of the god inside, "the vehicular form of the driver himself, or his own body"<sup>3</sup>; for example, Juno is drawn by proud peacocks, Bacchus is drawn by leopards and Venus by peaceful doves. The same is true here: what pulls the chariot and makes it move is divine energy and this is what the zoas represent.<sup>4</sup>

The four zoas are named, in their unfallen state, as Urizen, Tharmas, Luvah and Urthona. Urizen represents the divine Intellect or Reason (as his name suggests); Tharmas is called "the parent power" and represents our power to create (not procreate) life at will: this power was lost to us at the Fall. Luvah is love (again suggested by his name) and Urthona, the Imagination. Within the body of the Eternal Man, their places are respectively the head, the breast, the loins and the legs and feet. Northrop Frye likens them to the image "mighty and of exceeding brightness" in Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and  
arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs  
of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FZ., I, 523-4, K. 278.

<sup>2</sup> M., pl. 19:16-18, K. 500;

<sup>3</sup> The term "Vehicular terror" is applied to Los in the Milton, pl. 17: 31, K. 498.

<sup>4</sup> Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 273.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel, ch. 2, v. 32.

John Beer tells us that these four metals represent "the ancient division of human history into four ages" -- the ages of gold, silver, brass and iron, "leaving Los [the fallen Urthona] dominant in the Age of Iron as the only positive creature energy".<sup>1</sup> Our present age would come under this last influence.

There is some ambiguity about the positions of Tharmas and Luvah in the breast and loins. In The Four Zoas, Blake quite definitely says that "Luvah and Vala wake & [flew del.] fly up from the Human Heart"<sup>2</sup>, not from the loins, and in Jerusalem, it is Luvah who has the silver bow (associated with the breast and moon) and Tharmas who has the brass one (associated with the loins).<sup>3</sup> However, the whole character of Tharmas, calm and protective shepherd, associates him with the silver moony world while the burning brass fits the passionate, fiery Luvah better. Then again, Tharmas is the "parent power" whose residence is rightly in the loins while the passions of Luvah reside in the breast. The only solution is to allow some flexibility of interpretation here or we shall lose some of the richness of the imagery.

Correspondingly, the golden head represents the sun (realm of Urizen in the south), the silver breast the moon (realm of Tharmas in the west), the brass loins the stars (realm of Luvah in the east) and the iron legs and feet of the Divine Man are the mountains (realm of Urthona in the snowy north).

However, since the Fall, Man has been upside-down and sees everything from the wrong perspective. This idea is present in Blake as early as The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, when Blake converses with the "Angel" of the orthodox church, whose Reason (which should be at the head of the Divine Man) is so darkened that he is now inverted:

So I remain'd with him, sitting in the twisted root of an oak;  
he was suspended in a fungus, which hung with the head downward into the deep.<sup>4</sup>

In the same way, the traditional, moralistic eighteenth-century church, according to Blake, said just the opposite of what Christ said, so prompting the comment: "The Modern Church Crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards"<sup>5</sup>, making people sacrifice the spontaneous dictates of

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<sup>1</sup> Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, pp. 35 and 108.

<sup>2</sup> FZ., I, 262, K. 271.

<sup>3</sup> J., pl. 97:7-11, K. 744.

<sup>4</sup> MHH., pls. 17-20, K. 156.

<sup>5</sup> VLJ., pl. 87, K. 615.

their personalities rather than fulfilling them. It had turned true Christianity upside-down.

Urizen, Intellect, whose realm should be in the sunny south, now has his position reversed and is as cold as ice, whereas Los (Urthona) now steps out of the sun.

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Shadows, spectres and emanations

Each man has a Shadow: it is simply the corruptible body in which he dwells here on earth, called a Shadow because, to Blake, the greater realities are the spiritual ones and matter not imbued by Spirit is dead. What is in this world is simply a shadow or copy of what is in the eternal world. In Blake, the spiritual body is called "the real human". This idea again shows the influence of Swedenborg, whose doctrine of correspondences declared that everything in the physical world is symbolic of something in the spiritual. Boehme too, saw nature as a "vegetable glass" in which spiritual realities were reflected.

However, Blake never underestimated the importance of the Shadow, the earthly body. He was never in any sense a dualist. Quite the reverse. This body is the housing-place of the Soul and the means through which the Soul works out its life in all its creative acts on earth. When the senses, or perceptions, are alive, one is able to do this: the body is awake, and the spectrous part of man is asleep:

His Spectre slept, his Shadow woke; when one sleeps, th'other wakes.<sup>1</sup>

When the senses are stifled by guilt feelings propagated by a false morality which says it is sin to use them, then the body is asleep and the Spectrous part of man is awake. Like this, it is impossible for man to take positive action: like Albion, he remains inert on the rock.

The Spectre is the niggling conscience which forces man to look inward and become introspective, "locked in his own identity", instead of outward to joy in the created universe. While the Spectre is in control, man is separated from his emanation. His emanation, figured as a bride, a counterpart, is in fact also the whole of his created work, all that he loves, desired and delights in -- the world he has made around himself.

With his body hampered by guilt, man's inner life cannot outwork itself in the actions he was created to perform, and there is no atmos-

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 21:3, K. 503.

phere of love and harmony around him. You are what you do, or "he became what he beheld"<sup>1</sup>, as Blake expresses it. If your inner attitudes are negative, your actions are negative too. So the spectrous guilt hounds the howling emanation throughout Blake's mythological world:

He hunts her footsteps thro' the snow & the wintry hail & rain.<sup>2</sup>

Harold Bloom expresses the relationship of Spectre and emanation:

Milton's selfhood must perish: the Spectre must vanish if the Emanation is to reveal herself. The Spectre in Milton is everything that impeded his lifelong quest to achieve a societal and artistic form that would unify man in the image of God. The Spectre is therefore every impulse towards dualism, which must include the impulse that shaped the God and Satan of Paradise Lost as antithetical beings, and then assigned so much of human energy and desire to Satan.<sup>3</sup>

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### Los

In the Milton, Los has developed considerably from the character in Blake's earlier poems. In Book I of The Four Zoas at the Fall, Urthona divides into two parts, a masculine and a feminine principle. These two are incarnate as the petulant and selfish twins, Los and Enitharmon, who tease and run away from their "old and age-bent" mother, Enion. Los feels "alternate Love & Hate" and Enitharmon "Scorn & Jealousy" "In embryon passions". A splendid marriage feast is arranged but we have an uneasy feeling when we read that they sit in "discontent & scorn":

Craving the more, the more enjoying, drawing out sweet bliss  
From ... the chariots of the Slain.<sup>4</sup>

As a father figure in Book V of the same poem, Los does not make a better impression, chaining down his new-born son Orc on the top of a mountain. The cause of this is jealousy. The incident is treated with psychological realism: once the son is repressed or "chained" by the jealous father, he becomes wildly rebellious. No amount of effort or repentance later on the father's part can free the son or undo the effects of a repressive childhood. However, there is a prophecy that a redeemer will come:

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 3:29, K. 483; cf. J., 65:75 and 79, K. 701.

<sup>2</sup> M., 32:5, K. 521.

<sup>3</sup> Blake's Apocalypse, 1963, p. 309.

<sup>4</sup> FZ., I, 440-1, K. 276.



Milton of the land of Albion  
Should up ascend forward from Felpham's Vale & break the Chain  
Of Jealousy from all its roots.<sup>1</sup>

Los, however, has obviously grown to more maturity by the time he reaches the Milton, in which poem he figures prominently. He is the spirit of vision or inspiration, and thus the father of all creative work. He is also the spirit of prophecy. Prophecy can obviously only exist in the world of time. His unfallen name is therefore Urthona, possibly a simple pun on "earth-owner", the one who has the temporal world in his care. The realm of Urthona is the mountains (at the feet of the Divine Man) but in our fallen upside-down world Los, the fallen Urthona, steps out of the sun (the head).

The metal associated with Urthona is iron, and the Iron Age (our age) according to John Beer<sup>2</sup>, is the last of the traditional ages of mankind. Fittingly, the occupation associated with Los is that of blacksmith. His work is to forge in fire. According to the Bible, only work that has been refined through fire will stand at the last day:

...for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.<sup>3</sup>

A blacksmith gives form to the shapeless hard iron and to Blake anything that gave form was Art and Vision. In painting, he hated chiaro-oscuro and the work of Titian, Rembrandt and Rubens -- "blotting and blurring demons", he called them, because he believed they obscured the form and lineaments of the people they depicted. For that reason, he loved Gothic art with its clear lines:

The Venetian and Flemish practice is broken lines, broken masses, and broken colours. Mr. B.'s practice is unbroken lines, unbroken masses, and unbroken colours. Their art is to lose form; his art is to find form, and to keep it. His arts are opposite to theirs in all things.<sup>4</sup>

Blake makes his point very clearly:

The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M., 23:36-8, K. 507.

<sup>2</sup> Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> I. Corinthians, ch. 3, v. 13.

<sup>4</sup> DC., III, K. 573.

<sup>5</sup> ibid., XV, K. 585.

So Satan is born (or rather, generated) "Refusing Form in vain".<sup>1</sup> In moments of spiritual crisis, Los labours extra hard at his anvils to create faster than Satan can destroy. We do not recognise evil because it poses as moral good, "an angel of light". Error can only be spurned when seen for what it is, when forced to take shape. Frye suggests that this is why Blake attacked Locke and not Hobbes: the error of frank, honest Hobbes was obvious enough to be rejected, whereas that of urbane Locke had the power to deceive.<sup>2</sup>

Real creation is carried out through "mental fight". As one spiritual temptation is combatted, man grows spiritually and the work he produces is purer, more durable, more able to stand the test of fire. Temptation builds character:

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.<sup>3</sup>

...though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Blake is following St. James and St. Peter when he says that "where there are no lineaments there can be no character".<sup>5</sup> Los is the giver of artistic form and to Blake the most perfect form is the "Human Form Divine". This was probably why he so much admired the powerful bodily forms of Michelangelo and Greek sculptors. Things become more real the more they are likened to human beings: the 'Ghost of a Flea' is effective as it has a murderous human face and incidentally, this is probably why the famous 'Tyger' engraving looks so comical -- Blake has no doubt tried to give it too human a face.

So it is Los and his counterpart, Enitharmon, who actually give form to mankind. All men, at birth, must pass through their hands, as he works at his forge and she weaves at her loom:

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 3:41, K. 483.

<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> James, ch. 1, vv. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> I Peter, ch. 1, vv. 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> DC., III, K. 575.

Three Classes are Created by the Hammer of Los & Woven  
By Enitharmon's Looms when Albion was slain upon his Mountains  
And in his Tent, thro' envy of Living Form,<sup>1</sup>

We were once all one in the Divine Body of Albion but when he fell, we had to be generated into this world as individual souls, clothed in individual bodies. The three classes are the Elect, Redeemed and Reprobate, represented by the archetypes, Satan, Palamabron and Rintrah. It is also a kindness to give form to the unborn souls, although some of them do not think so and have to be frightened into the moment of birth:

They contend with the weak Spectres, they fabricate soothing forms.  
The Spectre refuses, he seeks cruelty; they create the crested Cock.  
Terrified the Spectre screams & rushes in fear into their Net  
Of kindness & compassion.<sup>2</sup>

If the spectre takes form, the doubt and fear it symbolises will be recognised as evil and can be combatted. So the chief task of Los, Enitharmon and their sons is that of giving form, Artistic and Human.

It would seem that an embryo form of the blacksmith Los appears in 'The Tyger' poem of The Songs of Experience, making the creature of energy:

What the hammer? what the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps an embryo-Los and an embryo-Enitharmon also appear in the 'Sunflower' poem of The Songs of Experience, as "the Youth" who "pined away with desire" and "the pale Virgin shrouded in snow". This suggestion is made by Kathleen Raine<sup>4</sup>, who refers us to The First Book of Urizen where Enitharmon is described:

... the first female now separate,  
Pale as a cloud of snow  
Waving before the face of Los.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 2:26 - pl. 3:2, K. 482.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pl. 28:23-6, K. 515.

<sup>3</sup> K: 214.

<sup>4</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 221.

<sup>5</sup> FBU., pl. 18:10-12, K. 231.

Suggestions for the origin of the name of Los have included a derivation from Chaucer's "loos" or "los" meaning fame (Frye) and an anagram of soul (Margoliouth). Perhaps, however, Kathleen Raine's solution is the best. She suggests the origin of the name Los by referring to an engraving by Durer, one of Blake's favourite artists. Here the sun-god holds up a mirror in which his name 'A P O L O' is reflected and the writing appears backwards. Kathleen Raine comments:

Is it fanciful to see the name Los as Sol seen in reflection, or mirrored, in the water, or looking glass, of physical nature?<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, in Blake's 'Sunflower' poem, the sunflower in this world is "weary of time" and, following the movements of the sun, it is an image of this physical world reflecting the heavenly.

Kathleen Raine also mentions that in Swedenborg's philosophy there were two suns, the natural and the spiritual, and "the natural sun is created by the spiritual sun through influx".<sup>2</sup> Influx is the divine essence that infuses the natural world. Miss Raine writes and comments on Swedenborg's Divine Love and Wisdom:

"The spiritual sun by its heat vivifies spiritual beings, and renews spiritual things, whereas the sun of the natural world does indeed produce the same effects upon natural man and natural things, not from itself, but by the influx of spiritual heat" -- and spiritual heat is pure love, that is, life itself.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly Blake, looking through, not with, the eye saw the sun as a company of angels, rather than as "a disc, somewhat resembling a guinea"<sup>4</sup>, as his contemporaries saw it.

In a letter to Butts, dated 22 November 1802, Blake writes:

Then Los appear'd in all his power:  
In the Sun he appear'd, descending before  
My face in fierce flames; in my double sight  
'Twas outward a Sun; inward Los in his might.<sup>5</sup>

He sees a sun within a sun, the physical sun and the spirit of vision behind it.

Apollo, Kathleen Raine points out, was both the god of the sun and also, at Delphi, oracular inspiration. Los too has both of these

<sup>1</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pp. 225-6.

<sup>4</sup> VLJ., pp. 92-5, K. 617.

<sup>5</sup> lines 55-8, K. 818.

functions:

Los flam'd in my path & the Sun was hot  
With the bows of my Mind & the Arrows of Thought.<sup>1</sup>

Bryant, in his Mythology, speaks of the heart as being the sun of the bodily system and source of heat and life. He tells us that the emblem of the country of Egypt is a heart over a vase of incense burning to the deity of the sun. Bryant tells us that the word 'Ait' was a title of Ham or of the 'Sun and that:

Among the parts of the human body it was appropriated to the heart: for the heart in the body may be esteemed what the Sun is in his system, the source of heat and life, affording the same animating principle. This word having these two senses was the reason why the Egyptians made a heart over a vase of burning incense an emblem of their country.<sup>2</sup>

So, in Blake's poetry, the sun is likened to a "red Globule of Man's blood"<sup>3</sup>, the warm life-giving force within man as well as outside him:

The red Globule is the unwearied Sun by Los created  
To measure Time and Space to mortal Men.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the figure on the first plate of Jerusalem is depicted as exploring the recesses of the grave with a sun-like globe in his hand. So man, with the lamp of Los pulsing within, can explore himself.

Time, like Shelley's West Wind, can be both "destroyer and preserver". Time as destroyer has been a common theme in poetry, from Marvell's:

But at my back I alwaies hear  
Times winged chariot hurrying near.<sup>5</sup>

to Masfield's:

Each ticking in the clock's womb made life less.<sup>6</sup>

When we look at the future we are under the bondage of a time-limit and we are under its bondage when we look back on the past and remember with guilt and regret. This aspect of Time, clock-time, appears in

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1 Letter to Thomas Butts, 22 November 1802, lines 77-78, K. 818.

2 A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology, vol. I, 1774, p. 19.

3 M., pl. 29:19, K. 516.

4 ibid., pl. 29:23-4, K. 517.

5 'To His Coy Mistress', in The Poems of Andrew Marvell, ed. Hugh Macdonald, 1956, p. 22.

6 'The Daffodil Fields', in Poems by John Masfield, 1946, p. 209.

Blake as the Spectre of Urthona. Los, however, represents a different aspect of Time:

Los is by mortals 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.<sup>1</sup>

George Herbert expresses a similar thought in his poem 'Time': to the man who thinks of this material world only, Time is an "executioner" and his scythe is a "hatchet", but to those who think of eternal things, he is a "gardener" with a "pruning-knife"<sup>2</sup>.

Los is the preserver. He preserves all human actions, not to reproach us with them, but to create something positive out of the experience:

All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of  
Los's Halls, & every Age renews its powers from these Works.  
With every pathetic story possible to happen from Hate or  
Wayward Love; & every sorrow & distress is carved here.<sup>3</sup>

The tone of the passage is loving and caring: the afflicted will be comforted and not one sorrow or pain undergone in the world of time has passed unnoticed:

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,  
And thy maker is not by.<sup>4</sup>

In the Milton, Los expresses a similar thought:

"I am that Shadowy Prophet who Six Thousand Years ago  
"Fell from my station in the Eternal bosom. Six Thousand Years  
"Are finish'd. 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 unpermanent,  
"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,<sup>5</sup>  
"They vanish not from me & mine, we guard them first & last."

Six thousand years was the traditional time for the age of the earth. Los inspires our imaginative, creative acts so that they are eternal and indestructible. One act performed in the right spirit -- it may be a

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 24:68-71, K. 509-10.

<sup>2</sup> The Poems of George Herbert, The World's Classics, second ed., 1961, p.113.

<sup>3</sup> J., pl. 16:61-4, K. 638.

<sup>4</sup> SI., 'On Another's Sorrow', 29-30, K. 123.

<sup>5</sup> M., pl. 22:15-23, K. 505.

moment of prayer -- transfigures all the rest:

There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find,  
Nor can his Watch Fiends find it; but the Industrious find  
This Moment & it multiply, & when it once is found  
It renovates every Moment of the Day if rightly placed.<sup>1</sup>

This moment of inspiration in its most intense form is described in the Milton when Los steps out of the sun, "that fierce glowing fire", rather like the angel in Revelation who is "standing in the sun".<sup>2</sup> Los bound on Blake's sandals so that Blake could "walk forward through eternity" upon the "stones of fire"<sup>3</sup> and he entered Blake's soul.

So there are many aspects of Los -- spirit of inspiration, vision, prophecy, art, all creative work, eternal blacksmith refining in fire, creating form and giving life, our guardian in this troubled world. In Jerusalem, Los's Spectre receives full praise from the Sons of Eden as the only one who "kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble".<sup>4</sup>

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### Tharmas

Tharmas does not appear directly in the Milton, except that much of the poem is about Beulah, the particular world special to him. His chief characteristics are pity and compassion, and so by profession he is a shepherd tending the sheep. Each of the four zoas presides over one of the senses, and Tharmas presides over the tongue, which represents both touch and taste. He represents that free use of the senses which, without guilt and shame, was in man before the Fall. In the Europe we are told:

Five windows light the cavern'd Man.<sup>5</sup>

The five windows are the senses, but man is caverned in darkness because he will not use them. Freeing man from the puritanism that holds him in chains is one of the themes of the Milton.

The female counterpart of Tharmas is Enion who, once separated from the creative power of Tharmas, has hardly any existence at all. She wanders "Into Non Entity, revolving round in dark despair".<sup>6</sup> She is passive, feminine matter that must receive the creative principle; she

<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 35:42-5, K. 526.

<sup>2</sup> ch. 19, v. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel, ch. 28, v. 16.

<sup>4</sup> J., pl. 30:15, K. 655. Here, he is also referred to as Urthona's Spectre.

<sup>5</sup> Eur., pl. iii:1, K. 237.

<sup>6</sup> FZ., I, 219, K. 270.

has no existence without it; as her name suggests, she is 'non-entity' -- she has no active life of her own without Tharmas. The Fall comes about when she tries to dominate him; matter tries to swamp the spirit. It is through Enion that the fallen Urthona is generated, split into two beings, Los and Enitharmon.

Tharmas is the "Parent pow'er, dark'ning in the West" when the zoas fall. Kathleen Raine suggests he is the 'deus absconditus' of alchemy, who "animates the matter [Enion] that imprisons him".<sup>1</sup> Tharmas's element is the sea which symbolises both the matter into which he has fallen and also the raging chaos of primal energies out of which the world was made.

Northrop Frye suggests that the names of Tharmas and Enion may be derived from 'Thaumas' and 'Eion' of Hesiod, for Thaumas was also a sea-god.<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Raine believes Tharmas to originate from 'Thaumas', meaning "Wonder" in the Hermetic myth of the alchemists, and she quotes The Divine Pymander of Hermes Trismegistus (translated by John Everard), "Nature being mingled with man, brought forth a Wonder most Wonderful".<sup>3</sup> There is also a possible identification of Tharmas with Thammuz, both of whom are suffering gods.

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### Enitharmon

The themes they represent, if not the characters of Tharmas and Enion, figure in the Milton and they also help us to understand Enitharmon. She is clearly, as John Beer suggests, "Tharmas in the arms of Enion"<sup>4</sup>, the masculine creative spirit embraced by the female principle of matter. It is not surprising therefore that her task in the Milton is to clothe the souls about to be born with bodies. She weaves the bodies on her looms and then they are "spun beneath the spindle of Tirzah". The figures of the three Fates spinning out and cutting off the thread of life are, of course, traditional and it is probable that they are represented in Blake's picture found at Arlington Court.

In The Four Zoas, Enitharmon shows "scorn & jealousy" to Los and, subdued by eighteenth-century morality:

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<sup>1</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, pp. 279-80.

<sup>4</sup> Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 109.



... they kiss'd not nor embrac'd for shame & fear.<sup>1</sup>

In Europe, she appears as the cruel, dominant Queen of the Night. She summons her sons and daughters around her and sleeps for eighteen hundred years between the birth of Christ until the "trump of the last doom" in Blake's own time. Her cruelty and dominance are apparent:

"Now comes the night of Enitharmon's joy!  
"Who shall I call? Who shall I send,  
"That Woman, lovely Woman, may have dominion?  
"Arise, O Rintrah, thee I call! & Palamabron, thee!  
"Go! tell the Human race that Woman's love is Sin,-  
"That an Eternal life awaits the worm of sixty winters  
"In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come.  
"Forbid all Joy, & from her childhood shall the little female  
"Spread nets in every secret path."<sup>2</sup>

And later in the poem she "laugh'd in her sleep to see ... Over the doors 'Thou shalt not' & over the chimneys 'Fear' is written."<sup>3</sup>

Here, however, Enitharmon represents something far deeper than just female dominance, something that Blake frequently calls the Female Will. She is setting up laws of Morality. The Virginity which Enitharmon advocates here is part of the Female Will, showing a desire for dominance and separation, rather than unity. Leading a separate existence is selfish and for Blake, virginity was a sin rather than a virtue. It also has a wider significance: as in the poem Thel it is a conscious refusal of the experience of life without which the character cannot grow. There is no merit in untried virtue: rather it develops into a state of senility and loss of contact with reality as shown in Har and Heva of the Tiriel poem.

The Female Will also represents the female principle of matter seeking to dominate the masculine principle of spirit. W.H. Stevenson comments:

When she [Enitharmon] works with him [Los] the work is good; but on its own ... her work brings only ill, since it is un-inspired. Only he can give it life. She creates 'soft affections', which need the masculine virtues of strength and form if they are not to be corrupted.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> FZ., I, 238, K. 270.

<sup>2</sup> Eur., pl. 5:1-9, K. 240.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pl. 12:25 and 28, K. 243.

<sup>4</sup> The Poems of William Blake, 1971, p. 527.

When Milton journeys downwards, Enitharmon does not realise that he comes to cast off his previous error of Moralism. She mistakenly thinks he has come to propagate Moralism, set her free from Los and to liberate the Female Will. She therefore rejoices:

... "Surely to unloose my bond  
"Is this Man come! Satan shall be unloos'd upon Albion!"<sup>1</sup>

Here she shows the cruel, dominant side of her character in wishing to be liberated from Los.

As Los is regent of Time, so Enitharmon is regent of Space. In the Milton she "Created a New Space to protect Satan from punishment".<sup>2</sup> The space to which Satan fell is called Canaan and Los gave it a time-span of six thousand years: hence it is our present world, under evil dominion and yet to be delivered and become the Promised Land.

The sun belongs to Los and the moon belongs to Enitharmon. Her world of "moony lustre" is a beautiful resting place, but it is dangerous to stay in it too long because it is too relaxing, separated from Los's world of creativity. However, the dominant Enitharmon would have us tarry there if she could.

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### Luvah

Luvah is the Zoa of the passions, primarily that of love. Frye contrasts Luvah and Tharmas. Luvah is associated with sacrificial animals, such as bulls and the sacrificial lamb, whereas Tharmas is the shepherd of the protected lamb.<sup>3</sup> Luvah is the dying god, and appears in "robes of blood". In Revelation, Christ is described:

He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God .... He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.<sup>4</sup>

So Luvah, in "robes of blood", has aspects both of the crucified Christ and the wrathful Lord of the Apocalypse.

"The Wine-press of Luvah" figures in The Four Zoas, but in the Milton it is called "the Wine-press of Los". However, the sons and daughters of Luvah tread the grapes in the winepress in both cases, and

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 17:32-3, K. 498.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pl. 13:13, K. 494.

<sup>3</sup> Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 284.

<sup>4</sup> Revelation, ch. 19, v. 13.

Luvah himself "laid the foundation" of the press.<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Raine suggests that some of the attributes of Dionysus are incorporated in Luvah:

How red the sons & daughters of Luvah! here they tread the grapes:  
Laughing & shouting, drunk with odours many fall o'erwearied,  
Drown'd in the wine is many a youth & maiden: those around  
Lay them on skins of Tygers & of the spotted Leopard & the Wild  
Ass  
Till they revive, or bury them in cool grots, making lamentation.<sup>2</sup>

Miss Raine points out that the drunken revels and leopard skins are reminiscent of the Bacchanalian revels.<sup>3</sup> Dionysus was dismembered and scattered through nature and a little further on in the Milton we read that:

... Every scatter'd Atom<sup>4</sup>  
Of Human Intellect now is flocking to the sound of the Trumpet.

This is especially interesting in the light of Miss Raine's quotation from Thomas Taylor:

... by Dionys [i]us, or Bacchus ... we must understand the intellect of the mundane soul.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of the winepress is to extract all the good juice, all that man has worked for, and learnt and experienced, from the human grapes.

Like Dionysus, Luvah (and particularly his generated form, Orc) represent a cycle of life, death and renewal. Luvah himself is an ambivalent figure. He reminds us of the double nature of love, selfish and selfless, as so many of the Songs of Experience do; either:

"Love seeketh not Itself to please,  
"Nor for itself hath any care,  
"But for another gives its ease,  
"And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."

Or:

"Love seeketh only Self to please,  
"To bind another to Its delight,  
"Joys in another's loss of ease,  
"And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."<sup>6</sup>

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1 M., pl. 27:2, K. 513.

2 ibid., pl. 27:3-7, K. 513.

3 Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, pp. 357-8.

4 M., pl. 25:18-19, K. 510.

5 Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 354.

6 SE., 'The Clod & the Pebble', 1-4 and 9-12, K. 211.

Luvah's name, associated with love, is also associated with sadism and cruelty and battle:

The cruel joys of Luvah's Daughters, lacerating with knives  
And whips their Victims, & the deadly sport of Luvah's Sons.

They dance around the dying & they drink the howl & groan,  
They catch the shrieks in cups of gold, they hand them to one  
another:

These are the sports of love, & these the sweet delights of  
amorous play,  
Tears of the grape, the death sweat of the cluster, the last sigh  
Of the mild youth who listens to the lureing songs of Luvah.<sup>1</sup>

The animals and vermin (or perhaps the spirits that inhabit them) that dance round the winepress are also distinctly evil.

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### Orc

Orc is the fallen Luvah, generated, according to The Four Zoas and The First Book of Urizen, by Los and Enitharmon. His nativity is infernal, a parody of Christ's. Los, his father, represses him and chains him down on the top of a mountain with the chain of jealousy. His true passionate nature cannot develop and he becomes rebellious. Unjustly repressed, he becomes inflamed and "glows fiery red". His spirit is the spirit of revolution; he is behind the Americans when they rebel against the English for their independence and behind the French when they rebel against their heartless monarchs:

But terrible Orc, when he beheld the morning in the east,  
Shot from the heights of Enitharmon ...  
And in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of his  
fury.<sup>2</sup>

His name, according to Kathleen Raine, may come from Orlando Furioso in which two 'orcs' are mentioned, one a sea-monster, the other a creature resembling Cyclops.<sup>3</sup> Orcs as sea-monsters are also mentioned in Paradise Lost.<sup>4</sup>

Orc appears in the Milton in spirit if not in persona, as the spirit of war behind the preparations for the Last Battle of Apocalypse. At the end of the poem his "lions & tigers sport & play" getting ready for the kill, the unleashing of fury, just as they did at the end of

<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 2:35-41, K. 514.

<sup>2</sup> Eur., pl. 14:37-pl. 15:2, K. 244-5.

<sup>3</sup> However, even in modern Italian the words 'orca' and 'orco' are quite common; the first is a vicious sea-mammal, in behaviour like a shark; the second simply means an ogre.

<sup>4</sup> Par. Lost, IX, 825-31.

