

Embracing the Divine: The Life of Spirit  
in William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*,  
and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

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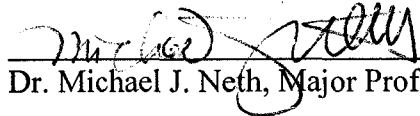
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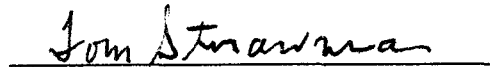
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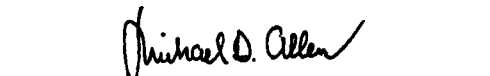
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## DEDICATION

In honor of:

my wife, Karen

my children, Robert J. Musante, IV, and John M. Musante

and my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Musante, Jr.

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## ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I argue that imaginative spirituality is a continuous power within individuals, and the power appears in energetic, contrary states of being, despite undeniable entities of abstract reason—orthodox religion, government, science—that function remorselessly to subdue, categorize, and oppress individuals' divine lives. My argument embodies a formalist approach in which I explain that Blake's text and art demonstrate meaningful combinations of divine and human worlds. Blake's emphases in poem and design focus unwaveringly on people's spiritual identities which are not located in otherworldly realms; they are found within people's bodies and souls. In his *Songs of Innocence*, children manifest wondrous spiritual innocence, but their collective spirit becomes trapped by social structures that are manifestations of the abuse of reason. The immorality resulting from such entrapment surfaces subtly yet strongly in several of the poems from this volume. In *Songs of Experience*, children maintain a spiritual presence, but their outlooks become tinged irreversibly with bitterness because of their knowledge of and place in threatening social environs. Blake shows us a fierce world of energetic force and reason that is inescapable but increasingly essential. This study attempts to reconstruct the spiritual odyssey of Blake's characters thus defined, demonstrating origins of spiritual liveliness and restriction in the poems and visual engravings. The manifestations of Blake's contraries are intended to direct readers to new knowledge based upon the confluence of human joy and pain that underlies existence.

In the second half of the dissertation, I examine the spiritual powers of the primal contraries, energy and imagination in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; additionally, my



study illuminates Blake's conviction in the need for revolution in the human world. The *Marriage* shows a spiritual plurality—comprised of a series of unique individualities—of contrary life, an existence displaying exotic, oppositional power along a continuum in Blake's hellish regions. The exuberance of Blake's devil-speaker and the presence of abstract origins (and forces) of religion, science, and politics will identify his intentions to reveal hypocrisy and truth. The advancements of spirituality and morality are forged in the inextricable relationship between art and language, and Blake encourages an energetic apocalypse by engaging his audience in the spiritual displays of his artistic media.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In this study I will use three early works by William Blake to demonstrate that for Blake human life is undeniably filled with spirit, and humans know the existence of spirit within themselves through a multitude of contrary presences. The first chapter explores the child as a divine presence in *Songs of Innocence*; even the child's outer, physical world contains manifestations of the divine, such as pastoral settings, lambs, and the simple presence of other children, as Nicholas Marsh and E. D. Hirsch claim. This study examines their criticism in light of the aforesaid possibility, but goes beyond by explaining that the spiritual optimism of children in Blake's poems indicates heavenly conditions on earth, making seemingly mundane objects and occurrences shine with the splendor of god. Blake's own colored drawings, against which his poems were first printed, show his conviction that such presence exists, enriching the poems even further. But certain types of immorality infiltrate the child's world, especially the existence of slavery but also its corollary in the reality of child labor. For example, "The Chimney Sweeper" in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* shows that the adult world has given the youths reason for bitterness and despair, perpetuating rough living conditions and shackling spiritual innocence. Martin Nurmi examines the realities of the sweeps' occupation, and Tim Fulford further engages this historical matter. In discussions of this poem and others, one may note that an abstract world of restriction is, to Blake, a world of spiritual imprisonment, especially to those who wish to live under better conditions of

physical and spiritual happiness. Thus, the life of the divine can be pleasing spiritually yet constricted and distorted by outside forces. As this study hopes to demonstrate, Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* give us palpable intertextual connections: Divine worlds exist within individuals alongside intrusive powers of conventional authority figures, and individuals often experience pain, intimidation, and repression because of these powers.

The analysis in chapter two leads us further into the abuses of abstract reason in an omnipresent world of human suffering. In "Holy Thursday," the "multitudes" of children are a pleasing group of singing spirits in human form, but dictating, organizing adults are present with subtle yet ominous opposition. As David Fairer explains, the masses of children could engage in revolution. In the poem of the same name from *Experience*, the contrary to a happy spiritual condition is poverty, and it exists in a "fruitful land" despite that land's prosperity. About Blake's illustrations here and elsewhere, David Erdman traces the intermingled ideas within the verbal and the visual components of Blake's art. Yet, through my discussion, I attempt to show an extended variety of ideas consisting in Blake's objects and human figures, and I sketch how his art shows the condition of spiritual life in children. So the first two chapters of the dissertation will examine the inevitable transformations of children's outlooks and the increasingly subjugated worlds of spirit.

Throughout chapter two, I argue that Blake identifies reason as a source of corruption, a common enough idea in British literature of the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. What

distinguishes Blake's art and makes it new for his age is its contrary juxtaposition of a seeming stylistic naiveté with a piercing intellectual wit and cutting metaphysical candor, a warring dissonance in his own creative vision and practice. In the "Introduction," reason has created a dead, and continuously dying, world of materialism with "The starry floor / The watry shore" (18-19). Blake's stars of reason have separated humankind from the bliss of eternity once imagined in the distant past. Blake's engraving demonstrates this psychic fact in the figure of a lonely, naked woman adrift on a couch of abstraction and materialism. And, in "Earth's Answer," we see the vicious traps of reason in a world that has become too abstract. "Break this heavy chain" becomes Blake's credo of energetic spirit (21), both psychic and political, as approached in this chapter. Marta Krzysztoforska explains that energy is a vital, necessary presence, but it is pushed about and even trapped between the "deeps" and "skies." Reason often has a contrary, restrictive presence, especially given its social manifestation in the creation of the Industrial Revolution. In the discussion of "The Tyger," readers will see the interactive forces of reason and energy: The presence of good and evil on the same continuum underscores the uniqueness of all spiritual creation. Similar forces of good and evil exist in "London" as well where Blake's speaker takes us into the restrictions of charters and the Magna Carta. John Beer examines the Magna Carta's original good intentions in checking the power of kings, but then he explains that in Blake's age, "these charters were freedoms granted to certain classes of people. . ." (62). In "The Garden of Love" and "The Little Vagabond," children come to understand the corruption of authoritative

priests and abuses of conventional religion. Peter Ackroyd explains that Blake's home in London and another building nearby sat over graves, pointing us to the problem of shifting populations in Blake's city. Thus, the lost "green" in "The Garden of Love" may be read as a reference to the older London that had a more pleasing natural environment. And again, Erdman explains Blake's art well, pointing us to the contrary, energetic powers of individuals who have been trapped by abuses of reason. Discussion of these powers and abuses takes readers into Blake's world view and his understanding of spirit.

In shifting my focus in chapter three to the attempt by Blake to integrate the disparate views of reality represented by *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, I argue that Blake seeks to develop a human view of existence that consciously goes beyond the contraries of innocence and experience dealt with separately by the poet in his earlier volumes. Not only does he give us further evidence about the undeniable powers of conventional energy, reason and spirit within individuals, but he also extends his examination to the sources of that same power in the symbolic regions of hell. Thus, Blake embodies the Heraclitean idea of the perpetual conflict of opposites in his art as a means of challenging the political, religious, and literary assumptions of his day, a rebel to the end of his years. Thus, the contraries take a thorough foothold in his symbolic hell, as shown in several "Proverbs" and elsewhere. But before "the Eternal Hell revives" (3), Rintrah announces the need for revolutionary spirit, and one perceives how this figure is needed: Life is dominated incessantly by restrictive forces of abstract reason in the form of brutal monarchies and orthodox

religion. Blake satirizes Emmanuel Swedenborg as one example of an abstract reasoner who is limited because he cannot perceive or value the substance of true imaginative spirit. Then Blake demonstrates the interplay of essential contraries, such as “reason” and “energy.” He explains that these contraries define existence even though conventional religion seeks to eliminate them by defining energy as “Evil” and reason as “Good.” In plate three, Blake states an inversion in which Good is Heaven, and Evil is Hell.

Conventional religion would like these standardized labels to persist, but Blake indicates that the “progression” of the contraries is the realistic recipe for the life of real spirit. On the topic of progression, critics differ in their perspectives. David Stewart explains that contraries intermingle and fuse into one another, eventually transforming themselves in a vital synthesis to form a new contrary presence. But Nurmi and Adam Max Cohen explain that the contraries maintain their identities and do not fuse; the contraries are, indeed, irreconcilable. In fact, Cohen even states that “Reconciliation is an anathema to Blake” (165). Nurmi’s and Cohen’s assessments are valid; this study will show additionally that contraries sustain a tremendously diverse array of spiritual presences within their unique physical and mental embodiments. And such presences exist in Blake’s spiritual worlds of art as well. Blake opposed the influence of Newtonian science which functioned to cut away and deny spiritual presence with formulaic notions of abstract reason, as Cohen also suggests.

On a symbolic “abyss” of hell in Blake’s first “MEMORABLE FANCY,” Blake’s “corrosive fires” work to write letters on a “rock,” but they also reveal the spirit within

the human body—which, importantly, is connected intimately with the soul, not separate from it; body and soul are one to Blake--going beyond the passive structures of reason that Swedenborg has accepted as truth. Jennifer Michael Davis explains that “palimpsests” of spirit exist within the human body, and the corrosives in Blake’s relief etching process serve to reveal symbolically infinite spirituality through continuous layers. About Blake’s symbolic corrosives, Steve Vine writes, “The infinite is never finally revealed, but is always about to be revealed, is always being revealed” (242). Both critics make strong points about the inexhaustible value of the human spirit; it continues to be traced upon at various levels within the human form, just as the metal plate’s “impurities” are removed; we see these crucial issues in plates seven and fourteen especially. Readers will see in ensuing discussions in this study that Blake’s spiritual universe is an infinite variety of universes within human beings; real spirituality is not in the otherworldly realm that Swedenborgian reasoners call heaven, which, ironically, calls our attention to the variety of devilish presences in later plates and in the environment of the inverted spiritual settings of Blake’s symbolic hell. Energy and the imagination are combined provocatively in Blake’s “Proverbs of Hell”; the proverbs further substantiate the better spiritual presence of Blake’s symbolic hell, and the wisdom therein contrasts with the accepted biblical wisdom of Blake’s era, as John Villalobos observes. He is correct, yet there is more for us to know: Blake’s wisdom in the proverbs is indeed unconventional, yet it is unconventional in specific senses—life is known and improved spiritually and morally by reflecting upon the specific proverbs that urge the necessity of



energy and the imagination. The work as a whole attempts to combine *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* into a definition of existence through the contraries, such as energy and passivity, imagination and reason, innocence and experience. Thus, up to and including the proverbs, Blake continues to envision progressive realities possible to humankind.

In later plates we see the presence of various meaningful figures, creatures, and objects in Blake's hellish regions. For example, Blake dines with the biblical prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, and during dinner he inquires about the origins of religion when the Poetic Genius (collective imaginative spirit within human beings) took root. He learns the origins of conventional religion, especially about how "the jews' code" came to standardize religion. Robert Rix asserts that Blake's purpose here is to show his antinomianism, for we learn that laws and codes—as they pertain to religion in this case—function to subjugate one's individual spirit. As Blake says in plate 11, "All deities reside in the human breast." Rix's comments about Blake's antinomianism are accurate, for Blake depicts the debasing, authoritative and remorseless presence of conventional religion (as well as monarchies and those who perpetuate the Industrial Revolution) in verbal and visual media. Furthermore, we see that his antinomianism points us to the presence of real spirituality within individuals. The Prolific (those titanic, imaginative, energetic, productive beings) are continuously invaded and controlled by the Devourers, who are parasitic individuals such as industrial slave masters, conventional religious figures and oppressive monarchs who would expend their spiritual selves in the effort to

dominate and repress the weak by limiting their spirituality and, thus, to control them. Subsequently, Blake speaks with an angel about the “hell” he can expect if he fails to worship the god of the angel’s conventional religion; Blake shows the angel his destiny if he continues on his conventional path. Blake sees a great, energetic Leviathan that scares the angel away. Eynel Wardi comments that the presence of the symbolic, energetic creature frightens the angel. Thus, we see that the abstract reasoners of conventional religion lack the strength of real spirit, so Blake’s comic vision is satiric, purposeful. Abstract theological reasoners are satirized when the angel sees the vision Blake prepares for him: A vicious bunch of monkeys and baboons fight with each other, exemplifying what Harold Bloom describes as the abstract triviality and bickering nonsense of theological intellectuals.

Blake’s later plates make us realize that there is a tremendous divide between the real spirit of imaginative beings and the restrictive abstractions of conventional religion and others who give such negative displays of reason. Yet Blake makes it clear that the real Jesus was not an abstract reasoner; Jesus “was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules. . .” (23-24). Rix would like us to read this statement as another gesture of Blake’s antinomianism. And he is wise to suggest this point because Jesus usually (but not in every case in the *Marriage*) embodies ideal imaginative spirit, not the normative conventions of orthodox religion. Thus, for Blake, spirit is often held by chains of reason, yet it may be released; Blake’s expression of this need in “A SONG OF LIBERTY” calls openly for the spirit of revolution. Christopher Z. Hobson emphasizes this matter, and he

explains the necessary presence of Orc, Blake's vital spirit of revolution. Hobson discusses this figure in terms of "the fall of the Bastille as well as events in America and Spain" (99). Hobson's point about Orc and revolution is valuable because Blake recognized the value of individuals' freedom. Freedom means unimpeded contact with an individual's spiritual self.

Thus, throughout his *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake depicts numerous, truly sacred worlds within specific individuals. Children have the capacity and tendency to express their imaginatively spiritual being; however, such spiritual displays go unrecognized or are threatened or enslaved by corrupt power structures. For Blake, conventional religion is one such force but not a source of *real* religion. Conventional religion implicates abstract reason and empowers authority figures (e.g., priests) who use such reason negatively or uncaringly, as seen throughout *Songs of Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Newtonian science also embodies the corruptive force of reason, as Stuart Peterfreund discusses. Similarly, Cohen explains how Newtonian science is harmful in its tendency to deny human spirituality its natural place in the world. In the end, Blake's emphases on energy and the imagination argue that the world of spirit precedes and is more "real" than the world of nature. The undeniable holiness of spirit within individuals is an eternal presence. Blake's sacred purpose of championing untrammelled spiritual expression before and above any faithful sensory depiction of nature (or realism) in his art is evident

in these three early yet seminal works, particularly given their intent focus on contemporary political, economic, and social issues.

## CHAPTER II

Revealing God: The Holiness of Children in *Songs of Innocence*

A powerful message in William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* is that the child is divine. To Blake, the eighteenth-century child lives in a world in which god is omnipresent, and the child particularly knows god inside and out of social and natural environs. The poems in Blake's masterpiece show that ordinary presences in life (a lamb, a field, and even a human caretaker, among other presences) glitter with the purity and essence of god, making the child's life replete with joy, and the child expresses such joy unabashedly. Thus, human life is a stage of spiritual optimism, a center of pleasure and happiness directing the eyes, heart and mind (often a quite imaginative mind) of the child to portions of heaven on earth. Yet there is another stage that intrudes on this heavenly, child-driven innocence: a world of cruel experience, pain and suffering. Sadly, to the readers of Blake's poems as well as to the children that inhabit the sometimes brutish realities in his poems, the world of innocence is shrouded by the threats of these painful realities. Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper" is one example in which the child's divine innocence meets the unfortunate social phenomenon of chimney sweeping. A stratum of divinity in human life exists beside an undeniable stratum of social evil. So, in this chapter, I will explore the above realities in Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, and where necessary I will examine graphic concerns by referencing Blake's designs that accompany the poems. In the process of these explorations, readers will envision the inner life and spirituality of the child alongside the social powers that oppress the child.

To begin to understand the divine life of the child in Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, one must take note of the frontispiece and title page of Blake's book. In the frontispiece there is a piper and a child in a cloud hovering over the piper; behind the piper and child is a pastoral setting of trees and grazing lambs. This scene bespeaks innocence, but it also says more: The child in the cloud opens his arms to the piper, as if he gives a message to the man piping. This scene not only matches the words given in the "Introduction," but it also shows the child to be angelic. David Erdman explains the child's heavenly presence in the cloud: "In various ways in different copies the cloud is strongly emphasized: the child is divine, celestial, a human form of the bird of innocence; the realm opened is that of the imagination" (43). On the title page, there are two children reading out of a woman's book (presumably the book of life). The children's backs are turned to the tree, which is broken atop its trunk. And the branches wrap around the word "innocence," demonstrating that the children are engaged only in their state of innocence, or the divinity of innocence, not the sinfulness of experience. Good has not yet faced evil. Even the woman sitting in front of the tree, facing it, does not see the tree because she is looking down from the tree, yet she is also blind to the children and the whole scene—more signs of the intrusion of experience of which the children are, as yet, unaware. The state of innocence is certainly visually reinforced with the sight of flying birds and figures in the letters themselves. And it is quite suitable that a piper sits in the letter "I" in the word "Innocence." Given the presence of the piper and children here and the piper and child in the frontispiece, an examination of Blake's first poem in the book reinforces

this interpretation.

In the “Introduction” Blake makes a statement about the inspirational power of children, especially through the child in the poem. The piper in the poem is being given a command, albeit a gentle, happy command, from a child in a cloud:

On a cloud I saw a child,

And he laughing said to me:

“Pipe a song about a Lamb!”

So I piped with merry cheer. (lines 3-6)

For starters, it might seem strange that a child is commanding an adult, and one might think it is even more unusual that the piper would obey the directive. However, the simplicity and harmlessness of the words do not imply threats, and the adult piper becomes easily engaged in the cloudy vision and words of the child. The child’s directive seems to have a purpose beyond that of the piper’s ordinary life, yet the purpose is certainly connected with life as well. Given the angelic child’s innocence, readers are encouraged to associate “all” children with the child in the cloud, bringing the realization that the child and all worldly children have something in common with the message intended. If one accepts the child in the cloud as divine, then all children are divine, a doctrine that certainly bespeaks a message about Blake’s book on the whole, as Zachary Leader says:

The child is placed on a cloud because he is divine, but he is made to speak and act like a human child for the same reason that Blake’s depiction of him on the

frontispiece omits the expected angelic wings and halo. The divinity of the child is the divinity of children or innocents in this world. (73)

Readers add to this religiosity the symbolic value of the “Lamb” (Lamb equals Christ for Blake as well as a series of qualities associated with Christ, including gentleness, tolerance, joy, obedience, trust, and, in a word, innocence). This reveals the prophetic power of the cloud’s child and children in general:

The idea of Christ, who is both child and man, is the underlying idea that unifies, indeed identifies, the piper and the child in this and all the poems of Innocence. This identification of naïve and wise innocence is symbolized also in the Lamb, who is at once the helpless and vulnerable child and also the Lamb of God—the watchful and shepherding adult. (Hirsch 172-73)

So now the piper is more than willing to listen to the child, to pipe the child’s songs and then sing them, much to the great happiness of the divine child: “So I sung the same again / While he wept with joy to hear” (11-12). Then the strong, clear joy of the divine child is successfully transmitted to the adult piper, as evidenced by the pleasing harmonies released by the piper at the child’s behest. The relationship between piper and child is thus a harmony between a divine and an earthly world, and the duty of the piper is wrapped with prophetic purpose. Given that the piper obeys the child, he is then equivalently instructed by Jesus Christ, and the piper is swelled with divine inspiration. By the time the third quatrain is finished, the piper is wholly absorbed by the “merry cheer” hovering over his head.



The penultimate quatrain of the poem reveals a divine wish in the child: “Piper sit thee down and write / In a book that all may read” (13-14). While the piper previously was asked to pipe and sing his simple lyrics, the divine child takes matters a step further and commands the piper to write poems for a much larger audience; thus the child’s vision is taken to an extreme of seeking to enforce one’s own ideals on the world around—much in the same way that prophets wrote different books that finally found their way into the Bible. One might argue that the message of the Bible was moral and lyrical as well. Interestingly, one can say that the message of the future poems in the piper’s book will contain the lyrical pleasures that the divine child heard in pipe and word, as Hirsch suggests:

[T]he poem, graceful and modest in its form, implies no false modesty as to its origin and intent. The form is simple and lyrical, but the purpose is in the line of prophecy—a direct statement of that which is divinely inspired. The “joy” that “every child” who hears these songs will feel, like the joy which filled the child on a cloud, is a divine and prophetic joy. (173-74)

Thus, in the final quatrain, Blake’s piper sets about his task of writing, and the inspirited cloud-child disappears: “So he vanished from my sight” (line 15). The piper-poet is filled with the vision that will help him write the poems that “Every child may joy to hear” (20). The piper is the poet/priest figure who can receive the vision and set it into a linguistic form, a script, that is powerful enough to teach its readers an absolutely new way of seeing reality and the world. The child has done his job, necessitating the themes

that will reach all children.

One final but crucial note must be mentioned here on the “Introduction” as far as the function of experience that will emerge and grow throughout Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. The piper anticipates joy, yet an ominous moral contrast peeks through the merriment in this poem. For the purpose of writing poems, the piper begins a seemingly natural process of gathering and using writing materials: “And I plucked a hollow reed. / And I made a rural pen, / And I stain’d the water clear . . .” (16-18). Up to this point in the poem, there is nothing disturbing or threatening to the child or to the piper. Yet in these lines a threat exists--or at least the seeds of future threats--lurking in the pejorative connotations of the word “stain’d.” Along with children’s divinity in natural and happy environs comes an adult world infiltrated by industrial impurities and commercial temptation and immorality, such as the child speaker will suggest later about chimney sweeping in “The Chimney Sweeper” from *Songs of Innocence*. Nicholas Marsh claims that the word “‘stain’d’ carries overtones of dirt and corruption, the disturbing suggestion that the piper here interferes with water, spoiling nature’s purity or innocence” (13). Thus, not even the piper is exempt from such corruption, even immediately after experiencing such a divine vision. Marsh takes his point further about the piper’s “pen”: “The pen is ‘rural’—a word which supposes the existence of its antithesis, ‘urban’, and which refers to an agricultural landscape, not ‘valleys wild’” (14). Marsh perceptively introduces the point that eventually the child will be touched by the immorality of experience, and his point will prove even more

compelling as more poems are discussed. Hirsch is correct in observing a divine function in the child from “a special pastoral world . . .” (173), but he does not go further into the necessary contrast about the darker implications Marsh examines in the poem. Yet for now the divine joys of purity are mostly the rule, not the exception.

Unfettered innocence continues in “The Shepherd,” and even with said innocence comes literal and symbolic spiritual protection. The actual shepherd in this poem looks over his flock in a joyous, protective manner (much as a parent looks down upon his little children with happy care), and the lines can be interpreted literally in terms of the shepherd’s protection. One can easily envision a shepherd watching his flock as Blake’s lines suggest:

How sweet is the shepherd’s sweet lot!  
 From the morn to the evening he strays;  
 He shall follow his sheep all the day,  
 and his tongue shall be filled with praise. (1-4)

The shepherd spends the entire day happily moving with his flock—he “strays” in the innocent harmony of his duty. But he also undertakes quite a serious task: caring for his flock. During the task of caretaking, the shepherd

hears the lamb’s innocent call,  
 And he hears the ewe’s tender reply;  
 He is watchful while they are in peace,  
 For they know when their Shepherd is nigh. (5-8)

Such caretaking holds symbolic religious value—Jesus Christ watches over humanity just as the “Shepherd” is all around his flock (the “lamb” and “ewe”) in a “watchful” state. Leader discusses this kind of symbolic protectiveness: “We must look for Christ in men on earth, in guarded as well as in guardian. Man, the earthly shepherd, protects Christ on earth by protecting the lamb, just as Christ protects the human shepherd who is part of his human ‘flock’” (77). Looking at Blake’s design for this poem, one is reminded of the frontispiece, as each design has a shepherd and lambs. And the frontispiece has a child just as “The Shepherd” has a “lamb,” “ewe,” and “sheep,” all of which symbolically represent humankind. Yet the shepherd’s purpose in “The Shepherd” is different from the shepherd’s purpose in the frontispiece, as Erdman says: “The piper’s role is prophetic, the shepherd’s protective” (46). In “The Shepherd,” the shepherd looks down upon his flock, suggesting an edenic unity between animal and man. It is then natural that the shepherd should be protective, given the basis for this oneness.

Blake’s theme of innocent and spiritual joy continues in “Infant Joy,” and this poem’s message is well identified in the design. Focusing on the design, one sees an unopened flower to the right of the poem, and an opened flower sits above it. In the opened flower is a scene indicating meaning integral to the poem. The mother is holding her two-day-old baby in her lap, looking down at him. Meanwhile, a winged spirit stands in front of the baby, looking down at him with open hands. In this posture and gesture, the spirit seems to speak to the baby, or bestow a message, at the least. Erdman believes that the winged figure has the following function: “The Psyche-wings of the spirit at the

staminal center of this flower, if Psyche stands for intellectual vision, promise the ‘Sweet Joy’ which the natural mother accepts as the boy’s announced name: ‘two days’ are enough time under these circumstances” (66). Thus, considering the poem, one can imagine after looking at the design that the winged figure has a role in naming the child in the spiritual meeting within the flower; the meeting itself is a “happy” event that the two-day-old recognizes, so it is only natural that the baby should wish to be named “Joy.” Looking at the first stanza of Blake’s poem, one can now understand the baby’s dialogue and the mother’s words:

“I have no name:

I am but two days old.”

What shall I call thee?

“I happy am,

Joy is my name.”

Sweet joy befall thee! (lines 1-6)

Both the baby and the mother are very pleased with the name, and the name marks the joyousness surrounding the new life in the world. The happiness of this reality is continued in the next stanza, wherein the mother experiences the excitement of her newborn baby: “I sing the while, / Sweet joy befall thee!” (11-12)

There is one last matter about “Infant Joy” that calls for clarification. In his letter to C. A. Tulk of 12 February 1818, Samuel Taylor Coleridge takes issue with the line in “Infant Joy” in which the infant smiles: “(N.b. for the last 3 lines I should wish—When

wilt thou smile, or—O smile, O smile! I'll sing the while—For a Babe two days old does not, cannot *smile*—and innocence and the very truth of Nature must go together. Infancy is too holy a thing to be ornamented.)” (837). While Coleridge indicates that overall he enjoys the poem, “and greater still” (837) he points out the probable impracticality that a two-day-old infant would be incapable of a “smile.” The reality of “Nature” (the baby’s actual physical capabilities) and “holy” innocence must go together. Furthermore, he believes that Blake should not tamper with the “holy” innocence of the infant, or that he should not *make* a “Babe” smile in a poem. To Coleridge, doing this to the infant in the poem is contrived and therefore violates the sacredness of supernature as well as the actuality of physical nature. Coleridge’s intentions are responsible in his wanting Blake to honor nature and supernature for the conditions that are fitting, or true, to each realm. However, the biological capability of the baby is not Blake’s point—the point is the symbolic significance of the baby smiling, as Martin Nurmi explains: “Blake was not in this poem, or other poems of Innocence like it, representing nature but the pure ‘state’ of Innocence, that can be seen, symbolically, in infancy” (58). A smile is a condition of happiness, and in the baby’s world of “holy” innocence, the infant represents that state with a smile. Coleridge’s view is no doubt limited. Stating that an infant *cannot* smile is impractical in the completeness of which one accepts the impossibility of this action. Also, the spiritual matters that have been hinted at in the design also indicate that the baby’s new life is one of holy bliss, and this again, palpably, is the point of the poem, not matters of biological possibility (or impossibility). Lastly, the happy state the baby

expresses in the poem is an outgrowth of spiritual understanding between the mother and baby: The baby now has new life as given by the mother, and the mother and baby relish the new experience. Wordsworth also optimistically claims this sort of understanding between mother and child in “Book Second” of *The Prelude*:

Blessed the infant babe—

For with my best conjectures I would trace  
The progress of our being—blest the babe  
Nursed in his mother’s arms, the babe who sleeps  
Upon his mother’s breast, who, when his soul  
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,  
Doth gather passion from his mother’s eye.  
Such feelings pass into his torpid life  
Like an awakening breeze. . . . (lines 232-40)

Like Blake in “Infant Joy,” Wordsworth perceives the union of spirit between mother and baby, and such a union is joyous in its difference from quotidian life divorced from divine and innocent love. In both poems the fresh relationship between mother and baby has supernatural reason for a happy beginning. And certainly, the spiritual basis of the mother/baby relationship far outweighs the literalness with which Blake’s baby in “Infant Joy” is made to “smile” or speak.

In “Holy Thursday” Blake’s thought is directed at the subtle (and less subtle) harms of experience, as a secular ritual has its place in the poem in addition to the

divinity within. The ritual refers to the title of the poem itself: Every year in London, charity school children joined by the thousands to sing in a service at St. Paul's Cathedral. These children were guided into the church in a very orderly, uniform manner, as Blake's lines suggest:

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,  
 The children walking two & two, in red & blue & green,  
 Grey-headed beadles walk'd before, with wands as white as snow,  
 Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow. (lines 1-4)

The plate shows the reality of the procession just as vividly as the language of the poem. The boys and girls walk in strict clockwise pairs in the colors mentioned, the boys at top and the girls at bottom. And, these charity school children were poor and had to be dressed appropriately for the occasion with "faces clean." Such regimentation was seen as necessary by charity school caretakers and church patrollers ("beadles") not only because there were so many children to be accounted for but also because they were being trained to interact correctly in the church procession, elsewhere and otherwise to learn their subservient station and manner on London streets before and after the procession as well as in their lives. The design shows how the boys were led by two beadles while the girls were entrusted to a matron. And Erdman says the "white wands" of the beadles "seem a parody of the true shepherd's staff . . ." (60), indicating more about the restrictive nature—no oxymoron intended, yet the philosophical significance exists—of the whole activity.