Europe when he appeared:

The Lions lash their wrathful tails!  
The Tigers couch upon the prey & suck the ruddy tide.<sup>1</sup>

Orc is behind all creatures of unrestrained energy. Blake at first sympathised with the French Revolution but by the time he wrote the Milton he could see that the new tyranny of Napoleon had risen out of it. So it is with all revolutions: the passionate spirit declines into a new establishment, issuing harsh laws just as the old one did. Northrop Frye believes that Orc bears an increasing resemblance to Milton's Satan: he "begins as a Promethean rebel and ends as a banished and execrated serpent".<sup>2</sup> Frye adds:

Milton's Satan is Orc, the power of human desire which gradually and inevitably declines into passive acceptance of impersonal law and external reason.<sup>3</sup>

For Frye there is no hero of Paradise Lost: it simply traces the Orc cycle (also in both Christ and Dionysus) of birth, death and resurrection and renewal. It "traces the Orc cycle to the point at which all the characters, from God the Father to Eve, are caught in the same quicksand of fatalistic morality".<sup>4</sup>

Orc and Milton's Satan are both embodiments of fiery, burning, unrestrained energy. Milton's cold, impersonal God is the real Evil One, "the prince of the power of the air". John Beer points out that when the Devil fell, he upset harmony in heaven and all fell, the only difference being that the cold moralistic God the Father fell further.<sup>5</sup>

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Vala; the Nameless Shadowy Female; Rahab and Tirzah

The emanation of Luvah is Vala. She develops out of a figure called the Nameless Shadowy Female in which form she unites with Orc at the beginning of Europe.

The name Vala suggests 'a veil', something that conceals. At the crucifixion of Christ, the veil separating the Holy of Holies and the outer part of the temple was torn in two, symbolising that man could

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<sup>1</sup> Eur., pl. 15:6-7, K. 1245.

<sup>2</sup> Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., p. 219.

<sup>5</sup> Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 24.

have full communion with God without any other intermediary but Christ. Vala, the veil, is Mystery, concealing rather than revealing God, and requiring priests as intermediaries. She is Shadowy because she is natural, of the body, which is only a shadow of the spiritual reality.

Vala is Nameless possibly because she cannot be defined and men fear what they cannot know. In this way, Blake thought, the eighteenth-century church blocked men from a personal knowledge of God and taught them to obey an unknowable abstract, issuing harsh moral laws and making them fear hell. Kathleen Raine, however, believes that this figure is Nameless because she is Paracelsus's Great Mystery, "which no certain essence and prefigured and formed idea could comprehend".<sup>1</sup> The Great Mystery was, to the alchemists, the first matter out of which all things proceed.

In any case, Vala is the Nature Goddess. She is very beautiful but her beauty is deceptive. She teaches men to worship nature, and to reproduce nature when they paint, whereas Blake would have us look through it to the spiritual world beyond. George Herbert's attitude is similar:

A man that looks on glasse,  
On it may stay his eye;  
Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,  
And then the heav'n espie.<sup>2</sup>

Blake's creation of Vala, the Nature Goddess, probably stemmed from his reading of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), whose work he abhorred. Basil Willey contrasts the old way of thinking about Nature as embodied in Marlowe's Dr. Faustus and the new way, as embodied in Bacon's Advancement of Learning:

The first obstacle that Bacon had to overcome ... before Nature could be investigated in the new way was the idea that natural science was the knowledge forbidden to Adam, its pursuit the re-enactment of the Fall, and its end damnation. The dread of knowledge is a very ancient thing; one form of it is expressed in the biblical allegory itself. But during the Christian centuries, as we have noticed, it had come to be accepted that Nature was the allotted sphere of the Fallen Angels -- to whose number were added the dethroned deities of the classical and Gothic pantheons .... To try and gain control over Nature, then, could only mean a desire to release these sinister agents and make them serve the ends of personal ambition.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by K. Raine, in Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Elixir', in The Poems of George Herbert, The World's Classics, second ed., 1961, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> B. Willey, The English Moralists, 1964, p. 127.

Bacon took pains to prove that if any knowledge was forbidden, it was not knowledge of Nature. Nature was not the home of evil spirits but the handiwork of God, and as such it was our duty to study it. However, even without realising it, Bacon exalted the position of Natural Science at the expense of religion:

... the more absurd and incredible any divine mystery is, the greater honour we do to God in believing it; and so much the more noble the victory of faith.<sup>1</sup>

According to Basil Willey, Bacon was afraid that "Biblical statements may be used to refute the conclusions of science".<sup>2</sup> Basil Willey comments:

He [Bacon] tries to guard against this danger by representing the Bible as so sacred and so supernatural that it is blasphemy to seek in it for truths proper to mere natural philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

As religion grew more abstract, so men began to look on Nature as the source of all knowledge. It was in this way that she became a goddess.

For Blake, Nature is beautiful but she is not a goddess, the end of all things. She cheats us when she makes us think so. As such, she is a whore, the woman in scarlet in Revelation. Rahab the Harlot represents the religion of the materialistic eighteenth-century church, a whore because it had corrupted the truth of Christ. She had taken the place of the true Bride, Jerusalem. She gave herself for hire, selling places in heaven in return for good works instead of offering free forgiveness. Rahab was the mother of Tirzah, the harsh moral law, which the church sanctioned.

In the Milton, Canaan is our world of time. In the Book of Joshua, the first city of Canaan to be entered is Jericho and the representative of this city is Rahab, the harlot. The last king to be defeated is the King of Tirzah. Together, therefore, Rahab and Tirzah symbolize all the evils of Canaan, the temporal world.

Tirzah was also the name of one of the five daughters of Zelophehad, according to the Book of Numbers. As Zelophehad had no sons, his daughters were allowed to inherit from him. She thus represents the evil, dominant Female Will. She is mentioned in the Milton with her sisters "Milcah & Mahlah & Noah & Hoglah" and with Rahab. Here the six

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<sup>1</sup> De Augmentis Scientiarum IX, quoted by B. Willey in The English Moralists, 1964, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> The English Moralists, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pp. 125-6.

of them are Milton's wives and daughters who "wrote in thunder, smoke and fire / His dictate", thus helping him to propagate Puritanism and the moral law; Milton's own body is here called "the Rock Sinai".

In his poem 'To Tirzah', Blake expresses how her moral laws prevent him from enjoying life in his God-given body, making him think of the body as evil. He should not consider her or the guilt feelings she inspires because Christ obtained forgiveness from sin and therefore freedom from guilt:

Thou, Mother of my Mortal part,  
With cruelty didst mould my Heart,  
And with false self-deceiving tears  
Didst bind my Nostrils, Eyes, & Ears:

Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay,  
And me to Mortal Life betray.  
Thē Death of Jesus set me free:  
Then what have I to do with thee?<sup>1</sup>

Although Blake so strongly resisted such moral teachings, he could still feel their pull, when they attacked through his conscience: this temptation he called his Spectre.

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#### Urizen/Satan

Urizen is perhaps the best-known of Blake's mythological beings, a bearded old man seen wandering through a cold, snowy world, or digging sharp compasses down into the deep in order to create a limited world while his back is towards the blazing light of vision. He is also seen clasping two tablets of the law or struggling not to drown in the waters of materialism. This character is the abstract God of the deists, the one who sets man's reason above all things; he is the kill-joy moralist of the church-leaders, a complete negation of energy, enthusiasm or any positive impulse, teaching man to fear punishment and hell. Urizen is a dualist: he tells man that his body and senses are evil, he is very plausible because in condemning the senses as sinful, he appears as an angel of light. After all, he is fallen reason. Plate 3 of the Milton describes the senses as they fall into Urizen's dominion:

Rolling round into two little Orbs, & closed in two little Caves,  
The Eyes beheld the Abyss, lest bones of solidness freeze over all;  
And a third Age passed over, & a State of dismal woe.

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<sup>1</sup> SE., K. 220.



From beneath his Orbs of Vision, Two Ears in close volutions.  
Shot spiring out in the deep darkness & petrified as they grew;  
And a fourth Age passed over, & a State of dismal woe.

Hanging upon the wind, two nostrils bent down into the Deep;  
And a fifth Age passed over, & a State of dismal woe.

In ghastly torment sick, a Tongue of hunger & thirst flamed out;  
And a sixth Age passed over, & a State of dismal woe.<sup>1</sup>

The irony of Urizen's position is that because he is alone he thinks he is a unity, but it is only introspective isolation. Separated from the other zoas he is pernicious:

"I am God alone:  
"There is no other! let all obey my principles of moral indivi-  
duality."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the Fall from Heaven took place when Urizen and Luvah struggled for autonomy, the reasoning power with the passions. The domination of one or the other would mean either complete repression or complete indulgence. In his eternal form, Urizen as Prince of Light drove the chariot of the sun. He was ploughman and sower, casting the seed of "eternal science" or "higher enlightenment" upon the soul.<sup>3</sup> He represented faith and certainty. Now he is a miller, grinding down creative minds.

Urizen is generated as Satan. When he is born, he refuses form because if people could see him for what he really was they would reject him. He appears as a mild, plausible do-gooder like Hayley. However, he conceals the Hobbesian appeal to self-interest as a means of persuading people to act in a 'Christian' manner. It is in our interest to be kind because then others will be kind to us; it is in our interest to obey the laws if we want to live in a peaceful society; we can enjoy pity because it makes us feel superior to the person pitied. In the Milton, Palamabron prays that Satan will be revealed:

That he who will not defend Truth, may be compelled to  
Defend a Lie, that he may be snared & caught & taken.<sup>4</sup>

Satan's lie must be made obvious so that we can reject it. Enitharmon created our world "to protect Satan from punishment". This world is

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 3:14-23, K. 482.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pl. 9:25-6, K. 490.

<sup>3</sup> M.O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, New York, 1938, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> M., pl. 8:47-8, K. 489.

called Canaan and it was to here that Satan fell. His glory as the Prince of Light diminishes and "his bosom grew / Opake against the Divine Vision". In mercy, the Divine Hand created a "Limit of Opacity". There is only a certain point to which reason is allowed to be darkened: some glimmer of truth must remain. Satan himself is the Limit of Opacity.

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Ahania/Leutha

The emanation of Urizen is Ahania. Milton O. Percival describes her as "the whole of the mind's desire, whatever its character".<sup>1</sup> She is very beautiful but the moralists of the eighteenth-century church thought of desire as sin, and in this form she appears as Leutha, springing from the head of Satan,

In The Book of Ahania we read:

Deep groan'd Urizen! stretching his awful hand,  
Ahania (so name his parted soul)  
He seiz'd on his mountains of Jealousy.

He groan'd, anguish'd, & called her Sin,  
Kissing her and weeping over her;  
Then hid her in darkness, in silence,  
Jealous, tho' she was invisible.<sup>2</sup>

Ahania is both intellectual desire and sexual desire. Percival likens her to Plato's division of desire into the irrational and the rational. The former was the desire for objects of sense in this world, and the latter was "a rising towards the Absolute".<sup>3</sup> The first was considered bad and the second good desire. Percival comments that it is impossible to "attack a portion of desire without attacking the whole of it", and that "the division led more and more in the direction of asceticism".<sup>4</sup> The more Ahania is worshipped as the higher form of desire, the more she is in danger of extinction. We have passed from the Greek condemnation of irrational desire to the Hindu repudiation of all desire:

... in Ahania we have the desire which Hindu philosophy repudiated in its quest of Nirvana.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Blake's Circle of Destiny, New York, 1938, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> BA., pl. 2:31-7, K. 249-50.

<sup>3</sup> M.O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, New York, 1938, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

So Sin is born. She, as Leutha, total sensuality, forms a contrast to the Diana-like figure of Elynittria, the "silver bowed queen". Leutha's real sin was persuading Satan to usurp Palamabron's place in the world of art, and she confesses to the Divine Assembly:

"I humbly bow in all my Sin before the Throne Divine."<sup>1</sup>

As Sin, she is redeemable for "the Divine Pity supported her". However, it is difficult to know how stable she is or how far she can be trusted. Her translucent "moth-like elegance" and "varying colours" and her appearance as a rainbow on the hills suggest she is changeable and deceptive. Satan can persuade people to do his will because he plays on their pity: he, like Hayley, weakens their resolve.

Los says:

I should have remember'd that pity divides the soul  
And man unmans.<sup>2</sup>

This is due to Leutha's influence. She worked on Satan's masculine resolve with her feminine pity:

"Like sweet perfumes, I stupified the masculine perceptions  
"And kept only the feminine awake."<sup>3</sup>

Some of the vocabulary that describes her and her dreams is distinctly sinister. Elynittria met her and:

...sooth'd her with soft words & brought her to Palamabron's bed  
In moments new created for delusion, interwoven round about.  
In dreams she bore the shadowy Spectre of Sleep & nam'd him Death:  
In dreams she bore Rahab, the mother of Tirzah, & her sisters  
In Lambeth's vales, in Cambridge & in Oxford, places of Thought,  
Intricate labyrinths of Times and Spaces unknown, that Leutha lived  
In Palamabron's Tent and Oothoon was her charming guard.<sup>4</sup>

"Delusion", "shadowy Spectre", "Intricate labyrinths" and also the children Leutha dreams of producing all indicate that there is something sinister about her, even though this incident takes place after her repentance.

Leutha's "charming guard", Oothoon, has already appeared in The Visions of the Daughters of Albion; walking in Leutha's vale, she plucked a marigold, flew over the sea and was raped by Bromion. As a consequence,

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 13:3, K. 493.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pl. 8:19-20, K. 488.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pl. 12:5-6, K. 492.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., pl. 13:38-44, K. 494.

her lover, Theotormon, sits in misery and jealousy on the shore, looks on her as defiled and refuses to accept her back. Plucking the flower represents the attainment of sexual love; just as in the Neoplatonist view, Persephone by gathering narcissi invited her own rape, so Oothoon invites hers.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps something more than a desire for sexual experience is involved: Kathleen Raine believes that "Oothoon is to Leutha as soul is to body"<sup>2</sup>, and when Oothoon flies over the sea (usually a symbol of matter in Blake) she is the soul descending to the physical world. In Eternity, soul and body would be one, but on earth they are often seen in opposition. However, the conditions of love in Leutha's vale, or on earth, do not correspond with the happiness of the soul's love in eternity and Oothoon suffers considerably. Oothoon has been deceived by the marigold's promise of happiness.

In a sensuous passage from Europe, Leutha is described as beautiful but deceiving:

"Where is my Lureing bird of Eden? Leutha, silent love!  
"Leutha, the many colour'd bow delights upon thy wings:  
"Soft soul of flowers, Leutha!  
"Sweet smiling pestilence! I see thy blushing light;  
"Thy daughters, many changing,  
"Revolve like sweet perfumes ascending, O Leutha, silken queen!"<sup>3</sup>

If love is healthy and good, it should be out in the open, not secret and silent. The perfumes may be sweet, but cover something unpleasant. David Erdman sees here a reference to Marie-Antoinette in her rustling silks<sup>4</sup> and perhaps there is a reference to unhealthy court life -- physically unhealthy, as "pestilence" suggests; the "blushing light" would then be the blush of false modesty or even rouged cheeks. Kathleen Raine's very different interpretation is that Leutha is the "lureing bird of Eden" because she lures the soul down into generation.

Milton's Sin was also associated with dogs or hell-hounds, and Kathleen Raine points out the reference to "the Dogs of Leutha" in Jerusalem, plate 83: they may symbolise the lower aspects of carnal desire in Leutha.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> Eur., pl. 14:9-14, K. 244.

<sup>4</sup> Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 173.

The sons of Los

The most important of these are Rintrah, Palamabron and Satan who have already been discussed as the archetypes of the three classes of men, the Reprobate, the Redeemed and the Elect. In slightly different form they appear again in Blake's Descriptive Catalogue of 1809. Here Blake describes how the ancient Britons were divided into three classes, represented by the most Strong, the most Beautiful and the most Ugly:

The Strong Man represents the human sublime. The Beautiful Man represents the human pathetic, which was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. The Ugly Man represents the human reason. They were originally one man, who was four-fold; he was self-divided, and his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. How he became divided is a subject of great sublimity and pathos.<sup>1</sup>

Rintrah is clearly the Strong Man, Palamabron the Beautiful Man, and Satan the Ugly Man.

These, Blake tells us, were the only three Britons to escape in the Last Battle of King Arthur, and they "shall rise again with tenfold splendor when Arthur shall awake from sleep, and resume his dominion over earth and ocean".<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Arthur is the symbol of Christ in the 'Jerusalem' lyric.

Northrop Frye believes that Moses is represented by Palamabron and Elijah by Rintrah. These are the two witnesses "who lie dead in the street of the great city" because of their testimony. In the eighteenth century, their prophetic voices spoke through Whitefield and Wesley.<sup>3</sup> Moses is good when linked with Rintrah, the prophetic imagination, because then he represents the spirit as opposed to the letter of the law; he is dangerous when allied with Aaron, the representative of the priestly code.<sup>4</sup>

Other sons of Los are described in plate 28 of the Milton when the human beings about to be generated are given form. They include the Greek-sounding Antamon who moulds the human form with "his beautiful hands"; Sotha, who "symbolises the outbreak of war in the world"<sup>5</sup>, and

<sup>1</sup> DC., V, K. 578.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, introductory heading, K. 577.

<sup>3</sup> M., pl. 22:55 and 61, K. 506.

<sup>4</sup> Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 334.

<sup>5</sup> S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary, 1973, p. 378.

the jealous Theotormon dispensing fright. Perhaps Theotormon's name suggests theological torment; this is certainly his character as the lover of Oothoon. He is repressed by the church's law because he is taught to fear hell; Ozoth gives protection to vision, albeit clouded. Man usually only sees external, physical things, but Ozoth preserves the power to look in.

Reuben and Gad and all the other tribes of Israel are also listed amongst Los's sons. Still more sons of Los include the constellations, the trees on the mountains and the dragonflies (Milton, plates 25 and 26) -- in fact, any part of nature that is seen imaginatively.

Blake's mythology: the places

There are four worlds in Blake's mythology: the two upper worlds of Eden and Beulah, and the two lower worlds of Generation and Ulro. Man can exist in different states of being simultaneously in all of them, a theme explored in the Milton.

1. Eden

This is the world of Creative Imagination. From it, Los steps out of the sun. In it, "everything is one in essence, but infinitely varied in identity"<sup>1</sup>. In it, risen man can walk in fire that would scorch fallen man. God speaks to Moses from the burning bush; he and his servants can survive in the burning fiery furnace.<sup>2</sup> A note scribbled on the back of a sketch for the last plate of the Milton speaks of returning "from flames of fire tried & pure & white"<sup>3</sup>. It is the world of the Holy Spirit that fell on the disciples in tongues of fire and the world of Carlyle's "fire-baptism".

It is associated with gold, the colour of the sun, gold that has been refined in holy fire. It is the highest world in Blake's cosmology. There is total unity in Eden: the Eternals meet there together as one Man. It is a four-fold world; since before the Fall, the four zoas, or aspects of Man, were united. It is the world of "Mental Fight" and poetic inspiration.

2. Beulah

Beulah is the three-fold world with which the poem Milton is most concerned. It lies on the outskirts of Eden and provides a resting-place for those wearied with the spiritual battles of great Eternity. In Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Beulah is a country "whose Air was very sweet and pleasant", and we learn that:

In this Countrey the Sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the shadow of death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting-Castle. Here they were within sight of the City they were going to: also here met them some of the Inhabitants thereof. For in this Land the shining Ones commonly walked, because it was upon the Borders of Heaven.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Northrop Frye, 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel, ch. 3, vv. 19-27, especially v. 25.

<sup>3</sup> K. 535.

<sup>4</sup> John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. James Blanton Wharey; second ed. revised by Roger Sharrock, Oxford, 1960, pp. 154-5.

John Beer also remarks that Boehme "makes a separation between Heaven and Paradise which suggests that Paradise itself is an inferior state, not to be equated with Heaven. The latter idea falls in with Milton's cosmology, but not with those orthodox conceptions that virtually identify the two states"<sup>1</sup>.

The name Beulah means "married" and is taken from Isaiah:

You shall no more be termed  
Forsaken,  
and your land shall no more  
be termed Desolate;  
but you shall be called My delight  
is in her,  
and your land Married;  
for the Lord delights in you  
and your land shall be married.<sup>2</sup>

John Beer writes:

In sexual love there can be a brief revelation of that eternal light which belongs to the state of full vision.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike Bunyan's Beulah, however, Blake's Beulah is a silvery world, presided over by Enitharmon's moon:

There is from Great Eternity a mild & pleasant rest  
Nam'd 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.<sup>4</sup>

It is the world so beautifully described in Blake's poem 'Night' in the Songs of Innocence. It is a protected world, a world of the Shepherd and the lamb (as such it is Tharmas's world). It is the world of dreams and of innocent childhood:

Beulah is evermore Created around Eternity, appearing  
To the Inhabitants of Eden around them on all sides.  
But Beulah to its Inhabitants appears within each district,  
As the beloved infant in his mother's bosom round incircled  
With arms of love & pity & sweet compassion.<sup>5</sup>

However, Beulah also has its dangers. It is not the ultimate reality. The highest world is Eden and the person who stays too long in Beulah will become old and addled like Har and Heva in Blake's poem

<sup>1</sup> Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah, ch. 62, v. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> FZ., I, 94-98, K. 266.

<sup>5</sup> M., 30:8-12, K. 518.



Tiriell. Beulah is a place for rest, not sloth. Harold Bloom comments that the wind of Beulah that "unroots the rocks & hills"<sup>1</sup> is the breath of inspiration which is both creative of new art and destructive of the natural order.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Generation

This is the two-fold world below Beulah. It is our everyday world here on earth in which man is concerned with labouring for his daily bread and keeping the law. It is rather a boring world, priggish, moralistic and materialistic. When its energies do break out, they take the form of wild Orc-like revolution. However, the revolutionary spirit soon degenerates and a new tyranny is established.

### 4. Ulro

This is Hell. Its ruler is Urizen. In the Milton, the term Ulro is applied far more often to our world than the term Generation is. Perhaps that is because the main theme of the Milton is casting off the Selfhood. The Ulro is a world of single vision in which man is totally wrapped up in himself and lives in splendid isolation from his neighbour. He is self-righteous, autonomous and certainly feels no need of God.

In the Ulro, the scenery may be vague, indefinite, without form; or there may be labyrinthine paths, symbolising the intricacies of abstract thought; or the scenery may consist of hard rocks and desert wastes, especially as described in plate 17 of the Milton.

Here, of course, Blake is deliberately using external scenery to express the state of mind within. Physically, a person can be in any one of Blake's four worlds without moving from his back garden: it depends on his state of mind.

The Ulro is the world of the False Tongue or of the Accuser of Sin. Like Dante's Inferno, it too has nether depths, known as the Or-Ulro, to which Ololon directs her steps.

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An excellent exposition of these four worlds and their importance in the Milton is given by Northrop Frye in his commentary on the Milton.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 7:33, K. 487.

<sup>2</sup> Blake's Apocalypse, 1963, p. 318.

<sup>3</sup> 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, pp. 105-29.

Golgonooza, Bowlahoola and Allamanda

Blake's whole teaching of "the kingdom of God within" is embodied in the image of Golgonooza. Golgonooza symbolises the inside of man's body, the dwelling-place of the soul or Jerusalem:

And every Generated Body in its inward form  
Is a garden of delight & a building of magnificence,<sup>1</sup>  
Built by the Sons of Los in Bowlahoola and Allamanda.

Jerusalem, the emanation of Jesus, is the collective soul of redeemed Mankind. Golgonooza is the collective body: it is collective because the Eternal Man is made up of multitudes of individuals and so:

We who are many are one body.<sup>2</sup>

Los, the Imagination, has his palace inside man, in Golgonooza. Man's body is also the home of art and poetic inspiration. When Blake has his memorable vision while fastening on his sandals, Los descends to him from the sun. Los first enters his soul and then accompanies Blake to Golgonooza: this simply means that Los accompanies and enables Blake to see inside himself.

Blake's idea of describing the body as a city or palace where the soul dwells is beautiful, but not new. St. Teresa of Avila, whom Blake admired, used a similar image in her work, Interior Castle:

I began to think of the soul as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions.<sup>3</sup>

This is similar to Blake's image in the 'Crystal Cabinet'. Strictly speaking, it is the soul that St. Teresa likens to the castle, rather than the body, but the idea of journeying within is the same. In the Bible, the body is referred to as a temple:

Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days,<sup>4</sup>  
I will raise it up'. ... He spoke of the temple of his body.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 26:31-3, K. 512.

<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians, ch. 10, v. 17.

<sup>3</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, Interior Castle, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers, New York, 1961, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> John, ch. 2, vv. 19 and 21.

<sup>5</sup> I Corinthians, ch. 6, v. 19.

Spenser, also much admired by Blake, uses an image similar to Blake's in The Faerie Queen. Alma, the Soul, lives in the fortress of the body. It has a portcullis (the nose) above the entrance (the mouth), and thirty-two guards (the teeth). The stomach has many pipes and chimneys and there is also the furnace of the heart and the pair of bellows, or the lungs, to cool its heat. The head is an ivory turret, the walls of which are covered with pictures of day-dreams, memories and ideas. The body is attacked and besieged by hordes of enemies, who make particular assaults on the five senses.<sup>1</sup> Blake also repeatedly tells us how our senses are under the attack of the moral law and need "cleansing", or liberating. However, in Spenser, it is Sir Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, who rescues the senses, whereas Blake considered Temperance to be a "Negative Virtue", one of "the four iron pillars of Satan's Throne"<sup>2</sup>. We can see that parts of Alma's castle resemble Blake's picture of Bowlahoola in the Milton:

In Bowlahoola Los's Anvils stand & his Furnaces rage:  
Thundering the Hammers beat & the Bellows blow loud,

...  
The Bellows are the Animal Lungs: the Hammers the Animal Heart:  
The Furnaces the Stomach for digestion: terrible their fury.  
Thousands & thousands labour, thousands play on instruments  
Stringed or fluted to ameliorate the sorrows of slavery.  
Loud sport the dancers in the dance of death, rejoicing in carnage.  
The hard dentant Hammers are lull'd by the flutes' lula lula,  
The bellowing Furnaces blare by the long sounding clarion,  
The double drum drowns howls & groans, the shrill fife shrieks &  
cries,  
The crooked horn mellows the hoarse raving serpent, terrible but  
harmonious:  
Bowlahoola is the Stomach in every individual man.<sup>3</sup>

In this rather humorous passage, Blake describes in apocalyptic terms something as banal as the stomach and all the noises it makes. Its gurgles and rumbles are likened to an orchestra -- the "instruments / stringed" probably refers to the network of nerves or perhaps the fibres and sinews spread out in the body; the fluted instruments are probably the pipes, particularly the wind-pipe, of the orchestra. The serpent referred to above was a wooden instrument, coiled like a serpent. The "hard dentant Hammers" are of course the teeth, white as piano keys. The heart also beats like a hammer and is probably the "double drum"

<sup>1</sup> Spenser, The Faerie Queen, Book II, Cantos 9 and 11.

<sup>2</sup> M., pl. 29:48, K. 517.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pl. 24:51-2, and 58-67, K. 509.

referred to. The lungs are like a pair of bellows, the same image as Spenser uses. As the food is swallowed and mashed, Blake bombastically reports "Loud sport the dancers in the dance of death, rejoicing in carnage". The internal workings of the digestive system are certainly "horrid labours", but eating can also be highly pleasurable and so the melody is also sweet. Perhaps the melodic instruments of the orchestra are also necessary to soothe the highly-strung nerves.

Bowlahoola, therefore, is within the city of Golgonooza, the body, because it represents the stomach. David Erdman suggest the name "Bowlahoola" is taken from "bowels" and the name "Allamanda" from "alimentary canal".<sup>1</sup> Could the name Golgonooza come from Golgotha, the Greek version of the Hebrew word (gulgōleth) for the skull? Golgonooza is also the city of art, and art is conceived in the mind of man.

We are also told very plainly in the Milton that Bowlahoola represents the Law and the legal profession.<sup>2</sup> Allamanda represents Commerce. Allamanda is also described in the Milton:

... Allamanda, call'd on Earth Commerce, is the Cultivated land  
Around the City of Golgonooza in the Forests of Entuthon:  
Here the Sons of Los labour against Death Eternal ....

...  
Urizen's sons here labour also, & here are seen the Mills  
Of Theotormon on the verge of the Lake of Udan-Adan.<sup>3</sup>

It is logical that the sons of Urizen, the miller, should labour in the fields, which are on the verge of the Lake of Time and Space. The waters of chaos provide the energy to work their mills, and in these archetypal fields they create our mundane universe, for here "the seeds of all things" are planted.<sup>4</sup>

The connection between commerce and the "cultivated land" or agriculture is found in a fragment of Blake's early play, Edward III:

... Commerce, tho' the child of Agriculture,  
Fosters his parent, who else must sweat and toil,  
And gain but scanty fare.<sup>5</sup>

Agricultural products were traded and the profit ensured a decent living for the farmers, according to this speech.

<sup>1</sup> Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, p. 432 (footnote 17).

<sup>2</sup> M., pl. 24:48, K. 509.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pl. 27:42-4 and 49-50, K. 514.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., pl. 27:53, K. 514.

<sup>5</sup> 'King Edward Third', in Poetical Sketches, Scene II, 31-33, K. 19.

Blake does not attack Commerce in itself, although his own venture into the world of commerce as owner of a print-shop was not very successful. He does, however, attack people who perjure their art and ideals for the love of money. He also opposed the British Government's attempt to persuade the merchants of the day that war was necessary for defence of commerce and Britain's sea-trade. True commerce, however, the product of labour of one's hands and its just reward, Blake sees as admirable.

Blake's Golgonooza is a city rather than a fortress, but in the centre of the city stand "Luban, Los's palace & the golden looms of Cathedral", which are surrounded by "a moat of fire". In Cathedral, the physical body of man is woven by Enitharmon and so, Foster Damon quite logically suggests that Cathedral represents the womb.<sup>1</sup>

The sons of Los work inside Golgonooza, the body, to give form to the "Spectres" or human beings about to be born. Two of Los's sons, Theotormon and Sotha, "stand in the Gate of Luban" through which the child is born.<sup>2</sup> Birth is difficult: the "Spectre" has to be frightened by them into birth and for that reason the child is "born a weeping terror".

Blake's city of Golgonooza is also found in the midst of the evil world of the Ulro:

Around Golgonooza lies the land of death eternal, a Land  
Of pain and misery and despair & ever brooding melancholy.<sup>3</sup>

Within ourselves lies the beautiful refuge from the pain of the outside world. Immediately around Golgonooza are "the Forests of Entuthon Benython" where the winds howl in the trees. This is actually the wailing of souls who are lost in the woods and are driven in all directions by their passions and appetities. These souls are formless: Los and his sons clothe them with form (bodies) or "houses" and give definition to their desires.

Outside Golgonooza, near the forest, is a dark lake, called "the Lake of Udan-Adan". It roughly corresponds to the lake into which the devils fall in Hell, although it is not fiery. Water is the symbol of materialism and the lake symbolises our world of time and space. Satan sleeps "upon his couch in Udan-Adan" so it is a solid world in our sense

<sup>1</sup> A Blake Dictionary, 1973, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Raine points out that the name 'Luban', according to Bryant, is a variant of Laban, and is a denomination of the Arkite moon which symbolised life travelling over the sea of generated existence. Luban is also Ararat, or Mons Lunaris, and "from this mountain all peoples dispersed over the world". See K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> J., pl. 13:30-31, K. 633.

of the term. Narcissus gazed into a lake and fell in love with the reflection or shadow of reality. This reflection of reality is what the time-space lake meant to Blake.

The Lake of Udan-Adan is described more fully in The Four Zoas:

"... a Lake not of Waters but of Spaces,  
"Perturb'd, black & deadly; on its Islands & its Margins  
"The Mills of Satan and Beelzeboul stand round the roots of Urizen's  
tree;  
"For this Lake is form'd from the tears & sighs & death sweat of  
the Victims  
"Of Urizen's laws, to irrigate the roots of the tree of Mystery."<sup>1</sup>

The building of Golgonooza, described most fully in Jerusalem is a real labour of love:

The stones are pity, and the bricks, well wrought affections  
Enamel'd with love & kindness, & the tiles engraven gold,  
Labour of merciful hands: the beams & rafters are forgiveness:  
The mortar & cement of the work, tears of honesty: the nails  
And the screws & iron braces are well wrought blandishments,  
And well contrived words, firm fixing, never forgotten,  
Always comforting the remembrance: the floors, humility:  
The cielings, devotion: the hearths, thanksgiving.  
Prepare the furniture, O Lambeth, in thy pitying looms,  
The curtains, woven tears & sighs wrought into lovely forms  
For comfort; there the secret furniture of Jerusalem's chamber  
Is wrought.<sup>2</sup>

The imagery here is very similar to that of George Herbert's 'The Church-Floore':

Mark you the floore? that square & speckled stone,  
Which looks so firm and strong,  
Is Patience:

And th'other black and grave, wherewith each one  
Is checker'd all along,  
Humilitie.<sup>3</sup>

Both passages have a quiet strength. However, Blake makes it clearer that beauty of character only comes through labour, suffering and patient endurance. Humility and pity should not be "wishy-washy" virtues. In his society, they often appeared as obsequiousness and condescension instead of signs of real strength and understanding. In this passage, Blake avoids sentimentality by juxtaposing "honesty" and "tears", "lovely forms" and "wrought", "comforting" yet "firm fixing" words. Even

<sup>1</sup> FZ., VIII, 225-229, K. 246-7.

<sup>2</sup> J., pl. 12:30-41, K. 632.

<sup>3</sup> The Poems of George Herbert, The World's Classics, second ed., 1961, p. 58.

the gold has to be cut, or engraved, to yield its full beauty. In the middle of the passage are "the nails / And screws & iron braces"; they and the "well contrived words" which they represent remind us of the quiet book of Ecclesiastes, the whole theme of which is the learning of wisdom through experience:

The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings which are given by one Shepherd.<sup>1</sup>

The whole city of Golgonooza has four four-dimensional gates which connect it to Eternity. Golgonooza is the body, and the way to Eternity is within. When the Eternals drive Milton and the Seven Angels of the Presence (the "Starry Eight") out of Eden, they flee down into Golgonooza "where Los opens his three wide gates" (the fourth gate, the gate of Tharmas, has been closed since the Fall of Eternal Man).

Los and Enitharmon dwell in Golgonooza: in plate 19 of the Milton, we are told that the universe of Los and Enitharmon is surrounded by the four ruined universes of the four Zoas which lie to the North, South, East and West. Each gate in Golgonooza therefore represents entry into one of the four senses, for each Zoa has charge of a different sense. Urthona in the North has charge of the hearing; Urizen in the South has charge of the sight; Luvah in the East has charge of the sense of smell and both taste and touch belong to Tharmas, in the West.

Each of the four gates of Golgonooza is again four-fold, or four-dimensional, so man has access to the worlds of Eden, Beulah, Generation or the Ulro through his bodily gates, whichever world he chooses. The western gate of Tharmas will be re-opened on the Last Day, at Apocalypse. In the meantime, it is guarded by four cherubim; these are the cherubim who guarded the tree of life in Eden and prevented man from going back into Paradise.

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It may help the reader to consult S. Foster Damon's map of the complicated city of Golgonooza, although, as he himself points out, it is impossible to give an adequate idea of a four-dimensional city in a two-dimensional diagram.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes, ch. 12, v. 11.

<sup>2</sup> S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary, 1973, p. 163 (map); for Golgonooza, see pp. 162-5.

The Milton: a critical study

Plate 1: The Preface

In the Preface, Blake extols "the sublime of the Bible" against "the stolen and perverted writings of Homer and Ovid, of Plato and Cicero". Why does Blake denigrate the classical authors (whereas elsewhere he professes admiration for them) and what does he mean by sublime?

Blake rejected the classical authors because their Muses, the Daughters of Memory, led them to set up standars of moral goodness, remembering sin, rather than the goodness of grace. "If Morality was Christianity, Socrates was The Savior."<sup>1</sup> Blake asserts, and we may contrast Joseph's speech to Mary in Jerusalem, as he recounts the words of the angel of his dream:

"... 'Doth Jehovah Forgive a Debt only on condition that it shall  
"Be Payed? Doth he Forgive Pollution only on conditions of Purity?  
"That Debt is not Forgiven! That Pollution is not Forgiven!  
"Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the  
"Heathen, whose tender Mercies are Cruelty.'"<sup>2</sup>

There are to be no "Public RECORDS"<sup>3</sup> in a heaven where sins are "blotted out". Leutha, in the Milton, is the embodiment of Sin, but she is forgiven:

"I humbly bow in all my Sin before the Throne Divine."

...

Now Leutha ceas'd: tears flow'd, but the Divine Pity supported her."<sup>4</sup>

It is a false religion that sees:

"Heaven as a Punisher, & Hell as One under Punishment,  
"With Laws from Plato & his Greeks to renew the Trojan Gods  
"In Albion, & to deny the value of the Saviour's blood."<sup>5</sup>

The Trojan gods demanded strict moral obedience, and -- if any credit could be given to the old legend -- it was Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas himself, who brought them to England.

Blake must have seen the classical authors as opposed to the fundamental laws of life, especially in the Stoic ideal that suicide could

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<sup>1</sup> Ann. Thornton, K. 786. These words also appear at the foot of the Laocoön plate; K. 775.

<sup>2</sup> J., pl. 61:17-21, K. 694.

<sup>3</sup> Ann. Watson, K. 392.

<sup>4</sup> M., pl. 13:3 and 7, K. 493.

<sup>5</sup> ibid., pl. 22:52-54, K. 506. See also my more detailed exegesis of plate 22, p.112 of this thesis.



be a noble act. A comment of David Cecil's makes this clear through Cowper's thoughts on the matter:

But what did he know of God? Perhaps He did not condemn suicide. The great men of antiquity, the idols of that classical scholarship by which all Cowper's young ideas had been moulded, had all praised, and some of them committed, it.<sup>1</sup>

For Blake, however, "every thing that lives is holy",<sup>2</sup> and the imaginative faculty was strongly associated with the life-giving Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> To him, physical sacrifice of self or of others, as practised by the Romans and latter-day Druids, was a symbol of a wrongful spiritual sacrifice of Imagination, of one's personality, cutting off the inner man, in obedience to the outer laws:

And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars my joys & desires.<sup>4</sup>

This is also clearly why Blake so disliked the doctrine of Atonement:

... in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves, ... for on this day shall atonement be made for you.<sup>5</sup>

Milton's renunciation in Blake's poem is, of course, a renunciation of the moral laws which had held him in bondage for so long and of themselves produced a demanding and intolerant attitude towards other people.

Another reason for Blake's enthusiasm for the Bible over and against the works of other religions was the influence of his contemporaries. Several eighteenth-century writers were engaged in trying to relate all the world religions to their common source, the Hebrew, and in turn to relate the Hebrew religion to that of the Druids. Sir Jacob Bryant and William Stukeley were particularly influential in this respect. Blake did some engravings for Bryant's New System of Mythology while apprenticed to Basire. In his Descriptive Catalogue of 1809,

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<sup>1</sup> The Stricken Deer, 1929, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> FZ., II, 366, K. 289.

<sup>3</sup> Notes on the Illustrations to Dante, K. 785: "... the Goddess Nature Memory ... is his Inspirer & Not Imagination the Holy Ghost"; cf. also J., pl. 77, 'Address to the Christians, K. 717: "is the Holy Ghost any other than an Intellectual Fountain?"; and J., pl. 91:9-13, K. 738: "... loving the greatest men best, each according / "To his Genius: which is the Holy Ghost in Man, there is no other / "God than that God who is the intellectual fountain of Humanity. / "He who envies or calumniates, which is murder & cruelty, / "Murders the Holy-one."

<sup>4</sup> SE., 'The Garden of Love', K. 215.

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus, ch. 16, vv. 29 and 30.

Blake wrote:

The antiquities of every Nation under Heaven, is no less sacred than that of the Jews. They are the same thing, as Jacob Bryant and all antiquaries have proved.<sup>1</sup>

'All Religions Are One' wrote Blake in 1788, and declared that "The Jewish & Christian Testaments are An original derivation from the Poetic Genius<sup>2</sup>, and this "is everywhere call'd the Spirit of Prophecy".<sup>3</sup> Anything else was therefore an imitation, and that, of course, included the classics. An imitation was remembered tradition, not inspired art.

This point of view may well be based on the authority of Bryant who wrote in the Preface to his Mythology:

It is my purpose in the ensuing work to give an account of the first ages; and of the great events, which happened in the infancy of the world.<sup>4</sup>

... All our knowledge of Gentile history must either come through the hands of the Grecians; or of the Romans, who copied from them. I shall therefore give a full account of the Helladian Greeks, as well as of the Ionim, or Ionians, in Asia: also of the Dorians, Leleges, and Pelasgi. What may appear very presumptuous, I shall deduce from their own histories many truths, with which they were totally unacquainted; and give to them an original, which they certainly did not know.<sup>5</sup>

Bryant believed that Greek religion and mythology was totally derived from the east. He lays particular emphasis on the Deluge, and believed that all ancient peoples were derived from Noah:

Under whatever title he may come, ... the first king in every country was Noah.<sup>6</sup>

He seems in the East to have been called Noas, Noasis, Nusus, and Nus and by the Greeks his name was compounded Dionusus.<sup>7</sup>

He also quotes the ancient proverb, "I suffer, as Noah suffered; or the calamities of Noah are renewed in me"<sup>8</sup>. In its spiritual sense this theme of death -- represented by the waters of the flood -- and

<sup>1</sup> DC., V, K. 578.

<sup>2</sup> ARO., Principle 6th, K. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, Principle 5th, K. 98.

<sup>4</sup> A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology, vol. I, 1774, Preface, p. v.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. xiii.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. II, 1774, p. 209.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 204.

renewal of life through one family is presented in the self-annihilation of Blake's Milton and his consequent "Resurrection to Unity".<sup>1</sup>

In any case, with Bryant as a source to tell him that "Homer likewise abounds with a deal of mysterious lore, borrowed from the ancient Amonian theology"<sup>2</sup>, and that "Ovid, though his whole poem be a fable, yet copies the mode of those countries, of which he treats"<sup>3</sup>, it is no wonder that Blake called their writings "Stolen & Perverted".

In fact, Bryant's ideas are by no means so far-fetched as they would seem. A. Caquot writes:

It seems likely that a certain number of elements of Semitic origin may have been absorbed into the great body of mythological literature written in Greek .... Classical texts in any case, are our only source of information regarding an incontestably Semitic deity in mythological literature. The deity in question is Adonis.<sup>4</sup>

As for Blake's famous rejection of Plato, Kathleen Raine points out his association with the Platonist, Thomas Taylor, and comments:

As late as 1799 Blake's enthusiasm for the Greeks was still active; for he wrote in a letter that his 'Genius or Angel' guided his inspiration in fulfilment of 'the purpose for which alone I live, which is ... to renew the lost Art of the Greeks'. These are very different words from his later diatribes against the classics in general and Plato in particular, as the source of the rational thought which has led to the materialist civilization of Western Europe .... In his later years Blake seems to have recovered from this view of Plato, for Crabb Robinson reports the warmth with which he acknowledged that Socrates was 'a sort of Brother'; and Samuel Palmer told Gilchrist that Blake was 'a Platonist in politics'.

It is not possible that Blake's reaction against Plato was merely a secondary result of an estrangement from Taylor: this would be an absurd suggestion to make of a mind of Blake's quality .... The explanation probably lies rather in the fact that Blake read the Neoplatonists before he read Plato, and the Phaedrus, Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides, and Timaeus before he read the more purely discursive works. Neoplatonism stems from one side of Plato -- all that he inherited, through Pythagoras and the Orphic tradition, from the 'revealed' wisdom of antiquity. Blake is neither the first nor the last reader of Plato's works

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<sup>1</sup> FZ., I, 21, K. 264; used here of Los, however.

<sup>2</sup> J. Bryant, A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology, vol. I, 1774, pp. 143-4.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> A. Caquot, 'Western Semitic Lands: The Idea of the Supreme God', in Larousse World Mythology, ed. Pierre Grimal, third ed., 1973, p. 94.

to have been bewildered by the presence of two, in many respects, contradictory, aspects of his thought -- logos and mythos; and he rejected the former with no less vigour than he continued to embrace the latter.

Taylor's interpretation of Plato was essentially that of the Neoplatonists and, above all, of Proclus; and in Blake's judgments of Plato, both favourable and adverse, we may see the result of an education in Greek philosophy received through the writings and probably the conversation of 'the modern Plethon'.<sup>1</sup> [i.e., Taylor, presumably.]

Surely, however, Blake's rejection of Plato was much simpler than this, due only to Plato's theory of art: Blake could not agree that "art is representation"<sup>2</sup> (mimesis) and is "third in succession to the throne of truth"<sup>3</sup>; that it is merely the memory or record of a material object, such as a bed, of which many examples exist, and which is in turn only a copy of the one ideal Form of that very object in the mind of the great Creator.

Such 'art', a mere copy of the material, a remembered image, is not what Blake calls art, and he abhors it in the work of Reynolds, Rembrandt and Rubens. Its Muses, according to one myth, are the daughters of Memory, Mnemosyne. For him, the true artistic Imagination put him in direct communication with the Mind of the Creator Himself -- he saw the ideal Form with the inward Eye -- which is why he identifies the Imagination with the Holy Ghost and declares that you cannot be a Christian and not be an Artist:

A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Architect; the Man Or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian.<sup>4</sup>

Hence also the term 'the Sublime of the Bible'.

Some of the terms in the Preface to the Milton are used in a very particular sense. One such term is 'sublime'. Different artists had differing theories of the Sublime. For Anton Raphael Mengs, who wrote a history of Greek art, and for Barry, "the Sublime is really a superior form of the beautiful"<sup>5</sup>. For Burke, whose Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful was first pub-

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<sup>1</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, pp. 73-4.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, The Republic, Book 10, translated by H.D.P. Lee, 1955, pp. 370, 374.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 374.

<sup>4</sup> From Blake's engraving of the Laocoön, to the left of plate. K. 776.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake, New York, 1959, p. 15.

lished in 1757, the year of Blake's birth, "the two ideas are opposed and mutually exclusive"<sup>1</sup>.

There is no doubt either that Blake read Burke or of Blake's opinions. He writes in the Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses, in about 1808:

Burke's Treatise on the Sublime & Beautiful is founded on the Opinions of Newton & Locke; ... I read Burke's Treatise when very Young; at the same time I read Locke on Human Understanding & Bacon's Advancement of Learning; ... I felt the Same Contempt & Abhorrence then that I do now. They mock Inspiration & Vision. Inspiration & Vision was then, & now is, & I hope will always ... Remain, my Element, my Eternal Dwelling Place.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear too that Blake considered that one of the "Hirelings in the Camp" which he mentions in the Preface to the Milton was Reynolds himself, who he says was "Hired by the Satans for the Depression of Art"<sup>3</sup>, because he copied nature, or painted after matter.

My following information on the Sublime is drawn almost in entirety from Sir Anthony Blunt's The Art of William Blake, but this section would be incomplete without its being reproduced in detail.

Burke allows very few classical authors to be sublime: the exceptions to this are Lucretius and Virgil:

The Bible [for Burke] is far more productive of sublime passages, though only the Old Testament. The books most favoured by Burke are Psalms and Job. Shakespeare is only quoted once, in the section on 'Magnificence', for the description of the king's army in Henry IV, Part I. Milton provides many more examples, particularly from Paradise Lost, in which Burke singles out as the most purely sublime passage the description of Satan, Sin, and Death at the Gates of Hell.<sup>4</sup>

This scene was painted by several of Blake's circle, such as Barry, Fuseli and Stothard, and Blake himself, as Sir Anthony Blunt points out: these painters also often shared their ideas -- "Blake is damned good to steal from", said Fuseli.

Blake and Burke were not the only exponents of the Bible as Sublime. Bishop Lowth, in his lectures on Hebrew poetry delivered at Oxford between 1741 and 1750, also emphasised the association of the sublime with

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake, New York, 1959, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ann. Reynolds, (p. 244), K. 476-7.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., (p. 12), K. 452.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake, New York, 1959, p. 15.

the books of the Old Testament, especially Job, one of Blake's favourites. Coleridge, following Burke and Lowth, also writes:

Could you ever discover anything sublime, in our sense of the term, in the Classical Greek Literature? I never could. Sublimity is Hebrew by birth.<sup>1</sup>

However, Blake and Burke, though in agreement about the sublimity of the Bible, differed severely on one point. To Burke, vagueness was one of the essential elements of the sublime. Blake hated vagueness and loved clear outline. He wrote that "Singular & Particular Detail is the Foundation of the Sublime"<sup>2</sup>, and that "To create a little flower is the labour of ages"<sup>3</sup>. It is clear too, that sublimity for Blake is also of the mind, for, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, he calls the head the part of the body to which Sublimity by right belongs<sup>4</sup>, where peace ensues after the "mental fight" has been won and "the Idiot Questioner" shot down.

In the Milton he speaks of his brain as the place where:

The Eternal Great Humanity Divine planted his Paradise,  
And in it caus'd the Spectres of the Dead to take sweet forms  
In likeness of himself.<sup>5</sup>

It is exceptionally important in a reading of Blake to realise at all times that most of the action, journeys, struggles, mythological figures and their divisions take place inside the character of man, and not in any external realm. The characters and their relationship to one another are symbolic of different elements of his psychology and give man gigantic proportions, depths and complexities.

The meeting of Contraries -- love perfected through suffering, joy and sorrow, the Divine and the Human, Justice (Rintrah) and Mercy (Palamabron) -- is also an element of the Sublime in Blake's poetry and in the Bible.

Amazingly, Burke quotes only one example of the sublime in the visual arts -- Stonehenge! This "qualifies on the grounds of its size and the difficulty of its construction"<sup>6</sup>. Blake would never have sup-

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1 See Sir Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake, New York, 1959, p. 16.

2 Ann. Reynolds, p. 58, K. 459.

3 MHH., pl. 9:17, K. 152.

4 ibid., pl. 10:1, K. 152.

5 M., pl. 2:8-10, K. 481.

6 Sir Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake, New York, 1959, p. 16.

ported this point of view. He gave the expression of an idiot to his visionary head of the man who built the Pyramids because they were constructed on the grounds that size must equal magnificence. In fact, Stonehenge figures on some of the plates of the Milton as the example of the monstrosity and the cruelty of the corrupted Druids, and is the hefty symbol of anti-vision.

In the Preface to the Milton, Blake also speaks of the "New Age" which will be "at leisure to Pronounce" with correct judgment. This reaches its consummation in Jerusalem. The Milton heralds in this age and acts as a warning to the people of England:

Mark well my words! they are of your eternal salvation,<sup>1</sup>

and

"The trumpet of Judgment hath twice sounded; all Nations are awake,  
"But thou art still heavy and dull. Awake, Albion, awake!"<sup>2</sup>

The idea of the "new age" is probably taken from Swedenborg, whose disciples believed that a new age had been declared in the heavens in 1757 -- the year of Blake's birth. Therefore, Blake wrote satirically in 1797 that "a New heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent".<sup>3</sup> The return of Christ in the latter days is, of course, a central part of Christian doctrine. For Blake, the term meant a time when there would be no more suffering, when the little black boy would hear the voice of God:

"Saying: 'Come out from the grove, my love & care,  
"And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice'."<sup>4</sup>

and when:

Children of the future Age  
Reading this indignant page  
Know that in a former time  
Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting that the same idea is incorporated into Shelley's poetry, in Hellas for example:

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 2:25, K. 482; pl. 4:20, K. 484; pl. 7:17 and 50, K. 487; pl. 9:7, K. 489.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pl. 23:4-5, K. 506.

<sup>3</sup> MHH., pl. 3, K. 149.

<sup>4</sup> SI., 'The Little Black Boy', 19-20, K. 125.

<sup>5</sup> SE., 'A Little Girl Lost', 1-4, K. 219. My underlining.

The world's great age begins anew,  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn<sup>1</sup>

and his unfinished Triumph of Life seems to be heralding in an overshadowing triumph of love, which has been waiting in the background of the poem.

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In his beautiful lyric 'Jerusalem', Blake declares his willingness to fight mentally through prayer and through Art for this new age when the Spiritual Jerusalem will be rebuilt. There is no doubt that Blake was interested in the Glastonbury legend and that it may well have provided some of his inspiration for this lyric. This is, of course, a very different thing from saying that he accepted it as literal truth, however much he might have linked the Druids with the Hebrews, and followed Stukeley who thought the conversion of the Jews would take place in our island. However, the spirit of the legend that Christ visited England is true, and the Spirit that knows no bounds of time or space is what Blake was interested in. Blake writes:

If historical facts can be written by inspiration, Milton's Paradise Lost is as true as Genesis or Exodus.<sup>2</sup>

Both are true, but in different ways. Whether or not he was fooled by the forged documents of Ossian, he could still enjoy Macpherson's writing because he believed (albeit wrongly) that its spirit was true to the 'original' Celtic. His approach to history is thus expressed:

... believing with Milton the ancient British History, Mr. B. has done as all the ancients did, and ... given the historical fact in its poetical vigour so as it always happens, and not in that dull way that some Historians pretend, who, being weakly organized themselves, cannot see either miracle or prodigy.<sup>3</sup>

The legends about Joseph of Arimathea include, on rather flimsy evidence, the possibility of his being a relative of the Holy Family, engaged in the tin trade between Cornwall and Phoenicia, and on one such business trip bringing Our Lord Jesus Christ with him to England and also visiting Glastonbury. Joseph was also considered to have set up the first Christian church in England. In any case, he definitely provided the tomb

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<sup>1</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, Selected Poetry, ed. Neville Rogers, 1969, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> Ann. Watson, K. 392.

<sup>3</sup> DC., No. V, K. 578.



for Christ, and, as John Beer points out, the symbolic significance of this is that Vision, similarly, is constantly murdered and rises again. Therefore, symbolically, Blake regarded Joseph of Arimathea as the "guardian of Vision".<sup>1</sup> Two of Blake's very lovely pictures portray Joseph of Arimathea, firstly among the cruel rocks of Albion's shore and secondly preaching later to the inhabitants of Britain, but whether this legend is historically true or not, in fact is irrelevant, if it is true in the Spirit of Imagination that the Britains were once reached by Vision's Guardian.

And so it is with Jerusalem, "builded here/ Among these dark Satanic Mills" of grinding Reason. The spiritual Jerusalem knows no boundaries of time and space, but is within us now. Once there was open vision, long before the Age of Reason clouded the hills. The cloud almost everywhere in Blake represents the obscurity of vision, caused by doubt, the darkening of the sun. Jerusalem is portrayed by Blake as both a city and, elsewhere, as a woman. In his literal way, he portrays her with children of faith:

For the children of the desolate  
one will be more  
than the children of her that  
is married, says the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

In plate 60 of Blake's Prophetic Book Jerusalem, "the Divine Vision appears among the hills of Albion in the shape of a shepherd gathering in his arms the children of Jerusalem and reproaching her". He reproaches her because "she sought to dominate him, to bind him down 'upon the Stems of Vegetation', building the Babylon of natural religion and sacrificing in secret groves", but nevertheless, he "prophesies the end of those who have misled her"<sup>3</sup>.

It is freedom of love and expression which Blake wishes to restore when the spiritual Jerusalem is rebuilt in England. As for the weapons he will use, they too are spiritual and the idea may in part owe its origin to the armour of God in Ephesians, as well as to the battle-songs in the Psalms and the chariot of God seen by Elijah and Ezekiel. However, Kathleen Raine comments:

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<sup>1</sup> J. Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah, ch. 54, v. 1.

<sup>3</sup> J. Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, pp. 214-5.

The well-known verses about the bow of burning gold and chariot of fire have their meaning in the mythology of Los as the spiritual sun with the bows, arrows, chariot and prophetic utterance of Apollo, but with the interior existence of the spiritual light 'which lighteth every man that cometh into the world'.<sup>1</sup>

However, the main thing about the passage is that the golden bow is the bow of prophetic Vision as displayed by Rintrah, in contrast with the silver arrows of Elynittria, the emanation of Palamabron, for silver traditionally symbolises Redemption.<sup>2</sup> There is a further contrast with the evil black bow of Ahania, the emanation of fallen Reason in the Four Zoas.

Lastly, Blake's epigraph "Would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets" is the semi-ironic reply of Moses to a complaint that people were prophesying in the wrong place. For Blake's definition of a prophet, though, we have only to turn to his Annotations to Watson's 'Apology for the Bible', of 1798:

Prophets, in the modern sense of the word, have never existed. Jonah was no prophet in the modern sense, for his prophecy of Nineveh failed. Every honest man is a Prophet; he utters his opinions both of private & public matters. Thus: if you go on So, the result is So. He never says, such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. A Prophet is a Seer, not an Arbitrary Dictator. It is man's fault if God is not able to do him good, for he gives to the just & to the unjust, but the unjust reject his gift.<sup>3</sup>

Blake's prophet, then, is the honest, clear-sighted man, not guilty of the Arch Sin of Hypocrisy. This passage also shows that Blake was essentially a practical man, not the unworldly eccentric he is sometimes considered to have been.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> Watchman Nee, Changed Into His Likeness, London and Eastbourne, first publ. 1967, (paperback edition) 1969, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Ann. Watson, K. 392.

The Milton: a critical study. Book I

Plate 2

Blake calls on the daughters of Beulah for inspiration:

- a) to speak of Milton's journey;
- b) to tell of the false tongue.

Let us explore the doctrine of the "false tongue". The true tongue is the voice of inspiration in Blake's brain where:

The Eternal Great Humanity Divine planted his Paradise,  
And in it caus'd the Spectres of the Dead to take sweet forms  
In likeness of himself.

8-9.

We can contrast the peace of mind expressed here by Blake with the false tongue that tormented Cowper, who reported:

... how his bedroom was every night the battle ground of a struggle between good and evil spirits, and how in the end the evil always vanquished the good, and then 'Bring him out!' they would cry, 'bring him out!'. ... One morning he told Johnson that a spiritual voice had spoken this message to him:

'Sadwin, I leave you with regret,  
But you must go to gaol for debt.'<sup>1</sup>

Sadwin meant "Winner of sorrow" to him. He believed his was the one soul predestined to damnation and that despite all his efforts, he could never deserve the love of God. God was taking from him all things he held most dear, so that nothing would distract him from His Love and yet he was too wicked to be grateful. Lurid dreams, such as the preparations for his execution outside his window, and voices haunted him for years. The "true tongue" brings peace: "the false tongue" brings the torment and guilt feelings which drove Cowper mad.