Thus, readers of Blake's poem cannot help but ask the following question: What does this uniformity, conformity and restriction imply in the poem? David Fairer claims that there was an uneasiness in Blake's London about the potential for a revolution:

Another move towards greater regimentation is evident in the years following the Gordon Riots in 1780, when London had been at the mercy of the mob. During the 1780s certain economic and social issues concerned with civil order were seen to be more pressing, and by 1792 extremely urgent. Overarching these developments, however, was a remarkably consistent national tradition and a persistently ambivalent public rhetoric that worried about over-education, individual skill, the role of paid work, and the implicit threat the charity children might offer en masse. (539)

So, in response to these anxieties, the thousands of poor children in charity schools had to be held in check. The children's "education" was a gravely serious, multidimensional process in which guidelines and rules had to be met for the children's social "good." As Fairer says,

The parish charity school was in general a day school, whose trustees undertook to feed and clothe the children of the deserving or "industrious" poor (carefully differentiated from the dissolute or indigent poor) and to prepare them appropriately for their future role as servants, apprentices, or ship-boys. It was important therefore that their education should be useful and practical. Regularly in sermons, pamphlets, rule books and reports, the dangers of widening the child's

expectations is made clear. (543)

Blake's poem suggests that English society was led to live under the confines of social usefulness and fear, with the charity school children providing the human base for this condition. This subtext in Blake's poem shows that children's innocence, which I have argued to be divine, was not at the forefront, pointing to the strange irony that the poem is about a "church" service, a supposedly religious occasion in which god is omnipresent and loves all. Here one is reminded of the utilitarian outlook of Mr. Bounderby and Thomas Gradgrind (a "teacher" in fact) in Dickens's *Hard Times*—these characters fail to view poor children as sensitive, spiritual beings and instead perceive them as objects of usefulness. Yet, to be fair, charity schools also garnered a reputation for some benevolence to the poor through much of the eighteenth century. But, as Blake's "Holy Thursday" and history show, satisfying social needs and maintaining the status quo were arguably of greater significance. Blake's lines imply restrictive conformity imposed upon children. He seems to be asking a rhetorical question: Do poor children, or even any children, deserve true compassion? And such a question should be kept in mind in reading *Songs of Innocence*.

For Blake, the presence of charity school children bursts with spirit—their collective bodies of innocence are a presence like no other, and a church service such as Holy Thursday at St. Paul's is an ideal venue to recognize such a demonstration of energetic, blissful spirituality. Blake's lines in his poem show an understanding of the power of children's spirit:

O what a multitude they seem'd, these flowers of London town!

Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.

The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,

Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands. (5-8)

These “multitudes of lambs,” living embodiments of spirit, people the church with a unique brand of innocent “radiance.” Considering that the lamb is a symbol for Christ in Blake’s world, “companies” of Christ shine with real spirit within the church. The words in these lines are pleasingly saturated with the throngs of heaven otherwise known as charity-school children. Therefore, it is not surprising that when the children burst into music, the occasion becomes nothing less than paradise: “Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song, / Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among” (9-10). It is also not surprising that the overseers of these children are stationed in a lower ethical realm. The overseers are Urizenic figures, a marked contrast to the truly spiritual children: “Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor. . .” (11). The guardians’ need to immerse the children in such strict, uniform behavior and moral codes is separate from the real spirituality the children possess; the guardians embrace the rules that underscore the status quo whereas the children embrace the spiritual infinity that characterizes heaven. Therefore, the reader is forced to ask, can the guardians truly “cherish pity,” or even learn it from the children they watch? The last line is ironical in its point: The heavenly super-reality symbolized by the “angel” in the last line is distant from the guardians, or even driven away. Hazard Adams explains the relationship

between the children and guardians in the poem:

The mighty wind with its voice of thunder seems almost to overflow the order of things. It suggests, for example, the voice of prophecy with which the Lord spoke to Job. Suddenly we realize that the children's song is speaking to the guardians, teaching them true pity if indeed they can read the message. That the children are above the wise guardians is no accident but part of the symbolism which Blake saw implicit in the scene as it was acted out every Holy Thursday. The inward light of the real sun shines from these children. (259)

It is clear that in the ironical effect of the last line and elsewhere in the poem, the guardians are unaware of the lighted heaven that the children demonstrate and embrace—a sign of the spiritual indifference Blake sees as associated with institutionalized religion.

In “The Little Black Boy,” Blake again shows problems that surround the spirit and innocence of a little child, yet in this poem Blake's subject is an African boy, not a charity-school child. The African boy in the poem sees his blackness as an issue in the western world he now lives in:

My mother bore me in the southern wild,  
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;  
White as an angel is the English child,  
But I am black as if bereav'd of light” (lines 1-4).

This first stanza is crucial to the philosophical identity of the poem: The African boy is aware of his racial difference. But more importantly, he believes his difference in skin

color is something to be endured on a spiritual level, so he feels inferior--he wishes for a religious kinship with the white boy in his "soul." His skin color makes him feel "bereav'd" of light whereas he feels the white boy is "white" with light, like an "angel" in his whiteness, and the African boy bemoans his exclusion from this condition. David Bindman says the black boy and the white boy symbolize the differing kinds of spirituality in their races: "The Little Black boy implicitly stands for all Africans, or the state of Africanness—just as the white boy in the poem stands for all brought up as Christians—and the theological condition of a continent deprived of Christian light" (376). But Blake makes a statement about spiritual equality through the advice of the mother in the poem, for she understands that all creatures and even natural objects receive the same sustenance from god:

Look on the rising sun: there God does live,  
 And gives his light, and gives his heat away;  
 And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive  
 Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday. (lines 9-12)

To the mother, any worldly concern is wiped away with the light that comes from god, as evidenced by the "comfort" and "joy" administered to all by noon each day; the mother does not want her son to be worried about spiritual discrepancies between white and black races. It is far better, she thinks, to appreciate god while they are "on earth a little space" (13). And, in fact, the African boy's skin color even helps him "bear the beams of love" (14), meaning that the same sunlight that comes from god is so powerful that a

human must be shielded from it. Thus the little black boy's skin "Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove" under the eternal sunrays of god (16). One could even say that the little black boy's skin gives him superiority in being shielded from the intense majesty of god's light.

The next lines in the poem demonstrate an additional reason for believing in equality, but alongside the positive implication there is a sinister subtext, the black boy's servility. The mother finishes her discussion, believing that all "souls" will be equal in heaven: "The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice" (14). The mother's speech seems persuasive, but one wonders if her little black boy really believes her words, for he still seems intent on trying to win the favor of the white boy. For example, in the last stanza, the boy's thought process shifts back to subservience: "I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear / To lean in joy upon our father's knee" (25-26). The subservience is given greater scope with the word "father," and adding meaning is the "silver hair," which then must be of the father—god, the father--because boys do not have hair of this color. (One is then reminded of the Urizenic, "grey-headed beadles" that enforce conformity in "Holy Thursday.") The point is that the African boy does not fully rid himself of his inclination to serve: "I'll stand and stroke his silver hair, / And be like him, and he will then love me" (27-28). And, of course, underlying the African boy's need to serve is the historical issue of slavery—this issue certainly exists in the poem, given the presence of the African boy and the white boy as symbols for their respective cultures. In fact, the African boy's disappointing subservience in the last stanza leads readers to

Bindman's point that "the poem is an ironical exposure to the limitations of the abolitionist position—that is, that blacks were to be freed from chains only to become servants, for as converted heathens they could only aspire to join the servant class" (377-78). One wonders if the god that the child wants to be loved by is the institutionally religious god that has allowed the black boy to experience the brutality of slavery, making the boy think he must continue to serve the white boy even if the white boy and the black boy are equals in heaven.

While Blake's "The Little Black Boy" indicates a clear opposition to slavery, it is evident that even more of Blake's writings show his strong anti-slavery position. For example, in scene three of his fragmentary drama "King Edward the Third," the character John Chandos tries to convince the Prince that individuals will fight ardently for their country—Britain, in this case—if they are made to believe their efforts are for their personal well-being:

Teach man to think he's a free agent  
 Give but a slave his liberty, he'll shake  
 Off sloth, and build himself a hut, and hedge  
 A spot of ground; this he'll defend; 'tis his  
 By right of nature. . . . (3.195-99)

Here the "slave" is the soldier who is brainwashed into believing he fights for himself as well as the black slave who believes he is given adequate freedom. The black boy from the *Innocence* poem wishes for freedom, hoping to gain a spiritual kinship with the white

boy. But, Blake is adept at making readers realize that this kinship is not likely: The bondage of slavery is too strong. In Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, he presents readers with a theodicy wherein the character Oothoon is raped by her husband Bromion. Blake presents Bromion as a slave owner and an oppressive husband, whose example serves ironically to register the poet's indignation toward slavery and the social abuse endured by women:

Bromion spoke: 'Behold this harlot here on Bromion's bed,  
 'And let the jealous dolphins sport around the lovely maid!  
 'Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north & south:  
 'Stamp'd with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun;  
 'They are obedient, they resist not; they obey the scourge;  
 'Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent. (1.18-23)

In this poem Blake shows that the two forms of slavery (and the very existence of slavery) are mentally and physically destructive to the enslaved; the "violent" oppressor forces worship on the oppressed subjects, and the conditions of slavery continue. In Blake's poem from *Innocence*, the little black boy's acknowledgement of his enslaved existence leads him to believe that he is "black as if bereav'd of light" (4). Thus, the little black boy has been led to believe in a condition of inferiority that stems from the mental brutality of slavery.

Blake's opposition to slavery is firmly grounded in his illustrations to J. G. Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of*



*Surinam*. David Bindman explains,

Stedman's *Narrative* is a well-illustrated account not only of slavery and its cruelties but of the geography and natural economy of the Dutch slave colony of Surinam. Among the 80 illustrations, taken from drawings and watercolours by Stedman, there are 13 signed by and three attributed to Blake, among which are a number of images of black slaves, some of which show harrowing punishments inflicted on them. Stedman's account of the brutalities of slavery in Surinam undoubtedly affected Blake. . . . (34)

In Blake's engraving titled "Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave," a female slave is tied by the wrists to a branch overhead, and it appears her toe can barely touch the ground (if it does touch the ground at all). She has lacerations across her legs and waist, which are the results of a vicious whipping, of course. In the background, one white man is seen calling to a skiff with four oarsmen (most likely slaves) while another white man leads two slaves carrying whips, perhaps the same whips used to torture the hanging female slave. Interestingly, a small hut is seen in the distance (at the bottom right of the illustration); one may conjecture that slaves were crammed into this hut or raped there. In the engraving "A Negro hung alive by the Ribs to a Gallows," a slave hangs from a wooden structure, and the rope is indeed tightened around his ribs. One also sees the whites of the slave's eyes, adding to the morbid reality. Behind him are two posts, and each post has a human skull on top. Below the hanging slave are human bones and another human skull—these remains must have belonged to tortured slaves such as the

slave hanging from the ribs. So, Blake had good knowledge of the physical and mental oppression endured by slaves (and by women), and even though “The Little Black Boy” (published in 1789) predated *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) and illustrations to Stedman’s *Narrative* (1796), Blake’s long-held opposition to the oppressive cruelty of slavery crucially underlies his *Songs of Innocence*. Readers of “The Little Black Boy” are aware of the very different pasts of the little black boy and the little white boy.

In order to understand more about the helplessness inherent in the black boy’s dire situation in “The Little Black Boy,” one must consider Blake’s Christ figure in the second plate of the poem. This Christ appears care-ridden and worn, not energetic and empowering like the Christ figures in other plates. As Leader says,

. . . there is the expression on Christ’s face: tired and saddened, and possessing none of the calm benevolence and omniscient passivity of Blake’s ‘symbolic’ pipers and shepherds. . . . This is the Christ of the church, of institutionalized religion. The men who create mandatory church attendance for the London poor in ‘Holy Thursday,’ and profess themselves Christians even as they construct a social system that has room for the sweep and the slave—these are the men who have created and who worship this Christ. (115-16)

Thus, the plate shows that a world of evil—the existence of slavery and the little black boy’s unwavering insistence on mind-numbing subservience—colors the poem with the darkness of immorality and experience that we see in “The Chimney Sweeper” and poems in *Songs of Experience*. The equality and bliss of heaven is evident in “The Little

Black Boy,” but the harsher elements in the physical world below are unavoidably influential. One must ask whether the little black boy of Blake’s poem can truly escape his worldly oppression.

In Blake’s “The Chimney Sweeper,” servitude is again an issue, yet it is an issue of the duty undertaken by young sweeps. In the poem, the little child speaker has been sold by his father after the child’s mother dies and thus begins the journey of the child who now has a master who subjects him to the cruel duty of chimney sweeping: “So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep” (line 4). This line drops us into the “sooty,” dangerous environment of the innocent sweep, and certainly the sweep’s poverty does nothing to help him escape his conditions. Martin Nurmi explains the historical matter of the sweep’s new apprenticeship and the sweep’s inability to escape poverty afterwards:

Unlike the usual apprenticeship, in which the fee is paid to the master, binding children—both boys and girls—to a master sweep usually brought a payment ranging from twenty shillings to five guineas from the master to the parent, if there was one, or to whoever had the child at the time. Ostensibly the child was apprenticed for seven years, after which he was usually too large to go up small chimneys; but after his apprenticeship he was by no means assured of a living as a journeyman, since there was not enough work to go around. (16)

In addition, the child sweep was often rendered *physically* unable to work after the apprenticeship, a harrowing prospect for the little sweep. Nurmi discusses the child’s despair in light of this possibility:

Often he was left to the parish to support, not only because work was scarce but because he was physically unable to work. Chimney sweeping left children with kneecaps twisted and spines and ankles deformed, from crawling up chimneys as small as nine or even seven inches in diameter, with ‘chimney sweep’s cancer’ of the scrotum resulting from the constant irritation of the soot, with respiratory ailments, and eye inflammations. (16)

In a more recent article that follows Nurmi’s important research, Tim Fulford also discusses the social desperation of chimney sweepers and the physically harsh occupation of chimney sweeping:

The climbing boys were certainly poor. Master sweeps bought five year olds, the thinner the better, from workhouses, orphanages, and poor widows. They sent them round the streets by night, crying their trade. They forced the boys up chimneys till their bleeding sores hardened into calluses. Soon, legs and pelvis became deformed. Often, ingrained soot led to cancer of the scrotum or mouth. Some boys fell to their deaths from damaged chimney pots. Others were suffocated or burnt alive. It was, all too often, the roasted flesh of infants that kept the home-fires burning. (37-38)

The gruesome history of chimney sweeping clearly has an ominous presence in Blake’s poem: the destruction of innocence. The opening lines horrify us because we would never expect a *child* to suffer such gruesome consequences. In other words, one expects a child to play in happiness and health, not face pain and possible death in a terrifying world of

chimney sweeping.

The severe conditions the boy sweep endures in the poem are underscored when he speaks with fellow child sweep Tom Dacre, to whom the slightly older narrator of the poem serves as a kind of more experienced mentor. Not only is the speaker's innocence corrupted by the brutal occupation, but the poem also shows what Tom endures. The boy tries to comfort Tom, whose hair "That curled like a lamb's back, was shav'd: so I [the boy speaker] said / 'Hush, Tom! Never mind it, for when your head's bare / You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair'" (lines 6-8). One must consider the loss of innocence with the "lamb's back" and "white hair." In "Holy Thursday" Blake's "multitudes of lambs" are the divine presence of children; in "The Little Black Boy," Blake's children roam innocently: "And round the tent of God like lambs we joy. . ." (24). In "The Chimney Sweeper," another divine child once had the "curl'd" hair of a lamb (but no more). Tom's "white hair" is an impossibility: Boys do not have white hair. Tom's scalp was white because his head was shaven for his work. Meanwhile, the boy speaker does not even realize the vicious magnitude of the matter. Instead of engaging in the freedom of his divine innocence and that of others, he allows his and other's oppression to subsist, even empowering his master, because he does not understand it as the evil it is. Fulford further emphasizes this dilemma, saying the speaker's "perversion is a matter of unwitting complicity, of passing on to other boys his own adaptation to slavery. Because he has no frame of reference to be angry, never having known anything else, the speaker hushes Tom's cries at the loss of his lamb-like hair, yet unknowingly

perpetuates repression in the process of providing comfort” (41).

The speaker then explains Tom’s dream, a sequence that takes readers to the end of the fifth quatrain. This dream is an imaginative escape in which “thousands” of sweeps are no longer “lock’d up in coffins of black” (12), or no longer working (or literally stuck) in the “black” chimneys where the possibility of death is very real in waking hours. The experience of the little sweeps is here a contrast to the reality of their lives, and this contrast is a joyous, playful event made possible by a spiritual figure:

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,  
And he opened the coffins & set them all free;  
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,  
And wash in a river, and shine in the Sun. (13-16)

This vision is crucial to the children because it is hopeful, happy. The vision allows Tom to see a spiritual rescue from earthly suffering, and he can duly witness such a blessed thing for other sweeps. The plate shows the Angel lifting a small child from a black object and freeing several other little sweeps: “The gowned figure (with halo) who bends over and takes the left hand of a boy climbing out of a box coffin is Jesus himself . . . ; the key and the angel, who would have wings, melt off as a metaphor for the swiftness of salvation for chimney sweeps. . .” (Erdman 53). The sweeps are then free to clean the filth and soot off their bodies and play as children play, demonstrating a spiritual, carefree oneness in the process. The environment of children at beautiful play is a glimpse of heavenly perfection. And, in the text, Tom’s vision of the child sweeps who

“rise upon clouds and sport in the wind” brings Wordsworth to mind (line 18).

Wordsworth’s vision of eternity in his poem “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” parallels the child-filled, visionary heaven:

Hence in a season of calm weather  
 Though inland far we be,  
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
 Which brought us hither,  
 Can in a moment travel thither,  
 And see the children sport upon the shore,  
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. (162-67)

Wordsworth views a divine source of children’s energy as something irretrievably lost while looking back as an older person whereas Blake views this same energy from the vantage point of a child as something eternally present. For both Wordsworth and Blake, the depiction of a child occupying such a state shows the eternal worth of the child.

Despite the escape inherent in the vision in Blake’s poem, the Angel gives a subtly ironic message to Tom: “And the Angel told Tom, if he’d be a good boy, / He’d have God for his father & never want joy” (19-20). The message here resonates with the same irony from “The Little Black Boy,” wherein the white boy might “lean in joy upon our father’s knee” (26). The message in each of these lines is that the boys had better be good servers to the institutionally accepted god and his system (a system that accepts slavery and chimney sweeping), or else the “joy” bound up with God the Father simply

will not happen. Thus, the “Angel” in “The Chimney Sweeper” does not solely embody goodness in the poem. In fact, the angel’s statement to “be a good boy” expands in meaning when Tom’s dream ends (19). He and the other sweeps return to the brutal workplace, but Tom has much to consider:

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,  
 And got with our bags and our brushes to work.  
 Tho’ the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;  
 So if all do their duty they need not fear harm. (21-24)

As G. E. Bentley explains, “The world is still cold and bleak, but ‘Tom was happy & warm’ because of his vision” (132). But, as a prophetic element of Tom’s dreamy vision, the angel reminds Tom not only to be good, but that he should consider what will happen to him if he is not good. The last line is a severe threat of punishment to Tom and other chimney sweepers, a reminder of the fear in the system they are a part of.

This underlying threat contrasts with the freedom-based vision of Tom’s dream, and it satirizes the dramatic unfairness of economic systems (including chimney sweeping) that Blake was so disgusted with. Bentley is correct in stating that the dream offers comfort, yet taking matters further, one realizes that Tom’s sense of comfort really does not run deeply enough because of the threatening industrial system to which he belonged. Even reformists attempted to better the harsh conditions of the working poor, but the rule of the day was still to improve profit-making systems and use laborers however they were needed. Fulford realizes the hypocrisy of such reformers and makes



an accurate statement about the last line of Blake's poem: "Blake's evangelical last line is, in fact, a quietly devastating exposure of the shallow sanctimoniousness with which social reformers shaped the poor they helped: 'So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.' Blake's boy has been brainwashed" (41). Blake's satires about certain institutions take on an even stronger emotional appeal in his *Songs of Experience*. Yet, for now, the hint of a threat is strong enough to poke through the "shady groves" of protection in the poems of innocence.

Blake's "The Lamb" is replete with the divine innocence of the child. In this poem the child speaker rejoices in asking the lamb about its very existence: "Little Lamb, who made thee? / Dost thou know who made thee?" (lines 1-2). The world of the child is not impinged upon or even tainted by any negative outside forces, such as Tom Dacre's harsh working conditions or the demands for conformity in "Holy Thursday." Nothing is restricted; nothing is enforced. About the plate, Erdman comments that "The village oak stands beside the thatched cottage; the high-arching spirit of the foreground trees prevents any Urizenic oak grove domination" (49). The child in "The Lamb" is pure in his questioning and curiosity, and there is nothing or no one to tell him otherwise. The beauty of the dialogue in this poem is that it takes place between child and animal, and the child claims no superiority or even differences. The child can ask whatever he wishes of the lamb, and no threat returns to him. The child thus wonders freely who gave the lamb "Softest clothing, wooly, bright; / Gave thee such a tender voice, / Making all the vales rejoice?" (6-8). Adults might not think that a lamb would make a vale "rejoice," but

young children would at least consider the possibility. One may liken these questions to the innocent child who asks this question: Who made the sky? Similarly, the child finishes his line of questions to the lamb by asking, “Dost thou know who made thee?”

(10). Marsh comments on the innocent microcosm of the child’s own world:

The point about the child’s faith expressed in this poem is not that he is deluded, or that distant dangers are hinted at to undercut its validity. The point is that this beautiful touching faith is dependent: it depends on the child continuing to see a gentle and joyous nature around him. His faith is good, but only good for the world within which, for the space of this poem, he exists. (82)

As Marsh implies, the child’s faith is untested, and his innocence is untested. Within the confines of his own space and dialogue, the child’s world exists wondrously but only as a product of how he perceives it.

In the next section, Blake’s innocent child perceives answers, causing him to be inclined to “rejoice” because his imagination has brought him to realize a oneness with the lamb. The child responds,

He is called by thy name,

For he calls himself a Lamb.

He is meek & he is mild;

He became a little child.

I a child & thou a lamb.

We are called by his name. (lines 13-18)

Going back to “The Shepherd,” Blake implies that the shepherd himself is god watching over a flock of sheep, which is also man and god: “God is both Shepherd and Lamb; man is both Lamb and Shepherd” (Hirsch 29). In the child’s dialogue in “The Lamb,” the child joyously realizes that Jesus has the same name as the “Lamb,” so the lamb must be Jesus. And Jesus became a little child just as the speaker is a child. Therefore, a great oneness, to the child, is that animal, child, and Jesus are the same. The child speaker then bursts into excitement because he is a divine being along with the lamb that he has questioned: “Little Lamb, God bless thee! / Little Lamb, God bless thee!” (19-20). The child’s happiness is understandable even to the adult reader of the poem. Would not one be happy to discover complete divinity within oneself? The child speaker in the poem has asked innocent yet powerful questions; consequently, the child has arrived at blissful and powerful answers.

The poems discussed in this chapter have dealt with children, divinity, social dilemmas, and nature. The child’s interactions have created matters in Blake’s book that will certainly be discussed as contraries in poems comprising Blake’s *Songs of Experience*. For example, the beautiful, unthreatening physical environment in the “Introduction” will become the not-quite-so-pure city world in Blake’s “London.” The child speaker in “The Chimney Sweeper” of *Innocence* will become more aware of his personal world and work world in the poem of the same name in *Experience*. Even the purity and innocence of the child’s questions in “The Lamb” will become ominous, difficult questions to consider in “The Tyger.” And one must, of course, consider the very

titles of the books *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*—the words imply states of being that are different yet undeniably present in each state. Of course, humanity will maintain spirit in upcoming poems, but the Blakean vision of spirit in various speakers will meet more of the confines of institutionalized religion (“Holy Thursday,” “The Garden of Love,” and “The Little Vagabond”). In measures of time and space, discussions of life and holiness will abound. Innocence and divinity will journey into and alongside experience and divinity. And finally, the imagination will show the realities of spirit and life.

## CHAPTER III

Divinity and Cruelty: The Collision of Spirit and Terror in *Songs of Experience*

Blake's *Songs of Experience* shows a world dominated by adults, and such a world often falls prey to the wiles of corruption, hypocrisy, and other forms of social cruelty. As the poems will demonstrate, the shocking reality of life throttles human spirit. The speakers of the poems are often bewildered and even embittered by the horrors of experience. For example, in "The Chimney Sweeper," the sweep is quite aware of the cruelties heaped on him by "God & his Priest & King" (line 11). In this poem, the child realizes he has no means of escape from the terrible world of chimney sweeping imposed on his existence; the child cannot engage in an imaginative world of grace like Tom Dacre's in "The Chimney Sweeper" in *Songs of Innocence*. In "The Tyger" the speaker repeatedly asks powerful, ominous questions centering on the origin of beauty and terror, and one is left uncomprehending about the motives or teleology of the supernatural power that allows the juxtapositions of contrary presences: "What immortal hand or eye, / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?" (23-24). Indeed, the world of experience has a balance--a symmetry--of contraries, yet this balance is potentially frightening to the human race that must experience it. The balance is often painful as well. At one time in his childhood, the speaker in "The Garden of Love" was joyful--he "used to play on the green" (4). His "play" was uncorrupted by the damaging, disheartening, and even spiritless forces of conventional religion, forces now threatening and "binding with briars, [his] joys and desires" (12). In Blake's moral universe, the innocence of childhood

is penetrated, even penalized, in *Songs of Experience*. Happy vales are filled with sad tears; the sweetness of innocent youth meets abominable Reason. In “London” the social trappings of Urizen pound a heavy fist in the forms of forced soldiery, chimney sweeping and prostitution. Instead of a happy child speaking to an innocent lamb in a harmless country environment in “The Lamb,” one hears the “Harlot” of Blake’s commercial London who “Blasts the new-born Infant’s tear . . .” (37). Sadly, even newborns are not exempt from the cruelty of experience, as Blake shows in this poem and others (“Holy Thursday” and “Infant Sorrow” included). Throughout *Songs of Experience*, Blake’s indignant honesty becomes apparent as he reveals the wild and unmistakable contraries of innocence and experience. And certainly, his designs further enliven the “fearful symmetry” of supernatural and social universes that underscores meaning in his poems. Blake attempts to indicate a change in the actual quality of consciousness: We learn to see the world in terms of knowledge (experience) that trumps and replaces the former consciousness of innocence.

The frontispiece of *Songs of Experience* suggest the adult realities of experience that resonate throughout Blake’s book, and these realities can be harsh to children. In the frontispiece the adult is holding a child, which at once signals a contrast to the frontispiece from *Songs of Innocence*: in the latter, the child is free from a human grasp yet looks down at the adult, giving inspiration. In *Experience*, the child is heavenly—he has angelic wings—yet the adult looks ahead rather than at the child. Thus, one is led to believe that the child is not dispensing knowledge (or anything) from a divine source. In

fact, the adult appears to clutch the child around the wrists and forearms--as if the child is subtly *bound* by and to the adult--leading him out of the pastoral environment and into the unknown world of experience. This visual concept is a prelude to the ideas in the poems ahead, as the world of experience is the arena that the child must perceive and that the adult dispenses. Stanley Gardner comments on the evidence of experience given in the frontispiece: "At the outset of the tragic journey through Experience, we see the child is constrained, and conveyed past the sheltering oak, away from the fields and hills of innocence. The flock is being deserted. The man is neither shepherd nor piper" (231). In *Innocence* the man is a happy shepherd; this man's guidance has subtle elements of Urizen, or even Nobodaddy. S. Foster Damon defines this figure: "NOBODADDY ('nobody's daddy') was Blake's name for the false God of this World" (301). Thus, one must wonder precisely how much the adult's guidance in the frontispiece should be trusted. Discussions of poems from *Experience* will tell how far he can be trusted.

Taking matters of experience further, one must then consider the title page. The bottom half of the title page shows two dead adults, most likely the parents of the two youths weeping over them. The fact that the hardened bodies of the adults lie straight between the weeping youths bending over them suggests that the world of adult experience is synonymous with death. And in the face of deathly presence, the two youths can only weep as a natural response to the living state. The walls behind the figures are as sterile as the corpses, so the walls also indicate the negative confines of the world of experience. The upper half of the plate contains the rigid letters of the word

“EXPERIENCE” while the two carefree figures just above the word stretch with life below the gently looping word “Songs.” Again, death equals the condition of experience whereas life is separate from the rigidity of that condition. Gardner elaborates upon the contrary conditions of death and life as shown on the title page: “The dead, who are effigies of death, are mourned by the adolescents in the stylised manner of *Experience*. They are barred from the living by the featureless panelling, with its heavy coping of EXPERIENCE. Above and beyond this, the dancing, flying figures celebrate a lost and contrary state ‘of the human soul’” (231). Thus, the spiritual life of Innocence has been divided from the stony world of experience, and the joyous state of Innocence itself vanishes in the cold “panelling” of “EXPERIENCE.”

In the “Introduction” to *Songs of Experience*, Blake (as the Bard himself) depicts the struggling state of the human spirit in the world of experience by emphasizing the divine source of life; in addition, the first stanza seems a recollection of a time-bound holiness. But, the religious source actually operates throughout (and beyond) human notions of time, as the Bard indicates:

Hear the voice of the Bard!  
 Who Present, Past, & Future sees  
 Whose ears have heard,  
 The Holy Word,  
 That walk’d among the ancient trees. (1-5)

But, along with the recognition of continuous spirit, one must acknowledge “ancient”



spirit. The Bard is able to recognize the “Holy Word,” the source of his prophecy and words that should and will penetrate existence as it once did so fruitfully. Interestingly, in the “Introduction” to *Innocence*, this holiness reveals itself to a “piper” (not to a Bard) as an angelic child in a clouded area, hovering directly above the piper’s earth. Now in experience, spiritual influence comes from a distant source (not as a child in a cloud), as Joseph Wicksteed claims: “The ‘Piper’ draws his inspiration from a visionary child in the clouds. The ‘Bard’ draws his from the Holy Spirit walking upon ancient earth” (145). For Blake, the Holy Word of Jesus is the basis for spiritual understanding on earth, and the Bard understands the need to carry Jesus’s spirit into and throughout the present from ancient times when his “Holy Word” was pre-eminent. And mankind was able to live in a purely imaginative state based on the Holy Word, just as the Bard is able to imagine “Present, Past & Future” (2). Therefore, one understands Blake’s imperative in the very first line of his poem: “Hear the voice of the Bard!” However, recognizing Jesus’s Holy Word becomes quite difficult for humanity in its ongoing state of experience, as Blake emphasizes in subsequent stanzas. And in the process, he literally sets the philosophical stage for subsequent poems in *Experience*.