St. James speaks of this double use of the tongue:

And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue -- a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Cecil, The Stricken Deer, 1929, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> James, ch. 2, vv. 6-10.

The zoa Tharmas presides over the tongue. When Tharmas fell and the evil Spectre of Tharmas rose up in his place, the daughters of Beulah "clos'd the Gate of the Tongue in trembling fear"<sup>1</sup>, lest it should profane the Holy name of God. In Jerusalem we are told that "the affectionate touch of the tongue is clos'd in by deadly teeth"<sup>2</sup>, which makes the imagery of the closing gate clearer and also shows how the proper enjoyment of our bodily senses is often denied to us by false feelings of guilt and fear.

Laura DeWitt James expounds the doctrine of the "False Tongue" and connects it with the power that created the Universe in the Qabalah.<sup>3</sup> That power existed as Ineffable Light and it was a tongue of flame that was shot forth. But before that tongue of flame could have any effect, the Ineffable Light had to scoop out a hollow of darkness in its own body in order to receive it. The passive "feminine" matter received the active "masculine" principle.

In the doctrine of the Qabalah, the four-lettered Name of God (the Tetragrammaton) was Unutterable, lest in being uttered by unholy man it should be profaned.<sup>4</sup> When, in Jerusalem, Albion is reawakened and communication is re-established between the zoas, they again have the power to use that name and the treasured gift of speech returns to them:

And they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic which  
Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous majesty.<sup>5</sup> bright

W.H. Stevenson comments on the "False Tongue":

The False Tongue speaks through man with the voice of Satan, when the Divine Voice should speak, and demands 'sacrifices and offerings', [that is, it is the voice of eighteenth century moralism, condemning sin and not forgiving it.]<sup>6</sup>

The biggest sacrifice ever demanded by the False Tongue was that of Jesus who died for Jerusalem, his emanation, or, as applied collectively,

<sup>1</sup> FZ., I, 108, K. 267.

<sup>2</sup> J., pl. 43:24, K. 672.

<sup>3</sup> William Blake & the Tree of Life, Berkeley and London, 1971, especially pp. 62-65.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., pp. 65-72.

<sup>5</sup> J., pl. 98:28-9, K. 746.

<sup>6</sup> The Poems of William Blake, 1971, p. 490, footnote.

redeemed mankind. In a similar way, Milton will offer himself as a willing sacrifice for Ololon. Milton decides to leave the satirically named "heaven" of moralism. The Bard's Song that follows (plate 2:25 - plate 13:44) inspires him to do so. The Bard sings of first causes, events that took place before the creation of the world.

+ + +

Plate 3

The Bard (Blake) gives an account of first causes when the "eternal mind" was "bounded" in a physical body. The fallen human form makes its first appearance. Its desires are unsatisfied and its senses deadened but at least it is preserved from chaos and non-entity. Urizen wishes to destroy definite form totally while Los is struggling at his anvil to preserve it.

Man's inner light is darkened: he is "stifled without & within". Blake's brilliant description shows how Man's body has become Hell: his eyes roll round in fright: his tongue is sick with hunger and thirst; his head is hard and insensitive. His head is described as the roof of a house where Urizen (sophistry or fallen reason) takes up his lodging. The image here is concentrated as "the Abstract Horror roof'd", but in The Four Zoas<sup>1</sup> it is more extensive: the roof is "shaggy wild" (presumably the hair) and it encloses his "fountain of thought", cutting it off from the channel of Divine Vision. His spine is like a "linked chain" and all the "bones of solidness" are seen as hard and restricting, binding the "nerves of joy". The ears are like terrifying, turbulent whirlpools, an image which refers both to their shape and also to man's reaction to what he hears in this fallen world.

The fall of each sense is made more sudden and intense by Blake's economic use of verbs: "became a roof" is rendered "roof'd"; "took on a spiral form" is rendered "shot spiring"; "becoming a fragile, small round globe of blood" is rendered "conglobing".

In this description of the bony head we remember Golgotha, "the place of the skull", where the eternal great Humanity Divine was crucified; so here, in man's fallen mind, abstract reason has cast out the Divine Vision.

We also remember Thel who came to her own grave-plot (an image for entry into this mortal world) and was horrified at the imprisonment and corruption of the senses she saw there. In fact, this theme is

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<sup>1</sup> FZ., IV, 208-46, K. 303.

basic throughout Blake's poetry.

Los also suffers at the Fall: a round, red globe separates from him and becomes a female form -- his emanation. A blue fluid issues from his back and hardens into a male form -- his spectre. Not even Los remains a unity. Pilo Nanavutty suggests that the birth of beings from various parts of the body in Blake's poetry -- nostrils, breath, back, head, loins, breast -- may be an idea borrowed from a Hindu creation myth, in which Brimha produces Fortune from his breast and Misfortune from his back.<sup>1</sup> The spirits produced from Brimha also included blue and flame-coloured ones, as these are. Nanavutty interestingly comments:

Blake is justified in this complex manifestation of the births, deaths, and rebirths of his characters in the Prophetic Books for, as E.J. Ellis points out, Revolution (Orc) has more than one cause, and so has Passion (Luvah) to mention only two important Blakean symbols.<sup>2</sup>

However, as Kathleen Raine points out, it is more likely that Blake took the colours from Swedenborg, in whose writings "red, blue, and golden-white signify, respectively, love, wisdom, [in the case of the blue spectre, reason] and the celestial state that is above both"<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, the Piper of the Songs of Innocence is usually clothed in red and the Piper of the Songs of Experience in blue.<sup>4</sup>

We are further told that Los and Enitharmon "builded Great Golgoonooza" for many ages and had several children, the last of whom was Satan.

+ + +

#### Plate 4

Satan, "Prince of the Starry Wheels", is sent to work at the mills. He is Urizen incarnate. Even he has his place, though he is told he cannot have eternal life. Los tells him:

O Satan, my youngest born, art thou not Prince of the Starry Hosts,  
And of the Wheels of Heaven, to turn the Mills day & night?

9-10

Satan is the prince of angels and often in the Bible the angels are re-

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<sup>1</sup> 'Blake and Hindu Creation Myths', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, pp. 177 and 180.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*; p. 7.

ferred to as stars:

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers, and on the fountains of water. The name of the star is Wormwood.<sup>1</sup>

... a great red dragon ... his tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth.<sup>2</sup>

One of Blake's own illustrations to The Book of Job (plate 14) shows four angels singing praise and is entitled "The Morning Stars Sang Together".

Milton O. Percival believes that when Urizen fell, he arrested his fall for a while, and created an astral world, before crashing down into the abyss.<sup>3</sup> The sun represents man's mental life and is at its maximum splendour at the zenith in the south, Urizen's rightful place. The stars "in their multiplicity represent the break-up of the eternal sun"<sup>4</sup> (the pure intelligence of Urizen). The natural sun was then created by Los.

"The Wheels of Heaven" obviously refers to the mechanical turning of the zodiac, like a great clock. From a philosophic point of view, the deists held that the power behind the universe was an impersonal one that just set things moving at the beginning of time and left them to work themselves out. From a material point of view, working at a mill-wheel or in a factory with machines with wheels and cogs meant drudgery for many people. For Blake, Satan was behind both.

According to Milton Percival, each of the turning constellations can be interpreted symbolically.<sup>5</sup> Urizen the Sun, journeys through each of them. Taurus the Bull is the symbol of generation; Gemini represents the twins, Los and Enitharmon, appointed regents of time and space; Cancer is the northern limit of Urizen's progress and, according to Porphyry<sup>6</sup>, is the Gate of Men, by which souls descend into mortal life; the period of the sun's greatest heat is when it is in Leo, the time when Urizen created the astral world; the Virgin represents the

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation, ch. 8, vv. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, ch. 12, vv. 3 and 4.

<sup>3</sup> M.O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, New York, 1938, pp. 21-2.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 151-61.

<sup>6</sup> Porphyry, Cave of the Nymphs; for details, see p. 120 of this thesis. K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, pp. 138-9 and 232.

dominating Female Will, the ascetic ideal of good and virginity that leads to the duality of good and evil and vengeance for sin; Libra represents only a temporary and false harmony when the sun hangs in the balance between the upper and lower worlds and it is at this point that Ahaniah is cast out by Urizen; Scorpio, owing to confusion with the neighbouring sign of the Serpent (Ophiucus) is the most evil of all the signs; next comes the Archer, an old man (always a symbol of evil in Blake) who shoots continually at the heart of Scorpio, hoping to slay both the scorpion and the sun. The Archer here symbolises the rational power which darkens the sun and enslaves Orc (often represented by a serpent). In Capricorn, however, the Sun is reborn and the new year begins; Albion's long, spiritual disease reaches its turning-point: Christ is born. Next follow the watery signs of Aquarius and Pisces: water symbolises materialism and they represent the eighteen evil but so-called Christian centuries until the time of Blake. So the Sun completes its cycle.

Satan's title as "Prince of the Starry Wheels" is rich in symbolism when one remembers that he is fallen Urizen, or the sun, who journeys through each of the constellations. The twelve signs of the zodiac also have their part to play in Blake's numerology, as we shall see later.<sup>1</sup>

In Plate 4, Blake also tells us of the basic character of Satan. What we take for kindness is really hypocrisy:

"If you account it Wisdom when you are angry to be silent and  
Not to show it, I do not account that Wisdom, but Folly."  
6-7.

+ + +

#### Plate 5

This hellish passage is full of fire and loud noises. Palamabron returns with the "fiery Harrow", the instrument of inspired art. Its sparks form the "artillery" to vanquish the prosaic Satan. The daughters of Albion (Englishwomen) are "Surrounded with fires unapproachable", or unassailable moral virtue with which to repel any suitors. Englishmen, who are the victims of their pride and moral restraints, "dance the dance of tears & pain" round flashing furnaces and clanging anvils. The strong stresses and alliteration make the image vivid:

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<sup>1</sup> See my study of Milton, plate 37, p. 139 of this thesis.



... loud lightnings  
Lash on their limbs as they turn the whirlwinds loose upon  
The Furnaces.

16-18.

Their lament is for man's littleness and his inability to perceive properly through his senses. His ear understands "discord and harmony" but no melodies (an interesting reflection on eighteenth-century music). The tongue too, is restrained:

"A little sound it utters & its cries are faintly heard."

26

Civil War and repression also leave England in "heaps of smoking ruins".

According to David Erdman, the reference to "fires in Golgonooza" may be a reference to the Great Fire of London. Why, then, should James call for the fires, when in 1666 Charles II was on the throne? Perhaps it is because James had "created the prosperity and wantonness that culminated under Charles II in the fire"<sup>1</sup>.

Contrasted with this depressing picture is the translucent world of beauty and "intoxicating delight" offered by the daughters of Albion when they do decide to be kind. They have three gates in "their Foreheads & their Bosoms & their Loins" ("Head & Heart & Reins") which represent the intellect, the emotions and the senses -- three ways of communicating with eternity.

+ + +

Plate 6

The images of fire and noise continue. We hear the "lulling cadences" of Enitharmon's looms, as they "vibrate with soft affections, weaving the Web of Life". She thus gives bodies to the classes of men "Created by the Hammer of Los". As a contrast with the soft sound of her shuttles, we hear that:

Loud sounds the Hammer of Los & loud his Bellows is heard  
...

... Los lifts his iron Ladles  
With molten ore: he heaves the iron cliffs in his rattling chains.  
8 and 29-30

Here the fires are not wrathful and destructive but rather have an ominous glow: Lambeth, for example, "Dark gleams before the Furnace-mouth".

Probably Blake was back in London when he composed this plate. In his poem 'London' he looks at the corrupt, disease-ridden city:

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<sup>1</sup> Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, p. 424 (footnote 2).

I wander thro' each charter'd street,  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.<sup>1</sup>

A charter is supposed to give freedom but the idea of the river needing a charter to flow ironically indicates how false this "freedom" is.<sup>2</sup> So, here in the Milton the Thames itself groans. The city itself feels the weight and pain of its people, just as St. Paul tells us:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the Thames groaned in a very literal sense. In June, 1803, Shrapnel's Spherical Case, a hollow spherical shell filled with small bullets, was tested in the Thames and approved, although it was not used until 1808 by Wellington. Robert Fulton also invented an explosive magazine which was to be attached to Napoleon's gunboats and detonated by clockwork. The noises and the imagery of Los at his anvils, working with his iron ladles, must have been taken from a sight before Blake's very eyes -- London as "a war arsenal and the hub of the machinery of war".<sup>4</sup>

Blake looking at London must have felt rather like Christ weeping over Jerusalem. He often mentions in detail suburbs and particular places, showing how well he knew every inch of it. Yet, while witnessing material misery and corruption, Blake still managed to see London in its ideal, spiritual or redeemed state, cleansed and spotless in the new age, "the spiritual fourfold London eternal". "Tyburn's brook" recalls Milton's mention of:

Silva's Brook that flow'd  
Fast by the oracle of God.<sup>5</sup>

Tyburn (near Blake's home in South Molton Street) was the place of execution and so Blake likens it to Calvary. "Beth" in Hebrew means "house" and so Lambeth, where Blake used to live, was simply for him "the house of the Lamb"<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps this is why he says that in "Lambeth's Vale ...

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<sup>1</sup> SE., 'London', K. 216.

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent exposition of this poem, see D.G. Gillham's Contrary States, Cambridge, 1966, pp. 8-22.

<sup>3</sup> Romans, ch. 8, v. 22.

<sup>4</sup> David V. Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, pp. 396 and 398.

<sup>5</sup> Par. Lost, I, 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> M. Davis, William Blake: A New Kind of Man, 1977, p. 47.

Jerusalem's foundations began" (14-15).

After the Fall from vision, each nation set up cruel gods that demanded "sacrifices and ... offerings", in many cases quite literally as the Aztecs in Mexico and the latter Druids in England, as Blake mentions here.

+ + +

Plate 7:1 - plate 8:10

These plates tell the story of Satan and Palamabron. Satan-Hayley persuades Palamabron-Blake to change places with him for a day. Satan believes he is doing Palamabron a favour since Satan's work at the mills is an easier task than Palamabron's work with the harrow of artistic vision. Finally, Palamabron agrees. Disaster ensues. The following day, the horses of the harrow are maddened by Satan's treatment of them. In their fury, they bite the gnomes, who are "the servants of the Harrow" and appointed like grooms to look after the horses.

Meanwhile, Palamabron has been doing Satan's work at the mills of drudgery -- or rather, Blake has been trying to fire Hayley's dull tasks with some artistic imagination. The result is that the next day, we see the genii, or "servants of the mills" driven mad with excitement. They are:

... drunken with wine and dancing wild  
With shouts and Palamabron's songs, rending the forests green  
With ecchoing confusion, tho' the Sun was risen on high.

8:8-10

When we remember Hayley's Ballads and the hand-screens for Lady Hesketh we can understand why.

Ellis and Yeats comment that these two days, each of a thousand years, are equivalent to the first two days of creation, which in turn correspond to the Eyes of God, Lucifer and Moloch:

Satan labour'd all day: it was a thousand years

7:15

and

With the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, Light (Lucifer) fell from its station in Heaven, symbolised by Palamabron with the light of vision going to work at the mills. The powers of the mills and harrow are both enraged, and this,

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<sup>1</sup> II Peter, ch. 3, v. 8.

according to Ellis and Yeats, corresponds to the fires of the god Moloch.<sup>1</sup>

David Erdman suggests that "the strife between Satan and Palamabron derives from the struggle between Cromwell and Parliament". He thinks that Satan's usurpation of Palamabron's place "under pretence of pity and love" could represent Cromwell's domination of Parliament. Palamabron calls a "Great Solemn Assembly" and in doing so acts like Parliament. His prayer recalls Parliament's need of Protectors. Palamabron's harrow "suggests the leveling function of revolutionary legislation: it is abused in the tyrant's hands". Satan's mills supply Cromwell's artillery.<sup>2</sup>

This is an interesting theory, but the Hayley/Blake interpretation perhaps fits in better with the personal tone of the poem.

+ + +

Plate 8:11-48

Los, seeing the disaster, takes off his left sandal and places it on his head as a "signal of solemn mourning". The natural order of things is confused -- Satan and Palamabron have taken each other's places. This may also symbolise that the imaginative mind, Los, "covers itself with the external world".<sup>3</sup>

The left foot always has sinister connotations in Blake's writing, as Sir Joseph Wicksteed has pointed out. For example, in the third illustration of the Book of Job, the fire of God falls from heaven and strikes the house where Job's sons and daughters are feasting together. The house falls and crushes them. One of the very beautiful daughters of Job is shown lying with her left hand on a lyre and her left foot raised on a tambourine rather unnaturally, to attract our attention. This symbolises the "beauty and gifts that have been exploited for merely corporeal pleasure, reckless of the soul they were meant to express"<sup>4</sup>. The messengers who report the disaster in the fourth illustration are shown with their left feet foremost.<sup>5</sup> In Illustration XIV, "the sun of the mind, driving the horses of instruction" is shown under the Deity's right arm; "beneath his left arm the moon of poetic, or woman's love, controls

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<sup>1</sup> The Works of William Blake, 1893, vol. II, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, p. 424.

<sup>3</sup> The Works of William Blake, ed. E.J. Ellis and W.B. Yeats, 1893, vol. II, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> J. Wicksteed, Blake's Vision of the Book of Job, 1910, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

and guides the serpents of corporeal desires"<sup>1</sup>; these serpents are scaly, which also symbolises evil.

Joseph of Arimathea, Guardian of Vision, is engraved with his right foot advanced, indicating his spirituality. In the sixth full-plate illustration of the Milton (copy D: plate 32), Blake is shown with his left foot advanced, indicating he is still in the material world; his dead brother Robert, with whose spirit Blake conversed "daily & hourly" is shown with his right foot advanced, indicating his spiritual state, in the seventh illustration (copy D: plate 37).

Kathleen Raine, however, thinks it is likely that the right foot/ left foot symbolism derives from Swedenborg, in whose work the right foot pertains to wisdom and the left foot to love. She points out that the Piper of the Songs of Innocence has his left foot advanced, while the Piper of the Songs of Experience has his right foot advanced.<sup>2</sup>

+ +

Los declares a day of mourning that "must be a blank in nature" or "a period without creative effort"<sup>3</sup>:

It is as though an artist having tried to do the creative part of his work by mere reason and patience, and to do the mechanical part with the impulsive side of his mind, got all into such confusion that he had to cease from his work and merely observe.<sup>4</sup>

This day of mourning naturally produced tears and "Jehovah's rain" poured incessant. This Ellis and Yeats identify with the flood.<sup>5</sup> It is true that Blake calls Noah an artist<sup>6</sup> because he and his family were the only ones to ride above the waters of materialism which swept everyone else away.

Next follows a sort of battle in heaven in which Michael contends against Satan. In the Book of Jude we are told:

Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Wicksteed, Blake's Vision of the Book of Job, 1910, pp. 101-2.

<sup>2</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> The Works of William Blake, ed. E.J. Ellis and W.B. Yeats, 1893, vol. II, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>6</sup> Noah, Shem and Japhet "represent Poetry, Painting & Music, the three Powers in Man of conversing with Paradise". VLJ., K. 609.

<sup>7</sup> Jude, v. 9.

Palamabron is associated with Moses and here Michael and Satan are disputing on his account. Thulloh is killed by Satan. Thulloh is not mentioned elsewhere by Blake and probably represents only a mediator between Blake and Hayley or possibly the friendship between them itself.<sup>1</sup> Ellis and Yeats suggest a derivation from Thullius, the female Leviathan in the Qabbalah (Kabala). This procreative creature of the waters is slain "lest it should overrun spiritual life with its offspring"<sup>2</sup>. This is a rather unlikely interpretation as the materialistic Satan is the slayer, not Michael.

The excellent image of the furrow suggests both the tracks left by the plough and also the brows furrowed with the worry and weariness that Satan causes.

Enitharmon separated the contenders, putting them in different "Spaces" or places, and Palamabron "called down a Great Solemn Assembly" so that Satan would be forced to reveal himself before them as the hypocrite he really was.

+ + +

Plate 9

Palamabron prays before the Assembly:

"O God, protect me from my friends, that they have not power over me.

"Thou hast giv'n me power to protect myself from my bitterest enemies."

5-6

His prayer brings to mind Blake's rhyme to Hayley from the Note-Book:

Thy Friendship oft has made my heart to ake:  
Do be my Enemy for Friendship's sake.<sup>3</sup>

Palamabron appeals to the Assembly of Eden but, surprisingly, they make a mistake in their judgment. Even they are deceived, for the judgment

... fell on Rintrah and his rage,  
Which now flam'd high & furious in Satan against Palamabron  
Till it became a proverb in Eden: Satan is among the Reprobate.

10-12

Even the Assembly has fallen into the dualist trap of considering love and pity as good and anger as evil. They are opposites, but both can be Divine, just as both can also be false and devilish. It is wrong

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<sup>1</sup> S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary, 1973, p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> The Works of William Blake, 1893, vol. II, p. 268.

<sup>3</sup> MS Note-Book 1808-11, 39, K. 545.

to pretend love when you should be angry; it is also possible to lead someone into wrong-doing by playing on his sympathy, as Blake thought Hayley did to him. For Blake, real evil is a negation -- it is inactive and it is the lack of a quality. It is the moral law that tells you what you should not do. Blake tells us in Jerusalem:

And this is the manner of the Sons of Albion in their strength:  
They take the Two Contraries which are call'd Qualities, with which  
Every Substance is clothed: they name them Good & Evil;  
From them they make an Abstract, which is a Negation  
Not only of the Substance from which it is derived;  
A murderer of its own Body, but also a murderer  
Of every Divine Member: it is the Reasoning Power,  
An Abstract objecting power that Negatives every thing.<sup>1</sup>

God created both the wrathful tiger and the meek lamb. Sorrow is opposed to joy, but it is not negative and therefore it is not evil. Christ, alpha and omega, the source and the end, is also the centre in which all the many opposites become as one.

"Without Contraries is no progression" Blake tells us in The Marriage of Heaven & Hell.<sup>2</sup> So Christ progressed from life to death to Resurrection; so also in the Songs of Innocence, there is a foreshadowing of the world of experience to follow, and in the Songs of Experience, there is the implication of a higher innocence to follow. If life were one-sided, purely pleasurable and happy, it would have only a cloying artificial beauty, a rather pagan view.<sup>3</sup> For Blake, Milton's Devil is too energetic to be really evil; his own idea of Satan is a decrepit, impotent old man.

So, even the Divine Assembly makes the mistake of judging against Rintrah's wrath; "and here the confusion of identities gets fixed in Satan coming to be known as the fiery character of tradition, as the reprobate".<sup>4</sup>

In plate 13, we are also told that many of the Eternals did not believe the Bard and some mistakenly said:

"Pity & Love are too venerable for the imputation  
"Of Guilt."

48-49

Now the error of dualism -- making two separate categories of Good and Evil -- has been committed, Satan is at liberty to draw out "his infer-

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<sup>1</sup> J., pl. 10:7-14, K. 629.

<sup>2</sup> MHH., pl. 3, K. 149.

<sup>3</sup> See Matthew Arnold, 'Pagan & Mediaeval Religious Sentiment', in Essays in Criticism, ch. IV; first publ., Macmillan, 1865.

<sup>4</sup> Martin K. Nurmi, William Blake, 1975, pp. 146-61.

nal scroll / Of moral laws and cruel punishments". He declares:

let all obey my principles of moral individuality.

26.

Everybody will be so introspectively concerned about obeying a code of personal "virtue" that people will lose sight of their neighbour's real needs. Each nation will be convinced of its own rightness and this will lead to wars. It is Satan himself "who triumphant divided the Nations"<sup>1</sup> when previously they were all a unity as one family, but here he says:

"Now I rend this accursed Family from my covering."

29

("Covering" here probably has the sense of protection.) Satan inwardly rages but outwardly is calm. At this point:

... his bosom grew  
Opake against the Divine Vision. the paved terraces of  
His bosom inwards shone with fires, but the stones becoming opake  
Hid him from sight in an extreme blackness and darkness.

30-33

This passage may be taken from the description of Satan in his original glory in the Book of Ezekiel:

You were in Eden, the garden of  
God;  
every precious stone was your  
covering,  
carnelian, topaz, and jasper,  
chrysolite, beryl, and onyx,  
sapphire, carbuncle, and  
emerald;  
and wrought in gold were your  
settings  
and your engravings.<sup>2</sup>

This passage in the Milton marks the fall of Satan from Heaven because his opacity is the sign that he has died spiritually and sunk down into materialism. Hell, or the "unfathomable abyss" opens up within him. The plate ends with these words:

His Spectre raging furious descended into its Space.

52

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 10:21, K. 491.

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel, ch. 28, v. 13.



Plate 10

This space, to which Satan has descended, is Canaan, our temporal world. Satan has been "Drawn down ... into Generation" on earth. Canaan is the land of sin and false gods, but is eventually to be redeemed. Satan is now in charge but Canaan will eventually be taken over by Christ. Los laments Satan's fall. Its immediate effect is to transform love to jealous possessiveness, for which Elynittria, the emanation of Palamabron, is blamed.

The perspective here is very interesting. We, on earth, see it as a flat plain when, in reality, it is a globe, as seen from space. So, Blake's several worlds all look different, according to whether you are in them or looking at them:

The nature of a Female Space is this: it shrinks the Organs  
Of Life till they become Finite & Itself seems Infinite.

And Satan vibrated in the immensity of the Space, Limited  
To those without, but Infinite to those within: it fell down and  
Became Canaan.

6-10

Satan, as he sank down to the lower world, diminished in size and grandeur so that, to him, it was infinite. To the immortal inhabitants of the higher worlds, however, it appears very small and limited. When the beautiful, bright Enitharmon descends to the world of time, she immediately takes on the form of "an aged woman". Returning to eternity, her experience on earth seems like a frightening dream. Our temporal world is not as real as it appears to be.

Why is the space to which Satan descends called "a Female Space"? In qabbalistic teaching, each stage of God's revelation of creative energy is pictured as a circle, called a Sefira. Each Sefira reflects within itself the Sefira above it. Therefore each Sefira is feminine (receiving energy), in relation to the one above it and masculine (transmitting energy), in relation to the one below.<sup>1</sup> Canaan, seen from above, is therefore "a Female Space".

This idea of reflecting the world above is also basic to Blake. We saw in plate six how the material, corrupt London reflected "the spiritual Four-fold London eternal". Seen in this light, Satan's comment about his "principles of moral individuality" is rather interesting:

"I have brought them from the uppermost innermost recesses  
"Of my Eternal Mind."

9:27-28

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<sup>1</sup> Laura DeWitt James, William Blake & the Tree of Life, Berkeley and London, 1971, pp. 20-1.

He means simply from the deepest part of himself, but the same connection between "uppermost" and "innermost" is made in Jerusalem:

What is Above is Within.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in the Job illustrations, the figures and events we see represented above Job in Heaven symbolise what is happening in Job's mind. It is always worth remembering when reading Blake that his cosmic events take place within man, though they seem to be in the external realm.

+ + +

Plate 11 - plate 13:11

The questions now arises as to why the wrath "fell on Rintrah" and why "the Innocent should be condemn'd for the Guilty". This was providential so that man could be redeemed by Christ who "died as a Reprobate, he was Punish'd as a Transgressor".<sup>2</sup> Ironically, Christ is now worshipped as one of the Elect.<sup>3</sup>

At this point Leutha descends into the midst of the Assembly. She beautifully describes how it was she who persuaded Satan to take over Palamabron's position. How subtle she was, hiding herself "In Satan's inmost Palace of his nervous fine wrought Brain", and whispering her ideas "night after night / Like sweet perfumes" until Satan finally drove her out "in selfish holiness demanding purity" because he thought of his sexual counterpart as evil.

Leutha, who symbolises sexuality under the law, is here contrasted with the chaste Diana-like Elynittria, Palamabron's emanation. Leutha tells the Assembly:

"I loved Palamabron & I sought to approach his Tent,  
"But beautiful Elynittria with her silver arrows repell'd me,  
"For her light is terrible to me: I fade before her immortal beauty.  
"O wherefore doth a Dragon-Form forth issue from my limbs  
"To sieze her new born son?"

11:37 - 12:3

This passage is clearly derived from Revelation:

And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery .... And the dragon stood before

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<sup>1</sup> J., pl. 71:6, K. 709.  
<sup>2</sup> M., pl. 13:27, K. 494.  
<sup>3</sup> Martin K. Nurmi, William Blake, 1975, p. 153.

the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth.<sup>1</sup>

The woman here represents Israel and she is to be contrasted with "the great harlot" or "Babylon the great" of Revelation ch.17. The same contrast applies to Elynittria ("internal emotions") and Leutha ("external sensations").<sup>2</sup> The light of the sun, moon and stars (associated with the woman in Revelation and therefore with Elynittria) is terrible to Leutha and dazzles her.