Humanity is fallen in its state of experience. And in its fall from innocence, humanity separates itself from the Holy Word and the sacred imagination. Blake laments the sadness of this fallen condition while also yearning for hope by

Calling the lapsed Soul

And weeping in the evening dew:

That might control,  
 The starry pole;  
 And fallen fallen light renew. (6-10)

Human beings have lost imaginative, paradisiacal bliss and experienced the dominance of “the starry pole” (9). Such a state will appear later in “The Tyger” wherein “the stars threw down their spears. . .” (17). Though there are certainly competing interpretations of this line, one can envision the dagger-like, war-like presence of reason. But, for now, the stars are more than objects of the “evening dew”: They are the restrictive symbols of reason in the material universe. Thus, in man’s fallen state, the “poles” of reason have replaced the imagination, so man’s “Soul” has “Lapsed.” If one considers Blake’s word “Lapsed,” one might think of the word *elapsed* in terms of a duration of time or the word *collapsed* in terms of falling apart in a process of loss. At any rate, the conclusions are pertinent because the material universe has altered the human soul through the force of reason. The sadness in this stanza turns to hope in the last line when Blake asks, “And fallen fallen light renew!” (12). He wishes for humanity to leave the dark confines of reason and seek rebirth in a world of imaginative life. Blake’s hope for the renewal of humanity continues when he says,

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

Rises from the slumberous mass. (11-15)

Here, the voice of the Bard gathers insistence, almost as if humans are being summoned from their graves in order to experience a lost heaven or a heaven to come. Interestingly, the comparison is compelling, for humanity has been “slumberous,” unresponsive to the once-familiar life of the imagination that, in Blake's prelapsarian state, was synonymous with the Holy Word. And humankind is indeed *stuck* under materialistic categories until it can overcome them and embrace the renewed light of the imagination:

Turn away no more:

Why wilt thou turn away

The starry floor

The watry shore

Is giv'n thee till the break of day. (16-20)

The “break of day” is the start of the spiritual renewal, but individuals cannot experience this rebirth until they cease to accept reason's confines. Keynes comments on the idea of leaving reason's “starry” boundary and rediscovering imaginative life:

Earth is the symbol of the Fallen Man, who is summoned to awake from materialism and to turn again to the free life of the imagination. The ‘starry floor’ of Reason and the ‘wat’ry shore’ of the Sea of Time and Space (the edge of materialism) are there only till the break of day if Earth would consent to leave the ‘slumberous mass’ (143).

In the plate a female (Earth) lies half-turned on a swirling couch amidst a starry universe

of materialism, and she faces the Bard's words, as if she knows she must pay attention to them. As Erdman suggests, "Her half reclining, half turning symbolizes a dawning response to the Bard's appeal" (73). And, as Keynes notes, "her head is surrounded by a golden circle through which she looks at the Universe" (143). The design not only shows her separated from the stars of materialism by the canopy of this halo, but also she is stationed under the last stanza—particularly under the phrase "till the break of day" (20), which indicates that she is imprisoned by "the watry shore" until she is able to release herself—and until the Earth of humanity releases her—from restrictive reason. Hence, as Erdman says, "the figure on the scroll is indeed Earth as the 'lapsed Soul' . . ." (72).

In "Earth's Answer" the voice of Earth laments in response to the Bard in the "Introduction": She wishes to free her energy from the oppressive bonds of reason. Her response to the Bard is initially one of fear and hopelessness: "Her light fled: / Stony dread! / And her locks cover'd with grey despair" (3-5). Her despair causes her to wish for an escape from the oppressive materialism heaped on her, and it is even more compelling that she significantly *realizes* who her oppressor is. Arguably, Urizenic cruelty was not as apparent in *Innocence*. But, in her world of Experience, one clearly hears her emotional response about who is responsible for her bondage: "I hear the Father of the ancient men / Selfish father of men / Cruel jealous selfish fear . . ." (10-12). One also hears the threats to Earth's natural energies in her question: "Can delight / Chain'd in night / The virgins of youth and morning bear" (13-15)? The beautiful "delight" is forced to confront the Urizenic "father" that began to dominate her as far back as the time of the

“ancient trees,” and her innocent, Edenic love has become secondary to the harsher reality that selfishly sustains itself at her expense. In fact, one then wonders why such pleasing natural beauty should be dominated in the first place (even literally speaking), and Earth herself has the same question: “Does spring hide its joy / When buds and blossoms grow?” (16-17). Northrop Frye offers his telling explanation of the Urizenic power of the father who chains her:

This false father still exists as the shadow thrown by Newtonian science into the stars, or what Blake calls the ‘Spectre.’ He is the genius of discouragement, trying to impress us with the reality of the world of experience and the utter unreality of anything better. His chief weapons are moral conformity, sexual shame, and the kind of rationality that always turns out to be anti-intellectual. (31)

In order to regain her freedom from Experience, Earth is now faced with the prospect of apocalyptic change. The contraries of Love and Hate are emphatic in the last stanza, as Earth rallies herself for the cause of her long-awaited renewal:

Break this heavy chain,  
That does freeze my bones around  
Selfish! vain!  
Eternal bane!  
That free Love with bondage bound. (21-25)

The female on her couch in the “Introduction” will no longer recline in passivity; she will no longer be subdued in the “slumberous mass.” Innocents like Tom Dacre should no

longer be satisfied with a mere dream as a means of escape. Earth has been given the “heavy chain” for too long, so she must “Hear the voice of the Bard!” and act to overcome Urizen and his socially accepted clothes of death. We find this garb of death in subsequent poems, such as “The Garden of Love”: “And priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds, / And binding with briars, my joys & desires” (12). Lastly, speaking of the deathly “Stony dread!” that has debilitated Earth, one must notice the serpent in the plate. This serpent blends with the vegetation, threatening it with a hissing tongue, just as the priesthood spreads hypocrisy. Keynes notes the snake as a symbol of the priesthood: “The snake below, perhaps the Serpent of the Garden of Eden, symbolizes for Blake the priesthood with their denial of freedom for natural energies” (144).

In light of the hypocrisy of those who preach goodwill, readers will now experience (considering the pun) his great poem “Holy Thursday.” Here Blake boldly confronts the issue of poverty in a direct and satirical manner, especially as the issue pertains to children. In the first lines of the poem, one sees that poverty exists despite a supposedly religious, affluent, and “fruitful land,” so Blake questions how poverty could exist at all:

Is this a holy thing to see,  
 In a rich and fruitful land,  
 Babes reduced to misery,  
 fed with cold and usurous hand? (1-4)

To Blake, poverty is needless. If the land is indeed productive enough to feed the poor,

why is there poverty at all? Yet, the satire here is that a rich, productive *humanity* should not know poverty. This poem makes one ask, what can be done on a social level to keep individuals (children especially, as Blake's subjects here) from falling into an impoverished condition? Charity itself would not be needed if the social reasons for the very existence of poverty did not exist—in light of this thought, the poem points to two classes of people: the rich and the poor. The poor children in their condition are left with no choice but to *accept* charity from the rich, and the rich are thoughtless and uncaring in allowing poverty as a consequence of social inequality. Hence, one reads, “Babes reduced to misery . . .” (3). Charity then becomes a system of evil which is based on a fundamental inequality between the rich and the poor. As Nicholas Marsh explains,

For Blake, charity was an evil. Why, he asks, does charity exist? Only because there is inequality and injustice. . . . He emphatically tells us that we should not have charity, giving a little bit so poverty is *not so bad*, or *a little better*. Blake looks for the cause of the evil, and urges us to stamp out that. Put simply, charity only lessens the symptoms, it does not cure the disease, which is inequality. (120)

Thus, Blake decries the immorality of affluent humanity unwilling to share its plenty, and his satire continues in its bitter, indignant questioning. One senses that he wants readers to know the reasons for the cries of the poor:

Is that trembling cry a song?

Can it be a song of joy?

And so many children poor?

It is a land of poverty! (5-8)

And in Blake's noticeable disgust, one sees that the children's fiercely unhappy "song" here differs markedly from the jubilant song of the charity children in *Innocence*: "Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song . . ." (9). In the poem from *Innocence*, children do not emphasize the underlying evil that causes them to be charity school children because they are not palpably aware of the evil. In the poem from *Experience*, the children are quite aware of their poverty, and readers hear the raw, bitter reality of their "trembling cry."

Blake's bold satire continues in the third stanza of the poem, where "eternal winter" is now the result of adult experience:

And their sun does never shine.

And their fields are bleak & bare.

And their ways are fill'd with thorns.

It is eternal winter there. (9-12)

The barrenness of nature Blake describes is a twofold problem: Such an environment represents the horrific evil of Urizen's workings as he brings about poverty and masks the evil in social spheres with useless charity; secondly, the impoverished masses are forced to experience Urizen's darkness, his unproductive "fields," and his "thorns." The stars of reason have not only corrupted the social order that advocates charity, but they have also perpetuated the pain that now seems inextricable from the charitable order. The conditions are dire in their immoral foundations. This poem shows the need for the



apocalyptic change the Bard calls for in “the break of day” from his “Introduction” (20).

In the illustration there is a leafless tree at the top right corner, and a woman stands beside it with palms facing downward as she looks at her dead baby over her right shoulder. The scene matches the bleakness of winter presented in the text and, as Erdman says, “a gowned mother stands appalled under a barren oak” (75), certainly a joyless way to perceive the death of a baby even if one imagines that the woman is not the mother of the child (also a possibility in the plate). Given that the woman is at least indifferent to (if not completely “appalled” by) the death of the child, she represents the unfeeling humanity that Blake satirizes in the text, a humanity that looks on impoverishment and the possibility of death “with cold and usurious hand” (4). Further emphasizing the conditions of poverty in the illustration, a mother and her two desperate children occupy the right side of the plate in lush vegetation, but such lushness is cut off from them. One child cries at her side while the other hugs her, perhaps for comfort. Then at bottom is another baby, perhaps dead, lying in Edenic lushness, in a cruciform position, suggesting the suffering of innocents in a world of cruelty and inhumanity. Blake contrasts the continuous pain in nature and society in the last stanza with a humane land, a land of the future that does embrace the Bard’s apocalyptic plea in the “Introduction.” Blake wishes for an end to poverty; the only way there is to end its immoral origins:

For where-e’er the sun does shine,

And where-e’er the rain does fall:

Babe can never hunger there,

Nor poverty the mind appall. (13-16)

Where there is sunlight, there is food; where the sunlight of humanity reigns, the blessed morality of life grows. A land without poverty is a land without needless charity, and a moral humanity indeed becomes “a holy thing to see . . .” (1). The consciousness that is unaware and unfeeling, such as the mother’s at the top right of the illustration, will no longer exist. In other words, as Blake says, no longer will “poverty the mind appall” (29). Yet, in this last line, one must also take note of the satire Blake still employs to attack the view that encourages charity yet turns a deaf ear to the cause of poverty. In fact, it is fitting that the word “appall” is stationed as the last word in the poem, as the word adds an exclamation to the title itself, even to the first word of the title, “Holy.” It openly suggests that the mainstream’s awareness of the holy (and, thus, of God) is appalling. Blake’s poem makes his readers ask, what is holy to humanity, and what is unholy? The word “appalled” is of particular interest to Blake, and it pointedly occupies the text and plate of “The Chimney Sweeper.”

Blake’s biting satire against an immoral social universe continues in “The Chimney Sweeper,” and again he brings us back to the dreadful world of chimney sweeping. The institution of chimney sweeping is exposed for its evil right from the outset, as the observer says in the first stanza:

A little black thing among the snow:

Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!

Where are thy father & mother? say?

They are both gone up to the church to pray. (1-4)

The horrifying image of the first two lines presents a pitiful child sweep who is “black” like the soot from chimneys, and his dirtiness contrasts with the white of the snow. One wonders why he should not be clean and white like the color of the snow—an English being synonymous with the purity of nature. And, of course, the cold of winter is not a place for a dirty, destitute child. Unlike the sweeps from the *Innocence* poem, this sweep is noticeably aware of his distress. The sweep from *Experience* has been cast out into the snow like a useless object because he has outgrown his ability to climb through chimneys. Saree Makdisi comments on the plight of the child sweep in Blake’s day:

[T]ypically beginning work at around the age of five, by the age of twelve or thirteen a chimney sweeper, now grown too large for this cramped work, would inevitably be a broken and stunted cripple, finished for life. . . . The chimney sweepers who populate Blake’s works, invariably crying and weeping, are the ultimate evidence of the extent to which work could literally form the worker, at once mentally, emotionally, and physically. (105)

Thus, the brutish condition in which this child sweep finds himself makes him “weep, in notes of woe!” (2). Logically, then, one must consider how the parents and the church could impose upon him the danger and unhealthy grime of industrialism as well as the even deeper spiritual sadness.

Blake’s satire is such a powerfully effective device in this poem because he initially gives us the thoughts of an observer who speaks before the child, and the

observer sets up the necessary speculation that something is indeed terribly askew in this situation. Nicholas Marsh explains that the observer's questioning attitude helps readers consider the sinister source of the sweep's dilemma: "The observer's question, 'Where are thy father and mother? say?', conveys his need to find an explanation for the sweep's condition, and his need to apportion blame. In fact, the observer acts out our role as readers: he is upset by destitution, and he reacts by trying to find a culprit in order to vent his feelings" (114). Thus, readers are guided by the artistic structure to the parents and the church as a collective source of blame while the former sweep explains the root of his displeasure in lyrical terms:

Because I was happy upon the heath,  
And smil'd among the winters snow:  
They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
And taught me to sing the notes of woe. (4-8)

Readers clearly envision the harsh reality behind the child's words: His years of chimney sweeping have harmed him. Still he still manages some happiness in the cold of the "winters snow." The child utters his natural happiness, just as Tom Dacre, the sweep in *Innocence*, has a happy dream in which all sweeps "rise upon clouds and sport in the wind" (18). But, unlike Tom Dacre in his state of innocence, the sweep in experience has become bitter, and readers can sense a heightening degree of bitterness. In addition, the child now makes us perceive that adults exacerbate the former sweep's—and all sweeps'—damaged, angry psyche because adults are *jealous* of whatever youthful

happiness he possesses. The child is punished for his happiness by being “taught” to be miserable. This jealousy is an echo of Urizen’s “starry” jealousy in “Earth’s Answer”: “Prison’d on watry shore / Starry Jealousy does keep my den / Cold and hoar. . .” (6-8). Therefore, as readers are carried into the child’s world of experience, one accumulates an understanding of the child’s terror caused by the collective forces of Urizenic churches and parents.

In the last stanza, the child proclaims his disgust and increased bitterness, and in doing so, he pinpoints the reason for his “misery”:

And because I am happy, & dance & sing,  
 They think they have done me no injury:  
 And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King  
 Who make up a heaven of our misery. (9-12)

The child’s problem (and the targets for Blake’s satire) now includes the parents, the priesthood and the British King (George the Third, of course). For starters, the child has been “injured”; beneath the appearance of his happiness lurks a thoroughly *insulted* child—a child made to feel the disgrace and misfortune of chimney sweeping, most definitely not the loving care and attention a child in a nurturing social fabric should expect. In fact, as the child implies (and Blake affirms through his satire) it is the moral and spiritual *obligation* of the child’s parents to secure happiness and well-being for the child. Here, their neglect achieves just the contrary. As the bitter child is now well aware (and as readers of the child’s words are aware), a massive injustice is done to him when

the parents ignore his horrid existence yet still possess the gall to attend church and offer praise to the King in the whole process. The evil of these last lines becomes mountainous (and insurmountable for the child); not only do the parents ignore the child out of economic necessity, but the church ignores the immorality of chimney sweeping and its ongoing abuses as well. King George allows chimney sweeping because he ignores it as an invisible element behind the power of the British nation and its industrialism.

Therefore, the overworked “little black thing among the snow” is alone in his destitution (1), and the aforesaid groups of people make nothing more than a collective “heaven” or a “Mundane Hell” for this child and all child sweeps. Erdman discusses the annual celebration known as May Day as it pertains to the impoverished child and the hypocrisy of the parents and the church:

As for the chimney sweeper, his father and mother have turned a happy boy into a symbol of death. Once a year he still does dance and sing—on May Day, when London streets are given to the sweeps and milkmaids to perform for alms in grotesque symmetry. *The Chimney Sweeper* is saying to the London citizen: you salve your conscience by handing out a few farthings on May Day, but if you really listened to this bitter cry among the snow you and your icy church would be appalled. (275)

One must ask, is it spiritually beneficial under the rule of God to allow a child to feel isolated, overworked, and literally and constantly dressed in a garb of soot? Does God want a child to be a mere tool for a nation’s commerce? Should not every priest and

parent encourage a child to embrace the happiness of life? Blake's satire points us in the direction of these questions. The miserable state of the child brings us back to "Holy Thursday" wherein Blake asks,

Is that trembling cry a song?

Can it be a song of joy?

And so many children poor?

It is a land of poverty! (5-8)

For Blake, just as the evils of charity persist, so do hypocrisy and heartlessness in the world of the chimney sweeper. Lastly, just as the text of "The Chimney Sweeper" shows the rawness of the child's destitution, the plate visually reiterates the suffering in a sweep's hard life. Erdman explains the chimney sweeper's reality as it is shown on the engraving: "A London sweep, with his wire brush in his right hand, holds a sackful of soot over his shoulder with his left. He looks up anxiously into driving snow in an unshovelled street and walks past closed window and door" (79). Blake's fiery anger at an unjust British society in "The Chimney Sweeper" continues in subsequent poems.

The opening stanza of his poem "The Tyger" shows the ferocious yet beautiful force of a creative God, and Blake's speaker gives us the fiery force of a tiger as an object of God in nature:

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,

In the forests of the night;

What immortal hand or eye,

Could frame thy fearful symmetry? (1-4)

The tiger roams the dark “forest,” and his eyes shine so clearly (“burning”) that one is absorbed by a sense of awe in the speaker’s purpose, which is identified in the contrast between the darkness of the forest and the brightness of the tiger’s burning eyes and its symmetrical stripes. In the “Introduction” the Bard believes that “The watry shore / Is giv’n thee till the break of day” (19-20). “The watry shore” is the boundary of materialism to be overcome in order to see the “day” of apocalyptic change; however, the process of change can be horrifying, not always gentle and sweet (e.g., the lamb) as it is in Blake’s world of innocence. The fiery eyes of the tiger blaze through the materialistic “forest” with passionate violence. Inder Nath Kher explains the presence of the forest and the tiger in the opening lines of the poem:

‘The forests of the night’ symbolize the dark illusions of the human brain. Man under the domination of analytical reason loses his integral nature and wobbles in the world of self-created doubts and delusions. But since the Tiger is the manifestation of immortality, it cannot be purely destructive or only terrifying. It must stand for both creation and destruction, both love and anger, and like fire it must perpetually create and consume. (81)

As an aspect of God, the tiger’s divine energy occupies, defines, and redefines the world in beauty and ferocity, continuously displaying contraries which are both bewildering and essential to human existence. Given the wild “symmetry” of these contraries, the speaker wonders what kind of God could “frame” such a terrifying creation as a tiger, or even



bring this and other contraries into existence at all. In “The Lamb,” the child comes to the clear, joyous conclusion that the Creator is purely benevolent, but the speaker in “The Tyger” comes to no such conclusion. In fact, the speaker’s question in the stanza implies tremendous amazement and intensity about the creation, and the answer is perhaps not meant to reveal itself to human comprehension completely. Yet there are certainly compelling clues to the truth of creation, as Blake’s speaker demonstrates.

Blake’s speaker wonders where the tiger’s God originates in the next stanza: “In what distant deeps or skies / Burnt the fire of thine eyes?” (5-6). In other words, based on the capabilities of the Creator, does he occupy the “deeps” (hell) or the “skies” (heaven)? Do the deeps or skies indicate a morally ambivalent place that is perhaps unknowable to humanity? Is there any real difference in these realms that is actually perceptible by human consciousness? The answer certainly would give a great deal of knowledge about the Creator’s identity. Nevertheless, readers are aware of his boldness in creating the tiger at all, yet the overall pattern of creation as oppositions makes one wonder what moral value the creator should be assigned. Matters are then further complicated when humanity pursues divine ambition. The speaker asks the following questions about this matter: “On what wings dare he aspire? / What the hand, dare seize the fire?” (7-8). The word “dare” is mentioned in both lines, showing that mankind has acted as boldly as the Creator—a human being has “aspired” with his “wings” to create what the Creator creates, and he wishes to employ the same divine energy (“fire”) in the process. And these lines have mythological dimensions that significantly clarify the speaker’s purpose.

Line seven is a reference to the myth of Icarus, which serves to emphasize the speaker's intentions at this point. Oskar Seyffert explains Icarus's identity as well as the myth named after him:

Son of Daedalus. While he and his father were flying away from Crete by means of waxen wings, in spite of his father's warnings, he flew too near the sun, so that the wax melted and he sank into the sea and was drowned. After him the island where his body was washed ashore and buried by Heracles was called Icaria, and the surrounding sea, the "Icarian Sea" (316).

This myth shows what happens to individuals who unconscientiously, overzealously reach dangerously for knowledge despite warnings given to such extreme knowledge-seekers. As established earlier, life contains numerous contraries that have a precarious balance, and the aforementioned myth evinces the dangerous aspect of one of the contraries within human thought (excessive knowledge-questing). Line eight refers to the myth of Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to humankind, despite his being warned not to do so. Seyffert explains the myth of Prometheus's punishment: "Zeus bound him in adamantine fetters to a pillar with an eagle to consume in the day-time his liver, which grew again in the night. . . . According to this account, the guile of Prometheus, and his opposition to the will of Zeus, brought on man far more evil than good" (520). Again, mankind's unchecked thirst for knowledge has consequences that do not prove fortuitous for the seeker or for humanity at large.

Yet another useful aspect of Blake's "deeps or skies" is the boundless importance

of vigorous energy and passive reason. Blake indicates that “the fire of thine eyes” is the positive energy of a divine source, and such energy is necessary to all of creation, including all humans; it is the manifestation of the divine. However, orthodox religion has pushed energy into categories of good and evil, imposing ethical values on energy that once did not exist (or did not *need* to exist). The “deeps or skies” refer specifically to Judeo-Christian ethics of hell and heaven, respectively. Marta Krzysztoforska explains how energy has been placed under the restrictions of normative ethics:

The deeps stand for vice, as they suggest hell, where the orthodox would fain push all the ‘evil’ bustling with energy. Sky is the place to which the passive followers of reason are to be elevated, (sic) and therefore it signifies virtue. The ‘or’ placed between both images does not allow for the fluctuation of energy between the ethical values that once were different stages of one process and now deteriorated to become two independent ethical values. (77)

Thus, energy was removed from an amoral position and duly categorized; subsequently, from that point forward, individuals from the Judeo-Christian tradition were forced to consider ethical boundaries and consequences when they wished to utilize their positive, natural energies. More importantly, the fierceness of energy is needed to overturn the corrupt confines of reason: The energetic Jacobins encouraged and participated in mass demonstrations against the corrupt French government during the French Revolution. In this sense alone, the tiger’s energy is a necessary power that transcends the labels imposed on it.

As we have seen, the tiger's creator participates in a dynamic act because he makes something powerful and yet terrifying, and there is even a certain beauty in the created object. And just as God with his "immortal hand or eye" is capable of making such an object (3), so too is man capable of using his energy to make something terrifying. After all, as Hazard Adams says, "the power of God is the power of man, and each man is a kind of artist. It is no surprise to see that Blake takes the next step and asserts that man is a microcosm of God, God is the spiritual body of communal man" (70). At this stage in the poem (stanza three), one must keep God's creativity in mind whenever one considers what man creates; the bold act of God is the bold act of man, and vice versa. Thus, we see the threatening power of the creator and the object created in the material world:

And what shoulder, & what art,  
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
 And when thy heart began to beat,  
 What dread hand? & what dread feet? (9-12)

The speaker is filled with wonderment about the power of this beastly creation, and the very act of creation seems violent and brutish; the creation is not serene and passive like that of the lamb. Thus, the continuous questioning is based on the eruptive force and the outcome of the creation.

Readers must question along with the questioning speaker: Is this creation *good* or even *necessary*? In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein is deeply absorbed

in his own scientific creation: He wishes to overcome mortality by creating a being that is all-powerful, even more powerful than death itself. Yet *what* he creates is a terrifying abomination constantly referred to as the monster. Frankenstein pieces it together from the bones and body parts he finds in charnel houses; the monster is indeed a “dread” beast. Just as the creator of Blake’s tiger forcibly constructs its “heart,” “hand” and “feet,” the monster in *Frankenstein* is created in the same manner. The result of Frankenstein’s creative labors is every bit as powerful and terrifying as the tiger.

Frankenstein himself speaks about his creation upon first seeing it:

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips. (58)

Victor is appalled at the outcome of his labors, just as one has reason to be appalled at the creation of the horrifying features of the tiger. And once these creations exist, they are in the world despite the morality (or immorality) of their very existence. One then must ask, how do we feel about their creators? Good intentions in the act of creating may turn out wrong, as Victor’s do. And, after all, as evidenced by the creation of the tiger, *man’s*

creation is also *God's* creation. Though we have seen that divine energy is necessary and even positive, may we also assign evil to God? Is God ambivalent in his creations? If either is possible, then one must take note of the frontispiece to Blake's *Europe* (otherwise known as "The Ancient of Days"). On this design, the Creator indeed creates in a universe of literal and moral darkness. In "The Tyger" the speaker continues to question the possible presence of evil as readers continue to wonder why it exists.

In the next stanza, the speaker gives readers specific creations in the forms of industrial images:

What the hammer? what the chain,  
 In what furnace was thy brain?  
 What the anvil? What dread grasp,  
 Dare its deadly terrors clasp! (13-16)

These lines make readers envision a blacksmith pounding away with his hammer and shaping a metal object on the anvil, and one can imagine a hot furnace is nearby in which metals are heated so they become malleable enough to be bent into the desired shape. The objects themselves may be the smith's tools, but certainly they are the symbols of industrial progress in Blake's era. And, as readers have seen in both "Chimney Sweeper" poems, the industrial revolution was not kind to the poor workers who labored long hours. Certainly, this blacksmith works long, hard hours by this hot furnace in order to make profits for factory owners. Thus the creations of the blacksmith, while interesting in their creativity and craftsmanship as the products of an artisan, are products of great

industrial toil. One also envisions the child sweeps with their bags of soot, perhaps carrying some of the selfsame tools created by the smith in his hot furnace. The “chains” too are symbols of the compulsory labor enforced by the Urizenic forces (factory owners and masters of the sweeps, for example). Thus, are the smith’s creations *good*? Does mankind do well in using the force of reason to envelop society in the Industrial Revolution? And if mankind does well to encourage industrial progress, does God do well to allow mankind to make such progress? One knows that man’s creations are God’s creations. In Blake’s prophetic poem *Jerusalem*, Los (the divine imagination) is aware of his reasoned creations, but he also knows the sadness created inside his blazing furnaces:

‘Loud roar my Furnaces and loud my hammer is heard.

‘I labour day and night. I behold the soft affections

‘Condense beneath my hammer into forms of cruelty,

‘But still I labour in hope, tho’ still my tears flow down:

‘That he who will not defend Truth may be compell’d to defend

‘A Lie: that he may be snared and caught and snared and taken: ‘That Enthusiasm and Life may not cease; arise Spectre, arise!’ (9.25-31)

Here Los sees the goodness in the “Enthusiasm” to create, but he also knows the “spectre” of reason that ruins the creations, turning them into oppression such as the child sweep experiences at the hands of business owners who do not care when they witness the disaster wreaked upon the embattled souls of the child sweeps in the business of chimney sweeping. Similarly, the “brain” of the tiger is created in Los’s furnace of

experience, and that brain becomes a product (literally and metaphorically) of the industrial revolution and its dangers.

In the penultimate stanza, the speaker gives readers an image of Urizenic stars and their “tears.” God and man’s creations not only appear terrifying, but they also resonate with sadness in their terror. Recalling “starry” materialism in the “Introduction,” mankind is forced to wallow in the oft perverse display of reason in “The Tyger.” The speaker proclaims the emotional distress caused by these starry confines: “When the stars threw down their spears / And water’d heaven with their tears: / Did he smile his work to see?” (17-19). Knowing that God’s universe is a place where creation is often violent--a place filled with darkness and at least the potential for evil—one again may recall the darkness surrounding the ambivalent Urizenic figure in the frontispiece to *Europe*; the figure’s hand and compass (representing Newtonian reason) stretch through the void in the creative process. In “The Tyger” horrifying reason stretches its “spears” through the distance, reminding readers that *war* is often the result of restrictive, abusive reason. (Such an image is also Miltonic—Satan and his legions lost the war against Christ whose armies were led by the archangel Michael in the heavens, and they experienced a tremendous literal fall in their great loss.) Joseph Wicksteed discusses Blake’s star symbolism in the poem: “In the first place, then, the stars are the broken and scattered lights of eternity which night itself cannot quench, but which melt the dawn with the dewy return of day. They symbolise the hard cold realm of Reason and of war, that held the earth before Compassion came with Christ. . .” (198). Thus, given the long history of



starry chaos that often involved war, one must wonder how the God of “The Tyger” can be pleased with His creations—the speaker emphasizes this point by asking if the Creator is able to “smile” after the reasoned, constructive process is at its end. Based on the ambiguous connotation of the word “smile” in such dire circumstances, one might ask this question: Is the violent, hard force of reason that centers on brute creations truly necessary? (For example, does the spiritual universe ever truly require the chimney sweeps’ long, tough workday?) Then, the speaker asks another powerful question: “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” (20). This question may be answered with another question: How could the Creator of a gentle lamb likewise create something as ferocious as the tiger? How could the Creator of gentle innocence likewise create terrifying experience and complicate the universe with physical and psychological harm? The speaker then wonders, “What immortal hand or eye, / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?” (23-24). Good and evil in the universe is so charged with a dynamic, even unthinkable unity that the Creator must “dare” to strike such a balance. The power of the symmetry, and the act of forging the symmetry, demands the courage of the Creator. This need for control is signalled by the first and the last stanzas containing the exact same words with the exception of one change: “could” and “dare.” The speaker shows that it is quite appropriate to be awestruck at the symmetry in the Blakean universe, as exemplified in “The Tyger.”

Readers might struggle to see the relevance of the plate to the text, but relevance and meaning do exist. After engaging in the intensity of the poem, one usually wonders

why Blake's tiger appears so physically benign. Should not the creature appear as the horrifying, predatory animal that it is? Furthermore, should not the animal walk and stare straight toward us, as opposed to staring off to the side in an unthreatening profile? Robert Essick even suggests that "Blake simply was not capable of etching in relief a more frightening animal on such a small scale" (62). However, viewing the design closely, the tiger's stare is a wide-eyed *gaze*. One may then imagine that the tiger is struck by the power and even the words of its Creator, and the tiger's eyes are utterly frozen, or awestruck. Also, the seeming powerlessness of the tiger's body would be appropriate: The tiger's smallish physical stature *should* be presented as a necessary contrary to the Creator's power. And, since the message of the poem involves the symmetry of diverse opposites, such as the states of innocence and experience themselves, Blake's making a tiger appear smallish (even something physically comparable to a lamb) and awestruck at the Creator is quite sensible. In addition to the tiger, there is one other creature on the design, a bird (likely an eagle). This bird is vertically above the tiger at the top of the plate, and the bird is directly above the word "Tyger" in the first line. As Erdman says, the bird's position over the word "Tyger" has meaning: "But the eagle (?) flying above the tiger's name in the first line should remind us to lift up our heads in the presence of 'a portion of Genius' . . ." (84). Whether the creature is a bird or an eagle, Erdman's point is valid because its wings are fully spread over the word "Tyger," calling our attention to the unleashed creation of the tiger (and thus to the Creator). So the tiger and the bird together present engraved opposites, and

these opposites call attention to the “fearful symmetry” in the text.

In “The Garden of Love,” which advances the theme of the conflict between energy (in this case passion) and obedience (social conventions and regulations), the child speaker discovers a discomfoting state of experience in a beautiful “garden” he has known since he was very young, and Blake points readers toward the unexpected evils of organized religion. The innocent speaker begins to engage readers in his state of surprise in the first stanza:

I went to the Garden of Love,  
 And saw what I never had seen:  
 A Chapel was built in the midst,  
 Where I used to play on the green. (1-4)

The child has occasioned himself to an innocent world of “play”—childhood sexuality, instincts and the simple interactions between child and nature—on the Edenic “green.” There were no intrusions of coldhearted adults; the child was always pleased with his natural environment, unlike the child sweep in “the Chimney Sweeper” who learned “to sing the notes of woe” (8). The state of innocence *was* this child’s norm—one may envision a child unencumbered by restrictions of the Church because organized religion was not present. Then the sudden presence of the “Chapel” signaled an end to his unfettered play, and conventional religion made its allegiance to experience known, as Marsh explains:

Blake’s subject is the loss of innocence, and his particular target is the denial of

natural sexuality. It was the ‘Garden of Love’, and play seems to refer to the innocent, uninhibited discovery of sexuality between children. However, the speaker is now aware of church law, and sex is surrounded by bans, punishment and statutes which are enforced by a watchful priesthood. (123)

Certainly, in referring to childhood sexuality, Marsh does not mean that Blake is advocating anything other than “complete love by complete, ‘whole’ people who act with their physical and spiritual selves in unity” (124). Thus, the “green” of innocence is now shockingly absorbed by the quick intrusion of adult experience, and the child undergoes a journey into the condition of experience—a tough journey in which he learns the facades of the chapel and experience, and he knows his innocence has receded into his irretrievable past already. In addition, one can see the chapel as an emblem of experience because it “was built in the midst” of the child’s play area (3). The child is forced to acknowledge its presence.

One notes as well that Blake makes an important statement about the diversity of population and overcrowding in London in “The Garden of Love.” The London that Blake knew as a child became noisy, dirty and crowded as he aged, and his poem can be read as a reminder of London’s evolving social conditions. Peter Ackroyd discusses how Blake must have observed his changing city:

Golden Square was just South of Broad Street; it had been finished in the 1670’s and the square itself, with its grass plots and gravel walks and wooden railings (with a statue of King James in the center), was a token of early eighteenth-

century urban gentility. Like Broad Street, it was losing its former status; the houses of the nobility and the great merchants were now occupied by painters and cabinet-makers. (30)

Thus, the London Blake discovered later in life was less pastoral, and its commercialism was intensifying. One must wonder if children had the same chance to “play on the green” during London’s commercial advancements (4). And if the child’s freedom to “play” in a more serene environment disappeared, the child’s environs must not have been as pleasing to the senses or the imagination. Ackroyd then mentions a drastic example of London’s overcrowding concerning graves under Blake’s family house and under a nearby building:

The house itself was erected upon an old burial ground once known as Pesthouse Close; it was completely filled by 1733, but the residents of Broad Street still complained of the stench that sometimes erupted from its ancient soil. The parish workhouse had been built upon a neighboring burial ground behind Blake’s house, known less noisomely as Pawlett’s Gardens. . . . (30)

The problem Ackroyd describes here directs us to the final quatrain of Blake’s poem, wherein the speaker observes the changes in the once-pleasing garden: “And I saw it was filled with graves, / And tomb-stones where flowers should be. . .” (9-10). Perhaps now we see that the child’s “play” has less physical potential to offer childhood happiness. Even Blake himself knew of the varying influences of the changing, growing population; for one, a less populated city would not need to experience living conditions above burial

grounds. The chance to live the happier life of a child was duly threatened.

In the poem the child's new understanding of conventional religion and its accompanying state of experience are indeed powerful, for Blake's child speaker sees literal and subjective differences between his newfound present and his past:

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,  
 And Thou shalt not. writ over the door;  
 so I turned to the Garden of Love,  
 That so many sweet flowers bore. (4-8)

Unquestionably, it must be strange to a young, happy child that a chapel's doors would be "shut"; one would think that a church would have open doors for the happy, the poor, or anyone wishing entrance. One would expect the church to be an accepting home of God. But in this poem, the chapel is the cold den of Urizen who sets forth rules and regulations in the form of the decalogue ("Thou shalt not"). The chapel is a restrictive, foreboding place to the child who has only known the unregulated warmth of nature's playful stimuli, so the decalogue is a fierce reminder to the child that he had better not exercise his usual instinctive happiness around the cold confines of the new building "in the midst." Similarly in "Earth's Answer," the "delight" of energetic, sweet love in a state of innocence also faces the hard ugliness of Urizen's religion: "Can delight / Chain'd in night / The virgins of youth and morning bear" (13-15)? In "The Garden of Love," the child's natural response is to turn away from this unwelcoming presence and toward the "Garden" that has provided him with such happy freedom in the past. However, Urizen

does not disappear, and the child's bleak education around the newfound zone of conventional religion sadly continues. In fact, the child's experience of "Love" mentioned earlier disappears completely, and the darkness of Urizen grows stronger. The child comes to realize that the now-dominating condition of experience in the garden is a deathly presence:

And I saw it was filled with graves,  
 And tomb-stones where flowers should be:  
 And priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,  
 And binding with briars, my joys & desires. (9-12)

Urizen's "Priests" are indeed threatening figures to the once-happy child—their "black" presence does nothing but show the child a world of despair in their "rounds" of conformity. Their restrictiveness can only hurt the child, and this hurt is sharp like the thorns Christ was forced to wear on his head in the Crucifixion. And certainly, the fact that *priests* are quite capable of damaging the child's natural instincts ("joys," "desires") is a vicious irony. Thus, in the child's new world of experience, he had better be wary of the priests in the garden: As the last lines of the poem show, the priesthood is quite capable of sticking little daggers of death into the human spirit.

The plate with the poem emphasizes images of death, showing a boy and a girl kneeling in prayer beside a priest (also kneeling) reading a Bible and gesturing with his left hand down toward an open grave. Erdman gives an accurate discussion of details around the graves:

Darkness, with a more or less vague suggestion of trees, presses at their backs; a leaning gravestone at right imitates the human form in rock, beneath a church window (the diamond leading of which repeats the crossed diagonals of briars below). Under the last line, ‘binding with briars my joys . . .,’ a grave mound is indicated by the traditional criss-crossed briars bound around the turf-covered coffin: what will go into the black hole being worshipped above. (86)

The darkness in the gravestone and behind the figures is well placed—the darkness of death is thus all around the living beings, just as the child speaker in the poem experiences the conformist blackness of priests in their “black gowns.” Also, it is appropriate to the message of the poem that criss-crossed patterns of briars are on the church window and the grave below the text: The briars and graves show the death of human instincts—even the murder of human instincts. Blake’s illustration suggests the same idea about the slanting positions of the tomb and human figures—each figure and the stone direct our attention to the subject of death. (Even the letters in the title are slanted, again suggesting the death and murder of human instincts.) Also of note, the worms between the quatrains and at the right of the text are associated with death, as Erdman says: “Worms, of course, are a hopeful sign; they speed dissolution of the mortal body” (86). Interestingly, the natural process of death and decomposition, each in its own proper time, contrasts vividly with the priests’ distorted manner of killing human instincts in the poem. Lastly, Erdman correctly states that “Blake treats the text area as underground . . .” (86). The “underground” text also implies that the whole subject of



death is prominent: Above and below the text are the representations of death (the grave at the top and the mound at the bottom).

In Blake's "The Little Vagabond," readers envision children whose true nature is subject to an unfeeling church, as in "The Garden of Love." But, in "The Little Vagabond," there is an additional dimension: the child fantasizes about a church environment that is as joyous and warm as a tavern: "Dear Mother, dear Mother, the church is cold, / But the Ale-House is healthy & pleasant & warm. . ." (1-2). The Urizenic forces of organized religion have traditionally kept the Church "cold," but the vagabond child is easily, naturally aware that this tradition is not physically or spiritually comfortable or conducive to the needs of the living. Thus, the speaker wants readers to engage in the possibilities of his own ruminations, and this absorption is important because readers perceive the spirituality and joy of a child (and a poor child as well). Why must a church be cold? Would not the same God who makes a child want warmth and even a festive environment in his Church? The vagabond continues to consider his idea of a happy church:

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale.

And a pleasant fire, our souls to regale;

We'd sing and we'd pray, all the live-long day;

Nor ever once wish from the church to stray . . ." (5-8)

The child speaker is aware that his nature is to be festive and playful, and if he is a happy lamb (like Christ in "The Lamb"), nothing should be unacceptable about taking "Ale"

and being comfortable around a fire within the Church. The happy nature of the child is also stated in “Earth’s Answer”: “Does Spring hide its joy / When buds and blossoms grow?” (16-17). It is not even appropriate for children to conceal their joy, for such joy is a vital part of existence. And in “Holy Thursday” of *Innocence*, readers envision a demonstration of naturally happy poor children, even if they are ceremoniously ordered by “beadles” for the event of Holy Thursday: “Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own. / The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs, / Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands” (6-8). The children in the state of innocence show their unrestrained happiness while the vagabond children in the state of experience are not allowed to express themselves at all.

Thus, the vagabond children would like to be free from the restraints of religious figures, and perhaps these figures would change in the process, for they would learn the happiness of the children’s vagabond spirit:

Then the Parson might preach & drink & sing.

And we’d be as happy as birds in the spring:

And modest dame Lurch, who is always at Church,

Would not have bandy children nor fasting nor birch. (9-12)

Two figures in the child’s world, the “Parson” and “Dame Lurch,” represent the Urizenic order of the Church. If the Parson were to participate in the children’s regaling, he would have good reason to be festive along with the children—he would do more than just “preach” as a coldhearted, doctrinal functionary in established church environs. Likewise,

Dame Lurch would no longer need to beat her unruly children into submission; the little children are made to be unruly (“bandy”) in the strict confines of the conformist Church environs, but after receiving ale and food, the children would naturally be well-behaved. One intuit, however, that this Parson and Dame Lurch would not allow a “fire,” food, and drink in the church. And assuredly, Dame Lurch would prefer to administer beatings in order to maintain Urizen’s “cold Church.” In fact, the very idea of the child’s wishes to eliminate the horrible aspects of the church is subversive to Urizenic order even if the child does not understand why change could be perceived as such. Wicksteed explains that the child would not even understand his thoughts as subversive:

For the Little Vagabond the so-called good things are evil, and the so-called evil things are good. He can see only power, and no love, in the God who has such churches and such worshippers, and who has no sympathy with the natural physical wants of mankind. But in warmth and kindness and good cheer the child finds, amongst the world’s ‘publicans and sinners,’ all that he knows for good.  
(180)

Undoubtedly, the child’s vision to eliminate harshness in the Church *would* entail dramatic change, perhaps the kind of change that only the gentle spirit of the child could envision. The truth of the change would mean breaking down oppressive conformity and replacing it with compassion, caring, and physical and spiritual well-being. Readers come to understand the outcome of the child’s vision:

God like a father rejoicing to see,

His children as pleasant and happy as he:

Would have no quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel

But kiss him & give him both drink and apparel. (13-16)

The cold of the Urizenic church would disappear beside the warm, happy fire of the vagabond's Devil, or in other words, the happy reality of a warmer, more comfortable life. And, God becomes a loving father instead of the oppressive Urizenic father. The Devil, or the collective vagabond spirit, would be nurtured and given the loving "kiss" of a newly established moral humanity in "the break of day" the Bard envisions in the "Introduction" (20).

The top half of the illustration for "The Little Vagabond" emphasizes the speaker's hopeful vision. God appears as a loving father figure who kneels down in a cove of trees and places his arms around a vagabond kneeling in front of him. In addition, bright light emanates from God's head, and the light's white and red appearance glow like warm fire, perhaps like the fire the vagabond in the poem imagines in the church. Certainly, *this* father would allow the fire. In addition, the letter "V" in the word vagabond opens below the center of the God-vagabond embrace, directing us to its character of loving acceptance. The scene at the bottom is a contrast in its significance, and it is fitting that the different scenes are stationed at opposite ends of the plate (and at opposite ends of the text). A careworn father sits on a small mound (likely a rock) while his son is being ignored as he stands by a fire. Meanwhile, as Erdman accurately explains, "The mother on the other side of the fire crouches and hides her face (though

Blake can give her a face looking up . . .) with one child kneeling before her, reaching its arms around her knee and neck, another ignored at her left knee. Only the two ignored children see or accept the light of the fire” (87). While the vagabond on the top half of the plate is warmed by God’s truly fatherly love, the ignored children in the plate below must approach the fire on their own; their poor parents cannot give the same comfort as God above. One must then consider that Urizenic forces have caused the adults’ love to diminish. Interestingly, the fire on the lower half of the plate is almost vertically below God’s warm light on the upper half of the plate, indicating the comforting spiritual power of the fire. Lastly, one must take note of the two birds at the bottom right of the illustration—the birds aspire upward in the direction of the loving God and comforted vagabond, showing the leading force of God’s love.

While the speaker in “The Little Vagabond” directs us to the immorality of conventional religion, Blake’s speaker in “London” gives readers various categories of social evil. The speaker in this poem is a pedestrian in the city of London, and as he walks he sees—or he *sees* in the sense that he *perceives*—the categories of evil; another way he understands is through the act of hearing, as we will soon discover. In witnessing the social problems that exist from place to place, he cannot help but feel indignant about the causes of the problems. Thus, what we have in this poem is an observant, judgmental wanderer whose tone is indignant, and as a result he conveys meaning in quite a direct manner. Adams discusses the speaker’s attitude as well as a significant reason for it:

The speaker of the poem is certainly an indignant critic who travels through the

area of which he speaks and comments as he does so on its spiritual state. Since London is the city of Albion—his false emanation—it is also an image of the false ambitions of Albion as a society. It is an image of what happens ‘if you go on So.’ The state of London is the state of Ulro. Its philosophy is naïve materialism, its politics is tyranny, its moral code leads to outrages. (276-77)

To the speaker there are injustices in the city that underscore the abuses of reason, and thus the spiritual status of its people suffers. In the opening stanza, there is much for him to observe on the streets, along the river Thames, and on people’s faces:

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. (1-4)

To understand this poem well, one must take stock of individual words. With the repeated word “Charter’d,” one perceives something already about Blake’s intentions early on. The word has multiple meanings, but one meaning directs us to the Magna Carta, which Londoners came to regard as oppressive in Blake’s era. John Beer explains how the Magna Carta came to be understood as unfair:

The word was originally associated with liberty. Magna Carta, signed by King John in 1215, was traditionally one of the foundations for British liberty, and one of many such charters over the centuries. But these charters were freedoms granted to particular classes of people: they automatically involved a loss of

liberty for others who did not belong; and by Blake's time it was hard to walk around London without feeling that the whole city had been parceled out among different groups in this way, leaving no freedom for the individual human beings who were excluded. (62)

In Blake's world view, a charter carries negative connotations that Blake associated with immorality. In his London city, charters were given as privileges to companies seeking profit, and the business functions of these companies often operated on the Thames.

When a charter was given to one business, other businesses were often not granted the same charters, and thus a system of unfairness was perpetuated; the dichotomy of rich and poor was perpetuated. E. P. Thompson discusses the negative privileges of charters:

... 'charter'd' is more particularly associated with 'cheating.' It is clearly a word to be associated with commerce: one might think of the Chartered Companies which, increasingly drained of function, were bastions of privilege within the government of the city. Or again, one might think of the East India Company, whose ships were so prominent in the commerce of the Thames, which applied in 1793 for twenty-years' renewal of its charter, and which was under bitter attack in the reformers' press. (176)

So, Blake's wanderer might "mark" the economically drained businessman who did not gain his charter and, thus, became a victim of the corrupt dispensation of power and privilege in London. And in the process of his observations, the wanderer sees the mark

as an emotional scar—the downtrodden face or gait of the sufferer. And in thus seeing the sufferer, it is obvious he can hear the sufferer's talk due to close proximity. So, the “weakness” and the “woe” are profound: They are economic; they are physical; they are the collective sights and sounds of *all* who suffer in the streets of humanity. The “marks” point Blake’s readers to the disasters of the human spirit. And more examples of the sufferers exist in subsequent stanzas.

The speaker now may imagine where the suffering leads within the individual. Or, put differently, one wonders what types of emotions the troubled masses feel that accompany the types of suffering. So, an investigation of the following lines is necessary to learn what other specific social groups exist on the streets:

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice: in every ban,  
the mind-forg’d manacles I hear. (5-8)

For starters, “every” person experiences some kind of pain; the speaker imagines that such travails are omnipresent. But, more specifically, the “Infant” suffers—the speaker feels that each person learns early in life the unfairness on which society is grounded, so a baby’s first cries of fear may be exceptionally real. For example, in “Holy Thursday” a baby may experience starvation as a result of his parents’ poverty: “Babes reduced to misery . . .” (3). And as the speaker so strongly proclaims, “It is a land of poverty!” Then the suffering persists in experience, for Urizen’s chains of oppression uphold bans against



the masses, as “every voice” knows. Such voices “cry” with disgust, mirroring Blake’s tonal intentions. Thompson discusses the wide-ranging immorality of these bans:

The bans may be execrations, but the mind may be encouraged to move through further associations, from the bans before marriage, the prohibitive and possessive ethic constraining ‘lawless’ love (“Thou Shalt not’ writ over the door’), to the bans of Church and State against the publications and activities of the followers of Tom Paine. All these associations are gathered into the central one of a code of morality which constricts, denies, prohibits and punishes. (184)

Blake’s readers today can easily acknowledge the ample reasons for the despair that throttles the collective spirit in his London streets. Dealing with the pains of Albion on a daily basis, the Londoner in crisis in Blake’s day developed a mental mechanism in which the pain was internally stationed in “mind-forg’d manacles” (8). For example, the speaker is able to “hear” the inward condition that derives from institutional oppression: “How the Chimney-sweeper’s cry / Every blackning Church appalls . . .” (9-10). The chimney sweeper, for example, knows his pain is not only misunderstood, but the abuses of further neglect or even physical retribution exist if the cries of his pain reach Urizenic ears. The sweeps’ masters, parsons and even citizens such as Dame Lurch are *appalled* at the cries of destitute pain. Thus, the sufferers freeze their pain in shackles, silencing their thoughts by ignoring themselves, and in this fashion, failing to assist themselves out of their experience-created traumas. Observing the marks on these people’s faces from street to street, Blake’s speaker “hears” the people’s irresolvable and, therefore, frozen crises.

The wandering speaker also perceives the British soldier's predicament. The suffering spirit of the soldier is shown in these lines: "And the hapless Soldiers sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls. . ." (11-12). The soldier in Blake's London was seen as a means to an end or a means to satisfy the King's war demands. Thus, for one, when Blake gives the image of the soldier's sigh running in "blood down Palace walls" (12), he refers to soldiers that were forced to fight in George's wars, and the soldiers had little or no choice: It was the soldiers' responsibility to serve their King as well as their own homes. Considering the soldier's blood, Robert Rix discusses the rough, even desperate, situation of George's soldiers:

The reference here is to the plaintive voice of the men who were forced to join the army out of economic necessity. Often as the only way to support their families, the poor became cannon fodder in the war George III had declared against France in February 1793. Blake warns against a violent revolt if the king continues to starve his subjects. (28-29)

Many soldiers were especially desperate *not* to fight, and many London citizens joined in an anti-war crisis, evincing their understanding of the plight of the British soldier. David Erdman also discusses the soldiers' desertion and the hiring of Hessian soldiers to fortify the monarch's war efforts: "Recruits secured by fair means or foul soon deserted; a decree of death to deserters had no effect; the Empire had to rely for its belligerency on 12,000 subsidized Hessians available on demand. . ." (60). In addition, the anti-war sentiment among soldiers was prevalent even on the battlefield in the American

Revolution, as Blake writes in his great prophecy *America*:

The British soldiers through the thirteen states sent up a howl  
Of anguish: threw their swords & muskets to the earth, & run  
From their encampments and dark castles seeking where to hide  
From the grim flames. . . (13.6-9)

Thus, given the feelings against war even among soldiers, England experienced the fear of a violent revolution similar to the French Revolution. England on the whole did not want a Reign of Terror, such as the one experienced among the French. Erdman says the blood in “London” is even “an apocalyptic omen of mutiny and civil war involving regicide” (279). So the sigh of the soldier is another sound that shows spirit of suffering in Blake’s “London.”

In the last stanza of the poem, the speaker hears the combined crises of the “Harlot,” the “Infant,” and the institution of marriage itself. Hearing the collective desperation, the speaker knows the social corruption and hypocrisy that sanctions and supports prostitution:

But most through midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful harlot’s curse  
Blasts the new-born Infant’s tear  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse. (13-16)

The collective immorality of the harlot and the married man may be imagined as follows. Considering the poverty of industrial England, the impoverished mother works as a

prostitute, and a married man has the money to pay her for sexual gratification. So, in the short, meaningless relationship between whore and married man, a child is conceived. However, this child will be born with a great disadvantage *besides* poverty: The child will not only bear the stigma of being a bastard but also the stigmata of venereal disease that was passed down from the infected mother. Meanwhile, the infected married man goes home to his unsuspecting wife and gives her the same disease, wittingly or unwittingly. The spread of this disease shows extreme immorality, and the disease and the immorality continue, as Stephen Lambert explains: “The Harlot—a perverse mother figure—passes down to her child a legacy of corruption and contagion, one that likewise infects the marriage institution (and, by association, the church) ensuring for posterity an endless cycle of excoriation and oppression” (142). Thus, the poem finishes with the words “Marriage hearse,” indicating that the disease has social and physical consequences—the death of the human spirit and the death of the actual person (the final stage of the social disease). The poem has a fitting end because of the variety of evils that join to “mark” individual and collective suffering. Blake’s London is a picture of immorality that penetrates life on the city streets, and the suffering of human spirit is the unquestionable result. It is fitting that, on the engraved plate, a young child leads Urizen past a door, and it is suitable that Urizen is on crutches: he has damaged himself while damaging the society he creates. And it is also suitable that a young child warms himself by the fire at the right of the design: he needs to feel the warmth of a fire in the chaotic society of moral vacuity and spiritual cold.

In Blake's "Infant Sorrow," readers are given a picture of a despairing child born into a world of pain, in opposition to the happy world of "Infant Joy." The infant speaker shows the pain of his fresh existence:

My mother groaned! my father wept.

Into the dangerous world I leapt:

Helpless, naked, piping loud;

Like a fiend hid in a cloud. (1-4)

Clearly this child does not perceive himself as the angelic child with arms happily stretched in the frontispiece from *Innocence*; this child considers himself a fiend born into a fiendish existence. There is no reason to consider the beauty of his own life, and readers are made to feel disgusted at what a grotesque, Urizenic world has done to this infant's mindset. In addition, the physical trouble the child immediately endures matches the morose interior condition of the child:

Struggling in my father's hands:

Striving against my swaddling bands:

Bound and weary I thought best

To sulk upon my mother's breast. (5-8)

The "Struggling" and "bound" condition of the child is the condition in which he will most definitely grow to realize more about the state of experience where Urizen will have his say in the world to come. And, his weary state is also unavoidable. In the child's poverty, he might become a chimney sweep, and he will learn the reasons to be a fatigued

“little black thing among the snow: / Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!” (1-2). Yet, at present, this baby born into experience will first learn to “sulk.” This poem shows that the world of experience is an unavoidable presence, and the infant discovers petulance already. As Ricks Carson says, the troubled presence of this infant is bothersome:

The child at the mother’s breast is an archetype of innocence, vulnerability, and spontaneous affection. That an infant might experience disillusionment and cynicism dismays the reader; the child should be “piping loud,” sleeping, or resting peacefully. But, ears scored by her birth pains and discouraged by the father’s tears, its limbs swaddled in bands, the child nurses not on life, but on resentment. (150)

The real infant sorrow in the poem is this resentment. In the plate, the infant appears to reach toward the mother in desperation, but the scene of baby and mother does not appear comfortable or joyous despite one’s expectations of a joyous embrace between mother and baby. Like the poem, the plate indicates the bitter influence of experience.

In “The Voice of the Ancient Bard,” the state of experience again infiltrates existence. Early in the poem, the youth are called forward to learn about “truth,” so their instruction begins:

Youth of delight, come hither,  
And see the opening morn,  
Image of truth new-born.  
Doubt is fled & clouds of reason,

### Dark disputes & artful teasing. (1-5)

The poem opens on a seemingly pleasant note, but the truth is dark; it is a world of experience—a world of “reason.” Urizen will rear his immorality upon the child’s day, and the child will soon know “disputes.” In fact, the youth’s short stay in innocence is nearly forgotten as the poem moves on, and the youths’ lives become increasingly perplexed by the workings of Urizenic forces. Consequently, the structure of the poem indicates the awkward change the youths experience, as Joseph Wicksteed says: “After the first line, which never finds a rhyme, the verse moves along brightly for three couplets and then breaks into a strange irregular quatrain, evidently intended to emphasise the stumbling and inconclusive course of those who wish to thwart youth’s impulses with tradition and reason and anxious care” (130). The chaos the youth will know is in the structure of the poem itself. Then, at the end of the poem, people of reason “wish to lead others, when they should be led” (11). So, the happiness of youth is the start of the poem, and Urizen’s power is the meaning in the end. Considering this, the poem is a journey through the stages of innocence and experience. The plate is unique because an old man plays on his harp while the youth around him listen. However, there are two matters about the plate that signal experience. For one, there is the color black near the bottom of the right leg of the old man; secondly, the child in green behind the old man is turned away in apparent sadness, and a woman is comforting her. Surely, she has heard something from the Urizenic man that made her sad. Both the black color on the man and the sad girl indicate the knowledge of experience.

Blake's *Songs of Experience* is a demonstration of the condition of experience, and readers see that the untrusting father of experience is now an unavoidable part of life. Thus, the Urizenic stars have had their say in the world; the fallen world of the imagination must one day arise in its apocalypse, and Blake encourages this event in the form of revolution in his satirical masterpiece *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: Rintrah will roar into the world. In *Songs of Experience*, we have been given reasons for the future apocalypse. In the state of experience, the child knows poverty in "Holy Thursday"; the energy of God's creations is balanced by the unavoidable evil in the universe in "The Tyger." Then, the priesthood creates an unhappy condition for the child in "The Garden of Love." Love and energy contrast with hate and reason, and this contrast is a palpable subject for discussion in *The Marriage* too. Thus, Blake's *Experience* has prepared us for the dynamic world of contraries in *The Marriage*. Again, the formation of the priesthood will be an issue; then one will understand reasons for the creation of immorality itself. Lastly, the voices of children and adults will become strong foundations for the philosophies underlying the marriage of contraries. Innocence has entered experience, and the same unity will be discussed in Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The turbulent world of opposites will demonstrate undeniable meaning in both spiritual and human worlds.



## CHAPTER IV

Heaven and Hell, the Vital Regions of Contraries: Energy and Perception in Blake's

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

In Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he gives readers three separate documents: a philosophical manifesto about how contraries help individuals lead a better existence, a detailed, multileveled satire on conventional religion, and a prophecy in which the French Revolution (and revolution in general) signals apocalyptic, religious change. His beliefs on contrariety and his satire on conventional religion will be covered in this chapter, and both will be discussed further about the "Proverbs of Hell" and later plates in the next chapter. The concepts of revolution and apocalyptic change will be covered in this chapter, but they will appear further in the next (especially in the context of "A SONG OF LIBERTY"). And just as individuals' true spirit is often ignored or restrained by ruthless social powers in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, individuals' collective and personal spirit is also confined by institutional force and abstract reason (e.g., the orthodox religion of Emanuel Swedenborg) in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Blake believed life contains undeniable contraries that permeate the lives of individuals. Pleasure and pain, peace and war, reason and energy, reason and imagination, good and evil, and institutionalized religion and true spirit are some of the most topical oppositions in Blake's day. To begin to gather an understanding of Blake's intentions, one must analyze the title. Can heaven and hell be married? The title leads us

to believe that perhaps the oppositions mentioned will become singular identities, but this possibility points to the ironic dimension of Blake's manifesto. For there is no reconciliation, or married harmony, of contraries in Blake's universe, as Adam Max Cohen explains:

The title 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' is misleading because 'Marriage' suggests a harmonious reconciliation between the two perspectives.

Reconciliation is an anathema to Blake. . . . A more accurate—though less lyrical—Einsteinian revision of Blake's title would be 'The Coexistence of Equally Valid Opposing and Irreconcilable Reference Frames.' (165)

To know Blake's universe, one must know that identities hold their forms in mental cross fires, not in the states of equilibrium that Swedenborg emphasizes, for example. The push and pull of contraries in existence is forceful and energetic, yet the result of the interactions is a creative life force that progresses toward the spiritual.