Elsewhere in the Bible, Israel is described as a woman in labour:

Like a woman with child,  
who writhes and cries out in her pangs,  
when she is near her time,  
So were we because of thee, O Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps Elynittria and even the woman in Revelation also owe something to the figure of Artemis who, "Although a virgin ... was the protectress of women in labour, and they frequently called upon her in dire distress, since she could, with her arrows, send them to a swift death".<sup>4</sup> Certainly Elynittria is armed with silver arrows and in Europe is called "silver bowed queen"<sup>5</sup>, while Palamabron is called "horned priest, skipping upon the mountains".<sup>6</sup> This association with Artemis makes it possible for her to be associated with childbirth as well as the silver moon of chastity. In Plate 10 of the Milton, Los speaks to Elynittria:

"Elynittria! whence is this Jealousy running along the mountain?  
... thou  
"Darkenest every Internal light with the arrows of thy quiver,  
"Bound up in the horns of Jealousy to a deadly fading Moon."  
10:14 and 16-17

Perhaps Elynittria owes something to Isis, also associated with the moon, and who was often pictured wearing the horns of Hathor, the cow-goddess. The reference to mountains could be because of their snowy coldness. The moon does not shine with its own light but reflects the sun; this is

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation, ch. 12, vv.1 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> These definitions belong to E.J. Ellis and W.B. Yeats, and are used in their edition, The Works of William Blake, 1893, vol. II, p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah, ch. 26, v. 17.

<sup>4</sup> P. Grimal, 'Greece: Myth and Logic', in Larousse World Mythology, ed. P. Grimal, third ed., 1973, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Eur., pl. 8:4, K. 240.

<sup>6</sup> ibid., pl. 8:3.

why Elynittria, moon-goddess, darkens "every Internal light". The horns are a pun first on the horns of jealousy which were traditionally supposed to sprout on the head of a cuckold and the horns of the crescent or of the waning moon. Here the moon is waning, an ominous symbol in Blake. Another example of this is his beautiful painting The Creation of Eve, in which the waning moon indicates the happiness she brings will be short-lived.

The horses of the harrow were maddened by Leutha's corporeal beauty, solely material, divorced from the spiritual altogether. The harrow was quite literally a "Chariot of fire" casting "thick flames", and as they saw it going off course, the gnomes were compelled to throw banks of sand round it to avert the danger. As it was, Leutha and Satan were covered in fire:

The Harrow cast thick flames & orb'd us round in concave fires,  
A Hell of our own making; see! its flames still gird me round.  
12:22-23

The second full-plate illustration of the Milton in fact shows Satan in torment, surrounded by tongues of flame that seem to emanate from him. Hell is both without and within, physical and psychological. Leutha then "form'd the Serpent / Of precious stones & gold, turn'd poisons on the sultry wastes". The stings of the serpent are "to say / The most irritating things in the midst of tears and love". This Satan does when he offers worldly advice, insensitive to any but material considerations.

Satan is permanently sick; confirmed in his own self-righteousness, he has even cast out his emanation as sinful, and this is the mark of a split personality.

+ + +

Plate 13:12-50

Leutha flees to Enitharmon's tent to hide. The Eternals ratify Enitharmon's decision to create a space, Canaan, which is our present world, for Satan. We must always bear in mind that the events of the Bard's Song take place before the creation of the world.

The Eternals "gave a Time to the Space / Even Six Thousand years". Six thousand years is the traditional length of time the earth is to last from the beginning until Apocalypse.

The Eternals appointed guardians for the earth, who come one after another. These are elsewhere called the Seven Eyes of God:

And they Elected Seven, call'd the Seven Eyes of God,<sup>1</sup>  
Lucifer, Molech, Elohim, Shaddai, Pahad, Jehovah, Jesus.

Each one has a particular fault except the seventh one, Jesus. Lucifer is proud; Molech is impatient; Elohim is weary and fainting; Shaddai is angry; Pahad is terrified and Jehovah is irascible, easily offended when not obeyed and "leprous" with jealousy. Only Jesus accepts death and is totally willing to sacrifice himself for others. When he comes again "the Elect shall meet the Redeemed", and they will be very surprised that the One they crucified as a Reprobate has turned out to be the Saviour. They think they have been worshipping Christ all the time but in reality, with their moral laws, they have been worshipping Satan, good works instead of grace.<sup>2</sup> They will then see the truth.

Ellis and Yeats see the Seven Eyes of God as corresponding to the seven days of creation in Genesis, and they draw up the following scheme:

Darkness and Chaos.

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1) Creation of light   | Lucifer                  |
| 2) The firmament is created to divide the waters above from the waters below | Moloch                   |
| 3) The water is divided from the dry land and the green things are created   | Elohim                   |
| 4) Creation of the sun and moon  | Shaddai (God of Abraham) |
| 5) Creation of the birds and fish  | Pahad (God of Issac)     |
| 6) Creation of animals and man   | Jehovah (God of Jacob)   |
| 7) God rests   | Jesus                    |

In the view of Ellis and Yeats, these Seven Eyes form a cycle. At first light descends. Then the outer and inner are divided from each other; the soul is separated from the body, "good" from "evil" and dualism begins. Then life is delivered from chaos. Next, the male and female principles, the sun and moon, are organised by Shaddai. Pahad, in Hebrew, means fear, so under his governing the spectres grow; fears and guilt are always associated with the spectral life in Blake, for "everything is terror to the egotistic energy". The animals, or fiercer and more imaginative energies are then born. Lastly, Man or "imagination" comes to be in Eden with Christ or falls again with Lucifer and another cycle begins.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J., pl. 55:31-2, K. 686.

<sup>2</sup> cf. M., pl. 11:13-14, K. 491.

<sup>3</sup> The Works of William Blake, 1893, vol. I, pp. 297-8.

Northrop Frye believes that each of the Eyes represents the "Orc cycle" of birth, death and renewal. Every Orc cycle begins with the ruddy youth of revolution and degenerates, dies (solidifies into Urizen) and then is born again as a new Orc cycle.<sup>1</sup> The once inspired Druids degenerated when they began to practise human sacrifice: In Blake's own time, the French Revolution began with a spirit of freedom and degenerated into another tyranny.

Two limits were set up after the Eye of Moloch, the limits of opacity and contraction:

Opacity was named Satan, Contraction was named Adam.  
13:21

W.H. Stevenson comments:

In Cartesian cosmology, the three forms of matter range from the luminous through the translucent to the opaque. The sun is luminous, the ether is translucent, the earth is opaque.<sup>2</sup>

Sin has caused the opacity, or darkness of vision, but there is a limit even to that. Man can grow no darker than Satan. Before the Fall, Eternal Man existed as a unity, containing both sexes in himself. When our world came into being, procreation or generation was established. Although it is already a sign of fallen nature that the female has divided from the male, at least man has his beloved object to gaze on, his emanation, otherwise he would be completely wrapped up in himself and fall even further:

... man realized his incompleteness and was saved from entire isolation. He could not settle into the final sordidness of self so long as there was necessary for his fulfilment a female counterpart. He sought, and in the seeking for that which seemed outside of himself, he was placing his feet on the first<sup>3</sup> rung of the ladder which was to lead him back to the true unity.

A limit has been set to how far he can fall and divide, and this is the limit of contraction, symbolised by Adam. Adam is the father of mankind, so, in a sense, the multitudes generated on earth are in Adam.

Elynittria goes to find Leutha in her hiding-place. She throws aside her bow and arrows and brings Leutha to Palamabron's bed, soothing

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<sup>1</sup> Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> The Poems of William Blake, 1971, pp. 502-3.

<sup>3</sup> Laura DeWitt James, William Blake & the Tree of Life, Berkeley and London, 1971, p. 66.

her "with soft words".

This self-giving on the part of Elynittria indicates she has put aside her jealousy and there is at last some unity between the internal emotions or imaginative mind (Elynittria) and the corporeal world of sense (Leutha). Neither should stand alone. While Leutha (the body) is in Palamabron's tent, Oothoon (the soul) watches over her. If the soul of spiritual beauty were not there, Leutha, corporeal beauty, would again be called Sin by the moralists.

The Bard is asked where he got his "terrible song".

+ + +

Plate 14

The Bard replies that he is inspired and there is a "murmuring" and discussion in heaven about this. Milton rises, takes off "the robe of the promise" and prepares to descend to eternal death, to leave Eden for our world, to die spiritually. The whole poem hinges on his act of self-sacrifice, his motive being to put to death the part of himself that lives for Self and to redeem his emanation. He must free himself from guilt and the fear-inspiring moral law:

"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."

30-32

The furnaces may represent the fallen human body<sup>1</sup>, flaming with unsatisfied desires. However, Harold Bloom comments:

The Hells are Milton's unrealized creations, now to be made into his Los-like Furnaces.<sup>2</sup>

At the border between Eden and Beulah, Milton steps into his shadow, or earthly body "in direful pain". It is twenty-seven-fold, which indicates it is not perfect<sup>3</sup>; in fact, it is described as a "dread shadow" and reaches to the depths of hell. It is called a shadow because it is only a reflection of heavenly realities, for according to Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences, everything in the physical world is symbolic of something in the eternal. Similarly, Boehme speaks of "the vegetable glass of nature" as a mirror in which spiritual realities are reflected.

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<sup>1</sup> Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Blake's Apocalypse, 1963, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> See my study of plate 17, pp. 101-2.

This is dangerous, because "shadows take on the appearance of the substance", like the mirroring pool that drowned Narcissus.<sup>1</sup> So people have been deceived into worshipping the beauties of Nature as an end in themselves, instead of seeing beyond the dead matter to eternity. Here, therefore, Blake refers to "this earth of vegetation", only a copy of the spiritual world.

+ .+ +

#### Plate 15

As Milton prepares to descend, the Seven Angels of the Presence accompany him to give him "intimations of immortality" ("still perceptions of his Sleeping Body") while he is on earth. These appear to be the guardian angels of mankind and are identified with the Seven Eyes of God or "the Seven Lamps of the Almighty" of The Four Zoas.<sup>2</sup> They also derive from Revelation:

... and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God ... seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.<sup>3</sup>

In Paradise Lost, Milton identifies them with God's archangels, such as Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel:

Th'Archangel Uriel, one of the seav'n  
Who in God's presence, nearest to his Throne  
Stand ready at command, and are his Eyes  
That run through all the Heav'ns, or down to th'Earth.<sup>4</sup>

In Eternity, we take on a spiritual body; on earth, we take on a shadow, a less real or corporeal form. Blake powerfully describes how it is possible to exist simultaneously in different states of being in different parts of his four-fold universe.

In Eden, Milton is like a sleep-walker because his spirit has taken on corporeal form in order to descend to our world of generation. Our world is less real than the eternal world, so the descent is like a sleep from the point of view of eternity.

Simultaneously, in Beulah, Milton appears "as One sleeping on a couch / Of gold". The emanations guard him and "feed / His lips with food of Eden in his cold and dim repose", i.e., his sojourn on earth.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> FZ., I, 554, K. 279.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation, ch. 4, v. 6 and ch. 6, v. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Par. Lost, III, 648-51.



However, to himself, as he descends he is like "a wanderer lost in dreary night". However wearisome the journey may appear to Milton himself, to others he moves very fast indeed "swift as lightning", like a comet, or "as a falling star ... swift as the swallow or swift".

Blake maintains his double perspective in his description of the vortices that Milton passes through to reach the earth. The idea that the universe consists of a series of vortices is Cartesian. From the perspective of the traveller within the vortex, everything around him seems like a flat plain, stretching away from him. This is the condition of man on earth, and it is a fallen condition. As you leave the vortex, it appears as a globe rolling away from you, just as the earth would appear from space. As Milton descends, the sun, moon and stars roll away from him, but this is a fallen perspective. Unfallen man contained everything, sun, moon and stars within his own "mighty limbs". The universe was within him but now is fragmented and externalised.

In fact, as he falls, Milton sees the earth as it would appear from space. He sees the land as a hard rock, with Albion stretched out upon it, symbolising spiritually dead and fallen mankind. The stormy sea washes against the land, "which was inwrapped with the weeds of death". Perhaps Blake here intends a pun on "weeds" meaning "clothes" and meaning the seaweed that covers the rock. The sea or water is doubly symbolic. In Neo-Platonic philosophy, it symbolises matter, and Blake uses it in this way in his picture of Urizen struggling in the waters of materialism.<sup>1</sup> In the Bible, it is usually symbolic of chaos. Hard rocks keep back the sea or set a limit on chaos. Milton bends down to the heart of Albion, the sun of our solar system. He pierces through the clouds and Blake sees him approach "as a falling star" and enter his left foot, the sinister left because Milton has entered the material world. Blake tells us on plate 21 that he did not realise at that time that it was the spirit of Milton that had inspired him, but he and, in fact, all mankind felt his influence. At this point, Blake had some kind of vision of the earthly world in its spiritual form:

And all this Vegetable World appear'd on my left Foot  
As a bright sandal form'd immortal of precious stones & gold,  
I stooped down & bound it on to walk forward thro' Eternity.<sup>2</sup>

A black cloud also issues from Blake's foot. Blake later tells us

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<sup>1</sup> FBU., pl. 6.

<sup>2</sup> M., pl. 21:12-14, K. 503.

that this symbolises "that portion named the Elect, the spectrous body of Milton" which redounded "from [his] left foot into Los's mundane space" (pl. 15:50).

+ + +

Plate 16 is a full-page illustration.

+ + +

Plate 17

Milton now realises that "the Three Heavens of Beulah" had been contained in his wives and daughters on earth, but he had been too blind before to see this. Plate 5 (in fact, a later plate) mentions the heavens of Beulah as being in the "Head & Heart & Reins", or mind, emotions and sensual pleasure of the daughters of Albion. Meanwhile, from their place in eternity, Milton's wives and daughters "distant viewed his journey". They are described as "now Human" which means now belonging to the spiritual body. What we describe as "human", Blake calls a mere shadow of reality or "mortal". For Blake, "human" meant imaginative reality, being able to see with vision, with the spiritual eye. The Eternals in Eden are "human".

Though their spiritual forms are in eternity, they also have bodies which "remain clos'd / In the dark Ulro till the Judgement". Ulro is Blake's hell. Rather as Christ harrowed hell, so Milton directs his steps to Ulro. In eternity, he knows he is united with them, but in the state of Ulro, "thro' Death's Valé" he and his wives and daughters are in contention. We must remember that different states of being exist simultaneously in Blake's universe.

He sees the hells of Ulro and all its cruelties. In these hells, his wives and daughters have taken the form of unyielding rocks or mountains in the desert: "Hor & Peor & Bashan & Abarim & Lebanon & Hermon". His own body has taken the form of the hardest rock of all: "his body was the Rock Sinai" on which Moses was given the law itself. They are sitting in the deserts of Midian, symbolising a spiritual desert. Everything is distorted and grotesque, a "Harden'd shadow" or imitation of what is on our earth, but "Enlarg'd into dimension & deform'd into indefinite space". The chief features of this hell are that everything is grandiose, without definite form and as hard and impenetrable as rock. There are, in fact, "Twenty-seven Heavens and all their Hells" stretching between the earth and the firmament. Twenty-seven is the cube of three and three is the number of the natural man. Blake's universe is four-fold and so four is his perfect number. Three falls short of this, just

as 666, the number of the Beast in the Revelation, falls short of the perfect number seven. Seven is the number most frequently mentioned in Revelation (seven spirits, seven angels with seven bowls, seven churches, seven lampstands, seven eyes of God). Seven multiplied by four equals twenty-eight, so the "twenty-eighth heaven" is the perfect heaven whereas the twenty-seven heavens imply something ominously lacking, reaching to the sky but not to eternity. In fact, they are all opaque.

The "labyrinthine intricacy" of "the cavernous Earth" symbolises complex reasoning and sophistry. (Blake uses the same image to describe Oxford and Cambridge on plate 13.)

Los and Enitharmon have seen Milton fall like a shooting star and so mistake him for Satan. For the wrong reasons, Enitharmon rejoices because she believes that Satan-Milton will set up the moral law and give power to the dominant, virgin female. Los tries to hinder Milton to prevent this from happening. He obviously does not yet understand why Milton has descended.

+ + +

#### Plate 18

The Nameless Shadowy Female also misinterprets the purpose of Milton's journey. Ironically, she begins: "I will lament over Milton in the lamentations of the afflicted". However, her very joy is lamentation. She looks forward to seeing an even fiercer moral law. This gigantic, archetypal character stretches out her twenty-seven imperfect "heavens" of morality over Albion like a great cloak. Typically female, she imagines the clothes she will wear: the border of her garment will be hemmed with "the misery of unhappy Families", and this misery will be drawn out like a thread<sup>1</sup>; the sharp needle will stab them with "poverty, pain & woe"; the garment will have a pattern of difficult writings, which children will be forced to learn by heart; it will also have the pictures of "Kings inwoven upon it & Councillors & Mighty Men", the earthly propagators of all this misery. She will deceive people into thinking that she and her moral law are God. Outwardly, she will display pity, but it is hypocritical like that of the "cold and usurous hand" that fed the charity children in 'Holy Thursday' of the Songs of Experience, and the moralists who believed that:

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<sup>1</sup> There is a pun here on "to draw out a thread", as if to pull a thread with a needle and "to draw out" or to prolong misery.

Pity would be no more  
If we did not make somebody Poor.<sup>1</sup>

She emphasises the sharp contrast between rich and poor:

And I will put on Holiness as a breastplate & as a helmet,  
And all my ornaments shall be of the gold of broken hearts.

21-22

In this magnificent line, we can hear her triumph in the misery of others. However, she is unaware of the ironic contrast between the material gold and the spiritual gold "tried in the fire", the person who has suffered the broken heart and genuinely learnt something through his suffering.

She gives as her motive the desire to dominate Orc and to defend herself from his consuming passion. Orc heroically tries to persuade her not to be so cruel, but fails. As she grows ten times more opaque with the sin of moralism, he glows more fiery against her darkness. The contention of these giant forms caused earthquakes and "moved the fast foundations of the Earth to wake the Dead".

+ + +

Plate 19 - Plate 20:6

Urizen, unlike Los at this point, does understand Milton's purpose and goes to meet him for a face-to-face confrontation.

Lines 15-26 provide a short descriptive interlude in the midst of their contention. These lines briefly recapitulate the first book of The Four Zoas which tells how Albion was slain and how Luvah (the Emotions) usurped the world of Urizen (Reason). Luvah's universe in the east is now a void because Luvah has left it for that of Urizen. The universes of the other zoas have also crumbled in ruins. However, in the midst of this chaos, form is preserved in the universe of Los and Enitharmon -- the world of Art on earth -- "towards which Milton went". Here it is described as the Mundane Egg, and, in a similar passage on plate 34:32-9, as "the Egg form'd World of Los". In the diagram on plate 34 which shows Milton's track, there is a picture of an egg in the middle of the four universes, and the name Satan is written upon it. We are reminded that even in the enclosed, earthly world of Satan, Los can create a paradise of art and he fights to preserve form. The kingdoms of Satan and Los are very close for both are within man: it depends on what plane of existence he is living, whether in the imaginative or natural realm:

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<sup>1</sup> SE., 'The Human Abstract', 1-2, K. 217.

Gates open behind Satan's Seat to the City of Golgonooza.

20:39

(Golgonooza is Los's city of art.)

The passage on plate 19:15-16, however, simply reminds us of the mythological background and adds nothing to the action. In fact, it is rather an untimely interruption.

Let us return to the contention between Milton and Urizen, which is uncanny because so silent. Urizen pours ice-cold water from the Jordan onto Milton's brain, in an attempt to destroy the warm passions; this is a sort of baptism, but into death, not life.<sup>1</sup> Milton tries to give life to his adversary by moulding him with the warm, red clay of Succoth, putting new flesh on the dry bones.

In the Book of Kings, we are told about "the plain of the Jordan", on which lies "the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan"<sup>2</sup>. Red clay is also associated with the red earth of the land of Edom and (by a little linguistic step), with Adam and the clay out of which he was formed. The red clay is therefore the body of Adam and "the return of Adam to Paradise", or as here, moulding with red clay means "the reintegration of the body, together with the physical universe, into the kingdom of the soul".<sup>3</sup>

Milton and Urizen strove together as far as Mahanaim, whose name means "two armies", for here Jacob was met by an army of God's angels. Shortly after this meeting, Jacob wrestled with the angel by the riverside, much as Milton is wrestling here. Jacob then went on to Succoth, where he built himself a house and cattle stalls or booths, which is what the word Succoth means -- singularly unromantic and unsymbolic.

Perhaps of more direct relevance is the Scriptural name that appears next in the text: Beth Peor. It was here that Moses died, and here that Urizen is moulded out of death into life. It obviously symbolises the death of the Mosaic law in the Milton.

The contention takes place on the shores of the River Arnon. The Arnon marked the boundary between the lands of the Ammonites and the Moabites. However, the land of the Ammonites was given into the hands of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Therefore, it probably symbolises the

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<sup>1</sup> The Poems of William Blake, ed. W.H. Stevenson, 1971, p. 512.

<sup>2</sup> I Kings, ch. 7, v. 46.

<sup>3</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, pp. 337-9.

boundary between the children of the law (Moab) and the children of the promise (Reuben and Gad). If Milton crosses it, he will be on the side of harsh moral laws again. The temptation put before Milton is, in fact, to cross the river. Just as Christ's temptations follow immediately after his baptism, so do Milton's.

The temptresses are Rahab (eighteenth-century religiosity) and Tirzah (the cruel moral law that Rahab sanctioned). The representatives that Rahab sends forth are "Female-male". This represents (feminine) materialism and idolatry which swamp the (masculine) principle of the spirit, and also the beauty that can lead captive weak minds<sup>1</sup>, and sway a person from his resolve. The representatives of Tirzah are "Male-Female" -- war-like, with their feminine pity subdued by masculine aggressiveness. They tempt Milton rather as the Devil tempted Christ, recorded in Paradise Regained.

The Devil tempted Christ by saying, "If you are the Son of God ...", and here doubt is also cast on Christ:

"Where is the Lamb of God? Where is the promise of his coming?"  
19:50

The Devil shows Christ all the kingdoms of the world and here Milton is shown all the kingdoms of bright Tirzah, "The banks of Cam, cold learning's streams, London's dark frowning towers". Both Tirzah and the Devil want worship.

Milton is told of other miseries, preciously referred to in the earlier Prophetic Books, particularly The Four Zoas -- the casting out of Ahania, the lamentations of Enion looking for her children, the binding of the youthful Orc to the mountain by his jealous father.

Tirzah loves analysing the souls of men, looking for some sin to pick on, however small:

"She numbers with her fingers every fibre ere it grow."  
19:49

Tharmas similarly suffers from Enion's cruel scrutiny in The Four Zoas:

"Why wilt thou Examine every little fibre of my soul,  
"Spreading them out before the sun like stalks of flax to dry?  
"The infant joy is beautiful, but its anatomy  
"Horrible, Ghast, & Deadly."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Par. Regained, II, 220-22.

<sup>2</sup> FZ., I, 47-50, K. 265.

Tirzah demands sacrifice "in her cruel sports among the Victims". She and her shadowy (earth-bound) sisters close man up with hard bones and an unyielding skull, imprisoning the imaginative mind. She is so obviously queen that Milton's attempt to conquer the propagators of the moral law and restore the law of Christ seems to be a forlorn hope. If he will forsake his attempt to cast off the Selfhood, he will be granted a new position as King of Canaan. This is the most fiendish temptation of all: to become the founder of yet another church .

+ + +

Plate 20:7 + plate 21:3

We are again reminded that different levels of being can exist simultaneously in Blake's universe. Milton's "Mortal part" is still in hell, "frozen in the rock of Horeb"; the redeemed part of himself stands here, gazing at the form of Urizen he has just sculpted; his "real Human" or spiritual body is above with the Angels of the Presence.

Blake digresses to lament his own littleness and his inability to speak of eternal perfection with his earthly "gross tongue". However, if God has chosen him as his mouthpiece, he must submit, for he is "like clay in the hands of the potter"<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, in his letters, he claims only to be the scribe of the poem Milton, not the author:

I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without Premeditation & even against my Will.<sup>2</sup>

I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary; the Authors are in Eternity.<sup>3</sup>

The effect of Milton's victory over Urizen has been profound enough to make Albion begin to stir and to make the Orc-like guardian of the law on Sinai glow ominously red. These are warning signs of the approach of the Apocalypse.

What is within is infinite: Blake never tires of telling us that "the kingdom of God is within us". Here, he uses the image of "the little winged fly", perfect in its minute proportions, to tell us to rejoice in the way God has created us:

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1 Romans, ch. 9, v. 20-1.

2 Letter to Thomas Butts, 25 April 1803, K. 823.

3 ibid., 6 July 1803, K. 825.

Seest thou the little winged fly, smaller than a grain of sand?  
It has a heart like thee, a brain open to heaven & hell,  
Withinside wondrous & expansive: its gates are not clos'd:  
I hope thine are not.

20:27-30

The gates are the senses which are free to delight in God's creation.

Similarly, the proverbs of Hell tell us to delight in the way God created us, that no creature should try to force itself and its personality into the mould of another:

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.  
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.  
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.  
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.  
Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.<sup>1</sup>

Perfection can be found in the perfect detail of things so tiny as to be almost invisible -- the winged fly, the translucent grain of sand, the lark, soaring out of sight but the influence of whose thrilling voice we still feel; there is also the thyme, hidden from our sight, but emitting a sweet perfume and the "moment of each day that Satan cannot find", that transforms all other moments. All these things are sources of inner joy. They are contrasted with the ugly grandiose forms of the giants Og and Anak, revered simply because they are enormous and therefore inspire fear and guilt. They try to stop us from enjoying our God-given senses -- to stop us from being. They are rather like the lions in The Pilgrim's Progress; they look fearsome and prevent man from entering the castle, but in fact they have no real power, only that which we allow to them.

The image of the castle, with the portcullis of "brass & bars of adamant" is an image of our human body. Blake shows how much he was against the dualism that these ogres, or moralists, propagated when they taught that the body was a thing apart from the soul and not to be delighted in, instead of the dwelling-place of the soul and to be respected as such. This is why within us "Satan's Seat" and the spiritual beauties of Golgonooza are very close together. We can choose whether to be bound or free.

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<sup>1</sup> MHH., pl. 8:2-6, K. 151.



The Eternals do not understand why Milton has descended. They think it is a rejection of eternal life on his part and look out of Eden, "wrathful, fill'd with rage". "The Watchers" referred to here are the Angels of the Presence, who are keeping guard over Milton, the "Shadowy Eighth". The Eternals surround the eight of them with a "fiery circle", rather like the "flaming sword which turned every way"<sup>1</sup> which God placed in Eden to keep man from going back to Paradise. The Eight therefore fled to Golgonooza, or Los's kingdom on earth:

... down to the Deeps,  
Where Los opens his three wide gates surrounded by raging fires.  
20:48-49

These are the three gates into Golgonooza which are still open.

Los sees the "Starry Eight" and is horrified, presumably because they have been driven out of eternity. He is also desperate with worry that Rintrah and Palamabron might desert him, as his other sons (bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel) have done. Could this mean that they have been lured away by following the rites of the Jewish law rather than inner faith?<sup>2</sup>

In tears at his anvil, Los suddenly remembers a prophecy that declared:

That Milton ... should up ascend  
Forwards from Ulro from the Vale of Felpham, and set free  
Orc from his Chain of Jealousy.

20:59-61

Notice that Milton is to ascend "forwards from Ulro"; we now know that he is going to make the return journey back to eternity, redemption accomplished.

Los now decides to descend into Udan-Adan, our world of time and space to see what he can do. It is here that he meets Blake.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis, ch. 3, v. 24.

<sup>2</sup> However, the tribes of Israel are represented here by Reuben and Gad and, as we have seen, the land of Ammon was given over to Reuben and Gad. Could they have become infected by the Moloch religion of sacrifice in the land of Ammon they took over? Milton tells us that:

Him [Moloch] the Ammonite  
Worshipt in Rabba and her watry Plain,  
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream  
Of utmost Arnon.

Par. Lost, I, 396-99

Plate 21:4-60

Milton enters the world through Blake's left foot and all men on earth and in heaven become aware that some tremendous act has taken place. The Eternals now understand and lament their previous action of driving Milton down into the Ulro or lower regions.

The Eternals dwell on the banks of "a sweet River of milk & liquid pearl". In this beautiful description, we see that all nature is animate in the eternal realm:

... and they wept in long resounding song  
For seven days of eternity, and the river's living banks,  
The mountains, wail'd, & every plant that grew, in solemn sighs  
lamented.

17-19

Ololon is the name of the river and also the dwellers by the river. Ololon consist of many individuals, but they unite in their lament in one collective soul.<sup>1</sup>

Their lament goes up in the early morning "when Luvah's bulls ... drag the sulphur Sun out of the Deep". Sacrificial animals like bulls are associated with Luvah. His universe is in the east where the sun rises. The bulls and slaves are scorched and sunburnt like the little black boy of the Songs of Innocence. The harnesses of the bulls are described as "starry". Milton O. Percival suggests that the bulls of Luvah represent the three stars in the curved line of the constellation of the Plough. They are dragging the plough of Urizen, the eternal sun. As "Taurus itself, strangely enough, is feminine in its astrological significance", this is "an admirable image of the surrender of the masculine mind to the feminine emotions"<sup>2</sup>.

As the sun rises on high, "the clarions of day" sound. The image of the trumpets here could represent either the dawn chorus or simply the noise and hustle and bustle of everyday life. They drown the lamentations of Ololon. Perhaps this passage is a reflection of Blake's life in the country: the bustle of the day, the stillness of the night and his solitary view of the sun-rise in early morning.

Los and Enitharmon on earth hear the lamentation of Ololon, but are unable to do anything about it:

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<sup>1</sup> Ololon, until they become "a Virgin of twelve years" in plate 36, is a collective plural. I have followed Blake in using the third person plural form of the verb.

<sup>2</sup> M.O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, New York, 1938, p. 152.