These spiritual progressions then reveal an apocalypse in an arena of mental, imaginative life; the apocalypse is not found in an abstract heaven above and beyond human life, such as the static heaven that Swedenborg favors. (Blake targets Swedenborg throughout the *Marriage* as a superficial reasoner because he denies the energetic "hell" of interactive contraries.) Martin Nurmi discusses the divine that emerges when contraries interact continuously in humanity: "The progression in human life to which they [contraries] are essential is the progression of continued creativity; and if it goes anywhere it goes toward fuller realization of the divinity that is in humanity through

continued fruits of a life lived with the divine imagination, rather than nature, as the ground of being” (75). Therefore, to Blake, the purpose of life is the realization of the divine, and it is found in an imaginative life in which contraries interact. This understanding is the main idea of the *Marriage*, and it is apparent in Blake’s narrator as well as in the various plates. Blake’s satire is exemplified as we hear the words of the devil and understand “the proverbs” that mark Blake’s philosophical and energetic regions of hell. We will also understand Blake’s spiritual apocalypse as interpreted in his artwork for the plates.

The title page demonstrates Blake’s message of contrariety, especially a mingling of contraries in a realm of spirituality and corporeality. The title page indicates Blake’s message in a powerful fashion, given the various life forms and their positions, and the letters have a similar philosophical message. About two-thirds the way up the design, earth and hell—or, a heavenly hell—are separated by a line. About the figures above the line, Erdman says that “Two couples, the first strolling, the second kneeling and reclining on green . . . grass, are framed and separated by arching trees stripped of most of their branches. Above the strollers two birds fly under an enclosing branch held out by four . . . paired but leafless trees” (97). With the looping letters and trees (as well as the fairly serene couples), this portion of the design is calm; robust energy is missing. Yet, there is a hint of the robustness below the line and even afterwards in the poetry and prose of the manifesto itself. On the upper right half of the design, a large bird flies upward, and it is surrounded by five other birds, which is “a configuration often suggesting the five senses

escorted by the imagination. . .” (97). The energy shown on the upper half of the design then greatly escalates, for the contrary of robust infinity exists below the line. Joseph Viscomi discusses the infinitude that exists on the lower portion when he says “two-thirds of the design, including the words “heaven” and “hell,” occur just below the surface, a space defined and hidden by a thin line, which, if ‘melted’ away, would reveal the ‘infinite which was hid. . .’” (327). The “infinite” below the line is teeming with energetic figures and other forms that stand in contrast to the calmer figures above. The scene brims with the fiery energy of hell, yet it is joyous, even celebratory, considering Blake’s emphasis on the embraces that one might more appropriately imagine in heaven. Erdman discusses this scene as well as the ominous presence of the words “heaven” and “hell”: “Below the apparent surface is an abyss or another sky, teeming with naked children or couples, who dance, embrace, soar, in the warmth of flames that leap toward ‘and’ (which makes a scroll round itself and tapers off as if drawn by the bird just beyond) to join ‘HEAVEN’ and ‘HELL’—deadly block letters in themselves” (98). One would ordinarily not consider hell to be *joyous* or *celebratory*, yet Blake’s hell mocks and confounds the conventional definitions and conceptions of heaven and hell on the title page. From the flames on the left to the clouds on the right (and figures between), the real marriage is a free expression of energy. The two nude kissing figures reveal an apocalyptic base for the flying figures, an outpouring of spiritual warmth that stretches to the line toward material existence. And though the trees above are missing leaves and appear to lack some vitality in their physical plane, the roots still spread to the energetic

warmth of hell below. Thus, with the title page, Blake readies us for inevitable clashes of spirit, stasis and other contraries that envelop human existence.

In “The Argument,” Blake gives readers a glimpse of how a spiritual apocalypse will unfold on earth. This plate bespeaks the violent thunder of revolution (namely, considering historical significance, the French and American revolutions): “Rintrah roars and shakes his fires in the burden’d air; / Hungry clouds swag on the deep” (2.1-2).

Rintrah is the symbolic figure that ushers spiritual resurgence into a morally struggling world, and he is used only once again in the whole work—in the next-to-last line in plate two. It is important that Rintrah appears at this early point because the figure sets the stage for vigorous apocalyptic change essential to meaning throughout the *Marriage*.

Morton Paley explains the importance of this energetic figure: “Here is the first appearance of the figure who embodies wrath in Blake’s mythology, Rintrah—presumably in this context the prophetic wrath of the just man” (33). Readers feel the power of Rintrah’s influence. The “just man” has been bound by the chains of oppression and tyranny long enough; it is time for humanity to overcome massive injustice and fill inner life with spiritual comfort: The people’s strength must be renewed; their very existence must be humanely refurbished among mental and physical planes of pain.

Blake indicates the dreaded existence humanity endures yet seeks to overcome:

Once meek, and in a perilous path,

The just man kept his course along

The vale of death.

Roses are planted where thorns grow,

And on the barren heath

Sing the honey bees. (2.3-8)

Historically, peasants in France went without freedom and food for too long; the seeds of revolution spread, as Blake was well aware. Erdman discusses the historical significance when he says, “the meek peasant came out of the feudal shadow of death and was free to ‘woo in pleasant gardens’ and plant a fair harvest. . .” (190). In terms of apocalyptic change, the revolution tends to physical needs because the poor will eat; it is then spiritual in its engagement because the human soul will be extricated from the madness of political immorality. Also, in the crux of contrary interaction, the historical past will meet a replenished future—temporal contraries will mingle in an arena of apocalyptic emancipation. Mental and physical emptiness will become fruitfulness, and thus humankind, as Blake sees it in its oncoming stage, arises “On every cliff and tomb: / And on the bleached bones / Red clay brought forth” (2.11-13). Metaphorically, humankind is Adam returning to paradise. As Erdman explains, “As oppression gave way to peace, ‘the perilous path was planted,’ and man was reborn in Eden. . .” (191).

Readers now see that Blake favors revolution for the sake of apocalyptic change. However, as Erdman explains, Blake is aware of obstacles in the form of priests and politicians that “agitated for counterrevolution and plotted to drive the righteous into the wilderness once more” (191). In England and France, there existed a mounting fear of the

Jacobins and their revolutionary fervor, causing politicians and priests to abhor the revolutionary spirit, which is reflected in later lines of “THE ARGUMENT”:

Till the villain left the paths of ease,  
 To walk in perilous paths, and drive the just man into barren climes.  
 Now the sneaking serpent walks  
 In mild humility,  
 And the just man rages in the wilds  
 Where lions roam. (2.14-20)

The “villain” and “the sneaking serpent” are Blake’s words for the priests that plotted to suppress the “just man” and his wishes for freedom. To the priests, humanity must remain in bondage. Change is too violent and disruptive to the reasoned conditions of life; consequently, Blake abhors the priests who underhandedly disguise their anti-revolutionary stance with facades of “mild humility.” Similarly, as Blake writes in *America*, “What crawling villain preaches abstinence & wraps himself / In fat of lambs? No more I follow, no more obedience pay” (11.15-16). The hidden immorality of the priests (“crawling villain”) could not stop the revolutionary spirit that was manifest in the American Revolution; their priestly gowns hid their immorality, as they lived comfortably off the toil of impoverished masses. Still, in England and elsewhere, hypocritical priests roamed about as villains while “the just man” was forced to experience the status quo. This meant his accepting continuous poverty and political domination. Blake’s readers may also recall the evil of “God & his Priest & King / Who

make up a heaven of our misery” in “The Chimney Sweeper” from *Experience* (11-12). The same child that grew up to learn bitterness from his past years of chimney sweeping must then know physical and mental poverty in later years. Thus Blake’s “perilous paths” are still ignored by priests (and politicians). The apocalypse that seemed quite possible earlier in the poem now seems harder to unchain, or at least the prospect for embracing change is not as hopeful. Readers are given ample reason to feel dismay as they consider the repetition of the last two lines: “Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burden’d air; / Hungry clouds swag on the deep” (2.21-22). Rintrah’s energetic, fiery wrath has met its opposition, and the “just man” will have a harder time promulgating the figure’s optimism. Yet, at the end of this poem, we are also reminded of the vigorous oppositions that envelop life—in the case of plate two, the oppositions are priests and impoverished citizens, government and the revolutionary spirit. While the apocalypse portends emergence, the contraries permeate existence with their identities.

On the design a figure in a tree appears to hand something to a female figure who wraps her other arm around the same tree, and this exchange is crucial due to the verticality of the two figures on nearly the whole right side of the design. The clothes twisted around the figure in the tree appear snake-like, showing us and the human-looking figure that perhaps a devilish energy is involved in the exchange. Erdman comments on the snake-like figure: “The twisting garment of the figure in the tree suggests Satan in serpent form tempting Eve” (99). Given this possibility, we are directed to the serpent-like priests in the text in their disguises of “humility.” Thus, the design,



like the text, brings us to considerations of good and evil in the world of contraries, and we can consider the female and the other human figures on the bottom left of the design to be a part of the world that sooner or later will experience the deceptive power of evil. Of course, this possibility in Blake's design is a complex matter: Birds are flying between the lower sections of text, and, as we have explored, these sections give readers an idea of the purposes of a "sneaking serpent" and "villain." Their evilness contrasts with the hopeful presence of Blake's birds, showing us again that contraries will interact in the human world, and such interaction is vital in arenas of experience.

Readers of Blake's manifesto are now ready to experience the meaning of the next plate, which is an argument against those individuals—namely, Swedenborg—that oppose the essential energy of life. First Blake refers to Swedenborg's idea of the Last Judgment: "As a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent: the Eternal Hell revives. And lo! Swedenborg is the Angel sitting at the tomb: his writings are the linen clothes folded up. Now is the dominion of Edom, & the return of Adam into Paradise. . ." (3). The "thirty-three years" Blake mentions is a reference to the year 1757, and this year is significant to Blake for two reasons, as Paley explains:

The subtraction of 'thirty-three years' brings us back to 1757, the year in which, according to Emanuel Swedenborg, a Last Judgment took place in the spiritual realm. . . . The facts that Blake himself was born in the year 1757 and that 33 was the Christological age were not likely to have escaped the author, who had already shown himself capable of ironically mocking his own sense of self-importance in

the figure of Quid the Cynic in *An Island in the Moon* (1784). However, the brunt of the irony is reserved for Swedenborg. (33)

And indeed the target is Swedenborg, as is the case continuously in the *Marriage*. Blake refers to Swedenborg comically, as readers envision him sitting by the grave of Christ with Christ's death clothes "folded up." In other words, Christ's true spirit is gone, and it has left Swedenborg and his ideas about religion behind. In addition, to Blake Swedenborg is an "Angel," a comparison that becomes increasingly negative in his manifesto because an angel in his work is an abstract, passive reasoner that denies the beauty and power of energy Blake associates with hell. As we have already seen, Blake certainly prefers the powerful energy of hell, which is why the real apocalypse takes place when the "Eternal Hell revives" (3). Robert Rix discusses the passive heaven as opposed to the energetic hell Blake favors:

On Plate 3, Blake calls for Swedenborg's 'writings' to be 'folded up' and abandoned. . . . Blake announces that a 'new heaven is begun', which is clearly the antithesis of the 'Heaven' of law-abiding angels Swedenborg had described. Instead, Blake associates his 'new heaven' with the revival of 'the Eternal Hell', . . . the liberty of bodily, religious, and psychological energies. (122)

To Blake the energy of hell is infinite in its worth and power whereas the passive reason of Swedenborg's heaven indicates limitations (and limitation, to Blake, is a source of real evil). Blake wants energy to "revive" in apocalyptic fervor, not regress into finite passivity. We can understand more about Swedenborg's preference for angels on the

topic of humans' spiritual regeneration: "I could see from this, and from other similar things I have heard from angels, what great wisdom they have, and how great relatively is the ignorance of man, who hardly knows what regeneration is and does not know a single phase of the process while he is involved in it" (196). This passage shows a substantial reason why Blake satirizes Swedenborg—a human being is very capable of understanding the truly spiritual; humans are *not*, or should not be, ultimately severed from the eternal wisdom of spirit. The energy of the body and of the Eternal Hell is the wisdom Swedenborg denies with his constricting notions of angelic, heavenly superiority.

Now that Blake has effectively begun to satirize Swedenborg for his errors as well as to announce the coming Eternal Hell, he then defines the necessity of the contraries. To Blake the interaction of contraries marks a positive, productive way of life: "Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" (3). Life is filled with these opposites, and the realization of opposites supposes the existence of others. If there is hot, one must understand that there is cold. If Swedenborg believes that man is "limited" and has ignorance of God's knowledge, the very opposite is possible—man has knowledge of God. Furthermore, taking into account Blake's aforesaid prose, if something attracts, something may also repulse, such as human emotions of "Love" and "Hate." However, in Blake's universe, two contraries do not intermingle to make a third contrary, as in Jacob Boehme's philosophy. Martin Nurmi discusses how Boehme's and Blake's ideas are remotely similar regarding opposing forces, but their systems fundamentally differ:

‘attraction and repulsion’ as they are conceived in Boehme’s elaborately organized scheme are but distantly related to Blake’s contraries of reason and energy. They are generative principles whose chief function is to produce a third principle through an extremely elaborate dialectical synthesis. Nowhere in Blake’s use of the contraries does he provide for such a synthesis, except possibly in the very general one of the unity of Human life. And that is not really a Boehmian (or Hegelian) synthesis, because the contraries remain unchanged. (33)

For Blake, the vitality of life is crucial, and the contraries direct us to the vitality of each identity. Ultimately, love remains love, and hate remains hate; neither change into something different, erasing the primary substance that makes each contrary what it inherently is. However, reality for Blake is not dualistic either. About this point, Christopher Hobson explains that “the *Marriage* rejects neither the reality of the body (or matter) nor physical experience, but rather, mind-matter dualism. . . . Blake does not, however, collapse one term into the other (solipsism or materialism), but reduces the distinction as far as possible without eliminating it” (25).

Though one sees that Blake does not suppose that contraries unite to form a synthesis, one may see that his contraries do form a continuum. In this way Blake’s thought is very similar to the ideas of the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus. G. S. Kirk translates Heraclitus’ philosophical fragment “206”: “*Things taken together are whole and not whole, something which is being brought together and brought apart, which is in tune and out of tune; out of all things there comes a unity, and out of a unity all things*”

(191). Just as Blake understands that opposites retain their identities in plate three, Heraclitus emphasizes a similar principle in the aforementioned fragment. For Blake and Heraclitus, opposites keep their identities and even appear as *extremes* in their oppositional natures; then these opposites operate in a continuous mode of plurality. G. S. Kirk explains Heraclitus' fragment in terms of a continuum:

In 206 'things taken together' must be, primarily, opposites: what one takes together with night, for example, is day. (Here we may note that Heraclitus expresses what we should call 'quality' always in terms of simple extremes, which he can then classify as opposites; so that all change can thus be regarded as that between opposites.) Such "things taken together" are truly described in one sense as 'whole', that is, forming one continuum, or in another sense as 'not whole', that is, when acting as single components. (191-92)

Heraclitus' plurality demonstrates differences within the continuum. Then, for Blake, the same possibility is at hand: The matter of "progression" for Blake is really the manifestation of continuous plurality (but most definitely not a "synthesis" of opposites on a continuous basis).

In addition, about the idea of "attraction" and "repulsion," Blake did not believe in the science of Sir Isaac Newton (author of *Principia*) as the source of truth. Newton's science became increasingly important throughout the eighteenth century, yet Blake did not believe that reality should be structured around mathematical principles and rational analysis—in this way, spirit was left on the outside of the human world. Blake insisted

that the purpose of humankind was to realize higher spirit, not the categorical analyses and experimental science that excluded spirit. Stuart Peterfreund discusses how Blake and Newton differ:

Living in a Newtonian universe was, as Blake suggests, ‘heavy’ going—all matter, motion, and force, and little or no (en)lightening spirit—even for those who subscribed to the premises and explanations of Newtonianism. Moreover, the going got heavier as the century wore on. Newtonian explanations settled ‘issues’ in fields as apparently unrelated as history, physiology, and psychology with presumptive justification, as each discourse identified causes and effects and studied the relationship of the two. . . . (40)

To Blake, the precepts of science have dominated life to such a degree that reality was separated into fragmented bits—and for Blake human life should not be mired in fragmentation. In Blake’s world, there is certainly great value in particulars, and that value is denied if the particular is divorced from the whole. As Blake says later in the *Marriage* (and as we shall see in the subsequent chapter), the “Giants of this world” once were able to live freely and be creative, but the “chains” of abstract reason dominated mankind, causing individuals to withhold portions of imaginative spirit within themselves: “The Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity; but the chains are the cunning of weak and tame minds which have power to resist energy. . .” (16). For Blakean Giants, reason became an oppressive force: The overemphasized

standards of reason entered spheres of Newtonian science, orthodox religion, and monarchical government, and individuals were subdued and even tricked (“cunning”) by those who used reason in a controlling fashion.

Thus, Newton’s science did not function to facilitate imaginative life—it worked to categorize it, divide it formulaically, or slice it abstractly into a lesser human power. However, the individual could know a greater spiritual life again through imaginative freedom—the contraries must interact and be free from the dominating divisions of scientific principles espoused by Newton. In his painting “Newton,” Blake again points to the negativity of Newton’s mathematics associated with “Attraction and Repulsion” (4). Milton Klonsky discusses Newton’s presence in the painting:

The figure representing Newton is shown, in profile, sitting naked upon a rock thickly encrusted with barnacles and lichen at the bottom of the Sea of Time & Space. A polyp (symbolizing in Blake’s mythology the many-tentacled cancer of state religion and power politics) crawls behind his left foot. Self-absorbed, and with the catatonic fixity of ‘single vision,’ he is staring at a geometrical diagram inscribed upon a snail-like scroll before him, meanwhile holding in his left hand a pair of tiny Urizenic ‘Two Horn’d’ compasses.’ (62)

Thus, Urizenic evil emerges in “Time & Space,” and Newton’s science is its threatening deliverer. Furthermore, Ackroyd explains the presence of the diagram as well as the white light upon it:

White light, which is for Blake the image of the spirit, has become part of a mathematical equation; the diagram itself is an emblem of separation and division, which for Blake . . . are the origins of the great sin. It is the Ratio, the generalisation, the use of abstract reason, ‘Mathematic Proportion’ that is the negation of Living Proportion’. . . . (193)

Thus, while now we know the inherent value of Blake’s contraries, we also know more about the negations that threaten the interactive vitality of the contraries—the negations pertaining to abstract reason in Newton’s science.

One soon sees that the reductive manner of categorization and its denial of spirit lead one to consider the religious figures that place convenient labels on the contraries: “From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy” (3). After Blake denies the categorical analyses of Newtonian science, he satirizes the manner in which religious figures place labels on energy. To this set of categorizers, we must “obey” reason and denounce its energetic counterpart—we then realize that here Blake upholds energy in order to expose as wrongful the labeling pacifiers. Rix discusses how those who categorize the contraries in this light harm humankind: “According to Blake, religious moralisers have pacified humanity with their claims that ‘the passive that obeys reason’ is ‘Good’, whereas the ‘active’ that follows its natural ‘Energy’ is ‘calld Evil’” (118). Then, at the close of the plate, Blake gives readers a succinct statement that serves to mock the limiters: “Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell” (3). Thus, the plate ends with Blake’s succinct



statements on the negativity of reason—when humanity places undue preference on reason, both energy and spirit are denigrated. Scientific reasoners and the conventionally religious are both guilty of imposing the categories on existence that stifle the vital contraries. Humankind then suffers to understand God on a higher and higher plane.

On the design, we see a variety of colors, indicating an energetic interplay of contraries. At top, we see a figure stretched out in a joyous position among colorful flames, showing us that her existence is alive in the free-flowing, fiery contraries. Such a figure surely directs us to the possibility of an apocalypse through the vital recognition of contraries. At bottom, interestingly, we see a boy and girl kissing. But, Erdman discusses their unusual, meaningful positions: “Note the optical illusion of married perspectives of time and space: the legs insist that she is still, he is running, but the heads, arms, torsos that they are embracing. Again, a paradoxical emblem illuminates the paradoxical text, of marriage without restraint” (100). The meaning here is that the contrariety of spirit exists beyond the categorical constrictions of reason (for example, the abstract conceptions of time and space), showing us the multidimensionality of Blake’s idea of true spirit; in this instance, the realms of spirit are given free expression. Then we see the birth of Orc (fiery revolution) at left, demonstrating the necessity of revolution in Blake’s energetic hell. One must also consider that the design itself is antithetical to Swedenborg’s passive heaven which does not authenticate the essential energy of Blake’s hell. Blake’s readers envision a creative hell unleashed by the contraries. Thus, in this hellish arena of our contrary existence, we experience the creative imagination, or Los, in Blake’s mythology.

But it is also important to note that, in Blake's prelapsarian world, the creative imagination is Urthona. Damon defines Blake's idea of Urthona: "URTHONA ('earth owner') is the northern Zoa, the creative Imagination of the Individual" (426). In addition, Damon defines Los's division from Urthona: "However, in this world, Urthona is divided fourfold, and his separated faculties are active. Los is his Humanity. . ." (426).

On plate four Blake gives us the speech of a visionary devil who explains the mistakes that religious reasoners have made with their "Bibles or sacred codes" (4). Rix explains, "On the following Plate 4, moralistic attempts to demonise bodily energies are criticized" (118). Blake's perceptive devil states the following:

1. That man has two real existing principles: Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies. (4)

In the first sentence, Blake's devil explains that organized religion has erred in separating the body from the soul. In the second sentence, energy was thought to be only from the body, so it must have been evil. Subsequently, reason was thought to originate only from the Soul, or consciousness, so it was considered "Good." Lastly, in the third sentence, Blake implies that mankind will be punished in a sort of abstract hell if the devil's energy is followed. One must once again consider Swedenborg in these cases because he (like

the conventional religious figures Blake targets) emphasized the fear of eternal damnation for following bodily energies, as Rix discusses: “There is no doubt that Swedenborg’s moral codex of doctrines is targeted here, since the prophet stressed the need for the ‘fear of eternal Punishment’ as the only way one would abstain from following evil lusts. . .” (113-14). This list of “errors” shows readers that Blake does not approve of the dualistic mindset that underlies religious orthodoxy, and the abstract hell created by conventional religion is simply and flatly wrong. In fact, one may consider that Blake even playfully mocks religious orthodoxy with his concise, numbered statements. Fundamentally, error is error, and religious figures such as Swedenborg have been guilty of the errors.

Consequently, Blake’s devil corrects the mistakes of religious orthodoxy:

But the following Contraries to these are True:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call’d Body is a portion of Soul discern’d by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight. (4)

Considering sentence one, body and consciousness (soul) are not separate.<sup>1</sup> Also “the five Senses” are useful because they help individuals understand the “Body” and its desires; however, Blake’s devil again mocks individuals of his “age” who believe that the senses

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed understanding of Blake’s idea of the body-soul connection, readers should refer to the analyses of proverb 10 and plate 14 in chapter five, pages 130, 160, and 161.

are of primary importance in understanding reality. One must consider Lockean philosophy in this respect. Locke believed the mind understood reality from collections of sense impressions, but his philosophy is incomplete because it dismisses one's ability to perceive through the human imagination; to Blake the senses are important but restrictive as far as helping individuals understand the fullness of reality. In Blake's "THERE is NO NATURAL RELIGION," he expounds on the limitations of the senses in the last principle: "The desires and perceptions of man untaught by any thing but organs of sense, must be limited to objects of sense" (VI). In other words, if one uses only the senses in acts of understanding and not the powers of perception, only the "objects of sense" can be understood. As a result, a shallow comprehension of the world is inevitable—that part of the human being involving vital consciousness is left by the wayside, and the human being leads an incomplete existence. Considering the visionary devil's second sentence, "Energy" is the irremovable, essential substance of the complete body—the body includes body and soul. Blake even celebrates it here, for "it is the only life" (4). "Reason" operates as the contrary to energy, and it acts as a "bound" or "circumference" to it. To Blake, reason often has a negative, constricting effect, as David Stewart explains: "Here energy does not find its own limits but is suppressed and confined by reason. When this happens, energy or desire becomes, as Blake writes, 'passive,' until it 'obeys Reason'. . . . Such desire is described as a 'shadow of desire' . . . , for it is no longer true desire but is dominated by reason" (51). Thus, reason becomes Urizenic, chaining energy with a sort of Newtonian, diagrammatic "circumference."

Meanwhile, considering the third sentence of the contraries of truth, Blake's visionary devil knows the "Eternal Delight" of energy; it is infinite and holy. One may then believe that it is of god. So, as stated above, its presence is to be celebrated, not surrounded or restricted. Yet one should also realize that reason itself is not always *bad*, for it has its function as a Blakean contrary. But, again, in the case of its potential to limit as suggested on this plate, it can become a negative, Urizenic presence, just as the religious pacifiers (like Swedenborg) have used it when constricting energy in favor of a passive, abstract heaven. We must remember that for Blake, "the Eternal Hell revives" (3).

The illustration enhances the messages of the text: The design is filled with various human figures that allow us to see the function of energy and reason. As Erdman accurately explains, "Flanking 'The voice of the Devil' are three cloaked angelic trumpeters (formerly emblems of biblical prophecy and the poetic muse) who announce the Devil's corrigenda list" (101). Then, beside the word "Energies," human figures are seen behind an animal kicking its back legs, indicating the energy of the animal ahead of the humans. Similarly, below the "inlets of Soul," an animal is walking ahead of a human, leading him with its energy. Certainly, we see the power of energy in these instances. Then, as Erdman correctly explains again, "Between answers 2 and 3 we see a procession of six figures moving forward, on their own but exhorted by Reason following them. . . ." (101). Here we see reason as a contrary subject, influencing the energetic figures with its inherent contrariness. The fact that there are many figures in a row shows that energy and reason exist in individuals and in groups. Then, at the bottom of the plate,

a woman holds an infant stretching out its arms; beside them is a red sun. Across from the baby and mother is a man reaching out in bright red flames. The three figures taken together do not demonstrate peaceful demeanors, and the man in flames is manacled at the right ankle, as if chained by reason among the flames of fiery desire. This section of the design shows the forceful, even violent struggle of contraries in human existence. Interestingly, this section of the design is positioned under the final, third correction given by the devil, perhaps demonstrating that contraries pervade life in pain as well as in pleasure. After all, as we have seen, the errors of the “sacred codes” have caused hardship for individuals who followed the “delight” of energy. One may again consider the priests who have turned a deaf ear to impoverished, physically and mentally abused chimney sweepers; and one may also think of the “villainous” priests who were disgusted by the revolutionary energies of the destitute masses.

On plates five and six, Blake’s devil continues his infernal, unconventional discussions on reason and energy. He begins by explaining how reason becomes an abusive force to those people who restrict their “desire”: “Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or Reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling. / And being restrain’d, it by degrees becomes passive, till it is only the shadow of desire” (5). Given that Blake’s devil calls for the free expression of energy, individuals show “weakness” when they do not allow their vital energy its free reign within themselves. And apocalyptic change inside individuals and in groups—for example, revolutionary fervor—cannot occur when energy is left on a leash. Then, while

people manacle themselves with their own weakness, the waiting “restrainer” overcomes individuals, ruling them with oppressive leadership. Erdman explains dominating, uncaring reason: “The moment it exerts a will of its own and attempts to restrain desire, it turns into that negative and unnecessary Reason which enforces obedience with dungeons, armies and priestcraft and which Blake refers to as the ‘restrainer’ which usurps the place of desire and ‘governs the unwilling’” (179). Thus, passivity is dangerous to individuals—the restrainers will be ready to subjugate them with unjust laws and actions (“dungeons”). The devil then discusses figures that represent restrainers as well as their contrary, energetic types. Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost*, for example, gives us restraint in the figure of a conventional Christ: “the Governor or Reason is call’d Messiah” (5). Subsequently, the figure that the orthodox Christ “governs” is Satan, who is presented as a hero by our visionary devil: “And the original Archangel, or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is call’d the Devil or Satan, and his children are call’d Sin & Death” (5). Here Blake’s devil gives us an ironic inversion of sorts: Whereas Christ is the “Governor,” the “Devil or Satan” is the true leader, or the “possessor” of the “heavenly host”—Satan is the aforesaid ruler because of his *energy*; his presence is the revolutionary spirit repressed by Reason, or Milton’s conventional “Messiah.” Then, of course, our prophetic devil makes a logical claim, saying Satan’s energetic offspring are “Sin & Death,” two figures who exist by name and symbol in Milton’s poem and who show us here that religious orthodoxy labels Satan’s energies as evil (when in fact they are positive and necessary). Lastly, near the end of the plate, the devil proclaims that “in

the Book of Job, Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan" (5). In other words, Satan is portrayed in the Book of Job as the selfsame negative reasoner as "Milton's Messiah" in *Paradise Lost*, not the energetic power of Milton's Satan. Jeremy Tambling explains Milton's Satan in relation to Job's Satan and god: "Though *Paradise Lost* included Satan's energy, Job's Satan is a rationalist as is Job's God" (153). Thus far, this plate exemplifies the energy of Satan and the *heavenly* restraint of an orthodox Messiah in order to show a history of their influences, especially as this history pertains to literature (*Paradise Lost* and the *Marriage* itself) and the Bible. Blake's readers also gain an understanding of the devil's perspective of reason and energy through his knowledgeable "voice."

The devil's infernal perspectives continue when he discusses further events involving the Messiah in relation to reason and energy. The devil explains the outcome of reason's fall: "It indeed appear'd to Reason as if desire was cast out, but the devil's account is, that the Messiah fell, & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss" (5-6). The devil believes that Christ fell because he—and symbolically, all orthodox religious figures—no longer possessed the energy that marked the substance of the real heaven; the devil, of course, possesses every bit of the bounty of vital energy and, therefore, must not have fallen. Cohen states the devil's perspective: "Here Christ, associated with Reason, suggests that Satan was cast out of Heaven into the abyss. Satan, associated with Desire, believes that it was the Messiah who fell" (165). Thus, if we believe Blake's devil is the symbolic representation of energy, the devil is rich in spirit whereas Christ (conventional religion) is poor in it. In other words, we may approach this



matter aphoristically (since we are headed in the direction of Blake's "proverbs"): Hell is fertile with desire; heaven is sterile with its reason. Hoping to regain some of the fertile spirit of hell's heaven, Christ robbed the "abyss," the region of the devil's energetic riches. Then the devil makes the sterility of conventional religion even more apparent: "This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the Comforter, or Desire, that Reason may have ideas to build on, the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than [the Devil] he who dwells in flaming fire" (6). Religious figures realize that the abstractions of reason and religion need the "flaming" hell of energy to make new "ideas," for energy is a truly creative source. Ideas spring from energy. Thus, the real Jehovah of the Gospel is Satan, who lives in the warm, "comfortable" fires of creative energy, or spirit. At this point, Blake's readers are given a rather powerful statement from the devil: "Know that after Christ's death, he became Jehovah" (6). Again, it bears repeating that the spiritual devil has become Jehovah. Then the devil confirms his beliefs by referring to Milton once again: "But in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost, vacuum!" (6). The "Father" becomes a Urizenic tyrant; Christ becomes a "ratio," or an abstract reasoner; and the "Holy-ghost" becomes emptiness, or meaningless. Blake's devil then compliments Milton for championing infernal energy: "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" (6). In his infernal wisdom, the devil knows that Milton understands

the difference between the passivity of “Angels” and the fiery spirit of “Devils”; therefore, Blake’s devil firmly believes Milton is a worthy poet.

The design for plate five demonstrates the contraries of energy and reason as they exist in the text. We see a man, chariot wheel, a horse and a sword falling down separately. Erdman explains the identities of reason and energy in the design: “Reason must have forgotten to let the horses do the pulling; a sword is not a bridle. But energy must have accepted restraint. . .” (102). The chaos of the image indicates the interplay of fiery energy, and the man falls directly toward hell’s energy with outstretched, even nervous, arms and hands. But energy was given order that clearly did exist between horse, chariot, and the rider. The flames of energy are ready to accept the horse and human divided from each other. The division itself also points us to the fall of Christ as well as the restraints once placed on the energetic devil. Interestingly, one sees a Newtonian science in the design too, as Erdman suggests: “Under ‘Paradise Lost’ . . . a reclining figure is instructed by a man with compasses, his back to a serpent headed away from them” (103). This man shows us that reasoned abstractions in scientific endeavors drive away energy (the serpent), creating a divisive, even formulaic world. Under the words “flaming fire,” we see another human figure reaching upwards, approaching the energy of the devil’s fiery hell; one might consider someone reaching up to the conventional heaven in this manner, but the reaching figure here is more relevant to the attractive energy of the devil’s heavenly hell. Thus, in this design, we apprehend more about the devil’s energy and the restrictions of reason.

In Blake's first "A MEMORABLE FANCY," we have another demonic speaker who traverses hell and makes important discoveries along the way. The speaker describes his journey: "As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity, I collected some of their proverbs. . ." (6). The Genius is the vast creative energy of the hellish region, and the proverbs are products of these regions. The "torment" of the "Angels" is simply inevitable—with their orthodox views of religion and life, they could not possibly appreciate the Genius of these infernal regions. Peterfreund explains why the Angels must be horrified: "The implication is that 'Genius,' 'good' immanence, or internal creative fire that distinguishes the individual is perceived by the orthodox who deny its existence as 'evil' immanence—'torment' and 'insanity' indicating demonic possession" (47). Yet, while the angels are terrified, the fiery knowledge exists with the proverbs nevertheless, and its existence will "shew the nature of Infernal wisdom better than any description of buildings or garments" (6). The ecstatic speaker realizes that he has come across wisdom that transcends ordinary thoughts or "descriptions" of ordinary objects ("buildings," "garments"). Nelson Hilton explains the transcendent worth of the proverbs:

As one might expect, the 'Proverbs of Hell' run contrary to the generic notion of pithy, folk-authored formations of conventional prudence and morality. Blake's aphoristic genius creates what might be thought of as an interrelated collection of 'koans'—those Zen word-viruses or instructional devices designed to cut through muddled perceptions of everyday language. (203)

Blake's readers will see that his proverbs are filled with unique perceptions of the everyday world. In addition, given that "sayings in a nation mark its character," we should expect to be given an understanding of the particular identities and contraries that outline existence.

Our demon-speaker then returns home, but the trip is not what one would expect, or the means of travel is unusual, for he returned "on the abyss of the five senses. . ." (6). Perhaps it is unusual that the speaker travels "on" the five senses, for the energetic hell is a place of imaginative vitality. However, here Blake shows us a combination of the senses and the imagination, as Viscomi explains:

Blake uses the preposition 'on' instead of 'to', suggesting that the 'abyss' is a vehicle of transport and not the thing to which he returns. By coming home 'on' the body, not 'to', and by identifying the body in this way, (sic) Blake conflates the sensually material with the creative. His return 'home' actually criticizes Swedenborg. (37-38)

Blake realizes the essential interconnectedness of body and spirit; he does not wish to leave the findings of either one behind as Swedenborg would. As we have seen on plate three, Swedenborg dismisses the fiery vitality of the "Eternal Hell" and favors a passive abstract heaven. His heaven is not Blake's heaven in the regions of "Genius" on this plate. On this demon's trip home, he indeed returns with the joys of infernal knowledge intact. Furthermore, on the speaker's return trip, he

saw a mighty Devil  
folded in black clouds, hovering on the sides of the rock, with corroding  
fires he wrote the following sentence now perceived by the minds  
of men, & read by them on earth:

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,

Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five? (6-7)

For one, this devil by the 'rock' with "corroding fires" is a reference to Blake's process of relief etching, in which he etches on a copper plate. Thus, one may argue that Blake refers to himself as the perceptive devil-speaker returning home with infernal knowledge. Blake again mocks Christian orthodoxy with his two closing lines, showing us that individuals may not comprehend the infernal knowledge of the "Bird" when they live under the confines of the senses and deny the important powers of perception that also exist. Secondly, the speaker reads the closing question on a rock's "sides," indicating the knowledgeable depths of seen and unseen worlds, as Jennifer Davis Michael explains:

The devil's question . . . challenges one's ability to discern truth from external appearances. Yet it is read on the surface of a 'face,' the only face the physical world presents to us. It is on that surface, the border between visible and invisible, that Blake inscribes a palimpsest that exposes rather than conceals what is inside: a palimpsest of transparency. (159)

We see that meaning for Blake travels through layers of perceptions, and the devil-speaker is aware that the senses will close off the deeper layers if life is lived only

according to the five senses. Yet, given that we know the perceptive capabilities of humans run deeply, we may see at least the “palimpsests” as glimpses of meaning beyond ordinary understanding, just as the proverbs will soon show us. On the top of the design, we see a figure falling into the flames of hell as well as two other figures dancing along the flames—an instance of joy in this eternal hell of fiery life. At the bottom of the design, we see the jagged letters of the word “how,” which, Erdman says, indicates Blake’s “etching process he must come home to. . .” (103). The word itself also starts the next to last line, demonstrating the essential power of perception.

Now we are prepared to enter Blake’s perceptive, proverbial world as well as the other areas of hell in which, for one, Blake speaks with prophets (for example, Isaiah and Ezekiel). Yet we have visited Blake’s hell once, and we have experienced the vital existence of the contraries. Blake’s manifesto and satire have shown us the value of energy and its oft-restricting and opposing force—reason. Conventional religion uses (and abuses) reason to maintain its presence, and thus individuals suffer from the excesses of resulting immorality. Similarly, we know that Newtonian science has a tendency to categorize the world with experimentation and abstract, reasoned principles. Just as spirit is sliced out of conventional religion as explained, the same spiritual distress may occur in science. In addition, Blake’s devil-speakers enter his manifesto and demonstrate how the contraries vitally and positively interact so that we may experience realms of spirit. Thus, the possibility of apocalypse first given to us by Rintrah exists. Along with the devils, we travel to hell and return with the knowledge that spirit is in and

beyond our understanding. So now we shall exit this portion of the *Marriage*, yet we will keep it firmly in mind: The exciting regions of energy, perception, and satire continue in Blake's language and art.

## CHAPTER V

Blake's Fiery Depths: Understanding the Contraries, Energy and the Imagination in  
*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

Blake's proverbs in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* extend his satire against artificial, restrictive reasoners. When Swedenborg is cast as the "Angel" who denies the joyous freedom of the human spirit, Blake uses him as an example of a reasoner who stakes a claim to the supposed morality of conventional religion. Blake's devil-speakers traverse regions of hell, discovering the joys of energy, the contraries, and the unchained imagination. Throughout the "Proverbs of Hell" and the remaining "Memorable Fancies," reason is shown to dominate existence while the energetic, fiery realms of spirit in Blake's hell are presented as the essential and beneficial contraries in opposition to the confines of reason (and those who represent such confines). In the journey through hell, readers are asked to contemplate the birth of the "Priesthood." Blake converses with Isaiah and Ezekiel and shows his "voice of honest indignation. . ." (12). The eternal purposes of "the printing house" in these infernal regions are also impugned by Blake's satire. This journey to hell contains caves, monkeys, baboons and valuable symbolic references to Jesus, Aristotle, Paracelsus, Boehme, Dante and Shakespeare. The subjects and objects to follow in Blake's infernal regions will point us to the value of a contrary existence. Furthermore, Blake's art continues to demonstrate the palpable, necessary presence of his energetic hell, revealing an eternal spiritual splendor that transcends conventional religion. Characteristic of all Blake's work, the *Marriage* ends on a note of



fiery freedom in its “SONG OF LIBERTY.” By the end of Blake’s manifesto, readers are encouraged to acknowledge the necessity of unleashing revolutionary spirit; the energetic desire of hell must free humanity from the tyranny of empire. In Blake’s imaginative work (beginning with the proverbs), readers are absorbed by the wisdom of hell, not the facile, reasoned trappings of the conventional Swedenborgian heaven. In the remaining plates, Blake advances his major themes: the holiness of life as it pertains to exuberant energy, the unchained imagination, and the contraries that are necessary for a fulfilling and evolving human existence; readers of the *Marriage* are enjoined to keep a perceptive eye on a spiritual heaven by embracing Blake’s infernal presences.

While Blake’s proverbs illustrate the prophetic wisdom of his symbolic hell, they also satirize the biblical proverbs that were popular in his times and earlier for their intellectual appeal. As John Villalobos explains,

The ‘Proverbs of Hell,’ a crucial section of the *Marriage*, have been read as an attack on the ‘received wisdom’ of the age, a criticism of facile intellectuality. . . .

In fact, Blake’s ‘Proverbs of Hell’ should be categorized as wisdom literature, or rather as a critique and parody of proverbial wisdom, a biblical genre that came under close scrutiny in the years following the Puritan Interregnum. (246-47)

The biblical proverbs published in the literature of Blake’s age were supposed to show the benefits of reason, especially if those benefits were used to bring readers to salvation. Blake satirized this means of salvation (as well as the books that published Old Testament verses), and he favored his version of the truly divine heaven that existed in

his metaphorical hell. Furthermore, perceiving spirit beyond conventional norms and one-dimensional thinking challenges the individual yet is necessary to understanding Blake's proverbs, as Dan Miller explains: "Blake's 'Proverbs of Hell' are a sustained exercise in the discipline of cutting away received wisdom in all its dualist and monist inflections, and of enforcing a difficult, always paradoxical mode of perception" (506). Blake's idea of a true heaven (in all his hellish wisdom) consists of "portions" of spiritual infinity that can be classified under the following three categories: energy, the contraries, and the imagination. These categories of proverbs will reveal morality and divine super-realities.

Throughout Blake's "Proverbs of Hell," he recognizes energy as a valuable substance within human beings, and he calls for individuals to unchain their energies. Robert Rix discusses Blake's purpose concerning the freedom of energy: "Among the 72 Proverbs recorded on plates 7-10, there are several provocative expressions of antinomian liberties, encouraging us to free our energies" (117). The fourth proverb is one such expression, reminding us of the necessity of energy by satirizing individuals who are without it: "Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity" (7.4). This proverb in particular is directed at an unmarried, wealthy, aged woman who is unable ("Incapacity") to understand or use her sexual energy—if a human being can be considered sexually *stale*, then this old woman would be even if there is a certain rudeness to considering a polite old woman in such a manner. (The point is that she is without energy, and we should see that energy should exist and flourish within the human body.) Here one recalls "modest Dame Lurch" from "The Little Vagabond," who presents herself as one who

does not appreciate energy, especially given that her lack of energy within the cold church contrasts so mightily with the youthful energy of the child-vagabonds around her. Blake's next proverb directs us to the evils of restraining one's energy: "He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence" (7.5). This proverb shows that certain forces exist--religious, governmental, or "mind-forg'd"—that serve to stifle one's energy, and the fear that keeps the energy restrained is an obstacle in itself. Algernon Charles Swinburne explains the restrictive harm created within and outside the individual: "The fear which restrains and the faith which refuses were things as ignoble as the hypocrisy which assumes or the humility which resigns" (207). In addition, Blake designates "pestilence" as the word for the immorality perpetuated when desire (sexual energy) is restrained. Another powerful expression about energy is given in the following proverb: "He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star" (7.9). In other words, one who does not show the energetic "light"—which exists, incidentally, here in Blake's fiery, divine hell—cannot reach the height and power of a "star." It is worth noting that in Blake's symbolism, stars often indicate reason negatively; however, in this proverb, Blake gives it a positive connotation, showing that the substance of energy within must *appear* in order to know something that outwardly glows, such as a star. Thus, as the aforementioned proverbs demonstrate, energy must be unleashed so that individuals will have fuller lives which enrich humanity.

Blake then reminds us that energy is a productive force for individuals and humanity alike, and one's use of energy points to realms of timeless, blissful divinity.

Blake suggests it is necessary for the individual to aspire toward the divine, given the temporal and supernatural connection between personal and spiritual realms: “Eternity is in love with the productions of time” (7.10). It is in the best interest of the individual to strive energetically for the divine because it exists to help people achieve magnificent creations. Saree Makdisi comments on this proverb and its spiritual import:

If the commodity and the sovereign subject and the mode of production with which they came into the world, and hence the psychosocial terrain to which they correspond, are regulated by clock time, the persistence of the moment suggests not simply another way of counting time, but rather other ways of imagining the interaction and mutual constitution of subjects and objects, selves and others, bodies and souls, heavens and hells. (156-57)

The energetic “persistence” within our earthly time periods is crucial for perceiving the inextricable relationship of nature (of which we are a part) to what lies beyond nature (toward which we should strive). As we now know, body and soul are interconnected in Blake’s universe, and that portion which we call body is energetically interwoven with “soul,” or the individual’s consciousness which is divinely connected to all other forms of the divine. Thus divine “creations” are, in part, human creations—and vice versa. We must not waste our time, nor must we allow emotional obstacles to overcome our paths to the divine, as Blake implies: “The busy bee has no time for sorrow” (7.11).

Seeing that “wisdom” is supernatural and human, we must notice this proverb: “The hours of folly are measur’d by the clock; but of wisdom, no clock can measure”

(7.12). About this proverb, Adam Max Cohen says: “Here folly is temporal while true knowledge, like a space trip at the speed of light, lies beyond time’s grasp” (166). Chronological time is meaningless when it comes to the recognition of spiritual realms, for the substance of human creation transcends “the clock.” Human motivation in acts of creation appear as “folly,” but we know otherwise about those who energetically strive beyond manmade boundaries of minutes and “hours.” Blake urges the individual to “Bring out number, weight & measure in a year of dearth” (7.14). Individual creations can be found (and made) where spaces and times of production seem unlikely, and the energy of one’s folly is significant in processes of creation. Blake even recognizes (and lauds) an element of positive divine energy in revenge: “A dead body revenges not injuries” (7.16). We are “dead” in body and soul when we do not appreciate the energy connected with “revenge.” Swinburne comments on the positive spiritual power associated with revenge when he says, “there is a vehemence of faith in divine wrath, in the excellence of righteous anger and revenge, to be outdone by no prophet or Puritan” (208). With this “revenge” proverb, one is reminded of Rintrah, who “roars & shakes his fires in the burden’d air. . .” (2.1). The energy of Rintrah’s revolutionary “fires” and the energy which proceeds from individuals must exist in humanity, and its existence portends the spiritual riches of life throughout domains of time and space.

Blake gives additional proverbs about restrained energy and its “wrath” in plates eight and nine. For example, Blake implies that society’s conventional codes often restrain an individual’s desire: “Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks

of Religion” (8.21). “Laws” and “Prisons” exist to restrict an individual’s energy, and immorality exists as a product of such restriction. Nature expresses energy, so its restraint causes distortion and perversity, caused and contained by laws and penalized in prisons. Subsequently, when sexual energy is restrained by conventional religion, “Brothels” abound as a needed commercial outlet. The hardened, restrictive “bricks” of conventional religion *cause* the individual to become perverse, and the foundation for perversity perpetuates the immorality of brothels. The priest also delivers normative codes of restrictive religion in Blake’s world of Experience: “Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds, / And binding with briars, my joys & desires” (“The Garden of Love,” 11-12). Blake’s satire tells us the priest is actually (and quite thoroughly) immoral, one who corrupts unadulterated, energetic “joys,” as imaged in the following proverb: “As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys” (9.55). Here again, the priest does not encourage energetic happiness. Also, to Blake, the sexual energy of the “goat” should not be considered immoral (though the animal often symbolizes lasciviousness), for it is a source of the divine: “The lust of the goat is the bounty of God” (8.23). According to E. D. Hirsch, energy (sexual and otherwise) and life (liveliness) must not be denied: “The basis of the natural order (reality) is 'life' or 'energy,' a vital force which is the divine substance. All expressions of 'life'—strong emotion, sexual drive, strength, instinctive desires—are therefore holy and their repression evil. . .” (62).

In fact, the presence of sexual energy is not only necessary, but it is a form of

beauty as well: “The nakedness of woman is the work of God” (8.25). The presence of divine energy in Blake’s world is shown in animals and humans. And, this next proverb even sounds like a commandment—which is eerily, inversely suitable when we recall that Blake satirizes Urizenic priests who impose the Decalogue on individuals in “The Garden of Love”—given the message that sexual energy is thoroughly positive: “The soul of sweet delight can never be defil’d” (9.53). In a convincing manner, this proverb shows us that “sweet” energy is a perpetual force within the individual, just as god’s presence continues within each person; energy equals god, and vice versa. Then Blake tests what appear to be dangerous, immoral waters (the outright sin of killing another human being) when he gives us “murder” and “desire” in the following proverb: “Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires” (10.67). But, in no way here does Blake endorse infanticide. He does grab our attention with rather shocking language, but he means that individuals eliminate the vital life of energy within themselves when they restrain their “desires.” In other words, the extreme situation (“sooner murder an infant”) serves to highlight his message that individuals perpetuate (“nurse”) negative restraint. Villalobos explains what Blake does and does not intend with this proverb: “Certainly Blake’s meaning here . . . is that one should closely scrutinize the motivation for emotional restraint. Never would Blake countenance killing a defenseless child, but prophecy—and Blake indicates that the ‘proverbs of Hell’ are a form of prophecy—is predicated upon powerful human emotional response” (257). The biblical proverbs had a similar direct appeal, and one may argue that Blake wished to capture the same directness

in his proverbs in order to exact flames of truth. In fact, the proverbs taken as a whole strongly emphasize the goodness and essentiality of unfettered energy.

Just as Blake is an advocate of liberated energy, he goes on to warn against the confines of reason. Untamed energy of the divine is apparent in the lion: “The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God” (8.24). The substance of raw emotion (“wrath”) is an undeniable part of God even if the rough appearance of wrath is uncomfortable and strains against socially accepted reason. Blake considers wrath “god’s wisdom,” which shows that its energy is every bit as valuable as the tamed presence of reason. Blake champions energy throughout the *Marriage*, and fiery emotion must be freed in order to penetrate Urizen’s corrupt influence in cities and in nations, in individuals’ lives and in conventional religion. Instinctively, an animal releases the feeling of wrath just as Rintrah announces the energetic spirit of revolution in a historical age dominated by reason. So, we see that ferocious energy can be a powerful, meaningful force for individuals, as the following proverb suggests: “The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction” (9.44). Here, one must take note of the contrast between “tygers” and “horses”:

Philosophically, the tiger’s wrath aligns with the lion’s wrath in the proverb discussed previously, and again Blake encourages us to follow our passionate emotions instead of the subdued, reasoning horses, such as the Houyhnhnms in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*.

Hatsuko Niimi discusses Blake’s message about energetic emotion and tamed reason:

“He [Blake] is saying afresh that to obey the rules and instructions of tamed creatures is wrong. He is insisting also on the greater value of ‘Violent Passions’. . . . He thinks them



more important than instruction which seeks to train through docile imitation, since the passions spring from instinctive wisdom” (17). Thus, the wisdom of Blake’s lion and tiger is praiseworthy in its divinity.

In addition, we see the worth of the wrathful tiger in Blake’s poem “The Tyger”: “Tyger, Tyger, burning bright, / In the forests of the night; / What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?” (1-4). The wrath of the tiger is a powerful display of energy, and again we see that god “frames” it. Subsequently, another proverb demonstrates that Blake idealizes the beauty of energy: “Exuberance is beauty” (10.64). The “exuberant” demonstration of energetic force is portrayed positively; we behold the wildness of this force just as we perceive the ferocity of the tiger’s energy. *Failing* to utilize the power of energy is debilitating and dull, as we see in this proverb: “Expect poison from the standing water” (9.45). When individuals allow reason to dominate their energies, their lives become as stagnant and “defil’d” as “standing water.” So, in light of these observations, energy must be championed for its spiritual power and beauty. Although Blake does not renounce reason altogether, he underscores energy’s value in the proverbs discussed—and elsewhere in the *Marriage*—in order to show that life’s passionate current, a vital impulse, has been undervalued and even subjugated by external forces such as the French and English monarchs and codified religion. Energy has an important place within the body and soul of human beings, and reason has its functioning place within individuals as well. Blake’s championing of energy helps us understand his insistence on the need of maintaining a consciousness of continuous opposition to ensure

the health of all life.

Many of Blake's proverbs show the efficacy of contrary human existence, and the unconventional wisdom he arrives at often seems paradoxical. However, his basis of truth rests on contrary identities, as manifested in this proverb: "In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy" (7.1). Nature's seasons are opposites, yet there is a specific productivity in the time period of each season, or each contrary, fundamentally speaking. In addition, one contrary can influence another even though their identities are antithetical—the "harvest" would not occur without "seed time." Realizing the presence of both, one may "enjoy" time to relax, for example, in "winter." Alternately, unconventional pathways also lead to wisdom: "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" (7.3). Experiencing too much and going too far—as opposed to too little and not far enough, respectively—brings one to the golden doorsteps of "wisdom," even if conventional society or normative codes say otherwise. As Dan Miller accurately explains, the less-traveled, unconventional paths of human thought may lead to substantial meaning: "Contrary knowledge hits its mark by indirection, by going too far, by what would be conventionally described as error" (506). Regular perceptions of reality are layered outside the richer, exotic displays of meaning, as the following proverb indicates: "Improve[me]nt makes strait roads; but the crooked roads without improvement are roads of Genius" (10.66). We must take note of the "[me]" in "Improve[me]nt": Blake wants us to *better* ourselves—intellectually, morally—by allowing our bodies and souls to experience different "roads," or avenues, of mental

“Genius.” Genius is discovered in zigzagging patterns. Because Blake opposes Newton’s rigid, heavily reasoned universe, he follows laws and principles that do not allow mental deviation and contrariety, as Cohen discusses:

The daunting perspectival restlessness which Blake displays in *The Marriage* is a corrective for Newton’s static, immutable perspectival stability. The atoms in Newton’s ether are fixed, immutable, and unchangeable. The mathematical laws which govern their motion are eternal and incontrovertible. Even space and time are fixed and eternal. Newton tries to eliminate all contradiction, complexity, mutability, contingency and temporality from the universe. Blake, on the other hand, is the poet of idiosyncrasy. (164)

Blake’s eternity is personally expansive; it is not mentally closed and mathematically abstract, such as Newton’s universe of abstract principles. Thus, Blake’s psychological universe is rooted in perceptive “crookedness,” and its recognition denies the hegemony of codes, laws, customs, and conventionality.

However, while Blake emphasizes the crucial worth of unconventionality, indirection, and excess in contrary existence, he also understands that contraries simply exist in a world—or, in a lively ensemble—of contrariety; value judgments and the influence of one contrary on another are sometimes unnecessary, as this proverb shows: “The cistern contains: the fountain overflows” (8.35). If one considers the physical structure of the cistern an emblem of reason, one sees its natural function is to “contain”; subsequently, if one considers the contrary “fountain” an emblem of energy, one

understands that its natural function is to come forth, or “overflow.” The cistern is connected to the fountain because it holds the energy that thrusts up from the fountain. It is an unavoidable relationship of contraries that can be observed for its simple and essential presence. Certainly, as can be seen elsewhere in the *Marriage*—and as is evident in later plates—reason becomes negative when its influence on energy stifles or restricts it unnecessarily. But, again, the border of reason around energy exists in a condition of naturalness: “Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy” (4). Then the last proverb shows the emphatic, yet necessary recognition of contraries: “Enough! or Too much” (10.70). The word “Enough” may be understood to be reasonable, yet natural limitation, so that the excesses of “Too much” are contrary--as the conjunction “or” shows—to the finitude indicated by “Enough.”

We continue to see the basic existence of contraries in the proverbs about animals, plants, the elements and natural objects. For example, specific animals have contrary purposes: “The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit watch the roots; the lion, the tyger, the horse, the elephant, watch the fruits” (8.34). In this aphorism we see the capabilities of small animals as well as the natural powers of the contrary larger animals. The “rat,” “mouse,” “fox” and “rabbit” will scamper along the ground and see the roots because of their small stature; one might even picture the rat or mouse burrowing tunnels under and between roots of tomato plants, for example, beneath a layer of mulch. The rabbit acts according to its specific nature, feeding on succulent leaves of cultivated bean plants.

(Human gardeners may act according to their contrary particular natures and curse the rabbits in a playful fashion.) Meanwhile, the “lion,” “tyger,” “horse,” and “elephant” act according to their contrary natures, standing beside, or even above, trees that bear fruit. Larger animals such as these may snatch the fruits from trees because their natural height gives them the capability. However, the “fruits” in this aphorism have multiple meanings. Tigers and lions are predatory, so their fruits may be zebras which must be hunted and killed. And contrarily, naturally, the larger animals may also hunt and kill *smaller* animals. The bestial violence of hunting such fruits bespeaks a natural, particular, Darwinian order that Alfred Lord Tennyson describes in *In Memoriam*. Even if animals are violent during *the kill*, they are especially, uniquely themselves in the process. Tennyson indicates the contrary existence of the Christian “God” (and God’s love) and violent “Nature”:

Who trusted God was love indeed  
 And love Creation’s final law—  
 Tho’ Nature, red in tooth and claw  
 With ravine, shriek’d against his creed-- . . . (56.13-16).

The “creed” of orthodox religion runs contrary to the harsh environs of nature which are often bloody (“Red,” “tooth,” “claw”), yet both religion and nature maintain presence nevertheless even if nature “shriek’d” wildly against religion in a display of wild, untamed contrariety. (One might picture a piranha ripping pieces of flesh from a struggling fish while in a city thousands of miles away, a human prays in a church to the

god of conventional religion.)

Thus, Blake emphasizes that animals must express their particular identities: “The eagle never lost so much time, as when he submitted to learn of the crow” (8.39). The eagle has its identity, and so does the crow. It would be an error for an animal to assume the identity of another animal; contrary states of being must remain contrary in order to solidify the uniqueness of their individualism, and such contrary existences mark and stabilize their *raison d’etre*. Saree Makdisi comments on the problem of assuming a different identity when he discusses

the discourse of infinite minute particularity which defies not merely instruction but any form of mimesis, any form of simple replication or duplication, and hence by extension any form of production-as-reproduction. And since, after all, we never see in Blake images of crows teaching crows, or eagles teaching eagles, it would seem that here all forms of mimesis turn out to be mistaken almost by definition. (179)

A specific variety must not only exist, but it must also not betray or abandon its own form of existence: “The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow; nor the lion, the horse, how he shall take his prey” (9.50). Inherently, particular identities are particular because of their contrariety. Or, to be an apple tree is to be an apple tree, not a beech; to be a lion is to be a lion, not a horse (especially here, given that the lion’s wrathful energy is not the instructive, passive reason of the Swiftian horse). As Makdisi confirms, “each particular form maintains its own particularity. . .” (179). Particularity is the natural

order: “As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt to the contemptible” (10.62). Though Blake may be considered a writer of contrariety, energy, and the imagination, he is not a writer of absurdity: A “bird” does not fly in the sea, and “the contemptible” does not fail to exercise “contempt.”

Blake insists upon challenging any easy acceptance of contraries: “the cut worm forgives the plow” (7.6). A part of life’s inherent struggle is the acceptance of the conflict itself even if it is rather drastic. The “cut worm” is somehow aware that its being divided is acceptable, or even forgivable; symbolically, this proverb applies to human life when people understand contrariety and exercise forgiveness. Miller suggests that this proverb shows that one contrary (“worm”) is inclined to forgive its contrary: “The worm who cuts the plant and is cut by the plow, acting according to its nature in both the conflict by which it lives and that in which it dies, ‘forgives’ its contrary” (508). This proverb shows that life’s undeniable troubles often border on seeming morbidity or cruelty. Yet Blake’s idea of contrariety should lead to life’s larger arenas of truth. Because Blake asserts that life is comprised of contrary truth, he laments generality and upholds particularity in his world of art, as apparent in his “Annotations to the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds”: “To Generalize is to be an Idiot. (sic) To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit—General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess [*As do Fools that adore Things & ?ideas x x x of General Knowledge*]” (641). In artistic spheres as well as in the material world, particularities indicate more about life underlying apparent surfaces of “General Knowledges,” as seen in Blake’s proverbs and elsewhere. The contraries exist

in spheres of particulars deserving of observation; “General Knowledge” is outside the more meaningful substances of contrary particularities.

Blake also reacted against Edmund Burke, who revered Reynolds for his generalizing system of art:

‘He was a great generalizer, and was fond of reducing every thing to one system, more perhaps than the variety of principles which operate in the human mind and in every human work, will properly endure. But this disposition to abstractions, to generalizing and classification, is the great glory of the human mind. . .’ (xcviii).

To Blake, the “glory” associated with mind is associated with the driving power of the imagination, not the abstract limits of reason. Both Burke and Reynolds upheld as righteous the mental boundaries of classification that Blake despised. Interestingly, Burke supported the French monarch, not the contrary presence of the Jacobins who wanted revolution; yet, in the figure of Rintrah, Blake adamantly supported the contrary force of revolution in order to bring forth revolutionary change on personal and societal levels. Additionally, plate 11 shows vividly that any abstract system of classification applies only to the restrictive, reasoning individuals who labeled religion and enforced it on others and who failed to understand their own spirituality in their “human breast.” Blake’s statement about generality directs us to his indignant opposition to the rigid forms of reasoned abstraction that deny and subjugate the essential contraries of life.