Seven mornings Los heard them, as the poor bird within the shell  
Hears its impatient parent bird, and Enitharmon heard them  
But saw them not, for the blue Mundane Shell inclos'd them in.

28-30

The sky is a delicate blue like that of an eggshell. It is also concave like an oval-shaped egg. A shell encloses the bird and shuts it off from the outside world, just as Los, in our world of time, cannot break through to eternity. However, intimations and sounds of the eternal world do come through to him, although he cannot see eternity. The lamentations of Ololon resound long and distant, to his ears like the song of an anxious bird. The mundane shell, like the egg-shell, is much more fragile than it looks, and must be pierced, just as our hard skulls must be pierced to set our imaginative energies free.

The idea of the world as an egg, imprisoning energy, or life about to hatch has been used as a symbol of the physical universe from ancient times, especially in Gnostic and Orphic mythology. John Beer suggests that Blake may have got the idea from Bryant's Mythology, which contains designs of eggs, with or without wings, and with serpents round them or emerging below. The serpent represents energy. The egg is an early state of reason, a hardened vision, in which energy is easily controlled because it has never known freedom. This state of reason, however, eventually leads to doubt and despair. Either the 'egg' deadens or else the energies break out like a serpent emerging from the shell. Finally, it attacks by biting and poisoning or by coiling and crushing. This last stage represents the visionless man who uses his energies to poison others and crush the vision in them.<sup>1</sup> This is the state of affairs in our fallen world, the mundane egg, shut off from eternal vision, although Los works hard to alleviate the situation.

Ololon continue to lament and call "in prayer all the Divine family". The Divine Family "collected as Four Suns" and came from "East, West & North & South", which suggests that they might represent the four zoas in their eternal state. In any case, they unite "as One Man, even Jesus", who in turn unites with Ololon. Ololon repent at the thought that their virtue has punished sin instead of forgiving it. They feel real sorrow

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<sup>1</sup> J. Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 23.

for the world below and want to descend in self-sacrifice to follow Milton. The Divine Family gives them the commission:

"Watch over this World, and with your brooding wings  
"Renew it to Eternal Life. Lo! I am with you alway."  
55-56

This reminds us of the Holy Spirit in Paradise Lost who "dove-like sat brooding on the vast abyss". It is a continuation of the above-mentioned image of the "parent bird" waiting for the mundane egg to break open.

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Plate 22:1 - plate 23:20

Los descends to Blake at the moment of vision, when Milton enters Blake's foot. As Blake is binding on his sandals, he is inspired by the spirit of Imagination:

And I became One Man with him, arising in my strength.  
'Twas too late now to recede. Los had enter'd into my soul:  
His terrors now posses'd me whole! I arose in fury & strength.  
22:12-14

Los and Blake walk along together to Los's "supreme abode", Golgonooza. On the way, Los explains who he is -- the generate Urthona, now guardian of the earth and the spirit of time. Moments and actions seem to pass away in time, but Los preserves them all. He has been entrusted with the guardianship of the earth for six thousand years, which are now nearly over. Apocalypse is imminent.

Rintrah and Palamabron meet them at the gate of Golgonooza and realise that Milton has entered Blake's soul. They misunderstand, however, and think that Blake ("this Shadow terrible") wants to spread the moralistic teaching of the "Elect" Milton, thereby letting loose the arch-fiends of moralism, "Satan, Og, Sihon & Anak". (The last three of these were Canaanite kings.) They are quite explicit that "Milton's Religion is the cause" of self-righteousness and "cruel virtue". Similarly, Rintrah tells us how Swedenborg's teaching has been perverted. He began as a visionary but finished as a moralist, writing such things as:

The commandments of the Decalogue are an epitome of the whole of religion, by which communion of God with Man, and of man with God, is effected. Hence their supreme holiness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E. Swedenborg, True Christian Religion, 283, quoted by J.G. Davies, in The Theology of William Blake, Oxford, 1948, p. 48.

As Samson was shorn of his hair, so Swedenborg, who began so promisingly, was "shorn by the Churches". He showed:

"...the Transgressors in Hell, the proud Warriors in Heaven,  
"Heaven as a Punisher, & Hell as One under Punishment,  
"With Laws from Plato & his Greeks to renew the Trojan Gods  
"In Albion, & to deny the value of the Saviour's blood."

22:51-54

Blake here evidently considers Swedenborg as one of the "Elect". In fact, Swedenborg was inconsistent on the subject of predestination, and Blake saw these inconsistencies, as his Marginalia to True Christian Religion show:

Predestination after this Life is more Abominable than Calvin's, <sup>1</sup>  
& Swedenborg is Such a Spiritual Predestinarian ... Cursed Folly.

The value of the Saviour's blood is denied when we try to justify ourselves through our own good works rather than through faith. John Beer makes some interesting comments on "the Trojan Gods" mentioned here, which Blake also refers to as "the detestable gods of Priam":

Priam, son of Hercules, failed his kingdom by becoming devoted to the moral law: his highest praise for Hecuba, for example, was that she was 'the chastest of women'

and

For Blake the figure of Aeneas, carrying his old father and abandoning his wife, seems to have been emblematic of a further stage in human decline, where human strength is burdened by aged hypocrisy.<sup>2</sup>

The opinions of Anchises, that old father, were expressed in the sixth book of the Aeneid, and Blake himself quoted them with contempt:

"Let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do,  
"namely War & Dominion."<sup>3</sup>

In this long speech, Blake is obviously using Rintrah as his own mouth-piece. He expresses his admiration for Whitefield and Wesley, the evangelical leaders. He mocks the evil, established churches who cry "shew us Miracles!". They sound like the Pharisees who asked for a sign and were told:

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by J.G. Davies in The Theology of William Blake, Oxford, 1948,  
<sup>2</sup> p. 39.  
J. Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 45.  
<sup>3</sup> On Virgil, K. 778.

An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.<sup>1</sup>

In Blake's opinion a miracle was not "an arbitrary command of the agent upon the patient".<sup>2</sup> In certain places, Jesus himself could work no miracles because of the people's disbelief. For Blake, miracles are seen in the lives of people like Whitefield and Wesley:

..... "Men who devote  
"Their life's whole comfort to intire scorn & injury & death."  
23:1-2

Blake, speaking through Rintrah, calls for Albion to awake. One of the signs of imminent Apocalypse is Orc, who now "Arises on the Atlantic". This refers to the spirit of revolt in the American colonies and England's refusal to recognise that freedom is every man's right. Rintrah warns that "the Covering Cherub advances from the East". The Covering Cherub is the embodiment of evil. He, like the English troops who want to curb America, advances from the east. The name "Covering Cherub" probably refers to the cherub on guard in the garden of Eden to prevent man from going back into Paradise to the tree of life.<sup>3</sup> He is the collective soul of "Albion's dread Sons". "Covering" implies both "guarding" and also "wide-embracing", his collective nature.

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Plate 23:21 - plate 24:76

While Rintrah is speaking, Los's kind face is covered with frowns. These frowns, tears and sighs of Los are likened, in an extended simile in Miltonic vein, to a gathering storm. Los, however, "dispers'd the clouds", or resumed a more cheerful expression and here he embarks on a long speech, telling his sons to be patient until the end. He tells them:

a) of the prophecy that Milton will "break the Chain / Of Jealousy from all its roots" (this is the famous chain that binds Orc in The Four Zoas, Book V, 79ff);

b) that the daughters of Beulah create night so that Satan's watch-fiends will not be able to see "Human loves / And graces" which, in jealousy, they wish to destroy by accusations of guilt. We are reminded here of Blake's illustration, 'Satan watching the endearments of Adam

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, ch. 12, v. 39. (The three days and nights which Jonah spent in the belly of the whale and his deliverance is a symbol of Christ's spending three days "in the heart of the earth" and of His resurrection.)

<sup>2</sup> Ann. Watson, K. 391.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis, ch. 3, v. 24.

and Eve', and the corresponding passage in Paradise Lost:

... he in delight  
Both of her Beauty and submissive Charms  
Smil'd with superior Love, as Jupiter  
On June smiles, when he impregns the Clouds  
That shed May Flowers; and press'd her Matron lip  
With kisses pure: aside the Devil turnd  
For envie, yet with jealous leer maligne  
Ey'd them askance, and to himself thus plaind.  
Sight hateful, sight tormenting!<sup>1</sup> ;

c) that they must not try to hasten the Apocalypse before its time and should not create war-like division, as Calvin and Luther, however well-meaning, did. David Erdman comments that "Calvin and Luther should not have unsheathed their mental swords because those swords became steel in the German Peasant Wars and the English Civil War".<sup>2</sup> Their interpretation of the Gospel was used as an excuse for political contention;

d) that we should live in peace and brotherly love;

e) that the Apocalypse is imminent, heralded by Milton; it is the first time that "one of the holy dead" has willingly returned to earth on a mission of Redemption;

f) he reiterates his plea that Rintrah and Palamabron should remain loyal to him;

g) he recounts how his other sons left him; their names are taken from among those of the twelve tribes of Israel, who went down into Egypt; they were sons of the promise who went down into the land of bondage;

h) he again tells Rintrah and Palamabron that they must not leave him, Los, the Imagination; however good their motives may seem, if they follow Milton to contend with him, they will be executing vengeance and committing the same error as Luther and Calvin; in trying to destroy somebody else's system, they will be creating another one; instead, they must forgive;

i) Los describes how the Covering Cherub is divided into four established Churches, "Paul, Constantine, Charlemaine, Luther". These Churches became aggressive and Rintrah and Palamabron must not become aggressive too, in wanting to war upon Milton;

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<sup>1</sup> Par. Lost, IV, 497-505.

<sup>2</sup> Blake: Prophet Against Empire, Princeton, New Jersey, second ed., 1969, p. 428.

j) if the last of Los's sons desert him, they will all become "vegetated"; Enitharmon can create the matter of which human beings are made at her looms, but the masculine principles are needed to give it form; form-giving is the work of his sons;

k) lastly, Los reminds his sons that the descent of Milton is a sign that Apocalypse or "the Last Vintage" now approaches. He adds that vegetation may not go on "till all the Earth is reap'd". The Holy Spirit, or Imagination, or Form-giver, lives in human beings and will do so until the end of the world; then, all human beings without the Spirit will be left to themselves, to vegetate.

Rintrah and Palamabron are not convinced by Los's arguments and in anger "descended to Bowlahoola & Allamanda". Next follows a rather amusing description of Bowlahoola, "the Stomach in every individual man", and all its attendant noises, including those of the "dentant Hammers", presumably the teeth as they crush the food before it is digested.<sup>1</sup>

For my exposition of plate 24:68-76, see pp. 40-1 of this thesis.

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Plate 27 [25] and plate 25 [26] :1-65<sup>2</sup>

These plates describe the famous image of the wine-press. In the Milton it is called the wine-press of Los, but it is worked by the sons and daughters of Luvah, who himself "laid the foundation".

The "Wine-presses & Barns" are mentioned together in the Milton, ready for the "Human Harvest", the "Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations".<sup>3</sup> These images are taken directly from the Book of Revelation where a son of man seated on a white cloud appears and is told:

'Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.'<sup>4</sup>

and then, after the harvest of wheat has been reaped, an angel appears with another sickle and:

The angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 62-3 of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Blake changed the ordering of plates 25, 26 and 27 in the C and D copies of the Milton. The numbers in brackets are the numbers of the A and B copies. The original ordering is followed here so that the two plates dealing with the wine-press can be treated together.

<sup>3</sup> M., pl. 42:36-37 and pl. 43:1, K. 535.

<sup>4</sup> Revelation, ch. 14, v. 15.



the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and the blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia.<sup>1</sup>

Wheat and grape juice are to be made into bread and wine, symbolic of the body and blood of Christ.

Before the Apocalypse, there will be war and much bloodshed. Blake must have seen his own war-torn times as a sign that the end was near.

In fact, "This Wine-press is call'd War on Earth" (plate 27:8). England is involved in war:

"The Ancient Man upon the Rock of Albion Awakes,  
"He listens to the sounds of War astonish'd & ashamed,  
"He sees his Children mock at Faith & deny Providence."  
25:23-25

France and Prussia are also engaged in warfare:

The Wine-press on the Rhine groans loud, but all its central beams  
Act more terrific in the central Cities of the Nations  
Where Human Thought is crush'd beneath the iron hand of Power.  
25:3-5

W.H. Stevenson points out that the campaigns of 1800-10 were not actually centered on the Rhine but, as this river marks the border between France and Germany, it is an adequate symbol of them.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the Rhine is a famous wine-producing area. There is also the suggestion of censorship of the press in the line "Where Human Thought is crush'd beneath the iron hand of Power". War and political division often bring censorship with them as Blake realised: his own work, The French Revolution, was set up in type but not printed for this very reason; while still working on the Milton he himself was to be tried for seditious utterances. The wine-press of Los is also called "the Printing-Press / Of Los" (pl. 27:8-9). The whole of corrupt Europe groans under warfare, which is why the black cloud that rises when Milton enters Blake's foot, spreads over all of Europe, as an omen that the end is nigh.

This is the evil aspect of the wine-press -- war that brings about millions of cruel deaths. The picture of "the Human grapes" in the wine-press (pl. 27:30-6) has a double aspect: on the one hand, it is selfish and sadistic love-play; on the other, it is a description of war. Prisoners are kept "in chains of iron & in dungeons". They are tortured

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation, ch. 14, v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> The Poems of William Blake, 1971, p. 530.

with "plates & screws & racks & saws & cords & fires & cisterns". The "mild youth" may be hurt in love by a heartless, dominant female, but it also sounds as though he is dying on the battle-field with the echoes of the clarion and the sounds of battle in his ears:

Tears of the grape, the death-sweat of the cluster, the last sigh  
Of the mild youth who listens to the luring songs of Luvah.

27:40-41

The "songs of Luvah" have lured him to war with the old cry of "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori".

The brilliant description of the vermin that sport round the wine-press (plate 27:11-29) underlines the evil nature of war, nonetheless clothed in glory. Blake, with his wonderful eye for detail, describes the outer form of the insects and plants as beautiful. This is juxtaposed with the evil their inner nature symbolises. The mole is "clothed in velvet"; the serpent's skin shines like "gems & gold" -- indeed gold is mentioned several times in the passage; the maggot appears "tender" and easily squashable because it is white, without a shell; the bee can sting, but nonetheless it collects sweet honey; the nettle also stings, but with "soft down". With great verbal economy, Blake describes the spider who tries to make his web high up, but constantly falls and ambitiously tries again: he is simply "the ambitious Spider in his sul-len web". However, these are not really insects and plants, but the spirits that inform them: the eternal forms, not the creatures themselves.

They throw off their gorgeous raiment: they rejoice with loud jubilee  
Around the Wine-presses of Luvah, naked & drunk with wine.

27:23-24

The "gorgeous raiment" is their bodily covering. Now what appeared beautiful can be seen for what it really is, "naked" without its hypocritical covering -- "Armies of Disease", hitherto hidden. They delight in the cruel frenzy of war and the wine-press. The instruments used for their "dance of death" are also cleverly juxtaposed: the violin was a normal dance instrument, but the timbrel was a biblical instrument, with evil connotations of sacrifices to Moloch:

Though for the noyse of Drums and Timbrels loud  
Thir childrens cries unheard, that past through fire  
To his grim Idol.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Par. Lost, I, 394-96.

The wine-press is an ambivalent image. In the redeeming hands of Los, even war can be converted into ultimate good. Although the people within the press writhe and suffer, after death there will be renewal and resurrection. Los "puts all into the Press, the Oppressor & the Oppressed", but the good wine is made only from "All the Wisdom which was hidden ... from ancient / Time", deep in secret places, not the so-called wisdom which is often vaunted publicly. Los explains the purpose of the wine-press in his exhortation to the "Labourers of the Vintage", who are his sons (pl. 25:17-62). The essence of each individual is extracted. Here, man's deepest inner life is the only thing that will be preserved in the wine-press. Not so much what he has done on earth but his motives for doing it are preserved. The wisdom mentioned here is all that he has learnt through his experience and kept in his innermost heart; these depths are symbolised by "caves and dens". The dross is discarded with the old grape skins.

Kathleen Raine points out that in Jerusalem "it is now the quietists and people of prayer who guide the wine-press"<sup>1</sup>:

... Fenelon, Guion, Teresa,  
Whitefield & Hervey guard that Gate, with all the gentle Souls  
Who guide the great Wine-press of Love ....<sup>2</sup>

The life-stories of these "gentle souls" show that they have already learnt to love through suffering.<sup>3</sup>

The tares are also to be divided from the wheat -- the Elect in one sheaf and the Redeemed and Reprobate together in "a twin-bundle". However, the "Elect" (the self-righteous) are not to be thrown into the fire: "the Elect must be saved [from] fires of Eternal Death".

This fire is rather like that in which the Phoenix burned. The Redeemed will rise from the ashes, renewed and purified, into the Eternal world. The fires would mean eternal death to the Elect; since they cannot have eternal life they would perish without the possibility of renewal:

They know not of Regeneration, but only of Generation.<sup>4</sup>

The Elect are symbolised by hard rocks and stones which, at best,

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<sup>1</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> J., pl. 72:50-2, K. 712.

<sup>3</sup> See also p. 25 of this thesis (footnote 1).

<sup>4</sup> M., pl. 31:19, K. 520.

would remain untouched in the fires, and so the Elect would remain locked in the same state of being forever.

Los assures the reapers and labourers that Apocalypse is very near, but that they must not try to hasten its coming before the appointed time or set themselves up as judges by breaking forth in their wrath. He describes how, just as Jérusalem was trampled by the heathen, so London is under the yoke of the moralists. He likens the pagan gods of London to those of Priam, son of Hercules, "who labour in Tirzah's Looms for bread". The allusion is probably to Omphale, the dominating female who made Hercules slave for her.<sup>1</sup> The Greeks also gave "Olympic crowns" to their athletes, which sets up a system of competition and work, not for pleasure, but for a reward.

Los has difficulty in restraining his sons, the labourers of the vintage and harvest, as they are impatient to get to work. Sounds of imminent Apocalypse are heard as they rumble their ominous thunders and flash "lightnings of discontent" all around.

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Plate 25:66 - plate 26:46

Imagination for Blake means to see the reality of things more deeply; it does not mean to see fancifully. Nowadays, we use the expression "it's only your imagination" to mean that you believe you see something that is not there at all. Blake used it to mean you perceive something which is not seen by the common or natural "vegetative" eye but which, in fact, has a more real existence than natural objects. He intends the following plates (26-29) to teach us to see imaginatively.

So here, the beauties of nature -- the constellations, the dragonflies, the trees shaken by the wind -- can be seen imaginatively as the sons of Los, as living creatures, infused with the spirit. Behind the natural phenomena is "the unchangeable reality of eternity".<sup>2</sup> At the end of plate 26, Blake tells us:

And every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause, & Not  
A Natural; for a Natural Cause only seems: it is a Delusion  
Of Ulro & a ratio of the perishing Vegetable Memory.

26:44-46

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<sup>1</sup> The part of London described is Lambeth. Another pun may be intended since, in Lambeth, Blake lived in Hercules Buildings.

<sup>2</sup> J.G. Davies, The Theology of William Blake, Oxford, 1948, p. 41.

This idea derives from Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences:

Whatever, therefore, in the natural world exists from the spiritual, is said to be its correspondent.<sup>1</sup>

Everything in nature has a spiritual meaning. Swedenborg goes so far as to list the parts of man's body and the correspondences they have with the societies of angels in the three heavens. Sometimes, however, the symbolism is exaggerated.

Swedenborg read the Bible giving a symbolic meaning to every word, or using Divine Analogy<sup>2</sup>. Kathleen Raine comments:

Every natural image, every town, country, and person named in the Bible, is taken to signify some spiritual state; and Blake at his worst follows Swedenborg into this profitless and unimaginative misuse of the Bible.<sup>3</sup>

Blake now describes the descent of the souls to our world. This naturally leads on to a description of Golgonooza, where the souls are given bodily form, and then to a detailed description of the work of the sons of Los (plate 28) as form-givers:

There are Two Gates thro' which all Souls descend, One Southward From Dover Cliff to Lizard Point, the other toward the North, Caithness & rocky Durness, Pentland & John Groat's House. The Souls descending to the Body wail on the right hand Of Los, & those deliver'd from the Body on the left hand.

26:13-17

Kathleen Raine points out that the Neoplatonists held there were two gates into and out of this world. The southern gate was ruled by the sun and the northern gate by the moon. Souls were generated into the earthly world through the gate of Cancer in the North and departed to eternity through the gate of Capricorn in the south. The immortals could also come and go through the southern gate. Enitharmon (who is represented by the moon of the northern gate) weaves men bodily clothing; mankind is generated through Enitharmon's broken gate.<sup>4</sup> Miss Raine also refers to The Four Zoas in which "Enitharmon is comforted by the promise that through her broken gate the Divine Child will be born".<sup>5</sup> Los (who

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<sup>1</sup> Swedenborg, Heaven & Hell, 89; quoted by J.G. Davies, The Theology of William Blake, Oxford, 1948, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> The term is Blake's: J., pl. 85:7, K. 730.

<sup>3</sup> Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> FZ., VIII, 24-31, K. 341.

<sup>5</sup> ibid., VII, 412-16, K. 330; K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 237.

is represented by the sun of the southern gate) helps man to perceive eternity. It is strange, however, that in the Milton, the souls descend on the right hand but ascend on the left, for this is the exact opposite of the directions taken by the souls at the end of Plato's Republic.<sup>1</sup> In Plato, however, they are given an absolutely free choice in the type of life they want to lead on earth<sup>2</sup>, which also applies to Blake's unborn souls or spectres:

... the Spectres choose their affinities,  
So they are born on Earth, & every Class is determinate.

26:38-39

In this way, Blake cleverly reconciles free will and predestination.

+ + +

Plate 28:1 - plate 29:3

The descent of the souls from the body has just been described, and now we see the sons of Los at work in Golgonooza, giving bodily forms or "houses" to the unborn souls, here called spectres because they are full of doubts and fears.

Each son has a particular task. Some of the sons give form to the passions, so the spectre will know what it desires and be able to realise that desire. Antamon gives form to "Doubts & fears unform'd & wretched & melancholy"; if a problem or a doubt is expressed or given definite form, it is close to being solved. Antamon moulds the spectres into life with his gentle hands. He also appears in Europe, but there seems to be no connection between the two passages.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the spectres are delighted with the lineaments that Antamon has prepared, but not all. The more recalcitrant spectres have to be frightened into birth by Theotormon and Sotha.<sup>4</sup> These two sons of Los create creatures like the crested cock, traditionally supposed to call ghosts back to the land of the dead at daybreak. This could be a reminder that Blake's spectres are being born into our world, a world much less real than the eternal world and, by comparison, a land of the dead.

Ozoth and his sons stand "within the Optic Nerve". Their job is to "give delights to the man unknown" or the joys of inner vision. Ozoth

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, The Republic, translated by H.D.P. Lee, 1955, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pp. 397-400.

<sup>3</sup> Eur., pl. 14:15-20, K. 244.

<sup>4</sup> For the derivation of their names, see my commentary on the sons of Los, pp. 56-7 of this thesis.

"builds walls of rocks against the surging sea"; the sea is the symbol of chaos and the rock is necessary to set a limit to chaos. At the same time, however, the rock is hard and visionless. Our hard, rock-like skulls are similarly at once protective and limiting. Blake extends the imagery to include "the black pebble on the enraged beach"; the term "enraged beach" is a concentrated way of saying "the beach washed by angry, swirling waters". The pebble is encrusted and black, but within there is a diamond. However opaque our vision has become, the power to look through the inward eye is always there, but first the thick encrustation must be flaked off.

Ozoth's name may be derived from "azoth", the alchemical panacea of Paracelsus.<sup>1</sup>

Golgonooza, where Los's sons are working, is not only the universal body of man, within which individual bodies are created, but also the city of art. What work of artistic creation could be as perfect as the creation of the human form? Antamon creates the human form by drawing the "indelible line, / Form immortal", the basis of all art. Blake now gives us his account of the time when "the poet's work is done".

We can give a wide sense to the definition of poet, as Shelley does in A Defence of Poetry:

But poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary and painting: they are the institutors of laws and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion .... For he [the poet] not only beholds intensely the present as it is and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time .... A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, the one.<sup>2</sup>

A poet or an artist is a person who creates. Whatever job he does, he does it as a labour of love, with a particular spirit behind it. To us in our earthly world, time passes, but in the eternal world, every moment

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<sup>1</sup> Northrop Frye, 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, p. 126 (footnote 1).

<sup>2</sup> Shelley, The Defence of Poetry, in Shelley's Prose, ed. David Lee Clark, Albuquerque, 1954, p. 279.

of our time and every action performed in time is preserved and precious. Blake expresses the preservation of time in the image of strong, durable buildings; he expresses its preciousness in his description of the materials with which these buildings are made. The actions performed in time form a castle, within which are golden couches; every Minute is draped with azure and with silken curtains; carved golden gates (the Hours) and walls of brass (the Days and Nights) protect the castle; a silver-paved terrace (the Months) adds ornament, built high and safe out of harm's way; towers (the Years) provide further protection, increased with deep moats (the Ages) which in turn are "Incircled with a Flaming Fire" (a period of seven ages). Angels of providence guard the castle so that none of the work is forgotten or destroyed. However, the real work of the poet is done in less than a moment, or "a Pulsation of the Artery". Inspiration comes in a period too infinitesimal even to be counted as time, but it puts man in touch with eternity and transfigures all the other moments put together.

+ + +

Plate 29:4-65

Why do we bother to look at a painting of a landscape when we can go into the country and see the real thing for ourselves? There is no reason if the artist has simply copied the natural scene. Perhaps, however, he has seen something in that landscape that we have missed, and if he can communicate his vision to the canvas, he will open our eyes to see it too.

The Microscope knows not of this nor the Telescope: they alter  
The ratio of the Spectator's Organs, but leave Objects untouch'd.

17-18

Scientific instruments help us to see natural objects; they do not help us to see with the inward eye.

The real world lies in man's subjective interpretation. We should not be subject to "the cruelties of Demonstration" or the empirical evidence of sense data. This provides us with a seemingly objective study, but it limits us to only five senses which, "tho' ever so acute", can not tell us everything.<sup>1</sup> It ignores our sixth faculty, the one which transcends all the others, the imagination. People who do not use their imaginations in this way are described by Christ, quoting Isaiah:

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<sup>1</sup> NNR., 2nd series, Principle I, K. 97.



You shall indeed hear but never understand,<sup>1</sup>  
and you shall indeed see but never perceive.

They see only through "Optic vegetative Nerves", with the natural eye only. Blake several times uses the word "vegetable" or "vegetated" in this plate to emphasise his point.

The only real world is the one around the individual, because it is only what he sees that he can transform with his inward eye. The physical world is covered by the sky which is "an immortal Tent"; it is not a permanent dwelling-place. If man moves his position, his world changes. It is at once his world and the world, because the only reality is subjective.

A Spirit "to be Vegetated" or to be born on this earth is conducted by Los to Golgonooza. To make his stay on earth bearable, man has the pleasures of Beulah, or sexual love, to give him intimations of immortality. This is the responsibility of Enitharmon and her daughters who work at their looms of love. However, in opposition to the "lovely heavens" of Enitharmon, a parallel, evil world has been set up by the moralist Tirzah and her ugly sisters, to call sexual love sin. These sisters also work at the loom and "sing to the winged shuttle", weaving "the veil of human miseries" or repression. They look like Harpies:

The stamping feet of Zelophehad's daughters are cover'd with Human  
gore.

58

With their spindles, they very much resemble the Fates, Lachesis, Clotho and Atropos. The same theme as later appeared in Blake's famous picture 'The Sea of Time and Space', found at Arlington Court, is probably described in these lines:

... they sing to the winged shuttle.  
The River rises above his banks to wash the Woof:  
He takes it in his arms, he passes it in strength thro' his current;  
The veil of human miseries is woven over the Ocean  
From the Atlantic to the Great South Sea, the Erythrean.

59-63

The Arlington Court picture shows the sea of time and space, our earthly world of matter, represented here by the ocean. Several "watery" souls are on their journey downwards to it and several "dry" souls are going

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew, ch. 13, v. 14.

upwards, back to the spiritual world. There is also a river running into the sea; in this river there are three females spinning out the thread of life; there is also a male figure (probably the sea-god Phorcys) who is passing the coil of thread through the current of the river, as here.<sup>1</sup> The souls of Plato's Republic also drink of the Forgetful River before they are born. In doing so, they forget eternity, or "vegetate" as Blake puts it; the greedier souls, however, drink too much and their forgetfulness of immortality, or state of vegetation, is therefore more complete.<sup>2</sup>

S. Foster Damon tells us that Bryant calls the Erythrean (or Red) Sea, "the Great Southern Sea", and in his opinion, this name refers to the Indian Ocean, not the Red Sea and the peninsula of Sinai, which the Israelites crossed. Blake is probably following Bryant when he calls the Erythrean "the Great South Sea", but in Jerusalem, plate 89:49 (K. 735), he places it beyond Japan.<sup>3</sup> The line: "From the Atlantic to the Great South Sea, the Erythrean" would therefore simply mean "across the world".

A rather humorous Blakean term for our earthly world is the Polypus; this general word for octopus-like sea-creatures indicates one of the lowest forms of animal-life; every man is joined "into One mighty Polypus", but exists as an individual tentacle, thrust forward without much direction; however, it is still joined to the head or centre and cannot break free from the un-thinking mass. The Polypus is here called Orc because Orc represents the natural man, unable to get free from his chains, in spite of his rebellious spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, Princeton, 1968, pp. 74-93, especially the illustration on p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, The Republic, translated by H.D.P. Lee, 1955, p. 400.