In order to demonstrate further the particular nature of contrariety, Blake includes several proverbs of contrary extremes and reversals. Although some contraries are



antithetical, they nonetheless suggest substantial meanings and even similarities of human emotion. For example, emotion possesses fertile power: “Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth” (8.29). Upon first consideration, one who experiences joy *and* sorrow knows inwardly that the two states of emotion are quite different—in fact, opposites. However, Blake shows us that “joys” fill the individual with happiness, and sorrow—joy’s contrary—may be just as strong in its unhappiness. Thus, in the emotive force of both states, we have a likeness that cannot be denied. S. Foster Damon confirms that “Extremes resemble each other” (320). Thus, as Blake writes, “Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps” (8.26) This proverb contains reversals in which sad and happy conditions are relative to each other, showcasing the identity of each contrary in the process. And the combined antithetical statements instruct us to understand the resulting emotions: The identity of sorrow is, in the extreme, like its contrary, laughter; likewise, an “excess” of joy inevitably “weeps.” Dan Miller discusses the idea of similarity in terms of the contraries in Blake’s proverbs: “To each its own, but also, under contrariety, to each its other. . .” (508). And then, Blake shows us contrariety within each of these statements: “Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!” (9.60). It is possible that a particular state of joy does not contain laughter, and the same can be said about sorrows. Upon experiencing ordinary perception, the unique identity of each contrary appears contradictory. But this proverb shows that joy does not always *need* laughter, nor must sorrows always “weep.” Sorrow might not make a recognizable sound; as S. Foster Damon says, “. . . deep emotions are silent” (322). With Blake, in sum, the nature of

contraries is to be contrary, and the possible extremes of contrary conditions show us unusual realities which carry us into worlds of undiscovered meaning in a uniquely and difficult Blakean universe.

In several other proverbs, Blake emphasizes the value of the individual's imagination. One's ability to imagine is the work of eternity, and anything is possible in the sphere of human life when one utilizes the imagination. Therefore, when Blake gives us words about the imagination, he gives us something within and beyond human existence. Blake claims the expansive spiritual worth of the imagination in *Jerusalem*:

I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination, Imagination, the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow, & in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more. (77)

To Blake the human imagination is both a sanctuary and an afterlife, and it defines an individual's existence with its inherently sacred presence. In all human things, one may perceive with its power. And one does not see the fullness of human life when one does not exercise the imagination. Cohen explains that individuals are blameworthy when they abridge their imaginative vision: "Individuals who observe with limited fields of spiritual or physical view have only themselves to blame for their myopia" (167). So, with the use of the imagination, Blake asserts a kind of understanding beyond the ordinary: "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees" (7.8). The "fool" is truly not a fool at all;

Blake's fool is imaginative and sees more than the usual. Or, this imaginative individual perceives more than the one who merely reasons, for the simple reasoner is limited.

Interestingly, the "wise man" may not be as "all-seeing" in his wisdom as he could be, for there are worlds of possibilities that the foolish, imaginative individual can perceive.

Given that there are no limits to the imagination, the potential for imaginative power is also limitless: "No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings" (7.15). Unique personhood, a powerful sense of identity, is the very expression of one's capacity to imagine.

As Swinburne confirms, the complexity of imagining is a grand uniqueness:

"The variety and audacity of thoughts and words are incomparable: not less so their fervour and beauty" (205). In the act of imagining, there is no limit: *Height* is not a

problem. Thus, body and mind—to Blake, both comprise the inner spectrum of

imaginative life—should "wing" forward and upward and passionately as well. Thus, as

Blake advocates so enthusiastically, we humans shall be joyous fools at every foolish, imaginative turn and opportunity.

The human imagination is a transcendent power in Blake's universe. The power to imagine fills time and space and beyond; its enduring appeal resonates with truth. The following proverb shows us the all-encompassing force of the human imagination: "What is now proved was once only imagined" (8.33). The world is undeniably loaded with facts and principles—the terms of Newtonian science, for instance—yet individuals first understood such concrete information through the use of the imagination. In fact, regarding this proverb, Damon confirms the value of the imagination even as truth itself:

“This axiom leads us unsuspectingly toward the doctrine that Imagination is Truth”

(320). Humans *invest* the world not only with mathematical principles, but with the supreme substance of the imagination. Thus, to best understand Blake, it is productive to consider (and remember) all portions of the universe as they are actually perceived—truth resides in the act of perception instead of in the categories of information that have been labeled after the act. The categorizing afterbirth of the imagination *becomes* science. The following proverb suggests the value of one “thought,” which is capable of entering the expansive power of truth: “One thought fills immensity” (8.36). Here we must consider what “immensity” is. Stuart Peterfreund explains the penetrative power of human consciousness when he writes that, for Blake, “the void of Newtonian absolute space does not exist for the subject who ‘humanizes’ its ‘otherness’” (46). Then the perceiving subject may travel to even further dimensions, for the human imagination may capture, or discover, anything that even remotely crosses human consciousness: “Every thing possible to be believ’d is an image of truth” (8.38). In other words, an individual may become an explorer, like Christopher Columbus, though now an explorer of the mind. If this proverb may be considered a motto, one must be mentally adventurous because the imagination is capable of making significant discoveries. Subsequent to these mental discoveries, the barriers between the perceiving subject and the object disappear. Northrop Frye explains the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived: “Mental experience is a union of a perceiving subject and a perceived object; it is something in which the barrier between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ dissolves. But the power to unite comes

from the subject” (85). The human capacity to create identifies the imagination as a force which underlies all knowledge of existence.

In addition, Blake gives us proverbs which further underscore the positive human imagination: “When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius; lift up thy head!” (9.54). For Blake, the eagle is a symbol of bold genius, as Damon says: “The EAGLE, which was reputed to be able to gaze unblinded on the sun, is the symbol of genius” (112). The ability to travel to unknown heights and *imagine* is the mark of a courageous individual. Blake wants us to reach for undiscovered mental depths and heights, for it is necessary to “lift up thy head!” and soar like an eagle as well as plummet to the depths of hell. We must pay careful attention to the act of creation itself—it is sublime and encourages one’s inner being. One’s exercising the imagination bespeaks a vitality which transcends the mundane world. The vigorous, brave act of creation transcends human time: “To create a little flower is the labour of ages” (9.56). Acts of creation are not mired in one era—hence, the overemphasized principles of Newtonian science are increasingly understood as primitive and limited. The capability to create transcends time because of its inherent, essential sublimity. And we see that the mental act of creation underlies the creation itself; the created “flower”—a product of the inventive act—evinces the source of the blissful, ageless labour. In this fashion individuals move their inventive, uninhibited spirit through each age, knowing the power to create resides within them. Conversely and negatively, individuals see that nature is moribund without creative acts, or without the imagination: “Where man is not, nature is barren” (10.68).

Metonymically, “man” is the active, fertile imagination. Where the individual’s imagination does not exist, a creation such as a “little flower” does not come into the world. When the imaginative act is absent, the world at large is “barren,” meaningless, devoid of life. Peterfreund explains the essentiality of mental life when he says that “living nature depends on the prior existence of the living and (pro)creative mind” (46). To Blake, the mind brings life to nature, and such vital mental activity is necessary from age to age, in social and personal perpetuity.

On the design for plate 10, Blake sums up the overall meaning of his proverbs. For one, a tiny infant form and a man with a rope are placed just below and slightly to the right of the word “infant” from the proverb, “Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires” (10.67). Then above and to the right of the word “barren,” Blake positions floating, dancing figures. David Erdman describes each of these appearances: “Below ‘murder an infant’ . . . a vegetable infant is approached by a man holding out a rope for strangling; behind him a human infant soars upward. And dancing beside ‘barren,’ to show how life is ‘where man is,’ are body and soul together again, with, perhaps, a lapwing and gull” (107). The man by the “vegetable infant” shows us the negative tendency to throttle human desire, or energy. Meanwhile, a necessary contrary to the “murder” of energy is given with the dancing figures and birds, which reveal the freedom of energy. The dancing figures especially show us the interplay of energies that further indicate the divine potential of humanity. In addition, at the bottom of the plate, under the final proverb, we see a kneeling, winged devil pointing out information to a

human hunched over and writing, and the devil gives his knowledge from the scroll he holds over his knees. The man at right appears just as absorbed as the devil and even leans to his right like him. Erdman describes these crucial figures:

The instructing Devil, reaching the end of his (snake-like) scroll of proverbs . . . , points one bat-like wing (almost occulted by his head) to 'Enough!' and the other to 'Too much.' The apprentice at his left may be Blake himself (cross-legged) who has just finished writing down these Proverbs, and whose profile matches the Devil's, sharing concern for the Theotormon-like angel's progress. (107)

Given that the Devil-teacher's wings point to the last proverb, they demonstrate for us the contrary presences of "Enough!" and "Too much," which instruct the angel-writer at left to understand the scrolled proverbs for their hellish wisdom. The writer imitating the devil (or Blake, as Erdman says) has achieved an understanding of the devil's proverbial wisdom, so we see why he is compelled to gaze beyond the devil at the figure still writing. And, given that Blake emphasizes imaginative discovery in certain proverbs, we see the necessity of diligent, enthusiastic study and careful instruction which mark this portion of the design.

After the proverbs Blake examines the philosophical and moral origins of conventional religion, or, fundamentally, how "Priesthood" was formed from human thought. For Blake, imaginative acts became abstract, reasoned classifications:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of

woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their  
enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country,  
placing it under its mental deity. (11)

In antiquity the human imagination “adorned” (decorated) the world—its material objects and people of various “nations”—with the “names” of gods. God did not initiate the naming of individuals or objects, as Cohen explains: “In Blake’s view God does not create human beings in his own image. Instead the human imagination acts on the world to bring gods into existence. Gods are neither more nor less than human thought experiments” (167). And in this mental naming process, humanity—individuals and entire societies—became maligned: The collective imaginative spirit became dominated and restricted by the slavish “system” of newfound religion. Blake proclaims this type of conventional, conceived religion: “Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood. . .” (11). The original intent to imagine and create is not immoral; however, the intentions of some individuals to systematize people’s imaginative creations did become immoral—the substantial freedom to imagine was lost or even stolen, and to Blake this process was tragic.

Andrew Priestman discusses how specific individuals restricted the freedom of individuals’ imaginations: “All religions are simply extensions of primitive animism, which resulted from the free play of the poetic imagination over the natural and then the



political worlds, until usurped by a power-seeking 'priesthood' with a vested interest in denying the purely human, psychological origin of 'all deities'" (92). Upon requiring portions of imaginative spirit to become forms of religion, the priesthood enforced conformity on everyone else, and individuals were left to "choose" a specified form of religion that was deemed acceptable, or, as Blake says, "Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things" (11). Then in the face of all conformity and restriction, the divinity of the individual was forgotten: "Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast" (11). Since the origins of the "priesthood," the individual's sacred imagination has been subjugated and replaced by false gods. Plate 11 closes on a note of sadness for the subjugation from which humanity will continue to suffer until individuals reascend from the fragmented, fallen world through renewed imaginative agency.

The illustration shows the same sort of sadness and loss, directing us to the divinity inherent in the "human breast" as well as the corrupt influence of Urizenic presences. As Erdman explains, a truly religious human reaches toward the sky at the left of the design: "On the left we see the divine human form of the sun or (also) of a daisy or sunflower rising over the horizon, or from the earth to greet the sun. . ." (108). The human imagination acts according to its divinity by stretching out its arms, rising out of the tiny area of land. The human imagination wants to be free of remote oppression. On the same island, we see a nude woman who is part water, part human; she appears to comfort a small child (innocence). Her figure is positive: Like the stretched figure at left

and the child she comforts, she is a fresh, imaginative creation. However, there are crucial contraries in this design which underscore significant meaning. For one, a morbid, Urizenic face appears on a tree trunk between the human creations, demonstrating the intrusion of conventional religion and conformity. Subsequently, at the bottom right of the design, just above the last line of the text (“All deities reside”), we see kneeling figures grouped together while a headless figure with a sword approaches them—here we can imagine that this single figure represents an immoral priest who approaches them with a sword, and the priest may use it to hurt them if they do not follow his commands. Thus, conventional religion could be dangerous: The sword could cut the divine substance of an individual’s imagination. Another Urizenic figure is shown at the bottom of the design: A man with a beard appears out of a cloud, pointing toward a drifting human. Erdman discusses the man’s Urizenic presence and the drifting human on this portion of the design: “At page bottom we see the illusion that the (sic) deity is a bearded man in a cloud whose outstretched finger creates man. Our thin modern Adam . . . drifts away from the cloudy God he has abstracted, forgetting where ‘all deities reside’ . . .” (109). At the top of this design, we see more of the splendor of the divine world with the exception of the Urizenic face on the trunk; at bottom, we see the darkened world of immorality associated with conventional religion.

In plates 12-13, we envision essential “indignation” when Blake dines with Isaiah and Ezekiel, two biblical prophets. Blake implies in the opening sentences of the plate that Isaiah and Ezekiel are important because of the imaginative possibility that they had

spoken with God: “The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly assert that God spoke to them; and whether they did not think at the time that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition” (12). Blake wonders if the two prophets truly spoke with God, and his opening narrative even challenges them about the matter. But the dinner conversation suggests that readers should pay attention to the prophets’ words because of positive spiritual implications, for they understand the truly divine source, and they do not betray it by worshipping false standards of religion. Kevin Fischer explains the value of this conversation: “Blake suggests a sense of active companionship with the biblical prophets, writing that ‘Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me,’ presenting an imaginative conversation that might nourish the spiritual understanding. . . . The ‘dinner’ suggests the spiritual and intellectual communion through which the liberty of divinity is realized” (46). During the dinner, Blake and his readers witness the responses of the prophets, who boldly claim how they have come to possess knowledge of the divine, for the “infinite” does exist in the material world, despite the possibility of adversarial disbelief. In his response to Blake, Isaiah is confident and self-assured about the real presence of divinity: “Isaiah answer’d: ‘I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover’d the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded, & remain confirm’d, that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences, but wrote’” (12). Isaiah knows that he has found the “infinite” within the human body, not outside of it in some “finite,” rational understanding accepted by others.

Thus, Isaiah establishes himself as a true prophet because he knows the real voice of eternity, and his writing about it (in the form of “indignation”) is relative to the confirmed “voice of God.” Joseph Viscomi discusses both prophets’ crucial spiritual understanding and its vital confirmation within the human body: “The ancient poets and the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel exemplify the visionary mind. The latter identify themselves as ‘poets’, affirm the Poetic Genius as an internal voice and the voice of God, refute external instruction, and make no distinction between vision and writing, or between spirit and sensual body” (39). Any “consequences” resulting from the divine understanding are inconsequential because of the spirit’s pervasive reality; undeniably, the divine understanding is all-important. Then Isaiah explains his confidence that the force driven by spirit exists within him and has existed in others, yet not everyone is capable of such divine confirmation. At this point Blake asks Isaiah a question about this matter, and Isaiah responds: “Then I asked: ‘does a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make it so?’ He replied: ‘All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm perswasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm perswasion of any thing’” (12). Thus, many individuals are removed from divine understanding, and the result is their shallow acceptance of the standards of conventional religion.

Ezekiel then explains that accepted codes of conventional religion appeared in Israel, so the “Poetic Genius” was present yet corrupted there too. Ezekiel describes how Israel came to codify the Poetic Genius, negating other people’s genius in the process:

we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the first

principle and all the others merely derivative, which was the cause of our despising the Priests & Philosophers of other countries, and prophecying that all Gods would at last be proved to originate in ours & to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius; it was this that our great poet King David desired so fervently & invokes so pathetic'ly, saying by this he conquers enemies & governs kingdoms; and we so loved our God, that we cursed in his name all the surrounding nations . . . . (12-13)

Israel began to believe that its version of the Poetic Genius was the only one worthy of being worshipped, and everyone else's—all peoples', "Priests & Philosophers"—versions of Genius "would at last be subject to the jews. . ." (13). All peoples were pushed to "worship the jews' god" (13). "King David" felt that the act of dominating and ruling other peoples was necessary in order to cultivate Israel's derivative belief in the Poetic Genius. We have seen that "All deities reside in the human breast" (11), but the dominating reasoners such as King David who portioned the Poetic Genius have moved themselves away from its divine truth. And in the act of enforcing codes of religion from Genius's fragment, others "forgot" their knowledge of Genius and allowed themselves to be dominated. Hence it is no wonder that people have conditioned themselves to enforce their own subjugation—they have allowed the stagnation of their own inherent spirituality. One may argue that the effect of this negative personal forgetting finds its way into a future city in the form of social corruption, as Blake exemplifies in "London": "In every voice: in every ban, / The mind-forg'd manacles I hear" (7-8). In other words, it

is possible that “the voice of honest indignation” is withheld personally due to the inner subjugation of Genius (12). And, given the overall condition of brainwashing, we must remember a crucial aspect of Genius: It is *collective* in a given society, city or nation. Makdisi details the inherent, collective (and potentially fragmented) nature of Genius:

For what Blake calls ‘poetic genius’ can be understood . . . only as a collective process. If language and art here offer lines of flight away from the apparent certainty of knowledge grounded in the viewing subject, they do so by allowing an approximation of the ‘poetic genius,’ whose true ‘subject-position’ could be occupied only by that infinite being in common which Blake calls God. (241)

Individuals understand God for themselves according to their requisite knowledge of the Poetic Genius, and the fragmentation of Genius from their inner beings becomes the ultimate separation from the substance of God. Powers that “govern” nations and codify religion have initiated the separation and perpetuate it.

After finishing dinner with the prophets, Blake inquires further about the infinite. For instance, he wishes to know how Isaiah’s knowledge of eternal truth may be communicated: “After dinner I ask’d Isaiah to favour the world with his lost works; he said none of equal value was lost. Ezekiel said the same of his” (13). Significantly, the prophetic vision of both prophets has been maintained; a confirmed “perswasion” of spiritual truth has existed atemporally. As Fischer suggests about the phrase “of equal value,” “Spiritual genius persists throughout the centuries” (47). Any “works” which contain such genius will always exist because they are spiritually indestructible;

similarly, genius is “equal” because of its spiritual endurance. Thus, genius (and the works containing it) will be accessible to the human world in some manner despite the restrictive artifice of conventional religion and its principles. Subsequently, the infinite may be demonstrated in the human world in rather unusual ways. For example, Isaiah makes an example of his bizarre actions and those of Diogenes: “I also asked Isaiah what made him go naked and barefoot three years? he answer’d: ‘the same that made our friend Diogenes, the Grecian’” (13). In actuality, Diogenes’ moving about the world unclothed and “barefoot” reveals hidden spiritual truth, as David Mazella explains:

Blake’s ‘Diogenes the Grecian’ (interestingly, not a ‘cynic’) has become fully emblematic of self-denial, moral integrity, and political independence once again, representing in this instance not so much a philosophic as a prophetic stance. As a prophet, Blake’s Diogenes is willing to undergo significant amounts of shame and self-abasement in order to raise other men into a perception of the infinite. (118)

Diogenes, Isaiah, and Ezekiel encourage the recognition of spiritual perception even if their actions display something else. Then one must note the principles of the Greek Cynics and Diogenes, as Ted Honderich explains:

‘Cynic’ once meant ‘one who lives a dog’s life: shamelessly, and without any settled home.’ Now, drawing on an anecdote of Diogenes’ searching in daylight with a lantern for a genuinely ‘just’ man, cynics despise all moral or altruistic claims. . . . But the major explanation lies in the natural assumption that those who despise *our* values must despise all values. Cynics, like early Christians,

were reckoned misanthropes because they preached against class division, greed, and enmity, and showed their own vulgarity by not being as ashamed as others thought they should be of their lack of honour. (174)

Thus, given the Cynics' denial of accepted values, one must consider that Blake reaffirms, in similar fashion, his own indignation against normalizing reason and conventional religion.

Then Ezekiel's seemingly grotesque actions uphold the infinite, as Blake discovers: "I then asked Ezekiel why he eat dung, & lay so long on his right & left side? he answer'd, 'the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite: this the North American tribes practice, & is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease or gratification?'" (13). The "North American tribes" and Ezekiel all engage in acts designed to help others understand infinity, just as Diogenes and Isaiah undergo acts that only appear shameful in the material world; the prophets and tribes act with spiritual honesty. Concerning Ezekiel's purpose, Blake refers to a passage from the King James Bible: "And thou shalt eat it [bread] as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight" (Ezek. 4.12). As the Bible's and Blake's Ezekiel suggest, individuals of the material world would rather experience "ease or gratification," and such people deny their "genius or conscience" and do not see the tremendous value of eternal splendor.

About the illustration for plate 13, we must pay careful attention to the appearance of babies and banners. Erdman discusses their appearance in the design: "In line 1 two



infants signal the word ‘be,’ and when the word recurs, its rising stroke is given a looping banner” (110). The babies over “be” show us that genius has a meeting point, even if that point does not turn out positively for humanity, which is the case given the words’ meaning. And the banner attached to the next “be” shows us a change from baby to object, just as humanity begins to standardize genius. Interestingly, on a banner at the bottom of the design, Ezekiel lies comfortably on his side, just below the words “present ease and gratification” (13). Erdman notes that Ezekiel’s “evident comfort seems to belie his spoken denial of “present ease”” (110). One may argue that Ezekiel’s comfort here spotlights those individuals who accept material “gratification” and provide a unique contrast to Ezekiel’s recognition of spiritual infinity. Meanwhile, the banner loops back toward the word “gratification,” which likewise shows the contrast between the acceptance of material “ease” and spiritual otherness.

Blake pursues his devilish, contrary wisdom in the next plate, commenting on the necessity of an apocalypse and satirizing the workings of conventional religion, as we see in his opening statement: “The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell” (14). The simple fact that he knows of the apocalypse from his regions of hell shows us the substance of his devilish voice, as Nicholas Marsh explains: “The passage begins with an allusion to the ‘end of the world’, the Apocalypse. Blake cheekily tells us that he has heard news of this from ‘Hell,’ which continues the ironic inversion of the whole work. We understand that Blake is putting forth an anti-Church view in his ironic ‘devilish’ persona” (98). Blake’s

satire even escalates when he discusses the removal of the “cherub” in order to bring forth the apocalypse: “For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life; and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite and corrupt” (14). The cherub symbolizes the abstract reasoners who prevent the energy of true religion from surfacing; here we can consider Swedenborg as one such reasoner. Conventional religion has stifled the infinite, and a powerful fire (“consumed”) is needed for religious restoration within and for individuals. Damon also discusses the reasoning cherub as a negative presence:

A Cherub is a spirit of knowledge (as opposed to love), whose symbol is the Eye. Cherubim are inferior to the Seraphim (love), whose symbol is the Wing. This cherub, then, is Reason, with the flaming sword of Prohibition, who drove man from Eden. (Blake never uses the word Cherub in a good sense.) (323)

As long as the “creation” continues on the path of dominating reason, individuals will not become “holy.” Most importantly, individuals will not live the holy existence awaiting them after the apocalypse when Swedenborg’s false, abstract notions of spirituality have been removed.

Further into the plate, Blake tells us how we may discover more of the “infinite” in the human body and soul, which are not separate but spiritually connected within one’s being; he explains “the printing method” (in actuality, his own process of relief-etching) as a symbolic means for knowing eternity within the individual: “But first the notion that man has a body distinct from the soul is to be expunged; this I shall do by printing in the

infernal method, by corrosives, which in hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid" (14). Just as one realizes the infinite exists within oneself in palimpsests--layered glimpses of eternity, so the printing method, for Blake, allows him to use "corrosives" to "melt" the copper plate and arrive at an additional face of spiritual splendor. Steve Vine discusses how Blake's printing method serves as a metaphor of an ongoing process of internal spiritual discovery:

Blake's use of the present continuous form—'printing,' 'melting,' 'displaying'—insists grammatically on the revelation of infinitude as an activity rather than an end. The infinite is never finally revealed, but is always about to be revealed, is always being revealed. The infinite is always in the process of (its) revelation, for Blake's corrosives designate a process rather than a product, a 'displaying' rather than a display. The infinite resides in the 'melting away' of the material, but this process is internal to the material itself. The material is not so much sublimated as the sublime is installed in the material. (242)

Blake arrives at eternal presence through corrosives in his printing method, yet the presence of the eternal is perpetual; the display is not a final result but an indication that an additional spiritual presence is inherent in the whole "displaying" process. Basically, the presence of spirit within the human body and soul is never-ending, just as the printing method reveals spiritual continuation. The printing *process* reveals more about inner spirit than the products at which one arrives. Tristanne J. Connolly discusses this matter of spirit in terms of a sick textual body and the "salutary and medicinal corrosives":

He uses ‘corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal’: this is a kill-or-cure method which promises to treat the ailing body of the text by skinning it with a ‘medicinal’ acid treatment. In promising to expunge the notion that there is a body distinct from the soul, it is as though Blake hopes to reveal the subtle knot which binds the two; or, to go so deep beneath the surface as to find the eternal body beneath the material one. (33)

Thus, Blake’s etching process uncovers the spiritual substance of infinite being as well as the necessity of his energetic, “medicinal,” “corrosive” hell. The fires used to burn away impurities on the copper plate are the fires of energy in the human body that reveal the infinite within one’s being.

Then Blake states that individuals may have limited “doors” and “caverns” within themselves: individuals fail to perceive eternity as well as they could. Thus, Blake claims that the perceiving individual needs to be opened, or “cleansed”: “if the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite” (14). For Blake, the means of opening one’s mental pathways are through the infernal printing method, as Viscomi explains: “The ‘infernal method,’ or its manifestation, the illuminated book, here the symbol of original art, is the cleansing agent. The relation between illuminated plate and mind is thus causal as well as analogous, with the former the key to opening the latter” (41). In Blake’s hellish regions, we find the substances that penetrate the individual’s mind, bringing it closer to the eternity it is capable of knowing. Blake’s “doors” are then open to the energetic, imaginative world of the devil: “For

Blake, the devil—in the form of Blake and the ‘infernal method’—opens the door, and the open door reveals the devil, for it opens to hell, to desire, energy and creativity, and therein lies Christ” (42). But, these eternal discoveries remain closed doors when individuals live mostly according to their five senses. The senses are a needed part of human life, but, as Blake believes, there should be “an improvement of sensual enjoyment” (14). Blake laments the overreliance of the senses in the last line of the plate: “For man has closed himself up, till he sees things through narrow chinks of his cavern” (14). Here the senses are the “narrow chinks.” And here we may recall Plato’s allegory of the cave: One may see the faint shadows from the distant light against the cave’s wall, but that small amount of light is all one sees; real sight is limited because one does not face the light.

Thus, Blake believes we may open ourselves to greater spiritual vision by allowing the imagination to combine with the five senses, just as he uses the corrosives (or, perception) to open layers of spiritual meaning in the process of relief etching. Eynel Wardi examines the fruitful, combined power of Blake’s infernal method, the senses, and imaginative life:

The narrator’s proposed method establishes a contiguity between the text, the body and the imagination—a de-limitation that enlarges their common space and allows an unobstructed circulation of creative energy between them. At once metaphorically and metonymically related, text and imagination both emerge as indistinguishable forms of embodied spirit, or spiritual bodies, whose sensory

chinks and metal surfaces are cleansed by the same purgatory re-creative fire that reveals their underlying infinity. (262)

Creative energy is most possible when one's imaginative life and bodily senses combine, and Blake's infernal method is an artistic, symbolic means of activating this joined force; subsequently, eternity is understood. On the design, a woman hovers over a gray, male body, and they are both in flames, telling us that imaginative spirit must awaken from the body. Connolly discusses the spiritual significance: "These figures epitomize the process of revelation through cleansing with 'salutary and medicinal' corrosives; they also illustrate the identity of Blake's plates as living things" (16). Also, the woman in this design could be a negative reasoning presence (a covering cherub) because she is blindfolded; therefore, she may prevent the male from having bodily and imaginative life, which would account for his deathly color and stillness.

In plate 15 Blake tells us about the "Printing house" and a categorized process therein of making a book about spiritual eternity: "I was in a Printing house in Hell & saw the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation" (15). In the first room of Hell's Printing house, Blake gives us a "Dragon-Man" who removes garbage while other dragons clean the cave: "In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a cave's mouth; within, a number of dragons were hollowing the cave" (15). This refuse can be perceived as the unneeded material on the copper plate (as well as anything in the human body that blocks the recognition of spirit). Visconti discusses the Dragon-Man's function here: "The dragon's activity is not mere

house-cleaning, for it refers to preparing the plate for etching by removing the greasy film from its surface so that etching ground will adhere firmly” (47). Thus, the Dragon-Man begins the work of infinity as the etching process starts. Meanwhile, in the next two chambers, respectively, vipers, an “Eagle” and Eagle-like men continue their imaginative work, further demonstrating Blake’s infernal method. In fact, the Eagle “caused the inside of the cave to be infinite” (15), reminding us of heightened spiritual presence and purpose. Wardi explains the creative actions in the last three rooms: “In the fourth chamber, the precious metals from the second chamber are melted by flaming lions into ‘living fluids’, and are then ‘cast’ out ‘into the [infinite] expanse’ in the fifth chamber, before they are gathered again to be re-cast, in the sixth chamber, into the forms of books” (263). Thus, the readers of this book will have a product of imaginative creation, and the process of its creation is a form of apocalyptic action. In the formation of the physical book, we come to understand the infinite from cover to cover, as Wardi explains: “Gradually expanding to infinity, the series of chambers in the cave/skull concretize the expansion of the imagination in an apocalyptic process of purging and delimitation that yields an infinite book: a book which embodies within its material bounds—or binding—the infinity of the poetic imagination” (263). Then on the bottom of the design, we see a flying bird under “libraries” and an eagle and serpent joined together. Erdman explains their positioning on the design as well as their function: “Under ‘libraries’ . . . a distant bird flies leftward above the large emblem of serpent and eagle—who are not fighting each other, as in the Homeric omen, but collaborating to

produce linear text and infinite illumination” (112). The eagle and serpent know that they may join their collective spiritual capabilities to make the book more meaningful. In addition, the combined creative intention of these creatures is a pervasive, perpetual display of infinity.

In the next plate, which starts the third “MEMORABLE FANCY,” Blake discusses the relationship between reason and energy. He begins by explaining how creative power (“energy”) was subjugated by “chains” of reason:

The Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity; but the chains are the cunning of weak and tame minds which have power to resist energy, according to the proverb, the weak in courage is strong in cunning. (16)

The “Giants” were once greatly imaginative beings who were free to exercise their inner spirit in the sensory world, creating “sources of all activity” (16). But their imaginative prowess became dominated and thus obscured by tyrannical reasoning powers, such as governmental figures and the priestcraft. Once, however, their creative ideas became laws *and* religion. Erdman explains the “conflict” between imaginative beings and tyrannical reasoning powers: “Blake’s intransigence toward any marriage of convenience between Hell and Heaven appears further in an extended metaphor of conflict which he introduces with a play upon Rousseau’s pronouncement that man is born free but is everywhere in chains. . .” (179). Humankind *had* imaginative spirit, yet at present individuals can no longer exercise it. Also the reasoning beings who dominate energetic



spiritual beings do not operate with the “courage” of energetic strength, which is why corrupt reasoners must be “cunning.” Their cunning is a weak substitution for spiritual energy, which they do not possess.

Blake divided individuals into types of reasoning and energetic beings: “Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the other the Devouring: to the devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains; but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole. But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer, as a sea, received the excess of his delights” (16). The devourer (reason) works to subdue and subjugate the prolific, but the Prolific cannot be contained fully and ultimately, for the imaginative spirit, like an overflowing “fountain,” continues to produce despite the limiting force of reason. This concept also applies to Blake’s indignant stance against the Industrial Revolution and its excesses: The Prolific energy of chimney sweeps was devoured by the sweeps’ masters. Yet, in “The Chimney Sweeper” from *Innocence*, we see that Tom Dacre and the other sweeps still attempt to go about their lives with energy and optimism despite the brutal realities of their harsh, long workdays perpetuated by their Devourer-masters. A. A. Ansari explains the relationship between the two types when he says “the Prolific and the Devourer are . . . the abounding Energy and the reductionist Reason and they play their own role in the economy of the human potential” (38). Ultimately, their roles do not disappear or even diminish in spite of each other’s obvious differences, the reason why the devouring individual always receives the Prolific’s “excess delights.”

Blake continues to examine the necessary separation and difference between the Prolific and Devouring classes:

These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies: whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence. Religion is an endeavor to reconcile the two. Note: Jesus Christ did not wish to unite, but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says: 'I came not to send Peace, but a Sword.' (16-17)

As Blake announces emphatically, the Prolific and the Devourer are inherently different, and they must maintain their differences at all times (quite literally, in fact, in terms of *ages*). One reason religion became conventional was as follows: it attempted to “reconcile,” or harmonize, the two classes—they are meant to be “enemies,” and any adversarial relations between the two classes is a natural relationship, or one that should exist of its own accord. Conventional religion is false in its attempt to “reconcile” opposing classes. Kings and monarchs (the devouring powers) exercise fierce control over a peasantry, and the peasantry (the prolific) exists to work the land and pay taxes to the powerful, tyrannical monarchy. Naturally, the two classes come to oppose each other; however, this opposition is necessary to human “existence.” Erdman explains this essential relationship between the two classes: “Blake’s more immediate focus is upon the politics of moral restraint, and he is condemning the conservatism which seeks to confine the oppressed to a passive acceptance of tyranny. ‘Religion is an endeavor to reconcile’ the ‘two classes of men’ who ‘should be enemies,’ i.e. to unite the lion and its

prey” (180). Further diagnosing the error of reconciliation, Blake proceeds to explain how Jesus Christ was misinterpreted, for Christ knew that personal freedom was gained by understanding the differences between people, as Michael Ferber explains: “Blake’s Jesus . . . is a shepherd with a sharp eye on his mixed flock and a warrior with sharp spiritual weapons” (167). Blake’s real Christ—not the conventional Christ—understands the necessity of personal liberation, so the Prolific must not be reconciled with the authoritative Devouring powers of conventional religion or government. In the last sentence of the plate, Blake explains that the “Messiah or Satan or Tempter was formerly thought to be one of the Antediluvians who are our Energies” (17). He emphasizes that both Christ and Satan were believed to be energetic, imaginative giants, but the reductive reasoners in later ages were responsible for separating them into the normative categories associated with conventional religion.

The five figures on the top of the design indicate the despair of individuals (restrained imaginative giants) whose energies and creative spirit are subjugated by forces of reasoned oppression. Erdman describes their sad, even morbid appearance:

Here . . . the jailing of gigantic potential is the point. The ‘Giants’ who form the world of ‘sensible objects’ (Plate 11) *seem* ‘to live in it in chains’ . . . but would be freed by altered vision. The five in prison are stout bodies grouped in one rank and clutched together like the fingers of a closed hand; their garments are colored variously as symbolic of variety. (113)

Along with their huddled sadness, one may notice the nearly complete blackness

surrounding them; there is only a faint reddish color just over a few of them. Their imaginative spirit has been dimmed, or nearly extinguished by the normative restrictions of conventional religion. Indeed, as Blake says of abstract reasoning powers, “The weak in courage is strong in cunning” (16). The abstract reasoners have used their “weakness”—their lack of energetic spirit and resulting moral decay—to imprison the imaginative, spiritual individuals. Thus, the five people in the design give the impression that their huddled, creative selves are, figuratively speaking, buried alive by their spirit-starved, devouring jailors. And, as Erdman has suggested, they are capable of regrouping and enlivening their imaginative powers as Prolific beings, but the five individuals demonstrate that they deserve compassion nevertheless: Blake has instructed us about the continuous remorseless tasks of unimaginative, devouring powers.

In plates 17-20 Blake’s devil-persona tells us more about what is wrong with conventional religion, and in doing so, he takes us through two crucial journeys, as Robert Rix affirms: “Subsequently, we are related two journeys, one in which the angel shows the speaker the fate he will suffer in the spiritual world as a consequence of his libertarian thinking, and another in which the speaker shows the angel the ‘eternal lot’ of his orthodox beliefs” (119-20). The angel speaks first—who, symbolically, is also Swedenborg because of his passive, conventional religion—telling Blake that if he continues on his devilish path, he will experience the reality of hell, undeniably: “O dreadful state! consider the hot burning dungeon thou art preparing for thyself to all eternity, to which thou art going in such career. . .” (17). The angel takes Blake on a

journey into the spiritual depths that await him if he continues in such a “career.” It is no great surprise that the trip exhibits ironically the repugnant trappings of conventional religion from the outset: “So he took me thro’ a stable & thro’ a church & down into the church vault, at the end of which was a mill: thro’ the mill we went, and came to a cave: down the winding cavern we groped our tedious way, till a void boundless as a nether sky appear’d beneath us, & we held by the roots of trees and hung over this immensity. . .”

(17). Blake’s satire here shows us the stable, which, ironically, is a structure where Christ was born—we must consider a conventional Christ here because we are being taken through hell by a conventional angel. Then Blake is shown the conventional “church” and “church vault.” The vault is the prison where the true word of Christ, according to Blake, was hidden away by the church hierarchy covering it over with dogma. Subsequently, at the end of the vault, we have a “mill,” which symbolizes a ceaseless pattern of abstract, negative reasoning—or the droning, mechanical presence, the immoral workings of the Industrial Revolution. The irony here is evident where the conventional angel’s reality is bound to the immorality of these presences. While Blake and the angel “grobe” ahead, they experience a vast, chaotic “void,” and they stay over it in “the roots of trees.” (One must consider “roots” to be a negative presence like the “nether” void itself.) Thus, the angel presents Blake with an unpleasant fate brought to him at the end of the conventional church (or the end of its passageway), and this depiction of the church shows us its threatening, devouring force. In addition, we understand the torment and desperation of conventional religion when they are “sitting in the twisted root of an oak;

he was suspended in a fungus, which hung with the head downward into the deep” (17-18). Ansari explains the “fungus” as a “symbol of parasitic growth not nourished by the springs of energy” (39). The vision of this hell is indeed alarming due to the morose symbols used to stand for the conventional church and its lack of energetic divinity.

Blake is shown more discomfoting presences as he travels deeper into hell with the conventional angel. Blake sees several predatory spiders “crawling after their prey” (18), and he is compelled to inquire about his “eternal lot” during the horrid display:

I now asked my  
companion which was my eternal lot? he said: ‘between the black &  
white spiders.’

But now, from between the black & white spiders, a cloud and  
fire burst and rolled thro’ the deep, black’ning all beneath, so that  
the nether deep grew black as a sea, & rolled with a terrible noise;  
beneath us was nothing now to be seen but a black tempest. . . . (18)

Here Blake gives us an apocalyptic vision in the nightmarish (yet necessary) presence of the spiders and the fiery areas surrounding their black and white colors. Blake’s hell is a display of energetic fury in the face of reasoned containment, especially given *contrasts* of reason and energy, religious orthodoxy and the divinity of Blake’s hell. The white spiders are presented as reason whereas the black spiders are fiery energy, and the Swedenborgian angel declares that Blake’s fate is to be mired somewhere “between” the two positions labeled as “black” and “white” by conventional religion. Marta

Krzysztoforska explains the symbolic presence of the black spiders (energetic evil) and white spiders (reason): “Darkness and light that represent Evil and Good, or in Blakean terminology Energy and Reason, are set asunder. Therefore the energy of the divine fire that used to flow between the black and white spiders . . . is frozen within both extremum points” (73-74). But despite the orthodox labels imposed on reason and energy, a “fire burst” through the normative categories in the “nether deep,” and the “black tempest” makes its necessary presence felt to Blake and the passive angel; the rigid positioning between contrasts is shattered, and divine life is freed from its restrictive labels.

Here the angel’s vision begins to work against his own conventional, abstract thought process, showing him “reptiles” in his own mind. And then we see one such frightening, symbolic reptile: “and now we saw it was the head of Leviathan; his forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tyger’s forehead: soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam, tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward us with all the fury of a spiritual existence” (18-19). This Leviathan is a twofold reference. First, we must consider the Leviathan of Thomas Hobbes (and his book of the same name), which consists of the masses of people who comprise a nation and who are ruled by a powerful king—these masses are concerned for their own self-preservation and safety, and the king desires to wield his power effectively enough to mollify the masses and prevent civil war. Secondly, as Morton Paley claims, “the manifestation of Leviathan is . . . a vision of the French Revolution . . . or, rather, two visions, an Angel’s and the speaker’s” (38). Both

references about the Leviathan show us the potential apocalyptic, passionate energy of individuals in “the raging foam.” And the Leviathan’s comparison to the “tyger” is apt as well: The wrath of the tiger is the energetic power of individuals, showing the angel and the speaker (Blake’s devil-persona), “the fury of a spiritual existence” (19). The Leviathan is so frightening to our Swedenborgian angel that he retreats to his church through the abstract, unimaginative safety of the “mill,” where the energetic force of individuals cannot harm him. Wardi further explains the angel’s fearful removal: “The prudent angel would not submit himself to being inside the space of the text, which to him would seem like being devoured by Leviathan himself” (260). Thus, as Blake has established, the individual who lacks energy, such as this conventional angel, is “weak,” so his only recourse is to flee. Meanwhile, Blake finds himself “sitting on a pleasant bank beside a river by moonlight, hearing a harper, who sung to the harp; & his theme was: ‘The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind’” (19). Blake gives us a comic twist here: the fiery rage just presented to him is gone suddenly, coinciding with the angel’s own purposeful removal. And while the “harper” sings Blake’s proverb—number 45 from plate 9—we realize more about problems with orthodox religion and those who follow it: Continuously forcing reality into normative moral categories creates and perpetuates the ferocious dangers associated with the “reptiles” of the angel’s vision. Thus, Blake’s devils must continue to live in a world of energetic, spiritual freedom.

Blake went to the “mill” himself in search of the angel, and he found him. Then



before he explains his vision of the angel's "eternal lot," Blake describes a journey: "I by force suddenly caught him in my arms, & flew westerly thro' the night, till we were elevated above the earth's shadow; then I flung myself with him directly into the body of the sun; here I clothed myself in white, & taking in my hand Swedenborg's volumes, sunk from the glorious clime, and passed all the planets till we came to saturn" (19). It is fitting that Blake takes the angel to another "space" while holding "Swedenborg's volumes." And his "white" clothes show the one-dimensional thinking that typifies abstract orthodoxy, such as Swedenborg and the present angel. Then in this "space," Blake and the angel visit another "stable" and "church," wherein they see a "deep pit" filled with vicious, combative animals that represent bickering theologians. Blake recounts this portion of his devilish journey with the angel, saying,

soon we saw seven houses of brick;  
one we entered; in it were a number of monkeys, baboons, & all of  
that species, chain'd by the middle, grinning and snatching at one  
another, but withheld by the shortness of their chains: however, I saw  
that they sometimes grew numerous, and then the weak were caught  
by the strong, and with a grinning aspect, first coupled with, and then  
devoured, by plucking off first one limb and then another, till the  
body was left a helpless trunk. . . . (19-20)

Blake satirizes strongly the scholastic theologians who believe that their opinions about religion are all-important, and their arguments with each other are wildly hostile. Harold

Bloom comments on Blake's creative display of fighting monkeys as theologians:

The gruesome lewdness of Blake's vision of a theological monkey-house has not lost its shock-value; it still offends orthodoxy. Swift himself could not have done better here, in the repulsive projection of an incestuous warfare of rival doctrines, ground together in the reductive mill of scholastic priestcraft. (93)

As the monkey-theologians also demonstrate, they are limited by their reason, what Blake calls, "the shortness of their chains" (20).

Ironically, the theologians' heavily reasoned arguments make them appear primitive, even comical. (One would consider ordinarily that creatures of reason would not be so backbiting and hostile.) Ansari also discusses the ineffectiveness of these theological reasoners: "Their high temper and boisterousness symbolize the hair-splitting theorizing and argumentative combativeness of the religious zealots as well as indulgence in linguistic subtleties giving birth to fierce and futile controversies, and they keep burning with anger and mischief" (40). And when they devour, they hack at the "body," leaving the devoured persons damaged in body and soul (as both are connected).

Witnessing these fierce, trivial theologians, Blake and the angel travel back through the mill of abstract reason, but Blake takes a souvenir from the experience: "I in my hand brought the skeleton of a body, which in the mill was Aristotle's Analytics" (20). Blake uses this work as another symbol of the abuses of reasoned principles. This entire display has "imposed" on the angel, and he says to Blake, "thou oughtest to be ashamed" (20). But, Blake knows that abstract reasoners such as the angel are at fault, or those are at

fault “whose works are only Analytics. . .” (20). At the bottom of the design, as Erdman says, we see the coiled Leviathan pointing “his bright red tongue straight upward” (117), almost reaching the word “Analytics” and demonstrating that apocalyptic ferocity exists around those who embroil existence with abstract reason.

In plates 21-22, Blake satirizes Swedenborg on the grounds that his supposed religion is filled with hypocrisy which grows from abstract reason. Blake begins his discussion by exposing the “Angels” who resemble Swedenborg in their beliefs; then his attack against Swedenborg begins: “I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning. Thus Swedenborg boasts that what he writes is new; tho’ it is only the Contents or Index of already publish’d books” (21). The reasoners’ “insolence” stems from the notion that they believe only their ideas are correct, above and beyond the ideas of others. Cohen discusses Blake’s disgust with such individuals: “Blake is most vicious in his condemnation of those who cherish their own perspective as the only correct vision of reality. His critique of arrogant absolutist Angels serves as a prelude to his attack on Swedenborg” (168). Swedenborg possesses the same arrogant insolence, but he also goes so far as to think that his ideas are original. Blake’s attack is clear and precise in these sentences as well: “Now hear a plain fact: Swedenborg has not written one new truth. Now hear another: he has written all the old falsehoods” (22). Along with his unrelenting arrogance about what he supposes is religious truth, his ideas derive flatly from “old falsehoods” and “publish’d books.” Nothing from his mind is new or

imaginative; therefore, real spirit is absent. Then, as Blake says, he has spoken only with abstract reasoners like himself, not with imaginative thinkers (“devils”): “He conversed with Angels who are all religious, & conversed not with Devils who all hate religion, for he was incapable thro’ his conceited notions” (22). Swedenborg has allowed the standards of conventional religion to outline his own thinking, and in the process his “conceited notions” took a foothold in his mind.

In shutting out the real angels (devils), Swedenborg has closed himself to original ideas. In fact, Robert Ryan believes that religion as a whole operates to close one’s real spirituality, and he argues that Blake sets out to demonstrate this crucial point in each of his prophecies:

The idea that religion itself may be the enemy of the true faith, and that a religious visionary must be able to balance belief and disbelief in a dialectic that most religions would dare not to encourage, lies at the heart of Blake’s reformist vision and of his central myth as it is embodied in his prophetic books. . . . (56)

Given Ryan’s point, Blake shows that Swedenborg’s absolute conventional religion makes his thinking very superficial: “Any man of mechanical talents may, from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen, produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg’s, and from those of Dante or Shakespear an infinite number” (22). Learning the truly imaginative thought of these writers will allow “any” individuals to “produce” works far greater than Swedenborg. The “masters” to whom Blake refers have followed their imaginative genius whereas Swedenborg did not follow his. At the top of

the illustration, we see a man who looks upwards, perhaps imagining god, exercising his capacity to know religion. Beneath his left knee is a skull, indicating how one's beliefs can become lifeless and sterile, like Swedenborg's—not genuinely devout.

In plates 21-24, Blake gives us a dialogue between an “Angel” and a “Devil,” showing us the how Jesus Christ embodies genius and personal instincts. The dialogue opens with the Devil explaining how god can be loved through “great men”: “‘The worship of God is: Honouring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best: those who envy or calumniate great men hate God; for there is no other god’” (22-23). The Devil tells the angel that the genius of Christ can be found in “great men,” so it is wise to follow such men just as one follows god. However, the Angel is shocked at the devil's words, for he believes that god is “visible” in Christ alone, and he also questions, “has not Jesus Christ given his sanction to the law of the ten commandments, and are not all other men fools, sinners, & nothings? . . .” (23). Not only does the Angel not perceive god in men, but he implies that not following his notion of the spiritual Jesus and the Ten Commandments is gravely wrong. Then the Devil argues that Christ has not always given his “sanction” to the “ten commandments”: “now hear how he has given his sanction to the Decalogue: did he not mock at the Sabbath, and so mock the sabbath's God? murder those who were murder'd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery?” (23). It is important to note that the Devil does not literally believe Jesus believed in murder or adultery; instead, he implies that Jesus was an excellent example of imaginative spirit, and he was not interested in the

restrictions of the *authority* imposed by conventional religious belief. Thus, the Devil finishes his antinomian dialogue by uplifting ‘impulse’ and denigrating “rules”: “Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules” (23-24). Rix asserts the validity of the Devil’s position as well: “The angel is an orthodox believer, who claims that Jesus gave his ‘sanction to the law of ten commandments’. This is vehemently refuted by the antinomian devil, who represents Jesus as an opponent to both civil and religious authority” (112). Interestingly, the devil wins this debate, and the angel becomes a devil, meaning he realizes the value of imaginative spirit as exemplified by the antinomian Christ. We see Blake’s infernal purpose in this plate when the Angel and Devil “read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense” (24). As the Devil and Angel now know, the imaginative spirit of Blake’s Christ is the essence of religion. Blake finishes with a maxim that captures the underlying meaning in the previous three plates (and elsewhere in the *Marriage*): “One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression” (24). All restrictions—including those that become laws—affect humans and various creatures in several respects, as Kevin Hutchings explains: “Blake’s disdain for homogeneous rule (‘One Law’) suggests that the law’s main problem is its inability to acknowledge and respect the particular otherness of individual creatures and contexts, human or otherwise” (74). At the end of the design, we see, as Erdman says, “the oppressor (King Nebuchadnezzar) with spiked crown, retreating in terror on all fours. . .” (121). This law-driven, Urizenic figure directs us to the oppression which is possible if individuals are dominated by conventional religion and all other forms of tyranny.

In Blake's "A SONG OF LIBERTY" on plates 25-27, readers see the energetic displays of emotion necessary for revolution. Just as Rintrah brings emotional fervor into the *Marriage* at the outset, here we see the violent, revolutionary spirit of "Orc." Hobson explains the presence of Orc in "A SONG OF LIBERTY":

An Orclike spirit appears first in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell's* concluding 'Song of Liberty,' which centers on a figure described as a 'newborn terror,' 'newborn fire,' 'newborn wonder,' or 'son of fire,' terms that connect him with Orc (verses 7, 8, 10, 19). The text alludes to the fall of the Bastille as well as events in America and Spain, . . . and presents embryonically ideas that will be more fully developed in *America*: the eclipse and reappearance of the Orc spirit, the downfall of religion, the holiness of life, and the end of Empire. (99)

Many verses in this concluding song indicate revolution, such as the following: "Albion's coast is sick silent; the American meadows faint!" (25.2). Albion (England) is troubled even by the thought of the American Revolution. And about the revolutionary spirit, we see this verse: "Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers and mutter across the ocean: France, rend down thy dungeon" (25.3).

Here the spirit of Orc travels across the sea and into France, knowing the Fall of the Bastille signals the French Revolution. Then verse ten shows us that Orc is near the "jealous," reasoning stars that dislike freedom resulting from revolution: "The speary hand burned aloft, unbuckled was the shield; forth went the hand of jealousy among the flaming hair, and hurl'd the new born wonder thro' the starry night" (25-26.10). The

starry rulers use corrupt reason to subdue and defeat the powerful energy of those who want revolutionary change, so they attempt to cast Orc out of their starry, ruling dens. Next we see that even the defeated powers attempt to oppress others: “With thunder and fire, leading his starry hosts thro’ the waste wilderness, he promulgates his ten commands, glancing his beamy eyelids over the deep in dark dismay. . .” (26-27.18). As Priestman explains, “Even after his catastrophic overthrow by the ‘new-born fire’ of equality, he tries to tie everyone to the same laws. . .” (101). Near the end of the plate, when “Empire” is gone, “the lion & wolf shall cease” (27). The energy symbolized by these animals is no longer needed for revolution. And lastly, we see Blake’s maxim that closes the Marriage: “For every thing that lives is Holy” (27). The maxim is nearly self-explanatory in its power and effect on the reader: To live is to know holiness, for all of life is indeed holy. On the design, just to the left of the word “is” (the word before “Holy”), we see a bird flying upward, showing us the value of hopeful spirit in the grand presence of life.

Blake’s *Marriage* is important to its readers because it shows the value of the human spirit, and this spirit is designed to grow within the human body and soul. Thus, we see through Blake’s proverbs that exuberant energy is spiritual; the energy of adults, babies, and animals exhibits an energetic essence of spirit. For Blake, god is within our reach. Such a god is not somewhere beyond the clouds or flying around universes; the spiritual power of tremendous holiness is within the body and soul. Imaginative life shows us god. And this sort of life must be exercised; it cannot be restrained by



“manacles” of mind. Continuously, abstract reason will become oppression for individuals, and this oppression is manifested in politics and conventional religion. Swedenborg has been our example of the rigid structure of confining religion, yet it exists universally as well. Thus, Blake advocates that we think and live as the holy beings that we are in order to know our inner beings and to know god. As Blake says wisely, “Every thing possible to be believ’d is an image of truth” (8.38). Thus, the presences of mind, body, and spirit—even if they appear contrary—may indicate a type of existence unknown to others. But this existence becomes known to us, as Blake has shown throughout the *Marriage*.

## CHAPTER VI

## Conclusion

In Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, a valuable interplay of contraries, human energy, and imaginative spirit occurs. Human beings reveal the strata of spirit in religious, political and even physical environments (one recalls the impoverished youths in a "fruitful land" in the *Experience* version of "Holy Thursday"); these environments and others are capable of operating on the human spirit in harmful ways. For example, in Blake's "The Lamb," the child speaker learns he is a sacred presence, just like Jesus Christ. Thus, there is adequate reason for this child to express the spiritual bliss that underlies his existence—a spiritual presence that formed the child's unique identity in his earthly, physical realm. In Blake's design for "Infant Joy," an angelic presence (with wings) speaks to the newborn child innocently; happy spirit is the driving influence at this stage of untested innocence. But, the undeniable presence of immorality exists in a world colored variously with the stripes of good and evil, like the symbolic, fearful symmetry of "The Tyger." Humanity loses the pleasing constant of innocent spirit, and individuals themselves may become increasingly dangerous presences. In "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence* as well as *Songs of Experience*, respectively, the child may escape his brutal workplace in an imaginative dream, but the older, former child sweep knows reasons for his bitterness and suffering; he has learned the rigid powers of the adult world that he has been forced to accept--conventional religion has imposed just such a corrupt world on him, and the

fierce British monarchy does not wish to change its remorseless power. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the imaginative spirit works against the effects of abstract reason and those who enforce such reason (Swedenborgian “Angels” of negative passivity).

In the “Introduction” to *Innocence*, the child is a splendid symbol of the divine, and his pastoral world is a space of creativity to all who are free to accept it. And, indeed, one of Blake’s vital messages is that spiritual reception should be unfettered; we can see this graceful aspect in “The Shepherd,” “Infant Joy,” and even in the presence of the “multitude of lambs” in “Holy Thursday.” However, easy spiritual reception is not always possible. In “The Little Vagabond” from *Experience*, the children wish to be warm in the “cold church” of conventional religion, but readers of this and other poems in the volume understand that there is no realistic escape from “Dame Lurch” or the other stern figures of orthodox worship; they can only hope to experience real religion around a warm, imaginative fire created individually within the walls of the inherently “cold,” unfeeling church. And in “The Voice of the Ancient Bard,” youths must be wary of the “Dark disputes & artful teasing” of older Urizenic figures (5). Reason is used perversely by Urizenic elders: It is a source of power that even holds the spiritual innocence of life in contempt. Thus, in “Earth’s Answer,” the “Cruel jealous selfish fear” of early Urizenic church “fathers” is clearly expressed. The energy inherent in a universe of “fearful symmetry” is embodied in a creation that is filled with manifestations of good and evil. Within a universe of abstract materialism, a blaze of energy is always ready to break through the barriers of passive humanity: “Tyger Tyger burning bright, / In the forests of

the night. . .” (21-22). The energy balanced between extremes is not meant to be bound forever by the “stars” or “spears” of reason. Dame Lurch, King George and the advocates of the Industrial Revolution will come to know strong oppositional force. Evidence exists in “Holy Thursday” from *Songs of Innocence* that the rumblings of revolt are possible within the ranks of the youthful “multitudes.” Blake’s art gives us further reason to consider revolution when a wealthy woman, in the illustration for “Holy Thursday” from *Songs of Experience*, spreads her hands downward, shunning a dead baby in “a land of poverty” (8). The study of these works and others in these early volumes shows that worlds of innocent spirit can be both blissful and miserable; these worlds are unique in Blake’s creative work. They produce the *feelings* of Blake’s innocents as well as their outlooks and mindsets in the process of uncovering their varied realities.

Blake’s various displays of energy, the contraries and the imagination, seek to find reconciliation or at least visionary explanation in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The fierce power of energetic spiritual wrath is audible in the figure of Rintrah, which is associated with the energy of the tiger in the poem of that name. Revolution is again a firm possibility: “Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burden’d air. . .” (2.1). In the *Marriage* readers perceive that energy and reason permeate existence as an essential power, but reason also has served to break spirit from the “human breast,” subduing individuals’ imaginative understanding of religion in favor of fabricated religion that had to be accepted by all. And the creation of conventional religion is put in clearer context in Blake’s “Proverbs of Hell,” wherein we learn that “Prisons are built with stones of Law,

Brothels with bricks of Religion” (8.21). The bricks of passive *reason* are used one by one, carefully yet surely, as the foundation for eventual immorality in individuals who are punished by containment of their spiritual energy; in their perpetual restriction, they act immorally in a carefully reasoned society and must be put in “Prisons” made by “stones of Law.” For Blake, the contrary life is the mortal and spiritual life. Thus, we come to understand and “Listen to the fool’s reproach! it is a kingly title!” (9.47). The beauty of this proverb is that the energetic, imaginative “fool,” still alive in a world of abstract reason, is the real “king,” and the false kings are monarchical kings of Blake’s time, the kings who impose corruption on individuals. Thus, Blake’s creation of contrary, supposedly foolish worlds seeks to reveal life’s wisdom, as this study has demonstrated. Blake’s wisdom is a world of energetic spirit that struggles and seeks to find its way through portions of contrariety, forging an existence that reminds us how much spiritual life *stands* behind all the shallow dungeons of stale reason.

Blakean wisdom emerges emphatically in scenes when he spoke through a reasoning, Swedenborgian angel in unfettered regions of hell. When Blake witnesses the angel’s vision of hell and sees a tremendous “Leviathan,” he reveals individuals who comprise a massive display of ferocious, collective energy—spiritual energy! The Leviathan approaches them “with all the fury of a spiritual existence” (19). The reasoning angel can do little more than shrink from the scene in cowardice and hopelessness, returning to the “mill” of his conventional church. In the illustration, the Leviathan itself is coiling toward the sort of contrary existence—conventional and energetic—to which

Blake has opened his readers' eyes. Later, Blake makes another outright attack on Swedenborg, the abstract, superficial reasoner himself: "He conversed with Angels who are all religious, & conversed not with Devils who all hate religion, for he was incapable thro' his conceited notions" (22). Swedenborg and others like him, of course, cannot understand the truthful "fury" of existence because of their thoroughly abstract notions of truth, by which they always abide; they will not deviate from their stupid stubbornness. Thus, wiser "fools" will always be at odds with the stubborn, abstract reasoners. It is no wonder that Blake's Orc must appear in "A SONG OF LIBERTY." Freedom from the restrictions of all abstract reason must be achieved, and this freedom has occurred though violent revolution in France and America.

This dissertation traces the value Blake's poetry of the 1790's places on a contrary mode of life—a type of existence that finds creases of spirituality among crevices of reasoned abstraction. The holiness of life has existed and will exist along with evidence of abstract immorality. The imagination shows us this reality: "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth" (8.38). These early works of Blake—*Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*—render a life of spirit that bespeaks infinity in regions of heaven and hell within human beings; Blake embraces spirit in its various forms and realizes that certain contraries exist to battle his spirit. Orthodox religion is one presence throughout humanity, yet layers of otherness—of spirit—are every bit as real. In fact, one may now argue that the palimpsests of spirit indicate truth. This study has shown that Blake's early works give us unique patterns of

spiritual reality in several inner worlds and lead us to deeper spiritual meaning. The images of spirit are vast within humanity, even if they are subdued by rigid abstractions. Thus, Blake suggests, eternity may be a glimpse away. Perceptions and inner imaginative energy uncover the essence of sacred life beyond the shadows of the known.

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