<sup>3</sup> S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary, 1973, p. 128.

The Milton: a critical study. Book II

Plate 30

The second book of the Milton begins in the calm, moonlight world of Beulah. We are told why Beulah was created: the golden fires of Eternity were too strong for the separate female emanations and they asked the Almighty to hide them "under the shadow of wings". The interpretation of this is literal. Immediately, a shadowy world was created, a quiet resting-place.

What exactly is the "terrible eternal labour"<sup>1</sup> and the "Mental Fight" that the Eternals need to rest from? We have seen that giving of form is fundamental to Art and to all creation. The labours of eternity are to create the forms with which the universe is built:

... such are the words of man to man  
In the great Wars of Eternity, in fury of Poetic Inspiration,  
To build the Universe stupendous, Mental forms Creating.

18-20

We can again compare Plato:

'You know that we always assume that there is a single essential Form corresponding to each class of particular things to which we apply the same name? .... For example there are many particular beds and tables .... But there are only two Forms, one of Bed and one of Table.'<sup>2</sup>

It is Eternity's work to create the original Forms. However, Blake differs from Plato because he believes that the true artist on earth has a direct perception of the eternal mental Form, whereas Plato thinks his work is only ever an imitation.

Blake now contrasts "the great Wars of Eternity" with war on earth, or "Corporeal Strife":

These are the Gods of the Kingdoms of the Earth, in contrarious  
And cruel opposition, Element against Element, opposed in War  
Not Mental, as the Wars of Eternity, but a Corporeal Strife.<sup>3</sup>

In Eden, there is opposition but it is mental; on earth (here called the Ulro), there is opposition, but it is corporeal, bloody warfare; in the resting-place of Beulah, there is no opposition at all -- it is "a place where Contrarieties are equally True".

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<sup>1</sup> J., pl. 12:24, K. 631.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, The Republic, translated by H.D.P. Lee, 1955, p. 371.

<sup>3</sup> M., pl. 31:23-25, K. 520.

In Blake's theory of opposites he is closely, though probably unknowingly, following his contemporary, Hegel (1770-1831):

While Plato regarded contradictions simply as obstacles to arriving at the truth, and thus used the dialectic to get rid of them, Hegel maintained that they lay at the root of everything and were of the utmost value, since it was only through their opposition that any progress towards reality and truth was possible .... The dialectical process is ... one of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The thesis affirms a proposition. The antithesis denies, or in hegelian terminology 'negates', it. The synthesis embraces what is true in both the thesis and the antithesis, and thus brings us one step nearer to reality. But as soon as the synthesis is subjected to a closer inspection, it, too, is found defective; and thus the whole process starts over again with a further thesis, negated in turn by its antithesis and reconciled in a new synthesis. In this triangular manner does thought proceed until at last we reach the Absolute, which we can go on contemplating for ever without discerning in it any contradiction. The term dialectic is thus used for that process of conflict and reconciliation which goes on within reality itself, and within human thought about reality.<sup>1</sup>

Opposites are always united, as are, for example attraction and repulsion in nature.<sup>2</sup>

This idea is very similar to Blake's statement in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.<sup>3</sup>

However, Blake differed sharply from Hegel on one important point. Applying the theory of contending opposites to practice, Hegel held that corporeal war was indispensable to human progress. Blake repudiates this view when Ololon look down on Ulro and see that:

"... War & Hunting, the two Fountains of the River of Life,  
"Are become Fountains of bitter Death & of corroding Hell,  
"Till Brotherhood is chang'd into a Curse & a Flattery  
"By Differences between Ideas, that Ideas themselves (which are  
"The Divine Members) may be slain in offerings for sin."<sup>4</sup>

In their original forms, War and Hunting are "mental conflict and mental search" ; in their worldly forms they become murderous and destructive.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R.N. Carew Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, first publ.

<sup>2</sup> 1950, (Pelican) 1963, pp. 42-3.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> MHH., pl. 3, K. 149.

<sup>4</sup> M., pl. 35:2-6, K. 525.

<sup>5</sup> J. Beer, Blake's Humanism, Manchester, 1969, p. 175.

Plate 32<sup>1</sup>

In this plate, Hillel expounds Blake's philosophy. Hillel's name probably comes from 'Helal ben Sahar', which is Hebrew for 'Lucifer, son of the morning'.<sup>2</sup> Lucifer is the first of the Eyes of God or Angels of the Presence, and this is probably his name in his eternal state. In any case, he is the light-bearer and we must therefore expect wisdom from him. Hillel and the other Angels of the Presence are still guarding Milton's couch of death and instructing him through dreams and visions. Milton is told:

"Distinguish therefore States from Individuals in those States.  
"States Change, but Individual Identities never change nor cease.  
...  
"Judge then of thy Own Self: thy Eternal Lineaments explore,  
"What is Eternal & what Changeable, & what Annihilable.  
"The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself.  
"Affection or Love becomes a State, when divided from Imagination.  
"The Memory is a State always, & the Reason is a State  
"Created to be Annihilated & a new Ratio Created.  
"Whatever can be Created can be Annihilated: Forms cannot:  
"The Oak is cut down by the Ax, the Lamb falls by the Knife,  
"But their Forms Eternal Exist For ever. Amen! Hallelujah!"

22-23 and 30-38

In Plato, the beds and tables made by the carpenter in the mortal world can be destroyed but the ideal Form of the Bed or Table can never be destroyed. Blake makes the same point here about the oak and the lamb. Whatever is natural can be destroyed. Creation implies its opposite, destruction, and then again, recreation; this therefore is fully reconcilable with Hegel's dialectic. All things in this world can be destroyed. Memory is of this world: in the eternal world, memory cannot exist because time has no existence. In plate 5 we were told:

The Elect cannot be Redeem'd but Created continually<sup>3</sup>  
By Offering & Atonement in the crue [ ] ties of Moral Law.

The natural, moral law remembers sin and constantly demands sacrifices and then one begins to sin again and offer sacrifices in atonement again. The law of Christ continuously redeems, for in Eternity, time is non-existent and consequently there is no memory of sin.

<sup>1</sup> I have placed my commentary on plate 32 before that on plate 31, as it is an interlude between plates 31 and 33. Plates 31 and 33 both deal with the Songs of Beulah and are best commented on together.

<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, p. 135 (footnote 1). The translation is of Isaiah, ch. 14, v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> M., pl. 5:11-12, K. 484.

Reasoning is also of this world: it is not an unchangeable Absolute. The thesis which is set up by reason is answered by the anti-thesis, showing up the contradictions in the original thesis: thereby a new thesis is set up. Each thesis is therefore changeable. This is what Blake means when he says "the Reason is a State / Created to be Annihilated & a new Ratio Created" (34-5).

Selfish, possessive love, being imperfect, can also be destroyed. The transcending power of all our actions is the imagination because it links man with eternity. What is done in selflessness endures.

The individual on earth is like a traveller through the various states. He can enter the State of Sin but his eternal existence is not destroyed when the sin is destroyed. Milton is challenged here to cast off what is not eternal, what is a state.

Finally, Blake tells us:

States ... are not, but ah! Seem to be.

29

States have no real existence in Eternity but in our natural world they seem very real to us.

+ + +

Plate 31 and plate 33

Beulah is a resting-plate, but the Eternals can come and go as they please as long as they do not stay too long. They now combine together as Ololon, and descend into Beulah, "weeping for Milton".<sup>1</sup> All of Eternity has united in Ololon, who, at this point, contain both sexes in one collective body. Ellis and Yeats comment that Ololon are weeping with their female tears that their male fires had driven Milton into the Ulro.<sup>2</sup>

The coming of Ololon prefigures the Second Coming of Christ:

... and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.<sup>3</sup>

Blake is here very closely following the above-mentioned passage from the Bible:

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<sup>1</sup> M., pl. 30:6, K. 518.

<sup>2</sup> The Works of William Blake, 1893, vol. II, p. 285.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew, ch. 24, v. 30.

... they saw the Lord coming  
In the Clouds of Ololon with Power & Great Glory,  
And all the Living Creatures of the Four Elements wail'd  
With bitter wailing.

31:15-17

+ +

Next follow two songs of Beulah. The first is a beautiful lyric of praise and the second a lamentation of the Divine Voice.

The lyric is an anthem to the early morning, when the solitary nightingale wakes the lark who soars to the sky and leads the dawn chorus. Blake has captured the very moment when the flowers unfold in the early morning sunrise. The whole passage vibrates with the song of the birds and is heavy with the perfume of the flowers. It is again the smallest things -- the lark and the hidden flowers -- that give us perceptions of eternity.

The lamentation is of the Divine Voice not, as usual, to Jerusalem, but to Babylon. He speaks to her as to a jealous wife who wants to monopolise him totally and isolate him from everything he loves, symbolised by other females. Babylon is Moralism who binds "with briars ... joys & desires". Christ's self-sacrifice means that Moralism will change to forgiveness and therefore God can be reconciled to Jerusalem. Milton's self-sacrifice will have much the same effect.

+ + +

Plate 34 - plate 35:60

These two plates are a fairly straightforward account of Ololon's journey to the Ulro to seek Milton. The action now moves much faster than in the first plates of this book.

Ololon meet the daughters of Beulah and lament and repent for having driven Milton and the Seven Angels out of Eternity. All of Beulah is astonished:

Is terror chang'd to pity? O wonder of Eternity!

34:7

The whole nature of eternity has changed because of Milton's self-sacrifice. Now it is able to forgive whereas before it could only issue judgments, as if from Sinai, with its thunders and lightnings.

On the verge of Beulah, Ololon sees "the Four States of Humanity in its Repose". The first is the shadowy, dream-like Beulah, well-earned rest. The other three, Alla, Al-Ulro and Or-Ulro, grow progressively darker and more nightmarish. Of course, sleep here means death, and

death in Blake means being born into our earthly existence. Ololon decide to descend to the lowest hell of all, the Or-Ulro. Blake's determination to see these states as parts of the body (plate 34:14-18) may again derive from Swedenborg, for whom every part of the body of the Grand (Eternal) Man represented some state of being.

Ololon travel the same path as Milton, but the nature of the journey is different. He travelled through vortices and chaos, whereas they travel over a created path. At last, Ololon come to the Arnon, where Milton moulded form on Urizen. This river flows down into the Dead Sea, or the Ulro, our world of Canaan. Ololon can see the Ulro from here, "a vast Polypus / Of living fibres". It is described as "A self-devouring monstrous Human Death Twenty seven fold". Ololon are now above the twenty-seven imperfect heavens of the Ulro.

Here the Arnon is also called the River Storge which is transliterated from the Greek and means family or parental love. This is the danger of staying too long in Beulah, the protective world of mother and child : the love becomes smothering and too much protection hinders the development of the soul.<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Raine draws our attention to the fact that Blake might have taken the term from Swedenborg's Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell:

Little children are ... the subjects of an influx from the inmost heaven ... which influx pervades their interior, and operates in them ... thereby exciting in their parents that natural affection, which we call by the name of Storge.<sup>2</sup>

The name "Storge" is, of course, also onomatopoeic.

The fibres of the polypus are spun out by Tirzah and her sisters and "the nameless Shadowy Mother", in this case, probably Rahab. They are spider-like sirens:

Spinning it from their bowels with songs of amorous delight  
And melting cadences that lure the Sleepers of Beulah down  
The River Storge.

34:28-30

We remember again the Forgetful River of Plato's myth, from which the souls drank before "falling asleep", or being generated into our world.

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<sup>1</sup> See J. Beer, Blake's Humanism, Manchester, 1968, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 256.



Here the sirens are luring the sleepers down to the sea of time and space, our world.

The image of the spider spinning out his web has previously been applied to Urizen:

Till a Web, dark & cold, throughout all  
The tormented element stretch'd  
From the sorrows of Urizen's soul.  
And the Web is a Female in embrio.  
None could break the Web, no wings of fire,

So twisted the cords, & so knotted  
The meshes, twisted like to the human brain.

And all call'd it The Net of Religion.<sup>1</sup>

The same image occurs in The Four Zoas, when the Spectre of Urthona appears:

Then Urizen arose upon the wind, back many a mile  
Retiring into his dire Web, scattering fleecy snows:  
As he ascended, howling loud, the Web vibrated strong,  
From heaven to heaven, from globe to globe.<sup>2</sup>

Piloo Nanavutty compares the spider image with another of the Hindu creation myths, as related by Dr. Joseph Priestley, a friend of Blake's. In this myth, the first cause is compared to a spider and the universe is spun out of its entrails and belly. At the end of time, the spider will draw all things into itself through the several threads.<sup>3</sup> Blake may have known the myth, and it certainly fits with the picture of the spider-like females.

These females appear again in plate 35, still spinning, but this time they are like witches perched over the various parts of London:

"O piteous Female forms compell'd  
"To weave the Woof of Death! On Camberwell Tirzah's Courts,  
"Malah's on Blackheath, Rahab & Noah dwell on Windsor's heights:  
"Where once the Cherubs of Jerusalem spread to Lambeth's Vale."  
35:7-10

We do not see the evil spirits that surround us but they are there just the same and their influence is felt. Their nets spread over the whole world.

Ololon follow Milton's track which leads between the ruined uni-

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<sup>1</sup> FBU., ch. VIII, pl. 25:15-22, K. 235.

<sup>2</sup> FZ., VI, 316-19, K. 319-20.

<sup>3</sup> P. Nanavutty, 'Blake and Hindu Creation Myths', in The Divine Vision, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, 1957, pp. 169-70.

verses of Urizen and Luvah, down to the Mundane Egg. They see the four universes now in chaos and look down with horror into the Ulro. They see everything in our world in its physical, solid form -- "Beasts & Birds & Fishes & Plants & Minerals". To Ololon, still in the spiritual body, this physical form is "a frozen bulk", decaying and deadly.

In fact, in the spiritual body, Ololon cannot even behold Golgonooza, the one redeeming feature of the Ulro. It is necessary to pass the Polypus to see it and that is "not passable by Immortal feet". In doing so, Ololon will lose their immortality,

Ololon now examine all the couches of the dead in this cosmological grave-yard. These couches are above the Polypus, for a couch is a symbol of the grave-plot through which one "dies" from eternity into the life of our earthly world. When the "terrific porter" lifted the bar of the northern gate of birth, The1 was free to walk among the graves, and, in a similar way, Ololon walk among the couches. Blake has given a very different interpretation from the theme of luxurious despair of many of the eighteenth-century grave-yard poets.

Finally Ololon come to Milton's grave or couch and, giving "a universal groan" fall prostrate before the "Starry Eight" (Milton and the other seven Angels of the Presence), asking for forgiveness.

Just as the Milky Way contains myriads of stars, stretching out for billions of light years, every star representing an angel, so Ololon contain multitudes of spiritual beings, "reaching from Ulro to Eternity". The "Starry Eight" rejoice that a wide road has been opened from Ulro to Eternity. This is the exact opposite of the account in Paradise Lost in which a road is built by Sin and Death from Hell to Paradise. Milton gives access to the devils: Blake gives access to the beautiful spiritual beings.

Ololon sit down beside a fountain, an ancient symbol of inspiration.<sup>1</sup> This fountain springs from a rock (which is like our hard heads that imprison imagination) and then divides into two streams: one of them "flows thro' Golgonooza / And thro' Beulah to Eden", in "a direct ascent

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Jacob Bryant believed that in Amonian religion fountains were sacred to the sun. He links the elements of the name of Athena (Ath-Sun; Ena-Fountain) to the Amonian religion and draws our attention to the fact that she was the goddess of Wisdom. His linguistic theory is always a matter of doubt, but Blake knew and respected his opinions. See A New System, or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology, vol. I, 1774, pp. 51-2.

through [all] the levels of vision".<sup>1</sup> The other stream "flows thro' the Aerial Void & all the Churches". The two streams rejoin each other in Golgonooza. John Beer comments:

The two streams evidently reiterate the idea that inspiration, an immediate, self-contained experience, yet exerts its influence over all the uninspired moments of the day and all the uninspired days of the centuries, redeeming their negativeness.<sup>2</sup>

In just such a moment, Ololon descended to the world of Los and Enitharmon and in just such a moment Milton will cast off his Selfhood. Kathleen Raine points out that the fountain flowing from the rock symbolises the source of life in the depths of the caves. In his illustration of the Genesis story, 'Eve, Adam, and the Serpent', Blake represents Eve standing "by a waterfall whose remote source is invisible to us. Thus the Cave of the Nymphs and their fountains is an image both lovely and awe-inspiring, even terrible, since the river flows from impenetrable darkness."<sup>3</sup> Coleridge also uses the image of the river flowing up from impenetrable darkness -- "caverns measureless to man" -- to symbolise his source of inspiration flowing from immeasurable depths of the mind, in 'Kubla Khan'. We can also compare Shelley's 'Mont Blanc':

The everlasting universe of things  
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,  
Now dark -- now glittering -- now reflecting gloom --  
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs  
The source of human thought its tribute brings  
Of waters.<sup>4</sup>

Luvah's empty tomb, here the tomb from which Christ has risen, is next to the fountain. The rock is also covered with the wild thyme, "Los's Messenger to Eden", because although it is so ugly, its perfume is so sweet and strong that it carries the farthest of all the plants. The lark is also a messenger of Los because he soars higher than all the other birds. His nest is here, at the eastern gate of Golgonooza, presumably because he rises with the sun.

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Plate 35:61 - plate 37:3

The Ulro has twenty-seven imperfect heavens, layer after layer on top of each other, but twenty-eight larks, the complete number, fly

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<sup>1</sup> J. Beer, Blake's Humanism, Manchester, 1968, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 176-7.

<sup>3</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, Selected Poetry, ed. Neville Rogers, 1969, p. 329.

through them. The first lark starts from earth and meets the second one at "the enterance of the First Heaven, named Luther". The second lark then flies up to the entrance of the second heaven where he meets the third lark, and so on, throughout the twenty-seven heavens and back until they reach the earth again. What is the sky to one lark is, of course, the earth to the lark in the realm above. To mortal eye, these messengers of vision seem like small birds, but immortal eyes see clearly that "the Lark is a mighty Angel" in Eternity.

As Ololon step into the Polypus they meet the twenty-eighth bright lark on the very limit of the Ulro heavens. Unlike the lark, who ascending becomes a mighty angel, Ololon, descending, decrease. In Eternity, Ololon contain multitudes; now, they take the simple form of a twelve-year-old girl. She descends to Blake's garden. Blake asks if she has any instructions for him:

"What is thy message to thy friend? What am I now to do?  
"Is it again to plunge into deeper affliction?"

36:29-30

The affliction of which he speaks is spiritual. We remember his letter to Butts:

I find on all hands great objections to my doing any thing but the meer drudgery of business, & intimations that if I do not confine myself to this, I shall not live; this has always pursu'd me. You will understand by this the source of all my uneasiness .... 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 ... It gives me the greatest of torments.<sup>1</sup>

These lines of this plate have a very personal touch: Blake invites Ololon into his cottage, particularly to give comfort to his sick wife:

"... behold me  
"Ready to obey, but pity thou my Shadow of Delight:  
"Enter my Cottage, comfort her, for she is sick with fatigue."

36:30-32

His letter to Butts tells us that "The Ague & Rheumatism have been almost her constant Enemies".<sup>2</sup>

Ololon simply replies that she is looking for Milton and asks Blake if he knows where he is. This is clearly an external expression of

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Thomas Butts, 10 January 1802, K. 812.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., K. 811.

Blake's inward thought, as Ololon speaks of "my Act / In Great Eternity which thou knowest". Blake knows of Ololon's act of driving out Milton because he has experienced it imaginatively: it has taken place within himself. Thus Ololon's contrition is also his.

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Plate 37:4 - plate 38:4

Suddenly Milton appears before them. He has a double aspect: his inner spiritual being is clothed in a beautiful outward form, much as Satan appears as an angel of light. He is:

... a Human Wonder of God  
Reaching from heaven to earth, a Cloud & Human Form.  
37:13-14

The Milton within is covered with a cloud, often the symbol of the body in Blake, as in 'The Little Black Boy':

When I from black and he from white cloud free,  
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear  
To lean in joy upon our father's knee.<sup>1</sup>

In Blake's picture 'Lucifer in his former Glory', Satan appears with gorgeous wings outstretched. Something similar can perhaps be imagined here. The outward form is dazzlingly beautiful, but it covers the inner. It is known as the Covering Cherub.

In Blake's vision of the Covering Cherub, he can see the full embodiment of all the evil ever known, symbolised in all the false gods and churches ever established. The number of the gods is twelve (the number of the natural man) and the number of the churches, the incomplete twenty-seven. The catalogue of Blake's false gods very closely follows Milton's catalogue of gods in Paradise Lost<sup>2</sup>, even to the place names. Except for Molech<sup>3</sup> who is clearly open cruelty and bloodshed, the other gods are associated with secrecy and hitherto hidden evil, now made apparent; even Molech's priestesses are pale and veiled; the others are "curtain'd", or with dark tabernacles, or worshipped at night, especially Belial who is:

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<sup>1</sup> SI., 'The Little Black Boy', 23-6, K. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Par. Lost, I, 392-521.

<sup>3</sup> Here I have used Blake's spelling "Molech", and not the more frequent "Moloch", which Milton uses.

... not worship'd nor ador'd, but  
With the finger on the lips & the back turn'd to the light.  
37:31-32

The fullest account of the Covering Cherub is given by Ellis and Yeats who devote a whole chapter to him and his churches. The churches are divided into groups of three, which correspond to the head, heart and loins of the natural man.<sup>1</sup>

The first church begins with Adam and finishes with Lamech, the father of Noah. It therefore finished when the earth was flooded with water, which symbolised a flood of materialism. The patriarchs of the first church are "Giants mighty, Hermaphroditic". This symbolises that they are balanced; they contain an equal balance of the qualities of both sexes, without either one predominating as in the next two churches.<sup>2</sup>

The second church begins with Noah, who triumphed over matter because he rode above the waters of materialism in the ark. However, the church declines. It finishes with Terah, who lived in Ur, where human sacrifice was practised. His name means "delay" and, in fact, his son Abraham could not complete his journey to the land of Canaan until Terah died in Haran.<sup>3</sup> "Peleg" means division and this church is divided as the members of it are called "Female-Males".<sup>4</sup> There is no longer a balance as in the first church, but a preponderance of female matter over the male spirit. The church finishes in lust and idolatry. The active spirit is hidden, just as the Israelites hid the Godhead in an ark and curtains and set up an inner sanctuary, putting a veil between man and God.

The third church begins promisingly with Abraham, the father of faith, but soon develops into Moses, the law-giver, and then into the aggressive or war-like protagonists of religion, whom Blake sees embodied in Paul, Constantine, Charlemagne and Luther. Therefore, these are "Male-Females"<sup>5</sup> -- masculine aggressiveness predominates.

Ellis and Yeats comment on the first church:

When a man beheld a natural object the spiritual thing  
it expressed came at once into his mind.

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<sup>1</sup> The Works of William Blake, vol. I, 1893, pp. 288-99, especially pp.290-1.  
<sup>2</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, p. 327.  
<sup>3</sup> Watchman Nee, Changed Into His Likeness, London and Eastbourne, first publ. 1967, (paperback edition) 1969, p. 32.  
<sup>4</sup> K. Raine, Blake and Tradition, vol. I, 1969, pp. 327-8.  
<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 328.

Of the second church they say that man saw the object and remembered rather than directly saw the spiritual meaning. The "symbol and meaning, body and spirit had begun to separate".

Of the third church they say that man "saw and knew the symbol only". This led to "blind dogma and dead-letter interpretation" of religion. The soul cannot see beyond the external nature of the object.<sup>1</sup>

The Covering Cherub, containing all the gods and churches in Milton's Spectre, or Selfhood of Moralism, must now be cast off.

All this is written in the heavens, signifying that the sin of Moralism has universal implications. Far away, beyond the stars, lie kingdoms, "Provinces / And Empires of Chaos", which are ruled by misshapen beings. Here lie unfathomable depths of evil. All we can see of these kingdoms are their boundaries, the stars. These points of light show the nature of each kingdom; in the northern sky, the Serpent, Ophiucus, marks the boundary of one kingdom. It is ruled by Sihon and divided into twenty-one districts. In the southern sky, the giant Orion marks the boundary of the other kingdom, which is divided into twenty-seven districts; again, each district is marked by a constellation, but the ruler here is Og.

This passage gives an impression of the vastness of Blake's cosmos, as even these kingdoms beyond the stars are still part of the Mundane Shell. Blake is dealing with "Giant forms"<sup>2</sup>:

From Star to Star, Mountains & Valleys, terrible dimension  
Stretch'd out, compose the Mundane Shell, a mighty Incrustation  
Of Forty-eight deformed Human Wonders of the Almighty,  
With Caverns whose remotest bottoms meet again beyond  
The Mundane Shell in Golgonooza.

37:52-56

Beulah and Eden are even further away, beyond these constellations. Even if a man shoots through the stars he will not reach to Eden: he will only finish up in the caverns of these kingdoms. The only way is within, through the Imagination. An Awakener (here Milton) is needed to break through the Mundane Shell and help us to ascend out of our cyclic existence, back to eternity.

Bryant has several pages and diagrams referring to the Ophites or serpent-worshippers. He also links Orion with Nimrod, "a mighty hunter before the Lord" and so makes him the builder of Babylon.<sup>3</sup> Og rules in

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<sup>1</sup> The Works of William Blake, vol. I, 1893, p. 291.

<sup>2</sup> J., pl. 3, K. 620.

<sup>3</sup> J. Bryant, A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology, Vol. I, 1774, pp. 8-11.

Orion. John Beer points out that Og, or Ogmius, was the name given to a decaying form of Herculean man, a little old man "dragging an infinite multitude of persons by 'extreme fine and almost invisible chains'" and, as such, he figured in the work of Lucian. John Toland, in his History of the Druids, also refers to Ogmius.<sup>1</sup>

However, Og is usually mentioned together with Sihon, as in Blake's passage, and they probably derive from the two kings of Canaan in the Bible:

... the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtaroth.<sup>2</sup>

The twenty-seven constellations of the southern sky and the twenty-one constellations of the northern sky together make forty-eight. The numerological symbolism is extended even further:

And the Forty-eight Starry Regions are Cities of the Levites.  
38:1

Moses gave the Levites forty-eight cities in Canaan, instead of land. The Levites were the priestly tribe and in Blake, the priesthood is generally associated with the evils of the priestly code and law. They also have links with the zodiac. Northrop Frye comments:

The zodiacal sun ... symbolises the fallen conception of eternity as indefinite or endless recurrence. The image for this is the circle, and the serpent in a circular form with its tail in its mouth is therefore a perfect symbol of the zodiac, being so employed by the Druids. The precious stones with which the Covering Cherub or unfallen serpent is traditionally adorned then become zodiacal signs. In the priestly cult of Judaism the twelve stones on Aaron's breastplate, according to Josephus, represented the zodiac; and the twelve sons of Jacob are connected with a zodiacal myth. This zodiacal pattern, which is frequent in Blake, always has the sinister significance of the unending cyclic repetition of time.<sup>3</sup>

All these symbols are incorporated in Blake's passage on this plate -- Ophiucus the Serpent in the northern sky, the precious stones of the Cherub, the priesthood of the Levites and the evil cyclic repetition of the universe in which we are trapped.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe, Manchester, 1969, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua, ch. 9, v. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, pp. 140-1.



Plate 38:5 - plate 39:61

The Spectre of Milton, also called the Spectre of Satan, now takes its stand upon the waves of the Felpham beach near Blake's cottage. Blake imaginatively interprets the thundering and roaring of the sea as the howlings of this demon.

The "sleeping Humanity" or the eternal form of Milton now descends into Blake's garden to confront his spectre. The inner spirit is now confronting its outward manifestation, although they appear in different shapes. They are in complete contrast. The outward form, the Spectre, is "Gorgeous & beautiful", whereas Milton himself appears "clothed in black" and is "severe & silent". This suggests his Puritanical nature, like the "Priests in black gowns" who "were walking their rounds" in the poem of the Songs of Experience.<sup>1</sup>

Blake now gives us a brilliant description of the hell that lies within man, the despair which he himself has known:

I also stood in Satan's bosom & beheld its desolations:  
A ruin'd Man, a ruin'd building of God, not made with hands.  
38:15-16

This hell has all the features of Milton's hell, but in Milton they are external; for Blake, the desert wastes are within, for the soul of man is itself a vast, infinite universe:

Its plains of burning sand, its mountains of marble terrible:  
Its pits & declivities flowing with molten ore & fountains  
Of pitch & nitre: its ruin'd palaces & cities & mighty works:  
Its furnaces of affliction, in which his Angels & Emanations  
Labour with blacken'd visages among its stupendous ruins.  
38:17-21

Perhaps Blake "stood in Satan's bosom" during the "twenty dark, but very profitable years" he mentions in a letter to Hayley.<sup>2</sup> The experience had to be dark before it could be profitable: similarly, Milton has to know Satan before he can cast him off, as he does in his next great speech.

Milton tells his Spectre that he will no longer follow the laws of the false heavens, which basically are the survival of the fittest and the strongest. Instead of fighting and trying to annihilate others, he will annihilate himself. He will not even try to annihilate his

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<sup>1</sup> SE., 'The Garden of Love', K. 215.

<sup>2</sup> 23 October 1804, K. 852.

Spetre -- he will not do battle with guilt. Satan, this Spectre of Milton's, keeps men in his power by making them fear death; Milton will teach men to overcome it. He will have nothing to do with "moral virtue" that, in any case, only seeks its own advantage. (It is only fair to Francis Bacon, whom Blake hated, to point out that he too believed the ancient moralists were wrong in teaching that a man's whole life should be a lesson in how to die, as "it increases, instead of diminishing, the fear of death because men must needs think it is a terrible enemy against whom there is no end of preparing".)<sup>1</sup>

D.G. Gillham quotes a contemporary story by Salzmann<sup>2</sup>, in which a little boy is told:

... pity, the compassionate feeling I am describing, is very useful, as it impels us to assist our suffering fellow creatures.<sup>3</sup>

It is useful because it makes us feel "so light, so gay, that every pleasure has a finer relish". Here, the only inducement to virtue that is offered the child is his own advantage, and it is against this false heaven that Milton is protesting now. Milton declares that he will put off all that is Puritanical in himself.

At this point, Satan blows apocalyptic trumpets and issues flames of fire, in a quite unconvincing imitation of God, proclaiming himself Almighty.

Suddenly, the path blazes with light in front of Blake and real angelic figures appear with trumpets, calling on Albion to awake and follow Milton's example of casting off the Spectre.

Satan howls, longing to attack but he has no real power, only that which we allow him. Again he is like Bunyan's lions, longing to devour, but chained up. He is merely corporeal, or natural, and if he touches the spiritual, then "His torment is unendurable". He can only touch us when we follow natural, moral "virtue".

In a similar way, the natural man, Uzzah, put forth his hand to touch the ark of God and died immediately because the power was too strong for him:

They must not touch the holy things, lest they die.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by B. Willey, in The English Moralists, 1964, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> D.G. Gillham, Blake's Contrary States, Cambridge, 1966, pp. 95-103.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> II Samuel, ch. 6, vv. 6-7; Numbers, ch. 4, v. 15.

Milton's words and the trumpet call of the Eternals are enough to make Albion rise on his couch. His form covers the whole of the British Isles. He leans his elbow upon "Erin's Land" to support himself and tries to get onto his feet which reach from Cornwall to Bognor. However, the time is not yet right and he sinks back on his couch with a groan. It is a sign that Apocalypse is very near; in fact, it comes in Blake's next great poem, Jerusalem.

On another plane of being, Milton is still striving in the decisive fight with Urizen beside the Arnon. When we are engaged in any work at all -- like the ploughman or shepherd in the field -- our thoughts may be elsewhere, and they are just as real as our corporeal form. In this way, Blake describes existence on different planes of being at one time.

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Plate 40 - plate 42:2

Ololon is amazed that the atheists, "those who condemn Religion & seek to annihilate it", have themselves set up a Natural Religion. As we have seen, Blake loved nature and believed we should enjoy the world around us through our senses, but he did not believe that that was everything:

Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception; he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover.<sup>1</sup>

He was firmly against Francis Bacon's view that the Bible should be considered so sacred and so supernatural that we should revere it but not try to understand and that instead our attention should be turned to the study of Natural Science. Blake symbolised this view as adoration of the false goddess, Vala. Similarly, he condemned Rousseau's ideas of "the noble savage".

Ololon names several eighteenth-century philosophers, exponents of rationalism and believers that man can achieve perfection by himself. She is horrified to think that by her failure in Eternity to understand Milton's act of love and self-sacrifice, she herself is the cause of such false thinking. It was she who drove Inspiration out of Eternity.

At this point, Rahab Babylon appears in Satan's bosom. She is Moral Virtue, who is a whore because she has usurped the place of the

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<sup>1</sup> NNR, (second series), Principle I, K. 97.

true Bride of Faith, Jerusalem.

Milton instructs Ololon to obey "the Words of the Inspired Man" and to cast off her own negative moral virtue, symbolised by her virginity. He tells her that:

"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."  
40:32-34

In him, the negation is symbolised by the Spectre of Satan and in her by her virginity. Puritanism and guilt feelings must be washed away. Milton and his feminine counterpart are contraries, not negations, of one another.

Milton continues his exhortation to Ololon. The corrupt ideas that she must cast off are a summary of all Blake's pet hates. Blake takes the text "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags", as literally as Bunyan did<sup>1</sup> and sees Albion as clothed in "the rotten rags of Memory" instead of inspiration. The unholy trinity of Bacon, Locke and Newton must go. Locke founded much of his philosophy on Hobbes, who believed that men did good out of self-interest only, but his style is more urbane and therefore to Blake more devilish.<sup>2</sup>

"All that is not Inspiration" shall be "cast aside from Poetry" -- all the hack-writing of the Hayleys and proponents of sensibility. The "tame high finisher of paltry Blots" may refer to Sir Joshua Reynolds or, in fact, to any of the Venetian and Flemish artists whose "practice is broken lines, broken masses, and broken colours"<sup>3</sup>, which they used to create a life-like, "natural" effect. Perhaps Voltaire himself must be cast off, as the following description could apply to him:

"... the idiot Questioner who is always questioning  
"But never capable of answering, who sits with a sly grin  
"Silent plotting when to question, like a thief in a cave,  
"Who publishes doubt & calls it knowledge, whose Science is Despair."  
41:12-15

"He smiles with condescension" is certainly very apt for Voltaire. These doubters are "the murderers / Of Jesus, who deny the Faith & mock at Eternal Life" (41:21-22).

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah, ch. 64, v. 6 (Authorised Version); The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. James Blanton Wharey, second ed., revised by Roger Sharrock, Oxford, 1960, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, Princeton, 1947, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> DC., III, K. 573.

Ololon realises that the feminine part of her, her "Femin[in]e Portion" has been afraid of mental fight. She will also go through annihilation for, as her mortal, moralistic part dies eternally, she will be purged and regenerated; the death-couch will become a womb to give entry into new life.

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Plate 42:3 - plate 43

With a shriek, the moralistic, virginal part of Ololon splits off from her and joins Milton's shadow in the sea. It is "a Double six-fold Wonder", because Ololon appeared as a twelve-year-old. Milton's wives and daughters also totalled six.

Ololon now descends to the path in Felpham "as a Moony Ark". Blake made several illustrations of arks in the shape of crescent moons, floating above the waters of materialism. The one he made for the last page of the third volume of Bryant's Mythology, shows a dove of peace flying towards it.<sup>1</sup> So here, Ololon has become "as a Dove upon the stormy Sea", gentle without the dominating Female Will.

The sustained climax of the last five plates now comes to a close with Apocalypse very close. Milton and the Seven Angels, free of all taint, now transform into "One man, Jesus the Saviour, wonderful!" (42:11). Ololon folds round him in the clouds in which he will be returning to earth, but they are clouds of blood, both because Jesus died in blood and because the world will end with the famous Last Battle. The twenty-four cities of Albion rise up as the twenty-four elders round the throne of God in Revelation. The chief four of them put trumpets to their lips.

The poem now climbs down from its apocalyptic heights to its more personal note. Blake has been so terror-struck that he has fallen on the path prostrate, and his worried wife, or "sweet Shadow of Delight", is bending over him to find out what has happened.

Blake has just come through some sort of mystic experience, rather like St. John of the Cross, who writes:

The end I have in view is the divine Embracing.  
and  
... It is God Himself Who is then felt and tasted.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Bryant, A New System, or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology, vol. III, 1774, p. 601.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by J.G. Davies, in The Theology of William Blake, 1948, p. 55.

The lark now mounts: to our eyes it is a simple bird, but we must remember it is really a mighty angel in Eternity. The spirits of Blake's universe hover over Surrey and Lambeth, unseen by us, but preparing for Apocalypse, to bring justice to the poor and oppressed and "To go forth to the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations".

The poem has dealt with universal themes, but it is the product of a highly intense personal experience. Milton's act of subduing the Spectre was in fact entirely Blake's own; as he writes in a letter to Hayley:

... For now! O Glory! and O Delight! I have entirely reduced that spectrous Fiend to his station, whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labours for the last passed twenty years of my life. He is the enemy of conjugal love and is the Jupiter of the Greeks, an iron-hearted tyrant, the ruiner of ancient Greece .... O the distress I have undergone, and my poor wife with me: incessantly labouring and incessantly spoiling what I had done well .... I thank God with entire confidence that it shall be so no longer.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 23 October 1804, K. 851-2.

### The illustrations to the Milton

Including the title-page and plate 43, which has only one line of writing at the top, there are ten full-plate illustrations to the Milton, as well as several designs, both large and small. The main theme of the illustrations, as of the poem, is inspiration.<sup>1</sup>

#### Title-page - full-plate illustration I

This shows a naked male figure with his back towards us, his right foot forwards (symbolising spirituality) and his right hand raised. The background is dark but he is preparing to walk through swirling fire. His body glows as with the light of fire. His body is strong and muscular in the Michelangelesque style that Blake so much admired. This figure is Milton, preparing to descend through "flames of annihilation".<sup>2</sup>

David Erdman comments:

When we follow Milton's hand through by turning the page, we see him as a flaming star (on Plate 2) from the perspective of this world.<sup>3</sup>

The writing contains the words "Milton, a poem in 2 Books" on the A and B copies, but this originally read "12", the number of books in the epic Paradise Lost, and it is possible to see where the figure "1" has been erased. Strangely enough, the figure "1" has been retained on the C and D copies so that they still read "12 Books".

Underneath are the words from Paradise Lost: "To Justify the Ways of God to Men".

#### Plate 6 - half-page design

The design appears underneath the following lines:

Thence stony Druid Temples overspread the Island white,  
And thence from Jerusalem's ruins, from her walls of salvation  
And praise, thro' the whole earth were rear'd from Ireland  
To Mexico & Peru west, & east to China & Japan, till Babel,  
The Spectre of Albion, frown'd over the Nations in glory & war.  
All things begin & end in Albion's ancient Druid rocky shore:  
But now the Starry Heavens are fled from the mighty limbs of Albion.  
6:20-26

This passage links the Druid religion with that of other cults that practised human sacrifice, such as the Aztecs, who tore the hearts out of

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<sup>1</sup> J. Beer, Blake's Humanism, Manchester, 1968, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 217.

their victims. Peter Fisher remarks that "Southey's story of a Celtic adventurer [Madoc] who founded a settlement in mythical 'Aztlan' -- the ancestral home of the Aztecs -- and was finally made to fight for his life at the foot of the stone of sacrifice suggested the common origin of both Aztec and Druidic sacrificial rites".<sup>1</sup> On plate eleven of the Milton Blake speaks of "the rocks of Albion's Temples", which suggests that the rock on which Albion is sleeping is also the one on which he is being sacrificed.

On plate thirty-seven of the Milton, Blake refers to the Wicker Man, a huge effigy in which people were sacrificed collectively by burning:

And he appear'd the Wicker Man of Scandinavia, in whom  
Jerusalem's children consume in flames among the Stars.<sup>2</sup>

W.H. Stevenson comments:

Caesar's Gallic Wars vi, 16, refers to Druid (not Scandinavian) human sacrifice by burning. B. sees this sadism as an escape of uncontrolled wildness, a savagery which also finds an outlet in war.<sup>3</sup>

However, as E.D. Snyder points out, there was a surprising tendency in eighteenth-century writers to confuse the religion of the Druids with the Nordic mythology; for example, even Gibbon called the Edda "the sacred book of the Celts".<sup>4</sup>

Druid sacrifice provides an image frequently used by Blake as the epitome of the cruelty of a hypocritical "holy" priesthood, or rather priestcraft. Oaks are also a symbol of evil in Blake as the Druids worshipped in oak groves.

The design on this plate shows a large Druid trilithon on the "material" left side of the picture. Some trees, probably oaks, are also seen on the left. Near them are some sheep and a man on foot. A horse and its rider are coming out from under the trilithon. Facing the horse-man is a large rocking stone, directly in front of the opening of the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Blake and the Druids' in Blake: a Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Northrop Frye ('20th century views' series), Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966, p. 161 (footnote 14).

<sup>2</sup> M., 37:11-12, K. 527.

<sup>3</sup> The Poems of William Blake, 1971, p. 553, footnote.

<sup>4</sup> The Celtic Revival in English Literature 1760-1800, Cambridge, Mass., 1923, p. 9.



trilithon. Two stars are seen behind the trilithon and six stars and a crescent moon on the right. Erdman points out that, although eight stars were etched, only five stars have been left bright in the A copy; in the D copy, "all the large stars are removed" and the crescent moon "has the full moon in its arms".<sup>1</sup> He points out also that the rocking stone is "a precarious image of our world -- and our skull" and has been "loosed from the spinning women of plate 4".<sup>2</sup> He also suggests that "it is painted to resemble a ship under sail, with grey hull".<sup>3</sup>

Margoliouth suggests that the figure on horseback is Hayley and the trudging pilgrim is Blake. Both are on the materialistic left side of the picture, but at least the pilgrim is journeying through the land of trilithons to the crescent moon ahead, like one whose kingdom is not here.<sup>4</sup>

Trilithons also appear in smaller designs of the Milton, such as those on plate 4. Blake regarded the heavy stone constructions of the Druids as the symbols of anti-vision. Although in the beginning the Druids had been an imaginative, spiritual people, their worship had declined into dogma (represented by the stone) and sacrifice. Heavy flat structures such as trilithons, or even the enormous constructions of the pyramids, are a symbol of evil; not only do they crush, but their only claim to grandeur is on account of their size, whereas Blake found perfection only in "Minute Particulars".

However, Blake makes use of both the favourable and unfavourable aspects of Druid culture in his images and thought. The Gentleman's Magazine in 1761 contained a poem by an anonymous author entitled "to a brother Druid" in which the word "druid" is clearly meant to be understood as poet. There were three orders of druids: druid priests, bards and euvates. The bards had the gift of prophecy and Blake frequently makes use of this tradition in his own poetry:

Hear the voice of the Bard!  
Who Present, Past & Future, sees<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>4</sup> H.M. Margoliouth, William Blake, 1951, p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> SE., 'Introduction', K. 210.

In the Milton, it is the song of the Bard that inspires Milton to make his journey to annihilate his Selfhood and redeem his emanation. Blake also illustrated Gray's poem, "The Bard", in which the Welsh bards were persecuted under the tyranny of Edward I.

Blake probably obtained his information about the Druids from John Toland's History of the Druids and Dr. Stukeley's extremely far-fetched yet highly reputed work, Abury, a History of the British Druids, to which Gray alone raised his voice in protest.<sup>1</sup> Stukeley was convinced that the Druids "worshipped God ... in spirit and in truth". He blames the corruption of their religion -- when the outer form took over from the spirit -- on the continental Druids rather than on the British ones.<sup>2</sup> Stukeley links the Druids with the Hebrews, especially with Abraham as he says that both worshipped in oak groves. He states his argument:

Hercules of Tyre ... Was a pastor king in Egypt ... or the Pharaoh with whom Abraham conversed there. He was a very great navigator: a learned prince, an astronomer, a chronologer. The Hercules Ogmius. He knew the secret of alphabet writing, and the true length of the solar year. He learn'd probably of Abraham. He carried colonies about the Mediterranean, and into the Ocean, and brought the Druids into Britain. He built many patriarchal temples; some of serpentine form; particularly at Acon in Palestine. He had a son called Isaac. The evidences of Hercules planting Britain. Remains of Hercules his people, called Hycsi, in Britain. Hence we conclude our Druids had the use of Writing before Cadmus carried it into Greece.<sup>3</sup>

This to some extent would account for Blake's linking of the names of Jewish people and places with English ones, especially in the case of the Sons and Daughters of Albion and the twelve tribes of Israel.

#### Full-plate illustration II

There are various interpretations of this plate. One is that one of the figures on the left is male (Los) and the other female (Enitharmon). They are both looking in consternation at an agonised male figure (right) who is on a small dais. He is writhing in flames which appear to emanate from him and which surround his body. The tormented figure is Satan "flaming with Rintrah's fury hidden beneath his own

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<sup>1</sup> E.D. Snyder, The Celtic Revival in English Literature 1760-1800, Cambridge Mass., 1923, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> W. Stukeley, Abury, a History of the British Druids, Volume the Second, 1743, Preface, pp. ii-iii.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 70.

mildness" (pl. 9:19). He is about to descend to our world of Canaan. This plate occurs after the last line of plate 9:

His Spectre raging furious descended into its Space.  
9:52

The other two figures are probably Los and Enitharmon at the moment of realisation:

Then Los & Enitharmon [sic] knew that Satan is Urizen  
Drawn down by Orc & the Shadowy Female into Generation.  
10:1-2

Shortly after this, we hear that "Los hid Enitharmon from the sight of all these things", or from such tragic sights.

Margoliouth comments on this plate:

Whatever Blake the psychoanalyst had seen in Hayley he depicted in the second full-page illustration. There on a plinth stands -- not the dignified façade of a statue which the 'bless'd Hermit' offered to the world but -- a Satan writhing in the flames of 'Rintrah's fury' and of ungratified desires. Los, with clasped hands, regards him with intense interest and concern: Enitharmon, who 'form'd a Space', has one foot, her left foot, on the plinth, though her hands and right foot turn away.<sup>1</sup>

David Erdman, however, offers a completely different explanation. He believes that all three figures are male and represent the three sons of Los--Satan, Rintrah and Palamabron. He believes that Satan, here, "is the selfhood revealed by the light of the flaming star of Milton's descent (Plate 2)"<sup>2</sup>, and comments:

Beside Satan, wringing his hands in mistaken sympathy, stands the brown-bearded Rintrah. Behind Rintrah is mild, blond-bearded Palamabron, touching toes with Satan in mistaken sympathy, too, but turning away, with his body and hands, inside a blue space resistant to the opacity.<sup>3</sup>

### Full-page illustration III

This is an illustration of the lines:

Then Milton rose up from the heavens of Albion ardentous.

...

And in his lineaments divine the Shades of Death & Ulro.  
He took off the robe of the promise & ungirded himself from the  
oath of God.

14:10-13

<sup>1</sup> H.M. Margoliouth, William Blake, 1951, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 226.

A male nude stands in the centre of the picture. He is still resplendent with eternal glory but his left foot is advanced, symbolising that he is descending to the material world. The sun of vision is setting behind him, ominously sinking low as at moments of spiritual crisis in the Job illustrations. Round Milton's head is a "fiery nimbus"<sup>1</sup>, rays from which "mingle with the rays rising from the globe of [the] setting sun".<sup>2</sup> David Erdman comments that:

Milton's striding forward is as in the title page but from a different perspective ... in the next plate we again see his star descending, as in Plate 2, but a bit later in time, now reaching its destination. If we look ahead for a matching picture, we shall find Ololon in Plate 50, [K. 43].<sup>3</sup>

Blake has portrayed the metaphor in the above lines literally, as Milton has a robe in one hand and a girdle in the other which he has just taken off. This literal portrayal is as common a feature in Blake's work as it is in Bunyan's. It occurs, for example, in Blake's picture of 'Pity' portrayed literally as a naked new-born babe, and in the same picture, "couriers of the air" or horses which are quite obviously blind.

#### Full-plate illustration IV

This is plate 16 in Keynes (K. 497), and plate 18 in David V. Erdman's The Illuminated Blake which follows copy D. In copies A, B and C, it is plate 15, according to David Erdman. It illustrates the contention of Milton and Urizen. An old man, clutching two tablets of stone, which represent the law, may be either fainting or sinking. These two tablets fall apart like the divided syllables of the word "Selfhood", at the bottom of the plate, cut in half by Milton's right foot. Similarly, Milton's right hand cut between the syllables of his name on the title page.<sup>4</sup> A young male figure, with his back towards us, is reaching forward, possibly as if to strangle him or push him down.

David Erdman, however, holds the contrary view that:

Milton ... uses his feet to express his wrath and his hands to save the human form of his adversary.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Geoffrey Keynes, from his notes in the Blake Trust facsimile of copy D, quoted by David V. Erdman, *ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 232.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 234.

Milton's work is to mould by shaping with the hands, not to sculpt by cutting with the knife. At the bottom of the plate are written the words: "To Annihilate the Selfhood of Deceit & False Forgiveness". Above, five celestial figures, four of whom are female and one male, rejoice at Milton's triumph and play musical instruments -- a serpent horn, tambourines, trumpet and a harp. It is the male figure, "a young Bard"<sup>1</sup> in the centre who holds the harp and also has a halo. David Erdman comments that there is yet another figure 'not clearly etched but given a face in D and a triangle to play'.<sup>2</sup> This extra figure brings the number of dancing women to five. These five women may be the figures "sent forth as seducers by Rahab in aid of Urizen" (pl. 19:27-31, K. 501), but from Milton's point of view they "represent the five liberated senses or daughters, not the 'self-dividing', or 'the Double-sexed' beings that Rahab and Tirzah thought they were sending".<sup>3</sup>

#### Full-plate illustration V

This plate follows plate 21 in copies A and B, but follows plate 43 in copy C and plate 47 in D. It illustrates plate 22:4-14 (K. 505), the passage in which Los steps out of the sun to inspire Blake, who is fastening on his sandals to walk forward through eternity. Both figures are nude in copy A, but have some scanty drapery in the other copies. The illustration is a blaze of yellow light from the "fierce glowing fire".

David Erdman suggests that this plate was moved to plate 47 so that it could follow full-plate illustration VIII, showing the dying Urizen. Blake himself would therefore represent the new figure of "Urizen reborn".<sup>4</sup>

#### Full-plate illustrations VI and VII

In copies A, B and C, the first of these two illustrations is plate 29 and the second is plate 33. In copy D, the first of these two illustrations is plate 32, and the second one is plate 37.<sup>5</sup> They are companion plates; the first shows a figure bending backwards to the left, as a star falls onto his left foot; the left indicates he is still in the material world. The second is the same picture in reverse,

<sup>1</sup> David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 234.

with the figure bending backwards to the right and the star falling onto his right foot; the right indicates he is in the spiritual world. Over the first figure is written "WILLIAM" and over the second figure "ROBERT".

When Blake's younger brother died in 1787 Blake wrote that he saw his spirit ascend through the ceiling "clapping his hands for joy".<sup>1</sup> He also claimed that his original method of "illuminated printing", in which the script was left in relief on the copper, had been suggested to him by the spirit of his dead brother in a vision.<sup>2</sup> In 1800, he wrote to Hayley that he still conversed "daily & hourly in the Spirit" with his brother, and that he heard his brother's advice and wrote "from his Dictate".<sup>3</sup> It would hardly be surprising therefore if the picture of Robert in the Milton represented one of the poem's "Authors" who, according to one of Blake's letters to Butts, was "in Eternity".<sup>4</sup>

Blake was extremely fond of his talented young brother who lived with him and his wife at their house at 28 Broad Street, next door to Blake's birthplace and the family hosiery business. Although he was only nineteen when he died, Robert Blake had already given evidence of his artistic talent, no doubt instructed by his elder brother. The picture 'The King and Queen of the Fairies', once thought to have been painted by William Blake himself, is now attributed to Robert. As Sir Geoffrey Keynes points out, the lines of the two reclining figures in Robert's picture are rather stiff and angular<sup>5</sup>, but nonetheless it is a very attractive work. Robert's drawing of a group of people awestruck by an approaching cataclysm was also etched by William Blake.<sup>6</sup> Blake's precious Note-book which he filled with his poems, sketches and private

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<sup>1</sup> A. Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, first published 1863, Everyman ed., 1942, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Blake first used this method in about 1788. First he coated a sheet of paper with gum arabic and soap. Then he wrote the script onto this sheet in a solution of asphaltum and benzine. Next he laid the sheet of paper on the heated copper-plate and passed it through the press. When the plate had cooled, the paper was soaked off the plate with water but the writing was left in reverse on the copper. Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Blake Studies, Oxford, 1971, p. 123. See also S.W. Hayter, New Ways of Gravure, 1966, pp. 64 and 130.

<sup>3</sup> 6 May 1800, K. 797.

<sup>4</sup> 6 July 1803, K. 825.

<sup>5</sup> Blake Studies, 1971, pp. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. 6.

thoughts and rhymes for most of his life, had at first belonged to Robert, who executed the first few sketches and drawings it contains.

In these illustrations to the Milton, there are three steps behind William, while behind Robert there are four. David Erdman points out that three represents the natural man (William is still alive in our earthly world), and four represents the spiritual man (Robert has died and is in eternity). David Erdman further comments:

The pictures also represent ... a sequence of progressive contraction and expansion, of descent and ascent (simple core of the bard's prophecy): steps downward from the past, behind William, whose hands unite past and present; fourfold steps upward, behind Robert and touched <sup>BCD</sup> by Robert's outstretched hand, the hand and the steps both directing us forward.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the steps in the "William" illustration mark the end of the stairway of the First Book itself, which is now behind us. This would be:

... a descent to this earth's surface as a place of rendezvous and illumination and redirection. William's turning away from the altar and toward his brother, ... is as if the two brothers in Plate 10, Palamabron and Rintrah, turned from the false, illusory brother Satan, falsely elevated, to confront and touch one another.<sup>2</sup>

#### Plate 33 - half-plate design<sup>3</sup>

This design is to help the reader understand the geography of Milton's journey. The four overlapping circles represent the four ruined universes of the zoas and the Mundane Egg is in the centre. Milton's track lies between the universes of Urizen and Luvah.

#### Plate 36 - half-plate design<sup>4</sup>

This simple but charming design represents Blake's cottage at Felpham with the Virgin Ololon descending to it.

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<sup>1</sup> David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, pp. 253-4.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> This design is on plate 33 in Keynes (K. 523). However, according to David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 252, it is on plate 32 in the A, B and C copies, and plate 36 in copy D.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Geoffrey Keynes puts this design on plate 36 (K. 527). However, according to David V. Erdman (*ibid.*, p. 256), it is on plate 36 of the A, B and C copies, and plate 40 of the D copy.

Full-plate illustration VIII

This illustration is plate 38 of the A, B and C copies, and plate 42 of copy D.<sup>1</sup> Two beautiful figures, one male and one female, lie naked on the rocks which are covered in green seaweed and washed by the sea. Although they are beautiful, their expressions are unhappy and worried. Above them flies an ugly bird, with feathers like scales and open beak, which is described in Jerusalem, plate 94:

Over them the famish'd Eagle screams on boney Wings.

The eagle is obviously spectrous guilt depriving them of joy, in this case sexual fulfilment. The couple may be Albion and Jerusalem, or perhaps Albion and "England, a Female Shadow" as described in Jerusalem. In that case, "Albion" would be the collective spiritual form of England, and "England", the collective material form which, instead of providing the soul's fulfilment as the body should, only serves to hamper and oppress:

Albion cold lays on his Rock: storms & snows beat round him,  
Beneath the Furnaces & the starry Wheels & the Immortal Tomb:  
Howling winds cover him: roaring seas dash furious against him:  
In the deep darkness broad lightnings glare, long thunders roll.

The weeds of Death inwrap his hands & feet, blown incessant  
And wash'd incessant by the for-ever restless sea-waves foaming  
abroad  
Upon the white Rock. England, a Female Shadow, as deadly damps  
Of the Mines of Cornwall & Derbyshire, lays upon his bosom heavy,  
Moved by the wind in volumes of thick cloud, returning, folding  
round  
His loins & bosom, unremovable by swelling storms & loud rending  
Of enraged thunders.<sup>2</sup>

This picture warns us that Apocalypse is imminent as Albion will soon be in the spiritual body and out of the physical.

Full-plate illustration IX

This illustration is plate 41 of the A, B and C copies, and plate 45 of copy D.<sup>3</sup> It illustrates the lines:

Urizen faints in terror striving among the Brooks of Arnon  
With Milton's Spirit.

39:53-54

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1 David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 258.

2 J., 94:1-11, K. 741.

3 David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, p. 261.



Milton, with light like a halo emanating from his head, is supporting the feeble Urizen. Their bodies sparkle and glow against the dark background, and Milton's expression is one of fierce pity.

Full-plate illustration X

Apart from the one line of text which is at the top of the last plate, this is a full-plate illustration. The line reads:

To go forth to the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations.  
43:1

A naked female figure is in the centre of the illustration. Her flame-like hair is billowing out and her arms are upraised. Her face is turned upwards and light illuminates her face, body and eyes, except in copy D, where her gaze is directed forwards. In copy D she is also wearing strapless sandals<sup>1</sup>, which may be linked to the sandals of vision on which Blake walked "forward thro' Eternity".

David Erdman suggests that this figure is "the female Human Form Divine, a combination of Oothoon and Ololon"<sup>2</sup>, and he adds:

The picture of Milton that more precisely matches this picture of his bride is on Plate 16, where he too is shedding robes. Milton is completely naked on Plate 1 because that picture has, on initial impact, to represent the entire action of the poem.<sup>3</sup>

Two figures stand on either side of this stately, willowy figure. They may be "the male and female human forms of the two deep rows of wheat", and so "remind us, symbolically, of the male and female harvest figures of bread and wine in Plate 2".<sup>4</sup> However, they may both be male, either the two brothers of plate 10 (Rintrah and Palamabron), or the brothers William and Robert.<sup>5</sup> If they are Rintrah and Palamabron, they would be the representatives of the Reprobate and the Redeemed, bound in "a twin-bundle for the Consummation" (pl. 25:37, K. 511). Apocalypse is imminent.

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<sup>1</sup> David V. Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 1975, pp. 266-7.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 266.

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